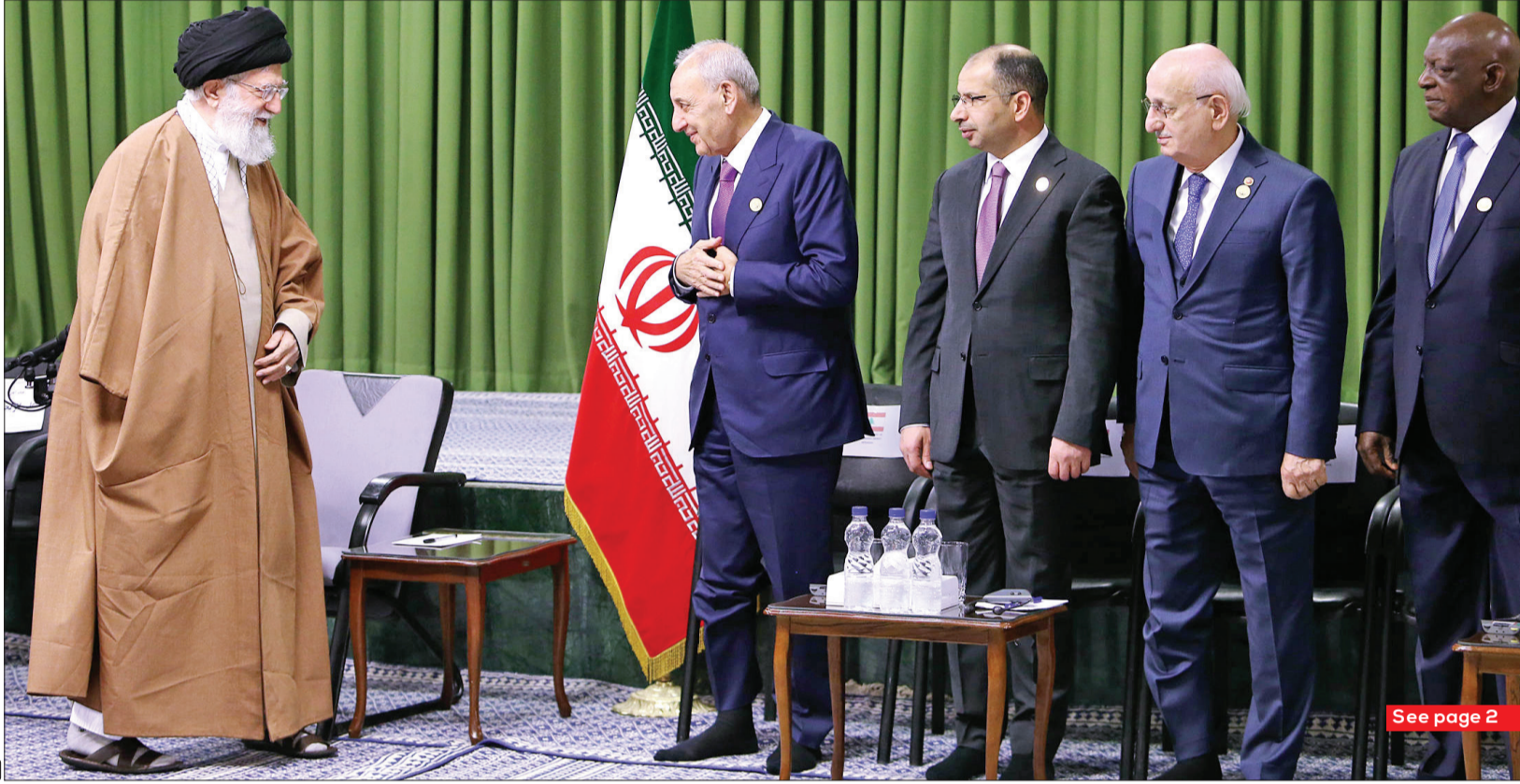


 <p>Rouhani urges Islamic states to reduce dependence on foreigners 2</p>	 <p>Iran-France joint transport task force holds 1st meeting 4</p>	 <p>Persian Beach Soccer Cup will be a high-level event: Marco Octavio 15</p>	 <p>Iranian premiere of "Beyond the Clouds" set for Feb. 14 16</p>
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U.S. Quds move unrealizable



Leader greets parliament speakers from Muslim nations

U.S. move in Syria may ignite 'flames of war': Iran

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran denounced a U.S. plan to deploy a militant force near Syria's border with Turkey as a "blatant" and "clear example" of interference in Syria's domestic affairs, saying the move "fans the flames of the conflict" there.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said the plan complicates the crisis and leads to instability in the country.

On Sunday, the U.S. government announced that it was working with its Syrian militia allies, including the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), to set up a new 30,000-strong "border security" force. The force would operate along the borders with Turkey and Iraq, as well as within Syria along the Euphrates river, which separates most SDF territory from that held by the government. → 2

It is 'unwise' to talk to U.S. on defense capabilities: IRGC

POLITICS TEHRAN — General Yadollah Javani, a senior official at the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps, said on Tuesday that it is "unwise" for Iran to sit at a negotiating table with the U.S. on its defense capabilities.

"The U.S. seeks to restrict and weaken Iran at various areas through tightening and increasing sanctions," said Javani, a senior advisor to the Leader's representative at the IRGC.

He noted, "The U.S. has targeted the Islamic Republic's points of strength and seek to weaken those points through negotiations. So, the people and officials should counter such plots." Iran has repeatedly said it will not compromise on its defense capability. In interview in September last year Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said, "Iran needs to develop its own defenses,..." → 2

Turkey bolsters Syria border as U.S. force plan slammed

Turkey has reportedly dispatched a convoy of over 40 military vehicles and tanks to the southern regions along the Syrian frontier amid growing Ankara-Washington tensions over a U.S. plan to create a "border force" at Turkey's doorstep.

Military sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency on Monday that two dozen armored vehicles had entered the Reyhanli district of Turkey's Hatay Province with military jammer vehicles "for reinforcement reasons." → 13

ARTICLE
 By Hanif Ghaffari
 Political analyst

Why did Trump insult Africans?

The President of the United States ridiculed African-American immigrants in his vicious statements, insulting them in the worst way possible. The White House authorities, and Donald Trump in particular, have been reluctant to apologize for his insults to colored people. The main question is why Trump has made such statements in the beginning of 2018 and only a few days after the start of the year? Does he pursue a specific goal?

The answer to this question is "Yes"! Donald Trump came to the end of 2017 with his popularity decreasing to around 32%. This diminished popularity, at the one hand, darkens the prospect and the possibility of Trump's victory in the 2020 presidential election and his re-presence at the White House, and on the other hand, provides grounds for widespread conflicts between the Congress and the White House. The results of the polls suggest that Democrats can easily defeat the Republicans in Congressional mid-term elections and take over the majority of the Senate and even the House of Representatives. In such a situation, the President of the United States has committed a kind of political suicide so that he may get out of this whirlpool. Trump's intention of this political suicide was reassembling the power of racists and nationalists in the United States for winning the Congress mid-term. During the past year's unrests in the United States, Trump also expressed his support for racism which was welcomed by extremist groups.

The fact is that Trump looks at racists and extremist nationalist groups in the United States as his political and social wealth. During the 2016 presidential competition and through winning these racist groups votes, Trump managed to win electoral votes in some key states like Florida, and could eventually defeat Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party. In other words, Trump made the racist votes his own by emphasizing on the "revival of American power". The President of the United States is currently attempting to repeat the experience of the 2016 presidential election in the Congress mid-term elections. → 7

There is no concerted movement in EU to accept Trump's demands: Adib-Moghaddam

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
 By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, Chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute believes "I don't think that there is any concerted movement in the EU to accept the demands set by Trump."

Author of "Psycho-nationalism: Global thought and Iranian imaginations" also adds that "Equally, I don't think that Iran is or should be willing to negotiate with someone such as Donald Trump, who is quite obviously acting in bad faith and who does not have any understanding of international law and diplomacy."

Professor in Global Thought and Comparative Philosophies and Chair of the Centre for Iranian

Studies at the London Middle East Institute, also adds that "I think that there is a conscious effort by the Trump administration to kill the JCPOA."

Here is the full text of the interview:

Q: US 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: The most important change requested by Trump is that Iran's inter ballistic missile programme becomes a part of the agreement, and thus open to full oversight and potentially sanctions. Other demands include even more inspections of all sites including military ones, and the phased expiration dates of various limitations placed on Iran's nuclear program which are set to lapse 10 to 15 years in the future. Trump

wants them to continue indefinitely. Of course, these are outrageous demands that are meant to push the JCPOA further to the brink. In my first interview about Trump, I said that he is the most dangerous man in the world. I continue to stick to that assessment. Who would have thought that the United States, with so much apparent talent would produce a racist, misogynist and anti-intellectual President such as Trump.

Q: 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: I don't think that there is any concerted movement in the EU to accept the demands set by Trump. → 7

Iran wins Energy Globe World Award 2017

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iran secured the first place in Energy Globe World Awards 2017 in the category of water here on Tuesday.

Beating the other two finalists, the Philippines and Singapore, Iran jointly with Sri Lanka won the event's top prize in the mentioned category.

The Energy Globe Award was founded in 1999 by the Austrian energy pioneer Wolfgang Neumann and is one of today's most prestigious environmental awards.

Over a ceremony held in Iran International Conference Center in Tehran on Tuesday, upgrade of tailings disposal and water management system project submitted by Kerman Copper Region as well as Puritas Sath Diyawara of Seri Lanka, a project aiming to providing clean drinking wa-

ter to people affected by chronic kidney disease, came jointly in first.

Projects from Afghanistan, India, Austria, and New Zealand also won the first place in other categories of earth, fire, air, youth respectively. Uganda also became the world winner.

'Sustainable development closely linked with water, energy sector'

In a statement given over the award ceremony Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian explained that the ministry is well-aware of the fact that sustainable development is closely linked with water and energy in every aspect.

In a world with limited natural resources which cannot meet the extravagant lifestyle of the human beings and with the constant ecological degradation, focusing on water, soil, air,

energy, youth, and waste is not only "fruitful" but "necessary", the Founding Director of the United Nations University Institute for Integrated Management of Material Fluxes and of Resources noted.

One of the main challenges the mankind is struggling with and is threatening the earth by impacting human lives is climate change which is the product of the [modern, lavish] lifestyle particularly since the industrialization, the coordinator of the UN-Water Task Force on planning and organization of the new Water Decade noted.

The minister went on to say that implementing goals set by international entities, non-profit and non-governmental bodies are positively affecting the current condition. → 12

ARTICLE
 By Syed Zafar Mehdi
 Political analyst from New Delhi

Netanyahu in India: Why India must not shake hands with him

On Sunday, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose animated bear hug easily beats Trump's awkward handshake, went against protocol to welcome his new friend Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the New Delhi airport. After a bear hug and handshakes, the six-day visit kicked off with both leaders extolling each other and reaffirming commitment to enhance bilateral ties.

Modi and Netanyahu, to quote a catchy phrase from a leftist newspaper, are "ideological soulmates". While one epitomizes right-wing Jewish nationalism, the other represents right-wing Hindu nationalism. Under Modi government, India and Israel have strengthened bilateral defence and trade ties much to the chagrin of civil society and intelligentsia in India, which is fiercely pro-Palestine. The covert co-operation between the two countries has become more overt in recent years.

Modi became the first Indian premier to visit Israel in July last year and Netanyahu is the first Israeli premier to visit India in 15 years, since Ariel Sharon in 2003. Hailing India-Israel partnership as a "marriage made in heaven", Netanyahu, who is accompanied by a strong 130-member delegation of Israeli diplomats and entrepreneurs, said his visit is a testimony that India-Israel relationship is "moving on so many fronts forward".

Last month, India voted in favor of a resolution to reject the U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, in line with New Delhi's traditional position on Israel-Palestine conflict. The resolution, which came as an embarrassment to Washington and Tel Aviv, created some tension between India and Israel ahead of Netanyahu's India visit. The annulment of a lucrative arms deal with Israel's state-owned defence contractor last month had already raised a few eyebrows in Tel Aviv.

Speaking to mediapersons in New Delhi, Netanyahu admitted that Israel was "disappointed" with the UN vote but said his visit marks the "dawn of a new era" in India-Israel relations. The two countries seek enhanced cooperation in the areas of security, agriculture, → 13



Seraj joins Sur for Fajr concert

Veteran vocalist Hesameddin Seraj (2nd L) accompanies the Sur band at a performance during the 33rd Fajr Music Festival at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on January 15, 2018.

The group led by tar virtuoso Majid Molania (3rd L) dedicated the song "The Tears of Moonlight" to Mohammadreza Shajarian, the legendary Iranian vocalist who is fighting kidney cancer.

The band also features Saber Suri on oud (1st L), Jamshid Safarzadeh (4th L) on santur and Hamid Qanbari on percussion.

Tehran Times / Bahman Vakhshour

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Lawmakers push for domestic messaging apps

POLITICS TEHRAN – In a letter to heads of the three branches of the government, Iranian lawmakers pushed for creating domestic messaging apps, Mehr reported.

The letter, signed by 170 lawmakers, came after protests erupted in various cities and towns across the country in early January.

The lawmakers said domestic messaging apps should replace foreign ones in order to prevent the misuse of social media.

They also said Daesh's attack to Majlis, promotion of violence, selling drugs and the recent riots were examples of the enemies' measures against the Iranian nation through foreign messaging apps.



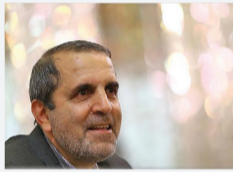
Enemy sought to cause turmoil in Iran: police chief

POLITICS TEHRAN – Police chief Hossein Ashtari said on Tuesday that the enemy was seeking to create disorder in Iran through social media when protests erupted in several cities across in Iran in early January.

Ashtari said the enemy used political gaps in the country to question the Islamic Republic's principles, values and beliefs.

The enemy is not too stupid to wage a military aggression against Iran, and instead, it is waging a "soft war" against the Islamic republic, he opined.

He added police is ready to counter any threat.



Majlis committee cuts off budget for special organizations

POLITICS TEHRAN – The joint committee of the Majlis has decided to cut off the annual budget of special organizations and institutes, the committee's spokesman said on Monday.

Ali Asqar Yusofnejad said the committee concluded that the annual budget of non-governmental educational-cultural organizations was "ill-advised", Mehr reported.

Controversy arose after details of the upcoming Persian year's budget were published back in December 2017.



Mogherini, Jubeir discuss nuclear deal

POLITICS TEHRAN – European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini met on Monday with Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Adel Al Jubeir to discuss various issues, including the Iran nuclear deal, also known as the JCPOA.

According to European Union's website, "they discussed, among other issues, the Middle East peace process, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, the JCPOA, the Sahel and the [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council."

On Tuesday, Jubeir said the JCPOA "needs improvement to prevent Tehran from enriching uranium." He also accused Iran of supplying the Yemeni Houthis with missiles that targeted Saudi Arabia.



JCPOA violation will be detrimental to all sides: Nabi Berri

POLITICS TEHRAN – Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabi Berri said on Tuesday that a violation of the Iran nuclear deal will be detrimental to all parties, urging all the signatories to honor the clauses of the multilateral agreement.

"Any violation of the nuclear deal with Iran by 5+1 countries will be harmful to all the countries," noted Berri who had attended the Islamic unity conference in Tehran.

The veteran Lebanese politician also pointed to the U.S. decision to recognize al-Quds as the capital of Israel, saying, "Iran adopted a strong stance against the U.S. decision to move its embassy to al-Quds and announced that al-Quds is the capital of Palestine."



Belgium counters Saudi FM's remarks on Iranian nuclear program

POLITICS TEHRAN – Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reynders on Tuesday countered remarks by his Saudi counterpart Adel Al-Jubeir that the nuclear deal with Iran needs to be revised to prevent Tehran from enriching uranium.

"The nuclear agreement with Iran is still optimal and its implementation is important," Didier said, according to Arab News.

Talking in a joint press conference with Didier in Brussels, al-Jubeir said, "The nuclear deal with Iran needs improvement to prevent Tehran from enriching uranium."

Rouhani urges Islamic states to reduce dependence on foreigners

POLITICS TEHRAN – Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday that it is necessary that Islamic countries abandon division and reduce dependence on foreigners through reliance on domestic capacities.

"We should abandon differences and reduce dependence on foreigners through synergy and reliance on domestic capacities and human resources and in line with developing the world of Islam," Rouhani said during his speech at the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC) in Tehran.

He noted that foreign powers make efforts to dominate Muslim states and deepen division among them.

"Selling weapons to various countries, which will lead to arms race, and creating division among countries are the acts they take to stay in the region," Rouhani explained.

The president noted that boosting solidarity among Muslim countries will help resolve challenges in the Islamic world.

He also said it is of high importance to promote democracy in Islamic states as a strategy to counter the West.

"We announce to the West that we do not need your intervention through ballot boxes, press and media," the president remarked.

'Iran does not view any Islamic country a rival'

Rouhani also said that the Islamic Republic Iran does not consider any Islamic country as a rival.

In an indirect reference to Saudi Arabia, Rouhani said, "We believe that we can cooperate and negotiate with the countries that we have differences with based on mutual respect. However, some countries deepen division in the Islamic community under the influence of the U.S. and



the Zionist regime of Israel."

Iran is ready to cooperate to replace extremism and war-mongering with unity.

Saudi Arabia, especially under its current leadership,

has been lobbying the United States to undermine the nuclear deal that Tehran clinched with major powers and the European Union. It has also making repeated hostile remarks against Iran.

Iran dismisses claim tanker shot by missile

POLITICS TEHRAN – Iran has dismissed as "sheer lie" the claim that the oil tanker operated by the National Iranian Tanker Company has been hit by a rocket.

On Monday, Al Arabiya, a Saudi-owned television news channel, claimed the tanker had been shot as it was transferring cargo to North Korea.

"The oil tanker was headed to North Korea and not South Korea, which prompted the Americans to block it and sink the ship," the Saudi news outlet said.

Denying the allegation, Ali Rabiee, labor minister and President Rouhani's special envoy on the tanker incident, on Tuesday said: "The South Korean government has officially

announced that the cargo of the sunken Sanchi belonged to them, and the Iranian mission inspected and photographed the ship."

"Such lies that the radars of the ships turned off, a missile shot, and not receiving any radar signals show that the claimers have no knowledge about international relations and navigation," Rabiee stated.

"If an American missile had hit the vessel, why didn't any radar detect it?" asked Rabiee.

The oil tanker, called Sanchi, was carrying gas condensates to South Korea when it collided with a Chinese freight ship off east coast of China on January 6, and all the 32 crew members including two Bangladeshis went missing. Three dead bodies were later found during a rescue operation.

The crew were killed due to inhaling toxic gases and the huge size of the fire which engulfed the tanker since the onset of the tragic incident.

To repudiate unsubstantiated claims, the president's special envoy said that some time ago in a similar incident, a U.S. warship had collided with ship carrying petrochemical cargo and some people were killed in that accident.

Rabiee, who led a special committee to investigate the incident, had earlier said at the end of the closing meeting of the committee in Shanghai that Chinese officials did all within their power, but they failed to control the fire due to its scale and gas condensate consignment aboard the tanker.

He further noted that the issue would be pursued seriously and the black box of the vessel will be examined carefully to restore Iran's rights in this regard.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi also told ILNA on Tuesday that the sunken tanker was destined for South Korea.

As it has been repeatedly stated since the bitter incident occurred, the tanker's destination was South Korea, and any rumors circulating on social media that say otherwise are completely false, Qassemi stressed.

The South Korean Ambassador to Tehran, Kim Seung Ho, also responded to rumors around the incident, confirming on Monday that the tanker's destination was South Korea.

Leader: U.S. Quds move unrealizable

POLITICS TEHRAN – The Leader of the Islamic Revolution on Tuesday strongly criticized the United States for its recent move to recognize al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of Israel, saying the dare to make this move was unseemly bold.

"They cannot do such a thing and their efforts will not bear results," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting with senior lawmakers attending the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) conference in Tehran.

The U.S. adventure on Palestine will get nowhere, he said, underlining that "Palestine is a collection, a country, and a history. Palestine is from the river to the sea and al-Quds is without a doubt its capital."

The Leader attached great importance

to the issue of "Palestine" and "unity in the Islamic world".

Ayatollah Khamenei said the injustices against the Palestinians are "unprecedented in history" as their land was occupied, expelled in millions and subjected to cruelty.

The Islamic world should play influential role in important issues facing the world and "prevent bitter experiences of the past decades and domination of (great) powers to be repeated," he stated.

Ayatollah Khamenei went on to say that

Leader says for the sake of Islamic unity Iran is "even ready to act in a brotherly manner toward those who appeared blatantly inimical" to the Islamic Republic.

issues related to the Islamic world should be expressed frankly in order to prove effective on the public opinion and the talented people in the larger world.

"The dangerous propaganda emperor of the West, which is run mainly by the Zionists, should not be allowed to ignore the world of Islam's important issues and wipe out them by the 'plot of silence'," the Leader of the Islamic Revolution remarked.

He noted that it is possible to defeat the Zionists through "soft war" as they were

defeated in the war in Lebanon in 2006 and forced to admit it.

The Leader also described the Palestine issue as the first priority of the Islamic world.

Ayatollah Khamenei also called on Muslim nations to help resolve the crises in Yemen and Bahrain, saying they are among the important issues facing the Muslim world.

The Leader also urged Muslim countries to be explicit vis-à-vis the fundamental issues of the Muslim world in order to be able to influence public opinion.

He added Islamic unity is so important that Iran is "even ready to act in a brotherly manner toward those who appeared blatantly inimical to us".

Ayatollah Khamenei also said that the Islamic world can emerge as a big, influential global power by tapping its resources.

Parliament speakers from various Muslim nations meet Rouhani

POLITICS TEHRAN – Iranian President Hassan Rouhani held separate talks on Tuesday with Syrian, Iraqi, Qatari, Senegalese and Algerian parliament speakers on the sidelines of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC) in Tehran.

During his meeting with Qatari Parliament Speaker Ahmad bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud, Rouhani said that the countries in the Middle East, especially the neighboring countries, should bridge differences through talks.

He also said that Iran is ready to cooperate with the Qatari government and people.

For his part, the Qatari parliament speaker called for expansion of relations.

'New U.S. plan for Syria contravenes international law'

During his talks with Syrian Parliament Speaker Hammoudeh Sabbagh, Rouhani said that the new U.S. plan in Syria is against international law and a plot against Syria's territorial integrity and security.

On Sunday, the U.S. government announced that it was working with its Syrian militia allies, including the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), to set up a new 30,000-strong "border security" force.

The force would operate along the borders with Turkey and Iraq, as well as within Syria along the Euphrates river, which separates most SDF territory from that held by the government.

Sabbagh said that Syria wants all the U.S. forces out of the country.

It is 'unwise' to talk to U.S. on defense capabilities: IRGC

1 → and we have proven that our missiles are for defense." Referring to Saddam Hussein's war against Iran in the 1980s, Zarif said, "We go back to a history where our cities were being showered with missiles from Saddam Hussein... and Iran did not have a single missile to work as a deterrent against its citizens."

'Missile program unrelated to nuclear deal'

Javani also said Iran's missile program, its human rights situation and regional issues have nothing to do with the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan

of Action.

The IRGC official also said repeated calls by the U.S. to revise the JCPOA lack value.

On Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump extended sanctions waivers 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.

Trump contends he cannot continue to certify the deal in its present form for three reasons: First, the agreement

is not permanent. Second, Iran is testing ballistic missiles and supporting what it calls terrorist groups in the Middle East. And third, they say, the IAEA should be allowed to inspect any military site in Iran, even without reasonable evidence that nuclear activity had occurred there.

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 UN Security Council adopted a resolution endorsing the agreement.

U.S. move in Syria may ignite 'flames of war': Iran

Iran decries U.S. 'blatant interference' in Syria

1 → Qassemi said the announcement comes just as the Syrian army and its allies made sweeping gains in their battle against Daesh (ISIS) and al-Nusra Front.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey are attempting to contain the flames of the crisis through the Astana peace talks and the creation of de-escalation zones" and

the three countries have made significant achievements in this regard, he added.

He urged Washington to reverse its "destructive" policies in the Middle East, withdraw its forces from Syria and let the Syrian people decide their own fate.

