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Engulfed in the flames of sorrow

Nation mourns loss of 32 sailors



© Reuters

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Rouhani: Nuclear deal will never vanish

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday that the successes of the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), can never be wiped out.

“By reaching the JCPOA, we told the world that regional and even complicated international problems can be resolved at the negotiating table and this will go down in history,” he said

during his speech at the closing ceremony of the 9th Farabi International Award.

“We proved that an international tight knot can be undone at the negotiating table and this is not something that will vanish.”

Rouhani also said, “We proved that Iran is truthful and the enemies are liars. We proved that we did not seek nuclear weapon which was confirmed by the (UN nuclear) Agency.” **->2**

Judiciary: 400 protesters still in custody

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Judiciary spokesman Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i said on Sunday that still 400 of the protesters who were arrested during the recent unrest across the country are in custody.

The protest rallies which first started in Mashhad on December 28 spread to some other cities in the country. They

died down after a week. The protests in certain cities turned violent as vandals joined the protesters.

The protests were mainly motivated by economic problems, corruption, and economic disparity.

Eje'i said 50 of the remaining detainees are from Tehran and the rest from other cities, IRNA reported. **->2**

Zakzaky explains his son details of meeting with doctors, press

Leader of Nigerian Muslims Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky spoke to the press in a brief interaction on Saturday while being allowed to meet with his own doctors after international call upon Nigerian government to pay heed to his critical health condition.

After the meeting, Sheikh Ibrahim

Zakzaky spoke to his son informing him of the incidents happened during his meeting with his doctors and the journalist who moved towards him asking some questions.

Here is the full text of his conversation with his son on Saturday. **->13**

ARTICLE
 By Mohammad Marandi
 Political analyst

Our trump cards against Trump

Donald Trump on Friday extended nuclear sanctions relief with certain conditions, one of which was restrictions on the missile program of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Since the first days that Barjam [the Persian name for the nuclear deal] went into force, when Barack Obama was still in power, America started violating it and this trend has been continuing until today. However, our country – despite meeting all its commitments – has reaped limited benefits from Barjam. Trump, too, continued this trend and due to the limited remaining benefits of Barjam, he is seeking to again blackmail the Islamic Republic of Iran.

But it is clear that renegotiation with America over nuclear program or any other issue is lunacy, because Barjam revealed that America is not trustworthy. Even if we say yes to negotiations with America over any issue, that country will again try to blackmail us in pursuit of its illegitimate benefits. Trump, like Obama, has a tendency to reap the benefits of Barjam but restrict our country's benefits from it.

Thus, so long as Barjam is not thoroughly implemented and our country does not benefit from it, negotiating with America about any other issue is meaningless. We do not trust America, and believe that the approach employed by that country regarding renegotiation will lead us to a dead end.

Also, it should not be overlooked that America, by bringing up negotiations about the missile program of the Islamic Republic of Iran, is seeking to dispossess us of this capability, because if we don't have a strong defense industry, America's military threats will get serious.

The goal of the military program of the Islamic Republic is to defend the country from the aggression of big powers and terrorism. Therefore, in order to protect our land, we won't need the permission of anyone, and as a result we won't negotiate with America or any other country for safeguarding our interests and defense capability.

Linking missile issues to Barjam is sheer stupidity because America – with its approach toward Barjam and its lack of commitment – proved that it cannot be negotiated with about any issue, especially missile program. **->2**

Trump's approach toward JCPOA contrary to U.S. interest: Prof. Zonis

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
 By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN – Commenting on Trump's recent approach toward the JCPOA, Marvin Zonis, Professor of international political economy says his approach is stupid and contrary to the U.S. national interest.

U.S. president Trump on Friday renewed Iran sanctions relief once again and at the same time warned that it was the last time that he renewed the Iran sanctions relief and asked the Europeans to work on changes to the JCPOA.

The issue was discussed with Marvin Zonis, Professor of international political economy and leadership in the University of Chicago.

Following is the full text of the interview:

■ What is your general assessment of Trump's latest approach toward the JCPOA?

A: It is as stupid and contrary to America's national interest as his earlier approaches. I am confident he understands nothing about the agreement other than it was made by President Obama. That is enough for Trump to hate the agreement



irrespective of its contents.

■ What changes is Trump after for the agreement?

A: I believe he will demand changes that will be unacceptable to the P5+1 as well as to Iran, implicitly for the purpose of blowing up the deal.

■ Considering the EU, Russia and China supports to the JCPOA and Iran's opposition to any changes to it, how realistic are Trump's requests? Will the EU and other signatories to the deal give up to his requests?

A: No, the other signatories will not agree to Trump's request and of course he has no better alternative.

Iran won't accept permanent restrictions on uranium enrichment: Nephew

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
 By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN – Richard Nephew, who served as the lead sanctions expert for the U.S. team negotiating with Iran, is of the opinion that I do not believe the EU will accept to make restrictions on Iran's uranium enrichment permanent.

He adds that “I certainly do not think that Iran will accept it, as presented.”

Fellow at the Center on Global Energy

Policy at Columbia University, says “I do think that there was an opportunity to negotiate a follow on agreement to the JCPOA, perhaps including regional nuclear and arms control topics. I fear that this opportunity is slipping away because of unreasonable and unrealistic demands being made by Mr. Trump.”

Following is the text of the interview with Nephew:

■ U.S. President Donald Trump approved the Iran nuclear deal only one more time before

Are European countries able to resist Trump's requests?

A: Yes, U.S. relations with Europe are at an all-time low and Trump's credibility with European allies is appropriately non-existent.

■ How serious should his threat be taken?

A: Since Iran does not have nuclear weapons and North Korea does, it is much safer for Trump to order air strikes against Iran. It certainly seems that he is eager to bomb someone – Iran may be his first choice.

■ What will be the consequences of possible withdrawal of Trump from the JCPOA for U.S.?

A: If I were the government of Iran, I would go back to building a bomb.

■ What can Iran do to reduce the U.S. pressures?

A: The principle complaint about Iran by U.S. strategic thinkers is not its nuclear program which is under control through the nuclear deal. It is instead Iran's foreign policy with Hezbollah, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Hamas. An Iranian withdrawal from Syria would be a major step in quieting that concern.

abandoning it if it is not changed. What are the changes that Trump emphasize on them?

A: Mr. Trump has said very clearly that he would like to have an agreement in which Iran renounces an expansion of its nuclear program beyond present JCPOA levels and accepts extensive, intrusive international inspections. He has also said that he requires additional European and other foreign country support for U.S. efforts to address concerns with Iran's broader regional and domestic behavior. **->7**

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

Subsidized petrol is poison to economy, citizens' health

Certain officials, both in successive parliaments and administrations, have been injecting such a belief among the public that as if cheap petrol is like water for fish.

Certain political factions and officials including parliamentarians have been opposing increase in petrol prices to buy support among the public. A clear example of which is the seventh parliament (2004-2008) which voted against increasing petrol prices.

Rival political factions, which through their influence, or legislators, who through their approvals, have been halting and continue to be halting hike in petrol prices have been taking tolls and continue to take tolls on the national economy and the health of citizens as more cities across the country are engulfed in choking air pollution.

It is due to such populist economic policies and stances that whenever proposals put forward to increase petrol prices the society becomes too sensitive and cry foul without knowing that people themselves are the main victims of such a policy.

So far no senior official in successive administrations has been honestly talking to people about the real price of petrol and its domino effects on the economy, industry, people's health, etc. A great majority of the people don't know that billions of dollars have been spent on import of petrol over the years as the country has not been able to keep pace with the rising consumption of petrol.

Certain officials and experts say that first transportation infrastructure in cities should be improved and then decide to increase petrol prices, but when the rail for that purpose will be laid is not in sight. However one thing is clear: petrol consumption is increasing unabated to the extent that just in Tehran 12 million liters of petrol is consumed per day, which is equal to petrol consumption in Poland with more than 38 million population.

The opponents, who are mostly parliamentarians or former officials or even experts, do not propose increasing petrol price and invest that money for developing transport infrastructure. **->13**



© Tehran Times / Bahman Vakhshour

Rastak performs at Fajr

Dancers perform along with the Iranian folk music ensemble Rastak at a concert during the 33rd Fajr Music Festival at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on January 13, 2018.

The ensemble has been a frequent visitor to the festival over the past decade.

Established in 1997 by a group of music students in Tehran, Rastak has given numerous performances in Australia, Canada and many Europe countries.

The festival will run until January 20.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Leader: Oil tanker crew lost lives while serving country

POLITICS TEHRAN — Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, issued a message on Sunday offering his “sincere” condolences to the Iranian families who lost loved ones in the oil tanker inferno in the East China Sea. Calling the incident “a bitter and heartbreaking incident”, the Leader said, “I sincerely express condolences” to the families of the deceased crew. The Leader said the crew lost their lives while serving the country and this is a “great honor” which may help lessen the heavy grief that has stricken their families.



Trump waging psychological warfare on Iran: commander

POLITICS TEHRAN — Brigadier General Massoud Jazayeri, the deputy chief of the Iranian Armed Forces, said on Sunday that the United States has waged a psychological warfare on Iran for its military capability. Responding to U.S. President Donald Trump’s “wishes” to weaken Tehran’s defense might, Jazayeri said someday Trump and others will realize that the Islamic Republic will never negotiate over its defense power, Mehr reported. He also said the enemies of the Islamic Republic are seeking ways to hurt Iran’s impenetrable defense system, emphasizing the need to constantly improve the national military power.



JCPOA opponents twist facts: ambassador

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran’s Ambassador to London, Hamid Baedinejad, on Saturday criticized the opponents of the nuclear deal, saying they twist certain facts about the deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). “Although no part of the nuclear industry has been stopped or shut down, they say the nuclear industry is closed,” Baedinejad said in a tweet. Iran and six world powers, including the U.S., UK, France, Russia, China and Germany, clinched the JCPOA on July 14, 2015. The deal went into force on January 16, 2016.



Iran overhauls Sukhoi SU-24

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Iranian Air Force has overhauled a Sukhoi SU-24, the Islamic Republic News Agency reported. Iranian veteran and young air force men performed the overhaul operation successfully on Sunday in Shiraz, according to the news outlet. The Sukhoi Su-24 (NATO reporting name: Fencer) is a supersonic, all-weather attack aircraft developed in the Soviet Union. The aircraft has a variable-sweep wing, twin-engines and a side-by-side seating arrangement for its two crew. It was the first of the USSR’s aircraft to carry an integrated digital navigation/attack system. It remains in service with the Russian Air Force, Ukrainian Air Force, and various air forces to which it was exported.



Trump’s failure on JCPOA victory for Iran: expert

POLITICS TEHRAN — U.S. President Donald Trump’s failure to take legal actions against the nuclear agreement is a victory for Iran, an expert on international affairs says. The new sanctions that the United States imposed on Iran are illegitimate and showed that Trump’s threats were all bluff, Ali Khorram was quoted by ISNA as saying on Sunday. On Friday, Trump avoided upending the nuclear deal — also called the JCPOA — which he has repeatedly disparaged, agreeing to waive key sanctions the U.S. lifted as part of the deal. Khorram said by the new sanctions Trump was trying to satisfy himself.



Washington cannot avoid staying in nuclear deal: analyst

POLITICS TEHRAN — U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration have no way but to keep the Iran nuclear deal, a Lebanese Middle East analyst has told IRNA. “It is not simple for Trump to withdraw from an agreement signed by former U.S. administration firstly because the other five parties involved in the deal have proved that they are committed to the nuclear accord,” Sami Nader said. “Secondly, U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis, as well as National Security Advisor Herbert Raymond McMaster and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson as main members of U.S. administration verify the deal and believe it is functioning properly.”

U.S. lost ‘diplomatic battle’ to Iran: Araqchi

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi says Tehran has successfully foiled the U.S. president’s attempts to undermine the 2015 multinational nuclear deal, noting Washington is fully isolated on the diplomatic stage due to its belligerent stance on the landmark agreement.

During a TV program on Saturday, he described the deal as “an international achievement” and that the document is “non-negotiable” and must be kept intact.

Araqchi, who served as senior negotiator in the talks leading to the JCPOA, further slammed President Donald Trump’s long-running hostile campaign against the deal.

Trump, however, lost the “diplomatic battle” over the nuclear pact to Iran as the Islamic Republic managed to fully isolate the U.S. and separate it from its European allies, the official said.

The U.S. president also said he wanted Congress to pass a bill that states Iran’s long-range missile and nuclear programs



are inseparable, and that the country’s development and testing of missiles should be subject to severe sanctions.

Araqchi further said Iran’s conventional missile program “is related to our domestic capabilities and national

security and has absolutely nothing to do with any other issue,” emphasizing that it is “not up for either negotiation or compromise.”

The JCPOA, he added, managed to “draw a line” between the missile program and the nuclear issue, saying that no party could now claim that Iran’s missile tests violate the nuclear agreement.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Araqchi stressed that the U.S. and Europe have no right to re-impose the sanctions lifted under the JCPOA under any pretext.

Additionally on Friday, Trump ordered the imposition of new sanctions on 14 Iranian and no-Iranian individuals and entities over alleged rights abuses, censorship, and support for weapons proliferators.

Araqchi said that Washington’s move to add individuals to such a blacklist was “out of desperation and meant to make up for its failures.”

(Source: Press TV)

Defense program non-negotiable, Tehran says

POLITICS TEHRAN — Behrooz Kamalvandi, spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, has said that Iran’s defense program and issues related to the Middle East region have nothing to do with the JCPOA, the official name for the international nuclear agreement.

Kamalvandi made the remarks in an interview posted on the IRIB website on Sunday.

Kamalvandi also said that no one can access Iran’s military sites. “We have no nuclear activity in military sites and we don’t seek nuclear weapons.”

He added, “We are meeting our obligations under



the JCPOA which has been confirmed by the Agency [the International Atomic Energy Agency] and there is no need for further access.”

On Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump extended waivers of key economic sanctions on Iran for another 120 days. However, Trump laid out four conditions that should be met for him to not abrogate the deal. The conditions included increased inspections, ensuring “Iran never even comes close to possessing a nuclear weapon” and that there be no expiration dates to the nuclear deal. His last condition required Capitol Hill lawmakers to pass a bill unilaterally incorporating Iran’s missile program into the nuclear deal.

Majlis says won’t accept any change to nuclear deal



POLITICS TEHRAN — The Iranian parliament will not accept changes to the 2015 nuclear deal and considers any change equal to complete collapse of the agreement, its speaker Ali Larijani announced on Sunday.

Talking in open session of the parliament, Larijani called on the U.S. to stop thinking about making changes to the multilateral nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

On Friday, U.S. President Donald

Trump extended waivers of key economic sanctions on Iran for another 120 days, but said he would scrap the agreement unless European countries “join with the United States in fixing (what he called) significant flaws in the deal” during this time.

Javad Zarif, Iran’s foreign minister, said in September that should the deal collapse, Tehran would be “walking away with better technology” as it had continued its research and development and improved its technological base in the meantime.

Rouhani: Nuclear agreement will never vanish



1 → The president added that Iran’s right to nuclear research and development (R&D) is another achievement of the nuclear deal which will not be stopped.

Elsewhere, Rouhani called U.S. failure to scrap the nuclear deal a victory for “humanity, morality and law”.

On Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump extended waivers of key economic sanctions on Iran for another 120 days. However, he said if the text of the deal is not revised during this period he would unilaterally withdraw the U.S. from it.

Analysts say the ultimatum by Trump was empty rhetoric.

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.

Immediately after the conclusion of the nuclear agreement the UN Security Council adopted a resolution endorsing the international deal.

Our trump cards against Trump

1 → Finally, it should be emphasized that if Barjam gets destroyed due to the American government’s miscalculations, the Islamic Republic of Iran will have many

trump cards. Until today, we have not been able to reap the expected benefits of Barjam because of obstacles created by the U.S. But in the event Barjam is ditched, we

can remove all the restrictions that were placed on our country and expand our nuclear technology at a higher speed compared to the past.

Macron highlights importance of JCPOA to Netanyahu

French President Emmanuel Macron has stressed the importance of maintaining the Iran nuclear accord during a conversation with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

“The president spoke of the importance of preserving the Iran nuclear deal, and the necessity for all parties to the agreement to respect the commitments they made,” said a statement released by the Elysee Palace on Saturday.

On Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump extended waivers of key economic sanctions on Iran for another 120 days but said he was doing so “for the last time.”

Although the U.S. president declined to seize an opportunity to withdraw from the Iran deal — which he has long railed against and formerly promised to “rip up” — he gave a four-month deadline to U.S. Congress and America’s main European allies to address what he called the “disastrous flaws” of the deal.

Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council — the United States, France, Britain, Russia and China — plus Ger-



many signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on July 14, 2015 and started implementing it on January 16, 2016.

Under the JCPOA, Iran undertook to put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for the removal of nuclear-related sanctions imposed against Tehran.

On Thursday, Macron has told his Trump that all signatories to the JCPOA should respect the terms of the agreement.

(Source: Press TV)

Judiciary: 400 protesters still in custody

1 → He also said 25 ordinary people and security forces were killed during the protests, stressing that no one was killed by security forces.

The Judiciary official blamed the United States and the Zionist regime for the violent protests.

During the riots U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted frequently encouraging the protesters. “They (wrongly) thought that they could misuse the people’s (economic) grievances,” he explained.

The spokesman also confirmed that two individuals who were in custody committed suicide. One of them was a drug addict, he said.

Abbas Jafari-Dolatabadi, the Tehran prosecutor general, also announced on Sunday that 440 individuals who were arrested in Tehran have been released, with 300 of them having been released during the last few days.

He emphasized that protesters should be differentiated from the rioters who committed crimes.

Jafari-Dolatabadi said there were many factors behind the unrest, including economic grievances and social problems.

He also said the role of the United States and the opposition in inciting the riots should



not be ignored. Majid Sarsangi, the vice-president of Tehran University, also said on Sunday that that 36 students from Tehran University have been released but 6 are still under arrest. “We hope they will also be released very soon,” Sarsangi told ISNA.

In pursuit of the conditions of the detainees, members of the Parliament’s Judicial and Legal Committee have filed a request to visit the detention centers, the committee’s vice chairman told ILNA on Sunday.

Mohammad Kazemi said the lawmakers have not received any response as of then.

'Shithole' projected on Trump's hotel in Washington

Anti-Trump demonstrators march in Swiss capital

Anti-Trump demonstrators march in Swiss capital
The word "shithole" - which President Donald Trump allegedly used to describe countries from which he does not want immigrants coming to the U.S. - has been projected along with other messages onto his Washington hotel.

Trump is said to have made the remarks - which he has denied but which a U.S. Senator who was present confirmed - at a meeting with legislators, setting off a firestorm of criticism when they became public.

"NOT A DC RESIDENT? NEED A PLACE TO STAY? TRY OUR SHITHOLE. THIS PLACE IS A SHITHOLE," read successive messages projected over the entrance of the Trump International Hotel in central Washington, according to a video posted on social media.

A flood of grinning feces emojis then stream out of the hotel's entrance as "SHITHOLE" appears in larger text above it. Another clip shows the word "SHITHOLE" over the entrance along with an arrow pointing to the door.

The videos were posted on the Twitter account of Robin Bell, who has staged other projection protests and been likened to a "hit-and-run editorial writer" by The Washington Post.

The alleged expletive emerged out of a Thursday meeting between Trump and legislators.

The topic? Immigration reform. After lawmakers raised the issue of protections for immigrants from African nations, Haiti and El Salvador, the president reportedly demanded to know why the United States should accept immigrants from "shithole countries," rather than - for instance - wealthy and overwhelmingly white Norway.

Trump on Friday tweeted a convoluted denial about the comments, which were reported by The Washington Post and The New York Times.

But Democratic Senator Dick Durbin said Trump had specifically asked, "Do we need more Haitians?" before launching into a diatribe about African immigration.

Trump then "said things which were hate-filled, vile and racist," Durbin said, adding that "shithole" was "the exact word used by the president, not just once but repeatedly."

Anti-Trump demonstrators march in Swiss



Meanwhile, anti-globalization demonstrators took to the streets of the Swiss capital on Saturday to protest against a planned visit by U.S. President Donald Trump to the World Economic Forum this month.

Trump announced last week that he would attend the WEF in Davos, an annual meeting of global business and political leaders.

Some have suggested that Trump's polarizing persona could resurrect the violent anti-WEF protests seen in the early 2000s. An online petition is circulating telling Trump

he is not welcome.

On Saturday, around 500 anti-globalization protesters marched peacefully past the Swiss parliament in Bern.

Some were clad in black and carried placards saying "No future for capitalism", "Eat the rich" and "Kill Trump", also setting off flares.

Up to 5,000 Swiss soldiers have been drafted in to guard Davos along with 1,000 police, while a no-fly zone will also be put in place to protect delegates.

(Source: agencies)

500 g bomb targets Hamas official in Sidon



A car bomb has targeted an official with the Palestinian resistance movement of Hamas in southwestern Lebanon, injuring him.

The explosive went off in the Bustan al-Kabir neighborhood in the east of the city of Sidon on Sunday, Lebanon24 news website reported.

It said early reports indicated that the target of the attack had been Abu Hamza Hamdan, describing him as one of the leaders of the Gaza Strip-based group.

Some reports said that the blast had left a number of other people injured, as well. Lebanon's An-Nahar newspaper posted a picture of a BMW in flames.

This is not the first time Hamas officials

come under attack. Israel has assassinated many figures with the Palestinian group.

Last March, Tel Aviv assassinated Mazen Fuqaha, one of the group's senior figures, in Gaza City, Gaza Strip. The victim was shot with four bullets to his head.

In 2010, Israel had itself embroiled in an international scandal when its operatives used false European and Australian passports to assassinate senior Hamas figure Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in the United Arab Emirates. The killing and the circumstances surrounding it also raised suspicions of complicity by Emirati intelligence and other services in the assassination.

(Source: Daily Star)

Anti-Zionist protests in New Delhi on Netanyahu's trip to India



Muslims in New Delhi held protest rallies on the eve of Netanyahu's trip to India and called for cutting ties of India with Israel.

Indian Muslims took to the streets and burned Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's effigy, who is scheduled to arrive in India on Sunday, January 14, on a six-day visit to India. He will be the first Israel PM to visit India since 2003.

The protesters chanted "Down with Israel" and "Down with Netanyahu" and called Indian government to cut ties with the Zionist regime.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived in India on Sunday for a six-day

visit with the intention of strengthening bilateral relations "even more". Netanyahu is being accompanied by the largest business delegation that has travelled with an Israeli Premier on an overseas tour.

The visit marks 25 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries and takes place about six months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip to Israel, the first by an Indian Prime Minister to the Jewish state.

Netanyahu will hold meetings with President Ram Nath Kovind and external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj, apart from Modi.

(Source: agencies)

Ballistic missile warning sent in error by Hawaii authorities

An emergency alert was sent mistakenly on Saturday to Hawaii's residents warning of an imminent ballistic missile attack when an employee at the state emergency management agency pushed the "wrong button," Hawaii's governor said.

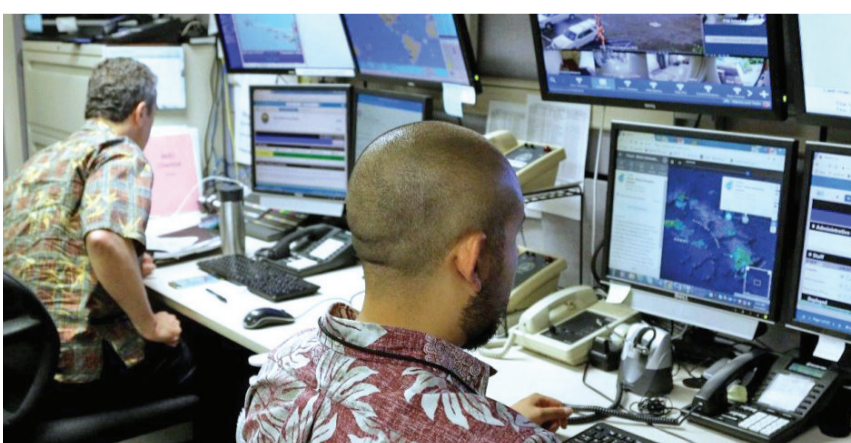
State officials and the U.S. military's Pacific Command confirmed that there was no actual threat to the state. But for more than a half hour, while the agency struggled to retract the warning, panicked Hawaiians scrambled to find shelter.

The mistaken alert stated: "EMERGENCY ALERT BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A DRILL." The alert, sent to mobile phones and aired on television and radio shortly after 8 a.m., was issued amid high international tensions over North Korea's development of ballistic nuclear weapons.

Governor David Ige told a news conference he was "angry and disappointed" over the incident, apologized for it and said the state would take steps to ensure it never happens again.

