



Zarif: Trump 'will be surprised' if he tries to renegotiate the nuclear deal

# 'Astana meeting expected to trigger intra-Syria dialogue'

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that he hoped the planned talks between the Syrian government and the armed

opposition groups would lay the groundwork for a start of intra-Syrian talks. Rouhani made the remarks in a meeting with Syrian Prime

Minister Imad Khamis in Tehran. The president also said the "liberation of Aleppo" and "ceasefire" are two important steps in line with establishing peace and stability in Syria. →2

## EU lifts ban on 3 Iranian companies, bank branch

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — In an amendment to its previous decisions, the council of the European Union removed its restrictive measures against three Iranian companies as well as a branch of an Iranian bank. The amendment published on the Official Journal of the European Union on Tuesday mentioned Oil Industry Pension Fund Investment Company (OPIC), Neka Novin (a.k.a. Niksa Nirou), West Sun Trade GMBH, and Bank Saderat PLC (London) as the Iranian entities against them the sanctions are lifted.

One year has passed since the implementation of Iran's nuclear deal that was reached with the 5+1 group of countries in January 2016.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini has said that nuclear agreement is working.

"We can clearly say that the Iran deal is working and we need to maintain it," she wrote in an article published by the Guardian on Tuesday.

Also at the start of his final week in the White House, Barack Obama issued a warning to the incoming Trump administration about the value of the nuclear deal with Iran.

"The United States must remember that this agreement was the result of years of work," read a statement released by the White House on Monday.

The deal, the statement said, "represents an agreement between the world's major powers — not simply the United States and Iran."



## Rouhani test drives homegrown electric car

TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani tested an electric car developed domestically by a knowledge-based company concurrent with the national clean air day on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, he had a look at electric motorcycles manufactured by two other knowledge-based companies.

He further met with managers of some electric vehicle manufacturers and got acquainted with prices and qualities of the vehicles as well.

On the same occasion, Tehran Municipality unveiled a number of electric bikes, cars, motorcycles, SUVs, low emission buses and minibuses on Tuesday. For a full coverage of the story see page 12.



### PERSPECTIVE

**Mahmood Monshipouri**  
University of California professor

## Trump's foreign policy: Redefining friends and adversaries

As the Trump transition team prepares to move into the White House, several major issues occupy the minds of the European leaders, none more important than the future of the U.S.-NATO relations; the U.S.-Russia relations and their implications for the overall Western world's relations with Russia; and the future of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

Europe's broader concern with president-elect Donald J. Trump has intensified as the latter has suggested that the United States would not steadfastly defend NATO members from a possible attack by Russia if they had not contributed their fair share to the alliance—which is estimated to be roughly around 2 percent of each member's GDP. This new much more transactional view of alliances contradicts the very language of the Article 5 of the defense pact (known as mutual defense clause), which reads, "An armed attack against one ... shall be considered an attack against them all." Trump has gone as far as calling NATO "obsolete," a comment that has sent a shiver up and down of the collective spines of many EU leaders.

The reaction to Trump's criticism of free trade and his attempt to realign the uneven car trade between Germany and the United States has been roughly criticized by Germany's deputy chancellor and minister for the economy, Sigmar Gabriel when he noted that, "The U.S. car industry would have a bad awakening if all the supply parts that aren't being built in the U.S. were to suddenly come with a 35% tariff. I believe it would make the U.S. car industry weaker, worse and above all more expensive. I would wait and see what the Congress has to say about that, which is mostly full of people who want the opposite of Trump." →13

## I don't believe Trump will scuttle JCPOA: Georgetown professor

**INTERVIEW**  
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Georgetown Professor Shireen Tahmasb Hunter says she does not believe Donald Trump is seeking to abrogate the nuclear deal signed between Iran, great powers, and the European Union.

"I don't believe that Trump will scuttle the JCPOA," Hunter tells the Tehran Times.

She also says Trump's overtures toward Taiwan are more of "psychological maneuvering" rather a change of policy toward China.

Following is the text of the interview:  
■ **Trump first declared he would tear up the JCPOA, then said he would renegotiate the terms of the deal. So what is his policy?**

A: I don't believe that Trump will scuttle the JCPOA. However, it is very likely that he will adopt a more confrontational approach towards Iran. Trump's main concern is to maximize America's interests, either economically

or strategically. If he comes to the conclusion that dealing with Iran is in America's interests, he will do so. However, he is very sensitive and will react harshly to any provocative statement or action on Iran's part. In short, the fate of U.S.-Iran relations is in Iran's hands.

■ **What will be the quality of China-U.S. relationship under the new U.S. administration as Trump has challenged one-China policy by talking to the Taiwanese president.**

A: By talking to the President of Taiwan, Trump wants to send a message to China that it cannot take America for granted. If China behaves in ways contrary to U.S. interests, America will retaliate. The one China policy that America accepted was in the context of U.S.-China reconciliation of the 1970s. Now China challenges America in the Pacific region and basically is flooding American markets. Therefore Trump is saying that the U.S. has means of responding to China's activities.

This is more of psychological maneuvering than actually changes of policy.

■ **Do not you think the U.S.-NATO relations would go through difficulty during the Trump presidency?**

A: What Trump has said about NATO members paying a larger share of the Alliance's budget and defense spending is nothing new. In the past, this was referred to as "Burden-Sharing". This is a legitimate demand, especially that the United States provides the most important components of the Trans-Atlantic defense, including the nuclear shield. It also provides the Alliance's air and sea lifting capabilities. These are very important in case of a potential conflict on the continent. These responsibilities impose huge financial burdens on America. Now that Europe, unlike in the 1950s or 60s, is financially strong, it should carry a greater share of providing for the continent's defense. →2

## IEA sees significant gains in U.S. shale oil as prices rise

Oil-price gains will trigger a "significant" increase in U.S. shale output as OPEC and other producers rein in supply, according to the head of the International Energy Agency.

"U.S. shale-oil production will definitely react strongly," Executive Director Fatih Birol said Wednesday in a Bloomberg Television interview in Davos, Switzerland. At \$56 to \$57 a barrel, "a lot of shale plays in the United States would make perfect sense to produce."

Birol's comments suggest that the IEA has become more optimistic about the outlook

for U.S. production. Last month, the Paris-based agency said it expected U.S. tight oil -- as shale is also known -- to rise only "marginally" in 2017. The policy adviser to 29 nations will release its next short-term oil outlook on Thursday.

Oil prices have risen about 20 percent since the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries reached a deal to curtail supply last year. The Nov. 30 agreement prompted a surge in activity in the U.S. -- not an OPEC member -- where oil and gas producers in-

creased drilling the most since April 2014.

The oil industry is becoming more cost-efficient and a "big chunk" of global output is now profitable at \$50 to \$55 a barrel, Birol said in a later interview, citing Brazil, Mexico and China as countries that will also boost production. There'll be "lots more" supply in late 2017 or early 2018, he said.

"At \$50, \$55, we've already seen a lot of activity," Birol said. "U.S. oil production will continue to increase in significant terms."

(Source: Bloomberg)



## Iran wins World Para Alpine Skiing

Iranian skiers won the title of the World Para Alpine Skiing, winning three gold, three silver and two bronze medals.

The event held in Dizin, in Alborz mountain range near Tehran, on January 16-17.

"We began and also continue planning to support athletes' activities in winter sports through participation in Nagano 1998, Salt Lake City 2002, Torino 2006, Vancouver 2010, and Sochi 2014," NPC Iran Secretary General Masoud Ashrafi said.

The Dizin resort has been around for 47 years and is recognized by the International Ski Federation (FIS).

## OIC to UN: Stop potential genocide in Myanmar

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has called on the United Nations (UN) to intervene in Myanmar's Rakhine State, where it says the escalation of violence against Rohingya Muslims could lead to "genocide."

The organization's special envoy to Myanmar, Syed Hamid Albar, said the world body should act to resolve the conflict, which is no longer an internal issue but an international concern.

"We don't want to see another genocide like in Cambodia or Rwanda," he told Reuters. "The international community just observed, and how many people died? We have lessons from the past for us to learn from and see what we can do."

The OIC, which represents 57 countries, is set to hold an emergency meeting in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur on Thursday to discuss regional issues, including the military crackdown against the Rohingya.

Myanmar's military began its crackdown in Rakhine after an attack on the country's border guards on October 9 left nine police officers dead. The government blamed the Rohingya for the assault.

There are reports that at least 400 people have been killed, more than 2,500 houses, mosques, and religious schools destroyed, and three villages completely wiped out during the military siege. The Myanmar government has blocked humanitarian and media access to Rakhine.

Rohingya Muslims have been subjected to executions, rape, and arson attacks since October, according to refugees and rights groups.

Myanmar's government denies full citizenship to the 1.1 million-strong Rohingya population and instead brands them as "illegal immigrants" from Bangladesh, even as many trace their lineage in Myanmar back generations.

The Rohingya Muslims who have fled to Bangladesh during decades of violence in Myanmar, as many as 500,000, are not recognized as citizens by Dhaka, either.

(Source: agencies)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



**Iran foiled U.S. F-18's attempt to free sailors last year: commander**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Khatam al-Anbia desk Air Defense Base's warning alerts forced the U.S. F-18 fighter jet to abandon attempts to free U.S. sailors captured by Iranian forces last January, the base's lieutenant commander Alireza Sabahi-Fard announced on Wednesday.

The IRGC Naval Force captured the U.S. Navy sailors inside Iran's territorial waters on January 12, 2016 in the Persian Gulf.



**We need someone who knows Imam well: Hassan Khomeini**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — As time passes, desk there is less and less access to people who lived with Imam Khomeini and experienced his frame of mind, Hassan Khomeini said on Wednesday in an indirect reference to the death of Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

"The first generation of the revolution who could interpret Imam are leaving us one by one, but today we need people who know Imam," he stressed, Jamaran reported.

Presenting a false view of Imam Khomeini is a distortion of reality, he said, adding the guardianship of the jurist and the people's rights should be stressed equally.



**Owner of quadcopter in Tehran sky identified**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — The police have desk identified the owner of a quadcopter that trespassed into a no-fly zone in downtown Tehran earlier this week and caused air defense forces to start shooting at it from a rooftop.

The person has been called down to the police headquarters, Tehran police public relations office announced on Wednesday. It said the owner was a filmmaker who was taking films for a promotional TV program.

The trespassing took place on Sunday around 17:00 near Enqelab Sq.



**Motahari: Missiles needed, but timing is important**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Improving the desk country's missile power is a must, but timing is a principle in how Iran interacts with the world, MP Ali Motahari wrote on Instagram on Wednesday.

"Some misinterpreted a recent interview of mine as a rejection of the need for missiles... but what is important is a timely show of power," he said, adding, "Now that we are in the first months of the JCPOA implementation, we postpone the show to some later time."



**Revocation of citizenship of dual nationals untrue: Iranian MP**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — An Iranian MP desk on Wednesday refuted allegations that Iran intends to revoke the Iranian citizenship of people who hold Iranian and other nationalities.

Having non-Iranian nationalities is not considered a crime by law, said Alireza Salimi, head of parliamentary group for supporting Iranians overseas, ICANA reported.

However, he said that Iranian nationals with extra nationalities will be considered only as Iranian citizens by the Islamic Republic and treated accordingly.



**Iran will not hesitate to respond to any aggression: IRGC**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — The commander desk of the IRGC Naval Force has underlined the country's resolve to counter any act of bullying, aggression or excessive demands.

"On the issue of security and defending the Islamic revolution, we will definitely not sit by," said Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi on Wednesday, Tasnim reported.

"We will certainly not let the behavior of any bullying aggressor with excessive demands... against the revolutionary nation go unanswered," Fadavi stressed.

# Syria talks without U.S. due to Iran's objection

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Secretary desk of the Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani said on Wednesday that Washington will not attend the Syrian peace talks due to an objection by Iran, ISNA reported.

The peace talks on the Syria conflict are planned to be held on January 23 in Kazakhstan's capital Astana, where representatives from the Syrian government and opposition groups will meet to resolve the conflict.

Washington, which had led failed efforts to bring an end to the war that has killed more than 310,000 people, has not been involved in the latest rounds of talks.

Shamkhani said there is no reason to involve the U.S. in the peace talks, and entirely ruled out Washington's direct role in the political initiative.

He pointed to Iran's active role in supporting the Syrian government to fight terrorism, saying "Tehran would play a major role in the Astana talks as well."

The talks will be mediated by Russia, Turkey and Iran, after the three countries paved the way to a deal last month, enabling the evacuation of civilians and militants out of the northwestern city of Aleppo as it was being liberated by the Syrian Army.

The senior official also said in addition to the UN representative, only those armed groups that had agreed to the



**Shamkhani says there is no reason to involve the U.S. in the peace talks and rules out Washington's direct role in the political initiative.**

ceasefire and were committed to it were invited to attend the negotiations.

Also, Ali Akbar Velayati, the senior foreign policy advisor to the Leader, said separately on Wednesday that Iran strongly opposes America's presence in

the Astana talks.

"Iran's stance is against the presence of those who still act against the Syrian government," said Velayati, referring to the U.S.

The Americans cannot "interfere" in

the peace talks on the one hand, and dispatching terrorists into Syrian and arming them on the other hand, he noted.

The top official went on to say, "We were told that the Americans will have a supervisory role in the talks, whereas we do not consent to their presence in the Astana negotiations whether it be supervisory or they be an active party."

This came as Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Tuesday he thought it was right to invite the upcoming administration of Donald Trump to the peace talks.

Speaking separately on Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the ceasefire in Syria was "the first step" taken by Iran, Russia, and Turkey in the crisis settlement process.

"What we need to do at the international level is to help the Syrians reach the stage of starting to talk to each other and I believe the first step has been taken by Iran, Russia and Turkey in bringing about a cessation of hostilities," Sputnik news quoted Zarif as saying at the Davos forum.

President Hassan Rouhani, at a news conference on Tuesday, pointed to the role that the United States and Saudi Arabia would play in Syria, saying, "Some countries are not attending the talks, [because] their role was destructive."

"They were helping the terrorists," he added.

## Rouhani: Astana meeting expected to trigger intra-Syria dialogue

**I→** The president also said the "liberation of Aleppo" and "ceasefire" are two important steps in line with establishing peace and stability in Syria.

Under a plan introduced by Iran, Russia and Turkey in Moscow on December 20 a ceasefire was declared in Syria on December 30. Under the initiative, known as the Moscow declaration, the warring sides – the government and opposition groups – are scheduled to sit for peace talks in Astana, Kazakhstan, on January 23.

The talks does not include terrorists, including Al-Nusra Front and Daesh.

For his part, Khamis said the liberation of Aleppo was a result of resistance by the Syrian Army and people with a support by Iran.

He also said that his government welcomes any initiative which helps restore stability and security to Syria, expressing hope that the Astana meeting would help



Syrian PM Imad Khamis meets President Rouhani on Jan. 18, 2017 in Tehran.

find a solution to the nearly six-year war in Syria.

The Syrian prime minister also said Damascus at-

taches great importance to Iran's role in the region and called for expansion of relations in various areas.

**Iran is strongly against U.S. participation in Astana talks'**

In a separate meeting with Khamis, top Iranian politician Ali Akbar Velayati said Tehran is strongly against participation of the U.S. in the Astana negotiations.

"The U.S. is leader of the supporters of terrorists and has insisted on toppling the Syrian legal government and bringing a mercenary government to power in Damascus," noted Velayati, the foreign policy advisor to the Leader.

He also said that Iran will spare no effort in restoring stability to Syria.

The veteran politician added Syria's territorial integrity must be protected and that it is the Syrian people who should decide about the future of their country.

Elsewhere, Velayati highlighted the importance of expanding "strategic" ties between Tehran and Damascus.

## FM urges cooperation with Riyadh over regional conflicts

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Foreign desk Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said Iran and Saudi Arabia should be able to cooperate to help end conflicts in Syria and Yemen.

"I do not see any reason why Iran and Saudi Arabia should have hostile policies towards each other. We can in fact work together to put an end to miserable conditions of the people in Syria and Yemen and Bahrain and elsewhere in the region," Zarif told the World Economic Forum in Davos on Wednesday.

Russia, Iran, and Turkey pushed for peace talks in Syria, after government forces won a major victory last month in retaking eastern Aleppo, a key rebel

stronghold through much of the war.

"Iran and Saudi Arabia were able to actually stop impeding the process of the presidential election in Lebanon. We have a success story," said Zarif, pointing to the victory of Michel Aoun, a Christian leader, who was elected president of Lebanon on October 31, 2016, breaking a 29-month deadlock.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the foreign



**"Iran and Saudi Arabia were able to actually stop impeding the process of the presidential election in Lebanon. We have a success story," Zarif says.**

### Terrorism is product of foreign military intervention, Iran says

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Hossein desk Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the parliament speaker, said on Tuesday that the emergence of terrorism in the region is due to military interventions in regional countries.

"Presence of al-Qaeda and spread of it in Afghanistan, and Daesh in Iraq and Syria is product of foreigners' military interventions," he said during a meeting with Boubacar Gouro Diall, the Malian ambassador to Tehran.

Amir-Abdollahian also said Tehran attaches great importance to the status of Mali in Africa.

"Countries in West Asia and Africa have been targeted by Takfiri terrorism and Mali has been able to leave the cri-

ses behind," he said.

Amir Abdollahian, a former diplomat, also said terrorists active in south Yemen threaten security of international waters.

For his part, Gouro Diall condemned instrumental use of terrorism and said countries which support terrorists will not remain safe from the horrors of terrorism.

Elsewhere, he said that the issue of Palestine is very important for Mali. He added Africa supports the Palestinians.

The Malian ambassador also said his country prioritizes expansion of parliamentary relations with Iran.

Gouro Diall expressed willingness to establish security cooperation with Iran.

### I don't believe Trump will scuttle JCPOA: Georgetown professor

**I→** Of course, Europeans would prefer that America continue paying for Europe's defense. The problem with Trump is that he frames his views wrongly. For example, saying that NATO is obsolete increases Europeans' anxieties. However, although initially, relation among NATO partners may experience a difficult period, America and Europe need one another and NATO will survive although some changes and reforms may be carried out. The same applies to the EU. EU's problems are its own. America cannot either preserve the EU or dismantle it. But Trump should not had said what he did.

**Trump has vowed to repeal the Trans Pacific Partnership and this**

**has discomfoted countries like Japan and South Korea. So what do you think will happen to the treaty?**

A: Free trade agreements largely have benefitted other countries rather than America. This includes Japan, South Korea and China. Consequently, many in America believe that the country should not enter into new ones, such as TPP, AND IF POSSIBLE RENEGOTIATE existing one such as NAFTA. China's trade practices are quite unfair. It pays its workers very little, practices dumping and disregards environmental regulations which generally increase the cost of production in other countries, especially America.

## Zarif: Trump 'will be surprised' if he tries to renegotiate the nuclear deal

**DAVOS, Switzerland (AP)** — Iran's foreign minister says U.S. President-elect Donald Trump "will be surprised" if he tries to renegotiate the hard-won nuclear deal reached by the Obama administration and other world powers with the Is-

lamic Republic.

Mohammad Javad Zarif told a panel at the World Economic Forum in Davos that he's taking a "wait and see" attitude about the Trump administration and "The jury is still... the jury is not even yet convened."

Pressed by The Associated Press afterward on Wednesday, Zarif said it "won't be the end of the world if he (Trump) tries to walk away from the deal."

"He wants to surprise people, so he will be surprised," if he does, Zarif said

with a smile, without elaborating.

Zarif also criticized the Obama administration, saying it "did not implement their side of the bargain in a full and complete way" — notably about unspecified difficulties faced by Iranian banks.