Washington's plan sparked condemnation by other countries, including Syria, Russia and Turkey.

On Monday, the Syrian government responded to the U.S. move, vowing to crush the new force and drive American troops from the country.

Russia described the move a plot to dismember Syria and place part of it under U.S. control.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also denounced the plan, saying the U.S. is

trying to form a terror army to target Turkey.

"A country we call an ally is insisting on forming a terror army on our borders," Reuters quoted Erdogan as saying of the United States in a speech in Ankara.

"What can that terror army target but Turkey?"

"Our mission is to strangle it before it's even born."

Over 75 percent of Yemenis in need of aid: UN

The United Nations (UN) says the number of the Yemenis who are dependent on assistance has risen to 22.2 million, as the risk of famine increases three years into a Saudi Arabian-led war on impoverished Yemen.

The UN humanitarian affairs office, the OCHA, said on Tuesday that 8.4 million people — out of Yemen's population of 29 million — were now at risk of famine, up from 6.8 million in 2017.

According to the OCHA, a total of 22.2 million people, or 76 percent of Yemen's population, are dependent on some form of aid, an increase of 1.5 million people over the past six months.

The humanitarian crisis caused by the Saudi Arabian-led war on Yemen has been worsened by a crippling blockade enforced by the invading countries.

Saudi Arabia tightened that siege on November 6 after Yemeni fighters targeted an international airport near the Saudi capital of Riyadh with a cruise missile in retaliation for Saudi-led strikes.

More than 13,600 people have been killed since the onset of the Saudi-led war on Yemen in 2015. Much of the Arabian Peninsula country's infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, and factories, has been reduced to rubble in military strikes.

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

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

■ Saudi jets target farmers in Yemen's Hudaydah
Saudi warplanes have launched a series of attacks on Yemen's western province of Hudaydah, killing at least six people.

Late on Monday, Saudi fighter planes attacked a farm in the province's al-Jerahi directorate killing two farmers and injuring several more.

Four more civilians were killed when Saudi jets launched air raids on agricultural land in the province's al-Khokha region.



Earlier in the day, eight civilians were killed and five others were wounded when Saudi military aircraft struck targeted their vehicle as it was travelling along a road in the Ahem area of Yemen's northwestern province of Hajjah.

On Sunday, a UN panel compiled a detailed report of civilian casualties caused by the Saudi military and its al-

lies during their war against Yemen, saying the Riyadh-led coalition has used precision-guided munitions in its raids on civilian targets.

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.

(Source: agencies)

British rights groups call on Theresa May to cancel Saudi crown prince visit UK



British rights organizations have called on the UK government to cancel the visit of the Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, to Britain, which was announced by the UK's Prime Minister, Theresa May, last month.

In a joint letter that was submitted yesterday to May's office, the organizations said: "The Saudi Crown Prince is responsible for the crimes committed in his country against activists, including prison, detention, torture, forced disappearance and execution."

"He [Saudi Crown Prince] is also responsible for the serious war crimes in Yemen which claimed the lives of tens of thousands of innocent people, including women and children," the letter read.

The rights activists also slammed the British government's defence and arms support to the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, which they believed was the major reason for the escalation in Yemen.

"The Saudi regime intervenes in other countries' internal affairs, such as in Bahrain, where they help the regime there to suppress the activists," the letter read.

"It [Saudi regime] also imposed the blockade on Qatar, which violates all international conventions, and detained the Lebanese prime minister in an effort to impose conditions on other states," the activists noted.

"Bin Salman's visit to Britain is a disgrace to the UK," the letter's signatories stressed, warning that "the interests and values of the British people contradict with this visit."

The letter was reported to have been signed by the Stop the War coalition, the Stop Arming Saudi group, the Arab Organization for Human Rights in UK, and the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights.

Moreover, the rights groups launched a campaign against the visit on the UK government's official website with the aim to collect "as much signatures against the visit as possible."

May visited Saudi Arabia twice last year, the first was in April and the other was in November, during which she met the Saudi King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz and held talks with the Crown Prince and the Saudi Minister of Defense.

(Source: Middle East Monitor)

Bahraini forces attack anti-regime protesters



Bahraini regime forces have engaged in clashes with separate groups of people protesting against the Al Khalifah regime's ferocious crackdown on political dissidents and pro-democracy activists in the kingdom and commemorating three Shia activists executed last year.

Dozens of people took to the streets in the island of Sitra, located five kilometers south of the capital Manama, on Monday evening, holding up pictures of Abbas al-Samea, 27, Sami Mushaima, 42, and Ali al-Singace, 21, whom were executed by firing squad on January 15, 2017.

Regime forces then intervened and fired stun grenades and tear gas canisters to disperse the crowd. There were no reports of casualties or arrests.

On January 9 last year, Bahrain's Court of Cassation upheld the death penalties given to the three activists over allegations of killing a member of Emirati forces, who had been assisting Manama in its suppression of Bahraini protesters in the northern village of al-Daih back in March 2014.

Seven other convicts were also sentenced to life in prison in the case. The defendants denied the charges.

Also on Monday, protesters set tires ablaze and blocked roads in the northern villages of al-Daih and al-Musalla as well as Jidhafs city, situated about 3 kilometers west of Manama. Similar anti-regime protest was staged in Sanabis village, which lies in the suburbs of the capital, as well as Karzakan village. Thousands of anti-regime protesters have been holding demonstrations in Bahrain on an almost daily basis ever since a popular uprising began in the country in mid-February 2011.

They are demanding that the Al Khalifah dynasty relinquish power and allow a just system representing all Bahrainis to be established.

Manama has gone to great lengths to clamp down on any sign of dissent. On March 14, 2011, troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were deployed to assist Bahrain in its crackdown.

Scores of people have lost their lives and hundreds of others sustained injuries or got arrested as a result of the Al Khalifah regime's crackdown.

King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah ratified the constitutional amendment a month later. (Source: Press TV)

Riyadh set to seize Lebanese prime minister's assets

Reports have emerged indicating that Saudi Arabia is planning to seize the assets of Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri in the kingdom as part of Riyadh's so-called anti-corruption campaign apparently targeting the crown prince's critics and opponents.

The New Arab, citing an unnamed source close to Saudi authorities, reported on Monday that Riyadh is moving to acquire assets still owned by Hariri in the now defunct construction company, Saudi Oger, in return for cancelling outstanding debts.

"The restructuring of Saudi companies whose owners are involved in corruption cases are steaming ahead, starting with the Binladin group and now moving towards Saudi Oger," the source said.

"Although Saudi Oger does not have many assets left after liquidating its businesses, the authorities are determined to reclaim all funds and assets that were sold off," added the source. The source said that the recent arrest of Jordanian-Saudi businessman Sabih al-Masri was also linked to the case of Saudi Oger and Hariri.

Masri, Jordan's most influential businessman and the chairman of its largest lender Arab Bank, was briefly detained last month during a business trip to Riyadh.

Hariri holds dual Saudi-Lebanese citi-



zenship and has longstanding political and economic ties to the kingdom.

His family had owned a construction business there since the 1970s, but he was forced to close it in July 2017 due to financial reasons.

The once-mighty construction giant, Saudi Oger, has built some of the most grandiose complexes in Riyadh, including the palatial

Ritz-Carlton Hotel, which became a luxury prison for Saudi royals and other elites detained in November 2017 on the order of the Saudi Anti-Corruption Committee headed by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Most of those detained have struck monetary settlements in exchange for their freedom.

The crackdown is believed to be a self-promotion campaign aimed at consolidating bin

Salman's power and silencing his critics.

While most of its assets have been transferred, Saudi Oger still has three projects, including a 15-year maintenance and operation contract for King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, the king's palace in Tangier and a project in Mecca.

The asset seizure comes after Saudi rulers failed to coerce Hariri into stepping down as Lebanon's prime minister over his reluctance to confront the Hezbollah resistance movement.

Last November, Hariri declared his surprise resignation from a location in Riyadh, fueling strong beliefs at home and abroad that he had been forced to quit by the Riyadh regime in an attempt to pressure Hezbollah.

A New York Times report later revealed that Hariri, upon arrival in Riyadh, had found himself manhandled by Saudi forces and forced to resign his position.

Hariri, however, managed to get out of the kingdom amid international pressure on Riyadh. He rescinded his resignation after returning home.

In an interview with The Wall Street Journal earlier this month, the Lebanese premier hailed Hezbollah, a party to his government, for doing its part to deescalate the tensions. (Source: agencies)

Palestinian leaders reconsider recognition of Israel



The Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) Central Council, the second-highest Palestinian decision-making body, has recommended revoking recognition of Israel until the latter recognizes the State of Palestine in its 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

During a meeting in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah late on Monday, the PLO, which is an umbrella of major Palestinian political parties, said it "assigned" its Executive Committee "to suspend recognition of Israel until it recognizes the State of Palestine on the 1967 borders and revokes the decision to annex East Jerusalem and expand and build settlements," according to Wafa, the official Palestinian news agency.

In a final statement read after the meeting, the PLO also said that the Oslo Accords, signed with Israel in the early 1990s, "no longer stand".

It added that it would renew its decision to "stop security coordination [with Israel] in all its forms" and called on all Arab states "to sever all ties with any state that recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and transfers its embassy to it".

But several Palestinian political parties expressed their reservations on the final statement, saying the language was vague.

Omar Shehadeh, a leader in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) party, said there was no clear decision to end the Oslo Accords, withdraw recognition of Israel and stop security coordination. He added that assigning the PLO's Executive Committee to take such actions could take some time.

The meeting comes following a decision in December by US President Donald Trump to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Breaking with decades of US policy that favored a two-state solution, Trump's declaration dealt a blow to the Palestinian leadership, which for more than two decades has unsuccessfully attempted to establish a state on the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. The PLO meeting in Ramallah was organized to lay out the Palestinian strategy to confront the U.S. in the wake of its Jerusalem decision.

At the start of the two-day meeting, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas slammed Trump's peace proposal, saying: "Now we say 'No' to Trump, we won't accept his plan - we say the 'deal of the century' is the slap of the century," referring to the U.S. president's pledge to achieve the "ultimate deal".

In the final statement, the PLO said it would find "other international pathways under the auspices of the United Nations to sponsor solving the Palestinian cause".

After officially recognizing Israel's existence in 1988, the PLO and Israel signed the Oslo Accords in 1993 and 1995 meant to lead to the creation of an independent Palestinian state through the establishment of an interim Palestinian government - the Palestinian Authority. The Oslo deals also gifted Israel complete control of the Palestinian economy, civil and security matters in over 60 percent of the West Bank, and introduced the controversial security coordination between Israel and the PA.

The PA says the only answer to more than 70-year-old conflict is the establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. But since the signing of the Oslo Accords, the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories has only intensified, making it difficult for Palestinians to envision such a solution.

Currently, between 600,000 to 750,000 Israeli citizens - or 11 percent of the Israeli population - live in the occupied Palestinian territories - encouraged by the right-wing Israeli government which offers them incentives to move there.

Guarded by heavily armed Israeli soldiers, they have taken up large swaths of Palestinian private land. (SOURCE: Al Jazeera)

Saudi troops kill Shia youth in Qatif



Saudi Arabian troops have fatally shot a youth during operations carried out in the kingdom's Shia-populated Qatif region in Eastern Province. Abdullah al-Qallaf was killed on Monday while driving in his car in the town of al-Awamiyah.

According to local reports, Qallaf was mistakenly shot by Saudi troops who were targeting a political activist.

Following the incident Saudi forces removed Qallaf body to a undisclosed location. The Shia-populated Eastern Province has been the scene of peaceful demonstrations since February 2011. Protesters have been demanding reforms, freedom of expression, the release of political prisoners, and an end to economic and religious discrimination against the oil-rich region.

The protests have been met with a heavy-handed crackdown by the regime. Security forces have increased security measures across the province. Over the past years, Riyadh has also redefined its anti-terrorism laws so as to also target activism. (Source: al Alam)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	98596.9
IFX	1087.94

Sources: tse.ir, lfb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	43,890 rials
EUR	54,850 rials
GBP	60,170 rials
AED	12,380 rials

Source: Mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$69.57/b
WTI	\$64.14/b
OPEC Basket	\$67.17/b
Gold	\$1,334.75/oz
Silver	\$17.12/oz
Platinum	\$997.95/oz

Sources: Oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Iran-France joint transport task force holds 1st meeting

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The first meeting of Iran-France joint transport task force was held in Tehran on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

During this meeting, headed by Iranian Deputy Transport Minister Asghar Fakhrieh Kashan and the French Transport Minister's representative Christian Esse Ei, the two sides reviewed the previously accorded mutual contracts for the purchase of Airbus and ATR aircrafts as well as some other issues including radar purchasing agreement between the French company Thales and Iran Airports Company.

A roadmap has been designed to be discussed during the French transport minister envoy's visit to Iran, which will be hopefully finalized during the French delegation's stay in Iran, Fakhrieh Kashan was quoted as saying.

India's imports of Iran oil in December scheduled to rise to most since March: source

India was scheduled to lift its biggest volume of Iranian crude in nine months in December, helping to shore up the OPEC producer's oil exports to Asia last month, said a person with knowledge of the country's tanker loading schedule.

Asian buyers were scheduled to lift 1.92 million barrels per day (bpd) of Iranian crude in December, down 7 percent from the actual loadings in the previous month, the source said.

India's scheduled crude oil loadings from Iran, excluding condensate, an ultra-light oil, were about 550,000 bpd last month, up 78 percent from the previous month and the highest since March, according to the source.

That more than offset monthly declines in liftings by three other major Asian buyers, China, South Korea and Japan. Details on condensate loadings for December are not yet available.

Taiwan also loaded Iranian oil last month. Iran produces 3.8 million bpd of crude and is the third-largest producer of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

December also marked Petronas' scheduled first purchase of Iranian crude since the Malaysian state oil firm halted Iranian oil imports in 2012 after Western sanctions targeting Tehran's nuclear program made it difficult to pay and ship the oil, according to the person.

Petronas bought Iranian Heavy crude in a spot deal, two other sources familiar with the matter said. (Source: Reuters)

Renault's production in Iran hits a record high in 2017

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Through manufacturing of over 160,000 vehicles in Iran, Renault hit a record high in 2017, according to a report by the Communications Department of Renault Pars (a joint venture established in 2004 between France's Renault and Iranian car makers Iran Khodro and Saipa).

The report said that production of Renault in Iran witnessed a 48-percent growth in 2017 and gaining 11 percent of the Iranian market, the company experienced its most successful year of performance in the Middle East country.

One day after Renault released the report of its global activities in 2017, Pascal Felten, the company's director for MENA region, said Iran has played a noticeable part in the French company's last year achievements.

He said: "Results in Iran were noticeable and with a growth of about 50 percent in the Iranian market, the name of Iran is now shining in Renault's world."

In a press conference on Tuesday, Renault Pars Managing Director Ramtin Esmaili highlighted the record high of 160,000 vehicles in 2017 and said: "Before that, the highest production has been 108,000 vehicles in Iran."

Renault's daily production in Iran also hit a record high of 766 cars during 2017, he added.

Iran in 'top ten' list of Renault Group

Elsewhere in his remarks, the managing director of Renault Pars said: "Renault



Group comprises five brands of Renault, Dacia, Renault Samsung Motors, Alpine and LADA and Iran gained the position of the eight largest market of this group in 2017. In this way, we came to the list of 'top ten' largest market. Also, Iran became the third largest market of Renault brand in last year which placed the country in the 'top three' list of the brand which is a noticeable achievement."

"Taking the third place indicates that while boosting the quantity of production we have managed to preserve quality as well", Esmaili underlined.

Quality the most important factor

Esmaili mentioned quality as the first and main factor in his company. He also referred to elevation of quality level in the activity of their suppliers and said: "Our suppliers are inside the country and achieving the production figure of 160,000 cars indicates that the quality of their work has been promoted to supply parts for this amount of production."

He further announced that for modernization of products, Renault Pars equipped all of its products with JHQ gearbox which is a new generation of integrated manual gearbox.

Measures underway to boost exports

Renault Pars managing director further put the company's exports at 5,500 cars before the sanctions and said the exports is being revived. "We are conducting necessary investigations in the target countries", he noted.

"We are also working on the plans for the exports of parts and raw materials. Two parts as samples have been already sent to Russia and South Africa, and we are also cooperating with a petrochemical company for the production of raw materials to be used domestically and be exported", Esmaili further announced.

He also said that they have boosting production and manufacturing new products among their plans for the next year.

Last October, Carlos Ghosn, the CEO of Renault, announced that his company has a long-term serious plan for presence in the Iranian market.

Making the remarks during a press conference in Paris on revealing the company's mid-term plan, the CEO underlined the significance of Iranian market and stressed that Renault will not leave the country.

According to the company's plan, Renault's production for Iranian market will reach over 250,000 cars per annum during six years. Also, manufacturing capacity of Renault cars inside Iran will increase by 150,000 vehicles.

Based on this plan, in addition to introducing new products, Renault will develop its distribution network in Iran in a way that it will gain over 15 percent of the market within six years.

Clothing exports reaches \$39m

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran has exported over 3,000 tons of clothing worth \$39 million to other countries during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2017), IRNA reported on Tuesday.

Afghanistan, Iraq, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Oman, Azerbaijan, Kuwait, Armenia, Georgia, Yemen, Germany, the Netherlands, Canada, United Kingdom, Lebanon, India, Norway, Japan, Spain, and Australia were some of the destination markets for Iranian clothing items.



Meanwhile, Iran exported \$48 million of the mentioned commodity during the last [calendar] year.

Exports to South Korea up 30%

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran exported over \$3 billion worth of goods to South Korea during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2017) up 30 percent compared to its preceding year.

Meanwhile, Iran shipped in some \$2.48 billion worth of goods from the Asian country, IRNA reported on Tuesday quoting an official at Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) of Iran.

As reported, formaldehyde, acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene copolymers, gypsum,



slag wax, white cement, floor coverings and dates were among top exported items to South Korea.

Airbus jetliners delivery to Iran may take longer

ECONOMY TEHRAN — "Iran would take delivery of dozens of European jets it has ordered under a nuclear sanctions deal with major powers, but the transactions could take longer to complete than planned," Airbus Sales Chief John Leahy announced.

"I think those deals will get fulfilled, maybe not on the original schedule," Leahy was quoted as saying by Reuters.

The Airbus official, who is due to retire later this month, indicated Airbus would be cautious about building jets for Iran without receiving deposit payments.

"We have to arrange financing; they have to understand about making pre-delivery payments," he said, referring to

the company's agreement to sell 100 planes to Iran's flag carrier Iran Air.

"You have got to make pre-delivery payments where aircraft get into production, so we are doing it on perhaps a lower basis than we thought, but we still believe that it will work out," he added.

The announcement comes following U.S. President Donald Trump's call for European allies on Friday to help fix "disastrous flaws" in the pact or face a U.S. exit. Trump has strongly criticized the 2015 deal to lift a raft of sanctions in return for restrictions on Iran's nuclear activities.

Airbus has secured a batch of export licenses from the U.S. Treasury that expire around the start of the next decade, meaning

it would need renewed permission to complete its planned deliveries to Iran, which are scheduled to stretch beyond 2020, Reuters reported.

According to Reuters, Airbus declined to comment on Trump's latest declaration on Iran, but said it "continues to work with Iran Air and the Iranian authorities on the execution of the purchase agreement signed last year in full compliance with the (nuclear deal) and other regulations".

The implementation of the nuclear deal in January 2016 led to the removal of sanctions against Iran, allowing the country to purchase hundreds of commercial aircraft from Airbus, Boeing and a number of other companies.

Transport Minister Abbas Akhoundi announced in mid-January 2016 that renovation of Iran Air fleet has begun, adding that according to the contracts with world major plane makers, Iran Air is to receive 200 new planes, of which 100 will be purchased from Airbus and 80 from Boeing.

The first, second and third planes that Iran purchased from the European aviation giant Airbus landed in Tehran on January 12, March 11, and March 25, 2017, respectively, and according to Iran Air's former Managing Director Farhad Parvaresh the country expected to receive four new Airbus jets in 2017 and five other ones in 2018.

First Announcement



SINGLE-STAGE INTERNATIONAL TENDER

GOVERNMENT TRADING CORPORATION OF IRAN

Government Trading Corporation of Iran (hereinafter referred to as GTC), affiliated to the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad of the Islamic Republic of Iran, intends to purchase 45,000 M/Ts 10 pct M/L Indian 1121 sella rice, (in 3 separate cargoes of 15000 MTs M/L 10% each. cargoes to be shipped in 3 lots at 10 days interval during April, May, June 2018) on CFR basis, through single stage international tender.

All qualified companies and suppliers who are interested to bid above tender are invited to receive tender documents from 20/01/2018 until 28/01/2018 from Trades & Tenders Committee located on the 4th floor of GTC building no 2, at No 225 Fatemi Avenue Tehran-Iran. along with an official letter of introduction.

The bidders are required to submit stamped and sealed envelopes containing their offers latest by 12:00 on 27/02/2018 to the Tender secretariat located on the 7th floor. The bid's envelope will be opened at 27/02/2018 By 13:00 In the presents of the bidder's representative in GTC's purchasing committee hall. (9th floor, No 12, Jihad Square, Tehran, Iran).

Bid bond: bid bond worth EUR 298,913 (IRR 13,750,000,000) for each 15000 MT cargo

Bid bonds may be deposited either cash in Rials or through an unconditional bank guarantee issued in Euros by renowned Iranian bank located in Tehran, with three months validity and extendible for another three months.

Note: participates who wish to bid for more than one cargo are obliged to deposit the above mentioned bid bond for each extra shipment.

For more information, you may refer to our website WWW.GTC-PORTAL.COM or contact us by phone No. 00982188957477 (foreign trade department).

First Announcement



ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER

GOVERNMENT TRADING CORPORATION OF IRAN

The Government Trading Corporation of Iran (hereinafter referred to as GTC), affiliated to the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad of the Islamic Republic of Iran, intends to purchase 30,000 M/Ts 10 pct M/L RBD palm olein, through single stage international tender

All of qualified companies and suppliers that are interested to bid above tender are invited to receive tender documents from 20/01/2018 until 28/01/2018

from the secretary of Trades & Tenders committee located on the 4th floor of GTC building no 2, Iran, Tehran, Fatmei Ave. opposite of Water and Wastewater Co. along with an official letter of introduction.

The bid participants are required to submit their stamped and sealed envelopes containing their offers latest on 13:00 (Tehran time) on 27.02.2018 to the secretariat of tenders committee located on the 7th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be held on 27.02.2018 at 14:00 (Tehran time) with the presence of bidder's representatives in our purchasing committee (9th floor, No 12, Jihad Square, Tehran, Iran).

Bid bond: the bid bond worth EUR 325,313 (IRR. 14,964,400,000) in cash or unconditional bank guarantee with three months validity and extendible for another three months.

For more information, you may refer to our website WWW.GTC-PORTAL.COM or contact us by phone No. 00982188957477 (foreign trade department).

Oil prices near three-year highs, supported by healthy demand

Brent crude oil dipped on Tuesday but remained near \$70 a barrel, a level not seen since 2014's dramatic market slump.

Prices have been driven up by oil production curbs in OPEC nations and Russia, as well as strong demand thanks to healthy economic growth.

Brent crude futures fell 54 cents, or 0.77 percent, to \$69.72 per barrel by 1018 GMT. Traders said Brent was well supported overall at around \$70.

Brent hit \$70.37 on Monday, a high from December 2014, when markets were at the beginning of a three-year decline.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$64.18 a barrel, down 12 cents, or 0.19 percent. WTI hit a December 2014 peak of \$64.89 a barrel in early trading.

"The market is hitting technical resistance. We need to see a confirmation of a true break past \$70 a barrel," Olivier Jakob of Petromatrix consultancy said.

"There is lots of speculative length in WTI at the moment ... the force is from the U.S. market right now so we need the direction they give coming back from holiday."

Trading was thin on Monday due to a holiday in the United States.

Oil has been pushed higher by an effort led by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and Russia to withhold



production since January last year. The cuts are set to last through 2018.

The restraint has coincided with healthy oil demand, pushing up crude by almost 15 percent since early December.

"This rally has been driven first by robust fundamentals, with strong demand growth and high OPEC compliance accelerating," U.S. bank Goldman Sachs said in a note.

"We see increasing upside risks to our \$62 per barrel Brent and \$57.5 per barrel WTI forecast for the coming months."

