



Aboutorabi Fard
named Tehran
Friday prayer leader **2**



Iran-Qatar strong ties
'a threat to U.S.':
al-Dajani **7**



ACL:
Iran's Persepolis
sink Nasaf Qarshi **15**



Iranian theaters refresh
screens to keep box
office brisk after Fajr **16**



Shias, Sunnis stand together in tough times

See page 2

© leader.ir



U.S. seeks to build military base near Iraq border with Iran: Lebanese daily

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — In an article published by the Lebanese Al Akhbar daily on Tuesday, the writer is of the opinion that the U.S. is seeking to build a military base in Iraq near the border with Iran. Washington seeks to build military base in the regions where there are the Popular Mobilization Forces in order to limit their scope of the influence, the newspaper said.

Following is an excerpt of the article: Pentagon spokesman Eric Bahon has said that the U.S. does not intend to remove its military forces from Iraq. He added that there are 5,200 American forces in Iraq which is confirmed by Baghdad.

Tehran prosecutor: Spies used environment as cover

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Tehran prosecutor general on Tuesday commented on a number of recent arrests of people who have been charged with espionage, saying they had used environmentalism as a cover.

Dolatabadi added that the spies had also a mission to provide their foreign links with data on Iran's defense program, missile activities in particular.

Kim praises S. Korea's hospitality, urges more dialog

North Korean Leader Kim Jong-un has lauded the hospitality South Korea extended to his country's delegation in the Winter Olympics, stressing the significance of building on the existing rapprochement to expand dialog on the divided Korean Peninsula.

Kim met the North Korean delegation, which was led by his sister, on its return in Pyongyang on Monday.

U.S., EU have slim chance of reaching an agreement on changes to JCPOA: Costello

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN — Ryan Costello, the NIAC assistant policy director says given Europe's commitment to the JCPOA, and the division of the U.S. Congress over the Iran deal, the likelihood of an agreement on changes to the JCPOA appears quiet low.

Within the deal for the time being. However, Trump warned his European allies and the Congress that it will be the last such waiver he signs if they fail to agree to radical changes.

ing Iran's missile program to the JCPOA all are necessary for the US not to withdraw from the JCPOA. Will Europe accept these conditions? What about Iran?



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

Trump's Quds move has made Netanyahu more hot-headed

The White House on Monday dismissed as "false" an assertion by Benjamin Netanyahu that the United States and Israel were discussing the possibility of Israel annexing settlements in the occupied West Bank.

"On the subject of applying sovereignty, I can say that I have been talking to the Americans about it for some time," Netanyahu told a closed-door meeting of his Likud party's legislators, according to the party's spokesman.

It is not a secret that extremists in Tel Aviv plan to announce an annexation of the West Bank that Israel occupied in 1967.

Such remarks by Netanyahu at the meeting of his loyalists are in line with the plot to push ahead with the annexation plan as they did in the case of the Golan Heights in 1981. Netanyahu is gradually revealing his ill intentions to make the world ready for such a malicious move.

There has been a hidden agenda behind construction of more and more settlements on the Palestinian occupied lands over these years.

It is easily understood in the words of the Likud spokesman that Israel is planning to announce such a decision sooner or later. According to Reuters, the Likud spokesman quoted Netanyahu as telling the lawmakers that any change in the settlements' status must first be coordinated, "as much as possible" with the United States.

Now that Donald Trump has taken the helm at the White House, the Likud party sees a good opportunity to push ahead with its plans in the occupied territories and probably take other adventurous moves.

Though, in contrast to international law, successive U.S. administrations have been strongly supporting Israel over the past seven decades, Trump's support for Israel in his first year in office has been special. Trump, who is politically naïve and possibly not much aware of the ulterior motives of the Zionists, has been trying to prove more loyal to Israel than all his predecessors.

Trump's declaration on Dec. 6 that the U.S. recognizes al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of Israel, which was the height of Trump's folly, has in fact made the ideologically-driven Netanyahu more adventurous and more hot-headed.

And now comes the acid rain

By Mohammad Ali Haqshenas

TEHRAN — Rain is a sign of hope and life, especially in low precipitation regions like Iran, but in some instances it can be harmful both for humans and the environment. I'm not talking about floods, rather about the sneaking effects of air pollution on rain which have added another item to the long list of environmental threats: acid rain.

What is acid rain?

An easy and general definition of acid rain can be summarized as any rain, fog, sleet or snow that has been turned acidic by pollutants in air.

Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) and Sulfur Dioxide (SO2) are the two main causes of acid rains; pollutants which mostly result from burning fossil fuels.

The pH value of water droplets determine

the acidity level of rains. Generally all rains are slightly acidic since some natural oxides exist in the air all the time. The pH value of an unpolluted rain is between 5 and 6.

When the pH value of water droplets falls below this range, we call it acid rain.

It is interesting to note that from one hand, the pH level of vinegar and lemon juice are 2.2 and 2.3 respectively and from the other, typical acid rains have the pH value of 4. So when vinegar and lemon juice don't cause any harm to us, why should we be concerned about acid rains?

Damages of acid rain

Acid rains can have a wide range of negative effects on our environment, cities and even our health.

The most prominent damage is one imposed on aquatic ecosystems. The pH level of waters

in streams, rivers and lakes should be around 4.8 to let aquatic plants and animals survive. Acids can be accumulated over time and lower the overall pH of water, making it hard or impossible to sustain life.

It destroys trees' leaves and arrests their growth and as a result, make them more vulnerable to extreme weather condition, diseases and insects.

Acid rain also changes the pH value of soil, leading to the extermination of some microorganisms and disturbing soil's biological activity.

Environment is not the only sufferer, our buildings and constructions are influenced by acid rain too. It makes building, especially those built with limestone, susceptible to decay. Even our cars, airplanes, steel bridges and pipes are all influenced by that. **->12**



Bodies of three oil tanker crew

The photo shows the bodies of three crew members of the Iranian oil tanker Sanchi which collided with a Chinese freight ship in East China coast on January 6. Bodies of three out of 32 crew members were found before the tanker sank on January 14.

The tanker was carrying over 136,000 tons of gas condensates for South Korea.

Leader pardons, commutes sentences of 565 inmates

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Tuesday pardoned or commuted prison terms of 565 convicts sentenced in courts across the country.

The pardon was requested by Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani on the occasion of the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, IRNA reported.

Article 110 of the Constitution grants the Leader the right to pardon or commute sentences of convicts upon a recommendation from the head of the Judiciary.

The clemency does not apply to all convicts, including those who have been engaged in armed struggle against the country or armed drug trafficking.

The need to clarify speculations about death of environmentalist

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Following the death of Kavous Seyed Emami, an environmentalist, in prison on February 10, the hashtag #free-IranianConservationist has gone viral in social media in Iran.

Seyed Emami, one of the founders of the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation, and six of his associates were arrested by the intelligence services earlier this month on allegations of spying. The other six conservationists, who are all well-known for their work in wildlife conservation, are still in prison.

The Judiciary announced that Seyed Emami, also a sociology professor at Imam Sadiq University, had committed suicide in his cell.

On Monday, footage from Seyed Emami's cell showing his last minutes, was played to a group of parliamentarians. **->12**

TEHRAN TIMES
Iran's Leading International Daily

Advertising Dept

021-430 51450

times1979@gmail.com

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Aboutorabi Fard named Tehran Friday prayer leader

POLITICS TEHRAN — In a decree on Tuesday, d e s k Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei appointed Mohammad-Hassan Aboutorabi Fard as an interim Friday prayer leader of Tehran.

On Friday, which falls on February 16, Aboutorabi Fard will be preaching the worshippers.

Other interim Friday prayers of Tehran are Mohammad Emami Kashani, Ahmad Jannati, Ahmad Khatami, Kazem Seddiqi and Ali Movahedi-Kermani.



Govt. spokesman rejects talks on Iran's defense capabilities

POLITICS TEHRAN — Government spokesman d e s k Mohammad Bagher Nobakht on Tuesday reiterated Tehran's policy not to negotiate with foreigners about its missile power, saying no country has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Islamic Republic.

"Our defense capabilities are nobody's business," Nobakht told reporters during his weekly press conference, Tasnim reported.

He said Iran's "policy is based on interaction" but it would never accept any "bullying".

Iranian officials have repeatedly said that the country's missile power is not negotiable.



West used lizards to spy on Iran's nuclear program: ex-military chief

POLITICS TEHRAN — Hassan Firouzabadi, the d e s k former chief of the Iranian armed forces, has said that Western countries had used lizards and chameleons to spy on Iran's nuclear program.

"Several years ago, some individuals came to Iran to collect aid for Palestine... We were suspicious of the route they chose. In their possessions were a variety of reptile desert species like lizards, chameleons... We found out that their skin attracts atomic waves and that they were nuclear spies who wanted to find out where inside the Islamic republic of Iran we have uranium mines and where we are engaged in atomic activities," Sputnik quoted him, citing ILNA.



Downing of F-16 fighter questions Israeli might, diplomat says

POLITICS TEHRAN — The military capability of the d e s k Zionist regime is once again being questioned with the downing of its fighter by Syria, a Foreign Ministry official said on Tuesday.

Hamid-Reza Dehqani, director of the Middle East and North Africa Department of the Foreign Ministry, said the humiliation of Israel happens after the regime's 33-day war on Lebanon in 2006 and the 22-day war on Gaza in 2009.

The Zionists were proud of their air force superiority, which is now under question with their F-16 having been shot down, Dehqani said in an expert panel on "Palestine and the Future Horizon".

The Israeli jet was shot down on Saturday as it was returning from a raid on a Syrian position.



'Iran's foreign policy genuinely independent'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's Ambassador to the d e s k Netherlands, Alireza Jahangiri, has said that independence and countering colonial powers were among top ideals of the Islamic Revolution, emphasizing that the country's foreign policy is genuinely independent.

In a ceremony to mark the 39th victory of the Islamic Revolution in The Hague, Jahangiri lauded the Iranian nation for reiterating their support for the Islamic establishment through their massive rallies across the country, Fars news agency reported on Tuesday.



Arab analyst highlights end of Israeli air force superiority

POLITICS TEHRAN — Almost all headlines in the d e s k Israeli media outlets suggest that a war between Iran and the Israeli regime is imminent, the editor-in-chief of the London-based electronic Arabic daily Rai-al-Youm has said.

In the article published on Tuesday, Abdel Bari Atwan said the downing of an Israeli F-16 bomber by the Syrian army has clouded Tel Aviv's balance of power, its military deterrence and air superiority.

Such headlines rather tend to show concerns and fears of the regime going through a hysterical stage than its might, he added.

Calm restored without gun, Rouhani says of recent protests

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian d e s k an President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday that security forces restored calm in the recent protests without using weapons.

"We ordered police forces to enter the streets without weapon. The French President [Emanuel Macron] was surprised when I told him that and said 'why don't you announce this issue that police entered the street without weapon and restored peace'," Rouhani said at a convention of provincial governors, ministers, heads of economic organizations and financial institutions.

Protests which started in Mashhad on December 28 died down after a week. Groups of people held demonstrations in several cities across the country to voice their anger over rising prices, unemployment and corruption. However, some rioters and hooligans misused the situation to commit acts of violence.



Iranian, Russian, Turkish FM's to discuss Syria in Astana next month

TEHRAN — The foreign ministers of Iran, Russia, and Turkey plan to meet next month to discuss the situation in Syria, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov said on Tuesday.

The sides have yet to fix the exact date and location, Abdrakhmanov told reporters, but one of the options is the Kazakh capital, Astana, which will also host a fresh round of lower-level talks on Syria between the same three parties, according to Reuters.

The eighth round of Syria peace talks, mediated by Iran, Russia and Turkey, was held in Kazakhstan's capital of Astana, with the aim of

finding a diplomatic solution to the six-year conflict in the Arab country.

In mid-September last year, the three countries, which together act as guarantor states in peace talks for Syria, agreed on the details of four "de-escalation zones" in the Arab country, including in Idlib, during peace talks in Astana.

The fifth zone is expected to reduce tension in Syria's Afrin border region.

The de-escalation zones are aimed at separating extremist groups, including Daesh and Jabhat Fatah al-Sham -- formerly known as al-Nusra Front -- from other militants.

(Source: Tasnim)

Iranian Shias, Sunnis stand together in tough times: Leader

POLITICS TEHRAN — Leader of d e s k the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has said that Shia and Sunni Muslims in Iran stand beside each other in the most difficult times.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting with the organizers of the Congress on Martyrs of Sistan-Baluchestan on February 5, which were published on Tuesday at the congress's website in Zahedan.

Zahedan is the capital of southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan mostly populated by Sunnis.

The Leader went on to say that the unity among the Muslims in Iran should be revealed through cultural and artistic actions.

He noted that Sistan-Baluchistan, like the provinces of Kurdistan and Golestan,

Rouhani also said that the people do not like chaos, noting there are legal ways to express complaints.

"Our constitution has many capacities. It has the capacity to manage the country and attract the public satisfaction even if not being reformed for many years," he explained.

He also called on all the officials to help the administration to fully implement the constitution.

■ **'Nobody can meddle in independent Iran'**

Elsewhere in his speech, Rouhani said that independence means nobody should meddle in Iran's affairs or fate.

He said if Iranians were asked whether they preferred to decide about their fate or be dependent on foreigners, the answer by over 98.2% would be "independence".

The president added, "Our nation would continue the path of Islamic Revolution which it has chosen before."

Trump boosts missile defense spending to counter so-called 'Iran threat'

U.S. President Donald Trump's \$686 billion defense request for the coming fiscal year would propel the Navy toward a new goal of 355 ships, restore major funding for a Boeing Co. fighter jet favored by the president and boost missile defense spending to counter what his administration calls threats from North Korea and Iran.

U.S. missile defense spending would increase about 25 percent over the Obama administration's last projected numbers for fiscal 2019 — to \$9.92 billion, or \$1.91 billion more than previously planned, Fortune reported.

It would bankroll 20 new interceptor missiles and silos, a new "homeland defense radar" in Hawaii and, for the first time, a "salvo" test to fire two interceptors at once at an incoming target.

The spending plan on Monday included \$716 billion

in military spending, the largest military budget since 2011, and a \$74 billion increase over last year.

Since entering the White House, Trump has adopted a confrontational policy toward Tehran — from threatening repeatedly to kill the 2015 nuclear agreement to imposing new sanctions against entities and people affiliated with Iran.

The Trump administration has also tried to do its utmost to depict Iran's missile program as a threat to the United States and the entire world.

In recent months, calls for negotiations over Tehran's missile program have grown louder. Iran, however, says it will never hold talks on the issue, insisting that its missile program is purely defensive and its missiles are not designed to carry nuclear warheads.



All enemies' plots to harm unity thwarted: IRGC chief

TEHRAN — The chief commander of Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has hailed the peaceful coexistence among Iranian Shia and Sunni Muslims, saying all plots hatched by enemies to undermine national unity and solidarity in the country have been thwarted.

The enemies are making considerable efforts to harm the Iranian nation's unity and solidarity, but all their plots have always been neutralized thanks to the guidelines of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and the prudence of Iranians, Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari said on Tuesday.

He added that despite hostile acts by the global arrogance, "the Islamic Republic is still continuing its path with strength and dignity."

The most important goal of enemies is to create insecurity across Iran, however Shia and Sunni Muslims are making joint efforts to boost the country's security, the IRGC commander said.

During a recent meeting in Tehran with a number of officials in charge of a martyrs' congress in the south-eastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, Ayatollah



Khamenei had lauded the strong unity among Iran's Shia and Sunni Muslims despite all enemy attempts to sow discord among them.

Ayatollah Khamenei further called for vigilance among Muslims against divisive enemy schemes.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Jafari pointed to the eight-year war imposed by Iraq with the backing of major global powers and said, "The biggest achievement of

this war was that other nations accepted that they can stand up to the global arrogance's bullying."

He emphasized that Iran has also countered the cultural, political and economic aggression of the global arrogance aimed at harming the Islamic Revolution.

"Enemies of the Islamic Revolution tried to create distrust among the [Iranian] people toward the Islamic establishment through the imposition of economic pressure and sanctions and the creation of certain economic problems but this plot was also thwarted through the vigilance of the people," the IRGC commander said.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said in January the Islamic Republic's security and stability depend on its own people, adding that "infiltrators" will not be permitted to violate the rights of the Iranians.

"Iran's security and stability depend on its own people, who — unlike the peoples of [U.S. President Donald] Trumps regional 'bffs' — have the right to vote and to protest," Zarif said in a post on his official Twitter account.

(Source: Press TV)

Vessels in Persian Gulf obligated to use Iranian-defined routes: commander

TEHRAN — In compliance with a new regulation introduced by Iran's Supreme National Security Council, all foreign vessels entering the Persian Gulf have to take the maritime routes defined by Iran, Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Navy Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi said.

In comments at a conference of maritime organizations in Tehran on Tuesday, Rear Admiral Fadavi said the Supreme National Security Council has passed a new regulation obliging all foreign ships, including American and British vessels, to take the waterway defined by Iran.

American vessels obey the Iranian rules when it comes to exercising sovereignty in the Persian Gulf, he said.

The general added that foreign vessels in the Persian Gulf do not dare to violate Iran's instructions on the waterways.



He further explained that Iran Ports and Maritime Organization has the authority to announce the decision on new maritime routes, in accordance with the administrative and international regulations.

General Fadavi also expressed the IRGC's readiness to detect and document environmental violations in

the Persian Gulf through aerial and naval patrolling, as soon as the Ports and Maritime Organization and Iran's Department of Environment authorize the IRGC forces.

In remarks in June 2016, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei underlined that security of the Persian Gulf region comes within the purview of the regional countries alone, and dismissed the U.S. claim of seeking security in the region.

"The Persian Gulf security relates to the countries of the region which have common interests, and not to the U.S. So, security of the Persian Gulf region should be provided by the countries of this region itself," the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei, Commander-in-Chief of the Iranian Armed Forces, has also called for the enhancement of

the Iranian naval forces' presence in international waters and expanding the Navy's power in balance with the merit of the Islamic Establishment.

(Source: Tasnim)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Job Vacancy

Assistant FAO Representative (Programme)

Deadline: 20 February 2018

Apply: www.fao.org/iran

Tip-off received on al-Nusra, White Helmets plotting chemical weapons provocation in Syria

Russia's Center for Reconciliation in Syria says it's been warned that al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra) terrorists brought in chlorine containers to a local village, where they aimed to work with the White Helmets to stage "a provocation."

Late on Monday, the center received a phone call from a resident of the village of Serakab in Idlib province about the planned incident.

According to the source, on the afternoon of February 12, rebels from the al-Nusra Front terrorist group brought three cars packed with more than 20 cylinders of chlorine along with personal protective equipment to Serakab.

Additionally, according to the caller, representatives of the local branch of the White Helmets, wearing individual means of protection, conducted rehearsals of "giving first aid" to "local residents" who were supposedly suffering from poisoning.

The information received from the Idlib resident raised a red flag for members of the Russian Center for Reconciliation in Syria.

According to the center, this indicates that al-Nusra Front terrorists along with the White Helmets are plotting another "provocation" with the use of poisonous substances in Idlib province, aimed at accusing the Syrian authorities of using chemical weapons against local residents.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in October that the notorious Idlib chemical incident in April, which was used by the United States as a pretext to strike Syria's Shayrat Airbase, might have been staged.

Presenting photographic evidence of a crater from the scene of the chemical incident, the head of the Non-Pro proliferation and Arms Control Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Mikhail Ulyanov, told a United Nations briefing that the bomb which dispersed the deadly chemical agent was most likely detonated on the ground and not on impact from a Syrian airstrike. "Most likely, an improvised explosive device was located on the surface," Ulyanov said.

The Khan Shaykhun chemical incident occurred on April 4, 2017, in the town of the same name in the Idlib Governorate, in an area that was under the control of al-Nusra Front terrorists. The sarin gas attack, which allegedly claimed the lives of between 74 to 100 civilians, reportedly took place when the town was struck by the Syrian Air Force. Washington rushed to blame Damascus, despite the denial of the Syrian government, which destroyed all of its sarin stockpiles under the deal brokered



between Russia and the U.S. in 2013. Even though there was a lack of any hard evidence, shortly after the incident U.S. President Donald Trump authorized the launch of 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles at Shayrat Airbase, from where the U.S. intelligence claimed the chemical attack was launched.

In late October, the U.S. Department of State finally admitted that militants linked to al-Nusra Front are indeed carrying out terrorist attacks using chemical weapons in Syria. Russia's Defense Ministry noted that a precedent had been set by Washington's acknowledgement of the situation.

"This is the first official recognition by the State Department not only of the presence, but the very use of chemical weapons by al-Nusra terrorists to carry out terrorist attacks, which we repeatedly warned about," General Igor Konashenkov, spokesman for the ministry, said.

The White Helmets have been long hailed by the Western media as "peace-bearing heroes" who save human lives. However, the group has been dogged by allegations of having

ties with terrorist groups.

"The White Helmets not only feel at home on territories controlled by al-Nusra Front and ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Daesh) but also openly express positive attitudes towards them, providing them with information and even financial assistance," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in April 2017.

Al-Nusra Front, known as the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham after July 2016, and also described as al-Qaeda in Syria or al-Qaeda in the Levant, is a Salafist terrorist group fighting against Syrian government forces in the Syrian foreign instigated war, with the aim of establishing self-interpreted Islamic state in the country.

On 28 January 2017, following violent clashes with Ahrar al-Sham (Free Men of the Levant) and other rebel groups, al-Nusra Front merged with four other groups to become Tahrir al-Sham (Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham/Organization for the Liberation of the Levant/Levant Liberation Committee).

(Source: agencies)

Russia accuses United States of undermining Syria integrity

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Tuesday that in Syria the United States has been acting unilaterally in a "dangerous way", undermining the country's integrity, RIA news agency said.

Lavrov also reiterated that Russia remains in favor of Kurdish participation in the Syrian peace process.

Meanwhile, the Russian Defense Ministry has accused the U.S. of fueling tensions in northern Syria by supplying arms to militant groups.

"The Pentagon's uncontrolled deliveries of modern weaponry to the pro-U.S. militants in the north of Syria contributed to the rapid escalation of tensions and prompted the Turkish special operation," said a statement.

The statement was released after Ankara began new air and ground operations around the area of Afrin in northern Syria aimed at ousting the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG/Yekineyên Parastina Gel), which Ankara views as a terror organization and the Syrian branch of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê).

The U.S. "provocative actions" such as establishing "border forces" and other activities aimed at the "disintegration of Syrian sovereignty, and supporting armed militant groups" have resulted in Turkey's "extremely negative" reaction.

A few days before the launch of Turkey's northern Syria operations, Washington



claimed that it was not supporting the YPG in Afrin.

"We are not operating in Afrin. We are supporting our partners in defeating remaining Daesh (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/ISIL) pockets along the Middle Euphrates River Valley, specifically in areas north of Abu Kamal, on the eastern side of the Euphrates River," said spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition Colonel Ryan Dillo.

Earlier in the day, the Russian Foreign Ministry released a statement voicing its

concerns over Turkish military operations in Syria, in which it noted that Russian troops were withdrawing from Afrin "to prevent potential provocation and exclude the threat to the life and well-being of Russian military."

Turkish tanks cross border into Syria

Meanwhile, several Turkish military trucks carrying tanks and other armored vehicles have crossed the border into the Syrian city of A'zaz in northern Syrian.

