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Employment takes center stage in \$284b budget bill

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani presented the administration's draft of the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1397, which starts on March 21, 2018, to the Majlis.

With a focus on job creation, stronger presence of the private sector in the national economy and protection of natural resources and the environment, the proposed national budget amounted to about 11.94 quadrillion rials (about \$284 billion at the open market rate), a 10 percent rise year on year.

Gazans burn photos of Saudi king, crown prince

By staff & agencies

Palestinians come out in force in the Gaza Strip to protest the United States recognition of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel's "capital," burning the pictures of American and the House of Saud regime heads of state.

The rally, organized by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), drew thousands in the besieged enclave to protest the most serious inroad in recent years to the third holiest site in Islam.

The protesters set fire to American and Israeli flags as well as the portraits and effigies of the U.S. President Donald Trump, and tore up pictures of the Saudi regime King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MBS), Palestinian Samanews website reported. **→3**

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Rouhani says Iran must enjoy nuclear deal benefits

POLITICS **TEHRAN**— In a meeting with British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson in Tehran on Sunday, President Hassan Rouhani said Iran must enjoy the benefits of the nuclear deal.

According to the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran is tasked to limit its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. However, countries, especially Europeans are slow in resuming economic and banking ties with Tehran.

"Implementing and protecting the JCPOA is very important. We believe that all and especially the Iranian nation should be able to enjoy benefits of the JCPOA," Rouhani asserted. **→2**

"Implementing and protecting the JCPOA is very important. We believe that all and especially the Iranian nation should be able to enjoy benefits of the JCPOA," Rouhani asserted. **→2**

Jerusalem al-Quds victim of division among Muslims

By Sadegh Maleki

TEHRAN — For a generation whose spirit and body are linked to the Palestinian cause, these days are hard and bitter. Undoubtedly, after the Balfour Declaration, Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel is the hardest blow against the Palestinian people and, consequently, all Muslims in the world.

Trump's move took place at a time when what remains of the Islamic world is nothing but a mere name. We should not deceive ourselves. When speaking about the West, we are talking about a capacity that can bring its full potential into a coherent format at a critical time. But the Islamic world, for the most part, is a virtual capacity that is, in effect, unable to challenge its opposing world. Trump went ahead with his presidential vow by recognizing Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel's capital under the best of circumstances. Apparently, the 'insane Trump' is not so much insane after all, since his decision has been able to, on the one hand, gain the Zionists' support, and on the other hand, has thrown domestic challenges and charges related to his ties with Russia into the margin. Today, any chance for a two-way peace seems abysmal, and the prospect points to a one-way peace imposed on Palestinians. Condemnations and demonstrations cannot do much. ISIL took a heavy toll on the Islamic world. One of the goals of the emergence of ISIL terrorism seems to have been to pave the way for the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel by the United States.

At a time, Palestine's liberation was a common goal for all Muslims, either Shia or Sunni, but as the emergence of ISIL diverted the attention of the Resistance Front from the Palestinian cause, Palestine and the Sunni world moved away from the resistance that had Shias at its core. **→7**

Waste management has come to a head

By Maryam Qarehgozlou

TEHRAN — The issue of waste management in Iran has reached a critical stage and actions have to be taken in no time.

According to Tehran city councilor, Mahmoud Mirlouhi, some 9,500 tons of waste is being produced daily in the capital and despite the fact that there are regulations designed to govern waste management, the sector still suffers from shortcomings in waste minimization.

The councilor further regretted that not implementing waste segregation at source results in losing 2,500 tons of recyclable waste and lack of effective and economical mechanisms in waste sorting is what holding us back.

Waste segregation at source [meaning where the garbage originates is where waste segregation should take place like in residences, offices, commercial establishments, etc.] is indeed a serious problem and the crux of the matter is that lack of citizens cooperation as well as limited resources at the municipality to both provide the citizens with proper guidelines concerning waste sorting, and install litter bins for waste segregation in all neighborhoods are what impeding the proper waste segregation in the country to some extent.

Waste disposal causes long-term effects on the environment and public health. In Iran there is no management after waste disposal in landfills, which are covered and abandoned.

■ Lagging behind the world

As per a report published by United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in October 2016, waste generation per capita in Iran's urban areas is about 658 grams per day while Iranian waste generation per capita in rural areas is about 220-340 grams per day. Average Iranian waste generation per capita amounts to some 240 kilograms per year. **→12**



ARTICLE

By Hanif Ghaffari
Political analyst

Today's Europe at a Glance

Today, news about the developments in Germany has been heavily popularized by Western media. The failure of Angela Merkel to form a coalition with Greens, Social-Christians and Free Democrats has led to political turmoil in Germany and subsequently, in the European Union. Negotiations for the formation of a coalition government in Germany between the two traditional and rival parties in this country, the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats, has resumed. However, many analysts in European affairs agree that Merkel's authority in the Green Continent has come to an end. What is really going on in Europe? Can we come to a clear picture of today's Europe by examining the "signals" and "events" in this continent? Here are some important points that need to be taken into consideration:

Firstly, the representatives from the far right movements were able to win over one hundred seats in the European Parliament during the 2014 European Parliament elections. The 43 percent participation by citizens in the 2014 parliamentary elections, on the one hand, and the relative victory of the right extremists in this election on the other hand, were both severe shocks to the entity of the United Europe. Since 2014, about 120 seats from the European Parliament are under the control of those who essentially don't accept the existence of the United Europe and the Eurozone. **→7**

Islamic Republic of Iran Ministry of Energy
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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Rouhani to attend OIC emergency meeting on al-Quds in Turkey

POLITICS TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani is scheduled to visit Istanbul on Tuesday to attend an emergency summit of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation on al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Parviz Esmaili, the presidential office's director for communications and information, made the announcement on Sunday, Mehr reported.

The OIC will hold meetings at level of heads of state and ministers in Istanbul on Wednesday to discuss the repercussions of the recognition of al-Quds as the capital of the Israeli regime by the United States.



'Zionist regime nearing closer to its annihilation'

POLITICS TEHRAN — By naming al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of Israel, the United States has made the Zionist regime closer to its annihilation, a lawmaker said on Sunday.

Hossein Naqavi Hosseini, spokesman of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Majlis, said the decision came after Washington failed in its Middle-East policies and wanted to compensate for its shortcomings, ISNA reported.

"America and the Zionists should know that al-Quds will remain Islamic and the Muslim world will be united against Americans' aggressive measure," he added.



Trump's move emboldens Israel to commit more crimes: Hamas envoy

POLITICS TEHRAN — Hamas representative in Tehran Khaled al-Qaddumi on Sunday censured U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to recognize al-Quds as the capital of Israel, saying the move has emboldened the Zionist regime to commit more crimes.

Al-Qaddumi said Trump has an aggressive personality and his policies have created feelings of hatred towards him in the Muslim world.

He also said the Arab allies of the United States should realize that having close ties with Washington will not benefit them as the White House considers the Zionist regime above all.

Larijani urges unified action to isolate U.S. for Trump's 'foolish' decision

POLITICS TEHRAN — Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani has called on Muslim countries to end their ties with the United States over President Donald Trump's "foolish" decision to recognize al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of the Zionist regime.

"Nothing has broken the hearts of Muslims more than Trump's move," Larijani told a parliament session on Sunday, Press TV reported.

Even Washington's European allies have condemned the "unacceptable and irrational" move, he said.

Trump on Wednesday announced that the U.S. was recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and had instructed his administration to begin the process of moving the American embassy from Tel Aviv to the ancient city.

The incendiary decision has drawn firm condemnation from across the world and sparked protests in the Middle East, leading to clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli forces.

"None of the former U.S. presidents had such an unacceptable behavior, but the incumbent president took the imprudent measure after phone calls with several leaders of Arab states," Larijani said.

He said Muslim nations should sus-



pend their political ties with the U.S. until Trump realize the depth of his "disgraceful" behavior towards Muslims.

"And if they have a higher will, Muslims are expected to halt their trade relations with the U.S. so that this fraudulent, busi-

ness-minded president understands that he cannot trade with the dignity of Muslims," he added.

The parliament speaker said according to confidential reports, Trump's decision was "already coordinated with some countries

as part of shoring up the Zionist regime, normalizing relations with the regime, and consigning the tragic drama of the Palestinian nation to oblivion, which means the countries involved have put all their dignity up for auction."

"We wouldn't like to believe these reports but simple calculations show what a scandal America has created through this adventure and that if Muslim and Arab countries do not distance themselves from it, nothing will be left of their dignity and they will have Muslim nations stand up against them."

On Friday, Palestinian officials expressed concerns that Saudi Arabia has been working for weeks behind the scenes to press them to support a nascent U.S. peace plan.

Four unnamed Palestinian officials told Reuters that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas discussed in detail a grand bargain that Trump and Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and adviser, are expected to unveil in the first half of 2018.

One of the officials said Prince Mohammed asked Abbas to show support for the U.S. administration's "peace efforts" when the two met in Riyadh in November.

Trump loyalist to take Iran policy job at State Department

The Trump administration plans to install a political appointee at the State Department to a key position managing policy on Iran and Iraq, a move that will replace a career diplomat with a loyal supporter of the president, Foreign Policy reported on Saturday.

Andrew L. Peek, a former captain in the U.S. Army Reserve and member of the president's State Department transition team, will become the new deputy assistant secretary of state covering Iran and Iraq, according to three State Department officials familiar with the matter.

Peek, a former U.S. Army intelligence officer, has no prior diplomatic experience and has not earned a reputation as an established expert on Iran or Iraq but has years of experience in military intelligence and in the Senate, where he served Republican senators on foreign-policy issues.

He will replace Chris Backmeyer, who currently serves as deputy assistant secretary for Iran. Backmeyer previously served as deputy coordinator for sanctions policy at the



State Department and National Security Council director on Iran from 2012 to 2014 under President Barack Obama.

Since Trump entered office, White House officials have privately expressed frustration with the career foreign service officers handling Iran policy in the State Department. In deliberations over the Iran nuclear deal, some officials on the National Security Council have clashed with their counterparts, arguing for a more aggressive stance toward Tehran and for laying out options to abandon the nuclear accord.

The impending appointment of Peek comes amid growing tension between Iran and the United States. Trump informed Congress in October he could no longer certify under U.S. law that the nuclear agreement between Iran and world powers was in the national interest. The decision has fed speculation that the administration aims to derail the agreement, while European allies have warned the White House that the collapse of the accord could increase the likelihood of Iran obtaining nuclear weapons.

President urges Saudi to stop bowing to Israel

POLITICS TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday that Saudi Arabia should stop bombarding Yemen and begging to have ties with the Zionist regime of Israel.

"Saudi Arabia, as our neighbor, should stop bombarding Yemen. It [Saudi Arabia] should stop bowing to Israel and stand firm and rely on its nation and the regional nations," Rouhani said in a speech to the parliament.

Rouhani added Iran wants Saudi Arabia to "cut misguided friendship

with Zionism" and "stop inhuman bombardment of Yemen".

The president said Iran is ready to have "good ties" with Saudi Arabia if it stops bombing Yemen and cuts ties with Israel.

Yemen has been grappling with a humanitarian disaster since Saudi Arabia led a military aggression against the country in March 2015.

Saudi Arabia launched intensive military campaign against Yemen with the aim of eliminating the Houthi Ansarullah movement and reinstalling former President Abdrabbuh Mansour

Hadi, who has close ties with the Saudis.

Failing to achieve either of its goals, Riyadh has not stopped bombing Yemeni targets, creating a protracted conflict which led to the killings of over 12,000 Yemenis and the destruction of the poor country's infrastructure.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote a letter to Antonio Guterres, the UN secretary general, in November suggesting that it is essential that the international community get more engaged in ending the "senseless war" on Yemen.

Rouhani says Iran must enjoy nuclear deal benefits

1 → The nuclear deal, which was signed in July 2015 between Iran, the European Union, Germany and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, including Britain, went into effect in January 2016.

Rouhani insisted it is important to expand ties especially in the banking sector in accordance with the implementation of the nuclear agreement.

More efforts should be made to reach a "favorable level" in bilateral cooperation, the president said, highlighting the necessity of expanding "friendly" and "balanced" relations to guarantee common interests.

He added, "The will to use the post-JCPOA atmosphere to expand all-out ties and cooperation should be shown in practice and we should see its results."

Elsewhere, Rouhani said that Iran has always sought to help establish peace and stability and eradicate terrorism in the Middle East, noting Tehran-London talks can result in more cooperation to establish regional stability.

Rouhani also said the decision by Donald Trump to recognize al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of Israel is like adding fuel to the fire.

"Regional situation is in a way that the fire in it should not be fuelled and the recent decision by the U.S. President on recognition of the noble Quds as capital was wrong," he said.

Johnson also described Trump's move as an "inappropriate action".

The British foreign secretary also



said that Iran has taken "positive actions" in fight against terrorism and promoting peace in the region.

Commenting on bilateral ties, he said that London is determined to expand relations with Tehran in various spheres.

He added British corporations seek to invest in Iran.

■ Johnson says UK supports JCPOA as intl. agreement

During a separate meeting with Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani on Saturday, Johnson said that London supports the JCPOA as an important international agreement.

"We support the JCPOA as an international agreement, because it is a very important deal and the Iranian people should enjoy its benefits in both

economic and nuclear areas," the media office of the parliament speaker quoted Johnson as saying.

He said that his visit to Iran was aimed at expanding cooperation and removing obstacles in this respect.

However, Larijani criticized UK for its failure to take "serious step" to expand economic relations.

■ Johnson to deliver Iran's warning to U.S. on nuclear deal

Ali Akbar Salehi, the vice president and director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), met separately with Johnson on Sunday.

In an interview with IRIB, Behrooz Kamalvandi, Salehi's deputy, said according to the discussions made between Salehi and Johnson it was agreed that the British foreign secretary deliver Salehi's warning to the United States about the necessity of commitment to the terms of the nuclear agreement.

"During the meeting with Mr. Salehi, the British foreign secretary received this message that the JCPOA cannot be protected without Iran's gaining benefits from it. This message should be transferred to the U.S. by Mr. Johnson," he said.

U.S. President Donald Trump has made repeated attacks against the nuclear deal that was signed under his predecessor Barack Obama. On October 13, Trump refused to certify Iran's commitment to the nuclear deal despite repeated confirmations by the UN nuclear watchdog that Tehran is abiding fully to the terms of the agreement.

The nuclear agreement was signed by Iran, the European Union, Germany and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia - in July 2015. It took effect in January 2016.



Central Bank Of Iran

INTERNATIONAL TENDER No. : 96 - K/168

First Announcement

- 1-Tender Holder:** Security Paper Mill of Central Bank of I.R.Of Iran.
- 2-Tender Subject:** Purchase one set of Swimming Roll related to calender Machine
- 3-Tender Deposit:** an unconditional and extendable Bank guarantee from Iranian Bank for the amount of 18*025 Euro or 775*000*000 Iranian Rials.
- 4-Deadline for receiving tender documents:**
Maximum ten days after second advertisement
- 5-How to get document:** Bidder can receive the tender documents by sending their written inquiry to Fax: +981143132566 or sending letter to email address info@takab-cbi.ir or refer to national database portal of Iran Tenders Information [http:// Iets. Mporg.ir](http://Iets.Mporg.ir)
- 6-Deadline for submitting offers:**
Maximum until dated 24 January 2018 (96/11/04)
- 7-Time period of Technical offers:**
- 8-Validity period of financial offers:**
The offers must be valid for ninety days after 24 January 2018 (96/11/04)
- 9- The offers** no sign, conditional, altered and the offers that submit after the expiration of the period of bid submission will be considered as null and void.
- 10- Tender Holder** reserves the rights to reject some or all of the offers.
- 11-The winner** of tender must be submitting an unconditional and irrevocable performance bond guarantee equal to 10% of value of the contract.
- 12-All the cost** of published advertisement must be paid by winner of tender
- 13-Place for receiving and submitting tender documents:**
7th km Chamestan Road, Amol, Mazandaran, Iran, Security paper Mill-
Department of the commercial department building
- 14-Delivery time:** 4 month after signing the contract for further information, prospective bidder may contact us via the following

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Web site: <http://www.takab-cbi.ir> E-mail: info@takab-cbi.ir

Bahraini king sends delegation to Israel for ‘peace’: paper

A Bahraini delegation has arrived in Israel with a message from the country’s king, in the latest instance of warming ties between the two sides, The Times of Israel reports.

The Israeli paper said on Sunday that 24 members of the “This is Bahrain” group, which professes campaigning for “religious freedom,” traveled to Israel this week for a four-day visit.

“The king sent us with a message of peace to the whole world,” a member on the group was quoted as saying about the visit.

In September, Israeli media said Bahrain’s King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah had called at an event hosted by pro-Israeli group Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles for an end to the Arab boycott of Israel, and the establishment of diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv.

Bahrain’s King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah has criticized the Arab boycott of Israel, saying that the Bahrainis are free to visit Israel.

Israeli tourists and businessmen have been traveling to Bahrain in recent years. The Israeli daily cited a prominent rabbi, who had met with the king, as saying that the monarch intended to allow citizens from his kingdom to visit Israel freely.

Last year, the tiny Persian Gulf state became the only Persian Gulf country to publicly mourn the death of former Israeli president Shimon Peres.

Also in 2016, Bahraini officials raised eyebrows by hosting and participating in the Israeli Hanukkah celebration.

Bahraini judicial activists called on the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry to punish its members who took part in the Hanukkah ceremony.

Leaks obtained by WikiLeaks also showed that senior officials from Israel and Bahrain had spoken in recent years. They cited a 2007 meeting between then Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Bahraini Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa in New York.



In 2005, the Bahraini king boasted to an American official that his state had contacts with Israel “at the intelligence/security level,” WikiLeaks’ findings also showed.

Arab states have been traditionally depicting themselves as Israel’s enemies and supporters of the Palestinian cause against Tel Aviv’s occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netan-

yahu has admitted that his regime has ties with the Arab world, and that the relations are improving.

In historical comments, Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz acknowledged last month that Tel Aviv had had covert contacts with the House of Saud regime.

Yaacov Nagel, who stepped down as Netanyahu’s internal security advisor earlier this year, also said last month

that the Saudi regime was ready to sacrifice Palestinians and their demands for closer ties with Israel.

And on Friday, Reuters cited Palestinian officials as expressing worries that the House of Saud regime was acting behind the scenes to advance a United States “grand bargain” over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that heavily favored Israel.

(Source: Press TV)

Gazans burn photos of Saudi king, crown prince

➔ “Al-Quds is Palestine’s eternal capital and not an inch of it will be conceded,” to Israel, Jamil Mazhar, a PFLP leader, told the rally. The protesters also condemned what they called Arab states’ alignment with Washington, which is Israel’s oldest and strongest ally, and held up placards reading “Down with Al Saud.”

Grand bargain

Yaacov Nagel, who stepped down as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s internal security adviser earlier this year, said last month that the House of Saud regime was ready to sacrifice Palestinians and their demands for closer ties with Israel.

On Friday, Reuters cited Palestinian officials as expressing worries that the Saudi regime was acting behind the scenes to advance a United States “grand bargain” over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that heavily favored Israel.

Four Palestinian officials told the agency on condition of anonymity that the Saudi regime crown prince 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 the Palestinians.

Elsewhere, in the Palestinian territories, the Fatah party called on the nation not to give up their demonstrations against Washington’s new policy on al-Quds.

In a statement, Fatah said the Palestinians should “keep up confrontation and broaden it to all points where the Israeli army is present” in the West Bank.

The appeal came after Israeli minister of military affairs Avigdor Lieberman said on Sunday he hoped the anger that erupted in Palestinian protests was abating.

“Our hope is that everything is calming down and that we are returning to a path of normal life without riots and without violence,” Lieberman told Army Radio.

Additionally Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas’s diplomatic adviser Majdi al-Khalidi told AFP that there would be no meeting with the U.S. Vice President Mike Pence due later this month.

“The United States has crossed all the red lines with the Jerusalem decision,” Khalid said.

Lieberman on Sunday called for a boycott of Arab businesses in an area in the occupied lands, where residents staged an anti-U.S. protest.

He said the Wadi Ara residents were “not part of us” and that the Israelis should no longer visit buy their products.

Hundreds of Israeli Arabs protested on Saturday in the region to express their sympathy with the Palestinians.

Lieberman said he “would call on all citizens of Israel — stop going to their stores, stop buying, stop getting services, simply a boycott on Wadi Ara. They need to feel that they are not welcome here.”

An Arab member of the Israeli Knesset (unicameral national legislature of Israel/parliament) Ayman Odeh criticized Lieberman’s boycott as reminiscent of the worst regimes in history. Gilad Erdan, another Israeli lawmaker, said that Lieberman’s bid was not applicable.

March of Shame in streets of Tel Aviv

Meantime, thousands of Israelis have taken to the streets of Tel Aviv to vent their anger at the regime corruption, calling on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to step down.

Israeli media estimated that about 10,000 people turned out for the protest dubbed the “March of Shame” in Tel Aviv on Saturday. Similar demonstrations also took place in other Israeli cities.

Saturday’s rally was part of the weekly events sparked by corruption allegations against Netanyahu, who has been questioned in two cases and is suspected of being involved in bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

Around 20,000 Israelis join the demonstration against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Tel Aviv, holding up signs reading “Crime Minister.”

Protesters held banners reading, “Crime Minister,” “Nei-



ther left, nor right (we demand) integrity,” “We are fed up with corrupt (politicians)” and “Sweep the corrupt away.”

They further shouted slogans such as “Corporate power, organized crime,” “We won’t stop until Bibi resigns,” “The people demand legal justice,” “Shame-Mafia” and “Bibi go home.”

Netanyahu is suspected of having received luxury gifts from businessmen overseas in Case 1000.

He is also being investigated in Case 2000 for an alleged media bribery scheme to help Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper against its competitor Israel Hayom in return for favorable coverage of the premier.

Protesters, police clash outside U.S. embassy in Beirut

Elsewhere, as the time of preparing this article clashes are currently underway between Lebanese security forces and people protesting Trump’s recognition of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the “capital” of Israel.

Police have used water cannon and tear gas to disperse the protesters who have gathered outside the U.S. embassy in Beirut.

Elsewhere across the world, protesters gathered outside the American mission in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, and many other cities in the world’s most populous Muslim country.

In Jakarta, protesters unfurled Indonesian and Palestinian flags and held banners reading, “Free Jerusalem and Palestinians,” “U.S. Embassy, Get Out from al-Quds” and “We are with the Palestinians.”

A statement from the Prosperous Justice Party denounced Trump’s decision as “a form of humiliation and provocation against Muslims all over the world.”

In Afghanistan, protesters took to the streets in the eastern city of Jalalabad, shouting slogans against the U.S. and Israel as they burned a Trump effigy.

Egyptian universities were also the scene of angry demonstrations.

Protesters in San Francisco condemn Trump’s move on al-Quds

The development follow as the U.S. protesters have rallied in San Francisco, California, to express their anger at Trump’s recognition of al-Quds as Israel’s capital, amid similar protests in other parts of the world.

More than 100 people took part in the demonstration at San Francisco’s United Nations Plaza on Saturday to condemn Trump’s decision to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to the holy city.

The protesters held signs reading “End all U.S. aid to Israel” and chanted “Hey hey, ho ho, the occupation has got to go,” and “Free Palestine.”

The march was co-sponsored by almost 50 San Francisco area organizations, including some Jewish groups.

The organizers and demonstrators advocated for al-Quds (Jerusalem) to be turned over to the Palestinians and urged a new uprising against the Israeli regime.

Hundreds of people also held a demonstration on Friday in New York City to condemn Trump’s plan.

Parisians protest U.S. al-Quds decision ahead of Netanyahu’s visit

Hundreds of demonstrators have also taken to the streets of the French capital to protest against the U.S. recognition of al-Quds as Israel’s capital ahead of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s visit to the country.

The protesters staged the gathering in Paris on Saturday, holding Palestinian flags and chanting slogans in support of Palestine amid global uproar against the U.S. move.