"What happened today was totally unacceptable," the Democratic governor said.

Ige said the alert was sent during an employee shift change at the Hawaii Emergency



Management Agency, and that the state had no automated process to get out the word that it was a false alarm. Vern Miyagi, the agency's administrator, called it "human error."

"An employee pushed the wrong button," Ige said.

Stacey Bow, 56, of Honolulu, said she received the emergency alert on her smart phone. She awakened her 16-year-old daughter with the news. "She became hysterical, crying, you know, just lost it," she said.

Ige said the emergency management

agency after the incident ordered a change in its procedures requiring two employees, not just one, to send out such an alert in the future. He said such shift changes occur three times a day every day of the year.

Miyagi, who said Hawaii would have only 12 to 13 minutes of warning in an actual attack, declined to say what action would be taken against the employee. Miyagi said the agency routinely tests its emergency alert system and that employee thought he was conducting a test, not realizing he had trans-

mitted the warning with a two-step process on a computer screen until receiving it on his own cellphone minutes later.

'Feels terrible'

"There is a screen that says, 'Are you sure you want to do this?'" Miyagi said, adding that the employee "feels terrible about it."

Miyagi, who took responsibility for the incident, said the mistake "should have been caught."

"This will not happen again," he added.

Bow said of the person responsible for issuing the alert, "I imagine that person is clearing out their desk right now. You don't get a do-over for something like that."

The U.S. Federal Communications Commission, which has jurisdiction over the emergency alert system, announced it was initiating a full investigation. Earlier this week, FCC chairman Ajit Pai said the agency would vote at its January meeting to enhance the effectiveness of wireless emergency alerts, which have been in place since 2012.

Hawaii, a chain of islands in the Pacific Ocean, has a population of about 1.4 million people, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, and is home to Pacific Command, the Navy's Pacific Fleet and other elements of the American military.

(Source: Reuters)

Iraqi PM Abadi announces bid for reelection

Iraq's incumbent Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announces his intention to run in the upcoming parliamentary elections to choose his successor.

He announced the candidacy in a statement late on Saturday, saying he would be contesting the elections at the head of a "cross-sectarian" list named Victory Alliance.

Abadi said his Victory Alliance will "boost the country's integrity and national sovereignty, correct mistakes and achieve justice and equality for all Iraqis."

He said the "miracle of victory and unity must lead to a new and brighter era."

The cabinet has proposed May 12 for holding the elections. The legislature is yet to endorse the proposal.

Abadi took office in 2014, the same year when the ISIL (Daesh) terror group swept huge expanses of the Arab country in blistering attacks. His incumbency is credited with Baghdad's finally driving Daesh out late last year.

He is credited for quickly rebuilding the army and liberating all territories under Daesh control with the help of Popular Mobilization Units, better known as Hashd al-Shaabi.

His archival in the competition is Nouri al-Maliki, who held the office for eight years before Abadi.

Maliki announced his candidacy on Saturday, saying he would be running on his State of Law alliance's ticket. The alliance is the largest political block at the parliament.

Maliki heads the Dawa party, of which Abadi is a member, and is also one of the country's three vice presidents.

The premier is a Shia Muslim in line with an agreement reached after the ouster of Iraq's former dictator Saddam Hussein.

(Source: Press TV)

Turkey vows to attack Kurdish enclave in Syria within 'days'

Turkey's president said Sunday the country will launch a military assault on a Kurdish enclave in northern Syria "in the coming days," and urged the U.S. to support its efforts.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the operation against the Afrin enclave aims to "purge terror" from his country's southern border.

Afrin is controlled by a Syrian Kurdish militia known as the YPG. Turkey considers the YPG to be a terrorist group linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) that has waged a bloody insurgency within its borders.

A YPG spokesman in Afrin said clashes erupted after midnight between his unit and Turkish troops near the border with Turkey. Rojhat Roj said the shelling of areas in Afrin district, in Aleppo province, killed one YPG fighter and injured a couple of civilians on Sunday.

Turkey and its Western allies, including the U.S., consider the PKK a terrorist organization. But the U.S. has been arming some of Syria's Kurds to defeat the Daesh (ISIL) in Syria - a sore point in already tense U.S.-Turkish relations.

The Turkish president said "despite it all" he wants to work with the U.S. in the region and hopes it will not side with the YPG during the upcoming Afrin operation.

"It's time is to support Turkey in its legitimate efforts" to combat terror, said Erdogan.

He added that the new operation would be an extension of Turkey's 2016 incursion into northern Syria, which aimed to combat Daesh and stem the advance of U.S.-backed Kurdish forces. Turkish troops are stationed in rebel-held territory on both sides of Afrin.

Roj said the Kurdish militia will fight to "defend our gains, our territories." Senior Kurdish official Hediye Yusuf wrote on Twitter that the Turkish operation against Afrin is a "violation" of the Syrian people and undermines international efforts to reach a political solution in Syria.

The Turkey-PKK conflict has killed an estimated 40,000 people since 1984 and the resumption of hostilities in July 2015 killed more than 3,300 people, including state security forces, militants and civilians.

(Source: Reuters)

Russia deploys new S-400 missile division to Crimea

Moscow has deployed a new regiment of its advanced S-400 air defense missile system to Crimea amid simmering tensions with Kiev over the security situation in the Black Sea Peninsula.

The new division of the S-400 surface-to-air missiles was stationed in Crimea on Saturday, according to Russian media, the second such deployment on the peninsula after a first one in the spring of 2017 near the port town of Fedosia.

Russia's RIA news agency had reported earlier that the new division would be based next to the town of Sevastopol and would control the airspace over the border with Ukraine.

"Starting today, the entire Crimean air defense group has been provided with the latest S-400 air defense missile system, which has no analogues in the world," Lieutenant General Viktor Sevostyanov, the commander of the 4th Air Force and Air Defense Forces, said on Saturday.

The Russian Defense Ministry says S-400 missile systems, known as "Triumph," are capable of destroying airborne targets at a range of 400 kilometers and ballistic missiles at a range of 60 kilometers. The systems were first introduced to the Russian military's arsenal in 2007, according to the ministry.

Crimea voted for unification with Russia in March 2014. The West brands the development as Moscow's "annexation" of the territory.

An armed conflict erupted shortly afterwards in Ukraine's eastern regions, collectively known as the Donbass. The US and its allies in Europe accuse Russia of having a hand in that conflict, an allegation denied by Moscow.

The fighting has left over 10,000 people dead and more than a million others displaced, according to the United Nations.

The warring sides have so far inked two ceasefire deals, dubbed Minsk I and II; however, fighting has continued almost regularly, and both parties have traded accusations of violating the ceasefire.

(Source: TASS)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	97228.7
IFX	1086.29

Sources: tse.ir, lfb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	44,050 rials
EUR	54,200 rials
GBP	61,200 rials
AED	13,250 rials

Source: Mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$69.87/b
WTI	\$64.30/b
OPEC Basket	\$67.38/b
Gold	\$1,338.90/oz
Silver	\$17.28/oz
Platinum	\$998.45/oz

Sources: Oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Aluminum ingot production exceeds 226,707 tons

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran produced 226,707 tons of aluminum ingots during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2017), according to a report released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).



The country's outlook plan for the calendar year 1399 (March 2020-March 2021) has envisaged the aluminum output of 780,000 tons and its outlook plan for the year 1404 (March 2025-March 2026) has put the figure at 1.2 million tons, IRNA reported on Sunday.

More households in Japan see higher inflation

The percentage of Japanese households expecting inflation to accelerate has hit a nearly two-year high, a central bank survey showed, offering some hope that economic recovery will help the Bank of Japan meet its elusive 2% price target.

But more households complained they were worse off than a year ago as rising prices forced them to boost spending, the survey found, underscoring the challenge policymakers face in driving up inflation without denting consumption.

"For the ordinary household, price hikes continue to be something that's undesirable," said a BOJ official who briefed reporters on the quarterly survey, conducted between Nov 10 and Dec 6.

The BOJ's survey on people's livelihood showed the percentage of households who expect prices to rise a year from now was 75.6% in December, up from 70.4% in September and the highest level since March 2016.

Among the surveyed households, 81.9% said they expect inflation to pick up five years from now, up slightly from 81.4% in September.

Slightly more than two-thirds - 67.1% - felt prices rose from one year, up from 63.2% in September, a sign households were feeling the pinch from higher energy and grocery prices.

A separate index measuring households' livelihood worsened to minus 33.7 in December from minus 31.9% in September, indicating that more respondents felt they were worse off compared with one year earlier.

The ratio of households who saw spending rise from a year ago stood at 41.5%, up from 38.5% in September, with many of the respondents citing higher costs of living, the survey showed.

Japan's economy grew an annualized 2.5% in July-September to mark a seventh straight quarter of growth, thanks to robust exports and capital expenditure.

But core consumer prices rose 0.9% in November from a year earlier, still distant from the BOJ's target as firms remain wary of scaring away cost-sensitive consumers with price hikes.

The survey is among the key data the BOJ scrutinizes in assessing the impact of its ultra-easy monetary policy.

The BOJ kept monetary policy steady last month and its governor reassured markets the central bank will lag well behind overseas peers in ending crisis-mode easing. (Source: Japan Today)

China to step up banking oversight in 'arduous' fight on financial risks

China will step up oversight in the banking sector this year to reduce financial risks, the country's banking regulator said, stressing that long-term efforts would be needed to control banking sector chaos.

The China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC) said late on Saturday in a statement that its priorities included increasing supervision over shadow banking and interbank activities.

"Banking shareholder management, corporate governance and risk control mechanisms are still relatively weak, and root causes creating market chaos have not fundamentally changed," the CBRC said.

"Bringing the banking sector under control will be long-term, arduous, and complex," it said. (Source: Reuters)

Tidewater Middle East to organize marine conference in Chabahar

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The 25th **d e s k** Conference of Coordinating Marine Organizations of Iran is scheduled to be held in Chabahar Free Zone (southeastern Iran) on January 30 and 31.

The motto of this year's edition of the event is "Developing Marine Transportation with Resistance Economy Approach". And its pivots are:

- 1- Protecting marine environment, the basis for sustainable development
- 2- Port logistics and private sector's role in marine development of the country
- 3- Marine transportation development: Maritime safety and security

Tidewater Middle East, a major port operator in Iran, is the organizer of the event. In a press conference on Sunday, the company's CEO Mehdi Etesam said that the conference is aimed at resolving the problems of marine organizations of the country and removing the barriers in the way of their activity through an operating and applied approach.

"We urge that the conference should be fruitful in removing the problems of marine organizations", he emphasized.

Specialized panels will be held on the sidelines of the conference, Etesam announced and mentioned Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO), National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC), Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), and the active companies as the major bodies present in the secretariat of the conference.

The conference will be held in the conference hall of Chabahar Free Zone, he said and added that First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri, some ministers and members of parliament (Majlis) have been invited to participate in the inaugural ceremony. Tidewater Middle East has previously organized the 17th edition of the event in Iranian calendar year 1388 (March 2009-March 2010), the CEO said.

"We organize this conference, as we consider ourselves a specialized and operating arm of the PMO", he underlined.



Conference to highlight significance of Chabahar

Elsewhere in his remarks, Etesam said: "Given the emphasis put by the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei on the advantages of marine sector and also the necessity of developing Chabahar Port, all state-run organizations and also the private sector should act for development of that region. In this due this conference is decided to be held there in order to highlight the significance of Chabahar."

He went on to say that the government doubled its efforts for implementing the first phase of Chabahar development, which was inaugurated last month. High investment has been made for this phase. Now it berths very large vessels. It is hoped that this development will be

all-out and such conferences will encourage and attract the private sector and investors to more development of the region, he noted.

"We should take more and more measures for developing Chabahar, because the regional countries including Pakistan, Oman, the UAE and Kuwait are already developing their ports", Etesam opined.

"Given our proper geographical location and also our short distance to the Commonwealth of Independence States (CIS), we should bring development of Chabahar under the spotlight and it should be a top priority among development projects of both government and private sector", he also commented.

Such conferences can help a lot to this end, Tidewater CEO asserted.

World Bank forecasts 4% GDP growth for Iran in 2018

ECONOMY TEHRAN — In its **d e s k** January 2018 report of Global Economic Prospects, the World Bank forecasted a four-percent growth for Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018.

The report put the country's GDP growth at 3.6 percent in 2017 and foresaw a 4.3 percent GDP growth for 2019.

It also said that growth in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the second largest economy in the region, is expected to reach 4.3 percent by 2020, with higher investment growth offset by lower oil production and limited access to finance.



On January 4, Iran's Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Masoud Karbasian praised the country's current GDP growth saying, "What makes this growth important is that it is not driven only by oil income."

Transit of goods via Iran rises 13% in 9 months

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Transit **d e s k** of goods via Iran rose 13 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2017) compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to a customs official.

Hossein Salari, the acting director of Transit Supervision Department of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), said 8.267 million tons of commodities have been transited via Iran's sea and land borders during the mentioned time, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The official said that the commodities of over 100 countries have been transited via Iran in the nine-month period.

In last September, Iran announced a surprise rise of around 24 percent in transit of goods through its territories during the first five months of this calendar year, Press TV reported.

Figures released by Iran's Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization (IRMTTO) showed that above 4.17 million tons of goods had been moved through 32 active land and maritime borders over the period.

Engulfed in the flames of sorrow



ENERGY TEHRAN — Pro-**d e s k** found grief and pain engulfed the Iranian nation over the loss of 32 sailors who died aboard an oil tanker which burst into flames and sunk, eight days after a collision with a cargo ship off the coast of China.

The Sanchi, carrying 136,000 tons of light crude oil from Iran, has been in flames since colliding with the CF Crystal on January 6, a Hong Kong-registered bulk freighter, some 300 kilometers east of Shanghai.

On January 13, Chinese rescuers recovered the tanker's "black box", the transport ministry said without specifying exactly what had been retrieved.

"There is no possibility of finding the bodies [of victims]," IRIB quoted Iran's labor minister Ali Rabiee who is in charge of a special task force for the incident as saying.

Mohammad Rastad, head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization said "Despite our efforts, it has not been possible to extinguish the fire and recover the bodies due to repeated explosions and gas leaks."

Parliament speaker Ali Larijani has said that the parliament's national security committee should pursue the issue.

President Hassan Rouhani issued a message of condolence saying that recovering the bodies of missing sailors and easing the pain and suffering of their families should be the first priority.

Gary Lewis, UN resident coordinator in Iran, wrote in his Twitter account: "On behalf of the UN Family in Iran, I extend our sincere condolences to those who lost loved ones in the Sanchi oil tank tragedy, as well as all Iranians."

Trump, Lighthizer discuss China, NAFTA trade talks

President Donald Trump was briefed on Saturday by U.S. trade envoy Robert Lighthizer on U.S. trade with China and talks on revising the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico, a White House spokeswoman said, as the administration considers several new tariff moves in coming weeks.

The meeting comes as Trump mulls whether to impose broad restrictions on steel and aluminum imports and punitive actions against China arising from an investigation into Beijing's alleged theft of intellectual property.

Lighthizer also briefed Trump on China's economy and pending trade enforcement

actions, as well as the NAFTA negotiations, White House spokeswoman Lindsay Walters said in a statement from Florida, where Trump is staying at his Mar-a-Lago resort. She did not provide details.

Lighthizer currently is preparing for the next round of NAFTA talks in Montreal. Washington has taken a hard line in the negotiations, which appear stalled with just two rounds of left, saying that concessions are the only way for Canada and Mexico to keep the deal.

Canada this week welcomed Trump's suggestion that NAFTA talks could be extended beyond March when Mexico's presidential election campaign kicks into high gear.

Trump's opportunity to impose new tar-

iffs or trade quotas follows a U.S. Commerce Department Section 232 investigation that looked into whether foreign steel imports are a threat to U.S. national security. The department submitted the long-awaited report to the White House on Thursday.

Next week, the results of a separate investigation of rising aluminum imports will go to the White House.

China's excess production capacity for both steel and aluminum has emerged as a major trade irritant for the United States and Europe, prompting them to consider new steps to protect domestic industries and jobs from a flood of Chinese imports.

Meanwhile, China reported on Friday that

exports and imports growth slowed in December after surging in the previous month, adding to signs of ebbing economic momentum as the government extends a crackdown on financial risks and factory pollution.

A synchronized uptick in the global economy over the past year has been a boon to China and much of trade-dependent Asia, with Chinese exports in 2017 growing at their quickest pace in four years.

The sharp December imports slowdown, however, is raising concerns that the world's second-biggest economy faces domestic-demand pressure as authorities turn off cheap credit and restrict speculative financing.

(Source: Reuters)

Pound's high vulnerable to fragile Brexit sentiment

The pound's rally, spurred by hopes of a soft Brexit, may be vulnerable this week to heightened sensitivity to comments from European Union leaders on the prospects of such a deal.

Sterling rose to its highest level since just after Britain's EU referendum on Friday after signs emerged that some countries want a Brexit deal that keeps the U.K. as close to the bloc as possible. That leaves the pound open to the risk of coming under pressure if Germany pours cold water on the idea, while renewed bids for the dollar following data showing an acceleration in U.S. inflation may also leave sterling exposed, according to analysts.

The pound rose more than 1 percent on Friday following a report that Spanish and Dutch finance ministers have agreed to push for a soft Brexit. Some analysts urged caution and suggested the rally may be partly driven by weakness in the



greenback, rather than a fundamental reappraisal of the Brexit talks.

"To derail this positive political momentum in the near term, one negative

scenario is Germany pouring cold water on the idea of a bespoke Brexit," said Nick Verdi, head of Group-of-10 currency strategy at Standard Chartered Plc. A push back from Germany could send the pound back down below \$1.35, he said.

U.K. economic data could also have an impact on the pound's performance this week. Inflation is seen cooling slightly in the figures due on Tuesday, while retail sales numbers are scheduled on Friday. Even the outlook for the U.S. economy could weigh, according to Stuart Bennett, head of Group-of-10 currency strategy at Banco Santander SA.

"The theme should be whether this dollar negativity holds, or if the market concludes they are too short a currency that has a central bank likely to hike in March," Bennett said. "That could impact cable."

(Source: Bloomberg)

Iraq joins UAE, Qatar in call to keep oil cuts

Iraq joined the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman in calling for OPEC and allied producers to stick with their agreement to cut oil output until the end of the year, despite recent price gains.

Output cuts by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and fellow producers have contributed to stability in the oil market, and Iraq supports OPEC's decision to keep the caps in place, Oil Minister Jabbar al-Luaibi said at a conference in Abu Dhabi. OPEC's agreement with other suppliers in November to rein in output until the end of 2018 helped lift Brent crude briefly above \$70 a barrel last week.

"There are some sources here and there indicating that the market is flourishing now, the prices are healthy, so let's talk about terminating the freeze," al-Luaibi said on Saturday. "This is the wrong judgment, and we don't agree with such a concept."

The United Arab Emirates foresees no big changes in OPEC's policy to result from short-term price fluctuations, U.A.E. Energy Minister Suhail Al Mazrouei said at the same event. Qatar Energy Minister Mohammed bin Saleh Al Sada told the official Qatar News Agency that the group should only review its cuts accord once crude stockpiles return



to a five-year historical average.

■ Holding gains

Brent crude rose as high as \$70.05 a barrel on Thursday before paring gains, and the international benchmark added 0.6 percent on Friday to end the week at \$69.87 a barrel in London, the highest closing price since December 2014. Prices are holding gains after a second yearly advance as OPEC and allies including Russia and Oman trim supply

to clear a glut.

"We hope the whole dynamic will continue throughout 2018," Iraq's al-Luaibi said. "The deal should continue. The market now is stabilizing somehow but it's not yet stable."

Iraq said repeatedly last year that it should have been exempt from the oil cuts as it worked to rebuild its war-torn economy. It lagged behind fellow OPEC members in paring output for much of 2017 and didn't comply fully with

its pledged cuts until October, when fighting with the Kurds brought production down to within limits in the OPEC deal.

The U.A.E.'s Al Mazrouei acknowledged last week's price increase but said producers must focus on longer-term, quarterly changes. "I don't believe if we see that the price goes to \$69 or approaches \$70 we need to meet or panic," he said.

Maintaining the cuts is OPEC's consensus view, but some members, notably Iran, are concerned about spurring a renewed push from U.S. shale producers. While U.S. output slid last week, the Energy Information Administration has forecast production will rise above 10 million barrels a day as soon as next month.

Oman, the biggest Arab producer outside of OPEC that joined the group's cuts, said it's too soon to even discuss winding down the reductions before the end of the year, despite concerns of a possible shale oil surge.

"It's absolutely crazy, for all of us, to increase production by 10 percent and to lose revenue by 40 percent, and this is what we did in 2014," Oil Minister Mohammed Al Rumhy said Saturday in an interview with Bloomberg television in Abu Dhabi.

(Source: Bloomberg)

PetroChina's biggest refinery doubles Russian pipeline oil intake



Since the new Russia-China oil supply agreement took effect at the start of the year, PetroChina's largest refinery has almost doubled the amount of Russian pipeline crude oil that it is processing.

A senior industry source with direct knowledge of the volumes told Reuters, the 410,000-bpd PetroChina refinery in the northeast port city Dalian will process 260,000 bpd of Russian pipeline crude oil in 2018, up by 85-90 percent compared to 2017.

The higher volumes of Russian pipeline crude will replace seaborne Russian shipments of the ESPO blend from the Kozmino port in the Russian Far East and crude oil shipments from the Middle East, said the source.

"The plant will be processing pipeline crude only this year," the source noted, and added that the PetroChina-run Daqing oil field also ships pipeline crude to the Dalian

refinery.

An extension of the East Siberia-Pacific Ocean oil pipeline between Russia and China started operating on January 1, doubling the export volumes from 15 to 30 million tons annually, or almost 220 million barrels. Russia's oil giant Rosneft is the supplier of the crude via the ESPO pipeline, and PetroChina is the buyer.

The pipeline crude will also increase Russia's market share in China. Last year Russia displaced Saudi Arabia as the top crude oil supplier to the world's biggest importer, while Saudi shipments have taken a hit as the Kingdom cuts oil supply as leader of the OPEC pact to restrict production.

China said at the end of December that Russia held onto its number 1 spot as the biggest crude oil supplier for a ninth month running, with Saudi Arabia second.

(Source: RT)

Danish wind energy sets new record in 2017



Wind power accounted for a record high of 43.4 percent of the total electricity consumption in Denmark in 2017, according to official data released on Thursday.

The new record surpasses the previous 2015 record of 42 percent, keeping Denmark on track to reach its target of having 50 percent of all electricity produced by wind power by 2020, figures from Danish Ministry of Energy, Utilities and Climate showed.

"With the wind power production record, Denmark places a green flag on the world map. We once again show the whole world that Denmark has the world's best energy system," said Lars Chr. Lilleholt, Danish Minister of Energy, Utilities and Climate, in a statement.

"We have managed to accommodate large amounts of wind power and other green sources of energy, while maintaining high security of supply," the minister said.

In the coming years, higher records are expected as new offshore wind farms are developed in the Baltic sea and the North Sea to further increase the Danish wind production.

According to Lilleholt, the government is working for Denmark to have at least 50 percent of its energy needs covered by such renewable energy as wind and solar power by 2030.

Denmark is part of the major European electricity market, with strong electricity connections to neighboring countries.

Excess electricity produced by Danish windmills is traded across borders, while Denmark can also purchase electricity from other countries that have a surplus of electricity.

The wind energy share of Denmark's electric energy system has more than doubled since 2008, previously accounting for 19.3 percent.

(Source: Xinhua)

Hot money's pushing oil to \$70, but OPEC should keep cool

By Julian Lee

Brent crude touched \$70 a barrel on Thursday, a level it last saw three years ago. That might start to look like a level where OPEC could say that its work to rebalance the market is done.

■ Crude Rally

After all, its output deal has done a pretty good job of draining surplus inventories. And U.S. oil stockpiles, including crude, refined products and the oil stored in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, have fallen by around 147 million barrels in the past 12 months and now stand just 23 million barrels above their five-year average, according to weekly government data.

■ Draining away

But there is more to the run-up in oil prices than the drop in American stockpiles. And OPEC should think very carefully before changing its strategy. Inventory levels outside the U.S. are far more opaque. While the U.S. provides comprehensive data weekly, the Paris-based International Energy Agency only assesses OECD stockpiles with a 2-month time lag -- so the latest results are for the end of October. They also show excess stockpiles coming down since the middle of 2017. But they also show the rising five-year average, the baseline for measuring excess crude, is having a much bigger impact on the amount of excess crude in storage than is the case in the U.S. That suggests inventories are still too high.

