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Johnson meets top officials in Tehran

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Global outrage over U.S. recognition of al-Quds as Israel's capital

By staff & agencies
People in different countries have hit the streets to denounce the United States President Donald Trump's recognition of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel's "capital."
Meantime, twenty Palestinians have sustained injuries during heavy clashes

between Israeli forces and protesters rallying in the occupied West Bank against the U.S.'s recent recognition of al-Quds as Israel's "capital."
Palestinians started taking to the streets of the city of Beit Lahm (Bethlehem) since the early hours of Saturday, the Palestinian Shehab News Agency reported. **->3**

Cinema Verite, Iran's major event for docs, to open today

A R T **TEHRAN** — The 11th **d e s k** Cinema Verite, Iran's major international festival for documentary cinema, will open today at Tehran's Charsu Cineplex, screening a total of 48 Iranian and foreign documentaries in different sections on its first day.
"Waiting for the Sun" by Kaspar Asstrup Schroder from Denmark and "I Remember" by Elma Tataragic from Bosnia

Herzegovina are some of the foreign docs to go on screen today.
Also included are Tamara Tepanyan's "Those from the Shore", produced by Lebanon, Armenia, France and Qatar, Rati Oneli's "City of the Sun" produced by Georgia, U.S. and Qatar, "Landscapes of a Capelada" by Alberto Lobelle from Spain and "Brexitannia" by Timothy George Kelly from the UK. **->16**

Intl. environmental co-op must be fair, not hampered by sanctions, politicization

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — We **d e s k** strongly believe in the fact that environmental problems are trans-boundary and trans-generational, and need to be solved through effective international cooperation mechanisms that are fair and not hampered by economic sanctions and politicization, Iranian environment official Kaveh Madani has said.
Madani, deputy environment chief for inter-

national affairs, innovation and socio-cultural engagement of the Department of Environment (DOE), made the remarks over the 3rd UN Environment Assembly gathered in Nairobi, Kenya, from December 4-6, 2017 under the overarching theme of pollution.
"I like to acknowledge the initiative of the UN Environment for orientation of this meeting towards a Pollution-Free Planet. **->12**

EDITORIAL
By Mohammad Ghaderi
Tehran Times editor-in-chief
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Johnson's souvenir for Queen from a "special" trip

The unexpected trip by British Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, to Tehran is of importance and its different aspects should be taken into consideration.

On one hand, the BBC Persian, which is the Royal British media is trying its best to prepare the condition for the freedom of "Nazanin Zaghari", the double-citizenship culprit who is in Tehran's jail at the moment. And on the other hand, Hamid Ba'idinejad, our ambassador to London, while calling this trip "special", has confirmed the effort to make this happen.

A brief overview of Ba'idinejad's talks about this trip and what is going to happen in Tehran between the two sides, along with emphasizing the importance of issues relating to the JCPOA, are generally some excuses for convincing the public opinion about the reason for this trip, and it doesn't inform us about the real cause of Johnson's trip.

Meanwhile, the BBC has, at least in its two reports on the issue, announced that the release of Nazanin Zaghari is one of the most important aspects of Johnson's trip to Iran.

The BBC also reported that Mr. Johnson has said that he will convey the British authority's criticism of human rights in his meetings with Iranian officials. He also said he is going to discuss other issues with Iranian authorities, including British concerns about Iran's role in the Middle East.

Apart from Ba'idinejad's justifications for this trip, and along with the BBC attempts, the historical vicious conduct of the British warn us that we should be extremely cautious about what's happening in this trip.

To put it more precisely, the very principle that takes acceptable to have different methods while playing on the ground of politics and international relations, considers it important and necessary to have a smart conduct based on the historical experiences. Such a conduct is the guarantor of our national interests. Thus we should be careful and we should know that Boris Johnson is the representative of a government that inherits all kinds of betrayal and mischief towards the Muslim world, the nations of the region, and especially Iran. **->13**

Disarmament of Hezbollah out of agenda: Sheikh Naim Qassem

By Somayyeh Khomarbaghi

TEHRAN — On the sidelines of the 31st International Islamic Unity Conference in Tehran, Sheikh Naim Qassem, the Deputy Secretary of Hezbollah told Mehr News correspondent that nobody in Lebanon talks about disarmament of Hezbollah in the current situation, adding Hariri's return to power has improved the political stability in Lebanon.

Seyed Hassan Nasrallah's deputy said that "America and Israel and their allies speak of disarmament because Hezbollah has been successful in defeating Israel in Lebanon," adding that "Lebanon's resistance was also able to effectively fight against Takfiri terrorism, so nobody talks about disarmament



of Hezbollah in the current situation."
He told Mehr News Agency that the unity

among Lebanese nation, army and the Resistance in Lebanon is very strong and added that "all sides have already agreed on stability in Lebanon, and we will decide on Lebanon without any external interference."

On the Hariri's return to power in Lebanon, Qassem said "after his return the situation has returned to time before his alleged resignation," adding that "all sides have already agreed on stability in Lebanon, and we will decide on Lebanon without any external interference."

The deputy of Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah concluded that "the Lebanon's Resistance will continue to fight the Takfiri terrorism in the region and is ready to face any kind of threat."

Malaysia suggests Muslim countries stop trading oil in U.S. dollars

The Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) suggested that Muslim countries stop trading their oil in U.S. dollars in retaliation to the United States for recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

"The power and influence possessed by the King of Saudi Arabia, King Salman Abdulaziz Al Saud, and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak will be able to convince oil-producing countries to do away with the trading of oil in the US dollar," New Straits Times quoted MIC treasurer-general Datuk Seri S. Vell Paari as saying in a statement today.

Oil trade could be done in another currency, Paari suggested.

"This will teach the U.S. a lesson as its decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel will have

consequences," the treasurer-general of MIC said. "Since the Muslim world is blessed with oil, it could be the only practical 'weapon' to be used against the United States," he went on to add.

Earlier this week, U.S. President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and instructed the State Department to begin to relocate the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Trump's action was met with dismay and anger in the Arab world, and Western allies such as Germany, the UK, and France said they didn't support the U.S. decision. Saudi Arabia, OPEC's largest exporter and de facto leader, expressed "disappointment".

Meanwhile, the U.S. has become isolated at the UN Security Council as Washington's traditional

allies condemn President Donald Trump's move to recognize Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel's capital.

The Security Council convened an emergency meeting with regard to Palestine on Friday upon the request of Britain, France, Sweden, Bolivia, Uruguay, Italy, Senegal and Egypt.

Following the session, the U.S.' traditional Western allies -- Britain, France, Germany, Sweden and Italy -- issued a joint statement, denouncing Trump's decision as "unhelpful in terms of prospects for peace in the region."

"We stand ready to contribute to all credible efforts to restart the peace process, on the basis of internationally agreed parameters, leading to a two-state solution," they said.

(Source: Oilprice)

ARTICLE
By Sajad Abedi
political analyst

Iran's Nuclear Deal, failure for Arab diplomacy

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the rulers of Hijaz, taking into account the strong opposition between the political and religious notion and their interests with the foundations of the Islamic Revolution, used all their financial and political capacities to support the terrorist cells and internal and external rioters. The political structure and territorial integrity of Iran face serious challenges. This attempt, although in the early years of the victory of the Islamic Revolution and the holy defense, created antagonisms to Iran's newly established system, but some years later it was faced with many failures, while events such as the testimony of the pilgrims of Baitullah al-Haram at the ceremony of blaming the idolaters in 1986 and The tragic incident of Mina and the martyrdom of Ayatollah Nemer and events of this kind brought the Iranian community to heart with bitter memories.

Along with these maladaptive approaches of the Saudi rulers during the nuclear talks and their efforts to bring to a standstill the talks between Iran and the Western countries over the peaceful nuclear activities of our country did not go a long way. Therefore, implementation can be considered one of Al Saud's most important defeats in 2015. The defeat made Saudi Arabia close to Tel Aviv to advance anti-Iranian policies and in recent months there has been a surge in spending between Saudi princes and Zionist regime officials.

With the onset of regional crises, the Saudi rulers, while helping the rioters and terrorists to burn the region, tried to extend the fingerprints to Iran and set the Islamic Republic as the number one accused of creating a crisis in the region. On the other hand, he relied on the oil resources and the great wealth he had received on the Saudi side to compensate for their failures in the region, while affecting the price of the global oil, a large part of the wealth generated for the political alignment of the small countries of the region Apply against Iran. Despite all the abuses, the Saudis are aware of the extent of Iran's influence in the region and are following the concerns of Iran's relations and interactions with Qatar and Oman. **->7**



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Traditional games festival held in eastern Iran

A festival featuring traditional games was held in the eastern province of South Khorasan on Friday for the first time.

Ritual dance, folklore music, camel riding, and ball games were among the recreational activities during the one-day event which was held in a tourist resort in Khusf.

Participants competed against one another in five teams in two sections of men and women.

The games are supposed to bring a spirit of happiness and keep ancient traditions alive.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Al-Quds to become burying place for Zionist regime: IRGC commander

POLITICS TEHRAN — Commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) said on Saturday that al-Quds (Jerusalem) will become the burying place for the illegitimate Zionist entity, ISNA reported.

"America and the Zionist regime committed their stupidest mistake yet," Mohammad Ali Jafari said in reference to U.S. President Donald Trump's recognition of al-Quds as the capital of Israel.

General Jafari called on all Muslims to oppose the move, which he described as a conspiracy to destroy al-Aqsa Mosque.

He also said the Saudi regime is making sure Muslims' stance against the U.S. new move remains limited to words and statements.



Defense chief lauds Tehran-Moscow strategic ties

POLITICS TEHRAN — Defense Minister Amir Hatami has described the growing relations between Tehran and Moscow as "strategic", saying the two countries have taken major steps in boosting military ties.

"In terms of military and defense cooperation, Iran and Russia have taken good steps," Hatami told Tasnim news agency in an interview published on Saturday.

The general said the national interests of the two countries lie in deepening bilateral relations.

The defense minister further said Tehran and Moscow have sale and purchase contracts in the military sphere in line with their interests.



'Naming Quds as Israel's capital serves Palestinian cause'

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Assembly of Experts has condemned U.S. government's decision to designate al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of Israel, saying the move was "an unwanted service to the Palestinian cause".

In a statement released on Saturday, the assembly described the move as "incendiary" and "foolish", saying it was a big step toward the collapse of the Zionist regime.

The statement said the conspiracy emerged after the White House and the Zionist regime failed to create chaos in the Middle East, especially in Iraq and Syria, through Daesh (ISIS).

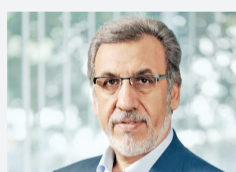


No path left except supporting Palestinian struggle: Hassan Khomeini

POLITICS TEHRAN — Seyed Hassan Khomeini, the grandson of Imam Khomeini, said on Saturday that there's no path forward for Muslim nations except supporting the Palestinian people's struggle in the face of Israeli aggressions.

In a statement, Khomeini said the U.S. president's inhumane move to designate al-Quds as the capital of Israel is a blatant violation of Palestinian rights, ISNA reported.

He also said Donald Trump's "delusional" and "irrational" action was against international agreements, and showed the U.S. government's hypocrisy for pretending to support peace and human rights.



Former banker sentenced for disrupting the economy

POLITICS TEHRAN — Head of the Islamic Revolutionary Court said on Saturday that Mahmoud Reza Khavari, a former banker involved in the 2011 massive fraud, has been sentenced to long-term imprisonment.

Mousa Qazanfard Abadi said Khavari was tried in absentia on November 21 and was found guilty of disrupting the economic, monetary and banking system, Mehr reported.

Khavari was chairman of Bank Mellī Iran until September 2011 and chairman of Bank Sepah's board of directors from December 2003 until March 2005.

He is wanted by the judicial authorities. As of October 2016, Khavari has been wanted by Interpol.

Khavari, an accomplice in the \$2.7 billion fraud scandal, fled to Toronto in 2011. So far Canada has refused to repatriate him.



U.S. House introduces sanctions bill against Iran

POLITICS Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, the chairman of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, and Ted Poe, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, have introduced a bill to impose new sanctions against Iran.

The bill codifies Executive Order 13611, issued on May 16, 2012, by President Obama, declaring a national emergency to deal with the threat on Yemen's peace, security and stability, Ros-Lehtinen's website reported on Friday.

It is claimed that the bill is to impose sanctions against Iran for destabilizing the region.

Top Iranian, Turkish officials discuss border security

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli and Suleyman Soylu, the Turkish interior minister, met in Tehran on Saturday to discuss border security, including issues related to smuggling and terrorism.

A Turkish delegation is visiting Iran to focus on border security issues like smuggling and terrorism.

The Turkish interior minister, heading a delegation, visited Iran at the official invitation of Rahmani Fazli.

Iranian Deputy Interior Minister Hossein Zolfagari also held talks with Soylu. Zolfagari and the Turkish interior minister discussed the expansion of ties and cooperation in fighting terrorism, mutual security concerns and the most important regional and international issues.

The two sides also held talks on the recent terrorist attack in northwest Iran during which an Iranian border guard was killed and 7 other guards and engineers were injured.

The high ranking delegations from Iran and Turkey, headed by the ministers of the



Suleyman Soylu and Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli

interior, were scheduled to attend a bilateral meeting.

The Turkish interior minister is accom-

panied by Turkish Gendarmerie General Commander Arif Cetin and Selami Altinok the General Director of Security.

Recently the Iranian Customs said a large international heroin trafficking band has been smashed by Razi customs officers at the Iran-Turkey border.

The gang sought to transit heroin from Iran to Turkey and then to Europe by hiding the drugs inside a luxury car.

The World Customs Organization in its October ranking has examined the performance of customs worldwide in the first nine months of 2017 and placed Iran at the top of the list of countries combatting drugs and second in fighting smuggled goods.

The World Customs Organization also named an online customs services plan introduced within the framework of a comprehensive Customs portal in Iran as a top model to its members globally.

Iran has long borders with hotbeds of drugs production and has dedicated many lives to fight smuggling rings.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are two origins of producing and trafficking various types of narcotic in the region.

Foreign Policy claims Iranian, American-made parts in Houthi missiles

News analysis

On November 4, a Yemeni tribal group called Houthi launched a short-range ballistic missile from a remote valley in the northwestern governorate of Amran over 1,000 miles to the outskirts of Saudi Arabia's capital, its warhead exploding on the edge of the King Khalid International Airport.

Saudi Arabia and Washington were quick to accuse Iran of having provided the missiles, leading to the UN team investigating into the matter.

Foreign Policy on Friday claimed that an examination of key missile fragments, documented last month in a confidential UN report, supported U.S. claims that the missile was comprised of Iranian hardware. But the report, which was reviewed by Foreign Policy, provided a new twist: The weapon also included a component that was manufactured by an American company.

The White House sees the missile strike as an opportunity to rally international sentiment against Tehran, and to lessen Washington's diplomatic isolation, which has deepened with President Donald Trump's rejection of the landmark 2015 Iran nuclear deal negotiated by his predecessor, Barack Obama.

"The Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its partners are arming, advising, and enabling the Houthis' violent actions, which accelerate the cycle of violence and

human suffering, obstruct the flow of humanitarian aid, and disrupt efforts toward a political resolution," according to a statement released on Friday night by the White House press secretary.

In recent weeks, Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, has pressed the Pentagon and U.S. spy agencies to declassify intelligence linking Iran to the Nov. 4 attack as well as other Iranian infractions, while U.S. national security officials have lobbied the UN. The U.S. goal, an official was quoted by Foreign Policy as saying, is to get UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to present the UN's strongest case to date of Iranian sanctions violations in a report due out next week.

In an unpublished report distributed to Security Council members on Friday, Guterres said the United Nations is "carefully reviewing" all the evidence related to Houthi missile attacks in Yemen, including the Nov. 4 strike. He urged the Security Council committees responsible for enforcing Yemen sanctions and monitoring the Iran nuclear deal to receive a briefing on the UN's findings. But the investigation also produced a surprise.

The missile, painted blue with "Borkan 2-H" written in white paint, contained another component — a set of carbon fiber compressed air bottles that circulate liquid jet fuel in the missile — manufactured in the United States, according to the UN panel's report. The panel has

reached out to the manufacturer, which was not named in its report, to find out how its technology found its way into a Houthi missile.

The question of how an American-made part found its way into the fabrication of the Houthi rebels' most advanced missile is a missing piece in an enduring puzzle UN investigators have been struggling to solve.

There are a number of contingencies arising from the fact that the missile included U.S.-made parts. First, it could serve arguments by Iran and its allies, including Russia, that the weapon was not produced by Iran.

The report's findings appear to lend support to an analysis of a missile research team and published in the New York Times, which challenged claims made by President Trump, who said that a U.S. supplied Patriot missile defense system in Riyadh "knocked the missile out of the air." Photos show that the Borkhan's rocket motor and other components landed well short of their target, but that missile warhead landed perilously close to the airport.

The second possibility is that either Iran or the U.S. have tried implicating each other in the rockets case. This is however unlikely because in that case only parts made by one side would have been found in the debris.

The third, more likely possibility, is that the local Houthi forces have managed somehow to take different parts from different sources and make their own missiles.

Trump's move will boost resistance front unity: Rezaee

POLITICS TEHRAN — Mohsen Rezaee, secretary of the Expediency Council, said on Saturday that U.S. President Donald Trump's recognition of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of the Zionist regime will boost unity in the resistance front.

The U.S. president declared on Wednesday that he recognizes al-Quds as the capital of Israel and ordered the relocation of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds.

"This action of Trump is war mongering and declaration of war and is also considered clear adventurism and an act to undermine the region," Rezaee, the former IRGC chief, told a press conference.

He described the U.S. move as "insult" to the Muslims and continuation of occupation.

He called on the Islamic countries to summon ambassadors of the U.S. and cut or reduce oil export.

The EU's top diplomat on Thursday

warned that the Israel-Palestine conflict could descend into "even darker times". Federica Mogherini, the bloc's foreign affairs chief, said the U.S. announcement "has a very worrying potential impact" for peace in the region. "It could send us backwards into even darker times than the ones we are already living in," she said.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel also responded to the pronouncement on Wednesday evening, saying that the

"German government does not support this position, because the status of Jerusalem is to be resolved in the framework of a two-state solution," according to a tweet by her spokesman.

Merkel's words were echoed by French President Emmanuel Macron, who criticized the move as "a regrettable decision that France does not approve of and goes against international law and all the resolutions of the UN Security Council."

Johnson meets top officials in Tehran

POLITICS TEHRAN — UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson held talks on Saturday with senior Iranian officials, including his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed bilateral relations, including economic, banking and commercial ties. The sides also insisted on the importance of boosting cooperation both in the region and the wider world.

Johnson highlighted his country's firm stance in supporting the nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was reached between Iran and six world powers including Britain in July 2015.

The chief British diplomat, who arrived in Tehran after a visit to Oman, also met with Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council.

Shamkhani said since the JCPOA went into effect, economic relations between the two countries have not developed sufficiently, emphasizing that developing banking relations could be a first step for expansion of cooperation in other fields.

'Washington's misconduct towards JCPOA a full-scale catastrophe'

The top security official also criticized the United States and European countries for not being fully committed to the nuclear deal.

"America's behavior towards BARJAM (the Persian acronym for the nuclear deal) has been a full-scale catastrophe," he said, adding that such misconduct would cast doubt on all international agreements.



British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson shakes hand with Iran's security chief Ali Shamkhani (L).

The official said the other parties to the JCPOA were only passive observers of Washington's inappropriate behavior, adding that Iran would take necessary measures based on its national interests.

Johnson, for his part, underlined London's unwavering support for the JCPOA, saying the deal was a multilateral and international agreement whose full implementation is to the benefit of international peace and stability.

According to ISNA, the British foreign secretary is also slated to meet President Hassan Rouhani, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi, and Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani.

Johnson's visit is his first to the region as foreign secretary, and the first to Iran by a British foreign secretary since 2015, the Foreign Office said.

In a statement ahead of his visit to Tehran, he described Iran as "a significant country", to which his country attaches great importance.

"Iran is a significant country in a strategically important, but volatile and unstable, region which matters to the UK's security and prosperity," he was quoted by The Telegraph as saying.

"My first visit is an opportunity to hold further discussions on a series of crucial issues, including how we can find a political solution to the devastating conflict in Yemen and secure greater humanitarian access to ease the immense suffering there."

He also underlined the UK's continued support for the Iran nuclear deal while making clear the British government's concerns about what he called "Iran's activity in the region."

"While our relationship with Iran has improved significantly since 2011, it is not straightforward and on many issues we will not agree," the chief diplomat said.

Underlining the importance of dialogue as the key to resolve differences between the two countries, Johnson said he was looking forward to "a constructive visit".

He also voiced the British government's concerns about "our dual national consular cases", pointing to the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian woman jailed in Iran since April 2016, as an important issue which he will try to resolve through dialogue.

Trump's move legitimizes occupation, envoy says

POLITICS TEHRAN — Gholamali Khoshroo, Iran's ambassador to the UN, said on Friday that U.S. President Donald Trump's recognition of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of the Zionist regime is an effort to legitimize occupation.

The U.S. president declared on Wednesday that he recognized al-Quds as the capital of Israel and ordered the relocation of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds.

"Any effort to deny the Palestinians' indisputable rights especially on the issue of al-Quds and al-Aqsa Mosque will simply further complicate the situation," Khosh-

roo said during his speech at a UN General Assembly meeting on "culture of peace".

He strongly condemned the U.S. move and described it as "illegal".

"Those who try to legitimize occupation in our region by rejecting the historical realities are gravely undermining peace. Occupation of the Palestinian Land lies at the root of all crises in our region and any action to deny the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including with regard to the holy city of Al-Quds and particularly Al-Aqsa Mosque, will only result in more bloodshed and rage," he said.

He noted that this act shows the U.S.

"hypocritical" approach toward the crises engulfing the Middle East.

Recognition of al-Quds as capital of Israel proves that the U.S. disrespects international law and violates the rights of the Palestinian nation, he added.

The senior diplomat added, "The international community considers the U.S. and the Zionist regime of Israel responsible for all the consequences of this irresponsible and illegal action."

Elsewhere, Khoshroo said some countries prefer bullying to diplomacy and dialogue and such behaviors lead to extremism. "The failed experiences of the past should

not be repeated. Those who prefer sanctions and coercion over diplomacy and negotiation, by their deeds and rhetoric, strengthen extremism and weaken the culture of peace and tolerance. Unilateralism and coercive measures are sources of instability and insecurity in international relations and have to be blamed for the spreading of terrorism and extremism."

"What is happening today in many parts of the world, from the Occupied Palestinian territory to Yemen, all reflect cases of failure in our joint endeavor towards enhancing peace in the world. However, we cannot and should not give up," he noted.

Pakistani air force ordered to shoot down intruding U.S. drones

Amid frayed Washington-Islamabad ties, Pakistan has ordered its air force to shoot down any drones violating the country's airspace, including those of the United States military, which are deemed responsible for a high number of civilian deaths in the Asian state.

"We will not allow anyone to violate our airspace. I have ordered PAF (Pakistan air force) to shoot down drones, including those of the U.S., if they enter our airspace, violating the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity," Air Chief Marshal Sohail Aman said in an address in Islamabad, the Times of India reported. The order is seen as a turnaround from the Pakistani air force's previous policy, in which it used to publicly censure the U.S. drone attacks on its soil, but would never threaten to shoot them down.