The protest came ahead of Netanyahu’s visit to Paris on Sunday.

Rome witnesses protests against Trump’s decision on al-Quds

In Italy, hundreds of Palestinians, joined by a group of American and Italian activists, held a protest outside the U.S. embassy in Rome.

The protesters called for boycotting Israel as well as the liberation of occupied Palestinian territories.

Pakistan protests

Also in Pakistan, hundreds of women belonging to the country’s main Islamic party, Jamaat-e-Islami, rallied in the city of Karachi to protest against Washington’s move.

The protesters, who were wearing all-encompassing black veils, chanted anti-Trump and anti-U.S. slogans.

Head of Jamaat-e-Islami Senator Sirajul Haq, who addressed the protest, called for a diplomatic boycott of the U.S. if Washington did not reverse its decision.

Haq also called for a ban on American products and the closure of U.S. diplomatic missions across Pakistan.

In a speech at the White House on Wednesday, Trump officially declared al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel’s capital, saying his administration would also begin a process of moving the American embassy in Tel Aviv to the holy city, which is expected to take years.

Following Trump’s statement, massive protests against the United States broke out across the Muslim world, and even in many Western cities.

Turkish president slams Israel as ‘terrorist state’, ‘killer of children’



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has taken a sharp jab at Israel in the wake of the recent decision by the United States President Donald Trump to recognize Israeli-occupied al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of the Tel Aviv regime, describing Israel as a “terrorist entity” and “killer of children.”

Speaking at a ruling Justice and Development Party’s (AKP/Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) congress in the central Turkish province of Sivas on Sunday, Erdogan blasted the “disproportionate” force being used by Israeli forces against Palestinian protesters, saying that Israel was an “oppressive and occupation” regime.

The remarks came only a day after the Turkish leader decried Trump’s decision on al-Quds, stressing that the move “contradicts international law and regional facts.”

“America’s decision does not comply with international law and human conscience, justice and regional facts. This statement is a big blow to the United Nations Security Council, to which the U.S. is also a member,” Erdogan said, adding, “The United Nations cannot have any credibility when its Security Council’s permanent members do not respect it.”

“Israel is an occupying state, and their police are shooting the youth and the kids... They are striking Gaza with their F-16s. They are striking Palestine in the meantime,” Erdogan said.

“I am saying this loud and clear, being strong does not mean being right,” the Turkish president pointed out.

Turkey has called for an emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to discuss Washington’s move. Ankara had warned before Trump made his declaration on December 6 that any change in the status quo of the city would lead to a new catastrophe in the Middle East.

Erdogan said the OIC summit in Turkey on Wednesday would convey the message that Washington should swiftly reverse its decision.

Meanwhile, the de facto leader of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has warned that Trump’s decision to recognize al-Quds as Israel’s capital could provide a lifeline to militants, who have been dealt stinging blows this year.

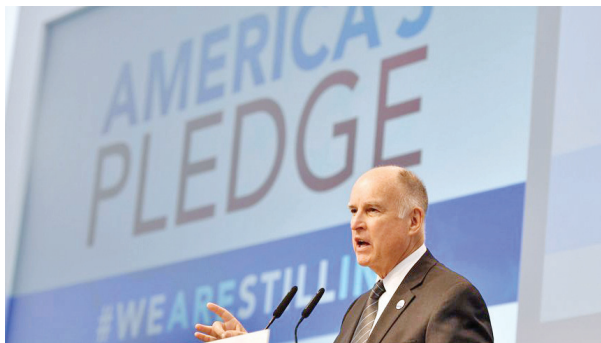
“The U.S. move could throw a lifeline to terrorist and armed groups, which have begun to lose ground in the region,” Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahayan told a delegation from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy on Saturday evening.

He stated that Washington’s unilateral decision violated UN resolutions.

Sheikh Mohammed also urged the U.S. administration to “reconsider its move and work basically in an effective and neutral manner to draft true principles for peace that serve all and realize development and stability in the region.”

(Source: agencies)

Trump doesn’t ‘fear the wrath of God,’ complains Jerry Brown



With parts of his state engulfed by historic wildfires, California Gov. Jerry Brown this weekend ripped into Donald Trump for his position on climate change, saying the commander-in-chief “doesn’t fear the wrath of God.”

In an interview with “60 Minutes” that will air on Sunday evening, Brown offers a stinging critique of the president on the environment. The California Democrat has been among the harshest critics of the Trump administration’s climate change policies, which have included pulling out of the Paris climate accord and scrapping Obama-era rules limiting carbon emissions from power plants.

“I don’t think President Trump has a fear of the Lord, the fear of the wrath of God, which leads one to more humility ... and this is such a reckless disregard for the truth and for the existential consequences that can be unleashed,” Brown said, according to excerpts of the interview released Friday evening by CBS News.

The Golden State’s governor also pushed back on Republican arguments that aggressive environmental policies stunt economic growth.

“We have a cap and trade system, which is a very efficient way to reducing greenhouse gases. We have zero-emission vehicle mandate. We have efficiency standards for our buildings, for our appliances. California is showing that dealing with climate is good for the economy, not bad,” he said.

(Source: The Washington Times)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	91198.9
IFX	1018.6

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42300 rials
EUR	50250 rials
GBP	58720 rials
AED	11,570 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, Baghdad ink oil swap deal

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Iran and Iraq have signed a deal to swap up to 60,000 barrels per day of crude produced from the northern Iraqi Kirkuk oilfield for Iranian oil.



Based on the agreement signed on Friday by the two OPEC countries Iran will deliver its crude to Iraq's southern ports, on the Persian Gulf, the delivered oil will have the same characteristics and in the same quantities as those it would receive from Kirkuk, Reuters reported on Saturday quoting Iraqi Oil Minister Jabar al-Luaibi as saying.

The two countries are also planning to build a pipeline to carry the oil from Kirkuk, so as to avoid trucking the crude, he said.

Between 30,000 and 60,000 bpd of Kirkuk crude will be delivered by tanker trucks to the border area of Kermanshah, where Iran has a refinery, Luaibi said.

Italy has the most people at risk of poverty in Europe

Italians at risk of poverty rose by more than 3 million since the 2008 financial crisis, marking the biggest increase among European nations.

The trend continued last year despite the country's return to economic growth. In 2016, Italians classified under European Union statistic rules as families with a very low income or without steady employment totaled 18 million, according to Eurostat.

Both the rise in the nine-year period and the total number were the biggest among the 28 EU member countries, Bloomberg calculations based on the data show. *(Source: Bloomberg)*

S. Korea to grow 3.1% this year on solid global economic expansion: HRI

South Korea's economy is expected to expand 3.1 percent this year on the back of solid worldwide growth, a local think tank said Sunday.

The forecast marks a 0.4 percentage-point increase from estimates made two months earlier, Hyundai Research Institute said.

The leading private think tank said it has marked up growth forecasts for 2018 by 0.3 percentage point to 2.8 percent.

"Growth is being fueled by a general economic recovery taking place all over the world," HRI said. It said expectations of improved ties between South Korea and China that had soured in recent months following Seoul's decision to station an advanced U.S. missile defense shield have been reflected in the improved growth numbers for Asia's fourth-largest economy.

It said another factor for higher growth can be found in private consumption that is forecast to rise 2.3 percent this year and 2.5 percent in 2018. The think tank said the government's policy to energize the job market has been factored into its growth estimates.

On the negative side, the rise in household debt that topped the 1,400 trillion-won (\$1.27 trillion) mark could weigh down growth. HRI said a cooling off of the real estate market, along with less money expected to go into construction and facility investment, could also moderate growth.

The government has slashed social overhead capital investment to better concentrate on welfare and job creation.

The research institute said that while exports will remain a key growth engine, due to the higher base effect, growth will be curbed in 2018 vis-a-vis this year.

It predicted outbound shipment growth will reach 6.2 percent in the new year, down sharply from 15.7 percent estimated for 2017.

HRI advised policymaker to come up with measures that can better control household debt and offset reduction in private spending.

It added that the government needs to have contingency plans in place to fuel corporate sector investment in the event that the income-based growth drive advocated by the current administration fails to meet expectations. *(Source: Yonhap)*

Employment takes center stage in \$284b budget bill

1 → We forecast to create 840,000 new jobs in the next year compared with 750,000 in the current year," Rouhani told MPs.

"Polluted air and soil, water scarcity, and inefficient waste management have created serious problems for the country," he said.

However, positive steps such as scrapping old cars and launching watershed

management plans have been taken so far and \$2.15 billion has been allocated to modern agriculture plans, Rouhani explained.

Next year's national budget is based on an oil price of \$55 per barrel, up from \$50 last year. It also sees a projected average exchange rate of 35,000 rials to the U.S. dollar for the fiscal year. The rial is currently

Egypt annual inflation rate slows as currency effects fade

Egypt's headline inflation rate rose at its slowest pace in nearly a year in November as the effects of a currency flotation began to fade, raising expectations that the central bank would soon begin to cut interest rates.

Urban consumer prices rose 26 percent in November compared to 30.8 percent a year earlier, according to the official statistics agency, CAPMAS. The month-on-month inflation rate eased to 1 percent compared to 1.1 percent in October. Food and beverage prices, which make up the single largest component of the price basket, rose by 32.3 percent.

Officials have said they expected the inflation rate to ease from highs in the mid-30s as the base effects of the currency flotation begin to wear off. The Egyptian pound has halved in value against the dollar since most currency controls were lifted, pushing up prices in the import-dependent economy where millions live in poverty.

"This is generally within expectations. I think it is likely that the central bank will begin cutting rates but not at the next meeting in December, at the one after," said Reham El Desoki, senior economist



at Arqaam Capital in Cairo.

El Desoki said she expected the central bank to cut policy rates by about 500 basis points over the course of 2018, but to follow a more dynamic policy in response to price shocks, raising and dropping rates as it guides inflation toward its target.

The central bank has repeatedly raised interest rates since the flotation to damp soaring prices, but faced criticism from business leaders who said the high cost of borrowing would stifle growth.

The central bank held the benchmark rate at 18.75 percent at its last meeting in October and has set an inflation target of 13 percent, plus or minus three percentage points, for the fourth quarter of 2018, and single digits thereafter.

(Source: Bloomberg)

After bitcoin's wild week, traders brace for futures launch

The newest way to bet on bitcoin, the cryptocurrency that has taken Wall Street by storm with its stratospheric price rise and wild daily gyrations, will arrive on Sunday when bitcoin futures start trading.

The first bitcoin future trades are set to kick off at 6 p.m. EST on Cboe Global Markets Inc's Cboe Futures Exchange.

The launch has given an extra kick to the cryptocurrency's scorching run this year. It has nearly doubled in price since the start of December, but recent days saw sharp moves in both directions, with bitcoin losing almost a fifth of its value on Friday after surging more than 40 percent in the previous 48 hours.

But while some market participants are excited about a regulated way to bet on or hedge against moves in bitcoin, others caution that risks remain for investors and possibly even the clearing organizations underpinning the trades.

The futures are cash-settled contracts based on the auction price of bitcoin in U.S. dollars on the Gemini Exchange, owned and operated by virtual currency entrepreneurs Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss.

"The pretty sharp rise we have seen in bitcoin in just the last couple of weeks has probably been driven by optimism ahead of the futures launch," said Randy Frederick, vice president of trading and derivatives for Charles Schwab in Austin.

Bitcoin fans appear excited about the prospect of an exchange-listed and regulated product and the ability to

bet on its price swings without having to sign up for a digital wallet.

The futures are an alternative to a largely unregulated spot market underpinned by cryptocurrency exchanges that have been plagued by cybersecurity and fraud issues.

"You are going to open up the market to a whole lot of people who aren't currently in bitcoin," Frederick said.

The futures launch has so far received a mixed reception from big U.S. banks and brokerages.

Interactive Brokers plans to offer its customers access to the first bitcoin futures when trading goes live, but bars clients from assuming short positions and has margin requirements of at least 50 percent.

Several online brokerages including Charles Schwab and TD Ameritrade will not allow the trading of the newly launched futures from day one.

Some of the big U.S. banks including JPMorgan Chase and Citigroup, will not immediately clear bitcoin trades for clients, the Financial Times reported on Friday.

Goldman Sachs Group Inc on Thursday said it is planning to clear bitcoin futures for certain clients.

■ Volatility dampener

Bitcoin's manic run-up this year has boosted volatility far in excess of other asset classes. The launch of futures may help dampen some of the sharp moves, analysts said.

"Hypothetically, volatility over the long run should drop after institutions get involved," said Ophir Gottlieb, chief



42,000 to the dollar on the open market.

The funding for running the government rose by 6 percent compared to the last year and was set at 3.68 quadrillion rials (about \$87 billion).

Meanwhile, the budget has allocated 600

trillion rials (about \$14 billion) to development projects, unchanged compared with the current year's budget. The budget bill has envisaged that tax income will reach 1.31 quadrillion rials (about \$31 billion) compared with 1.12 quadrillion rials last year.

China's inflation eases in November as economy holds steady

China's consumer inflation slowed more than expected in November, and producer inflation at the factory gate fell sharply, leaving room for prudent monetary policy to be maintained.

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 the market forecast of 1.8 percent, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said Saturday.

The CPI has grown at less than 2 percent 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 point 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 fruit rose on rising demand.

Non-food prices edged up in November



on both a 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. Clothing costs increased 0.7 percent.

China's producer price index (PPI), which measures costs for goods at the factory gate, rose 5.8 percent year-on-year in November, according to the NBS.

It was down from growth of 6.9 percent recorded in October, on par with the 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.

(Source: China Daily)

executive of Los Angeles-based Capital Market Laboratories.

"But there may not be an immediate impact, say in the first month," he said.

The launch futures on an underlying spot market can lend more order to spot trading in the long run, by facilitating better price discovery and directional bets, not just long bets, J.J. Kinahan, chief market strategist at TD Ameritrade in Chicago, said.

Analysts, however, warn that much of how the futures market will react is a mystery, given that bitcoin is unlike any other asset.

"This is completely unknown territory," said Charles Schwab's Frederick.

Fears of inaccurate pricing and systemic risk to clearing houses should prices move sharply and clients fail to meet margin calls remain. Brokers have said that more safeguards are needed to protect against bitcoin's high volatility.

The risk of market participants manipulating the underlying spot market to their benefit in the futures market is another big concern.

"Large equity indexes show some volatility around cash settlements and those are in highly liquid, highly regulated venues," said Steve Sosnick, chief options strategist at Interactive Brokers Group Inc in Greenwich, Connecticut.

"Compare that to cash settlement in bitcoin, and there is a lot more uncertainty on how that would play out."

(Source: CNBC)

Brexit success: UK economy outperforms official estimates yet again



£3 billion.

Export activity improved in every region of the UK, according to a separate report from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC). This deals a solid blow to the agenda of globalist-minded separatist forces in Scotland, and the multiculturalist elitists in London – stiff opponents of Brexit.

England's exports in the September-November period rose by 14 percent, whilst Scotland's exports surged by 19.9 percent. Pro-"Remain" Scotland is actually benefitting from Brexit more than provincial England – which overwhelmingly voted "Leave" back in June 2016.

This also puts the BOE in a favorable position to introduce further interest rate hikes.

"If, as we expect, the economy continues to expand around this pace and inflation remains elevated, there is a case for the Bank of England to gradually raise the policy rate to stop the economy from overheating," NIESR's Kara said.

The UK's trade deficit during the period was driven by imports from the EU, supporting the UKIP and Tory and Unionist leanings toward a "hard Brexit." The UK-EU trade deficit widened by £1.9 billion, providing further evidence trade relationships with the bloc has long stopped benefitting the

British economy and fiscal standing.

Yet another separate report from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) showed industrial production rose by 1.2 percent in the three months to October. Manufacturing activity rose 3.9 percent year-to-year and the ONS says the growth is "broad-based."

The UK's transport equipment production is the main driving force behind the manufacturing renaissance, adding 9.3 percent in the period. The aerospace segment alone surged 11.5 percent.

"While manufacturing was relatively subdued overall in October despite record production of cars destined for export, the longer-term picture is one of strong growth," Kate Davies of the ONS said.

Meanwhile, the British economy's main driving force is the services sector, which has expanded modestly. Economists expect a robust acceleration in domestic consumption this month due to the Christmas holiday shopping.

Overall, the UK's economy has been coherently defying the gloomy Brexit-related forecasts for almost 18 months now. The most recent numbers are poised to provide further encouragement to the "hard Brexit" faction within the Conservative and Unionist government, rendering Prime Minister Theresa May much less of an "appeaser" to the EU than she's appeared to be in recent weeks.

(Source: Sputnik)

Economist: U.S. shale industry takes side of Russia, OPEC

If U.S. shale oil companies start aiming for a profit, and not focus on production growth, one of the main factors restraining the growth in oil prices will disappear in the near future, Ivan Danilov, a Russian economist, political analyst and author of the popular political blog Crimson Alter, writes for RIA Novosti.

Danilov referred to the reported secret meeting of twelve major shareholders in U.S. shale-hydrocarbon producers that took place this September in New York City. Citing The Wall Street Journal December 7 report, the Russian economist noted that the “shale barons” had de facto accepted defeat in the global oil price war by shifting their focus on growing revenues.

Meanwhile, Bloomberg says that shale investors are seeking to benefit from the rise of crude prices orchestrated by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) instead of trying to fill the niche left by global oil producers in its Monday article entitled “Big shale turns opec ally from foe with focus on oil returns.”

The media outlet cited Matt Gallagher, chief operation officer of Parsley Energy, an independent U.S. oil and natural gas company, who emphasized that “higher oil prices can bring in more cash to the balance sheet,” so, there is no need “to chase additional activity.”

After a few years of struggle aimed at asphyxiating their Russian and Saudi competitors, American shale producers have given up geopolitical games and focused on making money, Danilov elaborated.



According to the economist, the meeting of the largest investors in the U.S. shale companies indicates that the PR stunt claiming that the American shale industry remains profitable even at \$20 per barrel turned out to be a lie.

Despite numerous measures to bolster efficiency in production and lower oilfield services' costs the U.S. shale production suffered losses in 2012 and today, Danilov wrote.

“For several years investors lived with the hope that cheap American oil, would literally flood the world market, leading to the collapse

of competitors — primarily Russia and the OPEC countries — after which U.S. companies would earn fabulous profits,” the economist suggested, adding that some observers even predicted the fall of the Russian and Saudi Arabia's statehood due to the sharp fall in oil prices.

However, these prognoses have never turned into reality, the analyst underscored.

Instead, as Reuters market analyst John Kemp noted in June 2017, “U.S. shale firms [were] drilling themselves into a deep hole

despite warnings from industry leaders about the risk of flooding the market with too much crude.”

To illustrate his point, Kemp referred to U.S. petroleum and natural gas company Pioneer Natural Resources, which reported losses of \$273 million in 2015, \$556 million in 2016 and a further loss of \$42 million in the first quarter of 2017.

Citing Evercore International Strategy & Investment (ISI) consulting company, Danilov highlighted that U.S. oil companies have in general spent \$280 billion more than they received from their shale operations during their price war with Russia and Saudi Arabia. For comparison's sake, \$280 billion equates to the price of 21 modern U.S. aircraft carriers USS Gerald R. Ford the Russian economist remarked.

According to Danilov, the change in the mood of American “shale barons” is good news for the oil market. Still, the Russian analyst does not exclude the scenario under which some U.S. shale industries will continue to increase shale production aiming to fight out the price war to bitter end.

“However, the U.S. ‘shale barons’ run the risk of infuriating Washington politicians,” the economist remarked, “The September conference in New York City resembles nothing but a ‘cartel collusion’ and given the anti-Russian hysteria which is raging on in the U.S. it is quite possible that the [American] ‘shale barons’ will be accused of working for the Kremlin.”

(Source: Sputnik)

Libyan political, oil and bank heads discuss funds to lift crude output

The head of Libya's U.N.-backed government held a rare meeting on Saturday with the head of the National Oil Corporation (NOC) and the governor of Tripoli's central bank to discuss funding to raise oil production.

Relations between the three institutions have been fractious over the past two years due to stand-offs over public spending and funding for NOC.

Ties have been tense between central bank Governor Sadiq al-Kabir Sadiq and Government of National Accord (GNA)

head Fayez Seraj over monetary policy and fiscal reform, although the bank said last month an economic and financial plan had been agreed.

“The meeting dealt with the necessary financial arrangements to provide funding to the National Oil Corporation so as to be able to raise production and carry out its tasks and responsibilities in ... production, exploration, refining and transport of crude oil and petroleum products,” GNA said.

The GNA statement added that rising oil

output would help “reduce the deficit, and helps the Central Bank of Libya to take monetary policies to deal with the liquidity crisis and support the Libyan dinar and stimulate the national economy.”

Libya earns almost all its income from oil production, which has risen about four-fold over the past year-and-a-half to about 1 million barrels per day (bpd).

Despite the rise in production, Libya is still running a heavy deficit and the NOC has complained in the past that it has only

received a fraction of its budget.

Citizens have struggled with inflation, which has risen to more than 30 percent as the Libyan dinar has steadily lost value on the parallel market.

Economic policy has also been obstructed by divisions between rival factions based in Tripoli and eastern Libya. A separate government and branches of the NOC and central bank were set up in the east in 2014, but they have little real power.

(Source: Reuters)

Egypt set to test output from giant gas field

Test production at Egypt's Eni SpA-operated Zohr natural gas field will begin “in the coming few days,” the oil ministry said, as the country nears its goal of producing commercial quantities of gas at the biggest discovery in the Mediterranean Sea by the end of this year.

Authorities are pumping gas from the national distribution system to test pipelines in preparation for trial production from the offshore field, Oil Minister Tarek El-Molla said Sunday in an emailed statement. Output will gradually increase until mid-2018, with the first phase of the project initially yielding about 350 million cubic feet per day, he said.

Zohr marks a turning point that would spell an end to the tenders that suppliers from Glencore Plc to Trafigura PTE Ltd. have won in past years. Once it starts producing, the field will help end Egypt's reliance on imported liquefied natural gas next year and may eventually enable the North African nation to export gas, El-Molla said last month in an interview.

Gas from Zohr will also help ease pressure on the economy of the most populous Arab nation, which has been plagued by a shortage of foreign currency since a 2011 uprising. Zohr, which Eni discovered in August 2015, has an estimated reserve of about 850 billion cubic meters of natural gas in place.

(Source: Bloomberg)

IEA says India will achieve ‘electricity for all’ by early 2020s

In a positive development that has confirmed India's march towards energy security driven by three big factors—solar energy, wind energy and electric cars—the International Energy Agency (IEA), in its latest report, has said that not only will India achieve “electricity for all” by the early 2020s, but will also be a major driving force in global energy trends.

The IEA's World Energy Outlook Report 2017, re-launched in association with The Energy & Resources Institute (TERI) in New Delhi, on Wednesday, pointed out that India has been gaining a prominent position in global energy trends through its targeted efforts and will lead global energy demand growth by 2040.

Tim Gould, Head of Division, World Energy Outlook, IEA, told The Sunday Guardian: “In our view, if you look at the increase in the global energy demand between now and 2040, India is the single biggest component of that growth. As much as 30% of overall growth will be driven by India alone and that means India will have significant impact on global energy trends across a vast variety of fuels and technologies.”

The report noted that India's continued emphasis on electrifying households will help the country reach “universal electricity access” in the early 2020s, with renewables accounting for about 60% of those who gain access. Gould attributed these findings to positive indications emerging from India's recent policy developments towards managing energy efficiency and pushing the expansion of renewable energy.

(Source: Sunday Guardian)

The advertisement features a dynamic image of a sailboat, the 'TeamWorld management', racing on a blue sea. The sailboat's sails are black with 'RAYMOND WEIL GENEVE' printed on them. In the foreground, a Raymond Weil Geneve automatic watch with a silver-toned metal bracelet and a white dial is prominently displayed. The watch face includes a date window at 3 o'clock and the text 'RAYMOND WEIL GENEVE', 'AUTOMATIC 300H/1000H', and 'SWISS MADE'. The background shows the sailboat's mast and rigging against a bright sky, with two crew members visible on the deck.

