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# Yemeni kids killed as unexploded bomb goes off



## Larijani blames occupation, spy services for spread of terrorism

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said on Sunday that occupation of other countries' land, extremism and intelligence services as chief reasons behind spread of terrorism in the region. "Intelligence services have been using terrorist movements to reach their objectives which led to spread of terrorism by providing arms and financial help to terrorists," Larijani said during a speech at a conference on terrorism and inter-regional connectivity in Islamabad, Pakistan.

The senior lawmaker added attacks on Afghanistan by the Soviet Union and later by the U.S. and NATO led to formation of terrorist groups in the country. **->2**

## Iran's crude steel exports up 84% in 8 months yr/yr

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iran exported 4.225 million tons of crude steel during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21), showing 84 percent growth from 2.294 million tons in the same period of time in the preceding year, according to Iran Steel Association.

The country exported 940,000 tons of steel products during the mentioned time, with 35 percent fall from 1.447 million tons in the same time span last year, Shata news agency reported on Sunday.

The association's report also said that

Iran produced 14.149 million tons of crude steel during the first eight months of this year, indicating 15 percent increase from 12.311 million tons in the same period of time in the preceding year. **->4**

## Majlis to recognize al-Quds as Palestinian capital

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The Iranian parliament on Sunday voted in favor of a double-urgency bill that recognizes al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the permanent capital of the state of Palestine.

Donald Trump's recognition of al-Quds as the capital of Israel, a move that angered the international community, especially the Muslim world. Trump also announced that he will move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to the holy city.

The bill was passed by 187 votes in favor, 15 against and 9 abstentions. It came as a response to U.S. President

The motion will be annexed to Article 1 of a legislation that states Iran's support for the Palestinian nation. **->2**

## Tough resolutions, epic statements inadequate for saving al-Quds: Maleki

**By Payman Yazdani**  
 TEHRAN — Political analyst Sadegh Maleki told Jerusalem al-Quds will not be liberated merely by issuing resolutions and making harsh statements in absence of any practical measures against Trump's decision.



Washington's recognition of Jerusalem al-Quds as the capital of the Israeli regime has been one of the most talked-about topics in political and media circles. In the midst of this hype, there are reports on the visit of a Bahraini delegation to Tel Aviv on the one hand, and on the other, there are Turkey's tough stance and President Erdogan's fierce opposition to Donald Trump's move. In this regard, we have reached out to political analyst Sadegh Maleki who believes that al-Quds is more of an international issue with humanitarian aspects than a mere Islamic issue, adding that Trump's move has struck a

serious blow to peace, justice and liberty in the international order, and magnified the brute force of U.S. power to people across the world. The move will cause international resentment for U.S. regime, he added. Maleki went on to say that al-Quds is the victim of division among the Muslims, and stressing

that as long as the current situation persists among Muslim governments and nations, any hope for a better future for al-Quds will be a far-fetched dream.

The following is full text of interview with Sadegh Maleki, an Iranian political expert and analyst:

■ With this analysis in mind, don't you think that the OIC summit in Istanbul and the adoption of a UN resolution against Trump's move with overwhelming majority were significant measures?

A: Yes, these measures and condemnations are a source of satisfaction, but none of them have any practical effect and are symbolic at best. So many leaders of Islamic countries took part in Istanbul conference, in which they vented a part of their anger and resentment against the U.S. and the Zionist regime. **->7**

## Tehran traffic schemes: Does anyone think twice about air pollution?

**By Maryam Qarehgozlou**  
 TEHRAN — Tehran Municipality has resumed talks over the past few days concentrating on altering traffic schemes to ease congestion and abating air pollutions.

Tehran, similar to many other metropolises worldwide, is struggling with many challenges of which air pollution and torturous traffic congestion stand out conspicuously.

To ease the congestion and fighting the suffocating air pollution which are clearly interrelated the responsible organizations have tried to come up with various plans and schemes.

Odd-even traffic scheme is a method of rationing in which access to the streets for private vehicles is granted on alternating days, according to whether the last digit in their license plate is even or odd. Although it has certainly undergone changes the scheme is being carried out in the capital for almost four decades.

The efficacy of odd-even rationing is highly debated. Despite the fact that the ultimate purpose of the scheme is to restrict access to the streets in order to diminish air pollution exacerbated by cars the municipality is at the liberty to grant permission to all vehicles to enter the zone by

paying \$10 a day.

On the other hand, many rich people who have more than one car can use either of the cars on all weekdays without paying anything.

While the scheme is designed to encourage the use of public transport the inadequate, old, high-emission transit system is also one of the main culprits of increasing the pollutant levels in the capital.

Nevertheless, it has been some years that by the end of autumn or the beginning of winter those who are eligible to get annual permission would apply on municipality website. **->12**

## PERSPECTIVE

**By Chris Cook**  
 Oil expert

### Advice from Oslo

At this time of the year in Oslo it is the custom to give unsolicited presents and as an Anglo-Dane on holiday in Oslo it is my pleasure to extend to the people of Tehran my compliments of the season and to present some unsolicited advice on one of my favourite subjects — transport.

Transport or mobility is not generally considered as energy, but in fact it is an example, like heat or cooling, light and power an example of energy delivered as a service. Oil, gas and even electricity are examples of energy which may be bought and sold as a commodity before being converted through generators to energy as a service, or through petrochemicals to materials.

■ **Norway's energy strategy**  
 On the discovery of major North Sea oil & gas reserves in the 1970s, the same principles which underpinned an industrial base powered by hydro electricity were applied by Norway to oil & gas development.

Despite exporting the vast majority of between 2 and 3 million barrels of oil production and immense quantities of natural gas, Norway's domestic fuel prices are among the most expensive in the world, and taxation of conventionally fuelled road transport is brutally high. Meanwhile, Norway has maintained ownership of a majority of oil and gas production, and has maintained a firm, fair and mutually profitable relationship with international oil companies developing Norwegian fields. The outcome is that this country of 5.3m people now has a sovereign wealth fund of \$1 trillion.

It is extremely significant that this fund is now considering selling its holdings in international oil and gas companies. Add to this change in investment strategy the World Bank's recent announcement that it is ceasing oil & gas development finance, and the sale by Russia and Saudi Arabia of ownership of sovereign oil resources, and it becomes clear that the long term outlook for oil prices is not positive.

■ **Oslo's transport strategy**  
 Where Norway gets a lot right with its energy policy Oslo, with a population of 1.7 million in a very extensive metropolitan area, gets a lot right with an efficient public transport system of suburban trains, efficient metros and buses and world leadership in electric car use. **->4**

Look for human interest stories on **page 9**

## ARTICLE

**By Mahnaz Abdi**  
 Head of the Economy Desk of the TehranTimes

### Single-window a key achievement for Iran's cross-border trade

The single-window system is a trade facilitation idea enabling cross-border traders to submit regulatory documents at a single location and/or single entity. Such documents are typically customs declarations, applications for import/export permits, and other supporting documents such as certificates of origin and trading invoices.

In Iran, the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) unveiled a single-window system for cross-border trade on October 7, 2014 and now considers it a key achievement, as IRICA Head Forud Asgari says establishment of such system has increased the country's customs income 61 percent in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2017) despite fall in the imports during that year.

The single-window system has reduced customs formalities time from 26 days to three days for imports and from seven days to one day for exports. While making transparency in the process of information exchange between the export and import organizations with the IRICA, the single-window system facilitates the condition for the legal traders while makes it difficult and preventive for the smugglers and those who break the laws and regulations, as Asgari asserted that the single-window system is a window toward transparency in trade.

In the annual meeting of the customs executive directors on November 1, Asgari referred to the presence of 27 related organizations in the single-window system as one of the achievements of this system which has facilitated and developed trade through reduction of time and cost for the commodity owners.

Single-window system has come close to the final stage and its most efficiency; so IRICA and related organizations should help remove the remained problems, the official noted.

It is also worth mentioning that the World Bank in its report titled "Doing Business 2017" released in April said that Iran has improved its trading across borders through applying the national single-window system.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran made exporting and importing easier by improving and expanding the services offered by the national single window", the report said.



## A mountain village built on rooftops

Sar-e Aqa Seyyed is a village in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiyari province, western Iran. Earth-colored houses are stacked on top of one another so that the roof of one house forms the pathway for the next. The village is named after Aqa Seyyed shrine. Most of the houses are windowless and only have doors. The village has a population of around 3,000 who are mostly living on husbandry and agriculture. They are very hardworking. Unfortunately, Aqa Seyyed lacks any development infrastructure such as asphalted roads or communication facilities.

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**MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS**



**Rouhani wishes New Year without violence**

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani on Sunday issued separate congratulatory messages to world's top leaders, wishing a happy Christmas and a new year without violence and injustice, Mehr reported.

"I hope, in the light of the teachings of the divine prophets and relying on the principle of mutual coexistence, we can take a big step toward spread of peace, justice, equality and brotherhood," Rouhani remarked.

He also wished a new year filled with spirituality, dignity and prosperity, in which people across the world can live free of injustice and violence.



**Zarif wishes 'happy and peaceful Christmas to all'**

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Saturday extended Christmas greetings to all Christians across the world, ISNA reported.

"The angels said, Mary, God gives you glad-tidings of a Word from Him whose name is Christ, Jesus, son of Mary; highly honored in this world and the next; Quran 3:45," he said in a Twitter message.

"A very happy and peaceful Christmas to all. May Christ's universal message of peace be embraced in the coming year," Zarif added in English.

Christmas is an annual festival commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, observed most commonly on December 25.

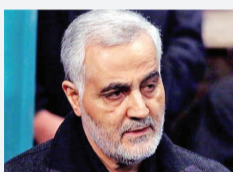


**Navy chief: U.S. seeking to create discord in the region**

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Navy Commander Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi on Sunday warned of U.S. plots to create discord among regional countries and block cooperation between them, Fars reported.

"Iran is at the center of the strategic energy lifeline and the arrogant powers have made their utmost attempts to block integration and solidarity of this region forever and are hatching plots and sowing discord to prevent the regional states' unity," Khanzadi said.

The rear admiral also said the Iran-Iraq war, economic sanctions, assassinations and other plots were hatched by enemies to foment insecurity in the country.



**'U.S. after assassinating General Soleimani since 2003'**

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Former Iranian Ambassador to Jordan Mostafa Mosleh Zadeh on Sunday revealed that the United States has been trying to assassinate Commander of the Quds Force Major General Qassem Soleimani for 14 years.

"Based on U.S. documents, the Americans have been seeking to assassinate him (General Soleimani) since 2003. This plot has been officially raised at the U.S. Congress," Mosleh Zadeh was quoted by Fars as saying.

"It has also been said that the abduction of a number of Iranian diplomats in foreign countries had been conducted because the abductors had thought General Soleimani was among them," he added.



**Air defense key to secure country: advisor**

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — A military advisor said on Sunday that air defense is a main force against possible attacks against the country.

"New threats can only be posed through the sky," General Ali Qolami, advisor to the commander-in-chief, told a meeting of graduate students in Isfahan.

Qolami said air defense is at the forefront of securing the country against the enemy, Mehr reported.

During the Iran-Iraq war the enemy realized that it cannot enter a ground war with the Islamic Republic, he pointed out.

In view of these facts it is necessary to boost its air defense capabilities, he proposed.



**Foreign Ministry undergoing new changes**

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Sunday that new changes are taking place at the Foreign Ministry.

Qassemi said under the changes, the ministry will remove three posts, including deputy foreign minister for European and American affairs, deputy foreign minister for Arab-African affairs and deputy foreign minister for Asia and Pacific affairs.

He said instead two posts, including deputy foreign minister for economic affairs and deputy foreign minister for political affairs, will be added to the ministry.

The changes will be made by the end of the Persian month of Bahman (February 19), he added.

# France's Le Drian expected in Iran in weeks

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi has announced that French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian will travel to Iran in early 2018.

Le Drian had said in early November that he would travel to Iran to prepare a visit by President Emmanuel Macron.

Macron has been leading a campaign against Tehran's missile program and regional influence, calling for missile negotiations with Iran or else putting Iran under sanctions.

"Given its position in Europe, France can play an effective role in bringing peace and stability to the region and the world if it avoids being influenced by others in regional issues," Qassemi said in an exclusive interview with ISNA published on Sunday.

"I believe the French foreign minister's trip to Iran is a good opportunity for the French side to get familiar with the realities of Iran, its position in the region and the current situation in the region. It is also an opportunity to address their uncertain concerns that are being made on the basis of the



propaganda by Iran's enemies, especially America, Israel and some Arab countries," the Iranian diplomat added.

Qassemi then said that during Le Drian's

trip, the two sides will discuss different topics like bilateral issues in the field of politics, trade, economy and investment as well as regional issues, fighting terrorism, and es-

tablishment of security and stability.

Although it has called for non-nuclear sanctions on Iran, France has opposed to Washington's calls to undermine the nuclear deal, aka the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), for the role it can play in engaging Iran.

Referring to U.S. hostile policies against Iran in the context of the Iranophobia project, Qassemi said, "American ambassador to UN Nikki Haley's baseless, irresponsible and inconsiderate claims are neither the first nor the last effort from America against the Islamic Republic of Iran."

"America's policies in the region, more than ever have led to the spread of terrorism and creation of insecurity and instability in the region. Of course these kinds of action have driven the United States deeper into isolation," the spokesman went on to say.

"Iran's policy in the region is quite clear and transparent. Our attempt in bringing stability and security and fighting terrorism relates to the whole region but unfortunately some governments attempt to negatively address these positive efforts," he also said.

## Military chief: Iran's security owed to 'strategic deterrence'

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Major General Mohammad Baqeri, chief of the Iranian armed forces, said on Sunday that Iran's security comes from "strategic deterrence" which is "dynamic".

During a ceremony held in Imam Hossein University, he said that enemies do not remain "inactive" and hatch

"religious" and "ethnic" plots against the country.

He said, "They (the enemies) know that they will be harmed a lot by launching war against the Islamic Iran."

Baqeri also said it is necessary that the Armed Forces keep vigilant given the sensitive conditions in the region.

In relevant remarks on Friday, Commander of the Is-

lamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Force Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh underlined that the Armed Forces are fully prepared to defend the country.

If the enemy dares to attack the Islamic Republic, it will face Tehran's rigid reaction, Fars quoted Hajizadeh as saying.

## Yemenis using own weapons: Iranian MP

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — MP Hossein Naqavi Hosseini has said that Iran has not provided Yemen with missiles, adding that Yemenis use their own weapons against Saudi Arabia.

"We have announced repeatedly that the Yemeni army and people have the support of Iran, however, we have also made it clear that we have not given any missiles to Yemenis," he told Tasnim news agency in an interview published on Sunday.

Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to UN, on December 14 presented the debris of a missile at a military base in Washington in which she claimed was made by Iran and fired at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh on November 4.

On December 18, Iran's Defense Minister Amir Hatami said that Iran should be given a piece of the missile to do its own investigation.

The MP said if Yemen's army had been equipped with Iranian missiles, the result



of the war would have been different.

Naqavi Hosseini also said that Saudi Arabia should explain from whom it has purchased the bombs it is using to kill people in Yemen.

In a tweet on December 15, Zarif said, "While Iran has been calling for ceasefire, aid and dialogue in Yemen from day 1, U.S. has sold weapons enabling its allies to kill civilians and impose famine. No amount of alternative facts or alternative evidence covers up U.S. complicity in war crimes."

## Tehran dismisses Bahraini FM's remarks as 'too petty'

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Saturday condemned the Bahraini foreign minister's "petty" remarks against the Islamic Republic, saying Iran is the cradle of ancient and glorious history and civilization.

In a series of anti-Iran tweets on Friday, Bahraini Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed al Khalifa claimed that Iran has been living on the sufferings of the Palestinian people for decades and is utilizing their cause to ensure that terrorist organizations, such as Hezbollah, remain.

"The biggest harm to the Palestinian cause is those who benefit from the sufferings of the people of Palestine," the minister said on Twitter, Tasnim reported.

In response, Qassemi said the Bahraini foreign minister is "too petty" to make such comments about Iran, which is the cradle of ancient and glorious history and civilization. Qassemi said the ancient land of Iran



with a genuine and cultured people is home to a very unique history, culture, civilization, and democracy, and is one of the most independent countries in the region.

The spokesman added that the Islamic Republic is the nightmare of the failed rulers of Bahrain and other reactionary regimes, who suppress the majority of their own people, and commit crimes against them with the support of other trans-regional countries.

## Judiciary: No decision yet on Nazanin Zaghari, Kamal Foroughi

Iran's Judiciary Spokesman Gholam Hossein Mohseni Eje'i announced on Sunday that no decision has yet been made to swap the two Iranian-British inmates, Nazanin Zaghari and Kamal Foroughi, convicted in the country for espionage charges, with Iranian prisoners jailed in Britain.

Mohseni Eje'i made the remarks in response to the Iranian reporters' question about the situation of Nazanin Zaghari, a dual-nationality Iranian-British citizen who has been convicted in Iran for security crimes, and Kamal Foroughi, another Iranian-British citizen convicted for espionage charges, after the recent visit by a British delegation headed by Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson in pursuit of their fate.

"They have had no talks with the Judiciary officials and we have not made any decision yet (on swapping them with Iranian prisoners)," he told reporters in his weekly press conference today.

Mohseni Eje'i explained that according to Iran's laws, prisoners who have spent half of their jail terms are given an opportunity for parole, stressing that once the conditions of the two inmates fall within the same law to make them eligible for parole, the Iranian Judiciary will act accordingly.

Asked if the British delegation demanded a meeting

with the Judiciary Chief Sadeq Amoli Larjani during its recent visit to Iran, he said, "I am not informed of any such demand but certainly they didn't have any meeting."

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a 38-year-old project manager with the Thomson Reuters Foundation, was arrested in Tehran in April 2016 as she was returning to Britain.

While the British media have claimed that she was arrested after a family visit, British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson told a parliamentary committee in November that Zaghari-Ratcliffe was "simply teaching people journalism as I understand it" when she was arrested at Tehran airport last year.

Also, Kamal Foroughi, is a 77-year-old Iranian-British national who been held in an Iranian jail for more than four years and convicted of spying.

Foroughi, a businessman who was working in Tehran as a consultant for the Malaysian national oil and gas company Petronas, was arrested in May 2011 and eventually sentenced in 2013 to a total of eight years' imprisonment, which he is still serving.

Iran's laws do not recognize dual citizenship.

Earlier reports said that Johnson's visit to Iran in early December was aimed at consultations to free

Zaghari by paying £400m to Tehran. A claim which was rejected last month.

Iranian Ambassador to London Hamid Baedinejad said in November that Britain is due to pay its £400m debt to Tehran soon, dismissing any link between the payment and the case of Nazanin Zaghari.

Over £400-m (596m) sum will be transferred to the Central Bank of Iran "in the coming days", Baedinejad wrote on his Telegram channel.

The Iranian diplomat further expressed regret over certain media attempts to link the debt pay-off to the case of Zaghari.

The payment "with regard to a 1974 arms deal has nothing to do with the case of Nazanin Zaghari who has been arrested in Iran over security charges or to any other issue," Baedinejad told reporters.

Also last month, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi said that "the British government's debt pay-off to Iran has no connection to the case of Mrs. Nazanin Zaghari and these two issues are two separate cases."

British Prime Minister Theresa May's spokesman also stressed at the same time that there was no link between the £400m debt owed to Iran and the fate of Zaghari.

(Source: FNA)

## Larjani blames occupation, spy services for spread of terrorism

Commenting on reasons behind youths' interest in joining terrorist groups, he said, "Poverty is another reason behind spread of terrorism, however, humiliation and discriminatory behavior are more important than poverty. Young people from Belgium, France, England and other developed countries did not join terrorist groups because of poverty."

Elsewhere, he called on the countries who attended the conference to cooperate in fighting terrorism.

He also attached great importance to expansion of economic relations.

Larjani described cooperation among Iran, Turkey and Russia as an example of successful cooperation in fighting terrorism in Syria.

### 'U.S. seeks adventurism in region'

During a meeting with State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin on the sidelines of the conference, Larjani said that the U.S. is seeking adventurism in the region.

He said claims by the United States that Iran supplies missiles to Yemen is a "new game" in the region.

Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to



UN, on December 14 presented the debris of a missile at a military base in Washington in which she claimed was made by Iran and fired at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh on November 4.

Larjani also called for expansion of economic cooperation between Iran and Russia.

For his part, Volodin expressed hope that economic relations would be expanded.

Larjani held a separate meeting with Chairman of Pakistani Senate Mian Raza Rabbani.

## Majlis to recognize al-Quds as Palestinian capital

It has been referred to a relative parliamentary committee and will be put on the parliament's agenda within the next 48 hours.

The Islamic Republic has long been a staunch sup-

porter of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and urged Muslim nations across the globe to unite against the Zionist regime.

On Thursday, in response to Trump's incendi-

ary move, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution by a decisive vote of 128 to 9, calling on the U.S. government to reverse the decision.

# Israeli troops raid birthplace of Jesus ahead of Xmas

## 12th Palestinian dies since Trump declaration on Jerusalem

Israeli forces have once again clashed with Palestinians demonstrating against the new U.S. policy on Jerusalem al-Quds in the West Bank city of Bethlehem. The Israeli soldiers used stun grenades and tear gas to disperse the protesters who had gathered outside an Israeli military tower in Bethlehem on Saturday.

Holding Palestinian flags, some of the demonstrators were dressed as Santa Claus. Bethlehem resident Mohammad al-Lahham said the Santa costumes send a message to Palestinian children "that we are on the path to freedom, to Jerusalem. Papa Noel (Santa Claus) distributes gifts and the occupation distributes bombs today. These are the bombs that the Israeli occupation is distributing today, at Christmas."

At this time of year, Bethlehem is normally flooded by pilgrims and tourists from across the world as well as local Christians who want to celebrate Christmas Eve at the traditional birthplace of Jesus Christ.

Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem Archbishop Pierbatista Pizzaballa said "dozens" of groups had cancelled their planned visits to Bethlehem after Washington's controversial decision on Jerusalem al-Quds that sparked violence in the occupied territories.

"Of course this created a tension around Jerusalem and this diverted attention from Christmas," he added. There have been regular anti-US protests by Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip since December 6, when US President Donald Trump declared that Washington recognized Jerusalem al-Quds as the "capital" of Israel and moving the American embassy from Tel Aviv to the holy city. The dramatic shift in Washington's Jerusalem al-Quds policy drew fierce criticism from the international community, including Washington's Western allies, and triggered protests against the US and Israel worldwide. On Thursday, the United Nations General Assembly voted by a resounding majority to reject Trump's Jerusalem al-Quds move. Israel lays claim to the whole Jerusalem



al-Quds, but the international community views the ancient city's eastern sector as occupied land and the Palestinians consider it their future capital.

### Pro-Palestine demo in Germany

Separately on Saturday, scores of pro-Palestinian protesters condemned Trump's recognition of Jerusalem al-Quds as the Israeli "capital" in the central German city of Göttingen.

They chanted slogans, waved Palestinian flags and held signs reading, "There is no country called Israel in order [for it] to

have a capital."

### Rally in Tunisia

Tunisians also held a similar rally in the capital, Tunis, calling on the parliament to pass a law on criminalizing any normalization of relations with the Israeli regime.

They demanded the freedom of Palestine from the Israeli occupation and called al-Quds Palestine's eternal capital, Arabic-language daily Alquds Alarabi reported.