That is true whether you look at the absolute volumes of stockpiles, or the number of days of demand that they cover. If you move beyond the developed countries of the OECD, the picture is even less clear. So,



while U.S. oil stockpiles may be approaching their five-year average level, the IEA data suggest the same is not yet true elsewhere. This is not the only factor that OPEC and friends need to consider. By choosing once again to act as the world's swing supplier, seeking to balance the volume of oil available against the amount needed by consumers, they have thrown other producers a lifeline. You need look no further than the IEA's U.S. production figures. U.S. output has soared on the back of rising prices and will continue to rise. The monthly assessment for October was more than 400,000 barrels a day above the level derived from weekly data. The daily average for U.S. oil production will exceed 10 million barrels by February,

four months sooner than the government forecast last month.

■ Shale surge

As I warned when OPEC and its friends embarked on this strategy back in 2016, it risked locking itself into a cycle of having to make ever longer and deeper cuts in order to meet rising output from other producers, particularly the U.S. There is already talk of U.S. producers locking in these prices, not just for 2018, but for 2019, 2020 and beyond, which will underpin continued output growth. The IEA expects that Brazil and Canada will also boost output at current prices. To be sure, stronger-than-expected demand growth helped producers to drain excess stockpiles in 2017, and OPEC is

(Source: Bloomberg)

The new natural resources fueling the green revolution

Records for renewable energy consumption were smashed around the world in 2017.

Looking at national and state grids, progress has been extremely impressive. In Costa Rica, for example, renewable energy supplied five million people with all of their electricity needs for a stretch of 300 consecutive days. Meanwhile, the UK broke 13 green energy records in 2017 alone, and California's largest grid operator announced it got 67.2 percent of its energy from renewables (excluding hydro) on May 13, 2017.

The corporate front is also looking promising, and Google has led the way by buying 536 MW of wind power to offset 100 percent of the company's electricity usage. This makes the tech giant the biggest corporate purchaser of renewable energy on the planet.

But while these examples are plentiful, this progress is only the tip of the iceberg -- and green energy still represents a small but rapidly growing segment. For a full green shift to occur, we'll need to 10x what we're currently sourcing from renewables.

To do this, we will need to procure massive amounts of natural resources -- they just won't be the fossil fuels that we're used to.

■ Green metals required

A major theme of the the Vancouver Resource Investment Conference 2018 is sustainable energy -- and the math indeed makes it clear that to fully transition to a green economy, we'll need vast amounts of metals like copper, silicon, aluminum, lithium, cobalt, rare earths, and silver.

These metals and minerals are needed to generate, store, and distribute green energy. Without them, the reality is that technologies like solar panels, wind turbines, lithium-ion batteries, nuclear reactors, and electric vehicles are simply not possible.

■ First principles

How do you get a Tesla to drive over 300 miles (480 km) on just one charge?

Here's what you need: a lightweight body, a powerful electric motor, a cutting-edge battery that can store energy efficiently, and a lot of engineering prowess.

Putting the engineering aside, all of these things need special metals to work. For the lightweight body, aluminum is being substituted in for steel. For the electric motor, Tesla is using AC induction motors (Model S and X) that require large amounts of copper and aluminum. Meanwhile, Chevy Bolts and soon Tesla will use permanent magnet motors (in the Model 3) that use rare earths like neodymium, dysprosium, and praseodymium.

The batteries, as we've shown in our five-part Battery Series, are a whole other supply chain challenge. The lithium-ion batteries used in EVs need lithium, nickel, cobalt, graphite, and many other metals or minerals to function. Each Tesla battery, by the way, weighs about 1,200 lbs (540 kg) and makes up 25 percent the total mass of the car.

While EVs are a topic we've studied in depth, the same principles apply for solar panels, wind turbines, nuclear reactors, grid-scale energy storage solutions, or anything else we need to secure a sustainable future. Solar panels need silicon and silver, while wind turbines need rare earths, steel, and aluminum.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Geopolitical wildcards could push oil beyond \$70

Two of last week's main market highlights were the continued oil prices rally--with Brent touching above \$70 a barrel on Thursday for the first time since December 2014--and a sell-off of U.S. Treasury bonds in the middle of the week.

The U.S. government bond sell-off pushed yields on the benchmark 10-year Treasury bonds to a 10-month high at above 2.5 percent. Generally, yields on Treasury notes go up when there's less demand for them, and go down when demand is high.

While a number of factors have combined to push U.S. government yields higher, analysts suggest that the main reason for this is the oil price rally.

The oil price gains have also increased expectations of inflation and rate rises this year, which is the primary cause of the U.S. bond sell-off, according to Rabobank.

The 10-year breakeven inflation rate--a measure of expected inflation in the next 10 years derived from 10-Year Treasury Constant Maturity Securities--moved above 2 percent this week, for the first time since March 2017. Much of that upward move can be attributed to the rising price of oil, Goldman Sachs' co-Head of Global Macro Markets Research, Francesco Garzarelli, told CNBC this week.

According to Deutsche Bank, the oil price rally has lifted inflation expectations, but the bond sell-off is unlikely to continue unless core consumer prices rise more than expected.

The Fed now has to figure out whether this is inflationary pressure coming just from oil prices, or whether there are more long-term trends at play such as increased industrial capacity and a tight labor market, Garcia said.

■ So where will oil prices go now?

"The market is telling potential sellers to back off or risk being stopped out, and such is the current mood that bullish news tends to get more attention than potentially bearish signals," Saxo Bank's Head of Commodity Strategy, Ole Hansen, said in an article on January 10.

While supply disruptions and declining U.S. and global oil inventories have pushed oil prices up in recent weeks and months, the immediate factors that could additionally drive oil prices up are U.S. President Donald Trump's imminent decision on Iran sanctions, and Venezuela teetering on the brink of collapse, Hansen says.

Now, as Brent toys with \$70 and WTI with \$64 a barrel, analysts say that there isn't much room for further gains, barring conflicts and escalation of geopolitical concerns, of course.

A growing number of geopolitical wildcards this year--including war, Middle East tensions, North Korea, more sanctions on Iran, and possible oil supply disruptions in Libya, Nigeria, Iraq, and Venezuela--could push oil prices to \$80 a barrel, Citigroup said.

Although \$70-\$80 oil price would greatly help OPEC's oil-dependent budgets, Goldman Sachs, for example, has warned that the cartel would try to talk oil prices down if Brent tops \$70, because of expectations of higher inflationary pressure and U.S. shale surging at those price levels. Since the start of the year, analysts have warned of a looming oil price correction, but at least in the first two weeks of January, bulls beat bears, and geopolitical concerns and declining inventories overrode the bearish concerns of U.S. shale production surging to crash the oil price rally party.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Saudi Arabia's richest man, is running out of time to make a deal

By Jake Novak

Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal has been detained for more than two months now by the government controlled by the new Saudi crown prince.

Saudi Arabia's richest man is running out of time. It's been more than two months since Prince Alwaleed bin Talal was first arrested and detained in what the Saudi government still calls an "anti-corruption" sweep. Yet the first sign of things getting more serious came early this week when Alwaleed was moved out of his restricted quarters at the Riyadh Ritz Carlton Hotel and moved to Al Ha'ir prison, according to the London-based Arabic news site Al-Araby Al-Jadeed.



Alwaleed bin Talal

Al Ha'ir is not exactly the Bastille, but the decision to get Alwaleed to a more secluded and secure location is ominous.

For more than two months, the prince had been held at the Riyadh Ritz along with what had originally been 200 of his fellow princes and top officials. That number has dwindled to just a few prisoners. Most of the former detainees have bought their freedom with payments and other forms of capitulation to the new Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

But bin Talal is holding out, reportedly balking at the \$6 billion bin Salman is demanding from him and/or control of some of his investment companies.

Prince bin Salman came to power last summer when King Salman made the extremely unusual move to change the order of succession and make bin Salman crown prince.

Since then he has been beefing up Saudi Arabia's military defenses against Iran, strengthening ties to the U.S. and even Israel in the process. In the fall, he further moved to purge the country of anti-Semitic and anti-American Islamic clerics. In November, bin Salman's economic reforms morphed into this arrest of Alwaleed and those 200 other princes and officials who were at least potential rivals in the overall power grab.

It's not that many of the crown prince's goals aren't prudent or even admirable. But the matter of human rights is being pushed aside. So is due process.

Another example of that happened this week with the Saudi government's outright seizure of the Binladin Group construction giant. A Reuters report says the government has taken managerial control and may also erase up to \$30 billion in debt it owes the company. This is happening as leading members of the Bin Laden family, yes the extended family of al Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden, were detained as well.

One of the most stunning aspects of bin Talal's detention is how quiet his long list of influential friends have been about it. This week brought at least some mention of his plight with a statement from two former French presidents who expressed concern over Alwaleed's status. But let's face it: a few words from a couple of French ex-presidents is peanuts.

So now we have bin Alwaleed in an actual prison, with a government aggressively taking cash and assets, and still no significant outcry from his foreign friends.

It may seem unrelated, but bin Salman has also been on an opulent buying spree. That includes record-breaking purchases of art, a yacht and a French chateau. It begs the question of whether some of this stems from his desire to be the most conspicuously wealthy leader in the country.

None of this very public behavior is drawing public rebuke from the crown prince's friends in Trump administration and elsewhere. They are clearly okay with the ends justifying whatever means he's using to modernize the country and strengthen its ability to oppose Iran.

This all makes it look like Alwaleed's time to make a deal is running out, especially almost all of his supposed powerful friends stay silent.

The fact that the lucrative Saudi Aramco IPO is coming soon could be another reason that Alwaleed's supposed friends in the world of finance aren't making a public stink. They want to curry favor with the Saudis now to gain access.

This week's moves only drives that point home. Prince Alwaleed's leverage to demand an actual trial or negotiate a better deal is dwindling by the day. The cavalry is not coming and the Saudi government has almost no fear of international reprisal.

The chances are greater than ever that Alwaleed will now rot in a literal jail for as long as the new government wants. Earlier reports that he was being hung upside down and beaten at the Ritz Carlton are still unconfirmed, but no one should be surprised if that's the next step — if it hasn't been taken already.

Prince Alwaleed must have thought at some point that he had the option of holding out for a fair hearing before being forced to hand over billions to save his skin. He doesn't have that option now and probably never did.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman isn't betting on seeing any pushback. Neither should anyone else. (Source: CNBC)

False alarms of the apocalypse

At a time when state and non-state actors alike are resorting to disinformation operations, reliable official information is critical

By Ankit Panda

Early this morning, residents of Hawaii received an emergency alert on their cell phones and on their television screens: "ballistic missile threat inbound to Hawaii. Seek immediate shelter." If that wasn't enough to spark panic in a state where Cold War-era nuclear-attack alert sirens have been undergoing testing, the warning ended with those five dreaded words: "this is not a drill."

Following several minutes of panic and confusion, various authoritative sources confirmed that the alert had been sent in error. Hawaii Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard took to Twitter to say that she had "confirmed with officials" that there was no ballistic missile threat. U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) issued a statement noting that the "Earlier message was sent in error," and that the State of Hawaii would issue a correction. Thirty-eight minutes after the original alert, a second followed: "There is no missile threat or danger to the State of Hawaii. Repeat. False Alarm." Russian, Chinese, or North Korean intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) could make it to Hawaii in less than 38 minutes, mind you.

This is, to be clear, a catastrophic error. It quite justifiably undermines the American public's confidence in the emergency alert system (EAS) and the competence of government authorities. Given President Donald Trump's emotional volatility and unitary nuclear-launch authority, paired with North Korea's breakneck technological developments on its ballistic-missiles and nuclear-weapons programs, nuclear anxieties are higher today than at any time since the end of the Cold War. A false alarm, as a result, can inflict serious and undue psychological stress, particularly for Americans already feeling quite vulnerable to an ICBM-armed North Korea.

False alarms of the apocalypse are not a new feature of the nuclear age. Governments have long sought to notify citizens of an incoming nuclear attack. During the Cold War, with the ever-looming, terrifying prospect of nuclear war with the Soviet Union, the U.S. government established an extensive educational and organizational effort to facilitate so-called civil defense — an effort to provide the public with the knowledge it needed to cope with an eventual nuclear attack.

Fortunately, to this day, nuclear weapons have been used just twice, at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the closing days of World War II. As a result, few public-emergency alerts warning of nuclear attack have been issued in the United States. When they have, they've been false. The U.S. public has mostly been spared the anxiety and helpless anguish of a false nuclear-attack notification. But there have been exceptions.

In February 1971, the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) issued a teletype notification to every American radio and television broadcaster warning of an impending thermonuclear war. It later had to retract the message. Information moved slower at the time from government authorities to the American public; broadcasters largely did not pause their programming to relay the entire message.

In the wake of Saturday's incident, it will be important for the Pentagon, the Hawaii government, and the Department of Homeland Security, to investigate what went wrong and offer a full public accounting. There are numerous possible explanations. None are particularly reassuring.

According to Governor David Ige of Hawaii, the error occurred during a change of shift,



Donald Trump plays golf as Hawaii descends into panicked chaos.

If President Trump, instead of spending his time on the green at Mar-a-Lago's golf course, had seen reports of an attack on Hawaii and issued a valid retaliatory order.

when an "employee pushed the wrong button." Whether intentional or not, if this was the result of a single point of human failure, then it can be written off as a bureaucratic and command failure, with the individual or individuals reprimanded; the country can move on, hopefully with the confidence that lessons have been learned and a repeated can be prevented.

A spokesperson for the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency told The Atlantic that the erroneous alerts were issued during a "shift change," when "somebody clicked the wrong thing on a computer." The spokesperson added: "We needed a cancellation procedure. So basically we're going back and checking all of our processes. We're aware that our credibility is vital. We're doing everything we can to reassure the public that this was a one-time error, that it will not happen again." While the situation is still bad, this is actually the best possible outcome — especially considering the alternatives."

Consider one alternative: An attacker managed to penetrate the Hawaii EAS and issue a false alert. ("No hacking," the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency spokesman told The Atlantic, emphasizing that the incident was caused by "human error.") But this possibility is still among the more unsettling scenarios — and it's far from unthinkable. In September 2017, U.S. military personnel and their families in South Korea received false mobile alerts instructing them to evacuate the Korean Peninsula — an alert that would be among the most-reliable indicators of impending U.S. military action against North Korea. U.S. forces in South Korea later clarified that they hadn't sent the alert, and U.S. counterintelligence opened an investigation. That investigation is ongoing.

Issuing a false alert of an impending ballistic-missile strike through a legitimate EAS may be among the most pernicious forms of "fake news." At a time when state and non-state actors alike are resorting to disinformation operations, it's all the more important for the U.S. government to ensure the inviolability of critical communication systems like the EAS. The Hawaii and South Korean incidents at least have an important point in common: Both exploit common fears about a possible scenario involving North Korea.

One more possible alternative — and perhaps the most worrisome, from a nuclear-stability point of view — is some sort of system-sensor error, involving a critical flaw in the network of sea-, ground-, air-, and space-based sensors operated by the United States military. While at this point this doesn't appear to be the case with the Hawaii incident, given that NORAD, Strategic Command, or PACOM did not corroborate the EAS alert, this long used to be the kind of nuclear false alarm scenario that Cold War decision-makers had to wrangle with.

After the end of the Cold War, former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski told the harrowing tale of his famous "3 a.m. phone call" in 1979, when he was awoken by an aide informing him of an incoming Russian nuclear attack. He had only minutes to decide whether to tell President Jimmy Carter. On instinct, Brzezinski nearly moved to order bombers to ready for a retaliatory strike, before realizing the alert was likely false. Indeed it was: a NORAD exercise tape was mistakenly interpreted as real, giving the appearance of an all-out incoming Soviet strike. (On the Soviet side, a man named Stanislav Petrov, a lieutenant colonel in command at a facility monitoring

for incoming attacks, would have to make similarly fateful decision in 1983.)

These kinds of false alarms and "near misses" involving nuclear decision-makers didn't end with the Cold War, either. In January 1995, Russian President Boris Yeltsin was informed of what appeared to be an American ICBM headed for Moscow. Russian nuclear forces were alerted and Yeltsin was given the Cheget (the Russian "nuclear football") before learning that the incoming missile was, in fact, just a Norwegian rocket on a trajectory that, on Russian early-warning radars, appeared quite similar to an American ICBM.

While nothing like what Brzezinski, Petrov, and Yeltsin faced took place on Saturday, both the Hawaii incident and these so-called "near misses" are a reminder of the dangers — psychological and physical — we invite by allowing nuclear weapons to persist in the world.

The real reason nuclear weapons have been used only twice against human populations and never again may have little to do with the compelling logic of nuclear deterrence, and far more to do with luck; the world has come close to nuclear apocalypse repeatedly and a strategy that relies on this luck never running out might require reassessment. Consider, for instance, if President Trump, instead of spending his time on the green at Mar-a-Lago's golf course (per pool reports), instead had seen reports of an attack on Hawaii and issued a valid retaliatory order.

Mistakes happen with emergency alert systems and they can happen with real nuclear weapons. For the residents of Hawaii who felt unexpected dread and helplessness looking at their phones on Saturday morning, that'll be all too clear.

(Source: The Atlantic)

Merkel in the balance



The coalition agreement in Berlin is step towards giving Germany a new government. But Angela Merkel's future rests in the hands of her prospective partner party.

to embrace Emmanuel Macron's eurozone reform ideas, putting Germany back at the heart of the EU after a period in which the French president has had the field largely to himself.

But there are mountains to climb before Merkel

can begin her fourth term in the chancellery. The most immediate problem is that Schulz must get his party to support the deal. This will not be straightforward. Both before and after September's poor SPD election performance, the party mood was against taking part in another grand coalition with Merkel. Within the party's youth wing, that is still the case. Schulz ruled such a deal out after the SPD had lost a fifth of its support in the election. But the failure of Merkel to form a four-party government with the liberal FDP and the environmental Greens left a renewed grand coalition as the only viable alternative.

Everything now hangs on two tests within the SPD. The first, on January 21, is an extraordinary party conference in Bonn to consider the joint program. The second, if Schulz wins in Bonn, is a referendum among the SPD's 450,000 members. Much will depend on whether the document agreed this week is felt by rank-and-file SPD members to contain enough of its own demands to overcome the widespread feeling last year that the party would be better off in opposition than to be the junior party in a Merkel-led coalition for the third time. The absence from the program of a big signature SPD pledge, at a time when industrial militancy over wages is growing in Germany, will test Schulz's authority.

If the SPD balks, Merkel will be left with a choice between minority rule and new elections. Even if it doesn't, the chancellor is likely to be even more cautious than before about politically difficult change. It would be reckless to write off early 21st-century Europe's most important politician too soon. But the post-Merkel era is beginning to loom.

(Source: The Guardian)

Congress unlikely to change JCPOA: Jim Walsh

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Jim Walsh from University of Massachusetts says “Mr. Trump wants Congress to make changes to an international agreement, which obviously Congress does not have the power to do. They include changing the sunset provisions and making a one year breakout time permanent.”

Dr. Walsh, who is a Research Associate at MIT's Security Studies Program, said in an interview with Tehran Times that it is highly unlikely Congress will be able to do so.

Walsh, an expert in international security who has testified before the U.S. Senate on Iran's nuclear program, says “I'm pretty sure Iran will not accept permanent restrictions on uranium enrichment.”

Following is the full text of the interview:
■ U.S. President Donald Trump approved the Iran nuclear deal only one more time before abandoning it if it is not changed. What are the changes that Trump emphasize on them?

A: Mr. Trump wants Congress to make changes to an international agreement, which obviously Congress does not have the power to do. They include changing the sunset provisions and making a one year breakout time permanent.

I think it is highly unlikely Congress will be able to do so. They failed to act when



they had the chance to do so following Mr. Trump's refusal to certify compliance. If Congress were going to act, that would have been the time to do it, but the 60 day window came and went.

■ Mr Trump also wants Iran's ballistic missile programme to be addressed. Iran frequently has emphasized that ballistic

missile is not related to JCPOA and will not be negotiated about it. According to this, do you think that this condition meaning the end for JCPOA?

A: The missile issue is largely outside of the purview of the JCPOA, which is a nuclear agreement. Accordingly, the U.S. is free to take whatever actions it wants regarding

missiles, and it would not be a violation of the JCPOA, as long as the U.S. did not simply reinstate the sanctions that were removed by the nuclear agreement. But the legal ability to do something does not mean it would be wise to do so. Iran has a missile program both b/c of its history (Iran-Iraq War), and b/c it feels it has a legitimate defense need given the threats and capabilities it faces in the region and its lack of air power. Personally, I don't think sanctions are likely to change those calculations and would be counter-productive.

■ The White House wants a deal with EU signatories to make restrictions on Iran's uranium enrichment permanent. Under the current deal they are set to expire in 2025. Do you think EU will accept this condition? If so, Will Iran accept it?

A: Well, I'm pretty sure Iran will not accept permanent restrictions. The parties to the agreement could collectively and by consensus agree to new or additional understandings about JCPOA, but obviously Iran is not going to accept unilateral concessions. If the U.S. wants something, then it will have to give up something or make a greater contribution than it is currently making.

And again, the EU, which is not inclined to renegotiate the deal has no power to do so on its own any more than Congress does. Iran, China, and Russia would have to agree to any changes, and they would have to be endorsed or at least not in conflict with the UNSCR that accompanied the JCPOA.

Iran won't accept restrictions on uranium enrichment permanent: Nephew



■ The White House wants a deal with EU signatories to make restrictions on Iran's uranium enrichment permanent. Under the current deal they are set to expire in 2025. Do you think EU will accept this condition? If so, Will Iran accept it?

No, I do not believe the EU will accept this. And, I certainly do not think that Iran will accept it, as presented.

I do think that there was an opportunity to negotiate a follow on agreement to the JCPOA, perhaps including regional nuclear and arms control topics. I fear that this opportunity is slipping away because of unreasonable and unrealistic demands being made by Mr. Trump.

■ Mr Trump also wants Iran's ballistic missile programme to be addressed. Iran frequently has emphasized that ballistic missile is not related to JCPOA and will not be negotiated about it. According to this, do you think that this condition meaning the end for JCPOA?

Well, I do think Mr. Trump intends for that to be the case. I do agree with Mr. Trump that Iran's missile program is destabilizing and that it would be better for the region and better for Iran to work out an arms control arrangement. I recognize, though, that Iran would need to get something too and that this would require concessions on the part of other countries.

I fear that the approach being taken by the president, though, will ensure that no other country in the region will be willing to make a concession and that Iran will refuse to even consider the missile issue in a broader, regional context in the future. I think this is all unfortunate and runs the risk of contributing to a dangerous escalation of tensions in the region.

Trump hopes to continue his game of diplomatic chicken with Iran: expert

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Nader Entessar from South Alabama University says “The game of “what will the U.S. do, what it will not do” every 90 days must end. Iran cannot afford to remain in a state of continuous limbo with respect to the JCPOA's fate.”

“What Trump hopes to do is to continue his game of diplomatic chicken with Iran,” Entessar tells the Tehran Times. Following is the text of the interview:

■ U.S. President Donald Trump approved the Iran nuclear deal only one more time before abandoning it if it is not changed. What are the changes that Trump emphasize on them?

A: What President Trump wants to do is to renegotiate the JCPOA by adding two major provisions to the Iran nuclear deal. The first provision is to remove the so-called sunset clause in the deal and make the restrictions on Iranian nuclear program permanent. The second major change he is requesting is to demolish Iran's defense capabilities by prohibiting its most important conventional deterrent leverage, namely its ballistic missile program. In other words, Trump wants to replace the JCPOA with a new one. For all practical purposes, the U.S. administration considers the



JCPOA to be a dead agreement.

■ The White House wants a deal with EU signatories to make restrictions on Iran's uranium enrichment permanent. Under the current deal, they are set to expire in 2025. Do you think EU will accept this condition? If so, Will Iran accept it?

A: There have already been attempts by some European countries, notably France, to convince Iran to accept the limitation you have mentioned. Unfortunately, many Europeans want to have their cake and eat it too.

What the U.S. hopes to finally force Europe to come to its side and ditch the JCPOA as it stands now. I am afraid that the Europeans, despite their public statements, do not have the wherewithal to challenge Trump in the long-term.

■ Mr Trump also wants Iran's ballistic missile programme to be addressed. Iran frequently has emphasized that ballistic missile is not related to JCPOA and will not negotiate about it. According to this, do you think that this condition meaning the end for JCPOA?

A: Yes, if Iran agrees to capitulate, it will augur the end of the JCPOA. Iran has been subjected to the diplomatic equivalent of the classic water torture, a process in which water is slowly dripped onto a person's forehead until the affected individual totally capitulates.

This game of “what will the U.S. do, what will it not do” every 90 days must end. Iran cannot afford to remain in a state of continuous limbo with respect to the JCPOA's fate. What Trump hopes to do is to continue his game of diplomatic chicken with Iran. This may serve President Trump's goals but it is certainly a disastrous game for Iran.

