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# Putin orders troop pullout from Syria

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## Rouhani urges anti-Trump unity in talks with Hamas chief

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Ismail Haniyeh, the current leader of Hamas and former prime minister of the Palestinian Authority, on Monday evening called Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to discuss Washington's recent move in recognizing al-Quds as the new capital city of Israel.

Urging unified action in face of the United States' new Middle East policy, Rouhani said he had no doubt that the

Palestinian nation, backed by the Islamic Ummah, will force the American-Zionist move down the path to failure.

Rouhani said Palestinian resistance He said the new move proved the U.S. and Israel's lack of regard for the Palestinian rights.

The heads of state of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation will meet in Istanbul, Turkey, on Wednesday to take decision about the new U.S. move against Palestine.

## Nasrallah: Trump alone in his decision about al-Quds

Touching upon the U.S. President Trump decision to move US embassy to al-Quds, the secretary general of the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement said Trum's decision made the US isolated.

Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, the Secretary General of the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement, opened his address on the recent decision of U.S. President Donald Trump on moving the U.S. embassy to al-Quds

from Dahieh neighborhood of the Lebanese capital, Beirut, on Monday, speaking to massive rallies held to oppose Trump's decision, thanking all those who took part in it to show their loyalty to the resistance.

"The dream of Palestinians in exodus to return to their motherland will come true in the near future, God willingly," asserted the Lebanese politician at the start of his address. **→13**

## Women's share in budget bill increases by 30%

**WOMEN** **TEHRAN** — The proposed national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1397, starting on March 21, 2018, has allocated 210 billion rials (\$5.25 million) for women's affairs, an increase of 30 percent year on year.

President Hassan Rouhani presented the administration's draft of the national budget bill for the next year to the Majlis (Iranian parliament) on Sunday.

Women's share of the national budget for the current Iranian calendar year was 151 billion rials (nearly \$3.8 million). **→12**



### EDITORIAL

By Mohammad Ghaderi  
Tehran Times editor-in-chief  
@ghaderi62

## Concluding Johnson's trip to Tehran

The visit of British Foreign Secretary, "Boris Johnson", to Tehran has been called a special trip by many analysts of foreign policy and international affairs, and subjects such as "the case of security convicts", "the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)" and "regional issues" are considered among his goals of this visit. There are some important points about Johnson's trip to Tehran:

- Boris Johnson has been accused by many British politicians of failing to perform his duties during the past months, especially weeks before his recent trip to Iran. Following Johnson's remarks about Nazanin Zaghari's case, and emphasizing that she was in Iran for running a journalism course, we were witnessing new protests against the British Foreign Secretary. It has reached a point where some British officials, including the Labor Party's leader "Jeremy Corbyn", demanded Johnson's resignation from his post. Beyond that, some members of the conservative party also expressed their opposition to supporting Johnson being the British Prime Minister after Teresa May's possible resignation. Under such circumstances, one of Johnson's main goals of his trip to Tehran has been to revive his legal personality. In analyzing the British Foreign Secretary's visit to Tehran, one shouldn't overlook these political and personal motives.

- The British Foreign Secretary has recently held talks with members of the U.S. Congress, and in particular some prominent Republican and Democratic presidential candidates. Johnson, on his trip to Tehran, also emphasized that his country supported the nuclear deal. However, it should be noted that London has been accused of violating the nuclear deal over the past two years. Nuclear analysts emphasize that after the United States, Britain has been the most important obstacle on the way of the JCPOA and made every effort to prevent its realization. In March, the British Foreign Office called Iran as a challenging place for trade, calling on investors and businessmen in the United Kingdom to be cautious about investing in Iran and to make the necessary consultations in this regard. **→7**

## Turkey and Egypt would like to defuse mutual tensions: SISU professor

By Javad Heirannia

**TEHRAN** — A professor of Shanghai International Studies University (SISU) says "Turkey and Egypt would like to defuse mutual tensions because both countries are trying to adjust to a rapidly changing balance of power in the Middle East that strongly favors Iran and Russia instead of Saudi Arabia and the United States."

Robert R. Bianchi also tells the Tehran Times that "Erdogan and El-Sisi would like to put aside their feud and focus on cultivating better ties with the Russian and Iranian power brokers who are likely to shape their futures."

Professor of Chicago University

Following is the text of the interview:

■ The Turkish government sent its official message of condolence to El - Sisi after in occasion

of the latest terrorist attack to their Egyptian mosque despite of existing difficulties between the two states over theon Muslim Brotherhood that the is called by Egyptian government regards as a terrorist group. So, What is the reason behind of Turkey's approach in this regard?

A: Turkey and Egypt would like to defuse mutual tensions because both countries are trying to adjust to a rapidly changing balance of power in the Middle East that strongly favors Iran and Russia instead of Saudi Arabia and the United States. Weakened regimes in Ankara and Cairo both fear losing influence in the region and over their own people. Turkey is alarmed by Egypt's growing connections with its unfriendly neighbors, particularly Greece, Cyprus, and Russia. Meanwhile, Egypt feels increasingly encircled by long-term se-

curity threats in Sinai, Libya, Sudan, and Ethiopia. In this context, Erdogan and El-Sisi would like to put aside their feud and focus on cultivating better ties with the Russian and Iranian power brokers who are likely to shape their futures.

■ Some analysts believe that Turkey tries to create closer relationship with Egypt in order to decrease pressures on the Muslim Brotherhood as mediator. What is your opinion?

A: Turkey can do very little to help Muslim Brotherhood prisoners in Egypt. El-Sisi has managed to gain grudging recognition from most foreign governments, including nearly all of Europe except for the United Kingdom. Turkey is belatedly trying to normalize its relations with Egypt so that it can move on to bigger issues in the Middle East, Africa, and Eurasia. **→7**

## Persons with disability awaiting better living conditions

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The bill on rights of persons with disabilities, which is being discussed by the Majlis [Iranian Parliament], has raised hopes among the disabled for better living conditions.

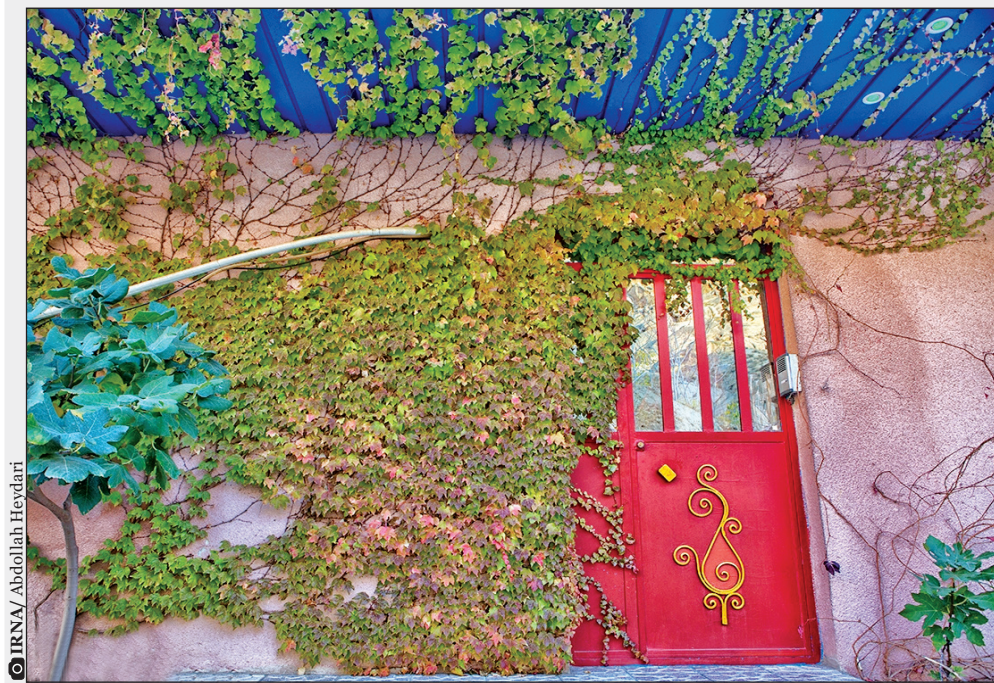
People with disabilities have a wide range of problems such as finding jobs or living in cities which have not been developed to be accessible for disabled people.

"We are far from [providing reasonable] living conditions for persons with disabilities and this is not exclusively a concern for the government; the society should also respect the rights of the

disabled," Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare Minister Ali Rabiei told IRIB on Saturday on the sidelines of a gathering held on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, December 3.

Unfortunately, many individuals still believe that making buildings disable-friendly just incurs additional costs, he added.

"Of course government buildings and offices are now accessible to people with disabilities, however these standards must be met by the private sector and the public sector as well," he noted.



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## Villages of Vardij and Varish

Vardij and Varish villages are two tourist spots located in the mountainous Kan district, northwest of Tehran.

Deep valleys, lush gardens and fresh air are among the distinctive features of the rural area.

Gradual erosion of rocks in the region has shaped some unusual forms known to people as "rocky ghosts".

Nearly 450 households live in the two villages.



### ARTICLE

By Setareh Behrooz  
Tehran Times journalist

## Stay-at-home or back-to-work?

If you know the definite answer to this question, you are either not a working woman or not have a baby yet! From the moment the tiny figures touch my skin, all straight answers vanished into thin air.

The dilemma springs up during maternity leave. When I was in the center of the vicious cycle of feed/burp/diaper. What the life seems like from now on?

I experienced one of the strongest bonds of nature while the munchkin was in my arms and gradually I began compromising many of life principles, which were negotiable for me before the baby.

Sleep-deprived amid a messy house, only your baby cry prompts you to rush into his/her crib and soothe him/her. Having no alone time, you constantly feel guilty about your cluttered house and your motherhood.

And if you are a working woman, the latter turns over in your mind every now and then. What is the best way to be a good mother? Are stay-at home mothers full-time parents? What about your personal goals and achievements?

Is being a mum what I want to be introduced with from now on? If not, who wants to take after my little one when I am at work? You doubt if it is selfish to think about your career after being a mother.

The easiest way is to follow the 'typical' supermom defined by the society and family you live in. May be it is a working mom, who does the house chores while her child is asleep and is always stylish and full of energy.

Or maybe it is an exemplary stay-at-home mother who makes dishes with fresh veggies and her house shines with cleaning with a well-groomed child.

Actually it is not important what is defined for you as a 'supermom', the only way for you to be 'super' in your life is when you are the best version of yourself.

Personal experience, education and beliefs are important factors for taking this important decision.

■ **Take it personal!**

A happy woman makes a happy home and I think it is the first responsibility of a woman toward her family. **→9**



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Islamic world would retaliate against Trump, Zionists: Judiciary chief

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larjani on Monday strongly condemned U.S. President Donald Trump's recognition of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of Israel, saying the Muslim world would retaliate against Trump and his Zionist allies.

The move showed that the U.S. and the Zionist regime will do anything to cover up their failures in the region, Amoli Larjani said, according to Fars news agency.

He also said the decision showed once again that the Americans are not trustworthy at all and are committed to UN resolutions as long as they benefit from them.



Vaezi says Iran must be able to benefit from JCPOA

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Mahmoud Vaezi, the presidential chief of staff, said on Monday that Iran must be able to reap the benefits of the nuclear deal in order to boost its economy and enjoy open global markets.

Vaezi criticized U.S. President Donald Trump for threatening to rip up the deal, saying Iran will take necessary actions in the event that the nuclear pact is abandoned by the other side, Fars reported.

Iran, the European Union and six world powers including the U.S., UK, Russia, France, China, and Germany signed the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015. It went into effect in January 2016.



'SNSC decided to put vote rigging claimants under house arrest'

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Judiciary spokesman Qolam-hossein Mohseni Ejei said on Monday that the house arrest of the opposition leaders, who claimed vote rigging in the 2009 presidential election, is a legal decision made by the Supreme National Security Council.

Speaking at a press conference, Mohseni Ejei said the house arrest was put in place due to national security concerns, Fars reported.

Mehdi Karroubi, Mir Hossein Mousavi and his wife, Zahra Rahnavard, were placed under house arrest early 2011 after they insisted on their claims of vote rigging and called for protests.



Iranian parliamentary team visits Bulgaria

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — An Iranian parliamentary team, led by MP Ahmad Alireza Beigi, arrived in Sofia on Monday to meet with a number of Bulgarian officials, including ministers and academic figures.

The main focus of the visit is to review expansion of parliamentary cooperation between the two countries.

According to Islamic Republic News Agency, the members of the parliamentary friendship group from the two sides are slated to attend a joint meeting to mull expansion of parliamentary cooperation.



Ambassador urges closer ties with Pakistan

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The ambassador of Iran to Pakistan on Monday called for broadening the scope of ties between the two countries.

Pointing to Iran's potential to become a major partner of Pakistan in electricity, shipping and aviation sectors, Mehdi Honardoost told local media that "time is gold and the movement and actions should be taken faster".

About the Iran-Pakistan natural gas pipeline, Honardoost said Pakistan needs to fulfill its obligations under the agreement to complete its share of the project in the Pakistani territory.

"We have spent \$2 billion to build our portion of the pipeline," he explained.



Protest in Tehran over Trump's al-Quds move

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — A mass demonstration was held in Palestine Street in Tehran on Monday to protest the U.S. president's new move in recognizing al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of Israel.

The protesters, mainly university students and people, set fire to the U.S. and Israeli flags.

The participants, carrying flags of Palestine and photos of Quds Force chief General Qassem Soleimani, chanted slogans decrying the decision of Trump to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

# Defense chief says U.S. will be responsible for more bloodshed in Mideast

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — On Monday, Iranian Defense Minister Amir Hatami described Donald Trump's recognition of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of Israel as a "hostile" move and said the U.S. will be responsible for more bloodshed and tension in the Middle East region.

During a meeting with senior Defense Ministry officials, Hatami said that the U.S. move violates the Palestinian people's rights.

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

"This action will accelerate annihilation of the Zionist regime of Israel and will boost unity among Muslims," Hatami said.

He noted that hegemonic system is hatching new plots against the regional countries after its defeats in Syria and Iraq.

"The Zionist regime of Israel is well aware that such illegitimate actions of the U.S. will make no change to the status of the Quds, and the Palestinian and



## Foreign Ministry to pursue Zaghari case for 'humanitarian reasons'

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Foreign Ministry said on Monday that it will follow up on the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian woman jailed in Iran, for "humanitarian reasons", but emphasized that the Iranian Judiciary acts as an independent body and is the ultimate decision-maker on the issue.

"It's undeniable that Ms. Zaghari's issue was brought up by the British side during a visit to Tehran by UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson," Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said during a press conference on Monday.

Qassemi said the Foreign Ministry explained to the British side how legal cases are handled in Iran and that the Judiciary, due to separation of powers, acts as an independent branch within the Islamic Republic.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe, 38, has been imprisoned in Iran for 20 months for charges that include trying to orchestrate a soft overthrow of the Islamic Republic.



On Saturday, Johnson visited Tehran for a two-day visit to hold talks with senior Iranian officials including President Hassan Rouhani, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, Secretary of Supreme Na-

## 'Various options if nuclear deal ditched'

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani has said that Iran has various options if the U.S. will "not be wise enough" and quit the 2015 nuclear deal.

The nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, is an international agreement signed by the European Union, Russia and China and not just by the U.S., Larijani said in an interview with Sputnik, Mehr news agency reported on Monday.

"The path having been taken by the U.S. is not simple. Suppose that the U.S. will not be wise enough and quit the JCPOA,

is it beneficial for it? The U.S. will be discredited in this case and the world will understand that the U.S. violates the deals," he said.

Larijani said that Iran will abide by the agreement as long as the other side is committed to its obligations under the JCPOA.

The nuclear deal was signed between 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. The agreement went into effect in January 2016.

In his new Iran strategy declared on October 13, U.S. President Donald Trump decertified the nuclear deal and asked Congress to decide about the fate of the agreement. Congress now has to decide whether to reimpose economic sanctions on Tehran that were lifted under the deal. Trump said if Congress does nothing he himself will terminate the deal.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, has issued nine regular reports each time confirming Iran's adherence to the international deal.



## Zarif says Europe must not pander to U.S. over Iran's missile program

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said Europe must not "pander to Washington's determination to shift focus to yet another unnecessary crisis" with Tehran over Iran's deterrent missile program or its influence in the Middle East.

"Europe should not pander to Washington's determination to shift focus to yet another unnecessary crisis — whether it be Iran's defensive missile program or our influence in the Middle East" Zarif wrote in an article in the New York Times published on Sunday.

In the article titled "Europe must work with Iran", Zarif said, "This would repeat the very dynamics that preceded the nuclear deal."

Following is some excerpts of the article: Unfortunately, for the past 11 months, the response to Iran's good faith has been tantrums from the Trump administration. But the unreliability of the United States — from climate change to Palestine — has become predictable. Our main concern now is cautioning our compatriots against wavering on issues beyond the scope of the nuclear agreement and following in lock step behind the White House.

As the nuclear deal and the Middle East enter uncharted and potentially combustible territory, it is imperative that Europe helps ensure that we don't soon find ourselves repeating history.

Iran's military capabilities comply with international law and are entirely defensive. Our defensive posture stems from sober geostrategic calculations, as well as moral and religious convictions. Our military doctrine is also based on



**"During the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam Hussein rained Soviet-made missiles on our cities, some of them carrying chemical components provided by the West. The world not only kept silent, but also no country would sell Iran weapons to enable us to at least deter the aggressor."**

historical experience: During the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam Hussein rained Soviet-made missiles on our cities, some of them carrying chemical components provided by the West. The world not only kept silent, but also no country would sell Iran weapons to enable us to at least deter the aggressor.

Our commitment to self-defense is not a slogan. We have deployed our missiles against only a few equally heinous adversaries: Saddam Hussein's regime and its terrorist allies, and the so-called Islamic State. And our strikes came in response to their merciless killing of Iranians.

No Iranian administration will leave our people defenseless. The international community — and Europe in particular — should realize this and instead focus its efforts on tackling real threats to the world, like the wars engulfing the Middle East.

Iran is proud of taking the lead in trying to bring an overdue end to the bloodshed in Syria. In 2013, I presented a plan to end the conflict there through a cease-fire, the formation of a national unity government, constitutional reform and free and fair elections. But this plan fell on deaf ears. Still, we have continued our efforts. Just last month, our president, Hassan Rouhani, joined by his Russian and Turkish counterparts, took an important stride toward peace at their summit meeting in Sochi, Russia, paving the way for more aid, de-escalation and the convening of a Syrian people's congress.

We urge responsible parties to recognize the need to look forward. And so, let us find hope in a shared vision of a more peaceful future and be brave enough to take tangible action to make it happen.

## Kabul says Tehran can help train Afghan forces

### Afghan Defense Ministry seeks Iran's support in terror crackdown



**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Afghan Defense Ministry spokesman Dawlat Waziri has called on Iran to support his country in the fight against terrorism, saying Tehran can tremendously help Afghan armed forces in terrorism crackdown.

In an interview with Mehr news agency published on Monday, Waziri lauded Tehran's cooperation with Kabul in various fields including military, saying Iran can further help Afghanistan by training Afghan armed forces.

"Military help to Afghanistan is not limited to giving guns and tanks to the country," he said, emphasizing that Iran's help should continue until the Afghan government can stand on its own.

Waziri stressed that the security of Iran and Afghanistan had become closely intertwined, saying there are twenty active terrorist groups in Afghanistan, which also threaten the security of Iran.

"All terrorist groups must be annihilated to

establish security in Afghanistan," he added.

He also hailed friendly ties between the two countries, pointing to the Chabahar agreement as an example of Iran's good will to Afghanistan. "We regard this as an example of a good friendship," he said.

The Afghan spokesman also criticized Washington's Middle East policies, saying U.S. President Donald Trump's strategy and its warning against Pakistan to halt supporting terrorists in Afghanistan has not borne results yet.



# Mogherini rejects Israeli call for EU to follow U.S. lead

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini has dismissed Tel Aviv's call on the European Union to follow U.S. lead and recognize Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel's capital.

Mogherini said Monday the bloc would continue to recognize the "international consensus" on Jerusalem al-Quds as she met Benjamin Netanyahu in Brussels where the Israeli premier arrived for a meeting of EU foreign ministers.

Netanyahu praised Trump's decision on the extremely sensitive city which is the third holiest site in Islam and said he expected the Europeans to follow suit because it would contribute to peace in the Middle East.

But even Israel's closest European allies such as the Czech Republic warned Trump's decision was bad for peace efforts.

EU foreign ministers reiterated the bloc's position that the lands Israel has occupied since a 1967 war - including the West Bank, East Jerusalem al-Quds and the Golan Heights - are part of the internationally recognized occupied territories.

The Israeli leader was headstrong, however, saying he thought the Europeans would ultimately fall in line with the U.S. and rec-



ognize Jerusalem al-Quds as the capital of the occupying regime.

"I believe that all, or most, of the Euro-

pean countries will move their embassies to Jerusalem, recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and engage robustly with us for

security, prosperity and peace."

Netanyahu is on the first visit to the EU by an Israeli premier in 22 years, flying into Brussels from Paris after a meeting on Sunday with France's President Emmanuel Macron. A demonstration condemning Netanyahu's visit was planned for later in the morning in Brussels.

Mogherini repeated the European Union's commitment to the so-called two-state solution and that it was in Israel's interest to find a sustainable solution to its conflict with the Palestinians.

The EU, she said, would step up its peace efforts and would hold talks with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas next month.

The Palestinians want the eastern part of Jerusalem al-Quds as the capital of their future state. Trump's move has sent shockwaves across the world and raised the possibility of a new intifada in the occupied territories.

A day after Trump made the declaration and ordered work to begin on relocation of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem al-Quds, Mogherini said the move could take the region "backwards to even darker times."

(Source: Euronews)

## UN: 'Stupid war' on Yemen harming Saudi Arabia, UAE

UN chief Antonio Guterres has called on the U.S. to pressure Saudi Arabia into ending the "stupid war" which is causing "terrible suffering to the Yemeni people" and also harming the kingdom and the UAE. "I believe this is a stupid war," Guterres told CNN on Sunday in an unusually blunt language, adding that what Yemen needed was "a political solution."

"I think this war is against the interests of Saudi Arabia and the Emirates... (and) of the people of Yemen," he added.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been bombing Yemen since 2015 in a campaign which has destroyed much of the country's infrastructure and left it grappling with what the UN calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The bombings have left more than 12,000 people dead while a cholera outbreak has claimed more than 2,000 people. According to the UN, around seven million Yemenis are also on the verge of starvation. "This war is causing, in my opinion, terrible suffering to the Yemeni people," the UN chief said, adding, "It's in the interests of everybody to stop this war." Guterres said he hoped Riyadh would lift its blockade of Yemen's ports, which has compounded the country's misery. "I hope that President Trump has put a lot of pressure recently...", he added. The United States is



an ally of Saudi Arabia in the military campaign against Yemen, providing logistical, and advisory support such as bombing coordinates as well as arms and weapons which have drawn condemnation from rights groups.

The U.S. sealed a massive arms deal with Saudi Arabia

in May during Trump's first visit abroad as president, in a move that solidified Washington's decades-long alliance with the world's largest oil exporter.

The agreement, worth \$350 billion over 10 years and \$110 billion that would take effect immediately, was hailed by the White House as a significant expansion of the security relationship between the two countries.

Lockheed Martin was one of the world's largest military contractors whose technology was part of the U.S.-Saudi accord.

The deal represented a softening of the U.S. position on the widely criticized Saudi war and support for "endless quagmire" in Yemen, U.S. news channel CNBC said at the time.

Amnesty International, which has recorded human rights violations in Yemen, said the deal "has President Trump throwing gasoline on a house fire and locking the door on his way out." "There is damning evidence that war crimes have been committed by the Saudi-led coalition and continuing to arm Saudi Arabia fuels serious human rights violations that are causing overwhelming civilian suffering in Yemen," wrote Eric Ferrero, Amnesty International USA communications director.

(Source: Press TV)

## Hamas vows to avenge Israeli killing of fighters in Gaza airstrikes

Palestinian resistance movement Hamas has vowed to retaliate against Israeli airstrikes that left two fighters dead amid tensions over Washington's recognition of Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel's capital.