### Another death

Meanwhile, a Palestinian teenager died Sunday, nine days after being wounded by

Israeli fire during a Gaza protest against U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the health ministry said.

Mohammad Sami al-Dahduh, 19, from Gaza City was shot on December 15 during a demonstration on the Israeli border, ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra said.

His death brings to 12 the number of Palestinians killed since U.S. President Donald Trump announced on December 6 that he would recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and move the U.S. embassy there from Tel Aviv.

## Anger as police gunfire kills Texas six-year-old

The fatal shooting of a six-year-old boy by police gunfire in the U.S. state of Texas has sparked outrage and renewed the debate over police brutality in the country.

Kameron Prescott was killed on Thursday in the small town of Schertz in Bexar County, after a stray bullet shot by a sheriff's deputy pierced through the wall of his mobile home and hit his abdomen.

A suspected car thief - a 30-year-old woman identified as Amanda Lee Jones - was also killed by police as she tried to break into Prescott's home.

Bexar County Sheriff Javier Salazar described Prescott's death as "a tragic accident" and said the shooting is under investigation. The incident is the latest in a series of deaths at the hands of police officers in the U.S.

A total of 952 people have been shot and killed by US police in 2017, according to the Washington Post's Fatal Force database.

### JusticeForKameron

Victims of police brutality are often children.

In May, police officers in a Dallas suburb shot and killed Jordan Edwards, a 15-year-old black American, for "aggressively reversing" towards them. Video footage later contradicted the officials' claims.

Gun violence and fatal police encounters have led to widespread protests in recent years.

Following news of Prescott's shooting, many took to Twitter to condemn his death, which came just days before Christmas.

A crowd funding campaign was launched on Gofundme to pay for Prescott's funeral. A total of \$13,736 was raised in two days, exceeding the goal of \$12,000.

According to the Guardian newspaper's The Counted database, at least 1,092 people were killed by police in the US in 2016.

Of that total, nearly a quarter were African Americans, although the group only accounts for roughly 12 percent of the total US population.

In a high-profile case in 2016, the aftermath of the shooting of black motorist Philando Castile by a Minnesota officer was streamed live on Facebook.

The killing of another black man, Alton Sterling, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana by white police led to a wave of protests across the country.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Turkey sacks 2,766 civil servants over 'terror' links

Turkey has dismissed 2,766 people from their posts in state institutions over alleged links to "terror" organizations, according to an emergency decree published in the country's official legal database.

Turkey has dismissed 2,766 people from their posts in state institutions over alleged links to "terror" organizations, according to an emergency decree published in the country's official legal database.

On Sunday, a decree in the Official Gazette said 637 military, 360 gendarmerie personnel, 61 police and four coastguard members were among those sacked.

Some 341 people were dismissed from the Directorate of Religious Affairs. The rest were civil servants from other institutions.

The decree also said 115 employees who were dismissed in the past were reinstated.

### Arrests and purges

Turkey has arrested or sacked tens of thousands of people from state institutions after a failed coup attempt in July 2016.

Local and international rights groups

as well as Turkey's Western allies accuse President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government of using the failed coup as a pretext to silence opposition in the country and tighten its grip on power.

The government says that the purges and detentions are aimed at removing supporters of Fethullah Gulen from state institutions and other parts of society.

Gulen is a U.S.-based, self-exiled religious leader who Ankara blames for the attempted coup.

Metin Gurcan, a security analyst, told Al Jazeera from Istanbul that the decrees show that Turkey is committed to the purges some 18 months after the 2016 coup attempt.

"Ankara is still inclined to prioritize 'de-Gülenification' of the army personnel rather than operational effectiveness of the military," he said.

The European Union recently shrunk so-called "pre-accession funds" for Turkey for the first time in the 2018 budget, due to what it called the country's "deteriorating situation in relation to democracy, rule of law and human rights".

(Source: TRT)

## Saudi crown prince pressed Abbas on 'grand bargain'

Informed Palestinian officials say Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman tried to persuade Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to agree to a so-called Middle East peace plan put forward by the U.S. during a recent meeting.

Abbas held talks with King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and the crown prince in Riyadh earlier this week.

The meetings came days after Abbas formally declared that Palestinians would no longer accept the U.S. as a mediator to resolve the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"We do not accept any role of the United States in the political process from now on, because it is completely biased towards Israel," Abbas told an urgent summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the Turkish city of Istanbul on December 13.

The announcement followed U.S. President Donald Trump's controversial recognition of Jerusalem al-Quds as the "capital" of Israel and his plan to relocate the American embassy from Tel Aviv to the ancient city.

The Palestinian officials with knowledge of Abbas' meeting with bin Salman told the Middle East Eye news portal that the latter had described the U.S. as "the only game in town" concerning the so-called peace process.

"The U.S. is the only one with real influ-



ence on Israel, it's the only country that can put pressure on Israel in any peace process and no one else can do [that], neither EU, nor Russia or China," the officials quoted the first in line to the Saudi throne as telling the Palestinian president.

They noted that bin Salman had attempted to use "soft diplomacy" to persuade Abbas to accept Washington's proposal and receive U.S. Vice President Mike Pence in his planned

visit to the region. Pence, however, postponed his trip amid tensions over Washington's policy shift on Jerusalem al-Quds.

The sources also stressed that Abbas had made it clear to bin Salman that he was fully committed to any "meaningful" peace process.

Abbas told "the [Saudi] crown prince, 'if the U.S. is willing to declare that a peace process is based on the [so-called] two-state solution on the '67 boundaries - including

East Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Palestine - we are ready to engage immediately, but if they want to drag us to the Israeli version of peace, we cannot," they added.

One of the Palestinian officials predicted that President Abbas would accept no "temporary partial deal, as the one being prepared by Trump's team."

The officials told MEE that Abbas was aware of the new U.S. plan but regarded it as a copy of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's vision: a mini-state on half of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, without Jerusalem al-Quds, refugees, borders and water.

Bin Salman was believed to have told Abbas in a previous meeting earlier this month that the U.S. was "preparing for a peace deal, and this deal might not look good at the beginning but at the end it will be good."

Palestinian officials have repeatedly expressed worry that Saudi Arabia is forging important Palestinian rights as it acts behind the scenes to advance a U.S. "grand bargain" over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that heavily favors Israel.

Saudi Arabia's maneuvering over Palestine comes amid increasing reports that the Riyadh regime is preparing a normalization of ties with Tel Aviv.

(Source: Press TV)

## North Korea says new UN sanctions an act of war



The latest UN sanctions against North Korea are an act of war and tantamount to a complete economic blockade against it, North Korea's foreign ministry said on Sunday, threatening to punish those who supported the measure.

The UN Security Council unanimously imposed new sanctions on North Korea on Friday for its recent intercontinental ballistic missile test, seeking to limit its access to refined petroleum products and crude oil and its earnings from workers abroad.

The UN resolution seeks to ban nearly 90 percent of refined petroleum exports to North Korea by capping them at 500,000 barrels a year and, in a last-minute change, demands the repatriation of North Koreans working abroad within 24 months, instead of 12 months as first proposed.

The U.S.-drafted resolution also caps crude oil supplies to North Korea at 4 million barrels a year and commits the Council to further reductions if it were to conduct another nuclear test or launch another ICBM.

In a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency, North Korea's foreign ministry said the United States was terrified by its nuclear force and was getting "more and more frenzied in the moves to impose the harshest-ever sanctions and pressure on our country".

The new resolution was tantamount to a complete economic blockade of North Korea, the ministry said.

"We define this 'sanctions resolution' rigged up by the U.S. and its followers as a grave infringement upon the sovereignty of our Republic, as an act of war violating peace and stability in the Korean peninsula and the region and categorically reject the 'resolution'," it said.

"There is no more fatal blunder than the miscalculation that the U.S. and its followers could check by already worn-out 'sanctions' the victorious advance of our people who have brilliantly accomplished the great historic cause of completing the state nuclear force", the ministry said.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Nov. 29 declared the nuclear force complete after the test of North Korea's largest-ever ICBM test, which the country said puts all of the United States within range.

Kim told a meeting of members of the ruling Workers' Party on Friday that the country "successfully realized the historic cause of completing the state nuclear force" despite "short supply in everything and manifold difficulties and ordeals owing to the despicable anti-DPRK moves of the enemies".

North Korea's official name is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

South Korea's foreign ministry told Reuters it is aware of the North Korean statement on the new sanctions, again highlighting its position that they are a "grave warning by the international community that the region has no option but to immediately cease reckless provocations, and take the path of dialogue for denuclearization and peace".

### 'Balance of force'

The North Korean foreign ministry said its nuclear weapons were a self-defensive deterrence not in contradiction of international law.

"We will further consolidate our self-defensive nuclear deterrence aimed at fundamentally eradicating the U.S. nuclear threats, blackmail and hostile moves by establishing the practical balance of force with the U.S.," it said.

"The U.S. should not forget even a second the entity of the DPRK which rapidly emerged as a strategic state capable of posing a substantial nuclear threat to the U.S. mainland," it added.

North Korea said those who voted for the sanctions would face its wrath.

"Those countries that raised their hands in favor of this 'sanctions resolution' shall be held completely responsible for all the consequences to be caused by the 'resolution' and we will make sure for ever and ever that they pay heavy price for what they have done."

The North's old allies China and Russia both supported the latest UN sanctions.

Tension has been rising over North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, which it pursues in defiance of years of UN Security Council resolutions, with bellicose rhetoric coming from both Pyongyang and the White House.

In November, North Korea demanded a halt to what it called "brutal sanctions", saying a round imposed after its sixth and most powerful nuclear test on Sept. 3 constituted genocide.

U.S. diplomats have made clear they are seeking a diplomatic solution but proposed the new, tougher sanctions resolution to ratchet up pressure on North Korea's leader.

China, with which North Korea does some 90 percent of its trade, has repeatedly called for calm and restraint from all sides.

China said on Saturday the new resolution also reiterated the need for a peaceful resolution via talks and that all sides needed to take steps to reduce tensions.

Chinese state-run tabloid the Global Times said on Saturday the tougher resolution was aimed at preventing war. It suggested the United States had wanted an even harsher resolution, and noted there was no indication in the resolution that the United Nations could grant the United States permission for military action.

"The difference between the new resolution and the original U.S. proposal reflects the will of China and Russia to prevent war and chaos on the Korean Peninsula. If the U.S. proposals were accepted, only war is foreseeable," it said in an editorial.

(Source: Reuters)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	97529.4
IFX	1095.42

Sources: tse.ir, lfb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	41,769 rials
EUR	49,569 rials
GBP	56,886 rials
AED	11,465 rials

Source: Mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$64.73/b
WTI	\$58.47/b
OPEC Basket	\$62.16/b
Gold	\$1,275.85 /oz
Silver	\$16.45/oz
Platinum	\$919.75/oz

Sources: Oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



**Intl. chandelier expo running in Tehran**

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — The 25th International Exhibition of Chandeliers & Decorative Lights kicked off on Sunday at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.

Some 210 Iranian exhibitors along with 19 foreign companies from Turkey, China and Taiwan are showcasing their latest products in this year's event, IRIB news reported.

Iran exports over \$260 million worth of chandeliers and decorative lights every year.



**SEO bans Bitcoin trade by brokerages**

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) Shapour Mohammadi said trading Bitcoin in the country's brokerages is illegal, Shada reported on Sunday.

"The Securities and Exchange Organization is reviewing Bitcoin's status for entering the country's economy and has not yet reached a conclusion, so if any brokerage buys or sells the cryptocurrency, it violates the law, the official said.

**Abu Dhabi plans 1st treasury bill sales next year**

Abu Dhabi plans to start selling treasury bills for the first time next year, according to people with knowledge of the matter, as the OPEC producer seeks to develop its local-currency debt market.

The government is working with international and local banks on how the notes will be structured, the people said, asking not to be identified because the discussions are private. Regulations are expected to be completed next year and regular sales could follow shortly after that, the people said.

Abu Dhabi, home to about six percent of the world's known oil reserves and capital of the United Arab Emirates, is exploring ways to bridge a budget deficit after oil prices dropped. The emirate, whose debt carries the third-highest investment grade at S&P Global Ratings, in October raised \$10 billion from a bond sale. The U.A.E. is working on a federal debt law to allow the nation to sell local-currency debt.

Fitch Ratings said last year that Abu Dhabi's department of finance was working with the central bank on a plan to issue local debt, but said the timing and the size of sales were uncertain. The central bank referred questions to the department of finance, which didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

The U.A.E. is the only member of the six-nation Persian Gulf Cooperation Council that hasn't sold the notes. Governments issue treasury bills as a money management tool and to develop a yield curve. (Source: Bloomberg)

**Major S. Korean banks eye 3% growth for 2018: poll**

The chiefs of South Korea's major commercial banks expect the economy to expand around 3 percent on-year in 2018 on brisk exports and a recovery in consumer spending, a poll showed Sunday.

In written interviews with Yonhap News Agency, the heads of the lenders - KB Kookmin, Shinhan, Woori, KB Hana and Nonghyup -- forecast Asia's fourth-largest economy to continue its recovery pace in the coming year.

South Korea's overseas shipments are projected to remain resilient thanks to the global economic recovery, while domestic demand is predicted to pick up, backed by the government's income-led growth and welfare policy.

But the bank presidents forecast the country's construction investment to slow down in the new year amid a government push to cool the housing market.

"The South Korean economy will be able to grow 3 percent next year, driven by strong exports and investment," said Shinhan Bank President Wi Sung-ho. "Private consumption is also likely to recover, helped by government efforts to create more jobs and boost growth by coaxing consumers to spend more," Woori Bank chief Sohn Tae-seung chimed in. (Source: Korea Herald)

**Iran's crude steel exports up 84% in 8 months yr/yr**

**1 ->** The country's crude steel output stood at 18.466 million tons in the past Iranian calendar year 1395 (ended on March 20), showing 11 percent rise from 16.656 million tons in 1394. Iran exported 5.5 million tons of crude steel in the past year, with 27 percent increase from the figure of its preceding year.

The country's crude steel exports are expected to reach a record high of 8 million tons by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2018). Head of the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), Mehdi Karbasian, said in early November that the country



exported 3.5 million tons of crude steel during the first half of the current year. "Following this trend, the figure could most probably reach 8 million tons by year-end," he added. The country aims to increase total crude steel output to 55 million tons and export

between 20 and 25 million tons annually by the end of the 2025 Outlook Plan. As a major steel producer in the region, Iran has boosted steel production in recent years, as central Isfahan and southwestern Khuzestan provinces remain the major steel producers.

**Advice from Oslo**

**1 ->** However, inadequate public investment, extortionate privately financed road tolling systems and poorly planned & managed ticketing systems, are signs that Norway is not immune from the curse of oil.

**Resource resilience**

But 2017 is not 1977; Iran is not Norway and Tehran is not Oslo: government institutions, monetary and fiscal systems are very different, and Norway was not excluded by physical and financial sanctions from global markets. So what policies can Iran and Tehran possibly apply at this stage in oil and gas development which will make a difference?

Firstly, Iran has long needed a strategic organising principle for energy policy and my advice to Iran is to apply the same principle applied by Norway for over 100 years and by Denmark since 1973 when the Oil Shock saw prices increase almost overnight by 400% from \$3 to \$12 per barrel. This is the organising principle of resource resilience, which mandates for any given use of energy as a service (heat/cooling, power, transport/mobility) that use of fossil oil & gas shall be minimised.

There are two reasons why this is now a very smart move for Iran: firstly, the more expensive oil and gas become in dollar terms, the more dollar profit there is in saving them, and secondly, to be a producer, processor or

trader of oil and oil products requires immense \$ finance capital. But a 'smart' service provider essentially replaces finance capital with intellectual capital: knowledge, know how, and know who.

Secondly, the resource resilience principle must be applied across Iran's entire energy production and use, including upgrade and rejuvenation of Iran's energy generation, transmission and use of energy as a service. But where will the international technology and vehicles come from if Iran cannot access financial markets? What additional or complementary financing and funding is possible?

Tehran's increasingly lethal air quality problems, which are estimated to be 80% due to carbon fuelled transport, provides an opportunity for rapid testing of new financing concepts, because unlike power stations, road transport infrastructure and vehicles represent relatively small scale investment with short time-scales.

**Getting there from here**

My advice to the Mayor of Tehran and his colleagues in national government is as follows.

Firstly, introduce a substantial additional Pollution Tax on all sales of road transport fuel, thereby creating a Transport Fund investment fund in Rials.

**Brexit Britain may struggle to improve Japan-EU free trade deal**

Despite hopes of a good free trade deal with Japan, Britain is unlikely to improve on the recent agreement between Tokyo and Brussels, and could end up worse off, experts say.

They argue Britain, on its own, could lose negotiating leverage with Japan and fail to further open up the country's services sector to British firms - an area the government is keen to focus on in deals with advanced economies like Japan.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson hopes Britain can better the free trade agreement recently struck between Japan and the European Union, which will eliminate tariffs and lower regulatory barriers.

Britain will have to transition the European Union's FTAs when it leaves the economic bloc in 2019 and will, in subsequent years, try and improve on the original deals.

However, trade experts are relatively skeptical about London's attempts to exploit these new freedoms as trade in services is always a highly political issue and beset by regulatory hurdles.

Hosuk Lee-Makiyama, director of the European Centre for International Political Economy in Brussels, said, "The EU, including Britain, couldn't make Japan concede (on services) and neither could the United States with all its economic statecraft during the now-defunct Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations. So, on its own, what is Britain's secret weapon?"

And Paul James Cardwell, a professor from Strathclyde University, said there were "wishful thinking" and a danger of British politicians "talking up" the prospects of an improved FTA with Japan.

He said, "The U.K. is a large economy but based on services, and countries are generally reticent to include them in FTAs. The card the U.K. has traditionally played in Japan as being a 'gateway to Europe' is a very different one to sell now."

Indeed, Japan will be closely watching the future trading arrangement between the European Union and Britain as this could have negative implications for the substantial Japanese investments here, particularly in the automotive, pharmaceutical and financial sectors.

Japanese businesses will be keen for Britain to retain the benefits of the EU single market. The European Union and Japan have agreed to eliminate tariffs for the auto industry and Tokyo will be hoping the arrangements can be extended to Britain.

Peter Holmes of Sussex University, a specialist in European economic integration and other global public policy issues, said, "It could become harder for Japanese firms (in Britain) to have integrated cross-border operations in the EU post-Brexit." (Source: Japan Today)

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ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

**INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 96/109-112/26**

*First Announcement*

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ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

**Subject of Tender:**  
Purchasing Non-chemical materials usable in film laboratory in accordance with the technical specification and other terms and conditions mentioned in the tender documents.

**Deadline and How to Receive the Tender Documents:**  
From **26<sup>th</sup> Dec 2017 (1396/10/05)** by **4 p.m.** on **Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 2018 (1396/10/13)** with presentation of introductory letter by company or its representative and the receipt of paying the documents fee.

**Place of Receiving the Tender Documents:**  
Interested participants may refer to purchasing (KALA) Dept., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor of IRIB Administration Complex, Hotel Esteghlal St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran Iran.

**The Fee of the Tender Documents and How to Deposit it:**  
Submission of payment receipt for the amount of **3,000,000 Rials** to account No.2172918037001 Meli Bank Amaniye Branch in the name of IRIB.

**Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participation to Tender:**  
The amount of deposit for participant in tender is **USD 5000** fixed or its equivalent in **210,000,000 Rials** which should be in the form of Bank Guarantee.

**Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:**  
The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted no later than **4 p.m.** on **3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2018 (1396/11/14)** and at the address mentioned in the 4<sup>th</sup> clause.

**Time and Place of Opening Envelopes:**  
The date of opening envelopes A&B is on **5<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2018 (1396/11/16)** at **3 p.m.** in the office of Financial Vice President and opening of envelope C will be after technical evaluation.

**For more information, please see:** [www.iriboffice.ir/tenders](http://www.iriboffice.ir/tenders) and <http://iets.mporg.ir/>.

**Purchasing (kala) Dept. of IRIB**

# Goldman: oil markets to balance sooner than expected

One of the biggest investment banks is one of the most bullish voices in predicting the state of the oil market next year. Goldman Sachs is more optimistic about the speed of the oil market rebalancing than many experts and other banks, and OPEC itself.

Goldman Sachs expects that the global oil overhang will have cleared by the middle of 2018, accelerating OPEC's exit from the production cut pact that is currently set to expire at the end of 2018.

"The oil re-balancing continued its progress through November," thanks to factors including "stellar" oil demand growth, Goldman Sachs analysts said in a note this week, as carried by Bloomberg.

"Global inventories will have re-balanced by mid-2018, leading to a gradual exit from the cuts," Goldman's analysts noted.

The U.S. investment bank also expects backwardation—the market structure of near-term oil futures trading at a premium to longer-dated contracts—to strengthen in the second quarter of 2018 when OECD oil inventories will drop to their five-year average.

Backwardation, a sign of a tighter oil market, was one of OPEC's goals in the production cut deal.

Commercial oil stocks in the OECD fell further in November, and the difference to the latest five-year average has been reduced by around 200 million barrels since the beginning of 2017, OPEC Secretary General Mohammad Barkindo said last week. And this week, OPEC and its non-OPEC



partners in the deal boasted "an impressive highest conformity level of 122 per cent."

However, even OPEC is less optimistic than Goldman about the oil market rebalancing by mid-2018. In its Monthly Oil Market Report, OPEC said last week that it expects excess global inventories to arrive "at a balanced market by late 2018."

Just two days before OPEC and allies agreed to extend the production cut pact to the end of 2018, Goldman Sachs had warned that a deal is far from certain. But after OPEC announced the extension, Goldman revised up its oil price forecasts for 2018, to \$62 from \$58 a barrel for Brent, and to \$57.50 from \$55 a barrel for WTI.

The production cut pact "leaves room for an earlier exit than currently scheduled, we now reflect this resolve in our supply forecast, with full compliance for longer and a more modest exit rate," Goldman said at the beginning of December.

At the end of December, the bank continues to believe that there may be an early exit from the cuts, and kept its \$62 per barrel Brent forecast for 2018.

Goldman is one of the most bullish of the biggest banks. JPMorgan is also among the bulls, citing "solid fundamentals and tightening balances." Citigroup and Barclays, however, are not that optimistic, and say that rising U.S. shale production could

undo the current market optimism.

Unplanned temporary outages such as the Forties Pipeline shutdown are currently supporting oil prices, but as we go into 2018 a lot of those temporary issues will go away and supply is going to exceed demand again and inventories will build, Michael Cohen, Head of Energy Markets Research at Barclays, said earlier this week.

Goldman Sachs may expect that OPEC/non-OPEC could exit from the deal earlier than planned, but OPEC and its partners have not communicated any exit strategy from the deal, yet.

A couple of days after the producers agreed to extend the cuts, Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih said that "We think that the outlook for when we will hit the balanced market will be clearer in June, and we will start thinking of what we do in 2019."

Now OPEC is said to have started to work on a kind of exit strategy, or rather, a "continuity strategy", according to an OPEC source who spoke to Reuters.

OPEC doesn't expect significant drawdowns in oil inventories in the first quarter of 2018, just like in 2017, al-Falih has said, and the message from OPEC is that we'll have a clearer picture by June.

Goldman, on the other hand, expects the second quarter to see significant drawdowns if we are to reach a balanced oil market by the middle of 2018.