African anger from White House

By Ali Alemi

TEHRAN — The offensive remarks of the President of the United States have led to anger and hatred of the general public opinion about the White House. These remarks have once again challenged Trump's character in the world. The offensive remarks of the President of the United States have led to anger and hatred of the general public opinion about the White House. These remarks have once again challenged Trump's character in the world.

As Newyorktimes reported. Governments and citizens across the world recoiled on Friday with disgust, outrage and sadness at reports that President Trump had described Haiti and unspecified African nations as “shithole countries” during a meeting with members of Congress on Thursday about immigration, asking why the American government would want to admit their citizens as immigrants. The Haitian government called the remarks racist. The president of Senegal tweeted that he was shocked. South Africa's governing party said the comments were “extremely offensive.” The African Union said it was “frankly alarmed.”

In Haiti, particularly, the words were greeted with pain, as the country marked the eighth anniversary of the deadly 2010 earthquake — known as the worst natural disaster of modern history, killing between 230,000 and 316,000 people and leaving 1.5 million homeless.

President Jovenel Moïse attended a solemn ceremony at Titanyen, the monument to the country's earthquake victims, where thousands were buried anonymously in giant pits.

“The Haitian government condemns in the strongest terms these abhorrent and obnoxious remarks which, if proven, reflect a totally erroneous and racist view of the Haitian community and its contribution to the United States,” the government said, while summoning the top American diplomat in the country for clarification, and possible an apology. The fury was not limited to those countries directly mentioned, however. El Salvador's government sent a formal



letter of protest. Earlier in the week, the United States announced it was rescinding Temporary Protected Status for about 200,000 Salvadorans living in the United States. In Brussels, a European Union lawmaker, Gianni Pittella of Italy, told The Associated Press that Mr. Trump “had forgotten to engage his brain before talking.”

Vicente Fox, a former president of Mexico who has frequently clashed with Mr. Trump, demanded of him: “With what authority do you proclaim who's welcome in America and who's not.” (He also suggested that Mr. Trump's vulgar word was better used to describe his own mouth.)

Michaëlle Jean, a former governor general of Canada who is now the secretary general of Francophonie, which comprises 84 states that share French as a language, called the comments “disturbing.”

“It is such an insult before humanity,” Ms. Jean, a native of Haiti, who after the earthquake became Unesco's special envoy to the Caribbean nation, told the Canadian Press. “For the first representative of the United States of America to speak in such a manner is quite troubling and offensive.”

Unsurprisingly, some of the strongest reactions were in Africa. “I am shocked by President Trump's comments on Haiti and Africa,” President Macky Sall of Senegal wrote on Twitter. “I reject them and condemn them vigorously. Africa and black people deserve the respect and consideration of all.”

Also CNN reported, The African Union, a group representing the continent's countries, and African ambassadors to the United Nations, sharply denounced US President Donald Trump's reference to African nations as “shitholes” and called on him to retract his statement and apologize.

“The African Union Mission wishes to express its infuriation, disappointment and outrage over the unfortunate comment made by Mr. Donald Trump, President of the United States of America, which remarks dishonor the celebrated American creed and respect for diversity and human dignity,” the African Union mission to the United States said in a blistering statement. Condemning the comments “in the strongest terms,” the AU demanded “a retraction of the comment as well as an apology, not only to the Africans,

but to all people of African descent around the globe.”

African UN envoys issued a statement saying their group is “extremely appalled at, and strongly condemns the outrageous, racist and xenophobic remarks attributed to the President of the United States of America.”

The envoys released a joint statement Friday after an emergency meeting was held to address the issue. The group “is concerned at the continuing and growing trend from the US administration towards Africa and people of African descent to denigrate the continent and people of color,” it said.

Making reference to Trump's reported derogatory comments about Haiti, ambassadors expressed solidarity with the people of Haiti “and others that have been similarly denigrated.”

They thanked “the American people from all walks of life and backgrounds who have condemned the remarks” and reaffirmed their commitment “to the values and principles of multilateralism, diversity and equality of nations.”

African anger about Trump's comments, made during a White House meeting on immigration, could impact US companies doing business in one of the world's fastest growing regions and complicate the Pentagon's counterterrorism efforts and security cooperation on the continent, diplomats and analysts said.

It will certainly sour relations with this administration. “I don't think this will just blow over,” said Peter Lewis, director of African Studies at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. “I think it fundamentally poisons the relationship with numerous countries.”

According sources in the Oval Office meeting between Trump and lawmakers, the President referred to Africa, saying, “why do we want all these people from ‘shithole countries’ coming here?” Lewis said that Trump had undermined 25 years of African goodwill towards the US. “To essentially give the back of his hand to 49 countries south of the Sahara creates real problems in many ways,” Lewis said.

Mossad plays role in Iran unrest

By Tamara Al Majali

There is finger-pointing to external interventions in the latest unrest in Iran. Attempts were made to tamper with security and stability inside the country by relying on some of the tools used by intelligence agencies. There is no difference between two groups in Iran: one affected by the government's economic policies, and the other who is ready to take to the streets to put pressure on the government and demand for their rights. But this situation was seen by the enemy as a golden opportunity to ride on the wave and move the spies at ‘home’ to distort the demonstrations and spread chaos and criminality, and more importantly interfere with Iran's national security in any way. Two years ago, Iran discovered the involvement of foreign intelligence services particularly the Israeli Mossad in its domestic affairs. An example is given below:

An Iranian named Amir, who was living in the Kurdistan region of Iraq was a spy of Mossad. The Iranian intelligence agency, aware of the fact, kept silent on the matter and replaced Amir with someone else to continue to communicate with his Israeli operator.

Mossad did not realize that his ‘agent’ had been changed and that they had been communicating with a new person appointed by the Iranian intelligence agency. The game continued on for two years. The exposed person was Amir. And an intermediary between him and Mossad was a Turkish newspaper, discovered by the Turkish intelligence service about 3 months ago. The leakage led to the shutdown of the publication. The Turkish newspaper admitted that Mossad was planning disturbances in Iran and gave out evidence on it. This confirms that the actions of some young people, who initiated the riots on the streets of Tehran and other attacks on public and private properties elsewhere, were instigated by Mossad and other foreign intelligence services who tried to get inside Iran to activate sedition and chaos. But Iranian counter intelligence forces identified and arrested them and recorded their confessions.

An official Iranian newspaper revealed the other week that American, Israeli and Saudi officers formed a control room in the city of Erbil in the Iraqi Kurdistan to manage the demonstrations in Iran a few days prior to the mayhem. The incident confirms the foreign countries were running the show. “Information leaked that the desperate and defeated America formed two control rooms to run these demonstrations in the Afghan city of Herat and Erbil, where U.S., Israeli and Saudi officers and representatives of the terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq organization were involved,” Kayhan newspaper wrote in an editorial.

This is additional evidence of the involvement of America and Mossad in the riots that were intended to create disturbances in Iran and bring down the country as a key player in the region.

The newspaper added, “The limited demonstrations, just bubbles, will soon come to an end, because from early the unrest attracted no supporters, as they were intended for chaos and vandalism.”

Blowing the limited protests “out of proportion” immersed in a trance and Washington and its two allies - Zionist entity and Saudi Arabia — “confirmed the extent of their failure in the face of Iran as well as their inability to understand the Iranian reality and their dedication to the Islamic Republic, eternal revolution and its sacred goals,” the publication stated.

“Iranians will never give up the principles,” the newspaper added. All these and other signs have already been reported by the Israeli channel 10 TV, revealing a closed door meeting between Mir Ben-Sabr, the Israeli national security advisor in the government of Benjamin Netanyahu, and his American counterpart Herbert on December 12, during which they reached a “deal” that calls for the development of operational scenarios and plans to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and developing ballistic missiles. The deal also prevents Iran from strengthening position in the region and from being an actor in countries like Syria and Lebanon. The accord also offers a strategy to counter the threats of Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The agreement was confirmed in the official statement of the White House, though it didn't have any media leakage.

Cameroon's heartbreaking struggles are a relic of British colonialism

By Eliza Anyanwu

On January 5, a man named Julius Ayuk Tabe was arrested along with nine others in a hotel in Nigeria's capital, Abuja. Tabe and his companions were reportedly committing no crime, at least not one that has yet been disclosed.

There are inconsistencies in the reporting. Some accounts say 10 people were arrested, while others speak of seven. The BBC's coverage eschews these details altogether. What remains consistent is that it is alleged that those detained were taken by Nigeria's intelligence agency, though the Department of State Services denies having them in custody. And so there the story ends. No public outrage – in Nigeria or anywhere else. No international condemnation.

This incident should matter because the violation of anyone's freedom of association anywhere in the world should be troubling. As has been said many times: "None of us is free until all of us are free." But in a world where mankind does unspeakable things every day, knowing and caring intimately

about each one becomes impossible, so let's bring this closer to home.

Tabé and his associates are part of a movement seeking independence from the Republic of Cameroon, a fight that would not be necessary if Britain had granted its former colony independence in 1961. What is now referred to as the "anglophone crisis" is in fact yet another hangover of British colonial rule.

After World War II, Germany's colonies were redivided among the spoils of the war, with Britain controlling one part of the former German territory of Cameroon and France controlling another. These "trust territories" were supposed to be prepared for independence and majority rule but that would not come for another 15 years. In 1960 France granted its colony independence. For the English-speaking population, in February 1961, Britain however had a different proposition: join Nigeria or the newly formed Republic of Cameroon.

■ The promise of equality

The anglophone Cameroonians who opted in

that referendum to form a federation with French Cameroon, soon found the terms of that union were void. The promise of equality was never kept, with the English-speaking minority facing widespread discrimination and repression. The ongoing crisis is about decolonization, not secession.

Of course, it's not just Cameroon's anglophone minority that has suffered at the hands of its despotic leader, Paul Biya. Biya's 35-year rule (preceded by nearly 20 years working in the office of the president) has been marked by allegations of corruption, cronyism and restrictions of civil liberties and human rights.

Since the conflict with Boko Haram escalated in the far north of the country, the use of torture against detainees (many arrested simply for failing to show ID) has been happening "right under the noses of high-ranking Cameroonian military officials", and perhaps also in the presence of U.S. military personnel.

The ever-present risk of detention is a story I am intimately familiar with. I was born in Cameroon

and return often. Going home over the Christmas holidays three years ago, we were constantly reminded to carry our ID cards. Taxi drivers would check as you got into their yellow cabs. "Madame, I don't want trouble with the gendarme," one driver told me, after I had got in but could not find my card. Everyone seemed to know someone arrested, or threatened with arrest. These stories, like those that followed the campaign to revive an article in the penal code banning women from wearing short skirts the year before, all end with someone paying a bribe for their freedom.

■ News of arrests in Abuja

I am equally familiar with the fight for self-determination in Southern Cameroons. My father is part of the Ambazonia Governing Council, the leadership of the movement seeking independence for the anglophone region they call Ambazonia. I woke up at 03:00 A.M. on Sunday to find him huddled over his phone, talking frantically as he learned of the news of the arrests in Abuja. The question then and now: if we can be arrested in

Nigeria, presumably at the behest of the Cameroonian government, are we safe anywhere?

As someone who has benefited from growing up bilingual and who, as many others do, feels "secession fatigue" after the implosion of South Sudan, and the failed attempts at independence in Scotland and Catalonia, I have doubts about what course of action is best, but never about southern Cameroonians' right to self-determination. The British Empire, in its arrogance, did not think this small group of people could effectively self-govern.

It was an imperialistic decision that has so far cost hundreds of lives, and seen many others detained in squalid conditions.

Rory Stewart, then the UK minister for Africa, in a statement on 4 October 2017 called for all parties to "urgently take action to implement solutions that address the root causes and grievances being raised". Britain, though it would rather forget it, is one of those parties, and it's time the government used its influence to get Biya to the discussion table. (Source: *The Guardian*)

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مالکین محترم

ملک های فروش و اجاره ای خود را (آپارتمان،
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مالکین محترم

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balcony, & F.F

Joradn (\$1200) 1bdrs
Jordan (\$1800) 2bdrs
Jordan (\$2500) 3bdrs
All with S/p, F.F

Darrou Villa
1500sq.m, 5bdrs
yard, S/p (\$8000)

Elahieh (\$4500)
3bdrs, S/p, S, J
240sq.m, & F.F

Velenjak (\$3500)
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Mahmoodieh bldg
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pkgs (\$20000)

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3 calming questions to ask yourself when you're feeling worried or anxious

By Susie Moore

Worry suddenly washes over me sometimes, and I find it hard to explain to other people. I worry about my mum getting sick. I worry that I'm spending too much. I worry that I've hurt someone's feelings or that I've done something wrong if a friend doesn't text me back.

My friend Charlotte told me that she worries that whenever her husband is late—coming home from the gym, for example—that he's been in an accident. My former boss Liz told me she pretends she's sick to avoid public speaking because she's lost her breath on stage before and loses sleep if she has to talk in front of a group.

So when worry and anxiety bubble up in your chest, first, know that you're not alone. The National Institute of Mental Health reports that 18 percent of Americans are affected by anxiety.

And although anxiety comes in many forms (from incessant worrying to more severe panic attacks), when I experience it personally, I've learned that asking myself certain questions can help calm me down.

They're not a perfect solution, and they come from my personal experience only. But in times of worry, this inner probing has helped my clients and me a little. And oftentimes, even just a little relief from panic feels good. (Please note: These suggestions are more for those with fleeting worries as opposed to true anxiety disorders. If you're experiencing the latter, you should speak with a medical professional.)

Here goes:

1. Is this really a threat?

In life, accidents do happen, yes. But most of the time, we worry about things that are very unlikely to go wrong. What is it that is making you worried? How possible is it really? Truly think about that for a second. Allow the practical nature of your question to help ground you.

Here are some of the most absurd worries I've had:

... The Wonder Wheel would break when we were on it (So our consolation prize was a corn dog at Coney Island.)

... Someone would put drugs in our suitcase and we'd go to jail (I only carry on now – it's more safe and efficient.)

My friend Louise once thought a staph infection on her thumb (a common outcome from a shoddy manicure we've since learned) was serious. There was a whole essay-length text chain about it (with photos!) She went to a doctor who gave her antibiotics and said, "If this happens again, you don't need to come back. Your body will heal itself in days."

Our overactive minds can make common situations seem far worse than they actually are.

2. Have I done all I can to be prepared?

This is where the portion of your life that you can control comes in. If you're riding a bike, wear a helmet! Check that your fire alarm works. Make sure your insurance is up to date. Go for your annual checkup.

My sister always worries that she has left something on and checks all of the electrical outlets in her home before



“Worry is useful when it changes our behavior in productive ways. The rest of the time, it’s a negative form of distraction, an entertainment designed to keep us from doing our work and living our lives.”

leaving. If that helps, great! What can you do to feel/be best prepared for what concerns you?

It may sound somber, but having a will or your paperwork in order, whatever it is that you can control, all ticked off, you might start to feel lighter. There's a big difference between planning and worrying—planning makes you feel empowered, calm, and clearer. In what area of your life can you replace stressing out with just getting stuff organized?

3. Is my mind just going into overdrive (like in the middle of the night)?

There's nothing like a restless mind in the middle of the night to make us feel helpless, crazed, and desperate. It's almost like the nonstop stock news ticker at the bottom of a TV screen. And if your feels of panic pop up at 2:43 a.m., you have nothing like work, other people, or anything else to distract you.

But you can shift your thought loop with deep breaths or by throwing on a YouTube sleep meditation like this one. Remind yourself that dead-of-night worrying is often com-

pletely eradicated by the imminent light of day.

Most importantly, I've come to understand that worrying itself is the thing to fear. Seth Godin says, "Worry is useful when it changes our behavior in productive ways. The rest of the time, it's a negative form of distraction, an entertainment designed to keep us from doing our work and living our lives."

So next time panicked thoughts arise, ask: Is this really threatening? Have I done all I can to keep myself safe? Could this be a case of mental overdrive, which is going to pass (like it probably normally does)? If so, breathe into it. Take what's useful from your fears and act. Control what you can. And remember that worry doesn't make life any more predictable.

We may think we feel safer when we're anxious, but it's just an illusion. Focusing on worst-case scenarios will not keep bad things from happening. It'll only keep you from making the most of all the good stuff that you have in the present.

(Source: greatist.com)

Flu stomps the nation, overwhelming ERs and leaving 20 children dead

By Susan Scutti

The flu virus has reached nearly every corner of the nation.

Influenza activity is widespread in all states except Hawaii (and the District of Columbia), according to the weekly flu report released Friday by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Flu is everywhere in the US right now," said Dr. Dan Jernigan, director of the CDC's influenza branch. "This is the first year we've had the entire continental US at the same level (of flu activity) at the same time." It has been an early flu season that seems to be peaking now, he said, with a 5.8% increase in laboratory-confirmed cases this week over last.

There were 11,718 new laboratory-confirmed cases during the week ending January 6, bringing the season total to 60,161. These numbers do not include all people who have had the flu, as many do not see a doctor when sick.

Seven additional pediatric deaths were reported during the week ending January 6, bringing the total for the season to 20.

For older people, the CDC estimates deaths based on pneumonia and influenza. Based on National Center for Health Statistics data, 7% of all deaths that occurred during the week ending December 23 were due to pneumonia and influenza. This is above the rate considered normal for this period, according to Lynnette Brammer, head of the CDC's Domestic Flu Surveillance team.

Additionally, 22.7 hospitalizations for every 100,000 people occurred over the week ending January 6, compared with 13.7 per 100,000 for the week ending December 30. Those older than 65 represent the largest group hospitalized, though people within the 50-to-64 age range and children younger than 5 are also experiencing high rates of hospitalization.

"We are currently in the midst of a very active flu season, with much of the country experiencing widespread and intense flu activity," CDC Director Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald said. "The flu season may be peaking now. We know from past experience it will take many more weeks for flu activity to slow down."

Brammer said, "Basically, it looks like things are starting to level off. We didn't see the sharp increases that we saw the last couple of weeks."

"Over the next few weeks, we'll know if we peaked or not," she said. "I would hope that the areas that have been hit a little bit earlier in the South and up the West Coast, I'm hoping that those people -- particularly

some of the states in the South -- may have hit their peak and are on their way down."

Some of the northern states may still be going up in the number of flu cases, she said. "I wouldn't be surprised to see that. But, either way, one of the really important things to remember is there are, probably for everybody, weeks to go in this flu season."

Vaccine effectiveness has not been calculated, but officials know that the most common strain making people sick this year is H3N2, Brammer said.

Jernigan said H3N2 seasons are associated with higher rates of hospitalizations and deaths, as well as with lower vaccine effectiveness. He believes that when calculations are made at season's end, vaccine effectiveness may be around 30% for this season.

Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious disease specialist at Vanderbilt University, provided a nutshell description of this season: "Started early; it then blossomed essentially all over the country more or less simultaneously. The upswing has been dramatic, and essentially the entire country is affected -- some parts more than others -- but flu is everywhere."

Schaffner suspects that holiday travel helped transport the flu virus and expedited its transmission. "All those hugs and kisses ... we're seeing the consequences now."

H3N2, this year's predominant strain, "tends to produce more severe disease, particularly among older persons," Schaffner said. "Doctors' offices, clinics and emergency rooms all over the country are feeling the H3N2 impact right now."

Generally, people most at risk for complications are older people, children and people with weak immune systems.

"Influenza and its complications disproportionately affect people who are 65 and older," Schaffner said. "They account for 80% of the deaths, and then there are also deaths in younger people, often who have underlying illnesses, such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, and also in some young children."

Two tragic deaths

However, flu can also claim the lives of healthy adults such as Jenny Ching, 51, who died January 5 after battling what she thought was just a bad cold. Her husband, Matt Ching, told CNN affiliate WCVB that the Massachusetts resident "had the flu, and she also developed a bacterial infection, and it was just really severe and caused severe pneumonia, and her body just didn't react to antibiotics."

Ching said he wasn't sure whether his wife had gotten a flu shot this season, though in

seasons past, that was the norm for the mother of two boys, ages 9 and 7.

Schaffner noted that "the usual flu death is a person who gets influenza, gets all that inflammation in their chest and then has the complication of pneumonia." The flu "can take a perfectly healthy person -- a child, a young adult, robust -- and put them in the ER in 24 to 48 hours."

That was the case for Kyler Baughman, 21, who died unexpectedly December 28 at UPMC Presbyterian Hospital in Pittsburgh. "Robust" characterizes Baughman perfectly.

The Latrobe, Pennsylvania, resident, who often posted pictures of himself at the gym on Facebook, was studying to be a physical trainer and worked not one but two jobs, his mother told CNN affiliate WPXI.

"It doesn't seem real," said his mother, Beverly. She recounted that her son looked run-down when she saw him December 23. On December 26, Baughman went to work but left early because he wasn't feeling well. The next day, he visited the ER at Westmoreland County Hospital. Health personnel immediately decided to fly him to UPMC, where he died less than 24 hours later.

The cause of his death, as reported by the Allegheny County Medical Examiner, was influenza, septic shock and multiple organ failure. Unlike the usual flu death resulting from pneumonia complications, Schaffner said, "this is a different phenomenon."

The viral flu infection stimulated an immune and inflammatory response in Baughman's body. "This happens to everyone," Schaffner noted, but when the person is a "very strong, robust person," there are times when that response is "overwhelming." In such cases, cytokines -- proteins created as part of the inflammatory response -- create a "cytokine storm" in the body. "And this cytokine storm can actually lead to sepsis in the person."

Baughman's parents hope that by sharing his story, they might save someone else. "I just think he ignored it and thought it would go away, like most people," his mother said. Added his father, Todd: "Don't let things go. Whenever you have fever and you have it multiple days, don't let it go. Get it taken care of."

Different states, different responses

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey declared a state public health emergency because of the flu on Thursday.

Scott Harris, acting state health officer at the Alabama Department of Public Health, said the influenza outbreak includes high ac-

(Source: CNN)

This is the best workout for your personality, according to science

By Marissa Laliberte

Have you ever looked at a gym rat friend and just thought, "How can you stand that?" Hating the treadmill certainly isn't uncommon, but that doesn't mean you're destined to avoid working out altogether. Finding a workout you actually enjoy is the first step to sticking with a program, and new research reveals the physical activity different personalities are most drawn to.

More than 800 workers from different countries answered a survey revealing their personalities and workout preferences. Matching the traits up with favorite exercises, the researchers realized there's no one-size-fits-all strategy when it comes to finding a routine that works.

According to the findings presented at the British Psychological Society's annual Division of Occupational Psychology conference, extroverts were more likely to prefer hitting the gym to get some

Extroverts get their energy from being around other people, so having someone next to them in the elliptical row could be motivating instead of annoying.

exercise in. The results make sense—extroverts get their energy from being around other people, so having someone next to them in the elliptical row could be motivating instead of annoying.

The most rational respondents also preferred the gym, especially when it comes to coming up with a regimented workout plan that lays out exactly what to do every day. If you let logic rule, come up with a specific workout plan before you get to the gym. Going in without a plan might feel overwhelming, but a solid schedule will keep you on track.

Meanwhile, creative people don't fare as well with a gym membership. Instead, those individuals preferred to take their workout outdoors, like taking a bike ride or going for a run. Maybe creative people are drawn to awe-inspiring landscapes, or maybe their love of the great outdoors fosters their creativity.

Other research says natural settings spark creativity, such as a PLoS One study that found participants were more creative and better problem-solvers after spending four days in nature.

No matter what your preferred workout style, the most important thing is to figure out what works best for your preferences and schedule. If you love what you do, you'll dread it less.

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

Ways to get rid of your love handles without any exercise

By Andrea Blair Cirignano

When choosing pants and skirts, opt for a high-waist style that will hide any excess fat around the middle. Mid-rise styles can also do the trick, but just make sure the waistline isn't so low that it cuts into—and therefore, highlights—any unflattering curves.

Talk to your doc

If you eat relatively healthy and move your body on a regular basis, the scale shouldn't shift too much. If you notice your waistband getting inexplicably tighter or you're gaining weight without lifestyle changes, schedule a visit with your doctor to rule out hormonal imbalances (like for instance, these health problems can be blamed on a thyroid problem), other health concerns, or to evaluate whether a change in medication could help you in how to lose love handles.

Try a procedure

Maybe you've tried diets, and even exercise isn't doing the trick since you can't really "spot train" specific areas of your body. Turn to your dermatologists for a variety of options that might work for your waistline. "Getting rid of love handles without exercise used to be impossible but the innovation in fat reduction treatments these days has definitely made this a reality—imagine, an FDA-cleared device, that doesn't even touch you, that's clinically proven to reduce fat," says Dendy Engelman, MD, board-certified dermatologist at Manhattan Dermatology and Cosmetic Surgery. "It seems too good to be true, but I have been very happy with results my patients get with BTL Vanquish ME."

