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Sanctions renewal is breach of commitments: Leader

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Plans underway if U.S fails to make good on JCPOA: Salehi

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN** — Iran's nuclear chief said on Monday plans have been made on how to react in the event Washington fails to make good on commitments to an international nuclear deal reached last year.

"We have already made necessary predictions in this regard in a committee meeting presided by Mr. Rouhani," said Ali Akbar Salehi on the sidelines of a ceremony held to mark the martyrdom anniversary of Majid Shahriyari, a nuclear scientist assassinated in Tehran six years ago.

Salehi was making the comments after the U.S. House of Representatives ratified a bill on November 15, agreeing to a 10-year extension of the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA).

He gave no details on possible retaliatory options Tehran has been considering.

The ISA will expire at the end of 2016, and needs the Senate's approval for renewal before President Obama signs it into law.

Iran says the sanctions extension push will breach the terms of the nuclear deal Iran and six world powers, including the U.S., finalized in July 2015 after arduous talks that spanned 20 months.

Under the deal, Iran reveled in a sanctions relief in exchange for it rolling back its nuclear program. →2

NISOC, Schlumberger sign MOU on 3 oilfields studies

TT ECONOMY desk **TEHRAN** — National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) and Schlumberger Ltd., the world's largest oil driller by market value, signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Sunday to carry out preliminary studies over three oilfields in southwestern Khuzestan province in Iran, Shana reported.

Shadegan, Parsi and Ragsefid oilfields were the subjects of the MOU which was signed by Bijan Alipour, the managing director of NISOC, and Tony Bowman, the president of production management at Schlumberger.

According to NISOC, technology transfer and skill sharing are the main focuses of the signed MOU.

Approved by Iranian oil ministry, the three above-mentioned oilfields in addition to Karanj oilfield in Khuzestan have been considered for development based on the country's new oil contracts, known as IPC.

Also on November 23, NISOC signed an MOU with a consortium of international companies known as Pergas to conduct preliminary studies over the Karanj oilfield and also a part of Shadegan.

More than 60 domestic and foreign companies have announced readiness to participate in the projects offered by NISOC among which 33 companies have been negotiating with the company so far.

Germany's KfW agrees on €1.2b Iran rail loan

Germany agreed to provide Iran with a 1.2 billion euro ($1.27 billion) credit line to help finance a rail project, according to an official at the Central Bank of Iran.

The facility -- through state-run lender KfW IPEX -- will help fund the development of the Tehran to Mashhad railway, the official said, asking not to be identified. German banks have also agreed to help fund power stations in the country, he said.

Iran has struggled to raise foreign financing for tens of billions of dollars worth of infrastructure projects it hoped it could get started after sanctions were eased 10 months ago. Large European banks have mostly kept their distance, worried that they could fall afoul of remaining U.S. sanctions, Iranian officials have said.

KfW IPEX, in an e-mailed statement, said it could "neither confirm any loan, credit line or similar transaction within Iran nor are we -- due to banking secrecy -- in position to comment on potential business or transactions under negotiation."

The funding has been agreed in principle and is close to being finalized, Michael Tockuss, chairman of the Germany-Iran Chamber of Commerce, said in an interview in London, adding it would be the biggest credit line Iran has secured from foreign sources since the easing of sanctions in January.

"The idea is to choose projects that change the day to day reality for the average Iranian citizen, to make them feel that it makes sense to make international agreements," Tockuss said. "It's a frustration from our ministry of economy that the bigger banks aren't stepping in."

(Source: Bloomberg)

UN office, Republic of Korea, and Iran address housing challenges

By Marjan Golpira

TEHRAN — In a workshop hosted by the UN habitat office in Tehran last week various issues surrounding housing challenges and urbanization in Iran and the Republic of Korea were put to discussion.

Experts from Korea and the Iranian Ministry of Transport and Urban Development shared their national and international knowledge and experiences in housing sector and offered proper strategies and policies on the topic.

The Korean embassy in Tehran was also a participant at the workshop.

In the workshop, titled "Housing Finance & Construction Technologies: Challenges and the Way Forward", UN-habitat chief in Tehran Siamak Moghaddam called housing a "major drive for social, economic and political development in the future."

Moghaddam said housing stands at the center of the new approaches of urban agenda as well as the sustainable development goals (SGDs).

He suggested it is necessary to "ensure access for all, to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums by 2030."

An estimated "two billion people", Moghaddam noted, "will require housing in 2030", an unprecedented figure that entails attention by authorities.

He went on to say that housing for "low income families" in Iran has always been a "critical issue".

To address such challenges properly "large investment in housing projects, private sector funds, and housing fiancé system" are required, he said.

The second speaker of the event was the Korean Ambassador to Tehran, Kim Seung-ho, who said housing is one of the major problems of his country.

The high cost of housing in Korea, having direct impact on the prices of goods, has left youngsters decide to tie the knots later in life, and postpone having babies.

The Korean ambassador hoped that Iran makes wiser decision in housing management and avoids repeating the same mistake the Republic of Korea has made.

Rebels in Aleppo suffer biggest defeat since 2012

The Syrian army has wrested control of a strategic district in the militant-held part of Aleppo, in a major victory on the battleground which brought back much of the embattled city's northeast under state control.

State television reported that the army troops had seized full control of the al-Sakhour district in eastern Aleppo early on Monday, the 14th day into its latest offensive to drive the terrorists out of the city.

Demining operations were now underway there, the report added.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed the development.

"It is the biggest defeat for the opposition in Aleppo since 2012," said its director Rami Abdulrahman. "The opposition has lost more than third of the area it controlled in Aleppo city during the big advance," he added.

He said government forces had also recaptured the districts of Haydariya and Sheikh Khodr, while Kurdish forces took Sheikh Fares District from militants.

Abdulrahman further said some 10 Aleppo neighborhoods over the past few days have been retaken by Syrian soldiers, putting nearly 30 percent of the city's formerly militant-held neighborhoods back under Damascus control.

A day earlier, the military had chased militants out of the neighborhoods of Jabal Badra, Baadeeen, Inzarat, al-Sakan al-Shaabi, Bastan al-Basha, Arz al-Hamra', al-Halak, and Ain al-Tall in the city.

Over the weekend, Syrian forces also retook Masaken Hanano, the biggest district in eastern Aleppo.

The government holds and defends the city's western side and is purging its east of militants. →13

I will never ever forget Melbourne match: Khodadad Azizi

TT SPORTS desk **TEHRAN** — Ex-Iran striker Khodadad Azizi says that he will never forget the match against Australia at the MCG in Melbourne.

On November 29, 1997, Iran advanced to the World Cup for the second time. Having drawn 1-1 with Australia in the first leg of its qualification play-off in Tehran, Team Melli trailed 2-0 in Melbourne with less than 20 minutes remaining.

Khodadad Azizi, indeed, set up Karim Bagheri to reduce the deficit on 71 minutes, before silencing the vast majority of the 85,000-plus fans with 75th-minute equalizer.

"I will never tire of talking about the match since it was a great day for all Iranians. We were motivated after the match hearing that the millions people came out to the streets to celebrate the team's victory," Azizi, who netted 11 times in 47 games for Iran between 1992 and 2005, told Varzesh3.com.

"We could have also qualified for the 2002 World Cup but we lost to Ireland in play-off. I am very happy to make the Iranian people happy and I will never ever forget the match," he added.

At the club level, after playing for domestic giants FC Pas Tehran and Persepolis, he signed for Cologne in 1997, joining Daei and Bagheri among the Iranian trailblazers in the Germany Bundesliga.

He went on to have a one-year spell with San Jose Earthquakes in the USA, and he still remains the only Iranian to have played in Major League Soccer.

After hanging up his boots, he embarked on a coaching career, leading his hometown team Aboomoslem before working as a technical advisor to a couple of Iranian clubs, including Sanat Naft, Esteghlal Ahvas and Shahrdari Tabriz.

Azizi currently leads Iranian team Siahjamegan in Iranian Professional League.

© Tasnim/ Abbas Shariati

Mourners cooking for divine mercy

Devoted mourners at a religious ceremony on November 28 in Tehran, cooking votive food. They take turn stirring the boiling pots as they believe makes God respond to their prayers.

The 28th day of the month of Safar (the second month in the lunar calendar) this year fell on November 28, when Muslims around the world marked the passing away of Prophet Muhammad as well as the martyrdom of his grandson Imam Hassan (PBUH), the second Shia Imam.

1,442 New Endowed Properties Registered in Current Year: Official

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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Railway managing director resigns over fatal train crash

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** The managing director of Iran's railway network resigned on Saturday after a train crash that killed 46 people in the province of Semnan on Friday.

Offering an apology to the nation for the deadly incident, Mohsen Pourseyyed Aqaei told the IRIB late on Saturday that Transport and Urban Development Minister Abbas Akhoundi had accepted his resignation, Tasnim reported.

A combination of technical failure and human mistakes had caused the deadly incident, sources reported.

Rouhani lauds navy's performance

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** President Hassan Rouhani has heaped praise on the navy for its outstanding role in protecting the country and its powerful presence in international waters.

Addressing a cabinet session on Sunday evening, Rouhani highlighted the navy's great role in defending the country both in the early days of the Iraqi invasion of Iran and throughout the war from 1980 to 1988, Mehr reported.

He also put the spotlight on the navy's role in ensuring the country's might in high seas.

Iran denies reports on visa waiver with Russia

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** The Iranian Foreign Ministry has denied reports that Tehran and Moscow have mutually lifted the visa requirement.

Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi told IRNA on Monday that the final agreement for the visa waiver has not been signed yet.

"It has been decided that tourist group visa requirement to be cancelled under special circumstances, something that has not turned operational yet," he said.

His statement came after Sputnik news agency reported that Iran and Russia had "[torn] down visa wall".

Reports on missing Iranian radioactive device baseless: source

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** Alleged reports by the Saudi-owned Asharq al-Awsat newspaper about the missing of a radioactive device at the Iranian nuclear reactor in Bushehr is baseless and politically motivated, an informed source said.

Speaking on the condition of anonymity, the source told IRNA on Monday that Iran had reported missing of an iridium-192 camera to the IAEA a while ago.

The camera was used for radiography in the city of Ahvaz, capital of southwestern province of Khuzestan, the source added.

Calm atmosphere needed for foreign investment: VP

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** The vice president for legal affairs has said Iran needs to project an image of serenity and security in order to attract foreign investment.

"We need to boost our foreign relations. Bad temper, conflict, and sending a sense of insecurity will prevent foreign investment," Majid Ansari said on Sunday, Nasim reported.

The effects of sanctions still remain, but the government has girded its loins to tackle problems and reconstruct the country, he stressed.

Daesh has roots in Zionism, Wahhabism: commander

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** Daesh and its terrorist acts have roots in ideologies of Zionism and Wahhabism, a top military advisor to the Leader said on Monday.

According to the YJC, Major General Hassan Firouzabadi said Daesh is the brainchild of the Saudi regime and Wahhabi ideology, which itself was created by the UK.

Since the U.S., Israel and the UK are afraid of Muslims they have provided terrorists with weapons and money.

Castro death is 'tragedy' for liberation movements, Zarif says

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that death of Fidel Castro, the legendary leader of the Cuban revolution, is a "tragedy" for the liberation movements, especially in Latin America.

"I offer the Cuban government, people and Fidel Castro's family condolences on behalf of the Iranian people. We believe that Castro will be remembered as a liberation leader," he told reporters on the sidelines of a ceremony held to respect Castro at the Cuban ambassador's residence.

Zarif said Castro was always concerned about Cuba and the third world and highlighted the necessity of solidarity among the developing countries to counter imperialism.

© Tehran Times/Leyla Ghodratolahi

He also signed the memorial notebook of Fidel Castro.

Rouhani visited some Latin American countries including Cuba in September during which he met Castro in Havana.

Zarif accompanied Rouhani in the Latin American tour.

Cuban Ambassador to Iran Vladimir Andres Gonzalez Quesada praised the Iranian officials' messages of condolences.

He also expressed hope that Iran-Cuba relations would be expanded.

Castro, who defied the United States for nearly half a century as Cuba's leader, died on Friday. He was 90.

Sanctions renewal is breach of commitments: Leader

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the renewal of sanctions against the Islamic Republic by the U.S. is tantamount to the violation of commitments under the landmark nuclear deal between Iran and the group of six countries known as the P5+1.

"During the [nuclear] negotiations there was a lot of debate about the sanctions, but now they raise the issue of extending the sanctions in the U.S. Congress and claim that these are not [new] sanctions but renewal [of old ones]," the Leader said in a meeting with a group of Navy commanders and officials in Tehran on Sunday on the occasion of National Navy Day.

"'Initiating sanctions' is no different from 'renewing them after their expiration,' and the latter is also [an instance of imposing] sanctions and violation of the previous commitments by the opposite side," Ayatollah Khamenei explained.

The GOP-controlled U.S. House of Representatives on November 15 passed a bill for a 10-year extension of the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA). The ISA will expire at the end of 2016 if it is not renewed. The bill must be approved by the Senate before being signed by the U.S. president into law.

Addressing members of the volunteer Basij forces in Tehran on Wednesday, Ayatollah Khamenei had warned that Iran would respond if the U.S. proceeded to renew the ISA.

"If these sanctions are extended, it will surely constitute a violation of the JCPOA (the nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) and they (U.S. officials) must know that the Islamic Republic will definitely react to it," the Leader had said.

Elsewhere in his Sunday remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei praised the naval forces for their progress and achievements in various areas and stressed the importance of continuing with plans and projects until they come to fruition while recommending his audience to exercise perseverance and avoid hastiness in carrying out various tasks.

Ayatollah Khamenei "During the [nuclear] negotiations there was a lot of debate about the sanctions, but now they raise the issue of extending the sanctions in the U.S. Congress and claim that these are not [new] sanctions but renewal [of old ones]."

The Leader emphasized that sturdy resolve and relentlessness in the face of limitations are necessary to overcome shortcomings.

Ayatollah Khamenei stated that the powerful presence of Iran's Navy in the high seas will boost the country's might and defense capabilities.

Such presence must be increased, he added.

Prior to the Leader's remarks, the Navy chief presented a report about the naval forces' activities.

Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said the Navy has safeguarded national interests through its "powerful and continuous" presence in the high seas and while establishing its presence far beyond regional waters has put on display the naval forces' prowess.

In recent years, Iran's Navy has increased its presence in international waters to protect naval routes and provide security for merchant vessels and tankers.

In line with international efforts against piracy, the Iranian Navy has been conducting patrols in the Gulf of Aden since November 2008, safeguarding merchant containers and oil tankers owned or leased by Iran or other countries.

Iran's Navy has managed to foil several attacks on both Iranian and foreign tankers during its missions in international waters. *(Source: Press TV)*

Plans underway if U.S fails to make good on JCPOA: Salehi

1→ The deal went into effect on January 16.

"The bill, if ratified and put into force, will be a violation of BARJAM (JCPOA)," the nuclear chief stressed.

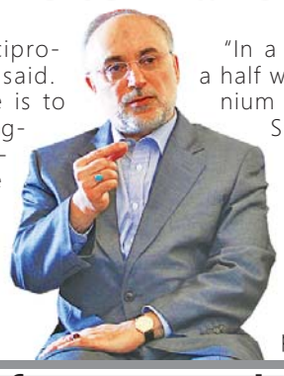
"We hope the other side won't do that because they will be main loser," he added.

Earlier Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei had warned of the renewal of the ISA.

"If this extension is enforced and made operational, it would certainly be in breach of the JCPOA and [American officials must] know that the Islamic Republic of Iran will certainly show a reciprocal reaction," the Leader said.

One possible response is to reverse agree-upon changes made to the Arak nuclear reactor, whose core was removed and filled with cement.

Also, Iran can reactivate its dismantled uranium enrichment facilities.



"In a matter of one year and a half we can reach sizable uranium enrichment capacity," Salehi stated.

Concerns over the nuclear deal which the Obama administration has hailed as a legacy foreign policy have increased after Donald Trump became the 45th president of the U.S.

"In a matter of one year and a half we can reach sizable uranium enrichment capacity," Salehi says.

In his campaign speeches, Trump had raised the prospect of pulling the U.S. out of the deal.

Iranian officials have called Trump's bluff, saying Tehran won't sit idly in the event Washington fails to honor it.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said Tehran has options if the JCPOA fails.

"Of course Iran's options are not limited but our hope and our desire and our preference is for the full implementation of the nuclear agreement, which is not bilateral for one side to be able to scrap," he highlighted.

Iran-Russia ties unlike bygone eras: ex-ambassador

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** The former Iranian ambassador to Azerbaijan has said that Iran-Russia ties are not comparable to those of the Qajar and Pahlavi eras since the interests of the two countries coincide.

Mohsen Pak-Aeen made the remarks in an interview with Mehr news agency published on Monday.

Referring to the bitter memories of Iran-Russia ties under the Qajar, he said, "Russia has transformed from the great Russian Empire to a country; and on the other hand Iran is not the same country as it was during the Qajar and Pahlavi periods."

The Russian Empire inflicted two treaties, the Treaty of Gulistan and Treaty of Turkmenchay, on Persia (modern day Iran) in 1813 and 1828 respectively. The terms of the treaties were humiliating, costing Iran all of its holdings in the Caucasus, comprised of modern-day Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Dagestan, which for centuries were part and parcel with Iranian national identity.

Pak-Aeen also said Tehran's relations with Russia is in its most favorable condition.

"Trust is built among countries whose interests are consistent with each other, and those countries with inconsistent interests would lose trust and move apart," Pak-Aeen stated.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he hailed Iran's win-win foreign policy as the right approach under which trust is established between two countries, adding that Iran-Russia ties are based on such policy that secures both sides' interests.

"It can be said with certainty that relations between Iran and Russia have not been as good and positive as of today's, because the two countries share harmonious political and security interests in the region and have common economic concerns" as the two countries have been subjected to Western sanctions, Pak-Aeen noted.

He also said the two sides intend to create new economic opportunities.

Iran and Russia have also developed very close military and security relationship, he said.

24 electoral procedures will be electronic, official says

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** Interior Ministry spokesman Salman Samani said on Monday that the future presidential election has 25 procedures that 24 of them will be conducted electronically.

"The Interior Ministry has taken essential executive actions to hold the election well and is moving forward according to the time schedule," he said.

Guardian Council spokesman Abbasali Kadkhodaei also said on Sunday that the electronic voting machines have been authenticated. However, he said, the issue is contingent upon receiving guarantee in terms of cybersecurity.

Iran will hold its next presidential election on May 19, 2017.

"The 29th of Ordibehesht of 1396 (May 19, 2017) has been announced as the definite date for the 12the presidential and fifth city and village council elections to the Interior Ministry by the Guardian Council," Samani said in July.

Iranian officials have said that the election would be held earlier than usual so as not to coincide with the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan which starts in late May.

Navy chief urges Iran's active presence in international waters

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN —** Navy Commander Habibollah Sayyari has highlighted the importance of enhancing Iran's naval power, calling for the country's active presence in international waters to achieve this end.

Writing an article in the Jaam-e Jam newspaper published on Sunday, Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said the Islamic Republic needs to develop more naval equipment to boost its naval capabilities.

"Naval might cannot be reached on its own, and requires various components and measures," Sayyari recounted.

The navy commander also noted that due to the difficulties that the Islamic Republic has been facing since the revolution, the country has not been able to boost its naval power in the region and across the world until the past few years.

He lauded the Leader of the Islamic Revolution for his "tactful measures" that have paved the way for more progress by the navy.

Also on Saturday, during a televised interview marking National Navy Day, Sayyari said, "We are not limited to regional waters, and should have a far-reaching arm in international waters as security would not come about in the absence of power."

"Beyond a doubt, our naval fleets will, in the near future, circle Africa and across the Atlantic, and will sail to waters of East Asia," Press TV quoted the senior military official as saying.

Cubans to throng Revolution Square in mourning for Fidel Castro

Cubans began massing on Havana's Revolution Square from Monday for a week-long commemoration of Fidel Castro, the communist guerrilla leader who led a revolution in 1959 and ruled the Caribbean island for half a century.

Castro died on Friday at the age of 90, a decade after stepping down due to poor health and ceding power to his brother Raul Castro.

Castro was cremated on Saturday and his ashes will be carried in a cortege to a final resting place in Santiago de Cuba, the city in eastern Cuba where he launched the revolution.

The government has invited people to Revolution Square for a two-day ceremony starting at 9 a.m. EST (1400 GMT). The urn holding the late leader's ashes could be displayed.

Workers rushed to install speakers and light standards in the plaza, where a giant photograph of Castro was draped over the national library, occupying the same space where an enormous poster of Jesus Christ was hung for last year's visit by Pope Francis.