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Burma is stonewalling the West on the Rohingya

International reaction to the ethnic cleansing campaign carried out by the Burmese military against the country's Muslim Rohingya minority gathered some momentum this past week. On Tuesday, the United Nations Human Rights Council passed a resolution condemning Burma, also known as Myanmar, for the "very likely commission of crimes against humanity." The next day, the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a resolution demanding an end to the military's attacks and the restoration of humanitarian access to Rakhine state, from which more than 625,000 people have been driven since late August.

Both Congress and the Trump administration are moving toward sanctions, including against the military leadership and, in the case of Congress, the industries that supply it. So is the European Union. Pope Francis met Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh at the beginning of December after visiting Burma and spoke out about "the immense toll of human suffering."

Unfortunately, there is not much evidence the pressure is having an effect on Burma's generals or even the civilian government under once-revered Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. By most accounts, Burmese society is united to an extraordinary degree in its contempt for the Rohingya, a long-despised community, and in its rejection of international criticism. Far from being willing to investigate reports of systematic brutality — murders of children, gang rapes, the torching of scores of villages — the military is insisting that its troops are innocent of any offense.

Rather than speak out or pressure the generals, Aung San Suu Kyi has been telling Western officials they are only endangering Burma's nascent democracy by protesting what the UN human rights chief has called "elements of genocide."

In theory, Burma has accepted repatriation; the government signed an agreement with Bangladesh last month and says returns can begin in a couple of months. But as UN refugee officials pointed out this past week, the conditions for a voluntary and sustainable return of the refugees don't yet exist. Many Rohingya are traumatized. There is no provision for international monitoring, humanitarian aid, secure places to live or the granting of basic rights such as citizenship.

These hard realities mean that the United Nations and Western governments must begin to focus on improving conditions for the hundreds of thousands of Rohingya in Bangladesh, who are likely to remain there for the foreseeable future and who face grave humanitarian risks — such as an incipient diphtheria epidemic.

At the same time, Western governments must not allow the intransigence of the Burmese elite to deter the pursuit of justice for the Rohingya, including prosecution of those responsible for the ethnic cleansing. Allowing crimes against humanity to go unpunished is an invitation for more and worse atrocities.

(Source: The Washington Post)

U.S. diplomat's resignation signals wider exodus from State Department

An award-winning U.S. diplomat who was seen as a rising star at the State Department has issued a scathing resignation letter, accusing Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and the Trump administration of undercutting the State Department and damaging America's influence in the world.

Elizabeth Shackelford, who most recently served as a political officer based in Nairobi for the U.S. mission to Somalia, wrote to Tillerson that she reluctantly had decided to quit because the administration had abandoned human rights as a priority and shown disdain for the State Department's diplomatic work, according to her letter, obtained by Foreign Policy.

"I have deep respect for the career Foreign and Civil Service staff who, despite the stingy disrespect this Administration has shown our profession, continue the struggle to keep our foreign policy on the positive trajectory necessary to avert global disaster in increasingly dangerous times," Shackelford wrote in her Nov. 7 letter, which is published in full below.

"With each passing day, however, this task grows more futile, driving the Department's experienced and talented staff away in ever greater numbers."

Her former colleagues said her departure — and the sentiments expressed in her letter — reflect a wider exodus of mid-career diplomats who have lost confidence in Tillerson's management and the Trump administration's approach toward diplomacy.

"She's emblematic of what we're losing across the board," said one of Shackelford's former State Department colleagues. "She is the best among us. We should not be losing the best among us. And that should concern people that we are," said the former colleague.

In her letter, Shackelford said she was leaving with a "heavy heart" as she recognized the potential of the State Department's mission. She said she was "shocked" when Tillerson appeared to cast doubt on the importance of human rights in remarks to department employees on May 3.

The State Department's role in internal government debates also had "diminished," she wrote, with the White House handing



over authority to the Pentagon to shape the country's foreign policy. Meanwhile, unfilled vacancies and proposed budget and staffing cuts had left the department adrift, with weakened influence inside the administration and on the ground, she wrote.

"The cost of this is visible every day in Mission Somalia, my current post, where State's diplomatic influence, on the country and within our own interagency, is waning," she wrote.

In the closing paragraph of her letter, Shackelford called on Tillerson "to stem the bleeding by showing leadership and a commitment to our people, our mission, and our mandate as the foreign policy arm of the United States."

"If you are unable to do so effectively within this Administration, I would humbly recommend you follow me out the door."

When asked about the criticisms in the letter, State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert said: "We are not able to comment on the career choices of each person at the Department."

"However, I can say that the Secretary has made clear that his objective is to make the State Department more efficient, more effective, and for staff to have a much more

rewarding and satisfying career," she added.

Wave of criticism

Tillerson has faced a wave of criticism from lawmakers and former senior diplomats about what they say is the dismantling of the State Department amid a hemorrhaging of top talent, a hiring freeze, and plummeting morale. He has firmly rejected the criticism, insisting the media mischaracterizes the rate of those leaving the department and that his plan to "redesign" the State Department is employee-driven and prioritizes the staff's well-being.

"What it's done," Tillerson said of the hiring freeze on Friday, "was just a little bit of a blunt instrument to have everyone be a little more disciplined about filling their positions."

But even his harshest critics say much of the blame for the troubled state of the Foreign Service rests with the president, who has shown an impatience with diplomacy and often sidelined Tillerson.

Shackelford's sentiments also reflect a long-held but growing concern among diplomats and experts that U.S. policy is increasingly dominated and shaped by the military, particularly in Africa. The Pentagon has expanded its footprint and

operations on the continent with additional funding while the State Department and U.S. AID face steep budget cuts and a dearth of ambassadors or top appointees in Washington.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, a retired career diplomat and former assistant secretary of state for African affairs, said the U.S. military has a vital role to play in Africa and elsewhere but said the pendulum was swinging too far away from diplomacy. "You can't just do military. You have to have the complement of diplomatic and development working alongside the military colleagues," she told FP.

Somalia reflects a balance that clearly favors the military, as the State Department lacks the manpower and resources of its Pentagon counterparts. In recent months, the U.S. military has expanded its role with hundreds of troops and more strikes against al Shabab militants, while diplomatic efforts have ebbed following the departure of U.S. ambassador to Somalia Stephen Schwartz in October.

The staff at the U.S. mission have repeatedly asked Washington for permission to meet Somali political leaders at Villa Somalia, the presidential residence, but the State Department has rejected the request on security grounds. U.S. military officers are able to meet Somali officials at the presidential palace, and other foreign diplomatic missions regularly visit the building for talks.

Friday was Shackelford's last day as a foreign service officer after nearly eight years in the State Department.

Born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi, the 38-year-old Shackelford graduated first in her class at the University of Pittsburgh Law School. She worked at a law firm, then the consulting company Booz Allen on foreign aid projects before joining the foreign service in 2010.

Shackelford distinguished herself in South Sudan for overseeing the evacuation of 1,000 Americans and other foreign nationals when violence erupted in Juba in December 2013. For her leadership skills and crisis planning in the evacuation effort, she received a department-wide Barbara W. Watson award for consular excellence. ➔13

Second Announcement

جمهوری اسلامی ایرانوزارت نیروسازمان آب و برق خوزستان

نوبت دوم

مناقصه بین المللی

فراخوان ارزیابی کیفی مناقصه‌مگران و تامین کنندگان مالی طرح توسعه نیروگاه سد دز به روش EPC+F

Islamic Republic of IranMinistry of EnergyKhuzestan Water and Power Authority

International TenderRequest of QualificationsEPC+F Bid for Dez Dam Power Plant Extension Project

Khuzestan Water and Power Authority (KWPA) intends to entrust financing, engineering , procurement, construction, installation, commissioning and 1 year trial operation and maintenance of the Dez Dam power plant extension project as EPC+F basis contract to qualified eligible bidders considering the following criteria and information. The bid will be carried out in accordance with Article (12) of the National Law of Bids (2004) and its relative directives in compliance with the relevant regulations of the “Law for the Sixth Development Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran” and based on the issued licenses.**1- Client Name and Address:** Khuzestan Water and Power Authority (KWPA), Golestan Blvd., Ahvaz City, Iran: Telephone No + (9861) 33331001, Fax + (9861) 33337001.**2- Brief Scope of project:**2.1. Financing, engineering, procurement, construction, installation, commissioning and 1 year trial operation and maintenance of:
- Three 180 MW hydroelectric power units (as the 2th Dez dam power plant)
- Dam strengthening and rehabilitation.
2.2. Based on the Governmental approved financing structure, the Contractor shall be held responsible for financing 85 percent of the Contract Price (from foreign sources).**3- Project Location:** The Dez Dam site, 22 km northwest of Andimeshk City, Khuzestan province, Iran.**4- Estimated Cost for Execution:** 372 million Euros
Repayment of the financial facilities, cost of money and related expenses will be guaranteed by the provision of the sovereign guarantee, in accordance with the regulations of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance under Article 62 of National Audit Act.**5- Execution and Operation Periods:** 72 months including 60 months for financing, engineering, procurement, construction, installation and commissioning along with 12 months of trial operation and maintenance.**6- Eligibility Criteria of Bidders:** Those consortium or joint venture of foreign and local contractors that have proven experience in dam and hydro power projects, can participate in bid considering the Law and Regulations of the Islamic Republic of Iran particularly including the Law on Maximum Use of Iranian Technical, Engineering, Manufacturing Industrial and Executive Capabilities for Implementation of Projects and Provision of Facilities Required for Export of Services (2012) taking into account the terms and conditions below:**6-1- For Foreign contractors:** Foreign contractors must be capable of financing, providing technical support and management regarding to the size, magnitude and specifications of the project and shall submit the Letter of Pre-Agreement of the intended foreign financing banks or institutions to finance 85 percent of total contract price along with other qualification documents. The bank or financier institution must meet the necessary conditions to finance the project approved by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran (CBI). The foreign contractor must have similar project experiences in dam and hydro power projects in the role of EPC contractor or participate in the bid with a reputable foreign consultant in designing similar projects (as a sub-consultant in the technical office).**6-2- For local contractors:** The required grades for consortium or joint venture of local contractors approved by plan and budget organization (PBO) are as follows:
- Certificate of “grade 1 in EPC projects” in the field of “water” with the sub-category of “dam construction” and the grade 1 of the contractor in the field of “power” with the sub-category of “power generation”.
Or
- Certificate of “grade 1 of the contractor” in the field of “dam construction and related facilities” and the grade 1 of the contractor in the field of “power” with the sub-category of the “power generation” along with first-rank local consultants in “water engineering” with the sub-category of “dam engineering”.**7- Date, Deadline and Address to receive documents:** The eligible bidders can receive the qualification documents from the date of 13/12/2017 to 23/12/2017 on office hours, from Behan Sadd Consulting Engineers Co. at the following address: No. 83, 17th St., Riazi Bakhshehsh Av., West Sarv Blvd., Sa'adat Abad, Tehran, Phone: + (9821) 22062634.
- The bidders can receive the document only by the authorized representative with the sign and sealed introduction letter including the bank payment bill of 3500000 Rials deposited into JAM account number 1364461783 of Behan Sadd Consulting Engineers Company in Mellat Bank, “Sarv - Sa'adat Abad” Branch.**8- Qualification Documents' Submission Date, Deadline and Address:** After reviewing of the qualification documents, the bidders should complete the relevant documents up to the end of the office hours of 30/01/2018 and submit them in a signed and sealed envelope to the following address: Khuzestan Water and Power Authority (KWPA), Contracts Department, 2nd Floor, Five-Floor Building, Golestan Blvd., Ahvaz, Iran. Phone: + (9861) 33360278.**9. The bidders may contact the Behan Sadd Consulting Engineers Co at the above mentioned address for any further questions/information.**

Khuzestan Water and Power Authority public relations

شرکت سهامی سازمان آب و برق خوزستان در نظر دارد با رعایت ماده (۱۲) قانون برگزاری مناقصات مصوب سال ۱۳۸۲ مجلس شورای اسلامی و آیین نامه اجرایی ذریط براساس قانون برنامه ششم توسعه کشور و براساس مجوزات اخذ شده، تامین مالی، طراحی، اجرا و یک سال بهره‌برداری و نگهداری آزمایشی طرح توسعه نیروگاه سد دز به روش EPC+F را با اطلاعات مشروحه ذیل به متقاضیان واجد صلاحیت واگذار نماید.

۱- نام و نشانی دستگاه مناقصه‌گزار: سازمان آب و برق استان خوزستان، اهواز، بلوار گلستان، تلفن ۵-۳۳۳۳۰۰۱+ و فکس ۰۰۱۳۳۳۱۰۰۱+ (۹۸۶۱)

۲- شرح مختصری از مشخصات و مقادیر کار:

۱-۲- تامین مالی، طراحی، تامین کالا، اجرا و یک سال بهره‌برداری و نگهداری آزمایشی سه واحد ۱۸۰ مگاواتی نیروگاه برقایی و انجام کارهای سیویل ایمن سازی، پایداری و علاج بخشی در سد و ساختگاه موجود.

۲-۲- براساس مجوزات اخذ شده تامین مالی (به صورت فاینانس خارجی) معادل ۸۵٪ مبلغ پیمان کار می‌باشد.

۳- محل اجرا: استان خوزستان - ۲۲ کیلومتری شمال شرقی شهر اندیشک، ساختگاه سد دز.

۴- برآورد تقریبی هزینه اجرا: ۳۷۲ میلیون یورو

بازپرداخت اصل و سود تسهیلات مالی و هزینه های تبیی مطابق قوانین وزارت اقتصاد و دارایی در چارچوب ماده ۶۲ قانون محاسبات عمومی کشور با ارائه ضمانت دولتی (Sovereign Guarantee) تضمین خواهد شد.

۵- مدت اجرا و بهره برداری: ۷۲ ماه ، شامل ۶۰ ماه برای تامین مالی، طراحی، تامین کالا و اجرا ، ب علاوه ۱۲ ماه بهره برداری و نگهداری آزمایشی.

۶- شرایط متقاضیان شرکت در ارزیابی کیفی:

پیمانکاران خارجی و داخلی که دارای سوابق کاری در اجرای پروژه‌های سد و نیروگاه برق آبی باشند باتوجه به ضوابط و مقررات جاری دولت جمهوری اسلامی ایران از جمله قانون حداکثر استفاده از توان تولیدی و خدماتی در تامین نیازهای کشور (مصوب ۱۳۹۱) با رعایت شرایط زیر می‌توانند نسبت به ایجاد مشارکت (پیمانکاران خارجی و داخلی) و شرکت در ارزیابی کیفی اقدام نمایند.

۱-۶- پیمانکاران خارجی:

- پیمانکاران خارجی باید دارای فني،مالی و مدیریتی مناسب با توجه به ابعاد و مشخصات طرح باشند و موافقت اصولی اولیه بانک یا موسسه تامین کننده تسهیلات خارجی مبتنی بر موافقت با تامین مالی ۸۵٪ اعتبار موردنیاز پروژه را به همراه اسناد و مدارک ارزیابی کیفی ارائه نمایند.

- بانک یا موسسه تامین کننده مالی باید شرایط لازم و مورد تایید بانک مرکزی جمهوری اسلامی ایران برای تامین مالی طرح را داشته باشد.

- پیمانکار خارجی می بایست سابقه اجرای پروژه مشابه سد و نیروگاه برقایی را بصورت طرح و ساخت داشته باشد و یا با مشارکت با یک شرکت مشاور خارجی معتبر در طراحی پروژه های مشابه (به عنوان مشاور همکار در دفتر فنی) در مناقصه شرکت نماید.

۲-۶- پیمانکاران داخلی:

مشارکت پیمانکاران داخلی می بایست با لحاظ رتبه های تایید شده زیر از سازمان برنامه و بودجه باشد:

- پیمانکار رتبه ۱ طرح و ساخت رشته آب با زیرشاخه سد سازی به همراه پیمانکار رتبه یک رشته نیرو با زیر شاخه تولید نیرو.

و یا

- پیمانکار رتبه یک آب در زیر رشته سدسازی و تأسیسات مربوطه و رتبه یک رشته نیرو با زیر شاخه تولید نیرو و به همراه مشاور رتبه یک مهندسی آب یا تخصص سد سازی.

۷- تاریخ، مهلت و محل دریافت اسناد ارزیابی:

واحدین شرایط می‌توانند در ساعات اداری از تاریخ ۹۶/۰۹/۲۲ تا ۹۶/۱۰/۰۲ نسبت به دریافت اسناد ارزیابی از شرکت مهندسی مشاور بهان سد به نشانی: تهران، سعادت آباد، خیابان سرو غربی، خیابان ریاضی بخشایش، کوچه فهدیه، پلاک ۸۳. تلفن ۲۲۰۶۲۶۳۴+ (۹۸۲۱) اقدام نمایند. دریافت اسناد ارزیابی تنها با همراه داشتن معرفی نامه کتبی و در قبال ارائه فیش بانکی به مبلغ -/۳۵۰۰۰۰۰۰ ریال واریزی به حساب جام به شماره ۱۳۶۴۴۶۱۷۸۳ نزد بانک ملت شعبه سرو سعادت آباد به نام شرکت مهندسی مشاور بهان سد امکان پذیر خواهد بود.

۸- تاریخ، مهلت و محل تحویل اسناد ارزیابی:

مناقصه‌گران پس از دریافت و مطالعه اسناد ارزیابی، حداکثر تا آخر وقت اداری مورخ ۹۶/۱۱/۰۱ اسناد مربوطه را تکمیل و در پاکت لاک و مهر شده به نشانی: اهواز - بلوار گلستان، ساختمان ۵ طبقه سازمان آب و برق استان خوزستان، طبقه دوم، دفتر قراردادها، تلفن ۳۳۳۶۰۲۷۸+ (۹۸۶۱) تحویل دهند .

۹- مناقصه‌گران می‌توانند برای کسب اطلاعات بیشتر و بیان سوالات احتمالی خود با شرکت مهندسی مشاور بهان سد به نشانی ذکر شده در بالا مکاتبه و یا با شماره تلفن ۲۲۰۶۲۶۴۴+ (۹۸۲۱) تماس حاصل نمایند.

What is Johnson afraid of?

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — The British Foreign Secretary's recent visit to our country is a matter of varying dimensions. The reality is that Boris Johnson is currently in a difficult position. He has been criticized by many British politicians such as Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the Labor Party in recent weeks. Even some Boris Johnson parties in the conservative party have advised him to resign from his position. Under these circumstances, the British Foreign Secretary has traveled to Iran to discuss the security prosecutors, nuclear accords and regional issues with our country's authorities. What is certain is that Britain is guilty of any of these cases. In other words, Boris Johnson must be held accountable for any charges against his government.

Regarding the nuclear deal, we have witnessed British decades over the past two years. Following the United States of America, Britain is preventing the normalization of Iran's banking and economic relations with other countries in the world. Currently, British banks do not have the necessary cooperation with Iranian merchants and exporters.

As for developments in the West Asia region, Britain is one of the main defendants. Johnson knows well that his country is the main sponsor of assassination and violence in the region. Britain is one of the main supporters of Saudi Arabia in the Yemeni war. Also, Britain is helping Saudi and Bahraini authorities in suppressing the Bahraini people. In Syria and Iraq, Britain played an important role in the emergence and creation of ISIS.

In the case of security guards, Britain must also be responsible for spying on Iran. Britain continues to be spies and criminals not only



in Iran, but also in many Muslim countries. The role of British security agencies is high on this issue.

The most important goal of Johnson's journey to Iran is to save himself from the difficult situation in which he is. The British Foreign Secretary now sees his future in danger. At the moment, Johnson doesn't have much luck to be present at the top of political and executive equations of London. In other words, many people who believed that he would be a good successor to Theresa May, have now discarded this idea. In such a situation, Johnson should throw out the thought of being the next UK's Prime Minister!

Many media in Britain now agree that Johnson is a man of great mistakes in the political arena.

It's better to talk a bit about Boris Johnson in this regard. Boris Johnson's name is familiar to many people who follow the UK political developments! Johnson is one of the most prominent members of the British Conservative Party. However, he is facing hard times in his country. He is now accused of ineffectiveness in the UK's political and executive atmosphere by the media and many of the British politicians. This is while Johnson was named as one of the main alternatives for the position of the UK's Prime Minister.

Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson, known as Boris Johnson, is a 51-year-old politician who sees himself in a proper position to be the prime minister of his country. During the years between 2008 and 2016, when he was the mayor of London, he became popular with the conservative party supporters. He could even gain popularity among people with no particular political orientation. He is also known for adopting liberal approaches among conservatives. Boris Johnson is considered a different politician in the conservative party. He is especially different from members like David Cameron and Theresa May.

Johnson was one of the main supporters of his country's exit from the European Union during the Brexit referendum. Adopting this stance towards the departure of Britain from Europe has led to the anger of many of his party members, including Prime Minister David Cameron. After David Cameron's resigned his post, many British analysts thought that Johnson would be introduced as the new prime minister. But eventually, we witnessed the presence of Theresa May was at the top of political and administrative equations in London.

However, today few people mention Johnson as the secretary of state in Britain. Under such circumstances, the desire of many Johnson party members from the Conservative Party to increase his premiership after Theresa's resignation. Theresa is scheduled to resign from her post for about two years. Will Johnson eventually be able to recover his lost position in England? Will we see Johnson's political death in the near future? The answers to these questions will be determined in the near future.

Jerusalem al-Quds victim of division among Muslims

1 → What should not have happened, did. Then, Saudi Arabia, along with Turkey, started its campaign to destroy Syria and intervene in Iraq's affairs, and now, Riyadh intends to annihilate the Yemeni people. Religious views and fighting against Shi'ism have always been the centerpiece of the Saudi policies. In this context, talking about the Islamic world and expecting a coordinated reaction against Trump's decision has no practical basis.

If there is an Islamic world, which there is, it is currently going through a leadership dispute. Who is the leader of the Muslim world? Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, each are competing to take the helm of the Islamic world according to their own national interests and based on their own particular viewpoints. Given the existing weaknesses, capacities and experiences of the West, there is no longer the possibility of imposing sanctions [on the West] such as the Oil Embargo of the 70s. Apart from that, Europe has not sided with the US on this decision. Almost all western countries have condemned Trump's move, which may not have sounded as vehemently as Muslim states, but by distancing from the US, they have bought themselves immunity against paying the cost for Washington's decision, and at the same time, their measure has not been that different from the measure taken by Islamic countries. Of course, the West's approach can, in the long run, shift toward the US policy, but this shift can also occur with delay in many Islamic countries.

Neither the Arab League, nor the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, nor the non-Aligned movement, and not even the Palestinians, can take a practical move to force Trump into backtracking on his decision. A large part of the Palestinians is still engaged in clashes between Hamas and their self-governed body, and another part, in the context of time and place, has shifted identities from the that of the displaced to the migrant. Many of the Palestinians, or even



Muslims in general, are not how they used to be in the past.

Political measures to prevent a process from happening should be taken before the decision-making and its announcement. Accusing the times is but excusing ourselves. We should not place the blame of all conspiracies and destructions on the US, because the Islamic world is no less guilty. More than the enemy, we need to look within ourselves. We, too, have changed, wittingly or otherwise. All Muslims more or less fell into the ISIL trap, and the terrorist group managed to become a mechanism for the Shias and Sunnis to settle the scores between one another. It has been said that the winner of the emergence of the ISIL is Tel Aviv, and ultimately, it was Tel Aviv who came out as triumphant in the post-ISIL era by Washington's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Yes, the game is not over, but Jerusalem has become Israel's capital and the process of regional developments has entered a new phase that needs to be considered as a new period in the history of developments in the Middle East.

After Trump's declaration, there's only one option left for Palestinians

TEHRAN (FNA) — U.S. President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem Al-Quds as Israel's new capital city has led to a massive and violent backlash from the Palestinians as well as protests and condemnations from the international community.

