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© File photo

Murder of critic journalist in Saudi consulate

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Majlis approves CFT bill

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian parliament on Sunday voted in favor of CFT, a legislation to combat financing of terrorism. The debate on the CFT kicked off on Sunday morning with 268 lawmakers present in the parliament. A total of 143 lawmakers voted in favor of the bill while 120 voted against it. Five MPs also abstained. To become a law, however, Iran's oversight Guardian Council should vet the bill

for compliance with the Constitution. Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif attended the parliament to defend the ratification of the CFT bill. "We cannot give guarantees that by joining the CFT the (banking) problems will be resolved but we can give guarantees that by not joining the bill the United States will invent pretexts to create more problems for us," Zarif said before the vote. ➔2

Police summons 942 market disruptors

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Tehran police chief Hossein Rahimi announced on Sunday that 942 disruptors in coin and foreign currency markets have been summoned. The central bank and Judiciary asked for summoning the disruptors, he said during a meeting of the Tehran city council. In recent months, there has been a sharp rise in value of foreign currencies

and gold coin. However, over the last few days the national currency, rial, has been gaining considerable strength against gold coin and foreign currencies. Unhappy with the plummeting value of foreign currencies, some economic opportunists, who had manipulated the market, are provoking people to buy foreign currencies, arguing that the prices will rise again when the second batch of U.S. sanctions start on November 4.

U.S. copters evacuate ISIL terrorists from Syria's Dayr al-Zawr

The United States helicopters have reportedly airlifted foreign and wounded members of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group from Syria's oil-rich eastern Dayr al-Zawr Province. Syrian media quoted local sources as saying that the militants had been relocated from the town of al-Shaafah near

the Iraqi border to an unknown location on Saturday night. This is not the first airlifting of terrorists by the U.S. in Syria as there have already been numerous reports of such transfers. The evacuation comes amid fresh sweeping advances by Syrian army soldiers and allied fighters against the Takfiris on the battlefield. ➔3



EDITORIAL
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The relation between Ahvaz terrorist attack and the White House

The martyrdom of some of our compatriots in the Ahvaz terrorist attack hurt the hearts of all Iranians. The crimes committed by the United States, its western allies, and its Arab pieces in Ahvaz can be analyzed from different dimensions. What's important in this regard is "finding the origin of this attack," and putting together the puzzle pieces that are set by the United States of America.

Although the U.S. government is trying to convince others that the American authorities are basically innocent in Ahvaz terrorist attack, the role of Trump's government in the incident is so highlighted that even his closest companions like John Bolton and Mike Pompeo aren't able to justify it. There is no distinction between producing terrorism (the U.S. and its allies), and field terrorism (operational groups affiliated with the West and the Zionist regime). The United States seeks to encourage individuals to distinguish between supporters and the elements which are involved in the emergence of terrorism.

However, a comprehensive look at terrorist attacks will prevent this distinction. In finding the relationship between the field terrorism and producing terrorism, we should note that the origin and the function of the two are the same. In other words, we are faced with a single network headed by the United States, and the body consists of those terrorist groups.

Another point that should be taken into consideration here is the specific efforts of the Trump government to support anti-Iranian terrorist groups (over the past two years). Rudy Giuliani, who is currently an attorney to Trump, and served as the former mayor of New York, is among the supporters of the Mujahedin terrorist group.

During a recent meeting in New York, Giuliani and some members of the Trump government have expressed support for members of this terrorist group. Obviously, the Ahvaz terrorist attack is the result of the secret (and at times open) lobbies of the White House and anti-Iranian terrorist groups. ➔7

Bin Salman knows his grip on power is dependent on U.S.: Askari

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Hossein Askari, an expert on Saudi Arabia who also teaches international business at the George Washington University, believes that "Mohammed bin Salman knows that his grip on power and his family's rule has been and is totally dependent on the United States."

Hossein Askari, who teaches at George Washington University, tells the Tehran Times that "He wants only one thing—to rule Saudi Arabia and he will do anything to guarantee this. Let me repeat, ANYTHING. MBS will do as he is told by Trump and Kushner."

Following is the text of the interview:

■ In his latest statement on Saudi Arabia, Trump humiliated Saudi Arabia again, and said: If America does not exist, Saudi Arabia will disappear within a few days, and Saudi Arabia owes

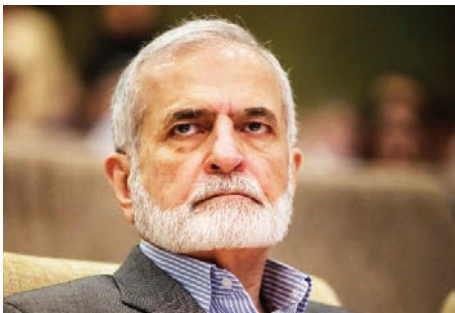


its stability and security to the United States. In fact, Trump has made such a statement in the direction of selling security to Saudi Arabia. Why this statement has been repeated at this time?

A: First of all, Trump likes to drive home the

simple point that he is boss. So Saudi Arabia better understand that and do what Trump wants. Whatever that may be: buy more U.S. arms, pump more oil to reduce oil prices, do whatever is needed in Yemen and Syria, cooperate as needed with Israel, and above all encourage the Al-Saud tribe and other wealthy Saudis to enrich the Trump family businesses. These are things that he wants but why did he say this especially at this time may be connected to the mid-term U.S. elections. Saudi Arabia could very easily funnel money to the election effort through U.S. corporations that are heavily involved in Saudi Arabia. Saudis cannot by law fund U.S. election campaigns but they can easily pad a contract to a U.S. company with the understanding that what has been padded goes to the Republican election effort. ➔7

Kharrazi says Iran to prevent misuses by setting red lines on CFT



TEHRAN (MNA) — In case CFT is approved, Iran will set conditions and red lines so as to

prevent misuses from the convention, said the head of Iran's Foreign Policy Strategic Council Kamal Kharrazi.

If Convention on Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) is approved, the conditions and red lines put forward by Iran will prevent misuses of the convention, besides, it can help to normalize Iran's economic ties with the world, he told reporters on the sideline of his Saturday's meeting with Werner Fasslabend, President of the Austrian Institute for European Policy and Security.

Former Iranian FM went on to say that Iran is not so hopeful about the dramatic change that these mechanisms can produce in the country,

highlighting, "we should rely on ourselves and resources."

Elsewhere touching upon proposed Europe's mechanisms, Kharrazi said that EU mechanism can solve part of the economic issues and maintain trade with the EU, however, he continued, "we should see to what extent the mechanism can be satisfactory for us and how many problems it can solve in practice," he said.

Asked about Iran's cooperation with Russia and China and especially economic aspects of that, he stressed Iran is not pursuing the policy of dependence on these countries, adding that there are mutual interests in the field of politics for which countries can cooperate with each other.



© IRNA / Farai Samadi

"Young police helpers" cycle to promote safety culture

A group of young teenagers cycled Velayat Park, Tehran, with the aim of promoting the culture of safety and traffic laws.

The gathering was organized by the police for the seventh consecutive year under the theme of "cycling is no longer a recreational activity, it's a solution".

Some 200 students from schools across Tehran as well as their parents and police forces took part in the event.



ARTICLE
M.H. Goudarzi
Reporter

The hot November for Trump is arriving

Political turmoil in the United States has become extremely unpredictable. The turn of events became worse with an op-ed at the New York Times on September 5. Former White House strategist Steve Bannon described it as a coup against Donald Trump.

The reality is that the president faces domestic problems in his second year in office. This has rarely happened in the U.S. political history. The issue is of great importance with regard to the approaching mid-term congressional elections in November. Republicans has the majority in the House of Representatives and the Senate, but they feel the risk of losing the majority in both houses due to Trump's record.

Indeed, a feeling has emerged among some American politicians that their country is heading in the wrong direction because of Trump's policies. Even former President Barack Obama has joined the election campaigns by breaking his promise not to get involved in political affairs.

The situation is not also good for Trump internationally. Disagreement with the European Union - a traditional ally of the United States - over trade and political issues, trade war with China, increasing tension with Russia, exit from international treaties such as the Paris climate agreement and the 2015 multilateral nuclear agreement Iran, have all made Trump to look dangerous in the eyes of the world. All these issues have made the situation unfavorable for Trump and his government at home and abroad.

But what is the answer of the president of the United States to these criticisms? The answer to this question is one word: economy. However, Trump is proud of his economic record.

According to statistics, the Labor Department published on September 8, US employment growth in August has beat market expectations, the non-farm payrolls increased by 201,000 from the previous month. Analysts were expecting growth of about 195,000.

The unemployment rate for August remained low at 3.9 percent. The average hourly wage rose 2.9 percent from the year before. That's the highest level since June 2009. ➔7

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



New Khatam al-Anbia chief named

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The new commander of Khatam al-Anbia Construction unit, a conglomerate belonging to the IRGC, was introduced on Sunday in a ceremony attended by IRGC Chief Mohammad Ali Jafari.

During the ceremony, which was also attended by top authorities and commanders, Saeed Mohammad was named as the new chief of Khatam al-Anbia, Tasnim reported.

Ebadollah Abdollahi, the former chief of Khatam al-Anbia, presented a report about the activities of the unit under his command. He was then praised for his sustained efforts during his tenure which lasted 6 years.



Iranian, Swedish diplomats discuss Yemen crisis

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Kingdom of Sweden's special envoy for Yemen and Libya affairs Peter Semneby met on Sunday with Hossein Jaber Ansari, a senior assistant to the Iranian foreign minister, to discuss ways to settle the crisis in Yemen and help its people.

During the meeting, which was held in Tehran, the two sides held talks on the latest developments in Yemen, which has been under attack by a Saudi-led military coalition since 2015, IRNA reported.

The Saudi-led war in Yemen started in March 2015 as an attempt to crush the Houthi movement in the country and restore former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi.



30,000 policemen to be deployed in borders during Arbæen

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Police Chief Brigadier General Hossein Ashtari said on Sunday that Iran will deploy 30,000 police forces in borders with Iraq during the Arbæen ritual.

Arbæen marks 40 days after the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, India, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Azerbaijan, Turkey and other countries trek a main road between Najaf and Karbala on foot to show their devotion to Imam Hussein. The shrine of Imam Hussein is in Karbala.



Biggest haul of heroin destined for Europe seized in Iran

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Intelligence Ministry announced on Sunday that its forces have seized one of the biggest hauls of heroin confiscated in recent years in the northwestern province of West Azerbaijan.

In a statement, the Intelligence Ministry said the drug shipment weighs 1,075 kilograms and is estimated to cost around 4,000 billion rials, Tasnim reported.

The shipment was detected at the Bazargan border region in northwest Iran before an international drug ring could smuggle it into Europe, it stated.

The smugglers had adroitly hidden the illicit drugs inside export commodities, the statement added.



Omanis can travel to Iran without a visa

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Omanis can travel to Iran without a visa, Oman's Foreign Ministry has announced, lauding the friendly relations between the two countries.

"Considering the good relations between the two countries, the concerned authorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran have decided to do away with the visa requirement unilaterally for the citizens of Oman," the ministry announced in a tweet, Muscat Daily reported.

It added that the passports of citizens entering or exiting Iran will not be stamped. The decision came into effect from October 2.



Bibi should take General Salami's advice seriously: journalist

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Abdel Bari Atwan, editor-in-chief of Rai al-Youm news website, has said that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu should take advice of Brigadier General Hossein Salami, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)'s second-in-command, seriously.

What General Salami said was not just psychological warfare, he wrote in an article published on Saturday.

Salami said on Friday that prime minister of the Zionist regime of Israel should learn how to swim in the Mediterranean Sea, because he will have no choice but escaping.

Majlis approves CFT bill

1 → Zarif said without approving the bill even China and Russia as "strategic partners" of Iran will have problems to do banking transactions with Iran.

Citing an example, the foreign minister said Russia' central bank governor has told his Iranian counterpart Abdolnasser Hemati that without FATF they cannot work with Iran.

"The Majlis faces a historic decision ... to act along the interests of the nation and take away any future excuses from the United States (to pressure Iran)," Zarif told parliament.

A number of lawmakers also spoke in favor and against the bill.

Speaking in favor of the bill, Behrooz Nemati, the spokesman for the presiding board of the parliament, said the government has so far implemented 40 requirements by the FATF, stressing, "If we do not accept the convention, we have actually done nothing" in this regard. He also said necessary measures should be taken so as "not to give the enemy any excuse for misconduct."

MP Mohammad Dehqan, speaking against the bill, said the recent depreciation of the Iranian rial was caused by the government's implementation of some FATF requirements.

"The enemy's goal has been to put economic pressure on Iran, which occurred due to the government's naiveties," Dehqan argued.

Mohammad Feizi, another lawmaker supporting the bill, said accepting the FATF's rules is a step to meet the global standards on fighting terrorism, adding that it will also be a great help to keep the channels to international financial systems open.

MP Hossein Naqavi Hosseini said



© Tehran Times/Majid Haghdoost

the Leader, during his annual meeting with parliamentarians, warned against the approval of conventions imposed on Iran by the enemies. Naqavi Hosseini added, "We all guess what he meant is such conventions."

After the vote, vocal MP Nader Ghazipour from Urmia said the approval of the FATF is a "black day" to the parliament. He said that in a closed session of the parliament earlier in the day, military authorities warned of the dangers of the

FATF but governmental officials insisted on approving the bill, and "eventually a shameful treaty like the Treaty of Paris (1857), Treaty of Gulistan, and Treaty of Turkmenchay was approved in the parliament."

Meanwhile, Abbas Ali Kadkhodaei, the Guardian Council's spokesman, said it is still too early to comment on the content of the bill, and the council will announce its opinion after considering the bill thoroughly.

The Iranian Ambassador to London, Hamid Baidinejad, praised the ratification of the CFT bill in the Iranian parliament, saying it was a manifestation of transparency and democracy.

"... after months of deliberations the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majlis), in a transparent and splendid demonstration of democracy, approved Iran's accession to the convention on combatting funding of terrorism," Baidinejad tweeted.

ICJ set to hold hearings over U.S. seizure of Iran's assets

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — On Monday the International Court of Justice starts holding hearings over Tehran's complaint against the U.S. for seizing Iran's assets.

The hearings will last until Friday.

In June 2016, Iran announced that it had filed a formal complaint with the ICJ to recover nearly \$2 billion in assets frozen in the United States.

"The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran officially complained about America to the International Court of Justice for the confiscation and theft of two billion dollars of the property of the central bank," Rouhani said at the time. "And demanded the condemnation of Washington's anti-Iranian action and compensation for damages."

On Wednesday, the Hague-based UN's top court ordered the U.S. to ease some sanctions against Iran, including those related to the supply of humanitarian goods and the safety of civil aviation.

The ruling was made in response to a plea from Tehran after President Trump's announcement in May that he would withdraw the U.S. from the 2015



international nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Iran and the U.S. signed the Treaty of Amity in 1955 which is still valid according to international law. The treaty consists of an introduction and twenty-three articles and emphasizes encouraging mutual trade and investments.

Angry over the ICJ ruling, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo immediately on Wednesday announced that Washington is pulling out the Treaty of Amity.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal Affairs Gholam-Hossein Dehqani told IRNA Thursday that the U.S. act in withdrawing from the treaty will not affect the ruling by the UN court.

After the U.S. announced its withdrawal from the Treaty of Amity, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the Trump administration has turned into an "outlaw regime".

"US abrogated JCPOA -a multilateral accord enshrined in UNSC Resolution 2231- arguing that it seeks a bilateral treaty with #Iran. Today US withdrew from an actual US-Iran treaty after the ICJ ordered it to stop violating that treaty in sanctioning Iranian people. Outlaw regime," Zarif tweeted.

VP asks Health Ministry to report on U.S. violation of ICJ ruling

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian vice-president for legal affairs has called on the Health Ministry and other governmental bodies to provide the International Court of Justice (ICJ) with cases of the U.S. violation of the ICJ's decision on Tehran-Washington dispute.

"Legal experts and directors of the governmental and the private sectors, especially in the Health Ministry, and all people who witness violation of the ICJ's ruling are needed to present their proofs on the violation cases to be raised at the main sessions of the court on Iran-U.S. dispute," Laya Joneidi said, addressing a forum in Tehran on Sunday.

She also said that the ICJ's decision on Iran-U.S. dispute is binding for Washington and must be obeyed.

In relevant remarks on Saturday, Joneidi had said that "the ICJ has issued a decree requiring America to avoid posing obstacles to the supply of medicine, food, medical equipment, foodstuff, air services and banking operations."

In its lawsuit against the U.S., the Islamic Republic of Iran argued that the sanctions violate the terms of the 1955 Treaty of Amity between Iran and the U.S. It also called on the court to order the U.S. government to immediately stop its destructive measures.

The UN's top tribunal unanimously ruled in its Wednesday verdict that the U.S. must ensure that the re-instituted sanctions are not impacting humanitarian aids or civil aviation safety.

Judge Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf read the final say of the court which obliged the U.S.

to "remove by means of its choosing any impediments arising from the measures announced on May 8 to the free exportation to Iran of medicines and medical devices, food and agricultural commodities" as well as airplane parts.

The court further said that sanctions on goods "required for humanitarian needs... may have a serious detrimental impact on the health and lives of individuals on the territory of Iran."

Just hours after the ICJ verdict, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the U.S. was quitting the Treaty of Amity with Iran.

In August, Washington announced the re-imposition of the first set of unilateral sanctions against Iran, introducing restrictive measures on trade with Tehran and potentially foreign companies doing



business with the Islamic Republic, which prompted a massive pullout of investors from the Iranian market.

In November, the U.S. is set to introduce the second phase, sanctioning Iranian oil and gas as Trump follows through on his promise to put maximum pressure on the country after the U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal in May.

IRGC-govt. mutual trust has brought many achievements: IRGC chief

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Chief of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps Mohammad Ali Jafari said on Sunday that mutual trust between the IRGC and government has brought many achievements to the Islamic Republic system.

Speaking at a ceremony naming the new managing director of the Khatam al-Anbiya Construction unit, he said that in spite of all plots, Iran is gaining victories in various areas.

"The fact that a nation can construct the country by relying on its own capabilities and without dependence of foreign powers, shows that advances can be made through proper management and within the framework of the Islamic revolution," he said.

He also said that construction is an area which can raise hope in the society.

"After the war [Iraq's war against Iran in the 1980s],

the Guards entered the area of construction, and today, after 27 years, all are aware of this revolutionary and people-based institution's role in the country's prosperity," he explained.

He added that the country has made successes in areas of defense, security and construction because of "Jihadi management".

Elsewhere, he said that it is essential to trust the youth and delegate managerial posts to them.

Envoy: Iran to continue support for new Iraqi government

Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad Iraq Masjedi congratulated the Iraqi speaker, president and prime minister for their election, stressing his country's continued support for Iraq after the formation of the new government.

"Relations between the two countries are strategic, and Iran and Iraq are two highly important neighbors in the region. Iran will continue its full support for the new Iraqi government," Masjedi said on Sunday.

He expressed confidence that political, economic, cultural, social, scientific

and academic relations between Tehran and Baghdad would further expand in the future, adding that the traffic of both countries' pilgrims will also increase.

Iraq is the second country after China in terms of trade volume with Iran. While exports to China are almost exclusively petrochemical products, Baghdad purchases a large variety of Iranian goods, helping to maintain high employment rates.

Iraq announced last month that it had officially removed the U.S. dollar in trade with Iran by declaring a legal limit

for passengers to carry along euros and not dollars into the Islamic Republic.

"Passengers would be allowed to carry along €10,000 or an equal value of any other foreign currency other than the greenback into Iran," a statement by Iraq's Customs Authority said.

The Customs Authority in its previous announcements had only cited U.S. Dollar ceilings.

In a relevant development in early September, Iraq and Iran had abandoned the greenback in their mutual trade, giving way to the Euro and local

currencies, as well as direct barter of goods.

"The American dollar has been removed from the list of currencies used by Iran and Iraq in their trade transactions and they are using Iranian Rial, euro and Iraqi dinar for financial transactions," Head of Iran-Iraq Chamber of Commerce Yahya Al-Eshaq said at the time.

Apart from switching from the U.S. dollar to alternative currencies, Iranian and Iraqi merchants have been engaging in barter operations.

(Source: Fars)

Kim, Pompeo agree to 2nd U.S.-North Korea summit ‘at earliest date’: Seoul

Kim Jong Un has agreed to hold a second summit with U.S. President Donald Trump as soon as possible, Seoul said Sunday, after Washington's top diplomat held "productive" talks on denuclearization with the North Korean leader in Pyongyang.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met with Kim on Sunday morning for around two hours of talks followed by a lunch in the North's capital, before flying to Seoul on a whirlwind diplomatic visit to the region.

Pompeo said "he agreed with Chairman Kim to hold the second U.S.-North Korea summit at the earliest date possible," South Korea's presidential office said in a statement, although no specific time or location has yet been agreed. Pompeo and Kim also discussed "denuclearization steps that will be taken by North Korea and the issue of attendance by the U.S. government," as well as "corresponding measures" to be taken by the U.S., the statement said.

The visit was Pompeo's fourth to North Korea.

U.S. President Donald Trump met Kim in Singapore in June for the first-ever summit between the countries, resulting in what critics say was only a vague commitment by Kim towards denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. "We continue to make progress on agreements made at Singapore Summit. Thanks for hosting me and my team," Pompeo tweeted.

Kim also praised their "nice meeting", telling Pompeo via an interpreter following the morning's talks that it was "a very nice day that promises a good future ... for both countries."

Since the Singapore summit, the road towards warmer ties has been bumpy.

Washington and Pyongyang have sparred over the exact terms of the vaguely-worded agreement in Singapore, with the U.S. pushing to maintain sanctions and pressure against the North until its "final, fully verified denuclearization."

Last month the North's foreign minister told the United Nations there was "no way" his



country would disarm first as long as tough U.S. sanctions remain against his country.

After a previous visit to Pyongyang in July, Pompeo had said the two foes made progress on key issues – but within hours of his departure the North condemned "gangster-like" demands from the U.S., raising questions over how much the two sides really saw eye to eye. Another planned trip by Pompeo to Pyongyang was scrapped after what Trump said was insufficient progress towards implementing the terms of the Singapore declaration. An official on Sunday's latest visit to Pyongyang with Pompeo said the trip was "better than the last time," but added: "It's going to be a long haul."

Following his arrival in Seoul from Pyongyang on Sunday, Pompeo said at a meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in that he had "a good productive conversation" with Kim, in talks which represented "another step forward."

The dovish Moon, who held three sum-

mits with Kim this year and also brokered the Trump-Kim summit in Singapore, said Sunday the "whole world" was watching with keen interest the outcomes of Pompeo's trip.

