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TEHRAN TIMES



Leader taps new army commander

16 Pages | Price 10,000 Rials | 38th year | No.12701 | Monday | NOVEMBER 21, 2016 | Azar 1, 1395 | Safar 21, 1438

World's largest rally of devotion



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Iran optimistic on OPEC production cuts after Barkindo visit

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said he's optimistic that OPEC members will agree to proposed production cuts at a meeting in Vienna later this month.

Zanganeh met the group's secretary-general, Mohammed Barkindo, in Tehran on Saturday to discuss an accord that seeks to reduce output by as much as 1.3 million barrels a day. He described as "promising" information that was relayed to him by Barkindo about finalizing the agreement.

"It is highly probable that OPEC members will reach a consensus in the November meeting," Zanganeh said in comments published by the Iranian Oil Ministry's Shana news service. "I think OPEC members honor the agreement and would try to put it into action."

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries is seeking to trim output for the first time in eight years. An agreement reached in Algiers in September to limit production has been complicated by Iran's commitment to boost production and Iraq's contention that it should be exempt so it can fund its war with Islamist militants.

Since reaching a 2016 high near \$52 a barrel last month, the oil price has retreated amid doubts about OPEC's ability to carry out a deal, which would end a two-year policy of pumping without limits. Without an accord at a meeting of the OPEC secretariat in Vienna on November 30, the International Energy Agency has predicted a fourth consecutive year of oversupply in 2017. → 4

Fidel Castro Diaz-Balart concludes successful visit to Iran

On Wednesday, Nov. 16, Fidel Castro Diaz-Balart, the scientific adviser of the Council of State and Vice-President of the Cuban Academy of Sciences, concluded his successful visit to Iran, responding to an invitation from the Vice-President for Science and Technology of the Persian nation, Sorena Sattari.

Castro Diaz-Balart and the accompanying delegation completed an extensive program of visits to Pasteur Institute of Iran, Aryogen Company, Sharif Technological University, Council of the Nanotechnology Initiative of Iran (INIC) and Technology Parks of Pardis and Isfahan (ISTD), important enclaves located at the outskirts of Tehran and center of the country respectively. Both projects are the most advanced of their kind in the Middle East and Central Asia.

In a warm meeting with Sattari, the Cuban official presented a report about the scientific advances made during the Cuban Revolution, which were early promoted by its historic leader, Fidel Castro, thereby placing Cuba at the forefront of biotechnology.

The Cuban official said Tehran and Havana have been cooperating for more than 20 years in biotechnology, calling it an example of friendly and successful South-South cooperation.

Likewise, both sides recognized the renewed impetus in bilateral relations between Cuba and Iran, which had its climax in the recent visit to Havana of President Hassan Rouhani. In this context, other cooperation projects were identified, including scientific collaboration.

(Source: CubaMinrex-EmbaCuba Iran)

Iran water polo team finishes fourth at Asian championship

SPORTS Iran wrapped up the Asian Water Polo Championship in fourth place on Sunday.

The Iranian team had a good performance against China in the bronze medal match and drew the

team 7-7 in regular time, however Aleksandar Cirić's men was defeated against their rivals 11-8 on penalties.

Iran defeated Singapore 8-4 in its opening match but suffered a 14-4 loss to Kazakhstan in group stage.

The Iranian team thrashed

Hong Kong 19-8 in preliminary round's last match and booked a place in the knockout stage.

Iran beat Saudi Arabia 15-6 and advanced to the competition's semi-final but failed to book a place in the final match after suf-

fering a 15-6 defeat to Japan.

In the bronze-medal match, Iran was defeated against China 11-8.

Japan will meet Kazakhstan in the final match.

The competition held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium indoor pool.

Trump will soon realize he cannot reverse all previous policies: Georgetown professor

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Like all his predecessors President-elect Donald Trump will soon find out that it is impossible to undo all policies followed by the previous administrations, a professor of political science from Georgetown University says.

"As a general rule, presidents soon realize that they cannot wipe the slate clean and reverse all previous policies," Shireen Tahmaasb Hunter tells the Tehran Times.

Hunter also "If Trump improves relations with Russia and cooperates with it in solving the Syrian crisis, this would weaken Saudi position in the Middle East."

Following is the text of the interview:

■ What the Trump administration's foreign policy will look like in the Middle East?

A: It is too early to predict what the United States' foreign policy will look like under the Trump Presidency. As a general rule, presidents soon realize that they cannot wipe the slate

clean and reverse all previous policies. Doing so could incur serious costs. Donald Trump, too, is likely to realize that reversing all previous American policies and commitments, such as those to NATO and other US allies like Japan will not be easy. The same to some extent will be true of the Middle East, especially as far as Israel is concerned. On other Middle East issues, Trump's instinct would be to reduce the risk of American military engagement, especially on behalf of regional states. Thus Trump will be less willing to support Saudi Arabia's regional ambitions. But he will not abandon it either.

Regarding Iran, much will depend on who Trump picks as his secretary of state. Some names that are mentioned such as, Senator Bob Corker, Newt Gingrich, and John Bolton are all very anti-Iran. For example, John Bolton supported military action against Iran and was against JPCOA. He is also a staunch supporter of Israel. Trump also is concerned about Islamic

extremism. Although Iran is not like IS or Al Qaeda, many see its revolutionary Islamic ideology as radical and against Western ethos.

However, if Iran were to be willing to talk to America, I believe Trump would be responsive, especially if he saw economic and trade benefits for America in dealing with Iran.

■ What is your prediction of the U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia during Trump's presidency?

A: I do not foresee significant changes in U.S. policy towards Saudi Arabia. However, as I noted earlier, he would not be responsive to Saudi views of regional developments. If Trump improves relations with Russia and cooperates with it in solving the Syrian crisis, this would weaken Saudi position in the Middle East. However, this would also undermine Iran's influence there. In general a U.S.-Russian cooperation in the Middle East would reduce the influence of regional players, including Iran. → 13

Visually impaired man raises funds to free prisoner

INTERVIEW
By Marjan Golpira

TEHRAN — Alireza Mohammad Beigina, who lost his eyesight in a clash with a motorcycle when he was 20, is on a mission to 'free prisoners.'

Regardless of being hard up for some time now, Beigina, the man of many talents, has taken steps of faith to collect donations for liberation of convicts from jail.

Just the other week, Beigina raised 4,000,000 rials (\$115) and released a convict, whose identity remains anonymous for protection of his privacy, from a prison in Isfahan, central Iran.

"With that amount raised, we found out we could set a prisoner free in Isfahan who was waiting for as little money as we had collected."

To do so, he said, "We originally targeted at Tasua and Ashura, however, we lagged behind in donations and aimed, instead, for Arbaeen", 40 days after Ashura.

Tasua and Ashura, the ninth and 10th days of the month of Moharram, are days of mourning in Shia Islam to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, a grandson of the Prophet Mohammed.

Beigina, too, the chief editor of the weekly Hezareh Sevom (The Third Millennium) website, www.h3nn.ir, believes that putting convicts behind bars costs the state and taxpayers a pretty penny rather than letting them loose on a small bond, yet under the supervision of probation officers.

"It seems criminal that people convicted of misdemeanors face jail time."

Beigina said that people charged with misdemeanors, infractions or lesser offenses are to be placed on probation to serve community, a more cost efficient plan, instead of being sentenced to jail.

Therefore, the budget spent on state corrections and those locked up in jails can be used "more efficiently" elsewhere, he expressed.

To top that off, he argued, the misconception here that the state punishes the convict whereas in reality their family is the one paying the price. → 13



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Golden Eagle arrives in Mashhad, starts Iran tour

The Golden Eagle Luxury Trains, a prestigious European operator of exclusive, long-distance rail tours, arrived in the northeastern city of Mashhad as the first destination in Iran.

Passengers from the UK, Spain, the U.S., Australia, Canada, South Africa and some other countries departed Moscow on November 10 to commence their 18-day itinerary titled "Persian Odyssey".

They will also have stopovers in Kerman, Yazd, Isfahan, and Shiraz before the journey comes to an end following a three-day sojourn in Tehran.

TEHRAN TIMES
Iran's Leading International Daily
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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



JCOA foe Schumer not ready to scrap it

POLITICS TEHRAN — Chuck Schumer, the U.S. Senate Democratic leader and JCPOA-critic, says he is not ready for scrapping the Iran nuclear deal.

Schumer said another year or two is needed to assess whether the pact is working.

Schumer told Politico in an interview published on Saturday while he remains "skeptical" of the agreement, "it would be wrong to repeal it now."

"I'm willing to try. I think the jury's still out, and I'm willing to wait another year or two," he said.



Principlists not agreed on single candidate yet: Haddad-Adel

POLITICS TEHRAN — A former MP and prominent principlist figure has said principlists have not yet agreed on a single candidate for the 2017 presidential election.

On the support of some principlists for Hassan Rouhani, Qolam Ali Haddad Adel said, "People are free and the probability has always been there. But right now effort is being made to steer principlists to a single choice."

On city and village council elections, he said principlists will follow the model of the February 2016 Majlis election.



Tehran urges ICC to address reasons for African exit

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's representative at a meeting of the International Criminal Court called on the tribunal to address the concerns of a number of African nations that have decided to withdraw from the court, describing it as sign of discontent with the organization's conduct.

Addressing the 15th session of the ICC's Assembly of States Parties, held in The Hague on Sunday, Hossein Panahi Azar said the ICC should seriously study the reasons behind that decision, Tasnim reported.



Iran offers condolences on death of Indian train passengers

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign Ministry on Sunday extended Tehran's condolences on the death of around 100 Indian passengers of a derailed train.

Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi sympathized with the bereaved families and wished speedy recovery for the injured.

96 people were killed and 150 were injured after a train derailed near the city of Kanpur in northern India on Sunday.



'Rouhani still our choice'

POLITICS TEHRAN — A member of Hope parliamentary group has said Hassan Rouhani is still their first choice for the 2017 presidential election.

"For the time being Mr. Rouhani is the reformists' choice for presidency, but when we sit down for examples, we may have more candidates," Mohammad Reza Tabesh said on Sunday, Mehr reported.

On council elections, he said, "We want our own candidates to make achievements in elections, according to which we have defined strategies."



Iranian, Japanese inspectorates ink cooperation agreement

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian and Japanese officials in a meeting in Bangkok on Sunday signed a memorandum of understanding to broaden their cooperation in monitoring and inspection.

The MOU was signed between head of Iran's General Inspectorate Organization Nasser Seraj and the president the Japanese ombudsman during the closing ceremony of the 11th World Conference of the International Ombudsman Institute in Bangkok, ILNA reported.

Mutual cooperation in ombudsman activities was the most important articles of the MOU.

Iranians mark Arbaeen

POLITICS Millions of Iranians descended across the country commemorated Arbaeen, a religious observance that occurs 40 days after the Day of Ashura.

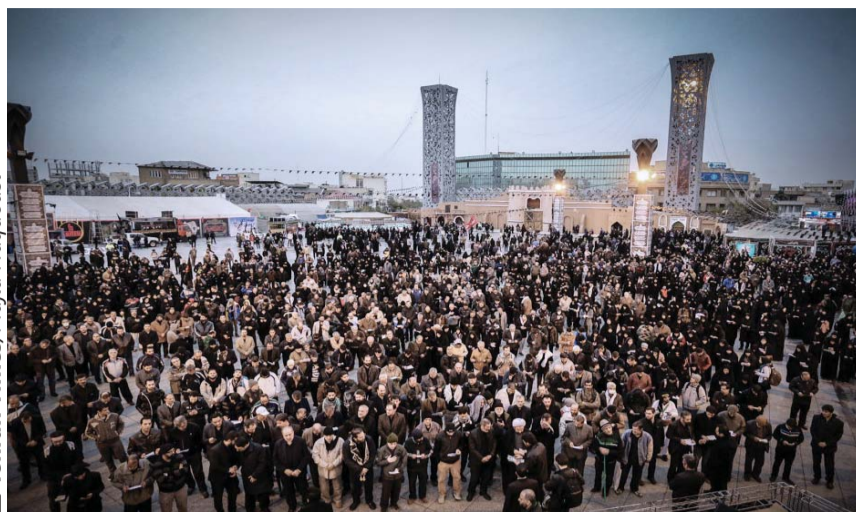
Arbaeen marks the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (AS), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and the third Shia Imam. People, including women and children, walked long distances to arrive at holy shrines such as the Imam Reza mausoleum in Mashhad and Shah-Abdol-Azim in Tehran.

The Arbaeen rituals revived the memory of Ashura and the feeling of devotion and sympathy.

Also, millions of Muslims, including more than two millions of Iranians, convened in the holy city of Karbala, where Imam Hussein is buried, to mark Arbaeen.

As the biggest religious gathering in the world the ritual in Karbala drew about 20 million pilgrims by Sunday.

Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, India, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Azerbaijan, Turkey and other countries trekked a main road between Najaf - another holy city in



Thousands of Iranians gather in Imam Hussein Square in Tehran to mark Arbaeen on November 20.

Iraq - and Karbala on foot to show their devotion to Imam Hussein.

The flood of pilgrims from Iran to Karbala was so great that Iraq closed Iran's Mehran border checkpoint, saying it was difficult to handle such huge population.

Followers of other religions including

Christians join the journey every year to mourn the martyrdom of Imam Hussein.

The Arbaeen has also become a rallying cry for the campaign against violence and Takfiri terrorism. It has also worked to unify Muslims in the face of attempts to create divergence, animosity and mis-

understanding among them.

Meanwhile Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Reza Salehi Amiri said foreign media outlets are closing eyes to the epic created by Muslims on the occasion of Arbaeen.

The minister made the remarks while inspecting Chazzabeh border spot in the southwestern province of Khuzestan which borders Iraq. Hundreds of thousands of Iranian pilgrims are using Chaz-zabe check point to cross into Iraq for Arbaeen rituals.

Vice president joins Arbaeen march in Iraq

Iran's Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri also visited Najaf on Sunday to participate in what has been hailed as Arbaeen Trekking among the Iranians.

Other Iranian officials, including Iran's Haj and Pilgrimage Organization chief Saeed Owhadi, Sports and Youth Minister Masoud Soltanifar, and Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Hossein Jaber Anasari, accompanied Jahangiri.

The vice president met the governor of the holy city of Najaf, hailing efforts by Iraqi officials to organize such a great event.

Iran's Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri joins Arbaeen marchers in Iraq



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Also on Saturday, Jahangiri made a telephone call to Iraqi Prime Minister Haider praising the efforts being made by the Iraqi people and government

in hosting millions of Arbaeen pilgrims.

"Launching the big fight against terrorists in Mosul and at the same time managing the Arbaeen march are indications of the Iraqi government's power," Jahangiri told al-Abadi. According to Iranian and Iraqi officials more than 2 million Iranians visited Karbala to mourn Arbaeen.

The joining of Jahangiri and some other Iranian officials to the Arbaeen marching are signs of religious affinity between the Iranian and Iraqi people and growing political and economic relationship between the Tehran and Baghdad governments. Jahangiri said the Arbaeen marching symbolizes "peace and freedom".

The gathering of millions of pilgrims in Karbala has been described as the biggest religious event in the world.

Leader taps new army commander



POLITICS TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei appointed on Saturday Brigadier General Kiomars Heidari as the new commander of the Iranian army's ground forces.

Heidari, 52, entered service in 1984 in the thick of the Iraqi invasion of Iran. Prior to his promotion he had served as the second-in-command of the army's ground forces since 2007.

Heidari replaced Ahmadreza Pour-dastan who was at helm since 2008.

The Leader has urged the newly appointed Heidari to upgrade intelligence and operational preparations of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army to meet

modern warfare demands.

The Leader emphasized that the appointment has been made on the recommendation of the Commander of Army Major General Ayatollah Salehi.

Also, in a separate decree, Ayatollah Khamenei appointed Pourdastan to serve as the second-in-command of the Iranian Army.

The appointments come after Ayatollah Khamenei in June named Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri as the Armed Forces Chief of Staff.

Baqeri replaced Major General Hassan Firouzabadi who was holding the position as of 1989 and will be serving hereafter as advisor to the Leader.

French FM to visit Iran in January: IRIB

POLITICS TEHRAN — French Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development Jean-Marc Ayrault has told IRIB he will visit Iran in January to attend Iran-France joint economic committee meeting.

Ayrault also held talks with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for European and American Affairs Majid Takht-Ravanchi in Paris on Friday.

The French foreign minister referred to

the trip by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to France in January, saying the visit marked a turning point in relations during which bilateral documents were signed.

He called for an expeditious implementation of bilateral agreements.

The chief French diplomat also said it is necessary to fully implement the JCPOA, the official for the nuclear deal between Iran and great powers including France.

Takht-Ravanchi, for his part, expressed

satisfaction over the speed of relations between Iran and France in various areas.

He also said the signatories to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action must honor their commitments.

Iran and the 5+1 group - the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia plus Germany - finalized the JCPOA in Vienna in July 2015. The nuclear agreement took effect in January 2016.

The Iranian diplomat also said it is es-

sential to support the Iraqi government and the country's territorial integrity.

He also highlighted the necessity of ending war in Yemen.

The conflict in Syria should also be settled politically, the deputy foreign minister said.

Noting dangers being posed by terrorism to the Middle East and Europe, he called for cooperation and dialogue in fighting terrorism.

Tehran expresses support for Afghan-led peace process

POLITICS Gholam Hossein Dehghani, Iran's deputy permanent representative to the UN, said on Friday that Tehran backs any Afghan-led peace process and welcomes peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

"My government continues to reiterate its support for any Afghan-led peace process, acknowledges peace talks between the Afghan Government and the Taliban," he said during a speech at the UN General Assembly meeting on the situation in Afghanistan.

Following is full text of his speech published by IRNA: Mr. President

Allow me to begin by thanking Germany for steering the negotiations on the draft resolution A/71/L.13 under consideration today.

As it has been the case in the past several years, terrorist groups have continued their subversive and criminal activities in Afghanistan in the past year. My people and government strongly condemn the perpetrators of these barbaric atrocities that culminated, among many others, in the bombings of peaceful demonstrations and religious gatherings on 23 July and in mid-October this year, which led to hundreds of civilian deaths and injuries. In committing these crimes, the terrorist groups, led by the Taliban and DAESH and their affiliates, are doing whatever in their power to prevent the country to return to normal and continue on the path of peace and development.

My government continues to reiterate its support for any Afghan-led peace process, acknowledges peace talks between the Afghan Government and the Taliban and deplores the continued prevailing uncertainty in this regards. At the same time, we condemn any coopera-



tion with the Taliban as we believe that it will encourage them and other terrorist groups in their odious behavior and will prove to be counterproductive to establishing peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Iran has and continues to warn about the emergence of Daesh and its affiliates in Afghanistan. During the same period, we witnessed that the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL KP) claimed responsibility for the terrorist attack against a demonstration by ethnic Hazaras on the 23 July, which was the deadliest single incident recorded by the United Nations in Afghanistan since 2001. ISIL - KP, along with a spectrum of other terrorist and extremist groups, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in north and the Islamic Movement of Eastern Turkistan appear as an emerging security threat in Afghanistan.

We support the Afghan National Unity Government, as it is at the forefront of fighting against terrorism and undertaking efforts to stabilize the situation in the coun-

try and keeping the people united in this fight. It is also important that the international community stays on the path of supporting the Afghan unity government, which continues to be imperative to bring the fight against terrorism and extremism to its successful conclusion and address security, economic and political challenges.

