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U.S. mediation deadlocked as Aoun sends warning to Israel

As the United States envoy David Satterfield left the Lebanese capital Beirut for Geneva without making any breakthrough in the maritime border dispute between Lebanon and Israel, the Lebanese President Michel Aoun warned the Israel regime there would be "tragic consequences" if it encroached on Lebanese boundaries.

Aoun's warning was the latest chapter in an ongoing maritime boundary dispute between the two countries that are technically at war, heightening tensions in the southern

border region fueled by Israel's construction of a cement wall and its threats over Lebanon's oil and gas exploration. Aoun said that Lebanon's determination to defend its potential oil and gas wealth in its territorial waters deterred Israel from violating the Lebanese land and maritime border.

In a move that appeared to cast doubts on the U.S. mediation efforts to resolve the dispute, the president urged Israel to turn to international arbitration to settle the issue. **→13**

50 new products traded at IRENEX since Mar. 2017

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — As of the beginning of the present Iranian calendar Year (March 21, 2017), 50 new products have been traded in Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), IRIB news quoted the CEO of IRENEX as saying on Saturday.

Among the newly added products to IRENEX, it can be referred to some

petrochemicals produced by refineries of Bandar Abbas and Shiraz, Ali Hossseini said.

Established in 2012, IRENEX is a commodity exchange trading physical energy carriers (including oil, gas, electricity, etc.) and commodity-based securities in its physical, derivatives and subsidiary markets.

Relocation not a viable solution to Tehran's problems: councilor

By Maryam Qarehgozlu

TEHRAN — The growing problems of the megacity of Tehran does not justify relocating it, councilor Ahmad Masjed-Jamei said on Saturday.

He made the remarks after a documentary named "the capital" was screened at Mehr news agency. The documentary was

mainly focusing on the issues the capital, Tehran, is struggling with including water shortage, air pollution, land subsidence and traffic congestion to name a few.

The 14-episode documentary which was partly screened at the agency suggested the relocation of the capital in order to sort out some of the problems the city is beset with. **→12**

Newly revealed U.S. document about JCPOA means "nothing": Nephew

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Richard Nephew, who served as the lead sanctions expert for the U.S. team negotiating with Iran, is of the opinion that the newly revealed documents of the U.S. State Department "do not often echo exactly what presidents say, rather using diplomatic language and a softer tone. It may mean nothing, therefore."

He adds that "If European officials are reluctant to renegotiating the agreement, then that says much about what Russian, Chinese, and Iranian officials would think."

Fellow at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, says "Trump's pressure was intended to seek European support in addressing other problematic aspects of Iranian foreign

policy and in improving the nuclear agreement from a U.S. perspective."

Following is the text of the interview with Nephew:

■ The Newly revealed documents of the U.S. State Department show that the obstruction of Iran nuclear deal by the U.S. government officials has been softened. According to these documents, the US has outlined a course of action in which three European countries Britain, France and Germany would be "totally committed to improving" the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). In return, Donald Trump would extend Iran sanctions relief, keeping Obama-era nuclear deal alive. According to these documents, The U.S. State Department is seeking an agreement with the European countries on this issue (improving

JCPOA) for an "uncertain" period of time. By assuming that these documents are true, can we consider them to be a turn in the Trump's policy toward Iran nuclear deal?

A: I would be very careful in evaluating this State Department instructions cable. In my experience, this document is very similar to how State Department officers write in general. They do not often echo exactly what presidents say, rather using diplomatic language and a softer tone. It may mean nothing, therefore.

Even if it does suggest a different stance of the State Department, which I doubt, it may not mean anything given that this is a decision for the president. His own views on the subject are so different than most of his senior advisors, let alone State Department officers, that it may not matter what they think or write. **→7**

U.S. plans to open embassy in al-Quds in May

The United States is planning to open its embassy in al-Quds (Jerusalem) in May, the State Department has announced.

"We are excited about taking this historic step, and look forward with anticipation to the May opening," the U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said.

Earlier, an official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said most embassy staff will remain in Tel Aviv.

"Come May, we're moving the ambassador and a small team to Arnona," the compound that currently houses the consular operations of the U.S. Consulate General in al-Quds (Jerusalem),

the official said.

"What will happen by May, is a sign will be put up in Arnona identifying the facility as the U.S. Embassy," the official added.

Another U.S. official, also requesting anonymity, added that a new embassy building will be later constructed in another location in al-Quds (Jerusalem).

The State Department spokeswoman said the search for a permanent site had already begun.

U.S. President Donald Trump on December 6 defied global warnings and said Washington formally recognized al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of Israel and would begin the process of

moving its embassy to the occupied city, breaking with decades of American policy.

His decision infuriated the Palestinians, who declared that Washington could no longer play a role as lead mediator in the Middle East peace process. It also sparked outrage across the Muslim world and even Washington's Arab allies.

The United Nations General Assembly on December 21 overwhelmingly voted in favor of a resolution that calls on the U.S. to withdraw its controversial recognition of al-Quds as the Israeli capital.

The 193-nation assembly adopted the resolution by a decisive vote of 128 to 9, with 35 abstentions. **→13**



EDITORIAL

By Mohammad Ghaderi
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West's crocodile tears over human rights in Ghouta

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) convened Thursday to draw up a draft resolution proposed by Sweden and Kuwait, demanding a 30-day truce in Syria to allow aid deliveries and medical evacuations in Syria's Ghouta east of Damascus. Negotiations on the draft began on February 9.

The meeting comes as warplanes pounded eastern Ghouta for almost a week. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appealed last Wednesday for an immediate end to "war activities" there.

The draft, which does not address the fight against Takfiri terrorists in Syria, didn't receive Russia's approval or vote.

A resolution needs nine votes in favor and no vetoes by Russia, China, the United States, Britain or France. Russia has cast 11 vetoes on possible Security Council action on Syria since its civil war began in 2011.

Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia argued that the language of the draft was unrealistic and that the 15-member Security Council could not simply impose a truce on Syria without consulting the parties and proposed amendments to the resolution.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's U.N. Ambassador and the current council president, Mansour Al-Otaiba, called the draft "clear and simple" inasmuch as it asks for a 30-day cessation of fighting in the Ghouta, where 1,200 civilians have been killed.

Also, Sweden's U.N. Ambassador, Olof Skoog expressed frustration over not being able to close the gap completely among the council members and said "we all agree there needs to be a ceasefire". Discussions continue on how to define its terms.

■ Syria's Ghouta

Eastern Ghouta, an important strategic location in close proximity to Damascus International Airport, naturally offers a good location for Takfiri terrorist groups who have always been determined to gain control of the area, even at the cost of slaughtering thousands of civilians.

So far, Syrian army is in control of two-third of the country and the remaining one-third, in the hands of the Takfiri terrorists, has now been surrounded by Syrian forces whose plan is to remove the terrorists from the country forever. **→13**



ARTICLE

Priti Gulati Cox
Interdisciplinary artist

'All I wish is for Palestine to be free': Freedom fighter Ahed Tamimi

The Palestinian cause is not just for Palestinians, not even just for Arabs. The Palestinian cause is a humanitarian cause. What makes me happy is to see the humanitarians of the world stand with us in solidarity to free our land.

— Ahed Tamimi, Empire Files: Abby Martin Meets Ahed Tamimi—Message From A Freedom Fighter.

In 1976, the Palestinian villages of Nabi Saleh and Deir Nidham were encroached upon by Israeli settlers, and their ever-expanding colony of Halamish was born. In December 2009, little Nabi Saleh began holding peaceful demonstrations every Friday in opposition to settlement growth and the usurpation of the land's fresh water springs.

Eight years later, on Friday December 15, 2017, the residents of Nabi Saleh were protesting U.S. President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. During the protest, Israeli occupation forces shot 15-year-old Mohammad Tamimi in the face with a rubber bullet, seriously wounding him. Shortly afterward, Mohammad's 16-year-old cousin Ahed Tamimi responded by accosting two Israeli soldiers right in front of her home. She reviled, slapped, and kicked them in a remarkable act of defiance. By Monday, a video of the confrontation taken by her mother had gone viral worldwide.

(Ahed has been resisting Israeli occupation since she was nine years old. And she's not the only one in her family to do so. Her parents have been resisting the occupation for many years and several members of her extended family have been killed by Israeli troops. Most recently another of her cousins, Musab Firas al-Tamimi of Dier Nidham, was the first teen to be shot and killed by occupation forces earlier this year.)

In the early hours of December 19, Israeli forces raided Ahed's home and arrested her. According to her father Bassem Tamimi, it took "at least 30 soldiers" to carry out the raid. When that afternoon Ahed's mother Nariman went to the police station where her daughter was being held, in order to be present for her interrogation, she herself was arrested. **→7**



IRNA/ Osaam Al-Rimawi

Conflict between the Israeli regime forces and Palestinian protesters in West Bank

The Israeli regime forces engage in skirmishes with Palestinian protesters in Ramallah, West Bank after Friday prayers. Tensions have risen in the Palestinian occupied territories since the United States president Donald Trump announced Washington's new policy on al-Quds (Jerusalem) last December.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



No one can undermine security on pretext of freedom: prosecutor

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Abbas Jafari-Dolatabadi, the Tehran prosecutor general, said on Saturday that no one is allowed to disturb security in the country on the pretext of freedom.

Pointing to the recent unrest by a cult group in Tehran's Pasdaran neighborhood, Jafari-Dolatabadi said those rioters who committed crimes, including rebellion and arson, will be dealt with according to the law, ISNA reported.

Investigation on the issue is still ongoing, he said.

He also lauded the police's tolerance in dealing with the unrest, saying the Islamic Republic will confront rioters, and at the same time, will observe their rights.



'Iran's Syria presence aimed to contain spread of terrorism'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi has said that Iran's presence in Syria was aimed to guard security in the region and prevent expansion of extremism.

In an interview with Mehr published on Saturday, Qassemi said Western powers had sought to overthrow the Syrian government, stressing that the next targets were Iraq and then Iran.

He said if the Islamic Republic had not fought terrorism outside its borders, it would have been forced to fight it inside the country.

As a victim of terrorism, Iran's ethical stance is to oppose terrorism in every part of the world, he added.



EU should press U.S. over JCPOA: nuclear official

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has called on European countries to put pressure on the United States regarding its lack of commitment to the nuclear deal, also called the JCPOA.

Behrouz Kamalvandi criticized Washington for its anti-JCPOA measures and emphasized that all sides should be committed to the deal, IRIB news reported on Saturday.

The call by Kamalvandi came after a quarterly report on Iran's nuclear program by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which for the tenth times confirmed that Iran is fulfilling its obligations under the 2015 historic nuclear accord.



Border police seized 68 tons of drugs in 11 months

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The commander of Iran's border police has said that over the past 11 months the border guards have managed to prevent smuggling of 68 tons of various kinds of illicit drugs, Tasnim reported on Saturday.

Brigadier General Qassem Rezaei said most of the drugs have been seized in clashes with drug smugglers in places where there had been no physical barriers.

He added 60 percent of the Iranian borders have been sealed with physical barriers.

As a vast country, Iran shares borders with 15 countries.



Maritime search, rescue maneuver held in Hormuzgan waters

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Maritime search and rescue maneuvers were held in the Hormuzgan waters in the Persian Gulf on Saturday afternoon, the director general of the Hormuzgan Maritime and Ports Organization said.

Speaking with IRNA, Allah-Morad Afifpour said the aim of the maneuvers are to evaluate technical and operational ability of involving forces in maritime rescue operation as well as creating more coordination between naval and relief units.

He added that more than 100 persons with five fire-boats, two life-boats, two helicopters and one Inflatable Rescue Boat (IRB) as well as rescue and assistant teams participated in the maneuver.



Turkey turning the tables on Iran, Russia, Syria: analyst

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Turkey's ongoing offensive in northwestern Syria sends a clear message to Iran, Russia, and Syria that they should make big concessions to Ankara over Syria, an American analyst has said.

"Turkey is simply generating political and military capital in the form of territorial conquest, that it will use to gain concessions and agreements and treaties and partnerships at the Istanbul conference with Russia, Syria, and Iran," Scott Bennett has said, Tasnim reported on Saturday.

"Turkey intends to push as far and deep as it can into Syria, so that it can retreat on its own terms and for a price," he added.

Daesh has lost territory but its ideology exists, Zarif says

'Petro dollars still reinforcing Daesh ideology'



Pointing to harsh comments on Iran's missile program, Zarif asks, "Does not Saudi Arabia have missiles with 2,500 kilometers range?"

them," he said.

"If the regional countries, instead of looking outside, eyed on their own people for security, they would not tremble with a frown by Obama and delighted with a smile by Trump."

Zarif noted that after the conclusion of the JCPOA - the official name for the nuclear deal - certain regional leaders "rushed to Camp David" protesting "why you left us alone.

We are not safe and secure without you."

He added, "We remember how state leaders were taken by ecstasy and thought they found new security when the guy (Donald Trump) came to our region and sword danced with them. We live in such a region."

"Last year they spent \$116 billion on arms in the Persian Gulf region. Saudi Arabia's military expenditure is higher than that of Russia, which has to protect its nuclear weapons."

Zarif says Saudi Arabia comes after the U.S. and China as the third biggest spender on arms with \$67 billion a year but it looks to the West for its security.

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Saturday that although Daesh has lost territory but its ideology has not been rooted out.

"Today, we are witnessing territorial defeat of Daesh and not defeat of the ideology of Daesh," Zarif said in a conference on post-ISIS era at the University of Tehran.

The chief diplomat said the "ideological and financial resources of Daesh" which originate from the region and beyond "have not been annihilated yet."

Zarif said the ideological bases of Daesh are still being reinforced by petrodollars, warning that Daesh is being spread all over the world. "So long as the main elements of creating Daesh persist we should expect that this danger emerge from somewhere else."

He added that the U.S. is relocating Daesh terrorists from Syrian cities of Mayadin and Dayr al-Zawr and other cities outside of the region and this means that the terror network is being widely dispersed.

On the sidelines of the conference, he told reporters, "Extremism and Daesh are still threat against the world. Planning is required to counter roots of this threat and the ideology behind it and also it is essential for the regional countries to cooperate and hold dialogue."

He also said that Iran has played an important role in fighting Daesh through advisory help.

■ 'Certain regional countries give up independence to buy security'

In a separate conference at the University of Tehran, Zarif said certain countries in the Middle East region have given up "independence and dignity" to buy security.

In an indirect reference to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Zarif said there are countries in the region which spend billions of dollars annually buy arms because they think their security depends on countries outside of the region.

"They tremble by a sulk of the major powers and feel secure and delightful by a smile of

U.S. curbs bid to take Iran off FATF financial blacklist

The world's financial watchdog has extended a waiver for punitive measures against Iran for another six months but refused to remove the country from its blacklist.

The Paris-based the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) had been weighing Tehran's request for the lifting of so-called countermeasures for some time but a flurry of recent visits by a top U.S. official to France and other European countries thwarted the bid.

Iran's removal from the blacklist had gained support in European capitals in recognition of the steps Tehran has taken in recent years to enact legislation barring terrorist financing and money laundering.

However, the U.S. sent the official to France, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium ahead of a plenary meeting of the task force Friday to warn that keeping Iran on the FATF blacklist was a top priority, and that Washington would aggressively pursue that policy.

As a result, the FATF decided to continue the suspension of countermeasures, taking into account the fact that Iran has draft legislation currently before Parliament, but did not remove the country from the list in a decision which many believe is political.

The FATF suspended its punitive measures for a year in 2016 when Iran reached a landmark nuclear deal and promised to step up its fight on money-laundering. The task force extended the waiver last July and again on Friday.

The Iranian government hopes that the exit from the FATF blacklist would remove one hurdle to foreign investment. Critics of the government, however, say membership in the



Financial Action Task Force has not only failed to attract investment, but it has also exposed various institutions to extraterritorial regulations and penalties.

The week-long meeting of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) began in Paris on Feb. 18, 2018.

In its Friday decision, the FATF threatened Iran with new penalties in June if it doesn't bolster oversight of alleged terrorism financing and money laundering within its borders.

Some in Iran believe the U.S. is using the FATF to target key organizations such as the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) which has both a role in the Iranian economy and supports groups such as Lebanon's Hezbollah regarded as legitimate "resistance" entities by the Islamic Republic.

The FATF cited nine "action items" which Iran had to fully address before the body considers its bid for removal from the blacklist.

"Until Iran implements the measures required to address the deficiencies identified in the Action Plan, the FATF will remain concerned with the terrorist financing risk emanating from Iran and the threat this poses to the international financial system," it said.

"The FATF, therefore, calls on its members and urges all jurisdictions to continue to advise their financial institutions to apply enhanced due diligence to business relationships and transactions with natural and legal persons from Iran, consistent with FATF Recommendation 19," it added.

Countries that do not follow FATF are often labeled as high-risk or uncooperative jurisdictions by the West, making international trade costly and difficult.

Iran agreed to scale back its nuclear energy program in return for the lifting of sanctions which would facilitate business with the world and pave the way for foreign investment. However, U.S. pressures on bodies such as FATF and its threats have driven away banks, investors and companies.

Earlier this week, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said Tehran will withdraw from the nuclear deal if there is no economic benefit and major banks continue to shun the Islamic Republic.

Big banks are afraid of falling foul of remaining U.S. sanctions.

Araqchi said even if U.S. President Donald Trump relents and issues fresh "waivers" to continue suspending sanctions on Tehran, the existing situation is unacceptable for Iran.

(Source: Press TV)

Iran, Syria working closely to de-escalate situation in Ghouta: Araqchi

Iran is working closely with Syria in order to bring calm back to parts of the Arab country that have witnessed renewed violence as a result of increased terrorist activities over the past days, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi says.

After losing most of the Syrian territories in their control, militants are now largely concentrated in Eastern Ghouta, an area they have been using to launch mortar attacks on the Syrian capital Damascus.

Syrian government forces have been pounding terrorist positions in the area to retake it and free a large number of civilians trapped there and struggling with malnu-

trition and lack of basic medical supplies.

Araqchi, who was on a trip to the UK, told Press TV's London bureau on Thursday that Tehran and Damascus were exploring possible ways to end the deadly clashes.

"We are trying to see how we can de-escalate this new tension and how we can assist people on the ground who are suffering from this conflict," said the Iranian diplomat.

Earlier this month, the United Nations was able to send an aid convoy to Eastern Ghouta, its first since the beginning of this year.

The UN Syria peace mediator Staffan de Mistura has asked Iran, Russia and Turkey, which have been organizing peace talks

for Syria in Kazakhstan's capital Astana for over a year, to work out a solution to the conflict.

Araqchi said on Thursday that the Astana process was ongoing and "successful to a good extent."

Elsewhere in the exclusive interview, Araqchi discussed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent remarks against Iran following Syria's downing of an intruding Israeli fighter jet.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference last week, Netanyahu claimed that Israel had shut down an Iranian drone that had flown into the occupied Palestinian territories.

Holding a rectangular chunk of dark green metal, which he called a part of the drone, Netanyahu said, "We will act if necessary not just against Iran's proxies but against Iran itself."

Dismissing Netanyahu's claims, Araqchi shrugged off the threat and said both Israel and the US knew how Iran would react to any act of aggression on their part.

"We cannot accept any threat and we warn any party in the region that the region cannot tolerate another... war," the Iranian official stated.

"We are fully prepared for every scenario and we don't allow anybody to threaten Iran," he added.

Rouhani: We have made substantial progress in new technologies

'Isolation does not bring progress'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday that Iran has made "substantial progress in certain new technologies".

Speaking at the closing ceremony of the Kharazmi International Award, the president said Iran can reach a level of progress to compete with advanced countries in certain technological fields.

Rouhani added Iran has made "very good advances" in certain scientific fields, citing stem cells, genetics, biotechnology and nanotechnology, ITC, nuclear and aerospace as examples.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani said no country can achieve progress through isolation.

"It has no use for us to restrict our scientific relations with the world," the president remarked.

He added, "We can achieve our goals sooner if we have good interaction with the world and with the international research centers. We should use what the world has reached and follow that path."

The president also said that the government, Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, Majlis (parliament), Judiciary and universities should join hands in creating

a good atmosphere to speed up progress in the country.

"If we want to have an advanced country in the area of science and technology, we should have a free atmosphere for research," he noted.

Elsewhere, Rouhani said, "Great Iran has been origin of civilization, science and knowledge throughout history."

"Universities have always played a fundamental role in political and social developments," he added.

He noted, "Iran is a country which played a valuable role in growth of science and development of civilization."

U.S. not ‘touching’ al-Nusra terrorists in Syria: Russia

Russia sends most advanced fighter jets to Syria

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has warned against the threat of the Takfiri al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra/Jabhat Fateh al-Sham) militant group, as the main source of violence in Syria's Eastern Ghouta region, censuring the United States for not taking any serious action against the terrorist group.

“Jabhat al-Nusra, which is the main problem in Eastern Ghouta, as I mentioned, is consciously or unconsciously being treated equally with the critics and accusers of the Syrian government. Jabhat al-Nusra is not being touched,” Lavrov said during a joint press conference with his Uzbek counterpart Abdulaziz Kamilov in Moscow.

“We still do not have evidence that the coalition led by the United States is viewing Jabhat al-Nusra as a real target. Of course, we draw the attention of our American colleagues to it, but we do not see any effect from our comments,” he added.

Eastern Ghouta near Damascus has witnessed renewed violence in the past few days, with terrorists mounting repeated mortar attacks on the Syrian capital in the face of an imminent rout.

The top Russian diplomat pointed to the latest ceasefire proposal for Eastern Ghouta at the United Nations Security Council and argued that the initiative fails to provide any guarantee that militants will stop the ongoing violence.

The 30-day ceasefire plan, drafted by Sweden and Kuwait, is aimed at allowing deliveries of humanitarian aid and medical evacuations.

“There are [no] answers to the questions of the guarantees that militants will obey this humanitarian pause and that they will not continue shelling the residential districts of Damascus. These guarantees are not given to us,” Lavrov said.

On Thursday, Lavrov expressed Moscow's readiness to consider the ceasefire in Syria, but only if it does not cover the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh), the al-Nusra Front and other terrorist groups that “conduct systematic shelling of the residential quarters of Damascus.”

According to Russian Ambassador to



the UN Vassily Nebenzia, no agreement has been reached at the United Nations Security Council on the ceasefire plan as the conflict deepens in the country due to a sharp rise in terrorist attacks.

■ Russia's advanced fighter jets in Syria

Meanwhile, Russia has reportedly sent two of its most advanced and sophisticated fighter jets to Syria, where its air force has been backing up the national army's ground operation against terrorist groups.

The reported deployment comes after the U.S. employed earlier this month its most advanced fighter jet, the F-22 stealth fighter, in strikes against alleged terrorist targets in Syria.

Reports say two of Russia's Su-57 fifth-generation fighter jets had been recently spotted in the skies above Syria and

then seem landing at the Hmeimim airbase in the country's western Latakia province.

The Su-57s were escorted by Russian 4th generation Sui-30SM multi-role fighter jets before landing at the Syrian airbase, according to the reports.

The sophisticated military aircraft have stealth capabilities and are specifically designed for attacking roles. They also enjoy an avionics system that autonomously makes battlefield calculations to assist the pilot.

Russian authorities have yet to confirm the Su-57s' deployment to Syria, but Vladimir Gutenov, chairman of the Military Industry Committee in the Russian parliament told Sputnik news agency that he “whole-heartedly welcomed” the reports.