Other U.S. banks, including Bank of

America Merrill Lynch and Morgan Stanley, have already upped their price forecasts.

A major factor holding back crude prices in 2017, the surge in U.S. production, has stalled at least temporarily as icy winter weather in North America has shut some facilities.

Instead of hitting 10 million barrels per day this month, as widely expected, U.S. production fell from 9.8 million bpd in December to 9.5 million bpd currently.

However, most analysts still expect U.S. production to break through 10 million bpd soon. (Source: Reuters)

Banks increasingly think OPEC will end supply cuts as oil hits \$70

As oil rallies to a three-year high near \$70 a barrel, the view that OPEC and its partners will end their supply cuts early is spreading.

Citigroup Inc., Societe Generale SA, and J.Morgan Chase & Co. predict the coalition of oil producers may begin winding down their intervention from the middle of the year, before its scheduled conclusion in December. The producers are nearing their goal of clearing an inventory glut, and rising prices risk encouraging rival supply.

Crude has climbed as output curbs by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and Russia successfully whittle away a surplus that had weighed on global markets for more than three years. The agreement will be reviewed at their next formal meeting in June.

"There could be an agreement over the

summer on ramping production back up," Ed Morse, head of commodities research at Citigroup in New York, said by phone.

For now, oil ministers are showing no signs of backpedaling. In the past week, ministers from the United Arab Emirates and Iraq have said producers remain committed to the policy to the end of 2018. Saudi Arabia and Russia, the two biggest exporters in the pact, have repeatedly stressed that when the end comes, it will be gradual.

■ Encouraging debate

Still, crude prices are high enough to encourage both U.S. production and action by central banks to cool inflation, which "OPEC members do not want to see," Jeff Currie, head of commodities research at Goldman Sachs Group Inc., told Bloomberg television

on Jan. 10.

Oil at \$70 is bound to speed up discussions on the exit strategy, Michael Hsueh, an analyst at Deutsche Bank AG, wrote on Jan. 15.

There are still plenty of analysts who expect a more drawn-out process. Forecasts from the International Energy Agency -- the organization that advises consuming nations -- suggest that OPEC's cuts aren't deep enough to reduce inventories at all this year, leaving the surplus largely intact.

Bank of America Corp. predicted that it will rather be in 2019 that the cartel phases out the agreement. Emulating the approach of the U.S. Federal Reserve, OPEC will signal small monthly increases in production to taper off the curbs, the bank said. (Source: Bloomberg)

N.I.O.C
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National Iranian Drilling Company

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

One-Stage(compressed)

TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	Subject of Tender	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
23,360	933,000,000	18,656,564,337	PARTS FOR NATIONAL HOOK MODEL HA-500	3,148,070	Tender No.: FP/17-96/052 Indent No.: 48-22-9622039	1

Brief description of subject:
National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address pasdaran Blev., Airport Sqare, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements from qualified and interested tenderers through one-stage public tender (compressed) upon following terms and conditions:
A) Qualitative evaluation of tenderer:
The evaluation is based on article (J) implementing regulations of the law of tenders and also carried out base on worksheets qualitative evaluation inquiry in the tender documents. Minimum acceptable point of quality is 60.
B) Preparation of tender documents:
Purchasing of documents:
In order to receive the tender documents, **510,000 Rials** should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Melli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.
Receiving of documents:
Tenderers must obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum ten days after the date of second publication in person at the following address: Hall No.:113, 1thfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN
Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recieve tender ducments from foreign procurement department in due date and participates in tenderwill be known as tenderer from tender committee.
C) Delivery of envelopes of bids and call quality evaluating:
Tenderers shall submit simultaneously envelopes of bids including bank guarantees(A), financial offer(C) and stamped and signed of tender documents(B) along with qualiaicaion worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 40 days from last day of document recived deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN.
Notice: The deadline for the refusal of bidders participation in the the tender is the last day of determined for submission of bids.
D) Tender Guarantee:
Type of guarantee:
A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activites licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to National Iranain Drilling Company.
Duration of credit guarantee & quotation:
This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.

More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. WWW.NIDC.IR
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IKCO Takes a Giant Stride towards Globalization

As a leading car manufacturing company in the country, Iran Khodro Industrial Group (IKCO) has taken a giant stride in 2017 in the fields of portfolio diversification , increasing quality and safety of cars, having strong presence in international markets as well as offering quality sales and after-sales services.

With due observance to the said issue, IKCO took effective steps in order to gain satisfaction of both domestic and foreign customers in the best form possible.

Increasing export, getting lion's share of domestic car production, encouraging domestic parts manufacturers to take part in designing new products and equipment are of the salient measures taken by IKCO in the recent years, the issue of which has been strictly followed up in the current year vigorously.

■ Increasing Car Production Volume and Supplying New Cars to Market

The considerable 11 percent growth of car production in the eight months of the current Iranian calendar year in 1396 (from March 21 to Nov. 22, 2017) as compared to the last year's corresponding period is a solid evidence for improving situation of car production in this industrial group.

Given the above issue, IKCO managed to produce and supply more than 450,000 various passenger cars in both domestic and foreign markets in the same period (i.e. March 21 to Nov. 22, 2017) while the company managed to manufacture about 404,000 cars in the same period last year.

Development and supply of new cars is one of the main strategies of IKCO, based on which the company manufactured the new cars as follows: "Tondar+", "Dena+



with turbocharged engine", "automatic Peugeot Pars", "automatic Peugeot 207i" and "Haima S5", total of which hit the car market of the country.

It should be noted that production lines of Peugeot 2008 and Dena+ were put into operation in May 2017, so that Peugeot 2008, a joint production of IKCO and Peugeot Company, also hit the market.

■ Developing into a Car Maker IKCO took giant strides in the current Irani

an calendar year (started March 21, 2017), the most important of which is related to signing and sealing the 10-sided Memorandum of Understanding with salient

foreign companies in the field of designing and producing platform for new products.

The contract was concluded between President's Office for Scientific and Technological Affairs, Sharif and Amirkabir universities of technology, Italy's Pinin Farina Company, Belgian Punch Company, South Korea's Hyundai Powertech Company and also Germany's Benteler Automotive and Mahle Company.

Given the above issue, all stages of designing and producing the platform and the exclusive vehicle of IKCO will be kicked off by the world's leading and most prestigious car brands.

Complete execution of this international contract will lead to designing and manu-

facturing exclusive platform of IKCO, based on which, different high-quality sedan, hatchback, crossover and SUV, hybrid and electrical models will be manufactured. It is predicted that the first product of this contract will hit the car market of the country in the next two and a half years, so that 23 new cars will enter the market in the next 10 years with the main focus on locally-made auto parts.

■ IKCO and German "Mercedes-Benz" Ink JV Contract

Conclusion of a cooperation agreement with the prestigious German "Mercedes-Benz" Company was one of the other measures taken by IKCO in the current Iranian year (started March 21, 2017). This contract includes setting up a joint-venture Company

between IKCO and Mercedes Benz Company in the field of sales and after-sales service of the commercial cars.

Under the contract, IKCO will be responsible for the exclusive sales of commercial cars of Mercedes Benz Company in Iran.

"ACTROS" Truck will also hit the domestic car market within the framework of a joint venture project to be inked between IKCO and German Mercedes Benz Company later on.

Under the deal, the domestic vehicle production of this JV Company will be 20 percent in the first year, expandable to 30 to 50 percent in case of economic efficiency.

■ Iranian Parts Manufacturers to Enter World Markets

Considering the significance of parts manufacturing industry in the production of car and lack of dependency to foreign parts manufacturers, it has been tried to participate domestic parts manufacturers in the provision of new parts.

In this regard, it is tried to produce about 80 percent of parts needed for manufacturing these cars inside the country, the issue of which is a positive step towards turning IKCO into a car maker.

On the other hand, given the fast-paced growth of technology in the world level and the necessity of alignment of Iranian auto and parts manufacturers with their global rivals, Iran's auto and parts manufacturers will try to put the transfer of technical knowhow and technology atop of their agenda.

However, transfer of technology and technical knowhow into the country has been taken into consideration in the latest international contracts of IKCO.

Will Turkey Call Early Elections?

Officially, Turkey's next parliamentary and presidential elections are not scheduled to be held until November 2019. On January 8, however, Nationalist Action Party (MHP) leader Devlet Bahçeli stated that his opposition camp would unconditionally support Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the next presidential election — a crucial pledge at a time when recent electoral results strongly indicate that Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) cannot win 50 percent of the vote in national elections and still needs a second party to secure a true parliamentary majority. Along with other political, economic, and diplomatic developments, the seemingly premature timing of Bahçeli's declaration suggests that snap elections could be in the offing.



If so, Erdoğan will likely accelerate his consolidation of power at home, further jeopardizing Turkish democracy. Washington can also expect him to dig in his heels on Kurdish policy before the vote as he allies with the staunchly Turkish nationalist MHP, potentially affecting the U.S. partnership with the Syrian Kurdish People's Defense Units (YPG) in the near term. Once the snap elections are over, however, he would presumably have more room to maneuver regarding this and other hot-button nationalist issues.

Why would Erdoğan push for early elections?

Turkey's next local elections are scheduled for March 2019, eight months before the planned parliamentary and presidential elections. When voting in local elections, Turks tend to give greater consideration to local figures than to national party platforms, so ruling parties often fare poorly compared to their performance in parliamentary polls. For instance, the AKP received 38.3 of the vote in the 2009 local elections, compared to 49.8 percent in the 2011 parliamentary elections. Erdoğan may want to save his party from a similar setback in the next round.

One way of doing so would be to bundle local, parliamentary, and presidential elections together in the same month next year. Yet Erdoğan may instead decide to hold some or all of these votes much earlier based on a host of other domestic and foreign drivers:

A friendly new election monitoring system

Turkey has held free and fair elections since 1950, and its election monitoring commissions have played an important role in this regard by observing and tallying the vote. Traditionally, members of each party participating in an election have staffed these commissions, thereby counterbalancing each other and ensuring transparency. Last year, however, the AKP and the MHP successfully pushed to change Turkey's election law by allowing the government to appoint most of the monitors. Given the government's current composition, this provision would allow the AKP (and, by extension, Erdoğan) to cherry-pick the next commissions, so he may decide to take advantage of the situation by holding early elections.

When Erdoğan won a yes vote on Turkey's April 2017 referendum — which, among other things, will allow him to assume executive-style presidential powers following the next national elections — he did so with a slim 51 percent majority. At the time, massive allegations of voter fraud emerged, and while the AKP dismissed them, suspicions lingered among many Turks. The change in commission policy will make electoral oversight even more elusive for opposition parties, potentially giving Erdoğan the legal buffer he needs to ensure a "clean" victory if the next elections are as close as the 2017 referendum.

The mechanics of calling snap elections

There is ample precedent for early elections in Turkey. They occurred more than once in the 1990s, and Erdoğan himself called snap parliamentary elections in 2011 to take advantage of the country's economic and political stability at the time.

The April 2017 constitutional changes mandated that parliamentary and presidential elections be held at the same time, and early elections can now be called by either the parliament or the president (though calling early local elections would require an amendment to Article 127 of the constitution). For example, the parliament can move a national election up with a qualified majority of 330 of the 550 total members in the legislature — an easy hurdle given that the AKP and MHP hold 352 seats in total. Erdoğan also has the power to call for early elections himself, though he may prefer to go the parliamentary route for appearance's sake.

If the parliament calls for early elections, legislators must then agree on a new date. If Erdoğan makes the call, elections are automatically scheduled for the first Sunday sixty days after his announcement. Either way, snap elections would mean an early transition to Turkey's new executive presidential system — another key reason why Erdoğan may want to move them up.

Implications for U.S.-Turkish ties

If Ankara calls for snap elections, Turkey's position on U.S. cooperation with the YPG would no doubt harden, both to satisfy the MHP's Turkish nationalist base and prevent Aksener from peeling away AKP voters. The MHP is currently polling around 9 percent, just below the 10 percent parliamentary threshold, so partnering with the AKP in early elections would make sense for both parties. As mentioned previously, however, Erdoğan would regain his current wiggle room on the YPG issue after the elections. He has used and discarded many allies before, including liberals, Kurdish nationalists, and the Gulen movement, so he would have no qualms about abandoning Bahçeli's faction after winning complete control of the country — particularly if it means better ties with the United States.

(Source: The Washington Institute)

Erdoğan also has the power to call for early elections himself, though he may prefer to go the parliamentary route for appearance's sake.

Trump, the controversial president in 2017

By Ahmad Mohammad Bagher

A year into his presidency, U.S. President Donald Trump has made overwhelmingly controversial decisions and has taken stances that affected the world one way or another.

Trump began his tumultuous journey by signing a decree banning citizens of six Muslim countries from entering America — Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Libya, Somalia and Iran.

Observers stressed that the decision will backfire on the U.S. security, and in the long term will be a reason to attract terrorist operations against the United States. It will also increase hatred towards Muslims.

In turn, hatred of Islam and Muslims serves terrorist organizations and facilitates the recruitment of thousands of angry young Muslims, turning them into time bombs.

At the domestic level, the poor in American society have been hit hardest by Trump's budget for 2018, which included cuts in social security and changes in anti-poverty programs. These cuts included several programs, especially food stamps, which benefit the poorest in the country.

With regard to the crisis on the Korean Peninsula, the American provocations of North Korea have escalated by moving its fleets and military pieces to the region.

Trump's war of words with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un was closer to the battles of boys than to the remarks of the leader of a superpower.

Reacting to Jong-un's announcement that the nuclear button was always on his desk, Trump said he had a bigger and stronger nuclear weapon than his North Korean counterpart.

The U.S. provocation pushed North Korea into more challenging and insistent stance.

In his latest televised speech, Jong-un confirmed that the entire United States is in the range of North Korean nuclear weapons and the nuclear button is always on his desk. This is a reality, not a threat.



The Middle East has seen the worst decision a U.S. president could make in general regarding recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Trump announced that he ordered the start of preparations for the transfer of the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

There is widespread international and regional criticism as millions of Muslims around the world protested against the U.S. decision.

On the Yemeni crisis, the U.S. administration, during the Trump era, increased its military support for Saudi Arabia in its war against Yemen despite the daily massacres committed against this country by the House of Saud.

The Wall Street Journal reported that the

United States not only increased military support for the Saudi-led coalition against Yemen but also provided more logistical and intelligence support to it.

The Journal of America reported that the Trump administration is seeking to resume sales of precision-guided weapons to Saudi Arabia.

On the Syrian crisis, Washington continued its blatant interference in favor of armed groups, declaring hostility to the legitimate government in the country.

In this context, the U.S. attempted to abuse the gains against ISIS made by the Iran-Russia resistance axis in its own favor.

U.S. continued to support the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Forces, which used to represent a project of sedition in Syria.

But the recent mayhem in Iran has revealed the psychological state of President Trump, confirming he is suffering from schizophrenia.

While Trump describes the Iranian people as a group of terrorists and orders to ban them from entering the United States and imposing further sanctions on Iran, all of sudden, we find in his latest tweet a series of sensational posts about the unrest in Iran.

But the Iranian people will never listen to Trump whose administration, and the ones before him, created many economic crises for Iran through imposing sanctions.

The Iranian people who have always been ready to sacrifice their sons will also deal with the latest crisis, as they did with the previous ones.

(Source: MNA)

Boko Haram

Detailed analysis of how a local protest in Nigeria became a brutal terrorist group.

In the middle of an April night in 2014, more than 250 schoolgirls were taken at gunpoint from dormitories in Chibok, northeastern Nigeria. While the kidnapping shocked the world, it was only one of many murderous raids by Boko Haram, an organization that had morphed from local religious movement into a brutal terrorist group. Nigerians, fed up with the ineffective government response to Boko Haram's rampage, launched a social media campaign to ensure the girls would not be forgotten. Fighting Boko Haram became a priority of President Muhammadu Buhari who took office in 2015. By the end of that year, he declared the group defeated. In fact, despite a massive military operation, Boko Haram remains a force to be reckoned with. In recent months it has mounted attacks that left over 100 people dead. Like other terrorist groups — such as ISIS in Iraq or al-Shabaab in Somalia — Boko Haram grew out of local grievances; also like others, its principal victims have been the people it purports to represent. But there are important differences.

As Alexander Thurston writes in Boko Haram: The History of an African Terrorist Movement: "Almost uniquely among contemporary terrorist movements, it began as a mass religious movement before transitioning to an armed struggle. And to an unusual degree among peer movements, it stresses western-style education as an enemy." To fill what he calls "significant gaps" in what is known about the group, Thurston, African studies professor at Georgetown University, takes readers back to northern Nigeria in the 1970s and 1980s, when the group's founder, Mohamed Yusuf, and its current leader, Abubakar Shekau, were children. A disastrous



civil war was followed by political turmoil, with military dictatorships punctuated by corrupt civilian governments. In majority Muslim northern Nigeria, the uncertainty fuelled religious activism, with competing groups challenging the authority of traditional leaders in the search for a new Muslim identity.

The area's poverty was exacerbated by the government's failure to provide basic education. Literacy was, and remains, shockingly low. Added to this was an ambivalence among the area's Muslim population to western-style schools, which they associated with colonization and attempts to destroy their traditions. Later, this suspicion became intertwined with resentment as Nigerian politicians and technocrats

presided over a corrupt system. "Boko Haram's rejection of western-style education did not come out of thin air," writes Thurston. By the early 2000s, Yusuf and Shekau were based in the city of Maiduguri, a centre for competing Salafi groups, ultra-conservative Sunni Muslims. It was here that Yusuf established himself as a preacher, advocating opposition to democracy and the Nigerian state. In 2009 he launched an uprising against the authorities that ended with his killing by the security forces. Under his successor, Shekau, Boko Haram transformed into a hardened terrorist organization, widening its campaign of violence and seeking to forge links with transnational groups. As the Nigerian security forces became more violent in their attempt to contain the group, the two became locked in what Thurston describes as a cycle of "repression and terrorism [that] helped preclude any peaceful solution to the conflict".

Thurston's account of Boko Haram's rise and how it "interacted dynamically with the political dysfunction and economic malaise that surround it" is key to understanding its survival. Boko Haram "represents an ugly paradox: its ideas have limited appeal but significant staying power. The group can be crushed militarily, yet state violence fuels its narrative of victimhood." The release of some Chibok girls in prisoner exchanges shows that the two sides can manage dialogue. But with the conditions that led to Boko Haram's creation still prevailing, it is not clear whether it will ever be defeated without a profound rethink in tactics. Thurston concludes, "business as usual? ... would set the stage for future violence".

(Source: FT)

We need a different kind of Martin Luther King Day

By William Barber II and Liz Theoharis

On the night before Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, he invoked a lesson from biblical Egypt in a speech that is often called "Promised Land."

Pharaoh's favorite formula for perpetuating slavery, he reminded us, was to keep the slaves fighting among themselves, for joined together they were too strong to subdue.

On that fateful eve in 1968, Dr. King used some of his final words to call for people of all colors to unite in a human rights revolution that would end destructive, entrenched poverty and prompt a radical redistribution of political and economic power.

This outline for a path toward a modern day promised land was more than rhetoric. In fact, he and other leaders had already launched the Poor People's Campaign, a movement that would bring together 50,000 of the nation's poor for a march on Washington the following week, and that was supposed to kick off an extended fight against dehumanization, discrimination and poverty wages in the richest country in the world.

The movement stagnated after Dr. King's assassination, but never have we needed it more.

Even before the exacerbation of extremism that is Donald Trump, the

evils of poverty, racism, militarism and environmental destruction were tearing apart the social fabric in America.

More Americans below poverty

While the situation was dire in 1968, today we have 60 percent more Americans living below the poverty line, eightfold more prison inmates, and double the gap between our government's discretionary spending on the military and funding for anti-poverty programs — the result of unjust policies and unchecked systemic racism.

Soaring inequality means that the richest 1 percent in our country now own more wealth than the bottom 90 percent combined, while extremist politicians in Washington fund more tax breaks for the wealthy by cutting critical services for the poor and middle class.

And more than 50 years after the passage of the Voting Rights Act, 23 states have adopted voter suppression laws in the past 8 years alone.

Amid this frightening economic and moral decay, well intentioned corporations, NGOs and governments have turned Martin Luther King Jr. Day into a sanitized "day of service," misappropriating the legacy of a man who went to his grave calling for a revolution.

While struggling Americans are crushed beneath over \$1 trillion in credit card debt and more than 40 million poor people

have no access to credit at all, credit card companies like American Express sponsor park cleanup service events in Dr. King's name.

We are engaged in a desperate battle for the soul of this nation. What we urgently need on this MLK Day is not to commemorate the man, but to consecrate a movement.

We need a different kind of Martin Luther King Day, not one in which politicians pay homage to the man on the one hand, but pass vulgar policies on the other. In fact, we don't need a day, we need a movement.

On December 4, 2017, 50 years to the day that Dr. King called for the original Poor People's Campaign, we announced just such a movement. The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival will unite the poor, disenfranchised and marginalized in direct action and collective nonviolent civil disobedience across the nation.

Solving the nation's soul

On Mother's Day, we'll launch a season of nonviolent civil disobedience — 40 consecutive days of action at two-dozen state capitols and in Washington D.C. Make no mistake, our movement's direct action, voter education and mass mobilization is aimed at saving the soul of our nation.

As we traveled across the country to lay the groundwork for this campaign with trainings and mass meetings that drew tens of thousands, we heard from mothers whose children



died because their states refused Medicaid expansion, homeless families attacked by police and militia groups, and families torn apart by unjust immigration policies.

Trump and extremist politicians in Congress and state houses have only intensified this misery, rising to power by using the oldest play in the Holy book — Pharaoh's scheme of dividing the poor and disenfranchised along racial, religious and other lines.

With his final public words, Dr. King reminded us that united we are stronger than the forces that oppress us. The surest way, then, to honor his legacy on the day that bears his name is to commit to standing up by the tens of thousands to demand change.

Join with the Poor People's Campaign in this peaceful revolution. Together, at last, we can begin our journey to Dr. King's Promised Land.

(Source: Newsweek)

There is no concerted movement in EU to accept Trump's demands: Adib-Moghaddam

1-➔ Equally, I don't think that Iran is or should be willing to negotiate with someone such as Donald Trump, who is quite obviously acting in bad faith and who does not have any understanding of international law and diplomacy.

Mr Trump also wants Iran's ballistic missile program 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: I think that there is a conscious effort by the Trump administration to kill the JCPOA. At some stage, Iran has to make a decision whether or not it got its fair share out of the agreement. I don't think the Rouhani administration has done enough and the recent protests in the country caused by corruption and socio-economic inequalities are a good indicator for the disappointment among many Iranians. In particular, the foreign missions of Iran, the embassies



are almost worthless in being a functioning part in Iran's foreign policy transmission. Where was the Iranian ambassador to Britain when some

of the international media was reporting nonsense about the protests? There is no activity in the British embassy in one of the most central towns in the world. There is no projects, no strategic engagements with the media, zero public relations by these officials who are meant to serve the nation. The Iranian embassy in London is dysfunctional when it comes to such matters and I have witnessed a similar paralysis in other foreign missions of the Islamic Republic. I think that the ambassadorial corps are well advised to reach out to scholars and to find common ways to further the interest of Iranians all over the world. This is one of the principles of public service and a pillar of the demands of the people after the revolution. As it stands, such simple requests are being betrayed on a daily basis feeding into the disenfranchisement of large segments of the population. Under the current international circumstances, Iran can't afford such laxity.

Saudi burden on America's shoulders; is it really worth it?

By Former U.S. Diplomat

One of the hottest topics presented and talked about by Donald Trump during his campaign trail was the necessity of a meaningful decrease in the expenses the US bears in the foreign relations and to encourage allies to pay their share. Actually, even the "America First" slogan was to target the allies too because cost and benefit are logically defined in relations with them, not the adversaries with whom you have no economic or political ties. Aligned with such policies, Trump has always slammed the considerable expenditures made by the US on defending its allies like Saudi Arabia, as "unfair". Accordingly, in his administration, there were some great expectations for a strategic change regarding the ties with America's traditional allies, including Saudi Arabia.

After he took the office, however, he turned the page by making his first foreign trip to Saudi Arabia and signing billion-dollar contracts with the Kingdom. But why did it happen? Why has that heated dispute gone cold and the two countries are even closer now than what it was under Obama? The answer is quite simple; Saudis' petrodollars flooding in the US through arms deals and their huge investment in America.