Global oil demand growth probably needs to be exceptionally "stellar" in the first half next year, if Goldman is to guess the timing of the rebalancing of the market right.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## Russia & China to kneecap petrodollar in 2018: Saxo Bank

The world's largest crude oil importer China is likely to roll out the petro-yuan next year predicts Saxo Bank. Beijing's largest oil supplier Russia would gladly accept the yuan to phase out the dollar in trade with China.

"China is by far the world's largest oil importer, and many producer nations are already more than happy to transact in yuan terms. With the U.S.' global power and reach waning, and given the success of CNY-based

commodity futures in general, the Shanghai International Energy Exchange's decision to launch a yuan-based crude oil future is a runaway success," reads one of Saxo's 'outrageous' predictions for 2018.

Saxo Bank expects the Chinese yuan-denominated oil contract to be "a move with tremendous geopolitical and financial consequences."

The U.S. West Texas Intermediate and European benchmark Brent have a joint dai-

ly turnover of more than two billion barrels or 20 times the total daily world oil demand. However, the U.S. WTI oil standard is losing its role in the oil market, notes Saxo.

"China, meanwhile, has already become far and away the world's largest crude oil importer and many key exporters – led by Iran and Russia – are more than happy to transact in yuan terms," the bank's analysts conclude.

(Source: Reuters)

## Iraq reaches initial deal with China's Zhenhua to develop East Baghdad oilfield

Iraq has reached an initial deal with China's state-run Zhenhua Oil to develop the southern portion of the East Baghdad oilfield, the oil ministry spokesman said on Sunday.

Iraq is seeking the help of Zhenhua Oil to increase production from East Baghdad oilfield to 40,000 barrels per day within five years as of the start of the development operations, Asim Jihad said in a statement.

Iraqi oil officials have estimated the East Baghdad field, a "super giant" with around 8 billion barrels of crude reserves, has the potential to produce 120,000 barrels of oil per day.

Under the initial deal with Zhenhua Oil, which will be announced in formal ceremonies to be held in Baghdad on Monday, the Chinese firm will commit to building an "oil residential complex", the statement said.

Oil Ministry officials said increasing East Baghdad crude production would help feed nearby refineries and power stations and free up more oil for exports from the southern region.

Iraq produces and exports the bulk of its crude from the southern region.

The oil ministry also said on Saturday that Iraq plans to increase production from its Nasiriya oilfield to 200,000 barrels per day from 90,000 bpd in the next few years without seeking assistance from international firms.

The ministry did not give a precise timeline for achieving the production rise from the field, which lies in Dhi Qar province in southern Iraq.

"The ministry has decided to move forward in developing the Nasiriya oilfield through national effort and not to stop or wait for a contract with an international investor," Oil Minister Jabar al-Luaibi said in a statement.

The development plans include using 50 million cubic feet of gas produced as a by-product of oil production to supply power stations in the province, Oil Ministry spokesman Asim Jihad said in the statement.

Discovered in 1973, Nasiriya is Dhi Qar's largest oilfield. (Source: Reuters)

## Oil producers to discuss exit plans from cuts once market near balance: Russia

Oil producers will discuss exit strategy for their deal on cutting output once the market moves closer towards being balanced, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said in remarks published on Saturday.

"We will talk about it as we get closer to the market rebalancing," Novak was quoted as saying by Russia's Interfax news agency. RIA news agency carried similar comments.

Novak had said in an interview with Reuters this week that detailed talks on an exit strategy would only start when the markets approached balance. (Source: Reuters)

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## Is the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council dead?

The split within the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council that pits regional powers Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates against Qatar has proven surprisingly durable. Kuwaiti efforts to mediate the six-month-long dispute have failed, most recently and notably when Kuwait's emir convened the annual PGCC summit on Dec. 5 and was forced to end the proceedings early just after the closed-door opening remarks.

The intra-Persian Gulf rupture has spilled over to the region's external relations, making it harder for security partners to insist on maintaining even and equal relations with all PGCC members. From informal think tank consultations to formal intergovernmental forums, Saudi Arabia and its neighbors have now imposed an approach that "you're either with us or against us" on its outside interactions.

In Washington, the embassies of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other countries aligned with them against Qatar, as well as experts affiliated with or supported by those countries, will avoid events with speakers or support from Qatar. Qatari perspectives are also not welcomed at forums that are funded by Saudi Arabia or the UAE. At the annual Manama Dialogue, organized by the International Institute for Strategic Studies and usually attended by Cabinet-level American officials, the Trump administration reportedly indicated that in the absence of any Qatari delegation, the U.S. would send more junior observers, not a senior ranked speaker. The dialogue's Bahraini hosts are in the Saudi camp.

The coup de grace in this saga is the recent announcement of a bilateral partnership between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi that signals their new post-PGCC strategy. This new arrangement reflects the deepening bond between the young leaders of the two largest players in the Persian Gulf and is intended to cover the full gamut of issues, from culture to trade and security.

So it is only reasonable to conclude that the PGCC has been eclipsed and cannot easily be resuscitated. It is true that the council created in 1981 has never lived up to expectations. It did not have a clear path to full integration, and was tentative about steps to deepen cooperation and coordination in most matters. The states that joined the PGCC were relatively young; Kuwait, for example, became independent in 1961, and the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain only a decade later, after the British withdrawal from the Persian Gulf. Saudi Arabia was indisputably the metropolis around which gravitated these small new states and the royal families who ruled them.

Over time, they developed their own national systems and styles as they were understandably invested in creating bonds of loyalty with their subjects, some of whom aspired to be real citizens with a voice in national affairs. The small states sometimes rotated farther from the Saudi orbit, setting more independent courses of action on key issues, from oil prices to relations with Iraq, or more importantly, with Iran, given its powerful economic and cultural influences across the waters of the Persian Gulf.

The annual PGCC summits were often viewed as empty rituals that did not reflect the true dynamics among the family dynasties. But slowly the PGCC developed some skills and capabilities. It studied projects for a single currency and the freer movement of people and goods among member states. In fits and starts, the bloc advanced more common approaches on select issues of shared interest.

But a belief in the larger meaning of true integration has been elusive. When Saudi King Abdullah proposed a political union of the Persian Gulf states in 2011, there was an awkward silence from his neighbors. Only Bahrain, already subservient to Saudi policies, enthusiastically embraced the idea. It was a reflection of policy initiatives from Saudi Arabia that often come too late or too abruptly for the rest of the Persian Gulf. Other than the latest collaboration with Abu Dhabi, the Saudis are not often skilled at consultative processes that engage the interests of the other parties.

From an American perspective, it's in the security realm that the true value and purpose of the PGCC resides. The U.S. has been pushing for more Persian Gulf integration for decades — toward more transparency in planning and procuring major weapons and defense systems that should be interoperable, given the region's tight air and maritime space in which real threats and contingencies take place. As Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies has recently written,

In practice, most of the real-world Persian Gulf Arab country efforts at common training, exercises, and command are developed as combined U.S. and Persian Gulf Arab state exercises by the United States 5th Fleet Headquarters in Bahrain, and the U.S. Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) in Qatar. It is also the U.S. that would have to provide key elements of battle management, command and control, IS&R [intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance], and combat support in a serious conflict.

Despite the now grave wound to the spirit and practice of cooperation in the Persian Gulf, one senses that most U.S. security cooperation continues, quietly. It's an important role for Washington, to insist that each of the regional players contributes its fair share to Persian Gulf security writ large, avoiding the personal and political disputes that have caused today's open rift. And the PGCC states have not entirely disrupted their economic interdependence: Qatari natural gas, for example, has still flowed to the UAE despite the diplomatic standoff.

The region's wily leaders will quietly sustain those parts of the architecture that have value, perhaps renaming some activities and avoiding any public pledges of unity and common good. The rift with Qatar is about both personalities and deep policy disagreements, but it has not yet destroyed entirely the logic of cooperation.

It is still mystifying, though, that the parties have undermined their own security agenda. Once they realize that, on top of the social and economic drivers, they may yet return to those components of regional cooperation that they surely still need.

(Source: WPR)

# Can Russia help solve the North Korea crisis?

To steer North Korea towards a peaceful course, Russia has combined coercive diplomacy with co-option

By Samuel Ramani

On December 13, the vice director of Russia's National Defense Command Center, Victor Kalganov, and three prominent Russian Ministry of Defense officials made an official visit to North Korea. Kalganov's trip to Pyongyang came after United States Secretary of State Rex Tillerson called for renewed DPRK-U.S. diplomacy, and underscored Moscow's commitment to a peaceful resolution of the North Korea crisis.

Since North Korea fired four ballistic missiles towards Japan on March 6, the Russian government has devoted considerable diplomatic resources to resolve the nuclear standoff. Many analysts have cited Russia's desire to increase its influence in the Asia-Pacific region and alignment with the North Korean regime as rationales for its expanded diplomatic involvement in the Korean peninsula.

While these factors have shaped Russian policymakers' perceptions of the DPRK crisis, the best explanation for Kremlin's active role in resolving the standoff is Russia's desire to showcase its great power status to both its domestic audience and the international community. To this end, Russian diplomats have rallied support from European and Asian leaders for a peaceful resolution to the North Korean crisis, and used a mixture of coercive diplomacy and back-channel negotiations to convince the DPRK to come to the bargaining table.

These diplomatic initiatives are principally aimed at preventing a war between the United States and North Korea. Much like how Russia's successful diplomatic outreach to U.S. allies in Europe and the Middle East on Syria helped soften Washington's position on Assad's removal, Kremlin policymakers believe that building an international consensus around the need to avoid war with North Korea will moderate U.S. President Donald Trump's hawkish rhetoric towards Pyongyang. Enticing North Korea to the bargaining table would also assist this aim. If Russia can help successfully prevent a war, Moscow's status as a conflict arbiter will increase tremendously, expanding Russia's alliance network and Putin's prestige at home and abroad.

### An increased voice

Russian policymakers believe that revealing the chasm in perspectives between Trump administration's hawkish rhetoric and the international community's perceptions will cause the United States to de-escalate and align with the international consensus. To facilitate this effort, Russia is trying to convince U.S. allies to support its preferred solution to the DPRK crisis and pressure Trump to refrain from military action.

Since March, Russia has emerged as a leading international supporter of China's dual freeze proposal, which calls for a freeze on North Korea's nuclear



The Russian government's efforts to steer the United States and North Korea towards a peaceful course has increased its credibility as a diplomatic stakeholder in the region.

weapons development in exchange for the suspension of joint U.S.-South Korea military drills on the DPRK's borders. Even though the United States has rebuffed the dual freeze proposal, Russia has reached out diplomatically to U.S. allies in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region to convince them to endorse the plan and pressure Washington to follow suit.

For example, on August 18, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov held a bilateral dialogue with his German counterpart Sigmar Gabriel. Berlin's subsequent expression of support for the dual freeze proposal gave Moscow's position on North Korea critical legitimacy within the European Union.

The Russian government has also attempted to expand support for the dual freeze proposal in the ASEAN bloc. On August 9, Lavrov announced the creation of a permanent Russia-ASEAN mission to bolster security cooperation with Southeast Asia on North Korea and transnational terrorism. Public statements expressing solidarity with the Russian position on North Korea by ASEAN leaders like Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte have also gained widespread coverage in the Russian state media, reaffirming the link between Moscow's great power status aspirations and diplomatic involvement on the Korean peninsula.

In addition, Russian officials have leveraged improved relations with South Korea to shape Seoul's perspective on the North Korea crisis. Moscow's outreach to moderate members of South Korean President Moon Jae-in's inner circle has produced tangible results, as

a group of Moon's foreign policy advisors expressed tentative support for a dual freeze proposal on September 14.

If the Trump administration responds to Moscow-induced diplomatic pressure from U.S. allies by loosening its preconditions for diplomacy with North Korea and desisting from further military threats against Pyongyang, respect for Putin as a peacemaker will grow considerably. Such an outcome would help Putin consolidate his nationalist base ahead of the 2018 presidential elections, and bolster the credibility of Russia's arbitration ventures in other regions.

### Coercion and Co-option

To steer North Korea towards a peaceful course, Russia has combined coercive diplomacy with co-option. To highlight its displeasure with Kim Jong-Un's brinkmanship, Russia supported the imposition of comprehensive UN sanctions against North Korea on September 12. As Russia has replaced China as North Korea's most trusted international partner, according to the DPRK's February 2017 ranking of international allies, Moscow hopes its expressions of displeasure with Pyongyang will resonate with North Korean policymakers.

Even though Russia remains officially committed to implementing the entire UN sanctions regime against North Korea, in practice, Russian policymakers have distinguished between "legitimate" punitive sanctions worthy of full compliance and "counter-productive" sanctions that threaten North Korea's economic stability.

Russia routinely violates sanctions against the DPRK that it deems to be

counter-productive, believing North Korean aggression is more likely if Kim Jong-Un faces internal instability. As such, in November 2017 Russia increased oil exports to North Korea aimed at preventing volatility and unpredictability associated with a potential collapse of the North Korean economy.

In exchange for this vital material support, Russian diplomats have held bilateral dialogues with North Korean officials aimed at convincing Pyongyang to accept diplomatic negotiations with the United States over its nuclear program. If Russia can convert the goodwill accrued from Putin's post-2014 rapprochement with North Korea into a diplomatic breakthrough, Moscow will highlight its diplomatic independence from China and great power status in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Russian government's efforts to steer the United States and North Korea towards a peaceful course has increased its credibility as a diplomatic stakeholder in the region. Arguably, based on its ability to maintain a line of communication with both North Korean officials and pro-engagement members of South Korea, Russia is presenting itself as a useful partner for U.S. policymakers seeking a peaceful resolution to the DPRK nuclear crisis.

As Washington's current strategy of combining sanctions against North Korea with periodic engagement of China struggles to gain traction, the prospect of Russia as a go-between in the crisis may take on increased relevance.

(Source: The Diplomat)

## Turkey-UAE rift may have unintended spillover

By Cengiz Çandar

In today's virtual world even a few lines on social media are enough to create a spat with geopolitical resonance. The recent tension between Turkey and the United Arab Emirates is the latest example of this.

It all began when UAE's Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed retweeted what Twitter user Ali al-Iraqi had posted. The tweet accused Ottoman-Turkish commander Fahreddin Pasha of usurping Arab wealth by deporting and exiling the local population of Medina during World War I. He described the pasha as the forefather of today's Turks — an implication referring to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his team. The retweet has created a massive uproar in Turkey, uniting almost every political bloc in outrage against Zayed. Erdogan and most of the opposition leaders lashed out at the UAE's foreign minister.

The uproar has pitted Turkey against the Saudi-UAE alliance and pushed it closer to Iran while uniting the highly polarized Turkish public opinion.

If Turkey's presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin had not responded to Zayed, the original tweet probably would not have drawn much attention. But Kalin responded by writing a highly polemical post.

"It is a shame that @ABZayed, FM of UAE, retweets this propaganda lie that seeks to turn Turks & Arabs against one another, again," he wrote on his official Twitter account. "It was Fahreddin Pasha who bravely defended Medina against the British plans then. Is attacking President Erdogan at all costs the new fashion now?"

American historian Ryan Gingeras stepped into the online discussion with his expertise on late Ottoman history. Questioning the rationality of interpreting a criticism of Ottoman policy as an attack on Erdogan, he provided some historical insight in support of the accusations.

"The original tweet, in part, is not wrong. Large numbers of Medina's inhabitants was deported as far away as Anatolia on the suspicion of being traitors," he wrote.

Gingeras is a renowned historian on Ottoman-Turkish history who penned a series of books on the issue. One of the most famous is "Fall of the Sultanate: The Great War



Emirati Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed

The latest brouhaha that erupted suddenly between Ankara and Abu Dhabi is not about what happened in the past — the matter is purely political.

and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1922." He is considered a reliable source on the matter.

However, it is not a matter of disputed interpretations of history, as most Turks have no idea who Fahreddin Pasha is — except those who have a particular interest in Ottoman-Turkish history. Pasha was dubbed "the defender of Medina" after a battle between Britain-supported Arab commander Sharif Hussein and the Ottoman forces. However, the latest brouhaha that erupted suddenly between Ankara and Abu Dhabi is not about what happened in the past — the matter is purely political.

The recent spat comes at a time when Erdogan, who is increasingly manifesting an anti-American stand follow-

ing U.S. President Donald Trump's Jerusalem decision, is seeking to resurrect the historical Ottoman grandeur. Hence, even a single retweet provides him with an opportunity to make a fiery speech to boost his attempts to unite the Muslim world under Turkey's leadership.

Indeed, he delivered a speech on live TV and lashed out at Zayed with extremely insulting and humiliating words. Erdogan also managed to mobilize opposition figures to follow suit.

"Hey, the pathetic person who is slandering us: Where were your forefathers when Fahreddin Pasha was defending Medina? [...] Arab people are our brothers. That said, the enmity of some leaders in Arab countries is meant to hide their own incompetence and even treason," Erdogan was quoted as saying by Bloomberg.

Reviving bad memories about the Arab-British alliance against the Ottoman Empire during World War I has been quite useful for Turkish leaders in consolidating their nationalist support base. Now, following the Jerusalem affair, the United States has replaced the role of Britain.

In addition, the Turkish leadership has already had qualms about the UAE. An article published less than a month ago in the government's mouthpiece Sabah daily reflects this. In the article, the UAE is accused of "running schemes against Turkey."

"Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu hinted at the UAE when he said, 'We know that a country provided \$3 billion in financial support for the coup attempt in Turkey,'" the Dec. 6 report said.

The report also claimed that the UAE used Ahval, an online news outlet critical of Erdogan, as a counterpropaganda tool against Turkey's president. "This website is financed by the Arab Weekly, in other words, by the UAE [...] this media group, which is owned by the UAE, declared total war against Turkey," it continued.

Meanwhile, Ankara knows that the UAE and Saudi Arabia are inseparable allies supported by Washington. Thus, deterioration of the bilateral relationship between Turkey and the UAE will inevitably spill over into Ankara's ties with Riyadh and Washington.

(Source: Al Monitor)

# Tough resolutions, epic statements inadequate for saving al-Quds: Maleki

1 → Note that what I said does not mean passivity or silence against Trump's move, but that al-Quds will not be liberated merely by issuing resolutions and making harsh statements.

From a certain viewpoint, one could say al-Quds is also the victim of the end of the Cold War. There was a time in the Middle East when former Egyptian President Nasser Hussein could strike a practical blow to the Zionist regime, or even Anwar el-Sadat, prior to Camp David Accords, could engage Tel Aviv in a war. Although conditions of the international order have changed, [Turkish President] Erdogan cannot even be a shadow of Nasser or Sadat before Camp David. In the past four decades, Tehran has been the most serious threat to Tel Aviv, and still continues to be so. One should not take other countries very seriously, because Palestine is not a strategic issue in their national strategy.

■ But wouldn't you say that Turkey has been in fact very active and serious on the Palestinian issue?

A: Turkey just appears to be serious, but it really isn't. One should distinguish between empty boasts and practical measures. Turkey is dependent on the West now more than ever, and its interests are closely entangled with those of the Zionist regime.

Did Turkey's relations with Israel go through a crisis after Trump's Jerusalem decision? Did Turkey sever or cut down ties with Israel? Did Turkey suspend the Manavgat Water Agreement with Israel? And all other examples of such nature. Opposition carried out with mere epic statements and comments in the political scene only serves domestic and foreign interests. At the moment, Erdogan is gripped with many domestic and international issues in the political and economic spheres, and al-Quds can become his saving grace. Erdogan's dispute with the U.S. on Syrian Kurds, Fethullah Gülen, Reza Zarrab, and his desire to win presidency in 2019, are some of the considerations that have propelled Erdogan to ride the wave of anti-Zionist and anti-American sentiments of Turkish people. Of course Iran welcomes even this level of



**One should not take other countries very seriously, because Palestine is not a strategic issue in their national strategy.**

challenge in Turkey's relations with Tel Aviv and Washington, but we must be vigilant.

The nature of Turkey's views and policies toward the Zionist regime is fundamentally different from that of Iran's. Turkey under President Erdogan are dependent on the West and global capital more than any time before. This Turkey, alongside its membership to NATO and the subsequent obligations of that membership, is a member of the global capital club, and as such, cannot act independent of the West's macro interests.

■ Won't such remarks cause some kind of hopelessness?

A: One could assume that, but the aim is not to cause hopelessness. The aim is to clarify and make efforts to find real solutions and understand the current policies. Sometimes, unwarranted hope or miscalculations are more dangerous; some have become so delighted over Erdogan's remarks against Trump that they are talking about forming a bloc with Iran, Turkey and Russia. These people have forgotten that a major part of our martyred defenders in Syria, and the

destruction of Syria and Iraq are the result of Turkey's policies. I personally consider Turkey's policies toward Syria, Iraq, and Hezbollah as an important factor in Trump's Jerusalem decision. Erdogan cannot save al-Quds, but al-Quds can save Erdogan. Turkey and Erdogan have an instrumental and interest-based outlook on al-Quds. Turkey's issues with U.S., since they are political disputes, will be resolved sooner or later, and so Erdogan's shift from his current policy should not come as a shock to Iranian political circles.

## Start of democrats' competition for conquering the White House

By Hossein Yari

TEHRAN — Following the increasing public dissatisfaction with the controversial U.S. President, Donald Trump, some Democrat figures are now preparing themselves to compete for the presidential elections in 2020. Many American affairs analysts believe that if the current situation continues in the United States, the Democratic nominee in 2020 will be able to defeat Trump and enter the White House.

In other words, the probability of Trump becoming a single term president (like Jimmy Carter) is high.

The probability of Trump's defeat in the U.S. presidential election of 2020 is relatively high. That is what prompted the Democrats for attempting to re-conquer the White House. But the main question here is who will be the Democratic nominee in the next presidential election? Even though the inner-party rivalry will determine the party's final candidate, but among the figures that have so far attracted American media attention, the name of two people is extremely impressive.

The first person who did not reject the possibility of his candidacy in 2020, and is also relatively popular among the Democrats, is "Joe Biden", the former Vice-President of the United States of America. Over the past months, some U.S. sources have reported the possibility of Joe Biden's candidacy for the 2010 presidential election.

Biden also expressed some interest in the issue in his remarks. Of course, he has not yet announced his definitive presence in this political scene. The vice president of the United States has recently stated that he is uncertain about a run for president in 2020, but he is looking for fresh blood to lead the Democratic Party back to the White House.

"I've done it a long time," said Biden, who previously ran for president in 1988 and 2008, "and I'm just not sure it's the appropriate thing for me to do."

Biden suggested that if "no one steps up," he'd be open to giving it another try. "I'm not doing anything to run," he said. "I'm not taking names, I'm not raising money, I'm not talking to anybody, but something's got to happen."

As Biden's remarks indicate, he isn't reluctant to take part in the 2020 presidential elections. Interestingly, the publication of some polls about Biden's growing popularity with American citizens has increased his motivation to take part in the 2020 political summit.

Not long ago, the U.S. Congressional website (Hill) released a poll on the 2020 presidential election. According to the poll, former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, in the 2020 presidential race, would be eleven points ahead Donald Trump, the current president of the United States. According to a poll by the Politico-Morning Consult Institute, 46% of the Voters will support Biden in the 2020 championship, while only 35% would support Trump.