# Biden calls Russia threat to world order, warns of clash with West

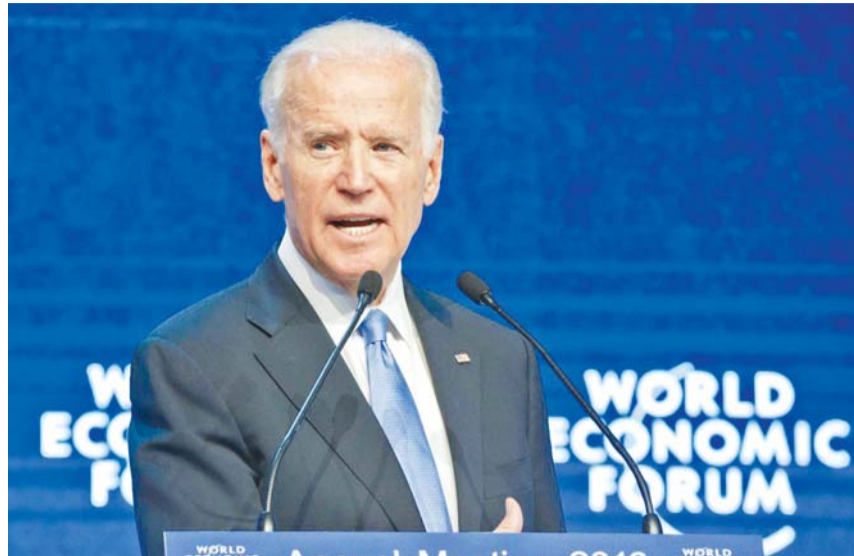
United States Vice President Joe Biden has called Russia the "greatest threat" to the international order, warning of a looming clash between the government of Russian President Vladimir Putin and the West.

The outgoing vice president made the remarks at the World Economic Forum in Davos on Wednesday, two days before the inauguration of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, who has taken a rather conciliatory line towards Moscow.

"Under President Putin, Russia is working with every tool available to them to whittle away at the edges of the European project, test the fault lines of western nations and return to a politics defined by spheres of influence," Biden said.

He further warned that Russia was planning to intervene in "the democratic process" of European countries, repeating Washington's claims that Moscow meddled in the 2016 U.S. presidential election that led to Trump's victory in November.

"With many countries in Europe slated to hold elections this year, we should expect further attempts by Russia to med-



dle in the democratic process. It will occur again, I promise you. And again the purpose is clear: to collapse the liberal international order," Biden added.

Despite reluctantly confirming U.S. intelligence reports that accuse Putin of personally ordering cyber-attacks to

change the outcome of last year's vote, Trump keeps showing strong willingness to work with the Russian head of state.

Speaking to hundreds of world leaders, CEOs and bankers gathered in the Swiss Alps resort town, Biden warned of a "dangerous willingness to revert to po-

litical small-mindedness" in politics.

He took another jab at the Republican president-elect by hailing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), describing as "a sacred obligation" the Article 5 of the NATO Treaty, which views an attack on a member as an attack on all.

"Defending the liberal international order requires that we resist the forces of European disintegration and maintain our longstanding insistence on a Europe, whole, free and peaceful," Biden stated.

"It means fighting for the European Union, one of the most vibrant and consequential institutions on earth," he added.

This is while Trump has criticized the U.S.-led alliance as "obsolete," arguing that member states should either pay for Washington's military support or stand on their own.

Since cutting ties with Russia over the Ukraine conflict in 2014, NATO has been amassing troops and heavy weaponry on the country's Western borders in the Baltic region in order to curb what it calls "Russia's aggression."

(Source: Press TV)

## UN shocked by Manama regime's execution of three activists

The United Nations has expressed distress at the execution of three Shia Muslim activists in Bahrain over their alleged role in killing policemen during a pro-democracy demonstration.

"We are appalled at the execution by firing squad of three men in Bahrain on Sunday," UN human rights commissioner spokesman Rupert Colville said in a statement on Tuesday.

Colville noted that the defendants' confessions were supposedly obtained under torture, and that their lawyers were not given access to all the evidence against them nor allowed to cross-examine prosecution witnesses.

"We again urge Bahrain to impose a moratorium on the use of death penalty," the top UN official said, adding that Manama should work to "abolish the death penalty definitively."

Colville added there were "serious doubts whether



the accused were provided with the right to fair trial."

On January 15, Bahrain executed Abbas al-Samea, 27, Sami Mushaima, 42, and Ali al-Singace, 21, by firing squad. The killings came a week after the Court of Cassation upheld death sentences against the trio after

finding them guilty of killing three policemen, including an Emirati officer, in the northern village of al-Daih back in March 2014.

Condemnations have poured in from across the world, even Bahrain's allies, against the executions.

On Tuesday, the United States reprimanded Bahrain over the executions.

"We're concerned that these executions occurred at a time of elevated tension in Bahrain," U.S. State Department spokesman John Kirby said.

Anti-regime protesters have held demonstrations on an almost daily basis ever since the popular uprising began in Bahrain in February 2011.

They are demanding that the House of Khalifah relinquish power and let a just system representing all Bahrainis be established.

(Source: Press TV)

## More clemency coming after Obama shortens Manning's sentence

Embracing his clemency powers like never before, United States President Barack Obama is planning more commutations in his final days in office after a dramatic move to cut short convicted leaker Chelsea Manning's sentence.

Obama became the president to have granted more commutations than any other when he announced on Tuesday that Manning will be freed in May, almost 30 years ahead of schedule. Manning, the transgender Army intelligence officer who leaked more than 700,000 U.S. documents, was one of 273 people receiving clemency on a single day.

Receiving pardons from the president were retired Gen. James Cartwright, who was charged with making false statements during another leak probe, and San Francisco Giants Hall of Famer Willie McCovey, sentenced in 1996 on tax evasion charges. Puerto Rican nationalist Oscar Lopez Rivera's 55-year sentence was

commuted.

But Obama is not finished. The White House said Obama would grant more commutations on Thursday — the day before his presidency ends — though officials said those would focus on drug offenders and would not likely include any other famous names.

The actions are permanent, and cannot be undone by President-elect Donald Trump.

With his last-minute clemency for Manning and Cartwright, Obama appeared to be softening what has been a headline approach to prosecuting leakers.

Manning has been serving a 35-year sentence for leaking classified government and military documents to WikiLeaks, along with some battlefield video. She was convicted in military court of violating the Espionage Act and other offenses and spent more than six years behind bars. She asked Obama last November to commute her

sentence to time served.

Obama did not grant a pardon to another prominent leaker, former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden, whom the U.S. has been unable to extradite from Russia. Snowden hasn't formally applied for clemency, though his supporters have called for it. Yet the White House drew a distinction between the unapologetic Snowden and Manning, whom officials noted has expressed remorse and served several years already for her crime.

Known as Bradley Manning at the time of her 2010 arrest, Manning came out as transgender after being sentenced. She was held at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where she attempted suicide twice last year, according to her lawyers. Manning has acknowledged leaking the documents, but has said she did it to raise public awareness about the effects of war on civilians.

House Speaker Paul Ryan called the

move "just outrageous," and added, "Chelsea Manning's treachery put American lives at risk and exposed some of our nation's most sensitive secrets."

Manning, Lopez and many of the others will be released in May, in line with standard procedure allowing a period for re-entry.

Obama's commutation for Manning also raised fresh questions about the future of another figure involved in the Army leaker's case: Julian Assange.

WikiLeaks had earlier pledged, via tweet, that its founder would agree to U.S. extradition if Obama granted clemency to Manning. Holed up for more than four years at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, Assange has refused to meet prosecutors in Sweden, where he's wanted on a rape allegation, fearing he would be extradited to the U.S. to face espionage charges if he leaves the embassy.

(Source: AP)

## Mali: Suicide attack kills dozens in Gao military camp

More than 40 people have been killed after a suicide car bombing hit a military camp in the northern Malian city of Gao, according to government officials.

President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita declared a three-day mourning period following Wednesday's attack, the worst in years.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blast, which killed at least 47 people, including five suicide bombers, and wounded a further 115, according to army spokesman Diarran Kone.

The morning explosion hit the Joint Operational Mechanism base in Gao, home to Malian soldiers and hundreds of former fighters who had signed a 2015 peace agreement with the government aimed at curbing violence in the region.

Sadou Maiga, a doctor at Gao's hospital, told The Associated Press news agency that all other hospital activi-

ties had ceased with dozens of wounded victims arriving.

Witnesses said the car bearing explosives breached the camp at around 9am, just as hundreds of fighters were gathering for a meeting.

The suicide bomber "succeeded in tricking soldiers' vigilance" and penetrated the camp, said Kone.

The attack came just days after Francois Hollande, the French president, visited the camp.

France sent troops to Mali at the request of the government there in early 2013 to prevent an advance by armed rebels on the capital Bamako.

Gao - seized by armed groups in 2012 before French forces drove them out a year later - is considered the best-secured town in northern Mali with multiple United Nations, French and Malian army checkpoints along main roads.

However, the offices of the UN peacekeeping mission located next to the airport terminal were razed by a

truck-bomb explosion last month.

Last year, Mali's government signed a peace deal with secular armed groups, but fighters pledging allegiance to both al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group have fought on and launched dozens of attacks on Western targets in recent months.

In December, a female French aid worker was kidnapped in Gao.

Corinne Dufka, an associate director for Human Rights Watch (HRW) who oversees Mali issues, told Al Jazeera the latest attack "was very bad news for Mali and for the international community who have put a tremendous effort in trying to put Mali back together after the spectacular collapse in 2012".

She cited main points outlined in the HRW's latest report on human rights abuses in Mali.

(Source: agencies)

## Turkey deports New York Times journalist

Turkey has deported a correspondent with The New York Times as he tried to enter the country through Istanbul's Ataturk Airport, according to the newspaper.

Rod Nordland was sent back to London, from where he had flown out, on a flight from the same airport on Tuesday, the report said.

There was no immediate statement from the Turkish authorities. Turkish officials contacted by Al Jazeera on Wednes-

day declined to comment or said that they did not have any information.

Dean Baquet, executive editor of The New York Times, denounced the deportation as unjustified and an affront to press freedom, according to the newspaper.

It appeared to be the first time a New York Times correspondent had been denied entry to Turkey, David McCraw, the news organization's vice president and

deputy general counsel, said.

Various Turkish media reports said that Nordland was denied entry into Turkey for writing "pro-Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) articles" in the past.

Turkey's more than 30-year-old conflict with the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK) reignited in the summer of 2015 after a ceasefire declared a year and a half earlier faltered and peace talks between the two sides col-

lapsed.

Many people, including leaders of Turkey's pro-Kurdish party, have been arrested in recent months for alleged links to the PKK, which is seen as a "terrorist organization" by Turkey's Western allies.

Various foreign journalists have been detained in Turkey, mostly while covering stories on the Kurdish issue.

(Source: agencies)

## U.S. Secret Service agrees to pay \$24m to settle decades-old race-bias case brought by black agents

The United States Secret Service agreed on Tuesday to pay \$24 million to settle a two-decade-old case in which more than 100 black agents have alleged that the agency fostered a racist culture and routinely promoted white agents over more qualified African Americans, according to documents filed in court and interviews with representatives of both sides.

As part of the deal, which is the result of a last-minute push in the waning days of the Obama administration, the agency admits to no wrongdoing or institutional bias.

But the payments to the agents — including lump sums as high as \$300,000 each to the original eight plaintiffs — are intended to remedy the sting of the discrimination the agents claim they suffered and the job opportunities they lost, according to interviews with representatives from both sides.

Jennifer Klar, the lead attorney for the black agents, described her clients as thrilled with a result they hope will end future discrimination in the agency.

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson, whose agency includes the Secret Service, said the resolution was "simply the right thing to do."

Secret Service Director Joseph Clancy described the pending settlement in a conference call with former directors on Tuesday afternoon and then sent an agency-wide message to staff late on Tuesday night.

The case centered on black agents who repeatedly bid for promotions from 1995 to 2005, and were turned down in favor of whites. Often the white agents chosen had less experience and lower performance ratings, according to the plaintiffs. Ray Moore, the lead plaintiff, had been a member of President Clinton's detail and bid 200 times for promotion over the years without success. Moore had trained several of the white agents who were leapfrogging over his head.

The suit was first filed when Clinton was president. But two presidents and four directors had passed the job of resolving this messy legal fight on to their successors.

(Source: The Washington Post)

## Jordan cracks down on activists over social media posts

A Jordanian military court has charged eight activists with "insulting the King" and "incitement to spread chaos to undermine the political regime of Jordan using social media", lawyers said.

The General Intelligence Directorate (GID), the "Mukhabarat" in Arabic, last week arrested civilian opposition activists, including retired army and intelligence generals, a former Member of Parliament, a former high-ranking government official and several teachers.

Lawyers for the arrested men told Al Jazeera on Tuesday that they were unable to meet their clients despite being given an appointment by the prosecutor of the State Security Court two days earlier.

The lawyers said they were told their clients had been charged and ordered to be held for a further 14 days. They said they were informed that the detainees had been transferred to al-Hashemiya prison, 100km north of the capital, Amman.

Faisal al-Kuzae al-Frehat, who represents former GID General Mohamad al-Otoom and other military retirees, called the charges "nonsense" and said they were unconstitutional.

"The government made these trumped-up charges in order to try the activists in the State Security Court, which is an illegal military tribunal used by the State to settle scores against activists who dared criticize the government and demand reform," he said.

Government and intelligence officers contacted by Al Jazeera refused to comment.

Hani Mulki, the prime minister, was quoted by the state news agency, Petra, on Sunday as saying: "The security agencies detained individuals based on arrest warrants issued by the prosecutor of the State Security Court for committing incitement that would arouse the public opinion."

The wife of al-Otoom, Um Moath, told Al Jazeera that she has been unable to speak to her husband since his arrest.

Another lawyer, Musa al-Abdallat, who represents ex-government official Hussam al-Abdallat, demanded the immediate release of the group.

Hussam al-Abdallat's brother, Wesam, rejected the charges and said his brother was not an opponent of the King or the government, and was solely interested in fighting corruption.

The activists want to see a corruption investigation reopened, and are also demanding an official investigation into what they say are "security and intelligence failures" that led to a spate of attacks last year. They are also calling for the head of the GID, Faisal al-Shoubaki, and other security chiefs to be fired for what they say was a failure to prevent "terrorist incidents".

It is unclear how many people were arrested in total but, according to local reports, the number ranges from 18 and 20.

The teachers' syndicate issued a statement on Monday saying 10 teachers were among those arrested and that they had been held for criticizing the government on social media.

Ahmad al-Hajaya, a spokesman for the syndicate, told Al Jazeera from Amman that the 10 were detained by various security agencies, with the arrests beginning in December. He said security agencies initially refused to acknowledge the arrests.

Al-Hajaya said the teachers were arrested for expressing their opinions on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, criticizing government handling of an attack in the town of Karak in which 13 people were killed, and criticizing corruption in government institutions.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## An odd moment for Davos

The World Economic Forum opened its annual meeting of the world's richest and most powerful in Davos, Switzerland, on Tuesday against the backdrop of spreading revolts against global elites. The question now is whether these gilded champions of globalization will choose to address inequality or proceed with the business of wining and dining as usual.

As if to underline the stakes, on the day the Davos meeting began, Prime Minister Theresa May of Britain delivered a speech in London outlining her country's exit from the European Union. The meeting will end on the day Donald Trump — who has cheered the breakup of the European Union, threatened to undo trade agreements and called climate change a Chinese hoax against the United States — is sworn in as president.



On Tuesday, it was President Xi Jinping, the first Chinese leader to attend the Davos meeting, who addressed the American and British retreats directly. "The problems troubling the world are not caused by globalization," Mr. Xi told the forum. As for climate change, he urged that "signatories should stick to" the Paris climate agreement. Though he never mentioned Mr. Trump by name, the target of his remarks was clear. "As the Chinese saying goes," he said, "people with petty shrewdness attend to trivial matters, while people with vision attend to governance of institutions." Ouch.

Mr. Xi's remarks should serve as a sobering warning about the stakes of walking away from the grand visions that have guided American foreign policy since the end of World War II. But they also reflect the reality that emerging economies — China is still a developing country — across Asia and Africa are counting on hitching their economic engines to a fairly brokered global economy, and that they will face the worst effects of climate change.

Global inequality has grown to the point that just eight of the planet's richest people now hold wealth equal to that of the poorest half of the world population. Bill Gates, the richest man in the world, with a personal net worth of over \$84 billion, is attending this year's Davos meeting, where sessions on inequality underscore the worries about populist revolt. Also on the agenda is a preoccupation from last year that automation will soon put millions of people out of work.

But for Davos to be more than a punch line about the wealthy, it will have to address the pains of globalization head on and do better than its usual platitudes about building "a dynamic, inclusive multi-stakeholder global-governance system."

(Source: The New York Times)

## Theresa May's Brexit plan has potentially disastrous gaps in it

In the debate about the government's Brexit strategy, a good deal of ink has been spilt on the finer distinctions of the single market and the customs union.

Tuesday's speech by the prime minister — which confirmed she plans to take Britain out of the single market and parts of the customs union — will doubtless lead to more. But I'm not sure how much clarity this debate has provided — or will provide.

In my Bloomberg speech last December, I attempted to put Labor's position succinctly by focusing on function not form.

I indicated then that Labor would push for a Brexit model that maintains and protects our ability to successfully trade goods with and deliver services to the EU.

I spelt out what that meant: a model that ensures continued tariff-free trade for UK businesses with the EU; a model that ensures any new regulatory frameworks do not add bureaucratic burdens or risk harmful divergence from the EU market; a model that protects the competitiveness of our services and manufacturing sectors; and a model that ensures that existing protections at work provided by the EU are maintained.

Having travelled across the country in the last three months, it is clear to me that businesses, both large and small, as well as many trade unions and working people, agree with this approach.

On Tuesday, Theresa May accepted the importance of these demands and promised to aim for "tariff-free trade with Europe" and a "comprehensive" free trade agreement that would ensure the "freedom to provide financial services across national borders". She also stated that she wanted to "protect the rights of workers" set out in European legislation.

That was the right thing to do. It is also important that the prime minister finally accepted Labor's demand for there to be a vote on the final Brexit deal. This will ensure there is proper grip in the process and a key role for parliament in holding the government to account.

But there were also significant gaps in the prime minister's speech — in particular over how she plans to deliver on these objectives.

That will take a lot of explaining, and she is taking a significant risk by giving up on membership of the single market and parts of the customs union. This will alarm many businesses and trade unions, so it is vital the government now produces robust economic analysis and a plan for delivery to support her decision.

The prime minister's comment that the government does "not seek to hold on to bits of membership as we leave" also leaves serious questions about our future role in a wide range of common EU agencies.

Does this mean, for example, that we will soon be outside of the European Aviation Safety Agency, which certifies aircraft before they are allowed to fly? The European Medicines Agency, which ensures all medicines in the EU market are safe and effective? Or Europol and Eurojust — agencies I worked closely with when I was the director of public prosecutions and I know have been vital in tackling cross-border crime and terrorism? If so, this would be profoundly counterproductive.

This uncertainty is compounded by the prime minister's threat to "change the basis of Britain's economic model" if she fails to get the agreement she wants. We have to assume this is not a hollow threat and that the prime minister is willing to rip up many of the economic policies and principles that have guided successive UK governments for decades.

(Source: The Guardian)

# Iranian private sector discusses enhancement of bonds with Syria

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Head desk of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafie and the visiting Syrian Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade Adib Mayaleh and Syrian Prime Minister Imad Khamis in a Tuesday meeting conferred on improvement of bilateral economic relations.

During the meeting, the senior officials investigated the increasing role of Iranian private sector in reconstruction projects in Syria, establishing joint commercial and trade committees in future, holding permanent fairgrounds, as well

as dispatching trade delegations to the other side's country.

Khamis, visiting Iran heading a high-ranking delegation, noted that bilateral economic ties between Iran and Syria have not grown in parallel with those political ones and it is crucial to remove barriers on the way to improve such relations.

Mayaleh, for his part, underlined that mutual economic relations should not be restricted merely to trade and commercial ones and cooperation should be commenced on industrial projects, too. He, in addition, voiced his government's readiness for providing Iranian



companies with all kinds of facilities to start collaborations with Syrians.

On Tuesday, Tehran and Damascus signed five memorandums of understanding for economic cooperation including one on construction of oil and gas storage facilities and terminals in Syria by Iran.

The MOUs also set the stage for cooperation on operation of mobile phones, cattle husbandry and other agricultural fields.