The deployment started after Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim announced that ground operations are expected to begin on Sunday.

Yildirim also said that Turkish "armed forces have started an air campaign in order to destroy elements" of the YPG militants in Syria.

The Turkish army also said in a statement that the airstrikes had struck 108 targets belonging to Kurdish militants, but it did not say whether the targets were all in Syria's Afrin's province.

According to an YPG spokesman, the air raids have killed 10 people, seven of whom civilians.

"Seven civilians were killed, including a child, as well as two female fighters and one male fighter," said YPG spokesman Birusk Hasakeh, adding that the child was an eight-year-old boy.

YPG vows to resist Turkish airstrikes

Following Turkey's Saturday night airstrikes on Afrin, the YPG announced that it had no choice but to fight back.

"We will defeat this aggression, like we have defeated other such assaults against our villages and cities," said a statement.

While noting that Turkey was targeting civilian neighborhoods, the YPG called on the people of north Syria to unite and defend Afrin.

(Source: agencies)

Tillerson urges Persian Gulf states to regain unity

Countries who fought ISIL must help rebuild Iraq: Tillerson

By Staff & agencies

Restoring the unity of Persian Gulf Arab nations remains in the interest of all parties in the region, the United States Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said on Tuesday, urging them to resolve a diplomatic dispute over Qatar.

Last June, the House of Saud regime, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain severed ties with Qatar, accusing it of supporting terrorism and opening up the worst rift in years among the U.S. allies. Qatar denies the accusation.

Tillerson was speaking at a meeting in Kuwait of the global coalition against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh).

Meanwhile, the U.S. urged members of the coalition fighting the ISIL terrorist outfit on Tuesday to help rebuild Iraq or risk the reversal of the gains made against the group there.

Donors and investors have gathered in Kuwait this week to discuss efforts to rebuild Iraq's economy and infrastructure as it emerges from a devastating conflict with the hardline militants who seized almost a third of the country.

Iraq declared victory over ISIL in December, having taken back all the territory captured by the militants in 2014 and 2015. The fighters have also been largely defeated in neighboring Syria.

The U.S. appreciates the "generous contributions" of coalition members over the past year but more is needed, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson told a coalition meeting in Kuwait.

"If communities in Iraq and Syria cannot return to normal life, we risk the return of conditions that allowed ISIL to take and control vast territory," he said. "We must continue to clear unexploded remnants of war left behind by ISIL, enable hospitals to reopen, restore water and electricity services, and get boys and girls back in school." The U.S. is not expected to make a direct government contribution at the conference, however.

"It's not in the question of a pledging thing where we go out with requests, it's underscoring - there is a need for support. It's investment, it's private company engagement, it's DFI," a senior state department official travelling with Tillerson told reporters on Monday. The term DFI generally refers to development finance institutions such as multilateral development banks.

"But it is also - and there are Arab donors willing to help and support - focus your efforts on those areas where it actually achieves something in terms of stabilization and countering foreign influence."

Rebuilding Iraq after three years of war will cost more than \$88 billion, with housing a particularly urgent priority, Iraqi officials told the conference on Monday. Tillerson also said Washington had decided to provide an additional \$200 million of aid to stabilize liberated areas in Syria.

At the same time, NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said the alliance was ready to answer a U.S. call for it to expand its small training mission in Iraq to support reconstruction. The U.S. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis sent a letter to NATO last month calling for a formal NATO train-and-advise mission, Reuters reported, part of President Donald Trump's campaign for the alliance to do more against militants.

The end of major combat operations does not mean the United States and its allies have achieved final victory, Tillerson warned.

"The end of major combat operations does not mean we have achieved the enduring defeat of ISIL," he said.

"ISIL remains a serious threat to the stability of the region, our homelands, and other parts of the globe."

The headline militants, who lost all territory they held in Iraq and are on the cusp of defeat in Syria, are trying to gain territory in other countries where they are active, he said, adding that "History must not be allowed to repeat itself elsewhere."

"In Iraq and Syria, ISIL is attempting to morph into an insurgency. In places like Afghanistan, the Philippines, Libya, West Africa, and others it is trying to carve out and secure safe havens."

Tillerson said he was concerned over recent events in north-west Syria, where Turkey launched an assault last month on a U.S.-allied Kurdish militia it considers a threat on its southern border, adding that he was keenly aware of Turkey's "legitimate security concerns".

S. Africa's confirms 'recall' of Zuma from presidency

South Africa's ruling ANC party (African National Congress) confirmed on Tuesday that it had decided to "recall" scandal-tainted President Jacob Zuma from office, but said no deadline had been set for him to resign. "In its wisdom, the NEC [National Executive Committee] decided... to recall its depsee Jacob Zuma," ANC secretary-general Ace Magashule told reporters.

ANC Secretary-General Ace Magashule said that the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) believes Zuma's removal "should be treated with urgency".

However, he said that the NEC had not discussed any motion of no-confidence against the embattled president.

"The NEC therefore decided as follows: To recall its employee, Comrade Jacob Zuma, in accordance with Rule 12.2.21.2 of the ANC Constitution, which accords the NEC the authority to 'recall any public representative'." Magashule added "we will deal with that matter" if President Zuma refuses to heed the party decision, which was taken after exhaustive discussion. The ANC decision is only a party-level instruction. Zuma is under no constitutional obligation to resign, which means if he refuses to step down, the party will have to navigate the prospect of calling for a motion of no-confidence against Zuma in parliament. The president faces hundreds of corruption charges but has previously vowed to stay in office until his term ends next year. Zuma was found to have given favor to an Indian-born immigrant family known as the Guptas, in what became known as the state capture scandal.

But there are still some who defend Zuma, saying he is being targeted unfairly in a system that is underpinned by corruption.

Zuma joined the ANC in 1958 and is considered one of the party stalwarts. He spent time on Robben Island and lived in exile before returning to the country in 1990.

Known for being an astute political operator, Zuma has survived several no-confidence votes in parliament and, until early February, believed he would survive another. But the tide has changed and several of his allies abandoned him.

Since being elected president of the ANC in December, Cyril Ramaphosa has been clear that he had no intention of humiliating Zuma. The party reportedly wants him to bow out rather than drag the process to a no-confidence vote in parliament, which he is likely to lose.

(Source: AlJazeera)

Damascus warns Israel of 'more surprises' in Syria

The Syrian government said on Tuesday that Israel would face "more surprises" in future attacks on Syria's territory, after Syrian air defenses shot down an Israeli F-16 jet.

Syrian anti-aircraft fire downed the F-16 as it returned from a bombing raid on positions in Syria early on Saturday.

"Have full confidence the aggressor will be greatly surprised because it thought this war - this war of attrition Syria has been exposed to for years - had made it incapable of confronting attacks," Assistant Foreign Minister Ayman Sussan said.

"God willing they will see more surprises whenever they try to attack Syria," Sussan said during a Damascus news conference.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday that Israeli forces would press ahead with Syria operations despite their loss of the advanced warplane, the first it has lost to enemy fire in 36 years.

In Kiryat Shmona on Tuesday, Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman told reporters: "There are no limitations [on military operations], and nor do we accept any limitations ... We will respond to every provocation."

"We will continue to defend our vital security and other interests. And I would like to paraphrase the well-known saying: 'This is not the time to bark, this is the time to bite.'"

Meanwhile, Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri says the downing of the Israeli F-16 warplane will establish new rules of engagement with the Tel Aviv regime's acts of aggression.

"What happened is larger than a battle and a little less than a war. It will create new balances and rules of engagement in the region," Lebanon's Arabic-language daily newspaper



al-Joumhouria quoted Berri as saying on Monday.

He added, "This event is the first of its kind in tens of years. However, no escalation is expected. Things will end here; they will not develop into an all-out war."

Palestinian Islamic resistance movement, Hamas, has announced in a statement that its fighters and the Palestinian nation stand by Syria in the face of Israel's latest act of aggression against the country plagued with foreign-spon-

sored militancy. "We commend the Syrian response to the Israeli aggression. We affirm that Palestine stands by Syria in the face of this hostile move," Ismail Radwan, a senior official of the movement, said in an exclusive interview with Arabic-language Quds Press International News Agency.

He also condemned Israeli attacks on Syria, stressing that Damascus had the right to self-defense against Israeli assaults.

(Source: Daily Star)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	98103.4
IFX	1107.32

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	49,600 rials
EUR	61,340 rials
GBP	71,150 rials
AED	13,900 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

WTI	58.70/b
Brent	62.14/b
OPEC Basket	61.52/b
Gold	\$1,326.30/oz
Silver	\$16.56/oz
Platinum	\$974.95/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Containerization in need of investments

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran owns 229 container ships, which contributes to 1.1 percent of the global capacity, but containerization is in dire need of attracting investments, Mohammad Rastad, head of Iran’s Ports and Maritime Organization (IPO), stated.

Making the remarks in the 25th Conference of Coordinating Marine Organizations of Iran on Tuesday, the official said: “Some 145 million containers are transported annually across the globe, of which Iran’s share is about 3 million containers that are mainly carried to Iran by foreign transportation systems.”

The official, elsewhere, underlined competitiveness as an important factor in improving ports in the country.

Referring to multidimensional transportation, Rastad added that an international counsellor has been employed at Shahid Rajaiee port, in south of Iran, in this regard.



Permanent expo of Iranian products to be inaugurated in Baghdad soon

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran is to inaugurate the permanent exhibition of its products in Iraqi capital in near future, Iranian ambassador to Iraq announced on the sidelines of opening an exclusive exhibition of Iranian products in Baghdad.

“The required agreements have been reached with Iraqi Ministry of Trade and the permanent exhibition of Iranian products will be opened in Baghdad soon,” IRNA quoted Iraj Masjedi as saying on Monday.

The Iraqi minister of trade as well as some other officials will attend the opening ceremony of this exhibition, he added.



CBI grants \$6.4b of facilities to SMEs since last March

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has given 300 trillion rials (about \$6.4 billion) of facilities to domestic small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as of the beginning of the present Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2017), IRNA reported on Tuesday.

According to CBI’s latest report, from the announced figure, 200 trillion rials (about \$4.29 billion) has been consumed to supply working capital and financing unfinished projects, while 100 trillion rials (about \$2.14 billion) has been used for renovation of economic units.

UK inflation holds steady after BOE warns of more rate hikes

UK inflation held at 3 percent in January as downward pressure from auto fuel and food prices was offset by the cost of attractions such as zoos and gardens.

Consumer prices fell 0.5 percent from December, as they did in January 2017, the Office for National Statistics said on Tuesday. Annual core inflation accelerated to 2.7 percent from 2.5 percent.

The Bank of England expects inflation to subside this year as the effect of sterling’s 2016 depreciation fades. That’s good news for consumers who have seen rising prices eat into their spending power over the past year.

But what matters for rate setters is domestically generated inflation, and officials now judge there is little spare capacity remaining in the economy.

Markets are pricing in about three interest-rate hikes over the next three years, with the first coming as early as May. Even that will leave “excess demand” and inflation above the 2 percent target, policy maker Gertjan Vlieghe said on Monday.

Auto-fuel prices rose less last month than they did a year earlier, and food prices fell compared with no change in January 2017. Upward pressures came from the recreation and culture sector, where prices fell by less than a year earlier. There was also some pressure from clothing prices as seasonal discounts failed to match those of a year ago. (Source: Bloomberg)

Renault’s investment in Iran to hit €800m

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — French automaker Renault is going to expand activities in Iran, boosting its total investments in the country to €800 million, IRNA reported quoting the company’s director for MENA region.

Speaking at the 5th edition of Iran’s Automotive Industry International Conference in Tehran on Tuesday, Pascal Felten noted that with the new round of cooperation between Iran and Renault beginning, the company will create 10 times more job opportunities in the country.

The director asserted that the jointly-made products will have less pollution and more quality and safety and will be presented with more competitive prices.

Earlier in August 2017, Renault inked a €660-million deal in Tehran to form a joint venture company for establishing a plant with an initial production capacity of 150,000



Renault Director for MENA region Pascal Felten

vehicles a year.

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

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

Centering on competitive supply chain issues (raw materials, parts manufacturing and logistics), the 5th edition of Iran’s Automotive Industry International Conference (IAIC 2018) is being held on February 13 and 14 at Milad Tower Conference Hall in Tehran.

Oil spill from Sanchi reaches lowest amount: NITC

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Oil spill from the sunken Iranian oil tanker Sanchi has reached the lowest amount, Mohsen Bahrami, the spokesman of National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC) for the emergency committee on incident, announced.

He said the amount of pollution from the sunken tanker is now at the least level according to the experts investigating the issue in the place of accident and also based on the results of exploration made by a robot submarine, ILNA reported.

On January 6, the Panamanian-flagged, Iranian-owned tanker Sanchi, with a full natural-gas condensate cargo



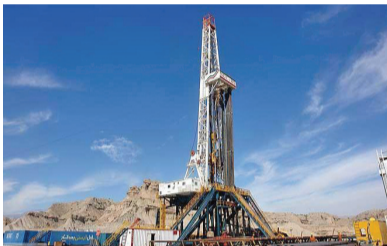
of 136,000 tons (960,000 barrels), sailing from Iran to South Korea, collided with the Hong Kong-flagged cargo ship CF Crystal 160 nautical miles (300 km) off Shanghai, China. 32 sailors lost their lives in the incident.

Yaran oil field’s DPOP to be presented by Feb. 19: PEDEC

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — The managing director of Iran’s Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC) said the Delivery Program and Operation Plan (DPOP) for Yaran oil field will be prepared by the end of the current Iranian month of Bahman (February 19).

According to Nouredin Shahnazadeh, as the field’s operator the Persia Oil & Gas Company has formed a joint venture with a French firm to prepare the DPOP and it is also cooperating with Russian Rosneft as a joint venture in developing the field.

Last year, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) signed a Head of Agreement (HOA)



with the Persia Oil & Gas Company for the integrated development plan of Yaran field.

Yaran oilfield is one of the five oilfields, dubbed the West Karoun oilfields, Iran shares with Iraq at the western part of Iran’s southwestern region of Karoun.

Iran’s heavy crude price jumps 8.2% in January

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — According to OPEC’s latest monthly report published on February 12, Iran’s heavy oil price reached \$65.85 in January, an increase of \$4.98 or 8.2 percent from \$60.87 in December.

Based on the data presented, the country’s

average heavy crude price stood at \$51.90 in 2017.

The report also put Iran’s oil production, based on secondary sources, at 3,829 million barrels per day (bpd) in the mentioned month, 3,000 bpd less than that of December.

Iran produced 3,832 million barrels per

day of crude oil in December, the report read.

The report also provided the OPEC member’s oil output based on direct communication for the first month of 2018 upon which the output stood at 3,817 million bpd, a 6,000 bpd rise compared to 3,811 million bpd in December.

The OPEC MOMR stated that OPECNGLs and non-conventional liquids output in 2017 is estimated to grow by 0.17 million bpd, averaging 6.31 million bpd, while for 2018, growth of 0.18 million bpd is forecast to average 6.49 million bpd. Production growth is expected to be mainly in Iran and Saudi Arabia.

OPEC president says shale surge won’t thwart plan to clear glut

Surging output of U.S. shale oil won’t be a “huge distorter” of efforts by global crude producers to clear a glut, according to OPEC’s president.

The market should re-balance this year, given robust demand and producers’ compliance with their pledges to curtail supply, United Arab Emirates Energy Minister Suhail Al Mazrouei, currently the president of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, said Monday in an interview in Dubai. The market is “on course to restoring balance” for the first time since 2014, OPEC’s Secretary-General Mohammad Barkindo said at a conference in Cairo.

Oil demand is set to grow by 1.6 million barrels a day in 2018, the same level as last year, and crude inventories are continuing to dwindle as OPEC and other producers pursue their output cuts until the end of the year, Barkindo said Monday. Venezuela is proposing that OPEC seek a five-year deal for cooperation on output with allied producers beyond 2018, he said.

“Venezuelans see that the cooperation with non-OPEC producers shouldn’t end,” Barkindo told reporters in Cairo. “They have put forward a proposal for the time frame of the cooperation, and that was five years. But this proposal isn’t final, and it’s a work in progress.”

Inventories in focus

Oil was rebounding from its biggest weekly decline in two years, though gains were limited due to concerns over a resurgence in U.S. shale. The U.S. oil rig count rose last week by 26, the most in a year, to 791, Baker Hughes data



showed on Friday. American weekly crude output topped 10 million barrels a day for the first time on record, and the U.S. government forecasts it will balloon to 11 million later this year.

Such an increase would complicate efforts by OPEC, Russia and other producers to prop up crude prices by curtailing supply. The producers agreed in November to extend self-imposed limits on output until the end of this year, seeking to counter a glut fed partly by U.S. shale drillers.

“Shale is coming and the expectation is that it will come stronger than in 2017, and this is something that we have to watch,” Al Mazrouei said. “But considering all factors, I don’t think it will be a huge distorter of the market.”

“What concerns us today is the level of inventories that

we need to achieve the five-year average, and I see the market going in that direction and achieving balance,” he said. “How long it will take depends on how long the increase in shale production will take.” Participants in the oil-cuts accord aim for global crude inventories to fall to the average level of the past five years.

Unprecedented conformity

“Demand for this year is expected to be good, if not better than 2017,” Al Mazrouei said. This, together with “good” economic indicators and compliance with output cuts, indicate that the crude market will balance within the year, he said.

Barkindo said producers’ “unprecedented conformity” with their targets for reducing output is driving progress toward a balance market. Compliance reached a record level of 129 percent in December, for a monthly average of 107 percent last year, and preliminary estimates show that compliance in January will surpass December’s level, he said.

Oil prices are currently at less than half their 2014 peak, with benchmark Brent crude futures up 1.2 percent at \$63.53 a barrel in London at 4:06 p.m. local time. Brent tumbled 8.4 percent last week, in the second consecutive weekly loss.

“It’s a correction only. It will come back,” Kuwaiti Oil Minister Bakheet Al-Rashidi told reporters in Kuwait City. Kuwait expects cooperation on oil policy to continue beyond 2018, he said. “We will look for criteria to make sure the market is stable at all times.”

(Source: Bloomberg)

China’s new loans in Jan surge to record 2.9 trillion yuan

China’s banks extended a record 2.9 trillion yuan (\$458.3 billion) in new yuan loans in January, blowing past expectations and nearly five times the previous month as policymakers aim to sustain solid economic growth while reining in debt risks.

While Chinese banks tend to front-load loans early in the year to get higher-quality customers and win market share, the lofty figure was even higher than the most bullish forecast by economists in a Reuters poll.

Net new loans surpassed the previous record of 2.51 trillion yuan in January 2016, which is likely to support growth not only in China but may underpin liquidity globally as major Western central banks begin to withdraw stimulus.

Analysts polled by Reuters had predicted new yuan loans of 2 trillion yuan, up sharply from December’s 584.4 billion yuan.

A more detailed breakdown of the loan data on Monday showed sharp pick-ups in demand for credit from both households and companies, auguring well for consumption and investment.

“Banks hope to lend early to get early returns... private investment and manufacturing investment are picking up due

to firmer global demand (and) household loans could be boosted by property demand,” said Nie Wen, an economist at Hwabao Trust in Shanghai.

“This indicates the economy may slow in the first half but any slowdown won’t be sharp...”

Corporate loans surged to 1.78 trillion yuan from 243.2 billion yuan in December, while household loans rose to 901.6 billion yuan in January from 329.4 billion yuan in December, according to Reuters calculations based on central bank data.

Beijing is in the second year of a regulatory push to clamp down on riskier financial activity that has been fueled by a rapid build-up in debt.

But authorities are proceeding cautiously and keeping liquidity broadly supportive to avoid any sharp drag on the world’s second-largest economy or excessive financial market volatility.

Reflecting that tricky balancing act, authorities are already warning China’s banks to rein in new lending growth after the strong start to the year, financial magazine Caixin reported late on Monday, citing banking sources.

(Source: CNBC)

(Source: Sputnik)

HUBLOT



**BIG BANG FERRARI
KING GOLD CARBON**



TEHRAN WATCH

SINCE 1901

WWW.TEHRANWATCH.COM



OFFICIAL WATCH
SCUDERIA FERRARI

Kenya is on a slippery slope to lawlessness

President Kenyatta has taken a wrecking ball to hard-won freedoms.

Miguna Miguna fled from Kenya to Toronto in 1988 after being persecuted as a student leader by former president Daniel arap Moi's iron-fisted regime. 30 years later, the government of President Uhuru Kenyatta has used the Canadian citizenship, granted to Miguna as a refugee, as a pretext to deport the prominent opposition lawyer to Canada. It would be hard to conjure up a more fitting sign of the democratic reversals under way. In an effort to crush dissent in the wake of last year's deeply polarizing elections, Kenyatta's government is reverting to methods of repression rarely seen since the dark days of Moi's regime. Civil rights embedded in a 2010 constitution approved by referendum are eroding by the hour. Since opposition leader



Raila Odinga was sworn in as the "people's president" at a mock inauguration two weeks ago, the government has charged two opposition members with treason and switched off three TV stations. It repeatedly defied court orders to restore transmission and to release Miguna on bail, and has stripped numerous other opposition politicians of their passports. Before that, it introduced legislation to curtail the powers of the judiciary and has harassed civil society groups and the press.

Far from helping to consolidate authority, these actions belie the vulnerability of a government with a legitimacy deficit. Odinga is a veteran opposition leader, whose fiery persona was forged at the helm of the pro-democracy movement during Moi's authoritarian reign. He claims, with some justification, to have been cheated at the ballot box several times since 2007, including in last year's vote. The results were annulled by the Supreme Court, due to irregularities. But the opposition boycotted a rerun, clearing the way for Kenyatta's second term as president. The mock swearing-in ceremony on January 29 in central Nairobi drew thousands of Odinga's supporters. It was an irresponsible and deliberately provocative gesture. But in all likelihood it would have passed without much consequence were it not for the government's ham-fisted response. Rather than dispelling questions about its legitimacy, the ongoing crackdown is fuelling them and exacerbating the ethnic divisions that are threatening again to tear Kenya apart. Western governments have been insouciant in the face of this crisis — a reflection of a wider trend that has seen the U.S. retreat from taking an active role in protecting democracy from creeping authoritarianism around the world. They were near silent last year on the electoral reforms, which might have prevented today's impasse had they been enacted, and a genuinely fair vote taken place. But if they thought Odinga would tire of calling for yet more elections, and that protests would fizzle in the face of a fait accompli, they were wrong. At the weekend, 11 ambassadors including those from the UK and U.S. called on Kenyatta's government to respect the law, and on Odinga to compromise his rival's presidency, as a prelude to talks. They were right, if late, in raising the alarm. Both sides in this dispute have been hardening their positions. Both need to compromise if Kenya is to escape escalating turmoil, and if its economy — the largest in east Africa — is to recover. Kenyatta inherited one of the continent's most progressive constitutions as well as a powerfully vibrant media. Foreign governments may have less leverage over Kenya than in the past. But they should stand on the side of the many Kenyans bravely resisting efforts to rob them of hard-won freedoms and the rule of law.

(Source: FT)

Trouble in Maldives paradise could become a global threat

The Maldives is a curious half-paradise, half-hell: The allure of its romantic island resorts often seems to be in inverse proportion to the sordidness of its politics. These could reach a dangerous new level if the political crisis that erupted last week is allowed to embroil India and China.

