



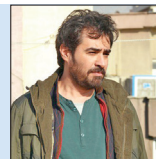
70 more detainees freed **2**



Trump is not champion of democracy: Charles Taliaferro **7**



Iran to play Puerto Rico at FIVB World Championship opener **15**



“The Salesman” trying luck at BAFTA Awards **16**



# Honest demands

U.S. will pay for inciting violence in Iran

## UAE not seen a major trade partner for post-sanction Iran

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) benefited a lot from years of the West-led economic sanctions against Iran as the neighbor country had turned into a number one trade partner of Iran through acting as a broker buying products and services from different countries

and selling them to Iran. But the Arab country is not seen a major trade partner for Iran in the post-sanction era as Iranian economy has opened its doors to the global markets. Mohammad Lahouti, the head of Iran Exports Confederation, said on Monday: **→4**

## Four characteristics of the concept of ‘Return to the self’ in Shi’ism

**THOUGHTS** **TEHRAN** — Islamic fundamentalism is a kind of revivalism (Salaism) which has turned into one of the most significant regional and international threats; even though, the fundamentalists talk about expanding the Islamic territory and guiding human-kind toward redemption. Flagrant violence against ordinary people – as one of the most prevalent tactics used by the fundamentalist

groups - is justified within the theoretical framework of certain contemporary Islamic ideas. These ideas are redefined in fundamentalist-revivalist thought and have lost their original meaning. The superannuated and prominent concept of ‘return to the self’ is among the most significant concepts in this line of thought. The Salaists have introduced this idea as a means to justify returning to an imagined past. **→9**

## Syrian army hits Israeli jet, intercepts missiles near Damascus

Syria’s army says its air defense systems have hit an Israeli aircraft and intercepted a number of rockets fired at targets on Syrian soil as the Tel Aviv regime continues its acts of aggression against the country.

In a statement carried by state media on Tuesday, the army said that Israeli jets had fired missiles at the al-Qutaifa area

northeast of the capital, Damascus, from inside the Lebanese airspace at 2:40 a.m. The target of the strike in al-Qutaifa was said to be a weapons depot.

According to the statement, Israel then fired ground-to-ground rockets from the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, but the Syrian defenses brought the missiles down. **→13**

## The hot debate of revising Tehran’s traffic scheme

**By Mohammad Ali Haqshenas**

The newly proposed scheme for traffic restricted zones put forward by Tehran Municipality to replace the odd-even traffic scheme has led to a series of debates both among officials and the public.

The 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 on their license plate is even or odd.

According to general outlines of the newly proposed scheme, everyone will be able to enter the traffic restricted areas with paying charges depending on the zone they wish to enter. Entering the city center - the most polluted and heavily congested area - is costlier and the farther the zone is from the city center the charge will be lesser.

Although the City Council has not still hammered out and approved the proposed scheme, a wave of comments has been made on the issue by municipal managers, city councilors, police officials and citizens debating the advantages and disadvantages of the issue.

### ■ Municipality’s viewpoint

Mohsen Pourseyyed-Aqaei, deputy mayor for traffic and transport affairs, can be regarded as the main figure behind the proposal. In an interview with Fars news agency published on Sunday, he provided further details on the schemes and strongly advocated it.

Pourseyyed-Aqaei argued that reducing traffic requires the implementation of two measures; developing public transportation and increasing the costs of using personal cars.

Referring to terrible traffic congestion and air

pollution as the primary concerns of Tehraners, he highlighted that tackling these issues are a priority for the municipality. Air pollution is linked to traffic but they are not essentially the same; there are some other culprits for the air pollution beside heavy traffic, he added.

The odd-even scheme has lost its initial effects in reducing traffic and easing air pollution, said the deputy mayor.

He went on to say that the municipality doesn’t intend to increase its revenue via this scheme, rather the aim is to control the traffic. “If it wasn’t the case, we wouldn’t eliminate traffic restrictions on Thursdays in the new scheme,” he argued. However, elsewhere in his remarks, he noted that based on estimations, the scheme will raise the revenue of Tehran Municipality by 1.5 trillion rials (nearly \$37.5 million) annually. **→12**

## Saudi regime seeking to acquire Israeli Iron Dome missiles

The House of Saud regime has reportedly been seeking to get its hands on Israel’s so-called Iron Dome missile system amid reports that the two regimes have plans to normalize their relations and unite against the regional power house Iran.

Basler Zeitung, a Swiss German-language newspaper published in the city of Basel, quoted a “European weapons dealer in the Saudi capital of Riyadh” as saying that the Saudi regime was seeking to buy Israeli military equipment, including the so-called Trophy Active Protec-

tion System (APS).

The vehicle-mounted system is capable of intercepting and destroying incoming missiles and rockets with a shotgun-like blast.

According to the report, the Saudi regime military experts had even examined the Israeli anti-missile system in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) capital, Abu Dhabi.

The House of Saud regime is said to have wanted to acquire the system in an attempt to stop missile attacks by Yemen’s Ansarullah (Houthi) movement, the report said.

The Ansarullah movement fighters regularly fire domestically-manufactured ballistic missiles at positions inside Saudi Arabia in retaliation for the Riyadh-led coalition war on Yemen.

Additionally, the Swiss daily noted that Riyadh and Tel Aviv were working together to confront Iran’s growing presence in the Middle East.

The two regimes, it noted, were cooperating significantly in the military and security sectors, with their intelligence cooperation having registered “further progress.” **→13**



### ARTICLE

**By M.A.Saki**  
Deputy editor-in-chief

## Neither logical nor expedient

In its national budget bill submitted to the parliament, the government has proposed to raise fuel prices, mainly petrol, to raise 174 trillion rials (around \$4.3 billion) and invest that money to create jobs.

However, the special parliamentary committee, which temporarily comes into existence every year to assess the annual national budget bill, has opposed increase in fuel prices.

The special committee has proposed other resources to create jobs. A decision which experts believe would not be materialized.

The recent protest rallies in some cities, which were mainly motivated by economic problems including unemployment, have made lawmakers member to the committee to be more cautious about raising fuel prices, especially petrol.

Even before the emergence of protests, the Majlis Budget and Planning Committee had opposed a hike in gasoline prices, saying it would lead to high inflation.

Such decisions are cherished by the public but in the long run it is the masses who should pay the costs.

Contrary to common assumptions, leading economists believe that increase in fuel prices initially creates a psychological atmosphere for price rises but that excitement dies down after a while.

Even experts believe that inflation is better than unemployment. MPs themselves directly hear more complaints about unemployment from the people they represent in the parliament.

Writing an article in the Hamshahri newspaper on January 8, Mehdi Pazouki, a budget expert, said if the Majlis deals with the national budget like the previous years, government expenditures will increase, revenues will decrease, infrastructure projects will be put on hold, and unemployment will surge.

“Bad governance will not rescue the Iranian economy miraculously,” Pazouki stated.

Job is the main concern of all nations in the world and Iran is no exception, and once in a while unemployment comes as a nuisance to all countries. In view of this fact it is necessary that parliamentarians help the government reduce unemployment rate. **→13**



### ARTICLE

**By Ebrahim Fallahi**  
Tehran Times Journalist

## Renewing oil tankers fleet a “must” for Iran

The collision of an Iranian oil tanker with a Chinese freight vessel has been at the top of news headlines in many energy news agencies this week.

Carrying 136,000 tons of gas condensate, the Iranian tanker collided with the Chinese vessel on its way to South Korea on January 7.

This is the second incident of this kind involving an Iranian tanker. In August 2016, also an Iranian super tanker collided with a Swiss container vessel in Singapore strait.

In Singapore incident luckily no injuries or major pollution were reported, but this time the Iranian vessel’s crew weren’t that lucky, 32 crew members, including 30 Iranians and two Bangladeshis, have gone missing after two vessels collided off China’s east coast.

Hearing about two such incidents with a less-than-a-year interval, one can’t help but to wonder what is causing such tragic accidents involving Iranian oil tankers.

As OPEC’s third largest producer, Iran is currently exporting 2.6 million barrels per day of oil and gas condensate to the world markets, almost all of which is shipped through sea by vessels under the authority of National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC).

The company, which operates the largest tanker fleet in the Middle East and has the world’s largest fleet of super tankers, transports Iranian crude and also acts as an independent entity in contracts with foreign concerns for crude oil transportation based on prevailing international freight rates. It enjoys a fleet of 65 tankers and gas carriers amounting for a total of 15.5 million dwt capacity.

Affected by West-imposed sanctions for so long, NITC wrestles with various issues among which the increase in the fleet’s average age and lack of technology significantly stood out. Currently, the average age of the Iranian tanker fleet has been reported over 16 years, which is a clear indicator of how old the fleet is.

According to international standards, the maximum age of an oil tanker for staying operational is about 15 to 20 years (if it is of high quality). **→4**



## First anniversary of Rafsanjani’s demise marked

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** – In a ceremony on Tuesday Iran marked the first anniversary of the demise of Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

The ceremony, held at the conference hall of the Islamic Cooperation Organization, was attended by dignitaries including Vice President Es’haq Jahangiri, Hassan Khomeini, nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi, Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi, and former culture minister Mostafa Mirsalim among other dignitaries.

Ayatollah Rafsanjani passed away on January 8, 2017 of a heart attack. The body of the first-generation revolutionary was buried in the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, in southern Tehran. **→2**



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Iran, EU set to discuss nuclear deal in Brussels

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** – The European Union has invited Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to Brussels for talks over the landmark nuclear deal on Thursday, Press TV reported.

“The EU High Representative Federica Mogherini will convene a meeting with ministers of foreign affairs of E3 countries -- France, Jean-Yves Le Drian, Germany, Sigmar Gabriel, and the UK Boris Johnson -- and Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif on Thursday, 11 January, in Brussels,” said a statement by the 28-member bloc released late on Monday.



70 more detainees freed

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** – Abbas Jafari-Dolatabadi, the Tehran prosecutor general, said on Tuesday that more detainees arrested by security forces during the recent riots have been released, Fars reported.

“Seventy other detainees were freed on bail after preliminary investigations were completed following detention of a number of suspects in the recent riots and in line with the Judiciary chief’s order to differentiate between those who have been deceived and the main culprits behind the recent riots,” Jafari Dolatabadi said.

A number of protests were staged in several cities and towns across the country. Some of the protests turned violent. The protests started on December 28 last year and ended after a week.



Amir Abdollahian meets Egyptian, Kuwaiti diplomats in Tehran

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** – Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the parliament speaker, on Tuesday held separate meetings with Egyptian and Kuwaiti diplomats in Tehran.

During a meeting with the head of Egyptian interest section office in Tehran, the two sides exchanged views on issues of mutual interests, top among them parliamentary ties and regional and international developments.

He also met with the head of the Kuwaiti embassy in Tehran, discussing relations between the two countries.

“Iran and Kuwait, as two influential countries in the region, have good and constructive stances on regional and international issues,” Amir Abdollahian said.



Trump to impose sanctions on IRIB: Guardian

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** – The Trump administration is planning to impose blanket sanctions on Iranian television, the Guardian reported.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), a state-run organization, has been subject to U.S. sanctions since 2013, but both Barack Obama and Donald Trump have signed waivers every 180 days to prevent them from coming into force.

According to the Guardian, Trump is planning not to sign the waiver in regards to the broadcaster when it comes up for renewal at the end of January, meaning the sanctions will become active.



Environmental challenges may have sparked Iran protests: report

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** – The impacts of climate change are among the environmental challenges facing Iran that may have helped spark recent protests across the country, Scientific American reported in an article published on Monday.

A severe drought, water shortage and dust storms have caused harms to Iran’s economy in recent years which may have contributed to recent protests, the publication said.

A number of protest rallies, which first started in Mashhad on 28, spread to other cities in the country with demonstrators complaining about inflation, unemployment, mismanagement, growing wealth disparity and corruption. However, the protests turned violent in some cities, with rioters targeting police stations and religious sites.



Trump’s approach to nuclear deal unpredictable: expert

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** – Kelsey Davenport, the director for Nonproliferation Policy at the Arms Control Association, has said that if the U.S. reimposes sanctions against Iran, it would be a violation of the 2015 nuclear deal which would also lead to a further isolation of Washington in the world.

In an interview with IRNA published on Tuesday, Davenport said U.S. President Donald Trump’s decision regarding the nuclear agreement, also known as the JCPOA, is not predictable.

“The European Union must make it clear for Trump that exiting the JCPOA will widen the gap between Europe and the United States, leaving to further isolation of America,” she remarked.

# Leader: Honest and rightful demands differ from violent acts



**The Leader says a “triangle” of enemies – with the United States and Israel comprising one of its sides, a filthy-rich Persian Gulf littoral state on its second side and the anti-Iran MKO terror organization on the third side – has been plotting for the past few months to foment chaos and violence in Iran.**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** – Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Tuesday that people’s “honest and rightful demands” should be heeded and separated from acts of violence and sabotage.

The honest and rightful demands of people is different from destructive moves of a group,” Ayatollah Khamenei said in a meeting with a large group of people from Qom.

In reference to recent protests across the country, Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized that all Iranian officials must pursue the demands of the people.

“Protests or people’s demands have always existed and they also exist today,” but such protests should be differentiated from those who insulted Islam, the Quran, the national flag and also burnt mosques.

The Leader also lauded the Iranian nation for their response to the enemy’s plots to foment chaos and violence in the country.

“These are not normal incidents. [These incidents] occur nowhere in the world,” the Leader said, pointing to the people’s massive show of support for the establishment.

He described the riots that hit some areas of the country as “fireworks and vicious acts”.

“It is not a matter of one or two or five years. [It is about] a battle between the nation and

## Parliamentary committee approve anti-money laundering bill



**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** – Parliament’s Judicial and Legal Committee has approved the framework of anti-money laundering bill, the committee’s spokesman announced on Monday.

Hassan Norouzi said the committee meeting was attended on Monday by officials and experts from the Intelligence Ministry and other relevant governmental bodies, Mehr reported.

Norouzi said after considerations, it was decided that the first clause of the bill should be amended.

He also said because of the anti-money laundering law’s problems and the necessity of predicting an operational structure to fight money laundering, the framework of the bill was approved.

In this regard, one of the crucial factors in improvement of the country’s financial system is making it more transparent by fulfilling demands of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on anti-money laundering and combating terrorism financing (AML/CFT).

On November 3, the plenary meeting of FATF was held in Buenos Aires. Among the issues discussed at the meeting there was an update on Iran’s engagement

with FATF. The country’s Action Plan expires on 31 January 2018 and the FATF urged Iran to proceed swiftly on the reform path, to ensure full and accurate implementation of the Plan. At its February 2018 meeting, the FATF will assess progress made by Iran and take appropriate action.

On November 20, President Hassan Rouhani’s official website published amendments to the draft law on AML/CFT – a document that, if adopted - will allow the country’s access to the international convention. If not, Iran will be pushed back to the organization’s “black list” with negative consequences for the country including possible disconnection from SWIFT.

However, it has faced an ambiguous reaction in the Parliament and media.

Some of the newspapers say putting the country’s banking system under international control was unacceptable and would cause threat to Iran.

Iran’s turning to the world is going hard but the process can’t be stopped. Now the country can make another important step to ensure transparency of some aspects of its national economy and readiness to international cooperation.

## First anniversary of Rafsanjani’s demise marked

**1 →** President Hassan Rouhani posted a message on Twitter on Monday paying tribute to Rafsanjani.

Jahangiri said that Rafsanjani was a “development-oriented strategist”.

“Nobody saw him hopeless; he always had plans for future and tough days,” he said.

The vice president also said that Rafsanjani played an “effective” role in the victory of revolution, the handling of Iraq’s war against Iran in the 1980s, and also Iran’s

international relations.

Jahangiri noted that Rafsanjani always highlighted the importance of holding free elections and respecting the people’s rights. Elsewhere, he described Rafsanjani as “identity” of the Islamic system.

Born in 1934 in a village in eastern province of Kerman, Rafsanjani grew up in a wealthy family.

He started his political career in the 1960s, acquainting himself with the views of the to-be

## All options on table if U.S. quits nuclear deal: Velayati



**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** – Ali Akbar Velayati, a top advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, said on Tuesday that Iran has all options on the table if the U.S. quits the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

U.S. President Donald Trump, in a statement issued on October 13, refused to certify Iran’s compliance to the nuclear deal and asked Congress to decide about the fate of the nuclear deal.

However, Congress passed the ball back to Trump by letting the deadline on reimposing sanctions on Iran pass. Trump must decide in mid-January if he wants to continue to waive sanctions on Iran.

“The JCPOA and the Majlis have predicted Iran’s response if the U.S. pulls out of the deal,” Velayati said in a joint press conference in Tehran with Humam Hamoudi, head of Iraq’s Islamic Supreme Council and the country’s first deputy parliament speaker.

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

Under the deal, Iran is obliged to put restrictions on its nuclear activities in exchange

those hostile to the nation; a battle between Iran and those hostile to Iran; a battle between Islam and those hostile to Islam,” the Leader remarked, according to the Press TV.

He said a “triangle” of enemies – with the United States and Israel comprising one of its sides, a filthy-rich Persian Gulf littoral state on its second side and the anti-Iran MKO terror organization on the third side – has been plotting for the past few months to foment chaos and violence in Iran.

“The plot has been hatched by Americans and Zionists. They have been working on it for several months, planning to begin from small towns and then move on towards the center. The cash comes from one of the filthy rich Persian Gulf littoral states. Obviously, such projects need money, but the Americans won’t be willing to spend anything as long as they have these [rich puppets],” the Leader said

The third side of the triangle, Ayatollah Khamenei added, was the “murderous” Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO), whose elements served as lackeys on the ground.

The Leader went on to say that the U.S. will surely pay a price for inciting violence in Iran.

Ayatollah Khamenei also said U.S. President Donald Trump, whom he described as mentally “unbalanced”, must know that his mad stunts will not go unanswered.

for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

So far the International Atomic Energy Agency has issued nine reports each time confirming that Iran is abiding fully to the terms of the agreement.

**■ ‘U.S. seeks divisive policies in Syria, Iraq’**

Velayati also said that the U.S. seeks divisive policies in Iraq and Syria, however, the two countries maintained integrity and succeeded to defeat Daesh.

He said that the U.S. makes efforts to split the Kurdistan region from Iraq but “their wish will not come true”.

Commenting on bilateral ties, he said that Iran and Iraq enjoy “strategic” relationship based on good neighborliness.

**■ ‘Iraq after using Iran’s experiences’** During the meeting with Velayati, Hamoudi said that Iraq is seeking to use Iran’s experiences for economic development.

He also praised Iran’s supports for the Iraqi government and people in difficult days.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran was the first country that recognized the current Iraqi establishment and we thank the Iranian Leadership, government and people for supporting the Iraqi people in fight against Daesh,” Hamoudi explained.

In 1980, Ayatollah Khomeini tapped Rafsanjani as commander of the war after Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein waged the war against the fledgling revolution.

He served the revolution in his capacity as parliament speaker (1980-1988), president (1989-1997), and chairman of the Expediency Council (1998-to his death). He was also the head of the Assembly of Experts from 2007 until 2011 and interim Friday prayer preacher of Tehran from 1981 to 2009.

today? Are these governments so brainwashed by the West that they think that democracy means permitting foreign agents to attempt to overthrow the government?

Are governments so intimidated by the Western prostitutes that they find it challenging to defend themselves against foreign-paid provocateurs?

Having succeeded in causing violent protests in Iran, Washington now intends to use an emergency UN Security Council meeting on Iran in order to set the stage for more intervention against Iran. The Washington-incited violence has been turned into a “human rights issue” against Iran. Will Washington get away with it?

Iran’s fate is up to Russia and China. If Washington succeeds in destabilizing Iran, Russia and China are next. Russia seems to understand this. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said yesterday [January

4]: “We warn the U.S. against attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

Just as the Russian government comprehended that Russia could not permit Washington’s destabilization of Syria, Russia understands she cannot permit the destabilization of Iran.

The leader of Turkey has aligned with Russia, declaring “obviously some people from abroad are provoking the situation.”

That is obvious to everyone but Americans, who are constantly lied to by “their” government and by the prostitute lie factories such as CNN, New York Times, Washington Post, BBC.

Trump and Haley are the type of loudmouths who are likely to break Washington’s power and influence over the world. They “take names,” admit that they bribe foreign leaders, and issue insane threats. If this doesn’t wake up the rest of the world, nothing will.



# North Korea, South Korea agree to hold military talks

North and South Korea agreed to hold military talks, a joint statement said after the two Koreas engaged in formal dialogue on Tuesday for the first time in more than two years.

North Korea also decided to send a high-ranking delegation and a cheering squad to the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in South Korea next month, but the head of its delegation in the talks on Tuesday expressed negative sentiment over the mention of denuclearization during Tuesday's discussions, the South Korean government said in a statement.

At the first formal talks with South Korea in more than two years, North Korean officials said their delegation to the Games would consist of athletes, high-ranking officials and a cheering squad.

The talks are being closely watched by world leaders eager for any sign of a reduction in tension on the Korean peninsula, amid rising fears over North Korea's missile launches and development of nuclear weapons in defiance of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions.

South Korea has unilaterally banned several North Korean officials from entry in response to Pyongyang's ramped-up missile and nuclear tests, held despite international pressure.

However, some South Korean officials have said they see the Olympics as a possible opportunity for easing tension.

Foreign ministry spokesman Roh Kyu-deok said Seoul would consider whether it needed to take "prior steps", together with the UN Security Council and other relevant countries, to help the North Koreans visit for the Olympics.

At Tuesday's talks, the first since December 2015, Seoul proposed inter-Korean military discussions to reduce tension on the peninsula and a reunion of family members in time for February's Lunar New Year holiday, South Korea's vice unification minister Chun Hae-sung said.

The North has finished technical work to restore a military hotline with South Korea, he added, with normal communications set to resume on Wednesday. But Chun did not immediately say what information would be transferred along the hotline.

The North severed communications in February 2016, following the South's decision to shut down a jointly run industrial park in the North.

South Korea also proposed that athletes from both sides march together at the Games' opening ceremony and other joint activities during the Winter Olympics, Chun told reporters outside the talks.

Athletes from the two Koreas have paraded together at the opening and closing ceremonies of major international games before, although this has not been seen since the 2007



Asian Winter Games in China, after relations chilled under nearly a decade of conservative rule in the South.

It would also be the first time since 2005 that the North will send its female cheerleaders, dubbed the "cheering squad of beauty" by the South Korean media.

## ■ Peace house

The meetings continued on Tuesday afternoon after the two sides broke up for separate lunches. Officials began speaking at 10 a.m. (0100 GMT) in the three-storey Peace House just across the demilitarized zone on the South Korean side of Panmunjom truce village.

"North Korea said that they are determined to make today's talks fruitful, and make it a groundbreaking opportunity," South Korea's Chun said. Chun also said the South Koreans proposed resuming negotiations over the North's nuclear program, but there was no specific response from the North.

However, North Korean officials said during the meeting they were open to promoting reconciliation through dialogue and negotiation, according to Chun.

The head of the North Korean delegation, Ri Son Gwon,

said, "We came to this meeting today with the thought of giving our brethren, who have high hopes for this dialogue, invaluable results as the first present of the year ..."

## ■ Good present

North Korea entered the talks with a "serious and sincere stance", said Ri, chairman of the North's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland.

South Korean Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon expressed optimism as the meeting began.

"Our talks began after North and South Korea were severed for a long time, but I believe the first step is half the trip," said Cho. "It would be good for us to make that 'good present' you mentioned earlier."

"Everything feels slightly new as we have not had talks in a while," he said.

Just before the delegation drove into the demilitarized zone, about 20 South Koreans were seen waving a banner that read: "We wish the success of the high-ranking inter-Korean talks."

