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Salehi to Moniz: U.S. must halt ISA enforcement

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi told U.S. Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz in a meeting in Vienna on Sunday that the U.S. administration must prevent implementation of the Iran Sanctions Act and remain committed to its obligations under the international nuclear agreement between Iran and great powers.

Iran's top officials, including President Hassan Rouhani, have said if the ISA is implemented it will violate the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Rouhani has asked his U.S. counterpart Barack Obama to use his authority to veto the ISA.

Salehi and Moniz, both nuclear physicists, worked on the technical aspects of the JCPOA according to which Iran slows down its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of financial and economic sanctions on Tehran.

The ISA was first adopted in 1996 to punish investments in Iran's energy industry. The extension was passed unanimously on Thursday by Senate. The ISA was first approved by the House of Representatives.

Salehi expressed concerns over the extension of the ISA for another 10 years, saying Iran has the right to respond properly if the ISA is implemented. →2

An implemented ISA would fly in face of nuclear deal

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's Foreign Ministry has warned the U.S. administration of signing into law of an anti-Iran act, saying it

goes against Washington's obligations under an international deal between Iran and world powers. "We believe extension of the ISA is flawed and

irrational," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi at a weekly press conference on Monday in Tehran. →2

Iran, Armenia plan to quadruple electricity exchange

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran and Armenia plan to boost the current capacity of electricity exchange between the two countries by fourfold in the near future.

Iranian Energy Minister Hamid Chitichian said that once the third Iran-Armenia power transmission line comes on stream, it will increase the current 300 megawatts (MW) capacity to 1200 MW, IRIB reported on Monday.

Chitichian made the remarks on the sidelines of the 14th Iran-Armenia joint economic committee meeting in Tehran, co-chaired by Armenian Minister of Energy Infrastructures and Natural Resources Ashot Manukyan.

The Iranian minister underscored Iran and Armenia's potentials for cooperation in different areas and urged the Armenian government to take necessary measures to facilitate trade between the two countries' companies.

According to Armenian press, the country is eager to carry out huge work to increase its trade turnover with Iran.

Back in October, Armenia held its first exclusive trade exhibition in Iran and some 91 Armenian companies active in the sectors of construction, transportation, agriculture, tourism, information technology, banking and insurance as well as medical equipment, food and garment showcased their latest products and achievements in the four-day event.



China warns against JCPOA breach

See page 2

Benevolent Ashtari gets one-year sentence by Indian local court

By Marjan Golpira

TEHRAN — On Monday, the local court of Rayagada in Odisha, Eastern India, ruled against Narges Kalbasi Ashtari, sentencing her to a year in prison and 300 rupees (\$4,300) in fines.

In a statement released Monday, Hassan Nourian, Iran's consulate general in Hyderabad, India, said upon hearing the ruling he appealed the decision.

Nourian, who has also been assigned by Iran's Foreign Ministry to follow the Narges case, called the judgment "unexpected."

In her personal account on Telegram, a messaging app, Narges said the process of appeal may take somewhere around a year or even more in India.

She does not seem optimistic about appealing the ruling for what she described as the "corrupt system of Mafia."

Narges is bailed out of jail until the appeal date.

Indian ambassador: This is bad news for us

In a phone message with the Tehran Times, Indian Ambassador to Tehran Saurabh Kumar expressed regret over the decision, saying, "This is not good news for us."

Ambassador Kumar noted that the district judge in Rayagada has made a determination in which can be appealed in a higher court, hoping that the right gets exercised.

Narges story

Eight years ago, Narges moved to India to tend to the most underprivileged children of that country.

She is the founder of Prishan Foundation, a children's home she established for orphans and blind children of District Odisha in Rayagada in 2011, followed by another children's home in the same village.

A couple of years after the establishment of her schools, in 2013, ASSIST took away Narges's first children's home, the orphanage, through "forged document" and "false promises." →13

Trump upset nuclear deal has not provided enough 'business opportunity' with Iran: Richard Nephew

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Richard Nephew, who worked on Iran sanctions issues for the Obama administration, says Donald Trump is disappointed that the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), has not opened up enough business opportunity for the United States in Iran.

"He is upset that there is not more opportunity for U.S. business deals in Iran in the existing deal," Nephew tells the Tehran Times in an exclusive interview.

Nephew, now a fellow at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, says Trump may "seek a more expansive agreement" with Iran.

Following is the text of the interview with Nephew:

■ During his campaigns, President-elect Donald Trump claimed that Obama had given too much concessions to Iran in the nuclear negotiations and argued that he wants to renegotiate the terms of the nuclear agreement. What is your prediction of his policy?

A: No one really knows yet what Donald Trump will do once he is in office. He has said variously that he wants to renegotiate the deal, presumably to seek more restrictions on Iran's nuclear program, and that he is upset that there is not more opportunity for U.S. business deals in Iran in the existing deal. He may, therefore, seek a more expansive agreement. Or, he may seek one that demands greater concessions on Iran's part. His positions during the campaign were unclear and he has yet to offer any further information since the election. →13

Iran, New Zealand ink educational MOU

SOCIETY TEHRAN

— Iranian Science Minister Mohammad Farhadi and New Zealander Trade Minister Todd McClay signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to bolster technology and scientific cooperation here on Sunday.

The two countries are seeking cooperation in fields of agriculture, information technology, environment, and climate change, as well as initiating student and faculty exchange programs and co-conducting research projects, IRNA quoted Farhadi as saying.

Mentioning some 300 Iranian PhD students studying at universities in New Zealand Farhadi pointed out that University of Auckland, University of Otago, Massey University, and University of Waikato are all assessed and approved by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

McClay, for his part, said that New Zealand education institutions stand to benefit following the signing of the education MOU in Iran.

"Under this arrangement, we aim to strengthen, promote, and

develop education cooperation and collaboration between our two countries including academic exchanges and research programs," he noted.

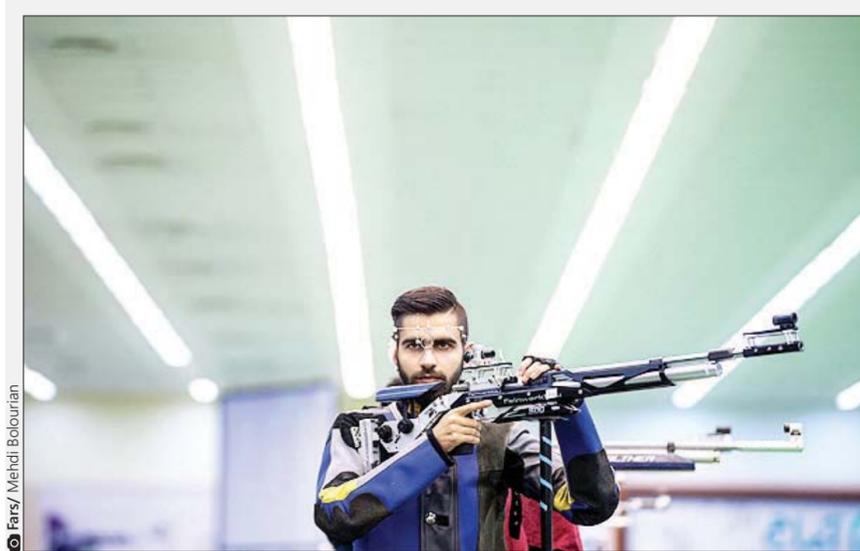
New Zealand is increasingly chosen as a destination for students looking for a world-class education, with 80 percent of Iranian students in New Zealand studying towards PhD qualification.

"I also welcomed the reclassification of New Zealand universities into the top tier of international rankings for Ira-

nian students looking to study overseas, further cementing New Zealand's position as a destination for students wanting a world-class education," he highlighted.

"I expect this will lead to more PhD students choosing to study in New Zealand," he added.

McClay who is leading New Zealand's first Trade Mission to Iran in more than a decade believes the visit has strengthened the New Zealand-Iran relationship following bilateral talks in Tehran.



Iran wins 9th Asian Airgun Championship

SPORTS TEHRAN — Iranian junior team claimed the title of the 9th Asian Airgun Championship.

The Iranian team won the title in competition underway in Tehran, Iran.

Hojatollah Pudineh won the gold medal in the event.

The Iranian team consists of Hojattollah Pudineh, Mahyar Sedaghat, Alireza Davoudabadi, Amir Asadi and Amirmohammad Nekounam.

Bangladesh and China finished in second and third place respectively. →13

Russia is 'No. 1 threat' to United States, Air Force secretary claims

The Secretary of the United States Air Force has once again claimed that Russia is the "No. 1 threat" faced by the U.S., with several defense officials expressing similar opinions. It follows promises by the U.S. President-elect Donald Trump to improve relations with Moscow.

"Russia is the No. 1 threat to the United States. We have a number of threats that we're dealing with, but Russia could be, because of the nuclear aspect, an existential threat to the United States," Air Force Secretary Deborah James told Reuters at the annual Reagan National Defense Forum on Saturday.

She went on to speak of "very worrying" incidents of "very dangerous airmanship" by Russia, as well as alleged cyber-attacks by Russian hackers on U.S. institutions.

James' statements were echoed by chief of Naval Operations Admiral John Richardson and Pentagon chief arms buyer Frank Kendall, all of whom voiced growing concern about what they claim is Russia's increasingly aggressive behavior.

Richardson told Reuters that increased Russian naval activities are taking place across the globe. He cited Moscow's deployment of a carrier strike group to the Mediterranean, the firing of missiles from ships in the Caspian Sea, increased submarine activities in the northern Atlantic, and a growing naval presence in the Pacific.

He said there are continuing incidents involving Russian aircraft buzzing U.S. vessels, with some coming as close as 30 feet. He also cited cases where ships were allegedly behaving "erratically."

Richardson went on to state that Washington and Moscow have an agreement to limit and discuss incidents at sea, but that the accord appears to be having limited impact on curbing such incidents.

"More communication with Russia would be a valuable thing," Richardson said, noting that dialogue between the U.S. and Russian naval officers has ceased since Russia's reunification with Crimea following the 2014 referendum. →13

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



S-300 missile system completely delivered: MP

POLITICS TEHRAN — The spokesman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee on Monday said all the components of the S-300 missile system has been delivered to Iran.

Of course the cooperation for the technical supports still continue between Iran and Russia, Hossein Naghavi Hosseini added, Mehr reported.

"Considering the complete execution of the S-300 contract, there is no need for Iran's complaint for the delay in the delivery," he said. "The system has been transferred to our country and now Iran has this air defense technology."



Sorouri elected Society of Pathseekers of the Islamic Revolution

POLITICS TEHRAN — Parviz Sorouri was on Sunday elected as the secretary general of the Society of Pathseekers of the Islamic Revolution.

Sorouri is a conservative politician who currently seats as a member of the City Council of Tehran. He represented Tehran in parliament for two terms.

The society is a principlist political group, founded in 2008. The group was formed out of a parliamentary group inside the Majlis.



UN resident coordinator summoned to Foreign Ministry

POLITICS TEHRAN — United Nations Resident Coordinator in Tehran Gary Lewis was summoned to the Foreign Ministry to hear complaint about what was called his 'unconventional and interventionist' statement, IRNA reported on Monday.

Peyman Saadat, director of the International Affairs, Environment Protection and Sustainable Development Department of the Foreign Ministry, conveyed the complaint to Mr. Lewis.

The Foreign Ministry official told Mr. Lewis that the specialized agencies of the United Nations in Iran should operate in the context of their specified tasks.



Keyan chief: Happy that Rouhani admitted to JCPOA violation

POLITICS TEHRAN — The editor-in-chief of the Keyhan newspaper has expressed happiness that President Hassan Rouhani on Sunday "clearly announced that the JCPOA has been violated", Tasnim reported on Monday.

"We hope that proper response is given" to the violation of the nuclear deal, Hossein Shariatmadari said in an address to the IRIB University.

"Our conflict with America is a conflict over identity. The story began when we placed the unadulterated Islam at the ruling position," he said.



Sanctions extension to serve Israel: American analyst

POLITICS TEHRAN — An American political analyst has said the U.S. Senate vote to extend the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA) is "clearly a violation" of the JCPOA that only favors the extremists in Israel.

"It must be recognized that the political class in the United States is enthralled to the domestic Israel Lobby, which is in turn closely aligned with Israel's Likud Party and the Netanyahu regime. The ambition of the Israel Lobby is the elimination of Iran as a regional competitor to Israel. The sanctions are a means towards that particular end," said Keith Preston, chief editor of attackthesystem.com.



U.S. should comply with JCPOA: ex-British Exchequer chancellor

POLITICS TEHRAN — A former chancellor of the British Exchequer has said the U.S. should comply with the JCPOA, the Iran nuclear deal.

Lord Norman Lamont, who is now the chairman of the British Iranian Chamber of Commerce, said the passage of the Iran Sanctions Act by the U.S. Senate is sensitive at a time when the U.S. is undergoing a power transition, ILNA reported.

In the meantime, he underlined, U.S. President-Elect Donald Trump is not as opposed to the JCPOA as he says.

Iran urges Islamic countries to counter terrorist movements

POLITICS TEHRAN - Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said on Monday that it is necessary that Islamic countries cooperate to counter the terrorist movements.

Larijani made the remarks in a joint press conference with Speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly of Indonesia Zulkifli Hasan in Tehran.

In an indirect reference to conflicts engulfing Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and Libya, Larijani said, "Crises have been created in the region which have destabilized some countries that from security point of view is beneficial to Israel."

He reiterated the Islamic Republic's position that these conflicts in regional countries "should be settled politically and through dialogue".

The senior parliamentarian also said Iran and Indonesia share close views on the Middle East issues.



© Tehran Times/Maryam Kamyab

An implemented ISA would fly in face of nuclear deal

"Our reaction will be primarily political and legal, and if that does not work, then we will go to other packages we have already anticipated in each specific area," Foreign Ministry spokesman says.

Qassemi was making the comments in reaction to a recent overwhelming vote by the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate in favor of renewing the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA).

Once signed into law by President Barack Obama, the act would authorize sanctions against Iran for a ten-year period.

If not extended, the ISA expires by the end of 2016.

The ISA, which was the Iran and Libya Sanction Act until 2006 after it was ratified in 1996, was introduced during the first term of the Clinton administration to rule out investment in Iran's energy sector.

The bill has drawn vehement condemnation from Tehran which says enactment of the ISA will run counter to the terms of the nuclear deal finalized in 2015.

Under the deal signed with six world powers of the U.S., Russia, China, Germany, France, and England, Iran committed to curb its nuclear program in exchange

for sanctions relief.

Washington will violate the JCPOA if it does not remove all individuals and entities set forth in the ISA in connection with Iran's nuclear program, as stipulated in the nuclear deal.

However, Qassemi appeared upbeat toward the fate of the deal, citing that it is an internationally-backed pact which Washington cannot violate unilaterally.

"I'm optimistic toward BARJAM (JCPOA) getting on the right track and the U.S. leaving the current path of extending the sanctions," he said. "It will have a strong international backing and its contravention is not something that could happen easily."

The Iranian diplomat further called on other signing parties to keep their side of the bargain.

"We expect from the three European countries (of France, England, and Germany), China, and Russia to stand by Iran and this is our expectation that these countries play their historic role in this regard."

In a meeting with Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Beijing on Monday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi underscored that "What is important is that all resolve whatever problem that may arise through negotiation and consultation in the light of the principle of commitment to the terms of the JCPOA."

Salehi to Moniz: U.S. must halt ISA enforcement

Moniz said that U.S. President Barack Obama will be informed about Iran's concerns in this regard. He also said his government will be committed to the JCPOA.

According to IRNA, Moniz said the U.S. president will prevent the implementation of the parts of the ISA which runs contrary to the

JCPOA. Salehi and Moniz are in Vienna to attend the International Conference on Nuclear Security: Commitments and Actions. The conference is arranged by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It started from December 5 and lasts until December 9.



Moniz said the U.S. president will prevent the implementation of the parts of the ISA which runs contrary to the JCPOA.

China warns against JCPOA breach

POLITICS TEHRAN — Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has warned of any violation of the JCPOA, a nuclear agreement that was signed between Iran and six world powers in 2015, IRNA reported.

Wang made the remarks at a joint press conference with visiting Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Beijing on Monday.

"The nuclear deal is a multilateral agreement endorsed by the UN Security Council, and its implementation must not be affected by any country's domestic affairs," the senior Chinese official noted.

The comments came days after the U.S. Congress voted unanimously in favor of a bill, dubbed Iran Sanctions Act (ISA), renewing anti-Iran sanctions for another 10 years. Iran has said an implementation of the act will be a violation of the nuclear deal.

"Of course, implementation of the JCPOA



Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif (L) meets China's Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli in Beijing on Monday.

is a long process and it is natural for problems and differences to occur along the course," Press TV quoted Wang as saying.

"What is important is that all resolve whatever problem that may arise through negotiation and consultation in the light of the principle of commitment to the terms of the JCPOA"

Zarif, for his part, called on all relevant

parties to fulfill their obligations under the JCPOA, saying that Iran and China "would not allow for a single party to disregard the nuclear agreement."

"We will not allow any party to unilaterally undertake any actions that are in violation of the nuclear agreement," Zarif insisted.

The two sides also discussed the latest

developments in the Middle East region and across the world and exchanged views on ways to develop bilateral relations.

Zarif said Tehran is ready to develop ties with Beijing in different fields, pointing out that Iran and China share the same views on dealing with regional and international affairs.

Pointing to a January visit to Iran by Chinese President Xi Jinping, Zarif said, "We believe that the agreements reached between the two sides during that visit could improve relations between the two countries."

He also thanked the Chinese foreign minister for his hospitality and expressed satisfaction with his visit.

The Iranian foreign minister arrived in the Chinese capital on Monday at the head a large political and economic delegation after a two-day visit to India.

Zarif and his team will fly to Japan after the China visit.