The announcement came two weeks after a U.S. drone strike targeted a suspected militant compound in Pakistan's tribal region near the Afghan border, killing at least three people.

The U.S. has been using drones to conduct surveillance flights and airstrikes in Pakistan since Washington and its allies invaded neighboring Afghanistan in 2001.

According to data by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, hundreds of civilians, including women and children, have been killed in the U.S. drone attacks targeting what are said to be militant targets in Pakistan and Afghanistan since 2004.

Islamabad has condemned the U.S. drone raids on Pakistani soil, describing them as a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty.

Washington's drone operations are also highly unpopular among Pakistani people, who have held numerous protest rallies over the past years against the civilian deaths caused by such aerial assaults.



Aman further recalled a historic breach of trust incident over a batch of the U.S.-made F-16's which Pakistan paid for, but never received. The Pakistani air force commander praised Pakistan's air prowess, saying their forces are prepared to defend sovereignty of the country. The latest order comes amid friction in ties between the two allies over what the U.S. President Donald Trump calls Islamabad's support for militant groups.

Officials in Islamabad have strongly rejected the allegations. They say Pakistan has made great effort to fight terrorism.

Trump harshly criticized Pakistan in August as he was announcing his administration's new strategy for Afghanistan. The U.S. president's comments sparked anger among Pakistani officials and public.

The order also came a week after a visit to Pakistan by the U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis during which he urged them to "redouble" their efforts to rein in the militants suspected of using the country as a base to carry out attacks in neighboring Afghanistan.

Mattis also met with high-ranking officials from Pakistan's powerful military, including

army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa and Lieutenant-General Naveed Mukhtar, the head of the Inter-Services Intelligence spy agency that the U.S. authorities say has links with Haqqani and Taliban militants.

A U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity, was cited in press reports as saying that Mattis' conversations had been "straightforward" and specific.

He added that one of the topics of conversation was getting Pakistan to help bring the Taliban to the negotiating table.

(Source: RT)

North Korea condemns 'dotard' Trump over Jerusalem

North Korea has lambasted the United States President Donald Trump for recognizing al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel's capital, renewing its description of him as a "dotard" in a statement released on Saturday (Dec 9) on state media.

Trump and North Korea's Leader Kim Jong Un have traded threats of war and personal insults in recent months as tensions remain high over the North's missile and nuclear threats. Now the hermit state has joined near-universal condemnation of the U.S. president's decision on Jerusalem, calling it a "reckless, wicked act".

"Considering the fact that the mentally deranged dotard openly called for a total destruction of a sovereign state at the UN, this action is not so surprising", a foreign ministry

spokesman was quoted as saying by the state-run KCNA news agency.

"But this move clearly shows to the whole world who is the destroyer of world peace and security, pariah and rogue in the international community", he said, using epithets usually reserved for the North.

Trump's declaration Wednesday to recognize al-Quds as Israel's capital and relocate the United States embassy from Tel Aviv sparked anger across the Muslim world, and drew expressions of concern and disapproval from U.S. allies.

Trump has previously warned Pyongyang of "fire and fury", telling the UN General Assembly that Washington would "totally destroy North Korea" if it had to defend itself

or its allies.

Trump dubbed Kim "Rocket Man" in the same speech - Pyongyang has tested missiles apparently capable of reaching much of the U.S. mainland - and days later Kim responded with a personal statement calling him a "dotard", an obscure term for a weak or senile old man.

According to the latest KCNA statement, the North "strongly condemns" the U.S. move to recognize al-Quds as capital, and expressed "firm support and solidarity for Palestinians and Arab peoples struggling to win their legitimate rights".

"The U.S. will be held accountable for all consequences from this reckless, wicked act", it added.

(Source: straits times)

Iraq: Abadi declares end of war on ISIL

Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has declared the end of military operations against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group in the country.

"Our forces are in complete control of the Iraqi-Syrian border and I therefore announce the end of the war against Daesh," Abadi told a conference in Baghdad on Saturday.

The Iraqi armed forces later said in a statement that the country has been "totally liberated" from ISIL.

The announcement came after the Iraqi army soldiers, backed by allied fighters, managed to clear the western desert bordering Syria of the last pockets of Takfiri militants.

Abadi had reserved announcing an ultimate victory over ISIL until after those last small concentrations were cleansed.

Meanwhile, an Iraqi senior military com-



mander said his country's war against the ISIL terrorist group is over.

In an announcement on Saturday, Lt General Abdul Ameer Rasheed Yarallah said that armed operations against the fighters have ended after Iraqi forces regained control of the country's border with Syria.

"All Iraqi lands are liberated from terrorist Daesh gangs and our forces completely control the international Iraqi-Syrian borders," Yarallah said in a statement.

ISIL began a terror campaign in Iraq in 2014, overrunning vast swathes in lightning attacks. Iraqi forces then launched operations to eliminate ISIL and retake lost territory, and last month, Iraqi forces liberated Rawa, the last remaining town in the grip of the terrorist outfit.

(Source: Press TV)

Saudi regime bombards Yemeni TV station, kills 4

The House of Saud regime-led coalition waging war on Yemen has attacked the headquarters of the Yemen al-Youm TV channel in the capital, Sana'a, killing four people and injuring five others. Yemen's al-Masirah television network reported that in addition to the casualties, the Friday Saudi regime air raids caused serious damage to the building of the TV station and its equipment.

The building of the Yemen al-Youm TV channel had been targeted twice by the Saudi regime jets over the last week.

The TV station was affiliated with the General People's Congress (GPC) of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was killed on Monday.

Yemen's Interior Ministry says former president Ali Abdullah Saleh has been killed in Sana'a clashes.

Ansarullah (Houthi) movement fighters took over the TV station following clashes with the supporters of Saleh, who broke ranks with the Ansarullah in favor of the Saudi regime.

■ **U.S. urges Saudis to allow humanitarian aid immediately**

Meantime, the United States has urged the Saudi regime-led coalition to "facilitate the free flow of humanitarian aid" in Yemen as millions suffer in the war-torn country due to the land and air blockade imposed by the Saudis.

"The United States is gravely concerned by the recent escalation in violence and continued dire humanitarian conditions in Yemen," the White House said in a statement on Friday.

"We call on the Saudi-led coalition to facilitate the free flow of humanitarian aid and critical commercial goods, including fuel, through all Yemeni ports and to restore commercial flights through Sana'a Airport."

■ **Dire humanitarian situation**

The statement comes two days after the U.S. President Donald Trump called on the Saudi regime to "completely allow food, fuel, water, and medicine to reach the Yemeni people who desperately need it".

A senior U.S. official, who did not want to be named, told

Reuters news agency on Friday that the U.S. had warned the House of Saud regime of threats in Congress over the dire humanitarian situation.

"We wanted to be very clear with Saudi officials that the political environment here could constrain us if steps aren't taken to ease humanitarian conditions in Yemen," the senior Trump administration official said.

Speaking in Paris on Friday, Rex Tillerson, the U.S. secretary of state, called on the Saudi regime to be "measured" in its military operations in Yemen.

He demanded a "complete end" to the Saudi regime-led blockade of Yemen so that humanitarian aid and commercial supplies could be delivered. His comments came after at least 23 civilians were killed in Saudi regime air raids in the country's north. The U.S. also condemned the Ansarullah movement. The remarks by Tillerson come even as the U.S. has itself been contributing to the Saudi regime-led war on Yemen both directly, through intelligence sharing and

logistical support, and indirectly, with the sale of billions of dollars' worth of arms to the Saudi regime.

Earlier in May, Tillerson's boss, Trump, signed a 350-billion-dollar arms deal with Riyadh.

Publicly, however, and as the Saudi regime-led atrocities in Yemen draw more attention, the U.S. has been calling for Saudi restraint. In Yemen, the House of Saud regime and its allies launched a bloody military campaign early in 2015 and have, ever since, been ceaselessly pounding the country in an attempt to reinstall a former regime allied to Riyadh.

The Saudi regime-led coalition has also maintained an embargo on the country where, so far, over 12,000 civilians have been reportedly killed.

Riyadh tightened that embargo after a retaliatory missile attack from Yemen early in November. The Saudi regime has claimed that it has partially loosened that embargo in the face of massive international outcry.

(Source: agencies)

Global outrage over U.S. recognition of al-Quds as Israel's capital

Riyadh advancing Israeli interests, Palestinian officials worry

➔ The casualties were caused after the forces began targeting the crowd with rubber-coated bullets and fired tear gas to disperse protesters.

Mass protests were expected to erupt in Beit Lahm, Ramallah, al-Quds (Jerusalem), al-Khalil (Hebron), Nablus, and Tulkarm in the West Bank from 01:00 pm local time (11:00 GMT).

■ **U.S. government serves Israeli interests at all levels**
Elsewhere, a former U.S. Marine says the American government serves the Israeli regime "at every level," including with its recent decision to recognize al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel's "capital," Press TV reports.

"It is clearly in line with the American-Israeli policy, which is to cater to Israeli interests at every level," Ken O'Keefe told Press TV's The Debate on Friday, referring to the al-Quds (Jerusalem) decision.

"The American government is bought and paid for by Israeli interests," he added. "The U.S. government is nothing but a bunch of puppet traders, who cater to Israeli policy in every way."

Michael Lane, who is the president of the American Institute for Foreign Policy and who was another guest on the program, claimed that all American presidents had striven to be neutral brokers in the Middle East conflict.

He further remarked that despite the emotions that the U.S. announcement had arisen, the entire matter would not likely alienate Washington's allies and "is going to slip from the front pages."

O'Keefe, meanwhile, said the move is meant to bring tensions and volatility to Israel's neighboring states so they become vulnerable to invasion "probably on the back of a false flag operation."

"Because Israel wishes to expand. There is something called 'the Greater Israel Project,' in which they intend to expand. In order for them to do that, they need to weaken and fracture the surrounding states," he said.

■ **Riyadh advancing Israeli interests, Palestinian officials worry**

The developments follow as Palestinian officials have expressed worry that the House of Saud regime is forgoing important Palestinian rights as it acts behind the scenes to advance a United States "grand bargain" over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that heavily favors Israel.

Four Palestinian officials told Reuters on condition of anonymity on Friday that the Saudi regime Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) had communicated a proposal to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas that would give away the right of return for Palestinian refugees and the status of al-Quds as the capital of a future Palestinian state in return for conditions unfavorable to Palestinians, Reuters reported on Friday.

That proposal has reportedly been shaped by Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and "senior adviser," who has developed a close relationship with Mohammed bin Salman.

The Palestinian officials expressed concern that the proposal is too much in line with Israeli interests and to the disadvantage of Palestinians, whose land Israel has occupied.

The Palestinian officials told Reuters they feared that by the Quds announcement, Trump would align with Israel in offering the Palestinians limited self-government inside disconnected West Bank patches, with no right of return for the displaced population. According to one of the Palestinian officials, the U.S. proposal that bin Salman communicated to Abbas included establishing "a Palestinian entity" in Gaza as well as the West Bank administrative areas A and B and 10 percent of area C.

Under the plan, however, Israeli settlements would stay in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian refugees would not be able to return to their homeland, and Tel Aviv would maintain control over borders, the source added.

Another Palestinian official said MBS had asked Abbas to back the U.S. initiative when the two met in Saudi capital, Riyadh, last month.

"President Trump in a phone call told Abu Mazen (Abbas): 'I will have some proposals for you that you would like.' When Abu Mazen pressed him on details, Trump didn't give any," the source said.

A third Palestinian official said the Saudi regime crown prince had told Abbas, "Be patient, you will hear good news. This peace process will go ahead."

Meanwhile, an unnamed Saudi regime source predicted that an understanding on the so-called Israeli-Palestinian peace would emerge in the coming weeks.

■ **Kushner in the spotlight**

Kushner has recently been increasingly engaging Saudi Arabia. Trump has put his son-in-law in charge of the Middle East portfolio, an appointment that has drawn criticism — including from some Israeli-Americans, who question Kushner's capabilities or knowledge of diplomacy or politics.

In a rare public appearance last week, Kushner was grilled by Israeli-American billionaire Haim Saban.

"How do you operate with people who basically, with all due respect, a bunch of Orthodox Jews who have no idea about anything?" Saban told Kushner. "What are you guys doing? Seriously, I don't understand this."

The House of Saud regime's maneuvering over Palestine comes amid increasing reports that Riyadh is preparing a normalization of ties with Israel. In November, Lebanon's al-Akhbar daily published a secret undated letter from the Saudi regime Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir to MBS that laid out a number of conditions in exchange for normalizing ties with Israel.

One of the conditions was that the Saudis would contribute to the resolution of the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict by proposing the resettling of Palestinian refugees in their host countries rather than their return to their homeland.

The House of Saudi regime has also cultivated seemingly better relations with the administration of Trump, a former businessman, by purchasing billions of dollars' worth of American arms.

■ **Protesters in NYC slam Trump's decision on al-Quds**

Hundreds of people have held a demonstration in New York to condemn Trump's decision to recognize al-Quds as the capital of Israel. The protesters descended on Times Square on Friday night while chanting, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free."

The demonstrators, who filled the sidewalks of Seventh Avenue, between 41st and 42nd streets, waved Palestinian flags or held up signs proclaiming, "Free free Palestine" and "End the Occupation." ➔ 13

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	91160.3
IFX	10.1597

Sources: tse.ir, lfb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	41,850 rials
EUR	50,000 rials
GBP	57,750 rials
AED	11,500 rials

Source: Mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$63.40/b
WTI	\$57.36/b
OPEC Basket	\$60.73/b
Gold	\$1,249.55/oz
Silver	\$15.93/oz
Platinum	\$890.25/oz

Sources: Oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Tehran to host intl. energy conservation conference

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The 7th International Conference on Emerging Trends in Energy Conservation (ETEC) is scheduled to be held in Tehran on February 18-19, 2018.



Representatives of prominent international organizations including the United Nations Industrial Development Program (UNDP), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) along with delegations from Thailand, Venezuela, Switzerland, Italy, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are expected to attend this year's event, IRNA reported.

According to the event's organizers, the conference aims to attract worldwide attention to energy conservation and also to collect indigenous data and sciences from different parts of the world to further study and explore the issue.

Japan to revise up growth forecasts: Nikkei

Japan is expected to revise up its economic growth forecasts for the current and next fiscal years, the Nikkei newspaper reported on Saturday, helping Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to make the case his stimulus policies are working.

Data released on Friday showed the world's third-largest economy grew twice as fast as originally estimated in the third quarter, thanks to a business spending splurge and buoyant exports.

In predictions to be released later this month, the Cabinet Office will revise up its growth forecast for the year beginning in April, perhaps to near 2 percent from the current 1.4 percent, the Nikkei said without citing sources.

The forecast for the current fiscal year will also be revised up from the current 1.5 percent, the paper said.

The projections will serve as a basis for estimating tax revenues and compiling the state budget for next fiscal year.

(Source: Reuters)

BOE officials seen unified after first rate increase in a decade

Bank of England policy makers will probably resume singing from the same hymn sheet at December's meeting, after officials split as they raised interest rates for the first time in a decade last month.

The nine-member Monetary Policy Committee will unanimously keep rates at 0.5 percent this coming week, according to 19 of the 20 economists in a Bloomberg survey. That's in contrast to the 7-2 vote in favor of a hike last month, and would be the first time all officials have voted the same way since February.

Policy makers have presented a fairly united front in public since November's meeting, with few signs of overt dissension from Governor Mark Carney's view that two more hikes are likely needed in the next three years to meet the BOE's inflation target. The main caveat to the bank's outlook is Brexit, which officials say could force them to act more quickly, and in either direction, if its outcome diverges too far from current expectations.

That means investors will scour Thursday's minutes for any updates on the BOE's view of the UK's exit from the European Union, particularly in light of the apparent progress in talks this week. December's meeting will also be the last before the BOE carries out its annual supply-side review in February, which may also cause policy makers to reassess their current stance.

Officials predicated their last policy move on the fact that Brexit is acting as a constraint on the supply side of the economy, and will likely continue to do so. The extent of that shock will depend on what shape Brexit takes, according to Peter Dixon, an economist at Commerzbank AG. He sees the BOE keeping rates on hold throughout 2018, and only raising them after the UK has quit the EU.

"The bank is absolutely right that there potentially is a major supply-side shock," Dixon told reporters Friday. "If we get a softer Brexit, then there will be implications, but perhaps it won't be the horror story it could've been."

(Source: Bloomberg)

Iran's trade surplus hits \$29b in 2016: UNCTAD

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's trade balance registered a \$29 billion surplus in 2016, Tasnim reported on Friday citing the "2017 handbook of statistics" report published by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

According to the report, the country's total foreign trade stood at \$109 billion, of which \$69 billion was related to exports. The Islamic Republic also exported about \$10.202 billion worth of services while the total value of services Iran traded with the world was estimated at \$24.896 billion.

Based on the UNCTAD report, Iran accounted for 0.34 percent of the world's total \$32.136 trillion trade in 2016.

It put Iran's real GDP growth at 4.3 percent for 2016, higher than the average world GDP growth (2.2 percent), and also above the average GDP growth for developing countries (3.7 percent).

"The Iranian economy has been experi-

encing a revival, with growth of 4.3 percent in 2016 and an estimated 5.1 percent in 2017 (as compared with 0.4 percent in 2015), thanks largely to a sharp increase in oil production after the lifting of sanctions, and the effects of this on household incomes, consumption and domestic investment," the report reads.

"Inflation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was high during the sanction years, fell to single-digit levels, and is currently around 9 percent per year. Like other oil-exporting countries, the immediate economic prospects of the Islamic Republic of Iran depend on the trend in oil prices, as oil accounts for around 60 percent of exports."

Iran, world's 44th top trader: WB Meanwhile, World Bank has put Iran at the 44th place among the world's top traders in 2016.

As reported, Iran's total trade in 2016 hit \$106 billion, indicating a positive trade



balance with \$26 billion surplus.

The country exported \$66 billion worth

of goods last year, while imports stood at \$40 billion, the report added.

Iran, Serbia discuss boosting energy, trade ties

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran and Serbia discussed expansion of relations in energy and trade sectors, IRIB reported on Saturday.

During his one-day visit to Belgrade, Mojtaba Khosrotaj, head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), held meetings with Serbian Minister of Mining and Energy Aleksandar Antic, State Secretary of Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of Republic of Serbia Bogdan Igich, and State Secretary of Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications Stevan

Nikevic.

Gas supply

"Iran can play a major role in meeting Serbia's demand for gas," the Serbian minister of mining and energy said in his meeting with TPO head.

Antic also referred to his country's rich resources of gold, copper, zinc, lead, coal, and lithium and announced readiness to cooperate with Iran on discovery, extraction, and processing industries.

Khosrotaj, for his part, noted that the two sides can boost bilateral trade in the

mining industry as well.

Agricultural products

In his meeting with the Serbian state secretary of agriculture, Khosrotaj underlined the high quality and low prices of Iranian agricultural products, saying that Serbia can become a customer for the products.

He added that the two countries can also boost cooperation on production of fishery products.

Igich, for his part, called for conducting joint agricultural studies and voiced his country's readiness for transferring technological

know-how to Iran in this regard.

Joint economic committee meeting

In his meeting with Serbia's state secretary of trade, the TPO head announced that the 15th meeting of the Iran-Serbia joint economic committee will be held in Belgrade in the near future.

In their meeting, Nikevic and Khosrotaj also stressed the need for establishing direct flights between the two countries, signing free trade agreements, and developing trade ties as well.

China's CPI, PPI up 1.7%, 5.8% in November

China's consumer inflation slowed more than expected to grow 1.7 percent in November driven by falling food prices, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said Saturday.

The consumer price index (CPI), a main gauge of inflation, rose 1.7 percent year-on-year in November, down from October's 1.9 percent, and missing market forecast of 1.8 percent.

The CPI has grown at less than 2 percent rate for 10 straight months, pointing to mild inflation in the world's second largest economy.

NBS statistician Sheng Guoqing attributed the slowdown in CPI to a decrease in food prices which account for a significant part of the CPI calculation.

Food prices fell 1.1 percent in November year-on-year, 0.7 percentage points more than the decline registered in October. Pork prices slumped 9 percent, dragging down the CPI growth by 0.25 percentage point.

On a month-on-month basis, food prices fell 0.5 percent. Prices of pork, aquatic products and fresh vegetables declined on abundant supply. Costs of beef, lamb, egg and fresh fruits rose on rising demand.

Non-food prices edged up in November on both yearly and monthly basis.

Non-food costs rose 2.5 percent year-on-year, 0.1 percentage point higher than the increase posted in October. The costs

of health-care, housing and culture and entertainment led the gains.

On a monthly basis, non-food prices gained 0.1 percent. Fuel and diesel prices rose more than 3 percent. Garment costs increased 0.7 percent.

China's producer price inflation tamed down in November on low basis and government curbs on polluted industries, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said Saturday.

The producer price index (PPI), which measures costs for goods at the factory gate, rose 5.8 percent year-on-year in November. It was down from a growth of 6.9 percent recorded in October, on par with market forecast.

On a monthly basis, it was up 0.5 percent. In the first 11 months, PPI climbed 6.4 percent from one year earlier.

As northern China enters into winter heating season, the government has increased efforts to tackle smog, asking steel mills and smelters to halt production to curb pollution. Those measures cooled demand for industrial raw materials.

Compared with a month ago, factory-gate prices gained faster in oil and natural gas developers and ferrous metal producers. Costs increased at slower pace in oil processing and chemical producing industries, NBS senior statistician Sheng Guoqing noted.

(Source: China Daily)

ECB seen topping up QE once more with short taper in late 2018

The European Central Bank will spend 2018 guiding its bond-buying program to a gentle halt as the euro zone benefits from the most-synchronized economic growth in two decades, according to a Bloomberg survey.

Policy makers, who have already agreed to halve monthly purchases to 30 billion euros (\$35 billion) starting next month, will taper them to zero in the final three months of the year, the poll of economists showed. Still, most respondents said that decision won't be taken until June or July as President Mario Draghi and his colleagues fret about upsetting markets by signaling an exit from crisis measures too soon.

"As things currently stand, we don't see much action from the central bank in the first half of 2018, with a very much steady-as-she-goes policy remaining in place," said Alan McQuaid, chief economist at Merrion Capital in Dublin, Ireland.

The survey points to a relatively quiet policy meeting on Dec. 14, when the highlight will be the ECB's updated estimates for economic growth and inflation. Those figures will include the first projections for 2020, and will emphasize how far the Frankfurt-based central bank is lagging behind some of its counterparts.

The U.S. Federal Reserve, which has already started shrinking its balance sheet to unwind its quantitative easing, is set to announce its third interest-rate

increase of the year on Wednesday, and signal more for 2018. The Bank of England will probably stay on hold when it sets policy on Thursday, less than an hour before the ECB, though that's after it hiked rates last month for the first time in a decade.

The 19-nation euro area is enjoying its strongest economic growth in a decade and the most broad-based since 1997, yet the ECB has pledged to buy bonds until at least September -- taking its total holdings to more than 2.5 trillion euros.

"Because of limited domestic inflationary pressure, the price outlook remains weak in the region and Bloomberg Economics expects this will push central bankers toward extending the asset-purchase program one last time, beyond September, for a further six months at a reduced pace."