(Source: Reuters)

# Netanyahu's son under fire after 'strip club' tape

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's son has been caught on tape seemingly drunk outside a strip club talking about a key natural gas deal, leading to political fallout on Tuesday.

The audio recording of Yair Netanyahu, who has been the subject of controversy in the past, led to further criticism of his father's handling of Israel's natural gas industry at a time when he already faces two unrelated graft investigations.

Netanyahu's family denounced the broadcast of the recording by Israel's Channel 2 television late on Monday as part of a witch-hunt, while Yair Netanyahu said he was obviously joking in the audio said to be from 2015.

Yair Netanyahu, now 26, can be heard speaking with the son of Kobi Maimon, a stakeholder in a company that owns a share in Israel's offshore Tamar gas field.

Their conversation includes talk of strip-pers and prostitutes.

"My dad arranged \$20 billion for your dad - you can give me 400 shekels (\$116)," he says. Yair Netanyahu issued a statement apologizing and saying he was only joking about the gas deal while "under the influence of alcohol."

"These statements do not represent who I am nor the values on which I was raised," he said.

"Regarding what I said about the gas deal, it was a joke. Anyone with a bit of common sense understands that right way."

Netanyahu faced a difficult political bat-



tle over Israel's natural gas arrangements, with opponents saying they overly favor the companies involved.

Labor party leader Avi Gabbay said the recording was a "new stain on the corrupt gas deal".

There was also criticism over Yair Netanyahu's security arrangements, with at least two lawmakers calling for an investigation.

A security guard employed by the state purportedly accompanied Yair Netanyahu to the strip club.

Netanyahu's office said it "is not consulted

on protection arrangements for his children decided upon by the security services."

The Netanyahus in a statement said the broadcast of the recording was part of a "witch-hunt against the family that has reached an unprecedented low."

"Apparently, everything is fair game to attack the Netanyahu government and family, including using a secret and illegal recording of young men drinking alcohol," it said.

The statement also said Netanyahu had no relationship with Maimon and was not aware of Yair Netanyahu's friendship with his son.

It said the premier had met Maimon "once 10 years ago."

According to the family, the recording was made by a driver from the prime minister's office. Israeli media reported that the driver has long since resigned for unrelated reasons.

The recording was a new blow to Netanyahu, who is already facing two separate graft investigations.

Police are probing Netanyahu over allegations he received expensive gifts from wealthy supporters. He is also being investigated over an alleged deal he sought with a newspaper publisher for favorable coverage.

Netanyahu, who has been questioned by police seven times in the investigations, has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing.

Separately, his wife Sara Netanyahu faces a possible trial over alleged misuse of public funds. She also denies the allegations.

Netanyahu's effort to approve a natural gas framework to develop Israel's significant offshore deposits met stiff resistance from opposition politicians and public protests.

After protracted political and bureaucratic challenges to the framework, including objections from anti-trust officials, Israel's Supreme Court in March 2016 struck it down.

It was later revised and given final approval.

Yair Netanyahu has drawn controversy in the past, including over a bizarre Facebook post in September suggesting there was a conspiracy against his family. The post included a series of anti-Semitic images.

(Source: AFP)

## Russian troops remaining in Syria can fight terror attacks on bases: Kremlin

Moscow says the number of Russian troops remaining in Syria following the collapse of ISIL (Daesh) is sufficient for defending its bases against any possible militant attack.

"That contingent that remains, the military infrastructure that remains, at the Hmeimim and Tartus military bases, they are completely capable of fighting these occasional terrorist acts," Dmitry Peskov, the Kremlin's spokesman, said in a conference call on Tuesday.

Peskov's comments came a day after Russia's Defense Ministry said its troops had successfully repelled multiple drone attacks launched by militants on its naval and air bases in Syria on January 6.

According to the ministry's report, 10 combat drones raided the Hmeimim Airbase in Syria's western coastal Province of Latakia, while three more attempted a strike against the Russian maritime logistics base located in the western city of Tartus, Syria's second largest port city.

Russia has been conducting air raids against terrorist outfits in Syria at the Damascus government's request since September 2015.

President Vladimir Putin made a surprise visit to Syria last month where he ordered the start of a pullout of Russian troops and held talks with President Bashar al-Assad.

Following the announcement, a group of Russian troops deployed to Syria has returned home.

The crews of Tupolev Tu-22M3 long-range bombers also returned to an operational airfield in North Ossetia and later flew to their permanent bases.

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

(Source: TASS)

## Turkey to continue military operation in northern Syria: Erdogan



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Turkey is to keep up its so-called Euphrates Shield military operation in northern Syria, which serves to keep Kurdish militants away from its borders.

The operation spans Syria's Afrin and Manbij regions. The country launched the mission in 2016, saying it sought to fight off the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist outfit. Later, however, Ankara was seen using the drive to push against the Kurds.

Turkey associates the Kurdish militants in Syria with the homegrown Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê), which has been fighting a decades-long separatist war against Ankara.

The Turkish operation, however, comes without the Syrian government's permission, prompting repeated calls by Damascus to stop its military intervention.

Despite angering Syria on the matter, Turkey, along with Russia and Iran, has made great diplomatic strides to help end the crisis in Syria.

The trio has been mediating a peace process in Astana, Kazakhstan, between Syria's warring sides since January 2016.

## ■ U.S., Gulen in cahoots

Separately, Erdogan branded a United States legal case against a Turkish banker as a "political coup attempt" and a joint effort by the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) and the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) to undermine Turkey.

Last week, a jury in New York found Mehmet Hakan Atilla guilty on five of six counts he faced, including bank fraud and conspiracy to violate the U.S. sanctions law.

Erdogan said the CIA, the FBI and the network of Fethullah Gulen, a U.S.-based cleric, whom Turkey blames for a failed 2016 coup against the Turkish administration, were working together, using the case to undermine Ankara.

Muhammed Fethullah Gulen Hocaefendi, is a Turkish preacher, former imam, writer, and political figure. He is the founder of the Gulen movement (known as Hizmet meaning service in Turkish), which is 3 to 6 million strong in Turkey and has an empire of affiliated banks, media, construction companies, and schools, especially those providing primary and secondary education, in Turkey and in Africa, Central Asia, the Americas, and Europe. Gulen lives in exile in the U.S. He is sought by the Turkish government for alleged involvement in the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey.

The Gulen movement (Gulenists) has been characterized as a civil society group promoting education, religious tolerance, and building social networks. Having shared a major goal of Turkish President Erdogan of empowering religious individuals in civil life officially disenfranchised under then existing law in secular Turkey, Gulen and his movement were aligned with Erdogan prior to 2013.

The alliance was destroyed after the 2013 corruption investigations in Turkey. Erdogan accused Gulen of being behind the corruption investigations. He is currently on Turkey's most-wanted-terrorist list and is accused of leading what the current Turkish officials call the Gulenist Terror Organization (Fethullahçî Terör Örgütü, FETÖ). A Turkish criminal court issued an arrest warrant for Gulen. Turkey is demanding the extradition of Gulen from the U.S.

(Source: agencies)

## British PM reshuffles cabinet, Johnson not sacked

Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May has changed the lineup of her ministers in an attempt to reunify her cabinet before the next phase of the Brexit talks with the European Union (EU), but there are no signs that she will fire Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson.

The biggest change came after Justine Greening, the education secretary, handed in her registration and rejected an offer to serve as work and pensions secretary.

"Social mobility matters to me and our country more than a ministerial career," she said in a statement on Monday.

"I'll continue to work outside of government to do everything I can to create a country for the first time that has equality of opportunity for young people wherever they are growing up," she added.

Experts have attributed the change to Greening's criticism of May's policies and her siding with trade unions instead of embracing Tory reforms.

Jeremy Hunt, who led the National Health Service (NHS), for over five years, was appointed as the new health secretary.

May also chose Damian Hinds, a Tory Member of Parliament, as the new education secretary while Esther McVey, another MP (Member of Parliament), was promoted to become the new work and pensions secretary.

Other major changes included Brandon Lewis, the immigration minister, who would go on to replace Patrick McLoughlin as Conservative Party chairman.

He is tasked with fixing the Tories' appeal after a humiliating loss of majority in June's general election, a strategic move that was supposed to finish the opposition Labour Party's



move but reinforced its foothold in the parliament instead.

Northern Ireland minister James Brokenshire, who had resigned for health reasons was replaced with Kren Bradley.

Despite much hype, however, there was no sign that May was going to demote Foreign Secretary Johnson and replace her with Home Secretary Amber Rudd as some media outlets had claimed.

Johnson, a pro-Brexit campaigner during last year's EU referendum, has on several occasions caused trouble for May

by often proposing policies that differ from those touted by May and her cabinet.

The minister's many blunders have also caused much trouble for London, forcing May to personally clean up after him.

Some of the people around May, including her former chief whip, Gavin Williamson, have advised her against the consequences of sacking senior Tory figures like Johnson and putting them on the backbenches.

(Source: agencies)



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	96149.3
IFX	1077.36

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	43,340 rials
EUR	53,000 rials
GBP	59,750 rials
AED	11,750 rials

Source: Mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$68.12/b
WTI	\$62.12/b
OPEC Basket	\$65.86/b
Gold	\$1,315.60/oz
Silver	\$17.06/oz
Platinum	\$969.85/oz

Sources: Oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Govt. projected to create 1m jobs by Mar. 2019

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian government spokesman Mohammad Baqer Nobakht announced that the government intends to create 1.033 million jobs by the end of the next Iranian calendar year 1397 (March 20, 2019) in case 3.27 quadrillion rials (about \$74.8 billion) of investments is attracted, Tasnim news agency reported on Tuesday.

Making the remarks in a press conference, Nobakht, who is also the head of Budget and Planning Organization, explained that by March 2019, the government plans to create 240,000 jobs via reviving 100,000 dilapidated constructions, 60,000 jobs by constructing 100,000 housing units, 67,000 jobs in agricultural sector, 173,000 jobs in cultural heritage sector, 221,000 jobs in active labor market policies and 74,500 jobs in industrial sector.

Over \$8.2b foreign investment attracted in water, power sectors post-JCPOA

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** —Iran’s water and electricity sectors have attracted over \$8.23 billion of foreign investment after the implementation of the nuclear deal between Iran and world powers (known as JCPOA) in January 2016.

As IRNA reported on Tuesday, the investments have funded numerous projects including thermal power plants, renewable energy parks, small scale generators as well as water and wastewater projects, some of which are at contract level, some underway and some already operational.

In May 2017, Iranian Deputy Minister of Energy Sattar Mahmoudi announced that completion of semi-finished projects in water and electricity sectors needs about \$46.189 billion of finance.

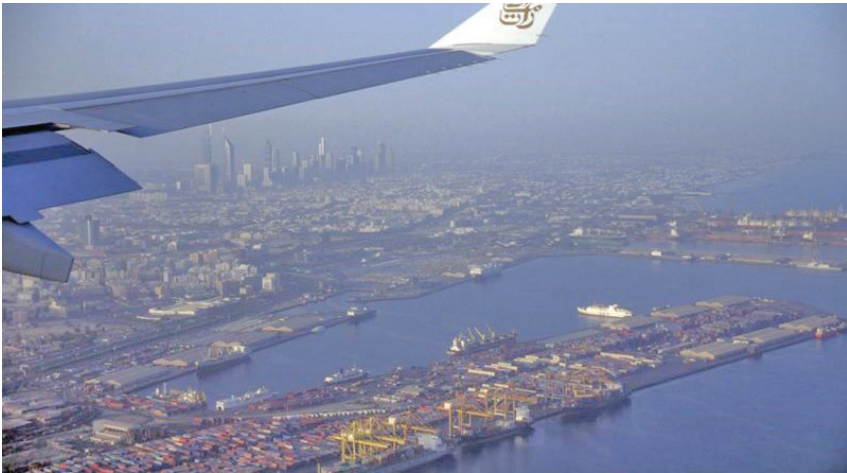
Addressing a conference in Tehran, the energy official said that although a large amount of investments has been made in this sector during the past years, a number of projects are still unfinished due to dearth of financial resources.

He, elsewhere, named lack of sufficient financial resources and modern technology as the main concerns that domestic power sector is faced with and said that removal of such obstacles would pave the country’s way to international markets.

UAE not seen a major trade partner for post-sanction Iran

**1 →** “We had noticeable trade with the UAE and it was a proper partner for us during the sanctions, but in our foreign trade during the first nine months [of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2017)] the highest fall has been in our trade with the UAE due to several reasons including the political one and also our post-sanction [economic] condition. During the sanctions time, the UAE played the role of a dealer, many goods were not transported to our ports, they were shipped to the UAE’s ports and from there they came to Iran. We could not purchase many products due to the sanctions, so we provided them from this country.”

“Following the implementation of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (which lifted the sanctions against Iran in January 2016), it is natural that a country, which as a neighbor used to play a dealer role between Iran and the other countries, now is a less important partner, as the other countries have come, like South Korea, which did not make any



deal with Iran during the sanctions, while it is now among the first five trade partners of Iran. And also Germany, which was not even among the ten trade partners of Iran in the sanctions time, is now among the five

top European countries from which we are importing products”, he explained.

“Meanwhile, we experienced over hundred percent growth in trade with Europe after the sanctions”, Lahouti added.

Another reason for adopting a less significant trade approach toward the UAE is the way that the Arab country is treating with Iranian traders, for example not offering banking services to Iranians as Emirates NBD, one of the largest banking groups in the Middle East in terms of assets, closed Iranian bank accounts in last November. There are also difficulties with visa issuance.

Taking all these factors into account, Iran’s trade shifting from the UAE to another neighbor like Oman, with which Iran has a proper geopolitical relation, makes sense.

Gholam-Ali Faroghi, the chairman of Agriculture and Food Industries Committee of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), says: “If the necessary process is defined and the proper ground is provided, I definitely hope that this shift will be very good.”

“While our trade transactions with the UAE had benefits for us during the sanction time, highlighting the role of a regional rival is not a correct approach now”, he comments.

Efforts continue to tame fire on Iranian oil tanker: NITC official

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — In collaboration with National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC), rescue crews are taking all necessary measures to tackle the fire on Sanchi tanker as soon as possible, IRNA reported on Tuesday quoting the NITC spokesman for the emergency committee on incident.

Speaking in a press conference covering the incident, Mohsen Bahrami said Iran has

requested help from the Japanese government and they are going to take part in the operation soon.

Asked about the search for the tanker’s crew, the official said there is a chance that the crew are stuck in the tanker’s engine room so they are doing their best to put out the fire as soon as possible.

“The nationality of the body which has

been found so far is confirmed as Iranian, but exact identity and name have not yet been identified,” he added.

According to Ports & Maritime Organization of Iran, following the Sanchi accident, Kitack Lim, the secretary general of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has expressed his sympathy for the loss of the tanker’s crew and offered to provide technical assistance.



Renewing oil tankers fleet a “must” for Iran

**1 →** The National Tanker Company should be considering the fact that in the coming years, part of the fleet would inevitably collapse (hopefully not in another incident) and the company needs a strategic plan to modernize its fleet.

Earlier in December 2016, NITC’s Director of Fleet Operations Akbar Jebel Ameli had emphasized the need for modernizing the country’s oil tanker fleet saying that four vessels have been already put out of operation.

NITC Managing Director Sirous Kianersi said in June 2016 that NITC is well aware of the country’s oil fleet condition, and the company is moving renewing its fleet.

“NITC is looking at options to place its first orders for new very large crude carriers (VLCCs) in post-sanction era, as it plans to renew its existing fleet,” he said. According to the official any new contracts would be to replace its current vessels, rather than adding new deadweight tons (dwt),



Shana news agency reported.

Since the implementation of the nuclear deal in January 2016, Iran has taken some steps for renewing its shipping fleet but so far the results have not been impressive.

Euro-area unemployment rate drops to lowest level since 2009

Joblessness in the euro area declined to the lowest level since early 2009, raising the prospect of a tighter jobs market finally putting the upward pressure on wages keenly anticipated by the European Central Bank.

The unemployment rate dropped to 8.7 percent in November from 8.8 percent the previous month, according to a report from Eurostat on Tuesday. The reading matches the median of 34 estimates in a Bloomberg survey.

While the region’s economy has returned

to health following a period marred by bank failures, record joblessness and a sovereign-debt crisis that jeopardized the currency union, inflation has proved sluggish -- in part because wages have been slow to rise. In a bid to fuel price pressures, policy makers have committed to continuing asset purchases until at least September.

“While falling unemployment should further boost consumption, thereby contributing to the self-sustaining character of the recovery, the key question for the

ECB is when the unemployment level will start to affect wages,” ING economist Peter Vanden Houste said in a note to clients. With the number of companies beginning to see production bottlenecks due to a lack of personnel, “wage growth should start to pick up.”

Economic activity in the euro-area accelerated to the fastest pace in almost seven years in December as services surged while factories benefited from booming domestic demand and near-record growth in export

orders, data last week showed.

In Germany, where unemployment is the lowest on record amid a veritable economic boom, industrial production increased almost twice as much as forecast in November, a separate release on Tuesday showed.

Meanwhile in Italy, the jobless rate dropped to the lowest since September 2012, providing a much-needed boost to the ruling Democratic Party before a general election in March.

(Source: Bloomberg)

IN THE NAME OF GOD

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

Amendment of International Tender Notice No.: 96/122-124/3

**Tender Holder:**  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

**Subject of Tender:**  
Following the above international tender Notice, Subject of Broadcasting the networks English Ifilm, Press TV and Hispan TV on Galaxy 19 satellite for three years which was published on Jan 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of 2018 the amendatory text of the above Tender is hereby announced.

**Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participation to Tender:**  
The amount of deposit for participating in tender is USD 82185 fixed or its equivalent in 3,580,000,000 Rials which should be in the form of Bank Guarantee.

All other information and dates stipulated in the previous announcement shall remain fixed and unchanged.

Purchasing (kala) Dept. of IRIB

IN THE NAME OF GOD

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

Amendment of International Tender Notice No.: 96/122-123/3

**Tender Holder:**  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

**Subject of Tender:**  
Following the above international tender Notice, Subject of Broadcasting the networks Ifilm 2 and Al Alam on Express AM6 satellite for three years which was published on Jan 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of 2018 the amendatory text of the above Tender is hereby announced.

**Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participation to Tender:**  
The amount of deposit for participating in tender is USD 73550 fixed or its equivalent in 3,200,000,000 Rials which should be in the form of Bank Guarantee.

All other information and dates stipulated in the previous announcement shall remain fixed and unchanged.

Purchasing (kala) Dept. of IRIB



# Oil hits highest since May 2015 above \$68 on tighter market

Oil rose further above \$68 a barrel on Tuesday, touching its highest since May 2015, supported by OPEC-led production cuts and expectations U.S. crude inventories fell for an eighth week.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia are keeping supply limits in place in 2018, a second year of restraint, to reduce a price-denting glut of oil held in inventories.

Brent crude, the international benchmark, was up 4 cents at \$67.82 a barrel at 0949 GMT and earlier touched \$68.29, its highest since May 2015. U.S. crude rose 15 cents to \$61.88 and also reached its highest since May 2015.

"Oil prices remain on an upward trajectory," said Carsten Fritsch, analyst at Commerzbank.

"In view of sharply falling U.S. crude oil stocks and record-high compliance with the production cuts by OPEC, market participants are convinced that the market is continuing to tighten."

OPEC is cutting output by even more than it promised and the restraint is reducing oil stocks globally, a trend most visible in the



United States, the world's largest and most transparent oil market.

Supply reports this week from industry group American Petroleum Institute and the U.S. government's Energy Information

Administration are expected to show U.S. crude stocks fell by 4.1 million barrels, an eighth week of decline.

The API releases its data at 2130 GMT on Tuesday and the government report is

out on Wednesday.

Many producers, still suffering from a 2014 price collapse, are enjoying the rally, although they are wary it will spur rival supply sources. Iran said on Tuesday OPEC members were not keen on increased prices.

Unrest in Iran, OPEC's third-largest producer, has lent support to prices this year although output and exports have not been affected. Economic collapse is leading to involuntary production cuts in Venezuela, another OPEC member.

There is no sign yet that OPEC is prepared to relax its supply restraint.

A senior OPEC source from a major Middle Eastern oil producer said on Monday OPEC would boost output only if there were significant and sustained production disruptions from Iran and Venezuela.

The rise in prices is expected to drive gains in U.S. production during 2018, offsetting curbs by others.

Still, the latest U.S. rig count, an early indicator of future output, showed a slight dip in the amount of rigs drilling for new oil, which lent support to prices.

(Source: Reuters)

## Four factors that could derail the OPEC deal

By Tsvetana Paraskova

OPEC and its Russia-led non-OPEC allies in the deal managed to stay together for a full year of high compliance with the oil production cuts and have agreed to extend the pact for a second year to the end of 2018.

This year, however, the cartel and friends face even more challenges in sticking together until the end of the December, with both supply and demand uncertainties adding to the unknowns.

On the one hand, within the cartel, possible production slumps from two OPEC members could trigger an early exit. Another internal OPEC factor could be the ever-present possibility that some members may cheat on the production cut deal outright now that oil prices are higher.

On the other hand, factors outside OPEC's control, such as U.S. shale production expansion and potentially strong global oil demand growth, could also spell the end of the production pact. OPEC could see U.S. shale as rising too much and threatening to eat away at an even bigger portion of the cartel's market share. Or some phenomenal oil demand growth, stemming from solid economic growth, could help OPEC to accomplish its mission to draw the global oil inventories down to their five-year average somewhere around the time the cartel meets to review the deal in June 2018.

There are four ways in which various

political and supply/demand factors could combine to call an early end to the OPEC/non-OPEC cuts, according to Bloomberg's Grant Smith.

### 1. Collapsing oil production in Iran and/or Venezuela

Protests in Iran have been the main theme in geopolitical upside risks to oil prices at the beginning of this year. However, analysts think that immediate supply disruptions out of Iran are unlikely. But the fallout of the protests could embolden U.S. President Donald Trump to refuse to certify the Iran nuclear deal and extend sanctions on Tehran's energy industry, according to Helima Croft, global head of commodity strategy for RBC Capital Markets. President Trump faces several Iran-deal-related deadlines in coming weeks.

Struggling Venezuela is another OPEC member whose production could sharply fall, which could lead to the cartel agreeing that restricting supply is no longer appropriate in a market that is significantly tighter than before the cuts started.

According to a Bloomberg survey from last week, OPEC's crude oil production remained largely unchanged from November in December, but that was mostly thanks to a 50,000-bpd decline in Venezuela's production.

### 2. OPEC members cheating

Another way the cuts could end earlier is OPEC members repeating history and starting to cheat, with Iraq given as an ex-

ample of a possible early dissenter. Iraq has been the least compliant producer, and in the few months in which it came close to its production ceiling, it was the fallout from the Kurdistan region's referendum and federal army retaking Kirkuk oil fields that helped Iraq to largely stick to its quota, not its purposeful actions.

"As seasonal demand picks up in the summer months, we expect Iraq's compliance with the agreement to slip," analysts at BMI Research told Bloomberg.

### 3. 'Mission accomplished'

The third possible road to OPEC ending the deal early is (1.) market rebalancing around the middle of 2018, or (2.) Russia persuading its OPEC allies in the deal that the market is already tightened and there is no need to over-tighten it and send oil prices too high and too comfortable for U.S. shale production growth. OPEC and non-OPEC producers are meeting in June to review the state of the oil market, and the impact of the cuts—a clause in the November 2017 deal extension included on Russia's insistence.

Some bullish voices, like Goldman Sachs, see the oil market balanced at the end of Q2 2018. OPEC, however, currently expects excess global inventories to arrive "at a balanced market by late 2018." OPEC doesn't expect significant drawdowns in oil inventories in the first quarter of 2018, just like in 2017, Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister

Khalid al-Falih has said, and the message from OPEC is that we'll have a clearer picture by June.