"The enemy will pay the price for breaking the rules of engagement with the resistance in Gaza," Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, said in a statement.

Israel conducted several aerial attacks against the besieged Gaza Strip on December 8, killing Mahmoud al-Atal and Mohammed al-Safadi and injuring 14 others, including women and children, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza.

Tel Aviv claimed that Palestinian resistance forces had fired a number of rockets at Israel.

"The coming days will prove to the enemy the great error and misjudgment of the will and determination of the resistance," the statement added. The Israeli aerial attacks came amid escalating tensions in the occupied territories in the wake of the U.S. president's recognition of Jerusalem al-Quds as the Israeli capital.

Hamas on Thursday called for a new Palestinian intifada or uprising against Israel, decrying Donald Trump's decision on al-Quds as a declaration of war. "The battle for Jerusalem [al-Quds] continues hour by hour above- and below-ground, and thousands of jihadist fighters are working and preparing at this moment in the darkest conditions, equipped for the battle to liberate Jerusalem [al-Quds]," the group said.



"This is evidenced by the death of two Qassami, martyrs Mohammed Safadi and Mahmoud al-Atal, who died... while carrying out their duties in one of the places of preparation," the statement added.

**■ Israeli troops clash with anti-Trump Palestinian protesters**

Meanwhile, the situation remains tense in the occupied West Bank territories. Clashes have broken out between Israeli forces and Palestinian protesters, who took to the streets for the fifth consecutive day to censure a U.S. decision to recognize Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel's "capital."

Israeli forces have fired tear gas and rubber bullets in several areas across the occupied West Bank, including Ramallah and Nablus, to disperse the Palestinian demonstrators, who threw rocks at them in return.

Last week, U.S. President Donald Trump said Washington was recognizing Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel's "capital" and tasked his officials with making preparations for transferring the embassy from Tel Aviv to the occupied city. Trump's announcement triggered harsh criticisms from the entire global community, including from Israel's very own allies. Several protests have been

held in many countries over the past days against the U.S. and Israel.

Earlier in the day, demonstrators in Indonesia and Malaysia held similar rallies to voice their support for the Palestinian nation.

Indonesian protesters torched U.S. and Israeli flags in front of the American embassy in the capital, Jakarta.

The protesters also waved Palestinian flags and chanted slogans against the U.S. and the occupying regime in Israel.

In the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur, protesters also gathered in front of the American embassy, burning an effigy of Trump.

In previous days, massive demonstrations and clashes with protesters were reported in many countries. The entire Jerusalem al-Quds is currently under Israel's control, while the regime also claims the city's eastern part, which hosts the third holiest Muslim site.

The city has been designated as "occupied" under international law since the 1967 Arab War, which Palestinians want as the capital of their future state.

Trump had vowed during his presidential campaign that he would relocate the US embassy to Jerusalem to please his pro-Israel voters. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hailed Trump's recognition as "historic" and a "courageous and just decision."

Palestinians had repeatedly warned Trump against such an action, saying it would deliver a death blow to any prospects of the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

(Source: agencies)

## Putin orders troops to begin pullout from Syria

Russia's President Vladimir Putin has ordered Russian forces to begin withdrawing from Syria during a surprise visit to the Arab country, RIA Novosti news agency reported.

Putin visited Russia's Hmeimim air base in the Latakia province on Monday and also held talks with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

"I order the defense minister and the chief of general staff to start withdrawing the Russian group of troops to their permanent bases," RIA quoted him as saying.

"I have taken a decision: a significant part of the Russian troop contingent located in Syria is returning home to Russia," Putin added.

The Russian leader congratulated his country's troops over the defeat of ISIL (Daesh) in Syria, saying the threat of Takfiri terrorism had been removed in the country for the most part.

"The task of fighting armed bandits here in Syria, a task that it was essential to solve with the help of extensive use of armed force, has for the most part, been solved and solved spectacularly," Putin said.

"I congratulate you!" he told Russian servicemen gathered at the base where he also met the Syrian president.

Putin stressed that Moscow would keep the Hmeimim air base in Latakia as well as Russia's naval facility at the Syrian port of Tartous "on a permanent basis".

Putin made the stopover on his way to Egypt where he arrived later Monday.

Since September 2016, Moscow has been targeting the positions of Daesh and other militant groups upon an official request from the Damascus government.

Putin's decision on Monday came a few days after he declared a "complete victory" over Daesh on both banks of the Euphrates River in Syria as he stressed the significance of switching to a political process to ultimately end the crisis in the Arab country.

The US, which has set up more than a dozen military bases in Syria without the Arab country's consent or a UN mandate, has said it planned to stay indefinitely.

"We're not going to just walk away right now," the US Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis said recently.

Since September 2014, the US has been carrying out bombings against what it calls Daesh positions in Syria. The government in Damascus says the airstrikes have harmed Syria's infrastructure and claimed the lives of many civilians without making a dent in the capability of the terrorists.

Washington is also aiding some militant groups which are increasingly posing a challenge to the Syrian government.

(Source: RIA Novosti)

## Women accusing Trump of sexual misconduct should be heard: UN envoy



U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley says women who have accused President Donald Trump of sexual misconduct "should be heard."

"Women who accuse anyone should be heard. They should be heard and they should be dealt with," Haley said on CBS's Face the Nation when asked about allegations of misconduct leveled against Trump.

"And I think we heard from them prior to the election. And I think any woman who has felt violated or felt mistreated in any way, they have every right to speak up."

Haley, a former governor and one of the highest-ranking women in the Trump administration, said "the time has come" to bring "a conscience" to the way women are treated in the United States.

The comments were a surprising break from the assertion by the administration that the allegations are simply unfounded and that voters dismissed them when they elected Trump.

More than a dozen women have accused Trump of unwanted sexual advances, including forcible kissing or groping.

There is growing concern within the administration that the president may not escape renewed scrutiny at a time when a number of powerful men have been forced to step down because of sexual impropriety.

Weeks before the presidential election last November, The Washington Post released a tape in which Trump boasted about how he sexually assaulted women because he was powerful.

The Access Hollywood tape triggered a wave of allegations against Trump. But the president in recent weeks has cast doubt on the authenticity of the 2005 tape, despite publicly acknowledging last year that, "I said it, I was wrong, and I apologize."

Some of the women who first accused Trump during the presidential campaign have expressed a renewed desire to press their case.

The president, however, has so far escaped the fallout relatively unscathed. He has used Twitter to mock others accused of sexual misconduct, including Minnesota Democratic Senator Al Franken, who announced his resignation last week.

Two lawmakers in the House of Representatives, Democratic Rep. John Conyers from Michigan and Republican Rep. Trent Franks of Arizona, have also stepped down over allegations of crude sexual behavior.

Congressional Republicans have been sharply divided over how to respond to the case of Roy Moore, the Senate candidate in Alabama, who has been accused of molesting a teenage girl and pursuing other teenagers decades ago.

Trump has officially endorsed Moore, calling the allegations against him "troubling" but stressing that he is needed in the Senate to advance the Republican agenda.

(Source: agencies)

## Myanmar military's rape of Rohingya women methodical, sweeping

A new investigation reveals that Rohingya Muslim women have been subjected to "methodical" and "sweeping" rape by Myanmar's military forces in Rakhine State, where a government-backed ethnic cleansing campaign has been underway against the minority group.

The investigation was conducted by the Associated Press based on interviews with 29 Rohingya women and girls, who survived sexual assault and have managed to take refuge in neighboring Bangladesh.

The Rohingya women and girls, who came from a variety of villages in Myanmar, told their horrifying stories of being raped several times by Myanmar's armed forces. They talked to investigators separately from across several refugee camps in Bangladesh, according to AP.

Each of every women described that they were attacked by groups of men. They said the rape often coupled with other forms of extreme violence. They said the attackers wore military-style uniforms, generally dark green or camouflage.

The survivors, ranged in age from 13 to 35 year old, gave their names to AP, but agreed to be publicly identified only by their first initial.

The new report brings to mind a UN official's remarks about the use of sexual violence by the military against Rohingya women as "a calculated tool of terror aimed at the extermination and removal of the Rohingya as a group."

Pramila Patten, UN envoy on sexual violence in con-



flict, said previously that sexual violence "was clearly a driver" for more than 620,000 Rohingya Muslims to flee Myanmar.

Patten, who spoke to rape victims in refugee camps in Bangladesh, said that this type of violence "has been commanded, orchestrated, and condoned and perpetrated by the armed forces."

Doctors Without Borders, also known by the French acronym MSF, said its volunteers have treated 113 sexual

violence survivors since August. It said that the youngest survivor was nine.

Myanmar's officials, however, have so far denied rape allegations and, instead, accused Rohingya women of "claiming they were raped."

The Rakhine minister for border affairs said in September that "these women were claiming they were raped, but look at their appearances - do you think they are that attractive to be raped?"

This is while Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi admitted previously that her country's armed forces used rape as a weapon to intimidate ethnic nationalities. Suu kyi, who has come under global scrutiny for backing the ethnic cleansing campaign, made the remarks in a videotaped statement to the Nobel Women's Initiative back in 2011.

More than 600,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled the violence to Bangladesh since late August, when the clamp-down began, bringing with them horrifying stories of massacres, gang rape and arson by Myanmar's military forces and Buddhist mobs.

Myanmar's government calls Rohingya Muslims Bengalis to imply they are immigrants from Bangladesh.

It has defied calls by the UN and the international community to grant citizenship to the stateless Muslims, whose roots in the country go back centuries.

(Source: AP)



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	91552.4
IFX	1022.92

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42050 rials
EUR	50350 rials
GBP	57800 rials
AED	11,600 rials

Source: Mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$63.36/b
WTI	\$57.18/b
OPEC Basket	\$60.73/b
Gold	\$1,250/oz
Silver	\$15.89/oz
Platinum	\$890.50/oz

Sources: Oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Iran-Pakistan  
commerce  
chamber  
inaugurated

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran-Pakistan Joint Chamber of Commerce was officially opened in Tehran on Sunday, the portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture reported.

The value of trade between Iran and Pakistan hit \$1.2 billion in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2017) increasing from \$861 million in its previous year and the figure is planned to increase to \$5 billion by 2021.



8-month  
pistachio  
exports exceeds  
\$495m

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran exported \$495,827 million worth of pistachio during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 21), Tasnim reported on Monday citing customs 8-month data.

The country's weight of exported pistachio stood at 59,744 tons during the mentioned time span, indicating an 18 percent fall from the figure of last year's first eight months.

Iran exported 130,000 tons of pistachio worth \$1.2 billion to 70 countries in the previous Iranian calendar year (which ended on March 20).

European shares edge  
up near four-week highs,  
helped by banks

European shares rose slightly to near 4-week highs on Monday following gains in Asian markets overnight and helped by strength among financial stocks.

The pan-European STOXX 600 index inched up 0.1 percent by 0837 GMT with banks leading sectoral gainers on relief after last week's deal on new global banking rules and ahead of the U.S. Federal Reserve meeting on Wednesday.

The STOXX 600 has recovered part of the losses suffered in November but remains more than 2 percent below the two-year highs hit at the start of last month.

Traders said markets will likely remain quiet before the much awaited Fed meeting, which is widely expected to raise rates, a measure that could support banking stocks.

"There is not much major data scheduled to be released today, which makes range-trading the most likely scenario... Also with the FOMC meeting just around the corner many traders might prefer to remain on the sideline for now," said Markus Huber, trader at City of London Markets.

HSBC was the biggest gainer on Monday, up 1.8 percent, while among other heavyweight banks, UBS rose 0.6 percent and France's BNP Paribas was up 0.2 percent, while Deutsche Bank declined 0.6 percent.

Over the weekend, Deutsche Bank's finance chief told a German paper the bank was able to cope with the stricter capital rules on banks that were agreed last week.

Top gainers on the STOXX were Steinhoff, which rose 23 percent to break three sessions of dramatic losses stemming from its discovery of accounting irregularities, and Italian defense contractor Leonardo, up 2.5 percent following an upbeat note from Goldman Sachs.

Elsewhere, Bayer shares were 0.7 percent higher, brushing off a report that EU antitrust regulators are expected to warn the group in the coming weeks that its planned takeover of U.S. seed maker Monsanto may hurt competition.

AB InBev was up 0.7 percent following a source-based report saying the company is among the brewing groups looking to bid for a stake in Vietnam's largest brewer in a \$5 billion sale process.

Gains on the broader market were limited by renewed weakness among tech stocks, the sector which has gained the most in Europe so far this year. Chipmaker AMS, whose shares have risen more than 220 percent so far this year, was the biggest faller on the STOXX 600, down more than 3 percent.

Also weighing were losses among utilities and telecoms, two sectors which tend to underperform when interest rates rise, making their steady dividend flows less attractive.

(Source: Reuters)

SMEs set  
to bolster  
Iran-Korea  
technology ties

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Representatives from private sectors of Iran and South Korea signed 22 memorandums of understanding (MOUs) in Tehran on Sunday to expand cooperation in technology transfer areas.

The MOUs were signed during the 4th Iran-South Korea Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Technology Matching Conference, which was attended by officials from both sides along with managers of eight South Korean and 50 Iranian companies, IRNA

reported.

Production of heating and cooling installations, solar panels, renewable energies, lithium batteries and electric engines were among the fields agreed upon by the two sides.

Addressing the ceremony, the head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization, Sadeq Najafi, said Iranian SMEs should benefit from South Korean expertise and knowledge and the government should pave the way for their activities.

In July, Iranian and South Korean SMEs



Representatives of two Iranian and South Korean companies signing one of the MOUs in Tehran on Sunday.

active in various areas including fisheries and marine environment, beekeeping, oil and gas, biological fertilizers, car spare parts manufacturing, as well as die casting signed 10 MOUs to expand bilateral cooperation.

South Korea is Iran's fifth biggest trading partner after China, the UAE, Iraq and Turkey. About 6.5 percent of Iran's total non-

oil exports is shipped to the Asian country.

Iran exported 6.6 million tons of non-oil goods, worth \$2.87 billion to South Korea in the previous Iranian calendar year (March 2016-March 2017) while imported 1.5 million tons of non-oil goods, worth \$3.46 billion from the country, according to Iran's customs administration.

Four developments to watch in global economy

Much of the markets' focus last week was on another round of records -- from the Dow Jones Industrial Average and S&P 500 closing Friday at new highs, to Bitcoins' wild ride ahead of the formal launch of futures trading. The spotlight was also on lower implied stock volatility, with the VIX dipping below 10, and the flattening of the Treasury yield curve as two-year yields continued to move up. With all of this going on, it is little surprise that several important data points relating to economic and policy fundamentals attracted a lot less attention. Yet their implications could be quite consequential, both for 2018 and beyond.

This is particularly the case for these four factors:

1 - The synchronized global recovery: Last week's economic data from China and Japan, as well as favorable indicators from Europe and another month of strong employment growth in the U. S., reinforced the message that the global economy continues to gather momentum. With all four major economic regions now contributing directly to the improved prospects for global growth, these developments could also lower some of the underlying currency and trade tensions.

2 - Policy progress: Improved global prospects are further enhanced by policy advances in the U.S. Congress on the tax bill, which was accompanied last week by indications that the administration intends to announce next month an infrastructure plan, the third element of President Donald

Trump's pro-growth push (the other two pieces are deregulation and tax reform).

3 - Less structural economic uncertainty: In Europe, after long and tricky negotiations, the U.K. and its EU partners reached agreement on what many have described as a tentative divorce settlement. This opens the way for the second stage of more economically constructive discussions on Europe's post-Brexit institutional arrangements.

4 - Continued orderly market acceptance of higher policy rates: Having already priced a very high probability that the Federal Reserve will hike rates when its policy-making committee meets this week, markets have been internalizing the likelihood of additional increases next year. For example, yields on two-year Treasury bills, one of the maturities most sensitive to Fed actions, have now risen to 1.80 percent, or by around 50 basis points in the last three months. This move has occurred without disrupting financial markets or derailing the economy, providing further indications that the Fed is progressing on its "beautiful normalization" (to adapt a phrase used a few years ago by Bridgewater's Ray Dalio in a different context).

Of course, not all of the backdrop of economic and policy fundamentals is positive. U.S. wage growth, at a 2.5 percent annualized rate in November, is still relatively low, especially given the decline in the unemployment rate to

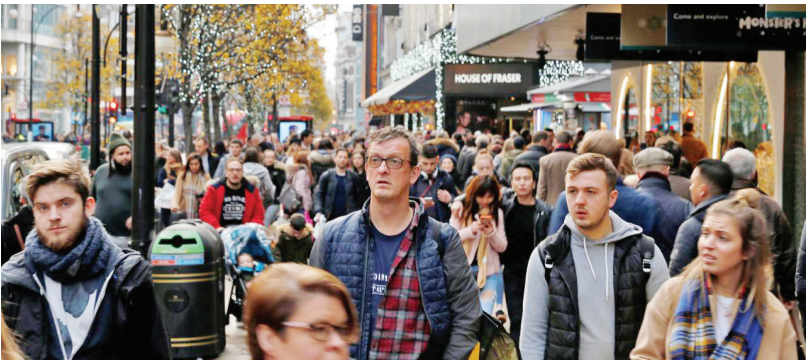
a 17-year low. Some worry that the flattening of the yield curve is a sign of higher recession risk (though I see it more as a reflection of foreign purchases of longer-maturity U.S. bonds turbocharged by institutional liability-driven investments.)

In addition, Europe's regional policy progress remains slow as many await the formation of a new government in Germany. And it remains to be seen how the global economy could absorb the simultaneous normalizing policies of several systemically-important central banks and the sustainability of pockets of high debt and leverage.

Despite those qualifications, last week's developments reinforce the prospects for better actual and future growth, thereby increasing the possibility of improved fundamentals validating notably elevated asset prices. Indeed, over the course of 2017, what I have previously labeled the "yes-but" global economy has shifted more in the positive direction, building a more solid foundation for 2018. Moreover, if you believe like me that the global economy faces a meaningful medium-term tipping point -- out of the "new normal" either to higher, more sustainable and more inclusive growth or to periodic recessions and unsettling financial instability -- this period is consequential not only for the current generation but also future ones.

(Source: Bloomberg)

UK consumers cut spending  
in run-up to Christmas: Visa



Squeezed British consumers reined in Christmas travel plans and bought fewer new cars last month, setting the stage for the first fall in festive spending in five years, credit card company Visa said on Monday.

The downbeat message came alongside a cut by the British Chambers of Commerce to its economic outlook for the next two years as the business organization sees inflation rising faster than pay for the next two years.

Visa said inflation-adjusted consumer spending last month was 0.9 percent lower than in 2016. This was a smaller decline than October's 2.1 percent drop but still enough to make annual falls in spending likely for the first time since 2012 for both the Christmas season and 2017 overall, the company said.

The biggest falls in spending came on expensive items such as cars and Christmas trips abroad, while cheaper luxuries such as beauty treatments and cosmetics saw gains.

"People opt for smaller treats, at the same time tightening their belts when it comes to larger purchases," Visa executive Mark Antipof said.

Black Friday discounts in late Novem-

ber boosted online sales at the expense of physical stores, Visa added.

British inflation has held at a five-year high of 3.0 percent since September, pushed up by the fall in the pound since June 2016's Brexit vote, while wages have failed to keep pace.

The British Chambers of Commerce, in a quarterly update to its economic outlook on Monday, said it expected this to persist throughout 2018.

"Continued uncertainty over Brexit and the burden of upfront cost pressures facing businesses is likely to stifle business investment, while falling real wage growth is expected to continue to weigh on consumer spending," BCC economist Suren Thiru said.

The BCC cut its forecasts for 2017, 2018 and 2019, seeing growth of 1.5 percent this year, slowing to 1.1 percent in 2018 and only partially recovering to 1.3 percent in 2019.

This is slightly below the average for economists polled by Reuters, who expect growth of 1.3 percent next year and 1.5 percent in 2019, when Britain is due to leave the European Union.

(Source: Reuters)

Turkey's 11% economic growth  
fuels expectations of rate hike



Turkey's economy grew faster in the third quarter than any other of the world's 20 biggest economies as household spending and exports surged, stoking expectations that the central bank will increase borrowing costs to curb rising inflation.

Gross domestic product expanded 11.1 percent in the three months to Sept. 30 from a year earlier, the fastest pace in more than six years, according to official data released on Monday. The median estimate of economists in a Bloomberg survey was 8.5 percent.

Turkey increased spending on everything from wages to investments, and extended cheaper credit to companies to counter the impact of last year's failed coup attempt on the economy. But with growth driven mainly by domestic consumption at a time when inflation is at the highest level since 2003, the central bank will likely tighten monetary policy when it meets on Thursday, according to Inan Demir, an economist at Nomura International Plc in London.

"Even though the headline growth rates do paint a very positive picture, the composition of growth has been a

factor that undermined the lira in recent months," he said.

Raising interest rates would put the central bank on a collision course with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who said in November that the bank was on a "wrong path" in its fight against inflation, and reiterated his unorthodox view that lower borrowing costs would better address price gains.

Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Simsek said Monday that economic growth based solely on domestic demand wouldn't be sustainable, and that more balance is needed.

Third-quarter growth "is an exceptional figure," he said in an interview with state-run TRT television. "It is based on the low growth in the third quarter last year. Turkey needs to carry out more reforms to have a 5.5 percent to 6.5 percent growth sustainable."

The lira was little changed after the report. Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekci had already said on Nov. 26 that Turkey will be the fastest-growing country in the world in the third quarter.

(Source: Bloomberg)

'Bitcoin crash' among significant market risks in 2018, says Deutsche Bank

Could the market's new darling become its next black swan event?

The bitcoin craze could pose a real risk to the broader market next year, Deutsche Bank warned last week, ahead of the cryptocurrency's launch on futures exchanges, scheduled to take place Sunday.

Torsten Slok, the firm's chief international economist, sent to clients a list of significant risks to the market in 2018. Included on that list: A crash in the price of bitcoin, higher inflation and the threat of North Korea.

Bitcoin has emerged as a financial phenomenon this year as the digital currency sees \$1,000-plus swings within hours. At this juncture, as the cryptocurrency has advanced quadruple digits this year, Slok said the markets have not correctly priced in the broader impact bitcoin could potentially have.

"It is something that I think financial markets so far have been discounting as a small issue," the economist said Thursday on CNBC's "Trading Nation." He said he worries about whether bitcoin and its wild price swings could become



"more systemic" next year if the current trends continue.

"The worry, of course, that one can have is that it's catching on quite substantially. And of course with the speed with which prices are going up, then you do wonder where prices will be even by the end of 2017. But we do think that in 2018,

this, of course, will continue to be a topic, and there are a number of questions that remain unanswered," Slok said.

While bitcoin has more than its share of true believers -- many of whom have sent its price on a dizzying rally to around \$19,000 just last week -- the digital currency's volatility and lack of transparency has earned it a fair number of critics.

Last week, "Mad Money" host Jim Cramer likened bitcoin trading to "an abstruse casino game that seems to have only winners and no losers. You've got to like that, right? I think, though, that could change," Cramer said.

Specifically, questions persist around regulation of the cryptocurrency and transparency in what exactly investors hold, according to Deutsche's Slok.

The cryptocurrency's price rose above \$19,000 for the first time on Thursday before tumbling more than 20 percent, according to Coinbase data.

Its volatility could intensify in days ahead as exchanges prepare to launch bitcoin futures trading.

(Source: CNBC)



# Kuwait says global oil cuts can halt if market balances by June

OPEC and its global allies including Russia may end their production cuts before 2019 if the crude market re-balances by June, Kuwait's oil minister said.

Russia is keen to end the output-capping deal as early as possible, Issam Almarzooq told Bloomberg on Sunday in Kuwait City. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries will study an exit strategy from the global cuts accord at its next meeting in June, he told reporters later.

"We still have a full year left in the agreement, but there is a possibility that we exit the cuts agreement before 2019 if the market is re-balanced by June," Almarzooq said. "There is pressure from Russia to exit the deal as soon as possible" once the market is balanced, he said.

