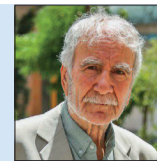

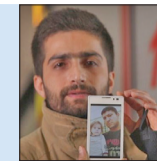
 <p>Rouhani says Quds will be Palestinian capital 2</p>	 <p>Mind is not awake without questioning 9</p>	 <p>Iran discover opponents at AFC Futsal Championship 2018 15</p>	 <p>Doc on Plasco tragedy premieres at Cinema Verite 16</p>
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Armed struggle is new approach of Intifada



See page 13

Majlis urges Islamic states to cut ties with Israel

POLITICS TEHRAN — In a statement released on Tuesday, Iranian lawmakers strongly condemned the U.S. president for recognizing al-Quds as Israeli capital and called on Muslim nations to break off ties with the Tel Aviv regime and lower economic ties with the United States. The MPs highlighted the U.S. government's lack of commitments to international agreements, saying by recognizing al-Quds as the capital of the Zionist regime, Washington struck the final blow against the so-called peace efforts in the Middle East. Signed by 235 MPs in the 290-seat parliament, the statement warned the U.S. and Israel that the Islamic countries will not keep silent in the face of their atrocities. **→2**

'We have damaged the environment and have to do something about it'

By Maryam Qarehgozlou TEHRAN — No political boundaries matter when it comes to the environment, said the Iranian deputy environment chief Kaveh Madani. "This is something that should not be affected by sanctions because environment has no boundary. No political boundaries matter when it comes to the environment. No time boundary matters because what we damage today would affect a lot of people tomorrow in another part of the world," Madani told the Tehran Times in an exclusive interview. "I think environment is a global challenge; it's something that everyone agreed; no matter how the politics are we believe that we have damaged the environment and we have to do something about it, so environment can unite people and this is an opportunity," the renowned Iranian scientist added. **→10**

EU welcomes decline of U.S. global hegemony: expert

By Vahid Pourtajrishi TEHRAN — Andy Storey, the professor of Politics and International Relations of Dublin University believes that Trump's recklessness may inadvertently precipitate a faster decline of the U.S. than would otherwise have occurred, and possibly a desire on the part of European elites to create, for example, an independent military capacity. Rise of Donald Trump changed the face of Washington in eyes of U.S. allies. His non-commitments to the current international order and the management system of its relevant institutions like NATO, UN and many other liberal institutions has scared the Western allies of Washington. **→7**

ARTICLE
By Hanif Ghaffari
Political analyst

Macron should be responsive

TEHRAN — The French President Emanuel Macron once again called for "completion of the JCPOA" by negotiating the missile power of the Islamic Republic of Iran in his latest interview with the French 24 network. He also stated that negotiations over Iran's missile program, shouldn't make any changes in the content of the nuclear deal! Besides, in another part of his remarks, the French President announced of Saudi Arabia's commitment not to support terrorist groups! Of course this part of his speech was not attended that much by the media. According to the French president, Saudi crown prince, "Mohamed bin Salman" has promised him to stop donations to the terrorists! Macron announced this in response to a question on why is Paris supporting Riyadh (arms support and ...). There are some points regarding the recent remarks by Macron that can't be easily overtaken:

First, there was a kind of controversial cooperation against the Islamic Republic of Iran in the meeting between the U.S. and French presidents in New York in September of 2017, and on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly. Accordingly, Macron committed to play the role of the "bad police" in dealing with the missile program of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to become the main agent in exerting pressure on Tehran to hold missile talks. Thus, the joint French-American plot against Iran, after the meeting between Macron and Trump in New York, entered a new phase. This process continues to this day. Based on what the sources report, Macron has promised Trump to eliminate the legal obstacles on the way of possible interference of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran's missile activities.

However, Macron's statements indicate that he himself has not been able to clearly distinguish between Iran's missile capability and the JCPOA. On the one hand, the French president stresses the unchangeable nature of the nuclear deal and, on the other hand, mentions that an agreement without restraining Iran's missile capability is useless. **→7**

Turkish expert: Egypt stance toward Iran affected by Cairo-Riyadh ties

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN — Turkish Political analyst Semih Idiz says Cairo's position on Iran is driven not only by its close ties to Saudi Arabia, but because as a major Arab power it is also concerned about the increasing Iranian influence in the Middle East. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been at loggerheads with the current Egyptian administration since his close ally, former Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi, was ousted by the military in 2013. However, statements by members of his ruling Justice and Development Party shortly before the attempted 2016 coup indicated that Turkey's attitude toward Egypt had begun to shift.

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

Answering the question whether President Erdogan's message to his Egyptian counterpart is sign of his tendency to tackle differences with Cairo, Turkish Political analyst Semih Idiz, told, "Turkey sent a message of condolence for those killed in the attack in Egypt out of Islamic/Sunni solidarity. This was after all an attack on a mosque during prayers. There are no indications, however, that Turkey is trying to get closer to Egypt. The two countries remain barely on talking terms."

Commenting on Turkey's concerns over Saudi

Arabia and Egypt relation and their joint stance on "Muslim Brotherhood" as terrorist group which is contrary to Turkey's attitude, Idiz went on to say, "The Egyptian-Saudi alliance, on the other hand, especially against the Muslim Brotherhood, is too strong for Turkey to be able to disrupt."

Referring to negative and hostile policy of Egypt toward Iran during past years and its roots and the Saudi role, the Turkish analyst noted, "Cairo's position on Iran is driven not only by its close ties to Saudi Arabia, but because as a major Arab power it is also concerned about the increasing Iranian influence in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia backed the coup against Morsi in Egypt so the Cairo-Riyadh axis will hold firm, and will, I believe, Saudi affect Egypt's policy on Iran."

Section T permits Iran work on non-nuclear weapon applications of detonators: Heinonen

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Olli Heinonen, the former deputy director general for safeguards at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), tells the Tehran Times that "According to Section T Iran is permitted to work on non-nuclear weapon applications of detonators, which find their use for example in the oil-industry. In order to do so, Tehran has to request permission from the Joint Commission (JC)."

Heinonen, now a senior advisor on science and non-proliferation at Foundation for Defense of Democracies, also believes that "A failure to

properly address and correctly report on Section T could have a negative impact on questions arising on whether other shortcomings are also happening in other sections of the JCPOA being implemented."

Following is the text of the interview with Heinonen:

■ U.S. delegation in IAEA after recent session in IAEA announced that "We welcome the Director General's statement that the IAEA continues to evaluate Iran's declarations under the Additional Protocol, and to conduct complementary access inspections to sites and locations in Iran. Any new and credible concerns of undeclared nuclear activities, including any potential weaponization-related

issues, can and must be pursued by the IAEA. According to this, what means "complementary access inspections to sites and locations in Iran"? Is this access beyond the Additional Protocol?"

A: The task of the IAEA is to verify the correctness and completeness of Iran's declarations under the comprehensive safeguards agreement. The additional protocol provides additional assurances that all nuclear material and activities in Iran have been declared. In order to do so, the IAEA has its disposal a number of tools ranging, inter alia, from routine and special inspections, design information visits, to complementary access, which provides the IAEA access - with justification - to any site and location in Iran. **→7**



© Tehran Times / Ramin Saffari

Funeral held for climbers

Thousands of people attended a funeral procession held on Tuesday for climbers at Mashhad's Takhti Stadium.

Nine mountaineers lost their lives on Friday by an avalanche on Oshoran Kooch Mountain.

The climbers were among a group of 15 men and women from the city of Mashhad and a local guide who were trapped by the avalanche on Thursday.

Oshoran Kooch has numerous peaks with the highest, San Baran, at more than 4,000 meters above sea level.

Israeli drone strike leaves 2 Palestinians dead in northern Gaza Strip

At least two people have lost their lives when an Israeli unmanned aerial vehicle carried out an attack in the besieged Gaza Strip as occupied Palestinian territories are simmering with tensions following the recent decision by U.S. President Donald Trump to recognize Israeli-occupied Jerusalem al-Quds as the capital of the Tel Aviv regime. Local and medical sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Israeli aircraft targeted a motorcycle as it was travelling along a road in Um al-Nasser village. The sources added that the bodies of the victims have been transferred to Rumah Sakit Indonesia Hospital in the northern Gaza Strip of Jabalia, located 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) north of Gaza City.

The two slain Palestinians were later identified as Hassan Ghazi Nasrallah and Mustafa Sultan.

They were reportedly members of the engineering unit of al-Quds Brigades, which is the military wing of the Islamic Jihad movement.

4 Palestinians killed, over 1,000 injured amid Quds tensions

Meanwhile, Palestinian medical authorities say at least four protesters have lost their lives and more than 1,700 others sustained injuries in rallies staged in protest at Trump's decision on Jerusalem al-Quds.

The Palestinian Ministry of Health, in a statement released on Tuesday, announced that four people were killed and 1,778 injured in angry anti-US demonstrations around the occupied Palestinian lands.

The statement added that 1,366 Palestinians were injured in West Bank. A total of 33 people were struck with live bullets, while 323 others were hit with rubber-coated steel bullets.

A total of 998 Palestinians suffered from tear gas inhalation as well.

Elsewhere in the besieged Gaza Strip, the number of casualties stood at 382. A total of 85 Palestinian protesters were struck with live bullets, and 14 others with rubber bullets.

Another 235 Palestinian inhaled an excessive amount of tear gas. Four Gazans, including a six-month-old girl, suffered serious injuries during clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli military forces.

Trump announced his decision to recognize Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel's capital and relocate the US embassy in the occupied lands from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem al-Quds on December 6.

(Source: Press TV)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Daesh trying to revive so-called caliphate: intelligence minister

POLITICS TEHRAN — Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi said on Tuesday that Daesh (ISIS) is still alive and is trying to revive its so-called caliphate in other countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan and other countries.

Speaking at a seminar on terrorism, Alavi said although terrorist groups' rule in Iraq and Syria has come to an end, they still exist, ISNA reported.

The minister described Daesh as a misrepresentation of the teachings of Islam.

He also said extremism in any religion and faith would lead to "irrational" and "abnormal" movements such as terrorism.



MPs okay candidacy of religious minorities for councils

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian lawmakers on Tuesday approved a single-urgency bill for candidacy of religious minorities in city and village councils.

According to the bill, the country's religious minorities have the right to nominate candidates for the city and village council elections, IRNA reported.

The Islamic Republic of Iran recognizes the rights of religious minorities based on its Constitution. All Iranian citizens are equal in benefiting from their basic rights within legal frameworks.



Advisor urges political solution to Yemeni conflict

POLITICS TEHRAN — Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the Iranian parliament speaker, said on Tuesday that the Islamic Republic supports the adoption of a political solution to the Yemeni conflict.

In a meeting on Monday with Swiss Ambassador to Tehran Markus Leitner, Amir Abdollahian stressed the need for the acceleration of the process of sending humanitarian aid to the war-ravaged country, ISNA reported.

Leitner, for his part, said his country's position was similar to Iran's on many issues, emphasizing the adoption of a political solution to the regional issues, especially in Yemen.

Rouhani says Quds will be Palestinian capital

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday that al-Quds (Jerusalem) is the territory of all Muslims and will be the capital of Palestine.

U.S. President Donald Trump declared on December 6 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.

"Quds is the land of all Muslims and will be the capital of Palestine and we will never abandon this important goal," Rouhani said before his departure to Istanbul to attend the emergency meeting of the Islamic Cooperation Organization on Trump's decision.

Rouhani added, "Today, the world of Islam has unity and solidarity and has unitedly stood against the wrong and illegal decision of the U.S. to say that its action is



impossible to implement."

Palestinian leaders declared Friday as the "day of rage" against Israel and the U.S.

Rouhani said, "Our message is that the Palestine issue is the first issue of Muslims and the world of Islam and Muslims in all international bodies, especially the United Nations, should condemn this action."

He noted that Iran will continue supporting the Palestinians by the time they are back to their lands and achieve their goals.

The Iranian president said the unity and resistance demonstrated by the Palestinian people in recent days proved that they can stand up against plots hatched by Zionists.

The Trump's announcement on al-Quds prompted harsh international warnings. Several protests have been held in many countries over the past days against the U.S. and Israel.

Johnson calls his meetings in Tehran 'worthwhile'

POLITICS British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson told the British parliament on Monday that his meetings in Tehran were "worthwhile".

According to Reuters, he said that he urged Iran to release detained dual nationals.

"I urged their release, on humanitarian grounds, where there is cause to do so," he said.

"These are complex cases involving individuals considered by Iran to be their own citizens, and I do not wish to raise false hopes. But my meetings in Tehran were worthwhile," he said. "It is too early to be confident about the outcome."

The spat between London and Tehran over Nazanin Zaghari, a British-Iranian woman, has been on since her detention in April 2016 when she was arrested with her two-year-old daughter at Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport for security reasons while she was about to return to the UK.

Zaghari, previously a project assistant at the BBC's Media Action who worked for the Thomson Reuters Foundation until her arrest, was sentenced to five years in jail in September 2016, a conviction upheld in the



January appeals court.

While Zaghari is imprisoned at Evin jail, her daughter Gabriella, now three, has been placed in the care of her Iranian grandparents and is allowed to see her mother twice a week.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry said on Monday that it will follow up on the case of Zaghari for "humanitarian reasons", but emphasized that the Iranian Judiciary acts as an independent body and is the ultimate decision-maker on the issue.

Initial details after Zaghari's arrest cited implication in post-election unrests in Tehran and some other cities in 2009.

Congress misses Trump's deadline on nuclear deal

POLITICS Congress is about to miss what was widely seen as a deadline to deal with U.S. President Trump's demands for a harder line on the 2015 nuclear deal, failing to agree on new sanctions against Tehran.

A Republican legislative push to establish new "triggers" that could reimpose harsh sanctions on Iran lifted under the Obama-era deal has gone nowhere ahead of Tuesday — the end of a 60-day unofficial deadline set by the administration for Capitol Hill to weigh in on the situation, The Washington Times reported.

Congressional aides say lawmakers still have time to propose something before Trump is mandated to decide again whether to weigh in on the deal, but White House aides say the president is rankled by the lack of progress on Capitol Hill and likely will pull the U.S. out of the deal entirely when it comes up for review on Jan. 13.

The nuclear deal was signed between Iran, the European Union, Germany and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the United States, Brit-



ain, France, China and Russia - in July 2015. The agreement went into effect in January 2016.

In his new Iran strategy declared on October 13, Trump decertified Iran's compliance to the nuclear deal and asked Congress to decide about the fate of the agreement. Trump said if Congress does nothing he himself will terminate the deal.

Contrary to Trump's claims 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.

General Soleimani offers support for Palestinian groups to resist Trump's move on al-Quds

POLITICS TEHRAN — General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the IRGC Quds Force, has offered Iran's "complete support" for Palestinians in their struggle against U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to recognize al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel's capital.

In telephone conversations on Monday, Soleimani made the offer to the Palestinian commanders of Islamic Jihad and the Izz Al-Deen Qassam brigades, the armed wings of the Islamist group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, the Sepah News reported.

The Iranian army's chief of staff, Mohammad Baqeri, said on Tuesday that Trump's "foolish move" on al-Quds could be seen as the beginning of a "new greater intifada".

Iranian Defense Minister Amir Hatami said the move will only "hasten the destruction of the Zionist regime and double the unity of Muslims."

General Soleimani, who has commanded forces battling Daesh (ISIS) in Syria and Iraq, said all "resistance groups" in the region were prepared to defend al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third-holiest site.

The entire world has reacted to

Trump's decision on al-Quds. The move has sparked protests by Muslims around the world in support of the Palestinians, who want East al-Quds to be the capital of their future state.

The Iranian parliament also issued a statement on Tuesday calling on Islamic states to cut ties with Israel and downgrade their economic dealings with the United States.

President Rouhani who flew to Turkey to attend the emergency OIC meeting in Istanbul on Trump's decision asserted that "al-Quds will remain Palestinian capital".

Trump's al-Quds move sign of frustration, Iran says

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Tuesday that Donald Trump's recognition of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of Israel shows frustration of the U.S. in the Middle East.

"The U.S. decision in relocating Israel's embassy to the noble Quds is an irresponsible policy which will lead to the strengthening of the Zionist regime of Israel's occupational approach," Hatami said in a phone conversation with Turkish Defense Minister Nurettin Canikli.

Hatami added that the U.S. took such an act because of division among Muslims and certain Arab countries' compromise with Israel.

Trump declared on December 6 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.

Elsewhere, Hatami said that Iran welcomes expansion of cooperation with Turkey in defense area.

For his part, Canikli said that recent developments in the region have made it essential for Iran and Turkey to expand cooperation.



Canikli added no country can influence Iran-Turkey relations negatively.

He also accepted Hatami's invitation to visit Iran.

The Turkish defense chief also said recognition of al-Quds as capital of Israel is a "big mistake" which is unacceptable to Muslims.

UN proves anti-Iran accusations over Yemen wrong

UN officials who examined debris from missiles fired at Saudi Arabia from Yemen have not confirmed that they were Iranian-made, according to a confidential report obtained by AFP on Monday.

Saudi Arabia and the United States have accused Iran of supplying weapons to Yemen's Huthis who fired a missile at an airport near Riyadh on November 4.

Weapons supplies to the Huthis would be in violation of a UN arms embargo



on Yemen.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres told the Security Council that the missiles

fired on July 22 and November 4 both had a diameter that was "consistent" with a Scud missile.

Guterres said "the missiles had similar structural and manufacturing features which suggest a common origin", according to the report sent to the council on Friday.

He cautioned that UN officials were still "carefully reviewing all the information and material available," but offered no firm conclusions.

Majlis urges Islamic states to cut ties with Israel

Washington is responsible for the consequences of such move, they warned.

"We, as members of the Majlis, call on all Islamic countries to immediately halt their diplomatic relations with the Zionist

regime and also reduce their economic relations with America," the statement read.

It added that the parliaments of Islamic countries should guide their respective governments to better meet the demands of the Islamic Ummah.

The MPs also said that the Iranian government and people will follow the lead of the founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei in the struggle against the Zionist regime.



Central Bank Of Iran

INTERNATIONAL

TENDER No. : 96 - K/168

Second Announcement

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

Tel:+981143132630 , 43133751 Fax: +981143132566

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

More than 8 million 'a step away' from famine in Yemen

Saudi warplanes strike civilian targets in Sana'a

A senior UN official has called for parties involved in the war in Yemen to allow "sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access" for the millions of Yemenis facing famine and battling disease.

"The lives of millions of people, including 8.4 million Yemenis who are a step away from famine, hinge on our ability to continue our operations and to provide health, safe water, shelter and nutrition support," Jamie McGoldrick, the UN's humanitarian coordinator for Yemen, said in a statement.

The call comes as the Saudi-led coalition continues a blockade of Yemen, which began in October after it shut down the country's borders in response to a rebel missile that was shot down near the capital, Riyadh.

Amid mounting international pressure, Saudi Arabia began to allow some humanitarian aid to enter the country in the last week of November.

Despite this easing, the situation in Yemen remains severe, according to McGoldrick.

"The continuing blockade of ports is limiting supplies of fuel, food and medicines, dramatically increasing the number of vulnerable people who need help," he said.

Aid organizations in Yemen faced further difficulties when renewed violence broke out in the capital, Sana'a, after the killing of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh on December 4.

■ Saudi warplanes strike civilian targets

Meanwhile, Saudi military aircraft have pounded Yemen's capital, Sana'a, killing three civilians and injuring two more.

The attacks struck the al-Rawzah neighborhood in the north of Sana'a early Tuesday, Yemen's al-Masirah television network



reported.

It said the bombardment targeted the residential buildings surrounding the Cadet College in the capital. Saudi warplanes also hit a residence in Razah District of Sa'ada Province in Yemen's northwest twice.

The raids came hours after at least 14 people lost their lives in similar Saudi aerial assaults against civilian targets across the country.

United Nations chief Antonio Guterres called on Sunday 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 itself.

Saudi Arabia and many of its allies have been bombing Yemen since 2015 to put its former Riyadh-friendly government back in the saddle. More than 12,000 have died since the warfare began.

Now, more than eight million Yemenis are on the verge of starvation, making the country the scene of, what the UN calls, the

world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The United States is an ally of Saudi Arabia in the military campaign against Yemen, providing it with logistical and advisory support such as bombing coordinates as well as arms and weapons.

U.S. President Donald Trump recently called on Riyadh to open Yemen's ports to humanitarian aid, but stopped short of urging it to end the campaign.

(Source: agencies)

56 female lawmakers seek probe into sexual allegations against Trump

Dozens of Democratic female lawmakers have called on the House Oversight Committee to launch an investigation into allegations of sexual misconduct against U.S. President Donald Trump.

Fifty-six members of the Democratic Women's Working Group (DWWG) wrote a letter on Monday and demanded Oversight Chairman Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.) and ranking member Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) open an investigation into the sexual allegations after at least a dozen women have "publicly accused the President of sexual misconduct."

The group is set to hold a news conference at Capitol Hill on Tuesday to highlight the demand, a day after three of Trump's accusers told their stories at a press conference and called on Congress to investigate the sexual misconduct allegations against the president, amid the snowballing harassment allegations convulsing the country.

The DWWG move comes at a time when women are coming forward with their "Me Too" accounts and telling how Trump sexually harassed them.

The sexual misconduct accusations have led to a wave of resignations and ousters of prominent figures who served in politics, the media, Hollywood, and other industries.

"In the time of 'Me Too,' women across the country are coming forward with their own harrowing stories of sexual harassment and assault. Members of Congress have also come under scrutiny and investigation, with some resigning, for improper sexual conduct. We cannot ignore the multitude of women who have come forward with accusations against Mr. Trump," the DWWG members wrote.

The female lawmakers said Trump's "own remarks appear to back up the allegations."