"Who is not going to be affected by a man who did everything for us?" said Jose Luis Herrera, part of the 12-person crew to hang the giant image. "He is the one who guided me and my children. He is my god."

If previous public memorials are any guide, Raul Castro and other government, Communist Party and military leaders will lay flowers near the monument to Cuban national hero Jose Marti, followed by a long line of ordinary Cubans.

The ceremony in the capital will end on Tuesday night when foreign leaders are expected to pay their respects to a man who dedicated his life to fighting capitalist and colonial oppression, aligned his country with the Soviet Union and outlasted nine U.S. presidents who had sought to oust or undermine him.

"What I have been impressed with is the love that the Cuban people had for him," said Martha Pons, a Mexican tourist who came to Cuba to attend a Placido Domingo concert on Saturday that was postponed after Castro's death.

BIRTHPLACE OF THE REVOLUTION

A cortege will then carry Castro's remains east across the 750-mile-long (1,200-km long), eyebrow-shaped island to Santiago de Cuba. Nine days of national mourning will come to an end when his cremated ashes are laid to rest in the birthplace of the revolution on Dec. 4.

Along the way, admirers will mourn a man that many here saw as a visionary who stood up to U.S. domination of Latin America, brought healthcare and education to the poor, and inspired socialist movements across the world.

But critics, including exiles concentrated largely in Miami, have celebrated Castro's death, saying he was a tyrant who jailed his opponents, banned opposition parties and wrecked Cuba's economy with a failed socialist experiment.

Reacting to his death, U.S. President-elect Donald Trump called Castro "a brutal dictator who oppressed his own people for nearly six decades".

Trump has also has threatened to reverse outgoing President Barack Obama's rapprochement with Cuba, which included restoring diplomatic relations and easing a half-century economic embargo.

Tourists passed through Revolution Square on Sunday, snapping photos and taking joy rides in classic U.S. cars from the 1950s that are still widely used.

"What I have been impressed with is the love that the Cuban people had for him," said Martha Pons, a Mexican tourist who came to Cuba to attend a Placido Domingo concert on Saturday that was postponed after Castro's death.

Cuba's rich variety of music, a soundtrack on the streets of Havana, has been muted since Friday night and the government has also temporarily banned alcohol sales and suspended the professional baseball season.

(Source: Reuters)

New U.S. troops arrive in Yemen's Aden

A report says more American military forces have arrived in Yemen's port city of Aden to join the contingent of U.S. troops allegedly fighting al-Qaeda militants in the country's south.

Yemen's al-Masirah television channel published footage showing American troops arriving in Aden.

The report further said the new batch is apparently linked to the US troops already deployed to al-Anad Airbase and other Yemeni areas, adding that the deployment is aimed at reinforcing the U.S. forces claiming to be fighting al-Qaeda terrorists.

The TV report added the development reveals the true intention of the U.S.-backed Saudi aggression against Yemen, which is to gain dominance over the Arabian Peninsula state and loot its wealth.

The deployment of U.S. troops to Yemen, the report said, shows Washington is pursuing its own interests in the war-torn country and seeks to expand its military presence there.

The Pentagon has been providing logistics and surveillance support to Saudi Arabia in its military aggression against Yemen, the kingdom's impoverished southern neighbor, which has killed at least 11,400 civilians since its onset in March 2015, according to a latest tally by a Yemeni monitoring group.

The unprovoked war started by a coalition of Saudi-allies in an attempt to undermine the Houthi Ansarullah movement and reinstate the former Yemeni government, a close ally of Riyadh.

Back in May, al-Masirah reported that US Special Forces had arrived in Yemen to fight alongside Emirati forces in alleged operations against al-Qaeda militants in the country's south.

The U.S.'s first deployment of troops came a year after the withdrawal of its forces from Yemen.

On March 21, 2015, the US evacuated its remaining forces out of al-Anad airbase in southern Yemen "due to the deteriorating security situation" a day after al-Qaeda captured the nearby city of al-Houta.

Al-Qaeda has, meanwhile, become stronger in Yemen by taking advantage of the chaos created by the Saudi war on the country, which started in March 2015.

(Source: Press TV)

At least 62 dead as Uganda moves against tribal king

The death toll from a weekend of fighting in western Uganda has risen to 62 after clashes between police and a militia loyal to a tribal king, according to regional police.

An initial 55 deaths had been reported on Sunday.

"So far we managed to kill 46 of the royal guards and we also arrested 139 (guards)," regional police spokesman Mansur Suwed told the Reuters news agency.

He said the number of police killed had risen to 16 from 14 after two officers died from their wounds.

Police detained King Charles Wesley Mumbere on Sunday and accused his supporters of trying to create a new state in the area near the border with Democratic Republic of Congo.

Mumbere has distanced himself from the cause. However, the authorities accuse his royal guards of training in the mountains alongside separatist militia forces to attack government installations.

"The situation is volatile. Several of our guards have been killed after the government gave an order to disband the royal guards immediately which is not easy," Clarence Bwambale, Rwenzururu kingdom spokesman, told the AFP news agency from the palace where he and the king were, as heavy shooting echoed in the background.

"The king spoke to the president [Yoweri Museveni] this morning and he gave him two hours to disband the royal guards, which is impossible. Now the army and police have raided the palace and attacked the royal guards" he said, with a large explosion heard in the background.

"We have told the government the kingdom is not involved in the creation of Yiira republic, which wants to break away [from Uganda], and that the royal guards are not involved."

Local media reported that Ugandan journalist Joy Doreen Biira, who works for neighboring Kenya's KTN news organization, was arrested in the region on Sunday and that her whereabouts were unknown.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

France election: Fillon floors rival in conservative primaries

Francois Fillon has taken the conservative ticket in next year's French presidential election by a landslide at party primaries.

With nearly all the ballots counted, he had won 66.5% to 33.5% for his run-off rival, Alain Juppe.

The former prime minister promised to build a fairer society, saying France wanted "truth and... action".

A new opinion poll suggests he would easily beat the far right's Marine Le Pen in the actual election.

According to the Harris interactive poll quoted by BFMTV (in French), Fillon would lead the National Front candidate by 26% to 24% in the first round, then win the run-off against her by 67% to 33%.

Mr Juppe, also a former prime minister and regarded as more moderate, congratulated Mr Fillon and pledged to support him in his bid to become president.

Francois Fillon was the man to beat going into this run-off vote, and his team knew it.

Shortly after polls closed, they were already celebrating at his party headquarters, as the first partial results came in. Within hours, it was confirmed. Fillon had won two-thirds of the vote; a stunning victory for the candidate once seen as the 'third man' in the contest.

Alain Juppe appeared in front of his own, determined supporters, to concede the contest. He gave a small smile to the crowds chanting his name and told them he was ending the contest as he began it: "A free man, who didn't betray who he was or what he thought."

The job for Fillon now is to unite his party after this unprecedented primary battle, and prepare to take on the governing Socialist party - and the far-right leader Marine Le Pen - in presidential elections next year.

What now for France's left and far-right?

As the result of the Republican party primary became clear, Fillon told his supporters he would work for change.

"If the French people entrust me with their confidence," he said, "I will try to respect that contract and conduct myself with dignity."

"I will take up an unusual challenge for France," he went on to say. "To tell the truth and completely change its software."

Fillon had been widely expected to win the race, after securing 44% of the vote in the first round a week ago that saw former President Nicolas Sarkozy knocked out.

The 62-year-old is a Roman Catholic who is seen as a traditionalist on issues such as abortion and gay marriage.

He is proposing dramatic economic reforms that include slashing 500,000 public jobs, ending the 35-hour week, raising the retirement age and scrapping the wealth tax.

On foreign policy, he advocates closer relations with Russia.

Juppe had initially been seen as the favorite to win the race but struggled against Fillon's strong performances in the primary debates.

(Source: BBC)

Syria denounces Qatar for saying it will continue to back rebels

Syria's Foreign Ministry on Monday denounced comments by Qatar that it will continue to back rebels against Syrian President Bashar Assad as merely an attempt "to raise the morale of the terrorist groups" in the face of army advances.

Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani told Reuters in an interview on Sunday that Doha would continue to arm Syrian rebel groups even if U.S. President-elect Donald Trump were to end Washington's support for them.

Sheikh Mohammed's remarks showed "the Qatari regime is one of the sources of extremism, terrorism and takfiri thought," Syrian state news agency SANA reported, citing a Foreign Ministry statement. "Takfiri" is an Arabic term used to describe extremist ideology. Qatar is one of the leading supporters of the insurgency against Assad, joining other Persian Gulf monarchies, Turkey and the United States to supply arms and training to some rebel groups that they say have been vetted.

Damascus regards all the rebels fighting to oust Assad, including both extremists and nationalist groups, as terrorists. The Syrian army and its allies have recently advanced in Aleppo, the insurgents' most important urban stronghold.

(Source: Daily Star)

Iraqi forces say 1,000 ISIL fighters killed in Mosul

Iraqi special forces battling to clear ISIL terrorist group from eastern Mosul have killed nearly 1,000 militants but fighting has slowed as troops face a mobile enemy hidden among thousands of civilians in the city, a top commander said.

Six weeks into a major offensive, Iraqi forces have captured nearly half of eastern Mosul, moving from district to district against extremist snipers, suicide attackers and car bombs.

Elite Iraqi troops, known as the "Golden Division", are the only brigades to have entered Mosul from the east, with Iraqi army, federal police and Kurdish Peshmerga units surrounding the city to the north and south. Shia volunteers are trying to complete the encirclement from the west.

The U.S.-trained Counter Terrorism Service unit breached ISIL' defenses at the end of October, but has been slowed by the militants' mobile tactics and concern over civilian casualties preventing the use of tanks and heavy armor.

Major General Abdul Ghani al-Asadi, one of the commanders of the special forces, said troops had adapted their tactics, surrounding one district at a time to cut off the militants' supplies and protect civilians.

"Progress was faster at the start. The reason is we were operating before in areas without residents," Asadi told Reuters in Bartella, on Mosul's outskirts. "We have arrived in populated districts. So how do we protect civilians? We have sealed off district after district."

He said around 990 militants had been killed in fighting in the east so far. He would not say how many casualties there were among government special forces.

"We have made changes to plans, partly due to the changing nature of the enemy ... Daesh (ISIL) is not based in one location, but moving from here to there," he said.

"Tanks don't work here, artillery is not effective. Planes from the coalition force and the air force are restricted because of the civilians."

(Source: AP)

Israel ups order for U.S.-made F-35 stealth fighter jets to 50

Israel has approved the purchase of 17 Lockheed Martin F-35 stealth fighter jets from the U.S., bringing the total order to 50 war planes.

The Tel Aviv security cabinet made the unanimous decision to increase its order for the stealth fighters, which are known to be one of the world's most advanced and expensive fighter planes.

The newly ordered jets will make the Israeli air force able to equip two whole squadrons of the plane.

The fighters are being procured as part of a military aid deal between the U.S. and Israel. The estimated coast for each plane is around $110 million. In two weeks, the first pair of F-35s are scheduled to land at the Nevatim air force base after being flown from the U.S. by American pilots.

According to congressional reports released earlier in the year, Israel is the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. foreign assistance since World War II. America's military assistance to Israel has amounted to $124.3 billion since it began in 1962.

In September, Washington and Tel Aviv agreed on a new package of at least $38 billion in U.S. military aid over a 10-year period.

The deal requires at least $3.8 billion in annual aid, up from $3.1 billion per year under the current pact, which expires in 2018. Israel had originally requested at least $4.5 billion a year.

The new package will include money for Israeli missile systems, which until now has been funded separately by Congress. American lawmakers have given Israel about $600 million in annual funds for this purpose in recent years.

(Source: AFP)

China's central bank deputy governor talks up yuan strength

Comparing the yuan's recent moves against the dollar misses the currency's underlying strength of the against a more appropriately watched basket, People's Bank of China (PBOC) Deputy Governor Yi Gang said in remarks released on Chinese state-run media at the weekend.

In a question-and-answer format interview with Xinhua news agency that was posted on the central bank's website, Yi said the yuan remained a strong and stable currency in the global monetary system, while noting concerns about a slide

against the dollar after Donald Trump's victory in the Nov. 8 presidential election.

The yuan plunged to eight-and-a-half year lows versus the dollar last week. On Monday, the PBOC set the yuan's central parity rate against the dollar at 6.9042, stronger than the 6.9168 level set on Friday.

"Referencing the yuan against a basket of currencies can better reflect the overall competitiveness of a country's goods and services," Yi said.

Given that economic structures, cycles and interest rate policies differed in various countries, fixating on a single currency was not suitable and may cause the yen to be "over-managed," he added.

Yi said the yuan's movements were due to domestic factors in the U.S., as they reflected the rise of the greenback on the back of improvements in the U.S. economy and inflation, alongside expectations of a quickening in the pace of Federal Reserve interest rate hikes.

The U.K's June referendum that supported leaving the European Union and the Egyptian central bank's move to freely float its currency on Nov. 3 also contributed to a faster depreciation of the yuan against the dollar, he added.

"These factors are somewhat unexpected for various countries. A rapid rise in capital inflows back to the U.S., record highs reached in the three major indices, and a general depreciation in global currencies against the dollar, some of which fell relatively much," he said.

The yuan, in fact, had weakened less than other currencies in both the developed and developing markets, the central banker added.

During his campaign, U.S. President-elect Trump accused China of unfair trade practices, including manipulating the yuan lower to benefit the country's exports. *(Source: CNBC)*

UK businesses' pessimism grows as costs rise and sales slow after Brexit

Businesses in the UK service sector are increasingly pessimistic about the future as sales slow and costs rise, according to the Confederation of British Industry.

Optimism fell in the three months to November, following a sharp decline in August after the 23 June Brexit vote, the CBI reported on Monday.

Consumer services such as hotels, bars and restaurants have benefited from buoyant spending, including on Black Friday, but accountants, lawyers and other firms that provide services to companies said they have seen flat growth and expect sales to fall over coming months.

"Growth prospects have diminished over the past two quarters, with the share of firms expecting to expand their business in a clear minority in both sub-sectors," the report said

The dramatic slump in the value of the pound since the EU referendum has provided some benefit to manufacturers, in the form of cheaper exports, but it has not helped the dominant service sector, which reported sharply rising costs.

In last week's Autumn Statement, Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond announced measures such as a national invest-

ment fund to boost the UK's ailing productivity, but some analysts have said the amount of funding pledged will make little impact.

IT spend offered one positive - it is expected to grow - but investment in buildings and machinery is set for cuts.

Business services firms, said they expect sales to fall, while consumer services companies predicted a modest wise but have been impacted by the increase in the National Living wage, which will rise further to £7.50 in April 2017.

"Optimism among firms in the UK service sector has fallen this quarter, as rising costs and sluggish volumes of business have led to a drop in profitability," said Rain Newton-Smith, chief economist at the CBI.

"We're also seeing diverging fortunes in the service sector. Business and professional services expect to see weaker growth in volumes next quarter while the resilience of the British shopper is boosting the outlook for consumer services."

(Source: Independent)

Tehran attracts $960m foreign investments in 8 months

TT ECONOMY desk **TEHRAN** — Head of Tehran's Management and Planning Organization Nematollah Torki announced on Sunday that $960 million of foreign investments have been made in the Iranian capital during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20), IRNA reported.

Torki added that in addition to the attracted foreign investments some MOUs and contracts have been signed with five prominent Japanese and South Korean companies in the said period.

Head of Tehran's Management and Planning Organization Nematollah Torki

Iran has approved 27 foreign investment projects to the tune of €1.4 billion since the implementation of the nuclear deal in January 2016, Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Mohammadreza Nematzadeh said in mid-November.

Referring to the issue of Donald Trump's win in the U.S. presidential election, he emphasized that political changes in America cannot affect implementation of the mentioned deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA.

CII to re-open office in Tehran: Indian ambassador

TT ECONOMY desk **TEHRAN** — The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) will re-open its representative office in Tehran by spring of 2017, IRNA quoted Indian Ambassador to Iran Shri Saurabh Kumar.

During his Sunday meeting with Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafeie in Tehran, the ambassador informed that CII is taking the required final stages to re-launch its representative office in Tehran.

Shafeie, for his part, referred to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Tehran on May 22-23, which was an important marker in New Delhi's attempt to instill momentum in bilateral ties, as well as the strategic ties between Iran and India, noting that the role of private sector should be improved in this regard.

Both officials highlighted the significance of expanding bilateral ties via implementing the mutual contracts including Iran, India, Afghanistan trilateral transit pact (Known as Chabahar Treaty).

The treaty allows the three countries to open new routes to connect among themselves via converting the Iranian southeastern port of Chabahar into a transit hub bypassing Pakistan.

Accordingly, through Chabahar port India can bypass Pakistan and transport goods to Afghanistan and central Asia, while Afghanistan can get linked to India via sea.

The document was signed in the presence of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

BOJ needs to keep easing but should monitor risks

The Bank of Japan should maintain monetary easing until inflation is above its 2 percent target but should be mindful of financial distortions caused by its policies, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said on Monday.

The BOJ's new policy framework gives it more flexibility, but it remains to be seen if will be successful and it could be difficult to target 10-year government bond yields, the OECD said in its semiannual Economic Outlook Report.

On the whole, the OECD welcomed the BOJ's decision in September to switch its policy target to interest rates from the pace of money printing, after years of massive asset purchases failed to jolt the economy out of stagnation.

But the OECD report highlighted concerns about the financial sector and the growing limitations on monetary policy.

"The Bank of Japan should maintain monetary easing, as intended, until inflation is stable above the 2 percent target, while taking account of costs and risks in terms of possible financial distortions," the OECD said in the report.

The BOJ revamped its quantitative easing to make policy more suited to a long battle to achieve inflation.

It now buys government bonds to keep the 10-year yield around zero and applies a negative 0.1 percent interest rate on a small portion of commercial banks' reserves.

The negative interest rate policy, which went into effect in February, has raised concerns about profitability for commercial banks and insurance companies, the Paris-based think tank said.

Additional scope for monetary policy is exhausted without strong fiscal spending and structural reforms in Japan and other advanced economies, the OECD said.

The report also said targeting the 10-year yield could be "complicated in practice."

Japan's economy will continue to grow in the next few years partly due to government stimulus spending, but China's economy remains a risk given it is Japan's largest export market, the OECD said.

The BOJ has repeatedly pushed back its timeframe for hitting its ambitious 2 percent inflation target, most recently to "around fiscal 2018", as weak consumption

and falling import costs from a strong yen weigh on price growth.

Japan's core consumer prices marked their eighth straight month of annual declines in October, illustrating the sheer scale of the central bank's struggle to beat deflation and stagnant growth with diminishing policy options.

(Source: Reuters)

PICTURE OF THE DAY — *Portal of ICCIMA*

Russian Ambassador to Tehran Levan Jagarian (L) visited Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafeie in Tehran on Sunday, where both officials underscored the vitality of removing barriers on the way to bolster common politico-economic ties between the two countries.

Tunisia targets $1b Eurobond issue in Jan.

Tunisia plans a Eurobond issue of up to $1 billion in January, the central bank's governor said, as the government gears up for an investment conference aimed at luring billions of dollars in aid and investment.

Market conditions will determine the size of the offering, Governor Chadli Ayari said in an interview with Bloomberg in the capital, Tunis. There "are some unknowns now, including U.S. interest rates that will definitely change in December and will affect our issuance," Ayari said.

Tunisia's government is trying to implement a reform program meant to cut costs, draw investors and promote private sector growth. The country has already secured a $2.88 billion International Monetary Fund loan, and is hosting an investment conference that begins Nov. 29.

The efforts have stumbled, however, as resistance builds against austerity measures such as a planned wage freeze for public sector workers. The country's biggest union has called for a general public sector strike next month if the government doesn't reverse course on wages.

(Source: Bloomberg)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Samsung to unveil shareholder return plans amid calls to split company

Samsung Electronics Co Ltd (005930.KS) said it will disclose plans to boost shareholder value on Tuesday - a move that comes amid pressure from U.S. fund Elliott Management to split the company in two and provide more in payouts.

The U.S. activist hedge fund, which owns 0.6 percent of Samsung, called on the South Korean tech giant in October to divide itself into a holding vehicle for ownership purposes and an operating company, as well as pay out 30 trillion won (21 billion pound) in a special dividend.

FTSE index slips as crude oil drops

Britain's top share index retreated on Monday pulled lower by energy shares hit by a decline in oil prices and financial shares concerned over Italian banks.