"I hope your trip to North Korea and the upcoming second U.S.-North Korea summit will provide a good opportunity for achieving irreversible, decisive progress in terms of denuclearization and the peace process on the Korean peninsula."

Analysts say Washington may now consider new options as China, Russia and South Korea seek to relax sanctions.

"North Korea took some steps towards denuclearization and the U.S. will face criticism from the international community if it continues to demand complete denuclearization without any lifting of sanctions," said Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul.

"We can't rule out the possibility that Washington... may move in the direction of partial easing of sanctions based on progress

in denuclearization," he said.

South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha has given a hint of what a grand bargain between the two countries could look like. In an interview with the Washington Post, she said the North could agree to dismantle Yongbyon, its signature nuclear site.

In exchange, the United States would declare a formal end to the 1950-53 Korean War – which concluded with an armistice rather than a peace treaty – but North Korea would stop short of delivering an exhaustive list of its nuclear facilities, she said.

After Seoul, Pompeo ends his trip Monday in China, North Korea's political and economic lifeline.

The Beijing stop could be tense as it comes days after Vice President Mike Pence delivered a blistering speech accusing China of military aggression, commercial theft, rising human rights violations and electoral intervention against Trump.

(Source: AFP)

5,000 believed missing in two hard-hit Indonesian quake zones: official

As many as 5,000 people are believed missing from the quake and tsunami that struck Indonesia's Palu city, an official said Sunday, an indication that far more may have perished in the twin disaster than the current toll suggests.

Indonesia's disaster agency say they have recovered 1,763 bodies so far from the 7.5-magnitude and subsequent tsunami that struck Sulawesi on Sept. 28.

But there are fears that two of the hardest-hit neighborhoods in Palu – Petobo and Balaroa – could contain thousands more victims, swallowed up by the ground as it engulfed whole communities.

"Based on reports from the [village] heads of Balaroa and Petobo, there are about 5,000 people who have not been found," agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho told reporters Sunday.

"Nevertheless, officials there are still trying to confirm this and are gathering data. It is not easy to obtain the exact number of those trapped by landslides, or liquefaction, or mud."

Nugroho said the search for the unaccounted would continue until Oct. 11, at which point they would be listed



as missing, presumed dead.

The figure drastically increases the estimates for missing people since the disaster struck 10 days ago. Officials had initially predicted that some 1,000 people were buried beneath the ruins of Palu.

But the latest tally speaks to the considerable destruction in the worst-hit areas of Petobo and Balaroa as the picture on the ground has become clearer.

Petobo, a cluster of villages in Palu, was one of the worst-hit by the powerful quake and wall of water that devastated the coastal city.

Much of it was sucked whole into the ground as the vibrations from the quake turned soil to quicksand in a process known as liquefaction.

It was feared that beneath the crumbled rooftops and twisted rebar, a vast number of bodies remain entombed.

In Balaroa, a massive government housing complex was also subsumed by mud and rescuers have struggled to extract bodies from the tangled mess in the aftermath of the disaster.

Hopes of finding survivors have all but faded, as authorities moved closer to calling off the search for the dead and declare the devastated areas as mass graves.

"This is Day 10. It would be a miracle to actually find someone still alive," Muhammad Syaugi, the head of Indonesia's search and rescue agency told AFP.

(Source: AFP)

Israel PM's wife goes on trial for 'fraudulent' use of state fund

The wife of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has gone on trial for allegedly using state funds to fraudulently pay for hundreds of meals, part of a list of legal troubles facing the family.

The trial for Sara Netanyahu, that started on Sunday, will be the latest chapter in a saga intensely scrutinized in Israel but dismissed by the Netanyahus as another "absurd" attempt to discredit them.

The premier himself faces possible charges in separate corruption investigations, leading to speculation that he will eventually be forced to step down.

Sara was charged with fraud and breach of trust in June. Prosecutors accuse her of misusing state funds to pay for catered meals costing \$100,000 by falsely declaring there were no cooks available at the premier's official residence.

From 2010 to 2013, she, her family and guests received "fraudulently from the state hundreds of prepared meals", the indictment read.

According to the charge sheet, the meals were ordered from a variety of well-known al-Quds (Jerusalem) businesses, including an Italian restaurant, a Middle Eastern grill joint and a sushi establishment.

The trial, which could run for months,



will be overseen by a panel of three judges due to the "public sensitivity" of the case.

It was originally scheduled to start in July but was postponed for reasons that were not

made public.

Sara Netanyahu, aged 59 and a high-profile presence at her husband's side throughout his long tenure, has denied any wrongdoing.

Sara has previously been accused of pocketing cash from deposit refunds for empty bottles returned from the official residence.

She has also faced accusations of mistreating staff, and in 2016 a court awarded some \$47,000 in damages to a former housekeeper who accused the couple of repeated workplace abuse.

All the allegations have been closely covered in the Israeli media. The Netanyahus have hit back, calling them grossly unfair smear attempts.

The prime minister faces a possible indictment in the months ahead. On Friday, police quizzed him for a 12th time as a suspect in various cases. Allegations against him include allegedly seeking a secret deal with the publisher of Israel's top-selling newspaper Yediot Aharonot to ensure positive coverage in return for pushing forward a law that would have limited the circulation of a rival.

Another case involves suspicions that the prime minister and his family received luxury gifts from wealthy individuals in exchange for financial or personal favors.

There is also an ongoing inquiry into the prime minister's ties with local telecoms giant Bezeq and its largest shareholder, Shaul Elovitch, according to Israeli media.

(Source: agencies)

U.S. copters evacuate ISIL terrorists from Syria's Dayr al-Zawr



In recent months, ISIL has been driven out of much of the territory under its control.

Latest reports suggest there have been clashes between ISIL elements and the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a U.S.-backed coalition of mainly Kurdish militants, around the Dayr al-Zawr city of Hajin.

The skirmishes have left a number of people dead and injured on both sides.

Last September, Syrian government forces managed to enter Dayr al-Zawr city, breaking an ISIL siege of nearly three years on government-held parts of the provincial capital.

Two months later, the Syrian military announced that it had fully liberated the Dayr al-Zawr city of Bukamal, ISIL's last urban stronghold. Now, ISIL controls small pockets of Dayr al-Zawr Province, much of them empty desert.

The Syrian army currently prepares for ridding the north-western Idlib Province of several foreign-backed militant groups.

Defying Israeli occupation, Golan Druze pledge loyalty to Syria's Assad

Meantime, in a move of defiance towards the Israeli regime, Arab Druze inhabiting the occupied Golan Heights have gathered at the Syrian border to declare their loyalty to Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, celebrating what they describe as Syria's victory in the country's foreign instigated war.

The crowd marked the Saturday event by wearing their traditional black garbs and white hats while waving Syrian flags and pictures of Assad. The gathering Druze shouted support for the president into megaphones and were answered by Syrian soldiers who were standing behind a security fence on the opposite side of the border.

The Druze are an Arab religious minority who practice an offshoot of Ismaili Islam and are known to have historically good relations with the ruling government in Syria.

Some of Syria's Druze population, however, fell under Israeli control after the Golan Heights were occupied by Israel in the 1967 Third Arab-Israeli War. The territory was officially annexed in 1981 by Tel Aviv in a move that was never recognized by the international community.

Today, more than 20,000 Arab Druze continue to live in the occupied land. The population has been pressed to apply for Israeli citizenship but the offer that has been turned down by 90 percent of the community.

At least 5 people, including 2 children, killed in car bomb attack in northern Syria

Elsewhere, at least five people, including two children, have been killed in a car bomb attack in Syria's northern province of Aleppo, reports say.

According to a report by the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) group, the large explosion on Saturday occurred after an explosives-laden vehicle went off at the entrance of the industrial district of the town of Azaz, which is controlled by Turkey-backed armed militia.

Britain-based monitor also said that the blast occurred near a tanker filled with fuel, sending up large pillars of smoke as a raging fire engulfed the area.

Turkey's pro-government Yeni Safak newspaper also reported that at least 27 people had sustained injuries in the explosion and the subsequent blaze.

The wounded are said to be rushed across the border to Turkey's Kilis Public Hospital to receive due treatment.

Azaz is located some 350 kilometers north of capital Damascus, and just a few kilometers away from the border with Turkey.

Car bombs are common in the war-ravaged country and are used by Takfiri outfits, particularly the ISIL terrorist group, during the past several years against civilians and Syrian government soldiers alike. Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri terrorist groups wreaking havoc in the country.

(Source: Press TV)

Pro-Russia party wins Latvia election

Latvia's pro-Russia Harmony Party has won the country's general elections, and will have to negotiate with other parties to form a coalition government.

Harmony won the Saturday parliamentary elections with 19.91 percent of the votes, followed by KPV LV and New Conservative Party, with 14.06 percent with 13.6 percent, respectively.

Turnout in the elections was 54.59 percent, according to the election website.

The pro-European Union (EU), pro-NATO liberal For Development/For! Party came fourth with 12.04 percent.

The rightwing National Alliance gained 11.03 percent. The Greens and Farmers Union – which currently holds the posts of both president and prime minister – won 9.96 percent.

The New Unity took 6.67 percent as the last party crossing the five-percent threshold needed to enter parliament.

The current parliament will keep working until November while parties discuss a new coalition.

Latvia's political parties had until now always tried to form coalition governments without Harmony in the blend.

The party will now hold 24 seats in the 100-seat parliament. KPV LV and the New Conservatives will jointly hold 31 seats.

The top three parties can muster the 55 seats needed to form a coalition government.

"No coalition combination is possible without Harmony," the party's chairman Nils Ushakovs told local media.

(Source: agencies)

Palestinian kills two Israelis, injures another in West Bank: military

A Palestinian man has shot dead two Israelis and wounded a third one in an industrial park in the occupied West Bank, the Israeli military says.

The alleged incident took place in a factory in the Barkan Industrial Park about 25 kilometers east of Tel Aviv on Sunday, it added. Israeli military spokesman Jonathan Conricus described the Palestinian as a 23-year-old resident of the city of Qalqilya in northwestern West Bank, who worked at the factory, saying he was still at large.

The Israelis were described as a man and two women,

one of whom remained in critical condition.

Barkan industrial park is next to the settlement of Barkan, established in the early 1980s, where nearly 5,000 Palestinians are reportedly employed in Israeli-owned businesses.

Most countries consider settlements that Israel has built on land occupied in the 1967 Middle East war as illegal.

On September 16, an armed Israeli settler shot and wounded a 17-year-old Palestinian who had allegedly staged a "stabbing" attack near a shopping mall south of the occupied city of al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Since 2015, the occupied territories have been the scene of heightened tensions due to Israeli measures which Palestinians view as a bid to change the status of the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Nearly 200 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces ever since the "Great March of Return" rallies began in the besieged Gaza Strip on March 30. The protests are centered around the Palestinian right of return for those driven out of their homeland after the creation of Israel.

(Source: Press TV)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	176419.4
IFX	2020.33

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	48,420 rials
GBP	55,090 rials
AED	11,430 rials

Source: isna.ir

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$74.34/b
Brent	\$84.16/b
OPEC Basket	\$84.09/b
Gold	\$1,204.65/oz
Silver	\$14.69/oz
Platinum	\$827.00/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

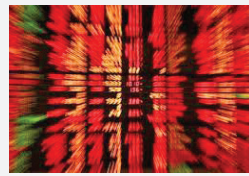
NEWS IN BRIEF



16% more job opportunities by cooperative sector

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — According to the Fars news agency report, during the first half of the present Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22, 2018), the number of registered cooperatives has increased by four percent, creating 16 percent growth in created job opportunities in this sector.

In the said period, 1,747 cooperative units and 6 unions have been registered in the country, the report said.



TSE plunges 7,665 points unprecedentedly

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE)'s main index (TEDPIX) fell back 7,665 points to 176,419 units on Sunday, IRNA reported.

The drop is described via the decreasing trend of foreign exchange rates, rial recovery and more confidence of the investors to the market.

Also, IFX, the main index of Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), dropped 89 points to 2,020 on the same day.



Speculations on appointment of 3 ministers

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — “Mohammad Shariatmadari, Reza Rahmani, and Farhad Dejpasand are the government's candidate ministers for the ministries of labor, industry and economy respectively, Fars news agency quoted, the ex-head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) on Sunday.

Citing an anonymous but official source, Mohsen Jalalpour announced that on social media.

Mohammad Shariatmadari is the present minister of industry and trade, Reza Rahmani is the deputy minister of industry and trade, and Farhad Dejpasand is the ex-deputy head of Iran's Budget and Planning Organization.

EU concerned by Italy's budget gaps for next three years, Italy defiant

The European Commission has told Italy it is concerned at its budget deficit plans for the next three years since they breach what the EU asked the country to do in July, but Rome insisted on Saturday it would “not retreat” from its spending plans.

In a letter to Italy's Economy Minister Giovanni Tria, the Commission said that with a planned headline deficit of 2.4 percent of GDP in 2019, Italy's structural deficit, which excludes one-offs and business cycle effects, would rise by 0.8 percent of GDP.

The council of EU ministers, however, asked Italy in July to reduce that structural deficit by 0.6 percent of GDP next year, which means the deficit would be 1.4 points off track.

Italy is planning to bring down the headline deficit to 2.1 percent in 2020 and to 1.8 percent in 2021, but that would not be enough either, the Commission letter said, because it would mean Italy's structural deficit would not change in 2020-21.

Under EU rules Italy, which has a public debt to GDP ratio of 133 percent and the highest debt servicing costs in Europe, should cut the structural deficit every year until balance.

“Against this background, Italy's revised budgetary targets appear prima facie to point to a significant deviation from the fiscal path recommended by the Council. This is therefore a source of serious concern,” the Commission letter said.

“We call on the Italian authorities to ensure that the Draft Budgetary Plan will be in compliance with the common fiscal rules,” it said.

(Source: Reuters)

Oman to go ahead with Iran gas pipeline project despite U.S. sanctions

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Muscat plans to move ahead with the natural gas pipeline project in Iran, hopeful that U.S. sanctions on Iran will strictly target oil.

As reported by Gulf Times, Oman's Oil Minister Mohammed Al-Rumhy declared, “We are still going ahead” with the pipeline, sending tender documents out to interested companies.

Al-Rumhy suggested Oman would continue to move forward with the project as

Muscat was “still waiting for the detail of the sanctions.”

The U.S. Treasury has announced it will reimpose sanctions on the purchase of Iran's petroleum, petroleum products and petrochemical products, namely transactions with the National Iranian Oil Company, starting Nov. 5.

Muscat hopes that ban will be applied to Iranian oil exports only, rather than gas.

The Iran-Oman gas pipeline, a major energy and engineering project, was agreed

Iran's H1 petchem exports up nearly 24% yr/yr

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Iran exported 15.451 million tons of petrochemical products worth more than \$7.432 billion during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), up 23.98 percent in terms of value, IRNA reported citing Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

The country's six-month petrochemical exports rose 9.44 percent in terms of weight compared to the same period last year.

The country also exported 4.644 million tons of gas condensate valued at \$2.418 billion during the mentioned time span indicating an increase of 46.18 percent and 28.58 percent in terms of weight and value respectively.

According to the same report, Iran's non-oil trade during



the first half of the current Iranian calendar year totaled \$45.123 billion, a 7.6 percent rise from \$41.674 billion in the same time span of the past year.

Iran's exports of non-oil goods stood at \$23.123 billion during this year's first half, indicating 12.99 percent rise from the non-oil exports figure in the first six months of the preceding year.

Non-oil imports stood at \$22.182 billion to register an 11.93 percent fall from last year's figure.

Gas condensate, polyethylene grades used in film application, liquefied propane, low-density oils and methanol were the major exported products while rice, corn for animal feed, vehicles, auto parts and soy bean were the main imported goods.

PBOC cuts reserve ratio for some banks



China's central bank cut the amount of cash lenders must hold as reserves for the fourth time this year, as policy makers seek to shore up the economy amid a worsening trade war.

The People's Bank of China lowered the required reserve ratio for some lenders by 1 percentage point, effective from Oct. 15, according to a statement on its website. The cut will release a total of 1.2 trillion yuan (\$175 billion), of which 450 billion yuan is to be used to repay existing medium-term funding facilities which are maturing, the central bank said.

Reacting to a cyclical slowdown that's been worsened by Beijing's anti-debt campaign and the building trade conflict with the U.S., the central bank has maintained an accommodative monetary policy even as the currency slumped. The effects of that policy support plus tax cuts and increased infrastructure funding have yet to fully filter through though, and economic momentum continued to lose pace in September.

“China's monetary policy is still prioritizing domestic economic problems, despite the escalating trade war and Federal Reserve tightening,” said Ming Ming, head of fixed income research at Citic Securities Co. in Beijing. “The reduction will help ease domestic financing difficulties,” he said.

The PBOC will continue to adopt a prudent, neutral monetary policy and this reserve ratio cut won't lead to yuan depreciation pressures, the central bank said in the statement. The cut will apply to large commercial banks, joint-stock commercial banks, city commercial banks, non-county rural commercial banks and foreign banks, according to the statement.

The increased liquidity will help support bank lending and credit in general, and unlike that from the PBOC's medium-term funding tools, it is permanent, which can help

banks' liquidity expectations, according to Wang Tao at UBS Group AG. The cut gives the market a stronger easing signal and can support sentiment, which has been negative on China and emerging markets in the past few days, she said.

Two gauges of activity in China's manufacturing sector worsened in September, with the official reading for new export orders falling to the lowest reading since 2016.

The lack of progress in negotiations between Washington and Beijing over their trade rivalry means that there's a good chance

the current roster of tariffs on \$250 billion of Chinese goods exported to the U.S. will grow, as President Trump has threatened. With little room for optimism on external demand, the outlook for China's economy hinges increasingly on the effectiveness of targeted stimulus measures being rolled out this year.

The central bank argued in a separate statement that the move won't affect the overall amount of liquidity in the economy, as it substitutes for existing instruments, and the remaining money will offset the tax-payment pressure in mid-to-late October. The cut won't put depreciation pressures on the currency, the PBOC said, which promised to keep the FX market running smoothly.

With markets shut over the past week in China, the onshore currency hasn't traded. Over that period, the offshore yuan has lost almost 0.3 percent of its value against the dollar.

“Weaker PMI, negative development in U.S.-Sino tensions, poor weekly performance in Hong Kong during the past week while the onshore equity markets were closed made most investors expect some kind of supportive announcement over the weekend ahead of the reopening on Monday,” said Karine Hirn, a partner at East Capital in Hong Kong. (Source: Bloomberg)

Strong global growth conceals emerging market fragility

The global economy's continued strength is concealing fragility in emerging markets and a lack of firepower to deal with and future shocks in advanced nations, according to the latest update of a tracking index compiled by the Brookings Institution think-tank and the Financial Times. Momentum in the global economy remains strong, if a little weaker than hoped at the start of the year, but severe strains have already been seen in Argentina and Turkey and these are beginning to ripple out to other emerging economies. Professor Eswar Prasad, a senior fellow at Brookings, said: “While conventional growth indicators look relatively healthy for most countries, weakening business and consumer confidence bode poorly for growth prospects in many of them, especially the major emerging markets.”

The Tiger index, which tracks a wide range of official economic data, financial market prices and confidence indicators and compares them with their historical values for the largest economies, suggests that global growth has come a little off the boil.

Christine Lagarde, managing director of the IMF, indicated last week that the fund's growth forecasts were likely to be revised down this week at its annual meetings in Bali, Indonesia. The composite Tiger index has similarly come off its recent highs, reflecting slightly weaker data in Europe and emerging economies. With the U.S. economy notably strong, pushing unemployment to its lowest level in almost 50 years, and other advanced economies still growing faster than long-term sustainable rates, the short-term concern in the global economy is centered in emerging economies.

These have hit a rough patch, Prasad said, suffering from outflows of money, depreciations of their currency and therefore an increase in the burden of foreign currency denominated debt. “As in the past, their domestic and external vulnerabilities tend to



get exposed when global financial conditions tighten and the U.S. dollar strengthens,” he added.

“Other countries such as Indonesia and South Africa that share some of these vulnerabilities have also been subject to capital flow and currency volatility.”

While China's economy has remained reasonably robust, its policymakers have faced the difficulty of deciding whether to stimulate credit growth again in response to a mild slowdown with the dangers that this would further increase already dangerous debt levels or accept a weaker outlook. Evidence of the impact of trade war on economic momentum is, as yet, hard to see, Prasad said, but it has added to policy dilemma by damping growth in the largest Asian economy.

India is now the world's fastest growing significant economy, but it too is caught up in the concerns about confidence in emerging economies as a result of the postponement of many reforms. In advanced economies, the long upswing has been welcome in lowering unemployment to pre-crisis levels in most economies, but that has not repaired all of the damage of the crisis, leaving them vulnerable to a new shock.

“Policymakers may be left with little room to respond aggressively to a slowdown in growth as the expansionary phase of the global business cycle winds down amid an increase in economic, trade, and geopolitical uncertainties,” Prasad said.

(Source: Financial Times)

Guardians of the global economy descend on Bali divided

A decade after the guardians of the world economy united to save it from depression, the scope for such shock-and-awe policies has all but dried up.

It was ten years ago on Monday that the Federal Reserve and five fellow central banks banded together for a rare coordinated interest rate cut. They went on to deploy massive monetary stimulus as the global economy spiraled lower.

Coordinated effort

As global finance chiefs prepare to meet this week in the resort of Bali, Indonesia, for the annual International Monetary Fund and World Bank meetings, they do so without the firepower of 2008 and with the era of coordination looking like an anomaly.

Today, central banks still have historically low interest rates and are following different paths, while finance ministers are hamstrung by debt. Governments are also pushing nationalist, not globalist, agendas and grappling with headaches such as Brexit, trade wars, surging oil prices and volatile currencies.

“There are no arrows left in the economic quiver,” said Danny Blanchflower, a professor at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire who was a policy maker at the Bank of England in 2008. “Imagine it's only as half a big a downturn next time, there's still much fewer weapons to protect us.”

It was the U.S. central bank, under the leadership of Ben Bernanke, which took the lead in bringing the world's monetary policy makers together to cut rates on Oct. 8, 2008.

Counterparts in the euro area, Canada, the U.K., Sweden and Switzerland also acted, while the Bank of Japan, which already had ultra-low rates, voiced support. The People's Bank of China also eased borrowing costs and bank reserve requirements, though it didn't tie its moves to those of the U.S.-led coalition.

All told, Bank of America Corp. calculates

global central banks cut interest rates about 700 times and bought \$12 trillion of financial assets since September 2008's collapse of Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. Global government debt surged about 75 percent to \$67 trillion.

It's hard to see such forceful and combined action happening today. For one thing, monetary policy lacks the scope it had. Even though the Fed is tightening policy, the average rate of developed countries only just passed 1 percent and will still be below its pre-crisis level a year from now, according to JPMorgan Chase & Co. The Fed's balance sheet alone is still about 20 percent of gross domestic product.