OPEC and its partners agreed on Nov. 30 to keep curbing production until the end of next year, in a bid to drain oversupplied world markets and prop up prices. Crude dropped in the week after their decision to extend the cuts as investors turned attention to expanding U.S. oil production and gasoline stockpiles. Prices have since edged higher as



near-record Chinese orders for foreign crude signaled stronger demand in the world's second-largest economy.

## Price outlook

U.S. crude production expanded for a seventh week to 9.71 million barrels a day,

the highest level in weekly data compiled by the U.S. Energy Information Administration since 1983. Gasoline inventories surged by 6.78 million barrels last week, the biggest gain since January.

Kuwait sees a full re-balancing of the oil market by the end of 2018, Almarzooq said on the sidelines of the annual meeting of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries. Prices should remain near current levels in 2018, he said.

United Arab Emirates Energy Minister Suhail Al Mazrouei said it was premature to comment on when OPEC will exit the production cuts agreement. OPEC plans to discuss the exit strategy in June but can meet at anytime if needed, he said in Kuwait.

Iraq's Oil Minister Jabbar al-Luaibi said it was "too early to speculate" on what OPEC and its partners in the cuts will decide in June.

"It depends on the market," al-Luaibi said in Kuwait. "We have an entire year ahead of us. OPEC made a decision to monitor the market, and now it's studying the market. The developments in the market will be the factor that contributes to decisions."

(Source: Bloomberg)

## China gas giant focuses on homes amid winter crunch criticism

China National Petroleum Corp. is restricting natural-gas sales to industries across the country to divert more of the fuel to heat homes in the northern part of the country.

The move is a response to instructions from the National Development & Reform Commission, which called on local governments and gas suppliers to combat gas shortages in the north. An industry group in southeastern China said it will probably face shortfalls as well, and pinned the blame on CNPC.

Natural gas supplies to petrochemical industries will be "severely" reduced, and other industrial direct-sale users will see gradual declines in supply heading into the winter season, CNPC said in a statement on its website Monday. The company said it will coordinate with regional governments to secure supplies to residential users.

CNPC, the main supplier to northern regions, failed to predict the sharp rise in demand for gas after China implemented coal-to-gas conversion projects this year to fight air pollution, Guangdong Oil & Gas Association said in a Dec. 8 statement. The southern province is highly likely to face gas shortages if the weather turns colder



and supply from the north shrinks further, it said.

Switching industrial and residential users to gas pushed demand up 19 percent during the first 10 months of the year, according to data from the national development commission. China faces a daily shortfall of 40 million cubic meters of gas, the energy administration of Guizhou province said Friday.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## Libya discusses boosting oil output amid OPEC cuts

Despite Libya agreeing to join the OPEC-Russia oil output deal, the country's officials, crude producers and bankers are discussing ways to increase output in order to fix Libya's public finances. This comes as global oil prices have stabilized above \$60 a barrel, rendering oil production more profitable.

The head of Libya's UN-recognized government held a meeting with leaders of the National Oil Corporation (NOC), as well the governor of the nation's central bank Saturday, discussing the allocation of additional funds to increase oil output.

Libya has been mired in political instability and suffered the consequences of fragile public finances for years entailing the overthrow of Gaddafi. However, as international oil prices increased, warring factions within the country – including Islamic extremists associated with Daesh – have sought ways to ship more oil overseas in order to boost their political influence.

The central government, backed by the UN, is now weighing an increase in state-controlled oil output for the same reason, as increased budget revenues could enhance political stability in the country. However, the NOC has been significantly underfunded in the past two years, and this lack of investment in the oil industry has limited government-controlled oil production.



Besides, Libya joined the OPEC oil cuts recently, not least due to the understanding that the nation's output capacity is restrained anyway due to these systemic factors. Current discussions are therefore controversial at least, as they contradict the spirit of the OPEC-Russian accords aimed at supporting oil prices, and Libya appears to be seeking to capitalize on the results of the agreement.

Libya agreed its oil production would not exceed 1 mln bpd, and Libya said it would bring its output in line with the target next year. However, increased governmental investment in the oil industry could allow the nation to produce more oil in the near future.

(Source: Sputnik)

## UK gas surges to highest since 2014 as snow blankets London

Same-day prices surged to their highest level in almost four years as demand jumped with a plunge in temperatures after snow covered much of the country over the weekend. The contract soared as much as 13 percent, the most since June, as forecasters predict more snow and colder-than-usual weather while outages curbed supplies to some terminals.

The average temperature in the UK for the rest of Monday will be 1 degree Celsius (34 Fahrenheit), compared with a 10-year average of 5.2 Celsius, according to Bloomberg's weather model. Supplies in the system could plunge 11 percent by the end of the day, according to network man-

ager National Grid Plc.

"Whilst the weather-related heating demand was expected, the reduction in flows via a number of terminals was not," Nick Campbell, an energy risk manager at Inspired Energy Plc, said by email. "Therefore this has left the system tight and battling to pull in more gas from the continent."

The UK's Met Office issued a "yellow" warning, flagging the risk of accidents from ice after dumps of snow over the weekend disrupted travel. Still, the impact was expected to be "much less widespread and less significant than across parts of England and Wales on Sunday," according to its website.

Supplies from the Bacton terminal in Norfolk are below the 10-day average after Total SA said exports from the Elgin Franklin field that feed it have been reduced by about 60 percent from normal levels, potentially until Wednesday evening. Flows into the St. Fergus terminal in Scotland also plunged. Storage supply picked up some of the slack, rising to the highest since Dec. 1.

Within-day prices jumped as high as 65 pence a therm (\$8.69 per million British thermal units), before trading at 62.25 pence at 10:12 a.m. in London, according to broker data compiled by Bloomberg. The day-ahead contract rose as much as 7.4 percent.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## Is oil about to collapse?

By Martin Tillier

When writing about markets, here and elsewhere, I usually try to avoid the temptation to write sensational things. Words like "collapse" and "crash", or "surge" and "explode" attract clicks, which in turn often translates to cash for a writer, but major events like that are rare. That is all fine and logical, but...WTI really does look like it is about to collapse.

Let's be clear, I am not necessarily talking about a return to the sub-\$30 of the beginning of 2016 here, but a return to the more recent lows around \$42 before too long is distinctly possible, and if that happens, who knows where we go from there? There are, as I have noted in the past, reasons to believe that the long-term path of oil is still upward, but more immediately there is one dominant factor that keeps adding downward pressure, large and still growing supply from North American shale producers.

Some say, as in this FT piece, that there are signs that U.S. shale production has peaked, but then that was also supposed to be the case in 2015 and 2016. I am sure that if I could bother to go back further I would find that the same thing was said in previous years too. The fact is though, that as the EIA chart below shows, after dropping off as price declined at earlier this year, U.S. crude production is growing again and will be higher this year than last and is expected to be higher again in 2018.

The second chart, directly above, indicates



why American producers are pumping at a growing rate. WTI has been recovering ever since the low of \$26.05, and is now at levels not seen since June of 2015. There are reasons for that recovery, most notably the production cuts agreed by OPEC countries and others including Russia and improving global growth, but those bullish factors are now fully priced in and the effect of that is to encourage U.S. E&P companies to, to borrow a phrase, drill, baby, drill!

I have been waiting for the expansion in North American production to slow and for demand growth to dominate pricing, but it hasn't happened. It seems there are only two

thing that will potentially bring that about... a lack of available drill sites, or a big drop in price. Anybody who has witnessed the actions to date of the current U.S. Presidential Administration and Congress will know that the first is not about to happen soon, which leaves us with the second.

When OPEC and other signatories to the deal got together recently in Vienna they announced that there was almost total adherence to the scheduled cuts. That was greeted by most people, including, I will freely admit me, as a positive for oil prices. It is certainly rare based on the results of other agreements to cut and therefore impressive, but there is

a basic problem. Now that the appropriate level of cuts has been achieved, production in the participating countries will at best remain at current levels. U.S. production, however, continues to increase exponentially.

There are, as I said, some bullish factors, and there is always the chance of a major unforeseen event disrupting supply, but all else being equal the next big move in oil will be caused by the most basic driver of price for any commodity; the balance between supply and demand. As it stands, every increase in demand and attempts at reduction in supply outside the U.S. is being more than compensated for by increases in domestic production, and eventually the price must reflect that, despite a continued positive outlook for economic growth.

That is especially true if further cracks start to appear in the production cuts agreement. Russia already rumbled some dissatisfaction at the last meeting of the parties to the cuts, and if crude prices simply stall for a while and U.S. exports continue to increase it is unlikely that the Russians will continue with a policy whose net effect is to enrich U.S. oil companies.

There is, then, a chance of an event that would cause a collapse in oil prices, but that may not even be needed. The simple mechanics of pricing, supply, and demand need only to do their thing and the result will be a drop in oil prices that justifies the use of words like "collapse".

(Source: oilprice.com)

## Oil prices slip under shadow of U.S. drilling

Oil markets edged lower on Monday as ongoing output cuts led by OPEC were countered by rising U.S. drilling activity that points to a further increase in American production.

Brent crude futures, the international benchmark for oil prices, were 15 cents lower at \$63.25 a barrel at 0950 GMT.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$57.03 a barrel, down 33 cents from their last settlement.

Both Brent and WTI crude oil settled more than 1 percent higher on Friday, and oil prices have gained well over a third in value from their 2017 lows.

"It's time for a breather," said Warren Patterson, commodities strategist with ING.

The gains are largely due to production cuts by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and a group of non-OPEC producers, including Russia, which have been in place since the start of the year.

But analysts said the effect of these cuts could be undermined by rising output from the United States, which is not participating in the deal to voluntarily withhold production.

The number of rigs drilling for new oil output in the United States rose by two in the week to Dec. 8, to 751, the highest level since September, General Electric Co's Baker Hughes energy services firm said on Friday.

"The largest concern for investors currently remains the rise in the U.S. rig count, which could potentially jeopardize the OPEC and Russian agreement when they meet for a review in June 2018," said Shane Chanel, equities and derivatives adviser at ASR Wealth Advisers.

(Source: Reuters)

## China starts world's biggest floating solar project

A unit of China Three Gorges Corp. is building a 1 billion yuan (\$151 million) floating solar power plant, the world's biggest, in the nation's eastern province of Anhui.

China Three Gorges New Energy Co. started building the 150-megawatt project in July and part of the plant has connected to the grid, according to a Dec. 10 statement. The project features panels fixed to floats on the surface of a lake that formed after a coal mine collapsed, according to the unit. The entire facility is expected to come online by May 2018.

Floating solar is getting bigger in China, where ground-mounted projects aren't used to full capacity because of grid congestion. About 5.6 percent of solar power generation was idled in the first three quarters, according to data from the National Energy Administration.

Before construction of China Three Gorges' plant, China's biggest commissioned floating solar project was a 40-megawatt farm by Sungrow Power Supply Co. in the same province, according to Bloomberg New Energy Finance.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## Footing the \$9 trillion renewable bill

As the world is growing increasingly conscious of the need to invest in cleaner and more sustainable energy to limit the impact of global warming, it's no secret that a faster and universal renewable energy transition will require trillions of dollars of investment over the next couple of decades.

The trillion-dollar question is, who will foot the bill?

According to Bloomberg's Nathaniel Bullard, the biggest future investors in clean energy could be the largest institutional funds that manage more than US\$1 trillion of assets each. Basically, the money is out there, it just needs to be realigned to the demand for investment in renewable energy.

Demand exists. Bloomberg New Energy Finance (BNEF) has estimated that zero-carbon power generation is expected to attract US\$9 trillion of investment until 2040.

According to BNEF's New Energy Outlook 2017, "Renewable energy sources are set to represent almost three quarters of the \$10.2 trillion the world will invest in new power generating technology until 2040, thanks to rapidly falling costs for solar and wind power, and a growing role for batteries, including electric vehicle batteries, in balancing supply and demand."

CO2 emissions from the power generation sector are expected to increase by one-tenth before peaking in 2026. Still, an additional US\$5.3 trillion investment in 3.9 TW of zero-carbon capacity would be required to keep the planet on a 2-degrees-Celsius trajectory, the NEO 2017 says.

According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the overall energy investment needed for decarbonizing the energy sector will require an additional US\$29 trillion until 2050.

So where would those funds come from? According to Bullard, they could come from the biggest asset managers. Each of the top ten institutional managers—BlackRock, Vanguard, State Street, Fidelity, BNY Mellon, PIMCO, J.P. Morgan, Capital Group, Goldman Sachs, and Prudential Financial—has assets under management worth more than \$1 trillion, with the leader BlackRock managing US\$5.7 trillion in assets.

There is demand and there is supply, and the challenge now is to align them one to another, Bullard writes.

A growing number of investors want to know how their investments impact climate change. According to Bloomberg Gaddy columnist David Fickling, many of the biggest institutional investors have been backing shareholder resolutions on more disclosure about sustainability and climate change.

So far this year, shareholders have filed more climate resolutions with U.S.-listed firms than the combined number of such resolutions proposed for voting in 2015 and 2016, data by sustainability nonprofit organization Ceres shows.

Then there's the fact that investors are chasing higher yields, and today's investment-grade yields are much lower than before the 2007-2008 crisis.

According to the Global Financial Stability Report October 2017 by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), "there is too much money chasing too few yielding assets: less than 5 percent (\$1.8 trillion) of the current stock of global investment-grade fixed-income assets yields over 4 percent, compared with 80 percent (\$15.8 trillion) before the crisis."

Institutional investors are looking not only at sustainable investment strategies—they are also chasing higher yields.

So the trillions of dollars necessary for zero-carbon energy is out there on the market. Could it be as simple as just aligning demand and supply by reallocating it to investments in renewables?

(Source: oilprice.com)



## The rise of an upstart crown prince in Saudi Arabia splits American experts

The drama surrounding Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman continues to captivate policy communities around the world. Is MBS, as the upstart royal is known, a genuine reformer or a reckless and ambitious young leader who has more power than he has wisdom? He is strongly identified with Saudi Arabia's costly war in neighboring Yemen, the nearly six-month diplomatic standoff with Qatar and the geopolitical struggle with Iran. At home, he has spearheaded ambitious plans to open up social space, reinvent the political system and adapt the kingdom's economic strategies for a changing world energy landscape.

The rise of MBS has triggered polarized views among American experts about him and about the long legacy of U.S.-Saudi relations. Some view this dynamic moment in the kingdom through the prism of American security interests and the durability of a mutually important security partnership.



They hope MBS' reforms will make the kingdom a more open and reliable partner. Other experts have long fretted about U.S. commitments to such a distinctly different and nondemocratic country, and one that the U.S. has never really challenged on its historic ties to Muslim extremists and its poor human rights record at home. They see a new, more aggressive authoritarian in MBS, cloaked in selective liberalization gestures toward youth and women.

The facts about the young heir apparent are not in dispute. The favored son of the current monarch, 81-year-old King Salman, is expected to be elevated to the throne in the near future. MBS has been empowered by his father to fast-track a number of significant policy initiatives that have been underway in the kingdom for several years. He has attracted most attention for ramping up anti-corruption efforts, placing several major royal figures under luxury house arrest while they decide whether to return billions of Saudi riyals to official coffers. He's made himself very popular with young Saudis, opening up mixed-gender public spaces and permitting more varied cultural activities than the kingdom has known for decades.

MBS is also promoting a more radical restructuring of the Saudi political system, reducing the roles of clerics and royals and creating a more modern and merit-based system. He is passionate about returning to a more moderate form of Islam, acknowledging that the clerics had been given too much power after the 1979 attack on the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Islam's holiest site, by extremists trying to overthrow the Saudi monarchy. The kingdom's response to the attack led to more conservative policies at home and more assertive exporting of Wahhabi doctrine to Muslim communities abroad.

In defense of Saudi national security, the crown prince has been the main force behind the war against Houthis in Yemen, which looks like a quagmire. Saudi Arabia now faces charges of war crimes over its recent blockade of Yemen's ports and airports that prevented food and aid from reaching the needy in what was already the Arab world's poorest country — and is now the world's greatest humanitarian crisis. MBS is also closely associated with the campaign of coercive diplomacy against Qatar. More recently, the strange episode of the on-and-off resignation of Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who announced he was stepping down while in Saudi Arabia but walked the decision back when he finally returned to Lebanon weeks later, appeared to be orchestrated by Riyadh as another part of its anti-Iran campaign.

### ■ Divergent reactions

The wildly divergent reactions to MBS' rise reflect deeply embedded views on U.S.-Saudi relations. Many skeptics, who have long believed that the U.S.-Saudi relationship has been built on illusions and unrealistic expectations, see the crown prince's dramatic moves as reckless and more evidence of the kingdom's inherent instability. They worry about the Trump administration's embrace of the young heir apparent as enabling his high-risk initiatives, with possible consequences for Washington if things go badly.

Others accept the Saudis as they are, as a price for the security partnership; MBS may be making mistakes in regional relations, they acknowledge, but they also take the long view. Although the U.S. might urge a different approach to Yemen and Qatar, these foreign officials and observers are pleased with recent Saudi foreign policy moves toward Iraq and even toward Israel that are compatible with American interests.

It's time to begin thinking about the implications of a kingdom of such wealth and geopolitical significance shifting to a different governance model.

This description of a polarized pundit class is of course a generalization. But it was vividly exposed when Thomas Friedman reported his long conversation in Riyadh with the crown prince in The New York Times last week, under the provocative headline "Saudi Arabia's Arab Spring, at Last." Friedman focused on MBS as a reformer, taking the optimist's view that his commitment to change is real and has positive implications for Saudis and the region.

But the glass-half-empty crowd reacted with fury. The American Conservative called it a "love letter to a war criminal." Even one of Friedman's Times colleagues disputed his seemingly unquestioned acceptance of the crown prince's views on Saudi Arabia's role in spreading Islam in recent decades.

This is a challenge for journalists and regional experts based in other institutions, whether think tanks or universities. Experts bring cumulative understanding of an issue or country, and putting the rise of MBS in the context of past Saudi reform efforts is useful and important.

His foreign policy instincts suggest overconfidence and lack of strategic insight, which will not be tempered if Washington gives him an open-ended endorsement.

Since King Abdulaziz Al Saud founded modern Saudi Arabia in 1932, he and his sons have overseen a slow-moving system driven by caution and consensus. Now that the transition to a new generation is underway, with the potential that MBS could be on the throne for many years as an agent of change, it's possible to imagine, as objectively as possible, some new scenarios for this critical country in a turbulent region.

(Source: WPR)

# Jared Kushner is wreaking havoc in the Middle East

In his role as the president's special advisor, Kushner seems to have decided he can remake the entire Middle East. The results could be devastating

By Moustafa Bayoumi

The entire Middle East, from Palestine to Yemen, appears set to burst into flames after this week. The region was already teetering on the edge, but recent events have only made things worse. And while the mayhem should be apparent to any casual observer, what's less obvious is Jared Kushner's role in the chaos.

Kushner is, of course, the U.S. president's senior advisor and son-in-law. The 36-year-old is a Harvard graduate who seems to have a hard time filling in forms correctly.

He repeatedly failed to mention his meetings with foreign officials on his security clearance and neglected to report to U.S. government officials that he was co-director of a foundation that raised money for Israeli settlements, considered illegal under international law. (He is also said to have told Michael Flynn last December to call UN Security Council members to get a resolution condemning Israeli settlements quashed.)

In his role as the president's special advisor, Kushner seems to have decided he can remake the entire Middle East, and he is wreaking his havoc with his new best friend, Saudi Arabia's crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, the 32-year-old who burst on to the international scene by jailing many members of his country's ruling elite, including from his own family, on corruption charges.

Days before Salman's unprecedented move, Kushner was with the crown prince in Riyadh on an unannounced trip. The men are reported to have stayed up late, planning strategy while swapping stories. We don't know what exactly the two were plotting, but Donald Trump later tweeted his "great confidence" in Salman.

### ■ New "peace" deal

But the Kushner-Salman alliance moves far beyond Riyadh. The Saudis and Americans are now privately pushing a new "peace" deal to various Palestinian and Arab leaders that is more lop-sided toward Israel than ever before.

Ahmad Tibi, a Palestinian parliamentarian in the Israeli Knesset, explained the basic contours of the deal to the New York Times: no full statehood for Palestinians, only "moral



## The Saudis and Americans are now privately pushing a new "peace" deal to various Palestinian and Arab leaders that is more lop-sided toward Israel than ever before.

sovereignty." Control over disconnected segments of the occupied territories only. No capital in East Jerusalem. No right of return for Palestinian refugees.

This is, of course, not a deal at all. It's an insult to the Palestinian people. Another Arab official cited in the Times story explained that the proposal came from someone lacking experience but attempting to flatter the family of the American president. In other words, it's as if Mohammed bin Salman is trying to gift Palestine to Jared Kushner, Palestinians be damned.

Next came Donald Trump throwing both caution and international law to the wind by recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

But it's not just Israel, either. Yemen is on the brink of a major humanitarian disaster largely because the country is being blockaded by Saudi Arabia. Trump finally spoke out against the Saudi measure this week, but both the state department and the

Pentagon are said to have been privately urging Saudi Arabia and the UAE to ease their campaign against Yemen (and Lebanon and Qatar) for some time and to little impact. Why? Because Saudi and Emirati officials believe they "have tacit approval from the White House for their hardline actions, in particular from Donald Trump and his son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner," journalist Laura Rozen reported.

### ■ Kushner-Salman alliance

The Kushner-Salman alliance has particularly irked secretary of state Rex Tillerson. Kushner reportedly leaves the state department completely out of his Middle Eastern plans. Of special concern to Tillerson, according to Bloomberg News, is Kushner's talks with Salman regarding military action by Saudi Arabia against Qatar. The state department is worried of all the unforeseen consequences such a radical course of action would bring, including heightened conflict

with Turkey and Russia and perhaps even a military response from Iran or an attack on Israel by Hezbollah.

Here's where state department diplomacy should kick in. The U.S. ambassador to Qatar could relay messages between the feuding parties to find a solution to the stand-off. So what does the ambassador to Qatar have to say about the Kushner-Salman alliance? Nothing, since there still is no confirmed ambassador to Qatar.

What about the U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia? That seat's also vacant. And the U.S. ambassador to Jordan, Morocco, Egypt? Vacant, vacant, and vacant. What about assistant secretary for Near Eastern affairs, a chief strategic post to establish U.S. policy in the region? No one's been nominated. Deputy assistant secretary for press and public diplomacy? Vacant.

It's partly this vacuum of leadership by Tillerson that has enabled Kushner to forge his powerful alliance with Salman, much to the detriment of the region. And in their zeal to isolate Iran, Kushner and Salman are leaving a wake of destruction around them.

The war in Yemen is only intensifying. Qatar is closer to Iran than ever. A final status deal between Israel and the Palestinians seems all but impossible now. The Lebanese prime minister went back on his resignation. And the Saudi state must be paying the Ritz-Carlton a small fortune to jail key members of the ruling family over allegations of corruption.

There's a long history of American politicians deciding they know what's best for the Middle East while buttressing their autocratic allies and at the expense of the region's ordinary people. (The New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman has traditionally provided the rationale for America and its allies in the region, and his recent sycophantic portrayal of Salman certainly didn't disappoint!)

But the Kushner-Salman alliance also represents something else. Both the U.S. and Saudi Arabia are concentrating power into fewer and fewer hands. And with fewer people in the room, who will be around to tell these men that their ideas are so damaging? Who will dare explain to them how they already have failed?

(Source: The Guardian)

## The worst summit



## In a new era of Middle Eastern history in which the PGCC is a totally ineffectual institution, wars in Yemen, North Africa, the Levant, West Asia, and the Horn of Africa will leave the Arabian Peninsula's sheikdoms in a more vulnerable position.

and president of the UAE, Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and to operate completely separately from the PGCC. The National reported that the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohammed bin Zayed, stated that the UAE and Saudi Arabia "have passed beyond the usual diplomatic ties and could be considered as one".

Given the extent to which Bahraini foreign policy is under Riyadh's thumb - and to a lesser extent Abu Dhabi's - it is probably safe to bet that the archipelago nation will join this new partnership as well. Some observers of the

The future of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) is extremely unclear six months into the bitter Qatar crisis. On December 4, Kuwait hosted the PGCC's annual summit, which marked the sub-regional organization's lowest point in its 36-year history.