The blue-chip FTSE 100 index .FTSE was down 0.7 percent in morning trading after recent gains. The benchmark index is still up about 8 percent so far this year even after falling around 5 percent since its October peak.

Energy shares led the broader stock market lower, with the UK oil and gas index .FTNMX0530 falling 1.7 percent following weaker oil prices.

StanChart to cut 10 percent of corporate, institutional banking staff

Standard Chartered (STAN.L) is set to cut about a tenth of its global corporate and institutional banking headcount, sources with direct knowledge of the matter said on Monday, as the bank steps up an aggressive drive to cut costs.

Standard Chartered Chief Executive Bill Winters this month branded the bank's income and profit unacceptable, as below-forecast third-quarter results underlined the challenges facing his overhaul.

The job cuts will be rolled out beginning this week across all the bank's major business centres including in Singapore and Hong Kong, one of the sources told Reuters. All the sources declined to be named as they were not authorised to speak to the media.

SWAUPE in talks with Iran on 400MW power plant

TT ECONOMY desk **TEHRAN —** In a visit to Iran's Chabahar port, the representatives of SWAUPE International Ltd Company voiced their company's readiness to start cooperation with the country for constructing a 400 megawatts (MW) power plant, a solar park, residential and office complexes and a mini-refinery in the region, IRNA reported on Monday.

After a meeting with SWAUPE's Executive Director Brent Peterson, Chairman of the board of Chabahar Free Trade–Industrial Zone Organization Abdolrahim Kordi told the press that his organization is in talks with SWAUPE's representatives and hopefully they will start cooperating in near future.

"Chabahar Free Trade–Industrial Zone welcomes domestic and foreign investors and the necessary infrastructures for investors will be provided in no time, we have considered 800 hectares of land for the implementation of SWAUPE's proposed projects which will be started after going through legal formalities and approval by the authorities," he stated.

He further noted that this year dozens of domestic companies and more than 100 foreign delegations have visited Chabahar port to negotiate business investment which is an indication of this region's importance.

"Investment in Chabahar enjoys a 20-year tax exemption which isn't applied in other economic areas of the country," Kordi stressed.

Situated on the Makran Coast of Sistan-Baluchestan province of Iran, Chabahar has increased in significance in international trade.

OPEC makes last-ditch bid to save oil deal as tensions grow

OPEC was trying on Monday to rescue a deal to limit oil output as tensions grew among the producer group and non-OPEC member Russia, with top exporter Saudi Arabia saying markets would rebalance even without an agreement.

OPEC experts started a meeting in Vienna at on monday and were due to make recommendations to their ministers on how exactly the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries should reduce production when it meets on Nov. 30.

Meanwhile, the Algerian and Venezuelan oil ministers were to travel to Moscow on Monday and Tuesday in a final attempt to persuade Russia to take part in cuts instead of merely freezing output, which has reached new highs in the past year.

In September, OPEC, which accounts for a third of global oil production, agreed to cap output at around 32.5-33.0 million barrels per day versus the current 33.64 million bpd to prop up oil prices, which have more than halved since mid-2014.

The meeting on Nov. 30 was expected to rubber-stamp that deal, with Russia and some other non-OPEC producers such as Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan also contributing.

But doubts emerged in recent weeks as OPEC's No.2 and 3 producers, Iraq and Iran, expressed reservations about the mechanics of output reductions and Saudi Arabia voiced concern about Russia's willingness to cut.

On Friday, OPEC canceled an experts meeting with non-OPEC producers scheduled for Nov. 28 after Saudi Arabia said the organization needed to sort out its differences first.

Over the weekend, Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih said oil markets would rebalance even without an output-limiting pact. That contrasted with his previous statements, in which he had said Riyadh was keen for a deal.

"Nobody knows"

Doubts about OPEC's ability to deliver promised cuts sent Brent crude down two percent initially on Monday to less than $47 per barrel, though prices later recovered.

Some analysts including Morgan Stanley and Macquarie have said oil prices will correct sharply if OPEC fails to reach a deal, potentially going as low as $35 per barrel.

As OPEC experts turned up at the group's headquarters on Monday, one delegate who had previously stated that a deal would be done, said this time: "I am not sure."

Another delegate, when asked about the prospects for a deal, said: "Nobody knows yet".

OPEC ministers started arriving in Vienna on Sunday for the group's regular twice-yearly talks but Saudi Arabia's Falih was not expected to land before Tuesday evening, leaving little time for traditional pre-meeting discussions with peers.

Iranian semi-official news agency MEHR published an editorial on Sunday accusing Saudi Arabia of declaring a new "war on oil prices" and reneging on its promises to limit output.

The tone contrasted with Iranian news agencies' more upbeat coverage of OPEC's informal meeting in September in Algeria, when the initial deal was reached.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Iran's Persian Gulf Petrochemical in talks for $1.1b

Iran's Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Co. is in talks with Asian companies to raise as much as one billion euros ($1.1 billion) for an expansion including a methanol project intended to serve China and other Asian customers.

An Italian company is "in the forefront" as a potential investor in the company, according to Touraj Seyed Arvanaghi, managing director of Persian Gulf Petrochemical's Veniran Apadana methanol project in Asaluyeh in western Iran on the Persian Gulf coast. He declined to identify the companies until negotiations are concluded.

Iran's petrochemicals industry needs $60 billion in foreign investment to more than double chemicals production capacity over the next decade, according to Marzieh Shahdaei, deputy oil minister and managing director of state-run National Petrochemical Co. The nation has already boosted its crude production since international sanctions were eased in January, to almost 4 million barrels a day from 2.8 million barrels at the end of last year, data compiled by Bloomberg show.

Veniran Apadan is seeking to produce 1.65 million metric tons of methanol a year for export to China and other parts of Asia, Arvanaghi said. Methanol is used as an antifreeze and in feedstock to produce acetic acid and formaldehyde. The project is expected to cost 450 million euros, with 354 million euros for equipment. In February, Japan signed a memorandum of cooperation to provide up to $10 billion of financing for Iranian projects involving Japanese companies. Japan's Marubeni Corp. got an order for equipment for Persian Gulf Petrochemical about two months ago.

Veniran Apadan, initially set up by Venezuela and Iran, is seeking to change its name through the government's Organization for Registration of Companies, Arvanaghi said.

(Source: Bloomberg)

First power begins from major UK tidal power project MeyGen

Following its recent installation, first power has been achieved from a 1.5-MW turbine in the MeyGen tidal power project in Scotland — an opening volley in game-changing development pitched to become the world's largest tidal power array.

Installation of four 1.5 MW turbines (MeyGen Phase 1a) is taking place in the Inner Sound of the Pentland Firth, in the far north of Scotland and comes after successful placement of foundations in October.

Lead developer on MeyGen and global leader in the tidal power sector is Atlantis Resources, whose CEO, Tim Cornelius, stated: "This is the moment we have been working towards since we first identified the MeyGen site back in 2007, and I am immensely proud of and grateful for the remarkable team of people who have contributed to this milestone."

He continued: "The success of this first phase is a foundation for the tidal industry to build upon to ensure we develop a new energy sector which can deliver clean, predictable and affordable power from the UK's own abundant resources. When it comes to energy, we think consumers should be asking for the moon, and we know how to harness it."

The 6-MW capacity of Phase 1a pales in comparison to the full scope for the MeyGen project though.

Speaking to Renewable Energy World, Cornelius said: "We're underway with a very successful construction campaign offshore with installation of the first four 1.5-MW turbines within Phase 1a. Installation is due to be completed before the end of the year."

He said that this part of the installation is only the precursor to rolling out the rest of the array to about 261 turbines in total.

"With capacity of 398 MW, it will be the largest tidal array in the world. We expect to announce first power towards the end of this year," he said.

(Source: renewableenergyworld.com)

Oil prices gyrate as OPEC heavyweights head to Vienna

Oil prices edged higher on Monday, after falling as much as two percent in early trading, as the market grappled over the shaky prospect of major producers being able to agree output cuts at a meeting on Wednesday aimed at reining in global oversupply.

Brent crude futures fell as far as two percent before clawing back to trade up 29 cents at $47.44 per barrel at 1008 GMT.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures also recouped early losses and were trading up 15 cents at $46.21 per barrel.

The choppy trading came after prices tumbled more than three percent on Friday as doubts grew over whether the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) would reach agreement to help curb global supply overhang that has more than halved prices since 2014.

On Sunday, Saudi Arabian Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih said that he believed the oil market would balance itself in 2017 even if producers did not intervene, and that keeping output at current levels could therefore be justified.

The statement added to simmering disagreement between OPEC and non-OPEC crude exporters such as Russia over who should cut production by how much.

Analysts said that even if some form of an output restriction is announced after producers meet in Vienna on Wednesday, the details matter greatly.

"Do not take an announcement of a headline cut of one million barrels per day (bpd) at face value. It could still imply an OPEC production level considerably in excess of 33 million bpd, depending on developments in Libya and Nigeria and the speed and rigor of compliance," David Hufton, managing director of brokerage PVM Oil Associates Ltd. said in a note.

He added that the stakes of failure are high for producer nations dependent on oil export revenue.

"But one thing few, if any, analysts will disagree with is that if OPEC do not come up with a credible agreement to cut production on Wednesday oil prices will end the year below $40 bbl and be chasing down $30 bbl early next year," Hufton said.

A meeting scheduled for Monday between OPEC and non-OPEC producers was called off after Saudi Arabia declined to attend, while concerns over the feasibility of a deal pushed the crude oil volatility index close to a nine-month high.

Even if a cut is agreed, oversupply may not end soon.

The U.S. oil rig count rose by three last week, and Goldman Sachs said that "since its trough on May 27, 2016, producers have added 158 oil rigs (+50 percent) in the U.S.". *(Source: Reuters)*

Iranian oil minister heading to Vienna for OPEC meeting

TT ECONOMY desk **TEHRAN —** Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh will leave Tehran for Vienna Tuesday evening to attend the 171st meeting of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) which is due to be held on Wednesday, Shana reported on Monday.

This meeting is a sequel to a September meeting in which OPEC agreed to reduce production to between 32.5 million and 33.0 million barrels per day - an effort to prop up prices - from the organization's latest production estimates of 33.64 million bpd.

Libya rules itself out of OPEC output cuts

Strife-torn Libya on Sunday ruled itself out of the oil production cuts which OPEC members are due to discuss at a meeting in Vienna this week.

"Libya is in such a dangerous economic situation, there is no way it can participate in OPEC production cuts for the foreseeable future," National Oil Corporation chairman Mustafa Sanalla said in a statement on NOC's website.

"The important thing now is that all Libyans should benefit from increased revenues. This will be the real test of whether we can pull through our current political crisis and keep our oil flowing."

In September, the 14 members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries agreed at an informal Algiers meeting to cut output, hoping to boost prices that have been severely depressed since 2014.

Details of the deal and on how to distribute the cuts are expected to be worked out at a formal OPEC meeting in Vienna on Wednesday.

Since the armed revolt five years ago that overthrew dictator Moamer Kadhafi, the North African country has been plagued by violence and political instability. *(Source: AFP)*

Oil market intervention will speed balancing process: Saudi energy minister

Saudi Arabia's energy minister Khalid al-Falih said on Sunday that he believed the oil market would balance itself in 2017 even if producers did not intervene in it.

Any intervention will aim to expedite the balancing process, Falih told reporters at the headquarters of national oil giant Saudi Aramco.

Under a preliminary agreement reached in September in Algeria, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries would reduce its production to between 32.5 million and 33 million barrels per day, its first supply curb since 2008.

OPEC is now trying to finalize that agreement, and wants non-OPEC producers such as Russia to support the intervention by curbing their own output.

Falih said on Sunday that Saudi Arabia was sticking to its position on the Algiers agreement, that everyone should cooperate. *(Source: Reuters)*

Solar, wind industries hope years courting Republicans pays off under Trump

U.S. wind and solar companies for the first time gave more money to Republicans than Democrats during the 2016 election cycle, according to federal campaign disclosures, part of a years-long effort to expand renewable energy's appeal beyond liberal environmentalists.

The industry is now hoping its strategy of reaching across the political divide will pay off in the form of Congressional support as Republican Donald Trump, a climate change skeptic who has expressed doubts about the role of clean energy, takes the White House in January.

"We're not starting from ground zero," said Isaac Brown, a principal at 38 North Solutions, which lobbies on behalf of clean energy clients.

The U.S. wind and solar industries employ over 300,000 people, making clean energy an important political constituency that is about five times bigger than the coal sector for jobs, thanks to years of rapid growth fueled by government incentives and declines in the cost of their technologies.

They have also fought to win over a new breed of backer: conservatives skeptical of climate change but interested in supporting homegrown energy alternatives that increase national security, boost competition, and create well-paying blue collar jobs.

(Source: Reuters)

European Commission approves Czech state aid for renewable energy

The European Commission said on Monday it approved Czech state aid granted in 2006-2012 to renewable energy installations.

"The Commission concluded that, in line with EU objectives, the measure helps the Czech Republic to achieve its 2020 renewable energy targets," it said in a statement.

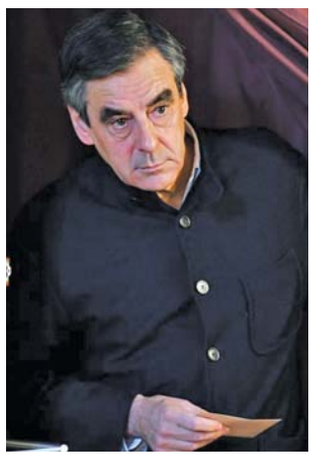
It added that Prague committed to spending around 20 million euros on energy inter-connectors to "remedy any past discrimination against foreign green electricity" resulting from the plan. *(Source: Reuters)*

François Fillon's victory creates strategy problem for Marine Le Pen

By Angelique Chrisafis

One of the first questions for the French right's presidential candidate, François Fillon, is whether he can act as a rampart against the far-right Front National.

Polls currently suggest the French presidential election final round in May will be a battle between the newly chosen Republican party candidate and the Front National leader, Marine Le Pen.



The Front National has reason to fear Fillon. His traditionalist and socially conservative line on family values and "the Christian roots of France", his emphasis on French national identity, "sovereignty" and "patriotism", his hard line on immigration all overlap with some of Le Pen's key ideas.

This could potentially see Fillon steal some of Le Pen's most socially conservative voters, particularly rightwing elderly people, who always have a big turnout to vote but remain skeptical about the Front National.

"Fillon presents us with a strategy problem, he's the most dangerous [candidate] for the Front National," Marion Maréchal Le Pen, the Catholic and socially conservative Front National MP and niece of Marine Le Pen, told journalists this week.But this doesn't mean it will be unduly easy for Fillon, a former prime minister who has spent 35 years in politics and is a figurehead of the old-school Catholic, provincial French right. Despite Fillon's hardline rightwing stances, he is not a populist. "He's closer to [the former British prime minister] David Cameron than [the Ukip leader] Nigel Farage," said Jean-Yves Camus, an expert on the French far right.

This leaves Le Pen a wide margin in which to go for Fillon's jugular as she fights a campaign centered on "the people versus the elite". The Front National has already begun attacking Fillon as a snobbish, political has-been. It argues that Fillon, as Nicolas Sarkozy's prime minister, was responsible for the failures of the Sarkozy era and cares more about the rich, globalized elite than the working class who have faced decades of mass unemployment.

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Is Italy about to feel the Trump effect with Prime Minister Matteo Renzi's referendum?

By Martin J Bull

Renzi claims the reform will make Italian government more stable and efficient. But the worry is that Trump's election increases the likelihood that the reform will be rejected by anti-establishment voters – especially as the Prime Minister has promised to resign if it is defeated.

The election of Donald Trump to the American presidency is causing turmoil in Italian politics in the run up to a constitutional referendum to be held on 4 December.

The referendum sets the stage for Italy to host the third major anti-establishment protest shock of 2016, before we've even had the chance fully to digest the news of Trump and Brexit.

The referendum is on a wide-ranging constitutional reform designed by Prime Minister Matteo Renzi and his government. It took more than two years to navigate through parliament and was put to the public vote once it had failed to win a two-thirds majority in parliament.

That's not because of the merits or flaws of the reform itself but because of the politics surrounding it. Renzi has effectively staked his all on the outcome of this referendum. In December 2015, with his personal poll ratings riding high, he announced, in De Gaullean style, that if he were to be defeated in the referendum he would resign.

This manoeuvre, which he assumed would convince any waverers to support the reform, turned out to be a catastrophic tactical misjudgement. It effectively turned the referendum into a plebiscite on Renzi.

Five Star Movement

That provided a theme for the anti-establishment Five Star Movement, which has campaigned vehemently for a No vote purely to remove Renzi from office.

The Five Star Movement has crowed Donald Trump's election as evidence of a protest movement sweeping the West. It is calling on Italians to seize the opportunity of the referendum to join in. And indeed, support for the reform has consistently declined throughout the year. Polls now show a small majority in favour of voting No – although the large number of undecided voters leaves the outcome in the balance.

Renzi, since the summer, has attempted to change tack and depersonalize the referendum, separating its outcome from his own future. But the genie can't be put back in the bottle. Polls indicate that over half of Italians intending to vote view the referendum as a judgement on the Renzi government and not the reform.

Renzi will surely be thinking of former British Prime Minister David Cameron, who famously argued that he would not resign if he lost the Brexit referendum, when most observers knew that it would be inevitable. A No vote in the referendum would signal not just the rejection of the reform but the end of the Renzi experiment.

If this is to be Renzi's fate, the result will be instability, if not chaos. That's not because the country will immediately go to an election, but rather because it will be unrealistic to do so.

To try and reinforce support for the constitutional reform, Renzi has also carried through an electoral reform of the lower house (the Chamber of Deputies), which came into effect in July. This new electoral law (the Italicum) was expressly designed to reinforce the constitutional reform, which reshapes the Senate, curtailing its powers compared to the Chamber of Deputies – the only house to be directly elected under the new scheme – by ensuring that a stable governing majority would always emerge from the ballot box.

However, if the constitutional reform is rejected, Italy would be left with two completely different electoral systems for the two parliamentary houses. It would provide the basis for two separate majorities in a system where both houses currently have identical powers.

The constitutional reform

The potential paralysis that this would create makes it inevitable that further electoral reform would immediately have to follow a rejection of the constitutional reform. And if Renzi resigned, it would mean bringing in yet another transitional government to implement such a reform.

This would probably be a "technical" or "institutional" government along the lines of those led by Renzi's two immediate predecessors, Mario Monti and Enrico Letta. These administrations were installed under the auspices of the non-partisan Italian president with a specific program of reform to implement, based on the (fragile) support of different political forces in parliament. Yet, the divisions between the parties over the sort of electoral reform needed would cause months of negotiation, instability, lack of direction and possible stalemate.

The elections that would surely follow electoral reform could result in the Five Star Movement emerging as the largest party. Successive opinion polls reveal a situation of tripolarity, with Renzi's Democratic Party, the Five Star Movement and the center-right parties (Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, the Northern League and Brothers of Italy) commanding about 30 per cent of the vote each.

All this will have reverberations beyond Italy because of the way Renzi has been able to convince international elites (most notably the European Union and President Obama) that the constitutional reform will increase Italy's capacity to deliver on the EU's economic agenda. Indeed, some of Renzi's supporters in Italy are arguing that expectations abroad about the reform are now so high that its rejection would send a shock wave through international circles, damaging Italy's credibility abroad and leaving it at the mercy of the markets.

For Renzi, there is bitter irony in the way this referendum has turned into an impending watershed for Italian politics. He stands to lose both the reform and possibly his political career on a wave of anti-establishment protest when his own emergence as leader of the Democratic Party and then as Prime Minister was precisely on the basis of an anti-establishment program. He swept to power promising to scrap the old political class (rottamazione) and lay the foundations for a "new politics" in Italy. That was barely two years ago, but Renzi has learnt to his cost that an anti-establishment profile does not last long once in office.

(Source: Independent)

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INTERVIEW
By Zohreh Kharazmi

Arbaeen rally a social movement

Nov. 21 coincided with Arbaeen in Iraq which marks 40 days after martyrdom of third Shia Imam Hossein in Karbala nearly 14 centuries ago. Every year, millions of people from across the world gather in Iraq to participate in a traditional, religious rally from Najaf or other cities toward Karbala. This year, over 20 million people attended the ritual where we had chance to ask some foreign pilgrims to share their views with us. Here is out interview with a lady from Tunisia who talked to us on the condition of anonymity due to security concerns back home.

Salam Alaykum. Would you tell us about yourself?

Salam Alaykom. I am a 26-year-old girl from Tunisia. I have got my MA in Psychology and now I continue my studies in a seminary school.