The current mess started as February began when the country's Supreme Court unexpectedly decided to nullify sentences against nine of the many opposition figures thrown into prison or forced into exile by President Abdulla Yameen. Among those cleared was Mohamed Nasheed, a former president who won the only fair election the country has had, but was replaced by the corrupt and authoritarian Yameen.

President Yameen refused the court's ruling, declared a state of emergency and ordered the arrest of two of the court's five judges, several opposition members and his 80-year-old half-brother, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who had earlier ruled the Maldives for 30 years. The remaining judges then nullified the court's ruling.

In a nation of about 430,000 people dispersed over an archipelago in the Indian Ocean — which could well vanish as climate change raises sea levels — that might not seem to pose a clear and present danger for the world. Years ago a coup attempt was snuffed when India, then the country with the greatest influence there, sent in paratroopers.

But in recent years, Yameen has cozied up to China and Saudi Arabia, raising concerns in India that its influence in the Indian Ocean is being challenged.

As the crisis ramped up, Nasheed asked India to intervene, while Yameen sent envoys to China, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The United Nations and the United States assailed the state of emergency, effectively taking sides against Yameen.

There is no easy way out. Gayoom still commands loyalty in the security forces; Nasheed has his following, and having imprisoned his foes, Yameen knows where he'd end up were he to fall. But turning the islands' turmoil into a proxy struggle would only make matters far more dangerous.

Elections scheduled for later this year offer the best way to restore legitimacy to the government. Yameen has little incentive in a fair election, but that is where international pressure must be focused.

(Source: The NYT)

The boomerang effect: How Netanyahu made Israel an American issue, and lost

By Ramzy Baroud

Despite massive sums of money spent to channel public opinion in the United States in favor of Israel, unmistakable trends in opinion polls are attesting to the changing dynamics of Israel's support among ordinary Americans.

Not only is Israel losing its support and overall appeal among large sections of American society, but among young American Jews, as well — a particularity worrying phenomena for the Israeli government.

The trend promises to be a lasting one, since it has been in the making for years, starting sometime after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

It was on that date that the affinity between Israel and the U.S. purportedly grew to unprecedented levels, since both countries claimed to be fighting "Islamic terror." In reality, the attacks, the ensuing media discourse and subsequent wars have all coagulated the support of Christian Evangelists behind Israel, as they saw the widening conflict in the Middle East as part of a long-awaited prophecy.

It was precisely then that the support of Israel by American Liberals, especially those identifying with the Democratic Party, began to weaken.

With time, supporting or not supporting Israel became a partisan issue, which is, itself, unprecedented.

While the Israeli government under Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, exploited every opportunity to maximize support for Israel in order to achieve objectives deemed important by the Israeli rightwing, ultra-right and religious parties, Netanyahu's conceited and confrontational style has alienated many Americans, especially Democrats.

Worse, Netanyahu's policies of entrenching the Occupation, blocking any peace efforts and expanding illegal Jewish settlements, also began to shift the kind of support that Israel has historically taken for granted, that of American Jews.

A comprehensive Pew poll published in October 2013 indicated that a growing number of U.S. Jews question the sincerity of the Israeli government in its alleged efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Palestine. Only 38% thought Tel Aviv was sincere, and only 17% agreed that the illegal Jewish settlements are conducive to Israel's security. 44% thought otherwise.

The Israeli government, aware of the generational gap within the U.S. Jewish communities, seemed more fixated on maximizing the unprecedented trend of support it was receiving from U.S. Republicans and religious conservatives, especially Christian Evangelists.

Fast forward to January 2018 and Israel's ratings among American Jews has plummeted even further.

According to a recent Brand Israel Group study, "support for Israel among



A comprehensive Pew poll published in October 2013 indicated that a growing number of U.S. Jews question the sincerity of the Israeli government in its alleged efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Palestine.

Jewish college students in the United States has dropped 32% between 2010 and 2016," reported the Israeli newspaper 'Haaretz'.

The report was accompanied by stern warnings from the CEO and director-general of the influential Jewish Agency, Alan Hoffman, who described the findings as "extremely worrisome."

However, no contingency plan is likely to reverse these numbers any time soon, since they are consistent with the overall perception of Israel among the U.S. population.

The assumption that the U.S. Jews is an insulated group which lends support to Israel, irrespective of political trends in the country as a whole, no longer suffices.

U.S. Jewish communities are changing, and so is the entire country:

The number of those identifying as 'liberal' in the U.S. has leaped from 27% to 41% between 2000 and 2015, respectively.

This change was accompanied by rising sympathy towards Palestinians by that same group as indicated by a May 2016 Pew poll. More liberal Democrats said they sympathized with Palestinians than with Israel, in a ratio of 40% vs. 33%, respectively.

At the time, it was prematurely concluded by various media analyst that the growing disenchantment with Israel had much to do with the feud between Net-

anyahu and then U.S. President Barack Obama. Netanyahu had repeatedly challenged — and often humiliated — popular Democratic President, Obama, on various issues, notable amongst them is the expansion of the illegal settlements and the Iran nuclear deal.

The trend, however, continued, simply because once an issue falls in the realm of Washington's partisan politics, it immediately becomes a polarizing one.

For decades, Israel was considered the only issue that united all Americans regardless of their political and ideological affiliations. That is no longer valid, and Netanyahu has played a major role in this.

The trend among Liberal Democrats was countered with another trend among Republicans, who have adopted the cause of Israel as their own. According to Pew, 79% of conservative Republicans support Israel, while 65% among liberal Republicans share their views.

While Christian Evangelists succeeded in making the unconditional support for Israel the litmus test for any candidate who seeks their vote, the Israeli cause is no longer a rally cry for Democrats.

Pew concluded that "the share of liberal Democrats who side more with the Palestinians than with Israel has nearly doubled since 2014 (from 21% to 40%) and is higher than at any point dating back to 2001."

More studies by Pew were conducted in January 2017 and January 2018, all confirming that the trend is a lasting one.

Of all Democrats, only 33% sympathized with Israel according to Pew's January 2017 poll. It was the "first time ever" that the Democratic Party "was split in nearly half between the support for Israel and the support for Palestinians."

And as support for Palestinians grew among Democrats, so did the margin between the two major parties as the most recent January 2018 Pew research indicates.

While support for Israel among Republicans has remained high, a whopping 79%, support for Israel among Democrats has sunk even further, to 27%.

True, Netanyahu's strategy in courting U.S. conservatives has proved a success. However, the price of that success is that the relationship between Israel and the American public has fundamentally changed.

Netanyahu has shoved Israel into the heart of polarizing American politics, and although he has achieved his short-term goals (for example, obtaining U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel) he has irrevocably damaged the decades-long consensus on Israel among Americans, and in that there is a great source of hope.

(Source: The Middle East Monitor)

U.S., Turkey could be on collision course in Syria

By Metin Gurcan

As the situation in Syria heats up among all players — including Israel — Turkey and the United States so far have limited their exchanges to a war of words. However, signs aren't encouraging that it will end there.

Decision-makers in Ankara have toughened their rhetoric against the United States, and many senior figures in the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) are hinting at the possibility of armed confrontation between Turkish and U.S. soldiers.

"If U.S. soldiers wear the garb of terrorists and hang around with them, and if they attack Turkish soldiers, no doubt we will not have a chance to distinguish between them," Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdag said last week.

In a Feb. 6 speech before AKP parliamentarians, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, speaking to the United States, "Get out of Manbij. We will come there to deliver the land to its true owners."

Turkey started its assault on Afrin in January to drive out the Kurds, specifically the People's Protection Units (YPG). Ankara appears insistent on expanding the Afrin offensive to Manbij, about 60 miles east, after gaining full control of the area west of the Euphrates River.

The United States, for its part, sounds determined not to abandon Manbij, even though it has no permanent military outposts there. As Ankara hardened its stance, a coalition team including Lt. Gen. Paul Funk and Maj. Gen. James Jarrard visited Manbij on Feb. 7 and had plenty to say.

"We're very proud of our positions here, and we want to make sure everybody knows it," said Jarrard, the special operations commander for the U.S.-led coalition against the Islamic State (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria.

"You hit us, we will respond aggressively. We will defend ourselves," Funk added, raising the stakes.

An armed confrontation Feb. 7 between U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces and President Bashar al-Assad's forces — backed by Russia — escalated to a major battle in Deir ez-Zor, an oil-rich town in eastern Syria. War planes were involved — yet another sign the United States intends to hold on to the territory it has brought under its control in the post-ISIS setting.

Is an armed confrontation in Manbij between Turkish and U.S. soldiers really a possibility? The key consideration here is whether Turkey is genuinely willing to challenge the United States militarily in Syria. Or is Ankara's



The key consideration here is whether Turkey is genuinely willing to challenge the United States militarily in Syria.

increasingly aggressive rhetoric just part of its effort to deter the U.S. military from working more closely with the YPG in Manbij?

The situation on the ground now seems very similar to the one that led to the notorious "hood incident" in July 2003, which ended with U.S. forces based in Kirkuk, Iraq, capturing Turkish special forces personnel operating in Sulaimaniyah in Iraq's Kurdish region.

The 2003 incident began when an unmarked building in Sulaimaniyah used by Turkish Special Forces operating secretly in Iraqi Kurdistan was raided by American soldiers on the pretext of stopping an alleged assassination plot against the Kurdish governor of Kirkuk. Turkish Special Forces were detained with hoods over their heads and were questioned for days at a Kirkuk air base. During the interrogation, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan militants misled the American soldiers and provided false translations, thus stalling the Turkish soldiers' release for days. The resulting crisis of confidence became a major trauma that still has a place in Turkey's strategic culture.

As a former Special Forces officer, I was assigned as a liaison team commander of Turkish Special Forces with the U.S. 173rd Airborne between November 2003 and May 2004. Today I shudder, sensing the same operational environment at Manbij.

Exactly as in the April-July 2003 period, Turkish and American soldiers are moving all over Manbij in the same operational environment without coordination, practically as hostile forces on the ground, again guided by local forces and translators. In a Jan. 25 Al-Monitor article, I had described Turkey's Afrin offensive as an "effect-based operation" that targets U.S. cooperation with the YPG forces east and west of the Euphrates River.

This is why Ankara will keep pressure on the United States as much as it can over Manbij. How long will U.S. decision-makers resist this pressure? I think we will get some indicators of the U.S. response with the visits to Ankara of U.S. national security adviser H.R. McMaster last week and by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson this week. From developments, I sense the United States is trying to stall a showdown by using a good cop/bad cop tactic. But it's also obvious that strategy doesn't work with Ankara.

At the end of the day, Special Forces that serve in chaotic areas like Manbij have to rely on the guidance of local forces and translators. As happened during the hood incident, if the local guides and translators want to ignite a conflict, they can easily do it — which is the dynamic that frightens me now. The blood feud between the Free Syrian Army (FSA) elements that provide guidance to Turkish troops and the Kurdish YPG elements that do the same for the Americans are well-known. Because of that all-consuming feud, even if Turkish and American soldiers try to avoid direct contact, they can be manipulated well by a process of which they are not even conscious.

The harassment-fire exchanges between the FSA and YPG at Manbij could get out of control and escalate to a major clash that will reduce the distance between Turkish and American soldiers and put them in range of direct fire from tanks and anti-aircraft guns, and indirect fire of artillery, mortar and rockets. The best method to minimize these hot contacts would be to deploy U.S. liaison teams with Turkish troops and to set up a joint operations center to coordinate their moves. Such a mechanism doesn't exist today, but I hope one would be set up before we experience another traumatic event like the 2003 hood incident. We all hope a decision is made soon to set up this mechanism. If that can't be done, I would suggest getting ready for another hood incident.

But this time, those captured and hooded may not be Turkish.

(Source: Al Monitor)

Iran-Qatar strong ties ‘a threat to U.S.’: al-Dajani

By Fatemeh Salehi

TEHRAN — A professor of political science at al-Ummah University in Gaza believes that Washington, whose strategic interest is at stake in the broken ties between Qatar and three members of the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, is making every effort to mend the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC)’s diplomatic spat.

In early June 2017, three of the Persian Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt alleged that Qatar is supporting terrorism and destabilizing the region, and thus they cut diplomatic ties with Qatar.

To that end, U.S. President Donald Trump has offered to bring Qatar and three members of the Persian Gulf Arab states to a meeting at Camp David, late in spring, to end the blockade in Qatar. In the upcoming U.S.-Persian Gulf Arab state summit, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the emir of Qatar, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammad bin Salman, and the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Mohammad bin Zayed will meet with President Trump.

Professor Hesam al-Dajani, who is also a political analyst of the Middle East, believes in the settlement of the Qatar-Persian Gulf crisis in Maryland, if that goes through, the U.S. the other parties of the Persian Gulf region and will have the winning hand.

He says Washington treats the Qatar crisis as a “national security issue”, because the blockade can lead Doha to seek alternative channels out of the geo-political crisis, and consequently, the U.S. will lose control over the region. Therefore the White House will spare no effort to bring an end to the Persian Gulf crisis or at least reduce its aftermath.

Earlier, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had warned that the Qatar-Persian Gulf crisis will have global implications and said that it will have a negative military and economic impact on the U.S.

Professor al-Dajani says in the U.S.- PGCC Summit “respect” for each other’s sovereignty and interest should be the main focus of the PGCC states in the meeting, as the U.S. will perhaps highlight that too.

Two weeks after the imposed sanctions on Doha, Saudi



Arabia and the other three Arab countries issued a list of 13 demands for Qatar that in case of compliance they would lift the trade and diplomatic embargo of Doha.

Doha’s foreign minister has already reassured his country’s readiness to engage in dialogue over the Qatar-Persian Gulf Arab state crisis, but on the principle of “equal footing” between the participating states.

Professor al-Dajani believes that during the summit, the White House, seriously seeking to resolve the Persian Gulf crisis, will push for results, as it will be to the best interest of Qatar and other four countries involved in isolating Qatar.

The professor opined that Qatar has paid high prices for its economic and diplomatic boycott, and the Saudi-led coalition, too, has not got the anticipated result. Therefore, perhaps Qatar will walk out of the meeting taking a softer

stance on its policy on the Muslim Brotherhood movement and will reconcile with the Arab regional states.

■ interviewee note

Iran has been an important country for Qatar to circumvent the imposed sanctions. Regional actors like Tehran and Ankara, which stood by Doha in the Saudi-led confrontation with Qatar, and formed a new axis of Turkey-Iran-Qatar.

As the ties between these three regional countries continue to grow, the Saudi-led coalition against Yemen faces a devastating failure in the war in Yemen. The dispute between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over Yemen has got more heated and armed clashes between forces loyal to the Saudis and Yemen-backed southern separatists has deepened. These conflicts have seriously threatened Washington’s interest in the region.

Trump victory in 2020 looks very uncertain

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — The U.S. president, Donald Trump, is extremely worried about his country’s presidential election in 2020. Surveys in the United States show that his popularity has fallen dramatically even though it was never high in polls. The introduction of a credible Democrat nominee (whose popularity exceeds that of Hillary Clinton) will lead to the victory of Democratic Party in the upcoming presidential election in 2020.

As Time magazine reported recently, just 36 percent of registered voters would support Trump in the 2020, a new poll finds. This marks a precipitous drop from the 46 percent of votes he received in 2016.

According to the NBC/Wall Street Journal poll released Wednesday, just 18 percent of registered voters would definitely vote for the President in 2020, and another 18 percent would “probably” vote for him. Thirty-eight percent of those surveyed said they would vote for the Democratic candidate, and 14 percent said they would probably vote for the Dem-



ocratic candidate. The poll, which surveyed 736 registered voters, was conducted in mid December. The margin of error is 3.61 percent-

age points. In 2016, Trump received slightly over 46% of the vote, while his Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton received slightly over 48 percent of the popular vote, but Clinton lost the electoral tally.

The poll included a comparison with Bill Clinton’s reelection prospects in the 1990’s. At that point in Clinton’s presidency, 18 percent said they would definitely vote for Clinton, and 24 percent said they would probably vote for him — 42 percent total. Meanwhile, 19 percent said they would probably vote for the Republican candidate, and 14 percent said they definitely would.

The 2020 election is a little under three years away. No Democrat has launched a campaign, and a lot can happen between now and then. But the results do indicate a level of dissatisfaction with the President that was also expressed through his approval ratings. Just 24 percent of Americans strongly approve of the job he is doing, while 48 percent strongly disapprove. Overall, 41 percent approve of Trump’s tenure so far, while 56 percent disapprove. While Trump’s approval ratings are a slight improvement from the NBC/WSJ poll conducted in October, he is still on pace towards average historically low approval ratings for a first-term President.

The poll also found that just 21 percent of Americans have a very positive view of Trump, while 45 percent have a very negative view. The margin of error for these portions of the poll, which surveyed 900 adults, is 3.27 percent.

Trump is the only US President since Harry Truman to have a negative net approval rating after a year in the White House and he finds himself an unbelievable 24 points below where Barack Obama was at the same time in his presidency.

Trump’s honeymoon period did not last long, as eight days after his inauguration he had managed to achieve a majority disapproval rating. The Republican real estate mogul managed to win the presidency despite being extremely unpopular in many parts of America and was only the fifth US President in history to win despite losing the popular vote, the previous one being George W. Bush in 2000. Trump secured 279 electoral votes to Hilary Clinton’s 228, a figure the future

democrat candidate will have to overturn.

Also Washington Post reported that Donald Trump may have proven himself a bumbling idiot on matters of policy, but when it comes to launching counterattacks, the president tends to find mantras that stick. He successfully won the presidency by turning the country against 16 better qualified GOP candidates and “Crooked” Hillary Clinton, and has continually labeled Robert Mueller’s investigation a “witch hunt”—a cry his supporters have taken up with glee. Though his outbursts may alienate some Americans, they regularly invigorate Trump’s “base,” which could be why, faced with an uncertain agenda and pathetic approval ratings, the president has returned to what he knows best: obsessing over his hypothetical opponents.

Those close to the president tell Politico that his new favorite pastime is sizing up his potential 2020 Democratic rival. “He’s always asking people, ‘Who do you think is going to run against me?’” said one Republican familiar with the president’s venting sessions. Trump’s hit list includes most of the plausible Democratic candidates so far, including progressive standard-bearer Bernie Sanders. Though the Vermont senator recently beat Trump in a head-to-head poll by nine points, Trump reportedly argued that the 76-year-old “wouldn’t have the energy” to run another national campaign. (Trump will turn 74 during the 2020 race.)

Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, the woman he has nicknamed “Pocahontas,” would be “easy to beat,” he said. New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker probably will not end up running, Trump mused. When someone in the room brought up California Senator Kamala Harris, the president seemed not to have her on his radar yet.

He reportedly skipped over would-be candidates such as Joe Biden and Kirsten Gillibrand. (A former White House official called the latter “easy to destroy” and added that “if you’re the president, or the RNC, you’re more worried about someone who looks like Biden.”) And while it’s true that the Democratic pool is noticeably thin on high-profile talent to the point that Oprah Winfrey’s viral Golden Globes speech caused many to consider her a viable candidate, handicapping the race two years early is hardly a worthwhile endeavor for the incumbent president.

Trump’s newfound focus on 2020 comes as he faces widespread disapproval: a recent Morning Consult poll found that 35 percent of voters gave his performance an “F,” while only 34 percent gave him either an “A” or a “B” grade. The White House, too, faces an uncertain path forward, with aides and advisers still struggling to hammer out a feasible legislative agenda. Amid the vacuum, Axios reports that Trump seems to be “backsliding” into his old, self-destructive habits, nursing petty grudges rather than turning his attention to DACA and the increasing possibility of a government shutdown. “What is the White House about right now?” asked a source close to Trump. “I don’t know.”

The total of these reports shows that the Trump is not in a good position. This could make it quite difficult for him going forward.

Merkel’s mojo waning in Germany



By Ali Alemi

TEHRAN — The German Chancellor has conceded much to its rival party in the formation of a coalition government with the Social Democratic Party. Undoubtedly, few will remember Merkel as a powerful politician in Germany and Europe she once was, and there have been many reports on this issue. The Guardian’s report on Merkel is one of them:

Angela Merkel has taken a crucial step towards ending a four-month period of political uncertainty by reaching a coalition agreement with the center-left Social Democrats – but at the cost of giving the party a greater role in government. Following a marathon of all-night deal making sessions and several missed deadlines, Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union on Wednesday agreed on the terms of a fresh deal with the SPD, whose supporters will now get a final say on the agreement through a membership vote.

But the prize of a renewed “grand coalition” is likely to come at the cost of ceding key ministries to her junior coalition partner, exposing the German chancellor to criticism from her own party. The SPD leader, Martin Schulz, can be optimistic about rallying support for a new term in government after securing three influential trophy ministries. The draft coalition deal foresees the center-left party filling the finance, foreign and labour ministries, as well as the roles for family, justice and the environment.

Schulz, who had ruled out playing a role in a Merkel government in the immediate aftermath of last year’s elections, is reportedly planning to hand his party leadership to the former labour minister Andrea Nahles and to take charge of the foreign ministry himself. The SPD mayor of Hamburg, Olaf Scholz, seen as a pragmatic centrist from the party’s liberal wing, is set to succeed the powerful Wolfgang Schäuble in the finance ministry, a key role for the future direction of the eurozone.

The draft coalition agreement hints at a departure from Schäuble’s hawkish focus on balanced budgets, promising a “solidaristic sharing of responsibilities” and a preparedness to increase German contributions to the EU budget. At a press conference on Wednesday afternoon, Merkel said that divvying up ministries had “not been easy” and acknowledged her party’s disgruntlement at the loss of the finance ministry.

“I’d wager that the SPD didn’t even believe it could get the finance ministry when the negotiations started,” the veteran CDU politician Wolfgang Bosbach told German media on Wednesday. “The CDU should have insisted on keeping the positions it already had.”

A boosted interior ministry with an additional focus on housing construction and life in regional areas has meanwhile reportedly been handed to Horst Seehofer of the Bavaria-based CSU, the Christian Democrats’ sister party – a consistent critic of Merkel’s policy course during the refugee crisis. Such a constellation would leave Merkel’s own party with only the roles for the economy, defence, health, education and agriculture, and no truly high-profile ministries apart from her own chancellery.

The coalition deal also complicates the question over who could eventually replace Merkel once she decides to step down. Two politicians recently mooted as potential successors, the young rightwinger Jens Spahn and the more liberal-leaning “mini-Merkel” Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, are not expected to play parts in the next government at all.

The CDU and the SPD have been in coalition talks since the first week of January after the collapse of Merkel’s attempt to form an unorthodox “Jamaica” coalition with the pro-business Free Democrats and the Green party.

Deadlocks over employment law and SPD-proposed reforms to the multi-payer health service resulted in the CDU and SPD missing several deadlines they had set themselves. As the talks ran into Wednesday morning, the chancellor cancelled an official lunchtime meeting with Italy’s Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni. Once the two parties have officially presented their coalition agreement, the SPD will allow their 460,000 members a vote on whether the party should formally enter a governing coalition with Merkel’s party.

Schulz, whose party has played junior partner to Merkel’s in the government for the past four years, initially ruled out the possibility of another grand coalition under his leadership. The SPD’s leadership faces opposition from a number of groups, including its own youth wing, the Young Socialists, who believe it should reinvent itself in opposition rather than seek another term in government.