The ECB has pledged to hold interest rates steady until well after it stops net asset purchases. The deposit rate is at a record-low minus 0.4 percent, and most economists predict an increase no sooner than the second quarter of 2019.

That leaves the focus in coming months on the policy language. Officials currently use forward guidance to promise to keep buying debt until inflation is back on track to the goal of just under 2 percent -- a level not seen on a sustained basis in almost five years.

(Source: Bloomberg)

EU eyes quick Brexit transition deal, trade pact to take time

Businesses fretting about Brexit should get reassurance early in the new year that little will change for a couple of years after Britain leaves the European Union in less than 16 months, EU officials said on Friday.

The full-blown free trade agreement that London wants will take considerably longer, however. Negotiations will start only later in 2018 and lead at best to a "political declaration" of intent before Brexit. Full negotiation on an actual trade treaty would only begin after March 2019, though Brussels hopes one can be in place by early 2021, when a transition period would end.

Following an interim accord on divorce terms struck by Prime Minister Theresa May in Brussels, EU leaders should next Friday agree to start negotiating a transition period of around two years, if they stick to a draft proposal seen by Reuters.

"We could easily engage on those issues very early in the new year," a senior EU official said, noting that the two sides had already voiced quite similar views on the transition.

The draft negotiating guidelines echo an agreement among the 27 other EU national leaders in April that Britain would remain bound by essentially all EU rules in the transition but without a say in making them. That will give businesses more time to adjust, but still leave it unclear what will happen in 2021.

"Removing uncertainty around transition arrangements would serve as a tremendous relief to businesses on both sides of the continent given supply chains are highly integrated," said Karen Ward, JP Morgan Asset Management's chief market strategist.

However, some in the EU are wary of giving Britain too easy an assurance before it has fully met their demands for a treaty governing its withdrawal. "We will only accept a transitional period after Brexit if we are satisfied with the outcome of the second phase of negotiations," said Manfred



Weber, the German leader of the European Parliament's big, center-right bloc.

Looking further ahead, EU Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier repeated his view on Friday that the future relationship would resemble last year's EU free trade agreement with Canada.

This was, he said, largely because May has ruled out staying in the EU's single market or a customs union and wants to end free immigration from the continent and the oversight of EU courts. "What are you left with?" Barnier asked. "Just one thing: a free trade agreement on the Canadian model."

The senior EU official said that some countries with which the Union already has free trade agreements had already voiced concern that Britain might get better terms than they have. Some treaties have clauses obliging the EU to improve the terms if need be if another subsequently gets more favorable treatment.

The draft guidelines make clear that Barnier will only be able to start seriously negotiating on trade and other aspects of the future UK-EU relationship such as defense and secu-

rity after leaders agree a more detailed set of instructions.

"We need more clarity on how the UK sees our future relations," summit chair Donald Tusk told reporters, calling on Barnier to start "exploratory talks" with London.

More guidelines could be endorsed at EU summits in February or March but could take longer if London delays, the EU official said. Talks take weeks to start after guidelines are agreed.

Moreover, there might be relatively little detail fixed by the time Britain leaves the EU. The withdrawal treaty must take account of the "framework for the future relationship". But this framework would be contained only in a "political declaration" that will accompany the withdrawal treaty to be ratified by the British and EU parliaments. It is "simply not realistic" to get a full deal by then, the official said.

The EU will launch negotiations on a legally binding trade treaty only once Britain becomes a non-member or "third country". If the two sides fail to reach a deal before the end of the transition period, there would be a "cliff edge".

Legally, it would be possible to extend the transition period, but EU governments are reluctant to do so very far.

Britain cannot put new bilateral trade treaties with other countries into effect during the transition period as the EU insists Britain go on collecting EU customs duties as if it were still a member, the official said.

Tusk, who will have to maintain unity among the 27 as they embark on the much more divisive phase of negotiating a trade deal that balances the countries' very different interests, warned "the most difficult challenge is still ahead".

The senior official said the EU assumes a trade deal would require ratification in each country, including some parliaments which have been skeptical of free trade in the past. However, such treaties can go into effect before full ratification.

(Source: Reuters)

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France's model of resilience to terror

By Raphaël Hadas-Lebel

In France this year, the second anniversary of the November 2015 Paris attacks was a subdued affair, and not just out of respect for those still living with the trauma. France, unlike others in the West, has managed to avoid panic and social divisiveness, even as it has taken far-reaching steps to defend itself against the threat of terrorism.

In a recent tweetstorm, U.S. President Donald Trump shared anti-Muslim smears from the extreme-right hate group Britain First, thus reminding us of the deep divisions and fears that terrorism has injected into Western democracies.

But not everyone responds to terrorist attacks with the atavism of Trump or Britain First. Take France, where on November 13, 2015, Islamic State (ISIL) militants carried out terror attacks on the Bataclan concert hall and other sites in Paris. Although 130 people were murdered – more than in any other episode of violence against civilians in France since World War II – France's commemoration of the second anniversary was extremely subdued.

French authorities, it seems, wanted to avoid re-awakening the painful trauma of the event. That trauma is a very real fact of life for the families who lost a loved one, and are permanently devastated, and for the survivors, whose experience has received little attention.

Much of the news coverage accompanying this anniversary showed that for most victims, even those who were not physically harmed, relearning “the next life” is an everyday ordeal. Since the attacks, their relationship with their surroundings has been upset. Sleep disorders, hallucinations, and depressive syndromes are common. Entire lives have been transformed.

In a November survey published in *Le Monde*, many victims reported an inability to return to work. And with each new attack, in France or elsewhere, the trauma is reawakened. “Life goes on,” writes one survivor. “But what life?”

On the other hand, French society has proved resilient. After the Paris attacks, the French quickly showed that they would not give up their way of life, nor would they give in to the temptation of civil war. There have been no significant outbursts against the country's Muslim population.

■ The state of emergency

The state of emergency that former President François Hollande declared immediately after the attacks allowed French authorities to ensure public order, by detaining suspects, conducting home searches, and closing certain places of worship. Human-rights groups criticized some of these measures as violations of civil liberties; but, for the most part, they were applied smoothly.

On November 1, 2017, many of the same state-of-emergency measures, with some adjustments, were codified in law. Despite some expected protests, the new anti-terrorism legislation enjoys wide support among the French, who seem willing to accept certain limitations to personal freedoms in the name of collective security.

Another consequence of the attacks is that international co-operation among security services has strengthened, new technologies have been adopted, and video surveillance has been implemented more widely. Earlier this year, French President Emmanuel Macron established a specialized counter-terror task force at the Élysée Palace. And, over time, armed soldiers – some of whom have been targets of new attacks – have become a familiar presence on French streets.

Still, a majority of French citizens remain deeply concerned about the threat of terrorism not just from abroad, but from people living in France, often with French citizenship. And similar fears about homegrown extremism can be observed in many other European countries.

In recent years, some of those drawn to extremism have carried out attacks with rudimentary instruments, from cars and delivery trucks to kitchen knives. Although violent extremists are an ultra-minority in the population, their actions have fueled a growing distrust in French society.

Worse still, the successful military campaign against ISIS raises new fears about violent extremists returning from Syria. Already, more than 250 people, including nearly 60 children, have returned to France. More often than not, they are picked up by law enforcement and brought to justice. Yet dealing with returning women and children has become another controversy in itself. And, in addition to the known militants, law-enforcement agencies must monitor thousands of other suspects.

This state of affairs inevitably affects French attitudes toward receiving migrants and refugees, most of whom come from predominantly Muslim countries. It also has a profound impact on the unspoken but constant debate in France about the place of Muslims in French society. While visible expressions of Islam have long been a source of controversy in France – owing to the country's political and colonial history, conception of national identity, and cultural and legal secularism – similar debates are also playing out in Germany, the Netherlands, and other European countries.

In the two years since the ISIS attacks in Paris, France has readied itself to face the terrorist threat. But the political consensus about how to tackle terrorism, which prevailed after the January 2015 attacks on Charlie Hebdo and the Hypercacher kosher supermarket, has eroded. Some now want to dismiss terrorism as a feature of everyday life, as if extremist violence posed a danger similar to traffic accidents, alcohol, or disease.

These arguments will likely fall flat in France. Even if the threat of terrorism will always exist, resilience must not become resignation. If there is another serious attack, the French will undoubtedly hold their leaders accountable for failing to protect them. And if elected officials have failed to take necessary precautions or demonstrated a sense of resignation, voters will let them know at the ballot box. For proof, look no further than the success of right-wing parties in the last German and Austrian elections.

(Source: project-syndicate.org)



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Another consequence of the attacks is that international co-operation among security services has strengthened, new technologies have been adopted, and video surveillance has been implemented more widely. Earlier this year, French President Emmanuel Macron established a specialized counter-terror task force at the Élysée Palace. And, over time, armed soldiers – some of whom have been targets of new attacks – have become a familiar presence on French streets.

Still, a majority of French citizens remain deeply concerned about the threat of terrorism not just from abroad, but from people living in France, often with French citizenship. And similar fears about homegrown extremism can be observed in many other European countries.

In recent years, some of those drawn to extremism have carried out attacks with rudimentary instruments, from cars and delivery trucks to kitchen knives. Although violent extremists are an ultra-minority in the population, their actions have fueled a growing distrust in French society.

Worse still, the successful military campaign against ISIS raises new fears about violent extremists returning from Syria. Already, more than 250 people, including nearly 60 children, have returned to France. More often than not, they are picked up by law enforcement and brought to justice. Yet dealing with returning women and children has become another controversy in itself. And, in addition to the known militants, law-enforcement agencies must monitor thousands of other suspects.

This state of affairs inevitably affects French attitudes toward receiving migrants and refugees, most of whom come from predominantly Muslim countries. It also has a profound impact on the unspoken but constant debate in France about the place of Muslims in French society. While visible expressions of Islam have long been a source of controversy in France – owing to the country's political and colonial history, conception of national identity, and cultural and legal secularism – similar debates are also playing out in Germany, the Netherlands, and other European countries.

In the two years since the ISIS attacks in Paris, France has readied itself to face the terrorist threat. But the political consensus about how to tackle terrorism, which prevailed after the January 2015 attacks on Charlie Hebdo and the Hypercacher kosher supermarket, has eroded. Some now want to dismiss terrorism as a feature of everyday life, as if extremist violence posed a danger similar to traffic accidents, alcohol, or disease.

These arguments will likely fall flat in France. Even if the threat of terrorism will always exist, resilience must not become resignation. If there is another serious attack, the French will undoubtedly hold their leaders accountable for failing to protect them. And if elected officials have failed to take necessary precautions or demonstrated a sense of resignation, voters will let them know at the ballot box. For proof, look no further than the success of right-wing parties in the last German and Austrian elections.

(Source: project-syndicate.org)

Trump must pay a price for his Jerusalem decision

If there is no price, Trump, like all bullies, will continue with his brutal ways and do far worse in future

By Richard Silverstein

The world media is full of coverage of Wednesday's announcement by President Donald Trump that the U.S. recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

We're hearing from governments throughout the world about their disquiet at the prospect of a conquered city becoming a national capital, in violation of international law and two generations of diplomatic precedent.

■ Strong action?

But there is something we're not hearing: A commitment by these governments to take concrete action against this outrageous breach by the U.S. We're not even hearing of any anticipated actions against Israel itself, except a vague threat by Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to cut diplomatic ties with Israel.

We've heard from France and even Saudi Arabia, which has conducted a covert scorched earth campaign to force Mahmoud Abbas to accept the Trump peace plan. The Saudi foreign minister has dutifully returned to old talking points, in which his country expresses solidarity for the “suffering of its Palestinian brothers”.

Germany's foreign minister took the unprecedented step of warning Trump and Netanyahu of “the limits of his country's solidarity” if they choose to take a dive off the deep end. Germany – ever cognizant of its role as the birthplace of Nazism, which destroyed European Jewry and caused the deaths of tens of millions during World War II – almost never says that there is a limit to how far they will go in supporting Israel or the U.S.

So these words are powerful and striking. But ultimately, what do they mean? If Trump were any normal president, he would realize that these are ominous words from Germany. But Trump isn't an ordinary president.

He's a leader who is megalomaniacal and pathological. He is a narcissist oblivious to anything and anyone but himself. To oppose such sociopathology requires not just strong language, but strong action.

■ Paying the price

If they really believe what they're saying, how about all these nations putting their money where their mouths are, and recalling their ambassadors from both Tel Aviv and Washington?

If Trump wants to break ranks with the EU and the rest of the civilized world and essentially abandon prospects for a negotiated resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict, he must pay a price.

Like all bullies, if there is no price he will



If Trump wants to break ranks with the EU and the rest of the civilized world and essentially abandon prospects for a negotiated resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict, he must pay a price.

continue with his brutal ways and do far worse in future. If you tell him “No” in no uncertain terms, it will stop him dead in his tracks.

To do this, the international community must develop a sustained strategy to confront the American and Israeli policy with a viable alternative. The United Nations should immediately recognize Palestine as a fully fledged member with its capital in East Jerusalem.

Nations throughout the world should create embassies in East Jerusalem (or at least demand the right to do so and force Israel to deny them that right). International bodies like the ICC must accept war crimes cases against Israel and not refuse them as the current highly politicized chief prosecutor just did, even after a judicial panel had earlier directed her to open a case.

■ A resilient peace process?

Will the world stand up for its convictions? I wouldn't bet on it. Israel has always bet on the world having a short attention span when it comes to such outrages. Now, it appears that Trump is following Israel's example.

Trump's decision was supported by both his son-in-law and envoy to the Middle East, Jared Kushner, as well as his special envoy, Jason D. Greenblatt, who had concluded that shaking up the status quo could actually help

rather than hurt their peace efforts.

While both Kushner and Greenblatt say that the move would cause an immediate uproar – including potentially driving the Palestinians away from negotiations for some time – they believed the process was resilient enough to withstand the shock.

This shows not just the hopeless pro-Israeli bias of these neophytes, but that they don't understand what a peace process is, let alone one rooted in the incredibly delicate environment of the Middle East.

There is no such thing as a resilient peace process. It also indicates it's far more likely Trump will incite war rather than make peace.

An Israeli security source I consulted sided with Trump. He expected Palestinian protests throughout last week. But that due to the cold winter weather, he didn't expect the level of intensity of the July al Aqsa protests against the installation of security cameras outside Islam's third-most holy site. He may be mistaken.

■ A gift to ISIL

Returning to how to oppose the new American policy, if Muslims in their tens of thousands heed Hamas' call for the Friday worship becoming a Day of Rage, and the protest spreads beyond Jerusalem throughout the Muslim world, then there could be

such a groundswell. The Saudis might realize that following Trump into the maw of Hell may not be the best approach if they wish to remain Protectors of the (Muslim) Faith.

That is the only way to make Trump and his allies in this ghastly affair back down.

There could also be a financial price to be paid: The massive selloff in yesterday's Asian stock market indicated it was deeply rattled by Trump's declaration. The president loves to point to market gains as proof he's good for the American pocketbook.

Let him face a series of market declines and uncertainty, and then boast. Perhaps the Arab oil producers should threaten a “stall” in the market. Even a hiccup would rattle investors.

Another “cost” for America may be increasing hostility toward U.S. interests in the Arab-Muslim world. Gen. David Petraeus once warned that U.S. soldiers faced increasing jeopardy as long as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict festered.

Imagine targets on the backs of not just our soldiers, but our diplomats, journalists and human rights workers serving around the world. Trump has just handed the Islamic State (ISIL) and al-Qaeda a gift, an amazing recruitment tool.

(Source: middleeasteye.net)

U.S. elite troop training in Iraq lags after Mosul

by Jack Detsch

The United States and its allies failed to train any new members of Iraq's elite counterterrorism force in the aftermath of the battle for Mosul, a potential blow to efforts to rebuild the country's premier fighting unit after the fall of the Islamic State (ISIL).

Between July and October, according to the Pentagon's Inspector General (IG), the 73-nation coalition combating ISIL in Iraq and Syria did not train a single new recruit for the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS), which spearheaded nearly nine months of block-by-block combat to reclaim Iraq's second-largest city from ISIL. The admission raises concerns about the Pentagon's ability to meet its goal of having 20,000 fighters in the elite unit within the next three years, especially after they suffered a 40% casualty rate in the battle for Mosul.

“I think it's questionable whether that's a realistic goal,” retired Lt. Gen. James Dubik, who led the training of Iraqi forces for NATO during the surge of 2007-2008, told Al-Monitor. “The country probably has some thinking to do, because the CTS forces were originally envisioned to be just that – more of a Special Forces capacity. They were able to be very selective in the kind of training and material and intelligence force they provided.”

Instead, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and his predecessor Nouri al-Maliki have both used one of their prime assets as a “regular infantry force” to battle ISIL in costly urban fights such as Fallujah and Mosul, said Dubik, now a fellow at the Institute for the Study of War. The devastation of those campaigns has left experts unclear how the force, originally designed for training, intelligence and elite missions, will be used in the future.

As of Dec. 5, the U.S.-led effort had trained more than 100,000 Iraqi Security Forces since the beginning of the anti-ISIL mission in October 2014, according to coalition figures provided to Al-Monitor. That figure includes 14,800 anti-terrorism troops, an umbrella designation that includes the CTS unit as well as other elite units such as the Emergency Response Division (ERD). Last month's IG report said that 5,000 core CTS forces have been trained since 2015.

Training efforts in Iraq after the Mosul fight focused on building forces to hold areas taken from ISIL and “replenishing the ranks of forces that have suffered heavy casualties,” the Pentagon IG report noted. “However, while Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) recruits also suffered heavy losses during battles against ISIL, no new recruits received training from the Coalition this quarter.”

The IG's findings, however, did not indicate that CTS military instruction entirely shut down in the months after Mosul. Some 341 troops already in the CTS ranks were going through specialty or advanced courses at the time, and



The difficulty of training elite units presents a challenge to the Donald Trump administration's global strategy to fight terrorism, an outgrowth of Barack Obama-era military policy that relies on building local forces in 19 countries where U.S. troops are deployed, including Iraq and Syria.

a coalition spokesman noted that the reason no CTS recruits graduated training in the third quarter of 2017 is because the next course did not begin until October. Some 933 CTS troops who enrolled in that course graduated from the basic training program in November.

Overusing special operations forces is not an uncommon problem, Dubik said, pointing to the U.S. practice in World War II. The U.S. Army once even considered making Ranger training mandatory for all recruits in the 1960s, before the Pentagon deemed the idea too costly.

If efforts to train, equip and recruit fresh forces in Iraq are delayed, the holdup could hamstring the U.S.-led effort to leave the country's security to indigenous forces, a major focus of the U.S.-led mission to defeat IS. The Pentagon plans to spend nearly \$1.3 billion to train and equip Iraqi troops and police units over the next year, providing them with thousands of M16 and AK-47 assault rifles, as well as hundreds of Humvees and armored vehicles.

At least 5,200 U.S. troops are stationed in Iraq to help assist the mission, according to the Pentagon's latest account released Wednesday, although figures released by Defense Manpower Data Center in November, which tracks counts of Pentagon military and civilian personnel deployed overseas each quarter, showed more than 9,000 American personnel in the country.

■ The difficulty of training

The difficulty of training elite units presents a challenge to the Donald Trump administration's global strategy to fight terrorism, an outgrowth on Barack Obama-era military policy that relies on building local forces in 19 countries where U.S. troops are deployed, including Iraq and Syria.

“We have got to have an integrated strategy on this, and it has got to be one that goes after the recruiting and [ISIL] fundraising, as well as delivering a military blow against them in the Middle East,” Defense Secretary James Mattis said of the anti-ISIL strategy at his Senate confirmation hearing in January. “And that way you slow down this growth and start rolling it back [ISIL] by, with, and through allies.”

Watchdog reports have called into question the effectiveness of U.S. efforts. A Pentagon IG report released in April found that CTS trainees went through U.S.-led courses that lacked adequate training standards and did not conduct live-fire exercises on all weapons they carried into combat, including anti-tank guns and lightweight artillery. Just 2,000 CTS troops graduate from a U.S. training academy every year, and training a single soldier can take up to a year.

Though the Pentagon has made CTS a key force in its effort to eliminate terrorist and insurgent safe havens, Iraq's recent political instability has also impacted that mission. The Washington Post reported this week that CTS units are now leading efforts to secure Kurdish-controlled parts of Iraq that Baghdad occupied after the Kurds' independence referendum in September. The IG's report also offers troubling news for efforts to stabilize Iraq after the defeat of ISIL. In the third quarter of 2017, the coalition also failed to train a single member of the ERD, a rapidly deployable unit housed under the Interior Ministry, while the Iraqi police trained just 24 new recruits. Members of the ERD, subject to congressionally mandated vetting procedures, have been accused of torture and extrajudicial killings in the past.

Experts worry that the coalition training effort lacks support from Iraq's ministries of Defense and Interior that provide civilian oversight to grow and sustain the CTS. A provision in the annual U.S. defense authorization bill, however, would allow a U.S. office based at the embassy in Baghdad more leeway to support those institutions.

“It needs to be a national effort,” said Bill Smullen, the director of national security studies at Syracuse University, once the chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell. He told Al-Monitor, “There are a lot of people in civilian clothes who have ill feelings toward Iraqi military and government. It is nationwide. That's the way they need to think of it – a national effort in all places, all ways and all times.”

Though U.S. troops are stationed in Iraq with the permission of the Abadi government, there's no long-term agreement with Baghdad for that presence to stay in place.

(Source: Al Monitor)

Ex-diplomat: Turkey and Egypt eyeing regional hegemony

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN — Touching upon tensions between Ankara and Cairo Nosratallah Tajik says both Turkey and Egypt are seeking regional hegemony.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been at loggerheads with the current Egyptian administration since his close ally, former Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi, was ousted by the military in 2013.

However, statements by members of his ruling Justice and Development Party shortly before the attempted 2016 coup indicated that Turkey's attitude toward Egypt had begun to shift. Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim sent a conciliatory message to Egypt in a speech July 11, expressing Turkey's desire to improve relations. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu raised the possibility of restoring commercial and economic ties and suggested holding a ministerial level meeting to reach a solution that serves the interests of both nations.

Recent President Erdogan's message of condolence to El - Sisi after the terrorist attack on the Egyptian mosque seems to be another signal from Ankara to mend ties with Cairo.

To shed more light on the issue, an interview is done with Nosratallah Tajik, former Iranian ambassador to Jordan.

■ Turkish government sent its official message of condolence to El - Sisi on the occasion of the recent terrorist attack on the Egyptian mosque despite of existing conflicts between the two states on "Muslim



Brotherhood" that is considered a terrorist group by Egyptian government. What is the reason behind Turkey's approach in this regard?

A: Competition between Governments of Egypt and Turkey is not so much as battle or conflict among two states or countries. This kind of hostility between these governments is not only about "Muslim Brotherhood" but it is for reaching regional hegemony, politics domination as well as to be closer to USA. So in this context Turkish Government doesn't like to have any internal or regional pressure

on his foreign policy.

■ Some analysts believe the reason that Turkey tries to get closer to Egypt is to decrease pressures on Muslim Brotherhood as a mediator. What is your opinion?

A: Our region and its problems and priorities have been changed since there are lots of new problems and issues and new atmosphere of foreign elements and activities such as Trump approach to region in ISIS era.