Furthermore, the Fed and ECB are among those who faced political criticism for the actions. That may curb room for uniting across borders next time, said Nathan Sheets, who was director of the Fed's division of international finance ten years ago.

“Maybe there would be more political scrutiny as to why are you allowing some other country to dictate your monetary policy,” said Sheets, who is now chief economist at PGIM Fixed Income.

The political obstacles might prove particularly daunting when it comes to the Fed activating emergency swap lines to provide other central banks with dollars to dole out in a crisis. Those lines -- in which the Fed swapped dollars for foreign currency -- proved crucial in easing global liquidity strains a decade ago but were subsequently attacked by some Republican lawmakers as handouts to foreign banks.

“The Federal Reserve was the central bank of the world,” said former Fed official Edwin Truman, who is now a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington. He said the Fed wouldn't provide such levels of support today with the more nationalistic Donald Trump as president. (Source: Bloomberg)



to last year after more than a decade of talks. A joint committee was formed to finalize the deal in July.

With an estimated cost of \$1.2 billion, the pipeline would send 28 million cubic meters per day of Iranian natural gas to Oman via Iran's southern port of Kuhmo-

barak, according to a January statement from the National Iranian Gas Company.

The gas would then be converted into LNG for export or could be used in Oman, which for some years now has seen its own reserves dwindling, hampering its economic growth.

Investors pull back their wagers on oil's rally

The run-up to \$100 oil is giving some investors pause.

This year's longest buildup of hedge-fund bets on higher Brent crude prices is faltering, with bulls retreating for the first time in six weeks. After fears of dramatic shortfalls from Iran sent the global benchmark on a tear and triggered speculation that it will reach three digits, the rally is cooling as Saudi Arabia and other major producers step in to fill the gap. "Cooler heads are starting to prevail," said Ashley Petersen, a senior oil market analyst at Stratas Advisors LLC. "Anyone that was worried they weren't adequately prepared for higher prices maybe has re-positioned themselves to where they do feel prepared."

Brent rose 20 percent in seven weeks as speculation mounted over how big a supply gap U.S. sanctions on Iran would leave in the market, with prices breaching \$86 a barrel for the first time since 2014. But as tension eases, futures closed the week at about \$84.

Mohammed Bin Salman, heir to the Saudi throne, said in an interview that the kingdom is fulfilling promises to make up for Iranian crude supplies lost to American sanctions. His comments follow U.S. President Donald Trump's attack on the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries for letting prices



rally. On Wednesday, the State Department urged OPEC to tap its reserve supplies.

Iran speculation

The shortfall speculation "went from the initial point of half a million to a million barrels a day of losses from Iran and then somewhere around 10 days ago people started to say, 'Oh my God! It might be 2 million barrels a day,'

said Michael Lynch, president of Strategic Energy & Economic Research. Now, "people are starting to think, they may be able to do some workarounds and it sounds like the Saudis and Russians are willing to increase production," he said.

Hedge funds' net-long position -- the difference between bets on higher prices and

wagers on a drop -- in Brent fell 2.9 percent to 481,945 contracts for the week ended Oct. 2, following a 53 percent jump over the previous five weeks, ICE Futures Europe data show. Longs fell 1.5 percent, while shorts jumped 24 percent, the most since May.

In the U.S., the restraint is deeper rooted. Pipeline constraints in the Permian Basin and rising stockpiles are keeping West Texas Intermediate crude at a wide discount to Brent. The spread is nearing \$10 a barrel, more than double its level in mid-July.

"WTI is still being hamstrung by midstream constraints," Stratas' Petersen said. "It's not going to benefit as much from this rally and some future rallies as Brent will, because it's still dealing with these transport logistics."

Other positions:

Net-longs in WTI declined for a fourth straight week, dropping 3.8 percent to 319,677 futures and options, according to the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission. Longs fell 2 percent, while shorts jumped 20 percent.

Money managers boosted their net-long positions on benchmark U.S. gasoline by 6.2 percent and increased their bullish bets on diesel by 13 percent, according to the CFTC. (Source: Bloomberg)

Rising oil bill set to erase Egypt savings from gas

No sooner has Egypt achieved its milestone of regaining self-sufficiency in natural gas than another corner of the energy market threatens to deal a new blow to fragile government finances.

A six-fold increase in production at the offshore Zohr field means Egypt can now meet its own needs domestically. The government may now save some \$2bn a year after receiving what it said was the final shipment of expensive liquefied natural gas recently. But relief for the most populous Arab country -- a net importer of refined gasoline and diesel -- could be short-lived.

Egypt's 2018-2019 budget assumes oil prices at \$67 a barrel but crude has already surged past \$80, threatening plans to cut the deficit under an economic overhaul program backed by a \$12bn International Monetary Fund loan. It also poses a dilemma for the government, which had sought to phase out fuel subsidies by mid-2019; burden the population by lifting prices higher and faster than expected or abandon its deficit target altogether.

"It boils down to a political choice for the government: either raise prices sharply and face social discontent, or find other sources of funding such as raising taxes on the rich," said Salma Hussein, a researcher with the Cairo-based Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights. "The government will probably choose what it did in the past couple of years -- increase borrowing, in addition to cutting subsidies and wages."

Egypt's population of nearly 100mn has seen real incomes gutted since the pound was allowed to trade freely in 2016, propelling inflation to over 30 percent for much of last year. The nation has seen three rounds of cuts in fuel subsidies since then, and removing them altogether is certain to inflict more pain on households.

The North African nation already faces an uphill struggle to reach its goal of cutting the budget deficit to 8.4 percent



of gross domestic product in the current fiscal year, which ends in the middle of 2019. Foreign investors are shunning local-currency treasuries and the government's cost of borrowing has risen since the fiscal year started in July.

Every dollar above its budgeted oil price translates into 4bn pounds (\$222mn) in additional expenditure annually. The government plans to spend 89bn pounds on fuel subsidies in the current year, a figure that may double if oil continues to rally. Under official estimates, the fiscal deficit will reach 439bn pounds this year.

The nation's trade balance will also suffer, potentially wiping out gains from ending LNG imports. Every extra \$10 in oil prices adds \$1bn to \$1.2bn to Egypt's current-account deficit, according to estimates by Mohamed Abu Basha, head of macro analysis at Cairo-based EFG-Hermes investment bank.

Wary of such risks, Egypt had made an agreement with Citigroup Inc and JP Morgan Chase & Co to hedge against fluctuations in oil prices. The plan, however, hasn't been implemented as a result of the surge in prices, Finance Minister Mohamed Maait said on September 19.

Although a revenue increase from Egypt's own oil exports should partially mitigate some of the impact on the budget and the balance of payments from higher crude prices, the net effect will likely be negative, Abu Basha said.

(Source: Gulf Times)

Japan's crude oil import costs to rise from replacing Iranian barrels

Japan's crude oil import costs are set to rise from September as local refiners start to replace Iranian barrels with more expensive supplies from the Middle East and elsewhere, while the upward trend in international outright oil prices remained firmly intact.

Replacing Iranian oil will be "a significant economic loss" for Japanese refiners, who still hope to see Japan exempted from US sanctions that snap back on November 5, an industry source familiar with the situation said.

Amid uncertainty over any US sanctions waiver, Japanese refiners have temporarily suspended loading oil from Iran as of mid-September, with the last VLCC loaded with the Iranian cargoes having arrived this month.

The VLCC Yufusan arrived at Kure, in Japan's southwest on October 3 after loading oil at Assaluyeh and Kharg Island in Iran and Mina Al Ahmadi in Kuwait, according to S&P Global Platts trade flow software cFlow.

Japan's Iranian oil imports will likely decrease in September after showing a fourth consecutive month of year-on-year increase until August amid signs that domestic refiners were attempting to take as many cargoes as possible before US sanctions against Iran come into effect in November.

Some Japanese refiners have started looking to secure alternative term supplies to Iranian oil, starting from around January, as well as asking for incremental supplies from existing key suppliers from the Middle East, according to market sources.

Iranian oil among cheapest

Iranian export grades have long been considered highly attractive and economical feedstocks for many Northeast Asian refiners, market sources said.

Analysts indicated that the likely cutback in Iranian crude imports and higher intake from other Middle Eastern suppliers could increase Japan's overall crude procurement costs by around \$0.50-\$1/b.



Traditionally, Japanese refiners have been importing mostly medium and heavy end crude grades, with Iranian Heavy and Forozan making up the bulk of the country's total imports from Iran this year.

Over January-August, Iranian Heavy accounted for 57.4% and Forozan grade accounted for 28.4% of Japan's total Iranian crude imports of 166,890 b/d, according to data from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

Japanese refiners are looking at Saudi Arabia's Arab Medium crude and Kuwait's Kuwait Export Crude (KEC) blend as potential candidates to replace Iranian Heavy, a market source said.

The outright OSP spread between Iranian Heavy and Arab Medium showed the Iranian grade has been consistently priced below the Saudi grade.

For cargoes loaded in September, the Iranian Heavy OSP was 85 cents/b below that of Arab Medium and 65 cents/b lower for August and July, Platts data showed.

Meanwhile, some Japanese refiners have covered shortfalls in Iranian supplies with more expensive Qatari crude and one particular Japanese buyer is looking at Abu Dhabi's Upper Zakum, Bahrain's Banoco Arab Medium and US Mars crude, according to market sources.

The outright OSP spread between Iranian Heavy and Qatar Marine crude was minus 63 cents/b for August and the discount averaged \$1.05/b through January-August.

(Source: Platts)

Should energy investors be worried by the Fed's latest move?

Just in case you didn't notice, stocks lost ground yesterday, and the reason du jour was a surge in interest rates. The yield on the benchmark 10-year T-Note climbed to around 3.2 percent, its highest level in years, and the jump extended out along the curve with the 30 year also hitting its highest level since 2014. That put pressure on stocks as traders weighed the potential slowing effects of higher rates on the economy and the fact that higher yields make bonds relatively more attractive, potentially diverting money from the stock market. The question here, though,

is should energy investors be concerned?

People are attracted to investing in the energy sector for several reasons, but recently one of the main among them is the lack of correlation between stocks in the sector and the broader market. Energy stocks respond more to moves in the price of oil than they do to anything else, so don't necessarily follow the herd. In order to assess the potential impact on those stocks of higher yields then, we must first look at what it could mean for oil prices.

There seem to be several reasons rates

jumped yesterday. The most obvious is that the Fed is hiking short-term rates, but that has been the case for a while and their plan to continue along that path can hardly be called a secret. More likely this was a move in front of today's jobs report which was expected to show higher average wages, something that is often an indicator of future inflation. The belief is that that could prompt the Fed to increase the magnitude and pace of rate hikes and the market is discounting that possibility. Once again, though, the relevant question here is how will that affect energy stocks?

If inflation is at the root of concerns, then far from being a negative for the sector, the events of the last couple of days should be a positive, at least in the relatively short term. Inflation means rising prices, and the price of oil should go up along with everything else. As I said earlier, the price of oil is one of the main drivers of energy stocks, so if that moves higher, stocks will follow. We are already seeing high prices because of supply constraints, so another jump should result in a windfall for oil companies.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Kazakhstan's fuel crisis is a thing of the past

Under a new deal being signed with Russia on October 3, Kazakhstan will be permitted to export car fuel -- a sign that severe domestic shortages may be a thing of the past.

As of this past year, and since July 2013, Russia has sold around 1 million tons of petrol to Kazakhstan every year and waived export duties, but on one condition: Kazakhstan could not take that same fuel and resell it elsewhere at a profit.

The arrangement has proven a valuable lifeline for Kazakhstan, which has endured a number of fuel-shortage crises over recent years amid growing demand. The last such crisis struck last fall, when two of the country's three refineries were under refurbishment. As a result, kilometer-long lines formed at gas stations across the country, causing much public ill-will.

There is a profound irony in the fact that for all its oil riches, Kazakhstan has needed to bring in around 15 percent of its petrol from Russia. This was to a great extent because the



country's three aging refineries have long operated at well below optimal level and, to make matters worse, they turned

out a low-grade product.

The modernization of the three country's refineries was completed this year -- a development that has allowed for expanded production and the output of higher-grade Euro-4 and Euro-5 fuels. The Energy Ministry has even begun to talk of a fuel oversupply, which would enable a turn to exporting -- probably to Kyrgyzstan for now. It is this that lends such importance to the energy sector cooperation agreement now being signed between Kazakhstan's Energy Minister, Kanat Bozumbayev, and his Russian counterpart, Alexander Novak.

Still, with ever-increasing domestic demand, this period of bounty may not be certain to last indefinitely. In an acknowledgement of possible supply problems down the pike, the government plans to build yet another refinery by 2022. If that plan should fall through or be delayed, Kazakhstan may yet again have to return to reliance on imports.

(Source: Marketwatch)

Saudi crown prince vows Aramco IPO by 2021

Saudi Arabia's crown prince insisted the stalled plan to sell shares in oil giant Aramco will go ahead, promising an initial public offering by 2021 and sticking to his ambitious view the state-run company is worth \$2 trillion or more.

The comments show 33-year-old Mohammed bin Salman's determination to press ahead with the IPO even after Riyadh's original timetable was undone by skepticism over the company's valuation and a plan for Aramco to buy a controlling stake in the country's biggest chemical producer.

"I believe late 2021," he said, discussing the timing of the IPO in an interview at the royal palace in Riyadh. "The investor will decide the price on the day. I believe it will be above \$2 trillion. Because it will be huge."

The IPO project was first announced in 2016 as the cornerstone of the prince's Vision 2030 plan to modernize the Saudi economy. Officials repeatedly said the deal was "on track, on time" for the second half of 2018, but earlier this year they said it would be delayed into 2019. Soon after, Aramco put the IPO on hold and instead started talks to buy a majority stake in local petrochemical giant Sabic, a deal potentially worth \$70 billion.

Speaking late on Wednesday, surrounded by a handful of advisers, Prince Mohammed said the IPO was "100 percent" in the nation's interest.

"Everyone heard about the rumors of Saudi Arabia canceling the IPO of Aramco, delaying that, and that this is delaying Vision 2030," he said. "This is not right."

Prince Mohammed said the IPO's delay had its origin in mid-2017, when it became clear that Aramco needed a push into petrochemicals. He said it would have been unfair to go ahead with the listing only to surprise investors soon after with a big deal in chemicals.

The Aramco IPO would be a seismic event for financial markets. Prince Mohammed said he hoped to raise a record \$100 billion by selling a 5 percent stake, dwarfing the previous record, set in 2014, when Chinese retailer Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. raised \$25 billion.

For Wall Street, it would be a money-maker, with banks from JPMorgan Chase & Co. to Citigroup Inc. already working for Aramco. Yet, in a world moving away from oil, the IPO would be a test of the appetite of global for investors fossil fuels.

The most recent statements on when the IPO would happen provided considerable room for maneuver. Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said in August that Saudi Arabia would go ahead with the project "at a time of its own choosing when conditions are optimum."

Prince Mohammed has now given the company and its advisers a new deadline, requiring the completion of the Sabic acquisition and a giant international share sale in less than three years. Management and bankers will take some solace from the fact they've already made many of the preparations needed for an IPO, but it remains a daunting agenda.

Prince Mohammed said the deal between Aramco and Sabic, which he hopes will close next year, was key for the future of the country's energy industry. The state-owned company can pull it off easily due to its low debt, he said.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Canada betting on LNG to unlock trade in China and Asia

Canadian Trade Minister Jim Carr's view of enhancing Canadian trade in Asia -- and its biggest prize, China -- is rosier these days because he's seeing the possibilities through a new lens: LNG Canada's new \$40-billion liquefied natural gas project in northern B.C.

"The most interesting development in Canada's relationship with China happened (Tuesday)," the new minister of international trade diversification said in an interview one day after the historic announcement to build the long-awaited LNG plant in Kitimat, B.C. "What we'll be able to say to our potential customers is that this now is real and there will be timetables."

Carr is so buoyant about the door-opening possibilities of shipping cleaner energy across the Pacific that he categorically discounts the effect of another surprise on the trade file this past week.

He sees no obstacle in the controversial clause in the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement that allows any of the countries to withdraw from the deal on six-month's notice if one of the partners enters into a free trade agreement with a non-market economy -- China, again.

"There's nothing in the trade agreement with Mexico and the United States that stops Canada from that. The deal has no impact on Canadian sovereignty or the capacity of the Canadian government to do business around the world," Carr said.

Carr's job is to find new trading markets for Canada beyond its largest trading partner, the United States. The word "diversification" was conspicuously added to his job title during a July cabinet shuffle and the minister is clearly thrilled with what he sees as the LNG arrow in his quiver.

Given the rocky, insult-laden, 14-month road to a new North American trade deal, the need to fulfil the promise of diversification has never been greater for Canada. Carr is also eyeing India, South America, and other Asian countries, as well as pushing for the speedy ratification of the new Trans-Pacific Partnership.

He is hoping to travel to China next month, though he stops short of calling for all-out free trade with the country that is the subject of so much Trump administration ire.

"I would say there are lots of possibilities for sectoral trade. We know the LNG possibility is real. We know that the Chinese Canadian community is very interested in deepening ties."

The distinction Carr makes is significant. An attempt to launch formal free trade talks last winter stalled because Chinese leaders flatly rejected the Trudeau government's progressive trade agenda that would have included labor, gender and Indigenous rights.

And then there's that surprise clause in the new USMCA. It requires a member country to provide notice and information to the other two partners if it plans free trade talks with a «non-market» economy. It gives the other partners a say in the text of such a deal.

The Chinese embassy in Ottawa blasted the inclusion of the new clause because it unfairly targets China's potential trading partners, and unfairly brands it as a "non market" economy.

Trade experts and analysts support the careful approach that Carr advocates because it gives Canada room to talk to China without overtly angering the United States.

"The Americans may still take notice but there's nothing to stop Canada from continuing to have productive conversations with the Chinese in areas that we have common interests," said Meredith Lilly, a trade expert at Carleton University.

Lilly said the non-market economy clause is unusual and represents a new way for the Trump administration to force its allies to "pick sides" in its ongoing trade dispute with China that has seen billions of dollars of tariffs imposed on Chinese goods, and retaliation by Beijing.

(Source: ctvnews.ca)

Who is violating Arms Trade Treaty in Yemen?

The Middle East is still filled with violence and terror, because warmongers can easily buy arms from the most significant violators of Arms Trade Treaty in the world and use them against whoever comes their way.

In Yemen, for instance, American weapons sales to Saudi Arabia are a serious violation of International Law and Arms Trade Treaty. They contribute to serious human rights violations, where the Saudi-led bombing campaign is systematically hitting civilian targets including schools and hospitals – in contravention of the rules of war. As reported by Oxfam, the UK government has also switched from being an “enthusiastic backer” of the Arms Trade Treaty to “one of the most significant violators”.

The U.S. and Britain still license billions of dollars of arms sales to Riyadh. The Saudis are leading a brutal military operation in which U.S. and UK-supplied aircraft, bombs and missiles are playing a major role. The British and American military officials are also in the command and control center for Saudi airstrikes, and have access to lists of targets, playing a key role in choosing them – even school buses that carry children.

One side-effect of the chaos resulting from this illegal campaign is that the local franchises of Al-Qaeda and ISIL are now thriving as never before. Worse yet, the Saudi-led campaign has claimed thousands of lives and triggered a humanitarian catastrophe that the UN has placed in the same class of severity as that in Syria. Among the dead are many women and children, as documented by Save the Children, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, International Committee of the Red Cross, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

These organizations are now calling on the UK and U.S. governments to suspend their illegal arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Some have even launched formal legal challenges in courts to halt the sales on those grounds. But to no avail.

The response from the British and the American governments has been thoroughly cynical. They “shamelessly and disingenuously” deny any evidence of Saudi violations, simply ignoring the world’s leading human rights organizations, who have been documenting such violations from day one.

This is not surprising. For decades, the regime changers have provided arms to their regional vassals capable of being used for external aggression and internal repression. They play lip service to the global Arms Trade Treaty, and expect others to believe they have in their own investigations found nothing untoward, concluding that the arms sales should continue.

The Anglo-American military alliance with one of the cruelest and most anti-democratic regimes in the world shows British and American complicity in the horrors of Yemen. It is the most overt manifestation of the criminal relationship between London, Washington and Riyadh in recent years.

Expect no immediate suspension of British-American arms sales to the Saudis, much less an international investigation of their use in Yemen or a call from the United Nations to end the war.

(Source: Yemen Press)

Merkel’s fading authority is a problem for Europe

The German chancellor needs to instil some order into her government.

Angela Merkel has entered her twilight years after 13 as German chancellor. Nobody expects her to stand again in 2021. Her authority is fading fast. Any faster and it could spell the end for Germany’s precarious grand coalition government and unsettle an EU that has grown accustomed to her as a fixed point in a region convulsed by economic and political upheavals. There has been no better illustration of her dwindling power than last week’s defeat of Volker Kauder, a staunch ally, as leader of the Christian Democrats in parliament. Kauder had done more than anyone to ensure the party swallowed the chancellor’s policies, including some appropriated from the left such as lowering the retirement age. The victory of the backbencher Ralph Brinkhaus will, in itself, change little. He was quick to reassure the chancellor that there was not a cigarette paper between them on policy, even if Brinkhaus will give more of a voice to MPs fed up with being taken for granted. He has said he will back Merkel for another term as CDU leader. His was not a planned coup.

It was, nonetheless, a German political earthquake. It burst forth from pent-up Christian Democrat frustration over poor election results, concessions to its center-left coalition partners and, above all, Merkel’s momentous decision to take in 1m migrants in 2015-2016. It followed a series of recent clashes between the Christian Democrats and their conservative partners in the Bavarian CSU. One was over immigration, another over contentious remarks by an intelligence chief about far-right protests in the eastern city of Chemnitz. Together, these have weakened the chancellor and destabilized the coalition. The clamor is growing among conservatives to renew policy and personnel. Merkel does not appear to face an imminent threat of rebellion, and she has much to celebrate: a robust economy, overflowing public coffers and rapidly shrinking national debt. But there are plenty of pitfalls in the months ahead. The CSU is bracing itself for its worst ever result in Bavarian regional elections on October 14, which may only make them more unruly partners. Two weeks later the CDU could yet take a battering in the state of Hessen. Extremists will seek to exploit the backlash over Merkel’s migration policy in European elections next year.