Mr. President

Today, as in the past, strengthening our regional cooperation with Afghanistan is a priority for my government as a major pathway to consolidate peace and economic in the region. During the past decade, Iran has spent hundreds of millions of dollars and engaged experts to help Afghanistan with the completion of hundreds of projects, ranging from infrastructure to training and capacity building in human resources, especially through offering hundreds of scholarships each year.

Following the trilateral agreement between Iran, Afghanistan and India to develop the Iranian port of Chabahar, relevant coordination meetings at the level of the governors' of the border provinces were held on 25 and 26 July to discuss security and new trade opportunities involving the Port. Afghan Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Tehran on 3 August for discussions on trade, infrastructure, and the presence of Afghan nationals in Iran and Afghan National Security Advisor visited Iran on 6 and 7 August to discuss border security and countering violent extremism. The fifth Afghanistan-Iran Joint Economic Commission was held on 10 August in Tehran. Iran and Afghanistan are also committed to increase their connectivity with emphasis, including on the Khaf-Herat Railway, 78-Mile railroad project in Farah and the second bridge over Hirmand River.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

India train derails, at least 107 killed, more than 150 injured

At least 107 people were killed and more than 150 injured when an Indian express train derailed in northern Uttar Pradesh on Sunday, with the toll set to rise amid a scramble to locate survivors in the wreckage.

Police officials said people were still missing as authorities were trying to ascertain what caused 14 carriages of the train traveling between the northeastern city of Patna and the central city of Indore to suddenly roll off the tracks in Pukhrayan, 65 km south of Kanpur city.

Authorities said they were checking what condition the tracks had been in but added they would need to look further before concluding the cause of the derailment.

Desperate survivors were looking for family members and some were trying to enter the damaged carriages to rescue relatives and collect belongings, said senior railway official Pratap Rai.

"We are using every tactic to save lives but it's very difficult to cut the metal carriages," Rai said from the accident site.

With the death toll set to rise, the derailment could become India's worst rail tragedy since 2005, when a train was crushed by rocks and another plunged into a river - each killing more than 100 people.

India's creaking railway system is the world's fourth largest. The federal government runs 11,000 trains a day, including 7,000 passenger trains that ferry more than 20 million people, but it has a poor safety record, with thousands of people dying in accidents every year, including in frequent train derailment and collisions.

Suresh Prabhu, India's railways minister, said in a tweet that the government would investigate the causes of the derailment and promised accountability with the "strictest possible action" and compensation for the affected passengers.



Mangled carriages

The packed train, operated by the government, derailed in the early hours of Sunday when more than 500 passengers were sleeping, survivors said.

TV footage showed mangled blue carriages, with crowds of people and police on top of the wreckage searching for survivors. One carriage was almost lying on its side, and appeared to have been completely torn apart.

Rescue officials with yellow helmets were working their way through the crowds, carrying victims from the wreckage as teams struggled to remove the derailed wagons from the tracks, one of the main transportation routes for goods and passengers in northern India.

"Suddenly I could feel that the carriage was overturning. I immediately held the metal rod near the bathroom door,"

said Faizal Khan who was traveling with his wife and two children, all of whom survived the accident.

Another survivor, Rajdeep Tanwar said. "I can see bodies lying near the tracks, everyone is in a state of shock. There is no water or food for us."

Buses were being pressed into service to help passengers complete their journey, said police additional director general Daljeet Singh Choudhary.

Rescue teams said they would conclude the search operation before night fall and resume it on Monday, and nearby villagers were setting up temporary kitchens and erecting tents for survivors and officials.

Push to modernize

Minister Narendra Modi, who started out selling tea outside a train station, has promised to modernize India's railways and build high-speed engines befitting

Asia's third-largest economy.

His government has pledged to replace old tracks and upgrade security infrastructure but little progress has been achieved so far.

By some analyst estimates, the railways need 20 trillion rupees (\$293.34 billion) of investment by 2020, and India is turning to partnerships with private companies and seeking loans from other countries to modernize its network.

Last year, Japan agreed to provide \$12 billion in soft loans to build India's first bullet train.

On Sunday Modi took to Twitter to express his condolences.

"Anguished beyond words on the loss of lives due to the derailling of the Patna-Indore express. My thoughts are with the bereaved families," Modi said

(Source: AP)

Obama tells Latin America and world: Give Trump time, don't assume worst

U.S. President Barack Obama did in Latin America what he tried to do in Europe: tell worried citizens not to draw negative conclusions about the man he once called unfit to serve in the White House, President-elect Donald Trump.

In the last stop of an international farewell tour that included visits to Greece and Germany, Obama continued his efforts to calm anxieties since Republican businessman Trump beat Democratic rival and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in the U.S. presidential race.

"My main message to you ... and the message I delivered in Europe is don't just assume the worst," Obama told a group of young people during a question-and-answer session in Peru on Saturday.

"Wait until the administration is in place, it's actually putting its policies together, and then you can make your judgments as to whether or not it's consistent with the international community's interest in living in peace and prosperity together."

Trump won the election after promising to build a wall on the U.S. border with Mexico, rip up trade deals and ban Muslims temporarily from entering the United States.

Obama has sought to soothe fears by pledging to ensure a smooth transition of power and expressing optimism that the president-elect would shift away from inflammatory campaign rhetoric once he faced the realities of the job.

"It will be important for everybody around the world to not make immediate judgments but give this new president-elect a chance to put their team together, to examine the issues, to determine what their policies will be, because as I've always said, how you campaign isn't always the same as how you govern," Obama said.

But Obama has couched his assurances largely in hopeful language that Trump's team would see the merits of policies that Democrats championed despite Trump's pledged to dismantle them, from the Iran nuclear deal to an international pact to fight climate change.

And the president, who campaigned vigorously for Clinton and showed visible disdain for Trump before his victory, has offset his words of reassurance with subtle digs at his successor by emphasizing themes of democratic values in Europe and Peru that Trump has been criticized for ignoring.

"You're seeing some countries that are going backwards rather than forwards in terms of freedom of the press, in terms of freedom of the Internet, in terms of respecting political opposition and civil society," Obama said on Saturday.

Trump barred some news organizations from covering events during his campaign and threatened during a televised debate to jail Clinton for her use of a private email server while secretary of state.

(Source: Reuters)

Damascus wants Trump to end rebel support: Syria FM

It is too soon to judge what policy U.S. President-elect Donald Trump will have on Syria's civil war, but Damascus hopes he will end support for armed groups and curb regional powers who

back them, Foreign Minister Walid al-Moalem said on Sunday.

"What we want from the new administration is not just to stop support (for armed groups)... but to curb those

regional powers that are supporting those groups... we have to wait," he said during a televised news conference in Damascus.

(Source: Reuters)

Protesters target gathering of white nationalists in Washington: reports

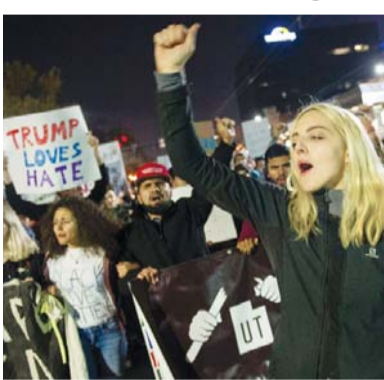
Hundreds of protesters rallied in Washington, D.C., to express outrage at a gathering of white nationalists celebrating U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's victory, according to media reports.

One man was injured when he emerged from the event at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center and was involved in a scuffle with several protesters, according to CNN, which posted a photo of the man with a bloody gash on his head following the altercation.

Police said no one was arrested during the protests, according to Washington television station WJLA.

A representative for Washington police could not be reached for comment late on Saturday.

Protesters chanted "fascists we will shut you down" and held signs such as "Fight Racism," video footage posted by WJLA showed.



In the days since Republican Trump defeated Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton on Nov. 8, large protests have erupted in several U.S. cities, with demonstrators decrying Trump's often inflammatory campaign rhetoric regarding illegal immigrants, Muslims and women.

Saturday's event, which took place three blocks from the White

House, was organized by alternative right group the National Policy Institute, according to the New York Times.

The alternative right movement, also known as the alt-right, has opposed multiculturalism and immigration. Adherents have been known to advance anti-Semitic views.

During Trump's campaign, members of the alt-right movement expressed support for some of his proposals, which included building a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico and stepping up deportations of unauthorized immigrants.

Attendees on Saturday celebrated Trump's victory, which Richard B. Spencer, president and director of the National Policy Institute, called "an awakening," the Times report said.

(Source: AFP)

Syria: Strategic hilltop near Raqqah freed from ISIL

An alliance of Kurdish and Arab fighters -- the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces -- has seized the strategic hilltop village of Tal Saman from the ISIL (Daesh) terrorist group in Syria.

Tal Saman, located 25 kilometers (15 miles) from Daesh's de facto Syrian capital of Raqqah, was encircled by the SDF forces and was freed from the Daesh terrorists after about a day of heavy fighting inside the village.

The U.S.-backed alliance, which launched an offensive to retake Raqqah on November 5, faced a stiff resistance by

the terrorists in Tal Saman because the village is on a hill that offers a view of surrounding rocky desert terrain and villages near the Raqqah stronghold, which has been under Daesh control since 2014.

According to Nasser Hajj Mansur, an adviser to the SDF general command, the U.S.-led coalition had supplied the alliance with "arms, equipment, troop transport, armor and ammunition."

Meanwhile, the Syrian army, backed by Russian air cover, is pushing ahead with its operation to take full control of the city of Aleppo. The Syrian army has set up

a number of humanitarian corridors for people to quit Aleppo. However, terrorists are said to be preventing civilians from leaving the city in a bid to use them as human shields. The Takfiri elements have also mined the streets leading to the exit routes and threatened to kill anyone who defies their order.

Aleppo has been divided since 2012 between government forces in the west and the militants in the east.

Since March 2011, Syria has been hit by militancy it blames on some Western states and their regional allies. Backed by Russian

air cover, the Syrian military is engaged in an operation to rid the country of Daesh and other terrorist groups.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura have put the death toll from the conflict at more than 300,000 and 400,000, respectively. This is while the UN has stopped its official casualty count in the Arab country, citing its inability to verify the figures it receives from various sources.

(Source: SANA)

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Iran, Brazil hash out development of economic ties

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The visiting Iranian Finance Minister Ali Tayyebnia and Brazilian Minister of Industry and Commerce Marcos Pereira and Minister of Mines and Energy Fernando Coelho Filho discussed reinvigorating mutual economic and trade relations in Brasilia.



As ISNA reported on Saturday, during his meeting with Tayyebnia, Filho referred to the endorsement of a pre-planned MOU during Iran's finance minister's presence in Brasilia, and said that "Iran-Brazil ties are experiencing an upward trend and Brazil is in need and fond of expanding its relation with Iran more than ever."

"The Islamic Republic possesses high potentials in different sectors such as oil, gas, and electricity," he added.

The Brazilian energy minister expressed hope that Tehran-Brasilia common trade value will mount up to \$5 billion per annum in near future from its current \$2 billion.

Introducing available investment opportunities in Iran, Tayyebnia for his part, discussed improvement of bilateral banking and brokerage relations with the Brazilian energy minister.

The Iranian minister left Tehran for Brazil on Tuesday to attend the 4th meeting of Iran-Brazil Joint Economic Committee.

Trump-trade rally pushes dollar to weekly surge as bonds slump

The Trump-trade has dominated markets this week.

The dollar extended its record winning streak against the euro on speculation Donald Trump's economic policies will trigger faster monetary tightening in the world's largest economy. Bonds around the world slumped for the week, while global stocks wiped out their advance. Oil rose after OPEC member Algeria said the group's meeting with Russia gave it confidence a deal can be reached to re-balance global markets.

The U.S. currency's appreciation over the past two weeks has come as Treasury yields have surged on bets the new administration will boost spending and spark an increase in inflation. Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen suggested Thursday the central bank remained on course to tighten policy, while Fed St. Louis President James Bullard said Friday that some of Trump's potential policies may help restore lagging U.S. productivity.

"The dollar is rampant," said Stuart Bennett, head of Group-of-10 currency strategy at Banco Santander SA in London. "It's just this assumption, and for now it still is an assumption, that the U.S. is going to reflate next year from fiscal policy. Yellen's comments yesterday probably helped the dollar."

Currencies

The dollar advanced 0.3 percent to \$1.0594 per euro as of 4 p.m. in New York to the strongest level in almost a year. The U.S. currency added 0.7 percent to 110.87 yen Friday, on track for the biggest two-week advance since 1988.

The Bloomberg Dollar Spot Index, which tracks the U.S. currency against 10 major peers, rose 0.5 percent to the highest since January. The gauge is up 1.9 percent this week after last week's 2.8 percent rise.

"U.S. dollar momentum has been strong," said Vassili Serebriakov, a foreign-exchange strategist at Credit Agricole CIB in New York. "The move has further to go. We could see some consolidation ahead of the Thanksgiving holidays, but I suspect markets will continue buying into any U.S. dollar pullbacks."

Bonds

The Bloomberg Barclays Global Aggregate Index has fallen 4 percent in the period through Thursday. It's the biggest two-week rout in data going back to 1990.

"We've seen a sharp and swift move since the election, which is pricing in the potential future policies of Trump," said Sean Simko, who manages \$8 billion at SEI Investments Co. in Oaks, Pennsylvania. "The big question is to what extent these policies are going to be implemented, and how quickly are they going to be implemented."

Treasury 10-year note yields rose four basis points, or 0.04 percentage point, to 2.34 percent, according to Bloomberg Bond Trader data.

The difference between yields on U.S. 10-year notes and similar-maturity Treasury Inflation Protected Securities, a gauge of trader expectations for consumer prices over the life of the debt, rose to as much as 1.97 percentage points this week, the highest since April 2015.

Stocks

The MSCI All Country World Index dropped 0.5 percent, erasing its weekly advance.

The S&P 500 Index fell 0.2 percent to 2,181.90, after climbing within two points of its Aug. 15 record of 2,190.15. The gauge capped a weekly gain of 0.8 percent. The Dow Jones Industrial Average slipped, while the Russell 2000 Index posted its longest winning streak since 2003.

"The markets are looking at the potential of a Trump stimulus," said Andrew Brenner, the head of international fixed income for National Alliance Capital Markets. "They're thinking the U.S. is going to do well, but the problem is that the dollar is going out of control to the upside."

Among stocks moving Friday, Salesforce.com Inc. surged the most in a month after the company gave an upbeat forecast for fourth-quarter sales. Ross Stores Inc. jumped after profit topped estimates. Gap Inc. tumbled 17 percent as results disappointed.

Commodity producers dragged down European equities as Mario Draghi indicated the region's economy still needs stimulus. The Stoxx Europe 600 Index trimmed its weekly gain to 0.6 percent. The European Central Bank president said the recovery isn't strong enough yet and the current level of monetary support is key.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Iran optimistic on OPEC production cuts after Barkindo visit

On Friday, OPEC said it made progress toward a deal to cut production after another round of talks with Russia, though it left crucial details including the role of Iraq and Iran to be resolved in Vienna.

While ministers from Saudi Arabia and Algeria reiterated their goal of reducing the group's production to 32.5 million barrels a day, they offered no clear details about how to resolve Iraq and Iran's resistance. Nor did they secure a pledge from Russia to do more than cap production, currently at record levels.

Members of OPEC are "all hands on deck" to reach an agreement by the Vienna meeting, Barkindo said in an interview in Marrakech, Morocco, on November 15. While Libya, Nigeria and Iran have been granted special considerations within the Algiers deal, Saudi Arabia is insisting that other members equitably share the burden of production cuts.



Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh (L) met OPEC's Secretary General Mohammed Barkindo in Tehran on Saturday ahead of OPEC's 171st ordinary meeting on November 30.

'Promising' talks

Zanganeh said Barkindo met with senior Iraqi officials to discuss that country's resistance to production cuts and the re-

sult of those talks is "promising," according to the Oil Ministry.

Barkindo asked Zanganeh to show "more flexibility" at the Vienna talks to en-

sure the Algiers accord is implemented, the ministry said in a separate statement. Zanganeh assured Barkindo that Iran will do "everything possible" to reach a consensus, it said.

'Oil may rise to \$55 if all producers cooperate'

Zanganeh said crude prices could jump to \$55 a barrel if an agreement is reached and non-OPEC producers cooperate.

"I think if we can reach an agreement, God willing, the price would rapidly reach above \$50 per barrel... If non-OPEC (producers) also cooperate, I don't think \$55 per barrel would be out of reach," Zanganeh told state television by telephone after meeting Barkindo.

Asked about an OPEC proposal for an output cap of 3.92 million barrels per day for Iran, Zanganeh said: "We have not reached any agreement. We have expressed our views and we look forward to explaining them." (Source: agencies)

ONGC Videsh gas deal with Iran by Jan.

A consortium of Indian companies led by ONGC Videsh (OVL) is set to strike a deal with Iran for the economic development of Farzad-B gas field in the Persian Gulf by January next year.

This comes at a time when Iran surpassed Saudi Arabia to become the biggest oil supplier to India in October, after sanctions on the former were lifted in January. According to a Reuters report, in October this year, the supply from Iran zoomed to 789,000 barrels a day (bpd), compared with Saudi Arabia's 697,000 bpd. "Our relationship with Iran is strategic and long-standing. As far as the Farzad project is concerned, financial issues will be sorted out and we will finalize the deal by January. We have already appointed a consultant for that," said an official close to the development.

Though India had shown its interest in the project long back, sanctions by the United States and other western countries on Iran delayed things. Farzad-B has gas reserves of about 21.6 trillion cubic feet.

Managing director of

Pars Oil and Gas Company (which is in-charge of the project), Mohammad Meshkinfam, told the Iran media that deemed "economic development model" was the main basis of disagreement between both the countries. "In case no agreement is reached in the envisaged time, the development of Farzad-B will be put out to an international tender," he said.

Under Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, India has focused on countries such as Iran and Russia for sourcing of hydrocarbons. In the recent past, India had invested about \$4.25 billion in Russia only. A consortium led by state-run Indian Oil Corporation, Oil India and Bharat PetroResources had signed a \$1.3-billion deal in Russia for 29.9 percent stake in the Taas-Yuriakh oilfield in March. Later, the consortium also struck a \$2.02-billion deal for 23.9 percent in Rosneft's Vankor field.

According to the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell, India imported 202.85 million tons of crude oil in 2015-16 up from 189 million in 2014-15.

(Source: Business Standard)

Slovenian president, trade delegation due in Tehran tomorrow

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Slovenian President Borut Pahor will arrive in Tehran on Tuesday, IRNA reported on Saturday.

Accompanied by a 50-member trade delegation, Pahor will meet Iranian entrepreneurs and businessmen in the building of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) to confer possible avenues to expand Ljubljana-Tehran economic and commercial ties.

Iran and Slovenia have discussed ways to launch long-term joint ventures, expanding bilateral cooperation in a wide range of areas, especially in electricity, oil, and gas industries as of the implementation of the nuclear agreement and removal of sanctions against Iran in January.

Heading a 46-strong business delegation, Slovenian Economy Minister Zdravko Pocivalsek travelled to Iran in January for a three-day official visit to Tehran where he met high-ranking Iranian officials.

During his stay, Pocivalsek held talks



with Iranian Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian, Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Mohammad Reza Ne'matzadeh, and Deputy Oil Minister for Commerce and International Affairs Amir Hossein Zamaninia.