Have you ever been to Iraq? And, what is your objective to take part in such a difficult walking trip into Karbala?

It is actually the first time I have the opportunity to travel to Iraq. And, naturally my prime goal has been the pilgrimage and expressing my love and heartfelt feelings to Imam Hussein (PBUH).

Regarding the fact that it is your first trip to Iraq, what is your impression about Iraqis' hospitability toward Imam Hussein's pilgrims?

Iraqi people are very much hospitable. Their warm reception and high hospitability is particularly considerable in this sense that many of our hosts are not coming from a very prosperous economic background. It is while they bestow devotedly whatever they have to Imam's pilgrims. I believe that Iraqi people are symbols of humanity and sacrifice here in Arbaeen.

How do you evaluate women's participation in Arbaeen's commemoration?

Women's participation is really numerous. I saw (gazing at me with tearful eyes ... breathing deeply) many young mothers with their little children who were passing this hard path with all its troubles. I think many of these women feel high sympathy with Hazrat Zeinab (PBUH) as they consider their sufferings a sign of devotion and empathy towards her.

Is there any sort of socio-political potential in Arbaeen's movement which currently finds international aspects?

Sure, it is. People from so many different nationalities are taking part in Arbaeen's commemoration and it has made it an exceptional movement. This is while the common point among them is their love to Imam Hussein (PBUH). So, I think not only shall we walk toward him, but also we may take it as a valuable opportunity to become familiar with each other's cultures. Moukkabs [traditional stations all across the path which serve pilgrim with drinks, food, fruit or any services such as massage, washing clothes or a\bath, etc.] are the best places where our local foods and customs can be represented. I believe, we still don't know much about each other and this lack of proper knowledge can be addressed in Arbaeen.

The second advantage of Arbaeen's great commemoration is that there is not only Shia followers of Imam Hussein (PBUH) who participate here, rather, there are a lot of Sunni brothers, even Jews and non-Muslims who come to Karbala to celebrate humanity and liberty. The inter-religious dialogue, thus, becomes possible here. I really hope to have more Tunisians in Arbaeen in Iraq.

Right. What is the presence of Tunisians in Arbaeen's commemoration like?

Tunisians may participate in Arbaeen's walk in a very few number of individuals. I aspired Tunisians could have their moukkabs here. In fact, the Shia population is a minority in Tunisia and many of them don't find it easy enough to express their identity. Anyway, if some day Tunisians have our moukkab in Arbaeen, they are much hospitable and host Imam Hussein's (PBUH) pilgrims serving the most comfortable places and the most delicious foods.

How about Tunisian Women? How do they look at Arbaeen's commemoration? Are they aware about such a glorious movement?

Nowadays, the media, particularly the social media, has made all news, pictures and videos accessible all around the world. Tunisian women are also very up-to-date and educated women. But, the point is that a sort of secularism has taken roots in our country where it even becomes worse after the Arab Spring. I think Arbaeen is a social movement and its teachings for us are not well understood by many of our women, yet. I hope it would happen so soon, Insha'Allah.

Trump-style Nepotism: Family connections hikes within President-elect transition team

By Abbas Torabi

Brian D. Feinstein concludes that, "brand identity" is the key reason in answering to this question that why do Americans are so tolerant about nepotism. Accordingly, antithetical to the flood of propaganda, which considers nepotism and cronyism as unethical trends and theoretically condemns this kind of family connections in politics and praises traditional American values of self-reliance and fairness, but notwithstanding this, practically among the U.S. political elites, "power begets power and it's a family thing." Hence, American voters in practice, would prefer a name they already know instead of an unknown politician even though he/she is conversant in politics and International Diplomacy but nobody knows her/him.

John Quincy Adams, John F. Kennedy, Bill Clinton, and now Donald Trump are the best examples of "brand identity," of the four Presidents listed here, the first three belongs to political elite family and the fourth one himself is a brand name in economy and rules the U.S. economic elites. John F. Kennedy, son of Joseph Patrick Kennedy Sr - who was a businessman, investor, and a leading member and politician of Democratic Party - by ascending to power, he had appointed his brother Robert as attorney general of the United States of America. Elizabeth Cheney, the daughter of the 46th Vice-president Dick Cheney, is another example of "family connections" who was appointed to the position of Deputy Assistance Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. Notwithstanding she had no background in Middle Eastern Affairs.

The transition teams due to the fact that are not federal agencies, so according to federal anti-nepotism laws, this is legal for Trump to hire his adult children in his White House transition team. Nevertheless, the case of Donald Trump's nepotism is more perilous to American political life than what was happened in the past U.S. history. Because, Trump's presidency will connect and join the political elites to the economic elites those who are the rulers of the business world. According to Rebecca Ballhaus, "critics have voiced concerns not only that he could take government actions to benefit his companies, but that people could pay his companies money in an attempt to influence the president's actions." Charles Wright Mills, distinguished professor of sociology at Columbia University and prominent American sociologist, the one who founded the terms "power elite," and "sociological imagination" in his famous book "The Power Elite," prophetically warns about the centralization of authority within the elites of society and brought to light that interwoven interests of the leaders of the Military, Economic, and Political elites of the United States are at odds with the common good.

→13

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Could you have a thyroid problem? Here are 10 familiar symptoms

By Mary Shomon

1. Fatigue, exhaustion, and sleep problems

Are you feeling exhausted when you wake up, even after 8 or 10 hours of sleep the night before? Do you need a nap in the afternoon to get through dinner? Do you take long naps, or have marathon sleep sessions on the weekend, just to recuperate enough to tackle your work week? These are common signs of an undiagnosed or insufficiently treated thyroid problems, especially hypothyroidism--an underactive thyroid.

Do you have a difficult time falling asleep, or staying asleep at night? When you go to bed, do you find it difficult to sleep, due to a racing heart or a feeling of anxiety? Are you experiencing insomnia? These can be common signs and symptoms of undiagnosed or insufficiently treated hyperthyroidism--an overactive thyroid.

2. Unexpected weight changes not connected to diet and exercise

Unexplained weight changes can be signs of both hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism.

Are you on a low-fat, low-calorie diet with a rigorous exercise program, but you are failing to lose weight. Or maybe you're even gaining weight? Or, have you joined a diet program or support group, such as Weight Watchers, and you are the only one who isn't losing any weight? If eating well and exercise are not budging the scale, you have a common symptom of undiagnosed or poorly treated hypothyroidism, an underactive thyroid.

On the opposite end, are you losing weight while eating the same amount of food as usual? Has your appetite increased substantially, but you're not gaining weight, or even losing weight? Unexplained weight loss, or higher caloric intake without weight gain are common symptoms of undiagnosed or undertreated hyperthyroidism, an overactive thyroid.

Note, however, that some of you may have an opposite response. You could be hypothyroid patients and lose weight, can't gain weight, or are underweight. Or, you may be hyperthyroid patients and find that you can't lose weight, even with a healthy diet and exercise.

3. Depression, anxiety, and panic attacks

Are you experiencing an unexplained depression, ongoing or periodic anxiety - or even the onset of panic attacks or a panic disorder? These can be symptoms of thyroid disease.

Hypothyroidism--an underactive thyroid--is most typically associated with depression.

Depression that does not respond to antidepressants may also be a sign of undiagnosed or poorly treated hypothyroidism.

4. Neck discomfort, enlargement, hoarseness, goiter

Your thyroid is located in your neck. In some cases, goiter (an enlarged thyroid) or nodules can cause a variety of neck and throat-related symptoms. These include:

- A feeling of swelling or fullness in the neck
- Visibly enlarged neck
- Discomfort with turtlenecks or neckties
- Difficulty swallowing or breathing
- Tenderness in the neck
- A hoarse, raspy voice

These symptoms can be associated with hyperthyroidism, hypothyroidism, autoimmune thyroid disease, nodules, goiter, and thyroid cancer, and should be evaluated.

5. Hair loss, hair changes, and skin changes

Hair and skin are particularly vulnerable to thyroid imbalances. In particular, hair loss is frequently associated with thyroid problems.

With hypothyroidism, your hair may become brittle, coarse and dry, break easily, and fall out more easily or heavily. In hypothyroidism, there is also a unique and very specific symptom: The loss of hair in the outer edge of the eyebrow. Your skin can become thick, dry, and scaly, especially on heels, knees, and elbows.

With hyperthyroidism, severe hair loss can also occur. Your hair may also become fine and thin. Your skin may become fragile, easily irritated, or unusually smooth.

There are also two unusual rashes associated with hyperthyroidism and Graves' disease. Pretibial myxedema--also known as thyroid dermopathy--can appear on the skin of the shins. And a bumpy rash known as milaria can appear on the face.

6. Constipation, bowel problems, diarrhea, and irritable bowel

A variety of digestive issues can be symptoms of an undiagnosed or undertreated thyroid condition.

Severe or long-term constipation, and constipation that does not respond to treatments and remedies, is commonly associated with hypothyroidism.

Diarrhea, loose stools, and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) are frequently associated with hyperthyroidism.

7. Menstrual irregularities and fertility problems

Menstrual changes are common in thyroid patients.

Heavier, more frequent, and more painful periods are frequently associated with hypothyroidism.

Women with hyperthyroidism often experience shorter, lighter or infrequent periods. In some cases, periods stop entirely.

Women with undiagnosed or improperly treated thyroid conditions--hypothyroidism in particular--are also at higher risk of infertility, failed assisted reproduction treatments, and recurrent miscarriage.

8. Muscle and joint pains, carpal tunnel, tendonitis, and plantar fasciitis

Pain is a common but often overlooked symptom of underlying thyroid issues.

People with hypothyroidism may experience aches and pains in muscles and joints, especially the arms and legs. Fibromyalgia-like pain is also common for people with an underactive thyroid.

There is also a greater risk of developing carpal tunnel syndrome in the arms/hands, which can cause weakness and pain in the forearms, wrists, hands, and fingers. A similar condition, tarsal tunnel, is also a risk, causing weakness and pain in the shins, ankles, feet and toes. Similarly, a painful foot condition known as plantar fasciitis in the feet.

People who are hyperthyroidism may have pain or unusual weakness in the upper arms, and calves.

9. High cholesterol, unresponsive to cholesterol medications

High cholesterol levels, especially when they are not responsive to diet, exercise or cholesterol-lowering medications such as statin drugs can be a sign of undiagnosed hypothyroidism.

Unusually low cholesterol levels that do not correlate with diet, weight, and exercise may be a sign of hyperthyroidism.

10. Eye problems and changes

A number of eye-related symptoms and changes are common in hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism, and Graves' disease, but can also be due to a related condition, known as Graves' ophthalmopathy or thyroid eye disease. These include:

- Your eyes feel gritty and dry
- Your vision is blurry
- Your eyes are red, dry, swollen, puffy, or watery
- Your eyes are sensitive to light
- You are having double vision
- Your eyeballs appear to be bulging (proptosis); your eyes aren't completely covered when your eyelids are closed
- You have "lid lag," when your upper eyelid doesn't smoothly follow downward movements of the eyes when you look down.

11. Next step

If you have any of these common symptoms, your next step is to consult a healthcare practitioner for a complete thyroid evaluation. *(Source: verywell.com)*

Exercises for pain free hands

Your hands perform countless small and large tasks each day — from pouring coffee, brushing teeth, and buttoning shirts to raking leaves or kneading bread.

But aching hands can transform the simplest task into a painful ordeal. Hands can hurt for a variety of reasons, from the mechanical to the neurological. Arthritis — which affects one in five American adults — and other persistent joint problems are by far the most common cause of hand pain and disability.

There are many ways — including medications and surgery — to get hands back to work. One of the most important ways is through therapeutic exercises.

Some exercises help increase a joint's range of motion, while strengthening muscles around the joint. Some commonly recommended hand exercises follow. If you have a serious hand, wrist, or arm injury, consult your doctor before leaping into the routines below. All exercises should be done slowly and deliberately, to avoid pain and injury. If you feel numbness or pain during or after exercising, stop and consult a therapist.

Stretching exercises

Stretching helps lengthen muscles and tendons. Some repetitive tasks, such as typing on a computer or gripping gardening tools, can shorten muscles and leave them tight and painful. Do these stretches gently, until you feel the stretch, but without pain. Hold the positions for a count of 15 to 30 seconds to get the most benefit. These exercises are particularly helpful for tendinitis and tight forearm muscles, which are common in people who do a lot of computer work.

For each of these exercises, do a set of four repetitions, twice a day. Hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds and rest for 30 seconds between each repetition.

• Wrist extensor stretches

1. Hold one hand at chest level with the elbow bent.
2. With the other hand, grasp the thumb side of the hand and bend your wrist downward.
3. To increase the stretch, bend your wrist toward your little finger.
4. Repeat the same exercise with a straight arm.
5. Switch hands and repeat.

• Wrist flexor stretches

1. Hold one hand at chest level with the elbow bent.
2. Grasp the fingers of that hand with the other.
3. Pull the hand back gently.
4. Repeat the same exercise with a straight arm.
5. Switch hands and repeat.

Resisted isometrics

These exercises work muscles against resistance. Hold each position for 10 seconds. Complete one set of 10 repetitions once or twice a day.

• Isometric wrist extension

1. Hold one hand palm down on a table or other surface. Put your other hand on top of it.
2. Try to raise the lower hand, but don't allow it to move.
3. Switch hands and repeat.

• Isometric wrist flexion

Follow the same steps as above, but with your palm facing up. *(Source: health.harvard.edu)*

How to turn your cleaning routine into a workout routine

Clean your way to good health

By Laura Williams

There's a lot to be said for a standard workout routine - regular exercise contributes to a long and healthy life. But there's also a trend in some fitness circles to discount everyday activities and "guilt" people into thinking if they're not logging their exercise at the gym, they're not really exercising.

I call foul.

Gyms in their current state didn't exist until the 1980s; jogging wasn't a "pastime" until the 1970s; and the study of exercise science didn't officially start until the late 1800s.

But you can't tell me that people from centuries past weren't fit, or didn't accumulate substantial physical activity. While they may not have run 10ks every weekend, or hit the weights for a couple hours a week, many (if not most) were still active, healthy, and physically robust.

In fact, it could be argued that today's more fitness-knowledgeable population is actually less fit than those of centuries past. We might know the importance of exercise, we might understand exercise prescriptions, but we're battling more obesity and obesity-related diseases than ever before.

The point is, what people knew and did before exercise became trendy was to stay active all day long. They cleaned, cooked meals from scratch, split wood, worked labor-intensive jobs, made clothing, took walks, cared for livestock, and tended gardens. It may not have been "exercise" in the modern sense of the word, but it was tough, and it burned a lot of calories.

Obviously a lifestyle like this doesn't fit with most modern situations - you may have to commute to and from work, sit at a desk job for hours, and spend your evenings sitting through kids' activities or board meetings. But that doesn't mean you can't take advantage of day-to-day chores as a means to accumulate exercise and stay fit.

The point is to approach these tasks with intention, and use them as a means to help you accumulate your goals for weekly physical activity.

Plan your chores in advance

The difference between general physical activity and exercise is planning. All physical activity is beneficial, but exercise is particularly important because the specific intent is to raise your heart rate and achieve improvements in physical health. By planning your chores and viewing them as part of your exercise routine, you're more likely to tackle them with gusto to achieve maximum benefit.

Sit down on a Sunday night and think about the tasks that must get done for the week. For instance, if you need to clean the guest bathroom, or if you want to clean out the garage, estimate how much time each task will take and allow yourself to consider it part of your weekly exercise program.

Do your chores, and do them well

If your intent is to use your chores as exercise, then think about how you can tackle each task for physical health.

For instance, if you usually take your time to sweep the floors, or you just "spot mop" the dirty areas of your tile, pick up your pace or scrub a little harder.

I, for one, have been moving this month. Every time I know that a task is going to require a significant amount of physical effort, I just say, "That'll be my exercise for the day." Then, I know that when I do the task, I'm going to work harder - if I'm lugging boxes, I'll walk faster, if I'm scrubbing floors, I'll scrub harder. The intent has changed, but in only the best possible way - I'm tackling a task I needed to complete, and I'm getting my exercise at the same time. Two birds, one stone.

Go old-school

Sure, today's technology has made many cleaning tasks easier, but if the goal is to clean and exercise, maybe you should skip the technology for a more challenging experience. For instance, sideline the riding mower and use a push mower, or put the Roomba on hiatus and grab your upright vacuum instead. If you've been using Swiffer dusters to dust your furniture, start using some elbow grease and tackle dust with a dust cloth and a can of Pledge.

Make it fun

Very few people like cleaning or chores, but that doesn't mean you can't make them more fun. Turn on your favorite music and dance while you clean the shower, or recruit the family for a "blitz cleaning" to see who can clean a designated space the fastest. The winner gets to put the rest of the family through a series of exercises of his or her choosing.

(Source: greatist.com)

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1,442 New Endowed Properties Registered in Current Year: Official

25% of medical and healthcare treatment centers in the country are considered as "endowed properties".

A number of 1,442 new endowed properties were registered in the first eight months of current Iranian calendar year in 1395 (March 20 – Nov. 20).

Head of Endowments and Charity Affairs Organization Hojjatoleslam Ali Mohammadi announced the above statement and pointed to the growth of public trust to the endowment activities in the country and said: "Growing number of new endowed properties is one of the main reasons behind increasing trend of public trust to the relevant activities."

Speaking at a weekly press briefing at the threshold of commemorating and disseminating culture of endowment, the Leader's representative at the organization first expressed his condolences on the death anniversary of ***Holy Prophet Muhammad (S), Imam Hassan (AS) and Eight Infallible Imam Reza (AS)*** to all Muslims around the world and said: "Moreover, I deem it necessary to express my deep condolences on **Arbaeen** which was observed a couple of days ago magnificently and commemorated the names and memories of those who martyred in a deadly terrorist attack en route Kabala."

"Endowment", One of Main Components of "Resistance Economy"

Elsewhere in his remarks, he added: "Endowment is considered as one of the main components of resistance economy."

Turning to the issue of "***resistance economy***", he termed it as an important and decisive concept and said: "All problems facing the country are not related to sanctions imposed on the country, rather, all responsible officials should focus on inner capacities and potentials available in the country."

Relying upon the assistance of the Almighty God, problems grappling the country will be settled logically, he said, adding: "Once the concept of resistance economy is taken into consideration in the country, most problems will be settled, so that endowment is regarded as one of the main components of resistance economy."

Regarding the key role of endowment in various arenas, he said: "More than 25% of medical and healthcare treatment centers in the country are accounted as endowed properties."

He put the number of hospitals endowed in the country at 130 which are offering quality medical services to all walks of life.

He also put the number of scientific, training and research centers endowed in the country at more than 6,800, the issue of which is the giant step taken in this field.

With regard to the memorization of Holy Quran, he said: "Effective steps have been taken by the Organization, the most important of which is related to training 1,500,000 Quranic memorizers in different levels."

Currently, renovation of approx. 4,000 holy shrines in the country is underway by the Organization which will be terminated before the current Iranian calendar year (to end March 19, 2017), he reiterated.

In the end, ***Head of Endowments and Charity Affairs Organization Hojjatoleslam Ali Mohammadi*** thanked unflinching efforts of mass media in introducing of achievements and blessings of the endowment and called on them to take more effective steps for disseminating culture of endowment appropriately."

Social and Cultural Deputy of Endowments and Charity Affairs Organization Hojjatoleslam Ahmad Sharafkhani was the next speaker who commemorated the "***Endowment Week***" which is underway in the country with the slogan of "*All Should Be Endowers in Country*."

He reiterated: "Relying upon the teachings of messengers of God and Infallible Imams of Household of Holy Prophet Muhammad (S), the Iranian and Islamic Tradition entitled "Endowment" has been considered as a source of blessing for a long time and its effects have been observed in various cultural, social and economic areas."

He pointed out that a number of 18 development projects will be inaugurated during this auspicious week.

In the end, ***Social and Cultural Deputy of Endowments and Charity Affairs Organization Hojjatoleslam Ahmad Sharafkhani*** pointed to the programs which will be held during this auspicious week: Organizing National Companions of Endowment Seminar in Tehran Province and also similar seminars in all provinces of the country along with honoring companions of endowment and Board of Trustees of holy shrines and tombs, etc. across the country.

Subterranean waterways offer clues to ancient way of life in Iran

TT HERITAGE desk

Water reservoirs have a long history in Iran, and there are still some remained from the 13th century. Among the various ancient cities which have applied this concept, Yazd is the focus of this article.

These reservoirs (called ab-anbars in Persian) supply irrigation systems that make urban settlements possible in the desert region of central Iran. Snow fed streams were tapped at the foothills of surrounding mountains and channeled through sloping subterranean canal systems (qanats), often over great distances to discharge into underground reservoirs within the city.