The presence of the Su-57s will doubtlessly send a political message, serving as a deterrent “for aircraft from neighboring

states which periodically fly into” Syrian airspace uninvited, according to Gutenov.

The Russian lawmaker added that the stealth SU-57 fighter jet planes “need to be tested in combat conditions, in conditions of [enemy] resistance.”

The Russian Defense Ministry had said the jets were slated to be introduced to its forces this year, and a total of 12 aircraft were initially ordered by the Moscow government.

Russia has been lending aerial support to Syria upon a request by Damascus since September 2015.

The deployment could potentially escalate Russia's tensions with the United States, who have been involved since 2014 in an unauthorized aerial campaign against what they call ISIL positions in Syria.

(Source: agencies)

U.S. imposes more N. Korea sanctions, Trump warns of ‘phase two’

The United States said on Friday it was imposing its largest package of sanctions to pressure North Korea to give up its nuclear and missile programs, and the U.S. President Donald Trump warned of a “phase two” that could be “very, very unfortunate for the world” if the steps did not work.

In addressing the Trump administration's biggest national security challenge, the U.S. Treasury sanctioned one person, 27 companies and 28 ships, according to a statement on the U.S. Treasury Department's website.

The United States also proposed a list of entities to be blacklisted under separate United Nations sanctions, a move “aimed at shutting down North Korea's illicit maritime smuggling activities to obtain oil and sell coal.”

North Korea has been developing nuclear-tipped missiles capable of reaching the U.S. mainland and Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un have exchanged taunts that have raised fears of war.

In August, Trump threatened to go beyond sanctions by bringing “fire and fury like the world has never seen,” although his administration has repeatedly said it prefers a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

Speaking at a news conference with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, Trump made apparent reference to military options his administration has repeatedly said remain on the table.

“If the sanctions don't work, we'll have to go phase two,” Trump said. “Phase two may be a very rough thing, may be very, very unfortunate for the world. But hopefully the sanctions will work.”

The sanctions' targets include a Taiwan passport holder, as well as shipping and energy firms in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore. The actions block assets held by the firms and individuals in the United States and prohibit the U.S. citizens from dealing with them.

The U.S. Treasury said the sanctions were designed to disrupt North Korean shipping and trading companies and vessels and further isolate Pyongyang. They are also aimed at ships located, registered or flagged in North Korea, China, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Marshall Islands, Tanzania, Panama and the Comoros.

Last month, three Western European intelligence sources told Reuters that North Korea shipped coal to Russia last year and that it was then delivered to South Korea and Japan in a likely violation of UN sanctions.

■ Frustrated Trump

Elsewhere, Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin said the new sanctions would help prevent North Korea from skirting restrictions on trade in coal and other fuel through “evasive maritime activities.”

“The president is clearly frustrated and

rightly so over the efforts that have failed in the past and also over the uptick in testing and the advances we've seen in the North Korean program,” a senior administration official told reporters.

At another briefing, Mnuchin stood next to enlarged photos he said showed December 2017 images that revealed ship-to-ship transfers of fuel and other products destined for North Korea in an attempt to evade sanctions.

He said he could not rule out the prospect of the United States boarding and inspecting North Korean ships.

Mnuchin said virtually all shipping currently being used by North Korea was now under sanction and the U.S. government had “issued an advisory alerting the public to the significant sanctions risks to those continuing to enable shipments of goods to and from North Korea.”

Mnuchin said the number of sanctions steps taken by the United States against Pyongyang since 2005 was now 450 with approximately half imposed in the last year.

Christopher Ford, assistant secretary of state for international security and non-proliferation, told reporters sanctions already had affected North Korea's weapons programs and this was shown by the lengths North Korea was going to try to evade sanctions.

Jonathan Schanzer of the Washington think tank Foundation for the Defense of Democracies said Friday's move was “the largest tranche of DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) sanctions” released by the Treasury Department.

“The only thing missing here today is action against Chinese banks,” he said. “We know they continue to undermine our efforts to isolate North Korea.”

Tougher sanctions may jeopardize the latest detente between the two Koreas, illustrated by the North's participation in the Winter Olympics in the South, amid preparations for talks about a possible summit between North Korea's Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

Nevertheless, South Korea welcomed the U.S. sanctions saying they would “alert those who are illegally trading with North Korea and therefore bolster the international community to carry out resolutions from the UN Security Council.”

Japan also supported the new sanctions, Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera said, according to the Kyodo news agency.

Taiwan said it was in touch with the United States and would investigate its citizens and entities suspected of helping North Korea. It also called on Taiwan firms and citizens not to break the UN sanctions.

(Source: Reuters)

■ Hundreds killed this year

The Afghan army and the U.S.-led coalition forces continue to battle the Taliban for the control of areas in the country but the security situation has been deteriorating.

On January 21, the Taliban orchestrated a bloody siege at Kabul's Intercontinental Hotel that left at least 20 dead.

A few days later on January 24, ISIL terrorists killed three people at the office of Save the Children, in the eastern city of Jalalabad.

On January 27, a Taliban attacker drove an ambulance filled with explosives in the heart of Kabul killing at least 103 people and wounding as many as 235. A day later, at least 11 soldiers were killed when gunmen attacked a military academy, also in Kabul.

The U.S. President Donald Trump has committed an additional 3,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan in recent weeks, bringing the total number of American troops in Afghanistan to about 14,000.

But the recent deadly attacks have raised questions over the U.S. president's strategy for winning the 16-year long war.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

U.S. warns Iraq against buying Russian S-400 systems

The United States has warned Iraq, among a number of other countries, of the consequences of extending military cooperation with Russia, and striking deals to purchase advanced weaponry, particularly the S-400 surface-to-air missile defense systems.

U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Neuert said that Washington has contacted many countries, including Iraq, to explain the significance of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), and possible consequences that would arise in the wake of defense agreements with Moscow.

On August 2, 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump signed into law the CAATSA that imposed sanctions on Iran, North Korea, and Russia.

Neuert said she did not know whether Iraq and Russia have finalized an accord on the S-400 missile systems.

The remarks came only a few days after Saudi Arabia's Arabic-language al-Watan newspaper reported that Baghdad is planning to buy Russian-made S-400 surface-to-air missile system from Moscow.

There are also reports that Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has tasked a team of advisers from the Iraqi Ministry of Defense and National Security Council to negotiate the purchase of the missile systems with Russian officials.

Earlier this month, Chairman of the Defense Committee of the Russian Federation Council, Colonel General Viktor Bondarev, named Syria, Iraq, Sudan and Egypt as the potential buyers of the defense systems.

Last week, Chief Executive Officer of Rostec, Russia's state-owned corporation for promoting the development, production and export of high-tech industrial products, stated that Moscow is ready to sell its air defense systems to any country with security concerns.

(Source: Press TV)

Former Trump campaign aide pleads guilty in Russia probe

A former senior official in the United States President Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, Rick Gates, pleaded guilty on Friday to conspiracy against the United States and lying to investigators, and he is cooperating with a federal probe into Russia's role in the election.

Gates, who was a deputy campaign manager for Trump, is being investigated by the office of Special Counsel Robert Mueller, which is probing alleged Russian meddling in the U.S. election.

Gates had been potentially facing decades in prison on much more serious charges, including bank fraud and conspiracy to launder money. Under the charges he pleaded guilty to, he faces a maximum sentence of nearly six years.



Prosecutors said they could ask the judge for a reduction in Gates' sentence based on the extent of his cooperation with Mueller's probe.

The plea increases pressure on Paul Manafort, who was Trump's campaign manager for five months in 2016, to also seek a plea deal. However, Manafort said in a statement issued after Gates' plea deal that he maintained his innocence.

Cooperation by Gates, and potentially by Manafort at a later stage, could provide a rich vein of information for Mueller, whose Russia probe includes looking into whether Trump's campaign colluded with Moscow to interfere in the election.

Gates' plea deal appeared to be partially motivated by his concern over legal costs and the strain on his family.

Prosecutors allege that Manafort, with Gates' assistance, laundered more than \$30 million and duped banks into lending money. It says the pair used funds from secret offshore accounts to enjoy a life of luxury.

None of the charges to date against Gates or Manafort have made reference to any connection with Russian meddling in the 2016 election or possible collusion. Russia has denied the accusations of interference. Trump has said there was no collusion, and has also denied any attempt to obstruct Mueller's probe.

Mueller, appointed by the Department of Justice last year, has a broad brief that allows him to look into any wrongdoing uncovered in the course of his investigation.

■ Campaign role

While it was not clear what Gates might be able to reveal to investigators, he was on Trump's campaign team when his then-boss Manafort attended a meeting in June 2016 at Trump Tower in New York between senior campaign aides and a Russian lawyer.

Mueller, according to sources familiar with the investigation, has taken a keen interest in whether Democrats' emails allegedly hacked by Russian intelligence and made public six days after that meeting were discussed then.

Gates helped run the campaign's day-to-day operations, played a key role at the Republican National Convention where Trump was chosen as the party's nominee and accompanied Trump on campaign flights.

He stayed on in the campaign even after Manafort resigned in August 2016 amid a controversy over cash payments from Ukraine. After Trump's election win, Gates was on Trump's presidential transition team and his inaugural committee.

The U.S. spy agencies have concluded that Moscow sought to meddle in the campaign to tilt the vote in favor of Trump, including by hacking the emails of leading Democrats and distributing disinformation and propaganda online.

Gates and Manafort were first charged in October. On Thursday, Mueller piled up more pressure on the pair - filing a 32-count indictment against them that includes charges of bank fraud and lying on tax returns.

As part of the conspiracy charge, prosecutors say that Gates and Manafort lied to the Justice Department in September 2016, when they were asked whether they had acted as foreign agents in 2013 on behalf of Ukraine's pro-Russian government.

(Source: Reuters)

Nearly two dozen Afghan soldiers killed in multiple attacks

Nearly two dozen Afghan soldiers and three others have been killed in multiple attacks across the country.

At least 18 Afghan soldiers were killed on Saturday in the Bala Boluk district of western Farah province when Taliban fighters stormed an army checkpoint.

Meanwhile, two suicide car bombers killed at least two soldiers and wounded dozen others in southern Helmand province.

In the first attack in Helmand province, Taliban fighters used a Humvee to enter an army base in Nad Ali district but were identified by soldiers and pushed away. At least two soldiers were killed in the incident.

A second suicide car bomber targeted an NDS (National Directorate of Security) compound near a police headquarters in Helmand's provincial capital Lashkar Gah. At least seven people were wounded.

In a separate attack in the capital Kabul on Saturday morning, a suicide bomber killed at least three people near the diplomatic area of the city. The attack was later claimed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group.



According to Najib Danish, the ministry of interior spokesman, the suicide bombing took place in Kabul's Shash Darak area, bordering the Green Zone.

The area is near the NATO (North Atlan-

tic Treaty Organization) headquarters, and is not far from the United States embassy.

The ministry of interior also said six other people were wounded, two of whom are in critical condition.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	98176.9
IFX	1093.33

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	44,900 rials
EUR	55,180 rials
GBP	67,070 rials
AED	13,000 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

WTI	63.55/b
Brent	67.04/b
OPEC Basket	63.08/b
Gold	\$1,330.20/oz
Silver	\$16.58/oz
Platinum	\$1,000.25/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Sea Expo 2018 kicks off in southern Iran

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – Iran’s 5th International Maritime Organizations Exhibition (Iran Sea Expo 2018) kicked off at the permanent exhibitions center of southern port city of Bandar Abbas on Saturday.

In this year’s exhibition, 53 renowned domestic exhibitors along with seven foreign companies from four different countries are presenting their products, services, equipment and activities in maritime and port industries, Tasnim news agency reported.

According to the organizers, Iran Sea Expo 2018 aims to represent Iran’s maritime and port capabilities and achievements to both domestic and foreign businessmen, companies and visitors.

Intl. agriculture, irrigation exhibit underway in Tehran

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – The second edition of Iran’s International Exhibition of Agriculture, Agricultural Machineries and Equipment, Inputs, Irrigation Systems and Mechanization (Iran Agri Show 2018) opened at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on Saturday.

The opening ceremony was attended by several officials from the country’s agriculture industry including Deputy Agriculture Ministers Alimorad Akbari and Kambiz Abbasi.

The four-day exhibition is presenting various achievements and products in agriculture, irrigation and mechanization equipment.

54 IDRO projects to be implemented using \$14.7b of investments by 2022

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO) plans to implement some 54 projects using 660 trillion rials (about \$14.73 billion) of investments by March 20, 2022, the organization’s Head Mansour Moazzami announced on Saturday.

As IRNA quoted him as saying, implementation of these projects, which are aimed at supporting production and job creation in the country’s deprived areas, will create jobs for about 29,000 people within the next four years.

Iran sells light crude oil at \$59.96 in a week

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Iran’s light crude oil price fell \$3.18 in the week ended on February 16 to settle at \$59.96 per barrel, Shana reported on Saturday. The country’s light oil price was reported \$66.20 on average since the beginning of 2018 until February 16.

Iran’s heavy crude oil also experienced a \$2.71 fall in the said week to settle at \$60.09 per barrel.

The country has sold heavy crude at \$64.56

on average since the beginning of 2018 until the mentioned date.

During the said week, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)’s basket price stood at \$61.34 per barrel with \$2.52 decrease compared to the preceding week.

Oil started falling since the beginning of February as the U.S. dollar rose to a high pitch in the wake of a sharp sell-off early this month on Wall Street and other stock markets,

Inflation rate stands at 9.9%: CBI

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) announced that the inflation rate for the 12-month period ended on the last day of the eleventh Iranian calendar month Bahman (February 19) compared to the same period in the previous year hit 9.9 percent.

It is while the Statistical Center of Iran had previously put the inflation rate for the 12-month period at 8.3 percent.

As CBI announced, commodities group and services group experienced 1.2 percent and 0.6 percent inflation rise, respectively, in Bahman, IRNA reported on Saturday.

The statistical center has put the country’s inflation rate at 9.8 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1395 (ended on March



20, 2017), showing 4.5 percent drop from its preceding year.

It is while the CBI has put Iran’s inflation rate at nine percent during the past calendar year.

Iran, accordingly, could manage to experience a single-digit inflation rate after 26 years in 1395.

Iranian oil, gas sector’s investment opportunities presented in IP Week 2018

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Investment potentials in Iran’s oil and gas sector was presented in the International Petroleum (IP) Week 2018, which was held in London from February 20 to 22.

Mohammad Ali Emadi, senior advisor to the deputy

for development and engineering in National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), was Iran’s representative who overviewed his country’s oil and gas sector in the conference.

IP Week hosted by the Energy Institute (EI) is a

What will it take for Bitcoin to replace the dollar in everyday transactions

By Panos Mourdoukoutas

Of all the problems that keep Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies from replacing the dollar in everyday transactions, one stands out: volatility—value fluctuation in relation to the dollar.

That’s according to a recent survey conducted by Survata, an independent research firm in San Francisco, which found that 60.3% of cryptocurrency holders see cryptocurrency volatility as the most important barrier of using cryptocurrencies in everyday transactions.

Survata interviewed 402 online respondents between January 18, 2018 and

January 23, 2018. Respondents were reached across the Survata publisher network, where they took a survey to unlock premium content, like articles and ebooks. Respondents received no cash compensation for their participation.

402 respondents is a tiny sample, and therefore the survey findings should be interpreted with extreme caution.

Still, the survey results aren’t surprising to Craig Cole, CEO and Founder of CryptoMaps. “Whenever you transfer bitcoin using blockchain, it can take hours. Because of the high volatility of the currency, the value can change dramatically during that time. So for many virtual currency owners, they see this and think it doesn’t make sense to

use bitcoin to purchase anything.”

What could change the situation? Two things. One is speeding up the time it takes to execute cryptocurrency transactions, something cryptocurrency exchanges are working on. “The focus has been on changing this issue,” says Cole. “Projects such as OmiseGO, DASH, Stellar, BitcoinCash and Litecoin have radically improved transaction speeds. This has eliminated some of the angst that Bitcoin has given business owners and consumers. With new point of sale platforms emerging daily like Coinbase Commerce, cryptocurrency will be a viable payment option for businesses for the sustainable future.”

Then there’s Wall Street, which has come up with financial products that allow market participants to hedge their positions against volatility in one of the major cryptocurrencies, Bitcoin. Merchants, for instance, concerned about Bitcoin volatility, can purchase Bitcoin futures, as discussed in a previous piece here.

While technology and Wall Street will help cryptocurrencies overcome volatility, it cannot help them overcome the threat of big governments, big banks and hackers that can crush them at any time.

That’s why cryptocurrencies have a long way to go before they replace the dollar in every day transactions.

(Source: The Fortune)

Geely chairman builds \$9b stake in Germany’s Daimler

The chairman of Chinese carmaker Geely [GEELY.UL] has built up an almost 10 percent stake in Mercedes-Benz owner Daimler (DAIGn.DE), making a \$9 billion bet that he can push through an alliance to access the German company’s technology.

The purchase by Li Shufu means Geely, China’s largest privately-owned automaker, is now Daimler’s biggest shareholder.

Geely said on Saturday there were no plans “for the time being” to raise the stake further. Instead, it will seek to forge an alliance with Daimler, which is developing electric and

self-driving vehicles, to respond to the challenge from new competitors such as Tesla (TSLA.O), Google (GOOGL.O) and Uber, which are all working on their own new technology cars.

“No current car industry player is likely to win this battle against the invaders from outside without friends. To achieve and assert technological leadership, one has to adapt a new way of thinking in terms of sharing and combining strength. My investment in Daimler reflects this vision,” Li said.

Only two or three manufactures will likely survive in the

auto industry going forward, a source familiar with Li’s thinking told Reuters, prompting Geely to seek access to carmakers with a technological edge.

Zhejiang Geely Holding has been on an expansion drive. It owns Volvo Cars, LEVC, the maker of London’s black cabs, and last year took a majority stake in sports car maker Lotus, a 49.9 percent stake in Malaysian automaker Proton, a \$3.3 billion stake in Volvo Trucks and control of flying car start-up Terrafugia.

(Source: Reuters)

First Announcement



SINGLE-STAGE INTERNATIONAL TENDER
GOVERNMENT TRADING CORPORATION OF IRAN

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

All qualified companies and suppliers who are interested to bid above tender are invited to receive tender documents from 26/02/2018 until 6/03/2018 from Trades & Tenders Committee located on the 4th floor of GTC building no 2 , at No 225 Fatemi Avenue Tehran-Iran. along with an official letter of introduction.

The bidders are required to submit stamped and sealed envelopes containing their offers latest by 13:00 on 10/04/2018 to the Tender secretariat located on the 7th floor. The bid’s envelope will be opened at 10/04/2018 By14:30 In the presents of the bidder’s representative in GTC’s purchasing committee hall . (9th floor, No 12, Jihad Square, Tehran, Iran).

Bid bond: bid bond worth EUR 299,205 (IRR 13,733,500,000) for each 15000 MT cargo

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

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

For more information, you may refer to our website WWW.GTC-PORTAL.COM or contact us by phoneNo.00982188957477 (foreign trade department) .

First Announcement



ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER
GOVERNMENT TRADING CORPORATION OF IRAN

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

All of qualified companies and suppliers that are interested to bid above tender are invited to receive tender documents from 2018/02/26 until 2018/03/06

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

The bid participants are required to submit their stamped and sealed envelopes containing their offers latest on 13:00(Tehran time) on 2018/04/10 to the secretariat of tenders committee located on the 7th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be held on 2018/04/10 at 14:00(Tehran time) with the presence of bidder’s representatives in our purchasing committee (9th floor, No 12, Jihad Square, Tehran, Iran).

Bid bond: the bid bond worth EUR 359,834 (IRR. 16,516,390,000) in cash or unconditional bank guarantee with three months validity and extendible for another three months.

For more information, you may refer to our website WWW.GTC-PORTAL.COM or contact us by phoneNo.00982188957477 (foreign trade department) .



Reuters reported.

However crude markets began to steady in the mentioned week, settling little changed as

global equities began to recoup some losses from their biggest one-week decline in two years.

Tehran to host Finstars2018 in mid Apr.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The third edition of Iran’s Finstars (Finstars2018) is planned to be held at the same time with FINEX 2018 (the International Exhibition of Exchange, Bank and Insurance) at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on April 16-19.

Finstars is a series of financial events that brings together fintech startups and fintech experts to meet Iran’s technological needs of the financial markets and share innovative ideas on fintech, Iran Fara Bourse Company (IFB) announced.

Panels and workshops mainly focusing on experiences of the successful teams



at Finstars2016 and Finstars2017 will be held in the event for creating a platform to change good ideas into real startups.

Amir Hamouni, the CEO of Fara Bourse, told reporters during a ceremony at Finstars2017 that Finstars is not an annual event, it’s a process.

Demand for oil to peak in next 20 years, BP says

BP says oil demand will peak in the 2030s, and that EVs will rise 100-fold to capture about a third of the car market.

BP released its annual Energy Outlook, with forecasts through 2040. Unlike in years past, this version sees more upheaval on the horizon as the energy landscape evolves rapidly. "Indeed, the continuing rapid growth of renewables is leading to the most diversified fuel mix ever seen," BP CEO Bob Dudley said in a statement. "Abundant and diversified energy supplies will make for a challenging marketplace. Don't be fooled by the recent firming in oil prices: the focus on efficiency, reliability and capital discipline is here to stay."

BP believes that just about all of the growth in energy demand will come from fast-growing developing economies, with China and India alone accounting for half of the total growth in global energy demand through 2040.

BP offered several different forecasts, but all predict a peak in oil demand in the 2030s, with varying degrees of decline thereafter. Its central forecast sees peak oil demand in the mid-2030s at about 110 million barrels per day (mb/d), with consumption plateauing and declining through 2040 and beyond. In other words, demand grows for another two decades, rising by 15 mb/d, before consumption tops out.

BP sees the number of EVs on the road surging to 320 million by 2040, capturing about a third of the market in terms of miles traveled. That equates roughly to a 100-fold increase from the 3 million EVs on the road today. It is also sharply up from the 100 million EVs BP expected to be on the road in 2035 in last year's Energy Outlook.



Yet, it doesn't equate to the total EV revolution that many hope to see. In fact, BP still sees carbon emissions rising by 10 percent through 2040, a scenario incompatible with what scientists say are needed to hit climate targets. And in BP's most aggressive scenario for EVs in which many more governments follow in the footsteps of France and the UK and put in place a ban on gasoline and diesel vehicles by 2040, BP still only sees EVs eliminating about 10 mb/d worth of demand, which would be about 10 percent of the current market. "It's a big number," BP's chief economist Spencer Dale says, but "even in that scenario, oil demand in 2040 is still higher than it is today." BP says carbon pricing is needed to drive down emissions.

Dale argues that cars will be used more in the future, traveling longer distances, but that autonomous vehicles, electricity and efficien-

cy will offset the increase in oil consumption from more vehicles on the road. "The suggestion that rapid growth in electric cars will cause oil demand to collapse just isn't supported by the basic numbers — even with really rapid growth," Dale said, according to the FT.

Dale predicts the average EV in the future will be used to travel about two and a half times more than the current internal combustion vehicle. "What we expect to see in the 2030s is a huge growth in shared mobility autonomous cars... Once you don't have to pay for a driver, the cost of taking one of those share mobility fleets services will fall by about 40 or 50 percent," Dale told reporters. The upshot is that demand for crude oil used in cars remains largely flat at 18.6 mb/d in 2040, down just a hair from 18.7 mb/d in 2016.