The chancellor’s shrinking authority will make it harder to engineer an orderly transition to a new leader. She appeared to have a successor in mind when she installed Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, a former premier of Saarland dubbed the “mini-Merkel” by German media, as party secretary this year. The CDU needs an open contest, but it will want to avoid a bruising battle between Merkel moderates and conservative hardliners. Elsewhere in Europe it can seem bemusing that Germany is consumed by small domestic disputes at a time of unrivalled influence and prosperity. But Merkel’s long goodbye matters deeply to an EU that is increasingly polarized between liberal and nationalist political forces. Her diminishing power will leave a void, especially now that France’s Emmanuel Macron is coming unstuck at home, although others will also see an opportunity to change the way the EU works. At this stage, the chancellor cannot do much to transform her legacy. The fracturing of Germany into a six-party political system means coalitions may never be as stable as in the past. But Merkel can try to instil some order and purpose into her government. Otherwise the infighting will get worse – and the political turbulence will be bad for Germany and for Europe.

(Source: FT)

Kushner’s peace plan would turn Jordan upside down

If the Trump administration seeks to strip Palestinian refugees of their status, it will destabilize one of America’s closest allies in the region

By Khalil E. Jahshan

The Trump administration’s attempt to pressure Jordan to strip its Palestinian refugees of their status struck a nerve in the kingdom at a time of unprecedented economic and political turbulence. In presenting their ill-conceived plan to Jordanian officials, U.S. peace negotiators Jared Kushner and Jason Greenblatt have demonstrated a bias and ineptitude that will derail Washington’s self-proclaimed peace plan and further undermine U.S. credibility in the Middle East.

Jordan is home to almost 2.2 million registered Palestinian refugees – more than any country in the region. When Palestinians were expelled from their homes in the British Mandate of Palestine during the war that led to Israel’s independence, the kingdom welcomed the refugees and granted them citizenship to ease their humanitarian burden, but in a limited capacity so as not to affect Palestinians’ national aspirations or their political future. They are still considered “stateless” awaiting repatriation, as provided by Jordan’s legal, regional, and international commitments. The popular phrase “Jordan is not Palestine” was and remains a vital national security concern in the kingdom.

For almost seven decades, the poorest refugees in Jordan have been cared for by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). UNRWA operates 171 schools in Jordan, serving more than 121,000 students. Its 25 primary health centers handle more than 1.5 million visits a year, and 10 recognized refugee camps shelter around 370,000 refugees.

The White House’s goal, detailed in internal emails from Jared Kushner to his colleague Jason Greenblatt that were obtained by Foreign Policy, is “to have an honest and sincere effort to disrupt UNRWA” and strip refugee status from all but the few living Palestinians who fled British Mandatory Palestine in 1948 – a plan that reveals a profound ignorance of Jordan’s current political and economic woes.

Kushner seems convinced that UNRWA “perpetuates a status quo, is corrupt, inefficient and doesn’t help peace.” President Donald Trump’s son-in-law turned senior advisor, who lacks any credible diplomatic experience in Middle East affairs, expressed his view that, “Sometimes you have to strategically risk breaking things in order to get there.” What he fails to understand is that his half-baked plan risks undermining



However, having survived many existential challenges since 1946, Jordan’s monarchy is not willing to commit national suicide just to please Washington.

the legitimacy and sovereignty of Jordan, Washington’s closest ally and partner in the Middle East. In this sense, taking the refugee issue off the negotiating table is, as Trump is fond of saying, tantamount to cutting off your nose to spite your face.

Despite the generous foreign aid Amman receives, with a new infusion on the way from the Persian Gulf States last week, it has been struggling with an economic crisis fueled by domestic and international factors, including the spillover from conflicts next door in Iraq and Syria. Widespread tax evasion has further contributed to ballooning Jordan’s debt to 95 percent of GDP. The lack of funds has triggered runaway inflation at a time when the state struggles to provide food and water for 670,000 poverty-stricken Syrian refugees. Proposed tax reforms and price hikes this spring spurred a general strike by labor unions that brought down Prime Minister Hani al-Mulki. New Prime Minister Omar Razzaz’s tenuous popularity hinges on whether he will confront Jordan’s

core political corrosion.

Amid this tense political climate, with a single-minded goal to dissolve UNRWA at all costs, Kushner reportedly offered to hand Jordan the millions the United States gives annually to UNRWA in exchange for absorbing full responsibility for Palestinian refugees. King Abdullah rejected the offer out of hand, and Jordan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi said such a move would have had “extremely dangerous humanitarian, political and security implications for refugees and for the whole region.”

Some officials in the Trump administration might naively consider Jordan too weak to resist U.S. pressure to accept White House commands. Jordan is certainly a close U.S. ally that is significantly dependent on U.S. aid. However, having survived many existential challenges since 1946, Jordan’s monarchy is not willing to commit national suicide just to please Washington.

The White House would also do well to

consider the risks of destabilizing its ally. Palestinian civic leaders in Jordan embrace UNRWA as a protector of Palestinian funds and a guarantor of their livelihood in the face of entrenched corruption in the Jordanian government. A wholesale transfer of UNRWA funds to that government would almost certainly be a money grab by a ravenous bureaucracy, sparking violent protests that could potentially collapse the new government in a storm of anti-authoritarian fervor. A formerly reliable insurer of stability would crumble, paving the way for unimaginable devastation and suffering.

Trump has accused UNRWA of perpetuating the refugee crisis by providing essential services as refugees wait to be repatriated, rather than working to permanently resettle them elsewhere. But nothing in UNRWA’s mandate gives it the authority to resettle anyone, even if it wanted to, and a unilateral attempt to strong-arm Jordan into upending multilateral agreements shows an ignorance of the political realities on the ground.

At UN General Assembly meeting, Trump announced he would unveil his plan for Israeli-Palestinian peace within four months. The White House has closed the PLO office in Washington and relocated its Israeli embassy to Jerusalem, moves that confirm a pro-Israel bias that all but guarantees Palestinian non-cooperation. Alienating its longstanding ally Jordan would further cement the growing U.S. rift with Arab countries and undermine prospects for peace.

The Trump administration hopes to pressure Palestinians to return to bargaining table.

If the plan bars more international aid to Palestinians, a humanitarian crisis will envelop the region – including Israel – with violence.

And, if Kushner’s plan succeeds, ultimately host countries such as Jordan would bear the consequences of UNRWA’s demise. This explains the enthusiastic lead taken by King Abdullah and Jordanian diplomats at the General Assembly to raise millions of dollars in funds for UNRWA to replace U.S. funding cuts and avoid the collapse of the refugee agency.

Jordan has avoided calamity for now. To prevent further insecurity, the United States should reinstate its funding for UNRWA and pursue a just and comprehensive negotiation process that treats the Palestinians as a party equally deserving of sovereignty and security.

(Source: Foreign Policy)

How Trump is pushing Turkey and the EU closer together

By Taha Ozhan

In the summer of 2016, two political earthquakes hit the European Union and Turkey within a month of each other. On June 23, the United Kingdom voted to leave the EU, triggering a major existential crisis within the union. Less than a month later, on July 15, the terrorist organization FETO, having infiltrated the Turkish state and military, tried to overthrow Turkey’s democratically elected government. Although the coup failed, it had a profound effect on Turkey’s political scene and state institutions.

As both the EU and Turkey faced grave political crises, relations deteriorated further. The weak response by the EU to the FETO-led coup attempt and their reluctance to extend full political support to the Turkish government increased pre-existing tensions.

Before the summer of 2016, Ankara and Brussels already had serious disagreements on a number of points, including the Kurdish issue, democratic reforms and the way the Turkish security apparatus handled anti-government protests in 2013.

Two years have passed since that eventful summer and now it is time for both the EU and Turkey to hit the reset button. The visit by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Germany last week was a good first step in that direction.

The Turkish president described his trip as a “success” while his German counterpart, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, was less forthcoming, saying: “This visit isn’t an expression of normalization - we are a long way from that - but it could be a start.”

Looking back on the past two years, there are indeed quite a few reasons for skepticism. Since 2016, there have been a growing number of political disputes between the two countries.

From the Armenian Genocide bill passed by the German Assembly in 2016, the Incirlik airbase crisis in 2017, the granting of asylum to individuals accused of being part of the July 15 coup attempt, the allegations of espionage against imams affiliated to the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs, the ban on campaigning imposed on Turkish politicians in Germany, Erdogan’s harsh criticism of the German political leadership using Nazi analogy ahead of the Turkish constitutional referendum in 2017, all the way to the jailing of German-Turkish journalist Deniz Yucel and Germany hosting members of FETO and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which Turkey considers a terrorist group - indeed a lot has happened over the past two years.

But there is also reason for optimism. In fact, over the past few months, there has been a rapid change in the climate of relations between the two countries and more generally between the EU and Turkey. There has been one main reason for this spectacular shift: U.S. President Donald Trump.



Relations between Turkey and the EU have markedly improved in recent months and Trump has played a major role in that.

Since he was elected president in November 2016, Trump has done much to spoil trans-Atlantic relations, with most EU leaders - especially German Chancellor Angela Merkel - demonstrating an outright aversion to his style of politics. His administration has managed to strain relations with Turkey as well.

In other words, the policies of the Trump White House have radically increased the desire in Brussels and Ankara for convergence on foreign policy, trade and security issues of major concern.

Even before coming to office, Trump pledged to go after NATO, and he did. He has attacked his NATO allies and accused them of not paying their dues. This encouraged the rest of NATO’s members to come together in a united front against his disruptive activities endangering the future of the alliance.

Trump has also caused significant damage to U.S. economic relations with both the EU and Turkey. His decision to impose tariffs on steel and aluminium imports and his constant threats of levying heavy import taxes on European cars have angered Brussels, which is already concerned about the economic impact of the UK leaving the union. The Trump administration also recently slapped Turkey with a number of economic sanctions.

As the Trump-initiated trade war rages on, it only makes sense for the EU and Turkey to stick together. Turkey is the EU’s fourth largest export market and fifth largest source of imports; the EU is by far Turkey’s number one trading partner. And if there was one aspect of relations that thrived over the past two years of tensions, it was the economic ties.

In addition, Trump’s decision to unilaterally withdraw from the nuclear deal with Iran and to impose sanctions on the country’s oil exports has further destabilized U.S. relations with the EU. European diplomats scrambled to save the deal, most recently proposing a special financial vehicle allowing companies to sidestep U.S. sanctions. Turkey is also on board about preserving engagement with Iran, having declared that it would itself defy the sanctions.

Security is also another major field of cooperation that has brought Ankara and Brussels closer in recent months. Erdogan has worked hard to prevent another offensive by Syrian government forces and Russia in northern Syria, which could produce another wave of Syrian refugees heading to the Turkish border and potentially to Europe. The Turkish president has engaged with his European counterparts seeking a solution to the crisis, despite the Trump administration playing a continuously disruptive role, supporting a PKK offshoot in northeastern Syria and failing to come up with an unequivocal stance on a future peace process.

While pursuing rapprochement with the EU, Turkey is aware that after Brexit, Germany’s political weight within the union will grow significantly.

For Ankara, it is increasingly clear that better relations with the EU have to be pursued not through Brussels but through Berlin. While there are still many issues to resolve, today the interests of Turkey and Germany overlap more than ever.

From the migration crisis to trade wars, from the Trump problem to the Syrian crisis, and from rising populism to Islamophobia, the two countries need each other to resolve major challenges they are facing.

It is in the best interest of both countries, and the EU as a whole, to seek unity in times of increasing global polarization, uncertainty and instability that leaders like Trump have brought about.

It is important to remember that 2018 marks 100 years since the end of World War I, which brought Turkey and Germany together in a close alliance and which ended with a Turkish-European geopolitical settlement still affecting their ties today. The Turkish reading of history produced a popular saying: “We were declared defeated because of Germany’s defeat.”

Today, Turkey is betting again on a close relationship with Germany, but this time Europe is different and so is the world. The 20th-century system of camps and axes is antiquated and should not be the basis of our reading of geopolitics today.

We have to recognize that Turkey and Europe have a geographical, demographic and economic interdependency, as well as major historical and cultural links, which will always pull the two back together, no matter the circumstances.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

The relation between Ahvaz terrorist attack and the White House

1 → Trump and other US officials from both the Republican and Democrat parties, are responsible for the operational, intellectual, financial and arsenal support of anti-Iranian groups which tried to make our country insecure for four decades, and made every effort to create or establish a security crisis in Iran. Therefore, in focusing on the Ahvaz terrorist attack, we can't simply close our eyes on its origin, or consider it as marginal.

Here we're not faced with an "independent terrorist group", but with an "extensive and complex network" that interacts with the main directors (the United States, Britain and the Zionist regime), the mediating leaders (Arab pieces) and the players (the members of the terrorist groups). There is a direct and deep connection between these three which calls for our close attention.

Obviously, our country's foreign ministry will play an important role in introducing this network, and in taking a tough political response against both its main and minor players. Of course, in this equation, the main players are of more importance. Undoubtedly, all those who were involved in the recent terrorist attack in Ahvaz will pay for it, and the Iranian security officials have emphasized on this stance.



Mohammed bin Salman knows his grip on power is dependent on U.S.: Askari

1 → ■ Mohammad bin Salman said in response: Working with Trump is enjoyable. Why did he take such a weak position and did not even criticize Trump?

A: This is obvious. MBS knows that his grip on power and his family's rule has been and is totally dependent on the United States. He wants only one thing—to rule Saudi Arabia and he will do anything to guarantee this. Let me repeat, ANYTHING. MBS will do as he is told by Trump and Kushner. He will enrich the Trump-Kushner family businesses and he will do whatever it takes to keep the Republicans and Trump in office.

But I am sure that he is nervous about the day that Trump is not in office. He has tried to cover that base by getting closer to Israel. He realizes that closeness to Israel will help him no matter who is President and who controls Congress. That is his insurance policy. There is no room for the Palestinians and other Arab causes in his universe. Possibly just lip service. His family's rule, and predominantly his rule, is all that matters.

■ Saudi Arabia has been relying on the United States in terms of security for many years. And this is the reason why Saudi foreign policy is under American influence. In view of this security outsourcing by Saudis, what will be the harmful effects on their security in the long run?

A: Well, as I have already said, there are uncertainties surrounding U.S. policies. Presidents come and go. Control of Congress changes hands. But for the moment, support from Israel gives the Al-Sauds some support, but even that cannot be counted on forever. Saudi Arabia is doing exactly what it has historically accused Qatar of doing—namely, it is acting too big for its britches. It is antagonizing Iraq and especially Iran. This is something that Iranians will not soon forget. And the day of reckoning will come when circumstances change in the Middle East and in the United States and Saudi Arabia will find itself naked. A United States that



can no longer afford foreign wars, an Israel and Iran that find a measure of accommodation, an Iran and Iraq that grow ever closer and a restless Saudi population who have not had political and human rights and have not benefitted from oil depletion. His so-called reforms are in large part to change the potential outcome that I have painted here but people are not blind. He and the rest of the ruling family cannot continue their iron fist rule and to live as they do in opulence and expect the average Saudi to look the other way.

■ Former President Barack Obama addressed countries like Saudi Arabia that your security threat is inside your own countries and not foreign threats. In fact, Obama's reference was to human security, which includes political

development, individual liberties, and so on. However, for these countries, the security of the ruling political system (state security) is in the top priority. What kind of security in these countries is in the top priority for the United States?

A: Let me first underscore what President Obama said. He is absolutely correct. Dictatorships sow the seeds of their own destruction. They exaggerate the foreign threat—now days terrorism is the favorite catch all heading—buy more arms to garner foreign support of arms exporting countries, arms to use not against foreigners who do nothing but on their own people. Oppressive rulers do not entertain orderly reforms towards democratic societies because they see what is at the end of the road—no more absolute power and their preferred access to oil revenues. So they resist meaningful reforms. But they fail to see what is at the end of this road of oppressive rule—turmoil, conflict and their eventual overthrow. They enjoy the here and now and push back on the future.

Now let me turn to your question. Unfortunately, the United States does not have the long-term interest of these countries at heart. Let me explain why. U.S. Administrations change every four years. And sometimes radically so, such as we have seen from Obama to Trump. Presidents invariably want to have stability in the region and help American businesses. So a U.S. President wants to sell arms and anything else he can, access to oil at a reasonable price and have stability to keep things humming along. The long-term condition of the country and its people is of secondary concern. Sure, Presidents pay lip service to human and political rights, they have to. But they will not risk stability and U.S. exports to achieve these noble goals. This is the reality. So security in these countries for the U.S. means no turmoil, no regime change, no damaging publicity about human rights abuses, no danger to other U.S. interests and preservation of U.S. business interests.

The hot November for Trump is arriving



1 → The latest figures are increasing speculation that the Federal Reserve will raise its key interest rate this month. The US economy expanded 4.2 percent in the April-to-June quarter, and is expected to grow more than 3 percent in this quarter.

But the economy cannot keep the president of the United States from the edge of criticism. Trump is in a difficult situation and worried about the result of the election and possible control of Congress by Democrats.

Issues such as the confessions of Trump's former lawyer Michael Cohen on bribing women for having affairs with Trump and Russia's possible involvement in the 2016 presidential election could possibly lead to his impeachment and his dismissal from power.

The U.S. constitution says that the impeachment of the president should be endorsed by representatives from both chambers of Congress - the House of Representatives and the Senate. Democrats now have 49 seats in the 100-member Senate, and if they get 51 seats in the November election, they will still need at least 15 Republican senators to impeach Trump.

Still, if Democrats win the November election, even if this victory does not lead to Trump's impeachment, it can put further pressure on him and cripple his government. According to a CNN poll, decrease in Trump's popularity even among his supporters shows that the days following the November election will be hard times for Trump and his government.

Trump set to shuffle top generals

As President Donald Trump grapples with a number of huge foreign policy challenges over the coming months, he is going to have to make some key decisions on the generals who advise him and lead the US military.

Behind the scenes, the White House and Pentagon are looking for a new slate of senior officers to fill several key jobs with several senior military figures set to retire.

Defense Secretary James Mattis is playing a central role in making recommendations for nominations that will have to be confirmed by the Senate. No one knows how long Mattis will stay in his job or the names he is recommending. But the new crop of senior commanders could help shape military operations and policy for some years to come.

A key vacancy will be filled in early 2019, when the highly respected four-star Air Force Gen. Paul Selva, currently the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is scheduled to retire. As vice chairman, Selva holds significant responsibilities overseeing highly classified nuclear weapons procedures, as well as military oversight of billions of dollars in budgeting and new weapons acquisitions.

(Source: CNN)

Afghanistan should say no to privatizing America's longest war in history

TEHRAN (FNA) — For good reasons, the Afghan government has denounced as 'destructive and divisive' a proposal by Erik Prince, the founder of private military contractor Blackwater, to privatize the 17-year-old war in the Asian country.

"In no manner does the government of Afghanistan condone this destructive and divisive debate," a statement from the Afghan Office of the National Security Council said on Thursday, adding that the Afghan government and people would never "allow the counter-terrorism fight to become a private, for-profit business."

Prince promoted his proposal on Kabul television last week for the government to allow foreign contractors to support Afghan forces in the fight against the Taliban, claiming it could end the war in "six months." Prince's idea, which first surfaced last year during President Donald Trump's review of the Afghanistan strategy, has already raised ethical and security concerns among the international community:

A- The employees of the notorious private military company have been charged with killing Iraqi civilians and wounding many others in the past, using gunfire and grenades at a busy Baghdad intersection on September 16, 2007. An FBI agent once described the atrocity as the "My Lai massacre of Iraq." They were never held to account, although Washington claims otherwise.

B- Afghanistan is still suffering from insecurity and violence years after the US and its allies invaded the country as part of Washington's so-called war on terror. The military invasion removed the Taliban from power, but their militancy continues to this day – with a helping hand from ISIL, Al-Qaeda and US-led occupying forces.

C- It was former CIA director Leon Pan-

etta and his top lieutenants - many of them holdovers from the Bush administration - that farmed out assassinations to their Blackwater subsidiary in Iraq. More astonishing, though, is that the holdovers continued to function as CIA's top managers under president Barack Obama. In other words, the Blackwater program is still ongoing and that explains why the Trump administration has decided to hike the number of its private mercenary forces in Afghanistan.

D- There is a loophole, known as "Operational Flexibility", created by just one sentence in the language of the National Security Act of 1947. The sentence can be abused as authorization for all manner of crime by the US government. The former Obama team exploited that ambiguous language very well. The Act stipulates that the CIA director shall: "Perform such functions and duties (assassinations) related to intelligence affecting the national security as the President or the National Security Council may from time to time direct."

E- Make no mistake. The proposed new mission is about "Operational Flexibility", where Blackwater mercenaries will be free to roam the streets of Kabul where the gloves come off with no limits. The "gloves" to which many US officials refer means legal restrictions are gone. And with "no limits" they mean there will be no limitations on the pursuit of Taliban militants in Afghanistan.

F- If the proposal by Prince goes ahead, and if the Afghan government agrees, mercenaries like Blackwater will be dispatched to Afghanistan on death contracts for "excusable, justifiable and praiseworthy" assassinations and "accidental" shootings of innocent civilians under the pretext of "Operational Flexibility", and as usual no organization in the world, including the United Nations, would ever be


able to hold them to account.

G- Seeing the Taliban as the problem is what the War Party continues to do with its proposed privatized re-entry into Afghanistan. After all, occupation is great, whatever it takes to secure profits for the murderous Military-Industrial Complex and its private killers, even if that requires a contractor tsunami under a false premise to defeat the Taliban.

In this, the Blackwater mercenaries will be among the most flagrant killers, but hardly alone. There will be also numerous reported "incidents" of mass murder conducted by US soldiers, Special Forces operatives, and private contractors in the coming weeks and months. Many more such incidents will be unrecorded, because no victims will ever survive to tell the story.

That's why the Afghan government should say no to the Blackwater business venture. Those mercenary outfits should never be allowed to have the blood of countless civilians on their hands all over again. The war criminals of American imperialism will never be brought to justice, and as is customary, no human rights organization in the world, including the United Nations, would ever be able to stop them.

The truth is, the people of Afghanistan want peace, not war and certainly not American mercenaries, who breed war and suffering. They know first-hand that for-profit warriors proliferate armed conflict - as long as there is someone to pay, there will always be a sectarian war to start, expand or prolong. History of Iraq shows us that they often maraud between contracts, preying on the innocent. These private killers should never be allowed to operate in Afghanistan, where political will for peace is still the only need that must be met and cherished by the people and their government.