These reservoirs were usually built at the center of city neighborhoods, and thus configure urban morphological form much in the same manner as their feeder canals (qanats) configure agricultural tract divisions. Hydrological, climatic and social criteria overlapped to evolve a distinct architectural form for these water reservoirs that now forms a distinct part of Yazd's architectural heritage and identity.

The typical ab-anbar consists of four key elements: the underground reservoir, the platform (pasheer), the dome, and the wind catcher shafts (badgir). Some of the larger and centrally located ab-anbars also house a public hot bath (khazineh).

The cylindrically shaped underground chamber often 10 meters below street level, maintain a stable low water temperature considerably below the summer sun baked ground surface. A descending staircase passageway approached the pasheer or foot of the faucet used to retrieve water. The semi-circular brick lined dome, visually much alike a Buddhist stupa, have escape vents in the center to cool water by air convection while protecting it from dust and other pollution. Four adjacent badgirs or weathering shafts, often at the cardinal directions would maintain fresh air circulation to prevent water quality deterioration.

The hierarchy of urban space where ab-anbars were sited would determine both its size and the scale of constituent elements. Thus, minor neighborhood ab-anbars are usually endowed with fewer badgirs while larger, city center reservoirs are often serviced by six or more wind catchers. The access openings to the street were often decorated with intricate stalactite ornament while larger ab-anbars often housed shops and coffeehouses in addition to public baths signifying an urban institutional status.

A file photo shows a water reservoir equipped by six wind catchers in Yazd

Not infrequently bazaars, mosques, public baths and ab-anbars would function together within a religious endowment property.

As it is often related to public use structures, one cannot trace the precise origin or patron of most ab-anbar reservoirs in Yazd. Though the earliest urban water supply constructions in Yazd are believed to date from the Sassanid period and many others have been continually repaired and used, most extant ab-anbars can be today traced to the late Safavid and Qajar periods. The Shesh Badgiri Anbar or 'Six wind catcher' reservoir was constructed in the Qajar period, while the Khan Bazaar ab-anbar can be more accurately dated to Qajar ruler Nasr al-Din's reign.

The earliest urban water supply constructions in Yazd are believed to date from the Sassanid era (224 CE to 651)

Currently, there are approximately 75-90 surviving ab-anbars in Yazd today, and some of the important ones are the Seyed Va Sahra; Masoudi; Hadji Ali Akbari; Khajeh; Golshan; Rostam Geev; Kolah Doozha; Malekotojar, and Mirza Shafi reservoirs.

Ab-anbars played a pivotal role in determining both Yazd's skyline and urban layout but are in a precarious state of preservation today with redundancy caused by modern piped water supply systems. Though few of the architecturally significant examples can be preserved, sustainable strategies to conserve traditional urban infrastructure systems like qanats, badgers, pigeon towers, dams and water mills need to be explored.

Irish tourism experiencing its best year ever

2016 is set to be the best year ever for Irish tourism, surpassing all previous records.

According to Tourism Ireland's latest estimates, 10.5 million people will have visited the island of Ireland by the end of this year.

It represents an increase of 11% on 2015 with growth recorded from all markets.

Revenue generated by international visitors is expected to be €5.4 billion and 10% increase over last year.

Tourism Ireland says it plans to grow overseas tourism revenue by over 4.5% next year.

Minister for Tourism Shane Ross described as "complete nonsense" claims he has not contributed to the tourism portfolio. *(Source: RTE)*

Air France unveils special B787-9 flights

Air France has unveiled details of special celebratory flights for the carrier's forthcoming B787-9 aircraft.

The airline is scheduled to take delivery of the Dreamliner on December 8, and will then make four "exceptional" flights around France on January 7 and 8.

Tickets cost from €249 in economy, €349 in premium economy, and €787 in business.

Air France is also rostering the B787-9 onto its flights between London Heathrow and Paris CDG for a limited period, allowing short-haul customers "to discover Air France's newest long-haul product".

Tickets are available from €69 return in economy, and €249 in business class, currently for travel dates between February 6 and March 25.

(Source: Business Traveller)

Numbers of tourists from the UK expected to fall

Tourism bosses expect the number of British visitors to fall in the wake of the Brexit vote, but they expect overall tourist numbers to continue to rise.

2016 is set to be the best year ever for inward tourism, with 10.5 million visitors to Ireland by the end of the year.

Tourism Ireland predicts that 10.6 million visitors will come next year. CEO Niall Gibbons says they are not complacent about the expected drop in British visitors, but it is not a cause for panic.

Tourism Ireland said: "2017 may present some challenges - not least Brexit, which is likely to impact on consumer confidence, which in turn may have consequences for travel to all destinations, including Ireland, from Britain. *(Source: Breaking News)*

IN FOCUS

Eram Garden

TT TOURISM desk

Eram Garden widely famous for its towering cypress trees is one the impressive and most-visited gardens in Iran.

Located in southern city of Shiraz, it has been converted into a botanical garden by Shiraz University since the early 1980s.

Visitors to the garden may be amazed by its peaceful atmosphere that feathers fragrance of flowers, bird songs, and dance of blossoms all intertwined with rich Persian art and architecture.

Narratives say the garden goes down to the time of the Seljuk Dynasty (ca. 1040–1196), but what visitors see today date from the 18th century onwards.

UNESCO describes the Persian Garden an idea that combines natural elements with manmade components in order to materialize the concept of Eden or Paradise on Earth.

Theory that challenges Einstein's physics could soon be put to the test

Scientists behind a theory that the speed of light is variable -- and not constant as Einstein suggested -- have made a prediction that could be tested.

Einstein observed that the speed of light remains the same in any situation, and this meant that space and time could be different in different situations.

The assumption that the speed of light is constant, and always has been, underpins many theories in physics, such as Einstein's theory of general relativity. In particular, it plays a role in models of what happened in the very early universe, seconds after the Big Bang.

But some researchers have suggested that the speed of light could have been much higher in this early universe. Now, one of this theory's originators, Professor João Magueijo from Imperial College London, working with Dr. Niayesh Afshordi at the Perimeter Institute in Canada, has made a prediction that could be used to test the theory's validity.

Structures in the universe, for example galaxies, all formed from fluctuations in the early universe -- tiny differences in density in certain regions. A record of these early fluctuations is imprinted on the cosmic microwave background -- a map of the oldest light in the universe -- in the form of a 'spectral index'.

Varying speed of light

Working with their theory that the fluctuations were influenced by a varying speed of light in the early universe, Professor Magueijo and Dr. Afshordi have now used a model to put an exact figure on the spectral index. The predicted figure and the model it is based on are published in the journal Physical Review D.

Working with their theory that the fluctuations were influenced by a varying speed of light in the early universe, Professor Magueijo and Dr. Afshordi have now used a model to put an exact figure on the spectral index.

Cosmologists are currently getting ever more precise readings of this figure, so that prediction could soon be tested -- either confirming or ruling out the team's model of the early universe. Their figure is a very precise 0.96478. This is close to the current estimate of readings of the cosmic microwave background, which puts it around 0.968, with some margin of error.

Maturity point

Professor Magueijo said: The "theory, which we first proposed in the late-1990s, has now reached a maturity point -- it has produced a testable prediction. If observations in the near future do find this number to be accurate, it could lead to a modification of Einstein's theory of gravity.

The "idea that the speed of light could be variable was radical when first proposed, but with a numerical prediction, it becomes something physicists can actually test. If true, it would mean that the laws of nature were not always the same as they are today."

The testability of the varying speed of light theory sets it apart from the more mainstream rival theory: inflation. Inflation says that the early universe went through an extremely rapid expansion phase, much faster than the current rate of expansion of the universe.

(Source: scieencedaily.com)

West Antarctic ice shelf breaking up from the inside out

A key glacier in Antarctica is breaking apart from the inside out, suggesting that the ocean is weakening ice on the edges of the continent.

The Pine Island Glacier, part of the ice shelf that bounds the West Antarctic Ice Sheet, is one of two glaciers that researchers believe are most likely to undergo rapid retreat, bringing more ice from the interior of the ice sheet to the ocean, where its melting would flood coastlines around the world.

A nearly 225-square-mile iceberg broke off from the glacier in 2015, but it wasn't until Ohio State University researchers were testing some new image-processing software that they noticed something strange in satellite images taken before the event.

Ice surface

In the images, they saw evidence that a rift formed at the very base of the ice shelf nearly 20 miles inland in 2013. The rift propagated upward over two years, until it broke through the ice surface and set the iceberg adrift over 12 days in late July and early August 2015.

"It's generally accepted that it's no longer a question of whether the West Antarctic Ice Sheet will melt, it's a question of when," said study leader Ian Howat, associate professor of earth sciences at Ohio State. "This kind of rifting behavior provides another mechanism for rapid retreat of these glaciers, adding to the probability that we may see significant collapse of West Antarctica in our lifetimes."

While this is the first time researchers have witnessed a deep subsurface rift opening within Antarctic ice, they have seen similar breakups in the Greenland Ice Sheet — in spots where ocean water has seeped inland along the bedrock and begun to melt the ice from underneath.

Strong evidence

Howat said the satellite images provide the first strong evidence that these large Antarctic ice shelves respond to changes at their ocean edge in a similar way as observed in Greenland.

In 2015, a 225-square-mile iceberg broke off of the Pine Island Glacier in Antarctica, and researchers at The Ohio State University have discovered that the event was no ordinary breakup.

"Rifts usually form at the margins of an ice shelf, where the ice is thin and subject to shearing that rips it apart," he explained. "However, this latest event in the Pine Island Glacier was due to a rift that originated from the center of the ice shelf and propagated out to the margins. This implies that something weakened the center of the ice shelf, with the most likely explanation being a crevasse melted out at the bedrock level by a warming ocean."

Another clue: The rift opened in the bottom of a "valley" in the ice shelf where the ice had thinned compared to the surrounding ice shelf.

(Source: phys.org)

NASA's Cassini spacecraft, Saturn mission prepares for Ring-Grazing Orbits

A thrilling ride is about to begin for NASA's Cassini spacecraft.

Engineers have been pumping up the spacecraft's orbit around Saturn this year to increase its tilt with respect to the planet's equator and rings. And on Nov. 30, following a gravitational nudge from Saturn's moon Titan, Cassini will enter the first phase of the mission's dramatic endgame.

Launched in 1997, Cassini has been touring the Saturn system since arriving there in 2004 for an up-close study of the planet, its rings and moons. During its journey, Cassini has made numerous dramatic discoveries, including a global ocean within Enceladus and liquid methane seas on Titan.

Between Nov. 30 and April 22, Cassini will circle high over and under the poles of Saturn, diving every seven days — a total of 20 times — through the unexplored region at the outer edge of the main rings.

"We're calling this phase of the mission Cassini's Ring-Grazing Orbits, because we'll be skimming past the outer edge of the rings," said Linda Spilker, Cassini project scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, California.

"In addition, we have two instruments that can sample particles and gases as we cross the ringplane, so in a sense Cassini is also 'grazing' on the rings."

On many of these passes, Cassini's instruments will attempt to directly sample ring particles and molecules of faint gases that are found close to the rings. During the first two orbits, the spacecraft will pass directly through an extremely faint ring produced by tiny meteors striking the two small moons Janus and Epimetheus.

"Even though we're flying closer to the F ring than we ever have, we'll still be more than 4,850 miles (7,800 kilometers) distant. There's very little concern over dust hazard at that range," said Earl Maize,

The F ring marks the outer boundary of the main ring system; Saturn has several other, much fainter rings that lie farther from the planet. The F ring is complex and constantly changing: Cassini images have shown structures like bright streamers, wispy filaments and dark channels that appear and develop over mere hours.

The ring is also quite narrow — only about 500 miles (800 kilometers) wide. At its core is a denser region about 30 miles (50 kilometers) wide.

Cassini's Ring-Grazing Orbits offer unprecedented opportunities to observe the menagerie of small moons that orbit in or near the edges of the rings, including best-ever looks at the moons Pandora, Atlas, Pan and Daphnis.

Grazing the edges of the rings also will provide some of the closest-ever studies of the outer portions of Saturn's main rings (the A, B and F rings). Some of Cassini's views will have a level of detail not seen since the spacecraft glided just above them during its arrival in 2004.

The mission will continue investigating small-scale features in the A ring called "propellers," which reveal the presence of unseen moonlets.

(Source: spaccecoastdaily.com)

Endangered Australasian marsupials are ancient survivors of climate change

In a new paper, published in Scientific Reports, an international team of researchers has analyzed fossils and DNA from living and recently extinct species to show that conservation sensitive Australasian marsupials are much older than previously thought.

"We used bandicoots as a model to examine the radiation of marsupials relative to climate change through time. Bandicoots are the marsupial equivalents of rodents and rabbits that today occupy a spectrum of desert through to rainforest habitats across Australia, New Guinea and surrounding islands. Alarmingly, however, most bandicoot species are under dire threat of extinction from introduced predators, habitat loss, and human hunting," says Dr. Benjamin Kear from the Museum of Evolution at Uppsala University, and lead author on the study.

Bandicoot fossils are important for understanding how Australia's unique biodiversity has reacted to climate change in the past. They suggest that a shift towards drier conditions 5-10 million years ago drove ancient species into extinction, while simultaneously prompting the emergence of modern groups.The "evolution of Australia's mammals has long been linked to aridity. Yet this hypothesis is based upon only a few distinguishing features found in the teeth and skulls of modern species," says Dr. Ken Aplin of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History.

Dr. Aplin recovered the remains of a remarkably archaic new fossil bandicoot, Lemdubuoryctes aruensis, from the Aru Islands of Eastern Indonesia.

Bandicoot fossils

The earliest bandicoot fossils are more than 25 million years old, but isolated teeth over 50 million years old hint at a deeper ancestry. In contrast, the first demonstrably modern bandicoots appeared less than 5 million years ago, while their most ancient relatives seemingly inhabited rainforests some 20 million years ago.

Lemdubuoryctes also did not live in a primordial rainforest, but rather a vast savannah plain that stretched between Australia and New Guinea during the last glacial maximum.

(Source: EurekAlert)

Deputy Roads Minister Praises Bank Maskan Performance

Salient activities and performance of Bank Maskan in the field of construction of 2,334 residential units in Yazd Province were appreciated.

Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development Ahmad Asghari Mehrabadi announced the above statement and expressed his special thanks to the unflinching efforts of senior executives and directors of the bank on the inauguration of a number of 2,334 residential units constructed in Yazd Province within the framework of Mehr Housing Plan.

Construction operation of residential units within the framework of "Mehr Housing Plan" is underway in 1,150 cities of the country, he said, adding: "Celebration for the completion of construction operation of units on "Mehr Housing Plan" will be held in this province before termination of the current year (to end March 19, 2017)."

Seyyed Mohammad Mir-Mohammadi governor General of Yazd was the next speaker who thanked the responsible officials who took giant strides in completion of construction operation of these units in this province.

Totally, approx. 24,000 residential units, within the framework of "Mehr Housing Plan" have been considered in this province, more than 17,000 units of which will be inaugurated by yearend, he ended.

Carbon silicon bonds: A new model for alien life?

Scientists have revealed a revolutionary technique to urge silicon to bond naturally with carbon, opening the door to a wide range of possibilities for both human engineering and alien life.

"It's like breeding a racehorse," said Frances Arnold, study coauthor and chemical engineering professor at Caltech. A "good breeder recognizes the inherent ability of a horse to become a racer and has to bring that out in successive generations. We just do it with proteins."

Silicon has long intrigued scientists because it is so abundant, yet life on Earth is exclusively carbon based. While scientists have artificially bonded silicon and carbon, no living organism is known to put the two together.

"Poor silicon, abundant in the Earth, but rejected by the biosphere for its wondrous evolutionary tinkering," said Cornell University chemist Roald Hoffmann in a press release.

Using a method called directed evolution, scientists mutated an enzyme called cytochrome c to catalyze a bonding reaction between silicon and carbon.

Extremophile bacterium

Cytochrome c, which comes from an extremophile bacterium that lives in Icelandic hot springs, can create chemical bonds between silicon and carbon fifteen times more efficiently than synthetic catalysts, proving that in this instance, natural is definitely better.

"This iron-based, genetically encoded catalyst is nontoxic, cheaper, and easier to modify compared to other catalysts used in chemical synthesis," said postdoctoral scholar and study lead author Jennifer Kan in a press release. The "new reaction can also be done at room temperature and in water."

(Source: He CSM)

Newly discovered salamanders may be doomed

Three new species of tiny salamanders — the smallest animals of their kind in the world — have been discovered in Mexico, and scientists fear they're already doomed to extinction.

The lizard-like creatures were found by a team of former UC Berkeley graduate students and famed biologist David B. Wake, their former professor and an expert on all things amphibian, who warns that the salamanders and their relatives could be the last ones on Earth.

A "Biological disaster is facing us," said Wake, a co-author of the new scientific report on their discovery.

The former Berkeley scientists have been exploring salamander habitats for many years in the mountains around the Mexican city of Oaxaca, and found that the animals, which once numbered in the hundreds, have almost disappeared.

In their report of one hunt, for example, where loggers had already churned up the salamander habitat, the researchers wrote:

"We searched for more than two hours, turning abundant cover of wood chips, chip piles, logs and bark on logs, as well as leaf litter and rocks. Conditions seemed good with adequate moisture but only a single individual was found, under a small pine log lying beside the road.

All three newly discovered species are members of a tiny salamander genus called Thorius. They are smaller than matchsticks, while other Thorius critters are barely more than half an inch long. Scientists had found it was almost impossible to tell any of the species apart because their bodies are so similar.

But since the 1970s, the scientists have developed molecular techniques like DNA analysis and digital imaging, so that now they have identified 29 distinct Thorius species, including the newly discovered ones.

(Source: San Francisco Chronicle)

Scientists develop skin patch with on-the-spot sweat monitor app

Scientists in the United States have developed a flexible microfluidic device that easily sticks to the skin and measures sweat levels to show how the wearer's body is responding to exercise.

The low-cost device, which can quickly analyze key elements such as lactate, Ph or glucose levels and let the user know if they should stop or change their activity, could also in future help diagnose and monitor disease, the researchers said.

"Sweat is a rich, chemical broth containing a number of important chemical compounds with physiological health information," said John Rogers, a professor Northwestern University in the United States who led the development of what he called a "lab on the skin".

Reporting results of the trial of the device in the journal Science Translational Medicine, the researchers said one of its attractions is that it allows people to monitor their health on the spot without the need for blood sampling.

The device, a slim, flexible patch measuring less than a couple of centimeters across, has integrated electronics that do not need batteries and can connect wirelessly to a smartphone.

Rogers explained that during exercise, sweat winds through the tiny microscopic channels of the device and into four compartments. Here, it reacts with chemical reagents to produce color-based readings relating to pH and to concentrations of glucose, chloride and lactate.

(Source: Reuters)

"We all have a reason for living I am blessed mine has two eyes a heartbeat and calls me mum."

Nikki Rowe

Violence against women 'serious obstacle' to sustainable development: Ban

Underlining that violence against women and girls is not only a human rights violation but also a serious obstacle to sustainable development, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for "meaningful" action to prevent and respond to such violence.

"Violence against women and girls imposes large-scale costs on families, communities and economies," Secretary-General Ban said in his message on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Afghan women in Kabul weave baskets using date leaves.

Ban explained that when women cannot work as a result of violence, their employment could be put at risk, jeopardizing much-needed income, autonomy and their ability to leave abusive relationships.

He added that the violence also results in lost productivity for businesses, and drains resources from social services, the justice system and health-care agencies. The net result "is enormous suffering as well as the exclusion of women from playing their full and rightful roles in society," he stressed.

"The world cannot afford to pay this price. Women and girls cannot afford it – and should not have to," he highlighted, adding: "Yet such violence persists every day, around the world."

But efforts to address such violence, while having strong political commitment, suffer from lack of resources, including funding.

Since 2008, Ban has been leading the UNiTE campaign to End Violence against Women, which calls for global action to increase resources and promote solutions.

"I call on governments to show their commitment by dramatically increasing national spending in all relevant areas, including in support of women's movements and civil society organizations," he said.

He further called on world leaders as well as private sector, philanthropies and concerned citizens to contribute to UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and to the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.

Recalling the Orange the World campaign aiming for a bright future for women and girls, Mr. Ban said: "With dedicated investment, we can keep these lights shining, uphold human rights and eliminate violence against women and girls for good."

"It is essential that Afghan women and girls can fully exercise their freedom and contribute to the building of the nation, without the threat of physical harm," said Pernille Kardel, the secretary-general's deputy special representative for Afghanistan and acting head of UNAMA.

