



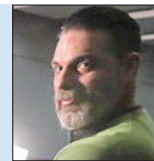
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# Conflict of invaders in Yemen



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## Rouhani: Our military power is for peace not war

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday that Iran's military power is for peace and not war. “We should have power for deterrence and dignified peace, and we should always be ready to counter threats,” Rouhani said in a ceremony arranged to launch 10 cul-

tural centers and Holy Defense museums. The Trump administration has created a commotion over Iran's ballistic missile program. The Trump administration, which has made repeated attacks against the landmark nuclear program, has argued that Iran's missile program should be included in the nuclear deal. **→2**

## Iran able to raise oil output, complies with OPEC pact

**By Ebrahim Fallahi**  
**TEHRAN** — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said although Iran is able to increase its crude oil output by 100,000 barrels per day in less than few days but complying with OPEC, non-OPEC pact the country will keep the output at the agreed levels.

According to the minister, the increase in production levels would come from the West Karoun oilfields which Iran shares with Iraq. “Oil production from the West Karoun fields has currently reached 305,000 barrels per day, 145,000 barrels more than last year's 160,000 barrels,” Zanganeh said. **→4**

## Charity foundation to build 1,000 schools nationwide

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Barekat charity foundation and the Education Ministry have signed a memorandum of understanding to build 1,000 schools nationwide, IRIB reported on Sunday. The charity foundation will finish the project of construction of one thousand schools, most particularly in underprivileged areas, within 4 years. So far the foundation has completed

construction of 6,000 schools for some 130,000 students in less developed and poor areas in 31 province of Iran. The construction project of the aforesaid schools valued at 7 trillion rials (nearly \$155 million). By the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20) at least some 300 new schools for around 44,000 students will be completed in poor and earthquake-stricken regions of Iran.

## Trump administration lacks skill to reconcile PGCC states: Bianchi

**By Javad Heirannia**  
**TEHRAN** — Robert R. Bianchi, a Professor at the University of Chicago, believes that the Trump administration lacks the diplomatic skills to resolve conflicts that are destroying the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC). Professor Bianchi, who also teaches at the Shanghai International Studies University (SISU), adds that “Washington might be able to negotiate a series of separate agreements with each country, but a collective pact is beyond reach.” The professor tells the Tehran Times that “in the long run, Washington seems powerless to stop the erosion of its influence in the Persian Gulf at a time when many other countries are making impressive gains, particularly Iran, Russia, China, and Turkey.” Following is the complete text of the interview: ■ There are reports that a summit might be held in the United States in May about the Qatar crisis with the participation of the Emir of Qatar, the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, and the crown

prince of the UAE. Can such a summit solve the disputes between Qatar and its adversaries? A: The Trump administration lacks the diplomatic skill to reconcile the conflicts that are destroying the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council. Eventually, Washington might be able to negotiate a series of separate agreements with each country, but a collective pact is beyond reach. ■ US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said that the negative consequences of the Persian Gulf regional crisis are not only limited to the Arab countries but also included the United States. What kind of losses is the United States facing? A: The US faces three types of damages. Immediately, the Trump administration is embarrassed by its internal divisions and contradictory responses to splits among long-time allies. More seriously, much of the American government is being penetrated and lobbied by opportunistic oil billionaires who think they can buy influence with competing agencies and play them off against

one another. In the long run, Washington seems powerless to stop the erosion of its influence in the Persian Gulf at a time when many other countries are making impressive gains, particularly Iran, Russia, China, and Turkey. ■ Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdul Rahman Al Thani said that Qatar is ready to attend the meeting. But he argued that Doha would not be willing to accept the announced conditions and also demanded resolving the crisis on the basis of equality between countries. However, is the Qatar crisis resolvable? A: The brawl has resulted in the demise of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council as a regional alliance. Qatar's adversaries have weakened themselves individually and collectively. ■ Which of the 13 terms and conditions announced by Saudi Arabia and its allies might Qatar have to accept? A: Qatar can ignore all of the demands with impunity because no one has ever regarded them as serious negotiating points.

## Ex-CIA analyst suggests PGCC talks may resolve crisis

**By Javad Heirannia**  
**TEHRAN** — Professor Paul Pillar, who was a CIA intelligence analyst for 28 years, tells the Tehran Times that “The United States not only wants to maintain friendly relations with both sides in the PGCC dispute but also has important military and security cooperation with each side.” Pillar also says: “So far the United States has not suffered more specific losses to its own interests and in some respects has gained, in the form of concessions, that Qatar has granted to it in the form of arms purchases and expanded base rights.”

“Cooler heads in Riyadh and the other capitals concerned probably are already realizing that Qatar is not going to cave in to pressure as easily as might have been thought a few months ago,” Pillar tells the Tehran Times. Following is the text of the interview: ■ A summit with participation of the Emir of Qatar, crown prince of Saudi Arabia and crown prince of the UAE will be held in the United States in May on the Qatar crisis. Are we looking at the end of dispute in Qatar with some of the Persian Gulf Arab states?

A: The scheduled meeting would be an obvious occasion for trying to make major progress in resolving the dispute, and preferably for resolving it altogether. The Trump administration would like nothing better than to be able to announce, after a meeting on its own territory, that it had mediated a resolution of this conflict among the Persian Gulf monarchies. Doing so would burnish Mr. Trump's self-promoted image as a “deal-maker” in addition to eliminating other problems that the conflict has caused for the United States. **→7**



**EDITORIAL**  
**By Mohammad Ghaderi**  
Tehran Times editor-in-chief  
@ghaderi62

## The dual on Downing Street

Brexit is still a hot topic for discussion in the United Kingdom (U.K.) and as well other members of the European Union (EU). Many political experts believe that Brexit talks are not going well, since there is no willingness on either side to carry out the results of the 2016 referendum in England. On one hand, British authorities emphasize the need to leave the EU while sending mixed messages to EU leaders about remaining part of the union. This duality has confused British citizens.

The current state of limbo may be what the British Prime Minister Theresa May has instigated. Some believe that by keeping the British at midpoint will assist in gaining support in whatever decision she will ultimately make about staying with or leaving the European Union. So far, British leaders have been ambiguous about their intentions. The former leader of the UK Independence Party Nigel Farage recently blasted Theresa May's approach, calling it totally unacceptable. He believes that Britain can't be an independent, democratic state while an active member of the European Union and that Britain must rid itself of the burden of European bureaucracy to achieve economic growth.

Despite Farage's comments, the economic and governmental institutions in the United Kingdom are preparing themselves for the aftermath and consequences of their withdrawal from the EU. In doing so, the official bodies in the U.K. are carefully manipulating public opinion by publishing biased reports regarding Brexit.

The British Prime Minister's dual approach towards the Brexit negotiations will continue in the coming months until she gains stealth on Britain's executive equations (Marjan, is this a good word, equation?). Theresa May knows well that the Brexit talks will not easily reach a desirable outcome.

Hence, the world will bear witness to an escalation of the crisis between supporters and opponents of Brexit in the U.K. This confrontation will be carefully maneuvered by the British government to reach the desired outcome.

It should be noted that with the influence of British government propaganda, the latest polls suggest an increase to the opposition to Brexit. **→7**



**ARTICLE**  
**By Hanif Ghaffari**  
Political analyst

## French approach to JPCOA is paradoxical

Conservative French leaders along with their American counterparts are lining up to make new demands on the Iran nuclear deal. Not to be outdone by the irrational mandates of Donald Trump, French President Emmanuel Macron is now calling for amendments to the Iran nuclear deal.

On the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, Macron met with Trump in New York to discuss Iran's missile capabilities and set new time limits on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

In their joint efforts with the U.S., the French are now demanding restrictions to Iran's missile capabilities. In their latest attempt to demonize Iran, the French have accused the Islamic Republic of violating United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 and have criticized its use of ballistic missiles.

During the World Economic Summit in Davos, the French also met with Zionist and American leaders. In one of these meetings, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu remarked:

“I said that in my opinion, the only option at the moment is to introduce real rather than cosmetic amendments that will prevent Iran from nuclearization, which is now guaranteed under the agreement.”

The French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian is scheduled for a state visit to Iran on March 5, 2018, during which he is to convey the Joint Plan of Paris and Washington and discuss Iran's regional activities.

Le Drian says he plans to discuss allegations of Iran's “destabilizing military influence in the Middle East.” The French Foreign Minister alleges that Iran has been supporting Lebanon's Hezbollah and Yemen's Houthi militias. This is while France's sudden criticism of Iran's ballistic missile tests and the threat of new sanctions over the program is an affront to the JCPOA.

Iran has been steadfast in its commitment to the JCPOA, a fact that has been confirmed by IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano. The Islamic Republic's missile program is purely defensive, and Tehran dismisses malicious allegations set forth by the West that it is destabilizing the region. **→13**



© Honaronline / Seyed Hafez Hosseini

## Journalists attend Fajr Film Festival

Journalists queue at the Mellat Cineplex in Tehran on February 3, 2018 to get into a theater screening movies from the 36th Fajr Film Festival. The festival opened last Thursday and will run until February 11.



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Jafari says IRGC duty-bound to protect Islamic Revolution

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) is duty-bound to protect the Islamic Revolution and its achievements, IRGC Commander Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari said on Sunday.

Speaking to reporters in Tehran, General Jafari said the Iranian people would respond to the enemies by their massive participation in the February 11 marches marking the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The Iranian nation toppled the U.S.-backed Pahlavi regime 39 years ago, ending the 2,500 years of monarchic rule in the country.



Zangeneh denies claims on oil for fighter jet barter

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Zangeneh has dismissed claims on an agreement between Tehran and Moscow to barter oil for Russian fighter aircraft.

According to Zangeneh, the cooperation with Russia is merely restricted to the industry of oil and gas, Trend reported on Sunday, citing IRNA.

Under an initial agreement, Russia was expected to buy up to 500,000 b/d of oil in return for Russian equipment and commodities.

This major oil deal, estimated to be worth \$1.5 billion a month, was subject to modifications. The two countries finally agreed on 100,000 b/d, largely down from the previous figure.



Dress code protesters under drug influence: Judiciary

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Judiciary spokesman Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i said on Sunday that some of the women who were arrested for protesting the dress code by taking off their hijabs were under the influence of drug abuse.

Mohseni-Eje'i warned families to beware of the moves that influence women to protest the Islamic Republic's dress code, saying some of the arrested women were not aware of what movements they represented by their actions.

There are women in the streets who do not fully conform to the dress code but they are not arrested, he said, adding that those who systematically oppose hijab will face the consequences.



'Islamic Revolution will suffer if Rouhani administration fails'

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Parvaz Fattah, the head of the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation, says if the current administration does not succeed, the Iranian nation as well as the Islamic Revolution will suffer.

"We have voted for [all] these administrations, whether the Rouhani administration or the administrations of Ahmadinejad, Khatami and Hashemi Rafsanjani; all of them are the administrations of the Islamic establishment," Fattah said in an interview with the Etemad newspaper published on Sunday.

"Therefore, we are obliged to help all of them," he said, emphasizing that the Islamic Republic can be successful in the field of economy as it is in military and security fields.



Intelligence Ministry seizes major drug haul

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The Iranian intelligence forces have managed to capture the biggest ever haul of illegal drugs in recent years in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, the Intelligence Ministry announced on Sunday.

Following round-the-clock activities, Intelligence Ministry forces in Sistan-Baluchestan seized 2,869 kilograms of illicit drugs that had been smuggled into the country, according to the official website of the ministry.

The drugs haul had been loaded into two pickup trucks. Iran, which has a 900-kilometer common border with Afghanistan, has been used as the main conduit for smuggling Afghan drugs to narcotics kingpins in Europe.



Iran captures 4 trespassing fishing vessels in Arvand waterway

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iranian naval guards have seized four Indian fishing vessels for trespassing on the country's territorial waters in the Arvand waterway on the mouth of the Persian Gulf.

Colonel Mohammad-Ali Mousivand, commander of the Abadan Navy Base, said the vessels had been seized on Saturday morning during a patrol by his forces, Press TV reported on Sunday.

The vessels had 16 crew members who were arrested as "border intruders," he added.

Mousivand said all those detained will be freed after Iran's Foreign Ministry takes measures to resolve their problem.

# Tehran: Deadly arms exporters unqualified to air judgment on Iran's defense program

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign Ministry has said the United States and other countries that export deadly weapons, many of which end up being used against innocent civilians, are in no position to express opinion about the Islamic Republic's missile defense program.

"America and some other countries, which are producing and exporting deadly weapons, must not export destructive weapons worth hundreds of billions of dollars to this sensitive region by deceit and pass judgment about Iran's defense might at the same time," Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi told IRNA on Saturday.

The United States has launched an intensive propaganda campaign against Iran's missile program which Tehran insists is only for defensive purposes.

Qassemi said Iran has "legitimate" and "undeniable" right to increase its deterrent power in order to protect its national and security interests.

In accordance with Islamic and national teachings and the principles of the Constitution, the Islamic Republic has not backed down one iota from its legitimate right to strengthen its defensive capabilities and "will still strongly pursue plans and objectives as well as its required defense strategies,



particularly in the field of its missile capability," the Foreign Ministry official stated.

Pointing to overt and covert military interventions of global powers, particularly by

the United States, in other countries, coupled with psychological warfare, constant Israeli military threats against Iran and various plots by some regional countries, he said, "The

Islamic Republic of Iran will not wait for any state's permission to safeguard its national security, preserve the country's sovereignty and defend its nation."

Qassemi added the enemies have made massive efforts to undermine Iran's defense and security power over the past 40 years and are seeking to establish a kind of "unequal military balance" against Iran.

"A powerful Iran is very important not only for the great Iranian nation but for regional peace, stability and security. Undoubtedly, Iran's capability will thwart plots of regional and international enemies and bar them from carrying out any unwise action," the Foreign Ministry spokesman remarked.

Referring to the deterrent nature of Iran's missile program, he said the Israeli regime and the U.S. have found out that a strong and independent Iran would never bow to their bullying and that Tehran would give a firm response to their "thoughtless" measures.

Qassemi added the Islamic Republic has never attacked any neighboring or regional countries over the past centuries and would never do so in the future.

Iran has always made efforts to boost peace and security in the region, he said, adding that psychological warfare against Iran is aimed at promoting Iranophobia.

## U.S. reliance on nuclear arms violates NPT: Zarif

**TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Saturday that Washington's reliance on nuclear arms violates the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

"The U.S. Nuclear Posture Review reflects greater reliance on nukes in violation of the #NPT, bringing humankind closer to annihilation. No wonder the Doomsday Clock is at its most dangerous since 1953. Trump's obduracy in killing the #JCPOA stems from the same dangerous imprudence," Zarif tweeted.

In 1970, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or NPT, was ratified, and it was extended indefinitely in 1995. Under the treaty, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council — China, France, Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom — were acknowledged as nuclear powers, and other countries that joined the treaty agreed not to pursue nuclear weapons development, although they are allowed to use nuclear technology for non-military purposes.

On Friday, Washington unveiled its Nuclear Posture

Review (NPR), a new nuclear arms policy that purportedly aims to revamp the U.S. nuclear arsenal and develop new low-yield atomic weapons.

The policy effectively ends efforts under the administration of former President Barack Obama to reduce the size and scope of the U.S. arsenal and minimize the role of nuclear weapons in defense planning, outlining the Pentagon's nuclear ambitions under President Donald Trump.

(Source: Press TV)

## Defense minister says U.S. trying to transfer Daesh to Afghanistan

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iranian Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Sunday that the U.S. is seeking to transfer Daesh militants to Afghanistan to justify its own presence in the Central Asian country.

"After heavy defeat (of Daesh) in Syria and Iraq, the U.S. has been making efforts to transfer Daesh to Afghanistan to justify presence there," Hatami told Afghan Defense Minister Tariq Shah Bahrami in a phone conversation.

Hatami also warned that the U.S. intends to increase the number of its forces

in Afghanistan.

Iran's defense chief suggested that establishing security in Afghanistan is only possible through a "positive approach" by the regional countries.

All the regional countries should use capacities to fight terrorism and help establish peace in Afghanistan, he added.

It is about 40 years that Afghanistan is caught in a conflict resulting from foreign invasion, war between rival factions, and terrorism.

"Iran has always been concerned about foreigners' plots against the Afghan peo-



ple and has made any efforts to reduce the Afghans' suffering during these years," Hatami noted.

For his part, Bahrami said Iran, Afghanistan and other neighboring countries should not ignore terrorism as the "common enemy" and should cooperate in fighting it.

The Afghan defense minister went on to say that there are more than 20 terrorist groups in his country which will threaten the entire region if they are not countered with.

He also called for more cooperation between the Iranian and Afghan defense ministries.

## Rouhani: Our military power is for peace not war



**1 →** "The people and officials do not need to hold talks on the country's defense capabilities," Rouhani asserted.

He noted that Iran should be so powerful that no country would dare to threaten it.

"The enemy should feel that he should pay a high price for attacking us," he added.

Rouhani said Iran builds any weapon essential for defense within the framework of law and the fatwa of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"However, we are not after building mass-destruction weapons."

The president also attached great importance to national unity, saying it promotes national power.

"We should always stand beside each other. The Armed Forces should

stand beside the government, the government should be beside the seminary schools and the seminary schools should stand beside the people. If we refrain from standing together, there will be no national power and the economic, political and cultural powers will face problems," the president opined.

**■ 'Cyberspace should be opportunity'** Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani said that cyberspace should be considered as an "opportunity".

"Cyberspace exists and will continue to exist. It should be turned into an opportunity to promote values and spirit of resistance. The youths are well able to use this space," he said.

He added that "spirit of resistance" should be boosted in a way that no one dares to hatch plot against the country.

## The president says Iran should be so powerful that no country would dare to threaten it.

## Iran says jails 'nuclear spy' for U.S., European country

Iran has sentenced an unnamed person to six years in jail for selling information about its nuclear program to the United States and a European country, the Iranian judiciary's news website reported on Sunday.

Tehran prosecutor Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi told judiciary news website Mizan that the convicted person had met nine times with U.S. and European agents to hand over information "about sanctions and nuclear

matters" and had received unspecified sums of money in return.

"This person has been sentenced to six years imprisonment and the return and seizure of funds," Dolatabadi said.

In December, Dolatabadi said Iran's Supreme Court had upheld a death sentence against Ahmadreza Djalali, a Sweden-based Iranian academic convicted of provid-

ing information to Israel to help it assassinate several senior nuclear scientists.

At least four scientists were killed between 2010 and 2012 in what Tehran said were assassinations meant to sabotage its efforts to develop nuclear energy.

Western powers and Israel said Iran aimed to build a nuclear bomb, which Tehran denied.

(Source: Channel News Asia)

## IRGC missile facilities immune to possible attacks: general



**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The underground missile facilities of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) are immune to all sorts of hostile attacks, says Hossein Salami, the IRGC's second-in-command.

In comments at a television talk show on Saturday, General Salami said that not all projectiles are stockpiled inside the missile facilities, Tasnim reported.

Salami said there are lots of missile facilities in the country, which are very safe from possible attacks, including conventional and unconventional ones.

The IRGC missiles, he said, are not stored in those facilities alone, but numerous missiles of various types could be fired at once from various places, given the type of threats.

The commander stressed that Iran's missile power is only a portion of its defense capabilities, pointing to the major advances that the country has made in drone industry.

He further said that the IRGC has detailed information about the U.S. mili-

tary capabilities and bases in the region, stressing that Iran considers the regional countries as being within the range of its strategic security.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Salami drew a comparison to the current defense system of the country to that of the pre-1979 Islamic Revolution, saying, "The place the Islamic establishment has in the international arena and the level of its independence determine the situation of its defense system."

"[Before the revolution], all our [military] equipment, such as artillery, tanks, anti-tank missiles, naval and airborne power, were purchased from Western and American powers, and we were only consumer of their products in our country. Billions of dollars were paid for equipment coming from Western countries and the United States, and we were just a consumer of their products," he explained.

Iran has repeatedly said that its military power, especially its missile technology, is key components of its deterrent power and does not pose a threat to other countries.



# Syrian rebels down Russian plane, kill pilot

## Russia to probe origin of MANPAD that downed jet

Syrian rebels shot down a Russian warplane on Saturday and killed its pilot on the ground after he ejected from the plane, Russia's defense ministry and Syrian rebels said.

The Su-25 came down in an area of northern Idlib province that has seen heavy air strikes and fighting on the ground between Syria's government forces backed by Russia and Iran, and rebel groups opposed to President Bashar al-Assad.

Meanwhile, senior Russian lawmakers have urged the country to probe the origin of the man-portable air-defense system (MANPAD), which was reportedly used by Takfiri terrorists to down a Russian jet over Syria.

Russia's Defense Ministry confirmed in a statement on Saturday that the Su-25 fighter jet had been shot down in Syria's northwestern province of Idlib.

Citing preliminary data it said the jet had been downed by a MANPAD. The pilot had parachuted down into the area controlled by Jabhat Fateh al-Sham Takfiri outfit, formerly known as al-Nusra Front, but was killed during a confrontation with militants from an unspecified group.

Russian military planes retaliated afterwards by targeting the Nusra-controlled area of Idlib and killing more than 30 terrorists.

"Certainly, we will investigate, including a great many things: from the type of the MANPADS to the circumstances of the Su-25 downing," Frants Klintsevich, the first deputy chair of the Russian Federal Council's Defense Committee told Interfax. "The loss of one aircraft is nothing, but politically, it has great significance and far-reaching consequences," he added.

MP Dmitry Sablin, the coordinator of the Russia-Syria parliamentary friendship group, said, "We have information that the MANPADS used to bring down our jet was brought into Syria from a neighboring country several days ago."

"Countries from whose territory weapons arrive, that are then used against Russian servicemen, must understand that this will not go unpunished," he told the agency.

Deputy head of the State Duma's Defense Committee,



Yury Shvytkin, told Russia's RIA news agency he was inclined to believe that the "MANPADS origins were linked with Western countries."

A 2017 military spending bill, signed under former U.S. President Barack Obama, allowed supply of such weapons to the militants fighting the Syrian government.

In September 2016, Reuters cited an unnamed U.S. official as saying that Washington "has kept large numbers of such man-portable air defense systems, or MANPADS, out of Syria by uniting Western and Arab allies behind channeling training and infantry weapons" to anti-Damascus militants.

"The Saudis have always thought that the way to get the Russians to back off is what worked in Afghanistan 30 years

ago — negating their air power by giving MANPADS to the Mujahideen," it quoted another American official as saying.

Members of the Ansar al-Islam Front were shown in a video posted in November 2016, parading a cache of shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missiles, the first evidence of the weapons being supplied to militants after an expected relaxing of US restrictions.

Russia has been lending aerial support to Syria's counter-terrorism operations since September 2016.

The United States and its allies, including regional ally Saudi Arabia, however, have been backing the militants against Damascus since the onset of the crisis.

(Source: agencies)

## Saudi jets kill civilians; Yemeni snipers take out soldiers

Extremely graphic footage has emerged, showing a charred body and heart-wrenching injuries after Saudi Arabian warplanes attack civilians in Yemen's west-central Sana'a Province. Yemen's al-Masirah television network published the video on Sunday, showing the aftermath of the attack on Criminal Investigation headquarters in the province's Dhahban District, which killed two people and injured 20 more.

The footage featured a body burnt thoroughly beyond recognition and Yemeni civilians bearing gaping wounds, which the physicians were scrambling to stitch up.

Only hours earlier, the aircraft had hit the nearby Sa'ada Province, wounding four civilians.

More than 13,600 have died since the kingdom led many of its allies in an invasion of the Arab world's already most

impoverished nation. The allies have been seeking to restore Yemen's Riyadh-aligned former government to power.

Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement, which the coalition has unsuccessfully been seeking to defeat during the invasion, and its allied Army forces have been launching tit-for-tat missile attacks against the kingdom's border areas.

