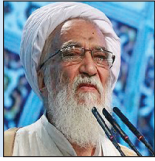
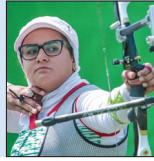




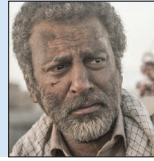
IAEA reaffirms Iran's compliance to nuclear deal for 10th time **2**



Cleric urges Judiciary to bring police murderers to justice **2**



Zahra Nemati nominated for International Women's Day award **15**



"The Lost Strait" leads winners at National Will Manifestation Awards **16**

We can't remain in JCPOA with no benefit



See page 2

Majlis approves next year's \$268b budget bill

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The Iranian parliament (Majlis) on Thursday approved a 12.175-quadrillion-rial (about \$268 billion) national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year, starting March 21, IRNA reported. On December 10, 2017, President Hassan Rouhani presented the administration's draft of the national budget bill to the Majlis. The bill was rejected on January 28 during the open session of the parliament

with 83 votes in favor, 120 votes against and 9 abstentions, media reported. Then the bill was returned to a joint parliamentary committee for revisions. The joint commission is a legislative body responsible for reviewing budget bills as well as the five-year development plans. After revision, the public resources in the budget bill increased by 14.3 percent to 4.43 quadrillion rials (about \$97.792 billion), from 4.25 quadrillion rials (about \$93.818 billion) of the previous proposed bill.

Iran sped up work on seaborne reactors in response to U.S. failure to respect JCPOA

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has said Washington's lack of commitment to the nuclear deal prompted Tehran to accelerate work on development of nuclear marine propulsion. In an interview with ISNA published on Friday, Behrouz Kamalvandi talked

about recent letter by Iran to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on development of nuclear propulsion. It came after a quarterly report on Iran's nuclear program by the IAEA, which is policing the deal's restrictions, showed that Iran had informed the agency of a "decision that has been taken to construct naval nuclear propulsion in future". **→2**

Syria slams Western silence on fatal terrorist attacks against Damascus civilians

By staff & agencies
Syria's United Nations envoy has denounced the United States and Europe for their silence on the carnage of civilians in Damascus by the terrorist groups operating in Eastern Ghouta, saying it is "unacceptable" to endanger the lives of eight million in the capital in order to protect

a few thousand terrorists in its suburbs. Bashar al-Ja'afari was speaking at a United Nations Security Council meeting on the situation in Syria on Thursday. After losing most of the Syrian territories under their control, foreign-backed militant groups, including the notorious al-Nusra Front **→13**



ARTICLE

By Hanif Ghaffari
Political analyst

Why EU is worried?

European officials continue to worry about their political future. The social, political, economic and security developments in Europe show that the European Union is not in a good position. This has caused European officials and many experts and analysts to warn Europe's issues about the future. A future whose signs are now visible.

In the course of the Munich Security Conference, the confusion of European countries was clear about current issues in the international system. Many European politicians could not hide their fears of these developments. On the other hand, the presence of the Trump government in the United States has become a serious problem for Europe. The president of the United States looks at the EU and the euro area negatively. Donald Trump welcomes the collapse of the European Union. However, some European politicians continue to play on the land of the United States.

Also during the World Economic Summit in Davos, the Chancellor of Germany and the President of France both gave a significant warning about the return of nationalism and populism to Europe. This warning has been sent in a time when Far-Right movements in Europe have been able to gain unbelievable power and even seek to conquer a majority of parliaments and form governments.

In her speech, Angela Merkel emphasized that the twentieth century's mistake shouldn't be repeated. By this, the German Chancellor meant the tendency of European countries to nationalism. Although the German Chancellor warning was serious and necessary, the warning seems to be a little late. Perhaps it would have been better if the warning was forwarded after the European Parliamentary elections in 2014, and subsequently, more practical and deterrent measures were designed. However, Merkel and other European leaders ignored the representation of over a hundred right-wing extremist in the European Parliament in 2014 and merely saw it as a kind of social excitement.

The fact is that many European officials still do not understand the current facts in the European Union! This social excitement has now become a "political demand" in the West. The dissatisfaction of European citizens with their governments has caused them to explicitly demand the return to the twentieth century and the time before the formation of the United Europe. **→7**

Saudi-UAE move in the Sahel region is for rivalry with Iran: Prof. Entessar

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Nader Entessar from South Alabama University says that "Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been looking at the Sahel region of West Africa as a major source of investment." "We should look at the Saudi-UAE move in the Sahel not in isolation but in the broader context of their rivalry with Iran," Entessar tells the Tehran Times recently.

Following is the text of the interview:
■ Saudi Arabia and UAE have pledged to financially back a five-nation coalition force in the Sahel region of West Africa. What are the reasons behind such funding?

A: Here are two main reasons for this. One is economical. Both Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been looking at the Sahel region of West Africa as a major source of investment. The second reason is political and strategic. These two Persian Gulf

countries want to portray themselves as supporters of global anti-terrorism and hence are committing themselves to militarily supporting the West African countries and increasing their political leverage in the Sahel region.

■ What is the strategic importance of the Sahel region for Saudi Arabia and UAE?

A: As I stated in my answer to the previous question, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been trying to expand their economic, political, strategic and cultural foothold in Africa. Their recent endeavor in the Sahel region must be seen in the overall context of Saudi-UAE influence buying machination in the African continent.

■ One of the reasons as to why Saudi Arabia and UAE joined the initiative is to contain the influence of Iran and Qatar in the Sahel region. Basically, what are these countries competing for in the Sahel region?

A: Iran has also been seeking to establish an economic foothold in the continent of Africa as Tehran sees Africa as an untapped and potentially

lucrative market, as does Qatar. We should look at the Saudi-UAE move in the Sahel not in isolation but in the broader context of their rivalry with Iran. In other words, the binary views of the Saudi-UAE axis compel them to make knee-jerk moves to checkmate Iran in every arena irrespective of the extent of their immediate gains.

■ Right after that Saudi Arabia and UAE joined G5 Sahel force summit in Paris and pledged their support, Qatar's emir visited the region to sign trade and economic deals. How much potential do have the Sahel region to help Qatar get rid of the hardship caused by Saudi Arabia and its allies?

A: The Sahel region's potential as a conduit to greatly alleviate Qatar's hardship is minimal at the present time, but Qatar sees the Sahel region of Africa as yet another place it can compete economically with Saudi-led Arab countries and score a point against its Saudi-UAE rivals. However, the Saudi-led countries have an upper-hand there because of their military commitments and economic muscle.

Iranian diplomat says missiles are matter of 'national security'

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has said Tehran will not compromise on its missile defense program, noting missiles are necessary to guard the country against possible foreign aggression.

"We would not negotiate on our missiles, ballistic missiles. These are a matter of our national security; nobody would compromise on their national security," Araqchi said in an interview with the BBC in London.

Here is an excerpt of the interview:
■ When you were in Munich I understand that

you had meetings with European officials about the Iran nuclear deal, because you know President Trump has basically told Congress and European allies that they have to, in his words, fix the Iran deal by May or else the sanctions will be imposed again.

Answer: Well we are in close contact with E3 and EU, External Service, we consult with them very closely. In the recent weeks I have visited Paris, Berlin and now London. I have been in different places meeting European officials, E3 officials, and of course EU officials, especially Helga Schmid and her colleagues to consult

about the latest developments. JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) is in a very critical moment, in the next three months I am sure we would have a big challenge. Of course this is a challenge President Trump has started more than a year ago, he tried to somehow destroy JCPOA because there is no role to fix or to change or to alter JCPOA, it's a package, it's not linked to any other issue, it's a package of gives and takes, you cannot just change one piece of that. The whole package would collapse.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)



Iran's armwrestling competition underway in Tabas

Iran's armwrestling competition got underway in Tabas, South Khorasan Province.

The tournament has brought 27 teams from 24 counties together.

Arm wrestling is a sport involving two participants. Each places one arm on a surface with their elbows bent and touching the surface, and they grip each other's hand.

The goal is to pin the other's arm onto the surface, the winner's arm over the loser's arm.

Trump slammed for suggesting teachers should be armed

By staff & agencies
The United States President Donald Trump has been slammed for suggesting that teachers should be armed to help prevent school shootings.

Trump made the divisive proposal on Wednesday during a "listening session" with survivors of last week's mass shooting at a Florida high school.

Following the remarks, families of victims of gun violence, survivors of mass shootings, gun control advocates, teachers and some politicians called the idea "terrible" and said the administration should instead focus on reforming gun control legislation.

Trump, who admitted it was a controversial idea, said he believed "a teacher who was adept at firearms ... could very well end the attack very quickly".

He added: "I really believe if these cowards knew that the school was well-guarded ... I think they wouldn't go into the school to start off with, it could very well solve your problem."

Trump in the past has said it was "wrong" of anyone to suggest that he was in favor of bringing guns into the classroom.

At least 17 people were killed last week when a gunman opened fire on students and teachers at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. According to police, 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz confessed to carrying out the shooting rampage.

There was an armed guard on duty at the Parkland high school last week, but he was not able to engage with the gunman before the shooting ended.

Scott Israel, who is the sheriff in the county where the Florida shooting took place, said he doesn't believe in arming teachers.

"I don't think teachers should be armed. I think teachers should teach," Israel said during a CNN Town Hall on Wednesday.

"But that's exactly what's wrong with this country. We have people in Washington, DC ... telling teachers what they should do, without asking teachers what you want to do."

Several teachers took Twitter to highlight the consequences of being armed in the classroom. Many added that they don't want to be armed.

Florida Senator Marco Rubio, who is from Trump's Republican party, also said the idea of arming teachers had "practical problems". **→13**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Cleric urges
Judiciary to bring
police murderers
to justice

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Movahedi Kermani, the interim leader of Tehran Friday Prayers, has asked the Judiciary to punish the murderers of five security forces who were recently killed in riots in northern Tehran.

The demand by the ayatollah came days after three policemen and two Basijis were violently run over and killed by members of a Dervish cult in protests in the Pasdaran neighborhood, northern Tehran.

Addressing worshippers, the ayatollah said nobody is allowed to cross security redlines, praising the police's prudence and restraint in dealing with the rioters, Mehr reported.



Military chief
vows severe
response against
law-breakers

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Chief of the Iranian Armed Forces Mohammad Hossein Baqeri said on Thursday that security forces will harshly counter violent "law-breakers" to prevent a recurrence of the recent mob attack in the Pasdaran neighborhood in northern Tehran.

In a message, General Baqeri offered his condolences on the martyrdom of the three police forces and two Basij forces in a mob attack in northern Tehran, Tasnim reported.

Describing the attack on police by members of a cult group as "brutal", he stressed that the Armed Forces, including the "brave police and selfless Basij forces", will not permit the "rioters and law-breakers" to create such disturbances again.



Protests
aimed to cause
division: military
adviser

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Yahya Rahim Safavi, a top military adviser to the Leader, has said that the enemies orchestrated the recent protests across the country in order to divert Iran's focus to domestic affairs and to drive a wedge between authorities and people.

Rahim Safavi said the nature of threats against the Islamic Republic has changed from foreign to domestic ones, Mehr reported on Friday.

The former IRGC chief also said the enemies are trying to harm national security, emphasizing the Islamic Republic has succeeded to boost security in the region and at home.



Firearms seized
from cult rioters
in north Tehran,
MP says

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A member of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has said a large number of firearms have been seized from the house of a team of cult rioters who sought to turn the unrest in northern Tehran into an armed conflict.

Abolfazl Hassan Beigi said the recent unrest in the Pasdaran neighborhood in northern Tehran was launched with the help of foreign spy agencies and members of the opposition bloc, Tasnim reported on Friday.

In recent days, protests by members of a Dervish cult in Pasdaran left five security forces killed. Hundreds have been arrested by security forces since the start of the unrest.



Iran voices
readiness to help
Venezuela

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A senior Foreign Ministry official has announced that Iran is fully ready to help the Venezuelan government to improve its situation, IRNA reported on Friday.

"The government and the private sector of the Islamic Republic of Iran are quite ready for assisting the Venezuelan people and government to improve their current conditions," Mohammad Keshavarz Zadeh said in a meeting with Wilmar Soteldo, the Venezuelan vice president for economy.

During the meeting, the two sides agreed to prepare a "roadmap" for improvement of Iran-Venezuela economic cooperation until the next joint economic cooperation commission which is expected to be held in Tehran in near future.



Iran, UK reach
'major' decision
on Yemen
conflict

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran and Britain have come to major decisions on settlement of the crisis in Yemen which has turned into a full-fledged inhuman war, Iran's ambassador to London has announced.

In an article on his telegram channel on Friday, Hamid Baeedinejad hailed the successful results of Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi's visit to London for the second round of Iran-Britain comprehensive political talks, Tasnim reported.

Pointing to "lack of complete accord" between Tehran and London when it comes to the regional developments, the ambassador said the two countries have made "major decisions" on the ways to resolve the conflicts in Yemen.

U.S. Supreme Court forbids seizure of Persian artifacts

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that American citizens injured in a 1997 suicide bombing in Israeli occupied Palestinian territories cannot seize ancient Persian artifacts from a Chicago university and museum as compensation.

The country's highest court on Wednesday unanimously upheld a federal appeals court's decision in favor of Iran that had prevented the plaintiffs from obtaining Persian antiquities held at the University of Chicago and Chicago's Field Museum.

The case required the Supreme Court to determine what assets qualify for seizure under the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act, a federal law that governs when foreign entities can be sued in U.S. courts.

In 2006, a group of victims of a 1997 explosion at a pedestrian mall in Jerusalem al-Quds were awarded \$71 million by a federal judge in Chicago.

The attack, which killed five people and injured 200, was claimed by the Palestinian Islamic resistance movement Hamas.

But the judge ruled that the money should be collected from Iran for being a "state sponsor of terrorism" and allowed the plaintiffs



to search for any and all Iranian assets in the United States to pay for the judgment.

The plaintiffs, who are mainly Jewish Americans, argue that Iran must pay reparations as it supports Hamas.

However, the Chicago-based 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals later reversed the 2006 judgment, ruling in favor of Iran and the University of Chicago in 2011 and again in 2014.

Iran has been a victim of baseless claims of support for terrorism, backed mostly by Zionists in the U.S. and Israel.

The Supreme Court ruling put an end to the long-running legal battle.

University of Chicago spokeswoman Marielle Sainvilus said the ruling "reaffirms the university's continuing efforts to preserve and protect this cultural heritage."

The artifacts, including at least 30,000 clay tablets and fragments with some of the oldest writings in the world, are kept at Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History and the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute.

The artifacts were loaned by Iran to the University of Chicago in 1937.

(Source: Press TV)

Zaghari's release 'linked to interest on UK debt to Iran', family claims

The fate of a British-Iranian woman jailed in Iran has been tied to the settlement of a £400 million debt that London owes Tehran, the family of one of the prisoners has claimed, The Telegraph reported on Thursday.

Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe, who has been held in an Iranian jail since April 2016, said an Iranian judge told her that her release was being held up because of a dispute over the interest owed on an unfulfilled arms deal dating back to the 1970s, the report said.

The Shah of Iran paid upfront for a consignment of British Chieftain tanks and support vehicles in the late 1970s, but the contract was cancelled after he was overthrown in the revolution of 1979.

Iran has been seeking to recover its money ever since. Britain paid money intended to settle the debt into a frozen bank account in 2002, but wrangles over the interest and the legality of paying money to Iran



while it was under international sanctions have delayed the payment.

British officials have previously denied any link between talks over the debt and Zaghari Ratcliffe's release.

But Richard Ratcliffe, Zaghari Ratcliffe's husband,

said an Iranian judge told his wife in a meeting on Wednesday that her release is dependent on the interest the UK owes and that Iranian foreign ministry is currently in talks with the UK government over finalizing the sum to be paid.

"It is the first time we've been told that it is linked to the dispute over the interest rate. But it is at least the second time an Iranian official has told Nazanin that her case is linked with the arms deal debt," Richard Ratcliffe, Nazanin's husband, told the Telegraph.

He said a prosecutor had at least once before referred to the debt in a previous meeting.

"A fight over a half or one percent of interest rate does not seem such a big stone worth keeping a mother in prison away from her baby," Ratcliffe added.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe has been in prison since she was arrested at Tehran airport at the end of a family holiday to visit her parents in April 2016. She has been charged with espionage.

IAEA reaffirms Iran's compliance to nuclear deal for 10th time

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — In a report issued by the International Atomic Energy Agency on Thursday, the UN atomic watchdog reaffirmed for the tenth time that Iran is fulfilling its obligations, under the 2015 nuclear deal, officially being known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

The report further noted that Iran has continued to inform the IAEA of reserves

of heavy water and allowed it to monitor the reserves, according to IRNA.

The report is to be examined during the upcoming meeting of IAEA Board of Governors from March 5-9.

The IAEA report comes after U.S. President Donald Trump on January 12 gave a four-month time to Congress and Europeans to overhaul the nuclear agreement or he would unilaterally

withdraw the U.S. from it. The deadline falls on May 12.

Under the nuclear agreement, endorsed by the United National Security Council, Iran is obliged to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

The international deal went into force in January 2016.



Iran says can't remain in nuclear deal with no benefit

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Thursday that Tehran cannot remain in the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, if it cannot benefit from it.

"If the same policy of confusion and uncertainties about the JCPOA continues, if companies and banks are not working with Iran, we cannot remain in a deal that has no benefit for us," Araqchi said in a speech at the Chatham House think tank in London.

In a statement on January 12, Trump gave Europeans only 120 days to agree to an overhaul of the nuclear agreement and said if the text of the nuclear deal is not revised he would unilaterally withdraw the U.S. from the agreement.

"The deal would not survive this way even if the ultimatum is passed and waivers are extended," Independent Quoted Araqchi as saying.

Iran, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the U.S., UK, France, Russia, and China - Germany and the European Union struck the nuclear deal on July 14, 2015.

Since the JCPOA went into force in January 2016 the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency has issued ten reports each time confirming Tehran's complete compliance with the multilateral agreement.

■Iranians' expectations from JCPOA not met

"In Iran, people's expectations from the JCPOA are not met. Most of it is because of this atmosphere of uncertainty which President Trump has created."



"If we lose JCPOA, we would face another nuclear crisis, which would be very difficult to be resolved this time," Araqchi says. "This is a choice between security and insecurity at the world level."

He noted, "If we lose the JCPOA, we will face another nuclear crisis. For the Europeans or the world community, when we talk about maintaining the JCPOA and saving it, it's not a choice between Iranian or the U.S."

Iran sped up work on seaborne reactors in response to U.S. failure to fully respect nuclear deal



1 -> The report also certified Iran's compliance to the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was struck between Iran, six world powers - the U.S., France, Britain, Russia, China and Germany - and the European Union.

The spokesman criticized a lack of commitment by the other sides, especially the U.S., to the JCPOA.

U.S. President Donald Trump has long railed against the 2015 pact, threatening to pull out unless European allies help "fix" the agreement with a follow-up accord.

In 2016, President Hassan Rouhani ordered the start of work on the development of nuclear marine propulsion in reaction to U.S. violations of the nuclear deal.

Kamalvandi said his atomic organization has briefed

President Rouhani about the scientific and research aspects of the project. After that, he said, the organization was tasked with taking further steps to launch the project.

The spokesman said Iran has provided the IAEA with the necessary information on its plan, adding that the nuclear watchdog will, in turn, be given further information.

He also pointed to the IAEA's quarterly report, saying the most important point of the report was that it certified Iran's compliance to the JCPOA for the tenth time.

The report has also released the latest information about Iran's plan to develop nuclear marine propulsion which Tehran reported to the UN nuclear watchdog, Kamalvandi stated.

Myanmar bulldozing Rohingya villages to destroy its ‘crime scenes’

UNICEF: Rohingya kids facing threat of violence, cyclone season

New satellite imagery shows that the government of Myanmar is bulldozing more than dozens of already-burned-out Rohingya Muslim villages in the west of the country in an attempt to destroy evidence of violence committed by the military, rights groups say.

Satellite imagery from Colorado-based DigitalGlobe that were handed to the Associated Press on Friday showed that at least 28 depopulated villages had been leveled by bulldozers and other machinery in a 50-kilometer radius around the town of Maungdaw in western Rakhine State between December 2017 and February this year.

Citing human rights groups, the AP said authorities were destroying “crime scenes” that contained evidence of the atrocities committed by the military against the minority Rohingya Muslim community — including rape, torture, and murder.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) also released a similar analysis on Friday, saying the Myanmar’s government had cleared at least 55 villages by heavy machinery since late 2017. At least two of the flattened villages had been previously undamaged by fires, the HRW said.

“Many of these villages were scenes of atrocities against Rohingya and should be preserved so that the experts appointed by the UN to document these abuses can properly evaluate the evidence to identify those responsible,” said Brad Adams, the Asia director of the HRW. “Bulldozing these areas threatens to erase both the memory and the legal claims of the Rohingya who lived there.”

A rights monitoring group said earlier this week that the government appeared to be destroying the villages to demolish the site of mass graves in Rohingya villages.

The Arakan Project, a human rights organization documenting the atrocities against the Rohingya community, earlier this week provided The Guardian with a video of a mass grave site before its destruction.

The group’s director Chris Lewa said the bulldozing appeared to be part of the government’s attempts to destroy evidence of the grave permanently.

“Two of the mass graves sites we know about have appeared in the media, but on Thursday one of the other mass grave sites was bulldozed. This means that evidence of the killings is being destroyed,” Lewa said.

The government denies the charges, saying it is simply trying to rebuild the devastated region. It has also so far denied charges of massacre and ethnic cleansing of the Muslims as well.

Thousands of Rohingya Muslims have been killed in a military crackdown that began in late 2016 and intensified in August 2017. Nearly 700,000 Rohingya have also escaped to neighboring Bangladesh since August last year.

Amnesty blames ‘hate-filled rhetoric’ of Myanmar’s leaders In its annual report, Amnesty International blamed the massacres of Rohingya Muslims on the society that, according to the group, is encouraged by the “hate-filled



December 2, 2017



February 1, 2018

rhetoric” of its leaders.

“We saw the ultimate consequence of a society encouraged to hate, scapegoat, and fear minorities laid bare in the horrific military campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya people in Myanmar,” said Salil Shetty, the secretary general of Amnesty.

The group also criticized the international community for failing to respond robustly to “crimes against humanity and war crimes” in Myanmar.

■ EU prepares sanction against military

Meanwhile, the European Union is preparing sanctions against Myanmar’s military over the killings of Rohingya people.

According to an EU diplomat, European foreign ministers will call on EU foreign policy Chief Federica Mogherini “to propose restrictive measures on senior members of the Myanmar military for systematic human rights abuses, without delay.”

They will also ask Mogherini on Monday to look at ways to strengthen the EU’s 1990s-era arms embargo on Myanmar that remains in place.

In a statement expected to be release on Monday at a regular gathering of EU foreign ministers, the EU is also expected to reiterate its call for the release of Reuters’ reporters Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, detained on December 12 last year because of their coverage a massacre of the Rohingya.

Earlier this year, the two were officially charged for breaching a colonial-era law. The charges brought against them could carry a penalty of up to 14 years in prison.

■ Rohingya kids facing threat of violence,

cyclone season

Elsewhere, the United Nations children’s agency, UNICEF, warned on Friday about the condition of more than 720,000 Rohingya children who are facing a threat of violence in Myanmar as well as those who are living in “a very difficult situation” in unsanitary and overcrowded camps in Bangladesh.

