



Egyptian diplomat meets Zarif in Tehran 2

Nuclear agreement not a deal solely between U.S. and Iran: Daryl Kimball

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association in Washington, says the nuclear deal is not a bilateral agreement between the United States and Iran that can be unilaterally abrogated by the incoming administration of Donald Trump.

"The nuclear agreement is not a deal solely between the United States and Iran," Kimball tells the Tehran Times in an exclusive interview.

Kimball says, "If the Trump administration walks away from the nuclear deal, it would also send a dangerous message to our European allies, Russia, and China that the United States cannot be trusted to honor agreements and commitments."

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Strong national growth buys bargaining power: Rouhani

POLITICS TEHRAN — Emerging victorious from a nuclear pact, an OPEC output freeze, and a recent deal with Boeing, President

Hassan Rouhani underscored in comments on Monday that a stronger domestic growth shores up the country's bargaining power in the international arena.

"Our bargaining power in OPEC talks was due to an increase in our oil output," Rouhani said on Monday. ->2



Religious commonalities more important than differences: Sunni female governor

Tehran Times/Hayva Narouei

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Aleppo liberation operation reaches end

Syrian forces are now in control of the northern city of Aleppo, nearly three weeks after Damascus and its allies launched a major offensive to recapture the militant-held part of the city, a pro-opposition monitoring group says.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said on Monday that the battle for Aleppo had reached its end and the government forces were making sweeping advances into the militant-held sector of the city.

The group's director, Rami Abdulrahman, said the militants had now withdrawn from six neighborhoods in the city, their last holdouts in Aleppo.

"The battle of Aleppo has reached its end. It is just a matter of a small period of time, no more, no less... it's a total collapse," Abdulrahman added.

Syrian forces announced earlier in the day that they were in the last steps of liberating Aleppo, saying almost all but two percent of the neighborhoods in the eastern part of the city, which was under the control of the militants, had been liberated.

The Syrian military said it had regained control over 98 percent of eastern Aleppo and that there were only some pockets of militants and civilians in a small sliver of territory in the center of the city.

The announcement came hours after Syrians and allied forces managed to retake Sheikh Saeed, one of the largest neighborhoods in the southern part of Aleppo's militant-dominated east. The army also seized control of al-Fardous neighborhood, one of the most populated districts to the north of Sheikh Saeed.

Militants had earlier admitted the loss of key areas in Aleppo, saying they were being squeezed from every side. They, however, insisted that they were holding seven percent of the areas they used to control.

Maps distributed by the army on Monday showed that the tiny portion of Aleppo remaining under the control of militants was a small silver of land located adjacent to the government-held parts of Aleppo in its center. ->13

Velayati denounces May's comments as worthless

POLITICS TEHRAN — Ali Akbar Velayati, the senior foreign policy advisor to the Leader, said on Monday that British Prime Minister Theresa May's anti-Iran comments will have no "practical effect".

May's remarks were intended to please Saudis who have faced defeats in Syria, Yemen and Iraq, Velayati told reporters after his meeting with Ramadan Shalah, the leader of Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

During the [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council's annual summit in the Bahraini capital Manama last Wednesday, May said she was "clear-eyed" about what she called "the threat" Iran poses to the region.

May also stressed England would help the council "push back" against what she called Iran's "aggressive regional actions."

Velayati said that Britain has no power itself and just follows U.S. policies.

On motivations behind May's comments, Velayati said, "They [the UK] seek to gain benefits and money from the Persian Gulf littoral states, especially Saudi Arabia, and to sell their useless weapons in the Persian Gulf countries."

Iran's Foreign Ministry has said the remarks by May were "irresponsible" and intended to create divisions among regional countries. The ministry also summoned the

"They [the UK] seek to gain benefits and money from the Persian Gulf littoral states, especially Saudi Arabia, and to sell their useless weapons in the Persian Gulf countries."

British envoy to Tehran to express its dismay over the prime minister's remarks.

Iran to take proper stance against U.S.

Velayati said that Iran will take "proper stance" towards the renewal of the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA) by the U.S. Congress.

Iran sees the sanctions renewal, which has been in place since 1996, as a violation of the July 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

"Undoubtedly, Iran has fulfilled its obligations in implementing the JCPOA, but the U.S. has not done so especially in economic area," the senior politician noted.

He said that Iran will respond properly if the act is implemented.

The ISA is awaiting an endorsement by the president.

The U.S. Senate passed the ISA on December 1. It was first approved by the House of Representatives.

Iran's crude oil price up \$1.8 in a week

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran sold its light crude oil at \$46.6 per barrel in the week ended on December 2, with \$1.84 rise from its previous week, IRNA reported on Monday.

Iran's light oil price stood at \$40.12 on average since the beginning of 2016 until December 2.

The country also sold its heavy crude oil at \$45.37 per barrel in the mentioned week, with \$1.81 rise from its preceding week.

Iran's heavy oil price stood at \$38.14 on average since the beginning of 2016 until December 2.

Oil prices have soared as some of the world's largest oil

producers agreed to curb oil output for the first time since 2008 in a last-ditch bid to support prices.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which accounts for a third of global oil supply, agreed in Vienna on November 30 to cut production from January by

around 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd), or over 3 percent, to 32.5 million bpd.

The cut will put production at the low end of a preliminary agreement struck in Algiers in September, and will reduce output from a current 33.64 million bpd.

Iran marks cultural week of Algeria



IRNA/Abolfazl Arab Javadi

TEHRAN — In a ceremony held on Monday in Tehran, Iran's Culture Minister Reza Salehi Amiri and his Algerian counterpart Azzeddine Mihoubi marked the cultural week of Algeria.

A borne statue of Algerian iconic figure Amir Abdolqader Aljazayeri (1808-1883) was unveiled in the ceremony. He championed the anti-colonial sentiment in Algeria when the country was crumbling under the yoke of French colonizers.

"Avantage" wins three awards at 10th Cinema Verite

ART TEHRAN — Filmmaker Saeid Kart has received three awards including the best director award for his "Avantage" in the national competition section of the 10th Cinema Verite, Iran's major international festival for documentary cinema.

"Avantage" also brought the best music award for Saba Nedai and the best sound award for Arash Qasemi, the organizers have announced.

Winners were announced during a ceremony held at Tehran's Art Bureau on Friday during a ceremony attended by large number of cineastes.

Cinema Organization of Iran Director Hojjatollah Ayyubi and Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC) Director Mohammad-Mehdi Tabatabaiejad were among the officials participating at the ceremony.

Mehdi Asadi received the best short doc award for his "Friday Carpet" (highlighting the ritual of the carpet washing in Mashhad Ardehal), and the best mid-length doc award went to Mohammadreza Hafezi for "Passageless Path".

The best research award went to "Fight Feast" by Vahid Hosseini and Hojjat Taheri won the best cinematography award for "Birds in Shadow".

Next, Arash Lahuti was presented with the best editor award for "Light Blue", and the best film award went to "Zero to Stage" by producer Mahtab Keramati. ->16

EU-Iran relations in Trump era

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran's relations with the major European states has been fragile and subject to the whims of sanctions regimes. The Iran nuclear deal was a watershed; removing sanctions and opening the door to broader economic cooperation and more sustainable, comprehensive ties. With Donald Trump in the White House, however, the issue is whether a durable, far-reaching Iran-EU relationship can emerge.

Most likely Trump will not "tear up" the nuclear deal. It is of course possible that Congress will pass new sanctions under terrorism or human rights pretexts and that Trump may sign some of these into law. The reality is, however, that Trump is the most business-oriented U.S. president in modern history and is likely to favor securing contracts for American firms in Iran. Nonetheless, the circumstances of Trump's election require a new road map for Iran and the EU that would safekeep Obama's engagement policy, ensure an EU-Iran relationship that is sustainable, and prevent escalation in U.S.-Iran relations.

Many in Washington wish to sabotage increased global trade with Iran and many insist on maintaining the deal. Presently, U.S. companies that obtain licenses from the Treasury Department can work with Iran in the aerospace, medicinal, food, and environmental sectors. Europeans can spur them through their contacts with U.S. companies, to consider greater economic cooperation with Iran.

The new situation in the Middle East requires EU and Iran to cooperate on the traditional disputes, i.e. terrorism, weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and human rights. On the issue of terrorism, it is now clear that the real terrorist threat facing the world comes from Wahhabi-Salafist groups like ISIS, Al Qaeda, Jabhat Al Nusra, and Boko Haram. (See full text at tehrantimes.com)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Judiciary chief urges decisive response to British PM's anti-Iran remarks

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Iranian Judiciary chief on Monday censured British Prime Minister Theresa May's recent comments against the Islamic Republic as "undignified", stressing the need for a crushing response from Iran's administration.

"A country that has come to the Persian Gulf from thousands of kilometers away to set up military bases accuses the Islamic Republic... of undermining regional security," Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larjani said of Britain, adding Britain is guilty of helping unrest in Yemen, Nasim reported.



Iran police seize over 800 kg of heroin

POLITICS TEHRAN — Police forces have seized over 800 kg of heroin which was embedded in a truck in the city of Iran-shahr, YJC reported on Monday.

Police arrested two people, including the truck driver, and efforts for arrest of other people linked to the consignment continue, the report added.

Iran is situated on a major drug route between Afghanistan and Europe, as well as the Persian Gulf states, sharing 900 kilometers of border with Afghanistan, from where 74 percent of world opium is smuggled.



Kyrgyzstan's new envoy delivers credentials to Zarif

POLITICS TEHRAN — Kyrgyzstan's new ambassador to Tehran on Monday submitted his credentials to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Mehr reported.

Avazbek Abdurazakov assumed the position at the Kyrgyz embassy in Tehran after wrapping up his service as his country's ambassador to Afghanistan.

On the same day, Zarif also received the leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). During the meeting, Zarif and Ramadan Abdullah Mohammad Shallah discussed the most recent political developments in the Palestinian territories.



Iran's passive defense official warns of new U.S. cyber-attack

POLITICS TEHRAN — A senior member of Iran's Passive Defense Organization on Monday warned that Washington has hatched plots to launch a new cyber-attack against Iran's infrastructures.

"At present, America has launched a project named Nitro Zeus with the aim of attacking Iran's defense and telecommunication infrastructures," Alireza Karimi said, Fars reported.

"Based on studies so far carried out, the project is assessed to be much more dangerous than the Stuxnet project," the Iranian official added.



'Israel's new stealth fighters unable to damage Iranian nuclear sites'

POLITICS TEHRAN — F-35 stealth fighters which Israel received from the U.S. on Monday have limited range, speed, and can do little against Iran's underground nuclear facilities, the Middle East Eye reported.

"It's not a perfect aircraft for operations against Iran by any means, but it's certainly better suited to penetrating modern air defenses than anything else the Israeli air force operates at the moment," according to Justin Bronk, a researcher at the Royal United Services Institute, a UK-based military think-tank.



'Mohsen Rezaee has no decision to run for president'

POLITICS TEHRAN — A new announcement by the secretariat of the Expediency Council said on Monday that Mohsen Rezaee, currently secretary of the council, has as of yet no decision to contest 2017 presidential election.

Rezaee has yet made no decision as to run for president in the upcoming election and would like to invite revolutionary forces to beware of schism and unite around the "guardianship and clergy", the statement said on Monday.

Egyptian diplomat meets Zarif in Tehran



POLITICS TEHRAN — Yasser Othman, the head of Egypt's Interests Section office in Tehran, met with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Monday to discuss regional issues.

The news comes after months of speculation over the future of relations between the two countries.

Egypt is the only Arab country that does not have an embassy in Iran.

Ties between the two countries were turned hostile following the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979.

After years of strained atmosphere, the two sides agreed with setting up interests section offices in 1991 under the Rafsanjani administration.

Steps were taken under the Khatami and Ahmadinejad administrations to upgrade ties to embassy level, but led to no tangible outcome.

The two Middle Eastern countries, however, found common ground in the Syrian conflict as both emphasized the necessity for finding a political solution to the crisis.

Back in October, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior advisor to the parliament speaker, praised Egypt for its "constructive and useful" positions on the Syrian crisis and campaign against terrorism.

In a meeting with Othman, Amir Abdollahian said "Iran and Egypt are two big and influential countries which can play a constructive role through mutual cooperation in the region to help soothe tensions."

Othman also said that Iran plays an important role in the region and called for increased consultations between the two countries to ameliorate the volatile situation in the region.

Egypt's stance on the Syrian crisis was close to that of Saudi Arabia during Morsi's tenure, as they both criticized Iran for supporting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

But things have changed since the ouster of Morsi and the ruling Egyptian government's stance on the Syrian crisis has tilted towards that of Iran and Russia.

In October, Egypt voted in favor of a Russian-drafted UN resolution on Syria, a move angered Saudi Arabia.

Things may have taken a further turn in November, when Saudi Arabia informed Egypt that shipments of oil products expected under a \$23 billion aid deal have been halted indefinitely.

However, Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shukri on Saturday denied reports of a rift between the two Arab countries, hailing a "special relationship" with Saudi Arabia.

Rafsanjani urges Sunnis, Shias to focus on commonalities

POLITICS TEHRAN — Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, chairman of the Expediency Council, has urged Sunni and Shia Muslims to focus on commonalities instead of differences, ISNA reported.

Rafsanjani made the remarks in a statement on Monday, marking the Unity Week in the northern city of Aqqala, Golestan Province.

"At a time when religious extremists have harnessed power over politics, culture, and ethics in Islamic territories, holding events under the name of 'unity' is a precious treasure," the veteran politician noted.

He emphasized that the Islamic Umma is suffering from a destructive scourge of discord, adding that "as Muslims, we should be ashamed by hearing news about it."

Rafsanjani noted that the Islamic Umma had emerged in order to lead human beings towards the peak of scientific and moral progress, but extremist groups have stolen the faith to promote wars and pit Muslims against one another.

He praised the "Shia and Sunni brothers and sisters" of Aqqala and nearby cities for promoting peace by holding an event on the occasion of the Unity Week.

"I hope that Shias and Sunnis, wherever they live together, would discuss among themselves the many commonalities in Islam, which is a religion of mercy, kindness and peace, instead of provoking hatred and disputes."

Strong national growth buys bargaining power: Rouhani

POLITICS TEHRAN — The president was making the comments at the "Harvest Festival," held in Tehran to celebrate self-sufficiency in agricultural products, particularly wheat.

There is a bit of background to Rouhani's remarks.

The past two years have been record years for Iran in the international scene. In July 2015, Iran and six world powers reached an agreement on a decade-long nuclear debate, resulting in removal of sanctions against Tehran in exchange for a limit on its nuclear program.

Emerging from the economic pressure, the country's oil sector reveled in a long-awaited-for euphoria, lost in recent years under Western sanctions tied to Tehran's nuclear program.

Victorious moments for the country's energy sector culminated in late November after OPEC, after years of trying fruitlessly to prop up energy markets, finally reached a consensus on production cuts.

The agreement was seen by many experts a blow to Saudi Arabia and a victory for Iran, which secured a pre-sanctions output level.

"When workers, engineers, and officials of the country's oil industry are able to raise oil output from one million barrels in 2015 to 2,300 million barrels only 10 months after implementation of BARJAM (the nuclear deal), it means bargaining power in the sector," Rouhani said of the OPEC freeze deal.

To top it all off, Tehran announced on Sunday it had finalized a \$16.8 billion deal with Boeing to purchase 80 passenger planes in what came to be the biggest agreement to be struck with an American company since the 1979 revolution.

Robust agro sector builds into national security

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani paired grains of wheat with pressures from a hostile enemy, saying food security works toward national security.

"The older ones who remember the starvation during World War II can appreciate what food security means," he said, adding, "They know what happens if the enemy puts pressure on us while we're short on wheat."

Tens of thousands of Iranians died of famine during World War II as Iran was occupied by Britain and the Soviet Union which believed German spies were sheltering in Iran.

Iran's agricultural output has increased from nearly 97 million tons in 2013 to 117 million tons in 2016, with wheat reaching a record high.

In 2016, the government purchased more than 11.5 million tons of wheat from farmers, eating into half of the country's annual construction budget, Rouhani explained out.

"Today's celebration is an international honor for the agriculture sector," Rouhani stated.

In 1999, the government initiated the self-sufficiency strategy for wheat by increasing production through input subsidies and the adoption of new methods and technologies such as improved seeds, mechanization, and farmer training.

When this strategy was launched, Iran was the 16th largest wheat producing country. By 2012, according to FAO, Iran had become the 12th leading producer of wheat in the world.

Rouhani had earlier announced to have set the goal of achieving self-sufficiency in essential crops as well as animal products by the end of the fifth five-year development plan (2011-2016).

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation.

"Self-sufficiency in agricultural products boosts national power and sustainability, sovereignty, and our bargaining power," Rouhani asserted.

Continued independence in the agriculture sector is threatened by low precipitation and out-of-date technology, what Rouhani was mindful of.

It is hoped that an international nuclear deal Iran and six world powers finalized in 2015 results in better agriculture performance, considering re-engagement with the global economy and access to cutting-edge technology.

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Shamkhani: Plots being hatched to divide Iraqi nation

POLITICS TEHRAN — Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani said on Monday that "mysterious efforts" are being made to create division among Iraqis and undermine their unity.

"Mysterious efforts are being made to create division among the Iraqi people which should be foiled by awareness, altruism and convergence of the Iraqi groups," he said during a meeting with Chairman of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) Ammar Hakim and his accompanying delegation.

Shamkhani said that campaigns against terrorists by various ethnic and religious groups indicate unity and integrity among Iraqi people.

The important role of the popular mobilization force



es in fighting the Takfiri terrorists demonstrates that the involvement of people is vital in the process of establishing security, noted Shamkhani, a former defense minister and IRGC Naval Force chief.

Elsewhere, Shamkhani suggested that Islamic countries and the larger world must put fight against the roots of extremism on their agenda.

For his part, Hakim praised Iran's supports for the Iraqi people and government.

He also attached great importance to Iraq's "political and territorial integrity".

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met separately with Hakim on Monday.

Zarif said the close relationship between Iran and Iraq can be a role model of regional interaction.

Iranian Army unveils new equipment in war drill

POLITICS TEHRAN — In its latest military drill in south-east of the country the Iranian Army has unveiled new military products, including homegrown sniper rifles and a drone.

The drill entered its second day on Monday with aerial bombardment of mock targets along the coasts of Makran bordering the Sea of Oman, Tasnim news agency reported.