"The President has boasted in public and in crude terms that he feels at liberty to perpetrate such conduct against women. Subsequently, Mr. Trump apologized and called it 'locker room talk.' He has since called all his accusers liars," they wrote.

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.

On Sunday, U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders suggested Trump should consider stepping down over the allegations.

The remarks by Sanders, who was a candidate in last year's presidential race, follow similar calls from a number of Democratic Senators, including Cory Booker and Jeff Merkley.

■ Trump 'angered' by Haley

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley has said women who have accused 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 Monday when asked about allegations of misconduct leveled against the U.S. president.

"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."

Trump is reportedly furious with Haley over her statement. Haley's comments angered Trump, two people familiar with the president told The Associated Press.

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.

(Source: Press TV)

Russia begins partial withdrawal from Syria

The first Russian troops returned home Tuesday from their deployment in Syria, the army said, beginning a partial withdrawal announced by President Vladimir Putin.

"The battalion of military police from the southern military district [of Russia] deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic has been flown by two military planes to Makhachkala [the capital of Dagestan] airport," the Russian army said in a statement.

State television broadcasted images of soldiers marching out of the aircraft onto a sunny runway in the small republic in Russia's North Caucasus.

The crews of Tu-22M3 bombers also returned to a military airport in North Ossetia before flying out to their permanent base in central Kaluga region, the army said.

The crew of an A-50 surveillance aircraft flew back to their home base in Ivanovo region where they were met by commanding officers and relatives.

On a visit to Syria on Monday, Putin ordered the partial withdrawal of Russian troops from the war-torn country, saying their task had been largely completed.

It was the third announcement of a partial



withdrawal since troops were deployed in 2015. Putin did not clarify how many soldiers will be returning home this time.

Putin, who announced last week he would seek a fourth term in a poll in March, was welcomed at Russia's Hmeimim airbase by

Syrian President Bashar Assad on his unannounced stopover.

RBK news agency cited sources as saying that Russia will pull out two-thirds of its contingent, both personnel and equipment, from Syria, which could take up to a month.

(Source: AFP)

Turkey chides Arabs for 'weak' reaction ahead of Jerusalem summit



Turkey criticized what it said was a feeble Arab reaction to the U.S. decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, saying on the eve of Wednesday's Muslim summit in Istanbul that some Arab countries were scared of angering Washington.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, who has accused the United States of ignoring Palestinian claims to Israeli-occupied east Jerusalem and "trampling on international law," has invited leaders from more than 50 Muslim countries to agree a response.

Jerusalem, revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, is home to Islam's third holiest site and has been at the heart of Israeli-Palestinian conflict for decades.

U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement last week recognizing the city as Israel's capital angered many Muslim countries, but few governments have matched Turkey's warning that it would plunge the world "into a fire with no end."

Several countries had still not said who they would send to Istanbul, a Turkish minister said.

"Some Arab countries have shown very weak responses (on Jerusalem)," Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said. "It seems some countries are very timid of the United States."

He said Egypt and the United Arab Emirates would send foreign ministers while Saudi Arabia had yet to say how it would participate. All three countries have delicate ties with Turkey, seeing links between the policies of Erdogan's ruling AK Party and regional Islamist movements they oppose.

Other countries had also not said who they would send, Cavusoglu said, adding that the meeting of Organization of Islamic Cooperation countries must stand up to what he called Washington's "I am a super power, I can do anything" mentality.

"We will make a call for countries that have so far not recognized Palestine to do so now," he said. "...We want the United States to turn back from its mistake."

■ Protests and clashes

Trump's announcement triggered days of protests across the Muslim world and clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

Israel captured Arab East Jerusalem in the 1967 Middle East war and later annexed it, an action not recognized internationally.

On Monday, tens of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in Beirut to protest at a march backed by Hezbollah, whose leader called last week for a new Palestinian uprising against Israel.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, who is expected to attend the Istanbul summit, said his country supported a new uprising against Israel to "safeguard the Palestinian people's rights".

Rouhani said Muslim countries would "undoubtedly voice their protest to the world" at Wednesday's meeting.

The Trump administration says it remains committed to reaching peace between Israel and the Palestinians and its decision does not affect Jerusalem's future borders or status.

It says any credible future peace deal will place the Israeli capital in Jerusalem, and ditching old policies is needed to revive a peace process frozen since 2014.

(Source: Reuters)

NATO prolongs chief Stoltenberg's term for 2 more years

NATO extended Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg's tenure for two more years at the head of the world's biggest military alliance Tuesday.

Stoltenberg has held the post since 2014 and his term has been marked by a spike in security challenges, including a resurgent Russia and foreign fighters returning to Europe from Syria and Iraq.

NATO said in a statement that the 29 NATO nations decided to prolong the former Norwegian prime minister's term until Sept. 30, 2020.

It said the allies "congratulate the Secretary-General and have full confidence in his ability to continue his dedicated work to advance NATO's adaptation to the security challenges of the 21st century."

British Prime Minister Theresa May lauded Stoltenberg as a "true champion of the NATO alliance."

She said "he has made sure that NATO has stood strong but not stood still, meeting Russian aggression in eastern Europe while reforming to face developing threats such as cyber attacks and hybrid-warfare."

Last week, the German government backed a two-year extension of Stoltenberg's term.

Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen said Stoltenberg had "the full support of Germany," adding that he had "done excellent work modernizing NATO and adapting its structures to a changed security situation."

She also praised his strong support of closer cooperation between NATO and the European Union, which has 22 member states in common.

Stoltenberg took up the position just after Russia had annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula and the ISIL terrorist group had seized cities in Syria and Iraq, inspiring a new, more brutal form of terrorism that would wreak havoc in European capitals.

For the NATO secretary-general "2014 was a turning point," he told The Associated Press during a trip to Poland in late August for talks with top officials and to thank some of about 4,000 NATO troops stationed in eastern Europe to deter an increasingly aggressive Moscow.

"Suddenly the world really changed," Stoltenberg said.

(Source: AP)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	92628.9
IFX	1030.85

Sources: tse.ir, lfb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42000 rials
EUR	50250 rials
GBP	57700 rials
AED	11,610 rials

Source: Mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$65.71/b
WTI	\$58.44/b
OPEC Basket	\$61.03/b
Gold	\$1,242.85/oz
Silver	\$15.81/oz
Platinum	\$890.35/oz

Sources: Oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Tehran to host Iran-Belarus economic committee meeting

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Tehran is scheduled to host the 14th Iran-Belarus joint economic committee meeting on January 22-23, 2018.

The previous joint economic committee meeting had been held in Minsk in May 2016, the portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture reported.

During the 13th meeting of Iran-Belarus joint economic committee, the two countries inked an economic cooperation roadmap for 2016-2017, according to which bilateral trade will reach \$250 million per annum, up from the current \$75 million.



Swiss automotive company inks deal in Iran

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Swiss Company Autoneum signed an exclusive license agreement with Iranian automotive supplier Ayegh Khodro Toos (AKT) to jointly produce and distribute components in Iran, Reuters reported citing the company.

AKT will produce carpet systems and inner dashes at its plant in Mashhad for IKAP, a joint venture between carmaker Iran Khodro and PSA, the French automotive group.

The first vehicle equipped with Autoneum components, a sport utility vehicle, will be launched in early 2019, the Swiss group said.

Germany argues over dividing spoils of long economic boom

Germany's next government will inherit one of the largest financial windfalls in the country's postwar history – a huge surplus generated by the bumper tax revenues from a booming economy. But having too much to spend can be just as divisive as having too little.



While other EU countries, still grappling with the consequence of years of crisis, wrestle with what to cut and where, the next government in Berlin is likely to be trimming taxes and increasing spending. Officials say it will have a €30 billion surplus to play with over the next four years – a luxury its neighbors can only dream of.

"The situation with the budget is unprecedented," says Jens Boysen-Hogrefe of the Kiel Institute for the World Economy. "Either by luck or coincidence, there is significant financial headroom. Any coalition government that's formed will have a lot of money to give away."

What Germany decides to do with its surplus will not be clear for months. Since the failure of Angela Merkel's attempt to form a "Jamaica" coalition with the Greens and Free Democrats last month, the country has been in political limbo. Eleven weeks after inconclusive elections it is still without a proper government, although the left-of-center Social Democrats have agreed to hold exploratory talks with Merkel's conservatives.

The Jamaica partners were at odds over several different issues, ranging from Europe and refugees to climate change. But it is clear that one of the big sticking points was fiscal policy, and in particular, the FDP's insistence on deep tax cuts. The party wanted to abolish the solidarity surcharge, a levy introduced in the 1990s to pay for German reunification, and quit the talks when it failed to get its way.

"For us it was important not to spend [the surplus] on our political projects, but to give a big chunk of it back to taxpayers," says Marco Buschmann, a senior FDP MP. "It's clear that a grand coalition [involving the CDU and SPD] will not do that."

While SPD officials insist a "grand coalition" with the CDU/CSU is still not a foregone conclusion, the budget surplus could make talks between the parties easier than they would have been if money were tight. (Source: Financial Times)

Iran eyes domestic finance for Airbus, Boeing purchases

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Iran is considering the use of domestic finance for the purchase of Airbus and Boeing airplanes, Tasnim reported on Tuesday quoting an official with flag carrier Iran Air.

"We prefer to use domestic finances rather than depending on foreign financiers," Iran

Air public relations director Masoumeh Asgharzadeh said.

The official noted that some fruitful negotiations have been done in this regard and the flag carrier will make announcements in the near future.

She further asserted that both Airbus and Boeing have expressed readiness to



directly fund the purchases in case of lacking domestic finance offers.

Airbus, Boeing reps in Tehran next week

According to Asgharzadeh, representatives of Airbus and Boeing are due to visit Tehran next week to discuss financial issues.

Iran Air inked a deal with Boeing on December 11, 2016 to buy 80 aircrafts valued at \$16.6 billion.

The national flag carrier also signed a deal with the French giant plane maker Airbus on January 28, 2016 for the purchase of 118 Airbus jets worth \$27 billion.

UK inflation comes in at 3.1 percent, highest since March 2012

The UK inflation rate has increased to 3.1 percent, its highest level since March 2012, according to data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) released Tuesday.

This puts consumer prices for November up 0.1 percentage points from October's consumer price index (CPI) rate of 3 percent, which was itself a five-and-a-half year high.

The new figures are in line with the Bank of England's (BoE) expectations that inflation would peak at just over 3.0 percent before the end of this year.

"It would be helpful for economic growth going forward if inflation is close to peaking," Derek Halpenny, European head of global markets research at MUFJG, said in an email note.

"The largest upward contribution to the rate change came from airfares, which fell between October and November, but by less than a year ago," the ONS wrote. The spike in inflation also responded in part to a fall in the pound over several weeks of tumultuous Brexit talks.

"CPI inflation edged above 3 percent for the first time in nearly six years with the price of computer games rising and air fares falling more slowly than this time last year. These upward pressures were partially offset by falling costs of computer equipment," Mike Prestwood, head of inflation for ONS, said.

British consumers have been feeling the price growth, with the British Retail Consortium (BRC) warning in November that consumers would face a pricey Christmas dinner this year. In October,



prices for food and non-alcoholic beverages climbed to 4.1 percent, the highest since September 2013.

While the BoE raised interest rates in November over inflation concerns, inflation is set to stay above the target 2 percent rate throughout 2018.

BoE Governor Mark Carney must now write a letter to UK Chancellor Phillip Hammond explaining why inflation has exceeded one percentage point higher than the bank's target rate of 2 percent.

"The annual headline inflation rate has risen to well above the BoE's mandated target of 2 percent since the Brexit vote in June 2016," said Kallum Pickering, senior UK economist at Berenberg.

"The dramatic fall in trade-weighted sterling, reflecting markets' lowered expectations for long term UK growth, has caused a temporary surge in import price growth. While the Brexit vote inflation surge will gradually fade from here on, underlying inflationary pressures are likely to continue to build over time without modestly tighter monetary policy." (Source: CNBC)

Most Asian currencies dip on caution ahead of Fed meeting

Most Asian currencies weakened against the dollar on Tuesday as caution prevailed ahead of an outcome from the U.S. Federal Reserve's policy meeting this week.

The dollar index, which tracks the greenback against a basket of six major peers, was up 0.07 percent at 93.932.

"We have seen relatively little volatility in Asian currencies," said Chang Wei Liang, an FX strategist with Mizuho Bank. "Markets are in a wait-and-watch mode ahead of the FOMC meeting."

The Philippine peso was down nearly quarter of a percent on the day, weighed down by data showing a record trade deficit of \$2.85 billion in October.

China's yuan slipped on rising dollar de-

mand from corporates, while the Malaysian ringgit also declined on the day.

The Thai baht and the South Korean won advanced against the dollar.

The Bank of Thailand said on Tuesday it had intervened this year to slow the strengthening of the baht to reduce the impact on businesses.

With a near 10 percent rise, the baht is the third best-performing Asian currency against the dollar this year.

While a Fed rate hike this week is largely priced in, analysts said the focus will be more on the 2018 "dot plot".

The "dot plot" is policymakers' rate projections and provides a view into their interest rate outlook.

If the Fed maintains its current dot plot

with three hikes for 2018, the dollar will strengthen against Asian currencies, said Mizuho's Wei Liang.

"But at the same time, it is not going to be substantial, given that we still have strong numbers coming up from Asia, such as Chinese trade data, which suggests global trade recovery is still on a firm footing."

On Monday, the central banks of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand launched a framework aimed at increasing direct settlement of transactions in their local currencies to reduce the current dependence on the U.S. dollar.

This framework should insulate the three currencies to a certain extent from dollar volatility and give them greater stability, Maybank said in a report.

The Indian rupee was down 0.2 percent ahead of inflation data, which a Reuters poll found is expected to surge to a 13-month high in November.

Indian bond yields spiked for a fourth straight session to their highest in more than 15 months on concerns of inflation breaching the central bank's medium-term target of 4 percent in November.

"We are mindful that, unlike the past couple of years, crude oil prices are higher and adding pressure to India's inflation and current account deficit," DBS said in a report.

Some analysts believe countries with larger current account deficits will see their currencies depreciate faster against the dollar next year. (Source: Reuters)

World economy to grow 3% in 2018 and 2019: UN report

The world economy is expected to remain stable in 2018 and 2019 after an impressive growth rate of 3 percent in 2017, said a UN world economic prospects report launched on Monday at UN Headquarters in New York.

The growth in 2017 is the strongest performance of the world economy since 2011. Global growth is expected to remain steady at 3 percent in 2018 and 2019, said the UN World Economic Situation and Prospects 2018 report.

The improvement is widespread, with roughly two-thirds of countries worldwide experiencing stronger growth in 2017 than in the previous year.

The recent pickup in global growth stems predominantly from firmer growth in several developed economies, although East and South Asia remain the world most dynamic regions. In 2017, East and South Asia accounted for nearly half of global growth, with China alone contributing about one-third, according to the report.

The end of recession in Argentina, Brazil, Nigeria and Russia also contributed to global economic upturn between 2016 and 2017, which has been supported by a rebound in world trade and an improvement in investment conditions.

The challenge is to channel this into a sustained acceleration in productive investment to support medium-term prospects, said the report.

The improved global economic situation provides an opportunity for countries to focus policy toward longer-term issues such as addressing climate change, tackling existing inequalities and removing institutional obstacles to development, it said.

"The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2018 demonstrates that current macroeconomic conditions offer policy-makers greater scope to address some of the deep-rooted issues that continue to hamper progress toward the (2030) Sustainable Development Goals," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in the Foreword of the report. Launching the report, UN Undersecretary-General for



Economic and Social Affairs Liu Zhenmin noted: "While the upturn in global growth is a welcome sign of a healthier economy, it is important to remember that this may come at an environmental cost. This calls for stronger efforts to delink economic growth and environmental degradation."

Despite the improved short-term outlook, the global economy continues to face risks, including changes in trade policy, a sudden deterioration in global financial conditions and rising geopolitical tensions, said the report.

The world economy also faces longer-term challenges. The report highlighted four areas where the improved macroeconomic situation opens the way for policy to address these challenges: increasing economic diversification, reducing inequality, supporting long-term investment and tackling institutional deficiencies.

The report said that reorienting policy to address these challenges can generate stronger investment and productivity, higher job creation and more sustainable medium-term economic growth.

It also noted that the recent improvements in economic conditions have been unevenly distributed across countries and regions. Negligible growth in per capita income is expected in several parts of Africa, Western Asia and Latin

America and the Caribbean in 2017-2019.

The impacted regions combined are home to 275 million people living in extreme poverty, underscoring the urgent need to foster an environment that will both accelerate medium-term growth prospects and tackle poverty through policies that address inequalities in income and opportunity, said the report.

It found that very few least developed countries are expected to reach the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal target for GDP growth of at least 7 percent in the near term.

Advances toward sustainable development in this group of countries continue to be hindered by institutional deficiencies, inadequate basic infrastructure, high levels of exposure to natural disasters, as well as challenges to security and political instability.

In addition to mobilizing the financial resources to meet the investment needs in these countries, policies must also focus on conflict prevention and removing barriers that continue to hinder more rapid progress, said the report.

Preliminary estimates suggest that the level of global energy-related carbon dioxide emissions increased in 2017 after remaining flat for three consecutive years. The frequency of weather-related shocks continues to increase, also highlighting the urgent need to build resilience against climate change and prioritize environmental protection, it said.

Many developing economies and economies in transition remain vulnerable to spikes in risk aversion, sudden capital withdrawal and an abrupt tightening of global liquidity conditions, while rising debt poses global financial challenges, said the report.

The World Economic Situation and Prospects report is produced annually by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs in collaboration with the UN Conference on Trade and Development, the five UN regional commissions and the World Tourism Organization. (Source: China Daily)

Brent crude oil jumps to mid-2015 high after North Sea pipeline outage

Brent oil prices jumped by 1 percent on Tuesday to their highest since mid-2015, after the shutdown of the Forties North Sea pipeline knocked out significant supply from a market already tightening due to OPEC-led production cuts.

Brent crude futures, the international benchmark for oil prices, were at \$65.32 a barrel at 0748 GMT, up 63 cents, or 1 percent, from their last close. The contract hit a high of \$65.70 a barrel earlier in the day.

That marks the first time Brent has risen above \$65 since June, 2015.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$58.38 a barrel, up 39 cents, or 0.7 percent, from their last settlement.

"Brent crude raced higher ... as news broke that the North Sea's Forties Pipeline system would have to be shut down for a number of weeks after a hairline crack was found in it," said Jeffrey Halley, senior market analyst at futures brokerage OANDA in Singapore. "The pipeline ... is a significant component underpinning the Brent benchmark."

Britain's Forties oil pipeline, the country's largest at a capacity of 450,000 barrels per day (bpd), shut down on Monday after cracks were revealed.



"The market reaction shows that in a tight market, any supply issue will quickly be reflected in higher prices," said ANZ bank. Analysts said there was also oil price

support from the consumer side.

"Demand growth across the commodity complex is extremely robust. And inventories across the complex have been declining sharply," U.S. bank Goldman Sachs said in a note to clients.

The jump in Brent prices widened its premium to WTI prices to as much as over \$7 a barrel, the highest premium since May 2015 and up from around \$5 last week, making U.S. oil exports more attractive.

Cheaper WTI is also a result of rising U.S. oil production, which has jumped by more than 15 percent since mid-2016 to 9.71 million bpd, levels not seen since the early 1970s.

U.S. production is now also not far off that of top producers Russia and Saudi Arabia.

The rising U.S. output threatens to undermine efforts led by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and a group of non-OPEC producers, most importantly Russia, to support prices by withholding supplies.

OPEC and its allies started withholding supplies last January and currently plan to continue doing so throughout 2018.

(Source: Reuters)

Saudi Arabia set to hike domestic petrol prices by 80% in January

Saudi Arabia plans to raise the price of domestic petrol and jet fuel in January, part of a program to gradually eliminate energy subsidies as the kingdom seeks to overhaul its economy and balance the budget, according to a person with knowledge of the matter.

Petrol prices are set to increase by about 80 percent, while the price of jet fuel will be raised to international levels in one go, the person said, asking not to be identified because the matter is not public.

Petrol and other fuels such as diesel, kerosene and heavy fuel oil, will see incremental price increases over several years, the person said.

Excluding jet fuel, prices won't reach international levels until 2023 at the earliest, and potentially by 2025. Electricity tariffs won't be increased directly, but will rise gradually with other energy prices, the person said.

Saudi Arabia's finance ministry, which oversees the

country's subsidy reform program, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The new plan represents a slower timeline for the removal of subsidies as the government tries to offset the impact of the measures on a struggling economy. Saudi Arabia first reduced subsidies in December 2015 after years of debate as oil prices plummeted.

Officials later said they would eliminate them entirely by 2020, part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 plan for the post-oil era.

The Kingdom is struggling to cope with low prices and spending cuts aimed at reducing a budget deficit that reached about 15 percent of GDP in 2015. The economy contracted in the first two quarters this year.

Finance minister Mohammed al-Jadaan said in October that prices of some subsidized domestic energy products will rise to international levels later than previously seen. Authorities will not rush to balance



the budget by 2019 to avoid hurting growth, he said. Next year's budget will be announced on 19 December. (Source: The Independent)

Pertamina set to import up to 250,000 bpd of oil in 2018

Indonesia's Pertamina expects to import up to 250,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil in 2018, the head of the state-owned company's procurement unit said on Tuesday.

From Indonesia's crude output of around 800,000 bpd, about 500,000 bpd currently goes to Pertamina's domestic refineries, Toto Nugroho, Senior Vice President of the firm's Integrated Supply Chain unit, told reporters.

"Around 250,000 (bpd) is imported," he said, noting that this level would continue in 2018, with imports meeting some 40 percent of Indonesia's crude oil needs.