Iran, Armenia mulling project to link Persian Gulf to Black Sea

POLITICS TEHRAN — First Vice President Es'hag Jahangiri on Monday urged Iran and Armenia to expand cooperation for implementation of a project linking the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea.

In a meeting with Armenian Energy and Natural Resources Minister Ashot Manukyan in Tehran, Jahangiri

emphasized that the both neighboring countries need to elevate economic and trade ties to a level proportional to their political relations.

Jahangiri noted that the Islamic Republic sees no limitation in developing ties with neighboring Armenia, IRNA reported.

He also called for closer ties in banking and customs

services. Manukyan, for his part, said Armenia looks to the Black Sea-Persian Gulf corridor as a top priority.

The Armenian minister also voiced his country's willingness to use the Islamic Republic's experience in setting up free trade zones. Tehran launched the 14th session of the Iran-Armenia Joint Commission on Monday.

Tehran says no contact with Trump team over nuclear deal

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran has made no contact with President-elect Donald Trump and his transition team over an internationally-backed nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, including the U.S.

"The (incoming) American administration has not been formed yet, and some time is left until Trump moves to the White

House formally," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman told a weekly press conference on Monday.

During the U.S. election campaign, Trump called the nuclear pact a "disaster" and "the worst deal ever negotiated". He has also admitted it would be hard to overturn an agreement enshrined in a United Nations resolution.

There are concerns over Trump's hands-off approach to the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Saudi Arabia and Israel have been harsh critics of the nuclear deal.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has recently said he and Donald Trump will discuss the "bad" nu-

clear deal with Iran after the U.S. president-elect enters the White House.

Also, last week former Iranian nuclear negotiator and a present researcher at Princeton University Seyed Hossein Mousavian said the Saudi officials are lobbying a big deal worth of billions of dollars with Trump, expecting an anti-Iran policy from him instead.

Russia will keep up support for Syria in anti-terror fight: Lavrov

The Russian foreign minister says Moscow and the United States will soon hold talks on the withdrawal of militants from the city of Aleppo, stressing his country's full support for Syria in its fight against the Takfiri terrorists.

"During the Russian-American consultations, concrete routes and timing of the withdrawal of all militants from eastern Aleppo will be discussed. Once we reach an agreement, a ceasefire will be put in place," Sergey Lavrov said on Monday.

He added that Moscow and Washington will begin the talks on the militants' pullout in Geneva on Tuesday evening or Wednesday morning, noting the discussions will take place upon a proposal made by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry.

Russia's top diplomat added that any militant group that refuses to leave eastern Aleppo after Moscow reaches a deal with the U.S. will be treated as terrorist.

The negotiations have been delayed by a few days at Washington's request, Lavrov noted. Lavrov also slammed as counterproductive a draft resolution on Aleppo truce that is set to be put to vote at the United Nations Security Council later in the day, saying it is aimed at undermining Russia-U.S. efforts, hinting at the possibility of Russia vetoing the measure.

"Taking into consideration the outcome of the previous pauses [in the conflict], there is absolutely no doubt that the 10-day ceasefire which backers of the draft resolution generously want to provide the militants with would surely be used for re-grouping and rearming the extremists and would slow down the liberation of eastern Aleppo from them," he said.

The comments come as the UN Security Council is reportedly set to vote on the Aleppo resolution calling for a temporary ceasefire in the embattled Syrian city as well as aid delivery there.



According to diplomatic sources, the resolution, drafted by Egypt, New Zealand and Spain, will be put to vote during a Monday session.

It urges all parties to the conflict in Syria to "immediately cease any attacks in the city of Aleppo to allow urgent humanitarian needs to be addressed" for an initial period of seven days that could be extended, the sources added.

The draft resolution calls for allowing humanitarian aid delivery to people trapped in the militant-occupied parts of eastern Aleppo. The document also says that the temporary ceasefire will be a prelude to a cessation of hostilities across Syria.

The resolution was reportedly drawn up after extended negotiations with Russia, which has been providing air cover to the Syrian army's ground operations against Takfiri terrorist groups for a year.

It is still uncertain whether Moscow, which had proposed a renewable

ceasefire of 24 hours, excluding terrorist groups such as the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (Front for the Conquest of the Levant) formerly known as the al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra), will veto the resolution.

Moscow and Damascus argue that lengthy pauses in the fight against militants could pave the way for them to re-group and rebuild their strength.

Meanwhile, Canada has asked on behalf of 74 of the 193 member states of the UN General Assembly to hold a plenary meeting for a vote on another resolution on humanitarian aid in Aleppo. No date has been set for the event so far.

Unlike the Security Council, no country has the right to veto the decisions of the General Assembly which are not binding either.

The assembly, according to a provision dating back to 1950, can take over from the Security Council when it is too divided to act.

Syrian government forces, who are in full control of western Aleppo, have been conducting operations to purge militants from the city's east.

Backed by Russia's airpower, Syrian army forces and their allies have dealt heavy blows to the militants over the past few weeks.

On the Aleppo front

On Monday, the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said the Syrian forces had managed to retake the neighborhood of Qadi Askar overnight.

The monitoring group also said the army had earlier captured Karm al-Myessar, Karm al-Qatarji and Karm al-Tahan neighborhoods.

Syrian forces have now surrounded Shaar neighborhood, whose potential recapture would bring back 70 percent of east Aleppo under the government's control, it added.

Syria's official news agency SANA quoted on Sunday a military source as saying that government troops had restored security and stability to new areas in the eastern part of Aleppo.

The Syrian army and its allies have reportedly taken control of the neighborhoods of Myessar, Tahhan as well as Qadi Askar al-Haoz roundabouts. The army's engineering units have begun dismantling bombs planted by terrorists in those areas.

The army also purged the Eye Hospital in Qadi Askar neighborhood of the terrorists.

The militants, however, continued to launch attacks across the country on Sunday. They fired rockets at the towns of Nubl and al-Zahraa, north of Aleppo, injuring 10 people, including three children.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists also launched mortar attacks in al-Qussour neighborhood in the city of Dayr al-Zawr, injuring six civilians, including two children.

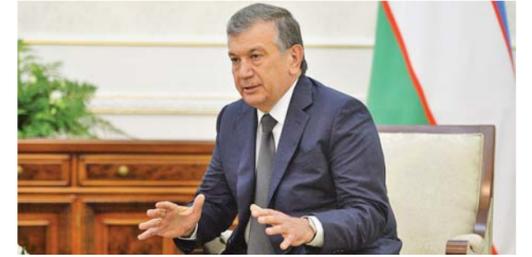
(Source: SANA)

Uzbekistan's acting president wins election overwhelmingly

Uzbek election officials say that acting President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has overwhelmingly won a tightly controlled presidential election.

Mirziyoyev garnered 88.61 percent of the vote, according to the head of the Central Election Commission.

Murza-Ulugbek Abdusalomov said during a briefing in Tashkent Monday that Mirziyoyev got 15.9 million votes.



Sunday's poll was the first election in the Central Asian country since the August death of authoritarian leader Islam Karimov, who ruled for 27 years. Karimov's demise sparked fears of a power battle but the country's regional clans quickly grouped around Mirziyoyev. Uzbekistan, Central Asia's most populous nation, is rich in natural resources and borders Afghanistan, making it of strategic interest to Russia, the U.S. and China.

(Source: AP)

Trump attacks China as Taiwan seeks to soothe anger from phone call with President-elect

As the United States President-elect Donald Trump attacked China on Twitter, Taiwan sought desperately to soothe the Asian superpower's anger over a phone call with the new leader of the United States.

The Asian superpower lashed out on the weekend after Trump took a phone call from the small island nation, throwing decades of diplomatic relations between the two into chaos. A U.S. leader has not talked to a Taiwanese leader for nearly four decades.

Taiwan's China affairs minister urged the superpower to take a "calm attitude" on Monday (5 December) to the 10-minute call Trump took from Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen.

On Saturday China lodged an official complaint and "stern representations" with the Obama administration about the call. "The one China principle is the political basis of the China-U.S. relationship," it said. These diplomatic norms were established by President Richard Nixon and Chairman Mao Tse-tung in 1972 when the U.S. established that Taiwan is part of China.

Trump took to Twitter on Sunday suggesting China cannot dictate policy to the U.S. and attacked the superpower for its policies. "Did China ask us if it was OK to devalue their currency (making it hard for our companies to compete)," he wrote, or "to build a massive military complex in the middle of the South China Sea? I don't think so!"

During the call Taiwan's leader Tsai said she hoped Trump "would continue to support more opportunities for Taiwan to participate in international issues."

It also emerged on the weekend that a representative of the Trump Organization met with Zheng Wenyan, the mayor of the city of Taoyuan in Taiwan, about the possibility of investing in the city's airport expansion by building luxury hotels in September.

(Source: IBT)

'ISIL retreats from major site in Mosul'

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group has completely withdrawn from a major site they were using for logistical and housing purposes in the Iraqi city of Mosul after destroying all buildings there as security forces approached, a report says.

Iraq's BasNews quoted an informed source as saying that the ISIL terrorists withdrew from all the buildings of Mosul University, whose buildings they were using as housing centers and for manufacturing weapons, over the past two days.

The source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that the ISIL terrorists had destroyed all the buildings and internal roads on the premises with bulldozers, themselves seized from the Mosul municipality back in 2014, when they overran the city.

The "scorched earth" tactic was apparently aimed at hindering the advancement of the Iraqi forces engaged in operations to liberate the city.

The source said that the presence of the terrorists in Mosul's residential areas had declined.

He also said that the ISIL terrorists had transferred their equipment to areas to "the right side of Mosul, west of Tigris River"

It also urged the Iraqi forces to set up safe corridors to allow Iraqis flee the ISIL-held areas.

ISIL media center uncovered

In another event, a high-ranking Iraqi security official says government forces have managed to uncover and dismantle a media and information center run by the ISIL terrorist group south of Mosul as they try to flush the extremists out of their last urban stronghold in the country.

Commander of Federal Police Forces Lieutenant General Raed Shaker Jawdat told Arabic-language All Iraq News news agency on Sunday that Iraqi forces made the discovery in the town of Hammam al-Alil, situated about 30 kilometers south of Mosul, on Sunday.

Jawdat added that Iraqi security forces recovered a number of state-of-the-art cameras, dozens of video files, a considerable amount of money and numerous confidential documents from the site.

(Source: agencies)

Trump not valuing our consultations: John Kerry

The United States Secretary of State John Kerry says his department's recommendations have no "value" in the eyes of President-elect Donald Trump, who has been making phone calls to world leaders since his election on November 8, a policy which the State Department considers controversial.

Speaking at the Saban Forum in Washington on Sunday, Kerry said neither Trump nor his transition team had contacted the State Department before speaking to leaders of other countries.

Trump risked China's wrath on Friday, when he talked to Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, a move that made him the first U.S. president or president-elect to hold a conversation with Taiwan's leader since severing ties with the territory in 1979.

The Republican president-elect also called Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif an "amazing" leader during a phone conversation on Wednesday, a praise that was looked unfavorably by India, Pakistan's arch-rival.

"I do think there's a value, obviously, on having at least the recommendations, whether you choose to follow them or not is a different issue, but I think it's valuable



to ask people, who've worked the desk and have worked it for a long period of time, their input on what's

the current state, is there some particular issue at the moment," Kerry said. "I think that's valuable and I would certainly recommend it, but obviously that hasn't happened in a few cases."

Unlike Trump, Vice President-elect Mike Pence has been using the State Department's recommendations regularly, Kerry said.

The outgoing secretary of state noted that he was trying to stay "a thousand miles away from the Trump transition process" and hoped that communications with the team would improve once Trump picked his secretary of state.

"I think it's important for me to be able to brief whoever the final nominee is going to be for secretary of state and I don't want to come at it with any engagements, with any of the choices they are making publicly," he added.

According to Trump's adviser Kellyanne Conway, the New York billionaire was considering at least four candidates for the job.

Kerry's comments underscore Trump's reluctance to receive advice from the Obama administration.

(Source: Press TV)

UN launches record aid appeal of \$22.2bn for 2017

The United Nations needs a record \$22.2bn to cover humanitarian relief projects next year, covering the needs of 93 million people in 33 countries, UN humanitarian chief Stephen O'Brien said on Monday.

"This is a reflection of a state of humanitarian need in the world not witnessed since the Second World War," he told a news conference, adding that 80 percent of the needs stemmed from man-made conflicts, such as those in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Nigeria and South Sudan.

According to Financial Trancing Service (FTS), a UN-managed site tracking humanitarian aid, as of November 30, 2016's humanitarian aid appeals were funded at 51.4 percent.

The World Food Program (WFP), which has launched an emergency response in Yemen, calculates that millions of people there are on the brink of famine.

Additionally, protracted wars in Syria and Iraq have led to a crisis of millions of refugees, as well as internally displaced people.

Funding shortfalls for those crises have already left the UN's refugee and children's agencies (UNHCR and UNICEF) struggling to meet the needs of families fleeing violence in great numbers.

The world is now seeing the highest number of refugees and internally displaced populations since World War II.

According to the UNHCR, there are currently 65.3 million people forcibly displaced in the world, with half of them being children.

(Source: agencies)

May urged to pressure Bahrain regime on human rights

British Prime Minister Theresa May has been urged to pressure the government of Bahrain over resorting to crackdown to silence the voice of dissent in the Persian Gulf tiny nation, when she visits leaders of the country along with other regional Arab states.

Human rights groups, including Human Rights Watch, called on British premier on Sunday to raise concerns about the human rights situation in Bahrain as she attends a meeting of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC).

The premier, meanwhile, released a statement, commenting about the harsh crackdown in the country, where most of the population are Shia Muslims.

She said the only way to solve the problem is to engage "with these countries and working with them to encourage and support their plans for reform."

Thousands of anti-regime protesters have held numerous demonstrations in Bahrain on an almost daily basis ever since a popular uprising began in the country on February 14, 2011. The protesters demand that the House of Khalifah dynasty relinquish power.

Scores of people have lost their lives and hundreds of others sustained injuries or got arrested as a result of the regime's crackdown.

Besides giving the security forces carte blanche in their treatment of protesters, the regime has also been using the legal channels at its disposal to muzzle dissent.

Leaders of the House of Saud regime, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain and Oman are set to have dinner with May on Tuesday.

(Source: Press TV)

Saudi fighter jets attack Pakistani boat off Yemen, kill six sailors

At least six Pakistani sailors have reportedly been killed after a Saudi strike targeted their boat off the Yemeni coast.

The Saudi air raid targeted the boat, which was carrying 12 Pakistani sailors off Mukha coast in the Yemeni province of Ta'izz on Sunday, Yemen's Saba news agency said.

According to the report, the other six sailors are still unaccounted for.

The deadly raid comes as the House of Saud regime continues its brutal military campaign against neighboring Yemen, which was launched in March 2015 to reinstall the former Yemeni government.

Yemen's former president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi has ordered a major assault on the country's Red Sea coast against Ansarullah (Houthi) movement fighters and allied army forces, who have been defending the nation against a deadly Saudi offensive.

Reports said on Sunday that Saudi warplanes had intensified their air raids on the province of Ta'izz, which has witnessed heavy fighting on the ground between pro-Hadi militants and Yemeni armed forces in recent days.

Meanwhile, a child was killed as Saudi fighter jets bombed residential buildings in the province of Sa'ada.

The girl's father and two of her brothers were also injured in the attack, which targeted the province's district of Razih.

In the same province, another airstrike hit the Baqim district and left a Yemeni woman dead and two children wounded.

The Saudi military aggression has left at least 11,400 civilians dead, according to the latest tally by a Yemeni monitoring group.

(Source: Press TV)

Zanganeh will attend OPEC and non-OPEC meeting on Dec. 10

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian Oil Ministry's SHA-d e s k NA news agency reported on Monday that Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh will attend the upcoming OPEC meeting with the non-OPEC producers which is due to be held in Vienna on December 10.



According to Reuters OPEC will meet non-OPEC countries to finalize the limit pact approved on November 30.

Earlier this week, Oman's Minister of Oil and Gas Mohammed bin Hamad Al Rumhi and Azerbaijan's Energy Minister Nateq Aliyev also announced their readiness to attend the event.

Iranian railways' new head appointed

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The Iranian cabinet in their Sunday evening meeting appointed Saeed Mohammadzadeh as the new head as well as board of directors' chairman of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (IRIR), replacing Mohsen Pour Seyed Aqaee, IRNA reported.



During the meeting, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani underscored the vitality of developing Iran's railway network through attracting foreign investments.

Mohammadzadeh has previously been the deputy head of IRIR for technical and infrastructural affairs.

Iranian trade delegation to embark for Czech, Denmark in early 2017

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) plans to dispatch a trade delegation headed by TCCIMA Chairman Masoud Khansari to Czech Republic and Denmark from January 29 to February 3, 2017, the official website of TCCIMA announced.

The upcoming visit follows invitations made by Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic and Confederation of Danish Industries.

The Iranian delegates- active in the fields of industrial and mining equipment, heavy machinery, renewable energies, environmental technology, medicine and medical equipment, as well as food and dairy industries- will visit their Czech and Danish counterparts during their six-day visit.

Intl. fishery exhibition to open in Tehran today

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The 1st International Fisheries and Seafood Industry Exhibition of Iran (IFEX 2016) will open today at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.



According to IRIB news agency, the four-day exhibit aims to create opportunities for better interaction of Iranian and foreign companies active in fisheries industry, attract foreign investors as well as transfer new technologies and knowledge into the country.

The event will be participate by 60 Iranian and foreign exhibitors from Italy, Turkey, Greece and China.

Manufacturers and entrepreneurs active in various fields including fishing equipment, aquatic breeding, processing of fishery products, seafood production and packaging will showcase their products and services in the exhibition.

Delegates from various countries including Turkey, Italy, Croatia, Greece, Poland and China have expressed interest in visiting the fair.