They were signed by the two countries' economy ministers at the presence of Iran's First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri and Khamis.

## India's 'dynamic economy' to grow at 7.7%: UN

India is one of the most "dynamic emerging economies" and is likely to grow at 7.7 per cent this year on strong private demand and government reforms but excluding the effect of demonetization, a UN report said today.

It said demonetization undertaken in India will have a "significant impact" on consumer spending in the short term but the country's economy will return to the about 7.6-7.7 per cent growth.

When asked as to why the UN has not taken into account demonetization impact on growth forecast, Economic Affairs Officer at UN ESCAP Matthew Hammil said: The UN report was prepared in late November, then finalized in December.

Going forward, he said, the growth rate for India is expected to be slower than what is projected now, taking into account the demonetization factor.

According to the United Nations World Economic Situation and Progress (WESP) report released here today, the country's economy is likely to expand at about 7.6

per cent in 2018.

"India has positioned itself as one of the most dynamic emerging economies. Growth is projected to reach 7.7 per cent in 2017 and 7.6 per cent in 2018 amid strong private consumption," said the report.

It expects a slight pick-up in investment demand supported by monetary easing, government efforts towards infrastructure investments and public-private partnerships and domestic reforms.

Earlier this month, without taking into account the demonetization impact, India projected the economy to grow at a slower pace of 7.1 per cent in 2016-17 -- as against 7.6 per cent in the previous fiscal -- on poor manufacturing, mining and construction sector activities.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Monday cut the growth rate to 6.6 per cent as against its earlier estimate of 7.6 per cent citing temporary negative consumption shock due to demonetization.

(Source: The Economic Times)

## U.S. lobby says China protectionism fueling foreign business pessimism

More than 80 percent of members of a U.S. business lobby in China say foreign companies are less welcome than in the past, a survey released on Wednesday showed, with most saying they have little confidence in China's vows to open its markets.

The American Chamber of Commerce in China's annual survey reinforces growing pessimism in the foreign business community, as it grapples with a slowing Chinese economy and complaints of increasing protectionism.

The chamber's report comes a day after China's President Xi Jinping gave a speech at the World Economic Forum championing open markets, and Beijing unveiled proposals to reduce restrictions on foreign investment in China.

Business circles are particularly concerned over the future of U.S.-China commercial ties as President-elect Donald Trump prepares to take office, having pledged to brand China a currency manipulator and threatened to impose

tariffs on its goods.

"More companies are slowing investments and deprioritizing China as an investment destination due to slowing growth and increased concerns over barriers to market entry, the regulatory environment, and rising costs," the chamber said.

If China took action, including removing "discriminatory barriers" to foreign-invested companies and investment restrictions, the chamber's members would "significantly increase investment", it said.

Asked about the report, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said investment figures showed China remained an attractive place for U.S. businesses and China was committed to opening up.

"At the same time, we hope that the doors of all countries are fairly opened to Chinese investors," Hua told a daily news briefing.

(Source: Reuters)

## Iran Solo Country expo to kick off in Muscat on Jan. 23

The third Iran Solo Country Exhibition will kick off at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on January 23.

Ali bin Masoud bin Ali al Sunaidi, Minister of Commerce and Industry, and Mo-

hammad Reza Nematzadeh, Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade in Iran, will grace the opening ceremony.

The exhibition will be organized by Omanexpo, in conjunction with the Irani-

an Embassy in the sultanate. The five-day exhibition comes this year to boost commerce between the sultanate and Iran, facilitate the development of business and investment prospects, and strengthen eco-

nomical relations between the two countries.

It is a platform for more than 100 Iranian companies to showcase high-quality products.

(Source: Muscat Daily)

### PICTURE OF THE DAY IRNA/Mousa Koorehie



## Iran, Germany sign co-op MOU on airport industry

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company signed an MOU with Fraport AG, Munich Airport, and Dornier Consulting International GmbH in Tehran on Tuesday to boost airport and aviation ties with Germany.

According to IRNA, the MOU was penned between Chairman of the Executive Board of Fraport AG Stefan Schulte (1st L), Business Director of Dornier Company Michael Holzschneider (2nd L), President and Chief Executive Officer of Munich Airport Michael Kerkloh (2nd R), and CEO of Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company Rahmatollah Mah-Abadi (1st R).

On Monday, Iran and Germany inked an agreement on the expansion of cooperation in rail, air and sea transportation. Based on the agreement, signed by Iranian Transport Minister Abbas Akhondi and the visiting German Federal Minister of Transport and Digital Infrastructure Alexander Dobrindt, the two sides agreed to set up a taskforce to develop mutual cooperation in different transportation areas.

In the signing ceremony of the agreement, Dobrindt expressed the readiness of Munich and Frankfurt airports for cooperation in development of Iranian airports.



## Deutsche Bank signs \$7.2b deal with U.S. over risky mortgages

Deutsche Bank finalized a \$7.2 billion settlement with the U.S. Department of Justice over its sale of toxic mortgage securities in the run-up to the 2008 financial crisis, the government agency said on Tuesday.

Deutsche's agreement represents the largest resolution for the conduct of a single entity in misleading investors in residential mortgage-backed securities, the department said in a statement. The settlement was higher than the \$7 billion paid by Citigroup to federal and state authorities in 2014.

"Deutsche Bank did not merely mislead investors; it contributed directly to an international financial crisis," Attorney General Loretta Lynch said in the statement.



## Toshiba mulls chips business stake sale to Western Digital

Toshiba Corp is looking to sell a minority stake in its core semiconductor business to Western Digital Corp a source said, in a bid to dull the blow from a looming multi-billion-dollar writedown on a U.S. nuclear acquisition.

The laptops-to-engineering conglomerate, still recovering from a \$1.3 billion accounting scandal, shocked investors last month by announcing cost overruns at a U.S. nuclear business it bought in 2015 which could now mean a charge against profit topping \$4 billion.

Toshiba does not have many options to offset the impact of this writedown that could wipe out its shareholders' equity.



## Volkswagen won't make Audi cars with SAIC in China before 2018

German carmaker Volkswagen said on Wednesday it would not produce or sell any Audi cars with SAIC Motor Corp until at least 2018, seeking first to strengthen ties with existing Audi partner China FAW Motor Corp.

VW announced in November a non-binding agreement with SAIC to discuss a partnership regarding Audi AG, which is the bestselling premium brand in China.

Tying up with SAIC, China's largest automaker, could boost slowing sales for the premium Audi brand as Daimler's Mercedes and newer entrants such as General Motor's Cadillac eat into its market share.

# Oil prices rise on weaker dollar underpinning market

Oil prices rose on Wednesday with a weaker dollar underpinning the market, although gains were limited by expectations that U.S. producers would boost output.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil futures were trading up 17 cents at \$52.65 per barrel at 0448 GMT.

Brent crude futures, the international benchmark for oil prices, were up 17 cents \$55.64 a barrel.

The dollar was trading near its lowest in six weeks against a basket of currencies after U.S. President-elect Donald Trump said that the strong greenback was hurting U.S. competitiveness.

A weaker greenback makes dollar-denominated crude less expensive for users of other currencies, potentially spurring fuel demand.

«U.S. oil has been supported by considerable weakening in the U.S. dollar over the last 24 hours,» said Ric Spooner, chief market analyst at CMC Markets in Sydney.

«There are two or three key things to watch, U.S. production numbers are important, given the sharp rise we have seen in output. Another issue on the supply side is any news on OPEC countries unwinding



their production.»

Oil has drawn support from top crude exporter Saudi Arabia, which said it would adhere strictly to its commitment to cut output under the agreement between the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting

Countries (OPEC) and other producers.

Under the agreement, OPEC, Russia and other non-OPEC producers have pledged to cut oil output by nearly 1.8 million bpd, initially for six months, to bring supplies back in line with consumption.

The output cuts agreed by OPEC and others are likely to come largely from field and refinery maintenance, BMI Research said in a note. It said oil producers are expected to use lower volumes needed for domestic power generation in a bid to maintain export volumes.

«Sticking to output targets is important but export volumes from the participating countries are a much better indicator of how the cuts will affect the market,» it said.

«Participating members are keen not to sacrifice vital export revenue so are trying to find ways to limit domestic crude usage in order to prioritize filling their contracts to foreign refiners.»

At the same time, U.S. oil production is set to rise towards 9 million barrels per day, the U.S. government said on Tuesday, providing headwinds to oil futures.

Representative Ryan Zinke of Montana, President-elect Donald Trump's nominee for interior secretary, on Tuesday said he would consider an expansion of energy drilling and mining on federal lands but would ensure sensitive areas remain protected.

(Source: Reuters)

## China's oil collapse is unintentionally helping OPEC

OPEC's campaign to prop up oil prices is getting unlikely support from its biggest customer.

China's production is forecast to fall by as much as 7 percent this year, extending a record decline in 2016, according to analysts at CLSA Ltd., Sanford C. Bernstein & Co. and Nomura Holdings Inc. That's about the same size as the output cut agreed by Iraq, the second-biggest producer in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, which late last year reached a deal to trim supply to support prices.

«China's domestic crude output decline will certainly help OPEC's plan to reduce global supply,» said Nelson Wang, a Hong Kong-based oil and gas analyst at CLSA, who sees a 7 percent slide this year. «Even if that

isn't China's intention, it's just the reality that China can't produce more under the current circumstances.»

While China consumes more oil than almost any other country, it's also one of the world's biggest producers, with fields stretching from offshore its southern coast to the far north east. The collapse in prices that began in 2014 is taking its toll, and the nation's output suffered a record decline last year. That plays into the hands of OPEC as it seeks to prop up the global oil market, forcing China to depend more heavily on imports.

Brent crude, benchmark for half of the world's oil, averaged about \$45 a barrel last year, more than 50 percent below levels in 2014, the year OPEC decided to tackle a global glut by keeping the taps open. The crash

in prices triggered a rethink by the group, which banded together with 11 non-member countries late last year and agreed to a collective cut of almost 1.8 million barrels a day.

The deal triggered a rally, which was unable to hold above \$58 a barrel amid concern higher prices would spur higher output elsewhere, particularly from U.S. producers. Brent was trading down 0.6 percent at \$55.53 a barrel as of 2:29 p.m. in Singapore on Tuesday.

China's output slumped in 2016 as state-owned firms shut wells at mature fields that had become too costly to operate after the crash. Crude production fell 6.9 percent in the first 11 months of 2016 to about 4 million barrels a day, the first decline since 2009 and the biggest in data going back to 1990.

The International Energy Agency estimates output fell 335,000 barrels a day last year as the country's biggest producers cut spending, and will slide a further 240,000 barrels a day this year. Production shrank to a seven-year low in October «with no uptick in activity expected from the major companies,» the Paris-based group said last month.

Supply from the Daqing field, one of China's biggest and oldest, slipped about 3 percent last year to 732,200 barrels a day, according to data from China National Petroleum Corp. While the nation's biggest explorer plans to maintain output at the field, it aims to cut spending on exploration and engineering there by 20 percent this year, it said in December.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## Iraq's southern oil exports fall since start of OPEC cut

Oil exports from Iraq's southern terminals have fallen so far in January, according to loading data and an industry source, a sign that OPEC's second-largest producer is following through on the group's decision to cut output.

Baghdad's initial request to be exempt from the deal, plus loading programs pointing to continued high Iraqi exports, have added to skepticism that the country would comply with the output cuts. Iraq is supposed to curb production by 210,000 barrels per day.

Exports from southern Iraq in the first 16 days of January have averaged 3.25 million barrels per day (bpd), according to shipping data tracked by Reuters and by an industry source. That is down from Iraq's own figure of 3.51 million bpd in all of December, a record high.

«Exports are definitely down, despite what the loading schedule suggests,» said the industry source, who monitors Iraq's shipments. The preliminary January loading plan pointed to another month of near-record southern exports.

The OPEC cut started on Jan. 1. Although it is only a mid-way through January, the drop in exports lends support to comments from Iraqi officials that Baghdad will stick to the accord.

Compliance by producers with the deal will be a key influence in 2017 on oil prices, which at \$56 a barrel are about half their level of mid-2014. A committee of OPEC and non-OPEC ministers to monitor the issue is meeting on Sunday.

(Source: Reuters)

## Operations at Venezuelan oil terminal halted by spill

Shipping operations at one of three docks of Venezuela's main crude exporting port were halted after an oil spill occurred while loading a vessel bound for India, union and shipping sources told Reuters on Tuesday.

The spill, which happened over the weekend at Jose port's Eastern dock and whose size has not yet been disclosed, also affected other tankers close to the very large crude carrier (VLCC) Nave Quasar, chartered by Reliance Industries, the sources said.

«The tanker had loaded 10,000 barrels less than agreed so when trying to reconnect the crude line to fill the missing volume, the pressure was too high, breaking the end of the hose and spilling crude directly to the sea,» one of the sources said.

Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA, which operates the terminal, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Jose is Venezuela's largest crude port. Most crude shipments are made from there due to its capacity to load Suezmaxes and VLCCs. The port also receives imports of diluents for PDVSA's extra heavy oil output, such as light crude and naphtha.

(Source: Reuters)



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## French fraternity and migrants

France's national motto is "Liberty, equality, fraternity." But the depth of its commitment to fraternity is being tested by activists who say they cannot, as French citizens of good conscience, stand by while the state fails in its humanitarian duty toward African migrants who are stranded on the border with Italy, or lost along French roadsides, tired, hungry, thirsty and cold.

It is illegal under French law to help illegal migrants enter France, travel in France or stay in France. But a 2013 law allows aid to illegal migrants if the aid is given freely — a caveat aimed against profiteering from human trafficking — and if the aid is necessary to protect their "dignity and physical integrity." This month, a court in Nice acquitted Pierre-Alain Mannoni, a university researcher charged with illegally transporting three Eritrean migrant women, on these grounds. Mannoni swore he was "not a smuggler." He said he had acted to protect the migrants' dignity, explaining that it "was very cold" and that they were young, perhaps minors, and "needed medical care."

The case against Cédric Herrou, also heard in Nice this month, is stickier. Herrou is an unapologetic serial violator of France's laws prohibiting aid to illegal migrants. An olive farmer in a mountain valley near the Italian border where Jews found refuge during World War II, Herrou admits to searching out needy illegal migrants across the border and sheltering them in France. "There are people dying on the side of the road. It's not right," he told the three-judge panel hearing his case. For Herrou, helping those in need is part of what it means to be French. "I am a Frenchman," he declared.

Even though Herrou could face up to five years in prison and a fine of up to 30,000 euros, the prosecutor has asked for an eight-month suspended sentence. A judgment is expected on Feb. 10. A light sentence would send a welcome signal that fraternity is, indeed, a French value that deserves to be defended. The French, who will vote in April on a new president, are understandably spooked by terrorism. And many fear that if the state takes care of migrants, it will have to reduce benefits for citizens. The right-wing candidates Marine Le Pen and François Fillon are pledging to tighten the borders and clamp down even harder on migration.

UNICEF reports that nearly a third of the more than 181,000 migrants who arrived in Italy last year were minors, and over 90 percent were unaccompanied. Many, like those helped by Mannoni and Herrou, headed to other countries. A handful of citizens moved by basic humanity have risked being found guilty of defying national laws to help them. But these individual acts of compassion are no substitute for Europe-wide policies that would create safe and legal paths for desperate people.

(Source: The NYT)

# Truth, lies and a voice under threat in Bahrain

By Bill Law

I have known Mansoor al-Jamri, the editor-in-chief of Bahrain's Al Wasat newspaper for many years. He is a brave, determined and diligent journalist and his newspaper is the only independent voice in a deeply divided country.

On 16 January at 7pm local time, Bahrain's Ministry of Information delivered a letter to Al Wasat's offices, ordering the paper to shut down its online site. At the same time, the government-run Bahrain News Agency issued a terse press release. That was followed up by a televised report just five minutes after the letter had landed on Mansoor al-Jamri's desk. As a Bahraini acquaintance of mine laconically noted "they planned it".

The charge sheet reads like something out of the Donald Trump playbook.

Al Wasat was accused of repeatedly publishing material "inciting division in the community, jeopardizing national unity and disrupting public peace". Or as Trump would have it "publishing fake news".

### Probable cause

The first thing to say is that Al Wasat's only crime was to publish the news as their reporters found it. And that included the pictures of three men executed by firing squad the day before. They were convicted and sentenced to die for the killing of three policemen on evidence that is widely believed to have been extracted under torture.

It is the pictures of these three men more than anything else that was the likely cause of the shutdown. But that's a guess. Thus far the ministry has not provided any further clarification on why it chose to order the suspension.

It is not the first time that Al Wasat has been closed. In August 2015, the newspaper was suspended because it carried a wire copy story about the death of Bahraini soldiers in Yemen that did not use the obligatory term "martyrs" to describe the victims of a Houthis rocket attack.



Bahraini protesters hold placards portraying Sheikh Ali Salman, head of the Shiite opposition movement Al-Wefaq, on March 24, 2015, during a demonstration

## Rather like Donald Trump, the ruling Al-Khalifas hate criticism.

During the pro-democracy uprising of 2011, the newspaper was attacked by thugs armed with clubs and knives. In April of that year, Al Jamri was removed as editor-in-chief and the paper's publisher Karim Fakhrawi was arrested. He was beaten to death in a police cell. Two police officers were eventually convicted of the murder and received seven-year jail sentences.

Al-Jamri was reinstated as editor in August 2011 and, since that time, has played a cat and mouse game with the authorities, doing his utmost to keep Al Wasat going without compromising his ethical and editorial principals.

### Rare critical voice

In a Persian Gulf media landscape largely barren of critical voices, where newspapers and their online sites are either directly owned or otherwise controlled by the ruling families, and state television pumps out a steady diet

of propaganda that would do the old Soviet Union proud, Al Wasat is an oasis of thoughtful news and information.

Despite all the constraints and all the threats against Al Wasat, Mansoor al-Jamri has always striven through his newspaper to point the way to common ground, to argue that what could bring his country together is far more important than what is tearing it apart.

But that message is anathema to a regime that has used sectarianism as a weapon to attempt to hammer a majority of its people into submission. Since 2011 thousands have been jailed, including the prominent human rights activist Nabeel Rajab and the opposition leader Sheikh Ali Salman. The charges on which they have been convicted are framed in the language of a "war on terror". The evidence is flimsy at best and, as was the case for the three men executed on 15 January, it is often secured under torture.

### Condoning tyranny

This is a regime that the UK supports wholeheartedly. It is a regime that is systematically crushing free speech and silencing any critics. Rather like Donald Trump, the ruling Al-Khalifas hate criticism. They take the asking of questions as a challenge to their authority. They deny foreign journalists access and make life hell for their own journalists who have the courage to ask questions, to seek answers.

So when someone tells me, as a Bahraini told me just recently, "I cannot stand the hypocrisy of the UK, it hurts me because it is supporting something inhuman," I want to shout to heaven and shatter the silence of Theresa May and her foreign secretary, Boris Johnson, about the abuses going on daily in Bahrain.

Because in our collective silence, we condone tyranny and allow the lone oasis of independent journalism in the Persian Gulf to be inexorably encroached upon. We deny the possibility of legitimate reform while pouring millions into police training and an ombudsman's service that is supposed to right the wrongs of a system that has operated and continues to operate with impunity.

The truth is the opposite: arbitrary arrests, beatings, forced confessions are all still happening; the truth is we have helped to erect and maintain a lie.

And how does our government respond when uncomfortable facts emerge to show the lie for what it is? The standard response the Foreign Office offers is to say that Bahrain is making significant progress on reform. No, it is not.

We are the hypocrites and our conscience should demand of us that we support those who represent the voice of decency, objectivity and truth, that we break the silence and shout our anger, that we acknowledge the hurt and betrayal many Bahrainis feel at our object and abysmal capitulation to a regime bent on suppressing the very values we claim to hold close.