Three sniper rifles, an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), and a jamming device were unveiled in the second day of the military exercise.

Taher, a homegrown sniper rifle with a maximum range of 1,200 meters, and the upgraded versions of G-1 and Dragunov sniper rifles were displayed during the drill.

The ground forces also unveiled a homegrown drone, dubbed Farpad, which was tested in the exercise.

Farpad is a 4-kilogram reconnaissance drone with the flight endurance of 45 minutes and a range of 20 kilometers and can evade jamming.

The massive military drill will continue on Tuesday.

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Iraqi forces take nine villages from ISIL west of Mosul

Iraqi forces have managed to liberate several villages near Mosul from the grip of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group as part of larger operations to fully recapture the northern city.

The commander of Nineveh Liberation Operation, Lieutenant General Abdul Amir Yarallah, said Popular Mobilization Units, known as Hashd al-Sha'abi, purged six villages, west of the city, of ISIL terrorists on Sunday.

According to Iraq's Shafaq News website, Yarallah added that ISIL terrorists lost the villages of Hazimiyah al-Janubiyah, Moshayrat al-Jisr, Zaid al-Mos'ab, Yassin al-Halbous, Tal Maidan Qoly and al-Bota al-Gharbiyah.

Some 450 families were also evacuated from Yassin al-Halbous village, west of Tal Abta district.

The terrorists suffered heavy losses in the military operations, the report added.

Meanwhile, Iraq's al-Sumaria news website said the Iraqi Badr Organization announced the liberation of three other villages west of Mosul.

The organization said in a statement on Sunday that the villages of Tal Ghazal, Tal Majan and Shwira have been purged of ISIL, adding that Iraqi forces managed to thwart a terrorist attack targeting the troops advancing in the area.

The organization added that 163 civilians have been evacuated from the villages.

The Iraqi forces also found a workshop for booby-trapping vehicles and explosive devices in the liberated villages.

The developments come as part of operations launched by Iraqi Hashd al-Sha'abi forces in the areas to the west of Tal Afar in western Nineveh Province on Sunday. The operations aim to purge



the villages and areas which are still under ISIL control and to regain control of the roads connecting the areas west of Mosul.

The Iraqi army and volunteer fighters have been leading a large offensive to retake Mosul since October 17.

The northern city of Mosul fell to ISIL in 2014, when the terrorist outfit began its campaign of death and destruction in the country.

Also on Sunday, Iraq's anti-terrorism forces took control of the neighborhood of Nour in the left bank of Mosul.

Shafaq News reported on Monday that the ISIL terrorists, along with their

families, began to flee the neighborhood of al-Zera'i, al-Mohandessin and al-Thaqafi in northern Mosul towards the right side of the city.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has vowed that Mosul would be fully recaptured by the end of 2016.

■ Iraqi forces unearth mass grave south of Mosul

In another development on Sunday, First-Lieutenant Saied al-Moselhi told Anadolu News Agency that the army found 15 corpses thrown into a well in the village of Saf al-Tout of al-Shura district, 40 kilometers south of Mosul.

He added based on initial information

the 15 people were massacred by ISIL terrorists.

Meanwhile, War Media Cell said the Iraqi security forces, backed by residents, found the remains of some people killed by ISIL in the Hammam al-Alil district, south of Mosul.

The northern and western parts of Iraq have been plagued by gruesome violence ever since ISIL terrorists mounted an offensive in June 2014.

The ISIL terrorists have been committing vicious crimes against all ethnic and religious communities in Iraq, including Shias, Sunnis, Kurds and Christians.

(Source: Press TV)

Kissinger: Don't judge Trump on rhetoric, give his vision a chance

Former United States secretary of state Henry Kissinger says Donald Trump has a personality that has "no precedent in modern American history," but warned critics not to judge the president-elect based on his campaign rhetoric.

"International debate should be over evolving American policy, not over campaign rhetoric," Kissinger said on Sunday at the Nobel Peace Prize forum in Oslo.

"Before postulating an inevitable crisis, an opportunity should be given to the new administration to put forward its vision of international order," he noted.

Trump's foreign policy rhetoric during the 2016 presidential campaign made many U.S. allies from Europe to Asia concerned about their future relations with Washington.

Trump called NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) an "obsolete" alliance and raised doubts over whether the U.S. under his command would assist a NATO ally under attack.

He also suggested that Japan and South Korea should obtain nuclear weapons to boost their ability in deterring regional rivals like North Korea.

Kissinger pointed out a number of challenges that may lead to conflicts during Trump's presidency, specifically the growing tensions between the U.S. and China and the breakdown of relations between Russia and the West.

The veteran diplomat said the U.S. leadership has always been influential in



shaping the world order and expressed hope that Washington will continue to maintain that tradition.

"I hope and believe that in the decades ahead, the United States will continue to fulfill its history and tradition of building world peace."

Trump and Kissinger met at least twice this year; once during the presidential campaign in May and the second time after the Republican's victory in the November 8 election.

In an interview with CNN last month, Kissinger described Trump as the "most unique" presidential figure in his lifetime and urged Americans to give him a chance.

Trump will take office on January 20 as the 45th U.S. president.

(Source: Press TV)

IMF head Christine Lagarde stands trial over £340m payout to controversial tycoon

Christine Lagarde, the head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), will stand trial on Monday over a €405 million (£340m) state payout to a controversial tycoon when she was the French finance minister.

Lagarde denies charges of "negligence" over her role in the 2008 payment to Bernard Tapie, a close associate of Nicolas Sarkozy, who was then president.

If convicted, she faces up to a year in prison and a €15,000 (£13,000) fine.

A guilty verdict could jeopardize her position as head of the IMF, which works to safeguard global economic stability.

Her predecessor, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, was forced to resign in disgrace after being accused of sexual assault in 2011.

The IMF's board has backed Lagarde since France began legal proceedings over the payout only a month after she became its first female head in July 2011.

The perm tanned, silver-haired politician is credited with expertly steering the IMF through a turbulent period.

The accusations stem from her handling of a claim by Tapie that a state-owned bank defrauded him when he sold the Adidas sportswear company in 1993 to a group of investors.

Adidas was sold a year later for more than double the amount he was paid.

Initially the state resisted his claim, but changed tack after Sarkozy was elected president in 2007.

As finance minister, Lagarde ordered that the long-running dispute be re-



solved by arbitration. Tapie was awarded the huge payout in compensation, which was approved by Lagarde.

Investigators suspect the arbitration process was rigged in favor of Tapie, who had supported Sarkozy during his election campaign.

Lagarde is not accused of profiting personally from the award, but has been criticized for failing to challenge it.

She maintains that the case is "politically motivated".

Tapie is a flamboyant figure and former owner of the Olympique Marseille football team who also served as a government minister. His rags-to-riches story captured the imagination of the French public until he was sentenced to two years in prison in 1995 for match-fixing.

(Source: The Telegraph)

China warns Trump against ignoring its Taiwan interests

China expressed "serious concern" on Monday after the United States President-elect Donald Trump said the United States did not necessarily have to stick to its long-held stance that Taiwan is part of "one China", calling it the basis for relations.

Trump's comments on "Fox News Sunday", questioning nearly four decades of U.S. policy, came after he prompted a diplomatic protest from China over his decision to accept a telephone call from Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen on Dec. 2.

China's Foreign Ministry said cooperation was "out of the question" if Washington could not recognize Beijing's core interest on Taiwan, indicating it would reject any effort by Trump to use the issue as a bargaining chip in a long list of commercial and security problems facing the two countries.

"China has noted the report and expresses serious concern about it. I want to stress that the Taiwan issue concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and involves China's core interests," said ministry spokesman Geng Shuang.

"Upholding the 'one China' principle is the political basis for developing China-U.S. ties. If this basis is interfered with or damaged then the healthy development of China-U.S. relations and bilateral cooperation in important areas is out of the question," Geng told a daily news briefing.

Geng said China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi, who outranks the foreign minister, had met with Trump advisers, including his pick for national security adviser, retired Army Lieutenant General Michael Flynn, during a transit in New York on his way to Latin America in recent days.

He did not give a precise date for the meeting, and it was unclear if it occurred before or after Trump's latest remarks on Taiwan, which Beijing considers a renegade province.

Geng urged the incoming Trump administration to fully recognize the sensitivity of the Taiwan issue and uphold a 'one China' policy to "avoid the broader picture of China-U.S. ties being seriously interfered with or damaged".

"The China-U.S. relationship has global and strategic significance. This not only concerns the happiness of both countries and their people, it concerns the peace, stability, development and prosperity of the Asia Pacific (region) and internationally."

(Source: Reuters)

Trump taps retired General Kelly to lead Homeland Security

Republican United States President-elect Donald Trump on Monday formally announced Retired General John Kelly, a 45-year military veteran, as his choice to lead the Department Of Homeland Security.

Trump's transition team said in a statement that Kelly would "spearhead the urgent mission of stopping illegal immigration and securing our borders" as well as streamline the Transportation Security Administration and improve ties between U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

(Source: AFP)



EU signs pact with Cuba to normalize relations

The European Union and Cuba on Monday signed a deal to normalize ties that had been blocked for decades by human rights concerns under revolutionary icon Fidel Castro.

Cuba had been the only Latin American country that did not have a so-called "dialogue and cooperation" deal with the EU covering issues such as trade, human rights and migration.

But EU ministers last week agreed to drop a policy in place since 1996 which stated that Cuba first had to improve its human rights standards before getting closer links with the bloc.

The new agreement was signed by Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, European Union foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini and representatives from the 28 EU member states at a Brussels ceremony capping years of difficult negotiations.

"Economic links with Europe will continue to be a priority for Cuba as we build a socialist economy," Parrilla said.

Castro died last month after more than 50 years at the helm of a self-styled Socialist paradise reviled by the West, with Cuba gradually opening up to the world, including bitter foe Washington.

In 2003, the EU had imposed sanctions on Cuba and suspended cooperation over a crackdown on journalists and activists and it took until 2008 to get talks going again.

Parrilla said the agreement "demonstrates that with good will and respect it is possible to make progress and resolve differences."

He recalled a speech in 2003 in which Fidel Castro had hailed the historical importance of the EU as a counterweight to the United States which imposed a damaging trade embargo and other sanctions on Cuba after it sided with Moscow in the Cold War.

"The sovereignty and dignity of a people cannot be up for negotiation with anyone," he said.

(Source: AFP)

DNC hack blamed on Russia may have been Obama's false flag operation: former U.S. ambassador Bolton

Hacking operations against America's two major political parties during the election may have been the result of a false flag operation carried out by the Obama administration, despite accusations against Russia, former United States Ambassador John Bolton says.

Speaking to Fox News' Eric Shawn on Sunday, former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton said "we have to know the facts here, and it's not at all clear to me, just viewing this and from the outside, that this hacking into the DNC (Democratic National Committee) and the RNC (Republican National Committee) computers was not a false flag operation."

Recalling what FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) director James Comey said regarding Hillary Clinton's "home-brewed server," Bolton noted that while the bureau found no direct evidence that foreign intelligence services had breached the system, he hadn't expected them to.

Bolton said this means that a "really sophisticated for-

ign intelligence service would not leave any cyber fingerprints, and yet people say they did leave fingerprints in the hacks regarding our election."

"So the question has to be asked: Why did the Russians run their smart intelligence service against Hillary's server, but their dumb intelligence service against the election?"

When asked if by using the phrase "false flag," he was implying that the U.S. government had played a role in the hacking, Bolton said "we just don't know."

However, the former United Nations ambassador said he believes "intelligence has been politicized in the Obama administration to a very significant degree."

He stressed the need for conducting an investigation that would potentially determine "who else might want to influence the election and why they would leave fingerprints that point to the Russians."

"If you think the Russians did this, then why did they leave fingerprints?" Bolton reiterated.

The U.S. government officially accused Russia of cy-

ber-attacking the DNC in October, saying it was "confident" that Moscow had "authorized" the hacks. Russia has dismissed the claims as "nonsense."

Russia has repeatedly denied that it was involved in the U.S. election or the DNC hacks in any way.

"Does anyone seriously think that Russia can somehow influence the choice of the American people?" Putin asked in October. "Is America some sort of a banana republic?"

In November, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera that the "whole story is from the field of myth-making."

Although the DNC hacks were widely publicized during the election - along with the leaking of documents belonging to the committee and Hillary Clinton's campaign manager - reports about a breach at the RNC, referred to by Bolton on Sunday, have only recently emerged. However, the RNC has denied that any such hack took place.

(Source: RT)

Iran earns 83% of projected tax revenues in 7 months

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran gained 83 percent of **d e s k** tax revenues anticipated for the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-October 21), IRNA reported on Monday.

According to the latest report released by the Central bank of Iran (CBI), the Iranian administration could manage to gain 512.4 trillion rials (about \$13.15 billion) of the total 614.4 trillion rials (about \$15.88 billion) tax income predicted to be earned during the said months.

70% self-sufficiency attained in Iran's petchem equipment manufacturing

ECONOMY TEHRAN — "Thanks to its experts and industrialists, the Islamic Republic of Iran could reach 70 percent self-sufficiency in manufacturing equipment needed in petrochemical industry," Managing Director of Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC) Marziyeh Shahdaie announced on Monday.

As IRNA reported, making the remarks in the 8th oil, gas, refining and petrochemical exhibition in the Iranian southern port city of Asalouyeh, NPC director noted that currently, there is no need for foreign experts to help with designing and manufacturing the required equipment in Iran's petrochemical industry and the held exhibition is set to help domestic companies with marketing.

Brexit, Trump and Italy cloud outlook for German economy: economy min.

Britain's decision to leave the European Union, unpredictable U.S. policy under president-elect Donald Trump, and political uncertainty in Italy are key risks facing the German economy, the Economy Ministry said on Monday.

It added that despite those risks, the global economic environment seems to be gradually brightening up, especially as emerging markets like Brazil and Russia are expected to exit recessions, which will benefit German exports.

"Uncertainties remain high, however, not least because of Brexit, the unpredictability of future U.S. policy, and the political situation in Italy," the ministry said in its monthly report.

Growth in Europe's largest economy is expected to pick up in the fourth quarter after a slowdown in the July-Sept. period, it said, adding that a robust labor market is continuing to sustain private consumption, which has been propping up the economy as exports wane. (Source: Reuters)

Turkey's economy shrinks in Q3 on domestic spending

Turkey's economy unexpectedly contracted in the third quarter, led by a slump in consumption, in the most significant sign yet that July's failed coup and the political instability it provoked are weighing on confidence.

Gross domestic product shrank an annual 1.8 percent in the three months starting in July, Turkey's statistics bureau reported Monday. The median estimate in a Bloomberg survey called for an annual expansion of 0.3 percent.

Domestic consumption, which makes up nearly two-thirds of the economy, fell 3.2 percent from a year earlier, adding to evidence that the takeover attempt on July 15 damaged business activity. Government spending on wages, goods and services rose 23.8 percent, limiting the impact from a slump in investments, which fell 0.6 percent from the same period in 2015.

The lira fell after the report and was trading 1 percent lower at 3.5121 per dollar at 10:05 a.m. in Istanbul.

The statistics bureau said last week that it changed the way it calculates GDP to make it consistent with accounting changes in the rest of the world and better measure the pace of economic activity. As a result, the base year it uses to calculate GDP was changed from 1998 to 2009.

(Source: Bloomberg)

UK economy set for sluggish growth, warns business group

The UK economy will slow markedly next year as uncertainty about the country's future position in Europe and higher inflation hit consumers and businesses, the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) has predicted.

The business group believes the UK will avoid recession but still lose momentum as the weak pound pushes up import costs and the resulting rise in inflation erodes people's spending power.

New figures from the British Retail Consortium and Springboard suggest that consumers may already be becoming more cautious. Visitors to the high street and shopping centers fell in November despite shops cutting prices as part of the Black Friday promotional event. Footfall fell 1 percent to retail destinations year on year as consumers spent money online instead. This compares with a 0.9 percent drop in October.

In new forecasts published on Monday, the BCC has upgraded its outlook for GDP growth this year to 2.1 percent from 1.8 percent, to reflect a stronger-than-expected performance from the economy in the months following the Brexit vote. It has also nudged up its forecast for 2017 growth to 1.1 percent from the 1 percent forecast in September but that would still represent the weakest growth since the financial crisis. (Source: The Guardian)

Steel exports seen to rise by 50%

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's exports of crude **d e s k** steel and related products are forecasted to rise by 50 percent in the current Iranian calendar year, which ends on March 20, 2017.

Steel exports amounted to 4.1 million tons in the past Iranian calendar year, National Iranian Steel Company Managing Director Abdolmajid Sharifi said, adding that the figure is anticipated to reach six million tons in the current year.

He also said Iran's annual crude steel exports is projected to hit 15 million tons in 2025, IRNA reported.

Sharifi further announced that the country's crude steel output is foreseen to reach 18 million tons by the end of 2016.

According to the World Steel Association (WSA),



Iran produced 13.210 million tons of crude steel in the first nine months of 2016, with 8 percent rise from 12.231 million tons in the same period last year.

The country's steel production stood at 16.110 million tons in 2015, indicating 1.4 percent fall from 2014. As a major steel producer in the region, Iran boost-

ed its steel mills across the country in recent years, as central Isfahan and southwestern Khuzestan provinces remain the major steel producers.

According to WSA, Iran was the biggest producer of crude steel in the Middle East in 2013. The country's rank was 14th in the world in 2014.

Iran to participate in Kazakhstan's renewable energy projects

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran is **d e s k** going to participate in construction of renewable energy plants in Kazakhstan and the two countries are expected to sign a memorandum of understanding in this regard, Shana quoted a Kazakh official as saying on Sunday.

Kazakhstan's Minister of Investments and Development Kassymbek Zhenis Mahmudovich made the remarks on

the sidelines of the 15th session of the Iran-Kazakhstan joint commission of economic, trade, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation in Tehran.

According to the official the deal will be the first energy related agreement between the two countries and the plants will be constructed in the southern provinces of Kazakhstan.

In the 15th Iran-Kazakhstan joint com-

mission of economic, trade, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation, a 58-article agreement was signed which covers cooperation in a variety of areas including customs, finance and banking, agriculture, water, transport, aviation, communications, petrochemicals, culture, tourism, health, science, technology and mining.

In the meeting, Mahmudovich noted

that the main goal of the 15th session was to review the upcoming agreements that will be signed during Iranian president's visit to Kazakhstan and the energy deal will be one of them.