Iran's car output up 131.7% in a month

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian car makers manufactured 129,031 vehicles in the eight calendar month of Aban (October 22-November 20), with 131.7 percent rise from 55,693 vehicles manufactured in the same month last year, ISNA reported on Monday.

Also, the number of cars manufactured in the country during the first eight months of the current calendar year (March 20-November 20) stood at 820,463 showing 35.9 percent rise compared to the same period of time in the preceding year, Tasnim news agency had reported on November 29.

Iran is scheduled to manufacture 1.35 million cars by



the end of the current calendar year, Deputy Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Mohsen Salehnia announced in early April.

As Salehnia underlined, the government seeks to improve the quality as well as the quantity of the domestically produced cars on the way to boost their exports.

Turkey's inflation dip gives little solace to central bank

A surprise slowdown in Turkey's consumer prices in November is unlikely to ease investor pressure on the central bank to raise interest rates after the lira plunged to a record.

The annual inflation rate dropped to seven percent, mainly due to low food prices, according to official data released on Monday. The median estimate in a Bloomberg survey of economists was an acceleration to 7.4 percent.

The central bank unexpectedly raised borrowing costs last month, a decision that failed to stem a rapid depreciation of the lira, amid investor concern that policy makers will hesitate to deliver

more increases to counter the impact of higher U.S. interest rates. At the same time, the central bank is also under pressure from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to cut borrowing costs.

"The weaker lira will take its toll on prices from December, when consumer inflation will likely start accelerating again," according to Kapital FX economist Enver Erkan, whose forecast of 7.1 percent was the closest among analysts surveyed by Bloomberg. "If inflation is an indicator, Turkey needs to increase interest rates, but it will prove to be difficult because of concerns over growth." The lira trimmed losses after the in-

flation data and was trading 0.4 percent lower at 3.5354 per dollar at 11:50 a.m. in Istanbul. The currency has depreciated about 11 percent over the past month, the most among emerging markets.

Erdogan said on Saturday that his political enemies are trying to sabotage the economy by speculating on the stock market, foreign exchange rate and interest rates after failing to overthrow his administration in a July coup. He advocated converting dollar savings into liras and gold, together with lower lending costs, to support the economy. After last month's rate increase, the

central bank said it expected food prices and lackluster consumer demand may mitigate the inflation risk. The bank's full-year inflation forecast is 7.5 percent in 2016, dropping to 6.5 percent next year. It has missed its five percent target for five years in a row.

Food prices rose an annual 3.6 percent through November, compared with 5.2 percent in the previous month. Clothing prices rose at an annual rate of 4.6 percent from 6.1 percent.

A gauge of core inflation, which excludes volatile items including food and gold, was little changed at 6.99 percent. (Source: Bloomberg)

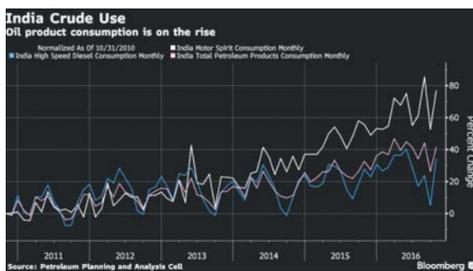
Oil market's new engine losing steam on Modi cash crackdown

Oil demand growth in the world's fastest-growing crude market may weaken as the government's cash crackdown slows the economy.

Diesel and gasoline use, which account for more than half of India's oil demand, will slow or contract this month and possibly early next year, according to Ivy Global Energy Pte., FGE and Centrum Broking Ltd. Expansion in the world's fastest-growing major economy is widely expected to ease temporarily after Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month withdrew high-value currency notes in a country where almost all consumer payments are in cash.

"As the Indian economy largely depends on various cash-intensive sectors, the demonetization saga will no doubt slow down economic growth in the near term," said Sri Paravaikkarasu, head of East of Suez oil at FGE in Singapore. "Moving into the first quarter, an expected slowdown in the economic growth should marginally drag down oil consumption particularly that of transport fuels."

India's \$2 trillion economy imports more than 80 percent of its crude requirement and the International Energy Agency expects it to be the fastest-growing consumer through 2040. At a time when oil prices have hovered around \$50 a barrel, the slowdown of a key demand center may take some steam out of an



Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries-driven price rally after the group approved its first supply cut in eight years.

Brent crude, which added 15 percent last week, lost 0.9 percent to \$53.97 a barrel at 12:17 p.m. Singapore time on Monday.

Diesel consumption could fall as much as 12 percent and gasoline demand as much as 7 percent this month, according to Tushar Tarun Bansal, director at Ivy Global Energy.

"I expect to see a much smaller growth in diesel demand of about 2 percent in the first quarter," Bansal said. "But as the year ticks on, growth is expected to

pick up further and normalize in the second quarter."

■ Scooters, motorcycles

The possible slowdown this month and into next year is a reversal of the demand spike seen in November as people rushed to fill their tanks to take advantage of a rule allowing fuel retailers to accept the banned 500 and 1,000 rupee (\$15) bills until Dec. 2.

Gross domestic product, which grew a slower-than-estimated 7.3 percent in July to September, will slump to 6.5 percent over the next quarter, according to the median estimate in a Bloomberg survey of 14 economists. A private gauge also signaled a slowdown in India's manufacturing in November, the first economic indicator since Modi's Nov. 8 decision.

Sales of scooters and motorcycles, one of the key drivers for gasoline demand, have also taken a hit. India's second largest two-wheeler manufacturer Bajaj Auto Ltd. said its local sales fell 10.3 percent in November, while sales at India's largest sport utility vehicle-maker Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. declined 22 percent in November.

"Domestic fuel consumption will certainly come off this quarter," said Sachin Mehta, analyst at Centrum Broking. "The impact could remain for two months or so. This is a momentary phenomenon." (Source: Bloomberg)

Bangladesh to share findings of heist inquiry with Philippines

Bangladesh will share findings from its investigation into how unidentified hackers pulled off one of the world's biggest cyber bank heists to help speed up recovery of the stolen funds, its law minister said on Monday.

Bangladesh has up to now declined to disclose its findings of an inquiry into how the hackers used stolen Bangladesh Bank credentials to try to transfer nearly \$1 billion from its U.S. Federal Reserve account in February.

Philippine Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez, who last week met a Bangladesh delegation led by Minister of Law Anisul Huq, said Manila "strongly recommended" Dhaka share the results of its investigation.

While the Bangladesh central bank, the Bangladesh Bank, had previously declined to release any inquiry findings, saying it wanted to deny the perpetrators knowledge of the investigation, it would now do so, Huq told Reuters.

"It is part of co-operation. We will give them an update of our investigation," he said. The hackers managed to transfer \$81 million via an account at the New York Federal Reserve to four accounts in fake names at a branch of

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp in the Philippines.

Most of the money was laundered through Philippine casinos and only about \$15 million was recovered from a gaming junket operator and returned to Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has said it wants the Rizal Commercial Banking Corp (RCBC) to compensate it for its losses, but the bank refuses to pay and has said the Bangladesh central bank was "negligent".

Huq last week said RCBC should shoulder the burden for accepting stolen funds.

RCBC was fined a record one billion pesos (\$20 million) by the Philippine central bank for its failure to prevent the movement of the stolen Bangladesh money through its bank.

Huq said paying that fine was tantamount to accepting culpability.

A Philippine anti-money laundering agency last month filed charges against five RCBC officials in connection with the theft.

No arrests have been made despite investigations by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Interpol, Bangladesh police and authorities in the Philippines. (Source: Reuters)

NEWS IN BRIEF



France's Sapin sees no euro risk from Italy

Italians remain strongly committed to the European Union despite their rejection of constitutional reforms in a referendum and there is no systemic risk to the euro zone, French Finance Minister Michel Sapin said on Monday.

Speaking to reporters on arrival at a meeting of euro zone finance ministers in Brussels, he said Italy was a "solid country" and that the defeat for Prime Minister Matteo Renzi was a domestic issue and not a rejection of the EU.



Italy five-year CDS at three-year high after referendum vote

Italian debt insurance costs surged on Monday after a resounding defeat for Prime Minister Matteo Renzi in a referendum threatened to tip the euro zone's third-biggest economy into political turmoil.

Five-year Italian credit default swaps rose nine basis points from Friday's close to 180 bps, their highest since December 2013, according to data from Markit.

Renzi has said he will resign and this may open the door to early elections next year and the possibility of an anti-euro party, the 5-Star Movement, gaining power.



Coca-Cola opens new \$100m plant in Cambodia

Coca-Cola Co opened a new \$100 million facility in Cambodian capital Phnom Penh on Monday to expand its production capacity in the Southeast Asian nation.

The plant, situated on a 12-hectare land in a special economic zone on the outskirts of the city, will employ 817 people and it will be powered by solar power, Prime Minister Hun Sen said at the inauguration ceremony.

The investment is part of Coca-Cola's expansion, which began four years ago, said Irial Finan, executive vice president of Coca-Cola.

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TEHRAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,
INDUSTRIES, MINES AND AGRICULTURE

Form of Request for Proposal (REF)

Notice of Selecting Competent Advisor for Designing a Model of Assessment/Audit of Private Sector Companies within a System Based on Corporate Governance and Anti-Corruption

- The formal joining of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nation Convention against Corruption requires assessments and audits of all relevant entities involved including the private sector companies;
- Since the private sector is one of the three components of good governance, therefore, setting it free from corruption would be considered as an essential step towards promoting health in the country. In so doing, designing a model for auditing private sector companies is now necessary.

The aim is to design a transparent, clear, simple and easy to apply model to serve as the basis for assessing and auditing private sector companies, whether production-oriented or service-oriented, that are members of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture. The request for assessment/audit shall be totally voluntary and the companies that manage to receive the relevant Certificate will be granted with certain privileges.

Specifications include :

- Principles
- Self reported method
- Self assessment/audit method
- Independent assessment/audit procedure
- Basics of assessment /audit
- All resources required to conduct assessment / audit
- Structure of assessment/ audit model
- Methods

Basics of assessment/audit include:

The documents and recorders of the following four international bodies:

- Transparency International (TI)
- United Nations Global Compact (UNGC)
- World Economic Forum Partnering Against Corruption Initiative (WEFPA)
- International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture intends to select an advisor for designing the said-above model from among real or legal persons having similar activity experience who are assumed to send, no later than 20/11/2016, their full characteristics and their relevant activity records to the following address: No. 10, 21th Street Khalid Islamboli (Vozara) Avenue, Tehran, Iran, P. O. Box/Postal Code: 1511917613
Email: int.edu@Tccim.ir

Austria rejects anti-immigrant populist in presidential election



Van der Bellen
By Anton Troianovski



Norbert Hofer

Alexander Van der Bellen's victory over right-wing opponent Norbert Hofer marks break with series of anti-establishment electoral wins in West.

Austrians voted against an anti-immigrant populist as their next president by a resounding margin, bucking a trend of nationalist electoral successes across the West.

Center-left candidate Alexander Van der Bellen beat back a challenge from his right-wing opponent Norbert Hofer, winning 53.3% of the vote in the country's runoff election, according to a final count of votes cast on Sunday and a projection of mail-in ballot results. Hofer congratulated Van der Bellen on his victory in a Facebook post and called on all Austrians to "stick together and work together."

The 72-year-old Van der Bellen's election to the largely ceremonial post notched a rare victory for supporters of European integration and liberal internationalism in a year in which nationalism and populism has swept across Europe and the U.S.

"I fought for a pro-European Austria from the start," he said Sunday evening on Austrian television. He promised to uphold the values of "freedom, equality, and solidarity with all those who at the moment aren't well off in our economic system."

The Freedom Party's Hofer would have become the first right-wing populist president in postwar Western Europe if he had prevailed. Like other populist politicians across the continent, Hofer wanted to roll back the power of the European Union, toughen border controls, crack down on the flow of migrants to Europe.

"Let us together allow reason rather than extremism to lead our decisions," Van der Bellen said in his closing video appeal to voters. "Let me be your president of the middle." Van der Bellen's victory capped a nearly yearlong Austrian

presidential campaign that brought to light widespread discontent with the country's political establishment. Either candidate would have been the first president in Austrian postwar history not supported by either of the two mainstream parties in the first round.

■ Austria's Green Party

Van der Bellen is the former head of Austria's Green Party and ran as an independent. In the campaign, he defended the EU and exhorted Austrians to accept refugees who have fled to Europe from war zones in Syria and elsewhere.

"I voted for the lesser of two evils," one Van der Bellen voter, 35-year-old Peter Krohn, said Sunday in Vienna. "Criticizing Europe is definitely justified, but one can't address this with isolation and hatred."

Right-wing Freedom Party presidential candidate Norbert Hofer answers media questions in front of a polling station in Pinkafeld, Austria.

Hofer's loss is a blow to the Freedom Party after polls showed a close race against Van der Bellen. But the party, long ostracized for past ties to former Nazis and xenophobic rhetoric, still has a shot at governing Austria. Early parliamentary elections are possible next year amid discord in the governing coalition of the country's main center-right and center-left parties.

The Freedom Party shot to an enduring lead in the polls after the refugee crisis peaked in the fall of 2015, consistently urging that migrants be turned back even as Austria's centrist government initially supported German Chancellor Angela Merkel's more liberal line.

While the runoff for the presidency was close, polls in recent weeks have shown that Hofer's Freedom Party remains Austria's most popular by a large margin. The party drew the support of 35% of those surveyed in a Gallup poll last month, well ahead of the second-place Social Democrats with 27%. →13

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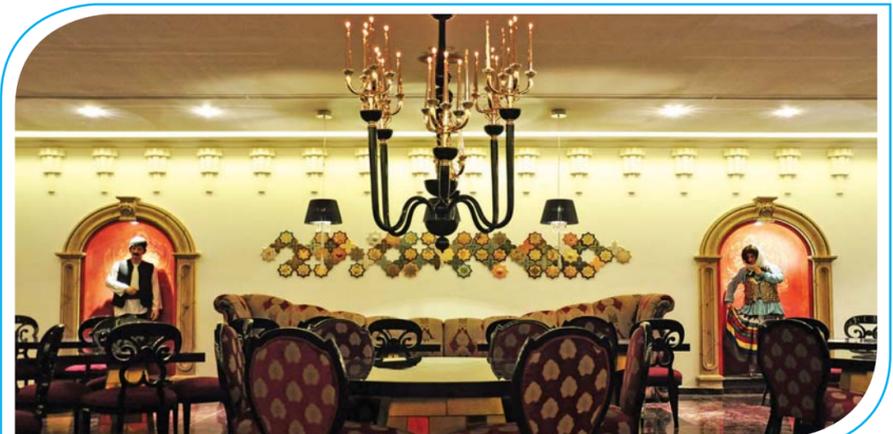


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By Maryam Azish

While the global doors are widely open to Iran following the nuclear deal, an appropriate opportunity has been created for augmentation of consolidation of ties between Islamic Republic and other countries, including Asian states.

Consolidation of relations between Iran and Asian states, especially the emerging powers like India, would mark a new chapter in Iran's economic cooperation with the outside world.

Given that the world is moving towards multi-polarity in the political, economic and cultural arenas, the Asian countries, in particular, as a cradle of emerging economies are moving towards sustainable economic development.

Thanks to its fastest economic growth, India is considered as one of the possible emerging superpowers of the world. This potential is attributed to several indicators, the primary ones being its demographic trends and a rapidly expanding economy and by GDP India became world's fastest growing economy in 2015 with 7.3% GDP rate.

In an indication of fostering Iranian ties with the regional countries, Asian in particular, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohamamd Javad Zarif, heading a high-ranking political, economic, trade and banking delegation, visited New Delhi on Dec 3 on the first leg of his Asian tour aimed at enhancing relations with India.

While in India, which is considered as his third visit to this Asian country, Zarif attended and delivered a speech in the Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan called 'Heart of Asia' and held talks with several high-ranking Indian officials the ways for fostering mutual cooperation.

■ The History of Iran-India relations

Tehran and New Delhi have always enjoyed an age-old relations. The two countries established diplomatic relations on 15 March 1950. Following the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, relations between Iran and India strengthened more. However, Iran's continued support for Pakistan and India's close relations with Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War impeded further development of Indo-Iranian ties.

Tehran-New Delhi at new turning point

As per the latest shipping data on Nov 2016, Iran has overtaken rival Saudi Arabia to become India's top oil supplier in October.

In the 1990s, India and Iran supported the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan against the Taliban regime. They continue to collaborate in supporting the broad-based anti-Taliban government led by Ashraf Ghani and backed by the United States.

Thanks to its geographical proximity, Iran as the fourth largest owner of gas reserves in the world has always played a pivotal role in addressing India's energy demands.

In 2011, the US\$12 billion annual oil trade between India and Iran was halted due to extensive economic sanctions against Iran, forcing the Indian oil ministry to pay off the debt through a banking system through Turkey.

■ Call for fostering Iran-India economic relations

Thanks to its economic growth, a population of one billion and 250 million people as well as its lack of reliable sources of energy, India is considered as a lucrative market for Iran and Tehran is keen on improving ties with New Delhi.

Speaking at Iran-India Economic Summit in India, Zarif underscored that economies of Tehran and New Delhi, as

largest producers and consumers of energy, complement one another adding that that trade and business relations between the two nations are not limited to oil, gas or energy bonds.

Touching upon Iran's determination to bolster ties with India, Zarif asserted that Tehran will always remember New Delhi's cooperation during the tough era of sanction years and develop trade with India.

Marking the country's southeastern Chabahar port as an excellent venue for bilateral cooperation between the two nations, Zarif underscored that investment in the Iranian free trade zone holds significance for the whole region as it can connect India to Afghanistan, Central Asia, Russia as well as Europe.

■ Secure Afghanistan vital to Asia prosperity

Addressing the 6th Ministerial Conference of Heart of Asia Process held in India on 4 December 2016, Zarif stressed the country's full support for the National Unity Government of Afghanistan, saying a secure and stable Afghanistan is vital to the prosperity of the Heart of Asia region.