(Source: middleeasteye.net)

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### TAJ MAHAL ANNOUNCES ITS SECOND RESTAURANT MAHI – MAHI

By Mina Ahmadi

# Challenges of new UN chief

**Guterres is inheriting several most complicated challenges to peace and security that the world faces, including the war in Syria, Europe migrant crisis, Africa mistrust to UN and climate change.**

Antonio Guterres has been recently handed over the helm of the United Nations as one of the toughest diplomatic jobs in the world while the world community, in the face of many challenges today, hopes the new chief of the international body would settle world problems more properly.

Guterres, 67, was Prime Minister of Portugal from 1995 to 2002, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees from June 2005 to December 2015. He has become the world's top diplomat on 1 January 2017 and assumed that position for the next five years.

Undoubtedly, Guterres is inheriting several most complicated challenges to peace and security that the world faces, including the war in Syria, Europe migrant crisis, Africa mistrust to UN and climate change.

As per the Article 98 of the UN Charter, the secretary general as head of the UN Secretariat shall act as the chief administrative officer 'in all meetings of the General Assembly, of the Security Council, of the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council, and shall perform other functions as are entrusted to him by these organs'.

**Rules-based international order**

In his first address to the 15-member council since taking office on January 1, Guterres stressed that: "The United Nations was established to prevent war by binding us in a rules-based international order."

New United Nations secretary-general has urged the Security Council to take more action to prevent conflicts instead of just responding to them, as he pledged to build the world body's mediation capacity.

He added too many opportunities to prevent conflicts had been lost due to mistrust among states and concerns over national sovereignty.

"Such concerns are understandable, in a world where power is une-

qual and principles have sometimes been applied selectively. Indeed, prevention should never be used to serve other political goals," he told the council.

"On the contrary, prevention is best served by strong sovereign states, acting for the good of their people," he said.

Guterres also asked the council to make greater use of Chapter 6 of the UN Charter, which allows the body to investigate and recommend procedures to resolve disputes that could eventually endanger international peace and security.

He outlined steps he was taking to build the United Nations' prevention capabilities, which he described as "fragmented".

**Sprawling bureaucracy**



**"The United Nations needs to be nimble, efficient and effective. It must focus more on delivery and less on process, more on people and less on bureaucracy."**

On Dec 12, 2016, Guterres was sworn in as Secretary-General of the United Nations, becoming the ninth UN chief in the body's 71-year history.

Guterres addressed the 193 member nations, saying the world body must work to simplify, decentralize and make more flexible its sprawling bureaucracy, media reported.

"The United Nations needs to be nimble, efficient and effective. It must focus more on delivery and less on process, more on people and less on bureaucracy."

**Syria conflict 'top priority'**

Guterres says he will make ending Syria's civil war his top priority.

"I believe it is the international community's first priority to be able

to end this conflict," he told the BBC.

Guterres said the world now faced a dangerous moment, with even countries far from warzones threatened by acts of terrorism.

He called the drive to end armed conflict "a battle for values".

**Mideast crises**

Following his election, Guterres had vowed to work as a "convener" and "bridge-builder" to help find solutions to the world's rising challenges.

At the moment, with the political and military vast crises in the Middle East, and the dire situation causing a variety of irreparable consequences to the international community, the role the United Nations can assume to achieve a general consensus among world countries and its rapid reaction against future crises tend to be in the spotlight more than ever.

**Europe migrant crisis**

The Europe migrant crisis and the big wave of the war refugees leaving their homes in the Middle East to find a safe haven in Europe and the terrible conditions these refugees face in the makeshift camps they are sheltered in are other problems which need to be properly addressed.

It is expected that Guterres by relying on his experiences as a former UN High Commissioner for Refugees find a more efficient solution to the global problem.

**Time for reform**

The same helplessness and at times disunity has marked the UN's response to the civil war that ravaged South Sudan for three years. A US initiative to impose an arms embargo failed, winning only seven votes from the 15 countries that sit on the Security Council.

The approximately 13,000 peacekeepers deployed in the country have been criticized for failing to protect the civilians crowding UN bases.

Elsewhere on the continent, ac-



**"It is time for the United Nations to recognize its shortcomings and to reform the way it works," Guterres says.**

cusations of rape have permanently tarnished the reputation of UN peacekeepers in the Central African Republic.

Guterres has acknowledged the criticism, saying "it is time for the United Nations to recognize its shortcomings and to reform the way it works."

Presently, however, Guterres needs to do something to overcome the mistrust shaped in the African countries towards the United Nations and its activities there. There are several reports suggesting that some UN aid workers and peacekeepers have abused women and children in exchange for providing them with food and drinking water.

Unfortunately, many such crimes have been left unpunished and the secretary general needs to follow up the cases.

**Climate change dilemma**

Under Ban Ki-moon, representatives of 195 UN member states adopted the Paris agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The major agreement sets out a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C.

According to Guterres, the landmark agreements such as the Paris Climate Agreement "lay out a clear strategy for action."

Moving forward, the United Nations should focus on "implementation, implementation, implementation," he stressed.

Guterres put the spotlight on "global mega-trends," and says it is crucial the international community understands them. "We live in times of multiple, evolving and mutually-reinforcing shifts."

The dynamics of "geopolitical, demographic, climatic, technological, social and economic nature, enhance threats and opportunities on an unprecedented scale," he says.

Guterres points out that "climate change affects economies and peoples, their lands, oceans and seas," identifying it as a source of conflict in the world.

## We must not demonize and threaten Russia

By John Scales Avery

In his famous farewell address, US President Dwight Eisenhower eloquently described the terrible effects of an overgrown military-industrial complex.

Here are his words: "We have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions... This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience.

"The total influence, economic, political, even spiritual, is felt in every city, every State house, every office of the Federal government... [and] we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.

"In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist."

In another speech, he said: "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not

fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children."

**The devil's dynamo**

The military-industrial complex involves a circular flow of money. The cash flows like the electrical current in a dynamo, driving a diabolical machine.

Money from immensely rich corporate oligarchs buys the votes of politicians and the propaganda of the mainstream media. Numbed by the propaganda, citizens allow the politicians to vote for obscenely bloated military budgets, which further enrich the corporate oligarchs, and the circular flow continues.

Today the world spends more than 1.7 trillion dollars (\$1,700,000,000,000) every year on armaments. This vast river of money, almost too large to be imagined, is the "devil's dynamo" driving the institution of war.

Politicians notoriously can be bought with a tiny fraction of this enormous amount; hence the decay of democracy. It is also plain that if the almost unbelievable sums now wasted on armaments were used constructively, most of the press-

ing problems now facing humanity could be solved.

Because the world spends almost two thousand billion dollars each year on armaments, it follows that very many people make their living from war. This is the reason why it is correct to speak of war as an institution, and why war persists, although we know that it is the cause of much of the suffering that inflicts humanity.

We know that war is madness, but it persists. We know that it threatens the survival of civilization, but it persists, entrenched in the attitudes of historians, newspaper editors and television producers, entrenched in the methods by which politicians finance their campaigns, and entrenched in the financial power of arms manufacturers, entrenched also in the ponderous and costly hardware of war, the fleets of warships, bombers, tanks, nuclear missiles and so on.

**The military-industrial complex needs enemies**

The military-industrial complex needs enemies. Without them it would wither. Thus at the end of the Second World War, this vast power complex was faced with a crisis. It was saved by the discovery of a new enemy: Communism.

This new enemy saved the military-industrial complex for a long time, but at the end of the Cold War, there was another crisis: the threat that arms profits would be converted into a "peace dividend".

Would this be the end of unlimited corporate greed? Heaven forbid! There was a desperate search for a new enemy. What about Islam? The Crusades could be revived, and all would be well. This seemed, for a long time to be a good solution.

But recently, with the Middle East in flames, Islam no longer seemed to be a sufficiently strong enemy justify the colossal budgets of arma-



**The military-industrial complex involves a circular flow of money. The cash flows like the electrical current in a dynamo, driving a diabolical machine.**

ments industries. A new enemy was urgently needed. One look at our mass media tells us the solution that our military-industrial complex has come up with: Revival of the Cold War!

**Nuclear war by accident or miscalculation**

As a consequence of our oligarchy's decision to revive the Cold War, we are witnessing increasing demonization of Russia as well as flagrant provocations, such as the recent massive NATO maneuvers on Russia's borders.

With unbelievable hubris and irresponsibility, western politicians are risking the destruction of human civilization and much of the biosphere through a thermonuclear war.

Such a cataclysmic war could occur through technical or human error, or through escalation.

**"Indeed the enduring problem, is that we are resting our future upon a nuclear deterrence system concerning which we cannot tolerate even a single malfunction."**



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# The stem-cell revolution is coming — slowly

By Wallace Ravven

In 2001, President George W. Bush issued an executive order banning federal funding for new sources of stem cells developed from preimplantation human embryos. The action stalled research and discouraged scientists.

Five years later, a Kyoto University scientist, Shinya Yamanaka, and his graduate student, Kazutoshi Takahashi, re-energized the field by devising a technique to "reprogram" any adult cell, such as a skin cell, and coax it back to its earliest "pluripotent" stage. From there it can become any type of cell, from a heart muscle cell to a neuron.

The breakthrough sidestepped the embryo controversy, offering researchers an unlimited supply of stem cells. Dr. Yamanaka shared the 2012 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for reprogramming mature cells into what are now called induced pluripotent stem cells, or iPS cells. Still, the march toward new treatments has been halting.

Dr. Yamanaka directs Kyoto University's Center for iPS Cell Research and Application. He also leads a small research lab at the Gladstone Institutes, affiliated with the University of California, San Francisco, where his group studies the molecular mechanisms that underlie pluripotency and the factors that induce reprogramming.

I interviewed him recently in San Francisco. Our conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

**■ There has been great enthusiasm and confidence for nearly 20 years that the use of stem cells will lead to powerful new treatments for a range of diseases. Now, 10 years after your discovery, what treatments have been developed?**

A. We are still in the early stages. In 2014, Dr. Masayo Takahashi and her colleagues at the Riken Center for Developmental Biology had great success using iPS cells to treat macular degeneration.

They took skin cells from a 70-year-old patient and derived iPS cells from them. They then differentiated the stem cells (directed them "back down" the normal developmental path) to become adult retinal cells. These were transplanted into the patient's eye to treat the disease. That was a huge success. She sees much better now.

**■ Have more patients been treated?**

A. Before the transplantation for the second patient, we checked the genome sequence of the patient's iPS cells and we identified a mutation in the cells. So we did not proceed.

The pluripotent stem cells [have the] ability to proliferate rapidly and infinitely. But it's a double-edged sword. After multiple cell cycles, the chances of mutations increases. This could include mutation to produce an oncogene that can cause cancer.

**■ So these treatments are now on hold?**

A. Yes. We are developing allogenic stem cell lines — stem cells from donors. They would not be the patient's own, but compatible cells to

transplant into the patient, much like blood transfusions with compatible blood types.

We are performing rigorous quality tests, including sequencing the stem cells' genomes to be sure the cells are free from cancer-causing mutations. We perform tests on adult retinal cells generated from these stem cells to assure that they function as normal retinal cells, and those cells are transplanted into mice or rats for a year to assure they are safe.

That's very different from the way stem cell treatments were originally described to the public. It was going to be "personalized" medicine — using the patient's own stem cells to generate the adult cells without risk of rejection.

Well, we realized that it would take a great deal of time and would be unrealistically expensive to carry out the deep sequencing and animal studies for each patient's cells.

**■ How many compatible donor cell lines do you expect will be needed to cover the Japanese population?**

Not that many. One particular line — just one — can work for 17 percent of the Japanese population. We estimate that altogether about 100 lines will suffice for the 100 million people in Japan.

**■ How many lines would be needed for the more diverse United States population?**

A. We would need only about 200 lines.

**■ Was the promise of stem cells overstated?**

A. In some ways, yes, it is overstated. For example, target diseases for cell therapy are limited. There are about 10: Parkinson's, retinal and corneal diseases, heart and liver failure, diabetes and only a few more — spinal cord injury, joint disorders and some blood disorders. But maybe that's all.

The number of human diseases is enormous. I don't know how many. We can help just a small portion of patients by stem cell therapy.

**■ Why so few?**

A. We have more than 200 types of cells in our body. But the diseases I described are caused by loss of function of just one type of cell. Parkinson's disease is caused by failure of very specialized brain cells that produce dopamine.

Heart failure is caused by loss of function of cardiac heart cell.

So, that's the key. We can make that one type of cell from stem cells in a large amount, and by transplanting those cells, we should be able to rescue the patient. But many other diseases are caused by multiple types of cell failures, and we cannot treat them with stem cell therapy.

**■ What are the prospects for the other nine or so diseases that you say stem cell treatments can address?**

I think it's likely that clinical trials will be well underway for many of these diseases in the next decade.

Your discovery has not entirely replaced embryonic stem cells for potential treatments.

Different applications work better under different conditions.



Shinya Yamanaka directs Kyoto University's Center for iPS Cell Research and Application, and leads a small research lab at the Gladstone Institutes, which is affiliated with the University of California, San Francisco.

**We are performing rigorous quality tests, including sequencing the stem cells' genomes to be sure the cells are free from cancer-causing mutations. We perform tests on adult retinal cells generated from these stem cells to assure that they function as normal retinal cells, and those cells are transplanted into mice or rats for a year to assure they are safe.**

## Cash for courgettes! How to bribe kids to eat greens

It's an age-old question in parenting: how to get your children to eat more greens? Or indeed, any greens. Or just one pea will do ... even if it's swimming in ketchup.

With figures showing that one in 10 British pupils are obese when they start primary school and only one in five children eat vegetables every day, the issue of how to get kids to eat healthy continues to be fiercely debated. The answer, according to obesity campaigner Tam Fry, is controversial: bribe them with cash. The spokesperson for the National Obesity Forum suggests that putting small amounts of money into a bank account in exchange for a child eating greens could be a solution to the obesity crisis.

It's not the first time bribery — or, if you prefer, a reward system — has been touted as a way to combat obesity. In 2016, a study published in the U.S. journal Health Economics gave 8,000 school children 25 cents for eating healthily. The results showed the number of children eating at least one serving of fruit or veg doubled. However, psychologists argue that coercion of any kind — whether cash in an account or the classic warning to "finish your greens if you want ice cream" — can have longstanding negative effects on a child's relationship with food. "As long as we make food 'healthy' or 'good' food an issue we are going to produce anxiety," says psychotherapist Susie Orbach. "We should just eat well when we are hungry!"

For parents who blanch at the thought of exchanging cash for courgettes with their children, there's the exposure method. The Tiny Tastes game is based on University College London research that revealed that if children tasted a new vegetable at least 10 times, even the most reluctant would eat more of it. Launched in partnership with Weight Concern in 2013, the £5.99 Tiny Tastes pack turns the introduction of vegetables into a "fun game" by offering a child a tiny piece of a chosen vegetable for 10 days in a row (minimum), with accompanying record charts, stickers, and coloring sheets.

In recent years the hidden vegetables industry, encouraging parents to sneak veg into meals, has flourished. In the U.S., companies such as Oh Yes Foods, which sells pizza loaded with 12 kinds of dehydrated, powdered fruit and veg, and Kidfresh, which promises "no more battles or headaches at mealtime with your little ones ... we bring a fresh twist to vegetables: It is as if they were not there," have sprung up. Entire cookbooks, including the likes of The Sneaky Chef by Missy Chase Lapine, are devoted to the pursuit of hiding veg. Even Jamie Oliver has a recipe for hidden vegetable pasta sauce.

(Source: The Guardian)

## Epidemic of eating disorders in middle-aged women, study finds

Eating disorders are affecting an unexpected group of people.

Many middle-aged women are suffering from eating disorders, according to a new study from BMC Medicine published Tuesday.

While eating disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia, are usually associated with early adulthood or adolescents, the UK study took a closer look at eating disorders and women in their 40s and 50s.

Eating disorders in middle-aged women isn't a new issue, but this is the first time there's been an investigation into the prevalence of eating disorders for women in this age group.

Researchers questioned more than 5,000 middle-aged women and found just over three percent reported having an eating disorder within the last 12 months. More than 15 percent said they had experienced an eating disorder at some point in their life. Less than 30 percent of women reported seeking help for their disorder.

Some middle-aged women struggled with an eating disorder throughout their life, while others developed an eating disorder in their midlife.

"Many of the women who took part in this study told us this was the first time they had ever spoken about their eating difficulties, so we need to understand why many women did not seek help," said Nadia Micali, lead author from the Department of Psychiatry at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York and University College London, London.

Researchers assessed many early risk factors that may be associated with eating disorders including childhood unhappiness, parental divorce or separation, sexual abuse and fear of social rejection.

(Source: ABC)

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## Ancient Iranian artifacts: Statuette of a female worshipper

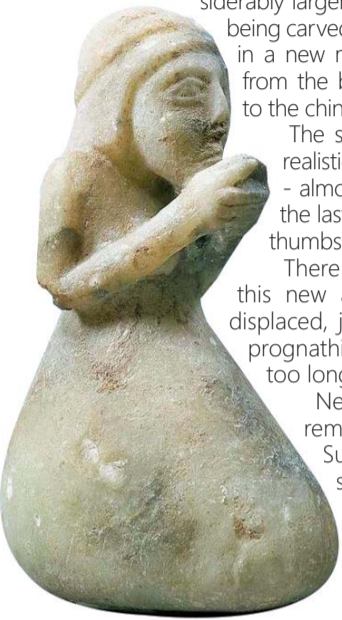
The first statuettes of praying figures were found in Susa, a city in western Iran, in two depositories called "Archaic depots."

The material of choice was alabaster, a stone that was readily available, easy to work, and more prestigious than limestone, which was also widely used in the late 4th millennium BC.

The kneeling position in the garment was peculiar to Elamite worshipper figures, although an example has been found in Tell Agrab, in the Diyala region of Iraq.

The figures are depicted with joined hands or bearing a vase as an offering. The small Susa worshippers are always shown with almond-shaped eyes and a hooked nose, the hair held in a band and falling in a rounded shape at the back, and with joined hands supporting very high-set breasts.

The pictured statuette is nonetheless exceptional. It is considerably larger than the others, and instead of being carved in a block, it occupies the space in a new manner: the arms are detached from the body and the fingers are raised to the chin.



The sculptor was seeking to make a realistic portrayal of a particular gesture - almost certainly that of prayer - with the last two fingers intertwined and the thumbs meeting under the chin.

There is a certain awkwardness in this new approach: the chin is slightly displaced, jutting forward to the point of prognathism, and the arms are a little too long.

Nevertheless, this praying figure remains the most beautiful of the Susa series: "One of the most striking ancient expressions of prayer," as the leading specialist of Elamite art Pierre Amiet put it.

(Source: Louvre)

## Spanish tourism boom seen slowing this year

**MADRID (Reuters)** — Spain's tourism sector is expected to grow at a slower pace this year due to higher interest rates and a drop in British and Spanish consumer spending, tourism promotion group Exceltur said on Monday.

Spain hosted a record 75.4 million foreign visitors last year, as tourists shunned Mediterranean resorts in Turkey and North Africa.

Britain is the biggest source of foreign visitors. The Brexit vote had no effect on tourism last year, but Exceltur did not rule out it deterring holidaymakers in 2017. Sterling has slid lower against the euro since the vote to leave the EU.

Spanish tourism grew 4.9 percent in 2016 but Exceltur said it expected expansion of just 3.2 percent this year.

The sector represents around 11 percent of gross domestic product and is a major employer in Spain, which has an unemployment rate of 18.9 percent, the second-highest in the euro zone. Tourism contributed over 80,000 new jobs last year.



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Old Towns of Djenne

Inhabited since 250 BC, Djenne in central Mali became a market center and an important link in the trans-Saharan gold trade. In the 15th and 16th centuries, it was one of the centers for the propagation of Islam. Its traditional houses, of which nearly 2,000 have survived, are built on hillocks (toguere) as protection from the seasonal floods.

The cultural property "Old Towns of Djenne" is a serial property comprising four archaeological sites, namely Djenne-Djeno, Hambarketolo, Kaniama and Tonomba, along with the old fabric of the present town of Djenne covering an area of 48.5 ha and divided into ten districts.



A view of the Great Mosque in Djenne, which is one of the largest mud brick buildings in the world

The property is an ensemble that over many years has symbolized the typical African city. It is also particularly representative of Islamic architecture in sub-Saharan Africa.