Heading a high ranking trade delegation, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani will visit Kazakhstan next week to explore avenues of economic cooperation and expand ties.

Oil hits highest since mid-2015 as global producers agree to cut

Oil rose by as much as 6.5 percent on Monday to an 18-month high after OPEC and some of its rivals reached their first deal since 2001 to jointly reduce output to try to tackle global oversupply and boost prices.

Brent crude futures were up \$2.21 at \$56.54 per barrel by 1125 GMT, having hit a session peak of \$57.89, the highest since July 2015.

The price is 50 percent higher than at this time last year, marking the largest year-on-year rise on any given day since September 2011.

U.S. crude futures were up \$2.16 at \$53.66 a barrel.

"OPEC have taken a very important

step towards stopping the relentless build up in global stock levels and speeding up the rebalancing process, as long as compliance is strong, Libya and Nigeria fail to rebound and U.S. producers take time to respond," PVM Oil Associates strategist David Hufton said.

"As things stand today, no cuts have been made and production is in fact still rising ... from a fundamental point of view, it is difficult to justify the front-end price surge other than that is where the liquidity is and where speculative players, moving in herds, always prefer to place their bets."

After nearly a year of wrangling, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries agreed on Nov. 30 to cut

output by 1.2 million bpd for six months from Jan. 1, with top exporter Saudi Arabia cutting around 486,000 bpd to curb the oversupply that has dogged markets for two years.

On Saturday, producers from outside OPEC, led by Russia, agreed to reduce output by 558,000 bpd, short of the target of 600,000 bpd but still the largest contribution by non-OPEC ever.

But for the deal to be effective, all parties must stick to their word, analysts said.

"We believe that the observation of the OPEC-11 and non-OPEC 11 production cuts is required to sustainably support... oil prices to our 1H17 WTI price forecast of \$55 a barrel," Goldman Sachs said.

"This forecast reflects an effective 1.0 million barrels per day (bpd) cut vs. the 1.6 million bpd announced cut and greater compliance to the announced cuts is therefore an upside risk to our forecasts."

Goldman Sachs forecast full compliance would be worth an extra \$6 per barrel to its price forecast.

Higher prices raise the chances of other producers increasing output.

"There are too many moving parts for OPEC's new policy to be sustainable in the long term. The strategy is bound to overshoot, in our view, leading to lower prices in the second half of next year," Barclays said in a note on Monday. (Source: Reuters)

PICTURE OF THE DAY @ SHANA/Mojtaba Mohammadgholi



Iran-Russia joint investment in oil, gas sectors can reach \$10b

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian Deputy **d e s k** Minister for International Affairs and Trading Amir-Hossein Zamaninia (L) said on Monday that oil and gas investment capacity between Iran and Russia could reach \$10 billion.

According to Shana, addressing the first Iran-Russia Joint Energy Committee meeting Zamaninia noted the economic relations between the two countries doesn't match the political relations and the two sides should take necessary measures to fill the gap.

In the meeting, Russian Deputy Minister of Energy Molodtsov Kirill, who co-chaired the meeting, mentioned Russian companies capabilities saying, "Russian companies have great potential in developing Iran's oilfields."

"The great volume of oil production in Russia (more than 10 million barrels per day) is an indication of the country's high-technology in this sphere," he added.

The first Iran-Russia Joint Energy Committee meeting was attended by representatives of giant Russian oil and gas companies like Gazprom, Rosneft, Zarubezhneft and Lukoil.



European shares buoyed by oil rally; Lonza slumps

European shares were little changed in early trading on Monday, with gains in oil stocks to near 17-month highs offset by weaker pharma stocks.

Shares in Swiss pharmaceutical firm Lonza fell 2.7 percent after it said it was in advanced talks to buy U.S. drugs capsule maker Capsugel. Sources earlier told Reuters the deal could be worth more than \$5 billion.

The STOXX Europe 600 was 0.07 percent lower, steadying after a rally last week brought the index to 11 month highs.



BMW November sales up 5.9%, Mercedes poised to overtake

Daimler's Mercedes-Benz is on track to overtake rival BMW to take the title of the world's biggest luxury carmaker, sales figures for November released on Monday showed.

November sales of BMW branded luxury cars were up 5.9 percent to 177,740 taking year-to-date sales to 1,824,490. By contrast Mercedes-Benz passenger car sales were up 12.7 percent to 182,602 increasing year-to-date sales to 1,893,619.

Sales of BMW's core brand reached 1.91 million in 2015 on strong demand for sports utility vehicles like the X5, the 11th year in a row the Munich-based carmaker clinched the title in 2005.



Eni sells 30% stake in Egypt's Zohr gas field to Rosneft

Italian oil and gas group Eni agreed to sell a 30 percent stake in Egypt's offshore Shorouk concession to Russia's Rosneft for \$1.125 billion, cutting its stake in the Zohr giant gas field to 60 percent.

Eni said Rosneft would reimburse pro-rata investments already carried out by the Italian group totaling around \$450 million at present.

Rosneft has also an option to buy a further 5 percent stake at the same conditions. Eni discovered the Zohr field - the Mediterranean's biggest ever gas field - in the Shorouk concession in August 2015.



Iran Tobacco Company

ONE TIER GENERAL INTERNATIONAL TENDER NOTICE

Iran Tobacco Co. located at Qazvin Ave, Qazvin square, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, P.O.Box 1331838734, intends to purchase below non tobacco raw materials through international tender:

Item	Description	Unit	Quantity	Bank guarantee (Euro)	Bank guarantee (USD)	Bank guarantee (CNY)	Bank guarantee (AED)	Bank guarantee (TRY)	Bank guarantee (GBP)	Bank guarantee (RIS)
1	Cigarette paper 22mmX4000	Bobin	40,000	6732	7187	47407	25760	24316	5733	28207080
2	Cigarette paper 22mmX6000	Bobin	45,000	11360	12127	79999	43470	41034	9675	47599448
3	Cigarette paper 27mmX6000(Light 80 cu)	Bobin	28,000	8932	9535	62899	34178	32263	7607	37425080
4	Cigarette paper 27mm DoubleX6000(Ultra Light 80 cu)	Bobin	3,000	1912	2041	13467	7318	6908	1629	8012747
5	Cigarette paper 19mmX6000 Bahman super slim	Bobin	16,000	4242	4528	29869	16230	15321	3612	17772304
6	Cigarette paper 21mmX6000 Tir slim (40 cu)	Bobin	17,000	4095	4372	28839	15671	14793	3488	17159307
7	Cigarette paper 27mmX6000 (40 cu)	Bobin	16,000	4954	5289	34889	18958	17896	4219	20758936
8	Cigarette paper 27mmX4000	Bobin	3,000	842	898	5926	3220	3040	717	3525885
9	Cigarette paper 54mm(Light 80 cu)	Bobin	5,000	4554	4861	32069	17426	16449	3878	19081260
10	Cigarette paper 54 mm 40 cu	Bobin	720	546	583	3846	2090	1972	465	2288092
11	Zica light tipping paper 50mmX2400	Bobin	5,100	3080	3288	21689	11785	11125	2623	12904739
12	Tipping paper 70mmX2400 Bahman super slim black	Bobin	1,700	1759	1877	12385	6730	6353	1498	7369100
13	Tipping paper 70 mmX2400 Bahman super slim blue	Bobin	1,650	1234	1318	8691	4723	4458	1051	5171298
14	Tipping paper 70mmX2400 Zica super slim	Bobin	1,250	1306	1394	9199	4998	4718	1112	5473188
15	Tipping paper 38mmX2400	Bobin	20,000	8470	9042	59646	32410	30594	7213	35489300
16	Tipping paper 62mmX2400 Tir slim black	Bobin	2,500	2043	2181	14389	7818	7380	1740	8561218
17	Tipping paper 50mmX2400 Tir light	Bobin	1,160	701	748	4933	2681	2530	597	2935196
18	Tipping paper 50mmX2400	Bobin	33,000	18967	20247	133564	72576	68509	16153	79470683
19	Tipping paper 64mmX2400 Ultra Light	Bobin	4,000	2922	3119	20574	11179	10553	2488	12241504
20	Tipping paper 64mmX2400 T4	Bobin	1,100	1670	1783	11759	6389	6031	1422	6996462
21	Tipping paper 64mmX2400 Bahman Nano black	Bobin	2,720	3065	3272	21586	11729	11072	2610	12843624
22	Tipping paper 64mmX2400 Tir Nano black	Bobin	700	770	822	5422	2946	2781	656	3226300
23	Tipping paper C Light	Bobin	3,460	2731	2915	19230	10449	9864	2326	11442073
24	Light Tipping paper 50mmX2400 Caspian	Bobin	1,680	1015	1083	7144	3882	3665	864	4250973
25	Bahman Light Tipping paper 50mmX2400	Bobin	6,550	4676	4992	32929	17893	16890	3982	19592629
26	Bahman ketabi 62mmX2400 Tipping paper	Bobin	3,500	2549	2721	17948	9753	9206	2171	10679053
27	Plug Wrap 27mmX6000	Bobin	16,000	5210	5561	36686	19934	18817	4437	21828224
28	Plug Wrap 22mmX6000	Bobin	11,800	3141	3353	22120	12020	11346	2675	13161460
29	Acetate cellulose tow 3y35000	Kg	800,000	202400	216065	1425304	774480	731083	172369	848056000
30	Acetate cellulose tow 5y30000	Kg	300,000	75900	81024	534489	290430	274156	64638	318021000
31	Acetate cellulose tow 4y35000	Kg	20,000	5060	5402	35633	19362	18277	4309	21201400
32	Bahman super slim black 120 mm Dual Filter rod	Rod	190,000,000	47652	50869	335566	182340	172122	40582	199661880
33	Bahman super slim blue 120mm filter rod	Rod	222,000,000	48840	52137	343932	186885	176413	41593	204639600
34	Bahman ketabi 108 mm filter rod	Rod	209,800,000	36925	39418	260025	141292	133375	31446	154714912
35	T4 108mm filter rod	Rod	234,500,000	41272	44059	290638	157927	149077	35148	172929680
36	Tir slims dual charcoal filter rods	Rod	134,380,000	25573	27299	180082	97853	92370	21778	107148834
37	Inner frame black 84mm Tir slim black	Kg	16,730	2227	2377	15681	8521	8043	1896	9330137
38	Inner frame white 95mm-220gr/m2	Kg	89,000	6119	6532	43088	23413	22101	5211	25637563
39	Inner frame white 97mm-220gr/m2	Kg	57,000	3417	3648	24064	13076	12343	2910	14317859
40	Inner frame white 84mm	Kg	13,100	901	961	6342	3446	3253	767	3773619
41	Inner frame white 96mm Ultra Light	Kg	29,700	2418	2581	17025	9251	8732	2059	10129660
42	Inner frame white 75 mm	Kg	5,000	344	367	2421	1315	1242	293	1440313
43	Inner frame black [75 mm	Kg	17,200	1542	1646	10859	5900	5570	1313	6460896
44	Black Inner frame 76 mm	Kg	24,000	2363	2522	16639	9041	8535	2012	9900132
45	White Inner frame 76 mm	Kg	4,230	291	310	2048	1113	1050	248	1218504
46	Tipping adhesive (Max Glue)	Kg	90,000	9059	9670	63790	34662	32720	7714	37955115
47	Triacetine	Kg	45,000	4826	5152	33987	18468	17433	4110	20221988
48	Side seaming (SE Glue)	Kg	37,000	3724	3975	26225	14250	13452	3171	15603770
49	Hot Melt Glue	Kg	12,500	1959	2092	13798	7498	7077	1669	8209781
50	Packaging Glue (7302)673253	Kg	60,000	7722	8243	54378	29548	27892	6576	32355180
51	Packaging Glue L7301	Kg	6,500	1019	1088	7175	3899	3680	868	4269087
52	Golden Tear Tape 1.6X12000m	Bobin	8,900	4758	5079	33505	18206	17186	4052	19935769
53	Self adhesive Tear Tape 1.6X12000m	Bobin	2,500	1128	1204	7940	4314	4073	960	4724225
54	Self adhesive Tear Tape 1.6X50000m	Bobin	125	227	242	1598	868	819	193	950606

Please note the following

Type and the amount of the bid bond should be in the form of unconditional and extendable bidbond for at least 6 months, outstanding claims or by payment of abovementioned amounts in Euro to the account number 1976770006 of Sepah bank , Mirdamad branch in favor of ITC.

Tender documents in English and Farsi will be obtainable from 10/12/2016 till 20/12/2016 at Iranian tobacco company, Commercial department, 2nd floor , Setadi building, Qazvin Ave, Qazvin square, Tehran, Iran,

or from the national tender website: www.iets.MPORG.ir register the participation process and receive tender documents.

The samples of each item and the related data sheet and safety data sheet should be dispatched in standard reinforced packing format as below to Iranian Tobacco commercial department, 2nd floor , Setadi building, Qazvin Ave, Qazvin square, Tehran, Iran, P.O.Box : 1331838734 exact and complete information of seller should be indicated on each sample.

Description	Quantity of sample	Description	Quantity of sample
Tipping Paper	5 Bobins of each size	Cigarette paper	5 Bobins of each size
Golden & Clear Self Adhesive Tear Tape	5 Bobins of each size	Plug Wrap Paper	5 Bobins of each size
Acetate Cellulose Tow	2 bales 200kgs of each type	Card board inner frame	5Bobins of each size
Filter rod	10000 rods	Glue and triacetine	60 kgs of each kind

The samples are receivable from 10/12/2016 till 9/1/2017 and Offers must be submitted to our security department secretariat **office located at, 1st floor, Shahid Golchin building, Qazvin Ave., Qazvin square, Tehran Islamic Republic of Iran. P.O.Box: 1331838734 Iranian Tobacco Company** until 19/1/2017.

The offers will be opened in the Iranian Tobacco Company located at Qazvin Sq, Qazvin Av, Tehran .Islamic Republic of Iran, at 9.00 on Monday 23.01.2017.

Validity period of the proposed price must be at least six months from the opening date of the envelopes.

For more information, you can contact to 0098 21 51261928 ITC commercial department

The Management of Communication and International Affairs,
Iran Tobacco Company

We still don't know who bombed Istanbul – and that's a sign of the trouble Turkey is now in

By Patrick Cockburn

The bombings that killed 38 people and injured 155 after a football match in Istanbul is the latest episode to underline Turkey's violent instability. Government officials blame the attack on the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), with which the Turkish state has been fighting a guerrilla war since 1984. But only a week ago the spokesman of ISIL called on its followers to target "the security, military, economic and media establishment" in Turkey.

The fact that either an offshoot of the PKK or ISIL could have carried out the football stadium bombings is a measure of the trouble Turkey is now in. The credibility of the government's initial attribution of responsibility to the PKK is undermined by its past tendency to claim that the Kurds are behind any terrorist atrocity, regardless of the evidence. The biggest terrorist attacks in Turkey in recent months – 47 killed at Istanbul International Airport in June and 57 dead at a Kurdish wedding in Gaziantep in August – were both carried out by ISIL.

The bombings will no doubt be used by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to justify his proposed assumption of more power under a new bill just submitted to the Turkish parliament. In practice, Erdogan already wields dictatorial powers and Turkey's shift towards becoming an authoritarian state using arbitrary powers is well under way. The last remnants of the free media are being closed down and journalists are being arrested under the guise of pursuing those responsible for the failed military coup on 15 July. Even before this purge, Kurdish population centers in the south east had been shelled and bulldozed into heaps of rubble.

Erdogan has responded to the Istanbul bombings by swearing to eradicate those responsible, but it was he himself who created the conditions under which terrorism has become a permanent feature of Turkish life. →13

Erdogan has responded to the Istanbul bombings by swearing to eradicate those responsible, but it was he himself who created the conditions under which terrorism has become a permanent feature of Turkish life.

Trump continues to confound his critics

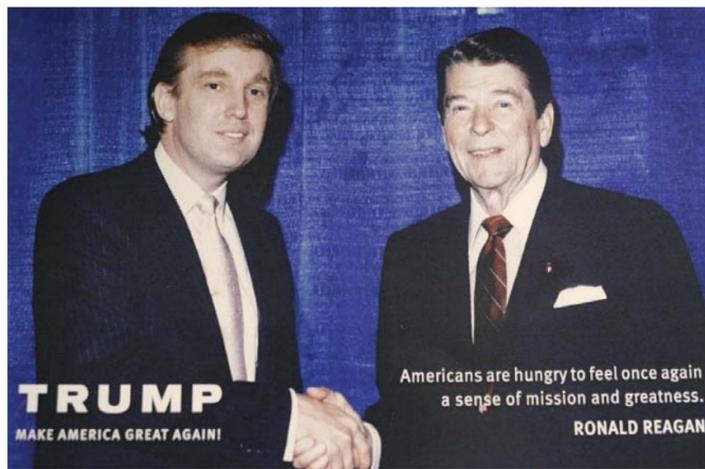
Donald Trump's appointments to his new administration continue to confound critics of the president-elect.

His latest is perhaps the most eye-catching: Rex Tillerson, the chief executive of Exxon Mobil, is expected to be offered the post of secretary of state, which will make him America's most internationally recognized figure after the man in the White House himself.

This has raised eyebrows since Tillerson has no background in diplomacy. But he fits the pattern of Trump's cabinet selections: his team is made up of people whose "real world" expertise is striking.

If Tillerson is confirmed, he brings to the post extensive contacts, notably with Vladimir Putin. How to handle a resurgent Russia is likely to be one of the biggest foreign policy challenges facing Trump so there is sense in being surrounded by people who understand the thinking of the Russian leader.

The liberals so emboldened by the election of Barack Obama in 2008 may recoil from the appointment of an industrialist to such a key post. But they can hardly argue that the foreign policy of the outgoing administration has been a success.



Trump promises to bring a completely different set of priorities to his foreign policy, as his decision to speak with Taiwan's president and risk China's anger has already demonstrated.

Obama came to the White House on a tide of high-blown rhetoric but delivered very little. On his watch the disaster of Syria has occurred and western influence in the

Middle East and Persian Gulf has waned.

Trump promises to bring a completely different set of priorities to his foreign policy, as his decision to speak with Taiwan's president and risk China's anger has already demonstrated.

His detractors see this as an extension of his bellicose personality and lack of experience. But now that the shock of his victory has started to wear off, a reevaluation seems to be taking place.