Also on Sunday, Yemen's War Media said the Army's snipers had taken out seven members of the Saudi Arabian military in counterattacks against various locations in the kingdom's Jizan border region.

The sharpshooters also killed and injured some of the Saudi-backed militants, which Riyadh has been heavily arming to enable a comeback by the former Yemeni government.

(Source: Press TV)

## Pope calls worldwide day of prayer and fasting for peace February 23

Pope Francis invited Roman Catholics and members of all other religions on Sunday to observe a day of prayer, fasting and initiatives for peace on Feb. 23, urging everyone to 'say no' to violence and conflict.

Francis, speaking to tens of thousands of people in St. Peter's Square for his weekly blessing, said he was making the appeal because of the "tragic prolonging" of conflicts around the world.

Feb. 23 is a Friday in the first full week of the Christian season of Lent, during which fasting from food and extra acts of charity are encouraged as a sign of penitence.

He said "everyone, in their own consciences, before God, should ask 'what can I do for peace?'"

"Surely, we can pray but not only: each

one of us can say 'no' to violence in their own way, because victories obtained through violence are false victories, while working for peace benefits all," he said.

He specifically invited non-Catholics and non-Christians to join the initiative in any way they saw fit, "but all together".

Francis said the prayers and fasting should be offered in a particular way for the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan.

South Sudan has been hit by a prolonged civil war and humanitarian crisis. The Democratic Republic of Congo has been hit by unrest this month following the shooting of protesting pro-democracy churchgoers opposed to President Joseph Kabila.

(Source: Reuters)

# PLO mulls suspending recognition of Israel

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has decided to withdraw recognition of Israel as Washington's recent hostile moves against the Palestinians deepen the decades-long conflict in the occupied territories.

After a three-hour meeting in Ramallah on Saturday, the PLO Executive Committee released a statement saying it would set up a body to study derecognition of the Tel Aviv regime.

It also called on the Palestinian Authority to cut off all its relations with Israel, including security coordination in the West Bank.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said "immediately start preparing plans and projects for disengagement steps with the Israeli occupation ... at the political, administrative, economic, and security levels," the committee said.

It further decided to seek action against the Israeli occupation at the United Nations Security Council, the General Assembly and the International Criminal Court (ICC), demanding that the latter start a judicial inquiry into the regime's settlements, racial discrimination and ethnic cleansing in the occupied lands. The request with the ICC was meant to bring Israeli officials before international justice in accordance with the Rome Statute of the ICC, which considers settlements as a war crime.

About 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built illegally since the 1967 occupation of the Palestinian territories.

In recent months, Tel Aviv has stepped up its settlement construction activities in the occupied Palestinian lands in a blatant violation of international law and in defiance of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334.

Elsewhere in its statement, the PLO committee blasted the U.S. for leading a "campaign of incitement and distortion against President Abbas and the Palestinian leadership."

The campaign, it said, is aimed at justifying Washington's "arbitrary and punitive measures against the Palestinian people and providing a cover for passing its plan to liquidate the Palestinian cause."

Last December, U.S. President Donald Trump declared that Washington was recognizing Jerusalem al-Quds as the



"capital" of Israel and planning to relocate the American embassy from Tel Aviv to the city.

In another hostile move against the Palestinians, the Trump administration said in January that it would withhold \$65 million of a \$125 million aid installment to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

The U.S. "must stop dealing with the Palestinians with the language of blackmail and threats. We call on the U.S. administration to stop its hate speech and to stop denying the presence of the Arab Palestinian people in this country throughout history," the PLO committee said.

It also renewed its call on Trump to backtrack on his controversial decision to recognize Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel's so-called capital.

Additionally, the committee accused Tel Aviv of failing to fulfill its obligations under the agreements signed with

the Palestinians and demanded a ban on goods produced in settlements.

### ■ Israel set to legalize outpost

The Israeli regime is expected to discuss on Sunday a retroactive approval to Havat Gilad outpost in the occupied West Bank, which houses about 40 settler families.

"We promised and the proposal to normalize Havat Gilad outpost as a regular community will be brought to the cabinet for approval this coming Sunday," Avigdor Lieberman, Israeli minister of military affairs, tweeted earlier this week.

Rabbi Razieli Shevach was shot dead near the outpost on January 9.

Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett had claimed that the only revenge for the rabbi's murder was building more settlements.

(Source: Press TV)

## China: Who's a nuclear menace? Us or U.S.?

China has expressed firm opposition to a recent U.S. government report describing Beijing as a potential nuclear rival, also calling on Washington to reduce its much larger nuclear arsenal and join in efforts to promote regional stability.

Casting China as "a major challenge to U.S. interests in Asia," the 74-page U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) report said the U.S. strategy for China was designed to prevent Beijing from mistakenly concluding that any use of nuclear weapons, however limited, was acceptable. Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman

Ren Guoqiang condemned the U.S. report on Sunday and said his country exercised utmost restraint in developing nuclear capabilities and kept its nuclear arsenal at the "minimum level" required for national security.

The official Xinhua news agency cited Ren as saying that Beijing would resolutely stick to the peaceful development of nuclear weapons and pursue a national defense policy that was defensive in nature.

It also added that under no circumstances would China use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states

or nuclear-weapon-free zones. The Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman called on the U.S. — which possesses the world's largest nuclear weapons arsenal — to conform to the irreversible world trend of peace and development rather than run in the opposite direction.

"We hope the U.S. will abandon a Cold War mentality and earnestly shoulder its special and primary responsibility for its own nuclear disarmament, understand correctly China's strategic intentions, and take a fair view on China's national defense and military development," Ren added.

China has the world's fifth-largest nuclear arsenal, with 300 warheads, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. The U.S. and Russia each possess about 7,000 warheads, or about 20 times as many as Beijing.

Before he became U.S. president, Donald Trump did a lot of China-bashing particularly in matters of trade; but since assuming office, Trump has taken a softer line on China and tried to cultivate a relationship with the Chinese leadership.

(Source: Xinhua)

## France says to work with Turkey on Syria 'road map'



France and Turkey will be working in the coming weeks on a "diplomatic road map" for an end to the nearly seven-year war in Syria, President Emmanuel Macron's office said Sunday.

The announcement came after Macron spoke by telephone with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan Saturday which discussed in particular Turkey's operation against Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia in Syria.

Macron had incensed Turkish officials last week by saying in a newspaper interview that France would have a "real problem" with the campaign if it turned out to be an "invasion operation".

Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency reported Saturday that Erdogan had sought to reassure Macron during their talk, saying Ankara had no eye on Syrian territory.

"The two presidents agreed to work on a diplomatic road map for Syria in the coming weeks," the Elysee Palace said.

"To that end, discussions between France and Turkey, which both hope for a political solution overseen by the UN, will increase in the coming days."

On Jan. 20 Turkey launched its "Olive Branch" operation in northern Syria against the YPG, which it brands a terror group.

On Sunday it said it could expand the incursion beyond the northwestern enclave of Afrin, to the town of Manbij and possibly east of the Euphrates river.

But Turkey's Western allies do not classify the YPG as a terror group and have worked closely with its fighters in the battle against Daesh (ISIL) terrorists.

Erdogan has sought to build a strong relationship with Macron despite rocky ties with the EU, visiting Paris in January for talks. (Source: AFP)

## Turkey warns U.S. troops over Syria clash risk

Turkey Sunday threatened to expand its operation against Kurdish militia in Syria to the town of the Manbij and even east of the Euphrates, warning that American soldiers risked being targeted in the area if they wore enemy uniform.

Turkey on Jan. 20 launched the "Olive Branch" operation in the northern Syrian region of Afrin, fighting Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia which Ankara sees as a terror group.

With the YPG a key ally of Washington in the battle against militants, the campaign has seen a fellow NATO partner of the United States fighting an openly U.S.-backed and U.S.-armed force.

Beyond the northwestern enclave of Afrin, the YPG also controls the key strategic town of Manbij to the east and then a long strip of territory east of the Euphrates up to the Iraqi border.

"If they [the YPG] do not withdraw from Manbij, then we will go to Manbij, we will go east of the Euphrates," Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdag told CNN-Turk.

American troops have no presence in and around Afrin but they are present in Manbij and east of the Euphrates, where they have assisted the YPG in the fight against Daesh (ISIL).

Bozdag emphasized that Turkey wanted no confrontation with American troops but said U.S. soldiers risked being caught up in clashes if they appeared in uniforms of the YPG.

This appeared to be a reference to past images of American troops in northern Syria showing them with YPG insignia.

"We do not at all want any clash with the U.S. in Manbij, east of the Euphrates or in any other place," Bozdag said.

"But the U.S. has to be aware of Turkey's sensitivities. If U.S. soldiers wear terrorist uniforms or are among the terrorists in the event of an attack against the army then there is not going to be the chance to make a distinction," he said.

"If they come up against us in such a uniform we will see them as... terrorists."

There have been heavy clashes with the YPG in the Afrin campaign so far and Bozdag was speaking after seven Turkish troops were killed Saturday, including five in a tank attack, the heaviest single day loss of the campaign so far.

Pro-government Turkish media said the tank attack was carried out with an anti-tank missile given to the YPG by the U.S., but this has yet to be confirmed.

"The supposed ally the United States knows no limit in treachery," the Yeni Akit daily said.

(Source: AFP)

## May under pressure as Conservatives at war over Brexit

As a new round of talks opens between Britain and the European Union, British Prime Minister Theresa May is under mounting pressure to take sides in the Conservative Party's war over Brexit.

May has walked a fine line between two feuding factions: those who want a clean break, even if it means trade barriers with Europe, and those who want to keep Britain's economy closely aligned to the 28-nation bloc.

With just months to negotiate future relations before Britain leaves in March 2019, the tensions are coming to a head. British Sunday newspapers teemed with allegations of plots against May by "hard Brexit" rivals including Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson.

The Sunday Times claims pro-Brexit lawmakers are prepared to topple May if she tries to keep Britain in the EU's tariff-free customs union.

(Source: AP)



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	97808.2
IFX	1085.61

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	47,700 rials
EUR	59,940 rials
GBP	67,400 rials
AED	13, 040 rials

Source: Mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$68.58/b
WTI	\$65.45/b
OPEC Basket	\$66.83/b
Gold	\$1,333.65/oz
Silver	\$16.63/oz
Platinum	\$995.60/oz

Sources: Oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Over 5,000 electricity projects to come on stream by next week

ENERGY  
desk

**TEHRAN** — Some 5,317 electricity projects are scheduled to be inaugurated in the country on the occasion of Ten-Day Dawn (February 1-10, marking the victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution), Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian announced.

The minister said that 278.4 trillion rials (about \$5.8 billion) investment has been made for implementation of these projects, Mehr news agency reported on Sunday.

The official mentioned seven power plant projects with the capacity of 723 megawatts and 43 renewable energy projects with the capacity of 183 megawatts as some of the projects.



Road management requires \$167m fund: transport min.

ECONOMY  
desk

**TEHRAN** — Managing roads of the country requires eight trillion rials (about \$167 million) of fund, Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Abbas Akhoundi said on Sunday.

The minister lamented that it is while just two trillion rials of fund (about \$42 million) has been allocated to this issue, IRNA reported.

Sri Lanka eyeing longer talks with China on free trade agreement

Sri Lanka wants a longer-time period to negotiate a free trade agreement with China as it is concerned about the economic impact of a rushed deal on their small country, the Sri Lankan ambassador said on Sunday.

There has been rising concern in the South Asian nation about Chinese investment, a key part of Beijing's Belt and Road initiative to create a modern-day Silk Road across Asia.

Hundreds of Sri Lankans clashed with police at the opening last year of a Chinese-invested industrial zone in the south, saying they would not be moved from their land. It was the first time opposition to Chinese investments in Sri Lanka had turned violent.

Speaking on the sidelines of an independence day reception at the Sri Lankan embassy in Beijing, ambassador Karunasena Kodituwakku said a free trade agreement with China could not be rushed.

"We'd like to have the process a little longer. China would like to have it faster," Kodituwakku told Reuters.

"Because Sri Lanka being a small economy, we have to get a consensus from stakeholders," he added. "Therefore the delay is due to the time period. But eventually we will sign the agreement."

Sri Lanka last month signed a free trade agreement with Singapore, but Singapore's economy is not as complex as China's, Kodituwakku said.

"Chinese imports are very important to Sri Lanka, but opening up the whole thing in a short time may make some problems for local companies. Therefore we have to balance it."

Sri Lanka has also been trying to get investment for a little utilized airport on its southern tip, in Mattala, built at a cost of \$253 million by China, which also provided \$230 million of funding.

"No doubt it was a white elephant. It is still a white elephant," Kodituwakku said.

India had been in advanced talks with Sri Lanka to operate the airport, but the ambassador said no deal had been reached.

"We have to turn it into a viable economic venture. In fact we gave the option to Chinese companies. I know Chinese companies have shown an interest, but according to our studies they were not having a viable economic plan and that's why they had to give the option to India," he said.

"The Indian offer had been there, but even that has not been finalised," Kodituwakku added.

"Anyone who want to come and turn the Mattala airport into a viable economic venture will be welcome. But unfortunately no one has taken over."

(Source: Reuters)

Iran able to raise oil output, complies with OPEC pact

1 →

The official further noted that the country's average daily oil production in the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2017- January 20, 2018) increased by 160,000 barrels compared to the figure for the last year's same time span.

"The average exports in the same period also increased by 60,000 barrels on year,"

**■ Development of shared fields, ministry's priority**

Elsewhere in his remarks, the minister stressed the development of shared fields as the ministry's priority saying, "These fields will either be developed by domestic companies or will be assigned to strong foreign contractors."

Asked about the potential foreign contractors for developing the fields, the minister didn't mention any names due to security issues stating that negotiations are ongoing with domestic and foreign companies for development of the fields.

"Since there are always parties who try to intervene with contract signing processes, we prefer not to announce the names of



companies with which the negotiations are close to conclusion," the minister explained.

He stated that National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) is currently negotiating with over 20 foreign and domestic companies to sign contracts for the development of the country's oil and gas fields.

West Karoun region includes five oil-

fields (Yadavaran, North Azadegan, South Azadegan, North Yaran, and South Yaran) Iran shares with Iraq at the western part of Iran's southwestern region of Karoun.

**■ Total activities in Iran on track**

Pointing to the NIOC's deal with French energy giant Total, Zanganeh said France's Total is working on development project of

Iran, Armenia sign gas-for-power deal, open radiotherapy center

ECONOMY  
desk

**TEHRAN** — During two separate events, Iran and Armenia signed a gas for power transfer deal and inaugurated a radiotherapy center in an Armenian hospital, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The third phase of transmitting electricity from Armenia to Iran and transferring gas from Iran to that country was signed between the two sides in Armenia, IRNA quoted Iranian Ambassador to Yerevan Kazem Sajjadi.

"The gas contract is signed following the two countries' efforts to boost mutual energy ties and the project's

capacity is supposed to be increased in future," the ambassador said.

As he further described, the radiotherapy center which has become operational in one of Armenia's state-run hospitals and in the presence of the country's president, has been constructed using joint investments.

"It has taken Iranian investors about two years to build the center relying on their own investments and their Armenian counterparts," Sajjadi said, hoping that the established center will improve medical capacities of the two sides and will ease bilateral knowledge transfer.



*Iranian and Armenian officials inaugurating a radiotherapy center in Armenia*

German strikes hit Daimler, BMW, VW factories

Germany's car industry was hit by a third day of strikes Friday, with thousands of workers walking off the job in an ongoing dispute over wages and working hours.

Daimler AG (DAI.XE), BMW AG (BMW. AG) and Volkswagen AG (VOW.XE) saw production grind to a halt at some locations when members of the IG Metall union launched 24-hour strikes.

Industrial action began earlier, after talks between the union and employers failed last weekend. IG Metall, which represents 3.9 million manufacturing workers, is seeking a 6% wage increase over 12 months and the right to reduce hours. For workers who cut

their hours to care for children or the elderly, the union also wants a subsidy to partially offset lost pay.

Employers have offered 6.8% over 27 months, but object to shorter hours and the subsidy. IG Metall said that, overall, the offer falls short of their demands.

Volkswagen's Audi and Porsche units were affected Friday, with 10,000 employees at Porsche's Zuffenhausen plant participating in strikes that began late Thursday. At Audi's Ingolstadt facility, which produces 2,400 cars a day on average, workers started a 24-hour strike Friday morning, an Audi spokesman said.

They also staged strikes at Daimler, the maker of Mercedes-Benz. IG Metall said 36,000 workers participated in strikes at Daimler's Sindelfingen and Untertuerkheim plants.

Daimler said it aimed to catch up on potential shortfalls as quickly as possible and expected to meet all delivery obligations.

At BMW's Munich plant, around 7,000 workers participated in the strike, bringing production to a standstill, according to the union. Production was also stopped at BMW's Dingolfing plant, where 13,700 workers participated, it said.

Juergen Wechsler, director of IG Met-

all in Bavaria, said Thursday that IG Metall would "paralyze" all Bavarian car plants at the same time.

"This will be the highlight of the strike measures in Bavaria," he said.

IG Metall said talks could resume Monday if employers showed a willingness to improve their offer. The employers association, Gesamtmetall, couldn't be reached for comment.

"We don't want plants to idle for long," the president of Gesamtmetall, Rainer Dulger, said in an interview with Handelsblatt on Friday. "I hope that we return to good talks as quickly as possible."

(Source: The MarketWatch)

Bitcoin newbies are getting crushed



of missing out after viewing the approval of futures as an endorsement by the establishment. As more novice investors jumped in, Bitcoin shot above \$10,000, then \$15,000, then as high as \$20,000 on some exchanges, in a span of only a few weeks.

Some of Bitcoin's biggest backers even warned the euphoria had gotten out of hand. Billionaire Mike Novogratz, who shelved his plans to open a \$500 million cryptocurrency hedge fund and instead wants to build a crypto

merchant bank, warned that Bitcoin would fall to as low as \$8,000. Thomas Lee of Fundstrat said the cryptocurrency would slide to as low as \$9,000 before shooting back up.

Recent hacks and tightening regulation have "weighed on confidence," Lee said in a telephone interview Friday. "Investors are staying on the sidelines until there's some visibility, but nothing fundamental has changed. It's healthy; you need drawbacks sometimes as nothing goes up in a straight line."

Those highs helped increase the scrutiny regulators as the total market capitalization climbed to more than \$800 billion at one point in January. A steady steam of headlines since about officials cracking down on the market sparked jitters and caused those same retail traders who got in at the highs, to panic sell, hoping to avoid even greater losses.

But the hordes of people wanting to trade crypto, which repeatedly crashed San Francisco-based exchange Coinbase Inc. when the market was rallying, are still there. More than one million people have signed up for "early access"

to the brokerage app Robinhood Financial's cryptocurrency section since it said it would offer no-cost trading in digital coins last week.

**■ Up 800%**

Charles Hayer of research website CryptoCompare sees good news on the horizon, as Bitcoin developers are making breakthroughs in technology that will help the network process transactions faster. Also, Hayer said an emerging regulatory framework and investor protections will be positive for cryptocurrencies in the long term.

Meanwhile, many investors who got in earlier aren't budging. Bitcoin was worth about \$1,000 at the beginning of last year and about \$450 at the start of 2016, so those who bought then are shrugging off these losses — they're still up more than 800 percent.

"It's just early-year market blues," said David Mondrus, a long-time crypto enthusiast and chief executive of Trive, a blockchain-based research platform. "In 12 months, we won't even remember it."

(Source: The Fortune)

Look out ahead: more U.S. dollar weakness to come, says currency expert

It's not just stocks that are falling.

Despite a selloff in the stocks, the U.S. dollar, traditionally a haven in times of turmoil, is hovering near multi-year lows. It could see even more downside this year for two major reasons: Europe and China. The DXY U.S. dollar index ended January with losses of 3 percent, its worst drop in nearly 2 years, and its third straight month in negative territory.

For all the stimulus from tax cuts, the growth in the U.S. economy is still on par with Europe's. As the global economy continues to grow, it will only put more pressure on the greenback, one respected currency expert explained to CNBC recently.

"The dollar weakness has a lot to do with the fact that we have strength in the global economy," Jens Nordvig, founder of Exante Data, told CNBC's "Futures Now" this week.

The U.S. is expected to print a growth rate of 2.7 percent in the first quarter as tax cuts begin to work their way through the economy. Yet Europe has already seen GDP of 2.5% "without any fiscal stimulus," Nordvig said.

The euro has gained ground against the U.S. dollar in the year to date, a trend Nordvig expected to continue. After recent moves, Nordvig sees risks for the euro/dollar exchange rate as skewed to the upside, and believes a move in the currency as high as 1.28 is realistic. Europe's single



currency closed on Friday trading near \$1.24.

Nordvig added that "dips should be used to add long exposure."

The eurozone's currency picked up gains through January and hit 1.25 against the U.S. dollar on Jan. 25, a level not seen since the end of 2014. The currency rose nearly 4 percent in January, its biggest one-month move since March 2016.

The single currency had rallied that month after European Central Bank President Mario Draghi said he did not expect to cut interest rates any further, marking the final time the ECB cut its rates this cycle.

**■ 'Finally starting to catch up'**

As the ECB makes moves to tighten monetary policy, the euro is expected to put even more downward pressure on the greenback, even as the Federal Reserve makes moves to push rates higher as well. UBS and Barclays have predicted a hike in the deposit rate sometime this year, while Draghi has maintained his dovish tone.

"Whereas other central banks have been slow to do what the Fed is doing, they are finally starting to catch up," said Nordvig. "There's more hawkish rhetoric around the world and it's really important to the dollar trend here."

The Chinese Renminbi also strengthened against the greenback this year. After strong gains in January, the currency is nearing the levels reached before its 2 percent devaluation in August 2015.

"China is a very big part of what's going on," said Nordvig. "They've always stopped the currency from moving in the past when they thought the appreciation, the strength of their own currency, got too much. This year they've not done it."

The Chinese Renminbi added 3.5 percent against the U.S. dollar in January, its biggest gain since China unified currency rates in 1994. The currency has eased back in February, but only slightly.

(Source: CNBC)



# Texas shale challenges North Sea crude as world oil benchmark

Surging shale oil production in Texas and North Dakota is being felt on trading desks in Chicago, Houston and New York, where a brisk business in West Texas Intermediate crude futures is far outpacing contracts for London-based Brent crude.

As the United States approaches a record 10.04 million barrels of daily production, trading volumes of so-called "WTI" futures exceeded volumes of Brent crude in 2017 by the largest margin in at least seven years.

A decade ago, falling domestic production and a U.S. ban on exports meant that WTI served mostly as a proxy for U.S. inventory levels.

"There was a time when the U.S. was disconnected from the global market," said Greg Sharenow, portfolio manager at PIMCO, who co-manages more than \$15 billion in commodity assets.

Two changes drove the resurgence of the U.S. benchmark. One was the boom in shale production, which spawned a multitude of small producers that sought to hedge profits by trading futures contracts. Then two years ago, the United States ended its 40-year ban on crude exports, making WTI more useful to global traders and shippers.

U.S. exports averaged 1.1 million barrels a day through November 2017, rising to an average 1.6 million bpd in the final three months. That compares to just 590,000 bpd in 2016.

As U.S. production and exports grow, global firms that increasingly buy U.S. oil are offsetting their exposure by trading in U.S. financial markets. That also gives U.S. shale producers more opportunity to lock in profits on their own production.

## ■ Rival exchanges, shifting profits

The U.S. boom has reignited a competition over oil trading that began in the 1980s between two of the world's biggest exchange operators - Intercontinental Exchange, and the New York Mercantile Exchange, or NYMEX, which was acquired by Chicago-based CME Group in 2008.