While President Trump is quite pleased with himself for the recognition, other US officials and Western leaders are predicting that it seriously threatens regional stability and could do lasting harm to efforts for peace talks.

For instance, European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini says the EU will work toward the city being made the capital of an independent Palestine. Mogherini says, "The EU is united on the position that the only realistic solution, given both nations' claims to the historic city, is for a two-state solution to happen with the city as the capital of both states." Far from it:

1- This is roughly in line with the United Nation's own position on the matter back in 1947, when they issued a Partition Plan for Palestine adopted by the General Assembly. That envisioned two states, and Jerusalem Al-Quds as a separate city under international control. The UN position, unlike the EU's, didn't necessarily envisage either nation making it their capital, let alone both, but Israel's subsequent military occupation and annexation of the city and surrounding area has made this a highly controversial plan at any rate, with Israel insisting Jerusalem Al-Quds must remain eternally undivided and under Israeli rule.



2- For the last 25 years, the sham peace process has been hurtling toward this very moment. Decades of playing the lopsided negotiations game has brought the Palestinians face-to-face with the simple truth that they pay a serious price for not negotiating. Their lands are taken by illegal Israeli settlements, many people are jailed and killed, and many are forced to eke out an existence on the margins of the Israeli occupation.

3- The US was never an honest broker between the two parties, and the pipe dream of pursuing statehood under a historic peace deal is over. The peace process was always

just a fig leaf foisted upon the Palestine Liberation Organization, which was left with very few other options but to participate as Arab countries expelled it from their capitals throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

4- Without any pretense of neutrality left in a US-led peace process, the Palestinian leadership must finally concede that the charade is over and no outside help is coming - not from the Americans, and not from the Europeans. President Mahmoud Abbas can no longer use the peace process and foreign aid to pacify Palestinians in the face of the daily indignities experienced living under Israeli occupation.

The liberation of Palestine was one of the main pillars of the Islamic Revolution of Iran under the leadership of Imam Khomeini, which created hope and mobility in the Islamic world. With the Iran-Iraq Imposed War and Imam Khomeini's saying that the path to Quds goes through Karbala, this strategy managed to remain the focus of Iran's foreign policy despite all issues. The Shia Iran supported the Sunni Palestine while the major part of Palestinian groups joined Arab states in Saddam Hussein's war against Iran, but this fact did not deter Iran from supporting Palestine's cause, and the support was so strong that some even said Iranians were more Palestinian than the Palestinians themselves. Iran's support for Palestine was partly due to throwing off isolation and historical accusations.

But today, what should not have happened has happened. Condemnations, demonstrations, conferences, statements, street clashes in Gaza, and individual and organized operations by Palestinians, none of them will be able to make a fundamental change. These moves are just treading on an old path that used to be more serious than today. Jerusalem al-Quds, apart from the enemy's measures, has fallen victim to the division among Muslim countries. A solution needs to be found. As long as the Islamic world is distanced from the real factors of power and is engaged with geopolitical rivalries in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, etc., Jerusalem will be in the hands of Zionists. The rivalry between eastern and western Rome and the ultimate collapse of Constantinople led to the fall of Eastern Rome and the change of its name to Istanbul. Today, Christians and Western tourists visit the churches and what remains of the Eastern Roman Empire in Turkey with regret, and if the Islamic world does not come together in unity and practical coordination (which looks quite a far-fetched possibility), it will not be long before Muslims would go to visit Jerusalem instead of al-Quds.

5- The Palestinians are right to interpret Trump's announcement as dismissing their historical, political, and cultural ties to Al-Quds, and as disputing their right to independence and self-determination. It condones Israel's occupation of the city in 1967 and implies that the city is solely Israeli.

Under these new circumstances, Palestinians should demand a new plan that veers away from American dictates, including achieving a real reconciliation between the primary political parties Fatah and Hamas, which have been at odds for years.

They should call for a new uprising, discard the two-state solution entirely, and shift to a struggle for one-state with equal rights for everyone living in historic Palestine. This legitimate push under international law toward a one-state model with full civil rights for all living in it will likely garner further momentum now - including support from the international civil society.

The Palestinians are now confident that Trump's announcement has provided clarity and a unifying objective for them. Last summer, their civil disobedience forced Israel to give up on its unilateral measures regarding the Haram al-Sharif compound, which houses the Al-Aqsa mosque.

This particular victory showed ordinary Palestinians that they had the power to stop the usurper regime and its American financiers, and change what's happening on the ground. They can once again rally, strategize, and mobilize; this time for a one-state solution; a humane solution that is no longer impeded by a sham peace process or a fraudulent broker.

Today's Europe at a glance



1 → These people are calling for a return to the time before the existence of the European Union. After 2014, radical right parties across Europe found extended powers.

Many nationalist parties, in the shadow of the weakness and inability of the moderate parties (conservative and socialist), were able to manifest themselves in the social body of the community.

Not long ago, radical right-wing movements (nationalist and anti-United Europe, anti-Islamist and anti-immigrant movements) were basically unable to obtain the least possible votes for entering the European Parliament.

For example, the Alternative for Germany (AFD) in the 2013 general election, couldn't gain 5% of the votes which was the minimum required for attending the German parliament (Bundestag). But now, in 2017, the party gained about 13% of the vote, and thus became the third strongest party in Germany after the two parties of Christian and Social Democrats.

In countries such as France, Austria, Sweden and Italy, the right-wing extremists could enormously succeed in the political and social grounds. It is expected that by 2020, far-right parties will become the most popular political parties in their countries.

The second point is about the «political-structural» conflicts in the European Union. Undoubtedly, the growing and progressive growth of the votes of nationalist parties is synonymous with the highlighted desire of «returning to the past» among the citizens of various European countries.

Over the past two decades, most European citizens believed that by «signing the Schengen Treaty», «using the common European currency», «the European protectionist approach in the field of economics», «the economic and political synergy of European players», etc., «The advantages» of forming the United Europe is far greater than its «costs».

Thus, nationalist parties were not accepted by the public opinion and couldn't come to power in the European countries. But now the equation has changed! Many European citizens «find less advantages» in the survival of the European Union.

Western officials must accept the bitter truth that the patterns and foundations have changed in the minds of citizens in different countries of the European Union, and this has greatly affected the «future of the United European and the European Union.» We are facing an antagonistic, infrastructural and fundamental contradiction in Europe.

They believe that what they get is much less than what they're paying for. Consequently «nationalism» as a politically accepted current is becoming more and more popular in the European countries.

The third point is the inability of European politicians such as Angela Merkel to maintain the existing political and economic structure, and to face the constant economic, security, political and social crises in Europe. The fact is that the Chancellor of Germany, whose country is the main economic and political leader in Europe, doesn't understand the profound transformations and infrastructure in the Green Continent.

Merkel and her entourage sought to impose

«exterior and specious reforms» in Europe in 2014, following the drastic triumphs of the far-right parties in the European parliamentary elections. The German Chancellor and people like Jean-Claude Juncker, Martin Schulz, Donald Tusk and other European executives who have played a major role in managing the developments in this collection, have never wanted to see and admit to a reality called «infrastructural contradictions» in the United Europe. They thought that the emergence of extremist parties was merely sort of reaction by the European citizens to the weak performance of the moderate parties. But that was not all!

Western officials must accept the bitter truth that the patterns and foundations have changed in the minds of citizens in different countries of the European Union, and this has greatly affected the «future of the United European and the European Union.» We are facing an antagonistic, infrastructural and fundamental contradiction in Europe.

To deal with this challenge, the «European reformist» approach isn't going to help. In such a situation, the only way for people like Merkel is to «redefine the European Union». This redefinition would be costly and difficult, but is the only possible way to save the «traditional United Europe» in the current situation.

Jacques Derrida, the postmodern philosopher, who is best known for developing a form of semiotic analysis known as deconstruction, which he discussed in numerous texts, and developed in the context of phenomenology, believes that the demolition and rebuilding of patterns should be done by the makers themselves. Will the EU finally succeed in redefining the European Union and preventing the continuation of the current process (which is absolutely to the benefit of nationalist groups)? Or will the EU and the Eurozone disappear in the near future? Will the term of «national citizen» be replaced with the «European citizen» in the coming years? These are the questions that many of them will be answered by 2020.

Did Hayden's flawed decisions make America more vulnerable?

By Patrick Eddington

Retired Gen. Michael Hayden, former director of the NSA and CIA (and now, a national security analyst at CNN), has recently emerged as a leading critic of the Trump administration, but not so long ago, he was widely criticized for his role in the post-9/11 surveillance abuses.

With the publication of his memoir, *Playing to the Edge: American Intelligence in the Age of Terror*, Hayden launched his reputational rehab campaign.

Like most such memoirs by high-level Washington insiders, Hayden's tends to be heavy on self-justification and light on genuine introspection and accountability.

Also, when a memoir is written by someone who spent their professional life in the classified world of the American Intelligence Community, an additional

caveat is in order: The claims made by the author are often impossible for the lay reader to verify. This is certainly the case for *Playing to the Edge*, an account of Hayden's time as director of the NSA, and subsequently, the CIA.

Fortunately, with respect to at least one episode Hayden describes, litigation I initiated under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) has produced documentary evidence of Hayden's role in the 9/11 intelligence failure and subsequent civil liberties violations. The consequences of Hayden's misconduct during this time continue to be felt today.

By the mid-1990s, a group of analysts, cryptographers, and computer specialists at NSA realized that the growing volume of digital data on global communications circuits was both a potential gold mine of information on drug traffickers and terrorist

organizations, as well as a problem for NSA's largely analog signals intelligence (SIGINT) collection, processing, and dissemination systems.

Stream of digital data

As recounted in the documentary *A Good American*, three NSA veterans — Bill Binney, Ed Loomis, and Kirk Wiebe — set out to solve the problem of handling an ever-increasing stream of digital data while protecting the 4th Amendment rights of Americans against warrantless searches and seizures.

Through their Signals Intelligence Automation Research Center (SARC), they had, by 1999, developed a working prototype system, nicknamed THINTHREAD. A senior Republican House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) staffer, Diane Roark, was so impressed with what Binney, Loomis, and Wiebe had developed, that she

helped steer approximately \$3 million to the THINTHREAD project to further its development.

But by April 2000, Roark and the SARC team had run into the ultimate bureaucratic roadblock for their plan: Hayden, who had recently been installed as NSA director.

He had his own, preferred solution to the same problem the SARC team had been trying to solve. As Hayden noted in his memoir:

Our answer was Trailblazer. This much-maligned (not altogether unfairly) effort was more a venture capital fund than a single program, with our investing in a variety of initiatives across a whole host of needs.

What we wanted was an architecture that was common across our mission elements, interoperable, and expandable. It was about ingesting signals, identifying and sorting them, storing what was im-

portant, and then quickly retrieving data in response to queries.

It was, of course, a description that fit THINTHREAD perfectly — except for the collection and storage of terabytes of digital junk.

THINTHREAD's focus on metadata mining and link analysis was designed to help analysts pinpoint the truly important leads to follow while discarding irrelevant data. Hayden's concept mirrored that of his successor, Keith Alexander, who also had a "collect it all" mentality.

That should've been Hayden's clue that NSA would be better off pursuing full deployment of THINTHREAD, a proven capability. But Hayden chose to pursue his industry-centric approach instead, and he tolerated no opposition or second-guessing of the decision he'd made. ➔13

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Avocados: History of an unlikely but legitimate healthy food craze

By Jacqueline Howard

From California to Manila, avocados are a common ingredient on restaurant menus around the world.

They can be found not only spread on toast and tacos but in ice cream, smoothies, hummus and even pasta sauce.

The consumption of avocados in the United States, has been climbing since 1989, when only about 1.1 pounds were consumed per capita, according to the Agriculture Marketing Resource Center, a research group that receives grants from the US Department of Agriculture.

By 2014, about 7 pounds were consumed per capita, and now avocados are a popular food item -- especially due to their health benefits. But what exactly makes them good for you?

"Avocados are a fruit and one of the few fruits that are high in fat and low in sugar," said Dr. Donald Hensrud, medical director of the Mayo Clinic Healthy Living Program in Rochester, Minnesota, and a specialist in nutrition and preventive medicine.

"Along with nuts, olive oil and canola oil, the fat content in avocados are predominantly monounsaturated fat, which is responsible for many ... health benefits," he said. "Avocados also contain other nutrients including B vitamins, vitamin E, vitamin C, copper and fiber, which add to their health benefits. They have a higher potassium content than bananas."

Yet long before the green-hued fruit became a modern-day health food staple, the history of the avocado was preserved in the Americas some 10,000 years ago.

The avocado's name is thought to come from the Aztec word *ahuacatl*, which means testicle, according to Merriam-Webster dictionary. The name presumably is tied to the shape of avocados.

When Spanish conquistadores arrived in the Americas, avocados attracted their attention, leading to the earliest-known written description of the fruit published in Sevilla in the early 1500s by explorer Martín Fernández de Enciso.

Yet before the avocado was distributed throughout Spanish colonies, Europe and the United States, the fruit was consumed for taste as well as for health, according to a 2007 article in the Harvard Papers in Botany.



Monounsaturated fats are good for your health in many ways, such as helping lower your “bad” LDL cholesterol levels and being high in vitamin E, which promotes healthy vision, a healthy immune system and other benefits.

In 1605, Spanish soldier and poet Garcilazo de la Vega described the avocado as “delicious and very healthy for sick people,” according to the article. De la Vega could have been on to something, as avocados are now seen as a source of the healthy dietary monounsaturated fat.

Monounsaturated fats are good for your health in many ways, such as helping lower your “bad” LDL cholesterol levels and being high in vitamin E, which promotes healthy vision, a healthy immune system and other benefits, according to the US National Library of Medicine.

"In addition, the relatively high fat content in avocados is associated with a low glycemic response, which is the tendency of a food to raise blood glucose," Hensrud said. "Evidence from large populations studies suggests that consumption of monounsaturated fats such as contained in avocados decreases overall

mortality."

How could you get those health benefits? Avocado toast has become a trendy way to consume the buttery fruit in the US, but Jenna Stangland, a registered dietitian at the physical therapy clinic Viverant in the Minneapolis area, said there are many other ways to include avocado in your daily diet.

"Avocado oil I think is getting to be easier to find in the grocery stores and more common as a type of oil to use in cooking or a marinade or as an ingredient in a homemade salad dressing, and then that oil contains the healthier fats rather than an oil that would have higher saturated fats," Stangland said. Avocado has a very high smoke point, the temperature at which oil starts to smoke, which makes it a good choice for cooking.

"It's common to do fruit and yogurt and

ice cubes in smoothies, but ... adding that avocado adds a really nice creaminess plus a healthy fat that might not be in a smoothie otherwise," she said. "Another one that I've tried, I haven't made myself, are avocado pops. ... It's like a frozen treat that includes that healthy fat."

However, because avocados are high in calories, Stangland cautions to watch portion sizes. For instance, topping a salad with about a half-cup of avocado adds 117 calories to your meal.

"Just doing a layer of the avocado on the toast comes out to be about a serving," Stangland said. "At restaurants, or even preparing a dish at home, putting sliced avocado on top of a fish or on top of a salad, it can be really easy to just slice up the whole avocado to put it on top of the salad, and then that's going to be a lot more dense in calories."

(Source: CNN)

Hearts and minds: Giles Fraser on life after his quadruple bypass

Vassilios Avlonitis sits in a cramped basement office in St Thomas' hospital in London. He may be a distinguished cardiac surgeon, but in the cash-strapped NHS, he still has to share a tiny workspace. He is immaculately turned out, with a kind face and the sort of hands I imagine playing the piano. And it's his hands that I can't stop looking at. The same hands that picked up a radial saw and cut through my chest bone. The same hands – the only hands – that have literally touched my heart. The hands that stripped veins from my leg and used them to replumb my broken heart. I have this man to thank for saving my life. And the cash-strapped NHS, of course.

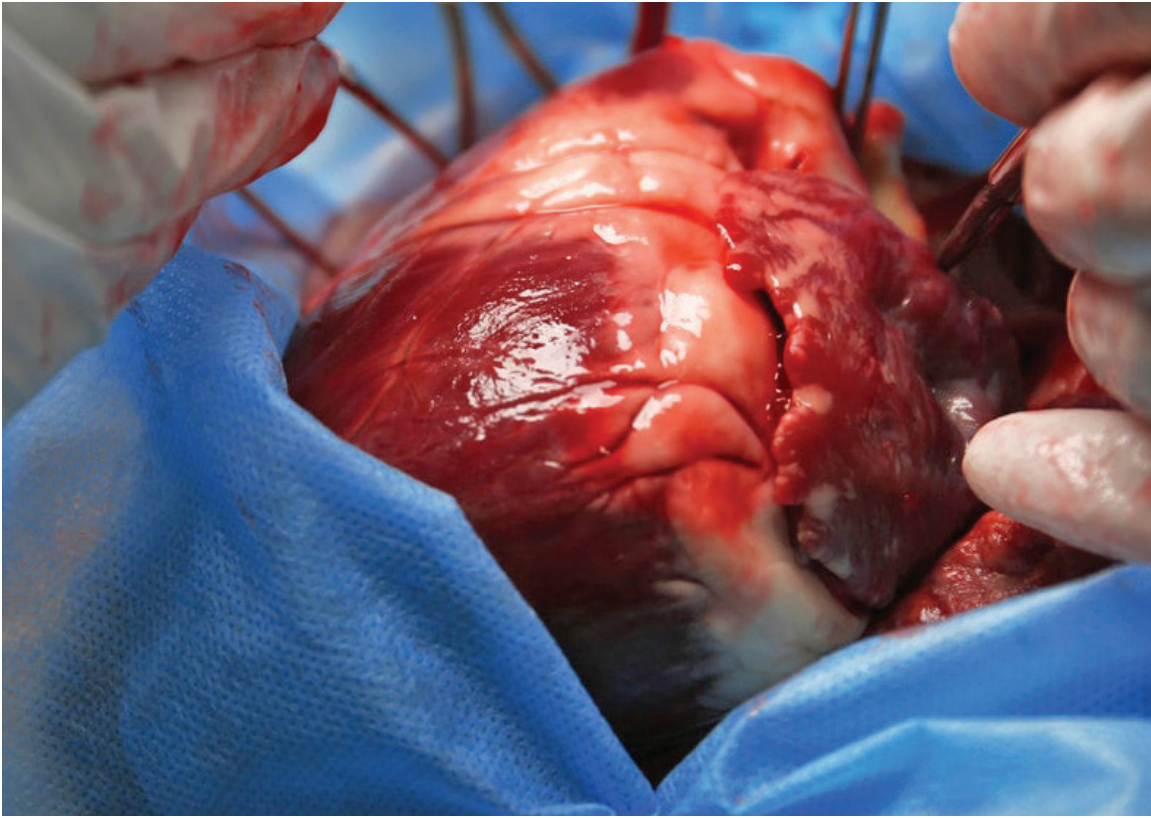
It is 50 years since Christian Barnard performed the first successful heart transplant operation. At the time, it was akin to putting a man on the moon. My operation was just a simple quadruple heart bypass, not a transplant. The day after the terrorist attack at Borough market, I had a heart attack. The team at St Thomas' discovered that my heart was almost completely blocked up with gunk. And they fixed me. So now I am overly aware of all things heart-shaped – both the pointy red heart shape that gets tattooed on arms and printed on cards and the fist-sized muscly pump that propels blood around our bodies.

That there are two very different hearts is interesting. One is the heart of medical science. The other is the heart of countless poems and religious writings, the heart that is a symbol of our emotional life, indeed, for some, a symbol of our very existence. Barnard's pioneering operation was an important stage in their long and complicated divorce because prior to this first heart transplant operation, it was the beating of our hearts that was widely regarded as signifying our being alive. Death was the cessation of the heartbeat because the heart was seen as the fountain of life. That is why the Japanese transplant surgeon Juro Wada, who performed a heart transplant in 1968, was charged with the intentional homicide of the donor. The logic was clear: if the heart was still OK, then the donor must still have been alive when the heart was removed.

In this country, the Daily Express led a campaign against heart transplants, stoking up fear that organs were being harvested from those who could have been saved. The questions kept on coming. If the heart was indeed the source of life, what did that mean for the identity of the recipient? And in apartheid South Africa, this anxiety was given a racial dimension – particularly after Barnard's second operation, in which a mixed-race man's heart was used to save a white man. The Guardian commented, with bitter sarcasm: "There is no provision under the Group Areas Act for black hearts to beat in white areas."

It was partly in response to some of these issues that we now we think of death as the shutting down of a part of our brain, with brain death becoming the accepted medical definition of death from the 70s onwards. Nevertheless, it was still extremely disconcerting to hear Mr Avlonitis tell me that, as a part of the operation, he had stopped my heart beating for the best part of an hour. Medical science may have shifted our existential centre of gravity from the heart to the brain, but for an old sentimentalist such as myself, the heart will always feel like the centre of my being.

It was a conversation with Rowan Williams, the former archbishop of Canterbury, that helped me understand why I still think that. Imagine how peculiar it would be if



Death was the cessation of the heartbeat because the heart was seen as the fountain of life. That is why the Japanese transplant surgeon Juro Wada, who performed a heart transplant in 1968, was charged with the intentional homicide of the donor. The logic was clear: if the heart was still OK, then the donor must still have been alive when the heart was removed.

scientific advance created an artificial replacement pump for the heart that pushes blood around the body in one continuous flow, without a beat. This thought got us talking about Shakespeare and his use of iambic pentameter. "But, soft! What light through yon-der win-dow breaks?" The rhythm – ber-bum, ber-bum, ber-bum, ber-bum, ber-bum – is the rhythm of our heartbeat. That is what makes Shakespeare's poetry so ingressive, so affecting. It picks up on the earliest noise we hear, in the womb. And this rhythm accompanies us throughout our lives. Rowan compared it to the tide coming in and out. It is a sort of anchor, a fixed and continuous reference on which we come to attach a sense of self. This is the beat that monks and mystics have listened out for in their periods of silent prayer, as if listening to this is to spend time deliberately conscious of the constituent conditions of being human. There would be something profoundly disorientating in having an artificial heart that didn't need to beat out this

constant and uninterrupted tempo.

We have strayed a long way from the calm and collected Mr Avlonitis, who smiled weakly at my tendency towards exotic metaphysical speculations. He is a scientist. And his subject is a pump. "Doesn't that make him just a glorified plumber?" I tried to provoke him, for conversation's sake. "Hasn't the brain taken centre-stage now?" And with that my mind was off, thinking about how interesting it was that we have become a far more rationally oriented culture at around the same time that the brain has become the preeminent organ in the human body. But he was not provokable. No doubt it is the quality of imperturbability that makes him such an effective surgeon. If he was a plumber, he was a plumber that has saved my life. Not just that, but I feel better today than I have for a great many years. I would say that I am born again. And I thank him, and all the staff at St Thomas', from the bottom of my heart.

(Source: The Guardian)

5 ways to burn more calories without hitting the gym



By Malia Frey

Do you know how many extra calories you can burn with simple changes to your lifestyle? It turns out that you don't have to go to the gym to burn more calories and lose weight. The little things you do during the day make a big difference in your metabolism. Use these tips to change your daily routine, boost your calorie burn, and lose weight without exercise.

■ Use neat to burn more calories

If you want to burn more calories all day long, experts will tell you to increase your NEAT or non-exercise activity thermogenesis.

This is a fancy term for all of the movement you do that is not vigorous enough to be called a workout. According to researchers at the Mayo Clinic, NEAT could play a major role in whether or not you lose or gain weight. And it may affect your risk for obesity.

So, how many calories can your NEAT burn? It varies, but the number could be significant. According to one study, because everyone's activity level is so different, calories burned from NEAT can vary from person to person by up to 2,000 calories per day.

So how do you take advantage of this calorie-burning benefit? Start with these small changes or get creative and try some of your own ideas.

■ The office

Having a sedentary job isn't a direct cause of obesity, but sitting for extended periods could become a cause of weight gain in some people. The American Heart Association reported that "obese individuals appear to exhibit an innate tendency to be seated for 2.5 hours per day more than sedentary lean counterparts." Researchers estimated that if obese individuals could adopt the NEAT habits of their lean counterparts, they could burn an additional 350 calories per day.