Second Announcement			
 N.I.O.C 1397.3191		Call for public tender (First/Second publish) One Stages tender Subject of Tender: P/F " STEWART STEWENSON" CROWN – O - MATIC	
Tender descriptions:		National Iranian Drilling Company	
The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3,176,508	Tender No.: FP/12-97/030 Indent No.: 08-22-9745013	2,686,200,000
Qualitative evaluation of tenders			
Method	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The evaluation will be made subject to submission of needed certificates in meeting for opening the received tenderer's proposals.		
Purchasing & Submitting			
Tender Document Distribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof (closing date 1397/07 /29 - Oct 21, 2018)		
Submitting Method	Hall No. :113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN		
Documents Receiving Method	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. Submitting formal Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.		
Closing date	Days after the last time of Purchasing, (closing date 1397/10/09 - Dec 30, 2018) 35 (The envelopes will be opened At 9 a.m On 1397/10/10 - Dec 31, 2018)		
Address	Hall No. 107, 1 st floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569		
Tender Guarantee			
Value of guarantee	134,310,000 Rial/ 2,722 Euro		
Type of guarantee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.		
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.		
(Contracts Department) Guarantee and More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir http://sapp.ir/nidc_pr			
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What makes whole grains so healthful?

Lately, it has become common knowledge that eating foods that contain whole grains is good for our health. However, we are only now unraveling exactly why this is the case.

■ Why are whole grains so healthful?

Drink enough water, get enough sleep, eat fresh fruits and vegetables, and eat whole grains; the importance of these behaviors is drilled into us.

It is fairly easy to see why the first three items are on the list above; the fourth, though, has proven more challenging to understand.

Studies have demonstrated a raft of benefits associated with consuming higher levels of whole grains; they seem to protect against chronic diseases and reduce the risk of all-cause mortality.

Diets that are rich in whole grains have also been shown to reduce cardiovascular risk factors, help maintain a healthy weight, and much more besides.

Why they should carry these benefits is not clear. Now, for the first time, scientists at the University of Eastern Finland in Kuopio are getting to the bottom of the molecular mechanisms behind whole grains' health benefits.

■ Whole grains reopened

Principal investigator Dr. Kati Hanhineva explains why the scientists began looking into this, saying, "Whole grains are one of the healthiest foods there is. For instance, we know that a high intake of whole grains protects against type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases."

"Up until now, however, we haven't understood the cellular mechanisms through which a whole grain-rich diet impacts our body."

Eating whole grains can prevent type 2 diabetes. A recent study concluded that those who eat whole grains every day are much less likely to have type 2 diabetes.

The recent study looked at the effects of a grain-heavy diet on both mice and humans, and the new findings were published recently in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

After participants had eaten higher levels of whole grains for 12 weeks, the researchers carried out a metabolomics analysis; metabolomics is the study of chemical processes involving metabolites, which are small molecules formed by and during metabolic processes.

The researchers were particularly interested in betaine, a group of compounds that has a range of biological functions. Whole grains are an important dietary source of betaine compounds, and the researchers had a hunch that they might help explain whole grains' healthful benefits.

■ The benefits of betaine

As expected, their analysis demonstrated a significant increase in betaine compounds following the 12-week whole grain diet; this boost in levels was measured in both mice and humans. According to Dr. Hanhineva, "This is the first



time many of these betaine compounds were observed in the human body in the first place."

The investigators discovered a correlation between higher betaine compound levels and improved glucose metabolism. Some of these compounds seemed to be more heavily involved than others; as Dr. Hanhineva explains:

"Pipelicolic acid betaine, for example, is particularly interesting. Increased levels of pipelicolic acid betaine after the consumption of whole grains was, among other things, associated with lower post-meal glucose levels."

In a follow-up experiment, the team tested certain betaine compounds on cells in the laboratory. In particular, they were interested in 5-aminovaleric acid betaine (5-AVAB), which is known to accumulate in particularly active tissues, such as cardiac tissue.

The findings from this part of the study might also prove useful for cardiovascular disease research.

"We observed that 5-AVAB reduces cardiomyocytes' use of fatty acids as a source of energy by inhibiting the function of a certain cell membrane protein."

This is interesting because some cardiac drugs have a similar effect. However, the team is cautious to avoid drawing conclusions before further studies are carried out in animals; as Kärkkäinen says, "it is important to keep in mind that we haven't proceeded beyond cell level experiments yet."

Overall, the findings significantly increase our understanding of the mechanisms involved in whole grains' health benefits. They also open up new questions that will need answers.

"In the future, we seek to analyze in greater detail the multitude of effects these new compounds can have on the human body," explains Dr. Hanhineva, "we will also look into how intestinal microbes possibly contribute to the formation of these compounds."

Unraveling the interactions involved in any metabolic pathway is incredibly challenging. It is therefore likely to be some time before we have a clear picture of the impact that betaine compounds have on organs, systems, and diseases.

(Source: Medical News Today)

Diabetes may begin more than 20 years before diagnosis

Early signs of type 2 diabetes can be identified more than 20 years before diagnosis, according to new research presented at this year's European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD) Annual Meeting in Berlin, Germany on October 1-5.

The Japanese study tracked over 27,000 non-diabetic adults (average age 49 years) between 2005 and 2016 and found that increased fasting glucose, higher body mass index (BMI) and impaired insulin sensitivity were detectable up to 10 years before the diagnosis of diabetes as well as prediabetes.

"As the vast majority of people with type 2 diabetes go through the stage of prediabetes, our findings suggest that elevated metabolic markers for diabetes are detectable more than 20 years before its diagnosis", says Dr Hiroyuki Sagesaka from Aizawa Hospital in Matsumoto, Japan who led the research, along with Professor Mitsuhsa Komatsu, Shinshu University Graduate School of Medicine, Matsumoto, Japan and colleagues.

Previous research suggests that risk factors like obesity and elevated fasting glucose may be present up to 10 years before someone is diagnosed with diabetes. However, the time point at which individuals who go on to develop diabetes and those who don't first become substantially different from each other was not known until now.

Sagesaka and colleagues assessed the trajectories of fasting blood glucose, BMI, and insulin sensitivity in individuals who developed diabetes and prediabetes separately. At the start of the study, 27,392 non-diabetic individuals had a fasting glucose and average blood glucose (HbA1c) measured and were followed until a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes or prediabetes, or the end of 2016, whichever came first.

Over the study period, 1067 new type 2 diabetes cases were identified. Findings showed that on average, several risk factors were more common among individuals who went on to develop type 2 diabetes compared with those who didn't. In particular, BMI, fasting glucose, and insulin resistance were increased up to 10 years before diagnosis, and these differences widened over time.

For example, mean fasting glucose: 10 years before diagnosis - 101.5 mg/dL developed diabetes vs 94.5 mg/dL those who didn't; 5 years before diagnosis - 105 mg/dL vs 94 mg/dL; and 1 year before - 110 mg/dL vs 94 mg/dL.

Of 15,778 individuals with normal blood glucose at the initial health exam, 4781 went on to develop prediabetes over the study period, and the same abnormalities, although to a milder degree, were present at least 10 years before diagnosis of prediabetes.

The research has important implications given that an estimated 425 million adults (aged 20-79 years) were living with diabetes in 2017, and this is predicted to rise to 629 million by 2045.

"Because trials of prevention in people with prediabetes seem to be less successful over long term follow up, we may need to intervene much earlier than the prediabetes stage to prevent progression to full blown diabetes. A much earlier intervention trail, either drug or lifestyle related, is warranted," says Dr Sagesaka.

This is an observational study, so no firm conclusions can be drawn about cause and effect, and the authors point to several limitations including that the length of time between diagnosis of prediabetes and diabetes is not known, so the entire timeline of diabetes evolution remains to be clarified.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

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Other areas: Farmaniyeh Aghdasiyeh Shahrak Gharb Shariati-Pasdaran Valiasre Tajrish Jordan Vanak Arjantin Zafar... nice cases ready to move in.

Science minister highlights academic exchange at STS forum

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Science Minister Mansour Gholami emphasized the important role of academic exchange in sustainable development during his speech at the 15th Annual Meeting Program of the Science and Technology in Society (STS) forum in Kyoto, Japan.

Science ministers from 20 countries are participating in the event which is being held from October 6 to 9, Fars reported on Sunday.



During the event, Gholami presented a report on the procedure of science and technology and its achievement in Iran's universities and research centers.

Science is an international issue, which belongs to people all around the world and no one can impose any limit or sanction on it.

The STS forum aims to provide a new mechanism for open discussions on an informal basis, and to build a human network that would, in time, resolve the new types of problems stemming from the application of science and technology.

The forum community also explores the opportunities arising from science and technology, and addresses how to remove the barriers to using science and technology to solve the problems facing humankind.

SOCIALLY SAFE

Safety tips for online job searching

Job searching online has become the most popular method of finding employment, with an estimated 67% of job seekers now beginning their search online. In 2014 The Daily Telegraph claimed job scams to be one of the top ten scams to watch out for and in 2015 one in three people are likely to change jobs so scams perpetrated through the job search is a real, growing threat to the UK.

Searching for the type of job you want is fast and easy, and you can see new jobs as soon as employers and agencies post them. However, like all online activity, job hunting carries certain risks which you need to be aware of and take precautions against, in order to stay safe.



- **The risks**
- Fictitious job posts leading to fraud or identity theft.
- Phishing emails enticing you to visit fraudulent websites.
- Premium rate telephone scams tricking people into believing it's a job interview.
- Fraudulent work at home schemes where you are not reimbursed for work done, or liable for expenses incurred such as postage and phone calls.
- Being tricked into paying money up front in exchange for the possibility of employment.
- Being tricked into paying money up front for non-existent DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) police checks or other security checks.
- CV writing scams where you are asked to pay to improve your CV in order to get a job.
- Unwitting participation in criminal activity.
- Divulging personal or financial information in online application forms and profiles.
- Divulging personal or financial information on your CV.
- Criminals hacking into your account.
- Unwittingly notifying your current employer that you are looking for a new job.
- Your personal safety being compromised by bogus potential employers.
- Exposure to viruses and spyware.
- **Safe job site registration**
- When registering on a job site, first ensure that the site is reputable and has a physical address and landline phone number.
- Most job sites offer flexibility regarding whether you keep your profile 'public', 'confidential' or 'private' (non-searchable). Reputable sites will explain the difference, and you should choose the option most suitable for you.
- Never divulge private information such as your National Insurance number, driver's licence number, bank account information, credit card information, passport number or date of birth.
- Select and use a safe password and never reveal it to anybody.
- **Safe CVs**
- Never divulge private information such as your National Insurance number, driver's licence number, bank account information, credit card information, passport number or date of birth.
- **Avoiding money laundering**
- Some money laundering activities are perpetrated via criminals using other people's personal bank accounts to move stolen money. Never divulge personal bank account details until you have been successful in your application, and are satisfied that your employer is legitimate.
- **Avoiding scams**
- If you receive an email claiming to be from a potential employer who has seen your CV on a job site, take care when clicking on links and ensure they go to a legitimate job posting.

(Source: getsafeonline.org)

Tehran to hold health digital media festival

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Iran University of Medical Sciences will hold the first Health Digital Media Festival on October 17 and 18, ISNA reported.

The festival aims to develop the potentials of digital media to increase health literacy in the society and providing infrastructure for content development in the field of digital health.

The motto of the event is 'Digital Media, the Pulse of Socialization of Health'.

The festival will be held in different fields of computer games, cellphone, software, weblog, electronic health services, social media, smart health systems and digital art.

Health incubators, health startups and companies who are pioneers in digital content creation in the field of health will be introduced on the sideline of the festival.

■ **Health innovation, incubator center to open in Tehran**

The health innovation and incubator center will be opened in coming weeks in Tehran, the secretary of the festival Amir Hossein Asadi said.

The center provides services like mentoring and counseling, marketing and offer some cooperation for obtaining licenses, he said.

"We plan to hold 30 startups in the field of digital health until the yearend," he announced.

Digital health is the convergence of digital technologies with health, healthcare, living, and society to enhance the efficiency of healthcare delivery and make medicines more personalized and precise.

The discipline involves the use of information and communication technologies to help address the health problems and challenges faced by patients.

Things learned from going social media free for September

Tens of thousands of people are estimated to be preparing to log into social media for the first time in a month as Scroll Free September draws to an end.

The campaign, led by the Royal Society for Public Health, was started to raise awareness about the issues around the "Big 5" social platforms and throughout the month we've been following six volunteers as they attempted to go "cold turkey".

All our volunteers will, on Monday, log in to Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and YouTube live on Sky News. They've all stayed strong despite the urge to scroll. Here's what they've learned about their relationship with social media.

■ **'It's like trying to quit smoking'** - **Sally Deller, 71, from Loughborough**

"I've learnt that I do rely on social media a lot in my life and I noticed, at least for the first week, that I had the same feelings of withdrawal that you get from trying to quit smoking.

I think I rely on social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, so much because I live alone and it's such a brilliant and vital tool for keeping in touch with friends.

I've missed the interaction with people, I've missed events, social invites and a lot of my Facebook friends live overseas and you don't text people in the same way overseas, so I've missed that a lot. It's been really challenging and I don't think I'd want to do it again."

■ **'Social media is bad for my sleep'** - **Thomas Tozer, 25, from London**

Before this challenge I used to spend a lot of time scrolling on Facebook and YouTube. I'd sit there often late or early watching things that the algorithm threw up at me.

The best part of Scroll Free September is the time I've managed to reclaim which has enabled me to have better night-time routines and get up earlier in the mornings to meditate - it's really set me up for the day!

So, although it's been a real challenge, especially the last week, I've found it very valuable and I'd be



very happy to do it again in the future. It's the sort of thing that unless you're on the challenge, it's very hard to break those cravings and habits because you're just used to following them and giving in to them, and there's no real strong reason why you shouldn't.

■ **'Without social media, I've cut my screen time down two-thirds'** - **Geoff Betteridge, 74, from Kent**

I've learnt this month that I waste far too much time on my social media platforms - mainly Twitter and Facebook - and it has stopped me in the past from engaging fully with friends and family, which I think I've now corrected.

Once I log back in I'm going to have a cull on the three social media platforms I use and get rid of anything that isn't friends, family or really important to me.

Having done the exercise I know that my screen time was mostly tied up with social media platforms. I've cut my time looking at laptops and phones by about two-thirds.

The whole thing has been a big lesson and I think for my age group you've got to try to limit what you do on social media platforms and get out into the big wide world, because it's great out there.

■ **'Breaking the habit is actually not as hard as I thought'** - **Emily Snow, 22, from Leeds**

The month was easier than I thought it would be, I thought I would really struggle but it's not been as

hard as I thought. I think my habits have changed and I've got used to life without it.

There have been several occasions where I've been itching to post a picture on Instagram or see what my friends have been up to on their stories on Instagram.

I noticed that I spend most of my time on social media when I'm actually stressed. I found that I want to log on when I'm stressed, just so not to think about anything, so I realized that I rarely go on social media because I actually want to go on. It was more just a habit.

I want to carry on not using social media when I first wake up in the morning because the massive change for me has been that I get up much earlier and it's been really beneficial for me.

■ **'FOMO is real and it takes a while to get over'** - **Benjamin Fox, 17, from Darlington**

The best thing has been that I've had more time to spend with friends and family but the worst thing has been having FOMO - fear of missing out.

Though that was very much in my head at the start, as soon as I got over that it was fine. This challenge has allowed me to have a mental checkpoint for myself and what I do with my time.

A future message to myself once I'm back online would be to not spend so much time on social media and also to turn off my phone/pc etc and turn off the apps for a bit, take a break and have a clean slate for a while, and then tune back in when I'm ready.

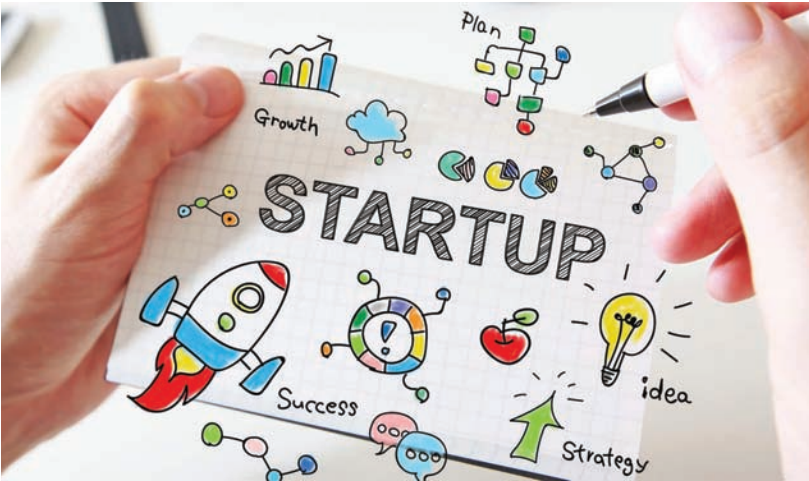
■ **'Texting is boring - it's just green blobs of words'** - **Emma Jackson, 15, Wigan**

What I've learned about this month is that there is no need to be on your phone as much, like going on social media is an addiction and a habit, and breaking the habit of social media is a really positive thing to do.

However, the good thing about social media is that you can talk to your friends in many different ways, for example, I've been talking to my friends through text for the whole month and it's been boring not talking to them on Snapchat and Instagram.

(Source: news.sky.com)

What is the scalable startup?



- Their vision for IMVU was broad and deep and very big – 3D avatars and virtual goods would eventually be everywhere in the on-line world. They wanted to build an industry not just a product or a company.
- Their personal goal wasn't to have a company that stayed small and paid them well. Nor did they think flipping the company to make a few million dollars would be a win. They believed their vision and work was going to be worth a lot more – or zero.
- They envisioned that their tiny startup was to going to be a \$100 million/year company by creating an entirely new market – selling virtual goods.
- They used Customer and Agile development to search for a scalable and repeatable business model to become a large company. It reduced risk while allowing them to aim high.
- They hired a world-class team with co-founders and early employees who shared their vision.
- They fervently believed that only they were the ones who could and would make this happen.

These decisions guaranteed that the outcome of the board meeting was pre-ordained. Selling out to Google would mean that someone else would define their vision.

(Source: steveblank.com)

A beginner's guide to blockchain-part six



■ **The blockchain and enhanced security**

By storing data across its network, the blockchain eliminates the risks that come with data being held centrally.

Its network lacks centralized points of vulnerability that computer hackers can exploit. Today's internet has security problems that are familiar to everyone. We all rely on the "username/password" system to protect our identity and assets online. Blockchain security methods use encryption technology.

The basis for this are the so-called public and private "keys".

A "public key" (a long, randomly-generated string of numbers) is a users' address on the blockchain. Bitcoins sent across the network gets recorded as belonging to that address. The "private key" is like a password that gives its owner access to their Bitcoin or other digital assets.

Store your data on the blockchain and it is incorruptible. This is true, although protecting your digital assets will also require safeguarding of your private key by printing it out, creating what's referred to as a paper wallet.

(Source: blockgeeks.com)

Mushrooms could help save the world's bees: new study

The epiphany that mushrooms could help save the world's ailing bee colonies struck Paul Stamets while he was in bed.

"I love waking dreams," he said. "It's a time when you're just coming back into consciousness."

Years ago, in 1984, Stamets had noticed a "continuous convoy of bees" traveling from a patch of mushrooms he was growing and his beehives. The bees actually moved wood chips to access his mushroom's mycelium, the branching fibers of fungus that look like cobwebs.

"I could see them sipping on the droplets oozing from the mycelium," he said. They were after its sugar, he thought.

Decades later, he and a friend began a conversation about bee colony collapse that left Stamets, the owner of a mushroom mercantile, puzzling over a problem. Bees across the world have been disappearing at an alarming rate. Parasites like mites, fast-spreading viruses, agricultural chemicals and lack of forage area have stressed and threatened wild and commercial bees alike.

Antiviral properties
Waking up one morning, "I connected the dots," he said. "Mycelium have sugars and antiviral properties," he said. What if it wasn't just sugar that was useful to those mushroom-suckling bees so long ago?

In research published Thursday in the journal Scientific Reports, Stamets turned intuition into reality. The paper describes how bees given a small amount of his mushroom mycelia extract exhibited remarkable reductions in the presence of viruses



associated with parasitic mites that have been attacking, and infecting, bee colonies for decades.

In the late 1980s, tiny Varroa mites began to spread through bee colonies in the United

States. The mites — which are parasites and can infect bees with viruses — proliferate easily and cause colony collapse in just years.

Over time, colonies have become even more susceptible, and viruses became among

Over time, colonies have become even more susceptible, and viruses became among the chief threats to the important pollinators for crops on which people rely.

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"We think that's because the viruses have evolved and become pathogenic and virulent," said Dennis vanEngelsdorp, a University of Maryland professor in entomology, who was not involved in the mycelium research. "Varroa viruses kill most of the colonies in the country."

Spreading viruses
He likened the mites to dirty hypodermic needles; the mites are able to spread viruses from bee to bee.

The only practical solution to date has been to keep the number of Varroa mites within beehives "at manageable populations."

Steve Sheppard, a Washington State University entomology professor, has heard a lot of wild ideas to save bees over the years, like harnessing static electricity to stick bees with little balls of Styrofoam coated in mite-killing chemicals.

Stamets' pitch was different: He had data to back up his claims about mycelium's antiviral properties and his company, Fungi Perfecti, could produce it in bulk. "I had a compelling reason to look further," Sheppard said.

To test Stamets' theory, the researchers conducted two experiments: They separated two groups of mite-exposed bees into cages, feeding one group sugar syrup with a mushroom-based additive and the other, syrup without the additive. They also field-tested the extract in small, working bee colonies near WSU.

(Source: [tuscaloosanews.com](#))

Day-time naps help us acquire information not consciously perceived, study finds

The age-old adage 'I'll sleep on it' has proven to be scientifically sound advice, according to a new study which measured changes in people's brain activity and responses before and after a nap. The findings support the advice which suggests that a period of sleep may help weighing up pros and cons or gain insight before making a challenging decision.

The age-old adage "I'll sleep on it" has proven to be scientifically sound advice, according to a new study which measured changes in people's brain activity and responses before and after a nap. The findings, published in the Journal of Sleep Research, support the advice which suggests that a period of sleep may help weighing up pros and cons or gain insight before making a challenging decision.

The Medical Research Council-funded study, led by University of Bristol researchers, aimed to understand whether a short period of sleep can help us process unconscious information and how this might affect behavior and reaction time.

The findings further reveal the benefits of a short bout of sleep on cognitive brain function and found that even during short bouts of sleep we process information that we are not consciously aware of.

While previous evidence demonstrates that sleep helps problem solving, resulting in enhanced cognition upon awaking; it was not clear whether some form of conscious mental process was required before or during sleep to aid problem solving. In this study, researchers hid information by presenting it very briefly and "masking" it -- so it was never consciously perceived -- the masked prime task. The hidden information, however, was processed at a subliminal level within the brain and the extent to which it interferes with responses to consciously perceived information was measured.