“Some 720,000 Rohingya children are essentially trapped — either hemmed in by violence and forced displacement inside Myanmar or stranded in overcrowded camps in Bangladesh because they can’t return home,” said UNICEF Director of Emergency Programs Manuel Fontaine.

“This is a crisis without a quick fix that could take years to resolve unless there is a concerted effort to address its root causes,” he said.

There are around 534,000 Rohingya children living in a “very difficult situation” in camps in Bangladesh’s Cox’s Bazar, which are now expected to get even worse as the cyclone season, with heavy tropical rains, approaches.

“Actually, if there is a bad cyclone passing through the camp, which became the fourth biggest town, a slum town of Bangladesh, we may have then a real situation to face,” UNICEF’s representative Edouard Beigbeder said in Geneva.

The cyclone season, which will bring heavy rain and high wind from March through July, is feared to cause another humanitarian crisis, including disease, flooding, landslides, and further displacement for those in camps along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.

(Source: Press TV)

UNAIDS deputy chief to step down after sex assault accusation

UNICEF deputy resigns after ‘damaging’ allegations

The deputy head of the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Luiz Loures, says he will not seek to renew his term in office although he was cleared of a sexual harassment allegation.

Loures “has communicated his wish to the UNAIDS executive director not to seek the renewal of his position,” the agency said in a statement on Friday. It added that the Brazilian national “will end his term as deputy executive director at the end of March 2018.”

The UNAIDS executive director, Michel Sidibé, has accepted the decision and conveyed it to the Secretary General of the United Nations António Guterres.

A formal complaint was brought against Loures in November 2016 by a female employee, who claimed that she has been sexually harassed on multiple occasions beginning in 2011 and assaulted her in a lift in 2015. However, Loures was cleared of any wrongdoing by the internal probe conducted by the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Office of Internal Oversight Services (IOS) which said there was insufficient evidence to support the woman’s claims.

Loures also told IOS that he had a graphic sexual conversation with his accuser on the night in question; however, the woman strongly rejected the claim while investigators also queried, according to the IOS findings seen by AFP. Speaking to reporters in Geneva, UNAIDS spokesman Mahesh Mahalingam said Loures’s decision had no connection



to the allegations against him based on the findings of the internal UN probe. “The independent investigation done by the WHO’s internal oversight services division clearly found that the case was unsubstantiated and recommended the case to be closed,” Mahalingam said. “Dr. Loures has had a long and distinguished service of 22 years at UNAIDS,” he said, adding, “He clearly feels that this is the time for him to move on.”

According to the internal United Nations investigation, Sidibé mishandled the sexual assault complaint against his top deputy.

The executive director of UNAIDS, Michel Sidibé, mishandled a sexual assault complaint against his top deputy, according to an internal United Nations investigation.

The IOS “found it perplexing that Dr. Sidibé

stated that he approached (the accuser) in an attempt to resolve the matter informally, given the Dr. Sidibé was aware at the time that the matter was under official investigation by IOS”, the internal report said.

■ UNICEF deputy resigns after ‘damaging’ allegations

Loures made his decision to resign a day after Justin Forsyth, deputy director of the UN Children’s Fund, stepped down following complaints of inappropriate behavior towards female staff in his previous post as head of British charity Save The Children.

The deputy director of the United Nations children’s agency has resigned saying he doesn’t want allegations of sexual misconduct made against him to “damage” the agency’s

work. Justin Forsyth said in a statement on Thursday his decision to step down from the UNICEF role was not because of “mistakes” made while head of Britain-based charity Save the Children.

Female colleagues of Forsyth’s at Save the Children raised complaints against him in 2011 and 2015, alleging he had sent inappropriate text messages and commented on what junior female staff members were wearing.

Forsyth said on Thursday the cases had been dealt with “through a proper process many years ago”.

“I apologized unreservedly at the time and face to face. I apologize again. There is no doubt in my mind that some of the coverage around me is not just to - rightly - hold me to account, but also to attempt to do serious damage to our cause and the case for aid,” he said. UNICEF operates in 190 countries around the world, according to the agency’s website. Forsyth’s resignation comes amid significant turbulence in the aid sector.

Earlier this month, reports surfaced that Oxfam employees had paid sex workers while on an aid mission in Haiti, following the country’s devastating 2010 earthquake.

Oxfam has received 26 new claims of sexual misconduct, allegedly by its staff, since the scandal broke on February 9.

The European Union and British government have said they will review their funding of Oxfam in light of the allegations.

(Source: agencies)

Trump admin.: U.S. forces can stay in Syria without Congress authorization

The administration of the United States President Donald Trump says it needs no legal authorization from Congress to indefinitely keep American military forces deployed in Syria and Iraq, even in territories that have been cleared of terrorist fighters, according to two newly published letters written by the Pentagon and State Department.

The U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had hinted the plan in a speech last month, saying that the U.S. troops would be in Syria to contain Iran and Russia who are fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists in Syria, and also to prevent the Syrian government from taking-back terrorist-held areas of the country.

Democrat Senator Tim Kaine to whom the letters were addressed sharply criticized the administration’s reasoning and said in a statement that Trump risks “acting like a king by unilaterally starting a war.”

The deputy undersecretary of defense for policy, David Trachtenberg, wrote the letters to Kaine, who had inquired the Trump administration to explain its understanding of its authority to stay on in Syria.

Borrowing arguments first advanced by the Obama administration, the State Department also sent the Virginia senator a similar letter, which claimed that international law provided a basis for American forces to remain in Syria — despite the lack of consent from the Syrian government — to protect Iraq and the U.S. from terrorists.

Kaine, who has tried for years to get his colleagues to debate and vote on authorizing the war against ISIL terrorists, warned in January that the U.S. mission in Syria was evolving and risked putting American forces on a collision course with Syrian government troops and their Russian supporters.

Syrian state TV confirms that the U.S.-led coalition attacked government forces fighting ISIL in Dayr al-Zawr.

The U.S. and its allies have been bombarding what they call ISIL positions inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a United Nations mandate.

The strikes, however, have on many occasions resulted in deaths of pro-government forces and civilian casualties, failing to fulfill their declared aim of countering terrorism.

(Source: Press TV)

Egypt resolves financial disputes on Israel gas deal

Egypt says it is resolving financial disputes with an Israeli electricity company hindering the implementation of a multi-billion-dollar deal enabling the regime to transfer natural gas from the occupied territories to the North African country.

Israeli energy company Delek Drilling and its United States partner, Noble Energy, announced on Monday that they had signed the deal worth \$15 billion with Egypt. It envisages supplying a total of 64 billion cubic meters of gas from Israel’s Tamar and Leviathan offshore gas fields to Egyptian company Dolphinus Holdings over a 10-year period.

The deal, though, has been frozen due to the arbitration rulings ordering Egypt to compensate Israel’s Electric Corp. electricity company and East Mediterranean Gas Co. (EMG) pipeline operator, where both Cairo and Tel Aviv are shareholders, Bloomberg reported on Friday.

Egypt incurred the compensation in 202, after cancelling a deal under which it was supplying gas to Israel. The cancellation came after the pipeline came under reported militant attacks.

Commenting on the money owed to the EMG, Egyptian Prime Minister Sherif Ismail said in Cairo, “We reached an agreement to receive part of the gas in Egypt via its pipelines and this is part of the resolution to the arbitration.”

He said an understanding has also been reached with the power company, but declined to give more details.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has hailed the recent contract as “historic” in a statement and said it would “strengthen our economy (and) strengthen regional ties.” The gas is expected to start flowing next year.

Aside from Jordan, Egypt is the only country, which is in a “peace” deal with Israel.

Israel signs a 15-billion-dollar deal with Egypt to export gas to the northeast African country over a ten-year period.

Since 2007, Cairo has been helping Israel maintain its full-scale siege on the Palestinian territory of Gaza, which has brought about dire conditions on the ground for the coastal sliver’s around two-million-strong population.

Relations between the two have improved further since the 2013 toppling of Egypt’s first democratically-elected president, Mohamed Morsi.

(Source: Press TV)

Australia’s scandal-hit deputy PM resigns

Australia’s scandal-hit deputy leader Barnaby Joyce announced on Friday he was quitting and moving to the backbench amid claims of sexual harassment and controversy over an affair with a now-pregnant former aide.

Joyce, whose National Party rules alongside Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull’s Liberals, has been front-page news in Australia for two weeks since it emerged he had left his wife of 24 years for his younger former media adviser, who is now expecting their baby boy.

The 50-year-old had insisted he would ride out the storm but his position became untenable on Friday when a sexual harassment complaint against him, which he denies, was lodged with the party. “I will say on Monday morning at the party room (meeting), I will step down as the leader of the National Party and deputy leader of Australia,” Joyce said at a press conference in Armidale, his country New South Wales electorate.

Joyce was due to be the acting prime minister this week with Turnbull meeting the United States President Donald Trump in Washington, but opted to take leave.

(Source: AFP)

Turkish military not avoiding civilians in strikes against Syria’s Afrin: HRW

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has criticized the Ankara government’s ongoing cross-border offensive in Syria’s northwestern region of Afrin against the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG/Yekineyen Parastina Gel), stating that the Turkish military has failed to adopt necessary measures to avoid civilian casualties.

The New York-based group, in a statement released on Friday, pointed to three attacks in the Afrin region in late January, stating that they claimed the lives of 26 civilians, including 17 children.

It also called upon Turkey to thoroughly investigate these strikes, and then publicize the findings.

Also on Friday, the YPG accused Turkish military forces of bombing a convoy of civilians crossing into Afrin to protest Turkey’s offensive. The United States-backed Kurdish militants said the attack left scores of people wounded, who were taken to hospitals in Afrin for treatment.

Syria’s state-run television reported late on Thursday that

Turkish artillery units had hit an Afrin-bound aid convoy, inflicting casualties.

Ankara views the YPG as the Syrian branch of the militant Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) that has been fighting for an autonomous region inside Turkey since 1984.

Hundreds of Syrians hold a demonstration in Afrin to celebrate the arrival of pro-government fighters in the northwestern city to counter a Turkish military campaign.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has repeatedly said that Afrin should be cleared of “terrorists,” and demanded the deployment of Turkish troops there during a speech back in November 2016.

This is while U.S. officials regard the YPG as the most effective fighting force against the the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group in northern Syria, and have substantially increased their weaponry and technology support to the terrorist group.

(Source: Press TV)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	98157.3
IFX	1097.05

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	44,920 rials
EUR	55,100 rials
GBP	65,500 rials
AED	12,650 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

WTI	62.76/b
Brent	66.07/b
OPEC Basket	62.50/b
Gold	\$1,330.05/oz
Silver	\$16.60/oz
Platinum	\$995.20/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Potentials of Iranian ports presented in Malaysia

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Malaysia's Port Klang hosted the first meeting between Iranian and Malaysian officials focusing on potentials of Iranian ports especially Chabahar Port in southern Iran.

As reported by IRNA, held on Friday, the meeting was attended by representatives of Malaysian maritime and logistics sectors, including shipping, warehouses, packaging and consulting.

As part of Iran-Malaysia's Joint Economic Committee meeting, the event was organized in collaboration with the embassy of Islamic Republic of Iran in Klang.



3,000 semi-finished projects ready to be transferred

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Some 3,000 semi-finished governmental projects are ready to be offered to the private sector, an official announced.

As IRNA quoted Ali Abdolalizadeh, the chairman of task force for transferring semi-finished governmental projects to the private sector, completion of these projects requires five quadrillion rials (about \$111.11 billion) of finance.

In addition to the named 3,000 projects there are 15,000 semi-finished ones in various Iranian provinces, he added.



Unemployment rate rises 0.2% in autumn

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — According to the latest report of the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI), unemployment rate in autumn which corresponds to the third quarter of current Iranian calendar year (September 23-December 21, 2017) increased 0.2 percent in comparison with summer, Tasnim news agency reported on Friday.

While there were 23.83 million employed people in Iran in summer, the figure decreased into 23.331 million ones in autumn, i.e. 500,000 more unemployed workforce, the report confirmed.

UK bank RBS reports first annual profit in a decade

Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) posted its first annual profit in a decade Friday, continuing its recovery following the financial crash of 2008.

The bank recorded a net profit of £752 million (\$1.05 billion) for 2017, surpassing analyst forecasts for a figure of £592 million. Just a year earlier, the bank had suffered an annual loss of £6.95 billion.

Operating profit came in at £2.239 billion, a notable increase of £6.321 billion compared to 2016. Fourth-quarter operating losses before tax were £583 million, with a net loss of £579 million. Shares sank 4 percent as European markets opened Friday, in part due to still-impending penalties from the U.S. Department of Justice centered on a significant misconduct probe.

(Source: CNBC)

Algerian consumers, firms feel pinch of import bans

Mansour and Nassima used to buy Swiss chocolate for their daughter. But in the past few days it has disappeared from the shelves as Algeria's government implements a ban on imports of hundreds of products in an effort to cut the trade deficit.

The restrictions will encourage domestic production, shielding it from foreign competition, officials say.

But local firms including drinks producers and potters say shortages of raw materials are putting their businesses at risk.

Algeria's non-energy sector remains undeveloped, meaning most goods consumed by its 40 million-strong people are shipped from abroad. Oil and gas account for 60 percent of the state budget.

(Source: Reuters)

Non-oil trade up 12% in 10 months yr/yr

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The value of Iran's non-oil trade with foreign partners reached \$80 billion during the 10-month period of the current Iranian calendar year ended on January 20, up 12 percent from the same period last year.

According to IRNA, in terms of weight, the country traded 135 million tons of goods during the mentioned 10 months, registering a 0.4 percent rise year on year.

Meanwhile, the trade balance was reported negative with the value of imports

exceeding that of exports by \$5.7 billion.

As reported, during the mentioned time span some \$43 billion worth of non-oil goods were imported into the country, 22 percent more than that of the last year's 10-month period.

Auto parts were one of the main drivers of the increase in the value of imports in the mentioned period.

The value of exports stood at \$37 billion in the said 10 months, 1.7 percent more than that of last year's same time span.

Industrial products and minerals as well

Banks will have eight years to write down bad debts under new EU rules

Banks in the European Union will have eight years to write down bad debts backed by collateral under proposals from the European Commission designed to tackle their 759 billion euros (\$933.19 billion) in soured loans, a source familiar with the matter said on Friday.

The source, confirming a press report in Italian daily Il Messaggero, said the percentage of writedowns required every year once a loan is classed as impaired would rise gradually over time.

High levels of bad debts, a legacy of the euro zone's debt crisis, are blamed for holding

back lending in the EU and for keeping the cost of capital high for banks, slowing their recovery and depressing profitability.

The Commission, which is expected to publish its proposal on the new bad loan criteria on March 13, declined to comment.

"In March, we will present a whole package of further proposals to help banks reduce non-performing loans and prevent their accumulation in future," the Commission's Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis told a conference in Berlin on Friday.

For unsecured loans, banks would be re-



as carpets and handicrafts were reported to be the main drivers of the increase in the value of the country's 10-month exports.

China, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iraq, South Korea, Turkey, India, Afghani-

stan, Pakistan, Thailand and Indonesia were the top importers of Iranian commodities, while China, the UAE, South Korea, Turkey and Germany were top exporters of goods to the country.

Euro zone inflation slows in Jan., core measure picks up

Euro zone consumer price growth slowed slightly in January but the core measure closely watched by the European Central Bank edged higher for the first time in months, data from the European Union's statistics office Eurostat showed on Friday.

Eurostat said consumer prices in the 19 countries sharing the euro fell 0.9 percent month-on-month in January for a 1.3 percent year-on-year increase, confirming its earlier estimates and market expectations.

But unprocessed food prices rose 0.7 percent month-on-month for a 1.1 percent annual increase and energy prices jumped 1.8 percent during January for a 2.2 percent annual gain.

Without these two highly volatile components - or what



the European Central Bank calls "core inflation" and watches in monetary policy decisions - prices fell 1.3 percent month-on-month and rose 1.2 percent year on year, accelerating from 1.1 percent in the previous three months.

An even broader measure of core inflation watched by some market economists, which in addition excludes alcohol and tobacco prices that can change with government hikes of excise tax, also increased to 1.0 percent year-on-year in January from 0.9 percent in the previous three months.

The ECB has been buying billions of euros of euro zone government bonds on the market to inject cash into the banking system and trigger greater credit to the economy to boost inflation, which it wants below, but close to 2 percent.

(Source: Reuters)

Global stocks stay subdued as dollar edges higher

A stronger dollar and slightly higher global borrowing costs kept world shares subdued on Friday and left gold limping toward its worst week since December.

Europe's main London, Frankfurt and Paris markets <0#.#INDEXE> barely budged in early moves, keeping MSCI's 47-country world index just in the black on the day but facing its third red week in the last four.

Modest gains for the dollar meant the euro was set to post its second biggest weekly loss in nearly four months [/FRX], as caution over the Italian election gave bond markets there their toughest week of 2018.

Polls point to a hung parliament in Italy, where no one party or coalition has an outright majority to form a government, and analysts expect a short-term volatility that could weigh on traditionally sensitive euro zone markets.

Italy's 10-year bond yield was up 1 bps at 2.09 percent. It has risen about 10 basis points this week.

"Some long-forgotten patterns return to euro bond markets with Bunds rallying while Italy sells off," said Commerzbank rates strategist Christoph Rieger.

He noted comments from European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker this week, who was reported to have warned about

Italian election risks.

Broader global cross-asset issues remained much the same as they have during a choppy few weeks. How far and fast U.S. interest rates can rise and what would it mean for global borrowing costs, risk appetite and business confidence.

That caution is reverberating in the bond markets with U.S. yields rising by more than 50 basis points since early December, more than the 38 basis points for German government debt. Benchmark Treasury 10-year note yields rose to a four-year high of 2.957 percent on Wednesday though they were a shade down at 2.904 percent on Friday.

The backsliding also stalled the dollar's overnight gains in Asia. It was virtually trading water against most major currencies by 0930 GMT, buying 106.8 yen and at \$1.2325 and \$1.3965 against the euro and pound.

It was still up more than 1 percent for the week and headed for its third gain in the last four weeks.

"We think the Fed could well put U.S. (interest) rates up four times this year but even then it only takes U.S. rates to 2.5 by the end of the year," said JPMorgan Asset Management global strategist Mike Bell. "So the question is would they continue at that pace in 2019?"

One of the Fed's chief doves, St Louis Fed

President James Bullard, tried to tamp down expectations of four rate hikes on Thursday, saying policymakers needed to be careful not to slow the economy.

Not so precious

Russian markets were readying for a big day with S&P Global due to review Moscow's credit rating.

It is just one step away from returning Russia to the investment grade bracket that it ejected it from after the 2014-2015 slump in oil prices and Ukraine crisis. Its restatement would also see Russian foreign currency bonds return to some widely-tracked bond indices.

In Asian trading overnight, MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan climbed 0.9 percent on Friday to add to the previous week's 3.9 percent gain.

It is still down more than 4 percent in February so far, however, after global equity markets were mauled at the start of the month by worries that inflation was picking up.

Japan's Nikkei rose 0.7 percent, though China's SSE Composite index and the blue-chip CSI300 both pared their early gains after the government seized control of acquisitive financial conglomerate Anbang Insurance.

It was seen as a dramatic move that underscores Beijing's intent to crackdown on

financial risk.

The dollar's strength meant it remained a tough environment for commodities which are priced in the U.S. currency.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$62.74 a barrel, down 3 cents from their last settlement, while Brent crude futures were down 2 cents at \$66.37 a barrel.

There were concerns about high U.S. crude export levels which outweighed an unexpected drop in oil inventories in the country which is also the world's biggest fuel consumer.

Industrial metals such as copper eased as they headed for a small weekly drop and as trading slowly picked up again after Chinese markets had been shut following the Lunar New Year holiday.

Gold remained the stand-out mover though and looking increasingly less precious.

Its spot market price was down 0.2 percent at \$1,328, heading for a fifth session of falls in six. It has shed 1.6 percent this week, its biggest drop since early December.

"We remain somewhat cautious on gold over the short term given that we think the dollar rally is still not over, especially in the light of U.S. Treasury yields remaining elevated," said INTL FCI analyst Edward Meir.

(Source: Reuters)

China is letting the yuan crush the dollar — Trump is just one reason why

The Chinese yuan has appreciated 10 percent against the dollar since the start of 2017, quelling some criticism that the export giant has been deliberately suppressing its currency to gain economic advantage over its trading partners.

This is all going according to China's plan, experts said.

Although the strength of the yuan against the dollar is in part due to the greenback's weakness, experts said the world's second-largest economy is also propping up its currency to appease President Donald Trump.

China has "reversed the rise" of the dollar against the yuan, and there's now "meaningful" strength against the greenback, Bilal Hafeez, global head of G-10 foreign-exchange strategy at Nomura, wrote in a recent note.

"Part of this was likely a response to the election of President Trump and the need to avoid being labelled a currency manipulator," Hafeez added.

On the 2016 campaign trail, Trump repeatedly said he would name China a currency manipulator from his first day in office. That has not happened.

Instead, the Chinese yuan rose almost 7 percent against the dollar in 2017, reversing three consecutive years of depreciation. In January, China's currency extended gains by another 3.5 percent.

At the same time, Beijing repeatedly stressed its desire to keep the currency stable — and it actually has managed to engineer this phenomenon against a basket of different currencies.

In 2017, the China Foreign Exchange Trade System RMB Index barely moved, starting the year at 94.83 and ending it at 94.85 — even though the yuan jumped against the dollar over the period. That measure is a trade-weighted index of the yuan, also known as the renminbi (RMB), as measured against a collection of currencies including the dollar, euro



A girl poses with a new 100 yuan note in Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province of China.

and Japanese yen.

"The Chinese authorities may be attempting to keep a range-bound [yuan] basket, which would mean ensuring euro (and yen) strength against [the yuan] to offset dollar weakness against [the yuan]," Nomura's Hafeez said in his note.

The CFETS RMB Index has gained about 1.3 percent so far this year. That comes even though the dollar is the heaviest weighted in the basket, and the greenback has lost over 2 percent against the yuan over the same period.

Beijing is walking a tightrope

But, January's spike in the yuan against the dollar was "excessive by almost any yardstick," Cliff Tan, East Asian head of global markets research at Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, told CNBC.

So, China will probably continue to manage its currency in the background even if it keeps its value against the dollar

relatively high, analysts said.

Morgan Stanley analysts said in a note this week that the trade-weighted yuan should remain "largely stable" around current levels as Beijing's capital control efforts have worked.

"[If [the yuan] continues to appreciate rapidly, policy-makers may seek to stem the rise in order to maintain stability in the trade-weighted [yuan], which would likely be achieved by verbal communication and a relaxation of some outbound capital restrictions," Morgan Stanley added.

Beijing is walking a tricky tightrope as the Communist regime seeks to balance political concerns with economic reforms and the demands that come with a market-based system.

In the second half of 2015, the Chinese government shocked markets by devaluing the yuan. That spurred capital flight due to concerns over the health of the world's second-largest economy — which further depressed the Chinese currency. Beijing has been trying to reverse that damage.

"I think they ultimately want a weaker currency, they just don't know how to achieve it. They tried in 2015, it didn't work, turned into a vicious cycle and they're kind of stuck right now with always trying to control everything but not knowing how to get a weaker currency through a structural slowdown in a way that does not cause a lot of disturbances to domestic financial markets for instance," said Jason Daw, head of emerging markets FX strategy at Societe Generale.

And then, there is the Trump factor should China be seen to deliberately adjust its currency downward.