In his meeting with Pocivalsek, Chitchian invited Slovenian firms to build economic partnership with Iranian companies and finance Iran's domestic projects, especially in the field of water and electricity, IRNA reported at the time.

As the news agency quoted Karl Viktor Erjavec, the country's foreign minister, in late July, Slovenia intends to reopen its embassy in Tehran.

Airbus frets over house Iran vote with \$27 billion deal at stake

Airbus Group SE said it's evaluating the implications of a congressional vote that could block it and Boeing Co. from providing jets to Iran, though hasn't given up on completing a \$27 billion order announced in January.

Airbus will wait to see how the U.S. Senate and President Barack Obama respond to the House decision, Claude Brandes, its vice president with responsibility for customer finance in the Mideast, said in an interview. Even if the Iran sale wins a reprieve, the vote has created a "state of uncertainty" just as the European company is negotiating final terms.

"Whatever the substance of the measure it's not great in terms of timing,"

Brandes said. "We need to see the wording and we need to see how the Iranians react." Whether or not Obama vetoes the House measure, as the White House has suggested, it "doesn't bode well" for when President-elect Donald Trump takes over, he said. Trump has said he wants to tear up or renegotiate the nuclear deal to which the aircraft sales are tied.

Brandes said Airbus might be able to go ahead with the delivery of a single A321 narrow-body before the end of this year should Iran pay in cash, though the aircraft "was discussed as part of a package" and a final contract would still need to be signed. The planemaker had also discussed supplying four A330 wide-bodies by May, he

said.

Even if the Airbus deal survives Republican opposition, it may not translate into a firm contract for all 118 aircraft specified, given that Iran signed an accord with Boeing for 109 planes five months later, with the final split between the manufacturers remaining in a state of flux, the executive said.

The eventual numbers may be determined by Iran's success in securing funds, which has been complicated by the political sensitivities of the deal. While the U.S. Treasury Department in September granted Airbus a license to supply the first 17 jets, the Mideast state is seeking financing from Dubai Aerospace Enterprise, which would

require further authorization, Brandes said.

Iran wants jets including Airbus's most modern A350 and the A380 superjumbo, and has signed up for 747 jumbos, the 777 and 777X upgrade from Boeing. The U.S. company is looking to provide 80 aircraft worth \$17.6 billion directly, plus a further 29 jets via leasing companies.

Republicans in Congress strongly oppose the 2015 agreement between the U.S. and five other nations, including Russia that is designed to limit Tehran's nuclear program. Iran agreed to redesign and reduce its nuclear facilities in exchange for relief from economic sanctions.

The legislation is H.R. 5711. (Source: Bloomberg)

Nalco senior execs to visit Iran next month

India's state-owned firm National Aluminium Co. Ltd (Nalco) is sending a study group comprised of senior executives to Iran next month. The group is tasked with examining the feasibility of building and operating an aluminum smelter and powering it with a gas-fired power plant.

An ease in sanctions on Iran and an increased emphasis on building strategic ties with the Persian nation has prompted India to explore further economic opportunities in the country. Nalco has already signed a

Memorandum of understanding with the Iranian government over plans for the firm to build a 500 thousand metric ton per annum aluminum smelter in country, requiring an investment by Nalco of \$2 billion.

"A group of executives from Nalco will be visiting Iran early next month to discuss the location of the smelter and the gas price," revealed a senior Indian government official who was speaking to local media on condition of anonymity.

A second unnamed Indian government

official divulged that toll-smelting is also on the agenda to be discussed with Iran, exploring the option of fueling existing aluminum smelters with surplus alumina from Nalco.

"Currently, market situation is not that good. Hence, we are also keeping the option of toll-smelting wide open and it will be discussed with Iran. It will also be assessed whether production of aluminum in the country will be cost-effective or not," explained the second official. He went on to say that Nalco plans to discuss prices of the

gas required to fire the planned power plant. Industry experts praised the idea of Nalco expanding into Iran.

"It makes sense to make alumina where cheap source of power is available. Also, metal prices need to be kept in mind as bounce-back in the prices during the first half of the current financial year is primarily led by liquidity," said associate director at India Ratings and Research Pvt. Ltd. Mahavir Jain.

(Source: Aluminium Insider)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Shares in Abu Dhabi's Union National Bank resume trading

Shares in Abu Dhabi bank Union National Bank (UNB) resumed trading on Sunday after being suspended earlier in the day, according to Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange's website.

Shares in the bank, along with those of Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank (ADCB) and Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank (ADIB) were suspended earlier on Sunday, according to an exchange source, who did not give a reason for the suspension.

The shares jumped last week on renewed speculation that the Abu Dhabi government might engineer a merger between ADCB and UNB, and another between ADIB and Al Hilal Bank, as part of an efficiency drive.



UK's Hammond pledges to spread wealth, but debt 'eye-wateringly' high

British finance minister Philip Hammond said on Sunday he would aim to help struggling families and boost the country's long-term growth prospects when he announces Britain's first budget plans since the Brexit vote next week.

But Hammond also told BBC television that levels of public debt were "eye-wateringly" high and he would not be announcing a big increase in public spending.

"We've got to make sure that the prosperity that comes from seizing opportunities ahead is shared across the country and across the income distribution," he said, echoing promises by Prime Minister Theresa May to work for "just managing" families.



Saudi makes \$10.7 billion of delayed payments to private sector

Saudi Arabia's government has made payments of 40 billion riyals (\$10.7 billion) that it owed to private sector companies, the kingdom's Arab News newspaper quoted a senior construction industry executive as saying.

With its oil revenues slashed by low crude prices, the government of the world's largest oil exporter has cut spending sharply this year and reduced or suspended payments owed to construction firms, medical establishments and even some of the foreign consultants who helped to design its economic reforms.

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How Erdogan can rule Turkey till 2029

By Mustafa Akyol

The hottest political topic in Turkey these days is the major constitutional amendment the government is cooking up to introduce a "presidential system." This, in fact, has been the grand ambition of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the past few years. But only now, thanks to the political alliance they formed with the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), they can find enough mandates in the parliament — more than 330 seats out of 550 — to realize this major transition.



If this transition takes place, Turkey would be abandoning the European-style "parliamentary system" it has been adhering to since the beginning of the republic in 1923 — or even from the first Ottoman Constitution of 1876. In this system, the president is a nonpartisan head of state, whereas the real executive power lies in the hands of the prime minister. Erdogan had no problem with this design throughout his first decade in power when he himself was the prime minister. Once he decided to run for the presidency in 2012, however, he and his advisers began advocating the "presidential system" and a new constitution that would allow that.

Some Turkish advocates of the presidential system point to the United States as a good example, but this comparison is flawed for various reasons. First, America is a federation made up of 50 states that have their autonomy in many matters, making the overall system quite decentralized. In contrast, Turkey is, and will keep on being, a very centralized state. Moreover, the presidency Erdogan seeks will have astonishing powers that would be unimaginable in America, such as appointing the heads of all universities across the nation. Given the electoral system and political culture, a partisan president is also very likely to fully dominate his own party, which can give him the full control of both the executive and legislative branches.

Unified power

Add to this the large appointment powers envisioned for the president over the high judiciary, what may come out is a system of "unified power" — as critically noted by a former adviser to former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. This would be the exact opposite of the system of checks and balances that is built into the American model.

Advocates of the presidential system also argue that it will save Turkey from all the previous ills, from economic problems to terrorism — but this too looks like more propaganda than analysis. They even claim that the presidential system will save Turkey permanently from military coups, whereas other experts think the exact opposite is true. One of them is Shadi Hamid of the Brookings Institution who examines the political models in the Arab world in his notable book, "Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle Over Islam Is Reshaping the World."

"All other things being equal, parliamentary systems ... make coups against elected leaders less likely," Hamid observed. Because "the fact that presidential contests are all or nothing — only one person, after all, can win — further heighten[s] the existential tenor of political competition."

Unfortunately, there is little room to calmly discuss such issues in Turkey now, as the presidential system is promoted more through defiant propaganda rather than a free, open debate. The urgency given to the topic, despite all the other major issues Turkey is facing, also suggests that the yearning for a new system has something to do with the personal trajectory of the current president. As Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the MHP, noted, Erdogan is using lots of "de facto powers" going well beyond his constitutional role, and what needs to be done is to make the system compatible with this "de facto reality."

Presidential system

Here is the possible scenario, as reported in the Turkish press, for the transition to a presidential system: The ruling AKP has just submitted three optional constitutional amendment packages to the "opposition" MHP: a whole new constitution, a major amendment and a more limited amendment — all focusing on a presidential system. When the MHP approves one of these, the parliament will vote for it, opening the way for a referendum sometime in early 2017. If a "yes" vote comes up, which is quite likely, then Turkey will have an entirely new political system.

However, as insider reports also suggest, the transition will not take place overnight. There will be a two-year "provisional period," during which Erdogan will use his newfound powers. The new constitution will fully come into effect in 2019 — also the year Erdogan's current five-year term ends. Then, the first presidential elections for the presidential system will take place. Since his current presidency will not count, Erdogan will have the chance to go for two more terms, or for 5+5 years, keeping him in power until 2029. He would be 75 years old then — and in power for 27 years. This would be almost twice the time Mustafa Ataturk spent in power, giving Erdogan a much bigger continuum of incumbency than any other political leader in modern Turkish history.

Is this really possible? Legally, it is certainly possible — and that is, in fact, the whole point about the presidential system, at least according to the opposition. Politically, Erdogan will have to sustain his popularity to keep winning elections in the next 13 years. He already has a large ideological base whose devotion to his persona seems unbreakable, but he also gets the support of pragmatic voters who think they have been better off under the AKP. To sustain the latter, Erdogan will have to keep the economy going, and whether he can really do that may be the pivotal question regarding Turkey's political future.

In any case, we will be witnessing a remarkable political experience. It will be an experience that gives euphoria to its supporters, fear and trauma to its dissidents, and marks a significant place for itself in the political history of the world.

(Source: *Al Monitor*)

We could see more and more divisions



In an exclusive interview with German public broadcaster ARD and DER SPIEGEL, outgoing U.S. President Barack Obama discusses the legacy he has built and his worries about the future of democracy, as well as Donald Trump, the man who will succeed him in office.

President, Donald Trump won the election, revealing massive discontent and rifts within American society. Did the amount of anger actually surprise you?

A: I think it's important not to overstate what happened. The truth is that America has been closely divided politically for quite some time. That was reflected in some of the challenges I had with the Republican Congress. What was unusual in this election is that my approval in the United States is as high as it has been since I was elected. And the economy is going relatively well. I think what is true is that there's been an underlying division in the United States. Some of it has to do with the fact that economic growth and recovery tends to be stronger in the cities and in urban areas. In some rural areas, particularly those that were reliant on manufacturing, there has been weaker growth, stagnation, people feeling as if their children won't do as well as they will.

There are cultural, social and demographic issues that came into play. They're not that different from some of the issues that Europe faces with immigration, the changing face of the American population. I think some reacted there, and Trump was able to tap into some of those anxieties.

And the question now, going forward, is whether the president-elect is able to move on those elements of his agenda that I think can garner broad support, like rebuilding our infrastructure. And if he can lessen some of the more controversial rhetoric that could divide the country more. That's going to be the test for him in the years to come.

During your presidency, you were confronted with a very hostile Congress. Donald Trump now is going to enjoy Republican majorities (in both the House and the Senate). Do you fear that your reforms like Obamacare, the nuclear deal with Iran and the Paris climate change agreement will be overturned or, as Donald Trump has put it, "cancelled"? What remains of your legacy?

A: First and foremost, it's important to remember that, from my perspective at least, my most important legacy was making sure that the world didn't go into a Great Depression. Keep in mind that, when I came in, we had had a crisis that was the worst we've seen since the 1930s, and working with people like Chancellor Merkel, working with the G-20 and other institutions internationally, we were able to stabilize the financial system, stabilize the U.S. economy and return to growth. We've now had 73 consecutive months of job growth. It's the longest period of job growth in the United States in our history.

Unemployment is low, incomes are up, poverty is down — and that's going to be a lasting change. When I turn over the keys to the president-elect, the country

will be much stronger than it was when I came into office.

With respect to some of the specific legislation or initiatives that I've made, it's true that Republicans often opposed these things. Sometimes they opposed them because I proposed them. Now that they are responsible for governing, I think they'll find that reversing them would be counterproductive.

Let's take the example of the Iran deal. There was a vigorous debate around this issue. There were many who were very skeptical of the deal. They believed Iran would not fulfill its commitments. Of course, now we have a year of proof that, in fact, Iran has done everything that they said they were going to do. And it has the broad support of the international community. It would be unwise — and, I think, ultimately the president-elect will recognize this — to do that.

With respect to healthcare, 20 million people now have health insurance who didn't have it before. He says that he can improve on that system, and my view is that if, in fact, he can provide the same amount of people with health care in a better way than I could, then I would support such efforts. Of course, I think when you actually try to do it, he may discover that the system we put in place is the best one that we can design. I always say that campaigning and governing are two different things. My hope and expectation is that regardless of what the president-elect said during the campaign, he's going to have to look carefully at the realities when he moves forward.

Let us dwell on the Paris climate agreement a bit more. It's an issue that doesn't really directly touch the daily lives of many American people. But it is urgent and definitely not a No. 1 priority for Trump. Do you fear it might be dead before it even takes off?

A: You are absolutely right that climate change is one of the issues I worry most about because its impacts are enormous. But they're gradual, they're not immediate. One of the hardest things in politics is to convince people to do things now that will have a good effect 20 or 30 years from now because politicians tend to have a short-term view. They are more attentive to things that people care about today.

The good news is that the Paris Agreement is not just a bilateral agreement

between the United States and some other country. You have 200 countries who came together. It's an international agreement. Historically, when a previous U.S. administration enters into an agreement, it carries forward into the future administration. I've always viewed the Paris Agreement as a starting point. If you look at all the commitments that have been made by all the countries, it's still not sufficient to deal with the very dangerous situation we face. What it has done is that it created an architecture whereby as technology improves, as we find new clean sources of energy, as we make our economies more efficient, then gradually we can turn up the dial and improve the outcomes of Paris.

I don't want to sound too optimistic. It is true that the president-elect and many of his supporters are less interested in this issue than I am, but I think that it can survive — even if for the next two or three or four years, they are not as active as I was.

What was the darkest moment of your presidency? Here in Europe, of course, people will talk about drone attacks, Guantanamo and, of course, about terrorist attacks and shootings.

A: Look, early on, I think people didn't fully appreciate how severe the economic crisis was, partly because we took smart steps, and we were able to avert complete disaster. But there were weeks where I wasn't sure whether we were going to be able to pull out of the crisis. For me, personally, the most difficult moments had to do with not just terrorist attacks, but also shootings.

Internationally, I have obviously been deeply concerned about how we fight the terrorist threat. How do we make sure that we don't change, even as we protect our people? I'm very proud of the fact that we ended torture. It's true that I have not been able to completely close Guantanamo, but we've drastically reduced the population from 700 or so to around 60 now, and I am going to continue in these two months to make every effort.

We have created a legal structure that is much more disciplined and consistent with rule of law and international norms. I know that drones have been a source of concern for a lot of people, understandably, but if you look at how we have constrained their use, we've created a framework that is consistent with how all of us going into the

future should be thinking about minimizing the loss of life, but also being able to reach terrorist organizations in countries that sometimes don't have the ability to capture them. The alternative in some cases is to invade these countries where there would be much greater loss of life, and so we have to make difficult choices in these situations.

The good news is we've had very strong allies. In Europe, where the terrorist threat is probably greatest at the moment, the amount of information-sharing that's been taking place, the effectiveness of law enforcement across borders gives us the ability to protect ourselves while still being true to the basic precepts of our liberal democracies. I hope that that continues, and it is something that I think we should be worried about.

Are you going to pardon Edward Snowden?

A: I can't pardon somebody who hasn't gone before a court and presented themselves, so that's not something that I would comment on at this point. I think that Snowden raised some legitimate concerns. How he did it was something that did not follow the procedures and practices of our intelligence community. If everybody took the approach that I make my own decisions about these issues, then it would be very hard to have an organized government or any kind of national security system.

At the point at which Snowden wants to present himself before the legal authorities and make his arguments or have his lawyers make his arguments, then I think those issues come into play. Until that time, what I've tried to suggest — both to the American people, but also to the world — is that we do have to balance this issue of privacy and security. Those who pretend that there's no balance that has to be struck and think we can take a 100-percent absolutist approach to protecting privacy don't recognize that governments are going to be under an enormous burden to prevent the kinds of terrorist acts that not only harm individuals, but also can distort our society and our politics in very dangerous ways.

And those who think that security is the only thing and don't care about privacy also have it wrong.

That may mean that, as long as they do it carefully and narrowly, that they're going to have to find ways to identify an email address or a cell phone of a network. On the other hand, it's important to make sure that governments have some checks on what they do, that people can oversee what's being done so the government doesn't abuse it. But we shouldn't assume that government is always trying to do the wrong thing.

My experience is that our intelligence officials try to do the right thing, but even with good intentions, sometimes they make mistakes. Sometimes they can be overzealous. Our lives are now in a telephone, all our data, all our finances, all our personal information, and so it's proper that we have some constraints on that. But it's not going to be 100 percent. If it is 100 percent, then we're not going to be able to protect ourselves and our societies from some people who are trying to hurt us.

Jeff Sessions as attorney general: A terrifying prospect for black Americans

By Bakari T Sellers

A man with a track record of hostility towards women, people of color is simply unfit to serve in the Department of Justice.

One of the more famous tag lines from President-elect Trump on the campaign trail was: "To my African-Americans: what do you have to lose?" If Alabama senator Jeff Sessions becomes the next attorney general of the United States, the answer is: everything.

There is no doubt that Steve Bannon — the executive chairman of the far-right website Breitbart News and newly minted senior adviser to the president-elect — has no place in the White House. Nor does Lt Michael Flynn, an Islamophobe who is Donald Trump's nominee to serve as national security adviser. And yet, the most troubling appointment thus far has to be Alabama Senator Jefferson Beauregard Sessions to serve as attorney general.

Sessions' record on race first came to light during his confirmation for a federal judgeship in 1986. A prosecutor testified before Congress that Sessions had said he thought the Ku Klux Klan was "OK until I found out they smoked pot". Sessions said he had been joking, but his judgeship was rejected. Many alarming allegations were made during the hearings, but the most disturbing involved the "Marion Three".

In 1984, the then U.S. attorney Sessions prosecuted three civil rights workers, who were registering black people to vote in Alabama, for purportedly committing voter fraud. Sessions charged Albert Turner, his wife Evelyn Turner, and their fellow activist Spencer Hogue with 29 counts of fraud under the Voting Rights Act — with the group facing a sentence of over 100 years if they were convicted. All three were found not guilty.



There will be some who will argue that we should not judge someone's present qualifications based on their past. Even if that's the case, Sessions' current record on race and as a U.S. senator is equally terrifying.

The Marion Three never received a sincere apology from Sessions. And the senator's existing hostility toward African Americans is proof that he has not learned anything from that experience.

There will be some who will argue that we should not judge someone's present qualifications based on their past. Even if that's the case, Sessions' current record on race and as a U.S. senator is equally terrifying.

Sessions believes the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is an

"intrusive piece of legislation". He has opposed efforts to remove the Confederate flag from state property. He has voted against the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. He called for a constitutional amendment to stop granting automatic citizenship to people born in the United States. He agreed with President-elect Trump's ban on Muslims migrating to the United States.