### 4. U.S. shale rising too much, too fast

The higher oil prices in a too-tight market could motivate U.S. shale producers to pump more than analysts currently predict. OPEC and allies are aware of the fact that U.S. production will grow, but if it grows too much, the cartel and Russia could ditch the pact and start defending their market share. This move, however, could send oil prices much lower than now—and OPEC would not be pleased.

Oil prices are currently at levels at which U.S. production could substantially increase. According to the Q4 Dallas Fed Energy Survey published at end-December, 42 percent of executives at 132 oil and gas firms expect the U.S. oil rig count to substantially increase if WTI prices are between \$61 and \$65 a barrel. Another 31 percent of executives forecast that oil prices will need to be between \$66 and \$70 a barrel to see a substantial increase, while 20 percent think prices have to be above \$70 for oil rig counts to substantially rise.

OPEC and the Russia-led alliance face a number of challenges in keeping their deal intact until the end of 2018. It's still too early to tell how the market will behave and how geopolitical risks factor in.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## Wind farms paid £100m to switch power off



Britain's wind farms were paid more than £100 million last year to switch off their turbines and NOT produce electricity, the Telegraph can disclose.

The payments - equivalent to £2 million a week - were made to the big energy firms that own the giant wind farms.

Incredibly, the wind farms receive on average 40 percent more cash when they are switched off than when they are producing electricity, according to an analysis of official figures.

The think tank which carried out the study said it was "a scandal" that the big energy companies were more profitable when turned off.

The turbines have to be shut down at certain times because Britain's electricity network is unable to cope with the power they produce. The wind farm owners then receive compensation - called 'constraint payments' - for not producing electricity.

The money is paid out by the National Grid but is ultimately charged to consumers and added on to electricity bills.

The scale of the constraint payments has ballooned in the past five years, according to the Renewable Energy Foundation (REF), which carried out the research.

According to the REF, constraint payments totaled a record £108 million in 2017, compared to less than £6 million in 2012. In the past five years, wind farm owners have been paid £367 million in constraint payments.

## Japan's Showa Shell sees Q1 crude refining down 5% y/y

Japan's Showa Shell Sekiyu KK said late last week that its group refineries would refine 5 percent less crude for the local market in January-March than the same time a year ago, in line with the outlook for domestic demand.

Showa Shell said its four group refineries would refine 7.35 million kilolitres (513,700 barrels per day) of crude in the first quarter of the year. They have a total capacity of 588,000 bpd. Refining volumes for export markets were not released.

The four group refineries are: Showa Shell's 255,000-bpd Yokkaichi plant, unit Toa Oil's 70,000-bpd Keihin plant, affiliate

Almost all the payments were made to wind farms in Scotland which has seen a rapid growth in the industry. While England has largely put a brake on onshore farms, the Scottish government has continued to encourage the wind industry.

Lee Moroney, REF's lead researcher, said: "It is an absolute scandal. They make more per megawatt hour [unit of electricity generated] when they are told to stop generating than when they are selling electricity to consumers."

REF research - based on official, publicly available data - shows that wind farms are currently being paid compensation of about £70 per megawatt hour (MWh) to switch off. In comparison they are typically paid £49 per MWh in a consumer subsidy when producing electricity. The subsidy was introduced to encourage a growth in renewable energy source and is added on to household electricity bills.

Whether supplying electricity or not, the wind farms also receive the wholesale price for the electricity they produce.

The REF pointed out that EDF Energy which owns Fallago Rig, a wind farm in Scotland, has lodged a plan to extend the wind farm even though it received one of the highest constraint payments last year.

The National Grid said the wind constraint payments were "the most economically efficient way of managing additional green capacity".

A spokesman said: "National Grid balances the country's supply and demand of electricity minute by minute, and it also transports electricity from where it is generated to where it is needed. As part of its role, it can sometimes ask generators to come on or off the grid to keep the system balanced - ensuring that there is energy across the UK whenever and wherever it is needed."

Emma Pinchbeck, RenewableUK's Executive Director, said: "Constraint payments have been the cheapest way for National Grid to run the electricity network within its current limits.

"Wind farms are compensated because being told to switch off means a significant loss of revenue from generating power, and causes wear and tear on the turbines."

(Source: The Telegraph)


Seibu Oil's 120,000-bpd Yamaguchi refinery and a 143,000-bpd Sodegaura refinery operated by Fuji Oil in which Showa Shell has a 6.6-percent stake.

There will be no group refinery maintenance during the three months, a Showa Shell spokeswoman said.


Idemitsu Kosan Co has completed the purchase of just under a third of Showa Shell, but its goals for full integration have been delayed indefinitely after opposition from Idemitsu's founding family.

(Source: Reuters)

**Second Announcement**



**N.I.O.C**  
**1396.4718**



**National Iranian Drilling Company**

**Public Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tender(First Publish/Seconed Publish)**

**One-Stage(compressed)**

TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	Subject of Tender	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
<b>6,563</b>	<b>284.000.000</b>	5,670,380,395	<b>P/F : SECURITY CORE BARREL</b>	3,147,308	TenderNo.:FP/04-96/064 <b>Indent No.:08-22-9645038</b>	<b>1</b>

**Brief discription of subject:**  
National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address pasdaran Blev., Airport Sqare, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements from qualified and interested tenderers through one-stage public tender (compressed) upon following terms and conditions:

A) Qualitative evaluation of tenderer:  
The evaluation is based on article ( J ) implementing regulations of the law of tenders and also carried out base on worksheets qualitative evaluation inquiry in the tender documents. Minimum acceptable point of quality is 60.

B) Preparation of tender documents:  
Purchasing of documents:  
In order to receive the tender documents, **510,000 Rials** should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.  
Receiving of documents:  
Tenderers must be obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum ten days after the date of second publication in person at the following address: Hall No.:113, 1thfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN  
Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recieve tender ducments from foreign procurement department in due date and participates in tenderwill be known as tenderer from tender committee.

C) Delivery of envelopes of bids and call quality evaluating:  
Tenderers shall submit simultaneously envelopes of bids including bank guarantees(A), financial offer(C) and stamped and signed of tender documents(B) along with qualificaion worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 40 days from last day of document recived deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN.  
Notice: The deadline for the refusal of bidders participation in the the tender is the last day of determined for submission of bids.

D) Tender Guarantee:  
**Type of guarantee:**  
A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activites licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.  
B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to National Iranain Drilling Company.  
Duration of credit guarantee & quotation:  
This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.  
More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. WWW.NIDC.IR  
**Foreign Procurement Dept**  
**National Iranian Drilling Company**

تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۶/۱۰/۱۹ نوبت دوم ۹۶/۱۰/۲۰



## Sudan is preparing its strategy for a conflict with its neighbors

By Khalil Charles

With the recall of Sudan's Ambassador from Egypt, the closure of the Eritrean Border and a recent visit by Turkey's President in which a Turkish takeover of a strategic island port fuelled uncertainty, it is safe to say that Sudan has moved closer than ever before to direct military conflict with its neighbors. The country now finds itself preparing its strategy to deal with major geopolitical issues facing the region.

The relative calm was arguably first disturbed by the Sudanese President's visit to Sochi on 23 November last year, where he met his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. Omar Al-Bashir's brief encounter set off a chain of reactions adding disquiet to the already tense atmosphere between his country and Egypt, and served to worry Sudan's neighbors across the Red Sea in Saudi Arabia.



President Erdogan shakes hands with Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir (R)

Many commentators were astonished by Al-Bashir's outburst in which he blamed the U.S. for Sudan's problems and for partitioning a once united country. His request to the Russians for protection "from the interventionist aggression of the United States" was viewed as a rather clumsy attempt to alter the dynamics of the geopolitical balance in the Nile Basin region.

Equally, the possibility of Russian naval vessels plying up and down the Red Sea also became a worry. Fortunately for the U.S. and Egypt, Russia's announcement that it was not in need of a military base in Sudan allowed opposing voices to heave huge sighs of relief.

However, the visit by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the decision to grant Turkey a 99-year lease on the former Ottoman port of Suakin Island — once a haven for Muslim pilgrims heading to Makkah — brought back memories of "foreign" occupation of the Nile Basin.

Even before Erdogan's two-day visit was over, the Egyptian media launched a scathing attack on Sudan. In Emad Adee's stinging opinion piece headlined "Omar Bashir's political suicide" the writer sensed a conspiracy and summarized Egypt's concern: "Sudan is violating the rules of history and geography and is conspiring against Egypt under the shadow of Turkish madness, an Ethiopian scheme to starve Egypt of water and Qatar's financing of efforts to undermine Egypt."

Iran and Qatar have not commented on all of this, but on the third day of Egypt's media frenzy Khartoum and Ankara issued separate statements firmly denying that Turkey was about to set up a military base on Suakin. The late denials only help to fuel the firmly held theory surrounding Turkey's high profile stance in the Muslim world, which claims that Erdogan is trying to re-establish the Ottoman Empire. An article published in the Huffington Post titled "Erdogan: The Sultan of an illusionary Ottoman Empire" claimed that the Turkish President is hell-bent on using Islam as a tool to "indoctrinate the public in a subliminal way to his perspective of the glorious Ottoman period."

To add fuel to the fire, media reports — described as "fake news" by Cairo, unsurprisingly — suggested that Egypt had attempted to cut Sudan out of the Nile water agreement by calling on Ethiopia to have direct talks. Ethiopia's decision to build the Grand Renaissance Dam on the Nile has rattled Cairo. Despite trilateral meetings and the signing of accords guaranteeing Egypt's water share, Cairo has sought to obtain firmer pledges from Ethiopia in the form of binding written agreements.

A few days ago, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates moved troops and heavy artillery into the Eritrean base of Sawa. The move has not only troubled Sudan but Ethiopia is also reported to have deployed military reinforcements on the border triangle with Eritrea. Over the weekend, Sudan first denied that thousands of its troops were amassing on the Eritrean border, but then the Governor of Kassala in east Sudan announced a complete shutdown of the border, with neither goods nor people being allowed to enter or leave the country.

It appears that Sudan, Ethiopia and opposition groups in both countries are preparing for the worst-case scenario of an Egyptian air strike on the Renaissance Dam. Such a move would be a disaster for the region, bringing chaos and retaliatory strikes, the first of which, according to sources in Sudan, would be an attack on Egypt's Aswan High Dam.

However, whilst the withdrawal of Sudan's Ambassador from Egypt was a sign of Sudan's displeasure, observers say that Khartoum is holding out for a de-escalation of tension, leaving room for the issues to be resolved through diplomatic means. The strongest illustration of that hope will be if Ambassador Abdel Mahmoud Abdel-Haleem gets on a flight to Cairo and normal diplomatic relations between the neighboring states are restored.

(Source: Middle East Monitor)

# We are seeing what happens when the U.S. pulls back: Germany's foreign minister

In an interview, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel urges Germany to pay greater attention to the future of the EU. He warns that there are no vacuums in international politics and that when the U.S. withdraws, Russia or China step in.

■ Mr. Gabriel, let's get the new year started with a couple of predictions. If you were to imagine a German foreign policy in 2028, what would it look like?

A: I hope that it will be part of a European foreign policy, because even the strong country of Germany won't really have a voice in the world if it is not part of a European voice.

■ What will the core issues of this European foreign policy be?

A: It is clear that we need a foreign policy in which we jointly define European interests. Thus far, we have often defined European values, but we have been much too weak in defining mutual interests. To preempt any possible misunderstandings: We cannot give short shrift to our values of freedom, democracy and human rights. On the contrary. But political scientist Herfried Münkler is right: If you only take normative positions, if your focus is solely on values, you won't find success in a world where others are relentlessly pursuing their interests. In a world full of meat-eaters, vegetarians have a tough time. DER SPIEGEL: This political toughness is something Germany still hasn't learned.

Gabriel: In the past, we could rely on the French, the British and, especially, the Americans, to assert our interests in the world. We have always criticized the U.S. for being the global police, and it was often appropriate to do so. But we are now seeing what happens when the U.S. pulls back. There is no such thing as a vacuum in international politics. If the U.S. leaves the room, other powers immediately walk in. In Syria, it's Russia. In trade policy, it's China. These examples show that, ultimately, we are no longer achieving either -- neither the dissemination of our European values nor the advancement of our interests.

■ Are you actually certain that the U.S. still feels bound to NATO's collective defense principles as outlined in Article 5 of the alliance treaty?

A: We are pleased that Donald Trump and the U.S. have affirmed Article 5, but we should not test that trust too much. At the same time, Europe could not defend itself without the U.S., even if European structures were strengthened.

■ How do you view Germany's role in the world today?

A: We are a place many dream about today in the way the U.S. was a place all those looking for freedom, prosperity and democracy dreamed about from the 18th to the 20th century.

■ Do you not also see Europe as being dysfunctional to a certain extent?

A: For years, we've been constantly hearing about a multi-speed Europe. It would be great if that were the case, because that would at least mean that we were all moving in the same direction, just at different speeds. The truth is that we have long had a multi-track Europe with very different objectives. The traditional differences between the north and the south in fiscal and economic policy are far less problematic than those that exist between Eastern and Western Europe. In the south and east, China is steadily gaining more influence, such that a few EU member states no longer dare to make decisions that run counter to Chinese interests. You see it everywhere: China is the only country in the world that has a real geopolitical strategy.

By Bill Press

Whatever you think of the Trump presidency, you must admit they'll have to rewrite the history books when it's over. We've had many kinds of presidents, but we've never had one like this before. We've never had a president so widely suspected of being mentally unstable, if not mentally ill.

Questions about Donald Trump's mental capacity dominate the Capitol. A leading psychiatrist tells congressional Democrats that Trump's mental health is "unraveling." Two dozen Democrats introduced legislation requiring that the president be examined and removed from office if deemed unfit by a commission of physicians and psychiatrists. Republican staffers bone up on the 25th Amendment, while CNN headlines: "Is It Wrong to Question Trump's Mental Fitness for Office?"

Obviously not. Trump's talking about it himself. When the drumbeat of doubt about his mental stability intensified after publication of Michael Wolff's tell-all book, Trump decided he could no longer depend on the experts. He asserted his own soundness of mind. "Actually, throughout my life," he tweeted, "my two greatest assets have been mental stability and being, like, really smart ... I think that would qualify as not smart, but genius...and a very stable genius at that!"

Now, I'm no psychiatrist, but when somebody feels compelled to tell you he's a genius, he's not one. And when somebody insists he's not crazy, that's a pretty good sign he is. Maybe not crazy as in "should be institutionalized," but certainly crazy in terms of ul-



German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel

■ The strategy of dividing Europe?

A: No, but one of increasing China's influence.

■ Let's get back to the conflict between values and interests, which leads us to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

A: I speak of honesty and perseverance. We have reduced our economic support of Turkey because of the arrests and human rights violations there.

■ Your Turkish counterpart Mevlüt Cavusoglu is hoping for quick improvement in German-Turkish relations. He calls you a "personal friend" and you also invited him to visit you at your home in Goslar. Is that not a bit much given that German-Turkish journalist Deniz Yücel, the Turkey correspondent for the German daily Die Welt, has been held in a Turkish jail without charge since February?

A: My Turkish colleague invited me to visit him a few weeks back. Much has happened in the time since -- a number of Germans have either been released from jail through decisions made by the Turkish judiciary or have been able to leave Turkey. And now I've invited him to visit me. The situation certainly won't get any better if we don't speak with each other -- neither for our countries or for the individuals who find themselves in jail. And the Yücel case, of course, is of paramount importance. We are now awaiting the charges against Yücel so that a response can finally be given. At least he's been taken out of solitary confinement. Here, too, the Turkish justice system has reacted to our requests.

■ It has been alleged that Turkey has also received military equipment from Germany.

A: Turkey is a NATO partner and a partner in the battle against ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) [terrorist group]. That's actually a reason not to have the kind of restrictions in place on defense exports that we have, for example, against some countries in the Middle East. Despite this, the German federal government has refrained from

authorizing a significant number of defense exports. That will remain the case for as long as the Yücel matter remains unresolved. But to get back to the tension between values and interests: The focus cannot just be on how German prisoners are doing right now in Turkey. We are interested more broadly in overall developments in Turkey. That doesn't just include the debate about democracy and human rights, but also very uncomfortable questions.

■ Which ones?

A: Turkey is currently seeking to make itself more independent from Europe and is turning to the east. Is that in our interest? Does it help us bolster Western values in Turkey, or at least here at home? Or are we making ourselves weaker overall? At the same time, Turkey is violating our European moral concepts. It's a difficult conflict to endure, and it leads to necessary disputes and debates. We need these debates -- the belief that we must only retreat to values to always be on the safe side is wrong. But what we do need is an open discussion of the issue. Constantly accusing each other of betraying values neither gets anyone out of jail nor does it strengthen us.

■ Chancellor Merkel has left Emmanuel Macron waiting for months now.

A: It is better to provide a good answer rather than the wrong one given by the FDP (Free Democratic Party). Macron's idea is that of a Europe that protects its citizens. That is underpinned by defense, the fight against terrorism, but also fair social standards and the battle against tax evasion by major corporations. It's a very good plan. I hope that we will have a clear decision on working together with France in the spring.

■ Which answer to Macron's proposals should the next government provide?

A: Madame Merkel knows very well that the CDU (Merkel's conservative Christian Democratic Union) and the CSU (the Bavarian sister party to the CDU, with which it

shares power nationally) must change their European policies. The FDP's nationalist-liberal position on Europe is presumably one of the reasons the attempt failed to form a Jamaica coalition government (which would have seen the CDU, FDP and Green Party govern together). I don't know if a coalition agreement with the Social Democrats (SPD) will be reached. But if it is, it will be the first such coalition agreement in which Europe is the focus. If you were to ask me, in retrospect, what we did wrong in the last grand coalition.

■ indeed an excellent question.

A: ... then I would say that we paid too little attention to Europe. We wrote a chapter in European history in which the Germany-centric economic views of (then German Finance Minister) Wolfgang Schäuble played too great a role. That was a mistake.

■ You have the opportunity to correct that.

A: We will see if the Christian Democrats want to join us in taking this step toward a new form of European cooperation. At the moment, the CSU is focused on other issues. Rather than investing in Europe, they want, in all seriousness, to double the defense budget. Right in line with Donald Trump. I am extremely certain that the SPD will not support such a thing.

■ But you yourself have said that Germany and Europe must command more respect militarily.

A: There is nothing wrong with a reasonable increase in defense spending. But doubling it? That would be more than 70 billion euros -- and that's per year! France, as a nuclear power, spends more than 40 billion euros. Do we truly believe that our European neighbors would be pleased to see an enormous central-European army arising in Germany in 10 years' time?

■ Are you suggesting that our European partners are afraid of a highly armed Germany?

A: The first French people have already asked me if we are really serious about it.

(Source: Spiegle)

## Is Trump mentally fit for office?



**The danger of a mentally unbalanced President Trump resides especially in the possibility he could single-handedly trigger a nuclear war.**

imate narcissism, pathological insecurity, insatiable need to be praised, inability to accept any criticism and intense hostility toward anyone who disagrees

with him. And definitely crazy enough not to be allowed to have his little fingers anywhere near the nuclear button.

What's surprising about this debate is how long it took Washington. Wolff is not the first to question the president's mental health. In their blockbuster book "The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump," published last October, 27 leading psychiatrists evaluate Trump's mental capacity and reach a universal and ominous conclusion: "Anyone as mentally unstable as this man simply should not be entrusted with the life-and-death powers of the presidency."

According to this distinguished group of physicians, the danger of a mentally unbalanced President Trump resides especially in the possibility he could single-handedly trigger a nuclear war. Although all military personnel responsible for relaying nuclear orders must by law undergo rigorous mental health evaluation before taking the job, they point out, there is no such requirement for the commander in chief. Now that's scary.

There is no more serious issue facing the nation today than the possibility, if not likelihood, that we have in the White House a man who is mentally unfit for the job. It's now painfully clear that, for a whole year, we've been chasing the wrong rabbit. We've been obsessed with figuring out how Trump won the White House. Did he cheat? Did the Russians do it? Did Hillary blow it?

That's the wrong question. It's time to stop asking how we got stuck with Donald Trump and start asking how we can, constitutionally, get rid of him.

(Source: The Hill)



# Trump is not champion of democracy: Taliaferro

## EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

By Javad Heirannia

**TEHRAN** — Charles Taliaferro, a professor of philosophy at St. Olaf College, says “Trump might be considered as heading up a democratic element in the USA, but his relentless attack on the free press, his attempts to have his rivals put in jail, his deportation of innocent young people who were brought to the USA illegally but as children, his sticking down of protections from pollution, his withdrawal from the Paris accord -which is widely supported by most, educated Americans, his defending neo-Nazi groups as no worse than left wing protestors, and more, make him out to not be a champion of democracy.”

In an interview with the Tehran Times, the professor also says “We are in a period that is dangerously close to the McCarthy era which poisoned much of the democratic culture in the first part of the Cold War.”

### Following is the text of the interview:

■ In 2014, you wrote “Political Order and Political Decay” to modify his earlier position. In regard with the US’s presidential elections and the rise of Clinton and Bush families in the political scene of the country, you believe that the US is experiencing the decay of a political system which made people feel so disappointed in American democracy. Could you please explain more about this?

A: Yes. Many of us in the United States are still shocked about the election of Donald Trump. He lost the popular vote by a wide margin, but won in the Electoral College



which distributes votes among a body of representatives from different states, in order to balance the popular vote which might otherwise give too much power to highly populated states like New York and California, overshadowing Wyoming and other less populated regions. Trump ran against what he considered the establishment. He might be considered as heading up a democratic element in the USA, but his relentless attack on the free press, his attempts to have his rivals put in jail, his deportation of innocent young people who were brought to the USA illegally but as children, his sticking down of protections from pollution, his withdrawal from the Paris accord -which is widely supported by most,

educated Americans, his defending neo-Nazi groups as no worse than left wing protestors, and more, make him out to not be a champion of democracy. Interestingly, he seems to have more admiration of rulers like Putin than democratically elected heads of government, as with Great Britain and Germany. I do not think Trump would have succeeded unless there was a wide perception among his base supporters that the USA was in a state of decay that Trump would reverse, making America great again. But as a matter of record, he has made America less democratic, collaborative, and tolerant of differences.

■ The Competition between the Northeastern elites and the Sothern populists led into the rise of Trump indicating that establishment slogans from both democratic and republican parties don’t sell anymore. In regard with your argument, shall we think of such developments as a sign of the U.S. political decay?

A: I think so, but it is a peculiar kind of decay. The stock market is at an all time high, unemployment is down, military spending is escalating, and so this is not the decay of a nation that is falling apart. But the democratic culture of collaboration, free and open dialogue, and reasonable exchanges of arguments is deeply threatened. We do not have much right now invested in trusting one another across party lines. The existence of intensely right wing news sources like Fox News and right wing radio has done much to entrench public discourse into mutual accusations of lying or conspiracy. We are in a period that is dangerously close to the McCarthy era which poisoned much of the democratic culture in the first part of the Cold War.

## Iran protests: A perfect time to know friends and enemies



**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Just like U.S. President Donald Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has backed the anti-government protesters in Iran in a video posted on his Facebook page. He has denied accusations that Israel is behind the illegal demonstrations as well.

Little wonder Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says enemies have been using various tools to deal blows to the Iranian nation and the Islamic establishment in the course of the latest developments in the country. In his words, “During the events of the past several days, Iran’s enemies, using the various tools at their disposal, including money, weapons, politics, and security apparatus, have allied [with one another] to create problems for the Islamic establishment.”

Likewise, President Hassan Rouhani has also blamed Iran’s arch enemies, the United States and Israel, for provoking the ongoing unrest. In his words, “Our success in the political arena against the United States and the Zionist regime was unbearable to (Iran’s enemies). Iran’s success in the region was unbearable to them. Don’t you expect that they would seek revenge? Don’t you think they would provoke some people?”