■ It is said that Turkey tries to get closer to Egypt to prevent more closeness of Egypt to Saudi Arabia in order to keep balance in

the region. What do you think of this?

A: This seems like a plain translation of what I just said in questions two without going to details. Relation between Saudi Arabia and USA have changed when Obama left White House. Trump is trying to have closer relation with Saudi Arabia to gain financial benefit rather than to have open eye on Human rights and Saudi activities in the region such as running a massacre in Yemen!

■ Recently, former US foreign minister Kerry said, during Obama presidency, the Egyptian government pressed US to take military action against Iran. What can be the reasons behind such hostile policy of Cairo toward Iran?

A: Really I don't know how this could be an accurate quotation, but hostile policy of some countries such as Egypt toward Iran is not new. It depends on many elements such as completion of Saudi Arabia competition and their hostile policy toward Iran.

■ How do you evaluate the role of Saudi Arabia in continuation of hostilities between Iran and Egypt?

A: I don't believe Egypt will follow Saudi hostility towards Iran any more. Egypt and Iran have their own concerns and problems. Unfortunately these two countries didn't use their own positive potential to build a stable relation after revolution in 1979. Although Egypt doesn't have its previous impact on regional issues but Iran should consider to make confidence building measures routes between two countries. Recent development between Egypt and Russia in military ties confirms this idea to think more about designing of such policy.

Fatal political talks for Merkel

By Hossein Yari

TEHRAN — Recently, European leaders called on two top German politicians, Merkel and Steinmeier, to formulate a coalition government as soon as possible. The lack of a strong government in Germany has worried the European Union. Social Democrats and Christian Democrats are now entering a new stage in the formation of a coalition government in Berlin. Although the Social-Democratic Party has somewhat retreated from its previous position, a strong government will not be established in Berlin even if a coalition government is formed between the two Social Democratic and Christian Democrats.

Therefore, the European Union and the euro area must prepare themselves to accept the new Germany. Certainly in the new era, Merkel would no longer be a major chancellor in the top of his country's political and executive equations. The German Chancellor will give many concessions to the Social Democratic Party to maintain its coalition government. "Europe needs a strong Germany, it is desirable to get a government in place quickly," Merkel told a regional party meeting in northern Germany, adding, however, that her acting government could carry on day to day business. "Asking voters to go to the polls again would, I think be totally wrong," she said. On Monday, Merkel had said she would prefer new elections to a minority government in which her party would be only held in power by others.

In other hand, Germany's Social Democrats have given the green light for their party to enter preliminary coalition talks with Chancellor Angela Merkel's party in a vote that could trigger an end to the country's political deadlock. More than 600 SPD delegates gathered on Thursday in Berlin and debated the question for several hours before voting over-



whelmingly for the exploratory talks to begin. In a speech earlier in the day, party chief Martin Schulz -- who is facing a vote on his own leadership later on Thursday -- called for a "yes" vote in spite of significant misgivings.

As CNN reported, Schulz had ruled out entering a coalition with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU) -- the so-called "Grand Coalition" that has ruled Germany for the last four years -- but has recently retreated from his position.

«It's not about the question of Grand Coalition or no Grand Coalition, minority government or no minority government», he said on Thursday. «No, it's about the question: how can we live up to our responsibility, both today and towards the next generation?»

He insisted that the party would not enter a new coalition without policy concessions from Merkel. «Governing

cannot come at any price,» he said. The news comes after nearly three weeks of deadlock following the collapse of coalition talks between Merkel's alliance, the pro-business Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the Green Party after federal elections in September. In a bid to avoid the possibility of fresh elections, Germany's President Frank-Walter Steinmeier stepped in to break the deadlock, issuing what Schulz described as a «dramatic appeal» for his party to consider coalition talks. Formal talks between the parties are unlikely to start until the new year.

Merkel has repeatedly insisted on a strong government in Germany. However, in the event of a coalition of two Social Democratic and Christian Democrats, we will not see a strong government in the head of the political and administrative equations of Germany. Undoubtedly, in the near future there will be great differences between the two traditional German parties. These differences will be in the social, political, security, economic and foreign policy areas. For example, there is a very serious disagreement between Merkel and the leaders of the Social-Democratic Party in terms of how Germany operates in NATO. The Social Democrats believe that Merkel surrendered to NATO's trampolines and would not resist the White House. This issue has been one of the issues between Merkel and his rival in the election (Martin Schulz).

Finally, many European countries are waiting for the formation of a coalition government in Germany. However, many analysts from the German and European affairs believe that a coalition of two Social Democrats and Christian Democrats can not establish a strong government in Berlin. In other words, we will not see a strong government in Berlin in the near future. This is the worst possible news for German supporters in Europe.

Iran's Nuclear Deal, failure for Arab diplomacy

1 → Therefore, they are supposed to support and support the trans-regional and major powers in order to strengthen their position in their region in order to compensate their weaknesses and failures against Iran. Although turning to such a policy has led to Saudi rulers.

These supports, of course, are counter-productive in the end. In the past year, Saudi Arabia failed not only to collapse in the Syrian crisis, but to find the way to the Astana Summit, which hosted the most important peace talks in Syria, but even in the oil talks, it was forced to consider the interests of Iran and respect Iran's share of The black gold market will reduce its oil production under severe economic pressure.

Even in diplomatic matters, Saudi Arabia, in spite of trying to mobilize resources against Iran, has had to retreat a lot, for example, with the election of the President of Lebanon. Al Saud has agreed with the choice of Hezbollah's support.

Saudi Arabia has long played the role of a strategic asset to protect the interests of Europe and the United States in the region, and on the other hand, along with some Gulf States, it is one of the most important sources of revenue for arms manufacturers in the United States and Europe.

Therefore, it is not possible to criticize the Westerners from Saudi Arabia. This trend seems to be followed by the government of Donald Trump, taking into account US interests in the region, despite his sharp commentary on Saudi politics.

On the other hand, with the arrival of King Salman and his new approaches to Saudi political administration, internal disputes within the Saudi dynasty have developed,



and the military conflict that exists among the princes seems to be due to the political hurdle in the country Provides some political turmoil and instability in Saudi Arabia. The realization of this issue is unpredictable in the current situation, since over the years, the Saudi people have been subjected to a political revolution, and their country's subjugation against its political rulers.

Saudi Arabia was one of the first designers and supporters of the Iraqi crisis, and given the initial and rapid progress of ISIL and the terrorists, they had a sense of prosperity and achieve their ambitions, which was why the percentage of the implementation of the goals and the spread of influence in Syria.

But the failures of the Saudi rulers in Iraq and Syria drove them to execute their

plans in Yemen. The entry of this country into the Yemeni crisis was one of the most outrageous plans of the Saudi rulers, since the resistance of the people against foreign invasion, the prolonged crisis, and the high cost of finances reduced its position. Saudi Arabia sought to narrow the conditions for the Yemeni people by launching a regional offensive. But with the rise of Saudi Arabia's crisis and failure in the invasion, supporters and allies who had previously promised to accompany the rulers of the country separated one way from Saudi Arabia. Separation of Egypt, and even being opposed to the Saudi rulers, the discontent of Oman, which initially opposed the move, was disappointing for other countries participating in the coalition. Influence and domination of the region

by considering solutions such as money and lobbies directly and indirectly with the West was one of the ways of the Saudi rulers, but with the coming of Malik Salman, Saudi Arabia's expansionism was publicly revealed and led to the country in the hand To take actions that go beyond the tact and wisdom of the Saudi rulers. The credo of Saudi Arabia made it difficult to reach its goals. There is no doubt that Saudi Arabia has always sought to undermine Iran's prominent role in the international and regional arena, and its rulers have no sense in pursuing this ambitious goal of making abusive political movements. Naturally, the continuation of such a process in the future will be negatively affected by the deadlock in reaching Saudi plans in the future. Saudi political recklessness, which is largely irrational, stems from the mentality of the Saudi rulers of Western support for Saudi action.

But evidence suggests that Westerners such as the United States and Britain are cynical about this country, and arms sales to the country from the West have provided a more favorable context for Saudi Arabia to arrest terrorist groups. On the other hand, these Saudi rulers were forced to buy weapons for more influence in the region and control of Iran. The country's set of spending to achieve such a goal along with today's economic problems and the dilemma of living in some of the less developed cities in Saudi Arabia will in the future lead to a decline in the political status of the Saudi family.

Saudi Arabia's turbulent approach in recent years and its role in waging war and violence in the region have allowed the plundering of human resources and raw materials in the Muslim world to the West.

Tillerson's Dissatisfaction with Kushner



By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — The U.S. President's son in law, Jared Kushner, has become a controversial figure in the United States in recent days. This 36-year-old Jewish young man who has extensive relations with the AIPAC lobby in the United States, has been very intimate with the Prime of the Zionist regime, Benjamin Netanyahu. During the 2016 presidential campaigns, Kushner was considered one of Trump bridges with the AIPAC lobby and Netanyahu. After Trump's victory in the election, Kushner became a powerful figure in the U.S. foreign policy. His power was even beyond that of the U.S. National Security Advisor and Secretary of State. He became the main mediator and, in some cases, the U.S. decision maker in the region. A process that continues up to this day.

U.S. Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, is absolutely dissatisfied with Kushner's involvement in the policies regarding Western Asia. And this dissatisfaction is intensified day by day. One of the main reasons for Tillerson's resignation, as reported by the American media, is Kushner's covert action in the region (West Asia). He has secret lobbies with Zionist and Saudi leaders. Many of these visits and lobbies are without the knowledge of the U.S. State Department. In other words, Trump has given Kushner an exclusive right to interfere in the foreign policy of his country. Therefore, many of Kushner's movements take place in the form of direct and indirect powers that Trump has given to his son in law.

Not long ago, Zionist sources, while introducing some of the Jewish members of Donald Trump cabinet, named Kushner as the most influential member of his administration. According to this Zionist newspaper, Kushner doesn't receive legal payment, but at the same time, he is Trump's advisor on policies regarding Middle East and Israel, as well as in the field of foreign trade.

As it comes from reports, Kushner has an enormous influence on American business and foreign policy. Trump gave a blank check to his son in law, and this has naturally led to many dissatisfaction in the US Department of State. It seems that as time passes, this dissatisfaction also increases.

Another point is that Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, looks forward to Kushner's role in American regional policies. Kushner's Jewishness and his strong attachment to the Zionist lobby, and especially the Likud party, has led the Zionist prime minister to rely on Kushner even more than Trump and, consequently, Tillerson. Many of the Washington-Tel Aviv interactions that took place during the last year were through Kushner.

In August, Kushner met with Netanyahu for a compromise and a roadmap for Washington and Tel Aviv approach towards Palestine. The controversial and unacceptable issues, such as recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of the occupied territories, have been the result of this visit. Obviously, as time goes by, we will hear more of Trump's son in law and his great role in U.S. foreign policy. Some American analysts believe that Kushner is going to benefit from the support of Trump's proponents for power in future (as the next president of the United States). Of course it's still unclear what will Kushner's fate be in the future of American political arena. Undoubtedly, Kushner's political life will expire if Trump is for any reasons defeated in the upcoming presidential election of the US. That's why Netanyahu and the leaders of the Zionist regime and the AIPAC lobby are all trying to keep Kushner in power in the United States in any way possible.

In recent days, some US media have announced the resignation of US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson in the near future. Even the media mentioned Mike Pompeo, CIA director, as an alternative for Tillerson. However, President Donald Trump, while denying the news, has called this action a media gossip. On the other hand, the White House spokeswoman Sara Sanders said, «Tillerson is still at the head of the State Department, and the government is fully focused on the successful completion of the first year of Trump government.»

Nevertheless, many American analysts acknowledge that there are strong differences between the State Department and the White House. What is happening today within the US government is a full-fledged controversy that somehow shows itself in how the authorities are taking positions. The fact is that U.S. Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, is furiously angry with people like Trump, Nikki Haley, and Kushner because of their interference in the State Department's affairs.

Kushner has a lot of advocacy and lobbying with some Arab countries supporting terrorism, and in the first place, Saudi Arabia. These consultations take place as Rex Tillerson, as the U.S. secretary of state is not aware of their contents accurately. In other words, many of Kushner's movements are made in the form of direct and indirect authorities that Trump has given to his son in law.

A review of Bloomberg's recent report shows that Tillerson's is severely dissatisfied with the unilateral actions of Kushner. Bloomberg writes in this regard:

«Tillerson believes Kushner hasn't done enough to share details of the talks with the State Department, according to the people, leaving senior U.S. diplomats in the dark on the full extent of the highly sensitive negotiations.

«The problem is, the senior presidential adviser does not consult with the State Department -- and it's unclear the level of consultation that goes on with the NSC,» one of the people familiar with Tillerson's concerns said, referring to the National Security Council. «And that's a problem for both the NSC and the State Department and it's not something we can easily solve.»

Tillerson and other senior State Department officials are also concerned that Saudi leaders, having been held at arm's length by President Barack Obama, see the connection with Kushner as a way to regain influence in the White House and U.S. backing for actions that could be controversial. Already, Prince Mohammed, heir to the Saudi throne, has put several such steps into motion.»

As reported by Bloomberg and others, Tillerson is virtually no secretary of State. He is left without the necessary power in the US diplomacy and foreign policy system. Consequently, despite Trump's denials of Tillerson's resignation, it remains possible for the U.S. Secretary of State to eventually resign. Undoubtedly in this case, we will witness a more serious confrontation between the Republicans and the President of the United States.

The scoundrel theory of American politics

By Greg Weiner

There have always been and always will be scoundrels in political life, especially one particular genus — the hypocrite — whose private behavior diverges from his public actions. But there is also a novel and ominous concept of the statesman emerging in American politics, most clearly in the gymnastic contortions being accomplished to justify support for the Senate campaign of Roy Moore, the former chief justice of Alabama: the politician as a disembodied policy array.

In this scheme, the candidate is a mere vessel for policy preferences. His or her character is irrelevant because the potential officeholder is to be judged wholly by the policies he or she will support. Even if campaigns accurately predicted the issues that will matter once the winner takes

office, which they don't, this desiccation of the role of the statesman in public life would be profoundly troubling.

Our shrunken concept of the statesman was evident when President Trump's counselor, Kellyanne Conway, suggested that it would be acceptable to elect a man credibly accused of molesting teenagers to the Senate because he would support the Republican tax plan. Mr. Trump followed with an even more expansive endorsement: "We need his vote on stopping crime, illegal immigration, Border Wall, Military, Pro Life, V.A., Judges, 2nd Amendment and more." Lest she be outdone by her boss, Ms. Conway subsequently declared that the "president has tremendous moral standards," the evidence for which apparently was that "he has said the allegations are troubling." Neverthe-

less, Mr. Trump "doesn't want a liberal Democrat representing Alabama in the United States Senate."

The embrace of candidate Trump because he said he would pursue conservative policies despite his unconservative disposition also reflects this negation of the statesman's role in political life. Nor did it begin with Mr. Trump. Liberals repeatedly rallied to President Clinton in scandal after scandal for fear of empowering Republicans.

Much of this may seem, on the surface, sensible enough. The denial of the importance of statesmen and their characters might be said to aspire to the elimination of personal whim and the reduction of politics to the objectively measurable. On this account, a public official is to be gauged only on public acts.

■ Realm of compromise

It is no surprise that politics, a realm of compromise and clashing interests, does not conform to standards of abstract rationality — nor should it. But a political act is a product of the statesman as an organic human being whose judgment is inevitably bound up with his or her character. Character is not reducible to private morality alone, but the person of the statesman makes an inescapable difference in politics. His or her character — that is, who he or she essentially is — matters. It is clear enough that each party knows this to be the case, for each asserts that character is important when attacking the opposition even while denying it when protecting its own.

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That the statesman's character does matter is true for several reasons. To elect a candidate is not only to choose incorporeal policies but also the prism through which unpredictable information and events will be assessed. If it were only incorporeal policies, it would not matter who the candidate was.

Another reason the statesman's character matters is that American notions of political representation assign statesmanship an essential role in the constitutional regime. James Madison's Federalist 10 says the representative's role is to "refine and enlarge," not simply reflect, the public's views. This is particularly true of the Senate, which Madison's Federalist 63 says must serve as a "temperate and respectable body of citizens" that delays rather than indulges the people when they are stampeding toward error. **→13**

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Embellish your garments in Persian style

L I F E Embellishment is an essential part of Iranian traditional dresses in each part of the country. During history, embellishing clothes manifested social class, financial situation and even the tribe of the person wearing it.

Due to wide range of designs and colors used in embellishment of Iranian clothes, they can be used on different fabric anytime and anywhere in the world.

Stylized designs

Inspired by flowers and plants, this kind of embellishment is designed by the taste of people in each region of the country.

Needlework on dresses of Turkmen and Baloch women in Iran are classified in this category. They are mainly embroidered on collar, wristband and hem.

Botteh Jegheh, which is known as paisley in Western culture, is one of the main patterns, which is used in Persian embellishments.

The teardrop-shaped motif with a curved upper end is known as symbol of cypress, which is known as a tree of life in Persian culture. Some experts also resemble the motif to flame of fire as well.

Geometric designs

The geometric designs are widely used in Persian traditional clothes either in fabric texture or in garment's embellishments.

Darvishduzi is one kind of embroidery used in traditional dresses of Iranians in different parts of the country. It is a kind of geometric pattern used on dresses.

In some part of the country, the main embellishment of women dresses are medallion or geometric patterns used in front of women's costumes. It can be found on Balochi women dresses.



A group of Iranian women in traditional dress pose for a photo at Iranian fashion and costume festival, which was held in Shiraz in May 2015.

Due to wide range of designs and colors used in embellishment of Iranian clothes, they can be used on different fabric anytime and anywhere in the world.

Natural designs

The patterns of animals, plants and human being are also found on Persian traditional costumes. Hunting or riding patterns are some of patterns used on fabric for embel-

ishment.

Several techniques are used for embellishments of garments in Persian costumes. Embroidery, printing, beads, coins and sequin are mainly used on Persian traditional clothes.

Embellishments on Persian clothes are manifestation of culture and civilization of different parts of Iran. They are considered as an important part of our heritage and we can be proud of it on our modern costumes.

Everyday habits you don't realize could shorten your life

When you eat, how you watch TV, and a number of hygiene habits may be seemingly harmless, but in reality, they could be shaving years off of your life.

Midnight snacking

That sweet or salty late night treat that you just can't resist may increase your risk of heart disease or diabetes, according to research out of the National Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City. "This habit increases the risk of heart disease and diabetes because in time you will not only have high triglycerides levels after your night meal [but permanently]," says study author Ruud Buijs, Ph.D.

Triglycerides are dangerous blood fats that accumulate in fatty tissue (mostly around the belly) and you can't get rid of them so easily, he explains. "The best thing to do would be to eat as little as possible at night and keep about 11 to 12 hours between your evening meal and the next meal (breakfast)." Here is your game plan to stop late-night eating once and for all.

Binge-watching

We agree, Stranger Things is strangely addictive, but staying up late to binge on this or any other compelling series on

Netflix or anywhere else can rob you of precious sleep. In a new study, young adults who copped to binge-watching reported more fatigue, more symptoms of insomnia, poorer sleep quality, and greater alertness before going to sleep.

In fact, binge-watchers had a 98 percent higher likelihood of poor sleep quality compared to their counterparts who did not binge-watch, the study showed. "Even one night of sleep loss can cause excessive daytime sleepiness, which makes you much more likely to be involved in a deadly motor vehicle crash or workplace accident," says Ilene M. Rosen, MD, MSCE, president of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and professor of clinical medicine at Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Even one night of sleep loss is dangerous, she says. How dangerous? "Performance after sleep deprivation, even for one night, is similar to the performance of individuals who are intoxicated, so encouraging binge-watching over sleeping is like encouraging drunk driving."

Your taste for salt

If you salt everything you eat, you may be jeopardizing your

health; too much salty food caused 9.5 percent of the total diet-related deaths, according to a study in the Journal of the American Medical Association. Too much salt can damage the heart or kidneys. The study found that 45.4 percent of all deaths caused by heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes are associated with eating either too much or too little of just 10 food groups. Too much salt can damage the heart or kidneys and it's the leading cause of diet-related deaths. Find out the seven sure signs you're eating too much sodium.

Halfhearted hand washing

Improper hand washing can leave you susceptible to germs. Not only are many foodborne illnesses spread by unwashed hands, but washing hands with soap and water could cut diarrheal disease-associated deaths in half, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Remember the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic of 2003? Proper hand washing could have staved off many of the cases of this dangerous respiratory illness. Here are five hand-washing mistakes to avoid.

(Source: Reader's Digest)

Colorful Iran: Chanting Yamal in southern Iran



L I F E Yamal is a kind of melody, which is chanted by sailors in the southern part of Iran while they are on board.

Yamal, which literally means 'wishes', is chanted on the start of a sailing trip or while raising and lowering sails or any other teamwork.

Yamal Mashooeh is a melody chanted by sailors on board when they want to leave the seaside.

They begin the yamal with 'Allah Akbar' (literally meaning God is most great) and pray for God and then wish for their families and citizens health while they are far away.

Various tribes and ethnic groups who live in different parts of Iran are just like colors, which make a great painting. Iran is home to about 20 ethnic groups who live in different regions of the country.

How to treat first-degree burns immediately?



Put out fire or stop the person's contact with hot liquid, steam, or other material. Remove smoldering material from the person. Remove hot or burned clothing. If clothing sticks to skin, cut or tear around it. Take off jewelry, belts, and tight clothing. Burns can swell quickly. Then take the following steps:

Cool burn

Hold burned skin under cool (not cold) running water or immerse in cool water until pain subsides. Help the person "stop,

drop, and roll" to smother flames. Use compresses if running water isn't available.

Protect burn

Cover with sterile, non-adhesive bandage or clean cloth. Do not apply butter or ointments, which can cause infection.

Treat pain

Give over-the-counter pain reliever such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), acetaminophen (Tylenol), or naproxen (Aleve). (Source: webmd.com)

101 ITEMS FOR YOUR BUCKET LIST!

#13 Climb a mountain

Why risk your life to climb a mountain when the journey is fraught with rocky terrains and with ever-changing weather conditions? For some, mountain climbing is an external conquest; some find enjoyment in the sport; others see it as a step in their personal growth journey.

Whatever it is, mountain climbing is a feat that takes physical endurance and mental tenacity to accomplish, and is definitely a bucket list worthy item. I haven't climbed a mountain yet but I plan to do that sometime in the future!

Here we share 101 items to consider for your bucket list. Look through the list — any item that resonates with you? Take the items that resonate with you and use them for your own list!

(Source: personalexcellence.co)

#IRANIANLIFESTYLE



Two Iranian girls in traditional dress pose for a photo at an eco-lodge located in Ramian, northern Golestan Province. (Instagram/ Mahtab Seqatolaslami)

PERSIAN STYLE

Traditional clothing of Baluch men and women in Iran



Clothing of The traditional costume worn by Baluch men is usually of white, cream, khaki, or light-gray cotton. The trousers are extremely wide, hanging in folds between the legs. They are drawn in to a waistband and are tapered at the ankles. A loose shirt reaches to the knees or even lower and is worn over trousers. The older style has a round neckline with a buttoned opening on one shoulder. The more modern neckline has a collar and a buttoned opening down the front to the waist.