Interestingly, even among white Americans, Biden is more popular than Trump. In other words, if Biden nominates for the 2020 election, some white Americans who voted for Trump in the 2016 presidential election would vote in favor of the former Vice President and the Democrats this time.

Another politician who has been nominated for Democrats inter-party competition for the 2020 presidential election is Bernie Sanders, a 75-year old senator and Hillary



**Many American affairs analysts believe that if Bernie Sanders was introduced as the Democratic nominee and competed with Republican nominee Donald Trump, he could have defeated his rival by 15 percent and enter the White House.**

Clinton's rival in the last year's presidential election. According to polls conducted in the United States, Sanders is one of the most popular political figures in the country. During the last year's campaign, he was defeated by the lobby behind the Democratic leaders and their support for Hillary Clinton. Many American affairs analysts believe that if Bernie Sanders was introduced as the Democratic nominee and competed with Republican nominee Donald Trump, he could have defeated his rival by 15 percent and enter the White House. In any case, Sanders, in some of his statements, implicitly confirmed his participation in the upcoming presidential elections in the United States.

The Democrats are now struggling to win the Senate and the House of Representatives mid-term elections (Congressional mid-term elections in 2018), and conquer the majority of the Congress.

They plan to pave the way for themselves for winning the 2020 presidential elections. But it should be noted that the internal equations of the Democrats have been severely disrupted after the 2016 presidential election. Meanwhile, the increase in Democratic Party popularity over the past year has been due to the disorders of Donald Trump government.

As you can see, the main strength of the Democrats is the weakness of Trump's government!

Hillary Clinton is a failed Democrat candidate in the 2016 presidential election, another politician who has not yet announced her presence or absence in the 2020 presidential election campaigns.

Many Democrat supporters believe that after Clinton's failure in the last year's presidential election, her candidacy for the next election of the United States is no longer acceptable. It should not be forgotten that Hillary Clinton was once again defeated by Barack Obama during the 2008 inter-party rivalries for the presidential elections.

Even Bill Clinton's strong lobbying with Democrat leaders wasn't of much help to Hillary Clinton in the two presidential elections of 2008 and 2016. More importantly, the case of Clinton's controversial emails is still open.

This case can once again turn into the Achilles heel of the former U.S. Secretary of State.

Even Hillary Clinton's sense of retaliation against Trump doesn't seem to help her to win over the next Democratic nominees such as Biden and Sanders. Any how it looks like Hillary Clinton and her proponents haven't exactly understood this problem yet ...

## What is Germany's position on JCPOA?



By Mohammad Ghaderi

TEHRAN — Sigmar Gabriel German Foreign Minister who is also one of the leaders of the Social-Democratic Party in the country, has recently held talks with members of the U.S. Congress over what he calls «preservation of the JCPOA». The German foreign ministry wrote in a Twitter post:

«Sigmar Gabriel met with members of Congress in Washington. Iran's nuclear deal must not be broken and violated.»

Also in September this year and before the United Nations General Assembly in New York, Bloomberg announced in a report that Germany had more explicit positions on maintaining the nuclear deal with Iran compared with Britain and France. Even this news site claimed that Trump had asked the authorities of Britain and France to seek Germany's satisfaction to hold talks on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) again. After a controversial announcement by the President of the United States about the nuclear deal, Gabriel apparently defended the nuclear deal, stating:

«We won't hesitate to persuade Congress to maintain the nuclear deal with Iran. We will consult on what can be done to change Iran's positions on its policies in the Middle East.» he said.

Although these positions by the German Foreign Secretary on defending the nuclear deal have led to a kind of optimism towards the Germans, the equation is far more complex than what it's supposed to be:

Sigmar Gabriel made a controversial speech in September, which, incidentally, did not reflect on many of our state-run media. He emphasized that his country, along with the United States and France, will do its utmost to secure Iran's «commitment to all its obligations», while supporting the JCPOA.

These statements came at a time when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in several reports confirmed Iran's full commitment to the nuclear accord. In February 2017, the German Foreign Minister supported Trump government's approach towards Iran and stated that Congressional sanctions against Iran is fully understandable! In the course of the Joint Commission meeting on the JCPOA, Berlin, along with its three Western partners, the United States, France and Britain, didn't recognize the numerous violations by the White House and the Congress as examples of violating the nuclear deal. In such circumstances, how can optimism about Germans' approach towards the JCPOA be justified?

On December 5, the German Foreign Minister, criticized U.S. policies (Trump's government policies) and emphasized that in such a situation, Berlin would only think of its own interests. A simple decoding of Gabriel's remarks suggests that Berlin looks at the JCPOA according to its own interests, just like Paris and London.

Although in a recent report released in November this year, the volume of trade between Iran and Germany reached 2.9 billion Euros, and the Germans are specially regarding the business grounds in our country, but one should not forget the fact that only one strategic and security synergy between Germany and the three Western countries, can thoroughly change Berlin's attitude towards the JCPOA! On the other hand, in the course of the nuclear negotiations between Iran and the members of the P1 + 5, Germany has practically proved that it doesn't see standing against the «Washington-Paris-London Triangle» as synonymous with the fulfilment of its own «interests», and thus it didn't stand against the above triangle in the course of nuclear talks with Iran.

Another point is about Germany's regional approach and Berlin's look to our country's missile power. German authorities have repeatedly made a relation between «the JCPOA» and «change in Iran's regional approach» and, on the other hand, have considered the missile power of the Islamic Republic of Iran unacceptable. German officials, like the US and French authorities, consider the containment of Iran's missile power as one of their main regional goals, and believe in the policy of carrot and stick towards our country.

People like the German Chancellor «Angela Merkel» and Sigmar Gabriel, argue that Iran's missile power should be restrained in line with our country's nuclear capability.

However, the main concern of the Germans is the way to implement this tactic. Berlin believes that the nuclear capability, missile power and regional approach of Iran should all be restrained at the same time.

But it must be done in such a way that people don't take it synonymous to the violation of the JCPOA. In this regard, the Germans believe in an apparently independent negotiation and a second consensus on Iran's missile power. It should be acknowledged that Germany has not yet been able to adapt its «underlying approach» and its «superstructure» and apparent attitude to the missile capability of our country.

This has led to controversial expressions and vague and paradoxical conducts by individuals such as Sigmar Gabriel: From consultations with the U.S. Congress on maintaining the nuclear deal, to talks about Iran's commitment to the JCPOA, or the need to restrain Iran's missile power!

Obviously, in such a situation, any optimism about the independent conduct of Berlin regarding the JCPOA would turn to the Achilles heel of our foreign policy calculations. Basically the separation between the Germans and the other three Western players is a terrible strategic mistake.

And, would consequently affect our policy towards Western countries. The various statements made by the Germans about Iran and the JCPOA are the best evidences for adopting a prudent approach towards Germany.

Otherwise, a «sudden turn» or «change of position» by the German authorities would disrupt the calculations of our country's diplomacy system.

# The EU vote ignored Ireland, but the UK can still change its mind

By John Bruton

Let me first try to explain why the handling of Brexit by the UK led to a crisis in Anglo-Irish relations. Treaties between nations are like contracts between individuals. They influence how each party behaves, towards one another and towards the rest of the world. While a contract or a treaty can be withdrawn from, there is a legitimate expectation that this will only be done with careful advance consideration of how this will affect the other parties to the treaty or contract. This is not just a legal expectation, but an expectation of the sort of civility that should apply in relations between people and nations.

## EU rules

One also takes for granted that, if the withdrawing party to a contract wants a new or different contract with the same parties, it will say in advance what it wants that new relationship to be. Even now, Ireland has no clear idea what sort of relationship, compatible with the EU rules the UK helped make, the UK wants with

the EU, and hence with Ireland. As the country most affected by Brexit, there is thus deep disappointment in Ireland that our neighbor the UK has not been able, in respect of Brexit, to live up to the normal expectations I have just outlined.

Forty-four years ago, Ireland and the UK signed the same contract with one another, and with the seven other countries that then made up the European Common Market. We each renewed that contract several times, in the UK's case with the sovereign approval of its parliament. We each expected that the others would continue to honor the contract and we shaped our institutions and our economies on that basis. In particular, when Ireland and the United Kingdom negotiated the Belfast and St Andrews Agreements, to resolve the ongoing conflicts in and around Northern Ireland, we each did so on the unquestioned assumption that the UK would continue to be an EU member.

We each assumed that the freedoms cre-

ated by membership of the EU could continue to be used to strengthen relations between the two communities in Northern Ireland, between North and South, and between Ireland and Britain.

The renegotiation and referendum process that was initiated by David Cameron, which has led to Brexit, seemed to us in Ireland to have been designed in a way that took no account of the obligations and expectations the UK had created in Belfast and at St Andrews.

During the renegotiation phase, the Irish taoiseach, Enda Kenny, supported Cameron's attempt to improve the special status the UK already had in the EU, even though some of the concessions the UK were given weren't in Ireland's interest.

## Other problems

Irish people saw other problems with the process that led to Brexit. The complex UK/EU relationship was reduced to a simple "Leave" or "Remain" choice. While it was clear what "Re-

main" meant, no effort at all was made by the government sponsoring the referendum to say what sort of "Leave" it would choose. So "Leave" became a vehicle for fantasies and wishful thinking of the most egregious kind. Explanations of the choices between different forms of Brexit – such as on whether to stay in the customs union and the single market – were left over until the people had already voted.

There was no deliberative process to inform public opinion, something one would have expected of the UK parliament, one of the oldest democratic deliberative bodies in the world. The referendum was not preceded by detailed green and white papers. In the absence of authoritative information, there was no informed debate about the impact of Brexit on the Irish border, and on hundreds of issues.

It is only in the past week that the UK government has started to consider the sort of post-Brexit relationship it will ask for. In doing so, it will have to take account of the fact that

the EU works because it is a single legal order, with a single system that makes, implements and adjudicates on the meaning of shared EU rules. The UK has a sovereign right to decide what it would like, but it cannot expect the EU to change its very nature, just to accommodate a country that is leaving.

In preparing its proposal, the UK will need to take into account the Interlaken principles that govern EU relations with third countries, and the EU community customs code, both of which UK ministers helped to draft. When it has done this, the UK government can then compare the special position it already enjoys as a voting EU member, with what the EU will be in a position to offer it as a non-member. Then it can make an informed decision. We are each allowed to change our minds in our private lives, if the issue is important enough. Nations might sometimes allow themselves the same privilege.

(Source: The Guardian)

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# Long quest to find her biological parents continues

By Marjan Golpira

Known as Eline Koning among her adopted family and friends in the Netherlands, and by Farideh in a children's home in Iran years ago, this 41-year-old Iranian-Dutch woman is still on a mission to find her biological parents.

A documentary film, *Finding Farideh*, had its premiere in a film festival at the Cinema Verite on December 13th in Tehran. The film told the story of her struggles after she set out to discover her biological family.

The story began on a hot June night in 1976, when a baby girl, estimated then to be about six months old, was found abandoned in the holy shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad.

The baby was soon taken to an orphanage in Mashhad and after 10 months, for 'unknown reason(s)', she was transferred to another orphanage in Tehran called Ameneh Orphanage.

Koning's life changed suddenly when only after spending three days in Tehran's orphanage a Dutch couple came to Tehran merely to visit a relative whose husband was working in Tehran.

The couple was eager to adopt a young child and heard about the orphanage.

Before the Islamic Revolution, or what is known as the "Shah's time", Iran observed international child adoption rules that allowed non-Iranian nationals to adopt abandoned Iranian children or orphans.

The Dutch couple immediately fell in love with the baby Farideh. To everyone's amazement, the day of the actual adoption fell on the couple's fifth wedding anniversary.

Two weeks later, off the couple went back to the Netherlands but this time with an additional member to their family. They renamed her Eline.

Eline was alone with no Iranian friends or family around in Holland, but as the cosmic world works undeniably in a miraculous way, another young couple, who happened to live on the same street as the Konings, heard about Eline's adoption story, and they, too, soon traveled to Iran and adopted another baby girl, the 2.5-year-old grumpy and shy Faranak, from the same orphanage in Tehran.

With much in common between the two girls, only six months apart, they bonded quickly until five years later when Eline's family decided to move to a bigger village, Almere, where Eline's father's workplace was.

To make matters worse, Eline's relationship with her father began to grow cold and around age nine, Eline's world began to fall apart when even children in the school would sometimes bully her for her different, Persian appearance.

Sad, she longed to connect to her roots and to enjoy warm hugs and cuddles in her real parents' arms.

She was always aware that she had connection with Iran. That was even clear from the inquiries she would receive in school about



© TehranTimes/Asghar Khatamsch

**Eline was alone with no Iranian friends or family around in Holland, but as the cosmic world works undeniably in a miraculous way, another young couple, who happened to live on the same street as the Konings, heard about Eline's adoption story, and they, too, soon traveled to Iran and adopted another baby girl, the 2.5-year-old grumpy and shy Faranak, from the same orphanage in Tehran.**

her nationality to which she would reply in a heartbeat, "I am very Dutch, but I was born in Iran." However, she would never introduce herself by her Iranian name 'Farideh'.

To fulfill her sense of belonging to Iran, she even once wrote a paper on Iran for her high school.

After high school, she held various jobs; since she was interested in exploring the world she tried her hand at commercial sales at a travel agency, camera assistance at a TV station and many other jobs.

At 29, she felt down in the dumps. "I felt stuck in life", facing a "black horizon," she recalls. She knew deep down that she had to start her quest to discover her biological parents.

Despite her adopted parents' unwillingness, she hired a lawyer in Iran to look into her adoption case. Fortunately, her attorney was able to track down the date of her desertion, along with her physical description on that

day. She was extremely pleased to learn some information about her very early childhood.

"I gained 10 months of my life back," she smilingly said.

Life went on until three months to her 38th birthday, when she decided to begin what she calls her "Big Search."

She launched her blog at [www.findfarideh.wordpress.com](http://www.findfarideh.wordpress.com) where she regularly wrote about her story. Then an idea struck her. She emailed her story to a Khorasan newspaper in Mashhad, and surprisingly two days later her story appeared in the paper.

Soon, a family replied to her and happily they all went for a DNA test, but to their disappointment, the test came out negative. Still, she was determined to press on.

Another family responded in 2015 but this time she decided to fly to Iran to meet them and do the tests. Despite her worries and anxiety, for the first time, she travelled to her homeland where she was once deserted.

She met up with the family and again same test, same results.

In 2017, once again she flew to Iran to meet the third family and attended the premier of the documentary film about her.

To this day, Eline has gone through three DNA tests with three different families, but they all have failed, although she looks back on her trips to Iran as "healing journeys."

"Total strangers who have either heard or seen my film offer me hugs and kisses. I feel like I have 80 million people as my family."

Today, she is back in Amsterdam, where she currently lives, and still hopes to find her family, although she has come to accept anything that happens.

Eline's story ends uncertain; however, she is certain of one thing. "I know now that I am Farideh Eline."

**Note:** The documentary film *Finding Farideh* will go on big screen in Iran soon.

## Ali Salameh: His life changing opportunity 46 years ago

By Martin Love

He came from a most depressed place at age 18 and made a good life for himself in the U.S. and has been able to help his family in Gaza enormously for decades as a result. He is among the fortunate few Palestinians.

'Ali Salameh, is now 65, and one of several children of Miryam and Yusuf, Palestinians made refugees in 1948 during the Nakba by Zionist terrorists when they were driven from their village, Iraq es-Suweidan, in Palestine, to Gaza. His parents wound up at Jebalya Refugee Camp, the largest refugee camp in Gaza, where 'Ali was born.

It all happened for 'Ali because a journalist in North Carolina happened to write an article about the Middle East in a newspaper in 1970 after a summer with visits to Israel, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. An elderly man of 80, one Emmett White, who once had headed the International Red Cross and was well traveled and based in Baltimore, Maryland, was visiting his sister in North Carolina and happened to read the newspaper article and wanted to meet the young reporter over lunch. He imagined they had something in common, as both were disturbed about the ongoing treatment of Palestinians, whether Muslim or Christian.

White had a book with him: "The Unholy Land" written by a Canadian Christian minister named A.C. Forrest. In this book in the preface, Forrest wrote about an unnamed teenager who "had no future" and worked with his father, the manager, in a citrus grove in Gaza, a walled grove ("bayyara" in Arabic) owned then by the Near East Council of Churches. So this young journalist and Emmett White, over lunch, hatched a plan. Why not find out who this unnamed youth was and sponsor him to come to the U.S. and attend college and live? It was a fine idea and a year later, in 1971, 'Ali appeared at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York City. He had never been outside the Gaza Strip before.

It was a sudden, dramatic change of venue for a teenager like few others ever will or can experience, especially coming from Gaza.

'Ali soon was in Greensboro, North Carolina, a modest city at the time of some 150,000 people, and not long after that he was studying at a local community college and had a job, too, for a construction company. He was assisted by the young journalist's family in Greensboro, and though he lived alone initially, he adapted quickly and he was often at the journalist's mother's home for a meal or just company. A few years later, he married a pretty American girl and they settled down to raise a family. They now have two adult sons, both in their 30s. 'Ali owns a few convenience/grocery stores now and has been a modestly successful businessman. His

wife also ran a restaurant for many years, but of late she has been working as a wildly popular and beloved, elected public servant in Greensboro.

'Ali has developed over the years many American friends, of all races. As a Palestinian Arab and Muslim, he straddles the social worlds of African Americans and whites, and is a beloved friend to both races. He helped found a mosque with other Arab and Muslim friends in Greensboro, too, and attends Friday prayers there regularly. Muslims in Greensboro, and there are a few hundred from various countries in the Middle East, are a tight knit community.

For the American journalist who helped him come to the U.S., there has long been the pleasure of a deep and abiding friendship. But more importantly, 'Ali and spouse and their two children have visited Gaza and 'Ali's parents and siblings from time to time. And 'Ali has contributed to his family's welfare with moral and financial support. He built his family members in Gaza a home near the center of Jebalya Refugee Camp where his mother still lives at age 96. Yusuf, his father, passed away a decade ago.

The young journalist, now a much older man, also made two trips to Gaza because of his friendship with 'Ali. The first in 1975 and the last in 1994. (Back then one could take a taxi to al-Quds from Gaza on occasion for Friday prayers at the Haram esh-Sherif, but no longer and not for many years.)

He will never forget walking to the "bayyara" as a young man in 1975 with Yusuf and there sitting, as if in the Islamic "janna", in winter sunshine and sampling all sorts of citrus until the sweet juices ran down his neck under his shirt. It was a taste of heaven, the best citrus, and the hospitality and warmth of the poor refugees in Gaza remain one of his fondest memories.

'Ali today does not know what's going to happen in and to Gaza, but he is fearful for the safety of all the people imprisoned there by the Israeli military, and under frequent bombardment by Israeli warplanes and the IDF. It is a bizarre situation for a Palestinian to be living in relative safety and comfort in a country, the U.S., whose economic and military support underwrites crimes against Palestinians.

Perhaps the sole relief, so far, is that Palestinians know that a great majority of the world's people empathize with their plight and condemn Israeli actions and postures. (Just this month a huge majority of United Nations member countries condemned the U.S. president, Trump, and his plans to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds, even as Trump and his Ambassador to the U.N., Nikki Haley, threatened to withdraw financial aid to countries opposed to the plan.)

'Ali understands that violent opposition to Israel occupation by Palestinians, as in the past, could be met by

even greater violence by the fourth most powerful military power on earth. "Every time that occurs," 'Ali says, "observers around the world wake up more to what we as a people are dealing with."

He is hopeful, and believes that the non-violent "BDS" (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) program under the leadership of Palestinian Omar Barghouti and others, including even some notably courageous Jewish intellectuals, writers, and academics who live outside Occupied Palestine or Israel, by choice, is currently the best tool to force change and further discredit the Zionist regime. (This kind of action eventually led to the end of Apartheid in South Africa and Nelson Mandela's freedom from decades of imprisonment there, and interestingly, it was the U.S. that long supported the Apartheid regime in South Africa and even claimed that Mandela was a "terrorist" until he was freed.)

In general, most Palestinians and also Muslims in the U.S. like 'Ali know that they may suffer if they speak out in support of Palestinian rights, or against the Zionist regime, even if they are fairly well integrated in to U.S. society. It isn't that Americans don't empathize with the Palestinians under occupation, if they know anything about conditions in places like Gaza and the West Bank.

One serious problem is that too many Americans don't know anything much about the Middle East, and part of the reason for this is that the mainstream U.S. media parrots misconceptions and propaganda pushed by the government inasmuch as it support the Zionists and disallows full reporting about the Palestinian suffering.

America may be a "powerful" country, but relative to most citizens of other countries, U.S. citizens still are not well educated about other cultures and countries, especially in the Middle East. Geography plays a role in this lack of knowledge, too.

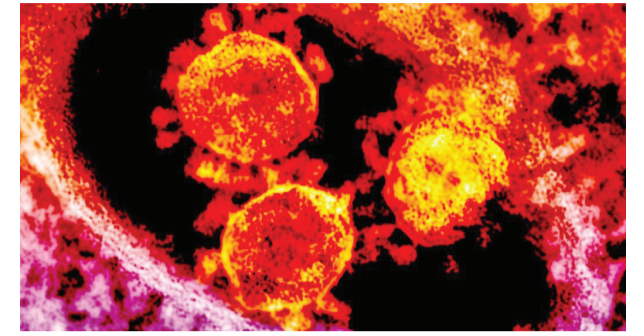
But "nothing lasts forever," 'Ali correctly says, especially when it involves gross injustice.

As the famous Black leader Dr. Martin Luther King said decades ago before he was gunned down in 1968 in his long battle against racial segregation in the U.S.: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice."

One must not forget that the struggle for justice in history in many countries and societies has often taken far longer and been frustrated far longer than ever desirable. Racial equality in the U.S. remains quite incomplete, despite the changes leaders like Martin Luther King advocated and at least partially succeeded in gaining.

**Note:** The main character's name 'Ali Salameh has been changed in the story to protect his identity.

## Why the government is creating lethal viruses



By Wayne Drash

The US government on Tuesday lifted a ban on making lethal viruses, saying the research is necessary to "develop strategies and effective countermeasures against rapidly evolving pathogens that pose a threat to public health."

Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, made the announcement, in which he outlined a new framework for the controversial research. The work with three viruses can now go forward, but only if a scientific review panel determines that the benefits outweigh the risks.

"We have a responsibility to ensure that research with infectious agents is conducted responsibly, and that we consider the potential biosafety and biosecurity risks associated with such research," Collins said in a statement.

The decision brings an end to a three-year moratorium on research involving the influenza virus, severe acute respiratory syndrome (known as SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (or MERS). Critics say the research could unleash a new germ that threatens millions if it is not properly stored or if it escapes from a lab.

The government paused the research in 2014 to review the practices in handling and storing infectious agents. At the time, Collins said that biosafety and biosecurity risks needed to be "understood better."

The pause came after several incidents involving the mishandling of potentially dangerous pathogens at government laboratories.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention accidentally exposed dozens of workers to anthrax in 2014, and a subsequent investigation detailed other instances in which lab workers did not follow protocol. Around that time, vials of the deadly smallpox virus were found in a cardboard box in an unsecured refrigerator at the National Institutes of Health's campus in Bethesda, Maryland.

In Tuesday's announcement, the institutes said that approved research would take place only if the researcher and institution where the research is being conducted demonstrate the "capacity and commitment to conduct it safely and securely, and have the ability to respond rapidly" should things go wrong.