Only SPD members who joined the party before late Tuesday will be able to vote. At a special party summit in January, only a narrow majority of SPD delegates voted in favour of continuing coalition talks. At the elections in September, the SPD plunged to its worst result since the Second World War, winning just over 20 percent. And despite emerging as the strongest party, with 33 percent, the performance of Merkel’s CDU also disappointed supporters.

The Alternative für Deutschland’s role as the largest opposition party is a non-official one, but it equips the party with a number of parliamentary privileges. Migration emerged as a contentious political issue in Germany after 1.2 million people entered the country during the refugee crisis in 2015-16. The backlash against Merkel’s decision to keep open Germany’s borders resulted in a far-right party entering parliament for the first time in more than 50 years.

Also, Reuters reported that Angela Merkel on Sunday defended “painful” concessions she has made to the Social Democrats (SPD) to win a fourth term as German chancellor and said criticism among her conservatives was not a sign her authority was waning.


Asked whether she was planning to groom a successor to lead her conservatives in the next election, Merkel said she wanted a younger generation of her Christian Democrats (CDU) to fill ministerial posts in a renewed coalition with the SPD.

In an interview with the ZDF public broadcaster, she commented on the rising displeasure among conservatives over her decision to give the SPD the powerful finance ministry.

“I understand the disappointment,” said Merkel, who has led Germany for the last 12 years.

“And now we need to show that we can start with a new team,” she added. “We have six ministerial posts to fill and from my point of view, we need to ensure that not only the over-60s are considered but also younger people.”

First Announcement



شرکت آب و فاضلاب اهواز
Islamic Republic of Iran
Ministry of Energy
Ahwaz Water and Wastewater Company

Tender No .110/96/1637

Invitation of Prequalification of Applicants for International Bidding of Financing and Execution of Ahwaz Sewerage Pump Stations (PCF)

Ahwaz water and wastewater company in regard to article 12 of tender holding law approved by parliament of Islamic Republic of Iran and related executive regulations in 2003 has considered to choose eligible financier/contractor for financing, supplying of materials and construction of pump stations of Ahwaz sewerage project with PCF method.

1. Tender: Ahwaz Water and Wastewater Company
Address: 5th Street, On the Corner of Khordad Street, Kian pars Ave., Ahwaz , Iran.
Tel: +98 6133330975
Fax: +98 6133386687

2. Project Summary and specifications:
2.1. Financing, supplying of materials and construction of pump stations of Ahwaz sewerage project with PCF method.
2.2. In regard to approved permissions, equal to 85% of contract finance should be provided by foreign financier.

3. Location of execution: Ahwaz city and Karoun city
4. Duration of execution: 24 months
5. Requirements of applicants in prequalification: Foreign contractors in partnership with local contractors that meet sufficient experience in execution of sewerage wastewater pumping station in regard to I.R.I. regulations such as maximum use of national competency of production and service (approved in 2012), can attend in bidding considering following requirements:
Foreign applicants must have sufficient technical and financial capacity based on size and specification of the project in addition to requirements of central bank of I.R.I. Also foreign applicants have to present initial agreement of bank or foreign financier in order to approve financing 85% of the project credit along with prequalification documents and attend in prequalification as joint venture of local applicants holding qualification certificate grade 1 in water categories expertise in equipment of water & wastewater issued by Management and Planning Organization (MPO) meeting valid technical and executive experiences.

6. Interested eligible applicants could receive prequalification documents during working hours from 14 Feb 2018 to 21 Feb 2018 from Ray Ab Company located in No. 30, West Farzan Street, Africa Ave., Tehran. Receiving prequalification documents is possible only by holding recommendation letter as well as bill of deposit 1.000.000 IRR to account No. 0105155272002 (Melli Bank) belonging to Ray Ab Company.

7. Completed prequalification documents should be submitted in sealed envelopes, delivered to Ahwaz water and wastewater company located in No. 77, 17 West Street, Kian pars , Ahwaz (Tel: +98-613374823) by 07 March 2018.

8. For more information and questions applicants could call +98 21 8309 – 301 or refer to Ray Ab company head office in Tehran.

Ahwaz Water and Wastewater Company public relations

Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

Apartment

Apt in Mirdamad
1st floor, 65 sq.m, 1 Bdr.
furn, pkg, storage
Reasonable Price
Ms.Ava: 09128440156

Apt in Soheil
115 sq.m, 2 Bdrs., fully furn
parking, yard, back yard
\$2500
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Zafaranih
2nd floor, 120 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.
fully furn, diplomatic place park
ing, good access to Valiasr
near Palladium, **\$2000**
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Punak
2nd floor, 60 sq.m, 1 Bdr.
unfurn (furn upon request)
renovated, balcony, yard
pkg, storage, **\$1000**
Ms.Ava: 09128440156

Apt in Jordan
5th floor, 140 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
fully furn, parking, diplomatic,
\$2000
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Tower in Farmanieh
1st floor, 200 sq.m, 3 Bdrs. new
furn, parking, spj
3 balconies, **\$3600**
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Villa

Villa in Shariati-Elahieh
1000 sq.m built up, 5000 sq.m
land, 6 Bdrs., outdoor pool green
garden, parking renovated, **\$20000**
Suitable for Residency or Embassy
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Villa in Aqdasieh
duplex, 700 sq.m built u
5 Bdrs., nice garden, outdoor pool,
Parking, completely renovated,
servant quarter
\$13000
Suitable for Residency or Embassy
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Villa in Farmanieh
duplex villa, 650 sq.m built up
5 Bdrs., completely renovated
green garden, pool, pkg
semi furn, **\$7500**
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Palace in
Tajrish/ Elahieh
duplex, 7000 sq.m land, 2200 sq.m
built up, 8 Bdrs. renovated,
unbelievable garden
water fall, spj, parking completely
renovated big saloon, **\$30000**
Suitable for Residency & Embassy
Ms.Diba: 09128103206



Holder of

ISO 9001:2008

ISO 10004:2012

ISO 10002:2014

From Oxford Cert Universal

Best Consultation
Best Services, Best Result

Section Manager "Tina 09128103205"

Tel: 22662452-8, Fax: 22667173

Hot Line: 28141

info@parsdiplomatic.com

www.parsdiplomatic.com

Building & Office

New Whole Building in Elahieh
3 Apts, each floor is 130 sq.m with
2 Bdrs., one duplex apt with 3
Bdrs., parking, storage rooms near
to highway **Price reasonable**
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Office in Zafaranih
4th floor, 175 sq.m, almost new
full of foreign companies
lobby, parking
Price per each sq \$40
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Office in Jordan
1st floor, 130 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
remodel & renew, lobby,
high security, parking, guest
parking full of foreign companies,
good access, near to Mellat Park
Price per each sq \$36
Tax not included
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Commercial Building in Fereshteh
120 sq.m 250 sq.m, flat, modern
Reasonable price
Ms.Ava: 09128440156

Best Commercial Office
380 sq.m, open office, parking
good access to highway, lobby
full of foreigners
Reasonable price
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Ideal Offers

Apt in Jordan
5th floor, 120 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.
fully furn, lobby, pkg diplomatic,
\$1500
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Qeytarieh
4th floor 120 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.
fully furn, parking
near to Qeytarieh Park, **\$1500**
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Luxury Apt in Jordan
70 sq.m, 1 Bdr., good access
top floors, **\$1400**
Suitable for foreign Companies
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

فقط مالکین محترم

یک ساختمان مستقل با ۲۰۰ تا ۳۰۰
اتاق خواب جهت سکونت کارمندان
یک شرکت بین‌المللی در شمال و شمال

غرب تهران جهت اجاره نیازمندیم

خانم دبیا: ۰۹۱۲۸۱۰۳۲۰۶

دفتر: ۲۲۶۶۲۴۵۴ - ۲۸۱۴۱

حدود ۳۰۰۰ متر بنا سند اداری در
شمال شهر تهران جهت اجاره به یک
کمپانی اروپایی، فوری نیازمندیم.

خانم دبیا: ۰۹۱۲۸۱۰۳۲۰۶

دفتر: ۲۲۶۶۲۴۵۴ - ۲۸۱۴۱

مالکین محترم

ملک های فروش و اجاره ای خود را (آپارتمان،
ویلا، مستغلات، اداری و تجاری) به ما بسپارید.

بهترین مشاوره، برترین سروس، بالاترین رضایت

مالکین محترم املاک مبله و غیرمبله، مسکونی، اداری و تجاری، ویلا و مستغلات
شما را جهت اجاره به سفارتخانه ها و شرکت های خارجی نیازمندیم.

مالکین محترم

ویلاهای شما را جهت اجاره به منزل سفیر و مدیران
شرکت های بین المللی در مناطق شمالی تهران
نیازمندیم.



TEHRANTIMES
Iran's Leading International Daily

Advertising Dept: times1979@gmail.com

Advertising Dept:

times1979@gmail.com

430 51 450

430 51 405

PARSIAN realEstate

SHANON
Shanon_zt@yahoo.com
+989121907875
Tel : 88745542

Farmanieh (\$3000)
3bdrs, S/p, S, J
balcony, F.F

Nice, & Bright
Zafaranih
400sq.m
5bdrs
F.F

Dibaji (\$2200)
200sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, S, J, yard, F.F

Fereshteh Villa
1200sq.m, 5bdrs
yard (\$7000)

Arjantin bldg
(\$30000)
8storey
30bdrs
pkgs

Beheshti office
(\$35 per sq.m)
800sq.m, & 2storey

FIRST CHOICE REAL ESTATE

Mr. Ghanizadeh
Nobody does it better

آژانسی املاک انتخاب اول در خدمت شماست

TEL: 22041212 - 09121081212
APARTMENT - VILLA - OFFICE
PROPERTY@FIRSTCHOICECO.COM
WWW.FIRSTCHOICECO.COM

PORSALEH HOUSING

For rent in Elahieh
120 sqm,
2 bdrms, European
taste, Superb material,
pics available
09128357277
English spoken agent

Don't Waste Your Time

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www.DeltaHOME.ir
The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

HOME
Real Estate
Member of DELTA Real Estate Group
(021) 88888865

For rent
Two bedrooms
furnished
apartment
0912 210 1160

ISF-EHSANI Real Estate
IRAN-SARAYE-FERESHTEH

Villa in Fereshteh
500 sq.m, duplex, 5 bedrooms,
fully renovated, fully furn.,
nice garden, servant quarter
(\$7,000)

Ehsan 0912 4388634
Tel: (021) 22022920

IraniaHOME
Real Estate

SH.LAVASANI
09123103526
Tel: 88888007
Fax: 88675936
www.iraniahome.com
Email: info@iraniahom.com

مالکین محترم: ویلا و آپارتمان مبله شما
را جهت اجاره به سفارتخانه ها نیازمندیم
AP: 1 to 4 rs, fom 1500\$
Villa : 3 to 7 rs, from 5500\$
Building and offices are available

maharaja
Indian Restaurant

FIRST INDIAN RESTAURANT IN IRAN

PRIVATE PARKING LOT

Jahan Hotel (Exelsior) - Rahimzade Alley - Taleqani
Crossroads - Valiasr St. Tel: 66476855

TEHRAN TIMES
Iran's Leading International Daily

Advertising Dept

Tel: **021-430 51 450**
times1979@gmail.com

REGISTRATION
of
Company, Branch,
Representative, Trademark
in shortest time & with free consultation
Applying for Tax File & Sealing of the Books
Applying for Commercial Card
Don't hesitate to call us : (+98) (21) 26 20 88 73

U.S., EU have slim chance of reaching an agreement on changes to JCPOA: Costello

1 → Iran is not going to accede to unilateral U.S. changes to a multilateral accord. So far, it also appears that Europe will remain unwilling to go along with any demands that would result in violations of the JCPOA. Tying the agreement's fate to Iran's missile activities or unilaterally extending sunsets would likely be non-starters.

However, Europe appears to be open to additional pressure outside of the accord and has hinted that they could go along with additional sanctions on Iran's missile program if the U.S. remains within the deal.

Over the past three months, member states of the European Union (EU) have made great efforts to convince the U.S. administration that a better agreement with Iran is not plausible, made on the ruins of the JCPOA. Will the EU and the US Congress be able to reach an agreement on the JCPOA that can meet Trump's demands? What does such an agreement look like?

A. Trump has left little wiggle room for Europe and Congress to reach an agreement that satisfies his demands while avoiding violations of the JCPOA, despite some of the vague language in his January 12 statement.

If Trump is willing to settle for actions that stop short of altering the JCPOA, it might be possible that he would be willing to declare victory and extend sanctions waivers again in mid-May. However, given Europe's commitment to the deal, the division of the U.S.



Trump has left little wiggle room for Europe and Congress to reach an agreement that satisfies his demands while avoiding violations of the JCPOA, despite some of the vague language in his January 12 statement.

Congress and Trump's seeming lack of interest in the details, the likelihood of such an agreement emerging appears low.

What can be the EU alternative if the U.S. withdraws from the JCPOA? And will the U.S. withdrawal worsen the foreign investment and working condition in Iran? In this case, what real guarantees can the EU offer Iran?

A. If the U.S. appears likely to follow through on its threat to terminate the agreement, the EU could put in place a strong blocking resolution that would bar European companies from complying with U.S. secondary (extraterritorial) sanctions waived under the JCPOA.

In accompaniment with additional measures, a blocking resolution could provide protection for European companies to continue to conduct business with Iran as permitted by the JCPOA, thus potentially sustaining relief needed to keep the deal alive.

While such a course would not be a silver bullet for preserving the JCPOA and would require substantial European resolve, there is a precedent.

Europe imposed a blocking resolution in 1996 in response to secondary sanctions targeting European energy companies, which resulted in the Clinton administration backing down from seeking to enforce them.

Today, with a nuclear accord to preserve, there is arguably greater justification for Europe to contemplate such a step.

Saudi rulers' fate to be similar to Pahlavi Regime's: UK author

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — A senior political analyst from Britain likened recent "cosmetic reforms" in Saudi Arabia to those introduced under the rule of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the last monarch of Iran, back in the 1960s and 1970s and said what happened to the Pahlavi regime awaits the Saudi rulers.

"Both Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's actions previously and Mohammed bin Salman's actions are in fact responses to the growing crisis of their respective regimes as they each sense that opposition to their regimes in their respective countries is growing and internationally is increasing," London-based Alexander Mercouris said in an interview with the Tasnim News Agency.

"Moreover, it is now generally acknowledged that Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's industrialization program in the 1960s and 1970s ultimately destabilized Iran's economy and weakened his regime, and I expect the same to happen in Saudi Arabia," he said.

Alexander Mercouris is a writer on international affairs with a special interest in Russia and law. He has written extensively on the legal aspects of NSA spying and events in Ukraine in terms of human rights, constitutionality and international law, being a frequent commentator on television and speaker at conferences. He worked for 12 years in the Royal Courts of Justice in London as a lawyer, specializing in human rights and constitutional law.

Following is the full text of the interview:

Recently, the Saudi regime led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has announced dramatic social reforms. The oil-rich kingdom, which has some of the world's tightest restrictions on women, has long barred women from sports arenas. The kingdom's General Sports Authority announced in October that stadiums in Jeddah, Dammam, and Riyadh will be set up to accommodate families from early 2018. The announcement is in line with bin Salman's ambitious reforms shaking up the kingdom, including the historic decision to allow women to drive from June. What is your assessment of the dramatic changes in the Saudi regime's domestic policy? What objectives is the kingdom pursuing by such social reforms? Do not you think that the increasing protests in the Arab country have led to them?

A. I should say first of all that I take issue with the claim in the question that these are 'dramatic social reforms'. On the contrary, they appear to me essential cosmetic reforms, which will leave the essential social and political structures of the Saudi Kingdom untouched. There has been some easing of social restrictions, but these do not change essential social conditions in Saudi Arabia in any significant way. Note that nothing Mohammed bin Salman is proposing in any way dilutes the power of the King or of the Saudi family or gives Saudi citizens outside the Royal Family and the elite any role in decision making or in the country's government.

The objectives behind Mohammed bin Salman's policies are in my opinion as follows: to increase radically the power of the Saudi regime by grafting on to Saudi Arabia an industrial base bought wholesale from abroad (principally the US) and a further upgrading of the Saudi military also based on wholesale imports of sophisticated weapons mainly from the US; and to increase Mohammed bin Salman's personal power within the regime, converting the regime from what it has been up to now - an oligarchy of the leading of Princes of the Royal Family - into a personal dictatorship centered on himself. This is being done - or at least attempted - by a process of eliminating Mohammed bin Salman's rivals amongst the Princes under cover of a



A major motivating factor for Mohammed bin Salman is to strengthen Saudi power so that it can reverse these defeats and intensify its campaign against Iran as well as against the Shiite people in general.

fundamentally bogus 'anti-corruption' drive.

The social easing which you refer to is intended to increase Mohammed bin Salman's personal popularity with younger middle-class Saudi citizens who have long chafed at the social restrictions that the Saudi regime imposes on them so that he can achieve his two main objectives with their support.

It is a very similar set of policies to those attempted in Iran by Mohammed Reza Pahlavi in the 1960s and 1970s: a rushed, unbalanced and in the end completely unsustainable industrialization program based not on an organic development of Iran's economy and society but on wholesale imports of factories and technology from the West, and reckless spending on the military, also based on massive imports of sophisticated weapons and military technology from the West.

Both Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's actions previously and Mohammed bin Salman's actions are in fact responses to the growing crisis of their respective regimes as they each sense that opposition to their regimes in their respective countries is growing.

In both cases, the intention is to buy off, intimidate and overawe growing opposition, by pretending that the regime is a force of 'modernization' rather than being what it really is, which is a repressive dictatorship which is holding the country back.

In reality, the steady pattern in Iran under Mohammed Reza Pahlavi was for the regime to become more brutal and more repressive towards its opponents over time, and I expect the same to happen in Saudi Arabia under Mohammed bin Salman.

Moreover, it is now generally acknowledged that Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's industrialization program in the 1960s and 1970s ultimately destabilized Iran's economy and weakened his regime, and I expect the same to happen in Saudi Arabia.

Do not you think that one of the objectives behind the reforms is to silence the voices of dissent and human rights defenders? In your opinion, are these reforms only a show by bin Salman to ingratiate himself with the US as his staunch ally?

A. As I said in my response to your first question, I expect the Saudi regime under

Mohammed bin Salman to become more repressive towards its domestic opponents over time, not less.

It is important to remember that his 'reforms' are themselves a response to the crisis of the Saudi regime. Since Mohammed bin Salman's 'reforms' are of a sort which are actually calculated to deepen and extend that crisis, more repression in the future is inevitable.

Already we see 'anti-corruption' being used to silence Mohammed bin Salman's critics within the regime itself. I expect that sort of repression to start to extend outward to include more and more of the population before long.

As to the second part of your question, the social easing that Mohammed bin Salman is engaging in is indeed to a certain extent intended to impress Saudi Arabia's friends in the West - especially of course in the US.

To a very great extent they are succeeding, just as Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's equally bogus 'reforms' were used by him to win support in the West in the 1970s.

That way Mohammed bin Salman now - like Mohammed Reza Pahlavi previously - can pretend to his friends in the West that he is leading his country forward along the path of 'Westernization'.

To a degree that is truly remarkable Western governments and Western commentators are remarkably easily swayed by rhetoric of this kind, especially when the dictator who is engaging in it is already one of their friends.

Doubtless in Mohammed bin Salman's case there is also a further factor, which is that by posing as the Saudi regime's great 'reformer', 'modernizer' and 'Westernizer', he is able to win Western and especially US support in any conflict in which he finds himself pitted against the other Saudi Princes. In that respect, he already appears successful as shown by how readily the West is taking the anti-corruption rhetoric he is using to eliminate his rivals amongst the Saudi Princes at face value.

Having said all this, there is also I think a genuine domestic populist aspect to Mohammed bin Salman's social easing, in that he does appear genuinely to believe that it

will win him popularity with Saudi Arabia's middle class younger population.

It might actually do so for a short time.

However in reality, as it becomes clear that the social easing does not point to any actual change in the essentials of the Saudi system, this social easing will in time lead to further discontent as it becomes clear how limited and cosmetic the changes Mohammed bin Salman envisages actually are. Before long he will find himself faced with an increasingly disaffected and disillusioned younger population whose hopes and expectations he has first increased and then dashed.

The reforms are in apparent contradiction with systematic genocide of Shiites and violations of human rights in the Shiite-populated city of Awamiyah. Saudi military bulldozers have recently almost razed the besieged town to the ground amid the deadly crackdown there, forcing hundreds of its residents to flee their homes. Do not you think that the Wahhabi ideology is behind this genocide?

A. It is essential to understand that this brutal treatment of the Shiite people of Saudi Arabia is all of a piece with Mohammed bin Salman's social 'reforms'.

Mohammed bin Salman's comments show that he is every bit as much of a Wahhabi sectarian as any other member of the Saudi Royal Family. In no sense is he any sort of 'moderate' and it is utterly wrong to think him so. His 'reforms' are intended to strengthen the Wahhabi based Saudi regime, not to change it, and that leads directly to the ever more brutal repression of the Shiite people within Saudi Arabia which we are now witnessing, who as a Wahhabi sectarian Mohammed bin Salman axiomatically opposes.

It is, in fact, consistent with Mohammed bin Salman's other policies that repression of the Shiite people of Saudi Arabia is intensifying at the same time that he is engaging in a certain social easing for the Saudi people as a whole. The two policies do not contradict each other; in his mind, they complement each other, with the second policy intended to win him support so that he can more actively pursue the first.

I said previously that the Saudi regime finds itself in a condition of crisis.

It is important to say that one of the principal factors behind this crisis is the succession of disasters Saudi Arabia has suffered in recent years in its - entirely self-chosen - duel with Iran.

Saudi Arabia has lost against Iran in Syria and Iraq, and it is now bogged down in a war in Yemen which it also (wrongly) blames on Iran.

A major motivating factor for Mohammed bin Salman is to strengthen Saudi power so that it can reverse these defeats and intensify its campaign against Iran as well as against the Shiite people in general.

The result is that we are going to see over the next few years as Mohammed bin Salman consolidates his power intensifying pressure from Saudi Arabia against Iran, intensifying repression against the Shiite people within Saudi Arabia and elsewhere, intensifying repression before long against the whole Saudi people, all of it carried out against the backdrop of heightened rhetoric about 'modernization', 'industrialization' and 'reform, until the whole system eventually unravels, as in the end it will.

The latter is bound to happen eventually, and Mohammed bin Salman's policies will probably make it happen more quickly than it otherwise would have done.

However, we must expect an atmosphere of intensifying repression and heightened aggressiveness coming from the Saudi regime until then.

Winter Olympics: The Korean Unity spectacle says no to America's war and destruction



TEHRAN (FNA) — In an extraordinary show of unexpected unity, North and South Korea sat side-by-side Friday night under exploding fireworks that represented peace, not destruction, as the 2018 Winter Olympics opened on the Korean Peninsula.

The genuine show of Korean unity rejected America's warmongering, hypocrisy, anger, suspicion, and bloodshed, and instead opted for regional peace and stability:

The sister of North Korea's leader, Kim Jong Un, shook hands with South Korean President Moon Jae-in - both appearing genuinely pleased - while they watched an elaborate show of light, sound

and human performance.

The only problem is that North Korea has a habit of not letting itself be ignored when it comes to its Southern neighbor. And so, with a little help from a liberal South Korean president eager to engage Pyongyang, it joined the 2018 Pyeongchang Games.

2007. International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach lauded the joint march of the two Koreas and said, "We thank you. We are all touched by this wonderful gesture. We all join and support you in your message of peace."