Pertamina's existing overseas crude processing deal with Sinopec subsidiary Unipe is due to expire at the end of this month, Nugroho said. Pertamina is waiting for certainty on crude output cuts by OPEC member Iraq, from which it takes a share of Basra crude, before making a new deal, he added.

"How far they will cut, we don't know yet," Nugroho said, adding that there was a possibility Pertamina would sign a new crude processing deal in the second half of 2018.

Pertamina's gasoline imports are expected to be at around 9 million barrels per month in 2018, Nugroho said, roughly half of which would be RON88 gasoline and half RON92 gasoline.

The company is expecting to import around 6.8 million tonnes of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) in 2018, Nugroho said.

Pertamina jet fuel imports are expected to climb to around 1 million barrels per month in 2018 from around 800,000 barrels per month this year "because our demand is good from the aviation sector", Nugroho said.

(Source: Reuters)

Brazil cuts local content requirements to attract oil investors

Brazil is looking to cut local content requirements for future oil E&P contracts in a bid to satisfy the demands of local suppliers and allow new customs breaks for oil majors active in the South American country.

"The proposal is already in place, it should be voted on this week and it will be compensation for the absence of tariff barriers from Repetro," Cesar Prata, Vice President of the local supplier union Abimaq, said, referring to the Brazilian tax program for oil and gas companies.

Tough local content requirements have stifled oil firms' investment interest in Brazil. They complain that complying to the rules made oil development in open blocks unprofitable.

In recent leasing rounds, Brazil has not had trouble attracting bids from oil majors for fossil fuel development. Brazil accepted bids for eight blocks in late October, six of which went to multinational oil majors, including Shell and ExxonMobil.

(Source: oilprice.com)

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The EU's complicity in refugee abuse in Libya

by John Dalhuisen

"In prison, they would hit us often," said Ousman who spent five months in a Tripoli detention centre in 2016. "They killed many boys. I saw many people dying in prison, either because they fell sick or were beaten."

Ousman is just one of hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants who have braved the journey across Africa to Libya and just one of tens of thousands who have ended up caught in a complex web of abuse and extortion.

Refugees and migrants are routinely exposed to human rights violations committed by Libyan officials and security forces and abuses at the hands of armed groups and criminal gangs, who are often working in close cooperation and to mutual financial advantage. In a lawless country, refugees and migrants have become a resource to be exploited - a commodity around which an entire industry has grown, as the shocking footage of an apparent slave auction aired by CNN last month highlighted.



From the reaction of world leaders to that grainy footage, one would be forgiven for thinking that this story is a new one and that the problem is one of Africa's own making. But nothing could be further from the truth.

The European Union, its member states - and Italy, in particular - have pursued their own goal of restricting the flow of refugees and migrants across the Mediterranean, with little thought, or seemingly care, for the consequences for those trapped in Libya as a result. They have entered into a string of cooperation agreements with Libyan authorities responsible for grave human rights violations, in particular, the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG) and the General Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM).

On the face of it, these deals drawn up to increase their capacity to tackle smugglers, carry out search and rescue operations and prevent irregular departures have been successful. The number of arrivals in Italy fell by 67 percent between July and November 2017, compared with the same period in the previous year, and deaths at sea have been reduced commensurately. But EU countries should not feign shock or outrage when the human cost of these deals is laid bare.

EU and Italian officials cannot plausibly claim to be unaware of the grave violations being committed by some of the detention officials and LCG agents with whom they are so assiduously cooperating. Nor can they credibly claim to have insisted on key rights protection mechanisms and guarantees from their Libyan counterparts. They are, as a result, complicit in these abuses and in breach of their own human rights obligations.

The criminalization of irregular entry under Libyan law, coupled with the absence of any legislation or practical infrastructure for the protection of asylum seekers and victims of trafficking, has resulted in mass, arbitrary and indefinite detention becoming the primary migration management system in the country.

Refugees and migrants intercepted by the LCG are sent to DCIM detention centers where they endure horrific treatment. Up to 20,000 people currently remain contained in these overcrowded, unsanitary detention centers. Migrants and refugees we interviewed described abuse they had been subjected to or they had witnessed, including arbitrary detention, torture, forced labour, extortion, and unlawful killings, at the hands of the authorities, traffickers, armed groups and militias alike.

Migrants and refugees are caught in a soul-destroying cycle of exploitation to which collusion between guards, smugglers and the LCG consigns them. Guards at the detention centers torture them to extort money. If they are able to pay they are released. They can also be passed onto smugglers who can secure their departure from Libya in cooperation with the LCG. Agreements between the LCG and smugglers are signaled by markings on boats that allow them to pass through Libyan waters without interception, and the Coast Guard has also been known to escort boats out to international waters.

The actions of European countries are leading to increasing numbers of people being stopped or intercepted. In so doing, European governments - and again, Italy, in particular - are breaching their own international obligations and becoming complicit in the violations committed by the Libyan authorities they are sponsoring and cooperating with.

Bakary, a Gambian man, was stopped at sea by the LCG and detained in the Zawia detention center, northern Libya in December 2016. "The police gave me the number of a Gambian man, said if you want to pay to leave you can call him, he will help," he said. "In the center, they don't give food, they beat me with a rubber hose, because they want money to release me. I still have scars".

EU countries should not feign shock or outrage when the human cost of these deals is laid bare.

Ultimately, the misery of refugees and migrants in Libya is a by-product of bigger economic and political trends on the African continent and bigger flaws in Europe's migration policies. In the absence of adequate safe, legal routes into Europe and, in light of the low prospect of being returned if found not to have a claim to protection, irregular journeys will continue to be seen both as the only choice and, ultimately, a rational choice by the ambitious and the persecuted.

This play of forces can only be addressed by increasing the number of safe and legal avenues of entry to - and return from - European countries. It cannot sustainably and conscientiously be addressed by enlisting the services of corrupt and abusive actors in transit countries to interrupt routes midway, without regard for how they do it, or the impact on those trapped as a result.

There are no quick fixes to this complex crisis, but it is essential that the aims and nature of European cooperation with Libya are rethought, to end this unconscionable collusion in human suffering.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

The absurdity of Trump's relationship with Israel

The U.S. president's performance on 6 December was nothing but an American tragedy or surrender

By Taha Ozhan

On 6 December, U.S. President Donald Trump, American populism's gift to the world, acting as if he was a fanatic Zionist in a conservative U.S. TV show, declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel.

Judging from his excitement and tone during the speech, designating a city as the capital of another country from one's own capital must have been bizarre even by Trump standards.

The entire scene could not be more absurd if Trump had also declared Washington as the capital of Israel.

■ The lobby

In fact, that is what happened. On 6 December, it was declared incontrovertibly that Washington is now the capital of Israel. It was exactly for this reason that, as an example of primitive provocation, once Trump finished his speech, the Israeli and American flags were projected on the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Neither analyses of Middle East politics nor Washington's foreign policy axis or theological assessments explain Israeli-American relations. It is difficult to explain persuasively the form and content of that relationship.

The only remaining explanation is the power of the Israeli lobby. Yet here one has to tread carefully for fear of sounding like a conspiracy theorist.

The lobby's sway over Washington and its ability to take it hostage are, however, real. When viewed from that perspective, Trump's performance on 6 December was nothing but an American tragedy or surrender.

Claiming the U.S., which basically handed over the most powerful country on earth to a troll wrapped in a flag of populism, cannot be taken captive by Israel would itself amount to a conspiracy theory.

■ A deep crisis

The problem of Israel lies at the core of many issues and crises in the Middle East. Yet, at the moment, the problem of the U.S. overshadows the problem of Israel. We are going through a deep crisis in the region, shaped by American and Israeli occupations and attacks for decades.

Israeli occupation, attacks on Gaza and Lebanon and American occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq have been the root sources of crises in the region for the past seven decades. Therefore, Trump's announcement on Jerusalem does not differ from interventionist steps by previous U.S. administrations that neither rested on a coherent strategy nor offered a convincing roadmap in terms of



Trump's decision on Jerusalem, likely to trigger a domino effect, did not just reveal the irrationality in American-Israeli relations but also demonstrates how the Israeli lobby directs U.S. policy.

security policies or overall policy planning.

Trump's decision should therefore be considered alongside the law passed in the U.S. Congress during the Clinton presidency in 1995 to move the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Hence, it is hard to disagree with the opinion that U.S. policy towards the Middle East has become a paradox. If we remember the magnitude of the tsunami the Bush family created in Iraq, only to be followed by disasters caused by Obama's policies in Egypt, Iraq and Syria, we can say that Trump is closely following in their footsteps.

Perhaps it is the American mindset and U.S. interventionism in the Middle East that is the source of the problem. A realist would observe that there is no logical explanation how these policies, mainly the unquestionable Israeli axis, have served American interests.

At this point, it is not difficult to predict what may happen next. Both Democrats and Republicans, who voted 90-0 last June to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, will unanimously stand behind this decision for two reasons that have nothing to do with Trump: first, indifference, as with the invasion of Iraq, and the

humanitarian tragedy in Syria.

Second, supporters of U.S. isolationism prefer sparking global outrage to confronting the machinations and power of the Israeli lobby. Representing American populism in the most lumpen manner possible, Trump, living in an Islamophobic mentality, has taken a step that would ruffle feathers even in Israel.

Yet the aim of finding and constructing a capital for Israel, which lives physically in the Middle East but mentally in Washington, remains in vain. A state that aspires to confiscating Jerusalem, the common capital of all Abrahamic religions, must be bereft of common sense.

Then it would be our mistake to expect the ambitions of Israel, an entity that has clung to its status as an occupier and its dreams of a liberated land for the last half a century, to follow any kind of logic.

Hence all that is left in Israel is the automatic reflex to maintain the occupation and protect past gains at all costs. With this last move, Israel hedged its short-term fate on Trump. Yet Israel may not have a bright future with Trump, the least popular American president ever, which it sees as its sole "safety net".

■ America First, no more

Trump's "America First" strategy has also taken a ruinous hit these days, because there is no one left inside his team that "works for America" any more. His son-in-law, campaign chief and former national security advisor are all accused of working for other countries. In the middle of the wreckage left by Trump's decision, we do not yet know if Trump himself will face a similar accusation.

We can see these follies as "American desperation" and watch what is to come. We can do better yet by saying that Trump's decision on Jerusalem, likely to trigger a domino effect, did not just reveal the irrationality in American-Israeli relations but also demonstrates how the Israeli lobby directs U.S. policy.

As long as the strong anti-Trump presence in the U.S. does not face this stark reality, we will keep hearing that it was Trump alone who took the decision on Jerusalem.

Those who have suffered so much and enough in the Middle East, however, will only laugh, with a sarcastic grin on their faces, at the idea of an Islamophobic troll in Washington who thinks he can determine what happens to Jerusalem.

(Source: middleeasteye.net)

The UN can't solve many crises

By Richard Gowan

The United Nations is a slow, imperfect and often unsuccessful peacemaker. We should celebrate that.

Last week, UN officials were grappling with three crises that have each been on the organization's agenda for over half a century. On Tuesday, Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman flew to North Korea to call for "open channels" of diplomatic communication with Pyongyang to avoid a nuclear confrontation. His visit came just over 70 years after the UN General Assembly first set up an international commission to facilitate the reunification of the northern and southern halves of the country, a dream that remains as distant as ever.

On Wednesday, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stepped up to reject the Trump administration's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, which contradicts standing UN resolutions. This too came almost precisely seven decades after the UN inserted itself into Middle Eastern affairs by voting for the partition of the British mandate of Palestine into independent Jewish and Arab states at the end of November 1947. Guterres finds himself standing up for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that is almost as old as the UN itself.

On Friday, as the Security Council was debating Trump's Jerusalem decision, news filtered in of the deaths of 15 peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo, or DRC. The council first ordered blue helmets to the Congo in 1960, when the former Belgian colony fell apart immediately after gaining independence.

The UN's roles in these three cases have varied hugely. The United States has effectively run the organization's engagement with Korea since the 1950-1953 war. U.S. forces on the Korean peninsula still trade under the title of "United Nations Command." By contrast, the Security Council and successive secretaries-general have been heavily involved in efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the 1940s. As for the DRC, the 1960s peace operation there ended after a few years, and the council only ordered peacekeepers back in 1999 at the end of a cataclysmic civil war.

If the UN thus often fails war-torn countries, it fails them in very different ways. The organization's critics are currently harping on its inability to deliver rapid, decisive solutions to major crises. They should be wary about how far they push their criticisms.

The present critic-in-chief is the U.S. ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, who has repeatedly accused the institution of bias against Israel and weak management of its peace operations. "The UN has done much more damage to the prospects of peace in the Middle East than to advance them," she warned fellow Security Council ambassadors in their debate on Jerusalem last Friday.



It is arguable that the true genius of the UN system lies not in resolving urgent crises, but in dragging out those cases that cannot be resolved so as to minimize their overall political and human damage.

"We will not be party to that."

Haley has also questioned the continued value of the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC. The large mission there "has lost its way," she complained in August. "The Security Council has piled on new responsibilities over the years, diverting resources and attention from its core mission of civilian protection and stabilization."

The true genius of the UN system lies not in resolving urgent crises, but in dragging out those cases that cannot be resolved so as to minimize their overall political and human damage.

Haley's approach to the UN could best be described as strategic impatience. While she has rightly won plaudits for crafting two hefty packages of sanctions against North Korea with the Chinese, she has also underlined that this is not an open-ended process and that the U.S. has military options to "take care of" Pyongyang.

The ambassador's overall attitude appears to be that, while UN diplomacy can be useful, it is necessary to keep up constant pressure on the organization to stop it from drifting. Haley herself might be feeling similar pressure from Washington to deliver speedy results, but she is not alone in her view of the UN. Guterres, although a UN official for over a decade, seems keen to push past some of the political obstacles that keep the organization from resolving long-standing international problems. Earlier this year he threw himself enthusiastically into engineering the reunification of

Cyprus, a conundrum that has kept the UN busy since the 1960s. While that effort failed, Guterres is reportedly keen to show that the UN can resolve rather than just juggle crises.

Indeed, the basic argument that the UN tends to kick conflict resolution down the road indefinitely is now almost a commonplace. African security officials grumble that blue-helmet missions like the one in DRC are too cautious. Ambitious UN staffers fret that the organization's lack of clear results is undercutting its global relevance. Ambassadors in New York lament the difficulty of getting their capitals to read their reports.

Everyone blames someone else for this state of affairs. UN officials say that the Security Council offers them tepid backing. Security Council diplomats counter that the system offers them opaque advice and flaccid policy options. All these criticisms have merit, but may miss the point of UN crisis management.

It is arguable that the true genius of the UN system lies not in resolving urgent crises, but in dragging out those cases that cannot be resolved so as to minimize their overall political and human damage. Think of it as disaster on an installment plan.

Multiple rounds of UN diplomacy since the 1940s have failed to meet the long-term interests of both Palestinians and Israelis. But if the Security Council and UN envoys had not been on hand to defuse outbreaks of violence, both sides could have plunged into worse confrontations. The UN peace operation in DRC has likewise failed to establish nationwide stability and has even struggled to tamp down localized bouts of violence. Yet its presence has deterred regional powers, such as Rwanda and Angola, from instigating another all-out struggle to control the country comparable to the 1990s civil war.

In the Korean case, meanwhile, few if any analysts can imagine that the UN will be able to resolve the current nuclear stand-off. But it could, as I have previously argued, offer channels for Pyongyang and Washington to communicate over easing tensions or avoiding accidental flare-ups. The role of the UN system is all too often to contain, mitigate and calm crises when other actors cannot see other ways out.

This does not mean that the UN can never make a bigger political impact. The organization has helped broken states such as Liberia onto their feet, and its officials do a lot more quiet preventive work behind the scenes than is generally recognized. But even this good work is often painstaking: UN peacekeepers have taken over a decade to stabilize Liberia, for example.

Turning to the UN for quick and slick answers to crises is a foolhardy endeavor. But the organization is a proven master of slowly and steadily containing conflicts.

(Source: WPR)

Section T permits Iran work on non-nuclear weapon applications of detonators: Heinonen

1 → ■ Why U.S. again try to bring up Iran PMD Case in IAEA?

A: The IAEA verification process is based on continuous impartial and factual analysis of all – past, current, and new – information available to it from its verification activities, declarations made by Iran, and information available from open and other sources that has come to its attention.

When the IAEA submitted its report on the PMD in December 2015 it concluded that Iran had conducted a range of R&D activities on nuclear weapon design. Iran however did not provide during these investigations the IAEA full access to scientists and sites involved in such work. Questions also remained unanswered. The IAEA further concluded that Iran's statement regarding the purpose of a key building in Parchin did not match with the IAEA findings on ground. Samples taken at Parchin also indicated presence of man-made uranium particles, which normally would prompt a follow-up action by resampling and obtaining clarifications from Iran regarding the presence of nuclear material at a location not declared as a nuclear facility.

The IAEA concluded in its December 2015 PMD report that it did not observe any weapons related R&D in Iran after 2009. Now that Iran and the IAEA are working towards a broader conclusion, those questions need to be addressed in order for the IAEA to be able to state that all nuclear material and activities have been declared and ascertain that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful.



■ IAEA Director General ask Iran for "more" verification about Section T. It seems that Director General Yukiya Amano's message is closing to Nikki Haley, United States Ambassador to the United Nations. What is your opinion?

A: Statements of Mr. Amano need a deeper look. The IAEA has stated since this summer that it is verifying the implementation of the JCPOA including Section T. Let us look as an example the development of multi-point-detonation systems. This was

part of the PMD file, which was not fully addressed. According to Section T Iran is permitted to work on non-nuclear weapon applications of detonators, which find their use for example in the oil-industry. In order to do so, Tehran has to request permission from the Joint Commission (JC), and such work will then be monitored. Iran has stated that such work takes place, but there is no indication that the JC has approved such work, and the IAEA has not visited any location for monitoring where such work

takes. The IAEA in doing its job has therefore to carry out its requisite verification work and issue clear statements – both in Section T as well as other areas of its reporting. A failure to properly address and correctly report on Section T could have a negative impact on questions arising on whether other shortcomings are also happening in other sections of the JCPOA being implemented. Several Members of the IAEA Board have already requested more detailed reports to assess the progress made in the implementation of the JCPOA. Transparent reporting is essential in demonstrating the stated robustness of the JCPOA's verification scheme.

■ Iran's Ambassador to the IAEA Reza Najafi highlighted that "by limiting Iran's benefits from the deal the US Government in contradiction with both letter and spirit of the agreement, particularly paragraphs 26, 28 and 29 of the JCPOA, has taken a negative approach to undermine "successful implementation" of the JCPOA." This statement is while U.S. try to place sanction Iran on the name of Human Rights and terrorism. What will happen for JCPOA if Iran limited from benefiting of the agreement?

A: JCPOA is a nuclear agreement, and it does not cover issues related to human rights, Iran's activities in the Middle East and its expanding missile program, which are seen by many states as threatening, inter alia, to their national security. Once those issues are resolved, there should not be concerns on any sanctions, which are anyway not related to the JCPOA.

EU welcomes decline of U.S. global hegemony: expert

1 → In this regard, many thinkers and political analysts believe in decline of U.S. global hegemony and probable rise of new world and regional powers like China and Iran.

To make this debate more clear, correspondent of Mehr News Agency talked to Andy Storey, the professor of Politics and International Relations of Dublin University.

Following is the full text of this interview:

■ Many thinkers in International relations like Fareed Zakaria believe that US global hegemony is going to decline thanks to rise of Eastern new actors like China. What is your opinion?

A: "I think the claimed decline of U.S. hegemony is exaggerated. The U.S. share of world GDP has fallen but some of this is because U.S. corporations are now producing more of their output in other countries, including China - thus, U.S. corporate power is declining less than the national economic data might suggest. Also, the U.S. is probably less of a debtor than, again, the figures might suggest because U.S. individuals and companies keep a lot of assets and income in offshore/unrecorded locations - were these to be counted, the U.S. net debt position would be less severe. In any event, the debt itself gives the U.S. economic leverage - the fact that China, etc. are owned huge sums of

money denominated in U.S. dollars gives the U.S. enormous influence in the world economy. The same is true of the fact that China and other emerging powers depend heavily on the U.S. market for their exports. And, finally, militarily, the U.S. remains overwhelmingly dominant"

■ In this regard, Prof. John Ikenberry in his article writes that rise of new global actors like China in the current world order shall eliminate the U.S. hegemony. If we accept this assumption, then how such decline will be occurred? How will China be changed to the first superpower while Beijing still is facing many problems relating stability of its economy?

A: "See my previous response – U.S. hegemony will not be eliminated any time soon! China is of course growing in influence and power, but it is not using that power to pose an ideological or material challenge to U.S.-led global capitalism. China does not demand that its trading and investment partners adopt non-capitalist relations of production (quite the contrary in fact) or in any way reduce their links to the U.S. So this is not the kind of competitive stance that the old Soviet union adopted towards the U.S."

■ Some contemporary thinkers and academics also predict the multipolar system for the future nature of the

next world order. For example, rise of Iran and Turkey in Middle East will determine the future of the region. In fact, they believe that regional actors will determine the future of new world order. Do you accept this assumption?

A: "I believe regional actors will probably become more important (Iran seems a good example) but, as discussed above, not in a way that fundamentally seeks to reshape world order. Yes, however, the world is becoming more multipolar"

■ As the last question, as you know, non – commitment of Donald Trump to the international treaties such as Paris Agreement or JCPOA has challenged the dignity and reliability of U.S. as a superpower in the current world order. Does Trump's behavior expand the differences and challenges between U.S. and EU? If yes, how serious will be this challenge?

A: "I think it is too soon to say for sure. Certainly Trump's recklessness may inadvertently precipitate a faster decline of the U.S. than would otherwise have occurred, and possibly a desire on the part of European elites to create, for example, an independent military capacity. But this is not certain, not least because the Trump presidency may be shortlived and the Atlantic alliance rebuilt more firmly by his successor".