Another interesting prediction was the

expected impact of regulations on plastics. BP sees taxes and regulations on things like plastic bags will help eat into crude oil demand by about 2 mb/d. Still, petrochemicals grow in importance over time, taking a greater share of the demand pie as EVs keep demand flat in transportation.

The opinions of other oil majors vary on this hotly contested subject. Officials from Royal Dutch Shell have said that a peak could come as soon as 2025, whereas ExxonMobil and Chevron see demand rising steadily for the foreseeable future, with no peak in sight.

In that sense, there is a bit of difference between the European and American oil majors. Shell, BP and Total have begun stepping up their investments into natural gas, utilities and renewable energy. Royal Dutch Shell recently bought First Utility, a UK-based utility. It also purchased a U.S. solar company last month. Total purchased SunPower years ago and is now looking to building up generating assets in France to rival incumbents. BP recently announced plans to jump back into the solar sector after pulling out years ago.

To be sure, these are marginal forays into clean energy; the majors are still overwhelmingly invested in oil and gas, and will continue to be for years. Yet, they mark a small but significant pivot away from oil.

"The outlook here shows that the world is going to need all forms of energy," BP Chief Executive Bob Dudley said at a news conference Tuesday, according to the WSJ. "Gas has to be part of the transition, if not a destination fuel" for lowering carbon emissions.

(Source: oilprice.com)

70,000 bpd come offline as Libya shuts El Feel oilfield

Libya's El Feel oil field was shuttered on Friday, taking 70,000 bpd of oil production offline, after guards at the field withdrew amid a dispute over pay, Reuters reports, citing a Libyan oil source and a local mediator.

On Thursday, reports emerged that Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC) had evacuated its workers from the El Feel, or Elephant, oil field amid threats from the field's guards who are locked in a pay dispute with the company. The guards are from the Petroleum Facilities Guards group that held all of Libya's oil export terminals under a blockade for more than a year until September 2016. There has also been talk about a wider disruption

to oil production, according to sources who spoke to S&P Platts, which might affect Libya's largest oilfield—Sharara—which has the capacity to produce 300,000 bpd of crude.

Guards at the El Feel oil field have withdrawn completely, after rejecting a request by the NOC to stay until talks over the pay row continued, Hassan Bedy Abubaker, a former guard who is now mediating between local representatives and the NOC, told Reuters on Friday.

"All the petroleum facilities guards of El Feel field withdrew last night and all the field's staff have also been evacuated," Abubaker told Reuters, adding that the last group left today.

"The field is shut and pumping process has also stopped," Abubaker said, and his words were corroborated by two other local sources who told Reuters that El Feel was shut as of Friday.

Following a relatively normal operations situation at the end of last year and early this year, Libya has managed to restore its crude oil production close to 1 million bpd, but still far from the 1.6 million bpd it pumped before 2011. Analysts have said that uncertainties over the security situation would likely prevent Libya from raising its production too much over 1 million bpd.

(Source: oilprice.com)

NICICO CEO Expounds on Salient Achievements Taken to Protect Environment Optimally

Let's Do Not Sacrifice Environment to Ethnicity

Chief Executive of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) Eng. Ahmad Morad-Alizadeh, in a press briefing held at the exposition booth of 17th International Exhibition of Environment, answered to the questions asked by reporters and correspondents about the general policies of his company especially in the field of environment.

In the beginning of this meeting, CEO of the company said, "over the past four years and in line with the general policies of the country, the company in the field of development has focused on four components including production, development, manpower and exploration."

In the field of production, the company implemented its development projects such as phase 2 of Sungun and Sarcheshmeh condensation plants which will be put into operation before termination of the current Iranian calendar year in 1396 (to end March 20, 2018).

He put the copper production volume in industrial and mineral units of the company at 300,000 tons, he said, adding, "in the field of development of program to increase production volume of content copper, the company has put the production volume of 400,000 tons of content copper atop agenda before the termination of 2020."

He pointed to the other component i.e. development and production growth and said, "presently, we have concentrated on commissioning three mines including 'Darrehzar', 'Chah Firouzeh' and 'Daraloo' in Kerman Province and said, "moreover, effective steps have been taken to activate small-scale mines for increasing production volume in cooperation with the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO). Under such circumstances, copper production volume in the company will hit 400,000 tons before termination of 2020."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the chief executive of the company referred to the next component of the company in the field of policies of manpower of this company taken over the past years and stated, "we have followed up necessary measures to increase productivity of industrious staff and personnel of the company. For this purpose, giant steps were taken by the company in a way that each manpower of the company managed to produce 9,700 kg of copper in 1392 (from March 20, 2013 to March 20, 2014), the rate of which has hit 15,000 kg currently."

In addition to the said three components fol-

lowed up by the company, the fourth component of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) is to increase production volume of exploration activities that has been taken into serious consideration over the past four years.

Morad-Alizadeh went on to say that sustainable production and development will not happen in abnegation of discoveries, so that discoveries are prerequisite for the sustainable development and production.

To achieve exotic and latent reserves, we are in dire need of advance technology and technical knowhow, he said, adding, "important events have been happened in the world especially in the field of explorations but it is a matter of regret to say that we could not take advantage of world's latest technical knowhow and technology completely due to the existence of sanctions imposed against the country in the previous years, the CEO of the company maintained.

Presently, "we are negotiating with the most prestigious scientific and technological centers as well as important countries in order to identify the latest reserves of the country."

■ Respecting to Nature Is Our Nature

Elsewhere in his remarks, the managing director of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) pointed to the significance of issue of environment for the mineral and industrial companies and added, "although nowadays environment is considered as social responsibility, this issue i.e. environment should be practiced practically and feasibility in the texture of the companies. In general, environment should be taken into serious consideration in all activities and performance of the any industrial and production unit significantly."

In the course of discussions conducted in the field of environment, we managed to attain a motto entitled "Respecting to Nature Is Our Nature", the issue of which was turned into the lifeline of environmental programs of the company, he said, adding, "it is worth mentioning that environmental programs of the company include three components such as improvement of tomorrow, healthy human and clean environment."

Paying due attention to the abovementioned three components i.e. improvement of tomorrow, healthy human and clean environment will cause sustainable development in the country, he said, adding, "the productivity rate in the field of energy and water and especially retrieval of water stands at



above 70 percent (70%) in all mines of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO)."

Given the above issue, National Iranian Copper Industries Company is presently considered as one of the top 15 industrial and production units in terms of saving water consumption, the CEO of the company reiterated.

Thanks to the measures taken by the company in the field of saving consumption of water, the National Iranian Copper Industries Company won the most reputable and trustworthy environmental award in the water sector, he stressed.

In response to the criticism of a reporter on Sarcheshmeh Smelting Project and pollution created in that region, he said, "speed of reaction in this form of smelting and production growth has been cited as one of the main reasons of investment in the field of change of technology of smelting in Sarcheshmeh from river to flash."

Preventing use of fossil fuels such as gas oil, gas and mazot, etc. has also been considered as the other reason in this respect, the managing director opined.

Since flash furnace is self-immolating furnace and its oxygen is used for reactions, fossil fuel consumption in it is very low, he said, adding, "the most important effect of this event is this that SO₂ gas production will be minimized."

However, since speed of reaction is very high in this technology, its gas concentration goes up, he opined.

If concentration of gas has been one percent before, it currently stands at two percent with

dilution.

■ License for reduction or stoppage in production volume of Sarcheshmeh Smelting Unit due to environmental pollution

The managing director of the company emphasized: "NICICO does not persists and insist in increasing production volume. For this purpose, we allowed the managers of Sarcheshmeh Smelting Unit to reduce charge of furnace in case of emergence of inversion of air when pollutant remain constant."

Then, one of reporters pointed to a written warning issued by the representative of people of Urmia in Parliament, requesting the chief executive of the company to respond to the criticisms raised.

In response to the criticism of representative of Urmia constituency in the Parliament, he said, "pollution emitted by the company belongs to Azarbaijan while its benefits belong to Kerman."

Fortunately, copper production in East Azarbaijan Province in Sungun region has not any pollution, because, we produce copper concentrate in it."

Copper concentrate production has not any environmental pollution, he stressed.

■ Even one kilogram of copper concentrate produced in East Azarbaijan Province has not produced in Kerman.

Turning to this issue that the company has not generated any employment in Sungun mine deposit, he said, "In should say that 4,000 manpower are presently working in Sungun copper production complex."

Our approach should not be ethnic and nation-



شرکت ملی صنایع مس ایران

National Iranian Copper Industries Co.

alistic, he said, adding, "National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) is an economic enterprise that should be thinking of sustainable development and production."

The claim saying that tax is paid by East Azarbaijan Province and its profit is obtained by Kerman Province is not correct, he maintained.

Basically, Sungun Complex is exempted from tax for 10 years and it is for a few years that this tax exemption still remains in place, he said, adding, "in the meantime, the company has tried to make company's turnover consistent in all regions."

It should be kept in mind that NICICO has been put into severe sanctions up to 2015, the issue of which incurred irreparable damage to the performance of company both in national and international level, the CEO of the company reiterated.

The managing director put the debt rate of company to the banks up to 2016 at over 36 billion tomans.

■ Defining Songun Smelting Project Was an Early Decision

In response to another question raised by one of correspondents on the main reason behind stoppage in construction operation of melting plant in Arasbaran and its environmental consequences in case of resumption of this giant project, he said, "construction of a smelting factory in East Azarbaijan Province for Sungun Copper Mine is associated with the economic problem. Construction operation of this project started in 2013. In that time, it was supposed to produce 700,000 tons of copper cathode in a year while there was not required raw materials for production of copper cathode in the country. For these reasons, construction operation of a smelting unit in Sungun was stopped."

As an economic enterprise, National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) has followed up a number of basic principle in the construction of projects. In this regard, the company intends to construct projects with economic and technical justification on the one hand and prevent destruction of environment on the other hand.

In the end, he pointed to the study of environmental considerations in construction of a smelting project in Sungun region and said, "the environmental issues are of the most important issues for the National Iranian Copper Industries Company, so that the company will welcome any company which intends to make investment in construction of melting project in Sungun wholeheartedly."

Saudi oil minister hopes OPEC, allies will ease output cuts in 2019

Saudi oil minister Khalid al-Falih said on Saturday that he hopes the production constraints under a deal between major OPEC and non-OPEC oil producers will ease in 2019.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is reducing output by about 1.2 million barrels per day as part of a deal with Russia and other non-OPEC producers. The pact will run until the end of 2018.

He said the OPEC and non-OPEC members were committed to bringing stability and to balancing the market.

"The next step may be easing of the production constraints. My estimation is that it will happen sometime in 2019. But we don't know when and we don't know how," he said.

Minister hopes OPEC, allies will ease output cuts in 2019.

(Source: Reuters)

Russia remains China's top oil supplier as pipeline expands

Russia remained the top crude oil supplier to China in January, data showed, beginning 2018 on a strong note after the start-up of an expanded trans-Siberia pipeline and as Beijing released more crude import quotas to independent refiners.

Angola and Iraq took the second and third positions for the month, leapfrogging Saudi Arabia, which was the second-largest supplier to China in 2017.

Russian supplies came in at 5.67 million tonnes, or 1.34 million barrels per day (bpd), up 23.4 percent from a year earlier, data from the Chinese General Administration of Customs showed on Saturday.

The January number compared with 1.194 million bpd in December.

Last month, data showed Russia notched up its second year as China's largest supplier in 2017, surpassing Saudi Arabia - OPEC's top exporter - by some 150,000 barrels each day.

The strong Russian exports to the world's largest crude oil buyer came as a second East Siberia-Pacific Ocean (ESPO) pipeline, as well as expanded domestic connections in China, started commercial operation in January.

In a reshuffle of the pack, Angola ranked second with 4.68 million tonnes, or 1.1 million bpd, of crude in January, down 5.4 percent from a year earlier.

China imported 4.45 million tonnes, or 1.05 million bpd, of crude from Iraq, up 28 percent from a year ago.

Saudi Arabia supplied 4.29 million tonnes, or 1.01 million bpd, to China in January. That was down 15 percent from the same year-ago rate and compared with 1.11 million bpd in December.

Even so, exports from the kingdom are expected to rise to record levels this year as Saudi Aramco ramps up supplies to Chinese state oil firm CNOOC, as well as the Huajin refinery owned by defense giant NORINCO.

(Source: Reuters)

Nigerians are demanding answers after another potential Boko Haram kidnapping

It's been more than three years since Nigeria's government declared victory over Boko Haram, the terrorist group, but that assertion has been put to the test several times in the past few months.

In November, Boko Haram terrorists conducted bombings in Nigeria that killed dozens of people. The next month, the group attacked a Nigerian army convoy accompanying World Food Program trucks, killing four. Then, last week, Boko Haram staged an attack on a girls' boarding school, one that echoed the 2014 kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls in the town of Chibok.



There are conflicting reports about exactly what happened, but here's what we do know: On Monday, the Government Girls Science and Technical School in Dapchi, a village in north-eastern Nigeria, was attacked.

NPR quoted several witnesses as saying that 12 trucks carrying insurgents and mounted machine guns drove onto the school campus. As the militants approached and set off explosives, dozens of students and teachers fled into the surrounding bush, helping one another scale the compound fence.

Police initially said the militants had come to raid the school's food supplies and that the girls had not been targeted. But when the attack ended, several girls were missing. School officials suggested at first that many of the local students had simply returned to their families on foot. Nigerian authorities claimed that no girls were abducted and that at least 76 were rescued. (Two bodies were also discovered, though it's not clear how they died.)

But witnesses reported that at least some girls were taken away in trucks.

One senior official told Al Jazeera that some of them were found on the side of a road inside a malfunctioning vehicle. "It had broken down, and the terrorists panicked because they were under siege by pursuing soldiers," he said. "The fear is that some of the other girls may have been taken along by the terrorists because the girls were not in a single vehicle. Only those in the broken-down vehicle were lucky."

Only on Wednesday did Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari acknowledge that some students were missing. "I share the anguish of all the parents and guardians of the girls that remain unaccounted for," he tweeted. "I would like to assure them that we are doing all in our power to ensure the safe return of all the girls."

Days later, there are still conflicting reports about how many girls are missing. Reuters puts the number at 13, while other outlets, including the BBC and Al Jazeera, say that more than 100 girls are unaccounted for.

The government's confused response left parents frantic. They said it echoed Nigeria's botched response to the Chibok kidnappings in April 2014, when 276 girls were forced onto trucks at their boarding school and driven into the forest. Researchers and reporters found that local officials had been warned about the attack hours before it started but failed to send in military reinforcements. Then-President Goodluck Jonathan waited two weeks before addressing the attack and refused international help.

About 60 girls escaped soon after the incident, and an additional 82 were later released in exchange for five Boko Haram commanders. But about 100 others remain in captivity. Just last month, the terrorist group released a video purporting to show some of the Chibok girls in custody. The girls' faces were covered, and they said on camera that they did not want to return home.

Meanwhile, the nearly decade-long war against Boko Haram continues. While the Nigerian government declared Boko Haram "technically defeated" in late 2015 after retaking much of the territory once controlled by the group, the insurgents' deadly attacks haven't stopped.

As Siobhan O'Grady wrote for the Los Angeles Times, it will take more than money and military might to defeat Boko Haram. "It isn't just a matter of coming in with a stronger military presence," Joe Siegle, the director of research at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, told O'Grady. "What the government needs to be doing now is winning the trust of the local population. ... That's the real battle, the next chapter here. ... That's where they've failed."

Incidents like the school attack this week make that goal even harder to achieve.

(Source: The Washington Post)

Endless carnage

By Hanna Anbar

The deadly Syrian quagmire remains mired in hypocrisy, disinformation, political duplicity and blood, with the unfolding massacre in Ghouta in recent days claiming around 100 lives, half of them children.

The reactions are just as staggering. In a rare move, UNICEF Tuesday issued a statement to express its outrage at the mass casualties among Syrian children in Eastern Ghouta and neighboring Damascus, saying, "No words will do justice to the children killed, their mothers, their fathers and their loved ones."

Meanwhile, the International Committee of the Red Cross said in a statement, "This cannot go on," citing distressing reports of dozens injured and killed every day in Eastern Ghouta, with no place to hide from shelling.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian also warned that worse was ahead unless something was done.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights described Monday as the deadliest day in Ghouta since 2015.

And Staffan de Mistura the UN envoy for Syria, after years of flying countless kilometers around the globe to attend conferences and meetings, has not only arrived at the realization that his mission has failed, but also decried the recent upsurge in violence.

Up north, a miniwar is developing between Turkey and the Kurds, who are now supported by the Syrian government.

The questions that the world community, the superpowers and the United Nations must ask themselves are: Where does Syria go from here? What is the defined mission statement of that UN if it is not able to address one of the most tragic and brutal challenges of the 21st century? And will these powers simply sit and watch as Syria's history is written in blood?

(Source: The Daily Star)

If not now, when should Europe recognize Palestine?

It is high time for European states to follow Sweden's lead and recognize Palestine's statehood

By Anders Persson

Once again, European states are said to be on their way to recognize Palestine. Some reports talk about a big wave, others are more modest. Much seems to depend on whether France will take the lead, but President Emmanuel Macron said last month that France won't recognize Palestine at this point, which probably means that there will be no big wave, at least not in the foreseeable future. Slovenia is, in any case, expected to be the second EU member to recognize Palestine since Sweden did in 2014, even if the Slovenian president recently said the time was not ripe.

Cyprus and Malta have previously recognized Palestine, but that was before they joined the EU. A number of central European member states have also recognized Palestine, when they were part of the Soviet Union. Some of these states (the Visegrad four, with the Czech Republic, in particular) have today emerged as Israel's closest allies in Europe. Iceland, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Ukraine and the Vatican have also recognized Palestine, but they are not members of the EU.

Israel initially feared that the Swedish recognition would unleash similar recognition and punitive actions against its occupation of the Palestinian territories. It didn't happen, but the Swedish recognition did create a certain momentum for the Palestinians, as parliaments in a number of key EU member states (the UK, France, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Belgium and Italy) adopted resolutions supporting Palestinian statehood and calling for their governments to recognize Palestine.

Israel responded ferociously to Sweden's recognition of Palestine, a response which went far beyond using its three standard replies to unappreciated European critique, which were formulated by its legendary Foreign Minister Abba Eban already in the early 1970s: that the critique was ill-timed; that the critique was counterproductive; and that European countries should stop dictating the conditions for peace if they wanted to be relevant in the peace process.

In retrospect, the harsh response from the Israeli government seems to have been part of a deliberate strategy to deter other European states from following Sweden, which, up until now, has been very successful. When I have done interviews with Israeli officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem, they have openly admitted that Sweden was indeed "singled out for special treatment", without elaborating further. A key component in this strategy, whose contours remain unknown, seems to have been to deliberately pick diplomatic fights with Sweden by misinterpreting or exaggerating Sweden's Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom's statements - something she believes Israel did deliberately.

What other European countries can learn from Sweden's experience of recognizing Palestine is to not wait for the EU, to be fact-based in all statements regarding the conflict, prepare for the Israeli counter-attacks and, if possible, do it together with other states to reduce the possibility for Israel to single them out for special negative treatment.

In the wake of November 2015 terror attacks in Paris, Wallstrom identified the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as one of the factors explaining why "there are so many people who have become radicalized". In December of the same year, she called for Israel to end



The tragic and paradoxical reality is that, as the Palestinian Authority progressed towards statehood, from the mid-1990s to the early 2010s, Europe became less and less ready to recognize a Palestinian state.

"extrajudicial killings" of Palestinians. In response, Israel swiftly declared her persona non grata.

Any fair observer can compare Israel's response to what Swedish officials say and do regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with Israel's response to what Russian officials say and do regarding the conflict. There were, for example, no Israeli officials who dared to challenge Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov when he, in 2015 (just the day after Wallstrom spoke about the radicalizing power of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in relation to the Paris terror attacks), said that Hamas and Hezbollah were not terrorist groups, even calling the latter a "legitimate sociopolitical" force in the Middle East.

Nothing of what Wallstrom has said in relation to either extrajudicial killings (also previously expressed by the EU during the second intifada), or the radicalizing power of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is by any means anti-Semitic, and not really controversial, either, for well-informed analysts. For example, Israel's largest judicial scandal in modern times, the so-called Bus 300 affair from 1984, has been widely categorized by international observers as a case of extrajudicial killing. The same is true for the largest whistle-blowing scandal in Israel, the Anat Kamm case from 2008, where it was revealed that the Israeli military had killed Palestinians in direct contravention of the Israeli Supreme Court's rulings. Last year, Israeli soldier Elor Azaria was found guilty of what Amnesty International called the "extrajudicial killing" of Hebron resident Abdel-Fattah al-Sharif.

Wallstrom was on safe ground even when it came to the radicalizing power of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for terrorism. Two months after she brought this up in relation to the 2015 Paris terror attacks, the leader of the cell that carried out the attacks, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, said in his so-called martyr video that "With Allah's help we will be the ones

who liberate Palestine." Before that, "the Palestine question" had been a central theme in Usama bin Laden's speeches, and likewise in his successor's, Ayman al-Zawahiri's, for over two decades.

The tragic and paradoxical reality is that, as the Palestinian Authority progressed towards statehood, from the mid-1990s to the early 2010s, Europe became less and less ready to recognize a Palestinian state, even if the EU, together with the UN, the World Bank and IMF declared in 2011 that the PA performed above the threshold for what was expected of a state. A European Commission official told my colleague Dimitris Bouris of the University of Amsterdam in 2010 that "Palestine is already better equipped in state-building than 70 percent of existing countries."

The EU had, in its Berlin Declaration from 1999, expressed its "readiness to consider the recognition of a Palestinian State in due course". A decade later, in 2010, the EU's commitment to recognize Palestine was downgraded to "when appropriate". When PA President Mahmoud Abbas demanded EU recognition for a Palestinian state during his recent visit to Brussels, EU diplomats told the press that recognition "is up to national governments to make, not for the EU as a whole". Other EU diplomats, in some contradiction, said that EU recognition could only "come as part of a peace settlement".

What other European countries can learn from Sweden's experience of recognizing Palestine is to not wait for the EU, to be fact-based in all statements regarding the conflict, prepare for the Israeli counter-attacks and, if possible, do it together with other states to reduce the possibility for Israel to single them out for special negative treatment. Wallstrom's real problem was not about the facts in her statements, but that she stood almost alone in the West in her critique against some of Israel's policies, which made her an easy target for Israeli counter-attacks, but also for some unexpected praise. One of Israel's leading

print journalists, Nahum Barnea of Ynet, wrote, for example, that Sweden struggled against the Israeli right-wing government in a way that the domestic left-wing opposition did not.

A big, known unknown is where the Trump administration stands on European recognition of Palestine, if it, indeed, has any position at all. Israel's diplomatic power and deterrence are, to a significant extent, based on having the support of the world's only superpower. If Trump takes an active position against recognition of Palestine, it will make it harder for European countries to follow Sweden. If he rudely threatens them, it is unlikely that they will follow through. Palestine is simply not that important to most of them. A big part of the Palestinians' historic misfortunes is that, while they have a worthy cause and much legitimacy, they do not have much power to leverage other countries themselves.

If the Palestinian state-building project fails, as it has been doing since Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad resigned in 2013, it will move the conflict out of the two-state solution paradigm and into an uncertain future. The big fear today among mainstream European policymakers, academics, intellectuals and others is of course not that a Palestinian state will be established too early, but that it will not be established at all.