As is, the striking visual moments haven't gone so well in Washington, where 'I Have Bigger Button' President Donald Trump still insists South Korea and Japan should flirt with war to pay more for American protection against their neighbor. Begging for war, Trump even sent his Vice President Pence to the frenzied Winter Olympics to deliberately fire-hose spray the new political development and ensure the Korean unity spectacle and reconciliation won't go farther than Pyeongchang.

The only problem is that North Korea has a habit of not letting itself be ignored when it comes to its Southern neighbor. And so, with a little help from a liberal South Korean president eager to engage Pyongyang, it joined the 2018 Pyeongchang Games. And it did so with as much focus on further talks and political reconciliation with the South.

To that end, Pyeongchang is the initial pitch. It could and should certainly contribute to peace on the Korean Peninsula. The opening ceremonies offered at least some hints about that, and maybe more. What's certain is that these Games, more so than any in recent memory, are about far more than sports. They

are also about peace, as war is never something the Korean people and their neighbors want.

The people of two Koreas are all in the know that President Trump pursues stronger sanctions and has threatened to punish countries that trade with North Korea. In the absence of another 'fire and fury' tweet, he has ordered his administration to consider banning North Korean textile exports and its national airline, stop supplies of oil to the government and military, prevent North Koreans from working abroad, and add top officials to a blacklist to subject them to an asset freeze and travel ban.

President Trump has even asked to be briefed on all available military options as Washington is dedicated to no peaceful resolution to the Korean crisis. Far from it, the US wants war to oil the engine of its Military-Industrial Complex, create jobs for its weapons makers, expand its strategic influence in the Far East through reckless and dangerous nuclear intentions, and "make America great again". No wonder this outrageous misconduct is also vehemently opposed by neighboring China and Russia.

In this dangerous environment that could easily have catastrophic consequences for everyone on the planet, however, the dazzling display of Korean unity on Friday's opening ceremonies at the Winter Olympics was the wonderful gesture the international civil society would expect from the North and South Korean leaders. More pertinently, it was an excellent exercise in regional diplomacy as well. Much to the chagrin of war-party Washington, officials and athletes from the two Koreas are now working together as partners for victory, and that will resonate with and be remembered in the hearts of people around the world as the first step towards lasting peace and unity on the Korean Peninsula.

60 years! One of NASA’s longest-serving women marks milestone

This January, one of NASA’s longest-serving women celebrated a landmark anniversary with the space agency. Only two days before the United States launched its first satellite, Explorer 1, in 1958, Sue Finley started what would be a long career at Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Sixty years later, the 81-year-old still works at JPL.

“I’m happy here every day,” Finley told Space.com. Over six decades, she has worked on a vast array of missions, from the Mariner satellites that visited Mars in the 1970s to Juno, the mission currently orbiting Jupiter. She loves the work and the people, both of which contribute to an enjoyable work environment, she said

“I have been extremely lucky,” she said. “It has always been that way here.”

■ A lab in the mountains

Finley took an improbable path to working on spacecraft. She spent three years in college studying art with the goal of becoming an architect. After becoming frustrated when she found that her credits wouldn’t transfer to an architect school, she applied to work at an engineering company as a typist. That company was hiring computers — at that time, the term for a person (usually a woman) who calculated vast swaths of numbers for engineers.

“They asked me how I liked math,” Finley said. “I said I liked it much better than letters.”

She didn’t do all the calculations in her head. Using a large Friden calculating machine, she and another woman punched in the numbers for 40 engineers.

After only a few months, Finley married and moved, and the commute to the company became too much for her. Her new husband had graduated from the nearby California Institute of Technology (Caltech), a partner of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL).

“He knew that there was a lab up in the mountains I should go and apply to,” she said.

Located in an isolated area next to the San Gabriel Mountains, the lab was started by a group of Caltech students and amateur rocket enthusiasts. They needed somewhere to tinker with rockets without disturbing the local population. When Finley applied to the lab in 1958, it was sponsored by the U.S. Army; NASA wouldn’t form until that October.

Luck played a big role in getting her where she is today, she said. Referring to her lack of a college degree, she said, “I’d never get hired these days.”

JPL was making strides even without the help of NASA’s predecessor, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics. In January 1958, JPL launched the United States’ first satellite. Finley started only a few days before the launch, and never got to work on the history-making mission.

“I wouldn’t have known what to do after two days,” she laughed.

Finley worked at JPL for three years before she took off to help her husband obtain his master’s degree. During her hiatus, she took a free class in programming the Friden calculating machine. When she returned to JPL, her ability helped her make the jump from human computer to programmer. From there, she began using the programming language Fortran to work with a new computing machine, a predecessor to today’s digital computers.

“It was pretty much the same, just a different machine,” Finley said. “And we used punch cards instead of punching the numbers in ourselves.”

After another year and a half at JPL, she took off six years to “have two boys and get them on their way.” Both of her children have grown up and now work in computer-related fields.

“It’s in the genes,” she said.

■ A long career

Finley worked as a programmer making calculations for spacecraft navigation for several years, she said. In the 1980s, she moved over to work with the Deep Space Network (DSN). The DSN provides a constant link to missions in space with three stations around the world, each separated by roughly 120 degrees of longitude. NASA and other agencies use the network to send home the data collected by missions.

“If it weren’t for the DSN, there wouldn’t be any science done, because nobody could listen to [the spacecraft],” Finley said.

She also worked with several missions on their entry, descent and landing tones. As a spacecraft approaches its planet, its more-powerful antennas typically are not pointed back toward Earth. Instead, some craft carry a weaker antenna that broadcasts tones of varying frequency, with each tone signaling a different report back to Earth.

“If everything goes well, it sends the correct tones and everybody’s happy,” she said.

The first mission to broadcast these real-time tones was Mars Pathfinder, which carried Sojourner, the first Martian rover. Finley said that the tones worked so well that NASA decided to use them on all of the more-expensive spacecraft. She said that all of the Mars rovers broadcast these tones, as does Juno. The Mars 2020 mission and Europa Clipper satellite also plan to send back tones.

So far, Finley said, all of the missions carrying tones have been successful. It wasn’t until missions like the Mars Polar Lander (MPL) failed that mission designers recognized how useful the tones could be. When the lander, headed for Mars’ south pole, crashed into the planet’s surface, broadcast tones would have told engineers what had gone wrong in the mission’s final few minutes. Instead, it took much longer for NASA to determine that the most likely cause of the crash came from a software error mis-identifying vibrations during descent, then shutting down the engines 130 feet (40 meters) above the surface. The official report on the loss of the lander concluded that the omission of tones was “not justifiable in the context of MPL as one element of the ongoing Mars exploration program.”

Her favorite mission out of all the ones she has worked on, she said, was the Soviet-French Venera-Gallei (Vega) mission, which dropped survey balloons into the atmosphere of Venus. As part of an international tracking network organized by the French space agency, CNES, the DSN’s antennas communicated with the satellite as the spacecraft traveled through space. The antennas also received signals from the balloons on the Venusian surface over the objects’ two-day lifetime.

Finley said she enjoyed that the mission required only a small team at JPL.

“Everything I did was important. Nobody else could do it,” she said. “That’s a good situation to be in, although it’s high pressure.” [‘Women of NASA’ Lego Set: Q&A with Creator Maia Weinstock]

Over her 60 years of off-and-on work at JPL, Finley has seen many things change, she said.

“Of course, there’s infinitely more bureaucracy, infinitely more paperwork [now],” she said. Scientific and technological advances have added to that paperwork. “We can get much more done now, but we have much more to do.”

(Source: jackphan.com)

These self-destructing electronics can turn your data to dust on command

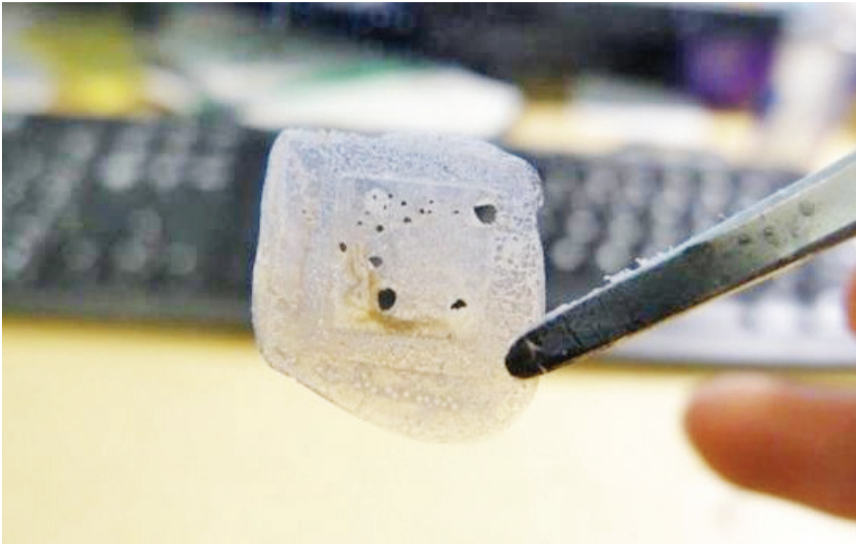
Engineers have come up with a trick to make electronics disintegrate from far away. The technology represents a new kind of transient electronics, which are designed to disappear when they’re no longer needed. In this case, chemicals that can destroy the circuit stay sealed away—until you unlock them with radio waves. This means that if a device containing these electronics were stolen, you could remotely order it to self-destruct, wiping its data.

“It literally goes into the air,” says Amit Lal, a professor of electrical engineering at Cornell University and one of the researchers behind the new design. “Very little remnants of it are left behind.”

Scientists are hoping to use transient electronics to build medical implants that vanish instead of requiring surgical removal. Or they might appear in sensors deposited in forests and oceans to measure things like pollution or carbon dioxide levels. That way people or robots wouldn’t have to go collect them later.

Other researchers are designing transient electronics that use water or heat to initiate self-destruction. But that approach has some drawbacks—you don’t necessarily want your gear to start dissolving as soon as it rains. So Lal and his team have created electronics that won’t disappear until commanded.

The design consists of a microchip embedded in a polycarbonate shell. Inside the shell are tiny cavities filled with metals such as rubidium and cesium. These metals react with oxygen, and are key to



A piece of polycarbonate. In a new kind of electronics, this material will vaporize when heated by a chemical reaction.

destroying the chip. “You can effectively think of it as a self-triggered fuel,” Lal says. “Unlike gasoline, where you need a match to light it up, here you just expose it to air and it will start reacting.”

Most of the time, the metals are barricaded behind membranes made from graphene and silicon nitride. To unleash them, the researchers send a radio signal to the chip. The chip then passes an electric current from its battery though the membrane. This

warms the graphene up, making it expand until it cracks the silicon nitride. Then air can rush in and begin reacting with the metals. Heat from this chemical reaction pours into the plastic shell, breaking and finally vaporizing it.

As the shell cracks, it can shatter the microchip as well. “Once you heat this stuff up, there’s enough stress in it to break up the chip into tiny, tiny pieces,” Lal says. He’s also experimenting with chemicals

that form hydrofluoric acid when heated to etch away at the chip.

A gadget with these electronics would be safe to handle most of the time. However, “I wouldn’t say you should hold this while it’s self-destructing,” Lal says. The device could theoretically come equipped with sensors to prevent it from vaporizing if a person was nearby, he says.

The team was issued a patent for the new technology in December. Once the electronics disintegrated, you’d be left with a fine powder made of cesium and rubidium oxides, sand from the silicon chip, tiny flakes of carbon from the graphene, and the battery. Lal’s colleagues at Honeywell Aerospace are working on a vaporizable battery as well.

All of this happens in a cube about 0.04 inches wide. “You can think of them as a LEGO block,” Lal says. A device built from these tiny pieces could be programmed to trigger all of them at once, or only destroy a select few.

Lal can envision the technology in environmental sensors that would vanish when they received a signal from a drone flying overhead. Another possibility would be using the energy released as the electronics break down to propel microrobots. Or the tech could make consumer gadgets more recyclable. After the circuit in your phone crumbled, precious metals like gold or platinum would be left behind for recycling. The casing and screws in your phone could potentially be made from vaporizable plastics as well, Lal says.

Trump’s NASA budget would cancel space telescope, 5 earth science missions

The Trump administration’s budget request for fiscal year 2019 calls for work on a major NASA space observatory and five Earth-science missions to be canceled. NASA’s Office of Education would also be terminated.

The Wide Field Infrared Survey Telescope (WFIRST), which would have used an existing spy satellite retired from the National Reconnaissance Office, would no longer receive funding. According to the White House’s 2019 budget request, released today (Feb. 12), WFIRST would have required a significant funding increase. Instead, the budget proposal requests that the funding go to smaller astrophysics missions.

The Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, ocean Ecosystem (PACE) satellite; the Orbiting Carbon Observatory 3 (OCO-3) experiment; the Climate Absolute Radiance and Refractivity Observatory (CLARREO) Pathfinder; the Radiation Budget Instrument (RBI), which was canceled in January; and the Earth-viewing instruments of the Deep Space Climate Observatory (DSCOVR) mission would also be canceled under the Trump administration’s budget proposal. The five climate missions were also nixed in the administration’s 2018 budget request.

WFIRST would have given scientists 100 times the field of view of the Hubble Space Telescope in infrared light,

letting scientists investigate dark energy, dark matter, the evolution of the universe and distant planets around other stars. NASA was in the middle of a review for WFIRST after an independent analysis found that the space telescope could cost at least \$3.6 billion; NASA was trying to reduce the cost to \$3.2 billion.

“The Budget redirects funding from [WFIRST] to complete research including smaller, principal-investigator-led astrophysics missions,” White House officials wrote in the budget document. “These missions have a history of providing high scientific impact while training the next generation of scientists and engineers.” The \$8.8 billion James Webb Space Telescope, which will also survey the universe’s infrared light but with a narrower field of view, still receives funding under the budget request, they added.

The total budget for Earth science would be \$1.78 billion, down from \$1.9 billion last year, according to NASA’s overview of the budget request. NASA’s overall science budget increased from \$5.76 billion to \$5.9 billion, with the gains going mostly to planetary science, according to NASA’s document.

SpaceNews reported last year that in 2018 NASA had planned to spend \$27.9 million for CLARREO Pathfinder,

\$9.5 million for OCO-3 and \$1.2 million for DSCOVR. No projected budget was given for PACE, as it was still in its early stages. The DSCOVR satellite is already in orbit; the satellite would continue to monitor space weather.

CLARREO Pathfinder was slated to launch to the International Space Station around 2020 to test technology for use on a future CLARREO mission to gather data to improve climate models. OCO-3 also would have been installed on the space station; the mission would measure carbon dioxide in Earth’s atmosphere and was slated to launch this year.

The PACE satellite would study clouds and aerosols in the atmosphere and monitor organic material in the oceans, and it was set to launch in late 2022. And the RBI, which would measure Earth’s reflected sunlight and thermal radiation, was intended to fly on the Earth-tracking Joint Polar Satellite System 2 (JPSS-2), planned for launch in 2021. JPSS-1 launched successfully in November.

NASA’s Education office, which received \$100 million in 2017, would be eliminated under the budget request, although NASA Acting Administrator Robert Lightfoot said last year that the agency would continue outreach efforts in a focused way after such a cut.

(Source: space.com)

Cyber security awareness top priority in financial sector



Finance sector chief information security officers (CISOs) worldwide have identified employee training and reporting to boards quarterly as essential to improving cyber security practices.

Infrastructure upgrades and network defense were also named as top priorities by 25% of respondents, followed by breach prevention (17%).

Infrastructure upgrades, network defense and breach prevention are prioritized mostly by CISOs reporting into a technical function like chief information officer (CIO), according to the first FS-ISAC CISO cyber security trends report.

Employee training is a priority mainly for CISOs reporting into a non-technical function like the chief operations officer (COO) or the General Counsel.

The report, which is aimed at helping leaders and businesses understand cyber security trends across the globe, said while cyber security used to be handled in the server room, it is now a board room topic.

The survey found that quarterly reports to the board of directors were most common (53%), with some CISOs (8%) reporting more than four times a year or even on a monthly basis.

In the era of increasing security threats and vulnerabilities, the report said CISOs know that keeping top leadership and boards updated regularly on these security risks and effective defenses are a priority.

As security has increasingly become a concern for financial institutions, the

role of the CISO has been thrust into the organizational spotlight, the report said.

However, the study found that that two-thirds of CISOs do not report to the CEO, and that the top cyber chain of command is more likely to be the CIO, followed by chief risk officer (CRO) and then COO. Only 8% said they report to the CEO.

FS-ISAC recommends training employees should be prioritized for all CISOs, regardless of reporting structure because employees serve as the first line of defense.

Employee training should include awareness about downloading and executing unknown applications on company assets, also in accordance with corporate policies and relevant regulations, and training employees on how to report suspicious emails and attachments, the report said.

FS-ISAC also encourages more frequent and timely reporting to the board of directors to ensure businesses maintain an “at the ready” risk posture and that cyber practices are clear to board members.

As the threat landscape shifts, FS-ISAC recommends that CISOs have expanded reporting responsibilities or dual-reporting responsibilities in the corporate structure to ensure critical information flows freely.

Free and direct flow of critical information to the CEO and to the board of directors will help increase transparency and facilitate faster decision making, the report said.

(Source: computerweekly.com)

Almost half of CIOs plan to deploy artificial intelligence enterprise solutions



Artificial intelligence (AI) is not a common component of the enterprise but almost half of Chief Information Officers (CIOs) plan to deploy AI solutions in the future.

On Tuesday, research agency Gartner revealed the results of a new survey which asked how many business executives are planning to adopt AI in the corporate realm.

According to the CIO agenda survey, four percent of CIOs have already implemented AI in some fashion, but a further 46 percent have plans to follow suit.

In addition, 20 percent of CIOs worldwide have pilot AI programs in the pipeline for implementation in the near future.

AI adoption is slow. It takes time for any enterprise to embrace new technologies, to understand the potential risk of replacing legacy systems and test the value of investment in next-generation services.

However, the technology has limitless possibilities, if implemented correctly. AI and cognitive computing can ramp up data analytics and process ambiguous sources such as from IoT devices and social media, identify patterns and improve industrial processes, and may also be able to enhance security and bolster marketing teams by providing personalized, actionable data on customers, and more.

Companies including SAP, MapR, Google, and Microsoft are all exploring the enterprise value of AI.

Despite vast levels of interest, actual deployment in the enterprise is low according to Whit Andrews, research vice president at Gartner.

Early adopters face a number of challenges, including the trap of expecting direct financial gain rather than indirect business value, and the wish to replace staff rather than augment them.

“Leave behind notions of vast teams of infinitely duplicable ‘smart agents’ able to execute tasks just like humans,” the analyst said. “It will be far more productive to engage with workers on the front line and get them excited and engaged with the idea that AI-powered decision support can enhance and elevate the work they do every day.”

However, there is a more tangible problem at the heart of low adoption rates. In total, 53 percent of respondents said their organization’s ability to mine and exploit data is “limited” -- the lowest level on offer -- and so implementing artificial intelligence solutions to take advantage of this information cannot be a priority.

The research agency estimates that by 2020, 20 percent of organizations will dedicate workers to monitoring and controlling neural networks, an important component of AI.

Neural networking, based on biological neural networks, is the key to giving AI the ability to define relationships and identify patterns based on ambiguous data gathered from a myriad of sources.

However, not every AI pilot will be a success. Gartner believes that up to 85 percent of projects will not deliver due to data bias, poor team management, or unsuitable algorithms.

(Source: zdnet.com)

Surprising bat genetic trait holds secrets of longevity, scientists find

Bats are the longest-lived mammals relative to body size, and a species called the greater mouse-eared bat lives especially long.

Researchers now have unlocked some of this bat's longevity secrets, with hints for fighting the effects of aging in people.

Scientists say that unlike in people and most other animals, in this bat species the structures called telomeres located at the end of chromosomes, thread-like strands inside a cell's nucleus that carry genes determining heredity, do not shorten with age.

■ Relative to body size

Only 19 mammal species are longer-lived than humans relative to body size. Eighteen of them are bats, some living more than four decades. The other is a weird African rodent called a naked mole rat.

The researchers identified two genes in the greater mouse-eared bat that may be responsible for its unique longevity adaptation.

These mechanisms could be the focus of future studies on aging, with an eye toward extending healthy lifespans in people, the researchers said.

Telomeres are protective caps at the ends of chromosomes that shorten each time a cell divides. This drives the natural aging process, leading to a breakdown of cells



that over time can drive tissue deterioration and eventually death.

“Studying exceptionally long-living mammals that have naturally evolved

“Bats are an exciting new model species that will enable us to identify new molecular mechanisms that drive healthy aging.”

mechanisms to fight aging is an alternative way to identify the molecular basis of extended ‘health spans,’” said biologist Emma Teeling of University College Dublin in Ireland, one of the study leaders.

“Bats are an exciting new model species that will enable us to identify new molecular mechanisms that drive healthy aging.”

■ Longest life span

The researchers studied 493 individual bats from four species: the greater mouse-eared bat and Bechstein's bat, both members of the bat genus called Myotis; the greater horseshoe bat; and the common bent-wing bat. Of these, the greater mouse-eared bat had the longest lifespan, about 37 years.

The greater mouse-eared bat and the closely related Bechstein's bat had telomeres that did not shorten with age, suggesting that Myotis bats share this characteristic. Another Myotis bat, Brandt's bat, holds the bat longevity record of 41 years.

Based on body size, the greater mouse-eared bat would be predicted to have a maximum lifespan of four years. Its range spans from Western Europe into the Middle East. It preys on large, ground-dwelling creatures like beetles, crickets and spiders.

(Source: Reuters)

Sea level rise has rapidly accelerated since 1993

Sea levels aren't just steadily rising — they're accelerating, according to a new assessment based on 25 years of satellite data. The findings, published Monday in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, confirm what climate projections have already told us. The results reveal that sea level rise has been accelerating for the past 25 years, rather than steadily rising the same amount each year.

Assuming the acceleration rate stays the same, which the lead author said is unlikely, sea levels will surge 26 inches by 2100 from climate change alone.

Scientists used satellite data to pinpoint acceleration of sea level rise over 25 years, beginning in 1993. A second part of the study used satellite data tracking tiny fluctuations in gravity due to ice mass loss to trace the acceleration back to melting ice in Greenland and Antarctica.

■ Without satellite measurements

“This study would not have been possible without satellite measurements,” Steve Nerem, lead author and fellow of the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences at University of Colorado Boulder, told Newsweek. “They really are our kind of eye on the Earth.”

These so-called eyes on the Earth revealed that sea level rise is not steadily



rising at 0.1 inch every year, but rather, that increase is increasing, itself—by 0.003 inches each year. Though these numbers sound small, tiny increases across the globe over several decades can result in devastating consequences from sea level rise on coastal cities alone. Storm surges and salt water intrusion into

aquifers where some communities get their drinking water are just two examples.

Assuming the acceleration rate that this study found stays consistent throughout the century, sea levels will rise 26 inches by 2100, the authors concluded. But, that number “is almost certainly a conservative estimate of future sea level change,” Nerem

said. “The acceleration will probably go up as ice sheets start to respond more to the warming.”

■ Other factors

This assessment did not account for sea level changes from other factors, including the climate phenomena known as El Niño — Southern Oscillation (ENSO), which affects ocean temperatures and precipitation, and the 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines.