These are all deeply problematic views for anyone to hold — let alone the top law enforcement officer of the United States.

The Department of Justice's mission is, among other things, to protect Americans from discrimination regardless of race, color, creed orientation. With Sessions, we have a well-documented history of hostility toward minority communities and vocal opposition to the laws that he would be sworn to protect and enforce should he be confirmed. Someone who was too problematic for the U.S. Senate to confirm in 1986 should be too problematic for the Senate to confirm in 2017.

During an era of rampant voter suppression and strained police-community relations, the Department of Justice is as important as it has ever been in the lives of Americans — especially African Americans and Latino Americans who bear the brunt of police violence and voter suppression. An attorney general with a track record of hostility towards women, communities of color is simply unfit to serve.

So to answer President-elect Trump's question: "What do African-Americans have to lose?" With the appointment of Senator Jefferson Beauregard Sessions to serve as the 84th attorney general of the United States, the answer is easy: everything.

(Source: *The Guardian*)

By Mina Ahmadi

Tehran and Beijing always have enjoyed cordial relations and have maintained a common stance for promoting global and regional peace and stability.

Since the triumph of the Islamic Revolution 38 years ago, Beijing has always been Tehran's economic, political and security partner and has never halted its cooperation with the Islamic Republic.

The growth in the Sino-Iran relations in recent years has been satisfactory and the two countries have always put development of friendly ties at the top of their foreign policy agenda.

During the process of nuclear negotiations between Tehran and P5+1 group of countries, China also played a pivotal role in helping the deal to be signed and a compromise on Iran's peaceful nuclear activities to be reached.

While the two countries are trying to reinforce mutual defense, military and security cooperation in the new post-sanctions atmosphere, China's Defense Minister General Chang Wanquan recently traveled to Tehran at the formal invitation of his Iranian counterpart Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan.

It goes without saying that the travel of General Chang to Tehran, which is the first visit of its kind by a Chinese defense minister to Iran, would well serve as evidence to the influential role the Islamic Republic of Iran has in fostering Asia's defense and security.

Many consider that the visit would open a new chapter in the long-term strategic defense cooperation between the two countries.

While in Iran General Chang, reviews the latest bilateral, regional and international issues with Iran's high-ranking political and military officials including President Hassan Rouhani and Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan.

■ Tehran-Beijing Profound Ties

In a meeting with General Chang, President Rouhani underscored that

Iran, China deepening military ties



China's Defense Minister General Chang Wanquan's visit is believed to open a new chapter in the long-term strategic defense cooperation between Tehran and Beijing.

terrorism and interference of certain powers in domestic affairs of other states are the two serious threats and that Tehran is keen on cooperation with Beijing to help promote regional security.

Emphasizing the need to upgrade Tehran-Beijing ties on the basis of mutual respect and common interests, President Rouhani noted that deepening ties with China as a major country in Asia and Iran's ancient friend is of higher significance.

President Rouhani said that the Islamic Republic of Iran makes efforts to safeguard regional stability and security and fight against terrorism and that Iran and China should boost cooperation to counter the big threat of terrorism.

President Rouhani highlighted Iran's existing capacities and the Chinese advances in science and technology, saying that a suitable atmosphere has been created for mutual cooperation in the fields of energy,

defense, economy, nuclear and other sectors following the implementation of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

General Chang, for his part, said that his country will continue cooperation with Iran as the first regional power on the common goal of regional security and stability.

Evaluating Iran-China relations as excellent, the Chinese minister stated that sense of friendship and amity prevails between the two nations and the two countries' military officials, adding that Iran is the biggest and most influential Muslim country in the region; therefore fostering mutual cooperation between the two countries is significant.

■ Mutual MoU on Defensive Military Ties

The defense minister of the two countries also signed an agreement to boost defense-military cooperation and fight terrorism and reviewed issues of mutual interest along with

General Chang has said that his country will continue cooperation with Iran as the first regional power on the common goal of regional security and stability.

regional and global developments.

Dehqan also emphasized that all countries in Asia and the Oceania should shoulder the responsibility to maintain peace and stability adding the development of Iran's long-term defense-military relations and cooperation with China is among the top priorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran's defense diplomacy the two countries' defense-military cooperation would guarantee regional and international peace and security.

Commenting on the emergence of terrorism and its spread throughout the world Iranian Defense Minister said today, foreign meddling and lack of respect for the national sovereignty

of countries have turned the Middle East region into a hotbed of crisis and insecurity in the world, PressTV wrote.

For his part, the Chinese defense minister said Iran has an important position in the region in political, economic, security, military and cultural fields.

He added that the two countries have common interests in many regional and global issues which have prepared the ground for the expansion of defense-military cooperation.

Dehqan had traveled to China in May 2014 to negotiate mutual visits and personnel training cooperation between the two countries.

Back in April 2015, the Iranian and



In recent years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has made major breakthroughs in its defense sector and attained self-sufficiency in producing important military equipment and systems.

Chinese defense ministers, who were in the Russian capital to attend the fourth Moscow International Security Conference, held a meeting and discussed Tehran-Beijing relations as well as the issue of the Daesh Takfiri terrorists and the extent of their activities in East Asia.

■ Iran-China Joint Military Drills

Meanwhile, the chief of staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, Major General Mohammad Baqeri in a meeting with General Chang voiced Iran readiness to hold joint military drills with China.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is completely ready to expand and deepen defense-military cooperation between the two countries including holding joint military maneuvers," Baqeri said.

He hailed China's constructive role in international equations and called on the country to continue with its part in order to counter the hegemony and aggression of the arrogant world powers.

Pointing to the cordial relations between Tehran and Beijing, the Iranian commander stressed the importance of improving strategic cooperation on regional and international developments.

For his part, the Chinese defense minister described the relations between Tehran and Beijing as bright and very promising.

In recent years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has made major breakthroughs in its defense sector and attained self-sufficiency in producing important military equipment and systems.

Without doubt, strengthening of mutual cooperation between Iran and China would assure establishment of peace and stability in the region and across the globe.

Thanks to implementation of the nuclear deal, the Tehran and Beijing should seize the opportunities created in the post-sanctions era to ever expand their relations.

Touching upon the rising trend of extremism, terrorism in the region, it seems that China and Iran need to join hands and expand relations to address such issues.

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Half your brain stands guard when sleeping in a new place

When you sleep in unfamiliar surroundings, only half your brain is getting a good night's rest.

"The left side seems to be more awake than the right side," says Yuka Sasaki, an associate professor of cognitive, linguistic and psychological sciences at Brown University.

The finding, reported Thursday in the journal *Current Biology*, helps explain why people tend to feel tired after sleeping in a new place. And it suggests people have something in common with birds and sea mammals, which frequently put half their brain to sleep while the other half remains on guard.

Sleep researchers discovered the "first-night effect" decades ago, when they began studying people in sleep labs. The first night in a lab, a person's sleep is usually so bad that researchers simply toss out any data they collect.

But Sasaki wanted to know what was going on in the brain during that first night. So she and a team of researchers studied the brain wave patterns of 35 Brown University students.

The team measured something called slow-wave activity, which appears during deep sleep. And they found that during a student's first night in the lab, slow wave activity was greater in certain areas of the right hemisphere than in the correspond-



ing areas of the left hemisphere.

After the first night, though, the difference went away.

To confirm that the left side of the brain really was more alert, the team did two other experiments. First, they had the sleeping students listen to a repeated standard tone followed by a single tone of a different pitch.

When someone is awake or sleeping lightly, the brain responds to this "deviant tone." And the students' brains did respond — but only on the left side.

Then the researchers played a sound loud enough to wake someone who was

sleeping lightly. And they found that students woke up faster when the sound was played into the right ear, which is connected to the left side of the brain.

The ability to rest just one side of the brain has never been demonstrated in people before, says Niels Rattenborg, leader of the avian sleep group at the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology in Seewiesen, Germany. But he says it's a trick many animals can do.

"We've known for quite a while that some marine mammals like dolphins and some of the seals as well as many birds can sleep with one half of the brain at a

time," he says.

A few years ago, Rattenborg did an experiment with ducks that suggests at least one way in which half-brain sleeping provided an evolutionary advantage. The experiment involved putting ducks in a row, literally, and watching them sleep.

Rattenborg found that ducks with a bird on either side of them put their entire brain to sleep and kept both eyes closed. "However, the ducks at the end of the row slept more with one half of the brain at a time," he says. "And when they did that they directed the open eye away from the other birds, as if they were looking for approaching predators."

Predators aren't a big problem for people these days. But the human brain was shaped during a time when nights were dark and full of terrors, Rattenborg says.

"When we're sleeping in a new environment and we don't know how many predators are around," he says, "it would make sense to keep half the brain more alert and more responsive to bumps in the night."

Sasaki says that brain response is involuntary and there's nothing people can do to prevent it, even if they've just flown in for a big presentation the next morning. So lots of coffee the next morning. (Source: npr.org)

6 ways to ease neck pain

Stress, poor sleep, and physical ailments over time can lead to a pain in the neck.

Everyday life isn't kind to the neck. You may be all too familiar with that crick you get when you cradle the phone between your shoulder and ear, or the strain you feel after working at your computer.

Neck pain rarely starts overnight. It usually evolves over time. And it may be spurred by arthritis or degenerative disc disease, and accentuated by poor posture, declining muscle strength, stress, and even a lack of sleep, said Dr. Zacharia Isaac, medical director of the Comprehensive Spine Care Center at Harvard-affiliated Brigham and Women's Hospital and director of interventional physical medicine and rehabilitation at Harvard Medical School.



The following six tips can help you take care of your neck:

- 1 Don't stay in one position for too long. It's hard to reverse bad posture, Dr. Isaac says, but if you get up and move around often enough, you'll avoid getting your neck stuck in an unhealthy position.
- 2 Make some ergonomic adjustments. Position your computer monitor at eye level so you can see it easily. Use the hands-free function on your phone or wear a headset. Prop your tablet on a pillow so that it sits at a 45 degree angle, instead of lying flat on your lap.
- 3 If you wear glasses, keep your prescription up to date. "When your eyewear prescription is not up to date, you tend to lean your head back to see better," Dr. Isaac says.
- 4 Don't use too many pillows. Sleeping with several pillows under your head can stifle your neck's range of motion.
- 5 Know your limits. For example, before you move a big armoire across the room, consider what it might do to your neck and back, and ask for help.
- 6 Get a good night's sleep. Sleep problems increase the risk for several different conditions, including musculoskeletal pain.

Generally, neck pain is nothing to worry about, but if it's occurring with other, more serious symptoms, such as radiating pain, weakness, or numbness of an arm or leg, make sure to see your doctor. "Other key things that might make one more concerned are having a fever or weight loss associated with your neck pain, or severe pain," said Dr. Isaac. "You should let your doctor know about these symptoms." (Source: health.harvard.edu)

280Tips for finding the right shoes

When shopping for shoes, you want to have more than fashion in mind — you'll also want to consider function and keeping your feet in good shape. These tips can help you choose the right shoes:

- Take a tracing of your foot with you. Place any shoe you think you might buy on top of the tracing. If the shoe is narrower or shorter than the tracing, don't even try it on.
- Shop for shoes during the afternoon — your foot naturally expands with use during the day.
- Wear the same type of socks to the store that you intend to wear with the shoes.
- Have a salesperson measure both of your feet — and get measured every time you buy new shoes. Feet change with age, often growing larger and wider. If one

foot is larger than the other, buy a size that fits the larger foot.

- Stand in the shoes. Press gently on the top of the shoe to make sure you have about a half-inch of space between your longest toe and the end of the shoe. This provides enough room for your foot to press forward as you walk. Wiggle your toes to make sure there's enough room.

- Walk around in the shoes to determine how they feel. Is there enough room at the balls of the feet? Do the heels fit snugly, or do they pinch or slip off? Don't rationalize that the shoes just need to be "broken in." Find shoes that fit from the start.

- Trust your own comfort level rather than a shoe's size or description. Sizes vary between manufactur-

ers. And no matter how comfortable an advertisement claims those shoes are, you're the real judge.

- Pay attention to width as well as length. If the ball of your foot feels compressed in a particular shoe, ask if it comes in a wider size. Buying shoes that are a half-size bigger — but not any wider — won't necessarily solve the problem.

- Feel the inside of the shoes to see if they have any tags, seams, or other material that might irritate your foot.

- Examine the soles. Are they sturdy enough to provide protection from sharp objects? Do they provide any cushioning? Take note of how they feel as you walk around the shoe store. Try to walk on hard surfaces as well as carpet to see how the shoe feels on both. (Source: WebMD)

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10 hot titles of IT world

Here are high rated IT titles in the world that reviewed by savvy tech users:

1 iPhone 8 and galaxy S8 come with 'edge-to-edge' screens.

"Edge-to-edge," "bezel-less," "all-glass," "90% screen-to-body" - these are all terms bandied about by analysts and "insider sources" when it comes to the upcoming 2017 flagships from the world's top phone makers Apple and Samsung.

The common theme in the rumors about the iPhone 8 and S8 is that they will utilize OLED displays.

Analyst Ming-Chi Kuo believes that Apple will bring a dual-camera setup to at least one of the rumored three iPhone 8 models, and says both camera modules will support optical image stabilization.

2 According to a new rumor, HP - in partnership with Microsoft - is working on a new Windows 10 Mobile smartphone. The device, the rumor says, could be made official in February next year, a year after the business-focused HP Elite x3 was unveiled.

3 Domino's has teamed up with drone-maker Flirtey to deliver fresh, hot pizzas via autonomous drones, and the duo just conducted their first successful delivery tests in New Zealand earlier last week.

The drone itself is constructed out of a combination of 3D-printed components, carbon fiber, and aluminum.

4 Samsung officially joining the Microsoft .NET community, developers will now be able to use Microsoft's Visual Studio to create apps for Tizen OS in the C# language.

Samsung says that more than 50 million gadgets are currently powered by the Tizen OS.

5 Sources close to the situation say Intel will be laying off a major slice of its wearables arm and could possibly shut down its entire New Devices Group, where its wearable devices division is housed.

Intel purchased Basis (a fitness watch producer) and Recon (maker of sports heads-up displays) in 2014 and 2015, respectively. However, Intel stopped selling the Basis Peak devices altogether and shut down their software support. Since then, the Basis acquisition hasn't amounted to anything significant for Intel, and the company is yet to make headlines with digital eyewear.

6 According to serial smartphone leakster Evan Blass, the LG V30 won't come with the series' marquee secondary ticker display. Although the tipster did not share any other information, he did indicate that the ticker display will be replaced with something else.

7 Google Translate app will offer more accurate translations from English to eight other languages thanks to a new technology. Neural Machine Translation allows entire sentences to be translated at once instead of the current one word at a time. The new technology will work on text being translated to and from English in eight different languages, making up approximately 35% of texts that are currently run through the app.

8 BlackBerry announced today that it has hired Canada's Smartest Person, Katy Warren, to be employed as a Hardware Engineering co-op student. She will be toiling for the company's IoT division, working on the BlackBerry Radar Solution.

9 Twitter has introduced QR code functionality within the app that should make following accounts easier. In an update that was enabled server side, both the iOS and the Android app now include this functionality.

The app generates a different color code for you every time you access it. It has your display picture in the center and the Twitter logo on the bottom right.

10 According to WSJ's Takashi Mochizuki, Sony plans to announce its upcoming games and partner's companies for the smartphone game project on December 7. He also mentions that the first games will hit Japan initially, so they might not go worldwide until next year.

Five million cyber-attacks warded off by APA centers

By Shataw Naseri

Over the past two years, more than five million cyber-attacks across the nation have been identified and warded off by Academic Protection and Awareness (APA) centers, Public Relations Center at Iran's ICT Ministry reported.

ICT Deputy Minister Nasrollah Jahangard noted, "currently, there is 72 terabytes of data capacity at Data Center in Alborz Province, which will escalate, if necessary."



He maintained that some security operations at national level are being carried out for National Information Network by APA centers, established at universities across the country.

Furthermore, Iran's Post Company CEO Hussein Mehri at ICT official's meetings in Alborz, said, "Geocoded National Address File (GNAF) has been approved as one of resistance economic projects and some measures have been carried out in postal code, GNAF as well as inter-agency inquiries fields."

So far, a total of 48.5 million postal code records have been updated, 38.5 million ones in urban areas and 10 million ones in rural areas, according to Mehri, adding, "100% postal codes in urban areas have been so far updated."

ICT Deputy Minister, also, highlighted that 55% postal codes in rural areas have been updated.

Britain has passed the 'most extreme surveillance law ever passed in a democracy'

By Zack Whittaker

The UK has just passed a massive expansion in surveillance powers, which critics have called "terrifying" and "dangerous".

The new law, dubbed the "snoopers' charter", was introduced by then-home secretary Theresa May in 2012, and took two attempts to get passed into law following break-downs in the previous coalition government.

Four years and a general election later -- May is now prime minister -- the bill was finalized and passed on Wednesday by both parliamentary houses.

But civil liberties groups have long criticized the bill, with some arguing that the law will let the UK government "document everything we do online".

It's no wonder, because it basically does.

The law will force internet providers to record every internet customer's top-level web history in real-time for up to a year, which can be accessed by numerous government departments; force companies to decrypt data on demand -- though the government has never been that clear on exactly how it forces foreign firms to do that; and even disclose any new security features in products before they launch.

Not only that, the law also gives the intelligence agencies the power to hack into computers and devices of citizens (known as equipment interference), although some protected professions -- such as journalists and medical staff -- are layered with marginally better protections.

In other words, it's the "most extreme surveillance law ever passed in a democracy," according to Jim Killock, director of



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the Open Rights Group.

The bill was opposed by representatives of the United Nations, all major UK

and many leading global privacy and rights groups, and a host of Silicon Valley tech companies alike. Even the parlia-

mentary committee tasked with scrutinizing the bill called some of its provisions "vague".

And that doesn't even account for the three-quarters of people who think privacy, which this law almost entirely erodes, is a human right.

There are some safeguards, however, such as a "double lock" system so that the secretary of state and an independent judicial commissioner must agree on a decision to carry out search warrants (though one member of the House of Lords disputed that claim).

A new investigatory powers commissioner will also oversee the use of the powers.

Despite the uproar, the government's opposition failed to scrutinize any significant amendments and abstained from the final vote. Killock said recently that the opposition Labour party spent its time "simply failing to hold the government to account".

But the government has downplayed much of the controversy surrounding the bill. The government has consistently argued that the bill isn't drastically new, but instead reworks the old and outdated Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA). This was brought into law in 2000, to "legitimize" new powers that were conducted or ruled on in secret, like collecting data in bulk and hacking into networks, which was revealed during the Edward Snowden affair.

Much of those activities were only possible thanks to litigation by one advocacy group, Privacy International, which helped push these secret practices into the public domain while forcing the government to scramble to explain why these practices were legal.

The law will be ratified by royal assent in the coming weeks.

(Source: ZDNET)

Trump's tech agenda is still a huge mystery, but there is cause for alarm

Tech advocacy groups and watchdogs have little idea of what to expect from a Trump presidency, and their anxiety is rising. Concerns about a lack of cyber security expertise, increased digital surveillance, and possible trade tariffs are reverberating throughout Silicon Valley.

The lack of information is "unprecedented," says Chris Calabrese, the vice president of policy at the Center for Democracy and Technology. While the president-elect has, over the years, commented on issues spanning HealthCare.gov, mass surveillance, and online gambling, Trump has pulled a 180 on a number of issues -- including climate change and H-1B visas.