The property is characterized by the intensive and remarkable use of earth specifically in its architecture. The outstanding mosque of great monumental and religious value is an outstanding example of this. The town is renowned for its civic constructions, with the distinctive style of verticality and buttresses as well as the elegant monumental houses with intricate facades.

Excavations carried out in 1977, 1981, 1996 and 1997, revealed an extraordinary page of human history dating back to the 3rd century BC.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Post-JCPOA Iran regards tourism a fountain of wealth

**TOURISM TEHRAN** — Iran regards tourism industry a source for generating wealth, and is seeking to make the best use of positive atmosphere created in the wake of the nuclear deal, known as JCPOA, signed in January 2016.

Iran needs to breathe fresh air into the sector in order to achieve sustainable growth and grasp boom in the number of foreign arrivals, Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Director Zahra Ahmadipour said in an address to executive members of the Iranian Tour Operators Associations (ITOA).

The official, who doubles as vice president, also called for cementing tourism infrastructure in general and establishing a framework of prestigious chain hotels in particular, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

In a recent move, Iran has also offered to grant years of tax exemption to both domestic and foreign businesses and individuals as an incentive for ramping up investments in its tourism sector.

"The country should integrate variety of its hotels into an umbrella brand, which travelers find it a reliable source for arranging accommodation and other services," Ahmadipour said.

During the meeting, ITOA Director Ebrahim Pourfaraj reminded attendees of the growing international demands for visiting the country, saying Iran is being turned into a major tourism destination for European tourists and travelers.

Iran expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots, including 21 ones that have been placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list, after it agreed to roll back its nuclear program in exchange for relief from economic sanctions in July 2015.

Foreign tourist arrivals in Iran has been more than double that of the global average since the implementation of the JCPOA, CHTHO announced in Oct. 2016.

In July 2016, Iran increased its visa on arrival extension from 1 month to 3 months.

For the time being, citizens of about 190 countries can obtain visa on arrival at the country's airports with one-month validation.



Western tourists walk along a platform at the Tehran railway station on October 27, 2014. (AFP/Atta Kenare)

Some \$24 billion came into Iran over the past three and a half years because of foreign tourists, CHTHO Deputy Director Morteza Rahmani-Movahhed an-

nounced in Sep. 2016.

Over 16 million foreign tourists visited the country during the mentioned period.

## Thailand wants rich Chinese tourists, not budget groups

Thailand is nursing a slide in Chinese holidaymakers after cracking down on low-budget tours from the world's most-populous country, muddying the Southeast Asian nation's economic growth outlook.

Arrivals fell 16 percent in December from a year ago, extending a slide that began after Thailand in September clamped down on operators bringing in large groups from China on cut-price holidays. Some of the impact could linger in the early part of 2017, according to Kasikorn Research Center Co.

Thailand's military government is seeking to focus on smaller groups of higher-spending visitors to bolster the

tourism industry longer term. The unknown is the severity of the short-term pain.

Chinese visitors last year were the most by headcount and tourism accounts for about 11 percent of Thailand's \$395 billion gross domestic product. Economic expansion was subdued even before the move against the so-called zero-dollar tour groups from China.

"The impact may continue to the first quarter as tour operators will take some time to adjust packages," said Pimonwan Mahujchariyawong, an economist at Kasikorn Research Center Co. in Bangkok.

"After that, things should get back to normal. It's good

for the long term to boost the quality of our services and improve our image among tourists. It's short-term pain, long-term gain."

Companies such as Nok Airlines Pcl have felt the squeeze: the drop in Chinese tourists is one reason why the Thai budget carrier doesn't expect to make a fourth-quarter profit.

Holidaymakers from China accounted for about 438 billion baht (\$12.4 billion) of the 1.64 trillion baht Thailand earned from foreign tourists last year, the government estimates.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## Guilt-stricken tourist sends stolen cobblestone back to Rome

A guilt-stricken tourist has returned a cobblestone that they stole to Rome, offering an apology to the city.

The winding lanes and alleyways of the capital are lined with distinctive, slate-grey "sampietrini" cobbles which make handy paper weights and door stops.

They often come loose as a result of subsidence or road works. The unidentified tourist sent back the cobblestone with an anonymous note written in English.

"Please find enclosed a cobble from one of your cobbled roads," the visitor

wrote. "I stole this from Rome last year whilst on holiday as a souvenir.

"I am really sorry for doing this and I would like to return it to Rome." The tourist explained that the cobblestone was stolen from a road leading from Piazza del Popolo, one of Rome's grandest squares, to Villa Borghese, a large park a few hundred yards away.

"Please would you mind returning it there," the tourist wrote. The visitor sent the cobblestone and the note to a restaurant in Rome's historic centre.

(Source: Telegraph)

## LA tourism industry grows for the sixth consecutive year

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board (L.A. Tourism) president & CEO Ernest Wooden Jr. announced that Los Angeles welcomed 47.3m visitors in 2016, surpassing mid-year forecasts and breaking visitation records for the sixth consecutive year.

The new record is 1.7m visitors higher than 2015's total, an increase of 3.8 percent from the previous year.

New tourism records were set for overall domestic and international visitation. Total domestic visitation reached 40.2m, a 3.8 percent increase over 2015, and 7.1m international vis-

itors made Los Angeles their ultimate destination, a 3.5 percent increase over the previous year.

In 2016, Los Angeles also became the first ever U.S. city destination to welcome more than 1 million visitors from China, the destination's number two international market behind Mexico. China alone accounted for 75 percent of the destination's overall international growth, derived from the market's year-over-year growth of nearly 22 percent - the seventh consecutive year of at least 20 percent visitation growth for China.

(Source: Exhibition World)

## IN FOCUS @ IRNA/Reza Qaderi



## Historical Vakil Mosque undergoing restoration

**HERITAGE** An artisan atop a scaffold restores portions of the floral tilework that embellishes the facade of the Vakil Mosque in Shiraz, southern Iran on January 16, 2017.

Wide range of restoration projects are underway in vast premises of the historical mosque, which is a major tourist attraction.

The Vakil Mosque is adjacent to a bathhouse and a bazaar of the same name, all completed in the second half of the 18th century. The whole complex bears exceptional testimony to the rich architecture practiced in the Zand era (1750-1794).

The monument was heavily restored in the 19th century upon the order of Qajar authorities. It was the time when much of the tiling, predominantly floral motifs and arabesques, was added.

The mosque embraces a magnificent inward courtyard that is encircled by adjoining tiled chambers and porches. It also has a magnificent hypostyle prayer hall supported by abundant carved columns.

# Curiosity examines possible mud cracks on Mars

Scientists used NASA's Curiosity Mars rover in recent weeks to examine slabs of rock cross-hatched with shallow ridges that likely originated as cracks in drying mud.

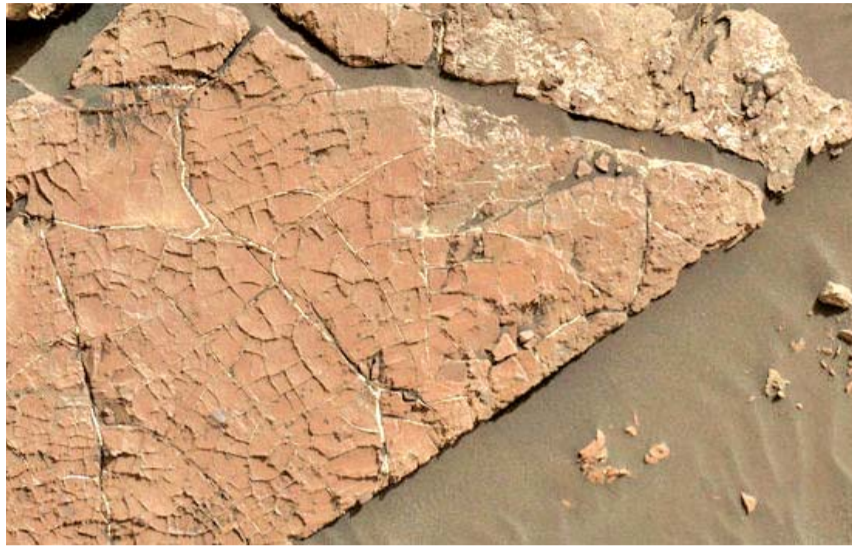
"Mud cracks are the most likely scenario here," said Curiosity science team member Nathan Stein. He is a graduate student at Caltech in Pasadena, California, who led the investigation of a site called "Old Soaker," on lower Mount Sharp, Mars.

If this interpretation holds up, these would be the first mud cracks -- technically called desiccation cracks -- confirmed by the Curiosity mission. They would be evidence that the ancient era when these sediments were deposited included some drying after wetter conditions. Curiosity has found evidence of ancient lakes in older, lower-lying rock layers and also in younger mudstone that is above Old Soaker.

## ■ Muddy ground

"Even from a distance, we could see a pattern of four- and five-sided polygons that don't look like fractures we've seen previously with Curiosity," Stein said. "It looks like what you'd see beside the road where muddy ground has dried and cracked."

The cracked layer formed more than 3 billion years ago and was subsequently buried by other layers of sediment, all becoming stratified rock. Later, wind erosion stripped away the layers above



**The cracked layer formed more than 3 billion years ago and was subsequently buried by other layers of sediment, all becoming stratified rock. Later, wind erosion stripped away the layers above Old Soaker.**

Old Soaker. Material that had filled the cracks resisted erosion better than the mudstone around it, so the pattern from the cracking now appears as raised ridges.

The team used Curiosity to examine the crack-filling material. Cracks that form

at the surface, such as in drying mud, generally fill with windblown dust or sand. A different type of cracking with plentiful examples found by Curiosity occurs after sediments have hardened into rock. Pressure from accumulation of overlying sediments can cause underground

## ■ Crack-filling material

Both types of crack-filling material were found at Old Soaker. This may indicate multiple generations of fracturing: mud cracks first, with sediment accumulating in them, then a later episode of underground fracturing and vein forming.

"If these are indeed mud cracks, they fit well with the context of what we're seeing in the section of Mount Sharp Curiosity has been climbing for many months," said Curiosity Project Scientist Ashwin Vasavada of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena. The "ancient lakes varied in depth and extent over time, and sometimes disappeared. We're seeing more evidence of dry intervals between what had been mostly a record of long-lived lakes."

Besides the cracks that are likely due to drying, other types of evidence observed in the area include sandstone layers interspersed with the mudstone layers, and the presence of a layering pattern called cross-bedding. This pattern can form where water was flowing more vigorously near the shore of a lake, or from windblown sediment during a dry episode.

(Source: space.ref.com)

## Zebra shark surprises scientists by giving birth without male

A female zebra shark in an Australian aquarium has astounded scientists by producing live offspring asexually, three years after being separated from her long-term mate.

While scientists have previously observed "virgin births" in vertebrates such as sharks, rays and reptiles -- a reproductive strategy thought to aid survival during periods of isolation -- this is the first time a female shark has ever been observed reproducing asexually after previously mating with a male.

It is only the third documented case of a vertebrate of any species switching its reproductive strategy from sexual to asexual.

An eagle ray and a boa constrictor, both held in captivity, are the only other species known to have undergone this unusual biological shift.

The zebra shark, named Leonie, lived with a male partner at the Reef HQ aquarium in Townsville, Queensland between 2006 and 2012.

## ■ Long-term male mate

After having several litters of pups with her long-term male mate, Leonie was moved into a separate tank by the aquarium as part of an effort to scale back its breeding program.

One of Leonie's female pups, Lolly, was moved into the same tank as her mother. In 2014, two years after being separated from the male sharks, both Lolly and Leonie laid eggs.

Christine Dudgeon is a biologist with the University of Queensland who has been working in collaboration with the Reef HQ aquarium for several years. She published a report on Leonie's unusual display of sexual behavior in Scientific Reports earlier this week.

Dudgeon pointed out that sharks simply laying eggs without a male present is not unusual. "It's much like a chicken -- they lay eggs whether they



are fertilized or not, if the conditions are good," she told CNN.

Staff at the aquarium noticed that some of Leonie's eggs contained embryos and attempted to incubate them out of curiosity, although none hatched.

The next year, Leonie and Lolly both laid eggs. This time, three of Leonie's eggs and two of Lolly's eggs emerged into live hatchlings.

## ■ Sperm storage

"There were two possible explanations for Leonie's eggs hatching," said Dudgeon. "One was sperm storage, which has been documented in several occasions. Sharks have been known to store sperm from male sharks for extended periods of time." The "other was parthenogenesis (asexual reproduction). This has been seen in a handful of sharks, but none that had mated previously."

Genetic analysis of Leonie's hatchlings displayed elevated homozygosity, meaning more genes are identical, and less diversity pointing to the likelihood that they had been produced asexually, rather than sexually through sperm storage.

"It was definitely a surprise," said Hamish Tristram, a senior aquarist with Reef HQ. "She had been mating successfully for several years, and there was nothing much published about such large animals switching reproductive strategy so quickly."

(Source: CNN)

## Climate policies alone will not save Earth's most diverse tropical forests

A focus on policies to conserve tropical forests for their carbon storage value may imperil some of the world's most biologically rich tropical forests, says new research.

Many countries have climate-protection policies designed to conserve tropical forests to keep their carbon locked up in trees. But the new study suggests these policies could miss some of the most diverse forests because there is no clear connection between the number of tree species in a forest and how much carbon that forest stores.

Lead author Dr. Martin Sullivan, from the School of Geography at the University of Leeds, said: "International programs often encourage the conservation of forests with high carbon stocks, because their focus is to try to slow climate change. Until now, we didn't know whether these programs would also automatically protect the most biodiverse forests. It turns out they probably won't."

A team of scientists from 22 countries measured both tree diversity and the amount of carbon stored in 360 locations across the lowland rainforests of the Amazon, Africa and Asia. In each plot the carbon stored was calculated using the diameter and identity of every tree within a given hectare (2.5 acres). In total 200,000 trees were measured in the study.

## ■ African tropical forests

The results, published in Scientific Reports, show that African tropical forests, spanning the Congo and West Africa store high levels of carbon, but are the least species rich. Forests in the Amazon and Asia, mostly in Borneo, have the greatest diversity of tree species, yet the Amazon tends to store less carbon per hectare than forests in Africa and Asia.

(Source: EurekAlert)



Co-author, Dr. Joey Talbot, also from the University of Leeds, explained: "In many ecosystems, sites with more species tend to lock up more carbon. But this doesn't work for tropical forests. Most tropical forests already have many species, and it may be that beyond a certain point adding even more species makes no difference to carbon stocks."

The study examined remaining intact tropical forests, the most biologically diverse ecosystems on the planet, home to half of all species. These forests also play a critical role in the global carbon cycle, storing 250 billion tons of carbon. Protecting them is essential -- both to secure a future for millions of species, and to meet the global commitment of keeping temperature increases well below 2 degrees C.

Although biodiversity did not boost carbon storage, it could still be important in the long run.

Co-author Professor Oliver Phillips, from the School of Geography at Leeds and leader of the RAINFOR forest monitoring network in the Amazon said: "We found some forests with fewer tree species storing a lot of carbon, while other very diverse forests had remarkably little. Yet the wonderful diversity of tropical forests, with millions of plant and animal species, is something we rightly celebrate."

(Source: EurekAlert)

## Dogfish shark extract could help treat Parkinson's disease, scientists hope

A substance found in the livers of dogfish sharks could help treat Parkinson's disease, scientists at Cambridge University believe.

Early research suggests the compound, called squalamine, not only prevents the formation of toxic plaques called Lewy Bodies which accumulate in the brain of sufferers, but also stops them being as damaging once they've already formed.

The compound has already been used in clinical trials for cancer and eye conditions in America, and a trial

in Parkinson's disease patients is now being planned by one of the researchers involved in the study.

Studies on human cells and worms suggests that it could be a valuable treatment for the disease.

"To our surprise, we found evidence that squalamine not only slows down the formation of the toxins associated with Parkinson's Disease, but also makes them less toxic altogether," said Professor Christopher Dobson, of St John's College at Cambridge University.

## ■ Drug from squalamine

"If further tests prove to be successful, it is possible that a drug treating at least some of the symptoms of Parkinson's disease could be developed from squalamine."

"We might then be able to improve on that incrementally, by searching for better molecules that augment its effects."

Squalamine is an anti-microbial compound which was discovered in the 1990s in the liver tissue of dogfish sharks by scientists who were looking for an explanation as to why the fish were so

good at fighting off infection. Scientists can now create the compound in a synthetic form in the lab.

To date, it has undergone extensive trials to fight infections and as an anti-cancer therapy.

It is not yet clear whether squalamine can reach the specific regions of the brain where the main molecular processes determining Parkinson's disease take place, or what form any resulting drug might take. But it could also help patients with dementia caused by Lewy Bodies.

(Source: The Telegraph)

## EDBI's Exchange Co. to Offer U.S. Banknotes to Applicants

Chief Executive of Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI) for Money Exchange Affairs Mr. Mohsen Bol-Hassani revealed the offering of U.S. dollar banknotes to applicants, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Following the agreement made with the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran (CBI) and in line with regulating policies at Foreign Exchange Market, the EDBI will embark on offering U.S. dollar banknotes both in the form of retail and wholesale.

Exchange Company of Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI) (Pvt.) is the first exchange company which was registered in 2004, licensed by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

This company is busy active in the field

of selling and purchasing various types of foreign currencies, he said, adding: "Despite economic sanctions imposed on the country, Exchange Company of the bank played a very constructive role in fulfilling drafts through world brokerage network."

## Machines learn to find patterns in quantum chaos

Australian researchers are combining two of the hottest topics in science: quantum computing and machine learning. Specifically, they've succeeded in training an algorithm to predict the evolving state of a simple quantum computer. Such an understanding allows real time stabilization of the system, much as tightrope walker uses a pole for balance, according to a paper in Nature Communications.

Quantum computing extends the familiar concept of the bit to propose the "qubit." While we usually etch transistors in silicon, the quantum analog could be a single particle such as a photon or electron. Like the transistor, this particle is able to exist in two states that correspond to 0 or 1. The difference is, the world at the quantum level looks nothing like ours. In addition to being 0 or 1, the particle can occupy a state not purely 0 or 1 but in some sense a mixture of the two. For this reason, a qubit can be much more flexible than a regular bit.

The mathematical behavior resists simple characterization, but the general idea is that they could take advantage of a phenomenon called interference to analyze many solutions to a problem simultaneously. In the end, more likely solutions would be amplified and less likely solutions eliminated by competing qubits, much like how ocean waves can combine to make superwaves, or cancel out entirely.

This simultaneous solution testing capability makes quantum computers theoretically useful for solving certain types of problems that would usually require a brute force approach, such as factoring large numbers and encryption.

(Source: The CSM)

## Incredible new 3D printed rocket is completely ready to launch

When you look back on your university days, what is your most cherished memory? Is it a certain test that you aced? A drunken frat party you attended? How about the time your class 3D printed an entire, ready-to-fly rocket?

OK, so that last one probably didn't happen -- but it totally could have if you had been lucky enough to attend Inholland University of Applied Science in the Netherlands, where fortunate students have been working on just such a project.



"We have an innovation studio that's kind of a maker space and creative lab for students to apply the theory they've learned in practice," Martin Kampinga, an aviation technology teacher at the school, told Digital Trends. "We do cool projects like building rockets, model RC aircrafts, low-mileage vehicles, and human-powered submarines. The projects have to be technical and innovative, so we use high-tech design and manufacturing methods."

Previously, the university has built and fired two rockets, constructed from carbon fiber, with non-structural parts printed using additive manufacturing.

The "next step is to print a full rocket out of segments we can click together," Kampinga continued. "This year in May we are planning to launch the printed rocket at a controlled military area."

"Building rockets or building aircrafts is something cool you can put on your resume," he said. The "fast process of idea, design and prototype is a big advantage (of 3D printing). The learning curve for students participating in these extracurricular projects is higher compared to the 'normal' students."

(Source: Digital Trends)

## Antarctic ice floe crack forces UK scientists to leave

The British Antarctic Society is recalling scientists from its Halley VI polar research base in March after a fissure developed in the ice sheet.