Trump and two shocking surveys

By Hossein Yari

TEHRAN — The president of the United States is deeply concerned about the decline in his popularity with his citizens. Many polls show that since the arrival of Donald Trump at the White House, many of his supporters in the 2016 presidential election are no longer demanding that he continue to be in power. The formation of cases, such as the cooperation of the Trump campaign with Russia, has intensified. Many American citizens are hoping that Trump will resign before he arrives in 2020. However, some US analysts believe he will face a severe crisis in 2020 if he continues to appear at the White House. Many Republicans have already prepared themselves to defeat the upcoming presidential election.

Meanwhile, Democrat leaders are content with the situation created after the 2016 presidential election. They believe that if conditions continue, the defeat of Trump will be definitive in the election. Of course, it must not be forgotten that Democrats' defeat in the 2016 presidential election was also the product of lobbyists behind the Democratic Party and their violation of the interstate rivalry between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders. If the Democratic leaders did not prevent Sanders from defeating Democrats within the Democratic Party, the American senator could have easily defeated Trump and headed for the White House.

A review of two polls in the United States shows that Trump has a bad situation in the country. The publication of these polls has been a source of serious concern for Trump and his fans.

As CNN reported, President Donald Trump's approval rating sits at 32%, according to a new poll released by the Pew Research Center, matching the lowest level in any poll on his approval since he took office in January.

The poll also found that disapproval of the President's job performance is at 63%, and just 14% of those who disapprove of his presidential performance say they can think of something he's done that they've been happy with. However, 37% of those who approve of his job performance say they can think of something Trump has done that they've been disappointed with or unhappy with.

Pew's report on the poll noted that Trump's approval rating has been fairly stagnant since October, when it was at 34%, but has decreased since February, when it was 39%.

Additionally, the poll found that the majority of Americans -- 59% -- think improper contact between senior Trump officials and Russia during the campaign "definitely or probably occurred."

Thirty percent said they believed "senior Trump officials definitely had improper contacts with Russia during the campaign," while 30% also responded that they thought improper contact "definitely or probably did not happen."

However, the second poll, more than the first survey, has led to dissatisfaction with Donald Trump. As Independent reported,



Voters would back Democrat Joe Biden over Donald Trump by a wide margin during a presidential election, according to a new poll.

A survey conducted by POLITICO and Morning Consult found that, in a hypothetical 2020 presidential election matchup, the former Vice President would draw the support of 46 percent of voters – easily eclipsing the 35 percent who said they would back Trump.


Independent voters would support Biden over r Trump by a 15-point margin, the poll found. The poll adds another data point to the list of arguments for those urging Biden to challenge the President in the next election. After weighing a 2016 campaign at length, Biden declined to run. But he is now sending signals that he might jump into the looming presidential race.

A common rationale for Biden's candidacy posits that he would do better than Democrat Hillary Clinton at winning over white working class voters whose defection to Trump helped him carry typically blue states like Michigan and Wisconsin. The poll found Biden and Trump in a statistical tie among white voters.


Biden, of course, has not yet been nominated as a Democratic candidate for the presidential election of 2020. However, he is ready to attend the next presidential election. Some analysts believe Democratic Party elections are important for the 2010 presidential election. Even Hillary Clinton, who has failed Democrats in the 2016 presidential election, may once again take part in the election. American senator Bernie Sanders has already announced his readiness to run for the presidential elections in 2020.

Will the Democrats also repeat their mistake in the 2016 presidential election in 2020? Will they once again conquer the Republican Party and Donald Trump? The answers to these questions will be determined in the near future.

Second Announcement



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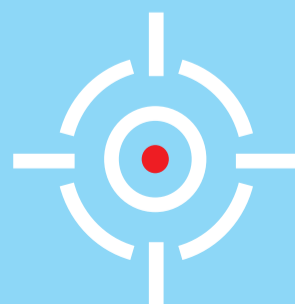
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Mind is not awake without questioning

We are lagging behind because we do not read philosophy

By Sara Faraji / Somaye Rezaei

TEHRAN — In keeping with our genial and friendly conversations with the Outstanding Scholars of Philosophy (Chehreh-ye Mandegar), we intended to talk to Gholam Hossein Ebrahimi Dinani about his memoirs, his school days at the Hozjatieh School in Qom, his relationship and association with Toshihiko Izutsu, Henry Corbin and other outstanding philosophers. However, our interview changed direction and we talked about other issues. Warmheartedly, he persuaded us that we should quit repeating the same words over and over again and discuss new things. Contrary to usual interviews, the interviewee started the conversation. He complained that many journalists follow the same routine all the time and they no longer pay attention to the events happening around the world. They do not ask where the world is heading to and where we are standing. He stated that, "there is no doubt that Henry Corbin and Alameh Tabatabayi were great people, but they have been discussed a lot and they have also written a lot. Instead of reminiscing about the past, it is better to talk about what is happening now in the world and ask ourselves, why we are lagging behind in so many aspects."

Ebrahimi Dinani was born in Dey 1313/January 1935 in the village of Dinan, a district of Daracheh in Khomeini Shahr, Isfahan. This Iranian philosopher was a student at the Hozjatieh School in Qom and classmates and roommates with the current Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenehi. He has been a student of Ayatollah Khomeini, Alameh Tabatabayi and Henry Corbin. He has published numerous works. His last book is called *Question of Existence and the Existence of Question* (1395/2016). Dinani does not use mobile phones, emails, etc. and prefers reading to any other activity. We talked to him about his interests, travels and some of his moral characteristics and asked his opinion on some social issues. The following is the result of our hour-long conversation with this professor of philosophy:

■ Well, let's not get distracted. Let us start with the question that you raised. Why do you think we are lagging behind many countries in so many aspects?

A: Because we do not think well and we do not read philosophy. Philosophy is related to everything and gives meaning to life. It is related to religion, to economy, to family. It is related to everything. Philosophy tells us what life is. We do not read philosophy. That is why we are lagging behind. My recommendation is that every one — from young children to grownups and old people — read philosophy.

■ So you support the new programs that promote philosophy for children?

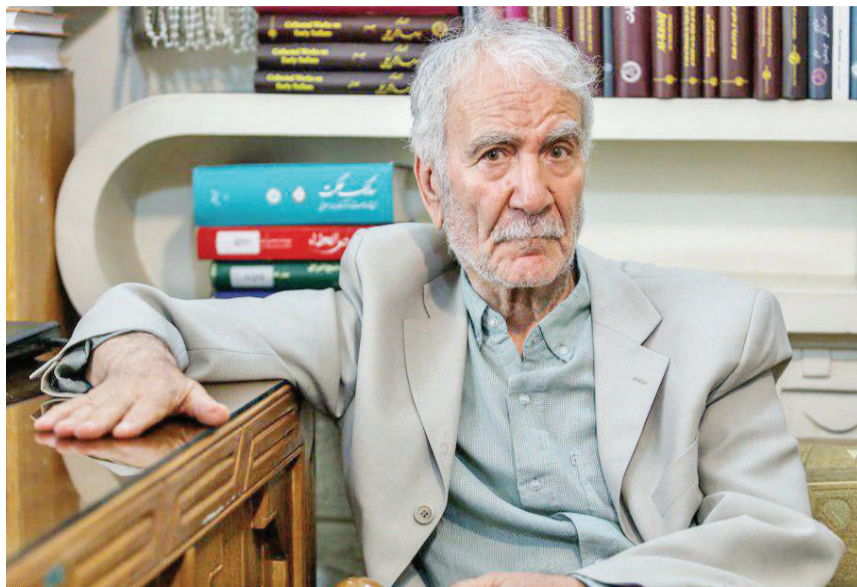
A: Yes, if they are administered properly, I support them. In addition to children, I recommend that the young people also read philosophy instead of reading novels. Without the inclusion of philosophy, it is not appropriate to talk about, for instance, history. The people who are frightened by the term philosophy, and think that it is a field of study suitable only for few, do not have analytical minds; they are not used to analyzing issues. They tend to read, see or hear thoughtlessly. They are like a person who does not want to cook stews and only eats fast food. They only want to hear something and leave. They do not want to hear the reasons behind and the process of the analysis. They usually are not capable of thinking.

■ Even though you speak so eloquently and articulately and attract a huge audience, sometimes you get angry in meetings or gatherings. Does this mean that you are an irritable person or to put it in a better way, a passionate person?

A: It seems that it is God's will that I am an honest person. I am not a hypocrite and I do not lie. Thus, I have a very good relationship with simple and honest people; even if I get beaten by such people, I won't be upset. But in the face of a hypocrite that does not want to show his true colors, or someone who asks questions but does not listen to the answers, and someone who is careless, I get angry. Carelessness, hypocrisy and arrogance make me angry more than anything else. These things seriously make me aggressive, because I want to interact honestly and in a straightforward manner. If someone is straightforward and honest with me, I will befriend him; however, if someone is dishonest, I will react bitterly and I will leave.

■ Asking questions during your meetings to make your opinions clear is among your communication methods. Why do you give your speeches and talk in this manner?

A: It is because I think that dialogue is influential and effective. Understanding results from dialogue and the best way to start a dialogue is to ask questions. If I ask comparative questions, I want my audience to think about each issue separately, compare them and then talk about it. I don't want them to just add something to what



they already have and store it. As long as a question is not asked, an understanding will not follow. One who is not asking a question, has learned by imitation. Such a person, would want to teach others by imitation. Understanding does not follow from imitation. I awaken you by my question; I guide you to ask your question from me. Mind is not awake without questioning; a mind without questions is not a mind.

■ Do you treat your children and talk to them in the same way?

A: No, until they ask me something, I will not talk to them like this.

■ Do your children study philosophy?

A: One is studying philosophy in France, but the other one has not studied philosophy. The one that is studying philosophy, has not chosen it because of my insistence or recommendation.

■ Do you discuss philosophy with the one who is studying philosophy?

A: No. They don't agree with my philosophy at all. Besides, I don't discuss philosophy at home and in my personal life. I talk about the house, food and everyday issues. Until I am asked, I don't talk about philosophy and I am almost never asked. Basically, I live my life, I don't make it philosophical. Philosophy is not bad, but it prevents one from having a life. A philosophical life is a difficult one.

■ Has your wife studied philosophy as well?

A: No.

■ I think that one of the problems that our philosophers have is that they consider themselves outside social problems and they do not enter the social domain. What is the reason?



Fardid was against Mulla Sadra and used to say that he is doubly westernized.

A: I tend not to agree with your opinion. Because no philosopher is outside society. Although philosophers do not act directly, they influence the society by their words and their books. A philosopher speaks and writes in a society. It is a society's problem if the people are not reading what the philosopher writes. Naturally, a philosopher does not directly enter the dispute; he/she acts with writing. If people are not reading a philosopher's writings, it is their problems, not the philosopher's.

Socrates did not write a word, he only walked in the streets and talked to the young and asked people questions. In contrast, Aristotle wrote everything he wanted to say, but he did not enter disputes. Because, a philosopher is not a journalist. A philosopher considers all social problems, big or small and enters the dispute with his/her writings. If no one reads them, it is not the problem of the philosopher. Most people want to have it easy, they want to have fast food.

In the table of contents of my book *Question of Existence and the Existence of Question*, issues like truth, goodness and God are mentioned. Are these not social issues? Do people follow goodness or not? Do people claim to be truthful or not? Do

people believe in God or not? Do people seek meaning in their lives? I have written about all these and I have published them. However, I cannot force people to read them.

■ What I meant was that philosophers do not directly discuss problems. For instance, if the marriage or divorce rate, etc. changes, what should be a philosopher's stand be?

A: Look, a direct discussion of divorce, is what a sociologist or a legal expert does. I have talked about these issues in my book, though. I put it this way: if a person knows the meaning of life, one is less likely to get a divorce. If one knows the truth and goodness of God, one is less likely to get into problems. In other words, philosophers are everywhere. However, they have their own methods and they deal with problems in a philosophical way. If a philosopher deal with the problems like a sociologist or a biologist, he/she is no longer a philosopher.

■ Well, if a government official came to you and asked for help, would you tell him to go and read philosophy?

A: First of all, one cannot do anything single-handedly. Second, a philosopher cannot do anything spur of the moment. When gradually all people read philosophy and start thinking, the problems will start getting solved. However, it is a time-consuming process. A philosopher cannot work unpremeditated. A philosopher does not stage a coup d'état. He/she thinks and works; and yes, thinking takes time.

■ In a meeting held on your book, your [academic] life was divided into two part, the early Dinani and the later Dinani. Do you support this?

How can we talk about epistemology without paying attention to ontology? As long as we do not know existence, epistemology has no meaning. Therefore, epistemology cannot be separated from ontology. First, we have to understand existence, then deal with knowledge. The title of my book, *The Question of Existence and the Existence of Question*, refers to these two meanings. The existence of question is epistemological and the question of existence is ontological. In other words, the book can also be called ontology and epistemology.

■ You have had long discussions with the late Ahmad Fardid. Can you talk about your relationship with him?

A: I was neither his student, not his classmate. Our relationship started because he was a compassionate person; he used to read my books, and because we had philosophical disagreements, he used to contact me and discuss my philosophy. Our phone calls usually lasted two or three hours. He did not write books, so I could not read and discuss them with him. However, he used to read my books.

For instance, Fardid was against Mulla Sadra and used to say that he is doubly westernized. We talked about such issues. He also did not give credence to Islamic philosophy and used to say that it is Hellenized. These issues would start our conversations. Nevertheless, neither was he my follower, nor was I his. Sometimes, our discussions would turn so bitter that we would hang up the phone. However, we were friends and usually he would call me again.

■ In your study sessions, you recommend thinking and distancing oneself from everyday routines. How one can distance oneself from the routines?

A: We have to think and talk about issues that help society. Talking about things like age, eating habits and familial life and kids will not help society. We have to think about the origins of problems.

■ Why did you never enter the politics? Many of your peers and classmates have gone into politics.

A: Because, I don't understand politics. I don't want to be trapped in everyday routines. Politics leads to routines. Politics is like a wave that carries one away; but I don't want to be carried away, I want to be myself.

■ You usually start your lectures with poetry. Why?

A: Because I love poetry. I used to compose poetry for a while, but I gave up on it for a reason. The reason is that Alameh Tabatabayi told me to quit composing poetry, and I did. Nonetheless, I still like poetry.

■ Do you read contemporary poets' works as well?

A: Rarely. I usually read the classics and don't read modern poetry.

■ Besides poetry, are you interested in other artistic fields like cinema and theater?

A: I like them, but I have not been following them in recent years. The last time I went to cinema was 30 years ago. I watched *The Ten Commandments* and *The Message*. I get invitations to plays a lot, but I don't attend them. Because, I prefer reading to going to cinema and theater. I would spend my time better if I read. Reading books is more intellectually beneficial to me than watching movies.

■ How do you like travelling?

A: I like travelling and I used to travel a lot, however, I am old now and I don't have the fortitude for travelling that I used to have. I have been to all countries from Europe to Indonesia and Egypt, except The United States.

■ You did not want to go to The United States or the circumstances for travelling were not favorable?

A: I decided to go once. I went to Turkey to get a visa. There was a conference in an American University and I was invited. In the embassy interview, they asked me a lot of questions. In the end, I inquired why they have been asking me all these questions. They told me that because they did not know me. I told them that it was their problem that they did not know me. One of them said that your government would not permit Americans to visit Iran and get to know people like you. I stated that nevertheless, they knew their own country and the university that had sent me the invitation. In the end, after all these discussions, they did not issue a visa for me. In response to this, I said that I really appreciate that you did not give me a visa, because you assisted me in not entering your doomed, evil and unclean country. After that, I never even wanted to go to the U.S.

■ When we contacted you to arrange this interview, we found out that you do not use new communication devices and technologies, to the extent that you do not even own a mobile phone and an email account. Is it not difficult to have such a lifestyle in this age of communication?

A: No, it is not difficult. Because I want to read, reading is more beneficial for me and it does not disrupt me. I don't have a lot of time to waste on these devices.

On the philosophy of conservatism

By Musa al-Gharbi

Musa al-Gharbi is a cognitive sociologist affiliated with the Southwest Initiative for the Study of Middle East Conflicts (SISMEC).

What do conservatives stand for? One popular idea is that conservatives cling to tradition and resist change. There is an element of truth to this description, in that conservatives do value tradition — albeit not for its own sake, but (following Edmund Burke), out of the conviction that systems and institutions that have proven themselves over the course of generations should not be hastily cast aside in favor of the untested (and typically ill-fated) vogue. But ultimately, this is a feature of conservatism rather than its essence.

Conservatism is a response to progressivism. The point of divergence between them relates to the (im)perfectibility of man — a centuries-long debate with theological origins but profound present political implications. Progressives tend to view history in a generally linear fashion: they think that as a result of mankind's essential goodness, or rationality, or else as a result of immutable suprahuman forces, humanity is on a trajectory towards some 'end of history' (the notion of progress is incomprehensible without an end-state. What would constitute progress on an infinite line?).

Insofar as this climax is viewed as utopian and so desirable in nature, progressives often believe it is their responsibility to hasten this outcome, or even try to instantiate their ideal in the here-and-now. They typically view governments as a means to achieve these ends, appealing to some conception of the Good that the state is supposed to realize, often by means of some presumed superior mode of social arrangement.

This is the impulse that undergirded the Enlightenment, Marxism, and myriad other revolutionary movements — and its negation forms the basis for conservatism.

Classical Conservatism

Given their rejection of political perfectionism, conservatives tend to envision a much smaller role for the state. However, unlike (political) libertarians, conservatives emphasize community over the individual. Within communities, people are held to be responsible for, and accountable to, one another, without much need for state interference — typically by upholding traditional values and modes of social organization. Civil rights, civil liberties, and private property, are viewed as essential bulwarks against potential government overreach. The function of the state is not to promote any particular socio-political arrangement, but instead to protect and promote conditions for communities to arrange themselves as they see fit — principally through the enforcement of agreed-upon rules defining relations in and between communities, and by providing a forum for resolving disputes. The state also serves as a vehicle for protecting against outside threats and advancing common interests abroad. However, the scope of such duties is narrow: governments are not responsible for citizens of other countries, and they have no more of a mandate to advance particular ideals or socio-cultural arrangements internationally than they do domestically. Accordingly, the state should avoid costly, risky, or open-ended foreign commitments unless absolutely necessary. It should similarly abstain from jeopardizing public safety, interests or resources, by needlessly threatening or otherwise antagonizing other states.

Other Conservative Strains

Classical conservatism calls for realism and restraint, both domestically and abroad, then. Unfortunately, many contemporary politicians who describe themselves as 'conservative' reflect little of this. So-called 'paleoconservatives' embrace foreign policy restraint, but (often because they wrongly conflate pluralism with relativism) hold that society should be premised more-or-less exclusively upon Christian-derived Western norms and values — in the process providing intellectual cover for xenophobes or people who are otherwise intolerant in regard to immigration and diversity. Many associated with this line of thinking view with suspicion and sometimes contempt attempts by non-WASPs to form enclaves within society to protect or promote their cultural identities, generally holding that minorities have a duty to integrate with the prevailing order: a convenient position to take insofar as this order happens to reflect one's own values and interests.

The self-described 'neoconservatives' are less concerned about social issues, and yet embrace 'progressive absolutism' in terms of foreign policy and national security. They hold that it is the responsibility of national governments to protect and advance the American-centric unipolar world order by virtually any means. These include forcibly spreading liberalism around the world; destroying incompatible political and economic systems and institutions; surveilling and disrupting internal dissent by means of pervasive law enforcement and security apparatuses; and by deploying oversimplified 'good vs evil' narratives that portray any skepticism of or resistance to their agenda as dangerously naive or even outright traitorous.

English to gain permanent foothold as ELF: Norwegian scholar

By Behnaz H. Gholipour

Jane Mattisson Ekstam, Associate Professor, English Literature, Ostfold University, says by the time automatic translation matures as a popular communicative medium, English is likely to have gained a permanent foothold as the lingua franca.

Addressing a workshop on «English as a lingua franca: Implications for the Teaching and Learning of English in a non-native context», Ekstam said in the next one hundred years we shall see if the presence of a global language will eliminate the demand for world translation services, or whether the economics of automatic translation will so undercut the cost of global language learning that the latter will become defunct.

«English will be shaped by its L2 [second language] users, as they will vastly outnumber the 'core' speakers. It is becoming increasingly common, for example, to say "discuss about" (rather than discuss). In Korea and Taiwan, "produkt" has replaced "product",» the scholar told the workshop, sponsored by the Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies.

Speaking to the audience, she said, «There are approximately 1,500 languages on the Internet, [while] 70 percent of all communication on the Internet is in English.»

She added, «The first computer operating systems automatically used English vocabulary and syntax. It seems likely that the influence of English will remain as programs become increasingly sophisticated.»