If you have a desk job, get up and move for at least 15 minutes every hour. Take a walk to the restroom, go to the water cooler, run an errand, take the stairs instead of the elevator or do your filing from a standing rather than seated position. Grab a few co-workers and make increasing your NEAT part of a healthy office routine. Many dieters lose weight at work with these simple but effective strategies.

■ Relaxation

How many hours will you spend in front of the television tonight? You can burn extra calories by simply adding some light activity to your TV viewing and relaxation time. Fold laundry, dust furniture or sweep the floor while you watch television. You can even do a full workout on your couch to burn up to 300 calories! Not only will the activity boost your caloric expenditure, but you will eat less in front of the television if your hands are busy. You can even burn calories during other leisure activities. If you like to talk on the phone, walk around during your chat instead of sitting down. And try to limit entertainment-related computer time to 15-minute intervals.

■ Hang with the kids

Teaching your children to increase their daily activity may save them from weight gain in the future. And it will help you, too! If you want to slim down without exercise, find ways to increase your walking time during the day. Walk the kids to school or to the bus stop. If you drive them, choose a parking spot at the back of the lot and use those extra steps to chat with them about their day. And parents, if you are tempted to scold your kids for fidgeting, you might want to think twice. According to research published in the Journal of Clinical Nutrition, fidgeting is a common form of NEAT and can contribute to a healthy metabolism.

■ Daily chores

Household chores can burn a few hundred calories per hour. The actual number depends on your size and gender. For example, a petite woman burns about 160 calories per hour doing moderate chores while a larger man would burn substantially more. But who would have thought that sweeping your floor could cause weight loss? Grab a mop and do a complete housecleaning workout to burn calories and tidy up at the same time. Once the cleaning is done, there are always organizational tasks that can help you improve your energy balance. Organize your closet, unpack boxes or clean the garage to increase your NEAT.

■ Social events

How many times have you entered a party in a friend's home and scanned the room for a comfy place to sit? The next time you go to a party, burn extra calories by becoming more social. Choose to stand or circle the room and talk to as many party goers as possible. Offer to help in the kitchen, take a tour of the garden or greet guests at the door to stay active. You'll be the life of the party and increase your NEAT at the same time.

(Source: verywell.com)

B vitamins may raise risk of lung cancer in men who smoke

Smoking causes lung cancer — no surprise there. But a new study found that high dosages of vitamin B6 or B12 supplements were associated with three to four times the lung cancer risk in male smokers compared with smokers who did not take the supplements. The results were published in the Aug. 22, 2017, Journal of Clinical Oncology. Researchers examined information from more than 44,000 men ages 50 to 76. At enrollment, the men reported on their smoking history and their B vitamin supplement use over the previous 10 years. In the study, high intake of B vitamin was classified as 20 milligrams (mg) of B6 per day or 55 micrograms (mcg) of B12. (The recommended daily intakes for men ages 51 and older are 1.7 mg for B6 and 2.4 mcg for B12.)

B vitamins help strengthen the immune system, according to the researchers, so it is not clear why high levels of supplemental B vitamins would increase rather than decrease smokers' lung cancer risk. They speculated that the B vitamins might feed small, undetected tumors and make them grow faster.

B vitamins aside, not smoking remains the most important way to prevent lung cancer. In fact, the researchers also found that men who quit smoking for at least 10 years before the study and also took high dosages of the B vitamins did not have a higher risk of lung cancer. In fact, their risk was equal to that of men who had never smoked.

(Source: health.harvard.edu)

10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

Here are high rated IT titles in the world that reviewed by savvy tech users:

1 Apple is close to acquiring Britain-based Shazam, the app that allows users to identify music and movies, according to TechCrunch, Bloomberg, and Recode. The deal for Shazam is reportedly worth as much as \$400 million. Shazam lets users identify a song they're listening to by matching it to the songs in its database. Launched in 2008, Shazam is used more than 20 million times a day.

2 Recode has learned that Rubin is back "less than two weeks" after the company announced that he'd taken a break. Neither Essential nor Rubin was willing to comment, but insiders claimed that he technically didn't have to leave the building -- he continued to work with his venture capital company Playground Global.

3 Twitter blames bug for accidentally banning a bunch of accounts. Over 21 accounts were "globally withheld" by accident.

4 Apple marketing chief Phil Schiller says Android's Face ID attempts will "all stink". Schiller says that the Android versions of facial recognition won't work in the same way that Face ID works.

5 Only a week out of beta, Microsoft's Edge browser has already made significant ground in the Google Play Store, passing 1 million downloads. With this traction, Edge shot up the rankings to 3rd place in the 'top free communication' rankings in Google Play.

6 Google and Microsoft are among some of the major tech outfits that have complained to Qualcomm about the ramifications of a Broadcom acquisition of the chipmaker. Currently, Broadcom has a \$70 a share deal on the table (\$105 billion) for Qualcomm consisting of \$60 in cash and \$10 in Broadcom shares. While there are sources suggesting that Qualcomm would be a willing seller at \$80 a share and up, Broadcom is looking to install its own candidates on Qualcomm's board, hoping that a proxy battle can help it win the company at the current bid price.

7 NVIDIA has announced the Titan V, a prosumer graphics card based on the company's brand new Volta architecture using 12nm process that supersedes the previous Pascal architecture found on the Titan Xp. It's a \$3000 graphics card that is designed entirely with compute performance in mind for people working on AI, deep learning, 3D rendering, and other computationally intensive applications.

8 Amazon brings Echo speakers and Music Unlimited to 28 new countries. The Amazon Echo speakers will keep their price of \$49.99 for the Dot and \$99.99 for the regular version, but will now also ship to the following countries: Belgium, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden, Uruguay.

9 Singapore taxi operator acquires majority stake in Uber's car rental business. ComfortDelGro is forking out \$5642 million for a 51 percent stake in Uber-subsidiary, Lion City Holdings, which runs a fleet of some 14,000 vehicles.

10 The Brazilian mobile phone market has seen a slow-down in the third quarter of 2017, according to analyst firm IDC. Some 12.4 million devices were sold over the period, two percent less than in Q3 2016. Of that figure 11.7 million were smartphones (five percent more than in Q3 2016).

Apple's Ive Regains Management of Design Team After 2 Years

Apple Inc.'s Jony Ive, a key executive credited with the look of many of the company's most popular products, has re-taken direct management of product design teams.



Ive, 50, was named Apple's chief design officer in 2015 and subsequently handed off some day-to-day management responsibility while the iPhone maker was building its new Apple Park headquarters in Cupertino, California. "With the completion of Apple Park, Apple's design leaders and teams are again reporting directly to Jony Ive, who remains focused purely on design," Amy Besette, a company spokeswoman, said Friday in a statement.

While Ive was involved in designing Apple's "spaceship" campus, day-to-day management of the company's hardware and software design teams was led by Alan Dye and Richard Howarth, who reported directly to Chief Executive Officer Tim Cook. Ive will now return to managing the teams directly.

Ive began leading Apple's design team in 1996, before Apple co-founder Steve Jobs returned to the company as it was on the brink of bankruptcy. Over the past two decades, Ive's designs, from the original iMac desktop computer in 1998 to the first iPod in 2001 and the iPad in 2010, have been a significant factor in Apple's growth to the world's most valuable public company. In 2012, a year after becoming CEO, Cook put Ive in charge of software design as well.

(Source: Bloomberg)

6 areas where artificial neural networks outperform humans

By Roman Steinberg

Five years ago, researchers made an abrupt and rather large leap in the accuracy of software that can interpret images. The artificial neural networks behind it underpin the recent boom we are now seeing in the AI industry. We are, however, still nowhere near achieving a reality similar to those in The Terminator or The Matrix.

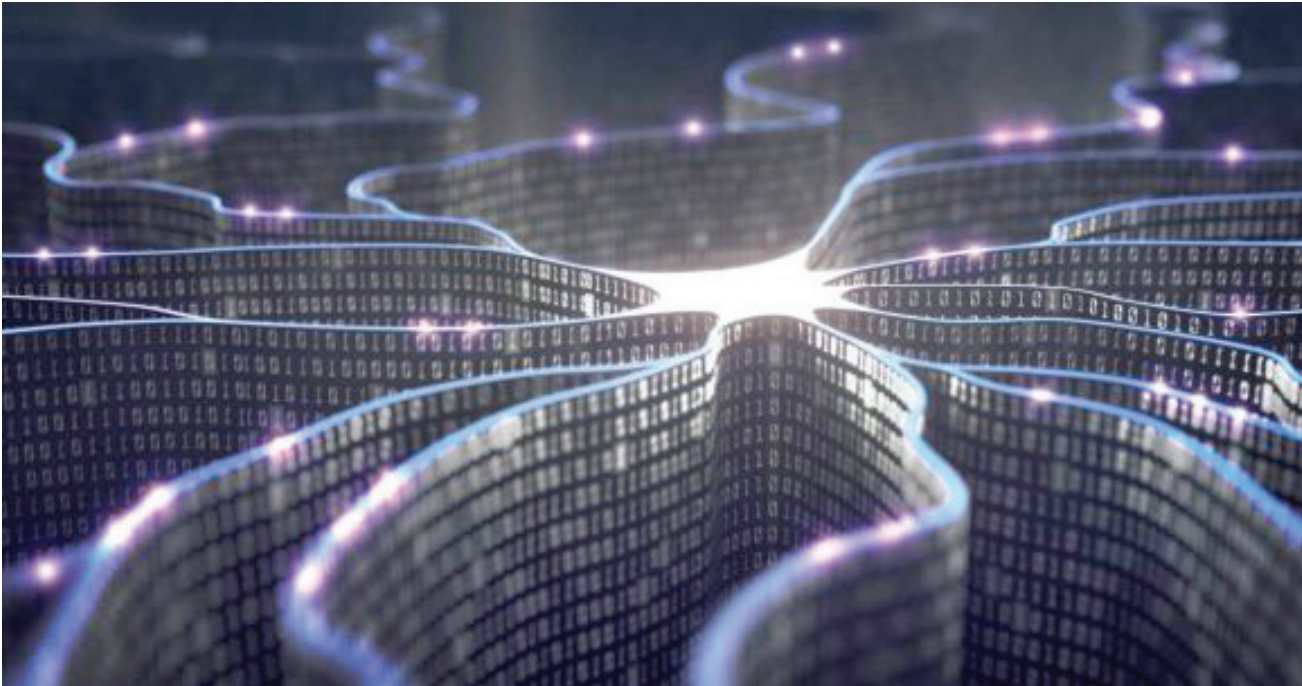
Currently, researchers are trying to focus on teaching machines how to do one thing extremely well. Unlike a human's brain, which processes multiple things at once, robots must "think" in a linear way. Regardless, in some fields, AI beats humans. Deep neural networks have learned to converse, drive cars, beat video games and Go champions, paint pictures, and help make scientific discoveries.

Here are six areas where artificial neural networks prove they can surpass human intelligence.

1. Image and object recognition
Machines have a strong record of besting humans in image and object recognition. Capsule networks invented by Geoff Hinton almost halved the best previous error rate on a test that challenges software to recognize toys. Using an increased amount of these capsules over various scans allows the system to better identify an object, even if the view is different than those analyzed prior. Another example comes from a state-of-the-art network that was trained on a database of labeled images and was able to classify objects better than a Ph.D. student, who trained on the same task for over 100 hours.

2. Video games
Google's DeepMind uses a deep learning technique referred to as deep reinforcement learning. Researchers used this method to teach a computer to play the Atari game Breakout. The computer wasn't taught or programmed in any specific way to play the game. Instead, it was given control of the keyboard while watching the score, and its goal was to maximize the score. After two hours of playing, the computer became an expert at the game.

The deep learning community is in a race to train computers to beat people at almost every game you can think of, including Space Invaders, Doom, Pong, and World of Warcraft. In the majority of these games, deep learning networks already outperform experienced players. The computers were



not programmed to play the games; they just learned by playing.

3. Voice generation and recognition
Last year, Google released WaveNet and Baidu released Deep Speech. Both are deep learning networks that generate a voice automatically. The systems learn to mimic human voices by themselves and improve over time. Differentiating their speech from that of a real human is much harder to do than one might imagine.

A deep network created by Oxford and Google DeepMind scientists, LipNet, reached a 93 percent success score in reading people's lips, where an average human lip reader only succeeds 52 percent of the time. A group from the University of Washington used lip syncing to create a system that sets synthesized audio to existing video.

4. Art and style imitation
A neural network can study the patterns in the strokes, colors, and shading of a particular piece of art. From there, it can transfer the style from the original artwork into a new image based on the analysis.

An example of this is DeepArt.io, a company that creates apps that use deep learning to learn hundreds of different styles which

you can apply to your photos. Artist and programmer Gene Kogan also applied style transfer to modify the Mona Lisa based on styles the algorithm learned from Egyptian hieroglyphs.

5. Predictions
Stanford researcher Timnit Gebru took 50 million Google Street View images and explored what a deep learning network can do with them. The computer learned to localize and recognize cars. It detected over 22 million cars, including their makes, models, body types, and years. One example of insights the system gained included indications of where voter lines start and stop. Based on the analysis, "if the number of sedans encountered during a 15-minute drive through a city is higher than the number of pickup trucks, the city is likely to vote for a Democrat during the next Presidential election (88% chance)," Gebru and coauthors wrote.

Another example of a machine providing more accurate predictions than a human comes from Google Sunroof. The technology uses aerial photos from Google Earth to create a 3D model of your roof to separate it from surrounding trees and shadows. It

then uses the sun's trajectory to predict how much energy solar panels could produce from your roof according to the location specs.

6. Website design modifications
AI integration in website builders can help update and make useful modifications to sites more quickly and potentially with more accuracy than humans. The underlying technology of systems like this provides an average-user opinion about site appearance, which tells designers whether the site design is bad or good. Today, website builders are either using deep networks to modify designs now or plan to use them in the near future. The technology can analyze different patterns and create better results based on previous conversion rates and other important indicators.

While we may still be far away from achieving Matrix-level AI, companies are working to improve the intelligence of neural networks at a rapid pace. The projects mentioned above are only scraping the surface of the technology's capabilities. New ideas and improvements pop up constantly to prove machines are able to surpass human performance, task by task.

(Source: VentureBeat)

Google Maps will wake you up when you need to get off the bus



Google Maps will make taking the train or the bus in places you're visiting a lot less stressful.

The app will soon guide you through every step of a mass transit ride, including telling you when it's time to get off. Once the feature rolls out, you'll apparently find a "start" button at the bottom of the screen when you look up how to go to a certain destination. If you tap that button, you'll get live updates on where you are as you walk or as your ride moves, not only within the app, but also on your Android lock screen.

You probably won't need a feature

like that for your daily commute, but if you're traveling to a new city, state or country with a transit system that can be overwhelming for first timers, then it could be a godsend. Simply glance on your lock screen to see where you are (if your GPS and mobile internet are working inside the vehicle, that is) or wait for your phone to tell you that you've arrived. You can even scroll up and make sure you're going the right way. The feature will go live "soon," but make sure to check your app right now -- it might have already rolled out to random users for testing.

(Source: techcrunch)

Sony may finally let you change your PlayStation Network name



For PlayStation fans, that's been a big problem when your PSN name has always been set in stone. Sony may have seen the light, though. In an interview at PlayStation Experience, the company's Shawn Layden said he hoped to have a name change option available by next year's Experience. So what's the holdup? Layden didn't dive into specifics, but he said the technical solutions were "more complex than you think."

As Gamespot notes, Layden said in 2014 (yes, 2014) that Sony had to take steps to prevent grieving. It didn't want trolls to cause havoc in one game, change their name and promptly ruin someone else's play session. There's also the matter of making sure that

all your friends see the change. It's unclear whether or not Sony might ask you to pay to change your handle, as Microsoft does on Xbox Live (again to discourage grieving), but setting up those exchanges could involve some work as well.

There's no guarantee that Sony will have name changes in place. As you might have noticed, it's been talking about the idea for years. The narrow time frame suggests the feature is getting close, however, and it's easy to see this becoming a higher priority given that a PSN account is increasingly vital to making full use of your PS4.

(Source: Gamespot)

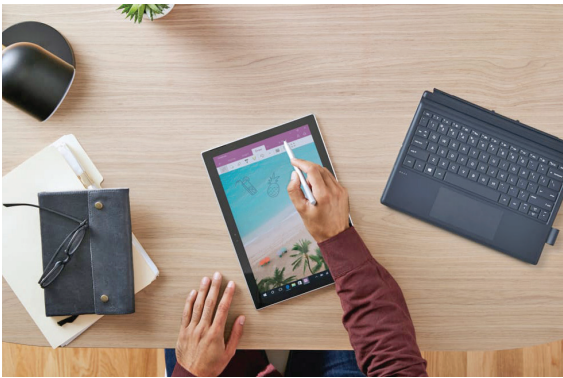
The "Always Connected PC" May Solve Laptops' Battery-Life Problem

Battery-life trouble is one of the most vexing challenges for laptop users (not to mention those of us who see our iPhones drop from 20% to 1% in 5 minutes). Qualcomm and Microsoft have announced a new PC design that runs Windows 10S and uses Qualcomm's 835 mobile processor which they claim will give users an average of 20 hours of battery life. In standby mode the battery can last as long as a week before needing a charge.

The news came at the Qualcomm Snapdragon Summit in Maui, where Qualcomm, Microsoft, and major hardware partners such as Asus, HP, Lenovo, Xiaomi, and Sprint shared their vision for what is dubbed the "Always Connected PC".

This refers to a new kind of PC that can run all day (with the improved battery life) and stay constantly connected to the internet with the Qualcomm LTE modem inside, no matter where the user may roam.

This new ultrathin laptop is based on the ARM processor architecture and runs Windows 10 in emulation



mode. The Qualcomm 835 SnapDragon processor used in these laptops is fast enough to run Windows 10s or 10 Pro with very little latency.

Microsoft worked hard to deliver a full version of its

OS that works well with Qualcomm's 835 Snapdragon processor. The last time it tried this with Windows RT, it failed to make its operating system run well on the ARM processor used in hardware. Consequently, the Windows PCs never got any serious attention in the marketplace.

The "always connected" quality is similar to what we have with smartphones today. The only difference is in the size and shape of the device. Microsoft and Qualcomm, along with their partners, believe that these new Always Connected PCs will usher in a new era of portable computing where battery life is a second thought and always being connected is the norm.

Qualcomm and Microsoft and their PC-maker partners, as well as the wireless carriers that provide the LTE, will have to work hard to get consumers to buy into their vision. They'll have to make us believe that the Always Connected PC is a new form of personal computing.

(Source: fastcompany)

Third Iran-Austria efficient technologies and mining working group meeting held in Tehran

The third efficient technologies and mining working group meeting was held in Tehran with the presence of deputy chief for international affairs and technology exchange at the office vice president for science and technology and a delegation from the Austrian ministry of science and research and economy. The meeting was supervised by Gudrun Henn, director for international co-operation projects and technology exports from Austria, and the Austrian Ambassador to Tehran Stefan Scholz.

After the conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between Iran and 5+1 countries, once more the economic cooperation commission of Iran and Austria was formed. According to the documents signed at the commission, a five year roadmap (2016-2020) for collaboration between the two countries was drafted to implement the previously concluded projects. The roadmap includes several working groups, including efficient technologies and mining working group that management of them was delegated to the office of vice president for science and technology by the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade. The working group was mainly established to observe mega trends and trends in technology advances in the international arena and to help new technologies transfer in three areas of green technologies in environment, renewable energies and mining. To this end, the efficient technologies and mining working group prepared an action plan (2016-2020) for following up and paving the way for guiding the defined projects.

This action plan includes more than 50 measures, up to now 30 of which have been implemented or are at the final stages.

The third meeting of efficient technologies and mining working group was held on November 28-29, 2017 at the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology (VPST) with the purposes of monitoring new projects, eliminating the barriers to the implementation of some cases and defining an execution mechanism for some of the projects.

In this round, representatives of the Austrian ministry of science and research and economy along with a number of Austrian companies and the representative of the AIT (Austrian Technology Institute) had meetings with their Iranian counterparts. The results of these meetings were announced to the deputy director for international affairs and technology in the form of a report. In terms of the measures taken in this area, Ali Morteza Birang said: the existence of a five-year action plan from 2016 to 2020 is



a beneficial phenomenon.

In addition to considering the role of the Austrian embassy in the regulation of relations between the two countries, Birang requested the ambassador of Austria to specifically follow up the solving of financial and banking problems, such as bank guarantees, money transactions and mutual insurances' cooperation. In this regard, he affirmed such problems interrupt the execution process of projects. Therefore, we expect the Austrian embassy can pave the way and help to eliminate these problems in the shortest possible time.

Birang also demanded effective role-playing of Advantage Austria (Austrian Commercial Section) to inform and call Austrian companies and private sectors to participate in INOTEX 2018 exhibition. He also said VPST is ready to allocate a pavilion to Austria private sector in INOTEX 2018 exhibition. He added we will be pleased if Advantage Austria take the management of Austrian pavilion in INOTEX 2018.

The deputy director for international affairs and technology exchange regarded the presence of Austrian companies in Iran as a step toward the elimination of previously missed opportunities.

Use of the capacities of startups in Iran is a requirement.

During the meeting, Ambassador Scholz stated that it is encouraging to have a five-year action plan between Iran and Austria. He added: we need to closely monitor the

proper implementation of programs and ensure that the programs are in compliance with the condition of Iran.

Ambassador Scholz continued: Iran is one of the most powerful countries in the region and has great young human resources, for which new occupations must be formed. In this regard, he said, boosting and strengthening small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) could contribute to the creation of jobs in the country.

Pointing to the high capacity of startups in Iran, Ambassador Scholz asserted: exploitation of the high capacity of startups is a requirement. Therefore, they must be used in the development of economy, production of value, wealth and development of SMEs. The Austrian ambassador regarded the use of the high capacities of startups as a solution for creating job for the Iranian youth and announced Austria's readiness for cooperation with Iran in this field.

He also said: Austria is ready to host Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in the first quarter of 2018. I hope H.E. Dr. Rouhani's next travel to Vienna leads to extended and deepened relations between the two countries.

In this respect, Ambassador Scholz added, the Austrian embassy plans to create a proper condition for concluding more contracts and documents between private owned companies and two governments to deepen technological collaboration.

In the end, Ahmadreza Alaei Tabatabaei, director-general of the Technology Exchange

Office, presented a report on the follow-up of the joint projects specified between the two countries.

Following that, the representative of AIT presented a report on the initiation of defined educational courses and cooperation with the Center for Innovation and Technology Cooperation of the Presidency, stating that some of the goals of this agreement has been realized. Another issue discussed by the mentioned representative was defining a new mechanism in the application of the capacity of supportive and research funds of Austria.

According to the reports, a joint cooperation was defined between Austria and Pardis Technology Park (PTP), which is decided to be evaluated by Advantage Austria.

During the meeting, the representative of mining department announced Austrian readiness in bilateral cooperation with I.R. Iran Geology Organization in areas of "Exploration of Karstic Water Resources" and "Processing Air-born Geophysical Data Information".

In addition, the representative of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) declared both sides have aimed to conclude joint projects in areas of "technology transfer in the area of mining machinery and mining industries" and "research and development studies and holding educational courses on the processing minerals" with Austrian counterpart during the next Joint Economic Commission in the next year.

Scientists find the giant mountain on Mars

Olympus Mons is the largest volcano in the Solar System. The massive Martian mountain towers high above the surrounding plains of the Red Planet, and may be biding its time until the next eruption.