Foreign Minister Wallstrom pointed to this after Sweden's recognition, when she said: "Some will state this decision comes too soon. I am afraid, rather, that it is too late." She followed this up with what some consider to be among the best Jewish quotes of wisdom: "If not now, when?" Finally, the foreign minister added that she hoped that the recognition would be a "positive injection into the dynamics of the Middle East peace process", and that other states would follow. Now for the first time, it seems that others will indeed follow. It is not a day too early that they do.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Pentagon partners with Germany on Tunisia border security

By Jack Detsch

The Pentagon plans to add nearly \$20 million in high-tech sensors to Tunisia's border, doubling down on U.S. and European investments to stop migrants, extremists and drug traffickers from crossing from Libya.

Defense Department officials notified Congress of the move in a letter last month, drawing from a joint fund set up with Germany in September to secure Tunisia's 300-mile border with Libya. Germany contributed funding that will be used specifically for the sensors.

"The funds will enhance the capacity of the government of Tunisia to detect and respond to threats posed by the trafficking of illicit materials," Assistant U.S. Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense Kenneth Rapuano wrote in congressional correspondence reviewed by Al-Monitor.

The U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency, a Pentagon office charged with countering weapons of mass destruction, kick-started a fence stretching along half of the Tunisian-Libyan border with a \$24.9 million grant in 2016. Construction of the 125-mile barrier began less than a year after an attacker linked to the Islamic State (ISIL) gunned down 38 victims — most of them British tourists — near the resort town of Sousse on the Tunisian coast.

Tunisia faces a scourge of homegrown radicalism, with the latest official figures estimating that at least 800 citizens who joined ISIL and other militant groups have since returned from foreign battlefields. The CIA assessed in 2016 that ISIL had recruited as many as 6,000 Tunisians, and the spy agency labeled it as a "top source country" for recruits.

"The Tunisian government doesn't have a real plan in terms of how to address this," said Sarah Yerkes, a former State and Defense Department official now a fellow with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "This is the problem of being a country in the midst of a democratic



The United States and Germany have also tried to prevent chemical and nuclear weapons from Moammar Gadhafi's era from getting loose, as disarmament has been slowed by Libya's ongoing civil war.

transition. Do you handle this in a democratic and a humane fashion or quick and easy?"

The United States and Germany have also tried to prevent chemical and nuclear weapons from Moammar Gadhafi's

era from getting loose, as disarmament has been slowed by Libya's ongoing civil war. The Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons verified that Libya fully destroyed its most threatening chemical weapons materials back in 2014.

Yet nonproliferation experts remain worried that radiological sources found in Libya's dominant oil and gas industry, such as X-ray scanners, could be packaged into a dirty bomb as warring faction's battle for control. While the impact of such an explosion might not be lethal, the toxicity emanating from the blast could leave areas uninhabitable, as happened with Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant meltdown in 2011.

"If a [dirty] bomb goes off in the middle of a corn field in Iowa, not that many people are going to care," said Miles Pomper, a senior fellow at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies. "If it goes off in New York or Tunis, it's another matter."

The funding boost comes as the Donald Trump administration is rethinking plans to slash foreign aid funding for Tunisia. The State Department's fiscal year 2019 budget proposal released last week seeks \$92 million in bilateral aid, including \$40 million in military assistance for border security and intelligence capabilities — a 67% increase over the current year's request.

Over the past year, the Pentagon has also given Tunisia more than \$20 million from its Global Train and Equip Fund, including body armor, outmoded helicopters, night vision devices and small arms such as M4 rifles and Russian-made PK machine guns.

In 2016, the latest year for which information is available, Tunisia relied on the United States for 10% of its military budget. The United States also has about 100 troops in the country, according to figures the Pentagon released to lawmakers last year.

(Source: Al Monitor)

Sahel is less important for Saudi Arabia and UAE than stronger powers: Bianchi

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN – Robert R. Bianchi, a Professor at the University of Chicago, believes that “The Sahel is less important for Saudi Arabia and the UAE than for stronger powers that are more deeply involved in the competition for influence across Africa such as France, China, Turkey, India, and the United States.”

Professor Bianchi, who also teaches at the Shanghai International Studies University (SISU), adds that “Africa needs cash to develop its mineral and agricultural resources and to pay for standing armies that can protect the assets.”

The professor tells the Tehran Times that “Qatar merely needs to prevent all of the Sahelian countries from tagging along with the Saudis and Emiratis.”

Following is the complete 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: France is pressing for a multinational military force to shore up the Sahelian countries, but it needs richer allies to pay the bills. The United States is holding back because it doesn’t trust the United Nations to run the program. Hence, Paris is courting Persian



Gulf oil exporters to bankroll the initiative.

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

A: The Sahel is less important for Saudi Arabia and the UAE than for stronger powers that are more deeply involved in the com-

petition for influence across Africa such as France, China, Turkey, India, and the United States. Africa needs cash to develop its mineral and agricultural resources and to pay for standing armies that can protect the assets. No non-African country wants

to miss out on the expected profits, but none wants to shoulder too much risk—political or economic. This means that many actors will join the bargaining, but their alliances will be loose and unstable.

■ 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: Each country wants to match or surpass its rivals in cultivating local politicians and companies. In the long run, their public and diplomatic exchanges are less important than the private and economic negotiations over future financial deals. All of the Persian Gulf countries have the spare cash and business connections that other countries need to succeed in Africa.

■ Right after 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 does the Sahel region have to help Qatar get rid of the hardship caused by Saudi Arabia and its allies?

A: Qatar merely needs to prevent all of the Sahelian countries from tagging along with the Saudis and Emiratis. As long as the region is diplomatically fluid and fractured, Doha will be happy.

The madness of U.S. arms sales

TEHRAN (FNA) — It is now a telling yarn that the U.S. arms trade is a major cause of conflicts and human rights abuses in the Middle East, where its Arab allies spend more on military expenditure and war than on regional peace and stability combined.

The growing availability of U.S. arms has been a major factor in the increase in the number of conflicts in the Middle East and beyond. In modern conflicts and in places like Syria and Yemen, over 80 percent of all casualties have been civilian and 90 percent of these are caused by U.S. arms and military support - with record profits for well-positioned U.S. arms-makers on record sales to every ally on even sort-of good terms with the U.S.

Little wonder the U.S. government is increasingly gauging its export success on weapons sales. Here, enough simply isn’t an option, as President Donald Trump is finalizing another policy guidance which will attempt to find major boosts to arms sales above and beyond what’s already been sent to region.

Efforts toward this end are ongoing, centering on making State Department officials public skills for U.S. arms dealers, going to Persian Gulf conferences and shows to sell arms to allies like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The aim is to keep the regime-change wars and campaigns moving forward and to weaken any efforts toward peace and stability.

Mind you, the approval process for sales in the region is also too fast and too easy. The latest case in point could be President Trump’s recent visit to Riyadh during which he sold arms worth over \$100 billion to the Saudis alone. In



other words, there are no attempts to limit U.S. arms exports to countries like Saudi Arabia despite their involvement in war crimes in Yemen and support for Takfiri-Wahhabi terrorists in Syria.

As a consequence of all this and more, the Middle East is plunging deeper into an arms race; a development that experts warn is fuelling serious tension and conflict in the region and beyond. This is because the Saudis and their allies are more prepared to use the weapons they are buying from the U.S. and Europe for death and destruction than for fighting terrorism and extremism.

With conflicts raging in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, the signs that the Trump administration is preparing to increase its arms sales – and supplies to the terror proxies in

Syria – are raising fears that tensions will be stoked further still. In particular, Saudi Arabia is targeting Yemen for its regional ambitions where, despite the announcement by the United Nations that it is illegal and has caused huge human suffering, the US-made Saudi jets continue to strike civilian objects in close cooperation with American and British militaries.

Which brings us to the conclusion that the wars and the human sufferings will not go away as long as the U.S. and Britain continue to sell arms to Saudi Arabia and other allies. But there has to be a way out:

Germany and Norway have already suspended exports of weapons and ammunition to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates over concerns they are being used in the war against Yemen, an unnecessary war that has killed more than 15,000 people and displaced more than 3 million.

Both the U.S. and British governments should take responsibility and follow suit. Under International Law and International Humanitarian Law, they can and they should revoke all the existing export permits to their Arab allies and refrain from issuing any new licenses.

Under the current circumstances and in the face of repeated violations of International Humanitarian Law, the decision by the Trump White House to increase arms sales will only embolden Saudi Arabia and its coalition members that are active in the indiscriminate bombing of schools and hospitals in Yemen and weaponising various terror proxies in Syria. Ironically, all this unnecessary violence and bloodshed is for their regional ambitions and nothing more.

Newly revealed U.S. document about JCPOA means “nothing”: Nephew

1 ➔ Last, it may just be that the cable was written long before the president’s speech, meaning that the words are unintentionally slightly different. This can of course happen in any big bureaucracy.

If it is an accurate reflection of a softening position, then of course this might mean that the Administration is recognizing that its hard lines are impossible to satisfy.

■ By assuming that these documents are true, is it right to say that Trump’s pressure on Iran nuclear deal was aimed at getting advantages from Tehran and probably some European countries?

A: I think it is right to say that Trump’s pressure was intended to seek European support in addressing other problematic aspects of Iranian foreign policy and in improving the nuclear agreement from a U.S. perspective.

■ Reuters reported, citing a senior U.S. official, that there was a hope to “Fix Iran Deal” by reaching an agreement on modifying some of JCPOA contents, endorsement of a supplemental agreement or referring it to the UN Security Council. Provided European countries accept the U.S. demands; is there a possibility that nuclear talks with Iran, Russia and China will resume again?

A: It is possible, certainly. It seems unlikely and improbable. If European officials are reluctant to renegotiating the agreement, then that says much about what Russian, Chinese, and Iranian officials would think.

Or, put another way: they may meet. They may discuss. They may even negotiate. But, it is hard to see a productive result given positions as they are today.

■ Some believe that there are three possible solutions regarding the Iran deal: 1. Modifying the current agreement, 2. Holding talks to reach a supplemental agreement, or 3. Following up with a new Security Council Resolution in order to add new changes. In your opinion, which one of these three is the most likely outcome?

A: I think that there remains a possibility to seek an agreement to address a broader set of issues in the future. I think that, even though there is deep resentment and frustration, there is also pragmatic consideration of national interests on all sides of the matter. Negotiators could meet -- in the future, on the basis of a successful JCPOA -- to consider how to build upon it. But, with every passing day and passing crisis, that gets harder and harder to believe.

‘All I wish is for Palestine to be free’: Freedom fighter Ahed Tamimi

1 ➔ On January 31, 2018, Ahed turned 17 in prison.

Ahed’s trial began on February 13, behind closed doors. She has been slapped with twelve charges, including stone-throwing, a charge levied against the vast majority of detained Palestinian children and punishable under military law by up to 20 years in prison. Stone-throwing and even participating in demonstrations are “security offenses” under the Israeli military court system.

When I first started work on this embroidered poster of Ahed Tamimi, I wanted it to be a testimony to her predicament. But as I read further about the treatment of Palestinian children at the hands of Israeli occupation forces and learned, for instance, that since the 2000 Al-Aqsa Intifada, more than 12,000 children have been detained by the Israeli military, I was reminded that beyond Ahed’s story are countless incidents that have yet to attract much media attention. For example, following Trump’s call to move the embassy to Jerusalem, the Israeli occupation forces detained not one but about 450 children.



It doesn’t matter how, when, or at what age a Palestinian might resist illegal Israeli military occupation. Any resistance is a crime in the eyes of the occupier’s law—in a nation whose own citizens’ first and last toy is fated to be a gun.

To such jaded eyes, a Palestinian resister, whether it be 13-year-old Abdel Raouf al-Bilawi from Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem, who was sentenced on January 22 to four months in prison for throwing stones or 24-year-old journalist and photographer Bushra al-Taweel who was arrested at her home in Um al-Sharyet, Ramallah, on the night of November 1, 2017, Palestinians of every shape, size, age or gender are being gradually cleansed from their land.

A shocking tactic in the ethnic cleansing being carried out by the Israeli military is that they target their “enemy” when they’re young. Bushra al-Taweel, for example, was first arrested on July 6, 2011 when she was just 18 years old. Get them young and then break them. That’s the strategy.

This trend—the arrest of Palestinian children by occupation forces—is a rising one. Over the years, the Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association Addameer has witnessed “a decrease in the overall prison population, but ... a vast increase in the number of children being held,” and has found that around “700 Palestinian children under the age of 18 from the occupied West Bank are prosecuted every year through Israeli military courts after being arrested, interrogated and detained by the Israeli army.”

They [the Israeli soldiers] laughed and laughed at me. I told them: ‘You are laughing at us now, but you don’t know that Palestine will be free and we will laugh at you when you leave.’

— Ahed Tamimi.

Pity the occupier of Palestinians that’s viewing its “enemy” through the barrel of a gun—a barrel-visioned fighting force that never really grew up or maybe was never even really a child. Is it any wonder that such a force is incapable of distinguishing between a child and an adult? Not that it matters, because whether an adult or a child, each and every occupied Palestinian feels the hot wrath of occupation.

Denial of resources like water to Palestinians does not discriminate between the old and the young. It parches them equally. The wall that separates a farmer from his fields does not magically open up when a child approaches it. It sends a message equally. The tear gas that is fired by Israeli forces into Palestinian homes (before they are eventually bulldozed) tortures all who are inside. Even so, attacking and imprisoning children is unconscionable by any International law standards.

We often play, but we get shocked when soldiers enter places of play therefore they destroy all of our happiness. Children often go to school and encounter locked barricades, so they are forced to return to their homes.... We often come back from parties and find locked barricades so that destroys all the joy and happiness we had.

— Ahed Tamimi.

The systematic collective punishment imposed on Palestinians includes arrests, interrogations, house arrest, and zero protection in their formative years. It thereby alienates them from their families and familiar surroundings and disrupts their studies. There are sexual threats aimed at coercing false confessions; deceptive techniques aimed at recruiting informants; psychological and physical torture; slapping, beating, kicking, and denial of food and water for long periods; and, of course, false accusations of terrorism.

While the focus on Ahed Tamimi is important and her commitment is something that we should all admire, it is essential that there is focus on the situation for all children in the occupied Palestinian territory. Ahed Tamimi’s case, and her treatment, is not exceptional; it is, unfortunately, the norm.

— Addameer, Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, Palestinian child prisoner population doubles over last three years, January 18, 2018.


As of 2017, there are 350 children being held in Israel’s prisons. Each of them, as well as each of those who preceded them, is a freedom fighter like Ahed. They all deserve their own embroidered posters and media attention.

I leave you with some more of Ahed’s heartbreaking words, arising from a place where the most natural children’s activities—playing, studying—are barricaded, walled and settled. She describes the discovery of lost childhood pleasures under almost unimaginable circumstances.


These are the bullets which the soldiers shoot at us (the necklace Ahed is wearing in the embroidered poster.) We collect them after they leave the village. [Touching her necklace Ahed says] These came from my uncle who was martyred. My cousin gave them to me. We make beautiful things out of them, like jewelry. We create life from death. They come to kill us with it but we convert it into things which we enjoy and benefit from.

Priti Gulati Cox (@PritiGCox) is an interdisciplinary artist. She lives in Salina, Kansas.

Second Announcement



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

A) Competence of tenderers:
The tenderers should not have legal restrictive to participation governmental to tenderers , 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, Ahvaz, IRAN Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and receive tender documents 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 Apr 09,2018 to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN.

Notice: The deadline for the refusal of bidders participation in the the tender is the last day of determined for submission of bids.

D) 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.

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Foreign Procurement Dept
National Iranian Drilling Company

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

Populist insurgents could be victorious in 2018

By Fred Lucas

Just as in the United States, the rise of both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in 2016 was driven by economic uncertainty and rage against politics as usual — two very different anti-establishment parties are on the move in Italy, driven by the same factors.

The populist Five Star Movement, led by Luigi Di Maio, most closely resembles Trumpism, with a desire to turn back illegal immigrants in the country and its opposition to the European Union. The Free and Equal Party, led by Pietro Grasso, is a left wing splinter party more in the mold of Sanders. It splintered off from the Democratic Party over former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi's moderate policies.

Anti-establishment populist candidates could be in a strong position in 2018 elections abroad,

delivering what Americans experienced in the 2016 election. Radical movements are nothing new in Europe and Latin America, but are often the proverbial dog that wouldn't know what to do if he caught the car. Dogs can't drive. Fringe parties — in most cases — haven't governed.

Still, what we would view as Trump/Sanders-style political movements have a decent shot at victory this year in Italy, Mexico and Brazil, according to a broad assessment of 2018 politics by the Washington political strategy firm Mehman, Castagnetti, Rosen and Thomas.

In Italy, Renzi stepped aside in late 2016 after voters rejected his proposed constitutional reforms, and Paolo Gentiloni became prime minister.

Neither the Five Star nor the Free and Equal party is likely to win a majority, but they could shift the balance of the multi-party parliament

tary elections to be held on March 4. For the most part, only four parties are relevant. The other two are the ruling center-left Democratic Party, led by Gentiloni, and center-right Forza Italia Party, led by former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

Italy ripe for shakeup

Italy is ripe for a shakeup. The country had 1.7 percent growth in the third quarter of 2017, but unemployment is more than 10 percent, debt is more than 100 percent of the gross domestic product and about 120,000 refugees came to Italy fleeing civil wars in Syria and Libya last year.

The center-right and center-left parties could likely form a coalition government. Berlusconi has said Gentiloni should remain as prime minister to maintain stability. However, Five Star is running second to the Democrats.

The problem for Five Star could be that even if

it wins the most votes, it might not gain control of parliament. That's because Di Maio has said his party won't give any cabinet posts to members of other parties. That's hardly an incentive for any other party to form a coalition. Still, politicians in any country become more pragmatic when power presents itself.

Next up is a contest that includes a nationalist firebrand and a former first lady. It sounds familiar enough. Except the firebrand is on the left and the former first lady is running on the center-right.

Just as Mexico was an issue in the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, America will be an issue in Mexico's 2018 presidential election.

Mexico votes on July 1, where much of the election is based on the Trump administration policies. Trump's approval numbers are even lower in Mexico than in the United States.

Frontrunner candidate

Mexico City's mayor, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, commonly called AMLO, has come close to winning the presidency in the past. He's been a perennial presidential candidate, but now he's the frontrunner who has held a double-digit lead. He's the leader of the left wing National Regeneration Movement.

Clearly not ideologically aligned with Trump, AMLO called the American president's policy on border security, "poisonous, hateful, xenophobic." However, he is somewhat stylistically like Trump. He's a Mexican nationalist and claims a past election that he lost was rigged. He's critical of the North American Free Trade Agreement, but wants to tweak it rather than ditch it as Trump promised during his presidential campaign. Though, Trump seemingly will keep the agreement in place too. ➔

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غرب تهران جهت اجاره نیازمندیم

خانم دبیا: ۰۹۱۲۸۱۰۳۲۰۶

دفت: ۲۸۱۴۱ - ۲۲۶۶۲۴۵۴

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Iranian app on fashion, clothing to make debut

L I F E **TEHRAN** — An Iranian software and application on clothing and fashion will be introduced at the 7th Fajr International Fashion and Clothing Festival.

“Regarding the technologies affiliated to clothing and fashion industry during recent years, the software is made to provide a good source for supply and demand,” Mehdi Mahmoudi, an official with the ministry of culture, said on Saturday.

The software application provides advanced search for users in different fields including price, product name, size and color.

The application is also supported with accounts in different social networks and provide opportunity for users to introduce their products on the media to others, he said.

The application also hold online workshops, which can be attended by businesses in

the field of clothing and fashion nationwide, he explained.

He went on to say that the application also provides information about seminars and meetings in clothing industry and special sales offered for different brands and productions.

For the first time, the festival plans to take up an impressive collection of clothes with the concept of a historical monument, Golestan Palace, in the competition section.

The fashion and textile designers will submit their works revolving around the Golestan Palace during the festival, which runs from February 25 to March 4 in Tehran.

All fashion designers, clothing industry managers and those who are interested in the clothing and fashion industry can attend the event free of charge.



Ways you’re being a toxic parent—without knowing it

Toxic parenting techniques can sneak into your everyday interactions, no matter how well-intentioned you are. Here’s how to spot your own bad parenting traits, and break the cycle before the damage is done.

■ You talk at your child instead of with them

Communication between parent and child can be a tricky thing, especially as children become older and have opinions of their own. Barbara Greenberg, PhD, a clinical psychologist known for her national television appearances focusing on the mental health of adolescents and teens, says communicating in the right way is key for parents. “Toxic parents are known for not listening to their kids, but instead, talking over them or at them,” she says.

■ You don’t manage your own frustrations

Parenting is fraught with frustrations on a daily basis, and recognizing these trigger points can be the first step in making life easier. Dr. Bernstein believes that parents can recognize how their own frustrations impact their child’s behavior. “When you learn to identify and manage your own parenting frustrations, you’ll be amazed at how your child’s challenging behaviors can quickly improve,” he says.

■ You put down their playmates

Every child will bring home a friend or two that might cause you to raise your eyebrows. Expressing criticism about your child’s friends will only lead to a toxic outcome, says Dr. Greenberg. “Toxic parents criticize their child’s friends. If you criticize their friends, you are criticizing your kids. At least, that’s what they take from this behavior. Instead, find out why each of their friends are special to them,” she recommends.

■ You label your child

“If you think about it, parents are ‘on duty’ 24 hours a day, seven days a week,” Dr. Bernstein explains. “The lack of time for parents to catch their breath and reflect, can lead them sometimes to see their children in global ways.



As a result, toxic labels such as: lazy, problematic, selfish, and inconsiderate can result in parents influencing their children to be locked into a negative identity.”

■ You compare your child to others

One of the worst behaviors of a toxic parent, is comparing a child to his siblings or friends in the hopes that he will exhibit the same good behavior. Dr. Greenberg says, “Instead, you should celebrate each child’s individuality; comparisons damage self-esteem and do not serve as motivation.”

■ You say “You always”...

Using phrases such as “You always” or “You never” allows little room for a child to make changes to their behavior. Instead of globalizing behavior you want to see changed, use language that provides an opportunity for growth, such as “You seem to be upset when...” or “How can we work through this issue together?” Here are 11 other things parents say that ruin their kids’ trust.

■ You openly criticize yourself

Toxic parents are notorious for constantly berating themselves about superficial issues, like weight or appearance. “Children look toward their parents to see examples of just about everything, self-esteem included,” Dr. Greenberg says.

■ You try to be your child’s best friend

Children need parents to be parents—and when parents try to dodge parenting altogether and instead become a friend, the results are disastrous. For toxic parents this can include dressing like their child, befriending their child’s friends (to an inappropriate degree), and even disclosing too much personal information to their child at a young age. Codependency between a parent and child sets up an unhealthy dynamic in which the child feels guilty for outgrowing the parent (something that is natural and healthy), and the parent refuses to find companions within their own age group.

■ You refuse to let them be independent

All parents know that watching children grow up can be a sad but beautiful process full of pride and wistfulness about the past. For toxic parents, however, this process becomes one filled with overbearing care taking that stunts the natural growth of the child. Children must be able to begin to take care of themselves at a certain age.