For ICE and CME, energy represents the second-biggest source of revenue, trailing only stocks and interest rate trading, respectively. ICE is based in Atlanta, but is known for its



European contracts after it bought London's International Petroleum Exchange and its Brent futures contract in 2001.

About 310 million U.S. crude futures contracts - worth about \$16 trillion in oil - changed hands on CME's New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX) in 2017, far more than the about 242 million contracts in Intercontinental Exchange's Brent crude futures.

Energy products including WTI brought in \$790 million in revenue for CME in 2016, the latest annual data available. Brent crude futures and options alone contributed nearly \$300 million to ICE's revenues in 2016.

Since 2011, trading volumes in WTI futures have risen by about 135 million contracts, compared to an increase of about 109 million in Brent, according to exchange data.

CME has said there is a "clear trend" that the U.S. benchmark is being used more globally, in part because of growing production there and relatively stagnant output of the North Sea crude grades that underpin Brent trading.

That makes investors more likely to trade in WTI than Brent, said Owain Johnson, managing director of energy research and product development at CME.

"You know more about what WTI will look

like in the next five years," he said.

Jeffrey Sprecher, chief executive at ICE, dismissed the notion that WTI's global influence is rising versus Brent, calling it "a red herring."

## ■ Export surge lures buyers

The increasing liquidity in U.S. oil futures stems partly from the surge in hedging by domestic shale producers but also from growing overseas interest, which pushed outstanding contracts to new records in 2017.

Average daily volumes in WTI futures from outside the U.S. jumped nearly 40 percent in 2017 over 2016, according to CME Group data. Foreign participation in WTI now represents about 30 percent of CME's average daily volume.

"The U.S. is reclaiming the title of being arguably the world's most relevant crude oil benchmark" because of rising U.S. exports and production, said Michael Tran, director of energy strategy at RBC Capital Markets in New York.

Purchasers worldwide say the U.S. contract may have to change, however, to reflect the price at export hubs such as Houston. Currently, WTI contracts are tied to oil deliverable at the landlocked storage hub in Cushing, Oklahoma.

More supply is coming to Gulf Coast ports from Texas, where production is now near 4 million barrels a day.

"We need a new benchmark for pricing American crude oil for export to Asia and other areas," said Chen Bo, president of Chinese state oil trader Unipet, at an industry event in Houston in November.

Unipet is the trading arm of refiner Sinopec and the largest buyer of U.S. oil in Asia; Chinese firms bought an average of 220,000 barrels a day of U.S. crude last year.

Sources with two major trading firms said CME has approached them to gauge demand for a benchmark futures contract that would have Houston as its delivery point.

In December 2017, the NYMEX introduced a new contract aimed at the growing market of Asian buyers importing U.S. crude, such as China, the second biggest importer in 2017. The contract prices the spread between WTI and Middle-East benchmark Dubai.

The contract allows Asian refiners to better evaluate the economics of U.S. crude compared to oil elsewhere, Chen said.

The dominance of Europe's Brent and America's WTI crude futures comes despite Asia's growing share of global oil consumption, up from 27 percent in 2000 to almost 40 percent today. Europe's and North America's share of demand has declined.

A key reason for the Middle East's and Asia's failure to create an oil futures benchmark is that financial commodity trading is not well established in either region.

Middle Eastern producers are largely state-owned, and while the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME) was set up in 2007 to establish a new benchmark, it has so far not managed to attract enough liquidity to dominate the region.

In China, a long-delayed futures contract is expected to be launched by Shanghai's INE exchange this year, with the stated goal of becoming Asia's benchmark. But wrangling over details has undermined INE's credibility, analysts say.

That's left the United States, with its established commodity markets, operating as "the Wal-Mart of the oil market," Tran said.

(Source: Reuters)

## South Australia promises world's largest virtual power plant

South Australia's state premier Jay Weatherill announced a plan on Sunday to create a network of 50,000 home solar systems backed by Tesla Powerwall batteries, ahead of a state election in March.

"We lead the world in renewable energy with the world's largest battery, the world's largest solar thermal plant and now the world's largest virtual power plant," he said in a televised interview from the state capital of Adelaide.

"The size of it is the reason why it's going to be a success."

The project would begin with a trial on 1,100 public housing homes, the government said on its website.



The 5kW solar panel system and 13.5kWh Tesla Powerwall 2 batteries would be installed at no charge to participating households, but would be funded through the sale of electricity and by taxpayers through a A\$2 million (\$1.6-million) government grant and a A\$30-million loan from the state-government-funded Renewable Technology Fund.

The South Australian Labor party which has governed the state since 2002 previously engaged entrepreneur Elon Musk to build the world's biggest lithium ion battery which went into operation on December 1, in time to feed the state's shaky power grid for the first day of summer.

Supporters say the battery will help stabilize the grid after the state, which gets more than 40 percent of its electricity from wind energy, suffered a string of blackouts and soaring energy prices.

The solar announcement was made on the same day that Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull launched the election campaign of state opposition leader Steven Marshall from the conservative Liberal Party.

Marshall will try to oust the more left-wing state Labor government in the March 17 election.

At the televised campaign launch, Turnbull took a crack at South Australia's energy policy, calling it a "reckless energy experiment" that had created the highest electricity prices in the developed world.

"They overlooked the minor detail, minor to them, that the wind doesn't blow every day," he said.

(Source: Reuters)



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## Kenya on the brink again

It has been depressing to watch as Kenya's presidential election saga has gone from fraud to hope to sham, and now to dangerous brinkmanship. It's hard to see what the opposition leader, Raila Odinga, hopes to achieve with his faux inauguration as the "people's president," or what President Uhuru Kenyatta plans to do next now that he has outlawed Odinga's National Resistance Movement. The space for a democratic resolution of the crisis has grown mighty thin, but the alternative could be disastrous.



The spiral began with a presidential election in August, which President Kenyatta seemed to win handily. Odinga challenged the vote, and to general surprise the seven-judge Supreme Court agreed and ordered another election within 60 days.

It was not to be. The ruling party passed amendments to the election law that made it all but impossible to challenge future results. Then the same Supreme Court, asked this time to postpone the do-over vote, suddenly couldn't round up more than two judges, short of a quorum. Odinga boycotted the vote and threatened to hold a swearing-in ceremony as "peoples' president"; Kenyatta threatened to block it.

The "inauguration," in effect a giant opposition rally, finally did take place in Nairobi on Tuesday. But the government declared the National Resistance Movement, the name the opposition adopted after the boycotted second election, a criminal group.

What intensifies the feud is the fact that elections in Kenya are a fierce struggle for power and spoils between parties often organized along ethnic lines. Kenyatta is Kikuyu, and his deputy, William Ruto, is Kalenjin; the two groups have held the presidency since independence in 1963. Odinga is Luo; when he was seemingly robbed of a victory in 2007, two months of lethal violence erupted, ending with the creation of a coalition government.

That could happen again, but both sides need to step back before it's too late. Business and civil society leaders and international diplomats must use whatever leverage they have to press both sides for restraint and some sign of a willingness to talk and compromise.

(Source: The NYT)

## The space for a democratic resolution of the crisis has grown mighty thin, but the alternative could be disastrous.

## Moon Jae-in's Olympic realpolitik

By: Christopher R. Hill

After a year in which many countries questioned whether it would even be safe to send a delegation to the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korean President Moon Jae-in has served his country well. He has both neutralized the threat of North Korean disruption to the Games and kept a thin-skinned U.S. president firmly on his side.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in has made a good start to the New Year. Not only did he broker an agreement to bring North Korea to the Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang; he also convinced U.S. President Donald Trump that doing so was in fact Trump's idea.

With his Olympic coup, Moon has both managed the North Korean threat to the Games and avoided any backlash from the United States. Still, the agreement that North and South Korea reached in the border village of Panmunjom earlier this month is unlikely to lead to renewed nuclear-disarmament talks.

Rather, once the Games are over, the North will likely use the current diplomatic opening to probe in other areas unrelated to its nuclear program, which, in turn, will raise a set of trying and familiar issues for the U.S.-South Korea relationship.

After all, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un certainly wasn't motivated by a genuine New Year's resolution when he called for better relations with South Korea on January 1. On the contrary, his gambit was in keeping with the North's longstanding policy of trying to weaken the U.S.-South Korean alliance.

In reaching out to the South, Kim wants to demonstrate that the North can live peacefully with its neighbors, even as it maintains a nuclear arsenal. More broadly, Kim is seeking to normalize the North's status as a wannabe, self-identified nuclear power in the eyes of the world.

Achieving these goals, Kim hopes, will drive a wedge between the U.S. and South Korea. He knows that Trump's approval ratings in South Korea are far lower than his already-abysmal ratings in the U.S., so he is exploiting that fact to facilitate his nuclear-normalization objective. And, of course, the North is always looking for opportunities to win relief from sanctions.

Moon, for his part, has handled Kim's "peace offensive" well. North Korea's Olympians and cheerleaders will undoubtedly be greeted enthusiastically when they arrive by train in the South, and the crowd will roar its approval when athletes from the two countries march into the stadium under the same banner.

To be sure, the North Koreans will think they were invited to participate in the Games not in spite of their nuclear program, but because of it. From their perspective, South Korea seems to have developed a newfound respect – or fear – of what the North is becoming. And participation in the Olympics suggests that international isolation is a temporary fact of life, a toll on the road to fully recognized nuclear status. They might think that, soon enough, other countries will be lining up to offer the North a seat at the diplomatic table.

But Moon has made it clear that his government will not be seduced by the Olympic spirit. If North Korea's leaders expect participation in the Games to lead to recognition of their country's nuclear status, they will be waiting a long time. The South's goal is to host a successful Olympic Games, after a year in which many countries questioned whether it was safe to send a delegation at all. Once the Games are over, the North will be facing a long winter of opprobrium and isolation.

That means the North would be wrong to assume that the South will beg it to reopen the Kaesong Industrial Complex, one of the most ambitious North-South cooperative efforts of the 2003-2009 détente era. Moon has shown no interest in such gestures. He understands that unilateral concessions will not improve South Korea's position vis-à-vis the other regional and global powers reacting to North Korean behavior.

Like the Saudis and others before him, Moon knows that the way to Trump's heart is through his ego. But he also must manage the broader front of countries that are participating in historically strong sanctions against an abhorrent state. In that respect, Moon's first big test will come immediately after the Olympics, when the South Korea-U.S. Combined Forces Command will decide on its plans for future military exercises.

North Korea, of course, will object to such exercises, as it always does. But so, too, might China and Russia, which will accuse the U.S. of reversing the Olympic thaw. Even so, a military alliance without exercises is like an orchestra without instruments. Moon most likely understands this, just as he realizes that the importance of his country's relationship with the U.S., despite its headaches and complexities, dwarfs that of any of its other partnerships around the world.

At the end of the day, a progressive South Korean government such as Moon's always must demonstrate to the public that it can manage and safeguard the U.S. relationship. So far, Moon has done that.

(Source: The Nation)

# The Middle East in 2018: Five issues to watch

By Joe Macaron

The past year was a watershed year for the Middle East and 2018 promises to continue on this path. Wars began to wind down across the region but challenges remain in managing conflict resolution. Next year will be defined by post-war transitions to peace talks, ballot boxes, and reconstruction. Two areas are the exception to this trend: Yemen is the only country that will start the new year without a roadmap to peace and territorial disputes along western Syria, from Idlib to Deraa, will continue next year.

Turmoil across the Middle East makes it harder to narrow down the main political issues that will dominate 2018. However, five of them should be watched in 2018 because of their regional and international impact.

### ■ Will Syrian refugees return home?

There are currently 5.4 million Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR, most notably in the neighboring countries of Turkey (3.4 million), Lebanon (1.5 million) and Jordan (650,000). Syrian refugees began to return in small numbers in 2017, and that process might accelerate in 2018 as these countries are facing growing security and socioeconomic tensions. Jordan and Turkey have buffer zones on their border with Syria and will face fewer difficulties in enforcing this decision. However, in the case of Lebanon, the Syrian government fully controls the border and the challenge is to overcome the Lebanese differences over engaging Damascus. The potential return of Syrian refugees could take precedence over the stalled Syrian peace talks and have a significant impact on reconstruction efforts and local governance.

### ■ Jerusalem and remaking regional alliances

Palestine is becoming once again a central issue in Arab politics as public pressure is compelling governments to take decisive actions and U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital was the triggering point. As a result, Jerusalem will continue to play a key factor in reshaping Middle East politics in 2018. Ankara is drifting away further from Washington, Amman is taking distance from Riyadh, and Tehran is seizing the opportunity to rally allies. As no peace process is looming on the horizon, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas will be weakened further and will have to heighten his rhetoric to match Hamas' reaction. The U.S. strategy to rally Saudi Arabia and Israel against Iran will also struggle, as Riyadh will be pressured to take the lead on the Palestinian issue if violence increased in the West Bank. Jerusalem will test old alliances and shape new ones as the Syrian war is winding down.

### ■ Shakeup in Riyadh: local politics drive foreign policy

The unpredictability of Mohammed bin Salman (known as MBS) in 2017 will most likely continue in 2018. Since ascending to power as deputy crown prince in 2015, MBS has been amassing powers. He pursued that objective



with urgency this year, which had an effect across the Middle East. Saudi domestic politics have been guiding the country's foreign policy and distracting from the turmoil at home. When former Crown Prince Mohamad bin Nayef was forced to resign in June, Saudi Arabia led the embargo against Qatar. When Saudi princes and businessmen were rounded up in the Ritz Carlton in November, Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri was forced to resign during a trip to Riyadh. If MBS is more secure in ascending to power, Saudi foreign policy could revert to a rather conventional approach. However, uncertainty could risk escalating Riyadh's rhetoric abroad. Saudi Arabia, under MBS, is at a crossroads in 2018.

### ■ Going back to the ballot box: Iraq and Libya

The year 2018 will witness a return to the ballot box in key countries across the region. Egypt's presidential elections next March and Lebanon parliamentary elections in May should have no surprises or major impact. However, Libya's presidential and parliamentary elections (tentatively scheduled for mid-2018) and Iraq parliamentary elections in May are consequential.

Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who scored two recent political victories by defeating the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and aborting the Kurdish independence referendum, should secure a majority along with his allies. He is leading an anti-corruption campaign in the period leading to the elections.

The question is whether Tehran will flex its political muscles during the elections and purposely make Abadi's

victory difficult.

Libya is the major electoral unknown of 2018, as elections are not fully confirmed yet. We might witness an interesting face-off in the presidential race between the old guard, General Khalifa Haftar who served in the Libyan army before defecting and Saif al-Islam, the son of the former ruler of Libya Muammar Gaddafi. Haftar is favorite to win with the current chairman of the UN-backed Government of National Accord and Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj likely to keep his post. It remains to be seen whether the country is ready to secure and organize a nationwide election, and whether Libyan rivals can show restraint and overcome their distrust to work together.

### ■ Will ISIL make a comeback?

ISIL, as a central authority with geographical control, has been decimated but the threat it poses is far from being gone. The radical group is gradually converting into an underground operation that could continue launching attacks in Syria and Iraq or across the world. It remains to be seen whether the group will become an ally of al-Qaeda, or continue to act as a rival. If the lack of stability and reconciliation persists in Syria, Iraq or Libya, ISIL or other radical groups might once again exploit the political vacuum to gain strength.

While these five issues are expected to stand out in 2018, history has not always been kind to the Middle East nor to those who forecast politics. One thing is certain, unpredictability will mark political developments in 2018.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Co. Launches Two Giant Projects during Ten-Day Dawn Ceremonies



Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company inaugurated two development projects during the glorious victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution (Ten-Day Dawn Ceremonies) in the presence of First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri.

Given the above issue, 1.3 million-ton steel manufacturing plant and 500-megawatt power plant were of the two projects of Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company which were put into operation concurrent with the glorious victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution (Ten-Day Dawn ceremonies).

Once this steel project of the company is put into operation, 1.3 million tons of steel ingot will be produced in Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company of Ardakan, Yazd Province.

First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri was the first speaker in the inaugural ceremony of these two giant projects of the company who pointed to the pioneering role of mineral and steel industries in the economic development of the country and said, "accelerating industries is one of the main objectives of the Islamic Republic of Iran especially the 11th government dubbed 'Hope and Prudence'."

He added: "Environmental policies such as foreign policy, country's socioeconomic and cultural condition can determine investment and strengthen activities of economic enterprises of the country."

Spread of security and stability is one of the main policies of the 11th and 12th governments dubbed "Hope and Prudence", so that suitable ground should be paved for both domestic and foreign investors in order to enter into economic enterprises, he maintained.

Jahangiri pointed to the stability in management of private sector as one of the main indicators of industrial development, adding: "Unfortunately, state-owned and public economic enterprises do not act successfully in the productivity field which is due to the instability in the management."

He advised that political managers should not enter into the economic enterprises and this issue should be taken into serious consideration.

Earlier, Eng. Mahmoud Nourian Managing Director of Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company expounded on the specifications and characteristics of underway and inaugurated projects of the company and said: "A Direct Reduction Iron (DRI) will be constructed in the vicinity of steel factory with 82 percent (82%) physical progress."

Once this unit is put into operation, 1,550,000 tons of sponge iron will be produced, he said, adding: "According to the scheduled program, this giant project will be put into operation in the first half of the next Iranian calendar year in 1397 (to start March 21, 2018)."



World's latest technology has been used for the construction of these two steel units, he said, adding: "Hot Charge method has been used for the production of steel ingot."

In this method, sponge iron is entered directly to the smelter furnaces prior to cooling with 600 degrees of centigrade (600 C) and consequently, this method will save 30 and 43 percent in consumption of electricity and water respectively.

He put the cost spent for launching these two giant projects at more than 21,000 billion rials.

Elsewhere in his remarks, managing director of Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company pointed to Ardakan Combined Cycle Power Plant as one of the other infrastructural and development projects of the company and said: "This power plant has been constructed with the production capacity of 500-megawatt capacity with the aim of supplying power required for DRI and steel projects and other industries based in Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Complex. Earlier, two gas phases and one thermal unit of the complex had been put into operation and today, this project was inaugurated officially concurrent with the glorious victory of the Islamic Revolution (Ten-Day Dawn ceremonies)."

He put the cost spent for launching this giant project at 14,000 billion rials.

He pointed to the underway projects of Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company as follows: increasing production capacity in pelletizing factory of this industrial and production unit to supply conglomerate required for the DRI and Chadormalu, Arfa' and Ghadir Iranian Mining & Industrial companies.

With the implementation of this giant project, annual production capacity of conglomerate in this unit will hit from the current 3.4 million tons to four million tons at large, he said, adding: "905 billion rials has been predicted to be spent for launching this giant industrial and production unit."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Nourian reiterated: "In a deal agreed with Yazd Province Water and Wastewater Company, this company undertook construction operation of sewage network of the city of Ardakan with the aim of supplying consumption water for sponge iron and steel ingot production operations due to the severe shortages of water in the region."

He put the costs predicted for launching this giant project at 2,000 billion rials.

Once this project is put into operation, 2.9 million cubic meters of water will be supplied for the industrial and pro-

duction units of the Complex, the managing director opined.

He pointed to the participation of Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company in many infrastructural projects of steel industry of the country for the materialization of its development outlook and said: "Concurrent with the operation of Chadormalu Steel Factory, operation of Sarmad Abarkuh Steel Rolling Mill has been started with the participation of 65 percent of Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company. Sarmad Abarkuh Iron and Steel complex includes a rolling mill with the annual production capacity of 500,000 tons of various round bars and steel manufacturing plant with the annual production capacity of 600,000 tons of steel ingot which has been founded on a land area as large as 150 ha.

### ■ Public Relations Dept. of Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company

Over 4,500 billion rials has been spent for the construction of equipment and commissioning of Sarmad Steel Rolling Mill. It should be noted that 65 percent of investment has been made by Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company on this project.

Then, the managing director of the company revealed that two other steel projects have been put atop agenda of the company and added: "Plan to construct new pelletizing plant with the production capacity of 4 million tons/year has been put atop agenda of Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company."

Over 7,177 billion rials worth of investment has been predicted for the construction operation of this project. If this project is financed timely, this project will be put into operation in four years.

On the other hand, construction operation of two rolling mills each with 550,000-ton production capacity (totally 1.1 million-ton capacity) is of the other programs of the company. Construction operation of this steel unit is underway, costing 2,646 billion rials.

To provide liquidity for the construction of this project, internal resources of the company and other resources have been predicted for this project.

According to the initial and preliminary planning, this project will be put into operation in three years.

It should be noted that these industrial projects, as mentioned in above, were inaugurated in the presence of Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Mohammad Shariatmadari, Minister of Energy Ardakanian, representative of people of Ardakan in the Parliament Tabesh and a number of Majlis deputies, Governor General of Yazd Province Zamani Qomi, Ardakan Friday prayers leader Hojjatolislam Shaker, chief executives of mining and industrial companies in the country, industrious staff and laborers of Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company, etc.





# Conflict of invaders in Yemen

By Ramin Hossein Abadian

**TEHRAN** — The dispute between Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Yemen, which has precedent, is intensifying as of late. The struggle between the two forces has peaked in Aden, a region located in southern Yemen.

The militia backing the former president of Yemen, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, is funded by the House of Saud. Mansour Hadi who fled after his resignation is presently barred from reentering Yemen. The Southern Transitional Council, a secessionist organization in Yemen, is backed by the UAE.

According to reports, the clashes between the Saudi and Emirati forces have caused 200 fatalities in southern Yemen.

Leaders of the Saudi-led coalition have gone to great lengths to conceal the disputes between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, as Saudi officials have been very tight lipped regarding their conflict with the Emiratis.

The fighting between the two armed forces escalated to such lengths that the leader of the Zaidi Revolution Movement Ansar Allah, Sayyid Abdul-Malik Badreddin al-Houthi felt obliged to publically address it. He described the recent conflicts in southern Yemen as a shameless and aggressive “power struggle” between the Saudis and Emiratis, in which both parties were solely serving their own self-interests in the region.

In 2015, Saudi Arabia called on to the UAE to join forces with the aggressive Saudi-led coalition to occupy Yemen and oppress its defenseless people. The UAE agreed to join forces with Saudi Arabia, with a hidden agenda that has recently caused a rift between the two Persian Gulf nations.

The Emiratis have been secretly supporting former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was a dictator, knowing all the while that the Saudi’s supported Mansour Hadi. In a covert operation, the UAE supported Ali Abdullah Saleh in order to have power and influence in Yemen and gain equal



footing in the country, like their rival Saudi Arabia.

Prior to Ali Abdullah Saleh’s death, the Emiratis beseeched Saudi Arabian officials to keep Saleh on his throne in Yemen. This show of support caused the Saudis to become suspicious of a covert alliance between the UAE and Saleh.

Thus, a conflict arose between the two countries. However, the Saudis, who needed to align themselves with the UAE in their aggressive coalition against Yemen, made all attempts to resolve their differences through negotiations.

Following three years of combat in Yemen, Saudi Arabia has not allowed the UAE to gain a stronghold in the country. Failure to dominate strategic locations in Yemen has exasperated Abu Dhabi as their presence in Yemen seems to be futile.

As a result, last year Emirati officials decided to limit their presence in Yemen by withdrawing their ground forces but maintained their air force to be used by the Saudi-led coalition. The establishment of Southern Transitional Council intensified

clashes between Saudi and Emirati mercenaries in Aden.

An important reason behind the dispute is the “totalization” attitude of the House of Saud; they want it all for themselves. Although Saudi Arabia began its aggression against the defenseless people of Yemen after the establishment of a 17-member coalition, they are yet to share the spoils of war with their allies.

Both the Saudis and Emiratis are closely eyeing access to gas and oil resources in southern Yemen. However, Saudi Arabia opposes UAE access to Yemen’s natural gas and oil reserves which is why the two Persian Gulf nations are currently at odds with one another.