Given the back-pedaling, the dangers inherent in Trump's presidency depend on which campaign promises live on inside the administration come January 20, 2017.

"Unsurprisingly, on almost anything that's not immigration and trade, the Trump campaign has been pretty vague about what their policy would look like. He's talked a little about cyber security, but 'we're going to be tough' is not exactly a white paper," says Cato Institute senior fellow Julian Sanchez.

"President-Elect Trump has promised to deport millions of our friends and neighbors, track people based on their religious beliefs, and undermine users' digital security and privacy," says EFF consulting technologist Erica Portnoy.

"If Mr. Trump carries out these plans, they will likely be accompanied by unprecedented demands on tech companies to hand over private data on people who use their services," says Portnoy.

"If anything, companies are probably anxious because there just isn't the sense that [Trump] has ever thought about a lot of important tech issues, so they have no idea where a Trump administration is likely to come down on any number of important questions for them," says Sanchez.

Trump's cabinet offers clues as it starts to take shape.

For attorney general, Trump has selected Jeff Sessions, an advocate of expansive government surveil-



lance, an opponent of immigration reform, and a critic of Apple's stance in the San Bernardino encryption case.

For the head of the C.I.A., Trump has picked Mike Pompeo, also an advocate of expanding government surveillance powers who has intimated that using encryption signals guilt -- "The use of strong encryption in personal communications may itself be a red flag," said Pompeo in January.

However, Trump's National Security Adviser pick, Michael T. Flynn, may have at least one technology company in mind next year: Palantir.

And then there's Palantir founder Peter Thiel, Trump's lone Silicon Valley ally and a member of the president-elect's transition team.

Maybe Thiel can whisper in Trump's ear.

Trump's team may not reflect Silicon Valley's ideals, but "we may in retrospect be glad that he has at least one" technologist there, says Sanchez. "I have to at least imagine Thiel understands why encryption is important and why mandating backdoors, for instance, would compromise everyone's security. At least there's someone in the circle. I don't know how successful he's going to be."

(Source: venturebeat)

Asia-Pacific Gateway 54Tbps subsea cable completes construction

NEC has announced the completion of the Asia-Pacific Gateway (APG) subsea cable between China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam, and Singapore, which provides capacity of more than 54 terabits per second.

The APG fiber-optic submarine cable -- owned by a consortium of telecommunications carriers including China's China Telecom, China Unicom, and China Mobile; Japan's NTT Communications; South Korea's KT Corporation and LG Uplus; Singapore's StarHub; Taiwan's Chunghwa Telecom; Thailand's CAT; Malaysia's Global Transit Communications; and Vietnam's Viettel and VNPT -- stretches 10,900km across the region.

"NEC is honoured to have been selected as the supplier for APG," Shunichiro Tejima, executive vice president and head of the Telecom Carrier Business Unit at NEC, said.

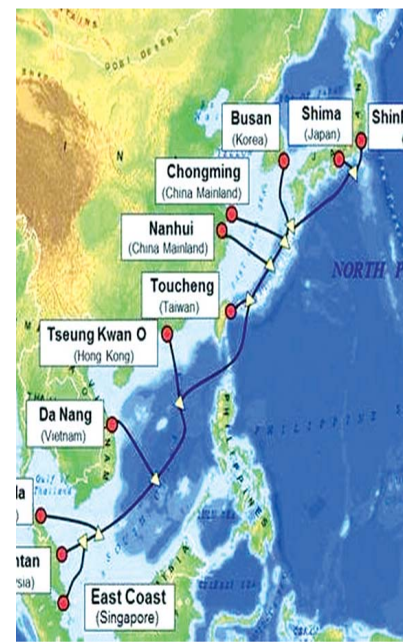
"We hope to see our partnership with the consortium further enhanced through NEC's ability to provide real-time technical support for the operation and maintenance of this advanced submarine cable."

Back in 2012, Facebook also invested an undisclosed amount into the APG in order to "help support our growth in South Asia, making it possible for us to provide a better user experience for a greater number of Facebook users in countries like India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Hong Kong, and Singapore".

Telecommunications carriers and consortiums are racing to build out subsea cable capacity across the Asia-Pacific region, driven by the rapid increase in data usage globally.

Australia's incumbent telco Telstra acquired a 36,000km cable network system connecting China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Philippines as part of purchasing Pacnet for \$697 million in December 2014, and is also involved in a number of submarine cable projects: In May, it announced the Bay of Bengal Gateway (BBG) 8,000km 100Gbps submarine cable system, made up of three fiber pairs, which will connect Singapore, Malaysia, India, Sri Lanka, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates.

Telstra, Singaporean telco Singtel, and Australian company SubPartners in March also entered a memorandum



of understanding (MoU) to construct a high-capacity Perth-to-Singapore subsea cable. The cable, named APX-West, will be 4,500km long, with two fiber pairs providing a minimum of 10Tbps capacity each pair and two-way data transmission, expected to be complete by 2018.

The AU\$400 million Trident subsea cable, backed by Beijing Construction and Engineering Group with the support of the China Development Bank, will connect the west coast of Australia with Singapore via Indonesia, and is expected to be completed by the second quarter of 2018. It has a bandwidth of 28Tbps utilizing 100Gbps coherent dense wavelength division multiplexing (DWDM) technology, which is upgradeable to 400Gbps.

In April, the 14,000km 30Tbps capacity Hawaiki Submarine Cable connecting Australia and New Zealand to Hawaii and the West Coast of the United States also commenced construction, with an expected completion date of mid-2018.

The "FASTER" 10,000km subsea cable system connecting Japan with the west coast of the United States, consisting of six fiber pairs and making use of 10Gbps wave technology, is also being built, as is the Southern Cross Cable Network between California and Sydney.

(Source: submarinenetworks)

Underground ocean found on Pluto, likely slushy with ice

Scientists have found evidence that tiny, distant Pluto harbors a hidden ocean beneath the frozen surface of its heart-shaped central plain containing as much water as all of Earth's seas.

The finding, in two research papers published in the journal *Nature*, adds Pluto to a growing list of worlds in the solar system beyond Earth believed to have underground oceans, some of which potentially could be habitats for life.

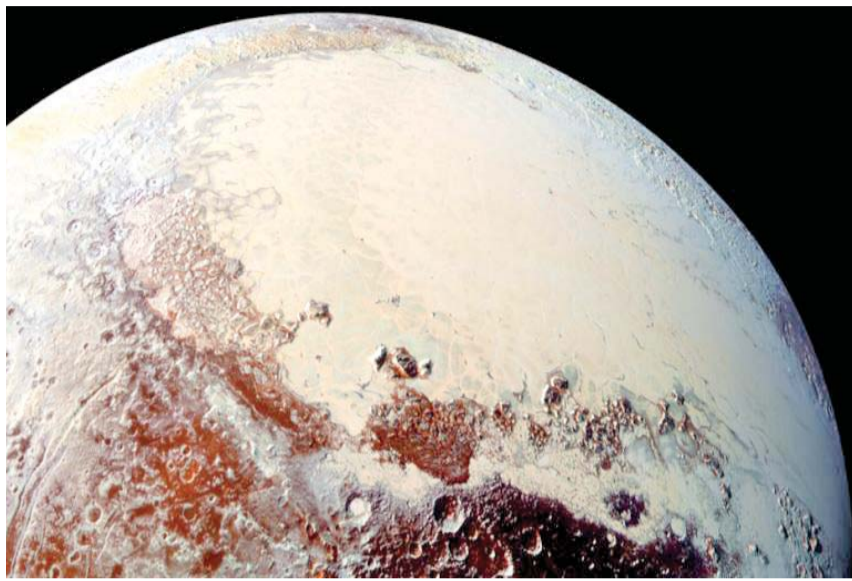
Pluto's ocean, which is likely slushy with ice, lies 93 to 124 miles (150 to 200 km) beneath the dwarf planet's icy surface and is about 62 miles (100 km) deep, planetary scientist Francis Nimmo of the University of California, Santa Cruz said in an interview.

Prime candidate for life

With its ocean covered by so much ice, Pluto is not a prime candidate for life, added Massachusetts Institute of Technology planetary scientist Richard Binzel, another of the researchers. But Binzel added that "one is careful to never say the word impossible."

Liquid water is considered one of the essential ingredients for life.

The discovery was made through an analysis of images and data collected by NASA's New Horizons spacecraft, which flew past Pluto and its entourage



of moons in July 2015.

"It shows that nature is more creative than we are able to imagine, which is why

we go and explore," Binzel said. "We see what nature is capable of doing."

Despite being about 40 times far-

ther from the sun than Earth, Pluto has enough radioactive heat left over from its formation 4.6 billion years ago to keep water liquid.

Ice shell

"Pluto has enough rock that there's quite a lot of heat being generated, and an ice shell a few hundred kilometers thick is quite a good insulator," Nimmo said. "So a deep subsurface ocean is not too surprising, especially if the ocean contains ammonia, which acts like an antifreeze."

Scientists made the discovery as they were trying to figure out why a 621-mile (1,000-km) wide impact basin known as Sputnik Planitia, which contains the curious heart-shaped region, was located in its present position near Pluto's equator.

Computer models showed the basin likely filled with ice, which caused Pluto to roll over, cracking its crust. That could happen only if Pluto possessed a subsurface ocean, the analysis found.

New Horizons is on its way to another frozen world in the Kuiper Belt region of the solar system about 1 billion miles (1.6 billion km) past Pluto. A flyby of the object, known as 2014 MU69, is scheduled on Jan. 1, 2019.

(Source: Reuters)

With its ocean covered by so much ice, Pluto is not a prime candidate for life, added Massachusetts Institute of Technology planetary scientist Richard Binzel, another of the researchers.

Why Stephen Hawking says we have 1,000 years to find a new home

Renowned theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking said in a speech at Oxford University Union that humanity only has about 1,000 years left of viable existence if it doesn't leave the planet and colonize the stars.

The professor argued that humanity is unlikely to survive all of the different crises we will face over the next millennium. But humans can avoid extinction, he said, if we have colonized other planets by that time, giving humanity a fighting chance away from our "fragile" Earth.

Dr. Hawking's prediction may seem gloomy, but much of his speech took an optimistic tone. After all, a thousand years is a long time to figure out how to colonize space, and plans are already underway for humans to visit Mars with an ultimate goal of colonizing the red planet. Scientists continue to discover potentially habitable exoplanets elsewhere in the galaxy that could potentially be new homes for humans — if we can make it there.

During his speech, Hawking noted that the biggest and most immediate challenge for humanity will come in the next century, with threats such as potential nuclear terrorism, climate change, and the rise of artificial intelli-

gence potentially outcompeting humans foremost in his mind, according to *The Washington Post*.

Planet Earth

"Although the chance of a disaster to planet Earth in a given year may be quite low, it adds up over time, and becomes a near certainty in the next 1,000 or 10,000 years," Hawking said in the speech. "By that time we should have spread out into space, and to other stars, so a disaster on Earth would not mean the end of the human race."

NASA has already discovered thousands of exoplanets using telescopes like Kepler, which can detect planets based on fluctuations in light created by planets passing between their stars and the telescope. While only a few are potentially habitable, and almost all are out of the reach of current technology, a rapid increase in our ability to detect Earth-like planets and the development of new propulsion methods could one day lead us to multiple new worlds for future generations to inhabit.

While large-scale colonization of space still feels like a goal rooted more in science fiction than science fact, Elon Musk, the founder and chief executive officer of Te-



sla and SpaceX, unveiled a plan last September to begin colonizing Mars by 2024, beating NASA's timetable for such a task by 10 years, as the Christian Science Monitor's Lonnie Shekhtman reported:

Mars' first colonists will contend with unprecedented obstacles. First there's the hefty price tag. Under current conditions, Musk estimates that a trip to Mars would cost about \$10 billion per person.

(Source: The CSM)

Pigs can be optimists or pessimists, depending on personality and mood, study finds

You can't keep a positive pig down. A new study finds that, like humans, pigs can be optimists or pessimists, and that the pessimists are more strongly affected by their current environments.

The results, described in the journal *Biology Letters*, hint that the complex interplay between personality and mood may extend far beyond the human experience.

"This finding demonstrates that humans are not unique in combining longer-term personality biases with shorter-term mood biases in judging stimuli," the study authors wrote.

Is that glass half empty, or half full? Scientists already know that humans process information differently depending on their mood: If they're feeling negative,

they'll tend to expect a worse outcome when facing ambiguous situations that could go either way; if they're feeling positive, they may expect a better one.

Mood, together with baseline personality, influences a person's cognitive bias — patterns of thinking that may lead to deviations in good judgment.

Researchers have increasingly looked

at cognitive bias in animals to study animal mood, the study authors wrote, but the results from these experiments have been inconsistent. Perhaps that's because the interaction of personality and mood, which together generate cognitive bias in humans, hadn't really been studied in animals until now.

(Source: The LAT)

Chief Executive Emphasizes on Implementing Smart City System in AFZO

In his meeting with visiting Malaysian scientific and technological delegation, Chief Executive of Aras Free Zone Organization (AFZO) Mohsen Khadem Arab-Baghi placed special emphasis on promoting productivity level with the implementation of smart systems in the zone, Public Relations Dept. of AFZO reported.

To achieve rapid conclusion of the negotiations, AFZO is ready to re-

ceive constructive proposals of visiting Malaysian delegation in the fields of electronics, transfer of technical knowhow, production of solar panels, pharmaceuticals, healthy nutrition and production of organic products, car manufacturing, optimization of technology and production processes in active factories.

Malaysia has attained satisfactory progress in the field of technology and

industry, he said, adding: "AFZO is ready to establish sound cooperation and collaboration in efficient projects with new ideas such as implementation of smart system."

It should be noted that Iraj Hatami Infrastructural Affairs Advisor to the Managing Director of Aras Free Zone Organization expounded on the plans which are enforceable in this zone.

He pointed to reorganizing and sup-

plying smart systems in the Zone and providing infrastructure of creativity and innovation in road and rail sectors as main priorities in the zone.

For his part, official in charge of strategic division of the visiting Malaysian delegation said: "Aras Free Zone Organization is of paramount importance and we are ready to make huge investment in this respect with Iranian side as joint venture (JV)."

AIC Distributes Sports Items at Schools in Country's Underprivileged Areas

In order to promote insurance culture, ASIA Insurance Company (AIC) embarked on distributing sports items at schools in disadvantaged and underprivileged regions of the country, Public Relations Dept. of AIC reported.

As the largest private insurance company in the nationwide, AIC won the first rank among country's top 100 insurance firms.

Dissemination of sports — cultural activities by economic enterprises especially insurance companies in

the country with a purposeful and targeted planning in different levels of education will play an important role in the promotion of culture of health and insurance among future-makers of the community, the report ended.

IKCO-ALGERIA Project Kicks off

The largest car manufacturer in the Middle East, Iran Khodro has taken the first step for establishing a production site in Algeria by launching a joint venture with the African country called IKCO-ALGERIA and dispatching the required equipment for setting up a production line there.

In a meeting with the CEO of Algerian Industrial Group of Famoval, IKCO's CEO Hashem Yekhezare stressed the necessity to follow the timetable of the project, adding, "Today we sent the first shipment of the equipment for production line to Algeria. We are supposed to install them by March 20 and start our

SKD production by June 2017."

He also noted that the agreement to establish IKCO's site in Algeria was signed in the early months of this year with an Algerian company.

"Iran Khodro's investment in the project is made through providing the required equipment for a production line in the African country and offering engineering knowhow," he said.

Algeria's Ambassador to Tehran, Abdel Moneim Ahryz who was attending the meeting praised the expanding ties between Iran and Algeria saying with the considerable cultural commonalities

between the two sides, the agreement can pave the way for further economic relations.

"The agreement can play a key role in the expansion of economic and political relations between Iran and Algeria," he added.

For his part, Famoval CEO said, "Many leading foreign car manufacturers have already invested in Algeria but we are determined to be the third largest company in the country after Renault and Hyundai."

He went on further saying that his company has set specific targets to rise to the top of the list of leading car man-

ufacturers in the region's export markets.

Muhammad Rahmoud announced the joint venture, IKCO-ALGERIA, has already been registered, adding, "We insist that in the first two years of the venture operation, the manager of the joint venture be chosen by IKCO's top management given their high technical knowhow and experiences."

"According to our timetable, 8,000 units of Dena are set to be produced in 2017 with a localization of 5 percent but the figure will reach to 25,000 units in 2020 with a localization of 40 percent," he stated.

Scientists tweak photosynthesis to boost crop yield

Researchers report in the journal *Science* that they can increase plant productivity by boosting levels of three proteins involved in photosynthesis. In field trials, the scientists saw increases of 14 percent to 20 percent in the productivity of their modified tobacco plants. The work confirms that photosynthesis can be made more efficient to increase plant yield, a hypothesis some in the scientific community once doubted was possible.

Many years of computational analysis and laboratory and field experiments led to the selection of the proteins targeted in the study. The researchers used tobacco because it is easily modified. Now they are focusing on food crops.

"We don't know for certain this approach will work in other crops, but because we're targeting a universal process that is the same in all crops, we're pretty sure it will," said University of Illinois plant biology and crop sciences professor Stephen Long, who led the study with postdoctoral researchers Katarzyna Glowacka and Johannes Kromdijk.

The team targeted a process plants use to shield themselves from excessive solar energy.

Extra energy

"Crop leaves exposed to full sunlight absorb more light than they can use," Long said. "If they can't get rid of this extra energy, it will actually bleach the leaf."

Plants protect themselves by making changes within the leaf that dissipate the excess energy as heat, he said. This process is called nonphotochemical quenching.

"But when a cloud crosses the sun, or a leaf goes into the shade of another, it can take up to half an hour for that NPQ process to relax," Long said. "In the shade, the lack of light limits photosynthesis, and NPQ is also wasting light as heat."

Long and former graduate student Xinguang Zhu used a supercomputer at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the U. of I. to predict how much the slow recovery from NPQ reduces crop productivity over the course of a day. These calculations revealed "surprisingly high losses" of 7.5 percent to 30 percent, depending on the plant type and prevailing temperature, Long said.

Long's discussions with University of California, Berkeley researcher and study co-author Krishna Niyogi — an expert on the molecular processes underlying NPQ — suggested that boosting levels of three proteins might speed up the recovery process.

(Source: EurekAlert)

Newfound spider species masquerades as a dried-up leaf

In the animal kingdom, sometimes the best survival strategy is to pretend to be something you're not — either to ambush unsuspecting prey or to convince predators that you're not very tasty.

And scientists recently discovered a spider that uses a unique masquerade to hide in plain sight. It is the only known spider to have a body that bears an uncanny resemblance to a dangling, partly dried-up leaf.

The find was reported in a new study, though the spider is yet to be described and assigned a species name.

The newfound costumed arachnid is in the Poltya genus in the orb spider family, which contains more than 3,000 species and one spider celebrity from children's fiction — an *Araneus cavaticus* was the barn spider Charlotte from the classic story "Charlotte's Web" (Harper and Brothers, 1952).

Masquerading is far more common in insects than in arachnids. In fact, many types of insects have bodies that mimic plants. For example, the Phasmatodea order contains hundreds of species of so-called stick insects, which look like bare branches or leaves. And brightly colored orchid mantises have petal-shaped legs to complete their disguises as harmless flowers, tricking other insects into flying close enough for the mantises to snatch them out of the air.

But about 100 spider species also sport physical features that make them appear inanimate and unappetizing, like a jumble of twigs, plant debris or a messy glob of bird poo.