Describing Iran as a frontline country in the war against narcotics, he added the Islamic Republic has offered alternative cultivation as well as alternative livelihood plans to dissuade Afghan farmers from opium cultivation", stressing however that an international cooperation is inevitable to "reverse the current alarming trend of increasing drug production".

He further pointed to the trilateral transit agreement between Iran, India and Afghanistan on the development of the port of Chabahar, as one important step in the direction of boosting prosperity in the region.

■ Iran now India's top crude oil supplier

As per the latest shipping data on Nov 2016, Iran has overtaken rival Saudi Arabia to become India's top oil supplier in October.

Before the unjust Western sanctions on Iran over the country's nuclear program, Iran held the position of India's second-biggest oil supplier after Saudi Arabia. With the signing of Iran's nuclear deal in January and the subsequent removal of sanctions, Iran once again reclaimed its level of exports and access to finance.

Shipping data show that Iran's oil ex-

ports to India shot up this year by having sold 759,700 barrels of oil per day to India in October, 56 per cent more than a year ago. This was larger than 717,000 bpd of oil sold by Saudi Arabia, as India's top oil supplier.

■ Farzad B gas field

Following the implementation of the comprehensive nuclear deal between Iran and the world powers, an Indian delegation traveled to Iran to discuss the ways for making investment in Farzad B gas field.

Early November 2016, Indian Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan announced that his country is ready to make an investment of \$20 billion in the development of Iran's Farzad B gas field in the Persian Gulf, estimated to hold 21.68 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of gas in place, of which 12.8 tcf is recoverable.

Pradhan said Iran and India can swiftly improve their bilateral relations in the oil and gas sectors in the new (post-sanctions) era, adding that New Delhi is keen to invest \$20 billion in Chabahar port and in development of the giant Farzad B offshore gas field, which the Indian companies have been in talks with Tehran since 2009 for developing.

A consortium led by New Delhi-based ONGC Videsh discovered Farzad B in the Farsi offshore block, but it abandoned its expansion after the West intensified sanctions on the Islamic Republic in 2012.

■ Chabahar cooperation agreement

On May 2016, India inked a much-awaited contract with Iran to develop the country's southeastern Chabahar port - a project which is expected to eventually create a regional trade, investment and transportation hub with links from the Indian Ocean to Central Asia.

According to Press TV, the deal - that has already been described as historic - was signed in a ceremony supervised by Iran's President Hassan Rouhani and the visiting Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It was sealed between India Ports Global Private Limited (IPGPL) and Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO).

Accordingly, the IPGPL will develop two terminals and five multi-cargo berths in Phase-1 of the Chabahar port project. India's investment in phase-1 will be about \$500 million.

From Chabahar port, the existing Iranian road network can link up to Zaranj in Afghanistan, about 883 km from the port. The Zaranj-Delaram road constructed by India in 2009 can give access to Afghanistan's Garland highway, setting up road access to four major cities -- Afghanistan-Herat, Kandahar, Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif, India's media reported.

Without doubt, North-South Corridor and the key role of Chabahar port would lead to the development of transit projects and promotion of extensive economic interests for all countries in this region.

The Chabahar agreement is also expected to create a regional trade, investment and transportation hub with links from the Indian Ocean to Central Asia and would mark a new chapter in Iran's economic cooperation with the outside world, India in particular.



On May 2016, India inked a much-awaited contract with Iran to develop the country's southeastern Chabahar port

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Easy ways to build better bones

Strength training, weight-bearing exercise, a healthy diet, and medication can help

An estimated 10 million people in the United States are coping with the brittle, fragile bones of osteoporosis—a disorder that causes severe bone loss. It's most common in women, and the risk is higher in those who are thin, age 50 or older, or of Caucasian or Asian descent. It also occurs in men, who make up about 20% of osteoporosis cases. The condition puts a person at a high risk for bone fractures, disability, loss of independence, and even death. That's why it's important to make your bones as strong as possible. "There are many ways to build bone mass, and the people who do tell us they feel stronger and more capable on their feet," says Rachel Wilson, a physical therapist at Harvard-affiliated Brigham and Women's Hospital.

There isn't one magic way to build bone mass. It takes a number of the following strategies.

■ Detect bone loss

A dual energy x-ray absorptiometry (DEXA) scan detects osteoporosis and less severe bone loss (osteopenia). A DEXA scan is typically performed after menopause or in people with high risk factors, such as these:

- A family history of osteoporosis or hip fractures
- Long-term smoking
- Excessive drinking

- Use of glucocorticoid drugs
- Certain chronic diseases
- A previous fracture caused by little or no trauma

■ Exercise

When we exert force on the bones, it stimulates them to add cells, which speeds up the process of building bone mass. An ideal way to do this is with a combination of weight-bearing activities (tennis, stair climbing, or an activity that involves jumping, like an aerobic workout or dancing) and strength training (in which you work your muscles against resistance, such as free weights, resistance bands, or your own body weight).

Get clearance from your doctor before exercising, and work with a physical therapist to develop a program tailored to your needs. Aim for 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week for cardiovascular health. Do strength training for 20 to 30 minutes, two or three times a week. Find that overwhelming? Wilson suggests a

shortcut: "On strength training days, split up exercises throughout the day. Two or three minutes per exercise will do the job," she explains.

■ Get enough calcium and vitamin D

Calcium helps make strong bones, and vitamin D aids calcium absorption. Take a daily vitamin D3 supplement (D3 is the form most easily absorbed) between 600 to 1,000 IU, depending on your blood levels of vitamin D. For calcium, some evidence indicates that large doses of calcium pills may increase the risk of death from heart disease. So as much as possible, get calcium from food—dairy products, leafy dark green vegetables, tofu, and sardines. The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) of calcium for men ages 51 or older is 1,000 to 1,200 milligrams (mg) per day. For women ages 51 or older, it's 1,200 mg per day. If your diet doesn't provide enough calcium, take a low-dose calcium supplement to reach your RDA, but not exceed it.

■ Consider medication

Medications called bisphosphonates, such as alendronate (Fosamax), help slow the rate of bone loss. They're typically prescribed for someone with osteopenia who is deemed to be at high risk for fracture, someone who has osteoporosis, or someone who has already had a fracture from a fall. These medications come with the rare risks of femur (thigh-bone) fracture and bone loss in the jaw. "The risk of those two problems is very, very low, while the risk of fractures is extremely high. The medications reduce spine fractures by 60% to 70% and reduce hip fractures by up to 40%," says Dr. David Slovick, an endocrinologist at Harvard-affiliated Massachusetts General Hospital.

■ Make lifestyle changes

Smoking and excessive alcohol use can interfere with bone health. So quit smoking, and limit alcohol intake (no more than one drink per day for women, two drinks for men). And get rid of fall hazards in your home, such as floor clutter, throw rugs, and slippery bathroom floors (use nonslip rubber mats or strips on floors, and install grab bars).

(Source: health.harvard.edu)

What is inflammatory arthritis?

Types of arthritis associated with inflammation

By Carol Eustice

Inflammatory types of arthritis may involve multiple joints simultaneously. Often, an overactive or malfunctioning immune system is the cause of inflammation. The primary symptoms of inflammatory types of arthritis are pain and stiffness in the morning or after periods of rest or inactivity. In patients with inflammatory arthritis, the period of morning stiffness typically exceeds 60 minutes.

Swelling, redness, and warmth also are common in or around the affected joints.

Inflammatory arthritis not only affects the joints -- other body parts can be affected, including the skin or internal organs. Inflammatory arthritis can affect people of all ages, but often strike people in the prime of life.

Swelling does not always occur with inflammatory arthritis. While that may seem uncharacteristic, actually inflammatory arthritis patients may have pain without swelling, swelling without pain, or physical limitations without either pain or swelling.

■ Types of Inflammatory Arthritis

The three most common types of chronic inflammatory arthritis are rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, and ankylosing spondylitis. But, there are others as well. In patients who exhibit musculoskeletal symptoms, inflammatory conditions that do not have joint involvement may include bursitis, tendonitis, or polymyalgia rheumatica. Patients who have one to three joints involved may have an acute inflammatory condition such as infectious arthritis, gout, pseudogout, Reactive arthritis, or Chlamydial arthritis -- or a chronic inflammatory condition such as psoriatic arthritis,



spondyloarthropathy, pauciarticular juvenile arthritis, or infectious arthritis that is slow to heal.

Patients who have 4 or more joints involved may have acute inflammatory conditions such as viral arthritis, drug-induced arthritis, early connective tissue disease, rheumatic fever, palindromic rheumatism, or remitting seronegative symmetrical synovitis with pitting edema (RS3PE) -- or chronic inflammatory conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, undifferentiated polyarthritis, inflammatory osteoarthritis, mixed connective tissue disease, lupus, scleroderma, polyarticular juvenile arthritis, or adult Still's disease.

How is inflammatory arthritis diagnosed?

Elevation in acute phase reactants serve as indicators of inflammation. While the two most often utilized, CRP and sedimentation rate, are indicative of inflammation, they do not differentiate between rheumatoid arthritis and other inflammatory types of arthritis. Also, not all patients with inflammatory arthritis will have elevated CRP or sedimentation rate initially. Some patients may instead have elevated levels of ferritin, haptoglobin, ceruloplasmin, or complement. Other markers indicative of

an inflammatory type of arthritis are anemia of chronic disease, elevated platelets, and elevated white cell count.

There are serologic tests to help pin down the diagnosis. Rheumatoid factor is commonly ordered when rheumatoid arthritis is suspected. But, not everyone with rheumatoid arthritis is positive for rheumatoid factor (seropositive). About 20% of patients diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis are negative for rheumatoid factor (seronegative). In early arthritis (symptoms for less than a year) rheumatoid factor sensitivity is about 17-59%, according to Kelley's Textbook of Rheumatology.

The specificity is also not good in early rheumatoid arthritis, since other conditions may be associated with a positive rheumatoid factor (e.g., lupus, Sjogren's syndrome). Even 4-5% of the general population is positive for rheumatoid factor. Other serologic tests, such as anti-CCP and ANA can provide more diagnostic information, in addition to CRP, sedimentation rate, and rheumatoid factor.

Testing for certain genetic markers can be helpful. For example, HLA-B27 positivity is strongly associated with ankylosing spondylitis. Also, synovial fluid analysis can provide information regarding inflammation - synovial fluid from an inflamed joint is typically yellow and turbid, with white cell counts above 10,000 cells/mm, with the greatest percentage being neutrophils.

Imaging is also utilized as part of the diagnostic process for inflammatory arthritis. X-ray evidence of inflammatory arthritis may include soft tissue swelling, chondrocalcinosis, joint effusion, osteopenia near the joint, symmetric loss of cartilage, joint space narrowing, and bony erosions.

(Source: verywell.com)

'Never go to bed angry': sleep makes it harder to forget bad thoughts

The age-old advice to "never go to bed angry" is getting some support from new research.

Researchers found that men in the study were less able to suppress a negative memory after they slept than they were before they slept.

Normally, sleep helps people process information from the day and store it in their memory. The new finding suggests that this process of solidifying memories during sleep also makes it harder to suppress negative memories, which people may not want to recall.

The results suggest that people should try to resolve any arguments before going to bed and not sleep on their anger, said study co-author Yunzhe Liu, a Ph.D. student in neuroscience at University College London.

In the study, the researchers asked 73 men in England to look at 26 neutral photos of people's faces. The photos were neutral, meaning they were not associated with either positive or negative emotions. But each of these neutral photos was paired with an upsetting image, such as a photo of corpses, crying children and injured people. This way, the men learned to associate each face with an upsetting image.

Shortly after, the researchers showed the participants some of the photos of faces again and asked them to try to suppress, or forget, their memories of the associated unsettling images. Specifically, the people were 9 percent less likely to recall the upsetting images compared with other, baseline images that the researchers had shown the participants earlier on in the study to test their memory performance.

The researchers repeated the memory-suppression task the next day, after the participants got a night's sleep, and found that this time around, the participants reported that they had more trouble forgetting the upsetting images that had been paired with the faces. Specifically they were just 3 percent less likely to recall the upsetting images compared with other, baseline images that the researchers had shown them earlier on during the study to test their memory performance.

These results suggest that sleep may make it harder for people to forget things they'd rather not remember, the researchers said.

The researchers also scanned the people's brains during the memory-suppression task, and compared the participants' brain activity when they tried to suppress the negative memory before they slept with their memory-suppression activity after they slept.

There was a difference: When the men were asked to suppress their memory of the negative image before they slept, the hippocampus -- the brain's memory center -- was the part of the brain that was most involved in the task of suppressing memories. But after the men got a night's sleep, other regions of the brain became activated in the task as well, according to the study, published today (Nov. 29) in the journal *Nature Communications*.

This last finding may lead to a better understanding of conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, in which people cannot suppress traumatic memories, the researchers said.

One limitation of the study was that it conducted only in men. Liu told Live Science that she thinks that the mechanisms of memory suppression before and after sleep should work the same way in women, but more research would be needed to confirm this.

(Source: Live Science)



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12% rise proposed for tourism budget

TOURISM TEHRAN — The national desk budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year has proposed a 12 percent rise for the tourism sector.

The bill has allocated about 7.82 trillion rials (\$205 million at the open market rate) to the sector which is supervised by the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization.

The next Iranian calendar year starts on March 21, 2017.

President Hassan Rouhani on Sunday presented his administration's draft of the 10.849-quadrillion-rial (about \$486 billion) national budget bill to the Majlis.

ROUND THE GLOBE

Historic town of Ouro Preto

Founded in the early 18th century 513km north of Rio de Janeiro, the historic town of Ouro Preto (Black Gold) covers the steep slopes of the Vila Rica (Rich Valley) in Brazil.

It's the center of a rich gold mining area and the capital of Minas Gerais Province from 1720-1897.



A view of the historical town of Ouro Preto in Brazil

Along the original winding road and within the irregular layout following the contours of the landscape lie squares, public buildings, residences, fountains, bridges and churches which together form an outstanding homogenous group exhibiting the fine curvilinear form of Baroque architecture.

The historic city of Ouro Preto was the symbolic center of the Inconfidencia Mineira in 1789, a Brazilian independence movement, and home to exceptional artists responsible for many of the most significant works of the Brazilian Baroque period, including the Church of Sao Francisco de Assisi by the distinguished architect and sculptor Antonio Francisco Lisboa (Aleijadinho).

The area's isolation for the better part of the 19th and 20th centuries generated economic stagnation, fostering preservation of the original colonial constructions and urban pattern.

(Source: UNESCO)

Abu Dhabi revamps boards of its state airport and tourism entities

Abu Dhabi has revamped the boards of two key state-owned entities, Abu Dhabi Airports and the Tourism Development Investment Company (TDIC), which are handling some of the emirate's biggest development projects.

Company sources gave no reason for the changes, which occurred last month and replaced Ali Majed al-Mansouri, who had served as Abu Dhabi Airports chairman since 2012 and TDIC chairman since 2014.

Like other governments in the Gulf Arab region, Abu Dhabi, the wealthiest member of the United Arab Emirates federation, tends to shield its inner workings from the public eye and out of the media. Decisions such as personnel changes are often announced late, if at all.

Awaidha Murshed al-Marar was appointed the new chairman of Abu Dhabi Airports, and some board members have also been replaced, a company spokeswoman told Reuters.

Marar is already chairman of Abu Dhabi's Department of Municipal Affairs and chairman of Etihad Rail.

Mohamed Khalifa al-Mubarak is the new chairman of TDIC, a company source confirmed. Mubarak's existing roles include chairman of Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority and the chief executive of Aldar Properties.

There was no formal announcement of the new appointments by the firms. However, websites of both entities showed the changes on Sunday.

"The new chairmen already hold the top positions in related entities in the transport and tourism sectors respectively, so it makes sense to bring (Abu Dhabi Airports) and TDIC under them," a source familiar with the matter told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

Abu Dhabi, home to the capital of the UAE, is investing billions in tourism, infrastructure and industry to diversify its economy away from oil. But some projects have been hit by delays.

A 10.8 billion dirham (\$2.9 billion) expansion of the emirate's main airport Abu Dhabi International, which Mansouri oversaw as chairman, has been delayed by around five months until December 2017.

The opening of the iconic Louvre Abu Dhabi, which is being developed by TDIC, is also delayed to 2017 due to pending construction work, sources told Reuters last month. It was originally scheduled to open in 2012 but that target was pushed back to the second half of 2016.

(Source: Reuters)

Rich cuisine can open up broader tourism scene for Iran

TOURISM TEHRAN — Iran, offering about 2,500 traditional and regional dishes, has one of the most opulent cuisines worldwide, which can contribute to boost the country's tourism sector, a tourism official announced on Saturday.

"Iran can increase its share of the global gastronomy tourism, which makes an annual turnover of about \$300 billion," ISNA quoted Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft Organization Deputy Director Morteza Rahmani-Movahhed as saying.

The Iranian cuisine, usually embellished with fragrant herbs, varies from region to region, however it principally accentuates freshness, deliciousness, and colorfulness.

The dishes are usually not overpowered with spices though kitchens are embraced with ranges of subtle and yet contrasting flavors such as a combination of sweet and sour or mild.

Amongst the dishes are dizi (a lamb, chickpea and potato stew made to a centuries-old recipe), fesenjoon (chicken poached in an earthy sweet-and-sour sauce of ground walnuts and pomegranates).

Gastronomy, as the essence of culture and a major element of intangible heritage worldwide, is a growing driver for tourists that remains often untapped by destinations, according to United Nations World Tourism Organization.

"The interrelation between gastronomy and tourism provide a vehicle for the transmission of culture which in turn, if properly managed, enhances local economic development, sustainable practices and food experiences."



A traditional Iranian spread features centuries-old dizi which its main ingredients are lamb, chickpea and potato stew.