Until the 1920s men in colder regions used to wear fully embroidered jackets over this basic costume. The material, woven by the men themselves, was of lamb's wool or goat hair and was at most 40 cm wide. The women sewed these pieces into jackets, which they then embroidered with traditional motifs and colors. The headgear of men consists of a piece of cloth wrapped as a turban, which is gradually becoming less popular.

Traditional women's dress

The women wear a straight, loose robe of cotton or light wool, extending to mid-calf. The simple round neckline is slit to the breastbone in front. Sleeves are long and loose and slightly tapered at the wrist. This robe is worn over loose-fitting trousers of a different color; the trousers are gathered at the waist with a drawstring and tapered at the ankles.

The most striking feature of the women's costume is the hand embroidery covering the front of the dress and the cuffs of the sleeves and trousers. These embroidered pieces are prepared separately and later sewn onto the dresses. The piece for the front of the bodice is square and extends across the entire front from shoulders to waist.

Another rectangular piece extends from the waist to the hem of the dress and comes to a point at the top; the sides of this piece are left unstitched for approximately 30 cm, so that it can function as a large pocket. Two trapezoidal pieces 25 cm wide and 45 cm long are stitched onto the sleeves as cuffs, and two similar but slightly smaller pieces decorate the trouser hems.

There are approximately fifty to seventy motifs in Baluch embroidery, each with its own name, though the names may differ slightly in different regions and simpler versions are identified by the names of the localities where they are made. In Persia this type of embroidery is practiced only by Baluch women and is still very much alive among the settled populations in Persian Baluchistan, especially in the villages of the central region. Within the last thirty years innovative techniques and about 390 new colors have been introduced.

(Source: iranicaonline.org)

Feel less tired during the day

Watch Your Sleep

It's obvious that too little sleep will leave you tired. If you often sleep less than seven hours at night, you're not only likely to be exhausted, you are also risking serious health concerns, including weight gain, depression, increased risk of accidents, lowered immunity, increased risk of diabetes and heart problems, impaired thinking, memory and mood.

Another often-overlooked energy-zapper is the snooze button. It's so tempting to grab those extra nine minutes of shut-eye, but that's just enough time for you to doze off without reaching restorative sleep. Sleep is as important to your health as proper eating and exercise, so don't push it aside to make room for other activities.

Fuel with protein

If your usual breakfast is a muffin, donut, bowl of refined wheat cereal, or even worse, nothing at all, you're likely to feel the effect just a few hours into your day.

Loading your belly with a heavy dose of carbs leads to a spike in blood sugar that makes it hard to resist the office vending machine once that sugar high crashes back down. Work protein into every meal, and grab snacks that balance carbs with protein. If you have time, scramble eggs for breakfast.

Get off the couch

It seems counterintuitive, but daily fatigue can be your body's way of crying out for more activity. Exercise raises your metabolism, stimulates your mood and helps you sleep better at night. You don't need to spend hours at the gym; even a 20-minute brisk walk around the block will provide benefits.

Water, water everywhere

Dehydration leads to fatigue and many people don't drink enough water throughout the day. Up your intake by keeping a water bottle handy, and drink a full glass of water before each meal. Another quick trick for an instant pick-me-up is taking a brief shower.

Have fun

A big laugh is one of the best energizers around, and costs you nothing. Watch a funny movie, read a hilarious novel or your favorite comic strip, or call that friend who always cracks you up.

Indulge yourself in a favorite activity each day, even if only for a short time. Read, garden or listen to your favorite tunes; whatever makes you feel good.

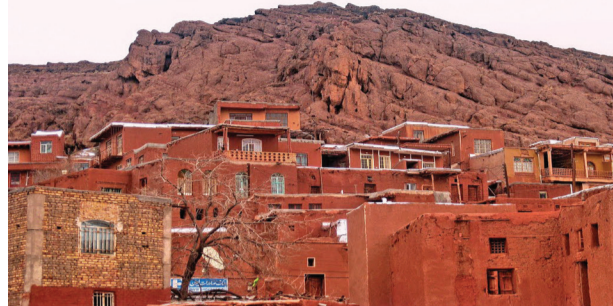
(Source: The Spurge)

Tehran-Badrud tourist train makes debut

TOURISM TEHRAN — A train boarding 163 domestic passengers made its maiden excursion from Tehran to Badrud, central Iran, on Thursday.

Badrud is the capital of Emamzadeh District in Natanz County, Isfahan Province.

A group of Badrud residents in traditional dress warmly welcomed passengers while performing local music, ISNA reported.



A view of Abyaneh tourist village in central Iran

"The sightseers [plan to] tour the historic village of Abyaneh, Harpark Fire Temple, Hajatgah Mosque, Abu-Zeidabad Caravanserai amongst other sites," said Hossein Yazdanmehr who presides over Natanz office of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization.

Speaking to reporters, Yazdanmehr added the service will be provided on a weekly basis to departure from Tehran every Thursday.

The train tickets can be purchased in person at countrywide travel agencies or online at www.raja.ir, he explained.

Dominated with reddish hues and lost in labyrinth of heights, Abyaneh village is one of the oldest in Iran. It is an example of human adaptation to nature, wherein one can redraw the boundaries of time and feel a flavor of ancient Iranian culture and civilization.

Ancient and enormous South American rock art mapped

Panels of rock art in Venezuela—including some of the largest known examples in the world, and some never seen before—have been mapped for the first time. The 2,000-year-old engravings, called petroglyphs, are located on a group of islands within the Atures Rapids, in the Amazonas State of Venezuela. The discovery holds clues to better understand ancient cultures in this region.



Top-down aerial perspective of east panel on Picture, with interpretative overlay of main engravings.

The research is part of the ongoing Cotúa Island-Orinoco Reflexive Archaeology Project, now in the third of a planned four-year study. The purpose of the project is to examine the "cultural mosaic" around the Atures Rapids, according to Philip Riris, a member of the project and post-doctoral researcher at University College London Institute of Archaeology.

The project, one of the first in-depth studies of its kind, is tracing the way pre-Columbian cultures interacted with one another, with a goal of better understanding how those interactions shaped lowland South America's more recent history.

Riris documents the new findings in a new paper in the journal *Antiquity*. The images show cultural rituals, and also humans and animals, including a horned snake measuring about 100 feet long. On one rock panel, a group of people surrounding what is described as a flute player shows what Riris thinks is a "rite of renewal" ceremony. The time of year when river depth allowed the engravings to be visible would mark the arrival of harvest season. (Source: *Newsweek*)

Cafe Naderi maintains integrity with big dose of nostalgia

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Any move to split or transform premises of the nostalgic Cafe Naderi, an erstwhile hangout for intellectuals and literati in downtown Tehran, has been thwarted.

Late last week, unendorsed stories circled at social media networks, noting its landowner is about to divide the cafe's garden by erecting a wall.

Form early hours of Thursday, patrols from District 12 as well as protection unit of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization scouted around the historical site, ISNA reported.

On the same day, Rajabali Khosroabadi, Tehran province's CHTHO director, paid a visit to the cafe to make sure no damage has been caused, the report said.

"I talked to the owner's representative by phone while visiting the cafe, warning any tampering is legally prohibited and any conservation plans should be carried out under the CHTHO supervision," Khosroabadi added.

A national cultural heritage site, the cafe is situated on the ground floor of the Hotel Naderi on Jomhuri St.

Khachik Madikians, an Armenian immigrant, opened the cafe in 1927, it soon became a bustling rendezvous of the literary and intellectual elites.



An interior view of Cafe Naderi in downtown Tehran

Iran seeks World Heritage listing for Rab'-e Rashidi

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Iran's cultural heritage body keeps an eye on possible inscription of the ruins of Rab'-e Rashidi, an educational complex dating back to the 14th century, on the UNESCO World Heritage list by 2025.

The complex was established during the reign of Ghazan, a ruler of the Ilkhanid dynasty. It embraces a paper factory, a library, a hospital (Dar-al-Shafa), a Quranic center (Dar-al-Quran), residential facilities for teachers, students' quarters and a caravanserai amongst other facilities.

The Cultural Heritage and Tourism Research Center in collaboration with Tabriz Islamic Art University has recently completed first chapter of an international project that lays basic groundwork for a UNESCO recognition.

Archaeological speculations, geophysical

surveys, 3D laser scans, endoscopy of the ancient structure were among exertions carried out during the project, CHTN quoted Bahram Ajorlou, a senior archaeologist, as saying on Saturday.

Situated in northwestern city of Tabriz, Rab'-e Rashidi includes several archaeological layers that date from Ilkhanid, Safavid and Qajar eras, Ajorlou added.

It is said that students from Iran, China, Egypt, and Syria studied there under the supervision of physicians, intellectuals, scientists and Islamic scholars.

The Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization plans to introduce the archaeological spot to international guests of 'Tabriz 2018', an event which marks the naming of Tabriz as the capital of Islamic tourism.



A general view of Rab'-e Rashidi in Tabriz, northwest Iran.

Rey's Shah-Abbasi caravanserai restored

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A six-month rehabilitation project has brought a Shah-Abbasi caravanserai back to its former glory in Rey, a historical city in Tehran province.

The mud-brick structure is named after Shah Abbas the Great (r. 1588 – 1629), who ordered construction of such roadside inns across the country.

The caravanserai is adjacent to the holy Shah-Abdol-Azim shrine and dates from the Safavid era (1501–1736), ISNA reported on December 6.

Eastern, southern, and northern iwans (porticos), internal walls and 17 external



A view of Shah-Abbasi caravanserai in Rey

chambers of the caravanserai were refurbished in the project that Tehran Beautification Organization, affiliated with the municipality, carried out in close collaboration with the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, the report said.

While traversing Iran, one can see abandoned caravanserais which in their heyday offered comfort to travelers, merchants and their livestock.

Now, caravanserais have largely lost their original usage though their atmospheric chambers, domes, porticos and courtyards still draw avid visitors.

Tips and advice on plane travel: The secret to securing the perfect plane seat

The perennial question of which is an aircraft's best seat is one with multiple answers, for the superlative seat on a plane depends entirely on your priorities as a passenger.

With that in mind we have sifted through a wealth of research to reveal the top spots to park your derriere depending on your needs.

■ If you want the best service

First of all, as soon as you step onto the plane, smile and make proper eye contact with the cabin crew who greet you. According to JetBlue flight attendant Amanda Pleva, who penned an article for *Flyertalk*, being blanked by passengers upon entry is surprisingly common and is likely to tick them off. "To have someone clearly see me and ignore my 'hello' and walk on by is the most dehumanising experience", she says.

And if you want the fastest service? Order a slightly different meal (vegetarian or no fish for example), as these always come out first. And sit at the back of the plane rather than the front. Flight attendants are less keen to respond to requests at the front because they have to parade whatever item you've requested - a pillow, or second drink, say - all the way up the gangway. This often prompts other passengers to notice and ask for the same thing, setting off an irksome chain reaction.

■ For the best view

In some cases this depends on which airport you're taking off from. For example, a seat on the right side of the plane is best for catching a great view of the Hollywood sign from LAX, and the same goes for Sydney if you want a prime view over the harbor. More broadly speaking, if you're partial to a spot of window gazing, you always want to avoid a window seat that's located over one of the wings, where your view will be blocked entirely. Websites like *Seat Guru* can provide you with a map of your particular aircraft if you plug in your flight number, so you'll be able to see which seats are located over the wings and steer clear of them.

■ If you're safety conscious

Airlines and plane manufacturers will tell you that all seats are equal when it comes to matters of safety. However, Popular Mechanics believe some seats are more equal than others. A 2007 study conducted by the periodical found that passengers sitting near the tail of a plane were 40 per cent more likely to survive a crash than those sitting in the first few rows.



Verdict? Sit as far back as possible if you're safety conscious.

■ If you want a speedy exit

You're on a city break to Europe and you're travelling light with just a small carry case in the overhead locker. You want to maximize the amount of time you spend at your destination and minimize the time spent on the plane. Verdict? You need to grab a seat at the front of the plane on the left, which is where the exit is located and where passengers leave the aircraft from.

■ If you want to sleep

Sleep is hard to come by at 35,000 feet, where many things are conspiring against you nodding off: the hum of the engines; the passenger next to you needing the loo; the lack of neck support in your seat. Some places, however, are better than others for getting some shut eye. Window seats give you control of the window shade and a place to rest your head; they also mean you don't need to be woken up every time the passenger next to you needs the toilet. The verdict? A window seat at the front of the plane, where it is also quieter.

■ If you want a better dining experience

According to Professor Charles Spence - author of *Gastrophysics: The New Science of Eating* - plane food tastes better at the front of the aircraft, where it is quieter and the air is more humid. "Dry cabin air and the loud engine noise all contribute to our inability to taste and smell food and drink," he told *Telegraph*. Verdict? Sit as close to the cockpit as possible if you want to make plane food taste better. More often than not you'll also get served first.

■ If you don't like turbulence

Turbulence does, of course, shake the entire aircraft, but experts claim there are some seats on a plane where lumps and bumps will feel less intense. The verdict? Sit in the middle of the plane, above the wings, which help keep the plane steady when the going gets tough.

■ If you need more legroom

Seats in exit rows have more legroom than most, as do seats at the bulkhead. Such seats are, however, in high demand and can come with caveats: passengers in exit rows, for instance, must be willing to assist in the evacuation of the aircraft during an emergency. Some airlines charge for seats with extra legroom. The verdict? A seat at the bulkhead, ideally in the middle, which means fellow passengers won't have to step over you en route to the loo. Failing that, an aisle seat.

■ If you're traveling with kids

Traveling with children, especially young children, can be something of an unknown quantity. Will they cry, will they be excitable, will they sleep like a log, will you need to accompany them on multiple bathroom visits? Perhaps all four of those scenarios will play out if you're going long haul. The verdict? Get a seat at the bulkhead, which has more room and is near the bathroom.

■ If you want to spread out

Flights will often take off with empty seats and there are ways to increase your chances of sitting next to one of them. If your airline has not yet replaced its check-in staff with computers, ask the person over the counter how busy the plane is. If it's not busy, ask politely if they'd be kind enough to put you next to an empty seat.

It works surprisingly often. If you're dealing with a computer, check in late and choose your seat manually before printing off your boarding pass. Be warned, though: this leaves you more exposed to delays going through security and in extreme cases could result in you missing your plane.

If you are flying with a companion, try booking both the aisle and the window seat. You will often find that the middle seat - as it is the least favored by passengers travelling solo - has been left empty by the time you come to board. Relax and enjoy it.

(Source: *Traveller*)

ROUND THE GLOBE

Late Baroque Towns of the Val di Noto

A UNESCO World Heritage, the Late Baroque Towns of the Val di Noto is comprised of components of eight towns located in south-eastern Sicily (Caltagirone, Militello Val di Catania, Catania, Modica, Noto, Palazzolo Acreide, Ragusa and Scicli).

These historic centers and urban environments reflect the great, post-seismic rebuilding achievement of the decades following the catastrophic earthquake of 1693, which ravaged towns across south-eastern Sicily. The rebuilding, restoration and reconstruction of these communities resulted in the creation of an exceptional group of towns, all reflecting the late Baroque architecture of the 17th century in all its forms and applications.



The eight components of the property differ in size and represent a range of responses to the rebuilding needs. They include the entire old town of Caltagirone, Noto and Ragusa; specific urban areas of Catania and Scicli; and isolated monuments in the historic town centers of Modica, Palazzolo Acreide and Militello Val di Catania.

The towns exhibit a plethora of late Baroque art and architecture of high quality and of a remarkable homogeneity as a result of the circumstances of time, place, and social context in which they were created. However, they also display distinctive innovations in the town planning and urban rebuilding. The property also represents a considerable collective undertaking in response to a catastrophic seismic event.

(Source: *UNESCO*)

Bat cave solves mystery of deadly SARS virus, researchers find

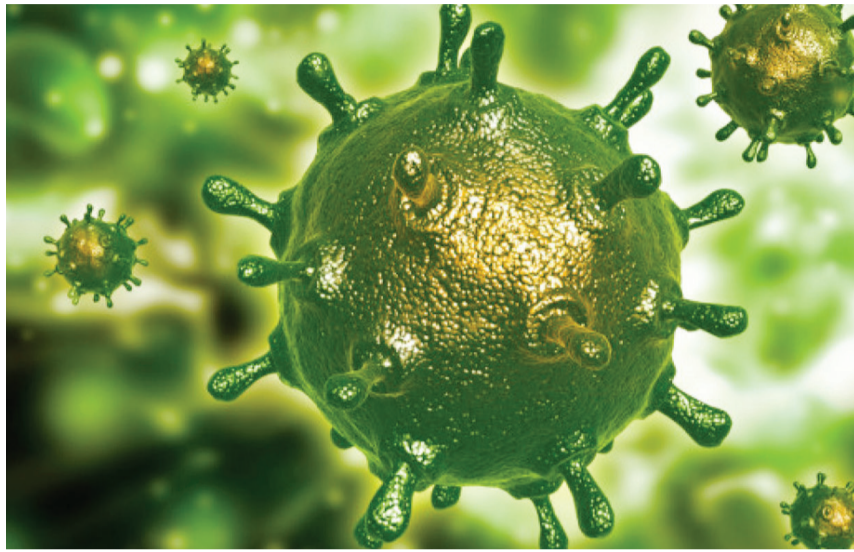
After a detective hunt across China, researchers chasing the origin of the deadly SARS virus have finally found their smoking gun. In a remote cave in Yunnan province, virologists have identified a single population of horseshoe bats that harbors virus strains with all the genetic building blocks of the one that jumped to humans in 2002, killing almost 800 people around the world.

The killer strain could easily have arisen from such a bat population, the researchers report in *PLoS Pathogens* on November 30. They warn that the ingredients are in place for a similar disease to emerge again.

In late 2002, cases of a mystery pneumonia-like illness began occurring in Guangdong province, southeastern China. The disease, dubbed severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), triggered a global emergency as it spread around the world in 2003, infecting thousands of people.

■ The culprit identified

Scientists identified the culprit as a strain of coronavirus and found genetically similar viruses in masked palm civets (*Paguma larvata*) sold in Guangdong's animal markets. Later surveys revealed large numbers of SARS-related coronaviruses circulating in China's horseshoe bats (*Rhinolophus*)—suggesting that the deadly strain probably originated in the bats, and later passed through civets before reaching humans. But crucial genes—for a protein that allows the virus to latch onto and infect cells—were different in the human and



known bat versions of the virus, leaving room for doubt about this hypothesis.

To clinch the case, a team led by Shi Zheng-Li and Cui Jie of the Wuhan Institute of Virology in China sampled thousands of horseshoe

bats in locations across the country.

The “most challenging work is to locate the caves, which usually are in remote areas,” says Cui. After finding a particular cave in Yunnan, southwestern China, in which

Although no single bat had the exact strain of SARS coronavirus that is found in humans, the analysis showed that the strains mix often.

the strains of coronavirus looked similar to human versions, the researchers spent five years monitoring the bats that lived there, collecting fresh guano and taking anal swabs.

They sequenced the genomes of 15 viral strains from the bats and found that, taken together, the strains contain all the genetic pieces that make up the human version.

■ Strain of SARS coronavirus

Although no single bat had the exact strain of SARS coronavirus that is found in humans, the analysis showed that the strains mix often. The human strain could have emerged from such mixing, says Kwok-Yung Yuen, a virologist at the University of Hong Kong who co-discovered the SARS virus: “The authors should be congratulated for confirming what has been suspected.”

Cui and Shi are searching for other bat populations that could have produced strains capable of infecting humans. The researchers have now isolated some 300 bat coronavirus sequences, most not yet published, with which they will continue to monitor the virus's evolution.

And they warn that a deadly outbreak could emerge again: the cave where the elements of SARS were found is just 1 kilometer from the nearest village, and genetic mixing among the viral strains is fast. “The risk of spillover into people and emergence of a disease similar to SARS is possible,” the authors write in their paper.

(Source: *Scientific American*)

Earth and Venus are the same size, so why doesn't Venus have a magnetosphere?

For many reasons, Venus is sometimes referred to as “Earth's Twin” (or “Sister Planet”, depending on who you ask). Like Earth, it is terrestrial (i.e. rocky) in nature, composed of silicate minerals and metals that are differentiated between an iron-nickel core and silicate mantle and crust. But when it comes to their respective atmospheres and magnetic fields, our two planets could not be more different.

For some time, astronomers have struggled to answer why Earth has a magnetic field (which allows it to retain a thick atmosphere) and Venus do not.

According to a new study conducted by an international team of scientists, it may have something to do with a massive impact that occurred in the past.

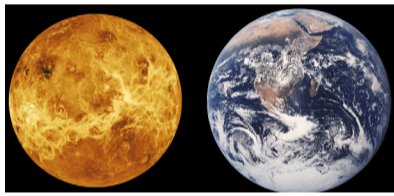
■ Never suffered impact

Since Venus appears to have never suffered such an impact, it's never developed the dynamo needed to generate a magnetic field.

The study, titled “Formation, stratification, and mixing of the cores of Earth and Venus”, recently appeared in the scientific journal *Earth and Science Planetary Letters*.

The study was led by Seth A. Jacobson of Northwestern University, and included members from the Observatoire de la Côte d'Azur, the University of Bayreuth, the Tokyo Institute of Technology, and the Carnegie Institution of Washington.

For the sake of their study, Jacobson and his colleagues began considering how terrestrial planets form in the first place.



According to the most widely-accepted models of planet formation, terrestrial planets are not formed in a single stage, but from a series of accretion events characterized by collisions with planetesimals and planetary embryos – most of which have cores of their own.

Recent studies on high-pressure mineral physics and on orbital dynamics have also indicated that planetary cores develop a stratified structure as they accrete.

■ Abundance of light elements

The reason for this has to do with how a higher abundance of light elements are incorporated in with liquid metal during the process, which would then sink to form the core of the planet as temperatures and pressure increased.

Such a stratified core would be incapable of convection, which is believed to be what allows for Earth's magnetic field. What's more, such models are incompatible with seismological studies that indicate that Earth's core consists mostly of iron and nickel, while approximately 10% of its weight is made up of light elements – such as silicon, oxygen, sulfur, and others. It's outer core is similarly homogeneous, and composed of much the same elements.

(Source: *Universe Today*)

Physicists just transferred quantum data between different materials for the first time

Scientists just took a big step towards the goal of quantum computers, and even a quantum internet to connect them, after successfully using photons to transfer quantum information between a cold atomic gas and a solid crystal.

Passing data between these two “nodes” or types of storage shows that it should be possible to build hybrid quantum computers that mix various nodes together, making them more stable and practical to use.

A hybrid system like this would potentially combine the benefits of each type of storage offered by the nodes, according to the team from The Institute of Photonic Sciences (The Institut de Ciències Fotòniques or IFCO) in Spain.

“It's like having nodes speaking in two different languages,” says one of the researchers, Nicolas Maring.

■ Single photon's properties

“In order for them to communicate, it is necessary to convert the single photon's properties so it can efficiently transfer all the information between these different nodes.”

No one has managed to pass quantum information between two different types of node before, as they typically function at different bandwidths and different wavelengths.

Getting a photon between them without interference and with a strong enough signal has proved to be incredibly tricky.

For this experiment the researchers used a photon encoding technique called time-bin encoding, which is very well



suited to communicating qubits and preventing interference – as here – but not so great at allowing qubits to interact with each other.