This is in no way an attempt to dismiss the legitimate demands of some protesters who want nothing but a better life for themselves and their beloved families. This is for a handful of those who are still under the illusion that the United States, the regime that used terror proxies to destroy Iraq and Syria on the pretext of freedom and democracy and bans Iranians from travelling to the United States, means well:

- It should come as no surprise to anyone that the economic protests have now become riots. Some of the protesters have raised the stakes with attacks of their own against police stations, banks and even religious centres, with reports of some posts and stations being set ablaze. So they are not on the streets for democracy; rather, they are there to destroy public and private property and undermine national security – something the United States and Israel have been desperate to see in Iran since the 1979 revolution.

- Those who have politicized the economic protests, and have even attempted to force their way into military facilities in the country, are in no way involved in peaceful demonstrations. These foreign-backed agents seek to take up arms and pave the way for presence of U.S.-backed terrorist groups in the country. In other words, they seek to repeat the same American-Israeli regime-change scenarios that were once unfolded in Iraq and Syria.

- Hundreds have been reported arrested nationwide as the government tries to keep a lid on the protests, but is struggling to avoid making things worse. That’s why a major part of the detainees have been released. A committee is working on the case of each detainee to release anyone who has played no major role in damaging public properties and armed attacks. The government has no intention to restore order quickly and forcefully, because this is a democracy in which people have the right to protest. However, that right will only be respected if it doesn’t turn into violence. Sadly, the latter has happened and the government has no other option but to react accordingly. After all, scores have been killed, including several policemen and the deadly skirmishes have to stop somewhere.

- This is a foreign plot, pure and simple. The protests are in no way representative and won’t be enduring. No doubt about it. However, that does in no way mean the government now has the right to double down on the crackdown. Some people have unmet rising expectations, such as high unemployment and rising costs, and the government needs to step back from some of its core economic policies. The government promised to fix the economy only after it could sign the nuclear deal with the West. But after that “historic deal” nothing happened as the U.S. refused to lift the ongoing sanctions regime against Iran. This means, the protesters should direct part of their anger and discontent toward the United States – the same regime that claims to be sympathizing with them!

- Trump simply lacks any potential to bring a change to developments in Iran. The key thing that U.S. politicians and policymakers need to keep in mind is that internal protests in Iran are not about Washington, and they are not an “opportunity” for them to exploit. With what it has done so far to the Iranian nation through its economic war and now media war, Washington is way off the line to presume that it can still attempt to insert itself into the situation or interfere as an honest “sympathizer.”

- The Trump regime has no credibility with even the pro-U.S. Iranians. It cannot ban Iranians from the U.S. at the start of the year, and then suddenly pretend that it respects them and supports their aspirations at the end. It’s also preposterous if the Trump regime concludes that the U.S. needs to “make up” for Obama’s handling of the 2009 post-election protests. Obama did his best to make use of the situation, and used the unrests for justifying sanctions, but even he was in the know that no one can topple the Islamic establishment in Iran.

As the events unfold, it becomes slowly clear who Iran’s enemies and friends really are. The United States, the Zionist regime and Saudi Arabia once again proved beyond any doubt that they are not Iran’s friends. Far from it, they live in a hostile world and only want to see self-destruction in Iran. Remember, those who vandalize public and private property and make life miserable for others, they are only fighting a losing battle with themselves. They may think they are practising benevolence and righteousness, but in effect they are only creating a kind of artificiality.

If the protesters honestly ask themselves which government, which establishment in their lives mean the most to them, they will find that it is those who, instead of instigating violence, have chosen rather to share their pain and touch their wounds with a warm and tender hand. These are difficult times and this particular region is a lonely and hostile place – just like the sea. It is best not to make enemies of those who are your true friends. You never know when your ships may cross.

## Why Trump is angry from Bannon?

By Saeed Sobhani

**TEHRAN** — The conflict between the president of the United States and his former advisor has entered a new phase. Although Steve Bannon has apologized for his remarks about the son of Trump, but this apology seems to have been influenced by other factors: factors like Bannon’s attempt to return to power!

As CNN reported, Former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon said Sunday he regretted not responding sooner to comments attributed to him that were critical of Donald Trump Jr. in an explosive new book on the White House.

“Donald Trump, Jr. is both a patriot and a good man,” read Bannon’s statement, which CNN obtained Sunday from a source close to Bannon. “He has been relentless in his advocacy for his father and the agenda that has helped turn our country around.”

The statement later adds: “I regret that my delay in responding to the inaccurate reporting regarding Don Jr has diverted attention from the president’s historical accomplishments in the first year of (Trump’s) presidency.”

Bannon’s statement comes as the President has called on friends and allies to choose between him and Bannon, a source told CNN. It also comes amid an effort to oust Bannon from his position as executive chairman at the conservative news site Breitbart because of his remarks in the book, a person familiar with the matter told CNN.

White House deputy press secretary Hogan Gidley echoed those sentiments aboard Air Force One on Monday, telling reporters that Bannon’s attacks on Trump’s family members were “repugnant” and “grotesque.”

“I don’t believe there’s any way back for Mr. Bannon at this point,” Gidley said when asked to react to Bannon’s statement.



In the book, “Fire and Fury,” author Michael Wolff quotes Bannon as saying the 2016 Trump Tower meeting between Trump campaign officials, including Trump Jr. and former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort, and a Russian lawyer purportedly offering damaging information about Hillary Clinton was “treasonous.” The book also attributes statements to him denigrating the President. CNN has not independently verified all the assertions in Wolff’s book.

Bannon said his comments about the Trump Tower meeting were not aimed at Trump Jr., but rather Manafort, “a seasoned campaign professional with experience and knowledge of how the Russians operate. He should have known they are duplicitous, cunning and not our friends.”

Following the publication of Bannon’s quotes in the book, which went on sale Friday, Trump has called friends and allies to make clear they must choose between him and his estranged former adviser, a source familiar with the calls told CNN. Axios previously

reported the calls.

Trump continued to fume privately about Bannon over the weekend despite Sunday’s statement, a source inside the White House told CNN, adding that Trump viewed Bannon’s semi-apology as “too little and too late.”

Trump has also taken to Twitter to attack Bannon, labeling him “Sloppy Steve,” and said in a statement released by White House last Wednesday that Bannon had “lost his mind.”

On his Sirius XM radio show later the same day, Bannon praised Trump and called him “a great man” – a comment Trump touted the following morning.

“He called me a great man last night, so he obviously changed his tune pretty quick,” Trump said.

The White House has attacked Wolff as well, and an attorney for Trump sent a “cease and desist” letter to him and the book’s publisher. The attorney, Charles Harder, also said he sent a cease-and-desist letter to Bannon warning of potential legal action.

After leaving the White House, Bannon

returned to his previous position as executive chairman of the right-wing website Breitbart, where he has boosted Trump and select conservatives. But his future there has come into question in the wake of Wolff’s book. There has been a “hard push” to convince Breitbart CEO Larry Solov and Susie Breitbart, the widow of website founder Andrew Breitbart, to fire Bannon, a person familiar with the matter told CNN.

Billionaire conservative donor Rebekah Mercer, who owns a stake in Breitbart, publicly rebuked Bannon and said they had not spoken “in many months.”

Although Bannon’s statement Sunday said his comments in the book were “not aimed at Don Jr.,” a quote attributed to Bannon in the book predicted, “They’re going to crack Don Junior like an egg on national TV.”

Bannon also said in the statement that he continued to believe special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation into potential coordination between Trump’s associates and Russia to influence the 2016 election is “ridiculous” in nature and “a witch hunt.”

In the book, Bannon is quoted as calling the Trump Tower meeting in June of 2016 “treasonous” and saying it should have been reported to the FBI. “The three senior guys in the campaign thought it was a good idea to meet with a foreign government inside Trump Tower in the conference room on the 25th floor -- with no lawyers. They didn’t have any lawyers,” Bannon said in the book. “Even if you thought that this was not treasonous, or unpatriotic, or bad s\*\*\*, and I happen to think it’s all of that, you should have called the FBI immediately.”

In any case, Steve Bannon appears to be a controversial figure in American political equations over the coming months, although his recent remarks showed that he did not intend to engage seriously in the conflict.

## Fierce U.S.-China trade war in 2018: analyst

**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — A senior political expert said 2018 could witness a full-blown trade war between the U.S. and China, saying such an encounter between the two big economies could disrupt the global trading system and damage many economies relying upon the U.S. and Chinese markets.

In an interview with Tasnim, Sourabh Gupta, a senior specialist in Asia-Pacific international relations policy, explicated the process China is going through to overtake the U.S. in economic nominal terms and dominate the global economy sooner than expected.

He also predicted severe trade rivalries and tensions between Washington and Beijing in 2018, saying that any U.S. punitive measure against China would not go unanswered.

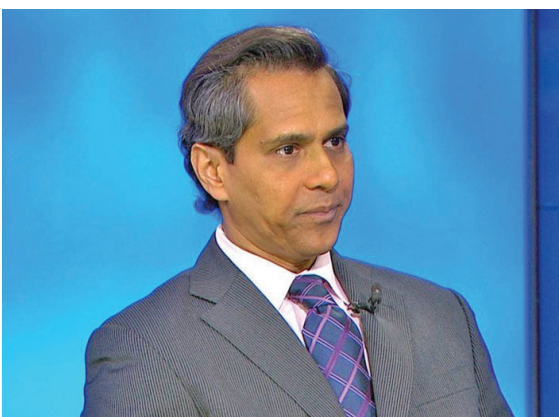
Mr. Gupta is a senior fellow at the Institute for China-America Studies (ICAS), a Washington, DC-based think tank, and has considerable experience in political risk research and advisory capacity.

He is also a member of the United States Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (USCSCAP) and was a 2012 East Asia Forum Distinguished Fellow. Prior to joining ICAS, he was a Senior Research Associate at Samuels International Associates, Inc, a diversified international consulting firm specializing in government relations, business, and trade and investment matters.

The following is the full text of his interview with Tasnim: ■ There are predictions that China’s share of global gross domestic product (GDP) will outnumber that of the U.S. in 2018, meaning that China’s economy will become the most significant in world. Is China really going to overtake the U.S. in the new year and become the world’s top economic power?

A: China’s share of global gross domestic product already outnumbers that of the U.S., as per the purchasing power parity (PPP) methodology that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) employ.

As per GDP measured at current market prices however, the U.S. economy is still a third larger than China’s. The important point to take away in this comparative context though is that most commentators had expressed the view at the turn of the century that China would surpass the U.S. in PPP terms around 2020. And that it would surpass the U.S. at nominal prices in the early 2030s. In fact, China overtook the U.S. in PPP terms by 2015 and will overtake the U.S. in nominal terms by the mid-to-latter part of the 2020s. The China-dominated future is arriving faster than



was anticipated!

■ In the recently released National Security Strategy of the U.S., Donald Trump has voiced concern about China’s growing influence in the world. “China is gaining a strategic foothold in Europe by expanding its unfair trade practices and investing in key industries, sensitive technologies, and infrastructure,” the document says, blaming China for “stealing U.S. intellectual property valued at hundreds of billions of dollars.” What reasons do you see behind such harsh U.S. attitude towards China for the forthcoming year?

A: President Donald Trump’s harshly-worded concern about China’s growing international influence and domestic economic practices is not a surprise. Candidate Trump had campaigned on an unabashedly anti-trade platform, with China listed as a key economic violator and three of seven points of the centerpiece of his economic plan to rebuild the American economy and “Make America Great Again” were in fact outright protectionist initiatives that were aimed at China. During his first year in office, he gave his mainstream economic advisors and cabinet officials, such as Gary Cohn and Steven Mnuchin, the benefit of doubt with regard to managing China policy and reducing the huge trade imbalance between the two countries. With little progress to show on this trade deficit reduction front as well as in terms of prizing the huge Chinese market open to accelerated U.S. exports, President Trump has effectively pivoted towards his more hardline and nationalist advisers, such as USTR

Robert Lighthizer and Peter Navarro. Their punitive and protectionist-minded views, which aim to unilaterally punish China for its alleged economic aggression and IPR theft, is now effectively becoming the Trump Administration’s policy. Lighthizer in fact had an outsize role during the drafting of the National Security Strategy (NSS) document, which is unusual because USTR’s typically have a marginal say in a document that is primarily confined to geo-strategic and security considerations. Besides, these unilateralist views instinctively accord with Trump’s own philosophy about Asia’s supposedly mercantilist practices and the harmful role of trade deficits.

■ Some believe that the U.S. has succeeded in maintaining an appropriate balance between free markets and government control, enabling its economy to grow steadily and remain at top of the world. Do you believe that China has the necessary infrastructures and long-term plan to compete with the other powers and secure its place as the world’s largest economy?

A: Yes, China has the necessary infrastructure and long-term planning capability to break through the ranks of middle-income countries and become an advanced modern economy – just like Japan, South Korea and Taiwan did. Of course, China faces a significant challenge in the years ahead as it transitions from its investment-led model to a more services and consumption-led growth model. None of its East Asian predecessors was able to make this transition smoothly, which was a function of the inherent investment and manufacturing-led bias of the East Asian growth model. Each of these countries (Japan, South Korea and Taiwan) has had difficulty with the issue of managing deficient aggregate demand and China too will face this challenge and could see a sharp decline in its growth rate if it fails to liberalize appropriately.

Having been said, there are still powerful growth motors embodied within the Chinese economy. Although China no longer enjoys a young demographic profile (it has aged), it has only reached the mid-way stage, or a bit beyond, in terms of its transition from a rural to an urban economy and from being a control economy to a pro-market one. These latter two transitions embody great economic potential and possibilities and, harnessed well, could continue to enable China to grow at a rate of 5 percent or higher for the next two decades.



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# Four characteristics of the concept of ‘Return to the self’ in Shia Islam: experts

The aberration of the concept of ‘Return to the Self’ in Salafism

In Shia thought, rationality is shaped by religion

Exclusive Interview  
By Yousef Seifi & Somaye Rezaei

1 →

They are inspired by the history of the idea of recovering the ideal ‘self’ in Islamic thought; however, they have exploited this idea to their personal advantage.

Seyyed Javad Miri, is a professor at The Humanities and Cultural studies Research Center who works on the idea of ‘return to the self’ in Islamic thought. He stated that this idea has been shaped contemporaneously with, and influenced by the colonial era and influenced by a sense of identity crisis in Islamic societies. As Seyyed Fakhorddin Shademan has mentioned, the alienation was the result of the Muslim subject being subjugated by the western civilization; a subjugation by the western Other that resulted in Us losing ourselves. In other words, the Muslim world was subjugated by its Other and we lost our own subjectivity and became the object for the West, a cultural subject. He added that under these circumstances the Islamic thought was confronted with such questions as “who we really are?” And consequent attempts to answer these question ensued in searching for the ‘the self’ – as Muhammad Iqbal explained. The reformist movement started with Al-Afghani and the idea of ‘return to the self’ gained momentum in this line of thought. The ‘self’ and the ‘return to the self’ are ideas discussed not only by Iqbal and Shariati, but also by thinkers such as Malik-ibn-Nabi and Hussain Alatas.

Discussing genuine theoretical backgrounds for the concept of ‘return to the self’, Miri stated that there is a movement, among others, that tries to westernize all Islamic societies, that wants Islamic societies abandon their identity and embrace modernization. There is another line of thought that wants to ignore modernity and stay isolated, or wants to reverse what we have now to a previous state. However, what prepared the ground for the ‘return to the self,’ is the third way that wants to interact with tradition and modernity and recover the contemporary Muslim ‘self’ in relation to tradition and modernity.

He added that return to ‘the self’ with a revivalist approach is a reminder of human ambition to travel in time. Time is one of the elements that humans have never been able to rule over and has been among the long-desired human wishes. Rashid Reza and other Salafist thinkers’ interpretation of the concept of ‘return to the self’ is a reductionist one. In this sense, ‘return to the self’ is a return to a past life-style. Instead of having an active encounter with the western civilization and trying to impose our life-style on it; they ignore all the progress and want to return to a previous era.

This member of The Humanities and Cultural Studies Research Center maintained that revivalist interpretation of the concept of ‘return to the self’ is an aberration and added that return to the self has never been a call to go back to the past, nor an invitation to retreat. ‘Return to the self’, is in fact recovering and exploring ‘the self’ in relation to tradition and modernity. What Iqbal meant by ‘return to the self’ was in fact revitalizing religious thought in modern times and not an invitation for going back to the past. The Salafist thought abandons ‘the self’ that must be revived for the contemporary world; therefore, in this line of thought, the ‘return to the self’ project is nipped in the bud. It is because, ‘the self’ that the Salafists are talking about is not a contemporary self, but a 1400-year-old self

## ■ Obstruction of rationality in Salafism

Seyyed Javad Miri added that the main issue that results in the deviation of the concept of ‘return to the self’ in Salafist thought is the relationship that this line of thought established between the competency of human mind and using the Islamic reference texts (naghl). In Islamic religious terminology, there are two prophets: internal and external. The discussion on the role that rationality can play in relation to reference texts or naghl has experienced extreme ebb and flows and have been through different stages. These changes became so extreme in the Sunni Islam that resulted in the cessation of Ijtihad (a jurist’s (faghih’s) independent reasoning). In a sense, the Sunni jurists can only refer to their quadruple Imams and search for the rules based on their works. However, on a more significant note, it closes the door to mo’aserat. Mo’aserat means that one considers contemporaneity and identifies contemporary trends as legitimate.

Miri pointed out that throughout the history, among different Muslim sects, rationality has paled in comparison to other quadruple sources of Islamic thought including the book (Quran), tradition, Ijma (consensus among jurists) and rationality. Although among the Shia, rationality was still acknowledged. However, it was a rationality justified within naghl. In other words, even in Shia Islam, rationality is not an independent source and it is used as a tool for Ijtihad. It should also be noted that neither Sunnis, nor Shia consider naghl as having divine or revelatory origin.

He continued to say that in fact, Quran is one part of naghl and naghl, itself has a cultural history. Naghl emerged among the Bedouin Arabs and it was practiced during the short periods of prophet’s and Imam Ali’s rule in early years of Islam; however, later during the long Umayyad Caliphate it was established as the foremost source in Islamic thought. I have said before that naghl in Islamic thought is more cultural than divine or based on revelation; one can even claim that it is an Umayyad product and it has an Arabic hue. We have inherited such a naghl.

## ■ Anti-Intellectualism for ‘Return to the Self’

The writer of the book Cultural Iran: Iran’s Opportunities and Challenges in Tatarestan (The Arab World) mentioned an intellectual tradition within the Sunni and Shia Islam that has gained a historical identity. This tradition has tried to ignore rationality as a source of knowledge. He added that the tendency to use reason among the Middle Ages scholars was based on the influence of Shia thought.

Miri pointed out that a contesting tradition was the existing philosophical tradition throughout the Islamic history; a philosophical line that was exclusive to cultural Iran and influenced by Shia rationalism. He clarified that when one



Seyyed Javad Miri



Qassim Pour Hasan

talks about being Shia in this context, one is not referring to Shia Sharia. For instance, Al-Biruni had a teacher called Abdol-Samad Hakim who was executed as he was found guilty of being a Shia Muslim. Al-Biruni was also accused of being a Shia. However, I do not think that Al-Biruni followed Shia jurisprudence. At that time, whenever someone had rationalist tendencies and made use of rationality in his religious beliefs, he was called Shia. In this sense, Al-Biruni’s idea in particular and the philosophical tradition in Islamic history in general, have Shia roots. This prevailed as far as the Safavid Dynasty.

Seyyed Javad Miri went on to say that in contemporary Islamic thought, the sects that have more affinities with rationalism and independent reasoning are located further from revivalism and fundamentalism – whether they are Shia or Sunni. This intellectual movement gives a more genuine account of the self.

He concluded that there have sometimes been convergences between Shia rationality and Sunni rationality. For instance, the Sunni Scholar, Hamid Abuzeid believes that we must reconstruct Shia or Mu’tazila rationalism. The same idea can be traced in Shahid Motahhari’s thought that regrets Mu’tazila’s disappearance. It seems that there is a growing tendency among the Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims to use reason in understanding religion; a rationality similar to the one that Al-Farabi talks about it. This kind of rationality gradually degraded in Sunni and Islam after Al-Farabi; when it was metamorphosed into Salafist response to modernity.

## ■ Different ‘Selves’ that ‘Really’ exist

Ghasem Pour Hasan, a professor of the Department of Philosophy at the Allameh Tabataba’i University said that there are different views on ‘the self’ in the Islamic thought. Salafist and fundamentalist interpretations stem from the Sunni Islam; meanwhile, the traditional rationalism in Shia



Islam prevents from emergence of Salafists tendencies.

Pour Hasan pointed out that a correct understanding of the concept of return to the self requires a look at the different renditions of this concept throughout the history of the Islamic thought and examining the modern interpretations in the contemporary era. As an idea, ‘return to the self’, have been used by Muslim scholars in five different meanings. Historically, it can be traced back to the ideas of theologians such as Al-Ghazali, who posed this idea against Greek rationality; which is different from what for instance, Iqbal ascribes as ‘the self’. In Al-Ghazali’s time, ‘return to the self’ implied a cleansing of the heresies brought on by the rationalist and philosophical traditions of the fifth and sixth century and a return to the early Islamic era or the original Islam.

Pour Hasan stated that the first phase of “return to the self” was concurrent with the dominance of Ash’ari theology. He pointed out that the second phase began with Ibn Taymiyyah, which was distinct from the first phase. During the Ibn Taymiyyah’s time, the main discussion was around anti-rationality and an opposition to rational arguments. Although, some like Al-Ghazali supported logic and used it to prove their ideas. Back then, ‘return to the self’ found a Salafist form and was a summons to anti-intellectualism. The third meaning of ‘return to the self’ is synonymous with what Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab said. He wanted to remove the manifestations of polytheism from the Islamic beliefs, a wish more important to him even compared to his Salafist concerns. What Wahhabism implies by ‘return to the self’ is a return to monotheism; not a return to the era of Salaf-e Salih (the good past). Abd al-Wahhab followed this line in his book, The Book of the One-

ness of God, however, he started to believe in a form of determinism and became concerned with the extreme forms of monotheism and polytheism.

Pour Hasan, as a philosophy professor believes that the idea of ‘return to the self’ is the most important groundwork for the development of the fundamentalist thought. Fundamentalist sects consider art and artistic work polytheistic and as a result, for instance, ISIS, has shown a destructive approach to historical monuments and artworks.

In Pour Hasan’s opinion, the fourth meaning of ‘return to the self’ is the popular perception among the Shia thinkers who did not believe in Salaf-e Salih. He elaborated that such a movement is associated with Al-Afghani in the Islamic World. In this movement, a short period in the Islamic era known as the Golden Age of Islamic Thought is proposed as an antithesis to Salafism. This Golden Age refers to the time span during which scholars like Avicenna and Al-Farabi disseminated rationalist ideas; the first ‘return to the self’ phase was in fact a reaction to them.

He also mentioned a fifth meaning that can be found in Tabataba’i and Motahhari’s ideas, which is, in fact, a summons to return to Quran. In this sense of return to the self, our contemporary lives have distanced it the self from Quran to such an extent that the escape route is a return to Quranic teachings. This approach values rational awakening.

## ■ Shia rationality against Akhbarism

Pour Hasan, the writer of Comparative Hermeneutics: A Study of the Similarities in Islamic and Western Philosophies of Interpretation, mentioned that there is considerable difference between the ‘the self’ in Sunni Islam and Shia Islam. He said that in Shia Islam’s ‘return to the self,’ Akhbarism [which reject the use of reasoning in deriving verdicts, and believed Quran and hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad and Twelve Shia Imams) as the only source of law] is considered a aberration which leads to an aborted project of recovering ‘the self.’ What is called Salafism and Akhbarism in Shia Islam, is in fact traditionalism; it is not an endeavor to return to a certain era in the past. ‘The return’ proposed by the Shia is supposedly an intellectual one. This means that Shia Islam acknowledges the modernity, however, it wants to embed Islamic inheritance (ideas) in this era and tries to modernize the Islamic ideas. Traditionalists like Hosein Nasr have emphasized on this point. The Shia Islam contemplates a way out of this present state of decadence, however, it does not negate the contemporary world; it tries to find a solution for the degeneration of the era.