It seems to be clear enough so far; "Trump the Businessman" and a lucrative deal. In fact the KSA paid for its own security through the arms deals and direct investments in the US, therefore, not only is there a need for Trump to insist on criticizing Saudis, but also he can take advantage of their policies in the region by supporting the country in numerous cases such as Yemen crisis, Qatar case, resignation of the Lebanese prime minister, deterring Iran and Mohammed bin Salman's ascendance to power. However,



here lies the question; is the Saudi cost for America limited to economic only?

If one picks a mere economic view, the answer would be yes, but there are alternative answers to this question too. The realistic view of international relations and foreign policy does not restrict itself to economy only, and the main role in the approach is played by security and strategic dimensions. If we look realistically, we will instantly find out that the costs made by Saudi for the US have not been merely economic, in fact, the KSA has imposed tremendous strategic costs to the US as well. Therefore, it cannot be compensated easily only through some arms deals and direct investments.

Saudi officials are pursuing an extremely dangerous agenda, by which they have the potential to flame another war in the Middle East. Not only could such an assumed war be a source of problem for Saudi's rivals

and adversaries, also it can have disastrous consequences for the US and its allies. Saudi actions as we have witnessed them in Qatar, Lebanon and even inside the country - recent arrests of princes and royal family members - have done no more than making the atmosphere much tenser. Quite interestingly, all the above-mentioned actions have been done with the Americans only watching and even worse some argue that the US is fully aware of the Saudi agenda. The strategic costs for the US, however, are huge and if not prevented, they could seriously destabilize the region more than what it is. What follow are only a number of strategic costs for the US instigated by Saudi Arabia:

1- In case of a probable military conflict between Iran and KSA in the (Persian) Gulf, oil flow to international markets could be severed or at least hindered. Although oil of the US might provide for its own domestic

needs, a possible blockage would strike international markets and economic systems critically and would definitely include the US as well.

2- The challenges created by Saudis and their consequences have distracted the efforts made to fight ISIS. This will cause ISIS and terrorist threats to continue targeting the West and especially the United States.

3- Many argue that Saudi Arabia would have never been capable of performing such maneuvers in its foreign policy comfortably without US's implied or explicit consent. Consequently, countries around the world would draw a conclusion that the US is an accomplice in Saudi's destabilizing actions and such perception could have undeniable grave impacts on United States' public diplomacy and its credit among the countries in the region - Turkey, Qatar, etc. - and beyond.

4- Due to a dramatic increase of tensions in the Middle East, other trans-regional great powers have entered the region actively, and this would oblige the US to consider such newcomers significantly in the developments of the region.

What was mentioned is just a handful of strategic costs and adverse effects that Saudi's behavior and actions would impose on the US. However, they reveal the unequivocal proof that Saudi costs are not limited to economic ones and this must raise the alarm for the American statesmen and strategists to consider strategic costs in their calculations.

As a result of doing so, they would rethink their relations with the KSA and might come to the conclusion that it is definitely not worth allowing the Saudis to follow their malign activities in the region just because they buy American weapons and invest heavily in America's heartland.

U.S. thinking about "Low-Yield" nuclear warfare - this should outrage the world

TEHRAN (FNA) - The Pentagon regime intends to create a new 30,000 man occupying force in northern Syria, along the border between Syria and Turkey. The force is expected to predominantly be American, Kurdish, but also include some Arab fighters - read terror proxies.

According to Spokesman Col. Ryan Dillon, the inaugural class of border fighters have already been trained. There is no timeline on getting to 30,000, though in the past the US has struggled mightily to achieve large numbers in such training efforts. Unsurprisingly, since this whole scheme boils down to training and arming a heavily Kurdish force, guarding what is ultimately Kurdish YPG territory, Turkey is furious, saying the entire enterprise is unacceptable. But post-ISIL Syria is also furious, because it doesn't need to have such a force along its border with Turkey.

Turkish officials have already summoned a US charge d'affaires in Ankara to protest the effort, and are being increasingly public about their opposition to the idea. Recent history suggests Turkey's opposition to US actions in Syria will have no impact on them, however. Having repeatedly threatened such an offensive in the past, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has announced that a Turkish invasion of the Afrin District of northern Syria, held by Kurdish YPG forces, will be launched in the coming days.

In other words, there needs to be a global front against the latest US move at the United Nations instead, where member states can talk directly to the US and force it to change course.

Turkey, a UN member state, considers the YPG to be terrorists on par with ISIL, which has meant US support for the Kurdish group has caused a lot of tensions between the two sides. With US support for a new Kurdish border force, Turkey may believe chasing them out of Afrin needs to be done sooner, rather than later. And in a world that is dominated by the rule of jungle, the US takes any action that it likes to give Turkey the needed excuse to embark on military action in the territories of another sovereign state without its endorsement or, at least, its content.

It gets worse when we hear that new details continue to emerge on the Pentagon draft proposal on changes to American nuclear policy. This policy would see a focus on acquiring new types of nuclear weapons for the region, with an eye toward more usable ones for limited nuclear wars in the Middle East and beyond. This is something some in the US military brass have been pushing for years, with an eye toward the acquisition of "low-yield" nuclear weapons that the War Party could readily use in situations where they would currently be unthinkable - Syria, Syria-Turkey border, Yemen, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, North Korea, and suchlike.

This is now said to include not just the acquisition of these new nuclear arms for more limited and frequent nuclear wars, but also revisions of nuclear policy that would dramatically relax restrictions on such strikes. With the US spending preposterously



large amounts of money on nuclear arms, some bureaucrats are galled at the fact that they get essentially no use out of them. In making smaller, more easily used nuclear arms, however, the US may ultimately end up normalizing nuclear warfare in the Middle East, something that would have huge implications for Iran, Russia, and Syria.

The US could find many pretexts to normalize its "low-yield" nuclear warfare. For instance, it can fault Iran for not preventing alleged weapons transfers to Syria, Yemen and Iraq, hence taking the world's focus off the harm done to civilians overall in any given nuclear attack. This could also rapidly disintegrate into a collection of warring statelets throughout the region, making it difficult for the UN to ever end such conflicts, let alone reunite after a US nuclear attack. This heavily faults the latest US decision to build a strong occupying force along the Syrian-Turkish border which we now know what they will be for: illegal airstrikes and even limited but frequent nuclear strikes.

Those expecting the US to leave Syria, however, should take a minute to consider this: the US still hasn't left Germany and Japan. In fact, there are quite a few places the US hasn't left, and while certainly most of them don't pose a threat to American soldiers, they reveal a pattern about the US staying, rather than leaving Syria.

Surely one could say that the US has a military presence in Syria now. They even have bases and troops on the ground but we should include the warplanes in the sky as well. The US military arguably has more presence in Syria than it does in Germany or Japan. To take this idea further, it would also be rational to say the US has a military presence wherever it uses unmanned aerial vehicles to strike targets throughout the region.

All the countries that have some sort of American military presence - from military attachés to the troops involved in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan - essentially results in highlighting pretty much this dangerous situation. Considering a sizable US military presence, existence of illegal bases in Syria, and the fact that the Pentagon regime is thinking about conducting "low-yield" and frequent nuclear strikes in Yemen, Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan and even North Korea, we are all advised to fasten our seatbelts, it's going to be a nuclear ride by a country ruled by a Racist President known as agent orange!

Why did Trump insult Africans?

1-➔ Trump knows that the Republican defeat in the Congress mid-term elections will be an introduction to his failure in the upcoming presidential election and thus, his departure of the White House.

Now, Trump has once again sought to mobilize his political infantry. Trump knows well that the racists need to be motivated to continue supporting him! As a result, he attempts to meet the needs of his fans with occasional insults and offensive statements against colored people. However, Donald Trump's remarks on African-American immigrants have not only been announced accidentally, but they have been deliberately targeted and motivated. The motive which once again, removed the mask from the face of the racist President of the U.S. and his supporters.


Recent remarks by the U.S. President Donald Trump on African-American immigrants have led to anger and dissatisfaction all over the world. These statements have been made while Trump has already shown similar behavior seeking the racists' satisfaction. During the unrests in some of the U.S. states, Trump addressed the protesters to racism with the worst possible words, which led to the reaction of many politicians. One of the people who was supposed to take a firm stand against recent remarks by Trump was Barack Obama. Obama, as the first black president in the United States, could have taken a responsible approach against the recent statements by the U.S. president, but he has not yet taken any positions against Trump.

Meanwhile, merely some few of the US sites have published an old interview of Obama (which was made months ago). In this interview, the former President of the United States, has simply advised other U.S. authorities to be careful about their behavior and speech! There are lots of facts about Trump's remarks. As mentioned before, Trump is seeking to gain permanent support of American racists. But this concern has become even more prominent this year since the Congress mid-term elections are ahead, and if Republicans fail in this competition, Trump will lose his hope for remaining at the top of the political and executive equations of the United States.


However, Obama's silence against Trump can't be understood. During the 2008 presidential competitions in the United States, many of the black and colored Americans came to the scene and voted for Obama. These votes helped Obama win Hillary Clinton and become the Democrats' final candidate. In other words, if it wasn't for the support of the colored Americans, Obama would not be able to overcome Hillary Clinton and find way to the final round of the presidential campaigns in 2008. Again in the final round of the presidential election, Barack Obama had the support of black and colored people. Eventually, Obama succeeded in defeating John McCain, his rival candidate from the Republican Party. Obama entered the White House with the slogan of «change», but eventually failed to make any differences in macro policies, and even in the United States medium and short term policies. He practically followed the path of George W. Bush and other former U.S. presidents, and proved that «change» was only a false slogan. Even in the fight against racism, Obama didn't take any serious actions against the U.S. police and its violence against the blacks.

It wasn't without a reason that many American voters were disappointed with Obama and the Democrats by the end of 2016. This disappointment was one of the main causes of the lack of active participation of black and colored Americans in the 2016 presidential elections. Obama is still silent against the racist remarks of Trump. This is despite the fact that many American citizens were waiting for the incisive stance by the former U.S. President against Donald Trump. However, Obama once again proved that his slogans in supporting all American citizens and specially respecting all ethnic minorities were nothing but lies.

Second Announcement



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1396.4824



National Iranian Drilling Company

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

One-Stage(compressed)

TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	Subject of Tender	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
11,713	508,000,000	10,151,935,000	P/F " MI SWACO " CENTRIFUGE	3,148,063	TenderNo.:FP/23-96/069 Indent No.:08-22-9445038	1

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

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

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

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

D) Tender Guarantee:
Type of guarantee:
A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activites licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to National Iranain Drilling Company.
Duration of credit guarantee & quotation:
This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.

More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. WWW.NIDC.IR
National Iranian Drilling Company
Contracts Department

تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۶/۱۰/۲۶ نوبت دوم ۹۶/۱۰/۲۷

The only barrier to Julian Assange leaving Ecuador's Embassy is pride

By James Ball

According to Debre's, the arbiters of etiquette since 1769: "Visitors, like fish, stink in three days." Given this, it's difficult to imagine what Ecuador's London Embassy smells like, more than five-and-a-half years after Julian Assange moved himself into the confines of the small flat in Knightsbridge, just across the road from Harrods.

Ecuador's foreign minister has said the country is seeking "mediation" to resolve the "unsustainable" situation of Assange's residency in the embassy, which ostensibly centers around Ecuador offering the WikiLeaks founder political asylum against possible prosecution in the United States. Assange took up post in the embassy a few weeks after interviewing the country's then president, Rafael Correa, on his Russia Today television show. Correa made an apparently casual offer of asylum

during a discussion of Assange's extradition case with Sweden, following accusations of rape and sexual assault by two women.

Assange pursued his extradition case right through the British legal system, aided by some of the country's leading human rights barristers, and extradition was eventually granted – denying Assange's appeal – by the UK supreme court.

It was at precisely this point – when extradition to Sweden to face potential prosecution in his rape case seemed certain – that Assange, concerned about potential U.S. prosecution over WikiLeaks, fled to the embassy.

Given Assange and Ecuador have spent more than five years saying his asylum was unrelated to the Swedish case, even Sweden's decision last year to abandon the case – citing no chance of conviction after Assange's flight from justice – was not

enough to give any chance of closure. If Assange had announced plans to leave the embassy at that stage, it would be clear his story for the previous five years had not been entirely truthful.

■ Genuine development

Ecuador's decision to seek mediation now is, on the surface, quite puzzling: it didn't make that announcement when there was a genuine development in Assange's Swedish case, nor did it do so when Donald Trump became the president, last year.

There is no public criminal case against Assange or WikiLeaks in the U.S., though Assange frequently says there is evidence of sealed indictments against him and his associates, and there have been publicly disclosed surveillance warrants against WikiLeaks staff, as well as FBI interest in Assange and his current and former co-workers (including me, as I worked with WikiLeaks for a

few months in 2010 and 2011). There is no real reason to believe anything has changed with Assange's situation in the U.S.

What has changed is Assange's value to Ecuador as a political symbol. Internal documents revealed that relations between embassy staff and Ecuador's most famous asylee were fraught. Security staff were filing minute by minute reports of Assange's movements to Ecuador's intelligence agency. Last year, these tensions came to the fore as Assange was publicly reprimanded by Ecuadorian officials for interfering in the US election process – by publishing hacked emails from the DNC and Clinton campaign – while claiming asylum. Assange's internet connection was eventually cut off by Ecuador, to his visible public rage.

When Ecuador first gave asylum to Assange, he was still a hero to many on the liberal left, and

to many opponents of "US imperialism". Today, most of those who still support Assange are hard-right nationalists – with many seeing him as a supporter of the style of politics of both Trump and Vladimir Putin. Assange is not the political icon he used to be.

This is perhaps what's behind Ecuador trying to seek a way to end the standoff. Assange's effect on foreign and diplomatic relations surely outweighs much of what Ecuador's own diplomatic corps would like to do.

The problem for both sides is that neither wants to lose face: Assange wants to be a symbol of resistance against an overreaching U.S. state, and does not want to admit his asylum was about his personal actions and not those of WikiLeaks. Ecuador does not want to suggest it made a mistake in granting Assange asylum. → 13

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Neoliberalism: the idea that swallowed the world

By Stephen Metcalf (critic and researcher)

Last summer, researchers at the International Monetary Fund settled a long and bitter debate over “neoliberalism”: they admitted it exists. Three senior economists at the IMF, an organisation not known for its incaution, published a paper questioning the benefits of neoliberalism. In so doing, they helped put to rest the idea that the word is nothing more than a political slur, or a term without any analytic power. The paper gently called out a “neoliberal agenda” for pushing deregulation on economies around the world, for forcing open national markets to trade and capital, and for demanding that governments shrink themselves via austerity or privatisation. The authors cited statistical evidence for the spread of neoliberal policies since 1980, and their correlation with anaemic growth, boom-and-bust cycles and inequality.

Neoliberalism is an old term, dating back to the 1930s, but it has been revived as a way of describing our current politics – or more precisely, the range of thought allowed by our politics. In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, it was a way of assigning responsibility for the debacle, not to a political party per se, but to an establishment that had conceded its authority to the market. For the Democrats in the US and Labour in the UK, this concession was depicted as a grotesque betrayal of principle. Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, it was said, had abandoned the left’s traditional commitments, especially to workers, in favour of a global financial elite and the self-serving policies that enriched them; and in doing so, had enabled a sickening rise in inequality.

Over the past few years, as debates have turned uglier, the word has become a rhetorical weapon, a way for anyone left of centre to incriminate those even an inch to their right. (No wonder centrists say it’s a meaningless insult: they’re the ones most meaningfully insulted by it.) But “neoliberalism” is more than a gratifyingly righteous jibe. It is also, in its way, a pair of eyeglasses.

Peer through the lens of neoliberalism and you see more clearly how the political thinkers most admired by Thatcher and Reagan helped shape the ideal of society as a kind of universal market (and not, for example, a polis, a civil sphere or a kind of family) and of human beings as profit-and-loss calculators (and not bearers of grace, or of inalienable rights and duties). Of course the goal was to weaken the welfare state and any commitment to full employment, and – always – to cut taxes and deregulate. But “neoliberalism” indicates something more than a standard rightwing wish list. It was a way of reordering social reality, and of rethinking our status as individuals.

Still peering through the lens, you see how, no less than the welfare state, the free market is a human invention. You see how pervasively we are now urged to think of ourselves as proprietors of our own talents and initiative, how glibly we are told to compete and adapt. You see the extent to which a language formerly confined to chalkboard simplifications describing commodity markets (competition, perfect information, rational behaviour) has been applied to all of society, until it has invaded the grit of our personal lives, and how the attitude of the salesman has become enmeshed in all modes of self-expression.

In short, “neoliberalism” is not simply a name for pro-market policies, or for the compromises with finance capitalism made by failing social democratic parties. It is a name for a premise that, quietly, has come to regulate all we practise and believe: that competition is the only legitimate organising principle for human activity.

No sooner had neoliberalism been certified as real, and no sooner had it made clear the universal hypocrisy of the market, than the populists and authoritarians came to power. In the US, Hillary Clinton, the neoliberal arch-villain, lost – and to a man who knew just enough to pretend he hated free trade. So are the eyeglasses now useless? Can they do anything to help us understand what is broken about British and American politics? Against the forces of global integration, national identity is being reasserted, and in the crudest possible terms. What could the militant parochialism of Brexit Britain and Trumpist America have to do with neoliberal rationality? What possible connection is there between the president – a free-wheeling boob – and the bloodless paragon of efficiency known as the free market?

It isn’t only that the free market produces a tiny cadre of winners and an enormous army of losers – and the losers, looking for revenge, have turned to Brexit and Trump. There was, from the beginning, an inevitable relationship between the utopian ideal of the free market and the dystopian present in which we find ourselves; between the market as unique discloser of value and guardian of liberty, and our current descent into post-truth and illiberalism.

Moving the stale debate about neoliberalism forward begins, I think, with taking seriously the measure of its cumulative effect on all of us, regardless of affiliation. And this requires returning to its origins, which have nothing to do with Bill or Hillary Clinton. There once was a group of people who did call themselves neoliberals, and did so proudly, and their ambition was a total revolution in thought. The most prominent among them, Friedrich Hayek, did not think he was staking out a position on the political spectrum, or making excuses for the fatuous rich, or tinkering along the edges of microeconomics.

He thought he was solving the problem of modernity: the problem of objective knowledge. For Hayek, the market didn’t just facilitate trade in goods and services; it revealed truth. How did his ambition collapse into its opposite – the mind-bending possibility that, thanks to our thoughtless veneration of the free market, truth might be driven from public life altogether?

When the idea occurred to Friedrich Hayek in 1936, he knew, with the conviction of a “sudden illumination”, that he had struck upon something new. “How can the combination of fragments of knowledge existing in different minds,” he wrote, “bring about results which, if they were to be brought about deliberately, would require a knowledge on the part of the directing mind which no single person can possess?”

This was not a technical point about interest rates or deflationary slumps. This was not a reactionary polemic against collectivism or the welfare state. This was a way of birthing a new world. To his mounting excitement, Hayek understood that the market could be thought of as a kind of mind.

Adam Smith’s “invisible hand” had already given us the modern conception of the market: as an autonomous sphere of human activity and therefore, potentially, a valid object of scientific knowledge. But Smith was, until the end of his life, an



18th-century moralist. He thought the market could be justified only in light of individual virtue, and he was anxious that a society governed by nothing but transactional self-interest was no society at all. Neoliberalism is Adam Smith without the anxiety.

That Hayek is considered the grandfather of neoliberalism – a style of thought that reduces everything to economics – is a little ironic given that he was such a mediocre economist. He was just a young, obscure Viennese technocrat when he was recruited to the London School of Economics to compete with, or possibly even dim, the rising star of John Maynard Keynes at Cambridge.

The plan backfired, and Hayek lost out to Keynes in a rout. Keynes’s General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money, published in 1936, was greeted as a masterpiece. It dominated the public discussion, especially among young English economists in training, for whom the brilliant, dashing, socially connected Keynes was a beau idéal. By the end of the second world war, many prominent free-marketters had come around to Keynes’s way of thinking, conceding that government might play a role in managing a modern economy. The initial excitement over Hayek had dissipated. His peculiar notion that doing nothing could cure an economic depression had been discredited in theory and practice. He later admitted that he wished his work criticising Keynes would simply be forgotten.

Hayek cut a silly figure: a tall, erect, thickly accented professor in high-cut tweed, insisting on the formal “Von Hayek” but cruelly nicknamed “Mr Fluctuations” behind his back. In 1936, he was an academic without a portfolio and with no obvious future. Yet we now live in Hayek’s world, as we once lived in Keynes’s. Lawrence Summers, the Clinton adviser and former president of Harvard University, has said that Hayek’s conception of the price system as a mind is “as penetrating and original an idea as microeconomics produced in the 20th century” and “the single most important thing to learn from



an economics course today”. This undersells it. Keynes did not make or predict the cold war, but his thinking wended its way into every aspect of the cold-war world; so too has Hayek’s thinking woven itself into every aspect of the post-1989 world.

Hayek’s was a total worldview: a way of structuring all reality on the model of economic competition. He begins by assuming that nearly all (if not all) human activity is a form of economic calculation, and so can be assimilated to the master concepts of wealth, value, exchange, cost – and especially price. Prices are a means of allocating scarce resources efficiently, according to need and utility, as governed by supply and demand. For the price system to function efficiently, markets must be free and competitive. Ever since Smith imagined the economy as an autonomous sphere, the possibility existed that the market might not just be one piece of society, but society as a whole. Within such a society, men and women need only follow their own self-interest and compete for scarce rewards. Through competition, “it becomes possible”, as the sociologist Will Davies has written, “to discern who and what is valuable”.

What any person acquainted with history sees as the necessary bulwarks against tyranny and exploitation – a thriving middle class and civil sphere; free institutions; universal suffrage; freedom of conscience, congregation, religion and press; a basic recognition that the individual is a bearer of dignity – held no special place in Hayek’s thought. Hayek built into neoliberalism the assumption that the market provides all necessary protection against the one real political danger: totalitarianism. To prevent this, the state need only keep the market free.

This last is what makes neoliberalism “neo”. It is a crucial modification of the older belief in a free market and a minimal state, known as “classical liberalism”. In classical liberalism, merchants simply asked the state to “leave us alone” – to laissez-faire. Neoliberalism recognised that the state must be active in the organisation of a market economy. The condi-

tions allowing for a free market must be won politically, and the state must be re-engineered to support the free market on an ongoing basis.

That isn’t all: every aspect of democratic politics, from the choices of voters to the decisions of politicians, must be submitted to a purely economic analysis. The lawmaker is obliged to leave well enough alone – to not distort the natural actions of the marketplace – and so, ideally, the state provides a fixed, neutral, universal legal framework within which market forces operate spontaneously. The conscious direction of government is never preferable to the “automatic mechanism of adjustment” – ie the price system, which is not only efficient but maximises liberty, or the opportunity for men and women to make free choices about their own lives.

As Keynes jettied between London and Washington, creating the postwar order, Hayek sat pouting in Cambridge. He had been sent there during the wartime evacuations; and he complained that he was surrounded by “foreigners” and “no lack of orientals of all kinds” and “Europeans of practically all nationalities, but very few of real intelligence”.

Stuck in England, without influence or respect, Hayek had only his idea to console him; an idea so grand it would one day dissolve the ground beneath the feet of Keynes and every other intellectual. Left to its own devices, the price system functions as a kind of mind. And not just any mind, but an omniscient one: the market computes what individuals cannot grasp. Reaching out to him as an intellectual comrade-in-arms, the American journalist Walter Lippmann wrote to Hayek, saying: “No human mind has ever understood the whole scheme of a society ... At best a mind can understand its own version of the scheme, something much thinner, which bears to reality some such relation as a silhouette to a man.”

It is a grand epistemological claim – that the market is a way of knowing, one that radically exceeds the capacity of any individual mind. Such a market is less a human contrivance,

to be manipulated like any other, than a force to be studied and placated. Economics ceases to be a technique – as Keynes believed it to be – for achieving desirable social ends, such as growth or stable money. The only social end is the maintenance of the market itself. In its omniscience, the market constitutes the only legitimate form of knowledge, next to which all other modes of reflection are partial, in both senses of the word: they comprehend only a fragment of a whole and they plead on behalf of a special interest. Individually, our values are personal ones, or mere opinions; collectively, the market converts them into prices, or objective facts.