(Source: UN News Center)

RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Pumpkin soup

"This delicious, cream-like soup is served at our family's Thanksgiving dinner every year."

Ingredients:

6 cups chicken stock
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
4 cups pumpkin puree
1 teaspoon chopped fresh parsley
1 cup chopped onion
1/2 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
1 clove garlic, minced
1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
5 whole black peppercorns

Directions:

Heat stock, salt, pumpkin, onion, thyme, garlic, and peppercorns. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, and simmer for 30 minutes uncovered.

Puree the soup in small batches (1 cup at a time) using a food processor or blender.

Return to pan, and bring to a boil again. Reduce heat to low, and simmer for another 30 minutes, uncovered. Stir in heavy cream. Pour into soup bowls and garnish with fresh parsley.

Imam Reza's mother, endowed with honor and virtue

As for the mother of Imam Reza (AS), she was endowed with all qualities of honor and virtue, through which the Muslim woman becomes exalted, such as chastity, purity, and great soul.

She is among the glorious women in Islam. His mother was a slave-wife, and this quality does not decrease her position, for Islam has made piety and good deeds as a measure to differentiate men from each other, and everything other than this measure is not important.

The narrators have reported many narrations about how Imam al-Kazim (AS) married this glorious lady. The following are some of them:

She was among the noble non-Arabs and was the retainer of Hamida Khatoon, the mother of Imam Musa al-Kazim (AS). She was among the meritorious women in her intellect, her religion, and her honoring her mistress, Hamida. She did not sit before her in order to honor and magnify her. So Hamida said to her son Imam Musa (AS): "My little son, surely Takktum is a slave-girl. I have never seen a slave-girl better than her. I have no doubt that Allah will manifest her children. I have granted her to you and advise you to treat her kindly."

It was reported that Imam al-Kazim (AS), said to his companions: "By Allah, I have bought this slave-girl according to Allah's command and inspiration." He was asked about this statement and he replied: "While I was sleeping my grandfather and

my father came to me, and there was with them a piece of silk cloth. They spread the piece, and suddenly there was a shirt in which was the picture of this slave-girl. Then they said: 'Musa, from this slave-girl you will have the best of the people of the earth after you.'

Then my father ordered me: 'If a baby-boy is born for you, name him 'Ali.' Then he said: 'Allah, the Great and Almighty, will manifest justice and mercy through him. Blessed is he who believes in him, and woe unto him who shows enmity toward him and denies him!"

These are some of the narrations which have been reported about how Imam Musa al-Kazim, peace be on him, married this noble lady. He showed sincere love for her, and she enjoyed admiration and respect in his house.

Her name

As for the name of this pure lady, the narrators have differed over it. They following are some of their opinions about it:

Takktum, many historians think that her name is Takktum and she was also famous as Najma Khatoon.

Concerning this name the poet composed the following lines when he praised Imam ('Ali al-Reza), peace be on him:

'Ali, the magnified, is the best of the men in soul, father, family, and grandfathers.

Takktum has brought him to us for knowledge and clemency. He will be the eighth Imam who will deliver the proof of Allah.

This is an Arabic name with which ladies from among the Arab women were called, and concerning it the poet says:

The two imaginations circled and increased in malady the imagination of Takkna` and the imagination of Takktum.

Her reverential fear

This pure lady was among the worshipful women. She devoted herself to the acts of obedience to Allah, for she followed the behavior of her husband, Imam al-Kazim, peace be on him, the Imam of the Allah-fearing and those who turn to Allah, the Most High, in repentance. Among the qualities of her worship is that when she gave birth to Imam Reza, peace be on him, she said: "Help me with (finding) a wet nurse." She was asked: "Has your milk decreased?" She replied, "The milk has not decreased, but I want to perform a part of my prayers and glorification."

Have you seen how this angelic lady adored Allah and devoted herself to Him. She asked (the people) to help her with finding a wet nurse for her baby lest it should divert her from performing her prayers and glorification.

(Source: imamreza.net)

Reporter becomes Canada's first hijab-clad news anchor

A Toronto television journalist is believed to be Canada's first anchor to don a Muslim head scarf at one of the city's major news broadcasters.

Ginella Massa was asked to fill in on the anchor desk for CityNews' 11pmbroadcast last week and created a buzz after the broadcast ended and she Tweeted, "That's a wrap! Tonight wasn't just important for me. I don't think a woman in hijab has ever anchored a newscast in Canada."

Massa, 29, said on Friday that she became Canada's first hijab-wearing television news reporter in 2015 while reporting for CTV News in Kitchener, Ontario, a city west of Toronto. She moved back to Toronto, where she grew up, earlier this year to take a reporting job at CityNews.

Massa recognized the personal career strides she had made after stepping out of the anchor desk, but she said it took her editor to point out the larger significance.

"It wasn't until my editor said, 'Hey, great job! Was that a first for Canada? A woman in a hijab?' And I said yes. And so I tweeted about it. As much as I knew it was important, I

Ginella Massa, a Toronto TV reporter believed to be Canada's first anchor to don a Muslim head scarf.

didn't expect the reaction that I received. My phone hasn't stopped buzzing for the last week," Massa said.

Her achievement comes amid heightened concerns about anti-Muslim sentiment in the U.S. and Europe. During the U.S. presidential election campaign, Donald Trump called for a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out" what is going on.

"I've talked to many women who are journalists in the U.S. who work behind the scenes and they've told me that they face multiple challenges trying to get on air," said Massa. "They've been told because of their hijab, that's not going to happen. That makes me really sad because they're being held back by someone else's idea of what the public can or cannot handle."

Although the reaction to Massa's anchor stint and reporting role has been mostly positive in Canada, she said she has received a handful of negative comments and Tweets.

"But this is all the more reason in today's climate to see positive images of Muslim women," she said. "They are a symbol of Islam when they wear the hijab and that carries a powerful image. It's so important to see positive images of us in the media."

(Source: The Guardian)

Why women are better decision-makers than men

They say the average person makes 35,000 decisions a day. Some are quick and thoughtless, like whether to have tea or coffee; others concern the big stuff, like what school you should send your child to, or whether to apply for that job.

Yet in her new book, How Women Decide, Therese Huston explores the theory that women's decisions are respected less than men's - and why this could be holding women back.

"There's a huge double standard when it comes to how men and women are perceived as decision-makers," explains Huston, a cognitive psychologist from Seattle University.

Huston decided to write the book after looking at her bookshelf: "At one end, there were these best-selling books about how to be a brilliant decision-maker - all written by men and featuring interviews with men such as stockbrokers and athletes. At the other end were books aimed at women, on gaining leadership skills and confidence. I thought, 'Once those women are at the table, will their decisions be taken as seriously as men's?'?"

She believes not. "Men are respected as decision-makers more than women, especially in the workplace, largely because there's this cultural belief that women are incapable of making smart choices at work. You see slightly mocking studies about women taking too long deciding what to wear each day - but where are the similar ones looking into how long men take to choose a new car?

"These stereotypes back the belief that if you want a decision to be made quickly and effectively, you should ask a man. They may also be causing women to question their ability to make the big decisions."

So Huston set out to pick apart the stereotypes to see what scientific research had found. "Firstly, I found that the trait of decisiveness is very valued. Studies show that it is the top-ranking quality we look for in a leader. Studies also show that society sees men as being more decisive. However, scientific research shows that men and women struggle with decision-making equally. The only difference I found was during the teenage years - teenage girls are more indecisive than teenage boys. Otherwise, there's little difference between the genders."

However, there are some differences. "Women are more collaborative," says Huston. "A female boss is more likely to ask the opinions of those around her when making a choice. Women ask for input, which has been shown to help you make better decisions. Ironically, however, this is often seen as a weakness rather than a strength.'

She also found that during times of stress, men and women make different choices - and the outcomes are often better when women are involved (a recent Fortune magazine article on the financial crash of 2007 was entitled "How more women on Wall Street could have prevented the financial crisis"). Or as Huston puts it, "Neuroscientists know about the differences between the way men and women make decisions, but investments bankers probably don't." Study after study backs this view up.

Cognitive neuroscientists Mara Mather, from the University of Southern California, and Nichole R. Lighthall, from Duke University, North Carolina, recently studied the way men and women make decisions and found that in times of stress, they react very differently. During their study, which involved playing a virtual gambling game, they found that when the women became stressed, they made smart decisions - quitting while they were ahead or taking safe bets - but when the men became stressed, they did the opposite, risking everything for a slim chance of winning big.

Another study, by neurobiologist Ruud van den Bos from Radboud University in the Netherlands, also found a greater tendency in men to make risky decisions when stressed. At the same time, it found that women make better decisions when under pressure and the closer a woman gets to a deadline or stressful event, the sharper her decision-making skills become. Yet van den Bos found that the women in the study were more critical of their decision-making ability than the men.

Huston says women are often brought into big companies when things are falling apart - yet if they were included when key decisions were initially being made, it might have prevented the problems arising.

(Source: The Sydney Morning Herald)

IN FOCUS IRNA/ Fatemeh Behboodi

Iranian pilgrims cross Iraq into the country via Shalamcheh border in southwestern Khuzestan province after attending Arbaeen rituals, on Nov 20, 2016.

Trump, without evidence, says illegal voting cost him U.S. popular vote

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump said in a tweet that he won the popular vote in the Nov. 8 election "if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally", though he provided no evidence of widespread voter fraud.

The allegation by Trump, who won the required votes in the Electoral College to secure the presidency, comes as Democratic rival Hillary Clinton's lead in the popular vote over Trump has surpassed 2.0 million votes and is expected to grow to more than 2.5 million as ballots in populous states such as California continue to be tallied.

Clinton's legal team said on Saturday it had agreed to participate in a recount of Wisconsin votes after the state's election board approved the effort requested by Green Party candidate Jill Stein, which Trump has called "ridiculous."

"In addition to winning the Electoral College in a landslide, I won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally," the Republican Trump tweeted as reporters waited for him to leave his Mar-a-Lago golf resort in Florida to fly back to his residence in New York City.

The U.S. presidential race is decided by the Electoral College, based on a tally of wins from the state-by-state contests, rather than by the national vote. Trump has surpassed the 270 electoral votes needed to win the White House. The

Electoral College results are expected to be finalized on Dec. 19. Trump takes office on Jan. 20.

"It would have been much easier for me to win the so-called popular vote than in the Electoral College in that I would only campaign in 3 or 4 states instead of the 15 states that I visited," Trump added in follow-up tweets.

Several hours later, Trump tweeted, again without citing evidence: "Serious voter fraud in Virginia, New Hampshire and California - so why isn't the media reporting on this? Serious bias - big problem!" Clinton won all three states.

A spokesman for Trump did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Criticizng recount effort

Before the election, Trump made unsubstantiated allegations that the results of the election might be "rigged" against him but several studies have found no evidence of widespread or significant voter fraud in the United States.

Since the vote, his message has alternated between appealing for unity and railing against his opponents and the media.

In a video message released ahead of the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday on Thursday, Trump said he hoped it would be a time for Americans "to begin to heal our divisions" following a "long and bruising political campaign."

In a tweet on Saturday, Trump derided the fundraising effort by Stein to launch recounts in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania as a "scam" that is "is now being joined by the badly defeated and demoralized Dems."

Those states had voted Democratic in recent presidential elections but all voted narrowly in favor of the Republican Trump in this month's election. The recounts are not expected to change the results of the election.

Stein, who won about 1.0 percent of the national vote, has said she wants a recount to guarantee the integrity of the U.S. voting system, a push that came after some computer scientists and election lawyers raised the possibility that hacks could have affected the results.

Democratic President Barack Obama's administration has said there is no evidence of electoral tampering, but experts have said that the only way to verify the results are accurate is to conduct a recount.

(Source: Reuters)

New UN chief, in China, calls for human rights respect

The United Nations needs to make sure there is an "effective combination" of human, civil and economic rights in a world where many rights are not respected, UN secretary general-elect Antonio Guterres said on Monday during a visit to Beijing.

China's leadership has overseen a sweeping crackdown on activists since President Xi Jinping took power, including detaining or imprisoning dozens of rights lawyers in what the government says is the targeting of criminal acts.

While in China in July, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on China to respect civil society.

China often clashes with UN bodies and envoys over the issue of human rights, and was angered last month when the UN human rights chief spoke at an award ceremony for a prominent Chinese academic jailed for life two years ago.

Speaking to reporters with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi standing at his side, Guterres, without specifically mentioning China, said what was needed was a United Nations that abides by its principles.

"In a world torn by war, a United Nations able to enhance diplomacy for peace," he said.

"In a world where so many rights are not respected, to make sure that there is an effective combination in human rights, of the civil and political rights and the economic and social rights in a balanced way," Guterres said.

Wang made no mention of human rights in his comments, but said he thought Guterres would make an "outstanding" secretary general and said the world had great expectations of the United Nations.

"The U.N. is an effective platform for responses to global challenges and the central institution for international efforts to handle global affairs," Wang said.

Guterres, who assumes his role on Jan. 1, praised China's role in UN peacekeeping missions and hot spot diplomacy.

"China can be a very important honest broker, trying to bring together some that are involved in conflict," he said. "China can play a very important role in the diplomacy for peace that the world badly needs today."

While China has been deeply involved in efforts to resolve the Iran and North Korea nuclear issues, and in African problems like South Sudan, it is also stretching its wings to try to help bring peace in the Middle East.

(Source: Reuters)

Kerry makes 'unbelievable effort' to save Syrian rebels from Trump, Russia confirms

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has significantly intensified contacts with Russia on Syria, the Kremlin confirmed, substantiating a report that Kerry wants to seal a deal with Moscow before Donald Trump assumes the U.S. presidency in January.

The report, by Washington Post columnist Josh Rogin, says Kerry is taking a last-ditch effort to stop the Syrian operation in eastern Aleppo, because the Trump administration may "squarely on the side of [Syrian President] Bashar al-Assad."

Russian presidential aide Yury Ushakov confirmed that Kerry has lately intensified contacts with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov on Syria.

"This [effort] could be called unbelievable, in terms that there have never been so many phone calls between the Secretary of State and Russia's FM which were focused on discussing a single issue – Syria," he told journalists. Ushakov refrained from commenting on whether there was any progress on it.

According to the Post piece, which cites four unnamed U.S. officials with the knowledge of the situation, Kerry hopes to seal a localized ceasefire in Aleppo by offering to separate members of the so-called moderate opposition from terrorist groups like Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (formerly Al-Nusra Front). The report says Kerry brought in other nations like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and at times Iran in a bid to seal the deal.

"Officials acknowledge that a frustrated Kerry still has not been given authority by the White House to bring any meaningful pressure to bear against Assad or Russia, placing him in a weak negotiating position. The prospect of Hillary Clinton being elected president gave Kerry some leverage, because she was expected to pursue a more hawkish Syria policy," Rogin wrote.

A ceasefire in Aleppo on Kerry's terms may be a hard bargain to sell. For once, Russia insists that U.S. failure to separate moderates from terrorists, which was a key point of the truce negotiated by Moscow and Washington in September, was the reason that ceasefire collapsed.

The Syrian government operation to retake eastern Aleppo from armed groups also appears to be progressing, with latest reports saying that the militants lost a third of their territories to the advancing army. Stopping the siege now may give those fighters time to regroup, rearm and mount a counter-offensive.

Moscow appears to be reluctant to strike any significant deal with the outgoing administration and is waiting for Trump to present all the key figures in his future government.

"We will patiently wait for that team to take their seats and then we are interested in having intensive dialogue with them," Ushakov said.

(Source: RT)

Trump-style Nepotism: Family connections hikes within president-elect transition team

7 → C. Wright Mills is of the opinion that, when the "power elite" collaborate closely with each other, their decision or lack of decisions will have enormous consequences, not only for ordinary Americans but also for the people all around the world (e.g., Trump's position on climate change, border control, relations with friends and foes, and immigration has grown concerns all around the world). Robert Reich in his latest book, "Saving Capitalism: For the Many, Not the Few," thinks "the increasing concentration of political power in a corporate and financial elite [threatens capitalism] that has been able to influence the rules by which the economy runs," he spoke to Real Time Economics. It does seem, the better way to read C. Wright Mills for better understanding, is listening to Bernard "Bernie" Sanders, a self-described Democratic socialist and United States Senator from Vermont, and the one who campaigned against Hillary Clinton for the party's 2016 U.S. Presidential nomination, when he said: "Let us wage a moral and political war against the billionaires and corporate leaders, on Wall Street and elsewhere, whose policies and greed are destroying the middle class of America."

Abbas Torabi has done his MA in North American Studies in Faculty of World Studies, University of Tehran.

François Fillon's victory creates strategy problem for Marine Le Pen

6 → **Radical shock**

The battle will largely focus on economic policy. Fillon has promised a "radical shock" for France with free-market reform, major cuts to public sector jobs and reducing public spending. Le Pen claims to represent the "forgotten" French underclass and has an economic line that is essentially leftwing: she is anti-globalization and favors protectionism and state intervention. Le Pen's campaign director, David Rachline, has called Fillon's program "economically insane" for wanting to slash 500,000 public sector jobs.

Le Pen's advisers believe Fillon will struggle to appeal to the lower middle class and working class voters who are afraid of losing their jobs. The Front National has slammed Fillon as a symbol of lawless, ultra-free market, globalized capitalism. Fillon, in return, says Le Pen's economic project is simply "a cut and paste of the extreme left".

There are some elements about Fillon that the Front National relishes – he is loathed by the left and so in theory could have difficulty in harnessing left-wing voters to fully line up behind him in final-round tactical voting against Le Pen. But there are other elements of a Fillon candidacy that will make things more complex for the far right. Against Fillon, the Front National will be forced to confront its own internal divisions. In recent years, the party has broadened its electoral appeal by calling itself "neither left nor right", striking a delicate balance between internal differences on whether its economic policy should be more free market and whether or not to take a more high-profile stance on the social issues that appeal to the religious right.

"Fillon presents us with a strategy problem, he's the most dangerous [candidate] for the Front National," Marion Maréchal Le Pen, the Catholic and socially conservative Front National MP and niece of Marine Le Pen, told journalists this week.

With Le Pen's presidential campaign not beginning in earnest until February, and the Socialist party's candidate undecided, analysts agree that it is too early to establish what damage Fillon could do to Le Pen.

In recent days, Fillon has been fiercely outspoken against what he calls the "extremism" of the Front National. But the left has not forgiven him for a comment in 2013 when he was asked who he would hypothetically vote for in a runoff that pitted the Socialists against the Front National. He replied that he would vote for whichever was "the less sectarian", implying that the Socialist party was on a parallel with the far right.

(Source: The Guardian)

Trump considers retired General Petraeus as top diplomat: Bloomberg

Donald Trump will meet with retired U.S. General David Petraeus on Monday as the president-elect considers him to serve as U.S. secretary of state, Bloomberg reported, citing a senior official with Trump's transition team.

Petraeus, a former CIA director who resigned in 2012 after it emerged he had an extra-marital affair, has indicated that he would serve in Trump's administration if asked.

(Source: Reuters)

WikiLeaks releases more than 500k U.S. diplomatic cables from 1979

WikiLeaks has released more than half a million U.S. diplomatic cables from 1979, covering numerous incidents such as the Iranian revolution, the siege of Mecca, and Saddam Hussein becoming president of Iraq.

Consisting of 531,525 cables, the latest batch - known as 'Carter Cables III' – marks the six-year anniversary of 'Cablegate', when WikiLeaks released classified cables sent to the U.S. State Department, revealing assessments of countries and details of eavesdropping.

"If any year could be said to be the 'year zero' of our modern era, 1979 is it," Julian Assange wrote in a statement on the WikiLeaks website. "In 1979 it seemed as if the blood would never stop. Dozens of countries saw assassinations, coups, revolts, bombings, political kidnappings and wars of liberation."

The election of Margaret Thatcher as British Prime Minister and the Three Mile Island nuclear incident are some of the incidents during the year cited by Assange.

Also included in the cables are new documents on the Irish Republican Army (IRA), who in 1979 killed Lord Mountbatten, cousin of Britain's Queen Elizabeth. His death is discussed in the newly-released cables.

Other subjects covered in the cables include the USSR invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian hostage crisis.

This release brings to 3.3 million the number of U.S. diplomatic cables published as part of the WikiLeaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (PLUSD), the world's largest searchable collection of United States confidential, or formerly confidential, diplomatic communications.

(Source: RT)

Brazil's president to block any corruption amnesty

Brazil's President Michel Temer, together with congressional leaders, vowed to block any attempt by legislators to grant themselves a corruption amnesty as he sought to defuse a series of scandals.