Find a flattering fit

When you don't feel your best, sometimes you want to hide behind baggy clothing but ill-fitting tops and bottoms will just make the problem worse. Go too small, and every lump and bump will be on display; go too large and the fabric will hang on the largest feature and lead to a frumpy and boxy appearance. Take the time to find your size and avoid clothing that's too small or too large to look your best.

Trust a tailor

Mass-produced clothing can't possibly flatter every figure so ask around for recommendations for a tailor in your area. You don't have to bring them every single item in your wardrobe but make an investment for your key closet staples and ask for their direction before your next shopping trip. This might not be the trick in how to get rid of love handles, but it can certainly help hide them in the meantime.

Set a "stand up" calendar reminder

Simply moving more during the day can mean a tighter figure, without any traditional exercise whatsoever, so set a calendar reminder on your phone or work computer to simply stand up once an hour. You might start by standing up a sitting right back down but it will likely turn into a quick stretch or a quick walk to refill your water for a win-win.

Drink more water

Sometimes the easiest diet changes include adding instead of removing foods and drinks since banning foods always makes them that much more desirable. You could eat more of these 12 foods that help you burn calories, or just grab a water bottle. A 2016 study found that when men and women increased water intake, their sugar and fat consumption went down.

Eat for heat

Diets are notoriously short-lived, so skip the strict nature of most of them and, just like your water intake, add instead of restrict. Add foods with fat-burning nutrients like calcium and fiber to your plate to help reduce body fat without exercise.

(Source: rd.com)

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 Phones across Hawaii received the above emergency alert about a "ballistic missile threat inbound," but according to state officials, it isn't true. US Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, Hawaii's governor David Ige and the state's Hawaii Emergency Management Agency all chimed in on Twitter to confirm the alert is false. It took 38 minutes before a second alert reached phones, confirming that the first one was a mistake.
- 2 If you're part of the Windows Insiders Fast Ring (or have opted to skip ahead), you'll find the Windows 10 Insider Preview Build 17074 available to download. Of note is the addition of Quiet Hours, which functions similarly to the Mac Do Not Disturb feature. You can set your own schedule, during which you will only receive notifications from people and apps in your priority list.
- 3 Current and former Uber security staffers cast doubt on spying claims. The former security chief of Uber Technologies Inc. swore in a closed legal proceeding that he knew of no attempts to steal trade secrets from anyone, including Alphabet Inc's self-driving unit Waymo, and would be "shocked" if that had occurred.
- 4 The former security chief of Uber Technologies Inc. swore in a closed legal proceeding that he knew of no attempts to steal trade secrets from anyone, including Alphabet Inc's self-driving unit Waymo, and would be "shocked" if that had occurred.
- 5 Indonesia central bank warns over cryptocurrencies. Indonesia's central bank has issued a fresh warning about trading in cryptocurrencies like bitcoin because of the risk of losses to the public and even a potential threat to the stability of the financial system.
- 6 Singapore Android TV sellers face copyright infringement charges. Two companies have been brought to Singapore's state courts over a piracy lawsuit filed by a group that includes local pay TV operators Singtel and StarHub and content owners Fox Networks and Premier League.
- 7 Astronaut apologizes for 'fake news' about his height increase. Norishige Kanai grew 2 cm, not 3.5 in, in his three weeks aboard the ISS.
- 8 AMD processors: Not as safe as you might have thought. With all the hub-bub about Meltdown and Spectre, AMD CPUs are widely regarded as being perfectly safe. Well AMD chips may be safer, but they're not invulnerable.
- 9 Researcher finds another security flaw in Intel management firmware. Active Management Technology defaults allow anyone to take control of many PCs. Intel says this is basically PC manufacturers' fault for not properly protecting the configuration for AMT in BIOS setup menus.
- 10 Boeing, SpaceX have razor-thin margins to fly crew missions in 2018. NASA has a lot to consider before assigning crews to the first flights.

French telcos fixing network black spots

France's mobile telephone operators will spend more than 3 billion euros (\$3.7 billion) rolling out a 4G network in black spots across the country to ensure there are no coverage gaps by 2020, according to a government minister. Julien Denormandie, junior minister for territorial cohesion, told the weekly Journal du Dimanche that each of the major operators had agreed to install 5,000 masts and antennas and jointly ensure network coverage along 30,000 km (19,000 miles) of rail tracks.



Orange, formerly the state-owned monopoly France Telecom, SFR, Bouygues Telecom, and Iliad's Free Mobile have all been guilty of under-investing in France's mobile network during the past 15 years, the minister said. "I want to put an end to 'The network's bad, I'll call you back'," Denormandie told the paper, published on Sunday. Asked how much financing the state would contribute, the minister replied: "Not a single cent will come from the budget!" French mobile users frequently complain about the patchiness of the network, lamenting that it can seem inferior to coverage in African countries where telecom companies playing catch-up bypassed fixed lines and invested heavily in mobile technology. As of July 2017, the 4G networks of SFR, Bouygues Telecom, Orange and Free Mobile covered 74 percent, 70 percent, 69 percent and 47 percent of the population respectively in low density zones, according to the telecoms regulator Arcep.

(Source: Reuters)

Cyber-attack risk on nuclear weapons systems 'relatively high'

By Ewen MacAskill

US, British and other nuclear weapons systems are increasingly vulnerable to cyber attacks, according to a new study by the international relations thinktank Chatham House.

The threat has received scant attention so far from those involved in nuclear military planning and the procurement of weapons, the report said.

It blames this partly on failure to keep up with fast-moving advances, lack of skilled staff and the slowness of institutional change.

"Nuclear weapons systems were developed before the advancement of computer technology and little consideration was given to potential cyber vulnerabilities. As a result, current nuclear strategy often overlooks the widespread use of digital technology in nuclear systems," the authors of the study said.

Nuclear weapons systems are at threat from hostile states, criminal groups and terrorist organisations exploiting cyber vulnerabilities.

"The likelihood of attempted cyber-attacks on nuclear weapons systems is relatively high and increasing from advanced persistent threats from states and non-state groups," the report said.

It cited examples such as a report the US could have infiltrated the supply chain of North Korea's missile system that contributed to a test failure in April last year. The silos of US nuclear-tipped Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missiles "are believed to be particularly vulnerable to cyber attacks".

The study also recorded illicit trafficking in Moldova and Georgia of radioactive and nuclear materials; a group in Belgium affiliated to Islamic State monitoring the movements of a nuclear scientist; and German-owned Patriot missiles reported to have been hacked in 2015.

The report, Cybersecurity of Nuclear Weapons Systems: Threats, Vulnerabilities and Consequences, was written by Beyza Unal, a research fellow at London-based



Chatham House who previously worked on strategic analysis at Nato, and Patricia Lewis, research director of the international security department at Chatham House.

"There are a number of vulnerabilities and pathways through which a malicious actor may infiltrate a nuclear weapons system without a state's knowledge," the report said. "Human error, systems failures, design vulnerabilities and susceptibilities within the supply chain all represent common security issues in nuclear weapons systems."

The authors noted there is a dilemma between needing the private sector in order to keep up with advances in technology and the risks they bring with them.

"Many aspects of nuclear weapons development and systems management are privatised in the US and in the UK, poten-

tially introducing a number of private-sector supply chain vulnerabilities."

It added: "Presently, this is a relatively ungoverned space and these vulnerabilities could serve to undermine the overall integrity of national nuclear weapons systems. For example, the backdoors in software that companies often maintain to fix bugs and patch systems are targets for cyber-attacks once they are discovered and become known."

Potential artificial intelligence (AI) applications, while creating new opportunities for cybersecurity, add another layer of complexity for nuclear weapons that could be exploited.

The authors criticise military failures to – so far – take the issue seriously. "Military procurement programmes tend not to pay adequate consideration to emerging cyber

risks – particularly to the supply chain – regardless of the government regulations for protecting data against cyber attacks. This could be due to constantly lagging behind the fast-moving nature of cyber attacks, a lack of skilled personnel and the slow institutional and organisational implementation of changes."

Digital components, material and software can quickly become obsolete and, without proper updates and patching, "they are subject to intrusion".

The authors cite the UK's new aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth, which appeared to be using the same version of Windows in its control room at the outdated system that left the NHS exposed in the WannaCry ransomware attack in May last year.

(Source: Guardian)

Tech wants to solve our tech-related sleep problems

Sleep technology exists to solve this issue, and there were plenty of companies exhibiting new devices here at CES 2018. Many of them intend to tell you how well, or poorly, you have slept each night, in the hope you'll make better decisions the following day. But, as well as becoming more commonplace, sleep gadgets are going to become far more diverse, at least according to what we saw at the show.

Smartwatches and fitness trackers have tracked sleep for years, using the principles of actigraphy: Monitoring how you move as you sleep with algorithms used to calculate your cycles. The less you move, the thinking goes, the deeper your sleep.

Companies like Nokia and Emfit both launched new under-bed sensors that do the same job, but without a device on your wrist. The former will track your sleep duration and quality and offers a sleep-coaching function if you're having trouble nodding off. In addition, the Nokia Sleep sensor offers control of your smart home with IFTTT, triggering recipes as you begin to nod off.

Using sleep technology as an extension of the smart home seems to be the beachhead from which these companies plan to enter our homes. Sleepace exhibited a whole



suite of connected home gear that'll automate your pad when it senses you're sleeping. Spend enough cash and your residence will turn off the TV and draw the blinds as soon as you climb into bed. When you're rousing the following morning, the system could gently turn on the lights and fire up the coffee machine.

Wake-up lights were sleep technology well before sleep technology was a thing, using daylight simulation to trigger your natural circadian rhythm. It's probably best exemplified by Philips' Wake Up Light, and at CES 2018 competing products appeared from companies like Witt and Aromarest. The latter pulls double duty as a scent diffuser, much like Bescent's forthcoming night-time sleeping aid.

Other devices are attempting to appeal more to the marginal-gains crowd looking to get an edge on their bodies. Dreamlight, for instance, is an intelligent sleep mask that offers light therapy in the eye cups and sleep coaching. If you have taken a genetic test with 23andMe, you can even customize the sleep programs according to your DNA. Even to the point where, should your genetics indicate so, you can attempt to sleep like Leonardo DaVinci, who famously took 20-minute polyphasic sleep naps every four hours.

(Source: engadget)

Drone trends to watch in 2018



Drones are going to see significant new capabilities in 2018. The use of multiple high-functioning cameras as well as upgraded Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) will enhance navigational acumen far beyond that of today's drone models. This, combined with ultra-fast charging and longer-lasting batteries, means the drones of 2018 will have far greater range and performance flexibility.

Expect to see more and more sectors incorporating drones into their operations this year as a result. Here are three areas that should be especially interesting to watch:

1. Drone-enabled big data
Drones offer a vast, bird's eye view for collecting data, which can contribute enormously to diverse areas such as weather, traffic flow, and even disaster forecasting. A fleet of drones can collect and analyze road conditions in real-time, amassing data that can help alleviate gridlock. And, unlike traffic cameras, drones have the flexibility to observe from numerous angles and can be sent swiftly to flashpoints, making them ideal for monitoring our roadways.

In 2017, drones helped determine damage following several natural disasters such as hurricanes and wildfires, and such data could prove vital in saving more and more lives in 2018. Several companies are already using drones for data collection and analysis in such areas. Kespry provides an aerial intelligence platform integrated with cloud storage to streamline insurance claims and help analysts better grasp the scope of a disaster. CyPhy specializes in high-endurance tethered drones with secure payload data that provide vital information and real-time footage to first responders; these drones are designed for customers in the defense, public safety, and commercial industries. And Flyability has created Elios, an inspection drone designed to explore indoor and confined spaces

to guide safety improvements to anything from bridges to mines.

Data collected by drones will also help the drone industry itself. With copious amounts of data to power unmanned aerial vehicles, "smart drones" will become more adept at navigating hazards on their own and communicating amongst themselves to negotiate safe flight paths, alter routes automatically in real-time according to current conditions, and even abort missions altogether if the data shows too much risk. One day, AI powered drones may even make the drone air traffic control system NASA is currently developing redundant.

Of course, there are darker clouds – with fear of drones being used as "big brother" tools, spying down on us from above. Consumers usually vote with their wallets on the side of convenience at the expense of privacy, but regulators need to be mindful of such issues when charting the path for drones in the coming year.

2. Unmanned flying taxis

It won't quite be the Jetsons, but in 2018, several companies will be competing to bring us the flying car/drone, also known as the AAV (Autonomous Aerial Vehicle). The concept first emerged with proof of concept prototypes from major players such as Ehang, whose eco-friendly AAVs aim to serve as autonomous personal transportation devices. The company has raised over \$50 million in funding.

Another competitor is Volocopter a German company aiming to help cities resolve growing mobility issues. Featuring a two-seated drone with 18 rotors, Volocopter received \$30 million in funding from Daimler and was also chosen to lead Dubai's revolutionary aerial shuttle service, with testing already taking place.

Even Uber is joining in the fight against road congestion with its Uber Elevate – a vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) aircraft "fast-forwarding to the future of on-demand,

urban air transportation" – which the company says will be fully operational by 2020. Uber is working with a number of partners on drone initiatives, including aviation giant Boeing's Aurora, Bell Helicopters, and even NASA.

Though a future of skies teeming with drone taxis may not be very appealing to today's professional drivers (or birds for that matter), taxi drones will offer immense benefits. They will be clean, safe, will free up roads – maybe even doing away with them altogether one day – and, with an infinite number of traffic lanes, will make our daily journeys exponentially faster.

3. Home surveillance via drone
Home security cameras could soon become a thing of the past with the rise of autonomous, multi-sensor drones. These drones will self-activate upon detecting noise or suspicious movement and fly inside or around a property until the threat is found and thwarted – with the homeowner watching from a safe distance. Drones are already used for surveillance in large industrial facilities, but drone-based home surveillance systems will likely take wing in 2018.

Sunflower Labs, a Palo-Alto-based company, is developing a home awareness system that combines immobile sensors with drones, leaving no corner unchecked. The sensors communicate with a camera-equipped quadcopter that transmits alerts and live footage of ongoing activity. Again, as home monitoring capabilities become more expansive, privacy and cybersecurity issues will become more acute, and homeowners will have to make tough choices regarding privacy versus safety.

Technologies such as AI, computer vision, and energy storage will also continue to develop exponentially in 2018. So the innovation should be very interesting to watch this year. (Source: venturebeat)

Pesticides could harm threatened salmon, whales: study

Scientists have determined that a family of widely used pesticides poses a threat to dozens of endangered and threatened species, including Pacific salmon, Atlantic sturgeon and Puget Sound orcas.

The National Marine Fisheries Service issued its new biological opinion on three organophosphate pesticides — chlorpyrifos, diazinon and malathion — after a yearslong court fight by environmental groups. At the urging of pesticide manufacturers, the Trump administration had sought a two-year delay of a court-ordered deadline to issue the findings by the end of 2017, but it was unsuccessful.

The exhaustive 3,700-page federal review, dated Dec. 29, concludes that chlorpyrifos and malathion jeopardize 38 out of the 77 species under the jurisdiction of the fisheries service and that diazinon was found to jeopardize 25 of the listed species.

The report makes detailed recommendations to the Environmental Protection Agency for new restrictions on how and where the pesticides can be sprayed to help limit the harm.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt in March reversed an Obama-era effort to bar the use of chlorpyrifos on fruits and vegetables after peer-reviewed academic studies found that even tiny levels of exposure could hinder the development of children's brains.

Threat to protected species

EPA's press office did not respond Friday



to a request seeking comment about the latest federal study on the threat to protected species.

Organophosphorus gas was originally developed as a chemical weapon before World War II. Dow Chemical, based in Midland, Michigan, has been selling chlorpyrifos for spraying on citrus fruits, apples, cherries and

other crops since the 1960s. It is among the most widely used agricultural pesticides in the United States, with Dow selling about 5 million pounds (2.3 million kilograms) domestically each year.

Dow AgroSciences, the Dow subsidiary that sells chlorpyrifos, did not respond to a

request for comment Friday.

The Associated Press first reported in April that lawyers representing Dow and two other pesticide companies sent letters to three of Trump's Cabinet secretaries saying the academic studies were flawed. Dow wrote a \$1 million check to help underwrite Trump's inaugural festivities, and company CEO Andrew Liveris led a now-disbanded White House manufacturing working group.

Pesticide regulations

CropLife America, an industry trade group that lobbies Congress and federal agencies on pesticide regulations, said it is still reviewing the final National Marine Fisheries Service opinion.

The "denial of a requested extension of time to complete the opinion resulted in a document that has the potential to create exaggerated and unfounded concerns regarding threatened and endangered species and have a negative impact on farmers as well as public health protection," said Jay Vroom, the CEO of CropLife.

A coalition of environmentalists and commercial fishermen has fought in court for more than a decade to spur the federal government to more closely examine the risk posed to humans and endangered species by organophosphates.

(Source: AP)

Organophosphorus gas was originally developed as a chemical weapon before World War II. Dow Chemical, based in Midland, Michigan, has been selling chlorpyrifos for spraying on citrus fruits, apples, cherries and other crops since the 1960s.

Researchers have found a surprising link between winter weight gain and sunlight

A study that has discovered fat cells beneath our skin shrink when exposed to blue light just might help explain why many of us find ourselves with more snug-fitting pants in spring.

Short days and time spent indoors might be making our fat cells a little fatter. That's not to suggest we can melt away the curves by lazing at the beach, but it could be one more factor to consider in our fight against obesity.

Researchers from the University of Alberta, Canada, set out with the intention of engineering white adipocytes — fat cells commonly found under the skin — that could produce insulin for people with Type 1 diabetes.

On setting up the controls for their experiment, they observed a strange phenomenon which hadn't been reported previously.

Adipocytes' membranes

It was already known that channels in the adipocytes' membranes could open and close under the influence of certain visible wavelengths of light.

To set the groundwork for bioengineering fat cells, the researchers controlled the types of wavelengths the adipocytes were exposed to, and measured the effect on the movements of charged particles across the membrane.



They noticed the highest current was generated when the light's wavelength was between about 450 and 480 nanometers. Or, in everyday terms, when it was bluest.

"We noticed the reaction in human tissue cells in our negative control experiments, and since there was nothing in the literature, we knew it was important to investigate further," explains pharmacologist and senior author Peter Light.

It's not unusual for other cells in our body to react to blue

light. Photosensitive cells in our retina not only respond strongly to this color, they use the color to signal to the body they're detecting sunlight.

This is useful for helping the body's clock, or circadian rhythm, to keep time with fluctuating periods of day and night.

The researchers were curious to see if the reaction to blue light caused the same genes to activate in adipocytes as in other photosensitive cells.

Fat cells

Not only did they discover fat cells did indeed produce the body-clock protein known as melanopsin, they found the cells also released more of the molecule glycerol and reduced the size of their lipid store by nearly a third.

"When the Sun's blue light wavelengths — the light we can see with our eye — penetrate our skin and reach the fat cells just beneath, lipid droplets reduce in size and are released out of the cell," says Light.

In practical terms it implies getting out and walking in the sunlight not only helps us make more Vitamin D, it could serve to help make it harder for our body to store quite as much fat.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Scientists stunned by discovery of 18 new spider species that look like Pelicans

Out of the 26 spiders that she sorted out, 18 species were found to be completely new ones which have never been seen before. Wood was accompanied by colleague Nikolaj Scharff of the University of Copenhagen to carry out a detailed research of those 18 new species of spiders.

In a new study, scientists have discovered 18 new species of pelican spiders. The Pelican spiders are spiders that eat other spiders. Although the name is pelican, this group of spiders is not massive, and they do not eat fish. The pelican spiders are actually very tiny and are as long as a grain of rice. They belong to the family Archaedidae and pose a threat to other spiders.

These extremely rare species of spiders are found in the remote areas of Madagascar. But the latest study has revealed that a team



of scientists has found new species of spider eating pelican spiders which indicate that the pelican spider species are not that rare as it was previously thought.

The latest study was led by veteran arachnologist Hannah Wood of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington D.C. Wood analyzed and scrutinized

more than hundreds of pelican spiders both from field research in Madagascar and from the pelican spiders kept preserved in museum. Her research mainly focused on spiders of Madagascar and Eriauchenius.

New species found

Out of the 26 spiders that she sorted out, 18 species were found to be completely new ones which have never been seen before. Wood was accompanied by colleague Nikolaj Scharff of the University of Copenhagen to carry out a detailed research of those 18 new species of spiders.

The new species of pelican spiders have same elongated neck and beak-like pincers or chelicerae like other pelican spiders. The study authors said that pelican spiders are not only famous for their unusual appearance but the way they prey on other spiders with the long "necks" and jaw-like mouthparts, is quite fasci-

nating. Wood said, "These spiders attest to the unique biology that diversified in Madagascar."

The study informed that the pelican spiders are active hunters and they reach to their spider prey swiftly with the help of long silk draglines. Then they pierce the body of the victim using their long, fang-tipped "jaws," or chelicerae. Their powerful jaws and long necks help them keep safe distance from any potential counter-attack from the victim until it dies.

Wood informed that pelican spiders have a long history and their ancestors lived as long as 165 million years ago as per the fossil records. So, she calls the present day pelican spiders as living fossils. The researchers analyzed the anatomy of the 26 different species of pelican spiders under a microscope and specifically looked at their genitalia.

(Source: The TeCake)

Iran Management Association Introduced Top Scientific Center in Farabi Intl. Festival

In 9th International Farabi Festival (special of Islamic and Humanities Researches), Iranian management Association under Chief Executive of Bank Pasargad was introduced as top scientific association, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

This prestigious ceremony was attended by Dr. Rouhani Iranian President, Dr. Gholami Minister of Science, Research and Technology and Vice President for Scientific and Technological Affairs, top researchers and managers.

As headed by the Chief Executive of Bank Pasargad Dr. Ghassemi, Iranian Management Association won a Plaque of

honor and statue among more than 377 scientific associations due to the salient measures and effective steps taken in the field of science, research and development of humanities.

It should be noted that Farabi International Festival is held annually by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology with the aim of conducting research activities in the field of Islamic humanities.

In this prestigious festival, other research works such as correction of historical, literary and philosophical texts, translation or top researchers and translators will be evaluated in the relevant field.



NPC Wins Three-Star Silver Statue in 3rd National Energy Management Award

Nouri Petrochemical Company (NPC) won three-star silver statue and single-star bronze statue in the 3rd edition of nationwide Energy Management Award on Monday Jan. 8, the Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

It should be noted that the 3rd National Energy Management Award was held on Jan. 8 with the introduction of top companies and organizations, based on which, Nouri Petrochemical Company managed to win the topmost level of three-star silver statue in the energy industrial sector and also single-star statue in energy management and energy projects' sector.

Reviewing status of energy consumption of companies to the criteria of energy consumption, assessing capabilities and results obtained in the field of improvement of energy performance and studying the situation and performance of energy management system have been evaluated as the main criteria for granting the National Energy Management Award.



To the accurate evaluation, applicant companies should provide the information with regard to the general specifications of the company, energy consumption informa-

tion, product production information, information on the generalities of energy management system within the framework of the tax return. Then, applicant companies should submit the relevant information to the Secretariat of the Energy Management Award.

At the final stage, tax returns are studied by the eligible and qualified assessors meticulously, so that top companies of each field were introduced and appreciated deservedly.

Given the measures taken over the past three years, Nouri Petrochemical Company succeeded in the field of observing the energy consumption criteria and also deployment of energy management system based on ISO 50001 standard and also implementation of various projects in the field of energy consumption optimization.

It is worth mentioning that Nouri Petrochemical Company managed to win the silver statue in the energy-consuming industrial sector last year, the Public Relations Dept. of the company concluded.

Scientists make cells that enable the sense of touch

Researchers at the Eli and Edythe Broad Center of Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at UCLA have, for the first time, coaxed human stem cells to become sensory interneurons -- the cells that give us our sense of touch. The new protocol could be a step toward stem cell-based therapies to restore sensation in paralyzed people who have lost feeling in parts of their body.

The study, which was led by Samantha Butler, a UCLA associate professor of neurobiology and member of the Broad Stem Cell Research Center, was published in the journal Stem Cell Reports.

Sensory interneurons, a class of neurons in the spinal cord, are responsible for relaying information from throughout the body to the central nervous system, which enables the sense of touch. The lack of a sense of touch greatly affects people who are paralyzed. For example, they often cannot feel the touch of another person, and the inability to feel pain leaves them susceptible to burns from inadvertent contact with a hot surface.

The "field has for a long time focused on making people walk again," said Butler, the study's senior author. "Making people feel again doesn't have quite the same ring. But to walk, you need to be able to feel and to sense your body in space; the two processes really go hand in glove."