10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

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

- 1** Prepare to say goodbye to cracked screens as research by the Australian National University (ANU) could help lead to the development of shatter-proof glass for mobile phones.
- 2** Singapore's largest mobile telecommunications company Singtel has announced attaining 1.1Gbps speeds on its 4G LTE network during a trial of licensed-assisted access (LAA) technology with Ericsson.
- 3** Former Facebook executive: social media is ripping society apart. Chamath Palihapitiya, former vice-president of user growth, expressed regret for his part in building tools that destroy 'the social fabric of how society works'
- 4** Apple confirms deal to buy music discovery app Shazam. Apple said Shazam would be a "natural fit" with its Apple Music streaming service and it would help users discover new songs. Apple Music has 27 million users and competes against Spotify Ltd, which has 60 million users. Apple said Shazam's team would be joining the Cupertino company.
- 5** Amazon.com Inc said it was expanding its cloud computing business in China with a new local partner, aiming to win share in an increasingly crowded and highly regulated market. Amazon Web Services (AWS) will start offering customer services based out of the northwestern Chinese region of Ningxia in partnership with local firm Ningxia Western Cloud Data Technology Co Ltd, the U.S. firm said.
- 6** Bitcoin slips to around \$16,300, futures volumes drop. The world's biggest and best-known cryptocurrency hit a record high of \$17,270 on Monday, registering a nearly twenty-fold increase in its price for the year as it drew in millions of new investors.
- 7** The U.S. Federal Communications Commission plans to turn over oversight of internet service providers to another federal agency as it plans to vote on Thursday to revoke the landmark 2015 "net neutrality" rules.
- 8** Singapore launched its first large-scale electric car-sharing program through which the land-scarce city-state hopes to provide commuters with more transport options and steer them away from the need to buy their own cars.
- 9** Taiwan's financial regulator said it had fined Far Eastern International Bank T\$8 million (\$266,524) due to deficiencies related to its SWIFT system hacking incident. In October, Taiwan local media reported that hackers sought to steal some \$60 million from Far Eastern Bank, and all but \$500,000 had been recovered by the bank.
- 10** Amazon's Alexa can now wake you up with music instead of alarms. Your Echo is now a much nicer alarm clock.

Net neutrality: 'father of internet' joins tech leaders in condemning repeal plan

More than 20 internet pioneers and leaders including the "father of the internet", Vint Cerf; the inventor of the world wide web, Tim Berners-Lee; and the Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak have urged the FCC to cancel its vote to repeal net neutrality, describing the plan as "based on a flawed and factually inaccurate" understanding of how the internet works.

"The FCC's rushed and technically incorrect proposed order to repeal net neutrality protections without any replacement is an imminent threat to the internet we worked so hard to create. It should be stopped," said the technology luminaries in an open letter to lawmakers with oversight of the Federal Communications Commission.

The letter refers to the FCC's proposed Restoring Internet Freedom Order, which removes net neutrality protections introduced in 2015 to ensure that internet service providers (ISPs) such as Comcast, AT&T and Verizon would treat all web content and applications equally and not throttle, block or prioritize some content in return for payment.

The FCC's vote on the proposed order is scheduled for 14 December and it is expected to be approved.

"It is important to understand that the FCC's proposed order is based on a flawed and factually inaccurate understanding of Internet technology," the internet pioneers state, adding that the flaws were outlined in detail in a 43-page comment submitted by 200 tech leaders to the FCC in July.

"Despite this comment, the FCC did not correct its misunderstandings."

Over the last 15 years, both Republican and Democratic FCC chairs have supported and enforced the principles of net neutrality, believing it to be important for protecting open markets on the internet. Donald Trump's FCC, headed by the former Verizon lawyer Ajit Pai, plans to break with convention, arguing that it is unnecessary regulation that is preventing ISPs from making money to fund new broadband infrastructure - something the ISPs themselves have denied when speaking to their investors.

The net neutrality rules have broad support from members of the public across the political spectrum, according to multiple polls. More than 22m comments were submitted to the FCC by members of the public in response to Pai's proposal to scrap the rules, indicating that the public is "clearly passionate about protecting the internet". Although the total number was inflated by spam and pre-populated form letters, 98.5% of the unique comments opposed the repeal, according to a study funded by ISPs.

Despite widespread public outcry, the FCC broke with established practice by not holding any public meetings to hear from citizens and experts about the appeal, the letter states.

Other signatories include Mitchell Baker, executive chairwoman of the Mozilla Foundation; Whitfield Diffie and Martin Hellman, pioneers of public-key cryptography; Brewster Kahle, founder of the Internet Archive; and Jennifer Rexford, chair of computer science at Princeton University.

(Source: Guardian)

'We have damaged the environment and we have to do something about it'

Environment has no boundary: Kaveh Madani



"There are a lot of people abroad, waiting and watching closely to see what's going to happen. If I succeed, we might see more people coming back to help the government."

'I'm the representative of my generation, scientists and experts'
Madani who is a Reader (Professor) in Systems Analysis and Policy at the Centre for Environmental Policy of Imperial College London is now on leave of absence and agreed to come to Iran to work in the Department of Environment. Once Madani took office he faced a barrage of criticism from a few environmental activists believing that a scientist must remain a scientist and should not take up office in order to be able to question the government's measures in tackling environmental predicaments.

However, Madani, who himself said that it was a "tough decision", finds himself as the representative of the scientists, experts and his generation who complain all the time that they have no role in the government.

"I don't believe in the fact that a scientist should remain a scientist. Everywhere in the world now we are talking about the societal impacts and public outreach and unless we do those things we are not successful as scientists because we should impact the world and what's a better opportunity than sitting at the right place and making sound decisions."

"But once you take office, the level of bureaucracy and all the constraints and limitations you face might prevent you from implementing good things and then you lose the capacity to at least educate people, and that's why I think some people think that I might be more effective sitting in my office in London rather than Tehran because I might not be able to even do what I was doing before," Madani said.

"But for me, as a scientist, this is also a field study opportunity and to be selfish, I'm enjoying learning new things. I'm someone who has been working on decision making and conflicts and all the things that I'm dealing with today; if I knew those things in theory, now I'm feeling them in action and that's another great thing."

"Here is my calculated risk. Let's say that the chance of success is one percent;

"We definitely have come to a conclusion that what we have damaged over decades cannot be fixed in a few years but what we can change is the level of understanding of the people and their level of commitment and hope to improve the situation and make changes."

but I'm the representative of a generation who complains about having no role in the government, so if I succeed, I might open some doors for people of my age," he highlighted, adding, "I'm the representative of scientists and experts who complain that those who are in charge don't respect science; so if I succeed, there might be chance for experts to join the government."

"I'm the representative of a generation who left the country and the whole country is complaining about losing this generation and brain drain. So if I'm back, that might be a benefit to the society, but more importantly, those who are here might learn that whoever that has left the country is a hater of the country or has fully lost his sense of belonging. We have a lot of people who are outside the country and their heart is still beating much stronger [for their country] than those who are in the country," one of the ten New Faces of Civil Engineering in 2012 explained.

"There are a lot of people abroad, waiting and watching closely to see what's going to happen. If I succeed, we might see more people coming back to help the government. We have had a lot of people coming back to work in industry and make money, so why not having people come back to help the country as we did some 38 years ago in 1979 [after the Islamic revolution]. So if the chance of success is minimal, the expected achievements still justify my decision," he noted.

Assisting in water-related issues
Madani who holds a Ph.D. in Civil and Environmental Engineering from the University of California has mainly directed his focus towards water-related issues.

While he is mainly tasked with improving international cooperation and public engagement, Madani says that he has already got involved in water issues "because this has been an overlooked role."

"The Department of Environment by legislation has a lot of roles to play when it comes to water policy, regulation, protection and allocation. Unfortunately, these have been unpracticed rights and

duties so we've already got involved even though I'm in a separate deputy; I mean it's not related to my deputy but the head has been already sending me to a lot of meetings with the Ministry of Energy on water-related issues and I'm glad that I have taken part in my expertise area," he said.

He further noted that "I'm hoping the Department of Environment claims its water protection rights and this must be one of the reasons for Dr. Kalantari to get me into office."

Addressing water bankruptcy requires 'a change of perspective'

In his articles Madani has blamed water shortage partly on shortsightedness and inefficient management on government's part. Asked if he thinks he can bring about any changes, however small, in the management Madani said that water bankruptcy requires "a change of perspective" and a switch from "supplying-oriented approaches to the demand-oriented approaches".

Madani who proposed the inclusion of the issue of water in the agenda of COP 24 in a statement delivered in the High-Level Segment of United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC) on November 16 in Bonn, said that "I've always said that our water shortage is not because of nature but because of people, it's anthropogenic, it's a socio-economic drought or what I call water bankruptcy, that's my term. Water bankruptcy requires a change of perspective and transition from supply-oriented approaches to demand-oriented ones. We need to cut consumption, cut our demand and fix that and that's what I'm after, that's what I pitch for and that's what I'm trying to promote but in the meantime I'm trying to minimize the anthropogenic effects of bad decisions in the water sector on our wetlands, on our groundwater, on our rivers and so on."

"We have this Persian expression; if you don't spell a word, there is no error and I think that applies here. It is easy to be a commentator and sit in office in London at a university and complain and nag about things and give prescriptions. What's hard is action and I wanted to feel the pain of those who make decisions and try to do things in the real world," says Madani, who has recently been appointed as the vice president of the United Nations Environment Assembly 3 (UNEA-3) on behalf of the Asia-Pacific group.

Islamic world concerned about environment, determined to make changes

Madani who had also attended the 7th Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers in October said that "I'm glad that I made this observation, that the Islamic world is concerned about the environment and is determined to make some changes and understand that this part of the world needs more special attention to environmental matters and we have to play it right; we have to cooperate with the rest of the world on environmental issues."

"Climate change was a big deal in this conference as well as water, unfortunately sand and dust storms were overlooked and we should be stronger when it comes to discussions on that and we should do better and looking at the prizes and the awards that people got I think the Islamic Republic of Iran should be more proactive and should also promote research and the industries involved and active in environmental sectors, so the main outcome was reciting a lot of things that were said before about the environment, our actions, commitments and our determination to make the world a better place not only for the Islamic Republic of Iran or the Muslims but the rest of the world. And we understandably need to work with people of different religions and nationalities if we want to fix the environmental problems because they respect no boundaries no religion or culture," Madani concluded.

Hackers hit key ATM network in crime spree that clears \$10 million

A previously undetected hacker group has netted around \$10 million in heists on at least 20 companies, in some cases by targeting the transfer networks banks use to transfer money, a Moscow-based security firm said Monday.

Members of the MoneyTaker group, named after a piece of custom malware it uses, started its heist spree no later than May 2016. That's when it penetrated an unnamed US bank, according to researchers with Group-IB in a report titled MoneyTaker: 1.5 Years of Silent Operations. The hackers then used their unauthorized access to control a workstation the bank used to connect to the First Data STAR Network, which more than 5,000 banks use to transact payments involving debit cards.

MoneyTaker members also targeted an interbank network known as AWS CBR which interfaces with Russia's central bank. The hackers also stole internal documents related to the SWIFT banking system, although there's



no evidence they have successfully carried out attacks over it.

Last year, online criminals used stolen SWIFT account

credentials to steal \$81 million from a bank in Bangladesh. Group-IB said the amount of information MoneyTaker has amassed on the Star, SWIFT, and AWS CBR networks raised the possibility the group may be planning more heists that target the interbank payment systems.

"A number of incidents with copied documents that describe how to make transfers through SWIFT are being investigated by Group-IB," company officials said in a statement. "Their contents and geography indicate that banks in Latin America may be targeted next by MoneyTaker."

Over the past 18 months, Group-IB has uncovered evidence that MoneyTaker has successfully breached 18 banks or credit unions, two financial services businesses, and one law firm. Two of the targets were located in Russia, one target was in the UK, and the rest were in the US. The average amount stolen in each hack was \$500,000.

(Source: arstechnica)

Planet Mars was made 4.6 billion years ago, claim scientists

The Planet Mars was formed, along with the rest of the Solar System, about 4.6 billion years ago. But exactly how the planets formed remains a subject of debate. Currently, two theories are duking it out for the role of champion.

The first and most widely accepted theory, core accretion, works well with the formation of the terrestrial planets like Mars but has problems with giant planets. The second, the disk instability method, may account for the creation of these giant planets.

Scientists are continuing to study planets in and out of the Solar System in an effort to better understand which of these methods is most accurate.

The leading theory, known as core accretion, is that the Solar System began as a large, lumpy cloud of cold gas and dust, called the solar nebula. The nebula collapsed because of its own gravity and flattened into a spinning disk. Matter was drawn to the center of the disk, forming the sun.

Moons and planets

Other particles of matter stuck together to form clumps called planetesimals. Some of these combined to form asteroids, comets, moons and planets. The solar wind — charged particles streaming out from the sun — swept away the lighter elements, such as hydrogen and helium, leaving behind mostly small, rocky worlds. In the outer regions, however, gas giants made up of mostly hydrogen and helium formed because the solar wind was weaker.

Exoplanet observations seem to confirm



core accretion as the dominant formation process. Stars with more “metals” — a term astronomers use for elements other than hydrogen and helium — in their cores have more giant planets than their metal-poor cousins. According to NASA, core accretion suggests

“In the core accretion scenario, the core of a planet must reach a critical mass before it is able to accrete gas in a runaway fashion,” said the CHEOPS team.

that small, rocky worlds should be more common than the more massive gas giants.

The 2005 discovery of a giant planet with a massive core orbiting the sun-like star HD 149026 is an example of an exoplanet that helped strengthen the case for core accretion.

Theory of core accretion

“This is a confirmation of the core accretion theory for planet formation and evidence that planets of this kind should exist in abundance,” said Greg Henry in a press release. Henry, an astronomer at Tennessee State University, Nashville, detected the dimming of the star.

In 2018, the European Space Agency plans to launch the CHaracterising ExOPlanet Satellite (CHEOPS), which will study exoplanets ranging in sizes from super-Earths to Neptune. Studying these distant worlds may help determine how planets in the Solar System formed.

“In the core accretion scenario, the core of a planet must reach a critical mass before it is able to accrete gas in a runaway fashion,” said the CHEOPS team.

“This critical mass depends upon many physical variables, among the most important of which is the rate of planetesimals accretion.”

Core accretion was first postulated in the late 18th century by Immanuel Kant and Pierre Laplace. Nebula theory helps explain how the planets in our solar system were formed. But with the discovery of “Super-Earth” planets orbiting other stars, a new theory, known as disk instability was proposed.

(Source: space.com)

Forest resilience declines in face of wildfires, climate change

The forests you see today are not what you will see in the future. That’s the overarching finding from a new study on the resilience of Rocky Mountain forests, led by Colorado State University.

Researchers analyzed data from nearly 1,500 sites in five states — Colorado, Wyoming, Washington, Idaho, and Montana — and measured more than 63,000 seedlings after 52 wildfires that burned over the past three decades. They wanted to understand if and how changing climate over the last several decades affected post-fire tree regeneration, a key indicator of forest resilience.

They found sobering results, including significant decreases in tree regeneration following wildfires in the early 21st century, a period markedly hotter and drier than the late 20th century. The research team said that with a warming climate, forests are less resilient after wildfires.

Climate change

“We often talk about climate change and how it will affect us in the future, but the truth is we are already seeing those changes,” said Camille Stevens-Rumann, assistant professor in the Department of Forest and Rangeland Stewardship at CSU. “Disturbances like wildfires are a catalyst for change. In many places, forests are not coming back after fires.”

“What we’ve found is dramatic, even in the relatively short 23-year study period,” she added.

Historically, forests change over time. But the research team said their findings suggest that it will take much longer after a wildfire for sites to return to forests, if they return at all. In one-third of the areas studied, researchers found no seedlings growing. The hardest-hit sites were the warmest and driest, and those where fires burned so severely that few trees survived to provide seed.

“Even if we plant trees in those areas,



as, it’s unlikely to be successful,” said Stevens-Rumann. “We need to start expecting that these landscapes aren’t going to look the same in the future, whether it’s reduced density of trees or no longer a forest.”

One of the big surprises for the team was seeing the data for the average annual water deficit at study sites.

Post-fire years

“In my lifetime, you can see these sites becoming substantially hotter and drier,” she said. “Many forest managers want post-fire years to be cooler and wetter, to help with regeneration, and that’s just not happening anymore, or happening very infrequently.”

What can be done to combat or lessen these effects? Stevens-Rumann said that while trees similar to the ones that burned have typically been planted on a fire-ravaged site, that may no longer be the smartest approach. She’s been meeting with land managers and foresters to discuss what might be better.

“Managers may want to plant species that are adapted to the current and future climate, not the climate of the past,” she said. “There are areas that could support certain tree species but there isn’t any regeneration currently; these are the ideal places to plant after a fire.”

(Source: eurekalert.org)

New Pacific island could resemble ancient Martian volcanoes

In December 2014, an underwater volcano amid the islands of Tonga in the South Pacific erupted. When the eruption ended and ashes settled a month later, a new island had emerged, rising 400 feet above the ocean’s surface.

Scientists unofficially named the island Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai, a concatenation of two older, uninhabited islands it nestles between.

Since then, scientists have been tracking how the new land mass has eroded and shifted. What they have found could make the island a Rosetta Stone to understanding volcanic features on Mars that also appear to have erupted underwater, providing clues about when the red planet was wet several billion years ago.

“We see things that remind us of this kind of volcano at similar scales on Mars,” said Dr. Garvin, the chief scientist at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md. “And literally, there are thousands of them, in multiple regions.”

New findings presented

He and colleagues presented the findings on Monday at a news conference at a meeting of the American Geophysical Union here.

Networks of river channels chiseled into Mars persuasively argue that liquid water once flowed across the red planet, but the current thinking of many planetary scientists is that Mars remained frozen through much of its history, punctuated with episodes of melting and flowing water.

On the side of Mauna Loa volcano in Hawaii, six individuals are living in Mars-like conditions as part of a NASA-funded behavioral research study. We chronicle their mission in 360 video.

While Tonga is in the middle of the ocean, Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai and its neighbors sit on the rim of a large volcano that rises about a mile above the deep ocean floor. Thus the water around the island is shallow, perhaps similar to what existed around the Martian volcanoes.



Since the eruption, satellites have repeatedly viewed the new Tongan island, not much more than a square mile in size, allowing scientists to generate detailed maps of the shifting topography.

Scientists have also made visits to map the surrounding seafloor and walk around for up-close examination. That’s an advantage that Earth scientists have over Mars researchers — they can directly compare what satellites see from orbit with samples they pick up.

Underwater eruptions

Islands formed by explosive underwater eruptions are usually short-lived, the ash washed away by crashing waves. In the initial months of its existence, Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai shifted in shape quickly. Initially oval, the island’s southern shore eroded rapidly, allowing the Pacific Ocean to break through into the lake at the center of the island. Steep walls around the lake appeared in danger of collapse, and it looked as if the island might have been about to vanish.

But then a sandbar formed, sealing off the lake again, and the landscape stabilized.

When conditions are right, chemical reactions with warm water cement volcanic ash into resilient rock, and the scientists speculate that similar reactions may have occurred on Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai. It is only the third such island in the last 150 years to survive more than a few months. They estimate that the island could now last for decades. (Source: The NYT)

Moallem Insurance Co.’s Noticeable Achievements in Field of Insuring Ships’ Body and Machineries

Moallem Insurance Company (MIC) is leader in the country in the field of marine insurance, the Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

The company has managed to get lion’s share of marine insurance market of the country as much as 30 percent (30%) since its establishment which dates back to 23 years ago, the report added.

It should be noted that Moallem Insurance Company was set up as the export and investment insurance company in 1994 with the participation of banking



system and in order to develop export activities and presentation of credit-based insurance coverage against available risks.

The company was renamed into “Moallem Insurance Company” in July 2007 after transferring major stock of the company and based on the decision of new shareholders.

Considering the terms and conditions of the country, Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) purchased stocks of Moallem Insurance Company in order to use potentials available in insurance

industry. Fortunately, the company showed excellent performance in this field successfully, so that the first P&I was formed in insurance sector of the country.

Entrance of this insurance company to the P&I insurance in sanctions period in sanctions period, Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) has been considered as a special success for this insurance company on the one hand and for the national fleet of the country on the other hand, the Public Relations Dept. of the company concluded.

CEO of PGPICO Visits Nouri Petrochemical Co. to Boost Current HSE Activities

Nejadsalim Chief Executive of Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company visited Nouri Petrochemical Company, based in Assaluyeh region on Saturday Dec. 10.

As accompanied by senior managers and directors of the company, Nejadsalim was briefed on the executive activities and performance of the company, the Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

For his part, he expressed his special

thanks to the unflinching efforts of industrious personnel of the company and placed special emphasis on the necessity of precise and accurate observation of safety requirements in implementation of basic repair and maintenance programs in this significant complex.

Turning to observing HSE (Health, Safety and Environment), he said: “Parameters of HSE should be taken into serious consideration meticulously.”

Taheri Chief Executive of Nouri Petrochemical Company was the next speaker who pointed to the basic repair and maintenance of the complex and said: “It is hoped that all activities will be conducted in scheduled date.”

In the end, he urged all personnel and managers of the company to focus on implementing basic repair and maintenance of the complex in the field of HSE (Health, Safety and Environment).



The world’s largest organism is dying

Pando, the world’s largest living organism — and possibly its oldest — is being destroyed by the voracious appetite of mule deer.

Also known as the trembling giant, Pando is a colony of quaking aspen that spans 106 acres (43 hectares) of south-central Utah. Because of an explosion of deer in the area, new sprouts from Pando are eaten before they have a chance to mature, and the venerable organism is at risk of dying out altogether.

“The system is not replacing itself; it’s highly out of balance,” said Paul Rogers, an ecologist at Utah State University and the director of the Western Aspen Alliance.

To the casual observer, Pando looks like an ordinary forest. But each tree shares a common root system and is a genetically identical clone of its forest pals. It’s essentially a forest of one tree, Rogers said.

“What you all think of as trees are actually one living and connected being,” Rogers told Live Science. “Being in this grove or this forest to me is pretty magical.”

Though Pando has often been called the oldest living organism on Earth (with some estimates claiming the stand is upward of 80,000 years old), dating techniques for the colony are so imprecise that no one can say for sure how old the grove is, Rogers said.

“If we had a community of 50,000 people and every one of them was over 80 years of age, we wouldn’t have a very sustainable community,” Rogers said. “That is exactly what we’re looking at with the Pando clone.”

(Source: livescience.com)

Massive whale faces extinction with just 100 breeding females remaining

For decades, whaling ships targeted right whales. Now that they’re protected, they are still victims of human activity, and it may be too late to save them.