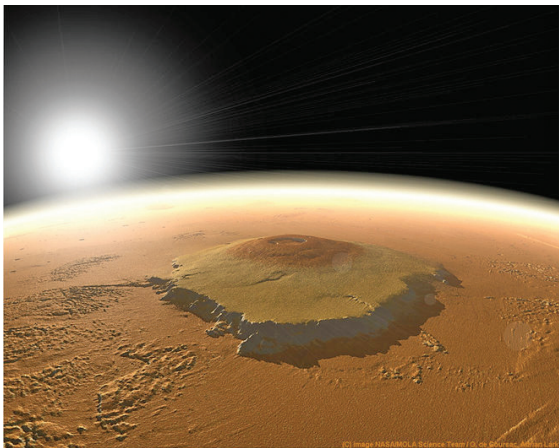
Found in the Tharsis Montes region near the Martian equator, Olympus Mons is one of a dozen large volcanoes, many of which are ten to a hundred times taller than their terrestrial counterparts. The tallest of them all towers 16 miles (25 kilometers) above the surrounding plains and stretches across 374 miles (624 km) — roughly the size of the state of Arizona.

In comparison, Hawaii's Mauna Loa, the tallest volcano on Earth, rises 6.3 miles (10 km) above the sea floor (but its peak is only 2.6 miles above sea level). The volume contained by Olympus Mons is about a hundred times that of Mauna Loa, and the Hawaiian island chain that houses the Earthly volcano could fit inside its Martian counterpart.

■ Higher than Earth's mountain

Olympus Mons rises three times higher than Earth's highest mountain, Mount Everest, whose peak is 5.5 miles above sea level.

Olympus Mons is a shield volcano. Rather than violently spewing molten material, shield volcanoes are created by lava slowly flowing down their sides. As a result, the mountain has a low, squat appearance, with an average slope of only 5 percent.



Six collapsed craters, known as calderas, stack on top of one another to create a depression at the summit that is 53 miles wide (85 km). As magma chambers beneath the calderas emptied of lava, most likely during an eruption, the chambers collapsed, no longer able to support the weight of the ground above.

A cliff, or escarpment, surrounds the outer edge of the volcano, reaching as high as 6 miles (10 km) above

the surrounding area. (The cliff alone is about as tall as Mauna Loa.) A wide depression surrounds the base of the volcano as its immense weight presses into the crust.

■ Young volcano

Olympus Mons is still a relatively young volcano. Although it has taken billions of years to form, some regions of the mountain may be only a few million years old, relatively young in the lifetime of the Solar System. As such, Olympus Mons may still be an active volcano with the potential to erupt.

"On Earth, the Hawaiian islands were built from volcanoes that erupted as the Earth's crust slid over a hot spot — a plume of rising magma," said Jacob Bleacher, a planetary scientist at Arizona State University and NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md, told Space.com. "Our research raises the possibility that the opposite happens on Mars: a plume might move beneath stationary crust."

The tallest volcano in the Solar System may also house rock glaciers — rocky debris frozen in ice. Snow and ice deposits above the base of the shield could result in such glaciers. Water-ice insulated by surface dust may exist near the top of the volcano. The tops of these glaciers may host ridges, furrows, and lobes, and be covered by rocks and boulders, and could be as young as four million years old.

(Source: space.com)

Researchers establish long-sought source of ocean methane

Industrial and agricultural activities produce large amounts of methane, a greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming. Many bacteria also produce methane as a byproduct of their metabolism. Some of this naturally released methane comes from the ocean, a phenomenon that has long puzzled scientists because there are no known methane-producing organisms living near the ocean's surface.

A team of researchers from MIT and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has made a discovery that could help to answer this "ocean methane paradox." First, they identified the structure of an enzyme that can produce a compound that is known to be converted to methane. Then, they used that information to show that this enzyme exists in some of the most abundant marine microbes. They believe that this compound is likely the source of methane gas being released into the atmosphere above the ocean.

Ocean-produced methane represents around 4 percent of the total that's discharged into the atmosphere, and a better understanding of where this methane is coming from could help scientists better account for its role in climate change, the researchers say.

"Understanding the global carbon cycle is really important, especially when talking about climate change," says Catherine Drennan, an MIT professor of chemistry and biology and Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator.

Drennan and Wilfred van der Donk, a professor of chemistry at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, are the senior authors of the paper, which appears in the Dec. 7 online edition of Science. Lead authors are David Born, a graduate student at MIT and Harvard University, and Emily Ulrich, a graduate student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Several years ago, van der Donk and University of Illinois colleague William Metcalf found a possible clue to the mystery of ocean methane: They discovered a microbial enzyme that produces a compound called methylphosphonate, which can become methane when a phosphate molecule is cleaved from it.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

There's a reason time seems to speed up as you age: study

Ask an older person to recall their most vivid memories, and there's a good chance that many of them will come from the same time period — between the ages of 15 and 30.



That's the time period when six of the 10 most important events in a person's life typically happen, according to a 2004 study: starting school, going to college, getting their first job, falling in love, getting married, and having children.

Psychologists call this phenomenon the "reminiscence bump", and it helps explain why our earlier years seem so much more memorable than life after 30.

The "key to the reminiscence bump is novelty," Claudia Hammond wrote in her book Time Warped.

The "reason we remember our youth so well is that it is a ... time for firsts — first sexual relationships, first jobs, first travel without parents, first experience of living away from home, the first time we get much real choice over the way we spend our days."

This series of novel events stretches our perception of time, and when the novelty runs out, our lives seem to accelerate, according to Chip and Dan Heath, authors of The Power of Moments: Why Certain Experiences Have Extraordinary Impact.

But although it can be a "somewhat depressing realization" that most of your best memories are behind you, as the authors wrote, it's important to put that feeling into context.

"It would be very easy to create a second reminiscence bump late in life. Just divorce your spouse, quit your job, move to New Zealand, and become a shepherd," the authors wrote.

"Plenty of novelty there, and you're certain to write a rush of memories. But let's not confuse memorability with wisdom."

(Source: sciencealert.com)

"Equator trap" may hinder search for alien life

Spotting signs of life in an alien planet's atmosphere may be tougher than scientists had thought.

One prominent such "biosignature" target, ozone, may get trapped near the equators of Proxima b, TRAPPIST-1d and other potentially habitable worlds that orbit close to their host stars, making the gas hard to detect from afar, a new study suggests.

"Absence of traces of ozone in future observations does not have to mean there is no oxygen at all," study lead author Ludmila Carone, of the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy in Heidelberg, Germany, said in a statement. "It might be found in different places than on Earth, or it might be very well hidden."

Ozone is an unstable molecule that consists of three oxygen atoms. Here on Earth, the stuff is generally produced in the atmosphere after ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun splits "normal" diatomic oxygen (O₂).

The vast majority of Earth's O₂ is generated by living organisms — plants and photosynthetic microbes — so ozone serves as a sort of secondary biomarker, at least for Earth-like life.

Earth's atmospheric flows distribute most ozone relatively evenly into our planet's famous ozone layer, which helps shield life from harmful UV radiation. So hypothetical aliens studying Earth from afar with powerful telescopes would have a good chance of detecting the gas.

But the situation is likely different on Proxima b, TRAPPIST-1d and other tidally locked worlds — those that always show the same face to their parent stars, and therefore have a "dayside" and a "nightside" — according to Carone and her colleagues. (Tidal locking is a consequence of a very tight orbit; TRAPPIST-1d and Proxima b complete one lap around their stars every four Earth days and 11 Earth days, respectively.)

(Source: Scientific American)

483,000T of Goods Transacted in IME: Official

Approx. 483,000 tons of various types of goods were transacted in Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) in a week ending Dec. 7, 2017, the Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

Given the above issue, about 483,736 tons of products valued at more than 10,918 billion rials, were transacted in IME, showing

a considerable 21 percent (21%) growth as compared to a week earlier.

Accordingly, 163,950 tons of mineral and industrial products, valued at 4,765 billion rials, were traded in the company.

Of the other products transacted at the company, it should be referred to 159,181 tons of steel, 3,380 tons of copper, 1,200

tons of aluminum, nine tone of concentrate of precious metals, 130 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 50 tons of zinc ingot and also 10 kg of gold bullion, the report added.

Moreover, 262,411 tons of oil and petrochemical products, valued at 5,672 billion rials, were transacted at this market.

It should be noted that 57,355 tons

of various types of agricultural produce, 56,250 tons of wheat, 460,000 day-old chicks, 75 tons of sugar and 100 tons of vegetable oil and also 470 tons of corn goods, valued at more than 477 billion rials, were transacted at the market in the mentioned period, the Public Relations Dept. of IME concluded.

BSI Awarded IMT Intl. Certificate

Bank Saderat Iran (BSI) was awarded with IMT-Advanced Standard certificate, licensed by prestigious Canadian ICS Group Institute, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

It is worth mentioning that IMT International Standard, licensed by Canadian ICS Group, was awarded to this bank due to the innovation, technology and modern services.

Widespread modern e-banking services by Bank Saderat Iran (BSI) has provided suitable condition for customers with more than 3,000 domestic and foreign branches.

The topmost golden trophy of the bank was awarded to the bank in supporting the largest national and economic projects of the country due to the vastness of range of banking services and all-out presence in supporting economic infrastructures.

The bank paid the amount of 125,000 billion rials long-

term facilities to a number of 89 large projects of the country in the first half of the current Iranian calendar year in 1396 (from March 21 to Sept. 22), the report added.

The bank financed implementation of large projects such as Jonoob Aluminum Company, Sabalan and Dena petrochemical companies, Saba-ye Kangan Oil and Gas Development Company, Persian Gulf Development Power Plant, etc.

The 4th Quality Management Development Summit was held in IRIB Intl. Conferences Center in the presence of Majlis deputies, managers of public and private organizations, banks, insurance companies, etc., based on which, Bank Saderat Iran was appreciated due its high-quality banking services, accountability, innovation in technology, observing requirements of international standards.



Hundreds of conex boxes delivered to quake-hit Kermanshah

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Up to now 886 conex boxes have been delivered to the earthquake-stricken regions of Kermanshah, head of the National Disaster Management Organization said on Saturday.

A magnitude 7.3 quake which jolted the western province of Kermanshah on November 12 caused severe damages and casualties in the area. The cold weather and completely wrecked houses left many displaced victims of the temblor in immediate need of accommodation.



Construction workers are preparing conex boxes in Sarpol-e Zahab. (Photo by Abdollah Moradi/IRIB)

The construction process of 923 conex boxes have been completed and 886 conex homes have been delivered to people in need, Mohammad Najjar said, YJC reported.

One of the top priorities is to rebuild houses which have been completely ruined and then to repair those which have partly damaged, he said, adding, “Debris of 2,912 ruined homes have been cleared away and 4,196 individuals have applied for loans.”

“Reconstruction of old houses can reduce the damages and casualties of earthquakes. In this line, some 200,000 rural houses all over the country are reconstructed annually which is why recent magnitude 6.1 earthquake in Kerman [on December 1] didn’t cause any fatalities,” Najjar explained.

According to Iran’s forensics, Kermanshah quake has so far claimed 579 lives of whom 518 are from the city of Sarpol-e Zahab. The deadly quake also left some 12,000 injured who were transferred to other cities to receive professional medical care.

‘Tehran metro can resist magnitude 8 earthquake’

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Tehran metro can endure earthquakes measuring up to 8 on the Richter scale, director of Tehran Urban and Suburban Railway Operations Company said.

The issues of passive defense and earthquake-resistance have been considered from the very first stages of construction of Tehran Metro and all the measures have been taken based on international standards to resist earthquakes of up to magnitude 8, YJC quoted Farnoush Nobakht as saying on Saturday.

Recent earthquakes which have hit different regions of Iran, namely Kermanshah and Kerman, have sparked growing concerns among people, hence, earthquake-resistant structures have become a hot topic these days.

Moreover, about 3.8 million Tehraners are travelling by metro every day so much emphasis should be put on its safety.

Metro is considered as a secure shelter and as per memorandums of understanding signed with relief organizations such as Fire Department, Emergency Medical Services and Red Crescent Society earthquake maneuvers are carried out annually to enhance preparedness against unforeseen disasters, Nobakht highlighted.

He further noted that all the equipment used in Tehran Metro meet international standards and that safety and security are among top priorities of Tehran Urban and Suburban Railway Operations Company.

LEARN ENGLISH

Small Talk

A: Morning.
B: Hi there, Mr. Anderson! How are you on this fine morning?
A: Fine, thank you.
B: **It sure** is cold this morning, isn’t it? **I barely even** got out of bed!
A: Yeah. It’s pretty cold, alright.
B: Did you **catch** the news this morning? I heard that there was a fire on Byron Street.
A: No, I didn’t hear about that.
B: **Did you happen to** watch the football game last night? The Patriots scored in the last minute!
A: No, I don’t like football.
B: Oh... **By the way**, I saw you with your daughter at the office Christmas party. She is really beautiful!
A: She’s my wife! Oh, here’s my floor! Nice talking to you. Goodbye.
B: Sir, this is the fifty-sixth floor! We are on the seventieth!
A: That’s okay, **I’ll take the stairs!**
■ **Key vocabulary**
it sure is: affirmation or confirmation of something
barely even: hardly, could almost not
catch: hear, listen to
did you happen to: by chance or casualty someone did something
by the way: phrase used to interject another topic in a conversation
take the stairs: go up the stairs, use the stairs
■ **Supplementary vocabulary**
small talk: short, friendly conversation about things that are not important
chat: talk (informal)
network: talk with people to form business connections
awkward: difficult to deal with
uncomfortable: a feeling of being embarrassed or uneasy
(Source: irlanguage.com)

First VP proposes a roadmap to decrease road crashes

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Iran’s First Vice-President Es’haq Jahangiri has tasked the transport ministry with formulating a time-bound roadmap to decrease the number of road crashes in the country.

Jahangiri made the remarks over a meeting held with Health Minister Hassan Qazizadeh Hashemi, Transport and Urban Development Minister Abbas Akhoundi, Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammad Shariatmadari, head of Iran’s Emergency Medical Services Pir Hossein Kolivand, and traffic police chief Taqi Mehri in attendance.

Jahangiri evaluated the road conditions acceptable considering the number of cars and increased number of road trips over the past few years and urged preparation of a national document comprising scientific strategies to reduce the number of fatalities on the roads, the Persian language daily, Iran, wrote.

Developing rail transport is certainly effective in diminishing the number of road crashes and it is the administration’s policy to invest in this sector, he noted.

According to transport minister Abbas Akhoundi, increasing road safety, developing necessary infrastructure, manufacturing safe vehicles, encouraging safe driving behavior, and offering proper relief services are of the strategies which will be adopted in the aforesaid roadmap.

As stated by the traffic police chief, Taqi Mehri, road accidents have claimed 280,000 lives over the past 10 years in the country. The figures and numbers also indicate that some 22,000 people died over the month of Shahrivar.

According to Iran’s forensics organization, some 15,932 individuals were killed during road accidents in the previous Iranian calendar year (March 2016-March 2017). The month of Shahrivar last year alone set the record high with 1,711 deaths.

Although the overall number of deaths has dropped by 3.9 percent year on year, the decrease does not satisfactorily resolve the issue. Road traffic deaths still add up to a significant number.



Increasing road safety, developing necessary infrastructure, manufacturing safe vehicles, encouraging safe driving behavior, and offering proper relief services are of the strategies which will be adopted in the roadmap to decrease the number of road crashes in the country.

Waste management has come to a head

1 → In Tehran alone waste generation per capita is estimated at 750-800 grams per day and each Tehrani citizen generates about 270-450 kilograms of waste per years.

Out of 20 million tons of waste being produced annually in Iran only 3.2 million tons will be recycled and the rest end up in landfills which lead to the production of some 10 million cubic meters of leachates.

With 32 million tons of waste per year Germany, with a population standing at 82 million, produces 1.5 times more waste than Iran, however, it recycles almost half the amount.

While Switzerland’s population is about 8 million it produces 3 times more waste than Iran but again recycles more than half of it.

Iran waste production is on average half the developed countries, but unfortunately only 7 percent of the waste is separated at the source, 13 percent is recycled and only 2.5 percent of them end up in formal or sanitary landfills.

Sanitary landfills are sites where waste is isolated from the environment until it is safe. It is considered when it has completely degraded biologically, chemically and physically.



Sadly some 77.5 percent of the waste will be burnt or buried in informal landfills located in the countryside or deserts near cities.

Coastal cities are also in dire straits. 5 percent of the total waste in Iran is produced in northern coastal cities and the daily waste generation per capita is 800 grams.

In coastal cities, formal waste disposal accounts for only 3% of all waste disposal; in

these areas there is a lack of suitable locations for landfills and urban areas are jammed between the coastline and mountains.

There are 42 informal landfills (3,000,000 m2) located in forest lands and more than 6,000 tons of waste are dumped in these landfills every day.

■ Things are not in place

Municipal waste collecting in Iran is

generally good. Municipalities have invested heavily on standardized trash-bins and mechanized collection. In Iran, more than 90% of municipal waste is collected by municipal waste management systems.

In recent years various new projects such as incinerators and digesters have commenced operation.

Nonetheless, lack of public education both in reducing waste production and waste separation, increase in the use of plastic bags and lack of regulations restricting their use, informal landfills, lack of resources and finance to set up waste management projects such as modern disposal solutions namely digesters, incinerators, biogas and combined methods in municipalities are hindering proper and effective waste management.

Air pollution, water shortage and sand and dust storm are throwing our lives out of balance but they are also partly blamed on nature (although human beings are fully responsible for messing up with it).

Nevertheless, no one can blame nature for being filled with trash and not being able to cope with it. It is all on us.

Huge turnout as charity ‘sleepout’ raises more than £3.6m for homeless

More than 8,000 people slept rough in freezing conditions to raise money to tackle homelessness.

The Sleep in the Park event - billed as the “world’s biggest sleepout” - took place in Edinburgh on Saturday night, on the coldest night of the year.

Participants have pledged to fundraise at least £100 each and more than £3.6m of the £4m target has been raised so far.

Crowds enjoyed performances by Liam Gallagher, Deacon Blue, Amy Macdonald and Frightened Rabbit, as well as a bedtime story read by John Cleese.

Comedian Rob Brydon hosted the event, which was

attended by Bob Geldof and Scottish deputy first minister John Swinney.

The event was organized by Josh Littlejohn, co-founder of Social Bite, which supports the homeless through cafes, a restaurant and fundraising events.

“This is the night that we collectively gave a voice to the people who have never had one,” Mr Littlejohn said.

“There are 11,000 homeless households in Scotland. When I think about all of the amazing different people, sleeping in this garden tonight, the one thing that strikes me about these statistics of homelessness is that they are not insurmountable.”

“Scotland is a small enough country, a compassionate enough country and a collaborative enough country, where nobody has to be homeless here.

“If we put our heads together, we can wipe out homelessness in five years.”

Singer-songwriter Amy Macdonald said: “It seems absolutely ludicrous that in 2017 that people are still sleeping out on the streets.

“It doesn’t seem like it would be that difficult to stop. Hopefully the money goes a long way to try and help that.”

(Source: *Independent*)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Charity foundation completes afforestation programs

Barekat charity foundation has completed afforestation programs on the outskirts of Tehran province which will be implemented as of today, IRIB reported.

Following the supreme leader’s decree on protecting the environment and preserving vegetation, the charity foundation has carried out afforestation programs on 1,000 hectares of land in southeastern, southwestern and northern districts of the province.

Saltbush, haloxylon, pine, cypress, mulberry, celtis australis, olive tree, barberry, Russian olive, etc. are of the trees planted in the area.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-burg, -burgh, -boro, -berg”

■ **Meaning:** used to form name of a city or town
■ **For example:** Find things to do and places to go in **Pittsburgh** according to your interests.

PHRASAL VERB

Ease up

■ **Meaning:** to work less hard or do something with less energy than before
■ **For example:** Just relax and ease up a little.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Bite one’s tongue

■ **Explanation:** if you bite your tongue, you try not to say what you really think or feel
■ **For example:** It was difficult for me not to react; I had to bite my tongue.

افتتاح طرح جنگل کاری بنیاد برکت

به گزارش خبرگزاری صدا و سیما طرح جنگل کاری بنیاد خیریه ی برکت در مناطق حاشیه‌ای از امروز به بهره برداری می رسد. طرح جنگل کاری برکت بنیاد برکت ، به منظور اجرای منویات مقام معظم رهبری در حفظ و توسعه محیط زیست، ایجاد جنگل و فضای سبز در ۱۰۰۰ هکتار از اراضی واقع در جنوب شرقی، جنوب غربی، و شمال تهران به اجرا در آمده است.

در این مناطق نهال و بوته شامل انواع آترپلکس، تاغ، کاج، سرو، توت، داغداغان، زیتون، زرشک، سنجد، بادامک و پسته وحشی کاشته شده است.

Palestine to ask the UN to issue a resolution on Trump's al-Quds decision: Palestinian FM

Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki says he will seek the United Nations Security Council's resolution over the United States President Donald Trump's recent provocative decision on recognizing al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel's "capital."

"The United States' decision is illegal and illegitimate. It shows how biased and hostile it is and that it has positioned itself as a party to the conflict rather than as a mediator," the Palestinian top diplomat told a news conference held ahead of the Arab foreign ministers' meeting in the Egyptian capital of Cairo on Saturday.

On Wednesday, Trump announced his contentious decision and ordered that work on the relocation of the American embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds begin.

Maliki further said Washington had decided to isolate itself from the international community and had moved to be part of the rogue minority side by side with the occupation entity of Israel.

"We came today to attend the emergency meeting of Arab foreign ministers at the joint request of Jordan and Palestine to discuss this issue and will issue a set of resolutions on this matter after the meeting of the Arab League," he added.

Lebanon proposes anti-U.S. sanctions over embassy move

Meantime, Lebanon's foreign minister has told an emergency Arab League meeting that imposing economic sanctions should be considered against the U.S. over its embassy relocation move.



"Preemptive measures (must be) taken against the decision... beginning with diplomatic measures, then political, then economic and financial sanctions," said Gebran Bassil during an Arab League meeting held in Cairo on Saturday.

"Could this calamity bring us together and wake us from our slumber? Let it be known that history will never forgive us and our future will not be proud of what we have done," added Bassil.

Arab League final statement

Following the meeting, the Arab League issued a statement calling on the U.S. to retract

its decision to recognize al-Quds as Israel's capital, adding that such a move would only amplify violence throughout the region.

It added that Trump's announcement was a "dangerous violation of international law" which has no legal impact and was "void".

"The decision has no legal effect... it deepens tension, ignites anger and threatens to plunge region into more violence and chaos," read the statement.

Arab League Chief Ahmed Aboul-Gheit also called on world nations to recognize the State of Palestine with East al-Quds (Jerusalem) as its capital.

He added that Trump's decision raised a question over Washington's role as a peace mediator, not just in Palestine but the whole world. "The decision amounts to the legalization of occupation," he added.

"The decision by the U.S. administration is in its essence legitimizing the occupation and admitting and allowing their stance by force. It is a waste of international legitimacy and the principles of justice, and therefore has placed he who took (the decision) in a state of conflict with the collective will of the international community," he stressed.

No peace unless al-Quds is free

Jordanian foreign minister also stressed that there will be no peace and security in the region unless al-Quds is free.

"We want peace as a strategic option, which we demand for all of the region's peoples completely and indefinitely. However, there will be no peace without a free and independent Palestine, there will be no peace unless Jerusalem is free, and is the capital of Palestine," said Ayman Al Safadi.

Abbas shuns Pence meeting

Meanwhile, Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas's diplomatic adviser said that Abbas will reject to meet U.S. Vice President Mike Pence during his scheduled visit to the region later in the month.

"There will be no meeting with the vice president of America in Palestine... The United States has crossed all the red lines with the Jerusalem decision," he added.

(Source: agencies)

Trump's approval rating plummeting among white, GOP voters: poll

A majority of Americans continue to disapprove of the way the United States President Donald Trump is handling his job and he is losing support among the white and Republican voters who helped elect him to the White House, according to a new poll.

Trump's job approval rating among white voters has plummeted to 41 percent from 49 percent in February, according to the latest Pew Research Center poll.

The president's approval rating among Republicans has dropped to 76 percent from 84 percent 10 months ago, the survey found.