It also said that the research must be "ethically justifiable" and that any pathogen created, transferred or used in the research "must be reasonably judged to be a credible source of a potential future human pandemic."

Dr. Tom Frieden, who was the director of the CDC from 2009 to 2017, applauded Tuesday's decision, saying such studies "help scientists better understand how dangerous organisms work, with the ultimate goal of learning how to stop them."

"There's benefit to be gained from this research, but only if lab safety is a top priority and limited to a small group of highly trained staff," said Frieden, who now serves as president and CEO of the initiative Resolve to Save Lives.

(Source: CNN)

## Boost the health of your holiday buffet

### Go for foods that are lower in fat, salt, and sugar

Big meals and traditional treats are a highlight of the season for many people. But you don't have to give in to the high calories and excess fat and salt that characterize holiday dining. "Particularly during the holidays, when you are surrounded by foods that you do not eat the rest of the year, it is important to take a breath while deciding what you will and will not include," says Debbie Krivitsky, a registered dietitian at Harvard-affiliated Massachusetts General Hospital.

#### What to avoid

Fatty foods are common on a holiday table. But they're usually high in saturated fat, which raises your risk of high cholesterol, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

They're high in calories, too. "Fats provide the most concentrated source of calories that we have—nine calories per gram, more than twice as many calories per gram as lean protein and carbohydrates," says Krivitsky. That means you should minimize anything that's buttered, fried, creamy, or cheesy. The usual suspects include sauces and dressings, pies and puddings, and red meats such as marbled roast beef and bacon-wrapped anything.

Salty foods are also abundant on a buffet, found in processed meats such as ham and bacon, as well as gravies, soups, crackers, and chips. But too much salt may lead to high blood pressure and put you at risk for stroke. "White" foods (potatoes, pasta, rice, bread) and sugary foods will raise your blood sugar quickly. The flood of insulin that follows can eventually cause blood sugar to drop too far, triggering hunger.

#### What to eat

Substituting foods that are lower in fat, salt, and sugar will keep you healthier this holiday season. It will also lower your calorie intake significantly, allowing you to enjoy a larger portion for fewer calories. "For example, one ounce of artichoke dip has 19 grams of fat, and 312 calories. In comparison, four ounces of cocktail shrimp, along with one ounce of sauce, provides 130 calories, and two grams of fat," says Krivitsky.

What are the best choices on a buffet? Go for salsa, hummus, and dips made with Greek yogurt instead of sour cream. Try lean protein sources such as fish, turkey, fruit, and veggies. Think baked, not fried, and spices, yogurt, or lemon juice instead of sauce.

(Source: [health.harvard.edu](http://health.harvard.edu))

## 10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

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

- 1** Apple faces lawsuits over its intentional slowing of older iPhones. Plaintiffs from two separate class-action lawsuits claim Apple did not have user consent to slow iPhone performance and that it was forcing new purchases
- 2** Bitcoin lost more than a quarter of its value as an analyst warned that investors in the cryptocurrency had finally been introduced to the law of financial gravity.
- 3** Benchmark confirms Qualcomm Snapdragon 845 CPU for Sony's upcoming flagship. Sony is readying its new Xperia smartphones and a flagship can't miss from the lineup. We know little about Sony's upcoming Xperia flagship smartphone other than its codename, Sony H8266, and a few unconfirmed specs.
- 4** U.S. Magistrate Judge Nathanael Cousins has ordered Apple to pay the court \$25,000 each day that it fails to turn over certain documents related to the FTC's suit against Qualcomm. The court started adding up the fines on December 16th. The \$25,000 is the amount of profit Apple made every 16 seconds during its last fiscal year.
- 5** The iPhone X's Face ID can't approve family purchases, and no one knows why? Touch ID could be used before, but iPhone X owners must enter their passwords.
- 6** Nvidia is abandoning driver support for 32-bit operating systems after it releases version 390, the company announced. After that, it's 64-bit or bust. "Later driver release versions will not operate, nor install, on 32-bit operating systems. Driver enhancements, driver optimizations, and operating system features in driver versions after Release 390 will not be incorporated back into Release 390 or earlier versions," the company said.
- 7** Apple's self-driving cars could use routes others have traveled. A newly published patent hints at Apple's navigation system.
- 8** Google is still snapping up Apple's chip design talent as part of its ongoing quest to create custom processors. The Information has learned that the search giant has hired John Bruno, the designer who founded and ran Apple's silicon competitive analysis group -- that is, the team that helped iPhone and iPad processors stay ahead of rivals.
- 9** Hackers take advantage of bitcoin's wild ride. "Whenever something gets this much publicity and popularity and there's a potential to make what appears to be free and easy money, the criminal aspects of the world are going to take advantage of it," said Mike Murray, vice president of security intelligence at mobile security firm Lookout.
- 10** Britain's cyber-spies are tracking 100 hacking groups who are trying to steal government secrets and damage the UK economy, The Sunday Times can reveal. In an exclusive interview Martin said the nation's infrastructure and financial systems were at risk.

## World of Tanks to get new graphics engine

World of Tanks has spent the last several months gearing up for its comprehensive Update 1.0. Developer Wargaming has now confirmed the long-serving combat vehicle MMO will receive a new graphics engine and overhauled maps come March, 2018.

Courtesy of an "advanced" CORE graphics engine, more than 25 of WoT's maps stand to be redesigned in a bid to "meet modern graphical standards", so says the developer in a statement.



"The in-house developed CORE engine brings a complete visual makeover, adding greater depth, beauty and realism to battlefields with no adverse effect on the game's performance," says Wargaming. "Terrain, water, flora, skies, and environments on recreated maps get bolstered with the latest physically based rendering tech and support a variety of new and improved effects. Space is more realistically illuminated and battlefields feel more dynamic and active thanks to improved shading and lighting models, responsive water, and realistic terrain textures."

Wargaming adds that Update 1.0 doesn't solely improve the game's visuals, but also its audio—having teamed up with over 40 musicians in the process. I caught up with videogame veteran Akira Yamaoka to this end earlier this year, where he discussed his recent involvement with World of Tanks, as well as his openness to a Team Silent reunion.

(Source: pcgamer)

# Telehealth cabin connects qualified doctors with patients all over the world

By Frances Marcellin

About a decade ago, French doctor Franck Baudino was providing primary medical care to isolated communities in small African villages, which sometimes took two or three days' travel to reach.

Exhausted, and with demand for accurate healthcare consultations spiralling, he vowed to create a sustainable solution that could bring professional medical diagnoses to the global population.

"It wasn't possible to carry on like that," he tells ZDNet. "I wanted somehow to be able to take the pulse of the world."

CIA data shows that low-income countries have 10 times fewer physicians per capita than high-income countries. Nigeria has about four doctors per 10,000 people, while Ghana has only one per 10,000. By comparison, European countries, such as France have around 30, while the figure increases to 40 in Norway and Switzerland.

Yet even in developed countries such as France, there are plenty of areas where some of the population, particularly those in rural areas and the elderly, are left with inadequate access to healthcare.

The issue of 'medical deserts' in the countryside has long been a problem for the French government.

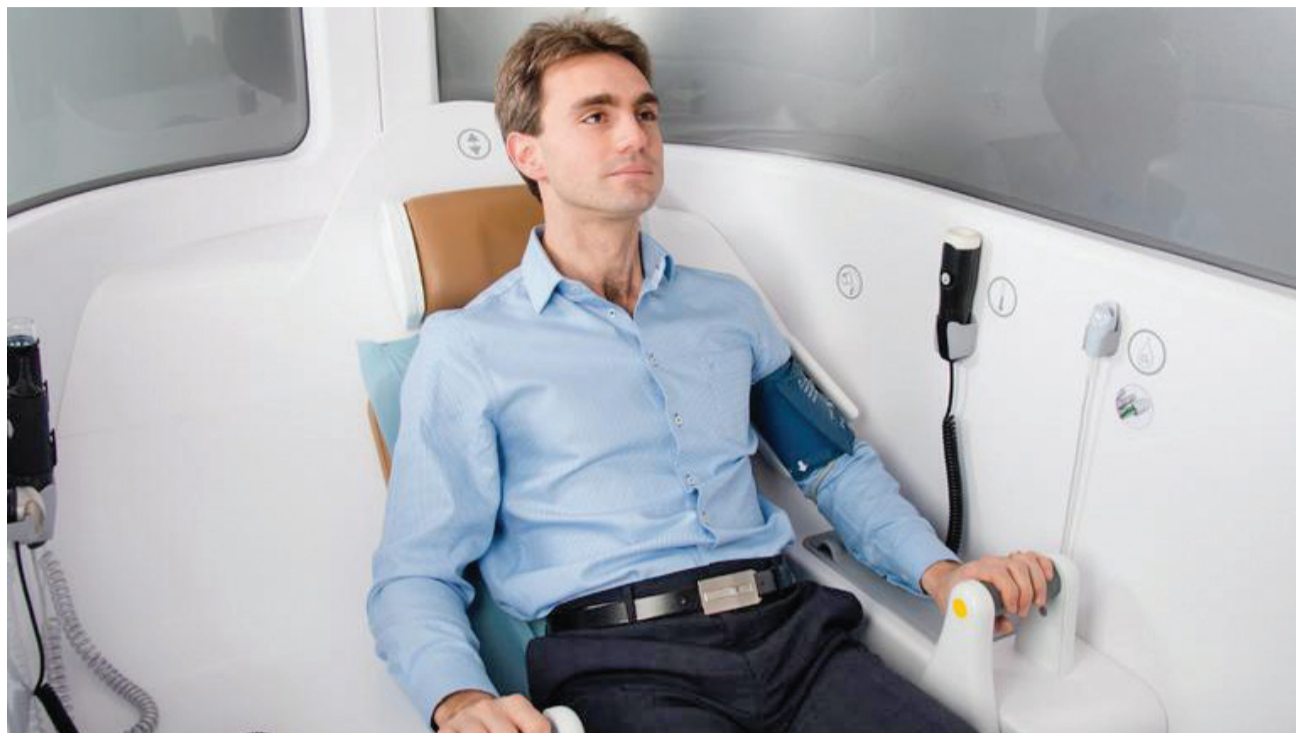
Having decided that it was important to find a way to provide remote consultations, Baudino founded H4D, or Health for Development, in 2008. Initially, he tested several devices, but the results left him dissatisfied.

"I realised that even with the best device you can't have consistent measurements because they depend so much on other factors, like the environment and design," he explains.

To put his plan back on track, he defined three essential elements for remote consultations. These were: quality of measurement, a sustainable point of care, and recreating an atmosphere of confidence.

Seven years later, after some intense R&D and a few setbacks, Baudino invented the first connected medical office: the Consult Station.

A standalone telemedicine booth, which is 191cm long, 121cm wide, and weighs 285kg (6ft 3in, 4ft, 628lb), the Consult Station is a patented and certified Class IIa Medical Device, which meets the requirements of European Directive 93/42/EEC. Its white,



clean design gives it the look of a hygienic, yet comfortable, hospital consultation room.

Inside, it offers professional medical instruments, screens, and a video system for communication with qualified doctors.

Guided by the doctor, a patient can use the equipment to perform a wide range of health checks, including measurement of vital signs such as blood pressure, pulse rate, blood oxygen level, height, weight, and temperature; using an electrocardiogram; listening to the heart and lungs with a stethoscope; testing the skin with a dermatoscope, and the eyes through a fundus camera. There are also visual and audio tests, and blood glucose-level monitoring.

"It works well, we've tested thousands of patients and 87 percent say they forget after three minutes that they're with a remote doctor," he says. "But one of our biggest challenges wasn't the technology. It was writing the clinical protocols with a core group of expert physicians, on how to guide a patient to use the devices."

When used properly, the range and quality of the devices inside the Consult Station allows a physician to treat 90 percent of

common illnesses.

A prescription is delivered through the machine to the patient at the end of the consultation, and the data that is produced during the consultation is encrypted and accessed by the patient through a secure online database.

In France the Consult Station can be found all around the country, including the Paris, Provence, Saint-Etienne, and Toulouse areas. There are around 50 qualified physicians working across three platforms in Caen, Toulon, and Paris.

Every single doctor providing teleconsultations is a licensed practitioner in France either in a general family practice, clinic, or hospital, and they spend two to three half days working for H4D.

However, for now, the model works best for corporate clients, of which H4D has many in France, such as global construction player Vinci, insurance firm AXA, and Econocom.

"These companies want to promote quality of life for their employees, but in a cost-effective way," Baudino explains. "With the Consult Station their employees don't need to lose a day of work to see the doctor."

They can have an appointment within 30 minutes and early intervention can prevent their condition from worsening."

For clients, the use of the booth and of the related services is available through a base monthly subscription of €3,000 per month. Individual consultations are then charged at the same rate as a standard consultation in France, which is currently €25.

Over the past few years, the company has branched out into eight other countries with a similar corporate client business model, including Italy, the Philippines, the United Arab Emirates, Canada, and the US.

Cleared by the US Food and Drug Administration in March 2017, the Consult Station now meets all the requirements to be marketed in the US.

Despite this progress, Baudino still has his eye firmly fixed on helping communities in developing countries, with Consult Stations arriving in Gabon and the Ivory Coast in 2018.

"My dream is that one day people will forget that access to healthcare was a problem, so we can treat six billion people," he says. (Source: Zdnet)

## Qualcomm wants TSMC to produce Snapdragon 855

For the last few years, Samsung has been the company churning out high-end chipsets designed by Qualcomm.

This would include the Snapdragon 820, Snapdragon 821 and the Snapdragon 835 chipsets. And while there has been some talk about another chip manufacturer taking over for Samsung to produce the Snapdragon 845, it appears as though Sammy won't be replaced until the Snapdragon 855 is rolling off of an assembly line.

By the end of next year, TSMC might start manufacturing the Snapdragon 855 SoC, and an unspecified



modem chip. But there is no reason to hold a charity bake sale for Samsung.

Next year, it is rumored to recapture the A-series chipset business from Apple that it had lost to TSMC with 2016's A10. Both Samsung and TSMC produced the A9 chip in 2015. One reason why Qualcomm might favor TSMC for the Snapdragon 855 chipset has to do with the Taiwan based firm's lead over Samsung when it comes to the 7nm node.

(Source: PocketNow)

## China closes more than 13,000 websites in past three years



China has closed more than 13,000 websites since the beginning of 2015 for breaking the law or other rules and the vast majority of people support government efforts to clean up cyberspace, state news agency Xinhua said on Sunday.

The government has stepped up already tight controls over the internet since President Xi Jinping took power five years ago, in what critics say is an effort to restrict freedom of speech and prevent criticism of the ruling Communist Party.

The government says all countries regulate the internet, and its rules are aimed at ensuring national security and social stability and preventing the spread of pornography and violent content.

A report to the on-going session of the standing committee of China's largely rubber stamp parliament said the authorities had targeted pornography and violence in their sweeps of websites, blogs and social media accounts, Xinhua said. As well as the 13,000 websites shut

down, almost 10 million accounts had also been closed by websites, it added. It did not give details but the accounts were likely on social media platforms.

"Internet security concerns the party's long-term hold on power, the country's long-term peace and stability, socio-economic development and the people's personal interests," Xinhua said.

More than 90 percent of people surveyed supported government efforts to manage the internet, with 63.5 percent of them believing that in recent years there has been an obvious reduction in harmful online content, it added.

"These moves have a powerful deterrent effect," Wang Shengjun, vice chairman of parliament's standing committee, told legislators, according to Xinhua.

China ushered in a tough cyber security law in June, following years of fierce debate around the controversial legislation that many foreign business groups fear will hit their ability to operate in the country. (Source: Reuters)

## 2018 will be the software industry's 'seat belt' moment



Sixty years after the first Ford Model T rolled off the production line, Congress passed a law requiring the installation of seat belts to address public safety concerns. Many auto manufacturer lobbyists claimed this would be the end of the U.S. car industry. But of course, it has saved millions of lives.

It looks like 2018 will be the software industry's seat belt moment. The introduction of GDPR in Europe, rulings on the rights of contract workers on the gig-economy platform in both the UK and in the U.S., and growing pressure on social media platforms globally to control their content are just the beginning. This growing wave of regulation will likely dominate the next decade of politics as society catches up with the huge changes that new technologies have wrought.

In just the last few weeks, the UK announced the creation of a Centre for Data Ethics, its first national advisory body for artificial intelligence, to look into how data can, and can not be used

for machine learning applications. An Australian parliamentary inquiry into the future of journalism has raised the possibility of levies on tech companies to support journalism. And financial institutions from the U.S. SEC to Japan's FSA are working on how they can manage the cryptocurrency explosion without killing a burgeoning new movement.

The world's leading tech platforms, led by some of the smartest people on the planet, are not oblivious to the coming reforms, and they are working hard to get out ahead of regulation on multiple fronts. Google and Facebook have committed to hire up to 10,000 human moderators to check the veracity and suitability of content on their platforms. Apple and Facebook both recently made voluntary changes to their tax status in multiple jurisdictions.

Software may be eating the world, but as far as the state is concerned, it has yet to foot the bill. (Source: venturebeat)

# Devastating climate change could lead to 1m migrants a year entering EU by 2100: study

Climate change will drive a huge increase in the number of migrants seeking asylum in Europe if current trends continue, according to a new study.

The number of migrants attempting to settle in Europe each year will triple by the end of the century based on current climate trends alone, independent of other political and economic factors, according to the research. Even if efforts to curb global warming are successful, the number of applications for asylum could rise by a quarter, the authors predict.

Wolfram Schlenker, professor at the school of international and public affairs at Columbia University in New York, and lead author of the study, said: "Europe will see increasing numbers of desperate people fleeing their home countries."

## Current forecasting models

Bob Ward, policy and communications director at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, at the London School of Economics and Political Science, who was not involved with the report, told the Guardian the results should be taken seriously by policymakers, though current forecasting models frequently fail to take such factors into account.

He said: "This study shows how Europe will be impacted by one of the most serious



impacts of climate change. Hundreds of millions, perhaps billions, of people will be exposed to coastal sea level rise and shifts in extreme weather that will cause mass migrations away from the most vulnerable locations. We know from human history that

such migrations often lead to conflict and war, with devastating consequences.

Climate change is predicted to result in more droughts, floods, heatwaves, and other extreme weather, as well as more intense storms and rising sea levels. These effects are

**Climate change is predicted to result in more droughts, floods, heatwaves, and other extreme weather, as well as more intense storms and rising sea levels.**

likely to render agriculture more difficult, if not impossible, across swathes of the globe, including sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia.

These effects will also be felt in Europe, but its lower base temperatures, relative prosperity and advanced infrastructure mean the damage could be contained, and make it an attractive destination for migrants.

## Marked migration increase

Migration, or attempted migration, to Europe has increased markedly in the last decade, with leading causes including the war in Syria, turmoil in North Africa and the Middle East, and a burgeoning young population with few economic prospects in many regions of Africa and the Middle East.

The new study, published on Thursday in the journal *Science*, was initiated and largely funded by the EU's Joint Research Center, with contribution from the US Department of Energy, and led by scientists at Columbia University in New York.

The authors of the study examined asylum applications in the EU from 103 countries between 2000 and 2014, during which time applications averaged more than 350,000 a year. They compared the applications with information on environmental factors, such as temperature and weather, and adjusted the data for factors such as conflict and political turmoil. (Source: *The Guardian*)

## Toronto's thriving AI ecosystem serves as a model for the world

While you were looking the other way, Toronto humbly produced some of the globe's top artificial intelligence (AI) and deep learning experts, companies, and innovations. Now is the time for the city to stand up tall and loudly proclaim what local folks already know: Toronto is at the center of AI innovation and its real-world applications.

The city is home to world-class academic institutions like the University of Toronto and nearby to the University of Waterloo, both of which constantly churn out bright computer and data scientists, engineers, and developers building next-generation AI technologies. These institutions are world leaders in scientific research, creating an ecosystem ripe with opportunities for novel applications for AI, particularly in the fields of health and life sciences. My own company actively recruits staff from both schools.

## Welcoming city

Toronto is also a welcoming city for both people and industry. The Canadian city's population is diverse, international, well-educated, and open to new experiences. A strong local network of investors, incubators, technologists, and support staff is sustaining and growing AI companies focused on transforming specific industries. There are also organizations led and advised by AI pioneers like Geoffrey Hinton, Sanja Fidler, Anna Goldenberg, and Raquel Urtasun.

A strong, connected network of business growth-



focused institutions, including MaRS Discovery District, The Vector Institute, and the Creative Destruction Lab, call Toronto home. They share a commitment to advancing AI innovation in the city. Each organization is connected to academic programs, cultivating local technology talent. All three bring technical and business talent together to optimize innovations and position them for the market.

The Creative Destruction Lab, based at the University

of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, provides founders focused on AI innovation with business training and networking opportunities.

JLabs, a part of Johnson & Johnson Innovation, has spearheaded the AI for Drug Discovery QuickFire Challenge to highlight rising stars who use AI to advance drug discovery and development in various medical areas.

## AI startups in energy

MaRS connect AI startups in the energy, clean technology, health care, finance, and agriculture industries with talent, industry partners, and corporate infrastructure to scale products and services; it also just expanded a platform to democratize venture capital and social investment. All three focus on bringing the world's top minds to Toronto and expanding across borders when AI innovations scale to meet international demand.

Investors from Toronto venture capital firms lead the funding of local AI startups, and their successes are noticed on the global stage.

In 2017, we saw an uptick in socially minded investments and civic innovation commitments to Toronto from Sidewalk Labs, Chan-Zuckerberg Initiative, and other global organizations. Over the next year, I believe we will continue to see an influx of investment from VCs, social impact investors, big technology, and global enterprises into Toronto's AI industry from every corner of the globe. (Source: *venturebeat.com*)

## Mysterious filament stretching down towards the Milky Way's supermassive black hole

The core of the Milky Way Galaxy has always been a source of mystery and fascination to astronomers. This is due in part to the fact that our Solar System is embedded within the disk of the Milky Way – the flattened region that extends outwards from the core. This has made seeing into the bulge at the center of our galaxy rather difficult. Nevertheless, what we've been able to learn over the years has proven to be immensely interesting.

For instance, in the 1970s, astronomers

became aware of the Supermassive Black Hole (SMBH) at the center of our galaxy, known as Sagittarius A\* (Sgr A\*). In 2016, astronomers also noticed a curved filament that appeared to be extending from Sgr A\*. Using a pioneering technique, a team of astronomers from the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics (CfA) recently produced the highest-quality images of this structure to date.

"With our improved image, we can now follow this filament much closer to

the Galaxy's central black hole, and it is now close enough to indicate to us that it must originate there. However, we still have more work to do to find out what the true nature of this filament is."

## Three possible explanations

After examining the filament, the research team came up with three possible explanations for its existence. The first is that the filament is the result of inflowing gas, which would produce a rotating, vertical tower of magnetic field as it approaches

and threads Sgr A\*'s event horizon. Within this tower, particles would produce radio emissions as they are accelerated and spiral in around magnetic field lines extending from the black hole.

The second possibility is that the filament is a theoretical object known as a cosmic string. These are basically long, extremely thin cosmic structures that carry mass and electric currents that are hypothesized to migrate from the centers of galaxies.

(Source: *Universe Today*)

With finance offered by Bank of Industry and Mine:

## Two ATR aircraft will be added to country's air fleet

The seventh and eighth ATR72-600 aircrafts owned by Homa Airlines, funded by the finance of the Bank of Industry and Mine from the National Development Fund, will enter Tehran.