After washing out at LSE, Hayek never held a permanent appointment that was not paid for by corporate sponsors. Even his conservative colleagues at the University of Chicago – the global epicentre of libertarian dissent in the 1950s – regarded Hayek as a reactionary mouthpiece, a “stock rightwing man” with a “stock rightwing sponsor”, as one put it. As late as 1972, a friend could visit Hayek, now in Salzburg, only to find an elderly man prostrate with self-pity, believing his life’s work was in vain. No one cared what he had written!

There had, however, been hopeful signs: Hayek was Barry Goldwater’s favourite political philosopher and was said to be Ronald Reagan’s, too. Then there was Margaret Thatcher. To anyone who would listen, Thatcher lionised Hayek, promising to bring together his free-market philosophy with a revival of Victorian values: family, community, hard work.

Hayek met privately with Thatcher in 1975, at the very moment that she, having been named leader of the opposition in the UK, was preparing to bring his Big Idea off the shelf and into history. They huddled for 30 minutes on Lord North Street in London, at the Institute for Economic Affairs. Afterwards, Thatcher’s staff anxiously asked Hayek what he had thought. What could he say? For the first time in 40 years, power was mirroring back to Friedrich von Hayek his own cherished self-

image, a man who might vanquish Keynes and remake the world. He replied: “She’s so beautiful.”

Hayek’s Big Idea isn’t much of an idea – until you supersize it. Organic, spontaneous, elegant processes that, like a million fingers on a Ouija board, coordinate to create outcomes that are otherwise unplanned. Applied to an actual market – one for pork bellies or corn futures – this description is little more than a truism. It can be expanded to describe how various markets, in commodities and labour and even money itself, form that part of a society known as “the economy”. This is less banal, but still inconsequential; a Keynesian accepts this description happily. But what if we bump it up one more step? What if we reconceive all of society as a kind of market?

The more Hayek’s idea expands, the more reactionary it gets, the more it hides behind its pretence of scientific neutrality – and the more it allows economics to link up with the major intellectual trend of the west since the 17th century. The rise of modern science generated a problem: if the world is universally obedient to natural laws, what does it mean to be human? Is a human being simply an object in the world, like any other? There appears to be no way to assimilate the subjective, interior human experience into nature as science conceives it – as something objective whose rules we discover by observation.

Everything about the postwar political culture lay in favour of John Maynard Keynes, and an expanded role for the state in managing the economy. But everything about the postwar academic culture lay in favour of Hayek’s Big Idea. Before the war, even the most rightwing economist thought of the market as a means to a limited end, to the efficient allocation of scarce resources. From the time of Adam Smith in the mid-1700s, and up to that of the founding members of the Chicago school in the postwar years, it was commonplace to believe that the ultimate ends of society and of life, were established in the non-economic sphere.

On this view, questions of value are resolved politically and democratically, not economically – through moral reflection and public deliberation. The classic modern expression of this belief is found in a 1922 essay called Ethics and the Economic Interpretation by Frank Knight, who arrived at Chicago two decades before Hayek. “The rational economic criticism of values gives results repugnant to common sense,” Knight wrote. “Economic man is the selfish, ruthless object of moral condemnation.”

Economists had struggled for 200 years with the question of how to place the values on which an otherwise commercial society is organised beyond mere self-interest and calculation. Knight, along with his colleagues Henry Simons and Jacob Viner, were holdouts against Franklin D Roosevelt and the market interventions of the New Deal, and they established the University of Chicago as the intellectually rigorous home of free-market economics that it remains to this day. However, Simons, Viner and Knight all started their careers before the unrivalled prestige of atomic physicists drew enormous sums of money into the university system and kicked off a postwar vogue for “hard” science. They did not worship equations or models, and they worried about non-scientific questions. Most explicitly, they worried about questions of value, where value was absolutely distinct from price.

It is not just that Simons, Viner and Knight were less dogmatic than Hayek, or more willing to pardon the state for taxing and spending. It is not the case that Hayek was their intellectual superior. But they acknowledged as a first principle that society was not the same thing as the market, and that price was not the same thing as value. This set them up to be swallowed whole by history.

It was Hayek who showed us how to get from the hopeless condition of human partiality to the majestic objectivity of science. Hayek’s Big Idea acts as the missing link between our subjective human nature, and nature itself. In so doing, it puts any value that cannot be expressed as a price – as the verdict of a market – on an equally unsure footing, as nothing more than opinion, preference, folklore or superstition.

More than anyone, even Hayek himself, it was the great postwar Chicago economist Milton Friedman who helped convert governments and politicians to the power of Hayek’s Big Idea. But first he broke with two centuries of precedent and declared that economics is “in principle independent of any particular ethical position or normative judgments” and is “an ‘objective’ science, in precisely the same sense as any of the physical sciences”. Values of the old, mental, normative kind were defective, they were “differences about which men can ultimately only fight”. There is the market, in other words, and there is relativism.

Markets may be human facsimiles of natural systems, and like the universe itself, they may be authorless and valueless. But the application of Hayek’s Big Idea to every aspect of our lives negates what is most distinctive about us. That is, it assigns what is most human about human beings – our minds and our volition – to algorithms and markets, leaving us to mimic, zombie-like, the shrunken idealisations of economic models. Supersizing Hayek’s idea and radically upgrading the price system into a kind of social omniscience means radically downgrading the importance of our individual capacity to reason – our ability to provide and evaluate justifications for our actions and beliefs.

As a result, the public sphere – the space where we offer up reasons, and contest the reasons of others – ceases to be a space for deliberation, and becomes a market in clicks, likes and retweets. The internet is personal preference magnified by algorithm; a pseudo-public space that echoes the voice already inside our head. Rather than a space of debate in which we make our way, as a society, toward consensus, now there is a mutual-affirmation apparatus banally referred to as a “marketplace of ideas”. What looks like something public and lucid is only an extension of our own pre-existing opinions, prejudices and beliefs, while the authority of institutions and experts has been displaced by the aggregative logic of big data. When we access the world through a search engine, its results are ranked, as the founder of Google puts it, “recursively” – by an infinity of individual users functioning as a market, continuously and in real time.

The awesome utilities of digital technology aside, an earlier and more humanist tradition, which was dominant for centuries, had always distinguished between our tastes and preferences – the desires that find expression in the market – and our capacity for reflection on those preferences, which allows us to form and express values.

*Previously published in Guardian

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** Petition against bitcoin crackdown to Korean president reaches 200,000.
A petition to the Blue House, South Korea's presidential residence, demanding a stop to regulating virtual currency has reached 200,000 signatures and will now get an official response.
- 2** BlackBerry launches cybersecurity software for self-driving cars.
Canadian software maker BlackBerry Ltd launched a new cybersecurity software, which identifies vulnerabilities in programs used in self-driving cars.
- 3** Brazil and Switzerland have renewed their ongoing research and development agreement for another three years.
The joint science and technology committee, in place since 2009 also signed a related agreement between the Brazilian Center for Science and Technology Development and the Swiss National Fund.
- 4** Singapore earmarks \$22.6M for tech development in water treatment.
Country's water agency has invited the tech industry to pitch for proposals worth S\$30 million (US\$22.68 million) aimed at enhancing water treatment processes and operations.
- 5** After Huawei's deal with Verizon and AT&T to add the Mate 10 lineup to their carrier rosters fell through at the last minute this month, U.S. lawmakers are now reportedly pressuring the second largest wireless carrier in America to drop all commercial ties to Huawei and oppose plans by China Mobile to enter the U.S. market. According to anonymous congressional aides, cited by Reuters, lawmakers are urging AT&T to cut ties with Huawei and China Telecom over security concerns.
- 6** The Chinese government is continuing to intensify its crackdown on the cryptocurrency market, Bloomberg reported, and is planning on extending its ban on crypto exchanges to pursue alternative "online platforms and mobile apps that offer exchange-like services."
- 7** Bad news: A Spectre-like flaw will probably happen again.
Our devices may never truly be secure, says the CEO of the company that designs the heart of most mobile chips.
- 8** AI created by Chinese tech giant Alibaba and Microsoft have tied for first place on the Stanford Question Answering Dataset (SQuAD) this month, beating the human score for Exact Match (providing exact answers to questions). Alibaba and Microsoft announced the news separately.
- 9** iPhone 7 Plus was almost China's top selling phone in 2017.
Apple, the only foreign phone maker to hit China's top 10 list, was beaten to the top spot by Oppo's R9S.
- 10** Unknown hackers (or hacker) have hijacked the DNS server for BlackWallet.co, a web-based wallet application for the Stellar Lumen cryptocurrency (XLM), and has stolen over \$400,000 from users' accounts.
"The DNS hijack of Blackwallet injected code," said Kevin Beaumont, a security researcher who analyzed the code before the BlackWallet team regained access over their domain and took down the site. "If you had over 20 Lumens it pushes them to a different wallet," Beaumont added.

IT spending hitting \$3.7 trillion in 2018

Global information technology spending will reach \$3.7 trillion in 2018, up 4.5 percent from 2017, as Internet of things, big data, artificial intelligence and blockchain drive growth, according to Gartner.

Gartner noted that there's a good bit of uncertainty for 2018 including Brexit, currency issues and politics, but businesses are going to invest in IT to drive revenue growth. In Gartner's broad categories, enterprise software will



have the most growth, jumping 9.5 percent in 2018 to \$389 billion. Gartner noted that more budgets will be allocated to software as a service for functions such as financial management, human resources and analytics.

IT services will jump 5.5 percent in 2018 to \$985 billion. Communications services represents the biggest part of the IT spending pie for 2018, said Gartner.

Device sales are expected to grow 5.6 percent in 2018 as PC prices creep up. Apple's iOS shipments are expected to grow 9.1 percent in 2018.

(Source: zdnet)

Table 1. Worldwide IT Spending Forecast (Billions of U.S. Dollars)

	2017	2017	2018	2018	2019	2019
	Spending	Growth (%)	Spending	Growth (%)	Spending	Growth (%)
Data Center Systems	178	4.4	179	0.6	179	-0.2
Enterprise Software	355	8.9	389	9.5	421	8.4
Devices	667	5.7	704	5.5	710	0.9
IT Services	933	4.3	985	5.5	1,030	4.6
Communications Services	1,393	1.3	1,427	2.4	1,443	1.1
Overall IT	3,527	3.8	3,683	4.5	3,784	2.7

Source: Gartner (January 2018)

Cybersecurity in 2018

By Charles McLellan

As IT systems evolve -- in offices, data centres, production facilities, transportation systems, homes and all points in between -- so the arms race between security professionals and an ever-changing cast of bad actors involves new challenges for the former and fresh opportunities for the latter.

As in previous years, Tech Pro Research has collated a large number of turn-of-the-year predictions in order to get an overview of the cybersecurity landscape as 2018 gets underway. All of these predictions were made before the biggest security story in years broke, in the first week of January -- the Spectre and Meltdown processor vulnerabilities, caused by exploitable flaws in modern CPU design.

Particularly noteworthy cybersecurity lapses last year were the massive Equifax breach and the global WannaCry ransomware outbreak.

This year, we've examined 518 cybersecurity predictions from 83 organisations, assigning them among 46 emergent categories.

Let's take a close look at the top five cybersecurity concerns for 2018.

IoT security

As in 2016 and 2017, the number-one cybersecurity concern for the coming year is the Internet of Things (IoT). This really is 'a security time bomb' (Nuvias Group) because, as Cxtera puts it, the IoT has moved 'from coffee pots to connected cars' and therefore 'from myth to reality'. Of course, the IoT has long been flagged as a security concern, but the combination of widespread adoption and minimal security provision means that, according to CloudBees, 'security breaches related to unexpected uses of Internet of Things connected devices will more than double compared to 2017'. There will be more types of IoT attack, too, according to Symantec: 'Expensive home devices will be held to ransom'; 'IoT devices will be hijacked and used in DDoS attacks'; and 'IoT devices will provide persistent access to home networks'. The result may be that 'early adopters will begin to regret purchasing smart devices' (F-Secure). Meanwhile, SentinelOne cautions that enterprise IoT will emerge as 'a new threat vector', providing 'yet another entry point for a network breach that, with a lateral move, can give attackers access to identified assets of interest'.

GDPR

The EU's GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) comes into force on 25 May 2018 -- a fast-approaching date that has propelled it into second place this year. GDPR will not only apply to companies based in the EU, but also to any organisation that handles data pertaining to EU-based customers or businesses. Non-compliance with GDPR's breach notification regula-



tions will carry fines of up to €20 million or 4 percent of a company's global annual turnover in the preceding financial year, whichever is greater. A big deal, then, and GDPR will 'challenge a lot of businesses who are not already prepared' (Avecto). Unfortunately, according to Forcepoint, 'most organizations will not be ready prior to the GDPR enforcement date, and panic-driven policies will stifle businesses as they struggle to become compliant'. Small businesses will be hit hardest by GDPR, says CrowdStrike, due to 'security immaturity', while Trend Micro predicts that 'many companies will take definitive actions on the General Data Protection Regulation only when the first lawsuit is filed'. The punitive level of fines under GDPR could also lead to blackmail attempts, says Nuvias Group, as bad actors threaten to expose non-compliance issues. However, on the plus side, 'GDPR will force organizations to assess their wider data security practices' (NTT Security).

Cloud security

FireEye notes that 'people are really starting to put critical data into the cloud', which goes a long way to explaining why cloud security has risen to third in our ranking. Breaches of cloud storage -- specifically AWS S3 buckets -- in 2017 prompted Palo Alto Networks to remind us that although 'the cloud is someone else's computer', organisations still need to protect the information they put there. That requires security operations with visibility into cloud services, says FireEye CEO Kevin Mandia, while Centrifly feels that 'the rapid move to the cloud will increase the adoption of zero-trust network models and modern

microservices architectures which will mandate the use of least privilege'.

The cloud security outlook remains pessimistic for some, though, with Symantec predicting that organisations will still struggle with both SaaS and IaaS security, resulting in 'more breaches due to error, compromise and design'.

Cryptocurrency and blockchain

There are several strands to the topical subject of cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology, covering both sides of the security fence. Starting with crypto-currencies, Imperva expects to see 'a growth of cryptocurrency mining attacks where attackers are utilizing endpoint resources (CPU/GPU) to mine cryptocurrency either by cross-site scripting (XSS) or by malware', adding that remotely hackable IoT devices and operations set up by insiders may be increasingly involved.

Blockchain is emerging as a key enabler not just for cryptocurrencies, but also potentially as a cybersecurity option, says Centrifly, but there's a way to go yet: 'While we expect blockchain to emerge as a potential disruptor across many areas of technology in 2018, it will take several years before vulnerabilities can be addressed and the technology is considered mature enough to act as a basis for enterprise security'.

Cyber-extortion & ransomware

Following last year's WannaCry saga, ransomware was never going to be far from the top of the prediction rankings, and this year it comes in at number five. Many pundits predict that cybercriminals will continue to reap rich pickings from ransomware attacks. Here's FireEye, for example: 'We expect to see continued use

of ransomware in 2018, especially as administrators are slow to patch and update their systems'. According to Centrifly 'the dark but lucrative trend in ransomware will continue to explode in the coming year', while KnowBe4 foresees 'exponential growth of the ransomware plague, especially the "as-a-service" strains'.

Outlook

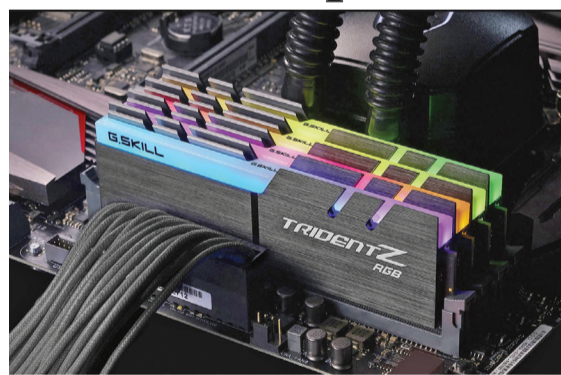
The IoT is front and centre in each of the three years, with cloud security, ransomware and nation-state/political cyber-attacks also ever-present. New top 10 entries in 2018 are typical areas like GDPR, AI/ML and crypto-currency/blockchain, while mobile security has slipped down the rankings (to 20th place) this year.

No sooner had 2018 got underway than news broke of major vulnerabilities -- Spectre and Meltdown -- in modern processors that, although rapidly addressed by OS and microcode patches, will probably require replacement of CPU hardware with fundamentally different designs in the long term. In the meantime, vigilance (there are no known exploits as yet), rigorous patching and acceptance of potential performance hits will be the order of the day.

Looking at the breaches from 2017, experts' predictions for 2018 and taking the recently revealed CPU flaws into account, the reality in cybersecurity must be that everything is potentially insecure. For businesses, this means that basic security hygiene and regulatory compliance are essential, defence in depth and resilience to cyber-attack are priorities, and insurance against almost inevitable network compromise is extremely advisable.

(Source: techproresearch)

End of a chip boom?



its longest ever boom after shrinking 6 percent in 2016.

Last year's explosive growth gave chipmakers cash to reinvest and boost output, analysts said. The supply of NAND flash memory chips, in particular, will grow 43 percent this year, up from last year's 34 percent, causing prices to drop by about 10 percent, brokerage Nomura estimates.

Nomura expects growth in output will be largely led by the likes of Western Digital, Toshiba Corp and Micron Technology Inc as they seek to catch up with top-ranked Samsung, which controls about 40 percent of the flash memory chip market.

Smartphone vendors have been including more memory in their phones and charging more for them, allowing them to weather last year's price surge, analysts say.

Average DRAM memory of new models launched last

quarter increased by 38 percent from the second quarter of 2016, while NAND content measured by gigabyte jumped 84 percent, according to an analysis by BNP Paribas.

Such solid demand will keep the industry's margin healthy this year, and chipmakers' investment in more advanced technology will help them cut production costs and stay profitable even as prices ease, analysts say.

Macquarie estimates Samsung's chip division's operating profit margin jumped to 47 percent last year from 26.5 percent in 2016, and will rise further to 55.5 percent this year.

While the NAND flash market may soften somewhat, the DRAM memory chip market, which is about \$20 billion bigger than the NAND industry, is seen as much tighter. Prices are expected to gain nearly 9 percent because of a severe supply shortage.

With DRAM manufacturers' rushing to ramp up production -- they are likely to nearly quadruple capital spending for 2017 and 2018 combined to \$38 billion from 2016's \$10 billion -- prices may decline as much as 18 percent next year, according to Nomura.

That gives some investors confidence in the industry's long-term future.

"Besides some minute adjustment, I am currently holding Samsung shares almost without change," said Kim Hyun-su, fund manager at IBK Asset Management. "I don't think the share price is expensive as they have recently been increasing dividends a lot - and as of now, the expected profit levels are very high."

(Source: Reuters)

Quika promises free satellite internet for developing countries

Facebook's plans for free satellite internet access may have run into some... setbacks, but another company is promising to make that ubiquitous data a practical reality. Quika, a company led by the chief of satellite provider Talia, is launching a free satellite broadband service in the second quarter of 2018. It's promising speedy, low-latency Ka-band data in developing countries where income inequality and a lack of infrastructure (especially in rural areas) make conventional internet access impractical for most. Service will begin with Afghanistan, Iraq and most of Africa, but there are promises of more countries afterward.

The strategy behind this no-charge access isn't terribly complicated: Quika is planning to support its free plan through its paid services



for enterprises and internet providers. Also, while the service itself will be free, Quika notes that customers may have to pay for setup or make a deposit on the necessary hardware.

It's far from certain that this will work as well as advertised. It depends on having enough corporate customers to subsidize free access, and capacity could be an issue. It may not be very fast if there are loads of users, and launching additional satellites isn't always quick or easy. If this lives up to promises, though, it could go a long way toward fulfilling promises of democratizing internet access. Google is already providing some free balloon-based internet, but only on a limited, experimental scale. This could make free internet a staple in many parts of the world.

(Source: Businesswire)

How did the Milky Way get its bulge? Fast-moving stars may hold clues

Sun-like stars in the Milky Way galaxy's central hub are zipping along at different speeds depending on how they are made, according to new research.

Researchers looking at the bulge of stars near the Milky Way's center found that stars rich in heavier elements — those more massive than hydrogen and helium — move twice as fast as those without. The new findings may help answer questions about whether the bulge formed by the motion of the stars or from an ancient collision with another galaxy, or through some combination of the two.

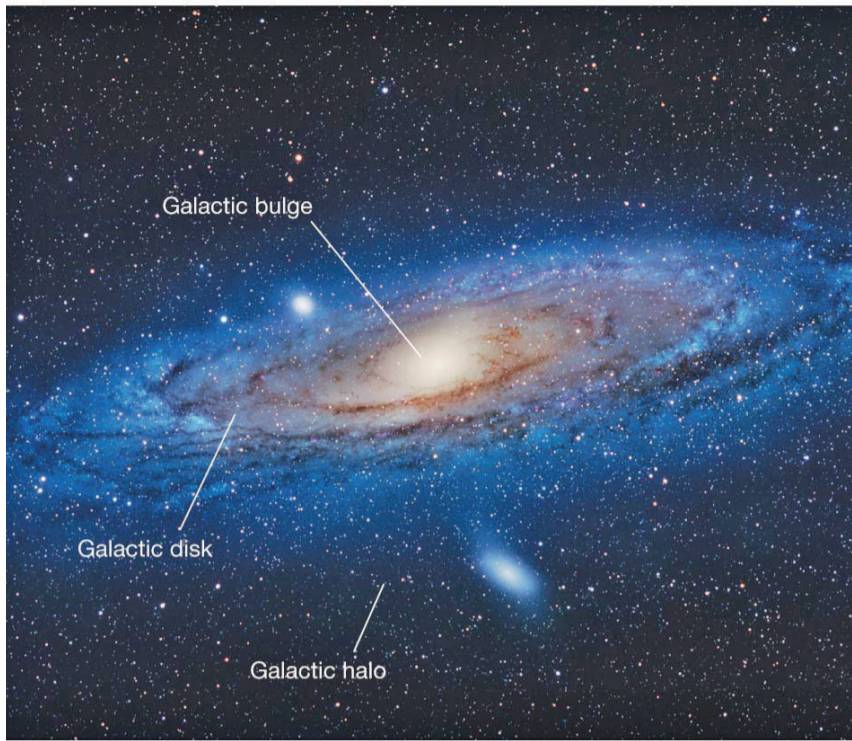
The "Milky Way bulge is an important galactic component. It contains about 10 to 20 percent of the mass of the galaxy, yet its formation evolution is still not well understood," Will Clarkston said Thursday (Jan. 11) at the 231st meeting of the American Astronomical Society in National Harbor, Maryland.

Stars swirled fast

Clarkston, an astronomer at the University of Michigan, was part of a study that combed through nearly a decade of data captured by NASA's Hubble Space Telescope to measure how fast the stars swirled around the center of the galaxy.

Whereas ground-based telescopes have measured the movement of the stars toward or away from the sun, the new research with Hubble reveals how they orbit the center of the galaxy sideways along the sky.

The Milky Way is a classic spiral galaxy, with arms curving in a plane around its bulging center. But the formation of



The new research suggests that the Milky Way may have suffered a collision with another galaxy in its past.

the bulge formation remains a mystery. In the past, astronomers thought that the

bulge was made up of old stars, researchers said in a statement, but a growing body

of evidence has revealed young stars, as well. Combined with other observations, this suggests that the Milky Way may have suffered a collision with another galaxy in its past.

"There are many theories describing the formation of our galaxy and central bulge," Annalisa Calamida, a member of the Hubble research team at the Space Telescope Science Institute in Maryland, said in the statement.

Galaxy formation

"Some say the bulge formed when the galaxy first formed about 13 billion years ago. In this case, all bulge stars should be old and share a similar motion," Calamida added. "But others think the bulge formed later in the galaxy's lifetime, slowly evolving after the first generations of stars were born."

To better understand how the bulge came to be, Clarkston, Calamida and their colleagues turned to nine years of archival Hubble data to track how about 10,000 of the bulge's normal sun-like stars moved. They then relied on spectra from the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope in Chile to help estimate those stars' chemical composition.