■ You take your child’s behavior personally

Hearing your child tell you they don’t like you (or worse!) for the first time is hard for every parent. You’ve fed, diapered, and cared for this tiny being since they existed, and it’s hard to hear anything but words of adoration out of those sweet little mouths. While it can sting, it is perfectly natural and a part of a child’s development to assert their independence and separation from parents. Toxic parents tend to take this natural part of growing up personally, and take the criticism to heart. (Source: rd.com)

28 simple and natural ways to detox your body



#11. Avoid obvious environmental toxins:

Some toxins are quite obvious in their presence and their ability to make you sick over time—these are the ones to avoid at all costs. When you can feel the presence of substances that may be making you sick or that can show up in an unsavory way later, then you know that these contribute to a buildup of the things that you don’t want or need in your system.

Environmental toxins can range from smog and diminished air quality to second hand smoke. Any chemical type of fumes such as those that may come from a fac-

tory are never good for you. If something doesn’t smell or feel right, then chances are that it’s doing absolutely no good to your system either.

If you have the ability to avoid these substances, particularly something like second hand smoke then it’s important to do so. This will ensure that you breathe in good clean air and get rid of the toxins that have built up over time. When in doubt, stay away from any environment, fumes, or substances that can work against your ability to naturally cleanse and care for yourself in this important way.

(Source: bembu.com)

How to hack more counter space at your kitchen?



The kitchen may be the heart of the home, but because it’s where everyone hangs out, it also inevitably becomes a chaotic landing pad for everything you own.

■ Store coffee pods in a drawer organizer

Corral loose K-Cups into a rolling drawer that can slide under your coffee maker. Stash different flavors in each divided section so you know exactly where to grab them. If you have the room for it, consider investing in a carousel-style organizer that can hold more than 30 cups.

■ Create a coffee station

If coffee mugs are taking over too much countertop real estate, simply hang your favorite mugs on your backsplash using Command hooks.

They’ll be out of the way, yet always within reach.

■ Decant pantry staples into stylish containers

Store pantry mainstays, like flour and sugar, in pretty canisters that match your decor. This trick will keep frequently used ingredients easily accessible, while the leak-proof containers will prevent spills.

■ Stack dishes on a tiered serving tray

Take advantage of vertical space by using a tiered serving tray to store some favorite dishes and bowls. Display your most colorful dishes to add a pop of color and liven up the room.

(Source: Real Simple)

Eating like an Iranian: A survey on Persian food

By Samira Mohebbi
Senior expert in Iran studies

Part 6

In this series of articles you can trace cookery art in Iran during history up to present. The survey sheds light on different aspects of Iranian life, culture and civilization.



In this series of articles you can trace cookery art in Iran during history up to present. The survey sheds light on different aspects of Iranian life, culture and civilization.

As mentioned in the previous edition, cooking in Iran enjoyed a wide range of variety during Safavid era (1501– 1736). According to documents, over 60 different kinds of Aash (Iranian soup), 55 kinds of rice cooking as well as different foods including kookoo (a kind of Persian frittata), dolmeh (a kind of Persian stuffed vegetable dish), kufteh (Persian meatball with rice) and borani (Persian appetizer made with yogurt and some type of vegetable) were cooked during that era.

“Karnameh; dar Bab-e Tabbakhi va San’at-e aan” by Haji Mohammad Ali Bavarchi Baghdadi (c1520) and “Maddatol Hayat; Resaleh dar ‘Elm-e Tabbakhi” by Nuruollah Natanzi written (c 1594) are two important sources about foods, which were cooked at Safavid court. The books, which were written in a 76 year interval, are considered as the most ancient cookbooks in Iran.

The cookbook includes recipes of different kinds of breads like different kinds of komaj (Persian date bread), different kinds of Aash (Persian soup) like Aash-e Reshteh and different kinds of Aash made with oat, rice, pistachio, pomegranate, vinegar, tamarind and barberry.

Different kinds of food made with dairies and various range of polow (rice that is usually mixed and cooked with vegetables, herbs, and/or meat), stews made with different ingredients and borani are also included in the books.

The Austrian Iranologist Bert G. Fragner, 77, in his article “From the Caucasus to the Roof of the World: A Culinary Adventure”, said that both books narrates the history of Persian cooking in Iran and in his view, the concept of Iranians about rice cooking was formed during Safavid era.

Cleaning hacks that don’t actually work

Here are eight cleaning hacks that don’t work and will just waste your time and money. Some are even flat out dangerous! Skip ‘em and follow the saner advice that will give you a much cleaner and safer outcome.

■ Sanitize sponges in the microwave

Like many hacks, this one is based on a bit of science. Yes, high heat can kill some bacteria. However, the length of time needed in a microwave to reach the desired temperature to kill all the bacteria lurking in the center of a sponge will result in a flaming, incinerated sponge. New studies show that nuked sponges still harbor about 40% of their bacteria, some of which can be life-threatening.

A better choice is to use disposable wipes or cotton or microfiber cloths that can be tossed in the washer after every use.

■ Add salt to washer to prevent dye bleeding

By the time clothes get into stores for you to buy, it’s too late to stop dye bleeding. That process has to be done while the fabric is being manufactured. Fortunately, if all of your underwear is now pink, there are some useful hacks that might just save the day.

■ Use hairspray to remove ink

This is an oldie but a goodie hack that used to work when hairspray was nearly 100% alcohol.

But times have changed. Today’s hairsprays contain less alcohol (which is the magic ink remover) and more conditioners, oils, and emollients.

■ Place a magic eraser in toilet tank to remove stains

Yes, those little white erasers are magic at removing soap scum on bathtubs and crayon marks on walls. But they do nothing in your toilet tank to clean your toilet and may even screw up the flushing mechanisms. The scrubbers are made of melamine foam and need your elbow action to work. They don’t dissolve and contain no bacteria killing or dirt-lifting components.

■ Coat a cooktop with car wax for easy cleaning

Grease and food spatters can be hard to remove from cooktops; especially if they are crusty from weeks of high heat. While a coating of car wax might make the mess easier to wipe away, it can also cause a fire. If you have a boil-over, stick with prompt cleaning and a product that cuts through grease.

■ Hot water kills all germs

Hot water can kill some bacteria, but it has to be really hot (212 degrees F) and the contaminated surface must be exposed for several minutes. Since most home hot water heaters are set at 120 degrees F, you’re fooling yourself about expecting hot water alone to kill germs.

After the flu sweeps through your home or you prepare raw meats in the kitchen, add a disinfectant like chlorine bleach, pine oil, or phenolic solutions (Lysol) to your cleaning routine.

■ Coca Cola is the best toilet cleaner

Can you clean a toilet with Coca Cola (or any carbonated soda)? Yes. Should you? No. Most carbonated sodas contain small quantities of citric and phosphoric acids that are effective in slowly removing rust and some stains. However, a liter of soda will do nothing to kill bacteria and leaves a sticky residue that might just provide food for bacteria growth. Stick with disinfecting toilet cleaners, they’re better and cheaper per use.

■ Extra detergent will produce cleaner laundry

More is not always better when it comes to cleaning laundry or dirty floors. Adding extra detergent and cleaners makes it harder to rinse away and remove all the sticky residue.

(Source: thespruce.com)



101 ITEMS FOR YOUR BUCKET LIST!

#39. Get a complete makeover

If you’ve been donning your current look for years (if not decades), and if you feel a little stagnant in your life right now, consider a makeover. Permanent change in life needs to happen from inside out, but sometimes change on the outside can help us to boost our self-confidence and give us a renewed sense of self.

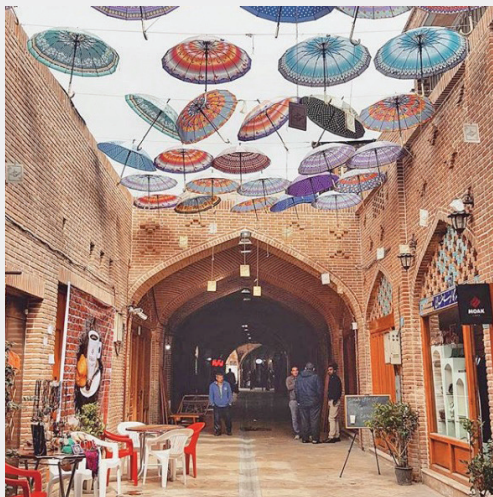
A makeover can consist of changing your hair style, hair color, physique, and wardrobe. You can start by getting a haircut (and even hair color), refreshing your wardrobe, applying a new makeup look (if you’re a girl), and then working out for a better physique. If you haven’t done a makeover before, consult the right people to know if your new look will work on you! Speak to an image consultant to get ideas on what will work best for you; consult a hairstylist before getting your haircut.

(Source: personalexcellence.co)



#IRANIANLIFESTYLE

The Oudlajan Bazaar in Tehran is decorated with several umbrellas in an undated photo (Instagram/@Mypersiancorner)



Tehran gears up for major handicrafts exhibit in March

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – Hundreds of artisans from across Iran will show their works at a major sales exhibition, which will be held at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds from March 6 to 9.

Craftspeople and exhibitors from various provinces will partake in the event which is to be held in halls 5 and 13 covering a total of 2,400 square meters in area, CHTN reported.



People visit a national crafts exhibition in Tehran, August 24, 2017.

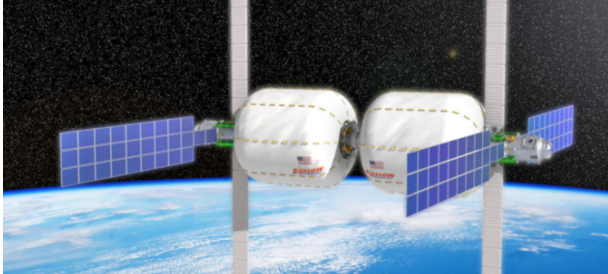
The exhibit will showcase a variety of souvenirs, woodwork, miniature, textile printing, enamel, leatherwork, calligraphy, metalwork, mirrorwork, marquetry, illuminated manuscripts, potteries, ceramics, and rugs amongst others.

Like previous editions, it will turn the spotlight on ethnic rituals, traditional music and regional cuisine and dishes.

This floating space hotel could be built by 2021

Bigelow Space Operations is betting that the hyper-wealthy will pay millions to float in space from the comfort of their hotel room.

Are you insanely wealthy? Do you consider the idea of merely traveling to space as a private citizen pedestrian and, frankly, beneath you? If you answered yes to both questions, then a new proposed venture by Bigelow Aerospace should be just the ticket.



A rendering shows the floating space hotel, a design which could be completed as early as 2021.

That's because the company has announced its intention to launch an "inflatable hotel" into orbit by 2021. According to The Daily Mail, the B330 will be a line of "fully autonomous standalone space stations" consisting of two 55-foot modules that will be linked to create outer-space accommodations. Once conjoined, the unit will offer twice the cubic capacity of the International Space Station (ISS).

Although project bankroller and billionaire hotelier Robert Bigelow made his money running Budget Suites of America, this extraterrestrial project will be anything but affordable.

The cost per passenger for accommodations in low-earth orbit and cislunar space is projected in the low seven figures, but Bigelow thinks charges in the "low eight figures" would be more likely.

As ridiculous as trusting the brains behind an earthbound extended-stay apartment company for a venture like this might sound, Bigelow has some tangible experience in the design of out-of-this-world structures. His company was the first to successfully build and attach an inflatable extension to the ISS.

(Source: architecturaldigest.com)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Itchan Kala

Itchan Kala, the inner fortress of Khiva, is located to the South of the Amu Darya River in the Khorezm region of Uzbekistan and it was the last resting-place of caravans before crossing the desert to Persia.

A World Heritage, Itchan Kala has a history that spans over two millennia. The inner town has 26 hectares and was built according to the ancient traditions of Central Asian town building, as a regular rectangle (650 by 400 meters) elongated from south to north and closed by brick fortification walls that are up to ten meters high.



Inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage list, the property is composed of 51 ancient monumental structures and 250 dwellings and displays remarkable types of architectural ensembles such as Djuma Mosque, Oq Mosque, madrasahs of Alla-Kulli-Khan, Muhammad Aminkhon, Muhammad Rakhimkhon, Mausoleums of Pahlavon Mahmoud, Sayid Allavuddin, Shergozikhon as well as caravanserais and markets.

The attributes are outstanding examples of Islamic architecture of Central Asia. Djuma Mosque, a mosque with a covered courtyard designed for the rugged climate of Central Asia, is unique in its proportions and the structure of its inner dimensions (55m x 46m), faintly lit by two octagonal lanterns and adorned with 212 columns.

The madrasahs, which make up the social areas, have majestic proportions with a simple decoration, and they form another type of Islamic architecture specific to Central Asia.

(Source: unesco.org)

Iranian handicrafts to come into sight in World Cup

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – Collections of Iranian handicrafts will find their ways to the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia.

Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization plans to hold a handicrafts exhibit in Moscow during the event, ISNA quoted Pouya Mahmoudian who presides over the CHHTO exports department as saying on Saturday.

In close collaboration with the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) in this regard, exquisite handicrafts will be utilized as Iran's gifts to senior sports officials and athletes during the event, she added.

"The World Cup opens up a great opportunity to introduce our crafts and traditional arts to people from other countries and helps to develop handicrafts market in Russia."

The FFIRI have already presented Iranian handicrafts to senior sports officials such as FIFA President Gianni Infantino and Russia World Cup Chief Vitaly Mutko, the report said.

The 2018 FIFA World Cup is anticipated to lure thousands of Iranian fans to Russia as Iran national team has been qualified for the prestigious event.

Over the past couple of years, dozens of Iranian handicrafts including enamel, tile, metalwork, leatherwork, wood carving have been honored with the UNESCO Seal of Excellence.



Mohammadreza Saket, the secretary general of the Iranian Football Federation, presents handicrafts to FIFA President Gianni Infantino in an undated photo.

Disputed Persian artifacts one step closer to home

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – Following years of ups and downs, the fate of some ancient Persian artifacts, on loan from Iran to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago since the 1930s, was left in the hands of an international court, this time in favor of Iran.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Supreme Court concluded that American citizens injured in a 1997 suicide bombing in Jerusalem cannot seize the artifacts to satisfy a \$71.5 million court judgment against Iran, as compensation, Reuters reported.

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

Archaeologists affiliated with the University of Chicago discovered the tablets in 1930s while excavating in Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Persian Empire. However, the institute has resumed work in collaboration with colleagues in Iran, and the return of the



An Achaemenid-era clay tablet

tablets is part of a broadening of contacts between scholars in the two countries, said Gil Stein, director of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago.

What these tablets tell us is the economic, social and religious history of the ancient Achaemenid Empire (550-330 BC) and the larger Near Eastern region in the fifth century BC.

The tablets have been difficult to read because information about the Persian Empire had been largely limited to non-Persian sources. That non-Persian information came from Greek writers such as Herodotus and Latin authors, and mostly concerns encounters between the Persian Empire and Greek states, encounters of warfare, and diplomacy. Information from the tablets provided one of the first opportunities to gather data on the empire from Persian sources.

The Persian Empire was the largest and most durable empire of its time. The empire stretched from Ethiopia, through Egypt, to Greece, to Anatolia (modern Turkey), Central Asia and to India.

Neyshabur, a prosperous center in medieval times

The Metropolitan Museum's excavations at Neyshabur

Neyshabur is a city in northeastern Iran that was founded around the third century CE, grew to prominence in the eighth century, and was ruined by invasions and earthquakes in the thirteenth century. After that time, a much smaller settlement was established just north of the ancient town, and the once bustling metropolis lay underground—until a team of excavators from the Metropolitan Museum arrived in the mid-twentieth century. They worked at Neyshabur between 1935 and 1940, returning for a final season in the winter of 1947–48.

The excavators had been drawn to the city because of its fame in the medieval period, when it flourished as a regional capital and was home to many religious scholars. It was also known as an economic center—Neyshabur was located on the trade route known as the Silk Road, which ran from China to the Mediterranean Sea, crossing Central Asia, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey along the way.

In addition, Neyshabur was a source of turquoise and a center for growing cotton, producing cotton textiles as well as several types of fabric incorporating silk, called 'atabi, saqlatuni, and mulham. One of the most unusual products of Neyshabur, however, was its edible earth, which was believed to have curative properties. At its peak between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, Neyshabur had a population of approximately 100,000 to 200,000 people, and development covering an area of approximately six and a half square miles.

The Museum's team of researchers, Joseph Upton, Walter Hauser, and Charles Wilkinson, worked at Neyshabur under a cooperative agreement with the Iranian government that permitted them to excavate so long as half of the material found was shared with the Iran Bastan Museum in Tehran. Their trenches were located throughout the medieval city, sited where significant finds had already been made by locals or where they could obtain permission to dig (as much of

the site was under cultivation). They gave each site a name based on its local nickname or a distinguishing topographical feature.

Two areas provided particularly rich finds. The first site to be excavated, called Sabz Pushan ("green mound" in Persian), had been a thriving residential neighborhood occupied between the ninth and twelfth centuries, with houses of three to four rooms connected by small alleys. Of the large area this neighborhood once occupied, approximately fifteen houses were eventually excavated. One of these houses had particularly well-preserved decoration, with carved stucco panels covering the lower part of the wall, the dado, in several rooms. The panels were originally painted in bright yellows, reds, and blues, with equally colorful murals on the plaster walls above, but once the panels were exposed to the air, the colors that the excavators first saw quickly disappeared.

At a part of the site the locals called Tepe Madrasa, the excavators had expected to find one of Neyshabur's famed institutions of learning, or madrasa. Instead, they uncovered a large residential area with a mosque that had been developed and rebuilt in several phases between the ninth and twelfth centuries. Inside one of the residences, perhaps the palace of the city's ninth-century governors, they found a room with an extraordinary set of wall paintings whose iconography appears unique to the site.

Hundreds of objects were discovered during the course of the excavations. Each year, the Museum's share was shipped back to New York, where the objects were restored and placed on display. Recently, the con-



Animal-spouted pitcher, 9th–10th century, found in Neyshabur, Sabz Pushan

servators in the Museum's Department of Objects Conservation have re-treated all the excavated objects under a special grant to preserve this important archaeological source.

Hundreds of objects were discovered during the course of the excavations. Each year, the Museum's share was shipped back to New York, where the objects were restored and placed on display.

These objects were significant in providing information on several different artistic traditions. In terms of ceramics, they brought to light several types whose decoration was unique to this part of Iran. These were typically decorated with strong-colored slips, made of diluted clay, in bold patterns. The distinctive ceramics produced in Neyshabur were traded around the region, and have been found at Herat, Merv, and Samarkand.

The evidence from the excavations also revealed much about the development of architectural decoration in northeastern Iran. Walls in residences and public buildings throughout Neyshabur were decorated in many different ways, from frescoes to carved and painted stucco, terracotta panels to glazed ceramic tiles.

The range of imagery was also wide, including geometric and vegetal patterns, calligraphy, figures, and animals. The refined tradition of wall painting shows links with the earlier history of the region, such as Buddhist paintings in Central Asia and Sasanian paintings in Iran, as well as with contemporary painting of Iraq.

Carved stucco decoration, perennially important in Iranian architecture, was represented in examples found throughout the site. The exteriors of large public buildings were clad in baked bricks set in decorative patterns, large terracotta panels carved with multilayered ornament, or glazed tiles, often in shades of bright blue.

In addition, Neyshabur was an important center for the manufacture of glass, metal, and stone vessels as well as textiles. None of the latter were found in the excavations, no doubt due to their highly perishable nature. However, beautifully decorated spindle whorls were excavated by the hundreds. Smaller items such as toys, game pieces, musical instruments, and beads throw light on everyday activities in Neyshabur and give us a better understanding of daily life for its citizens.

(Source: TheMetropolitanMuseumofArt.org)

Parkinson’s disease may be diagnosed using tears, study says

A new study has shed some light on how Parkinson’s disease could be diagnosed and on more clues about the disease. Scientists said they can use tears to see if someone has Parkinson’s.

New research reveals that tears may indicate how susceptible people may be for developing Parkinson’s disease. Analyzing tear samples allowed scientists to get a glimpse into one of the differences found in people that have Parkinson’s.

With the findings of the study, doctors may soon have a new way of diagnosing Parkinson’s in their patients. A study by a group from the University of Southern California (USC) shows that people with Parkinson’s have different levels of a protein associated with the disease than those who don’t have it.

Tears were examined because of their link to the nervous system. Parkinson’s disease itself is a degenerative order that affects the central nervous system.

■ Secretory cells

Tears were found to contain proteins produced by secretory cells from the tear gland, which is stimulated by nerves to turn these proteins into tears.

This would provide doctors with reliable and non-invasive biological marker for the disease. Parkinson’s disease develops over time, even before symptoms begin to appear.

Knowing if it can be detected before these



symptoms appear may give doctors and scientists a way to fight it before the nervous

system starts breaking down.

Researchers collected tear samples from

Tears were found to contain proteins produced by secretory cells from the tear gland, which is stimulated by nerves to turn these proteins into tears.

55 people with Parkinson’s disease and compared them with tear samples from 27 people who did not have the disease. Those without the disease were the same age and gender as those that do have Parkinson’s. Tear samples were then analyzed for four specific proteins.

■ Protein in tears

Scientists found that those with Parkinson’s have lower levels of the alpha-synuclein protein in their tears. The samples also had a higher level of the aggregated -- clumped, misfolded versions of the protein -- form of alpha-synuclein, oligomeric alpha-synuclein. Oligomeric alpha-synuclein is linked with the death of cells in the nervous system.

This research shows that there may be a link with tear gland secretory cells and the alpha-synuclein that is found in tears. This is just an initial investigation into a new method that could be used to detect Parkinson’s. It still isn’t a definitive way to prove that with higher levels of oligomeric alpha-synuclein are more likely to have Parkinson’s.

Parkinson’s disease affects around one million Americans and more than 10 million people worldwide. Almost 60,000 Americans are diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease each year. There have also been links between Parkinson’s and sleeping disorders.

(Source: Tech Times)

Plant-based plastics could solve world’s waste problem, researchers say



Plant-based plastics are incredibly useful materials with extremely diverse properties, allowing a multitude of different applications that benefit our lives.

Bottles and forks aside, in the medical field alone plastics have been used for artificial heart valves, medical implants and devices, controlled drug release, specialist surfaces and coatings that repel water, organic batteries -- the list is endless.

But with marine plastic debris estimated to reach 250 million tons by 2025, governments around the globe are starting to think about how to overcome this significant problem.

A fundamental part of this issue is that unsustainable, single-use plastics account for up to 40 percent of global plastic production. This equates to around 128 million tons. The vast majority of these plastics have low recycling rates and do not biodegrade in an acceptable time span -- polypropylene can take millennia to break down properly.

■ Particulates called plastics

Worse still, if these plastics find their way into the marine environment, the motion of the sea along with sunlight can cause the plastics to fracture into small particulates called “microplastics.”

The presence of macro- and microplastics in our oceans has been shown to have a detrimental effect on marine life. But the potential effect on human health is much less well understood.

It is clear then that plastic waste is a complicated problem -- spanning economics, sustainability, social pressures and recycling infrastructure in both developed and developing countries. But while it’s widely

known that plastics can be an issue for the environment, what isn’t often known is that the persistence of plastics in the environment is actually closely linked to how they are made.

The overwhelming majority of plastics are made using oil-based materials, meaning that, by their chemical nature, many plastics have no oxygen content. This makes them very hydrophobic (water-hating) and, as such, it is very difficult for common bacteria or enzymes to break them down if they enter the environment.

■ Source of chemicals

Over the past few decades, there has been increased awareness of our dependence on a limited oil supply and this has driven research into alternative, sustainable sources of chemicals. In particular, the concept of using bio-based materials as a resource rather than oil-based materials has really gained momentum. Sustainable, bio-based material can be waste crops, waste wood -- in fact, any waste biological matter.