Two ATR72-600 aircraft will be registered with the EP-ITG and EP-ITH registers after

conducting grand tests in the city of Toulouse, France, and carrying out the acceptance flights by Iranian pilots will soon be delivered to the directors of Homa Company.

Asghar Fakhriya Kashan, Deputy Minister of Road and Urban Development earlier this year, pointed out that with each

of new airplanes a sum of around 1,000 direct and indirect jobs will be created. The purchase of new airplanes is a real proof of the realization of a resilient economy, behind the scenes there were complexities in this operation, only the technical and historical understanding of the head of the

central bank and the managing director of the industry and mining bank was able to solve it.

Meanwhile, the financing of Airbus planes, several of which were added to our airline's fleet, was also carried out by the Industry and Mine Bank.

## water transfer project to central Iran is seriously being carried out

The Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company's CEO Mohmood Nourian met and talked with 'Special Commission for the Protection of Production and Supervision for the Implementation of General Policies of Principle (44) and they reviewed the ways to fund the water transfer project from the Persian Gulf to central Iran. After the meeting, the Chadormalu's CEO said they had a good meeting with the members of the Commission.

Nourian continued that in the meeting, Iran's minister of energy promised to cooperate in the development of power plants and power supply to the water transmission stations.

He added that also in the meeting, the minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Minister and the managing directors of the banks in Iran promised to finance the project.

With regard to the completion of the project and the time when water gets to Chadormalu, Mahmoud Nourian said "it takes more time to get water to Chadormalu than Gol Gohar and Sarcheshmeh Copper Complex."

"Regarding this issue, we hope that in the year 1398 (almost two years from now), the water will reach Gol Gohar and in the third phase to the Chadormalu complex," Nourian asserted.

Referring to the financing of the project, he stated

"according to our commitments so far, we have provided about 950 billion Tomans out of 1500 billion, though there is, of course, a lot of deficits a share of which has been submitted to the banks to loan the money," adding "foreign currencies are being supplied by the National Development Fund of Iran."

Noting that Chadormalu owns %22 of the Water Transmission Company shares, Chadormalu CEO said "fortunately, to date, there has been no problem in the implementation of the project, and the work is underway quickly."

In response to the question 'to what extent that the implementation of this project is affecting the price of the product, he said "given the shortage of water and its increasing price, this project is highly economical and will not have a negative effect on the finished product price."

In response to another question about the most important barriers ahead of the development of the country's iron and mining sector, Engineer Nourian said "as I have said many times, most of our problems are internal and we expect government and legislative institutions to have a good understanding of the problems and the current situation of the mining sector and try to solve the problems."

He went on to say "when it comes to the issue of Resilient Economy, we have to meet its requirements, and the first



step is to eliminate barriers to production and encourage investment in the field and move towards creating surplus value in economic activities."

He concluded "it should be noted that the creation of surplus value in any industry requires an adequate understanding of the business market, planning based on realities, and building necessary infrastructure for development," adding mining sector is not an exception in this regard.

## Mars absorbed water on its surface like a sponge: study

The Martian surface may have reacted with and absorbed the water that once flowed on the Red Planet, making it uninhabitable, scientists suggest.

Although today's Martian surface is barren, frozen and uninhabitable, a trail of evidence points to a once warmer, wetter planet, where water flowed freely.

The conundrum of what happened to this water is long standing and unsolved.

Previous research has suggested that the majority of the water was lost to space as a result of the collapse of the planet's magnetic field, when it was either swept away by high intensity solar winds or locked up as sub-surface ice.

Convinced that the planet's mineralogy held the answer to this puzzling question, scientists from the Oxford University in the UK applied modelling methods used to understand the composition of Earth rocks to calculate how much water could be removed from the Martian surface through reactions with rock.

The team assessed the role that rock temperature, sub-surface pressure and general Martian make-up, have on the planetary surfaces.

The results revealed that the basalt rocks on Mars can hold approximately 25 percent more water than those on Earth, and as a result drew the water from the Martian surface into its interior.

"People have thought about this question for a long time, but never tested the theory of the water being absorbed as a result of simple rock reactions," said Jon Wade, from Oxford, who led the research.

"There are pockets of evidence that together, leads us to believe that a different reaction is needed to oxidize the Martian mantle," said Wade. (Source: *Hindustan Times*)

## China is building a solar-power highway

China is building a 1.2 mile (2 km) stretch of solar highway, meaning solar panels on the road will be powering the towns surrounding it. Engineers hope that soon it will wirelessly power electric cars driving on the road as well.

The Jinan South Ring Expressway starts off in the eastern Chinese city of Jinan, home to nearly 7 million people. Known as a tech and transportation hub, it is home to Sinotruk, the county's state-owned heavy-duty truck manufacturer. According to state-owned media, the solar-powered leg of the expressway will be open by the end of December. It will be able to carry up to medium-sized trucks.

To build a photovoltaic highway, Chinese engineers are using three layers. The uppermost of these is transparent concrete with a feel similar to asphalt. Then come the solar panels, absorbing the sun's rays while safely protected from nature. Below the solar panels is a strip of insulation that makes sure nature doesn't interfere from the bottom up.

Beyond acting as a power source, the road also provides an added benefit: The panels heat can transfer through the concrete, allowing them to automatically melt snow.

Solar roads are still a rarity but they have been around since 2014, when one opened in the Netherlands.

One of the most polluted cities in China, Jinan has poor air quality that has been shown to increase the city's mortality rate by nearly six percent. A good target for China's newfound environmentalism, the expressway isn't even the city's first solar road. The Qilu Transportation Development Group, the same government group building the Expressway, also built a road in the city as a test run. (Source: *Popular Mechanics*)



## Aesthetics crucial factor in development of earliest copper alloys

While studies of ancient gold metallurgy and the color characteristics of gold alloys are well supported by modern research, the color properties of prehistoric copper alloys, such as tin bronzes or arsenic copper, the most abundant type of metal artefacts in prehistory, have largely been understudied.

A team of Serbian and UK researchers has developed a Cu-Sn (Copper-Arsenic-Tin) color ternary diagram to uncover the original colors of archaeological artefacts now patinated through age and exposure.

The study was prompted by the discovery of the world's earliest tin bronze artefacts four years ago in Serbia and the ongoing debate into what significance color played in the advancement of metal-making technologies.

Dr. Miljana Radivojevic, lead author and researcher at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge, said "Given the acknowledged importance of aesthetics in ancient metallurgy, we decided to experimentally replicate the most common prehistoric alloys, made of binary and ternary combinations of copper, arsenic and tin and produce a color chart that comes the closest to showing the true 'bling' of such artefacts in the past. Professor Zeljko Kamberovic, leader of the Serbian team from the University of Belgrade Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy said, "Our laboratory is one of the few in Europe to hold a license to experiment with arsenic, which is why we were approached to develop the study and produce 64 metal samples of variable copper-tin-arsenic compositions."

The "copper-tin-arsenic ternary color charts enabled us to re-evaluate the claim that early tin bronzes in the Balkans had a distinctive golden hue", said Radivojevic. She added that it is "now highly likely that the production of this new alloy in the Balkans at the same time as gold could have been dictated by the demand for the 'exotic' golden hue, or its closest imitation".

(Source: *eurekaalert.org*)

## Govt. should stand firm against acquisitive industry: environment chief

**ENVIRONMENT** TEHRAN — “Health, environmental safety and the rights of future generations cannot be neglected and the government should take a determined stand against the industry’s passion for acquisitiveness,” chief of the Department of Environment, Isa Kalantari, said on Saturday.

He made the remarks over the meeting of the workgroup for combating air pollution in metropolises which was held with governors, mayors and deputy ministers in attendance, IRNA reported.

He criticized the fact that no practical step is being taken to combat air pollution and highlighted that beside Tehran and Karaj, other cities like Tabriz and Urmia are facing air pollution now.

“At least 80 percent of fine particles (PM 2.5) is produced by clunker buses and trucks,” noted the environment chief.

Incomplete combustion of car engines is another important factor of air pollution, said Kalantari, adding, “70 percent of Tehran’s air pollution is due to the incomplete combustion of clunker vehicles.”

Criticizing the import of 500,000 carbureted motorcycles in two months, he noted that these motorcycles are four times more pollutant than cars.

Kalantari also mentioned that there are 140,000 trucks plying Tehran, 40 of which are considered clunker.

The domestic industry should try to improve its productions and create a competitive environment with foreign industries, rather than impeding this process, he noted.

Posing the question of “people should serve the industry or vice-versa?” he criticized the disobedience of car manufacturers for not applying the required standards in their products.

“The Department of Environment will only act based on its regulatory duties from now on,” told the vice-president.

Kalantari spoke about revealing some facts about industries and added, “We will stand for people’s rights although I know that I will be faced with intense pressures and attacks.”

2.2 percent of GDP is spent on damages caused by air pollution and a national determination is needed to combat this challenge, he concluded.

There isn’t any short-term approach towards air pollution except reinforcing traffic restrictions and closing schools, told Amirhossein Qena’ati, an official with to ministry of industry, adding, “tackling this challenge needs at least four years.”

Talking about social consequences of tough decisions for addressing this issue, Tehran’s Governor Mohammad Hossein Moqimi noted that 70 percent of air pollution in Tehran and other metropolises is caused by vehicles and transportation fleet and on the other hand, there is no practical plan for developing and improving this system.

## LEARN ENGLISH

### Preparing a Budget

A: Welcome Mr. and Mrs. Carnwell, please take a seat.  
 B: Thank you.  
 A: So I understand that your family spending has **skyrocketed** and you want to start **budgeting**.  
 C: Yes that’s correct. **Frankly speaking** our household income is relatively high and we have never had any money problems, but I think this is the main reason as to why our spending has **gone out of control**.  
 B: We have two kids and with allowances, paying their credit cards, ours and not to mention our mortgage and car payments. With the recent economic **downturn**, my husband’s business has suffered and now we need some advice as to how we can prepare a family budget.  
 A: I see. Well you have come to the right place. First what we need to do, is determine your cash flow. Knowing how much money is coming in will help us **allocate** spending to different categories such as mortgage, education, groceries, etc.  
 B: Yes that makes sense.  
 A: Secondly, I need you to bring all of your receipts for the last two to three months. That way, we can determine what your average expenditures are and see which category you are spending money on the most. Usually, your fixed costs are higher and we can’t do much about that, but we can usually trim your variable costs such as entertainment or clothing.  
 C: Great! We will do that then! Now how about we treat you to a nice dinner?  
 A: That’s another thing. If you really want to stop spending so much money, throw away at least half of your credit cards!

■ **Key vocabulary**  
**skyrocket**: rise rapidly, as in price  
**budget**: plan the way to spend money in order to save more  
**frankly speaking**: to be honest, to say it directly  
**out of control**: beyond the ability to direct the actions of something  
**downturn**: a period or process in which business activity, production etc. is reduced and conditions become worse  
**allocate**: assign  
 ■ **Supplementary vocabulary**  
**capital**: the wealth in money or property one owns  
**finances**: one’s monetary resources  
**to bring in the dough**: to make money  
**breadwinner**: one whose earnings are the primary source of support for one’s dependents  
**to itemize**: to place or include on a list of items  
 (Source: [languagel.com](http://languagel.com))



# ‘UNGA draft resolution turns combating SDS into a global issue’

**ENVIRONMENT** TEHRAN — The adoption of a draft on combating sand and dust storms (SDS) in the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 72) will turn it into a global issue which can garner international support to tackle its detrimental effects, the Iranian ambassador to the UN said.

The 72nd session of the UN General Assembly which closed on December 22, 2017 adopted a further draft on combating sand and dust storms. It recognized that such weather had inflicted substantial economic, social and environmental damage on the inhabitants of the world’s arid, semiarid and dry sub-humid areas, underscoring the need to treat and promptly take measures to address them.

Sand and dust storms put many Iranian specially those residing south-western areas of Iran to considerable inconvenience which requires national, regional and international cooperation to address it, Gholamali Khoshroo told IRNA news agency.

“After rounds of talk lasting for two and half months finally the draft of the resolution was adopted,” he said, explaining, “the resolution has recognized the negative effects of sand and dust storms on the citizens health and considered it as an obstacle to achieve sustainable development goals and has called for urgent measures.”



Khoshroo went on to say that the resolution has prompted World Health Organization (WHO) to work out international and regional strategies to fight the health hazards posed by the sand and dust storms.

Combating sand and dust storms require “national determination” and close regional and international cooperation, the

resolution tasks the UN to facilitate international cooperation and device a global mechanism to fight the issue, he added.

Ambassador to the UN further highlighted that all responsible UN agency are required to join hands to address the predicament.

The resolution has also underlined the

need for increased technical support and capacity building for addressing the issue and assign UN Environment Program (UNEP), World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and WHO to provide the necessary support to the affected countries, he said.

As proposed by Iran a conference will be held in July 2018 with UN high-ranking officials, representatives from other countries, NGOs, and researchers in attendance to discuss ways to improve cooperation in abating sand and dust storms, he noted.

Following Iran’s incessant efforts to foster international support to fight sand and dust storms representatives from more than 40 countries convened in Tehran on July 3-5, 2017 to look collectively into dust and sand storms.

The meeting entitled “International Conference on Combating Sand and Dust Storms: Challenges and Practical Solutions” was hosted by Iran’s Department of Environment and Foreign Ministry, with the cooperation of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, UN Environment and the UN Development Program among others.

Ministers and high-level representatives participating in the UN-backed conference wrapped up the second day with the Tehran Ministerial Declaration, agreeing to “co-operate on combating SDS at sub-regional, regional, and international levels.”

## Hashemi cautions against possible Tehran earthquakes

**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — Tehran city council chairman Mohsen Hashemi has urged officials and responsible organizations to be vigilant over the possibility of future earthquakes in the metropolis and take necessary measures.

“The magnitude-5.2 earthquake in Tehran was not minor enough to be disregarded and not major enough to cause damages,” Hashemi said on a TV show aired on Saturday night.

Speaking on the importance of an earthquake in Tehran, he added that the municipality, the Red Crescent Society, ministries of education and transport, and military forces should implement required measures in face of natural disasters.

■ **Potential aftermaths**  
 Talking about 36,000 hectares of run-down areas in Tehran, the city council chairman noted that earthquake can result in nearly 2 million injuries and casualties.

He went on to say that if an earthquake of magnitude 7 or stronger shakes Tehran, the water supply system will severely damage and Tehran may face floods as well, so plans for reinforcement of water supply system have been developed.

He referred to earthquake warning system which notify the citizens of a substantial earthquake 10 seconds before it strikes and explained plans to equip different areas of Tehran with the warning systems. “It is said that it can decrease casualties by one forth,” he said.

Talking about rumors which are circulating about the



A view of buildings damaged by the magnitude 7.3 earthquake which hit western city of Sarpol-e Zahab on November 12

possibility of another tremor within the next 2 to 16 weeks, he stated that earthquake is “unpredictable” and all the rumors which exacerbate people’s anxiety should be disregarded.

“Facilities that have been provided in Tehran to face earthquake is just enough for a city with a population of less than 300,000,” highlighted Hashemi, adding, “The Red Crescent Society should be ready for providing emergency shelters for 1 million individuals and the municipality should be prepared to remove the debris of collapsed buildings.”

He also noted that Iran has enough equipment and credit to face earthquakes but the main issue is the inconsistency between different bodies.

Mohsen Hashemi also referred to two other main issues which can pose threats after an earthquake in Tehran. “The first one is the possible collapse of tall buildings which are built on narrow streets; this incident will impede the rescue and relief operation,” he said. The second issue is the possibility of gas leak and explosions; to combat this problem, new gas valves have been developed that will automatically cut gas stream in major earthquakes.

■ **Tehran’s medical centers not ready**  
 Although medical centers in Tehran are in acceptable condition now, they are not expected to fulfill all the medical needs of an earthquake stronger than magnitude 7, the vice-chairman of the Majlis health commission Mohammad Hossein Qorbani said on Sunday, Nasimonline reported.

■ **Over 90% of Tehran buildings insecure**  
 The number of buildings in Tehran which lack the required safety measures is considerable and if all the safety factors are taken into account, more than 90 percent of them are regarded as insecure, Tehran’s Fire Department chief said on Saturday.

Mehdi Davari Dolatabadi further noted that the volume of flammable materials, their flammability rate, the number of people living in a building and appropriate escape routes are among the factors determining buildings’ safety.

## Tehran traffic schemes: Does anyone think twice about air pollution?

➔ The number of those who can apply in the website is limited as only 98,000 can actually obtain the permit out of some 4 to 5 million car owners.

People with disabilities, war-veterans, journalists or some officials are among the minorities who can actually obtain the permit by paying a small charge.

However, as announced by Mohsen Pour Seyed Aqaei, deputy of transport fleet and traffic of Tehran municipality, the odd-even traffic scheme will be revised for the next year and that everyone can enter the restricted areas depending on their need and by paying charges being decided by the municipality.

As per the newly proposed scheme the

city will be divided into three zones: zones A, B, and C depending on the restrictions imposed in each area. So everyone can enter all three zones by using specific reloadable prepaid debit cards, councilor Afshin Habibzadeh explained.

But the charges for each zone is varying as accessing zone A, which is closer to city center and accordingly more affected by air pollution and traffic, would cost more. In addition to the zones the time and the day also matter in working out the charges, Habibzadeh added.

■ **Is air pollution a priority?**  
 So far, once air pollution hit the city, the odd-even scheme will be conducted all over

the city and restrict a greater number of cars from plying the cities on the off-chance that the pollution minimizes.

Even though the current scheme is not efficient enough the new scheme will authorize everyone to enter the city center regardless of their license plate.

No one has mentioned anything about the air pollution and the possible effects of the scheme on worsening or mitigating the predicament. For now, it sounds like an undeveloped, immature, moneymaking scheme for the municipality.

The scheme is being hammered out and is not approved yet, we should wait and see if the scheme will succeed or fail.



## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## 95% of wildfires in Iran are human-caused: official

Some 95 percent of wildfires which occur in Iran are rooted in human factors, an official with Forests, Range and Watershed Management Organization said.

Since the beginning of the current [Iranian calendar] year [falling on March 21], some 30 to 40 wildfires have erupted mostly in 5 to 10 hectares of Zagros forest area, ISNA quoted Qasem Sabz’ali as saying. Additionally, forests in the provinces of Golestan, Khuzestan, Kerman, Lorestan, and Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad also sustained damages to some extent due to wildfires, Sabz’ali added.

“Though the hot weather can spark fire 95 percent of the wildfires are caused by human beings,” he restated.

## علت ۹۵ درصد آتش سوزی های جنگل ها انسانی است

فرمانده یگان حفاظت سازمان جنگل ها، مراتع و آبخیزداری کشور اعلام کرد: ۹۵ درصد آتش سوزی ها عامل انسانی دارد.

قاسم سبزی علی در گفت و گو با ایسنا با اشاره به آمار آتش سوزی ها در سال ۹۶ گفت: از ابتدای امسال تاکنون نزدیک به ۳۰ تا ۴۰ مورد آتش سوزی داشتیم که بیشتر در استان های زاگرس، گیلان، آذربایجان شرقی و بین پنج تا ۱۰ هکتار در مناطق زاگرس حریق صورت گرفت.

سبزی علی افزود: چند مورد آتش سوزی کوتاه نیز در استان گلستان و استان های خوزستان، کرمان، لرستان، کهگیلویه و بویراحمد به صورت نوبه ای دچار حریق شدند. وی با بیان اینکه هر چه شدت گرما افزایش یابد استعداد حریق بالا می رود، تصریح کرد: اما ۹۵ درصد آتش سوزی ها عامل انسانی دارد.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “-cardium”

■ **Meaning:** a word ending that indicates it is associated with the heart  
 ■ **For example:** The **myocardium** is the heart’s muscular wall.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Faff about/around

■ **Meaning:** to waste time doing unnecessary things:  
 ■ **For example:** I wish you’d stop faffing about and do something useful!

## IDIOM

### In black and white

■ **Explanation:** in written form, and therefore definite  
 ■ **For example:** Once it’s down in black and white, you can’t forget it.

# Yemeni kids killed as unexploded bomb goes off

## Pentagon Admits Presence of U.S. Troops in Yemen as Cholera Cases Top One Million

At least four children have lost their lives and five others sustained critical injuries when an unexploded bomb dropped by Saudi military aircraft went off in Yemen's western coastal province of Hudaydah.

Local sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television network that the children were playing in an area of al-Sukhnah district in the province, located 150 kilometers southwest of the capital Sana'a, on Saturday when the incident happened.

Separately, five Yemeni children were killed in Saudi aerial assaults against residential buildings in the Arhab district of Sana'a province. Elsewhere in the mountainous northwestern province of Sa'ada, Saudi airstrikes left two women dead and as many injured in Razih district.

Earlier in the day, two people were killed and several others injured when Saudi warplanes bombed an area close to Arhab University in Sana'a.

Saudi airstrikes also left two children and a woman injured in the Sanhan district of the capital province of Sana'a.

Additionally, Saudi aerial attacks against residential buildings in the west-central province of Ma'rib killed two civilians.

Three other civilians also died in Saudi strikes across Hudaydah province.

More than 12,000 people have been killed since the onset of Saudi Arabia's military campaign against Yemen more than two and a half years ago. Much of the Arabian Peninsula country's infrastructure, including



hospitals, schools and factories, has been reduced to rubble due to the war.

The Saudi-led war has also triggered a deadly cholera epidemic across Yemen.

According to the World Health Organization's latest count, the cholera outbreak has killed 2,167 people since the end of April and is suspected to have infected 841,906.

On November 26, the United Nations children's agency (UNICEF) said that more than 11 million children in Yemen were in acute need of aid, stressing that it was estimated that every 10 minutes a child died of a preventable disease there.

Additionally, the UN has described the current level of hunger in Yemen as "unprecedented," emphasizing that 17 million people are now food insecure in the country.

It added that 6.8 million, meaning almost one in four people, do not have enough food and rely entirely on external assistance.

A recent survey showed that almost one third of families had gaps in their diets, and hardly ever consumed foods like pulses, vegetables, fruit, dairy products or meat.

More than three million pregnant and nursing women and children under the age of five also need support to prevent or cure malnutrition.

### U.S. Troops in Yemen

Meanwhile, the Pentagon admitted for the first time this week that it has "conducted multiple ground operations" in Yemen, the impoverished and war-ravaged country on the Arabian Peninsula, while conducting more than 120 air strikes there this year, triple the number in 2016.

This revelation of an escalation on yet another front in the expanding U.S. military intervention in the Middle East came as Yemen marked the 1,000th day of the war being waged by Saudi Arabia and its fellow Persian Gulf oil sheikdoms against the poorest nation in the Middle East.

Multiple aid agencies issued statements warning that the deaths of millions are threatened as the war claims more victims and plunges vast portions of the population into conditions of famine and disease.

The depth of the country's humanitarian crisis was underscored this week with the announcement by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that the number of cholera cases in Yemen had reached one million, making the ongoing epidemic far the worst in recorded human history.

The rapid spread of the disease, which has claimed the lives of over 2,200 people since April, a third of them children, is an unmistakable manifestation of the destruction of Yemen's social infrastructure by the nearly three-year-long, unrelenting U.S.-backed Saudi bombing and blockade of the country.