## ■ The four characteristics of the concept of ‘Return to The self’ in Shia thought

Pour Hasan finds four excellent characteristics in Shia thought in regards to the concept of ‘return to the self’:

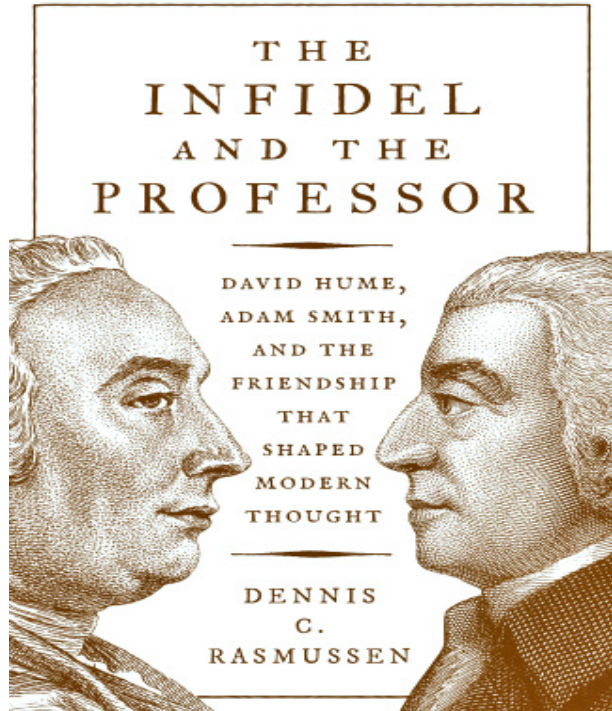
1. ‘Return to the self’ in Shia thought is related to proposing a discussion of the Golden Age of Islam or the era that philosophical thought was prospering. This Golden Age in the Sunni thought refers to the early Islamic era and Salaf-e Salih (the good past).
2. The revivalist Shia thought is a revolutionary one and wants to change the existing conditions. This revolutionary thought does not exist in the Sunni Islam. As Tabataba’i pointed out, in the early Islamic era and the prophet’s time, there was no intellectual improvements; in fact, the Islamic thought was immature and trivial. In other words, Shia thought is a critique of the Salafist thought.
3. Shia Islam’s concept of ‘return to the self’ is rationalist. The Shia scholars’ criterion for recovering ‘the self’ is reasoning and wisdom. Meanwhile, in Sunni thought the main role belongs to fideism.
4. The Shia concept of ‘return to the self’ does not prescribe revivalism; it wants to recover past traditions in accordance to the contemporary world. It wants to find its ‘self’ now by rereading Tarath and Badaye’a. In contrast, traditional Salafism demands a rupture from contemporary era and modernity.

In the end, Pourhasan pointed out that rationality in Shia thought is not synonymous with Greek rationality and autonomous reason. It is a rationality shaped by religion and within Islam. The anti-intellectualism of Akhbarism and Salafism target Greek rationality. Pour Hasan maintained that Shia rationality is a religious one; it is not autonomous and independent. This type of rationality that is used by the dynamic Shia jurisprudence has prevented from the development of Salafist and fundamentalist tendencies in Shia scholars.

## Infidel and Professor: David Hume, Adam Smith, and friendship that shaped modern thought

By Dennis C. Rasmussen

The story of the greatest of all philosophical friendships--and how it influenced modern thought.



David Hume is widely regarded as the most important philosopher ever to write in English, but during his lifetime he was attacked as “the Great Infidel” for his skeptical religious views and deemed unfit to teach the young. In contrast, Adam Smith was a revered professor of moral philosophy, and is now often hailed as the founding father of capitalism. Remarkably, the two were best friends for most of their adult lives, sharing what Dennis Rasmussen calls the greatest of all philosophical friendships. The Infidel and the Professor is the first book to tell the fascinating story of the friendship of these towering Enlightenment thinkers--and how it influenced their world-changing ideas.

The book follows Hume and Smith’s relationship from their first meeting in 1749 until Hume’s death in 1776. It describes how they commented on each other’s writings, supported each other’s careers and literary ambitions, and advised each other on personal matters, most notably after Hume’s quarrel with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Members of a vibrant intellectual scene in Enlightenment Scotland, Hume and Smith made many of the same friends (and enemies), joined the same clubs, and were interested in many of the same subjects well beyond philosophy and economics--from psychology and history to politics and Britain’s conflict with the American colonies. The book reveals that Smith’s private religious views were considerably closer to Hume’s public ones than is usually believed. It also shows that Hume contributed more to economics--and Smith contributed more to philosophy--than is generally recognized.

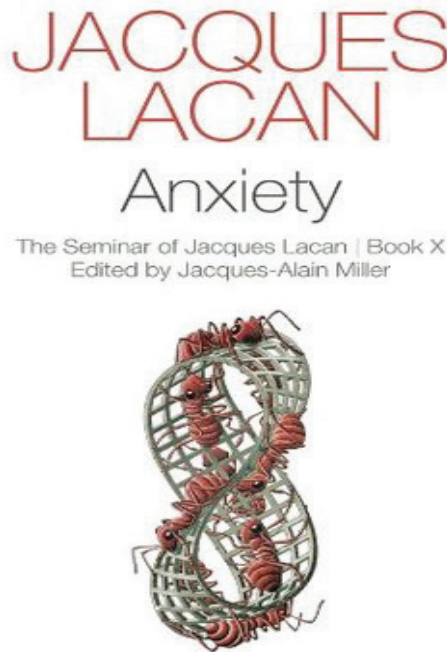
Vividly written, The Infidel and the Professor is a compelling account of a great friendship that had great consequences for modern thought.

## Anxiety - The Seminar of Jacques Lacan

By Jacques Lacan

Jacques Lacan is widely recognized as a key figure in the history of psychoanalysis and one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th Century. In Anxiety, now available for the first time in English, he explores the nature of anxiety, suggesting that it is not nostalgia for the object that causes anxiety but rather its imminence.

In what was to be the last of his year-long seminars at Saint-



Anne hospital, Lacan’s 1962-63 lessons form the keystone to this classic phase of his teaching. Here we meet for the first time the notorious a in its oral, anal, scopic and vociferated guises, alongside Lacan’s exploration of the question of the ‘analyst’s desire’. Arriving at these concepts from a multitude of angles, Lacan leads his audience with great care through a range of recurring themes such as anxiety between jouissance and desire, counter-transference and interpretation, and the fantasy and its frame.

This important volume, which forms Book X of The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, will be of great interest to students and practitioners of psychoanalysis and to students and scholars throughout the humanities and social sciences, from literature and critical theory to sociology, psychology and gender studies.



## 10 hot titles of IT world

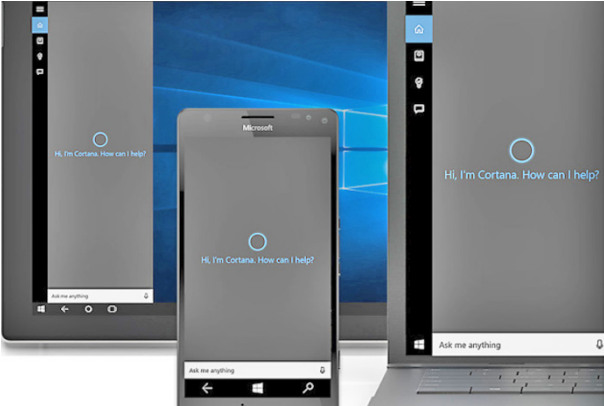
By Alireza Khorasani

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

- 1 Ericsson to power Dallas smart city traffic solutions.  
Ericsson will provide its Connected Urban Transport solution for the City of Dallas' Advanced Traffic Management System to monitor, manage, and maintain systems and performance and share data.
- 2 Apple releases iOS 11.2.2 for iPhone and iPad.  
Apple patches Spectre vulnerability in Safari. The patch is to fix the Spectre vulnerability that came to light earlier this month.
- 3 South Korea probes local banks over virtual currency.  
South Korea's Financial Services Commission and the Financial Supervisory Service will inspect six local banks offering virtual currency accounts.
- 4 French prosecutors probe Apple over iPhone slowdowns.  
Prosecutors in France have opened an investigation into Apple, after the tech giant deliberately slowed down some ageing iPhone models via software updates.
- 5 Samsung Electronics expects annual profit to almost double.  
Samsung Electronics has posted 15.1 trillion won in operating profits for the fourth quarter of 2017, its highest ever for a quarter, marking a total of an all-time high 53.6 trillion won profit for last year.
- 6 China shuttered 128,000 sites during 2017 internet crackdown.  
China has been tightening controls over internet content and last year shut down 128,000 so-called harmful websites.
- 7 Apple will add more iPhone parental controls to combat child addiction.  
The company responds quickly to an open letter from two major shareholders.
- 8 While SpaceX successfully relanded the most recent Falcon 9 it launched -- Elon Musk even tweeted about it -- its top secret payload apparently met a different fate. According to The Wall Street Journal, Zuma failed to make it to orbit, and authorities believe it has plummeted back into the atmosphere. No government agency stepped forward to claim the satellite, but industry experts estimate its cost to be billions of dollars.
- 9 Hyperloop Transportation Technologies has signed a deal to codevelop the future of transit with South Korea. The partnership will see the company working with both the local government, its institute of civil engineering, and Hanyang University. The group will research all aspects of Hyperloop technology, from the tubes themselves through to developing safety regulations determining its use.
- 10 Google takes on Echo Show with four new smart displays.  
Google Assistant-enabled touchscreens unveiled at CES are made for your kitchen countertop and will compete against Amazon's Echo Show.

## Welcome to CES 2018 also known as Microsoft Cortana's funeral

If Microsoft's Cortana can't win on a Windows PC where can it? At CES 2018, Amazon's Alexa assistant is being added to Acer, Asus and HP systems with more likely to follow.  
A year ago, Amazon's Alexa everywhere strategy rolled out. At CES 2018, Alexa's footprint is expanding throughout the smart home and via partnerships.  
Cortana's future has increasingly been looking shaky as a front-end assistant.



Microsoft has dropped plans to integrate Cortana with its Dynamics 365 ERP and CRM platforms.  
Cortana has 230 skills and that tally is well behind Alexa's 25,000.  
Microsoft and Amazon announced a pact to co-mingle Cortana and Alexa. But Alexa for Business alters the business focus for Microsoft's Cortana.  
Now Microsoft's Cortana does have a few smart speaker and thermostat wins, but its distribution is flooded by Alexa as well as Google Assistant.  
Simply put, Microsoft lacks the mobile, smart home and digital speaker footprint to provide touch points for Cortana.  
And now Cortana is now sharing time with Alexa on the PC in a development that can't be good for Microsoft.  
Now Cortana may not disappear completely, but it'll be more of a back-end enabling technology that will ride along with a set of artificial intelligence tools.  
In any case, Cortana's future needs to be outlined better. At first glance, it's clear that Cortana is losing the digital assistant name game.

(Source: zdnet)

# Universities must prepare for a technology-enabled future

Automation and artificial intelligence technologies are transforming manufacturing, corporate work and the retail business, providing new opportunities for companies to explore and posing major threats to those that don't adapt to the times. Equally daunting challenges confront colleges and universities, but they've been slower to acknowledge them.

At present, colleges and universities are most worried about competition from schools or training systems using online learning technology. But that is just one aspect of the technological changes already under way. For example, some companies are moving toward requiring workers have specific skills trainings and certifications – as opposed to college degrees.

As a professor who researches artificial intelligence and offers distance learning courses, I can say that online education is a disruptive challenge for which colleges are ill-prepared. Lack of student demand is already closing 800 out of roughly 10,000 engineering colleges in India. And online learning has put as many as half the colleges and universities in the U.S. at risk of shutting down in the next couple decades as remote students get comparable educations over the internet – without living on campus or taking classes in person. Unless universities move quickly to transform themselves into educational institutions for a technology-assisted future, they risk becoming obsolete.

### Existing alternatives to traditional higher ed

Enormous amounts of information are now available online for free, ready for watching, listening or reading at any time, by anyone who's connected. For more than a decade, private companies, nonprofits and universities alike have been experimenting with online courses, often offered for free or at low cost to large numbers of students around the world. Research has shown that it's as effective for students to use a combination of online courses and traditional in-classroom instruction as it is to just have classes in person.

Providers of massive open online courses (often called "MOOCs") are refining ways for people who complete the classes to present their accomplishments in ways employers can understand easily. For example, students in certain classes from major MOOC provider edX can get an official Arizona State University transcript listing their courses and grades. An employer would never know the person studied online. (There's another threat to universities' business model, too: Students can take the classes and get their grades for free; they only need to pay if they are happy with their grades, and if they want official college credit.)

This is a period of rapid change unlike what universities have dealt with for centuries.

**The evolution of the university**  
Medieval European universities trained would-be clergy members in canonical law, theological discussion and religious administration. These institutions amassed huge repositories of knowledge, storing and indexing them in libraries, which became the focal point of the campus.

As European countries explored the world and established overseas colonies starting in the 15th and 16th centuries, universities evolved to train officers to manage those territories, study navigation across the oceans and look after colonists' health. After the



Online class with students from around the world. AP Photo/Gretchen Ertl

## Private colleges' main competition at the moment comes from public universities. Their prices are two-thirds lower, but studying still involves taking many courses that are just as easily taught online.

Industrial Revolution, colleges changed again, teaching workers how to use new scientific and technological methods and tools.

In the 21st century, the workplace is transforming once more; what businesses, governments and society need from education is shifting, and technology has made the brick-and-mortar library obsolete. It used to be that users of a technology needed to know how it works. In the early days of driving, for instance, it was important for a driver to be able to fix a car that broke down on the side of the road, perhaps far from any expert mechanic.

But in the current post-industrial economy, that has changed: Even a car mechanic uses a computer to connect to car systems to identify what is not working properly. Very few people need to know how these internal computer systems work; they just need to be able to interpret sensor readings and error messages.

### A changing job market

Now, the number of jobs mostly involving routine skills – both physical and cognitive – is shrinking over time. Increasing automation at factories is rapidly replacing workers at factories, even in low-wage countries like China. Artificial intelligence technologies like machine learning and computer vision are permanently eliminating high-skill jobs in offices, too. Many world economies – including in the U.S. – are turning from manufacturing to service, in which most new jobs do not require advanced education.

The remaining jobs will involve fewer routine tasks. The people doing that work will still need some education beyond high school. But they may not have as much need

to attend classes at, or even live on, a physical university campus. Colleges that are outside the very top tier of quality and name recognition – and those that have taken on large amounts of debt to build physical facilities – will suffer as demand for their services lessens.

### Competition between colleges

Another factor challenging universities' existence is the rapidly rising cost of a traditional college education. So far, in the U.S. demand for degrees from residential colleges has remained high because government-backed loans are easy to get. But student loan debt in the U.S. has reached US\$1.45 trillion – and as many as 20 percent of borrowers may not be earning enough to pay them back.

Universities might highlight intangible values of in-person learning, like personal contact and nonverbal communication, but the costs are becoming a larger factor. Parents and students in the U.S. are increasingly asking whether it's worth spending around \$30,000 – or even more than \$60,000 – for less than 240 days of school in an elite private residential college – more than \$250 a night.

Private colleges' main competition at the moment comes from public universities. Their prices are two-thirds lower, but studying still involves taking many courses that are just as easily taught online.

Soon students will want to take a variety of courses from different universities, choosing each class and school for its particular merits and benefits. That will stiffen competition between institutions, lowering students' costs – and universities' revenues.

Courses will become shared experiences for online learning communities. Some colleges might seek to charge students for special in-person learning experiences, but these will be extras for those who can afford them, not the higher education norm they are today.

### Finding a new way to teach

Some universities – those at the top, with the most money and expertise – are responding to the coming changes to higher education. Some are forming partnerships with international universities and online teaching companies, or building remote-learning programs on their own. Some of these, like the Harvard Extension School, are high-tech adaptations of correspondence courses people used to take by mail.

Harvard Extension School enrolls nearly 2,000 degree candidates and over 13,000 non-degree students, who take classes online, on campus or a mix of both. Students can earn a Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree in extension studies. At an estimated cost of \$49,500, a four-year degree is cheaper than a single year on campus at Harvard.

But the vast majority of people who take its classes never get a degree at all. They're just looking for one particular course, or maybe a few, customizing their own education.

Employers will soon take advantage of options like this, too: Universities will find themselves asked to build specific programs for particular companies. And universities will find themselves needing to explore other ways artificial intelligence technologies can help reduce the cost of education.

(Source: theconversation.com)

## China launches first specialist insurance company on technology



China's insurance regulator has approved the launch of Taiping Technology Insurance, the country's first ever insurer to specialize in offering services to the technology sector.

China Insurance Regulatory Commission (CIRC) has issued the approval for China Taiping Insurance Group to launch the technology insurer, according to a CIRC statement.

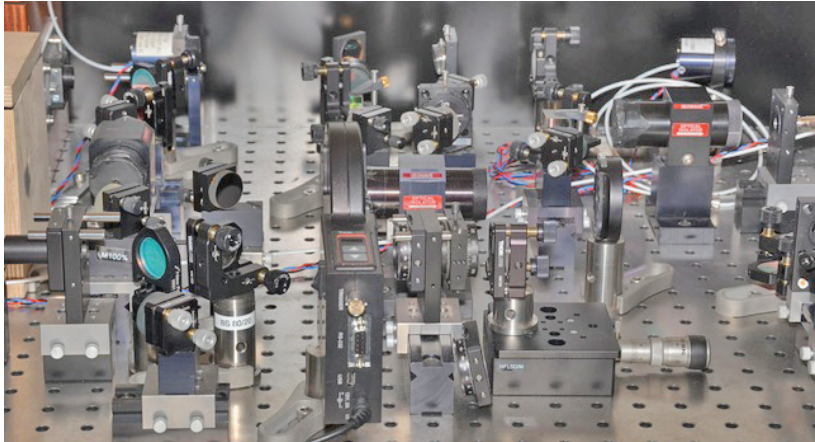
Headquartered in Jiaxing, a city in east China's Zhejiang Province, the new company has a registered capital of 500 million yuan (more than 77 million U.S. dollars).

The company will provide services related with scientific and technological businesses, such as corporate and household property insurance and engineering insurance.

The idea of establishing technology insurers was brought forward by the Ministry of Science and Technology and CIRC in 2006, aiming to provide an insurance mechanism for high-tech firms in their research and development, as well as transfer of technological achievements.

(Source: xinhuanet.com)

## Swiss and French team develops hyper-precise atomic clock



A team of Swiss and French researchers has discovered new laser technology for use in atomic clocks, resulting in super-accurate timekeeping mechanisms that lose just one second every six million years.

The scientists, including representatives from the University of Neuchâtel's Time and Frequency Laboratory, developed a new class of thermal cesium jet clocks that are ten times more precise than existing atomic clocks. The technology will allow for better-synchronized telecommunications networks as well as improved communication among satel-

lite navigation systems, according to the University of Neuchâtel's announcement of the research.

Laser diodes are the centerpieces of atomic clocks, producing light of a very precise frequency to interface with atoms that create the reference of passing time.

According to the LAMA consortium, laser diodes could in the future be used for applications beyond timekeeping, such as the analysis of the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere, or the detection of gravitational waves.

(Source: swissinfo.ch)



# Plants’ immune response could keep a bacterial infection from spreading, scientists find

When you see brown spots on otherwise healthy green leaves, you may be witnessing a plant’s immune response as it tries to keep a bacterial infection from spreading. Some plants are more resistant to such infections than others, and plant biologists want to understand why. Salk Institute scientists studying a plant protein called SOBER1 recently discovered one mechanism by which, counterintuitively, plants seem to render themselves less resistant to infection.

The work, which appeared in Nature Communications on December 19, 2017, sheds light on plant resistance generally and could lead to strategies to boost plants’ natural immunity or to better contain infections that threaten to destroy an entire agricultural crop.

“There are a lot of losses in crop yields due to bacteria that kill plants,” says the paper’s senior author Joanne Chory, a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, director of Salk’s Plant Molecular and Cellular Biology Laboratory and a 2018 recipient of the Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences. “With this work, we set out to understand the underlying mechanism of how resistance works, and to see how general it is.”

**Bacterial infection**  
One of the ways plants fight bacterial infection is by killing off their own cells in which bacterial proteins are detected. But some bacteria have evolved a counter strategy — injecting special proteins that suppress the



plant’s immune response by adding small, disabling chemical tags called acetyl groups to immune molecules. This process is called acetylation. What makes certain plants able to resist these bacterial counter measures while others succumb to infection remains

unclear. As a means to better understand such pathogen-plant interactions, Chory’s team turned to the well-studied weed Arabidopsis thaliana and, in particular, an enzyme called SOBER1 — which had previously been reported

to suppress the weed’s immune response to a bacterial protein known as AvrBsT. While it may seem counterintuitive to use immune suppression to study infection resistance, the Salk biologists thought doing so could yield useful information.

The researchers started by determining SOBER1’s amino acid sequence — the particular order of building blocks that gives a protein its basic identity. Intriguingly, they found it was very similar to a cancer-pathway-related human enzyme.

**The enzymatic reaction**  
This enzyme contains a characteristic tunnel into which proteins with certain types of modifications can fit and be cut as part of the enzymatic reaction. It turns out SOBER1 can be classified as part of a vast protein superfamily known as alpha/beta hydrolases.

Next, they used a more than 100-year-old technique called X-ray crystallography to determine SOBER1’s three-dimensional structure. While similar to the human enzyme, the plant enzyme’s tunnel had two extra amino acids sticking down from the top: one at the entrance and one in the middle.

“When we saw those, we realized they had to have a dramatic effect on function because they basically block the tunnel,” says Salk research associate and co-first author Marco Bürger.

(Source: phys.org)

One of the ways plants fight bacterial infection is by killing off their own cells in which bacterial proteins are detected.

## Scientists develop ingestible gas sensor, could improve diet

An Australian team has developed the first gas-diagnosing intestinal pill ever to be tested in people. As the researchers report today in the journal Nature Electronics, this ‘smart’ capsule reliably measured levels of oxygen, hydrogen, and carbon dioxide as it journeyed through the innards of six healthy volunteers, revealing the impact of dietary fiber intake on microbial activity in the small intestines and colon.

Not only might this electronic pill one day shape custom diets for optimal gut health; it could also help doctors distinguish between the early signs of different GI disorders, such as malabsorption syndrome, Crohn’s disease, colitis, irritable bowel syndrome, and even colon cancer.

“At the moment, we have no tool to differentiate between these different things,” says Kourosh Kalantar-zadeh, an electronic engineer at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia, who led the research. A colonoscopy can only reveal inflammatory lesions or cancerous polyps that are visible with a camera—and by that point, people have often suffered with gut discomfort and without a diagnosis for years.

**Swallowable sensor**  
“That’s too late,” says Kalantar-zadeh, who envisions people popping a swallowable sensor once or twice a year to detect disease early on. “If gas profiles around the norm change,” he explains, “then we’d know we have a problem with the gut.”



*Iranian Professor Kourosh Kalantar-zadeh*

On its surface, the gas capsule looks like an over-the-counter supplement you’d buy at any GNC or Vitamin Shoppe. But within its inch-long polyethylene shell are two gas sensors, a temperature sensor, a microcontroller, a radio-frequency transmitter, and button-sized silver-oxide batteries. The gas sensors are sealed within a special membrane that allows gas in but keeps out stomach acid and digestive juices.