After comparing the two, the team discovered that the motions of bulge stars varied depending on a star's chemical composition. Stars high in metals — for astronomers, all elements other than hydrogen and helium are considered metals — circle the bulge at a higher speed than older, metal-poor stars. (Source: space.com)

Scientist developing device to convert dog barks into English language



An AI algorithm can convert the vocalizations of prairie dogs into English. Now, animal behavior expert Con Slobodchikoff is working on a pet translator that can translate a dog's barks into human language. When will this device become available?

The idea of humans being able to talk to and understand animals may soon become a reality. A researcher is working on a device that may be used as a pet language translator in the future.

Using artificial intelligence (AI), scientists learn how to translate vocalizations and facial expressions of animals into something that humans can understand.

Animal behavior expert Con Slobodchikoff is one of these researchers whose work may allow pets and their owners to effectively converse with each other using a pet translator in less than ten years.

Animals communicate

Slobodchikoff, from Northern Arizona University, has studied footage of dogs engaged in a range of behaviors including growling, barking and howling, and used AI to understand how these animals communicate.

He hopes that with the help of machine learning, computers can help humans understand what a particular gesture of pets such as the wagging of the tail, or growling really means.

The researcher has been studying North American prairie dogs for 30 years. He found that the animals have their own language system that conveys complicated instructions and commands.

The rodents also use calls that alert

members of their group of incoming threats. Interestingly, these warnings include specific information about the predator such as its size and coat color.

Working with a computer scientist, Slobodchikoff developed an algorithm that converted the prairie dog's vocalizations into English. He has since expanded his work to include studying the behaviors and barking of dogs.

In 2017, he founded the Zoolingua company to develop a similar tool he used to understand the prairie dog's vocalization to translate facial expressions, sounds and body movements of pets.

Different barks

"If we can do this with prairie dogs, we can certainly do it with dogs and cats," the animal expert said.

Slobodchikoff studies videos of dogs showing different barks and body movements. He plans to use this to teach an AI algorithm about the communication signals used by animals.

The work is still at an early stage but this could pave way for animals and humans having more effective communication in just ten years. Slobodchikoff wants to use scientific research based on careful experiments to decipher the meaning of a dog's behavior.

Slobodchikoff's ultimate goal is to create a device that humans can pinpoint at a dog to translate barks and woofs into English words. If this becomes possible, humans will be able to know exactly what their pets want and would be more capable of dealing with animals in the future. (Source: Tech Times)

Don't hold in a sneeze, warn doctors. It could be the death of you



When sitting in a quiet theatre or a packed train, stifling a sneeze by holding the nose and closing the mouth may seem like the courteous option.

But doctors have warned against the polite practice, after a man ruptured the back of his throat while trying to contain the convulsive explosion of air.

The 34-year-old was admitted to hospital barely able to swallow or speak after pinching his nose and clamping shut his mouth to stop a sneeze.

When doctors examined him they also heard strange popping and crackling sounds, which extended from his neck all the way down to his ribcage.

Airs from lungs

A scan confirmed that that air from his lungs had bubbled its way into the deep tissue and muscles of the chest when it could not escape.

Ear, nose and throat specialists at the University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust released details of the man's condition in BMJ Case Reports and warned that trying to contain a forceful sneeze could lead to 'numerous complications' and even a lethal brain aneurysm.

"Halting sneezing via blocking the nostrils and mouth is a dangerous maneuver, and should be avoided," said lead author Dr. Wanding Yang.

"It may lead to numerous complications, such as pseudomediastinum (air trapped in the chest between both lungs), perforation of the tympanic membrane (perforated eardrum), and even rupture of a cerebral

aneurysm (ballooning blood vessel in the brain)."

Doctors said the man's condition was similar to Boerhaave's syndrome in which the esophagus is torn as a result of intense retching or vomiting. But in his case the build up of pressure from the trapped sneeze caused a rupture higher up in the throat, at the pharynx, which is situated just behind the tongue.

Damaged facial nerves

Previously people have been admitted to hospital suffering from burst eardrums, ruptured blood vessels in the eyes, damaged facial nerves, pulled muscles and even cracked ribs from trying to contain the huge force.

Doctors say a sneeze, or sternutation, is intended to release foreign, and potentially damaging, particles, irritants or germs. Stopping it not only risks rupturing the throat, but could encourage the build of bacteria or trigger an asthma attack.

The patient was admitted to hospital where he was fed by a tube and given intravenous antibiotics until the swelling and pain had subsided.

After seven days the man, who has not been identified, was well enough to be discharged with the advice not to block both nostrils when sneezing in future.

And for people still needing to suppress a sneeze, experts advise rubbing the nose, breathing heavily through the nose, or rubbing the area above the lip. (Source: The Telegraph)

Jet stream changes since 1960s linked to more extreme weather

Increased fluctuations in the path of the North Atlantic jet stream since the 1960s coincide with more extreme weather events in Europe such as heat waves, droughts, wildfires and flooding, reports a University of Arizona-led team.

The research is the first reconstruction of historical changes in the North Atlantic jet stream prior to the 20th century. By studying tree rings from trees in the British Isles and the northeastern Mediterranean, the team teased out those regions' late summer weather going back almost 300 years -- to 1725.

"We find that the position of the North Atlantic Jet in summer has been a strong driver of climate extremes in Europe for the last 300 years," said Valerie Trouet, an associate professor of dendrochronology at the University of Arizona Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research.

Having a 290-year record of the position of the jet stream let Trouet and her colleagues determine that swings between northern and southern positions of the jet became more frequent in the second half of the 20th century, she said.

"Since 1960 we get more years when the jet is in an extreme position," Trouet said, adding that the increase is unprecedented.

When the North Atlantic Jet is in the extreme northern position, the British Isles and western Europe have a summer heat wave while southeastern Europe has heavy rains and flooding, she said.

"Heat waves, droughts and floods affect people," Trouet said. The "heat waves and drought that are related to such jet stream extremes happen on top of already increasing temperatures and global warming -- it's a double whammy."

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Surfers spread antibiotic-resistant E. Coli

In a study researchers analyzed samples of seawater off the coasts of England and Wales. They then surveyed 143 surfers and 130 non-surfing beachgoers in this area. They discovered that the surfers were three times as likely to have antibiotic-resistant E. coli in their stool than non-surfers. Of the survey group, 13 surfers (9%) and four non-surfers (3%) harbored Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria, or ARB.



Antibiotic-resistance comes from overuse of antibiotics. Cefotaxime is a drug of choice used to treat bacterial infections like E. Coli, but some E. Coli evolved a gene that makes them resistant to the drug. When Cefotaxime kills off most of a bacterial infection, but some resistant bacteria survives, that bacteria has an opportunity to proliferate.

Antibiotic resistance is "one of the biggest threats to global health, food security, and development today."

When antibiotics are fed to livestock and farmers use their manure to fertilize crops, the antibiotics in their system can give rise to ARB. When those crops are watered, runoff from the fields sometimes make it into bodies of water. When people swim in that water or swallow it, they are prone to infection.

The researchers noted that surfers tend to be fit and healthy and are unlikely to get severely sick from the bacteria. But their infections can still have significant consequences. They could spread the bacteria to anyone they interact with, including the elderly and people with compromised immune systems.

Anne Leonard, a research fellow at the University of Exeter and one of the authors of the study, said in a press release that "there is increasing focus on how resistance can be spread through our natural environments."

(Source: Newsweek)

Scientists discover life-supporting organic compounds inside a pair of meteorites

In 1998 two meteorites were found from two different locations, one outside Morocco and the other one in Texas. Now, after a rigorous analysis of the two space rocks, the scientists have discovered that the meteorites contain biological material from other planets. The analysis was done by an international group of scientists at the Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory.

After analyzing the meteorites, scientists found out that these space rocks contain organic compounds needed for life. The organic compounds include hydrocarbons, amino acids, and other organic substances along with some traces of water. This is for the first time that scientists got hold of a pair of meteorites that contain both liquid water as well as a mixture of complex organic compounds, which are considered as main ingredients for life.

As per the scientists, the possible sources for the meteorites might be Ceres, a brown dwarf planet considered as the largest object in the asteroid belt, or, it might be asteroid Hebe, the main source of meteorites that fall on Earth.

First, the scientists sampled the tiny blue and purple crystals from the meteorites, and when they tried to explore the chemical content of the salt crystals, they found it that it contains organic matter along with liquid water. Lead author of the study Queenie Chan, a planetary scientist and postdoctoral research associate said. "This is really the first time we have found abundant organic matter also associated with liquid water that is really crucial to the origin of life and the origin of complex organic compounds in space."

(Source: The TeCake)

BSI Eases Debit Card-Free Money Withdrawal from ATMs

Bank Saderat Iran (BSI) paved suitable ways for its account holders to withdraw money from their accounts without having debit card, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

The licenses for receiving card-free funds from ATMs of Bank Saderat Iran is valid up to 24 hours in line with increasing factor of safety and security of customers, in which, customer can withdraw money instantly and repeat-

edly up to 2 million rials and/or put this amount available to the another customer through mobile bank.

Receiving card-free cash money and/or sending its license for other individuals by customers of this bank has found more attractiveness in such a way that other banking services will be more developed gradually.

Presently, offering card-free services in ATMs of this bank is possible in the following three options: 1- blocking

the card, 2- receiving SHEBA number of the account and 3- withdrawing money without card.

Given the above issue, other services such as payment of bills, insurance premium will be put into operation.

It should be noted that the service of "license of withdrawing fund without card from ATM" was commissioned in mobile bank system using this service, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank concluded.

DOE ready to fight for people's right of clean air

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Implementation of clean air law will definitely face serious oppositions but the Department of Environment is ready to stand up for the nation's right to have clean air, DOE chief Isa Kalantari said on Tuesday. The clean air law was passed by Majlis [the Iranian parliament] in July 2017 and related guidelines for its implementation are under development.



"If its guidelines are approved till the end of current [Iranian calendar] year (ending on March 20), we will surely implement the law," IRNA quoted Kalantari, as saying. "The right for clean air precedes the nuclear right," he highlighted. He regarded domestic car manufacturers as one of the groups which will oppose this law and urged all environment managers to be totally ready for a fierce battle. Criticizing the excessive support for domestic production which may even cost the lives of people, Kalantari said that top officials prevent the closure of some polluting industries with excuses such as creating unemployment. According to Health Ministry, air pollution claims 29,000 lives annually nationwide, he regretted, adding, "I hope that clean air law can help but without a national determination for the environment, these laws may not be effective."

Rangers to be equipped with personal armors

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — As per a memorandum of understanding signed between the Ministry of Defense and the Department of Environment, the ministry is tasked to provide rangers with appropriate personal armors. The commander of Iran's environment protection unit explained that other equipment including ballistic vests, stun guns, pepper spray, handcuffs and leg cuffs will be given to the rangers.



The equipment, comprising some 1,300 items, are produced with proper international standards and the first delivery will be made during next two weeks, YJC quoted Jamshid Mohammadkhani as saying on Monday. Counting to 2850 individuals, protectors of Iran's environment have long suffered from lack of support, especially in terms of equipment. For instance, in June 2016 Mohammad Dehqani and Parviz Hormozi were killed during an armed conflict with poachers in Hormozgan province while a simple ballistic vest could have saved their lives.

LEARN ENGLISH

Sorry I'm Late

Maggie Gao: Okay everyone, shall we begin?
 Bill: Sorry Maggie, but we are missing a few people. Can we **hang on a sec**?
 Maggie Gao: Well, I did say eleven o'clock sharp, and it's now five past so...
 James: Hi everyone, I'm so sorry I'm late. It's raining cats and dogs outside and I had to **wait ages** for a taxi.
 Maggie Gao: Okay James, take a seat quickly please. Right, the subject of the meeting is.
 Sally: Hi guys. Please excuse me, I was **held up** in traffic.
 Maggie Gao: Right, as I was saying the subject of the m...
 Bruno: Hi Maggie. **I'm terribly sorry**. The traffic is murder out there.
 Maggie Gao: Sit down Bruno! Okay now, as you are aware, the topic for this meeting is "The importance of being punctual". Who would like to start?
Key vocabulary
hang on a sec: hold on
wait ages: wait for a very long time
hold up: stuck
I am terribly sorry: Very sorry
Supplementary vocabulary
late: A occurring, coming, or being after the usual or proper time
absent: not in a certain place at a given time
excuse: to offer an apology for; seek to remove the blame of
slack: negligent; careless
 (Source: irlanguage.com)



Iran wins Energy Globe World Award 2017

1 → Speaking on the sustainable development goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations Ardakanian highlighted that ministry of energy is tasked with striving for SDG 2 (end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture), SDG 6 (access to safe water and sanitation and sound management of freshwater ecosystems), and SDG 7 (ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all). Attaining the aforesaid goals highly depend on changing the current lifestyle and efficient use of energies on individual, organizational, national and international level, the minister suggested. The ministry is seriously following up on policies to increase energy efficiency and decrease the effects of climate change, he concluded.

The award winner Kerman's water project

Located in a dry area, the Sarcheshmeh mine, in southeastern province of Kerman, has very limited access to surface water. Due to its geographical location and the climate conditions of the region of Kerman, groundwater is the only reliable source. The yearly volume of recharge is nearly 5.6 billion cubic meters. However, the volume of discharge is at nearly 6.7 billion cubic meters per year. Therefore, their water balance is negative which leads to an alarming decrease of groundwater. The cathode production even increases the amount of water required for the



Reza Ardakanian

production process. Due to the local conditions, achieving a stable and reliable source of water is very hard.

A water recycling system using modern methods could be the solution. The Integrated Water Master Plan (IWMP) has improved the consumption of fresh water through the new water resources management and a complete cycle of reclaimed water. Another part of this plan includes the evaluation of the environmental impact according to the latest international standards. Knowledge of international consultants is gathered and implemented. For the best use and maximum recycling of the water, dewatering by means of paste

thickeners has been deployed.

Energy Globe Award

The objective of the Energy Globe Award is to present successful sustainable projects to a global audience and to demonstrate that for many environmental problems feasible solutions already exist. Projects submitted from over 170 countries take part each year in the awards.

With a global call for participation Energy Globe invites outstanding sustainable best practice projects to participate in the annual competition. From all over the world, some 800 projects and initiatives are submitted annually to compete for the award.

The Energy Globe Award is given to the best projects in 2 categories of national and international. "Shahriar Sewage Project" from West Towns and Townships of Tehran Province Water and Wastewater Company won the 2017 national Energy Globe Award. Within this unique project, contaminated water for around 50,000 people is cleared up and drinking water is produced. The other nominees were the project "Remediation Of Underground Contamination By Means Of Green Biological Approaches" from Pars Petrochemical Co. and the project "North of Kish Wastewater Treatment Plant" from ZYANE Co.

The international Energy Globe Award distinguishes the best projects in the five categories of earth, fire, water, air and youth and the special category Sustainable Plastics.

The international category winners are awarded in a ceremony which is broadcast all over the world and are in the spotlight of international media coverage. International winners divide a prize pool of 10, 000 euros.

Tehran's sewerage project was nominated for the 16th Energy Globe Award 2015 in category of water, which was also held in Tehran Milad Tower on January 19, 2016. For the industrialized countries Tehran's sewerage project was selected as an overall winner as a project in which wastewater is recycled, energy is produced, agricultural land is created and emissions are reduced in a single process.

Importance and specifications of "Akhlal"- Black bile



ARTICLE

By Seyed Mahdi Mirghazanfari, MD, PhD

'Abstaining' from food stuff and drinks as well as reforming eating habit in accordance with one's individual temperament would definitely help people to stay healthy.

As Iranian traditional medicine (also known as Persian medicine) underlines, recognizing one's distinguishing's temperament (Mizaj) and adopting a kind of lifestyle corresponding to one's Mizaj is the key to keep in good trim.

There are four humors (Akhlal) in the body. Yellow bile, blood, black bile, and phlegm are the humors which are formed from consumed foods in the liver and gastrointestinal system after digestion.

Body tissues mainly rely for nourishment on one of the humors more than the others. So, by putting two and two together one can simply conclude that in order to have a healthy body we need to keep healthy humors both in terms of quantity and quality.

Black bile

Black bile is cold and dry. It is sparse in the body but it sure is pretty essential for the body. The right amounts of black bile keep bones healthy and strong and that's why bones, teeth and tendons primarily live off black bile.

Normal amounts of black bile also supports hair and nails, in fact black bile strengthen body parts, therefore, lack of black bile in the body will compromise bone's strength and the tendons function. In worst case scenario it can lead to osteoporosis. Its shortage would also cause tooth decay and hair falling. Black bile also stimulates appetite when the stomach is empty.

Black bile producing foods

All canned foodstuff, leftovers, fast foods containing sausages and deli meat (in general precooked and processed meats), frozen meat which are kept for a long time in the freezer, meat of old animals, salted or smoked fish can produce black bile in the body. Generally the older a food stuff is the more black bile and waste material it produces in the body and the harder it will be to digest.

Additionally, all kinds of sauces, food with additives, junk food such as chips, gumdrops, too much coffee, black and strong tea, vegetables such as eggplant, cabbage, cauliflower, tomato, green pea, corn, lentil, sour fruits, pickled vegetables and fruits, vinegar, too much cold water and ice, too much yogurt, sour doogh (a savory yogurt-based beverage popular in Iran), kashk (fabricated from the liquid yoghurt), and old sour cheese would result in production of black bile in the body.

It is worth mentioning that black bile production in cold seasons, especially autumn, and cold climates such as mountainous regions normally increases.

Excessive black bile symptoms

Darkening of the skin, developing brown skin patches, wrinkles, having dull skin, developing dark circles under your eyes, suffering muscle cramps (specially muscles of the posterior leg and toes during sleep),

more painful menstrual cramps, irregular menstrual cycle, having depressing and negative thoughts, poor sleep, having nightmares, darker waste materials (sweat, urine), constipation, fake hunger, thicker and darker blood, having excessive unwanted hair, getting thinner, developing mental disorder such as depression, obsession, isolation, skepticism, and cynicism are symptoms of built up excessive or abnormal black bile in the body.

How to avoid, treat excessive black bile

Clearly people suffering excessive black bile should avoid con-

suming food stuff which increase the aforesaid humor in the body.

In case they are used to consume such food stuff they should try to modify their bad eating habits step by step in order to become healthy.

People with melancholic temperament or those who suffer excessive black bile should eat foods with warm and wet temperament more and consider such food items in their food choices. Abgoosht (Iranian stew made with lamb, chickpeas, white beans, onion, potatoes, and tomatoes, and dried lime), lamb kebab, quail, partridge, chicken or sheep heart (one should not consume too much liver or kidney because of their bad effects on the body tissues), soft boiled or sometimes fried egg, wheat and wheat bread, haleem (a stew including wheat or barley and meat), ash (a traditional slow-cooked, thick soup made with chickpeas, beans, noodles, and fresh herbs), chick pea and beans and food containing them, sangak bread (bread made from whole-wheat flour) with some butter or animal fat or oil, sweet food stuff such as date or grape syrup, rock candy, homemade jams, sweet fruits, raisin, grape, quince, apple, melon, fresh fig, fresh or dried berries, vegetables such as basil and tarragon, nuts like almond, peanut, and hazelnut, almond porridge made with or without milk, spices used to give cardamom, cinnamon, and ginger would increase warmth and humidity in the body and help get rid of the built up black bile.

Eating natural laxatives such as olive oil or fig soaked in rosewater in order to rid the body of the waste material would also help ease excessive black bile symptoms. Rubbing sweet almond oil on the body especially in the shower or placing it in nostrils would greatly help treat dry skin and membranes. It would also ease the nerves and improve sleep quality.

Seyed Mahdi Mirghazanfari, MD, holds a PhD degree in medical physiology and is an Iranian-Islamic traditional medicine (Persian Medicine) researcher. He is also an assistant professor in AJA University of Medical Sciences, Tehran.



Eating food stuff with warming characteristics which also increase the humidity in the body such as raisin, soft boiled egg, and ginger can help people suffering excessive black bile.



ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Tehran subway greatly helps cut harmful emission: CEO

Tehran subway system had a significant part in reducing air pollution in the capital during the past years of its daily operation. Subway system has helped cut some 1.4 million tons of harmful emission in Tehran over the past 11 years, Mohammad Ahmadi Bafandeh, CEO of Tehran Urban and Suburban Railway Operation Company has said. Commenting on public transportation's direct impacts on minimizing air pollution Bafandeh further highlighted using the subway has resulted in 4.5 billion liters less petrol consumption over the same period.

مدیرعامل شرکت بهره‌برداری مترو تهران: مترو عامل کاهش گازهای آلاینده از هوای پایتخت

مترو تهران در طول سال های گذشته نقش مهمی در کاهش آلودگی هوای پایتخت ایفا کرده است. مدیرعامل شرکت بهره‌برداری مترو تهران محمد احمدی بافنده گفت: استفاده از مترو به عنوان حمل و نقل عمومی طی ۱۱ سال اخیر باعث کاهش بیش از یک میلیون و ۴۰۰ هزار تن گازهای آلاینده هوا پایتخت شده است. بافنده با اشاره به تاثیرات مستقیم حمل نقل عمومی در کاهش آلاینده های خاطرنشان کرد: استفاده از مترو باعث صرفه جویی بیش از ۴/۵ میلیارد لیتر بنزین و گازوییل نیز شده است.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"centi-, cent-"

Meaning: hundred or hundredth
For example: The fruit can be up to **centimeters** long.

PHRASAL VERB

Fight something back

Meaning: to try hard not to have or show a feeling
For example: She looked away, fighting back her tears.

IDIOM

Blot one's copy-book

Explanation: someone who blots their copy-book does something to spoil their good record or reputation
For example: He blotted his copy-book when he was arrested for speeding.

Turkey bolsters Syria border as U.S. force plan slammed

➔ Another 20-vehicle military convoy, including tanks, had also arrived in the Vransehir district of Turkey's Sanliurfa Province to provide assistance to the military units already deployed to the Syrian border, the sources added.

The U.S. infuriated its NATO partner Turkey on Sunday by announcing that Washington and a coalition of its allies purportedly fighting Daesh will work with U.S.-backed militants of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to set up a new 30,000-strong "border security" force.

The force would operate along the Turkish border with Iraq and within Syria along the Euphrates River.

Washington also said it is supplying weapons and training to anti-Damascus militants of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), the SDF's main backbone. Turkey views the YPG as a terrorist group and the Syrian arm of the homegrown Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been fighting for independence over the past decades.

The U.S. had promised to take back the weapons from Kurdish militants once Daesh falls.

Reacting to the U.S. military's announcement, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Washington is "building an army of terror" on the border with Syria, and that "it is our responsibility to suffocate this effort before it is born."

He also threatened an attack on Afrin



"in the days ahead" to clear the northwestern Syrian town of "terrorists." The city is controlled by Kurdish militants.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu echoed Erdogan's remarks, urging the U.S. to clarify its stance.

"The U.S. must clarify which side it is on, whether it chooses to be with its allies or terror groups," he said, warning, "We will take our own measures [against terror groups] regardless of who backs them;

whether it is the U.S. or other countries, it doesn't matter to us."

In August 2016, Turkey began a unilateral military intervention in northern Syria, code-named Operation Euphrates Shield. Ankara said the campaign was aimed at pushing Daesh terrorists from Turkey's border with Syria and stopping the advance of Kurdish forces.

Turkey ended its Syria offensive in March 2017, but has kept its military presence there. Syria has voiced strong opposition to both

Turkish and American military actions on its soil, repeatedly calling on the two NATO allies to pull their forces out.

Washington's border force plan drew angry reactions from both Syria and Russia, with Damascus describing it as a "blatant assault" on its sovereignty.

Russia also said the U.S. was seeking to split the Syrian territory.

"In fact, that means separation of a huge territory along the border with Turkey and Iraq," Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said. "The actions we currently see indicate that the United States does not want to keep the territorial integrity of Syria."

■ 'U.S. after dividing Syria'

Meanwhile, Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad on Monday denounced the U.S. bid to form "an armed militia" as a desperate attempt to divide the country and prolong the crisis there.

He told Lebanon's Al Mayadeen television channel that the efforts by Washington and its agents in the Persian Gulf region as well as Turkey to undermine Syria's unity and sovereignty were in vain amid sweeping gains by the Syrian army and its allies against terrorists on the battlefield.

Mekdad also expressed confidence in the Syrian people's ability to foil the new conspiracy, adding that the presence of foreign forces on Syrian soil without coordination with the Damascus government is illegitimate.