Since gaining legal protection from being hunted, the population of North Atlantic right whales has slightly increased. In the 1930’s, there were just over 300 North Atlantic right whales, which is one of three right whale species. Their population has since increased to 450, but they still face a very real possibility of extinction.

In 2017, 17 North Atlantic right whales died. That leaves only 100 breeding females left in the world.

The 17 deaths this year is particularly high, and coincides with a particularly low rate of births, and could be the beginning of the end. The World Wildlife Fund’s page on north Atlantic right whales says that they show “no signs of recovery despite protection.”

Right whales migrate annually from along the Atlantic waters that border eastern Canada all the way down to the coast of North Carolina.

However, new research monitoring their calls in these locations has found that they are starting to roam further north.



Their migration route passes through fishing areas, where they sometimes collide with fishing boats and become entangled in nets and traps. Those encounters make up a large portion of their untimely deaths.

Collisions with fishing boats and entanglement in gear can stress them, slow them down and kill them. Even if they survive the encounters, the stress makes them less likely to bear healthy offspring. Fecal-analysis research published in the journal *Endangered Species Research* shows that entangled whales show higher levels of stress hormones.

(Source: Newsweek)

Tasmanian tiger doomed long before humans came along

The Tasmanian tiger was doomed long before humans began hunting the enigmatic marsupial, scientists said Tuesday, with DNA sequencing showing it was in poor genetic health for thousands of years before its extinction.

Scientists genetically mapped the animal — also known as a thylacine — using the genome of a pup preserved more than a century ago in a jar.

The research revealed the creature began to undergo a decline in genetic diversity more than 70,000 years ago, leaving it less resilient to environmental change even before Aborigines are believed to have first inhabited the continent 65,000 years ago.

“Our hope is that there is a lot of the thylacine can tell us about the genetic basis of extinction to help other species,” said University of Melbourne biologist Andrew Pask, co-author of a study published in *Nature Ecology and Evolution*.

Pask added the research may eventually enable scientists to clone the Tasmanian tiger and bring it back from the dead.

“As this genome is one of the most complete for an extinct species, it is technically the first step to ‘bringing the thylacine back’, but we are still a long way off that possibility.”

They survived in the southern island state of Tasmania until 1936 when the last known one died in captivity at Hobart Zoo after the species was hunted to extinction in the wild.

Scientists found the genetics of the animal to be more closely related to fellow Australian marsupial the Tasmanian devil than the dog-like dingo with whom it shared many physical features.

The physical likeness of the two animals is among the best examples of what scientists call “convergent evolution”, whereby animals distantly related evolve to look similar as they adapt to the same environment.

(Source: phys.org)

Majlis makes amendment to budget law for quake-hit victims

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Majlis (Iranian parliament) has agreed to introduce an amendment to the current [Iranian calendar] year's budget law to improve living conditions of the victims of recent quakes across the country.

The general outline of the amendment is now adopted and in case it goes into effect it will significantly improve living conditions of people hit by the recent quakes over the past month, according to IRIB.



Slashing loan interest rate to zero and reconstructing the razed buildings are of the articles of the proposed budget amendment.

Consecutive earthquakes have shaken different provinces of Iran since November 12. The magnitude 7.3 temblor which struck the western province of Kermanshah was one of the most powerful and destructive quakes which has hit Iran over the past 30 years. It claimed more than 570 lives, left more than 12,000 injured and thousands displaced.

Fortunately the rest of the quakes namely the magnitude 3.8 Tehran earthquake, the magnitude 6.1 Kerman quake, the magnitude 4.9 Bushehr quake, and the magnitude 4.8 Gilan quake didn't cause any fatalities but caused some damages to the buildings in some other areas.

Second strong quake rocks Kerman in month

SOCIETY TEHRAN — An earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale jolted Hejidak village, southeastern province of Kerman, on Tuesday.

Fortunately there were no fatalities linked with the earthquake, but it caused injuries to some 17 individuals.



It happened at 12:15 p.m. local time and at a depth of 10 kilometers beneath the earth surface 57 kilometers from city of Kerman, the provincial capital.

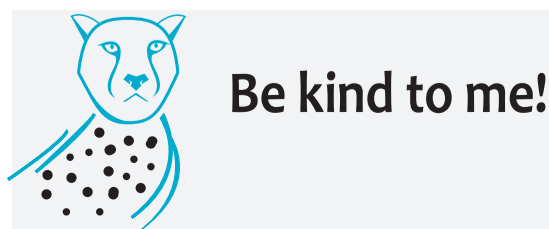
This is the second time over the past month that a powerful earthquake hits the province. A quake measuring 6.1 on the Richter scale struck the same village on December 1.

LEARN ENGLISH

What a Bargain!

A: Hello. May I help you?
 B: Yeah, this dress is really nice! How much is it?
 A: That one is one hundred and fifty dollars.
 B: One hundred and fifty dollars? What about this other one over here?
 A: That's one hundred and forty dollars.
 B: Hmm...that's a bit **out of my price range**. Can you give me a better **deal**?
 A: This is an **exclusive** design by DaMarco! It's a **bargain** at that price.
 B: Well, I don't know. I think I'll **shop around**.
 A: Okay, okay, how about one hundred dollars?
 B: That's still more than I wanted to spend. What if I take both dresses?
 A: Okay, I can give you a special **discount**, just because you seem like a nice person. One hundred and ninety dollars for both.
 B: I don't know... It's still a bit **pricy**...Thanks anyway.
 A: Okay, my final price! One hundred dollars for both! That's two for the price of one. That's my last **offer**!
 B: Great! You've got a deal!

Key vocabulary
out of my price range: too expensive, can't afford it
deal: agreement to buy something
exclusive: not common, unique
bargain: a good deal, a cheap price
shop around: look in many stores and try to find the best price
discount: a lowering of the price of something
pricy: expensive
offer: an opportunity to buy something at a low price
Supplementary vocabulary
promotion: a special discount or offer on goods and services
cash: money in the form of coins and bills
credit: card that is used to buy things and pay at a later time
negotiate: to discuss and fight for a better price
freebie: a free item that is usually given to promote a product
 (Source: irlanguage.com)



Iran, Netherlands seek increased environmental co-op

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Iran's Department of Environment chief Isa Kalantari held a meeting in Tehran on Monday with Dutch ambassador Susanna Terstal, discussing ways to boost environmental cooperation.

Iran faces some environmental challenges — namely water shortage, air pollution and sand and dust storms — which need to be tackled through national and international measures.

"The importance of water and soil resources call for greater cooperation in sharing related knowledge and experience in order to preserve them," DOE official website quoted Kalantari as saying.

"Population growth has resulted in an increasing need for food, consequently putting more pressure on water and soil resources. So planning for preservation of these resources along with providing global food security has grave importance and Iran is eager to use the experiences of successful countries in this regard".

Iran is interested in using the practical experiences and strategies of European countries, especially the Netherlands, for combating air pollution, Kalantari highlighted.

After the appointment of an Iranian official as the vice president for UN Environment Assembly on behalf of Asia-Pacific group, Iran is increasingly eager to expand regional and international environmental cooperation, especially on sand and dust storms, deputy environment chief Kaveh Madani said.

The Iranian officials also expressed their interest on the issue of green businesses and hoped for more collaboration especially on the issue of e-waste management.

The Dutch ambassador, for her part, touched upon the two countries' long history of cooperation and added "[since] climate change and temperature rise affects all countries, the efficient management of water and soil resources grow in special importance and it can be a major topic for expansion of environmental cooperation among nations".

E-waste management, effective management of water



Dutch ambassador Susanna Terstal (L), Environment chief Isa Kalantari (C), and Kaveh Madani

and soil resources, combating sand and dust storms, development of green businesses and expansion of trainings, researches and scientific activities are among the issues that the Netherlands seeks cooperation with Iran, Terstal noted.

Highlighting the importance of educating kids as the future decision makers and managers, she emphasized on the role of women in this regard saying "it has grave importance to provide environmental education for women since they have a fundamental role in nurturing the future generation".

Increasing the costs of using personal cars through various measures, quantitative and qualitative development of public transportation, fostering the culture of using bicycles — especially e-bikes — and establishing cycling routes and parking in the cities are among the major actions of the Netherlands to combat air pollution, the ambassador said.

Terstal invited Iran's environment officials to visit her country, to acquaint with its various environmental measures and take major steps toward expansion of relations between the two nations.

Global warming will weaken wind power, study predicts

Wind farms are key to tackling climate change but warming will significantly cut the power of the wind across northern mid-latitudes, including the U.S., the UK and the Mediterranean, according to new research. However, some places, including eastern Australia, will see winds pick up.

The research is the first global study to project the impact of temperature rises on wind energy and found big changes by the end of the century in many of the places hosting large numbers of turbines.

Wind farms have grown more than fivefold in the last decade and plunging costs have made them a key way of reducing carbon emissions from fossil fuel burning. But in the central US, for example, the power of the wind could fall by nearly a fifth.

"We found some substantial changes in wind energy," said Kristopher Karnauskas at the University of Colorado Boulder, U.S. "But it does not mean we should not invest in wind power." It does mean such changes need to be taken into account in planning future wind farms, he said, and also in assessing how much wind farms overall can cut global emissions.

The research, published in the journal *Nature Geoscience*, used the same climate models and projected future emissions as the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Losses of wind energy stretched from the central U.S. to the UK, Russia and Japan for both medium and high emissions scenarios. If emissions remain high in the future, wind energy increases were also seen a smaller number of regions.

The biggest fall was in Japan, where wind farm building is just beginning to accelerate, with wind energy projected to fall by 58kW, or about 10%. The central US was second with 49kW but because the average current winds are generally weaker than in Japan, this represents a larger 17% drop. The UK is anticipated to fall by 36kW, or 5%.

However, the wind energy in eastern Australia would jump if there is strong global warming in future. "That is the biggest increase on the whole map," said Karnauskas. Here, wind energy would rise by 48kW, or 23%. Eastern Brazil and west Africa would also see big rises, 35% and 40% respectively.

The reason these coastal areas would see increased wind energy is that the world's land is warming faster than the ocean and that difference is the energy source for those winds. "The more it warms, ironically, the more it increases the wind power there," said Karnauskas.

In the northern mid-latitudes, however, the major driver of wind is the temperature difference between the Arctic and

the tropics, and the Arctic is warming very rapidly, reducing that difference.

The scientists had to convert the wind speeds predicted by the climate models into wind energy, because temperature, pressure and humidity all affect the power of the wind. "More dense air is going to blow harder on a wind turbine," said Karnauskas.

Prof Brian Hoskins, at Imperial College London, UK, and not involved in the study, said: "It is important to try to estimate how climate change is likely to influence all our activities. This is a good example."

The new study analysed average monthly wind over broad areas and Hoskins said smaller scale changes could be more important for particular wind farms. Dave MacLeod, at the University of Oxford, said other higher resolution work had found different results in the US.

Karnauskas acknowledges the uncertainties and said the work provides a starting point for more focused work: "It points to places that need detailed studies. Until now, we were really missing a consistent global view of the issue."

(Source: The Guardian)

Losses of wind energy stretched from the central U.S. to the UK, Russia and Japan for both medium and high emissions scenarios. If emissions remain high in the future, wind energy increases were also seen a smaller number of regions.

Macron to offer U.S. climate change scientists grants

French President Emmanuel Macron is preparing to award a number of U.S. based climate scientists, multi-year, all-expenses-paid grants to relocate to France.

The "Make Our Planet Great Again" grants are part of Mr. Macron's efforts to counter U.S. President Donald Trump on the climate change front.

The French leader announced a competition for the projects in June, hours after Mr. Trump declared he would withdraw the U.S. from the 2015 global accord reached in Paris to reduce climate-damaging emissions.

Mr. Macron is unveiling the first winners at a start-up incubator in Paris called Station F, where Microsoft and smaller tech companies are announcing projects to

finance activities aimed at reducing emissions.

They are aimed at giving new impetus to the Paris accord and finding new funding to help governments and businesses meet its goals.

More than 50 world leaders are expected in Paris for the One Planet Summit, co-hosted by the United Nations and the World Bank. Mr. Trump was not invited.

Initially aimed at American researchers, the research grants were expanded to other non-French climate scientists, according to organizers. Candidates need to be known for working on climate issues, have completed a thesis and propose a project that would take between three to five years.

The time frame would cover Mr. Trump's current presidential term.

The applicant list was whittled down to 90 finalists in September, the majority of them Americans or based in the US, according to French national research agency CNRS.

About 50 projects will be chosen overall, and funded with 60 million euros (£53 million) from the state and French research institutes.

However, some French researchers have complained that Macron is showering money on foreign scientists at a time when they have been pleading for more support for domestic higher education.

(Source: Reuters)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

New subway lines to become operational

Three new subway lines will be fully operational by summer, the managing director of Tehran Urban and Suburban Railway Operation Company said on Friday.

Subway tunnels to the total length of 100 kilometers and 24 subway stations have been completed in the current Iranian calendar year, ending on March 20, 2017, YJC quoted Habil Darvish as saying.

Tehran Municipality has spent more than 60 trillion rials (nearly \$1.5 million) on subway development projects over the current year, he added. He went on to say that soon 100 kilometers of subway line will come into operation in Tehran and the plans for subway lines of 9 and 10 will be discussed afterward.

پرونده خطوط ۶،۷ و ۸ مترو، سال آینده بسته خواهد شد

مدیر عامل شرکت متروی تهران گفت: پرونده خطوط ۶،۷ و ۸ مترو قبل از شهریور سال ۹۶ بسته خواهد شد.

به گزارش باشگاه خبرنگاران جوان هابیل درویش بیان داشت: امسال ۲۴ ایستگاه مترو را افتتاح کرده ایم و بیش از ۱۰۰ کیلومتر و تونل ساخته شده است.

درویش ادامه داد: امسال بیش از ۶ هزار میلیارد تومان توسط شهرداری تهران در پروژه های مترو هزینه شده است.

مدیر عامل شرکت مترو تهران با اشاره به اینکه به زودی ۱۰۰ کیلومتر مترو در شهر تهران به بهره برداری می رسد، تصریح کرد: برای پروژه خط ۹ و ۱۰ نیز مطالعاتی در حال انجام است.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"anti-"

■ **Meaning:** against
 ■ **For example:** This guide is intended to serve as an educational tool for **antibiotic** use at the hospital.

PHRASAL VERB

Ebb away

■ **Meaning:** to gradually decrease
 ■ **For example:** Linda's enthusiasm began to ebb away.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Bitten by the bug

■ **Explanation:** if you develop a sudden interest or enthusiasm for something, you are bitten by the bug
 ■ **For example:** My dad decided to take up golf and was immediately bitten by the bug.

Armed struggle is new approach of Intifada

Iran's General Soleimani sends Palestine support message

INTERNATIONAL A new intifada (uprising) began in the World after U.S. President Donald Trump's recognition of al-Quds as the "capital" of Israel.

On December 6, Trump sparked international outrage as he declared that Washington was recognizing Jerusalem al-Quds as the "capital" of Israel.

Meanwhile, commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Major General Qassem Soleimani voiced Iran's readiness to provide the Palestinian Islamic resistance forces with whatever support is necessary in defending Al-Aqsa Mosque in the holy city of al-Quds.

In a phone conversation with commanders of Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades - the armed wing of Hamas Movement - and commander of the Islamic Jihad Brigades in Gaza, Major General Soleimani expressed the Islamic Republic's readiness to fully support the Palestinian resistance forces.

The top general noted that the other resistance forces in the region are also ready to defend the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The conversation came against a backdrop of protests across the Palestinian territories following U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to recognize the city of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the new capital of Israel.

The secretary general of the Lebanese Hezbollah also called for a new intifada (uprising).

"We support the call for a new Palestinian intifada (uprising) and escalating the resistance," Nasrallah said. "It is the biggest, most important and gravest response to the American decision."

Nasrallah, who described Trump's move as "a major historical injustice".

Over 90 percent of Palestinians oppose Trump move

The Palestinians overwhelmingly oppose President Donald Trump's recognition of Al-Quds as Israel's capital and have little faith in the U.S. or their Arab allies, according to a poll released Tuesday.

The poll found that 91 percent of respondents consider Trump's declaration last week to be a threat to Palestinian interests.



Forty-five percent believe the Palestinians should cut all contacts with the U.S., submit a complaint to the International Criminal Court and launch an armed uprising against Israel.

In Tuesday's survey, 72 percent of respondents said they believe the Trump administration will not submit a peace plan, while just 24 percent think it will. Eighty percent of respondents said they do not trust the Saudi role and 70 percent do not trust Egypt. Egypt has close security ties with Israel, and the Saudis are believed to have covert ties with Israel in an alliance against Iran.

Asked about the most effective means of establishing a Palestinian state, 44 percent called for armed resistance, while just 23 percent believe nonviolent resistance is most effective. Three months ago, only 35 percent supported armed resistance.

The poll also found widespread dissatisfaction with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, with 70 percent of the public wanting him to resign.

If new elections were held, it said that his rival, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, would defeat him by a 53 percent to 41 percent margin.

Chileans gather outside U.S. embassy to protest Trump's al-Quds move

Chileans have staged a large rally in the capital, Santiago, in protest at U.S. President Donald Trump's recognition of al-Quds as the "capital" of Israel.

Around 2,000 people demonstrated in front of the U.S. embassy in the capital, waving Palestinian flags and holding banners reading "Trump, Jerusalem [al-Quds] is Palestine."

Police used water cannon to disperse the protesters, who blocked city streets.

The rally was organized by members of Chile's Palestinian community, one of the largest in Latin America.

On December 6, Trump sparked international outrage as he declared that Washington was recognizing Jerusalem al-Quds as the "capital" of Israel and that he had instructed his administration to begin the process of moving the American embassy from Tel Aviv to the ancient city.

Trump's move upended decades of American diplomacy, causing an overwhelming global diplomatic backlash and sparking protests by Palestinians and their clashes with Israeli forces.

Jerusalem al-Quds remains at the core

of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with Palestinians hoping that the eastern part of the city would eventually serve as the capital of a future independent Palestinian state.

Putin, Erdogan warn U.S. move risks escalating tensions

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin has concluded a whirlwind one-day regional tour with a stop in Turkey, where he joined his Turkish counterpart in criticizing a U.S. decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Before landing in Ankara on Monday to meet Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Putin made an unscheduled visit to war-torn Syria, where he ordered Russian troops to start withdrawing, and Egypt, to hold planned talks with President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

His lightning visit to the region highlighted Russia's expanding ties with key players in the Middle East, analysts said.

It also came amid growing anger in the region and the Muslim world over U.S. President Donald Trump's decision about declaring Jerusalem the capital of Israel. The shift in US policy was also widely condemned by Washington's allies.

Speaking alongside Erdogan after their meeting in the Turkish capital, Putin said Jerusalem's status should be settled through direct talks between Palestinians and Israel.

"Both Russia and Turkey think the decision of the U.S. to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel is not helping the situation in the Middle East," he said during a press conference.

"It is destabilizing the region and wiping out the prospect of peace," added Putin.

Erdogan said he was "pleased" by Putin's stand, and condemned Israel over the deaths of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories as protests against Trump's plan continue for the sixth day there.

Palestinians see occupied East Jerusalem as the capital of their future state.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (IOC) is scheduled to discuss the issue in Istanbul, Turkey's largest city, on Wednesday.

Erdogan said the summit would be a "turning point" on the crisis and Russia promised to send a representative.

France hosting climate summit, Trump not invited

French President Emmanuel Macron is hosting a United Nations (UN) climate summit in Paris to discuss financing issues for a landmark climate deal clinched two years ago.

Leaders from around the world will attend the One Planet Summit to be held on Ile Seguin, an island on the Seine River, southwest of Paris, amid tight security.

Some 3,100 security personnel will be patrolling around the capital for the gathering, and extra patrol boats will be sailing along the river.

The United Nations (UN)'s chief, Antonio Guterres, World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, Mexico's President Enrique Pena Nieto, UK Prime Minister Theresa May, Spain's Premier Mariano Rajoy, and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker will be among the attendees.

The United States, which under its new president has initiated a withdrawal from the climate deal, will be represented by an embassy official as President Donald Trump has not been invited.

Trump announced his decision to withdraw the U.S.

from the historic 2015 Paris climate accord on limiting carbon emissions in June.

The deal is aimed at capping global warming at "well under" two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and 1.5 degrees Celsius if possible.

A cash crisis will top the agenda at the summit, where world leaders will discuss financing issues.

Analysts have warned that without trillions of dollars of investment in clean energy, the deal's goal will remain a pipe dream.

UN climate chief Patricia Espinosa said political action "will not be enough if we do not update and reset the global finance architecture and make all development low-emission, resilient, and sustainable."

Mohamed Adow of Christian Aid, which represents poor country interests at the UN climate forum in Paris, said, "The missing piece of the jigsaw is the funding to help the world's poorer countries access clean energy so they don't follow the fossil fuel-powered path of the rich world."

Macron hopes Trump will change his mind

On Monday, Macron reminded Trump of his responsibility toward history over his decision to withdraw political and financial support for the deal.

"I'm sorry to say that, it doesn't fly, so, so sorry but I think it is a big responsibility in front of the history, and I'm pretty sure that my friend President Trump will change his mind in the coming months or years, I do hope," Macron said in an interview aired on CBS.

"It's extremely aggressive to decide on its own just to leave, and no way to push the others to renegotiate because one decided to leave the floor," he said.

Climate activists demonstrate at summit

At the beginning of the summit, a few hundred activists protested in front of the domed Pantheon monument on Paris' Left Bank.

The protesters unfurled a massive sheet that looked like a wave of oil and held a huge banner that read "Not one more euro for energies of the past."

(Source: agencies)

Austria: 1 dead, 21 hurt in explosion at natural gas plant

An explosion Tuesday at a major natural gas facility near Austria's border with Slovakia left one person dead and 21 injured, and caused some gas flow disruptions to other countries, authorities said.