"Trump has complicated their efforts on doing it. But, I think even without the Trump factor, 2015 is still too fresh in their minds as far as what happened and them not wanting that to happen again, and losing that control," added Daw at a recent briefing.

(Source: CNBC)

Oil slips to \$66 a barrel as U.S. output offsets OPEC curbs

Oil slipped to \$66 a barrel on Friday, under pressure from concerns that rising U.S. oil output and exports will offset OPEC-led attempts to erode stockpiles with output curbs.

U.S. oil production last week was steady at 10.27 million barrels per day, a record level if confirmed by monthly figures. Crude exports jumped to more than 2 million bpd, close to a record 2.1 million hit in October.

"The U.S. is pumping out a record amount of oil," said Naeem Aslam, chief market analyst at Think Markets UK Ltd.

"The bull rally which we have seen for the black gold could fade away as the U.S. oil production undermines the OPEC production cut commitments," he said.

Brent crude, the global benchmark, was down 45 cents at \$65.94 at 1052 GMT. Prices had rallied in early 2018 and reached \$71.28 on Jan. 25, the highest since December 2014. U.S. crude fell 34 cents to \$62.43.

Oil also slipped as the U.S. dollar strengthened. A stronger dollar can make oil and other commodities denominated in the U.S. currency



more expensive for other currency holders.

The latest decline for crude came despite the U.S. Energy Information Administration

reporting crude stocks fell unexpectedly by 1.6 million barrels. Analysts said low import figures contributed to the decline.

U.S. production is expected to rise even more this year and top 11 million bpd in late 2018, a headwind for OPEC efforts to drain stockpiles.

But the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is not outwardly worried by rising U.S. output and says it is comfortable at the speed the market is moving toward balance.

"I think the pace is excellent, the deal is working and we're very happy with it," United Arab Emirates Energy Minister Suhail al-Mazroui, the current OPEC president, told Reuters on Wednesday. "But the job is not yet complete."

In January 2017, OPEC and allies including Russia began to cut production by about 1.8 million bpd, almost 2 percent of global supply, to get rid of a glut that had built up since 2014 and that led to a price collapse.

OPEC wants to reduce oil inventories held by industrialized nations to their five-year average and is getting closer to that goal, although officials are starting to talk about looking at different metrics.

(Source: Reuters)

Why is the WTI-Brent spread shrinking?

As U.S. exports continue to rise, the price gap between WTI and Brent has sharply narrowed.

The premium that Brent traded at relative to WTI used to run in the double digits. The spread was the result of surging shale output that ended up trapped in the U.S. because of a ban on crude exports. The spread, however, shrank in recent years after the broader oil market meltdown in 2014, combined with the inauguration of U.S. crude exports at the end of 2015 and into 2016.

U.S. exports, however, really began to pick up last year. U.S. crude exports bounced around between 0.5 million barrels per day (mb/d) and 1 mb/d in the first half of the year, a level that jumped to a range between 1 and 2 mb/d in the third and fourth quarters.

Hurricane Harvey interrupted a major portion of refining in the U.S. for a few months, leading to the Brent-WTI differential to open up once again as crude stocks built up along the Gulf Coast. That helped spark the higher levels of exports at the end of the year as the arbitrage opportunity played out.

But while the Brent-WTI spread jumped over \$7 per barrel between September and December, it has sharply narrowed more recently.

There are several reasons for this. First, U.S. crude exports remain elevated, although down a bit from the fourth

quarter. Meanwhile, the Keystone pipeline was temporarily knocked offline at the end of 2017 and is still operating below full capacity. That has trimmed volumes flowing into the U.S.

Moreover, new pipelines have increased connections around the U.S., easing bottlenecks and allowing more U.S. oil to reach its destination. For instance, the Diamond pipeline started up in December, opening a route from Cushing, OK to Memphis, TN. That has led to a sharper drawdown in crude inventories at Cushing, helping to push up the WTI benchmark.

Finally, the recent startup of the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port (LOOP), which is the only port capable of handling the oil industry's largest oil tankers, has raised expectations of a flood of U.S. oil reaching the global market. LOOP can handle very large crude carriers (VLCCs), which can carry as much as 2 million barrels. Not only does LOOP mean that more volume can be moved, but using larger but fewer tankers could also cut transit costs, adding to the appeal of American crude.

That means rather than the U.S. becoming awash in oil once again as shale drillers ramp up production, much of the additional barrels could be shipped abroad.

"There could not be a better time to offer this service as domestic production surpasses 10 million barrels per day in the ever-dynamic global crude oil market," said LOOP LLC

President Tom Shaw, according to Bloomberg.

All of that has helped push up WTI. Meanwhile, refinery maintenance in Europe has dampened demand for Brent, causing the two benchmarks to converge. The "price gap between the two oil types has narrowed to its lowest level in six months. This is due to the pronounced fall in crude oil stocks at Cushing, the delivery point for WTI," Commerzbank wrote in a note on Tuesday. "For one thing, less crude oil is being transported from Canada to Cushing due to the restricted capacity of the Keystone pipeline. And for another, new pipeline capacities mean more crude oil is leaving Cushing."

Prices for front-month contracts between Brent and WTI has shrunk to less than \$4 per barrel, and the spread between spot prices recently dipped below \$3 per barrel, the lowest since Hurricane Harvey.

However, the narrowing differential between WTI and Brent likely means that demand for American crude could slow a bit as WTI-linked cargoes become comparatively less attractive. It is a sort of self-limiting phenomenon: the wide price differential led to a surge in exports, which helped eliminate the huge price difference, which in turn could put a ceiling on exports.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Energy shares in Asia climb as oil prices hold onto gains following U.S. inventory decline

Oil-related stocks in Asia traded higher on Friday as oil prices recorded slight gains after touching two-week highs in the previous session.

Those gains in oil prices had come after U.S. crude stocks unexpectedly declined by 1.6 million barrels in the week ending Feb. 16, Reuters said, citing data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration. That compared to the 1.8 million-barrel rise in inventories forecast by experts.

Woodside Petroleum, Australia's largest oil and gas company, was up 0.56 percent following those increases in prices. Other oil producers also gained: Santos rose 0.39 percent and Oil Search rose 1.46 percent.

More broadly, the S&P/ASX 200 energy sub-index traded higher by 0.68 percent in the afternoon Sydney time.

Energy stocks in Japan saw sharper gains, with oil producer Inpex trading higher by 2.55 percent and Cosmo Energy gaining 4.59 percent. JXTG Holdings, Japan's largest refiner, was up 3.58 percent.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong-listed shares of Chinese oil producer CNOOC rose 0.88 percent in late morning trade local time. Oil giant China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation, or Sinopec, added 1.11 percent.

Oil prices were mostly steady on Friday. U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude futures advanced 0.05 percent to trade at \$62.80 per barrel and Brent crude futures were off by 0.02 percent at \$66.38.

"The unexpected fall in oil inventories in the U.S. should see support for crude oil prices remain strong," said ANZ Research analysts in a Friday morning note.

(Source: CNBC)

LNG rollercoaster seen getting wilder until China builds storage

The rollercoaster that drags liquefied natural gas prices higher as demand jumps in the northern hemisphere winter is going into overdrive.

After a winter in which an unexpected boost in demand from China pushed prices to three-year highs, spot LNG in northeast Asia has plummeted about 30 percent from its mid-January peak. Summer plunges and winter spikes are the order of the day, at least over two years, said Pablo Galante Escobar, head of LNG at Vitol Group, a commodities trading house active in LNG.

China, which boosted LNG imports 46 percent last year as it turned to natural gas to combat pollution from coal, lacks the storage facilities that would help smoothen out the swings in prices between winter and summer. Rising global production paired with limited or falling demand in traditional summer markets might exacerbate those moves.

(Source: Reuters)

60 YEARS OF ADVENTURE
AND DISCOVERY



superOcean
HERITAGE
SINCE 1957

SARMAN Co.

TEL +98 21 22 61 37 52



INSTRUMENTS FOR PROFESSIONALS™

The politics of fear is dying out in Africa

By Netsanet Belay

Lenin was once quoted as saying, “There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen.” This could perfectly describe the past week in Africa. Across the continent, a number of game-changing political developments have followed each other in quick succession in one of the most tumultuous weeks of any decade.

In South Africa, Jacob Zuma resigned after a presidency marked by corruption and impunity. Shortly after, Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn stood down following months of intensifying public protest. In the same week, Morgan Tsvangirai, Zimbabwe’s long-standing opposition leader, passed away after a lifetime spent challenging human rights violations under former President Robert Mugabe.



Jacob Zuma

The pace of these successive changes has been significant, but the ground has been stirring for some time. Last year Africa bid farewell to its three longest-serving leaders: Yahya Jammeh of Gambia (22 years), José Eduardo dos Santos of Angola (38 years) and Zimbabwe’s Mugabe (37 years) -- all leaders of governments known for their brutal repression of dissent.

Given the scale and long history of the repression enacted by these governments, many thought they would not live to see their end. In Gambia, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia, recent developments were unthinkable -- until they happened.

Who could have imagined that the gates of Ethiopia’s notorious prisons would open so widely, allowing thousands of prisoners of conscience to walk free? That Eskinder Nega, the courageous journalist who spent seven years behind bars for criticizing the government, would finally be reunited with his family?

Who in Gambia would have believed that Ousainou Darboe and Amadou Sanneh, two former Amnesty International prisoners of conscience who spent years in jail for speaking out against repression, would be ministers in the new government?

Who would have dared to question the reign of dos Santos and see his family lose its grip over Angola’s oil industry and wealth?

The growing resilience of people standing up against repression and demanding respect for human rights is a cause for hope in uncertain times. It suggests the politics of fear may finally be withering away.

Since 2016, mass protests and people’s movements -- often articulated and organized through social media -- have swept the continent.

#Oromoprotests and #amaharaprotests in Ethiopia, #ThisFlag in Zimbabwe and #FeesMustFall in South Africa were some of the most powerful manifestations of this growing defiance. These protests were often spontaneous, viral and driven by ordinary citizens, in particular young people who bear the triple burden of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

This trend continued in 2017. From Lomé to Freetown, Khartoum to Kampala and Kinshasa to Luanda, people went out to the streets in large numbers, ignoring threats and bans on protests and refusing to back down even in the face of brutal clampdowns.

The triggers for these protests vary. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, it was delays in publishing the electoral calendar that got people out on the streets; in Chad it was an increase in the fees charged to traders at the N’Djamena Millet Market; in Togo it was hikes in oil prices; in Kenya it was frustrations over the electoral process.

But what unites them is the strength in defiance and the demand for change, inclusion and freedom. While some of these protests had violent elements -- mostly in reaction to heavy-handed clampdowns -- the majority were peaceful and driven by a demand for basic rights and dignity.

And there is every reason to believe that this trend is unstoppable.

Amnesty International’s report on the state of the world’s human rights documents how 2017 saw the arbitrary and brutal suppression of the right to peaceful protest in more than 20 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including through unlawful bans, excessive use of force, harassment and arbitrary arrests.

But this did little to silence dissent despite the best efforts of those who want to crush and silence dissent. In fact, it is becoming clearer that failing to respect freedoms and fulfill human rights obligations is ultimately self-defeating.

This should serve as a wake-up call to all governments that the solution to lasting peace and stability lies in guaranteeing more freedoms, not less. Political shifts mean nothing if they don’t result in greater respect for human rights. People who care about freedom and equality are ultimately concerned not with which leader is in power, but whether or not they respect human rights.

Only time will tell what these political changes will truly mean for us Africans -- especially for the poor, the young, the marginalized, the repressed and silenced.

But what is clear is that people across the continent are not willing to wait decades to find out.

(Source: CNN)

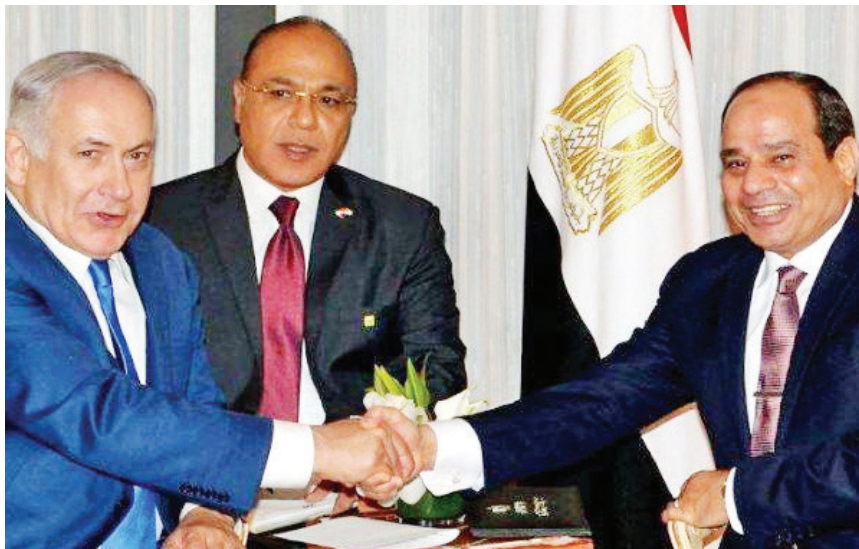
The Egypt-Israel gas deal is scandalous and shameless

By Amira Abo el-Fetouh

After Al-Sisi opened the very large Zohr gas field about two weeks ago the newspapers celebrated and announced the news that Egypt will achieve gas self-sufficiency this year by means of the Zohr, North Alexandria, Nawras, and Atoll gas fields. The Egyptian citizens lived this dream until they awoke to a nightmare where Netanyahu is announcing that Israel is celebrating after signing a historical agreement with Egypt that stipulates Egypt will import gas from Israel for 10 years. The imported gas agreement is worth \$15 billion and these billions will be added to the Israeli treasury in order to be spent on education, health services, and welfare for Israeli citizens.

Of course it was no coincidence that Netanyahu announced this great news to the Israeli people on the anniversary of President Anwar Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem, as such an agreement poses a new victory for Israel, no less significant than its victory in 1967 and the signing of the peace treaty. In my opinion, they are crowning their victories with this latest victory, as a result of which they control energy in Egypt and the key to the energy tap is placed in their hands. They can turn it off whenever they please. Whoever controls the energy can suffocate the states that live under its mercy and can control the decisions of these states.

This is a major crime committed against Egypt as a state and against its people. This gas is actually Egyptian gas that was seized by Israel either without the ruling government’s knowledge or in collusion with it. Instead of admitting to this crime and being ashamed of it, the government’s mouthpieces and corrupt media came up with justifications and excuses more criminal



Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu (L), President of Egypt Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (R) and Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry

It is a strategic mistake to link Egypt’s energy security to Israel, which can stop importing gas to Egypt if any conflict between the two countries arises.

and shameless than the act itself. Some examples include but are not limited to the claims that the government has nothing to do with the Israeli gas import deal, overlooking the fact that the government facilitated the deal and prepared a draft bill allowing the private sector to import gas from abroad and sell it in the local market. Of course, the corrupt parliament, which does as the government desires and was formed under its watchful eye, approved the

bill. It is foolish to make such claims when everyone knows that no private company can import anything without first obtaining government approval. Moreover, there would be an unnamed company that has never operated in this field before, come up with \$15 billion from to pay the Israelis?

Another justification included claims that economic interests dictate relations between countries and that there is no problem importing gas, even from an enemy, as long as

it serves Egypt’s interests. However, those making these claims forgot that a country’s interests cannot be served by their enemy, and that from a purely national security standpoint, it is a strategic mistake to link Egypt’s energy security to Israel, which can stop importing gas to Egypt if any conflict between the two countries arises.

The most absurd justification is the claim that Egypt is seeking to turn into a regional center for energy and that the gas market has become available and open to any private company. No one bothered to mention what happened to the natural gas self-sufficiency claims made two weeks ago and ask why Egypt is importing gas when it has one of the largest gas fields, the Zohr gas field, in addition to the fields discovered in Egyptian regional waters and in the western and eastern deserts.

These mouthpieces also failed to mention why Egypt is importing gas specifically from Israel, especially since there are several alternatives, such as Algerian, Iraqi or Russian gas.

However, what is most astounding is the strange silence of the Egyptian government regarding this suspicious agreement, compared to the historical celebrations in Tel Aviv. Of course these celebrations are completely understandable given the financial, strategic, and moral benefits the agreement will grant Israel. Israel never dreamt of such benefits, even during the rule of Hosni Mubarak, their strategic treasure. What we cannot understand or accept is the fact that the corrupt Egyptian media is celebrating this agreement, despite the fact that such an agreement is the most prominent manifestation of betrayal and treachery, and the secret to the link between Egypt’s energy security and Israel’s gas.

(Source: The Middle East Monitor)

South Korea’s Olympic gambit traps both Kim and Trump

By Peter Apps

North Korea’s Olympic athletes will not be bringing home any medals, but their participation may have earned the peninsula something more substantial.

By taking part so visibly alongside South Korea, Pyongyang has been able to present itself as a credible global and regional power in a way that has eluded North Korean leaders since the war that divided the peninsula. The real strategic winner, however, is the South Korean government, which has shrewdly used the games to reshape the diplomatic landscape.

For all the talk of reconciliation, neither North nor South Korea has much appetite for the compromises -- or the catastrophic war -- that reunification would take. What both countries have been desperate to do, however, is to blunt the potential threat of a major unilateral U.S. strike on Pyongyang’s nuclear facilities.

The potential for renewed dialogue puts Washington in a distinctly difficult position. This year, President Donald Trump’s administration had intended to ramp up military pressure on Pyongyang, reinforcing the Kim regime’s fears that further nuclear progress might lead to U.S. action. The Olympic rapprochement with the South, however, has compelled Washington to abort some of its plans, at Seoul’s request.

Distrust clearly remains high. The Washington Post reported this week that North Korea canceled a meeting with U.S. Vice President Mike Pence after he used his trip to condemn Kim’s nuclear ambitions and to pledge further sanctions. The fact that a meeting was even considered, however, was arguably a breakthrough in its own right.

It would be a mistake to view the Olympic rapprochement as a true game changer on the peninsula; the fundamental drivers of the conflict have not gone away. What the Pyeongchang Games have offered, however, is a break from the cycle of ever-rising escalation. Where that will ultimately lead remains far from clear. But it does make an imminent war somewhat less likely.

If the U.S. was to strike now, while communication between North and South is improving, it might look like an unjustified aggressor, risking regional disaster just as peace seemed possible.

Kim, however, must also face some tough decisions. He clearly wishes to continue his nuclear program, so as to remove all doubt about North Korea’s ability to deliver nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles to the U.S. mainland; most analysts agree that he views this capacity as vital to protecting his power and deterring Iraq-style “regime change.”



President Moon Jae-in sits with first lady Kim Jung-sook in the VIP box. Behind them are Kim Yong-nam, president of the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly of North Korea, and Kim Yo-jong, younger sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

Despite the relative harmony of the Olympics, many in Washington suspect that Trump and other top administration officials -- particularly National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster -- still favor military action. Kim may conclude that advancing his weapons program remains the best way to safeguard his long-term rule.

But building ever more powerful missiles and warheads would require Kim to resume his highly-visible test program. Doing so would likely torpedo the regional dialogue, and could even be viewed as justification for a limited U.S. strike.

At the very least, any resumption of the North Korean test program while talks are ongoing would likely result in

much tougher international sanctions, particularly from China. These have already had a considerable impact on the North Korean economy, and any further reduction of Beijing’s support might genuinely imperil Kim’s rule.

Kim’s current quandary nicely suits South Korea’s purposes. President Moon Jae-in’s government has little genuine affection for the Kim dynasty, and if there were a way of ousting it without disaster, it would probably take it. In the absence of such options, however, it is trying to manage the situation as best it can.

Even if Kim resumes his tests and tensions with the U.S. rise again after the Games, the temporary detente will still be seen as a success. Had Pyongyang been unable to take part, there were genuine concerns the North might try to disrupt the games, perhaps through cyber or guerrilla attacks. If nothing else, Kim would probably have staged high-profile missile, and perhaps even warhead, tests simultaneously, wrecking any Olympic spirit and dominating news coverage.

The Games have provided the best hope in several years that all sides will step back from what had been an ongoing cycle of escalation. Unfortunately, this progress may prove temporary.

Kim may have successfully used the games to increase his regime’s credibility, in particular by sending his sister as a powerful political proxy. But he may conclude that this achievement was equally a result of his recent saber-rattling, and of having exceeding outsiders’ expectations for his nuclear progress.

Kim’s regime still faces ongoing internal and external danger. North Korea is arguably the world’s most insular society, but technology is still making quiet inroads. There remains the medium- to long-term risk that domestic discontent could bring it down.

The risk of U.S.-led military action has not gone away either. Despite the relative harmony of the Olympics, many in Washington suspect that Trump and other top administration officials -- particularly National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster -- still favor military action. Kim may conclude that advancing his weapons program remains the best way to safeguard his long-term rule.

The Winter Olympics have opened a slim but real chance that further North Korean tests and the continued rise in tensions can be averted -- or at the very least, slowed. It’s not exactly “peace in our time” -- not least because neither side has made any real concessions. But it’s not a terrible outcome for a sports competition that could easily have become another flashpoint.

(Source: Reuters)

The making of the European Commission president

The ‘Spitzenkandidaten’ process brings some legitimacy to the EU

With 15 months to go until the next elections to the European Parliament, the question vexing member states is whether those polls, as well as deciding control of the legislature, will also in effect determine the president of the European Commission.

The pressing issue is the Spitzenkandidaten process, where political groupings in the parliament pick their contender for president before the elections and then expect member state governments to select the winner based on the election results.

The process dates only to the last elections in 2014, and remains highly contentious among member state governments, who regard it as an infringement on their prerogative to choose the commission president. But they should not dismiss it out of hand. The EU apparatus is badly in need of legitimacy, and this is a way of providing it. The issue of the Spitzenkandidaten, which means lead candidates, is intrinsically tied up with Jean-

Claude Juncker’s appointment in 2014, as the chosen candidate of the center-right European People’s party. He is pushing the issue hard as part of his own legacy. In 2014 there was initially strong resistance among many member states to the idea. But Angela Merkel, for one, was taken aback by the support for the process evinced during the German election campaign in public opinion and in the national press. She reluctantly acceded, and Juncker became president.

Opinion, including in the Financial Times, has evolved, and popular support for the process cannot be ignored. A strong commission is necessary for the functioning of the EU, particularly when there are issues such as migration that require a collective response and where Europe’s response has been sadly lacking.

To be sure, the nature of the European Parliament throws up considerable objections to the idea that a single EU polity is con-

sciously selecting the president from a set of candidates. The groupings in the parliament are not at all like parties in parliamentary systems. Their membership shifts around over time, and in any case represents a wide ideological spectrum that militates against a coherent political vision. These points have forcibly been made by Emmanuel Macron, the French president, who regards the current political groups as “ossified”.

He has signaled his intention to try to create a coalition of reformist parties after next year’s election. He also opposes the idea of Spitzenkandidaten, who are chosen before voters go to the polls. Macron’s arguments have some validity.

There was hardly any ideological difference in 2014 between Juncker and the other main candidate, Martin Schulz of the Socialist bloc, whose groupings were in any case in a grand coalition in the parliament. But if the Spitzenkandidaten process can

gain broad support among other member states, Macron’s best bet is to try to organize a reformist grouping after the elections and push for change in future years. The French president’s brand of pro-European centrist radicalism will be all the more powerful if it can command enough votes in future to choose the commission president.

The Spitzenkandidaten process is not, and is unlikely ever to be, legally binding. It remains an advisory procedure for the member state governments.