Traditional Iranian garments, jewelries on show at Malaysian festival

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A wide range of traditional Iranian textile, garments and jewelries have been put on show at the 4th Putrajaya International Islamic Arts & Culture Festival, which kicked off in the federal administrative center of Malaysia on December 1.

Iran's Ambassador to Malaysia Marzieh Afkham and Cultural Attaché Ali-Mohammad Sabeqi along

with several artists and artisans took part in the opening ceremony of the festival, CHTN reported late on Sunday.

Meanwhile, works from other countries including Kuwait, Indonesia, Uzbekistan, Brunei, and Saudi Arabia are on display.

With the motto of "Glorious Textiles of the Islamic World" the exhibition puts the spotlight on intricate handwoven

fabrics such as eye-catching embroidery products.

Visitors to the exhibit have a chance to perceive traditional Muslim, Mughal and Persian clothing dated from the early Islamic civilization up to the present.

The exhibit that also embraces workshops, calligraphy sessions, and live performances of regional craftspeople runs through December 11.



A poster for the 4th Putrajaya International Islamic Arts & Culture Festival

Fund set up to protect endangered heritage sites

ABU DHABI (The Daily Star) — Representatives of around 40 countries on Saturday approved plans to establish a fund to protect heritage sites in war zones and a network of safe havens for endangered artworks.

A closing statement issued after two days of talks in Abu Dhabi did not specify the total amount pledged for the fund but French President Francois Hollande said a target of \$100 million remained achievable.

The meeting, co-sponsored by France and the United Arab Emirates, was spurred by the systematic destruction and looting of archaeological treasures in Iraq and Syria by the Islamic State group.

The world watched in dismay as the systematically destroyed temples and tower tombs in the ancient Syrian city of Palmyra last year.

In Iraq, videos showed IS using bulldozers and explosives to destroy Nimrud, a jewel of the Assyrian empire, and ransacking pre-Islamic treasures in the Mosul Museum.

But proposals for ancient artifacts to be taken abroad for safekeeping met with reservations from some countries -- notably Greece and Egypt -- which saw treasured artworks removed for display in museums in Europe and North America in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Participants in the meeting, who also included representatives of international organizations and private institutions, pledged "to safeguard the endangered cultural heritage of all peoples, against its destruction and illicit trafficking."

The Geneva-based fund they set up will be charged

with safeguarding cultural heritage endangered by conflict, financing preventive and emergency operations, combating the illicit trafficking of artifacts and helping restore damaged cultural property.

UNESCO director Irina Bokova said: "The creation of this fund breaks new ground.... I see this as the starting point of something... global."

Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan urged all countries to "cooperate and coordinate to control the trafficking of cultural property... especially in some Arab countries that have suffered from the dangers of violence and terrorism."

France is to contribute around \$30 million (28 million euros) to the fund.

"Our objective is to collect at least \$100 million, and we can reach this," Hollande said.

Participants hope the international network of safe havens will be used to temporarily store cultural property endangered by conflicts or extremism.

But with sovereignty a sensitive issue, ancient artifacts would only be moved out of a country at the

The Geneva-based fund they set up will be charged with safeguarding cultural heritage endangered by conflict, financing preventive and emergency operations.

request of its government, a participant in the meeting told AFP.

Works of art would first be moved to a safe place within the country concerned. Safeguarding them in a neighboring country would be the next option while moving them elsewhere would be a last resort.

Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras told participants it should be the "last option" and there should be "guarantees for the safe return" of cultural property removed for safe keeping.

Greece has long sought the return from Britain of ancient sculptures that once decorated the Parthenon temple on the Acropolis in Athens but were taken by British diplomat Lord Elgin two centuries ago.

Participants at the UNESCO-backed conference called on the UN Security Council to support the initiative.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization will oversee the safeguarding operations.

The meeting coincided with an announcement by Swiss authorities that they had seized cultural relics looted from Syria, Libya and Yemen that were being stored in Geneva's free ports.

Swiss representatives told the meeting of the country's experiences in providing safe haven for art works during the conflicts of the 20th century.

A follow up conference will be held in 2017 to assess the implementation of plans and the first projects to be financed by the international fund.

IN FOCUS @ IRNA/Amin Basiri pars



CHTHO director visits world pottery capital

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft Organization Director Zahra Ahmadipour (L) pays a visit to a traditional pottery workshop in Lalejin on December 1, 2016.

Located in Hamedan Province, Lalejin is one of the most essential centers for production of the earthenware and ceramics in the country and even worldwide.

Earlier in August, Lalejin celebrated its registration as the world pottery capital, a privilege given to the western Iranian city by jurors of the UNESCO-affiliated World Crafts Council.

Meanwhile, the council had declared in 2015 that Isfahan in central Iran and Tabriz in northwest of the country as the world cities of handicraft and carpet weaving, respectively.

How NASA and FEMA will deal with a killer asteroid

If a killer asteroid on a path to striking Earth were discovered, the first word of its existence would likely come in the form of a text or an email — preliminary information about the space rock, sent out to a group of less than 12 scientists.

At that stage, researchers wouldn't know much about the size and trajectory of the errant space rock, but that'd change quickly. They'd start hurriedly gathering observations of the object, likely first spotted by one of the large survey telescopes constantly looking out for this kind of thing.

There's a small but very real possibility that, one day, a city-leveling (or even: planet-obliterating) asteroid could hit the planet. A major asteroid strike could cause wide swaths of regional damage, everything from broken windows to toppled buildings, a disaster that could range from a local tragedy to a global-scale event.

■ Asteroid striking Earth

And while the odds of an asteroid striking Earth are extremely low (a 5,000-foot asteroid is only expected to hit the Earth about once every 1 million years), NASA does, in fact, have a plan of action, in case an errant space rock were making its way towards us. And they — in conjunction with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) — recently



staged a run-through of what would happen if they did find a dangerous asteroid speeding toward our planet.

"It is critical to exercise these kinds of low-probability but high-consequence

disaster scenarios," FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate said in a statement. "By working through our emergency response plans now, we will be better prepared if and when we need to respond to

And while the odds of an asteroid striking Earth are extremely low (a 5,000-foot asteroid is only expected to hit the Earth about once every 1 million years), NASA does, in fact, have a plan of action, in case an errant space rock were making its way towards us.

Many lakes getting murkier, but gives hope for improvement: study

A study of more than 5,000 Wisconsin lakes shows that nearly a quarter of them have become murkier in the past two decades. It also shows this trend could get worse as a changing climate leads to increased precipitation.

However, the study -- led by researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources -- reveals that reducing the amount of agricultural land immediately surrounding Wisconsin's waterways could improve water clarity by limiting nutrient runoff. It also shows most lakes have stayed the same and some are even seeing an improvement in clarity.

"In the face of increasing precipitation, this analysis provides empirical support for the fact that adapting our landscape is going to be important into the future," says co-author Monica Turner, a UW-Madison professor of zoology.

Specifically, limiting farming to 10 percent or less of the so-called riparian buffer zone around a lake and the streams flowing into it can improve water clarity. The riparian buffer refers to the vegetation immediately adjacent to a body of water. Implementing such actions also benefits farmers, as they suffer less damage to their croplands during heavy rains, Turner says.

■ Trends in water clarity

Using more than 25 years of data collected by citizen scientists, the DNR and the federal government, the researchers analyzed Wisconsin's lakes to identify not just trends in water clarity (an indicator of lake health) but also how the landscape and the climate interact to determine year-to-year fluctuations.

While their results show water clarity in the majority of lakes has not changed and six percent of lakes are on an upward trend, the fact that more lakes are getting worse signals there is work to be done.

"If we want to maintain or improve water clarity, we need to think about trends in precipitation," says lead author Kevin Rose, formerly a postdoctoral researcher at UW-Madison and now an assistant professor of freshwater ecology at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York.

The study, published in the journal *Ecological Applications*, shows that wet years (like the current one) can be especially hard on lakes that typically have greater water clarity, like those found in northern Wisconsin. Clear lakes are more sensitive to the onslaught of nutrients and plant matter flushed in by the rain, which can cause water to turn murky, brown and green.

Mitigating the negative impacts of more rain, howev-



er, will require managing land in ways the research team didn't expect. They approached the study thinking that what happens across an entire watershed, such as where and how the landscape is farmed, would impact water clarity, especially during wet years.

While the results indicate broad-scale land use does matter during dry years, the opposite is true in years with higher precipitation, when water clarity is more dependent on how the land is managed in particular places.

(Source: *EurekAlert*)

Cognitive science backs up the ancient Indian philosophy

Deep, dreamless sleep is often described as unconsciousness. We certainly don't see distinct objects or have linear and memorable trains of thought, as we do in daily life or while dreaming. But in a meta-analysis published last month in *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, cognitive science experts argue that there is no clear line of consciousness between dreaming and deep sleep.

"There's complicated experiential or conscious activity that occurs throughout the night in all the different stages of sleep, including deep sleep," says Evan Thompson, philosophy of mind professor at University of British Columbia in Canada and one of the paper's authors. "We need a more fine-grained way of talking about the different kinds of mental activity that happen in deep sleep and the ways they're related to neural activity."

Consciousness during dreamless sleep does not look like daily, awake consciousness, says Thompson, but it still seems there's some conscious awareness. "It could be just a sense of being asleep combined with some sense of the passage of time. Maybe different fleeting thoughts that aren't

really preserved in memory but related to skill-learning and memory preservation," he adds.

■ Deep sleep

The authors write it's still an "open empirical question" whether unconsciousness does occur in some periods of sleep, but say consciousness doesn't seem to simply switch off when we enter deep sleep.

Studies show fast-frequency ripples in the hippocampus during deep sleep, which suggests we need to think the notion that this is a period of total unconsciousness.

Meanwhile, meditators who claim to be aware during deep sleep are supported by their distinctive electrophysiological brain patterns, with high gamma-band frequency activity (typical of waking consciousness) during deep sleep than in non-meditators.

Thompson notes that this reflects the belief of the ancient Indian philosophical traditions of Yoga and Vedanta.

■ The basic idea

The "basic idea is that, from the Yoga perspective, consciousness, in the sense of the sheer awareness or feeling of being or existing, continues



in deep sleep, even when ordinary mental activity (thoughts, emotions, mental images) has quieted down or stopped," he says. "Buddhism generally agrees with this idea, too, but it's more developed in the texts of the Yoga and Vedanta."

Thompson, who's written about consciousness in his book *Waking, Dreaming, Being*, says scientific findings that match ideas from Indian philosophy show contemporary research can still learn from

such an event."

When a survey discovers what could be a new near-Earth object (NEO), it gets logged with the Minor Planet Center — an organization that acts as a clearinghouse for discoveries of relatively small new objects in the Solar System — in a public forum.

If a newfound object does look like it's on a course that'd bring it near Earth in the next six days, the Minor Planet Center's system sends out an automated text message or email to a select group of people at the center and NASA.

■ Impact trajectory

That, explained NASA's planetary defense officer Lindley Johnson, is when they get alerted as to "any possibility that a newly discovery could be on an impact trajectory," he explained to Mashable in an interview.

Once logged, amateur astronomers and people using large telescopes can train their own tools on the part of the sky to gather more data about the possible object, attempting to confirm its size and orbit.

Usually "... when we get further observations, the possibility of an impact disappears or the possibility of a very close approach disappears," Gareth Williams, associate director of the Minor Planet Center said.

(Source: *aol.com*)

There are pollinators just like bees in the oceans, scientists say

The researchers have discovered that there are pollinators that perform the same tasks as bees in the oceans. They were dubbed by the scientists as the "bees of the sea."

The study was printed in *Nature Communications*. It was led by Brigitta van Tussenbroek from the National Autonomous University of Mexico and other colleagues. The researchers have found for the first time an evidence of underwater pollination and discovered that there are bees in the sea or creatures that perform the same work just like the bees.



Van Tussenbroek said that there are microscopic crustaceans and tiny marine worms that help pollinate a tropical seagrass known as turtle grass or *Thalassia testudinum*. She further said that they saw these animals coming in, and they saw some of them carrying pollen.

In the past years, the team filmed a video footage of these tiny invertebrates that are swarming on the turtle grass beds just like the bees on flowers. These animals were drawn to male flowers maybe because to feed off carbohydrate and protein-rich pollen.

The researchers named this type of pollination as zoo-benthophilous pollination. The team has never thought that animals were involved in pollinating marine plants. To confirm their discovery, the team placed tiny crustaceans to an aquarium of turtle grass. In just minutes, the pollen can be seen on the female flowers. On the other hand, the control tank that did not have crustaceans had no pollen on the flowers. This indicates that tiny crustaceans were transporting pollen from flower to flower and helping to fertilize them, according to Science Alert.

Kelly Darnell from the non-profit research group The Water Institute of the Gulf told said that the pollination by animals can occur adds a wholly new level of complexity to the system.

(Source: *Science World Report*)

Virgin Galactic's second SpaceShipTwo performed its first glide flight

Virgin Galactic's spaceplane, SpaceShipTwo, went on its first free flight on Friday, performing an unpowered glide over the Mojave Desert. The vehicle, named VSS Unity, was dropped from its carrier plane, WhiteKnightTwo, and flew for 10 minutes on its own before landing successfully at the Mojave Air and Space Port.

The flight comes more than two years after the company's first SpaceShipTwo experienced a failure mid-flight — killing its pilot and injuring its co-pilot. It marks a major step forward for the company, which has been working to launch sub-orbital flights for several years.

Virgin Galactic unveiled SpaceShipTwo earlier this year, and received approval from the Federal Aviation Administration back in August to begin test flights. This was the fifth time that VSS Unity and WhiteKnightTwo have flown together, but this is the first time that it's been separated from WhiteKnightTwo.

Before the drop test, Richard Branson addressed the crowd, saying that he hoped to "see out here a lot over the next few months." According to the company, the "data as well as feedback from our two pilots indicate that today's flight went extremely well," but also indicated that it will be examining the data that was collected closely. With this week's success, the company will conduct several additional glide tests before moving on to the next phase of testing, where the rocket engine will be ignited in the air.

Since its accident in 2014, the company has worked to correct the problems that contributed to the breakup of the aircraft, which included design and pilot errors.

(Source: *The Verge*)

SpaceX aims for December 16 return to flight, customer Iridium says

Tech billionaire Elon Musk's SpaceX hopes to return its Falcon 9 rocket to flight on Dec. 16, said Iridium Communications Inc, which plans to have 10 of its satellites on board for launching.

The launch is contingent on approval by the Federal Aviation Administration, which oversees U.S. commercial space transportation, Iridium said on Thursday.

"We are looking forward to return to flight," SpaceX President Gwynne Shotwell said in a statement from Iridium.

SpaceX suspended flights after one of its rockets burst into flames on Sept. 1 as it was being fueled for a routine prelaunch test at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida.

The company traced the explosion to a fueling system problem that caused a pressurized container of helium inside the rocket's upper stage to burst.

The accident destroyed a \$200 million satellite owned by Israel's Space Communication Ltd.

"We are confident that SpaceX understands its fueling process now and will do it successfully for our launch," Iridium spokeswoman Diane Hockenberry wrote in an email to Reuters.

Iridium's satellites, however, will not be aboard the rocket during the prelaunch engine firing, she added.

SpaceX declined to comment about the status of its accident investigation or what measures it will take to ensure the problem will not reoccur.

(Source: *Reuters*)

Pak Ambassador Calls for Broadening Power Cooperation with Iran

Pakistani Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran Asef Dorrani placed special emphasis on broadening and enhancing power cooperation with Iran and said: "A high-profile delegation from Pakistan will travel to Tehran in very near future in order to hold power and electricity talks with Iranian counterparts," Public Relations Department of Iran Power & Water Equipment & Service Export Company (SUNIR) reported.

Speaking in his meeting with the Chief Executive of Iran Power & Water Equipment & Service Export Company (SUNIR) Bahman Salehi, the ambassador praised the construction operation of projects in Pakistan and said: "Necessary measures will be taken for accelerating construction operation of power projects in Pakistan."

He emphasized: "Pakistan will buy more power from

Iran in future. Considering the increasing demand of Gwadar region to electricity, there is a growing demands for power in subsequent months."

Elsewhere in his remarks, he said: "Iran's SUNIR Company enjoys high capability in order to develop projects in energy sector without organizing international tender."

As attended by the Chairman of Energy Committee of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Ali Shams-Ardakani and Vice Chairman of Energy Committee of Tehran Chamber of Commerce (TCC) Hamid-Reza Salehi, Pakistani side was urged to take effective steps in order to transmit power from Zahedan to Mir-Javeh and Quetta as an independent project.

He further noted that SUNIR Company is famous industrial unit in international arena, the issue of which

has created a golden opportunity for Pakistani side."

It should be noted that project for transmitting power from Zahedan to Mir-Javeh and Quetta was raised in latest trip of the respected President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Dr. Rouhani to Pakistan.

For his part, Vice Chairman of Energy Committee of Tehran Chamber of Commerce (TCC) Hamid-Reza Salehi said: "SUNIR is licensed by Iran Power Transmitting, Distributing and Management Company (TAVAN-IR) for transmitting 400 MW-electricity to Pakistan."

Since its establishment, SUNIR Company has thus far constructed more than 230 projects in different countries. Presently, the company holds 18 projects in 13 countries in world, construction operation of which are underway, the report ended.



"Pieces of your heart broke every day when you were a mother"
Dianna Hardy

'Hero' Muslim police officer harassed over hijab in New York

As racially motivated assaults in the United States spike post the Trump triumph, a decorated Muslim police officer in New York was threatened and harassed over the weekend for wearing the hijab.

Officer Aml Elsokary was off duty on Saturday morning when she dropped off her 16-year-old son on a street corner and went to park the car.



After parking the car and returning to where she had dropped her son, she saw a white man, who appeared to be in his 30s, harassing and shoving her son.

As she approached, the man screamed, "ISIS b****, I will cut your throat. Go back to your country!"

Unarmed and in casual attire, Elsokary did not reveal her identity as a police officer to the man. Police have

been looking for the man and the NYPD Hate Crimes unit is probing the incident as a hate crime.