(Source: agencies)

Rohingya refugees to return 'within two years'

The UN has raised concern over the return of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees, who fled a military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine State, within the next two years as agreed upon by Bangladesh and Myanmar.

As part of a repatriation deal signed by the two Asian neighbors in November last year, Bangladesh and Myanmar officials at a joint meeting in Naypyidaw on Tuesday agreed on plans to facilitate the return of those displaced since August.

"Much work remains to be done in the context of the Rohingya refugee situation to ensure that any potential returns are voluntary, that they occur in conditions of safety and dignity, and that they are sustainable," said Caroline Gluck, senior public information officer for UNHCR, UN's refugee agency.

"The protection of the Rohingya refugees must be guaranteed both in Bangladesh and upon their return to Myanmar," she told Al Jazeera in an emailed response.

Earlier, Bangladesh's foreign ministry said in a statement that "the repatriation would be completed preferably within two years from its commencement".

"There will be two working groups - one will work on verification process for Rohingya and the other will facilitate the return of verified refugees to Myanmar," an official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who preferred to remain unnamed, said.

When asked whether the verification process is different

from the one chalked out earlier in line with the 1992 deal, the ministry official declined to clarify saying the foreign secretary will clarify the issue later.

Under the arrangement, Bangladesh would possibly establish five transit camps from where returnees would be received initially in two reception centers on the Myanmar side, the statement revealed.

Some 1,550 refugees will be sent back each week, which will add up to approximately 156,000 over a period of two years.

"Myanmar has reiterated its commitment to stop the outflow of Myanmar residents to Bangladesh," the Bangladesh foreign ministry said.

The agreement does not specify when repatriation will be commenced, but agrees to provide temporary shelter to the returning Rohingya and building houses for them later.

■ 'They will slaughter us'

More than 650,000 Rohingya have fled to neighboring Bangladesh since August 25, when Myanmar's army launched a bloody crackdown in response to attacks on border posts by the armed group, Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army.

Refugees who crossed the border reported mass killings, gang rapes and arson, prompting the UN and rights groups to accuse Myanmar's army of possible crimes against humanity.

The mainly Muslim minority, who live primarily in Rakhine State, is not recognized as an ethnic group in Myanmar, despite having lived there for generations. They have been

denied citizenship and are rendered stateless.

Many refugees living in camps in Bangladesh have also raised fears about returning to Myanmar.

Abd-us-Salam, who is more than 100 years old, has fled three military crackdowns in Myanmar. He and his wife are currently seeking refuge in Bangladesh's Kutupalong refugee camp.

"There's no point in sending us back to Myanmar because there is no security for us there," he told Al Jazeera.

"They will not allow a single Rohingya to live there," he said. "They will slaughter us all. Please don't send us back as bait for the monster."

Taslina Begum, another Rohingya refugee, said she would "rather die in Bangladesh than go back".

"We have been persecuted and brutalized there," she said. "They took all our possessions, crops and cattle."

■ Safe return

UNHCR's Gluck told Al Jazeera that Rohingya refugees say they would only consider return if they see positive developments in relation to their legal status and citizenship, the security situation in Rakhine State, and their ability to enjoy basic rights back home.

She said that the root causes of the crisis, such as the Rohingya's legal and citizenship status, need to be addressed to ensure peace and security in Rakhine State.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Sisi: Egypt does not want war with Sudan and Ethiopia

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi said his country was not meddling in the internal affairs of Sudan and Ethiopia, as he sought to defuse rising tensions in the Red Sea region.

Sisi, in a televised broadcast, said Cairo was not planning to go to war with the African countries.

"We are not prepared to go to war against our brethren or anyone else for that matter. I am saying this as a clear message to our brothers in Sudan and Ethiopia," Sisi said.

"Egypt neither conspires nor meddles in anyone's internal affairs. We are determined to have good relations [with Sudan and Ethiopia]. Our region has seen enough the past few years," he said.

Egypt fears that the soon-to-be-completed Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project, the largest hydroelectric dam project in Africa, will significantly reduce its share of the Nile River water. The river provides almost all of Egypt's freshwater.

Addis Ababa says the \$5bn dam will not have any effect on Egypt's share of the Nile water, and claims the project is necessary for the East African country's economic development.

Egypt, with a population roughly equal to that of Ethiopia, has traditionally received the lion's share of the Nile's water, under agreements reached in 1929 and 1959.

Other Nile basin nations view those agreements as unfair, arguing that they ignore the needs of their own large and growing populations.

Egypt has long accused Sudan of siding with Ethiopia, while Khartoum claims Cairo is supporting rebels in its territory.

Khartoum recalled its ambassador to Cairo for "consultations" on January 4, following media reports of Egypt sending troops to Eritrea, which has a border with Sudan.

Sudan also closed its borders with Eritrea and sent troops to its border region of Kassala.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Jordan, Greece and Cyprus say more support to states on refugee frontline

Greece, Jordan and Cyprus called for more effective support to countries on the frontline of the Middle East refugee crisis Tuesday and pledged to deepen cooperation on a host of issues from water management to protection of artefacts.

As millions of people have poured out of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey have taken in hundreds of thousands of refugees, while Greece has been used as a launchpad for many seeking to reach other European countries.

"We underlined the huge challenges our countries face on the refugee crisis and naturally the need for the international community to actively and effectively support countries which host large numbers of refugees," Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras said after a meeting with Jordan's King Abdullah and Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades in Nicosia.

He did not say what sort of support the countries want. Jordan hosts over 1.3 million Syrian refugees, while thousands of refugees

and migrants are stuck in Greece after its Balkan neighbors sealed off a route used by more than a million people in 2015 and early 2016 to get to other European states.

"It's an international concern and host countries like Jordan need the world's support," King Abdullah said.

"We are shouldering an immense refugee burden and cannot be left alone as we undertake this humanitarian responsibility on behalf of the world."

The three countries said they would seek to boost cooperation on issues such as water management, tourism projects and in the shipping sector.

"It is no secret that we live in a very tough neighborhood, rife with challenges but also with opportunities and together, our chances of capitalizing on these opportunities...increase tenfold," Abdullah said.

An agreement was also signed on the prevention of theft, illicit excavations and export of cultural property.

(Source: Reuters)

Japan issues false alarm over missile launch, days after Hawaii alert gaffe

Japanese public broadcaster NHK issued a false alarm on Tuesday saying North Korea appeared to have launched a missile and urging people to take shelter, but it managed to correct the error within minutes.

The mistake took place at a tense time in the region following North Korea's largest nuclear test to date in September and its claim in November that it had successfully tested a new type of intercontinental ballistic missile that could reach all of the U.S. mainland.

Pyongyang regularly threatens to destroy Japan and the United States.

But there were no immediate reports of panic or other disruptions following the NHK report. A similar gaffe caused panic in the U.S. state of Hawaii at the weekend.

NHK's 6.55 p.m. (0955 GMT) alert on its web site said: "North Korea appears to have launched a missile...The government urges people to take shelter inside buildings or underground."

The same alert was sent to mobile phone users of NHK's online news distribution service.

In five minutes, the broadcaster put out another message on the website correcting itself and said no government warning, called "J-alert", had been issued.

"This happened because equipment to send a news flash onto the Internet had been incorrectly operated. We are deeply sorry," an NHK announcer said on its 9:00 p.m. news program, bowing deeply in apology.

Last Saturday, a false missile alert during a civil defense drill caused panic across Hawaii. A state emergency management agency spokesman attributed it to human error and a lack of fail-safe measures.

(Source: Reuters)

Netanyahu in India: Why India must not shake hands with him

➔ technology, tourism. But, the major focus is on defence and security. India is one of the biggest importers of military equipment and Israel happens to be its biggest supplier, selling \$billion worth arms every year. It has been widely described as a "worrying trend" since India's defence budget is big and imports are extremely high. For a country hailed as a 'rising power' and 'economic powerhouse, it doesn't augur well.

The deepening ties between Israel and India under the Modi government have become a cause of concern to many people in India, who fear it might put a spanner in India's relations with countries in the Arab/Persian world. India has historically been a strong advocate of the Palestinian cause. Founders of modern India Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were vocal supporters of Palestine and they minced no words in condemning Israeli barbarism in Palestine. An editorial in a popular Indian leftist newspaper 'People's Democracy' this week lashed out at Netanyahu and emphatically stated that the people of India have always stood in solidarity with the people of Palestine and against Israeli aggression.

So, even though the current political dispensation in New Delhi is cozying up to Israel, this "marriage" will most likely end up in an acrimonious divorce. The popular mood in India suggests that Israel cannot be a bankable, long-term partner for India which seeks a bigger role in regional and global politics. By embracing Israel, India will be antagonizing many important players in the region, including Iran.

To register their protest against Netanyahu's India visit and India's growing ties with Israel, people took to streets in many parts of India, including New Delhi, Kashmir, Lucknow and Hyderabad. Social media has also been abuzz with anti-Israel and anti-Netanyahu posts and hashtags.

So, the writing is on the wall. India must look at the bigger picture, focus on long-term goals and shake hands with time-tested friends. Israel is not one of them.

The only barrier to Julian Assange leaving Ecuador's Embassy is pride

➔ ■ Assange's case, not political

Their problem is a simple one, though: what is there to mediate between the UK and Ecuador on Assange? Assange's case in Britain is not a political one, it's a matter of simple law. Assange was arrested on a European arrest warrant and eventually granted bail - then fought his extradition case right the way to the Supreme Court.

Following Sweden's decision to abandon its attempts to extradite Assange, all that he faces in the UK is the relatively straightforward matter of breaching bail - a minor offense, but not one suitable for political negotiation. Ecuador's "mediation" pitch to the UK amounts simply to asking them to ignore UK law - it's not a strong ask.

Assange should not face prosecution in the U.S. in connection with WikiLeaks publishing activities - it would go against constitutional principles of free expression, and damage the media's ability to hold power to account. The U.S. would dispute any such prosecution would be political, though - the country pursued New York Times journalist Jim Risen through the courts for some time - and the UK still has an open police investigation into journalists who worked on the Edward Snowden leaks. Given Assange's recent leaks benefited the current U.S. president, what case is there to make that prosecution would be political?

Assange does not want to be trapped in Ecuador's embassy, and his hosts do not want him there. Their problem is that what's keeping him trapped there is not so much the iniquitous actions of world powers, but pride. Perhaps it's not Ecuador and the UK that need a mediator, but rather Ecuador and Assange.

(Source: The Guardian)

Nigeria summons U.S. envoy over Trump's 'shithole' slur

The Nigerian government has summoned the United States' ambassador over the derogatory remarks recently made by President Donald Trump about African countries.

Nigeria's Foreign Minister Geoffrey Onyeama confirmed on Monday that U.S. Ambassador Stuart Symington had been summoned to the Foreign Ministry. Onyeama declined to provide further details.

Trump on Thursday questioned why the U.S. should be taking in immigrants from Haiti and African nations, which he called "shithole countries," according to U.S. government officials present at the meeting where Trump spoke.

The Nigerian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Onyeama "sought clarification on the veracity or otherwise of the substance of the remarks, stressing that if they were true, they were deeply hurtful, offensive and unacceptable."

Trump has denied using profane language about African countries; however, several U.S. lawmakers who attended the White House meeting confirmed that the president had made the disparaging remarks.

Trump's vulgar comments sparked anger and drew global condemnation.

A group of 55 African countries demanded a "retraction and an apology" from Trump.



The United Nations also denounced the remarks as "shocking," "shameful," and "racist."

Last week, the Trump administration ended the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for more than 260,000 immigrants from El Salvador, forcing them to gradually leave the U.S.

The U.S. president has also angered Muslims worldwide by imposing a travel ban on the citizens of six Muslim-majority nations.

During the 2016 presidential race, Trump pledged "a total and complete shutdown" of U.S. borders on those he deemed undesirable.

■ Trump faces more protests

Meanwhile, protesters across the United States have staged more anti-racism rallies in response to President Donald Trump's offensive remarks about immigrants, whom he reportedly berated of coming from "sh*thole countries" like Haiti and South Africa.

In Palm Beach, Florida, Haitian activists showed up in large numbers at the Southern Boulevard bridge on Monday to confront Trump as his motorcade passed through the streets after leaving his luxurious Mar-a-Lago resort for the airport.

"What brings us out today is the statement he made," said Charlemagne Metayer, a Haitian-born American citizen who moved to the U.S. in 1985.

"Some of us work two or three jobs to make a living," said Metayer, a father of four. "We are hard working people. We deserve an apology from the president."

Trump's supporters tried to counter the protest by gathering on the side of the street. There was heavy police presence at the scene to prevent violent clashes.

On Thursday, Senator Dick Durbin and several other Democratic lawmakers who had attended a White House meeting on immigration maintained that the president used disparaging remarks to refer to a number of nations during the bipartisan session.

(Source: agencies)

No agreement for Mkhitarian move to in exchange for Sanchez

There is no agreement in place for Manchester United forward Henrikh Mkhitarian to join Arsenal in exchange for Alexis Sanchez, a source close to Mkhitarian has told the BBC.

It is understood Sanchez has agreed personal terms with United. But neither Arsenal nor United will sanction the deal without Mkhitarian travelling in the opposite direction.

The 28-year-old Armenian is believed to be deliberating over the move and is in no rush to make a final decision.

Sources with knowledge of the situation say they understand Chelsea are also interested in signing Sanchez.

But when asked if this was the case by reporters on Tuesday, Chelsea boss Antonio Conte said: "I don't know but I don't think so."

United pipped Arsenal to the signature of Mkhitarian from Borussia Dortmund for £26m in July 2016.

He is not demanding to leave Old Trafford at all costs but has a different footballing philosophy to manager Jose Mourinho and that has raised the possibility of his departure.

There are said to be alternative options on the table and that it is not entirely out of the question that he opts to stay at United, where he is under contract until 2020.

It is also understood Dortmund have ruled out making a bid to re-sign Mkhitarian.

The German side inquired about Mkhitarian before the transfer window opened but they felt the transfer fee was excessive. (Source: BBC)

Conte 'doesn't think' Chelsea have pursued Sanchez

Chelsea manager Antonio Conte does not believe the club have been trying to sign Alexis Sanchez.

Sanchez appears poised to leave Arsenal and join Manchester United, having until recently been expected to sign for Manchester City.

However, speculation has suggested Chelsea have interest in hijacking that deal to add the Chile forward to a squad that has failed to score in each of the last three games.

But asked in a media conference ahead of Chelsea's FA Cup third-round replay with Norwich City if the club had been pursuing Sanchez, Conte replied: "I don't know but I don't think so."

Pressed for his general view on the transfer window, in which Chelsea have added midfielder Ross Barkley from Everton, Conte remained consistent in refusing to offer an opinion.

"I refer to the top of the club. I don't want to give my opinion about the transfer market," he added.

Barkley is ineligible to face Norwich on Wednesday but Conte is pleased with how the England midfielder has trained since his arrival.

"We are preparing a friendly game for him during this week, and then we will see his physical condition," the Italian said.

"But I'm very happy for his commitment and physical condition. He could be ready for the next game, or for the next game."

Striker Michy Batshuayi has been linked with a loan move to Sevilla, but Conte indicated talk of a switch being close is false. (Source: Four Four Two)

Tevez: CSL spell was a holiday

Carlos Tevez has labelled his time in the Chinese Super League with Shanghai Shenhua as a "holiday".

Forward Tevez secured a return to Boca Juniors for a third spell with the club this month, having left his boyhood club for China in December.

The former Manchester United, Manchester City and Juventus striker scored only four goals in 16 Chinese Super League appearances, receiving criticism for a supposed lack of effort.

Reportedly earning \$40million-a-year in his time in the CSL, Tevez was disappointed about how his time in the far east went, though he can now see the funny side. Asked about his spell in China by TyC Sports, Tevez joked: "I was on holiday for seven months in China. It's fine for the Shanghai coach and president to criticise me, I didn't know what I was doing there."

Addressing the end of his second stint with Boca, an exit that angered fans, Tevez added: "I know there are people who were annoyed by how I left, but that's normal."

"I was not in a position to give 100 per cent, but it was going to hurt the fans no matter what I did."

"Now the fans will see me again with the Boca shirt and they will be excited and happy."

(Source: Goal)

Pochettino refuses to rule out Real Madrid job

Tottenham boss Mauricio Pochettino has refused to rule out a move to Real Madrid in the future, admitting that anything can happen in the world of football.

Spurs have improved immeasurably under the former Espanyol manager, turning themselves into a top four side capable of challenging at the very top of the league.

Real Madrid, meanwhile, are struggling under the stewardship of Zinedine Zidane, and Pochettino has been linked with a move to the Bernabeu. While he insists he is currently focusing on the present, he does admit he may not be with Tottenham forever.

"Football will bring me to where football wants me to be," Pochettino told Onda Cero. "Jorge Grifa [former Argentina international footballer] told me to focus on the present, to maintain your professionalism and let things happen, and he was like a second father to me. 'In football you always have to endure highs and lows whether you are managing in England or in Spain, so it is normal for me to go through this.'"

Pochettino is no stranger to La Liga football, having previously managed Espanyol - even taking points off Pep Guardiola's Barcelona.

(source: Daily Mail)

Djokovic dismisses talk of boycott over prize money



Six-times Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic has distanced himself from reports that he called for a boycott of next year's tournament unless there was an increase in prize money.

Media reports said the 30-year-old Serb, who is president of the Players' Council, was pushing for a revolt over the way revenues from the four grand slams were distributed.

The reports also suggested he had demanded officials from the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP), which runs the men's Tour but not the grand slams, and Tennis Australia leave a players' meeting on Friday.

After his easy victory over American Donald Young on Tuesday, however, Djokovic set the record straight.

"No boycott, no," the former world number one replied when asked if he had threatened one.

"Not much of what you have wrote is true. What happened is that we, players, just wanted to have us players talk about certain topics. I don't think there is anything unhealthy about that. This is one of the places where we get together."

"We wanted to use this opportunity to speak about certain subjects and see how everyone reacts to that, see what opinions are. There was no decisions being made."

"There was no talks about boycott or anything like that."

Djokovic, who has won 12 grand slam singles titles, also denied that ATP officials had been thrown out of the players' meeting or that a lawyer had been present.

"Everything was done in a very normal, polite way," he said. "Players wanted to stay alone. There were 100 players in the room. We talked about things that we talked about. That's all."

RIGHT DIRECTION

The reports said the players had also discussed creating a union, independent of the

ATP, to represent their concerns and push for greater prize money.

The ATP, established in 1972, is owned jointly by the tournaments and the players.

Djokovic said there had been no discussion about player unions, though American former world number one Andy Roddick took to social media to support the idea.

"It's been a good idea for a long time," he said on Twitter. "Impossible for an entity to represent both sides of a negotiation. I'm amazed it's not talked about more."

Players at the Australian Open have been reluctant to talk about the issue but Players' Council vice-president Kevin Anderson confirmed that discussions about prize money

had taken place, with the focus on helping lower-ranked players make a better living.

"The top guys aren't out for how they can squeeze more money for themselves," South African Anderson was quoted as saying in various media reports. "Obviously they've had very lucrative careers. Now if you are top 100 you are making a good living. I think we want to push that to the (top) 150, 200."

Prize money in the grand slams has increased drastically in recent years. Wimbledon's total fund has nearly doubled in the last five years, rising from 16.06 million pounds to 31.6 million pounds (\$43.59 million) in 2017, although the percentage rises have been greatest for early-round losers.

The Australian Open prize money increased by 10 percent this year to A\$55 million (\$43.82 million) with the winners of the men's and women's singles titles pocketing A\$4 million.

Prize money on the ATP Tour has risen 113 percent over the last 10 years.

"Everybody's trying to do their best," Djokovic said. "I mean, we are here at the Australian Open, and they always try to compensate the players in a best possible way."

"(Tournament director) Craig Tiley is always trying to accommodate players to make them feel like at home, make them feel respected and valued."

"Things are going in the right direction." (Source: Reuters)

LeBron James says Trump has emboldened racists in the U.S.



Basketball star LeBron James of the Cleveland Cavaliers said on Monday President Donald Trump has emboldened racists in the United States and urged the country not to allow itself to be divided along racial lines.

"The guy in control has given people and racism... an opportunity to be out and outspoken without fear," James, a frequent Trump critic, told reporters prior to the Cavaliers' game against the Golden State Warriors on the U.S. holiday honoring civil rights activist Martin Luther King.

"And that's the fearful thing for us because it's with you and it's around every day but he's allowed people to come out and just feel confident about doing negative things."

Trump has come under fire for reportedly calling some African nations "shithole countries" during a White House meeting with lawmakers discussing U.S. immigration policy.

Trump has denied using such derogatory language, which has led him to be widely condemned by many African leaders and international rights organizations. He told reporters he was "the least racist person

you have ever interviewed."

James said Americans should stand united against hate. "We can't allow that to stop us from continuing to be together and preach the right word of living and loving and laughing," he said. "Because would we want to live anywhere else? I don't think so. We love this place."

In August James, four-time winner of the National Basketball Association's most valuable player award, slammed Trump for saying there were "some very fine people on both sides" of protests spearheaded by white nationalists in Charlottesville, Virginia, which left one counter protester dead.

In September, James called Trump a "bum" on Twitter after the president withdrew a White House invitation to Warriors guard Stephen Curry, who had said he did not want to meet with Trump to celebrate the Warriors NBA 2016-2017 championship.

San Antonio Spurs coach Gregg Popovich, another outspoken Trump critic, on Monday called racism America's "national sin" and said he did not take Trump at his word. (Source: Reuters)

Olympic gold medalist Biles says doctor sexually abused her



Four-time Olympic gold medalist Simone Biles said on Monday she was sexually abused by former USA Gymnastics team physician Larry Nassar, the latest in a list of female athletes to accuse the doctor of misconduct.

The 20-year-old American, who was a key member of the U.S. team that won gold at the 2016 Rio Olympics, joins a number of top-level gymnasts who have accused Nassar of abuse, including Gabby Douglas, Aly Raisman and McKayla Maroney.

"I too am one of the many survivors that was sexually abused by Larry Nassar," Biles, 20, wrote in a letter posted on her Twitter account.

"Please believe me when I say it was a lot harder to first speak those words out loud than it is now to put them on paper. There are many reasons that I have been reluctant to share my story, but I know now it is not my fault."

Nassar's attorney, Matt Newburg, said he had no comment on the latest allegations.

Nassar was sentenced last month to 60 years in prison on federal child pornogra-

phy charges and is set to be sentenced this week in Michigan after pleading guilty to additional counts of criminal sexual conduct related to allegations he assaulted girls under the guise of medical treatment.

"It is not normal to receive any type of treatment from a trusted team physician and refer to it horrifyingly as the 'special' treatment," Biles wrote.

"This behavior is completely unacceptable, disgusting, and abusive, especially coming from someone whom I was TOLD to trust."

Biles, who won a record three successive world all around titles before winning four gold medals at the 2016 Rio Olympics, said the alleged incidents left her broken and the more she tried to "shut off the voice in my head the louder it screams."

She has been an elite gymnast since 2011 and after taking a break to enjoy life away from the gym, she is now training and planning to make her return at the U.S. Classic in late July with the goal of competing in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. (Source: Euro Sport)

Spain police suspect Lionel Messi of fraud

Has Lionel Messi done it again? The diminutive Argentine keeps scoring and evading his opponents on the field, but off the pitch he may not be as adept at evading tax obligations in Spain, according to various media reports.

Lionel Messi is at the center of another tax fraud scandal. It's not the first time that Messi and his father Jorge Horacio, who both have criminal records, have been accused of questionable business practices. The Argentine superstar was handed a prison sentence of 21 months prison sentence in the summer of 2016 for evading €4.1 million in taxes through the use of offshore companies. He hid €10 million from the authorities, but didn't have to serve the sentence as it was a first offence.

This time the FC Barcelona player and his dealings have been exposed by reports in Spanish daily El Mundo and in leading German magazine Der Spiegel, which obtained confidential documents from Football Leaks. Spanish tax authorities are investigating the link between Lionel Messi's non-profit foundation and payments made by the club.

El Mundo claims that Barcelona donated at least €12.5 million to the foundation between 2010 and 2016, amount-



ing to more than 70% of the foundation's revenue. These money transfers were discovered by agents from the Agencia Tributaria, Spain's tax office. Spanish law requires that 70% of a charity's revenue should be spent in relation to its founding purpose.