But those heads of government must recognize the EU’s legitimacy problem. Meaningful pan-European elections are a necessary part of the answer, and tying those elections to the selection of the commission president is one way of doing it.


Juncker will depart next year, but this may turn out to be one of the more enduring parts of his legacy.

(Source: FT)


Once again Bahrain, once again human rights violations

In the prevailing environment, it's never too late for the United Nations to step in and end this complicity. The world body should apply serious pressure on Bahrain to demand the immediate release of all detained human rights defenders as well as all prisoners of conscience and religious leaders; and to protect public freedom, in particular freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association; and to stop the security forces from practicing any form of torture or ill-treatment on detainees, a practice which is well documented in recent years by the UN and regarded as systematic in Bahrain.

Ultimately, Europe has an ambiguous future. However, we can not ignore the role of European leaders in this matter! The passive policies of the European countries against the United States, and in particular the Trump government, will be in the near future to the detriment of the European Union.



N.I.O.C
1396.5481



National Iranian Drilling Company

Public Call Of Tender

One-Stage

TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	Subject of Tender	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
4,286	197,300,000	3,944,687,462	P/F GENERAL ELECTRIC D.C. DRILLING MOTOR MODEL: GE 752 R6A	3,152,519	Tender No.: FP/17-96/079 Indent No.: 48-22-9622022	1

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

A) Competence of tenderers:
 The tenderers should not have legal restrictive to participation govermental to tenders , also they should provide statute or business license related to subject of the tender.

B) Preparation of tender documents:
Purchasing of documents:
 In order to receive the tender documents, **510,000 Rials** should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.

Receiving of documents:
 Tenderers must be obtain the tender documents maximum ten days after the date of second publication till Mar 10,2018 in person at the following address: Hall No.:113, 1thfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN
 Notice: The real or legal persons who apply to purchase and receive tender ducments from foreign procurment department in due date and participates in tenderwill be known as tenderer from tender committee.

C) Delivery of bids envelopes:
 Tenderers shall submit simultaneuosly envelopes of bids including (A) Tender bank guarantee, (B) stamped and signed of tender documents, (C) The priced signed and stamped of the same Technical-Commercial sheets maximum till Apr 09,2018 to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN.
 Notice: The deadline for the refusal of bidders participation in the the tender is the last day of determined for submission of bids.

D) The envelopes will be opened At 10:30 a.m On Apr 10,2018

E) Tender Guarantee:
Type of guarantee:
 A) Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activites licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
 B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to National Iranain Drilling Company.

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

More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. WWW.NIDC.IR

Foreign Procurement Dept
National Iranian Drilling Company

تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۶/۱۲/۵ نوبت دوم ۹۶/۱۲/۶

Democratic Republic of Congo: a country on the brink

By Patrick Litanga

On January 21, Therese Kapangala, a 24-year-old Congolese woman studying to be a nun, left her home in Kinshasa to attend church in the Commune of Kintambo. Therese never returned home. She was shot by security forces outside her church, just after Sunday mass. The bullet entered her arm and went to her heart. She died on the way to the hospital.

On that day, many others, including Serge Kikunda, Packson Kabadiatshi, and Hussein Ngandu were also killed by security forces. The Catholic Church and civil society organizations suspect many others have also been killed by regime forces across the Congolese capital on the very same day. But Congolese officials insist that only six people have died.

Of course, enormous discrepancies in death

toll estimates are quite common in the Democratic Republic of Congo - the repressive regime frequently tries to downplay the number of its victims.

Yet, there was something unique in the regime's account of the events of January 21. This time, Kinshasa not only tried to whitewash the scope of the violence, but also attempted to brand its victims, including Therese, Serge, Packson, and Hussein, as "terrorists".

If one were to believe Congolese Minister of Communication Lambert Mende's incoherent account of the events, delivered on Al Jazeera's UpFront earlier this month, one would think that the victims of the January 21 violence were bomb-strapping ideological lunatics who had to be stopped by "heroic" Congolese soldiers.

No, Sister Therese was not a terrorist; neither were Serge, Packson, or Hussein. Contrary

to Mende's claims, these were young Congolese citizens fed up with being repressed by an ineffective government. They died because they dared to hope for a better Congo. They died because they lived and experienced a radically different Congo than one Lambert Mende and Bruno Tshibala, the Congolese Prime Minister, try to portray.

But no, everything is not fine in the DRC. Joseph Kabila has managed to extend his presidential mandate, which expired on November 28, 2016; wanton warlords continue to rule eastern regions of the country, and inter-ethnic conflicts continue to plague some Congolese localities. If things do not change, many more Congolese citizens will inevitably become victims of the draconian insensitivity of Kabila's regime.

■ The chain of events

The chain of events that led to Therese's death

started in December 2017, when the Lay Coordination Committee of the Catholic Church (CLC), a group backed by many priests and bishops in the majority-Catholic country, asked the Congolese government to respect the St Sylvestre Agreement. Signed between the government and the opposition a year earlier in December 2016, as result of the Congolese government's inability or indeed reluctance to organize a new presidential election, the St Sylvestre Agreement stipulated that:

Political prisoners were to be liberated, and political exiles would be able to return home freely.

Considering that by the end of 2016 Congo President Joseph Kabila had already served two terms (from 2006 to 2016) in addition to the transitional period from 2001 to 2006, amounting to a total of 15 years in power, the St Sylvestre Agreement meant that Kabila's days in power were numbered.

By December 2017, the Congolese government was still not "ready" to organize a presidential election. That was when the CLC went nuclear on Kabila. Spokeswoman Leonie Kandolo and the CLC leadership warned that if the conditions of the St Sylvestre Agreement were not met by December 15, 2017, the people would take it to the streets.

That is exactly what has happened not once, but twice so far. On December 31, the Catholics marched in Kinshasa and in other parts of the Congo. Marchers were heavily repressed, with many of them sustaining injuries. In reaction to the brutal repression of the protests on New Year's Eve, the CLC called for a second march on January 21. Police repression was heavier this time, resulting in the killing of Therese, Serge, Packson and Hussein. ➔13

Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

Apartment

Apt in Mirdamad
148 sq.m, 3 Bdrs., 3 balconies fully renovated, parking near to subway, **\$2600**
Ms.Ava: 09128440156

Apt in Jordan
4th floor, 130 sq.m, 2Bdrs. almost new, fully furn parking storage, laundry BBQ, balcony, **\$2300**
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in a Tower in Farmanieh
15th floor, 280 sq.m, 4 Bdrs. fully furn, city view, lobby pool, parking, **\$5500**
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

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

Apt in Elahieh
3th floor, 90 sq.m, 2 Bdrs. almost new building, pkg nice view, luxury furn **\$2800**
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Kamranieh
nice tower, 220 sq.m, 3 Bdrs. equipped kitchen, spj nice balcony, gym saloon, nice garden, diplomatic tower **\$4500**
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Villa

Luxury Villa in Elahieh
1000 sq.m built up, 1500 sq.m land, 7 rooms, duplex completely renovated semi furn, green garden outdoor pool, parking, **\$16000**
Suitable for Residency & Embassy
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Duplex Villa in Farmanieh
400 sq.m, 4 Bdrs., fully furn green & nice garden fully renovated, **\$4500**
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

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

Villa in Valiasr-Park way
triplex villa, 500 sq.m built up 600 sq.m land, 5 Bdrs., modern renovated, barbeque, garden servant quarter, luxury furn outdoor pool, cozy & beautiful **\$12000**
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Villa in Zafaranieh
600 sq.m, 5 Bdrs., fully furn renovated, outdoor pool, **\$8000**
Suitable for Embassy & Residency
Ms.Diba: 09128103206



Holder of

ISO 9001:2008

ISO 10004:2012

ISO 10002:2014

From Oxford Cert Universal

Best Consultation
Best Services, Best Result

Intel. Department Manager "Tina 09128103205"

Tel: 22662452-8, Fax: 22667173

Hot Line: 28141
info@parsdiplomatic.com
www.parsdiplomatic.com

Building & Office

New Whole Building in Mahmoodeh
9 apt each apt 220 sq.m to 240 sq.m with 3 & 4 rooms one penthouse with 5 rooms & big saloon, luxury lobby, spj gym saloon, parking, equipped kitchen for all apts good access to highway
Price negotiable
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Commercial Building in Elahieh
2th floor, 100 sq.m, pkg, **\$1800**
Ms.Ava: 09128440156

Whole Building in Zafaranieh
19 apt & each apt 200 sq.m with 3 Bdrs., one penthouse with 5 rooms, pkg, 4900 sq.m built up 6900 sq.m land, semi furn
Suitable for Residency & Embassy
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Office in Jordan
1th 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.Diba: 09128103206

Ideal Offers

Luxury Apt in Mahmoodieh
4th floor, 120 sq.m, 2 master rooms, almost new, luxury lobby, luxury & new furn pkg, spj, good, access to highway, **\$3000**
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

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

Suite in Elahieh
40 sq.m, good access, **\$1500**
Ms.Ava: 09128440156

فقط مالکین محترم

یک ساختمان مستقل با ۳۰۰ تا ۳۰۰ اتاق خواب جهت سکونت کارمندان یک شرکت بین‌المللی در شمال و شمال غرب تهران جهت اجاره نیازمندیم
خانم دیبا: ۰۹۱۲۸۱۰۳۲۰۶
دفت: ۲۸۱۴۱ - ۲۲۶۶۲۴۵۴

حدود ۳۰۰۰ متر بنا سند اداری در شمال شهر تهران جهت اجاره به یک کمپانی اروپایی، فوری نیازمندیم.
خانم دیبا: ۰۹۱۲۸۱۰۳۲۰۶
دفت: ۲۸۱۴۱ - ۲۲۶۶۲۴۵۴

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.



Velenjak (\$2800) 3bdrs, F.F
Elahieh (\$2400) 3bdrs, F.F

Zaferanieh villa (\$8000)
1400sq.m, 5bdrs, S/p, & yard

Farmanieh Apt (\$3800)
3bdrs, 220sq.m, S/p, S, J, & F.F

Vozara bldg (\$30000)
8storey, 30bdrs, & pkgs

Jordan (\$1800) 2bdrs, & S/p
Mirdamad (\$2200) 3bdrs, & S/p

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

FIRST CHOICE REAL ESTATE

Mr. Ghanizadeh
Nobody does it better

آژانس املاک انتخاب اول در خدمت شماست

TEL: 22041212 - 09121081212

APARTMENT - VILLA - OFFICE

PROPERTY@FIRSTCHOICECO.COM

WWW.FIRSTCHOICECO.COM

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

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

maharaja
Indian Restaurant

FIRST INDIAN RESTAURANT IN IRAN

PRIVATE PARKING LOT

Jahan Hotel (Exelsior) - Rahimzade Alley - Taleqani

Crossroads - Valiasr St. Tell: **66476855**

TEHRAN
INTERNATIONAL DAILY

Times

Explore a Brand New Market in Iran for Goods & Services

For rent

Two bedrooms furnished apartment

www.furnishedunitstehran.com

0912 210 1160

Hot water, saunas can relieve pain, may help heart

By Amy Chillag

Don Benedict played handball competitively for 30 years in the Pacific Northwest. To stay in shape, he ran 5 miles every other day.

But decades of pounding the pavement took its toll. When Benedict was 57 years old, he ruptured a disc in his back. And then it happened again.

He had three back surgeries, and the last one, he says, made things worse.

“I found out that they compressed my spinal cord nerves so long that they went into (a condition) called arachnoiditis,” he said.

Scar tissue pressed on his nerves, causing constant pain. Doctors prescribed heavy-duty painkillers, including OxyContin and Tramadol, along with anti-anxiety pills. He took them for years -- a total of 14 doses of pills a day. The drugs took away only some of the pain. Most of the time, Benedict just lay in bed because, despite the pills, it was too painful to do anything else.

The 70-year-old’s stoic, chiseled face -- a cross between Dan Marino and Jimmy Stewart -- belies his decades of suffering.

“Depression comes along with pain. When you have something this debilitating, you have to be depressed,” Benedict said.

But after years on painkillers, he found another way.

■ **Soaking in hot springs makes pain go away**

Benedict thought back to a time he was a summer river guide, taking guests down Idaho’s Salmon River with his wife. They’d stop where there were natural hot springs.

“We actually sought that out to get comfortable,” Benedict recalled. “I thought, ‘well, if it did it for me then, it should do a lot for me now.’”

For the past four years, he and his wife have been coming to hot springs three times a week in Idaho City, Idaho.

“The hot water makes me just feel so much better that it seems like all my troubles go away,” Benedict said, his wife at his side. “Those nerves become relaxed in such a way that I can be out of pain for six or eight hours.”

The springs bubble up into an Olympic-size pool where the water temperature hovers between 97 and 99 degrees.

Within months, Benedict got off more than half the pills he was on. “Not only did I drop the pills in numbers, I dropped the medication in potency.”

He soaks with his wife, Susan, who says the soaking helps improve her severe asthma, relaxing the muscles around her throat.

Along the way, they made a friend who regularly texts them to meet at the pools: a Vietnam veteran in remission from cancer. They socialize, relax and have a few laughs as steam from the hot water rises up past the



Benedict’s pain level and his blood pressure have both dropped significantly since he started going to the hot baths four years ago.

picturesque Idaho mountain views.

“My mental state when I’m soaking is terrific,” Benedict boasted.

■ **How hot water helps pain**

Benedict’s experience with hot water immersion and pain relief has science behind it.

“When you step into a hot bath and your core temperature goes up, a number of things happen that help with pain,” said Dr. David Burke, head of Emory University’s Center for Rehabilitative Medicine.

Two friends soak in Olympic-size pool fed by hot springs in Idaho City, Idaho.

Two friends soak in Olympic-size pool fed by hot springs in Idaho City, Idaho.

“Hot baths expand the blood vessels in those areas and allow the healing properties within the blood to be delivered. They relax the muscles, which takes the tension off of them and the nerves that have been injured.”

Beyond just pain relief, studies are finding there might be far more profound benefits to hot soaking and saunas, as well.

■ **Hot soaking, saunas may be good for heart**

A 2016 study published in the Journal of Physiology found that just eight weeks of repeated hot water immersion lowered blood pressure and caused arteries to become more

flexible in healthy young adults.

Scientists in Finland have focused on the benefits of saunas, a Scandinavian tradition. Their study published in the American Journal of Hypertension followed more than 1,600 middle-age men with normal blood pressure who used saunas over a 25-year period.

People who visited a sauna two or three times a week were 24% less likely to have hypertension compared with those who visited once a week or less.

Those who visited four to seven times a week had a 46% reduction.

And even more profound was an association found between saunas and dementia.

A 2016 study out of Finland found that frequent heat exposure from saunas throughout the week was associated with lower risk of dementia.

That study followed more than 2,300 healthy men who used the sauna each week for six years.

Burke says more studies haven’t been done in the United States because there aren’t large groups of people who use saunas and hot water immersion like the Finnish do.

None of these studies can prove cause and effect, definitively linking sauna use with these benefits -- but, Burke says, the

evidence is strong that “the vascular effects are profound.”

■ **Saunas used at Emory University for brain injury patients**

Burke incorporates saunas into his treatments at Emory University’s Rehabilitative Hospital, where he specializes in brain injuries.

“I routinely recommend the saunas as a quick way -- 20 minutes, four times a week -- to preserve the brain that hasn’t been hurt.”

He believes that in the sauna, small blood vessels in the brain open, possibly stopping micro deterioration in the brain.

“The idea appears to be increasing your core temperature,” Burke said.

“This is one thing that’s passive and easier to do, especially in people who have injured joints who need to keep their brains and hearts in good condition but can’t physically do some of the exercises,” he said.

■ **Some caution when using saunas or hot baths**

The doctor cautions that soaking in hot baths or saunas is not for everyone at all times.

He says that when you’re newly injured (within 48 hours), ice is best for the healing process to decrease inflammation.

After 48 hours or so, Burke says, heat is a good response.

“People with lower blood pressure or other more severe cardiovascular conditions should check with their physicians before they engage in any long-term or short-term treatment like hot water immersion,” he said.

“People have been known to pass out when their blood vessels open up quickly,” Burke said. “You just have to know your body and ask your doctor.”

He also says blood pressure medicine might affect how your vascular system responds to heat and cold. And drinking plenty of water before and after use can counter any dehydrating effects.

■ **Former handball player says he doesn’t need proof**

Benedict says his pain level and his blood pressure have both dropped significantly since he started going to the hot baths four years ago: “I was 150 over 90. I’m now 118 over 68.”

But he also credits an improved diet and weight loss during that time.

Still, Benedict says, his pain relief from the hot baths can’t be understated.

“There was a time I had a plan to end my life,” he said. “The chronic pain of not being able to be as active as I used to be,” he said. “I was a Type A personality. I was successful. And then, all of a sudden, I was taken away from it. So what I’m trying to do is get back some quality of life that I enjoy.”

“You know if you come here three times a week, there’s something to it,” he said.

A smile lights up his face.

(Source: CNN)

Does walking help you lose belly fat?

By Ollie Odeunm

Belly fat looks unpleasant, but beyond aesthetic considerations, it also poses a serious risk to your health. According to Harvard Health Publications, belly fat increases your chances of developing heart disease and several other diseases that have a negative impact on your quality of life.

■ **The lowdown on belly fat**

Ninety percent of your body fat is subcutaneous fat -- fat under the skin -- according to Harvard Health Publications. The other 10 percent is visceral fat, which is belly fat that lies under your abdominal wall and between your internal organs. Excess belly fat makes your stomach protrude and waistline bigger. It also raises blood sugar levels, and increases your risk of developing cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. Excessive belly fat is also linked to colorectal cancer, breast cancer, dementia and stroke.

■ **Losing belly fat**

In contrast to subcutaneous fat on the thighs, hips and butt, belly fat is readily broken down and used as energy by your body, according to Harvard Health Publications. This means that it responds swiftly to cardiovascular and strength-training exercises. Exercises that specifically target your abs such as crunches, reverse crunches or sit-ups, however, won’t help you lose belly fat.

■ **Walking off your belly fat**

Brisk walking is a low-impact moderately intense cardiovascular activity. It gently increases your heart and breathing rates and doesn’t put excessive stress on your joints. Walking is ideal if you are new to exercise, elderly or infirm. All you need are comfortable walking shoes, particularly if you have arthritic knees. According to a study published in the July 2010 issue of, “Arthritis Care & Research,” flat walking shoes place less stress on your knees than clogs or stability shoes. To reduce belly fat, do a 30-minute brisk walk five days a week. This is in line with “The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans,” published by the department of Health and Human Services. According to NutriStrategy, if you weigh 155 pounds, a 30-minute brisk walk at 3.5 mph will burn 134 calories. If you weigh 180 pounds, you will burn 156 calories.

■ **Cranking it up**

As you get stronger and your body gets used to your walking routine, increase your intensity to challenge your body, and accelerate reduction of your belly fat. For example, walk briskly for 10 minutes, then do 40 knee lifts by raising your knees as high as you can as you walk for another 10 minutes. Then, skip along for two minutes. Finish by cooling down with a five-minute walk. Another option includes adding hills to your walking route. Walking uphill expends more energy with the added bonus of toning and shaping your thighs, hips and butt. If you weigh 155 pounds, walking uphill at 3.5 mph for 30 minutes will burn 211 calories, according to NutriStrategy. If you weigh 180 pounds, you will burn 245 calories.

(Source: livestrong.com)

Get moving to avoid blood clots from TV watching

Even if you get enough exercise, you are still at risk for blood clots from too much sitting in front of the TV, according to research presented at the American Heart Association’s Scientific Sessions in November 2017.

Prolonged TV viewing has already been associated with heart disease involving blocked arteries, but this is the first study in a Western population to look at blood clots in the veins of the legs, arms, pelvis, and lungs known as venous thromboembolism.

Researchers examined more than 15,000 people (average age 55) and found that the risk of developing venous thromboembolism for the first time was 1.7 times higher among those who reported watching TV “very often” compared with those who watched TV “never or seldom.” Most surprising was that the rate was 1.8 times higher in those who watched TV very often but also met the recommended guidelines of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week.

The experts suggested people can reduce their risk by breaking up prolonged sitting (in front of the TV or otherwise). For instance, get up and move around every 20 to 30 minutes (go for a quick walk), or combine exercise with TV time -- for instance, by using a treadmill or stationary bike while you watch your shows.

(Source: health.harvard.edu)

No need to shun gluten if you don’t have celiac disease, study suggests

Gluten, a storage protein in wheat, rye, and barley, triggers inflammation and intestinal damage in people with celiac disease. Due to concern that gluten may also increase the risk of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease among healthy people, the number of people without celiac disease who have adopted a gluten-free diet grew more than threefold from 2009 to 2014.

A team led by researchers from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health used 20 to 30 years of data from the 64,714 women in the Nurses’ Health Study and the 45,305 men in the Health Professionals Follow-up Study to examine the relationship of dietary gluten to the risk of chronic conditions such as coronary artery disease in people without celiac disease or heart disease. All the participants had completed questionnaires on their diet and health every four years from 1986 through 2010.

The team found no significant association between the participants’ estimated gluten intake and their risk of developing coronary artery disease. Moreover, further analyses suggested that restricting dietary gluten may reduce a person’s intake any of whole grains, which are associated with lower cardiovascular risk.

The authors point out that this is an observational study, so no firm conclusions can be drawn about cause and effect. Nevertheless, they conclude that their findings do not support the promotion of a gluten-restricted diet to reduce coronary artery disease risk.

(Source: The BMJ)

Single blood test for cancer ‘shows promise’

By Peter Russell

Doctors and scientists in the US say they have developed a blood test that can identify 8 common types of cancer.

The test, called CancerSEEK, has been used to screen for ovary, liver, oesophagus, pancreas, stomach, colorectal, lung, and breast cancer.

■ **Diagnosing cancer in its early stages**

A universal test could detect cancers early enough to allow a cure by surgery alone. In some cases, early detection could make other treatments more successful.

Researchers from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore say the breakthrough could change the future of cancer screening.

Development of the ‘liquid biopsy’ test is still in its early stages. “To actually establish the clinical utility of Cancer-SEEK and to demonstrate that it can save lives, prospective studies of all incident cancer types in a large population will be required,” the researchers conclude.

Nevertheless, they believe that this study “lays the conceptual and practical foundation for a single, multi-analyte blood test for cancers of many types”.

“This paper is a step along the way to a possible blood test to screen for cancer, comments Nicholas Turner, professor of molecular oncology at The Institute of Cancer Research in London, “and the data presented is convincing from a technical perspective on the blood test.”

However, he cautions that “the study does not support use of the blood test outside research studies, as it has not shown yet whether the blood test has the characteristics required for population screening, nor whether the blood test will improve outcome.”

■ **Looking at mutations and proteins**

The new test measures circulating tumour DNA (ctDNA) from 16 genes as well as 8 protein biomarkers, and then uses machine-based learning to analyse the data.

The test was evaluated in 1,005 patients who had stage 1 to stage 3 cancers that had not spread to other parts of their body.

It was able to detect the presence of cancer in 70% of patients on average. This ranged from a high of 98% for ovarian cancer to a low of 33% for breast cancer.

For 5 types of cancers that have no screening tests -- ovarian, liver, stomach, pancreatic and oesophageal cancers -- sensitivity ranged from 69% to 98%.

The average age of the patients at diagnosis was 64. The most common stage at presentation was stage 2 (49%); 20% of patients had stage 1 disease; and 31% had stage 3 disease.