A columnist in the New York Times recently likened the geopolitical impact of Trump's arrival to that of Ronald Reagan's famous denunciation of the Soviet Union as the "Evil Empire".

At the time Reagan was castigated as a warmonger; yet he did more to bring peace and democracy to half of Europe than any liberal leader ever did.

President Obama believed oratory would solve intractable problems in areas that have been resistant to the blandishments of outsiders for centuries. It takes more than fine words for America to engage with the rest of the world; and if Trump is bringing in people who know how deals are made, that is no bad thing. (Source: The Telegraph)

A counternarrative for Boko Haram's victims

As Nigeria pushes back the violent terrorist group, the millions of victims of that war are in desperate need. Yet one need – resiliency – is being mirrored back to them by one woman's images of hope.

Nigeria's war on the terrorist group Boko Haram is largely succeeding, bringing a relative calm to the country's devastated northeast. Since 2009, the insurgents have killed more people than the Islamic State (ISIL) terrorists has in the Middle East. In one state alone, Borno, there are now more displaced people – 1.4 million – than all the refugees who fled to Europe last year. Despite the reduced violence, aiding the war's victims is still more urgent than ever. In December, international donors plan to meet in Geneva to address Nigeria's immense humanitarian crisis.

Material aid, however, is not all that Nigeria's displaced millions need. Many require help with the emotional scars from witnessing the cruel violence of



Boko Haram. Some 1.8 million children must return to school, especially to prevent them from joining terrorist groups. Entire communities have to be restored.

Most of all, these Nigerians need to steadily change the image of themselves as victims. That is not always easy when their current plight, which is serious, is constantly depicted in international media and then played back to them. The narrative of suffering often lasts long

after the suffering is relieved.

One woman, a nurse and photojournalist named Fati Abubakar, has been offering a counter narrative. She is a native of Borno's capital, Maiduguri, a city that has taken in some 600,000 displaced people. Last year, she became unhappy with the one-sided stories about the war's victims. She began to take pictures of the people – laughing children, lively shoppers – to reveal their resiliency and their eagerness to thrive in the midst of adversity.

Abubakar's work offers a fresh insight on the meaning of disaster aid. Those who wish to help after a tragedy must also lift the mental state of victims – by a counter narrative – as well as a person's physical circumstances. Wars are not only won with armies and humanitarian supplies. People who have fled violence also need a mirror to their natural insistence on the good in life. (Source: The SCM)

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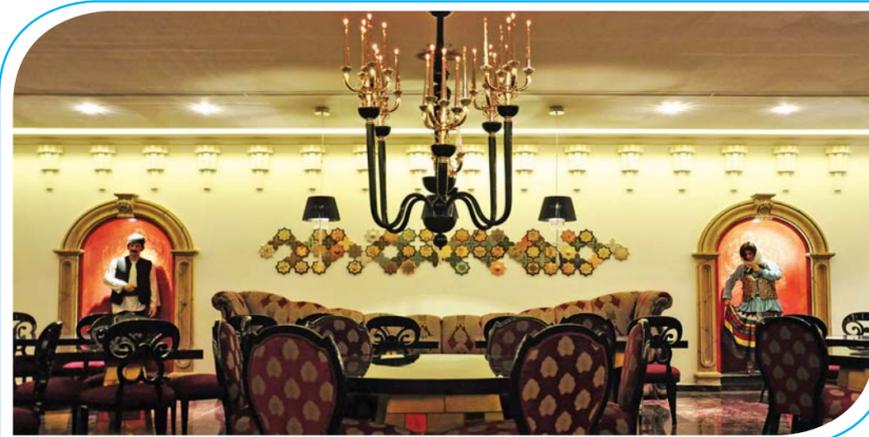


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By Shahidul Haque

We live in a rapidly evolving, hyper-connected world, where goods, capital, and people are more mobile than ever before. But, whereas countries have shown a willingness to cooperate on exchanging goods and capital, the international community has shown little appetite for improving how it governs human mobility.

After the wide-scale persecution and displacement of people in World War II, world leaders took the bold step of crafting the 1951 Refugee Convention. In doing so, they relinquished a measure of national sovereignty – by accepting the principle of non-refoulement – in order to promote global solidarity toward refugees.

On the other hand, country leaders saw migration as something temporary that could be managed ad hoc, through unilateral or bilateral agreements primarily designed to fill specific labor-market needs in developed economies. In hindsight, it is now clear that this approach was inadequate for dealing with the upsurge in human mobility that came with global and regional economic integration.

When writing about guest workers in Switzerland, Swiss playwright Max Frisch once observed that, “We asked for workers. We got people instead.” He meant that migrants are not goods that can be exported or imported, and they should not be exploited as if they were. Migrants are human beings with rights, and they are motivated by a complex combination of personal desires, fears, and familial obligations. Many migrants are searching for jobs because they have missed out on globalization’s unequally distributed gains, and they see no future for themselves if they remain where they are; countless others have been displaced by conflicts or natural disasters.

Today, ungoverned migration is threatening geopolitical stability, burdening border controls, and creating chaos around the world. The current mechanisms for managing migration have clearly failed to meet existing needs. The world needs a new, comprehensive global-governance frame-



After the wide-scale persecution and displacement of people in World War II, world leaders took the bold step of crafting the 1951 Refugee Convention by which they relinquished a measure of national sovereignty.

work to address all issues relating to human mobility. Achieving such an outcome is Bangladesh’s primary objective as Chair of the 2016 Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), which culminates with the Ninth Annual Forum Meeting in Dhaka on December 10-12.

In 2015, as part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, world leaders pledged to cooperate on migration issues and to “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration.” The SDGs acknowledge migrants’ positive contribution to inclusive growth and sustainable development, and it is high time that our leaders follow through on their promises.

Sadly, governments worldwide have become preoccupied with deterring migration and restricting people’s movement, rather than creating safe, dignified channels for human mobility. Unsurprisingly, this obsession with control has had little impact on irreg-

ular migration flows, because it runs counter to the pull of market forces and the push of personal aspirations.

Populist politicians have taken advantage of the current situation by politicizing migration and scapegoating migrants for socioeconomic problems such as unemployment, welfare-sys-

tem strains, and deteriorating social cohesion. But there is still room for hope. When world leaders gathered at the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants on September 19, they reaffirmed migrants’ human rights and committed to strengthening global governance on this issue. At the center of the summit’s unanimously adopted New York Declaration is a commitment to develop two global compacts: to share responsibility for taking in refugees, and to ensure orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration.

The government of Bangladesh proposed the second compact in April 2016. That compact, which will be adopted at an inter-governmental conference in 2018, offers a historic opportunity to improve the way governments and other stakeholders cooperate on migration. Building walls and discriminating against migrants or refugees on the basis of ethnicity or religion is antithetical to the 2030 SDG agenda, which aims to free people from the shackles of poverty, reduce inequality, and promote shared prosperity.

The international community must now ensure that the new global compacts promote these broad ambitions. This will require national governments and global-governance institutions to implement bold policies that make



In 2015, as part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, world leaders pledged to cooperate on migration issues and to “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration.”

migration both easier and more orderly. It will also require them to protect migrants and refugees’ rights, prevent ethnic or religious discrimination, and provide emergency assistance when needed. And it will encourage them to maximize migrants’ positive economic impact on both their new countries and their countries of origin, by reducing financial and human costs and integrating newcomers into the labor market.

To achieve the best outcome, the two global compacts will need to be pursued in a coordinated fashion, and treated as two parts of a single framework for governing migration. In 2017, governments will begin to negotiate the details of this future framework. This may include a legally binding convention; a political declaration of principles to guide conduct; or operational commitments with goals, targets, and indicators of success, combined with a robust monitoring mechanism.

These options should not be seen as mutually exclusive. If diplomacy pre-

vails, and international arrangements are crafted carefully, one could imagine an outcome similar to the 2015 Paris climate agreement: binding commitments in some areas, non-binding guiding principles in others, and a shared promise by member states to take concrete action and to report their progress regularly. Such an approach would help to guarantee effectiveness.

As the Chair of the GFMD, Bangladesh will communicate the Dhaka summit’s recommendations to countries’ negotiators. We will push for an agreement among political leaders at the inter-governmental conference in 2018 that vastly improves how migration is managed. With international cooperation, we can unleash the full social and economic potential of migration. And, in doing so, we will make migrants safer, societies more harmonious, and economies more prosperous.

Shahidul Haque is Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh and Chair-in-Office of the GFMD 2016.



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What apple cider vinegar truly can (and can't) do for your health

By Marygrace Taylor

What can apple cider vinegar do for you? If you're a regular reader of health and wellness blogs, you probably think the answer is: EVERYTHING! ACV (as the cool kids call it) is so commonly touted as a safe, natural, and completely effective panacea that it probably deserves its own sketch on Portlandia.

But if you're a bit skeptical that a tart liquid made from fermented apples can cure diabetes, banish acne, soothe a sore throat, whiten teeth, banish dandruff, and basically make your life perfect in every way, we can relate. With all the fuss about apple cider vinegar, we had to look into what science actually says. If you're a diehard devotee, you may want to look away.

What the science supports

Considering how much recognition ACV gets as a cure-all, you might think there's tons of research to support those claims. Well, right now, that's not the case. "The scientific literature on humans ingesting vinegar is very, very limited," says Carol Johnston, Ph.D., R.D., who studies the medicinal uses of vinegar at Arizona State University. However, there are a few things that scientists have found ACV can do for you.

1. It promotes stable blood sugar

You know that light-headed, low-energy feeling you sometimes get after chowing down on too many refined carbs? That's your blood sugar spiking—and then crashing down. The acetic acid found in ACV (and most other types of vinegars, like white vinegar and red wine vinegar) contains anti-glycemic properties, and studies show that consuming apple cider vinegar before a meal can help keep those kinds of spikes at bay. This could, in theory, have something to do with why people who take ACV claim that the stuff boosts their mood and energy, says Los Angeles-based holistic nutrition and wellness coach Nicole Granato.

The blood sugar benefits might even spell good news for people with diabetes, though researchers still have more



to figure out. "If they follow a protocol of drinking some vinegar before every meal for a year or more, does that reduce reliance on insulin medications? Reduce the progression of their disease? Those questions haven't been answered yet," Johnston says.

2. It can fight bacteria

ACV has been used to combat infections like ulcers and sores since the time of the ancient Greeks. In fact, there are plenty of studies documenting vinegar's antimicrobial effects. But just because ACV is capable of fighting bacterial infections doesn't mean that using it to do so is actually a good idea. Because it's so acidic, pouring it into your ears for an ear infection or using it on open sores or cuts is almost guaranteed to irritate your skin. It's not safe to use by itself for a sore throat, either, because it could do more harm than good. "You shouldn't gargle vinegar. There have been cases where people have ended up in the hospital because they accidentally choked on it," Johnston says.

3. It can soothe jellyfish stings

Weirdly, research shows that if you happen to get stung by a jellyfish, dousing the affected area in ACV may help. It can deactivate nematocysts, the sharp barbs that jellyfish use to inject their painful venom. But experts say that warm

water can have a similar effect—without irritating your skin the way ACV may.

What's not so clear

As for the rest of the miraculous stuff you often hear, most of it is TBD. For now, the majority of these claims haven't been studied.

1. It improves your skin

Anecdotally, there are plenty of people who say that applying ACV to their faces helps get rid of acne and improve their skin's texture. "I have clients with chronic acne who steam their face with diluted apple cider vinegar, and within two to three weeks, there's a difference," Granato says. And since ACV contains antimicrobial properties, it could help acne-prone skin, she says. But for now, there aren't any studies out there to prove it.

2. It gets rid of warts

A handful of studies have shown that putting acetic acid on your skin can destroy wart tissue. But this research used super high concentrations of the stuff (up to 99 percent). Since ACV and other vinegars are only around 5 percent acetic acid, they wouldn't be nearly strong enough to kill a wart.

3. It clears up dandruff

Though an ACV rinse might make your hair look shinier, there's no credible research to support the idea that it can clear up dandruff. (Johnston had never

even heard of this until we asked her.)

4. It whitens teeth

ACV's antibacterial properties could conceivably help get some plaque and germs off of your teeth, Granato says. However, there isn't evidence to show that ACV can whiten teeth. In fact, it'll probably leave your pearly whites in pretty bad shape. "I can't advocate whitening your teeth with apple cider vinegar at all," Johnston says. "We don't have a lot of acid protection in the mouth, and you don't want to lose the enamel on your teeth."

The safe way to use apple cider vinegar

Apple cider vinegar's acetic acid contains some beneficial properties, but in high concentrations, acetic acid can be a poison. So if you're going to drink the stuff or use it on your skin, you've got to be careful.

Both Johnston and Granato agree that the best way to use ACV is in tiny doses. If you're drinking the stuff, swig a tablespoon diluted in at least eight ounces of water no more than twice a day. And always chase it with food, which can help clear the acid out of your throat faster and prevent irritation, Johnston recommends.

The same principle applies if you want to try using it on your skin. Dilute a tablespoon of ACV in a bowlful of hot water and dunk a face towel or rag in the mixture. "You can steam your face with the rag for 12 minutes," Granato says.

The takeaway

Most of the research on apple cider vinegar has looked at its effects on blood sugar, and those studies seem to pan out. Experts accept that ACV has antibacterial properties too—but because vinegar is harsh, it's not the best choice for treating sore throats or wounds (except those jellyfish stings). As for the other stuff, there's no scientific data to support using ACV for better skin, less dandruff, or whiter teeth. What's more, it might be harmful. If you decide to try using it anyway, proceed with caution. "This is an instance where more isn't better," Johnston says.

(Source: greatist.com)

Health benefits and risks of eating a vegan diet

A vegan diet is a type of vegetarian diet, but it's completely devoid of animal products, including eggs, honey, and dairy products. Some vegans choose the diet for health reasons, but many eat only plant-based foods for ethical reasons, such as avoiding animal cruelty and consuming foods that are more sustainable.

Health benefits of going vegan

Since a vegan diet is all plant-based, it's easier to load up on healthy whole grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables that most people on regular diets often lack.

A vegan diet is generally high in fiber, vitamin C, magnesium, iron, and folate and lower in calories and saturated fats.

Eating diets rich in plant-based foods have been associated with better heart health and a reduced risk of type 2 diabetes. It's probably going to be easier to lose extra body fat and maintain a healthy weight as well. And cutting out red and processed meats may also reduce your risk of colon cancer.

Health risks of going vegan

All in all a vegan diet is healthy, but there are a few potential nutritional deficiencies that need to be addressed. Vitamin B-12, or cobalamin, is one nutrient that will be lacking because it's only found in foods of animal origin. Vitamin B-12 is needed for normal nerve function



and blood cell production, and a deficiency can lead to a condition called pernicious anemia. It's not a problem for a regular vegetarian diet, but vegans need to supplement this essential B-complex vitamin.

Protein can be another issue, but it's one that is easily solved. Proteins are made up of building blocks called amino acids, and there are a bunch your body needs to maintain organs and muscles and various things in the body. Some of those amino acids are called essential amino acids, and you need to get them from the foods you eat.

While all animal proteins contain all of the essential amino acids, plant proteins are usually missing one or more of those amino acids. So, it's important to eat a variety of protein sources to ensure you get all those amino acids you need by combining proteins.

Vegan diets can also be low in vitamin D, though to be fair, so are other diets since most of your vitamin D comes from exposure to sunlight. Two excellent vegan sources of vitamin D include maitake mushrooms and portobello mushrooms that have been exposed to UV light. Otherwise, a dietary supplement or fortified nut milks will help you get enough vitamin D during the winter months.

A vegan diet is also deficient in two omega-3 fatty acids called eicosapentaenoic acid and docosahexaenoic acid that your body needs for a healthy heart and eyes and brain function. But, as long as you eat plenty of soy, pumpkin, flax or chia seeds, you'll get enough of an omega-3 fatty acid called alpha-linolenic acid, which your body converts to the other two forms.

Please note, though, if you're pregnant to talk to your health care provider to make sure you get enough omega-3s during your pregnancy.

(Source: verywell.com)

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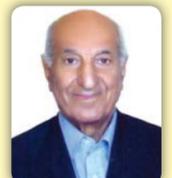
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Prehistoric Iranian toys or votive carts?

HERITAGE These pictured prehistoric Iranian animal figurines that are mounted on tiny carriages are being kept and displayed at the Louvre Museum in Paris.

These mobile objects that might be either toys or votive carts are a subset of a larger collection that were assembled under the Shutrukid dynasty in the late second millennium BC.

The collection unearthed by French mining engineer and archaeologist Jean-Jacques de Morgan (1857 – 1924) at Susa, southwest Iran, near the temple of Inshushinak.

Susa bears exceptional testimony to the Elamite, Persian and Parthian civilizations and cultural traditions. The modern Iranian town of Shush is located at the site of ancient Susa.

According to the Louvre, Susian children in the Middle-Elamite court may have played with them, pulling the little carts along with a piece of string.

"Scholars have also pointed to the religious connotation of human or animal figurines on wheels, suggesting they were purely votive offerings. Of course a toy could become an offering, dedicated to a divinity or buried alongside a deceased person."



These animal figurines mounted on little carriages are part of a valuable deposit found in Susa, southwestern Iran, in the early 20th century.

ROUND THE GLOBE

Gebel Barkal and sites of the Napatan region

Inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage list, Gebel Barkal and the sites of the Napatan region in Sudan is comprised of five archaeological sites on both sides of the Nile in an arid area considered part of Nubia.



An undated photo shows travelers visit some ancient pyramids near Gebel Barkal in Sudan

Together they cover an area more than 60 km long. The sites (Gebel Barkal, Kurru, Nuri, Sanam and Zuma) represent the Napatan (900 - 270 BC) and Meroitic (270 BC - 350 CE) cultures of the second kingdom of Kush.

They include tombs, with and without pyramids, temples, burial mounds and chambers, living complexes and palaces. They exhibit an architectural tradition that shaped the political, religious, social and artistic scene of the Middle and Northern Nile Valley for more than 2000 years (1500 BC - 6th Century CE).

The pyramids, tombs, temples, palaces, burial mounds and funerary chambers set in the desert border landscape on the banks of the Nile, are unique in their typology and technique.

Gebel Barkal has been a sacred mountain since New Kingdom times (ca. 1500 BC). The Egyptians believed that their state god Amun resided in this "Holy Mountain". Today, the mountain is locally named (Gebel Wad el-Karsani) after a Muslim sheikh (saint) buried near the 100m high, flat-topped sandstone rock.