In this case the researchers started with a laser-cooled cloud of rubidium atoms, generating a qubit encoded in a single photon with a very narrow bandwidth and a wavelength of 780 nanometers.

That was then successfully passed over to the receiving node, a crystal doped with praseodymium ions, by converting it to a wavelength of 606 nanometers.

Between the sending and receiving node, the photon was converted again, to a wavelength of 1552 nanometers, in order to prove that this experimental network might one day be integrated with our current telecommunications infrastructure.

The qubit was held for around 2.5 microseconds and retrieved with very high fidelity.

These qubits are the building blocks of quantum computing, able to be in superposition – two states at once – rather than computer bits of today, which are fixed as either 1s or 0s.

(Source: *sciencealert.com*)

“MA” Insurance Co. Attends Iran, Russia and CIS Countries' Business Forum

As represented by “MA” Insurance Company, Amir Rad-Saeed attended “Iran, Russia and CIS Countries' Business Forum, the Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

This business forum was held at the initiation of SINA Bank, Bank Pasargad and MA Insurance Company, the report added.

Amir Rad-Saeed MA Insurance Company's Marketing, Sales and Advertising Department was the first speaker who addressed the participants in this prestigious forum.

After introducing the history and field of activities of “MA” Insurance Company, he said: “Introducing technical capabilities of the country in insurance sector, removing insurance-related concerns and also obstacles facing economic activists as well as creating confidence for traders and merchants of the two countries have been cited as the main aim behind attending this significant forum.”

Turning to the activities of MA Insurance Company in post-sanctions era, he said: “Extension of contract with

Partner Re Reinsurance Company and conclusion of a contract with French “SCOR” Reinsurance Company are of the salient measures taken in post-sanctions period.”

In the end, Amir Rad-Saeed MA Insurance Company's Marketing, Sales and Advertising Department pointed to the possibility of offering insurance coverage to both Iranian and Russian traders and said: “Giant steps have been taken by the company in backing merchants of the two countries in relevant field.”

BSI Awarded Two Natl. “Quality of Services” and “Responsibility” Badges

Bank Saderat Iran (BSI) was awarded two badges in the fields of “Quality of Services” and “Responsibility” in 4th Joint Meeting on the Development of Quality of the Development of Quality of Building, Transportation, Roads and Urban Planning, Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

This prestigious meeting was held at IRIB

Intl. Conferences Center in the presence of Vice President and Head of Free Zones Council, Majlis deputies, senior managers of public and private sector companies, banks, and insurance companies.

In line with implementation of sublime recommendations of supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution and in tandem

with the policies taken by the respected government on the necessity of activation of potential productive capacities in small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), Bank Saderat Iran has paid 15,176 facilities, worth over 64,585 billion rials, to entrepreneurs, industrialists and applicants since 2016 up to the end of first half of current year

(Sept. 22, 2017), the report added.

In the same direction, the bank has also paid 241,000 facilities and loans, valued at more than 244 billion and 311 million rials, to Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in industrial, mineral and agricultural sector, the report concluded.

Hungarian Exim Bank to Finance Manufacturing Buses in Iran

Bank Shahr (City Bank of Iran) will cooperate with Hungarian Exim (Import-Export) Bank to finance manufacturing inner-city buses in Iran as joint venture (JC), the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

For his part, Dr. Hossein Mohammad Pour-Zarandi Chief Executive of Bank Shahr pointed to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) inked at the 1st Iran and Hungary Joint Economic Commission Forum and said: “Under the agreement and at the unsparing support of Exim Bank of Hungary

in financing and investing this giant project, joint production of IKARUS buses in Iran will be conducted using high capability and potential of domestic engineers.”

Joint production of 1,000 inner-city buses in cooperation with the domestic car manufacturers and Shahr Mines and Development Group, affiliated to Bank Shahr, within three years is of the salient programs which were put atop agenda in this MoU.

The Hungarian government and IKARUS

Company have voiced their readiness to manufacture inner-city buses in Iran in the long term, so that Bank Shahr also is ready to transfer technical knowhow and technology of this prestigious company to Iran, Pour-Zarandi reiterated.

Turning to the significance of development of public transport in metropolises, he said: “Facilities and high technical knowhow and knowledge of domestic car manufacturing companies will pave the way for joint production of inner-city buses through fi-



nancing this project by Exim Bank of Hungary and with financing 85 percent of sales rate of urban buses, Pour-Zarandi reiterated.

Why is Mars red? Primordial steam bath created clay

Mars gets its “Red Planet” nickname from the clays that cover its surface, but billions of years ago, Mars was steaming and in a bit of a blue funk. And that's when those clays that now color it red may have been formed, according to a new paper published in the journal *Nature*.

The “basic recipe for making clay is you take rock and you add heat and water,” lead author Kevin Cannon, a planetary scientist at the University of Central Florida, said in a press release. “This primordial atmosphere created by a magma ocean would have been the hottest and wettest Mars ever was.”

Plenty of young planets go through a magma ocean phase, with their surfaces coated in lava, before settling down. And as they grow out of that phase, the molten rock freezes, but as it does, it releases steam and other gases—creating that hot, wet atmosphere that Cannon suspects might turn out to be the perfect conditions for making clay.

Conveniently, Mars at the time also had open, porous soil, which means that rock as far as six miles below the surface could have been exposed enough to turn to clay.

So Cannon and his colleagues tried to replicate those steamy conditions here on Earth to see whether they could find a way to create clay in the large quantities we see on Mars. Those experiments put Mars-like basalt under high pressure and steam for two weeks.

Today, Martian clay is distributed in large clumps over the surface, but the researchers believe that's a plausible result from the combination of the heavy, steamy atmosphere and the later impacts that reshaped the planet's surface.

(Source: *Newsweek*)

Sugary diet during pregnancy may increase asthma risk in children

Women who consume lots of sugar during pregnancy may increase the risk for asthma in their children, researchers report.



Previous studies have suggested that poor diet and obesity are linked to the current increases in childhood asthma. This new study, in the *Annals of the American Thoracic Society*, implicates sugary drinks and fructose, or fruit sugar.

Harvard researchers studied 1,068 mothers in eastern Massachusetts, gathering diet information during their pregnancies. They checked children's diet and asthma diagnoses at ages 3 and 7.

About half of the fructose intake of both mothers and children came from sweetened drinks and fruit juice.

Compared with the children of women who consumed the least sugar – an average of 21 grams a day – the children of those who had the most – 46 grams a day – had a 58 percent higher risk for asthma. (A 12-ounce can of Coca-Cola contains 39 grams of sugar.) The researchers controlled for maternal education, smoking and pre-pregnancy body mass index, as well as for the child's B.M.I., age, sex and race.

A lead author, Sheryl L. Rifas-Shiman, of the department of Population Medicine at Harvard Medical School, said that the mechanism for the association remains unknown.

Still, she said, “avoiding high intake of sugar during pregnancy and in early childhood could be one of several ways to reduce the risk of childhood asthma.”

(Source: *NYT*)

Breast cancer drug superior to chemotherapy in late stage: study

Patients with advanced breast cancer tied to an inherited gene mutation who were treated with an experimental Pfizer Inc. drug went about three months longer before their disease worsened than those who received chemotherapy in a late stage study, according to data released on Friday.

The drug, talazoparib, a once daily pill that Pfizer acquired with its \$14 billion purchase of Medivation, belongs to a class of medicines called PARP inhibitors that may induce tumor cell death. They have shown promise in advanced ovarian and breast cancers.

Patients in the Phase III study had mutations of the BRCA1/2 genes, the type of mutation that led actress Angelina Jolie to have preventive breast removal surgery.

About 3 percent of breast cancers occur in people with inherited BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutations that lower a cell's ability to repair damaged DNA. Up to 65 percent of women who inherit the mutations will develop breast cancer, often much younger than is typical for the disease.

In the 431-patient trial, those who received talazoparib went 8.6 months before half of them experienced disease progression, a measure known as median progression-free survival (PFS). Among those who received standard chemotherapy, the median PFS was 5.6 months.

In addition, 62.6 percent of talazoparib patients experienced a complete or partial response to the treatment compared with a 27.2 percent response rate for chemotherapy.

Twelve patients who received the Pfizer drug, or 5.5 percent, had a complete response, meaning no detectable sign of cancer. There were no complete responses in the chemotherapy group.

Researchers also reported a significant delay in time to meaningful deterioration of quality of life among talazoparib patients.

Dr. Jennifer Litton, the study's lead investigator from MD Anderson Cancer Center, said there are currently no drugs specifically approved for this group of patients aside from standard chemotherapies.

(Source: *Reuters*)

Special schools planned for students with autism in Tehran

SOCIETY TEHRAN —The Special Education Organization affiliated with the Ministry of Education plans to set up schools for children with autism in Tehran.

“Shortage of funds and facilities is impeding establishment of autism schools unless we have enough students nationwide, but it is our policy to set up schools for autistic children in Tehran,” ILNA quoted the organization’s director Majid Qadami as saying on Saturday.



Qadami made the remarks over the 3rd International Autism Conference.

The organization is dealing with different groups of students [suffering different kinds of disabilities] and that the organization is firstly tasked with identifying and then providing services to these students, he added.

The Special Education Organization has 23,000 personnel providing services to some 137,000 children of whom 2,000 are suffering from autism disorder.

“Every year we examine some 1.4 million children to identify those with special needs,” he noted.

He emphasized that the organization’s main approach is to let special kids study alongside normal students, if at all possible, since they should be able to interact in the society and this is a skill which is learned at schools.

In this line, some 62,000 students with special care needs are studying in ordinary schools and about 74,000 are studying at special schools, Qadami said, adding that 132 students who suffer from autism are attending ordinary schools.

“I believe that we are not knowledgeable enough about autism and multiple disabilities; teachers should be educated in this field and learn the teaching methodologies suiting special children needs,” he said.

“We are also planning on educating parents with autistic children to be able to continue teaching them at home which would suitably affect such children’s [learning],” he suggested.

“We should expand our relationship with other countries regarding autism and multiple disabilities and use their experiences and knowledge. We should also support researches which are conducted in this area.”

Female Iranian student shines at ICMAS Championship

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iranian student Zahra Yazdani came in fourth at the International ICMAS Abacus and Easy Math Championship which was held on December 3 in New Delhi, India.

ICMAS Stands for International Concept of Mental Arithmetic System.

The 11th grade Yazdani had also ranked among the top ten from among 400 students in the national easy math competitions held in July, ISNA reported on Saturday.

Easy math competitions are held with the focus of calculation speed in the four basic mathematical operations, square root and exponentiation. This year’s International ICMAS Abacus and Easy Math Championship was held with around 700 students in participation.

LEARN ENGLISH

I’m Sorry

A: Steven! Where have you been? I’ve been trying to **get a hold of** you for hours!

B: I... um... there was an emergency at work, so...

A: I was waiting for you in the restaurant for three hours! And you didn’t even have the **decency** to call me! **Do you have any idea** how embarrassed I was?

B: Honey, I promise this won’t happen again, it’s just that I...

A: Yeah, right. I’ve heard it all before. I’m not going to take any more of your **empty promises**. This is the fifth time you’ve stood me up in two weeks! You need to **get your priorities straight**. I’m tired of you **putting your job first** all the time!

B: Come on, Veronica, that’s not fair. I do care about you a lot, you know that. I tried to...

A: You know what? Maybe we should just **take a break**. I need some time to think about where this relationship is **heading**.

B: But...Veronica, would you just listen to me? There was a fire alarm at my office building today and I was stuck...

Key vocabulary

get hold of: find or contact someone

decency: polite or moral behavior

do you have any idea: do you know

empty promises: words etc. that are not sincere, or have no effect

stand (someone) up: fail to keep the appointment to meet someone

get your priorities straight: realize what is more important

put something first: to consider someone or something as the most important person or thing

take a break: stop seeing each other or going out with each other for a short period of time

head: go towards a specified direction or place

Supplementary vocabulary

break up: end a relationship

cheat on (someone): to be unfaithful to your husband, wife

get back together: restart a relationship that ended

ex: someone’s former wife, husband, girlfriend, or boyfriend

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Intl. environmental co-op must be fair, not hampered by sanctions, politicization

1 → This theme is, indeed, in line with the national environmental priorities set by our Supreme Leader and President Rouhani’s environmental roadmap that is focused on four pollution-related topics, namely air quality, sand and dust storms, wetlands, and waste,” Madani who was also appointed as vice president for UNEA on behalf of Asia-Pacific group, said.

About seven million people around the world are losing their lives annually due to air pollution that not only affects human health but also impacts economy and productivity, he added.

At the same time, Madani noted, sand and dust storms, as one of the most significant but overlooked environmental problems of the 21st century, is imposing harmful effects on health, livelihood, food security, biodiversity and ecosystem services, and is causing migration and relocation of people.

The Iranian scientist went on to say that drying wetlands, lakes and water bodies as a result of shortsighted development plans and aggressive water withdrawals is a serious challenge of many developing countries and one of the major causes of the increasing sand and dust storms around the globe.

Waste in various forms is now damaging our health, ecosystem, and oceans, Madani highlighted. “In addition to plastic, the issues of e-waste is another major pollution problem with unknown long-term impacts that requires our immediate attention.”

“These issues constitute the four current environmental priorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran and we welcome international and regional cooperation to tackle them,” he said.

“Earlier this year and in close collaboration with the UN Environment, we hosted the International Conference on Combating Sand and Dust Storms in Tehran to address its challenges and implications on biodiversity and the human livelihood,” Madani said, stating, “I would like to emphasize on a need for a global response to the issue of sand and



Sand and dust storms, as one of the most significant but overlooked environmental problems of the 21st century, is imposing harmful effects on health, livelihood, food security, biodiversity and ecosystem services, and is causing migration and relocation of people.

dust storms through an international and UN system-wide action to address this major environmental challenge of the 21st century, which we are not yet prepared to properly cope with.”

He further added that in this context, Iran recommends the implementation of Paragraph 4 of the Resolution on Combating Sand and Dust Storms (A/C.2/72/L.49), which has been approved by the second

Committee of the General Assembly in its 72nd Session.

“We highly appreciate the efforts of the 3rd UN Environment Assembly to recognize and identify the means to tackle pollution challenges. Nevertheless, let’s not forget that the real challenge is in the effective implementation of the recognized solutions. We need to bridge the huge gap between science and policy, and develop

effective solution mechanisms that are financially and socially sustainable and involve the private businesses as well as civil societies.”

“With no doubt, my government remains committed to providing full support for the successful implementation of the outputs of this meeting towards the global peace, security and sustainability,” Madani concluded.

Penzance wins first plastic-free status award to help clean up beaches

A Cornish town has become the first community in the UK to be awarded “plastic-free” status after dozens of residents and business people backed a grassroots scheme aimed at helping clean up oceans and beaches.

As part of a campaign being run by the marine conservation charity Surfers Against Sewage (SAS), Penzance has been given “plastic-free coastlines approved” status.

Shops, cafes and visitor attractions have reduced single-use plastics and children and adults have taken part in beach cleans. The town’s status was confirmed after the town council voted to support the initiative.

Another 100 communities across the UK are taking part in SAS’s plastic-free coastlines scheme and working towards the status, which has been inspired by the fair trade and transition town schemes.

Rachel Yates, an SAS regional representative in Penzance, said she had been impressed by how keen people were to take part.

“Everybody you speak to wants to do something,” she said. “People are contacting us asking what they can do. We haven’t had to chase people.”

Among those who have signed up to Plastic Free Penzance is the Cornish Hen Deli. Owner Sarah Shaw said she was using biodegradable pots, wooden cutlery, paper straws and cornstarch plates for outside catering jobs.

She said: “It’s hugely important because one of the reasons a lot of people live down here is the connection to the sea and the elements. You’re so much more aware of what’s going on that the thought of not doing something about it is awful.”



Shops, cafes and visitor attractions have reduced single-use plastics and children and adults have taken part in beach cleans.

Flo Gibson, manager of the Jubilee open-air pool cafe, said reducing plastics was becoming easier. She said: “People are becoming more aware of plastic and the negative effects. Suppliers are also a lot more aware.”

Plastic Free Penzance’s next moves include setting up a plastic-free clinic to spread the word further and speaking to holiday home owners. They will also lobby local supermarket managers, although the emphasis is on changing behavior on a local level and leaving

national campaigning to SAS leaders.

To win the plastic free coastlines approved status, Penzance had to complete five objectives set out by SAS such as setting up a steering group and organizing beach cleans. Its status was confirmed after Penzance town council passed a motion on Monday pledging to support all plastic-free initiatives in the area and to lead by example through removing single-use plastics from their own premises.

(Source: The Guardian)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

‘Feast of charity’ starts nationwide

A charity event called Jashn-e Nikoukari (the feast of charity) started in Iran on Wednesday.

As announced by Ali Mohammad Zolfagari, an official with Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, there are some 1.6 million underprivileged families receiving financial assistance from the foundation.

“In addition to the funds allocated by the government to the foundation donations made by the philanthropist also adds up to the budget,” Zolfagari highlighted.

“What we are seeking most is to promote the giving spirit among the young population to stop poverty in the country,” he added.

آغاز جشن نیکوکاری در سراسر کشور

جشن نیکوکاری روز چهارشنبه در سراسر ایران آغاز به کار کرد.

علی محمد ذوالفقاری معاون توسعه مشارکتهای مردمی کمیته امداد گفت: یک میلیون و ۶۰۰ هزار خانوار تحت حمایت کمیته امداد هستند.

ذوالفقاری خاطرنشان کرد: کمیته امداد برای رسیدگی به امور این ایتم و نیازمندان بخشی از اعتبارات خود را از دولت و بخشی دیگر را از طریق مشارکتهای مردم خیر و نیکوکار تامین می کند.

وی افزود: ما دنبال توسعه فرهنگ نودوستی برای حضور پررنگ خیران جوان، نوجوان و خردسال هستیم تا از افزایش فقر در کشور جلوگیری شود.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“ambi-”

■ **Meaning:** both or around

■ **For example:** Save your knuckles and your grip with this cleverly designed **ambidextrous** hand pruner.

PHRASAL VERB

Eat something away

■ **Meaning:** to gradually remove or destroy something, erode

■ **For example:** The stones are being eaten away by pollution.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Bite someone’s head off

■ **Explanation:** If you bite someone’s head off, you criticize them strongly (and perhaps unfairly)

■ **For example:** I worked 10 hours a day all week and my boss bit my head off for not doing my share of the work!

Global outrage over U.S. recognition of al-Quds as Israel's capital

3 → U.S. isolated at UNSC as allies condemn Trump's al-Quds decision

The U.S. has become isolated at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as Washington's traditional allies condemn Trump's move to recognize al-Quds as Israel's capital.

The Security Council convened an emergency meeting with regard to Palestine on Friday upon the request of Britain, France, Sweden, Bolivia, Uruguay, Italy, Senegal and Egypt.

Following the session, the U.S.' traditional Western allies -- Britain, France, Germany, Sweden and Italy -- issued a joint statement, denouncing Trump's decision as "unhelpful in terms of prospects for peace in the region."

"We stand ready to contribute to all credible efforts to restart the peace process, on the basis of internationally agreed parameters, leading to a two-state solution," they said.

"We encourage the U.S. administration to now bring forward detailed proposals for an Israel-Palestinian settlement," the statement added.

UN Middle East envoy Nickolay Mladenov warned the Security Council against the risk of violent escalation, saying, "There is a serious risk today that we may see a chain of unilateral actions, which can only push us further away from achieving our shared goal of peace."

In response, the U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley accused the international organization of undermining the peace prospects by "bullying" Israel.

"Israel will never be, and should never be, bullied into an agreement by the United Nations, or by any collection of countries that have proven their disregard for Israel's security," Haley said.

She claimed that the U.S. has not adopted any stance on al-Quds's boundaries, and that it is not advocating any changes to the arrangements at the holy sites.

U.S. not mediator anymore

Meantime, Palestinian Ambassador Riyad Mansour told the emergency meeting that Washington's new decision "undermines and essentially disqualifies its leadership role to seek peace in the region."

He argued that the U.S. cannot continue to monopolize the peace process as Washington is biased in favor of Israel and urged the Security Council to denounce what he described as an "irresponsible" U.S. decision.

Mansour called on the Security Council to reject any violation of its position that the status of al-Quds is unresolved and it should be negotiated based on the so-called two-state solution.

The Palestinian envoy warned that the existing conflict can turn "into a never-ending religious war that will only be exploited by extremists, fueling more radicalism, violence and strife in the region and elsewhere."

100 Jewish studies scholars sign petition condemning Trump's declaration

More than 100 Jewish studies scholars have condemned Trump's announcement of the U.S. recognizing al-Quds as Israel's capital.

In a petition released on Thursday, at least 110 signatories from universities and colleges across the United States called on Trump to cancel the controversial decision.



"We write as Jewish Studies scholars to express our dismay at the Trump administration's decision to reverse decades of bipartisan U.S. policy by declaring Jerusalem [al-Quds] the capital of Israel, and authorizing the relocation of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv," the petition read.

"A declaration from the United States government that appears to endorse sole Jewish proprietorship over Jerusalem [al-Quds] adds insult to ongoing injury and is practically guaranteed to fan the flames of violence," it added.

The petition said the Israeli regime is perpetrating "systematic inequalities" against the Palestinian people.

"Palestinian residents of Jerusalem [al-Quds] endure systematic inequalities, including an inequitable distribution of the city's budget and municipal services, routine denial of building permits that are granted to Jewish residents, home demolitions, and legal confiscation of property for Jewish settlement," the petition argued.

"In addition, Palestinians in the West Bank, unlike Jewish Israelis resident in that territory, require a special permit to visit Jerusalem [al-Quds]'s holy sites," it continued.

Two killed, 25 injured as Israeli air strike, artillery shells hit Gaza

At least two Palestinians have been killed and over two dozen injured in Israeli artillery and air strikes against the besieged Gaza Strip, amid escalating tensions in the occupied territories in the wake of the U.S. president's recognition of al-Quds as the Israeli capital.

Israeli forces fired artillery shells at a checkpoint belonging to Palestinian resistance forces in the northeast of the town of Beit Hanoun, northern Gaza, on Friday night.

An Israeli jet also targeted a group of resistance fighters in the east of Beit Hanoun, the Palestinian Information Center said, adding that they survived the air strike.

Palestinian sources said Israel also carried out an air strike on the town of Beit Lahia.

Three Israeli rockets were fired at Shaikh Zayed area in northern Gaza.

Reuters cited the Palestinian Health Ministry as saying that 25 Palestinians, including six children, were injured in the attacks.

On Saturday, the Hamas Health Ministry in Gaza said the bodies of two young men

were recovered several hours after a pre-dawn strike by Israeli warplanes.

Tel Aviv claimed that Palestinian resistance forces had fired a number of rockets at an Israeli military position.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Health Ministry said Mahmoud al-Masri, 30, was shot to death by Israeli forces in Gaza's southern city of Khan Yunis on Friday.

On Thursday, the Israeli military said an aircraft and a tank had targeted two security posts in Gaza. The attack in the late hours of the day had no casualties.

Egypt's top cleric cancels meeting with U.S. vice president

The Grand Imam of Egypt's al-Azhar Mosque, the country's highest Islamic authority, has canceled a meeting with the U.S. Vice President Mike Pence in the wake of Trump's al-Quds announcement.