The tests produced ‘false positives’, in which the test returned a diagnosis of cancer without cancer apparently



The test, called CancerSEEK, has been used to screen for ovary, liver, oesophagus, pancreas, stomach, colorectal, lung, and breast cancer.

being present, in 1% of 812 healthy people with no history of cancer.

■ **‘Some major caveats’**

Professor Turner says such a rate could be quite a concern for screening the population at large. “There could be a lot of people who are told they have cancer, who may not have it,” he says “We can only learn about how much this is, or is not, a problem through larger studies.

“Much larger studies will also be needed to address whether using these blood tests can help improve survival rates.”

Paul Pharoah, professor of cancer epidemiology at the University of Cambridge, says the results come with some major caveats: “Firstly, 80% of the cancer evaluated were stage 2 or stage 3 cancers (fairly advanced).

“Demonstrating that a test can detect advanced cancers does

not mean that the test will be useful in detecting early stage symptomatic cancer, much less pre-symptomatic cancer. The sensitivity for the stage 1 cancers in the study was only 40%.”

■ **Cost of screening**

The John Hopkins researchers say the cost of the single test could be less than \$500 (£360).

“This is very much an estimate of what we think it will likely cost if it was implemented as a widely-used screening test,” Dr Ann Lennon a professor of medicine, surgery and radiology, and one of the study’s authors, told Medscape Medical News.

They say the test is likely to be less expensive and more convenient than current screening tests, such as colonoscopy and mammography.

(Source: webmd.com)

‘Parents killed it’: why Facebook is losing its teenage users

When Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook he was a 19-year-old living in a dorm in his second year at university. Fast-forward 14 years and it is the young people he was so successful in luring to Facebook to propel it to become the world’s biggest social networking site that are now his biggest problem.

This year more than 3 million under-25s in the UK and U.S. will either quit Facebook or stop using it regularly, and they are pretty vocal about why.

“As soon as parents got in they killed it,” says 24-year-old Jordan Ranford, a now minimal Facebook user who ditched his mum as a friend because she was “just jarring”.

Georgia Davey, 21, predicts a bleak future for the increasingly uncool Facebook. “I don’t know if I should say this, but I think Facebook might shut down one day,” she says. “There will be a new thing soon and no one will be on it anymore.”

With 2 billion registered users it is impossible to see Facebook closing. But her comment highlights an inherent truth of internet life: impermanence. Digital businesses age in dog years, meaning today’s new thing can rapidly become yesterday’s news. Anyone remember MySpace or Second Life?

Facebook is managing to keep a proportion of disaffected youngsters: many have moved to Instagram, which it bought in 2012 for \$1bn, but the big winner is increasingly Snapchat.

About 44% of Snapchat users are aged 18 to 24, while just 20% of Facebook’s are now in that key age range, according to Ampere Analysis.

The youth exodus is being balanced by older users joining, and the first users of Facebook are moving into their 30s and 40s. As a result there will be an increase of about 3.6m over-35s in the US and UK this year, according to eMarketer. But the mass departure of younger users has prompted questions about whether the world might now be at peak Facebook.

“I don’t know about calling peak Facebook globally but one of Facebook’s biggest challenges is that it is saturating core markets, western markets, where it has really slowed down,” says Richard Broughton, an analyst at Ampere. “Most of the population likely to go on it are on it.”

Facebook has become a vast money-making machine. Its revenues rocketed 47% to nearly \$41bn last year and its profits soared 56% to nearly \$16bn. But its advertising-based business model is also proving to be its Achilles heel.

Flooding users’ timelines with more and more commercial messages may please investors – Facebook’s advertising dominance has pushed the company’s stockmarket value past \$522bn – but it is being unfriended by its user base.

Last month, Zuckerberg responded by cleaning up its news feed algorithm to prioritise what friends and family share, and reducing the amount of non-advertising content from publishers and brands, which he said were “crowding out the personal moments”. He said the company was focused on “making sure the time we all spend on Facebook is time well spent”.

“The fundamental confusion with Facebook is that it increasingly talks about itself as a community platform, but that is not the reality,” says Benji Vaughan, chief executive at Disciple Media. “Do users feel part of a community when they are there? I have reservations about whether they do. Facebook’s core purpose is to sell targeted content to individuals. All its issues begin there.”

Zuckerberg admitted recently that 2017 was a “hard one”, with the company taking a beating on all sides.

Politicians have attacked Facebook over its role in disseminating fake news. Earlier this month UK MPs grilled the company’s executives in an evidence session in its own backyard in the US. Concerns continue to be raised over Facebook’s use as a platform for Russian meddling in the US elections.

This week Unilever, maker of brands from Marmite to Magnum and the world’s second-biggest advertiser, threatened to withdraw its advertising from Facebook and YouTube unless they cleaned up the “swamp” of opaque business practices and dodgy content.

Zuckerberg has his work cut out attempting to navigate Facebook through its awkward teenage years. Still just 33, with 60% voting power, he is far from ready to throw in the towel.

“They are in an innovator’s dilemma, seen as the monolithic rigid media company,” says Fergus Hay, chief executive of the ad agency Leagas Delaney.

“No one would bet against Zuckerberg, but Facebook needs to grow out of [relying on advertising] or the hipster will be dad on the dancefloor.”

■ **Georgia Davey, 21**

“I’m still on Facebook to keep in touch with old friends, to plan meet-ups and just ... to be nosey,” says Georgia. But she thinks it is becoming a platform “for the old generation to sort of keep an eye on the younger generation – that’s why I don’t really post many things there”.

For her, “Instagram is much more interesting because it’s more visual and I relate more to photos than words”.

Facebook, she says, now seems to be a platform for advertisements, “but it’s also an easier way to find news and articles from magazines, as opposed to having to look through their websites. I don’t know if I should say this, but I think Facebook might shut down one day. There will be a new thing soon and no one will be on it anymore.”

■ **Viktoria Valchanova, 17, and Alina Postelnicu, 16**

“I don’t use Facebook any more because none of my friends use it, so there’s no point,” says Viktoria. Alina says she uses Snapchat rather than Facebook but doesn’t think Facebook is full of old people, just “more middle-aged people, like in their 30s and 40s”. The two girls mainly use Snapchat “for everything, messaging, pictures ... and WhatsApp for groups from school, to talk about topics we did and projects”.

■ **Emily McClymont, 17, and Cameron Cavens, 18**

Cameron says he tries not to use Facebook because he finds it too intrusive. Emily is also using it less: “I find it a bit boring now. It deals too much with people’s lives.” However, she says: “I don’t think I’d delete it because it’s a way of speaking to my family. That’s the only reason I keep it.” She says Facebook is good if you lose touch with people because you can find them again.

“If all my friends stop using it, I might delete it,” says Cameron. He uses Twitter a lot: “I just hate the amount of ads on Facebook. It’s become unusable. Twitter is not as bad.” Emily also uses Twitter, and that’s where she gets most of her news. They also use Instagram and WhatsApp.

■ **Jordan Ranford, 24**

“As soon as the parents got in, they killed it,” Jordan says. He no longer has the Facebook app. “I mainly pay attention to what my older sisters are doing or keeping track of things that are funny ... I deleted my mum as a friend on Facebook because she was just jarring.”

(Source: The Guardian)

The hidden costs of letting your children be raised by screens and smart devices

Too many parents, smartphones and iPads are wonderful babysitters – a funny Youtube video playing on a screen can work miles better than any pacifier or nanny. But this convenience has its costs.

Facebook recently published a blog post admitting that “when people spend a lot of time passively consuming information – reading but not interacting with people – they report feeling worse afterward.”

Jean Twenge – a psychology professor who penned the article “Have smartphones destroyed a generation?” for The Atlantic magazine – believes that smartphones have created “a lonely, dislocated generation.”

Twenge thinks members of what she calls iGen (born between 1995 and 2012) “are on the brink of the worst mental-health crisis in decades. ... Eighth-graders who are heavy users of social media increase their risk of depression by 27 percent. ... Teens who spend three hours a day or more on electronic devices are 35 percent more likely to have a risk factor for suicide, such as making a suicide plan.”

“Kids used to compare themselves with their peer group at school or they’d watch TV and look at Fonzie on ‘Happy Days’ and say, hey, I’m not as cool as Henry Winkler,” said Victor Strasburger, a pediatrician and adolescent medicine expert. “But now it’s instantaneous comparison. Just log on to Facebook, log on to Instagram, and it’s instantaneous comparison with a peer group or many peer groups. And so many kids feel like they don’t match up.”

That’s because much of the technology that won your child’s attention is driven by profits – it’s a business, not a play date or parenting substitute. Many social media applications are engineered to be at least somewhat addictive, and often their business models depend on the apps’ ability to



monopolize users’ time and attention.

The same logic applies to online gaming. For some game makers, “addictive” is the highest compliment to their products, since an “addictive” game will keep gamers engaged, in a subscription model and buying virtual goods.

Twenge says smartphones are responsible for a mental-health crisis among young people. But other researchers debate whether there’s a direct causal relationship between excessive screen use and one’s mental health, in large part because there hasn’t been long-term research on children and smart devices.

“We have some objective data that kids are more stressed. The question is: Is it related to new technology or not?” Strasburg said. “Rates of anxiety and suicide started increasing with the advent of smartphones. Sleep has decreased dramatically with the advent of smartphones.”

Meanwhile, a subcategory of internet addiction – gaming addiction – has received an

official recognition. At the end of last year, the World Health Organization recognized “gaming disorder” in its list of mental health conditions.

Doug Gentile, a psychology professor who specializes in media study, defines gaming addiction as “an impulse control disorder. You know you should do your homework, but you just can’t stop playing. You know you should go to bed, but just one more level. That you are not able to manage that impulse when you need to.”

Hilarie Cash, who co-founded reSTART, a rehabilitation clinic for tech addicts, welcomes the addition from the WHO. “I hope that down the road they will broaden or add to it,” Cash said. “I would like to see a broad category of Internet or screen or digital addiction, because that would then capture all of the different forms it can take.”

We are living in a confusing age. On one hand, parents would like to educate their children using the latest tech inventions. On

the other hand, parents also fear that their introduction could foster addictive behavior or expose children to inappropriate content.

Cash, who has treated many teenage boys who are addicted to internet and games, said, “The average age of exposure to porn is now about 9 years old.” Bryant Paul, an associate professor at Indiana University’s Media School and the author of studies on psychological effects of pornography, told The New York Times in February that “on average, boys are around 13, and girls are around 14, when they first see pornography.”

The truth is, growing up is a delicate process. Parents can’t protect their children from everything. However, there are a few things they can do to better prepare their children for adulthood.

Strasburger suggests setting boundaries. “You have to be very conscientious about it and basically start controlling media from the get-go. And that means reading to your baby, not putting a smartphone in her hand. ... Being very conscientious between [ages] 2 and 8, in terms of content and time and co-viewing.”

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 1 hour per day of high-quality programming for children 2 to 5 years. As for children ages 6 and older, place consistent limits on the time spent using media and the types of media.

Cash recommends parents read “Reset Your Child’s Brain” by Victoria Dunkley and “The Big Disconnect” by Catherine Steiner-Adair and visit the website familiesmanagingmedia.com. Cash said the first step for parents is to start understanding what children need. “We’re unprepared for the technology and how to fit it into our lives appropriately,” Cash said. “Parents really need to talk to a parenting coach or therapist who specializes in child development.”

(Source: CNBC)

Growth of AI could boost cybercrime and security threats, report warns



Wanton proliferation of artificial intelligence technologies could enable new forms of cybercrime, political disruption and even physical attacks within five years, a group of 26 experts from around the world have warned.

In a new report, the academic, industry and the charitable sector experts, describe AI as a “dual use technology” with potential military and civilian uses, akin to nuclear power, explosives and hacking tools.

“As AI capabilities become more powerful and widespread, we expect the growing use of AI systems to lead to the expansion of existing threats, the introduction of new threats and a change to the typical character of threats,” the report says.

They argue that researchers need to consider potential misuse of AI far earlier in the course of their studies than they do at present, and work to create appropriate regulatory frameworks to prevent malicious uses of AI.

If the advice is not followed, the report warns, AI is likely to revolutionize the power of bad actors to threaten everyday life. In the digital sphere, they say, AI could be used to lower the barrier to entry for carrying out damaging hacking attacks. The technology could automate the discovery of critical software bugs or rapidly select potential victims for financial crime. It could even be used to abuse Facebook-style algorithmic profiling to create “social engineering” attacks designed to maximize the likelihood that a user will click on a malicious link or download an infected attachment.

The increasing influence of AI on the physical world means it is also vulnerable to AI misuse. The most widely discussed example involves weaponising “drone swarms”, fitting them with small explosives and self-driving technology and then setting them loose to carry out untraceable assassinations as so-called “slaughterbots”.

Political disruption is just as plausible, the report argues. Nation states may decide to use automated surveillance platforms to suppress dissent – as is already the case in China, particularly for the Uighur people in the nation’s northwest. Others may create “automated, hyper-personalized disinformation campaigns”, targeting every individual voter with a distinct set of lies

designed to influence their behavior. Or AI could simply run “denial-of-information attacks”, generating so many convincing fake news stories that legitimate information becomes almost impossible to discern from the noise.

Seán Ó hÉigeartaigh of the University of Cambridge’s center for the study of existential risk, one of the report’s authors, said: “We live in a world that could become fraught with day-to-day hazards from the misuse of AI and we need to take ownership of the problems – because the risks are real. There are choices that we need to make now, and our report is a call-to-action for governments, institutions and individuals across the globe.”

“For many decades hype outstripped fact in terms of AI and machine learning. No longer. This report ... suggests broad approaches that might help: for example, how to design software and hardware to make it less hackable – and what type of laws and international regulations might work in tandem with this.”

Not everyone is convinced that AI poses such a risk, however. Dmitri Alperovitch, the co-founder of information security firm CrowdStrike, said: “I am not of the view that the sky is going to come down and the earth open up.”

“There are going to be improvements on both sides; this is an ongoing arms race. AI is going to be extremely beneficial, and already is, to the field of cybersecurity. It’s also going to be beneficial to criminals. It remains to be seen which side is going to benefit from it more.”

“My prediction is it’s going to be more beneficial to the defensive side, because where AI shines is in massive data collection, which applies more to the defense than offence.”

The report concedes that AI is the best defense against AI, but argues that “AI-based defense is not a panacea, especially when we look beyond the digital domain”.

“More work should also be done in understanding the right balance of openness in AI, developing improved technical measures for formally verifying the robustness of systems, and ensuring that policy frameworks developed in a less AI-infused world adapt to the new world we are creating,” the authors wrote.

(Source: alphr.com)

Bitcoin: what have experts said about the cryptocurrency?



Bitcoin’s gyrations have attracted a lot of attention over the past year. Here are some of the most memorable comments from senior figures in world finance.

■ **Yves Mersch**

Yves Mersch, a member of the European Central Bank’s executive board, called for a global clampdown on virtual currencies because of their threat to financial stability on 8 February. Bitcoin transactions can easily take several hours to process, he noted in a speech in London.

■ **Agustin Carstens**

The new head of the Bank for International Settlements has described bitcoin as “a bubble, a Ponzi scheme and an environmental disaster”.

“If authorities do not act pre-emptively, cryptocurrencies could become more interconnected with the main financial system and become a threat to financial stability,” he said in a speech on 6 February.

■ **Nouriel Roubini**

The American economist credited with predicting the 2008 financial crash has called bitcoin “the mother of all bubbles” and “much worse” than tulip mania. He told Bloomberg TV on 2 February: “It’s on the way down to zero. The fundamental value of bitcoin is zero.”

He said the other 1,300-plus cryptocurrencies were “even worse” and slammed the underlying blockchain technology. He added that blockchain has been around for 10 years and its only application is bitcoin or cryptocurrencies and they “are a scam”.

Roubini tweeted this week: “Cryptocracies are also criminal Cyber-Terrorists.” He also claimed that his consulting firm, Roubini Global Economics, was targeted in a 2015 denial-of-service attack because he criticised bitcoin.

■ **Jamie Dimon**

JP Morgan boss Jamie Dimon said in mid-September that Bitcoin was a fraud that would ultimately blow up. He said the digital currency was only fit for use by drug dealers, murderers and people living in places such as North Korea.

The boss of America’s biggest bank said he would fire “in a second” anyone at the investment bank found to be trading in bitcoin. He later softened his stance, and revealed on 9 January that his daughter had bought two bitcoins.

■ **Robert Shiller**

The Nobel prizewinning economist predicted on 26 January that bitcoin would not be a “permanent feature” of the financial world. Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Shiller hailed bitcoin as a “really clever idea”.

Shiller has previously warned that the bitcoin price could collapse. “We are over-emphasising bitcoin, we should expand it out to blockchain, which will have other applications.”

■ **Warren Buffett**

The billionaire investor said on 11 January he would never invest in bitcoin or other cryptocurrencies, and predicted the wildly popular assets were in for a fall.

“I can say almost with certainty that cryptocurrencies will come to a bad end,” Buffett told CNBC in an interview.

■ **Joseph Stiglitz**

The Nobel-prize-winning economist has argued that the currency should be outlawed. “It doesn’t serve any socially useful function.”

■ **Sir Howard Davies**

The chairman of Royal Bank of Scotland has painted an apocalyptic picture for bitcoin. He told Bloomberg TV on 8 December, after bitcoin hit \$15,000 for the first time

■ **Janet Yellen**

On 15 December, the former US Federal Reserve chair described bitcoin as a “highly speculative asset” and “not a stable source of value”, but noted it remained a very small part of the global payment system. She also reiterated her 2014 position that the Fed does not have the authority to regulate the cryptocurrency.

■ **Theresa May**

Theresa May said at the World Economic Forum in Davos that she was concerned criminals were exploiting digital currencies, which can be used to anonymously transfer funds. “In areas like cryptocurrencies, like bitcoin, we should be looking at these very seriously,” May told Bloomberg.

■ **Steven Mnuchin**

The US treasury secretary also flagged up concerns about misuse of digital currencies. “My number one focus on cryptocurrencies, whether that be digital currencies or bitcoin or other things, is that we want to make sure that they’re not used for illicit activities,” Mnuchin told CNBC.

(Source: forexu.com)

World’s coral reefs face new peril from beneath within decades

The world’s coral reefs, already enduring multiple threats from bleaching to nutrient run-off from farming, also face another challenge - this time from below.

New research, published in the journal Science on Friday, has found the sediments on which many reefs are built are 10 times more sensitive to the acidifying oceans than the living corals themselves. Some reef bases are already dissolving.

Not loving it enough: coral reefs face multiple threats from climate change, including as it turns out, from below.

The study used underwater chambers at four sites in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, including Heron Island in the Great Barrier Reef, and applied modelling to extrapolate results for 22 reefs in three ocean basins.

■ Oceans turn acidic

As oceans turn more acidic, the corals themselves produce less of the calcium carbonate that forms their base. Instead of growing, the reef bases start to dissolve.

The “public is less aware of the threat of ocean acidification (than warming waters),” said Bradley Eyre, a professor of biogeochemistry at the Southern Cross University and the paper’s lead author.

“Coral reef sediments around the world will trend towards dissolving when seawater reaches a tipping point in acidity - which is likely to occur well before the end of the century,” he said.



“It is vital that we put pressure on governments globally to act in concert to lower carbon dioxide emissions as this is the only way we can stop the oceans acidifying and dissolving our reefs,” Professor Eyre said. Rates of dissolving reef sediment will

Living corals themselves appear to be able to resist the acidification process, with mechanisms and strategies to resist some of the impacts.

What we do in the next 5 years will affect sea levels for several centuries



The world is far off course from its goals in cutting greenhouse gas emissions - and research published Tuesday illustrates one of the most striking implications of this.

Namely, it finds that for every five years in the present that we continue to put off strong action on climate change, the ocean could rise an additional eight inches by the year 2300 - a dramatic illustration of just how much decisions in the present will affect distant future generations.

“One important point was to reveal that sea level (rise) is not in the far future, it’s now, and because the system is so slow, we just can’t see it at the moment,” said Matthias Mengel of Germany’s Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, the lead author of the study, which was published in Nature Communications.

■ Greenhouse gas emissions

The study, which also included scientists at institutions in Australia and Austria, takes as its premise that the world will work to achieve the Paris climate agreement’s sharp cuts in greenhouse gas emissions.

The goal is to limit warming below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), which requires that the world essentially cease adding any more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere by 2050 or so.

This, in turn, means that global greenhouse gas emissions must reach a peak by either 2020, 2025 or 2030 (or possibly 2035) and then begin to decline rapidly. The longer the wait, the faster the necessary decline after the peak.

If we delay longer still, it simply becomes

too difficult to bring emissions down fast enough to avoid dangerous levels of global warming.

All of this has major implications for the global sea-level-rise commitment, the study finds.

Because emissions today impel rising seas over centuries, the researchers were able to calculate a surprisingly large impact of present choices on sea levels in the distant future.

■ Sea level projection

For every five-year delay in the peaking of emissions, the middle-range sea level projection for 2300 increased by 20 centimeters, or about eight inches, the study found.

The “more cumulative emissions, the more warming, the more sea level,” Mengel explained.

At the extreme end of what’s relatively unlikely but still certainly possible, the research found that each five-year delay could mean as much as an additional meter, or over three feet, of sea level rise.

That is because of the ever-growing chance of major destabilization of the Antarctic ice sheet.

Eight inches of sea level rise is about what the planet experienced during the entirety of the 20th century, Mengel said.

That, itself, highlights how much worse sea level rise could get in the future, as global warming increasingly warms the oceans (causing them to expand) and melts glaciers, the Greenland ice sheet and Antarctica.

(Source: Sciencealert.com)

Scientists say lead and other toxic metals found in e-cigarette ‘vapors’



Significant amounts of toxic metals, including lead, leak from some e-cigarette heating coils and are present in the aerosols inhaled by users, according to a study from scientists at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

In the study, published online in Environmental Health Perspectives on February 21, the scientists examined e-cigarette devices owned by a sample of 56 users. They found that significant numbers of the devices generated aerosols with potentially unsafe levels of lead, chromium, manganese and/or nickel. Chronic inhalation of these metals has been linked to lung, liver, immune, cardiovascular and brain damage, and even cancers.

The Food and Drug Administration has the authority to regulate e-cigarettes but is still considering how to do so. The finding that e-cigarettes expose users -- known as vapors -- to what may be harmful levels of toxic metals could make this issue a focus of future FDA rules.

■ Heating coils

“It’s important for the FDA, the e-cigarette companies and vapors themselves to know that these heating coils, as currently made, seem to be leaking toxic metals -- which then get into the aerosols that vapors inhale,” says study senior author Ana Maria Rule, PhD, MHS, an assistant scientist in the Bloomberg School’s Department of Environmental Health and Engineering.

E-cigarettes typically use a battery-supplied electric current that passes through a metal coil to heat nicotine-containing “e-liquids,” creating an aerosol -- a mix including

depend on their starting points, including their exposure to organic sediment. The Hawaiian reef studied is already showing signs of its sediment dissolving, with higher organic nutrient levels likely to be contributing, he said.

“Carbonate sediments in Hawaii are already net dissolving and will be strongly net dissolving by the end of the century,” the paper said.

■ Living corals

Living corals themselves appear to be able to resist the acidification process, with mechanisms and strategies to resist some of the impacts.

Still, the study said the transition of the dissolution of reef sediment “will result in the loss of material for building shallow reef habitats such as reef flats and lagoons, and associated coral cays”. It is unknown if the reefs will face “catastrophic destruction” once the erosion begins, the paper said.