The mountain is closely associated with religious traditions, since the tomb of this sheikh is still being visited by the local people for blessings. (Source: UNESCO)

China's famous Buddhist mountain to launch "smart" tourism program

TAIYUAN (Xinhua) — Mount Wutai, one of China's four sacred Buddhist mountains, has signed an agreement with Shanxi Cable and Broadcasting Information Network to launch a smart tourism service around Mount Wutai, the management committee of the scenic area said Sunday.

With a planned investment of 4.5 million yuan (650,000 U.S. dollars), the program named "smart Mount Wutai" will offer free wi-fi service, a network system providing services, including an intelligent voice guide, ticket booking, as well as hotel and restaurant information to tourists.

Qeshm Island to host Global Geoparks Network workshop in 2017



An undated photo provided by travital.com shows an individual gets shots of the scenic Stars Valley region on Qeshm Island in southern Iran.

TOURISM TEHRAN — The southern Iranian Qeshm Island will play host to Global Geoparks Network Workshop for Middle East Region, which will be held from April 24 to 26, 2017.

Founded in 2004 as an international partnership developed under the umbrella of UNESCO, the GGN seeks to promote professional management of global

geoparks and raise multi-cultural links to the maintenance of geological sites.

The GNN oversees about 120 geoparks it had registered in China, Spain, Germany, Norway, France, Malaysia, Japan, Italy and other countries.

A geopark is a clearly defined area with geological heritage of significance that fosters environmentally appropriate, so-

cio-economic sustainable development.

Qeshm as the largest island in the Persian Gulf is also known for its wide range of ecotourism attractions such as the Hara marine forests.

Back in September, the Qeshm Free Zone Organization in close collaboration with the private sector started creating eight eco camps along the coastlines.

The island has an abundance of wildlife, including birds, reptiles, dolphins and turtles. It is home to about 60 villages which are dotted mostly across its rocky coastlines.

Popular ecotourism activities in Iran include mountain and desert treks, bird watching in coastal areas and wetlands as well as diving.

The ibex code: deciphering Iran's ancient rock art

An Iranian archaeologist has spent years in an almost single-handed quest across the country's hills and desert plains to uncover ancient rock art that could be among the oldest in the world.

Now he hopes that renewed ties with the West after years of international isolation could help decipher its mysteries.

Despite its rough beauty, it is hard to imagine that the desolate, rock-strewn landscape outside the town of Khomein in central Iran conceals any treasures.

But Dr. Mohammed Naserifard scrambles up a hillside, and waits eagerly at the top, his walking stick pointing out the long curled horns of a 4,000-year-old ibex deer scratched into a flat stone.

Over the next few hours, he leads AFP on a journey through valleys and up steep slopes, revealing dozens more images of ancient hunters, tribal dances, deities and beasts.

Despite their potential world-historical importance, they have been seen by just a handful of people.

All are thousands of years old, but some of the markings -- such as a line of cup-marks that may have been used in religious ceremonies -- could be much older.

Dutch enthusiasts who visited the area with Naserifard in 2008 dated the cup marks to more than 40,000 years ago, putting them among the oldest rock art on the planet.

But getting definitive data has been all but impossible for Iranian archaeologists.



Ancient engravings of ibex deer in the hills outside of Khomein, Iran are some 4,000 years old.

"Sanctions have deprived us of the technology," Naserifard told AFP.

"We hope with the situation improving now, we can soon bring this technology to Iran and gain more accurate and scientific information on these engravings."

Finding a treasure

He estimates he has since travelled more than 700,000 kilometers (450,000 miles) across two dozen Iranian provinces, unearthing some 50,000 ancient paintings and engravings.

Naserifard now teaches at a local university, and his discoveries have been catalogued by the Bradshaw

Foundation, a Swiss NGO specializing in rock art, bringing them international attention.

Eerie similarities

Naserifard's discoveries support the growing evidence that humans may have started to develop a common art tradition before leaving Africa, which might explain why the same themes and shapes have turned up in sites as far-flung as California, Spain and South Africa.

"Iran could be a really important part of the puzzle. It is a very strategic location -- humans migrated through there heading both east and west," said von Petzinger.

"These new methods are very expensive," said von Petzinger. "Dr Naserifard has done all this diligent work, but he needs access to the big labs. Hopefully, people can now come to help him."

"We don't know why they picked a favorite motif and ran with it, but we see the same pattern in very different places," said Peter Robinson of the Bradshaw Foundation.

He said the ibex may have been part of an origin myth, or perhaps the engravings were an attempt to summon magical hunting powers or encourage the deer to multiply.

"The similarities across time and space can be eerie. We see examples in which Ice Age art didn't vary across 30,000 years," said Robinson.

"But one thing that seems clear is this innate human characteristic to want to mark a wall, to graffiti." (Source: dailymail.co.uk)

IN FOCUS



Iran, the country of simultaneous seasons

TOURISM These pictures all shot over the past few days depict scenes of contrasting colors and climates that simultaneously do exist in Iran.

The picture on the left shows farmers holding watermelons they have just harvested in the semitropical Hasht Bandi region, southern Hormozgan Province.



The upper right photo depicts children playing in a snow covered park in the north-central city of Hamedan, while the third demonstrates a herder driving a flock of sheep in a colorful countryside in the western province of Kordestan.

The relatively vast Iranian territory possesses characteristics of four geo-climatic zones. Its north is

covered with evergreen forests with moderate climate, and its south towards the Persian Gulf is mainly associated with hot and humid climate.

To the east one can see a blend of different terrains dominated by hot deserts and arid areas with night times full of bright stars while trekking westward the country hands scenes of mountainous and high altitude areas.

Surge in methane emissions threatens efforts to slow climate change

Global concentrations of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas and cause of climate change, are now growing faster in the atmosphere than at any other time in the past two decades.

That is the message of a team of international scientists in an editorial to be published 12 December in the journal *Environmental Research Letters*. The group reports that methane concentrations in the air began to surge around 2007 and grew precipitously in 2014 and 2015. In that two-year period, concentrations shot up by 10 or more parts per billion annually. It's a stark contrast from the early 2000s when methane concentrations crept up by just 0.5 parts per billion on average each year. The reason for the spike is unclear but may come from emissions from agricultural sources and mainly around the tropics - potentially from farm sites like rice paddies and cattle pastures.

Scientists involved in the editorial will discuss these trends at a session during the fall meeting of the American Geophysical Union (AGU) in San Francisco on Tuesday, 13 December.

The findings could give new global attention to methane - which is much less prevalent in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide but is a more potent greenhouse gas, trapping 28 times more heat. And



while research shows that the growth of carbon dioxide emissions has flattened out in recent years, methane emissions seem to be soaring.

Carbon dioxide emissions

The "leveling off we've seen in the

last three years for carbon dioxide emissions is strikingly different from the recent rapid increase in methane," says Robert Jackson, a co-author of the paper and a Professor in Earth System Science at Stanford University. The re-

The results for methane "are worrisome but provide an immediate opportunity for mitigation that complements efforts for carbon dioxide."

sults for methane "are worrisome but provide an immediate opportunity for mitigation that complements efforts for carbon dioxide."

The authors of the new editorial previously helped to produce the 2016 Global Methane Budget. This report provided a comprehensive look at how methane had flowed in and out of the atmosphere from 2000 to 2012 because of human activities and other sources. It found, for example, that human emissions of the gas seemed to have increased after 2007, although it's not clear by how much. The methane budget is published every two to three years by the Global Carbon Project, a research project of Future Earth.

Methane, Jackson says, is a difficult gas to track. In part, that's because it can come from many different sources. Those include natural sources like marshes and other wetlands. But the bulk, or about 60 percent, of methane added to the atmosphere every year comes from human activities. They include farming sources like cattle operations - cows expel large quantities of methane from their specialized digestive tracks - and rice paddies - the flooded soils make good homes for microbes that produce the gas.

(Source: phys.org)

Research offers clues about the timing of Jupiter's formation

Scientists have theorized for years now that Jupiter probably was not always in its current orbit, which is about five astronomical units from the sun (Earth's distance from the sun is one astronomical unit). One line of evidence suggesting a Jovian migration deals with the size of Mars. Mars is much smaller than planetary accretion models predict. One explanation for that is that Jupiter once orbited much closer to the sun than it does now. During that time, it would have swept up much of the material needed to create supersized Mars.

Meteorites known as CB chondrites were formed as objects in the early Solar System -- most likely in the present-day asteroid belt -- slammed into each other with incredible speed. This new study, published in the journal *Science Advances*, used computer simulations to show that Jupiter's immense gravity would have provided the right conditions for these hypervelocity impacts to occur. That in turn suggests that Jupiter was near its current size and sitting somewhere near the asteroid belt when the CB chon-

drites were formed, which was about 5 million years after formation of the first solar system solids.

The asteroid belt

"We show that Jupiter would have stirred up the asteroid belt enough to produce the high-impact velocities necessary to form these CB chondrites," said Brandon Johnson, a planetary scientist at Brown University who led the research. "These meteorites represent the first time the solar system felt the awesome power of Jupiter."

Chondrites are a class of meteorites made up of chondrules, tiny spheres of previously molten material, and are among the most common meteorites found on Earth. The CB chondrites are a relatively rare subtype that have long fascinated meteoriticists.

Part of what makes the CB chondrites so interesting is that their chondrules all date back to a very narrow window of time in the early solar system.

The "chondrules in other meteorites give us a range of

different ages," Johnson said. "But those in the CB chondrites all date back to this brief period 5 million years after the first solar system solids." But to Johnson, who studies impact dynamics, there is something else interesting about CB chondrites: They contain metallic grains that appear to have been condensed directly from vaporized iron.

"Vaporizing iron requires really high-velocity impacts," Johnson said. "You need to have an impact speed of around 20 kilometers per second to even begin to vaporize iron, but traditional computer models of the early solar system only produce impact speeds of around 12 kilometers per second at the time when the CB chondrites were formed."

So Johnson worked with Kevin Walsh of the Southwest Research Institute in Boulder, Colorado, to generate new computer models of the chondrule-forming period--models that include the presence of Jupiter near the present-day position of the asteroid belt.

(Source: EurekAlert)

Reindeer becoming smaller due to global warming, research finds

Dragging a sleigh laden with enough presents for the world's children - not to mention a famously portly white-bearded gentleman - can be no easy feat.

But, since time immemorial, this crucial Christmas Eve duty has been performed with distinction by a team of beloved reindeer.

Soon, however, Santa Claus may have to start looking around for a stronger type of animal, as new research reveals the species is becoming increasingly puny.

A 16-year survey on the arctic Norwegian island of Svalbard found the reindeer there have declined in weight by an alarming 12 percent.

In research at a meeting of the British Ecological Society in Liverpool, scientists will explain how rising temperatures are depriving female reindeer of nutrients during important phases of gestation.

Snow in Svalbard typically covers the ground for eight months of the year, which, combined with low temperatures,

limits grass growth to June and July.

But as summer temperatures have increased by around 1.5C, pastures have become more productive, allowing female reindeer to gain more weight by the autumn and therefore to conceive more calves.

(Source: The Telegraph)

BIM Chief: Implementation of JCPOA Helps Iran Boost Its Economy in Intl. Arena

A landmark nuclear deal was inked between Iran and P5+1 in mid-July 2015 and Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was put into force in Jan. 2016.

With due observance to the said issue, Iran opened its economy towards international markets wholeheartedly.

Managing Director and Chairman of the board of Director of Bank of Industry & Mine (BIM) announced the above statement and said: "Implementation of JCPOA, the official title of the nuclear deal, raised hope

and trust in the country in order to showcase its economic situation in international arena."

Speaking at the venue of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) in the presence of a great number of economic activists of Iran and Italy Joint Chamber of Commerce, he pointed to the key role of banks in easing trade and business hurdles and said: "Italy is equipped with world's most modern equipment and technology and Iran attaches great importance to this European country."

BIM is as old as 60 years and since its establishment, it has cooperated with most prestigious domestic and foreign companies, he said, adding: "Bank of Industry & Mine has stood at first rank in financing power plant projects in the country in a way that it has managed to finance these projects, valued at \$1.8 billion, in the past three and a half years ago."

It should be noted that this meeting was held in the presence of a high-ranking delegation from Italy.

"BITZER" Establishes a Subsidiary in Iran

Compressor specialist BITZER establishes a subsidiary in Tehran today, creating a presence closer to its customers in Iran.

The foundation ceremony for the new BITZER subsidiary BITZER Iranian held at the Espinas Hotel in Tehran on Monday, 5 December 2016. The company has invited selected business partners to the ceremony and, among other things, will be presenting a cutaway model of its intelligent VARISPEED compressor with integrated frequency inverter.

BITZER compressors have been well represented in the Iranian market for decades. Up to 500,000 running compressors

are now in use. The long-standing company currently manages customer and user support in Iran from its BITZER Middle East site in Dubai. Now the company is establishing its own subsidiary that reports to Dubai. However, experienced sales partners who are very familiar with local conditions will continue to ensure the high presence of BITZER compressors in the Iranian market. "BITZER doesn't receive direct orders in Iran and this will not change in the future. As always, our reliable sales partners will be responsible for processing orders," says Stefan Leitl, Managing Director BITZER Middle East. "Over the decades, we've managed to establish a close

relationship built on trust with our business partners, as we've always been available to provide our users with support, including in challenging political times.

High technical standards and a growing population - BITZER firmly believes in Iran as one of the most important future markets. The Iranian market offers enormous opportunities for intelligent energy-efficient products. BITZER is developing a service concept tailored to Iran's specific requirements, enabling the company to better support customers and users in terms of queries, maintenance and repairs in the future. BITZER is also working closely with universities,

institutes of technology and vocational schools to offer general and specialized training courses. After all, it's only when efficient compressors and trained staff come together that users benefit from a strong team.

Local representative: Sobhan Katebifar, Resident Engineer, tel.: 0912 1693 916.

The BITZER Group is the world's largest independent manufacturer of refrigeration compressors with sales companies and production sites for reciprocating, screw, and scroll compressors as well as pressure vessels all over the globe. In 2015, 3,400 employees generated sales of €686 million.

Senior Cleric Urges IMIDRO to Present Requirements of Foreign Capital Attraction

Expediency Council Chairman Ayatollah Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani called for Iranian Mines & Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) to submit requirements for the attraction of foreign capital, Public Relations Department of the Organization reported.

Speaking in 2nd IMIDRO Summit, the senior cleric said: "With the studies made in this regard, Iran enjoys high potential and capability in the fields of mine and mining and effective steps should be taken in order to take advantage

of the available capacities in international arena."

After a landmark deal inked between Iran and P5+1, golden opportunity has been opened in the country, he said, adding: "Both domestic and foreign companies can invest in Iran's mine and mineral projects freely."

Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Eng. Ne'matzadeh was the next speaker who said: "An amendment has recently been submitted to the respected government, based on which, some restrictions facing investors have been removed."

Turning to Iran's new economic condition, he said: "With the improvement of condition in international arena, we invite investors (domestic and foreign) to participate in mineral, exploratory, engineering and utilization sectors."

He put the proven mineral reserves in the country at 84 billion tons and said: "With the geophysical programs underway in the country, new reserves are discovering."

In the end, the industry minister said that both domestic and foreign investors willing to invest in mines and mineral projects will be supported wholeheartedly.

World's longest rail tunnel begins regular service in Switzerland

Regular rail service through the world's longest tunnel has begun, carrying passengers deep under the Swiss Alps from Zurich to Lugano.



The famed Gotthard Base tunnel (GBT) was given a ceremonial opening in June, attracting European leaders including the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, and the French president, François Hollande, for its first ride.

Sunday marked the start of normal commercial traffic through the 35-mile (57km) GBT, which took 17 years to build, at a cost of over 12bn Swiss francs (€9.3b).

The Swiss news agency ATS reported that the first regular passenger train to use the GBT pulled out of Zurich at 6.09am (0509 GMT) and arrived in Lugano at 8.17am, with the tunnel passage shaving 30 minutes off the previous travel time.

"It's Christmas," Andreas Meyer, the chief of the Swiss national rail service, SBB, was quoted as saying by ATS after the journey was over.

The ambitious GBT project has been praised across Europe for its pioneering efforts to improve connectivity from Rotterdam to the Adriatic.

The Swiss-funded tunnel was largely made possible by technical advances in tunnel-boring machines, which replaced the costly and dangerous blast-and-drill method.

The GBT has surpassed Japan's 33.4-mile (53.9km) Seikan tunnel as the world's longest train tunnel. The 31-mile (50.5km) Channel tunnel connecting Britain and France has been bumped into third place.

(Source: The Guardian)

Giraffes, rarer than elephants, put on extinction watch list

The giraffe, the tallest land animal, is now at risk of extinction, biologists say.

Because the giraffe population has shrunk nearly 40 percent in just 30 years, scientists put it on the official watch list of threatened and endangered species worldwide, calling it "vulnerable." That's two steps up the danger ladder from its previous designation of being a species of least concern. In 1985, there were between 151,000 and 163,000 giraffes but in 2015 the number was down to 97,562, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

At a biodiversity meeting Wednesday in Mexico, the IUCN increased the threat level for 35 species and lowered the threat level for seven species on its "Red List" of threatened species, considered by scientists the official list of what animals and plants are in danger of disappearing.

While everyone worries about elephants, Earth has four times as many pachyderms as giraffes, said Julian Fennessy and Noelle Kumpel, co-chairs of the specialty group of biologists that put the giraffe on the IUCN Red List. They both called what's happening to giraffes a "silent extinction."

"Everyone assumes giraffes are everywhere," said Fennessy, co-director of the Giraffe Conservation Foundation.

"There's a strong tendency to think that familiar species (such as giraffes, chimps, etc.) must be OK because they are familiar and we see them in zoos," said Duke University conservation biologist Stuart Pimm, who wasn't part of the work and has criticized the IUCN for not putting enough species on the threat list. "This is dangerous."

Fennessy blamed shrinking living space as the main culprit in the declining giraffe population, worsened by poaching and disease. People are moving into giraffe areas especially in central and eastern Africa.

(Source: kron4.com)

Are octopuses really colorblind?

Cephalopods comprise some of our favorite colorful creatures. How they see the world is nothing short of marvelous.

Octopuses and their cephalopod cousins are famous for their ability to change color and hide from predators and attract mates - but they can't see color, at least the way we see it.

So why would a cephalopod bother dressing in bright hues if potential suitors can't see them?