Trump's approval among blacks also fell to seven percent from 14 percent, while his status among Hispanic voters was unchanged at 17 percent.

Trump has also lost significant support among older voters and evangelical Christians -- from 47 percent to 38 percent and from 78 percent to 61 percent -- respectively.

His approval rating among members of the Democratic Party remains remarkably low -- 7 percent now, compared

to 8 percent in February.

Trump has spent much of his first year in office catering to older Republican conservatives and evangelical Christians, who comprise an important share of his voter base.

But the large drop in support among those groups could be a sign Trump is losing control of his own Republican Party.

A majority of Americans say U.S. President Donald Trump has not accomplished much during his first nine months in office, according to a new poll.

Trump's actions and statements have even drawn severe criticism from fellow Republican lawmakers in Congress, most recently from Senators John McCain and Jeff Flake of Arizona and Bob Corker of Tennessee.

Numerous surveys show that Trump's approval rating at this point in his term is noticeably lower than any previous president in over seven decades.

Trump is the only U.S. leader since former President Harry Truman -- in office from 1945 until 1953 -- whose approval rating at this point in his presidency is net negative.



Last month, thousands of protesters marched in over 20 cities across the United States to denounce the policies of Trump and his administration.

(Source: Press TV)

Syrian army: U.S., Israeli arms left behind in ISIL hideouts in Dayr al-Zawr

Syrian troops have found a cache of the U.S. and Israel-made weapons and equipment belonging to ISIL terrorists in the recently-recaptured Dayr al-Zawr.

According to Syria's official news agency SANA on Saturday, Syrian

troops discovered large amounts of weapons, various types of ammo, explosive devices, landmines, communication devices, armored vehicles, car bombs, and tanks left behind by ISIL terrorists.

A Syrian army commander told SANA that a large amount of the weapons and equipment found there were made by the U.S. or Israel.

He added that the scale of the discovery is proof of the direct and systematic support

provided to ISIL by regional and international states.

This was not the first time that the Syrian government forces made such discoveries from terrorists' hideouts across the country.

(Source: Press TV)

Yemen's Saleh buried in Sana'a

INTERNATIONAL Yemenis has buried the body of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh in Sana'a, sources from his General People's Congress (GPC) party said on Sunday.

Saleh, 75, was killed on Monday.

GPC Secretary-General Aref al-Zouka, who was killed

with Saleh, was buried on Saturday in his native al-Saeed district of Shabwa province in southern Yemen.

Saleh ruled Yemen for 33 years before being forced to step down in 2012 in a transition plan following months of Islamic Awakening (Arab Spring) protests demanding democracy.

He remained in politics as the head of the GPC, Yemen's largest political party, and in 2015 he joined forces with the Ansarullah (Houthi) movement after they captured the capital Sana'a in a move that precipitated Saudi regime-led military intervention on the side of ousted President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

Iraq marks ISIL defeat with military parade

The heavily-fortified Green Zone in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad has hosted a military parade in celebration of the country's ultimate defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist outfit.

The parade took place on Sunday, a day after Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared final victory over the terrorists.

The Takfiri outfit invaded Iraq in 2014 and overtook around a third of

the country's expanse in exceptionally brutal attacks.

The same year saw the United States launching an aerial campaign and then deploying troops on the ground with the express aim of fighting terrorists. The intervention featured occasional air-dropping of arms and ammunition in areas under ISIL control, which the U.S. military always called a mistake.

Baghdad's desperate appeals to the

U.S. and its allies for help famously went unheeded as ISIL terrorists closed in on Baghdad. Since then, several Iraqi leaders have said that the capital would have fallen to ISIL if Iran had not rushed arms and military advisers.

The Sunday parade was not broadcast live and only state media was allowed to attend, but several squadrons of Iraqi helicopters flew over Baghdad a day earlier in rehearsal.

Also on Sunday, fighter jets were flown over the capital in another celebratory gesture.

On Thursday, the Russian military announced ISIL's defeat in neighboring Syria. The group invaded the country in the same year as it began its campaign against Iraq.

Iranian advisory support likewise helped Damascus reverse ISIL's gains in Syria, where Russian aerial backup also played a pivotal role in pushing the terrorists back.

(Source: Press TV)

French fighters appear with ISIL in Afghanistan

French and Algerian fighters, some arriving from Syria, have joined the ranks of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group in northern Afghanistan where the militants have established new bases, multiple international and Afghan sources have said.

It is the first time that the presence of French ISIL fighters has been recorded in Afghanistan, and comes as analysts suggested foreigners may be heading for the war-torn country after being driven from Syria and Iraq.

It is also a troubling sign as France, which has faced the worst of the ISIL-inspired violence in Europe since 2015, debates how to handle hundreds of its citizens who went to fight for the group in the Middle East.

"A number" of Algerian and French nationals entered the largely ISIL-controlled district of Darzab in northern Jowzjan province in November, said district governor Baaz Mohammad Dawar.

At least two women were among the arrivals, who were travelling with a translator from Tajikistan as well as Chech-

ens and Uzbeks, Dawar added.

European and Afghan security sources in Kabul confirmed Dawar's claim that French citizens were among the fighters -- though, one cautioned, "we do not know how many there are".

Three of the Algerians seen in Darzab are believed to have been in Syria and Iraq, Dawar said, suggesting they may link ISIL-Khorasan Province (ISIL-K), the group's franchise in Afghanistan and Pakistan, with the main group in the Middle East.

When it first emerged in 2015, ISIL-K overran large parts of eastern Nangarhar and Kunar provinces, though initially its part in the Afghan conflict was overshadowed by the Taliban.

The terrorists have since spread north, including in Jowzjan on the border with Uzbekistan, and carried out multiple devastating attacks in the capital Kabul.

Mohammad Raza Ghafouri, the Jowzjan provincial governor's spokesman, said French-speaking Caucasian men and women had been seen training ISIL terrorists in Darzab.

U.S. diplomat's resignation signals wider exodus from state department

6 → During her stint in South Sudan, Shackelford worked to document and focus attention on human rights abuses, according to those she worked with and a personal statement she submitted as part of an employee evaluation. She cultivated contacts with South Sudanese civil society organizations and met with victims and witnesses of atrocities committed in the country's conflict. Convinced that there could be no lasting peace without coming to terms with crimes committed on both sides, she co-wrote a dissenting cable backed by some of her fellow diplomats making that argument.

"Her view was if we don't deal with accountability now, whatever peace that's achieved is going to be temporary," said another former colleague, who worked with her in Juba. "She made it her mission to get human rights material out the door."

Shackelford is not alone in accusing the Trump administration of backsliding on America's support for human rights and democracy over the past ten months. Republican Sen. John McCain, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Sen. Ben Cardin, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, wrote a letter to the president on Friday accusing his administration of failing to assert America's commitment to human rights.

The lawmakers wrote that "for much of the past year, our national voice on international human rights issues has been largely silent."

But Deputy Secretary John Sullivan told the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Thursday that in a recent tour of Africa, he repeatedly raised human rights concerns with governments in Ethiopia and Sudan, saying it was a crucial element in the fight against terrorist threats.

"The United States continues to emphasize respect for human rights as a fundamental part of our counterterrorism strategy," Sullivan told lawmakers.

Six months ago, when Shackelford began considering leaving the foreign service, her mentors and colleagues encouraged her to stay the course, telling her she had a promising career ahead of her and that the difficulties would pass, she told FP.

But in a sign of plunging morale in the foreign service, when she spoke to those same colleagues two months ago about resigning, she got a much different response.

"It had completely changed to a person," she said. "Nobody tried to talk me out of it. Everybody said, 'yep, I get it.'"

(Source: Foreign Policy)

Did Hayden's flawed decisions make America more vulnerable?

8 → In April 2000, Hayden's message to the NSA workforce made it clear that any NSA employees who went to Congress to suggest a better way for the NSA to do business would face his wrath. Even so, the THINTHREAD team pressed on, managing to get their system deployed to at least one NSA site in a test bed status, working against a real-world target.

Meanwhile, Roark continued to push NSA to make the program fully operational, but Hayden refused, and, just three weeks before Sept. 11, 2001, further development of THINTHREAD was terminated in favor of the still hypothetical TRAILBLAZER program.

As Loomis noted in his own account of the THINTHREAD-TRAILBLAZER saga, within days after the 9/11 attacks, NSA management ordered key components of THINTHREAD—the system Hayden had rejected—to be integrated (without the inclusion of 4th Amendment compliance software) into what would become known as the STELLAR WIND warrantless surveillance program.

Terrified that the technology they'd originally developed to fight foreign threats was being turned on the American people, Loomis, Binney, and Wiebe retired from the NSA at the end of October 2001.

Over the next several months, they would attempt to get the Congressional Joint Inquiry to listen to their story, but to no avail. By September 2002, the trio of retired NSA employees, along with Roark, decided to file a Defense Department Inspector General (DoD IG) hotline complaint, in which they alleged waste, fraud, and abuse in the TRAILBLAZER program.

Classified reports

Inside NSA, they still had an ally — a senior executive service manager named Tom Drake, who had become responsible for the remnants of THINTHREAD after the SARC team had resigned. Drake became the key source for the subsequent DoD IG investigation, which resulted in a scathing, classified report completed in December 2004.

The TRAILBLAZER-THINTHREAD controversy subsequently surfaced in the press, and I followed the reporting on it while working as a senior staffer for then-Representative Rush Holt (D-N.J.), a HPSCI member at the time.

Once Holt was appointed to the National Commission on Research and Development in the Intelligence Community, I asked for and received copies of the published DoD IG reports dealing with the THINTHREAD and TRAILBLAZER programs.

The 2004 report remains the most damning IG report I've ever read, and after Holt announced his departure from Congress in 2014, I decided to continue my own investigation into this episode as an analyst at the Cato Institute.

In March 2015, I filed a FOIA request seeking not only the original 2004 DoD IG report, but all other documents relevant to the investigation.

After being stonewalled by DoD and NSA for nearly two years, Cato retained the services of Loevy and Loevy of Chicago to prosecute a FOIA lawsuit to help get the documents I sought.

In July 2017, the Pentagon released to me a still heavily redacted version of the 2004 DoD IG report. But there are fewer redactions in my copy than there were in the version provided to the Project on Government Oversight (POGO) in 2011, and it provides the clearest evidence yet that Hayden's account of the THINTHREAD-TRAILBLAZER episode in his memoir is simply not to be believed.

On page 26 of his memoir, Hayden's only mention of the IG investigation is a single sentence: "Thin Thread's advocates filed an IG (inspector general) complaint against Trailblazer in 2002."

Hayden makes no mention of the efforts he and his staff made to downplay THINTHREAD to the IG, or the climate of fear that Hayden and his subordinates created among those who worried TRAILBLAZER was a programmatic train wreck, and that THINTHREAD could, in fact, provide NSA with exactly the critical "finding the needle in the haystack" capability it needed in the digital age.

(Source: Newsweek)

(Source: AFP)

Arsene Wenger blasts Saints time-wasting

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger says he does not want to make an issue of the team’s recent bad starts as it could affect the confidence of the players, and accused Southampton of time-wasting after the 1-1 draw at St Mary’s on Sunday.

Arsenal repeated their poor start from last week against Manchester United as Per Mertesacker gave the ball away after just three minutes, setting up a quick attack for Southampton that was finished off by Charlie Austin.

Arsenal conceded two similar goals in the first 11 minutes in the 3-1 loss to United last weekend, and Wenger admitted that may have had an effect on his players.

“I felt that we played with an excellent spirit,” Wenger told BT Sport. “But in the last two weeks, unfortunately we dropped points in the last two games for bad starts — we are caught straight away. And after, it’s difficult.

“Of course you’re concerned, but you don’t want to make too big a problem of it because it takes belief and confidence away from the players.

I think you could see today that last week had an influence on today’s start of the game. The players wanted to start strong, and overall I believe it took us time to get into the game again.”

Wenger singled out Southampton’s time wasting in the second half as a problem, and said Premier League referees have to crack down harder on such efforts.

“I feel the wasting of time becomes a real problem in England, and the referees have not found the answer yet,” Wenger said. “The answer is the authority of the referees. First of all, I think it’s in the head of the players to respect the game, and to play. And secondly, the authority of the referees to act early in the game, because it becomes really a problem in the last two seasons.”

(Source: ESPN)

Zidane praises Ronaldo after ‘perfect week’ for the Portuguese

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane said people write off Cristiano Ronaldo at their peril after the Portuguese forward struck twice in the 5-0 drubbing of Sevilla on Saturday as the La Liga champions and their prolific scorer roared back to life.

Ronaldo has been widely criticised in Spain for his domestic form this season and before the game with Sevilla he had only scored twice in the league, his lacklustre form mirroring Real’s feeble defence of the title they won so convincingly last May.

Ronaldo was crowned world player of the year for a joint-record fifth time on Thursday and showed off his shiny Ballon d’Or trophy on the Bernabeu pitch before kick off and when the game began he appeared to have an extra spring in his step.

He latched onto a through ball from Marco Asensio to confidently sidefoot the ball inside the near corner to score Real’s second goal midway through the first half and then powered home the third from the penalty spot, his shot bouncing under Sevilla goalkeeper Sergio Rico.

“It has been a perfect week for him and I hope he continues at this pace, although I already said you have to be careful with him,” Zidane told a news conference.

Ronaldo also scored in Real’s 3-2 win over Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday to become the first player ever to score in all six Champions League group games in one season.

(Source: Mirror)

Southampton 1 Arsenal 1: Super-sub Giroud rescues last-gasp point

Olivier Giroud proved to be Arsenal’s super-sub once again as he rescued a 1-1 draw two minutes from time at Southampton.

Charlie Austin fired an early opener for Mauricio Pellegrino’s hosts — his fifth in three Premier League starts this season — and the striker was unlucky not to have more to show for the palpable sense of panic he and the Southampton attack injected into a shambling Arsenal backline.

Arsene Wenger’s men recovered their poise and some swash-buckling attacking play as they sought an equalizer before half time made for a captivating contest.

But France striker Alexandre Lacazette could not claim the goal his endeavors deserved and it was left to his compatriot Giroud — a man, like Austin, not too well-versed in starting games this term — to avert a sixth Premier League loss of the season.

There was a certain inevitability as the 31-year-old rose to expertly direct Alexis Sanchez’s floated cross beyond Fraser Forster for a seventh goal in all competitions this term.

Giroud now has 17 Premier League substitute goals to his name, the same number as similarly famed game-changers Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Nwankwo Kanu. Only Jermain Defoe has more.

(Source: Goal)

Sergio Romero considering Manchester United exit?

Manchester United’s number two goalkeeper Sergio Romero is reportedly considering his future at Old Trafford.

The Argentine made 18 appearances in all competitions for United last season, but he has only played four times during the 2017-18 campaign, and is very much the number two due to David de Gea’s presence at the club.

According to the Daily Mail, Romero is concerned that his lack of football will harm his chances of keeping the goalkeeping position for Argentina entering next summer’s World Cup in Russia.

Romero is a popular figure in the United dressing room, but the emergence of 21-year-old Joel Pereira has led to suggestions that Red Devils boss Jose Mourinho would be open to allowing the 30-year-old to seek pastures new.

A number of European clubs are believed to be closely monitoring developments surrounding a goalkeeper that played for Racing Club, AZ, Sampdoria and AS Monaco before moving to United on a free transfer in the summer of 2015.

(Source: Sportsmole)

United 2026 bid needs to build support for U.S. not stadiums



The heads of a joint bid from the United States, Mexico and Canada to host the 2026 World Cup trumpeted a winning plan on Saturday that technically ticks most if not all the boxes FIFA wants, but could miss the mark when it comes to winning friends.

On the surface the fight to stage the expanded 2026 tournament, the first to involve 48 nations, would appear a David and Goliath struggle with Morocco, the only other bidder, up against the commercial and organizational might of the North and Central Americans.

Already possessing all the necessary infrastructure and stadiums to host a massive 48-team tournament, United 2026 executive director John Kristick boasted the bid was able to “focus on building the game not stadiums”.

While the United 2026 bid may be technically impressive, it comes at a time when the United States’ globally popularity is on the decline.

Bids must be submitted to FIFA by March 16 and the awarding announcement set for June 13 in Moscow before the Russian World Cup leaves little time to mend strained relationships. United 2026 bid members conceded their efforts have not been helped by the sight of disgraced FIFA



officials being paraded in front of U.S. judges on corruption charges almost daily and the escalation of tensions in the Arab world over President Donald Trump’s decision last week to move their embassy to Jerusalem.

“These issues down the road people are certainly going to be confronted with (them),” John Kristick, executive director of United 2026, said ahead of Major League Soccer’s championship game on Saturday.

“But they (FIFA) are going to have to make a decision of what is in the best interest of football, what’s in the best interest of the World Cup and as long as our bid gets delivered the way I think it will, we will be OK.”

If the United 2026 officials need to understand how important good relationships are, they need look no further than efforts to host an Olympic Games in the U.S.

After stunning rebukes to New York to host the 2012 Olympics and Chicago’s failed bid for the 2016 Games, the United States Olympic Committee spent years repairing fences and were finally rewarded for their efforts earlier this year with Los Angeles landing the 2028 summer Games.

“An important part of what we are doing has got very little to do with the sport frankly, it’s a lot to do with the countries



and given what is going on in the world we have always had a special relationship with these two federations,” said Sunil Gulati, head of the U.S. Soccer Federation.

“The countries have been partners and there are some ongoing discussions that everybody in the room is familiar with about that so hopefully the message this sends about relationships and international relationships is extraordinarily important.”

■ COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

One thing that could help smooth over rocky relationships is the commercial viability of the United 2026 plan which could help replenish FIFA coffers.

“We believe between the size of stadiums, which obviously impacts attendance, the level of hospitality available at stadiums that affects revenue and the commercial opportunities that will be available to FIFA, this will be by far the most successful financial World Cup and this is probably a pretty good time for that to happen for FIFA,” said Gulati.

“It is part of the score card FIFA looks at... it’s not lost on us and we will make sure it is not lost on 207 voters, many of them whom rely on FIFA for their financial stability.”

(Source: Reuters)

Vettel: Stop moaning about lack of overtaking



Ferrari’s Sebastian Vettel says those who moan about a lack of overtaking should calm down and accept that some Formula 1 grands prix will be boring.

This week, Pirelli released data that showed the 2017 campaign was the worst for overtaking in the DRS era.

F1’s tyre supplier recorded 435 passes, which is a 49% drop from the 866 in 2016, when there was one more race.

“Wishes for next year is that everybody calms down,” said Vettel, who finished second to world champion Lewis Hamilton in the drivers’ standings.

“Some races are boring, so what? I don’t see the problem in that. I don’t think we need another record, another record every race, to have more overtaking and more overtaking.

“It’s true that [difficulty in] overtaking sometimes, especially if you’re behind and you’re fast and you can’t get past for those reasons, it annoys you.

“But then again if you make the move there is a massive reward inside the car, sometimes out of the car. What I want to say is that overtaking should be an achievement and not handed to you.

“Sometimes just relax and calm down and accept a boring race or a boring

two races in a row and then there will be another great race after that and another one.”

Following the dramatic changes to the F1 aerodynamic regulations, drivers have found it tougher at certain circuits to follow other cars and get close enough to pass.

“I think Seb’s right in some ways, that’s just the way it is and that’s the way some tracks are laid out,” said Red Bull’s Daniel Ricciardo.

“I think the wider cars and all that look great and they’ve given us more downforce and grip but when they take up more space on the track you have less clean air to try to find so it does make following harder so that one is good and bad.”

Hamilton hopes tweaks can be made so that the possibility of overtaking increases, as he believes that will improve the show.

“On the racing side, I hope moving forwards, overtaking gets easier,” he said. “Not easier, but being able to follow each other is really what the sport needs.

“The more overtaking the more fun it is for people to watch.”

(Source: Eurosport)

Stoger ready to grab ‘incredible opportunity’ at Dortmund



Peter Stoger acknowledged his fortune in being handed a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity” as the new head coach of Borussia Dortmund until the end of the season.

Stoger was presented as Peter Bosz’s successor at a news conference on Sunday, where it was confirmed the former Ajax boss had been sacked following a run of eight Bundesliga games without a win.

The slump leaves Dortmund seventh in the table and 13 points shy of leaders Bayern Munich, but that predicament pales next to the one Stoger left in Cologne only last weekend. The 51-year-old Austrian secured promotion back to the top flight as 2.Bundesliga champions in 2013-14 and Cologne’s performances improved season-on-season, culminating in a fifth-place finish and Europa League qualification last term. It has been a different story this time around, however, with Stoger departing on the back of a 2-2 draw at Schalke last time out. It was Cologne’s third point over the course of 14 winless Bundesliga games in 2017-18.

Dortmund chief-executive Hans-Joachim Watzke said the club spoke to Stoger before installing Bosz as Thomas Tuchel’s successor earlier this year and his subsequent struggles have evidently not damaged

his standing in the eyes of the Signal Iduna Park hierarchy.

“It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” said Stoger ahead of his first assignment as Dortmund boss at Mainz on Tuesday.

“I’m coming from a really, really awesome club. I’ve spent incredible years there.

“BVB are an opportunity for me and my staff to work at another level.

“It’s an incredible opportunity to work in this stadium and with this support.”

Manfred Schmidt will serve as Stoger’s assistant, with former Dortmund full-back Jorg Heinrich also part of the coaching set-up. Watzke said he expected Stoger to be in charge until June 30 next year, with “nothing set in stone” to the extent that the new man is yet to sign a contract.

Additionally, Bild has reported Stoger’s appointment is merely a stop-gap before chasing Julian Nagelsmann — the Hoffenheim boss he will face next weekend.

Nevertheless, the opportunity presented to Stoger means he has no qualms over his apparently unclear long-term employment prospects. “If given the opportunity I’d have coached here for 14 days,” he added.

“I’m very surprised and I don’t need more than six months right now.”

(Source: Goal)

I was misinterpreted over Spurs ‘self-destruct’ comments - Clattenburg

Ex-Premier League referee Mark Clattenburg says his comments about “allowing Tottenham to self-destruct” in a game at Chelsea in May 2016 have been “misinterpreted”.

Spurs needed to win to retain any hope of winning the league but drew 2-2 and conceded the title to Leicester City.

Clattenburg said he could have sent off three players but told NBC’s Men in Blazers podcast last week that he “went in with a gameplan” so he could not be blamed for Tottenham’s result.

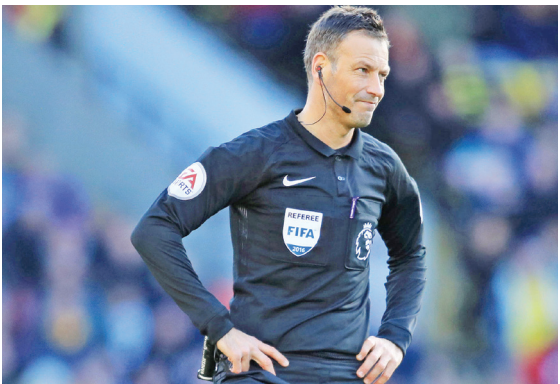
However, speaking to BBC Radio 5 live’s Sportsweek programme on Sunday, the 42-year-old said: “I probably said it in the wrong way.

“One thing I certainly don’t want to do is be the centre of attention.”

Former top-flight official Dermot Gallagher said Clattenburg’s handling of the game at Stamford Bridge was a “gamble too far”, while ex-Arsenal striker Ian Wright said it was “baffling”.

Clattenburg, who is now head of referees in Saudi Arabia, booked nine Tottenham players - the most for one team in a Premier League match - in the bad-tempered game in which Chelsea came back from two goals down.

The two clubs later received record fines from the Football



Association and Spurs midfielder Mousa Dembele was also given a six-match ban for violent conduct against Chelsea striker Diego Costa.

“Tottenham self-destructed when Chelsea equalised,” added Clattenburg.

“When Tottenham lost their discipline in the last few minutes, it was an opportunity for me to say: ‘OK, the game

is finished, do I want to be the centre of attention?”