In 2014, Elsokary was awarded a medal for bravery when she charged into a burning building to save an elderly man and a small child. The veteran officer and her partner rushed into a smoke-filled building when they heard a baby crying on the second floor.

Mayor Bill de Blasio said at a dinner honoring Elsokary that she was "a hero long before that remarkable day." She joined the police force after the 9/11 attacks in order to fight anti-Muslim stigma.

In a similar incident last week, three men tried assaulting a Muslim woman on the 23rd Street subway station in New York.

The suspects came to the woman and yelled at her: "Donald Trump! Donald Trump! F***** terrorist, get out of this country, you don't belong here," police said. One of the attackers also grabbed the woman's bag, tearing it apart. Police have been searching for the suspects.

(Source: The Express Tribune)

RECIPE OF THE WEEK Orange cake

"This is the best cake I have ever tasted. My mom gave me this recipe and I can't make it often because I would weigh 500 pounds. Hope it lasts more than a day at your house!"

- Ingredients:**
- 1 (18.25 ounce) package yellow cake mix
 - 1 (3 ounce) package instant lemon pudding mix
 - 3/4 cup orange juice
 - 1/2 cup vegetable oil



- 4 eggs
- 1 teaspoon lemon extract
- 1/3 cup orange juice
- 2/3 cup white sugar
- 1/4 cup butter

Directions:
Grease a 10 inch Bundt pan. Preheat oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees C).

In a large bowl, stir together cake mix and pudding mix. Make a well in the center and pour in 3/4 cup orange juice, oil, eggs and lemon extract. Beat on low speed until blended. Scrape bowl, and beat 4 minutes on medium speed. Pour batter into prepared pan.

Bake in preheated oven for 50 to 60 minutes. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack and cool completely.

In a saucepan over medium heat, cook 1/3 cup orange juice, sugar and butter for two minutes. Drizzle over cake.



Every action has a reaction. We have one planet; one chance.

Environmental art helps empower rural women in Qeshm

By Naghmeh Mizanian

Women in Salakh village on the Persian Gulf island of Qeshm are beginning an environmental art work, mainly aimed at creating jobs for breadwinner women and meeting educational needs of girl students.

Art works made of pieces of unused materials, such as old cloths, are used to create decorative items and showcased at a gallery in Salakh House of Art.

In an interview with the Tehran Times, Tahereh Goorani, the manager of the gallery, said people of Salakh have learnt not to throw away their old cloths. They hand them out to the gallery for making the art works, thus taking a step toward protecting the environment.

"The themes of the art works are women on Qeshm Island, mothers and children, and sea animals," Goorani, 29, said.

Out of a large number of women who are trained the art work free of charge, fifteen of them are professionally working in the art house and many others work as their second job or filling their free time, she said.

Goorani, who is the first member of



her family holding a university degree, explained that the House of Art provides all the raw materials, except for glass for the working women and even does the marketing, she stated.

The gallery and the outlet were

established about one year ago, in the old part of Goorani's residential house, she said, adding a room of the house is being utilized as the working place of women.

Goorani further explained that she repaired the old part of her house

spending her own money she had collected over the past nine years, when she began her work as the principal of a girl high school.

Goorani is doing this job as a teamwork with four of her sisters, one of her brothers, and her mother who supported her in establishing the art house and now her sisters help her in training interested women and doing the art works.

Traditional burqa and a kind of traditional doll, dubbed Dokhtlook, which used to be made by grandmothers, are also made and being sold in the gallery, she added.

Goorani, is also planning to train girls of the area as local tour guides with the aim of improving women's self-confidence and creating an atmosphere for the rural women to become acquainted with other cultures.

Early marriage is a ban on girls' education in the area, she said, adding, about 13 percent of girls in this village become engaged or married before the age of 18.

Goorani, who has learned English language, hopes tourists will visit her gallery.

Saudi prince: Women driving ban bad for struggling economy

Saudi Arabia's billionaire prince al-Waleed Bin Talal says the kingdom's ban on women driving is draining billions of dollars from the country's struggling economy.

Waleed made the remarks in a statement released by his office on Wednesday after he tweeted that the time has come to lift the ban on women driving.

Despite not holding any political posts in the country, Waleed, an influential member of the Saudi royal family, heads the Riyadh-based investment firm Kingdom Holding Company, which has stakes in several Western companies, including Twitter, Citigroup and the Euro Disney theme park.

His statement went on to stress that the ban should be removed as it is not only a matter of rights but of economic necessity to the kingdom.

He singled out the "economic costs" of women being forced to use drivers and taxis due to the lack a viable public transit system as a factor deeply affecting the country's economy.

"Public transport is not, at least at present, a fully viable means for them, for even Saudi men do not as a whole use it," he stressed.

"Preventing a woman from driving a car is today an issue of rights similar to the one that forbade her from receiving an education or having an independent identity," he said.



Saudi Arabia's prince al-Waleed Bin Talal (R) with his former wife, Princess Amira al-Taweeel (Photo by AFP)

Riyadh is currently dealing with economic struggles brought on by a budget deficit of nearly \$100 billion caused by a sharp slump in oil prices as well as Riyadh's rising army expenditure, a large amount of which is being funneled into a military campaign against Yemen, where thousands of people have been killed and many more injured.

The Saudis have also been forced to introduce a series of austerity measures that include canceling of some bonuses offered to state employees and increasing of entry visa fees for residents and foreigners.

The Saudi prince noted that the driving ban results in families spending an average of \$1,000 a month on drivers, an amount which otherwise could be used in the household at a time when many are forced to make do with less.

"Having women drive has become an urgent social demand predicated upon current economic circumstances," he said.

The billionaire prince noted that the only solution is to let women drive with an "element of moderation" such as mandating them to always carry smartphones in case of emergencies and prohibiting them from driving out of the city limits.

Saudi Arabia is the only country in the world that prohibits women from driving. The ban stems from a religious fatwa imposed by Wahhabi clerics. If women get behind the wheel in the kingdom, they may be arrested, sent to court and even flogged.

Saudi authorities have defied calls by international rights groups to end what has been described as a violation of women's rights.

In April, Saudi Arabia's grand mufti, Sheikh Abdulaziz Al al-Sheikh, defended the ban, saying permitting women to drive was a "dangerous matter" as it exposes them to "evil."

(Source: Press TV)

15 female candidates ran for parliament in Kuwait's latest election

In its weekend election, the tiny oil-rich nation of Kuwait had the opportunity to substantially boost the share of women in its parliament. And like Americans earlier this month, its voters failed to deliver those big gains.

Fifteen women ran for the 50 open seats in Kuwait's 65-member parliament, but only one won: Safa Al Hashem, whose reelection keeps her as the only woman in the legislative body. Her status as Kuwait's sole female MP illustrates the legislative body's struggle to diversity a decade after the nation first allowed women to seek office.

The victory for Al Hashem, a 52-year-old liberal politician, marked her third

parliamentary victory—a record among the limited ranks of women who have served Kuwait as MPs. She was elected this weekend after resigning during her last term. She joined other MPs in giving up her seat to object to parliament's refusal to question Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al Sabah about allegations of corruption. She previously won election in 2012 and 2013.

Al Hashem is a businesswoman who founded the Kuwaiti consulting firm Advantage Consulting. Upon winning, Al Hashem, who has an MBA from Pennsylvania State University and a postgraduate diploma from Harvard Business School,

thanked her 331,000 Twitter followers "from the bottom of [her] heart."

Women make up more than half of the labor force in Kuwait, and are highly educated, according to the World Economic Forum. Yet when it comes to female representation in parliament, the country has a poor record compared to others.

"There's a stigma against women participating in public life because they haven't really done it that much," Courtney Freer, a researcher at the Middle East Centre at the London School of Economics, told Fortune. She adds that since parliament is "a boys club," it is "difficult for newcomers to come in."

Kuwaiti women's representation in parliament has actually fluctuated quite a bit since they first were able to participate. Women held four parliamentary seats in 2009, before dropping to three in 2012, and one in 2013. Because of that, Freer says, it's difficult to know what the future holds in terms of female participation.

Before the most recent election, Kuwait ranked 184th out of 193 countries in terms of female representation in parliament, with women making up just 1.5% of seats, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union. (The Persian Gulf state's National Assembly includes 50 elected members and 15 appointed government ministers, who have voting power.) That puts it above its regional neighbor Oman, whose parliament is 1.2% female, and Qatar, which has no women MPs. But Kuwait is well below 96th-ranked Saudi Arabia, where women make up 19.9% of the governing body. Elections were opened to Saudi women only last year. (The U.S., for its part, is ranked 99th.)

Kuwait lacks both an established political party system and strong quota mechanisms—two factors that have helped female representation in politics in other countries in the region, according to a study by Marwa Shalaby, director of Women's Rights in the Middle East program at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy. Quotas—which have aided women in Tunisia and Jordan—are not under consideration in Kuwait because they are not a priority for the ruling regime or the competing political elites. However, creating a strong party system is "attainable" since the constitution does not prohibit it, Shalaby argued in her report.

That said, the under-representation of women in Kuwait's parliament may not change in the near future. "As long as the political scene in Kuwait is dominated by the Islamist and the conservative tribal figures, women will continue to achieve negligible gains in politics," Shalaby said in an interview. "Promoting women's issues is always not a priority for ruling elites whose main concern is to maintain power and garner popular support."

(Source: fortune.com)

IN FOCUS Tehran Times/ Ali Yeghaneh



Women relief forces providing rescue services in an earthquake maneuver which was held on Monday morning in schools across the country.

Donald Trump's growing list of secretary of state finalists

At Trump Tower, the Manhattan headquarters of the next president of the United States, Kellyanne Conway emerges from the gold lift doors with some news.

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump is no longer considering only four people for secretary of state, the crown jewel in cabinet-level appointments at the White House. The list is growing, according to Conway.

"It's a big decision and nobody should rush through it," says Trump's former campaign manager and senior adviser.

Up until Sunday, the talk focused largely on two contenders: former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani and former Utah governor Mitt Romney.

Trump has paraded the two men in front of the media like contestants on his hit reality-TV series, *The Apprentice*. But Conway's remarks open the possibility that Trump is now backing off those picks in favour of other people.

Still, many Trump supporters know who they want.

"I like Rudy," says Julie Pickering, 51, a retired registered nurse from Mississippi,



hanging out in the busy lobby of Trump Tower. "He stood by Trump and deserves that position."

"You want people who will be with you through the good times and the bad times," says Angela Bounds, 53, a retired financial adviser.

"You never saw Rudy Giuliani turn his back on Donald, no matter how many

times the media reported negative and fake news about Donald."

That's not the case, they say, with Romney, who ran for president in 2012. Both women campaigned for him during his bid for the White House but they were "shocked" when he came out in March and denounced Trump.

"If we, the Republicans, choose Trump

as our nominee, the prospects for a safe and prosperous future are greatly diminished," Romney told an audience in Salt Lake City.

"Trump tells us that he is very, very smart. I'm afraid that when it comes to foreign policy, he is very, very not smart."

It was a brutal takedown of the man who would win the election and led to a mea culpa of sorts from Romney himself last week in New York.

The Republican, who lost to U.S. President Barack Obama in 2012, dined with the man who will replace President Obama and emerged from dinner with a completely different tone.

"I happen to think that America's best days are ahead of us," he told reporters at Trump Tower. He said the meeting filled him with "increasing hope that President-elect Trump is the very man who can lead us to that better future."

Indeed, the choice of secretary of state will be key in this administration and anyone seeking the position got a taste recently of how challenging it truly will be under Trump.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Lebanese army raids northern town after deadly attack

The Lebanese army has launched a search operation in the northern parts of the country to find the gunmen who killed two soldiers a night before.

On Monday, army units were deployed to the Bqaa Sifrin town in Dinnieh, where unknown gunmen opened fire at any army checkpoint and killed two soldiers overnight on Sunday, Lebanon's al-Manar television channel reported.

Media reports said that the 10th Infantry Brigade post was the target of the Sunday attack, which came after the army arrested a person over terrorist links during an operation in the town.

The army identified the slain soldiers as Abdel Qader Neaman and Amer al-Mohammad.

According to Voice of Lebanon radio, so far seven suspects have been detained in connection with the deadly attack.

Lebanon has been affected by the spillover from the foreign-backed militancy, which has been afflicting Syria since 2011.

Ever since, Lebanese border areas have come under intermittent attacks by Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (Front for the Conquest of the Levant), formerly known as al-Nus-

ra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra) or al-Qaeda's Syria branch, which recently splintered from the group, as well as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh), another Takfiri terrorist group.

Hezbollah fighters have fended off several ISIL attacks inside Lebanon. They have also been providing counterinsurgency assistance to Syrian army forces in neighboring Syria.

The movement has accused Israel of supporting Takfiri terrorists operating in the Middle East.

(Source: Press TV)

Hunger-striking prisoner briefly enters coma

A Palestinian hunger-striking prisoner has briefly entered into a coma while a fellow inmate also refusing food remains in critical condition.

Ahmad Abu Farah, 29, who has been on hunger strike for 73 days, lost consciousness for several minutes, the Palestinian Committee of Prisoners' Affairs said on Sunday.

The committee added Abu Farah and Anas Shadid, 20, could pass away at any minute as they have, respectively.

The committee had said last month that both had slipped into a coma and have partially or completely lost their power to breathe, hear, speak and drink.

The committee warned that Israeli authorities had threatened to force feed both hunger strikers.

Force feeding amounts to torture, according to legal experts.

Both inmates, who are residents of the southern occupied West Bank village of Dura, have been on hunger strike in protest at their administrative detentions.

Many Palestinian inmates have launched hunger strikes in the past year to protest the controversial administrative detention as well as their mistreatment in Israeli jails.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Prisoners' Center for Studies (PPCS) said on Sunday that 32 Palestinian inmates who were suffering from different physical disabilities have been denied suitable medical care by Israeli

prison officials.

PPCS spokesperson Riyad al-Ashqar said in a statement that Israel Prison Service officials routinely neglect disabled and injured Palestinian prisoners and do not provide them with basic and necessary equipment such as wheelchairs.

In the statement, Ashqar cited several names of Palestinian prisoners who were tortured during interrogation, leading to their incurable physical and mental disabilities.

Ashqar called on international human rights organizations to probe the matter and exert pressure on Israeli officials to release Palestinian prisoners suffering from physical and psychological disabilities.

The Palestinian Committee of Prisoners' Affairs confirmed last month that "there is a deliberate policy of medical negligence against injured and sick Palestinian prisoners."

According to the group, since the beginning of the Second Intifada (Uprising) in 2000 until 2008, 17 Palestinian prisoners have died in Israeli jails, adding that in 2014, the number of ill inmates in Israeli prisons had increased to over 1,000 as a result of medical negligence.

Israeli raids in West Bank

In another development on Monday, Palestinian Safa news agency reported that Israeli force raided several homes and areas in the occupied West Bank on Monday, clashing with stone-throwing Palestinian youths



and arresting over a dozen people.

The Arabic-language agency reported that Israeli forces entered the town of Qabatiya, located six kilometers south of Jenin, in the northern West Bank.

The Israeli forces occupied the city center and used live ammunition and tear gas to disperse protesters.

The Israeli forces also raided homes in Bethlehem and arrested a Palestinian there.

Israeli forces regularly carry out raids in Palestinian territories, terrorizing the residents and intimidating them by destroying their properties and making arrests.

(Source: Press TV)

Austria rejects anti-immigrant populist in presidential election

6 → "Politicians have been distancing themselves ever more from the citizens," Hofer said in a closing video appeal to voters on Saturday. "Some want to exchange the people. I go the opposite route: we must exchange the politicians."

Hofer, a 45-year-old former aeronautical engineer, had cast himself as an ally of right-wing leader Marine Le Pen in France, of President-elect Donald Trump in the U.S., and of the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany in Austria's larger

neighbor to the north.

"Trump was presented as though he was the Devil himself," said Freedom Party General Secretary Harald Vilimsky, who led a delegation from his party to the U.S. that

met with Trump allies last month. "We deal with something similar in Austria."

Polls ahead of the election pointed to a virtual tie, with Austrian voters torn between anger over the refugee crisis and

frustration with their established political class on the one hand, and their unease with a party long seen as extremist by the political mainstream.

Sunday's vote was the third attempt at a second-round election in Austria: Van der Bellen's tight victory in May was first annulled by a court because of rule violations in counting mail-in ballots. Then, a revote scheduled for October was delayed because of faulty glue on the ballot envelopes.

(Source: The Wall Street Journal)

Van der Bellen's victory capped a nearly yearlong Austrian presidential campaign that brought to light widespread discontent with the country's political establishment

Trump upset nuclear deal has not provided enough 'business opportunity' with Iran: Richard Nephew

1 → ■ The team surrounding Trump are severe opponents of Iran and the JCPOA. How much the team can influence Trump's foreign policy toward Iran?

A: It is reasonable to conclude that these severe opponents will be able to influence Trump's thinking. They are his advisors, after all, and they will have a role in what information he receives. At the same time, he will also be receiving advice from others -- outside the government and inside of it -- and he may seek to balance it. This remains unclear.

■ Some argue Trump will not violate the JCPOA but his administration would place sanctions on Iran under the pretext of human rights violations. If so, how can it affect the future of the JCPOA?

A: This is indeed a possibility. The future of the



JCPOA, then, will be up to Iran. In my view, the JCPOA permits additional sanctions for non-nuclear issues. These are supposed to be imposed under existing law and not in a manner that replicates those

sanctions suspended by the deal. But, there is room for U.S. action in this regard, if Iran accepts that interpretation. If Iran does not, then Iran will have to decide how it wishes to respond.

■ What will be the reaction of Europeans if Trump violates the JCPOA?