Earlier this year, we reported on a pair of researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, and Harvard University who found the unique pupil shape of cephalopods allows light to enter their eyes from many directions, which could help the animals interpret color.

Cephalopods have evolved wide pupils, which increase chromatic aberration - the fuzzy fringe of color you see around objects when your vision is out of focus.

By changing the "depth" of their eyeball, cephalopods can bring specific wavelengths of color to focus on their retina. This allows the animals to change the amount of chromatic blur they're seeing to determine different colors, depending on whether or not they're focused on the retina.

(Source: Cosmos Magazine)

Somali-American woman to wear hijab in Miss Minnesota USA contest

A Somali-American woman will be the first to compete in the Miss Minnesota USA contest while wearing a hijab and other modest Muslim clothing that keeps her fully covered.

Halima Aden, 19, of St. Cloud will be part of the competition Saturday and Sunday in Burnsville. In addition to her hijab, she'll wear a full-body outfit called a burkini during the swimsuit competition, and she'll modify evening gowns, Minnesota Public Radio News reported.



Denise Wallace, executive co-director of the Miss Minnesota USA pageant, said in a statement that the company values inclusion and celebrates diversity. Wallace said Aden's burkini will be acceptable and the decision "is in line with the values of the Miss Universe Organization in empowering women to be confidently beautiful."

Aden said she's been bullied for wearing her hijab and hopes the pageant will help disrupt some misconceptions about her religious and cultural beliefs.

"This pageant is so much more than just beauty. Their whole message is being confidently beautiful, so I didn't think that I should allow my hijab to get into the way of me participating," Aden said. "This is a great platform to show the world who I am ... just because I've never seen a woman wearing a burkini (in a pageant) it doesn't mean that I don't have to be the first."

If Aden wins Miss Minnesota USA, she would go on to compete in the Miss USA competition. The winner of that goes on to Miss Universe, formerly owned by President-elect Donald Trump, who sold the pageant after broadcast partners refused to air it due to remarks he made about Mexican immigrants during the campaign. Trump has also spoken negatively about Somalis in Minnesota.

Aden, who was born in a refugee camp in Kenya and came to Minnesota as a child, said she wasn't thinking about Trump when she entered the pageant.

"What I wanted to do was to just give people a different perspective," she said. "We just needed one more thing to unify us. This is a small act, but I feel like having the title of Miss Minnesota USA when you are a Somali-American, when you are a Muslim woman, I think that would open up people's eyes."

(Source: twincities.com)

Religious commonalities more important than differences: Sunni female governor



© Hava Norouei

By Naghmeh Mizanian

TEHRAN -- Different branches of Islam should pay attention to their notable commonalities rather than little differences, says Ms. Homeyra Rigi, the first Sunni female governor in Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Rigi, 41, is the governor of Qasr-e Qand city in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan. She was appointed to the position in 2014. She had already served as the head of the welfare department of Chabahar and councilor, as well.

In an interview with the Tehran Times, Rigi put emphasis on the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Holy Quran as the most important commonalities

between all branches of Islam.

"The Unity Week is the week of boosting brotherhood bonds by all Muslims and we should declare the unity of all Muslims to the world," she said.

The interval between the 12th day of the month of Rabi al-Awwal in the lunar Hijri calendar (December 12th this year) which is believed by Sunni Muslims to mark the birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad, and the 17th day of the month which is believed by Shia Muslims as the birthday of the Prophet is celebrated every year as the Islamic Unity Week.

Appointment of a woman as the highest executive authority of the city (Qasr-e Qand), has created a big change in the viewpoint of people toward

women, she remarked.

The rule of a female governor has spread self-belief and self-confidence among women, which had no considerable social activity before, she said.

For instance, she said, there are girls and women who had not been permitted even to come out of their homes, but now they are talented artists, poets, and successful people in different fields.

"Three years ago, when I became the governor of the city, in a sport competition which was held in the city, the only female participant was me," Rigi noted.

"However, today, a large number of women and girls, supported by their husbands and fathers take part in such competitions," she underscored.

Out of the 60,000 population of the city of Qasr-e Qand, about 200 people are Shia Muslims, the female governor explained.

"High ranking Sunni clerics, other officials of the city and me participate in the rituals which the minority Shia Muslims hold in different occasions," the mother of three said, stressing the brotherhood and equality of Shias and Sunnis.

Rigi, of Baluch ethnicity, has participated in the Islamic Unity Conference which has been held by the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thoughts for six consequent years.

She said she attended the conference with a view of "closeness" and "equality" among different tribes and genders in Islam.

Dos and Don'ts of Investment in Bandar Imam Khomeini (RA)



Foreword: Mayor of Bandar Imam Khomeini (RA) Habib Nasirifar pointed to the considerable share of this city in gross national product (GNP) and said: "Along with imposing rules and regulations related to the selection of investor, it was logical to focus on the way of guiding and attracting investor, investment methods, successful investment factors and strategies, the way of attaining sustainable capital, etc."

To learn more about the details, our reporter has conducted an interview with him which comes as follows. (It should be noted that he holds a Ph.D. degree in Urban Planning.)

Let's review the interview in questions and answers:

■ As the first question, would you mind explaining on the geographical situation, population and specifications of this city?

A: In response to your question, I should say that Bandar Imam Khomeini (RA), as large as approx. 22,000 ha land area, is home to 85,000 people, composed of different languages and ethnicities. This city is located in Mahshahr, southwest Khuzestan Province. Location of this city in Persian Gulf coastal waters is the salient specification of Bandar Imam Khomeini (RA). This city enjoys natural attractions with breathtaking views and is considered as second trade and business port in the country. In general, this city is famous as the nature of capital of industries and ports in the country.

■ What are the salient advantages of Bandar Imam Khomeini (RA) in attracting capital and investor?

A: Benefitted from Khuzestan Province Ports and Maritime Department General, the city is home to 33 active jetties which account for over 40 percent of total imports and exports volume of the country. Moreover, the city is home to a number of 21 giant petrochemical industries, Customs Department General, nearness to the airport and also the ancient nationwide south-north station in the country, etc. which has paved very suitable condition for investment, sustainable economic growth and also attaining favorable economic share in world trade. Equipped with multi-dimensional transport system, the city has created the possibility of transfers both inside and outside the country using four land, air, sea and rail methods. Approx. 12 million tons of cargoes are transported in the port city daily, so that traffic congestion of heavy equipment and machinery can be observed at the entrance gate of the city round the clock.

Since this city accounts for the lion's share of income rate in economic situation of the country, provincial authorities expect the respected government to pay due attention in line with introducing capabilities, capacities and economic significance of the port city considerably.

Khuzestan Province accounts for 65% gross national income (GNP) in the country and significant share of this city in boosting economy of the country should not be ignored.

Generally speaking, key and pivotal role of the city in sustainable economy of the country

should be taken into serious consideration.

■ How do you evaluate investment, development and economic activities taken in this port?

A: Bandar Imam Khomeini (RA) is heavily dependent on Bandar Imam Khomeini (RA) Special Economic Zone, the issue of which is completely tangible in the field of loading and unloading, warehouse and warehouse management, capacity of production lines, distribution channels, transport and movement methods, sales power and foreign trade and business. Undoubtedly, any kind of economic development in will boom the economic structure of the city considerably.

In this line, Bandar Imam Khomeini (RA) Municipality has taken giant strides in this respect scientifically and technically at the unsparing supports of the then provincial officials which led to the signing and sealing cooperation agreements with ports and maritime department generals coupled with stabilizing pollution and Value-Added Tax (VAT).

■ What are obstacles and problems facing investment in this city? How is the status of the city in nationwide as compared with other cities?

A: Actually, municipalities lack certain rules and regulations in the field of investment. That is to say that there is not a certain rule at municipality for investment activities. However, there is ambiguity in this respect. Along with rules and regulations related to the selection of investor, it was logical that the way of attraction of investor, investment methods, and the way of attaining sustainable capital should have been taken into consideration.



■ What drastic measures have thus far been taken by Bandar Imam Khomeini (RA) Municipality with regard to the attraction of investor?

A: Setting up Higher Council for Investment, Investor Attraction Committee, participating in investment circles and publishing investment tenders and advertisement, etc. are the salient measures taken in this regard. Organizing an exhibition for introducing investment opportunities of Khuzestan Province is the second chance for showcasing investment achievements of Bandar Imam Khomeini (RA) Municipality.

■ How do you evaluate the investment prospects in this city?

A: With due observance to the aforementioned issue, excellent geographical situation and potentials of the city are not covered to anyone. However, threats ahead of invest-

ment should be turned into opportunities. Generally speaking, I see a rosy and bright future in this city in terms of investment. It is hoped that the city will witness a growing trend of development.

■ What are the investment priorities in Bandar Imam Khomeini (RA) due to the situation of this city and its available capacities?

A: With the studies made in this regard, most economic objectives will be materialized. Hereunder are the most important projects which have been prioritized:

Koodak (Child) Parkland Project, Traffic Park, City Trade Complex, City Administrative, Trade and Cultural Complex, Ayatollah Saeidi Pavement, etc.

■ Any concluding remarks.

A: At the unsparing effort of the 11th government dubbed "Hope and Prudence" and unflinching cooperation and collaboration of Khuzestan Province Governor general, effective steps have been taken in this field. With the coordination made in this regard, it is hoped that salient steps will be taken in this regard.

In the end, I seize this opportunity to express my special thanks to the able governor general of Khuzestan Province, governor of Mahshahr and all officials who took giant strides for materializing most economic objectives of the city.



Turkey detains pro-Kurdish party officials after attack

Police have detained 199 people in raids across Turkey, targeting officials from the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP/Halklar'n Demokratik Partisi) over allegations of links to an outlawed Kurdish armed group, the state-run Anadolu agency said.

Monday's operations were launched a day after Kurdistan Freedom Hawks (TAK/Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan), an armed group believed to be a splinter of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê), claimed responsibility for twin bombings that killed 44 people and wounded 155 outside an Istanbul football stadium.

Hours after that claim, Turkish warplanes carried out air strikes against PKK targets in northern Iraq, destroying a base of the fighters and surrounding gun positions and shelters, an army statement said.

Around dawn, about 500 police officers, backed by armored vehicles and a helicopter, launched an operation in the southern city of Adana and detained 25 HDP officials, Anadolu said.

Counter-terrorism police teams in Istanbul separately took into custody 20 HDP officials, including its provin-



cial head, and carried out searches at various addresses including the party's main offices in the city, the agency said.

The top HDP official in Ankara was among 17 people from the party held in raids in the capital, according to Anadolu, which added that 51 people were detained in the southern city of Mersin

and five in the northwestern province of Manisa.

The leaders of the HDP, the second-largest opposition group in parliament, have already been jailed pending trial over alleged ties to the PKK, and Ankara regularly accuses the HDP of being an extension of the armed group.

The PKK is designated a "terrorist group" by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called a security meeting on Sunday after declaring at the funeral in Istanbul of five of the slain 30 police officers that Turkey would "fight terrorism to the end".

Turkey was observing a day of mourning on Sunday, with flags flown at half-mast.

In June, TAK claimed responsibility for an attack that killed 11 people in Istanbul. Dozens of people were also killed by the group in the capital Ankara in February and March.

Turkey has been hit by a series of bombings this year and last year, including five in Istanbul. Dozens of attacks blamed on the PKK and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist groups took hundreds of lives.

The country is also still reeling from a failed July 15 coup blamed on the U.S.-based preacher Fethullah Gulen which has been followed by a mass dismissal of his alleged supporters from state institutions.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Bahraini appeals court confirms Salman's 9-year sentence

Bahrain's appeals court has ruled to uphold a nine-year jail sentence handed down to senior Shia opposition cleric, Sheikh Ali Salman, despite widespread criticism both at home and abroad against his imprisonment.

A judicial source said the verdict was issued during a Monday trial session.

On the eve of the trial, hundreds of Bahrainis staged anti-regime protest rallies across the Persian Gulf kingdom to demand the immediate release of Sheikh Sal-

man, the secretary general of the country's dissolved Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society.

The protesters poured out into the streets in the villages of Diraz, al-Markh and Saar as well as the town of Bilad al-Qadeem on Sunday evening.

On October 16, Bahrain's Court of Cassation overturned the sentence and ordered a retrial of the senior Shia opposition figure, who had been sentenced to nine years in jail in previous trials.

Earlier this month, the tribunal adjourned the trial of

Sheikh Salman to December 12.

He was arrested in December 2014 on charges of attempting to overthrow the Manama regime and collaborating with foreign powers. Sheikh Salman denies the charges, saying he has merely been seeking reforms in the country through peaceful means.

Amnesty International and other human rights groups have slammed his arrest and called for his release.

(Source: Press TV)

Nuclear agreement not a deal solely between U.S. and Iran: Daryl Kimball

"Europeans, China and Russia will not trust U.S. if Trumps violates commitments under nuclear deal"

Following is the full text of the interview:
During presidential campaigns Donald Trump said he would "renegotiate" the terms of the nuclear deal with Iran. What is your prediction?

A: Yes, Mr. Trump did pledge to "dismantle" the 2015 agreement between six world powers and Iran, which has led to verifiable limits on Iran's capacity to produce material that could be used for nuclear weapons, allowed Iran to continue peaceful nuclear activities, and led to the removal of nuclear-related international sanctions — a win-win scenario for both sides.

It is not clear at this point whether and how Trump would seek to do this or why. Trump's campaign statements on many issues appear to have been designed to pander to hard-right elements of the Republican Party in order to obtain votes and to criticize the Democratic nominee for president, Hillary Clinton.

Trump was not elected because his supporters wanted him to walk away from the Iran deal. Although American voters may be sharply divided on many issues, but they do expect their elected leaders to reduce nuclear weapons dangers. According to a 2015 Chicago Council on Foreign Relations opinion survey, 73 percent of Democrats, 78 percent of Republicans, and 68 percent of Independents rank "preventing the spread of nuclear weapons" as a top U.S. foreign policy goal.

If Trump actually tries to get the U.S. Congress to impose additional sanctions on Iran or threatens not to extend the waivers of nuclear-related sanctions in an effort to coerce Iran into "renegotiating" the deal, he would have violated the JCPOA and opened the door to the rapid reconstitution of Iran's capabilities, alienate all major U.S. allies, and increase the odds of another disastrous war in the Middle East.

If Trump or the Republican-led Congress sabotage the deal, they will own the grave geopolitical consequences. I believe that is more likely that the Trump administration will, in the end, decide to continue with the implementation of the JCPOA but work harder to counter Iran's influence in the Middle East region both militarily and diplomatically.

The team of Trump advisors are strong opponents of Iran and the JCPOA. How much can this team shape Trump's foreign policy toward Iran?

A: Given Trump's lack of experience and lack of specificity on many international and domestic policy issues, his picks for key cabinet positions will be important in that they will likely fill-in many of the essential details re-

"I think it very likely that the United States' P5+1 partners will resist such actions and seek to insulate the JCPOA as much as possible."

garding key policy decisions and their implementation. It is also likely that there will be some tension and contradictions within the Trump administration on a number of policy issues. Congress will also play an important role on some issues, including U.S. policy toward Iran.

So far, some of Trump's key picks for key positions have been critical of Iran and the JCPOA, such as Rep. Pompeo who has been tapped to serve as the new CIA director. One of the candidates reported to be under serious consideration as his Secretary of State, John Bolton, has urged Trump to "abrogate the Iran nuclear deal in his first days."

"My private conversations with German, French and British government officials indicate that Mogherini's statement has their strong backing."

On the other hand, there are others, like Gen. James Mattis, who has been named as Trump's pick for Secretary of Defense, who are likely to counsel Trump to maintain the U.S. end of the JCPOA bargain. In April in testimony before the U.S. Congress, he described the JCPOA as an "imperfect arms control agreement." He also said that:

... there's no going back. Absent a clear and present violation [by Iran], I don't think we can take advantage of some new president—Republican or Democrat—and say, 'well, we're not going to live up to our word in this agreement.' I believe we'd be alone if we did, and unilateral economic sanctions from us would not have anywhere near the impact of an allied approach to this.

Rather than rip up the deal or try to squeeze further nuclear concession out of Iran through sanctions on non-nuclear issues, the Trump administration should work with our P5+1 partners to think through:

ways in which we can extend the core nuclear limits and additional verification tools that have been established by the Iran deal — perhaps by multilateralizing them — and pursue strategies that reduce Iran's commercial and economic incentives to increase its uranium stockpiles and enrichment capacity after those core limits expire.

Some argue Trump would not violate the JCPOA but instead will place sanctions on charges of human rights violations in Iran. If so, can it affect the future of the JCPOA?

A: Yes, it is possible that some in Congress and some in the Trump administration will seek to put pressure on Iran for other reasons, including by imposing sanctions that seek to limit Iran's testing and development of long-range ballistic missiles and... for human rights violations. The effect of these possible actions on the JCPOA itself is hard to assess at this point. If the two countries get into

much different from ISIL, received copious supplies of arms and ammunition.

Turkey is today reaping the dire consequences of Erdogan's past policies which created crises from which he says he will emerge victorious. But this is not going to happen because, again thanks to Erdogan, the PKK and ISIL can operate

from foreign sanctuaries in Syria and Iraq.

Erdogan could go a step further and increase his present limited military intervention in northern Syria and Iraq. Turkish-backed forces are getting close to the ISIL stronghold of al-Bab, 25 miles from Aleppo. Turkey could launch a more widespread assault, ostensibly

directed at the de facto ISIL capital at Raqqa, but in reality aimed at crushing the Syrian Kurds. The Turkish leader has hitherto combined belligerent rhetoric with practical caution when it comes to Syria and Iraq, but this may not always be so.

(Source: Independent)

Italy's Gentiloni races to form new cabinet

Italy's premier-designate Paolo Gentiloni raced to put together a cabinet team Monday as the market welcomed the apparent rapid resolution of the country's political and banking crises.



Gentiloni, 62, was asked by President Sergio Mattarella on Sunday to form a new center-left government that will guide Italy to elections due by February 2018, following the resignation of outgoing Prime Minister Matteo Renzi.

Opposition parties slammed the softly-spoken former foreign minister as little more than a Renzi puppet, but Milan's FTSE Mib saluted the move, up 1.04 percent at 2 p.m.

It was also buoyed by relief over the news the Italian government would intervene to recapitalize Italy's Monte dei Paschi di Siena bank (BMPs), should it fail to raise the money from private investors needed to stay afloat.