Kalantar-zadeh’s ingestible capsule would be the first to provide information about the chemical composition of the gut.

The system is an upgraded version of one that the Australian team previously tested in pigs. It determines gas profiles in the gut by modulating the heating elements of the sensors. Since oxygen, hydrogen, and carbon dioxide all conduct heat to different degrees, the sensors can accurately determine the levels of these gases by taking measurements at multiple temperature points.

**Algorithm reads information**  
An algorithm reads the information coming off the sensors and relays the signal in real-time to a small receiver that has a range of up to 100 feet and can be carried in a pocket or left on the nightstand when someone is home. The receiver in turn transmits the data via Bluetooth to a cell phone, which can post the data online for easy monitoring by users and doctors.

Digital pills on the market today can already gauge things like pH and pressure inside the intestines. Some can also relay pictures of the esophageal and stomach lining.

Plus, late last year the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the first sensor-enabled medicine, a version of an antipsychotic drug that’s embedded with sensors to tell doctors whether, and when, patients with schizophrenia take their pills.

But Kalantar-zadeh’s ingestible capsule, if it stands up to greater clinical scrutiny, would be the first to provide information about the chemical composition of the gut.

(Source: spectrum.ieee.org)

## Scientists’ one-step catalyst turns nitrates into water and air

Engineers at Rice University’s Nanotechnology Enabled Water Treatment (NEWT) Center have found a catalyst that cleans toxic nitrates from drinking water by converting them into air and water.

“Nitrates come mainly from agricultural runoff, which affects farming communities all over the world,” said Rice chemical engineer Michael Wong, the lead scientist on the study. “Nitrates are both an environmental problem and health problem because they’re toxic.

There are ion-exchange filters that can remove them from water, but these need to be flushed every few months to reuse them, and when that happens, the flushed water just returns a concentrated dose of nitrates right back into the water supply.”

**Chemical reactions**  
Wong’s lab specializes in developing nanoparticle-based catalysts, submicroscopic bits of metal that speed up chemical reactions. In 2013, his group showed that tiny gold spheres dotted with specks of

palladium could break apart nitrites, the more toxic chemical cousins of nitrates.

“Nitrates are molecules that have one nitrogen atom and three oxygen atoms,” Wong explained. “Nitrates turn into nitrites if they lose an oxygen, but nitrites are even more toxic than nitrates, so you don’t want to stop with nitrites. Moreover, nitrates are the more prevalent problem.

“Ultimately, the best way to remove nitrates is a catalytic process that breaks them completely apart into nitrogen and oxygen, or in our case, nitrogen and water

because we add a little hydrogen,” he said. “More than 75 percent of Earth’s atmosphere is gaseous nitrogen, so we’re really turning nitrates into air and water.”

Nitrates are toxic to infants and pregnant women and may also be carcinogenic. Nitrate pollution is common in agricultural communities, especially in the U.S. Corn Belt and California’s Central Valley, where fertilizers are heavily used, and some studies have shown that nitrate pollution is on the rise due to changing land-use patterns.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

## \$6.8b Export of Minerals in 9 Months: IME

Statistics show that \$6.8 billion worth of mineral products was exported from the country in the nine months of the current Iranian calendar year in 1396 (from March 21 to Dec. 22), the Public Relations Dept. of IME reported.

The volume and value of exports share of minerals as compared to total exports share of the country in the nine months of the current year stood at 55 and 22 percent respectively.

Given the above issue, 48,663,000 tons of minerals [in-

cluding steel products, aluminum, Copper and downstream industries, cement, zinc, molybdenum, iron ore, various types of ceramics, tiles, chrome, coals, cokes, titan, mica, antimony and precious stones, etc.] were exported from the country in the same period, showing a considerable one percent growth (1%) as compared to the last year’s corresponding period.

Also, exports value hit \$6,855,570,000 in the nine-month period, showing a considerable three percent hike

as compared to the same period of last year.

The imports volume of products in mines and mineral sector in the nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (from March 21 to Dec. 22) hit 9,115,000 tons, valued at \$4,083,980,000, showing 86 and 33 percent growth in terms of volume and value respectively.

It should be noted that share of mineral sector from total imports value stood at 34 and 11 percent respectively, the Public Relations Dept. of IME concluded.

## Tose’e Ta’avon Bank CEO: Moving towards Rural Employment, Most Important Objectives of Bank

Chief Executive of Tose’e Ta’avon Bank Hojjatollah Mahdian said that moving towards generation of total and rural employment is of the most important objectives of the bank, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Speaking in 6th Rural and Total Employment Working Group, which was held in the presence of senior managers and directors of the bank, he said: “As one of operating banks in the field of distribution of governmental resources, Tose’e

Ta’avon Bank is ready to take giant strides towards removal of one of the greatest socioeconomic problem in the country i.e. employment.”

The initial measures include compilation of method, training manpower in the departments of branches of the provinces with regard to validation and identification of customers to guide these facilities in the right track are of the salient steps in this regard.

Considering the outset of settling re-

sources of the National Development Fund of Iran to operating and credit banks, it was stipulated that effective steps will be taken to receive plans of applicants in the employment field in rural areas using the modern pattern.

Applicants have welcomed these facilities, he said, adding: “Guiding these resources for generating sustainable employment at villages of the country properly is considered as one of the main duties of the operating banks.”



## CEO congratulates 12th establishment anniversary of Sarmayeh Bank

The Chief Executive of Sarmayeh Bank congratulated Dey 18 (Jan. 8) the establishment anniversary of Sarmayeh Bank and wished a very prosperous year for the bank in the current year, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Despite many ups and downs experienced since its establishment, the bank managed to overcome most of its

problems before and after sanctions, the chief executive of the bank reported.

With the coordination made in this regard, the bank managed to pay totally 1,700 billion rials dividend to its major shareholders in the past year (ended March 20, 2017).

Like any other banks and economic enterprises of the

country, the bank experienced many ups and downs in the course of its history but it should be kept in mind that the bank has managed to improve banking and monetary market of the country considerably.

In conclusion, CEO of Sarmayeh Bank once again reiterated: “Relying upon the assistance of the Almighty God, the bank will take more giant stride in the current year.”

## A fully solar-powered car may be hitting the road by 2019

Lightyear One, a car whose ability to use solar power has been thought of as an impossible feat, just won a Climate Change Innovator Award.

Designed by the Dutch startup Lightyear, the “car that charges itself” can supposedly drive for months without charging and has a 400-800 km range. But is a solar-powered car feasible?

For years, the concept of “solar-powered cars” has loomed over the electric car industry as a hopeful, possible future. But there are many who argue that this concept is not only impractical, it is basically impossible.

For instance, a solar roof that was designed to power the Toyota Prius was found to only be useful in combination with a traditional battery charging system and it only added an additional 4 miles to the range - not that impressive.



One engineer even calculated the power capacity of a car with a solar roof under the optimal amount of solar radiation, and the results are underwhelming.

Engineers measure the rate at which an engine’s work is done in “horsepower” (hp): the car equipped with a solar roof had a horsepower rate of 6.4. For comparison, engineer Tom Lombardo said, “my riding lawnmower has an 18 hp engine.”

The first 10 Lightyear One cars are due to be released in 2019. Up until now fully solar-powered cars were not considered a realistic prospect, Solar Assisted Electric Vehicles (SAEVs) were considered the best possible option for solar cars, adding up to hundreds of miles to a car’s range.

But the Dutch Lightyear promises to topple the canon with a car that is not only fully powered by the sun, but also overcomes some of the conventional challenges associated with the technology, such as intermittency and low performance.

(sciencealert.com)

## Hungry coral-eating starfish is destroying Australia’s Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef of Australia is at serious at risk of total damage if crown-of-thorns starfish will continue to eat through the coral.

Authorities have started culling procedures to prevent the spread of the coral-killing marine animals and save the reef. At least 37 sections of the Swaine Reef located at 100 kilometers to 250 kilometers, or about 328 to 820 feet off the coast between Gladstone and Rockhampton are affected by the outbreak of the coral-eating starfish.

The trigger of the recent outbreak is still unclear but authorities offer a few theories, including the presence of extra nutrients in the water.

“It may be caused by nutrient upwelling from deep ocean waters, but that’s still yet to be proven,” says Fred Nucifora of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Authority.

Starfish are known to contribute to the reef’s diversity by eating faster-growing coral species, allowing slower-growing species to thrive. However, the crown-of-thorns starfish are eating way much faster than the corals can reproduce.

Each starfish damages the coral through spreading its stomach on the coral and releasing digestive enzymes that dissolve the coral tissues. The predator crown-of-thorns starfish eat corals about the same size of its body diameter each night. If there are thousands of starfish in the affected area, the effects are indeed damaging.

Since marine authorities started a control program to prevent the predator starfish in 2012, they have culled more than 600,000 starfish from the north and central reef areas.

This starfish outbreak has struck the Great Barrier Reef that is still reeling from two consecutive years of major coral bleaching. In 2016, the reef was damaged by the worst ever coral bleaching that killed two-thirds of a 700-kilometer stretch of reef.

(Source: Tech Times)

## Antarctica is melting from below — and it’s getting worse

Antarctica’s ice shelves are melting from warming ocean waters below — even during seasons when snowfall on top of them is increasing. This strange paradox could worsen from the natural climate phenomenon El Niño, according to a study published Monday in Nature Geoscience. Based on 23 years of satellite data from the West Antarctic ice shelves, the study revealed that a strong El Niño event causes the shelves to lose more ice from melting beneath than they gain back from snowfall on top of it.

“I was expecting to see an overall reduction in height as a consequence of mass loss, but it turns out that height increases,” Fernando Paolo, the study’s lead author, said in a statement. Paolo conducted the study while he was a graduate student and postdoc at Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California San Diego.

El Niño causes snowfall to increase, especially in the Amundsen Sea sector. Though the snowfall increases the actual height of this ice shelf, El Niño events cause wind patterns in Antarctica to push warmer ocean waters towards the ice shelf, which results in the basal melting.

The satellite data from 1994 to 2017 revealed the height of the ice decreased by eight inches per year overall from ocean melting, according to the study. But during the El Niño event in 1997 and 1998, the height increased by 10 inches. The fresh snowfall, however, is much less dense than the solid ice that makes up most of the shelf. The mass, which is the most important measurement in terms of sea level rise, was decreasing although the height increased during the event.

Satellite records over two decades allowed researchers to look at the processes that affect ice shelves, which helps scientists better understand how ice sheets may melt in the future.

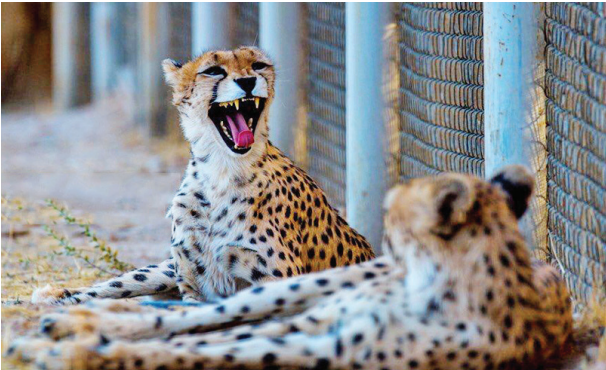
(Source: Newsweek)



## Artificial insemination an option for breeding captive Asiatic cheetahs

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** — Two Asiatic cheetahs which are **d e s k** being kept in captivity in Tehran’s Pardisan Park may become parents using artificial insemination.

The two cheetahs called Koushki - the male cheetah - and Delbar - the female cheetah, were separated from their parents as a cub and couldn’t return back to wild as they didn’t have a parent to teach them how to survive and were kept in captivity since then.



The two cheetahs are regularly undergoing medical tests to ensure their readiness for artificial insemination, YJC quoted the chief veterinarian of Pardisan rehabilitation center Iman Memarian as saying on Tuesday.

Continuous efforts have been made so that the cheetah couple could achieve a natural conception, but unfortunately they all have failed till date, he regretted.

Memarian went on to say that German experts are lending a hand in implementing the artificial insemination techniques.

Physically and clinically healthy, Delbar and Koushki are receiving their required supplements and nutrition, he noted.

The behavior of cheetahs is being monitored 24-7 so that whenever Delbar (the female cheetah) shows stress or signs of readiness for natural breeding, veterinarians can adopt the required measures, he concluded implying that there is still hope for natural conception.

Once living in wide parts of Asia, Iranian or Asiatic cheetahs are now just inhibiting in central dry regions of Iran. As per the figures announce d by Conservation of Asiatic cheetah (CACP) only some 50 cheetahs are estimated to inhabit Iran.

Special programs have been planned for saving this species and hopes are that artificial insemination can open a new window for conserving this critically endangered animal.

## Plasco tragedy one year on: Groundbreaking set for new building

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Construction of a new building at the site of Plasco, an iconic shopping center in downtown Tehran which erupted in fire and collapsed last winter, will get underway in the next few weeks.

According to Tehran’s deputy mayor for architecture and urbanization the project of constructing a new 10-storey Plasco building will start on January 19.



Additionally the new building will have 5 underground floors as parking lot, highlighted Mehdi Hojjati, stating, these 5 floors will only provide 1,300 parking spaces although new Plasco will need 2,300 ones totally.

The rest will be provided with equipping an old parking across the street, he added.

On January 19, 2017 Tehran Plasco building, a 17-storey shopping center, caught fire and three and a half hours later, #PlascoTragedy went viral on the internet and social media. The building collapsed. 15 firefighters and a number of civilians lost their lives and hundreds of people their jobs and business.

## LEARN ENGLISH

### Small Talk

A: Morning.  
B: Hi there, Mr. Anderson! How are you on this fine morning?  
A: Fine, thank you.  
B: **It sure is** cold this morning, isn’t it? **I barely even** got out of bed!  
A: Yeah. It’s pretty cold, alright.  
B: Did you **catch** the news this morning? I heard that there was a fire on Byron Street.  
A: No, I didn’t hear about that.  
B: **Did you happen to** watch the football game last night? The Patriots scored in the last minute!  
A: No, I don’t like football.  
B: Oh... **By the way**, I saw you with your daughter at the office Christmas party. She is really beautiful!  
A: She’s my wife! Oh, here’s my floor! Nice talking to you. Goodbye.  
B: Sir, this is the fifty-sixth floor! We are on the seventieth!  
A: That’s okay, **I’ll take the stairs!**

■ **Key vocabulary**  
**it sure is:** affirmation or confirmation of something  
**barely even:** hardly, could almost not  
**catch:** hear, listen to  
**did you happen to:** by chance or casualty someone did something  
**by the way:** phrase used to interject another topic in a conversation  
**take the stairs:** go up the stairs, use the stairs  
■ **Supplementary vocabulary**  
**small talk:** short, friendly conversation about things that are not important  
**chat:** talk (informal)  
**network:** talk with people to form business connections  
**awkward:** difficult to deal with  
**uncomfortable:** a feeling of being embarrassed or uneasy  
(Source: irlanguage.com)

# The hot debate of revising Tehran’s traffic scheme

**1 →** If earned, he emphasized, this revenue will exclusively be spent on developing public transportation.

Asked if the scheme may increase the number of cars in the traffic zones, he explained that if that happens, the City Council can increase the charges to further restrict the traffic.

“Why the cost of air pollution produced by personal cars must be paid by those who don’t have a car?” Pourseyyed-Aqaei said, adding, the world now believe that the cost of using personal cars should be increased in order to encourage people to use public transportation.

### ■ City Council’s green light

It seems Tehran City Council has given the green light for the general outlines of the scheme but there are debates over its details.

The supreme council for traffic (affiliated with the Interior Ministry) has approved the scheme and as the next and final step, it will be submitted to Tehran’s City Council in this week, Fars quoted the head of City Council’s transportation commission Mohammad Alikhani as saying on Sunday.

Tehran City Council Chairman Mohsen Hashemi has also emphasized the need for changing the current traffic scheme, saying that at the first stages of implementing the odd-even traffic scheme, only 20,000 yearly permits were granted for entering traffic zones, comparing to over 120,000 permits which are currently issued.

### ■ Police urges further study

Although Pourseyyed-Aqaei claimed that he had received verbal approval of traffic police chief Taqi Mehri for this scheme, Tehran’s police chief Hossein Rahimi said on Monday that the new scheme lacks the required studies and it will aggravate both air pollution and traffic, YJC reported.

Despite what councilor Alikhani says according to another report published by Fars news agency on Tuesday traffic supreme council has not approved the scheme yet.

Pouria Mohammadian Yazdi traffic supreme council secretary general has said that the scheme has not been discussed and approved in the council.

### ■ What people say

It seems that the new scheme is not generally welcomed by T ehraners due to the increased costs of using their personal cars besides the shortcomings of public transportation which surely doesn’t meet their expectations.

Nonetheless it should be noted that for



those who come to the city center for a short stay, the charges will be less than daily permits that are currently being issued.

### ■ A simple calculation of increased revenue

In general the city of Tehran is divided into three zones regarding the traffic congestion. Zone A is the city center which is restricted to all vehicles except for those who have a permit (some 120,000 cars) and taxis from 6.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Saturday to Wednesday and until 1 p.m. on Thursdays.

Zone B is where the odd-even scheme is being implemented. And Zone C is not restricted to anyone.

According to a report by YJC on Monday, the minimum and maximum fees for entering traffic zone is 96,000 rials (nearly \$2.5) and 360,000 rials (nearly \$9) per day respectively. Considering the average of these charges which amounts to 22,800 rials (nearly \$5.75), and current 123,000 cars that enter the traffic restricted zones on daily basis, the municipality can earn 28 billion rials daily (nearly \$700,000).

The same calculation can be done for Zone B. Here, the charges will be lower but the number of cars count to at least 1 million per day. The estimations show that the municipality can earn some 70 billion rials (nearly

\$1.75 million) from this zone. Totally the daily revenue of Tehran Municipality derived from this scheme can add up to some 100 billion rials (nearly \$2.45 million).

Experts believe that the new scheme will result in a significant increase in the number of cars entering traffic and odd-even zone; which is not being considered in above calculations.

As far as traffic and air pollution is concerned, T ehraners really hope that this new scheme can have tangible effects on both issues and also the increased revenue would only be spent on public transportation development, as promised.

## A peek into daily life of border guards



**SOCIETY** **d e s k** The photo collection depicts the daily life of border guards at a station in Savoji rural district in Marivan, western province of Kordestan.

The guards are in charge of border control and ensuring the security of the country’s borders. The duty entails permanent observation of the borders with the purpose of detecting, alerting and preventing any violations which involves twenty-four seven surveillance.

The job is extremely difficult, sensitive and dangerous. Many border guards have lost their lives safeguarding the country’s borders against drug traffickers or terrorist groups over the past years.

Although the daily life of border guards might seem to be normal they have to be constantly vigilant to protect our lands against any wrongdoers at any time.



## ENGLISH IN USE

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## New subway lines to become operational

Three new subway lines will be fully operational by summer, the managing director of Tehran Urban and Suburban Railway Operation Company said on Friday. Subway tunnels to the total length of 100 kilometers and 24 subway stations have been completed in the current Iranian calendar year, ending on March 20, 2017, YJC quoted Habil Darvish as saying. Tehran Municipality has spent more than 60 trillion rials (nearly \$1.5 million) on subway development projects over the current year, he added. He went on to say that soon 100 kilometers of subway line will come into operation in Tehran and the plans for subway lines of 9 and 10 will be discussed afterward.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “-derm, -derma, -dermis”

■ **Meaning:** skin  
■ **For example:** In animal embryos, the **ectoderm** is the outer germ layer of the embryo.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Fence something off

■ **Meaning:** to separate one area from another area with a fence  
■ **For example:** The planting area was fenced off from the main garden.

## IDIOM

### Blockbuster

■ **Explanation:** something that is outstanding, impressive or particularly successful, such as a film or a book  
■ **For example:** The TV series was a blockbuster.

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

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

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

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

مدیر عامل شرکت مترو تهران با اشاره به اینکه به‌زودی ۱۰۰ کیلومتر مترو در شهر تهران به بهره‌برداری می‌رسد، تصریح کرد: برای پروژه خط ۹ و ۱۰ نیز مطالعاتی در حال انجام است.



# New Saudi regime airstrike leaves dozen civilians dead in Yemen's Ta'izz

At least a dozen more civilians have lost their lives when the House of Saud regime fighter jets carried out an airstrike in an area of Yemen's southwestern province of Ta'izz as the Riyadh regime presses ahead with its devastating aerial bombardment campaign against its conflict-plagued southern neighbor.

Local source, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Arabic-language al-Masirah television network that the victims were killed as the Saudi regime military aircraft targeted trucks loaded with coal travelling along a road linking al-Najibiyah district and Hays region in the neighboring coastal province of al-Hudaydah on Tuesday afternoon.

The development came on the same day that Yemeni army forces and allied fighters from Popular Committees launched a barrage of artillery rounds at a gathering of the Saudi regime-backed militiamen loyal to Yemen's resigned president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi in the city of Sirwah, which lies about 120 kilometers (75 miles) east of the capital Sana'a, leaving scores of them killed and injured.

In the As Silw district of Ta'izz province, several Saudi mercenaries were killed and wounded when an explosive device went off in their position.

Yemeni soldiers and their allies also fired a number of artillery rounds at the Saudi



regime troops in the al-Ghawiyah military base of Saudi Arabia's Jizan region, located 969 kilometers south of the capital Riyadh. There were, however, no immediate reports on possible casualties and the extent of damage caused.

At least 13,600 people have been killed since the onset of the House of Saud regime

military campaign against Yemen in 2015. Much of the Peninsula country's infrastructure, including hospitals, schools and factories, has been reduced to rubble due to the war.

The Saudi regime-led war has also triggered deadly epidemics of infectious diseases, especially diphtheria and cholera, across Yemen.

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

WHO has also warned that at least 471 people in Yemen have contracted diphtheria, a bacterial disease that has been killing one in 10 Yemenis since the outbreak started in the war-torn country in mid-August last year.

The United Nations agency's spokesman, Tarik Jasarevic, made the disturbing announcement last Thursday, adding that the west-central province of Ibb and the western province of Hudaydah were the hardest hit by diphtheria, which is easily spread between people through direct physical contact or the air.

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.

(Source: Press TV)

## Pakistan court frees anti-U.S. preacher amid spat with Trump

A Pakistani court has ordered the release of a radical anti-United States preacher who went to Afghanistan with thousands of volunteers to help the Taliban fight against Americans after the 2001 U.S.-led invasion.

The development comes amid rising U.S.-Pakistani tensions following the U.S. President Donald Trump's accusations that Pakistan is harboring militants and the withholding of American aid to Islamabad, AP reported on Tuesday.

Defense lawyer Fida Gul says the court set Sufi Mohammad free on health grounds. Paperwork for his release is still being processed.

Mohammad, imprisoned since 2009, is also known as the father-in-law of Mullah Fazlullah, the leader of the Pakistani Taliban.

Trump has said that the United States had "foolishly" given Pakistan more than \$33 billion in aid in the last 15 years and had gotten nothing in return but "lies & deceit."

### ■ Pakistan alliance with U.S. over

Pakistan's alliance with the United States seems to be coming towards an end following the latter's decision to suspend security aid, Minister of Foreign Affairs Khawaja Asif told the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) in an interview late Saturday night.

Asif said he believes the U.S.-Pakistan relations are now at risk, especially after the tensions heightened and moods turned sour when Trump warned Islamabad to "do more" against terrorists, to whom, he alleged, the country provides safe havens.

"We do not have any alliance [with the U.S.], this is not how allies behave," the minister told WSJ.

On New Year's Day, Trump tweeted that the U.S. had "foolishly" given Pakistan over \$33 billion in aid over the past 15 years, adding that Islamabad gives "safe havens to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help".