(Source: agencies)

## Lavish Arab gifts for UK politicians: Caviar, Rolex, rugs

A report has exposed how certain Arab states have continued to shower British politicians with luxury gifts in an attempt to curry favor and buy their support.

Those states include Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Jordan, and Oman, the Middle East Eye (MEE) news portal reported on Saturday, citing newly released UK government data.

Prime Minister Theresa May, whom Saudi Arabia has conferred with the Order of King Abdulaziz Al Saud, has received several gifts from the kingdom, including an ornament, a clock, and a medal, the report said.

Saudi Arabia "has splashed out on 20 luxury Christmas hampers for Conservative Party ministers since 2010," the MEE further reported.

The United Arab Emirates has also been providing British ministers with various gifts.

The emirates has offered luxury Christmas hampers, rugs, and a \$2,600 designer briefcase to Tobias Ellwood, Britain's defense minister. In December 2012, the country's government bought former British foreign secretary William Hague a rug and Alistair Burt, the UK's Middle East minister, both a hamper and an iPad.

In July, the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry gave Burt a Rolex watch worth nearly \$8,000. Incumbent Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson was also once given a \$400 box of Wagyu meat by the King Abdullah II of Jordan. Another Arab ruler gave the British minister tins of Caspian caviar, worth more than \$1,000 in total, when they met the same month.

Since 2015, Britain has been providing state-of-the-art weaponry and logistical support to Saudi bombardment of Yemen, which also enlists the Emirati military. More than 12,000 have died since the bombing started.

The MEE went on to cite rights campaigners as blasting the trend of the Arab showering of the politicians with gifts as a means of influence peddling by governments, some of whom have incurred huge international outcry over the human rights abuses at home and abroad.

"These gifts aren't being given out of any sense of generosity. They are being given to buy friends and increase influence," said Andrew Smith of Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT). "If repressive regimes and brutal dictatorships are giving gifts to MPs, then it is time for those politicians to think about the messages they're sending out, and to stop offering such intimate political support to human rights abusers," he added.



Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, director of the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, said, "Many of these regimes have consistently repressed democracy and violated human rights. These lavish gifts are a transparent ploy to influence the UK's foreign policy so that it favors the regimes rather than the people of the Persian Gulf."

(Source: Press TV)

## U.S. clears sale of 36 F-15s to Qatar amid Saudi crisis

The Pentagon says Boeing has been allowed to manufacture as many as 36 F-15 warplanes for Qatar which is locked in a bitter confrontation with a Saudi-led group of Arab states.

The permit covers half of the 72 F-15s which Qatar will buy from the United States as part of an agreement signed between the two sides in June.

The entire agreement is worth \$12 billion and the Persian Gulf state is scheduled to start receiving the aircraft at the end of 2022.

"This contract provides for the foreign military sales requirement to procure 36 new F-15QA aircraft for the Qatar Emiri Air Force," the U.S. Department of Defense said in a statement.

Qatari Minister of Defense Khalid Al Atiyah said the deal underscored the "long-standing commitment of the state of Qatar in jointly working with our friends and allies in the United States in advancing our military cooperation for closer strategic collaboration



in our fight to counter violent extremism and promote peace and stability in our region and beyond."

Earlier this month, Qatar said it would buy 24 Typhoon fighter jets worth \$8 billion from the United Kingdom.

The deals come amid a blockade by Saudi

Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates against Qatar, which has gone on for more than six months.

The quartet has accused Qatar of supporting "terrorism" and meddling in their affairs -- allegations strongly denied by Doha, which sees the campaign as an attack on its

sovereignty.

The boycotters are all Washington's strong regional allies, especially Saudi Arabia which the U.S. regards its paramount Arab partner.

The dispute among some of the world's top energy producers flared up a few days after Donald Trump visited Saudi Arabia on his first overseas trip as president and signed a \$110-billion arms deal with the kingdom.

During the visit, Riyadh hosted a summit to showcase close ties between the White House and its Arab allies but Trump was also reportedly told that Qatar had incurred Saudi Arabia's displeasure.

Trump initially sided with the Saudi-led bloc but later had a change of heart. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates reportedly considered military action in the early stages of their ongoing dispute with Qatar before Trump called leaders of both countries and warned them to back off.

(Source: Press TV)

## Death toll from Philippine landslides rises to 200

The death toll from Tropical Storm Tembin in southern Philippines has risen to at least 200 people with hundreds more missing, according to officials and aid agencies.

Rescue efforts are under way after the storm lashed the country's second largest island, Mindanao on Friday, triggering mudslides and flash floods.

Aid workers fear the number of casualties will further increase as forecasters predict more heavy rains.

"We're really on our toes right now," Richard Gordon, chairman of the Philippines Red Cross told Al Jazeera on Saturday.

"We're trying to figure out how to give help to so many people that are really in danger."

Most of the deaths caused by Tembin, known locally as Vinta, were reported in the provinces of Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur, as well as on the Zamboanga peninsula.

At least 62 people were killed in the hardest-hit province, Lanao del Norte, where floodwaters swept away an entire village on Friday, according to media reports.

The flash floods that hit the remote farming village of Dalama in the Tubod region washed away more than 100 houses, killing at least 18 people, the news website Rappler said.

At least 27 people were still reported missing there on Saturday night.

"The rains caused the Cabuyo River to overflow. The



flood came with big rocks and uprooted trees. It wiped out a community composed of 103 houses," Vicmar Palomar, a local disaster management official, told the news website.

A state of emergency has been declared in Lanao del Norte, as well as Lanao del Sur, the Philippine Daily Inquirer said.

Rescue workers said they fear the number of casualties will rise as power cuts and loss of communication lines have blocked rescue and relief efforts.

"The terrain is kind of rough. There are lots of rocks.

And the area is pretty wide," Gordon, of the Red Cross, told Al Jazeera.

"It's not just in one province, it's in several provinces - and so we're having a hard time trying to communicate with other areas that may have been affected."

Harry Roque, a spokesman for President Rodrigo Duterte, said at least 72,592 people have been affected by flooding.

"It is unfortunate that another tropical cyclone, Vinta, made its presence felt so near Christmas," he said in a statement on Saturday.

Tembin struck less than a week after Tropical Storm Kai-Tek, which left more than 50 people dead in the central Philippines.

The national weather service said in a bulletin late on Saturday that Tembin has made a second landfall on Balabac, an island in western Philippines.

The Philippines is battered by around 20 major storms each year on average.

But Mindanao Island, home to 20 million people, is rarely hit because of its location close to the equator.

In 2011, more than 1,249 people were killed when Tropical Storm Washi hit the island. The storm unleashed devastating flash floods and landslides in areas where the natural forest had been logged or converted into pineapple plantations.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Thousands of demonstrators call for Netanyahu's resignation

Thousands of Israelis have taken to the streets in Tel Aviv, calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over alleged corruption charges.

People gathered in central Tel Aviv for a demonstration, titled the "March of Shame," on Saturday for the fourth consecutive week, while a smaller protest was held in Jerusalem al-Quds.

Netanyahu is involved in two separate corruption cases and investigators have questioned him seven times.

The cases involve allegations that Netanyahu received lavish gifts from wealthy businessmen and negotiated a deal with a newspaper owner for more favorable coverage. He has denied any wrongdoing.

Read More:

Congress president and Netanyahu's long-time ally, Ronald Lauder, had given the premier and his son gifts, including expensive suits. The accounts prompted Israeli police to interrogate the prime minister.

Netanyahu is currently under probe over suspicions that he accepted 1 million euros (about \$1.1 million) from accused French fraudster Arnaud Mimran for campaign funds during the 2009 elections.

There are also calls for Netanyahu to be investigated for his role in a billion-dollar deal to purchase three submarines from German shipbuilder ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems GmbH.

(Source: al Alam)



## 37 Saudi-led coalition aircraft, 1,200 tanks destroyed in Yemen war: Yemeni army

Dozens of Saudi-led coalition military aircraft in addition to hundreds of battle tanks and armored vehicles have been destroyed in the military campaign against Yemen as the Riyadh regime presses ahead with its atrocious airstrikes against its crisis-hit southern neighbor.



The Yemeni army, in a statement released on Sunday, announced that 37 aircraft plus more than 1,200 tanks and armored vehicles have been destroyed ever since the Saudi regime and its allies launched a devastating war on the country more than two and half years ago, Arabic-language al-Masirah television network reported.

Saudi Arabia and its regional allies also lost a dozen Boeing AH-64 Apache attack helicopters, five McDonnell Douglas F-15 Eagle and General Dynamics F-16 Fighting Falcon warplanes plus more than 20 reconnaissance aircraft.

The statement added that ten warships, frigates and a number of gunboats were also destroyed in the Saudi-led military aggression.

Yemeni army soldiers and allied fighters from Popular Committees have also targeted and destroyed hundreds of command centers and border outposts in Saudi Arabia's southwestern regions of Najran, Jizan and Assir.

The statement further noted that the Saudi-led war on Yemen has incurred huge fiscal losses on the Riyadh regime and its allies.

Sovereign wealth funds in the Saudi-led military alliance have been pulling money out of asset managers at a faster rate on record in order to finance the aggression against Yemen and cover arms expenditures.

Moreover, the Yemen war has resulted in a budget deficit of 15 percent of gross domestic product for Saudi Arabia, and decreased the volume of capital reserves from \$737 billion to \$437 billion.

The volume of Saudi Arabia's military spending has also steadily increased to exceed \$81 billion, making the oil-rich kingdom the world's third largest military spender after the United States and China.

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A recent survey showed that almost one third of families had gaps in their diets, and hardly ever consumed foods like pulses, vegetables, fruit, dairy products or meat.

More than three million pregnant and nursing women and children under the age of five also need support to prevent or cure malnutrition.

(Source: agencies)

## Middlesbrough sack manager Monk

Middlesbrough have sacked manager Garry Monk following an inconsistent start to the season, the Championship (second tier) side have announced.

Former Swansea City boss Monk took charge at Middlesbrough in June, following the club's relegation from the Premier League last season, and was fired after his team managed only 10 wins in 23 league games to sit ninth in the standings.

"The club would like to thank Garry for all his hard work and dedication, and wish him all the best for the future," Middlesbrough said in a statement. ([www.mfc.co.uk](http://www.mfc.co.uk))

"The club's Academy manager Craig Liddle will take temporary charge of first team affairs during the interim period while a successor is appointed."

(Source: Mirror)

## Mercedes admit Ricciardo interest

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff says he is happy with the driver line-up but admitted he is keeping an eye on Daniel Ricciardo's situation.

Ricciardo is due to fall out of contract with Red Bull at the end of the 2018 season and could be on the lookout for a new team for 2019. The Australian has stated on a number of occasions that he wants to see whether or not the team can provide him with a car capable of challenging for the Drivers' Championship before he makes a commitment on his future.

Lewis Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas are the current Mercedes drivers and Wolff says he isn't actively looking to make any changes, but confirmed Ricciardo could come into his thinking.

"In so far as I would like the pairing to continue, we are committed to both of them in 2018, but having said that 2019 is a very exciting new year," he told the BBC.

"There are young drivers that will have gained more experience and some of the very good ones like Daniel [Ricciardo] become free. 'What we want to see is how the first third of the season pans out, whether our car is good enough and strong enough. This is what we are actually concentrating on and then we will analyze and then take the right decisions hopefully.'

(Source: Club Call)

## Pastore: I have not said goodbye to PSG team-mates

Javier Pastore has denied he has said goodbye to his team-mates amid reports he is set to leave Paris Saint-Germain.

Pastore has fallen down the pecking order at the Parc des Princes due to the continued infusion of big-money signings into the squad. The world-record capture of Neymar and the signing of Kylian Mbappe have added to an attack that already boasted Angel Di Maria and Julian Draxler, with Edinson Cavani serving as the focal point. Argentina international Pastore has therefore been left largely on the outside looking in, making just eight league starts this season. Pastore was visibly emotional as he waved to the fans after PSG's 3-1 win over Caen on Wednesday, further fuelling talk of his exit, with Atletico Madrid and Inter linked.

His agent Marcelo Simonian hinted that could have been the 28-year-old's last game for the club, however, Pastore rejected rumors of an impending departure.

Pastore told Mundo Deportivo: "It's a lie to say that I have said goodbye to my team-mates."

"I've always thought about playing for this club and doing the best I can every time. 'In recent games, I've played a lot and I'm happy. I still have a year-and-a-half left on my contract, and I'm very calm. 'I was looking for more playing time, it's true. The coach makes the decisions and I have to make sure to keep improving to get some PSG playing time.'

(Source: Goal)

## Hospitalised Valencia coach has to grin and bear it

Marcelino's journey from Valencia to Asturias for Christmas was interrupted by a brief visit to hospital after the coach's car collided with a boar. It had already been a bad weekend for the 52-year-old, who watched his third-placed Valencia team lose 1-0 at home to former side Villarreal on Saturday.

LaLiga leaders Barcelona earlier extended their advantage at the top of the table courtesy of a thumping 3-0 Clasico win over Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu.

And after failing to keep pace with the frontrunners, Marcelino's trip home was then sidetracked following the collision with a wild animal. "This morning Marcelino Garcia Toral suffered a traffic accident while traveling back to Asturias, to spend the holidays with his family," Valencia said in a statement on Sunday.

"The accident occurred on the road from Logrono to Bilbao, when a boar crossed the road and collided with his vehicle. He was treated at the hospital and has already received medical discharge."

(Source: Four Four Two)

## Marcelo: We've spoiled you and you think that Madrid must always win

Marcelo said it is unrealistic for Real Madrid to win every match after the Spanish and European champions were upstaged by rivals and LaLiga leaders Barcelona in El Clasico.

Madrid's title defense was dealt a major blow Saturday after suffering a 3-0 loss at home to Barca in the Spanish capital.

Second-half goals from Luis Suarez, Lionel Messi and Alexis Vidal at the Santiago Bernabeu downed Madrid, who slipped 14 points adrift of the Catalan giants.

Speaking post-match, Brazilian full-back Marcelo appeared to refer to either fans or journalists as he said: "We have spoiled you and you think that we must always win."

"LaLiga is the best league in the world and it's hard to win. 'This is sport and sometimes you win, while sometimes you lose. 'The gap to Barcelona is because they have won more matches.'

(Source: Marca)

# Zinedine Zidane safe for now despite Barcelona debacle



There was one word that Zinedine Zidane kept repeating in his post-match press conference on Saturday: 'jodido' – the polite translation is 'screwed'.

He was talking about how his players felt about losing the last match of 2017 against Barcelona in such emphatic fashion.

He could easily have been talking about his own situation going into 2018 with just the Copa del Rey and the Champions League to play for and having seen his masterplan against Barcelona's Ernesto Valverde so comprehensively taken apart.

Only a week ago that the French coach became the first Real Madrid manager to guide the team to five trophies in a calendar year but things change quickly as coach at the Bernabeu – he had taken certain gambles that simply did not pay off and when the inquest is carried out on this game he may well take much of the blame.

His opening gambit was to replace the creative Isco in his starting line-up with the more destructive Mateo Kovacic. The plan was that Kovacic would stop Sergio Busquets coming out with the ball and also look to smother Leo Messi whenever Barcelona did manage to build an attack.

The plan worked in the first half but Kovacic was nowhere to be seen when Barcelona scored their second goal created by Busquets sweeping out of defence.

"The defeat really hurts" said Zidane. 'I know I will be giving a lot of criticism tomorrow but I will have to take it; I make the decisions.'

As well as the Kovacic plan not working, Isco never got a kick in the game. Real Madrid's most creative player would maybe have been introduced late on but because of Dani Carvajal's sending off Zidane choose to throw on defender Nacho to cover the loss of the full-back instead.

That is also likely to be thrown back at him. Why at 2-0 down put on a defender?

Could he not have gone to a back-three? His voice was a little more tense than usual in the post-match press conference. It was raised too, as if the louder he said what he had to say the more it would make sense.

Madrid had gone down without a fight. Their old ability to pick teams off on the counter-attack seems to have deserted them and it is now they that suffer as sides slice through them with very few passes.

"If we had taken our chances in the first half it would have been a different game," lamented the manager. 'Just as I wanted to make the changes we conceded again and we had a man sent off.'

There is no suggestion that Zidane's job is in danger. He has just delivered the World Club Cup – a fifth trophy in 2017 but there is an uncomfortable scenario on the horizon.

What if Madrid fail to get past Paris Saint Germain in the Champions League? It's feasible that the club that blew everyone else out of the water during the last transfer market proves too much for them in February.

That would leave Madrid just with the Spanish Cup to contest because no-one expects them to make up a 14 point gap in the league even with a game in hand.

More likely than Zidane being dismissed is perhaps the arrival of one or two new players in the winter window. Athletic Bilbao keeper Kepa is on his way but after a fine display from Keylor Navas the goalkeeper position is not a pressing problem.

A move for a striker is likely to be what the crowd call loudest for. Karim Benzema still has just two goals all season and one of the loudest noises on a rather flat early afternoon in the Bernabeu was the sound of him being whistled as he was substituted. It had been a bad day for him, for Madrid, and for their coach.

(Source: Daily Mail)

## 'Something difficult to achieve': Nadal reveals his special achievement in 2017



Rafael Nadal has revealed what his most special achievement was in a year that saw him completely turn back the clock.

Despite a sour end to his 2017 season, having had to pull out of the season-ending ATP World Tour Finals, the Spaniard can look back at the last 12 months with a sense of satisfaction.

Nadal won his first Grand Slams since 2014 with a record-breaking 10th French Open title and a third US Open title.

He also became world number one again as he pipped Roger Federer to the top spot to end the calendar year at the summit for the first time since 2013.

Reflecting on his past year, Nadal has chosen his 10th French Open title as his most special accomplishment, as he became the first player in tennis history to have double figures in a single Grand Slam.

"I am happy to feel that I am competitive again and that I have a great level," Nadal told Movistar via Tennis World USA. "My goal was, if I keep playing as

I did on hard courts also on clay, I may have the chance to do something really important.

"Winning ten French Open titles is very special, something difficult to achieve. I think it's the most special achievement for me."

As for when he saw the world number one ranking within his sights, the 31-year-old states that it was during the early clay season when things started to evolve.

"During the clay swing, I was seeing how things were evolving and (Novak) Djokovic and (Andy) Murray weren't in the best form," Nadal added.

"I was second in the (ATP Race) and I told Toni: 'Well, if I play well on clay, I can be no. 1'. Then when I won Roland Garros, I really had chances."

Meanwhile, there are doubts on Nadal's fitness ahead of the 2018 season as he recently withdrew from the Abu Dhabi exhibition event which was set to take place from 28-30 December.

(Source: IBT)

## LeBron James Free Agency: Houston Rockets ready to make a run



The Houston Rockets plan to make a serious run at soon-to-be free agent star LeBron James, according to several reports. The Rockets currently own the best record in the NBA and are viewed as legitimate threats to dethrone reigning champions, the Golden State Warriors.

Though several NBA insiders believe James will stay with the Cleveland Cavaliers, there are many who believe the 4-time MVP will give the Rockets and Los Angeles Lakers serious consideration.

Rockets general manager Daryl Morey, the frontrunner to win the NBA Executive of the Year award this season, would have to make a lot of roster changes to accommodate LeBron James. For starters, Morey would have to trade at least two out of Ryan Anderson, Eric Gordon, Nene and PJ Tucker, besides convincing friends James and Paul to take pay cuts. Morey would also have to deal with Clint Capela's Restricted Free Agency. Capela is expected to receive maximum-level offer sheets in July.

According to ESPN's Zach Lowe, Rockets

believe they have a shot at landing James. "He (Morey) will hunt likely LeBron this summer, per league sources, and hopes to sign Paul to another long-term deal. With Clint Capela and Trevor Ariza headed toward free agency, just bringing this group back could vault Houston well into the luxury tax. Tilman Fertitta, the team's new owner, has said he would pay the tax to preserve a contender."

Coach Mike D'Antoni believes that Chris Paul and James Harden have at least five years together in Houston. "We think we have a five-year window with Chris and James. It will be up to Chris (to sign a new contract), but we feel good about it."

Besides the Rockets, Philadelphia 76ers and Los Angeles Lakers are viewed as potential free agency destinations for LeBron James. Will the LeBron James to Rockets chatter come to fruition? Will the Cavs manage to retain their homegrown star? Stay tuned for the latest on LeBron James Free Agency.

(Source: IBT)

## Guardiola refuses to clarify City 'legend' Aguero's future

Pep Guardiola refused to give away what lies in store for Sergio Aguero after the claimed that the Manchester City "legend" will decide his own future amid growing speculation that he has grown unhappy at the Etihad Stadium.

Much of that frustration appears to have stemmed from his unhappiness with being substituted against Tottenham last weekend, having been seen throwing his gloves to the ground, as well as being left on the bench for the important derby victory over Manchester United earlier this month.

Despite starting the 4-0 victory over Bournemouth on Saturday and scoring twice in the process, reports this week still claimed that Aguero had grown unhappy once again, having held talks with the club's chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak to appease him earlier this year.

And while Guardiola hailed both his legacy at the club – having famously secured the Premier League title in 2012 – and the impact that he has had this season in firing City to a 13-point lead at Christmas, the largest in the history of the English top flight, he did not confirm



if Aguero will remain in his squad beyond the end of the season.

With Gabriel Jesus also on the books at City and in contention to start every match, Guardiola stressed that

he has a job on his hands to rotate them when he deems necessary, and that will always upset one or the other.

"I understand players when they are substitutes and don't play," Guardiola said. "They are sad and they are upset."

"But sometimes I think Gabriel Jesus deserves to play too, and Bernardo Silva or Eliaquim Mangala too. If they are not happy with me, that is not a problem – the most important thing is that they respect each other."

"I respect a lot about Sergio, about all he has done, what he has done and what he will do in the future."

"He is a legend and he will decide absolutely everything about his life and his future, and I am delighted to have him here with Gabriel and all of the squad."

Aguero remained on the pitch for the duration of Saturday's landslide victory over Bournemouth as Guardiola decided not to bring Gabriel on, though that could well be due to the Spaniard keeping one eye on Wednesday's trip to Newcastle United that comes just four days after their last outing.

(Source: Independent)

# Persepolis denied at the death by Foolad, Esteghlal ease past Sanat Naft: IPL

**S P O R T S** d e s k Rahim Zahivi's late goal denied Persepolis three points in a 1-1 draw in their Iran Professional League (IPL) fixture in Ahvaz on Sunday.

Persepolis football team put up a better display and opened the scoring through Godwin Mensha in the 15th minute, but one minute before the end of regulation time Zahivi found the back of the net with a long-range shot.

Persepolis goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand set a new record for the amount of time without conceding a goal for the club in IPL by going 718 minutes.

He surpassed former Sepahan goalie Armenak Petrosian's old mark of 704.

"We expected a difficult match against Foolad and they played valiantly to level the scores. We have a long way ahead. I think the draw is a fair result," Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic said in the post-match news conference.

In Tehran, Esteghlal, who have bounced back in the recent weeks with German coach Winfried Schafer, defeated Sanat Naft 4-0 at the Azadi Stadium.

Mohsen Karimi netted twice in the 15th and 67th minutes. Dariush Shojaeian and Vouria Ghafouri also scored in the 42nd and 55th minutes respectively.

In Abadan, Pars Jonoubi lost to Gostaresh Foolad 2-0. Peyman Babaei scored in the 18th minute and Ahmad Mousavi added a late second.