In a separate study, published in September by the journal eLife, Butler and her colleagues discovered how signals from a family of proteins called bone morphogenetic proteins, or BMPs, influence the development of sensory interneurons in chicken embryos.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

What's the difference between fresh and instant coffee?

Instant coffee's taste has a bad reputation and a long uphill battle against the artisanal coffee wave making its rounds in people's daily routines. Though there have been concerted efforts to make instant coffee better or even just taste-testing to find the best brand of them all, much of the matter comes down to two factors: the economics of coffee and the complex processes behind making instant coffee.



"If you expect to pay less, then you know you're going to get lower quality coffee going into the process from the very beginning," Spencer Turer, vice president and chief coffee taster of Coffee Enterprises, told Newsweek.

The other factor is the "pretty heavy-duty processing that goes into turning coffee into soluble coffee." There are two main methods: spray-dried and freeze-dried. Both begin as the raw coffee that comes from its country of origin. It's roasted, ground and brewed into a coffee beverage.

"That's where the differences start," Turer said. For instant coffee, "you're brewing the coffee at a really high-strength level. You want to get a lot of flavor out of the coffee." From there, spray-drying the coffee involves the process of spraying the coffee into hot and dry air, as hot as 480 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the Huffington Post. Once the moisture evaporates, coffee powder remains. Freeze-drying involves a specific process where the coffee is frozen and the water is vaporized out of it.

Huffington Post described the process as cooking the coffee down to an extract, chilling it into slabs of ice, and breaking it down in granules before vaporizing the ice from them.

(Source: Newsweek)

Space molecule that smells like almond may help solve interstellar radiation mystery

Researchers spotted an important aromatic molecule in space that smells like almond. It could help explain the puzzling glow of infrared light that persistently glows in space.

It turns out that this faint cosmic light, usually observed by astronomers, are organic molecules known as benzonitriles. This class of organic molecules composed of carbon, known as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, were observed using the National Science Foundation's Green Bank Telescope.

With the detection, it is likely that similar organic molecules are spread throughout the space. Experts presume that almost 10 percent of all the carbon content in the universe is tied with these organic molecules.

Based on the abstract, the identification of the molecule may be the first step toward the discovery of the composition of aromatic materials within the stellar medium that will eventually be incorporated into new stars and planets. Like many compounds, benzonitrile emits a sweet scent that is usually compared to almond.

"I can tell you from personal experience it smells like almonds," says study author Brett McGuire from the NROA.

To pinpoint the radiation, scientists used radio astronomy or radio fingerprints to detect the rotational transitions of the benzonitrile chemical compounds. They studied the shape of the molecules through the pattern of light that the benzonitrile absorbs or emits as it rotates.

The atoms of PAHs are arranged in multiple hexagonal rings, making them more difficult to detect. However, the spotted benzonitrile only has one hexagonal ring of carbon and arranged in an asymmetrical pattern. McGuire's team identified nine distinct spikes in the radio spectrum that pertain to the molecule.

(Source: Tech Times)

One third of Iran's schools require renovation

SOCIETY TEHRAN — One third of schools in Iran are dilapidated and require renovation, director of schools renovation, development and equipment organization said on Saturday.

As per an article of the sixth five-year development plan (2016-2021), \$3 billion can be withdrawn from the National Development Fund for renovating and equipping schools, ISNA quoted Mehroллаh Rakhshanimehr as saying.



If received, the budget can quickly resolve both issues of renovating schools and building classrooms, he highlighted.

Rakhshanimehr also added that during fourth and fifth five-year development plans, more than half of schools were restored nationwide costing 40 trillion rials (nearly \$1 billion).

He went on to say that philanthropists' support is needed to accelerate the renovation process.

■ Nomad schools' poor status

Mohammad Reza Seifi, the caretaker for nomads' education department affiliated with Ministry of Education, said that 40 percent of nomad schools lack appropriate educational space, meaning classes are held in tents, trucks, mud buildings or even in caves.

The population of nomads stands at 1.2 million in Iran and some 65 percent of them are aged below 30, he explained, adding, schools can be built in the regions where nomads have a long stay.

300,000 disabled to receive monthly allowance

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Around 300,000 individuals suffering from multiple disability will receive allowance on a monthly basis, deputy director of Tehran's welfare organization for rehabilitation affairs said on Sunday.



Mohammad Reza Asadi stated that according to the bill on rights of persons with disabilities those who suffer from multiple disability and are not able to work will receive a monthly allowance of 9.5 million rials (about \$250), YJC reported.

Majlis [the Iranian parliament] hammered out a law on rights of persons with disabilities on the final days of the year 2017. The law is aimed to improve the living conditions of persons with disability by introducing measures which were neglected in the past.

As per an article of the law the administration should allocate the required budget to pay a minimum wage to those persons with multiple disabilities who don't have the physical capabilities to work.

Why Iran is facing decreased rainfall?

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — It is all over the news in Iranian media. Iran is unprecedentedly suffering from low precipitation and experiencing a prolonged drought.

Deciding whether the use of the word "unprecedentedly" is scientifically accurate or not is not a job that can be done by the press. It certainly needs extensive, reliable geological and meteorological data to confirm the claims.

However, what Iranians are experiencing over the current winter, most significantly in provinces located in arid and semi-arid areas such as Isfahan, Tehran, Qom or South Khorasan is way different than winters of few years ago.

According to Iran's meteorological organization Iran has experienced a 56-percent decrease in average precipitation over the period from September 23-December 25 compared to the same period in the long run. Moreover, nearly 96 percent of Iran's total area is suffering from different levels of prolonged drought.

In regard to that taking counter-measures to alleviate the undesirable outcomes of low precipitation levels must be a top priority.

In an interview with Tasnim news agency Hassan Lashkari, a faculty member at the geology department of the Shahid Beheshti University, has explained that managing current water resources as well as application of scientific technology that can enhance clouds' ability to produce precipitation, also known as cloud seeding, as methods of facing the current challenges of water shortage in the country.

■ Regional climate can affect Iran

Lashkari scientifically explained the reasons as to why Iran is facing tangible decreased rainfall.

He said that as per researches and recent findings climatic variables and the main pressure systems that affect the weather and climate of Saudi Arabia can affect rainfall over the region, as well as Iran, in the cold seasons. There are two patterns of pressure that influence the weather and climate of Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The direction of subtropical high in Saudi Arabia can play an important role in the precipitation levels in Iran, he said, adding, westward oscillation of



subtropical high prevents interaction between air masses and leads to a decrease in the surface air temperature, relative humidity and rainfall over Saudi Arabia and also Iran, he noted.

The second pattern occurs when subtropical high moves towards Sea of Oman and east India. This pattern, Lashkari said, increases the surface air temperature, relative humidity and the probability of rainfall over Saudi Arabia as well as Iran.

Over the autumn, he stated, the first pattern has happened and resulted in diminished rainfall in Iran.

■ Air pollution, particles can't reduce rainfall

Lashkari further said that air pollution and fine particles (PM 2.5) cannot cause decreased rainfall. In fact it's quite the reverse, he said. Cloud droplets form when water vapor gas gathers onto tiny airborne particles called condensation

nuclei. Fine particles can be condensation nuclei for raindrops to form.

That's why rain can leave spotting from raindrops splashing against the windows and windshields, he highlighted.

■ HARP has nothing to do with decreased rainfall

Project HAARP, short for High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program, was originally developed was to analyze the ionosphere and investigate the potential for developing ionospheric enhancement technology for radio communications and surveillance.

Over the past few years, Lashkari said, due to lack of understanding and knowledge many have started baseless and unconfirmed rumors about the project potentials to cause draught in other parts of the world.

The U.S. is hit by giant and devastating hurricanes every now and then, he said, adding, if they had the power to

control climatic conditions they would have certainly stopped them.

■ Cloud seeding is a viable option

Inquired about the possibility of increasing precipitation amounts in the country Lashkari explained that cloud seeding is a viable option that officials should seriously consider.

In a country like Iran cloud seeding can be very important, he highlighted, stating, regarding the fact that the country will face severe water shortage in the near future setting up a research center to implement cloud seeding must be high on agenda.

However, he added, Iran is located in an arid and semi-arid region and any hopes for high precipitation amounts is unrealistic, such climatic condition is the inevitable fate of the country.

So sustainable water management especially in agriculture sector is seriously important, he concluded.

Health ministry seeks to tap into private sector's potential

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Giving more opportunities to the private sector and paving the way for its participation in the health sector leads to improving quality and reducing costs of services, Health Minister Hassan Qazizadeh Hashemi said on Sunday.

He made the remarks in a meeting in Tehran on Sunday with representatives of private companies affiliated with Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TCCIMA).

Speaking on the major legal barriers that impede the private sector's investment in the health sector, the minister urged lawmakers and politicians to revise restrictive laws, Fars reported.

Great efforts have been made during past five years to support private sector investments in this field, he highlighted, adding, "It takes time to change the traditional view which recognizes the government as only service provider."

Hashemi went on to say that after signing the nuclear deal (officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA) a window of opportuni-



Masoud Khansari (L) and Hassan Qazizadeh Hashemi

ty has been opened for foreign investment in Iran's health sector and that banks from South Korea, China and Italy are already financing some health related

projects in Iran.

Boosting economy of health sector cannot be achieved unless making perfect use of other nations' experiences in this regard, he concluded.

■ Knowledge-based companies on the rise

The deputy health minister Reza Malekzadeh, for his part, said that there are 920 knowledge-based companies active in the health realm.

The products of these companies have had an 18-trillion-rial (nearly \$450 million) share of domestic market in the current [Iranian calendar] year 1396 (March 2017-March 2018), he further added.

■ TCCIMA, health ministry to bolster co-op

Moreover, TCCIMA and Ministry of Health signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to promote joint cooperation regarding knowledge-based companies' participation in health sector.

As per the MOU signed between Qazizadeh Hashemi and TCCIMA Chairman Masoud Khansari, TCCIMA will act as a mediator between knowledge-based companies and the ministry and set the scene for their mutual cooperation.

LEARN ENGLISH

Buying a TV

A: Seriously, I don't know why we need to get a new TV.

B: Honey I told you already. I can't appreciate the graphics level and detail of the games on my PlayStation 3 on our old TV.

C: Good afternoon folks! How can I be of service today?

B: I'm looking to upgrade to a newer, bigger television set.

C: You've come to the right place! What size are you looking for?

A: Just a normal sized TV for our living room.

C: I see. Well this set here is on sale. It's a forty six inch HDTV screen and has all the works. Three HDMI connectors, USB, VGA and S-Video ports. It even has a DVI port so you can hook up your PC or laptop! This is without a doubt the complete home theater experience!

B: This is exactly what I need! Can you imagine watching movies or playing video games on this thing?

A: Honey, I think it's a bit too big. I don't even think it will fit in our living room.

C: Not to worry, we will deliver and install it in your home. It comes with a wall mount so you can just hang it on the wall like a picture!

B: This is great! How much will this set me back?

C: Lucky for you, this is the last one we have in stock so it's half off!

B: I'll take it!

■ Key vocabulary

appreciate: to be grateful for (something)

upgrade: get something better, more modern, more useful

the works: the best things offered

hook up: connect

wall mount: attached to a wall

set me back: cost

■ Supplementary vocabulary

projector: a machine for projecting an image onto a screen or other surface

plug in: to connect (an appliance) to an electrical outlet

speaker: a device that converts electrical signals into sounds loud enough to be heard at a distance

remote control: a device used to control an apparatus or machine from a distance

cable television: a television service in which the subscriber's television is connected to a central receiver by cable

(Source: irlanguage.com)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Iran's Welfare Organization conducts offline autism screening test

An offline autism screening test is now available for downloading from Iran's Welfare Organization website, ISNA news agency reported.

The questionnaire is comprising of 10 questions for parents with children aged 2 to 5 to diagnose children who are suffering from the autism spectrum disorder, an official with Iran's Welfare Organization has said.

Maryam Pourseyyed explained that in case a child shows three of the symptoms, he/she might be suffering from autism and need to refer to the centers to undergo treatments [if necessary].

آغاز طرح غربالگری آفلاین اوتیسم توسط بهزیستی

به گزارش خبرگزاری ایسنا پرسشنامه آفلاین غربالگری اوتیسم در حال حاضر در سایت سازمان بهزیستی کشور قرار گرفته است.

رئیس گروه مراکز روزانه آموزشی توانبخشی بهزیستی گفت: این پرسش نامه شامل ۱۰ سوال برای خانواده هایی است که فرزند ۲ تا ۵ سال دارند و برای شناسایی کودکان مبتلا به اوتیسم در کشور طراحی شده است.

مریم پورسید توضیح داد: در صورتی که کودکی سه علامت از علائم ذکر شده در پرسش نامه را داشت، ممکن است از اختلال اوتیسم رنج ببرد و باید به مراکز بهزیستی مراجعه کند و در صورت نیاز تحت درمان قرار گیرد.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ectomy”

■ **Meaning:** surgical removal

■ **For example:** Remember, not two people undergoing an **appendectomy** are alike.

PHRASAL VERB

Fiddle around

■ **Meaning:** to tease, annoy, or play with someone; to waste someone's time

■ **For example:** Now it's time for all of you to quit fiddling around and get to work.

IDIOM

Blood, sweat and tears

■ **Explanation:** a project or action which involves blood, sweat and tears requires a lot of effort and hard work

■ **For example:** His success wasn't due to luck; it was blood, sweat and tears all the way.

Zakzaky explains his son details of meeting with doctors, press

1 → When we left here we were headed to laboratory for some tests but they took us there (the DSS facility were the interview took place) instead, we were surprised as to why they took us there.

But when we asked why they were taking us there instead of the lab, they said that we were there because the doctor that is seeing your mother is there and that we would go to lab afterwards.

After she saw doctor they said we were going to the lab but before we left they said there were some people that would like to see me, I didn't know it was the press, as soon as we stepped out we saw cameras already recording.

So they (the press) said, there are lots of rumors spreading about your life and about your health.

And I told them, I had a stroke last Friday (5th Jan) and it was very serious until Monday (8th Jan), and this time my doctors were allowed to come and see me and I am recovering. I told them before this incident, my doctors weren't allowed to see me only the DSS doctors saw me and this is first time I was able to see my own doctors. I said that the after effect of the stroke is still present but I am recovering,



and I thank you for all your prayers. That was all I said.

But from what you have just explained, I understand that they have already planned to have the press there so they can portray something. You see there was no mention of the stroke, and I only said I am recovering

and thanks for the prayers.

As I am speaking with you right now, I have to lie down in order to speak clearly and when it comes to prayers, I have to perform them sitting down, I can't do ruku' or sujud during prayers. But Alhamdulillah, I am thankful to Allah for the prayers of His

servants are very helpful, we are seeing the effect of the prayers.

I made no mention of any form of thanks to the DSS, they do not deserve my thanks under whatever circumstance, they are keeping me in detention not based on any law. Those who have kept me in detention not based on anything, even their court declared this detention as illegal and unfounded in any law and in the constitution, there is no law of this country that agrees with this and I thank them?

I thank Allah and I thank the people that are praying for us, it has been two years since they did what they did and after about a year the court ruled that they have no right to keep us, and they continued with this detention and keep shooting and killing people and I thank them?

Alhamdulillah, if they have arranged this to show the world that I am alive, fine but its not right to propagate that I am thankful to them. I am thankful to Allah for not allowing them to achieve their goal on me and I am thankful for all the prayers and thanks to our brothers and sisters for their efforts and we pray Allah to grant them endurance (thabat).

(Source: MNA)

Israelis hold anti-corruption protest amid new scandal involving PM family



Thousands of Israelis have held another anti-corruption demonstration in Tel Aviv, calling on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to resign days after the release of an audiotape, in which the premier's son is heard bragging about his father's role in a shady gas deal.

Protesters took to the streets for a seventh consecutive week on Saturday, chanting slogans against the premier such as, "Shame" "Bibi go home," "Corruption is going to be broken," and "a corrupt government of corrupt tycoons."

They also waved banners and signs, reading, "Brothers in the war against the corrupt," "Out with the corrupt!" and "Not leftist, not rightist, but honest!"

Similar anti-graft protests were held Saturday in other cities, including in Haifa and Afula.

During the Tel Aviv event, minor scuffles erupted between anti-regime demonstrators and right-wing Israelis attending a counter protest.

This came less than a week after Is-

rael's Channel 2 television aired a 2015 secret recording from outside a strip club, where Netanyahu's elder son, Yair, is heard making disparaging comments about women and trying to persuade gas tycoon Kobi Maimon's son Ori to lend him money.

"My dad arranged \$20bn for your dad - you can give me 400 shekels (\$116)," Yair said.

After the tape was broadcast, Netanyahu's son issued a statement complaining it had been obtained illegally but apologizing for his comments.

Menny Naftali, an organizer of the Tel Aviv demonstration, criticized the Israeli prime minister over the secret recording. "I have pity on these kids. The education you [Netanyahu] gave your children is what you are doing to this nation," he told Haaretz.

Another bribery scandal, called the "submarine affair," also involves Netanyahu associates.

(Source: agencies)

Feinstein: If Trump can't stop being racist, he needs to go



Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) said Friday that President Donald Trump's comments about African nations being "shithole countries" are "beneath the dignity of the presidency," and if he can't take his job seriously, he shouldn't have it.

"If the president can't control himself and lead this country with the authority, dignity and leadership it requires, then he shouldn't be the president," she said in a scathing statement. "There's no room for racism in the Oval Office."

Feinstein, the top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, said people need to be clear about what Trump was really saying when, during a Thursday meeting with senators, he rejected their idea of cutting the visa lottery in half and allotting the rest to underrepresented countries in Africa and nations like Haiti that have temporary protective status. That designation lets people stay in the U.S. after natural disasters or other crises in their home nations.

Trump reportedly said no to that

proposal, referred to African nations as "shithole countries," asked why the United States needs any more Haitians, and then said people from Norway would be more welcome.

"The president's expressed desire to see more immigrants from countries like Norway must be called out for what it is: an effort to set this country back generations by promoting a homogenous, white society," Feinstein said. "We all need to stop pretending that there are no consequences when the most powerful person in the world espouses racist views and gives a wink and a nod to the darkest elements in our society."

The Washington Post first reported Trump's "shithole" comments. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), who was in the meeting, later publicly confirmed them.

But Trump on Friday insisted the reports were inaccurate. He denied that he criticized Haiti, but said nothing about his reported comments on Africa.

(Source: HuffPost)

Saudi, allies used precision-guided arms in raids on Yemeni civilians: UN panel

A UN panel has compiled a detailed report of civilian casualties caused by the Saudi military and its allies during their war against Yemen, saying the Riyadh-led coalition has used precision-guided munitions in its raids on civilian targets.

"The attacks were carried out by precision-guided munitions, so it is likely these were the intended targets," Al Jazeera cited the UN report on human rights violations in Yemen as saying on Saturday.

The report, which has been devised for the UN Security Council, has not been made public, but Al Jazeera said it was allowed to view a copy.

It has examined 10 airstrikes that killed 157 people last year. It specified the targets as a migrant boat, a night market, five residential buildings, a motel, a vehicle, and government forces.

"Even if in some cases, the Saudi-led coalition had targeted legitimate military objectives, the panel finds it highly unlikely that the IHL (International Humanitarian Law) principles of proportionality, and precautions in attack were met," the report stated.

The Saudi-led coalition began its military campaign

against Yemen in March 2015 to bring its favored government back to power. More than 13,600 people have so far been killed in the war.

Further, the UN panel directed strong criticism at the coalition's other abuses inside Yemen. Those include the violations being committed inside the coalition's incarceration camps, most notably the ones run by the United Arab Emirates, Riyadh's most important coalition partner, on the Yemeni soil.

It cited a "widespread and systematic" pattern of "arbitrary arrests, deprivation of liberty, and enforced disappearances."

"The report talks about beatings, electrocutions, constrained suspension, and it talks about something called the cage which is confinement in a cage in the sunlight and the denial of medical treatment," said James Bays, Al Jazeera's diplomatic editor.

The panel finally said the militants loyal to the former government, which are promoting the coalition's goals on the ground in Yemen, "pose a threat to peace, security and stability of Yemen," and "will do more to further the fragility of Yemen than they will do to hold the state together."



UN chief Antonio Guterres has called the war a "stupid one," calling on the United States, which is a strong Saudi ally and has been backing the invasion through arms sales and logistical support, to pressure Riyadh into ending the attacks.

(Source: Press TV)

Germany's SPD at odds over coalition plan

Leading members of Germany's Social Democrats voiced skepticism Sunday over a preliminary coalition agreement reached with Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives, days after the hard-fought deal was hailed as a breakthrough.

Berlin's SPD Mayor Michael Mueller said he was "very critical" about entering into another government with Merkel's CDU/CSU bloc after all three parties slumped to their worst results in decades in last September's election.

"The same coalition with the same policies is not the right answer," the center-left politician told the Tagesspiegel daily, calling for "further talks" to win more concessions on key SPD demands.

Party leaders on Friday announced after tortuous negotiations that they had signed

off on a policy blueprint paving the way for formal coalition discussions to begin after months of paralysis in Europe's top economy.

In the 28-page document, the parties agreed to join France in a push to "strengthen and reform" the Eurozone, to limit the influx of asylum seekers to Germany to around 200,000 a year, and to refrain from tax hikes.

But Mueller lamented the SPD's failure to secure a tax hike for the rich or a restructuring of the country's two-tier health care system - two major campaign pledges.

Those concerns were echoed by the SPD's Malu Dreyer, premier of Rhineland-Palatinate state, who also slammed the compromise to cap immigration.

The migration stance outlined in the roadmap was "very difficult" for the SPD,

she told the German newspaper group Funke Mediengruppe.

The criticism will make for uncomfortable reading for SPD chief Martin Schulz, who has promised to give party members the last word on a third stint as Merkel's junior coalition partner.

In a sign of the difficulties ahead, SPD delegates at a regional party conference in Saxony-Anhalt on Saturday narrowly voted against starting formal coalition talks.

Spiegel news weekly said the non-binding vote was "hugely symbolic" coming just a day after the in-principle agreement "that Schulz is trying to sell as a success."

The stakes will be higher next Saturday, when 600 party delegates will be asked to give the green light at a congress, followed

by a final vote by more than 400,000 rank-and-file members.

The SPD's youth wing chief Kevin Kuehnert has vowed to spend the coming days criss-crossing the country to press his case against a new grand coalition, known as "GroKo" in German political shorthand.

The SPD initially vowed to go into opposition after scoring a humiliating 20.5 percent in the September ballot.

But Schulz faced pressure to reconsider after Merkel's coalition talks with two smaller parties collapsed in November.

Merkel, whose political life is on the line, has welcomed the coalition blueprint as "a fresh start" but commentators have already described a possible repeat of the left-right alliance as a coalition of "losers".

(Source: AFP)

Merkel could join Macron in Davos for epic clash with Trump

German Chancellor Angela Merkel is considering joining French President Emmanuel Macron at the World Economic Forum in Davos next week in what could turn into an epic clash of competing world views with U.S. President Donald Trump.

Merkel, who has been struggling to put together a government since a German election in September, had been expected to skip the annual gathering of leaders, CEOs, bankers and celebrities in the Swiss Alps for a third straight year.

But after clinching a preliminary coalition agreement with the Centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) on Friday, German officials said Merkel could travel to Davos after all, possibly setting up a major confrontation with Trump, who is expected to speak on the final day of the forum.

An appearance would signal Merkel's return to the world stage after months of political limbo in which she has avoided the limelight and been dismissed by some in the German and international media as a spent force.

It would also allow her and Macron, who is scheduled to speak at the forum on Jan. 24, two days before Trump, to reaffirm their commitment to reforming the European Union after Britain's decision to leave, and to defend liberal democratic values in the face of Trump's "America First" policies.

Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert was coy last week when asked whether she might attend the WEF, which will run from Jan. 23-26 under the banner "Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World" and will attract some 60 heads of state and government.

But after clinching a preliminary deal with the SPD, the chances that she could attend appear to have risen. German officials said no final decision had been taken and that Merkel may wait for the outcome of an SPD congress in Bonn next Sunday - where the party will formally decide whether to enter coalition talks with her conservatives - before committing.

Officials at the WEF said they believed Merkel was still considering whether to attend. If she does, it is unlikely that she or Macron would overlap with Trump, who is expected to arrive on the afternoon of Jan. 25.

This year's forum will be opened by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Jan. 23. Britain's Theresa May, Canada's Justin Trudeau and Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu are also expected, as well as celebrities such as actress Cate Blanchett and musician Elton John.

Last year's gathering took place in the week leading up to Trump's inauguration and was headlined by Chinese President Xi Jinping, who signalled his readiness to fill the vacuum in global leadership created by America's shift inward.

Since then, Trump has pulled the United States out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a free trade deal with Asian countries, announced a withdrawal from the Paris climate accord and threatened to torpedo an agreement between Western powers and Iran aimed at curbing its nuclear program.