(Source: agencies)

## Macron visits Forbidden City before China deals, Xi talks

French President Emmanuel Macron toured Beijing's sprawling Forbidden City on Tuesday before a day of business deals and talks with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping as the two rising global leaders seek closer ties.

Macron, who has positioned himself as the leading voice of the European Union, came to Beijing to discuss an ambitious agenda with Xi, the most powerful Chinese leader in decades.

The two presidents are expected to oversee the signing of some 50 agreements, including in the strategically key sectors of nuclear energy and aerospace.

Ahead of the ceremony, Chinese online retailer JD.com announced plans to sell French goods worth 2 billion euros (\$2.4 billion) to Chinese consumers over the next two years -- including high-end wine and cognac -- and spend 100 million euros on French industrial products.

In a keynote speech on Monday, Macron urged the European Union (EU) to participate in Xi's cherished \$1 trillion Silk Road trade infrastructure project despite misgivings, though he warned that the initiative should not create a "new hegemony".

Macron and Xi held a private meeting on Monday night and were due to hold more talks on Tuesday.

The French leader told reporters he discussed the Silk Road initiative with Xi "at length".

"We will see how things are done,"

Macron said as he attended a forum on Artificial Intelligence in Beijing on Tuesday.

Macron and his wife Brigitte were accompanied by students from the French international school and a French historian as they walked along the red-walled palaces of former Chinese emperors at the Forbidden City.

On a sunny but bitterly cold day, Macron asked historian Patrice Fava to translate a banner which read "With fairness, govern from the center".

"It's important. It's symbolic," said Brigitte Macron, whose husband campaigned as a centrist candidate in the French presidential election.

It is the first state visit by a European leader since China's Communist Party congress in October, which reinforced Xi's grip on power as he was formally handed a second term and his named was enshrined in the party's constitution.

Beijing has praised Macron's decision to make China his first state visit to an Asian nation.

At the Forbidden City's pavilion of Supreme Harmony, Macron drew a parallel with the 19th Communist Party congress.

"This also allows us to better understand one of the themes of the 19th Congress raised by President Xi Jinping," Macron said. "This also comes from a profoundly anchored history in this country."

(Source: AFP)

## Unrest over price hikes hits Tunisia, authorities probe death

Protests hit several parts of Tunisia where dozens of people were arrested and one man died in unclear circumstances amid anger over rising prices, authorities said on Tuesday.

Several buildings were damaged during overnight scuffles with police, the interior ministry said, after activists and political parties denounced new austerity measures expected to increase the cost of living.

Authorities are to carry out an autopsy on Tuesday to determine the cause of death of the 43-year-old man in the town of Tebourba, west of Tunis, spokesmen for the interior and health ministries said.

The interior ministry denied he had been killed by police, saying the man's body showed no sign of any violence. Spokesman Khalifa Chibani said the man suffered from "respiratory problems".

Across the country, 11 officers were wounded including after being hit by stones and Molotov cocktails, while four police vehicles were damaged, National Security chief Walid Ben Hkima said.

He denounced "acts of violence and ransacking".

In the central impoverished city of Kasserine, dozens of youths set tires ablaze and threw stones at members of the security forces, who retaliated with tear gas, an AFP reporter said.

In the central town of Sidi Bouzid, epicentre of the 2011 uprising that unseated dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, rocks

and tires blocked the roads, another AFP correspondent said.

On Monday, Tunisians held a peaceful protest in the town against price hikes following austerity measures including increased value-added taxes and social security contributions.

An interior ministry spokesman said at least 44 people had been arrested, including 16 in Kasserine and 18 in working-class areas near Tunis.

The unrest "had nothing to do with democracy or social demands", Khalifa Chibani told the Shems FM radio station.

A car pound in Kasserine was ransacked, he said, and buildings of the security forces damaged in the southern town of Hamma.

Several groups called for protests in the Tunis city center on Tuesday starting from midday. Protests are common in the North African country in the month of January, when Tunisians mark the anniversary of the 2011 revolt that led to Ben Ali's ouster.

Tensions have been running high seven years since the uprising, including over the new austerity measures implemented on January 1.

On Sunday, Tunisian police dispersed a protest in the capital against the price hikes.

In December, unemployed protesters and activists marched through the streets of Sidi Bouzid angry over the lack of jobs and opportunities that continue to plague the central town.

(Source: AFP)

## U.S.: 200,000 Salvadorans must leave within 18 months

Members of the Salvadoran community in the United States have expressed their "devastation" after the United States President Donald Trump's government said it would stop providing legal status and the ability to work to some 200,000 immigrants from El Salvador.

The move, announced on Monday by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), gave Salvadoran holders of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) until September 9, 2019, to leave or find a legal way to stay in the country.

The U.S. government had originally granted Salvadorans special protection status after two earthquakes killed nearly 8,000 people in 2001.

"Based on careful consideration of available information, including recommendations received as part of an inter-agency consultation process, the Secretary determined that the original conditions caused by the 2001 earthquakes no longer exist," the DHS said in a statement.

In its statement, the DHS also said it had determined that El Salvador could successfully reintegrate its nationals.

However, TPS holders said the Central American country was not ready to receive the thousands of families that would be forced to return.

### ■ Unfair decision

El Salvador, home to about six million, is often described as one of the world's deadliest countries. In 2016, it averaged 14.4 murders a day.

High levels of insecurity, coupled with education challenges and limited employment opportunities, lead large numbers of people to consider migrating elsewhere.

During his election campaign, Trump had promised to overturn some of the immigration policies of his predecessors.

The DHS's move on Monday came months after his administration had also eliminated special protection status for thousands of Haitian and Nicaraguan TPS recipients.

Salvadorans were until recently the largest immigrant group protected under the program.

Norma Portos, an immigration lawyer who has worked with Salvadoran TPS holders living in New York, said the decision came down to determining that the original conditions for providing the temporary legal residency and deportation relief were no longer valid.

"The Trump administration claims it has done all the necessary studies and assessments to determine it is no longer necessary to renew TPS status for Salvadoran immigrants. But this determination remains relative because we can see that living conditions remain poor in El Salvador," Portos told Al Jazeera.

"Perhaps the Salvadoran government has been able to recover from the 2001 earthquake, but it is not ready to receive its nationals because of the violence and insecurity in the country," she added.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Saudi regime seeking to acquire Israeli Iron Dome missiles

**1→** Israel and Saudi Arabia have no diplomatic relations, but they are widely believed to have secret liaisons.

Numerous reports have suggested growing ties between Tel Aviv and Riyadh in the past few months.

In November 2017, Chief of Staff of Israeli military, Lieutenant General Gadi Eizenkot, expressed Tel Aviv's readiness "to exchange experiences with moderate Arab states and exchange intelligence to confront Iran."

In an interview with the Saudi regime-owned Elaph online newspaper, Eizenkot claimed that Iran was the "biggest threat to the region," adding that Tel Aviv and Riyadh were in full agreement about Iran's intentions.

Israeli minister of military affairs also echoed Eizenkot's comments, saying that the Middle East now requires an anti-Iran coalition.

"The Middle East today needs, more than anything else, a coalition of moderate states against Iran. The coalition against ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant)/Daesh terrorist outfit) has finished its work, after ISIL, Iran," Avigdor Lieberman said.

Tel Aviv has itself come under fire for colluding with terrorist groups, such as ISIL, which has been losing ground against the Syrian army.

### ■ Iron Dome

Iron Dome is a mobile all-weather air defense system developed by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems and Israel Aircraft Industries. The system is designed to intercept and destroy short-range rockets and artillery shells fired from distances of 4 kilometers to 70 kilometers away.

In addition to their land-based deployment, Iron Dome batteries will in the future be deployed at sea.

(Source: agencies)

## Syrian army hits Israeli jet, intercepts missiles near Damascus

**1→** It said that Israeli jets had fired a final barrage of four rockets from inside Israel, and that the Syrian air defenses brought them down one, but that the others caused material damage.

Syria's official news agency (SANA) cited the general command of the army as saying that the attack had been carried out to raise the morale of the "defeated" terrorists in the country.

"This flagrant aggression reaffirms Israel's support for the armed terrorist groups in Syria and its desperate attempts to lift its morale," the statement read.

The Israeli military did not comment on the reports.

During the past few years, Israel has frequently attacked military targets in Syria in what is considered as an attempt to prop up terrorist groups that have been suffering defeats in their fight against Syrian government forces.

Back in April 2015, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu officially admitted for the first time that the regime's military had conducted strikes in Syrian territory.

Damascus says Israel and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri terrorist groups operating inside Syria, while Tel Aviv's military carries out such sporadic strikes against Syrian government forces. The Israeli regime has even set up field hospitals to treat wounded militants evacuated from Syria.

Moreover, the Syrian army has repeatedly seized huge quantities of Israeli-made weapons and advanced military equipment from militant groups inside Syria.

(Source: SANA)

## Rights group criticizes Thai PM's cardboard cutout gesture

Thailand's Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, known for his temperamental outbursts, has adopted a unique tactic to avoid tricky questions from reporters -- leave a cardboard cutout of himself for reporters to quiz.

But the gesture has been criticized by Human Rights Watch which said it shows the military junta chief's "contempt of media criticism" in a country yet to restore democracy since a 2014 coup.

Seventeen life-sized cutouts of Prayuth have been set up around the government compound ahead of Children's Day on Saturday. They show Prayuth in various outfits including sportswear, work suits and traditional Thai attire.

On Monday, Prayuth spoke briefly at Government House before a cutout of Prayuth in a suit and tie was brought out. Prayuth, who is known for his abstruse sense of humor, then told journalists to refer any questions to the cardboard cutout.

"Ask this guy," he said.

Reaction to the bizarre gesture was largely muted on social media on Tuesday but Human Rights Watch



said it added to a "long list of his bizarre and bullying reactions to reporters".

"Thailand's junta leader General Prayuth Chan-ocha continues to show contempt of media criticism and scrutiny," Sunai Phasuk, senior Thailand researcher at Human Rights Watch, told Reuters.

The general is known for going off-script and for his

public outbursts which are sometimes dismissed as mildly amusing even by his staunchest critics. His comments have also been menacing.

In 2015 he warned journalists that he had the power to execute them. In another, separate incident he threw a banana peel at a reporter.

Prayuth's government has announced it will hold a general election in November 2018 after repeatedly delaying the vote.

However, it has yet to lift a ban on political campaigning despite pressure from groups of all political stripes.

"Even when the junta promises to hold an election, there is no open space for media freedom," said Sunai.

Children's Day is celebrated annually in Thailand on the second Saturday of January. On the day, armed forces open up military barracks to children to let them pose with weapons and tanks. Children are also invited to sit at the prime minister's work desk inside Government House.

(Source: Reuters)

## Neither logical nor expedient

**1→** MPs must realize that heavily subsidized petrol, which have turned into a malignant disease in the Iranian economy, is unnecessarily devouring a considerable portion of the revenues which must be used for economic priorities. They must also know that if they hesitate to allow a partial increase in petrol

prices, the severity of this disease will become more intolerable and tomorrow the country may be forced to take tougher decisions.

Parliamentarians must also bear this in mind that Iran's main revenue, which mostly comes from oil export, is not sustainable, especially as the world is speedily moving

toward renewable sources of energy and more countries are joining the club of oil exporters.

The parliament must also be reminded that while Iran is facing repeated droughts, which by itself adds to the number of unemployed people, and the Trump administration, which is maddeningly discouraging foreigners to

invest in Iran despite the nuclear deal, selling gasoline with a highly low price is neither logical nor expedient.

It is extremely expected that when the entire parliament votes for the budget it would allow a partial, if not 50 percent, increase in petrol prices.



## North Korea to send athletes to Winter Olympics

North Korea has agreed to send a delegation to next month's Winter Olympics in South Korea and to hold talks with Seoul to ease military tensions, in the most significant thaw in relations between the neighboring states in years.

Delegates from the two nations met face to face on Tuesday for the first time in more than two years, at the border village of Panmunjom -- known as "truce village" -- in the Korean peninsula's heavily fortified demilitarized zone.

North Korea would send a high-level delegation comprising athletes, a cheering squad, an art troupe, a visitors' group, a Taekwondo demonstration team and a press corps, a closing joint statement said.

The two countries also announced military talks "to ease the current military tensions between the two Koreas." The talks were first proposed by Seoul, the South Korean Unification Ministry said earlier. "We expressed the need to promptly resume dialogue for peace settlement, including denuclearization, and based on the mutual respect (the two Koreas) cooperate and stop activities that would raise tensions on the Korean Peninsula," said unification vice minister Chun Hae-sung.

Chun also announced that both sides planned to re-open a military hotline on the western Korean Peninsula. The hotline was one of many shut down as inter-Korean relations soured.

But the two countries were not on the same page on all fronts. North Korea's chief negotiator, Ri Son Gwon, expressed strong discontent over the mention of denuclearization in context of military talks and also complained that Chun had presented the hotline development as a result of the latest discussions. He said that had already been agreed upon on Wednesday last week.

The talks make official the sentiments from North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who in a New Year's Day address said he wanted his country to compete in the Olympics, in a statement seen as an olive branch after a year of aggression from Pyongyang, through regular missile and nuclear testing.

(Source: Staff & Agency)

## Roberto Mancini open to coaching Italy national team

Roberto Mancini has refused to rule out the prospect of becoming the next Italy boss. Gian Piero Ventura was sacked in November after the Azzurri suffered a play-off defeat to Sweden, failing to qualify for the World Cup for the first time since 1958.

A successor is yet to be appointed after Italian Football Federation (FIGC) president Carlo Tavecchio stepped down.

Mancini is currently in charge of Zenit and, while the ex-Inter and Manchester City boss maintains he is happy working in Russia, he was unwilling to take himself out of the running should his country come calling. "Before choosing the coach, it seems to me that we have to choose a the new FIGC president. "the 53-year-old told Mediaset. "But I absolutely do not exclude coaching Italy. I think like other coaches -- you can never exclude anything." Mancini added: "My experience in Russia is going. We started well, then had a difficult spell and we'll restart the league in second place. We hope to make up ground on Lokomotiv."

After 20 games and with the competition currently on a mid-season break, Zenit are eight points shy of Lokomotiv Moscow at the top of the Russian Premier League.

Mancini's men will face Scottish champions Celtic in the Europa League round of 32 next month.

(Source: Goal)

## Conte has no regrets over Mourinho row



Chelsea head coach Antonio Conte has no regrets over his escalating feud with Jose Mourinho.

Conte has become embroiled in a war of words with his Manchester United counterpart over the past week after Mourinho made reference to unnamed coaches behaving like "clowns on the touchline". This was widely interpreted as a swipe at the ever-animated Conte, who responded by accusing Mourinho of having "demenza senile" in his native Italian -- Chelsea later maintained their boss was searching for the word for amnesia -- and forgetting his actions in the past.

The Portuguese then took the invitation to delve into Conte's past and reference the ex-Juventus and Italy coach's four-month ban for allegedly failing to report match-fixing at his former club Siena. The 48-year-old was subsequently cleared of any wrongdoing and branded Mourinho a "little man" after Chelsea's 0-0 FA Cup draw against Norwich City on Saturday.

Chelsea are back in action against Arsenal in the first leg of their EFL Cup semi-final at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday and, with the unseemly spat still prominent in the pre-match discussion, Conte insisted he had no cause to question his own conduct.

"I have this look -- a person that regrets? I don't think so," he said. "I think we both said the things and we'll see what happens in future." Conte went on to reject suggestions that the League Managers' Association or either club could be needed to step in and mediate on a matter of personal dislike.

"I think it is not important for the Association, it's not important," he said. "[Mourinho] said serious words and used serious words. I won't forget this.

"This is not a problem for the clubs. It is a problem between me and him." Chelsea beat United 1-0 at Stamford Bridge in November and travel to Old Trafford for the reverse Premier League fixture on February 25.

(Source: Four Four Two)

# Wawrinka, Nadal give Australian Open huge boost

Former champions Stan Wawrinka and Rafa Nadal gave Australian Open organisers a massive boost on Tuesday when they both said they were looking forward to next week's season opening grand slam after battling long-term injuries.

The Australian Open has been hit hard by absences with Andy Murray, Serena Williams and Kei Nishikori among those to have withdrawn, while Nadal and Novak Djokovic have also been struggling with injuries.

Wawrinka has been battling a knee injury and has not played since he was knocked out in the first round of Wimbledon last year, and the Swiss was one of the major question marks heading into the January 15-28 Australian Open.

"I'm really, really happy to be back on the Tour and seeing the sun," Wawrinka told reporters after an event with the tournament's ball kids at Melbourne Park on Tuesday.

"For me, the first thing is to play a match, to play a tennis match again. It's been many months out of the tour. It's not always the best when you are an athlete so I'm looking forward to it, enjoying the crowd. Still a lot to do but I'm feeling really positive so looking forward to starting."

It was naturally a welcome news to Australian Open director Craig Tiley.

"There's been a lot of questions and in fact this is the first time publicly in six months that he's said anything, so we are excited that he agreed to come here and do it with the ball kids," Tiley said. "So he's ready to play. I've watched him practice.

"Obviously to play best-of-five-set



matches and to play seven of them in two weeks, he'd need to have a lot of things go his way. But, as he indicated this morning, he will be ready to play and it's great to see him out here."

Tiley's mood would have improved even further after Nadal returned to the court for an exhibition match at the Kooyong Classic.

## FA to adopt 'Rooney Rule' for appointing future England managers



The Football Association has announced it will interview at least one applicant from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background for future managerial roles with England.

Speaking on Tuesday, chief executive Martin Glenn said the FA will adopt its own version of the 'Rooney Rule' implemented in the NFL in 2003.

"What it will say is the opportunity to have a career beyond playing is something that the FA is serious about promoting," Glenn said.

"The FA wants to become a more inclusive organisation where the workforce more represents the people who play football today."

Football League clubs introduced their own version of the 'Rooney Rule' from 1 January but the same measure has been applied to roles in their academies since June.

The FA has also announced a major increase in grassroots funding and several initiatives to boost diversity throughout the game.

Based on the speech chairman Greg Clarke gave to the FA Council in October shortly after a shambolic appearance before

the digital, culture, media and sport select committee, the new plan is the governing body's response to the issues thrown up by the Eni Aluko affair.

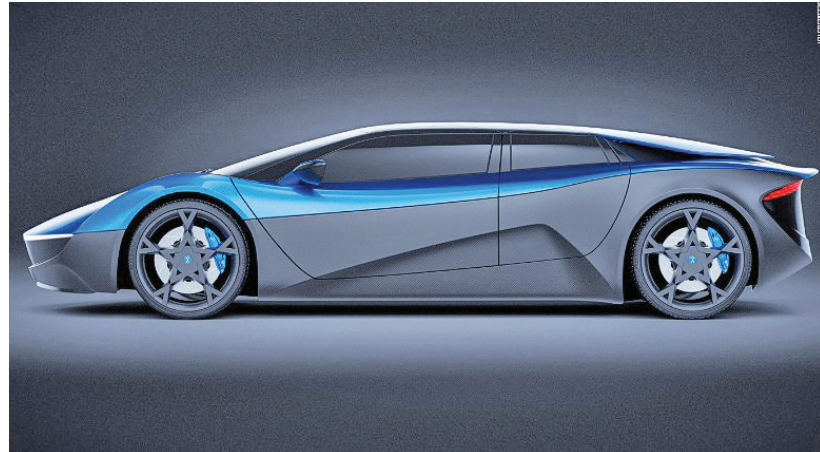
That saga, which eventually led to the sacking of England women's team manager Mark Sampson, prompted Clarke and his senior team to ask why the FA continues to lurch from crisis to crisis, with little attention paid to its successes, such as England's remarkable progress in age-group football.

In that job-saving speech, Clarke identified three major problems: the FA's role is large and complicated and it is not viewed as competent; it is too male, old and white; and it does not use the experience of ex-players and managers as well as other national associations.

In a statement on Tuesday, Glenn said: "The initiatives and investments announced today will make a significant impact to the way football is run in this country. They illustrate both how committed the FA is to becoming a more inclusive and diverse organisation, and how much it contributes to English football.

(Source: Guardian)

## Formula E partners with Swiss technology giant to 'write the future'



The rush to be a part of the all-electric street racing series that's "writing the future" goes on. Just four years into its development, Formula E has announced a "groundbreaking" multi-year partnership with Swiss industrial technology giant ABB.

The annual motorsport series will be renamed the "ABB FIA Formula E Championship" -- the first time an FIA-sanctioned single-seater championship has had a title sponsor.

As the third E-Prix of 2017/18 approaches in Marrakesh, Morocco, Formula E chief executive Alejandro Agag called it "an historic day" for the series he founded in 2014.

"Our two companies are synonymous with pushing the boundaries of what is possible," said Agag during an announcement at the Saatchi Gallery in London Tuesday.

"Together, as partners, we will showcase breakthrough technology on a global scale." Ulrich Spiesshofer, chief executive of ABB, is excited at the possibility of shaping the future of transport.

"Today, two pioneers are uniting," said Spiesshofer. "ABB and Formula E are a natural fit at the forefront of the latest electrification and digital technologies.

"Together, we will write the next phase of this exciting sports activity and foster high-performance teams. Together, we will write the future -- one electrifying race at a time."

### Electric future

Numerous manufacturing giants -- including Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Porsche and Jaguar -- have announced plans to participate in the series in recent years, showing electric racing's increasing "relevance to the motor industry," according to Agag. ABB, which claims to annually dedicate \$1.5 billion to fund "research and development activities," gives Formula E further scope to grow.

"The tremendous level of excitement surrounding this new FIA discipline is tangible," said FIA president Jean Todt, calling the collaboration "proof of the attractiveness" of a championship still very much in its infancy.

"The mobilization of major economic powers around the pillars of this discipline -- new technologies, electric mobility and sustainable development -- is a very good sign, and something to be excited about."

(Source: CNN)

## Wrong wax? Snow problem for Olympic athletes

It is the one subject skiers and snowboarders cannot stop obsessing about at the Winter Olympics - how best to wax their equipment to ensure maximum speed and stability.

Get it right in the waxing shed and you can glide your way to Olympic glory. Get it wrong and the snow can turn to treacle.

In cross-country skiing, athletes must ensure they get their "kick wax" right in order to keep pace in the uphill stretches and former biathlete Jean-Marc Chabloz told Reuters there was no room for error.

"It is completely crucial, completely crucial," the four-time Olympian said as he demonstrated the basic techniques for waxing cross-country skis.

"You can't win a race with bad skis, it just doesn't work. Everyone is at their best, so it's small margins."

Chabloz, who now coaches student athletes at the Jamtlands High School in Sweden, expertly cleaned his skis and used a hot iron to spread a thin layer of glide wax before polishing them to a smooth finish.

For cross-country skiers and biathletes, getting the balance right is tough. They need to be able to ski as fast as possible across flat ground and downhill, but they also need a good grip to get them to the top of hills.

To achieve this, a stickier "kick wax" is applied to the



ski in the area under and in front of the foot, while the rest is given a coating of glide wax.

But it is not just a case of what wax is applied where. There are hundreds of products on the market for different conditions.

"There's many parameters that have to be taken into account when waxing. The quality of the snow - is it rough or fine? It's the temperature, humidity and of course the

distance," Chabloz explains. The 50-year-old, who competed for Switzerland in Albertville, Lillehammer, Nagano and Salt Lake City, said he always got his waxing right at the Olympics, but others are not so lucky.

At the 2014 Sochi Games, both Norwegian relay teams performed poorly and the blame was laid squarely on the waxing team. And at a World Cup event in Ruka, Finland in November, it happened again.

"The skiers had good grip when they tested the skis, and bad grip when they skied the race. It's easy to explain - it was a waxing miss." Knut Nystad, who is responsible for waxing in the Norwegian team, told reporters.