Over time, as coral bases begin to dissolve, they are more likely to become more vulnerable to cyclones and other threats, Professor Eyre said.

He said further study was needed to understand how reefs would be affected by temperatures, rising organic and nutrient levels and more acidic waters in combination, he said.

(Source: The Sydney Morning Herald)

‘Last wild horses’ not actually wild, researchers find

Genomic research has dramatically re-written what we know about the history of horses. Most importantly -- wild horses no longer exist.

Before a study published Thursday in the journal Science, biologists believed that Przewalski’s horses were the only purely wild horses left alive in the world, the blood running through their veins untainted by a history of domestication. They also believed that the Botai horse, an ancient breed named for the Botai people of modern-day Kazakhstan, was the genetic father of all domestic horses today.

To investigate these claims, scientists at the University of Exeter and the French National Center for Scientific Research did a genomic analysis of 88 ancient and modern horses and mapped them out. They found that neither of the assumptions about Botai and Przewalski’s horses were true.

Archaeologists had analyzed evidence of horsemanship at ancient Botai sites and found that Botai people rode horses, used bridles with bits, drank the milk of the horses and ate their meat. They also kept multiple horses in corrals, demonstrating that keeping, riding and eating domestic horses was an integral part of the Botai culture.

Genetic evidence shows that some Botai horses escaped or were set free, and ultimately gave rise to Przewalski’s horses, also known as Takhis. The researchers also found that the earliest Przewalski’s horses had spotted, Appaloosa-like coats, a trait that may have been bred into Botai horses because it looks cool. The takhis eventually became the tan, stocky animals we know today. But as they are descendants of domestic Botai horses, Przewalski’s horses can no longer be considered the “last wild horses.”

(Source: Newsweek)

Some black holes erase your past, says new study

Physicists insist on determinism: your past and present determine your future uniquely, per Einstein’s equations of general relativity. They call this strong cosmic censorship. A mathematician found some types of black holes -- charged, non-rotating objects in an expanding universe -- that allow an observer inside the black hole to travel across a horizon into a place where the past is obliterated and there are an infinite number of possible futures for every initial state.

A spacetime diagram of the gravitational collapse of a charged spherical star to form a charged black hole. An observer traveling across the event horizon will eventually encounter the Cauchy horizon, the boundary of the region of spacetime that can be predicted from the initial data. UC Berkeley’s Peter Hintz and his colleagues found that a region of spacetime, denoted by a question mark, cannot be predicted from the initial data in a universe with accelerating expansion, like our own. This violates the principle of strong cosmic censorship.

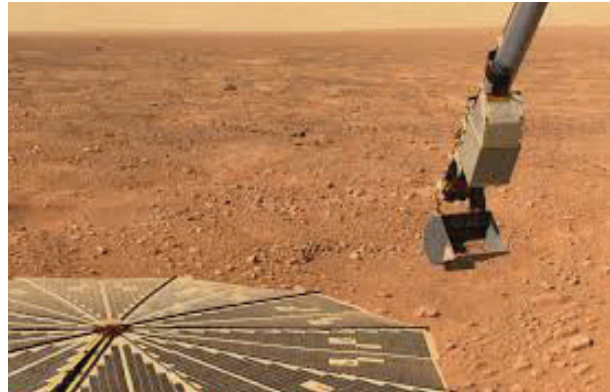
But a UC Berkeley mathematician has found some types of black holes in which this law breaks down. If someone were to venture into one of these relatively benign black holes, they could survive, but their past would be obliterated and they could have an infinite number of possible futures.

Such claims have been made in the past, and physicists have invoked “strong cosmic censorship” to explain it away. That is, something catastrophic -- typically a horrible death -- would prevent observers from actually entering a region of spacetime where their future was not uniquely determined. This principle, first proposed 40 years ago by physicist Roger Penrose, keeps sacrosanct an idea -- determinism -- key to any physical theory. That is, given the past and present, the physical laws of the universe do not allow more than one possible future.

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

Dust may be burying NASA’s Phoenix lander on Mars

A newly released photo suggests that dust is reclaiming the site near the Martian north pole where Phoenix touched down nearly 10 years ago.



The “Phoenix lander itself, plus its back shell and parachute, are still visible in the image taken Dec. 21, 2017, by the High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment (HiRISE) camera on NASA’s Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter,” NASA officials wrote in a description of the photo.

“But an animated-blink comparison with an image from about two months after the May 25, 2008, landing shows that patches of ground that had been darkened by removal of dust during landing events have become coated with dust again,” they added.

Phoenix’s mission was supposed to last 90 days, but the solar-powered lander kept operating in the frigid Martian north for more than five months, finally falling silent as winter took hold in November 2008.

Phoenix studied the Red Planet soil and atmosphere using several different instruments. The lander also confirmed the existence of water ice just below the Martian surface, in a shallow trench dug by its robotic arm.

This GIF blinks between two images of NASA’s Mars Phoenix Lander hardware taken by the agency’s Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter in July 2008 and December 2017, respectively. In the latter photo, dust obscures much of what was visible two months after the landing. The lander is near the top, and the back shell and parachute are close to the bottom. The dark patch at right was created by the impact of Phoenix’s heat shield.

This GIF blinks between two images of NASA’s Mars Phoenix Lander hardware taken by the agency’s Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter in July 2008 and December 2017, respectively. In the latter photo, dust obscures much of what was visible two months after the landing.

(Source: space.com)

Scientists gain new clarity on how fast the ice is melting in Antarctica

Scientists already thought that the Antarctic ice sheet was melting, but the speed at which the melt is occurring was a mystery until now. Using satellite imagery and computer vision, NASA was able to build what scientists say is the clearest view of the ice melt so far.

The U.S. space agency compiled data from hundreds of thousands of satellite photos taken from Landsat satellites owned by NASA and the U.S. Geological Survey. It then used all that data and images to build a detailed

map of ice flow across almost all of Antarctica using computer vision which allowed them to locate features in two images that match. The team also developed its own software to process all the data and build their model.

The lead author of the study said that when they started studying the changes in the Antarctic ice sheet, all they had was one map showing ice flow, which had been built using data that scientists had gathered over a decade. That ice flow map was published in

2011, and at the time, it was considered to be “revolutionary,” lead author and researcher Alex Gardner said.

■ Tracking the melting

After completing their map of the Antarctic ice sheet, they now expect to track changes in the sheet’s melting every year. In addition to tracking the melting, scientists also believe they will be able to determine how the ice flow in Antarctica is accelerating or decelerating over time as conditions in the environment

change.

The NASA team published their findings in the journal The Cryosphere, and while much of what they discovered about the melting of the Antarctic ice sheet was what they expected based on findings from previous studies, there were a few surprises. The biggest surprise was the accelerating glacier flow into the Getz Ice Shelf, which is located in southwestern Antarctica.

(Source: ValueWalk)

Bank Shahr Awarded with Silver Status of Financial Management System

Bank Shahr was awarded with a silver status at the 8th National Financial Management Award due to salient achievement taken in the field of transparency of its financial system, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

The award-granting ceremony was held in the presence of senior advisor of the President, chief executives of the company, university lecturers and a number of senior officials of the country.

Accordingly, this edition of ceremony was held with a focus on promoting capability of financial management level of economic enterprises of the country, the report added.

A silver status in the field of financial management was awarded to Bank Shahr in the field of development of electronic banking (e-banking) as well as offering quality modern banking services, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank concluded.



Industrial fishing occupies a third of the planet

When a team of researchers set out to see how prevalent industrial fishing was around the world—who was fishing where and when—they were met with a dearth of information.

They lacked access to vessel monitoring systems closely held by regional fishery managers, says Juan Mayorga, a marine data scientist from National Geographic's Pristine Seas project. And that information would have shown only pieces of the puzzle.

To circumvent this obstacle, Mayorga and a team of researchers took a step back—way back—and tracked marine vessels from space, using satellites to learn where industrial fishing vessels fished and when.

They found the footprint left by the industry was staggering. More than 55 percent of ocean surface is covered by industrial fishing, they found. That's more than four times the area covered by agriculture.

Industrial fishing has been responsible for harmful environmental impacts. Overfishing can deplete resources, many animals like dolphins and sea turtles are products of bycatch, and the massive vessels used require large amounts of CO2-producing fuel.

But looking at the industry on a global scale may lead to increased transparency and accountability to ensure fisheries are more sustainably managed, the researchers say.

■ Where is fishing taking place?

The study, published in the journal Science, looked at over 70,000 industrial vessels measuring from six to 146 meters, which encompasses more than 75 percent of the large-scale industry.

From 2012 to 2016, researchers watched the ships' movements down to the hour, by sifting through 22 billion signals from ships' automatic identification systems or AIS.

AIS was originally created to prevent ship collisions by broadcasting a vessel's identity position, speed, and turning angle every few seconds.

«Those AIS messages that are broadcasted are publicly available via satellite,» says Mayorga. «We then combed through [the signals] with sophisticated computing capabilities provided by Google and machine learning algorithms.»

From this, says Mayorga, he was able to glean information about the characteristics of each vessel, which revealed what type of fishing was taking place.

Longline fishing, a type of fishing in which a line with baited hooks is dropped into the water, was found to be the most prevalent. Trawlers were frequently spotted in the North Sea and off the coast of China.

The data also provided useful information by showing activity on the high seas. As opposed to coastal waters under a country's jurisdiction, the high seas are less closely monitored.

China, Spain, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea accounted for 85 percent of fishing in the high seas.

(Source: National Geographic)

Oil from sunken Iran tanker reached Japan shores: Coast Guard

Oil that reached islands in southern Japan earlier this month is highly likely to have come from the sunken Iranian tanker Sanchi, the Japan Coast Guard said on Thursday.

The Sanchi sank on Jan. 14 after colliding with a freighter on Jan. 6 in the world's worst oil tanker disaster in decades.

“Oil matter that arrived at the shores of the two islands is extremely likely to be linked to the Sanchi tanker incident, considering the similarity of the oil and the fact that there has not been any marine disaster involving oil spill in the nearby sea area,» a Coast Guard official told Reuters by phone on Thursday.

The Sanchi, which the Coast Guard said was carrying 111,000 tonnes, or about 810,000 barrels, of condensate - an ultra-light, highly flammable crude oil - sank after several explosions weakened the hull following the collision. Most of the fuel evaporated after the ship caught fire.

An oil slick continues to be seen near where the Sanchi sank. The slick is located about 315 km (197 miles) west of Amami-Oshima island and is about 700 metres long and 20 metres wide, though oil has been evaporating from the fringes, the Coast Guard said in a statement on Thursday.

(Source: Reuters)

LEARN ENGLISH

Talking To Your Roommate

A: Charlie, do you have a second?

B: Yeah what's up?

A: Well, I went and paid the **bills** today and you still haven't given me your half.

B: Yeah I wanted to talk to you about that. I agreed we would **go halves** on all the bills, but frankly I think it's unfair.

A: Unfair! Why?

B: Well, you have long hair and use the hairdryer every morning. I don't. You leave your computer on all night downloading torrents. I don't. You see **what I'm getting at** here?

A: You leave the air conditioner on day and night! You also take 30 minute showers which means you are using **way more** gas and water than me!

B: Well, while we are at it, stop bringing your friends over for drinks every weekend. You always leave a **mess** and keep me up all night!

A: Maybe you should just **move out** and find another place.

B: Maybe you should move out!

■ Key vocabulary

bill: a document that shows how much you must pay

go halves: divide equally

what I am getting at: what I am trying to say

way more: much more, a lot more

mess: if there is a mess somewhere or a place is a mess, things there are dirty or not neatly arranged

move out: to vacate a residence, cause to leave

■ Supplementary vocabulary

landlord: one that owns and rents land, buildings, or dwelling units

lease: a contract granting use or occupation of property during a specified period in exchange for a specified rent

utility: a commodity or service, such as electricity, water, or public transportation, that is provided by a public utility

dower: the rights of a widow in the property of her husband at his death

breach of contract: a legal violation of an established contract between two parties

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Tehran to monitor carwashes for water pollution

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — A special monitoring program will be implemented in Tehran over the next two months to control the water pollutants released by commercial carwashes, said the chief of Tehran's department of environment.

Initial estimates indicate that some 200 carwashes are causing water pollution, ISNA quoted Mohammad Hossein Bazgir as saying on Friday.

The priority will be given to those carwashes which are bigger and more active, he noted. “All of their equipment will be checked by environment officers,” he highlighted.

Emphasizing that not all of these car washing units are equipped with wastewater treatment systems, he added, “wastewater outlet sampling will be conducted to determine whether the amount of pollutants is in standard range or not.”

Bazgir also touched on the fact that 30 carwashes which caused water pollution and



ignored the warnings of the department of environment have been referred to judicial authorities by now, adding that this trend will continue for offending units.

■ Polluting carwashes

Washing cars at home or in carwashes which are not equipped with appropriate wastewater treatment systems result in heavily polluted water flowing into storm-water drainage and finally, contaminating water bodies.

Pollutants released by car washing are far more serious than a mere detergent; contaminants such as petroleum hydrocarbons and volatile hydrocarbons, heavy metals, surfactants and suspended solids and nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen.

Accordingly, carwashes are required to install wastewater treatment systems and related equipment – such as oil water separators, rain water harvesting systems, first flush diversion systems and pH control systems.

Former addict named health ambassador

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Abbas Amir-Moafi, once a member of Iran's national archery team, was named health ambassador for preventing and fighting drug use.

Hooked on opium as early as 12, Amir-Moafi suffered a tough 10-year addiction. Then he managed to quit drug use and turned to sports.

The vice minister of sport and youth, Abdolhamid Ahmadi, gave the title to Amir-Moafi appreciating his efforts to combat drug addiction in the society, Nasimonline reported on Friday.

In 2004, Amir-Moafi got to know Congress 60, an Iranian

non-profit organization which uses sport to help addicts.

After receiving the treatment and turning drug free, he became one the members of the national archery team, widening the horizons of achievements which can be enjoyed by a former drug user.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) published a report about this athlete on July 25, 2008 acknowledging his success in overcoming drug addiction.

“I went from being someone others looked down on, to being a role model for young people,” the report quoted Amir-Moafi as saying. “My story is a positive lesson for teenagers on how you can change.”

Climate change ‘will push European cities towards breaking point’

Major British towns and cities, including Glasgow, Wrexham, Aberdeen and Chester, could be much more severely affected by climate change than previously thought, according to new research.

The study, by Newcastle University, analyzed changes in flooding, droughts and heatwaves for every European city using all climate models.

Looking at the impact by the year 2050-2100, the team produced results for three possible outcomes – low, medium and high-impact scenarios.

But even the most optimistic case showed 85% of UK cities with a river, including London, would face increased flooding.

In the high-impact scenario, some cities and towns in the UK and Ireland could see the amount of water per flood as much as double. The worst affected is Cork, which could see 115% more water per flooding, while Wrexham, Carlisle, Glasgow, and Chester could all see increases of more than 75%.

The increase in severity in the predicted impact has come after the team, in a first of its kind, examined all three climate hazards together in the largest study of its kind ever undertaken.

After around three years of analyzing the information across hundreds of cities in Europe, they found every outcome was worse than previously thought.

Wrexham, Carlisle, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Derry and Chester were the worst-hit UK towns and cities for river flooding, with Dublin, Cork and Waterford the worst in Ireland.

All 571 cities studied saw a worsening in heatwaves and the high-impact scenario predicted southern Europe experiencing droughts 14 times worse than today.

The lead author, Selma Guerreiro, said: “Although southern European regions are adapted to cope with droughts, this level of change could be beyond breaking point.

“Furthermore, most cities have considerable changes in more than one hazard, which highlights the substantial challenge cities face in managing climate risks.”

While southern European cities saw the biggest increase in the number of heatwave days, central European cities saw the greatest increase in temperature during heatwaves – ranging between 2C to 7C for the low scenario and 8C to 14C for the high scenario.

A co-author, Prof Richard Dawson, said: “The research highlights the urgent need to design and adapt our cities to cope with these future conditions.

“We are already seeing at first hand the implications of extreme weather events in our capital cities.

“In Paris, the Seine rose more than four metres above its normal water level. And as Cape Town prepares for its taps to run dry, this analysis highlights that such climate events are feasible in European cities too.”

Published in the journal Environmental Research Letters, the research found the European capitals worst hit by flooding would be Dublin, Helsinki, Riga, Vilnius and Zagreb.

Under the high-impact scenario, several European cities saw more than 80% increases on peak river flows.

Stockholm and Rome could see the greatest increase in number of heatwave days, while Prague and Vienna could see the greatest increase in maximum temperatures

during heatwaves.

Lisbon and Madrid are in the top capital cities for increases in frequency and magnitude of droughts, while Athens, Nicosia, Valletta and Sofia might experience the worst increases in both drought and heatwaves.

Next month the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is holding its first cities and climate change science conference, after recognizing the important role cities must play in tackling climate change.

Over 75% of the population of the EU currently lives in urban areas, and this percentage is expected to grow to 82% by 2050.

And already the impact is being felt, as between 1998-2009 floods in Europe caused 1,126 deaths and at least €52bn in insured economic losses.

Dawson, who sits on the scientific steering committee for the conference, said: “A key objective for this conference is to bring together and catalyze action from researchers,



A rescue boat in a flooded street of Nemours, near Paris, France, after downpours in June 2016. Photograph: Kenzo Tribouillard/AFP/Getty Images

policymakers and industry to address the urgent issue of preparing our cities, their population, buildings and infrastructure for climate change.”


The team used projections from all available models associated with the high emission scenario RCP8.5, which implies a

2.6C to 4.8C increase in global temperature.


They found the British Isles have some of the worst overall flood projections, with the high scenario predicting half of UK cities could see at least a 50% increase on peak river flows.

(Source: The Guardian)

First Announcement



N.I.O.C
1396.5479



National Iranian
Drilling Company

Public Call Of Tender						
One-Stage						
TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	Subject of Tender	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
4,800	220,000,000	4,390,054,300	P/F " RENHE " WELL LOGGING	3,152,550	Tender No: FP/12-96/080 Indent No: 08-23-9545051	1

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

A) Competence of tenderers:
The tenderers should not have legal restrictive to participation govermental to tenders , also they should provide statute or business license related to subject of the tender.

B) Preparation of tender documents:
Purchasing of documents:
In order to receive the tender documents, **510,000 Rials** should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.

Reciving of documents:
Tenderers must be obtain the tender documents maximum ten days after the date of second publication till 10-MAR-2018 in person at the following address: Hall No.:113, 1thfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN
Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recieve tender duements from foreign procurment department in due date and participates in tenderwill be known as tenderer from tender committee.

C) Delivery of bids envelopes:
Tenderers shall submit simultaneously envelopes of bids including (A) Tender bank guarantee, (B) stamped and signed of tender documents, (C) The priced signed and stamped of the same Technical-Commercial sheets maximum till 09-APR-2018 to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN.
Notice: The deadline for the refusal of bidders participation in the the tender is the last day of determined for submission of bids.

D) The envelopes will be opened at 9: 00 On 10-APR-2018

E) Tender Guarantee:
Type of guarantee:
A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activites licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to National Iranain Drilling Company.

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

More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. WWW.NIDC.IR

Foreign Procurement Dept
National Iranian Drilling Company

تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۶/۱۲/۵ نوبت دوم ۹۶/۱۲/۶

Syria slams Western silence on fatal terrorist attacks against Damascus civilians

Damascus: France not eligible to play role in Syria peace process

➔ (Jabhat al-Nusra/Jabhat Fateh al-Sham/al-Qaeda in Syria), are now largely concentrated in the Damascus suburb of Eastern Ghouta, an area they have been using to launch deadly mortar attacks on the capital.

Syrian government forces have been pounding terrorist positions in the area to liberate it and free a large number of civilians struggling there with malnutrition and lack of basic medical supplies.

The U.S. and its allies accuse Syrian forces of killing civilians in its aerial campaign against militant positions in Eastern Ghouta, a claim sharply rejected by Damascus and Moscow, which backs the anti-terror operation with its air force.

Ja'afari further said the terrorist groups in Eastern Ghouta, which have been designated as terrorist organizations by the Security Council, have been targeting Damascus with hundreds of rocket and mortar shells on a daily basis, killing and injuring hundreds of its residents.

He expressed surprise that the U.S., along with its European and Persian Gulf allies, has remained silent about the deaths of civilians in the capital in the terrorist attacks from Eastern Ghouta.

The eight million citizens of Damascus, Ja'afari said, are under constant threat by a few thousand terrorists in Eastern Ghouta, and yet the Western countries are more concerned about the well-being of those terrorists than that of the civilians in the capital.

He said the U.S.-led coalition, purportedly fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit in Syria, has moved from the proxy war to direct aggression against Syria in order to achieve what the terrorists failed to achieve.

The Russian military announces that militants in Syria's Eastern Ghouta are preventing civilians from exiting the conflict zone.

He complained that the UN has turned a blind eye to the coalition's crimes, including its complete destruction of the northern city of Raqqa under the pretext of fighting the ISIL.

Also, he said the world body is ignoring more than a month of Turkish aggression on the Afrin district in northern Syria as well as Israel's repeated attacks on the Syrian territory.

Al-Ja'afari said the instances of the UN's failure to call the aggressors to account "stress that this international organization suffers a professional and ethical crisis through adopting the stances of states which support terrorism in Syria and denying the right of the Syrian government to defend its citizens."

In remarks after the session, Syria's ambassador said accusations by the United



States, Britain and France — which he called the “three musketeers” — that the Syrian government was indiscriminately bombing civilians were completely false.

He accused them of ignoring rocket attacks by rebels in Eastern Ghouta that have killed scores in Damascus.

On Friday, at least two civilians were killed and over 30 others injured in renewed militant rocket attacks launched from Eastern Ghouta against residential areas in Damascus.

■ **Damascus: France not eligible to play role in Syria peace process**

Elsewhere, Damascus says France is not eligible for a role in Syria's political process as long as it supports terrorism, has Syrians' blood on its hands, and shows hostility towards the conflict-ridden country.

The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, in two separate letters sent to UN Secretary General António Guterres and rotating President of the UN Security Council Mansour Ayyad al-Otaibi on Thursday, stated that France has long been making unsubstantiated allegations in a bid to distort facts and garner support for the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham Takfiri terrorist group, which the United Nations recognizes as al-Qaeda's Syria branch.

“Since the very beginning of Syrian crisis, France has spearheaded state terrorism and supported terrorist organizations, particularly Jabhat al-Nusra and its affiliated groups. The French government's financial support (for terrorist groups in Syria) could be corroborated by video and audio files,” the letters pointed out.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry also asked

the United Nations Security Council to put an end to France's practices, which undermine the credibility of the world body, violate its resolutions and defy the UN Charter.

On Wednesday, French President Emmanuel Macron said Paris “vigorously” condemns war activities in the militant-held area of Eastern Ghouta near the Syrian capital Damascus.

Macron then alleged that the Syrian government “has decided to target civilian populations,” calling for the “immediate adoption” of a UN resolution on the issue.

The French Foreign Ministry, in a statement released on Tuesday, also denounced a “serious violation of humanitarian law” in Eastern Ghouta.

“France calls on all its partners in the United Nations Security Council to take responsibility for finally reaching a humanitarian truce,” the statement read.

■ **Russia: UN Security Council fails to agree on ceasefire across Syria**

Meantime, Russia says no agreement was reached at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on a month-long ceasefire across Syria as the conflict deepens in Syria due to a sharp rise in terrorist attacks.

Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia made the announcement on Thursday after a council meeting on a draft resolution demanding a 30-day truce in Syria amid renewed violence in Syria's Eastern Ghouta region.