Al-Azhar said in a statement on Friday that Ahmed al-Tayeb had changed his previous decision to meet with Pence, who would travel to Egypt and Israel in late December.

The grand imam announced "his categorical rejection of a formal request from U.S. Vice President Mike Pence to meet with him on December 20," the al-Azhar statement said.

According to the statement, Tayeb had agreed to meet the American official after receiving an official request from the U.S. embassy a week ago, "but after the unjust and unfair American decision on Jerusalem [al-Quds], Al-Azhar's grand imam announces his strong and decisive rejection of this meeting."

"Al-Azhar cannot sit with those who falsify history and steal the rights of people," the statement added.

"How can I sit with those who gave what they do not own to those who are undeserving?" the statement quoted Tayeb as saying.

Al-Azhar also said Trump "must immediately reverse this decision."

"Let your third intifada be on the level of your belief in your cause and your love for your country. We are with you and will not let you down," Al-Azhar quoted Tayeb as saying in "an urgent call" he directed to the people of al-Quds (Jerusalem) after Friday prayers.

The statement further said Tayeb held Trump and his administration "fully respon-

sible for igniting the flame of hatred in the hearts of Muslims... and the consequences of spreading hatred."

Meanwhile, Jibril Rajoub, a senior Palestinian official in President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party, said Pence was "not welcome in Palestine" during his upcoming visit, adding that Abbas would not meet him.

Saudi regime-funded TV channel bans Jordanian presenter over al-Quds tweets

The broadcaster MBC, which is funded by the House of Saud regime, has suspended a TV program hosted by Jordanian presenter Ola al-Fares after she posted a message on Twitter critical of the stance taken by Washington's regional allies toward an announcement by Trump on al-Quds.

Saudi regime's Okaz news agency said Fares was banned following an "angry campaign" that was launched against her by Saudi Twitter activists.

The activists reportedly called for the removal of Fares' program, saying she published tweets that "insulted Saudi Arabia."

Fares said in the Twitter posting that the U.S. president had not chosen "the recognition timing" coincidentally. She referred to Washington's regional allies who would have supported the decision before it was declared. "Tonight we condemn and tomorrow we sing."

Trump, al-Quds, intl. outrage

Trump announced that the U.S. would be recognizing al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel's "capital" on Wednesday and ordered that work on the relocation of the American embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds begin. The turn of events has sent shockwaves throughout the Muslim world, and even prompted warnings from Washington's allies in the West that it would bring more chaos to the region.

Trump also said that Vice President Mike Pence will travel to the Middle East in the coming days "to reaffirm our commitment to work with partners throughout the Middle East to defeat radicalism."

It also led to violent clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

People hold pro-Palestinian rallies in many cities across the world to slam a U.S. decision to recognize al-Quds as Israel's "capital."

But that declaration was welcomed by Israel, which claims sovereignty over the whole al-Quds (Jerusalem). This is while the international community views East al-Quds as occupied land and the Palestinians want it as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

East al-Quds (Jerusalem) was occupied in 1967 and Israel later annexed it despite international condemnations. The occupied city's final status is one of the thorniest issues in the stalemated talks between the Palestinian Authority and Tel Aviv.

Claiming all of al-Quds as its "eternal and indivisible" capital, Israel annexed the eastern part, where a number of sites sacred to Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, are located, following the 1967 Six-Day War.

The annexation is in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 and has never been recognized by the international community.

Declaration by Cuba's MFA on Trump's Al-Quds move

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba expresses its deepest concern at and utter rejection of the US president's unilateral declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, which constitutes a serious, flagrant breach of the UN Charter, of international law and of the relevant UN resolutions.

This attempt by Washington to change Jerusalem's historic status undermines the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people and of the Arab and Islamic nations, will have grave consequences for stability and security in the Middle East, further exacerbate the tensions in the region and hinder any initiative aimed at restarting the peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians.

Cuba calls on the Security Council to meet its responsibility under the UN Charter regarding the maintenance of international security, to take the necessary decisions and to demand that Israel put an immediate end to its occupation of the Palestinian territories, its policies of aggression and its colonizing practices, and comply with the UN resolutions on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterates that Cuba will continue to support a comprehensive, equitable and lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, based on a two-state solution that accords to the Palestinians the right of free self-determination and to an independent sovereign state, with its capital in East Jerusalem and with the pre-1967 borders.

Johnson's souvenir for Queen from a "special" trip

1 → Our historical memory will never forget the role of people like Margaret Gertrude Bell, Thomas Edward Lawrence, Shirley Brothers, Shapur, and Ardeshir Reporter, Arthur Balfour, etc. in planting the seed of schismatic in the Islamic world, and the evil role of the English court in the events of contemporary Iran and Middle East.



On this basis, at least from the point of view of "Theresa May" government, it appears that the expected achievements of Mr. Johnson's visit to Tehran are different from those estimated by our country's officials.

In this regard, the goals of Johnson's trip to Tehran, apart from his most important goal which is freeing Nazanin Zaghari, who knows a lot about M16 and its secrets, can be summarized as follows:

1. Making a Balance and compensating for the superiority of the United States in the region. Given the proximity of Trump to the Saudi court, London's estimate is that it must maintain its active role in the region by approaching the Islamic Republic of Iran. The change in the tactical position of May's government in relation to the issue of Yemen and Syria, supporting Qatar, and opposition to the recent action by Trump on Jerusalem, should be all assessed in this regard.

2. Competition with France and Germany in post-JCPOA economical atmosphere

after the deal between Emmanuel Macron and Donald Trump, and Trump's letting France to develop its trade and investments with Iran in spite of his decision on the JCPOA, London's efforts has doubled so that it won't lose this market. The British pledges on helping to fully implement the JCPOA, preparing the condition for the re-presence of "Shell", etc. are due to this reason.

And finally, perhaps the freedom of Zaghari could be considered the best souvenir of Johnson from his trip to Tehran for the Queen of Buckingham palace; a gift given in return for a handful of British promises. We hope that the Iranian Foreign Ministry and the judiciary apparatus of our country will be cautious and take these issues into great consideration.

The scoundrel theory of American politics

8 → This requires something in the statesman's composition, which is the quality that thinkers from Aristotle to Aquinas to Burke have called "prudence" — not mere caution but rather a deep capacity for judgment that enables one to choose the most appropriate means toward worthy ends. This capacity requires not just reacting to events but also anticipating them. It is a product of moral cultivation, broad education and political experience and as such, it is inseparable from the statesman's character.

None of this is to cast statesmanship as wizardry. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, an exemplar of prudent statesmanship who practiced it in both Democratic and Republican administrations as well as in the Senate, wrote that much of politics is about predicting "which relatively quiescent situations of the moment are likely to become political issues in the near future." He continued: "It is no great feat. In a chess master, it involves considerable intellectual elegance, but politics is mostly checkers." But checkers is still a game played by human beings. It matters who makes the moves.

Personal matters

Nor is the point that the personal matters more than policy. One of the ironies of the new defense of the candidate as a mere vessel for policy preferences is that it attaches to strong personalities who seem to attract support precisely for their charisma — Mr. Trump and Mr. Moore prominent among them. That is why the statesman must be bound by constitutional rules and customs.

Public and private virtue are not identical. Machiavelli showed that what is virtuous for the individual may be vicious in the prince. But that is fundamentally different from saying character does not matter at all or that policies may stand alone, disembodied from the human being who pursues them. Public virtue exists, and it is inseparable from the character of the person who exercises it.

This hollowing out of the personal role of the statesman withers political life. It denies the human parts of politics that connect us to one another. That is reason enough to reject it. That it might elevate Mr. Moore to an institution like the Senate is equally sufficient evidence of its flaws.

(Source: The NYT)

North Korea: UN envoy expressed willingness to ease tensions

The United Nations political affairs chief expressed willingness to ease tension on the Korean peninsula during a visit to North Korea this week, state media said on Saturday, amid a rising war of words over the North's missile and nuclear programs.

North Korea also said in a statement carried by its official KCNA news agency that the UN envoy acknowledged the negative impact of sanctions on humanitarian aid to North Korea.

Jeffrey Feltman, the highest-level UN official to visit North Korea since 2012, did not speak to reporters upon arriving back from Pyongyang at Beijing airport on Saturday morning.

"The United Nations expressed concerns over the heightened situation on the Korean peninsula and expressed willingness to work on easing tensions on the Korean peninsula in accordance with the UN Charter which is based on international peace and security," KCNA said.

Speaking at an academic forum, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the situation on the Korean peninsula had entered a vicious circle of shows of strength and confront-

ation, and the outlook was not optimistic, China's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

"But at the same time it can be seen that hopes for peace have yet to extinguished. The prospects for negotiations still exist, and the option of resorting to force cannot be accepted," Wang was quoted as saying.

North Korea is pursuing nuclear and missile weapons programs in defiance of UN sanctions and international condemnation.

On Nov. 29, it test-fired an intercontinental ballistic missile which it said was its most advanced yet, capable of reaching the mainland United States.

The United States and South Korea conducted large-scale military drills this week, which the North said have made the outbreak of war "an established fact."

KCNA said North Korean officials and Feltman agreed that his visit helped deepen understanding and that they agreed to communicate regularly.

Last month's missile test prompted a U.S. warning that North Korea's leadership would be "utterly destroyed" if war were to break out. The Pentagon has mounted repeated shows of force after North Korean tests.



North Korea regularly threatens to destroy South Korea and the United States and says its weapons programs are necessary to counter the U.S. aggression. The United States stations 28,500 troops in the South, a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War.

(Source: Reuters)

U.S. jets tried to hinder victory over ISIL in Syria: Russia's military

Russian authorities have indicated how the United States military attempted in a latest incident to hinder the full defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group in Syria.

Igor Konashenkov, the Russian Defense Ministry's spokesman, said on Saturday that American warplanes in Syria had tried in late November to disrupt a Russian air operation against the positions of ISIL in eastern Syria.

"An American F-22 fighter actively prevented the Russian pair of Su-25 at-

tack aircraft from carrying out a combat mission to destroy the Daesh stronghold in the suburbs of the city of Mayadin in the airspace over the western bank of the Euphrates River on November 23," said Konashenkov.

The official added that the American fighter jet had attempted to escalate the situation and engage in a battle with the Russian jets.

"The F-22 aircraft fired off heat flares and released brake shields with permanent maneuvering, imitating an air battle," Konashenkov said, adding that the U.S.

plane then stopped dangerous maneuvers and fled to the Iraqi territory after a Russian Su-35S fighter appeared in the scene.

He said similar incidents had occurred in the final weeks of a multi-throng battle against ISIL in eastern Syria, adding that those incidents showed Washington was trying to hinder a full defeat of the terrorist group in the territory.

Russia started its military campaign against the terrorists in Syria in September 2015 when the Syrian government submitted an official request to the Kremlin.

Russian President Vladimir Putin last Wednesday declared a "complete victory" over ISIL on both banks of the Euphrates River in Syria.

Konashenkov said the U.S. military authorities had failed to provide clear answers to Russian military authorities based in Syria about the dangerous maneuver of the U.S. F-22 fighter on November 23.

Russia and the U.S. signed an agreement in 2015 to avoid any unwanted confrontation of their planes in the Syrian airspace.

(Source: Press TV)

Barcelona sell five players to fund move for Philippe Coutinho

Barcelona need to sell players to fund a move for Liverpool's Brazilian playmaker Philippe Coutinho.

The Catalan side could axe five players in January to free up capital and space on the wage bill, according to Mundo Deportivo.

Ernesto Valverde remains keen on adding Coutinho to his ranks despite Liverpool's unwillingness to sell in the summer.

The Reds rejected a £114million bid for the 25-year-old and Barcelona know they are likely to have to up their offer next month.

Javier Mascherano, Arda Turan, Aleix Vidal, Rafinha and Gerard Delefeu are among those linked with a move away.

Mascherano's departure is likely to depend on Samuel Umtiti's injury lay-off and the Argentinian might have to wait until the end of the window for his transfer.

Former Everton man Delefeu benefited from Ousmane Dembele's absence at the start of the season but has not managed to nail down a place in the starting line-up and the former Borussia Dortmund man is now back in training.

Vidal, Turan and Rafinha are all on the periphery so seem logical candidates to free up wages to accommodate Coutinho.

The Brazilian handed in a transfer request in the summer but has re-focused himself on performing at Anfield, although he recently admitted his future with Jurgen Klopp's side remains uncertain.

Clearly Barcelona still retain an interest in Coutinho and whether Liverpool will keep up their firm rejection of bids for their key player remains to be seen.

(Source: Daily Mail)

Hamilton: I can't match Schumacher

Lewis Hamilton does not believe he has the "desire" needed to be able to match Michael Schumacher's record seven Formula One crowns.

The British driver claimed his fourth this season, which moved him to within one of the legendary Juan Manuel Fangio's five titles, but still leaves him three short of Schumacher's mark.

With his Mercedes team remaining dominant, Hamilton will be a hot favourite to equal Fangio next season but longer-term he doesn't think he'll be in the sport long enough to claim seven titles.

"I can't see it [matching Schumacher] at the moment. Four more. It has taken me 10 years to achieve this four."

"I don't have that desire to match it. Matching Fangio could be quite cool."

"Being that I am going to be here for at least another couple of years, that is my goal to try and at least get that."

"When I am older and look back, I don't think the amount of titles I have is going to define what I am as a driver or who I am."

"How I work with the team, how I drive the car, every time I drive the car and extract it from the car - that's what I feel inside defines me."

"When I was young I thought I would have a family at 28. When I got to 28 it all shifted. But it is difficult to say never."

"Maybe in a couple of years' time I will be saying: 'I am going to go another 10 years.' I really hope that's not the case because I'll be with you guys until you are in Zimmer frames."

(Source: eirsport)

Alpine skiing: Vonn injured and Gut crashes at St Moritz



American Lindsey Vonn was injured after finishing the World Cup Super G race in St Moritz on Saturday while Switzerland's Lara Gut crashed halfway down the course.

Vonn, four-times overall World Cup champion and the finest woman skier of her generation, fell to the ground grimacing as she slowed down after the finishing line and she staggered away with what appeared to be either a hip or back injury.

Vonn spent just under an hour in the medical treatment tent before being escorted to a waiting car and driven away. The 33-year-old walked the few meters to the car with great difficulty.

An ambulance was initially called but was not needed.

The U.S. team said on Twitter that Vonn "compressed her back on the fifth gate, skied through pain but didn't have power to push. She was evaluated by the physio and doctor in the tent. Further information to come."

Gut, recently recovered from a serious knee injury, lost her balance high on the course, fell and flew into the safety netting. She was able to walk away after being disentangled by course officials.

Gut, the overall World Cup winner in 2016 and bronze medalist in the downhill at the Sochi Olympics, tore an anterior cruciate ligament in her knee at the same venue at the world championships in February.

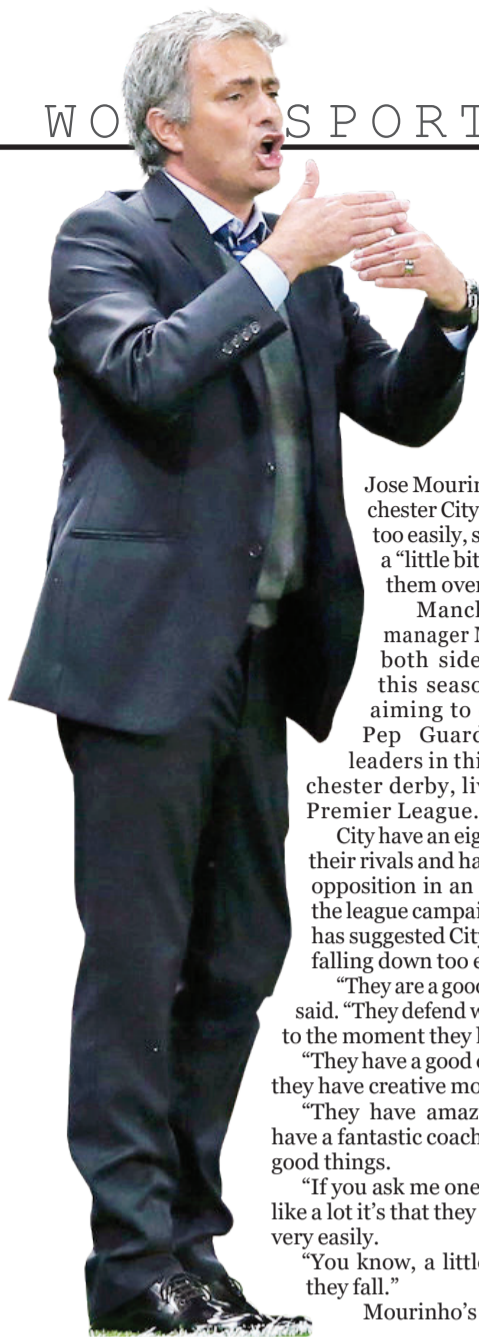
The race, on a shortened course, was held in difficult conditions and was interrupted several times as wind blew clouds of snow across the course.

Switzerland's Jasmine Flury, who had never previously finished on the podium in a World Cup race, was a surprise winner, starting from 14th, in one minute 2.59 seconds.

She finished 0.10 seconds ahead of compatriot Michelle Gisin while Liechtenstein's Tina Weirather was third.

(Source: Reuters)

Jose Mourinho claims Manchester City players blown over too easily



Jose Mourinho believes Manchester City's players go down too easily, saying it only takes a "little bit of wind" to knock them over.

Manchester United manager Mourinho praised both sides' improvement this season, with his side aiming to close the gap on Pep Guardiola's runaway leaders in this Sunday's Manchester derby, live on Sky Sports Premier League.

City have an eight-point lead over their rivals and have blown away all opposition in an unbeaten start to the league campaign, but Mourinho has suggested City's players may be falling down too easily themselves.

"They are a good team," Mourinho said. "They defend well, they react well to the moment they lose the ball."

"They have a good dynamic in attack, they have creative movement."

"They have amazing players, they have a fantastic coach, they have lots of good things."

"If you ask me one thing that I don't like a lot it's that they lose their balance very easily."

"You know, a little bit of wind and they fall."

Mourinho's comments echo

those of his long-term adversary, Arsene Wenger, who accused in-form Raheem Sterling of diving last month.

Fernandinho was booked for simulation at Huddersfield and Burnley boss Sean Dyche fumed with the way Bernardo Silva went down to win a penalty earlier in the campaign.

Guardiola spoke of his similarities with Mourinho on Friday, claiming he and Mourinho are like "twins" in their pursuit of silverware, but the United boss believes the pair do not receive the same treatment.

The Manchester City coach wears a yellow ribbon in support of imprisoned Catalan politicians.

"If the rules allow us to do that, he is a free citizen to do it," Mourinho said.

"But I am not sure if the rules allow to have any political message on the pitch. That's just my doubt."

"But I know Pep and I know his feelings like everybody else knows because it is public about his country."

Asked if he would ever do a similar thing, he added: "I think I wouldn't be allowed to do. That's just what I think."

UEFA allow political messages without offensive content, while the Football Association is understood to have similar criteria.

■ 'I'll stop criticising fans'

Mourinho has pledged to stop taking

aim at his own fans.

The United boss was put out by an apparent lack of support for Romelu Lukaku in October's win against Tottenham, when he held a finger to his lips and told the doubters to calm down.

Mourinho then made a chatting gesture at the following home game against Benfica having dug out some of his own fans in his programme notes, leading the Manchester United Supporters Trust to invite him to "discuss his concerns" around the Old Trafford atmosphere.

"I stop with that," he said. "I am not going to write any more words about it, I am not going to say any more words about it."

"We are paid to work and to work hard and to give the best we can, not to criticize fans and I am not going to say any words."

"Because it is the reality of things. I am not paid to come here and to make any comments or to ask for something from the fans."

"I am paid to try and give them happiness, which is what I try to do every day."

(Source: Sky Sports)



Wenger admits to frank talks with Arsenal players after United loss



Arsene Wenger admits he held frank discussions with the Arsenal players following their 3-1 defeat to Manchester United last Saturday.

The Gunners saw their 100 per cent record at home in the Premier League ended by a ruthless counter-attacking display from United, who raced into a 2-0 lead inside 11 minutes and withstood a barrage of pressure to see out the win.

The result left Arsenal 15 points behind leaders Manchester City, their hopes of a first league title since 2004 looking decidedly slim.

Wenger says he spoke with the players immediately after the loss to Jose Mourinho's side, having been frustrated to see them create so many chances but fail to earn a result. "Everybody has a little bit his own analysis. But my opinion counts," he said.

"You know you have a very clear-the-air [talk] straight away when you have a defeat like that, a disappointment like that. You try to analyse it straight away with the players to get it out of the system and focus on what is in front of you."

"I felt that it took our players time to

get into the game. It took them a while to adjust to the pace of the game and they had the power up front and they surprised us a little bit with their pace and after that we played remarkably going forward but, as well, we did not take enough of our chances. We were not clinical enough."

"I am looking just at the numbers and we had a very strong creative performance, with a high, high, high amount of expected goals. And we had a poor defensive performance."

Wenger started the match with a back three but shifted to a four-man defence after United scored their second through Jesse Lingard, with Alex Iwobi replacing the injured Shkodran Mustafi to boost their chances of a comeback.

The Gunners boss has conceded he would prefer to play with a back four on a more regular basis but will always adjust depending on the circumstances.

"I decided to play with a back four," he said. "It is my preferred system. But I adjust always what suits the players, the quality of the players, the balance of the team."

(Source: Four Four Two)

No room for friendships in Manchester derby- Lingard



Jesse Lingard says friendships will be put on hold when Manchester United host derby rivals Manchester City on Sunday.

Pep Guardiola's side travel to Old Trafford seeking to extend their eight-point lead at the top of the table, while United will look to breathe life into their own title challenge by handing City their first loss of the season. Each squad features internationals from England, Spain, Belgium, France and Argentina but Lingard insists those relationships will mean little once the derby begins. "You know quite a lot of them [City's Academy players] growing up, and through the England set-up as well," Lingard told United Review, Sunday's official match-day programme. "I'm good friends with Raheem [Sterling] off the pitch. But when you're on the pitch, there are no friends and we're there to do a job and win the game."

With Jose Mourinho gradually losing patience with Henrikh Mkhitaryan and Juan Mata, Lingard appears certain to feature for United after igniting his season in recent weeks. Lingard was given just his second Premier League start of the season against

Watford and seized the opportunity with both hands, helping himself to a goal and an assist in a 4-2 United victory.

The 24-year-old followed that up with two goals in a 3-1 win at Arsenal and he goes into Sunday's game with plenty of optimism. "I am confident," Lingard said. "It's two great teams going out there and you don't know what the game is going to be like. "It might be a battle; it might not be pretty. But if we come out on top, it's always good for the city of Manchester. We need to make sure that Manchester is red at the end of the day. Like us, they have lots of big players. "When [Kevin] De Bruyne's on the ball, he's always got that eye for a killer pass that can put a player one on one with the keeper, and Raheem Sterling's been popping up with the late goals. "It's going to be full-on for 90-plus minutes. We need to be on point until that whistle goes, so everyone needs to stay highly-concentrated throughout."

"As long as we start the game well, like we did at Arsenal, I don't see any reason why we can't win."