“Tottenham drew the match which meant they had lost the title. I always said my gameplan was not to be the centre of attention, not to cost anybody the title and not to influence the result.”

‘Good old trick of mind games’

Clattenburg also backed referee Michael Oliver to put aside comments made by Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho when he takes charge of Sunday’s derby against Manchester City. Mourinho claimed City’s players “lose their balance very easily - a little bit of wind and they fall”, while also accusing them of tactical fouls.

“It’s the good old trick of mind games,” said Clattenburg.

“I’m sure Michael Oliver, who is one of the best Premier League referees that we have got at the moment, will be mentally and physically prepared.

“Regarding the comments from Jose Mourinho, I’m sure Michael is experienced enough to ignore them and judge the game as it is.

“He will probably try to manage the game verbally before he goes for the yellow card. But, if a yellow card is needed, he has to show it.”

(Source: BBC)

Leader honors iconic sportsman Karimi

S P O R T S **d e s k** Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei met with Alireza Karimi, who refused to wrestle a Zionist, and his family on Sunday.

Karimi was accompanied by Iranian Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs Masoud Soltanifar in this meeting.

Karimi, the honorable wrestler of the Islamic Republic, whom, recently, refused to enter competition against the usurper Zionist Regime's representative, rejecting recognition of the Zionist entity, met with Iran's Supreme Leader.

Praising the act of Alireza Karimi, Ayatollah Khamenei regarded his great deed paralleled with that of famous athletes like Pourya-ye Vali and held: "I truly feel proud of such behavior that shows a young man, among our nation, is ready to sacrifice his desires and his right to earn a championship for the sake of a great, high goal."

He went on to say: "Value this deed, and know that God will reward you with spiritual blessings for this deed; of course, the officials should also pay proper attention and offer material rewards."

Ayatollah Khamenei also offered his ring to the athlete.



Enticing draw awaits Asia's finest futsal sides

Asia's best teams will learn their fate at the AFC Futsal Championship 2018 draw which will take place in Chinese Taipei on Monday.

11-time champions Islamic Republic will return to defend their title after remaining unbeaten in Group B of qualifying for the South and Central Zones. They booked their berth alongside Tajikistan who held their nerve to confirm a ninth appearance as group runners-up.

Like Iran, Uzbekistan went unbeaten throughout the qualifiers, scoring 22 goals and conceding only six to win Group A. Kyrgyz Republic sealed second place.

In the ASEAN Zone, Vietnam and Thailand topped

their groups, while Malaysia and Myanmar finished second to progress to the regional semi-finals and, as a result, the 2018 AFC Futsal Championship.

As three-time AFC Futsal Championship winners, Japan are also one of the competition's heavyweights. They qualified with ease from the East Zone, scoring 24 goals and conceding only two to finish top of Group A.

After failing to qualify in 2016, Korea Republic will return to the tournament after pipping China PR to top spot in Group B.

China, however, duly beat Chinese Taipei on penalties in the East Zone's Play-off to secure their ticket to the

AFC Futsal Championship.

Chinese Taipei qualified automatically as hosts.

The West Zone teams were forced to endure a tense qualifying campaign, with the successful quartet - Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan - only making the cut on the final day.

■ Draw

16 teams will be drawn into four groups of four teams, with the top two teams in each group advancing to the quarter-finals. The first matches are set to be played on February 1, 2018, with the final set for February 11.

(Source: the-afc)

IPC and Agitos Foundation handover #FuerzaMexico donation to UNICEF



The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and the Agitos Foundation made on Friday (8 December) the official handover to UNICEF Mexico of a cheque for USD 40,000 from the #FuerzaMexico fundraising campaign launched to support UNICEF humanitarian efforts in the country following the earthquake in September near Mexico City.

The handover took place during the final day of the World Para Powerlifting Championships in Mexico City. IPC president Andrew Parsons presented the cheque to UNICEF Mexico Early Childhood Development Officer Jimena Lazcano.

#FuerzaMexico received donations from the IPC's international partner Allianz, the IPC, National Paralympic Committees and World Para Swimming partner SWANS. People from all over the world have also made contributions to the fundraising campaign.

Parsons said: "The #FuerzaMexico campaign was launched after a number of members within the Paralympic Movement asked how they could support the relief efforts in Mexico following the postponement of the World Para Powerlifting and the World Para Swimming Championships

due to the earthquake.

"I would like to thank the NPCs, our partners and everybody that has committed to our fundraising campaign. I would also like to thank Allianz for the support and the sizeable donation made to #FuerzaMexico. The whole Paralympic Movement united to support Mexico and once again we have seen the strength and resilience of the Mexican people to deliver two amazing World Championships.

"UNICEF has been an important partner in this campaign and has worked tirelessly since the first moments to ensure those affected by the September quake received the necessary assistance. We know that there is still a lot to be done and we are really proud the Paralympic Movement can make a contribution to UNICEF's work."

Lazcano added: "Since the earthquake we have seen an impressive demonstration of solidarity from and with the Mexican people. For UNICEF it is really important to make alliances to be able to attend those who need support, especially children. The IPC and the Agitos Foundation have shown how we can best join forces during difficult times."

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Bayern Munich president critical of Carlo Ancelotti's backroom staff



Bayern Munich president Uli Hoeness has criticised Carlo Ancelotti's backroom staff, suggesting they contributed to his dismissal.

Ancelotti won the Bundesliga title in his debut season at Bayern after replacing Pep Guardiola in 2016 but saw his side knocked out of the Champions League by Real Madrid at the quarterfinal stage and the DFB Pokal semifinals by Borussia Dortmund.

Following five defeats in pre-season as well as a Bundesliga loss at Hoffenheim and an embarrassing 3-0 Champions League defeat at Paris Saint-Germain this season, Bayern dismissed Ancelotti on Sept. 28, replacing him with Jupp Heynckes as interim boss.

Ancelotti's backroom team at Bayern included his son Davide, who became one of his assistants when Paul Clement left to become manager at Swansea. Giovanni Mauri and his son Francesco were fitness coaches, while Ancelotti's stepson, Mino Fulco, worked as a nutritionist.

Ancelotti's staff were often derided in the German media. Despite being a well-respected fitness coach, Mauri Sr. was heavily criticised for his smoking habit, while a month before his sacking, Ancelotti himself

was banned from smoking at the club by new sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic.

"It definitely didn't work out with Ancelotti's backup staff. With Carlo everything was fine, but there were arguments of some kind every day between Ancelotti's physios, medical staff and coaches," Hoeness told reporters.

"You cannot work sensibly in such an environment. For example when you are just arguing on who sits where on the bench. These were more important things than the game itself. Long-term, these are all things that are not good for a football team."

Meanwhile, Joshua Kimmich has said he was "extremely angry about the situation" under Ancelotti.

Kimmich, 22, played 39 times in all competitions last season, but featured 19 times as a substitute. He was linked with Barcelona, Atletico Madrid, Manchester United and Manchester City after expressing his unhappiness over a lack of playing time.

"It was very difficult for me," he told Bild. "I was extremely angry about the situation. You clearly see you are nothing more than a replacement. There were many times when I was sitting at home disappointed."

(Source: Soccer.net)

AFC rules can cope with Gulf dispute, says official

Asian Football Confederation regulations can cope with any political issues facing clubs from Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates who meet in next season's Asian Champions League, General Secretary Windsor John said on Thursday.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates -- along with Bahrain and Egypt -- cut diplomatic, transport and trade ties with Qatar in June, accusing it of financing terrorism.

Doha denies the charges.

The diplomatic stand-off with 2022 World Cup hosts Qatar has already caused numerous issues for football in the region.

"The AFC executive committee has made a decision that they would like all of the matches to be played as per the format, and I believe our regulations at AFC are solid enough to deal with any situation as we have done in the past," John told Reuters.

"So we are confident there will be nothing done outside the regulations. The regulations cover every scenario, so we are good."

"We've just finished the 2017 competition and everybody

talked about issues and problems and we finished it quite successfully. I think we want to build on the success rather than talk about other issues at the moment."

■ GROWING IMPACT

The standoff between the nations, which started in June amid accusations by Saudi Arabia that Qatar was sponsoring terrorism around the region, has had a growing impact on sport in Asia.

The Gulf Cup, which is due to be held in the Qatari capital Doha at the end of this month, is under threat with Saudi Arabia and the UAE unlikely to take part.

Qatari broadcaster BeIN Sports, which hold the rights to the confederation's competitions in the Middle East, has also experienced significant disruption to its attempts to attend games in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The UAE, meanwhile, asked soccer's world governing body FIFA to change the referee in a World Cup qualifying match during the summer as the appointed official was a Qatari.

Two groups in next year's Asian Champions League could feature clubs from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar alongside a team from Iran, a nation also in dispute with the Saudis.

The confederation has already had to deal with the fallout from that diplomatic spat, which resulted in games between clubs from the two nations being played at neutral venues during the 2017 Asian Champions League.

"Using the regulations is how we dealt with the case of Saudi Arabia and Iran," said John. "It will be the same way we will deal with any potential scenarios that may come up."

"The exco (executive committee) also decided a very high level delegation will go and explain the situation to all of the affected countries."

"I think it should be ok, so long as we follow the regulations. Any decision can be appealed, so we have a good structure in place."

The AFC said on Thursday that the prize money for the Asian Champions League would be increased in 2018, with the winners set to receive \$4 million (£2.9 million), \$1 million more than the amount won by Japan's Urawa Red Diamonds this season.

The prize pot for the runners-up has also been improved, from \$1 million to \$1.5 million.

(Source: Reuters)

Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic linked with Saudi Arabian teams

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic has been linked with two Saudi Arabian teams Al-Ittifaq and Al-Ittihad.

Ivankovic's contract expires at the end of the season and the Croat has yet to reach an agreement to extend his stay at the club.



"Yes, I've received offers from the two Saudi Arabia clubs. I've already worked at Al-Ittifaq and it's not strange that they have contacted me again," Ivankovic said in the Persepolis and Sanat Naft pre-match news conference.

Persepolis club said they have reached an agreement with Branko and he will extend his contract very soon.

Uzbekistan Football Federation has also shown an interesting in hiring Branko Ivankovic.

Ivankovic led Persepolis to title of Iran Professional League (IPL) last season and helped the Iranian giants qualify for the AFC Champions League semi-final.

Ex-Iran defender optimistic about Team Melli in World Cup

Former Iranian national football team defender Reza Shahrudi said Team Melli has been drawn in a tough group but it could qualify for the next stage.

Team Melli has been pitted against Spain, Portugal and Morocco in Group B of the 2018 World Cup.

"However, we are in the Group B and will have to deal with the best European and African teams," Shahrudi said.

"Our opening game is with Morocco which I think is the best African team you can find these days. The opening game is always the hardest," he added.

"Portugal is the one of the best around and Spain won the 2010 World Cup and has a star-studded lineup. These three outfits will be a big challenge for us, but we still hope that our guys, or sports officials and all our football fans will keep their fingers crossed so that next summer in Russia we are lucky," he said.

(Source: Sputnik)

Neymar flies to Brazil with PSG permission for family matter

Neymar has received permission from Paris Saint-Germain to fly to Brazil for a family emergency, a source confirmed to ESPN FC.

The forward was suspended for PSG's 2-1 win over Lille in Ligue 1 on Saturday, and though he attended the game, he is now set to return to his homeland, as first reported by RMC Sport.

PSG granted Neymar three days' leave to attend to the matter, RMC reported, but he is now likely to miss PSG's Coupe de la Ligue match away to Strasbourg on Wednesday.

Strasbourg handed PSG their first loss of the season last week, and the French giants went on to lose to Bayern Munich in the Champions League in midweek before righting the ship against Lille.

(Source: Soccer.net)

Lindsey Vonn injures back, pulls out of St. Moritz race

She's targeting a historic season but Lindsey Vonn pulled out of a race in St. Moritz after injuring her back Saturday.

The 33-year-old, who is trying to become the most successful ski racer of all time, hurt her back during her run in Saturday's super-G in the glitzy Swiss resort.

She made it to the bottom but slumped to the snow after crossing the finishing line and received lengthy treatment at the course.

Vonn later tweeted she had an "acute facet (spinal joint) dysfunction. I got compressed on the 6th gate and my back seized up."

Vonn said she would see how she responded to treatment overnight, but she tweeted again Sunday morning ahead of a second super-G: "Unfortunately I will not be able to race today."

"I am extremely disappointed but my biggest goal this season is the Olympics and I need to take care of myself now so I can be ready for next week, and more importantly, for February."

Vonn finished 24th in Saturday's race, more than a second behind winner Jasmine Flury of Switzerland, who clinched her first ever World cup podium. Another Swiss Michelle Gisin was 0.1 seconds back, ahead of Liechtenstein's Tina Weirather.

Sunday's super-G was subsequently canceled because of bad weather.

America's Vonn has suffered a catalogue of injuries over her career and began last season's World Cup campaign late after breaking her arm in training last December and then suffering associated nerve problems in her hand.

(Source: CNN)

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Schiller arrives in Tehran to perform concerts

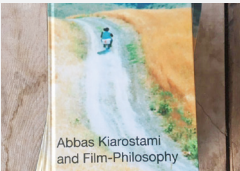
A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The German electronic music band Schiller arrived in Tehran on Saturday night to give several performances in the Iranian capital, several Persian news websites announced on Sunday.



Schiller's bandleader Christopher von Deylen poses in Tehran on December 9, 2017. (Mehr/Mohammad Mohsenifar)

The band is scheduled to perform at the Grand Hall of the Interior Ministry in Tehran from Monday to Friday. Composer Christopher von Deylen is Schiller's bandleader. Ritmeno, an Iranian music news agency, is the organizer of the event.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Matthew Abbott's book on Kiarostami published in Persian

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Australian philosophy lecturer Matthew Abbott's book on the legendary Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami has recently been published in Persian by Lega Publications in Tehran. Translated by Saleh Najafi, "Abbas Kiarostami and Film-Philosophy" presents a powerful new film-philosophy through the cinema of Kiarostami. Abbott argues that Kiarostami's films carry out cinematic thinking: they do not just illustrate pre-existing philosophical ideas, but do real philosophical work. The book was originally published in English by Edinburgh University Press in 2016.



"Petros' War" at Iranian bookstores

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Greek writer Alki Zei's 1971 novel "Petros' War" has recently been published in Persian by Sureh-Mehr Publications in Tehran. Translated by Majid Amiq, the book is about a ten-year-old boy, Petros, and his family's life and their problems and miseries in occupied Athens during World War II. The book has been translated into several languages including English, French, Italian, Spanish, Danish, Russian and Turkish.



Iranian culture minister appoints new assistant

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi appointed Mohammad-Mojtaba Hosseini as the new assistant for artistic affairs on Sunday. Hosseini replaced Ali Moradkhani who took the position in 2013.

Egypt reveals artifacts, mummy from tombs in ancient city of Luxor

LUXOR, Egypt (Reuters) — Egypt's authorities on Saturday revealed artifacts and a linen-wrapped mummified body, possibly that of a top official, from two tombs that were discovered two decades ago in the Nile city of Luxor but had not been fully explored. The Ministry of Antiquities said the tombs, located in the Draa Abul Naga necropolis on Luxor's west bank, had been noted by German archaeologist Frederica Kamp in 1990s and were either unexcavated or had never been entered. Along with the mummy, archaeologists found painted wooden funeral masks and several hundred carved statues, likely dating around the end of Egypt's 17th Dynasty or the start of the 18th Dynasty, the ministry said.

Online exhibit "Collapse" to raise funds for Kermanshah quake victims

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian painter and graphic designer Behzad Shishegaran has launched an online exhibition entitled "Collapse" on Instagram, Telegram and Facebook to raise funds for the victims of the devastating earthquake that hit Kermanshah region in western Iran last month. "Each day one collage will be put on view at my Facebook, Instagram and Telegram accounts for sale for the art lovers," Shishegaran said in a post published on his Instagram on Saturday. The collection contains about 20 paintings and the online charity exhibit, which opened on Saturday, will last for 20 days. Copies of the works are available at much lower prices than the original works. Shishegaran said that the social networks provide a better opportunity for him to share works with a wider range of users. "The networks have also provided the means for me to be in better contact with Iranian expatriates and to reduce my publication expenses," he has remarked. A devastating earthquake killed hundreds and displaced thousands in the western Iranian province of Kermanshah on November 12.



Turkish cartoonists hang works in Tehran

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Tehran's Art Bureau is displaying a collection of cartoons by a number of Turkish artists in an exhibition titled "Reverse Thinking". A total of 50 cartoons have been selected for the showcase at the Aali Gallery of the bureau, the organizers announced on Sunday. Erdogan Basol, Serdar Gunbilen, Oguz Demir, Ali Sur, Ahmet Ozturk, Musa Gumus, Hakan Sumer, Tonguc Yasar and Askin Ayrancioglu are among the cartoonists whose works are on display at the exhibition that opened on Saturday and will run for ten days. In addition, the director of the Turkish Cartoonists Association Metin Peker and a number of his fellow cartoonists are scheduled to arrive in Tehran on December 13 to visit the exhibit and hold meetings with Iranian artists. The guests are also expected to attend the closing ceremony of the 11th Tehran



A poster for "Reverse Thinking" exhibit.

International Cartoon Biennial, which will take place at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art on December 15.

Poland keen to collaborate with Iran on cinema: exec

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The director of Iran's Farabi Cinema Foundation, Alireza Tabesh, has said that Poland is eager to collaborate with Iran on cinema. He made the remarks after several meetings with a number of Polish executives, including Deputy Culture Minister Pawel Lewandowski, the foundation announced in a press release on Sunday. Tabesh visited Warsaw last week to attend a festival of Iranian films held at Luna Cinema in the Polish capital. "On the trip to Warsaw, I also visited a number of executives of Polish organizations and studios active in the cinema industry," Tabesh said. "Fortunately, they are quite eager to cooperate with Iran on cinema," he added. Topics such as online offering of Iranian movies by a number of Polish organizations and a proposal for buying Iranian films from the national Polish television and several other TV networks were also discussed at



Farabi Cinema Foundation director Alireza Tabesh in an undated photo

the meetings. Ten movies, including "Tragedy" by Azita Moghie, "Crazy Castle" by Abolhassan Davudi and "A House on 41st Street" by Hamidreza Qorbani, were screened at the Iranian film festival in Warsaw, which ran from December 5 to 10.

Abu Dhabi to acquire Leonardo da Vinci's "Salvator Mundi": Christie's

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — New-York based Christie's auction house said on Friday Abu Dhabi's Department of Culture and Tourism was acquiring Leonardo da Vinci's portrait of Christ, "Salvator Mundi," a painting that sold for \$450.3 million. The latest twist in a saga over the painting came after a report in the Wall Street Journal which said that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, known as MbS, was identified as the buyer of the painting in U.S. intelligence reports, according to people with direct knowledge of the information. A Saudi official denied MbS had purchased the artwork. "Christie's can confirm that the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi is acquiring 'Salvator Mundi' by Leonardo da Vinci," the auction house said in a statement. "We are delighted to see that this remarkable painting will be available for public view at the Louvre Abu Dhabi." The painting, sold last month, became the most expensive painting ever sold. At the auction, the painting was purchased by an unidentified buyer bidding via telephone after a protracted contest of nearly 20 minutes at the auction house. A document seen by Reuters showed that a Saudi prince was authorized to purchase the painting on behalf of the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism.



"Salvator Mundi," an ethereal portrait of Jesus Christ which dates to about 1500, the last privately owned Leonardo da Vinci painting, is on display for the media at Christie's auction in New York, NY, U.S., October 10, 2017. (Courtesy Christie's New York/Handout via Reuters)

The document, dated Nov. 12, is addressed to Prince Badr bin Abdullah al Saud and thanks him for "agreeing to bid as undisclosed agent for and on behalf of the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi for the artwork" at Christie's auction on Nov. 15.

The letter authorizes the Prince to "bid up to a hammer price" of \$500 million. A UAE government official confirmed the painting belonged to the Abu Dhabi government and would be put on display at the Louvre Abu Dhabi. "We own it," the official said.

In November, MbS ordered Saudi security forces to round up members of the political and business elite, including princes and tycoons, holding them in Riyadh's opulent Ritz Carlton hotel in what was billed as a war on rampant corruption. "Contrary to media reports, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman did not purchase this art piece," a Saudi official told Reuters. "But, yes, His Royal Highness and His Highness Prince Badr Al Saud are good friends," the official said. The official added that the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism had subsequently asked Prince Badr to act "as an intermediary purchaser". The Louvre Abu Dhabi, which opened last month, said on its Twitter feed it was "looking forward to displaying the Salvator Mundi by Leonardo Da Vinci" and said the work was acquired by the Department of Culture and Tourism for the museum. A spokeswoman for the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism confirmed the department had acquired the painting to be displayed at the Louvre, but declined to say whether it was bought by the Department. The painting, only recently rediscovered, was the last da Vinci left in private hands and fetched more than four times Christie's pre-sale estimate of about \$100 million.

Thousands mourn rock idol Hallyday at Paris memorial

PARIS (Reuters) — Hundreds of thousands of people paid homage to late French rock and roll giant Johnny Hallyday at a Paris memorial service attended by French stars and politicians. A hearse carrying Hallyday's white coffin, accompanied by 700 Harley Davidson motorcycles, drove the length of the Champs Elysees boulevard in a rare honor usually reserved for foreign statesmen on July 14 National Day. As his band played instrumental versions of his biggest hits, the crowds belted out the words, many in leather biker jackets and carrying pictures of Harley Davidson enthusiast Hallyday, who died of lung cancer on Wednesday at the age of 74. Largely unknown abroad, Hallyday was a household name in France, where he had tens of millions of fans and sold more records than any other singer in a career spanning five decades. His death nine months after announcing

his illness sparked days of national mourning, with broadcasters providing wall-to-wall coverage of the rocker's life, tracing the history of a man regarded by many, non-fans included, as part of French national heritage. In a eulogy on the stairs of the La Madeleine church, French President Emmanuel Macron said Hallyday was "more than a singer ...he was part of ourselves, part of France". "It is a sad day today but you had to be there because Johnny was there for you from the beginning. In each of your lives, there was this moment where one of his songs translated what you had in your heart," said Macron. "The French Elvis", as he was known, Hallyday made his name with French versions of American rock and pop songs, including "House of the Rising Sun", which many French people only know as "Le Penitencier", one of his biggest hits.

"Star Wars: The Last Jedi" premieres with tribute to late Carrie Fisher

Los Angeles (Reuters) — The galaxy far, far away was brought to life in downtown Los Angeles on Saturday for the world premiere of "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" where the anticipated first screening was dedicated to the franchise's late star, Carrie Fisher. "I want to dedicate tonight to Carrie, who is up there right now flipping me the bird, saying 'Damn it Rian, don't you dare make this night a solemn tribute,'" the film's writer-director Rian Johnson said as he introduced the screening. "So let's all have a blast tonight for Carrie," he said. The film ends with a dedication to Fisher, who plays Princess Leia. The actress died at age 60 last December after completing her work on "The Last Jedi". Her character, now known as General Leia Organa, leader of the Resistance, plays a key role in the film. Walt Disney Co.'s DIS.N "The Last Jedi", out in U.S. theaters on Dec. 15, follows 2015's

"Star Wars: The Force Awakens" and picks up with the Resistance fighting off Snoke's First Order which is trying to take control of the galaxy. The film explores themes of the battle to find a balance in the Force, the supernatural energy that runs through the fictional "Star Wars" galaxy. Reviews of the film are embargoed until Dec. 12. The star-studded ensemble cast, including Ridley, John Boyega, Lupita Nyong'o, Adam Driver, Andy Serkis and Hamill, walked the red carpet at the premiere, surrounded by droids and Stormtroopers. Guests walked into the entrance of the premiere flanked by larger-than-life AT-AT Walker transport vehicles. Johnson paid tribute to Fisher on the red carpet. "Once the audience sees her performance in this movie, she's going to be there in all our hearts," he said. "It's bizarre not having her here tonight. She would be the life of the party."