One person was seriously injured and 20 others slightly hurt in the morning blast at the plant in Baumgarten an der March, east of Vienna, police said. No one was in a life-threatening condition. The facility's operator said all the victims were Austrian.

The explosion set off a fire, which operator Gas Connect said was quickly contained and completely extinguished by mid-afternoon. The facility was "shut down in a controlled state and is offline," the company said.

Police wrote on Twitter that the explosion was triggered by a "technical cause," but didn't elaborate and said that local authorities are investigating. Gas Connect said it also suspects an unspecified technical fault.

Gas Connect describes the Baumgarten plant, where pipelines bringing gas from Russia, Norway and other countries connect and gas is compressed and cooled, as one of Europe's most important gas supply hubs.

"Austria's natural gas supply can be covered for the foreseeable future," the company said on its website. However, "transit through Austria to the south and southeast regions is currently negatively impacted," it added.

Neighboring Italy's Economic Development Ministry declared an emergency after the explosion interrupted the flow of natural gas to the country, but said Italy's supply of gas would be ensured by existing stockpiles.

Italy's SNAM natural gas transport network said flows could resume in the course of the day if it is confirmed that no transport infrastructure was damaged.

(Source: AP)

Trump wants tightened immigration laws after NYC attack

U.S. President Donald Trump has said America must "fix" its immigration system following a bomb attack in New York City, which has left at least four people injured.

Trump called on Congress to revise the country's chain migration policy, which allows immigrants to sponsor other relatives' entry into the U.S., in a White House statement on Monday.

"Today's terror suspect entered our country through extended-family chain migration, which is incompatible with national security," he said.

"America must fix its lax immigration system, which allows far too many dangerous, inadequately vetted people to access our country."

Trump also pleaded for U.S. lawmakers to increase the country's number of immigration officers, enhance officers' powers relating to arrest and detention and "end fraud and abuse in our immigration system".

"Those convicted of engaging in acts of terror deserve the strongest penalty allowed by law, including the death penalty in appropriate cases," he added.

The U.S. Supreme Court granted permission for President Trump's administration to fully enforce the third version of a controversial travel ban prohibiting people



from six Muslim-majority countries from entering the country on December 4.

The suspect in Monday's attack, 27-year-old Akayed Ullah, relocated to the U.S. from Bangladesh in 2011.

According to authorities, he entered the country on an F43 visa issued on the basis he has a family connection

to an American citizen.

The Department of Homeland Security has confirmed he is a legal, permanent resident of the U.S.

Ullah is alleged to have carried out the attack using an improvised low-tech explosive device strapped to his body.

An NYPD spokesman told Al Jazeera that the explosion occurred in the area of the Port Authority Bus Terminal, near 42nd Street and 8th Avenue, which is also close to Times Square.

Three bystanders, and the suspect, suffered non-life-threatening injuries from the blast, officials have said.

Bangladesh's embassy in Washington, DC has condemned the assault.

"[The] Government of Bangladesh is committed to its declared policy of 'Zero Tolerance' against terrorism," the embassy said in a statement on Monday.

"A terrorist is a terrorist irrespective of his or her ethnicity or religion, and must be brought to justice."

Police are yet to comment on the suspect's motive and have announced they will be conducting a full investigation into the explosion, which was also caught on CCTV.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Kremlin: We see Trump's tweets as official statements

Tweets by U.S. President Donald Trump are viewed in Moscow as his official position and read by his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, the Kremlin said Tuesday.

A prolific user of Twitter before he was elected late last year, Trump has continued to use the social media platform to voice his views on policy and world affairs since moving into the White House.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Tuesday it was not his place to comment on Trump's actions, but added: "In any case, everything which is published from his authorized Twitter account is perceived by Moscow as his official statement."

"Naturally, it is reported to Putin along with other information about official statements by politicians," Peskov said, adding that Putin was not a Twitter user himself.

Trump's activity on Twitter have previously cause controversy. His tweets sparked outrage in Britain last month and a sharp rebuke of Prime Minister Theresa May when he retweeted anti-Islam videos from a British far-right group.

(Source: Reuters)

400,000 children in DR Congo could die from hunger: UNICEF

The United Nations Tuesday warned that more than 400,000 children in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are severely malnourished and could die within months without emergency intervention.

The crisis - the latest to hit the poverty-stricken, strife-torn central African country - is unfolding in the vast region of Kasai, the UN's children fund UNICEF said.

An 18-month-long combination of violence, mass displacement and slumping agricultural output are having a devastating impact on the very young, it said.

"At least 400,000 children under five ... are suffering from severe acute malnutrition and could die in 2018 if they are not urgently reached with life-saving health and nutrition interventions," it said bluntly.

The children are the neediest of more than three-quarters of a million who are badly malnourished, even though the security situation in some parts has stabilized and displaced people are starting to return home.

"This nutrition crisis and food insecurity in the Kasai region follows the displacement of thousands of families who have been living for months in very harsh conditions," said Tajudeen Oye-wale, Unicef's acting representative in the DRC.

"The true scale of the problem is becoming clear as people are returning home in some areas where the security situation has improved and health services have started functioning again." The DRC - a country nearly twice the area of Britain, France and Germany combined - has a long history of violence, especially in its volatile east.

Until recently, the diamond-rich Kasai region was deemed a relative haven.

The situation changed traumatically in 2016, when a tribal chieftain known as the Kamwina Nsapu, who had rebelled against President Joseph Kabila's regime in Kinshasa and its local representatives, was killed.

According to UN figures, clashes between local groups and government troops have led to several thousand deaths and around 1.4 million people have fled their homes, leaving fields untended.

The catalogue of alleged violence includes extrajudicial killings, rapes, torture and the use of child soldiers, along with the torching of villages and the systematic destruction of schools, public buildings and clinics.

Security in some parts of Kasai has improved recently, but food shortages will haunt the region right up until next June, because the planting seasons for 2017 have been lost, UNICEF said.

"Families have little harvest from their own land and nothing to sell at the markets," it said.

UNICEF, which has been intervening in the Kasai crisis since January, also said the region's health infrastructure had been devastated.

"Approximately 220 health centers were destroyed, looted or damaged, leading to a weakening of the health delivery system, reduced access to healthcare and an increased risk in the spread of communicable diseases like measles," it said.

(Source: AFP)

English to gain permanent foothold as ELF: Norwegian scholar

She used a humorous language to extend the question, «I wonder what would have happened if Bill Gates of Microsoft had grown up speaking Chinese?»

The scholar further added, «The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost.»

She said that the African should aim at fashioning out "an English" which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience.

«... I feel that English will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings (Morning Yet on Creation Day).»

Professor Ekstam holds Ph.D from Lund University (2000). The title of her thesis is «Knowledge and Survival in the Novels of Thomas Hardy» (Lund University Press, 2002). She addresses the relationship between education and survival in an increasingly modernized world.

She specializes in English literature, Canadian literature, British culture, and academic writing in English. She works closely with Norwegian Ostfeld University's teacher training programs.

She has undertaken teaching at the doctoral level and also supervised doctoral students of English Literature. She has served on a number of doctoral grading committees and examined doctoral theses in English Literature.

With respect to research, her areas of expertise include nineteenth-century British literature, modern Canadian literature, modern detective fiction set in World War One or its aftermath, intercultural influences on writing, reading in English, and written feedback.

Behnaz H. Gholipour, the author of the report, is a PhD candidate of TEFL at Allameh Tabataba'i University.

Arsene Wenger: Post-match celebrations can be 'offensive'

Arsene Wenger has criticised exuberant post-match celebrations after Manchester City and United clashed following the Manchester derby on Sunday.

Arsenal manager Wenger said that he understood why the celebrations happened, but would prefer the celebrations to be less over the top. Wenger said:

"It is part of the intensity. It can go overboard. It happened to us. It happened to us. Hopefully you commit 100 per cent to the pitch and are an angel after. 'I don't know what happened really. It is difficult to take to see the 100 per cent celebration on the other side. It is an experience that's a little bit offensive.'"

Arsenal famously came to blows with Manchester United when they lost their undefeated league run in 2004, when Cesc Fabregas threw pizza at Alex Ferguson.

Wenger referenced his time in Japan where celebrations can be more muted: "That's why I admired sumo in Japan because the guy who wins does not show his happiness out his respect for his opponent. 'Is it something we can copy? I don't think so. It's not part of our culture.'"

(Source: Eurosport)

Oscar Pistorius suffers bruise in prison fight

Jailed South African track star Oscar Pistorius suffered a bruise in a fight with another inmate over the use of a phone in prison where he is serving a sentence for murdering his girlfriend, a prison spokesman said on Tuesday.

Fellow prisoners were angered by a long phone call he made and it led to a fight, local media reported.

"Oscar sustained a minor bruise. It was so minor it didn't need any form of treatment," said Singabakho Nxumalo, a spokesman at the Department of Correctional Services. He said authorities were investigating last Wednesday's incident.

Pistorius is serving 13 years and five months after the Supreme Court last month more than doubled his sentence for the murder of his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp in 2013.

Pistorius won six Paralympic gold medals and was known as the "Blade Runner" for his use of carbon-fibre prosthetics.

(Source: Mirror)

Serena hints at return, says 'be excited'

American Serena Williams dropped a large hint that she could soon be back on court competing when she posted an Instagram photo of a pair of dazzling gold and white tennis shoes.

Williams, who won her 23rd grand slam singles title at last year's Australian Open before taking time out to have her first child, has entered next month's tournament in Melbourne.

"Be excited. Be very excited..." the 36-year-old said in the post which attracted 135,000 likes in the space of an hour.

Williams gave birth to Alexis Olympia Ohanian Jr. in September and was married to Alexis Ohanian last month.

Few female players have won grand slams after taking a break to start a family, although Kim Clijsters won the 2009 U.S. Open in her third tournament back after having a daughter.

Australians Evonne Goolagong and Margaret Court also managed it. Court's 24 grand slam singles titles remain a record although only 11 of them were in the professional era.

(Source: Reuters)

Bayern planning 'serious talks' with Robben, Ribery



Bayern Munich plan to hold "serious talks" with experienced wingers Arjen Robben and Franck Ribery before the season ends, chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge has confirmed.

The duo will be out of contract at the end of the campaign, with Robben, who turns 34 in January, stating last month that retirement could be an option for him.

Ribery, meanwhile, has expressed a desire to keep playing for up to three more years and to retire at Bayern, though he would likely have to be content with a squad role should he remain at the Allianz Arena.

The Frenchman has won seven Bundesliga titles – one more than Robben – and both were key members of the 2012-13 treble-winning side, and Rummenigge was keen to emphasize their importance to the Bavarian giants.

"Franck and Arjen both have a big history here and we know what we have with them. Both are very important for us," the chairman told TZ.

"But it is important how they will continue. We definitely won't decide that in near future but there will be serious talks. Let's say in early spring."

It looks likely that Robben and Ribery will have more competition to contend with should that stay at Bayern next season, with Serge Gnabry set to form part of the squad next year after his loan to Hoffenheim finishes.

"It is not planned that Serge Gnabry will stay at Hoffenheim. We plan to bring him back after this season and then integrate him," said Rummenigge.

"Despite the injury he had we are very satisfied with his performances so far. We especially remember his two goals against [RB] Leipzig."

(Source: Goal)

Diego Maradona statue provokes mirth on social media



It's been quite the year for football's gods being honored with statues -- not least in the reaction they have provoked.

Famously known for his "Hand of God" goal against England in the 1986 World Cup, Diego Maradona is the latest football great to be immortalized, this time with a 12-foot statue in India.

The Argentine was on hand for the bust's recent unveiling in Kolkata.

The bronze representation is of a youthful Maradona, with a head of hair that appears to make him look more like one of the Beatles than a footballer, holding aloft the World Cup trophy.

Almost single handed, the Argentine guided his country to their 1986 World Cup success with a series of stunning individual performances.

"I am not god of football but a simple footballer," said Maradona after the unveiling. "It's amazing to have my statue here."

However, the statue has provoked plenty of mirth on social media, with Maradona's visage prompting comparisons with singer Susan Boyle, grandmas and a youthful Roy Hodgson, who now manages English Premier League club Crystal Palace.

'Total bust'

Earlier this year Portuguese artist Emanuel Santos designed a sculpture of Real Madrid star Cristiano Ronaldo's head to commemorate an airport being renamed after him.

Some social media users said the bust looked more like other athletes, obscure art and the character Sloth from the film "The Goonies." It was like something from a horror movie, one football podcast joked on Twitter.

2017 has been a year when Ronaldo has had not one, but two busts of himself unveiled. The good news for the Portuguese star is the second one actually looks like him.

Situated at Real's Santiago Bernabéu Stadium in Ma-



ดริด, Spain, the bronze figure -- made by famous Spanish sculptor Jose Antonio Navarro Arteaga -- shows a more striking likeness of Ronaldo with naturalistic eyes dreamily looking into the distance, thick arched brows, a beauty mark resting above lifelike curved lips and perfectly coiffed hair, among other details.

Maradona, who is now 57 years old, is one of the greatest players in soccer history, having helped Napoli win two Italian league titles after a difficult two-year stay at Barcelona

- both clubs signed him for world-record fees.
- he was thrown out of the 1994 World Cup after testing positive for ephedrine -- and he suffered from subsequent health problems.

There's another statue of Maradona in his former club Boca Juniors' museum. Unveiled in 2006, the fiberglass and cement bust was made by sculptor Elizabeth Eichhorn.

(Source: CNN)

Guardiola: Man City players did not over-celebrate win at Old Trafford



Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola says he "encouraged" his side to celebrate Sunday's 2-1 win at Manchester United, but denies they went over the top.

United manager Jose Mourinho had milk thrown at him outside the Old Trafford dressing rooms after objecting to City's celebrations.

Asked if his players went too far, Guardiola said: "No. Definitely not."

"We were happy. We won a derby against Manchester United, one of the best rivals we have."

City's players initially celebrated Sunday's victory in front of their fans, and coaching staff tried to persuade Guardiola to join them, but he refused.

After the players and staff headed down the tunnel, it is understood Mourinho complained outside the visitors' dressing room as he made his way to interviews.

In the ensuing row, the Portuguese had water and milk thrown at him while City coach Mikel Arteta suffered a cut head after he was hit by a plastic drinks bottle. It is not known who threw it and sources from both clubs say no punches were thrown during the incident.

Guardiola said: "We celebrated. I think

if United win a derby, they celebrate.

"But where? Inside the locker room. That's what we tried to do and we did."

"People have to understand that we were happy. I think all the teams around the world when they win a derby, they are so happy."

The Football Association said on Monday that both clubs have until Wednesday to reply to a request for their observations of the incident.

"After what happened, hopefully it cannot happen again," said Guardiola. "What happened we will explain to the FA investigation. United will do the same."

"We will make a statement to the FA. I am not going to comment about that."

City's victory - a record 14th in a row in the league - took them 11 points clear of United at the top of the table.

Mourinho, appearing at a news conference before Wednesday's game against Bournemouth, would not comment on what Guardiola had said.

He added: "The only thing I can say is that for me was just a question of diversity - diversity in behavior, diversity in education, just that and nothing more."

(Source: BBC)

It was diversity in education – Mourinho addresses derby fracas



Jose Mourinho believes the alleged fracas between Manchester United and City players after Sunday's derby came down to a "diversity in behavior" and "education".

City left Old Trafford with a 2-1 win thanks to goals from David Silva and Nicolas Otamendi, opening up an 11-point lead ahead of United at the top of the table.

But news later broke about an incident in the tunnel after the match, with reports suggesting Mourinho and several members of United's team and coaching staff reacted angrily to apparently disrespectful celebrations.

The FA confirmed they had contacted both clubs for their versions of events, with City coach Mikel Arteta suffering a head wound and Mourinho said to have been struck by a bottle.

The controversy understandably dominated the questions in Mourinho's pre-match news conference ahead of Wednesday's visit of Bournemouth and, although United's press officer eventually shut things down, the Portuguese coach did give a fairly cryptic response to why tempers flared.

When informed that Pep Guardiola spoke of his respect for United in his news

conference, Mourinho said: "He says, he says, I'm not there to comment on his words."

"The only thing I can say is it was just a question of diversity; diversity in behaviors, diversity in education."

"Nothing more than that. That's all I'm going to say."

United will be eager to bounce back from their derby disappointment when Bournemouth visit, and Mourinho expects that he will see extra desire from his players.

"As always when you lose, you probably have a little bit more desire to win," he said.

"Nobody wants to lose once or twice; I think it's something that belongs to every team in the world."

"When you lose, you want to win your next game -- you have better desire. The motivation is based on we want to try to win all the time."

"When you have a bad result, you don't want to have two bad results. We lost against Chelsea and then the next match we had a little extra to try to win."

"Chelsea lost this weekend, so for sure they're going to give more in their next match. I think it's something every team has."

(Source: Four Four Two)

Russia backs athletes wanting to take part in Winter Olympics

Russian athletes wanting to participate in the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea will have the unanimous support of the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC), the body said Tuesday. Last week Russia was banned from taking part in February's Games after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) found the country had engaged in "systemic manipulation" of anti-doping rules, though Russian athletes who can prove they are clean will be "invited" to compete under the name "Olympic Athlete from Russia" (OAR).

Following the IOC's decision on December 5, Russian President Vladimir Putin said the country's athletes would not be told to boycott the Games, which will take place in PyeongChang from February 9-15. He did, however, call the ban a politically motivated decision.

At Tuesday's meeting in Moscow, attended by some of the country's top athletes and presidents of winter sports federations, the Russian Olympic Committee said it was "united" and "supported" its athletes. "Everyone had the same opinion, we believe our athletes should go to South Korea and win medals for our country," said ROC president Alexander Zhukov, who has been suspended as a member of the IOC. "The bottom line is that Russian athletes expressed their willingness to participate in the PyeongChang Games despite these very difficult conditions and the decision made by IOC which is unfair to a large extent and that is what everyone said."

'Complex questions'

Zhukov added that the ROC would take "all necessary



measures" to ensure the country's athletes could compete in South Korea and would assist in "resolving all managerial, technical, financial and other issues."

The ROC will also provide "overall support" to athletes not invited to compete under the neutral flag or who will refuse to participate in the Games, he said.

Zhukov said the IOC has established a special task force which will meet a Russian delegation in Lausanne, Switzerland, on December 15 to discuss the "complex questions" of Russian participation. On Monday, the ROC athletes commission made a single statement on behalf of Russia's winter sports athletes, explaining they were "fully prepared" to take part in the Games under a neutral flag.

Ilya Kovalchuk, an ice hockey player for SKA Saint Petersburg, told reporters before Tuesday's announcement:

"We are Russian athletes, so it's quite clear: they can take away the flag and the anthem, but they can not take away the honor and the conscience. "Patriotism and love for your country is in your heart, so no one can take it away from us. So we must go there and fight with double energy."

From first to fourth

A 17-month IOC investigation, carried out by the former president of Switzerland, Samuel Schmid, was tasked with looking at whether or not the Russian government and authorities had played a part in covering up doping of the country's athletes during the 2012 London Olympics and 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics.

Schmid's report confirmed "the systemic manipulation of the anti-doping rules and system in Russia" -- and that it had come under the authority of the Russian sports ministry. The Schmid report was itself created to look into the findings of reports by Canadian lawyer Richard McLaren which said the Russian state conspired with athletes and sporting officials to undertake a doping program which was unprecedented in its scale and ambition.

Separately, the parallel Oswald Commission -- headed by another Swiss, the IOC member Denis Oswald -- was set up to examine Russian doping in Sochi in 2014 and has so far banned 25 athletes retrospectively.

Those retrospective bans means Russia, traditionally a major force in winter sports, has dropped from first to fourth in the 2014 medal table.

(Source: CNN)

Iran discover opponents at AFC Futsal Championship 2018

S P O R T S Reigning champions Iran, who have won the title 11 times, were drawn in Group C alongside Iraq, China PR and Myanmar in the AFC Futsal Championship 2018.

Three time winners Japan will have Uzbekistan, Korea Republic and Tajikistan for company in Group B. Japan last won the tournament with back-to-back titles in 2012-2014 with their first being in 2006.

ASEAN powerhouse Thailand will face off against Kyrgyz Republic, Lebanon and Jordan in Group D.

Thailand, who recently won the AFF Futsal Championship 2017, were runners-up in 2008 and 2012.

Vietnam, who finished fourth in Uzbekistan 2016, will face off against hosts Chinese Taipei, Malaysia and Bahrain in Group A.

The top two teams in each group will advance to the quarter-finals. The first matches will be played on February 1, 2018, with the final set for February 11.

The 15th edition of the AFC Futsal Championship will be played in Chinese Taipei.

The AFC Futsal Championship is the biennial international futsal championship organized by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) for the men's national teams of Asia.

It will take place in Taiwan (referred to



as Chinese Taipei by the AFC), which was appointed as hosts by the AFC on 29 July

2017, between 1 and 11 February 2018. A total of 16 teams will play in the tournament.

Team Melli will kick off the competition with a match against Myanmar.

Iran defeat S. Korea at IBSA Blind Football Asian Championships

S P O R T S Iran started the 2017 IBSA Blind Football Asian Championships on a high note on Tuesday. The Iranian team defeated South Korea 3-0 in Group B of the competition underway in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Ahmadreza Shahhosseini, Hossein Rajabpour and Behzad Zadalasghari scored for the Iranian team.

Iran will meet hosts Malaysia at the National Hockey

Stadium in Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday.

Group A consists of China, Japan and Thailand. Only the top two teams will qualify for the last four stage.

Iran will defend the title it won in Japan in 2015 by defeating China on penalties in the final.

The top three teams will book spots at the IBSA Blind Football World Championships in Madrid, Spain, next year.