Using these platform molecules, the Green Chemistry Center of Excellence at the University of York, has been working with the plastics industry to create a new generation of bio-based polyesters. These are often used to make fibers for clothing, as well as films and containers for liquids and foods. The resulting materials are entirely plant-based, recyclable and -- importantly -- fully biodegradable.

Aside from sustainability, the huge benefit of using biomass as a resource is the high quantity of oxygen that is incorporated into nature’s chemical structures (cellulose, glucose, etc.).

(Source: Newsweek)

New insight into how magma feeds volcanic eruptions



A novel research study by scientists at the University of Liverpool has provided new insights into how molten rock (magma) moves through the Earth’s crust to feed volcanic eruptions.

Using laboratory experiments involving water, jelly and laser imaging, researchers were able to demonstrate how magma flows through the Earth’s crust to the surface through magma-filled cracks called dykes.

This new approach to studying magma flow revealed that prior to a volcanic eruption there was recirculation of the fluid in the dyke and instability in the flow, details which had previously not been documented before.

■ Volcanic eruptions

Nearly all volcanic eruptions are fed by dykes that transport magma from its source to the surface. Understanding how magma travels through these dykes to the surface is central to forecasting the style, longevity and climatic impact of volcanic eruptions.

Researchers created a scaled-down model of an active volcanic plumbing system using a perspex tank filled with gelatine, representing the Earth’s crust, and then injected this with dyed water, representing the magma.

They applied cutting-edge laser imaging techniques to look inside the model. Passive-tracer particles added to the fluid glowed in a laser sheet to allow the flow of the model magma to be mapped as the dyke grew.

Digital cameras recorded changes in the shape of the model volcanic plumbing system over time and the changes to the surface of the crust was recorded using an overhead laser scanner. Polarized light allowed subsurface stress patterns that

would result in rock fracturing in nature to be observed as the dyke grew.

This novel experimental setup allowed, for the first time, the simultaneous measurement of fluid flow, sub-surface and surface deformation during the magma ascent through magma-filled fractures.

This finding will help inform the interpretation of data from field studies and geophysical surveys, which will ultimately improve our ability to understand if an eruption is likely to happen.

■ Volcanic plumbing systems

Liverpool volcanologist, Dr. Janine Kavanagh, who heads up the University’s specialist MAGMA laboratory, said “For the first time, using innovative laboratory experiments that combined our knowledge of volcanic plumbing systems with engineering expertise, we have managed to see how magma flows through the Earth’s crust to the surface through dykes.

“Our experiments, the first to use laser imaging technology in this way, revealed a strong coupling between surface deformation patterns and subsurface processes.

“This indicates that it is both the magma properties and the host rock properties that controls how the dyke ascends, which is a brand new finding and challenges our existing thinking on magma flow through rocks.

“As it’s not possible to always successfully predict volcanic events due to the lack of complete knowledge of the signals leading to catastrophes, these results are an important new finding and ultimately we hope they will contribute to our understanding of where and when the next volcanic eruption will be.”

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Could Jupiter’s icy moon Europa have life powered by nuclear energy?

Among the places within our solar system that could potentially support life as we know it (other than Earth, of course), Jupiter’s icy moon Europa is one of the prime candidates. New research by a team of Brazilian researchers indicates native life-forms on the solar system’s sixth-largest moon, if they exist, could be powered by nuclear energy.

With its surface covered in a thick layer of ice, thought to be about 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) deep, and a warm subsurface ocean estimated to be 10 times deeper, Europa is also the target of an upcoming NASA mission, called Europa Clipper, designed to study the icy world’s habitability. The findings made by researchers from the University of Sao Paulo may help that mission.

“We studied the possible effects of a biologically usable energy source on Europa based on information obtained from an analogous environment on Earth,” principal investigator Douglas Galante from USP and one of the paper’s coauthors, told Agência FAPESP in an interview Wednesday.

This “analogous terrestrial context” the researchers studied was deep inside a gold mine in South Africa. The bacterium Candidatus Desulforudis audaxviator lives almost 3 kilometers below the surface inside the Mponeng gold mine near Johannesburg, completely devoid of sunlight and lacking in oxygen. In the high temperature conditions, it uses energy from a radioactive process that involves the splitting of water molecules due to ionizing radiation.

(Source: IBT)

Antidepressants do actually work, says huge review of over 500 studies

Health advice these days feels like a game of ping-pong, and the accepted wisdom on antidepressants like Lexapro -- one of the most popular drugs used to treat depression -- is no exception to that mixed messaging.

In January, writer Johann Hari published a series of personal stories in outlets like The Guardian and the Huffington Post in which he claimed that antidepressant medications didn’t help him because “the whole idea that depression is caused by a ‘chemically imbalanced’ brain is wrong.”

Fortunately, a large new review of 500 studies comprising more than 100,000 people and published this week in the medical journal The Lancet, backs up what many experts in the fields of psychiatry and neuroscience have been saying for decades: antidepressants do work.

The review found that the drugs can be powerful tools in the fight against depression, which today remains the leading cause of disability and a major cause of suicide worldwide.

Written by a team of 18 medical doctors and specialists in Europe and England and funded by the UK’s Department of Health, the review concluded that all of the 21 antidepressant drugs they studied worked better at treating depression than a placebo.

In direct comparisons of some of the drugs, small differences in the results appeared, with the research suggesting that some medicines like escitalopram (frequently sold under brand-name Lexapro) worked slightly better than drugs like fluoxetine (sold under brand-name Prozac).

Evidence suggests that for as many as 78 percent of people, simply taking a pill does not completely erase depression’s most insidious symptoms, which can include things like isolating oneself, having disturbing impulses to self-harm, or being so self-critical that it interferes with daily life.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

What’s behind toddler’s extremely rare water allergy?

We can’t live without water, but for one toddler in Minnesota, contact with plain old H₂O can be dangerous -- she has an extremely rare allergy that causes her to break out in hives and rashes anytime she touches water, according to news reports.



The 18-month-old, Ivy Angerman, was recently diagnosed with aquagenic urticaria, or an allergy to water, according to local news station Fox 9. Her doctors say she may be the youngest person ever diagnosed with the condition, which more often appears around the age of puberty.

Ivy’s parents have taken cellphone videos to show their daughter’s severe reactions during bath time. She can be in the water for only 15 seconds before her symptoms appear, Fox 9 reported.

“Is she ever going to be able to go to daycare? Is she ever going to be able to go to public school? Is she able to ever go in the ocean? I don’t know,” Ivy’s mother, Brittany Angerman, told Fox 9 after her daughter’s diagnosis.

Aquagenic urticaria is so rare that fewer than 100 cases have ever been reported in the medical literature, according to a 2011 paper.

People with the condition rapidly develop hives after contact with water, regardless of its temperature, according to the National Institutes of Health’s Genetic and Rare Diseases Information Center (GARD).

One possibility is that the hives are not caused by water itself, but by another substance dissolved in the water (such as chlorine) that enters the skin and triggers an allergic reaction, according to GARD.

(Source: Live Science)

SINA Bank Climbs 17 Steps among Top 100 Companies

For the 15th consecutive year, SINA BANK managed to improve its rank among top 100 companies in the country, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Salient achievements were taken by the bank in national level, the report added.

As ranked by Industrial Management Institute (IMI), SINA BANK managed to earmark the highest rank to itself among top 100 Iranian companies.

With the studies made in this regard, the bank managed to stand at 21st rank in terms of sales and income rate among

to 100 companies.

The 20th edition of Top 100 Iranian Companies Seminar was held on Sunday last week in the presence of senior managers and directors of top companies and industrialist activists, the report concluded.



NICICO Takes Giant Strides on Environmental Issues: World Energy Foundation Award

Amir Valadkhani HSE (Health, Safety and Environment) Manager of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) said that Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) has taken giant strides in recent years in the field of removal of environmental, health and safety defects.

He made the above statement on the sidelines of 17th International Exhibition of

Environment and said, “recently, NICICO was awarded with precious prize in the field of environment that can be a solid evidence for the said claim.”

In addition, the company also has taken significant control measures in the field of pollutants such as emission of dust and gas in its affiliated companies based in Shahr-e Babak and Sarcheshmeh, he maintained.

The company has been equipped with



electrostatic precipitators and managed to minimize the emission of gases and dusts

to a great extent, the HSE director stressed.

In conclusion, Amir Valadkhani HSE (Health, Safety and Environment) Manager of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) said, “it is hoped that the company will be introduced as a non-pollutant and green industrial unit in Kerman Province due to salient achievements taken recently in the field of preserving environment.”

Reducing consumption the sole solution for water crisis: Kaveh Madani

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — The only solution for water crisis in the country's current circumstances is to reduce consumption in all industrial, agricultural and urban sectors, said Kaveh Madani, the deputy environment chief for international affairs, innovation and socio-cultural engagement.



“We have insisted on expanding and finding new water resources to date, but [now] we should move toward cutting down water consumption,” the official website of Department of Environment quoted Madani as saying on the sidelines of the ‘International Environment and Renewable Energy and Energy Saving Exhibition’ held in Tehran on Thursday.

The current state of the country is a perfect opportunity for reconsidering water consumption patterns, he added.

Madani went on to say that the notion of water consumption management is not essentially the traditional methods which individuals consider in this regard, but it refers to programs that should be planned in the national level such as recycling the water.

■ No fundamental strategy taken to tackle water shortage

“No fundamental strategy has been adopted in water sector to manage [the country's] water resources to date,” said Masoud Tajrishi, DOE's deputy director for human environment.

Touching on the fact that water shortage has not been taken serious by the Energy Ministry and the administration, he called for more serious attention to this challenge.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Tajrishi showed the green light for water transfer projects by saying, “In any regions where Energy Ministry recognizes water transfer as the sole solution, the related project should be carried out.”

“However,” he continued, “projects such as water transfer should be launched as the final solution.”

Situated in an arid region, Iran has long been fighting with water shortage. The huge expansion of agricultural and industrial activities in past decades put an extra pressure on water resources, reaching a point where all the officials are talking about water crisis.

Also, the long lasting drought in almost all parts of the country has aggravated the situation.

Many damns have been built and way too many deep wells have been dug in the country to satisfy the ever increasing need for water. When these resources are somehow depleted, some officials propose looking for new water resources such as fossil waters instead of reconsidering water consumption patterns. Why? Because certainly it's easier and less painful.

LEARN ENGLISH

Calling Tech Support

Tech guy: Hello, thanks for calling 123 Tech Help, I'm Todd. How can I help you?
Client: Hello? Can you help me? My computer! **Oh man...**
Todd: It's okay sir, **calm down**. What happened?
Client: I turned on my **laptop** and it broke! I mean, the **monitor** went black!
Todd: Ok, sir, it sounds like you might have a **virus**.
Client: I don't feel sick,...let me check... **Nope!** No fever, I'm fine.
Todd: No, your computer might have a virus, I mean, it has a bad **program** on it. Maybe that's why it **crashed**. I recommend that you **run** an **antivirus** program in order to safely remove any unwanted **spyware** or Trojans.
Client: Phew!Wait a minute, CRASH?!!! **Spyware?** Trojans! What? where? when?!

■ **Key vocabulary**
oh man: to express emotion or feeling, like God, Jesus
calm down: become quiet or calm, relax
laptop: a small computer which is easily carried
I mean: to express one's own opinion, meaning
monitor: an electronic display that shows images
virus: a program designed to harm a computer
nope: no
program: a set of instructions to perform
crash: stop working or functioning properly
run: to work or be in operation
antivirus: a program designed to identify and remove computer viruses
spyware: software that secretly gathers information
■ **Supplementary vocabulary**
hotline: a telephone line that gives quick and direct access to a source of information or help
phishing: to request confidential information over the Internet under false pretenses in order to fraudulently obtain credit card numbers, passwords, or other personal data
crack: to break open or into something such as a safe or a computer system
format: to divide (a disk) into marked sectors so that it may store data

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Relocation not a viable solution to Tehran's growing problems: councilor

1 → The city is fraught with problems originating from unsustainable development of Tehran, its large and growing population, depletion of groundwater resources to satisfy the need of the dense crowd of people residing the metropolitan which itself has led to land subsidence, air pollution brought about by the numerous private cars, diesel engine vehicles, carbureted motorcycle, clunker buses and taxis.

“Some 171 bird species used to inhabit Tehran which constitute about one third of the country's bird species,” Mohammad Darvish, environmentalist and the former director of the Public Participation Office at the Department of Environment, said in the aforesaid documentary.

By cutting down the trees and removing the city's vegetation the birds have left Tehran, Darvish regretted, adding, “Birds fertilize the soil and also can make the atmosphere peaceful for the human beings and now we have lost them.”

He went on to say that since the year 1956 Tehran has lost 70 percent of its vegetation.

The city which is stretching over 700 square kilometers is only suitable for a population of 2 to 2.3 million, however, some 8.5 million people live in the capital. So, why is that so? The answer is simple: government provision of facilities are



more concentrated in urban areas, and even more in the capital. This works like a magnet, the unemployed population opt to move to the capital in a hope to find a job and living a better life.

Having said that, Mehdi Chamran,

the former chairman of Tehran City Council, also emphasized on the fact that relocating the capital does not solve the problems.

With the current policies relocating the capital would not solve the problem,

it is only a matter of time for the new capital to become just like Tehran, a city suffering from some serious problems, Chamran noted.

“What we should do is to take measures to increase the livability of other cities in the country so that people won't have to move to the capital,” he suggested.

All ministries and organizations should try to find the reasons as to why people migrate to urban areas specially Tehran, making the capital expensive does not fix this problem, people in rural areas don't have job so that 72 percent of the population in the country are currently living in urban areas, Chamran lamented.

■ Walk the walk

Relocating the capital may be out of question, but we cannot pretend there is nothing wrong with the capital. It may not happen at once or tomorrow but one day the city will become unlivable and it would be too late to make a change.

The officials seems to be having all the answers but nothing actually happens. They seem to be having plans for making the city more livable and developing smart cities but having things written down on a piece of paper and agreeing upon it does not mean that the city is protected against the harms.

It's time to do something and make a difference. Do not just talk the talk but walk the walk.

ISESCO to build two schools in quake-hit Kermanshah

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) will establish two schools in the quake-stricken province of Kermanshah, western Iran.

In a meeting with Education Minister Mohammad Bat'haei, the director general of Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri promised to establish two schools in Kermanshah, Mehr reported on Friday.

The meeting was arranged on the sidelines of the Fifth Islamic Conference of Ministers in charge of Childhood held in Morocco.



A deadly magnitude 7.3 earthquake hit Kermanshah on November 12 claiming over 500 lives and leaving at least 10,000 injured. The earthquake was so strong that it razed some 19,000 houses along with some schools and other facilities to the ground.

Britain and Europe must ban palm oil in biofuel to save forests, EU parliament told

If Britain and other European nations are to fulfil forest protection goals, they must ban the use of palm oil for biofuel and tighten oversight of supply chains, a delegation of forest peoples told parliamentarians this week.

The call for urgent, concrete action comes amid an increasingly heated diplomatic row over the issue between the EU and the governments of major palm-producing nations such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Costa Rica.

The European parliament voted last April to prohibit sales of biofuels made from vegetable oils by 2020 in order to meet its climate goals. This was followed by a related vote last month. Whether and how this might be implemented is now being considered by the European Commission and member states.

The pushback has been strong, particularly in south-east Asia, the origin of 90% of the world's palm oil exports, which is used in hundreds of supermarket products. Palm oil can also be blended with diesel to power engines, which is what the ban would halt.

Influential politicians in these countries, many of whom are closely linked to the industry, accuse the EU of trade protectionism, colonial thinking and undermining poverty reduction efforts. Malaysia's plantations minister described the proposed ban as “crop apartheid.”

But indigenous and other communities who are negatively affected by the plantations urge the EU to push ahead with the ban and to go further by tightening other supply chain controls to prevent damage to their land, rights and environment.

Franky Samperante, a founder of the indigenous peoples' organisation Pusaka, said the Indonesian government had granted concessions to more than 50 companies to open plantations on 1.2m hectares of land claimed by local communities. For him, any palm oil from this area should be considered a conflict product and prohibited from sale in Europe.

“There should be sanctions. If not, there is no point,” he said.

Samperante is part of a group of 14 forest peoples representatives from 11 nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America visiting Europe this week to lobby for a new action plan on sustainable supply chains.

The delegation proposed concrete steps, including for European nations to establish sustainable trade ombudsmen to look into reports of human rights and environmental violations, and for companies to adopt binding human rights policies rather than voluntary actions. Their call was supported by a coalition of environmental NGOs including the Forest People's Programme, Global Witness,

Greenpeace, WWF and the Environmental Investigation Agency.

Tom Griffiths, the author of a report on rights and deforestation, said lofty goals to protect forests were being undermined by a failure to protect the rights of those


who live in them.

“There are so many pledges and commitments by companies and government that sound good on paper, but the reality on the ground is starkly different,” he said. “At the meetings this we, they are all saying close the gap.”


Their recommendations will be presented at a multilateral meeting in Paris in June, when the French president, Emmanuel Macron, is expected to launch his strategy for “deforestation-free trade”.

(Source: The Guardian)

Second 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 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 governmental to tenderers , 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, Ahvaz, IRAN
Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recieve tender ducments from foreign procurment department in due date and participates in tenderwill be known as tenderer from tender committee.

C) Delivery of bids envelopes:
Tenderers shall submit simultaneously envelopes of bids including (A) Tender bank guarantee, (B) stamped and signed of tender ducuments, (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, Ahvaz, IRAN.
Notice: The deadline for the refusal of bidders participation in the the tender is the last day of determined for submission of bids.

D) 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

U.S. mediation deadlocked as Aoun sends warning to Israel

➡ “The current situation does not permit Israel to encroach on the [Lebanese] border because there is a Lebanese decision to defend the land and sea border,” Aoun said in an interview with the Iraqi Al-Sumaria TV conducted during his official visit to Iraq this week. Excerpts of the interview were released by Aoun’s media office.

“Lebanon has maps dating back to the ‘20s that confirm its rights to its land. The whole world has [access to] them and they can’t be manipulated. What Israel is demanding in this respect will lead to the loss of these rights,” Aoun said. “Let Israel resort to [international] arbitration. Or else, the consequences could be tragic and Israel realizes what that means to reach these consequences.”

Speaker Nabih Berri also said this week that “there are Israeli maps that prove Lebanon’s right to its maritime oil reserves, particularly in blocks 9 and 8.”

Aoun said the maritime border dispute with Israel could be settled through a third party under United Nations sponsorship “to demarcate the border and resolve this problem.”

Israel has recently ramped up its rhetoric against Lebanon over energy Block 9, a sliver of which lies in a disputed area. Earlier this month, Lebanon granted licenses to a consortium of three international companies for oil and gas exploration and production in two energy blocks, including Block 9, a move Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman called “very provocative.”

In remarks published by An-Nahar newspaper, Aoun said Lebanon’s oil exploration would not be affected by Israeli threats.

“It is unlikely that the Israeli threats will affect the start of oil exploration,” the president said.

Aoun also said that Satterfield, the acting U.S. assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, did not bring any new proposals during his visit to Beirut this week after re-



turning from Israel where he discussed the border dispute with officials there.

With his shuttle diplomacy, Satterfield has been acting as a mediator between Lebanon and Israel over the border dispute. He met with Berri, Prime Minister Saad Hariri and Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil to brief them on the results of his talks with the Israeli officials.

Sources close to Berri also said that Satterfield didn’t bring any further suggestions for resolving the dispute, except for the already rejected “Hof Line” proposal.

In 2011, U.S. diplomat Frederic Hof reportedly proposed that Lebanon acquire 550 square kilometers of the disputed 860 square kilometers that it insists is part of its maritime territory and abandon the remaining part to Israel. Lebanon rejected the proposal.

In addition to the maritime border dispute, Israel has begun building a cement “separation wall” along the United Nations-demarcated

Blue Line. Lebanon has warned against the wall passing through certain points that it has reservations on in the disputed territory.

In a series of tweets posted on Friday, Bassil said that Lebanon is “not politically or militarily weak and we are able to protect our oil. We did not engage [in drilling operations] with urgency because Israel is not able to start drilling in the contested areas. They [Israelis] cannot bar us from working in Block 9.”

Separately, the European Union urged the Lebanese government to carry out economic reforms ahead of three international donor conferences in support of Lebanon. EU Ambassador to Lebanon Christina Lassen made the plea during a meeting with Berri, with whom she discussed recent developments in the region and Parliament’s priorities ahead of parliamentary elections slated for May 6. Lassen highlighted the potential of the three upcoming conferences in Rome, Paris and

Brussels to support the stability and further economic development of Lebanon.

To ensure the success of the conferences to attract public- and private-sector investments, she called for “further accelerating the government’s reform program, stressing that it is imperative that economic reforms as well as concrete steps to implement Lebanon’s dissociation policy are undertaken immediately,” according to a statement released by the EU’s media office in Beirut.

“The success of all three support conferences depends on Lebanon embarking on a track of sustainable growth and stability and a clear understanding of mutual commitments and accountability,” Lassen said.

She called for “a clear plan from the government to tackle reforms, including measures to stabilize the fiscal situation, balance the debt, and strengthen the public investment management framework, including through legislation on anti-corruption.”

The EU envoy expressed hope that the 2018 draft state budget would be passed before the Paris IV Conference, also known as “Cedre Conference.”

Set for April 6, the conference is designed to garner international support for Lebanon’s economy and infrastructure.

Ahead of Paris IV, the Rome II Conference to enlist support for the Lebanese Army and security forces is set for March 15 in Italy.

A third international conference, set to be held in Brussels later in the spring, will focus on support for Syrian refugees in the region.

Referring to the border row between Lebanon and Israel, Lassen expressed support for the efforts to de-escalate current tensions concerning Lebanon’s southern borders and encouraged continued diplomatic engagement from all sides to resolve the dispute.

(Source: Daily Star)

U.S. plans to open embassy in al-Quds in May

➡ The scheduled opening of the U.S. embassy in May appears to represent an earlier time frame than what had been expected.

During an address to the Israeli Knesset (parliament) on January 22, the U.S. Vice President Mike Pence said Washington was planning to relocate the country’s embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to al-Quds (Jerusalem) “by the end” of 2019.

“Jerusalem [al-Quds] is Israel’s capital, and as such President Trump has directed the State Department to immediately begin preparations to move the United States embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem [al-Quds],” Pence said to prolonged applause from Israeli lawmakers.

According to one of the U.S. officials, the new U.S. embassy in al-Quds would open on May 14 to coincide with the 70th anniversary of Nakba Day (Day of Catastrophe), which marks the anniversary of the forcible eviction of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homeland by Israelis in 1948.

The U.S. Congress is reportedly being notified of the impending move on Friday. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson signed off on the security plan for the new embassy on Thursday.

■ **PLO: U.S. decision provocation to Arabs**
Meanwhile, a senior Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) official has said Washington’s decision to open its embassy in May to coincide with Nakba Day “is a provocation to Arabs.”

“The American administration’s decisions to recognize



Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel’s capital and choose the Palestinian people’s Nakba as the date for this step is a blatant violation of international law,” AFP quoted Saeb Erekat as saying.

Erkat added that the move will result in “the destruction of the two state option, as well as a blatant provocation to all Arabs and Muslims.”