Volcanic eruptions have a mild cooling effect that can, in turn, affect sea levels. Disentangling the various causes of sea level changes allowed researchers to pinpoint the acceleration rate due to climate change alone, which is critical to illuminate what sea level changes will happen over a time period of several decades.

“We have known from observations that the ice sheets and mountain glaciers have been losing mass at an accelerated rate over the past decade or so,” Fernando Paolo, postdoctoral scholar at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, who was not involved with the study, told Newsweek.

This study shows a “clear acceleration in the 25-year sea level rise, which can be linked to the accelerated ice loss.”

(Source: Newsweek)

Refah K. Bank Funds Implementation of Knowledge-Based Firms

Refah Kargaran Bank financed construction operation of knowledge-based companies, valued at 500 billion rials, in Kish Island, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

The salient activity of the bank was hailed in the inaugural ceremony of launching a plant dubbed “Limb Prosthesis in Surgery of Orthopedics and Neurology” during the 39th glorious victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution (Ten-Day Dawn ceremonies) in the presence of Dr. Sattari President Rouhani's Deputy for Science and Technology and senior officials of the bank.

Dr. Sattari the Deputy President for Science and Technology as the first speaker who said: “Movement of free zones towards implementation of infrastructural and knowledge-based projects is an important goal which

should be taken into serious consideration.”

New employment opportunities were generated for 60 job-seeking people directly with the inauguration of this industrial and production unit, he said, adding: “Moreover, employment was also created for 200 job-seeking people indirectly.”

Manufacturing various types of intra-bone implants according to the latest standards in the world is of the most important objectives of this industrial and production unit, he maintained.

In the end, Sattari Deputy President for Science and Technology said: “Relying upon its domestic potential and capability, this industrial and production unit will prevent capital flight, valued at \$10 million, per annum from the country.”



Official Expounds on Paying Marriage Facilities in 31 Provinces

Bank Maskan has paid 45,476 marriage interest-free loan facilities to the applicant couples since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year in 1396 (started March 21, 2017), the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Among 31 provinces, Bank Maskan has paid maximum marriage facilities and loans to Khorasan Razavi Province. According to the official reports, Bank

Maskan has paid 5,867 marriage interest-free loans to the young couples, the report added.

Khuzestan and Fars are the second and third provinces respectively which grabbed the lion's share of loans offered by Bank Maskan, the report added.

Given the above issue, Bank Maskan branch in Fars Province paid 3,162 marriage loans and facilities to the applicant

couples in the current Iranian calendar year in 1396 (started March 21, 2017).

The bank has paid 2,669, 2,322 and 2,164 marriage loans and facilities to the couples in the provinces of Mazandaran, East Azarbaijan and Kerman provinces respectively.

The share of provinces of Gilan, Golestan, Kermanshah, Hamedan and Alborz is significant in payment of marriage

interest-free loans in the current Iranian calendar year in 1396 (to end March 20, 2018).

The senior management of the bank pointed out that the bank will take more giant strides in the next Iranian calendar year in 1397 (to start March 21, 2018) in terms of paying more marriage loans to the qualified applicants, Public Relations Dept. of the bank concluded.

Significant Increase in Bank Shahr's Capital in Recent Years

Bank Shahr experienced a considerable capital increase in the recent years, Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

For his part, Deputy Financial and Economic Affairs of the bank Mohammad-Taghi Samadi announced the above statement and said: “A glance at the structure of capital of this bank and its changes since 2009 and given the capital increase of the bank in four stages, the number of stocks of the bank have increased from 1,500 million shares to 15,573 million stocks, showing a considerable 4.10fold, valued at 15,573 billion rials.

The way of accessing to the cash liquidity and management of the liquidity is the driving force of banks, finance and credit institutions, so that these changes have totally been within the framework of interests of shareholders (market share) and increasing financial and



management capability for maximizing profitability of the bank and offering quality services to customers and all walks of life.

It is natural that increasing capital without receiving fund (out of claims and reassessment of assets) has reduced daily rate of each share with observing interests of shareholders, he said, adding: “Generally, total value of stocks has been improved in favor of shareholders.”

Although the oldest banks have not significant gap with Bank Shahr in evaluating and pricing their stocks in terms of volume of operations, number of branches and capital the daily value of stocks and interests of shareholders are strictly monitored in the bank continuously, he opined.

In the end, Samadi said that 22 finance and credit institutions and banks have been admitted in the Capital Market at the present situation.

New evidence unearthed on extinction of dinosaurs

An asteroid that hit Earth 66 million years ago may have possibly triggered a worldwide release of volcanic magma that could have sealed the fate of the dinosaurs, researchers have claimed.

A six-mile-wide asteroid crashed into Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, nearly 66 million years ago, causing a massive earthquake both on land and sea.

The impact might have also caused underwater volcanoes to spit up magma more ferociously, further intensifying the devastating environmental impact of the event, revealed a study published in the journal Science Advances.

“We found evidence for a previously unknown period of globally heightened volcanic activity during the mass-extinction event,” said Joseph Byrnes from the University of Minnesota.

Since 1980s when the evidence of the meteor strike near present-day Chicxulub in Mexico surfaced, scientists have been debating whether the asteroid or eruptions from a particularly volcanic region in India called the Deccan Traps drove the extinction event that killed off all nonavian dinosaurs.

Various studies indicated that the Deccan Traps volcanoes were already active when the meteor struck. Hence, the seismic waves moving through the planet from the meteor strike, probably fuelled an acceleration of those eruptions, explained Leif Karlstrom, Professor at the University of Oregon.

For the study, the team analyzed available global data sets on free-air gravity, ocean floor topography and tectonic spreading rates.

They divided the seafloor into one-million-year-old groupings, constructing a record back to 100 million years ago.

At about 66 million years, they found evidence of a “short-lived pulse of marine magmatism” along ancient ocean ridges. This pulse is suggested by a spike in the rate of the occurrence of free-air gravity anomalies seen in the data set.

Byrnes found changes in free-air gravity anomalies of between five and 20 milligals associated with seafloor created in the first million years after the meteor.

(Source: siasat.com)

Earth's inner core shouldn't technically exist, researchers say

One day, about a billion years ago, Earth's inner core had a growth spurt. The molten ball of liquid metal at the center of our planet rapidly crystallized due to lowering temperatures, growing steadily outward until it reached the roughly 760-mile (1,220 kilometers) diameter to which it's thought to extend today.

That's the conventional story of the inner core's creation, anyway. But according to a new paper published online this week in the journal Earth and Planetary Science Letters, that story is impossible.



In the paper, the researchers argued that the standard model of how the Earth's core formed is missing a crucial detail about how metals crystallize: a mandatory, massive drop in temperature that would be extremely difficult to achieve at core pressures.

Weirder still, the researchers said, once you account for this missing detail, the science seems to suggest that Earth's inner core shouldn't exist at all.

“Everyone, ourselves included, seemed to be missing this big problem,” study author Steven Hauck, a professor of Earth, Environmental and Planetary Sciences at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio, said in a statement. Namely, they were missing “that metals don't start crystallizing instantly unless something is there that lowers the energy barrier a lot.”

In chemistry, this extra energy is known as the nucleation barrier: the point at which a compound visibly changes its thermodynamic phase. Liquid water, for example, freezes into a solid at the familiar 32 degrees Fahrenheit (0 degrees Celsius). If you've ever made ice cubes at home though, you know that even water stored at its freezing point can take several hours to fully crystallize.

(Source: space.com)

Scientists identify hundreds of atomically thin materials

Graphene may seem like a modern wonder-material, but it has been with us for ages in the form of graphite. Graphene is a sheet of carbon atoms bonded to each other, just one atom thick; graphite is just an agglomeration of these sheets layered on top of each other. To study graphene, however, it took someone clever to devise a way of peeling single layers off from this agglomeration (the secret turned out to be a piece of tape).

Since then, we've identified a handful of additional chemicals that form sheets that are a few atoms thick. These have a variety of properties—some are semiconductors and have been combined with graphene to make electronic devices. To expand the range of devices we can craft that build on the advantages of these atomically thin materials, a larger catalog of chemicals like this would be handy.

The work relies heavily on other scientists having shared their data in open repositories. These include large databases that hold the structure of crystals for a huge number of chemicals. The Inorganic Crystal Structure Database, for example, held nearly 100,000 unique crystal structures when this research was performed; the Crystallography Open Database another 90,000. Each of these structures provides the details of how the atoms of a material are arranged in three-dimensional space.

Almost all of these materials, however, are 3D, with a repeating pattern of atoms extending to the edges of the material in all directions.

The authors developed computer code that could search through the structures for something like graphite. Graphite has strong chemical bonds among the carbon atoms of each layer. But the layers are held together by a relatively weak electrostatic interaction called a van der Waals force. While the van der Waals forces are enough to hold the material together under most conditions, they're weak enough to allow individual layers to be peeled off the bulk graphite.

(Source: arstechnica.com)

China helps provide food assistance for refugees in Iran

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — China made a contribution of \$1 million here on Tuesday to the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) to provide food assistance for the refugees in Iran.

The handover ceremony of the generous contribution of \$1 million to the WFP projects for Afghan and Iraqi refugees in Iran was held in WFP office with Negar Gerami, WFP Representative and Country Director in Iran, and Chinese Ambassador to Iran Pang Sen in attendance.

According to a press release made earlier in November, 2017 by WFP the contribution is used to purchase fortified wheat flour, sunflower oil enriched with vitamins, lentils, rice and sugar for food distributions among Afghan and Iraqi refugees living in settlements across Iran.

The commodities have been locally purchased to ensure speedy delivery and conformity with Iranian standards.

“The aforesaid contribution was confirmed in August [2017], and the food was procured as per the agreed proposal between WFP and the government of China and I’m very happy to report that we not only fulfilled the obligation but we also managed to procure a little bit more food with the money that we received due to the favorable circumstances and the lower prices,” Gerami said over the ceremony.

She went on to say that “So we managed to buy 1,200 tons of food instead of the pledged 985 tons..., the food is sent the 20 settlements across Iran and attributed among 30,000 of most vulnerable refugees residing there.”

Chinese Ambassador to Iran Pang Sen, for his part, expressed his gratitude for WFP transparency in fulfilling their obligations.

The ambassador also noted that China, as a developing country, is very much interested in supporting other developing countries.

He further explained that efforts being made to achieve food security of the most vulnerable Afghan refugees in Iran are done as part of the implementation of the South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund declared by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015.

He finally expressed hope that the two countries extend more humanitarian cooperation in the near future.

■ WFP in Iran

The World Food Program is the food assistance arm of the United Nations which has been present in the country for about 30 years, Negar Gerami has told the Tehran Times in an exclusive interview in October, 2017.

As Gerami has said WFP 2018 project has been budgeted for \$6 million. The \$6 million is going to be spent on 30,000 refugees living in settlements but alongside of that we also promote the education of refugee girls, so we will be giving their families an incentive to send their girls to school.

She also noted that WFP is completely and 100 percent funded by governments, private sector, individuals and institutions. In Iran WFP has attracted the attention of a number of donors. Germany, the Republic of Korea and China are large donors to the WFP, specifically to the WFP Iran.

PM 2.5 level ‘beyond hazardous’ in southwestern Iran

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — The recent sand and dust storms have increased the PM 2.5 fine particles concentration to a ‘beyond hazardous’ level in the southwestern city of Ahwaz, Khuzestan province, on Tuesday.

According to Khuzestan provincial department of environment the fine dust concentration has jumped to 60 times above the recommended limits once again over the past months.

While the normal level of pollution should not exceed 150 micrograms per cubic meter it increased to 9,000 micrograms per cubic meter at 2 p.m. local time in Ahwaz.

Other southeastern cities of Sousangerd, Mahshahr, Hamidiyeh, Omidiyeh, Abadan, and Dezful are affected by hazardous levels of fine particles as well, Khabaronline reported.

LEARN ENGLISH

Heating

A: It’s freezing in here! Can I **turn up** the heat?

B: Don’t touch that thermostat! You don’t pay the bills around here!

A: Dad! Are you serious? What’s the point of having central heating if we can’t use it! Look, I can see my breath!

B: Put on a sweater! I’m not gonna let you **run up** my heating bill just because it’s a bit **chilly**.

A: Dad! I’m gonna **catch a cold**!

B: When I was your age, my parents didn’t have central heating like you do! We had a **furnace** in the center of the living room and that was it. We used it to cook, heat the house and even dry our clothes! We never caught a cold. You should be **grateful**!

■ Key vocabulary

turn up: increase the intensity of a device

run up: acquire bills or debts

chilly: very cold

catch a cold: become infected with a cold

furnace: a piece of equipment used to heat a building

grateful: thankful

■ Supplementary vocabulary

wood stove: a metal closed fire chamber that burns wood fuel for heating and cooking

thermos: container lined with insulating material that keeps liquids hot or cold

fireplace: a structure, made of stone or brick, for holding a fire at the base of a chimney

frost: a deposit of tiny ice crystals formed when water vapor condenses at a temperature below freezing

sub-zero temperatures: cold temperatures, below zero degrees Celsius

(Source: irlanguage.com)



Every action has a reaction. We have one planet; one chance.

The need to clarify speculations about death of environmentalist

1 → The MPs - among them National Security Committee chairman Alaedin Boroujerdi and the committee spokesman Naqavi Hosseini - who have seen the 8-minute video believe that Seyed Emami was preparing to kill himself.

However, they all agree that the Judiciary is responsible for the prisoners’ health and the fact that an inmate has managed to kill himself is not acceptable and is a clearly a contributory negligence.

Moreover, it was reported on Sunday that Kaveh Madani, deputy head of the Department of Environment, had been summoned for explanation. Later on Monday, photos of Madani attending a meeting with German ambassador to Tehran Michael Klor-Berchtold was uploaded on the Department of Environment’s official website. He also shared a live video on his Instagram account saying he was OK and attended the office. He also said that his email, twitter and telegram accounts are temporarily suspended.

Madani didn’t confirm his arrest. However, he wished that those “real environmentalists” who are under arrest would be soon released and those who are committing any crimes, in every field, face punishment.

■ Environmentalists or spies

There is speculation weather it is possible for an environmentalist who is believed to focus primarily on protecting and safeguarding the environment act as a spy.

If the answer to that question is yes, and if there is any reasonable explanations as to why these people should be kept in prison, the public and their families have every right



Kavous Seyed Emami

to know the truth.

Furthermore, the Judiciary must be accountable for the well-being of all prisoners, regardless of their crimes.

There is a possibility that the conservation-

ists have unknowingly and unintentionally committed a crime. However, isn’t it the Judiciary’s responsibility to conduct closer surveillance on NGOs or even teach such people about the possible dangers of getting

involved in espionage?

In case of Kaveh Madani, and the likes of him who are trying to serve this country, even the fake news of their arrest can lead to cynicism worldwide.

And now comes the acid rain

1 → As far as human health is concerned, we are not directly affected by acid rain since it is too dilute to cause any serious health problem but inhaling its dry depositions, which mainly include nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide, are too dangerous for our health.

■ What are the causes?

We can categorize the sources of acid rain into two groups of man-made and natural.

Among natural sources, volcanic emissions have the most significant share. The gases released by volcanic activities can make the strongest acid rains – with even the pH value of 2. Also, lightning strikes naturally produce nitric oxides which react with water to produce nitric acid, hence developing acid rain.

However, the primary contributors to this harmful rain are human activities producing chemical gas emissions. Power generation facilities which use coal as their fuel have the most significant share. Motor vehicle and factories stand next in this regard.

■ Some of its other features

Acid rain is colorless and those rains which seem to be muddy are not acidic, said Amin-Hossein Naqshineh, prominent weather forecaster of Iran Meteorological Organization, Tasnim reported.

After the start of an acid rain, the acidity will gradually decrease but that very first minutes of rain brings about its



harmful effects, he highlighted.

Naqshineh went on to say that PM2.5 fine particles have no role in acid rain.

Another feature of acid rain is that it can starts raining in areas which have clean air. How? The wind can push the harmful gases away from polluted areas, leading to the formation of acid rains in clean neighboring regions.

■ Acid rain in Iran

“Areas suffering from air pollution caused by fossil fuels will certainly face acid rain; and Tehran is not an exception,” added the meteorological expert.

Trump’s infrastructure plan aims to sweep away ‘inefficient’ environmental reviews

The Trump administration is attempting to speed up or even sweep away various environmental reviews in its plan to fix America’s crumbling infrastructure and construct a wall along the border with Mexico.

The White House’s infrastructure plan targets what it calls “inefficiencies” in the approval of roads, bridges, airports and other projects. It proposes a 21-month limit for environmental reviews of projects that potentially threaten endangered species or fragile habitats, along with curbs on federal agencies’ ability to raise objections to new construction.

In a meeting with state and local officials on Monday, Trump said “we’re going to get your permits very quickly.” The president, who mentioned he was able to push through the building of an ice rink in New York’s Central Park within a few months, said he will “speed the

permit approval process from 10 years to two years, and maybe even to one year.”

The campaign to fast-track development over concerns has been picked up by Trump’s lieutenants. Scott Pruitt, the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, has attempted to quicken the pace even further, telling the same group that the EPA will “process every permit, up or down, within six months” by the end of 2018.

The administration has sought to completely cast aside environmental considerations when it comes to its controversial border wall. It recently acquired a waiver for the third time in order to speed construction of 20 miles of the wall in New Mexico, and Trump has rescinded an Obama-era rule that demanded officials consider sea level rise and other climate change factors in federally-funded projects.

Environmentalists have warned that Trump’s agenda will place extra pressure on endangered species and risk exacerbating hazards, such as flooding, by failing to factor climate change.

A recent report by the Center for Biological Diversity found that the border wall risks the habitat of dozens of species, including the arroyo toad, the Peninsular bighorn sheep and the jaguar, which was once driven out of the south-western US but has been spotted again in recent years due to the northward migration from a group located around 100 miles south of the border in Sonora, Mexico.

A coalition of conservation groups said Americans are “overwhelmingly opposed” to any sidestepping of the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act or National Environmental Policy Act.

“President Trump’s dangerous proposal would hand out massive subsidies

for wealthy developers to build roads and bridges without any regard to the impacts of hurricanes, fires, or rising seas,” the groups said in a joint statement.

“By rubber stamping permits for corporations to build oil pipelines, dams, and toxic waste dumps, gutting environmental and labor laws, and severely limiting the public’s ability to hold government accountable will only make our communities, and our nation, a more dangerous place.”

Meanwhile, the White House’s 2019 budget proposal has outlined slashing the Environmental Protection Agency’s funding by a third and cutting the department of the the interior’s budget by 16%. Congress has the ultimate say on the nation’s budget, however, and it is unlikely lawmakers will enact to such deep budget reductions.

(Source: The Guardian)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → چ

Shiraz hosting intl. congress on social studies on health

The First International Congress on Social Studies on Health for medical students opened in Shiraz, Fars province, on Wednesday, IRNA news agency reported. Shiraz University of Medical Sciences is playing host to the event and officials from the Health Ministry along with professors of anthropology and sociology will attend the congress, the event scientific secretary Sulmaz Qahramani has said.

کنگره بین المللی دانشجویی مطالعات اجتماعی

سلامت در شیراز گشایش یافت به گزارش خبرگزاری ایرنا کنگره بین المللی دانشجویی مطالعات اجتماعی سلامت چهارشنبه در شیراز گشایش یافت . دکتر سولماز قهرمانی دبیر علمی کنگره گفت: این کنگره به میزبانی دانشگاه علوم پزشکی شیراز و با حضور میهمانانی از وزارت بهداشت استادان مردم شناسی و جامعه شناسی برگزار می شود.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

inter-

■ Meaning:

between

■ For example: Role playing is an *interactive* teaching methods.

PHRASAL VERB

Glass something in

■ Meaning: to cover something with glass, or to build a glass structure around something

■ For example: The manuscripts are now glassed over, to prevent them from being damaged.

IDIOM

At the drop of a hat

■ Meaning: immediately and without pausing to think about what you are going to do

■ For example: Some of these corporations threaten to sue at the drop of a hat.

Kim praises S. Korea's hospitality, urges more dialog

1→ He further stressed that it was important to enhance “the warm climate of reconciliation and dialog” created by the Winter Olympics.

Kim gave instructions for “practical measures” to do so, the official KCNA news agency said, without providing further details.

Kim's sister, Kim Yo-jong, visited the South for the Winter Olympics. She was the first member of the ruling Kim family to cross the border into the rival South since the end of the Korean War in 1953.

During the visit, Kim's sister verbally delivered South Korean President Moon Jae-in a personal invitation from the North's leader for a summit meeting in Pyongyang.

At the Olympics opening ceremony on Friday, the South Korean president and the delegation from the North cheered as athletes from the two neighbors entered the arena and marched under a unified peninsula flag. Seoul hopes to use the games — which will end on February 25 — as an opportunity to restore regular communication with Pyongyang and resolve a standoff over the North's weapons programs.

The two neighbors have been separated by a heavily-militarized border since the end of Korean War.

Tensions have also been high over the United States military presence in the region, mainly in South Korea.



■ Cautious optimism

Elsewhere, South Korea's government expressed cautious optimism in making progress with inter-Korean relations in the wake of a landmark visit of North Korean officials at the Winter Olympics.

The North Korean high-level delegation's three-day visit that ended on Sunday “shows that North Korea has a strong will to improve inter-Korean relations, and

that Pyongyang can make unprecedented and bold measures if deemed necessary,” South Korea's unification ministry said in a press release.

It was the first time since the 1950-1953 Korean War that a lineal member of ruling Kim family and the constitutional head of state set foot in South Korea.

The closely-watched 56-hour trip, covered wall-to-wall on news channels, was filled

with a string of symbolic moments.

When North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's powerful sister Kim Yo-jong and its ceremonial head of state Kim Yong-nam paid a visit to the presidential Blue House in Seoul to meet South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Saturday, even the lunch menu reflected the pendulum of the inter-Korean relations.

On the last day, President Moon bade farewell to the North Korean delegation at a North Korean art troupe's music concert in Seoul.

Seohyeon, of South Korea's popular K-pop band Girls' Generation, made a surprise appearance and sang a couple of songs together with North Korean singers, including a song longing for reunification.

Kim Yong-nam's eyes were visibly teary, and he wiped them several times, as another song about reunification rang out across the music hall.

As Kim Yo-jong put it earlier at the luncheon meeting with Moon, relations between the North and the South have made faster progress over the last one month than over the previous few years.

Many experts agree that the Moon administration made achievements in opening up channels of communication with North Korea and putting itself in the driver's seat to lead Korean affairs.

(Source: agencies)

Pentagon asks for major budget increase to confront Russia, China

The United States Defense Department has called on Congress to approve a major budget increase in order to counter “threats” from Russia, China, and North Korea.

The Pentagon on Monday asked for a budget of \$686 billion to be allocated to military spending in 2019. The requested amount is one of the largest in the U.S. history, and is also focused on beefing up the country's nuclear arsenal. The budget sees an increase of \$80 billion from 2017.

On top of the \$686 billion budget request was an additional \$30 billion for agencies including the Department of Energy, which maintains American nuclear weapons.

Under-Secretary of Defense David L. Norquist told reporters on Monday that the budget aims to neutralize threats posed by China and Russia which “want to shape a world consistent with their own authoritarian intentions.”

“We recognize that, if unaddressed, our eroding U.S. military advantage versus China and Russia could undermine our ability to deter aggression and coercion in key strategic regions,” he added.