The decision was taken after a huge crack appeared in the Brunt Ice Shelf, just 10 miles away from the Halley VI research station. "We want to do the right thing for our people," said Captain Tim Stocking, Director of Operations at the British Antarctic Society (BAS).

"Bringing them home for winter is a prudent precaution given the changes that our glaciologists have seen in the ice shelf in recent months."

There are currently 88 scientists stationed at the Halley VI research center, which monitors climate data and played a key role in discovering the ozone hole in 1986.

The station is currently undergoing a process of relocation, after a fissure -- once thought to be dormant -- began encroaching on the base in 2012, advancing a mile every year.

But the new site is faced with another huge chasm, which developed in October 2016.

Scientists from the center have been monitoring the chasm's development but cannot be sure whether a large iceberg will calve -- splitting away from the main ice shelf.

According to the BAS, the risk of this happening is low and the decision to pull scientists from the research station was made as a precautionary measure.

If the ice fractured during summer months, an evacuation could be swiftly mounted. But the forthcoming Antarctic winter complicates things, bringing 24-hour darkness and frozen seas, making evacuation an extremely complex process.

(Source: Reuters)

## IRCS launches natural disaster preparedness scheme

**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — Iran's Red Crescent Society has initiated a nationwide scheme to improve public disaster preparedness.

Unfortunately public disaster preparedness is about 9.3 percent on average while some 99 percent of the cities of Iran are most likely to be hit by an earthquake and 50 percent are vulnerable to flood, IRIB quoted Hamid Jamaledini, an official with IRCS, as saying on Wednesday.



Accordingly, Jamaledini said, some 250,000 Iranian families will be trained for disaster preparedness by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (Mar. 2017) and the scheme will cover all families by Mar. 2022.

In order to adopt the scheme volunteers would go to the citizens' houses, train them and provide them with home safety guides for 12 sessions at no cost at all, he said, stating, "We have allocated some 100 billion rials (nearly \$2.5 million) to this scheme."

Families who live in cities and areas with high natural disaster risks would be given priorities over other families, he highlighted.

## Finally! After years of trying, China celebrates ballpoint pen breakthrough

China has finally produced its own fully home-produced ballpoint pen after years of trying to master the complex techniques involved in making the delicate tips.

Despite manufacturing 80% of the world's ballpoint pens, the country had previously been unable to produce the small but crucial component.

So why did a country renowned for ingeniously replicating technology struggle to create an everyday item for so long?

Firstly, it did not have machines with the precision needed to cut a tiny ball-bearing accurately, meaning the balls had to be imported from Switzerland.

And despite being the world's largest steel producer, China was unable to produce the high quality steel to case the ink-dispensing ball, resulting in the steel being imported from Germany or Japan.

Such was the national concern about the issue that, in June 2015, state-run broadcaster CCTV hosted three manufacturing chief executives in an hour-long talk show discussing what the country could do to solve the problem.

And the dilemma made headline news last year, when Chinese Premier Li Keqiang complained on national TV that the country's pens were "rough" in comparison with their Japanese, German and Swiss counterparts.

His comments led the Hong Kong Economic Journal to declare: "The day China can produce a 100% homemade ball pen will be the day it truly qualifies as a first-class industrial power."

The newly announced breakthrough is a small but very symbolic success for the central government's Made in China 2025 program, designed to help domestic growth.

Following the announcement, CCTV posted a video on social media site Weibo asking its followers to cheer for the momentous achievement.

China is now hoping to phase out pen tip imports completely within the next two years. (Source: Sky)

## LEARN ENGLISH

### Asking for Time Off

A: Mr. McKenna, do you **have a second**? I need to talk to you about something.

B: Sure, Liv, what can I do for you?

A: Well, I was just wondering... you see, I know I've **used up** all my vacation days this year, but my sister is getting married, and the wedding is **overseas**, and, well...

B: You wanna **take some time off**, is that right?

A: Well, sir, I was just hoping that I might be able to take some **unpaid leave** this year.

B: What dates are you planning on **taking off**? I'll need at least two months' **notice**, so that I can plan for your absence.

A: I was thinking of taking off from September first until the thirtieth. Would you **be okay with that**?

B: Well, I guess so.

#### Key vocabulary

**have a second**: have some time, not busy

**use up**: take all of something

**overseas**: in an other country, across the ocean

**take some time off**: stop working for a short time

**unpaid leave**: time away from work that is not paid

**take off**: leave

**notice**: information that tells you about something or warns about something

**be okay with that**: agree

#### Supplementary vocabulary

**take a leave of absence**: stay away from work for a long period of time, without getting paid

**sick leave**: time away from work when sick

**personal leave**: time away from work for personal reasons (i.e. doctor's appointment, etc.)

**maternity leave**: time away from work for a mother to care for a new baby

**bank holiday**: public holiday recognized by law (BrE)

(Source: irlanguage.com)

# Tehran taking steps toward green transportation



**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — Tehran is gradually taking steps toward establishing green transportation in crowded neighborhoods by unveiling hybrid and electric vehicles and bikes.

On Tuesday, 200 hybrid taxis, 200 bikes, 30 electric SUVs, 32 electric motorcycles, and low-emission minibuses and buses were unveiled on the occasion of the national clean air day, January 18, in district 12 of Tehran, IRIB reported.

Since district 12 is one of the most crowded and polluted areas in the

capital Tehran Municipality has done its best to bring back peace to this area once again by developing green transportation and pedestrianizing 40 percent of the streets, deputy mayor for traffic and transport affairs Maziar Hosseini said.

"In addition to the 200 bikes, three kilometers of bike lanes are also built which will be doubled in the near future," Hosseini added, regarding the cycling infrastructure in Tehran.

Some 150 old minibuses in Tehran will be scrapped soon, he said, adding, the



filters absorbing the pollutant emissions which are installed on buses are worth of 400 million rials (about \$10,000) each but citizens health is a top priority.

The official further underscored the role of carburetor cars in worsening air pollution by 40 percent in Tehran saying that almost 10,000 of the 16,000 clunker taxis are replaced by new ones so far.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Hosseini expressed hope that with grants allocated to the buyers they would be more encouraged to buy electric motorcycles.

In February 2016 it was announced that 10,000 hybrid taxis, meeting euro-5 standards, will join Tehran's transportation fleet within the next three years and that 2,500 hybrid taxis will be added to the fleet by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2017), however it seems that the municipality has failed to keep their promises so far.

Considering the air pollution and constant gridlocks in the city, hybrid taxis can be of great help to resolve these two persistent problems.



## Campaigners call on EU to halve food waste by 2030

People are being urged to support calls by a major pan-European group to halve 'farm to fork' food waste in Europe by 2030, on the eve of a landmark vote later this month.

The European parliament's environment committee will vote on new regulations on 24 January, which are set to shape the next 15 years of EU food waste policy and have the potential to be the most ambitious, legally binding target on food waste in the world.

A new campaign urges MEPs to halve the amount of food waste generated in the EU by 2030, and for this target to be legally binding at member state level. A movement of 42 organizations from across 15 countries has backed calls for the EU's circular economy package to support a 50% reduction of food waste by 2030. Separately, 47,000 people have to date signed the public petition (28,000 from Change.org and 19,000 from Global Citizen) backing the move.

If the target is passed, it would become British law before the UK leaves the European Union, making it difficult for the government to backtrack.

Martin Bowman, Campaigner for This is Rubbish, who started the UK public petition, said: "The circular economy package has potential to be the most ambitious food waste agreement in the world, and that's urgently need-

ed - both for the environment and the millions suffering from food poverty in Europe."

An estimated 88m tons of food is wasted in EU countries every year, which This is Rubbish estimates could feed the 55 million people living in food poverty in Europe more than nine times over.

Kierra Box, campaigner for Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland added: "If approved, this ambitious target to halve food waste across Europe should enter into UK law before we leave the European Union, meaning that it will influence our approach to food waste even after Brexit. If our government tries to wriggle out of this commitment when we leave Europe, it will have a fight on its hands."

Some EU countries, including France and Italy already have national schemes in place to combat their food waste. Meanwhile, the UK's major supermarkets will be questioned on Wednesday about food waste throughout the entire supply chain and why there is little comparable data between retailers on food waste data.

In the third evidence session of its inquiry into food waste in England, MPs will want to know why the UK's levels of redistribution, where out-of-date but edible

food is redistributed to the hungry and the needy via charities and food banks, is at less than 2% - much lower than in other European countries.

Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrisons and Waitrose will all give evidence, along with the Food and Drink Federation, which represents the UK food and drink industry. They will be asked to explain their policies on selling 'wonky' or imperfect fruit and vegetables, and whether current best by/use by labelling is contributing to food waste by creating consumer confusion.

Labor MP Jim Fitzpatrick of the environment, food and rural affairs committee, said: "Despite the progress made reducing food waste along the supply chain, the amount of reusable, recyclable food that we throw away in the UK is still staggeringly high. Of the estimated 7m tons we discard from our homes each year, nearly half is edible.

"We will be asking the supermarkets what more can be done to reduce food waste and this needless expense to our households. We know there is a lot of good practice out there - from Tesco's work with the FareShare charity to a £1m food waste trial by Sainsbury's - and we want to find out more about it."

(Source: The Guardian)

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

#### S. Korean, Russian university officials to come to Iran

South Korean and Russian university officials are set to come to Iran in the near future, IRNA news agency reported.

University chancellors from top 14 South Korean universities will pay a four-day visit to Iran on Wednesday, the Iranian deputy science minister has said.

The chancellors will hold talks with their Iranian counterparts to boost bilateral cooperation and interaction, Hossein Salar-Amoli added.

During their stay, the Korean officials will take a two-day trip to the central province of Isfahan to visit academics as well, he highlighted.

#### نمایندگان دانشگاه های روسیه و کره ی جنوبی به ایران می آیند

به گزارش خبرگزاری ایرنا قرار است تا نمایندگان دانشگاه های روسیه و کره ی جنوبی در آینده ی نزدیک به ایران سفر کنند.

قائم مقام وزیر علوم، تحقیقات و فناوری از سفر چهار روزه ی روسای ۱۴ دانشگاه برتر کره جنوبی طی روز چهارشنبه به تهران خبر داد.

حسین سالار آملی افزود: این میهمانان علمی در سفر خود با مدیران مراکز علمی کشورمان برای افزایش تعاملات و همکاری ها گفت و گو خواهند کرد.

وی خاطرنشان کرد: همچنین هیات دانشگاهی کره جنوبی به مدت دو روز به اصفهان سفر خواهند کرد و با مدیران مراکز علمی این استان نیز مذاکراتی خواهند داشت.

#### ENGLISH PROVERB

### Mouse that has but one hole is quickly taken

■ **Explanation**: it is dangerous to always depend on just one thing, because if it fails you, you will not have any alternatives

■ **For example**: Don't put all your money in a single bank account. The mouse that has but one hole is quickly taken.

#### PHRASAL VERB

### Buy someone off

■ **Meaning**: to bribe someone to ignore what one is doing wrong

■ **For example**: The mobster tried to buy off the jury.

#### ENGLISH IDIOM

### Bandit territory

■ **Explanation**: a geographical area where law enforcement is practically impossible, because people ignore all rules, is called 'bandit territory'.

■ **For example**: There are a certain number of bandit territories in the world where travelers are advised not to go.

# Fatah and Hamas to form unity government

## 2 Palestinians killed as tensions continue in occupied lands

Leading Palestinian movements, Hamas and Fatah, have agreed to form a new unity government following extensive negotiations in Moscow, Russia.

The unity deal was announced late on Tuesday, three days after the talks began under the Russian auspices among representatives from Ramallah-based Fatah as well as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, both headquartered in the Gaza Strip, and other factions.

Russia has been working towards conflict resolution in the region as part of the Middle East Peace Quartet, also comprising the United States, the European Union and the United Nations.

"We have reached agreement under which, within 48 hours, we will call on Mahmoud Abbas to launch consultations on the creation of a government," Fatah official Azam al-Ahmad told a press conference.

Abbas, who leads Fatah, will be carrying out the consultations in his capacity as the president of the Palestinian Authority (PA).

Moussa Abu Marzouk, the deputy chairman of Hamas' political bureau, also described a unity government as "the most effective tool" to address divisions among Palestinian groups, adding that "it is responsible to promote the solutions, including the holding of free and democratic elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip."

The official noted that an agreement between Fatah and Hamas to achieve Palestinian unity is not considered a compromise by any means. The concept of unity, among all factions, is a win for all sides, rather than a loss, he said, adding, "Everybody will win."

Fatah and Hamas have been at odds ever since the latter scored a landslide victory in Palestinian elections in 2006. Hamas governs the Gaza Strip, while Fatah has set up offices in the West Bank.

The factions agreed in April 2014 to end their grievances and reconcile. The move drew the Israeli officials' ire, and the Tel Aviv regime consequently responded by suspending the so-called peace talks with the PA.

Following the agreement, the two sides formed a unity government, which Fatah unilaterally dissolved in June 2015, claiming it was "weak," and that Hamas would not "allow it to work in Gaza."

In line with the new arrangements, the Palestinian sides involved in the Moscow talks, including Islamic Jihad, will now join institutions under the umbrella of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and form a new Palestinian National Council.

The new council will select the PLO Ex-



ecutive Committee, the top political and diplomatic Palestinian body.

### ■ Trump's pledge on U.S. embassy

In another development on Monday, the Palestinian diplomats met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, asking Moscow to help dissuade the United States President-elect Donald Trump from fulfilling his campaign pledge to move Washington's embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to al-Quds (Jerusalem), which the Palestinians want as the capital of their future state.

Prior to the talks in the Russian capital, the Palestinian Authority had also asked Russia to intervene to stop the potential relocation of the U.S. embassy in Israel.

The unity deal comes at a critical juncture amid growing international pressure on Israel over its occupation of Palestinian territories.

Israeli paper Haaretz quoted a Fatah official present at the Moscow talks as saying that "the unity government is of strategic importance for the Palestinians" given the recent peace conference in Paris, the United Nations Security Council's Resolution 2334 criticizing the settlements as well as Trump's election.

### ■ 2 more Palestinians killed as tensions continue in occupied territories

Elsewhere, at least two more Palestinians have been killed and several others injured as tensions between Israeli military forces and illegal settlers on the one side and Palestinian protesters on the other continue in the occupied territories.

Israeli soldiers raided the Palestinian village of Umm al-Hayran in the Negev desert early on Wednesday to demolish a number of Palestinian houses there, prompting fierce scuffles with local residents, Arabic-language al-Aqsa television network reported.

The regime claimed the houses were being built without Israeli-issued permits.

Israeli troops fired tear gas canisters, stun grenades and rubber bullets to disperse the crowd. Two villagers were fatally shot, and four others sustained gunshot wounds.

Ayman Odeh, a Palestinian member of the Israeli parliament (Knesset) who currently serves as the head of the Arab-dominated political alliance Joint List, was shot in the head and injured during the melee.

Ayman Odeh, a Palestinian member of the Israeli parliament, sustains gunshot wounds during clashes, January 17, 2017.

Odeh was taken to Suroka Hospital in the southern Israeli city of Beersheva to receive medical treatment.

Palestinian sources later identified one of the fatalities as Yaqoub Moussa Abu al-Qayaa. They said Qayaa was shot dead as he sought to prevent Israeli military forces from entering the village.

Israeli forces later declared Umm al-Hayran a closed military zone, and imposed a curfew on it. Military equipment and reinforcements were sent to the area as well.

The development came only a few hours after they carried out an attack on the Qalandiya refugee camp north of Jerusalem al-Quds.

Reports say the Israeli soldiers used tear gas and live bullets as clashes broke out between residents and the troops inside the camp.

Witnesses said Israeli forces prevented local medical staff from taking the injured to a nearby hospital. The troops also demolished two Palestinian homes near the place.

Meanwhile, an Israeli settler ran over a four-year-old Palestinian girl in the south-

ern West Bank city of al-Khalil (Hebron), located 30 kilometers south of al-Quds, on Tuesday evening.

Locals said Layan Ayed al-Razem was crossing the street in the Jabal Jales area of the city when she was hit.

Palestinian medical sources at al-Ahli Hospital in al-Khalil said the little girl was admitted with "bruises all over her body, mainly on her right leg." They added that she is in a stable condition.

There have been scores of "hit and run" incidents targeting Palestinians in different parts of the occupied West Bank, with most of them largely going uninvestigated by Israeli authorities.

On January 6, an Israeli settler ran over a 40-year-old in al-Khalil as he was walking on the edge of a road.

The occupied Palestinian territories have witnessed tensions ever since Israel imposed restrictions on the entry of Palestinian worshippers into the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East al-Quds in August 2015.

Nearly 280 Palestinians have lost their lives at the hands of Israeli forces since the beginning of October that year.

### ■ UN: West Bank annexation to destroy peace talks

The development follows as the UN has warned that any attempt made by Israel to annex Palestinian land will destroy further prospects of peace talks.

The UN's envoy for the Middle East, Nickolay Mladenov, gave the warning on Tuesday while addressing the UNSC which had met for the first time since the adoption of a resolution calling for an end to Israel's illegal settlement activities.

Mladenov made the remarks in response to calls by several Israeli ministers for annexation of Palestinian land.

On December 23, the UNSC passed Resolution 2334 with 14 votes in favor and one abstention by the United States. It condemned the establishment of settlements by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories as a "flagrant violation under international law," which it said was "dangerously imperiling the viability" of peace and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

More than half a million Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank including East al-Quds. The international community regards the settlements as illegal as they are built on private Palestinian lands. Israel has defied international calls for a halt to its settlement activities.

(Source: agencies)

## Gambia MPs extend President Jammeh's term

Gambia's national assembly has adopted a resolution to allow President Yahya Jammeh to stay in power for three more months, starting from Wednesday, just hours before the end of his official term.

Jammeh, who has ruled the small West African country for 22 years, initially acknowledged opponent Adama Barrow as the winner of elections in December, but later rejected the ballot count as flawed and lodged a complaint with the country's Supreme Court.

Barrow, who is currently in Senegal, is scheduled to take office on Thursday.

He insists his inauguration will proceed as planned.

The move by the Gambian parliament comes a day after Jammeh declared a 90-day state of emergency, alleging "unprecedented and extraordinary amount of foreign interference" in the country's internal affairs.

Jammeh is refusing to step down despite international pressure and a threat by leaders of the Economic Community of West African States, or ECOWAS, of a military intervention to make him hand over to Barrow.

Jammeh's decision not to step down has created political turmoil in the country. At least five ministers have

resigned from his government, hundreds of people have fled to neighboring Senegal and others in the country say they fear violence.

Gambia is one of Africa's smallest countries and has had just two rulers since independence in 1965.

Jammeh seized power in a coup in 1994 and his government has gained a reputation among ordinary Gambians and human rights activists for torturing and killing opponents.

Speaking to Al Jazeera from Dakar, Sidi Sanneh, Gambia's former foreign minister, accused Jammeh of corruption and of pillaging Gambia's state coffers.

(Source: agencies)

## Russia: Turkey jets join anti-ISIL operation in Syria's al-Bab

Moscow says: Russian war planes and Turkish jets have jointly targeted positions of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

(ISIL/Daesh) terrorists in the Syrian city of al-Bab.

9 Russian and 8 Turkish warplanes

participated in the "first joint air operation" in the area around the town of Al-Bab in the Aleppo region, senior Russian

Defense Ministry official Lieutenant-General Sergei Rudskoi said on Wednesday.

(Source: Press TV)

## Trump's foreign policy: Redefining friends and adversaries

➔ Trump's opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) has caused much discomfort and political debate in Japan and South Korea, two of the U.S. key allies in its attempt to contain the spread of China's influence and power in Southeast and Northeast Asia. How would the Trump administration reconcile President Obama's "pivot to Asia" policy with the active undermining or abandonment of the TPP? Trump's populist and protectionist rhetoric, if translated into actual measures and policies, could lead to contradictory political actions with the potential to further complicate any U.S. foreign policy that seeks to contain or deter China and the spread of its influence in the South China Sea. After meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Trump emphasized his common ground with U.S. allies, such as

Japan, South Korea, Australia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Trump's telephone conversation with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, the first such top-level contact between the two countries' leaders since 1979, has portended an even more pronounced and confrontational approach toward China.