Additionally, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are at odds over their respective relationship with Turkey. The UAE government’s support of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the incumbent President of Egypt, has been always frowned upon by the Turkish authorities.

Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, is on good terms with the Turkish government. The fact that Ankara and Riyadh are attempting to expand their influence in the region has sparked outrage among UAE officials.

Abu Dhabi’s meddling in West Asia and North Africa, as demonstrated by their involvement in Tunisia, is also a source of discomfort for the Saudis. Therefore, Riyadh is doing everything that it can to keep Yemen under its control without UAE intervention.

It appears that the aggressive Saudi-led coalition that has been slaughtering the helpless people of Yemen has come to a full-stop, as the UAE, one of the most powerful states in the coalition, has clashes with the Saudis in Yemen.

Amidst the tug of war for dominance in Yemen and covetousness over the spoils of war, the people of Yemen are paying the highest price. Over 13,000 civilians have been killed and some 20,000 have been injured over the totalitarian attitude of Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

## Ex-CIA analyst suggests PGCC talks may resolve crisis

**1 →** The United States has leverage it could use with both sides of the dispute, and it probably will attempt to use more of it as the meeting approaches. This does not necessarily mean, however, that a U.S. attempt to resolve the conflict will succeed.

■ US Secretary of State Tillerson has said that the negative consequences of crisis in the Persian Gulf region are not just limited to the Arab countries but they will also have impacts on the United States. What kind of losses is the United States facing?

A: The losses are not direct losses for the United States in terms of money or business or basing rights. Rather, the conflict has posed the same sort of problem that always arises when the United States seeks good relations with two sets of friends but the friends are feuding with each other. Any act of friendship toward one side is seen by the other side as unfriendly. A similar complicated situation has existed for many years in U.S. relations with Pakistan and India. The United States not only wants to maintain friendly relations with both sides in the GCC dispute but also has important military and security cooperation with each side. So far the United States has not suffered more specific losses to its own



interests and in some respects has gained, in the form of concessions, that Qatar has granted to it in the form of arms purchases and expanded base rights.

■ Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdul Rahman Al Thani has said that Qatar is ready to attend the meeting. But he argued that Doha is not willing to accept the announced conditions and also demanded resolution of the crisis on the basis of equality between countries. Do you believe the crisis

will be solved?

A: It is resolvable, but each side will have to back down some and do so in a way that will enable the other side to save face and not have to admit defeat. Most of the backing down will have to be done by the Saudi-led side. The demands that were made earlier on Qatar include ones that are extreme and cannot reasonably be met. Such demands will have to be quietly dropped. Cooler heads in Riyadh and the other capitals concerned

probably are already realizing that Qatar is not going to cave in to pressure as easily as might have been thought a few months ago. Internal politics in Saudi Arabia, however, and especially the efforts by the crown prince to consolidate his power, may get in the way of any backing off from the earlier demands.

■ Which of the 13 terms and conditions announced by Saudi Arabia and its allies might be negated?

A: A few of the demands are relatively low-cost ones on which Qatar could make some concessions and the Saudi side could claim a victory of sorts. These demands include ones about the handling of fugitives and relations with opposition movements in the other PGCC countries, as well as a general pledge of non-interference in the other states’ internal affairs. It would be much harder for Qatar to concede anything regarding the nature of its relations with Iran, Turkey, or other foreign countries. Qatar probably also will continue to resist demands to shut down Qatar-based news organizations, although the government always could quietly influence the nature of the news coverage in ways that would be less likely to anger its neighbors.

## The dual on Downing Street



**1 →** Hence, if another referendum is held, the result of the 2016 referendum is likely to change, which is precisely what Theresa May seeks.

■ **The incompatibility of some politicians within the EU**

The anti-immigration policies of the Austrian and Hungarian governments have become a chronic and have caused a widespread crisis in the European Union. The issue is further aggravated by Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel’s failure to form a coalition government. Merkel does not seem to have the power and impact needed to confront the Vienna-Budapest alliance.

Prior to the Austrian general elections, the Hungarian Prime Minister was alone in confronting the immigration policies of the EU. However, after the formation of a conservative Austrian coalition, which consists of the Freedom and People Party, Hungary can now seek to impose its demands on Brussels.

In other words, we are now witnessing the formation of the “Kurz-Orbans” union opposing the United Europe, a movement that can spread to other European countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic. As long as far-right extremists and radical groups are growing in number in European countries, EU policies regarding refugees seeking political asylum will continue to be a challenge.

Austria and Hungary have jointly emphasized the need for border protection of the European Union against the influx of refugees. The demand to guard the continent’s borders demonstrates their opposition to the EU’s stance on the immigration crisis.

Even though, as a result of an agreement between Turkey and Brussels, there have been fewer refugees seeking asylum in Europe in 2016 and 2017, Austria insists that the agreement with Turkey on the issue of immigrants should be abolished.

The EU is currently at odds with Austria and Hungary over this issue as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz are seeking to impose their demands on the United Europe. Orbán believes that the external borders of the European Union should be closed to refugees, and that the current process threatens the Schengen Agreement.

However, the majority of European leaders believe that the Schengen Agreement is actually threatened by the anti-immigration approach of Austria and Hungary. Even though the European Union seeks to impose immigration laws on these two European nations, Orbán and Kurz have shown that they’re both determined to oppose the pattern presented by Merkel and other EU politicians.

In a recent meeting, Merkel and Kurz could not rectify their differences over this issue. Even if Kurz reaches an agreement with Merkel on the issue of immigration, the right wing extremists in Austria, who are also part of the coalition government, will never accept the terms set forth by these two European leaders.

As a result, the European Union may change its immigration laws in accommodating asylum seekers, with Austria and Hungary acting as reformists of the immigration protocol currently in effect in Europe. Strict control of the external borders of Europe through the construction of a fence is among the Hungarian government’s agenda on controlling the influx of refugees.

## Iran-S. Arabia reconciliation is key to peace in Asia, Africa: De Venecia

**TEHRAN** — A strong appeal for the two rival leader-nations of Islam, Iran and Saudi Arabia, to lead Islamic Asian and African members in peaceful reconciliation was made Friday by former five-time parliamentary Speaker Jose de Venecia, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte’s special envoy for inter-cultural dialogue and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

Addressing a special conference in Tehran on the revival of the Chinese-led historic Asian Silk Road initiative, which today traverses Asia and Europe and crosses the Red Sea into Africa, de Venecia told the 350-member International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP), which he founded in Manila in September 2000:

“On the raging Sunni-Shiite issues and the extremist violence in the Arab world with the emergence of ISIS-ISIL in the battle-grounds of Syria and Iraq and even Libya, we cannot discount the magnitude of the barriers that intense doctrinal separation has raised between the two great schools

of Islam, and head off decisively the expansion and internationalization of the extremist groups, ISIS-ISIL.”

He added, “We believe the initiative at unification is most difficult but not impossible.”

Venecia recalled the comparable “bloody Catholic-Protestant conflicts in Europe that ran for centuries have long since ended, the more recent achievement being the ‘Good Friday’ peace agreement that ended the brutal politico-religious Catholic-Protestant wars in Northern Ireland.”

De Venecia said in the initiatives for peace, “the latest heart-warming proposal” is that of Iran’s Foreign Minister Javad Zarif for a “dialogue in the Middle East,” by itself a facet of Iran’s great proposal in recent years for a “Dialogue among Civilizations.”

He recalled an episode when Iran’s late President Hashemi Rafsanjani visited Saudi Arabia in 2010 and enjoyed positive relations with then Saudi Arabia’s King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz.

community.” “For understanding among the great civilizations is the only basis for global peace that will endure,” he said.

“We in ICAPP and in the international organizations represented in our conference must learn to create space for other systems and alternative faiths,” de Venecia said, adding “we must all accept that peace is much more than the absence of conflict.”

“We must take to heart the simple truth that peace indeed is a community of sharing; that we all belong to ‘one great human family under God’,” he said.

De Venecia pointed out recent moves by Iran’s spiritual leader Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani had calmed down the recent tensions in Iran, adding sanctions had hurt Iran’s economy with the fall of crude oil exports from 2.5-million barrels per day to 1.1-million barrels by mid-2013, compounded by the drastic fall in oil prices since 2014, but today Iran’s oil exports have returned to nearly pre-sanction levels.

He added the economy has grown, even

**De Venecia is founder and chairman of the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP), which represents some 350 ruling, opposition, and independent parties from 52 countries in Asia, which has launched successful cooperative alliances with the various political parties of Europe, Africa, and Latin America.**

of Islam, and the emergence today of the radical, violent extremists ISIL-ISIL, some of whose splinter groups are moving into Southeast Asia, into Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.”

He, however, noted that ISIS-ISIL “is not meeting with success but being routed in current battlefields.”

He pointed out that in ICAPP’s letters to Saudi Arabia’s then King Abdullah and Iran’s spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, “it would be a great relief to our region and indeed the world, if the two leaders of Islam, Saudi Arabia, representing the Sunnis, and Iran, representing the Shiites, could meet in Mecca and bring about the beginnings of reconciliation and the end of violence in


He said Rafsanjani then expressed hopes that Iran and Saudi Arabia would be restored to a close political and inter-religious relationship. De Venecia quoted the late Iran President who said that “if the two countries (Iran and Saudi Arabia) are harmonized on regional issues and the Islamic world, seditionists will not be able to induce differences between Muslims.”

De Venecia told political party delegates who are Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and Jews from Asian political parties and guest political leaders from Europe, Africa, and Latin America to “strive relentlessly to achieve the multicultural understanding which is the only basis for the long-term security of our Asian region and the global


spreading to non-oil sectors, while Iran has regained access to some \$115-billion in new foreign exchange. De Venecia said, “We in ICAPP note that as Iran today plays a crucial role in the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative, major Asian countries continue working with the Iran economy, and Iranian growth has extended to the cities, townships, and villages.”

He said foreign direct investments in Iran under Ayatollah Khamenei and President Rouhani have soared, growing five-fold to \$12.2-billion in 2016, with 2017 figures still unreported, and today \$12.6-billion in petro-chemicals, methanol and LNG plants are programmed in Iran’s PARS Region for 2018-2019.

Second Announcement



**N.I.O.C**  
**1396.5146**



**National Iranian Drilling Company**

Public Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tender(First Publish/Seconed Publish)						
Two-Stage(Semi-pressed)						
TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	Subject of Tender	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
16,264	728,000,000	14,558,400,000	ROTARY SLIPS	3,150,207	Tender No. FP/17-96/077 Indent No:48-22-9422022	1

**Brief discription of subject:**  
National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address pasdaran Blev., Airport Sqare, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements from qualified and interested tenderers through two-stage public tender ( semi-pressed) 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 doucments. Minimum acceptable point of quality is 60.

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

C) Delivery of call quality evaluating:  
Tenderers shall submit the completed documents including qualificaion worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 14 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.

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:  
This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.

More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. WWW.NIDC.IR  
**Foreign Procurement Dept**  
**National Iranian Drilling Company**

تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۶/۱/۱۵ نوبت دوم ۹۶/۱/۱۶



# Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

## Apartment

Apt in Jordan  
3<sup>th</sup> floor, 130 sq.m, 2 Bdrs. fully  
furn, parking **\$1700**  
**Ms.Diba: 09128103206**

New Apt in a Tower in Elahieh  
6<sup>th</sup> floor, 220 sq.m, 3 Bdrs. semi  
furn & furn, spj, lobby **\$4500**  
**Ms.Diba: 09128103206**

Apt in Farmanieh  
1<sup>th</sup> floor, 350 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.  
equipped kitchen, renovated  
nice garden, outdoor pool **\$3800**  
**Ms.Diba: 09128103206**

Apt in Elahieh  
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# Ward off winter skin woes

Try these simple strategies to keep dry, cracking skin at bay during the cold weather

Chapped, dry, cracked, and peeling... winter can be hard on your skin. What with the cold air and the lack of humidity, your skin spends the winter months fighting to retain moisture, not to mention fending off other insults from cold-weather staples like scratchy wool clothes and crackling wood fires.

How can your skin survive the season? We asked Dr. Barbara Gilchrist, senior lecturer on dermatology at Harvard Medical School, to weigh in with her best tips to help you protect your skin from winter dryness.

### ■ What's the most common winter skin problem that women experience?

For most women, it's dry skin and itching, says Dr. Gilchrist. You can blame cold air and low humidity for stripping the water away from the surface of your skin. Instead of lying flat and smooth and then shedding from the surface inconspicuously, dead skin cells from the many layers that make up our protective skin barrier form small but visible partially attached clumps that make your skin feel dry and rough. "Older women tend to have very dry and itchy lower legs. Sometimes this can even interfere with sleep, so it's more than just cosmetic," says Dr. Gilchrist.

Eczema craquelé is another problem to watch for in the winter months. It's essentially an extreme manifestation of dry skin, again usually occurring on the lower legs. With this condition, the dryness actually causes cracks in the top layer of skin, known as the stratum corneum. These cracks allow blood to rise up beneath the skin, appearing as squiggly red lines, which give the skin a mottled appearance. Some women with this condition



experience itching and stinging.

Also keep in mind that your face and limbs aren't the only parts of your body that can experience dry skin. Your scalp might also dry out during the winter months, causing dandruff, which is luckily easy to address by using a dandruff shampoo.

### ■ How can you prevent dry skin in the winter months?

Combating the problem starts with keeping your home environment moist. Use a humidifier if you can. But the most effective strategy is to use skin moisturizers, which slow water loss and also physically smooth the skin, making it feel less rough, says Dr. Gilchrist.

### ■ Do you have any tips for choosing a moisturizer?

Choose the heaviest moisturizer that's comfortable to wear, and use more on your lower legs and hands, which are most prone to dryness. After a bath or a shower, pat the skin dry and immediately apply a moisturizer. Reapply as needed throughout the day, says Dr. Gilchrist.

### ■ How about dry lips? Any suggestions to treat and prevent chapping?

Lip balms, which you can buy at any drugstore or supermarket, work well to treat and prevent dryness of the lips in the winter months. Is it possible for your lips to become dependent on balms and dry out more quickly when you don't wear them?

While you may have heard this in the past, your skin doesn't get dependent on these products. "I've never seen any data that support that," says Dr. Gilchrist. However, if you are used to the feel of these products on your lips and suddenly go without, your lips may feel particularly dry as a result.

### ■ Do expensive, brand-name moisturizers work better than lower-cost options?

"It doesn't have to be expensive to work," says Dr. Gilchrist. "To my knowledge, while there are some extremely expensive moisturizers, there are none that are proven to be magically better." But if you can, she says, look for moisturizers with alpha hydroxy ac-

ids, also called fruit acids, such as lactic acid or glycol acid. Creams with alpha hydroxy acids tend to hold moisture in the skin longer than other moisturizers. You can get them at fairly high concentrations, she says. Use small amounts until your skin gets used to them, so you can apply them and they don't sting.

### ■ How about fragrances in moisturizers? Should you avoid them?

Fragrance-free isn't always necessary either. "Unless you've had a reaction in the past to a particular moisturizer with a fragrance, there's no real reason not to pick a moisturizer with a scent if you like it," says Dr. Gilchrist. Allergic reactions are very uncommon, except among highly allergy-prone individuals, she says.

### ■ Any other winter skin tips you can offer?

Keeping the outer skin barrier well hydrated is crucial. Also keep the skin covered in cold temperatures, and don't forget to wear gloves when you're out, says Dr. Gilchrist. For people with Raynaud's syndrome, where blood vessels in the fingers overreact to cold temperatures, gloves help prevent fingers from becoming painful and turning white — which happens more commonly in the winter. Keeping the hands warm can also ensure healthy nail growth during the colder months, she says. In addition, as cozy as it may be, it's best to avoid sitting next to a fire or a radiator all day, because that type of direct heat can be damaging to your skin. Avoid super-hot baths for the same reason, says Dr. Gilchrist. Whenever possible, try to wear soft fabrics. Wool is warm, but it can scratch and irritate the skin. If you do wear wool when you go outside, be certain to remove it as soon as possible when you go back inside or layer it over softer fabrics. (Source: health.harvard.edu)

## Things I want my kids to know about mental health



When I was a child, mental health just wasn't spoken about.

I remember euphemistic conversations about my great-aunt, who drowned after falling into a river; it was many years later that I realized she'd died by suicide.

And when I began to suffer mental health problems myself as a teenager, I tried — literally — to keep them under cover, wearing long sleeves and long skirts to hide the self-harm scars.

Today, there's a lot more openness around mental health.

My children, aged six and 12, are taught about it at school; they've had assemblies run by Childline, and even watched programs about it on CBBC.

There is, however, still a long way to go before mental illness is treated just the same as physical illness.

With that in mind, here are eight things I want my kids to know about mental health:

### 1. Everyone has it

Just as we all have physical health, we all have mental health. And like physical health, sometimes our mental health is good — and sometimes it's not.

It's a fact of life, and something that many of us will go through at some point.

### 2. Kids can get mental illnesses, too

Don't let anyone tell you you're 'too young' to suffer from depression or anxiety.

According to YoungMinds, almost a quarter of young people have symptoms of mental ill health, and half of all mental health problems begin by the age of 14.

That means you need to take the signs of mental health seriously, in yourself and in your friends.

It might be 'just a phase' — but equally, it might be a genuine problem, and getting help quickly could bring it under control before it gets worse.

### 3. It's nothing to be ashamed of

Would you feel ashamed if you broke your leg playing football, or if you came down with tonsillitis?

There's no need to be ashamed of having a mental health problem, either.

About one in four of us will experience a mental illness at some stage of our lives, so you're far from alone.

And the more open we are about our struggles, the easier it will become for everyone to talk about mental health.

### 4. It's not your fault

If you have a parent who suffers with mental illness, please understand that it's not your fault.

They're sick because something has gone wrong in their brain chemistry, not because you forgot to tidy your bedroom or got a D in your maths homework.

If you're a young person with mental health problems, that is equally not your fault.

You're not bad or flawed or broken; you have an illness that's as real as flu or chickenpox.

### 5. People with mental health problems are not scary

We've all read news stories about 'violent psychos' committing hideous offences, and seen bloodthirsty horror movies where the main character has schizophrenia, a personality disorder, or some other shady mental illness.

But — news flash — the vast majority of people with mental health problems are far from violent or scary. In fact, they're more likely to be the victims of crime than the perpetrator.

So you don't need to shy away from people with mental illnesses, or fear that your own mental health problems could turn you into a psychopath. Illness does not equal evil.

### 6. Tact is important

We've all used throwaway comments to refer to things going a bit pear-shaped.

You know the sort: 'I've got nothing to do this weekend; it's so depressing,' or, 'Did you hear about Miss going schizo in chemistry?'

While some people with mental illnesses barely notice this kind of remark, others are sensitive about their diagnosis and feel mocked if terms relating to mental health are slung around.

If in doubt, be tactful and find a different expression to use.

### 7. Talking helps

As a depressed teenager, I phoned Childline from the phone box around the corner every single Sunday evening for a good six months.

Talking is hugely important if you have mental health issues, and having someone who will listen to you without judgement is vital.

It might be your parents, but you might find it easier to talk to someone unconnected with your story, such as a friend, a teacher, a school counsellor or a helpline.

### 8. It can get better

Whether you have a mental health problem yourself, or are close to someone who has, it may seem as if things are never going to get better.

But most mental illnesses are highly treatable with medication, therapy or both.

It's true that it's not always easy to find the right help, and getting support often involves long waiting lists, but with perseverance, it's entirely possible to lead a normal and fulfilling life with a mental illness.

(Source: Metro)

## What is listeria? 5 things you need to know

What you need to know about the food-borne bacteria that can make you sick.

Every few months — sometimes even weeks — it seems there's another one: a wide-ranging product recall based on concerns of listeria contamination. This week, Panera Bread announced it would recall cream cheese products sold in its U.S. cafes over possible listeria contamination. But what exactly is listeria? How does it breed and why are outbreaks so deadly?

After talking with a handful of experts, I've learned that this is one tricky food-borne pathogen. Which brings us to lesson number one, listeria itself is not a disease; it's a bacteria: listeria monocytogenes. "It's important to understand that listeria itself is not a medical disease — but can cause a disease process," says Dr. Runjhun Misra, DO, an internal medicine specialist in Oakland, CA. "When it leads to infection, that is called listeriosis." And you can get it when you eat something that has been contaminated with the bacteria.

Here are five things you need to know about listeria outbreaks.

### 1. Listeria loves certain foods

And listeria (the bacteria, that is) is incredibly unique, or, in the words of Dr. Meghan May, associate professor of biomedical sciences at University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine, "it is very cool, with a fascinating cell biology to it." Listeria bacteria behaves similarly to mold, preferring moist conditions, and can be found in soil, water and some animals.

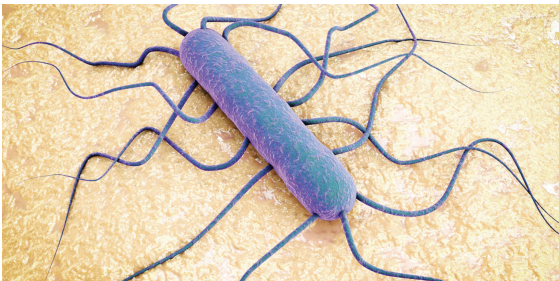
"Certain foods that are more likely to contain listeria include unpasteurized milk and cheeses made from unpasteurized milk, melons, raw sprouts, hot dogs, pâtés, lunch meats, cold cuts, and refrigerated smoked seafood," Karen Wong, medical officer with the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) Division of Foodborne, Waterborne, and Environmental Diseases told NBC News BETTER.

It's odd that listeria can affect such a wide array of food types. Usually food-borne pathogens, like salmonella, which favors raw foods, are more particular, and easier to sniff out as potentially suspect. What about listeria makes it able to breed in both smoked meats and unpasteurized milk? It all comes down to temperature and environment.

2. It's okay in the fridge, but listeria hates the oven "Listeria can grow at refrigeration temperature," says May. "It can do that because it's used to living outside and not particularly bothered by [that level of cold]."

Though listeria can grow in the fridge, May notes that it does grow more slowly in the cold, which is why it's critical to make sure your refrigerator is set at "under 40 degrees Fahrenheit," says Dr. Misra, adding that when you do your grocery shopping, make sure no refrigerated items are out for longer than two hours.

One condition that listeria can't endure is extreme heat. If you really want to be sure that bacteria is dead and gone,



expose it to heat of "above 165 degrees Fahrenheit," says Misra. 3. It can be deadly, but for many it's not harmful.

If you are more or less in good health, young, and not pregnant, you may come into contact with listeria and not even know it.

"About 30 percent of infected patients don't show any symptoms," says May. "The next biggest group [of those infected] have flu-like illnesses."

If you fall among the latter, you'll probably just be miserable for a few days as you would with any stomach bug, but your body should be able to clear it up on its own and you might not require medical attention. But really, it's your body, your call, and if you're violently ill, you should go to the doctor just to be on the safe side. Also, if you do have listeriosis, you'll want the hospital to know so they can report it and be on the lookout for other cases.

Wong of the CDC notes that around 260 people die from listeriosis every year. Those who have the highest risk of fatal infection are older people (older than 50, Dr. May points out), people with HIV, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, liver disease on immunosuppressant drugs or living with other immune problems, as well as newborns and pregnant women.

Dr. Misra explains that this high-risk group of people can come down with invasive listeriosis, "meaning the bacteria spreads beyond the gut. You may have a headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance and seizures in addition to fever and muscle aches." If you present any of these symptoms, it's imperative to get to the doctor or ER right away. You will likely be admitted to the hospital and administered antibiotics through an IV.

Pregnant women really need to be especially vigilant because, as Dr. May explains, they may fall in that 30 percent that have no idea they're infected — or they'll just feel like it's a particularly bad case of morning sickness. They may pull through fine, but they can unknowingly pass the infection on to their unborn child, which can be terribly tragic, leading to miscarriage or stillborn birth as well as health complications once the child is born.