A: I have long said and I will maintain here that the context for what the United States (and, for that matter, what Iran) does is the most important element for third party reaction. European countries may support the United States if Trump responds to clear violations of the JCPOA by Iran. On the other hand, they may support Iran's position if the United States violates the deal, even if their companies and banks go along with U.S. sanctions regardless. It is impossible to judge now how these states and their entities will react.

South Korean tycoons line up for biggest corruption probe

The South Korean parliament has kicked off an unprecedented series of hearings that will see top business heads grilled over their alleged connections with President Park Geun-hye's influence-peddling scandal.



The hearings started on Monday with the heads of industrial behemoths Samsung and Hyundai lining up with seven other top business leaders to testify before the National Assembly's special investigation committee.

The heads of the so-called chaebol conglomerates, including Samsung Group's de facto leader Jay Y. Lee and Hyundai Motor Group Chairman Chung Mong-koo, are scheduled to appear at the inquiry on Tuesday.

The hearings opened on the back of a series of weekly mass demonstrations in the capital, Seoul, that have seen millions of people take to the streets to call for Park's resignation.

Park is under intense pressure to step down over the scandal, which involves one of her close associates. A parliamentary vote to impeach her over the case could take place on Friday.

Park's presidential Blue House aides addressed the parliamentary hearing on Monday over the allegation that Park and her friend, Choi Soon-sil, as well as a senior aide to Park, put pressure on major corporations to pay money to foundations that were set up to promote Park's policy initiatives.

Choi, 60, has been accused of using her relationship with Park to solicit \$70 million in donations from conglomerates such as Samsung, intended for two foundations but in fact embezzled for her personal use.

The shadowy woman has been detained and is being questioned by prosecutors, as are several of Park's close aides.

Choi, who has been indicted on charges of coercion and abuse of power, is set to appear at televised hearings on Wednesday.

Park has denied any wrongdoing, but has apologized for exercising poor judgment.

Last week, she offered to step down and asked the parliament to decide how and when she should leave office.

Opposition parties rejected her proposal, describing it as a ploy to buy time and avoid being impeached, and vowed to push ahead with the impeachment bid.

(Source: Press TV)

Russia is 'No. 1 threat' to United States, Air Force secretary claims

1 → Meanwhile, Kendall said that U.S. policy, which had previously been focused on threats in the Asia-Pacific region and the Middle East, is now being focused more on Russia.

Also speaking at the conference, Marine Corps General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, accused Russia of aiming to counter NATO (The North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and undermine its credibility while limiting the ability of the U.S. military to project power around the world.

Army Secretary Eric Fanning also told a panel at the conference that Russia was acting in a "destabilizing way."

It is not the first time that James has named Russia as the biggest threat to the U.S. In August, she told Fox News that she thinks the "number one threat is Russia," adding that it is "one of the handful of [countries] that could actually present an existential threat to the U.S."

Despite the officials' cited concerns about Russia, President-elect Donald Trump has vowed to strengthen ties between the two countries, repeatedly stressing that it would be great if the two nations could get along, and citing a common desire to combat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh). Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed a willingness to cooperate with the Trump administration during his annual address to Russian lawmakers on Friday, saying that Moscow and Washington "have a shared responsibility to ensure international safety."

For its part, Moscow has expressed its own concerns about U.S. and NATO military activity in recent months, with Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov calling the Western alliance an "aggressive bloc" in November.

(Source: RT)

Benevolent Ashtari gets one-year sentence by Indian local court

1 → The founder and secretary of ASSIST registered the Narges Foundation in his own name, manipulating Narges into believing she could not register a foundation as a foreigner.

The NGO then tried to take Narges's second home for visually impaired children, but this time she fought back.

She filed a complaint at the police station in Rayagada and the husband and wife behind ASSIST were sent to jail.

But soon, the court granted the couple bail, and from then on Narges's life became a "living hell" as she received life threats constantly.

They have tried to ruin her reputation, take away her second children's home, threaten to send her to jail and have her Indian visa revoked.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Behind the World Cup record: Peter Shilton

"Sometimes, being a goalkeeper, things get forgotten. You're very lucky if saves get replayed and remembered – you get remembered most for things that go wrong."

At times, the legacies goalkeepers are left with can mean the job can seem like a thankless task. There are many fine goalkeepers who have seen countless match-winning saves eternally eclipsed by a single second's lapse in concentration across thousands upon thousands of minutes across a career.



That's why Peter Shilton, who was reflecting above, feels so fortunate to have been remembered how he is today – as arguably England's greatest goalkeeper and the holder of the record for most clean sheets at the FIFA World Cup™. He was part of the team which brought the Three Lions closest to recreating their solitary triumph in 1966, with his renowned shot-stopping ability seeing him end almost 60 per cent of his appearances on football's top stage without conceding.

The Player

Shilton, now the Seattle Sport Sciences, Inc. and ISOTechnie global ambassador, enjoyed a career representing his country that spanned almost 20 years, having first donned the gloves in 1970 – a few months after England relinquished their grasp on the Jules Rimet trophy in Mexico. It was not until 1982 that they would make it back, though. He still stands as the men's side's all-time leading cap-holder, with 125 to his name – also a world record at the time. The last of these came in the Match for Third Place at Italy 1990, with fourth remaining England's second-best finish at the tournament to date, while seeing him move on to 17 World Cup appearances – another national record – having also competed at Spain 1982 and Mexico 1986. His place coming into his first World Cup had been in doubt, as he was sharing duties with Ray Clemence, but having been given the nod by manager Ron Greenwood, he did not look back.

The Record

With clean sheets hard to be come by in the earlier era of the World Cup – with almost twice as many on average during the last five World Cups as the first five editions – it may not come as a surprise that it took some time for a meaningful tally to be accrued. However, Brazilian legend Gilmar – who won two World Cups in the process – did eventually clock up seven, with the final of those coming against Bulgaria in 1966.

He had to wait 12 years to get some company on that mark, and since then, this has been a popular record to share. Netherlands' Jan Jongbloed joined Gilmar there at Argentina 1978, but he enjoyed just a week with his name at the top of the bill, as Germany's Sepp Maier went one better, pushing the benchmark to eight in a goalless draw with Italy. Even then, he was out on his own for just another four days when another Brazilian in the shape of Leao moved alongside the German after keeping out Argentina.

It was not until Shilton, in his second game of Italy 1990 – a 0-0 draw with Netherlands – moved up to the top of the crowded podium, before claiming it for his own when England pulled off a 1-0 win over Egypt five days later. It was not until the semi-final of Germany 2006, when Fabian Barthez booked a return to the World Cup Final for France in a 1-0 defeat of Portugal, that the English stopper had to make room for one of his peers.

The Memories

"Being part of a team, you want to make sure it performs first, then I was just the one who made all the saves. My first line of defence was my mouth. I always tried to work my back four in particular – telling them 'what a great tackle', 'great header' – and engage with them right through the 90 minutes, working them verbally and mentally. Sometimes, I'd come in after a game and think I'd played really well, as I only had one save to make."

"1982 was strange in the sense that we played five games and let one goal in. To then come home [after the second group stage] – having been waiting 12 years – was a very strange feeling. It felt like you had done your job, but not made it to the semi-finals. The Germany game was very tactical, but against Spain, I remember making a couple of saves I was really proud of that kept us in it, but we couldn't score the goals that we needed."

"[In our first game of 1986 against Portugal] nothing went right for us, we didn't play well, they cleared one off the line and the goal was really a mistake by Kenny [Sansom] and it wasn't the start we were looking for."

"We changed things against Poland and the rest is history – Gary Lineker scored a hat-trick – but even in that game, they broke away one-against-one in the first few minutes, and I managed to get down low and make a really good save. If we'd gone 1-0 down, then who knows. I'll always put that down as one of my most important World Cup saves. A lot of people don't remember it, but I personally remember that first save early on because of the importance for our confidence."

"We should have beaten the Netherlands [in 1990]. We played well that day and I can't remember getting overloaded that game. [When breaking the record versus Egypt] I didn't have much to do, but as a goalkeeper you're thinking 'one goal, one shot, one mistake and you could be out of the World Cup'. It's one of those games where you want us to score a couple and you can enjoy it a little. But when it's 0-0 and it's getting to the last few minutes, you know that one breakaway and you could be on your way home. That's the pressure you have at the back."

"I played for eight years under Bobby Robson and to get the record number of caps was something I was very proud of. Because we had such a great World Cup, getting so close to the final, it was great to finish on a high and it felt like the right moment to retire."

"You have to credit [Barthez for] achieving something like this too. It's always nice to hold a record yourself, but you have to applaud if someone else reaches it as well."

(Source: FIFA)

Napoli, Benfica, Besiktas vie for last 16 Champions League slots

Paris (AFP) — As Paris Saint-Germain joust with Arsenal for top spot in their group, Napoli, Benfica and Besiktas will battle it out Tuesday for last 16 Champions League slots.

The Group B trio all have everything to play for in their final pool games as the only one of the eight first phase groups where no side has yet secured a berth.

Portugal's Benfica, European champions back in 1961 and 1962 in their halcyon days but who have underachieved since, should have secured their passage on matchday five but threw away a three-goal lead at Besiktas.

That Turkish comeback, rekindling memories of Liverpool's historic 2005 Istanbul triumph, has left the group outcome on a knife-edge with Besiktas knowing that a win at eliminated Dynamo Kiev will send them through.

In contrast, the final round of games pits Benfica against a Napoli side who beat them 4-2 back on matchday two in Italy — while Besiktas were dropping home points against Kiev.

The Turkish side's subsequent win in Italy threw the group wide open and the 14-time national champions' refusal to surrender against Benfica means they now fancy their chances.

Besiktas will hope that their best previous showing — a 1987 European Cup quarter-final appearance — will not prove a poor omen. Back then, they lost 7-0 on aggregate — to Kiev.

Turkish daily Sabah expressed concern Sunday about the weather in Kiev predicting that sub-zero temperatures and snow could spell "danger". The paper added Aras Ozbiliz, Anderson Talisca and Caner Erkin are on the treatment table and set to miss out.

All at stake in Lisbon

The winner of Benfica-Napoli in Lisbon will qualify as group winners, while a draw would be enough to send the latter through given their head-to-head edge. If Besiktas lose, both will progress regardless.

Whereas Benfica warmed up for the game by losing their unbeaten record in Portugal in slumping to unheralded Maritimo at the weekend, Napoli broke back into the top four in Serie A when Slovakia midfielder Marek Hamsik moved to within 11 goals of Diego Maradona's record haul



of 115 goals for the club after scoring in Friday's 3-0 romp over Inter Milan.

"As far as we're concerned, we have to go there looking for the win," said Napoli coach Maurizio Sarri.

"It will be a difficult game, but it could be two games in one. For the first 70 minutes it could all be normal, then go one way or the other in the final 20 minutes."

Beyond the tightest group of the season, the final round of games is all about securing pole position and a theoretically softer second round draw.

It's been tight at the top throughout in Group A where there is nothing to choose between Arsenal and PSG, both through and level on points ahead of final games at Basel

and home to Ludogorets, both winless makeweights.

Barcelona have already won Group C at the expense of Manchester City who nonetheless accompany the Catalan club through regardless of what happens as City host Celtic and Barca welcome Borussia Moenchengladbach.

Atletico Madrid won Group D by a distance and are the only club in the competition with a perfect record as they prepare to do the double over runners-up Bayern Munich.

Rostov will look to avoid defeat at PSV Eindhoven and see their adventures carry on albeit in the Europa League.

A minute's silence will be held before all matches as a mark of respect for Brazilian side Chapecoense, whose squad was decimated by last week's air crash.

Former FIFA president Blatter loses appeal against ban



Former FIFA president Sepp Blatter has lost his appeal against a six-year ban for ethics violations, imposed amid the biggest corruption scandal to shake the world soccer body, the Court of Arbitration for Sport said on Monday.

Blatter led FIFA for 17 years, resigning in June last year after several dozen football officials, including former FIFA executive committee members, and entities were indicted in the United States on graft charges.

Blatter, 80, was not among those indicted but himself became embroiled in scandal when he was banned from all football-related activity the following December by FIFA's ethics committee, along with Michel Platini, then the president of

the European soccer body UEFA.

The men were banned over a payment of 2 million Swiss francs (1.55 million pound) that FIFA made to Platini in 2011, with Blatter's approval, for work done a decade earlier.

CAS said in a statement that its panel had determined that Blatter "breached the FIFA code of ethics since the payment amounted to an undue gift as it had no contractual basis."

"The Panel further found that Mr Blatter unlawfully awarded contributions to Mr Platini under the FIFA Executive Committee retirement scheme which also amounted to an undue gift."

Blatter and Platini have denied wrongdoing.

(Source: Reuters)

Mario Balotelli had behaviour clause in Liverpool contract - report



Mario Balotelli was entitled to a bonus payment of £1 million from Liverpool if he was not sent off on three occasions each season for violent conduct, according to a report in The Times.

Sources told ESPN FC before the deal that Liverpool wanted to insert a behaviour clause into Balotelli's contract upon signing him. As part of a series of wide-ranging stories published by The Times in the U.K., Der Spiegel in Germany and El Mundo in Spain, based on a series of documents released by Football Leaks, The Times reports that the clause allowed Balotelli, who left Liverpool to join Nice on a free transfer in the summer after a troubled two-season spell on Merseyside, plenty of opportunity to earn the bonus.

It is claimed the clause reads: "If during each season of the term of this contract

the player is not dismissed from the field of play on three or more occasions for violent conduct, spitting at an opponent or any other person, for using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures and/or for dissent by word or action ... then on the 30th June at the end of each season he shall receive a bonus payment of £1 million."

Balotelli was not sent off during his first campaign at Liverpool, but he spent the second season on loan to AC Milan.

Meanwhile, the Times also reports that Balotelli was in line to earn £50,000-a-goal once he surpassed the total of five in the Premier League or Champions League each season. However, in his first season he only managed two in European competition and one in the league.

(Source: ESPN)

Cristiano Ronaldo and Jose Mourinho were warned over tax affairs - report

The representatives of Cristiano Ronaldo and Jose Mourinho were warned that the structure of their tax affairs was potentially risky, according to media reports in Spain.

An investigation sparked by a leak of more than 18 million documents has reported that Real Madrid star Ronaldo has routed at least €150 million in income through the British Virgin Islands tax haven since 2009, and that the Spanish tax authorities have been investigating his affairs for 12 months already.

The same reports say that current Manchester United manager Mourinho allegedly moved some of his income via six countries and a New Zealand based trust in his wife's name in a bid to minimise the taxes he would pay when he was Real Madrid coach between 2010 and 2013.

Government officials in England and Spain have called for Mourinho's tax bill to be re-examined with Mourinho's advisers alleged to have misled investigators while hiding money in a Caribbean tax haven. Mourinho has insisted he has "nothing to hide."

Both are represented by Jorge Mendes' agency Gestifute, which has strongly denied any wrongdoing,

saying that all of their clients are fully compliant with all of their tax obligations.

However, an email printed by El Mundo allegedly shows that Madrid-based lawyers Senn Ferrero wrote to Gestifute to say that his opinion was that the combination of offshore companies created to manage Ronaldo's finances could come under scrutiny.

"The structure you have created gentlemen is going to cause a serious problem for the player [Ronaldo]," the leaked email allegedly written by Julio Senn, who was managing director of Real Madrid in the late 1990s and is now a leading sports law expert in Spain, read.

The publication of the leaked documents has caused a furore in Spain, especially with many details being printed on the morning of Saturday's 1-1 Clasico draw between Madrid and Barcelona at the Camp Nou.

Veteran radio host Jose Ramon de la Morena, a household name in Spain after three decades on late-night sports shows, was critical of rich individuals using complicated structures to hide earnings on his current programme El Transistor.

"The tax structure was created to steal from society," De la Morena said. "The taxes seem a lot to you if you

earn a lot, and even more if you earn less, but these are rules set by the governments the people have chosen. This is the law.

"Before the guy who avoided taxes was the smart one, but now it is a crime where everyone feels they are the victim, as we are all being robbed. Everyone tries to do what they can, within the law. But to hide money to avoid paying taxes is to steal."

Among the leaked documents is correspondence between the father of Madrid starlet Martin Odegaard and the Senn Ferrero office, in which Hans Erik Odegaard declined to use any scheme which would have helped his son pay less tax.

"[Martin] is going to earn a lot of money anyway," Odegaard Sr. is quoted as saying by El Mundo. "So there is also a moral question involved over how much effort should be made to try and save some money, when other people are struggling much more to pay their taxes."

Former Real Madrid player Mesut Ozil, now at Arsenal, paid more than €2m (£1.67m) in back tax in Spain and is disputing a €790,000 fine, according to documents supplied to Der Spiegel by Football Leaks.

(Source: ESPN)

Toni candidate to take charge of Iran's Machine Sazi

T S P O R T S Antonio Jose da Conceicao Oliveira, known as Toni, is a candidate to take charge of Iranian football team Machine Sazi.

Rasoul Khatibi quit his role as head coach of the rock-bottom team on Friday after suffering an away defeat against Persepolis.

Under tutelage of Khatibi, Machine Sazi secured promotion to the Iran Professional League (IPL) last season.

Machine Sazi has won just one match in IPL after 12 weeks, suffered eight defeats, and drawn three times.

Farhad Kazemi, who stepped down as Siahjamegan coach, and Yahya Golmohammadi, who was sacked as head coach of Zob Ahan, are among the candidates.

The 70-year-old Portuguese coach served three stints as coach of Tractor Sazi of Tabriz.

Toni inspired Tractor Sazi to Hazfi Cup title in 2013-14.

Toni earned 32 caps for Portugal, his debut coming on 12 October 1969 in a 0-1 away loss against Romania for the 1970 FIFA World Cup qualifiers.

His last match occurred eight years later, in a 0-2 friendly defeat in France.

Toni was part of the country's squad at the 1972 Brazil Independence Cup.