Qatar's Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani attended, but absent at the summit were the Bahraini, Emirati, and Saudi heads of state. The summit fell apart within hours, underscoring the internal damage within the PGCC as a result of its Qatar rift.

Looking ahead, the million-dollar question is: Will there be another PGCC summit ever again?

Kuwait's Emir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah, who has engaged in shuttle diplomacy between Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the United States, is committed to preventing the PGCC's de facto dissolution. The emir has the full support of his people in addition to all of the parties involved in the Qatar crisis, Oman, and virtually the entire international community.

Sheikh al-Sabah is very committed to helping the two sides reach a rapprochement; Kuwait suffered a war on its soil only 26 years ago, and the Kuwaitis want the parties to the PGCC dispute to address their problems through dialogue, fearing the prospects of escalation into a military confrontation.

In his speech, Kuwait's monarch sent a number of important messages, stressing the need to continue the PGCC meetings despite the six-month-old Qatar rift. Additionally, he called for the formation of a committee that would look into modifying the PGCC's statute to establish a clear mechanism for resolving disputes between member states.

Significant was the establishment of the first inter-committee organization among PGCC members that did not include all six. The UAE announced the formation of a committee for Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia to cooperate in military, economic, cultural, and political domains. In other words, it is essentially intended to fulfill the PGCC's exact purpose since its 1981 birth.

The committee is to be chaired by the ruler of Abu Dhabi

## A new threat to Brexit?

This was the week in which Prime Minister Theresa May of Britain was supposed to wrap up a draft deal on several key issues with the European Union, clearing the way for the next stage of the negotiations. The most difficult of these issues were supposed to be the size of Britain's "divorce check" — its outstanding financial commitments to the European Union — and the rights of European citizens living in Britain.

But once again things went awry, in a way few had anticipated, and because of an issue thought to be the least contentious: the status of the border dividing Ireland from Northern Ireland.

Ireland, which will remain in the European Union and so has a veto over any

deal, wants the border, once a major source of sectarian tension, to remain open, even though Northern Ireland will exit the Union with Britain. To secure Dublin's support, May was reported to have agreed that there would be "regulatory alignment" to make sure the border stays open.

To hardline unionists, whose central tenet is to be part of the United Kingdom, any talk of a special status for Northern Ireland smacked of separating them economically and politically from Britain and pushing them toward the Republic of Ireland. So on hearing of May's proposal, the Democratic Unionist Party, on which May depends for her majority in Parliament, said "no deal." To compound the problem, hard-core Brexiters in her Con-

servative Party rallied behind the DUP stance, while anti-Brexit leaders in Scotland and the mayor of London, areas where a majority oppose leaving the Union, declared that if Northern Ireland were to get special access to Europe, they wanted the same.

Unless Britain can get a draft past the European Union summit next week, chances fade for a trade deal by March 2019, the deadline for the Brexit process. No doubt diplomats will work overtime to avoid that. But even if they get past this hurdle, the Europeans are bound to question whether the government is capable of delivering on their pledges and advancing to the next and more complicated task of shaping a new trade relationship.

(Source: The NYT)





# Concluding Johnson’s trip to Tehran

➡ Also, the UK made lots of barriers during the purchase of 950 tons of uranium and yellow cake by Iran, which eventually prevented the deal from happening. More importantly, after Trump’s recent and controversial speech on the JCPOA, Boris Johnson has tried to distinguish between «changing the JCPOA» and its «cancellation».

In his controversial remarks, he emphasized that the U.S. Congress is only calling for a reform in the content of the JCPOA, and not for its cancellation. The British government has promised to Washington to do its best to change the JCPOA to the benefit of the United States. This includes removing clauses related to time limits (Sunset clauses), limiting Iran’s missile program, and inspecting Iran’s military sites. London is fully in favor of these changes, and any statements made by the English authorities in concluding a deal are merely tactical statements (in order to persuade public opinion).

- The third point is about London’s regional policy. Undoubtedly, Boris Johnson as the British Foreign Secretary is deeply concerned about the rising costs of London’s defeat in the West Asian region. Over the past year, Britain has had lots of failures in the region and has incurred a lot of costs: in Yemen, the direct support of the British government from the Saudi regime for the massacre of men and women and children had no benefits for this country, even the continuation of the Yemen war has led to an increase in Britain’s failure and incapacity in the campaign. In Bahrain, over the past five years, the British government has worked hard to support the



Al Khalifa regime. Even Britain has supported actions such as the siege of Bahrain’s Shiite leader, «Sheikh Isa Qassim» in the Al-Daraz area. Training Bahrain’s police to suppress people, has been another step by British government and security authorities to support the hated regime in Manama. However, the erosion of Bahrain’s developments and the shattering of the foundations of the Al-Khalifa government made Britain frightened over Manama’s future.

In the two countries of Syria and Iraq,

Britain has suffered much tougher failings. In 2013, Britain, along with the United States, tried to use ISIS as an instrument for managing the region’s changes. However, the defeat of ISIS in Syria and Iraq and the presence of popular mobilized forces (especially the popular mobilization in Iraq and Syria) and the strength of the Resistance Front have confused London in its calculations in the region. Thus, Boris Johnson came to Tehran in a period when the cost of Britain’s defeats in West Asia is far greater than before.

In such a situation, the British authorities are trying to preserve their being rightful as ever- gest in the first place!

Basically, Boris Johnson and other British officials should be responsible for their anti-security measures in Iran as well as their anti-Iranian acts during the post-JCPIA period. What is certain is that today, Johnson and other British officials should merely stand in the position of «answering» to the Iranian people and there is no place for them to «demand» anything from us.

The experience of years and decades has shown that one of the British tricks in face of crisis in its foreign policy, is to lead the game from formal and public diplomacy to «hidden diplomacy.»

The British authorities have been trying to prevent the concentration of public opinion on their Achilles’ heels and weaknesses in the field of foreign policy by changing the game and leading it towards the field of hidden diplomacy. Therefore, the diplomatic and foreign policy system of our country should in no way allow the British authorities to implement this policy. Boris Johnson and other English officials know well that if the game is drawn to public diplomacy, they can’t defend themselves against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Ultimately, Johnson has no choice but to admit to his country’s defeat in the region and to admit to the mistakes his government in Iran. Obviously, any pressure from the British authorities to maintain the status quo and put pressure on Iran to threaten our country will double the cost of London’s defeat against Tehran.

## Turkey and Egypt would like to defuse mutual tensions: SISU professor



➡ Could we interpret attempts of Turkey in this regard as attempts to prevent Cairo from getting closer more closed to Saudi Arabia?

A: Perhaps. Turkey and Egypt take opposing sides in the quarrels between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, but they are converging in support of a post-war Syria that leaves Assad in the picture. Egypt needs Saudi money to survive, especially while its tourism industry is crippled by fears of terrorism. The Turks can encourage Egypt to rely on a broader set of international donors, but Saudi Arabia will remain a key patron of Cairo despite ups and downs in their diplomatic relations.

■ John Kerry, the former US foreign minister has stated recently that Egypt provoked Obama’s administration to attack Iran. What is the reason behind of such a provocation provoke?

A: Kerry noted that Saudi Arabia and Israel were the most outspoken proponents of war against Iran. Mubarak hedged his support and even admitted to Kerry that Egypt would denounce such an attack in public no matter what its leaders said privately. Kerry and Mubarak agreed that a nuclear-armed Iran would trigger the proliferation of nuclear weapons across the region. Both men believed diplomacy was the best way to deal with Iran and war was a last resort.

■ Saudi Arabia and Turkey are the two states who are scared of getting concerned about improving relations between Iran and- Egypt. relations improved. How do you evaluate the role of these states in ongoing continuation of hostilities between Iran and Egypt?

A: Turkey is far more confident and flexible than Saudi Arabia in modulating its relations with Iran and Egypt. For the Saudis, Iran is a mortal enemy; for the Turks, it is a potential partner in managing Middle Eastern states and brokering their ties with outside powers. Egypt is the weakest and most vulnerable of these nations, but its leaders are highly skilled at balance of power diplomacy in multipolar situations.

## As war winds down in Syria, reconciliation is new trend

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Unlike what “fakestream” media outlets in the West would like to suggest, no ethnic group or community is going to be forgotten by the government in post-ISIL Syria – even those who colluded with the foreign-backed terrorist group.

Syrian people want to get on with their lives in the liberated cities and towns and that’s a fact – including in the de-escalation zones. Regional and international reporters are free to travel to these regions as there are no threats from the Syrian Army or its allies. This includes the cities that gave up their rebellion and ties to the foreign-backed terrorist groups and their affiliates, and surrendered to the Syrian government.

And it’s never been the choice to surrender or starve. The Syrian government is taking care of everyone, including the surrenders and rebel sympathizers who stayed behind and put their fate in the hands of the government. The only problem is that the destruction is massive and every house can count at least one family member killed or wounded. But no one has been imprisoned for that. The rebuilding has begun and many schools have reopened, while other civilian objects have been partially rebuilt. Shops have reopened, even though prices are very high. The army is in control of these cities and towns and it’s business as usual for everyone.

It’s a big lie, therefore, to claim that in some places, like Daraya or Wadi Barada, west of Damascus, the government

has expelled the entire population. Those who have remained are unwilling to leave their families, their homes, and the city where they grew up. And no one in the government is ever forcing them to do so. But the official story is seldom told by the “fakestream” media.

Silly how some media lackeys, instead, claim that the Syrian Army’s Fourth Division has bases in these areas that are hosting the army’s chemical warfare department and the infantry squadrons of the army’s chemical department - set up by Rifaat al-Assad, the uncle of President Bashar al-Assad! It’s equally silly to claim that the government’s armed forces have besieged these cities from all sides in order to starve their unfortunate citizens!

All roads to Damascus are indeed open for food, medicine, and fuel. Civilians are free to commute as all the smuggling tunnels have been closed off and all the defensive trenches and barricades that crisscross the cities have been removed. Finally, international reporters and news television networks are allowed to enter these cities and film any report to show that life goes on now that people are back under government rule.

There are no distorted pictures here. The Syrian government and its allies have been true to word. All rebel prisoners have been pardoned and released and no one is going to arrest them again. The flow of food and international aid has sped up, and no one is using food as a weapon to bring

pressure on people. Under International Humanitarian Law, the government is also allowing access in order to supply all the basic needs of the populations, including medical and government services.

Long story short, life has now largely returned to normal in many regions across the war-torn country. They are now being provided with their basic needs, including power and water, while government is allowing local infrastructure – including hospitals and schools – to resume operations. Local restaurants and shops are now doing a booming business, while numerous vendors can be seen roaming the streets hawking their wares. The allied forces deployed on the border or the cities, meanwhile, have continued to help local residents return to their homes, with hundreds of thousands civilians having returned to their cities to date.

Last but not the least, hundreds of thousands refugees are also expected to return to Syria from Turkey by the end of 2017, according to a project started as part of cooperation between the Syrian and Turkish governments as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The project overseen aims to normalize daily life in the country. Accordingly, infrastructure works, the opening of bakery shops, the providing of clean water, the maintaining of education services, and the repairing of state-run buildings like hospitals and schools are all part of the nationwide rebuilding and reconciliation efforts.

## ISIL origins are geopolitical and ideological: expert

### EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN \_ Referring to the measures that should be taken in post-ISIL era, Prof. Arshin Adib Moghaddam, believes the origins of ISIL are geopolitical and ideological.

In recent weeks Islamic Republic of Iran, Russia and Iraq declared ‘victory’ over the ISIL terrorist group in Iraq and Syria as the Takfiri group cling to just a few remaining scraps of territory.

Iran beside Russia is one of the main international backers of Syrian legal government to fight ISIL on the ground in Syria and Iraq.

To discuss the reasons why such a terrorist group appeared in the region and what should be done in post-ISIL era to avoid repetition of rising of such groups, we reached out to Arshin Adib Moghaddam, Professor in Global Thought and Comparative Philosophies and Chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute.

Following is the text of his interview:

■ Basically what is the origin of extremist Takfiri ideology of ISIL (Daesh)? What elements and reasons lead to strengthening of such groups in some parts of the Middle East?

A: The origins are partially geo-political and partially ideological. In terms of ideology, ISIL must be placed on the extreme right-wing of the ideological spectrum, close to fascism and neo-Nazism. It is an ideology premised on terror and death, a cult that is devoid of human spirit, compassion and culture. I would call it a death cult. For sure, Islam has been abused for many ideological projects, but the modus operandi of ISIL is unique in its use of terror to pursue political aims. In terms of geo-politics, terror movements such as Daesh take advantage of situations of anarchy, when the absence of the central state, for instance in Syria, Iraq or Yemen, creates a void that such movements lodge into.

■ How do you evaluate the role of some intelligence services of some regional and transregional states namely Saudi Arabia and the US in supporting these extremist terrorist groups? What are their goals behind such supports to ISIL?

A: There is circumstantial evidence to that end. I don’t think such collusion is strategic. There are many tactical maneuvers by the actors in the region that have created even more chaos and human misery. Everyone is to blame for the plight of the civilians and the death and destruction that has become the reality for everyone associated with this region. Allow me to add, that the ongoing humanitarian disaster in Yemen was not created by US imperialism or even Daesh. It is the ongoing hegemonic ideological projects that created the misery in Yemen and elsewhere. All actors including the Iran have to change their



policies if they intend to bring about a real strategic solution to the disasters in the region.

■ Now we are witnessing the military defeat of the ISIL in the region. Does ISIL military defeat mean it will be eradicate, too?

A: ISIL or other terror movements such as Al-Qaeda in the past will always be footnotes in the history of the region because they are terrorist entities that are anti-human. They are rejected by the majority of the people in the world, certainly Muslims. I expect that movements like this will continue to use terror in the short and middle term until the region is truly pacified which can only come about through enlightened governance and regional leadership that moves beyond zero-sum calculations. I have expressed such peace mentality in my previous interviews.

■ What measures particularly the cultural ones should be taken in the region to avoid ISIL’s re-emerge like the re-emerge of al-Qaida in some countries?

A: Cultural exchanges, art festivals, poetry recitals, peace vigils, an Islam that is devoid of hegemonic projects, a discourse of cooperation and diplomacy, a politics of pluralism and democracy. The methods are there, the ideas are expressed by us intellectuals of peace, in our books and our daily lectures - what is missing are politicians that would translate them into real actions beyond empty promises.

First Announcement

N.I.O.C  
1396.4137

National Iranian  
Drilling Company

Public Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tender(First Publish/Seconed Publish)						
One-Stage(compressed)						
TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	Subject of Tender	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
15,420	647,000,000	12,929,208,383	PARTS FOR NATIONAL DRAWWORKS MODEL 1320	1,508,063	Tender No.: FP/17-96/062 Indent No.: 48-22-9622004	1

**Brief discription of subject:**  
National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address pasdaran Blev., Airport Sqare, Ahwaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements from qualified and interested tenderers through one-stage public tender (compressed) upon following terms and conditions:  
A) Qualitative evaluation of tenderer:  
The evaluation is based on article ( J ) implementing regulations of the law of tenders and also carried out base on worksheets qualitative evaluation inquiry in the tender documents. Minimum acceptable point of quality is 60.  
B) Preparation of tender documents:  
Purchasing of documents:  
In order to receive the tender documents, **510,000 Rials** should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.  
Receiving of documents:  
Tenderers must be obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum ten days after the date of second publication in person at the following address: Hall No.:113, 1thfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN  
Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recieve tender ducments from foreign procurment department in due date and participates in tenderwill be known as tenderer from tender committee.  
C) Delivery of envelopes of bids and call quality evaluating:  
Tenderers shall submit simultaneously envelopes of bids including bank guarantees(A), financial offer(C) and stamped and signed of tender documents(B) along with qualificaion worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 40 days from last day of document recived deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN.  
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Foreign Procurement Dept  
National Iranian Drilling Company

تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۶/۰۹/۲۱ نوبت دوم ۹۶/۰۹/۲۲



# Enough is enough

The man in the White House is reckless and unmanageable, a danger to the Constitution, a threat to our democratic institutions.

Last week some of his worst qualities were on display: his moral vacuity and his disregard for the truth, as well as his stubborn resistance to sensible advice. As ever, he lashed out at imaginary enemies and scapegoated others for his own failings. Most important, his reluctance to offer a simple and decisive condemnation of racism and Nazism astounded and appalled observers around the world.

With such a glaring failure of moral leadership at the top, it is desperately important that others stand up and speak out to defend American principles and values. This is no time for neutrality, equivocation or silence. Leaders across America — and especially those in the president's own party — must summon their reserves of political courage to challenge President Trump publicly, loudly and unambiguously.

Some people clearly understand this. On Monday, after Trump suggested that "alt-left" counter-protesters were as much to blame as Nazis and white supremacists for the fiasco in Charlottesville, a courageous

CEO — Kenneth Frazier, the chief executive of Merck & Co. — resigned from the president's American Manufacturing Council in protest. His departure, which the ever-gracious president greeted with derision, led to an exodus of other commission members.

## ■ Tacit rebuke to Trump

Also last week, five members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued a tacit rebuke to the president by condemning racism and hatred in Charlottesville. Denouncing Nazis and Klansmen is not exactly controversial or cutting-edge in 2017, but for the generals to take on the commander in chief is, to say the least, highly unusual.

Many Republicans and conservatives have broken ranks as well in recent months, dismayed by the daily chaos, belligerence and mismanagement. Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.), Lindsay Graham (R-S.C.) and Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) have been outspoken critics. Max Boot, David Frum and other conservative public intellectuals have written articulately about the failures of the Trump presidency; the venerable conservative

magazine National Review has as well. On Friday, former GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney said Trump's response to Charlottesville had "caused racists to rejoice," and that if he didn't apologize it could lead to "an unraveling of our national fabric." These votes of no-confidence from fellow conservatives and Republicans are powerful indictments.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and Rep. Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) are the two most-powerful men in Congress. Both have fired off the occasional potshot but for the most part have stood firmly behind this wildly flawed president, despite the taunts and insults Trump hurled at them from his Twitter redoubt.

What holds them back? Craven, self-serving political calculations designed to protect their careers, and dwindling hope that the president, despite everything, will help them move their long-delayed legislative agenda.

Their silence is shameful.

How about the more rational members of

Trump's Cabinet? They should be fleeing the administration, refusing to stand mutely against the wall at his press conferences while he steps on their messages and undermines their best efforts.

Many rank-and-file GOP members of Congress are simply too scared of alienating Republican voters or of enraging a vindictive Trump or of provoking a primary challenge from the right funded by the Koch brothers or the Mercer family. They should wake up and declare their independence.

## ■ Distancing from Trump

In California, the pressure is sometimes in the other direction. For instance, Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Vista), a Trump supporter who won reelection in 2016 by an extraordinarily narrow 2,348 votes, knows he needs to distance himself from Trump if he hopes to win reelection in 2018; he has done so, slowly, a bit. It would be nice if he did so on principle, but in the end, he and his colleagues may be more persuaded by Trump's low favorability ratings and the near certainty of challenges

from Democrats in the midterm election.

Men and women of conscience can no longer withhold judgment. Trump's erratic nature and his impulsive, demagogic style endanger us all.

Republicans and conservatives around the country should be just as concerned as Democrats about Trump's conflicts of interest, his campaign's relationship with the Russians and whether he engaged in obstruction of justice. They should call him out when he sows division, when he dog-whistles, when he emboldens bigots. They should stand up for global human rights, for constructive engagement with the rest of the world and for other shared American values that transcend party allegiances.

Rejecting the president of one's own party could mean alienating friends, crossing allies, damaging one's chances of advancement or risking one's career altogether for a matter of principle. But that's the very definition of leadership.

(Source: The LAT)

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# Stay-at-home or back-to-work?

**1 →** Even if you should go back to work for financial reasons, you should find ways to enjoy it. Improve your career and be more active in your field. In this way this is not just a waste of time but an investment for your future.

You are the only person in the world that you can take the best decision about this matter and you should take a wise choice, which is really hard as well.

After being a mother, you become much more patient, fearless and more decisive. They are crucial parts of motherhood, which makes you a more powerful human being.

So stop searching on the internet about staying at home or returning to work. The psychological articles may be great help for you but you are the only person in the world with a unique lifestyle and unique family.

The only one who can help you to make this landmark decision is yourself.

## A person for tomorrow

The point is that you are responsible for your tiny tot for many years and you are his/her mother for a lifetime. You should raise your child for a future, which is un-



**It is not important what is defined for you as a ‘supermom’, the only way for you to be ‘super’ in your life is when you are the best version of yourself.**

certain. Hence, time-bound criteria for taking decision is not wise.

Nobody can be sure about the accuracy of his or her decision for lifetime.

However, you should consider your child’s adulthood, which is affected by your decision as well.

Although you are not responsible for all your child’s feeling but you are responsible about your decisions and your feeling during your life span.

## Your spouse matters

Talk and negotiate with your husband about your decision and your feelings. Being a parent is a new role both of you should accept and compromise your routine life and habits with it.

Parent-child relationship is a dynamic bond, which is defined several times during life.

The dilemma exists for me after 15 months and I believe there is no general answer to this question.

May be this is a part of this great dynamic mother-child relationship, which should be welcomed or an uncertainty, which I overcome in a future, which is not very far!

## Things that highly successful people do every morning

Make your morning—and the day that follows—rock with these tips for a positive and productive morning routine from highly successful people.

### They wake up from a good night’s sleep

If you want to be on top form in the morning, it’s no good being sleep-deprived. Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, is one of the busiest women on the planet. In an interview with U.S.A Today, she revealed one of her top tips for getting ahead in the morning: She makes sure she gets a good night’s sleep. Sheryl confesses that de-linking from her technology is hard, but she always switches her phone off so she’s not disturbed overnight.

Habits such as lowering the light levels, getting to bed at a reasonable hour, and consciously relaxing before bed, can all make a huge difference to our sleep patterns. Then you’re ready to begin tomorrow with a pep in your step.

### They get up early

Oprah Winfrey is a legendary high achiever, and she typically rises by 6 am. When outlining a typical day in her life to Parade, she described how she would arrive her office at 6:30 am. Almost without exception, successful people start their day early. Many say they get up between 5 am and 6 am.

### They spend time in meditation

It’s important to take care of your mental health when you spend the day using your brain to its highest capacity. Many of our most successful entrepreneurs turn to meditation to help. In a LinkedIn Pulse article, Jeff Weiner, CEO of LinkedIn, describes how using a meditation app helped

him establish a daily meditation routine. He feels this brings great benefits to his mental well-being.

### They avoid reaching for coffee immediately

Jack Dorsey, CEO of Twitter and Square, revealed on Product Hunt that his morning routine includes rising at 5 am. He follows this with exercise and meditation, before heading to his favorite coffee shop for breakfast. It may seem tempting to reach for that enlivening cup of coffee the minute you roll out of bed. But successful people know that caffeine isn’t the best solution to getting going immediately. Here’s why you’re better off waiting until after 9 am for your first cup of java.

### They have a healthy breakfast

Another high-achieving executive who has a morning routine is Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin Group. Branson is well-known for paying attention to his eating habits. In a Q&A session for American Express OPEN Forum, he says he usually has fruit salad and muesli for breakfast. If you’re pushed for time in the mornings (and who isn’t?), it’s tempting to skip breakfast.

### They incorporate exercise

We all know how important exercise is to our physical and mental well-being. But exercise doesn’t have to be a traditional activity. Shonda Rhimes, executive producer of the hit shows Grey’s Anatomy and Scandal told Vulture on Facebook that her morning routine includes a “dance party with Beyoncé.” A few minutes of lively dancing is an awesome way to kick off your day.

### They dress simply

You may not think that choosing what you wear is important to your morning routine. However, eliminating stress about clothing choices can make a difference to your performance later in the day. Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, is famous for his dressed-down style of jeans and a sweatshirt. But this is not a coincidence. Zuckerberg explained to the Independent that he prefers to save his mental energy for important decisions and vowed to simplify his morning routine by always wearing the same outfit.