The foundation's aim is to help children in need. On its website, the foundation writes that it "was created in 2007

with the wish that all children should have the same opportunities to make their dreams come true, and to promote equality in education and health." Der Spiegel highlights "the questionable business practices the Messi clan engages in."

The authorities suspect Barcelona's donations to the foundation are de facto salary payments and demanded all club documents relating to payments made to the foundation in the years 2010 to 2013.

The leaked documents also show that FC Barcelona stepped in to pay Messi's €12 million settlement to avoid another trial through a flimsy loan and bonus construction.

Barcelona has gone to great lengths to keep their global star, key to the club's marketing strategy and soft power, happy. His new contract with the club was dated on the day of the star player's wedding on June 30, 2017. Barcelona guaranteed Messi an annual income of more than €100 million, including his salary and the income from his own image rights. Letting Messi go would have been a nightmare scenario for the Catalans, one that they seemingly wanted to avoid at all costs. (Source: Inside World Football)

Persian Beach Soccer Cup will be a high-level event: Marco Octavio

S P O R T S Iran national beach soccer team head coach Marco Octavio says the Persian Cup will be a high-level tournament with a spectacular atmosphere.

The Persian Beach Soccer Cup will take place in Bushehr, south Iran, from January 27 to 29 where the hosts will go up against three of Europe's premier sides, namely Spain, Ukraine and Azerbaijan.

"Our players are preparing in the camp to get ready for the high-level competition. Without a doubt, all participants in the competition are strong and we respect all of them," Octavio said.

"Mundialito de Clubes was held in Brazil in December and I attended the tournament. Now, I have a good knowledge of the teams in the competition. For example, I

studied Levante who represented Spain in that event and it was a good opportunity for me to know more about our rivals," the Brazilian added.

"Spain, Ukraine and Azerbaijan will participate in Persian Beach Soccer Cup with their main teams, while we take part in the tournament with a mix of experienced and young players," Octavio said.

"Persian Beach Soccer Cup will be a high-level tournament, with a spectacular atmosphere. I invite people of Bushehr to attend the competition and help us win the title," Octavio stated.

"It's a great honor for me to find the good Iranian players from 2008. I am looking for a new generation of beach soccer players, who will be able to show their talents in the future," he concluded.



Iran among top candidates to win 2018 Sitting Volleyball Worlds



S P O R T S Iran, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Egypt are three top candidates to win the 2018 Sitting Volleyball World Championships.

The competition will be held in the Netherlands in June, featuring the world's best 15 male and female teams.

Iran aim to regain the world title they won for the last time in Edmond, USA, in 2010. Led by their 2.46m tall star player Morteza Mehrzad, Iran sealed gold at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games following a 3-1 victory over Bosnia & Herzegovina in the final. They are hoping to repeat such success in the Netherlands, Paralympic.org wrote.

Bosnia & Herzegovina will need to improve as they seek to successfully defend the world title claimed in Elblag, Poland, in 2014, when they beat Brazil 3-1 in a tight final. In 2016, Bosnia & Herzegovina lost to Iran 3-1 in the Paralympic final. One year later, the team lost to Russia in the semi-final at the European Championships and could not defend the continental title for a 10th time.

With Hesham Elshwikhi's leadership, Egypt secured their first Paralympic medal in the sport at Rio 2016, taking bronze after a much-celebrated victory over host Brazil 3-2 in a thrilling game. They have repeatedly ended within the top four teams at World Championships and Paralympic Games and they will surely be a leading contenders again in the Netherlands.

China, USA and Brazil are three top candidates to win the women's competition.

Turkish coach Ersun Yanal linked with Iran's Tractor Sazi

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Tractor Sazi of Iran are reportedly negotiating with Turkish coach Kazim Ersun Yanal.

Iranian media reports suggest that Tractor Sazi want to sign former Trabzonspor coach.

Tractor Sazi have already negotiated with ex-Galatasaray coach Mustafa Denizli and former Werder Bremen coach Alexander Nouri.

With Genclerbirliđi, Ersun Yanal impressed many football followers with excellent wins against Blackburn, Parma and Sporting Lisbon in the 2003-04 UEFA Cup.

Ersun Yanal has also coached Turkey football team in the 2004.

He has also been the General Director of the Turkish Football Federation in 2010.

Tractor Sazi are preparing for the 2018 AFC Champions League, where they have been drawn with the UAE's Al-Jazira, Al-Ahli of Saudi Arabia and Winner Play-off West 3 in Group A.



Simonyan: Russia reaching final four would be huge success

Russian football is facing a landmark year in 2018, as the country hosts the FIFA World Cup™ for the first time in history and celebrates the 60th anniversary of their debut at the tournament.

The country's relationship with FIFA's most prestigious competition began at Sweden 1958, where the USSR produced a respectable finish for the debuting side: reaching the quarter-final before losing to the hosts 2-0.

The captain of that team, who also scored the Soviets' opening goal at the tournament, is 91-year-old Nikita Simonyan. Despite his age, he is still working hard for the good of the sport nationwide as First Vice-President of the Russian Football Union and Ambassador for the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™. Recently, he represented Russia as one of the draw assistants during the FIFA World Cup Final Draw in December last year.

Simonyan's personal moment of glory came in the Soviet Union's 2-2 draw in their opening match against England, when he broke the deadlock in the 13th minute. However, the former striker remains humble about his achievement.

"My task for this goal was the same as the whole team," Simonyan said. "It was the result of a move and my team-mates gave me the assist, so the achievement is down to the whole team and not the player who touched the ball last."

Nevertheless, you cannot underestimate Simonyan's role in Russian football history; in



many ways, he is Russian football. Simonyan recently sat down for an interview with FIFA.com to revisit the World Cup 60 years ago and share his thoughts on the upcoming tournament on home soil for Russia.

Playing at the 1958 World Cup:

"There are many different competitions, such as domestic leagues and cups. I also won a gold medal at the 1956 Olympic Games held in Melbourne. However, only the World Cup can truly confer the title of the best international team on the planet: there is no comparison with any other tournament. So, I am proud to have played at the sixth World Cup in Sweden in 1958, when the Soviet Union reached the quarter-finals.

"My young friends maybe don't know that back then there were no substitutes. In case

of injury, the team was forced to played with ten men. For a variety of reasons, the USSR didn't take the strongest squad to Sweden. Even without four of our best players, we made it to the quarter-finals, where we lost to the eventual finalists Sweden. We played five matches in 11 days, including the play-off against England. Without subs! Nowadays they play again after three or four days and there's enough time to recover."

Russia's aims in 2018:

"The first task is always the same: qualify from the group. To play in the semi-final or win the tournament, you need to complete the first step and then set a new objective. It would be a huge success if our players reached the last four."

Russia's captain and leader:

"Igor Akinfeev is Russia's best player at the moment; everyone respects him in the squad. The position of goalkeeper carries huge responsibility. I was a striker: if I scored one chance out of three, I'd receive praise, while if a keeper makes five difficult saves but lets an easy one in, people would say he lost the game.

"I can't help but remember Lev Yashin, whom I played with in the national team. A goalkeeper exudes a sense of confidence to all outfield players, especially his defenders. Akinfeev's best qualities are his reactions and organisation. He has a fine strike on him as well and can hit the ball 60 or 70 metres. The most important thing is his confidence and reliability. He's an outstanding keeper, although Yashin is considered the best of all time."

Favourites for the World Cup:

"Germany, without a doubt. England haven't won for a long time, since 1966. Of course, there are also Spain, Argentina, Brazil and Portugal. Surprises are possible, but the top teams in the world are fairly well-established today. You all know the famous phrase said by Gary Lineker, with whom I chatted before the Final Draw. Germany have a huge advantage in their high-playing discipline, fighting spirit and character, but all 32 teams will try to show these qualities.

"In any case, I hope the World Cup goes off at the highest level and all the fans who come to our country are happy."

(Source: FIFA)

Mignolet to consider Liverpool future after losing place to Loris Karius

Liverpool goalkeeper Simon Mignolet has told sporza he will think about his position at Anfield after Loris Karius was installed as first choice for the foreseeable future.

Mignolet has been on the bench for Liverpool's last two games, and Jurgen Klopp said before Sunday's win over Manchester City that Karius had the chance to secure the No. 1 spot on a permanent basis.

And Mignolet said that although he respected his manager's decision he would have to assess whether his long-term future lies at Anfield as he approaches the age of 30.

"After all that has happened this season, I know where I am at and the situation has become clearer," the Belgium international said.

"Klopp told me honestly and personally in that conversation. Of course I am absolutely not satisfied with that, but I must always respect a decision of the coach.

"Then we played against Everton in the FA Cup, and after



a longer break the game followed against Manchester City. So I had a hunch of what would happen, and that proved to be correct. "I always try to stay quiet and calm. In the past, I did come back stronger from such situations.

"But I must of course also think of my own future. The only thing I can do is focus on my training and do my best. I become 30 years old and the World Cup is coming this summer. "This situation cannot take too long, which is clear. I cannot lose any more time."

Mignolet denied any bust-up with Klopp, but said he had held talks about his standing in the team.

"I have heard those rumors too, but there is absolutely no truth in it," he said.

"Ten days ago I had a conversation with Klopp after the game against Burnley. In the Christmas period we rotated again and I found that it was not a healthy situation for a goalkeeper.

"Klopp told me what was said on Sunday before and after the match. Of course I am not happy with that but there were certainly no heavy words, in hindsight."

(Source: ESPN)

Dragan Skocic appointed as Iran's Khooneh Be Khooneh coach

TASNIM — Dragan Skocic has been named as new head coach of Khooneh Be Khooneh football team on Monday.

The 49-year-old Croat has been appointed as Iran's First Division team until the end of the season.

Skocic replaced Javad Nekounam who stepped down last week due to financial problems.

Khooneh Be Khooneh sit fifth in the Azadegan League table, nine points behind leaders Naft Masjed Soleyman.

The Babol-based team have already qualified for the Iran's Hazfi Cup semi-final.

Dragan Skocic has already worked in Iranian football clubs Malavan and Foolad.

Cameroonian striker Aloys Nong joins Saipa

TASNIM — Aloys Bertrand Nong has joined Iranian top flight team Saipa until the end of the season on Monday.

The Cameroonian striker has joined Saipa from another Iranian team Pars Jonoubi.

The details on Nong's contract have not been revealed.

The 34-year-old striker signed for Iranian club Foolad in the middle of the 2014-2015 season and played in the AFC Champions League with the team.

At the end of the season he left the club and signed with Naft Tehran. He has also played for Iranian teams Tractor Sazi and Esteghlal Khuzestan. Saipa sit seventh in Iran Professional League (IPL) table, 16 points behind pacesetter Persepolis.

Nigerian Odibe on Iran's Tractor Sazi's radar

IRNA — Nigerian defender Michael Chukwuwike Odibe has been linked with a mover to Iranian top-flight football team Tractor Sazi. The 30-year-old defender, who has also played in Italian team Siena, will travel to Iran on Thursday to negotiate with Tractor Sazi. Odibe most recently played for Kazakhstan's Akzhayik and now is a free agent player.

Tractor Sazi are preparing for the 2018 AFC Champions League, where they have been drawn with the UAE's Al-Jazira, Al-Ahli of Saudi Arabia and Winner Play-off West 3 in Group A.

New Zealand league player banned for doping

Auckland domestic rugby league player Siliga Kepaoa has been handed an 18-month ban after two positive doping tests.

Kepaoa, a prop for national premiership champions the Akarana Falcons, was twice found by Drug Free Sport New Zealand to have ingested the prohibited substance Higenamine.

The first positive test was after a Falcons training session in September and the second came after the national premiership final three weeks later when Kepaoa scored a try in his team's 30-4 win over Waikato.

Because Kepaoa wasn't notified of the first positive result before his second, the two violations are treated as one in accordance with anti-doping rules.

The ban imposed by the Sports Tribunal is backdated to the date of the first positive test on September 19.

Kepaoa admitted using a supplement which sold itself as a 'super potent thermogenic fat burner'.

Drug Free Sport NZ chief executive Nick Paterson says despite Kepaoa receiving anti-doping education around the risks of using supplements, the 29-year-old didn't take the threat of taking a prohibited substance seriously.

In this case, Higenamine was listed on the label of ingredients on the back of the supplement container.

"As a top-level amateur athlete who has had education about the risk of taking supplements it's disappointing that once again, a talented sportsman is going to be on the sidelines," Paterson said.

"These sanctions are preventable with a bit of research and checks through the right channels."

Al Ain sign former AFC Player of the Year Ahmed Khalil

The man named Asia's best player in 2015 joins the 2016 winner Omar Abdulrahman at the Garden City side, ahead of their 2018 AFC Champions League Play-off.

The inaugural AFC Champions League winners Al Ain made a strong statement of their intention to not only participate in this year's group stage, but also go deep in the tournament once again with the marquee signing of 2015 AFC Player of the Year Ahmed Khalil from Al Jazira.

The 26-year-old United Arab Emirates international joins on a six-month deal ahead of Al Ain's AFC Champions League play-off tie with Bahrain's Al Malkiya on January 30.

"I am very proud to be joining Al Ain, the club that every local and continental football player wishes to join," Khalil said.

"I never was thinking of the money because my focus was to get ready for the new challenge with great desire because I know very well the value and status of my new club.

"Firstly, I have the opportunity to play for one of the best clubs in Asia, and that's the reality."

Khalil will have the opportunity to re-create his national team partnership with 2016 AFC Player of the Year Omar Abdulrahman (above) at his new side.

"It is not a secret to say that I wish to play with my teammates from Al Ain who form 80% of the UAE National Team," he added.

"Absolutely, I am so proud that I played for the best clubs in the State: Shabab Al Ahli Dubai and Al Jazira and now Al Ain."

(Source: the-afc)

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“Subdued” to compete in Jounieh Intl. Film Festival in Lebanon

A R T TEHRAN — “Subdued” by Hamid Nematollah from Iran will be competing with five other movies from different countries in the First Jounieh International Film Festival opening in the Lebanese coastal city today.



Leila Hatami acts in a scene from “Subdued” by Hamid Nematollah.

Starring Leila Hatami, the film is about Mina who is recently divorced from her drug addict husband. With her mother deceased and estranged from her father, she leads an independent life. After finding a job in a restaurant, she strikes up a friendship with its attentive manager. She starts having feelings she has never before experienced. These feelings, eventually shared, are shaken when the manager begins to distance himself from her. Thus commences a tumultuous emotional journey.

“Subdued” was selected as best film at the 11th Celebration of Iranian Cinema Critics and Screenwriters in August 2017.

Other films competing in the official section are “Ali, the Goat, and Ibrahim” by Sherif El Bendary and “Kiss Me Not” by Ahmed Amer, both from Egypt, “Happy Birthday” by Christos Georgiou from Greece, “The Dionti Family” by Alan Minas from Brazil and “The Flower of Aleppo” by Ridha Behi from Tunisia.

The festival will be running until January 22.

Cranberries singer Dolores O’Riordan dies suddenly at 46

DUBLIN (Reuters) — Dolores O’Riordan, the lead singer of Irish rock group The Cranberries, died suddenly on Monday at the age of 46 during a recording trip to London, her publicist said. The cause of death was unclear.

O’Riordan’s distinctive Irish lilt and yodel helped fuel the Cranberries’ rapid rise in the early 1990s with global hits “Linger” and “Zombie.” The band went on to sell over 40 million records to become Ireland’s second-best-selling rock band after U2.

Irish President Michael D. Higgins described O’Riordan’s death as a big loss to Irish music, saying her influence was “immense.”

But a naturally reserved singer, O’Riordan often struggled with fame, leaving her native Ireland for several years to avoid the spotlight. During her separation from her husband in 2014, she was arrested for attacking a police officer.

The singer’s publicist said she died during a short recording trip to London, but declined to comment on the cause of death.

“Family members are devastated to hear the breaking news and have requested privacy at this very difficult time,” the publicist, Lindsey Holmes, said in a statement. O’Riordan is survived by two daughters and a son.

Police in London said a woman in her 40s was pronounced dead early on Monday at a hotel on Park Lane in central London.

A spokesman said police were continuing inquiries into the death, which was being treated as “unexplained.” The woman had yet to be formally identified, he said.

The Cranberries shot to fame with their 1993 debut album “Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can’t We?” after the hit song “Linger” was picked up by MTV. The band’s first three albums sold a combined 28 million copies.

But the strain on O’Riordan, who was so shy that she performed with her back to the audience during some early concerts, was also becoming clear, with the band cutting short a tour in 1996 citing exhaustion and disillusionment.

O’Riordan left the Cranberries in 2003 and recorded two solo albums, before the band reformed in 2009.

Last year the Cranberries canceled a number of concerts in North America and Europe, saying O’Riordan was suffering from back problems.

British pop band Duran Duran, whose tour manager, Don Burton, was O’Riordan’s husband from 1994 until they separated in 2014 and was father to her children, said in a twitter post that they were “crushed” by the news.

Irish singer Hozier said he was “shocked and saddened.” “My first time hearing Dolores O’Riordan’s voice was unforgettable,” he said. “I’d never heard somebody use their instrument in that way.”



Irish singer Dolores O’Riordan poses during an autograph session to promote her new solo album in Hong Kong April 24, 2007. (Reuters/Paul Yeung)

“Monte” crowned best at Iranian Film Festival in Prague

A R T TEHRAN — “Monte” by the U.S.-based Iranian filmmaker Amir Naderi has won the best film award at the Iranian Film Festival in Prague, Czech.

Over 30 Iranian films competed in various sections of the festival as winners were announced on Sunday evening, Iranian Short Film Association (ISFA) announced on Tuesday.

The festival mostly focuses on Iranian independent cinema. Starring Andrea Sartoretti and Claudia Potenza, “Monte” was filmed in Italy in the mountainous regions of Alto Adige and Friuli.

The film tells the story of a man who makes every attempt to bring the sunlight into his village, where his family is barely able to survive because of the prevailing darkness.

“Marzieh” by Dornaz Hajih was picked as the best short film. It tells the story of a couple whose life changes drastically after they return home from a funeral for a relative.

The award for best documentary was given to “The Invincible Diplomacy of Mr. Naderi.” Co-directed by Maryam Moqaddam and Behdash Sanaeiha, the film is about a man named Naderi who wants to act as a mediator between Iran and the United States.

This year, the festival organized several discussion panels attended by a number of Iranian filmmakers.

“The Night It Rained” by Kamran Shiridel and “A Simple Event” by Sohrab Shahid-Saleh, two documentaries that highlight the significant role of the two filmmakers in independent Iranian cinema, were screened and discussed at the program.

The festival opened in the two Czech cities of Prague and Brno on January 9 and will end today. It will then continue in the Slovakian capital of Bratislava from January 18 to 20.

The event has been organized by the Europe Media Nest, a Prague-based private company that supports media and film projects.



A scene from Amir Naderi’s “Monte”

Iranian premiere of “Beyond the Clouds” set for Feb. 14



A scene from “Beyond the Clouds”

A R T TEHRAN — “Beyond the Clouds”, a drama shot in India by Iranian director Majid Majidi, will have its Iranian premiere at Tehran’s Kurosh Cineplex on February 14, Iran’s Screening Council told the Persian service of ISNA on Tuesday.

The Nourtaban Film Industry is the Iranian distributor of the movie produced by India’s Zee Studios, and Shareen Mantri

Kedia and Kishor Arora of Namah Pictures.

Starring Ishaan Khattar, Malavika Mohanan and Sharada, the film revolves around the life of a young boy, Amir, and his sister, Tara, in Mumbai. When on the run from the cops, Amir finds his estranged sister, who in a bid to protect her brother lands in jail. Their entire lives are clouded by despair when unexpectedly, the light shines on them from beyond the clouds.

Leading world storytellers to attend Tehran festival



A poster for the 20th International Storytelling Festival

A R T TEHRAN — Eight different countries will be attending the International Storytelling Festival, which will be held in Tehran from January 22 to 25.

Beatriz Montero from Spain, Fatima Farhat from Lebanon, Barbara Amaral from Brazil, Nor Azhar Ishak from Malaysia and Beyza Akyuz from Turkey are among

the storytellers invited.

Other storytellers are coming from Afghanistan, India and Kenya.

The festival is organized every year by the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA).

Montero took part in one of the previous editions of the festival in 2016 and held a workshop for a group of Iranian teachers at the IIDCYA.

“Pig” from Iran to compete in Berlinale

A R T TEHRAN — “Pig” by Iranian filmmaker Mani Haqiqi, the director of the acclaimed dramas “Modest Reception” and “A Dragon Arrives!”, will screen in the official competition of the 68th edition of the Berlin International Film Festival – Berlinale, the organizers announced on Monday.

The film is about Hassan, a filmmaker who has not been able to make any films recently, but his popular starlet can’t wait any longer and wants to leave and work with another director. His wife no longer loves him. His daughter has grown up and feels independent. His elderly mother is suffering from Alzheimer’s disease. A disturbingly beautiful woman tracks him everywhere he goes and wants him to give her a role in his films.

Worse yet, a murderer is killing directors of Iranian cinema in the city, but he has ignored



Hassan Majuni acts in a scene from “Pig”.

Hassan. Now he is despondent: isn’t he the most important filmmaker of the city? Why then doesn’t the murderer care about him? The situation becomes more intolerable when Hassan is accused as the prime suspect for the murder cases on the social networks. Now he is forced to concoct a clever plan to rebuild his destroyed reputation.

The movie stars Hassan Majuni, Leila Hatami, Leili Rashidi, Parinaz Izadyar and Ali Bagheri.

Other movies will also contend for the Golden Bear at the festival, which will run in the German city from February 15 to 25.

Among the film are “3 Days In Quiberon” by Emily Atef from Germany, Austria and France, “Damsel” by David Zellner and Nathan Zellner from the U.S., and “The Prayer” by Cédric Kahn from France.

The organizers intend to add additional films to the lineup soon.

Color returns to Hollywood’s red carpets but Time’s Up still strong

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — After making a strong statement in black dresses at the Golden Globes to protest sexual harassment, actresses brought a burst of color back to the red carpet last week but said the message of the Time’s Up campaign will continue throughout Hollywood’s awards season.

From white gowns on Angelina Jolie and Greta Gerwig to bold tones on Nicole Kidman, Jessica Chastain and Allison Janney, actresses and filmmakers donned a vast palette at the Jan. 11 Critics Choice awards.

“The ‘Wear Black’ specifically was for the Golden Globes but the (Time’s Up) message remains. Enough is enough,” said Rachel Brosnahan, award-winning star of Amazon series “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel.”

“This is just the beginning of a much larger conversation that’s being translated

into action, black or not,” said Brosnahan, who was dressed in a pale pink shimmering Zuhair Murad dress.

With glamorous stars drawing millions of spectators, red carpets have become the fashion world’s most coveted runway.

The Golden Globes saw throngs of top male and female talent wear black and don pins in solidarity with Time’s Up, launched by more than 300 entertainment figures to address workplace sexual harassment.

The Jan. 7 Golden Globes turnout raised questions about whether black would rule every show through the awards season, which culminates in the Oscars ceremony on March 4.

“The unity on the night was absolutely vital, but definitely going forward, we would want any woman to wear what she feels great in,” said InStyle editor-in-chief Laura

Brown.

At the Critics Choice Awards, a handful of actresses stuck with the black dress code including Reese Witherspoon in Prada, Laura Dern in a Balmain jumpsuit and Emilia Clarke in Dolce and Gabbana. All three helped launch Time’s Up.

The scramble for black outfits at the Golden Globes is likely to have left actresses with numerous options for upcoming ceremonies such as the Jan. 21 Screen Actors Guild awards, said Marilyn Heston, founder of publicity firm MHA Media.

For an actress hoping to stand out on the red carpet, a bold color is often the way to win approval from the fashion world.

Black dresses, however, have always been good for business.

“There’s a lot of women out there who love wearing black dresses. They sell,”

Heston said.

“If there’s really beautiful black gowns and cocktail dresses created for some of the other events, I would say a great number of women will go ‘wow, wonderful dresses, can I buy them?’”

The award shows coincide with fashion weeks in New York, Paris, Milan and London, where designers will showcase their autumn/winter 2018 collections.

Whether there will be a flurry of black dresses on the runway remains to be seen, Brown said, but she added designers are conscious of the movement.

“The last thing you want for a designer is to not be themselves, but also designers are acutely aware of the world around them so hopefully there’s a way they can marry their own signatures with being cognizant of where we are,” Brown said.