■ Greatest gift to Israel

Israeli Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz also congratulated the U.S. president for announcing Washington’s plan on the opening of the new embassy.

“There is no greater gift than that! The most just and correct move. Thanks friend!” Katz said in a post on his Twitter account.

Earlier in the day, hundreds of Palestinians held a fresh

rally in the besieged Gaza Strip to express their protest against President Trump’s recognition of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel’s capital.

The demonstration was held in Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip after protesters took to the streets following the Friday prayers and chanted slogans.

■ U.S. Zionist offers to pay for new U.S. Israel embassy

Meantime, the administration of Trump is considering an offer from Republican Party mega-donor and Zionist billionaire Sheldon Adelson to help fund the relocation of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Adelson, a Las Vegas casino tycoon and hardline supporter of Israel, has offered to pay the difference between the total cost of the embassy and what the Trump administration is able to raise, four U.S. officials told The Associated Press.

The U.S. State Department lawyers are looking into the legality of accepting private donations to cover some or all of the embassy costs, said the U.S. officials, who were not authorized to discuss the issue publicly and demanded anonymity.

The total price tag to build the new embassy to replace the current one in Tel Aviv is estimated at around \$500 million. It is unclear how much of the cost Adelson might be willing to cover.

The State Department said it had “nothing to announce” and “no confirmation or details about this hypothetical proposal.”

(Source: agencies)

Nasrallah: People shouldn’t elect based on family, religious or party affiliations

In a televised speech on Saturday, Lebanese resistance movement of Hezbollah Secretary-General Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah discussed upcoming elections and regional developments.

Addressing an event at the Imam Khomeini Cultural Center in the eastern city of Baalbek to mark the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Imam Al-Agha Institute for Islamic Studies, Nasrallah said that the country was now beginning a period of national debate.

“Lebanon is entering the election phase, it’s [the people’s] daily work. For the period of two months, Lebanon can debate, speak... [express] different opinions and criticism, positive or negative,” he said.

“Lebanese people should hold the election

to a high standard. When they elect MPs and those representing their district [they must think about] why I elect this person? Is it because of family, religion, because I know him, his political party? This is not enough, I am not diminishing belonging to something.”

“When we present a list, we need to explain why. It’s not enough just to say we are Hezbollah, these are the people and we’ll see you on May 6. We need to explain, and people need to debate.”

“Your voice for the resistance in the elections preserves the blood of the martyrs who fell on the path of the resistance... especially amid the current direct U.S. (United States) intervention in the region,” Nasrallah said.

(Source: Daily Star)



WH trying to keep Kushner involved on sensitive issues without Trump’s intervention

The United States officials at the White House have been working to devise a plan this week that would allow Jared Kushner to continue in his role handling sensitive foreign policy matters without forcing President Donald Trump to personally intervene and grant him access to classified information, people familiar with the situation say.

The scramble came after chief of staff John Kelly issued a memo a week ago declaring the White House will no longer allow some employees with interim security clearances access to top secret information if their background investigation has been pending since before last June -- a category Kushner falls into.

As President, Trump himself could grant any clearance to Kushner. But the President’s advisers have determined that taking that step would be drastic and cause deep rifts within the intelligence community and among Trump’s top aides.

Kelly, a retired Marine general, has also made it known that Trump’s personal intervention would post a problem and possibly undercut his authority in the West Wing.

Instead, aides have been searching for a solution that would allow Kushner to continue working on Middle East and China issues; not be viewed as violating Kelly’s mandate that interim clearances be revoked; and avoid requiring Trump’s personal intervention.

It is not clear what ideas or solutions have been formally proposed; however, one official speculated there may be a way to completely seal off the required information for Kushner’s slate of issues that would allow him to keep working on them without requiring a clearance.

The trickier issue is the matter of Trump’s daily intelligence briefing, which would require some level of clearance. Kushner is one of the few White House officials who regularly receives the daily roundup of issues that the intelligence community determines the President needs to be aware of each morning.

Multiple White House officials have said the complications with Kushner’s security clearance have only exacerbated his frustration with Kelly, who has privately disregarded

Kushner and Ivanka Trump as unserious and meddling.

Trump, however, has given Kelly his full support in efforts to reform the White House’s system of security clearances, and has told his chief of staff that changes need to be made to bring the system into order, according to a person who has spoken to him about the matter. Kelly has interpreted that as a wide-ranging mandate that would include Kushner, a person familiar with the matter said.

After questions were raised whether the new clearance policy would affect Kushner, Kelly issued a statement this week saying he had “full confidence in (Kushner’s) ability to continue performing his duties in his foreign policy portfolio including overseeing our Israeli-Palestinian peace effort and serving as an integral part of our relationship with Mexico.”

“Everyone in the White House is grateful for these valuable contributions to furthering the President’s agenda,” Kelly said. “There is no truth to any suggestion otherwise.”

(Source: CNN)

Saudi regime’s minister tells Germany it will find weapons elsewhere

The House of Saud regime is not dependent on Germany for its arms and will find other suppliers, Foreign Minister Adel al Jubair said. It comes after Germany blocked further arms exports to countries involved in the war in Yemen.

In an interview with German news agency DPA, the Saudi regime’s Foreign Minister Adel al Jubair described as “strange” the decision taken by the German coalition partners in their outline agreement to issue no more permits for arms shipments to countries involved in the war in Yemen.

“We do not need your armaments. We will find them somewhere else,” the minister said.

The House of Saud regime has been leading the alliance of nine states against Ansarullah (Houthi) movement forces in Yemen since 2015. Thousands of people have died and some 3 million Yemenis have been displaced, according to the United Nations.

The German coalition agreement still has to be approved by members of the Social Democratic Party (SPD).

The Saudi regime has been one of Germany’s best customers for arms exports. However, al Jubair said: “We will not put ourselves in a position where we become a plaything,” in the country’s domestic politics. “If Germany has a problem in delivering weapons to Saudi Arabia, we do not want to put pressure on Germany,” he said.

Relations between the two countries have come under some stress since German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel accused the Saudi regime of “adventurism” in Middle East conflicts.

In 2017, the House of Saud regime was sixth on Germany’s list of export authorizations with weapons worth €255 million (\$314 million). Approved exports include patrol boats being produced at the Lurssen shipyard in north-east Germany. (Source: DPA)

West’s crocodile tears over human rights in Ghouta

➡ Withdrawal of extremists from Syria has been quite worrisome for the West and supporters of the terrorism who seek to undermine the legitimate Syrian government.

Western and Arab leaders, who themselves hold dark human rights record, have all of the sudden raised an outcry for humanitarian aid and ceasefire in Eastern Ghouta, one after the other. For instance, Saudi Arabia’s Foreign Ministry has recently issued a statement expressing concern over the continued Syrian regime’s attacks on the eastern Damascus. The note which welcomed a ceasefire in Syria read, “The Syrian regime must stop violence and provide the ground for humanitarian assistance as the Syrian crisis is in dire need of getting addressed.”

Emirate’s Foreign Ministry also made a similar response to the same issue in the Eastern Ghouta, and stressed the need for the entry of humanitarian assistance including food and drug supplies for the wounded. The United Arab Emirates, UAE, and Saudi Arabia hold same positions on the humanitarian situation in the Eastern Ghouta, while they have killed and wounded more than 35,000 Yemeni people over the past three years. It appears that Riyadh and Abu Dhabi hold very different views of human rights when it comes to Yemen versus Syria.

Western officials blame Damascus and its allies on the issue of Eastern Ghouta. The French ambassador to the United Nations Security Council said: “The draft Security Council resolution requires stopping any military action to respect human factors.”

“The bombing of the Eastern Ghouta with no consideration for civilians, the conditions to reach a political solution to the Syrian crisis should be provided. The situation in Syria shows that we must endlessly strive for a ceasefire in the Eastern Ghouta, otherwise we must inevitably have to prepare for worse conditions,” the Frenchman said.

Following the statements of the French representative to the UN Security Council, the Syrian Foreign Ministry sent two separate letters to the UN Secretary-General and the head of the Security Council of this organization. In its two letters, the ministry condemned French support for terrorism in Syria. It was only a year ago that the branch of the Swiss French company “Lafarge”, in Syria, explicitly acknowledged the support of ISIL weapons in the Middle Eastern country.

Meanwhile, the United States has also laid the blame on Damascus government, as it has done in the past. US ambassador to UN Nikki Haley made unequal claims against Damascus and Moscow during a Security Council summit. She ignored her country’s support for Takfiri terrorists group in Syria, accusing Damascus and Moscow for killing civilians in the Eastern Ghouta.

Haley added that the United States is preparing a positive vote on the draft resolution.

In order to deceive public opinion and beautify the face of the United States in public opinion, she also said that the entry of medical and humanitarian assistance to the Eastern Ghouta should be allowed.

Americans, who show support for armed groups in Syria, are now turning into human rights advocates and shed crocodile tears for civilians in the Eastern Ghouta.

The Western- Arab countries are now accusing Tehran and Moscow for human rights crises and killings in the Eastern Ghouta.

The terrorists not being able to confront the Syrian government forces, target civilians to damage the reputation of Tehran and Moscow internationally.

The fate of the Takfiri terrorists, such as the Al Nusra Front, is quite tolerable in the Eastern Ghouta. They have no choice but to die or surrender themselves in the area.

No doubt, Syria’s Ghouta will join the other liberated strategic areas in Syria, and foreign powers will see another corner of the power of Damascus and its allies. To that end, Syrian envoy to United Nations, Bashar al-Jafari says in the UN: “We will turn Syria into hell for terrorists. The fate of the Eastern Ghouta and Idlib will be like Aleppo.”

Populist insurgents could be victorious in 2018

➡ Running second place is National Action Party’s Ricardo Anaya Cortes, a center-right candidate seeking to build a broad coalition.

Also, center right is Margarita Zavala, the wife of former President Felipe Calderon, who beat AMLO in the 2006 Mexican election. Zavala split with her husband’s National Action Party to run on her own ticket, finding fault with the current party’s leadership.

The term-limited incumbent President Enrique Pena Nieto’s Institutional Revolutionary Party is running Jose Antonio Meade, a former finance minister for the presidency. Meade, considered highly qualified for the presidency based on his vast government experience, is trailing badly because his party has been besieged by corruption scandals.

(Source: nationalinterest.org)

Mourinho forecasts ‘amazing’ period for Manchester United

Jose Mourinho has predicted an “amazing” period for Manchester United as he prepares to host a series of significant fixtures at Old Trafford across three different competitions.

United host Chelsea in the Premier League on Sunday to kick off a run of four home games in their next five matches.

Mourinho’s side start next month with a league trip to Crystal Palace before welcoming top-four rivals Liverpool.

A Champions League last-16, second-leg fixture against Sevilla and a home FA Cup quarter-final against Brighton & Hove Albion wrap up the busy period, and Mourinho remains confident ahead of United’s decisive spell in the campaign.

“I think the next few weeks at Old Trafford will be amazing,” he told MUTV.

“Two big matches against two direct rivals in the Premier League, two knockout matches that, if things go well, can leave us in the quarter-final of the Champions League and the semi-final of the FA Cup.

“Sometimes we have periods with three, four consecutive away matches but this time we have four matches at home, with Crystal Palace away in between, but four big matches at Old Trafford.”

United’s schedule contains 13 fixtures, including 11 league matches, but that total could potentially rise to 20 depending on their progress in the cup competitions.

“March, April and May can be really busy and going far in the FA Cup creates you problems,” Mourinho added.

“We now play Brighton when we were supposed to play West Ham and we don’t know when we’ll play West Ham.”

United, currently second in the league, have an opportunity to open up a six-point advantage over fourth-placed Chelsea with a win this weekend.

(Source: Reuters)

Guardiola charged by FA for yellow ribbon protest

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has been charged by the English FA for wearing a yellow ribbon during matches in apparent protest against the imprisonment of pro-independence politicians in his native Catalonia.

The former Barcelona boss, who has sported the ribbon in City’s Premier League matches as well as games in domestic and European cup competitions this season, has until March 5 to respond to the charges, an FA statement said on Friday.

It added that the ribbon had breached the FA’s kit and advertising regulations.

In December, Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho was asked to explain comments he made before the derby match against City, including doubts whether he would be allowed to make political statements like the Spaniard.

(Source: Reuters)

Chinese Super League transfer window makes Simeone ‘uncomfortable’

Diego Simeone acknowledged the threat of financially powerful Chinese Super League clubs buying his players has made him feel “uncomfortable”, as Yannick Carrasco nears a move to Dalian Yifang.

Carrasco joined Atletico in 2015 and looked promising in his first two seasons, but the Belgium international has been more of a peripheral figure this term.

The 24-year-old has started just eight of Atletico’s 24 LaLiga games this season and scored three goals, with the club’s impressive array of attacking talent counting against him.

Yifang emerged as a potential destination in recent days and Simeone has previously suggested the transfer is entirely down to Carrasco, who could also be joined at the Super League club by Fernando Torres.

Although the 33-year-old’s potential exit is not as far along as Carrasco’s, Simeone accepts he is “worried” about the financial lure of Chinese football and suggests there should be a single transfer deadline for all, with the Super League’s transfer window not due to end until February 28.

Speaking to reporters ahead of Sunday’s trip to Sevilla, Simeone said: “I am worried because with all the money that goes around, aside from the decision of the players, for the coaches it’s uncomfortable because you think about what can happen.

“It’s not the player, the representative, the negotiations [that cause you to worry] – it’s the amount of time, because it [the CSL transfer window] ends on February 28.

(Source: Soccerway)

Matic insists Man Utd can still do ‘big things’

Midfielder Nemanja Matic is confident Manchester United can do “big things” despite the Premier League title looking beyond them this season.

United go into Sunday’s home top-flight meeting with Matic’s former club Chelsea trailing neighbours and runaway leaders Manchester City by 16 points.

That gap can be trimmed to 13 with victory at Old Trafford on the same day City face Arsenal in the EFL Cup final.

United are still in contention in the Champions League, though Jose Mourinho’s men were fortunate to escape their away last-16 first-leg clash against Sevilla with a 0-0 draw, and are in the quarter-finals of the FA Cup.

And Matic has plenty of hope of a successful conclusion to the campaign, the Serbia international telling United Review: “I think that we have improved.

“Of course, in the Premier League, it is difficult to win every game, but I think step by step we have improved and in the future I believe, as a team, we can do big things together.

“I’m happy to be with the team and how we are working together. I’m sure we can do something this season and in the future for sure.” We have to be honest and say we have had some very good games, but we have also had some bad games. We have to improve together. We have the Champions League and the FA Cup still to play for.

(Source: Goal)

Carabao Cup final preview: The heat is on Pep Guardiola just as much as Arsene Wenger

Pep Guardiola is targeting a first trophy in English football when Manchester City take on Arsenal in the Carabao Cup final at Wembley.

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 in a bid to win the first silverware of the Spaniard’s reign at the Etihad.

“We have to win titles to give more value to what we have done,” he said. “In the beginning of August, we said we will be judged by how many we win. It is the same for the five or six big contenders.

“I don’t like to lose competitions. What happened at Wigan, maybe I’d prefer to lose Premier League games than FA Cup, because now we’ve dropped a competition. But that’s football, it has happened and we can just focus on the next one and try to get better. All we can do is learn from Wigan.”

Meanwhile, Arsenal will be hoping to put right the wrongs of their 2011 League Cup final defeat to Birmingham. The Gunners were huge favourites ahead of the Wembley final seven years ago, but Obafemi Martins’ 89th-minute winner secured the Blues an unlikely win.

And with the League Cup the only domestic trophy Arsene Wenger is yet to win, the Frenchman is keen to put that right on Sunday.

“Yes of course [I am eager to complete the domestic set],” Wenger said. “What counts for me is that we go into the final with absolute desire on winning and performing on the day.

“Everyone expects a very exciting game and I feel it will be. It’s a good opportunity to show that we are at their level.”

■ Team news

Aaron Ramsey is winning his battle to be fit for the final. The Wales international has missed the last three games with a groin injury but Wenger is confident he will now be ready to be involved at Wembley.

Mesut Ozil is also expected to be available after illness while Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang can play having been ineligible in the Europa League, but Alexandre Lacazette



(knee) and Santi Cazorla (Achilles) are out and Henrikh Mkhitaryan is cup-tied.

Raheem Sterling is a doubt for City because of an unspecified muscle injury.

Striker Gabriel Jesus (knee) could come into contention after almost two months out but a change will be required at left-back with Fabian Delph suspended. Oleksandr Zinchenko or Danilo could feature with Benjamin Mendy (knee) out long term.

Guardiola has confirmed Claudio Bravo will retain his place in goal having featured in all domestic cup matches this season.

■ Match stats

This is Arsenal’s eighth League Cup final - they’ve lost more than any other side in the history of the competition (5), winning the tournament twice in 1987 and 1993.

Manchester City will be making their sixth appearance in the League Cup final, and third in the last five seasons. They’ve won four of their previous five, failing only in 1974.

This is the first-ever meeting between these sides in a major final. Arsenal have won both previous meetings with Man City at Wembley - 3-0 in the 2014 Community Shield, and 2-1 in last season’s FA Cup semi-final.

(Source: Sky Sports)

Russian bobsledder Sergeeva admits anti-doping violation: CAS



Russian bobsledder Nadezhda Sergeeva has admitted an anti-doping violation and has been disqualified from the Winter Olympics, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) said on Saturday.

As the International Olympic Committee (IOC) were meeting to discuss Russia’s possible Olympic reinstatement, CAS said in a statement that Sergeeva had tested positive in an out-of-competition test for the banned heart condition product trimetazidine two days before her race.

Sergeeva finished 12th with Anastasia Kocherzhova in the women’s bobsleigh competition in Pyeongchang on Wednesday. “The athlete has admitted the anti-doping rule violation; she is disqualified from the women’s bobsleigh event,” it said.

“The results obtained by the team at the same event are disqualified with all resulting consequences; the athlete is excluded from Pyeongchang 2018; her accreditation shall be withdrawn.

“These proceedings shall continue before the CAS between the IBSF (International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation) and the athlete after the end of the Games; the IOC is no longer a party to this procedure.

“The athlete has accepted a provisional suspension beyond the period of the Games and reserved her ‘rights to seek the elimination or reduction of the ineligibility period’ following the conclusion of the Games.”

Russian bobsleigh official Sergei Zhurkin

told reporters at the Olympic sliding center: “At this moment she can’t say where she made a mistake.

“In my opinion, maybe since the dose is very small that even means that she didn’t drink the pill. As the doctors said, she could have got sprayed or smelled something or licked something. This is how minimal the dose is.

“Possibly she kept the pills that are allowed in the same container that was, somewhere, at some point, tainted.

“These are just my guesses. It’s hard to say now. The doctors are investigating and probably all the medications that she had will be sent into the investigation as well as the container in which they were kept.”

However, Stanislav Pozdnyakov, head of the Russian delegation in Pyeongchang, said the positive test was a result of negligence by Sergeeva, who had “let the team down”.

Pozdnyakov said he had apologized to the IOC for the Russian’s two doping violations but said they did not have a systematic character. Saturday’s announcement comes after Russian curler Alexander Krushelnitsky agreed to hand back his mixed-team bronze medal after testing positive for meldonium, which can aid in endurance.

It also came while the IOC’s executive board was meeting to discuss whether to lift the suspension of Russia’s Olympic committee and allow them to march with the Russian flag at Sunday’s closing ceremony.

(Source: Reuters)

Jersey want UEFA membership after hitting a dead end



Jersey’s bid to become UEFA’s 56th member will be put to vote on Monday although the island’s football association says the aim was not trying to get regular glamour matches against Europe’s top national teams.

Phil Austin, president of the Jersey FA (JFA), said he wants Jersey’s top players to be able to play against sides of the same level rather than try to take on the likes of Germany, Spain and France.

He said that the JFA has done everything it can to develop football on the island but has effectively hit a dead end.

“We have a centre of excellence for boys, a development centre for girls, we’ve got 17 senior clubs which is great but it stops there because we live on an island,” he told Reuters in a telephone interview. “What we don’t have is regular external competition.

“If you’re a 28-year-old player here, you’ve probably been playing with the same players week in, week out for 15 years.

“We’ve been trying for some time to find a pathway which enables our players to play international football and represent the island competitively.”

UEFA often faces criticism about teams such as Andorra, San Marino and Gibraltar who play in its qualifying competition with the sole aim - in most games - of trying to keep the score respectable.

Germany coach Joachim Loew, in particular, has complained about too many games against minnows, something which

Austin agreed was a fair point.

“I understand England and Germany not wanting to play us,” said Austin. “If we were in that (League of Nations) Group D with Andorra, San Marin, Gibraltar, Malta, Liechtenstein, it’s where we should be.”

He was happy to follow the example of cricket where Jersey has been accepted as a member of the International Cricket Council and plays in its fifth tier, and last year won a group featuring Vanuatu, Ghana and Germany.

Jersey first applied for UEFA membership in 2015 but was rejected by the executive committee.

The JFA appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) which ruled that the application should be heard by the entire UEFA Congress which will take place on Monday in Bratislava.

The biggest hurdle is Article 5 of the UEFA statutes which limits membership to FAs which are based in a country “recognised as an independent state by the majority of members of the United Nations”.

In a letter to UEFA members, the JFA recognised it did not meet this criteria but said that also applied to some existing UEFA members.

It also suggested that UEFA could amend the article, which Austin said would help other islands and territories in a similar situation such as Guernsey and Greenland.

(Source: Eurosport)

The first 5G Olympics? Not quite, say bemused spectators

The Pyeongchang Winter Games was supposed to be the coming-out party for 5G, the next generation of wireless technology -- but few people noticed. And some of those who did were unimpressed.

“It was okay,” South Korean spectator Lim Seol-hwa said, after visiting a truck outfitted with the technology, one of several demonstrations of 5G’s applications at Games venues.

“It was quite real and interesting to try. It would have been better if we could have actually tried it with our own phone.”

South Korea’s largest telecom, KT Corp, had promoted Pyeongchang as the first “5G Olympic Games in the world”, arousing interest from investors, other telecoms firms and networking companies curious to see if the technology is viable and how exactly it would be applied.

KT’s marketing also led some Games spectators this month to believe their phones could use super-fast 5G -- though that was never a possibility given 5G-compatible handsets have yet to be sold.

In KT’s 5G demonstrations, company representatives show videos demonstrating the speed and capability of 5G, using real-time, 360-degree video of athletes competing. It’s a feat that would be impossible on current 4G technology without buffering.

The 5G speeds reached in the trials were four times faster than 4G, according to chip maker Intel Corp, which partnered with KT. It allowed for crisp streaming of the Games’ action from all angles with no buffering.

KT also staged a “5G Zone” at venues allowing passers-by to also analyze video in short time slices. About 100 cameras installed around the Olympic ice arena gave 360-degree views for people watching on special tablets, Games organizers said.

While the 5G Zone at the Gangneung ice hockey area was promoted on Pyeongchang’s Olympics website, it was not available to attendees during hockey games and was based in an area reserved for Olympic families, making it hard to find.

American hockey fan Ben Dower was one spectator who had failed to spot the trial.

“I don’t really know what 5G is,” said Dower, who traveled from Washington to watch a game between the United States and neutral Russian athletes. “I’ve heard of the term but I just don’t know how it’s different from 4G.”

KT spokeswoman Jiyoung Lee said KT had limited marketing rights at the Games and that this in turn had limited its ability to promote 5G as much as the company would have liked.

A spokeswoman for the Pyeongchang Games organisers said in a statement that “KT has exercised their marketing and promotion rights to the fullest through various efforts within Korea”.