According to the budget document, Beijing is “using predatory economics to intimidate its neighbors while militarizing features in the South China Sea.”

China “seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term,” the document claims, but in the long term seeks to “achieve global preeminence” over the United States.



The request for more military spending comes as the budget proposed by President Donald Trump's administration includes major cuts for international diplomacy and overseas aid.

Promoting his proposal on Monday, Trump said the U.S. military would be the strongest it has ever been.

Last month, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis warned of “growing threats” from Russia and China, saying the U.S. military's advantages over the two countries have eroded in recent years.

The assessment was part of an unclassified summary of the Pentagon's new National Defense Strategy Mattis unveiled on January 19.

“We face growing threats from revisionist powers as different as China and Russia, nations that seek to create a world consistent with their authoritarian models,” he said.

“Our military is still strong, yet our competitive edge has eroded in every domain of warfare -- air, land, sea, space and cyberspace -- and is continually eroding,” he added.

In December 2017, Trump unveiled a new “America First” national security strategy that named China and Russia as “competition,” claiming that the two countries sought to “challenge American power, influence, and interests.”

A recent report by the U.S. think tank RAND Corporation warned that the United States would likely lose a simultaneous military confrontation with Russia and China.

Thanks to their major technology advancements over the past years, Beijing and Moscow have now reached a level that they can top Washington in certain areas of military prowess, the report said, warning that limited budget and a lack of enough forces to support the “ambitious” U.S. military plan were hindering American forces.

(Source: agencies)

Commonwealth in secret succession plans

The Commonwealth has secretly begun considering who might succeed the Queen as its head, the BBC has learned.

The issue is hugely sensitive because the role is not hereditary and will not pass automatically to the Prince of Wales on the Queen's death.

The Commonwealth has set up a “high level group” to look at the way the international organization is governed.

This group is meeting later, officially to review how the Commonwealth is run by its secretariat and governors.

However, senior sources added that the gathering in London would also consider what happens when the Queen, who turns 92 in April, dies.

One said: “I imagine the question of the succession, however distasteful it may naturally be, will come up.”

The agenda for the all-day summit, seen by the BBC, says there will be a discussion of “wider governance considerations” which insiders say is code for the succession.

The group is expected to report to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meet-

ing (CHOGM) in London in April, which is likely to be the last that the 91-year-old monarch will attend.

A second source said the issue of the succession is expected to be discussed by Commonwealth leaders on the margins of the summit, particularly when they meet without officials “on retreat” at Windsor Castle.

The Queen was proclaimed Head of the Commonwealth at her coronation in 1953, when she was head of state in seven of its eight members.

Although the Queen took over from her father George VI, it is not a hereditary position that will pass automatically to her son - who will be head of state in only 15 of the 53 member nations that now make up the Commonwealth.

Any decision about the future would have to be made by the Commonwealth heads of government at the time of the Queen's death. But there is no formal process for choosing her successor.

While many Commonwealth figures presume there will be no realistic alternative to Prince Charles, there has in the past

been talk of electing a ceremonial leader to improve the organization's democratic credentials.

One source said the issue to be decided was whether a one-off decision should be taken to appoint Prince Charles to the position, or whether a new process should be agreed to ensure that it is always the British monarch who automatically becomes head of the Commonwealth.

“There are various formulas being played with,” the source said. “Should it always be the heir to the throne or Prince Charles himself? Is it the person or the position?”

The high level group, which is made up of seven senior former ministers from the Commonwealth, will meet at the body's London headquarters at Marlborough House.

The group, which has its own staff and budget, is independent of the Commonwealth Secretariat. It will look at how the secretariat is run and funded, how a new secretary general is chosen and the balance of power between the Commonwealth's governors and executive committee.

According to documents seen by the

BBC, the high level group will not just confine itself to bureaucratic changes. The agenda for the meeting says: “Discussions will take into consideration the issues raised in the first session and also the wider governance considerations of the Commonwealth.”

The Queen has been working in private to try to ensure that Prince Charles does succeed her, sending senior officials around the world to lobby Commonwealth leaders.

At the last CHOGM in Malta in 2015, the Queen told them that she could not “wish to have been better supported and represented in the Commonwealth than by the Prince of Wales who continues to give so much to it with great distinction”.

The Prince of Wales represented the Queen at the CHOGM in Sri Lanka in 2013. A whole section of his website is devoted to the Commonwealth, noting that he has visited 41 out of 53 countries and has been a “proud supporter” for more than four decades.

(Source: BBC)

‘U.S. funding of Syria Kurds to impact Turkey decisions’

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has warned that Washington's refusal to stop funding the Kurdish militants in Syria will affect Ankara's decisions, ahead of a visit by the United States Secretary of State Rex Tillerson this week.

Addressing members of his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP/Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) in parliament on Tuesday, Erdogan criticized Washington for supporting militants from the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG/Yekineyen Parastina Gel).

“Our ally's decision to give financial support to the YPG... will surely affect the decisions we will take,” Erdogan said.

Ankara views the YPG as a terrorist organization and an extension of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) that has been fighting for an autonomous region inside Turkey since 1984.

Erdogan's comments followed the release of the U.S. Department of Defense's 2019 budget, which includes funds to train and equip local forces purportedly fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit.

“It is very clear that those who say ‘we will respond aggressively if you hit us’ have never experienced an Ottoman slap,” Erdogan said, in an apparent reference to comments made by the U.S. Lieutenant General Paul Funk during a visit to the northern Syrian city of Manbij last week.

Funk had said American troops would remain in Manbij despite Ankara's demands for a U.S. pullout.

U.S. officials claim that the YPG is the most effective fighting force against the ISIL terrorist group in northern Syria, and have substantially increased their weaponry and technology support for the terrorist group.

Turkey is wary of the presence of Kurdish militants close to its borders in Syria, and has been opposed to Washington's efforts to train and arm them in the country. The U.S. has said it has no plans to pull out troops stationed near the town of Manbij.

Ankara has been waging “Operation Olive Branch” against the Kurds in Syria's Afrin region since January 20 in a bid to eliminate the Kurdish militants. Turks have said the offensive could extend to Manbij and beyond.

Erdogan had earlier said the YPG is trying to establish a “terror corridor” on Turkey's southern border, linking Syria's northern city of Afrin with a large Kurdish-controlled area to the east. Senior authorities in Ankara have warned Washington that there could be a confrontation between Turkish and American troops in northern Syria if arms transfer to the Kurds was not stopped.

(Source: TRT)

Israeli court allows police to call for corruption indictment of PM

Israel's Supreme Court has authorized police to make recommendations regarding the indictment of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on corruption charges, rejecting a petition that had been filed to block those recommendations.

Right-wing attorney Yossi Fuchs had filed the petition last week, asking the top court to prevent police from publicly recommending to the attorney general to indict Netanyahu in the graft probes.

The tribunal, however, dismissed the

petition on Monday, saying that it had previously passed judgment on the system of recommendations and upheld its lawfulness.

“There is no reason to interfere,” read the court ruling, meaning the police recommendations can now be forwarded.

Netanyahu is suspected of being involved in bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

He has been questioned in two separate cases, involving allegations that he received lavish gifts from wealthy businessmen and

negotiated a deal with a newspaper owner for more favorable coverage. He has denied any wrongdoing.

Speaking before the court ruling, Fuchs claimed that his petition was a demand for “justice,” but also admitted it was meant to protect Netanyahu's right-wing administration.

A poll conducted by Hadashot TV news last December showed that 60 percent of Israelis say Netanyahu should step down if police recommend an indictment against him.

Israelis have been holding weekly protests to demand Netanyahu's resignation over the corruption scandals, but the premier has described the events as part of efforts meant to topple him “at any cost.”

Last week, Netanyahu lashed out at Israeli police over their handling of the graft probes. This came after Police Commissioner Roni Alsheich said that officers investigating Netanyahu had been put under pressure.

(Source: RT)

U.S. rejects Netanyahu ‘annexation’ talks claim

The United States dismisses claims by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Washington and Tel Aviv are in talks for “annexation” of Palestinian lands, grabbed by the regime for construction of settlements.



The White House made the announcement on Monday in a rare show of discord between Netanyahu and the United States President Donald Trump.

The Israeli premier told a closed-door meeting of his right-wing Likud party's legislators earlier that Tel Aviv was in talks with Washington to apply “sovereignty” on the Palestinian lands, where the regime has been constructing settlements, internationally deemed illegal.

“On the subject of applying sovereignty, I can say that I have been talking to the Americans about it for some time,” Netanyahu said.

The comments were, however, rejected by the Trump administration.

“Reports that the United States discussed with Israel an annexation plan for the West Bank are false,” White House spokesman Josh Raffel said. “The United States and Israel have never discussed such a proposal, and the president's focus remains squarely on his Israeli-Palestinian peace initiative.”

After the announcement, the Israeli prime minister's office rushed to clarify his statement, claiming that he had just updated the Americans on proposed legislation in Israeli parliament, known as Knesset.

Some analysts have also said that his move was an attempt to please his supporters in the Likud party.

His statement was decried by Palestinians with Nabil Abu Rudeineh, a spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, asserting that any annexation would “destroy all efforts to try and save the peace process.”

“No-one has the right to discuss the situation of the occupied Palestinian lands,” Abu Rudeineh said from the Russian capital Moscow, where Abbas was holding talks with President Vladimir Putin.

Hailed as a “great friend to the Jewish people” by Netanyahu, President Trump has mended ties with Israel that had gone sour under former President Barack Obama.

The real estate mogul has vowed to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds (Jerusalem), a move indicating that Washington recognizes the city as the capital of Israel.

The Israeli regime, meanwhile, keeps taking expansionist measures in Palestine while getting engaged in atrocities against the Muslim nation.

(Source: Press TV)

Al-Kaabi: At any point on the resistance axis, we will definitely line up against Israel

Hezbollah al-Nujaba secretary general, stressed that this movement stands next to Lebanon's resistance movement of Hezbollah, adding, “Until the liberation of al-Quds, we will go on fighting against Israel and line up against it at any point on the resistance axis”.

According to the report of Hezbollah al-Nujaba Media and Relations office, on the anniversary of Haj “Imad Faiz Moghnieh's” martyrdom, the senior commander of Hezbollah, al-Nujaba secretary general visited “Rawzat al-Shahidain” in the southern suburb of Beirut and paid tribute to the sublime position of the Resistance's martyrs.

Hujjat al-Islam “Akram al-Kaabi” reciting al-Fatiha for the martyrs, paid tribute to the holy souls of Hezbollah's martyrs, especially “Raghib Harb”, “Sayyed Abbas Musavi” and “Imad Mughnihi” who were martyred in the Jihad against the Zionist and Takfiri enemies.

Among the reporters of different TVs and satellite channels covering his visit of the Lebanese capital Beirut, al-Kaabi said: Until the threats are all removed, the Zionist Regime is totally defeated and collapsed and the holy al-Quds is fully liberated, we line up against Israel at any point on the Resistance axis, we will fight against the aggressors and definitely stand next to the Syria army and the fighters of the Resistance in all the combat fields.

Describing as a brave action the reactive strike of the Syria Army against the Israeli aggressors in targeting their air force F-16 Jet, Hezbollah al-Nujaba secretary general said: “The Syrian army showed its power to the aggressor enemy”.

Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi added: “As the U.S. had to directly resort to targeting the fighters of al-Hashd al-Shabi after the successive defeats of the ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Daesh) in Iraq, the hostile strikes of Israel on the positions of the Syrian Army and the Resistance forces also showed that Tel Aviv is the main supporter of the armed terrorists in the Syria, and to prevent from the increasing damages of their proxies, it is taking actions against the Resistance”.

It is noteworthy that some hostile media had reported that Hezbollah al-Nujaba secretary general was targeted earlier this week in strikes of the Israeli aggressor jets on the Damascus suburb. Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi's presence in front of the news cameras and addressing the media in Lebanon, nullified all claims of his death.

Speed skating - Dominant Dutch win gold, silver in men’s 1,500m

Dutch speed skaters continued their dominance at the Olympic Games on Tuesday with world champion Kjeld Nuis powering to gold in the men’s 1,500 metres ahead of compatriot Patrick Roest.

South Korea’s Kim Min-seok sparked wild celebrations by taking bronze to open the host nation’s speed skating account at the Games.

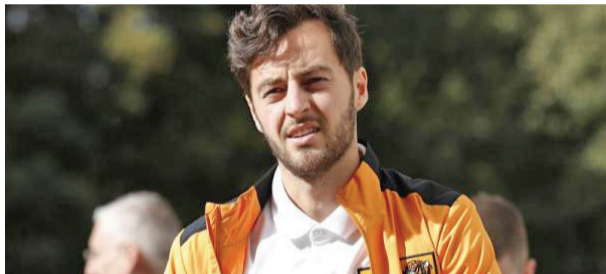
The Netherlands has won eight of the 12 speed skating medals at the Games so far, including all four golds.

Nuis, the first reigning world champion to win Olympic gold in the distance, made a blistering start and finished in one minute 44.01 seconds despite losing speed on the final lap.

Skating in the fourth pair of the evening, 22-year-old Roest set the time to beat, powering across the line in 1 minute 44.86 seconds. Racing after Nuis, Kim responded to the cheers of the crowd with a huge effort and made a late surge in the last two laps to finish 0.07 seconds behind Roest in third.

(Source: Reuters)

Hull’s Mason forced to retire after skull fracture



Hull City’s Ryan Mason has retired from soccer a year after fracturing his skull in a Premier League match against Chelsea, the midfielder said on Tuesday.

Mason, 26, was injured in a collision with Chelsea defender Gary Cahill at Stamford Bridge in January, 2017 and tried to resuming his playing career with the Championship club.

“I have worked tirelessly in order to be able to return to the pitch,” Mason said on Instagram.

“Unfortunately, having taken expert medical advice I now have no option but to retire due to the risks involved given the nature of my injury,” he added. “I am and always will be eternally grateful for the incredible network of people around me who have helped me to recover from what was a life-threatening injury.”

Mason, who left Tottenham Hotspur in 2016, made 16 appearances for Hull last season.

(Source: Mirror)

Lacazette to miss crucial six weeks after knee operation

Alexandre Lacazette is set to be out for between four and six weeks after having knee surgery, Arsenal have revealed.

The France international underwent an arthroscopy on his left knee on Tuesday, with the Gunners understanding the minor operation to have been “a success”.

But the injury comes at a crucial juncture for Arsenal, who have important fixtures in the Europa League, Premier League and EFL Cup all on the horizon.

Lacazette could miss a total of seven games across all competitions if he is ultimately out for six weeks.

Among those fixtures are the two Europa League last-32 contests with Ostersonsunds, plus a Manchester City double-header in the EFL Cup final and league.

It is also likely he will be unable to feature in France’s next two international friendlies against Colombia and Russia on March 23 and 27, respectively, as Didier Deschamps intensifies his preparation for the upcoming World Cup.

The injury has come at a particularly inopportune moment for Lacazette and Arsenal, as Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang’s ineligibility in the Europa League meant the former Lyon man was likely to lead the line against Ostersonsunds.

The two-legged affair against the Swedish side would have represented a fine chance to rediscover his touch in front of goal, having been demoted to second-choice since Aubameyang’s arrival and scoring just twice in all competitions since the start of December.

But he could now be out of action for Arsenal until the start of April.

(Source: Four Four Two)

Morata regrets trying to play through pain

Alvaro Morata regrets trying to play through the pain barrier with a back injury which ultimately kept him out for nearly a month before returning against West Brom on Monday.

The Spain international made a strong start to life in England, scoring eight times in his first 11 Premier League appearances following a €65million move from Real Madrid.

But he has struggled since, scoring just two in his last 10 league games and attracting criticism for several wasteful performances in front of goal.

It became apparent that he had been suffering from a persistent back problem in January and, after the FA Cup replay penalty shoot-out win over Norwich in which he was red-carded, it was finally decided that Morata needed time off once his suspension was served. He made his return after nearly a month out in Chelsea’s 3-0 defeat of West Brom, appearing as a second-half substitute, and he acknowledges making a mistake in trying to cope with the injury after Antonio Conte had put so much faith in him.

Speaking to Movistar, Morata said: “He [Conte] is the one who bets on me and that’s the truth.

“At the end of the day, a great club has given me the opportunity to play as a starter and to grow.

“That is until the physical problems arrived. I was wrong to play with pain. I wasn’t okay to play.”

(Source: Independent)

Real Madrid vs PSG: Zinedine Zidane and Unai Emery face a fight to the death

When Xabi Alonso revealed to the world that it would be Paris Saint-Germain who would have to face Real Madrid, Unai Emery must have cursed the futility of it all. For the first time since 2013, he had put PSG in the driving seat ahead of the knockout stages. Spearheaded by their expensively assembled front three, PSG managed to overcome the challenge of Bayern Munich to win Group B, a position that surely meant they would avoid any of the big boys. But it wasn’t to be. Madrid had stumbled out of the group stages in second place and landed in front of PSG’s Champions League pursuing juggernaut. Emery tried to sidestep the reality, describing his side’s fate as a “good draw”. But he knows as much as anyone that the result against Real will have serious ramifications on his future. The story is the same for his opposite number, Zinedine Zidane.

Jobs at stake

Both Zidane and Emery’s jobs are likely to be under serious consideration should they falter in this round of 16 tie. Their circumstances could not be more different; Real Madrid are flailing domestically, 17 points adrift of Barcelona and out of the Copa del Rey, while PSG are still on course for another domestic treble. But both club’s seasons hinge on European success, and with it, the fate of their managers. It’s remarkable that Zidane is a man under pressure. Having brought La Decima to the Bernabeu, and then going on to retain the trophy, you would think he deserves a degree of impunity. But Real Madrid are no ordinary club. Zidane’s current stay of execution is abnormal, and it feels precarious at best.

Real found themselves all but out of the title race by Christmas, dropping points to clubs including Levante, Betis and Girona. They currently find themselves fourth, a point behind Valencia, and 10 behind city rivals Atletico. Their collapse in the league has caught many by surprise. They still retain



the same personnel who triumphed twice on Europe’s biggest stage, but they have struggled to outscore opponents, with Cristiano Ronaldo, normally so ruthless in front of goal, only finding the net four times in their opening 14 La Liga matches. But Zidane’s past success in Europe has kept him in his post. After tumbling out of the Copa Del Rey last month, thanks to an ignominious home defeat to fellow Madrid-based side Leganes, the Champions League is the only competition they can win. Staying in it, then, is vital, if he is to continue to deter Florentino Perez’s already airborne axe. Emery, meanwhile, has had the spectre of the Reaper looming over him ever since this stage of the Champions League last season. That day, he oversaw the greatest collapse in the competition’s

history, as PSG threw away a 4-0 aggregate lead by losing 6-1 in the Nou Camp. He clung onto his job, by the skin of his teeth. Last summer, PSG President Nasser Al-Khelaifi thought he would help his manager’s cause by giving him the players who embarrassed him in Europe and at home, in Barcelona’s Neymar and Monaco’s Kylian Mbappe.

The big money signings have become a burden

But rather than a blessing, those signings have become something of a burden for the Spaniard, for they symbolize his employer’s greatest yearning – to lift the Champions League trophy. Emery knows this. European success was the sole reason they hired him after his remarkable Europa League treble with Sevilla. Domestic honors are something

of an irrelevance now for the French club. The fact that PSG showed themselves capable of putting Barcelona to the sword was enough to persuade the Parisian hierarchy that Emery deserved another chance, even though they ceded the Ligue 1 title to a more vibrant and exciting Monaco side. But after forking out £198 million for the Neymar, and an expected £166 million for Mbappe, he has, for the club’s leadership at least, been given the strongest hand available to him. His wagers must now yield a return. When Paris Saint-Germain take to the field at the Bernabeu on Wednesday night, there will be more at stake than just an intriguing clash between old and new money. For their managers at least, it could well be a fight for survival.

(Source: News)

Uefa wants referees to punish serious foul play and ‘protect football’s image’



Referees have been reminded by Uefa to protect players by punishing serious fouls in European club competitions.

It comes after Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola urged English officials to take care of the game’s “artists” when Leroy Sane was injured in the FA Cup win at Cardiff in January.

Uefa has told referees they have a duty to “protect football’s image”.

“We need players playing, so they must be protected,” said Uefa’s chief refereeing officer Pierluigi Collina.

“We do not want situations where a player’s future is put in doubt because of serious injury caused by a challenge, whether it is intentional, or is unintentional and the player making the challenge is taking a risk of causing injury.

“Players must understand that they have to respect their opponents and show the same positive behaviour to them that they would want to receive themselves.”

Manchester City have asked to meet the body responsible for Premier League referees to discuss their concern at tackles

being made against them.

The Premier League leaders have cited nine challenges this term which they say have not been suitably sanctioned, while City forward Raheem Sterling says his teammates are being “butchered” by bad tackles.

Europe’s governing body has also reminded referees not to tolerate being pressured into making decisions by groups of players.

Collina added: “When I see mobbing of a referee, it’s something that is not acceptable - this is not the message that we want the game to convey.”

Manchester City are at Basel and Tottenham go to Juventus in the first legs of their Champions League last-16 ties on Tuesday, while Liverpool go to Porto on Wednesday.

Chelsea and Manchester United play Barcelona and Sevilla respectively in their Champions League first legs next week.

Meanwhile, in the Europa League, Arsenal travel to Ostersonsunds while Celtic are at home to Zenit St Petersburg on Thursday.

(Source: BBC)

Mourinho backs VAR technology amid mixed response



Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho supports the use of the video assistant referee (VAR) system despite the mixed response it has generated since its debut in English football in the FA Cup last month.

United play their first match with VAR when they travel to Huddersfield Town for their FA Cup fifth round clash on Saturday and Mourinho stressed that the technology had to be embraced, although it needed to iron out some issues.

“Of course they (VAR) need adjustments,” Mourinho told the club’s website (www.manutd.com).

“They need to make sure they don’t change the dynamic of the game too much, the emotion of the game too much - people waiting a couple of minutes to know if they can jump (and celebrate) because it was a goal.

“But from my professional perspective, I like the feeling of a right decision coming. It’s a penalty or not a penalty, it’s handball or not handball, it’s a red card

or not a red card. I think a fair decision is a feeling that I like.”

The technology is also being trialled around the world, however critics have pointed out the length of the reviews while some supporters in the stadium are unhappy at being left in the dark about replays that TV viewers can watch over again.

English clubs are not alone in experiencing teething trouble related to the use of the system, with VAR decisions seemingly only adding to the confusion rather than stopping it in Italy’s Serie A.

VAR induced more controversy on Monday when the Portuguese football federation (FPF) said it had been wrongly used to disallow a goal at the weekend.

Backing the referees, Mourinho added: “They want to perform the best they can, they don’t like to make mistakes... so if the referees are happy with technological support, then yes, let’s go for the VAR.”

(Source: Guardian)

Coutinho relishing union with ‘best in the world’ Messi

Philippe Coutinho considers playing alongside Barcelona team-mate Lionel Messi “very special” as he believes the Argentine to be the best in the world.

Coutinho joined Barca from Liverpool in January after a protracted transfer saga and has settled in quickly, impressing with his early performances.

The Brazilian was strongly linked with a move to Camp Nou in pre-season and was reportedly upset when it did not go through.

But after finally getting his dream switch to Barca, Coutinho has the chance to play alongside Messi every week, with the Argentina star, Luis Suarez and Andres Iniesta making a strong impression on the 25-year-old.