### They set their priorities for the day

Successful people don’t waste time getting going. Time is precious, so being organized in the mornings is a top priority for people like Arianna Huffington, founder of the Huffington Post and Thrive Global. Huffington likes to use her early mornings to set her priorities for the day. She told My Morning Routine that she wakes up early, exercises, and sets her priorities for the day.

### They find their own rhythm

Opinions vary about the best way to get started on work tasks. Some advocate doing taxing activities first and leaving lesser tasks until later. Other advise doing the most important task first. But some people find that working up to things gradually works better for them. Gretchen Rubin, founder of The Happiness Project, starts her working day by tackling routine tasks like checking emails or social media.

(Source: Reader’s Digest)

## Colorful Iran: Palm tree planting ritual in Bushehr



**L I F E** In the southern province of Bushehr, local people plant palm trees during a special ritual.

They plant the saplings of palm trees in September and March and for the locals, palms are considered as sacred trees.

When they transfer the palm sapling to the palm grove, they put it toward Qibla (the direction that should be faced when a Muslim prays), believing that it makes

it fruitful.

They recite four small surahs from the Holy Quran, known as “Chahar Qul” (four surahs beginning with letter ‘q’), when they start planting a palm tree.

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

## How to clean and dust your electronics?



In case you have not noticed, television and computer screens are magnets for dust and dirt. A screen can get dusty and grimy or be covered with fingerprints. Different types of screens will require different cleaning solutions, so be sure to check the manufacturer’s instructions. The touch screens on my phone and computer are magnets for my toddler and need cleaning frequently.

Never spray cleaner directly onto a screen

because you will inevitably spray too much and have it dripping into your electronics. Instead, spray a small amount onto your cleaning cloth and then wipe the screen working in a circular motion. Do not use paper towels on your screens, they can scratch and pit the surface. Instead, choose a soft cleaning cloth. It’s a good idea to have a few cloths that are specifically used for your screens.

(Source: thespruce.com)



## 101 ITEMS FOR YOUR BUCKET LIST!

### #14. Learn a strategy game

Strategy games like chess, checkers, Chinese chess, Reversi (also known as Otello), Mindsweeper (part of Windows bundle) are great ways to train your mind.

Playing strategy games can be a fun experience. Strategy games can be enjoyable at a number of different psychological levels. It can be an enjoyable individual experience. It can be an exhilarating group experience. It can be an activity that a family can enjoy.

Who doesn’t like to beat an opponent in a game situation by out-smarting them? Isn’t it gratifying when your planned strategy works to perfection and produces the winning play? Working together with partners to reach the strategic game goal can be a rewarding social interaction.

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

(Source: personalexcellence.co)



## #IRANIANLIFESTYLE



A fisherwoman in traditional dress on Hengam Island, Persian Gulf (Instagram/hengamisland)

## MY PERSIAN KITCHEN

## Aash-e somagh - Herb and sumac soup



Aash-e somagh recipe is rich, creamy, comforting and delicious. The original recipe calls for small meatballs but to make a vegetarian soup, in this recipe it is replaced with lentils instead.

Sumac gives this soup a subtle tangy taste. Sumac is mostly sprinkled on kabab dishes for extra flavorings.

### Ingredients:

Serves 4-6

1 cup rice flour or small broken rice, rinsed

1/2 cup lentils, rinsed

3-4 tablespoons dried sumac, soaked in 1/2 cup of cool water for an hour

1 cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, hard stems removed

1 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro

1 cup finely chopped fresh chives or scallions (green parts only)

1/4 cup chopped fresh tarragon, hard stems removed

A few sprigs of mint, washed and chopped

Salt and pepper to taste

Water

### Topping:

1 large onion, cut into small pieces or thinly sliced

4-5 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1-2 tablespoons dried mint

1/2 teaspoon turmeric

2-3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

### Method:

Put the rice in a large stew pot, add 8 cups of water, and bring to a boil on medium-high heat. Then lower heat to medium-low and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Pour in the lentils, stir well, cover and cook for 30 minutes. Add water if necessary. Always add hot water to the stew that’s cooking on the stove. Cool water will interrupt the simmering/boiling process.

Stir in the chopped herbs into the soup. Add salt and pepper to taste and let it simmer on low heat for another 10 minutes.

You may drain sumac in a very fine mesh strainer and add the liquid into the soup as suggested in the book or pour in the soaked sumac and all liquid and cook for another 10-15 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning to your liking.

In the meantime, sauté onions in hot oil. When golden brown, add turmeric, stir well, and mix in the garlic and mint, and sauté for another 5 minutes on medium heat.

Add some of the fried onion mixture into the soup, stir well and save the rest for garnish.

Ladle the soup into a serving bowl, garnish with fried onion and drizzle some of its oil, sprinkle a little bit of sumac and serve with warm lavash and yogurt. Aash-e somagh may be served hot or cold.

• For aash-e somagh with meatballs, combine a pound of ground meat (lamb, beef or turkey), salt, pepper, a handful of chopped herbs, 1 small grated onion, one egg, 1 tablespoon of flour, mix well. Make tiny meatballs, brown on all sides in hot vegetable oil and add to the soup half way through cooking. Enjoy!

(Source: turmericsafron.blogspot.nl)

## The top excuses for clutter

### “If I get rid of this wedding vase, I’ll feel guilty.”

“When you receive a present,” says Maxwell Gillingham-Ryan, an interior designer in New York City and the founder of ApartmentTherapy.com, “your duty is to receive it and thank the giver?not to keep the gift forever.” That goes for items you inherit. “Ask yourself, ‘How many things do I really need to honor this person’s memory?’” says Frost. Select a few objects with strong associations to your late grandmother, say, and keep them in places where you’ll see them. Let the rest go to people who want them more than you do.

### “I think this brooch/chair/ugly knickknack might be valuable again.”

When you hear the appraisers on Antiques Roadshow say that someone’s grandmother’s old Bakelite bracelets would now fetch \$500, it’s easy to wonder whether your vintage piece might be worth a bundle. Stop guessing and find out what the item in question is truly worth. Take a 10-minute spin on eBay, searching for an item similar to yours.

### “But I might need seven sleeping bags one day.”

Everyone fears tossing something out only to realize?six months, a year, or five years down the road?that she shouldn’t have. Keeping things around “just in case” makes people feel safe. If your main problem is an overflowing closet, try the “packing for a trip” trick.

### “I want this chartreuse muumuu to go to a good home.”

People often want to find just the right place for their belongings. The problem is, trying to find just the right place can be paralyzing, says interior designer Maxwell Gillingham-Ryan. And while you wait, say, for your niece to move into a starter apartment, your old love seat and dinette set gather dust.

### “If I put the bills away, I’ll never pay them on time.”

Many clutterers have gotten into the habit of organizing their world visually and spatially, says Randy Frost. They’re afraid that if they put stuff away, they won’t remember it, because they won’t see it. “But it’s a perception of order,” he says, “not real order.”

### “I want to declutter, but I can’t get motivated.”

This may be due to a phenomenon known as delayed discounting, says Daniel Hommer, M.D., chief of brain imaging at the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, in Bethesda, Maryland, and an expert on motivation. It works like this: If it takes a long time to reach a goal, you value that goal less than if you could reach it quickly?making it harder to get started.

(Source: Real Simple)



## Over \$12m allotted to expand eco-lodges in Hormozgan

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Over 500 billion rials (roughly \$12.5 million) will be channeled into building new eco-lodge inns across Hormozgan province in southern Iran. The fund has been earmarked for paying loans of maximum 1 billion rials (about \$25,000) at four percent [annual] interest rate to each eligible applicant, Mehr quoted Mohsen Ziaei, the provincial tourism chief, as saying on Sunday.



A file photo shows a typical eco-lodge in Hormozgan province, southern Iran.

“The eco-lodges should bear traditional architecture and texture and have at least 16 beds.”  
“Catering for travelers with local cuisine and traditional music and taking advantage of indigenous traditions and codes are amongst the most important features of such eco-lodges,” the official explained.  
Over the past couple of years, Iran has witnessed a boom in its ecotourism market, drawing more domestic and foreign backpackers to its pristine and relatively undisturbed natural landscape.

## East German village sells for 140,000 euros

The only bidder at an unusual auction on Saturday put down 140,000 euros and walked away the new owner of a small slice of German history: the village of Alwine, population 20. Its empty homes and ageing residents mirror the wider fate of the ex-communist east German hinterlands since the country’s reunification 27 years ago.

The anonymous buyer, who bid by telephone, scooped up the community that real estate auctioneers Karhausen had given a starting price of 125,000 euros (\$148,000).

In 2000, the hamlet was sold to private investors for one “symbolic Deutschmark,” the pre-euro German currency.

The two brothers who were the original buyers of its dozen buildings, plus sheds and garages, did not manage to stop its slide into neglect.

Only about 20 mostly retired people still live in the cluster of decaying homes in rural Brandenburg state, 120 kilometers (75 miles) south of Berlin.

During World War II, the Hitler Youth trained around Alwine and prisoners of war were incarcerated nearby. Then the Iron Curtain went up and it became part of Germany’s communist East. Until Germany’s 1990 reunification, all the property in Alwine, which once counted about 50 residents, was owned by a nearby coal briquette plant, the oldest in Europe. The plant closed in 1991 and many people left as the work dried up.

Alwine is not the only such community in eastern Germany, which still lags behind the west in prosperity, wages and jobs with a per capita GDP that was only 67 percent of that in western states in 2015. (Source: AFP)



### ROUND THE GLOBE

## Archaeological Heritage of the Lenggong Valley

A World Heritage, Archaeological Heritage of the Lenggong Valley on the Malay Peninsula contains evidence in open-air and cave sites along the Perak River spanning all the periods of hominid history outside Africa from 1.83 million to 1,700 years ago.

Undisturbed in situ Palaeolithic stone tool workshops are located on the shores of a paleolake and ancient river gravel beds and dated in a long chronological sequence.

A meteorite strike 1.83 million b.p. blocked and diverted the river preserving Palaeolithic tools at Bukit Bunuh, where hand axes are among the oldest so far discovered outside Africa. Analysis suggests these were made by hominids which thus provide an extremely early date for hominid presence in South-East Asia.



An aerial view of the lush Lenggong Valley in Malaysia

A catastrophic Toba volcanic eruption 70,000 b.p. caused abandonment of a workshop site containing multiple tool types at Kota Tampan. Other workshop sites date from 200,000-100,000 BP at Bukit Jawa, 40,000 BP at Bukit Bunuh and 1000 BP at Gua Harimau.

The relative abundance of these sites hints at a relatively large or semi sedentary population.

Perak Man was discovered within Gua Gunung Runtuh cave. Perak Man is South-East Asia’s oldest most complete human skeleton. It is radiocarbon dated to 10,120 BP and identified as Australomelanesoid, a hominid type occupying the western part of the Indonesia archipelago and continental South-East Asia at the end of the Pleistocene and early Holocene. (Source: UNESCO)

# Akhlamad retains charm in winter

By Afshin Majlesi

**TEHRAN** — Though not a water-rich country, Iran still boasts a considerable number of waterfalls and cascades that are fairly popular amongst domestic sightseers.

Undoubtedly they are not branded as world’s highest, wildest or prettiest but a feature making them astonishing is that they are in a land with dominating arid and semi-arid plain.

The northeastern Akhlamad Waterfall sustains its own charm by simply freezing over in the wintertime. It offers onlookers a magnificent natural view yet challenges rock climbing enthusiasts as well.

The 40-meter-high waterfall is named after the adjacent Akhlamad Village, itself distanced about 85 kilometers from Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi province.

Encircled by ranges of rocky cliffs measuring up to 300 meters, the cascade boasts huge amounts of pouring waters due to heavy downpours in the first few months of the spring.

Water plunges straight down to a pond beneath where associated fossils and mineral deposits can testify its age. Some experts believe that the history of Akhlamad Waterfall can be traced to the Late Jurassic.

The cascade can be reached on an overland journey involving some trekking. Visitors may stay for a couple of hours, relaxing together while breathing fresh air in a countryside known for the abundant fruit trees.

Over 300 waterfalls are dotted across Iran with Margoon in Fars province, Latun in Gilan province, Piran in Kermanshah province, and Rayen in Kerman province to name a few.



An undated photo shows a rock climber ascending the frozen Akhlamad Waterfall in Khorasan Razavi province, northeast Iran.

## Private sector to revive, operate century-old fortress

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — A century-old fortress in Ilam province, western Iran, has recently been ceded to the private sector with the aim of repurposing it into thriving eco-lodges.

Mir Gholam-Hashemi fortress was handed over to the private investors to make the best use of the site under contracts for restoration, maintenance and operation, Mehr quoted Abdolmalek Shanbehzadeh, the provincial tourism chief, as saying on Monday.

The report didn’t mention duration of the contract received by the Revitalization and Utilization Fund for Historical Places (known by its Persian acronym Saabta). However, similar contracts usually have validity of 20 years.

Located in Darreh-Shahr county, the fortress is constructed from stones, bricks, mortar and wood, the official said, adding, it has a total of 35 interconnected rooms.

“The stronghold was completed in 1924 with a military-residential purpose. It bears a Qajar-style layout that embraces four iwans (porticos).”

A scheme initiated by the Saabta lays out opportunity for privately-owned businesses to run certain old structures in order to be maintained and repurposed into hotels, traditional restaurants or lodging places.

Iran is home to many old mansions and historical buildings, which can buttress its budding tourism and hospitality sectors if managed appropriately and refurbished properly.



A view of Mir Gholam-Hashemi fortress in Ilam province, western Iran.

## ‘Oldest eye ever discovered’ in 530-million-year-old fossil

Scientists have found what they believe is the oldest eye ever discovered in a 530-million-year-old fossil.

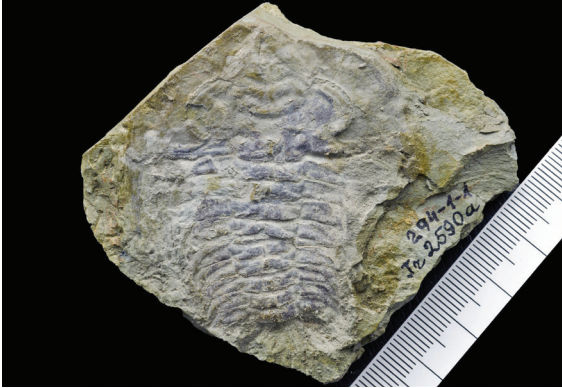
The remains of the extinct sea creature includes the early form of an eye, which is seen in many animals that exist today, including bees and dragonflies.

An international team of researchers made the find while examining the fossil of a species called a trilobite unearthed in Estonia, according to the study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences journal.

Trilobites, hard-shelled ancestors of crabs and spiders, lived in coastal waters during the Palaeozoic era between 541-251 million years ago.

Scientists discovered the species, called Schmidtiellus reetae, had a primitive form of compound eye, an optical organ consisting of tiny visual cells called ommatidia.

“This exceptional fossil shows us how early animals saw the world around them hundreds of millions of years ago,” said Professor Euan Clarkson, of the University of Edinburgh’s School of GeoSciences who was part of the research team.



“Remarkably, it also reveals that the structure and function of compound eyes has barely changed in half a billion years.”

An examination of the fossil revealed the species likely

had poor vision compared to many modern animals, but it could still identify approaching predators, researchers said.

Its eye consists of approximately 100 ommatidia, which are situated relatively far apart compared to contemporary compound eyes, they added.

The fossil’s eye does not have a lens, unlike modern compound eyes, because the species lacked parts of the shell needed to form one.

The team also revealed that only a few million years later, improved compound eyes with higher resolution developed in another trilobite species from the present-day Baltic region.

“This may be the earliest example of an eye that it is possible to find,” said Professor Brigitte Schoenemann, of the University of Cologne, which conducted the study along with the Tallinn University of Technology in Estonia.

“Older specimens in sediment layers below this fossil contain only traces of the original animals, which were too soft to be fossilised and have disintegrated over time.” (Source: MSN)

## Mummy discovered in unexplored Egyptian tomb

Egyptian archaeologists have discovered a new mummy in a previously unexplored tomb near the city of Luxor.

According to Egypt’s antiquities ministry, the mummy was found in one of two tombs which are being explored for the first time since being found twenty years ago.

The tombs, which are located just across the Nile from Luxor, were found by German archaeologist Frederica Kampp in the 1990s.

They were found in an area known as the Dra Abu el Naga necropolis, near to the Temple of Hatshepsut and the Valley of the Kings, where the treasures of Tut-ankhamun were found.

They are believed to date back to the ancient Egyptian dynasties of the New Kingdom, which lasted from 1,550-1,070 BC.

Authorities are exploring the tombs as Egypt attempts to encourage tourists to visit its ancient sites.

Antiquities Minister Khaled al Enany announced the discovery in Luxor, one of Egypt’s tourist centers.

“It’s truly an exceptional day,” he said.



An aerial picture taken from a hot air balloon on September 10, 2017 shows the Temple of Hatshepsut, also known as the Djeser-Djeseru (‘Holy of Holies’) in the southern Egyptian town of Luxor.

“The 18th dynasty private tombs were already known. But it’s the first time to

enter inside the two tombs.”

The antiquities ministry said archaeol-

ogists found “a mummy wrapped in linen” which studies suggested “could be for a top official or a powerful person”.

It added that it believed the mummy could be of “a person named Djehuty Mes whose name was engraved on one of the walls”.

Alternately, it could belong to “the scribe Maati, as his name and the name of his wife Mehi were inscribed on 50 funerary cones found in the tomb’s rectangular chamber”.  
■ **Only one of the two tombs was excavated.**

The ministry said: “The tomb has a court lined with stone and mud-brick walls. It has a six-meter deep burial shaft at its southern side that lead to four side chambers.”

“Studies reveal that the tomb was reused in antiquity,” the ministry added.

The explored tomb contained a depiction of “a person, probably the deceased’s brother, presenting offerings and flowers to the deceased and his wife” according to the ministry.

(Source: MSN)



# CAR T, immunotherapy bring new hope for multiple myeloma patients

Two investigational immunotherapy approaches, including chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T cell therapy, have shown encouraging results in the treatment of multiple myeloma patients who had relapsed and were resistant to other therapies.

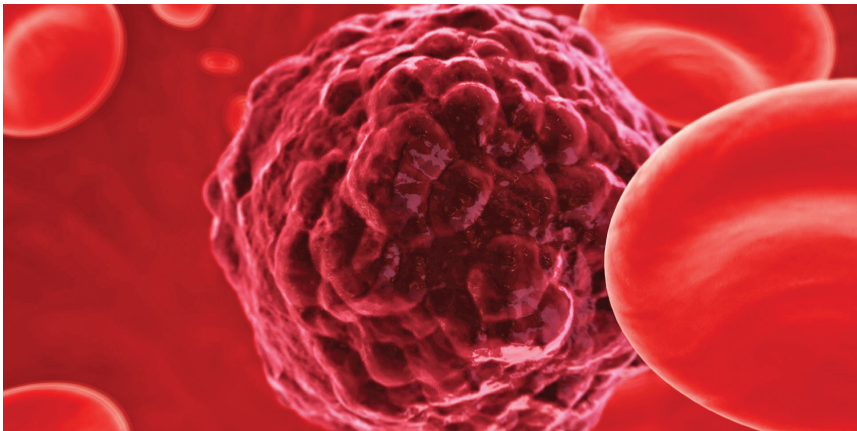
Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania's Abramson Cancer Center administered CAR T cells to patients following chemotherapy, with 64 percent of patients responding in a clinical trial. In a separate study, patients got an infusion of an experimental monoclonal antibody, which resulted in an overall response rate of 60 percent.

Multiple myeloma (MM) is a bone marrow cancer that affects plasma cells.

**■ Immune system**

Normal plasma cells work as part of the immune system, but in MM these cells become cancerous and grow out of control, leading to multiple painful bone tumors, as well as anemia, kidney failure and recurrent infections. The American Cancer Society estimated there will be more than 30,200 new cases of MM in 2017. Standard treatments include chemotherapy and radiation and can include a stem cell transplant.

The first study (Abstract #505) used CART-BCMA, a specifically engineered type of CAR T cell developed by Penn researchers



in collaboration with Novartis as part of a global research and development alliance that began in 2012. The investigational treatment modifies patients' own immune T cells, which are collected and reprogrammed to seek and destroy the patients' cancer cells. After being infused back into patients' bodies, these newly built "hunter" cells both multiply and attack, targeting cells

that express BCMA. Patients were given a single dose of chemotherapy before the CART-BCMA infusion to temporarily clear out normal white blood cells and help the hunter cells to expand. Two dose levels of CART-BCMA cells were explored in a population of heavily-pretreated patients. These patients had a median of seven prior lines of therapy.

**Multiple myeloma (MM) is a bone marrow cancer that affects plasma cells.**

In the clinical trial, the lower dosage group had five patients, two of whom (40 percent) achieved at least a minor response to the treatment (defined as 25 percent or greater reduction in myeloma protein levels).

**■ Higher dosage group**

The higher dosage group had ten patients, and eight of those (80 percent) had a minor response or better, including one complete response. The trial is ongoing, with additional patients being treated at the higher dose group.

Twelve of the 15 patients experienced cytokine-release syndrome, a toxicity that involves varying degrees of flu-like symptoms, with high fevers, nausea, and muscle pain, and can require ICU-level care. All patients recovered, with one requiring tocilizumab, a standard therapy for this side effect, and one receiving siltuximab, a similar cytokine-blocking drug.

"This follows up on our previous report that showed that six out of nine patients had clinical benefit to CART-BCMA given alone, without chemotherapy," said the study's lead author Adam D. Cohen, MD, an assistant professor of Hematology and Oncology at Penn and the director of Myeloma Immunotherapy in Penn's Abramson Cancer Center.

(Source: Medical Xpress)

## Earliest black hole gives rare glimpse of ancient universe

Astronomers have at least two gnawing questions about the first billion years of the universe, an era steeped in literal fog and figurative mystery. They want to know what burned the fog away: stars, supermassive black holes, or both in tandem? And how did those behemoth black holes grow so big in so little time?

Original story reprinted with permission from Quanta Magazine, an editorially independent publication of the Simons Foundation whose mission is to enhance public understanding of science by covering research developments and trends in mathematics and the physical and life sciences.

Now the discovery of a supermassive black hole smack in the middle of this period is helping astronomers resolve both questions. "It's a dream come true that all of these data are coming along," said Avi Loeb, the chair of the astronomy department at Harvard University.

The black hole, announced Wednesday in the journal Nature, is the most distant ever found. It dates back to 690 million years after the Big Bang. Analysis of this object reveals that reionization, the process that defogged the universe like a hair dryer on a steamy bathroom mirror, was about half complete at that time.

The researchers also show that the black hole already weighed a hard-to-explain 780 million times the mass of the sun.

(Source: wired.com)

## Scientist's accidental exhale leads to improved DNA detector

The sudden waft of warm air swept over the nanofilter, transferring it to the sensor - right on target. The "accident" led Madejski to an important insight: the water vapor in his breath had condensed on the device, causing the nanofilter to adhere ever so neatly to the sensor.

"It was like a really high-tech temporary tattoo that I created by accident; lick and stick!" says the Ph.D. student in the lab of James McGrath, a professor of biomedical engineering at the University of Rochester.

And that's how water vapor became integral to the development and design of a novel device for detecting DNA biomarkers affiliated with disease. Created by McGrath's lab in collaboration with Professor Vincent Tabard-Cossa and graduate student Kyle Briggs at the University of Ottawa, the device is described in an article published online at Nano Letters. The article, and an image from Madejski's homemade animation of the device in operation, will be highlighted on the cover of the February 2018 print issue.

The arrangement creates a nanocavity filled with less than a femtoliter of fluid -- or about a million times smaller than the smallest raindrops.

During operation, the device uses an electric field to lure a strand of DNA to enter one of the pores of the prefilter and then pass through the nanocavity to reach the pore of the underlying sensor membrane. This triggers changes in the device's electrical current that can be detected and analyzed. The fact that DNA must elongate itself in a consistent way to pass through the two-membrane combination improves the precision and reproducibility of detection.