(Source: Live Science)

Drones will transform the way food is grown next year

Drones are transforming agriculture — giving farmers new tools to supervise crops and check on fields from the air — and 2017 will be a pivotal year for adoption, say industry experts.

Growers will increasingly embrace the technology because of new FAA guidelines clarifying the rules for flying drones, simpler operating systems, and better software to analyze data, said agtech consultant Chad Colby.

The global market for drone-powered tools may reach \$127 billion by 2020, with agriculture accounting for \$32.4 billion of that, according to *PricewaterhouseCoopers*.

DroneDeploy wants to become the go-to operating system for drones — like Android for smartphones — said Jono Millin, the company's chief of product. The company is betting that the real money will be in delivering drone software and services, rather than manufacturing the drones themselves, he said.

Its software automates drone flight, allowing users to fly drones made by market leader DJI with the tap of a mobile app. The drone flies a path preset by the farmer and captures images of the ground. Users then upload the images to the cloud where DroneDeploy's software creates a map revealing areas of crop distress and variability.

This enables farmers to quickly identify problems and take action fairly inexpensively. Previously, farmers had to rely on expensive small aircraft or satellites for this information, which often take too long to get to be useful.

(Source: CNBC)



Climate summit chief pleads with Trump not to ditch Paris treaty

The president of the COP22 climate summit in Marrakech has made a direct plea to the incoming US president Donald Trump to join the struggle against global warming for the sake of humanity and the planet.

Salaheddine Mezouar, who is also the Moroccan foreign minister, had spent most of the week-long summit diplomatically trying to steer clear of questions about Trump, telling reporters at one point that "no one can stop history".



But asked for a direct message to the president-elect in the last question of the summit's final press conference, Mezouar issued a heartfelt plea. "We count on your pragmatism as well as your commitment to the spirit of the international community, in a huge struggle for our future, for the planet, for humanity and the dignity of millions and millions of people," he said.

"This is about what our planet is going to be tomorrow, and what we are going to leave behind," he added.

Trump was a specter haunting much of the COP proceedings and a final "Marrakech call" by nearly 200 nations yesterday affirmed their "highest political commitment" to combating climate change, in a thinly coded warning to the far-right tycoon.

But his election did not prevent some of the world's poorest countries from announcing a major emissions-cutting initiative before delegates boarded their planes home. In total, 48 nations promised to cut their carbon emissions dramatically and rapidly move to 100% renewable power as the UN climate summit in Marrakech drew to a close on Friday.

Bangladesh, Ethiopia and the Philippines were among the countries which said they would now file plans for becoming zero-carbon societies by the middle of the century, in line with the Paris deal's aspiration of limiting global warming to 1.5C.

Al Gore, the former US vice-president, hailed the announcement as "a bold vision that sets the pace for the world's efforts to implement the Paris agreement".

"These ambitious and inspiring commitments show the path forward for others and give us all renewed optimism that we are going to meet the challenge before us and meet it in time."

Mohamed Adow, Christian Aid's spokesman, said: "It is moving to see, despite their relative poverty, the world's most vulnerable countries leading the world in delivering the goals of the Paris agreement. They may be relatively small in size, but these countries have become titans in the world of climate leadership."

However, the summit made limited headway on other key issues. Crucially, just \$165m of new money was pledged by advanced economies for the global climate fund which enabled poorer countries to sign up to the Paris agreement.

A UN source insisted that the \$100bn target would be met by 2020, but said trillions would be needed to make development more sustainable. "The question is, how you are going to change the whole financial structure on this planet to get these big sums going?" said the source.

"It is very, very worrisome," Tosi Mpanu Mpanu, the chair of the Least Developed Countries group, told the Guardian. "If you have to make agriculture resilient, build a sea wall or ensure that diseases don't spread, there is no money-making rationale behind it. So public money is needed."

"Unfortunately, at this stage it is all about climate finance which is calculated using creative accounting, and methodologies that were not agreed upon and are not conducive to building trust."

Shortly before the summit ended, Mezouar told the Guardian: "It is a priority of this COP22 presidency to mobilize finance as this is really becoming a necessity and an emergency."

OECD projections suggest that developed countries will have stumped up just one fifth of the initial funds needed for adapting to climate change of a \$100bn-a-year global climate fund which is due to launch in 2020.

The fund also addresses "mitigation" – or preventing climate change – and Morocco says that a roadmap proposed by the UK and Australia in Marrakech will eventually allow around two-thirds of funds to come from public sources.

The US has so far only delivered around \$500m of a promised \$3bn donation to the global climate fund, and doubts hang over the likelihood of more being provided under a Trump administration.

Asked by the Guardian whether the US could provide an emergency fast-tracking of funds before 20 January when Trump is sworn in, Jonathan Pershing, the US special envoy on climate change, said that it would be premature to speculate on the new president's actions in office.

But he added: "We believe that this is an essential part of the movement forward and there will therefore be substantial value for US citizens and taxpayers in addressing these questions and providing technical support."

Mezouar said that the \$100bn promised in the global climate fund was "nothing" when measured against the costs of climate change mitigation and adaptation, but that it could draw private investors into realizable projects.

Just 8% of climate finance committed to date has been disbursed, and of the largest money stream – energy finance – the poorest states have received just 5%, according to developing countries.

(Source: The Guardian)

UNDP, UN Environment hold sand and dust storm side event at COP22

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) jointly with the United Nations Environment held a side event on the sand and dust storms at Conference of the Parties (COP22) in Marrakech, November 7 to 18, 2016.

The event was held with UN resident coordinator in Iran Gary Lewis, UNDP Administrator Helen Clark, head of UN Environment Erik Solheim, and Iranian chief of Department of Environment (DOE) Masoumeh Ebtekar, as speakers.

The aim of the side event was to both raise awareness and serve as a call to action for West Asian countries to find a way to tackle this trans-boundary human development challenge.

Lewis as the event moderator underscored the economic, health and environmental impacts of sand and dust storms, emphasizing a growing emergence of international consensus on the matter in 2016.

Ebtekar, for her part, cited evidences and figures indicating sand and dust storms in Iran and the concentration of pollutants in various cities underlining the fact that at least three quarters of the particles are coming from neighboring countries.

In the past decade sand and dust storms have become major threats to the economy, health and the environment in many countries across a geographical swathe starting in northwest Africa and ending at Japan, she said, adding, the challenge is especially acute in the Middle East with Iran being among the most affected countries especially in its



From left to right: UN Resident Coordinator to Iran Gary Lewis, UNDP Administrator Helen Clark, DOE chief Masoumeh Ebtekar, and Head of UN Environment Erik Solheim

western reaches.

Some eight million hectares of land in Iraq are hot spots for sand and dust storms which haunt provinces of Khuzestan, Ilam, Kermanshah, and Kordestan for long periods, she regretted.

Noting the trans-boundary nature of SDS, she stressed the need for international environmental impact assessment of projects affecting water availability in the region emphasizing sand and dust storms are a peace and security issue.

Chief of DOE further urged global

environmental funds such as Global Environmental Facility (GEF), Adaptation Fund, and Green Climate Fund to tackle the problem of sand and dust storms.

Mentioning the economic impact of dust storms which is at least US\$13 billion yearly in lost GDP, UNDP Administrator Clark called for increased cooperation at the global and regional levels in four areas of developing early warning systems, and sharing climate and weather information which can be used to forecast sand and dust storms, promoting measures that mitigate the worst adverse health effects

of sand and dust storms where and when they happen, scoping of effective preventive measures, and research.

Clark went on to say that "the United Nations development system can serve as a platform for such cooperation and UNDP itself has a global presence and commits to working closely with other agencies which can provide specialized inputs."

Further UN Environment Head Solheim described sand and dust storms as a huge human, economic, health and environmental issue, noting that World Meteorological Organization (WMO) estimates 7 million people worldwide die prematurely every year due to air pollution.

Solheim referred to the past successes addressing environmental problems such as ozone depletion and acid rain and said that sand and dust storms can be addressed, but require coordinated political action in the region and underscored planting trees and building codes as keys to address the problem.

The need for collaborative action among countries in the Middle East was stressed by all speakers and the opportunity afforded by the UN to serve as a platform for such engagement was also recognized.

On the sidelines of her trip to Morocco, Ebtekar has also met with the Iraqi president Fuad Masum and discussed ways to mitigate the problem of sand and dust storms in collaboration with Iraq.

Masum stated that should they overcome their problems at hand (war and regional conflicts) and succeed in securing peace in their country they would be happy to help Iran to fight sand and dust storms.

Secrets of long-eared owls in urban environments

By Farnaz Heidari

Of the eight commoner species of typical owls in Iran, five are residents, one is a common summer visitor (European scops owl or *Otus scops* and two are mainly or wholly winter visitors (long-eared owl and short-eared owl).

Long-eared owls *Asio otus* breeds in forests in vicinity of open country, in copses among arable fields, in plantations on moors, in large parks with conifers, tall hedgerows and etc. Long-eared owls' food are mainly voles, but also small birds, hunting both from perch and in flight, latter probably by far is the commonest method.

Diet composition of long-eared owls in an urban environment was unknown but many studies have been carried out till now. Scientists know the diet of raptors may change when they inhabit urban areas.

Dr. Matěj Lövy and his colleagues from Department of Zoology, University of South Bohemia studied the dietary composition of urban populations of long-eared owls during the 2000s. These studies indicated that the most frequently



Matěj Lövy

secondary prey is mice, and in years with poor vole's availability, mice comprises a considerable part of the owl's diet.

The Tehran Times had an interview with Lövy as a lead author, he described some of the most significant findings and provided recent updates on what we know and don't know about these fascinating animals.

How much the presence of urban long eared owl is important for controlling the population of urban pests such as *Rattus novogicus* and *Rattus rattus*?

A: I think the presence of urban long-eared owls is really important in terms of reducing the numbers of pests such as *Rattus* spp. Basically, foraging long-eared owls depend on presence of their main prey; in Europe, species of voles *Microtus* spp. (Especially *M. arvalis* are the main prey of owls and their diet could rapidly change during the years where voles are scarce. During the prey shortage, owls usually hunt alternative prey, such as other rodents. In Asia and the Middle East, the situation could be rather different and it is of crucial importance to know the detailed species composition of the long-eared owl's diet during longer period (It means in several years).

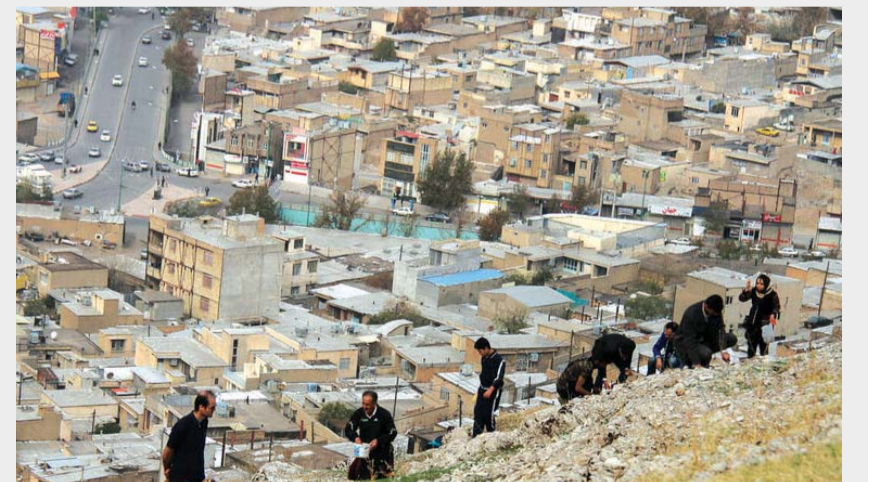
And what about their relation with *Corvus corone* This crow is a big challenge in my country now.

A: The long-eared owls depend on the presence of corvids in urban areas since they commonly use their abandon nests



for breeding. In my opinion, *Corvus corone* could be such an important species in your country. I am not sure about the situation concerning other corvids in Iran but in our city, long-eared owls use old magpie nests mostly, but we have noticed successful breeding attempts in *Corvus frugilegus* breeding colony as well. →13

IN FOCUS ISNA/ Bayat Azadbakht



People and environmental communities in Khorram Abad, Lorestan province, planting acorns and other plants endemic to the area to help preserve the regional biodiversity.

World's largest rally of devotion

Three million foreigners, mostly Iranians, are in Iraq to observe Arbaeen

INTERNATIONAL Millions of Muslim pilgrims beating their chests in mourning thronged the Iraqi city of Karbala Sunday under the protection of thousands of members of the security forces.

The Arbaeen pilgrimage is one of the world's largest religious events and is seen as a major potential target for suicide bombers from ISIL terrorist group.

The commemoration of Imam Hussein (the third Imam of Shia Muslims)'s death in 680 AD will culminate on Monday but millions were already packing the city hosting the shrine of the Prophet Mohammed's grandson.

Each year, Sunni Muslims and followers of other religious groups such as Christians join the journey to mourn the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the third Imam of Shia Muslims.



Nusayyef al-Khattabi, who heads the Karbala provincial council, said he expected the total number of visitors over several days to range "between 17 and 20 million". Among them are an estimated three

million foreigners, mostly Iranians who started crossing the border days ago.

"We are on maximum alert," Staff Major General Qais Khalaf Rahaima, the head of the security command responsible for the area, told AFP.

Many in the sea of black-clad devotees swarming the shrine walked days to reach Karbala, sometimes from cities as far afield as Basra, about 500 kilometers (300 miles) away by road.

Baghdad and much of the country south of the capital come to a standstill in the days preceding Arbaeen, as several major motorways are reserved for pilgrims on foot on one side and authorized vehicles on the other.

Monday will mark the final day of the mourning for Imam Hussein who was martyred in a battle with the massive army of Yazid I after refusing allegiance to the tyrant caliph.

Saudis target Yemen in flagrant violation of truce

Saudi fighter jets have carried out more air raids against Yemen in violation of a ceasefire declared by Riyadh itself in the war-torn country.

Yemen's al-Masirah television reported that the Saudi warplanes targeted the Sirwah district of Ma'rib Province and bombarded three bridges in the Silw neighborhood of Ta'izz Province late on Saturday.

Earlier on the day, similar Saudi strikes were carried out in the provinces of Hudaydah, Sa'ada and Sana'a.

The Saudi jets also mistakenly targeted Riyadh-backed forces loyal to Yemen's former president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi in the Midi district of the northwestern Hajjah Province, killing a large number of them.

Saudi mercenaries also launched mortar attacks in the al-Dhaba neighborhood of Ta'izz. The assaults left several Yemeni citizens dead and injured.

The deadly assaults came in violation of the 48-hour truce declared by Saudi Arabia on Saturday noon.

The announcement followed a request for a ceasefire by Hadi, who is based in Riyadh, to Saudi King Salman.

Yemeni counter attacks

In retaliation for the Saudi attacks, the Yemeni army and forces of the Houthi Ansarullah movement fired a ballistic missile at a Saudi military base in the kingdom's southwestern region of Najran.

Saudi ground forces claim that they had averted three other missile attacks allegedly fired from Yemen over the past few hours.

Meanwhile, the Yemeni army foiled an attempt by Saudi mercenaries to advance in the Midi district of the northwestern Hajjah Province.

Saudi Arabia has been leading an offensive against Yemen since March 2015 in a bid to crush the Houthis and reinstate the former Yemeni administration. The war has left at least 11,400 civilians dead, according to a latest tally by a Yemeni monitoring group.

The U.S. has also been providing logistic and surveillance support to the kingdom in the bloody military campaign.

(Source: Press TV)

Turkey can join Shanghai Pact instead of EU: Erdogan

The Turkish president says his country should not be "fixated" on joining the European Union and could instead seek accession to the Eurasian Shanghai Pact organization dominated by China and Russia



"Turkey should first of all feel relaxed about the EU and not be fixated" about its membership, Recep Tayyip Erdogan was cited in Sunday media reports as saying, as Ankara continues to rile up Brussels with its EU-unfriendly moves.

Turkey has been trying to join the EU since the 1960s. The formal negotiations started in 2005.

The two sides reached a landmark deal in March to stem the unprecedented flow of refugees into Europe. Under the agreement, Ankara agreed to receive all refugees landing on the coasts of Greece in return for concessions, including billions of dollars in funding, accelerated talks on Turkey's accession to the EU, and visa-free travel for Turks to the Schengen Area.

The bloc, however, has only opened 16 chapters of the 35-chapter accession process for Ankara and refused to lift the visa ban, finding fault with Ankara's treatment of opposition, especially in the aftermath of a mid-July failed coup against Erdogan.

The putsch has been followed by mass arrests and expulsions as well as reported torture, ruffling feathers in Brussels. For its part, Ankara has accused the EU of treating the country differently regarding its accession attempt and failing to unlock all the cash it had promised to disburse to Turkey on the back of the refugee deal.

"Some may criticize me but I express my opinion," Erdogan added, explaining on why the country should not put too much emphasis on EU membership.

"For example, I say 'why shouldn't Turkey be in the Shanghai 5,'" he asked.

Erdogan said he had already discussed the idea with Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Kazakh counterpart Nursultan Nazarbayev.

"I hope that if there is a positive development there, I think if Turkey were to join the Shanghai Five, it will enable it to act with much greater ease," added the Turkish head of state.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) -- also called the Shanghai Pact -- is a security and economic bloc led by Russia and China. Other members are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

(Source: Hurriyet)

Trump will soon realize he cannot reverse all previous policies: Georgetown professor

1 -> ■ **Trump first vowed to rip up the JCPOA. Then he said he would renegotiate the terms of the deal. What do you think of him?**

A: Trump's attitude on JCPOA would depend on the direction in which Iran's relations with America moves. He has said that he would talk to anyone who is willing to talk to America. But he would be less tolerant of certain Iranian provocations such as the capture of American sailors and showing them bound and kneeling. The same applies to sanctions. However, some sanctions such as those under the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ISLA) depend on the Congress.

■ **On the whole, how do you evaluate Trump's foreign policy towards Iran?**

A: The main problems in U.S.-Iran relations which are related to Iran's anti-American stands, plus the animosity of significant portion of American political class towards Iran, including in the Republican Party, will remain. Therefore, U.S.-Iran relations will not improve under Trump. Meanwhile, a Trump administration will be less tolerant of some of Iran's activities than Obama has been. In general problems in U.S.-Iran relations are structural and would not change with changing U.S. administrations.



Visually impaired man raises funds to free prisoner

1 -> The prisoner's family, who tends to be from lower rank of society, is left "high and dry" and the "grave burden falls on their shoulder."

A woman whose husband serves time is perhaps left with a family to raise and feed, and piled up bills and overdue rents to pay. "She is now in a very vulnerable and compromising position."