"We worry about meningitis [in newborns] and also, when they're taking their first breaths, they may contaminate their respiratory tract with listeria if the mother is infected,"

from the disease," she said.

Culhane added that compared with breast cancer, prostate cancer has had half the investment and half the research, making it unsurprising that progress here is lagging.

Experts credit the discrepancy to the sheer number of organizations raising funds, worldwide, and the massive public relations efforts to stamp out breast cancer.

"However, the good news is that many of these developments could be applied to prostate cancer and we're confident that with the right funding, we can dramatically reduce deaths within the next decade," Culhane said.

In its announcement, Prostate Cancer UK underscored the fact that "the shift does not represent a worsening situation for prostate cancer and men diagnosed today are 2.5 times more likely to live for ten years or more than if they were diagnosed in 1990." The organization said more men are dying

from the disease because the population, as a whole, is getting older.

Dr. Mieke Van Hemelrijck, academic lead for translational oncology and urology research at King's College London, agreed that this milestone was not wholly unexpected.

"It's not such a surprise, because obviously the population is aging and, hence, there will be more prostate cancer," Van Hemelrijck said. "Part of the reason why it's higher than for breast cancer is really because breast cancer is, in essence, 20 years ahead of prostate cancer when it comes to research."

Time and money allotted to breast cancer research have far outpaced the resources afforded to prostate cancer research, she said.

As a result, "we have much better knowledge about figuring out subtypes of breast cancer and then identifying which treatments you should get, depending on which subtype you present with," Van Hemelrijck said. "With prostate cancer, unfortunately,

we're not there yet."

Risk factors for developing prostate cancer include age, race/ethnicity and family history. According to the American Cancer Society's website:

- 60% of cases of prostate cancer are diagnosed in men over age 65.

- African-American men are more likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer; Asian-American and Hispanic/Latino men are less likely to develop the disease.

- "Having a father or brother with prostate cancer more than double's a man's risk of developing the disease."

As in the UK, prostate cancer is the No. 3 cause of cancer-related death in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Lung cancer is by far the leading cause of cancer death in the US, followed by breast cancer. Colorectal cancer ranks fourth.

(Source: CNN)

By Ben Tinker

Prostate cancer now kills more people in the United Kingdom than breast cancer, according to numbers released Friday by Prostate Cancer UK.

The charitable organization said 11,819 men in the UK died from prostate cancer in 2015 -- the latest year for which data are available -- compared with 11,442 women who died of breast cancer. Lung cancer and bowel (colorectal) cancer remain the top two deadliest cancers in the country, respectively.

"It's incredibly encouraging to see the tremendous progress that has been made in breast cancer over recent years," Angela Culhane, CEO of Prostate Cancer UK, said in a statement.

"The introduction of precision medicine, a screening program and a weighty research boost has no doubt played an important role in reducing the number of women who die



## Cellphone radiation poses no real harm to humans, new research says

Male rats showed a small increase in a kind of heart tumor after exposure to massive amounts of cellphone radiation, a new government study reports. But don't read too much into that, experts say — because those rats bathed in more radiation than even the heaviest cellphone users would experience.

There are ongoing worries about whether cellphones can give you cancer — especially brain cancer, since our phones spend so much time near our faces. It's true that cell phones do emit radiation. But it's radiofrequency radiation, which is much lower energy than the ionizing radiation you'd get from an X-ray, or, say, nuclear fallout. Ionizing radiation can cause DNA damage that can eventually lead to cancer. But the radiofrequency radiation from a cellphone doesn't work that way — and today's results support that.



One of the studies reports that male rats exposed to very high levels of radiofrequency radiation grew tumors around their hearts. Female rats exposed to the radiation didn't, and neither male nor female mice showed obvious health problems in a second study. Neither study turned up clear evidence that radiofrequency radiation causes brain tumors, although the researchers are continuing to investigate. The studies are drafts that haven't yet been reviewed by outside scientists.

While the Federal Communication Commission limits how much radiofrequency radiation can come out of your cellphone, the Food and Drug Administration can have a say about whether those limits are safe. So the FDA asked the National Toxicology Program (NTP), a division within the National Institutes of Health, to investigate. Based on the NTP's results, as well as hundreds of other studies, the FDA is still confident that the current limits on cellphone radiation are safe, according to a statement from Jeffrey Shuren, the director of the FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health.

The study specifically used 2G and 3G frequencies — not the frequencies used on more advanced 4G or 5G networks. Researchers exposed the rodents' entire bodies to the radiowaves for more than nine hours per day, for up to two years. ("A rat that is 2 years old is roughly equivalent to a 70-year-old person," STAT News reports.) These exposure levels were much higher than what people would experience, John Bucher, senior scientist with the NTP, says in a statement. "So, these findings should not be directly extrapolated to human cell phone usage," he says.

And even with these unusually high levels of exposure, the links to cancer were still "mostly equivocal, or ambiguous," according to the FDA's statement. In fact, the rats exposed to cell phone radiation actually appeared to live longer than the ones that weren't, a finding that the FDA's Shuren says the agency is assessing. The difference could simply be the result of chance, STAT News reports.

So, what do these results in rodents mean for people? Not a whole lot, experts say. "Even with frequent daily use by the vast majority of adults, we have not seen an increase in events like brain tumors," the FDA's statement says. Otis Brawley, the American Cancer Society's chief medical officer, agreed in an interview with The Associated Press. "The evidence for an association between cellphones and cancer is weak, and so far, we have not seen a higher cancer risk in people," Brawley told the AP in a phone interview. "I am actually holding my cellphone up to my ear."

(Source: The Verge)

## High-tech collars fueled a new study showing the impact of climate change on polar bears

The plight of the polar bear is looking direr all the time.

A new study finds the large predators have a higher metabolic rate than previously expected and prey is getting harder to catch as climate change causes sea ice to retreat sooner than ever.



Researchers monitored a group of nine female polar bears in the Arctic over the course of two years. They used collars equipped with point-of-view cameras and location-tracking tech to follow the bears' movements and feeding behavior. They also measured the bears' metabolic rates using blood and urine samples.

"We found that polar bears actually have much higher energy demands than predicted. They need to be catching a lot of seals," says Anthony Pagano, a US Geological Survey wildlife biologist and doctoral candidate at University of California Santa Cruz. Five of the nine bears lost mass at a time when they should have been packing on body fat.

The team, led by Pagano, published its findings Friday in the journal Science.

(Source: Cnet)

# Successful startup founders who claim the title of 'Mom'

If you think every startup founder has to be a college dropout like Mark Zuckerberg, you'd be wrong.

A new generation of startup entrepreneurs are working hard to solve problems — while working just as hard at being a parent.

Business Insider talked to venture capitalists and startup CEOs to find the moms who have risked it all to build a business.

Many are solving the pain points in their own lives, like the craziness of carpool schedules. Others are tackling subjects like genomics or cloud infrastructure.

If anything is clear, being a mom doesn't mean you can't build a startup. Rather, these startup founders are an inspiration to future generations of women who can really have it all.

■ **Anne Wojcicki, CEO and cofounder of genomics company 23andMe**

Anne Wojcicki is Silicon Valley's example of never giving up. Even after the FDA served her company with a cease-and-desist in 2013, Wojcicki didn't get sidetracked from her vision of making personal genomic testing affordable. Instead, she buckled down for two years and in October 2015 the company came out with a new line of genetic testing. Wojcicki's startup is now worth more than \$1.1 billion.

■ **Diane Greene, cofounder of VMware and Bebob, now with Google**

Diane Green was pregnant with her second child when she, her husband, and three other founded VMware. "My original plan was I was going to get the company going and bring in a CEO," she once told Stanford students.

That never happened. Greene scaled VMware (her third startup) until 2008. Google then acquired her latest startup Bebob for \$380 million in November 2015. Greene now serves as the senior vice president in charge of its cloud business.

■ **Beatriz Acevedo, founder and president of the Mitú network**

Beatriz Acevedo wants to change how Latinos are portrayed in the media so it's not only about the soap opera stereotype. So, in 2012, the media executive took the responsibility into her own hands. Alongside raising her twins, Acevedo and her husband launched Mitú, a content network that speaks to a rising generation of Latino millennials. The startup is creating everything from sketch comedy shows to DIY beauty tutorials, which are viewed more than 700 million times a month.

■ **Paula Long, CEO and co-founder of DataGravity**

Paula Long was about to take her first network storage company, EqualLogic, public when Dell came in with an offer she couldn't refuse: \$1.4 billion for the startup. While she's had great success in tech, she's not afraid to admit that she needed a better work-life balance and to encourage that for her employees at her new startup, DataGravity.

"I missed a lot of moments in my family's life, especially with my son," Long told the Huffington Post. "...My family knew I was there if they needed me, but they tried not to



© Photo by Beatriz Acevedo

need me. This is why I push people to work from home so they can pick up their 5-year-old on the first day of kindergarten. I make sure people know these little moments are important, and you can't get them back."

■ **Jane Park, CEO and founder of Julep**

After having her second child, Jane Park gave up her high-level Starbucks position on a gut instinct to follow a true calling. "I actually surprised myself - I expected to care less about my work after having children, not more. But the opposite happened. I suddenly found an incredible internal drive to learn, grow and create," she told the Huffington Post. That business ended up being Julep, an e-commerce powerhouse that now has more than 300 non-toxic nail polishes and other beauty products. She even named a polish color after her son, Yumi.

■ **Adi Tatarko, CEO and cofounder of Houzz**

Houzz started as a pet project when Adi Tatarko and her husband Alon Cohen wanted to remodel their house. Now, their company, which helps people redecorate their home from start to finish, has more than 40 million visitors a month to the site. Having both parents as startup founders means Tatarko is hyper-aware of making sure the work-life balance is there for their three kids.

"I can't waste time. I have to be with my kids at home at certain times, and that means that the times I'm at work need to be very, very productive. I have to focus on the things that will really move the needle. At home it's the same thing. I'm not wasting time on things that other people can help me with," Tatarko told the Huffington Post.

■ **Tina Sharkey, cofounder of iVillage and CEO of Sherpa Foundry**

Tina Sharkey's first venture was cofounding iVillage in 1995 and she has been lead-

ing brands into the digital world since. She served as CEO of BabyCenter.com and led multiple businesses at AOL. In 2013, she was tapped to run Sherpa Foundry as its CEO and became a venture partner at Sherpa Capital. It's still in stealth, but Sharkey has also co-founded a new consumer startup that's incubating at Sherpa Foundry.

■ **Mariam Naficy, CEO and founder of Minted**

Mariam Naficy built her first startup, Eve, during the dot-com boom and sold it for \$110 million right before the market for e-commerce startups collapsed in 2001. Starting a company straight out of school and selling it for millions helped her afford things later like childcare when she started her next company, Naficy told the Huffington Post. Now a mother of two, Naficy is ignoring the "move fast" lessons she learned from her first go-round to build Minted, a crowdsourced designer stationary and arts marketplace.

■ **Julia Hartz, CEO and cofounder of Eventbrite**

10 years ago, Julia Hartz teamed up with her husband and a friend to launch Eventbrite. The husband-and-wife team served as CEO and President of the digital ticketing company until April when she switched to CEO and her husband, Kevin, moved to executive chairman. In the 10 years the two have been working together, they've also raised two kids and grown the company until it's now worth more than \$1 billion.

■ **Kimberly Bryant, founder of Black Girls**

Kimberly Bryant had left her job at Genentech after years working in the biotech industry. Her daughter Kai also had a passion for tech and fell in love with coding, but the 12-year-old realized she was one of few girls at a summer coding camp and the

only African-American girl. That's when the lightbulb went on for Bryant. She founded Black Girls Code in 2011, and now there are chapters throughout the globe that host hackathons and all-day workshops to promote girls in tech.

■ **Jessica Alba, founder of The Honest Co.**

After having her first daughter, actress and entrepreneur Jessica Alba was inspired to create The Honest Company. She launched her line of non-toxic family-friendly products in 2011 with 17 different items, from baby wipes to laundry detergent. The company is now worth \$1 billion and is rumored to be preparing to go public.

■ **Carolyn Yashari Becher, Janelle McGlothlin, and Joanna McFarland, founders of HopSkipDrive**

The three cofounders of HopSkipDrive have eight kids between them, all between the ages of 4-12. They know the pain of crazy carpool scheduling and being working moms, so they created HopSkipDrive, an "Uber for kids" alternative that helps parents in a pinch. The service so far is only available in Los Angeles and Orange County, but it hopes to expand throughout southern California this year.

■ **Jessica Herrin, WeddingChannel.com and Stella & Dot cofounder**

Jessica Herrin calls 2003 the "year of firsts." She had her first daughter and took her first leap into turning her weekend hobby of designing jewelry into a business. With one startup under her belt (she cofounded the WeddingChannel.com when she was 24), Herrin turned her passion for jewelry into Stella & Dot. The jewelry company has raised \$37 million from Sequoia and was named an Inc. 500 Fastest-Growing company.

(Source: Business Insider)

## NASA lecture: Radiation still a stumbling block to space travel

The dream of exploring deep space has sparked the imagination for generations, but it always runs up against one cold, hard reality: radiation.

Simply put, exposure to space radiation during a long mission or while exploring a place like Mars increases the likelihood of an astronaut dying from cancer.

Yes, astronauts are willing to take some risks, but within reason, said John Norbury, lead research physicist in the Space Radiation Group at NASA Langley Research Center in Hampton.

According to the American Cancer Society, the average American male stands a roughly 22 percent chance of dying from cancer in his lifetime; an American woman, just under 19 percent.

NASA wants to keep the acceptable added risk to astronauts to less than 3 percent. But the agency isn't there yet.

"It's not a do-or-die situation," Norbury said. "It's, rather, how much does the risk of dying from cancer increase on a mission?"

Norbury will discuss space radiation and its impact on space flight within our solar system and beyond in a free public lecture 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Virginia Air & Space Center in downtown Hampton. He'll appear as part of NASA Langley's monthly Sigma lecture series.

Langley is a leader in NASA's space radiation work and, for senior research physicist Sheila Thibeault, Norbury is ideally suited to discuss the topic: an internationally recognized expert who models the ability of cosmic rays to go through various materials and impact the human brain, heart, eyes and other organs

"This is pioneering work," said Thibeault. "Radiation in space is much, much, much more hazardous than on Earth, so this is a space problem. And it's a very challenging problem to try to figure out how we're going to get astronauts to Mars and back safely. And how to get astronauts to the moon and stay there for a while and get back."

Thibeault is vice chairwoman of the Sigma selection committee and nominated Norbury for Tuesday's lecture.

As NASA and even private space transportation companies work to get humans to the Martian system in the 2030s and to build an orbiting Deep Space Gateway as a port of call for extended missions, the specter of radiation



exposure is very real.

Prolonged exposure doesn't just increase one's lifetime cancer risk, but can cause serious acute health effects.

Here on this planet, we're largely protected from most solar and cosmic particles by the Earth's atmosphere and magnetic field. That magnetic field also offers some protection to crews in low-Earth orbit aboard the International Space Station.

For now, there is no single solution to reducing the radiation risk from space travel to acceptable levels, but scientists and engineers continue to work the problem.

Water — or hydrogen — offers excellent protection and could in some manner be used as shielding. A material such as polyethylene, a thermoplastic, is also promising: It's already being used to supplement the sleeping quarters on the space station.

A more recent Langley discovery is that there's actually an optimal thickness to spacecraft walls for radiation protection: about 7 centimeters, or roughly 2.75 inches.

Thicker than that, it doesn't offer more protection, and it could actually increase radiation levels inside the craft.

"It's not only the radiation coming through the walls, but also coming scattered back from the walls," said Norbury. "It's a complex situation."

And it's one that likely will need more than one fix, especially for a Martian mission

"For example, optimizing the shield thickness, going at an optimal time during the solar cycle, perhaps using medical counter-measures," Norbury said. "And then building a reasonable shelter on the surface of Mars."

Genetic screening of astronauts might also be a consideration in future, he said, although currently it's illegal to turn people down for a job based on their genetic profiles.

"So I think the solution for a Mars mission will probably be a combination of different partial solutions, rather than just one complete solution," Norbury said.

(Source: Daily Press)



# Can huge volcanoes help cool the Earth, and save us from fiery death?

With concern about global warming caused by climate change continuing to rise and fewer and fewer options to do something about it, scientists are proposing a radical new solution. Experts say we should study the next major global volcanic eruption to learn about spreading aerosols to reflect sunlight back into space and cool the planet.

Volcanoes spew a huge amount of rock and ash when they blow, and that mixes with water vapor to form aerosols, which acts as a giant reflector that keeps light from entering the Earth's atmosphere. During the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines nearly 30 years ago, global temperatures plunge by nearly a full degree Fahrenheit for about two years.

As a result, scientists believe they can study the effects of the next volcanic eruption to determine the feasibility of actions like spreading aerosols in the sky via jet planes or other methods in order to counteract the effects of global warming.

## Solar radiation

In November of 2006 the NASA Ames Research Center and the Carnegie Institution of Washington Department of Global Ecology at Stanford University sponsored an expert workshop on the use of solar radiation management as a strategy for coping with the challenge of climate change. The basic concept of managing Earth's radiation budget is to reduce the amount of incoming solar radiation absorbed by the Earth so as to counterbalance the heating of the Earth that would otherwise result from the accumulation of greenhouse gases.



The workshop did not seek to decide whether or under what circumstances solar radiation management should be deployed

or which strategies or technologies might be best, if it were deployed. Rather, the workshop focused on defining what kinds

**The volcanic eruptions of El Chichón and Pinatubo injected enough sulfate aerosol into the stratosphere to decrease temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere for 1 to 3 years by several tenths of a degree Celsius.**

## Scientists drilling holes in Antarctica's largest ice shelf to explore the ocean beneath

Antarctica's Ross Ice Shelf is the world's largest floating slab of ice: It's about the size of Spain, and nearly a kilometer (about 0.6 miles) thick.

The ocean beneath, roughly the volume of the North Sea, is one of the most important but least understood parts of the climate system.

We are part of the multi-disciplinary Aotearoa New Zealand Ross Ice Shelf program team, and have melted a hole through hundreds of meters of ice to explore this ocean and the ice shelf's vulnerability to climate change.

## Ocean is warming

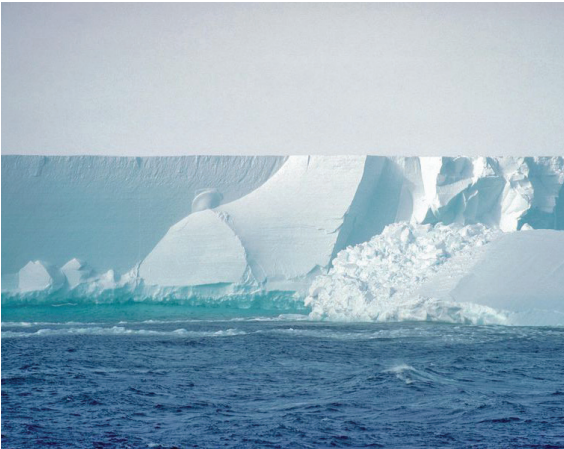
Our measurements show that this hidden ocean is warming and freshening - but in ways we weren't expecting.

All major ice shelves are found around the coast of Antarctica. These massive pieces of ice hold back the land-locked ice sheets that, if freed to melt into the ocean, would raise sea levels and change the face of our world.

An ice shelf is a massive lid of ice that forms when glaciers flow off the land and merge as they float out over the coastal ocean.

Shelves lose ice by either breaking off icebergs or by melting from below. We can see big icebergs from satellites - it is the melting that is hidden.

Because the water flowing underneath the Ross Ice



Shelf is cold (minus 1.9 degrees Celsius, or 29 degrees Fahrenheit), it is called a "cold cavity".

If it warms, the future of the shelf and the ice upstream could change dramatically. Yet this hidden ocean is excluded from all present models of future climate.

There has only been one set of measurements of this

ocean, made by an international team in the late 1970s. The team made repeated attempts, using several types of drills, over the course of five years.

With this experience and newer, cleaner, technology, we were able to complete our work in a single season.

## Seawater circulates

Our basic understanding is that seawater circulates through the cavity by flowing in at the sea bed as relatively warm, salty water. It eventually finds its way to the shore - except of course this is a shoreline under as much as 800 meters (about 0.5 miles) of ice.

There it starts melting the shelf from beneath and flows across the shelf underside back towards the open ocean.

The New Zealand team - including hot water drillers, glaciologists, biologists, seismologists, oceanographers - worked from November through to January, supported by tracked vehicles and, whenever the notorious local weather permitted, Twin Otter aircraft.

As with all polar oceanography, getting to the ocean is often the most difficult part. In this case, we faced the complex task of melting a bore hole, only 25 centimeters (10 inches) in diameter, through hundreds of meters of ice.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

## Cheetah uses inner ear to keep balanced while running, scientists discovered

When a cheetah runs, there's plenty of motion. After all, the animal can crack speeds of 60 miles per hour when it's sprinting after prey, making it the fastest land animal in the world. But one thing doesn't really seem to move during the rush: the cheetah's head, which lets the big cat stay focused on its target. Now scientists have discovered that may be thanks to tiny structures in its ears.

Humans have these structures, called inner ears, too—we use them to keep our balance. But researchers comparing cheetahs with other cats discovered that the speediest of the lot also had the largest inner ears, even larger than those of extinct cheetahs. That's according to scientific reports.

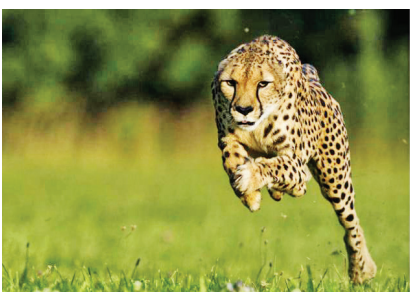
That balance lets a cheetah keep its head stock-still while chasing after prey. "If you watch a cheetah run in slow motion, you'll

see incredible feats of movement: its legs, its back, its muscles all move with such coordinated power," lead author Camille Grohé, a biologist researching at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, said in a press release. "But its head hardly moves at all."

## Keeping their balance

Cheetahs use finely honed structures in their inner ears to keep their balance.

So Grohé and the rest of the team decided to look at what's going on inside the cheetah's head with its inner ear. To do so, they put the skulls of 14 different species of cat through a high resolution CT machine. The other species included a tiger, a clouded leopard, and a house cat, and the researchers used seven different modern cheetah skulls to cover differences between different populations.



The CT scans let the scientists gather very detailed three dimensional measurements of each cat's inner ear structures.

## Extinct cheetah species

In the cheetah skulls, they found really weird inner ear structures: they were particularly large compared to the cat's body size,

and certain sections were longer than usual. All the other skulls they looked at had less refined inner ears, even the extinct cheetah species, which likely died out about 126,000 years ago.

That means cheetahs don't just have a nifty talent, but also that it evolved fairly recently. The researchers suggest that the improved sensory system, in conjunction with other adaptations like thin bones, was enough to let cheetahs compete against other species of big cats.

Without their inner ears, perhaps cheetahs would still be able to run quickly — but they might not be able to hunt as effectively as they do today. And all that speed burns up a lot of fuel, so successfully catching dinner is a top priority.

(Source: Newsweek)

## Woodpeckers show signs of potential brain damage, new research finds

For a person, slamming your head full force into a tree trunk could be enough to knock you silly. Woodpeckers do this untold thousands of times during their lives, and these birds have thrived on Earth for some 25 million years.

But research published on Friday shows for the first time that all this pecking seems to carry consequences for the woodpecker's brain. Scientists said an examination found build-ups of a protein called tau in woodpeckers' brains that in people is associated with brain damage from neurodegenerative diseases and head trauma.