He has stirred fears of conflict with North Korea by engaging in an escalating war of words with his leader Kim Jong Un. Last week, he stirred international outrage by referring to Haiti and African nations as "shithole countries," according to members of Congress who attended a meeting in the White House.

On Saturday, some 500 demonstrators marched in the Swiss capital Bern to protest against Trump's plans to attend the WEF.

"There are very few things in the world that unite countries as much as their antipathy towards Trump and what he is doing," said Ian Bremmer, president of political risk consultancy Eurasia Group, and a regular at Davos.

"In the United States he may have 40 percent who approve of what he's doing. In the Davos crowd it is closer to 50 percent."

The visit by Trump will be the first by a U.S. president since Bill Clinton in 2000. He will be accompanied by a large delegation that is expected to include his son-in-law Jared Kushner, Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

Merkel has had a frosty relationship with Trump, who accused her during his campaign for the presidency of "ruining Germany" by allowing hundreds of thousands of refugees, many fleeing war in the Middle East, into the country in 2015.

(Source: Reuters)

Iraqi troops purge over 80% of Anbar desert areas of ISIL

A high-ranking Iraqi security official says government troops, supported by allied fighters from Popular Mobilization Units, have succeeded to purge more than half of the desert areas in the country's western province of Anbar of ISIL (Daesh) Takfiri terrorists.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with Arabic-language al-Sabah al-Jadid daily newspaper on Sunday, Chairman of Anbar Provincial Security Council Naeem al-Kaoud said security forces and volunteer fighters, commonly known by the Arabic name Hashd al-Sha'abi, have cleansed over 80 percent of Anbar desert areas of the extremists following multi-pronged military operations there.

He added, "The troops also destroyed several Daesh hotbeds and remotely detonated four armored vehicles, which were used by the militant group."

Kaoud went on to say that ten more people were also arrested on suspicion of joining Daesh terror group.

"Although the militants hotbeds were built underground, the troops were able to destroy them after receiving intelligence reports on their locations," the senior security official pointed out.

"The military operation, backed by the Iraqi Air Force, comes as part of ongoing efforts to eliminate Daesh militants on the country's borders with Saudi Arabia and Jordan," Kaoud noted.

(Source: al Alam)

Subsidized petrol is poison to economy, citizens' health

1 → They also intentionally or unintentionally refuse to say that so long as petrol remains heavily subsidized the unrivalled local auto companies continue to produce fuel inefficient cars, excessive use of petrol will continue to rise further, and more days schools should be closed because of air pollution.

Decision makers and political factions must openly acknowledge that subsidized petrol has proven detrimental to the national economy and the health of citizens. In fact, it has been a poison to economy and health.

'I just count my millions' - Tomic after failing to qualify

Bernard Tomic said he was heading home to "count my millions" after failing to qualify for the Australian Open.

The Australian lost 6-1 6-7 (5-7) 6-4 to Italian Lorenzo Sonego in the final round of qualifying in Melbourne.

It will be the first time since 2008 that 25-year-old Tomic has not featured in the main draw, with Tennis Australia having chosen not to offer the world number 142 a wildcard.

"I just count money, that's all I do," he told Channel 7. "You go do what I did. You go make 13-14 million. Good luck guys. Bye bye."

The remark echoed his reaction to criticism for a lack of commitment in Madrid last year, when he said: "Would you care if you were 23 and worth over \$10m?"

A two-time junior Grand Slam champion, Tomic became Australian number one and reached the Wimbledon quarter-finals as an 18-year-old qualifier in 2011.

He reached the third round at last year's Australian Open, but will fall further down the next set of rankings after this qualifying failure.

Local media have reported he is considering taking part in the Australian version of television show I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here.

(Source: BBC)

Joshua faces Parker in heavyweight unification bout in March

Britain's Anthony Joshua will put his perfect 20-fight, 20-knockout record on the line when he takes on New Zealand's Joseph Parker in a world heavyweight unification bout in Cardiff, Wales on March 31.

Joshua holds the WBA and IBF versions of the crown while Parker is the WBO champion and unbeaten in 24 contests, with 18 knockouts.

Following weeks of negotiations, the 28-year-old Joshua confirmed the fight was on in a video posted on his official Twitter account.

"These fights aren't easy because there's a lot on the line so respect to team Parker for taking the challenge. And you know me, I love this game," he said.

"I'm looking forward to it, training camp is under way and before you know it, March 31st will be upon us."

The winner of the fight will take a step towards becoming the first undisputed heavyweight champion since Lennox Lewis in 1999.

American Deontay Wilder holds the fourth belt in the heavyweight division.

(Source: Reuters)

Antonio Conte tells Jose Mourinho feel of 'contempt' is mutual

Antonio Conte told Jose Mourinho the feeling is mutual after the Manchester United manager said he regarded their bitter feud with "contempt".

The two Premier League bosses have traded barbs since the new year after Mourinho's comment he did not feel the need to behave like "a clown" during games touched a nerve with Conte.

That sparked an extraordinary war of words between the pair, where Conte accused Mourinho of having "demenza senile", which directly translates as senile dementia, prompting the United boss to hit back by appearing to allude to a four-month suspension Conte served in relation to match-fixing. Conte was later cleared of wrongdoing.

Conte responded by accusing Mourinho of being "fake" and "a little man".

Asked about Mourinho's "contempt" comments following Saturday's goalless draw with Leicester, Conte said: "I think that I said (I'd) stop the story."

"But, it (contempt) is the same for me. I don't know if he said this for me. But I'm not worried. I sleep very well."

Chelsea are scheduled to play United at Old Trafford on February 25, unless the Blues reach the Carabao Cup final at Wembley on the same day.

(Source: Euro Sport)

No offence intended by Aubameyang 'monkey circus' remarks

A German journalist has insisted he did not intend to offend or discriminate against Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang after using the phrase "monkey circus" to describe the Borussia Dortmund star's behavior.

Aubameyang has had a number of run-ins with the Dortmund board in recent months and angered fans by repeatedly talking up his admiration for other clubs - most notably Real Madrid.

Speaking about the forward's actions on Kicker.tv, the publication's chief reporter Karlheinz Wild said: "I cannot imagine that Aubameyang could stage the same monkey circus in Munich as he does in Dortmund."

The term 'monkey circus' best translates into English as referring to someone who has been indulged in their attention-seeking behavior.

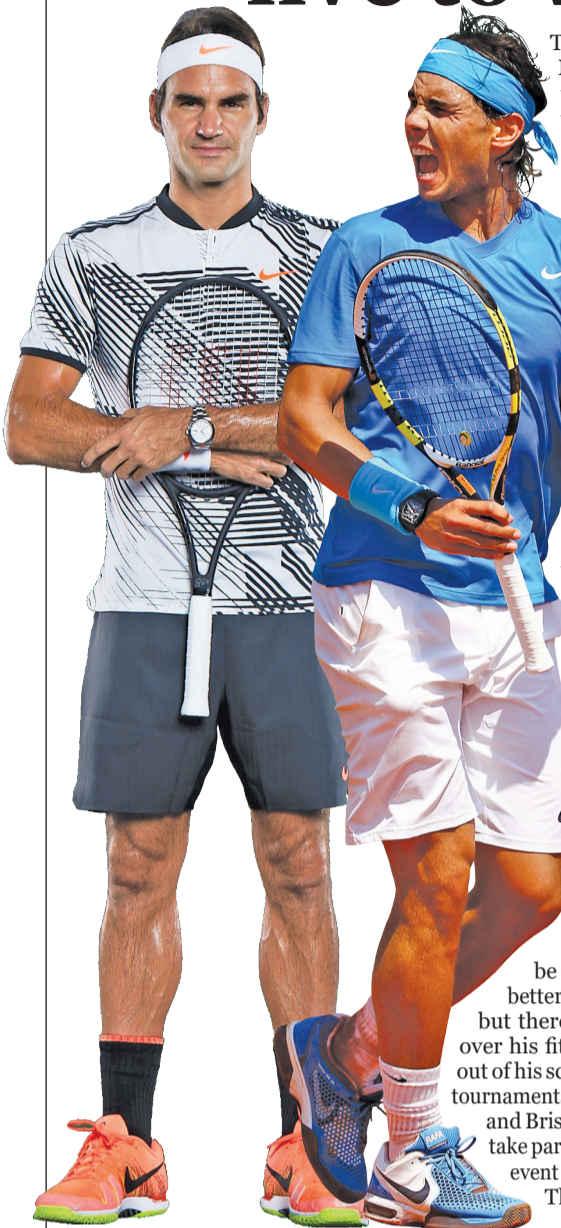
However, writing in a post on Instagram, the Gabon international took issue with Wild's choice of words.

In addition to an article featuring Wild's remarks, Aubameyang posted a screenshot of a Google search for the word 'Affenzirkus' (monkey circus), which generated among its results an image of an ape wearing a swastika armband and giving a Nazi salute.

Aubameyang wrote: "These days German journalists are attacking me, while remaining correct until today. I think this reporter could have used another word [than] 'affenzirkus... Circus of Monkey'... on the right side of the picture, that is when I tap on Google [for] affenzirkus. I leave you to judge!! 2018 ... sorry for my English."

(Source: Soccerway)

Australian Open 2018: five to watch in the men's singles



There may be no Andy Murray, but the Australian Open men's tournament will have no shortage of returning stars who will all be aiming to start 2018 by claiming the Australian Open title.

■ **Rafael Nadal**
The world No 1 came agonisingly close to winning a second title in Melbourne last year, losing in five thrilling sets to Roger Federer in the final.

He stayed injury free until the final stages of his brilliant 2017 campaign, winning a 10th French Open title and then claiming the US Open, before familiar knee problems returned putting an end to his season at the ATP Finals in London.

The Spaniard will be determined to go one better in Australia this year, but there are more concerns over his fitness after he pulled out of his scheduled opening two tournaments of 2018 in Abu Dhabi and Brisbane, although he did take part in the Tie Break Tens event and then beat Dominic Thiem in a surprise exhibition match ahead of his first-round clash against 37-year-old Dominican Victor Estrella Burgos.

■ **Novak Djokovic**
Djokovic lost only once at the Australian Open between 2011 and last year, when he suffered a shock second-round defeat to Denis Istomin. It was the latest stumble for the former world No 1 but his 2017 took a more serious downward turn in the summer when, after pulling out during his Wimbledon quarter-final against Tomas Berdych, he announced he would be taking the rest of the season off to rehabilitate an ongoing elbow problem.

■ **Roger Federer**
While his younger rivals battle their bodies, the 36-year-old is living the dream and looks a strong favourite to retain his title and become the first man to hit 20 Grand Slam singles titles.

After last year's throwback season and 12 months on from his remarkable feat in Melbourne, there is nothing to suggest Federer will be in anything less than top shape at a tournament he has won five times. The Swiss world No 2 has landed in a stacked half of the draw, with Novak Djokovic, Stan Wawrinka, Alexander Zverev, Dominic Thiem, Tomas Berdych and Gael Monfils all potentially lying in wait. He will open the defence of his title against Slovenia's Aljaz Bedene.

■ **Juan Martin del Potro**
Del Potro has not played in Melbourne for four years because of his injury troubles but heads back with his status as a Grand Slam contender restored by his memorable run to the US Open semi-finals. Battling illness, the Argentinian came back from the dead against Dominic Thiem before shocking Roger Federer and went on to finish the season very strongly.

The 29-year-old has continued 2018 where he left off with a 21st career title looming at this week's ASB Classic in Auckland and he will return to the Top 10 of the ATP Rankings for the first time since August 2014 when he gears himself up for a first-round test against the hugely talented American Frances Tiafoe.

against American Donald Young.

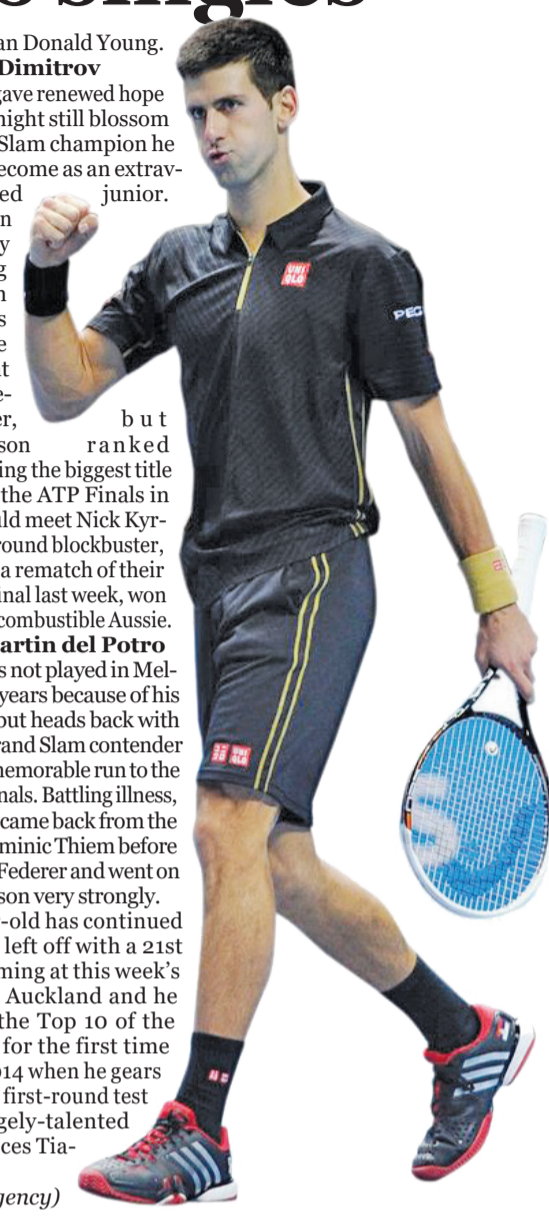
■ **Grigor Dimitrov**
Last season gave renewed hope that Dimitrov might still blossom into the Grand Slam champion he seemed set to become as an extravagantly talented junior.

The Bulgarian came agonisingly close to beating Rafael Nadal in the semi-finals in Melbourne when he went down in a five-set humdinger, but finished the season ranked third after winning the biggest title of his career at the ATP Finals in London. He could meet Nick Kyrgios in a fourth-round blockbuster, which would be a rematch of their Brisbane semi-final last week, won by the gifted but combustible Aussie.

■ **Novak Djokovic**
Djokovic lost only once at the Australian Open between 2011 and last year, when he suffered a shock second-round defeat to Denis Istomin. It was the latest stumble for the former world No 1 but his 2017 took a more serious downward turn in the summer when, after pulling out during his Wimbledon quarter-final against Tomas Berdych, he announced he would be taking the rest of the season off to rehabilitate an ongoing elbow problem.

The signs were less than positive when he suffered more pain in the elbow and withdrew from his scheduled opening tournament of 2018 in Abu Dhabi. But there has been more optimism since and how Djokovic, now ranked 14th, performs in Melbourne will be one of the most fascinating aspects of the tournament. No man has won more singles titles here than the Serbian so it would be a fitting venue for a return to the winners' circle when he opens up

(Staff & Agency)



Real Madrid fighting to finish in top four, says Kroos



Real Madrid midfielder Toni Kroos said the Spanish champions cannot defend their title and are fighting to finish in La Liga's top four after their defeat to Villarreal on Saturday.

Madrid are fourth in the table after their 1-0 home defeat, 16 points behind leaders and bitter rivals Barcelona. The gap could increase to 19 points if the Catalans triumph against Real Sociedad on Sunday.

Zinedine Zidane's side have struggled this season and have won one game in their last five in all competitions, against third division Numancia in the King's Cup.

"We have to focus on qualifying for next season's Champions League," Kroos told BeIN Sports USA. "I think this should be our goal for the rest of the season."

"Sixteen points is very far behind and it's not the moment to think about anything that is not the next game and returning to winning points to bring us close to Real Madrid's objective, which is to finish in the top four."

The hosts created chances against Villarreal but were kept at bay by superb

goalkeeping from Sergio Asenjo, before Pablo Fornals' perfectly-executed chip consigned Zidane's side to defeat.

Madrid have only managed to accumulate 32 points after 18 matches, which is their lowest points total at this stage of the season since the 2005-06 campaign when they had 30.

Fans made their displeasure at Madrid's recent performances known at the Santiago Bernabeu, jeering and whistling as their team trudged off the field.

"Those in the upper echelons of the Madrid hierarchy are now firmly on the fans' side, laying the blame at the dressing room door as this crisis period unfolds," wrote Spanish newspaper Marca, of the mounting pressure on coach Zidane.

The Frenchman has repeatedly stated he has signed a contract extension at Madrid until 2020, although the club has made no official announcement.

Zidane has also said the league title is out of Madrid's hands and should they fall to Paris St Germain in the Champions League last 16, his position will be at risk.

(Source: Mirror)

Russia planned to dope their own team at 2018 World Cup



Russia doped all its international football teams, with the Russian sports minister instructing that the players should never be caught testing positive, according to the whistleblower who has exposed the scale of corruption in Russian sport.

And Russia planned to swap urine samples at the 2018 World Cup so that its footballers could take drugs with impunity this summer, in a carbon copy of their operation at the Sochi Winter Olympics, according to those close to Grigory Rodchenkov, the former head of the Moscow anti-doping laboratory. Rodchenkov is now in witness protection in the USA, having already provided damning evidence against Russian sportsmen and women. But Bryan Fogel, director of Icarus, the documentary film which detailed Rodchenkov's flight to the USA and revealed the extent of the Russian doping conspiracy, has indicated that the lab director's testimony on football will be just as damning as for winter sports or athletics.

It means that FIFA are heading into the Russia 2018 World Cup while trying to investigate and potentially discipline the host nation for what looks like the biggest doping

scandal football has known. It could lead to the Russia team losing several players and will likely lead to calls for Russia to be banned from their own World Cup.

Fogel, who spent two years investigating doping and getting to know Rodchenkov before he went into witness protection, has revealed more details about Russia's football doping programme and how it was allegedly orchestrated by Vitaly Mutko, the Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, who until last month was in charge of Russia 2018.

Fogel said: "What I know from Grigory is that the order from Mutko was: 'Football must be clean.' What that meant was that there should never be positives reported in football, even though all the footballers were on the state-sponsored doping programme."

Rodchenkov is the whistleblower who initially revealed to Fogel and then to the World Anti-Doping Agency that Russian government security agents had helped him defraud the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics by passing tainted Russian samples through a hole in the wall in the anti-doping lab, to be replaced with clean urine.

(Source: Daily Mail)

Kyrgios can become global superstar, says Becker

Australian maverick Nick Kyrgios is ready to win over his doubters and can become an 'international sporting superstar' according to former world number one Boris Becker.

No home player has won the Australian men's title since Mark Edmondson in 1976 but hopes are soaring that Kyrgios could end that long wait after his spectacular start to the year.

The 22-year-old, ranked 17th in the world, won the Brisbane title in the build-up to his home slam and Becker says the man who divides opinion like no other in Australia is finally beginning to look like the real deal.

"There has never been a question mark over his talent but there was a question mark about his discipline," Becker, commenting for Eurosport, told Reuters.

"But he's getting it together now. It would be wonderful to see him get to the quarters or semi-finals. He has a huge following and is slowly getting it together. It's great. I am a huge fan of Nick."

Kyrgios's antics and unruly behaviour have rightly attracted scorn. He was accused of 'tanking' a match against Richard Gasquet at Wimbledon in 2015 and was booed by his own fans last year when he suffered a meltdown to lose to



Andreas Seppi in five sets in the second round at Melbourne.

He has also said that some days he does not even like playing tennis, although Becker says that could be a smoke-screen for dealing with the inevitable spotlight that came his way after he stunned Rafael Nadal at Wimbledon in 2014.

"He has a very interesting personality and doesn't make

it easy for himself at times," the German said. "But he must love tennis otherwise he couldn't do the things he's doing."

"He's not as clean cut as some Australians would like to see. But he could be an international superstar in sport, with his multi-ethnic background, his style, the ear rings."

"He is very much the guy all 22-year-olds want to be. I just hope he concentrates a little more on his tennis because it would be wonderful for the sport."

Kyrgios plays Brazil's Rogerio Dutra Silva in the first round but faces a tough path to make a deep run.

French former runner-up Jo-Wilfried Tsonga could be waiting in round three with world number three Grigor Dimitrov, who he beat on the way to the Brisbane title, a possible opponent in the last 16. Three-times Australian Open winner Mats Wilander believes Kyrgios has shown a huge improvement in his attitude but has concerns over his durability after a spate of hip niggles. "I think he seems to be mentally in the right place and he showed that in Brisbane," the Swede told Reuters. "Is he ready physically to play seven matches in two weeks? I'm not 100 percent sure."

(Source: Fox Sports)

Reza Ghoochannejhad dreams of playing at his second World Cup

S P O R T S Reza Ghoochannejhad says his dream will be fulfilled if he plays for Team Melli in the World Cup for the second time.

Ghoochannejhad represented Iran in the 2014 World Cup and scored his side's only goal against Bosnia-Herzegovina.

He had already scored the winner against South Korea in the 2014 FIFA World Cup qualifier in Ulsan.

Iran have been drawn along with Spain, Portugal and Morocco in Group B of the 2018 World Cup.

"If I can play at my second World Cup, you can say that I have fulfilled all my dreams," he told Leeuwarden Courant.

"But nobody knows what will happen and where I end up. As long as I am fit, I continue playing football. As a top athlete you always want more. If there is no challenge, you have to stop," Ghoochannejhad added.

The Iranian international midfielder, whose contract expires at the end of this season, says he is going to stay at Heerenveen.

"I started a project and I really want to finish it in a good way. I could have gone to China but I preferred to stay in Heerenveen. If you know how much I could have earned there, then you made fun of me. I want to continue at Heerenveen, the club that trained me," Ghoochannejhad concluded.



Iran beats Belarus futsal team in friendly

S P O R T S The Iranian national futsal team defeated Belarus 5-0 in a friendly match on Sunday.

In the match held in Tehran, Ahmad Esmaeilpour, Abolghasem Oruji, Farhad Tavakkoli, Asghar Hasan-zadeh and Mehran Aalighadr were on target for futsal national team of Iran.

Iran will again play the Belarus national futsal team

on Monday.

Team Melli are preparing for The 2018 AFC Futsal Championship which will take place in Taiwan (referred to as Chinese Taipei by the AFC) between 1 and 11 February 2018.

Iran is in Group C along with Iraq, China, and Myanmar.

The 2018 AFC Futsal Championship will be the 15th edition of the AFC Futsal Championship, the biennial

international futsal championship organized by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) for the men's national teams of Asia.

A total of 16 teams are divided into four groups of four teams with the top two in each section will advance to the knockout phase. Iran claimed the title of the last edition in 2016, where they defeated the host, Uzbekistan, 1-2 in the final match.

FIFA condemn Spartak Moscow over Twitter message



FIFA have condemned Spartak Moscow over Saturday's "racist" tweet about their own players which caused a social media storm.

The Russian side posted a message on Twitter and captioned a video of some of their black players as "see how the chocolates melt in the sun" during a warm-weather training camp in Dubai - it was later deleted after being visible for a number of hours.

Spartak quickly faced widespread criticism and a statement from Kick It Out read: "This social media post from the official account of Spartak Moscow only continues to highlight the prejudices towards black people in Russia."

"With the World Cup only a few months away, it is a reminder that Russia, as with the whole of football, has significant work to do to eradicate racism of all forms from the game."

FIFA issued a similarly critical statement to Sky Sports News on Sunday, but said any punishment would have to come internally from the Russian Football Union. It read: "FIFA condemns the message

published on Twitter account of Spartak Moscow. As said many times, any form of discrimination on or outside the field is unacceptable and has no place in football.

"As to the handling of this matter, this falls under the responsibility of the relevant national body."

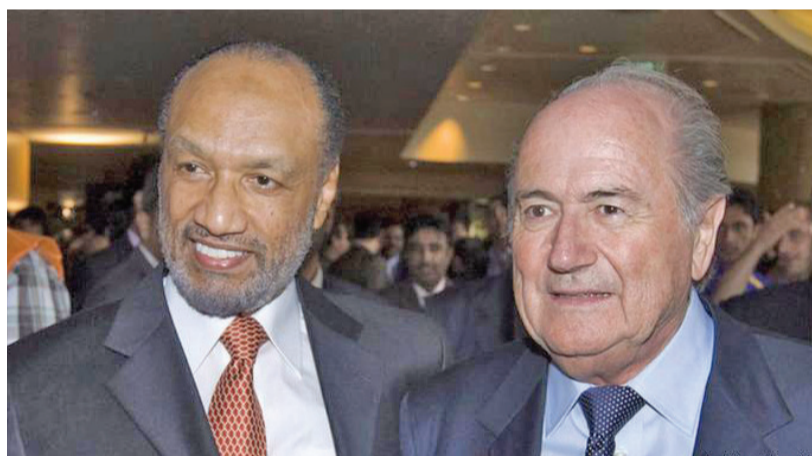
"Please note that at its meeting in May 2017, the FIFA Council emphasised that member associations and referees should be ready to adopt a strict policy to deal with incidents of racist nature."