Silver-haired Gentiloni, a one-time student radical from an aristocratic family, is expected to keep the cabinet largely untouched and present his final list to the president by the close of play Monday.

He will then seek parliamentary approval of his new government on Tuesday or Wednesday.

The biggest cabinet seat to fill is the one left vacant by Gentiloni himself, that of foreign minister.

Reshuffle -

Political watchers say it could go to Piero Fassino, a member of Renzi's center-left Democratic Party (PD) who has previously held the justice and foreign commerce portfolios.

Interior Minister Angelino Alfano, who was Renzi's deputy and heads the New Centre-Right (NCD) party, is also tipped for the post.

Should it go to Alfano, the interior portfolio could be handed to Domenico Minniti, the state secretary with responsibility for the security services under Renzi.

Analysts say Gentiloni could also keep the foreign minister job for himself, at least in the short term.

Pier Carlo Padoan is expected to stay on as finance minister to reassure Europe that the eurozone's third-largest economy is on solid ground.

Among the most pressing issues facing the new government is the fate of the troubled BMPs.

The institution, the third largest in Italy, had requested extra time from Europe to plug a gaping hole in its finances, but reports on Friday that the European Central Bank had refused spooked the markets.

'Super speed' -

But just hours after Gentiloni was named as prime minister, the bank said it could avoid appealing for a government bailout, with BMPs shares up 6.46 percent in early afternoon trading on Monday.

Oanda analyst Craig Erlam said investors were "more optimistic" the bank could raise the 5 billion euros (\$5.29 billion) needed to avoid a handout and were relieved political uncertainty had been removed in the short term at least.

Gentiloni is now rushing to resolve the political crisis sparked by Renzi's crushing referendum defeat and downfall in time for Italy to attend the European Council meeting in Brussels on Thursday, where the pressing issue of migration is on the table.

Italy is on the front lines of the migrant crisis, with a record 175,000 people landing on its shores this year alone.

"The Gentiloni-Padoan government is coming together at a super speed to prevent the implosion of the Siena bank (BMPs) and to make sure Italy does not turn up at the European Council with an incomplete government," La Stampa daily said.

Renzi may be down and out for now, but analysts said he had tapped Gentiloni to replace him because he trusts him to keep his seat warm for the next general elections, which could be brought forward to early next year.

(Source: AFP)

Aleppo liberation operation reaches end

Aleppo's complete liberation from the foreign-backed militants would mark a significant victory for Syria in its nearly six-year-long campaign against foreign-backed militants. The liberation of Aleppo would deny the militants their main supply routes across the Turkish border while it would hugely undermine the morale of the militant groups.

U.S. to blame for Palmyra fall

Elsewhere, Russia, a major ally of Syria in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group, has warned that ISIL is still a major threat despite the group's defeats in Syria and neighboring Iraq.

The Kremlin spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said on Monday that the fall of the ancient city of Palmyra (Tadmor) into the hands of ISIL over the weekend showed the seriousness of the ISIL threat.

"The threat of losing Palmyra is a loss for all civilized humankind, not just for Russia," Peskov said, blaming the United States for the loss of the city, which the Syrians had recaptured earlier this year.

Peskov said the unwillingness of the United States to work with Moscow in Syria helped the fall of Aleppo, adding that "cooperation would have probably allowed us to more effectively avoid such attacks from terrorists."

(Source: agencies)

We still don't know who bombed Istanbul – and that's a sign of the trouble Turkey is now in

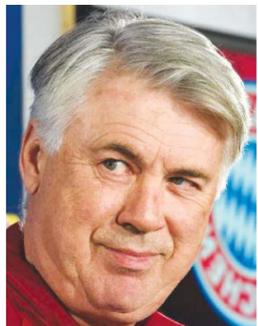
He chose confrontation with the Kurds last year in order to boost his nationalist support at the polls, while the rise of ISIL in Syria since 2011 would not have been possible without Turkey's tolerance of extremists. For a long time ISIL had free passage across the Turkish-Syrian border and al-Qaeda clones, not

Carlo Ancelotti 'confident' Bayern Munich can progress past Arsenal

Carlo Ancelotti says Bayern Munich's round-of-16 tie against Arsenal in the Champions League will be tough, but he is "confident" his side will progress.

Bayern and Arsenal will meet once again in the competition after they were pitted against each other in Monday's draw in Switzerland.

The pair won one game each in the group stage last season, while Bayern dumped Arsenal out at the round-of-16 stage in both the 2012-13 and 2013-14 campaigns.



"They'll be two interesting games, which I'm already looking forward to," Ancelotti said on Bayern's official website. "I have faith in my team and hope to reach the quarterfinals. We have to lay the foundations at the Allianz Arena for the second leg in London.

"Arsenal have a very good team at the moment and a trainer [Arsene Wenger] who I respect. Arsenal are doing well in the Premier League and have only lost once in the league [this season]. It'll be tough but I'm confident."

The first leg will be played at the Allianz Arena on Feb. 15, with the second leg taking place at the Emirates Stadium on March 7.

"It's an interesting and tough task," Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer said. "We know Arsenal very well from the past few years, having played against them regularly, including twice in the round of 16.

"We had a good experience against them and progressed. But Arsenal play good football and I rate them stronger than in previous years."

Bayern defender Jerome Boateng is hopeful his side can keep up their good record against the Gunners.

"Arsenal is a very good opponent, the fans can look forward to really exciting games," he said. "We have some positive Champions League experience against Arsenal in the past and it's all about carrying that on."

Bayern's German stars will come up against compatriots Mesut Ozil, Shkodran Mustafi and Per Mertesacker over the two legs, with Thomas Muller and Mats Hummels looking forward to the reunion.

"I've played with Borussia Dortmund against Arsenal so I know all about them," Hummels said. "I'm looking forward to two exciting games but I must say Arsenal is a very attractive draw for Bayern and their fans.

"Above all I'm looking forward to meeting my current Germany teammates Mesut Ozil and Mustafi. And naturally Per Mertesacker too."

Muller added: "Undoubtedly, Arsenal are a tough opponent as two top European teams meet. But hopefully Bayern will come out on top. Above all, though, I'm looking forward to the duel with Mesut Ozil."

(Source: ESPN)

Jose Mourinho was 'scared' when he saw Henrikh Mkhitaryan injury

MANCHESTER — Jose Mourinho said he was "scared" about losing Henrikh Mkhitaryan to a lengthy lay-off after watching a replay of the tackle on the Manchester United midfielder which saw him stretchered off during the Premier League win against Tottenham Hotspur.

Mkhitaryan is expected to be sidelined for just two weeks as a result of the ankle injury sustained after Danny Rose's challenge during the 1-0 win at Old Trafford.



But Mourinho, who is hopeful of having the Armenian back in the team during the Christmas period, feared the worst initially.

"When I saw the tackle on TV, I was scared," Mourinho said. "It's a pity because he will miss matches in his best period, but at least we won't miss him for long.

"Hopefully he can play at Christmas. We believe that is possible. When I saw on stretcher, I thought it was more difficult."

Mkhitaryan has fought back from a tough start at United, when he was overlooked for almost two months by Mourinho, to become a key figure in the team.

His goal against Spurs secured three crucial points ahead of Wednesday's trip to Crystal Palace and Mourinho admits he has been impressed by the player's determination to prove his worth.

"I have had similar processes and adaptation with other players," Mourinho said. "We bought him, he was not chosen by other people, he was bought because I asked the club to do it.

"So it would be more frustrating for me if everything went wrong. In that period, when he did not play, he was a great professional.

"Another guy would blame the pitch, the weather, the manager -- but he was quiet, closed his mouth, worked really hard and waited for opportunity."

(Source: Soccernet)

Arsenal drawn against Bayern Munich in Champions League last 16

RESULTS OF THE DRAW

MANCHESTER CITY FC (ENG)	VS	AS MONACO FC (FRA)
REAL MADRID CF (ESP)	VS	SSC NAPOLI (ITA)
SL BENFICA (POR)	VS	BORUSSIA DORTMUND (GER)
FC BAYERN MÜNCHEN (GER)	VS	ARSENAL FC (ENG)
FC PORTO (POR)	VS	JUVENTUS FOOTBALL CLUB (ITA)
BAYER 04 LEVERKUSEN (GER)	VS	CLUB ATLÉTICO DE MADRID (ESP)
PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN (FRA)	VS	FC BARCELONA (ESP)
SEVILLA FC (ESP)	VS	LEICESTER CITY FC (ENG)

Arsenal will face Bayern Munich in the last 16 of the Champions League, a draw that will lead to a great level of frustration among the club's staff and supporters given they topped their group for the first time since 2012.

Having finished above Paris Saint-Germain in Group A, Arsenal hoped to be rewarded with a favourable tie. Instead, however, they will face the Bundesliga champions and five-time winners of Europe's elite competition.

Manchester City, meanwhile, have been drawn to face Monaco, having finished behind Barcelona in their group, while Leicester City, who came top of Group G will face Sevilla.

Elsewhere, the holders Real Madrid will face Napoli, while Barcelona take on Paris Saint-Germain. Benfica were drawn against Borussia Dortmund and fellow Bundesliga side Bayer Leverkusen are to take on Atlético Madrid.

This will be the fourth out of the past five seasons that Arsenal have faced Bayern in the Champions League. Arsène Wenger's side lost to the Germans at this stage in 2012-13 and 2013-2014 and they had one win apiece in the group stages in 2015-16.

Arsenal have not progressed beyond the last 16 since 2009-10 when they defeated Porto, but lost to Barcelona in the quarter-finals. Since then they have lost six times in succession at this stage, twice to Bayern, twice to Barcelona, and also to Milan in 2012 and Monaco in 2015.

Manchester City's Pep Guardiola, who failed to win the

Champions League in his three years at Bayern Munich, will know his side could have been paired with more illustrious opponents than Monaco, although the French side defeated Tottenham twice in the group stage and are just a point behind Nice at the top of Ligue 1 after their 4-0 win at Bordeaux on Saturday.

Leicester's first taste of European Cup knockout football sees them meet the Europa League holders Sevilla, a side now managed by Jorge Sampaoli and currently sitting in third place in La Liga.

Champions League last 16 Advertisement
Bayern Munich v Arsenal
Manchester City v Monaco
Sevilla v Leicester City
Real Madrid v Napoli
Benfica v Borussia Dortmund
Porto v Juventus
Bayer Leverkusen v Atletico Madrid
Paris Saint-Germain v Barcelona
First legs to be held 14/15 February and 21/22 February, with second legs on 7/8 March and 14/15 March.
Draw facts

- Real Madrid beat Napoli in the 1987/88 European Champion Clubs' Cup first round, winning 2-0 at home before a 1-1 draw in Italy.
- Dortmund beat Benfica in the 1963/64 European

Champion Clubs' Cup first round, a 5-0 first-leg win in Germany taking them through despite a 2-1 away defeat. The Bundesliga side have won their last five fixtures with Portuguese opponents.

- Bayern and Arsenal have played each other ten times, all since 2000/01. The German club have won five of those games and the English team three, with Bayern beating Arsenal in the round of 16 in 2004/05, 2012/13 and 2013/14.
- Juventus beat Porto 2-1 in the 1984 European Cup Winners' Cup final in Basel, and recorded a win (3-1) and a draw (0-0) when the sides met in the 2001/02 UEFA Champions League first group stage.

- Atlético and Leverkusen have faced off four times in recent years, sharing two 1-1 draws in the 2010/11 UEFA Europa League group stage and a 1-0 home win each in the 2014/15 UEFA Champions League round of 16 - Atlético won the tie on penalties.
- Barcelona beat Paris in the 2012/13 and 2014/15 quarter-finals, although the French team came out on top when the clubs met in the last eight in 1994/95. Barcelona won the 1997 UEFA Cup Winners' Cup final against Paris in Rotterdam, and each team won their home game when their paths crossed again in the 2014/15 group stage - 3-2 in France, 3-1 in Spain.
- Manchester City and Monaco, and Sevilla and Leicester, have never met.

(Source: Staff & Agencies)

Jurgen Klopp: Liverpool 'have open eyes' for January signings



Jurgen Klopp has insisted that Liverpool are prepared to make moves in the January transfer window but admitted that it is a difficult period to do business in.

Klopp has previously said that he could make additions due to mounting injuries within the squad.

Philippe Coutinho, Daniel Sturridge and Danny Ings are all currently sidelined through injury, and Klopp only had Ben Woodburn, 17, and Ovie Ejaria, 19, on the substitutes' bench as an attacking outlets in Sunday's 2-2 draw with West Ham United.

The Reds boss said that if the current selection problems continue, then the club may have to make signings next month.

"If you watch our bench yesterday -- very experienced in defence and not in the same way experienced in the offence," Klopp told a news conference at Melwood on Monday.

"If the situation stays like this then it's clear that we have open eyes for everything. But the winter transfer market is maybe the most difficult one because the players you want, the other clubs doesn't want to give you. It's not about money. The players you don't want, you can have. That's all.

"We are always looking. Maybe it's a surprise but we always work hard on this

part of the business because we need to have an overview about everything. That's what we do, but nothing else."

Meanwhile, midfielder Emre Can is a doubt for Wednesday's trip to Middlesbrough with a knee injury that forced him to sit out the weekend's game at Anfield.

However, Klopp is confident that the 22-year-old will be able to return for the Merseyside derby on Dec. 19.

"It was a challenge with Divock [Origi] in training -- knee on knee. Both trained on and both could do the rest of the training. Emre [was] in a little bit more pain," Klopp said.

"We looked a little more exact on it. I never heard this ligament but it's a little bit damaged. He is already in a good way, but he is a doubt for Wednesday.

"I think Everton he will be back for sure, but it would be cool if he could [be in] training tomorrow. We will see."

Elsewhere, Marko Grujic is close to returning as he is making a comeback from a "tendon" injury, which has kept him out for "about three weeks," according to Klopp.

The 20-year-old Serbian midfielder has not played for the Reds since October.

(Source: ESPN)

Pogba brothers face off as Man United get St Etienne in Europa League



Manchester United have drawn French club St Etienne in the last-32 of the Europa League.

The tie means that Manchester United's world record signing Paul Pogba will face his older brother Florentin, who is a centre-back for the Ligue 1 side.

"It's a nice thing. Paul was already laughing and for sure it's a nice thing," said Mourinho. "Then the good thing is the travel distance. Going to France is an easy flight.

"We're one of the big names in the competition so it will be hard. But we've got two months to forget it."

Saint-Etienne are a growing force in Ligue 1 thanks to a solid defensive platform and organised tactical style - the kind that Manchester United have struggled to break down at times this season. The French side have won ten domestic titles in their history, but none for 35 years, and have never picked up European silverware.

United's fellow Premier League heavyweights Tottenham Hotspur were drawn against Belgian side Gent having dropped into the competition from the Champions League. Gent beat Valencia, Lyon and Zenit St Petersburg during their European campaign last season and will be a threat to Spurs, who will host the London leg of the tie at Wembley.

However, arguably the clash of the round will see Villarreal play Roma. The Spanish side, currently sixth in La Liga, are extremely organised defensively, with just ten goals conceded in 14 league games so far this season. But the Yellow Submarine will have their work cut out against free-scoring Roma, who have bagged 35 goals in Serie A this season and are the closest challengers to league leaders Juventus.

The other eye-catching fixture of the last-32 sees Bundesliga outfit Borussia Monchengladbach take on free-flowing Fiorentina.

Draw in full
Athletic Bilbao v Apoel Nicosia
Legia Warsaw v Ajax
Anderlecht v Zenit St Petersburg
Astra Giurgiu v Genk
Manchester United v Saint-Etienne
Villarreal v Roma
Ludogorets v Copenhagen
Celta Vigo v Shakhtar Donetsk
Olympiakos v Osmanlispor
Gent v Tottenham Hotspur
Rostov v Sparta Prague
Krasnodar v Fenerbahce
Borussia Monchengladbach v Fiorentina
AZ Alkmaar v Lyon
Hapoel Beer-Sheva v Besiktas
PAOK v Schalke

(Source: Eurosport)

Iranian teams to learn ACL 2017 opponents on Tuesday

S P O R T S Iranian teams Esteghlal Khuzestan, Zob Ahan and Persepolis will learn their opponents for the next edition of the continent's flagship competition during an official draw in the Malaysian capital on Tuesday.

The stage is set for the AFC cup 2017 draw which will take place at the Hilton Petaling Jaya in the Malaysian capital at 1430hrs (local time) on Tuesday, the-afc.com wrote.

In the draw for next year's East Zone Group Stage, holder Jeonbuk will be joined by:

FC Seoul and Suwon Samsung Bluewings (Korea Republic)

Kashima Antlers + two other clubs to be determined after the Emperor's Cup (Japan)

Guangzhou Evergrande, Jiangsu FC (China PR)

Adelaide United, Western Sydney Wanderers (Australia)

Muangthong United (Thailand)

Eastern SC (Hong Kong)

Four Play-off winners to be determined in due course

In the West Zone, the clubs that will discover their

Group Stage opponents are:

Al Ahli, Al Jazira, Al Ain (United Arab Emirates)

Al Ahli, Al Hilal, Al Taawoun (Saudi Arabia)

Esteghlal Khuzestan, Zob Ahan and Persepolis

(Islamic Republic of Iran)

Al Rayyan, Lekhwiya (Qatar)

Lokomotiv (Uzbekistan)

Four Play-off winners to be determined in due course

There will be eight groups in total - Groups A, B, C

and D in the West Zone and Groups E, F, G and H in

the East, with the country-protection principle to be

applied during the draw. In addition, the Double-Match

Date System (Monday/Tuesday for the West, Tuesday/

Wednesday for the East) will be implemented.

Meanwhile, the clubs set to learn Preliminary/Play-

off Stages fate in the Eastern Zone are Jeju United



(Korea Republic), a yet to be determined Japanese club, Shanghai SIPG (China), Brisbane Roar (Australia), Sukhotai FC, Bangkok United (Thailand), Kitchee (Hong Kong), Hanoi T&T (Vietnam), Johor Darul Ta'zim (Malaysia), Yadanarbon FC (Myanmar), Global FC (Philippines) and Tampines Rovers (Singapore).

In the West Zone, the clubs who will battle it out for a slot in the Group Stage from the Preliminary/Play-off Stages are Al Wahda (UAE), Al Fateh FC (Saudi Arabia), Esteghlal (IR Iran), El Jaish, Al Sadd (Qatar), Bunyodkor, Nasaf (Uzbekistan), Al Wehdat (Jordan), JSW Bengaluru FC (India) and Al Hidd (Bahrain).