In a rare weekend news conference, the president sought to reassure Brazilians that he is fighting corruption among the political elite and working to restore an economy that he predicted will see an upturn in the second quarter of 2017.

Temer -- a center-right veteran politician who took power after the bruising impeachment of his leftist predecessor Dilma Rousseff -- has stated his mission is to save Brazil from its worst recession and corruption scandal in decades.

However, the country's would-be savior is now beset by controversy himself just as the Senate prepares to vote Tuesday on a 20-year spending freeze that would be the first of several deep reforms billed as measures to restore the economy's health.

Seated alongside the speakers of the Senate and lower house of Congress, Temer said he would veto any attempt by the legislature to grant itself an amnesty on undeclared campaign donations.

"It would be impossible for the president of the republic to approve something of this nature," he said. "We all agreed there isn't the slightest basis... for going ahead with this proposal."

He was responding to public outrage over an attempt in the lower house on Thursday to vote on a bill apparently including an amnesty for the previous acceptance of undeclared funds -- often suspected to be bribes -- in political campaigns.

Temer, who took office vowing to end the paralysis and infighting of the Rousseff presidency, was also forced to respond to the latest crisis within his own cabinet.

(Source: AFP)

Rebels in Aleppo suffer biggest defeat since 2012

1 → Aleppo's full recapture would deal a decisive blow to the foreign-backed militants, who have been in control of its eastern side since 2012.

Syria's Al-Watan daily, which is close to the government, reported quick advances by the army.

The next phase of the operation, the report said, would be "to divide the remaining area into security districts that will be easily controlled and to capture them successively."

The advance would then "push the gunmen to turn themselves (in)... or accept national reconciliation under the terms of the Syrian state."

Amid army operations against terrorists, thousands of civilians have managed to flee the militant-held parts towards the government-controlled areas.

The army has set up several humanitarian corridors to facilitate the exit of civilians as well as those militants seeking to leave.

(Source: SANA)

Real Madrid and Germany's Toni Kroos not planning to play beyond 32

Toni Kroos has said he is currently thinking about retiring from professional football when his current deal with Real Madrid expires in 2022, telling kicker: "At 32, you are past your prime."

Kroos, 26, signed a long-term contract extension until 2022 last month and at that time told reporters that his plan is to retire at Real Madrid, adding that he is "committed to playing each of those six years" at the Bernabeu.

In a lengthy interview with German football magazine kicker, the Germany midfielder has now said that he could retire from professional football altogether once that deal expires.

"I will be 32 by the time my contract ends, and that's certainly a point where I won't have a long way to go as a player, or at least that's the plan right now," he said. "Sure, I don't know how I'll feel then, but there is no plan that includes playing football at 38 or 39.

"If I were to predict it today, it's more likely that I'll call it a day. But I can't give an exact prognosis yet."

Kroos cited the examples of his former Bayern Munich and Germany teammates Bastian Schweinsteiger, 32, and Philipp Lahm, 33, who both appear to be nearing the end of their careers despite taking different career paths.

"I think at 32 you are past your prime as a footballer," he said. "There are differences. Bastian Schweinsteiger is struggling with injuries more often than Philipp Lahm. I think it's important to have an idea and try to stay fit for as long as possible. But I'd say it's a good age to retire. But I won't necessarily be held to my words in six years."

For now, Kroos is still in his prime as a footballer and has several career goals. He joined Madrid from Bayern in 2014 and has yet to win La Liga, although he has already lifted the Champions League.

"I finished second here twice in two years, and twice it was tight," he said. "If you are behind by only one or two points after 38 matches -- in which so much can happen -- then it's proof of just how close the race is here. But of course, we want to stake our claim to the title. Preferably more titles than in the past 10 years. It was good to win two Champions League trophies as a compensation.

He added: "It's certainly not only my personal goal to win the league a few times. It's very important to me."

When asked by kicker which Real player he would pick for the Germany national team if he had the chance, Kroos heaped praise on Croatia midfielder Luka Modric and Wales forward Gareth Bale.

"Can I pick two?" he asked. "I'd take Luka Modric and Gareth Bale. It's a lot of fun to play with Luka. We clicked from the first day on -- we are people with similar thinking but a different playing style. We complement each other.

"Gareth is a weapon with his speed, his left foot and his headers."

Earlier this month, Kroos was named on the 23-man shortlist for The Best FIFA Men's Player 2016 but the midfielder is aware he has little prospect of winning the award.

"Sure, it's nice to get appreciation from the outside," he said. "But generally, I don't think personal accolades are appropriate in football. I would not swap the World Cup title for any accolade. But I could imagine that quite a few would swap every accolade for a World Cup title."

The 2014 World Cup winner, who is currently sidelined with a broken bone in his right foot, added: "It's not important for me. I want to win trophies in the summer and not accolades in the winter." *(Source: Soccernet)*

Zaha switches to Ivory Coast from England

Crystal Palace winger Wilfried Zaha has decided to switch his international allegiance to Ivory Coast from England.

The 24-year-old was able to make the switch to Ivory Coast as his two England caps came in friendlies, against Sweden in 2012 and Scotland the following year.

"The Ivorian-English attacking midfielder Wilfried Zaha has chosen to play for the Elephants, under the colours of the Ivory Coast, his country of origin," the Ivorian Football Federation (FIF) said in a statement.

"In the presence of his father, of Augustin Sidy Diallo (president of the FIF) and Michel Dussuyer (Elephants coach), he signed at the bottom of the demand to change his sporting nationality addressed to FIFA."

(Source: Reuters)

Tite: Ronaldo has been the best this year

Tite believes Cristiano Ronaldo deserves to win The Best FIFA Men's Player 2016 honour and has explained why Lionel Messi would not make his top three.

"Messi's the best in the world, but this year, Ronaldo has been the best," the Brazil coach told the Estado de Sao Paulo newspaper. "For his triumphs, Cristiano's year has been better.

"In second, Neymar, and in third, [Antoine] Griezmann. I left Messi out because he was injured a lot. Cristiano is direct, is fascinated with the goal. Messi is playful, creative."

Ronaldo helped Real Madrid win the UEFA Champions League and Portugal win the UEFA EURO this year. The 31-year-old is hoping to fire his club to FIFA Club World Cup glory in December.

Ronaldo, Messi, Griezmann and Neymar are among the 23 players in the running for The Best FIFA Men's Player. 50 per cent of the vote will be determined by the head coaches and captains of the world's national teams. The remaining 50 per cent will be split between an online public ballot, which has now concluded, and a selected group of 200-plus media representatives.

The winner will be crowned at The Best FIFA Football Awards™ ceremony in Zurich on 9 January 2017.

(Source: FIFA)

Tournament of Champions map drawn in Kazan

Excitement has gathered pace for the FIFA Confederations Cup as the Official Draw was made on Saturday, held at the Kazan Tennis Academy.

Assisted by two-time Olympic gold medallist Yelena Isinbaeva and five-time Russian Premier League winner Sergey Semak, the draw ceremony revealed who will face who and at which venues in the group phase of the Tournament of Champions, which takes place in Russia from 17 June-2 July 2017.

Group A: Russia, New Zealand, Portugal, Mexico

Group B: Champion of Africa, Chile, Australia, Germany

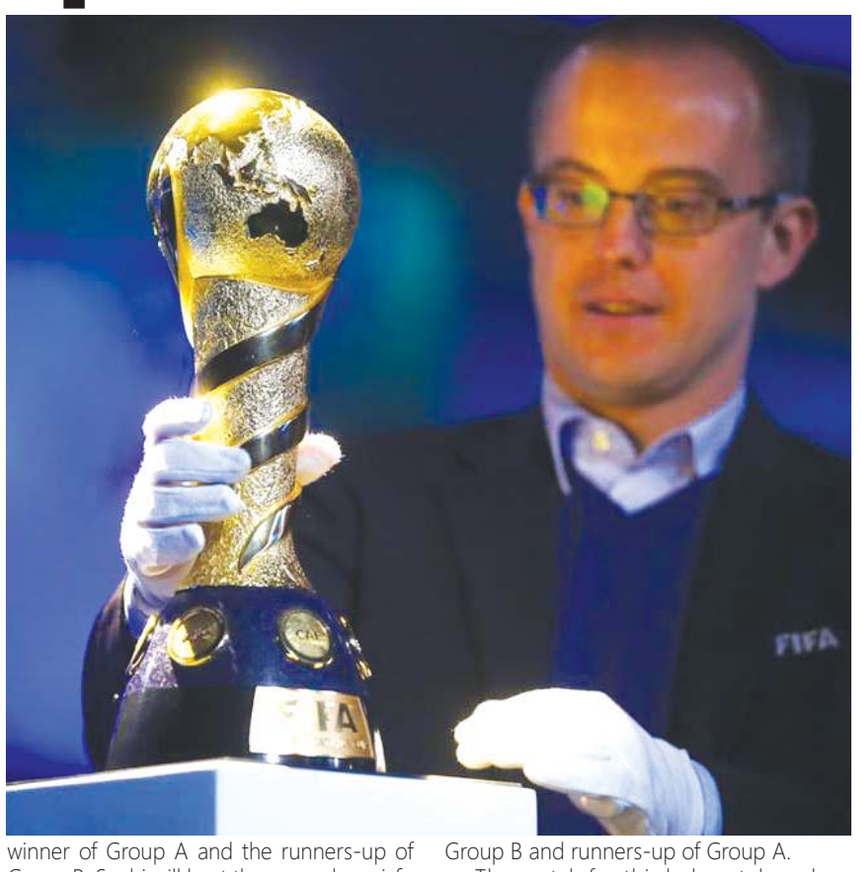
The opening match of the tournament will see hosts Russia face New Zealand, to be played on Saturday 17 June 2017 in Saint Petersburg at the Saint Petersburg Stadium.

Another match that football supporters around the globe will surely have circled on their calendars is Germany against Chile on Thursday 22 June 2017 in Kazan.

Meanwhile, the identity of Africa's representative in the tournament will be revealed at the final of the CAF Africa Cup of Nations, to be played on 5 February 2017 in Gabon.

The top two teams in each section advances to the semi-finals. Group matches will be held in Kazan, Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Sochi.

Kazan will host the first semi-final on Wednesday 28 June 2017 between the



winner of Group A and the runners-up of Group B. Sochi will host the second semi-final the next day between the winner of Group B and runners-up of Group A.

The match for third place takes place in Moscow at the Spartak Stadium on 2 July between the losers of those matches. The final will be played in Saint Petersburg at the Saint Petersburg Stadium later that evening.

Festival of Russian culture

Not only did the draw map out the eight participating countries' routes to glory for Russia 2017, it was also a time to enjoy a display of Russian culture. Eighty-seven performers brought colour, music and dance to the stage in Kazan, a 1,000-year-old ancient city.

Television presenters Yana Churikova and Andrey Malakhov hosted the event, while Deputy Secretary General for Football Zvonimir Boban and FIFA's Chief Competitions & Events Officer Colin Smith conducted the draw itself. Anticipation ramped up when two-time FIFA Confederations Cup winner Julio Baptista presented the Winners Trophy after the musical performance. Victoria Lopyreva, an official ambassador for the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™ Host City Rostov-on-Don, then entered the ceremony with Krasava, the tournament's Official Match Ball.

The event set the perfect tone for the 2017 Tournament of Champions, a competition that will give each confederation's best teams the chance at more glory on the very same stage that will host the FIFA World Cup™, the greatest footballing show on Earth, one year later.

(Source: FIFA)

Juan Martín del Potro inspires Argentina to first Davis Cup title in Croatia

Argentina have won the Davis Cup for the first time after Juan Martín del Potro, playing with a broken finger in his left hand, inspired a stirring comeback against the hosts, Croatia, in the final.

Heading into the final day in Zagreb 2-1 ahead, Croatia were on the verge of victory when Marin Cilic surged into a two-set lead against Del Potro but the 2009 US Open champion battled back to level the match at 2-2 with a 6-7, 2-6, 7-5, 6-4, 6-3 win. That set the stage for a deciding rubber and Federico Delbonis swept past Ivo Karlovic 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 to seal victory for Argentina, who had lost their four previous finals. It is the seventh time in Davis Cup history that a country has come from 2-1 down in the final to become champions. Out of the game for nearly two years and forced to undergo three wrist operations Del Potro's comeback has been the feelgood story for tennis in 2016.

Having won a silver medal for Argentina at the Rio Olympics, his upset five-set victory over Britain's Andy Murray went a long way to sending his country into the Davis Cup final, where he won both singles rubbers, having overcome Karlovic 6-4, 6-7, 6-3 7-5 on Friday.

He revealed his broken finger after his singles victory. "It happened when I tried to catch a ball in the fifth set," the right-handed Del Potro said. "This was an emotionally exhausting match and one of the biggest wins of my career. Thanks to all those who prevented me from retiring,

I was very close to never playing again and, well, here I am."

Cilic had earlier beaten Delbonis 6-3 ,7-5, 3-6, 1-6 ,6-2. Victory in Saturday's doubles had put Croatia within one victory of a second title, having landed their first honour in 2005.

The Argentine fans, including Diego Maradona in the VIP box, treated their team to a standing ovation at the end of the tie. The Argentina coach, Daniel Orsanic, who has Croatian roots, singled out Del Potro's heroics.

"What Del Potro did was amazing. He represents his country with so much pride and he also showed how good a player he is," he said. "His achievement today borders on the impossible while Federico played a perfect match and was on top of every ball throughout the contest."

(Source: Guardian)

Rodgers: Nobody has been better than Suarez this year

Brendan Rodgers has lauded Lionel Messi but reckons Luis Suarez warrants The Best FIFA Men's Player 2016 award.

In February, the 29-year-old became the first player in La Liga history to score four goals in back-to-back games. He then hit a hat-trick, as Barcelona beat Granada 3-0 on the final day to pip Real Madrid to the Spanish title, finishing as the 40-goal Pichichi recipient in the process. Suarez has also netted three times in eight FIFA World Cup™ qualifiers this year, including goals that secured Uruguay draws in Brazil and Colombia.

"The last year, I don't think there's been any player better than Luis Suarez," Rodgers told Sky Sports. "In terms of that award, I think he would be very deserving of it in terms of how he's played, what he's given the team, how he's carried the team, and the level that he's played at consistently.

"Lionel Messi is a player that I've admired since I saw him as a young player, a teenager. I've seen him come into the team at 16,17, and the last ten years, he's been remarkable.

"His quality and just the things he's done in the game are magical. I've had the fortune to work with Luis, so I know first-hand his qualities, but they're both brilliant players."

Rodgers, who managed Suarez at Liverpool, has put his coaching acumen against the two-time and reigning Euro-

pean Golden Shoe winner twice this year. The former Nacional, Groningen and Ajax striker scored twice, as Barcelona battered Celtic 7-0 in their first meeting in Group C of the UEFA Champions League, and won a penalty, which Messi converted, in a 2-0 victory in the return match.

Messi and Suarez are among the 23 players hoping to win The Best FIFA Men's Player 2016 award. 50 per cent of the vote will be determined by the head coaches and captains of the world's national teams. The remaining 50 per cent will be split between an online public ballot, which has now concluded, and a selected group of 200-plus media representatives.

The winner will be crowned at The Best FIFA Football Awards™ ceremony in Zurich on 9 January 2017.

(Source: FIFA)

Jeonbuk claim second Asian title, book Japan place

Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors booked their place at December's FIFA Club World Cup in Japan after defeating UAE's Al Ain over two legs in the AFC Champions League final. Noksekjunsa (Green Warriors) recorded a vital 2-1 home victory in the first leg courtesy of a Leonardo brace before Choi Kanghee's charges held out for a 1-1 draw in Abu Dhabi, as the hosts were made to rue a missed penalty.

The Korea Republic side's continental triumph comes 10 years after they were first crowned kings of Asia and will face old acquaintances Club America in the Club World Cup quarter-finals, a decade after both sides first met at the international club competition.

The champions

While they finished top of the pile in Group E in May, Jeonbuk were made to work hard in a tightly-contested four-team pot, pipping FC Tokyo to top spot on goal difference, despite losing to Chinese Super League side Jiangsu Suning and Vietnam's Becamex Binh Duong. They embarked on a valiant unbeaten run in the knockout stages, however, by first overcoming Australia's Melbourne Victory in the Round of 16.

They then made their presence felt in the quarter-finals after emphatically defeating Shanghai 5-0 in their second leg quarter-final meeting before seeing off domestic rivals FC Seoul 5-3 on aggregate in the semi-finals, where Brazilian duo Leonardo and Ricardo Lopes both scored twice over the two legs.

Key points

Though devastated to miss out on AFC Champions League glory at the final hurdle, Al Ain's gifted playmaker Omar Abdulrahman could take some solace in being named as the tournament's best player.

Meanwhile, FC Seoul's Adriano finished top of the tournament's scoring list with 13 goals, equalling the record set by Muriqui at Guangzhou Evergrande in 2013. The hitman notched two hat-tricks, plus scored four against Thailand's Buriram United, but was unable to prevent his side from exiting at the hands of Jeonbuk in the semi-finals. Behind the Brazilian goal-getter was fellow countryman Leonardo with ten goals.

Holders Guangzhou Evergrande failed to make it to the knockout stages after an extremely slow start to life in Group H. After failing to record a victory in their opening four matches, the 2015 champions registered two victories in as many games, but it

was not enough to see them progress beyond the group stage. Meanwhile Pohang Steelers, the tournament's most successful side with a record three titles, finished behind third-placed Guangzhou Evergrande at the foot of Group H.

The stat 32 – The number of AFC Champions League goals that Jeonbuk's evergreen frontman Lee Donggook has to his name, making him the all-time leading goalscorer in the competition. The 103-time Korea Republic international bagged five of them during the 2016 campaign. What they said "It's our first title since 2006, I'm so happy. When we lost in 2011, I saw the fans were so dispirited, so winning the AFC Champions League is an unforgettable dream. Since coming back to Jeonbuk from the national team, we have been building this team so that we can win the AFC Champions League. Finally, it has happened. I want to thank the fans. This is for them," Jeonbuk coach Choi Kanghee, speaking after the final.

"I want to tell the fans I'm sorry about the result and I hope they will support us like they did today, with a full stadium. We promise them we will fight in every competition, for the AFC Champions League, in the domestic league, the cup and everything," Al Ain captain Omar Abdulrahman.

(Source: FIFA)

Iran's Vahedi makes semi-final in IBSF World Amateur Championship

TT SPORTS desk Soheil Vahedi from Iran defeated Michael Judge and booked a place at the IBSF World Snooker Amateur Championship underway in Doha, Qatar.

On Monday, Vahedi, who had defeated German Lukas Kleckers 5-4, continued his excellent run with a 6-1 win over the Irishman in the competition.

He will meet Declan Brennan of Northern Ireland in the semi-final.

Brennan defeated Iran's Hamed Zarehoost 6-1 in quarter-final.

Over 250 players from 55 countries are competing in the IBSF World Snooker championship, which is being held concurrently for men, women and masters.

The 10-day tournament will end on November 29. A total of $16,000 is up for grabs in the men's event of the championship.

The women's event carries a $6,000 purse while $8,000 is at stake for the master players.

The winner of the championship highest break in the men's category will receive $500 cash reward plus certificate.

For women, the highest break will fetch $200 and for the masters' $300.

Alireza Jahanbakhsh expresses sympathy with Iranian victims

TT SPORTS desk Iranian international winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh did not celebrated his goal after scoring for his club AZ Alkmaar in the 5-1 win over Heracles on Sunday.

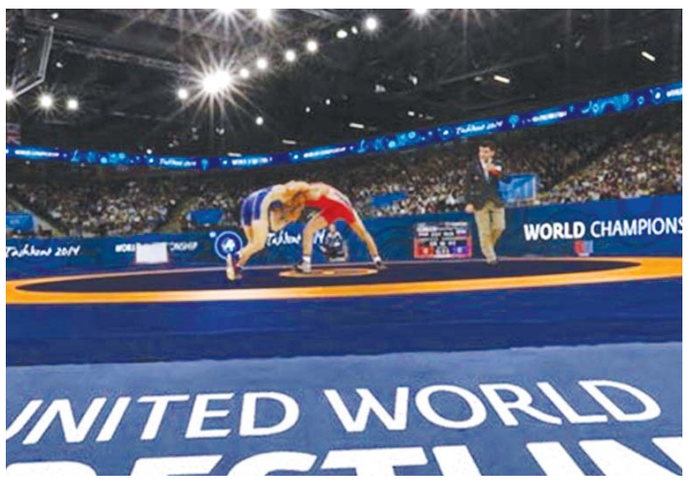
Former NEC Nijmegen star, who came on as a substitute on 83rd minute, needed just nine minutes to score with a rocket shot from edge of the penalty box.