"This is a remarkable structure," says McGrath. "We've built an integrated system with a highly porous filter within molecular reach of a sensor. I think there are many sensors, particularly those that hunt for biomarkers in raw biological fluids that would benefit from filtering away unwanted molecules immediately upstream of the detector."

(Source: eurekaalert.com)

## Science can predict if babies are left-handed even before they're born

Researchers have devised a new method to predict the hand preference of babies while they're still in the mother's womb.

The discovery adds to a growing body of research showing our handedness is innate - but on top of that, the screening method could also come in handy for identifying neurological disorders.

Handedness before birth has seen plenty of research before, with studies showing there's a correlation between postnatal hand preference and which thumb the fetus sucks while in the womb.

But while it seems to be clear that innate factors and even genetics contribute to a person's hand-preference, there's still a lot we don't know about how exactly this preference develops.

With that question in mind, a team of researchers in Italy have developed a prenatal screening method that could accurately predict whether a baby turns out left- or right-handed.



The method uses four-dimensional ultrasonography to map and characterize the hand movements of fetuses in real time.

Borrowing their methods from an earlier study on fetal movement, the researchers specifically focussed on movements that require higher precision - such as when the fetuses directed their hands towards the eyes - contrasting them with less-precise movements, like shoving a hand against the wall of the uterus.

The team recruited 29 women with healthy single-baby pregnancies and monitored the fetuses at gestational weeks 14, 18, and 22 - each time for a session of 20 minutes, videotaping the ultrasound footage for later data crunching and analysis.

They found that around week 18, the fetuses already had fairly well-established hand dominance, indicated by the fact they could perform faster high-precision movements with the preferred hand.

Based on the ultrasound results, the researchers predicted the handedness of the children, and followed up after nine years to see if they got it right.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

## Dentures put wearers at risk of malnutrition, study says

Dentures put wearers at risk of malnutrition because they cause wearers to avoid healthy foods which are difficult to chew, a major study has shown.

Researchers at King's College London found the same was true for people with teeth loss, who also struggle to chew food properly.

In both cases, tooth loss and wearing dentures was associated with joint and muscle frailty which can leave people at risk of bone breakages and falls.

The scientists said that people with dentures, or fewer teeth find it difficult to eat foods such as fibrous fruits and vegetables, nuts and meat, which are essential for good nutrition.

**■ Chewing function**

Although dentures improves chewing function, the bite force is much weaker than that of natural teeth, meaning users often avoid certain foods.

"Persons with inadequate dentition are less likely to eat hard food that is difficult to chew, for example, some of the fresh fruits and vegetables, apples, pears, carrots, nuts etc.," said Dr. Wael Sabbah, from King's College London Dental Institute.

"They could also have difficulties in eating some cooked food such as meat, depending on the way it is cooked."



Around 11 million people wear dentures in Britain. Although just six per cent of people now have no teeth compared to 37 per cent in 1978, 74 per cent have needed at least one tooth extracting.

The study examined the health of more than 1,800 people who had an average age of 62, and were categorised into three groups; having at least 20 teeth, denture wearers with fewer than 20 teeth, and people and non-denture wearers with fewer than 20 teeth.

Researchers tested all groups for strength, frailty, BMI and oral health and interviewed about their nutritional intake.

The group that had less than 20 teeth and did not use dentures, and those who used dentures, were found to have consumed the least amount of nutrients, compared to recommended daily amounts. They were also found to be more frail.

Denture wearers and those with fewer teeth were 32 percent more likely to be frail and 20 per cent more likely to be nutritionally deficient.

**■ Preventing tooth loss**

The researchers say the study demonstrates how important oral health is in preventing tooth loss which can cause nutritional deficiencies in later life.

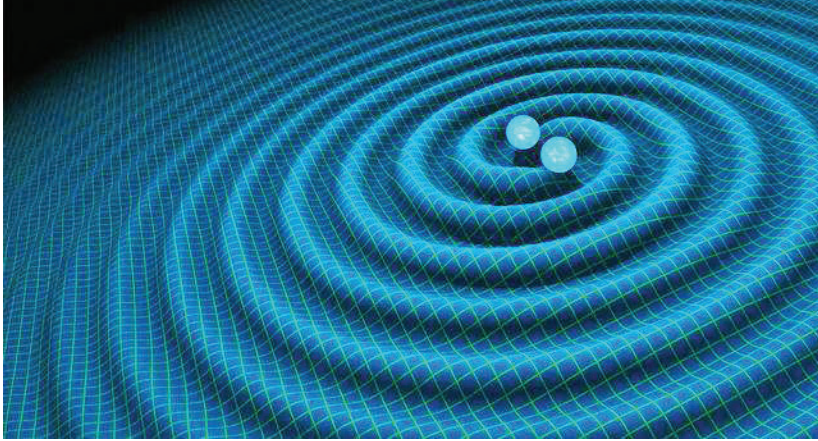
Nutrients are crucial to maintain muscle mass and stave off musculoskeletal frailty.

"Few studies have examined the relationship between oral health, the number of teeth and general frailty," added Dr. Sabbah.

"One of the important findings of the study is the significant relationship between the condition of teeth and deficiency in intake of essential nutrients, regardless of the use of dentures."

(Source: The Telegraph)

## New form of matter, excitonium, finally proved to exist after 50-year search



After 50 years of theories and thwarted attempts, scientists have finally proved the existence of a new form of matter. The never-before-detected condensate is called excitonium, a name first coined in the 1960s by Harvard theoretical physicist Bert Halperin. Halperin is now 76. Peter Abbamonte, the physicist responsible for the discovery, recently saw him at a party; Halperin was, apparently, excited.

"It's as close to 'proved' as you're ever going to get in science," Abbamonte, a physics professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, told Newsweek. "You can never really 'prove' anything, but, well, people find it convincing."

Excitonium is a condensate, meaning what the researchers detected was a solid. Excitonium is made up of particles called excitons, in the same way that, say, solid aluminum is made up of aluminum particles. The exciton particles themselves, though, aren't created through quite as intuitive a process.

**■ More conventional**

Let's start with something a little more conventional to compare to, like hydrogen. Hydrogen particles are made up of an electron and a proton. Exciton particles, then, are made up of an electron that's escaped and the negative space it left behind when it did so. The hole actually acts like a particle, attracting the escaped electron and bonding with it; they orbit each other the same way an electron and a proton would.

As much as previous scientists suspected that excitonium existed, they

never had a good enough way of proving it. What Abbamonte and his colleagues did was invent an electron-scattering technique to detect the exciton particles' final result, excitonium. They started with a clean surface of the material in a vacuum--no air or anything else--and then scattering the electrons from its surface to make waves, like hitting the middle of a trampoline.

**■ Final form**

The particular way the waves spread allowed them to detect those escaped electrons in their final form, excitonium. It's not unlike the way the fabled Higgs Boson was detected. They call the technique momentum-resolved electron energy-loss spectroscopy, or M-EELS. A paper explaining the discovery was published in the journal Science.

excitonium1 Artist's depiction of the collective excitons of an excitonic solid. These excitations can be thought of as propagating domain walls (yellow) in an otherwise ordered solid exciton background (blue). Peter Abbamonte, U. of I. Department of Physics and Frederick Seitz Materials Research Laboratory

Abbamonte and his colleagues started working on their scattering technique about seven years ago, but they weren't designing it to detect excitonium. They initially wanted to study high-temperature superconductors, and only in early 2015, through "total serendipity" as Abbamonte put it, realized their work had the potential to prove the existence of a whole new kind of matter.

(Source: Newsweek)

## Research unveils new promising biofuel



New research indicates that poplar trees could be an economically viable biofuel material.

In the quest to produce affordable bio-fuels, poplars are one of the Pacific Northwest's best bets--the trees are abundant, fast-growing, adaptable to many terrains, and their wood can become substances used in biofuel and high-value chemicals that we rely on in our daily lives.

But even as researchers test poplars' potential to morph into everything from ethanol to chemicals in cosmetics and detergents, a commercial-scale processing plant for poplars has yet to be achieved. This is mainly because production costs still are not competitive with the current price of oil.

Now, a team of researchers is trying to make poplar a viable competitor by testing the production of younger poplar trees that could be harvested more frequently--after only two or three years--instead of the usual 10- to 20-year cycle.

These trees, essentially juveniles compared with fully grown adults, are planted closer together and cut in such a way that more branches sprout up from the stump after each harvest, using the same root systems for up to 20 years. This method is called "coppicing," and the trees are known as poplar coppice.

The team is the first to try converting the entire young tree -- including leaves, bark, and stems -- into bio oil, a biologically derived oil product, and ethanol using two separate processes. Their results, published this summer in two papers--one in ACS Sustainable

Chemistry & Engineering and the other in Biotechnology for Biofuels--point to a promising future for using poplar coppice for biofuel.

"Our research proved that poplar coppice can be a good option to meet the cheap, high-volume criteria of biofuel feedstock," says Chang Dou, a doctoral student in the University of Washington's Bioresource Science and Engineering program at lead author of both papers. "Our findings are significant for the future biofuel industry, and the ultimate goal is to make poplar coppice biofuel a step closer to the pump."

Poplar woodchips from older trees have been the focus of most research, mainly because wood parts contain the highest concentration of sugar, which is important for making ethanol and chemicals. Earlier studies show that poplar woodchips are a viable biofuel source, but costs still don't pencil out, especially since trees are cut just once every 10-plus years.

Additionally, other tree parts go to waste when only the trunk is used, making the process more inefficient and wasteful. If poplar were planted close together like an agriculture crop, and whole trees were harvested on a much quicker cycle, however, it could make sense from a cost perspective and offer a short return on investment--and be more attractive for farmers.

For this study, researchers planted trees in rows close together in spring of 2012 in Jefferson, Oregon--one of the four study sites-- and harvested less than two years later before the leaves had fallen.

(Source: oilprice.com)



## Women’s share of budget bill increases by 30%

**1→** The total proposed national budget amounted to 11.94 quadrillion rials (about \$284 billion), a 10 percent rise year on year. It also highlights stronger presence of the private sector in the national economy.

“We hope to keep going on with single-digit inflation and an annual 5 percent growth rate. We forecast to create 840,000 new jobs in the next year compared with 750,000 in the current year,” Rouhani told MPs.

## RECIPE OF THE WEEK

### Orange cake with semolina and almonds

“Semolina and ground almonds give this cake a luxurious weight and the whole oranges provide moisture and a sunny citrus flavor without using any dairy. The cake can be stored in an airtight container for up to 2 days.”

#### Ingredients



- 2 large organic oranges, scrubbed and coarsely chopped (with the skin)
- 5 eggs, separated
- 1 cup white sugar, divided
- 3/4 cup ground almonds
- 3/4 cup semolina flour
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon fiori di Sicilia (optional)
- 1/2 teaspoon confectioners’ sugar (optional)

#### Directions

Combine chopped oranges and 1 tablespoon water in a small saucepan, cover, and cook over medium-low heat until oranges are soft and excess liquid has evaporated, about 30 minutes. Set aside to cool, about 20 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Line the bottom and sides of an 8-inch spring-form pan with parchment paper.

Place oranges in the bowl of a food processor; pulse until finely chopped.

Beat egg whites in a glass, metal, or ceramic bowl until stiff peaks form. Gradually add 1/2 cup sugar, continuing to beat for 1 more minute.

Beat egg yolks and remaining 1/2 cup sugar in a separate bowl until pale and thick, 2 to 3 minutes. Whisk in finely chopped oranges. Fold in ground almonds, semolina, vanilla extract, and fiori di Sicilia. Stir in 3 spoonfuls of whisked egg white to loosen the batter. Gently fold in remaining egg whites with a spatula or large metal spoon. Pour batter into prepared springform and level the top.

Bake in the preheated oven until cake is golden and a skewer inserted in the center comes out clean, about 50 minutes. Check cake after 20 and 30 minutes to see if it is starting to brown too quickly. Cover top lightly with aluminum foil once cake starts to brown.

Remove from oven and cool in the pan. Remove ring, peel away parchment paper and transfer cake to a serving plate. Drizzle with confectioners’ sugar.

## LEARN ENGLISH

### How Would You Like Your Eggs?

A: Wow, you’re up early today! What’s for breakfast?

B: Well, I felt like **baking**, so I made some **muffins**.

A: Smells good! I’ll make some coffee. Do you want me to make you some eggs?

B: Sure, I’ll take mine, **sunny side up**.

A: Eww, I don’t know how you can eat your eggs like that! Ever since I was small, I’ve had **eggs and soldiers**.

B: You know, my dad had **scrambled eggs** every morning for twenty years. It drove my mom crazy!

A: You know what really drives me crazy? When I ask for **soft boiled eggs**, and they **overcook** them, so they **come out hard boiled**! How can you **dip** your toast into a hard-boiled egg?

B: You’re so **picky** sometimes.

A: Here you go, honey, fried eggs.

B: Dammit! I asked for sunny side up! How many times do I have to tell you?

#### Key vocabulary

**bake**: cook in the oven

**muffin**: a small bread or cake people usually eat for breakfast  
**sunny-side up**: with egg fried on only one side  
**eggs and soldiers**: soft-boiled eggs with strips of buttered toast on it which people usually eat for breakfast

**scrambled eggs**: a way of cooking eggs by mixing them in a pan  
**drive someone crazy**: make someone feel very annoyed  
**soft boiled egg**: eggs cooked in the shell so the yellow part is still soft and wet

**overcook**: to cook food for too long; opposite of undercook  
**come out**: if something comes out in a particular way, that is what it is like after it has been made or produced  
**hard boiled egg**: egg cooked in the shell until the inside becomes solid

**dip**: to put something into a liquid and lift it out again

**picky**: too careful at selecting things and usually hard to please

#### Supplementary vocabulary

**hen**: female chicken

**over-easy**: an egg fried on both sides; cooked so the yolk is still soft

**omelet**: eggs mixed, then cooked, and then folded in half;

**yolk**: the yellow part of the egg

**egg white**: the white part of the egg

**frying pan**: a large, flat pot used for cooking eggs and other things  
(Source: [irlanguage.com](http://irlanguage.com))

# Appointing female deputies not a remedy for women’s problems: activists

W O M E N  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — A group of female social activists in an open letter addressing national policymakers criticized recent appointments of women to government posts as a symbolic move which would be no remedy for various problems women are facing in the country.

President Hassan Rouhani, while presenting a report of his administration’s first 100 days, referred to the creation of 307,000 jobs for women as one of the most important achievements gained by the government, Mehr reported.

The female activists criticized employment of women in advertising luxury cars, employment of women in real estates, employment of female drivers, and employment of women in low rank jobs in trains and airplanes, as well as increasing number of women in odd-jobs as street vendors.

The letter further criticized growing number of women marketers which is on the contrary to article 21st of the Constitution in which the government is bound to secure women’s rights and dignity in line with the law.

The law also makes the government duty bound to revive the spiritual and materialistic rights of women.

The female activists expressed their concern that appointment of a few number of women deputies not only will not solve women’s problems but it may increase vulnerability of women.

The letter further stressed assigning clear goals in social fields, especially in women’s employment.

They also put emphasis on not using women as a tool for earning financial benefits in trades and markets.

The female activists in social fields requested the policymakers to highly respect women’s rights in drawing out plans related to women’s affairs in order to value personality and dignity of women.



## National congress on women, urban regeneration and sustainable development wraps up



W O M E N  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — The first national congress titled “Women, Urban Regeneration and Sustainable Development” was held on Sunday in the western city of Kermanshah.

Dr Nozari Ghanbari, head of Kermanshah Islamic Azad University; Hojjat-ul-islam Abolfazl Allahverdi, representative of the Supreme Leader; and members of the scientific committee of the congress were among the participants.

People are always waiting for the development to be provided by the government, while development is the result of

effort made by the people themselves, ANA quoted Nozari as saying.

Women’s role in development is same as the role of other strata of the society and women have their own duties, Nozari said.

A number of 135 essays were delivered to the congress, 20 of them being presented as speeches and a number of 112 were offered in the form of posters.

The one-day event was to be held on November 15. However, it was postponed due to the strong earthquake which rocked Kermanshah on November 12.

## Women’s affairs study center opens

W O M E N  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — A center for women’s affairs studies opened at Shahid Chamran University, southwestern city of Ahvaz, on Sunday.

The center aims at studying the problems women are facing, planning for improvement of women’s situation in the society, investigating different problems related to women and providing scientific solutions for them.

The center also makes efforts to implement research projects in women and family affairs, hold workshops and specialized seminars and improve the scientific and technical level of researchers.

The center attempts to contribute to and influence on national, regional and international procedures for women empowerment.

## U.S. scholarship for Muslim women honors Iraq-born pioneering pharmacologist



The family of an Iraq-born woman who developed a pioneering drug for congestive heart failure in the United States has created a scholarship for Muslim women pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering and math.

The Adawia Alousi Scholars program was established at the Dearborn, Michigan-based Center for Arab American Philanthropy with money from Alousi’s family trust. It’s believed to be the first of its kind. The inaugural class of 11 recipients includes refugees, daughters of poor parents and the first in their families to go to college.

Creators say the scholarship aims to overcome what creators see as a lack of Muslim women in the fields known by the acronym STEM.

One recipient, University of North Carolina freshman Tasneem Essader, feels a kinship with Alousi, who died in 2010.

Dr. Adawia Alousi was a scientist and educator whose research contributed significantly to the world of pharmacology. Born in Baghdad, Alousi came to University of Michigan and later to Harvard Medical School to pursue postgraduate studies, with the support of her family.

(Source: *Daily Sabah*)



## Why successful women keep mum about their children

At a dinner in London not long ago, the chief executive of a very respectable organization told a story that left her end of the table gobsmacked.

It went like this: she was in such a rush to leave work to pick up her children from school recently that she had to ask an underling for help on a minor chore. The underling was stunned, she said, because it turned out no one in the office knew she actually had children even though she had been running the place for years.

Then she said something I found more dismaying. She was thrilled to learn no one knew. She had made it a rule to never talk about her children at work on the grounds that being a mother was irrelevant and she never wanted people to think her family affected how she did her job.

The mothers could expect a deficit in average starting salaries compared to childless women, according to a 2005 Cornell University study. Yet fathers were likely to be offered \$6,000 more than non-fathers, who were thought less committed to their jobs than dads

The first reason I found this astonishing was because, even though I am childless, I doubt I would ever have the willpower to shut up about such a central bit of home life.

I have bored my colleagues senseless with far less vital domestic news: the soul-sapping apartment move, The Great Kitchen Renovation Disaster, the bloke down the road who kept pinching our Sunday papers and returning them with the crosswords filled in.

I cannot imagine censoring children from such blather, and as I look around the office at mothers I have worked with for years I am glad I cannot see one who has kept noticeably quiet about her offspring.

Yet none of us was trying to be a top executive, as far as I know. If we were we might have thought again, because what really floored me about the story from that dinner was what it said about women in today’s workforce.



On the one hand there has rarely been another time when so much is being done by so many governments and companies to improve the lot of working women. In the UK businesses with 250 or more employees will be legally required to publish gender pay-gap figures from April next year, and the Aviva insurance group has just introduced six months of fully paid parental leave for its 16,000 UK workers, men and women.

The U.S. may still be the only OECD country with no nationally guaranteed paid maternity leave, but it is also home to companies such as Salesforce, the \$75 billion online software group that measures its gender pay gap and has spent nearly \$3 million a year to close it.

#### Female academics

There are signs that sexist hiring practices blamed for blocking female academics in the sciences have waned, as research suggests that U.S. universities prefer women

to identically qualified men in some fields.

On top of this, women are running everything from the International Monetary Fund to General Motors and Germany. Do they really need to worry whether anyone knows if they are mothers? Maybe not. Yet it is obvious why some still do.

One of the most arresting studies I have seen on this topic was done more than a decade ago in the U.S., where Cornell University researchers concocted fake resumes for equally qualified men and women, with and without children. They found mothers were not just a lot less likely to be hired than childless women, they could also expect \$11,000 less in an average starting salary.

Yet fathers were likely to be offered \$6,000 more than non-fathers, who were thought less committed to their jobs than dads.

In other words, it literally paid to have kids if you were a man and cost if you were a woman. I doubt this irksome motherhood penalty has completely vanished since then. But it is clear that things are changing.

#### High school graduation

Last week I spoke to Haruno Yoshida, the president of BT in Japan, a country with a woeeful gender equality record. A few years ago, not long after she started at BT, she missed her daughter’s high school graduation because it fell on the same day as a big reception for top executives at the telecoms group. When she later told her British boss, expecting praise for putting work first, she got a “purple and screaming” reaction. “He said, ‘How dare you? You did something you can never take back’.”

That is partly a story of cultural differences. But it also suggests the world is moving on. Yoshida says she would never let a female employee do what she did, and as more companies are run by people like her, I like to think there will be a lot fewer workers who still feel the need to keep mum about being a mum.

(Source: *Irish Times*)



# Putin and Sisi discuss nuclear deal, Middle East tensions

Russian President Vladimir Putin met Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Cairo Monday for talks over a nuclear power plant and tensions in the Middle East following Washington's decision to recognize occupied Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

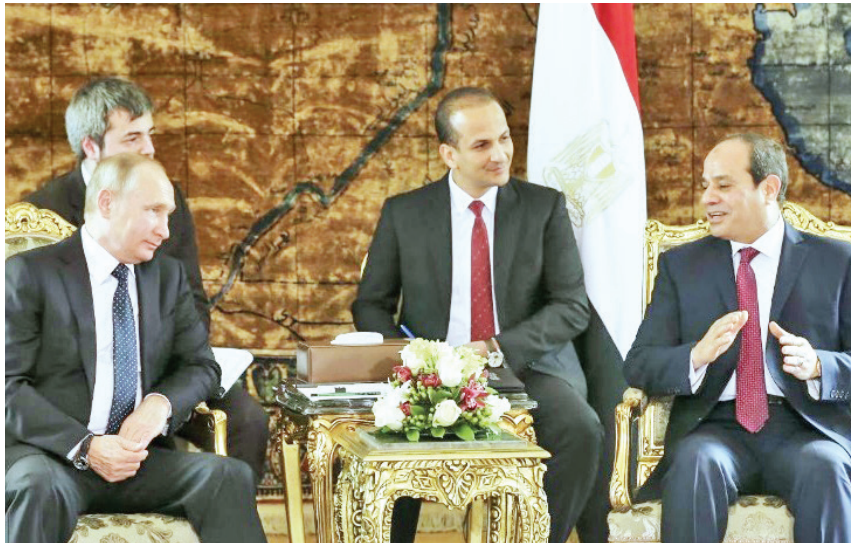
Putin's visit to Cairo reflects the deepening ties between Russia and Egypt, the second largest recipient of U.S. military aid after Israel and a strategic U.S. partner in the Middle East because of its control of the Suez Canal.

Putin, who is due to fly to Turkey after Cairo, briefly visited a Russian base in Syria before arriving in Egypt and ordered Russian forces to start withdrawing from Syria after a two-year military campaign.

During the visit, Egypt and Russia signed an agreement to start work on Egypt's Dabaa nuclear power plant, state television showed. They were also to discuss the resumption of Russian flights to Egypt as soon as possible, a presidential spokesman told MENA state news agency.

Moscow halted civilian air traffic to Egypt in 2015 after militants bombed a Russian Metrojet flight leaving from the tourist resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, killing 224 people onboard.

Russian state nuclear company Rosatom said on Monday the Dabaa nuclear station it will build in Egypt will have four reactors and cost up to \$21 billion with construction



expected to finish in 2028-2029.

Moscow and Cairo signed an initial agreement in 2015 for Russia to build the plant, with Russia extending a loan to Egypt to cover the cost of construction.

The high-level Russian visit comes after the U.S. government in August decided to deny Egypt \$95.7 million in aid and to delay another \$195 million because of its failure to make progress on human rights

and democratic norms.

Russia launched a military operation to support Syrian President Bashar Assad in September 2015, and there are signs Moscow is keen to further expand its military presence in the region.

In November, Russia's government published a draft agreement between Russia and Egypt allowing both countries to use each other's air space and air bases for

their military planes.