For Alpine skiers and snowboarders, the requirements are different, with sharp edges often needed on their equipment to cut into the artificial snow and icy surfaces of downhill and slopestyle courses.

When waxing, teams must also take into account the fact that conditions can change during a race, which makes waxing more an art than a science.

But for Chabloz, the key is not to complicate things. "There's a whole pile of waxing products out there, so you have to try to stick to something simple that you know, and then there's no big worries," he said.

(Source: Reuters)



# Iran to play Puerto Rico at FIVB World Championship opener

**S P O R T S** **d e s k** Iran national volleyball team will kick off the FIVB Men's World Championship with a match Puerto Rico.

The match will be held in Varna, Bulgaria on Sept. 12. The first round of the Championship will be co-hosted by Italy and Bulgaria from September 9 to 30.

As previously announced, the 24 teams participating in the competition will play in Italy (Pools A and C) and Bulgaria (Pools B and D).

The opening match in Pool A will take place at the Foro Italico in Rome on September 9, with the remaining matches in the pool to be played at the Nelson Mandela Forum in Florence from September 12-18.

The opening match in Pool D to be played at the Palace of Culture and Sport in Varna will also take place on September 9. Pool B will be played at the Bulstrad Arena in Ruse and Pool C at the Palaflorio in Bari.

## ■ Pool D (Varna)

September 9: Bulgaria-Finland.

September 12: Iran-Puerto Rico; Cuba-Poland.

September 13: Puerto Rico-Poland; Iran-Bulgaria. Cuba and Finland do not play.

September 14: Finland-Cuba; Bulgaria-Puerto Rico. Poland and Iran do not play.

September 15: Cuba-Iran; Poland-Finland. Bulgaria and Puerto Rico do not play.

September 16: Puerto Rico-Finland; Cuba-Bulgaria. Iran and Poland do not play.

September 17: Cuba-Puerto Rico; Iran-Poland. Bulgaria and Finland do not play.

September 18: Finland-Iran; Bulgaria-Poland. Cuba and Puerto Rico do not play.

The 2018 FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship will take place from September 9 to 30. The first round of the competition will be followed by second (September 21-23) and third pool round matches (September 26-28), semifinals (September 29) and finals (September 30).



The third round, semifinals and finals will be played in Turin, Italy.

## ■ Second round

If co-hosts Italy and Bulgaria qualify for the second

round, they will play in Milan and Sofia respectively regardless of whether they finish first, second or third in their first round pools. The host cities will be adjusted accordingly, fivb.org wrote.

## Iran legendary footballer Ali Parvin released from hospital

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** – Ex-Iran national football team and Persepolis midfielder Ali Parvin has been released from the hospital and is recovering at home.

Parvin was hospitalized in Tehran's Kasra Hospital last week after he was feeling dizzy.

He was diagnosed with high blood pressure, the doctors said.

"I would you like to thank all the fans who came to visit me in the hospital," Parvin said in a video message.

Ali Parvin, nicknamed "Sultan", is regarded as one of the most prominent Iranian footballers. During his career, he has been associated mainly with Persepolis, played for the team for eighteen years, managed the club for seventeen years in three occasion and also the club's president.

He was selected as one of the seventeen Asian football elites by AFC and received a statue from this con-



federation.

He was named as one of the members of Persepolis Hall of Fame and the club thanked him for his great performance during his senior career at Persepolis.

The club gave him a statue of his face and named him as one of the twelve great players of Persepolis in the 1970s.

## Iran to host two top-class beach soccer competitions

**S P O R T S** **d e s k** Iran will host top-class beach soccer competitions in both January and April this year, beachsoccer.com wrote.

Iran will host two top-class beach soccer events in the space of four months this year with clubs and international teams heading their later this month and again in April.

One of the traditional heartlands of the sport, players and teams will get to experience the famous Iranian atmosphere once again, starting with the Persian Beach Soccer Cup in Bushehr between January 27th and 29th.

The international event sees hosts Iran take on Ukraine, Spain and Azerbaijan in what promises to be a fascinating tournament.

While Iran remain one of the best nations in the world, sitting third in the rankings, Spain go into the competition off the back of trophy success at the Copa Lagos in Nigeria, former European champions Ukraine kick off their 2018 campaign in Bushehr



and Azerbaijan will hope to continue their steady improvement in recent years.

Just over two months later, the sport returns to Iran with the Eurasia Beach Soccer Cup in Yazd.

The competing clubs are yet to be confirmed for the event between April 3rd and 5th.

## Golfer Fritsch banned for three months for doping violation

Canadian golfer Brad Fritsch has been banned for three months after he reported himself to PGA Tour officials for violating its anti-doping policy, the governing body said on Monday.

The 40-year-old, who plays on the secondary Buy.com Tour and is eligible to return to competition on Feb. 28, said the banned substance was in a supplement he had been taking to assist weight loss.

"Mr. Fritsch self-reported this information after discovering that an ingredient in a supplement that he was taking was on the prohibited list," the Tour said in a statement.

"He has acknowledged his inadvertent error and accepted his suspension."

Fritsch, in a Facebook posting, said his heart had "sank" when he realized that one of the supplements he was taking included dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA).

"That ... supplement ended up containing a substance called DHEA," he wrote.

"I'm just so upset with myself that I didn't think to question what was in the supplements. But I never did. And in the program rules, it stipulates that a self-report is the same as a positive test."

Fritsch has won once on the Buy.com Tour.

DHEA is a hormone produced by the adrenal glands and its production peaks when someone is in their mid-20s, according to the webmd.com website. In most people,

production gradually declines with age.

Fritsch joins a small list of players suspended since the PGA Tour began drug testing in 2008.

With the exception of former world number on Vijay Singh, most have been little-known journeymen.

Singh was suspended for 90 days in 2013 after saying in a magazine interview that he was using deer antler spray.

The tour banned Singh for using the spray, which contained an insulin-like growth factor on its banned list.

The suspension was lifted after the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) concluded that the spray should be removed from its list of banned substances.

(Source: Reuters)

## 'Unacceptable' Iwobi faces fine



Alex Iwobi will be fined if is confirmed he attended a party less than 48 hours before playing in Arsenal's FA Cup exit, says Arsene Wenger.

The 21-year-old, a product of Arsenal's academy, was pictured at an event in London in which he was reported to have stayed until early Sunday morning - hours before their third-round defeat at Nottingham Forest.

Wenger said the party took place on Friday night and that the matchday team had stayed in a hotel on Saturday ahead of the game.

"He will be fined," said Wenger.

"It was not the night before the game, it was 48 hours before the game. The night before the game we were in a hotel, but it's not acceptable, I will have to speak to him about that.

"First of all you have to be cautious with all the news coming out. When you read what is reported it is like he has taken drugs. I don't think he is involved in that at all.

"He has been out at a party, how long has he stayed? That is of course very important. After that, I will decide what happens.

"If your neighbour takes drugs what can you do about it? You are not responsible for the behaviour of your neighbour."

FA Cup holders Arsenal came under heavy criticism after they were beaten 4-2 by Nottingham Forest, who were without a permanent manager, last weekend.

Wenger had made nine changes for the trip to the City Ground, but said he will alter his line up again for the first leg of their Carabao Cup semi final against Chelsea on Wednesday, live on Sky Sports Football.

The Arsenal boss believes his side's results have suffered due to injuries, with those unavailable to face Forest still yet to recover from injury as yet.

(Source: Skysports)

## 'Reds must fulfil klopp's ambitions'



Liverpool could lose manager Jurgen Klopp to one of their rivals if they do not match the German's ambitions, says the club's former managing director Christian Purslow.

Liverpool sold playmaker Philippe Coutinho to Barcelona for £146m over the weekend and Purslow feels the Reds must now use the proceeds from the Brazil international's sale to strengthen their squad.

If Liverpool do keep offloading their best players and do not bring in high-quality replacements, though, Purslow has warned his former club that they may risk losing their manager to one of their rivals.

"They [United] are shopping at Harrods - I do not know why he is making excuses by the way - Liverpool need to start shopping at Harrods rather than just selling the good ones," said Purslow, who was MD at Anfield between 2009 and 2010.

"And I really believe Jurgen Klopp is absolutely A-list, he is the next manager for one of those bigger clubs if Liverpool do not fulfil his ambitions."

The two Manchester clubs and champions Chelsea have all spent big on player recruitment in recent times, so much so that there is now a divide between that trio and Liverpool, Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur, according to Purslow.

"It is not a Big Six - it is a three and a three. It feels to me like City, United and Chelsea are breaking away from Liverpool, Arsenal and Tottenham for pure economic reasons," Purslow told The Debate.

"United are what Jose was on about, you are talking Paul Pogba, the most desired footballer on the planet went there last summer.

"The most productive centre-forward in the Premier League, Romelu Lukaku, went there last summer. Henrikh Mkhitaryan, probably the most admired creative midfield player in Germany, went there."

(Source: Skysports)

## Iran indoor hockey team finish third at Rohrmax Cup 2018

**Press TV** — The Iranian men's national indoor field hockey team have defeated the Czech Republic squad at the Rohrmax Cup 2018 to claim the third place overall at the conclusion of the international tournament.

The Iranian outfit defeated Czech 5-3 to win the bronze medal, the Islamic Republic of Iran Hockey Federation website reported.

Later in the day, Austria beat Switzerland 8-1 in the title clash, and shattered the Central Europeans' championship hopes.

The Rohrmax Cup 2018 kicked off in the Austrian capital city of Vienna on January 5, 2018.

The Iranian squad comprised Alireza Chezani Sharahi, Mohammad Asnaashari, Abbas Aruei, Amir Aruei, Yaghoob Bahrami, Behdad Biranvand, Sasan Hataminejad, Mohsen Bohlouli, Hamid Nouraniyan, Reza Norouzzadeh, Behnam Sa'di and Navid Taherirad.

The team were led by Esfandiar Safaei as the head coach. Abolfazl Yousefi and Masoud Bohlouli assisted Safaei as coaches.

## Branko Ivankovic moves up at World Rankings

**TASNIM** — Persepolis football team coach Branko Ivankovic has moved up one place in the latest Club World Ranking.

Ivankovic has moved to 134th in the rankings and is the best coach in Iran football.

Former Esteghlal coach Alireza Mansourian is second in the rankings, sitting at the 212th place.

Foolad coach Siros Pourmousavi, who is third coach in Club World Ranking, sits at 336th place.

Iran Professional League title-holder Persepolis have moved down one place to 136th in the ranking but still are the country's best team in the ranking.

Esteghlal have moved up two places to 182, while Esteghlal Khuzestan moved down one place to 337.

Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia are the best Asian team and sit 30th in the world ranking.

## Sprinter banned for 8 years for sabotaging rival's doping test

One of Japan's top sprint canoeists has been banned from competition for eight years for spiking a younger rival's drink with an anabolic steroid, causing him to fail a doping test, the Japan Anti-Doping Agency said Tuesday.

The Japan Canoe Federation will recommend at a board meeting to be held around March to permanently ban the canoeist, 32-year-old Yasuhiro Suzuki, from competition considering the severe punishment handed down by JADA, federation officials said.

The incident occurred at the national canoe sprint championships last September in Komatsu, Ishikawa Prefecture, where Suzuki and the younger rival, 25-year-old Seiji Komatsu, were both competing, according to the canoe federation.

The two had been considered among the top prospects to represent Japan at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games and were teammates at last year's world championships in the Czech Republic, where Suzuki finished 24th in the men's K1 5000 meters. Komatsu was a member of the K4 500m crew which reached the semifinals.

(Source: kyodonews.net)

## Cristiano Ronaldo 49th most valuable

Cristiano Ronaldo's market value has plunged and the Real Madrid star is now just the 49th most valuable player in the world, according to research from the CIES Football Observatory.

Only last month Ronaldo won a fifth career Ballon d'Or award, while he also took the FIFA Best Player prize and UEFA player of the year award during a year in which he was easily the most decisive player as Madrid won five trophies including the Champions League and La Liga.

However the 32-year-old's past achievements do not count for CIES' valuations which have Paris Saint-Germain's Neymar, 25, top of their list at €213 million, followed by Barcelona's Lionel Messi on €202.2m and Tottenham's Harry Kane third on €194.7m.

New Barcelona midfielder Philippe Coutinho is 16th with a value of €123m, while Ronaldo's expected value of €80.4m has him between Manchester United forward Anthony Martial and Monaco's utility man Fabinho in the rankings.

Above Ronaldo on the list are Liverpool midfielder Georginio Wijnaldum (27th), his Bernabeu teammate Isco (45th) and Manchester City defender Nicolas Otamendi (47th).

Signed by Madrid from Manchester United for a world record €91m back in summer 2009, Ronaldo was seventh in CIES' annual list just 12 months ago, with his estimated worth then set at €126.5m. Neymar (€246.8m), Messi (€170.5m) and United's Paul Pogba (€155.3m) was the 2017 top three.

Gareth Bale was the world's most expensive player between 2014 when he joined Madrid for €101m from Tottenham and 2017. But the Wales international now does not even make the top 100 in the 2018 CIES list. His teammate Marco Asensio, 21, is down in 94th on €51.2m, five places below Southampton winger Nathan Redmond (89th).

CIES say their assessment "takes into account the key criteria used by market actors such as age, position, contract duration, performance and international status." But the announcement that Ronaldo had slipped to 49th place caused so much traffic that it crashed their website on Monday afternoon.

An alternative list of the world's most valuable footballers on Transfermarkt.com has Ronaldo still joint third with Kane on £108m. That list has Messi (£162m) top ahead of Neymar (£135m), with Isco and Bale in joint 21st place (£67.5m).

The Portugal captain is currently seeking a salary increase from Madrid president Florentino Perez, with reports in Spain suggesting that he wants to be paid the same as Neymar and Messi who have recently signed new contracts which included a raise.

Ronaldo's five-year deal, which was signed in November 2016, includes a €1 billion release clause, and though he made it clear last summer that he would consider a move away from the Bernabeu, there were no official bids from other clubs.

(Source: ESPN)



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■ Managing Director: Ali Asgari  
■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895  
editor@tehrantimes.com  
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000  
» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450  
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## Intl. Conference of Asian Cultural Dialogues to open next week in Tehran

**A R T** TEHRAN – The First International Conference of Asian Cultural Dialogues will open in Tehran on January 13.



A poster for the International Conference of Asian Cultural Dialogues

organized by the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO).

Over 70 cultural and academic scholars from 20 Asian countries are expected to attend the 3-day conference, the director of the conference, Mohamad-Ali Rabbani, told the Persian service of MNA on Tuesday.

He added that the conference has been arranged to put a spotlight on cultural and spiritual affinity among the Asian countries.

The organizers will also hold several meetings at the Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mazandaran University in Babolsar, and the Bu Ali Sina University in Hamedan.

The conference has been organized by the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO).

## “The Greatest Showman” swings to top of Billboard 200 chart

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — The soundtrack for circus musical “The Greatest Showman” climbed its way to the top of the U.S. weekly Billboard 200 album chart on Monday, leaving offerings from Ed Sheeran and Taylor Swift as the runner-ups.

“The Greatest Showman” soundtrack, which features songs by the cast including Hugh Jackman, Zac Efron and Zendaya, sold another 106,000 total album units in the week ending Jan. 4, according to figures from Nielsen SoundScan.



Benj Pasek and Justin Paul hold the awards they won for Best Original Song - Motion Picture for “This Is Me” from the film “The Greatest Showman,” at the 75th Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California, U.S. January 7, 2018. (Reuters/Lucy Nicholson)

The soundtrack’s lead song, “This Is Me”, won the Golden Globe award for best original song in a motion picture on Sunday. The 20th Century Fox film, about circus entertainer P. T. Barnum, has grossed \$150 million worldwide since its Dec. 20 release.

Sheeran’s “Divide” album remained at No. 2 for a second week with sales of 67,000 units, while his single “Perfect” featuring Beyonce held steady at No. 1 on the Digital Songs chart with another 109,000 copies sold.

Swift’s “Reputation” album, which opened 2018 at the top of the Billboard 200 chart last week, dropped to No. 3 with 48,000 units sold.

No new entries made the top 10 of the Billboard 200 chart this week.

## Pink to sing national anthem at Super Bowl LII

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — Pink will get the Super Bowl party started by singing the national anthem before the championship game in Minneapolis on Feb. 4, the NFL said on Monday.

The performance will mark the Grammy award-winning singer’s first appearance on the Super Bowl stage, which has been graced by artists such as Luke Bryan, Lady Gaga and Idina Menzel in recent years.

Performances of the national anthem have been a major talking point during the NFL season as players have used the occasion to take knees, sit or link arms during the song to protest about racial inequality and police brutality in the U.S.

The protests have been criticized by the Trump Administration, which has chosen to interpret the demonstrations as offensive to the U.S. military.

Vice President Mike Pence walked out of an NFL game in Indianapolis earlier this season when players protested during the anthem.

The NFL previously announced that singer Justin Timberlake would headline the halftime show.

# “The Salesman” trying luck at BAFTA Awards

**A R T** TEHRAN – The Oscar-winning drama “The Salesman” by Iranian director Asghar Farhadi was nominated in the not in the English language category at the British Academy Film Awards, the organizers announced on Tuesday.

A Memento production, “The Salesman” is about Emad and Rana who move into a new flat in the center of Tehran. An incident linked to the previous tenant dramatically changes the young couple’s life.

This film received the Oscar for best foreign-language film in 2017.

In 2016, Farhadi won the award for best screenplay for this movie at the 69th Cannes Film Festival. It also brought Shahab Hosseini the Palme d’Or for best actor.

At the British Academy Film Awards, which is presented by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA), the rape-revenge black comedy “Elle” by Paul Verhoeven from France will compete with “The Salesman”.

The French-Cambodian drama “First They Killed My Father” by Angelina Jolie, Korean psychological thriller “The Handmaiden” by Park Chan-wook and Russian drama “Loveless” by Andrey Zvyagintsev are other contenders in this category.

The 71st British Academy Film Awards, more commonly known as the BAFTAs, will be held on 18 February 2018 at the



Shahab Hosseini (L) and Taraneh Alidoosti act in a scene from “The Salesman”.

Royal Albert Hall in London.

“Call Me by Your Name”, “Darkest

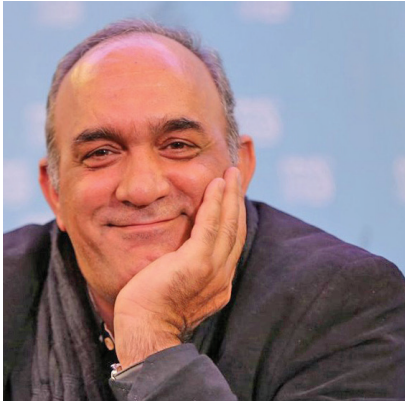
Hour”, “Dunkirk”, “The Shape of Water”

and “Three Billboards Outside Ebbing,

Missouri” were nominated for the award

for best film.

## Greek, Iranian theater experts to hold panel discussion on female characters



This combo shows the Iranian director and writer Shokrehoda Gudarzi (L) and the Greek stage star and director Katerina Evangelatou.



**A R T** TEHRAN – The Greek stage star and director Katerina Evangelatou and Iranian director and writer Shokrehoda Gudarzi will hold a joint panel discussion in Tehran in late January.

The panel discussion will be organized at the Amirkhani Hall of the Iranshahr Theater Complex on January 22 as part of the various programs arranged by the 36th Fajr International Theater Festival, the organizers announced on Tuesday.

Female characters in dramatic works created by literary luminaries of both Greece and Iran will be scrutinized at the panel discussion.

A graduate of the Greek National Theatre Drama School, Evangelatou also studied philosophy at Athens University and the classical guitar at the Greek Conservatory.

She pursued postgraduate studies in theatre direction at the Russian Academy of Theater Arts in Moscow and at Middlesex University in the UK on an Onassis Foundation scholarship.

She has directed numerous plays, including “The Suicide Club”, “Revenge” and “The Glass Menagerie”.

Gudarzi has expertise in mythical and epic characters in the Persian dramatic texts.

## Iranian artists hailed as Living Human Treasures

**A R T** TEHRAN – Three celebrated Iranian artists in music have been honored with the title of Living Human Treasures on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

Ebrahim Qanbari-Mehr, a pioneer in making and restoring musical instruments, tonbak virtuoso Mohammad Esmaeili, and Ashiq Saljuq Shahbazi received the honors on Monday, the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization (CHTHO) announced.

According to UNESCO, the Living Human Treasures are persons who possess to a high degree the knowledge and skills required for performing or re-creating specific elements of the intangible cultural heritage.

“Qanbari-Mehr specializes in making violins, but he also makes and repairs traditional Iranian musical instruments,”



This combination photo shows Ebrahim Qanbari-Mehr (L), Mohammad Esmaeili (C) and Ashiq Saljuq Shahbazi.

said Farhad Nazari, the director of CHTHO Office for Inscription of Properties and Revitalization of Intangible and Natural Heritage.

“He is 89 years old. He is one of the oldest instrument makers in Iran and he has been able to make all the Iranian musical instruments due to his high talent

in that field.

“He has also made great changes and innovations in the instruments to help offset the disadvantages of many instruments,” he added.

Esmaeili is the first person to write music scores for tonbak with the help of musicians Hossein Dehlavi, Mostafa-Kamal Purtorab and Hushang Zarif.

Ashiq Shahbazi is a poet, composer and a professional musician who founded the Iran Ashiqlar House in 2015.

An ashig, also spelled ashik and ashug, is a mystic troubadour or traveling bard, who blends together instrumental and vocal music, dance, poetry and storytelling in his performances.

Mostly performed by men, the art of ashliqlar or ashigs, is more common in Iran’s northwestern provinces of East Azarbaijan, West Azarbaijan, Ardebil and Zanzan.

## “Roseanne” star says revived show reflects Trump’s America

**PASADENA, Calif. (Reuters)** — The March revival of hit 1990s television comedy “Roseanne” will show how a politically divided, working-class American family grapples with daily life and challenges after the election of U.S. President Donald Trump, the show’s stars said on Monday.

Walt Disney Co’s ABC broadcast network is bringing back “Roseanne”, starring Roseanne Barr and John Goodman, for nine episodes starting March 27.

In the new episodes, the titular Roseanne, played by Barr, is now a grandmother who voted for Trump and at times clashes with family members and friends with opposing views, the show’s cast and producers said at a Television Critics Association event.

The original “Roseanne” aired from 1988 to 1997 and was the most-watched show on U.S. television in 1989 and 1990. It featured a blue-collar family, the Connors, with overweight parents struggling to get by in the fictional town of Lanford, Illinois.

The series was praised for its realistic portrayal of a working-class family in the United States, and Barr said she wanted the revival to also present a true-to-life portrait



Actress Roseanne Barr arrives at the 75th Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California, U.S., January 7, 2018. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

of a country in which half the voters chose Trump.

“It was the working-class people who elected Trump,” Barr said. “I felt that was very real and something that needed to be discussed.”

Barr herself has spoken in support of Trump, but the

show’s producers said the series does not advocate a political stance.

“There is no agenda on anybody’s part but to get honest feelings out there within a family that’s relatable,” executive producer Bruce Helford said.

Many original cast members returned for the revival including Goodman, who plays Roseanne’s husband Dan, and Sara Gilbert, who portrays daughter Darlene.

Gilbert said the new episodes show a family “that is divided by politics but still filled with love.”

The revival will also deal with topical issues such as opioid addiction and access to healthcare, Helford said.

Michael Fishman, who plays Roseanne’s son D.J., said the show lets the characters debate important issues in a way that does not always happen in today’s real-life society.

“We have the conversation about why we don’t agree,” Fishman said. “That dialogue is kind of missing.”

“Roseanne” is the latest hit show from the 1980s and 1990s to be revived, on the heels of comedy “Will & Grace” and supernatural crime drama “Twin Peaks”, both of which returned to television in 2017.