History of the IBSA Blind Football Asian Championships:

- 2005 Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam), winners - Japan
- 2007 Seoul (South Korea), China
- 2009 Tokyo (Japan), China
- 2011 Sendai (Japan), China
- 2013 Beijing (China), China
- 2015 Tokyo (Japan), Iran

South Korea conducts anti-terror drills ahead of Winter Games



Set to host the Winter Olympics in February, South Korea conducted a series of security drills on Tuesday to prepare against terror attacks ranging from a hostage situation, a vehicle ramming a stadium and a bomb-attached to a drone.

Police and firemen were among around 420 personnel participating in the exercise, held in front of the Olympic Stadium at Pyeongchang, just 80 km (50 miles) from the heavily fortified border with North Korea.

During the simulated drills, members of a SWAT team shot down a drone with a bomb attached that was flying toward a bus carrying athletes.

In another part of the mock exercise a terrorist took hostage athletes on a bus, and tried to ram the vehicle into the stadium before being gunned down by police. Officers in gas masks also removed a chemical bomb.

"Please keep in mind that accidents always happen where no one has expected," South Korean Prime Minister Lee Nak-yeon said.

"Please check until the last minute whether there are any security loopholes."

Anxiety on the Korean Peninsula has been rising in recent months due to a series of missile tests by North Korea as it continues its pursuit of nuclear weapons in defiance of U.N. sanctions and warnings from the United States.

Lee did not mention North Korea, but South Korea's Defense Ministry on Friday flagged risks that North Korea could resort to terrorist or cyber attacks to spoil international events. Some 5,000 armed forces personnel will be deployed at the Winter Games, according to South Korean government officials and documents reviewed by Reuters

(Source: Reuters)

IOC bans six Russian female ice hockey players for life over doping



LAUSANNE, Switzerland (Reuters) - The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has banned six Russian female ice hockey players from the Olympics for life over doping allegations linked to the 2014 Sochi Games, the ruling body said on Tuesday.

The decision came a week after the IOC banned Russia from next year's Pyeongchang Winter Olympics for what it called "unprecedented systematic manipulation" of the anti-doping system.

The IOC, however, left the door open for Russian athletes with a clean history of non-doping to be invited to compete in Pyeongchang as neutrals.

The banned ice hockey players are Inna Dyubanok, Ekaterina Lebedeva, Ekaterina Pashkevich, Anna Shibanova, Ekaterina Smolentseva and Galina Skiba.

"The Russian Team is disqualified from

the Women's Ice Hockey Event and the International Ice Hockey Federation is requested to modify the results of the event accordingly," the IOC said in a statement on its website.

The Russian women's hockey team finished sixth at the 2014 Sochi Games.

The IOC decision increased the number of Russian athletes banned for life from the Olympics over alleged doping violations at the Sochi Games to more than 30.

The IOC did not disclose the nature of the hockey players' alleged doping violations. It also said it had closed a case against a seventh unnamed athlete without sanction.

Russia's Olympic Committee agreed earlier on Tuesday to support the athletes who choose to compete in next year's Winter Games in South Korea as neutrals.

Al Hilal look to make amends in 2018

The dust has yet to settle after another heart-breaking AFC Champions League final defeat, but Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal will look to start afresh and make amends, having learnt of their opponents in the group stage draw for next year's event.

Earlier this week, the draw for the 2018 AFC Champions League placed Al Hilal in Group D, setting the stage for a series of mouth-watering clashes. The Saudi giants have been drawn alongside Esteghlal, Al Rayyan and the winner of the play-off between Al Ain and Al Malkiya.

Al Hilal and Esteghlal have a history between them in Asian competitions and memorably faced off in the final of the 1991 Asian Club Championship, when the former came out on top to become the first Saudi side to win the Asian title.

Qatar's Al Rayyan are also familiar opponents for Al Hilal, after the teams played out two epic encounters in the group stage in 2017, both of which were won by Al Hilal.

Whoever progresses from the play-off between Al Ain and Al Malkiya, footballing neutrals will love to see them take on Al Hilal. 2003 champions Al Ain will be looking to take revenge after the Saudis ended their Asian hopes in the 2017 quarter-final.

As for Bahrain's Al Malkiya, they will be making their debut in Asian competition and will undoubtedly relish an opportunity to play against Al Hilal, who are one of the continent's most successful sides.

The task for Ramon Diaz and his Al Hilal side will now be to progress through what promises to be a difficult group and mount another challenge for that elusive title.

Speaking to the AFC.com ahead of the second leg of the 2017 final, Al Hilal legend Sami Al Jaber had opined that the team's consistency in Asia was built on its strategy.



"We always view Al Hilal as an example of stability; this is very important to mention because you see continuity with the technical staff and the administration at the club," said Al Jaber.

"Al Hilal have been working on short, medium and long-term plans since 2009, which has benefited the club, as you can see by them being in two Asian finals over a three-year period."

The Riyadh-based team's plans to ensure continuity will be strengthened by the continued presence of star man Omar Khribin. The Syrian striker made his move to the club permanent by signing a four-year deal in June, before going on a scoring spree that took Al Hilal to the cusp of winning the AFC Champions League title.

Khribin's ten goals saw him receive the AFC Champions League top scorer award, while he was also named as AFC Player of the Year. The individual accolades may not be enough for the 23-year-old, who spoke of his desire to have another go at the continental title with Al Hilal.

"We hope that next year we will do our best and try to get the AFC Champions League title for Al Hilal," said Khribin,

after he was recognised as Asia's best player.

While Khribin will be raring to kickstart another Asian campaign, it remains to be seen if he will be accompanied by his equally impressive strike partner Carlos Eduardo.

The Brazilian star had to be taken off in the first leg of the final against Urawa Red Diamonds, with scans showing later that he had sustained an anterior cruciate ligament injury which will keep him out of Al Hilal's early planning in 2018.

While Al Hilal may be on the lookout for new signings, their manager has expressed his hope of seeing Eduardo return.

"Without a doubt, Carlos Eduardo was an important player, and we lost him when he was at his peak," said Diaz, speaking at a recent press conference. "We will wait for him to return to us with full strength."

Diaz has also been keen to deflect attention from Al Hilal's Asian defeat and focus on continuing the team's strong start to the domestic campaign. "The AFC Champions League was one of our most important objectives. We faced a lot of issues in the final, including injuries, but all of this is now history."

"We may be sad about the final, especially after we had many chances in the first leg, but now we have to think about what is in our hands."

Al Hilal are currently top of the Saudi league table with an unbeaten record and a two-point lead over second-placed Al Ahli, who have played two games more.

The domestic form augurs well for Diaz's side and they will now look to strengthen their position even further before launching a new campaign to conquer Asia on February 13, when they play their opening game in the 2018 AFC Champions League.

(Source: the-afc)

Sayyadmanesh reaches agreement with Galatasaray

Press TV - Iran U-17 football team striker Allahyar Sayyadmanesh has reached an agreement to join Turkish giant Galatasaray.

The 16-year-old player, who currently plays in Iranian club Saipa, has traveled to Istanbul to negotiate with Galatasaray.

Sayyadmanesh will join Galatasaray during the January transfer window if he reaches final agreement with the Turkish side.

Sayyadmanesh was a member of Iran U-17 football team who qualified for the 2017 FIFA U-17 World Cup quarter-final in India in October.

He scored three goals against Guinea, Germany and Mexico.

Iran Paralympian swimmers earn 7 medals at Asian Youth Para Games



Iranian Paralympian swimmers have shown their outstanding performances at the third edition of Asian Youth Para Games in the United Arab Emirates, and received seven medals at the continental event.

Masoud Mahmoudi, Amir Hossein Sa'adati, Iliya Kazemiyeh, Sina Zayghaminejad and Erfan Esmaili finished runner-up at the end of S12, men's 100-meter backstroke, cadet men's 50-meter individual medley, S10 and junior men's 100-meter individual medley heats in Dubai.

Additionally, Ebrahim Omrani and Mohammad Karimzadeh landed in the third spot and each pocketed a bronze medal in the S12 and S4 events.

The third edition of Asian Youth Para Games kicked off on December 8, and will finish on December 14, 2017.

(Source: Press TV)

Pogba: My heart chose Manchester United over Real Madrid

Paul Pogba has explained his decision to join Manchester United over Real Madrid last year, telling the Beyond the Pitch podcast: "My heart told me to come back."

Pogba, 24, came through the youth ranks at United but left for Juventus in 2012 after growing frustrated at a lack of opportunities under Sir Alex Ferguson.

The France international returned to Old Trafford four years later for a then world-record fee despite having been heavily linked with Zinedine Zidane's Madrid earlier in the summer.

Asked if Madrid had been his first choice, he said: "To be honest, I'm being honest with you, Real Madrid came to me and I was thinking to go there, and I was thinking to go to Manchester United too."

"But I always felt it in my heart -- my heart told me to come back here. I don't know why, I didn't know what was going to happen, but I did it, and I don't regret. I never regret my choice."

On whether the club could have dealt with things better during his first stint at Old Trafford, he said: "Maybe -- you have to speak with them."

He said things had changed "just a bit" since Ferguson's era, with so many members of staff still present, but made clear that he is relishing the chance to play a key role for the club now under Jose Mourinho.

Asked why Mourinho is "the Special One," he said: "Because he's special. He's really special."

(Source: Soccer.net)

Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp has no regrets over derby comments

Jurgen Klopp has defended his postmatch comments following the weekend's Merseyside derby, insisting he did not say anything that he wished to retract.

In the aftermath of Liverpool's 1-1 draw with Everton on Sunday, Klopp disputed the controversial penalty that Dejan Lovren conceded in an interview with Sky Sports' Patrick Davison, saying he wanted "to talk to people who have a little bit of an understanding of football" before apologizing at the end.

At his postmatch news conference, the Liverpool manager then asked journalists in the Anfield press room to raise their hands if they thought referee Craig Pawson's decision was correct, with the majority of the room signalling their belief that the awarding of the spot kick was right. Speaking at a news conference on Tuesday afternoon, Klopp said: "If I would give the same interview now, I think the information I had to give would be the same."

"But of course, now I am completely relaxed, but it was five minutes after the game, so I was not relaxed."

"You look in the eyes of the journalists and you see they're not interested in what you feel, and I know that already, but sometimes it feels not too cool and that's why I reacted the way I did."

"I didn't use any words I have to take back or whatever. I don't like it, but I'm pretty sure I can't change it. I felt like this in the moment and I'm not an actor, so I cannot act differently."

"Meanwhile, I can keep myself calm in situations like this so that nothing serious happens -- it's just an interview. I don't think anybody really remembers it, to be honest, and would watch back and say: 'Oh my God, that was hilarious or legendary.' It was just an interview, nothing else."

(Source: ESPN)

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Kazakh folk music band Saryarka to perform in Tehran

A R T TEHRAN — Saryarka, a folk music ensemble from Kazakhstan is scheduled to give a performance at the Niavaran Artistic Creations Foundation in Tehran on December 21.



A poster for Kazakh folk music band Saryarka's concert in Tehran

The concert has been organized with support from the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Cultural Institute (ECI) in Tehran and Iran's Institute for Promotion of Contemporary Visual Art, the center announced on Tuesday.

The ensemble was established by its art director Yerzhan Toksanov in 1998 to promote the national music of Kazakhstan.

"Birthday Night" to compete in French festival

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Omid Shams' "Birthday Night" will be competing in the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, the organizers have announced.



A scene from "Birthday Night" by Omid Shams

The film is about Ahmad and Ali, two friends and business partners who face a dramatic situation on their birthday night.

Over 70 other films coming from Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China and dozens of other countries will also be screened at the festival, which will be running in the French city from February 2 to 10.

Saudi sovereign fund plans cinema venture with AMC Entertainment

DUBAI (Reuters) — Saudi Arabia's main sovereign wealth fund said it planned to enter the cinema business with major U.S.-based movie exhibition company AMC Entertainment Holdings, as the conservative kingdom lifts a 35-year-old ban on cinemas.

"In line with the fund's mandate to help unlock promising new sectors within the kingdom, PIF and AMC Entertainment will explore theatrical exhibition and related investment and partnership opportunities in Saudi Arabia," the Public Investment Fund said.

Neither of the partners gave details of the business ventures which might arise from their non-binding memorandum of understanding.

The Saudi government announced on Monday that the first theaters could start showing films as early as March, part of a liberalizing reform drive that has opened the door to concerts, comedy shows and women drivers in the past year.

AMC, which owns the Odeon brand, is one of the largest movie exhibition companies in the world with about 1,000 theaters and 11,000 screens across the globe.

Other cinema chains are also eyeing the Saudi market. Dubai-based mall operator Majid Al Futtaim, which owns VOX Cinemas, said it wanted to open the first movie theater there. The government said it expected to open over 300 cinemas with more than 2,000 screens by 2030.

U2 knocks Taylor Swift's "Reputation" off Billboard top spot

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — U2 knocked Taylor Swift off her perch at the top of the Billboard 200 album chart with its new release "Songs of Experience," giving the Irish band its eighth No. 1 album in the United States.

"Songs of Experience" sold more than 185,000 units in its first week, according to Nielsen Music data released on Monday.

Billboard said it was the biggest sales week for a rock album in 2017 in an industry where hip hop and R&B music are now the biggest genres.

Country singer Chris Stapleton's "From a Room: Volume 2" debuted in second place with more than 124,000 units sold.

The two new releases pushed Swift's "Reputation" into third place after three weeks at No. 1

Doc on Plasco tragedy premieres at Cinema Verite

A R T TEHRAN — A documentary that chronicles the tragic collapse of Tehran's Plasco Building following an inferno premiered at the 11th Cinema Verite, Iran's major international documentary film festival, on Monday.

Directed by Mohammad-Hassan Ferdowsizadeh, "Panjshanbeh Suri" ("Thursday Fireworks") was screened late last night and was warmly received by documentary cinema aficionados at Tehran's Charsu Cineplex.

In the film, Ferdowsizadeh conducts interviews with colleagues of the firemen trapped in the 17-storey mega mall this year on January 19. The collapse of the building claimed the lives of 16 firefighters and a number of citizens.

"Documenting tragic incidents has always been appealing to filmmakers and those people interested in documentary cinema," Ferdowsizadeh said during a press conference.

"Due to the large extent of the catastrophic disaster and the number of firefighters trapped in the rubble when the building collapsed, and due to the fact that such an event was unprecedented in Iran, the issue of the Plasco tragedy was attractive for me," he added.

The documentary also shows that the incident could occur in many other old towers in Tehran, which, like Plasco, lack modern safety standards.

"Mismanagement, lack of foresight and control over many issues resulted in a tragedy... for example, an average of 20,000 people die in traffic accidents in Iran every year, but taking some measurements could cause a significant reduction in the number of the traffic incidents," Ferdowsizadeh noted.

"It is sad that there are many other unsafe buildings like



A scene from "Panjshanbeh Suri"

Plasco on Jomhuri Street in Tehran and it should come as no surprise if another tragedy similar to Plasco happens again," he added.

The Documentary and Experimental Film Center is the organizer of the Cinema Verite festival, which will run until December 17.

Gaza children's writings, paintings published in "The Gardens of Hope"

A R T TEHRAN — A collection of writings and paintings by Palestinian children in Gaza, which is always under attack from Israeli forces, has been published in a book titled "The Gardens of Hope" in Tehran.

The writings have been translated by Gholamreza Emami for the book, which has been published by Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, the institute announced on Tuesday.

The collection has been accumulated by the Palestine section of the International Board on Books for Young People, a Swiss non-profit organization committed to promoting children's literature.



Front cover of "The Gardens of Hope"

"White Bridge" wins UNICEF award at Greek festival

A R T TEHRAN — "White Bridge" by Ali Qavitan won the Hellenic National Committee for UNICEF award at the Olympia International Film Festival for Children and Young People in Greece, the organizers announced on Saturday.

The film also received an honorable mention at the festival, which took place in the Greek capital of Athens.

The film centers on a school girl who faces problems at school following an accident.

Photo: Ali Qavitan holds his awards at the Olympia International Film Festival for Children and Young People in Athens on December 9, 2017.



Ali Qavitan holds his awards at the Olympia International Film Festival for Children and Young People in Athens on December 9, 2017.

Festival of Iranian films opens in Islamabad

A R T TEHRAN — The Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) in Islamabad is playing host to an Iranian film festival, which opened on Monday.

"So Close, So Far" and "A Cube of Sugar", both by Reza Mirkarimi, "Bodyguard" by Ebrahim Hatamikia, "Crazy Castle" by Abolhassan Davudi, and "Where Are My Shoes?" by Kiumars Purahmad have been selected to be screened during the 5-day event, the Persian service of IRNA reported on Tuesday.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Pakistan's Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb praised Iranian filmmakers and added that

Iranian cinema has gained international recognition by winning numerous awards including two Oscars.

She also proposed that similar festivals be arranged in both Pakistan and Iran based on bilateral agreements between the two countries.

In addition, PNCA Director General Jamal Shah also called Iranian cinema one of the most enthralling in the world.

"With their unique and innovative styles of filmmaking, Iranian directors have brought the cinema of their country a special status in the world," he said.

The festival has been organized in collaboration with the Embassy of Iran in Islamabad.



A scene from "A Cube of Sugar" by Reza Mirkarimi

Ancient Roman Pantheon to start charging entry fee in 2018

ROME (Reuters) — Visitors to Rome's Pantheon, one of the ancient world's best preserved monuments, will have to pay an entry fee from next May unless they are going there to pray, Italy's culture and tourism ministry said on Monday.

Now a church, the vast cylindrical former temple whose undamaged exterior wall supports a 43.3 meter-high (142 ft) dome with a circular skylight at its summit, drew 7.4 million visitors last year.

The new 2 euros (\$2.36) per person charge is part of a drive to squeeze more profit from Italy's cultural assets, and the ministry said tourist visits would also be suspended during religious services.

Part of the ticket revenue will be spent on maintaining the site, where Roman statesman Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa commissioned a temple in honor of



Tourists visit the ancient Pantheon in downtown Rome, Italy December 11, 2017. (Reuters/Tony Gentile)

Emperor Augustus in around 27 B.C.

The Pantheon's current form and six-meter thick walls date from the early part of the reign of Emperor Hadrian, who came to power in A.D. 117. The building survived the Barbarian attacks on Rome and was transformed into a Christian church in 609.

Palace releases new portrait of Britain's Prince Philip

LONDON (Reuters) — Buckingham Palace released on Monday a new portrait of Prince Philip, painted by Australian-born artist Ralph Heimans in the year that Queen Elizabeth's husband announced his retirement from active public life.

The portrait, which shows the prince standing in the grand corridor at Windsor Castle, has been painted for display at the Museum of National History at Frederiksborg Castle in Denmark.

The Museum is holding a retrospective exhibition of Heimans' work in 2018, part of which aims to explore the historical and cultural connections between the royal families of Britain and Denmark, the palace said in a statement.

The Duke of Edinburgh was born a Prince of Denmark and his ancestry spans both the British and the Danish royal families.



A painting by Australian born artist Ralph Heimans of Britain's Duke of Edinburgh, London, Britain, December 10, 2017. (Ralph Heimans/Buckingham Palace handout via Reuters)

Philip bowed out of public life in August, ending a royal career marked by occasional gaffes that landed him in hot water.

Female directors snubbed, Plummer surprises at Golden Globe nominations

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Women were shut out of the directors race at the 2018 Golden Globe nominations on Monday, while Ridley Scott's scramble to reshoot "All the Money in the World" led to a surprise nod for actor Christopher Plummer, who replaced Kevin Spacey.

Greta Gerwig, who made her solo directorial debut with the warmly reviewed coming-of-age tale "Lady Bird", was snubbed in a category in which Scott, Guillermo del Toro, Martin McDonagh, Christopher Nolan and Steven Spielberg were nominated.

Patty Jenkins, who delivered box office superhero smash "Wonder Woman", was also left out, along with directors Dee Rees, of Netflix Inc's racial period drama "Mudbound", and Kathryn Bigelow, of the racially charged drama "Detroit".

"It's a terrible shame, to be honest," said McDonagh, who wrote and directed small-town drama "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri." "I know there have been great screenplay by women recognized this year but not directing, and maybe that will change in the Oscars."

Gerwig, 34, was nominated for best screenplay for writing "Lady Bird", which also landed two acting nods for its star, Saoirse Ronan, and supporting actress, Laurie Metcalf.



Nominees for the 75th Golden Globe Awards, Best Director, Motion Picture category, (L-R) Guillermo del Toro, Martin McDonagh, Christopher Nolan, Ridley Scott and Steven Spielberg are seen in a combination of file photos. (Reuters)

Metcalf told Reuters that Gerwig's "Lady Bird" set was collaborative and stress-free.

"I'm spoiled rotten", Metcalf said. "She just made it a beautiful and personal experience for the entire cast and crew."

Scott's "All the Money in the World" received nominations for supporting actor Plummer and lead actress Michelle Williams in the drama about the 1973 kidnapping of oil heir John Paul Getty III.

Plummer replaced Spacey last month in the role of Jean Paul Getty after Spacey was cut because of multiple sexual misconduct allegations against him.

Spacey issued an apology for the first reported incident, involving actor Anthony Rapp. Reuters could not independently confirm the allegations.

Scott did last-minute reshoots to have the Sony Pictures film completed in time for its Dec. 25 release.

"I am especially proud that the beautiful performances of Michelle and Chris were celebrated today," Scott said in an emailed statement. "Despite the unexpected challenges we encountered after shooting was completed, we were determined that audiences around the world would be able to see our film."

Other surprises included Vietnamese-American actress Hong Chau for her breakout role in the best supporting actress race for futuristic comedy "Downsizing."

Other key snubs included Amazon's interracial romantic comedy "The Big Sick", which failed to land any nominations, especially for its star Kumail Nanjiani, who wrote the film with his real-life wife on the circumstances that brought them together.