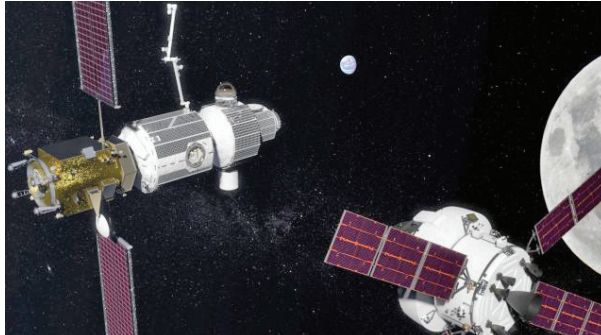
(Source: [Science Daily](#))

Lockheed wants to build a lunar lander for NASA's Gateway station

NASA representatives have spoken in the past about returning to the moon as a stepping stone to Mars, but it was always in the vaguest of terms. The agency recently formalized its plans with the aim of building an orbital moon station called The Gateway. One glaring omission from the plan was a vehicle for landing on the moon.

NASA plans to start building a moon base by 2023 with the help of SpaceX, Boeing, and its own Space Launch System. The Gateway station will consist of four parts: power and propulsion, habitation and utility, logistics and robot arm, and an airlock. First, the power and propulsion module will launch in 2022. This component is already under construction in facilities across the U.S. The habitation module is next up in 2023. NASA plans to lock the last two modules into place in 2024.

None of the NASA modules include a lander for ferrying astronauts to and from the surface. However, the last station module will include an airlock. A lander like the one Lockheed Martin is proposing could remain parked there most of the time. This would provide easy access to the lunar surface, which would vastly increase the amount of time humans have spent on the moon in short order.



Lockheed Martin revealed its proposal at the International Astronautical Congress (IAC) in Germany. The spacecraft would be fully reusable, capable of transporting 2,000 pounds of cargo to the lunar surface. Once there, it would have the resources to remain on the moon for two weeks. The lander would not need to refuel on the moon to return to the station. So far, humans have spent a total of 16 days across all the Apollo missions. We could surpass that after two lunar excursions from The Gateway.

(Source: [extremetech.com](#))

Scientists just created quantum artificial life for the first time ever

Can the origin of life be explained with quantum mechanics? And if so, are there quantum algorithms that could encode life itself?

We're a little closer to finding out the answers to those big questions thanks to new research carried out with an IBM supercomputer.

Encoding behaviors related to self-replication, mutation, interaction between individuals, and (inevitably) death, a newly created quantum algorithm has been used to show that quantum computers can indeed mimic some of the patterns of biology in the real world.

This is still an early proof-of-concept prototype, but it opens the door to diving further into the relationship between quantum mechanics and the origins of life.

The same principles governing quantum physics may even have had a role to play in forming our genetic code.

Creating artificial life inside computers has been the subject of many a previous experiment, but current software typically takes a classical, Newtonian approach in producing these models -- step by step, with logical progressions.

We know that the real world adds a dab of quantumness to the mix -- strange phenomena happening at the micro and macro level -- and the new research aims to add that same unpredictability to computer simulations as well.

In other words, the simulations are no longer limited to 1s and 0s, but can introduce some of the randomness we see in everyday life. That promises to open up a whole new field ready to be explored.

The "goal of the proposed model is to reproduce the characteristic processes of Darwinian evolution, adapted to the language of quantum algorithms and quantum computing," write the researchers, from the University of the Basque Country in Spain.

(Source: [sciencealert.com](#))

An ancient ant-bacteria partnership to protect fungus, team finds

The dawn of agriculture did not rise with Neolithic humans in Mesopotamia. Or in China. Or in the Levant. No, it bloomed in the rain forests of South America some 60 million years ago. And the first farmers were humble ants.

Long before early humans cultivated wheat, barley, lentils and flax, ancient leafcutter ants raised fungus. And like human farmers, the ants had to fend off crop pests, particularly a parasitic fungal disease.

"If the fungus dies, the ants die," said Cameron Currie, a microbial ecologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who studies the fungal-farming ants and their mutually beneficial relationships with other species.

To fight the pestilence, the ants aligned themselves with a bacteria that produces a chemical capable of subduing the parasite.

Trapped in amber
Now, Dr. Currie and his colleagues have found evidence that suggests that the partnership between ants and antimicrobial bacteria has existed for tens of millions of years. The key clues came from two 20-million-year-old ants that were discovered, trapped in amber, in the Dominican Republic.

A fossilized leafcutter ant, *Apterostigma eowilsoni*, trapped in amber. The ant's head had tiny pockets that housed fungus-protecting bacteria.

One of the fossilized ants had specialized pockets on its head, called crypts that are also seen on modern ants. The crypts are known to house the fungus-protecting bacteria, called actinobacteria. The other ant specimen was entombed with gas bubbles on its body, likely produced by the respiration of the actinobacteria. "It's kind of like the ants are walking



pharmaceutical factories," said Dr. Currie, who is an author of the study, which appeared Monday in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. "This indicates that, like in the way ants predated us in growing crops, they also predated us by tens of millions of years in associating with microbes to produce antibiotics."

Similar to modern ants
Hongjie Li, an evolutionary biologist in Dr. Currie's lab and the lead author of the study, was inspecting the amber specimens last summer, using a scanning electron microscope at the Smithsonian Institution, when he and his colleagues found signs that the amber ants carried bacteria in a manner similar to modern ants.

The team combined that finding and published data on 69 other ant species to reconstruct the ant's evolutionary tree. The results indicated that the ants established their partnership with the bacteria tens of millions of years ago, shortly after they developed their fungus-farming abilities.

"These ants have been associated with this antimicrobial-producing bacteria arguably since 40 to 55 million years ago," said Dr. Currie. "Which is fascinating, because humans have been using antibiotics for about 60 to 70 years." (Source: [The NYT](#))

Particle accelerators will not destroy the planet, but humans might, researcher claims

The future could be glorious or grim, and the gust of wind that tips things one way or another is us — the humans of the 21st century.

The "stakes are very high this century," said British cosmologist Martin Rees. "It's the first century when human beings ... can determine the planet's future."

For the past couple of days, news outlets have been reporting that Rees' new book "On the Future: Prospects for Humanity" (Princeton University Press, 2018) makes a rather spectacular claim: If things go wrong, particle accelerators that slam subatomic particles together at immense speeds — like the Large Hadron Collider near Geneva, Switzerland — could turn Earth into a dense sphere or black hole.

"I think people quite rightly thought about this question before they did the experiments, but they were reassured," he said. The reassurance mainly comes from the fact that nature already performs such experiments — to an extreme.

Cosmic rays, or particles with much higher energies than those created in particle accelerators, frequently collide in the galaxy, and haven't yet done anything disastrous like rip space apart, Rees said.

"It's not stupid to think about these things, but on the other hand, they're not serious worries," he said. But in contrast, "if you're doing something where you have no guidance from nature, then you've got to be a bit careful."

It's in these cases that technology can be a realistic threat for the future, he said.

Gene editing, for example, can yield new organic products that don't exist in nature, Rees said.

Sometimes, if "you tinker with a virus, then of course you can't be quite sure what the consequences are," he said. "It may



well be that you can create a form of a virus which has not arisen through natural mutations."

Reducing disease transmission
There's much conversation around gene drives, for example — modifications that are being considered for mosquitoes to reduce disease transmission. Gene drives essentially tweak the genetic code to alter the likelihood of inheriting certain traits, and can lead to "unpredictable environmental effects," he said.

"Just a few people anywhere in the world can cause something which has global consequences in a way they couldn't [before]," Rees said. One example is a cyberattack.

Technology also does incredible things, especially in medicine and space travel. And as such, "things can go extremely well," Rees said. "But there are all these hazards along the way because of misuse of technologies."

The second major threat to the future is our collective influence on the climate, environment and biodiversity, he said. So, it's important to have international conversations about how to combat the pressures humanity has placed on the world, he added. And it's much easier to solve the world's problems, such as by combating climate change, than by packing up our things and going to a new planet, he said.

(Source: [livescience.com](#))

New spheres trick, trap and terminate water contaminant, scientists say

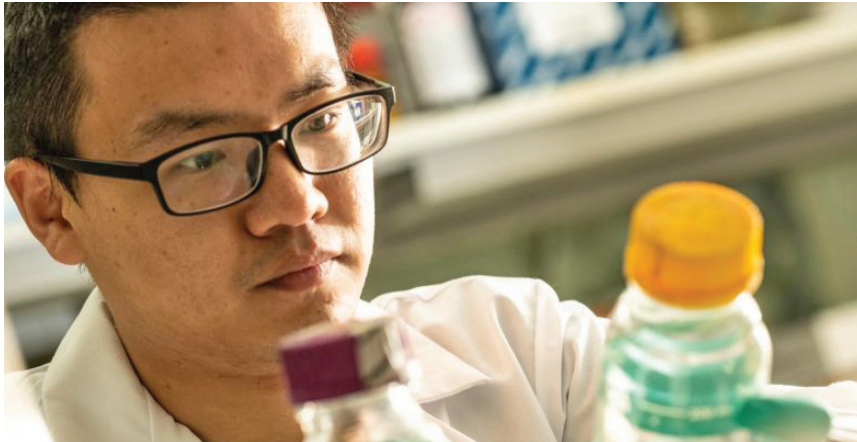
Rice University scientists have developed something akin to the Venus' flytrap of particles for water remediation.

Micron-sized spheres created in the lab of Rice environmental engineer Pedro Alvarez are built to catch and destroy bisphenol A (BPA), a synthetic chemical used to make plastics.

BPA is commonly used to coat the insides of food cans, bottle tops and water supply lines, and was once a component of baby bottles. While BPA that seeps into food and drink is considered safe in low doses, prolonged exposure is suspected of affecting the health of children and contributing to high blood pressure.

The good news is that reactive oxygen species (ROS) - in this case, hydroxyl radicals - are bad news for BPA. Inexpensive titanium dioxide releases ROS when triggered by ultraviolet light. But because oxidating molecules fade quickly, BPA has to be close enough to attack.

Close up, the spheres reveal themselves as flower-like collections of titanium dioxide petals. The supple petals provide plenty of surface area for the Rice researchers to anchor cyclodextrin molecules.



Cyclodextrin is a benign sugar-based molecule often used in food and drugs. It has a two-faced structure, with a hydrophobic (water-avoiding) cavity and a hydrophilic (water-attracting) outer surface. BPA is also hydrophobic and naturally attracted to the cavity. Once trapped, ROS produced by the spheres degrades BPA into harmless chemicals.

Contaminated water
In the lab, the researchers determined that 200 milligrams of the spheres per

liter of contaminated water degraded 90 percent of BPA in an hour, a process that would take more than twice as long with unenhanced titanium dioxide.

The work fits into technologies developed by the Rice-based and National Science Foundation-supported Center for Nanotechnology-Enabled Water Treatment because the spheres self-assemble from titanium dioxide nanosheets.

"Most of the processes reported in the literature involve nanoparticles," said

(Source: [eurekalert.com](#))

Relief foundation creates jobs for over 600,000 underprivileged families

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation has generated jobs for some 625,000 financially struggling families since the Iranian calendar year of 1390 (March 2011-March 2012), the foundation's deputy head has said.



"Last year, some 136,000 business plans have been launched, which have led to the employment of 170,000 individuals under coverage of the Foundation," Mehr quoted Ali Akbar Khademi as saying on Sunday.

In recent years, the Foundation has been identified as the country's top job generating organization, he said, adding that some 625,000 families living in underprivileged areas have been provided with jobs over the past seven years.

The foundation grants budget for job facilitation to the financially struggling individual after major assessments, as well as talent testing, examination of psychological characteristics which are conducted under the supervision of experts, he said, adding that the individuals will be under supervision for 3-5 years until reaches to a minimum acceptable standard of income.

Flash flood hits 6 provinces, leaves 5 dead

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Heavy rain and flooding has struck 6 provinces of the country, claiming 5 lives so far.

The provinces of Isfahan, North Khorasan, Golestan, Gilan, Mazandaran and Yazd, have been hit by flood, said Morteza Salimi, the Rescue and Relief Organization chief.

Up to date, 37 cities have been affected, and more than 2,679 people were provided with emergency accommodation, Mehr quoted Salimi as saying on Sunday.

Additionally, 675 rescue forces are on operation to rescue the victims, and managed to pump flood water away from 401 houses, also distributed food stuff and tents among the victims as well, he added.

He expressed sorrow that 5 people lost their lives due to the flooding in Mazandaran province.

LEARN ENGLISH

Marketing Plan

A: Okay everyone, let's begin. I called you here today to evaluate our marketing strategy during this recession. I wanted to re-emphasize our corporate mission of Aiming to give our customers the best coffee and service in a clean and welcoming atmosphere. B: Several other shops have reduced the prices for their coffees and are drawing in more customers. Why aren't we doing the same thing?

A: I know that recent sales have been slow, but we are not going to reduce our prices to the level of our competitors. We offer a superior product and our focus is on long-term growth rather than short-term sales. If we lower our prices, we run the risk of **devaluing** our product.

B: Customers don't care about the coffee anymore. They only care about the price.

A: I disagree. Highly **discerning** customers know that our coffee is far better than the coffee you buy at the other places. Our coffee bean is artisan roasted and we use **state-of-the-art** equipment to brew our coffees. When you compare the coffees side-by-side our coffee wins the taste test every time. We have never sought to appeal to the mass market with cheap coffee drinks, and we will not do so now.

C: That's true. We've certainly achieved top of mind **awareness** when it comes to the best tasting brews and it's important to distinguish ourselves from our competitors. I think the main question is how we can show our appreciation to our customers.

A: That's the main question I would like to discuss today.

B: Money is tight for everyone these days so even our most loyal customers may be reconsidering the money they pay for their morning coffee. Since the superiority of our coffee beans is one of our core competencies why don't we sell the beans for people to brew coffee at home.

C: That could definitely be a way we could expand our company, but would we be **undermining** the essence of the company that way?

A: Let's brainstorm some more ideas, and do some research. The customer always comes first, and what the customer wants, the customer gets. Maybe it's time we started selling coffee beans.

■ Key vocabulary

devalue: reduce in value

discerning: Showing insight and understanding

state of the art: the latest and most advanced in technology

awareness: showing realization and perception

undermine: to subvert or weaken insidiously or secretly

■ Supplementary vocabulary

downturn: a recession; when things are not going very well
value proposition: an analysis of the total cost and benefits of a product that a company can deliver its customers

R&D: Research and development

Excel: to be very good at doing something, to do something better than anyone else

(Source: irlanguage.com)

SDSs shut down schools in southeastern Iran

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Huge sand and dust storms (SDSs) led to the closure of schools in Rigan, Kerman and Fahraj counties located in the southeastern province of Kerman, on Sunday.

The schools in the mentioned counties are closed, while in the other cities of the province schools are open, IRNA quoted Amir Salajegeh, an official with the provincial education department general as saying.

Also, Reza Jazinizadeh, provincial environment chief, said that the level of particulate matters (PM) has reached 353 micrograms per cubic meter in the region.

"The air quality index in Fahraj county is estimated at 464, which is 4.5 times above the safe levels, and Zarand county with an air quality index of 500 has exceeded the safe levels by five times," he added.

He went on to say that a committee on combating air pollution is established at the provincial department of the environment of Kerman due to the province's air quality index being at a dangerous level.

"Considering the Meteorological Organization warnings about the high PM concentration, and its harmfulness, schools have been closed on Sunday," he stated.

He further explained that "Currently, in Iran safe levels of PM is identified as under 100 micrograms per cubic meter, it will be unhealthy for sensitive groups when reaches between 100 and 150, and also unhealthy for all groups of people when stands at 150-200, and over 200 which is anonymously dangerous".

Pointing to the lack of dust measuring device in most of the cities of Kerman, he noted that tools for monitoring air quality



is available only in some cities of Fahraj, Rigan, Zarand and Kerman.

The province has experienced healthy air quality for only one day during the first Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 20), while being unhealthy for sensitive groups during the second month of Ordibehesht (April 21-May 21), he said, adding that furthermore, in the month of

Khordad (May 22-June 21), Kerman's air has reached a level which was unhealthy for sensitive groups and all groups of people.

Moreover, PM concentration peaking above the safe levels, also closed schools and offices in Rigan county, southeastern Kerman province, Rigan's governor Ali Bagheri said.

He went on to say that it has also caused respiratory problems for the residents, as some

23 residents have referred to the hospitals.

Due to the intensity of PM concentration, some 50 villages in the city were surrounded by sandy soil, Bagheri said, adding, so far, some 16 villages are depopulated due to the severe PM concentration.

The Road Maintenance Organization has dispatched special groups to reopen the roads, he concluded.

How climate change is making it harder to monitor marine pollution

Despite the dramatic news coverage of oil spills and other big pollution disasters in our seas and oceans, most environmental pollution is caused by much smaller incidents that are often invisible, persistent, and far more difficult to track.

While animals and plants caught up in these disasters are easily identified as stressed or physically affected by the pollution, with smaller incidents organisms might look and behave perfectly normal. Only over time does the chronic exposure to low-level pollution take its toll.

By the time this becomes obvious, often it is too late to do anything to save a particular population, whose decline might have knock-on effects on the surrounding environment, often with socio-economic consequences.

So there is not only a moral responsibility to look after the environment, but also a strong financial incentive, because many jobs and livelihoods depend on a healthy environment and its ecosystems.

■ Biomarker tools

Biomarkers of exposure provide a tool to identify pollution events early on, often at levels that are not detectable by conventional methods. Loosely defined as measurable effects (endpoints) in organisms, providing evidence of exposure to pollutants, biomarkers lead to establishing the cause and giving the necessary data to inform any policy decisions that need to be taken.

Such biomarkers exist in a number of biological areas. They can be purely biochemical, manifesting themselves as damages to DNA, alterations to the activity of enzymes involved in metabolism, structural damage to cells and their subsequent ability to perform properly, as well as more obvious pathological, reproductive or behavioral disorders.



However, this requires intimate knowledge of the species and the relevant environmental variables, including how these may influence the respective biomarkers.

The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports on climate change show that the upper 75 meters of the world's oceans have been warming at a rate of 0.11°C per decade since at least 1971 and the uptake of CO₂ caused by human pollution has depressed pH (acidity level) by -0.0014 to -0.0024 per year, and is predicted to continue.

■ Effects of climate change

These changes are likely to affect biomarkers on three levels. First of all, commonly used organisms may no longer be available, as they migrate further north in search of cooler water. And they may then be replaced by invasive species from warmer waters that are not as sensitive to pollution and therefore not as useful as biomarker organisms. Changing migratory patterns may increase the

transport of contaminants in the bodies of organisms in significant quantities to other, previously clean locations, in some cases even becoming more important than wind or water driven methods.

Second, the fate and behavior of contaminants in the environment, particularly their persistence, their ability to be taken up by organisms and how they behave once absorbed, is strongly driven by environmental factors such as salinity, pH and temperature – and these are all subject to change under climate change scenarios. This means, organisms may be more or less susceptible to pollutants; the degree of change will depend on the specific pollutants and the organism species involved.

Last of all, organisms unable to migrate will experience increased stress owing to changes in temperature, salinity and pH which may mean they may no longer be sensitive enough for the biomarker task.

A major focus of research in my lab is working towards re-evaluating these biomarkers in several mainstream organisms and assessing the potential of new, better-adapted organisms. The main aim of this work is to future proof our tools for detecting pollution in the marine environment in order to maintain the ecosystem we all depend on.

The evidence for climate change driven by pollution caused by humans is overwhelming and it is clear it is affecting the marine environment. As a result, some commonly used biomarker species and endpoints may need to be re-evaluated and adapted for this changing environment if they are to be used in future as early warning systems for pollution.

(Source: The Independent)

UK's children denied basic human right to clean air, says Unicef

Children in the UK are being denied their basic human right to breathe clean air and facing a long term "health crisis" because of the toxic fumes they breathe on their way to and from school, according to leading children's charity Unicef.

The organization, which campaigns on children's rights and wellbeing around the world, described the situation in the UK as "horrific" and has announced it is to make protecting youngsters from air pollution its priority across the country in the months ahead.

"I have been amazed as the picture has emerged showing us just exactly what the impact of air pollution is on children in the UK," said Alastair Harper from Unicef UK.

"Research is coming out all the time showing us how these toxic emissions can lead to lasting and devastating health impacts, impacts that will last their entire lives, from stunted lung growth to asthma to brain developments. It is horrific."

Unicef's intervention follows a series of new studies which highlight the impact of the UK's air pollution crisis on children's health and will increase the pressure on government to intervene.

The charity, which is now working with schools across the country, as well as clean air groups, is calling on the government to introduce a fully funded national action plan to protect children from the effects of toxic air.

Harper said: "We want a national strategy specifically to protect children from harm, and a ring-fenced pot of funding to focus on the ways to reduce children's exposure to toxic air."

"We now know that exposure is most acute when they are travelling to and from school or nurseries and even inside the



classrooms. Now there is no excuse not to take immediate and determined action."

He said measures should include vehicle exclusion zones around schools, a network of clean air zones, improved walking and cycling infrastructure in towns and cities and more child friendly urban areas.

Last year a Guardian investigation revealed hundreds of thousands of children are being exposed to illegal levels of damaging air pollution from diesel vehicles at more than 2,000 schools and nurseries across England and Wales.

Earlier this month it emerged that children were absorbing a disproportionate amount of air dangerous pollution on their way to and from school – and while in the classroom. One school was found to have several times over the World Health Organization pollution limit for the most damaging particulates inside several of its classrooms.

There is a growing campaign among some parents and schools to ban the school run and encourage walking and cycling, but Unicef said central government needs to step in to orchestrate a nationwide policy that protects young people's health.

"It has taken a while to understand the true nature of the problem but now

we do know and we have to act."

Harper said that unlike some other problems facing young people – including entrenched poverty and obesity – air pollution was relatively simple to address, if there was the political will.

"The fact is that it is so needless, we can fix this – other things are more intractable – but this is something we can resolve."

The government has been widely criti-

cized for its lack of action on air pollution. It has lost three court cases and is one of five nations that have been referred to Europe's highest court for failing to tackle illegal levels of toxic air.

Harper said: "All children have the right to breathe clean air, and toxic air not only violates children's right to breathe clean air it also impacts on their future and that is unacceptable."

(Source: The Guardian)



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Murder of critic journalist in Saudi consulate

By staff & agencies

Turkish authorities believe prominent Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who disappeared four days ago after entering the House of Saud regime's consulate in Istanbul, Turkey has been killed.

"The initial assessment of the Turkish police is that Mr. Khashoggi has been killed at the consulate of Saudi Arabia in Istanbul. We believe that the murder was premeditated and the body was subsequently moved out of the consulate," a Turkish official told Reuters news agency on Saturday.

A Saudi regime source at the consulate denied that Khashoggi had been killed at the mission and said in a statement that the accusations were baseless, Reuters reported.