"I did not celebrate due to the recent terrible accidents in which many Iranians died. I did this to show my sympathy with the families who lost their loved ones," Jahanbakhsh said.

A total of 71 Iranian shiite pilgrims have been killed by a suicide bombing claimed by Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) near the Iraqi city of Hilla, 60 miles south of Baghdad on Thursday.

In another terrible accident, At least 44 died and 100 got wounded after two passenger trains collided in Iran's north-central province of Semnan on Friday.

Iran's Hosseini wins bronze at UWW Golden Grand Prix



Amirhossein Hosseini from Iran claimed a bronze medal on the final day of the United World Wrestling (UWW) Golden Grand Prix Final in Baku.

In the 98kg weight class, Hosseini beat Cuba's Reinier Romero 5-3 while Turkey's Cenk Ildem won 3-1 against Azerbaijan's Orkhan Nuriyev for the second bronze.

Gold medal went to Musa Evloev from Russia who defeated Aliaksandr Hrabovik of Belarus.

Iran took part in the prestigious event with four Greco-Roman wrestlers.

The Iranian freestylers had already won four bronze medals in the competition.

(Source: Tasnim)

Three more candidates shortlisted for Iran volleyball job

Three more coaches have been shortlisted for Iran volleyball job after a meeting held in Iran Volleyball Federation headquarters on Saturday.

Earlier on the day, head of the volleyball federation Mohammadreza Davarzani had said Brazilian coach Bernardo Rezande is a candidate to replace current coach Raul Lozano but it seems he is not among the nominees.

Marcelo Mendez, Sada Cruzeiro Argentinean coach, Italian coach Andrea Anastasi and Bulgarian Radostin Stoychev are candidates to coach Iran volleyball team.

Iran is not going to renew Lozano's contract. Under guidance of the Argentinean coach, Iran finished in fifth place in the 2016 Olympic Games.

(Source: Tasnim)

Manchester United make worst start in Premier League era after 13 games

Manchester United have made their worst start to a season in the Premier League era after Sunday's 1-1 draw with West Ham left them with 20 points from their opening 13 games.

The draw -- a fourth in succession at Old Trafford -- leaves Jose Mourinho's men sixth in the table, 11 points behind leaders Chelsea.

United have not taken so few points after 13 games since the 1989-90 campaign, when Alex Ferguson's side finished 13th in the old First Division, five points clear of the relegation zone, although they did win the FA Cup.

They had also been on 20 points after 13 games in the 1990-91 season but only after being deducted a point as the result of a brawl during a defeat to Arsenal. Ferguson's side ultimately finished sixth and won the Cup Winners' Cup.

David Moyes, who lasted less than a season after succeeding Ferguson in 2013, took 22 points from his opening 13 league games, while Louis van Gaal also had 22 from 13 in 2014-15 before accumulating 27 at the same stage last season.

Ferguson took 30 from 13 in 2012-13 when United last lifted the Premier League title.

Sunday's result was also United's first run of four home league games without a win since 1989-90, when Ferguson's side drew three and lost three at Old Trafford between November and February.

Diafra Sakho's opener for West Ham on Sunday -- which came after one minute and 30 seconds -- was also the second fastest goal United have conceded at Old Trafford in the Premier League, trailing only Eden Dzeko's effort for Manchester City in March 2014.

(Source: ESPN)

Iranian women's table tennis team to participate at Finlandia Open

The Iranian women's table tennis team will take part at the 27th Finlandia Open.

The competition will be held at the Kisakallio Sports Institute in Lohja, Finland from December 8 to 11.

The Iranian team in the competition will consist of Neda Shahsavari, Fatemeh Jamali and Maryam Samet.

The team will be headed by Fatemeh Keyvani in the tournament.

The competition is officially recognized by the ITTF (International Table Tennis Federation) and ETTU (European Table Tennis Union) and has ranking status.

About 200 players from more than 30 different countries will take part in the competition.

(Source: Tasnim)

Iran karate fighters stand second in Asian junior championship

Iranian male and female karate practitioners have ranked second at the 15th edition of Asian Karate Federation (AKF) Cadet, Junior & U-21 Championship in Indonesia.

Iran landed in the second position of the chart, having collected six gold, four silver and fifteen bronze medals at the end of the week-long contests at the Celebes Convention Center in the southern Indonesian city of Makassar.

The Iranian karatekas stood behind their Japanese counterparts with 20 gold, three silver and eight bronze medals.

The hosts could pick up two gold, seven silver and a dozen bronze medals to secure the third place.

On Sunday, Iran's Zohreh Barzegar overcame a representative from Chinese Taipei 2-0 in the last contest of the female cadent minus 55-kilogram weight category, and was awarded the gold medal.

Zahra Barzegar, however, lost to her Japanese opponent in the female cadet minus 61-kilogram class, and won a silver medal for Iran.

In the female cadet minus 61-kilogram category, Melika Ahadi prevailed over her Thai rival in the repechage round and settled for the bronze.

Behnoush Najafi also earned a bronze in the female cadet minus 68-kilogram section.

Additionally, Reza Enayati scored a 6-3 win over his Jordanian competitor in the final contest of the male cadet minus 67-kilogram class, and clinched the gold.

Ali Meskini also pocketed a bronze medal in the male cadet minus 55-kilogram category, after his Nepalese opponent did not show up for the repechage encounter.

The 15th edition of AKF Cadet, Junior & U-21 Championship started in Makassar, Indonesia, on November 21, and finished on November 27, 2016.

The continental tournament attracted some 400 male and female karate practitioners from 24 Asian countries, including China, Chinese Taipei, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka and Uzbekistan.

(Source: PressTV)

Iranian archers win three medals in Indoor Archery World Cup - Stage 1

Iranian archers have been awarded three medals, including one gold, at the Indoor Archery World Cup - Stage 1 in Morocco.

On Sunday, Iran's Parisa Rouhanian competed in the final match of the girl's junior recurve section in the city of Marrakesh, and tallied most of the points to stand on the top of the podium and strike the valuable gold medal.

Her compatriot, Sogand Rahmani, finished as the runner-up and snatched the silver.

Also in the boy's junior individual compound

division, Danial Haidarzadeh, fell 144-149 to a Danish contestant, and earned Iran a second silver medal.

Iranian Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs, Masoud Soltanifar, later extended his felicitations to the Iranian female archers over their commendable achievements.

"The spectacular success of the female junior archers in the all-Iranian final of the Indoor Archery World Cup in Morocco is a source of pride for the [Iranian] sports society," Soltanifar wrote in his congratulatory message.

"I am pleased that the veiled and honorable sports girls held onto their cultural and religious values in the international tournament, and flaunted the dear name of Iran and hoisted the country's sacred flag vigorously and well deservedly," he added.

He also expressed hope that Iranian archers could notch up success in more prestigious sporting events, especially the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics.

The Indoor Archery World Cup - Stage 1 opened in Marrakesh, Morocco, on November 26, 2016, and finished the next day.

(Source: PressTV)

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Poem of the day

How would the plants be quickened
by streams and gentle rain?

Rumi

Prayer Times

Noon:11:53 Evening: 17:11 Dawn: 5:26 tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:55 (tomorrow)

NOVEMBER 29, 2016

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tehran to host Intl. Art Festival of Resistance

TT ART desk **TEHRAN —** The Fourth International Art Festival of Resistance will be held in Tehran from December 10, 2016 to January 7, 2017.

Artworks in the forms of painting, poster, sculpture, cartoon and caricature will be showcased during the festival, which will take place at the Saba Art and Cultural Institute of the Iranian Academy of Arts.

Works by artists from over 70 countries have been selected for the event.

In addition, a large number of workshops are scheduled to be held across Iran during the festival.

Arna to give concert in Tehran

TT ART desk TEHRAN – Arna, an all-female Iranian folk music ensemble, is scheduled to give concerts at Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center on December 1 and 2.

The band led by vocalist Azra Vaziri will perform a repertoire of popular traditional songs at the concerts.

Raheleh Firuzi, Setareh Mostafizi, Aida Bakhtiari and Shadi Rahimi are the other members of the ensemble.

Artists come together to raise funds for EB patients

TT ART desk TEHRAN — An exhibition of calligraphic paintings by a group of artists is being organized at Tehran's Bahman Cultural Center to raise funds for people suffering from Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB), a group of inherited connective tissue diseases.

Works by Mojdeh Aftab, Fatemeh Isa-Oghlui, Elham Asgari and Shahrzad Rajabi are on display at the exhibition titled "The String of Freedom".

The exhibit will run until December 5 at the center located at Vafai Alley, Bahman Sq., Navvab Ave.

Bel Canto Symphony Orchestra to perform Italian operas

TT ART desk **TEHRAN —** The Bel Canto Symphony Orchestra will be performing a selection of best-loved Italian operas under the baton of conductor Nima Panahiha at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on December 14.

Pianist Faraz Aqili, violinist Amin Atai, cellist Yasaman Kuzehgar and bassist Hadi Esmaili are among the musicians who will collaborate in the concert entitled "Pulse of Opera".

China plans $2 billion film studio as part of culture drive

BEIJING (AP) — China's government has announced plans to build a $2 billion film studio as part of a national push to expand its cultural influence.

The studio in the southwest municipality of Chongqing will include a theme park and tourist attractions, state media reported late Sunday. Construction will begin early next year and is expected to cost 15 billion yuan ($2.18 billion).

Officials say they have operating agreements already with several foreign partners. The official Xinhua News Agency said the park would include tie-ins with gaming and online entertainment.

The park will be named after President Xi Jinping's signature "One Belt, One Road" program, a multibillion-dollar effort to deepen China's economic and cultural ties with its western and southern neighbors reaching as far as east Africa.

China is already the world's second-largest film market and home to the world's largest theater operator, Dalian Wanda, which has purchased American media companies AMC Theatres and Legendary Entertainment. Its signature film studio, Hengdian World Studios, spans almost 3,000 hectares (7,000 acres).

Facing growing domestic demand, Chinese officials and companies have sought to fend off Western film imports by producing more competitive films locally. A national quota permits just 34 Hollywood films to be shown each year in domestic theaters.

Iranian films "Breath", "Duet" win top awards at Estonian festival

TT ART desk **TEHRAN —** Iranian movies "Breath" and "Duet" won top awards at the 20th Black Nights Film Festival in the Estonian capital of Tallinn, the organizers announced on Saturday evening.

Narges Abyar won the Golden Wolf for best director for her anti-war drama "Breath", and "Duet" by Navid Danesh received the award for best first feature.

Iranian director Reza Mirkarimi presided over the First Feature Competition Jury. Mirkarimi's latest movie "Daughter" was also screened in the Forum section of the event.

"Duet", which tells the story of Minoo who takes her husband, Hamed, to meet his ex-sweetheart, Sepideh, also won the Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema (NETPAC) Award.

"Breath" is about four children whose mother had died a few years ago and their father decides to join the Iranian volunteers on the warfront following Iraq's attack in September 1980.

"A Quiet Heart" by Israeli director Eitan Anner won the Grand Prix at the festival. The film's star, Ania Bukstein, took home the best actress award.

Director/writer Igor Cobileanski won the award for best screenwriter for the Romania/Lithuania/Moldova co-production "Eastern Business", which also brought Ion Sapdaru and Constantin Puscasu the best actor award.

The organizers also paid tribute to late renowned Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami by screening "Take Me Home", Kiarostami's short film about southern Italy, and "76 Minutes and 15 Seconds with Abbas Kiarostami", a montage documentary made by Kiarostami's close friend and collaborator Seifollah Samadian.

This combination photo shows Narges Abyar (L) after accepting the Golden Wolf for best director for "Breath" and director Navid Danesh after receiving the award for best first feature at the 20th Black Nights Film Festival in Tallinn, Estonia on November 26, 2016.

Iranian filmmakers Mehrdad Oskui's acclaimed documentary "Starless Dreams" and Soheil Beiraqi's drama "I" were also shown in the festival.

Painting exhibit raising funds for children with hearing disabilities

TT ART desk **TEHRAN —** Tehran's E1 Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Vajid Amini to raise funds for the Komak Charity Foundation, an institute established by actress Katayun Riahi in Tehran to help children with hearing disabilities.

Entitled "The Other Place", the exhibit shows paintings of the mountainous landscapes covered with snow to highlight the glory of the scenes drowned in a deep silence.

"The idea for the exhibit goes back about five years when I made a trip to southern Qeshm Island, and I have been working on the project for the past two years," he said in a press release published on Monday.

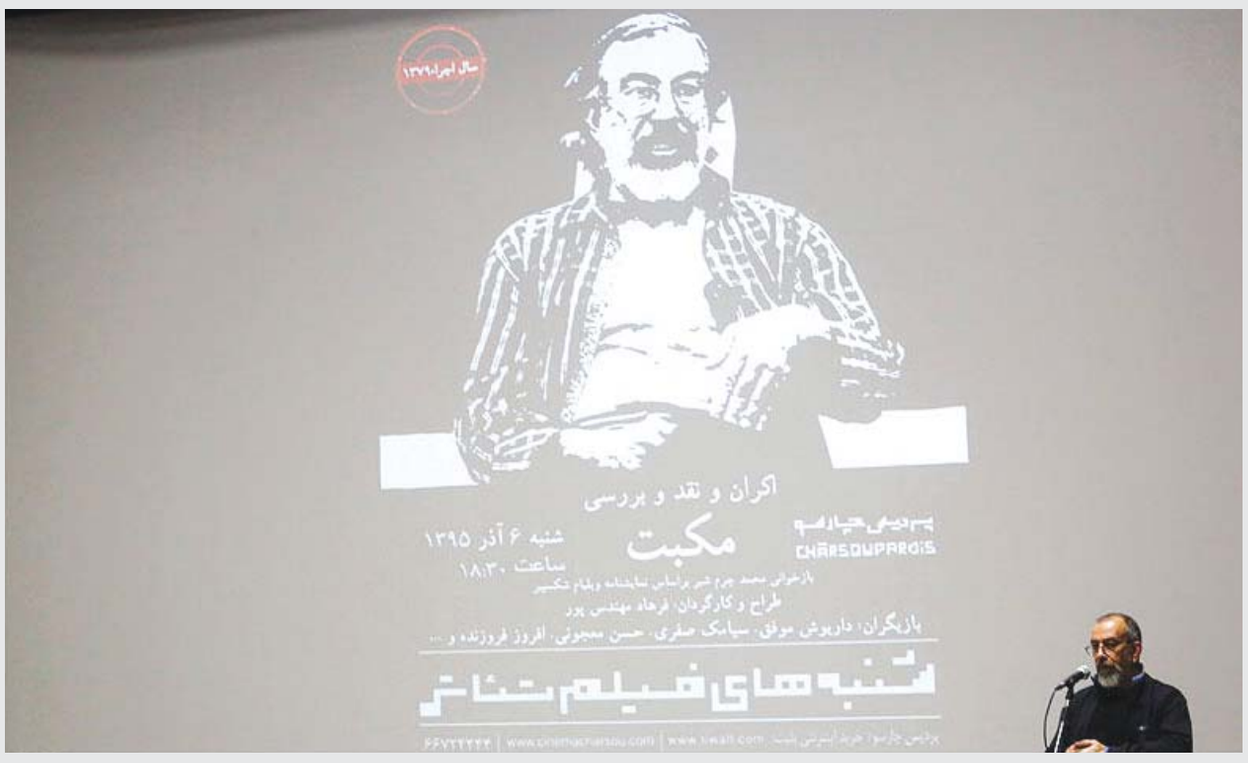
"This exhibit reflects part of my thoughts in an objective and subjective atmosphere. It is subjective because they do not actually reflect any specific landscapes, and objective since they show real landscapes one has seen in one's life," he said.

Actress Riahi, who paid a visit to the exhibit, said that she likes works by Amini and she believes although most of the colors are white, they bear a good spirit.

She also expressed thanks to the director of the gallery, Huri Qavimi, for the support she has given to young artists and her cooperation with charity foundations.

The exhibit will be running until December 21 at the gallery located at 1 Hamid Dead End, off Lesani Alley, Jebheh St., off Mahdieh St., in the Elahieh neighborhood.

PICTURE OF THE DAY **Honaronline/** *Gatha Ziatabari*



Iranian director Farhad Mohanddespur speaks during a review of "Macbeth" at Tehran's Charsu Cineplex on November 26, 2016. The review was conducted after the screening of a film of the play that he staged in Tehran in 2000.

"Moana" cruises with $81.1m Thanksgiving weekend

NEW YORK (AP) — Disney's South Pacific animated tale "Moana" fell short of a "Frozen"-sized debut but nevertheless dominated the Thanksgiving box office with an estimated $81.1 million over the five-day weekend.

The well-reviewed "Moana", about a princess's mythical journey in ancient Polynesia, earned $55.5 million from Friday to Sunday in North America, according to studio estimates Sunday. Though it didn't match the 2013 Thanksgiving release of "Frozen" ($93.6 million over five days in 2013), "Moana" ("MWAH-nah") scored the second-highest Turkey Day debut ever.

Boosted by the star power of Dwayne Johnson and the appeal of original songs from Lin-Manuel Miranda of "Hamilton", "Moana" landed Disney another big hit in a year full of them. The studio has notched four of the top six films ("Finding Dory," "Captain America: Civil War," "Zootopia," "The Jungle Book") and still has "Star Wars: Rogue One" coming in December.

"If you look at the track record of this year, there's definitely a correlation to the films that have broken out and become hits," said Dave Hollis, head of domestic distribution at Disney. "Each of (Disney's top performers) had Rotten Tomatoes scores in the 90 percent range, each of them had CinemaScores that were As. If you make something that has great story and huge scale and is ultimately living under the brand, the chances of having success are overwhelmingly higher."

Falling to second was J.K. Rowling's "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them," which earned $65.8 million over the five-day weekend and $45.1 million over the three-day weekend. The Harry Potter spinoff, from Warner Bros., has brought in $156.2 million in two weeks. Overseas, "Fantastic Beasts", debuted in China, where its $41.1 million fueled a weekend haul of $132 million internationally.

Those two blockbusters far outpaced more star-driven films.

The Brad Pitt-Marion Cotillard World War II romance "Allied" opened with a mediocre $18 million over five days. The Paramount Pictures release, directed by Robert Zemeckis, cost a hefty $85 million to make. But for a proudly old-fashioned film built around the appeal of its stars, "Allied" had to largely do without Pitt's promotional presence. The actor's divorce proceedings from Angelina Jolie largely eclipsed the film, which drew an audience 85 percent over the age of 25.

"It played older and older audiences don't storm the theaters weekend one. I think they're going to take their time," said Kyle Davies, Paramount's head of domestic distribution. "There's not a big influx of new movies until you get closer to Christmas, so we think that's good for the playability of the picture."

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Boosted by the star power of Dwayne Johnson and the appeal of original songs from Lin-Manuel Miranda of "Hamilton", "Moana" landed Disney another big hit in a year full of them. The studio has notched four of the top six films ("Finding Dory," "Captain America: Civil War," "Zootopia," "The Jungle Book") and still has "Star Wars: Rogue One" coming in December.

"If you look at the track record of this year, there's definitely a correlation to the films that have broken out and become hits," said Dave Hollis, head of domestic distribution at Disney. "Each of (Disney's top performers) had Rotten Tomatoes scores in the 90 percent range, each of them had CinemaScores that were As. If you make something that has great story and huge scale and is ultimately living under the brand, the chances of having success are overwhelmingly higher."

Falling to second was J.K. Rowling's "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them," which earned $65.8 million over the five-day weekend and $45.1 million over the three-day weekend. The Harry Potter spinoff, from Warner Bros., has brought in $156.2 million in two weeks. Overseas, "Fantastic Beasts", debuted in China, where its $41.1 million fueled a weekend haul of $132 million internationally.

Those two blockbusters far outpaced more star-driven films.

The Brad Pitt-Marion Cotillard World War II romance "Allied" opened with a mediocre $18 million over five days. The Paramount Pictures release, directed by Robert Zemeckis, cost a hefty $85 million to make. But for a proudly old-fashioned film built around the appeal of its stars, "Allied" had to largely do without Pitt's promotional presence. The actor's divorce proceedings from Angelina Jolie largely eclipsed the film, which drew an audience 85 percent over the age of 25.

"It played older and older audiences don't storm the theaters weekend one. I think they're going to take their time," said Kyle Davies, Paramount's head of domestic distribution. "There's not a big influx of new movies until you get closer to Christmas, so we think that's good for the playability of the picture."