Sweden and Kuwait, two non-permanent members of the Security Council, had proposed the ceasefire measure in Syria to allow deliveries of humanitarian aid and medical evacuations.

On Wednesday, Nebenzia presented amendments to the draft resolution, saying, “We cannot simply decide that there is a ceasefire.”

“That's a long and complex process to achieve. Cessations cannot be established by putting a word in the resolution,” he noted.

Earlier on Thursday, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expressed Moscow's readiness to consider the ceasefire in Syria, but only if it does not cover the ISIL, the al-Nusra Front and other terrorist groups which “conduct systematic shelling of the residential quarters of Damascus.”

“It is hard to oppose a call to a ceasefire with the goal for civilians to take a breather, to supply humanitarian aid and medication and to offer assistance to people in a difficult situation,” Lavrov said.

Russia says it will consider supporting a UN-proposed ceasefire in Syria if it does not cover the ISIL and the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham Takfiri terrorist groups.

Eastern Ghouta near Damascus has witnessed renewed violence in the past few days, where terrorists have mounted repeated mortar attacks on the Syrian capital in the face of an imminent rout.

UN special envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, stressed the urgent need for a ceasefire in comments made ahead of Thursday's UN Security Council meeting.

“The humanitarian situation in Eastern Ghouta is appalling and, therefore, we need a ceasefire that stops both the horrific heavy bombardment of Eastern Ghouta and the indiscriminate mortar shelling on Damascus,” he said.

He added the ceasefire needs to be followed by immediate unhindered humanitarian access and a facilitated evacuation of wounded people out of Eastern Ghouta, and warned against this being a repeat of Aleppo.

■ **Terrorist attack kills 3, injures 22**

Separately on Thursday, a total of three civilians, among them two children, were killed and 22 others wounded in terrorist attacks on Damascus and its countryside.

A source at Damascus Police Command told the official SANA news agency that the casualties came after armed groups positioned in Eastern Ghouta fired mortar shells on several nearby residential neighborhoods.

Residents of Eastern Ghouta, majority of whom are internally displaced, say there is nothing they can do and nowhere to hide.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri terrorist groups that are wreaking havoc in the country.

Trump slammed for suggesting teachers should be armed

➔ “The notion that my kids are going to school with teachers that are armed with a weapon is not something that, quite frankly, I'm comfortable with,” Rubio said during the CNN Town Hall.

Florida Democratic Senator Bill Nelson added that he believes it is a “terrible idea”.

The suggestion, which was also brought up after the Sandy Hook school shooting in 2012, has garnered support from some.

A few raised their hands when Trump asked those present at the listening session if they were in favor of the idea.

According to a Washington Post-ABC poll after the shooting, the majority of Republicans surveyed (59 percent) said they believe that arming teachers could have prevented last week's school shooting.

Politicians in at least six states have proposed bills this year that would make it easier to allow firearms on campuses, according to Politico.

Responding to criticism, Trump tweeted on Thursday that he “never said ‘give teachers guns’”. He said that he was suggesting legislators “look at the possibility of giving ‘conceal guns to gun adept teachers with military or special training experience’”.

He added: “Highly trained teachers would also serve as a deterrent to the cowards that do this. Far more asset at much less cost than guards. A ‘gun free’ is a magnet for bad people. ATTACKS WOULD END!”

“Highly trained, gun adept, teachers/coaches would solve the problem instantly, before police arrive. GREAT DETERRENT!” Trump said.

“If a potential ‘sicko shooter’ knows that a school has a large number of very weapons talented teachers (and others) who will be instantly shooting, the sicko will NEVER attack that school.”

Trump, who was endorsed by the National Rifle Association (NRA) during the 2016 presidential election, also said he would be in favor of stricter background checks for gun buyers.



Earlier this week, the president called for a ban on bump stocks, a device that allows semiautomatic rifles to fire at the rate of a machine gun.

■ **Nationwide protests against gun violence**

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, students nationwide continued their protests against gun violence.

Students throughout southern Florida walked out of their classrooms to demand stricter gun control.

Thousands also descended on the Florida state capitol under the banner “never again”.

Wednesday's protests followed a week of near-daily demonstrations, organized by students.

Next month, a nationwide march and walkout is being planned by those who organized the Women's March.

■ **U.S. educators say no to ‘arms race’ in schools**

After Trump proposed arming “highly trained” teachers to deter school shootings, the idea has drawn little support from those most directly concerned -- teachers.

“Parents and educators overwhelmingly reject the idea of arming school staff,” said Lily Eskelsen Garcia, president of the National Education Association (NEA), the largest professional union in the United States.

“Bringing more guns into our schools does nothing to

protect our students and educators from gun violence,” said the head of the three-million-member NEA.

Randi Weingarten, head of the American Federation of Teachers, another union, condemned what she called an “arms race” and efforts to “turn schools into militarized fortresses by arming teachers.”

Besides the major U.S. teachers' unions, the proposal also drew criticism from Shannon Watts, the head of one of the leading gun control groups, Moms Demand Action For Gun Sense in America.

“I'm honestly gobsmacked that the president used a forum with gun violence survivors to pimp the (National Rifle Association's) priority legislation and to suggest arming teachers,” Watts said.

■ **NRA chief accuses critics of politicizing mass shootings in U.S.**

Meantime, the head of America's powerful gun lobby has blasted gun rights opponents for exploiting last week's deadly Florida high shooting to expand gun control and curb the gun violence epidemic in the U.S.

National Rifle Association (NRA) chief Wayne LaPierre on Thursday dismissed street protests and mounting demands to tighten America's permissive gun laws.

“They hate the NRA. They hate the Second Amendment. They hate individual freedom,” LaPierre said at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Oxon Hill, Maryland, near the nation's capital.

Striking a defiant tone in his first public comments since the mass shooting in Florida, he also accused the gun control advocates of hating individual freedom.

LaPierre blamed school security, families, and the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) for the tragedy, urging more armed security in education centers. His suggestion was similar to what Trump had given for solving the issue.

“Evil walks among us and God help us if we don't harden our schools and protect our kids” LaPierre said. “The whole idea from some of our opponents that armed security makes us less safe is completely ridiculous.”

more than 270 girls were kidnapped from their school. More than a third of them are yet to be found.

More than 20,000 people have been killed and two million others forced to flee their homes in northeastern Nigeria since Boko Haram launched a campaign in 2009 aimed at forming a breakaway state.

Over the years, the armed group has kidnapped thousands of adults and children.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Turkey summons Dutch envoy for Armenia ‘genocide’ vote

Turkey summoned the Dutch charge d'affaires on Friday to complain about the Netherlands Parliament's recognizing the massacre of as many as 1.5 million Armenians in 1915 as genocide, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said.

The parliamentary motion, which the Dutch government said would not become official policy, risks further worsening relations already strained over the Netherlands' barring Turkish ministers from campaigning for a 2017 referendum that gave President Recep Tayyip Erdogan more power.

A second motion called for a high-level Dutch government official to attend Armenia's genocide remembrance day on April 24. In the past, the Dutch ambassador has attended.

Turkey accepts many Christian Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire were killed in clashes with Ottoman forces during World War One, but contests the figures and denies the killings were systematically orchestrated and constituted a genocide.

Turkey's Foreign Ministry said the Dutch motions were “baseless decisions.” Nearly a dozen other EU countries have passed similar resolutions.

Talks to repair relations between the two countries have broken down and the Netherlands recalled its ambassador on Feb. 5.

(Source: Reuters)

Stormzy to Theresa May: Where's the money for Grenfell?

A British artist has taken Prime Minister Theresa May to task, rapping about the government's failure to provide support to the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire.

After Stormzy's 40-second verse on stage at the 2018 Brit music awards on Wednesday evening won him praise, Number 10 defended its record over the deadly London blaze in June, 2017, in which at least 71 people died.

In his lyric, Stormzy said: “Yo, Theresa May where's the money for Grenfell? What, you thought we just forgot about Grenfell? You criminals, and you got the cheek to call us savages? You should do some jail time, you should pay some damages. You should burn your house down and see if you can manage this.”

In response, a spokesman for the prime minister said on Thursday: “I think the PM has been very clear that Grenfell was an unimaginable tragedy that should never have happened and should never be allowed to happen again.”

The spokesman admitted May had not watched the performance by Stormzy, who won the award for Best Male Solo Artist at the ceremony. The government, he said, had allotted \$82m for victims of the disaster.

However, the Conservative-led administration has been accused of failing the victims, many of whom remain without permanent housing.

An online petition, calling on PM May to build public trust in the Grenfell Tower inquiry, has gathered almost 30,000 signatures.

“Bereaved families and survivors call on [the prime minister] to exercise her powers under the Inquiries Act 2005 to appoint additional panel members, with decision-making power, to sit alongside the chair in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry: to ensure those affected have confidence in and are willing to fully participate,” the petition reads.

The clip of Stormzy's rap has been viewed more than 1.5 million times on social media, with many praising the artist as a “national treasure”.

Later in the rap, 24-year-old Stormzy targeted Britain's right-wing Daily Mail news for negative rhetoric against minorities and praised recent successes of black figures in popular culture, such as the model Jourdan Dunn and actor Daniel Kaluuya.

Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the main opposition Labour Party, was among those who had praised the artist's performance, writing on Twitter: “Congratulations @Stormzy1 for winning your first #BRIT award, and what a powerful performance. #Grenfell.”

On June 14, 2017, a fire ripped through Grenfell Tower, an apartment block in west London, claiming the lives of scores of residents.

Victims ranged in ages from a stillborn baby to an 84-year-old woman.

Most residents were from lower-income backgrounds and their flats were subsidized by the council in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea - a wealthy, but deeply divided area.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Democratic Republic of Congo: a country on the brink

➔ These days, there seems to be two Congos existing simultaneously. On one hand, there is the Congo of Kabila, Mende, and Tshibala where “everything is fine,” and people can “freely” challenge the government and demand accountability. On the other hand, there is the Congo of the CLC and the Congolese people where calling the government into account is an act of defiance to Kabila, and speaking out against repression can land you in jail, in exile, or in the grave.

■ **Third Christian march**

CLC spokeswoman Kandolu and many of her colleagues have now gone underground, as there is an arrest warrant on their names. But, in spite of the threats, the CLC is already planning to organize a third Christian march on February 25. Will this be the straw that breaks the camel's back?

Among all the devastating photos that document the events of January 21, there was one demonstrating the reality of Congo the best. In the photo, a young Congolese man is kneeling on a street in Kinshasa. His hands are halfway raised in a prayer pose, his eyes are raised in reverence, and a rosary is dangling from his right hand. Around him, chaos runs amok, smoke bombs are fuming, and an inert body is lying nearby on the ground. Yet, the kneeling Catholic protester keeps praying while looking towards the soldiers attacking him and his fellow protester.

What do we make of this? In a country where armed conflicts have directly and indirectly caused the deaths of millions, where countless people have been internally displaced, and thousands of others have fled to neighboring countries, surrendering to the very possibility of death is an act of hope, a triumph of life and freedom over death and repression.

The current political instability in Congo is no longer a question confined within the binary of stability and security against democratization and political liberalization. As of now, the most pertinent question is whether the Congolese people will finally have a say in the determination of their political future. For the time being, it is most likely that an ongoing confrontation between the Congolese government and the CLC will continue to erode Kabila's legitimacy, or whatever is left of it.

(Source: aljazeera.com)

Confusion over missing Nigerian girls, parents demand answers

Families of abducted Nigerian schoolgirls have expressed grief and disappointment after the authorities retracted a statement that some of the missing girls had been rescued by the military.

Police said on Wednesday that 111 girls from the government Girls Science and Technical College, a state-run boarding school in Dapchi, in Yobe state, were unaccounted for after an attack by the suspected Boko Haram group on Monday night.

The Yobe state government issued a statement on Thursday that the girls were rescued but retracted it within 24 hours saying the information was “not credible”.

Witnesses told Al Jazeera that some of the attackers were dressed in military uniforms as they passed through the school gates. Many of the students who were alerted by gunshots earlier, scaled the school's perimeter fence and escaped. Some of them said they saw dozens of their school mates being led into

a waiting truck.

“We heard gunshots. There was chaos everywhere,” Hadiza Makinta, an escapee, told Al Jazeera.

“Four of us sisters started running together. She fell and I fell down too. But someone picked me up. That was the last time I saw her. She was taken,” Makinta said referring to her eldest sister.

Residents hope the tragedy won't be as long-drawn as the 2014 Chibok incident where

Arsenal and AC Milan meet in Europa League last 16

Seven-times European champions AC Milan will face Arsenal in the standout last-16 tie in the Europa League after the draw was made in Nyon, Switzerland on Friday.

It will be the first time the two clubs have met since Milan won 4-3 on aggregate to reach the Champions League quarter-finals in 2012 where they lost to Barcelona.

Spanish favourites Atletico Madrid take on Lokomotiv Moscow while Milan's Serie A rivals Lazio will face Dinamo Kiev.

Borussia Dortmund, another club having to settle for Europe's secondary club competition after falling out of the Champions League, face Austria's FC Salzburg.

French club Olympique Lyonnais, whose ground will host the final, play CSKA Moscow while former European champions Olympique de Marseille face Athletic Bilbao.

The remaining two ties are RB Leipzig against Zenit St Petersburg and Portugal's Sporting Lisbon versus Viktoria Plzen.

Although Milan, playing in Europe after a three-year absence, have improved under former player Gennaro Gattuso who has taken them on an 11-match unbeaten run, they are adrift in the race for Champions League places, lying seventh in Serie A.

Arsenal, who failed to qualify for the Champions League this season for the first time for 20 years, look unlikely to get back in via a top-four finish in the Premier League.

With a Champions League spot up for grabs for the Europa League winners, the clash between the two powerhouses takes on added significance. The six previous matches between the sides have seen both win twice, Arsenal prevailing 3-0 in the most recent clash at The Emirates having lost 4-0 in the San Siro in the first leg of their 2012 Champions League tie.

Arsenal reached the last 16 despite losing 2-1 at home to Swedish club Ostersunds on Thursday. Milan beat Bulgarian side Ludogorets.

(Source: Guardian)

Michy Batshuayi slams Europa League racist abuse



Borussia Dortmund striker Michy Batshuayi has accused Atlanta fans of racial abuse during a Europa League tie in Italy. The Belgian star complained on Twitter that he was subjected to constant "monkey noises."

Michy Batshuayi and two other Borussia Dortmund players complained they received racial abuse during their side's Europa League match in Italy on Thursday.

After Dortmund progressed to the last-16 with a 4-3 aggregate win over Atalanta, Batshuayi tweeted: "2018 and still racists monkey noises in the stands ... really ?! Hope you have fun watching the rest of Europa League on TV while we are through."

The on-loan striker accused the Atalanta fans of making monkey noises for the duration of the match. His teammates Dan-Axel Zagadou and Alexander Isak were also reportedly the target of abuse. Dortmund captain Marcel Schmelzer said he was not aware of the noises during the match but that he condemned it "in the strongest possible terms," adding that "this doesn't belong anywhere."

Atalanta were punished as recently as January after Napoli defender Kalidou Koulibaly was subjected to racist abuse during a Serie A match. Club President Antonio Percassi later apologized. "I'll be honest, I didn't hear them," he said. "If it did happen, then I am very sad and absolutely apologise to Batshuayi. This should never happen."

Read more: Black players in Italy urged to strike after Muntari is handed suspension.

European football's governing body UEFA could also investigate Dortmund after their fans set off pyrotechnic flares and aimed a laser-pointer at the pitch.

The game itself ended in a 1-1 draw, which meant Dortmund won the tie on aggregate thanks to their 3-2 victory in the first leg. (Source: Deutsche Welle)

Conte dismisses Mourinho tension

Chelsea boss Antonio Conte says he has moved on from the war of words with Jose Mourinho that has plagued their Premier League rivalry. The pair go head-to-head at Old Trafford on Sunday with Chelsea looking to go level on points with the home side.

Conte referred to Mourinho as a "little man" earlier this season after the Portuguese appeared to raise the former's 2012 suspension for match-fixing, for which he was later acquitted.

The barb was the latest in a long sequence of insults which Conte suggested was now over.

However, the former Italy coach declined to answer whether he would shake Mourinho's hand on Sunday.

"In the past we have both said things. For me it is okay," Conte told reporters on Friday.

"I am not interested to speak about this topic."

Chelsea enter the weekend's match on the back of an encouraging Champions League draw with Barcelona which extended their unbeaten to three competitive matches.

With only three points separating the sides, Conte expects a hard-fought encounter between two clubs eager to shore up a top-four spot. "United is always dangerous because the squad is very strong. This team is also very physical," he said.

"When you play against United you have to know anything can happen and there is risk to lose the game. It is a massive game for us."

(Source : Four Four Two)

Police officer dies after clashes at Athletic Bilbao vs. Spartak Moscow game

A police officer has died as rival fans violently clashed before a European soccer game between Spanish club Athletic Bilbao and Russian team Spartak Moscow.

In a statement, Ertzaintza regional police said Inocencio Alonso Garc a, 51, died after suffering a cardiac arrest, following the clashes between supporters of Athletic and Spartak outside the Basque club's San Mames stadium before their Europa League game.

According to police, several people had turned up to the game with batons and knives. At least nine people have been arrested.

After the game, Athletic tweeted: "Our deepest condolences to the family and companions of the deceased agent today."

"Athletic Club shows its strongest rejection of the violence generated around football."

Footage of the clashes showed supporters aiming fireworks at each other on the streets.

David Vilumbrales, an Athletic supporter, tweeted a video from the scene saying: "Several injured in Bilbao. We were attacked by the Spartak ultras with golf balls and bottles and the ambulance does not arrive."

"I was caught by surprise," Vilumbrales told CNN, adding that fireworks, bottles, and golf balls were all thrown by Spartak "ultras."

"I wanted to go to San Mam s Stadium on the safest street, Alameda Urquijo, and I ran into a pitched battle all-against-all without police."

"Everything was very confusing and the police did not distinguish Athletic Bilbao's fans from the Spartak because they all wear the same colors. The ultras were prepared in groups of 30 people and attacked us three times."

Spain's Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, offered his condolences to Garcia and his family on Twitter.

"My condolences to the family and friends of the policeman who died in Bilbao and my consideration to the Ertzaintza for its efforts to protect those who do enjoy sport."

Second Russian athlete fails doping test at Winter Games



A second Russian athlete has tested positive for a performance-enhancing drug at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, a major blow for the nation's hopes of regaining its Olympic status and drawing a line under years of doping scandals.

Bobsledder Nadezhda Sergeeva tested positive for a heart drug on Feb. 18, five days after a previous doping test returned a negative result for her, the Russian bobsleigh federation said in a statement on Friday.

"On Feb. 13, her sample was clean. The team's medical staff did not prescribe the drug to the athlete," the federation said in a post on its official Facebook page.

"The Bobsleigh Federation of Russia and the athlete herself understand the extent of their responsibility and understand how what has happened can have an impact on the fate of the whole team."

Earlier this week, Russian curling medalist Alexander Krushelnitsky agreed to hand back his mixed-team bronze medal after testing positive for meldonium, which can aid in endurance.

Krushelnitsky's case shocked the Russian



I condemn in the most energetic way the violent events," he tweeted.

In a statement, UEFA said it "strongly condemns the violent clashes which occurred on Thursday night."

"We are in contact with local authorities to obtain further information on these incidents"

"UEFA sends its sincere condolences to the family and colleagues of the police officer who passed away tonight."

Spain's Football Federation has announced plans for a minute's silence at all upcoming matches.

Meanwhile, Real Madrid captain Sergio Ramos tweeted: "Football, sport and society cannot remain indifferent to violence, fear and the loss of life. We must force change."

Russia World Cup

The incident once again places a spotlight on Russian hooliganism ahead of this year's World Cup which Russia is hosting.

Russian hooligans caused trouble during the 2016 European Championship finals in France, clashing with rival supporters.

Both Russia and England were threatened with expulsion from the tournament follow-

ing clashes between rival fans in Marseille.

Earlier Thursday, German police said they had arrested a Russian football hooligan for attacking an England fan during Euro 2016.

The suspect was arrested en route from Moscow to Bilbao where he was traveling to watch the game between Athletic and Spartak.

Spartak won the game 2-1, but Athletic progressed to the last-16 courtesy of a 4-3 aggregate victory.

The Europa League is UEFA's second tier club competition.

(Source: CNN)

Messi, Ronaldo and Neymar are the only superstars, says Pele



Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi and Neymar are the only genuine "superstars" in world football, according to Brazil great Pele. Ronaldo and Messi between them have won every Ballon d'Or since Kaka's triumph in 2007, while Neymar has finished third in two of the last three years, including the most recent edition.

Brazil fans are used to seeing some of the world's best playing for the Selecao, with Pele highlighting the fact they have often had "three or four top players for each position" at a given time.

The 77-year-old does not think that is the case anymore, though he does believe Neymar is one of football's leading trio, praising the Paris Saint-Germain attacker for being able to adapt to a different role with his national team to the one he usually takes up at club level.

"Neymar has changed the way he plays with the national team," Pele told FIFA.com. "He has had to."

"At his club side, he was playing as a left-sided attacker, whereas for Brazil, he plays more centrally, as a more traditional number 10. That's hard, but he's managed

to adapt his game.

"If you look around the world, the ones who stand out are Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Neymar. There are no other superstars."

"The important thing is for the national team to be well organised as a group because they no longer have three or four top players for each position."

"The same is true of Germany, whose emphasis is more on the collective. Before, it was individuals who mattered most, but it's changed a lot. It's all very similar these days."

Brazil's chances of World Cup success will surely be pinned on the performances of Neymar, who Pele feels is already "technically" the world's best player.

"He's ready, yes," Pele added. "He might find that the tactical switch from his club to the national team isn't straightforward, but Neymar is Brazil's key player."

"He has to prepare himself for that. And I would go further: for me, technically, he is already the best player in the world. I'm absolutely sure of that."

(Source: Goal)

What inspires Pyeongchang's Winter Olympians?

It's never easy reaching a Winter Olympics.

For the 2018 edition, some athletes defied all odds and competed without funding, while others spent months wondering if they'd ever compete again after suffering career-threatening injuries. But as the Winter Games draws to a close, athletes are beginning to reflect on how they ended up competing on the world's greatest stage.

CNN Sport spoke with two of them to find out what inspired them to compete at a Winter Olympics.

'My mom and dad escaped communism'

Team Canada ice hockey player, Wojtek Wolski, says he owes his success and perseverance to his father, who brought the family from Poland to Canada as refugees when Wolski was one year old.

"My mom and my dad escaped communism," Wolski told CNN Sport. "They moved us to West Berlin and from there, we were sponsored by the Catholic Church and we moved to Toronto. "We were supposed to end up in Winnipeg, but my dad decided we were going to get off the plane in Toronto and start a life."

One of the key lessons Wolski picked up from his Dad was the importance of resilience.

"He's overcome so many things. He's taught me to not



give up -- to be persistent, to be determined. To keep going no matter what the costs."

The hockey player has had many setbacks in his career -- in 2016 he broke hi

Wolski wasn't sure if he'd ever walk again, let alone skate. And while his recovery has been extraordinary, during his comeback he also struggled with depression.

He says his father has always been there to encourage him to never give up.

"I think anytime I have a tough time in my life he's some-

one that I look to to help me through it."

Fighting adversity and defying odds

India's only competitor in luge, Shiva Keshavan, too, has faced many hardships during his Olympic journey.