Turkey's announcement came four days after the leading critic of the House of Saud regime entered the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul on Tuesday to obtain paperwork.

"He went to the consulate four days ago and was then asked to return, which is why the Turkish officials believe it was premeditated and that he was lured in," Al Jazeera's Jamal Elshayyal, reporting from Istanbul, said

Elshayyal added there has not been any disclosure of the whereabouts Khashoggi's body.

"However, we have heard a funeral will take place in the coming two or three days," he said before adding that it was unknown if Khashoggi's body will be present at the funeral.

Khashoggi's fiancée said he was very upset that he had to visit the consulate.

"Before going in, he handed over his phone to me and asked me to call on of Erdogan's [Turkish president] advisors if he doesn't return," Hatice Cengiz told BBC Persian.

■ Saudi regime officials in Istanbul

Earlier on Saturday, sources told Al Jazeera that a delegation of 15 Saudi regime officials arrived in Turkey the day Khashoggi, 59, disappeared.

"The Saudi officials flew into Istanbul on two different flights on Tuesday," Elshayyal quoted his sources as saying, adding that it was not clear if the Saudi delegation consisted of security or diplomatic officials.

The revelations came as Turkey widened its investigation into the disappearance of the dissident Saudi journalist after the House of Saud regime failed to back its claim that he left the consulate on Tuesday.

In an evening of quick-fire developments, following four days of silence since his disappearance, officials in Ankara pledged to on Sunday release evidence that they say supports claims that the journalist was killed shortly after he entered the consulate to sign divorce papers. The evidence is expected to include video footage and focus on a black car.

Two Turkish officials claimed to Reuters that Khashoggi, 59, had been killed. The



Reuters claim was circulated by a government spokesman, and confirmed by numerous other officials, some of whom claimed to have knowledge of how the body had been disposed of. Several officials alleged, without tabling evidence, that Khashoggi had first been tortured.

Officials believe that a team of 15 Saudis arrived on Tuesday to conduct the killing, then left the country soon afterwards.

Turkey's Justice and Development (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi/AKP) ruling party also said it will "uncover" the details surrounding Khashoggi's vanishing, adding that the country's sensitivity on the issue was at the "highest level".

"The condition of the lost journalist, details on him and who is responsible for this will be uncovered," AK Party spokesman Omer Celik told reporters at a party summit chaired by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

"Al Jazeera has also learned in the next day or so video material will be released showing details of the assassination," Elshayyal said.

Erdogan is expected to hold a speech later on Sunday, although it is unclear yet if Erdogan will address the issue, possibly because of behind-the-scenes diplomatic talks.

However, Elshayyal said the incident will most probably lead to a significant diplomatic fallout between the two countries.

"We'll see severe problems arise because if the Turks are able to prove Saudi has killed a journalist who was engaged to a Turkish citizen, who was legally here and who was not wanted for any crime either by Interpol or even the Saudis themselves, it will cause a big diplomatic fallout," he said.

"Obviously it is very challenging for the Turks because they enjoy strong diplomatic relations with the Saudis, which is one of the reasons they did not comment immediately following the disappearance of Khashoggi,"

Elshayyal added.

■ Diplomatic row

On Friday, Turkey's foreign ministry summoned the House of Saud regime's ambassador to Ankara over the issue.

Later that day, the Saudi regime Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) said Saudi authorities would allow Turkey to search its consulate.

"We will allow them to enter and search and do whatever they want to do ... we have nothing to hide," MBS told Bloomberg on Friday.

The Saudi regime invited a group of journalists into the Istanbul mission on Saturday, in an effort to show that Khashoggi was not on the premises.

"I would like to confirm that ... Jamal is not at the consulate nor in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the consulate and the embassy are working to search for him," consul-general Mohammad al-Otaiba told Reuters.

Khashoggi had entered the consulate's premises at around 1pm (10:00 GMT) on Tuesday to secure paperwork in order to marry his Turkish fiancée, identified only as Hatice A.

Hatice said she waited outside after Khashoggi entered the Saudi regime consulate on Tuesday and never re-emerged. Following the initial announcement by Turkish sources of Khashoggi's killing, she tweeted in Arabic her refusal to believe that is the case.

Rights groups had called on the House of Saud regime to verify Khashoggi's whereabouts, with Human Rights Watch (HRW) calling on Turkey to deepen its investigation into the case, saying if Saudi Arabia had detained Khashoggi without acknowledging it, his detention would constitute an enforced disappearance.

Khashoggi's suspected killing may further strain relations between Turkey and the

House of Saud regime, who are on opposite sides of the multi-nation blockade of Qatar and other regional crises.

Khashoggi, who had been living in self-imposed exile in the United States for over a year, was one of the best-known critics of the House of Saud regime's reform program under the stewardship of the ambitious and inexperienced Saudi regime Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Saudi officials said hours after Khashoggi's disappearance that he had left the diplomatic mission. Ankara says there has been no evidence to corroborate the claim.

However, there have been reports in the Arab media suggesting Khashoggi was abducted on the same day of his disappearance and evacuated from the other entrance of the Saudi regime consulate in Istanbul. The Lebanese al-Akhar newspaper said that the journalist had been flown to Saudi Arabia with the apparent consent of the Turkish intelligence authorities.

The Washington Post newspaper, which featured articles from Khashoggi on its Global Opinions section, published blank pages on its print and website editions on Friday, demanding urgent information about the journalist whereabouts. Human rights campaigners have also demanded that the Saudi regime authorities clarify the issue.

In his writings for the Washington Post, the Saudi commentator had slammed the Saudi regime policies towards Qatar and Canada, the war in Yemen, and a crackdown on dissent and the media in the kingdom.

■ Jamal Khashoggi

Jamal Ahmad Khashoggi was a Saudi journalist, columnist, author and the former general manager and editor-in-chief of al Arab News Channel. He was internationally respected for his contributions to al Watan for becoming a platform for Saudi progressives.

Khashoggi had been close to the previous Saudi regime, but fled the kingdom a year ago, soon after the new monarch anointed his son, MBS, as prince. He subsequently became an outspoken critic of some aspects of the country's reform program, especially the clampdown on political freedoms, and intolerance of dissent.

He fled Saudi Arabia on 18 September 2017, and has been regularly posting articles critical to his home country.

In December 2016, The Independent, citing a report from Middle East Eye, said Khashoggi had been banned by the Saudi regime authorities from publishing or appearing on television "for criticizing U.S. President-elect Donald Trump".

The Turkish police maintains that Khashoggi had been brutally tortured, murdered and hacked to pieces by a 15-member Saudi death squad sent to Istanbul from Saudi Arabia, who subsequently removed his remains from the consulate.



disturbed attacker while campaigning and spent three weeks in hospital unable to campaign or attend televised debates.

On Thursday, the 63-year old snubbed the final debate broadcast on Brazil's TV Globo and appeared instead in a recorded interview on rival channel Rede Record, which is owned by billionaire Evangelical bishop Edir Macedo who has endorsed Bolsonaro.

On Sunday, Brazil's 147 million registered voters will also elect 27 governors, 54 senators, 513 legislators and more than 1,000 state legislators.

Congress wields considerable power and, since 2016, has decided the fate of two presidents by impeaching Dilma Rousseff for a budget misdemeanor and shielding incumbent Michel Temer from corruption charges.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Brazil votes in polarized presidential race

Brazilians voted in the presidential elections, the run-up to which was bitterly polarized and turbulent and included a failed assassination attempt of one candidate, another leading the race from prison, mass protests and endless wave of fake news.

Sunday's vote also comes amid a backdrop of high-profile corruption scandals, rising violence and recession.

It's a far cry from Brazil's last elections in 2014, when the country hosted a successful football World Cup, was removed from the United Nations hunger map and unemployment was at a record low.

Leading the polls is Jair Bolsonaro, the far-right politician and former army captain whose disparaging comments about homosexuals, women and other minorities disgusted many voters. His chauvinism, political incorrectness and tough-on-crime postures appeal to others.

Last year, nearly 64,000 murders took place in Brazil. The vast majority of these remain unsolved and public security is one of the major concerns going into the election.

Bolsonaro - who openly praises the country's brutal 21-year military dictatorship as well as Chile's former dictator Augusto Pinochet - pledged to give Brazil's police additional rights to kill suspected criminals.

He is often described as a hybrid between United States President Donald Trump - for whom Bolsonaro has expressed his admiration - and Philippines strongman Rodrigo Duterte, whose bloody war against drug dealers and addicts has left thousands dead.

Running in second is Fernando Haddad, the centre-left

former mayor of Sao Paulo, who stepped in to take over the Workers' Party candidacy after former President Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva - who was leading the race - was barred from running because he is in jail serving a sentence for corruption.

Bolsonaro had a clear lead over Haddad in opinion polls released on Saturday. But the lead was less than the 50 percent needed for him to win the election in the first round.

Datafolha predicted the first round as Bolsonaro leading with 40 percent and Haddad trailing with 25 percent. Ibope, another polling institute, had the figures at 41 percent and 25 percent respectively.

A first-round victory for Bolsonaro is still considered unlikely. However, analysts are refusing to rule it out altogether given a recent surge in support despite a series of negative media coverage and mass street protests.

A second-round runoff is scheduled for October 28.

In a Facebook Live broadcast on Saturday night, Bolsonaro blasted socialism, communism and political correctness, while reiterating his plans to open up Brazil's Amazon to mining interests and also relax gun laws.

"Let's liquidate the race in the first round," he said, sitting next to his eldest son Flavio, who is now running for Senate, elections for which are also taking place on Sunday.

Former Brazil footballer Ronaldinho took to Twitter in support and posted: "For a better Brazil, I want peace, security and someone who gives us back joy. I chose to live in Brazil, and I want a better Brazil for everyone!!!"

In September, Bolsonaro was stabbed by a mentally

who assault women and then lie about it and try to cover it up. I'm here for that, I'm here for the truth," said one of the protesters.

President Donald Trump, who stood by his nominee amid the allegations and later mocked his accusers, said in a tweet that the "crowd in front of the U.S. Supreme Court is tiny" and the "Fake News Media tries to make it look sooo big, & it's not!"

As Kavanaugh arrived at the Supreme Court to be sworn in on Saturday evening, protesters moved to flood the steps of the court in opposition.

Police made a number of arrests there and removed the protesters.

Kavanaugh, 53, was accused by California research psychologist Christina Blasey Ford of sexual assault in high school. The accusation, which Kavanaugh adamantly rejected under oath, nearly derailed his confirmation in the Senate.

Kavanaugh was confirmed by a very narrow margin of 50 to 48, putting an end to a bitter battle that has further divided the country along partisan lines.

"I'm just very frustrated. I do not want to see Kavanaugh on that Supreme Court," said Jackie Knightshade of Washington. "I do believe he has lied."

Demonstrations were held elsewhere in the country. Around 100 people gathered

in Washington Square Park in New York, holding signs reading "believe women" and "punish perjury."

In Denver, hundreds of people converged in front of the office of Senator Cory Gardner of Colorado to "make sure he knows we will be holding him accountable in 2020."

A protest was also held against Kavanaugh's confirmation in Cleveland, Ohio.

Both sides are using the Kavanaugh affair as a rally cry for the upcoming midterm elections. Some Republicans warn that Democratic wins would lead to impeachment proceedings against the judge.

(Source: Press TV)

Italy will close airports to unauthorized migrant flights: Salvini

Italy will close its airports to unauthorized planes carrying migrants from Germany, Interior Minister Matteo Salvini said Sunday, ratcheting up a dispute between the EU partners over how to share responsibility for asylum seekers.

The two countries have been working on a deal under which Germany would send back to Italy migrants who have already applied for asylum there, but the accord has yet to be signed.

Italian daily La Repubblica reported Saturday that Germany's refugee agency had sent "dozens of letters" to migrants advising them of a planned transfer back to Italy, possibly via charter flights. The first such transfer is planned for Oct. 9, it said.

"If someone, in Berlin or Brussels, thinks of dumping dozens of immigrants in Italy via unauthorized charter flights, they should know that there is not and there will be no airport available," Salvini said in a statement.

"We will close the airports as we closed the ports."

Germany's interior ministry and the refugee agency could not immediately be reached for comment on the report in La Repubblica.

German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer said last month that a deal with Italy had been reached and that he expected it to be signed shortly. But Salvini denied that a day later, demanding more concessions from Germany.

The Italian minister said at the time that he had received reassurances from Germany that for every migrant it returned to Italy the German authorities would accept a bonafide asylum seeker from Italy.

But Salvini wants concessions on two other issues – a revision of both the EU's Dublin Treaty on how Europe handles asylum requests, and of the EU's Sophia naval mission which is patrolling the Mediterranean.

Seehofer urged German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte to intervene to end the standoff.

"The agreement has been negotiated and follows the same principle as with Greece," Seehofer told the Welt am Sonntag newspaper. "We return refugees back to Italy, but we must take in the same number from sea rescues."

He added: "But now Salvini is suddenly saying: I will only sign if Germany backs Italy's position on asylum in the European Union. The heads of government are required to act [to solve this]."

Italy is seeking an overhaul of the Dublin Treaty so that there is an automatic distribution of asylum seekers throughout the EU, instead of requiring them to stay in the country where they first touch European soil, as is the case now.

It also wants to change the mandate of Operation Sophia, which at present says that all migrants picked up in the Mediterranean must be taken to Italy.

Italy has become the main route into Europe for hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers arriving by sea since the other main route from Turkey to Greece was largely shut in 2016. However, numbers have fallen dramatically over the past 12 months.

(Source: Reuters)

Taliban destroy highway bridges, cut off 3 Afghan provinces

The Taliban have destroyed highway bridges southwest of Kabul during a wide-ranging assault on security forces, cutting off road traffic between the capital and three provinces, officials said Sunday.

Interior Ministry spokesman Najib Danish said Afghan security forces repelled the attack but that gun battles are still underway. He said at least six Afghan police, including a district police chief, were killed in the fighting. A provincial official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief reporters, said at least 10 police were killed.

The official said the Taliban attacked a number of remote checkpoints, and that the toll could be much higher.

Abdul Rahman Mangel, the provincial governor's spokesman, said the attack began late Saturday and appeared to be aimed at seizing the Sayed Abad district headquarters, in the Maidan Wardak province.

The Taliban said they overran the district headquarters, but local officials denied the claim.

Danish said reinforcements have been sent to the area and that "most areas in the district" are under control.

The destruction of the bridges cut off the main highway from Kabul to the Ghazni, Zabul and Kandahar provinces. The battle also cut off electricity to four provinces: Maidan Wardak, Logar, Ghazni and Paktia.

The Taliban have seized a number of districts across the country in recent years and regularly attack security forces. The latest assault comes just two weeks before Afghanistan holds parliamentary elections.

(Source: AP)

Cameroon votes amid violence, threats from separatists

Thousands headed to the polls in Cameroon Sunday for an election that will likely see Africa's oldest leader win another term amid fighting and threats from separatists that have already prevented residents in English-speaking regions from voting.

President Paul Biya, in office since 1982, vows to end a crisis that has killed more than 400 people in the Central African nation's Southwest and Northwest territories in more than a year. The fractured opposition has been unable to rally behind a strong challenger to the 85-year-old leader.

"I am satisfied after performing my civic duty and particularly satisfied that the election is taking place in calm and serenity and without fighting," said Biya after voting. "I hope that the calm will continue after results are proclaimed."

Main opposition Social Democratic Front party candidate Joshua Osih voted in Douala and called for transparency in vote counting.

"My wish is that the results of the ballot should not be tampered with. That transparency should be the watchword and that the choice made by the Cameroonian people be respected," he said.

Even as the candidates spoke, violence had already marked the voting.

The military killed two armed men in the English-speaking northwest town of Bamenda, according to Governor Deben Tchhoffo of the Northwest region.

(Source: AP)

Nearly 200 people arrested during protest against Kavanaugh's confirmation

Nearly 200 protesters were arrested on the steps of Capitol Hill after the United States Senate confirmed Brett Kavanaugh as a Supreme Court justice despite allegations of sexual assault against him.

The demonstrations on Saturday were the latest in a series of protests against Kavanaugh at the Capitol and across the United States.

The protesters carried signs that read "Cancel Kavanaugh" and chanted "We believe survivors."

"The Supreme Court should be the most fit people in the land, the most fit lawyers, the best, the brightest, not people who hide their financial dealings, not people who lie under oath, and certainly not people

Arsenal run riot in second half to win 5-1 at Fulham



Five superb goals gave Arsenal nine wins in a row, the sixth in the league sending them above neighbors Tottenham into third. Fulham, meanwhile, have conceded 21 times, and are in big trouble.

The game started relatively slowly, but Arsenal were the better side and took the lead on 29 minutes, Alexandre Lacazette turning smartly to finish after a fine first touch. But just before half-time, Fulham improved, and a lovely goal from Andre Schurrle sent them into the break level.

Arsenal, though, returned to the pitch in proper manner and absolutely blitzed their opponents from kick-off. Within four minutes they were back in front, again through Lacazette, and then, just 39 seconds after coming on, Aaron Ramsey's backheeled half-volley finished a sweeping move to give them a third goal - easily the best scored in the Premier League so far this season.

After that, it was simply a question of how many Arsenal would score, and the introduction of Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang caused Fulham further problems as they wilted; he produced two expert's finishes to crown the sort of statement victory that has been so sorely lacking in recent times. Arsenal are now playing with confidence and verve, while Fulham must find a way to defend; if not, they will go down.

(Source: Eurosport)

Stuttgart's Korkut becomes first coaching victim of Bundesliga season

VfB Stuttgart fired coach Tayfun Korkut on Sunday, making him the first coaching victim of the Bundesliga season.

Korkut was sacked less than 24 hours after a 3-1 defeat away to fellow strugglers Hanover 96 left Stuttgart bottom of the table with five points from seven games.

The former Turkey international took over in January with the club battling against relegation, led them to an impressive seventh place finish and was rewarded by having his contract extended until June 2020. But their poor start to this season, with only one win so far, prompted a change of heart among the club's leadership. "The lack of development in the course of this season and the negative results have led us to take this step," said director of sports Michael Reschke. "Tayfun Korkut took over the team last season in a very difficult situation and secured with an extraordinary run this Bundesliga season for VfB. We are very grateful to him and his two assistant-coaches."

Korkut, who was born in Stuttgart, has previously coached Hanover 96, Kaiserslautern and Bayer Leverkusen, the latter on an interim basis. The 44-year-old lasted 15 months at Hanover until a 13-match winless run led to his downfall and was in charge of second tier Kaiserslautern for six months in 2016.

Stuttgart said that reserve team coach Andreas Hinkel would lead training until further notice.

(Source: Goal)

Real Madrid goal crisis, Ramos makes Ronaldo claim

Real Madrid are going through a huge crisis that sees the Merengues be without a goal in the last four games. Just to make things worse the La Liga giants have lost the last two games in the Champions League and La Liga. Speaking to journalists in the mixed zone after yesterday's home defeat against Alaves, Ramos replied to journalists who asked whether the recent poor results of the La Liga giants can be linked with the departure of Cristiano Ronaldo in the summer. "Now everybody speaks about Ronaldo but even when he was here we had problems to score goals sometimes. We'll end our goal drought", the Spaniard said (via Ilbianconero).

Ronaldo left Real Madrid for €112 million to join Juventus last summer while Zinedine Zidane resigned after winning three successive Champions League. Real Madrid lost the European Supercup final last summer and are now with three points in two games in the Champions League group stage. The Merengues are on top of the La Liga table alongside Barcelona and Alaves with 14 points. The Blaugrana, however, have one match in hand and can take a three-point lead on their historic rivals if they win tonight in Valencia.

(Source: Calciomercato)

Kovac feeling the heat as Bayern lose again

Borussia Monchengladbach were once again tormentors of Bayern Munich, handing the German champions a 3-0 defeat at the Allianz Arena on Saturday.

Alassane Plea fired home from the edge of the penalty area following a quick exchange of passes in the 10th minute and Lars Stindl scored the second after Jonas Hofmann dispossessed Thiago Alcantara as he tried to play the ball out of defence.

Bayern dominated possession only to be caught out again on the break as Patrick Herrmann netted the third for the visitors with two minutes left, the goal being confirmed by a VAR review.

The loss leaves Bayern in fifth place, four points behind leaders Borussia Dortmund and piles more pressure on under-fire first year manager Niko Kovac.

(Source: Soccernet)

Mixed Martial Arts - Arrests after Nurmagomedov beats McGregor

Chaos erupted after Khabib Nurmagomedov retained his UFC lightweight title with a submission victory over Ireland's Conor McGregor on Saturday with members of his support team arrested after an all-in brawl broke out after the bout.

The Russian ended McGregor's attempt to win back the title when he sealed a brutal submission victory with a rear naked choke hold in the fourth round, which then sparked a mass brawl.

Fights broke out in and around the cage, with a red-shirted fan landing several blows on McGregor before security intervened. Both fighters were escorted from the arena by police and security.

UFC boss Dana White later told Fox Sports that three members of Nurmagomedov's team were arrested.

The fight had been highlighted by bad blood between both camps, with McGregor pleading guilty in July as part of a deal with prosecutors to resolve charges over an April melee in which he attacked a bus the Russian was travelling on.

The situation boiled over after referee Herb Dean waved off the fight, which prompted Nurmagomedov to jump out of the cage and head straight for McGregor's teammate and corner-man Dillon Danis, prompting a series of violent scuffles.

One man jumped the fence, swinging blows at McGregor before being bundled away by security and there were punches thrown in the crowd as police and security struggled to deal with the angry crowd, most of whom had been backing the Irishman.

White entered the octagon to try to placate Nurmagomedov, who was not presented with the belt, although he was announced as the winner.

The Russian's fans chanted his name and danced in the street outside the T-Mobile Arena, but rather than the fight bringing to the end the feud, it only poured more fuel on the fire.



■ WRESTLING STRENGTH

McGregor, making a comeback to the octagon after nearly two years away, had looked dangerous in the early striking exchanges but as expected, Nurmagomedov quickly took the fight to the ground.

The Russian smothered him with his wrestling skills and prevented him from getting back to his feet for the rest of the first round.

The Irishman was then wobbled by an early

right cross from the Russian in the second round and the fight was soon on the floor again, but this time the Russian champion was able to keep the challenger from getting his back to the cage.

McGregor survived until the end of the round, giving a tired smile as the horn went, and in the third period he managed to keep the fight standing, tripping off shots to the head and body as he rediscovered his range.

However, it proved to be too little, too

late, and Nurmagomedov was once again on top in the fourth, sapping McGregor's energy with his excruciating pressure before the choke ended the fight 3:03 into the fourth round.

Despite McGregor tapping his arm to indicate his submission, Nurmagomedov seemed to hold on to the winning choke rather than releasing it, encapsulating the bad blood between the pair.