In the Middle East, Trump's appointment of David Friedman as the U.S. ambassador to Israel is likely to deepen tensions between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Friedman's support for the transfer of Israel's capital from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem poses a major obstacle to any peace process aimed at creating a Palestinian state. The Trump administration may decide to withdraw from the nuclear deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action—JCPOA), or impose further sanctions on, what will become an

increasingly isolated Iran. Pulling out of the nuclear deal, an agreement that enjoys the enthusiastic and broader support of Britain, China, France, Germany, and Russia, will be costly and imprudent at best.

In the meantime, Trump, who has already expended substantial political and rhetorical capital to seek better ties with Russia (despite the evidence of Moscow's hacking and interference with the U.S. elections) and in essence tolerated the Assad regime's actions in Syria directed at defeating and dismantling the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), might find himself in the middle of an increasingly uncomfortable and paradoxical situation. While Trump has declared the defeat of ISIS to be his number one priority in the Middle East and seeks partners with an avowed interest in comprising an

anti-ISIS coalition, this should provide a natural venue for seeking closer ties with Iran who has been pursuing the war against ISIS in Syria in alliance with Russia. It thus remains to be seen how the Trump administration might resolve this contradiction if it tries to defeat ISIS while also escalating tensions with Iran. These uncertainties and complexities notwithstanding, it is too early to foretell exactly which direction the Trump administration will take toward making key foreign policy decisions. Transitions entail—as they often do—uncertainties and surprises.

Mahmood Monshipouri teaches Middle Eastern Politics at San Francisco State University and the University of California, Berkeley. He is the editor, most recently, of the *Inside the Islamic Republic: Social Change in Post-Khomeini Iran* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2016).

## Barack Obama's net worth as he leaves the White House

On Jan. 20, Republican president-elect Donald Trump will be sworn in as the 45th president of the United States and the Barack Obama era will officially come to an end. While his net worth is nowhere near that of his successor, Obama will leave office a very rich man.

Based on a recent study by American University in Washington, D.C., the Obamas could stand to make as much as \$242 million once leaving the White House.

Here is a look at President Barack Obama as he turns over the presidency, his net worth and plans for the future.

For his day job as president, Barack Obama earned \$400,000 a year throughout his entire eight-year term — a salary that incoming president Trump has vowed to forgo. The president also receives a \$50,000 annual expense account, a \$100,000 nontaxable travel account and a \$19,000 entertainment budget.

According to CelebrityNetWorth.com, Obama has a net worth of \$12.2 million and First Lady Michelle Obama is not far behind with a net worth of \$11.8 million.

### ■ Donald Trump's Net Worth

Here's a look at Trump's businesses, presidential campaign, lavish lifestyle, family and net worth.

Forbes puts Trump's net worth at \$4.5 billion. He is No. 324 on the worldwide list of billionaires and No. 113 in the United States. Early in his campaign, the Republican president-elect said he was worth in excess of \$10 billion, and he reiterated that claim on May 17 when he submitted an updated financial disclosure to the Federal Election Commission.

Born into a wealthy family, Trump inherited about \$40 million from his late father, real estate developer Fred Trump, reported Celebrity Net Worth, which tracks celebrity earnings. In 1971, Donald became head of what would later be known as The Trump Organization.

Donald Trump's earnings and title have since helped him develop over 500 companies. The business mogul has his stake in casinos, skyscrapers, television shows, golf courses, books, merchandise and more.

(Source: GOBankingRates)

## Rome shaken as earthquakes hit central Italy

Three earthquakes have hit central Italy in short succession, with tremors felt in the capital, Rome, forcing an evacuation of the underground train system.

The German Research Centre for Geosciences, which operates a regional quake monitoring system, said a quake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.5 hit the region north of Amatrice at about 09:25 GMT on Wednesday.

A second quake with the same magnitude hit the same area about 50 minutes later.

A third quake was also reported shortly after, hitting 110km northeast of Rome with a depth of 40km, according to the European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre.

There were no reports of casualties.

The Italian Red Cross said dozens of people were trapped by the snow in their homes and that it had received reports of building collapses in hamlets near Amatrice.

"Happily there have been no victims," Paolo Gentiloni, Italy's prime minister, said in Berlin.

He said the army's presence in the affected area would be stepped up.

The tremors were felt across the Abruzzo, Lazio and Marche regions and powerfully enough in Rome, more than 100km away to send some panicked parents scrambling to schools to collect their children.

Centuries-old papal palaces in Rome - showpieces of the mastery of Renaissance architects - swayed during the tremors.

Train services on some mainlines and the Rome underground were briefly suspended but resumed after safety checks.

Some schools in Rome and all those open in the quake zones were evacuated.

Residents of the city of Aquila, where over 300 people died in a 2009 earthquake, rushed into the snow-covered streets in scenes of panic but the mayor said there had been no building collapses there.

In Amatrice, the bell tower of the 15th Century Church of Sant'Agostino crumbled.

It had been badly damaged by the first of the earthquakes which struck the mountainous center of the country between August and October last year.

Much of Italy's land mass and some of its surrounding waters are prone to seismic activity, with the highest risk concentrated along its mountainous central spine.

Italy straddles the Eurasian and African tectonic plates, making it vulnerable when they move.

The worst disaster of the 20th century was in 1908 when an estimated 95,000 died in tidal waves following a quake in the sea between mainland Italy and Sicily.

(Source: agencies)

## George H.W. Bush hospitalized in Houston

Former United States President George H.W. Bush was recently admitted to Houston Methodist Hospital after falling ill with an undisclosed illness.

"He's there. He's fine and he's doing really well," Bush's chief of staff, Jean Becker, said.

She said the doctors have a couple of theories about Bush's condition, but he is responding to treatment.

Bush, who lives in Houston, is expected to be discharged in the next couple of days. Bush, 92, served as president from 1989 to 1993.

As is the case with most people his age, former President Bush has had his share of health issues in recent years.

(Source: Houston Chronicle)

## Leonard, Aldridge propel Spurs past Timberwolves

Kawhi Leonard scored 34 points and LaMarcus Aldridge added 29 as the San Antonio Spurs shrugged off a ragged first three quarters and rolled to a 122-114 win over the Minnesota Timberwolves on Tuesday at the AT&T Center.

Leonard's rebound and rush down the court for a dunk over two Minnesota defenders with 7:36 to play highlighted a 20-2 run for San Antonio that turned a 90-83 deficit into a 103-92 lead.

Leonard has 12 games of 30 or more points this season and has reached that mark in four consecutive contests. He's



the first San Antonio player to score 30-plus points in four straight contests since Tim Duncan in January 2004.

Tony Parker added 14 points for San Antonio (32-9) and Patty Mills had 11 points. The Spurs' bench outscored Minnesota's reserves 37-21.

Karl-Anthony Towns led the Timberwolves (14-28) with 27 points and 16 rebounds, while Ricky Rubio added 21 points and 14 assists, Zach LaVine had 18 points, Gorgui Dieng scored 17, Shabazz Muhammad

poured in 15 and Andrew Wiggins hit for 10.

Minnesota utilized only eight players in the game and six of them scored in double figures.

The first quarter was back-and-forth between the two teams, featured 11 lead changes and ended tied at 30.

The Timberwolves opened up a 51-44 lead on a Towns putback layup at the 6:15 mark of the second quarter and Minnesota kept its lead through the rest of the session.

The 71 points scored by the Timberwolves in the first half were the second-most surrendered by San Antonio this season and were just 16 points less than Minnesota scored the entire game in its last contest, a 98-87 loss to Dallas.

Towns led Minnesota with 17 points in the half while Rubio had 16 (going 10 of 10 from the free throw line) and Muhammad hit for 15. The Timberwolves shot 55.9 percent from the floor and took 30 free throws (making 29) in the first two periods.

Leonard paced the Spurs with 17 points and Aldridge had 15. San Antonio had just two turnovers in the first half and shot 56.1 percent on its field goals.

The Timberwolves ran their lead to as much as eight points in the third quarter and looked to be in a comfortable spot after Towns' 3-pointer at the 1:40 mark had Minnesota up 90-83.

But the Spurs woke up in a major way, scoring the final nine points of the quarter including a 4-point play by Leonard with 38.6 seconds to play that pushed San Antonio on top at 92-90 heading into the fourth quarter.

A driving layup by David Lee gave the Spurs a 94-90 lead with 10:50 to play in regulation -- their biggest of the game up to that point -- and San Antonio just wore down the Timberwolves for the rest of the game.

(Source: Reuters)

## Asian champions banned from defending title over match-fixing

Asian Champions League holders Jeonbuk Motors have been banned from continental competition in 2017 over a match-fixing scandal in the K-League, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) announced on Wednesday.

Last year, Jeonbuk were docked nine points and fined 100 million South Korean won (approximately £70,000) by the Korean Football Association after one of their scouts was found to have made payments to referees in 2013. The points deduction ultimately handed FC Seoul the K-League title ahead of Jeonbuk.



Jeonbuk defeated Al-Ain 3-2 on aggregate in the 2016 Champions League final but will not be given the chance to defend their title.

A club statement confirmed that the four-time Korean champions will step up their appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

"The AFC independent Entry Control Body on Wednesday decided that Jeonbuk Motors are ineligible to participate in AFC competitions for the 2017 season due to its indirect involvement in activities aimed at arranging or influencing the outcome of matches during the 2013 and 2014 K-League seasons," read a statement from the AFC.

"Such indirect involvement was found to be in contravention of Article 11.8 of the Entry Manual for the AFC Club Competitions 2017-2020. As such, Jeonbuk Motors was deemed not to have met the sporting criteria to participate in the AFC Champions League 2017."

Jeju United finished third behind second-place Jeonbuk in the K-League last season and have been handed their group-stage spot, with Ulsan Hyundai subsequently awarded a Champions League qualifying place.

(Source: Goal)

# Carlo Ancelotti: Benitez lacked Zidane's rapport with Madrid players

Carlo Ancelotti says the key to Zinedine Zidane's success at Real Madrid is his relationship with the players, telling ESPN FC that his predecessor Rafa Benitez struggled even though he "probably has more experience and more knowledge of the game."

Zidane, who worked as Ancelotti's assistant during Madrid's Champions League-winning 2013-14 campaign, was appointed head coach in January last year after Benitez was sacked after less than seven months in charge.

Zidane's only managerial experience prior to taking the job was an underwhelming stint with Madrid's Castilla reserve team in the third division, but the former France international led the club to the Champions League title last May and his side are currently top of La Liga.

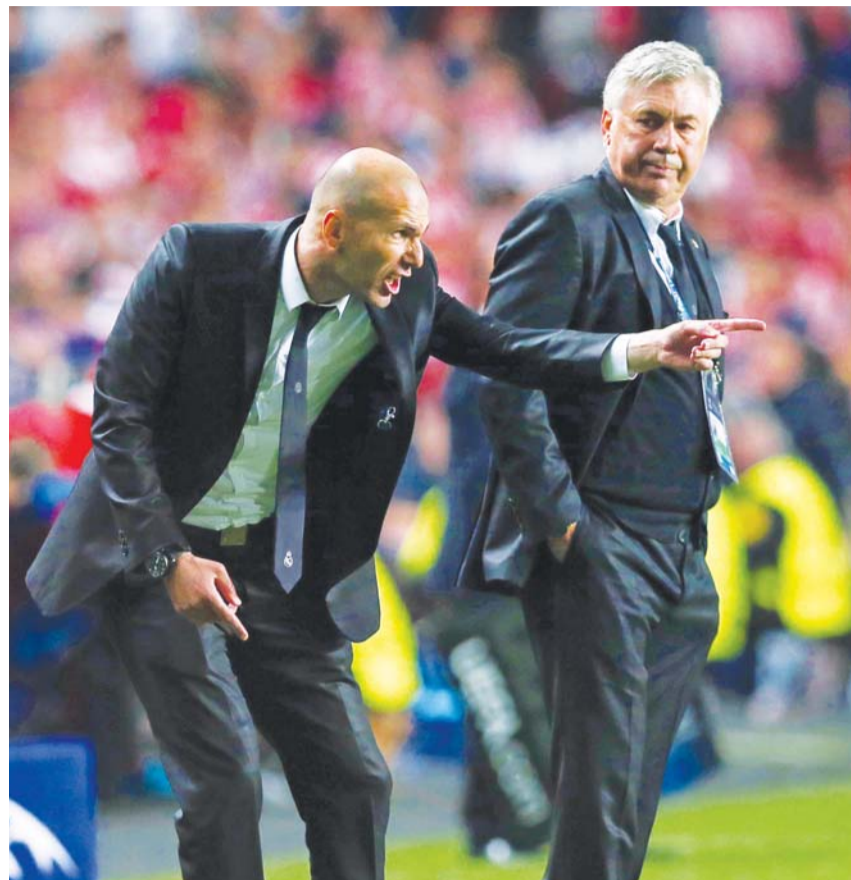
Asked if that meant anyone could manage Madrid, Ancelotti told ESPN FC's Gab Marcotti: "No, not everybody can manage Real Madrid. The key to success I think is the relationship with the players. The knowledge of football is secondary, as is the experience."

"I mean, sure, Zidane had not managed in the top-flight, but he played for a long time, he had worked as an assistant, he had managed Castilla, he knows the game, he knows the tactical aspects, he knows the club."

"The key question I think was the relationship with the players, as I said, and the ability to work with them on the training pitch. I mean structuring a training session in such a way that you get your message across and the players are happy and receptive."

"There's a teaching/coaching element there that not everybody who knows or understands football has. If none of my coaching staff showed up to training tomorrow and I simply told the players go ahead and structure a week's worth of training sessions, they couldn't do it. Or, at least, they couldn't do it well."

"As for the relationships, you need charisma, you need respect, you need personality. Zidane has all that and he proved it as a player, as a leader but also



in the time he spent as my assistant."

Benitez, who had various coaching roles at Madrid earlier in his career, failed despite an impressive managerial history at clubs including Valencia and Liverpool.

Ancelotti said: "Look, a guy like Rafa Benitez probably has more experience and more knowledge of the game but maybe he wasn't able, in the short time he was there, to build the kind of relationships that are necessary. And Zidane, in that respect, had an edge, because he'd been at the club, he'd coached many of the players, heck, he'd even played with some of them."

"So, yes, I value experience and knowledge, but they are not the most important thing. The most important thing is being able to talk to the players and teach them and work with them, and

you can only do that if they respect you and listen to you."

"You don't need to give an inspirational monologue every time. Sometimes you don't even need to talk much. Zidane doesn't talk much, though I'm sure it's still a lot more than he talked before, but the thing is, when he does speak, people listen. He commands respect. And he builds on that."

Jose Mourinho was also reported to have had a poor relationship with many players by the time he left Madrid, and he had complained shortly after his Madrid exit in 2013 that Cristiano Ronaldo had refused to listen to his tactical advice.

Ancelotti, though, said it can be "very difficult" to give technical direction to established professionals.

"Maybe you can do it with a youngster, but at this level it's hard, especially with veterans," he said. "First of all, they're exceptional technically so there aren't that many faults to iron out, but also they've been through a lot to get where they are and you can upset things."

He gave the example of Danish striker Jon Dahl Tomasson, who played under Ancelotti at AC Milan between 2002 and 2005.

"He'd only ever side-foot the ball when shooting," he said. "He wasn't a bad finisher, but obviously when you side-foot it, you're not going to get the same power as you do when you put your laces through it, so I tried to get him to change his body shape and try finishing with power."

"We worked on it a lot but his finishing didn't improve. In fact, it got worse, so we left it. Sometimes, when you're fully formed as a player, your technique won't change, and that's fine."

However, he said that "part of the skill of a top manager is understanding the qualities and characteristics of each player and being able to give that advice that helps them improve technically as well."

He also said motivation had not been an issue for him when working with players at the highest level.

"There's a hunger and a desire in guys like Xabi Alonso and Pepe, to name but two, that means they are never satisfied, they never settle, they always want more."

He said Ronaldo is "the ultimate example" of that kind of hunger, adding: "His belly is never full. People had told me he was like this before I went to Real Madrid, but until you actually work with him every day, you don't realise to what degree he takes it. He is hugely professional and he works as hard anybody out there. From recovery to diet, he takes care of every detail, ensuring everything is optimal."

"When I compare it to my playing days, there is no comparison -- but he takes it to another level."

(Source: ESPN)

## Bekele sets 02:01:30 marathon career target

Triple Olympic track champion Kenenisa Bekele, the second-fastest marathon runner in history, said on Wednesday he can shave around 90 seconds off the current world record over the classic 26.2 mile distance before he retires.

Ethiopian Bekele, widely regarded as the greatest distance runner of all time and world record holder over 10,000 and 5,000 metres, is making an attempt at the world record this Friday at the Dubai Marathon.

He ran two hours, three minutes and three seconds when winning Berlin last September, six seconds outside Dennis Kimetto's world record of 2:02:57 set on the same course in 2014.

The 34-year-old, who said he is eyeing "just the world record" this week, told reporters he believes he can run "around 2:01:30" before retiring.

The last time Bekele competed in the Dubai Marathon was in 2015 when an injury forced him to pull out mid-race.

"I am fully confident. My preparation is going well. I am healthy enough," he said on the sidelines of a press conference ahead of Friday's race. He said he expects a better time than in Berlin.

To run 2:01:30 Bekele said he would need to change his training programme.



"The way you prepare yourself is very different. You need nutrition groups and facilities have to be perfect," he said, adding that he had not changed his preparations since Berlin.

Dubai is offering a bonus 250,000 dollars to any runner who can break the world record this week on top of the 200,000 dollar first place prize money.

Bekele, who is also due to run the London Marathon in April, the Ethiopian told reporters he would put his hand up for selection for the Tokyo Olympics in 2020 if he was fit.

Bekele was left out of the Ethiopian team for last year's Rio Games.

(Source: Reuters)

## Borussia Dortmund agree deal for Adrian Ramos to join Chongqing Lifan

Borussia Dortmund have reached an "agreement in principle" with Chinese Super League club Chongqing Lifan over the transfer of attacker Adrian Ramos for a reported transfer fee of around €12 million.

Ramos, 30, is set to join La Liga strugglers Granada, who are under the same ownership, on loan before moving to China in the summer.

The Colombian requested a transfer twice in 2016, and has now been granted his wish to leave the Bundesliga side after making 79 competitive appearances in which he scored 19 goals.

"We have reached an agreement in principle," BVB media director Sascha Fligge told multiple media outlets on Tuesday, adding that final talks over the transfer will take place in the next few days.

Although BVB currently are without Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, who is at the African Nations Cup in Gabon, Dortmund believe that in Germany internationals Andre Schurrle, Marco Reus and Mario Gotze they have enough options in attack.

"I would have liked to keep him, and regret it," BVB coach Thomas Tuchel said. "Adrian expressed his desire to leave in every transfer period. It's different being the No. 2 striker at his age than at a younger age."



"With a heavy heart, we've accepted his wish, but his decision for more playing time is understandable. Auba will come back soon, and he's our starter. We'll have other options until then."

Tuchel said Dortmund have not identified a replacement for Ramos, adding: "It's not like we have an idea about that right now. To allow Adrian a transfer was an isolated decision."

B.Z. reported that Hertha Berlin, Ramos' previous club in Germany, are set to receive a windfall of around 15 percent of the transfer fee thanks to a clause included in the paperwork when selling him to Dortmund for around €9.7m in 2014.

(Source: ESPN)



@juventus Presenting the new #Juventus logo. #2beJUVENTUS



@cristiano Mood



@rafaelnadal Time to rest after a day training at the #ausopen!

# Bulgarian coach Radostin Stoychev to come to Tehran

**S P O R T S TEHRAN** — The Islamic Republic desk of Iran Volleyball Federation (IRIVF) president Mohammadreza Davarzani said that Bulgarian coach Radostin Stoychev will travel to Tehran, capital of Iran, to negotiate with the federation to replace Raul Lozano.