"Furthermore, it should also be noted that as from the FIFA Confederations Cup 2017, FIFA has adopted a three-step procedure in case of discriminatory incidents and also deploys anti-discrimination observers at all matches in official tournaments."

Spartak are already facing a UEFA complaint from Liverpool over alleged racist abuse aimed at young striker Rhian Brewster during a U19 clash in December.

The club's fans were also found guilty of abusing Liverpool's Bobby Adekanye during a Youth League fixture in Russia. (Source: Sky Sports)

Mohamed bin Hammam confirms payment from German account, denies World Cup bribe



Former FIFA official Mohamed bin Hammam has admitted he received a payment from a World Cup organizing committee account after the awarding of the 2006 World Cup to Germany. However, he denied the money was a bribe.

Mohamed bin Hammam, who was banned for life from football in 2011 in connection with allegations of vote-buying, said he had received a €6.7 million (\$7.3 million) payment only after a decision had been made to award Germany the hosting of the tournament.

A former vice president of FIFA, football's world governing body, bin Hammam told German broadcaster ZDF's "Sportreportage" program that the sum had not been connected with the decision to let Germany stage the event.

"The €6.7 million have gone into my account, yes," bin Hammam said in an interview. "But I would like to know why Germany should have bribed me for something they have already received."

The decision on where the 2006 World Cup should be held was made in 2000. The sum was transferred in 2002, from a

World Cup organizing committee account to a company controlled by bin Hammam.

The World Cup committee account was controlled by German football legend Franz Beckenbauer and his now deceased manager, Robert Schwan.

"It's only you who cares" When asked if the payment was linked to Germany being awarded the event, bin Hammam retorted: "I do not know. No, of course I know, but excuse me - it's only you who cares, no one else."

The head of the German Football Federation (DFB), Reinhard Grindel, told the German weekly sports magazine Sport Bild in December that he wanted to meet bin Hammam in Qatar to discuss the payment. Grindel said at the time that he had yet to receive a response.

Beckenbauer has denied that any bribes were paid in connection with the 2006 World Cup. He has said Germany's World Cup organizers wanted to secure the payment of an organizational cost subsidy from FIFA, although that claim has been denied by former FIFA President Joseph Blatter. (Staff & Agency)

You fight for fantastic opportunities – Mourinho hints at Sanchez move

Jose Mourinho hinted at a Manchester United move for Arsenal star Alexis Sanchez, insisting that you must "fight" when a "fantastic opportunity" arises in the transfer market.

Sanchez is in the final six months of his contract at Arsenal and had been expected to move to United's local rivals Manchester City, after he nearly joined Pep Guardiola's men at the start of the season.

But United have reportedly emerged as genuine rivals to City, whose main attraction to Sanchez is understood to be the presence of Guardiola, the coach who signed him for Barcelona.

United are said to have presented Arsenal with a bigger offer than City, and although Mourinho claims it was not in the club's plans to sign players in January, he acknowledged that fantastic opportunities are worth pursuing whenever they present themselves.

"Let's say we have three targets in the summer - a defender, a midfielder and an attacking player," Mourinho told reporters.



"If in the winter you do one of the three, then in the summer you do three minus one. If we do something now, we don't do it in the summer again."

"Our plan was not to have new players in January. We build a squad with this idea and I share this philosophy with [executive vice-chairman] Mr. [Ed] Woodward

and the owners.

"But if there is a fantastic opportunity on the table, you fight for that fantastic opportunity. If it happens, it happens."

Nevertheless, Mourinho does not think that any signing will bridge the gap between United and City in terms of points in the Premier League this season, with Guardiola's

side 15 clear ahead of their trip to Liverpool on Sunday.

"At this stage, I don't think it's about the market," said Mourinho, whose United host Stoke City on Monday. "There are lots of already strong teams in the Premier League, not like in other leagues where it is difficult for the top sides to lose points, and there is a very important difference of points between first and second."

"City have a very comfortable advantage and they can sit on that; it is the sort of lead that gives a lot of tranquility and takes away the pressure from the guy that comes behind you. I have been in that situation."

"I don't think any of the teams near the top - Chelsea, Liverpool, Tottenham and ourselves - are thinking they can spend money this January to close the gap."

"It's not about transfers. It's about keeping on winning, getting the maximum number of points from the remaining games and seeing what happens." (Source: Four Four Two)

He's finished' – Fans brutally blast Cristiano Ronaldo after latest Real Madrid setback

Real Madrid's season is quickly unravelling as far as La Liga is concerned, as their 1-0 loss to Villarreal on Saturday piled further misery on them.

Los Blancos are now 16 points adrift of league leaders Barcelona, while they've fallen eight points behind third-placed Valencia.

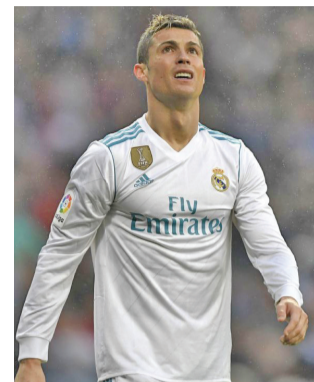
Having suffered consecutive La Liga home game defeats for the first time since May 2009, things aren't going to plan for Zinedine Zidane and his men and it's resulting in pressure building on the Frenchman.

In turn, it remains to be seen how long he gets to turn things around as Madrid haven't convinced in the cup or the Champions League this season either, and so serious question marks have to be asked as to why they've suffered such an alarming drop off from last season in which they were crowned Spanish and European champions.

One player in particular has faced the brunt of criticism and jokes, and that man is Cristiano Ronaldo. That's to be expected given how prominent and divisive a figure he can be, and his form this season has been utterly woeful which has led to Real Madrid's struggles.

The 32-year-old has scored just four goals in 14 La Liga games, a huge drop off from previous campaigns, and as he prepares to turn 33 next month, it has led to suggestions that he's suffering with a decline in the latter stages of his career.

Fans on Twitter, particularly Barcelona supporters, revealed in his misery this weekend, as seen below, as he evidently looks to have convinced this group that he has indeed lost a step and is set to continue on a concerning decline. (Source: Caught Offside)



Keita not joining Liverpool in January, say RB Leipzig

RB Leipzig have put speculation "to bed" and declared they will not allow Naby Keita to join Liverpool in January.

The two clubs struck an initial deal in August regarding a future move to Anfield for Keita at the end of the 2017-18 season.

Back then, Liverpool reportedly triggered a £48million release clause which is due to become active on July 1, 2018, while they are also said to have paid an extra £7m in order to secure the transfer a year in advance and loan him back.

Following the sale of Philippe Coutinho to Barcelona and with Liverpool reportedly eager for midfield reinforcements as they bid to qualify for the Champions League, an attempt to bring Keita to Anfield six months early had been speculated about. (Source: Goal)

Ashkan Dejagah Plays Down Move to Qatar Stars League

Tasnim – Iran national football team's international midfielder Ashkan Dejagah has played down speculation linking him with move to Qatar Stars League.

Dejagah is without a team since parting company with Wolfsburg in early June.

"I traveled to Doha to see my friends. I've played in Al Arabi for three years but at the moment I'd rather play in a European team," Dejagah said.

"The 2018 World Cup is a great goal for me and I want to make sure I am fully prepared for the competition," he added.

Dejagah played for Team Melli in the 2014 World Cup.

Federer says he should not be favorite at 36

Roger Federer says a 36-year-old should not really be considered a favorite for the Australian Open, although when the man in question is himself, no one was taking him seriously.

The Swiss breezed through his media duties on Sunday with the same swagger he will take on court against Slovenia's Aljaz Bedene on Tuesday, when he kicks off the defense of the title he won against great rival Rafa Nadal last year.

That unforgettable triumph ended a five-year hiatus in Federer's grand slam collection and a few months later, he took his tally to a record-extending 19 by winning Wimbledon.

Few would bet against him becoming only the fourth tennis player to reach 20 in two weeks time, although Federer was reluctant to accept the favorite's tag.

"With age, I feel like I play down my chances just because I don't think a 36-year-old should be a favorite of a tournament, it should not be the case," he told reporters.

"That's why I see things more relaxed, you know, at a later stage of my career."

Federer says he likes of six-times champion Novak Djokovic and Stan Wawrinka, both returning after lengthy injury breaks, could benefit from the same mindset he arrived with in Melbourne last year, when he was just back from a six-month hiatus.

"This year I hope to win the first few rounds and get rolling, whereas last year it was more of a 'let's see what happens' kind of tournament," Federer, who is seeded second behind world number one Nadal, said.

"Maybe similar to what Novak or Stan or others are going through this year. It's like, let's just see what happens. If you're in the draw, you give yourself a chance."

"That's what happened for me last year. All ended up way better than I thought it would. Having no expectations was so nice after all these years always having expectations."

Despite being a year older Federer has higher expectations this year and says his build-up has been 'perfect'.

He won all his four singles matches as he and Belinda Bencic helped Switzerland lift the Hopman Cup in Perth. (Source: Reuters)

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Eva Meyer-Keller's "Death Is Certain" at Fajr festival

A R T TEHRAN — The German performance artist d e s k Eva Meyer-Keller will perform her comical tragedy "Death Is Certain" in Tehran during the 36th Fajr International Theater Festival, the organizers announced on Sunday.



Eva Meyer-Keller performs "Death Is Certain" in an undated photo.

The play will have two performances in the Rooberoo Mansion Art and Cultural Institute in Tehran on January 20 and 21. In "Death Is Certain", Meyer-Keller is a perfidious kitchen queen who puts vegetables to death. They are throttled, shot, drowned, poisoned and so on.

Meyer-Keller works at the interface of performing and visual arts. In addition to completing a four-year course in dance and choreography at the Amsterdam School for New Development (SNDO), she has studied photography and visual arts in Berlin and London.

Her varied activities include presenting her performances internationally, developing projects in cooperation with other artists and groups, dancing for other choreographers and creating video art.

The 36th Fajr International Theater Festival will be running in Tehran from January 18 to 29.

Iranian university to hold conference on Al-Ghazali in Jakarta

A R T TEHRAN — The Islamic Madhahib University, d e s k a Tehran-based academic center for Islamic denominations, plans to organize a conference on the Sufism of the Iranian mystic and poet Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali (1058-1111) in Jakarta, Indonesia.



A poster for a conference on Iranian mystic Al-Ghazali in Jakarta

The three-day conference, which will open at the Borobudur Hotel on January 18, plans to discuss the role and contributions of Al-Ghazali in building a peaceful and harmonious world civilization, the university announced on Sunday.

Scholars Habib Luthfi bin Yahya and Said Aqil Siradj from Indonesia, Yasir al-Ghadhmani from Syria, Sheikh Muhammad Mahmud Abu Hasyim from Egypt are among the keynote speakers.

Islamic academics from Russia, China, Tunisia, Iran, Morocco and the United States have been invited to attend the conference. Al-Ghazali was born and died in Tus, in the Khorasan region. He was an Islamic theologian, jurist, philosopher, cosmologist, psychologist and mystic of Persian origin and remains one of the most celebrated scholars in the history of Sunni Islamic thought.

He is considered a pioneer of the methods of doubt and skepticism. In one of his major works, "The Incoherence of the Philosophers," he changed the course of early Islamic philosophy, shifting it away from an Islamic metaphysics influenced by ancient Greek and Hellenistic philosophy, and towards an Islamic philosophy based on cause-and-effect as determined by God or intermediate angels, a theory now known as occasionalism.

Benin photographer captures voodoo via the lens

COTONOU, BENIN (Reuters) — Hundreds of Beninois marked National Voodoo Day, celebrating the once-banned culture on Wednesday with a series of ceremonies across the country.

Voodoo is an ancient belief system practiced by more than 65 percent Benin's 7 million people and by millions in neighboring Nigeria, Togo and Ghana.

In Benin's capital Cotonou, photographer Charles Placide Tossou marked the day with an exhibition of his latest work, featuring photographs of voodoo followers taking part in ceremonies where they dance, play drums and animals are slaughtered as a sacrifice to the gods.

"When we talk about voodoo, everyone sees the negative side of this local culture. But I rejected that, there is something more artistic about it that most people are not seeing because not everyone participates and gets the chance to see it up close," he said.

Voodoo is estimated to be more than 500 years old and centered on the worship of a range of gods and spirits.

Comedy king Akbar Abdi to receive Golden Simorgh

A R T TEHRAN — Akbar Abdi, d e s k the 57-year-old actor who played roles in over 100 movies and series, mostly are comedies, will receive a Golden Simorgh for his lifetime achievements at the 36th Fajr Film Festival, the organizers announced on Sunday.

The 36th Fajr Film Festival will be held in Tehran from February 1 to 11. Veteran film dubber Manuchehr Esmaili and director Mohammad-Ali Najfi are scheduled to be honored with lifetime achievement awards.

He began his acting career with "The Traffic Neighborhood", a popular children's TV series directed by Dariush Moadebian in 1981.

He soon shot to fame during that time for playing roles in director/actor Reza Jian's TV series "Masalabad".

The portrayal of a chubby schoolchild who was always late in director Hossein

Afsahi's popular TV serial "I Am Late again for School" secured him a position as a professional comedian in Iranian TV.

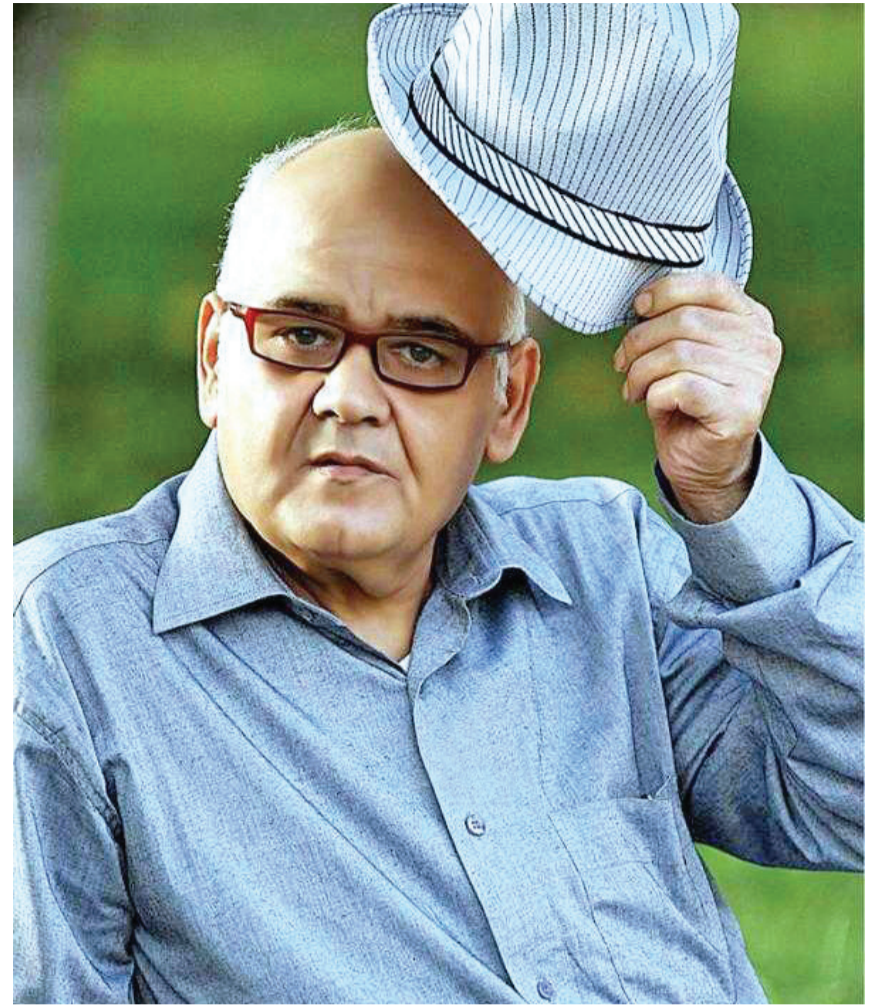
All these TV series and telefilms prepared the ground for him to try his luck at cinema in 1985 with "A Man Who Became a Mouse" by Ahmad Bakhschi.

In 1986, he collaborated with Daruieh Mehrjui, a director of Iran's New Wave Cinema, in "The Tenants".

He also worked in "Mother" and "Delshodegan" with director Ali Hatami, who was known as the Hafez of Iranian cinema due to the poetic ambiance of his movies.

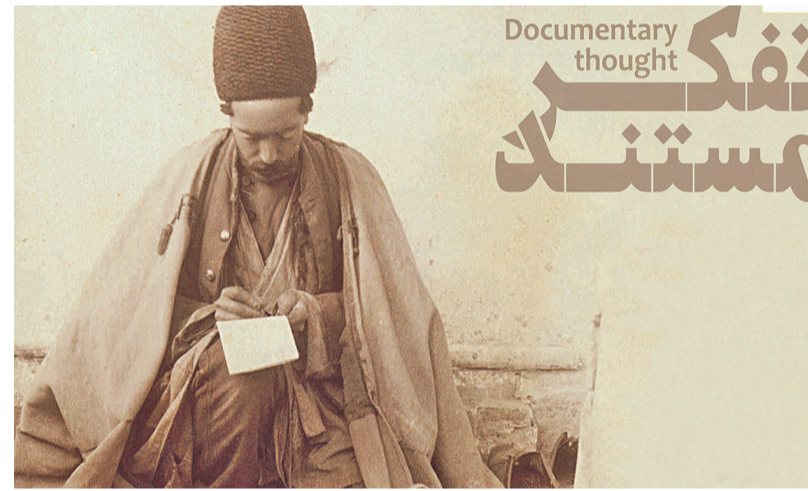
Due to the wide variety of roles he played in the Iranian cinema and television, Abdi was dubbed "the man with a thousand faces of Iranian cinema."

Abdi also worked as a stage director in several plays, including "Mr. Akbar, the Theater Actor".



Actor Akbar Abdi in an undated photo

Tehran exhibit chronicles Iranian documentary photography



A poster for the Documentary Thought exhibit at Tehran's Afrand Gallery

A R T TEHRAN — An exhibit d e s k tion that gives a brief account of Iranian documentary photography spanning about 170 years is currently underway at Tehran's Afrand Gallery.

Photos of several major historical events along with images of routine daily life have been showcased at the exhibition entitled "Documentary Thought".

Photos of the demonstrations that led to the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution are among the 28 works selected for the exhibit.

"The oldest photo is shows a geomancer in Tehran's Einoddoleh Street taken by the Qajar era photographer, Antoin Sevruguin,"

curator Arman Stepanian told the Persian service of MNA on Sunday.

He said that documentary photography helps the younger generation learn how to observe their surroundings and examine things carefully.

Works by Aqa Reza Akkasbashi, Maryam Zand, Kamran Adl, Atila Pesyani and Mojgan Parsa-Moqaddam are among the photos on display at the exhibit.

Photos of Qajar royal clowns and female Kurdish musicians are among the highlights of the exhibit.

The exhibit will be running until February 2 at the gallery located at 48 Jalal Hosseini St., Jahan Ara St., off Jalal Ale-Ahmad Highway.

Dutch pianist Martyn van den Hoek to perform with Iranian orchestra



Dutch pianist Martyn van den Hoek in an undated photo

A R T TEHRAN — Dutch pi d e s k anist Martyn van den Hoek will accompany the Tehran Symphony Orchestra by under the baton of Shahrzad Rohani at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on January 18 and 19.

The two performances have been arranged for the 33rd Fajr Music Festival, which is currently underway in Tehran, the organizers announced on Sunday.

"The Firebird", a ballet and orchestral concert work by the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky, "Piano Concerto No. 2" by Frederic Chopin and "Méditation", a symphonic intermezzo by French composer Jules Massenet have been selected for the

repertoire of the orchestra. Van den Hoek studied at the Rotterdam Conservatory, the conservatories of Moscow, Budapest and New York. He won the first prize in 1987 at the Franz Liszt Competition. This formed the basis for his international career.

He is also active as pedagogue. He teaches at the Viennese Conservatory and the Conservatory of Utrecht.

Van den Hoek is also involved in the creation of musical projects, and is the manager and conductor of the Bratislava Chamber Orchestra.

The Fajr Music Festival will run until January 20.

Brigitte biography says young Macron wrote steamy book about their romance

PARIS (Reuters) — A new biography of French first lady Brigitte Macron says her husband penned a racy novel inspired by their early romance, when he was still a teenager and she his married drama teacher.

President Emmanuel Macron, who turned 40 last month, fell for Brigitte during rehearsals for a school play at the Providence high school in Amiens, and defied his parents' disapproval.

The book, "Brigitte Macron, The Liberated Woman", to be published next week, quotes a family neighbor from Macron's home town who says she typed up the 300-page manuscript.

"It was a daring novel, a little bit smutty. Of course, the

names were not the same but I think he needed to express what he was feeling at the time," the unnamed neighbor is quoted as saying in excerpts published by Closer magazine.

A spokeswoman for Macron's office declined to comment.

In the excerpts, the typist said she had not kept a copy of the novel - perhaps sparing the blushes of a leader who has promised to clean up French politics and says he wants to restore the dignity of the presidency.

But Macron would not be the only current French politician to try his hand at adult literature.

In 2011, the prime minister, Edouard Philippe, co-authored "Dans l'ombre" (In the shadows), a political thriller laced with steamy encounters. The finance minister, Bruno

Le Maire, has written a novel entitled "Le Ministre" (The Minister), which includes a steamy scene between the minister and his wife in Venice.

Macron's literary ambitions as a young man are well known and he wrote at least two unpublished works before authoring a book entitled "Revolution" during his election campaign.

He told the weekly magazine Le Point last year that he had not sought a publisher for the earlier works "as I was not happy with them".

In a separate article for the same magazine, asked by French author Philippe Besson if he regretted not becoming a writer himself, Macron replied: "My life isn't finished yet."

Stephen King to receive PEN Literary Service Award

NEW YORK (N.Y. Times) — The 2018 PEN America Literary Service Award has been awarded to Stephen King, author of horror and suspense classics such as "It" and "The Shining."

The award is meant for a critically acclaimed writer whose body of work "helps us understand and interpret the human condition," according to a news release. Andrew Solomon, the president of PEN America, said Mr. King "has inspired us to stand up to sinister forces through his rich prose, his generous philanthropy and his outspoken defense of free expression."

Mr. King has written more than 50 books, including "Under the Dome", about a town in Maine suddenly separated from the world by an invisible force, which draws terror from human nature. The book also includes social commentary; Marilyn Stasio, a critic for The Times, wrote that it has "echoes of 9/11, Hurricane Katrina and Iraq that help to shape this small town's view of the wider world." Mr. King provides support to writers and artists who have suffered hardship through his Haven



Credit Kenzo Tribouillard/Agence France-Press — Getty Images

Foundation and is an outspoken advocate of free speech on Twitter and elsewhere, resulting in his being blocked by President Trump on the social media platform.

Mr. King will be honored with the award on May 22 at the American Museum of Natural History. His new novel, "The Outsider", will also be published on that date.

Last year, Stephen Sondheim was the recipient of the service award; he became the first composer-lyricist to win. In 2016, J.K. Rowling received the award.

Ed Sheeran and Dua Lipa dominate Brit Award nominations

LONDON (Reuters) — Ed Sheeran, Dua Lipa, Liam Payne and Stormzy are among the nominees for this year's Brit Awards, Britain's most prestigious pop music prizes.

Sheeran is in the running in four categories - British male solo artist, best video and single for "Shape of You", and best album.

Singer Dua Lipa received the most nominations. Her single "New Rules" was a break out hit last year and she is nominated in five categories including best album, best female artist and best single.

And former One Direction star Payne was nominated for best single and video for "Strip That Down", which has now been a hit in Britain, Australia and United States.

"The song's done extremely well, I am extremely happy with the success so far... We just reached a billion streams. I have never written down that number, I have never had the need," Payne said backstage at an event to announce the nominees in London.

"It's amazing. You look at it and you're



Ed Sheeran performs during the 2017 Jingle Ball at Madison Square Garden in New York, U.S., December 8, 2017. (Reuters/Lucas Jackson)

like, wow, it's one-sixth of the world's population, incredible."

Dua Lipa will compete for best female artist against the likes of Jessie Ware and 2015 winner Paloma Faith.

East London rapper J Hus and platinum-selling songwriter Rag'n'Bone Man have three nominations apiece, including for best album, while Stormzy's "Gang Signs and Prayer" is also nominated.