The researchers examined brain tissue from Downy Woodpeckers and Red-winged Blackbirds, a non-pecking bird, from collections at the Field Museum in Chicago and the Harvard Museum of Natural History. The woodpeckers had tau build-up. The blackbirds did not.



"It was assumed that woodpeckers have no brain injury," said George Farah, who worked on the study published in the journal PLOS ONE as a Boston University School of Medicine graduate student. "This research seems to suggest the contrary."

The scientists are now trying to determine whether the woodpecker tau buildup is indicative of brain damage or somehow protective instead.

"One day in the lab I was talking to another professor about how we've designed different types of sports safety equipment, like football helmets, based on the biomechanics of the woodpecker, but no one had ever looked at a woodpecker brain."

(Source: Reuters)

## NASA's Mars Curiosity rover just took a selfie of the Red Planet

The Curiosity rover, which is currently on Martian soil, just snapped a selfie and sent it back home to Earth — along with a breathtaking panoramic shot of the Red Planet.

The Jet Propulsion Laboratory shared the said photo last week, taken by the rover while it roamed the Vera Rubin Ridge and featuring Mount Sharp far behind.

Rover has been gallivanting around the Red planet for five years in a mission to study the nether regions of Mount Sharp and its "clay-rich" slopes.

The "mountain's" base provides access to layers formed over millions of years," said JPL. "These layers formed in the presence of water — likely due to a lake or lakes that sat at the bottom of the mountain, which sits inside Gale Crater." Ultimately, what it's really there for is to study whether Martian soil is apt for human exploration — and eventually settlement and colonization.

But Martian ambitions aside, the Curiosity Rover selfie, which can be seen above, is actually made up of various images stitched up to form one whole photo.

It was captured on Jan. 23 by the rover's Mars Hands Lens Imager, which isn't seen in the shot because it was positioned out of frame in the final mosaic.

Along with the selfie, NASA also shared the aforementioned panoramic shot of Mars, the footage resembling that of a scene from a big-budget sci-fi movie. Needless to say, it was glorious, and to see such a detailed and vivid look of the Red planet is a sight to behold.

The panorama was captured three months ago by the rover's Mast Camera. It features the 11-mile journey the Curiosity Rover has made since landing in the Gale Crater back in 2012.

(Source: Tech Times)

## Unlocking secrets of sour flavors with something found in your ears

Of the five tastes — sweet, salty, sour, bitter and umami — sour is one of the most mysterious. Bite into a piece of lemon and — bing! — your brain gets a message that something sour has arrived. But unlike sweet and bitter, for example, for which biologists have identified proteins on the tongue's taste cells that detect the molecules involved, the sourness of acids like lemon juice and vinegar has remained enigmatic, with the exact details of how we pick up on it little understood. Now, however, in a paper published last month in Science, researchers report that they have found a protein in mouse taste cells that is likely a key player in the detection of sour flavors.

There's just one strange thing, though: Biologists have known about this protein for years. It was previously identified in the inner ear, or vestibular system, of mice, humans and many other creatures, where it is required for developing a sense of balance.

The results suggest a fascinating truth about evolution: The first place something is discovered may not be the last place it turns up. If it has proved advantageous over the eons, a protein whose purpose we thought we understood may have a rich private life of its own elsewhere in the body, just waiting to be found.

Similar discoveries have cropped up more and more in the last decade as researchers look more closely at which genes cells are using. This approach has led to the revelations that smell receptors are alive and well in the kidneys, bitter taste receptors dot the sinuses and testes, and sweet taste receptors are found in the bladder.

It seems these proteins are acting as sensors in these other tissues as well. But rather than sending a message about the strawberry you're biting into, they are rigged to send messages about invading bacteria, for instance, or to help adjust blood pressure after a meal.

(Source: The NYT)

## Ayandeh Bank Launches "Every Wish Will Be Fulfilled in Future" Plan

The 7th Periodical Plan of Ayandeh Bank's Customers Club entitled "Every Wish Will Be Fulfilled in Future" started on November 1 and is run up to Bahman 22 (Feb. 11), the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

15 billion rials worth of valuable prize has been allocated in this plan in order to meet the demands. Of total 15 billion rials,

seven billion rials of which include a grand prize worth three billion rials and millions of other valuable prizes. Other valuable prizes will be specified in cooperation with the participation of customers and selection of a list of prizes which are provided through the communication channels.

Meanwhile, eight billion rials worth of

the remaining prizes will be awarded specifically by drawing lot among customers of each branch of the bank.

It is necessary to mention that scoring mechanism in this edition has changed since the organizing customers' Club of Ayandeh Bank, the report added.

Considering the approaching to the end

of this plan, people and dear customers of the bank are cordially requested to open a new account or increase their balance (inventory) and/or increase the number of transactions of electronic banking of Ayandeh Bank in order to increase your chance of winning, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank concluded.

## Senior banking official reveals Russia's unlimited financing scheme opened for Iran

A senior banking official said that Russia will finance projects in Iran unlimitedly.

Ali Salehabadi senior banking official announced the above statement today in his weekly press briefing and said: "after a landmark nuclear deal inked between Iran and six world's major powers, a number of 12 brokerage ties have been added to the list of brokers in Africa."

However, efforts are underway in order to establish more brokerage relationship with some countries, he maintained.

He pointed to the finance and credit line exchanges with South Korea and China, amounting to \$10 billion, and Austria, amounting to €1 billion and added: "Recently, an unlimited finance contract has been inked with Russia, so that finance will be allocated according to the predefined projects."



In this contract, risk of each bank is evaluated and finance will be earmarked without public guarantee



## Almost four environmental defenders a week killed in 2017

The slaughter of people defending their land or environment continued unabated in 2017, with new research showing almost four people a week were killed worldwide in struggles against mines, plantations, poachers and infrastructure projects.

The toll of 197 in 2017 – which has risen fourfold since it was first compiled in 2002 – underscores the violence on the frontiers of a global economy driven by expansion and consumption.

“The situation remains critical. Until communities are genuinely included in decisions around the use of their land and natural resources, those who speak out will continue to face harassment, imprisonment and the threat of murder,” said Ben Leather, senior campaigner for Global Witness.



Members of a delegation of indigenous and rural community leaders from 14 countries in Latin America and Indonesia, the Guardians of the Forest campaign, demonstrate against deforestation in London.

But there was a glimmer of hope that after four consecutive increases, the number of deaths has flattened off, amid growing global awareness of the crisis and a renewed push for multinational companies to take more responsibility and for governments to tackle impunity.

Most of the killings occurred in remote forest areas of developing countries, particularly in Latin America where the abundance of resources is often in inverse proportion to the authority of the law or environmental regulation.

Extractive industries were one of the deadliest drivers of violence, according to the figures, which were shared exclusively with the Guardian in an ongoing collaboration with Global Witness to name every victim.

Mining conflicts accounted for 36 killings, several of them linked to booming global demand for construction materials.

In India, three members of the Yadav family: Niranjan, Uday and Vimlesh, were murdered last May as they tried to prevent the extraction of sand from a riverbank by their village of Jatpura.

In Turkey, a retired couple, Ali and Aysin Büyüknöhtüçü, were gunned down in their home after they won a legal battle to close a marble quarry that supplied blocks for upscale hotels and municipal monuments.

The hunger for minerals was also blamed for turning the Andes into a “war zone” with high-profile conflicts between indigenous groups and the owners of Las Bambas copper mine in Peru and El Cerrejón coal mine in Colombia.

Agribusiness was the biggest driver of violence as supermarket demand for soy, palm oil, sugarcane and beef provided a financial incentive for plantations and ranches to push deeper into indigenous territory and other communal land.

With many of the tensions focused in the Amazon, Brazil – with 46 killings – was once again the deadliest country for defenders. Relative to size, however, smaller Amazonian neighbors were more dangerous.

Colombia suffered 32 deaths, largely due to an uptick of land conflicts and assassinations in the wake of the 2015 peace deal, which left a power vacuum in regions previously operated by Farc guerrillas.

Among the most prominent victims was Efigenia Vásquez, a radio and video journalist from the Kokonuko community who was shot during a protest “to liberate Mother Earth”.

Peru witnessed one the worst massacres of the year in September when six farmers were killed by a criminal gang who wanted to acquire their land cheaply and sell it at a hefty profit to palm oil businesses.

(Source: The Guardian)

## LEARN ENGLISH

### Being Scared

Shabby: Eddie, why are we at this **scary looking mansion**?

It's like, **ultra spooky**!

Eddie: I told you already Shabby, the owner of the house says there is a ghost **haunting**his house so we have to go in and **investigate**.

Scruffy puffy poo: I don't like this!

Wilma: Come on guys, stop being such **cowards**. It's a **mystery** and an **adventure**!

Shabby: This place **gives me the creeps**! Seriously guys, let's get out of here! I'm getting **goosebumps** just being here!

Scruffy: Shabby is a **scaredy cat**!

Wilma: That laugh came from this room. Let's go and check it out.

Eddie: Look! A ghost! Run!

#### ■ Key vocabulary

**scary looking**: frightening in appearance

**mansion**: a very large house

**ultra**: extremely

**spooky**: strange and a little frightening

**haunt**: (a ghost) lives or visit a place

**investigate**: to try and get information about something

**coward**: someone who is too afraid to do what is right

**mystery**: an event, situation etc. that people do not understand or cannot explain because they do not know enough about it

**adventure**: an exciting experience in which dangerous or unusual things happen

**give somebody the creep**: if a person or place gives you the creeps, they make you feel nervous and a little frightened, especially because they are strange

**goosebumps**: small bumps on your skin caused by fear, cold, etc.

**scaredy cat**: someone who is always scared of things

#### ■ Supplementary vocabulary

**Supernatural**: unable to be explained by science

**terrifying**: extremely scary

**creepy**: strange or scary (informal)

**chilling**: very disturbing or frightening

(Source: irlanguage.com)

# Tilapia versus environment

## Possible environmental damages of tilapia farming

By Mohammad Ali Haqshenas

The environmentalists' concerns for tilapia farming is nothing new as the topic is being debated over the past few decades across the globe. However, the recent controversial decisions made regarding farming and importing tilapia in and to Iran has turned it into hot topic in Iran's environmental circles.

#### ■ What is tilapia?

Tilapia is the common name for nearly a hundred species of cichlid fish. Native to lakes in Africa, tilapia is mainly freshwater fish residing in shallow streams, ponds, rivers and lakes.

This versatile warm-water fish is known in the food business as “aquatic chicken” because of its easy breeding and bland taste. Tilapia happily eats pellets made largely of corn and soy and gains weight rapidly, easily converting a diet that resembles cheap chicken feed into low-cost seafood.

As far as nutritional value of this species is concerned, it should be said that like all other fish, tilapia is a good source of protein, with few of the unhealthy saturated fats in red meats.

However, it contains lower omega-3 fatty acids comparing to other fish in the market. While a portion of tilapia has 135 milligrams of omega-3 fatty acids, a portion of salmon has over 2,000 milligrams. And farmed tilapia may have even less than wild tilapia because fish acquire omega-3s by eating aquatic plants and other fish.

Also, the amount of omega-6 acids in tilapia outnumber the beneficial omega-3s by a factor of 2 to 1, which some nutrition experts believe that this ratio can increase the risk of heart disease.

#### ■ The environmental side

Generally, fish farms are notorious for having adverse effects on the environment because if the farm fish escape their pens, water pollution and spread of disease to wild fish can be expected and tilapia is not an exception.

Tilapia is one of the most invasive species known and it's really hard to get rid of them once they are established. The aggressive breeding and feeding of the fish can squeeze out native fish and plant species in lakes, hence, they are considered a true danger for ecosystems.

#### ■ The case of Lake Apoyo in Nicaragua

“One small cage screwed up the entire lake — the entire lake!” highlights Jeffrey K. McCrary in a paper published in 2007 in the Environmental Biology of Fishes journal. He has spent many years studying how a small, short-lived tilapia farm degraded Lake Apoyo in Nicaragua.

Waste from the cages polluted the pris-



## The import ban of tilapia combined with the desire of officials for supporting domestic production and raising employment may pave the way for granting further permissions for developing tilapia farms. Such farms have positive economic advantages in the short run but damaging ecosystems certainly has far more negative social and economic effects in the long run.

tine ecosystem, and some tilapia escaped. An aquatic plant called charra, an important food for fish, disappeared, leaving the lake a wasteland. Some species of plants and fish are slowly recovering, but others are probably gone forever, said McCrary.

#### ■ Tilapia in Iran

The first permission for importing tilapia was issued in 2008 by the Department of Environment.

Although the department had resisted to give permit for tilapia farming projects, it seems that the new chief of environment, Isa Kalantari, is showing the green light for that because of its economic advantages.

However, the head of Iran's Fisheries Organization Hassan Salehi issued the import ban of tilapia on January 21 to support the domestic fish farmers.

Meanwhile the Department of Environment has granted the permit for limited tilapia farming in Bafgh, a city in central province of Yazd. “There is no fresh water resource within

radius of 500 kilometers,” said caretaker for natural environment directorate at the Department of Environment Hamid Zohrabi, emphasizing that this is an experimental and very strict farming plan.

#### ■ Iranian experts deeply concerned

The effects of tilapia in ecosystems has various social, economic and environmental aspects, Eskannews quoted Asghar Abdoli as saying.

The penetration of tilapia in lakes influences the vegetation and can even destroy many of them, continued the professor of ecology.

He went on to say that another detrimental effect of tilapia would be in the water quality of dams. If tilapia enters these resources and starts its extensive breeding, the nutrients' level of the water will increase resulting in significant growth of phytoplankton which will make the water unusable for drinking and other uses.


Unfortunately, tilapia has been able to enter Shadegan and Hour-al-Azim wetlands

and Karun River in southwestern Khuzestan province due to illegal tilapia farming in the region. “Their presence has resulted in decreasing the population of some native fish species and even pushes them to the border of extinction,” added Abdoli.


Many developed countries have tilapia farms but they offer very strict regulations which tries to minimize their detrimental effects on the environment. Also, they follow special practices in this regard like using closed recirculating tank systems, which alleviate problems of water pollution and fish escapes.

The import ban of tilapia combined with the desire of officials for supporting domestic production and raising employment may pave the way for granting further permissions for developing tilapia farms. Such farms have positive economic advantages in the short run but damaging ecosystems certainly has far more negative social and economic effects in the long run.

Second Announcement



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National Iranian  
Drilling Company

Public Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tender (Seconed Publish)						
Two Stage (Semi-Compressive)						
TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE	DESCRIPTION	Tenders Portal Reg. No. On	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial	(Rial)		http://iets.mporg.ir		
5,960	265,000,000	5,290,776,000	Computerize Torque/Turn/Time Monitoring System	3/150/111	Indent No: 43-22-9603748013 TenderNo.: CGP/25-96/021	1

**Brief discriptionof subject:**  
National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) address pasdaran Blv., Airport Sqare,Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements from qualified and interested tenderers through Two-stage public tender (semi-pressed) upon following terms and conditions:  
A) Qualitative evaluation of tenderer:  
The evaluation is based on article (j ) implementing regulations of the law of tenders and also carried out base on worksheets qualitative evaluation inquiry in the tender documents. Minimum acceptable point of quality is 60.  
B) Preparation of tender documents:  
Purchasing of documents:  
In order to receive the tender documents, **510,000 Rials** should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.  
Receiving of documents:  
Tenderers must be obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum 10 days after the date of second publication in person at the following address: Sector Tenders, Foreign Procurement of Capital Goods dept., end of the workshop No. 8, Karoon Industrial Area, Ahwaz, IRAN.  
Tel No.: 061-34142387  
Notices:  
1- Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recieve tender ducments from foreign procurment department in due date will be known as tenderer from tender committee.  
C) Delivery of call quality evaluating:  
Tenderers shall submit the completed documents including qualificaion worksheets in form of software in CD/DVD and documentary within 14 days from last day of document recived deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National IranianDrilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel No.: 061-34148205-6  
D) Tender Guarantee:  
**Type of guarantee:**  
A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that haveactivites licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.  
B) The original cash deposit receipt paid toNational 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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تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۱/۱۵/۹۶نوبت دوم ۱/۱۶/۹۶



# Sheikh Isa Qassim discharged from hospital

By staff & agencies

Senior Bahraini cleric Sheikh Isa Qassim is discharged from a hospital after his admission for hernia surgery.

Sheikh Isa Qassim transferred to hospital to undergo a hernia surgery, 10 days after he was said to be in critical condition under house arrest.

The cleric has been living under virtual siege since Manama revoked his citizenship in June 2016, prompting protests and sit-ins in his home-town of Diraz. Bahraini authorities later dissolved the Islamic Enlightenment Institution, founded by him, in addition to the opposition al-Risala Islamic Association.

In May 2017, a Bahraini court convicted Sheikh Qassim of illegal collection of funds and money laundering, and sentenced him to one year in jail.

It also ordered him to pay \$265,266 in fines. The court ruling sparked widespread demonstrations across the kingdom.

Last week, a legal source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Bahrain's Supreme Court upheld the one-year jail term for Sheikh Qassim.

## Amnesty warns against expulsions, executions of activists in Bahrain

Meanwhile, Amnesty International has warned against the execution and expulsion of anti-regime activists in Bahrain, saying Manama is using such sentences as a tool to crush all forms of opposition.

In two separate reports, the international rights group has provided details about the expulsion of four Bahrainis to Iraq and the death sentence given to an activist following a trial which relied on "confessions" extracted under torture.

Brothers Ismail and Ibrahim Darwish were expelled to Iraq on Sunday, followed by Adnan Kamal and Habib Darwish on Monday, Amnesty said.

Four other people - Mohammed Ali, Abdul Amir, Abdalnabi Almosawi and his wife



Maryam Redha - have also been told they will be expelled to Iraq. The four had had their Bahraini citizenship revoked in 2012.

The four expelled men are part of a group of 31 Bahrainis who were stripped of their nationality in 2012 over allegations of causing "damage to state security."

The 31 individuals were never officially notified of the decision and learned about it through the media, the report said.

According to the rights group, the Bahraini authorities have revoked the citizenship of more than 550 people since 2011, including at least 150 in 2017.

Amnesty noted that Manama revokes the activists' citizenship by referring to a paragraph under Article 10 of the Bahrain Citizenship Law, which stipulates that nationality can be revoked if a person causes harm to state security.

"This paragraph is framed too broadly and does not clearly define what could amount to

'harm to state security,'" Amnesty's report pointed out.

"The Bahraini government is using revocation of nationality - rendering many of its citizens stateless in the process - and expulsion as tools to crush all forms of opposition, dissent and activism," said Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International's Middle East Research Director.

"It is doing so with little to no pushback from the international community, including key allies such as the United Kingdom that could use their leverage to publicly condemn these actions," she added.

"Turning citizens into stateless people and banishing them by forcing them to leave the country is a violation of international law," the Amnesty official added. "Bahrain's authorities must immediately halt all planned expulsions and allow those it has already expelled to return to the country and reinstate their nationality."

## Israel conducted over 100 airstrikes in Egypt's Sinai

Israel has reportedly been conducting a years-long campaign of airstrikes in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula with Cairo's blessing.

Using unmarked warplanes and drones and unconventional flight routes, Tel Aviv has been staging airstrikes against targets in the peninsula at least since 2014. The New York Times said on Saturday. It named former and current British and American officials involved in Middle East policy as its sources.

So far Israel has carried out more than 100 such attacks, the report said.

Apart from Jordan, Egypt is the only Arab country, which is in a peace agreement with Israel. Cairo and Tel Aviv have also close intelligence cooperation.

The NY Times alleged that attacks were aimed at Takfiri militant targets. While militancy has taken a considerable toll on security forces and civilians in Sinai, the militants have never been known to use Egypt as a base for attacks on Israeli targets.

The airstrikes are being conducted with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's approval, The Times added. The report said Sisi had kept the strikes secret, only letting a small group of military and intelligence officials in on the cooperation.

Cover-up?

It said the president had also kept northern Sinai a closed

military area, barring reporters from the region.

The Associated Press, meanwhile, reported that the Egyptian Army was bulldozing homes and olive groves to build "a buffer zone" around North Sinai Province's only airport in the city of el-Arish.

The report said the buffer zone will destroy dozens of hamlets around the airport, forcing thousands of people to leave their homes for an unknown future, sparking some protest by residents despite the government promises of compensation.

Ashraf el-Hefny, a 51-year-old teacher and local community organizer, said hundreds of families are leaving their homes to an unknown future location.

"The bulldozers have already started to raze the olive groves, rooting out every green leaf in the area," he said.

Another resident, Ayman el-Rotil, 48, said that "many" homes had been demolished quickly after bulldozers showed up, giving people barely enough time to gather their belongings.

Heavy-handed government policies ranging from displacements to shoot-to-kill orders have not contained the insurgency, but have sometimes made residents prey to recruitment by the militants.

## Growing Arab-Israeli alliance

The Israel-Egypt collaboration "is the most dramatic evidence yet of a quiet reconfiguration of the politics



of the region," The NY Times said, pointing out certain regional Arab countries' gravitation towards Israel over the recent years.

Though trying to depict themselves as traditional upholders of the Palestinian cause of resistance against Israeli occupation, Saudi Arabia, and its allies, including the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain, are reported to have made significant overtures to Tel Aviv over the recent years.

(Source: NYTimes)

## Merkel: German coalition talks to be tough, unclear when they'll end

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that her conservatives faced tough negotiations with the Social Democrats (SPD) on Sunday as they strive to form a ruling coalition, and it was unclear when the two blocs would be able to wrap up the talks.

More than four months after a national election, Europe's largest economy and pre-eminent power broker is in political paralysis, causing concern among investors and partner countries that policymaking on key issues like Britain's looming departure from the European Union and euro zone reform may be held up.

The conservatives and SPD had set themselves a Sunday deadline to agree on renewing the "grand coalition" that has governed since 2013 but some politicians said that the discussions could run into Monday or Tuesday - and even then SPD grassroots members still need to agree to any deal.

"It's not yet possible to say how long it will last - we did good groundwork yesterday but

there are still important issues that need to be resolved," Merkel, in office for 12 years, said before heading into negotiations.

The parties reached agreements on energy and agriculture on Saturday but continued to haggle over healthcare.

Merkel, who is betting on the SPD to secure her fourth term in office, added: "I'm going into talks with goodwill today, but I also expect that we'll face difficult negotiations."

SPD leader Martin Schulz said the opposing sides had edged closer on many issues in recent days but remained at odds over his party's demand to abolish fixed-term contracts for workers and its call to replace Germany's dual public-private healthcare system with one insurance system for all.

Healthcare and labor market policy are crucial for the SPD, whose 443,000 members - many of whom oppose forming another awkward partnership with Merkel after their party suffered its worst postwar result in September's election - will get the chance

to veto any final coalition deal.

"We'll have to negotiate very, very intensively on these issues today and I think agreements are possible but they still haven't been reached," Schulz said.

## Obstacles

The conservatives have rejected SPD calls for sweeping reform of health insurance and talks are now expected to focus on improving public healthcare, such as by changing billing rules for doctors, who earn more by treating private patients.

Labor market policy is another serious stumbling block - Merkel's bloc does not want to ban fixed-term contracts like the SPD but has offered to prevent the repeated renewal of such contracts as a compromise.

Two negotiating sources told Reuters that the parties had reached an agreement on residential rents and construction of social housing, issues they had been wrangling over on Saturday, but this deal still needed to be approved by senior negotiators.

## Execution after confessions under torture

In another report, Amnesty pointed to the upholding of the death sentence against Maher Abbas Ahmad following a trial which relied on "confessions" extracted under torture.

On January 29, Bahrain's Court of Cassation upheld the death sentence and if the king ratifies his sentences, Ahmad will be at imminent risk of execution, the report said.