“It’s something very special [to play with Messi],” Coutinho told Mundo Deportivo. “Not everyone has the opportunity to play with the best player in the world. This makes me very happy.

“They [Messi and Suarez] received me very well. They are two great idols and being part of the team with them is a very good feeling.

“But not only with them, also with Andres and with the rest. For me it’s very special to live with this squad. For me, it’s a great experience and a great opportunity to be in this club.”

Coutinho’s transfer fee of €120million, potentially rising to €160m, makes him the most expensive signing in the



club’s history.

But he insists that is not a cause of pressure.

“No, for me it’s an honour and gives me pride,” Coutinho added. “But it’s something I have to set aside, so I can dedicate myself to playing football and doing it the way I always did.

“I have to improve and do well on the field to help the team achieve the things that they hired me for.

“Being here gives you the opportunity to play with the best and the opportunity to win titles, which is something that motivates me a lot.

“So I am very motivated to train every day to improve and learn so that everything goes well and in the end the titles arrive.”

(Source: Goal)

“Wizard of Tehran” attacks Iran Football Federation over lack of transparency

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Ex-Iran and Persepolis midfielder Ali Karimi, known as ‘Wizard of Tehran’, attacked the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) over lack of transparency in several issues.

In a live debate in Iran’s Channel 3 TV on early Tuesday, FFIRI General Secretary Mohammadreza Saket was criticized for a lack of transparency over commercial contracts, Carlos Queiroz’s deal with Iran national football team, Italy’s premier kit supplier Givova’s contract and so on.

The former Bayern Munich midfielder hit out at unfair treatment of Queiroz about kicking the Iranian coaches out of the national team.

Karimi accused FFIRI of not making clear about its decisions over the issues.

He also accused the federation on not publishing the details of environmental advertising in Iran football league.

Saket also criticized Karimi for not supporting Team Melli with less than five months to go to the 2018 World Cup.

The FFIRI General Secretary said Team Melli have been drawn in a tough group along with Spain, Portugal and Morocco, where they want to get the best ever results in the World Cups, advancing to the next round for the first time.

Saket, who had been engaged in a heated debate, said they are facing multiple issues over the past few years and are trying to solve the problems but it takes time and they must have patience.



Shahrdari Tabriz win Iran Basketball Super League



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Shahrdari Tabriz defeated Mahram in game 5 of the Iranian Basketball Super League (IBSL) Finals.

Shahrdari Tabriz beat their opponents 85-73 in Tabriz and claimed IBSL title for the first time.

The Tabriz based team lost two matches and won three.

Earlier on the day, Petrochimi Ban-

dar Imam finished in third place after beating Naft Abadan.

The Iranian Basketball Super League (IBSL) is a professional men’s basketball league in Iran.

Founded in 1998, it is widely regarded as one of the best basketball leagues in Asia.

The league follows the promotion and relegation system in which the worst two teams are relegated to 1st Division.

Iran to play pre-World Cup friendlies with Greece and Lithuania



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran national football team will play two friendly matches with Greece and Lithuania in early June.

Team Melli will face Greece on June 2 in Turkey.

Carlos Queiroz’s men will also play Lithuania six days later in their training camp in Russia.

Team Melli have been drawn along

with one-time World Cup champions Spain, UEFA titleholders Portugal and Morocco in Group B.

Carlos Queiroz’s men will kick off the competition with a match against Morocco on June 15.

Iran, meanwhile, face Spain in Kazan on 20 June before meeting Cristiano Ronaldo’s Portugal in Saransk five days later.

Spain’s PM doesn’t want Neymar at Real

Spain’s prime minister, Mariano Rajoy, said that he would prefer for his team, Real Madrid, not to sign Neymar from Paris Saint-Germain.

Madrid president Florentino Perez has made numerous attempts over the years to sign Neymar, even after his controversial transfer from Santos to La Liga rivals Barcelona in 2013.

Since Neymar joined PSG in a record €222 million deal last summer, Perez, club captain Sergio Ramos and Madrid’s Brazil internationals Casemiro and Marcelo have all spoken about the possibility of the Brazilian playing at the Bernabeu.

Rajoy, speaking to AS ahead of Madrid hosting PSG in the first leg of the Champions League round of 16 on Wednesday, said he believed in the team’s current strike force of Gareth Bale, Karim Benzema and Cristiano Ronaldo.

“I wouldn’t like to see Neymar in the white shirt,” Rajoy said. “I don’t know about [Kylian Mbappe] but Bale, Benzema and Cristiano were great, and within a few months, people are doubting them. We should have a bit more perspective. I believe in them.”

Madrid’s disastrous season has seen Zinedine Zidane’s



side in fourth place in La Liga, 17 points adrift of runaway leaders Barcelona, while they were also eliminated from the Copa del Rey by neighbours Leganes.

Rajoy admitted that PSG’s form so far this year was much better, but recalled that Madrid often saved their season

by lifting themselves in Europe.

“Thinking rationally, you might believe they will give us a thrashing,” he said. “But in these games anything can happen. We cannot forget this is Madrid and the Champions League is their competition -- even more when they are well behind in La Liga and out of the Copa. They are the same players as last year -- a team which has won three of the last four Champions Leagues. I think we can knock [PSG] out.”

Meanwhile, Bale’s agent, Jonathan Barnett, has told Tuttosport that his client is as valuable as Neymar, but the reported Manchester United target’s price tag is meaningless as he has no intention of leaving the Bernabeu.

“Bale is worth as much as Neymar, €222m,” Barnett said. “But he is very happy at Madrid. He loves it at Madrid.”

Ronaldo’s future also had no bearing on Bale’s future plans, Barnett said, as he did not need the Portuguese to leave in order to be acknowledged as a key player in Madrid’s team.

“Gareth does not need Cristiano Ronaldo to leave. Even at the moment, he is a star at Real Madrid,” Barnett said.

(Source: ESPN)

ACL: Iran’s Persepolis sink Nasaf Qarshi



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Persepolis were in a class of their own as they defeated FC Nasaf to open their 2018 AFC Champions League Group C campaign on a high on Tuesday.

The 2017 semi-finalist took the lead 20 minutes in when Nigerian forward Godwin Mensha headed home Vahid Amiri’s cross from the right flank to put Persepolis in front at the half-time break.

After the restart, striker Ali Alipour netted a brace to round off the Iranians’

triumph. First, he collected a pass from right-back Sadegh Moharrami and fired with venom into the top corner from inside the box in the 66th minute.

Alipour added his second of the night five minutes later, this time finding space inside Nasaf’s box to receive a squared pass from the left by Mohammad Ansari and driving it low with his left into the back of the net to complete a 3-0 win, the-afc.com reported.

Persepolis will travel to Qatar to face Al Sadd on Matchday Two while Nasaf host Emirati side Al Wasl.

Matchday One - Group D: Al Rayyan 2-2 Esteghlal



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Esteghlal football team of Iran left it late before salvaging a 2-2 draw against Al Rayyan in Group D of the AFC Champions League at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in Doha on Tuesday.

Al Rayyan captain Rodrigo Tabata opened their own goal just seven minutes into the match.

Moroccan Abderrazak Hamdallah levelled the match in the 18th minute and Al Rayyan captain Tabata scored in the 18th minute.

Tabata was sent off in the 80th minute

for a dangerous tackle on Esteghlal’s player.

Ali Ghorbani was on target in the 88th minute to seal a deserved point for the Iranian team.

The 2018 AFC Champions League is the 37th edition of Asia’s premier club football tournament organized by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), and the 16th under the current AFC Champions League title.

The winners of the 2018 AFC Champions League will qualify as the AFC representative at the 2018 FIFA Club World Cup in the United Arab Emirates.

Persepolis striker Alipour invited to Team Melli: Report

TASNIM— Following a string of impressive performances in Iran Professional League (IPL) with Persepolis, Ali Alipour was invited to Iran national football team.

Iranian media reports suggest that the 23-year-old forward has been called up by Carlos Queiroz to join Team Melli for the first time.

Alipour started his career with Nassaji Mazandaran in 2011. He made his professional debut in 2012 at the age of 16 with Azadegan League club Sang Ahan.

He signed with Persepolis in January 2015 and scored in the Tehran derby against Esteghlal, making him the youngest player to score in the match, with only 19 years of age.

Alipour currently is the top scorer of IPL with 17 goals.

Messi cried after 2012 UCL exit - Sanchez

Alexis Sanchez has revealed Lionel Messi was in tears in the dressing room after Barcelona were knocked out of the Champions League by Chelsea in 2012.

Messi missed a penalty in the second leg at the Camp Nou as goals from Ramires and Fernando Torres earned 10-man Chelsea a 2-2 draw and a place in the final against Bayern Munich.

Sanchez started the game for Barca, who took a 2-0 lead to go ahead in the tie after losing 1-0 at Stamford Bridge in the first leg.

Chelsea had John Terry sent off in the first half but regained the lead in the tie when Ramires chipped Victor Valdes before Messi hit the bar from the spot.

Torres confirmed the Premier League’s side place in the final in stoppage time, leaving Messi distraught in the changing room.

“In the Barcelona dressing room after the Chelsea game, I saw Leo cry,” Sanchez told Sky Sports. “That’s because players demand so much from themselves. People don’t see that.”

In eight meetings against the English side, Messi has never scored against Chelsea, who went on to win the Champions League in 2012.

His only win against Chelsea came in 2006, his first game against them, when Barca won 2-1 at Stamford Bridge.

Barcelona travel to Stamford Bridge next week for the first leg of their Champions League round-of-16 tie and Messi will look to end his drought against the Premier League champions.

(Source: Soccer.net)

Japanese skater suspended from Winter Olympics for doping

Japanese short track speed skater Kei Saito has been suspended from the Winter Olympics after a positive doping test.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) said Saito voluntarily accepted his provisional suspension after an out-of-competition test turned up signs of a masking agent.

Saito had been due to compete Wednesday in the second heat of the Men’s 5,000 Meter Relay, according to the official Games website.



Instead, the 21-year-old athlete will leave the Olympic Village Tuesday.

This is the first doping violation of the 2018 Pyeongchang Games. However, CAS pointed out that no results from the Games have been affected by the violation.

In a statement, Saito said he was surprised by the result and had not knowingly taken any prohibited drugs.

“I have consulted with medical experts to treat any injuries or sickness in advance and I have paid attention to my daily consumption of drinks and food,” he said. “I have no merit and motivation for using this drug. I cannot think of any other case than I accidentally and unintentionally took it in.”

(Source: CNN)

Aguero tops Sky Sports Power Rankings

Manchester City striker Sergio Aguero has topped the Sky Sports Power Rankings this week.

Aguero scored four goals during a 5-1 win over Leicester on Saturday, while team-mate Kevin De Bruyne climbed two places up the chart to land the No 3 spot with a hat-trick of assists.

The Argentine’s scintillating performance ousted last week’s table topper Eden Hazard into the runner-up spot - despite the Belgian netting twice during Chelsea’s 3-0 win over West Brom.

Liverpool duo Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino were both among the top performers after getting on the scoresheet during a 2-0 win at Southampton.

Harry Kane scored the winner against Arsenal to retain his No 6 spot, while Christian Eriksen broke into the top 10 after creating four chances at Wembley.

Elsewhere in the top 10, Stoke’s Xherdan Shaqiri hit a customary stunner from distance to salvage a point against Brighton, while James Ward Prowse and Theo Walcott also made the cut.

The Power Rankings methodology reflects a player’s performance over the last five matchdays by awarding points to players for 32 different stats.

(Source: Sky Sports)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com
■ Managing Director: Ali Asgari
■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
editor@tehrantimes.com
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450
» Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433
» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
» Printed at: Rooztab - ISSN: 1017-94

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.o. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713

Books from world literature appear in Persian

TEHRAN – Three books from world literature have recently been published in Persian in Tehran.

The books are Swiss playwright and novelist Max Frisch’s “The Arsonists”, Russian writer Viktoria Tokareva’s “The Japanese Umbrella” and Swedish writer Fredrik Backman’s “The Deal of a Lifetime”.



Left to right, this combination photo shows the front covers of the Persian copies of “The Arsonists”, “The Japanese Umbrella” and “The Deal of a Lifetime”.

Qasem Shafi Nurmohammadi is the translator of “The Arsonists”, which has been published by Jahan-e Ketab Publications.

The play is about fires that are becoming a problem, but Biedermann, believes nothing can get to him, so he happily fulfils his civic duty by giving shelter to two new houseguests.

Jahan-e Ketab is also the publisher of “The Japanese Umbrella”, which has been translated into Persian by Parviz Davai.

Like Chekhov, the writer whom she most admires and on whom she models herself, Tokareva likes to write about ordinary men and women and the vicissitudes of their day-to-day lives.

“The Deal of a Lifetime” has been translated into Persian by Farnaz Teimurazov and Chatrang is the publisher of the book.

In the book, a father tells his story of a Christmas Eve to his son.

Galaxy inspires Iranian artist’s new collection “Callixy”

TEHRAN – The galaxy has provided inspiration for the Iranian artist Hamedeh Mashiyati to create her latest calligraphic painting collection that she calls “Callixy” (“Khatkeshan”).



Hamedeh Mashiyati poses in a file photo beside one of the works from her collection “Callixy”. The exhibition will run until March 11 at the gallery that can be found at 71 Khoddami St. off Vanak Square.

“I try to be in harmony with the universe,” Mashiyati said in a press release on Tuesday. “Because man feels himself in that and unites with the eternal spirit,” she added.

The collection is composed of 14 works, some of which feature verses of Rumi poetry inscribed on images of the galaxy.

She plans to showcase the collection in an exhibition that will open at Tehran’s Vaali Gallery on Friday.

Mashiyati has previously displayed her works in solo exhibits in Iran and also has participated in several international art events.

The exhibition will run until

U.S. singer Vic Damone dies at age 89, family says

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — U.S. singer Vic Damone, a crooner who found fame in the 1940s and 1950s, has died at the age of 89, his family said on Monday.

Damone, known for hits like “I Have But One Heart” and “You Do”, died in Miami Beach, Florida on Sunday surrounded by relatives, his family said in a statement.

Damone appeared in television shows and movies in the 1960s and also had hits with “An Affair to Remember” and “On the Street Where You Live.”

New York-born Damone was the son of an Italian-American electrician and was inspired to launch a singing career by Frank Sinatra, with whom he later became friends.

Damone was also a personal friend of U.S. President Donald Trump, the family said.

In 1962, he hosted his own television variety show “The Vic Damone Show” on NBC, after appearing in movie musicals “Hit the Deck” and “Kismet” in the 1950s.

In 1971, Damone began performing in Las Vegas casinos, and in 1972 he was offered the role of singer Johnny Fontane in “The Godfather” movie but turned it down. The role ultimately went to Al Martino.

Damone released his final album in 2002 and gave his final public performance in 2011 at the age of 82, when he sang to a sold-out crowd in Palm Beach, Florida.

His autobiography, “Singing Was the Easy Part”, was released in 2009.

Dame was married five times and is survived by his six grandchildren.

Iranian theaters refresh screens to keep box office brisk after Fajr

TEHRAN – Three Iranian films are coming on screen at Iranian theaters to maintain the pickup experienced by their box offices during the Fajr Film Festival.

The theaters eagerly arranged additional screenings by public demand during the ten-day festival, which wrapped up on Sunday. Now, they are revising their schedules to sustain the improvement.

Starring Mina Sadati and Milad Keymaram, director Amir-Ahmad Ansari’s thriller “Rabies” had its premiere in Iran on Monday three years after its production.

The X-rated movie is about Shahrokh and Siavash, two friends who have paved a criminal path. By the help of a woman, they set a trap for a rich criminal and rob him of all his fortune and send him to jail.

The film has been screened at several international events, including the Zanzibar International Film Festival in Tanzania.

Majid Majidi’s drama “Beyond the Clouds”, which was filmed in India in 2017, and Vahid Jalilvand’s acclaimed movie “No Date, No Signature” are scheduled to hit Iranian theaters today.

“Beyond the Clouds” had its Iranian premiere at Tehran’s Kurosh Cineplex on Monday night during a special ceremony, which was attended by Majidi and a large number of Iranian cineastes.

Starring Ishaan Khattar, Malavika Mohanan and Sharada, “Beyond the Clouds” revolves around the life of a young boy, Amir, and his sister, Tara, in Mumbai. When on the run from the cops, Amir finds his estranged sister, who in a bid to protect her brother lands in jail. Their entire lives are clouded by despair when, unexpectedly, the light shines on them from beyond the clouds.

“No Date, No Signature” is about Dr.



Director Majid Majidi attends the Iranian premiere of his movie “Beyond the Clouds” at Tehran’s Kurosh Cineplex on February 12, 2108. (Mehr/Masud Saki)

Nariman, a forensic pathologist who has a car accident with a motorcyclist and injures his 8-year-old son. He offers to take the child to a clinic nearby, but the father refuses his help and money. The next morning, in the hospital where he works,

Dr. Nariman finds out that the little boy has been brought in for an autopsy after a suspicious death.

Earlier in September 2017, the film brought Jalilvand the best director award and its star Navid Mohammadzadeh was

picked as best actor in the Orizzonti (Horizons) section of the 74th Venice International Film Festival in Italy.

“No Date, No Signature” also won a Gold Hugo Special Jury Prize at the 53rd Chicago International Film Festival last October.

Iranian photographers win awards in PhotoArt Prague



“Single” by Hamidreza Helali received the CFFU Bronze Medal in PhotoArt Prague 2018.

TEHRAN – PhotoArt Prague announced on Saturday that several Iranian photographers have won awards at the competition.

Hamid Reza Helali won the IAAP (International Association of Art Photographers) Ribbon for his photo “Tow” in the Open Monochrome section.

Helali also received the CFFU (Czech Federation of Art Photography) Bronze Medal for his photo “Single” in the Open Color section.

In the Nature section, Mostafa Mirtaleb won the FIAP (International Federation of Photographic Art) Blue Ribbon for “Arvah”,

and the FIAP Blue Ribbon in the Portrait section was given to Saeid Abdollahi for “Invasion”.

Mirtaleb also received the CFFU Bronze Medal for “Alam Bandan” in the Photojournalism section.

In the Portrait section, the CFFU Bronze Medal was given to Mehdi Zabolabbasi for his photo “Belief”.

The international competition is organized by PhotoArt, a photo magazine which is based in the Czech capital.

Works coming from different countries including Brazil, Spain, Hungary, India and the UK were judged at the competition.

Bold, black and beautiful, “Black Panther” hopes for cultural shift

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Some film critics are calling it the best Marvel movie so far; others say it’s a correction after years of neglecting minority talent in Hollywood.

The predominantly black cast of superhero movie “Black Panther” hope its combination of African pride, beauty and adventure will also mark a cultural shift in the movie industry and beyond.

The Disney movie, opening worldwide this week, tells the story of T’Challa/Black Panther (Chadwick Boseman), the new king of the futuristic, wealth-laden African nation Wakanda, who is challenged by factions within his own country.

“Marvel has a way of really affecting popular culture,” said Lupita Nyong’o, who plays the Wakandan warrior spy, Nakia.

“Hopefully it changes the general idea of what being an African is. Too often times we see Africa as a place that is wanting, and here it’s a place that you want to go,” she said.

The movie, directed by Ryan Coogler and also featuring Michael B. Jordan, Angela Bassett, Forest Whitaker and Daniel Kaluuya, arrives to stellar reviews after years of criticism about the underrepresentation of movies, actors and filmmakers of color in Hollywood.

Analysts expect it to rake in some \$150 million at the North American box office on its opening weekend, and the filmmakers hope it will encourage studios to invest in more mainstream, racially diverse films.



Cast member Chadwick Boseman poses at the premiere of “Black Panther” in Los Angeles, California, U.S., January 29, 2018. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

“It’s not often that you see two black men in a movie playing a role of this importance. You see it with white actors, (like) ‘Ocean’s Eleven’ where it’s Brad Pitt and Matt Damon and George Clooney, and it’s like ‘why does that never happen with us?’” Boseman said.

“Hopefully the success of this will make it be commonplace. It’ll make Hollywood stop saying ‘well, your movies don’t travel,’ he said.

“Black Panther” also offers a new type of villain through Jordan’s Killmonger, an empathetic former military black-ops agent, who wants to distribute Wakanda’s wealth to arm the world’s black population and help them rise to power.

Wakanda is depicted as a verdant land with stunning waterfalls where spacecraft designed like tribal masks soar over a modern metropolis.

Iranian expatriates in Vancouver to perform “Hamletak”



A poster for “Hamletak” from the Blue Light Theater Group.

TEHRAN – The Blue Light Theater Group will perform “Hamletak” (“Little Hamlet”), a Persian musical adaptation of William Shakespeare’s masterpiece Hamlet, at the Centennial Theatre in Vancouver on February 18, the Canadian theater has announced.

The group established by a number of Iranian expatriates in the city will use some traditional Persian performance styles including siyah-bazi, a type of Iranian folk dramatic performing art, and traditional Persian puppet show kheimeh shab-bazi

to perform the musical directed by Jubin Ghaziani.

The play has been written by Mohsen and Ofoq Iraj. Composer Alborz Rahmani will collaborate in the project.

The play is due to open with the recorded voice message of the veteran Iranian stage and screen actor Ali Nasirian.

Arash and Kasra Azad, Elnaz Rezai, Fadin Zahedi and Soheila Rahimi are the main members of the cast.

The performance is staged in Persian with a scene-by-scene breakdown in an English brochure.

Family feud erupts over riches left by ‘French Elvis’ Hallyday

PARIS (Reuters) — A feud has erupted over the estate of French rocker Johnny Hallyday, who died two months ago, with two of his four children aggrieved that they have seemingly been cut out of a will that may be worth as much as 100 million euros (\$122 million).

Lawyers for Hallyday’s actress daughter Laura Smet, 34, said she was taking legal action to contest a will that appears to leave everything to his fourth wife Laeticia, 42, who mostly lives in Los Angeles.

Separately, a lawyer for David Hallyday, who was born to Johnny Hallyday’s first wife Sylvie Vartan in 1966, said he was planning to join his half-sister in challenging the will, which was drawn up under Californian law.

The hard-living rocker, known as the French Elvis, died in December at the age of 74 after a battle with lung cancer. During his nearly 60-year career, he sold more than 100 million records, building up a valuable but dispersed estate. He is buried on the Caribbean island of Saint Barthelemy.

In a statement issued by her lawyers, Laura said she was “stunned and pained” to discover she had been excluded from the inheritance.

“If this were to be, her father will have left her nothing: no material goods, no stake in his artistic legacy, no souvenir, no guitar, no motorbike - not even a signed cover from the song he



Artists pay tribute to French music icon Johnny Hallyday during the 33rd Victoires de la Musique French music awards ceremony in Paris, France, February 9, 2018. (Reuters/Benoit Tessier)

dedicated to her,” the statement said.

The document, Laura Smet’s lawyers said, seemingly runs counter to French law, which specifically protects children from being disenfranchised in a will.

While the details of the document and the size of his estate have not been made public, the lawyers said it appeared to leave everything to Laeticia, who Hallyday married in 1996, when she was 21.

French media estimates of his wealth vary wildly, with some saying it may be as much as 100 million euros (\$122.40 million) but others saying it could be far lower because of debts.

Hallyday, famed for a rockstar lifestyle spent much of his later years in Los Angeles, indulging his love of motorbikes and sports cars.