(Source: Mirror)

Ex-USA Gymnastics doctor sentenced to 60 years in jail



Larry Nassar, the disgraced former USA Gymnastics team doctor who admitted to sexually abusing underage girls, has been sentenced to 60 years in federal prison on child pornography charges, a court official said Thursday.

US District Judge Janet Neff essentially imposed a life prison term on the 54-year-old physician, sentencing Nassar to 20 years for each of three counts, which are to be served consecutively, according to the docket.

But the child porn charges are not the most serious accusations against Nassar.

In November, he pleaded guilty to seven counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct and admitted to using his position to sexually abuse underage girls. Three of those charges related to victims who were under age 13. He will be sentenced on those state charges in January.

More than 140 women and girls have accused him of sexual misconduct, including several American gymnasts on the "Fierce Five" team that won gold at the 2012 Olympics.

Nassar pleaded guilty in July to receiving child pornography in 2004, possessing child pornography from 2003 to 2016 and destroying and concealing evidence in 2016 as he was under investigation, according to the US attorney's office for the Western District of Michigan.

Rachael Denhollander, a former Michigan gymnast who filed the first criminal complaint against Nassar, said after the sentencing that the case represented failures on many levels, from university athletics programs to sports governing bodies.

"It is victim blaming and victim blaming at its finest," Denhollander told reporters. "And that should terrify us."

Because ladies and gentlemen, this is the culture of abuse. This is what keeps victims silent. This is what keeps predators in power. And this is what's endangering the next generation of girls."

John Manly, an attorney representing more than 100 victims, said he was proud of McKayla Maroney and other victims for overcoming their fear and facing their perpetrator in court.

"The system failed these women for 20 years," he said.

Andrew Birge, acting US Attorney for the Western District of Michigan, called Nassar an "insidious, hands-on predator" who "treated his license to practice medicine as a license to sexually molest."

"He's getting a natural life sentence," he said. "He is

never getting out of prison. He should never have another opportunity to pose a threat to another child."

In a sentencing memorandum last week, prosecutors asked the judge to consider the "full scope" of Nassar's criminal behavior.

Nassar was the team doctor for USA Gymnastics through four Olympic Games, and he worked at Michigan State University from 1997 to 2016 as an associate professor and as the gymnastics and women's crew team physician.

■ 'American tragedy'

In the federal case, prosecutors say Nassar downloaded images and videos of child pornography in 2004 and kept thousands of images and videos -- some of which showed children under 12 -- on his hard drive for years. He then paid \$49 to have his laptop wiped of the child pornography and threw away hard drives that contained child pornography, according to court documents.

In return for the plea deal, federal prosecutors agreed not to prosecute Nassar for sexual exploitation and attempted sexual exploitation of children. Those accusations related to conduct with two minors in Nassar's swimming pool in the summer of 2015 and for "illicit sexual conduct" with two other minor children during interstate and international travel, according to the plea agreement obtained by CNN.

Over the past several months, gold medal winners Gabby Douglas, Aly Raisman and Maroney have each spoken out about Nassar's abuse. In a November interview with "60 Minutes," Raisman specifically took aim at USA Gymnastics for allowing the abuse to go on for two decades.

(Source: CNN)

Privilege for Iran to face Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal: Carlos Queiroz

S P O R T S Iran national football team coach Carlos Queiroz says to face Portugal, who take advantage of Cristiano Ronaldo, is a privilege for Team Melli. "It is an incredible accomplishment for Cristiano Ronaldo to reach his fifth FIFA Ballon d'Or. A remarkable achievement that deserves the greatest recognition. Congratulations," Queiroz wrote on his Facebook account.

"It will be a privilege for Iran National Team to face this player and his Portuguese National Team.

"Cristiano Ronaldo shows the level that we will have to be prepared to compete, and why we need to have a very good preparation for the World Cup. Only someone dishonest may question the need to implement a unique and exceptional Preparation Plan for Russia 2018. All for Team Melli!" the Portuguese added.

Iran have been drawn along with Portugal, Morocco and Spain in Group B.

Team Melli will kick off the event with a match against Morocco on June 15 and face Spain five days later.

The Iranian football team will meet Portugal on June 25.



Azim Gheyichisaz to carry Iran's flag at Winter Olympic Opening Ceremony



S P O R T S Iranian high altitude mountaineer Azim Gheyichisaz has been confirmed as Iran's flag bearer for the Opening Ceremony of the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympics. Gheyichisaz is the first Iranian who has climbed the all 14 of the world's highest peaks.

The 37-year-old mountaineer has done

all of those ascents without supplementary oxygen.

Iran is expected to participate in the 2018 Winter Olympics with four athletes.

The Pyeongchang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games will take place from March 9-18.

A record 102 medals will be awarded in 15 disciplines.

Iran's Padideh face six-point deduction by FIFA



S P O R T S Iranian football club Padideh faced six-point deduction after they failed to pay their ex-player Zoran Knezevic.

The 31-year-old Serbian defensive midfielder was a member of Padideh in 2015 and played for the Iranian team 25 times.

The punishment has imposed by FIFA's disciplinary committee.

In February 2008, Persepolis faced a six-point deduction for failing to pay a former player and lost its top position in Iran's Pro League.

Sepahan are another Iranian club have suffered the FIFA's punishment.

Padideh moved down to 10th place in the Iran Professional League table after the point deduction.

Beijing 2022 accessibility plans impress IPC

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) this week held a Project Review with Beijing 2022 and left the Chinese capital impressed at measures the Organizing Committee is taking to improve accessibility ahead of the 2022 Paralympic Winter Games.

Since the last Project Review held in January 2016, Beijing 2022 has developed an accessibility monitoring mechanism together with different stakeholders, such as Beijing City Government and Hebei province officials. A gap analysis between the IPC Accessibility Guidelines and the national accessibility legislation has also been completed. The Beijing 2022 Accessibility Guidelines will also be finalized by the end of the year.

Thanos Kostopoulos, the IPC's Paralympic Games Integration Director, said: "With just over four years" to go until the Beijing 2022 Paralympic Winter Games, the

Organizing Committee is in good shape and has made some excellent progress in many areas, most notably in the area of accessibility.

"I am confident that Organizing Committee will continue and extend this good work to other areas as following the conclusion of PyeongChang 2018, the focus will shift to Beijing. The Organizing Committee should use next March's Paralympic Winter Games as an opportunity to grasp as much knowledge and key learnings as possible as this will benefit them greatly in the years to come.

"I hope one of their key learnings will be just how crucial it is to engage the public early in the Paralympic Winter Games. Like in South Korea, there is not a moment to waste in the need for the Organizing Committee to raise awareness of winter Para sports and leading athletes in China."

During the Project Review, Beijing 2022, who were led by their Executive Vice President Jiandong Zhang together with representatives from the National Paralympic Committee of China, Beijing City Government and Hebei Province, provided progress updates in multiple areas.

This included People Management (HR), Sport, Education, Planning & Co-ordination, Legacy, Accessibility both on the side of the OCOG and the Host City, Paralympic Village, Transport, Brand and Engagement, and Commercial and Broadcasting.

The Project Review took place following a two-day IPC Academy Excellence Workshop which aimed to educate the Organizing Committee's workforce on the Paralympic client groups, their backgrounds, their needs and requirements.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Ryan Giggs interested in Wales job



Manchester United legend Ryan Giggs has confirmed his interest in wanting to replace Chris Coleman as Wales manager.

Wales are on the lookout for a new boss following Coleman's resignation last month, and former international Giggs has thrown his name into the ring.

Giggs had a four-match spell as interim boss at United in 2014 following David Moyes' sacking, while he also worked as an assistant to Louis van Gaal until 2016.

The 44-year-old – capped 64 times by the national team – has failed to land a permanent managerial role despite being linked with numerous jobs but he is attracted to the Wales vacancy.

"Of course I'm interested," Giggs told Sky Sports News.

"I played for Wales, I've said that I want to go back into coaching and that is obviously one of the top jobs.

"I played for United, I played for Wales, those are the two jobs.

"I've not spoken to anyone at the moment but I'd definitely be interested."

Wales qualified for Euro 2016, where they reached the semi-finals, having previously failed to reach a major tournament since 1958.

However, Wales were unable to book their spot at the 2018 World Cup in Russia as Coleman left for Championship outfit Sunderland.

(Source: Goal)

Wantaway Barca veteran Mascherano 'too old' for Tianjin Quanjian

Tianjin Quanjian have dismissed links with Barcelona veteran Javier Mascherano by insisting he is "too old" for the Chinese Super League side.

Rumoured CSL target Mascherano is tipped to leave LaLiga giants Barca, having recently spoke of his time at Camp Nou coming to an end.

With game time hard to come by under Barca head coach Ernesto Valverde, the 33-year-old has been linked with a January move to China, where Tianjin have reportedly made an offer for the Argentina international.

However, Tianjin – now led by former Fiorentina boss Paulo Sousa following Fabio Cannavaro's return to Chinese champions Guangzhou Evergrande Taobao – denied those reports, pointing to Mascherano's age.

"Those [rumours] are untrue. We have not entertained the idea of buying Mascherano at this point," a Tianjin spokesperson told Tianjin Today Evening News.

"We will aim to get better results next season and Mascherano is too old to fit in at our current plan."

Mascherano, who is recovering from a hamstring injury, has only made six LaLiga appearances this season and 10 in all competitions.

(Source: Mirror)



Nine Iranian climbers killed by avalanche

S P O R T S Nine Iranian climbers were fatally buried by an avalanche on Oshtoran Kooch Mountain, in the country's west on Friday.

The climbers were among a group of 15 men and women from the city of Mashhad and a local guide who were trapped by the avalanche on Thursday



They were heading back from Oshtoran Kooch, one of the highest ranges in Zagros mountain range and known as the Iranian Alps because of its high peaks which are snow-capped all year round.

Efforts are still underway to locate the rest missing mountaineers. Oshtoran Kooch has numerous peaks with the highest, San Baran, at more than 4,000 meters above sea level.

Keikha wins silver at Toyota Gymnastics Competition

TASNIM – Iranian gymnast Saeed Reza Keikha claimed a silver medal at the 2017 Toyota International Gymnastics Competition on Saturday.

The competition takes place in Tokyo, Japan on December 9-10.

Saeed Reza Keikha, who won a silver medal in the men's pommel horse, was the only Iranian gymnast in the prestigious competition.

Keikha won the bronze medal at the 2017 Asian Artistic Gymnastics Championships held in Bangkok, Thailand in May.

He also claimed a bronze medal at the FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Challenge Cup in Baku in February.

Reza Enayati appointed Iran's Siahjamegan coach

TASNIM – Former Esteghlal striker Reza Enayati has been named as new head coach of Iranian football club Siahjamegan.

Siahjamegan, who sit bottom of Iran Professional League (IPL) table, started the new season under guidance of Akbar Misaghian but parted company with the coach in October.

Alireza Marzban took charge of the Mashhad-based team but he also left the team due to disagreement with the team's officials.

Enayati, who hung up his boots in April, was named the new head coach of Siahjamegan until the end of the season.

Siahjamegan sit bottom of the table with eight points from 15 games.

Wife of ex-rugby player reportedly kills couple's children

The wife of ex-Italy player Andrea Benatti is believed to have murdered their two children, aged two and five, before attempting suicide.

Italian rugby is in a state of shock after the wife of former international player Andrea Benatti reportedly murdered the couple's two children on Thursday before attempting to commit suicide.

According to local reports, Antonella Barbieri first killed their two-year-old daughter by smothering her with a pillow, then stabbed their son, five, to death.

Barbieri was later discovered with a knife in her abdomen, having apparently tried to take her own life, and is now in hospital in Reggio Emilia, northern Italy, with her condition said to be serious but not life-threatening.

Benatti, who retired from professional rugby in 2011 having won five caps for Italy, was out at work when the events took place, Italian media say.

(Source: AS)

Olympics: USOC says all systems go for Pyeongchang

The United States Olympic Committee on Friday said it will send a full team to compete at the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang in February despite mixed messages this week from the White House about whether the U.S. would participate.

U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley had said it was an "open question" as to whether the U.S. would travel to South Korea amid weapons tests by its neighbor North Korea and White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders told reporters no official decision had been made before clarifying in a tweet that the "U.S. looks forward to participating."

"I think there was just some miscommunication there rather than anything intended to be substantive," USOC CEO Scott Blackmun told reporters following a board meeting in New York.

"We are going to take a team to Pyeongchang unless it's physically impossible or legally impossible to do that," he said.

"We are 100 percent committed to our athletes on that." Blackmun said no Olympic sponsor or athlete had raised concerns about the safety of traveling to South Korea despite growing tensions between the U.S. and North Korea.

"We are going to be bringing a team and showing up like 100 other nations," he said.

The Pyeongchang Games will take place from Feb. 9-25.

(Source: Reuters)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
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Movies from Iran competing in Indian festivals

A R T TEHRAN — Seven Iranian films are competing in two festivals in India.

“The Villa Tenants” by Monir Qeidi, “Kupal” by Kazem Mollai and “Dogs and Fools” by Ali-Mohammad Qasemi are competing in the 22nd International Film Festival of Kerala, which is underway in Thiruvananthapuram, India.



A scene from “The Villa Tenants” by Monir Qeidi

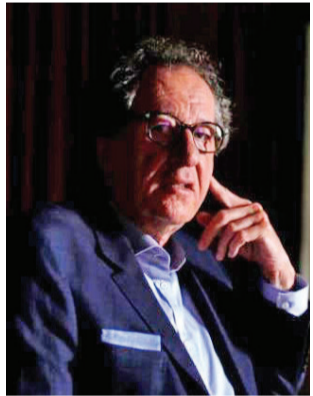
“A Man of Integrity” by Mohammad Rasulof and “White Bridge” by Ali Qavitan will also go on screen at the festival, which will run until December 15.

“Gamichi” by Majid Esmaili Parsa and “The Chocolate” by Mehdi Heidari will compete in the Smile International Film Festival for Children and Youth in New Delhi.

The festival will be held from December 11 to 17.

Actor Geoffrey Rush sues Australian newspaper over “inappropriate behavior” report

SYDNEY (Reuters) — Australian actor Geoffrey Rush said on Friday he had filed a defamation lawsuit against Sydney’s Daily Telegraph newspaper after it published a report about a complaint alleging inappropriate conduct.



Cast member Geoffrey Rush poses for a portrait while promoting the upcoming movie “Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales” in Beverly Hills, California U.S., May 20, 2017. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

The newspaper article last month said an Australian theater company had received a complaint about “inappropriate behavior” following the production of King Lear two years ago in which Rush was the star.

Rush has denied any wrongdoing and said he was never told of the complaint at the time. Details of the complaint have not been made public.

“They have splashed spurious claims with bombastic titles on their front pages,” the Oscar-winning actor said in a brief press conference in Melbourne.

“This has created irreparable damage to my reputation,” he added. “This situation is intolerable and I must now seek vindication of my good name through the courts in Australia.”

The Daily Telegraph Editor Chris Dore said in a statement to Reuters that Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp-run newspaper will defend itself.

“The Daily Telegraph accurately reported the Sydney Theatre Company received a complaint alleging that Mr Geoffrey Rush had engaged in inappropriate behavior. We will defend our position in court,” Dore said.

Rush’s lawsuit said he was seeking damages and a restraint on further publication on the matter.

Last week, Rush voluntarily stepped down as president of the Australian Academy of Cinema and Television until the matter is resolved.

Australian show business identities have come to his defense, including fellow Australian actor Rachel Griffiths.

Rush’s film credits include “Shine,” “The King’s Speech” and “Pirates of the Caribbean.”

More “Big Little Lies” on its way to television

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — “Big Little Lies,” the Emmy-winning drama starring Reese Witherspoon and Nicole Kidman, is returning for a second season, HBO announced on Friday, with most of the cast expected to return.

Kidman said the decision to make a second series was “inspired by the overwhelming response by audiences around the world.” “I’m so grateful to have this opportunity to keep exploring these female characters and make this series with my friends,” she added in a statement.

The dark female-driven drama centering on a murder mystery was released in February as a limited series based on the novel of the same name by Liane Moriarty.

But it proved a huge hit for HBO with an average 7 million viewers per episode and won eight Emmys in September, including a best actress trophy for Kidman.

Cinema Verite, Iran’s major event for docs, to open today

I → Other international docs to be screened during the 8-day event include “69 Minutes of 86 Days” by Egil Haaskjold Larsen from Norway, “Moo Ya” by Filippo Ticozzi from Italy, “Every Soul of My Body” by Erika Rossi from Italy and “I Want To Go Home” by Wesley Leon Aroozoo from Singapore.

“The Forest Of Love” by Alejandro G. Salgado from Spain and “I Heard the Birch Tree Whisper in the Night” by Kenneth Harvey from Canada are also seen on the list.

“Soft Sand of Fakkeh” by Abbas Omrani Bidi and “Lotus” by Mohammdreza Vatandoost are the two Iranian short documentaries in the international section.

“Seeking Farideh” by Azadeh Musavi and Kurosh Atai, “Women with Gunpowder Earrings” by Reza Farahmand and “My Mom, My Tribe” by Ezzatollah Parvazeh are the feature-length Iranian docs competing in the event.

The renowned Italian documentarian Gianfranco Rosi, German filmmaker and journalist Andreas Ewels, French critic Matthieu Darras and program director of the Parisian festival of the Cinema du Reel Carine Bernasconi are just a few of the invitees attending the gala.

Dozens of meetings and workshops have also been scheduled to be held by



a number of the guests.

The Documentary and Experimental

Film Center is the organizer of the Cinema Verite festival.

All the five theaters within the cineplex will be hosting the event until December 17.

Iranian publisher Ofoq buys rights to Tom Hanks’ “Uncommon Type”



A publicist assists Tom Hanks as he promotes “Uncommon Type” in New York. (Reuters/Lucas Jackson)

A R T TEHRAN — Ofoq, a major Iranian publisher of works from overseas authors, has recently bought the rights to “Uncommon Type,” a collection of seventeen short stories by two-time Oscar-winning actor Tom Hanks.

The collection will be translated into Persian by Mohammad Javadi who is the translator of many books such as Stephen Kelman’s “Pigeon English” and Joseph Boyden’s “Through Black Spruce,” the publishers announced in a press release

on Saturday.

The book was originally published by Alfred A. Knopf this year in October.

Hanks, 61, is an American actor and filmmaker. He is known for his roles in “Big,” “Philadelphia,” “Forrest Gump,” “Apollo 13,” “Saving Private Ryan,” “You’ve Got Mail,” “Cast Away,” “The Da Vinci Code,” “Captain Phillips” and “Saving Mr. Banks,” as well as for his voice work in the animated films “The Polar Express” and the “Toy Story” series.

Iranian ensemble to perform theme music from Hollywood at Fajr



Amin Ghaffari in an undated photo

A R T TEHRAN — An ensemble of Iranian musicians is scheduled to perform theme music from several Hollywood movies during the 33rd Fajr International Music Festival, which will run in Tehran from January 10 to 20, 2018.

The theme music from “Pirates of the Caribbean” composed by Geoff Zanelli, “Harry Potter” by John Williams and “Game of Thrones” by Ramin Djawadi have been selected to be performed at

the event, the leader of the ensemble, Amin Ghaffari, said in a press release on Saturday.

The ensemble is also slated to play pieces by Italian violinist Niccolò Paganini, German composers Johannes Brahms and Johann Sebastian Bach and Austrian violinist Fritz Kreisler.

The ensemble also features Navid Shabanzadeh, Amin Atai, Danial Jurabchi, Hasti Sepasi, Hossein Mohammadi and Sahar Shateri.

European theater execs visit Tehran

A R T TEHRAN — The executives of a number of European theater festivals and organizations have met the director of the Center for Dramatic Arts, Mehdi Shafiei, during a recent visit to Iran, the center announced on Saturday.

They also held talks with a number of Iranian theatrical figures and saw several Iranian plays during their 4-day stay in Tehran.

Ways to introduce Iranian theater troupes to international festivals were discussed at the meetings. In addition, the center pledged to provide the facilities for some performances by European troupes in Iran



Louvre Abu Dhabi to display Leonardo’s “Salvator Mundi”

ABU DHABI (Reuters) — The new branch of the Louvre in Abu Dhabi will exhibit Leonardo da Vinci’s portrait of Christ, “Salvator Mundi,” which at \$450.3 million became the most expensive painting ever sold at a New York auction last month.

“Da Vinci’s Salvator Mundi is coming to #Louvre Abu Dhabi,” Louvre Abu Dhabi said on its twitter feed late on Wednesday.

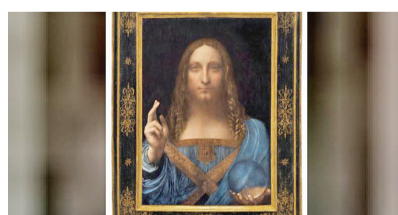
It did not say whether the piece would be on permanent display nor did it shed any light on the buyer’s identity.

A museum spokesperson said it had no further comment at this stage.

The New York Times reported that the winner of the sale at Christie’s on Nov. 15 was a Saudi prince, Bader bin Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Farhan al-Saud, citing documents provided to the newspaper from inside Saudi Arabia.

Abu Dhabi opened its Louvre last month, positioning itself as a city of cultural tourism with a display of hundreds of works that it hopes will draw visitors from around the world.

Surrounded by water on three sides, the museum houses 600 artworks it has acquired alongside 300 works on loan from 13 leading



“Salvator Mundi,” an ethereal portrait of Jesus Christ which dates to about 1500 by Leonardo da Vinci, is on display for the media at Christie’s in New York, NY, U.S., October 10, 2017. (Courtesy Christie’s New York/Handout via Reuters/File Photo)

French institutions in its 23 permanent galleries.

The artists range from Paul Gauguin and Vincent Van Gogh to Pablo Picasso and Cy Twombly.

The Museum already houses one of Leonardo’s finest works.

“Wonder Woman,” “The Post” among AFI’s movies of the year

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Press freedom movie “The Post,” “Call Me By Your Name,” World War Two film “Dunkirk” and superhero movie “Wonder Woman” were among 10 films of the year chosen by the American Film Institute (AFI) on Thursday, in a list likely to be echoed at Hollywood’s high-profile awards shows next year.

Racial psychological thriller “Get Out,” coming-of-age drama “Lady Bird,” fantasy romance “The Shape of Water,” romantic comedy “The Big Sick,” dark comedy “Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri” and social drama “The Florida Project” were also on the AFI’s annual list.

The AFI’s list is non-competitive with no overall winner. The movies are selected because they “advance the art of the moving image, enhance the rich cultural heritage of America’s art form, inspire audiences and artists alike and make a mark on American society,” the AFI said in a statement.

The list was announced as Hollywood’s awards season moves into high gear with nominations next week for the Golden Globes



Meryl Streep as Katharine Graham in “The Post”

and the Screen Actors Guild awards. Oscar nominations will be announced in January.

The AFI list covered a wide range of movies spanning personal, political, racial and women’s issues. “Lady Bird” and “Wonder Woman” are both directed by women, while “The Big Sick,” “The Shape of Water” and “Get Out” were written and directed by people of color.

The AFI also picked its top television shows of the year, with HBO’s medieval fantasy “Game of Thrones,” female-led drama “Big Little Lies,” Netflix’s 1980s science-fiction series “Stranger Things” and Hulu’s dystopian thriller “The Handmaid’s Tale” making the list.