FIFA fines Persepolis for breach of transfer rules



T S P O R T S Iranian football club Persepolis has been fined 55,000 Swiss francs by FIFA's Disciplinary Committee for breaching the rules of transfer windows.

Khalatbari had signed a two-year deal with the UAE's Ajman in June 2013, but after the Pro League changed its name to Arabian Gulf League, the former Al Wasl midfielder had to return home.

At that time, the Iranian football federation decid-

ed to bar their players from signing for UAE clubs and Persepolis signed the midfielder.

The Iranian giant paid \$850,000 – the release clause in Khalatbari's Ajman contract – and signed him for two years.

Persepolis acting president Aliakbar Taheri said that the team has been fined by FIFA for breaching the rules of transfer windows and there has been a problem in transfer date.

Iranian teams will face Russian counterparts on Tuesday.

Iran lost to Russia 4-3 in the semi-final of the FIFA Futsal World Cup Colombia 2016.

Iranian teams will face Russian counterparts on Tuesday.

Iran futsal team defeats Russia in friendly

the Iranian futsal team defeated Russia 6-4 in friendly match on Monday.

The match took place in Tehran's Handball Hall.

Hossein Tayyebi (two goals), Aliasghar Hassanzadeh, Mehdi Javid, Mohammadreza Sangsefidi and Ahmad Esmaeilpour scored for the Iranian team.

Earlier in the day, Iran U-23 futsal team

defeated 4-2 the Russian U-23 team.

Farhad Kazemi, who stepped down as Siahjamegan coach, and Yahya Golmohammadi, who was sacked as head coach of Zob Ahan, are among the candidates.

Iran to participate at Grand Prix Epee Qatar 2016



Iran will send seven fencers to the Grand Prix Epee Men and Women Qatar 2016.

The competition will be held in Doha from December 9 to 11.

Mohammad Esmaeili, Hossein Jafari, Mohammadali Keyhani and Mohammad Rezaei will represent Iran's men team.

Azam Bakhti, Sekineh Nouri and

Mahsa Pourrahmati are members of the Iranian women team.

The modern epee derives from the 19th-century Epee de Combat (itself a derivative of the French small sword), and is the largest and heaviest of the three weapons used in sport fencing. Epee is French for "sword".

(Source: Tasnim)

Soroush Rafiei linked with Qatari teams



Iranian international midfielder Soroush Rafiei has been linked with a move to Qatari clubs.

Rafiei's current contract expires next month. Iranian football giant Persepolis has also shown interest in signing the attacking midfielder.

His glittering performance in the Iranian Professional League caught eye of the Qatari giant clubs al-

Gharafa and Umm Salal.

The 26-year-old player started his career with Fajr Sepasi Shiraz and helped the team to promote to the 2011-12 Persian Gulf Cup. He later joined Foolad.

Rafiei joined Tractor Sazi in July 2015. He has made four caps for the Iranian national football team.

(Source: Tasnim)

Mauro Berruto shortlisted for Iran volleyball team

Former Italy coach Mauro Berruto has emerged as the latest candidate to take charge of Iranian national volleyball team.

Berruto was head coach of Italy men's national volleyball team from 2010 to 2015. Under his guidance, Italy achieved the silver medal in the European Championship in 2011.

The Italian team won the bronze medal at the 2012 Olympic Games.

They later achieved bronze medal at the World League 2013, while in the same year, Berruto led the team to the second consecutive silver medal in the

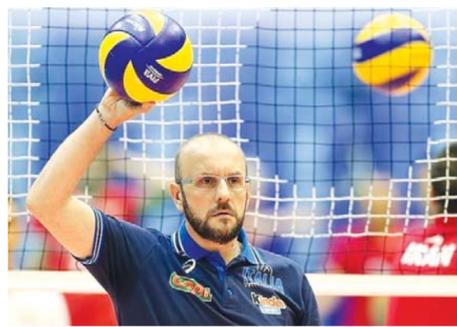
European Championships.

At the World League 2014, Italy advanced to the final round, held in Florence, gaining another bronze medal.

After Italy finished in fifth place in the World League finals in Rio de Janeiro, on July 29, 2015, Berruto resigned as coach of the Italian national team.

The Iranian volleyball federation has also negotiated with Marcelo Mendez, the Argentinean coach of Brazilian volleyball team Sada Cruzeiro, with Italian coach Andrea Anastasi and Bulgarian Radostin Stoychev in the last few days.

(Source: Tasnim)



Antalyaspor's Samuel Eto'o 'can't say no' to Marseille move

Samuel Eto'o has opened the door to a potential move to Marseille, but has said his wife will have the final say.

Eto'o, 35, is currently with Turkish club Antalyaspor, the 11th senior club of his 19-year career that has also seen him ply his trade in Spain, Italy, England and Russia.

The former Cameroon international told TF1 he could be tempted to join Frank McCourt's ambitious project at Marseille, if Mrs. Eto'o agrees.

"We'll see, I can't say 'no'. But I have to ask the question to my wife," Eto'o said on Telefoot. "She's the boss."

Should the former Chelsea and Everton striker make the switch to the Stade Velodrome, he could form a

high-profile front pair with Bafetimbi Gomis.

Gomis, 31, joined OM on loan from Swansea City last summer, and has scored a respectable seven goals in 15 league outings this term for his new club.

However, though he found the net in OM's 3-0 home win over Nancy on Sunday, he received a lukewarm reception from his own team's fans after comments he made following his club's goalless draw with Saint-Etienne in midweek.

Gomis came through the ranks at Saint-Etienne, playing there for eight years before joining arch-rivals Lyon in 2009.

He admitted following Wednesday's match he re-

mained a supporter of his first club, a statement some OM supporters did not take kindly to.

Gomis told L'Equipe he now intends to clear the air. "I have asked to meet the supporters' clubs to talk about this misunderstanding. I want to wash my dirty linen in the family. I think my words about the club where I first played have been badly interpreted," he said.

"I accept being whistled at and I'm proud to play for OM and to be its captain."

He added: "Marseille fans are demanding fans, but I need that to progress. If you don't like pressure, you don't come here. I've got quite a few goals still to score here."

(Source: SoccerNet)

Nico Rosberg retirement like losing a wheel to Mercedes

World champion Nico Rosberg will be tough to replace because it is like losing a corner of the Mercedes Formula 1 car, says the team's executive technical director Paddy Lowe.

Just five days after winning the 2016 F1 title, Rosberg stunned the world of motorsport by announcing his retirement with immediate effect on Friday.

Who should replace Rosberg in 2017?

Mercedes chief Toto Wolff said Rosberg retires as "the best driver in Formula 1 today" and added the world champion outfit will take its time in naming a replacement.

Rosberg, who was named International Racing Driver of the Year at the Autosport Awards in London on Sunday, beat Hamilton to his maiden title by just five points.

"From an engineering point of view, losing Nico is like losing a corner of the car," Lowe told Autosport.

"How are you going to recover that?"

"We'll be putting a lot of work in to that over the next few weeks, making sure we make the best decision possible."

"It is difficult because from a technical, engineering point of view we exist as an organisation to go out there and earn points for championships."

"That's a very, very tough process to go through - we've got some very, very tough competitors."

"Losing such a critical component in the team as Nico at this stage is something that will set us back a bit."

"To break the records we've done in the last three seasons you need a great car and a great team to produce that car."

"But you need fantastic drivers to go out there and score those points at a very, very low error rate."

The German won nine races and took eight poles during the season and only failed to make the podium five times in 21 races.

Despite the void Rosberg would leave, Lowe said the 31-year-old's decision made "perfect sense".

"There's the human side and we share some admiration with the rest of the world for Nico making such a brave call," added Lowe.

"We know him well, we know his family, and we understand the move he wants to make."

"It makes perfect sense to all of us. That's the human aspect."

(Source: AutoSport)

F1 to return to France in 2018 as McLaren say Fernando Alonso happy at team

The French Formula One Grand Prix will return in 2018 after a 10-year absence, with the race scheduled to take place at the Circuit Paul Ricard in southern France, said a local politician, Christian Estrosi, on Monday.

"We and those who are with me are very proud ... it's a great victory," said Estrosi.

France hosted the first ever recognised Grand Prix near Le Mans in 1906, but the country lost its slot in 2008.

McLaren have no fears about losing Fernando Alonso to Mercedes after the Formula One world champion Nico Rosberg's sudden retirement, the team's new executive director Zak Brown said on Monday.

"We have a contract with Fernando and he's very happy," the American told Sky Sports. "Obviously, he wants to be winning races, as do we, but I am not worried about that scenario [him leaving]. We are very comfortable where we are at."

McLaren have not won a race since 2012 and have under-performed since the start of their new partnership with Honda in 2015, finishing sixth overall this year and ninth out of 10 teams in 2015.

Alonso, a double world champion with Renault, joined McLaren from Ferrari at the end of 2014 and has been disappointed by their lack of success. He is due to partner Belgian rookie Stoffel Vandoorne next year.

Formula One's commercial supremo Bernie Ecclestone said last week that Alonso, a team-mate of the triple world champion Lewis Hamilton at McLaren in 2007, would be his ideal replacement for Rosberg at Mercedes alongside Britain's Lewis Hamilton.

Rosberg announced his retirement on Friday, five days after winning the world title in Abu Dhabi.

Mercedes began their search for a new driver on Monday with the non-executive chairman Niki Lauda saying at the weekend that he hoped the most-prized seat on the starting grid could be filled by the end of the year.

Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel, another driver mentioned in media speculation and a four-times world champion, ruled himself out of the reckoning on Sunday.

(Source: Guardian)





Poem of the day

Go, rest your head on a pillow, leave me alone;
leave me ruined, exhausted from the journey
of this night,

Rumi

Prayer Times

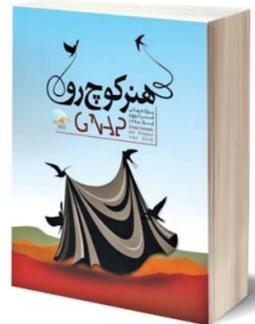
Noon: 11:55 Evening: 17:11 Dawn: 5:31 tomorrow Sunrise: 7:01 (tomorrow)

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“Global Nomadic Art Project” published in Tehran

T A R T TEHRAN — The book “Global Nomadic Art Project” has been published by the Institute for Promotion of Contemporary Visual Art, the Center for Visual Arts announced.



The book was unveiled during the opening ceremony of the project, which began in the coastal village of Salakh on Qeshm Island on December 5, and was attended by the Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Ali Moradkhani and Majid Mollanoruzi, the head of the Center for Visual Arts.

This is the seventh edition of the project, which began in South Korea, moved to India and South Africa, and now continues here in Iran,

head of the project land artist Nadalian has already said.

Nine artists from South Korea, Germany, France, Switzerland, Slovakia, the Netherlands and Lithuania in addition to 11 artists from Iran have taken part in the project, which will end on December 18 at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art.

Italian maestro Damiano Giuranna to hold master classes in Tehran

T A R T TEHRAN — Italian maestro Damiano Giuranna who is the conductor of the World Youth Orchestra is scheduled to hold master classes in Tehran

The master classes, which will focus on violin, viola and orchestral performance, will be held at the Culture and Art Applied Science University in Tehran on December 10 and 11.

The master classes will be organized based on an agreement signed between the university and the World Youth Orchestra, which is located in Rome.

Based on the agreement, a number of Iranian students will be selected to attend master classes and also to perform with the World Youth Orchestra in future concerts.

The master classes have been arranged in collaboration with the 5Khat Music Academy in Tehran.

The World Youth Orchestra performed joint concerts with the Tehran Symphony Orchestra at Tehran's Vahdat Hall during August.

Seventy-five young musicians from the five continents founded the orchestra in 2001.



Photo: Italian maestro Damiano Giuranna conducts musicians from the World Youth Orchestra and the Tehran Symphony Orchestra during a joint rehearsal at Tehran's Rudaki Hall on August 3, 2016. (Honaronline/Bahareh Asadi)

French instructor to teach buffoonery acting at Tehran center

T A R T TEHRAN — French theater instructor Dominique Dupoux Vaudeville will be holding a buffoonery acting workshop at Tehran's Fanous Art and Culture House next week.

Buffoonery is a modern French theater term that was re-coined in the early 1960s by Jacques Lecoq to describe a specific style of performance work that has a main focus in the art of mockery.

Vaudeville is the director and instructor

of Point Fixe, a theater school in Paris.

This is the 13th international theater workshop by Fanous running for five days from December 15 to 19, and participants will be granted an international certificate offered by POINT FIXE theater school,

Fanous has announced on its website.

Point Fixe theater school was established in Paris by Vaudeville. In this theater school, short-term and long-term classes are held for acting, filming and dancing.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Films from Iran to compete in Pentedattilo Film Festival

T A R T TEHRAN — Iranian films “Kech” and “Nobody” will be competing in the Pentedattilo Film Festival, an international festival of short movies that will be held in the Italian town from December 7 to 11.

Directed by Mehrdad Hassani, “Kech” tells the story of a nurse who sacrifices herself to save a child from a war zone. The film will be screened in the official competition.

“Nobody” directed by Elham Toroqi will compete in the animation section.

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Watercolor

■ Shokuh Gallery will be playing host to an exhibition of watercolor paintings by Bahman Niku and his pupils from December 9 to 20.

The gallery can be found at 19 Amir Nuri Alley, North Salimi St. near Andarzgu Blvd.

Jewelry

■ Silver jewelry by Nima Saei and Mehran Shirzad will be showcased in an exhibition at Mess-Negar Gallery from December 9 to 12.

The gallery is located at No. 5 in the Park Prince Building on Molla Sadra Highway.

“American Honey” leads British Independent Film Awards

LONDON (Newsweek) — “American Honey” dominated the British Independent Film Awards in London Sunday, winning four trophies including best British independent film.

The coming-of-age drama, about a teenage girl who runs away from home to join a traveling sales crew, also took home best actress for lead star Sasha Lane, best director for Andrea Arnold and best cinematography.

“Moonlight”, Barry Jenkins’ poignant drama was awarded best international independent film. It is the latest win for the Oscar favorite, which also won best film at the Los Angeles Film Critics Awards Sunday.

“I, Daniel Blake”, legendary British auteur Ken Loach’s drama about the shame of poverty in austerity Britain, won in the category of best actor, thanks to Dave Johns—a Newcastle comic who made his acting debut in the film. Co-star Hayley Squires was voted most promising newcomer.

Actors Alison Steadman and Naomie Harris won special awards for their contributions to acting. Steadman won the Richard Harris Award, recognizing her five-decade career, while Naomie Harris was given the Variety Award for helping put a spotlight on British filmmaking on an international scale.

Best Screenplay Award was given to Babak Anvari for “Under the Shadow”, while the Best Supporting Actress Award was also presented to Avin Moushghi for her role in “Under the Shadow”.

PICTURE OF THE DAY

Honaronline/Alireza Farahani



Members of a troupe led by writer/director Yavar Darrezami perform “1=4” at Tehran's Da Theater on December 2, 2016. The play will be on stage until December 16.

Iranian films line up for Jaipur festival

T A R T TEHRAN — Seven Iranian films will be competing in various categories of the 9th Jaipur International Film Festival running from January 7 to 11, 2017.

“Arvand” by Purya Azarbaijani and “Inversion” by Behnam Behzadi are the two entries in the feature fiction section.

“Without Eve” by Komeil Rohani, “Jamshid Aria” by Arsha Aghdasi, “Kech” (Daughter) by Mehrdad Hasani and “Beyond The End” by Arshiya Zarrin will



be competing in the short fiction section.

“Owsia” (Darkened Water) by Alireza Dehghan is an entry in the short documentary section.

Watch Docs to screen “A157”

T A R T TEHRAN — Iran's Soureh Pictures Company's powerful documentary “A157” will compete at the 16th Watch Docs, an international festival of human rights films in Warsaw.

Directed by Behruz Nuranipur, the film is about the tragedy of three Kurdish girls who became pregnant after being raped by members of ISIS.

The documentary was named best documentary at the 34th Fajr Film Festival in Tehran in February.

The festival will open with a screening of “Wrong Elements” by Jonathan Littell



from France, Germany and Belgium on December 9

The weeklong event will wrap up with a screening of “Prison Sisters” by Sweden-based Iranian director Nima Sarvestani.

James Taylor, Al Pacino and Mavis Staples feted at Kennedy Center Honors

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — Washington celebrated singer-songwriter James Taylor, actor Al Pacino, and gospel vocalist Mavis Staples at the annual Kennedy Center Honors on Sunday in a night of music punctuated by the approaching end of President Barack Obama's time in office.

Obama lauded the five honorees, including pianist Martha Argerich and rock band the Eagles, at a White House ceremony that will be his last before stepping down in January.

“The arts are always central to

American life,” he said, noting a string of performances his family had enjoyed over eight years at the White House. “This is one of the perks of the job that I will miss.”

Politics and the recent election of Republican Donald Trump to the presidency influenced the atmosphere of the evening. Host Stephen Colbert opened the show with a welcome to “endangered swamp dwellers,” a reference to Trump's pledge to drain “the swamp” of Washington when his administration begins.

The surprise appearance of former President Bill Clinton with a tribute to Taylor also underscored the results of the election, in which his wife, former Secretary of State and Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, lost to Trump.

Still, the evening belonged to the honorees and the performers who feted them. Singers Darius Rucker, Sheryl Crow, and Garth Brooks sent up Taylor, who is known for hits such as “Sweet Baby James” and “You've got a Friend.”

“He has been and he still is the sweet and steady voice of our better angels,”

Clinton said of Taylor.

Actor Pacino, star of “The Godfather” and “Scent of a Woman,” drew praise from friend and fellow actor Sean Penn for making the gods of acting smile.

“I'll Take You There” singer Staples told reporters she was honored to be part of the last group of awardees under Obama. “It feels wonderful,” she said. “I'm really happy.”

Classical pianist Martha Argerich, a one-time child prodigy from Argentina, was feted by opera great Plácido Domingo for her spirit.