Maher Abbas Ahmad was first sentenced to death on 19 February 2014 on charges of premeditated murder of a police officer with explosive materials in Sahla, on the outskirts of Manama, on 14 February 2013.

Maher Abbas Ahmad told his lawyer that he had been tortured under interrogation during the first few days he was arrested.

Although he told the judge about the torture during one hearing, no investigation is known to have been launched into the matter, Amnesty said.

The international rights group pointed to several other death sentences against Bahraini activists and said, "Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception. The death penalty is a violation of the right to life and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment."

Thousands of anti-regime protesters have held 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 regime 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.

## Maldives army seals off parliament, arrests MPs

Security forces in the Maldives have sealed off the country's parliament and arrested two opposition legislators amid a deepening crisis over President Abdulla Yameen's refusal to free jailed politicians.

Soldiers in riot gear surrounded the parliament building in Male on Sunday soon after the opposition petitioned the parliament to remove the island nation's attorney general and its chief prosecutor.

Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, the parliamentary leader of the opposition, accused the pair of breaking the law by failing to act on a Supreme Court verdict overturning "terrorism" convictions against nine dissidents, including exiled former President Mohamed Nasheed.

The top court's ruling has plunged the Maldives into fresh political turmoil and dealt a major blow to Yameen, who is accused of corruption, misrule and rights abuses. He denies the allegations.

The verdict also gave the opposition a majority in the 85-member parliament as it reinstated 12 members of parliament who were stripped of their seats last year.

But two of the 12 were arrested at the airport on Sunday, shortly after they returned to the Maldives after months in exile.

Abdulla Sinan and Ilham Ahmed were detained on charges of bribery, a police spokesman told Al Jazeera.

Solih condemned their arrest in a statement. "We call on the police to release the MPs immediately, and to stop following unlawful orders, to stop obstructing the lawful mandate of parliamentarians," he said.

"In a desperate attempt to cling onto power, President Yameen has illegally overruled the state: his attorney general has illegally assumed the powers of the apex court, while the military has overrun the legislature," he added.

The motion to remove Attorney General Mohamed Anil came hours after he accused the Supreme Court of trying to impeach the president.

"I have informed all law enforcement agencies they must not obey such an illegal order," he said in a televised appearance flanked by the chiefs of the army and the police.

Ahmed Shiyam, the army chief, said the security forces would follow Anil's advice and "will not wait and watch as the Maldives descends into crisis".

Later, in a ceremony broadcast live on state TV, Shiyam led soldiers and police officers in reciting their oath at the military headquarters in Male.

Meanwhile, the official who heads the parliament secretariat has also resigned.

"I have stepped down," Ahmed Mohamed told Al Jazeera on Sunday, without offering further details.

The heads of the Maldives' main high-security prison and the elections commission have also resigned in recent days.

Following the ruling, Speaker Abdulla Maseeh, a Yameen ally, called off the opening of the parliament, scheduled for February 5. In a text message to legislators, he cited unspecified "security concerns" for the cancellation.

Nasheed, speaking to a private television channel from neighbouring Sri Lanka on Sunday, called for protests and urged rank-and-file members of the security forces to arrest the attorney general as well as the chiefs of the army and police.

Anil's statements were "tantamount to a coup," the former president said in a post on Twitter.

The United Nations, European Union, and several foreign governments including India, US and UK, have urged Yameen to comply with the Supreme Court's latest ruling.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## French approach to JPCOA is paradoxical

**I →** The French plan does not appear to be in a violation of the nuclear deal with Iran. Le Drian and Macron are taking a less demanding approach than their right wing counterparts such as former French Prime Minister Laurent Fabius and former President François Hollande, as they do not want to seem controversial in their collaborative efforts with the JCPOA.

The fact is that the French are prepared to oppose the nuclear deal, and they have opted to back the U.S. in their demand for amending the JCPOA. They believe that by imposing pressure or even implementing new missile sanctions on Iran, it is possible to force Iran to negotiate, and then a direct link can be created between Iran's missile power and its nuclear capabilities.

The difference between the French and U.S. approach is the tactics employed by the two parties. During his campaign for presidency in 2016, Donald Trump referred to the JCPOA as "the worst deal ever" and called for "modification" or "withdrawal" from it.

However, the French have chosen the policy of ambiguity regarding the Iran nuclear deal. Terminology used by French leaders in their reference to the JCPOA is wider in scope than that of the Americans. They have claimed to be "commitment to the JCPOA" and "completing the JCPOA."

Therefore, the French are spewing forth rhetoric that is quite different than the type of jargon the world is accustomed to hearing from Americans. In essence, what Donald Trump is saying is: "it's our way or the highway!"

Many analysts believe that France has not been transparent with their agenda regarding the nuclear accord. This lack of transparency is not due to France's uneasiness with Iran's nuclear deal, but as a result of their covert collaborative effort with the Americans to discredit the JCPOA through ceaseless false allegations and continued demonization of Iran, a country which has adhered to the terms of the JCPOA with a full commitment.

The French are constantly contradicting themselves. They speak of "the necessity of commitment to the JCPOA" and then say "tie up the nuclear deal to Iran's missile activities".

This paradoxical approach is not something that should be overlooked. French authorities know well that drawing a relationship between Iran's nuclear and missile activities will mean a violation of the JCPOA and withdrawal from the nuclear deal.

In other words, bringing Iran's missile capability under question and throwing the country's regional activities in the mix only to make additional demands on the JCPOA would be a violation of Iran's fundamental interests, not to mention a violation of the nuclear deal.

However, French authorities are attempting to discredit the JCPOA simply to meet the demands of Donald Trump and his administration.

Turkey says it has suffered its deadliest day yet in northern Syria since launching its offensive against YPG Kurdish fighters there more than two weeks ago.

On Saturday, eight Turkish soldiers were killed, according to a Turkish army statement.

Some died after their tank came under fire from Syrian Kurdish forces.

Turkey wants to push the YPG, which it says are "terrorists", out of Afrin to create a buffer zone along its southern border.

YPG fighters targeted the Turkish army tank in Sheikh Haruz, northeast of Afrin, killing five soldiers. Three other soldiers were killed in fighting elsewhere in Afrin.

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim promised to retaliate in a statement on Twitter.

"They will pay for this twice as much. We have given the necessary response instantly, and we continue to do



so," Yildirim said.

Immediately after the attack at Sheikh Haruz, an air operation targeting YPG positions and weapon storages in the area was launched, the army said.

Turkey's Operation Olive Branch began on January 20 along with the Free Syrian Army (FSA) to clear armed Kurdish groups and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS) fighters from Afrin in north-western Syria.

Since the start of the operation, Kurdish fighters have carried out cross-border attacks by firing rockets into southern Turkey.

According to the Turkish army, the operation aims to establish security and stability along Turkish borders and the region as well as to protect Syrians from what Ankara called "terrorist oppression and cruelty".

(Source: Al Jazeera)



## Spain Davis Cup captain makes big claim about Rafael Nadal

Rafael Nadal has every intention of competing for Spain in the Davis Cup later this year, according to team captain Sergi Bruguera. Rafael Nadal is currently sidelined with a leg injury which forced him to withdraw from the Australian Open last month.

The 31-year-old has given the Davis Cup a miss as he looks to streamline his schedule to keep himself in top shape for the big tournaments. However, Spain captain Sergi Bruguera has claimed Nadal could be available to represent his country later in the year. “He’s very motivated and really looking forward to being back in the team to try to win the Davis Cup again,” he told Spanish newspaper El Mundo. “Sometimes your body asks you for a needed rest and having proper adjustments to a change in surface.

“He has to take care of all these aspects.  
“If we advance, we’ll analyze things in the next round.”  
Nadal is not the only big-name player to miss the Davis Cup this month, with Roger Federer and Stan Wawrinka out for Switzerland. And Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray are both sidelined with injury and cannot represent Serbia and England respectively. Discussing his decision to avoid playing in the tournament last month, Nadal said: “The captain Sergi Bruguera already knows it.  
“I had to withdraw from Abu Dhabi and Brisbane and I can’t drastically switch surface [to clay].  
“I will help the team as much as possible because I’d like to win Davis Cup again.”

(Source: Express)

## Joint Korean ice hockey team loses first match

The joint North and South Korean women’s ice hockey team has lost its first match - a friendly against Sweden - before the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in South Korea.

The Swedish women’s team beat their Korean counterparts 3-1. The unified Korean team will get a chance to even the score when they face Sweden again during the Games, which start next Friday. Sunday’s outing was the first and only practice match for the Korean squad. The combined team was formed after the two Koreas reached a controversial deal to compete under the same flag. A BBC correspondent at the game said the crowd went wild, although there had been a small protest against the fielding of a joint team outside the arena.

The move had proved unpopular with some in the South, who believe the late inclusion of North Korean players will jeopardize their chances of a medal.

North Korea’s participation in the Olympics, which run from 9 to 25 February, has been interpreted as a show of reconciliation.

It comes at a time of heightened tensions over the North’s nuclear ambitions, following a series of missile tests designed to demonstrate its nuclear capability.

As well as the ice hockey players, its athletes will compete in skiing and figure skating events.

The North is also sending hundreds of delegates, cheerleaders and performers. Earlier this week it emerged that the North had scheduled a large-scale military parade for 8 February, the day before the Winter Olympics commences.

Amid international headlines, North Korea said no-one had the right to take issue with its plans and promptly cancelled a cultural event it was to hold jointly with the South.

(Source: BBC)

## Keylor Navas welcomes competition for starting spot

Keylor Navas insists that he is unconcerned by the prospect of other goalkeepers challenging him for the number one spot at Real Madrid. A new goalkeeper is expected to arrive at the Santiago Bernabeu next summer, and the current favourites are Manchester United’s David de Gea and Milan’s Gianluigi Donnarumma.

De Gea has long been a target for Madrid and may leave Old Trafford this summer after seven years at the club. Alternatively, Donnarumma may seek a move away from the San Siro after the Milan fans turned on him last month for refusing to sign a new contract. But Navas stressed that he is not worried about potential competition, and knows that he will not always be first-choice at Madrid. “I am calm because one day I will have to go,” said the Costa Rica international, quoted by goal.com. “Nobody will last here forever and only God knows when [I will leave]. If Real Madrid were to sign a goalkeeper in the future and let him compete with me, then I would like that and it wouldn’t intimidate me.”

Real drew 2-2 at Levante on Saturday to fall further behind Barcelona and Atletico Madrid in La Liga. Navas accepts that it has been a tough season for Los Blancos, but urged the club’s supporters to get behind the team.

“This has not been an easy year and we’ve had to put up with a lot,” Navas said.

(Source: Sports Illustrated)

## Conte: Chelsea need two or three world-class players

Chelsea head coach Antonio Conte believes his team still need two or three world-class players to close the gap to the Premier League’s leaders.

The champions are in a fight to claim a top-four finish, sitting fourth in the table but just two points ahead of Tottenham.

Chelsea signed six players in the close-season, but runaway league leaders Manchester City outspent the London club.

Conte said the club needed to avoid making such big changes to their squad, insisting their focus should be on adding top-class players.

“Now we have to struggle to fight for a Champions League place – that is top. We must be realistic. We must be strong to accept this type of situation,” the Italian told UK newspapers.

“Then, in the future, if there is the possibility, you have to try to buy only two or three players – not eight players.

“Don’t forget, this summer, we brought in eight players and spent a lot less than other teams who bought only two or three.”

Conte’s future at Stamford Bridge is also reportedly uncertain ahead of his side’s trip to Watford Monday.

(Source: Daily Star)

# Boxing could face expulsion from Games, IOC warns



Boxing could be knocked out of the next Olympic Games if the International Olympic Committee is not satisfied problems with the sport’s finances and governance are sorted out, IOC President Thomas Bach warned on Sunday. Speaking in Pyeongchang ahead of next week’s Winter Olympics, Bach said the IOC was “extremely worried” about how the sport was run and said the body was prepared to make bold decisions. “The IOC reserves the right to review the inclusion of boxing in the programs of the Youth Olympics 2018 and Tokyo 2020,” he told reporters, adding that the IOC would be freezing all contacts with the sport’s governing AIBA “excluding the ones on a working level necessary to implement the respective IOC decisions”.

AIBA was not immediately available for comment when contacted by Reuters.

Following a two-day Executive Board meeting in Pyeongchang, Bach said the IOC had not been satisfied with a report prepared by AIBA, and that it would be opening an investigation into the body.

AIBA has been riven with in-fighting for months, with former president CK Wu first provisionally suspended and then stepping down last November after a bitter dispute with his executive committee.

AIBA named Uzbek Gafur Rahimov as its new Interim President last Saturday, following the unexpected resignation of Interim President Franco Falcinelli.

This is not the first time AIBA has had IOC funds blocked. The Olympic ruling body withheld payment of more than \$1 million of television rights from the Athens 2004 Olympics after a

refereeing scandal at those Games. The Winter Olympics runs from Feb. 9-25.

■ **CAS ruling surprising and dis-appointing, says Bach**

The decision by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) to overturn lifetime Olympic bans on 28 Russian athletes came as a complete surprise and it could make the fight against doping more difficult, said IOC President Thomas Bach on Sunday. CAS said on

Thursday there was insufficient evidence of anti-doping violations against the athletes, and while it confirmed 11 other Russians had committed doping offences it reduced their lifetime bans to a suspension from this month’s Pyeongchang Winter Games.

The bans were originally imposed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) following an investigation into alleged systematic doping in Sochi four years ago.

## Neymar played cat and mouse with Barcelona - Mestre



Neymar played a game of cat and mouse with Barcelona before joining Paris Saint-Germain to become the world’s most expensive footballer, according to the Spanish club’s vice-president Jordi Mestre.

PSG paid up the €222million release clause in the Brazilian’s contract in August to break up the Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez and Neymar partnership - known as ‘MSN’.

Neymar has subsequently scored 18 league goals to help PSG build an 11-point lead at the top of Ligue 1, although Barcelona, shorn of the Brazilian, are in a similarly dominant position in LaLiga.

Barca and Neymar face a court date over a disputed bonus payment and Mestre suggested the player was not open and honest with Barcelona about his intentions to leave the club, having travelled with his colleagues on a pre-season tour of the United States.

“What hurt me the most was the way it happened,” Mestre told Sport. “We were all on tour talking with him and his father, and they were not transparent.

“If he came to us and said, ‘I want to go’, like Cesc [Fabregas], Pedro, Alexis [Sanchez], [Javier] Mascherano did, we would have reached an agreement. What you can’t do is rock the boat.

“He played cat and mouse with us. It arrived at a point where we saw where things were going so we told him we would

The IOC has banned Russia from Pyeongchang as a result of its “unprecedented systematic manipulation” of the anti-doping system, although individual Russian athletes can compete as neutrals if they can meet stringent IOC criteria. Russia has repeatedly denied state involvement in doping.

“This CAS decision is extremely disappointing and surprising,” Bach said on Sunday after an IOC Executive Board meeting. “We would never have expected this.”

CAS had told the IOC that its reasoned decision for upholding the athletes’ appeals might not come until the end of February, but Bach said this was “extremely unsatisfactory given the gravity of the cases”.

After receiving the reasoned decision, the IOC would explore the possibility of an appeal, he added, warning that the CAS decision had the potential to have a “very negative” impact on the fight against doping.

He also said the ruling had showed it was necessary to change the internal structure at CAS to allow it to “better manage the quality and the consistency of its jurisdiction”.

Bach said the decision to invite 169 Russian athletes to compete at this month’s Olympics in South Korea gave them a chance to show the country’s sporting community that clean athletes can be successful.

“We gave a new and young generation of Russian athletes, after having passed great scrutiny by the independent panel, the opportunity to be invited to participate in the Games and to be ambassadors for a clean sport,” he said.

(Source: Staff & Agency)

## How much longer can Zinedine Zidane last at Real Madrid?



It’s a question that had been put to one side after Real Madrid had scored 11 goals in two fantastic La Liga performances against Deportivo la Coruna and Valencia.

Another dismal failure against Levante, however, has reignited the debate – Just how long has Zinedine Zidane got left?

From the ‘best team in the world’ to one of the worst in Real history, statistically speaking, takes some doing, but the French coach has managed it.

What’s worse is he doesn’t appear to be capable of changing the status quo or stemming the tide.

Los Blancos are stumbling from one disaster to the next but drawing against Levante when leading with two minutes left surely represents a new low.

Remember, their opponents hadn’t won a league match since mid-November, and even that was against bottom-of-the-table Las Palmas. They were cannon fodder. There for the taking.

Sergio Ramos’ return was at least a small highlight in a game that offered precious little positivity for the players and the supporters who’d made the trip to see what was surely meant to be another goal fest.

Rarely can one club, especially one as prestigious as Real Madrid, have suffered such a collapse and lack of purpose in all facets of their game.

Defensively, they are shot to pieces and

only Ramos, when fit, has been offering anything like the usual high level of performance that one might expect.

Both Marcelo and Dani Carvajal have been caught up field on too many occasions this season, and as a consequence, Real have been exposed down the flanks in every single match.

Only Luka Modric in midfield can emerge with any credit, and if you factor in that Lionel Messi has the same amount of league goals as Ronaldo, Benzema, Bale and Isco combined, there’s no need to delve into greater detail where Real’s attack are concered. Options from the bench are limited thanks to Zidane sanctioning the sale of Alvaro Morata and James Rodriguez, and those that are given a chance – Marco Asensio for example – aren’t anywhere close to the player(s) they were last season.

No new signings in the winter window – at Zidane’s request, no real chances to impress for likes of Dani Ceballos, Jesus Vallejo, Theo Hernandez and Marcos Llorente – because Zidane doesn’t appear to trust them enough...

A coach lives or dies by his decisions and the Frenchman has made far too many errors in 2017/18.

A heavy loss to Paris Saint-Germain in just over a week really should spell the end of Zidane’s tenure.

(Source: The Sportsman)

## Main stadium of Russia 2018 receives ‘green’ certification



• Using LED-based lamps instead of incandescent lights will save a significant amount of electricity. The lighting outside of the venue was also installed using electricity-saving strategies.

• Water-saving technology at the stadium will allow hundreds of thousands of litres to be saved during a match at full operational capacity.

• Large green spaces and a high number of trees already present on the surrounding territory were preserved during the reconstruction, while even more greenery was also added. According to the stadium managers, 1,050 trees and bushes were planted, and 15,700 squared metres of flower beds were laid down.

Environmental protection reaching new heights

The FIFA World Cup has always had a strong influence on many aspects of society in Host Nations, and Russia is no exception. With just over four months remaining until the start of the tournament, the venue hosting the Opening Match and Final of the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™ has received a final certificate of pass from international green standard BREEAM.

Certifying stadiums in accordance with sustainable standards is an important aim for the tournament organisers: building sporting arenas in line with ‘green standards’ not only reduces their impact on the environment but also, to a great extent, determines usage in the future, including a decrease in the use of water and energy.

The Luzhniki Stadium, which last November welcomed the Russian and Argentinian national teams for the first game at the venue after a comprehensive renovation, has gone through an entire cycle of certification from design to construction by the same standard. Decisions concerning the green construction and environmental efficiency of the facility were incorporated into the project from the very early stages.

The Luzhniki: a green stadium  
• Energy conservation at the Luzhniki Stadium is achieved through modern heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems, as well as bringing together all essential utilities into one automated central system. This will allow complete monitoring and control of how much energy the building is consuming.

Apart from the Luzhniki, two other World Cup stadiums have undergone certification according to sustainable standards. In January, the Spartak Stadium in Moscow received its final BREEAM-in-use certificate with level ‘Good’. This venue is surrounded by large green spaces and its energy supply is regulated effectively by various management systems that ensure significant resources are saved.

The Kazan Arena has received ‘Silver’ on its final certificate from “RUSO. THE FOOTBALL STADIUMS”, which was set up as part of the 2018 World Cup preparations and to fulfill the mandatory requirement of FIFA for green certification of football stadiums used for the tournament. A group of experts working for the Ministry of National Resources and the Environment – and supported by the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia Local Organising Committee (LOC) – developed this national green standard, which is the first of its kind in the country. It was designed especially for the voluntary certification of football stadiums in accordance with the principles of sustainable construction.

“Stadiums are key in our efforts to stage a successful and more sustainable FIFA World Cup, which is why FIFA has made green certification mandatory for all arenas used for the event,” said FIFA Head of Sustainability & Diversity Federico Addiechi. “I am very glad to see that three of the 2018 FIFA World Cup stadiums have already successfully achieved their sustainable certification following Russian as well as international green building standards.”

(Source: FIFA)



# Iranian Veteran Sports Journalists ask AFC to consider spirit of Fair Play

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Members of the Iranian Veteran Sports Journalists Association have asked Asian Football Confederation (AFC) officials to stay neutral between Iranian and Saudi Arabian clubs.

The Iranian journalists in a letter asked Dato’ Windsor John, the AFC General Secretary, to consider spirit of Fair Play.

“We are writing to express our disbelief with the latest development surrounding the status of the Asian Champions League matches concerning home-and-away matches between Iranian and Saudi clubs for the current 2018 season.

For the third consecutive season, matches between Iranian and Saudi clubs will have to be played on neutral venues. This is following the rise of political tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia in January 2016.

We believe there should be an annual review of the AFC Executive Committee’s decision of March 2016 as changes in circumstances should be taken into consideration from one year to another.

We were hoping that our clubs could play host to their Saudi counterparts in this season of the AFC Champions League. However, for reason unknown to us, the AFC Executive Committee did not even entertain reviewing its decision of two years ago.

We read with huge disappointment that our clubs would have to play host to Saudi clubs at neutral venues yet again.

During the last two seasons, Saudi clubs nominated Qatar and the UAE as their home venue, while our clubs chose to play in Muscat, Oman, with devastating financial impact for our clubs.

Due to strict visa regulations, our fans were unable to travel to Muscat either, with the exception of a few hundred local residents fans of Iranian descent, Saudi clubs played before thousands of their own fans making a mockery of a “home advantage” for our clubs.

With that in mind, it was understandable that our clubs looked for alternative venues to reduce their financial losses and having more of a “home advantage” so far as spectator support was concerned for the 2018 season.

It is our understanding that our football federation had first contacted Oman Football Association on 11th January for Tractor Sazi’s home match against Saudi Arabia’s Al Ahli to be played on 12th February. Having followed that initial request on 24th January, Oman FA never responded to Iran’s request.

Esteghlal, on the other hand, chose to look for an alternative venue amongst Central Asian countries. So far as we understand, Uzbekistan did not respond to Esteghlal’s request. Kyrgyzstan declined due to winter conditions in February and Turkmenistan’s artificial pitch was not acceptable to their coaching staff.

With no response from Oman and the ensuing deadline to nominate our hosts, the Iranian Football Federation turned to Qatar Football Association seeking their assistance. Qatar FA responded promptly accepting to host the two games on 12th and 20th February.

However, we have read reports with horror that the Asian Football Confederation has made a unilateral decision on behalf of our two clubs, Tractor Sazi Tabriz and Esteghlal Tehran, forcing them to play their “home” matches in Muscat, Oman, in contrast to the AFC allowing Saudi Arabian clubs to “choose” their desired home venues in Kuwait and UAE for the return matches of the same fixtures.

Both Saudi and Iranian clubs nominated their home venues in the last two seasons as per the ruling of March 2016 when AFC decided that matches involving Iranian and Saudi clubs would be played on neutral territory.

Consequently, the Asian Football Confederation asked both sides of the dispute to nominate their desired home venues. At no point in the last two seasons, did you force one side to play at any given location.

However, there seems to be one rule for the Saudi



clubs and another for Iranian clubs in this upcoming AFC Champions League season. This is a clear violation of your own ruling and against the spirit of Fair Play.