Putin has been steadily building relations with Egypt. On his first visit to Cairo in 2015, he was the first leader of a major power to meet with Sisi after the former Egyptian army commander ousted President Mohamed Morsi in 2013.

That prompted Washington to cool relations with Egypt, and the U.S. government suspended some military aid.

Since then the two leaders have increased cooperation, reviving the historical alliance between Egypt and Soviet Union of the 1970s. Cairo had moved closer to the United States when Washington brokered a peace deal with Israel in 1979.

Libya is a particular interest, where Egypt and Russia have both backed Libyan commander Khalifa Haftar who has become one of the most powerful leaders in the North African state since it fell into factional fighting after a 2011 uprising.

Moscow has cultivated close ties with Haftar, who held talks several times with Russian officials and visited Moscow.

U.S. officials also said in March that Russia had deployed special forces in Egypt near the border with Libya, at the Sidi Barrani base. Egyptian sources said another Egyptian base was also in use this year. Moscow denied those claims.

(Source: Reuters)

## Merkel, Social Democrats seek clarity on coalition talks

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives and the center-left Social Democrats (SPD) say they hope to find clarity soon on prospects for a new ruling coalition as they gear up for exploratory talks this week.

The conservatives, meeting on Monday to map out their negotiating positions, believe compromises can be reached to renew the "grand coalition" that governed for the past four years.

The two blocs must overcome differences over the future of Europe, pensions, health care and education.

Merkel, whose CDU/CSU alliance last month failed to cut a coalition deal with two smaller parties after an inconclusive national election in September, is due to brief the media at 1 pm (1200 GMT).

Senior conservatives on Saturday rejected the vision for a "United States of Europe" put forward by SPD leader Martin Schulz, weakened after his party posted its worst post-war election result in September.

But Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, the conservative premier of the Saarland region, told broadcaster ARD that she hoped some progress could emerge from this week's talks with the SPD. "Maybe we can take a first big step in this direction this week," she said.

SPD Secretary General Lars Klingbeil told ARD his party was open to all possibilities, including a renewed coalition

with conservatives or a minority government.

"The ball is now in Mrs. Merkel's court," Klingbeil said, adding that the pace of negotiations depended to a large extent on the core demands of the Christian Democrats (CDU) and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU).

"The SPD made its positions clear at its party conference. Now we'll listen to what the CDU leader wants, what the CSU wants, and it will be clear very quickly if further discussions are worth it," he said.

A poll published on Monday by broadcaster RTL and n-tv showed 71 percent of SPD members welcomed the party's decision to talk with conservatives about forming a new ruling coalition, while 81 percent wanted the party to conduct tough negotiations.

Klingbeil said his party would seek clear commitments from the CDU to spend more on education and combat childhood poverty before entering coalition talks.

Julia Klöckner, deputy leader of the CDU, warned the SPD against making exaggerated demands and criticized comments Klingbeil made over the weekend suggesting that talks could stretch as long as May.

"If the SPD thinks we have time forever, that is not our view," she said.



Monday's poll showed that 71 percent of German voters favored rapid negotiations on forming a new government.

Klöckner said it was clear that the two political blocs would have to revisit issues such as integration, digitalization and development of rural areas before agreeing to a new coalition.

"A continuation of the previous grand coalition cannot happen," she said.

(Source: Reuters)

## Britain's May hails new optimism in Brexit talks after deal

Prime Minister Theresa May will hail "a new sense of optimism" in Brexit talks on Monday, telling parliament Britain and the European Union should sign off on a deal at a summit this week "to move forwards together" to discuss future trade ties.

May, weakened after losing her Conservatives' parliamentary majority at a June election, rescued an agreement last week to move the negotiations to unravel more than 40 years of union on to their second phase after easing the concerns of her Northern Irish allies over a border with EU member Ireland.

But the discussion of Britain's trade relationship with the EU after Brexit contains many pitfalls and could widen differences among her top team of ministers, or cabinet, over how Britain should look after it leaves the bloc.

In a statement to parliament, May will take to task those who doubted that she could move the talks beyond the initial stage of agreeing terms on how much Britain should pay, citizens' rights and the border between

the British province of Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland.

"I have always been clear that this was never going to be an easy process. It has required give and take for the UK and the EU to move forwards together. And that is what we have done," she will say, according to extracts provided by her office.

"Of course, nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.

"But there is, I believe, a new sense of optimism now in the talks and I fully hope and expect that we will confirm the arrangements I have set out today in the European Council later this week," she will say after holding a meeting of her cabinet.

May will head to Brussels on Thursday for a summit meeting at which she expects the leaders of the other 27 EU states to approve an assessment by negotiators that the sides have made "sufficient progress" to move on to phase two.

### ■ Troubles ahead

The deal to launch further talks looked in

jeopardy a week ago when May was forced to abandon a choreographed meeting in Brussels intended to seal the deal after her allies in Northern Ireland expressed fears she was proposing a special status for the region -- out of sync with the rest of the United Kingdom.

After days of diplomacy, there was a compromise -- if no overall Brexit deal is secured, Britain will keep "full alignment" with those rules of the EU's single market that help cooperation between Ireland's north and south.

But those words have reverberated in both London and Belfast, with Brexit minister David Davis saying they were more "a statement of intent" than a legally binding move.

On Monday, Davis told LBC his words had been taken out of context and denied he was backing away from the commitment, but added there were several ways of securing a frictionless border.

The Northern Irish Democratic Unionist



Beijing about the latest U.S., South Korean and Japanese drills, said the situation was in a vicious cycle that if followed to a conclusion would not be in anyone's interests.

"All relevant parties should do is still to completely, precisely and fully implement the relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions toward North Korea, and do more for regional peace and stability and to get all parties back to the negotiating table. Not the opposite, mutual provocation," Lu said.

### ■ 'Important meaning'

Gerasimov's visit to Japan is the first by a senior Russian

military official in seven years and follows the resumption of "two-plus-two" defense and foreign minister talks in March after Russia annexed Crimea.

Relations between Russia and Japan have been hampered for decades over the ownership of four islands north of Japan's Hokkaido, captured by Soviet forces at the end of World War Two. Japan has declined to sign a formal peace treaty with Russia until the dispute is resolved.

Gerasimov also met Katsutoshi Kawano, the chief of staff of Japan's Self Defence Forces.

China's Defence Ministry said on Monday it had begun a planned joint simulated anti-missile drill with Russia in Beijing, which had "important meaning" for both countries in facing the threat from missiles. It said the exercise was not aimed at any third party.

China and Russia both oppose the development of global anti-missile systems, the ministry added in a statement.

China and Russia both oppose the deployment in South Korea of the advanced U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile system.

China in particular fears the system's powerful radar could look deep into its territory, threatening its security.

The United States and South Korea say the system is needed to defend against the threat of North Korean missiles.

It is not clear if this week's exercise by U.S., South Korean and Japanese forces will involve the THAAD system.

(Source: Reuters)

## Kazakhstan to hold new Syria talks next week

A fresh round of Syrian peace talks is scheduled for next week in Astana, Kazakhstan said Monday, as part of a Moscow-led push to end the six-year conflict.

The two-day talks in Astana will begin on December 21 and will focus on freeing prisoners, the delivery of humanitarian aid, the functioning of de-escalation zones and other issues, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

The announcement came as Russian leader Vladimir Putin ordered a partial withdrawal of Russian forces in Syria during a surprise visit to the war-torn country earlier Monday.

Nearly all of the seven rounds of Syria negotiations in Astana have involved representatives of the Syrian regime and the armed opposition, as well as the three power-brokers: Russia, Iran and Turkey.

Moscow has spearheaded the talks in Astana since the start of the year as it tries to turn its game-changing military intervention into a negotiated settlement.

Both Russia and Iran have thrown their support behind the regime of Bashar Assad, while Turkey has provided backing to the rebels.

The negotiations, which run in parallel to broader UN-backed talks in Geneva, involved armed rebels and government officials and have focused mainly on military issues.

The Kremlin also hopes to convene a political congress in the Black Sea resort of Sochi which would bring together regime officials and the opposition to reinvigorate a hobbled peace process.

(Source: AFP)

## Abbas in Cairo, Istanbul to rally region over Al-Quds

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Monday intensified efforts to rally Middle Eastern countries against U.S. recognition of occupied Jerusalem as Israel's capital, setting up talks with Arab leaders beginning in Cairo.

Abbas will meet President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi of Egypt, which has been a key broker in past peace talks with Israel and between fighting Palestinian factions, before heading for Istanbul to give a speech, his office said.

Arab states condemned U.S. President Donald Trump's Jerusalem decision last week, and vowed to press international bodies to take action against it, without announcing any concrete measures. The Arab League held an emergency meeting on the issue in Cairo on Monday.

"Daring Palestinian and Arab decisions are required in the coming stage, which is very important," Abbas's spokesman Nabil Abu Rdainah told Palestinian official news agency Wafa.

World powers have warned the U.S. move will impede peace efforts in the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict as anger spreads across the region.

(Source: Daily Star)

## Nasrallah: Trump alone in his decision about al-Quds

Mr. Nasrallah reiterated that the Lebanese hold a great deal of respect to those Palestinians who defend sanctities.

"Trump is alone in his decision about al-Quds, and except for the Zionist regime, no-one else accompanies him," underlined Mr. Nasrallah, slamming Trump order to move U.S. embassy to al-Quds.

The leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement says the recent decision by U.S. President Donald Trump has made the United States and White House isolated in the world.

he said, "All positions taken on Trump's al-Quds decision were negative. We appreciate all those countries, nations and freedom seekers, who opposed Trump's announcement of Jerusalem al-Quds as capital of Israel."

He also thanked Yemenis and Palestinian nations which had stood by resistance in voicing their opposition to Trump's decision despite huge threats they were facing.

The Hezbollah leader also praised the unity of Lebanon's people over the cause of Palestinian and the cause of Jerusalem al-Quds.

Referring to recent statements of Lebanese and Iraqi delegations in Arab League meeting on the issue in Egypt's capital Cairo, Nasrallah called their statements as "cause of pride."

(Source: MNA)

## Persons with disability awaiting better living conditions

"Providing houses for families who have two members with disability is in progress and 4,000 houses are under construction and will be ready by the end of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 2018). We hope that we can start housing families with disabled member in the next year," the minister explained.

### ■ Reformed recruitment policies

Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey, head of the Welfare Organization, said for his part that the bill also obliges state-run organizations to allocate 3 percent of their vacancies to the disabled people otherwise the welfare organization has the right to legally follow up on the issue.

"Of the 46,000 jobs created last year 26,000 were dedicated to people with disability and we hope to improve the latter to 60,000 in the near future," Bandpey stated.

He went on to say that "if an employer hires an individual with disability, the organization will pay the insurance premium for the first five years and also, based on the extent of the disability, the organization pays some share of the wage. We are trying to take the disabled people out of their homes and bring them back to the society."

"We have performed poorly regarding developing disability-friendly cities to the point that less than 25 percent of the required standards are met," he explained.

"The new bill will obligate builders to make their new constructions disabled-friendly," Bandpey added.

### ■ 30,000 congenital anomalies prevented

"By making genetic screening tests mandatory, we succeeded in preventing congenital anomalies causing of infant and childhood deaths, chronic illness and disability in 30,000 children," he said.

"Today we proudly declare that all the newborns undergo hearing screening tests and 80 percent of children aged 3-5 have taken vision screening tests for lazy eye disorder."



## Russians want to compete at Olympics, even as neutrals, says official

Most Russian athletes want to go to next year’s Winter Olympic Games even though they would have to compete as neutrals, an official of the country’s Olympic committee said on Monday.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) last week banned Russia from the Games due to take place in Pyeongchang, South Korea in February, citing evidence of an “unprecedented systematic manipulation” of the anti-doping system.

But it left the door open for clean athletes to compete as neutrals. “A majority of athletes want to take part in the Olympics,” Olympic fencer Sofya Velikaya, who chairs the Russian Olympic Committee’s (ROC) athletes’ commission, told reporters.

“The Russian Olympic Committee supports the opinion of the athletes who will decide to participate and also respects the decision of those who decide not to go.”

Velikaya said no athlete questioned by the ROC had voiced plans to boycott the Games. “Everyone is preparing and hoping to compete,” she said. President Vladimir Putin said last week that Russia would not prevent its athletes from competing, damping down calls from some for a boycott. [nL8N1O64WN]

He also reiterated Russia’s insistence that there was no state-sponsored doping system in the country. Russian Olympic authorities are expected to spell out their response to the IOC ban following a meeting on Tuesday.

In the weeks ahead of the IOC ban, more than 20 Russian athletes who competed at the 2014 Sochi Games were banned for life from the Olympics for allegedly violating anti-doping rules. Russia’s athletics federation, Paralympic Committee and anti-doping agency RUSADA remain suspended over doping scandals.

(Source: Reuters)

## Arsenal face Ostersunds in Europa League while Celtic draw Zenit

Arsenal will face Swedish side Ostersunds in the Europa League round of 32, while Celtic face Russian side Zenit St Petersburg.

The Gunners, seeded for the draw, avoided the likes of Borussia Dortmund and Napoli - who were both in the unseeded pot.

Ostersunds are managed by Englishman Graham Potter, who previously played for Birmingham City and West Brom.

Potter has taken the club from the fourth division to the Allsvenskan, the Swedish top tier, in six years.

The 42-year-old has earned comparisons with Roy Hodgson - who managed in Scandinavia - and this will be his first clash against English opposition. Arsenal will play the first leg away in Ostersund in mid-February, before returning to the Emirates.

Celtic, also unseeded, will play the first leg of their tie against Zenit at home, before a trip to the Zenit Arena in Russia, which is one of the 2018 World Cup venues in Russia.

Zenit were last week ordered to partially close their stadium by UEFA for their next European game after fans displayed a banner praising former Bosnian Serb military leader Ratko Mladic during a 2-1 home win over Macedonian side Vardar Skopje in the Europa League last month.

Bundesliga giants Borussia Dortmund, who on Sunday sacked their head coach Peter Bosz, will face Atalanta, while 2010 Europa League winners Atletico Madrid meet FC Copenhagen after failing to qualify for the knockout stages of the Champions League.

Lyon, who will host the competition’s final on May 16, have been drawn against Villarreal in one of the standout ties of the last 32.

Elsewhere, seven-time European champions AC Milan will meet Ludogrets, Marseille face Braga and Lazio are drawn with Romanian side Steaua Bucharest.

<b>Europa League round of 32:</b>	
Borussia Dortmund .....	Atalanta
Nice v Lokomotiv .....	Moscow
FC Copenhagen .....	Atletico Madrid
Spartak Moscow .....	Athletic Bilbao
AEK Athens .....	Dynamo Kiev
Celtic .....	Zenit St Petersburg
Napoli .....	RB Leipzig
Red Star Belgrade .....	CSKA Moscow
Olympique Lyonnais .....	Villarreal
Real Sociedad .....	FC Salzburg
Partizan Belgrade .....	Viktoria Plzen
Steaua Bucharest .....	Lazio
Ludogorets .....	AC Milan
Astana .....	Sporting Lisbon
Ostersunds .....	Arsenal
Olympique Marseille .....	Braga

(Source: Daily Star)

## Emery: PSG ‘can compete with Real Madrid’

Paris Saint-Germain boss Unai Emery is upbeat over his side’s chances of getting past Real Madrid and advancing to the Champions League quarter-finals.

Despite topping Group B, the runaway Ligue 1 leaders were dealt perhaps the toughest possible hand in drawing the reigning champions.

PSG were dumped out in the round of 16 by Barcelona last term as their 4-0 first leg advantage was spectacularly overturned in a 6-5 aggregate defeat.

Emery is undaunted by a similar challenge this time around. “I think it is a good draw. I believe we can compete with Real Madrid,” Emery told UEFA.com.

“To make something great in the UEFA Champions League, you need to beat the best teams. The last 16 is a good moment to play such teams.

“We will need to show our character, our tactical skills and our talent. Talent is very important.”

Unlike last season’s defeat, PSG will this time benefit from the second leg being played on home turf in March.

PSG’s assistant sporting director and former club legend Maxwell, who won the tournament with Barcelona in 2010-11, echoed Emery’s excitement.

“It is a good draw, with two good games to play. Our fans will like it after we were knocked out by Barcelona last season,” he said.

“It will be nice. It is a beautiful challenge for the club. I think we are ready for that.”

(Source: Goal)

# Real Madrid to face PSG in Champions league last 16

Holders Real Madrid will have to overcome a sizeable obstacle when the Champions League resumes in February after Monday’s draw pitted the 12-times winners against Paris St Germain.

Bidding for a hat-trick of titles in Europe’s elite club competition, Real paid a heavy price for not winning their group as they were drawn with the big-spending Parisians who were tipped as many people’s favorites ahead of the draw in Nyon.

Five-times champions Barcelona will face English champions Chelsea, one of five Premier league clubs in the draw.

Tottenham Hotspur, who topped their group ahead of Real Madrid thanks to a 3-1 victory at Wembley, will face Serie A champions and last seasons’ runners-up Juventus.

Manchester City, who clocked up a record 14th successive Premier League victory on Sunday, are now listed as favorites after being handed a last-16 clash with Swiss club Basel.

Five-times winners Bayern Munich, who finished below PSG in the group, will be happy with a two-legged clash with Turkish outsiders Besiktas. Europa League champions Manchester United take on Sevilla while, Liverpool will meet Porto while AS Roma’s reward for winning their group ahead of Chelsea is a tricky tie against Ukraine’s Shakhtar Donetsk.

The Champions League has proved beyond even the vast riches available to PSG and last season they were stunned in the last 16 by Barcelona, losing the second leg 6-1 after beating the Spanish side 4-0 in the French capital.

A clash with Real is hardly what they would have desired at such an early stage but with Neymar and Edinson Cavani having scored six goals apiece in the group, they will be hopeful -- if they can keep Real’s nine-goal Cristiano Ronaldo quiet.

“This could have been the final, given the power of the two clubs. The last 16 is a bit early, we could say. Logically we are both challengers for the trophy,” Emilio Butragueno, Real’s director of institutional relations, said following the draw.

“PSG get stronger and stronger, they had an impeccable group phase and have a lot of power. I don’t think it’s a good draw for them either. It will be a thrilling tie.”

PSG and real have played six times in Europe, most re-



cently in the 2015-16 group stage when the sides drew 0-0 in Paris with Real edging the return match 1-0.

Chelsea and Barcelona will renew a regular Champions league rivalry that last surfaced in the 2012 semi-final when Chelsea won 3-2 on aggregate before going on to claim the trophy for the only time in their history.

Barcelona won the 2009 semi-final on away goals. “We’ve had some great times at Stamford Bridge, haven’t we?” Barca’s Andres Iniesta said on Twitter.

While Antonio Conte’s Chelsea were handed a tough draw, the other English qualifiers would have been reasonably content with their opponents, especially Manchester City. While Basel are a formidable side at home and have some big English scalps at home in the Champions

League, Pep Guardiola’s side will be big favourites to progress.

“We have to be careful, they deserve to be here,” City’s technical director Txiki Begiristain said.

Tottenham will face Juventus for the first time while Manchester United and Sevilla have also never met before.

Bayern Munich will meet Besiktas for the first time since winning 2-0 home and away in the 1997-98 group stage.

“Bayern are a powerful team but we are not a piece of cake either,” Besiktas president Fikret Orman said.

The first legs, with group winners PSG, Tottenham, Liverpool, Manchester United, Roma, Manchester City, Barcelona and Besiktas away first, take place on Feb. 13-14 and Feb. 20-21 with the returns on March 6-7 and March 13-14.

(Source: Mirror )

## Antonio Conte puts top four first for Chelsea after Barcelona draw



Antonio Conte insists beating Huddersfield and finishing in the top four is Chelsea’s priority after drawing Barcelona in the Champions League.

Conte reiterated it is “impossible” for Chelsea to defend their Premier League title after suffering their fourth top-flight defeat of the season away at West Ham on Saturday.

Chelsea’s immediate priority remains their domestic form and not the Champions League, according to Conte, despite learning their last-16 opponents will be Barcelona in February.

“Our priority must be the league, to try to stay up and to try to fight for a Champions League place,” Conte said shortly after the draw and ahead of facing Huddersfield on Tuesday.

“This must be our priority in this moment. Then, when it is the moment to play Barcelona we will start to think about that game.

“We must be very realistic to understand this league is very dangerous, we are to go game by game, to play with 120 per cent of our strength every game, otherwise we will have a bad surprise at the end of the season.”

Conte added: “I’m not happy because the last game we lost. The draw is in February, I look at the present. I like to win, when we lose I’m not happy.”

Chelsea are 14 points behind Premier League leaders Manchester City while just four points separate the Blues from seventh-placed Burnley.

Conte insisted recent comebacks against Newcastle and Atletico Madrid prove his squad have “character” despite the departures of key dressing room figures such as John Terry, and defended his summer signings.

“I’m happy to work with my players,” he said. “When you are starting to change to create a base fundamental for Chelsea it is normal [to take time to adapt].

Chelsea’s tie against Barcelona appears to be the most difficult of the English sides in the Champions League draw.

It will be the sixth time the pair have faced off in the knockout stages of Europe’s elite club competition.

Goals from Ramires and Fernando Torres gave Chelsea an unlikely draw at the Nou Camp in 2012, taking them to the final with a 3-2 aggregate win as they lifted the trophy for the first time.

“Our reaction must be positive,” said Conte, speaking about the prior meetings between the sides. “We must be ready to face every team and in this case we must be ready to face Barcelona.

“It’s the past, now is the present and a different story, it’s totally different.”

(Source: Sky Sports)

## Valverde’s Barcelona proving dull but effective



Barcelona ground out a 2-0 victory over Villarreal on Sunday to go five points clear at the top of La Liga, continuing their excellent start to the season.

On paper it has been business as usual for a Barcelona side accustomed to success, but Ernesto Valverde’s team play a very different style of football to that of his predecessor Luis Enrique.

Although the former Athletic Bilbao coach has chosen to change from a 4-3-3 to a 4-4-2, adding a man in midfield to increase ball possession, this Barcelona are also far cry from Pep Guardiola’s passing demons from 2008-12.

With electric winger Neymar leaving for Paris St Germain, Barcelona lost their most creative player behind Lionel Messi and it has had positive and negative effects on the team. Although Ousmane Dembele was signed to replace the Brazilian, his injury has resulted in Valverde using Paulinho as an extra midfielder.

With four central midfielders on the pitch, even with two of them moving into wider positions, Barcelona are much harder to break down, playing pragmatic but slow football.

The Catalans have conceded only seven goals in La Liga, joint fewer than any other side with Atletico Madrid, who are renowned for their rock-solid defence.

In attack, however, it means they are

reliant on the quality of Messi and Luis Suarez, meaning if defences can keep the striking duo shackled, Barcelona have trouble finding a way through.

That was the case at Estadio de la Ceramica, with Villarreal keeping the door shut until midfielder Daniel Raba was sent off for a foolish lunge at Sergio Busquets.

When the hosts were reduced to 10 men it was far easier for the Catalans to unpick them, with Suarez and Messi scoring.

“The first half was very even but after the red card we had more chances on goal to win the game,” Suarez said. “The red card hurt them but Paco Alcacer coming on also helped the team.”

With Barcelona in need of a goal, Valverde hauled off midfielder Denis Suarez, who was standing in for injured captain Andres Iniesta, and his replacement Alcacer teed up Suarez.

Now boasting an extra forward, Barcelona looked more dangerous but also started allowing chances to the hosts, although goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen stopped anything which came his way.

When Dembele returns from injury in January it will give Valverde the chance to bring the thrill and excitement back to Barcelona’s game, but the coach might be reluctant to change a winning, albeit at times dull, formula.

(Source: Guardian)

## Arteta cuts head & milk thrown at Mourinho in Man Utd-Man City post-derby row

Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho had water and milk thrown at him and Manchester City coach Mikel Arteta suffered a cut head during a post-match row.

United were upset at what they viewed as an excessive City reaction to Sunday’s 2-1 win at Old Trafford, which sent them 11 points clear at the top of the Premier League.

City’s players celebrated in front of their fans after the final whistle and coaching staff tried to persuade manager Pep Guardiola to join them, but he refused.