The athlete was forced to practice on the mountainous roads of Northern India -- not because he wanted to, but because he had no choice. India has no professional luge track -- nor is it likely to build one any time soon.

He says Indian track and field athlete, P.T. Usha was one of the many people who has inspired him. She participated in three Olympic Games -- in 1980, 1984 and 1988.

"(She) used to compete at the Olympic level and run barefoot because she didn't have the resources to get the equipment others did," he explains.

Like Usha, he too struggled to receive funding and structural support from India's Olympic Association.

Mahatma Gandhi -- leader of India's independence movement and known for his peaceful activism -- is also one of Keshavan's idols. "He taught me how to fight adversity," he says. "India is a land of hardship and of people trying to make things happen despite the odds and so I get inspired by people around me on a daily basis."

(Source: CNN)

Zahra Nemati nominated for International Women's Day award

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Zahra Nemati from Iran has been shortlisted for the 2018 International Women's Day Recognition Award.

The winner will be announced on International Women's Day on 8 March, exactly one day before the PyeongChang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games Opening Ceremony.

Nemati will vie with Esther Vergeer (NED), Dr. Hayat Khattab (EGY), Mina Mojtahedi (FIN) and Sarah Storey (GBR) for the prestigious award.

"Zahra Nemati changed the view of women in Iranian society with her archery achievements that include two Paralympic titles and three world titles, most recently from the 2017 World Championships in Beijing, China. She was the first Iranian woman to win a Paralympic or Olympic medal. As a pioneer and role model, the influence she exerted over Iranian women during the past years has been substantial," Paralympic.org wrote.

The United Nations International Women's Day takes place annually and sees organizations, groups and individuals marking the day with special events to raise awareness of the role of women in society.

Thousands of events occur not just on this day but throughout March to mark the economic, political and social achievements of women.



Iran beat Kazakhstan in FIBA World Cup Qualifiers

Seasoned veterans Hamed Haddadi and Samad Nikkhah Bahrami teamed up to lead Iran in their convincing win over Kazakhstan in the second window.

Haddadi had a whale of a game, scoring 20 points, grabbing 20 rebounds, handing out 5 assists, getting 2 steals and blocking 2 shots. Bahrami, meanwhile, added 21 points and 8 assists. The Kazakhs were led by 18 points from Rustam Murzagaliyev.

Kazakhstan stuck close to Iran for an entire half, but Team Melli dominated them in the last two quarters to eventually notch their second win of the Asian Qualifiers, 75-54.

Coach Mehran Shahintab was generally happy with how

his team played, especially considering the short amount of time they had to train together.

"We only had 5-6 practice sessions because many players just came last week," he said. "We stressed more the importance of good defense. We knew that we would be so-so in offense, but I think we adapted well to both the gym and the game."

Iran next face Iraq on Sunday, and Team Melli will have vengeance foremost on their minds when they do so. Kazakhstan will try to bounce back on Sunday as well when they host Qatar, who just earned their first win after besting Iraq to open their second window campaign.

(Source: FIBA)

Iran files complaint over Al Hilal's minute's silence snub



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) filed a complaint to Asian Football Confederation (AFC) against Al Hilal after the Saudi Arabian team's players failed to respect a minute's silence for the victims of Iranian plane crash.

The silence was planned ahead of the Group D match of the 2018 AFC Champions League between Esteghlal and Al Hilal in Muscat, Oman.

On Sunday, An Iranian commercial plane crashed in a foggy and mountainous southwestern region of the country, killing all 66 people on board.

The Iranian players lined up on the center circle ahead of the match to pay their respects.

But their counterparts from Saudi Arabian team instead walked back to their positions to line up ahead of the game.

Esteghlal defeated Al Hilal 1-0 at the end of the match to remain at top of the group.

Iranian football legends Ali Karimi, Ali Daei bury the hatchet



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Sepidrood coach Ali Karimi and Saipa coach Ali Daei ended their feud ahead of a match in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Friday.

The war of words between Karimi, Daei started after the 2006 World Cup, where Team Melli failed to book a place in the next stage under guidance of Branko Ivankovic.

Afterward, Karimi accused Daei of being a selfish player who was playing just for

his own reputation not for team.

Daei holds the record for most international goals with 109 in 149 caps, which is remarkably 25 more than the legendary Ferenc Puskas achieved for Hungary.

Karimi, known as the Wizard of Tehran, is arguably the most popular player in Iran. Daei and Karimi both played in Iran's Persepolis and Bayern Munich.

Sepidrood defeated Saipa 2-0 in Rasht's Sardar-e Jangal Stadium.

Neymar's Barcelona dispute no longer being investigated by FIFA

FIFA has closed its investigation into the dispute between Neymar and Barcelona over the unpaid renewal bonus that surfaced when the Brazil international moved to Paris Saint-Germain last summer.

World football's governing body say they will not be taking the matter any further because the Brazilian has filed a "parallel [complaint] before different jurisdictions."

Neymar originally made the complaint to FIFA in August, but in January, El Mundo reported that he had also filed a lawsuit with the Spanish courts against the Catalan club in relation to the same case.

As a result, FIFA confirmed on Friday that they are no longer in a position to continue with their investigation.

"After having been made aware that, apparently, the same matter had been submitted in parallel before dif-

ferent jurisdictions by the same party, the FIFA administration informed the parties to the dispute that based on the long-standing and well-established jurisprudence of FIFA's deciding bodies, it did not seem to be in a position to continue with the investigation of the affair," a spokesman said.

Neymar believes he is entitled to €26 million, which Barca were due to pay him last summer as the second part of a bonus for the contract renewal he signed earlier that season.

The club had already said they would not be paying the bonus and later announced they would be suing Neymar for a breach of contract.

The fallout stems from the five-year deal the 26-year-old signed with Barca in October 2016.

In addition to the bonus he was paid at the time -- the amount of which has not yet been made public by Neymar or Barcelona but is reported to have been around €14m -- he was due to receive a second payment last summer before his world-record move to France. Barca spokesman Josep Vives explained the club's reasoning for not making the payment at the time.

"There were three conditions," he said. "One, that the player didn't negotiate with another club before July 31; two, that he publicly expressed his decision to fulfill his contract; and three, the payment was to be made on Sept. 1 to ensure he didn't go to another club."

A final decision on the case will now be made by the Spanish courts.

(Source: ESPN)

Ice Hockey: Germany stun Canada to make first final

GANGNEUNG, South Korea (Reuters) - Germany shocked defending men's ice hockey champions Canada 4-3 on Friday, beating the Canadian men on Olympic ice for the first time to reach their first gold medal game.

The Germans, who knocked out Sweden in the quarters, relied on a scrappy defense and opportunistic offense to squeeze past a Canadian team who had looked on course for a third straight Olympic final appearance even without their NHL players.

The win set up a gold medal game against the mighty Russians, who beat the Czech Republic 3-0 in Friday's first semi-final.

"It's unreal to get to play for gold," German defenseman Frank Hordler said.

"It gives me goosebumps," said forward Patrick Hager, who scored what would prove to be the game-winner.

The Canadian men's curling team were earlier shut out of the Olympic medals for the first time.

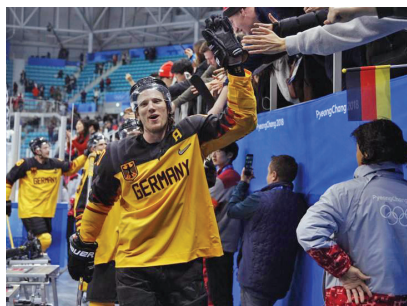
"A lot of guys have scars today," Canadian

forward Maxim Noreau said.

Germany built a 4-1 lead through the first two periods only to face a withering Canadian comeback in the third as they scored two goals in the first 10 minutes of the period.

But Canada fell one goal short despite peppering German goaltender Danny Aus den Birken with a barrage of shots until time ran out.

But Canada fell one goal short despite peppering German goaltender Danny Aus den Birken with a barrage of shots until time ran out.



Sepahan trounce struggling Siahjamegan: IPL

TASNIM— Sepahan football team humiliated Siahjamegan 5-0 in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Friday.

Reza Dehghan was on target twice (2nd and 74th) and Sasan Ansari (33rd), Mehdi Sharifi (35th) and Milad Sarlak (87th) scored each for the Isfahan-based football team.

Elsewhere, struggling Sepidrood Rasht defeated Saipa 2-0, Gostaresh Foolad lost to Paykan 3-0 and Naft Tehran was held to a 1-1 draw by Sanat Naft.

On Saturday, IPL leaders Persepolis will host Esteghlal Khuzestan, Foolad will entertain Esteghlal, Pars Jonoubi meet Tractor Sazi and Zob Ahan face Padideh.

Alireza Jahanbakhsh on Napoli's radar

Iranian winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh has been linked with a move to Italian giant Napoli.

Jahanbakhsh has been playing for Eredivisie side AZ Alkmaar since joining the club in 2015.

He has made a big impression this season at AZ, scoring 12 goals and 12 assists in 27 games.

The Iranian's contract in Alkmaar will run until mid-2020, but there is a chance for him to join a better league after the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

Watford, Bournemouth and Celtic had already showed interest in recruiting the winger.

A former Iranian U-20 and U-23 international, Jahanbakhsh has won 34 caps and scored four goals but played only a peripheral part in his country's 2014 World Cup campaign, coming on as a sub in all three of Iran's games.

(Source: Corrieredellosport.it)

Raheem Sterling a doubt for Carabao Cup final

Manchester City will make a late call on the fitness of Gabriel Jesus and Raheem Sterling for Sunday's Carabao Cup final against Arsenal.

Brazil striker Jesus has been sidelined since New Year's Eve with a knee injury but has now had three training sessions back with the team as they prepare for their trip to Wembley.



Asked about Jesus' chances of being involved, City boss Pep Guardiola replied: "We will see."

Regarding Sterling, he said: "He has a muscular problem. He had it against Basel. I don't know if he will be ready for Sunday."

Guardiola confirmed second-choice goalkeeper Claudio Bravo will start, having done so in all domestic cup matches this season.

"He deserves to play in the final," he said. "Without him we would not be here. He's going to play."

City's quadruple hopes were ended last Monday when they suffered a shock 1-0 loss at Wigan in the FA Cup, and Guardiola says his players are determined to learn from their mistakes as he attempts to win his first trophy in English football.

(Source: Sky Sports)

Mourinho: Man United players must earn trust

Jose Mourinho has sent a warning to his Manchester United players that they must earn his trust in the wake of Paul Pogba's demotion against Sevilla.

Pogba was left out of the starting XI for the first leg of the Champions League round of 16 in Spain -- a decision to which Mourinho insists the midfielder has responded well.

But the United manager has also reminded his players they must all earn his trust if they want to play and pointed to 21-year-old Scott McTominay, who started instead of Pogba against Sevilla, as an example.

"I think I don't give trust for free," Mourinho said at a news conference on Friday. "I think is the other way round. I don't think it's about the manager to trust the player. [It] is the player to make the manager trust him. [It] is as simple as that."

"Sometimes it looks like we have to give everything to the players and they give nothing back to us. I don't think that way. The confidence and trust I show towards Scott, he earned it since day one, since he came to the first team training sessions."

"Of course, he will have bad matches and make mistakes and be on the bench and not be selected, but I know when I want him to play, I know the kind of mentality."

Pogba is likely to return to the team against Chelsea at Old Trafford on Sunday with Ander Herrera ruled out with a hamstring injury.

Mourinho is expecting Herrera to be sidelined "for weeks" while also saying Phil Jones, Marcos Rojo, Marouane Fellaini, Daley Blind and Zlatan Ibrahimovic are not ready to return.

Mourinho insists Pogba has been "professional" after being dropped for games against Huddersfield Town and Sevilla in the last fortnight and insisted the 24-year-old's performance in the Champions League in midweek was "positive."

Mourinho added: "You saw the game against Sevilla. It's always more difficult to come from the bench than to start."

"To come on without warming up and getting to the pace of the game is not easy and I think he had a very positive game for us."

"Some details are details and some players take five minutes to be ready to play. They don't have shin pads, strapping, the shirt. He took 10 seconds to be ready to come to the pitch to show the professionalism and show he was ready to help the team."

(Source: Soccermet)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

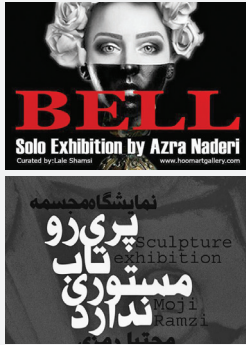
■ Managing Director: Ali Asgari
■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» 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



WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES



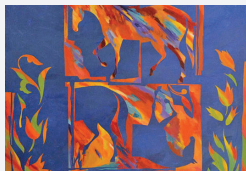
Sculpture

■ Hoom Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of sculptures by Azra Nadiri.

The exhibit titled “Bell” will run until March 2 at No. 2, 4th Alley off Qaem Maqam St.

■ An exhibition of sculptures by Mojtaba Ramzi are on display at Seyhun Gallery.

The exhibit will be running until February 23 at the gallery located at No. 11, 4th St., Vozara Ave.



Painting

■ An exhibition of paintings by Mostafa Nadrlu is currently underway at Haft-Samar Gallery.

The exhibit will be running until February 28 at the gallery located at No. 8, Fifth Alley, Kuh-e Nur St., Motahari Ave.

■ Paintings by Payam Golchin are on display in an exhibit entitled “Neigh” at Shirin Gallery.

The exhibit will be running until February 28 at the gallery located at No. 5, 13th St., Karim Khan Ave.

■ “Solitude Whisper”, an exhibit of paintings by Marzieh Bakhtiari is currently underway at Ariana Gallery.

The exhibit will continue until March 1 in the gallery located at 9 Fereshteh St., off East Maryam St., in the Elahieh neighborhood.



Drawing

■ An exhibition of drawings by Soghra Damirchilu is underway at Shalman Gallery.

The exhibit will run until February 28 at the gallery located at 27 Kavusi Alley, West Rudbar St., off Mirdamad Blvd.

Soderbergh’s thriller shot on iPhone premieres in Berlin

BERLIN (Reuters) — Director Steven Soderbergh said on Wednesday he so enjoyed making his psychological thriller “Unsane” on an iPhone, he would find it hard to go back to conventional filmmaking. “Unsane”, which premieres at the Berlin film festival, was shot over just two weeks - way shorter than the months a movie usually takes.

It tells the story of Sawyer Valentini, who moves to a new city to escape her stalker David but finds herself admitted to a mental health institution where he works.



Director Steven Soderbergh and actor Joshua Leonard pose during a photocall to promote the movie “Unsane” at the 68th Berlinale International Film Festival in Berlin, Germany, February 21, 2018. (Reuters/Hannibal Hanschke)

Sawyer, played by Claire Foy, is convinced she has been wrongly admitted to the facility but no one believes her so she is trapped there and subjected to tortments from David, who gives her pills that make her lash out and imprisons her in a padded cell where he declares his love for her.

Soderbergh said the overall experience of making a film on an iPhone was good, although there were some drawbacks such as the phone being very sensitive to vibrations.

“I have to say the positives for me really were significant and it’s going to be tricky to go back to a more conventional way of shooting,” he said.

Not having to make a hole in a wall or secure a camera to the ceiling are big advantages, as is being able to go straight from watching a rehearsal to shooting, Soderbergh said.

“The gap now between the idea and the execution of the idea is just shrinking and this means you get to try out more ideas so I wish I’d had this equipment when I was 15,” he said.

Joshua Leonard, who plays David, said filming on an iPhone enabled the actors to stay in the world of their characters and the film more than the conventional camera set-up would allow.

“There’s nothing more fun as an actor than just being in the thick of the creative process when you’re actually on set and not having to wait for the machine of filmmaking to catch up with the creative impulse,” he said.

Being used to people putting iPhones close to his face to take selfies helped too because “it really minimized any self-consciousness about the process of making a film”, he said.

“Unsane” is among around 400 films screening at the festival but it is not among the 19 movies vying for the main prize, the Golden Bear.

“The Lost Strait” leads winners at National Will Manifestation Awards

A R T TEHRAN — Director d e s k Bahram Tavakkoli’s acclaimed movie “The Lost Strait” led the winners at the National Will Manifestation Awards on Thursday with seven accolades.

The awards are presented to those films that promote issues being pursued by some public organizations and institutes. Juries from the organization select winners from the films screened at the Fajr Film Festival.

“The Lost Strait” is based on a true story, which recounts an epic battle by Iran’s Ammar Battalion during the last days of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

The Iran Water Resources Management Company, Iran Insurance Company, Cinema Organization of Iran, Iran National Carpet Center and several other organizations held the National Will Manifestation Awards ceremony at the Rex Cinema in the southwestern Iranian city of Abadan.

The Iran Water Resources Management Company honored Javad Ezzati and Hamid Azarang with its first and second best awards. In addition, Tavakkoli won the fourth award of the company.

The Iran Insurance Company also presented its second best award to “The Lost Strait” producer Saeid Malekan.

“Iran’s Lady Qods”, a documentary by Mostafa Razzaq-Karimi about Khadijeh Saqafi, the wife of Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, received the first best award from the Cinema Organization of Iran.

The organization gave its second and



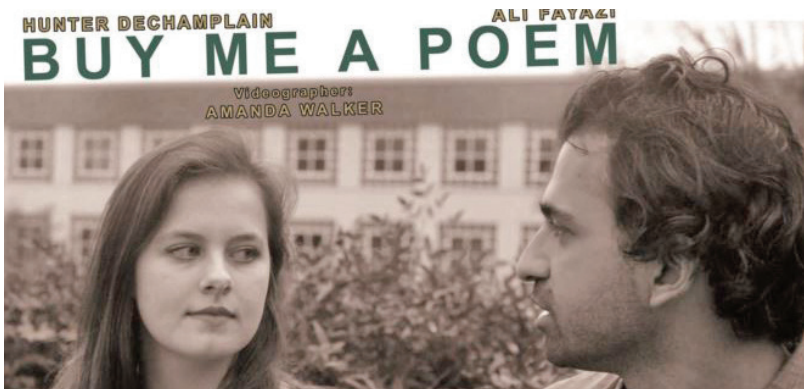
Hamid Azarang acts in a scene from “The Lost Strait”.

third best awards to producer Hamed Jafari and director Hadi Mohammadian for their animated movie, “The Elephant King”.

The organization’s fourth best award went to “Women with Gunpowder Earrings”, a documentary by Reza Farahmand about

Nur, a female journalist who covers stories about Syrian and Iraqi women and children in the war against the Daesh terrorists.

U.S.-based Iranian student makes film on Trump travel ban



A poster for “Buy Me a Poem” by Rezvan Khorsandi

A R T TEHRAN — A U.S.- d e s k based Iranian student has made a short movie that revolves around the difficulties arising after the partial implementation of President Donald Trump’s travel ban.

“Buy Me a Poem” is based on a true story about Ali Fayyazi, a Ph.D. student at Clemson University where writer and director Rezvan Khorsandi studies graphic communications.

The film is about difficulties that this Iranian student with his American fiancée is experiencing because of Trump’s travel ban, she said in an announcement sent to

the Tehran Times on Thursday.

By her film, Khorsandi said that she intends to show that “not only are Iranians not terrorists but also their millennia culture is filled with goodwill and benevolence.”

She also added, “I hope that I could have shown a small piece of the reality of Iranians’ peaceful culture with this short movie.”

Trump signed an executive order last year suspending refugee arrivals and banning entry to the United States from seven Muslim-majority countries, including Iran and Syria.

Sadeq Tabrizi commemorated by Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art

A R T TEHRAN — A number d e s k of artists and friends came together at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMCA) on Thursday to commemorate Sadeq Tabrizi, a pioneer of calligraphic-painting in Iran who died at 79 in London in early January.

Tabrizi was an influential figure in the formation of the Saqqakhaneh School, a neo-traditional style of art that derives inspiration from Iranian folk art and culture.

Speaking at the meeting, Visual Arts Office director Majid Mollanoruzi called Tabrizi an accomplished figure in the history of Iranian art.

“Tabrizi was quite familiar with Iranian classical art such as calligraphy and miniature, while he also made use of Western art in his long professional career,” Mollanoruzi said.

Expressing his condolences to the family of Tabrizi, painter and art critic Aidin Aghdashlu praised Tabrizi for his fighting character.

“The Sadeq Tabrizi that I knew was a



Painter and art critic Aidin Aghdashlu speaks during a meeting held by the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art on February 22, 2018 to commemorate artist Sadeq Tabrizi. (Mehr/Mohammad Mohsenifar)

quiet and calm person. But over the past few years, during which we hardly saw one

another, I thought why has Sadeq become so bitter, what has happened to cause an

Oscar contender “Shape of Water” accused of ripping off 1969 play

Academy Awards ceremony, including nods for best picture and best director. The lawsuit was filed the day after ballots went out to some 8,000 members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, who vote on the Oscar winners.

The lawsuit, filed by Zindel’s son David, listed more than 60 resemblances between the play “Let Me Hear You Whisper,” and “The Shape of Water.”

They include the play and the movie’s basic story of the lonely janitor who works at a scientific laboratory during the Cold War, forms a loving bond with a captive aquatic creature and hatches a plan to liberate it.

In the Zindel play, the creature is a

dolphin. In the movie, it is a half-man, half-river creature.

The lawsuit said that despite “the glaring similarities between the play and the obviously derivative picture, defendants never bothered to seek or obtain a customary license” for the rights to Zindel’s play, nor credit him.

Fox Searchlight denied the claims as “baseless (and) wholly without merit.”

The studio said in a statement that the lawsuit seemed timed “to coincide with the Academy Award voting cycle in order to pressure our studio to quickly settle. Instead, we will vigorously defend ourselves and, by extension, this groundbreaking and original film.”

Intl. festivals to screen films from Iran



A scene from director Mostafa Taqizadeh’s “Yellow”, which will be screened at the Malaysia International Film Festival.

A R T TEHRAN — Movies d e s k from Iranian filmmakers will be screened at two international festivals in Malaysia and Nepal in March.

Director Mostafa Taqizadeh’s debut film “Yellow” will compete in the Malaysia International Film Festival, the organizers have announced.

A question and answer panel has also been organized after a screening, which will be held on March 2.

Taqizadeh has also been invited to present the Best New Director Award to a winner at the 2nd Malaysia Golden Global Awards,

which will take place at Plenary Hall in the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre on March 3.

“Yellow” tells the story of a group of close friends who try to pay for a lifesaving liver transplant.

In addition, the Nepal Human Rights International Film Festival (NHRIFF) running from March 7 to 10 in Kathmandu will be screening a number of Iranian films.

“It Rains Slowly” by Saeid Nejati,

“Compatriot” by Mahtab Soleimani, “Release from Heaven” by Ali Nuri Oskui and “Pink” by Mahbubeh Mohammadzaki are the Iranian entries.

individual from the world of art who has lived in a society where he was well-known to become so bitter.

“I reviewed those formative years when we grew up. When I review his time, I see him heartbroken, since the one who had exerted great efforts has been ignored, while some minors have grown up and become famous,” Aghdashlu said.

“Tabrizi saw the world in his own way but was upset at being ignored and not respected like others on his own level,” Aghdashlu added.

“It was really hard for me to attend this meeting since walking has become hard for me these days, but I came here to say these few words. I am here to pay my respects to the artist who was among the pioneer artists in Iran. Among those who I knew I can hardly forget Sadeq Tabrizi,” he concluded.

For the first time in 1959, Sadeqi painted and inscribed some illegible words on a ceramic panel, which some experts believe to have been the first calligraphic-painting.