Following Qatar’s acceptance of staging home matches of the two affected Iranian clubs, the Iranian football federation communicated that decision to you on 30th January. Instead of simply ratifying that decision, you seemed to have ignored that letter.

While Oman had not responded to Tractor Sazi’s request, AFC decided to choose Muscat as the venue for both Tractor Sazi and Esteghlal within less than 48 hours of receiving confirmation from our football federation that those two matches would be played in Qatar.

Can you please give us a clear explanation so that we are convinced that this astonishing decision of yours was not the outcome of quick conversations between yourself and officials from the football associations of Saudi Arabia and Oman on 30th and 31st January?

Anything else is simply fabrication of facts that took place behind the scenes and away from the domain of Iranian football officials, the rightful body who should have nominated their desired venue to you, which they indeed did on 30th January.

We have been told that Oman have not responded to Tractor Sazi’s written request for their home game of 12th February even after your announcement. Esteghlal never sought to play in Muscat as previously stated earlier in this letter.

We read reports of Saudi football officials’ dismay of playing their away matches in Doha in various media outlets on 30th January, despite the Asian Football Confederation’s categorical decision to authorise Qatari clubs hosting Saudi Clubs in Doha and vice versa only a week earlier.

Those same Saudi media outlets and even official club social media channels in Saudi Arabia made your official announcement shortly after you had transmitted your decision to Tehran on Friday, which is a holiday in both Saudi Arabia and Iran.

It seems Saudi media and officials had advance knowledge of your decision, which indeed we believe they forced you to make. While the Iranian football officials only saw your official letter on Saturday, 3rd February (working day in Iran), their Saudi counterparts made official announcements a day earlier and shortly after Friday prayer in Saudi Arabia, on their holiday.

You have taken side in this dispute. Instead of using the power of football to help bridge the political gap to at least bring the football communities of Saudi Arabia and Iran closer together, you have widened that gap and inflamed the feelings of football fans against your organisation.

Members of Iran’s Veteran Sports Journalists have followed Asian football competitions since their infancy in the 1960s. Our football has been a great part of the Asian football sphere since those early years. The passion of our fans is unrivalled not only in Asia, but also across the whole world.

Those same fans in Iran feel disillusioned by the Asian Football Confederation and regard your organisation a biased one and against them. Will you do the right thing to act as a fair and neutral body to change those three-decade long lingering feelings?

Football is about players and fans. Administrators come and go, but fans will be there at the best of times and worst of times. And these seem to be the worse of times for Iranian fans vis-à-vis Asian Football Confederation’s treatment of their clubs.

“One Asia” “One Goal” and “Bringing Asia Together” seem hollow slogans given AFC’s unfair treatment of our clubs. We respectfully ask you to put those slogans into practice and eradicate the disillusionment we all feel in Iran following this latest episode and unfair decision of yours.

You have allowed Saudi clubs to choose their venues while trying to force Iranian clubs to play at a venue chosen by you, and influenced by Saudi Arabian football officials.

With the first of these two games due to take place on Monday, 12th February, you must respect your own decision of March 2016 whereby you ordered matches involving Saudi and Iranian clubs to be played on neutral territories, to be nominated by both sides and not chosen by the Asian Football Confederation.

You have been entrusted with the running of Asian football across a vast and culturally diverse continent. Politics separates us across our continent while football is one social phenomenon that acts as a unifying force for more than half the world population within the AFC territory.

Please keep politics out of our football to preserve it as the beautiful game we have loved all our lives. Not too much to ask, or is it? Prove us wrong by doing the right thing please.”

## their return to the World Cup. Why do you think it has taken so long?

I think we had a handover from one generation to the next after 2006 and there was some instability too. The current generation deserved to qualify, though I think half the players will be contesting their last World Cup.

The average age is a little over 28 and I can’t see this generation making it to the next World Cup. Some of the younger players will have an opportunity to show what they can do and earn a move to Europe. Mohamed Salah has shown that the door to Europe’s leagues is open for players from the Arab nations that have qualified for the World Cup.

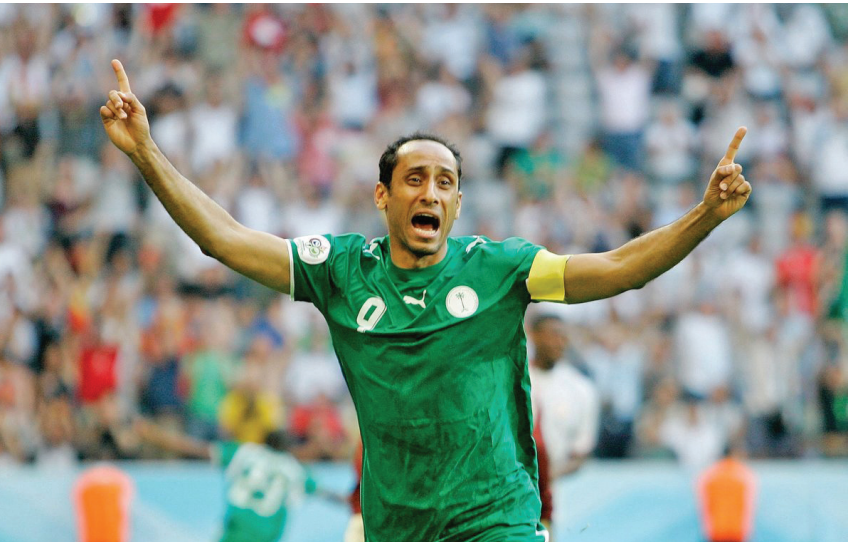
## ■ What’s your view on Saudi Arabia’s group?

We’ve been very lucky because it’s the first time that we’re going to play in the Opening Match of a World Cup. Millions of people will be watching to see how Saudi Arabia get on after such a long absence. It’s a match I’d really love to play in.

It won’t be easy to take on Russia in Moscow, what with the president there and all the fans, but it’ll be a unique occasion. That match could be a first step towards qualification for the second round or just an unforgettable memory.

(Source: FIFA)

## Al Jaber: My World Cup memories are vivid



who’ve scored in a World Cup. I have vivid memories of each of those competitions.

## ■ Which match stands out most of all in your career?

The one against Tunisia at the Allianz Arena in Munich in 2006, a game I scored in. It came 12 years after my first World Cup appearance. God gave me a wonderful gift in allowing me to end my career by repeating

the achievement.

When I went through one-on-one against the keeper, I saw my whole life as a footballer flash before my eyes. That goal allowed me to end my career on a high note, before I announced my retirement.

## ■ Following your last international appearance in 2006, Saudi Arabia had to wait until last year before making

Sami Al Jaber called time on his long international career on 23 June 2006, a day after his Saudi Arabia team lost to Spain and exited the 2006 FIFA World Cup Germany™ having finished bottom of their group.

Not only was that match Al Jaber’s last with the Green Falcons, it was also their last World Cup outing to date, with the Saudis missing out on the following two world finals before qualifying for Russia 2018 last year.

Almost 12 years on from scoring the last of his world finals goals, Al Jaber spoke to FIFA.com about his World Cup memories and what Russia 2018 means to Saudi Arabia’s players.

## ■ What memories do you have of your four World Cups?

Sami Al Jaber: I remember everything from 1994 onwards. I’m very proud to have appeared at four World Cups in a row. Playing in the competition is a unique experience because there are millions of people watching you. In 1994, if you’d asked the American people to talk about Saudi Arabia they wouldn’t have known what to say. Football is a very quick way of getting yourself known.

The world finals after that were amazing. I was lucky enough to score at a few World Cups and to become an iconic player in Saudi Arabia. There are a lot of talented players in my country but there aren’t many

## FIFA World Cup 2018 to see Footballs made in Pakistan

The Russian Ambassador to Pakistan Alexey Dedov confirmed that Sialkot-made footballs will be used in the 2018 FIFA World Cup, which is slated for later this year.

Pakistanis will have their special moment of joy when they see footballs made in their own country being used to score goals in the international-level event.

The company “is a contracting manufacturer of global

sports brand Adidas” and is making its laborers work “extra hours to ensure on-time delivery of the footballs”.

Forward Sports chairman Khawaja Masood while talking to a private news channel said , his company churns out 700,000 footballs a month.

“This is an honor for us, that we are going to provide footballs for the world cup once again. We are very excited to meet this

challenge,” he said.

First introduced in 2014, the football to be used in 2018 FIFA World Cup is “thermo bonded”. Prior to this, Pakistan used to supply handmade and stitched footballs.

“Thermo bonded balls are made by attaching the panels through heat – the latest technology adopted by Adidas and transferred to Forward Sports in 2013.”

(Source: AP)

## Iran runners-up at Asian Indoor Athletics Championships

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran became runners-up at the 8th Asian Indoor Athletics Championships Saturday night.

The Iranian delegation came second with 24 medals, including five gold, nine silver and 10 bronze.

Kazakhstan collected seven gold medals, four silver medals and one bronze to finish in the first place.

Qatar sat in third place, winning four gold medals, three silver medals and two bronze medals.

The event acted as a preparations for the IAAF World Indoor Championships, due to take place in Birmingham between March 1 and 4.

Iran’s Medalists in the end of the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships:

### ■ Gold Medal Winners:

Hasan Taftian in 60m  
Amir Moradi in 1500m  
Hossein Keyhani in 3000m  
Ali Samari in Shot Put  
Sepideh Tavakoli in Pentathlon

### ■ Silver Medal Winners:

Pejman Yarvali in 800m  
Mohammad Baniadam in Pole Vault  
Milad Miri in Heptathlon  
Keyvan Ghanbarzadeh in High Jump  
Sepideh Tavakoli in High Jump  
Elnaz Kompani in 60mH  
Mahsa Mirzatabibi in Pole Vault  
Maryam Noroozi in Shot Put  
Women’s 4x400m Relay  
■ Bronze Medal Winners:  
Ali Mohebbi in Heotathlon  
Ali Fahimi in 1500m  
Vahid Sedigh in Triple Jump  
Homayoun Hemmati in 3000m  
Men’s 4x400m Relay  
Farzaneh Fasihi in 60m  
Sara Nadafi in 60mH  
Sara Karimi in Pole Vault  
Niloufar Fashkhorani in Pole Vault  
Sana Dadras in Shot Put

## Esteghlal suffer defeat to Zob Ahan: IPL

Esteghlal football team lost to Zob Ahan 2-1 in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Sunday.

Vouria Ghafouri gave the lead visiting team Esteghlal in the 31st minute with a header.

Zob Ahan put Esteghlal under pressure in the second half and equalized the match in the 61st minute.

Brazilian striker Stanley Soares found the back of the net from the penalty spot after Majid Hosseini brought down Zob Ahan player in the area.

Mohammad Reza Hosseini scored in the added time to seal a 2-1 victory for Isfahan based team.

Zob Ahan moved up to second place with 38 points, 13 points behind IPL leader Persepolis.

## Bojan Najdenov on the verge of joining Esteghlal

**TASNIM** — Macedonian central midfielder Bojan Najdenov has been linked with a move to Iranian football club Esteghlal.

The 26-year-old has traveled to Tehran to undergo a medical examination.

Free agent Najdenov most recently played at the Egyptian club Smouha Sporting Club.

Cameroonian strikers Christian Bekamenga, Yves Ekwalla Herman, Portuguese forward Yazalde Gomes Pinto, Nigerian Salisu Abdullahi “Alhaji” Gero and had been already linked with Esteghlal.

The Blues need to strengthen their team for the 2018 AFC Champions League.

Esteghlal have been drawn along with Al Rayyan of Qatar, Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia and Al Ain of the UAE in Group D of the competition.

Esteghlal will meet Al Rayyan of Qatar on Feb. 13 in Doha in their opening match.

Winfried Schafer’s team also sit sixth in Iran Professional League, 19 points behind pacesetters Persepolis.

## Iran down China at AFC Futsal Championship

Reigning champions Islamic Republic of Iran advanced to the quarter-final of the 2018 AFC Futsal Championship after defeating China PR 11-1 in a Group C tie on Sunday.

China held firm for the first three minutes but a defensive error proved costly as Iran took the lead courtesy of Hossein Tayyebi’s strike.

Iran continued to control the match before firing two more goals seven minutes later through Farhad Tavakoli and Mahdi Javid.

Javid added his second four minutes later before Mohammad Shajari and Tayyebi’s strike made it 6-0.

China, however, did not give up as Xu Yang pulled one back when he found an opening following an assist by Shen Siming for a 6-1 score at halftime.

Iran wasted no time after the break as they picked up the pace, firing five more goals with Ali Asghar Hassanzadeh scoring two under three minutes.

Ahmad Esmaeilpour hit Iran’s ninth while Tavakoli’s second three minutes later gave Team Melli a commanding 10-1 lead before Tayyebi put the icing on the cake, completing his hat-trick with three minutes left to play.

Iran will play Iraq in their final group tie while China will play for pride against Myanmar on Tuesday.

(Source: the-afc)



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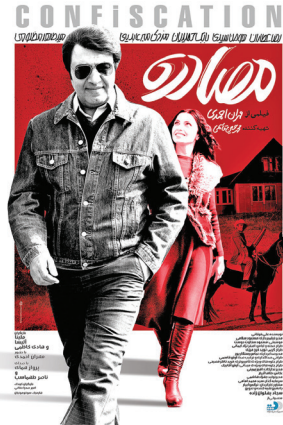
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## “Confiscation” pursues more specific comedy: director

**A R T** TEHRAN — Actor-turned-director Mehran Ahmadi has said that he pursues a more specific type of comedy in his directorial debut “Confiscation”, which is contending in the official competition of the 36th Fajr Film Festival in Tehran.



A poster for “Confiscation” by Mehran Ahmadi.

starring Reza Attaran is set in the 1970s. It is about a man who works for SAVAK, the Shah’s Intelligence service.

“My team and I believe that we should make a film that first deserves to be on the silver screen and then respects the audience,” he concluded.

## Book, album by Iranian artist to be unveiled at Paris fair

**A R T** TEHRAN — Iranian writer and composer Mehran Mokhtarpur’s book “My Little Secrets” (“Mes Petits Secrets”) and album “Identity” (“Identite”) will be introduced at the Paris Book Fair, which is scheduled to open on March 16.



“Mes Petits Secrets” by Mehran Mokhtarpur.

media and virtual identities on society.

The Candle and Fog Publishing, the London-based Iranian-British company, is the publisher of the book, which contains two short stories and a collection of poetry all written in French, the Persian service of ISNA reported on Sunday.

The album also contains Mokhtarpur’s 10 rock songs composed in French. He is a member of the Iranian rock band Piclavier.

The songs mostly highlight the negative impact of social media and virtual identities on society.

## Actor Uma Thurman accuses Harvey Weinstein

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — Actor Uma Thurman has accused movie producer Harvey Weinstein of sexually assaulting her at a London hotel after they worked together on the 1994 hit film “Pulp Fiction.”

In a New York Times article on Saturday by columnist Maureen Dowd, Thurman broke her silence after saying in October that she would wait to speak out about inappropriate behavior in the workplace because she did not want to say anything in anger.

Thurman became the latest of more than 70 women who have accused 65-year-old Weinstein of sexual misconduct, including rape. Weinstein’s lawyer said on Saturday that the producer had immediately apologized to Thurman for making an “awkward pass” at her 25 years ago, but that her claims about being physically assaulted were untrue.

In the Times article, Thurman, 47, said Weinstein pushed her down when she met him in his suite at London’s Savoy Hotel.

Asked for further comment by Reuters, a representative for Thurman said the Times article spoke for itself.

Weinstein’s lawyer, Ben Brafman, said the producer was stunned and saddened by what he considered false allegations from someone he worked closely with for more than two decades.

“Mr Weinstein acknowledges making an awkward pass at Ms Thurman 25 years ago which he regrets and immediately apologized for,” Brafman said in a statement.

“Why Ms Thurman would wait 25 years to publicly discuss this incident and why according to Weinstein, she would embellish what really happened to include false accusations of attempted physical assault is a mystery to Weinstein and his attorneys.”

Brafman said Thurman’s statements to the Times were being carefully examined and investigated “before deciding whether any legal action against her would be appropriate.”

# My background in overseas projects helpful in making “Bomb”: Peyman Maadi

**A R T** TEHRAN — Peyman Maadi, the actor of “Camp X-Ray” and “Last Knights”, has said that his previous experience in several big overseas projects has been helpful for him to direct his second movie, “Bomb, a Love Story”.

He co-starred with Kristen Stewart in U.S. director Peter Sattler’s debut “Camp X-Ray” and collaborated in Japanese director Kazuaki Kiriya’s action adventure “Last Knights”.

The story of “Bomb, a Love Story” is set in Tehran during the 1980s when the city was under Iraqi missile attacks.

“The story of the film is about love that is piling over and over,” Maadi said in a press conference on Saturday after a screening of his film at the 36th Fajr Film Festival.

He said, “I didn’t intend to illustrate violence in my film otherwise I would make a film about modern violence, but at that time we witnessed a violent era, during which most of us were beaten at schools and love was only an insignificant issue in a harsh time.”

Maadi also co-stars with Leila Hatami, the star of Asghar Farhadi’s Oscar-winning drama “A Separation”, in “Bomb, a Love Story”.

The film’s music has been composed by Greek musician Eleni Karaindrou, whom Maadi met in October when he collaborated as a juror with the 58th Thessaloniki International Film Festival in Greece.

“I have loved her works since long ago and gave some of them to Ms. Hatami to make her familiar with the ambiance of the film’s story,” Maadi Said.

“It was a great honor to have her



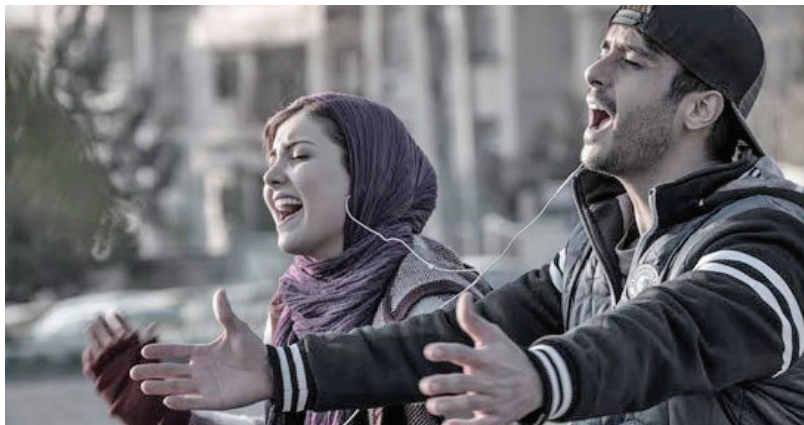
Director Peyman Maadi (R) poses during a photocall for “Truck” at the Fajr Film Festival in Tehran on February 3, 2018. (Mehr/Mohammadreza Abbasi)

[Karaindrou] on this project. She is like my aunt and I call her frequently and she

asks about my children and fortunately likes the film very much,” he added.

Maadi’s directorial debut “The Snow on the Pines” won popular acclaim in 2012.

## Sex trafficking drama “Lottery” gets extra screenings at Fajr



Ziba Karamali (L) and Saeed Soheili act in a scene from “Lottery”. (Sahab Zaribaf)

**A R T** TEHRAN — The organizers of the 36th Fajr Film Festival have arranged three additional screenings for “Lottery” on Saturday night by popular demand.

The additional screenings were held at Tehran’s Kurosh Cineplex for director Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian’s drama that revolves around trafficking in Iranian women to Arab countries.

The film tells the story of Amir-Ali and

Nushin, who plan to get married against their families’ will. They both also dream of winning the U.S. green card lottery.

Earlier in July 2017, the Persian daily Sobhe No reported that the culture officials had refused to authorize the screenplay of the movie due to its sensitive subject.

They allegedly asked Mahdavian, as writer and director, to make modifications in his story.

## Guillermo del Toro wins Directors Guild top award for “The Shape of Water”



Director Guillermo del Toro holds his award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Feature Film for “The Shape of Water” at the 70th Annual DGA Awards in Beverly Hills, California, U.S., February 3, 2018. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

**HOLLYWOOD (Reuters)** — Hollywood directors named Guillermo del Toro the best film director of 2017 for “The Shape of Water” on Saturday, placing the Mexican filmmaker and the film in a strong position for the movie world’s top honors, the Oscars, in March.

The Directors Guild of America (DGA), the leading industry group representing film and television directors, chose Jordan Peele as best first-time feature film director for the offbeat horror film “Get Out”, which has four Oscar nominations including best picture and for Peele as best director.

DGA feature film winners have often gone on to claim the best director Oscar and even see their films win best picture.

The Oscar chances for “The Shape of Water” were also boosted last month when the Producers Guild chose it as the year’s best film.

It was del Toro’s first DGA win and his first nomination.

“The Shape of Water” scored 13 Oscar nominations last month, the most of any 2017 film and just one shy of the all-time

## Barcelona Casa Asia screening Iranian films



Ghazal Shakeri acts in a scene from “Sara & Aida” by Maziar Miri.

**A R T** TEHRAN — Casa Asia, a Barcelona-based center promoting Spain’s relations with Asian countries, is screening a selection of 10 Iranian films directed by the new generation of Iranian filmmakers.

The screening program, which started in Cinemes Girona on Saturday, will be running until February 7, the center has announced.

“Bench Cinema” by Mohammad Rahmanian, “Cyanide” by Behruz Shoeibi,

“Sara & Aida” by Maziar Miri, “Mina’s Option” by Kamal Tabrizi and “A House on 41st Street” by Hamidreza Qorbani are among the selected films.

Also included are “The Dream of Water” by Farhad Mehranfar, “Qashang and Faranag” by Vahid MUSAIAN and “Until Ahmad Returns” by Sadeq Sadeq-Daqqi.

The program has been co-organized by Iran’s Farabi Cinema Foundation and Cultural Office in Spain.

## Annie Awards: “Coco” tops the animation celebration



Courtesy of Disney/Pixar

**LOS ANGELES (Hollywood Reporter)** — Disney/Pixar’s Dia de los Muertos-themed Oscar frontrunner “Coco” topped the 45th Annie Awards, winning 11 trophies including best animated feature, direction and writing.

Accepting the awards, helmer Lee Unkrich emphasized “building bridges not walls,” while producer Darla Anderson urged inclusion and diversity.

“GKIDS’ The Breadwinner” won the trophy for best independent animated feature. The team, including director Nora Twomey, exec producer Angelina Jolie, producer Anthony Leo and lead voice actress Saara Chaurdy came on stage to accept the award. The audience applauded as Leo noted that Twomey is the first solo woman director to win the category.

“Coco” and “The Breadwinner”, the story of an Afghan girl growing up until the Taliban rule, are both nominated for the Oscar for best animated feature, alongside Dreamworks Animation’s “The Boss Baby”, Fox/Blue Sky’s “Ferdinand” and indie “Loving Vincent”. In four of the past six years, the winner in the best animated feature Annie category went on to win the animated feature Oscar (in

2015, the Annie category was split in two with the addition of the best animated independent feature category).

Also Saturday at UCLA’s Royce Hall, Oscar-nominated animated short “Dear Basketball” won the Annie for animated short; Oscar-nominated animated short “Revolting Rhymes” grabbed an Annie for animated special production; and Weta’s work on VFX Oscar nominee “War for the Planet of the Apes” collected the Annie for best character animation in a live action production.

The TV category winners represented multiple productions, led by Disney Mickey Mouse and Samuraj Jack, which grabbed three trophies apiece.

Winsor McCay Awards for career contributions were presented to James Baxter, Stephen Hillenburg and Canadian animation duo Wendy Tilby & Amanda Forbis.

SpongeBob Squarepants creator Hillenburg, who was diagnosed with ALS this past year, was seated and received a standing ovation. Tom Kenny, who is the voice actor for SpongeBob, made the stage presentation and accepted the award.