Siamand Rahman: I will never forget Bahman Golbarnezhad



S P O R T S Iran's Siamand Rahman, the world's strongest Paralympian, says that to lose Para-cyclist Bahman Golbarnezhad is one of the worst events in his life.

The 48-year-old C4/C5 competitor was Iran's sole cyclist at the Rio Paralympic Games and died in an accident.

"I have so many memories of Bahman. It is impossible for me to forget him. I couldn't sleep at night when I heard that. That was one of the worst events for me as well as for the entire Paralympic community. I will never forget him," Rahman told Paralympic.ir.

Rahman lifted an unprecedented

310kg to claim the coveted gold medal in the men's over 107kg in the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games.

He set a new world record and claimed his second consecutive Paralympic gold.

"I'm going to continue and make my people proud. But I like an Iranian powerlifter to break my record in the future," Rahman told Paralympic.ir.

"Rio Paralympic 2016 was very hard for me since I promised I would lift more than 300kg. I was under pressure since everyone asked me if I am ready to lift more than 300kg. It made my task harder but I am happy now to do that," Rahman said.

Iran jujitsu team finishes runner-up in Asian championship



The Iranian men's and women's national jujitsu teams have finished in the second place overall in the first edition of the Asian Jujitsu Championship in Turkmenistan.

The Islamic Republic of Iran collected two gold, five silver, and four bronze medals and stood behind the host nation at the conclusion of the six-day-long competitions in the Turkmen capital city of Ashgabat. Thailand secured the third place.

On Monday, Iranian brothers Hamid and Majid Joursaei snatched two gold medals in the individual kata division.

Earlier, Masoud Hassanzadeh had picked up two silver medals for Iran in the over 94-kilogram and open divisions.

Amir Hossein Khademian landed second

in his final over 66-kilogram and open encounters, and added two more silver medals to Iran's tally at the sporting event.

Mohsen Hamidi and Mohammad Mansouri also settled for bronze in the minus 94-kilogram and minus 77-kilogram sections.

Additionally, Soudeh Kamandan won a silver medal in the women's minus 63-kilogram division, and a bronze in open contests. Nasrin Mohammadi earned a bronze medal in the women's over 70-kilogram class as well.

The first edition of the Asian Jujitsu Championship started in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on December 7 and wrapped up on December 12, 2016.

(Source: PressTV)

Jorge Fossati optimistic about Qatar's chance of winning over Iran

S P O R T S Qatar coach Jorge Fossati says that they are optimistic about defeating Iran in the 2018 FIFA World Cup qualifier.

Qatar will take on Iran on March 23 in Doha's Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium.

Qatar is fifth in the Asia's 2018 World Cup qualifying with four points while Iran

remains top of Group A with 11 points.

"The match against Iran is our most important game in the return leg. With all respects I have for Iran national football team, I am optimistic about defeating them in Doha," Fossati said.

"I know Iran is a strong team and we have a difficult task ahead of the team but

I believe in my players," the Uruguayan coach added.

"I saw Qatar's 2-0 loss against Iran in Tehran in September. At that time, I was not Qatar coach and don't want to analyze the match but I have to say that our players have the great potential," Fossati concluded.



Iran, Morocco friendly in doubt

S P O R T S The friendly football match between Iran and Morocco in the UAE is in doubt.

The match has been scheduled for January 6 in the UAE's training camp but the game may be called off.

The Iranian federation has penned a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Armenian football federation and

Team Melli's preparatory camp will likely be held in the European country.

Iran, who is currently top of Group A in the Asia's 2018 World Cup qualifying with 11 points, will take on Qatar on March 23 before facing China five days later.

Team Melli was also scheduled to play Ivory Coast in its training camp in the UAE.

Reza Mehmandoust wins WTF Annual Gala Awards

S P O R T S Iranian coach Reza Mehmandoust, who currently works as Azerbaijan's taekwondo coach, won the coach of the year award.

World Taekwondo Federation (WTF) Annual Gala Awards held at the Badamdar Hotel in Baku in Azerbaijan on Monday.

The 2016 WTF World Taekwondo

Team Championships begin today in Baku.

Belgium, South Korea, Russia and the United States are set to battle for the inaugural mixed title at the event held at the Sarhadchi Olympic Sports Complex.

Previously, only male and female team events have been held, with each country fielding five athletes with the option of a substitute.

Iran defeats Russia in 2016 WTF World Taekwondo Team Championships

Iran men's national taekwondo team has pulled out a narrow win at the 2016 WTF World Taekwondo Team Championships in Azerbaijan, overcoming the Russian squad.

On Monday, the opening day of the competitions at the Sarhadchi Olympic Sports Complex in the Azerbaijani capital city of Baku, the Iranian team conceded the first two sets (4-6 and 9-10) to the European side.

The Persians, however, came from behind in the decider and managed to achieve a 16-15 result, sealing their final victory.

Iran men's national taekwondo team is put in Group A of the group stage of the sports event, and has joined Russia, South Korea and Turkey.

Group B consists of Azerbaijan, Belgium and the United States.

The top two teams in each group (seven teams in total) will qualify for the knockout stage. The 2016 WTF World Taekwondo Team Championships started in Baku, Azerbaijan, on December 12, and concludes on Tuesday.

The names on the roster of the Iranian men's team include Farzan Ashourzadeh, Abolfazl Yaqoubi, Mehdi Jalali, Masoud Hajizavareh, Siavash Fakhrzai and Masoud Saeed Rajabi. The Iranian outfit is under the tutelage of Bijan Moghanloo as head coach, and Alireza Nasr Azadani and Hadi Afshar coach the Iranian taekwondo practitioners.

Earlier, Iranian taekwondo fighter Sajjad Mardani could claim a gold medal in the male over 80-kilogram weight category of the 2016 WTF World Taekwondo Grand Prix Final. Mardani beat Russia's Vladislav Larin 4-3 and won the honor.

Roman Kuznetsov of Russia fought a smart and mobile fight against 21-year-old Nigerian taekwondo athlete Abdou Razak Issoufou Alfaga in the bronze medal match, and took the medal with a 2-1 win.

Attended by a total of top 64 taekwondo practitioners of the world, the event was staged in four weight categories between December 9 and 10 in Baku.

(Source: PressTV)

Roger Federer aims to win Stuttgart title in his much-anticipated 2017 comeback

Roger Federer has set his goals of winning the Mercedes Benz Cup in Stuttgart next year, when the Swiss Maestro returns to the Tour coming off a knee injury.

In a video posted by the Mercedes Cup's official account in Instagram, Federer revealed his goals of winning the ATP 250 grass tournament in Stuttgart.

"I'm really working to hard to get ready for 2017 and to play at the Mercedes Cup in Stuttgart in June," Federer said.

"I hope you can be there and follow me. This last time I came really close, but not close enough to win the title and drive home in a nice Mercedes Benz. So, hopefully, I can do it 2017."



It will be Federer's second-straight appearance at the event after making his debut last year. The 17-time Grand Slam winner had an impressive run at the Mercedes Benz cup, but was halted by Austrian youngster Dominic Thiem in the semifinal round of the tournament.

Federer is coming off the worst season in his career, suffering setbacks and injuries that prevented him from winning a single title this year. After suffering a knee injury a day after his Australian Open loss to Novak Djokovic, the Swiss was sidelined for more than two months before occasionally being bothered by back problems.

Rarely did fans see Federer flashed his old form, and when he is finally playing remarkable tennis at Wimbledon, the Basel native re-injured his surgically repaired knee, forcing him to skip the remainder of the season.

Nevertheless, his recent injuries have never stopped Federer's determination to come back stronger and better at the Tour. Federer, who started the year as world No. 3, now sits at No. 16, his lowest place in the ATP world rankings in over a decade. But while Federer recognizes the road back atop the summit, he vows to train well to get regain his position in the leaderboard.

"I have thought about that these few weeks-what'll it be like when I return...will I feel pressure," Federer said, reports Tennis. "I will have dropped a few rankings."

"But if I can train the way I am hoping [during the off-season], I'm thinking that I can quite rapidly rejoin."

(Source: gamenguide)

Iran's Hosseinkhani wins bronze at Wrestling World Championships Non-Olympic

Mostafa Hosseinkhani from Iran claimed a bronze medal at the 2016 Wrestling World Championships in Budapest on Sunday for weight categories not contested at the Rio Olympic Games.

Magomed Kurbanaliev of Russia defeated Nurlan Bekzhanov of Kazakhstan 10-4 to win the 70kg freestyle event.

Bronze medals went to Mostafa Hosseinkhani of Iran and Elaman Dogdurbek Uulu of Kyrgyzstan.

A total of 142 wrestlers from more than 40 countries and regions attended the championships held in Hungary.

The world championships were held in women's wrestling (55kg, 60kg), freestyle (61kg, 70kg) and Greco-Roman (71kg, 80kg).

(Source: Tasnim)

Cameroonian attacker Nong completes Esteghlal Khuzestan medical

Cameroonian striker Aloys Bertrand Nong has completed his Esteghlal Khuzestan medical test on Monday.

The 33-year-old striker has already played at Iranian clubs Foolad, Naft Tehran and Tractor Sazi.

Nong will join the Iran Professional League titleholder to strengthen the Ahvaz-based team in the AFC Champions League.

Esteghlal Khuzestan is 10th in the IPL table with 15 points from 13 games.

Nong started his career in Belgium football club Eendracht Aalst. He has played at Kortrijk, Mechelen, Standard Liège and Levante as well.



(Source: Tasnim)



Poem of the day

There is a mystery I know full well,
Which to all, good and bad, I can not tell;
My words are dark, but I can not unfold
The secrets of the station where I dwell.

Khayyam

Prayer Times

Noon: 11:59 Evening: 17:12 Dawn: 5:36 tomorrow Sunrise: 7:06 (tomorrow)

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Algerian Minister of Culture Izzedin Mayhoubi meets ICRO director in Tehran

CULTURE TEHRAN — Algerian Minister of Culture Izzedin Mayhoubi met with director of Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organizations (ICRO) Abuzar Ebrahimi-Torkaman in Tehran.



Algerian Minister of Culture Izzedin Mayhoubi (L) meets with director of Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organizations (ICRO) Abuzar Ebrahimi-Torkaman in his office in Tehran on December 11, 2016.

The two officials met on Sunday and stressed reinforcing bilateral cultural relations, ICRO has announced in a press release.

Ebrahimi-Torkaman said that there are many commonalities between the two countries that have led to their friendship.

"We can focus on more joint collaborations between Iran and Algeria and take further positive steps," he added.

Izzedin Mayhoubi, who has traveled to Iran to attend the Algerian Cultural Festival, said that the event would be a positive step in the expansion of cultural relations.

He expressed hope that the festival would help introduce cultural potentials of Algeria to the art and culture devotees of Iran.

The Iran National Library and Archives (INLA) hosted the opening ceremony of the Algerian Cultural Festival on Monday.

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Reza Salehi-Amiri, Algerian Minister of Culture Izzedin Mayhoubi and a number of cultural officials and foreign ambassadors and diplomats attended the opening ceremony.

The festival will hold Algerian film screening sessions in addition to a number of concerts.

Gillo Pontecorvo's 1966 black-and-white film "The Battle of Algiers", which recreates France's suppression of the 1950s Algerian uprising, will go on screen during the five-day event.

Also included are the films "L'Algérie Vue Du Ciel" (On the Sky of Algeria) by Yann Arthus-Bertrand, and "Le Puits" (The Well) by Algerian filmmaker Lotfi Bouchouchi.

Musician Nouri Koufi is also among several musicians who have been invited to give performances during the festival.

In addition, an exhibition of handicrafts, photos, paintings and manuscripts will be shown.

"Avantage" wins three awards at 10th Cinema Verite

The jury special award was presented to "Nena" by Mohammadreza Vatandust.

The winners of the international section were also honored at the ceremony.

"Bread and Tea" by Sarah Kaskas (Lebanon) won the best short doc award and the best mid-length doc award was given to "Hamja" by Mehdi Qanavati (Iran).

The jury did not select a best long documentary in the international section.

However, the jury special award was given to "Under the Sun", a production of Russia, Germany, Czech Republic and North Korea by director Vitaly Mansky.

The award-giving ceremony was followed by honoring Austrian specialist Professor Dr. Gerhard Freilinger, who appeared in Mostafa Razzaq-Karimi's "Memories for All Seasons".

"Memories for All Seasons" is an acclaimed documentary that narrates the memories of a group of Iranian soldiers wounded by Iraqi chemical weapons during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

The 90-year-old professor, who is a specialist in plastic reconstructive surgery and treated chemically-wounded Iranian soldiers in those years, was surprised at the ceremony and said he did not expect to be honored.

He expressed hope that there not be any more war and wished for more peace and friendship.



Filmmaker Saeid Kart smiles as he is holding the best director award for his "Avantage" at the closing ceremony of the 10th Cinema Verite held at Tehran's Art Bureau on December 11, 2016. Tehran Times/Asghar Khamseh

Hamedan Intl. Theater Festival kicks off

ART TEHRAN — The 23rd edition of the International Theater Festival for Children and Young Adults opened yesterday during a ceremony in Hamedan, Iran.

Over fifty theater troupes from Germany, Italy, Russia, Spain, South Africa, Czech Republic, South Korea and Iran will compete in the ten different sections of the festival, which will run until December 17.

Several stage directors from Poland, France and Germany are scheduled to hold workshops during the event.

Theater experts Niclas Malmcrona from Sweden, Salvatore Tramacere from Italy, and Bahram Shah Mohammadlu and Ardesheer Salehpour both from Iran

have been selected for the jury of the festival.

The jury also includes Leili Rashidi, Hengameh Mofid and Majid Qanad.

The organizers also plan to honor Iranian actor Reza Fayyazi.

An exhibition of photos and posters will be held on the sidelines of this edition of the festival.

In addition, in the reading performance section, the organizers will put a spotlight on plays by Jabbar Baghtchehban.

Baghtchehban (1886-1966) established the first Iranian kindergarten for the deaf, and was the inventor of Persian language cued speech. He wrote several plays and books for children and young adults.



PICTURE OF THE DAY

FARS/Soheil Sahranavard



A visitor looks at works on display at the Fourth International Art Festival of Resistance, which opened at the Saba Art and Cultural Institute on December 10, 2016.

"Star Wars" enters 'grittier' new chapter with 'Rogue One' premiere

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — With a new band of rebels and a high-stakes journey, "Star Wars" ushered in a new chapter on Saturday by bringing a galaxy far, far away to the heart of Hollywood for the "Rogue One" premiere.

Directed by Gareth Edwards, "Rogue One" is the first standalone film in Disney's "Star Wars" reboot. It stars a brand new cast in a storyline that does not follow the third trilogy that started with last year's hit, "The Force Awakens".

Ben Mendelsohn, who plays Imperial Commander Orson Krennic, described "Rogue One" as "the really tough cousin" to previous "Star Wars"

films. "People are going to understand exactly where it lives in the 'Star Wars' world and timeline, and I feel like this is a much grittier, harder-edged film and it really packs a hell of a wallop," Mendelsohn told Reuters on the red carpet, which featured a life-size Rebel Alliance X-Wing jet.

"Rogue One", in theaters on Dec. 16, follows Jyn Erso (Felicity Jones), the daughter of a weapons specialist who has been in hiding under another name for years. Her fate is quickly tied in with Rebel Alliance pilot Cassian Andor, played by Diego Luna, and Imperial pilot Bodhi Rook, played by Riz Ahmed, who defects from the dark

side. The trio band together with more rebels to fight the evil Darth Vader's plans for intergalactic domination.

Jones described Erso as "a bit of a tomboy", saying she had prepared intensely for the role's physical demands.

"I had to be in the gym for far too long, which I have to say is not enjoyable. But for the sake of 'Star Wars', I was prepared to do it," she said.

The movie explores the journey preceding the events that launched George Lucas' intergalactic saga with 1977's "Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope".

United States returns stolen 14th century image of saint to Italy

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — A stolen 14th century illustration of a Roman Catholic saint was returned on Friday to Italy, where it will be put in a museum, U.S. Customs officials said.

The image, an ink, tempera and gold image of a haloed Saint Lucy, had spent decades at the Cleveland Museum of Art, which bought it in good faith in 1952, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency said in a statement.

It said the artifact was turned over in a ceremony at the Italian Embassy.

A two-year investigation determined that the item, a leaf of the book, had been stolen and the museum turned it over to U.S. officials last month after another stolen leaf from the same book turned up in the Swiss market. That leaf has also been returned to Italy.

The Cleveland leaf, which measures about 17.4 inches (44.3 cm) by 13.9 inches (35.2 cm), was taken from a page in an illuminated parchment antiphony, a type of hymnal, created around 1340. Known as Codex D, the manuscript is in a museum in Castelfiorentino, near Florence.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Chennai festival to screen "Parole"

ART TEHRAN — Iranian director Hossein Mahkam's debut feature "Parole" will go on screen at the 14th edition of the Chennai International Film Festival, which will be held in the Indian town from January 5 to 12, 2017.

The film tells the story of a young boy, Saeid, who is released from jail and faces some problems with his family.

In addition, Asghar Farhadi's acclaimed drama "The Salesman" and Behruz Sebti-Rasul's "Identity" will also go on screen at the festival.



Tehran gallery to hang works by Kambiz Derambakhsh

ART TEHRAN — Iranian cartoonist Kambiz Derambakhsh plans to showcase 40 frames of his works in an exhibition, which will be held at Seyhun Gallery from December 16 to 28.

The exhibition entitled "Endless Stories" is a collection of his selected works, which were previously published in Dastan magazine.

The gallery is located at 24 Sinai Alley, off Keyhan St. and Moqaddas-e Ardabili Ave.



"We Can't Pay? We Won't Pay" to go on stage at Tehran theater

ART TEHRAN — Iranian director Hadi Amel plans to stage Italian director and playwright Dario Fo's "We Can't Pay? We Won't Pay" at the Nazerzadeh Kermani Hall of the Iranshahr Theater Complex in Tehran from December 20, 2016 to January 19, 2017.

The 1974 play, which is one of Fo's most famous plays, is a comedy about consumer backlash against high prices.

Shiva Ebrahimi, Labkhand Badiei, Hedayat Hashemi and Ali Amel are the main members of the cast for the play.