After the players headed down the tunnel, it is understood Mourinho made his feelings known outside the visitors’ dressing room as he made his way to post-match interviews.

The City camp reacted, with Brazil goalkeeper Ederson and Mourinho exchanging words angrily in Portuguese - but Mourinho carried out his post-match media engagements as normal and made no mention of it.

Arteta was left with a cut, though it is unclear how it was caused and sources from both clubs say no punches were thrown during the incident.

● The incident started when Mourinho responded to what he perceived to be over the top celebrations.

● The row took place outside the visitors’ dressing room, the door to which was open. It was noisy but lasted no more than two minutes.

● A one-pint milk carton - which had been left in the City



dressing room for tea and coffee - was thrown at Mourinho. The United manager did not get splattered but a member of his staff was.

● After the row, the Portuguese went into the referees’ room, which is opposite the visitors’ dressing room, and then to the tunnel to do his post-match interviews.

● Players from both sides were talking to each other normally after they had got changed.

The Football Association announced on Monday that it will seek observations from both clubs in relation to the incident with the clubs having until 13 December to respond.

The referee, Michael Oliver, did not see the incident and did not include it in his report of the match.

In October 2004, then United manager Sir Alex Ferguson was hit by pizza thrown by Arsenal midfielder Cesc Fabregas after a bad-tempered encounter between the sides at Old Trafford.

In the build-up to Sunday’s Premier League game, City were irritated when United denied them permission to use cameras to gather footage for their £10m behind-the-scenes documentary.

The Old Trafford club said there was not enough room because of the number of rights holders wanting to attend the game.

In his pre-match news conference - and again on Sunday - Mourinho said he did not think he would be allowed to make to make a political statement on the touchline like Guardiola.

The City boss has recently worn a yellow ribbon - a symbol of protest against the imprisonment of pro-independence politicians in the Spanish region of Catalonia.

Mourinho also suggested on Friday that City players go to ground too easily, saying: “A little bit of wind and they fall.”

However, on Sunday United midfielder Ander Herrera was booked for diving in the second half when he went down in the box under challenge from Nicolas Otamendi - though his Portuguese boss was adamant his side should have been awarded a penalty.

(Source: BBC)



# Saman Ghoddos excited by underdogs Ostersunds' trip to Arsenal

Ostersunds coach Graham Potter has no fears over meeting Premier League heavyweights Arsenal in the Europa League round of 32.

The unheralded Swedish side were handed a dream tie for their maiden appearance in the knockout stages of a European competition, having progressed through a tricky Group J.

Founded in 1996 - shortly after Arsene Wenger had taken charge at Arsenal - Ostersunds have enjoyed a stunning rise under Potter.

The former Stoke City and West Bromwich Albion defender guided the club from the fourth division to the top flight with three promotions in five seasons and will now get the chance to lead his team at the Emirates Stadium.

"Fantastic draw! I wanted to get a really big team," Potter told UEFA.com.

"I think it is really cool to be going home to England and meeting one of the best teams in the Premier League.

"Now we are really underdogs."

Ostersunds forward Saman Ghoddos, who scored twice during the group stage, was taken aback by the high-profile draw.

"It is insane. Never in my wildest dreams would I have imagined facing Arsenal in the knockout stages of the Europa League when I signed for Ostersunds," Ghoddos said.

"We drew the best team straight away. Now we will look forward to this match. There will be no chance to just relax during the [winter break], we will be training hard."

(Source: Yahoo Sports)



## Reza Zarei re-elected Iran Sport Climbing and Mountaineering Federation president



**S P O R T S** Reza Zarei has been re-elected as president of Iran Sport Climbing and Mountaineering Federation on Monday for a four-year term till 2021.

In the elections held at the Iran's Academy Olympic in Tehran, Zarei secured 34 of 36 votes cast.

Hadi Saberi came second with two votes, while the federation deputy Mansoureh Gorji withdrew from the elections in favor of Zarei.

"We concentrated on teaching in the previous four years and we will invest on finding new talents over the next four years," Zarei said.

Zarei also extended his condolences to the families, relatives and friends of more than nine people who lost their lives in an avalanche in Oshtoran Kuh on Friday.

"It was very shocking. It would have been better if they had canceled their climbs due to the weather conditions," He added.

## Persepolis move seven points clear at IPL top



**S P O R T S** TEHRAN – Persepolis moved seven points clear of Pars Jonoubi Jam at the top of the Iran Professional League (IPL) on Sunday with a 2-0 victory in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Ali Alipour scored twice for the hosts in this match and also moved top of the IPL goalscorers table with 10 goals.

He found back of the net in the 70th minute after his shot deflected off the

foot of Sanat Naft defender on its way into the net behind goalkeeper Davoud Noushi Sofiani.

Alipour scored the second goal with two minutes remaining after receiving a worthy pass from substitute Bashar Resan.

Persepolis cemented their position at the top of the table with 36 points from 15 matches.

Pars Jonoubi are second with 29 points and Foolad sit third with 27 points.

## PyeongChang 2018: Medals revealed

The PyeongChang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games medals have been revealed to coincide with 88 days until the Games begin on 9 March 2018.

The stunning medals are based around the design principles of the Olympic Winter Games medals, but have their own unique characteristics whilst still being heavily influenced by Korean culture and traditions. Like the Olympic Winter Games medals, they were designed by LEE Suk-woo, an industrial designer from Korea.

The collection of medals - which are 92.5mm in diameter and 9.42mm in width - use the Korean Hangeul alphabet to engrave the consonants of "PyeongChang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games" around the edge. The alphabet dates back to the 15th century and the word Hangeul combines the archaic Korean word 'Han', which means 'great', and 'Geul' which means 'script'. Hangeul is a very symbolic piece of Korean culture and history, and is still the official writing system used throughout the country today.

Traditional patterns including clouds, mountains, wind and wood that symbolize the beautiful nature of PyeongChang and

Gangwon Province are engraved on the obverse.

The Paralympic symbol of three agitos appears on the front side of the medal; and the Paralympic Winter Games logo, along with the name of the specific sport feature on the back. On both sides you can see horizontal lines that represent the Paralympic values of equality, and on the back there is also a trail, which reads "PyeongChang 2018".

The ribbon from which the medal hangs is an equally important part of the design. It has been created using the traditional Gapsa textile of Korea, which is light and translucent and is used to make the traditional dress known as the hanbok. The light teal and light red ribbon - colors regularly used when making the hanbok - is embroidered with a delicate snowflake pattern.

The case created in which to keep the medals symbolizes Korea's traditional beauty of curved lines and shapes. It gives the feel of Korean aesthetics using simple but elegant lines that can be seen in the eaves of 'hanok', Korea's traditional housing.

---- A symbol of equality  
PyeongChang 2018 Games Ambassa-

dor and Korean Para Ice Hockey athlete JUNG Seung-hwan said, "I really love the design of the medals. I am sure that all the athletes during the Games in March will be very proud and honored to wear this unique design around their neck. My team will certainly be doing all we can to put ourselves in contention to receive one."

LEE Hee-beom, President of PyeongChang 2018 Organizing Committee added, "The Paralympic Winter Games medals for PyeongChang 2018 are a symbol of equality, creativity, culture and passion. The work that has gone into the design and manufacturing of the medals has been world class and we are all looking forward to the moment that the first medal will be awarded to the world's best Paralympic athletes next year."

Designer Lee has a long list of awards and accolades to his name including one of the Top 10 design concept consultants in the 2015 Red Dot Design Awards and was also selected as the next-generation leader of Korea by Forbes in 2013.

He said, "After years of work - and a few months of having to keep the design top-secret - I am very happy with the reception



they have been given so far, and I hope the athletes that step onto the podium to receive them are just as happy!"

A total of 133 sets of Paralympic Winter Games medals will be awarded from 9-18 March across six sports and 80 events.

Tickets are on sale now. Each Games ticket includes access to the Olympic Plaza on that day, allowing spectators the chance to enjoy the cultural celebrations and activities that will take place there. Spectators can also witness the medal ceremonies and see the pride and passion of the athletes live, as they are rewarded for their remarkable achievements.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

## Iran Junior Women's 10m Air Pistol Wins Gold at Asian C'ships

**TASNIM** — Iran junior women's 10m air pistol team claimed a gold medal at the 10th Asian Championship underway at Wako City, Japan on Monday.

Iran finished in first place with combined score of 1144 points.

Fatemeh Ghodrattollahi (386 points), Haniyeh Rostamiyan (383 points) and Shirin Mortazavi (375 points) were the athletes of the Iranian team.



India claimed the silver medal with 1128 points and South Korea came third, earning 1122 points.

Earlier on the day, Iran's Erfan Salavati won a silver medal in the 10m air pistol and booked a place at the 2018 Youth Olympics Games in Buenos Aires, Argentina, scheduled for Oct. 6 to 18.

## 10 countries to attend Greco-Roman World Wrestling Clubs Cup in Iran

**Press TV**— Dozens of coaches and contestants from 10 different countries will be in attendance at the fourth edition of Greco-Roman World Wrestling Clubs Cup, which is scheduled to be staged in Iran's central province of Isfahan later this month.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Wrestling Federation announced on Sunday that athletes from Armenia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey and Ukraine will take part in the international tournament.

The fourth edition of Greco-Roman World Wrestling Clubs Cup, will kick off at Naghsh-e Jahan Sports Complex in Isfahan on December 14, and will conclude the next day.

Iranian wrestling club Sina Sanat Izeh was crowned the champion of the third edition of the Greco-Roman World Wrestling Clubs Cup in Hungary.

On December 9, 2016, the Iranian team finished in the first place at the end of the two-day competitions in the Hungarian capital city of Budapest, overpowering Istanbul Buyuksehir Belediyesi SK of Turkey 5-3 in the title showdown.

The third edition of the Greco-Roman World Wrestling Clubs Cup opened in Budapest, Hungary, on December 8, 2016 and finished the following day.

The tournament attracted Greco-Roman wrestling clubs from Armenia, Belarus, Hungary, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine and the United States.

## Olympiakos in hunt to sign Haji Safi

**TASNIM** — Olympiakos are reportedly set to land Iranian international defender Ehsan Haji Safi.

Haji Safi signed a two year contract with Greek Super League side Panionios in June 2017 and teamed up with his fellow Masoud Shojaei.

The media reports suggest that Haji Safi will leave Panionios in January to join Olympiakos.

The 27-year-old international defender will reunite with his countryman Karim Ansarifard in the top-flight team if he leaves Panionios.

Haji Safi has represented Iran at the 2011 AFC Asian Cup, the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2015 AFC Asian Cup.

## Heynckes wary of Besiktas threat

Bayern Munich will have to be at their best for 180 minutes if they are to progress in the Champions League at Besiktas' expense, according to Jupp Heynckes.

The Bundesliga leaders were drawn to play Besiktas in Monday's last-16 draw in Nyon, with the first leg at home in February before they travel to Turkey on March 14.

Bayern have never lost a competitive match against a Turkish side in European competition, but their veteran head coach warned that maintaining that record will be no easy task.

"They are a very good team," he said. "We need to bring our best performances to both games in order to progress."

Since Heynckes returned for a fourth spell in charge of Bayern in September they have only lost once in all competitions, a run that has seen them return to the top of the table and progress in Europe.

And that upturn in form is something sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic believes gives them the edge against Besiktas.

"We know how strong Besiktas are," he told FCB.tv.

"We [have] followed their progress because they were in Leipzig's group. It's a difficult draw. We'll see what happens.

"There'll definitely be an exceptional atmosphere over there, but there will be here in Munich as well.

"We're looking forward to it. Obviously it's a disadvantage to play at home first, but we're good enough and accept it."

(Source: Goal)

## Iranian teams crowned in Asian Kung Fu To'a Championship

**Press TV**— Iranian Kung Fu To'a artists have featured dominant performances at the second edition of the Asian Kung Fu To'a Championship in the Islamic Republic, and stood atop the podium.

On Sunday evening, the Iranian sportsmen finished their campaign at Shahid Beheshti Sports Complex in the northeastern Iranian city of Mashhad on a high note and won the championship.

Afghan competitors finished as the vice-champion in the continental sporting event and Uzbeks claimed the bronze podium.

Iranian female Kung Fu To'a fighters also sat in the first position of the tournament, and were followed by athletes from Afghanistan and Pakistan in the second and third places respectively.



The second edition of the Asian Kung Fu Championship started on December 6, and wrapped up on December 11.

Dozens of male and female athletes from 17 countries, including Afghanistan, China, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Macau, Malaysia, Pakistan, Palestine, South Korea, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, took part in the event.

Kung Fu To'a is a Persian martial art developed by grand master Ibrahim Mirzaei in the 1960s. The term Kung Fu To'a consists of the Chinese terms Kung (hard work) and Fu (path) as well as To'a (thou) derived from Farsi.

Kung Fu To'a consists of about 73,000 techniques, combinations and reactions. The practitioners of the martial art need to perform rapid and fluid movements, and utilize ingenious techniques, which are commonly called shocks and frequently finished by a twist.



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■ Managing Director: Ali Asgari

■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895  
editor@tehrantimes.com

» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000

» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450

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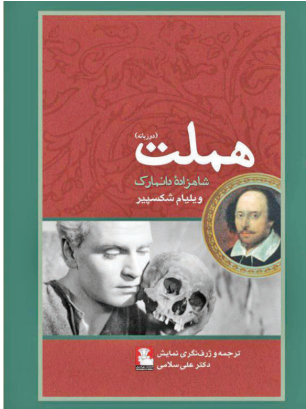
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## Iranian scholar translating Shakespeare works

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — Iranian scholar Ali Salami has embarked on translating Shakespeare’s collected works into Persian.

The translated works, which are being published by Mehrandish Books in bilingual editions, will include all plays and poems, Salami told the Tehran Time on Monday.



Front cover of a Persian copy of “Hamlet” translated by Ali Salami

Salami holds a Ph.D. in Shakespeare studies. In 2014, he organized and managed the First International Conference on Shakespeare in Iran at the University of Tehran, which was attended by leading Shakespeare scholars as well as the admirers of the Bard. The event which received wide coverage in Western media had Harvard scholar Stephen Greenblatt and Mark Thornton Burnett from Queens University as its keynote speakers.

Salami is the author of “Shakespeare and the Reader” (Illinois, 2013) and the editor of “Culture-blind Shakespeare” (New Castle 2016) and “Fundamental Shakespeare” (New Castle 2016).

Shakespeare has never ceased to fascinate Iranian readers and new translations of his works emerge every year in the country. Yet, this is the first time all his works are being translated into Persian by a veteran translator and a Shakespeare scholar.

Salami says his translation comes as closely as possible to the style of the Bard and that he uses reliable texts for this purpose.

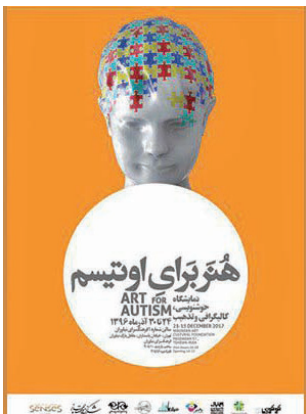
“Hamlet” is the first volume of the series, which the publisher has recently released in Iranian bookstores.

Each book is also accompanied by a scholarly essay by the translator. To deliver a precise translation, Salami collaborates with Iranian poet and translator Mehdi Sojoudi Moghaddam as an editor in the project.

So far ten plays have been translated and are being edited and prepared for publication.

## Niavaran Cultural Center to host 2nd Art for Autism Exhibition

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — the 2nd edition of the Art for Autism Exhibition will be held at the Niavaran Cultural Center in Tehran from December 15 to 21.



Ave. in the Niavaran neighborhood.

Photo: A poster for the 2nd Art for Autism Exhibition

## “Coco” wins as “Star Wars: The Last Jedi” waits in the wings

**LOS ANGELES (Variety.com)** — With anticipation building for “Star Wars: The Last Jedi,” Disney-Pixar’s animated comedy “Coco” handily won its third straight crown at a moderate North American box office with \$18.3 million at 3,748 sites.

“Coco” joined “The Hitman’s Bodyguard,” “Fate of the Furious” and “Split” as 2017 titles to top the domestic box office for three weekends in a row. The major studios have held off on any new openings since the Thanksgiving holiday but that changes on the evening of Dec. 14 when previews start for Disney-Lucasfilm’s “The Last Jedi” amid expectations of an opening weekend in the \$200 million range.

“Coco,” a colorful celebration of Mexico’s Day of the Dead, showed impressive holding power with a 33% decline from its second weekend to lift its 19-day domestic total to \$135.5 million. It’s performed similarly to Disney’s animated “Moana,” which opened at the same time last year and had totaled \$144.7 million after three weekends.

There was a single wide opening this weekend with Broad Green Pictures’ final movie, “Just Getting Started,” showing little traction with moviegoers with \$3.2 million at 2,146 locations. “Just Getting Started,” a poorly reviewed action comedy starring Morgan Freeman and Tommy Lee Jones, wound up in 10th place behind A24’s sixth weekend of awards contender “Lady Bird” with \$3.5 million at 1,557 venues.

# “Retouch”, “Gaze” from Iran honored at Zubroffka festival

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Iranian movies “Retouch” and “Gaze” were honored at the Zubroffka International Short Film Festival in Poland on Sunday.

Directed by Kaveh Mazaheri, “Retouch” received the award for best film in the Whole Wide World Competition, the organizers announced.

The acclaimed film is about a young woman whose husband is trapped under a barbell during a workout, but she declines to save him and, consequently, he dies.

The jury called the film, “an original story in an efficient short film about conscience and retouching reality.”

“Gaze” by Farnush Samadi won an honorable mention

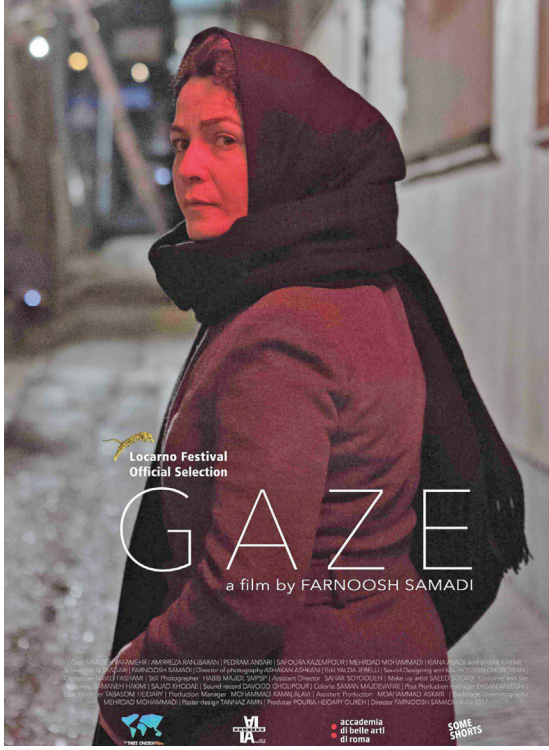


Posters for “Retouch” and “Gaze”

in the same category.

The film tells the story of a woman who witnesses something happening in the bus on her way back from work, but she has to decide whether to reveal it or not.

The Zubroffka Grand Prix was presented to “Pussy”



## Ramiz Guliyev to hold master classes in Tehran



Ramiz Guliyev in an undated photo.

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Azerbaijani tar virtuoso Ramiz Guliyev is scheduled to hold master classes in Tehran a few days ahead of his concerts at Vahdat Hall in the city.

The master classes will be held at the Culture and Art Applied Science University on December 16 and 17, the director of the academy, Susan Taqipur, said in a press release on Monday.

She added that the master classes will be held on the Iranian traditional music

radif, Azerbaijani melodies and classic compositions.

Guliyev’s concerts are scheduled on December 21 and 22. Iran’s Culture and Art Orchestra conductors Ali-Akbar Qorbani and Shahram Tavakkoli will also collaborate with Guliyev.

Iranian vocalist Rashid Vatandust will accompany the orchestra during the concerts.

A wide repertoire of songs by Azerbaijani composers will be performed at the concerts.

## Bosnian museum of wartime childhood aims to go global, wins top prize

**SARAJEVO (Reuters)** — In just a year, a small Bosnian museum dedicated to the experience of growing up during the Balkan wars has opened its doors, won a best European museum prize and decided to go global.

The War Childhood Museum in Sarajevo, a trove of memorabilia from Bosnians whose childhood was traumatized by the 1990s war, has started collecting personal items from children affected by other wars, such as those in Syria and Ukraine.

The idea was born out of the experience of the museum’s founder, Jasminko Halilovic, and has become a long-term project to create the world’s largest archive on the impact of war on children.

“Speaking about the war from a child’s perspective is the most powerful anti-war message,” 27-year-old Halilovic told Reuters. He said that giving away personal items also helped children cope with the trauma of war.

The Bosnian 1992-95 war was Europe’s bloodiest since World War Two. The museum has collected more than 4,000 exhibits donated by children who endured it, and over 150 hours of a video archive of oral history interviews. Halilovic said the items from other conflicts



A guitar with engraved names is seen at the Bosnian War Childhood Museum in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina December 7, 2017. Picture taken December 7. (Reuters/ Dado Ruvic)

could be put on display next year.

Among the artefacts is a perfume bottle donated by 10-year-old Syrian girl Yehya

from Homs. It belonged to her father, who was killed going to work, and its scent used to bring back memories in Lebanon, where

## UK Princes William and Harry announce sculptor for new Diana statue

**LONDON (Reuters)** — A sculptor who produced the image of Queen Elizabeth used on Britain’s coins has been chosen to create a new statue of Princess Diana, the office of Princes William and Harry said on Sunday, to commemorate 20 years since her death.

Ian Rank-Broadley, whose effigy of the Queen has appeared on all UK and Commonwealth coinage since 1998, will design the statue, which now will not be unveiled until next year.

“Ian is an extremely gifted sculptor and we know that he will create a fitting and lasting tribute to our mother,” Prince William and his younger brother Harry said in a statement.

In January, the brothers commissioned a statue in honor of their mother, who died in a Paris car crash 20 years ago to be erected outside their official London home Kensington Palace.

Diana, the first wife of the heir-to-the-throne Prince Charles, was killed when the limousine carrying her and her lover Dodi al-Fayed crashed in a Paris tunnel in August 1997.

William was 15 and Harry was 12 at the time.



Britain’s Prince William, Duke of Cambridge and Prince Harry visit the White Garden in Kensington Palace in London, Britain August 30, 2017. (Reuters/ Kirsty Wigglesworth)

“We have been touched by the kind words and memories so many people have shared about our mother over these past few months,” the brothers said. “It is clear the significance of her work is still felt by many in the UK and across the world, even twenty years after her death.”

It had been hoped that the statue would be unveiled before the end of the year to mark the anniversary, but Kensington Palace said that it was now envisaged that the statue would be unveiled in 2019.

## Singer Neil Young’s model trains fetch nearly \$300,000 at auction

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — Singer-songwriter Neil Young’s extensive collection of model trains have fetched nearly \$300,000 at auction, along with classic cars and musical equipment owned by the 72-year-old folk-rock icon.

Young, a model train enthusiast for decades, offered more than 230 pieces at Julien’s Auctions in Los Angeles from his collection of Lionel trains, including a custom-painted Commodore Vanderbilt 4-6-4 locomotive that sold for \$10,000.

Several cars that Young owns were also sold. A 1953 Buick code 76X Roadmaster Skylark convertible with a steering wheel hub that says, “Customized for Neil Young,” went for \$400,000, the auction house said on Saturday.

Young, best known for his Woodstock-era songs as well as his work with the bands Buffalo Springfield and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young has said the vast model train layouts at his California ranch helped him connect with his son Ben, who has cerebral palsy.

Other items auctioned off on Saturday included some of Young’s guitars, ampli-



A model train which is part of a collection of recording artist Neil Young’s most prized possessions being put up for auction by Julien’s Auctions in Los Angeles, California, U.S., December 9, 2017, is shown in this photo provided November 2, 2107. (Julien’s Auctions Gallery/Handout via Reuters)

fiers and microphones.

A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Bridge School in California, which Young’s ex-wife Pegi Young co-founded in 1986 for children with severe speech and physical impairments.