Tractor Sazi also defeated Esteghlal Khuzestan 3-0 in Tabriz. Mohammad Iranpourian opened the scoring from the penalty spot in the 27th minute and Omid Alishah and Ehsan pahlavan scored in the 45th and 93rd minutes respectively.

Persepolis are top of the table with 37 points, followed by Pars Jonoubi and Foolad with 29 and 28 points.



MEHR NEWSAGENCY  
Photo: Mehdi Pedramkheo

## Afshin Peyrovani takes Persepolis sporting director job



**S P O R T S** TEHRAN — Former defender Afshin Peyrovani has returned to elite football as sporting director with the Iran league champions.

Peyrovani replaced Mahmoud Khordbin in the post on Saturday.

Persepolis acting president Hamidreza Garshasbi has appointed Peyrovani to the role.

Peyrovani, 47, is a familiar face for Perse-

polis's fans since he has played in the Iranian giant for 11 years from 1993 to 2004.

He has also coached Persepolis for a while after the departure of Afshin Ghotbi in November 2008.

The former defender has worked as sporting director of Iran national football team in 2016.

Peyrovani has 66 caps for Team Melli and was a participant at the 1998 FIFA World Cup.

## Sorraya Aghaei takes silver medal at Nepal International Badminton Tournament



**S P O R T S** TEHRAN — Sorraya Aghaei from Iran claimed a silver medal at the Yonex Sunrise Nepal International Series 2017 on Sunday.

In the women's singles final, Aghaei lost to Deng Joy Xuan of Hong Kong 2-0, thehimalayantimes reported.

Aghaei had defeated Thet Htar Tuzar of Myanmar 20-22, 21-18, 25-23 and Joy Xuan outplayed Thi Trang of Vietnam 21-18,

21-19 to enter the women's singles final. Yonex Sunrise Nepal International Series 2017 sanctioned by Badminton World Federation and Badminton Asia with prize money of US\$ 8,000.

The event was held from December 21 to 24 at Dashath National Stadium, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Aghaei, 21, competed at the 2017 Summer Universiade in Taipei.

## Saman Ghoddos confirms up to 10 clubs are chasing him

OFK forward Saman Ghoddos has confirmed to the Swedish media a number of clubs are interested in signing him.

The Iranian international has been linked with a move to Queens Park Rangers in recent months, and Expressen say there have been 'concrete bids from England', as well as Spain and Germany.

Speaking to Sydsvenskan, Ghoddos was asked about his future with OFK: "Yes, there are currently, maybe ten clubs. It's more than interest."

Ghoddos was linked with a move to QPR in the last window after the Championship side tabled a bid for the player,

which was rejected by the Swedish side.

At the time, the OFK hierarchy said if the right bid came in for the forward they would have considered selling him, but QPR didn't come back in with an improved offer.

If QPR are to revive their interest in Ghoddos in January then it's likely they'll face competition to sign him, and will need to work to convince the player to come to Loftus Road.

However, it's possible the player will only leave OFK next summer after the Swedish club unexpectedly reached the Europa League knock out stages.

(Source: Sports Witness)



## Chess federation says Israel excluded from Saudi-hosted match

**ATHENS (Reuters)** — Israeli players have been denied visas to participate in a speed chess championship hosted by Saudi Arabia this week, a vice president of the World Chess Federation (FIDE) said on Sunday.

Seven Israeli players had requested visas for the tournament on Dec. 26-30. It would have marked the first time Saudi Arabia had publicly hosted Israelis as the Gulf state does not recognize Israel and there are no formal ties between them.

Israel Gelfer, vice president of FIDE,

whose Secretariat is based in Athens, told Reuters in an email that visas for the Israeli players "have not been issued and will not be issued".

He said the tournament would go ahead as planned. It was not immediately clear if other delegations had been excluded but players from Qatar had suggested they may have been rejected.

Saudi Arabia's Center for International Communication said in a statement that more than 180 players would participate but

did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Israel Chess Federation Spokesman Lior Aizenberg said efforts were still being made "by various parties" to ensure the Israeli players took part.

"The event is not a world championship if they prevent chess players from several countries from taking part," Aizenberg told Reuters.

"Every chess player should have the right to participate in an event on the basis of

professional criteria, regardless of their passports, their place of issue or the stamps they bear."

Aizenberg said FIDE should ensure Israeli players could compete in international events and that the Israeli federation was considering all options, including legal action and holding an international competition in Israel for players excluded from the Saudi match.

FIDE had said in November it was undertaking a "huge effort" to ensure all players were granted visas.

## Paralympic legend blocked from boarding a train in wheelchair

One of Britain's most successful paralympians has revealed how she was barred from boarding a train because she was in a wheelchair.

Tanni Grey-Thompson, the paralympian peer, said a passenger declared "there's no room for her", despite everyone else on the platform boarding the carriage.

Baroness Grey-Thompson, 48, tweeted: "Merry Christmas to the person on the train who just stopped me getting on. Told member of staff 'there's no room for her.' Everyone else waiting on the platform got on."

In a series of tweets the former wheelchair racer explained that both she and a member of staff on the train were dumbofounded by the rudeness of a passenger who



blocked her from boarding the carriage.

Explaining how it left her wanting to "scream", she said: "It was that moment where you stop. And afterwards think what could have been done. I didn't say anything either. Should have done. I think staff member didn't quite know what to do. Virgin staff are often fab. I was lost for words too. It was only afterwards that I got annoyed."

She added: "I tweet about stuff like this because 1) it stops me screaming 2) because this happens to disabled people every day."

She boarded the next train 15 minutes later. It is not known where she was travelling to or from.

(Source: telegraph.co.uk)

## Shojaei reaches agreement with AEK

Iranian international attacking midfielder Masoud Shojaei will sign his contract with AEK after Christmas of 2017.

The 33-year-old player will soon be released from Panionios and AEK Spanish coach Manolo Jimenez considers him as an ideal replacement for captain Petros Mantalos, who will miss the remainder of 2017-18 season because of cruciate ligament injury.

Shojaei started his playing career with Sanat Naft Abadan in 2002 and has also played in Saipa, Al-Sharjah, CA Osasuna, UD Las Palmas, Al-Shahania Sports Club and Al-Gharafa Sports Club.

Shojaei currently trains with Las Palmas after parting company with Panionios.

(Source: SDNA.gr)

## Mehdi Taremi on Qatari Al-Gharafa's radar

**TASNIM** — Iranian national football team and Persepolis striker Mehdi Taremi has been linked with a move to Al-Gharafa of Qatar.

Taremi, who is serving a four-month ban from late September after FIFA found he had breached his contract with Turkish club Çaykur Rizespor, is reportedly close to join the Qatari club.

Persepolis's officials will announce their decision on the issue after the match against Foolad, scheduled for Sunday.

The 26-year-old forward had been already linked with move to Greek teams, namely Olympiakos, Panathinaikos, PAOK, AEK and Panionios.

The best goalscorer of the Iranian football league in the previous two seasons, had caught the eye of Croatia's GNK Dinamo Zagreb and Urawa Reds of Japan also showed interest in signing him.

Taremi's contract with Persepolis will expire at the end of the current season.

## Inter inquire about Mkhitarian loan

Life for Henrikh Mkhitarian at Manchester United hasn't been going well and Gazzetta dello Sport reports that Inter Milan are ready to offer him a lifeline to jumpstart his flagging form.

Jose Mourinho has given the Armenia international fewer and fewer chances as the season has progressed, even leaving him out of the squad entirely for some of the team's matches in October and November.

Mkhitarian's confidence has taken a shot under the United boss, a reality that was on full display in United's 2-2 draw with Leicester when the 28-year-old wasted a chance to put his team two up after Romelu Lukaku had played him close in on goal.

The outlet reports that Man United want £35 million for the attacking midfielder, but that Inter are only willing to take him on loan in the winter window as the club needs to sell players to comply with FFP regulations before they could buy.

(Source: Soccermet)

## Pep wants Skriniar to strengthen defence

Manchester City are looking to sign Milan Skriniar from Inter Milan with the Express reporting that the Slovakian is Pep Guardiola's No.1 target.

The Nerrazzurri's back four has been transformed since signing the centre-back from Sampdoria for €23m -- conceding just 14 goals in Serie A. With John Stones hurt and Vincent Kompany also an injury risk, money will be made available in January.

The 22-year-old appears to have leaped ahead of Virgil van Dijk as the priority, with Southampton omitting the Dutch international from their squad to face Huddersfield on Saturday.

Luciano Spalletti has steered the Nerazzurri towards a surprise Scudetto challenge, and with Skriniar's contract running until 2022 City will need to pay a huge fee to even tempt Inter into selling.

Further reinforcements at the Etihad, perhaps with a view to bolstering their Champions League bid could come in midfield. ESPN FC sources are also reporting a move for Shakhtar Donetsk midfielder Fred, who impressed in a 2-1 win over Guardiola's side earlier this month, could also be in the works.

(Source: ESPN)

## Magic big man Vucevic suffers broken hand against Wizards

Orlando Magic center Nikola Vucevic suffered a broken bone in his left hand on Saturday against the Washington Wizards and will require surgery, the Magic announced.

The injury occurred in the first quarter when Washington forward Otto Porter swiped at the ball and instead struck Vucevic's hand.

The Magic reported that similar injuries require players to be sidelined for six to eight weeks.

Vucevic is one of the team's leading scorers -- 17.8 points per game entering Saturday -- and its top rebounder with 9.6 per game and his absence comes at a tough time for the Magic (11-23) who have now lost eight straight.

Orlando was also without injured players Evan Fournier (ankle), Aaron Gordon (calf strain), Terrence Ross (knee) and Jonathan Isaac (ankle) during their 130-103 defeat to the Wizards.

(Source: Reuters)



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**BOOK REVIEW**

**Egyptian center to publish novels from Iranian writers**

**CULTURE** TEHRAN — The Majma al-Thaqafi al-Misri, a publishing house in Cairo, plans to publish 10 novels by Iranian authors in Arabic. The books were originally published by Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA).



This combination photo shows the front covers of the books to be published in Arabic by the Majma al-Thaqafi al-Misri in Egypt.

The decision was made after an MOU was signed between the Egyptian center and the IIDCYA during Tehran's International Book Fair in May, the IIDCYA announced on Sunday. "Call Me Ziba" by Farhad Hassanzadeh, "A Princess in Metro" by Mohaddeseh Gudarznia, "Little Book of Story Writing" by Fereidun Amuzadeh-Khalili, "Stanger and the Sea" by Jamaledin Akrami and "Even One Minute Is Not Enough" by Atusa Salehi are among the books. "Before Packing a Suitcase" by Minu Karimzadeh, "Time of Turtles" by Abbas Abdi and "Love, Pain, and Chestnuts" by Reza Mozuni are also included.

**Mehr-e Vatan to perform at World Choir Games**

**A R T** TEHRAN — Mehr-e Vatan, an ensemble from the southern Iranian city of Kerman, will give performances during the 10th World Choir Games, which will be held in the City of Tshwane, South Africa from July 4 to 14, 2018.



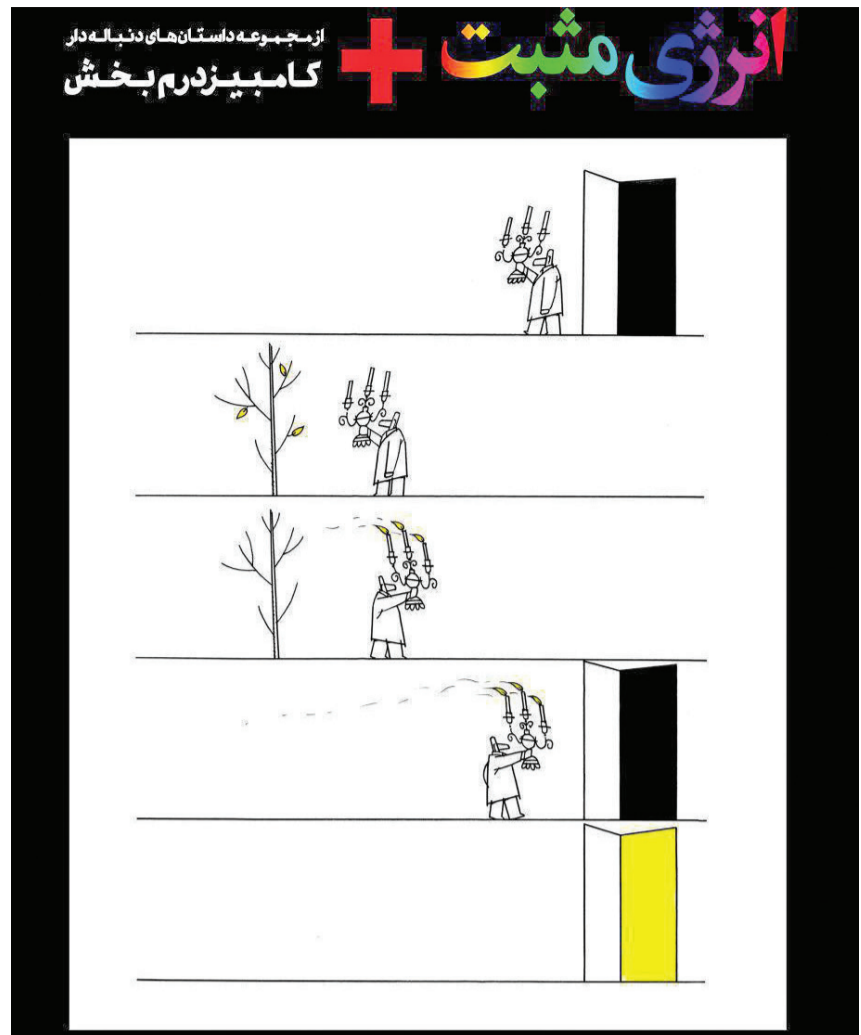
Mehr-e Vatan in an undated photo. The ensemble led by Masud Nekui plans to give performances in the two sections of folklore and a cappella music, Nekui told the Persian service of ILNA on Sunday. Mehr-e Vatan also features Aida Iranmanesh, Narges Esmaeili, Samaneh Vaziri, Keivan Bakhtiari, Afshin Hosseinpour, Mohsen Nazarizadeh and Ali Mirhosseini. Every year, a different country hosts the World Choir Games that is the largest international choir competition in the world.

**"Pet Man" named best at Sao Paulo Times Film Festival**

**A R T** TEHRAN — "Pet Man" by Iranian director Marzieh Abrarpaidar won the best animation award at the Sao Paulo Times Film Festival in Brazil on Friday. The 2D animation is the story of an animal dealer who falls asleep in his shop and has a nightmare in which he finds himself caught in an animal cage. He manages to escape and seeks to rescue other animals, but every time he is faced with an obstacle. He finally awakes from his nightmare but still feels surrounded with uncertainty and fear of the animals. "Laws of the Game" by Aegina Brahim from England won the best short film award, while "How to Be Human" by Bruno Centofanti was picked as best sci-fi short film at the short film festival, which was organized by the Sao Paulo Times.

**Kambiz Derambakhsh to bring "Positive Energy" to Tehran gallery**

**A R T** TEHRAN — Tehran's Seyhun Gallery plans to showcase cartoonist Kambiz Derambakhsh's new collection "Positive Energy" in an exhibition, which will open on Friday. The collection is composed of 30 cartoons featuring new pictorial stories by the artist, who is famous for his quick and simple works. "The cartoons have been selected from over 500 works all created within the past year," Derambakhsh told the Persian service of the ILNA on Sunday. On choosing the title "Positive Energy" for his exhibit, he said, "Every time I hold an exhibit I receive a lot of positive energy from the visitors." "This time I decided to hold an exhibit and return this positive energy to the visitors, despite all the complications of the world of today such as war, earthquakes or air pollution," he added. "This exhibit can be a break for the visitors to experience a good feeling, relax and relieve tension after a hard day," he noted. He also said that he plans to hold his next exhibits employing different media such as installation or video art. The exhibit will be running until January 10, 2018 at the gallery located at No. 11, 4th St., Vozara Ave.



A poster for "Positive Energy" by Kambiz Derambakhsh.

**Director of British Museum visits Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art**



British Museum director Hartwig Fischer glances at Jackson Pollock's "Mural on Indian Red Ground" in the storehouse of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art on December 23, 2017. (TMCA)

**A R T** TEHRAN — The director of the British Museum, Hartwig Fischer, has visited the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMCA), the TMCA announced on Sunday. He held talks with TMCA director Ali-Mohammad Zare' who accompanied him on his visit to British sculptor Tony Cragg's exhibition now underway at the museum. Zare' expressed his hope that the world would get the chance to see the artworks being kept at the TMCA, and the museum would find an opportunity to showcase its treasure trove, which is composed of masterpieces from the world's august modern artists, at major art museums of the world. Hartwig also praised the architecture of the TMCA and noted that the museum houses artworks from a wide variety of artistic styles, which every artist and art enthusiast wishes to see. He said that Cragg's exhibition in progress at the TMCA is one of most comprehensive showcases of the artist's works ever organized. Hartwig is a German art historian who was selected to helm the British Museum in April 2016. He is the first ever non-British director of the museum since 1866.

**Baran Auction fetches \$420,000 on second sale**

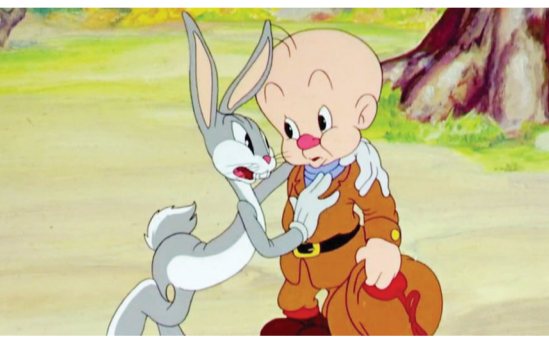


An employee holds an original manuscript of the Holy Quran during the Baran Auction at Tehran's Sam Center on December 22, 2017. The artwork was the first top seller fetching about \$48,000. (Honaronline/Ramona Mirian)

**A R T** TEHRAN — The Baran Auction held its second annual sale on Friday at the Sam Center, grossing over 17 billion rials (about \$420,000). A collection of 56 works went under the hammer at the auction dedicated to calligraphic paintings and calligraphy works. An original manuscript of the Holy Quran inscribed by Ali-Asgar Arsanjani from the Qajar period was the most expensive item, which sold at 2 billion rials (about \$48,000), the Persian service of ILNA reported on Sunday. An artwork by calligrapher Mohammad Ehsai was the second most expensive item, which sold for 1.6 billion rials (about \$39,000). A brass pencil case belonging to the Safavid era and an artwork by Reza Mafi came next. The organizers dedicate the Baran Auction to a famous calligrapher every year. This year's sale was presented to Darvish Abdolmajid Taleqani (1737-1771), a Safavid era calligrapher from Qazvin. Last year, it was dedicated to calligrapher Mohammad ibn Seyfi Qazvini (1553-1615), who is known as Mir Emad. The first auction was held last October, grossing a sum of 26.09 billion rials (over \$720,000).

**Bob Givens, key member of team that created Bugs Bunny, dies at 99**

**LOS ANGELES (L.A Times)** — Bob Givens, a key member of the animation team that created Bugs Bunny, has died at 99. One of the last surviving notable figures from animation's early golden age, Givens died Dec. 14 of acute respiratory failure at Providence Saint Joseph Medical Center in Burbank, his daughter Mariana Givens confirmed. Givens was a rising young animator in the late 1930s, when he hired on with cartoon pioneers Chuck Jones and Tex Avery. They were building on a character that had evolved through a few animated shorts, one which seemed to have potential: a rabbit with an attitude. The character was "too cute, so Tex asked me to do [another] one," Givens wrote in a letter to Michael Barrier, author of Hollywood Cartoons: American Animation in Its Golden Age. Givens drew a model sheet — labeled "Tex's Rabbit" — that guided other animators. "Bugs was no longer defined by [a] tangle of curves," Barrier wrote. "His head was now oval, rather than round." Givens' design preserved whiskers and the idea of a "naturalistic" nose from an earlier version, but introduced elements such as cheek ruffs and less prominent teeth. Robert Herman Givens was born on March 2, 1918, in



Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd appear in a 1940 cartoon that debuted the rabbit's trademark personality and look, which was sketched out by Bob Givens. (Warner Bros. Animation)

Hanson, Ky., according to Mariana Givens. He was one of two twin boys. The family, which grew to include five sisters, moved to Southern California hoping the climate would improve the health of Givens' father, a horse breeder and rancher. Givens, a precocious artist, began working in studio

animation right out of Alhambra High School. His first big break was on the animation team for "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" at the Walt Disney Studios. He later joined a company that became the Warner Brothers animation unit, which sought to create a less treacly style than Disney was known for. The re-imagined Bugs Bunny debuted in "A Wild Hare" (1940). For that short, Givens also prepared a model sheet that redesigned Elmer Fudd, the rabbit's co-star and witless nemesis. A third sheet sketched out a size comparison between Bugs and Elmer. Along with this winning look, Bugs Bunny also benefited from sophisticated writers and the voice talent of Mel Blanc, who delivered Bugs' signature line: "What's up, Doc?" Bugs Bunny became a cartoon superstar, his image and manner still recognized around the world. During a World War II military stint, Givens collaborated with colleagues from the industry on training films. His work after the war, in a career that spanned more than 60 years, included shaping the look and scene layout of cartoons featuring Daffy Duck, Tom & Jerry, Popeye, Alvin and the Chipmunks, Garfield and others, according to a release prepared by Warner Bros.

**Circus owner sues Kid Rock for using "Greatest Show on Earth" slogan**

**NEW YORK (Reuters)** — The company that owns the Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus, which for years had dubbed itself the "Greatest Show on Earth," filed a lawsuit accusing singer Kid Rock of using the slogan unlawfully. Feld Entertainment, the production company that owns the longtime circus show and associated intellectual property, said in a lawsuit filed Friday that singer Robert Ritchie, known professionally as Kid Rock, and Live Nation Entertainment were infringing the circus' "celebrated and valuable" trademark by using the slogan on the singer's upcoming U.S. concert tour without permission. The company, in the lawsuit filed on Friday in U.S. district court in Tampa, charged

trademark dilution and infringement, unfair competition, injury to business reputation and unjust enrichment. "We have authorized licensees for Ringling Bros. and The Greatest Show On Earth, but Kid Rock is not one of them," Feld general counsel Lisa Joiner said in a Friday statement. Among Feld's licensees are restaurant chain Chick-fil-A, telecommunications provider MetroPCS [METRRW.UL] and nonprofit Easterseals, according to the lawsuit. Representatives for Kid Rock and Live Nation did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Saturday. The company said it had contacted Kid Rock and Live Nation repeatedly to ask that

they stop using the slogan but was ignored. The lawsuit asked the court to stop the unauthorized usage of the slogan in connection with Kid Rock's tour and merchandise, and award Feld profits derived from the slogan's use and triple unspecified damages. In May, Feld Entertainment ended its storied Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus show in New York after nearly 150 years of showcasing animals, clowns and acrobats to millions. The finale came a year after the company bowed to pressure from animal rights activists and agreed to stop using elephants as its featured attraction in its performances, which it said affected ticket sales amid high operating costs.



Head clown Davis Vassallo performs during the last show of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus at Nassau Coliseum in Uniondale, New York, May 21, 2017. (Reuters/Lucas Jackson/File Photo)