■ Still just hype?

Makers of network equipment, device makers like Samsung Electronics and Apple Inc and chip designers such as Qualcomm Inc are counting on 5G to usher in a new wave of hardware upgrades -- and income.

Network operators in South Korea, Japan and the United States are preparing to launch 5G this year or in 2019, with China also likely to be an early adopter. The European Union wants European companies to start offering 5G in 2020.

“Unfortunately, 5G is being over-hyped everywhere. Carriers are desperate not to appear as though they are falling behind,” said Craig Moffett, a research analyst at MoffettNathanson.

“The reality is that true 5G is still a ways off.” KT spokeswoman Lee said it was “not right to say we’re making any hype on the 5G service now”.

KT, which wants to be among the first to roll out 5G, is also demonstrating at the Games how 5G can be used in future in smart cities, such as in autonomous vehicles.

(Source: Guardian)

Saman Ghoddos reportedly on the radar of several Premier League clubs

S P O R T S d e s k Ostersunds Iranian striker Saman Ghoddos has attracted a wide range of interest after impressing against Arsenal in the Europa League.

West Ham, Southampton, Leicester City, West Brom and Brighton have sent scouts to watch the 24-year-old in action.

Arsenal narrowly beat the Swedish giants in the last 32 tie, but the Iranian striker stole the show and is now a top target for several clubs, according to ESPN.

After the first leg at the Jamtkraft Arena, Gunners boss Arsene Wenger was quick to praise his performance.

He said: "Technically and tactically, I was impressed by him."

The Swedish-born star then set up two goals in the second leg as Ostersunds thumped Arsenal 2-1.

His agent, Ferhat Cifici, confirmed that there was interest in the player after the clash at the Emirates.

But he was reluctant to release further details regarding the strikers future.

The Swedish side would have struggled to reach that stage of the competition without his clinical ability in front of goal.

He scored two goals in the play-offs to qualify his team for the group stages, before finding the net to book their spot in the knockout stages.

He has also attracted interest from La Liga side Celta Vigo and German giants Hoffenheim.

The Iranian international scored 10 goals in his first season in the Allsvenskan for Ostsunds in 2016.

And he went on to win the Attacker of the Year award at the end of the 2017 season.



Ivanka Trump reveals her favorite sport at Winter Olympics

President Trump's daughter and White House senior adviser Ivanka Trump disclosed her favorite sport during her visit to Pyeongchang, South Korea, for the 2018 Olympic Games closing ceremony.

Garrett Hines, a former U.S. bobsledder and Army reservist, asked Trump what her favorite sport is while Trump made a stop at the USA House. Trump laughed and said she was "actually going to say bobsledding," but then admitted skiing is her favorite sport.

"I've gotten super into bobsledding these Olympic Games, but I'm kind of a skier," Trump said, according to a press pool report. "So skiing maybe No. 1, but I'm going to go with bobsledding No. 2."



Trump said, this year, her children have been old enough to follow the Olympics.

"We have really gotten into it," she said. "They would answer bobsled."

Trump is leading the presidential delegation for the 2018 Olympic Games closing ceremony in Pyeongchang on Sunday.

"I am honored to lead the U.S. delegation to the closing ceremonies of the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympics," Trump said in a statement. "We look forward to congratulating Team USA and celebrating all that our athletes have achieved. Their talent, drive, grit, and spirit embodies American excellence and inspire us all."

(Source: Washingtonexaminer)

Marco van Basten to come to Iran: Report



S P O R T S TEHRAN - FIFA Chief Officer for Technical Development Marco van Basten will reportedly travel to Tehran, capital of Iran, within the next few days.

The Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) had already invited FIFA President Gianni Infantino to come to Iran on March 1 and the Iranian media reports suggest that the Dutch legend will accompany him.

Infantino will attend Tehran derby between Persepolis and Esteghlal in his two-day visit.

According to the Iranian media, Infantino, who will travel to Tehran via private jet, is going to meet with Iran's President Hassan Rouhani.

The Swiss-Italian will also meet Iranian Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs Masoud Soltanifar.

In the fifth FIFA Executive Football Summit in 2017/2018 series which was held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands in January, FFIRI President Mehdi Taj invited Gianni Infantino to travel to Iran.

Infantino visited Iran two years ago when he was seeking the Persian Gulf country's support for his bid to become FIFA President.

Esteghlal, Persepolis emerge victorious in Iran Professional League



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iranian giants Esteghlal and Persepolis emerged victorious over their opponents in the Iran Professional League on Saturday.

Esteghlal sank Foolad 4-1 in Ahvaz's Ghadir Stadium, thanks to a good display from Mame Baba Thiam.

The Senegalese opened the scoring for the visiting team just three minutes into the match.

Baba Thiam set up Rouzbeh Cheshmi for another goal five minutes later.

Rahim Zahivi pulled a goal back in the 13th minute with a header but Dariush

Shojaeian made it 3-1 in the 18th minute.

Baba Thiam was on target once again, opening Foolad's goal on a counter attack in the added time.

In Tehran, Persepolis defeated struggling Esteghlal Khuzestan 1-0 at the Azadi Stadium.

Siamak Nemati scored in the 37th minute.

Furthermore, Zob Ahan defeated Padideh 2-1 and Pars Jonoubi drew 1-1 with Tractorsazi.

Persepolis lead the table with 57 points, followed by Zob Ahan (41 points) and Esteghlal (38 points).

An experience Toni will forever cherish

Kuwait City: After a managerial career that took him to five different Asian countries, Portuguese coach Antonio Oliveira, better known as Toni, reflects on great times at Tractorsazi Tabriz and playing in the AFC Champions League.

Tractorsazi had achieved their highest-ever finish in the Iran Pro League in the 2011-12 season, ending the campaign as runners-up, a single point behind champions Sepahan, which meant the club would be making their AFC Champions League debut the following season.

An experienced coach was needed to help the club navigate this new territory, and with past experiences in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and China PR, Toni was the chosen one for the challenge. The Portuguese remembers his first encounter with Tractorsazi players.

"I remember my first day; I told the players that being there was a challenge for me," the 71-year-old told the-AFC.com.

"I explained to them that I want to bring my experience as a coach and as a player, to help them become not only better players, but better men too. I always give 100 percent to be engaged with the players."

Tractorsazi's AFC Champions League debut was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. 70,000 fans filled the Stadium in Tabriz as Toni's men recorded an impressive 3-1 victory over UAE side Al Jazira.

Although they could not win any of their next five games, eventually finishing bottom of the group, Toni still has fond memories of playing in Asia's top club competition.



"Playing in the AFC Champions League is one of the greatest experiences in my life; to travel around the continent, meet coaches and new people, to see people of different cultures and beliefs. It was amazing."

Under the guidance of Toni, Tractorsazi went on to lift their first, and to date only, Hazfi Cup title in 2014, while also matching their runner-up finish in the league. The club were transformed into AFC Champions League perennials, only missing out on one edition of the competition in the past six years.

Success brought along adoration for Toni, who soon grew into a fan favorite in Tabriz, having transformed the team's home ground at Stadium to a fortress.

"The players and fans at Tabriz don't consider me just a coach, I was considered one of them. I can never forget my time in Tabriz or the fans. When I walked into the stadium in Tabriz, I would hear the fans cheering my name. We rarely lost there, and it was fantastic for us."

In his four years at the club, Toni coached many of Iranian footballs biggest names, but three names stood out for the Portuguese.

"Ali Karimi was one of Iran's best players of all times. I remember whenever we travelled abroad, I saw the appreciation fans had for him. He was such a big name across Asia."

"Andranik Teymourian was a great player too, very talented and I enjoyed working with him. Also an important player for Tractorsazi was Mehdi Kiani. He was a player who loved Tractorsazi and the fans loved him back. He was always great for us."

After a 35-year journey that took him across Asia, from China PR to Saudi Arabia, the UAE and IR Iran. Toni can now be found in the Kuwaiti League, trying to turn the fortunes of historic club Kazma who have last won the league in 1997 and now sit sixth in the table.

"I have had good times managing in China and in the Middle East. Kuwait is a nice country and a new experience for me. I try to bring my expertise as a player and coach to help the players improve. I am here with the same spirit I was in Iran, China and everywhere else."

(Source: AFC)

Iran win Fajr International Kabaddi Cup

TASNIM — Iran men's national Kabaddi team claimed the title of the second edition of the Fajr International Kabaddi Cup on Friday.

The Iranian team defeated Iraq 45-15 in the final match at the Persian Gulf Hall in Iran's southern city of Khorramshahr.

In the first edition held last year in Khorramshahr, Iran's junior team won the title.

The tournament brought six teams namely, Iran, Arvand juniors, Khorramshahr Shahrdari, Azerbaijan, Iraq and Georgia together.

Kabaddi is a contact team sport. It is popular in South Asia and is the national sport of Bangladesh.

Reza Enayati sacked by Siahjamegan

IRNA — Reza Enayati has been sacked by rock-bottom Siahjamegan on Friday after suffering a 5-0 defeat against Sepahan in Mashhad.

Enayati had resigned from his coaching role after a 2-1 loss to Paykan two weeks ago but the Iranian club had not accept that.

Enayati had replaced Alireza Marzban in December.

Siahjamegan sit bottom of the table with 15 points from 24 games. Mostafa Senobari has been named as Siahjamegan's interim coach.

Curling: The U.S. rock Sweden to win first gold medal

GANGNEUNG, South Korea (Reuters) — The United States delivered a gold-medal knockout punch, scoring five in the eighth end to crush Sweden 10-7 and claim their first ever Olympic men's curling title on Saturday.

With the score deadlocked at 5-5, United States skip John Shuster provided some last-rock magic with a pinpoint double take-out for five that left their Swedish opponents stunned as the Gangneung Curling Centre erupted into chants of "USA, USA" led by U.S. President Donald Trump's daughter Ivanka.

The gold was just the second Olympic curling medal won by the U.S. men, following a bronze at the 2006 Turin Winter Games which Shuster was also a part of. Switzerland beat Canada 7-5 on Friday to win the bronze.

"I think during the entire (eighth) end we could feel it building," said Shuster. "Their margin for error was incredibly small. I can't tell you how un-nervous I was."

The victory capped a remarkable comeback for the United States who sputtered through early preliminary-round play with a 2-4 record before rattling off three straight wins to make the playoffs where they beat twice defending Olympic champions Canada in the semi-finals before seeing off the top-ranked Swedes.

The only real miscue involving the Americans on Saturday came when officials mistakenly presented them with the women's gold medals but that error was quickly corrected and switched for the correct ones.

"We've played our best when our backs were up against the wall," American second Tyler George. "We took it to another level this week."



Neymar the most-fouled player in Europe's top leagues

Paris Saint-Germain striker Neymar has been the most fouled player across Europe's major domestic competitions this season.

Neymar, 26, has been on the receiving end of rough treatment from opponents 96 times, seven more than Nabil Fekir of Lyon, who also plays in Ligue 1.

French news outlet RMC Sport created a top 10 of the most fouled players in Ligue 1, which Neymar leads with an average one foul every 17 minutes and 46 seconds.

And PSG's No. 10 remains top of the pile when the list is expanded to cover the Premier League, Bundesliga, La Liga and Serie A too.

PSG's Marco Verratti also features on RMC's list in sixth, with a foul against him every 30 minutes and 49 seconds, but the Italy international is not placed when expanded to all of Europe.

However, another Ligue 1-based player, Bordeaux's Malcom, is seventh in the overall rankings with 75 fouls against him so far this campaign.

The numbers confirm that Neymar is a marked man and the 26-year-old has been on the receiving end of rough treatment regularly this season both domestically and in continental competition.

Despite that, Neymar has still managed to score 19 goals and rack up 12 more assists in 19 Ligue 1 appearances to date.

The former Barcelona man has been enjoying a quieter week than usual ahead of Sunday's clash with bitter rivals Marseille in Le Classique and was spotted with a baguette and playing basketball while filming an advert with sponsors Honda in the suburb of Saint-Germain-en-Laye on Thursday.

Neymar was the second-most fouled player in Europe last season, with only Dario Lezcano of Ingolstadt suffering more.

Watford's Richarlison is the most-fouled in the Premier League this season; in Spain it's jointly Borja Garcia of Girona and Munir of Alaves. In Serie A, it's Alejandro Gomez of Atalanta and for the Bundesliga it's Schalke's Amine Harit.

Most fouled players

- Neymar, PSG, 96 fouls drawn
- Nabil Fekir, Lyon, 89
- Borja Garcia, Girona, 81
- Munir, Alaves, 81
- Richarlison, Watford, 78
- Amine Harit, Schalke, 77
- Malcom, Bordeaux, 75
- Kevin-Prince Boateng, Eintracht Frankfurt, 73
- Dele Alli, Tottenham Hotspur, 69
- Jimmy Briand, Guingamp, 69
- Jonathan Viera, Las Palmas, 69

(Source: Soccer.net)

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Doc “Capital” reveals urban problems in Tehran

A R T TEHRAN — Ali Nikbakht has directed a documentary series titled “Capital” that gives an in-depth analysis of the persistent problems of Tehran.

Nikbakht, producer Ahmad Shafie, Tehran City Council member Ahmad Masjed-Jamei came together in a meeting at the Mehr News Agency on Saturday to unveil the 14-episode series.



A view of the capital Tehran

Air pollution, poor water quality, insufficient water availability, unsatisfactory public transportation and high energy consumption are among the issues discussed in the series by a number of Iranian and foreign experts.

Martin Seger from Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt in Austria and ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) former president Iftikhar Husain Arif are among the scholars spoke in the documentary, which has been produced at the Islamic Revolution Documentary Center.

The unbalance and unequal growth of the city leading to Tehran's deteriorating condition has also been reviewed in “Capital”, scenes of which were screened at the meeting.

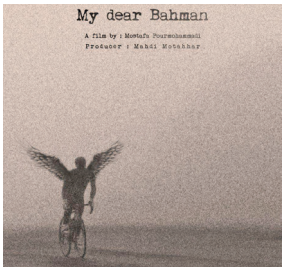
“The life of Tehran is in danger and the trees that could have helped preserve the health of the city are gone,” environmentalist Mohammad Darvish warns in the documentary.

“Over 170 species of birds used to live in the city and could help fertilize the soil are disappearing day by day. The birds could decrease the stress and improve the social health of the citizens,” he added.

The series is due to be aired on the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) in the near future.

Doc looks at life and career of Para-cyclist Bahman Golbarnezhad

A R T TEHRAN — Director Mostafa Purmohammadi has completed a documentary that chronicles



A poster for “My Dear Bahman” by Mostafa Purmohammadi

the life story of the Iranian Para-cyclist Bahman Golbarnezhad who died following a crash during the 2016 Rio Paralympics.

Produced by Mehdi Mthahhar, “My Dear Bahman” is scheduled to premiere at the Kasaneh Cultural Center on Monday evening.

Golbarnezhad, 48, died in a crash during the men's C4/C5 road race at the Rio Paralympics in Pontal, Rio de Janeiro on September 17, 2016.

Canadian festival to review films by Qasideh Golmakani

A R T TEHRAN — The REGARD-Saguenay International Short Film Festival in Canada will be reviewing the latest films by Iranian filmmaker Qasideh Golmakani, the organizers have announced.



A scene from “Horn” by Qasideh Golmakani

Focus on Director Qasideh Golmakani, a REGARD special section, is scheduled to screen “Limbo”, “Online Shopping” and “Horn” on March 16.

A discussion hosted by film critic Manon Dumais will follow the screenings.

In addition, several other Iranian films, including “Changeover” by Mehdi Alibeygi, “Animal” by Bahman and Bahram Ark, and “Retouch” by Kaveh Mazaheri, will be screened at the festival.

The 22nd edition of the festival will take place from March 14 to 18.

Iran’s “Dressage” wins special mention in Berlin Generation 14plus

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Puya Badkubeh's drama “Dressage” received a special mention in the Generation 14plus competition at the 68th Berlin International Film Festival, the organizers announced on Friday.

The film is about Golsa and her friends who rob a corner shop. But while evaluating the booty, they are dismayed to realize that they forgot to take the security camera footage. One of them must return to the crime scene and retrieve it. The vote falls on Golsa, who bravely completes the mission. Her friends' behavior makes her think, and she hides the hard drive somewhere in secret. But her accomplices and their well-to-do families, worried about their social standing, put more and more pressure on Golsa.

“This film impressed us with its intelligent storytelling as well as its complex and unpredictable development of characters,” the jury said in a statement.

“The protagonist is uncompromising in her refusal to join the vicious cycle of corruption, lies, middle-class hypocrisy and false morality,” the statement added.

The Grand Prix of the Generation 14plus International Jury for the Best Film was presented to director Germinal Roaux's “Fortuna” from Switzerland and Belgium.

The Special Prize of the Generation 14plus International Jury for the Best Short Film went to “Juck” by Olivia Kastebring, Julia Gumpert and Ulrika Bandeira from Sweden.



Iranian director Puya Badkubeh (2nd L) and cast members pose after their film “Dressage” won a special mention in the Generation 14plus competition at the 68th Berlin International Film Festival on February 23, 2018.

Rapper 2Pac to come back to life on Tehran stage



American rapper and actor Tupac Amaru Shakur in an undated photo

A R T TEHRAN — The Iranian stage director and writer Manijeh Mahamedi plans to stage a play based on the life story of the American rapper and actor Tupac Amaru Shakur, also known by his stage name 2Pac and Makaveli.

“Years ago, I, along with Arsham Moaddabian, translated songs from 2Pac and also wrote a play based on his life story,” Mahamedi told the Persian service of MNA on Saturday.

“The play will cover the life of 2Pac from childhood to his death,” she said.

She first planned to stage “2Pac” at Tehran's Shahrzad Theater, but she subsequently withdrew after the theater imposed severe conditions for performing the play.

Now, she is determined to direct the play during the next year of Iranian calendar,

which will begin March 21.

2Pac is consistently ranked as one of the greatest and most influential rappers of all time. He sold over 75 million records worldwide, making him one of the best-selling music artists of all time.

His double disc albums “All Eyez on Me” and his “Greatest Hits” are among the bestselling albums in the United States.

He was shot four times in a drive-by shooting in Las Vegas, Nevada on September 7, 1996 and died from his injuries six days later.

On April 7, 2017, Shakur was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility.

He was also an actor, starring in six films and one TV show in the 1990s, including “Poetic Justice”, “Gang Related” and “Gridlock'd”.

Ed Sheeran searches for new lines in movie “Songwriter”

BERLIN (Reuters) — British singer Ed Sheeran said on Friday that the hardest part of songwriting was coming up with lines that had never been written before as a new documentary detailing his creative process premiered at Berlin's international film festival.

The movie “Songwriter” was directed by Sheeran's cousin, Murray Cummings, and follows the Grammy winner as he travels around the United States and England writing songs on his laptop, jamming in a garden and recording in the studio.

The intimate portrait of Sheeran, who was the most-streamed artist on music service Spotify globally in 2017, includes footage of him belting out songs while crossing the Atlantic on the Queen Mary 2, returning to high school to see his music teacher and talking to his father about his songs.

“I think the most difficult thing to do with writing a song is finding a phrase that you haven't heard before because there's always a song that's going to be like: ‘I love you baby like crazy, I miss you maybe,’” Sheeran told a news conference.

He said he had learned not to push himself if he was struggling to write and did not believe writer's block existed.



Director, screenwriter, editor and producer Murray Cummings and Ed Sheeran pose during a photocall to promote the movie “Songwriter” at the 68th Berlinale International Film Festival in Berlin, Germany, February 23, 2018. (Reuters/Fabrizio Bensch)

“What I do when I can't write a song is I just put the guitar down and go and do something else for about a

Fajr visual arts festival honors winners



Miniaturist Farideh Tat'hiri Moqaddam receives a Golden Tooba from Culture Minister Seyyed Abbas Salehi during the closing ceremony of 10th Fajr International Festival of Visual Arts at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on February 23, 2018. Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Mojtaba Hosseini (L) and Visual Arts Office director Majid Mollanoruzi are also seen in the photo. (Mehr/Iman Hamikhah)

A R T TEHRAN — The 10th Fajr International Festival of Visual Arts wrapped up on Friday after honoring the winners and the veterans during a ceremony at Tehran's Vahdat Hall.

The closing ceremony was attended by Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi.

Hassan Qaedi, Hassan Kakavand, Sajjad Rafei, Samaneh Salimi, Abdorrahman Mojarad, Mitra Soltani, Morteza Purhosseini, Mehdi Behbudi and Nima Azargan all from Iran, as well as Liliana Petrovic from Serbia, were the honorees who received Golden Tooba Awards.

In addition, 10 veteran artists were

awarded Golden Toobas for their lifetime achievements.

Photographer Hadi Shafaei, painters Hossein Mahjubi, Habibollah Sadeqi, and Hushang Jazizadeh, calligrapher Abdol-samad Hajsamadi, graphic designer Amrollah Farhadi, illustrator Akbar Nikanpur, cartoonist Ali Divandari, sculptor Iraj Mohammadi and miniaturist Farideh Tat'hiri-Moqaddam were the veteran honorees.

The festival opened at the Saba Art and Cultural Institute of the Iranian Academy of Arts on January 23. The international section of the event was organized at the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Cultural Institute (ECI).

couple of weeks and then come back and then I'll be able to write a song,” the 27-year-old said.

“So the way that my mind is now is, I will be able to write songs forever - they probably will start being about pretty mundane things because my life is getting more and more calm.”

Sheeran said he liked the documentary because it showed a song being written from start to finish, rather than just an album being recorded.

“I like that Murray found a niche that hasn't really been done before. It's quite difficult to find something that hasn't been done in a music movie,” Sheeran said.

Sheeran, who said he planned to make a film next year in which he would play something other than himself, listed “Goodfellas”, “Cool Runnings” and “Love Actually” as his favorite movies.

Cummings told Reuters the documentary would give fans an insight into Sheeran off-stage.

“When he's on his own he's kind of very like relaxed and chilled and stuff. So I think they're going to see that's what he's like because this film just kind of shows what I see every day,” Cummings said.

U.S. playwright David Mamet turns his sights on Harvey Weinstein

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — David Mamet has written a new play about film producer Harvey Weinstein, the Pulitzer Prize winner said in an interview published on Friday.

Timing for production of the play, currently titled “Bitter Wheat”, is still to be determined, the report said.

“I was talking with my Broadway producer and he said, ‘Why don't you write a play about Harvey Weinstein?’ And so I did,” Mamet, who has been a force in U.S.

theater and film for over 40 years, told the Chicago Tribune.

More than 70 women have accused Weinstein of sexual misconduct, including rape, triggering a wider impropriety scandal that has roiled Hollywood and beyond. Weinstein has denied non-consensual sex with anyone.

Mamet gave few details of the play, and his representatives did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Jeffrey

Richards, a Broadway producer with whom Mamet has collaborated often, also did not immediately respond.

Mamet explored the theme of sexual harassment in his controversial 1992 play “Oleanna” about a male university professor and a female student.

“I think about this a lot now. I have a bunch of daughters, a young son,” Mamet said in the interview.

“Every society has to confront the

ungovernable genie of sexuality and tries various ways to deal with it and none of them work very well.”

The Tribune report said an unnamed “Chicago stage legend who is now a movie star” has expressed interest in the play's lead role.

Mamet won a Pulitzer Prize in 1984 for his play “Glengarry Glen Ross” about male power set in the cut-throat world of real estate.