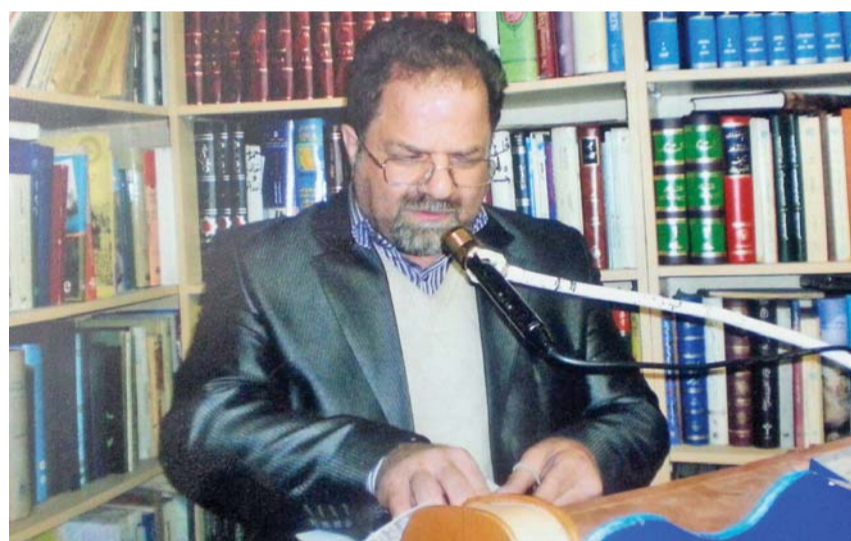
If she turns out not to have no income, she now has to go on job hunting mission and obviously in such economic downturn she will be having a tough time landing one, and if so, it'll be just enough to make ends meet.

So clearly, he sets out that incarceration can do the family and society more harm than good.

Suffice to say, "Doomsday scenario awaits the entire family of prisoners."

Today, 1.7 million Iranian women have become the sole breadwinner of their family due to loss of their husband to divorce, drug addiction, disability, imprisonment, etc, according to Habibollah Masoudi-Farid, deputy director of State Welfare Organization in Iran.

A challenge that calls for prompt attention of authorities, IRNA reported on its



website. Opening out his heart, Beignia is after giving us all a lesson in the mission he has taken up. "Rather than await people with no physical disability to assist us, the disabled, we made the right call to be of some help to them."

"Rather than await people with no physical disability to assist us, the disabled, we made the right call to be of some help to them."

Secrets of long-eared owls in urban environments

12 -> ■ **What are the most important characters that make this species different?**

A: Unlike other raptors, the long-eared owl is probably not able to nest on and/or inside the buildings, houses etc. Such occasions are really scarce (I remember only one scientific paper related to this issue). This fact disadvantages it against other synanthropic raptors such as kestrels, falcons, and barn owls.

■ **Your researches showed that this owl avoided vegetation types associated with human activities. But how could encourage *Asio otus* to be present in urban parks? Which plant species are eligible?**

A: What I meant was that they avoid areas such as small fenced gardens etc. but not in general. It is very important to realize that two different "green urban areas" are important for owls for nesting and for hunting. And there is much difference between those. Urban parks are ideal places where long-eared owls can find suitable nesting sites. We know that sometimes only a small group of trees (up to five, may be less) presents a very suitable place for nesting. In Europe, it seems that conifers are preferred tree species but it very much depends on the situation at your study locality. I do not know how the situation in Iran is. Refugia are very important for hunting and as such they have to offer suitable environmental conditions for rodents, the main prey. For example, abandoned areas within the cities commonly offer higher rodent densities, or grassy river banks.

(Noted: Refugia is an area in which a population of organisms can survive

through a period of unfavorable conditions, especially glaciation).

■ **Are long-eared owls readily to occupy artificial nests?**

A: Hard to say, I have never tried to install artificial nests in our study area because owls always have plenty of natural breeding sites (old corvid nests). However, in general, I think they could occupy artificial nests as well. Such artificial nest could be something like a wooden base with breeding material (wooden branches and smaller sticks). I guess that a very important factor is to choose the most suitable site where to install this nest ideally on a mid-high tree which does not grow solitary but in a group of several ones. For instance, urban parks seem to me a very appropriate place.

■ **Ecological cycles wiped out in megacities such as Tehran. How could we change this situation and bring essential species such as owls back to cities?**

A: The ongoing trend is that owls and raptors in general have begun to follow many songbirds towards the cities across the world. Synanthrophization is relatively young phenomenon but of increasing importance since it embraces more and more species across biota. Megacities can serve as an ideal place for raptors, both diurnal and nocturnal (e.g. common kestrels, falcons, long-eared owls etc.) since they offer more (and non-fluctuating) numbers of prey, less predators and also more pleasant weather conditions, "buffered temperature" (smaller range of extremes). So I am not sure if it is necessary (or even possible) to change this situation. In my opinion, raptors tend to

take advantage of these conditions and this is reason why their numbers (in European cities) are still increasing.

■ **How urban barriers such as skyscrapers could affect long-eared owl ranges?**

A: I guess drastically. Long-eared owls hunt rodents using harrier-like flight. This technique is the most effective at low flight which disadvantages moving across high buildings. On the other hand, owls for sure use corridors within the urbanized areas which interconnect suitable foraging sites (I call them refugia) and avoid high buildings. Generally, owls can easily nest in the park surrounded by skyscrapers and move for further distances to find a prey.

■ **What are the first steps to estimate population trends in nocturnal owls?**

A: We have tried many different techniques and simulating a territorial intrusion by broadcasting a male's territorial call is the best way. You should do this at the beginning of the breeding season. You can divide your study area into several (ideally of the same size) parts and broadcast a male's territorial call close to urban parks or any suitable "green urban areas". Second, it is very good to look for owl pellets. Owls use the same site for a long period and you can easily get data about numbers of nesting pairs during the breeding season. If you combine these methods, you will get the desired data.

■ **What was your method to assess the spatial activity of *Asio otus*?**

I used radio-tracking. Nowadays, there are a lot of possibilities which mostly depend on your budget. GPS

abled, we made the right call to be of some help to them."

He said that if all of us go on in life tackling our own problems first, "There remains no time to reach out to others."

Beignia is a textbook example of a man who never gives up in life, while rising up against all the odds.

With great willpower and a dogged determination, he refuses to see his disability as a debilitating factor. He is a fighter who fights his way, all the way.

He believes that we ought to find the good, even in less-than-great situations. "There's always a way to find something positive. It may be hard to see at first, but one has to try looking closer."

Beignia has set his heart out on having more prisoners freed with the public's help and asks for a pledge of support.

He urges everyone to pitch in a little as \$1 to help free more prisoners.

"This is an example of doing great things with little money", he expressed smilingly.

Today, as you read this interview, Beignia is on his way back to Iran from a journey he set out on to Karbala, a city in Iraq, for the occasion of Arbaeen.

Man United lack a cutting edge

From the first day he walked into Old Trafford last summer, Jose Mourinho was telling people he had identified the central factor in Manchester United's failure to compete in the Premier League under Louis van Gaal: goals, or rather the lack of them.

It was a simple observation, but with United scoring just 49 goals in 38 league games last season, Mourinho confided in club staff that neither Marcus Rashford nor Anthony Martial were experienced enough to shoulder the goal-scoring burden, while Wayne Rooney was no longer able to perform the central striker role consistently enough to contribute 20 goals.



Mourinho believed he had solved the problem by recruiting Zlatan Ibrahimovic on a free transfer from Paris Saint-Germain, but the 35-year-old has shown this season that he is not the solution. Meanwhile, the manager's instincts about Rashford, Martial and Rooney have proved to be correct.

However, until Olivier Giroud headed Arsenal's 89th-minute equaliser at Old Trafford on Saturday, United looked to have been on

course to get away with their failure to convert a succession of chances against Arsene Wenger's team.

Juan Mata's opener, 20 minutes earlier, was long overdue for United and undoubtedly deserved, yet before it arrived United had huffed and puffed without once threatening to blow Arsenal down by putting the ball into the back of the net.

It was deja vu all over again. United had dominated against Stoke City last month, but ended up with a 1-1 draw and, in their last game at Old Trafford, had 37 shots on goal against Burnley but still trudged off the pitch with only a point following a 0-0 draw and a heroic performance by goalkeeper Tom Heaton.

"Against Stoke we could have won by five or six, but we draw," Mourinho said. "Against Burnley we could have scored five or six, but we draw, while against Arsenal today, we could have scored two or three, but we draw again."

It is an issue that has plagued Wenger for over a decade at Arsenal and the Frenchman has never quite managed to find a player capable of scoring even half of the goals that Thierry Henry once contributed. Yet the Gunners are starting to pick up a habit of claiming points where they were not deserved. Giroud's goal -- coming from Arsenal's only shot on target -- was the latest example, as Wenger's team found the cutting edge where United could not to end the game.

"I am happy with the work and happy with the guys," Mourinho added. "But, at the moment, we are the unluckiest team in the Premier League."

Is it all bad luck, though, or is Mourinho paying the price for the makeup of his squad?

When you also consider Ibrahimovic's missed header against Liverpool during October's 0-0 draw at Anfield, and a similarly wasted effort by the Swede when United trailed 1-0 at Chelsea -- they eventually crashed to a 4-0 defeat -- it is becoming painfully obvious where United's, and Mourinho's, problems lie.

United's defence and midfield continue to have their flaws and remain works in progress, but there have been signs of those areas being developed under Mourinho -- the 90 minutes at Anfield perhaps being the best example of that.

In front of goal, however, United are suffering from a recurring nightmare. Chances are being created, through the middle and from the flanks, but they just cannot put the ball into the back of the net.

It is an unusual issue for a Mourinho team, but the reality is that his United squad lacks the centre-forward that has defined each of the Portuguese coach's previous teams and until he rectifies that problem, it is impossible to envisage United becoming a real attacking force.

Why Mourinho failed to do more in the summer to address a problem he had already identified is a mystery. Did he really believe that an aging Ibrahimovic could do for United what the likes of Didier Drogba (Chelsea), Diego Milito (Inter) and Benni McCarthy (Porto) have done for him at his previous clubs?

Wherever he has been successful, Mourinho has built his team around a centre-forward of presence and pace.

McCarthy helped lead Porto to Champions League glory in 2004, while Drogba was Chelsea's goal-scoring battering ram in Mourinho's first spell in charge of Chelsea. At Inter Milan, a younger and fitter Ibrahimovic guided Mourinho to Serie A success before Milito helped to deliver a second Champions League title in 2010.

Cristiano Ronaldo and Karim Benzema were Mourinho's attacking aces at Real Madrid, while Diego Costa was signed for Chelsea as Drogba's long-term successor, scoring the goals to win the Premier League in his first season at Stamford Bridge.

But United have lacked a striker to compare to any of the above since Robin van Persie inspired Sir Alex Ferguson's team to the title in 2013. Rooney has not been convincing as a No. 9 since before Ferguson retired and Radamel Falcao was simply too lightweight to succeed when he was signed on loan by Van Gaal.

Mourinho is now desperate for a striker of real pedigree, though, and the right signing would prove the difference between success and failure.

Antoine Griezmann is a player on United's radar, but the Atletico Madrid forward is not a classic Mourinho centre-forward. Robert Lewandowski would fit the profile -- a powerful, hard-working, quick, goal scorer -- but prising him away from Bayern Munich would be a tough challenge. Tottenham's Harry Kane may prove more realistic, especially with the England forward facing a contract stand-off with his club, but United are certainly not going to be able to find the right man in January.

So Mourinho must work with what he has by coaxing more from Ibrahimovic, reviving Rooney and ensuring that Rashford and Martial's development does not stall due to a lack of success in front of goal.

The United manager knows the importance of a reliable striker -- his success has been built on their goals -- and he will be aware that his club will continue to struggle until he finds the right man to put the ball in the net for him.

(Source: Soccernet)

Defeat at Dortmund shows work Carlo Ancelotti still has at Bayern Munich



"But it's good for the league. It's what everyone has been wishing for," said Philipp Lahm, per Kicker. Not without a degree of irony after Bayern Munich's defeat at Borussia Dortmund on Saturday, as it means that RB Leipzig—the other club German football fans love to hate—will end the weekend on top of the Bundesliga table.

For the first time in 39 Matchdays, some 425 calendar days, Bayern will not be top of the league ahead of the next round of games. It is an inhumane position for the record German champions, who find themselves in second place, three points behind the leaders and—perhaps more significantly—just a victory ahead of Dortmund, now lurking ominously on their shoulders in third.

At most clubs, it would not be much of a concern, but at Bayern, it all but constitutes a crisis. What is even more worrying is that this defeat has been coming.

Carlo Ancelotti's men came into the game unbeaten in domestic competition, but performances like the one at Eintracht Frankfurt suggested they were not as impressive as their stats would have us believe. Against the best of the rest in the Bundesliga—sorry, Leipzig, but you're not there yet—this was always going to be a real test for Bayern, and it is not a massive surprise they failed it.

You have to credit Dortmund and manager Thomas Tuchel, whose 5-3-2 formation flummoxed and frustrated Bayern. The visitors could have learned something from the discipline with which the hosts remained supremely organised.

Tuchel had clearly noted Bayern's diffi-

culties at picking their way through compact defences, and bet—rightly, as it turned out—his rearguard action could make them suffer even more than they had against Germany's lesser lights. He rather parked the BVB bus, though it was more of a luxury coach, and it was done so cleverly, perfectly, to nullify Bayern.

The match stats tell the story: Bayern with 66 percent possession, played 694 passes—exactly double Dortmund—yet BVB were not chasing the ball around needlessly. They tallied only a collective 1.3 kilometres more than their opponents, whose efforts were channelled into attempting to knock a hole in the formidably well-drilled banks of yellow and black in front of them.

Dortmund patiently let a huffing and puffing Bayern blow their own storm out.

"We lacked the final ball, especially in the first half," Lahm analysed afterwards, per Bayern's official website, with the sort of laser-guided precision his team's passing in the final third was crying out for. "We were never exact enough, otherwise we would have had numerous chances."

Poor Robert Lewandowski, who was superbly handled and manhandled by Sokratis, got not so much as a sniff of a decent ball, never mind of the goal.

With Ancelotti's system requiring the full-backs to provide width, both Lahm and David Alaba needed to deliver quality service into the box. Only once, when Lahm lunged near the by-line to volley over a cross, did either of the pair produce something resembling danger, though it required the most acrobatic of attempts by Thiago

Alcantara to even make anything of it.

Also at the opposite end, the 4-3-3 of Ancelotti did not work, once again. The ability of Bayern's wide players to beat their man one-on-one, which made them such formidable adversaries under Pep Guardiola, is all but nullified by the new Bayern boss' narrower approach. And the reliance on the full-backs to compensate for that makes the side vulnerable.

It was especially evident early on and—in fact—decided the game. Alaba, in particular, was uncharacteristically all over the place, and it caused the defensive chaos that led to Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scoring.

With Alaba AWOL, Mats Hummels was pulled out wide to face Mario Gotze, whose cross squeezed between the former Dortmund man's legs and found Aubameyang in the six-yard box all alone to score. You have to think Hummels would have been tight to the Gabon international striker had Alaba been doing his job.

There was a carbon copy just a few minutes later when it was Aubameyang wide on the Bayern left. Hummels was again the man covering only to leave a lonely Andre Schurrle on the edge of the box to send a first-time shot towards the goal that—either side of Manuel Neuer—would have given the Germany No. 1 something seriously tough to chew on.

As Ancelotti has been prone to do when his preferred formation has not been working, he switched to 4-4-2/4-2-3-1 with Douglas Costa coming on for Kimmich just before the hour mark. The fact the Brazil international raced on to the pitch yelling the new tactical setup to his teammates

without using his hand to thwart lip-readers like some Cold War spy suggested urgency rather than carelessness.

Costa had—along with fellow South American Arturo Vidal—been classed as being "tired" by Ancelotti after international duty, per Bayern's official website. And there was little doubt the Brazilian's habitual spark was conspicuous by its absence.

There was one moment where he cut inside onto his left foot before sending a shot over the bar. It reminded everyone that it probably would have been different had Arjen Robben been on the pitch given the Dutchman's stunning form this season.

But he wasn't, so it wasn't.

Bayern desperately needed a moment of individual inspiration to get them back into the match—Xabi Alonso's shot that struck the bar almost did—but with Robben sidelined by injury and Franck Ribery, who had just returned from injury, looking every inch a player who had only just returned from injury, inspiration was in desperately short supply.

They might have had more shots—18 to Dortmund's 11—but Roman Burki was not seriously stretched, unlike Neuer with the block to prevent Aubameyang doubling Dortmund's lead 19 minutes from time.

"I was happy with the performance, not with the result," claimed Ancelotti, per Bayern's official website, after the final whistle at the Signal Iduna Park. If the former Chelsea boss does not change his ideas, notably his formation, it is a phrase he is likely to utter after a number of key matches this season.

(Source: BleacherReport)

I expected worse from Liverpool, says Klopp

Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp says he expected a worse display from his side in their 0-0 Premier League draw with Southampton on Saturday.

The visitors were short of their best at St Mary's Stadium, with Sadio Mane, Roberto Firmino, Philippe Coutinho and Nathaniel Clyne all guilty of missing good chances to snatch a victory.

The result keeps Liverpool ahead of Manchester City at the top of the table on goal difference, but they will be overtaken by Chelsea should Antonio Conte's side beat

Middlesbrough on Sunday.

Klopp, however, was content with his players' application given the difficulty in preparing for a match at the end of an international break. "Two things are really important when you play football: the result and the performance," he told a press conference. "The result is not perfect, but the performance was much better than we could have expected, when we think about our preparation for the game."

"It was not bad first half, much better second half. It was a really good performance against a side that are difficult to play against. Southampton are one of the best organised teams in the league."

"I think they adapted their style a little bit to our strength. We had enough chances to win the game, particularly in the second half. The reaction in the second half was really good, the body language was better."

"I'm fine with the performance, absolutely. We could have scored, maybe we should have scored, but football is like this."

"Very often in my life I have lost games like this, when you are so much better and have many more chances. But we didn't because we stayed concentrated, and that's very important, maybe the most important thing for us."

"Everybody could see this season that on a very good day we are able to score fantastic goals. But today was much more different for many reasons. And even then, to stay in the game is the best news we can get."

(Source: Goal)

Ronaldo has closed Ballon d'Or debate with Atletico hat-trick - Zidane

Zinedine Zidane feels Cristiano Ronaldo's hat-trick in the derby victory over Atletico Madrid has decided the 2016 Ballon d'Or.

Ronaldo scored all three goals, one in the first half and two in the second, including a penalty, as Real Madrid claimed the bragging rights in the final La Liga derby at the Vicente Calderon before Diego Simeone's team leave their historic home at the end of the season.

Ronaldo is vying with 2015 winner Lionel Messi and the likes of Atletico's Antoine Griezmann for the biggest individual prize in world football.

And Madrid coach Zidane, who claimed the accolade himself in 1998, believes the Portugal star will be awarded his fourth Ballon d'Or on January 11.

"I've never had doubts that Cristiano is the best and tonight closes the debate," he said.

Zidane, who guided Madrid to Champions League glory with a penalty shootout victory over Atletico in the final at San Siro in May, was reluctant to describe the comprehensive victory on Saturday as the highlight of his brief career in the dugout so far.

"I do not know if [it is] the best, but we played a huge game against a difficult opponent and in a stadium where it is difficult to win," he said.

"In the second half it was logical Atletico's pressure [increased] in those first 15 minutes, but we produced the necessary intensity against a complicated opponent."

"It is an important victory for us, on a difficult pitch and with a rival that gives you a war. We played a very good game from the beginning. There

are not many teams that can win on this pitch and we did well."

Asked if he will miss the Calderon when Atletico move to a new ground for the 2017-18 season, Zidane said: "Yes, sure. The players, fans... they are going to miss it. We're happy about this victory because there are not many teams that win here."