Under tutelage of the Argentinean coach, Iran finished in fifth place in the 2016 Olympic Games.

"Radostin Stoychev will come to Tehran on Sunday and will remain here until Thursday. We will start negotiation with him on taking charge of the national team," Davarzani said.

Stoychev's managerial career began at Slavia Sofia, whom he coached from 2003 to 2005, winning the Bulgarian Volleyball Cup in 2003. From 2005 to 2007, Stoychev was with VC Dynamo Moscow as their assistant manager. In Russia, he won the national championship in 2006 and the national cup in 2007.

In 2007, Stoychev was appointed the manager of Trento-based Italian Volleyball League team Trentino Volley. In his debut 2007-08 season, he won the Italian national championship, an achievement comparable to the feats of Julio Velasco and Paulo Roberto de Freitas. In the following 2008-09 season, Trentino Volley's first season in the CEV Champions League, Stoychev led the club to the title in Europe's premier volleyball competition.

In 2011, Stoychev replaced Silvano Prandi and became head coach of the Bulgarian national team. He was released from his duties in May 2012, following a 1:3 loss against Germany during one of the qualification tournaments for the 2012 Summer Olympics.



## Persepolis eases past Foolad, Sepahan beats Naft

**S P O R T S** Persepolis extend its lead at the top of Iran Professional League table with an easy 3-0 win over Foolad in the 17th week of IPL in Ahvaz on Wednesday.

Abdollah Karami's own goal gave Persepolis a lead just two minutes into the game. Nine minutes later Vahid Amiri doubled the lead with a header from inside the box. Three minutes into the second half Ali Alipour made it 3-0 for the Reds with a diving header after

Vahid Taleblou's crucial mistake.

Persepolis took advantage of Tractor Sazi's draw against Sanat Naft on Tuesday, as the Reds is currently on top four points clear at the top of the league.

Elsewhere in Isfahan, Sepahan came from behind to beat Naft Tehran 2-1. Tohid Gholami put Naft in front in the 28th minute but two goals by Masoud Hassanzadeh and Mehrdad Mohammadi in the 60th and 62nd

minutes completed a comeback for Abdollah Veisi's men.

Padideh and Siah Jamegan finished 1-1 in Mashhad derby, while Gostaresh Foolad earned a late win over struggling Machine Sazi to win the Tabriz derby.

Saipa and Zob Ahan played out a goalless draw in Tehran's Dastgerdi Stadium.

Persepolis is on top with 38 points, followed by Tractor Sazi (34), Zob Ahan (29) and Sepahan (26) respectively.

## Bakhtiar Rahmani returns to Foolad



**S P O R T S** Iranian midfielder Bakhtiar Rahmani has officially returned to Foolad on a six month deal on Tuesday after a one-and-a-half year absence.

Rahmani, who joined Esteghlal in the summer on a two-year contract, couldn't even make it to the starting line up under coach Alireza Mansourian.

He started his professional career with Foolad in 2007 when he was just 16. He holds the record of the youngest scorer of the club as he scored his first goal when he was 17.

The 25-year old is also the second top scorer of Foolad history with 25 goals.

"I'm happy to be back at Foolad where I started my career. I will try my best for Foolad in order to finish in the top form. On the other hand, I would like to return to Team Melli and play in the 2018 World Cup," Rahmani said after signing for Foolad.

Rahmani watched his side's defeat against Persepolis on Wednesday from the stands. Foolad is currently in 8th with 23 points from 17 games.

## Italian coach and retired volleyball player Andrea Giani nominated for Iran volleyball job



Italian coach and retired volleyball player Andrea Giani has been nominated to take charge of the Iranian national volleyball team.

The 46-year-old coach has been considered as a replacement for Raul Lozano in Iran volleyball team.

The Iranian federation has already negotiated with Italian coaches Andrea Anastasi and Mauro Berruto, Argentine Javier Webb, Bulgarian Radostin Stoychev and Serbian Igor Kolakovic.

Giani was appointed as coach of the Slovenia men's national volleyball team in May 2015 and led the team to victory in the European Volleyball League, which secured them a spot at the 2016 FIVB Volleyball

World League.

In October Slovenia unexpectedly won their first medal on a major volleyball tournament, after reaching the Final of the 2015 Men's European Volleyball Championship where they were defeated by France.

Giani scored numerous successes in the 1990s, including three World Championships with his national team.

He is considered as one of the best volleyball players ever, and surely the most versatile one: Giani was an all-rounder able to play both as outside hitter and as middle blocker, but he played several times as opposite.

(Source: Tasnim)

## Iran futsal team to play friendly against Croatia and Uzbekistan

**S P O R T S** Head of Iran Futsal and Beach Soccer Committee Abbas Torabian said that Team Melli will play friendly matches against Croatia and Uzbekistan.

According to Torabian, Iran will travel to Croatia to face the European team on April 3 and 4.

The Iranian team will also play Uzbekistan in late April

in Tashkent, the head of Iran Futsal and Beach Soccer Committee Abbas Torabian said.

Furthermore, Iran futsal coach Mohammad Nazemosharia extended his contract until 2020.

He was appointed as Iran coach in September 2015.

Under guidance of Nazemosharia, Iran finished in third place in the 2016 FIFA Futsal World Cup Colombia.



## Valentin Granatkin memorial: Iran 1 - 0 India

Iran defeated India 1-0 in the 17th edition of Valentin Granatkin Memorial on Tuesday.

Mohammad Sharifi scored the only goal of the match in the 39th minute.

Iran's Taha Shariati was sent off in the 90th minute.

"Our teams met last year in the Asian Championship, and as for India, I guess it has progressed a lot since then. Today's match was hard for us, as in some moments our opponents were playing better than us," Iran coach Abbas Chamanian said.

Iran has been scheduled to play Lith-

uania for 13th place on Friday.

The traditional International Youth Football Tournament is underway on January 8-21, 2017 in Saint Petersburg commemorating the first FIFA Vice-President Valentin Granatkin.

(Source: Tasnim)

## Andy Murray shrugs off stiff ankle to beat Andrey Rublev at Australian Open

Andy Murray sometimes struggles to hit a convincing rhythm early in grand slam tournaments but, after a hesitant start on Monday, he goes into the third round against Sam Querrey on Friday looking as dominant as he did when stringing together 28 wins in a row on his rise to No1 in the world.

He made the most of a heaven-sent opportunity against the little-known Russian teenager and world No156 Andrey Rublev, to win 6-3, 6-0, 6-2, with a slight chill lurking in the cloudless night skies after a couple of days of killing heat.

Murray advances in a tournament he loves but has yet to conquer in five losing finals with an imperious dismissal of an opponent who did not look old enough to be out this late unaccompanied, but whose reputation for pugnacity preceded him. Fernando Verdasco, the friendly Spaniard, is among those who have been irritated in a match by the brashness of Rublev, who has sparred under the tutelage of his father, a respected amateur boxer in the old Soviet Union.

Murray, a keen student of pugilism, had not heard of the father, but, as he does for every match, acquainted himself with the strengths and weakness of his opponent, the son, and duly dismantled his game in a little over an hour-and-a-half in Rod Laver Arena.

He crumpled behind the baseline on his right ankle in the third game of the third set and had the trainer on to check for damage, of which there appeared to be little. His serving percentages were respectable and he did not give Rublev a break opportunity, which gave the match something of an exhibition feel.

Serving for the match, Murray graciously offered to replay the first point after movement behind him in the crowd; that is the way knights of the realm roll. Rublev appreciated the gesture and finished with a bit of a flourish to force deuce but shoved his last backhand long.

"There's something about this kid that people gravitate to," John McEnroe observed of Rublev. He is usually right. We will hear more of him, hopefully without a subtext of aggression. He was charming throughout and appreciated the reception on his departure.

Murray said his ankle was "just a little bit stiff" after he had warmed down but added: "It's not too bad. I was moving fine on it."

As for his performance, he said, "I did pretty good. It was better than the first match. I was hitting the ball a bit cleaner, hitting through the court more. More winners. I was able to get myself up to the net more. I served way better, too. My second serve was harder than the other day. Most things were better tonight, but I think I can still improve."

He is in prime shape, physically fresh and mentally alert before the tougher challenges ahead. He faces Querrey next, whose most recent favour to Murray was beating Novak Djokovic in the first week of Wimbledon. It cleared the way for his second title there and contributed significantly to the minor crash of the Serb's tennis for the rest of the season, which also facilitated Murray's rise to the top of the rankings.

Querrey, who earlier finished strongly after a slow start to wreck the home debut of the exciting Australian teenager, Alex De Minaur, in three sets, said of his third-round challenge: "Whether he is No1 or No2, it doesn't really make a difference. He is Andy Murray, he has got an unbelievable record, he is on top of his game right now so that is going to be tough. I am going to have to play like I did in the second and third sets today for the entire match in order to have a shot."

He said of his win over Djokovic: "That let me know I can do it. I have one other win over Murray in 2010 in a final in LA but I have got a handful of losses to him."

"Sam's got a big game, takes a lot of chances with his forehand," Murray said. "I'll need to be on my game."

(Source: Guardian)

## Messi camp denies Barcelona star gave interview claiming he doesn't want to leave

Lionel Messi's family have denied that the Barcelona star gave an interview to Coach magazine, in which he stressed that he does not want to leave the club.

The 29-year-old was quoted as stating that he wants to stay with the Spanish champions for "as long as they want me", according to a wide-ranging interview published this week.

However, Messi's family have informed Goal that the interview is "totally false", denying that the Argentine had spoken to the publication.

Speculation persists over Messi's future at Camp Nou, with his contract expiring at the end of next season.

President Josep Maria Bartomeu stressed last week that he was not concerned about the prospect of Messi rejecting a new deal, although some reports in Spain have suggested that the Argentina international has become frustrated with the club's apparent unwillingness to open talks swiftly.

Sensitivity around the subject was highlighted last week, when Pere Gratacos was removed from his position as director of Institutional Relations just hours after suggesting that Messi would not be such a decisive player were it not for the strength of the team around him.

Speaking ahead of Barca's Copa del Rey clash with Real Sociedad on Thursday, head coach Luis Enrique was unwilling to address the talk around Messi any further.

"I've spoken in an active and a passive way about renewals," he said.

(Source: Goal)





### Poem of the day

Look not upon the dimple of her chin,  
Danger lurks there!  
Where wilt thou hide, oh trembling heart, fleeing in  
Such mad haste--where?

Hafez

### Prayer Times

Noon:12:15 Evening: 17:38 Dawn: 5:44 tomorrow Sunrise: 7:12 (tomorrow)

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## Persian art exhibit underway at Madrid center

**T I A R T TEHRAN** — An exhibition displaying d e s k works of Persian art is currently underway at the Casa de Cantabria in Madrid.

Forty works of Persian painting and calligraphy by Mohammadreza Honarvar, Mehdi Khodapanah, Maryam Gholami and Ali Kalhor have been picked for the exhibit, which opened at the Maria Blanchard Hall of the Casa de Cantabria last Saturday, the Persian service of IRNA reported on Wednesday.

The artists along with a number Madrid cultural officials and Iranian diplomats attended an opening ceremony.

"Art has always played a key role in the expansion of the relations between Spain and Iran," Iranian Ambassador Mohammad-Hassan Fadai said at the ceremony.

"I am sure that organizing this exhibition will help bilateral cooperation to increase," he added.

He also announced Iran's plan to celebrate the 400th anniversary of diplomatic relations with Spain in Madrid by organizing a special ceremony.

Casa de Cantabria Director Jose Manuel Conde also made a short speech.

He said that a series of affinities made the Iranian nation and Spanish people in Cantabria ever more close.

He added that the autonomous region on Spain's north coast is eager to expand cultural relations with Iran.

The exhibition will run until January 25.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

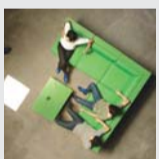


### Art Basel to showcase photos by Abbas Kiarostami

**T I A R T TEHRAN** — Art Basel, the d e s k giant Swiss art fair, plans to showcase a final photography series from world-renowned Iranian auteur Abbas Kiarostami in an exhibition during its Hong Kong edition in spring.

Kiarostami, who achieved global recognition for Iranian cinema after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, passed away last year in July.

The exhibition will be held from March 23 to 25.



### "Simulation" to go on screen at Berlin film festival

**T I A R T TEHRAN** — Iranian director d e s k Abed Abset's debut film "Simulation" will go on screen at the Forum section of the 67th Berlin International Film Festival, which will be held from February 9 to 19.

Lineups for the other sections will be announced in the near future.

## Adams' "Girls of the Golden West" to premiere on Nov 21.

**SAN FRANCISCO (AP)** — Composer John Adams' "Girls of the Golden West" will be given its world premiere by the San Francisco Opera on Nov. 21.

The work, with a libretto by Peter Sellars, portrays stories of the California Gold Rush in the 1850s and stars tenor Paul Appleby, soprano Julia Bullock and mezzo-soprano J'Nai Bridges, the company said Tuesday in announcing its 2017-18 season.

Grant Gershon conducts, Sellars directs and David Gropman designs the sets in the co-production with The Dallas Opera, Nationale Opera and Ballet Amsterdam and the Venice's Teatro La Fenice.

Adams, who turns 70 on Feb. 15, previously composed "Nixon in China", "The Death of Klinghoffer" and "Doctor Atomic", which all appeared at the San Francisco Opera.

The season opens Sept. 8 with a revival of Puccini's "Turandot" and includes new productions of Strauss' "Elektra" with Christine Goerke and Stephanie Blythe as well as Massenet's "Manon" with Nadine Sierra and Michael Fabiano. There will be three Ring cycles in a revival of Francesca Zambello's staging of the four Wagner operas, and they will feature new projections and stage action not part of its 2011 performances in San Francisco.

# Intl. congress on Persian poet Bidel Dehlavi opens in Tehran

**T I A R T TEHRAN** — The fourth international d e s k congress on Persian poet and mystic Mirza Abdul-Qadir Bidel Dehlavi (1644-1721) opened in the Grand Hall of the Interior Ministry in Tehran on Wednesday.

Experts on Bidel and poets from 20 countries are participating in the two-day congress, the Persian service of MNA reported.

Bidel Dehlavi was born in Azimabad (present day Patna, India). He mostly wrote ghazals and quatrains in Persian and was the author of 16 books of poetry, which contain nearly 147,000 verses.

The Iranian Literature Center director Hadi Kiasari in his brief words called Bidel one of the great literary figures who had found worthy answers for many great questions of mankind.

"During all the years mankind has existed on earth, no language has had the honor to express such a great amount of wisdom and philosophy by itself as has Persian," he added.

The former ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) president Iftikhar Husain Arif, as one of the guests at the congress, called Bidel a complex poet.

"Although not much has been written about Bidel, whatever exists is of good quality," he added.

Academy of Persian Language and Literature director Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel and chairman of the Leader's office Ayatollah Mohammad Mohammadi Golpayegani, who were both due to attend the congress, were not present.

Last year, a foundation was named after Bidel in Tehran.



Pakistani poet Iftikhar Husain Arif speaks during the fourth international congress on Persian poet and mystic Bidel Dehlavi at the Grand Hall of the Interior Ministry in Tehran on January 18, 2017. (Mehr/Majid Asgaripur)

The Bidel Dehlavi Foundation has been established to promote Persian language and literature in the international arena, while it also helps boost research related to the thoughts of and works by Bidel.

## Tehran museum to display photos of Iranian rural houses

**T I A R T TEHRAN** — An d e s k exhibition of photos of Iranian rural houses will open today at the Imam Ali (AS) Religious Arts Museum in Tehran.

Exhibited will be 122 photos depicting the old and traditional as well as new and

modern rural life, the relations of culture and architecture in the villages, the inner architecture of the houses, as well as the materials used to make the houses more compatible with their environment.

The photos have been selected out of more than 5000 photos submitted by over

1000 photographers to the secretariat to participate in the competition.

The selected photos will be shown in the two categories of single frames and comparative photos, and the winners will be announced on the opening day of the exhibition.

The competition has been organized by the Department of Rural Housing Renovation and Reconstruction in collaboration with the Kargah-e Tahrir Khial Institute.

The exhibit will be running until February 9 at the museum located at 35 Esfandiar Blvd., off Vali-e Asr Ave.

### PICTURE OF THE DAY Honaronline/Bahareh Asadi



Spanish flamenco singer Juan Rafael Cortés Santiago (L), known as Duquende, reacts after a performance with his fellow musicians Diego del Morao (R) and Israel Suarez (not pictured) during the 32nd Fajr International Music Festival at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on January 17, 2017.

## African-born actor in Hungary: 'People just see me as a migrant'

**BUDAPEST (Reuters)** — Marcelo Cake-Baly came to study in Hungary from wartorn Guinea-Bissau in 1976, and has been working as a tram driver in Budapest for over a decade despite being a trained economist.

Now, at the age of 58, his life has taken a new turn. He has made his acting debut in a Hungarian movie about the life of an African refugee who settles in Budapest to work as a security guard in a shopping center.

The film, "The Citizen", shows the difficulties of integration in Hungarian society through a tormented love story. The main character, Wilson, applies for citizenship and falls in love with a history and language teacher who tries to prepare him for the tough citizenship exam.

Director Roland Vranik's feature film will be shown in cinemas on January 26 - at a time when Hungary has barely any refugees left, after its right-wing government raised a fence on the southern border and imposed tough laws to keep out a wave of

migrants.

Vranik and Hungarian writer Ivan Szabo crafted their script in 2012, aiming to show how Africans in Budapest put down roots. They started to shoot the movie in 2015, just as Hungary became a transit route for hundreds of thousands of migrants fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East and Africa.

"What we think does not matter for them: they just need a safe place and clean water. They just need days when nobody tries to kill them," Vranik said.

He said "mass psychosis" took hold when Europeans became scared of the wave of migrants. But Vranik remains optimistic: he believes people are still ready to help those in need and says his film is "completely timeless and also spaceless."

"It can be anywhere in Europe," he said.

Cake-Baly obtained Hungarian citizenship in the mid-1990s and has lived in the country for four decades. But the migration crisis had an impact on him.

## Simon Rattle offers up musical 'tapas bar' for first season in London

**LONDON (Reuters)** — Conductor Simon Rattle unveiled what he described as a musical "tapas bar" on Tuesday as he presented an eclectic program for his first season with the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO).

Rattle, the outgoing chief conductor of the prestigious Berliner Philharmoniker, will take up his new role as music director of the LSO in September and will be running both orchestras concurrently for the 2017-2018 season.

"I'm doing the insane thing for one year that I promised I would never do in my life, run two orchestras at the same time," Rattle told a news conference in London.

"I hope the season is like a tapas bar of the type of things I have in mind," he said of his plans for the LSO.

The season will range from challenging contemporary works and new commissions by young composers to old favorites by the likes of Edward Elgar, Leonard Bernstein, Claude Debussy, Dmitri Shostakovich and

Ludwig van Beethoven.

The season will culminate with a performance of German modernist Karlheinz Stockhausen's "Gruppen", a work for 120 musicians divided into three orchestras, in the monumental Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern gallery, a former power station.

An instantly recognizable figure with his shock of white curls, Rattle, 61, is one of the biggest names in classical music.

He has worked with the LSO many times as a guest conductor. They reached an audience of hundreds of millions when they performed Vangelis' "Chariots of Fire" during the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics with comedy character Mr Bean.

Rattle brings star power to the 113-year-old LSO as it tries to get a proposed new concert hall off the ground. The project is costed at 278 million pounds (\$345 million), a daunting sum at a time of government budget austerity and economic uncertainty.

## Meeting to discuss cultural dialogue between Iran, Arab world

**T I A R T TEHRAN** — Cultural d e s k dialogue between Iran and the Arab nations will be scrutinized during a three-day meeting, which will open in Tehran Saturday.

A number of officials and scholars from Iran and some Arab countries are scheduled to attend the meeting titled "The Cultural Dialogue between Iran and the Arab World."

Organized by Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organizations (ICRO), the meeting will continue in Qazvin and Qom.

A closing ceremony will be held in Mashhad, which is the Capital of Islamic Culture for 2017 as well as home to the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS), the eight Imam of the Shia Muslims.