(Source: Goal)



AFC referees honored after a landmark year

Asian referees have set a new benchmark for excellence in 2016, gracing some of the world's biggest stages. In recognition for their outstanding performances, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) on Sunday awarded six match officials – three men and women – with the AFC Referees Special Award 2016 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The men's trio from the Islamic Republic of Iran – Alireza Faghani as well as assistant referees Reza Sokhandan and Mohammad Reza Mansouri – and the women's team comprising Australians Kate Jaczewicz and Renae Coghill as well as India's Uvena Fernandes – received their awards from the AFC Referees Committee Vice-Chairman, Hany Taleb Ballan Safar (Qatar), at the opening of the AFC Elite Referees and Assistant Referees Seminar taking place in the Malaysian capital.

AFC President Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa said: "The AFC's Vision and Mission has underlined our desire to ensure Asian players and officials succeed on the world stage. The performances of our men and women referees this year demonstrate once again our continent as a great force in world football and that our referees – both men and women – have earned global respect.

"Their achievements serve as a testament to the progressive steps Asian football continues to undertake under the banner of One Asia, One Goal and I am confident that they will continue to do us proud in the years ahead."

Faghani, Sokhandan and Mansouri made history this year as Asia's first trio to officiate the final of the Men's Olympic Football Tournament when they took charge of the Brazil versus Germany gold medal match in August in Rio de Janeiro.

During the hugely successful AFC Asian Cup 2015 Australia, Faghani and Sokhandan were appointed to officiate the final match between Korea Republic and host nation Australia. The men's trio also officiated the 2015 FIFA Club World Cup final in Tokyo, which saw Barcelona take on Argentina's River Plate.



Jaczewicz, Coghill and Uvena Fernandes completed an all-Asian affair when they were selected to officiate in the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup Jordan 2016 final between DPR Korea and Japan last month. They also featured prominently in the group stages, taking charge of the fixtures between Brazil and England, as well as Venezuela and Germany.

Jaczewicz and Coghill, who obtained their FIFA international referee status in 2011 and 2015 respectively, also worked together in the W-League 2016 final between Melbourne City and Sydney FC.

Uvena Fernandes is India's first-ever female referee to officiate in a FIFA World Cup.

The AFC Referees Special Awards are the first of the AFC Annual Awards to be presented this year and among four awards that will be presented at specific occasions relevant to the individual recipients. The AFC Futsal Player of the Year, AFC Youth Player of the Year and AFC Asian International Player of the Year awards will also be presented to the respective winners at an appropriate date and venue.

(Source: the-afc)

Iran's shot putter Rajabi will not reverse retirement decision: official



SPORTS **d e s k** Iran Amateur Athletic Federation vice-president Parisa Behzadi said Leila Rajabi has not changed his mind and will not return to the national team.

Belarus-born Iranian athlete Rajabi announced her retirement after she failed to secure a place at the final of the women's shot put at the Rio Olympics.

She finished in 16th place with a

throw of 16.34 meters. Rajabi failed to surpass her personal best in the event.

The athlete announced she would no longer compete at the shot put.

"We thought Rajabi would change his mind but she is not going to return to the national team," Behzadi said.

"Maybe Rajabi wants to return to national team a few months later but at the moment she has decided to quit," she added.

Faghani shortlisted for Globe Soccer Awards referee of the year



SPORTS **d e s k** Alireza Faghani from Iran been named among the nominees for the 2016 Globe Soccer Awards referee of the year.

The ceremony will be held in Dubai on December 27-28.

The Globe Soccer Awards are part of the International Sports Conference where figures from the world of football converge on the emirate to discuss the big topics dominating the sport.

Entering its seventh edition, the Globe

Soccer Awards were created to recognize the best contributors to football – globally and regionally – both on and off the field.

Alireza Faghani, Bakary Papa Gassama (Gambia), Mark Clattenburg (England), Nestor Pitana (Argentina) and Joel Antonio Aguilar (El Salvador) have been nominated for the best referee of the year.

The Iranian referee officiated the final match of the Rio Olympic Games between Brazil and Germany, where the host won the title on penalties.

Iran's Aramideh receives United World Wrestling Endurance Trophy

Abolfazl Aramideh, who won a bronze medal in the 2016 Asian Cadet, received Endurance Trophy on Friday.

Masoud Soltanifar, new Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs, presented the trophy to the wrestler on behalf of the United World Wrestling.

In July the 15-year-old Iranian freestyler pinned Abdymalik Karachov (KGZ) to win bronze at the Cadet Asian championships in Taiwan. However, Aramideh soon fell ill.



Despite his condition Iranian Wrestling Federation president Rasoul Khadem says that Aramideh has "shown great courage and strength," in fighting his disease.

Online support for Aramideh has also been pouring in for weeks, including a message from 2012 Olympic champion Jordan Burroughs (USA) delivered to Aramideh on Instagram.

(Source: Tasnim)

Iran's Hossein Vafaei makes history in Northern Ireland Open

SPORTS **d e s k** Hossein Vafaei Ayouri from Iran became the first Iranian player who booked a place in the Northern Ireland Open quarter-final.

The snooker world number 75 Vafaei lost to Mark King from England 5-3 Friday night and failed to advance to the competition's semi-final.

Vafaei started the campaign with a 4-3 victory over England's Rod Lawler in the last 128 round.

The Iranian defeated Zak Surety from England 4-2 in the last 64 and beat Englishman Sanderson Lam 4-1 in the last 32.

He also defeated Scotland's Scott Donaldson 4-2 in the last 16.



Iranian trio nominated for AFC Futsal Player of the Year

SPORTS **d e s k** Three Iranian futsal players have been nominated for the AFC Annual Awards on Sunday.

The Asian Football Confederation has announced the nominees for the award, the-afc wrote.

Three Iranian futsal players Aliasghar Hasanzadeh, Ahmad Esmaeilpour and Farhad Tavakoli will vie for the AFC Futsal Player of the Year.

The trio played key roles in the FIFA Futsal World Cup Colombia 2016, where the Iranian team made history and finished in third place for the first time.



Stars of Tomorrow: Iran's Mobina Nejad Katesari

Nobody can confirm whether or not it is a world record, but everybody in Burnaby is talking about it: The incredible run by Iran's Mobina Nejad Katesari on Day 1 of the 2016 WTF World Taekwondo Junior Championships.

Over a day of fighting that ended with her being crowned world champion in the female -42kg category, she scythed her way through the opposition, scoring 73 points and conceding none.

Yes, you read that right: None. Not one of her five opponents throughout the day managed to score a single point on the 15-year-old from Gilan, Iran.



"I think that must be a record," said WTF Technical Committee Chairman Jung Kook-hyun, "I don't think anyone else has done that before." "I don't know, I can't say," added Peter Bolz, curator of website www.taekwondodata.com. "But I think that is a record."

In person, Nejad Katesari does come across as an invincible fighting machine. Quietly spoken and with a shy but ready but ready smile, she is small in stature and lacks the towering height of some current-generation competitors. But she moves with the obvious physical grace of the athlete and has the self-assurance of the chosen.

"Taekwondo is not about height, it is about techniques and about the mind," she said. "Strength and ability are important, but on top of that, it is about hard work and trying over and over again."

She started the game at the age of four, having seen bouts on TV. Already a third dan black belt, Nejad Katesari has added her first world junior title to her roster of win, which include two cadet championship golds – at the worlds in Muju, Korea, and at the Asians in Taipei, Taiwan, both in 2015.

When it comes to offense, she is a master of the sliding ax kick and is fully ambidextrous. But what is her brilliant defense composed of? She puts it down to her ability with the push kick as a counter-attack weapon, but is unwilling to say any more: "It's a secret!" she said, mischievously.

Fatameh Safarpour, coach of the Iranian Female Junior Team, is more forthcoming. "She is very smart and the key reason for her success in not giving any points away is that she can work with her knees very professionally – she brings up her knees – and she has a good push kick," Safarpour said. "She is very quick and her explosive movements and flexibility help her, so that the opponent cannot react to her – she is ahead of her opponents."

Her other weapon is her mind. "I have the power of making images of the game before I fight," she said. "This is what I learned from my coach."

She also has the intense discipline necessary to juggle schooling and the demands of elite taekwondo, for as a national team member, she has to attend the grueling three-month pre-competition training camps at Tehran's famous "Taekwondo

"I am happy that as a Muslim girl my hijab did not create any limitations. By winning 75 points in five games without losing any, I could make history."

House." "When I am not in camp, I go to school, and in the evenings I go to taekwondo practice sessions," she said. "When I am in the camps I focus on taekwondo, and when I get back home, I get personal tutors to help me catch up with other students."

She is not happy with the current ruleset. "Since the single touch with the sole of the foot has come in, most of the athletes use it and

taekwondo does not have any beauty any more as they don't use the more technical moves," she said.

However, she is positive about recent developments with the PSS. "I believe that the electronic headgear is very helpful as you are sure that the foot has impacted the headgear," she said. "In the traditional way, sometimes the referee might press the key without an impact."

Given her recent string of victories, she is 100 percent sure of what her life path. "I am going to major in taekwondo in university and take it as my occupation for life," she said. "I recently made that decision as, after I had achievements, I believed I could do this. It was motivating."

The decision to make taekwondo her life was completely her own, but her parents both encouraged and supported her, Nejad Katesari said. Naturally, there were "super happy" when she called them after her victory on the night of her win.

As for influences in the sport, she cites her coach back home in Gilan, Neda Rastad. "She was my coach from the age of four," Nejad Katesari said. "She gives me positive energy and high spirits." Another is her taekwondo senior Kimia Alizadeh Zenoorin – who, in Rio, became the first Iranian female athlete ever to win an Olympic medal and has since won fame across Iran.

"I know her personally," she said. "She gave high motivation to all Iranian girls, so now they believe that if they try hard, they can have great achievements – like her."

In the future, destiny awaits. Nejad Katesari's ambitions are not lowly: She aims to be both an Olympic champion and a national team coach. "I am happy that as a Muslim girl my hijab did not create any limitations," she said. And of course, that destiny can build on the foundation of a very impressive recent record. "By winning 75 points in five games without losing any, I could make history," she said.

(Source: worldtaekwondofederation.net)



Poem of the day

We know that alchemy transforms copper into gold.
This Sun doesn't want a crown or robe from God's
grace.

Rumi



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■ **Subscription & Distribution Dept.:** Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
■ **www.eshtarak.ir** Distributor: Padideh Novin Co. Tel: 88911433
■ **Webmaster:** webmaster@tehrantimes.com
■ **Printed at:** Kayhan - ISSN: 1017-94

Prayer Times

Noon: 11:50 Evening: 17:14 Dawn: 5:19 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:47 (tomorrow)

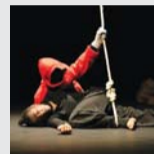
NOVEMBER 21, 2016

NEWS IN BRIEF



Nima Javidi on Gijon festival jury

T E H R A N — Iranian filmmaker Nima Javidi is on the international jury of the 54th Gijon International Film Festival, which is currently underway in the Spanish city. Spanish director Judith Colell presides over the jury, which also includes Spanish producer David Matamoros and Venezuelan director Claudia Pinto. The festival will be running until November 26.



"Mysterious Gift" tops at Thespis festival

T E H R A N — Iranian director and actor Yaser Khaseb's "Mysterious Gift" was honored as one of the three top plays at the 10th Thespis Monodrama Festival, which was held in Kiel, Germany from November 11 to 18.

"Mysterious Gift" narrates the story of birth to death of a human being.

"A Life in My Bag" by Nozomi Satomi from Japan and "Secondhand Time" by Elena Dudich from Belarus also were two other top winners of the festival.

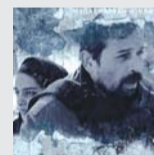


"Breakfast at Tiffany's" appears in Iranian bookstores

T E H R A N — A Persian version of American writer Truman Capote's novella "Breakfast at Tiffany's" has recently been published by Morvarid Publications in Tehran.

Translated by Ramin Azarbahram, the book is about a writer who becomes friends with his neighbor Holly Golightly. Holly's lifestyle confuses and fascinates him as in public she is very sophisticated, but when they are alone she changes into a sweetly vulnerable and naive girl.

Blake Edwards directed a film based on the novella in 1961.



"Another Time" named best at Kolkata filmfest

T E H R A N — "Another Time", Iranian director Nahid Hassanzadeh's debut feature, won the best film award in the Women Filmmakers' Competition at the 20th Kolkata International Film Festival, the organizers announced on Friday.

"Another Time" tells the story of Ghadir, a chemical plant worker who, after being arrested for protesting against not being paid his wages for over a year, returns from his prison sentence and is confronted with the fact that his daughter, Somayeh, has given birth to a child out of wedlock.

The award for best director in this section went to Yao Tingting from China for "Yesterday Once More".

Late Mexican singer Juan Gabriel wins three Latin Grammys

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Late Mexican singer and actor Juan Gabriel finally won his first ever Latin Grammys on Thursday, taking album of the year for "Los Duo 2" and two other awards three months after his death.

Gabriel, one of world's best-selling Latin singer-songwriters, also won for best traditional pop/vocal album, while his work for Puerto Rican singer India on "Intensamente India Con Canciones de Juan Gabriel," led her to a win for best salsa album.

Gabriel, who died in August at the age of 66 in California while on tour, had never won a Latin Grammy despite recording some 18 albums.

Colombians Shakira and Carlos Vives were the other big winners, taking home two Latin Grammys for their catchy summer song "La Bicicleta."

"La Bicicleta", the first collaboration between the two singers, won record and song of the year on a night that celebrated the best of Latin music.

Mexican sibling duo Jesse & Joy's "Un Besito Mas" was declared the best contemporary pop/vocal album and Mexican-American guitar player Julieta Venegas won the rock/pop album Latin Grammy for "Algo Sucede."

Colombian singer Manuel Medrano was named best new artist.

The three hour show featured performances from Marc Anthony, the newly-crowned Latin Recording Academy's person of the year, as well as Wisin, and Jesse & Joy.

The Latin Grammy nominees and winners are voted for by members of The Latin Recording Academy.

"Cyanide" has its world premiere in Canada

T E H R A N — "Cyanide", the latest **d e s k** film by Behruz Shoeibi about the Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization, an Iranian political-militant organization in exile that carried out many terrorist operations during the 1980s to overthrow the Iranian government, had its world premiere in Canada last week.

The film was screened in the Vancity Theater of Vancouver on November 16 and is due to go on screen in several other theaters in other Canadian cities, Aria Persys Film Production Company, which is the distributor of the film, has announced in a press release.

"Cyanide", which is currently on screen in Iranian theaters, has grossed over 2 billion rials (about \$55,000) so far.

Starring Hamed Komeili and Hanieh Tavassoli, "Cyanide" tells the story of Vahid Afrakhteh, a devout Muslim member of the MKO military unit during the reign of Iran's last monarch, Mohammad-Reza Shah.

He is gradually changed into an obedient Marxist under the influence of his fellow member Taqi Shahram.

Vahid is arrested by Iranian intelligence agents after assassinating a U.S. military envoy in Iran.

He voluntarily cooperates with SAVAK to arrest his bandmates, all of whom are executed.



Pedram Sharifi (L) and Atila Pesyani act in a scene from "Cyanide".

TMCA to review European cinema

T E H R A N — The **d e s k** Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMCA) plans to review European cinema by screening a lineup of 21 short, feature and documentary films from Germany, France, Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands and several other countries.

The screening program, which has been organized by TCMA in collaboration with Iran's Young Cinema Society, will begin today at 4 p.m., the TMCA announced in a press release on Sunday.

"Carte Blanche" by Jacek Lusinski and "Black Poodle White" by Dorota Wisniewska from Poland, "Among the Blind" by Eva Spreitzhofer from Austria, "Heidi" by Alain Gsponer from Switzerland and "To Be and to Have" by Nicolas Philibert from France are



A poster for "Carte Blanche" by Jacek Lusinski among the films.

"A Godsend" by German director Oliver Haffner and "Bon Voyage" by Dutch director Margien Rogaar will also be screened during the program, which will run until Friday.

Mar del Plata festival screening Iranian films

T E H R A N — The **d e s k** 31st Mar del Plata International Film Festival, which is currently underway in the Argentine city, is screening three Iranian films in its various sections.

"Lanturi" by Reza Dormishian has been selected for the special screenings section of the festival, which will run until November 27.

The film tells the story of a gang member Pasha who runs amok because Maryam, a socially committed, self-confident journalist, does not reciprocate his feelings. The badly injured young woman demands lex talionis – the law, applicable in Iran, of "an eye for an eye."

"Take Me Home", Abbas Kiarostami's documentary about the south of Italy, is among the films selected for the



Panorama Section.

In addition, "76 Minutes and 15 Seconds With Kiarostami", a montage film made by Kiarostami's close friend Seifollah Samadian, will go on screen in the Film on Film, a non-competitive section at the event.

PICTURE OF THE DAY Honaronline/Alireza Farahani



A group performs a tazieh (Iranian passion play) about Imam Hussein (AS) in the northern Iranian town of Ziabar on November 20, 2016 to commemorate Arbæen, which marks the end of the 40-day mourning period following the martyrdom of the Imam and his loyal companions on Ashura.

Centuries-old Ten Commandments tablet goes under hammer for \$850,000

DALLAS (Reuters) — A 1,500-year-old stone tablet with the earliest known chiseled inscription of the Ten Commandments was sold at a U.S. auction on Wednesday for \$850,000.

The two-foot (61 cm) square slab of white marble that weighs about 115 pounds (50 kg) was sold in Beverly Hills, California, by Dallas-based Heritage Auctions to a buyer who not to be immediately identified.

The tablet was put up for sale by Rabbi Shaul Deutsch, founder of the

Living Torah Museum, in Brooklyn, New York, with the stipulation that the buyer must put it on public display, the auction house said.

The tablet is chiseled with 20 lines of Samaritan script with principles that are fundamental to Judaism and Christianity. The inscription lists nine of the 10 commandments in the Book of Exodus, omitting "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" and replacing it with a rule for Samaritan worshippers, the auction house said.

It was probably chiseled during the late Roman or Byzantine era, between 300 and 500 A.D., and marked the entrance of an ancient synagogue that was likely destroyed by the Romans, according to the auction house.

The tablet was discovered in 1913 during excavation for a railroad line near the modern city of Yavneh in Western Israel. Someone, possibly a construction worker, acquired it and set it in a courtyard where it remained until 1943 when it was acquired by an archeologist, who owned it

until his death in 2000.

Deutsch acquired the tablet for temporary display through an agreement with the Israel Antiquities Authority and then bought it outright after a legal settlement, Heritage officials said.

Deutsch said he wished to sell the tablet and other artifacts from his collection chronicling Jewish life and history back to antiquity to raise money for a makeover of his museum. He said he plans to transform the museum with more hands-on exhibits to attract younger visitors.

Monroe's dress from JFK birthday sells for \$4.8 million at auction

NEW YORK (Reuters) — The skin-tight dress Marilyn Monroe wore for her rendition of "Happy Birthday" before then U.S. President John F. Kennedy at a 1962 gala was sold on Thursday for \$4.8 million at an auction in Los Angeles.

Ripley's "Believe it or Not" purchased the Jean Louis designed dress covered in sequins, the Beverly Hills-based Julien's Auctions said in a statement.

With its color matching her skin tone, the dress, which was so tight that Monroe had to be sewn into it.

"Marilyn Monroe singing 'Happy Birthday Mr. President' is certainly one of the most famous impromptu performances in American history," said Darren Julien, President and CEO of Julien's Auctions.

Monroe, one of the 20th century's most famous symbols, wore the dress as she sang "Happy Birthday to You" to Kennedy in a breathy performance at a May 19, 1962 fundraiser for the Democratic Party in Madison Square Garden in New York.