(Source: Reuters)

Qualifier Medvedev stuns Nishikori to win Japan Open title



Russian qualifier Daniil Medvedev stunned home favourite Kei Nishikori in the final to claim the Japan Open title after a comfortable 6-2 6-4 victory in Tokyo on Sunday. Medvedev came out of the blocks fast and Nishikori, aiming for his third title at this event, could not cope with the big-hitting Russian who broke his serve at the second time of asking.

After that it was a story of mistakes by world number 12 Nishikori -- 11 unforced errors in the first set -- and consistent serving by Medvedev who strolled to a 6-2 first set in just 25 minutes.

Nishikori corrected issues with his own serve in the second set but still could not have an impact on Medvedev's service games, winning only one point on the Russian's serve during the entirety of the second set.

Medvedev bided his time and broke a tired Nishikori, whose final shot was another wild miss, to wrap up the victory and secure a third ATP title of the season. "I was playing amazing and I am so happy to come out on top," said Medvedev, who

will jump to 22nd in the world rankings, after winning in just over an hour.

"To play seven matches and losing only one set, this makes me extremely happy." Medvedev has defeated Milos Raonic and Diego Schwartzmann en route to Sunday's final and did not drop a single service game in his last three matches.

"The serve is the most important thing in tennis right now," the 22-year-old added. Nishikori has now lost eight ATP finals since his last victory, which came at the Memphis Open in February 2016.

"He's serving great. I didn't have any chance on his first serve, even second serve," Nishikori said.

"His ball was skipping a lot on this surface and he was hitting good enough flat shots and he was serving great, so it was tough to play against Daniil today."

"It's been a great couple months. After the US Open, I think I've been playing well," he added.

"I've got to keep playing the same in Shanghai."

(Source: Reuters)

Hamilton closes on fifth title with Japan win



Lewis Hamilton may have been 'allowed to win' last week in Russia but needed no help to take victory Sunday in the Japanese Grand Prix to close on a fifth world championship crown with a virtually unassailable 67-point lead over Sebastian Vettel.

Hamilton's teammate Valtteri Bottas, who moved over for Hamilton at the Russian Grand Prix under team orders, finished second, with Red Bull's Max Verstappen in third place. But it proved another sorry afternoon for Hamilton's title rival Vettel as the Ferrari man lost further ground to finish in sixth place.

After a mistake by his team left the German in eighth on the grid after qualifying, he charged through to challenge Verstappen for third place after just eight of 53 laps at Suzuka. However, going for a passing move on the Dutchman at the Spoon corner, Vettel appeared to misjudge the available gap and made contact, dropping back to 19th. "On that corner you can't overtake, I even gave him (Vettel) room. It's a shame," said Verstappen, who had to serve a five-second penalty for an incident with Vettel's Ferrari

teammate Kimi Raikkonen but still made the podium.

Vettel, whose title hopes have all but subsided, saw it differently: "For me the gap was there," he told Sky Sports. "I had the inside, he tried to push when he shouldn't push any more."

Up ahead, Hamilton, who started from pole, led for every lap for a dominant victory, his 71st and 50th for the all-conquering Mercedes team.

"I loved it, very, very happy. The whole weekend we were strong, it's a great one-two for Mercedes," he said after winning for the fourth time in five years on a track he described as the "best in the world."

With just four rounds to go, Hamilton will go to Austin in Texas knowing that if he achieves victory there, with Vettel finishing lower than second, the coveted fifth championship will be his.

"I can't wait to unleash the best at Austin," he said as Mercedes takes a 78-point lead in the constructors' championship over Ferrari to the United States GP in a fortnight.

(Source: CNN)

Jose Mourinho hits out at 'man-hunting' after Newcastle win

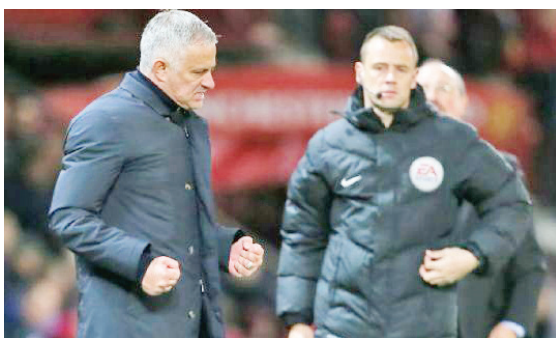
Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho said he had received a text message from the club's board saying not to read the papers and hit out at the "man-hunting" and "wickedness" against him as doubts about his future at Old Trafford continue to dominate headlines.

Mourinho also said young players such as Marcus Rashford and Scott McTominay were struggling to deal with the pressure while speaking after United came from 2-0 down at half-time against Newcastle to win 3-2, thanks to Alexis Sanchez's 90th-minute header.

"This is the first time I've seen in football man-hunting," Mourinho told BT Sport. "I am 55. I am mature. I can cope with it, and I can live with it. I think, really, some of the boys, in spite of them not being the man that is hunted, I think that they are not coping well with it."

United were woeful in the first half and were two down inside 10 minutes but looked a completely different team after the interval as Juan Mata, Anthony Martial and Sanchez turned the game on its head in the final 20 minutes.

"The way they started the game was absolutely panicking. Every ball that was in our box, I thought even in some moments, we couldn't even score in our own goal. It's not



easy for them. For me, it's not easy too, but I think life is made of experiences and some are new and some are déjà vu, but this is new."

Sources have told ESPN FC the board are no longer offering long-term guarantees about their manager's future after the poor start to the season, but Mourinho said he had received a text from Old Trafford bosses the night before the Newcastle match to assure him his

position is safe for now.

"The ones that read the papers that are connected with social media they thought maybe I had gone," he told Talk-Sport. "If I hadn't had an SMS from my board not to read [the papers] I would have been convinced, too."

"They gave me contract until July 2020. I have a contract to 2020, I didn't point a pistol at them. They give me the contract because they wanted to give it me."

A run of four games in all competitions without a victory put pressure on Mourinho, who came under increased scrutiny before the game, with the Daily Mirror reporting that he would be sacked regardless of the result on Saturday.

United entered Saturday having taken just 10 points through seven games -- their fewest at that stage of a top-flight campaign since 1989.

"I think, not just a better manager, but it makes me even a better person because I understand things in the human nature nowadays and in the industry where I work," Mourinho said. "I used to love it. I still love it, but it is different. You know, a lot of wickedness. Too much wickedness in something that should be beautiful."

(Source: ESPN)

Swimmer Izadyar books Iran's first gold at Asian Para Games

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Shahin Izadyar claimed Iran's first gold medal in the men's 100M butterfly S10 at the 2018 Asian Para Games on Sunday.

Izadyar won the gold medal, clocking 01:07.12. Dawan Fraidden from Malaysia (01:07.66) and Kazakhstan's Dmitry Li (01:07.77) claimed silver and bronze medals respectively.

"I am very happy to win Iran's first gold medal in the Asian Para Games. It was my third gold medal in the Asian Para Games. I will compete in six more events and I hope to win more gold medals," Izadyar told Tehran Times.

"It was my first gold medal since 2010 Asian

Para Games and I'd like to thank my coach Mehdi Ziaei and everyone for helping me win the gold," he added.

Iranian sportspersons participate at the Games under the motto of "We Can Do It with Trust And Effort".

Iran are represented by 209 athletes in the Asian Para Games, with 136 men and 73 women competing in 13 disciplines.

Team Iran finished in fourth place in the past two editions in Guangzhou (2010) and Incheon (2014).

The 2018 Asian Para Games are being held from October 6th to 13th at the Bung Karno Sports Complex in the capital city of Jakarta.



Saman Ghoddos scores stunner against Dijon

Iran international Saman Ghoddos scored a stunner in Ligue 1 Conforama to help Amiens SC to a 1-0 win over Dijon FCO on Saturday.

Dijon arrived at the Stade de la Licorne with confidence low, winless in five, no goals in three, and lacking their most menacing forward, Julio Tavares, who is sidelined by an adductor injury.

The Swedish-born attacker, who has already had some memorable moments in his flourishing career in France, scored a wonderful goal in the 39th minute.

Dijon showed plenty of willing after the break, but even the introduction of former France international Yoann Gourcuff (71') failed to inspire Olivier Dall'Oglio's men as Amiens made it six points from their last five league outings.

Ghoddos's goal was good enough to win two games and Amiens will be thankful they beat off the challenge of a host of clubs to pick him up from Östersunds this summer.

Ghoddos was a member of Iran national football team in the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

U-23 players get India senior team call-up

13 U-23 players who were part of the Indian squad that emerged runners-up in the SAFF Cup 2018 last month have been called up by national coach Stephen Constantine for a training camp in New Delhi as part of the senior national team's preparation for the friendly against China PR.

India, who are preparing for the AFC Asian Cup 2019 UAE, will play China PR on October 13 at the Suzhou Olympic Sports Centre Stadium.



The 29-member squad will assemble in New Delhi on Monday for the two-day camp before they leave for China PR on Wednesday.

The friendly against China PR is among several planned as India gear up for their challenge in Group A of the AFC Asian Cup 2019 UAE. Also in the group are hosts the United Arab Emirates, Thailand and Bahrain.

China are in Group C with Korea Republic, the Philippines and Kyrgyz Republic.

"China are a strong team and the match will be a tough test for us. But we need to play these sort of games right now. Getting to play under pressure is important and an away fixture in China is exactly the kind of game we need," said Constantine.

"Hopefully everyone stays free from injury as it's going to be an important game for the build-up to the AFC Asian Cup in January."

(Source: the-afc)

Iranian women make history by refereeing first international Sitting Volleyball matches

Halleh Jafari and Fariba Ahadi hope to become flagbearers for their country after making history last week when they became the first Iranian women to referee an international Sitting Volleyball match.

Jafari, 34, and Ahadi, 39, both refereed matches at the ParaVolley Europe New Nations Subzone Men's Tournament 2018 in Tourcoing, France last weekend as part of the World ParaVolley Level 3 Referee Course, which was held at the same time.

Jafari was the 1st referee of the first match between the Czech Republic and Slovenia on Saturday while Ahadi refereed the last game of the opening day between France and Georgia before both featuring as second referees and scorers on the final day.

"I am honored to be one of first Sitting Volleyball refereeing delegates from Iran and I hope other women in my country follow my lead," Jafari said after the tournament. "It was a great experience for me. I'm very proud to be involved in the course and being able to learn from so many other passionate Sitting Volleyball experts – course directors, other referees and organizers."

■ Growing interest in Iran

The physical education teacher, who is a keen volleyball player herself, and was introduced to Sitting Volleyball in Iran when she was 22.



"When I was a 2nd level referee for the FIVB, I was invited to a national Sitting Volleyball tournament for be a line judge and scorer and that's where I became very interested in the sport. I like very much, the friendly atmosphere and different relationships in Sitting Volleyball – the referees, coaches, players and even the opponents... they are such a big family."

Last month, the National Olympic Committee of the Islamic Republic of Iran President Reza Salehi Amiri had reportedly expressed his support of the promotion of female participation in sport in the country.

■ Paris 2024

And in total, Jafari and Ahadi were part of the successful Level 3 course where all six participants – there were four male candidates: Philippe Dauchel (FRA), Pierrick Le Balch (FRA), Jasmin Ramic (CRO) and Tomas Buchar (CZE) – also passed the course. A third French referee (Stefan Vanderbeeken) certified with a Level 2 after reaching the age limit for a Level 3.

"The is a great sign of the direction of World ParaVolley," World ParaVolley Referees Commission Chair Glynn Archibald said. "Gender equality across all aspects of World ParaVolley is a key goal as witnessed by the 50/50 gender split for referees at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games and a continuation of this objective with our referees is very important. The successful participants in last week's course also bodes very well for the Paris 2024 Paralympics."

France is also building up its referee resources ahead of the Paris 2024 Paralympics where they now have one International Referees (male) and six Candidate International Referee (all males).

World ParaVolley has a total of 86 qualified referees (48 candidate referees and 38 international referees, 22 women and 64 men) while Iran boasts 447 certified referees including 148 women and 299 men.

(Source: Paravolley)

Japan win record third title

Kuala Lumpur: Japan clinched the AFC U-16 Championship Malaysia 2018 title after securing a hard-fought 1-0 win over Tajikistan in the final at the National Stadium on Sunday.

Jun Nishikawa's 63rd minute strike secured Japan a record third AFC U-16 Championship title as Yoshiro Moriyama overcame a steely Tajikistan.

Both sides opted for a cautious approach in the opening minutes but Japan, who made four changes to the lineup that had started in the semi-final against Australia, slowly gained the upper hand with Nishikawa on the left flank sending crosses into the box.

Tajikistan, who were camped mostly in their own half, depended on counter attacks and Rustam Soirov had a glimpse at goal in

the 10th minute when he made his way past two defenders but shot wide.

Japan came close to opening the scoring in the 23rd minute when Nishikawa intercepted a pass and sent the ball forward to Shoji Toyama but with only the goalkeeper to beat, the livewire shot straight into the arms of Mukhriddin Khasanov.

A Tajikistan counter-attack a minute later saw Nidoyor Zabiroy surging down the middle before sending a through pass to an unmarked Islom Zairov but his strike to the bottom left corner was saved by diving Japanese goalkeeper Taishi Brandon Nozawa.

Zayniddin Rakhimov's Tajikistan had coped well with the incessant Japanese pressure but in the 42nd minute, the Tajik backline

was caught off guard when Shunsuke Mito found Nishikawa at the edge of the box but he sent his shot over the crossbar.

Japan may have controlled possession but as the half time whistle was blown, Tajikistan would have been pleased with their defensive resolve.

Japan started the second half on the front foot and sent on Ryuma Nakano in the 54th minute, and after just five minutes, Ryuma headed in Keita Nakano's brilliant lob but much to Tajikistan's relief, the goal was ruled offside.

The East Asians persistence, however, was finally rewarded in the 63rd minute with Nakano sidestepping Emomali Ahmadkhon and sending in his cross to an



unguarded Nishikawa, who let loose a half-volley into the bottom right corner of the net to break the deadlock.

Tajikistan tried to mount a comeback but Japan held on to celebrate a third AFC U-16 Championship title.

(Source: Yonhap)

Iran fail to Advance to FIBA 3x3 U-23 World Cup semis

TASNIM — Iran's women failed to advance to the first-ever FIBA 3x3 U-23 World Cup 2018 semi-final on Sunday.

Iran lost to Ukraine 21-8 in the event's quarter-final.

Russia and Japan will meet together in the final match, while Ukraine face Germany in third-place match.

The Iranian team defeated Malaysia (13-12), Andorra (21-11) and Sri Lanka (21-5) and lost to Russia (5-19) in the competition.

The competition started on October 3 in Xi'an, China and will finish on October 7.

Japan's chance to host futsal World Cup more than Iran

IRNA — Chairman of the technical and development committee of Iran's futsal said that Japan's chance of hosting futsal World Cup in 2020 will be higher than Iran due to national determination and appropriate hardware facilities.

Abbas Torabian said on Saturday that Iran was not lucky to host the futsal World Cup, adding, 'Mehdi Taj, the head of the football federation recently had a meeting with FIFA chairman Gianni Infantino and after returning to Iran, I have not talked to him.'

'My personal impression is that Japan's chance of getting this hosting is much higher because the national determination made in Japan to host is unmatched,' he said. 'They have established a headquarters for the competition for 9 months.'

The chairman of the technical and development committee of the futsal said, 'Unlike them in our country, only the Football Federation and for a short period of time the Ministry of Sports and Youth tried to host the games. Globally, hosting a global games will make a difference in Iran's football, and for the long time the world's news will be allocated to the Iranian futsal.'

Jeonbuk retain K League title

Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors won the 2018 K League title with six matches to spare after playing to a 2-2 draw with Ulsan Hyundai on Sunday.

The draw gave Jeonbuk, who have sealed qualification to the 2019 AFC Champions League, an unassailable 74 points with 23 wins, five draws and just four defeats.

They are 19 points ahead of second placed Gyeongnam, who lost 1-0 to Jeju United earlier in the day, with six matches to play.

Jeonbuk, quarter-finalists in the 2018 AFC Champions League, not only defended the title they won last season but took their overall haul to six in the last 10 seasons and they are just one short of matching Seongnam FC.

Against Ulsan, Jeonbuk striker Lee Dong-gook scored the equaliser from the penalty spot in second half added time.

Lopes had given Jeonbuk the lead in the 54th minute but Ulsan leveled the score four minutes later when Han Seung-gyu fired in a right-footed shot off a pass from Kim In-sung, who scored Ulsan's second in the 82nd minute.

(Source: the-afc)

Thousands apply to be Tokyo 2020 volunteers

The Tokyo Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Tokyo 2020) announced on Friday (5 October) that, just 10 days after the commencement of registrations, more than 30,000 applications for the Tokyo 2020 Games Volunteer Program have been received.

As of 10:00 JST 5 October, 61,826 people have registered to apply and 31,982 people had completed the application. Tokyo 2020 will be offering up to 80,000 volunteer opportunities, and continues to welcome applications from all people with a passion to contribute to the success of the Games.

Registration will be open until early December 2018. The exact closing date for applications will be announced on the Tokyo 2020 website at a later date.

Orientation sessions and interviews for applicants residing in Japan will commence in February 2019, with general training following in October 2019. Orientation for successful overseas applicants will be held between March and July 2019 via video calls, with training to follow from June 2020.

Volunteers will provide valuable support for the operation of the Games in a variety of roles at competition venues and at the Athletes' Village, and their contribution will be a key factor in the Games' success.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Ramos: It would be 'crazy' to sack Julen Lopetegui

Julen Lopetegui said he knows he is vulnerable after Real Madrid were beaten 1-0 at Alaves on Saturday, while captain Sergio Ramos said it would be "crazy" to sack the manager despite Real's run without a win -- or even a goal -- now at four matches.

Madrid had five shots on goal in the first nine minutes, but the fast start fizzled out and before half-time, they had gone a full six hours without finding the net in any competition.

Lopetegui replaced Karim Benzema with Mariano Diaz at half-time, with Gareth Bale then limping off and teenager Vinicius Jr. entering, but Alaves goalkeeper Fernando Pacheco was never seriously troubled.

The final action was a 95th-minute corner, missed by Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, leading to substitute Manu Garcia heading the winner from close range.

The last time Madrid went four games without scoring was in April 1985, when coach Amancio Ortega was immediately fired, but Lopetegui said it was much too early in the season for any such drastic action.

"Coaches are always exposed, but we are not thinking about [the sack]," Lopetegui said in a news conference. "The dynamic is negative. Things are not going as we wanted. We are disappointed, of course. We wanted to win. We know how the life of a coach is, and even more at Real Madrid."

"The coach is always responsible, ahead of the players, no doubt about that. But we are still in October and at worst three points off the top. We now have time to get some very important players back."

(Source: ESPN)

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Memoires of Afghan volunteers in Iran-Iraq war published

CULTURE d e s k **TEHRAN** – A book carrying the memoirs of the Afghans who volunteered to fight for Iran during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war has been published in Iran. Compiled by Tehran-based Afghan writer Mohammad-Sarvar Rajai, “From Leili Desert to Majnun Island” has been published by the Study Center of the Islamic Revolution Cultural Front. Rajai spent 10 years collecting the volunteers’ memories of the war, the center announced in a press release on Saturday. “To achieve unity between our nations, we need to know how the Afghan mujahideen, on their way to find love, crossed the central and northern provinces in Afghanistan, from Leili Desert in the Jawzjan Province and the Dokuheh Garrison in (Iran’s) Andimeshk to reach Majnun Island,” Rajai wrote in his introduction to the book. Thousands of Afghans volunteered to help Iran in the war, during which over 2,000 of them lost their lives. Rajai is the writer of “In the Arms of Hearts”, the memoirs of a number of Afghan people about Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic.

Intl. festivals pick films from Iran

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – A lineup of movies from Iranian filmmakers will be competing in two international festivals. Short documentary “Owsia” (Darkened Water) by Alireza Dehqan and short animation “Stop Killing Home!” by Yunes Mohammadi will be competing in the 1st New Earth International Film Festival running in the Polish city of Krakow from October 15 to 21.



“Owsia” by Iranian director Alireza Dehqan. The Cinanima, an international animation film festival in the Portuguese city of Espinho, has also picked “The Fox” by Sadegh Javadi Nikjeh. The festival will be running from November 12 to 18.

‘We just got Banksy-ed’: balloon girl painting self-destructs at sale

LONDON (Reuters) — A painting by mysterious British artist Banksy shredded itself into pieces at the moment it sold for more than 1 million pounds at a London auction on Friday. Onlookers gasped and laughed after the bottom half of “Girl with Balloon”, one of Banksy’s best-known works, was sucked into a shredder hidden in its frame as the hammer fell, auction house Sotheby’s said. The 12-year-old painting had just been sold for 1,042,000 pounds (\$1.37 million) - matching Banksy’s all-time record. “It appears we just got Banksy-ed,” Alex Branczik, senior director and head of contemporary art, said in a statement on Sotheby’s website. Banksy himself posted an Instagram picture of shocked attendees watching the painting disintegrate, with the caption: “Going, going, gone...” Sotheby’s said this was “certainly” the first time a work of art started to shred itself after coming under the hammer. Video footage showed two men taking the painting away shortly after the sale, bits of the image hanging down from the bottom of the frame in strips. The auction house was not immediately available for comment on the whereabouts of the painting’s remains, or how its value might have changed in light of its self-destruction. Banksy, whose real identity is unknown, is known for sharply ironic outdoor graffiti with political themes, Once a small-time graffiti artist from the English city of Bristol, Banksy’s work has become hugely valuable.

Iran to celebrate 380 years of publishing at Frankfurt Book Fair

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iran plans to celebrate 380 years of publishing at a special ceremony on October 10 during the Frankfurt Book Fair, Iran’s cultural office in Germany has announced. A copy of the first page from a book of Armenian prayers published in 1638 at a Vank Cathedral publishing house in the Jolfa district of the central Iranian city of Isfahan is scheduled to be unveiled at the ceremony. The original copy is preserved at the British Museum in London. What is of high importance is that the machine used to print the book was different from the one invented by Johannes Gutenberg in Germany during the 15th century. A large number of cultural figures and Iranian ambassador to Germany Ali Majedi are expected to attend the ceremony, during which a message from the Armenian Diocese of Iran will also be read. According to the Iran Cultural Fairs Institute, over 20 Iranian publishers and several literary agencies and associations will attend the Frankfurt Book Fair 2018, which will be running from October 10 to 14.

Iranian director makes his debut in Thailand, Cambodia



A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iranian director Soheil Abdollahi has shot his debut feature-film “24 Hours” on location in Thailand and Cambodia. The film stars a cast of unknown actors, including Mahya Dehqani, Amir-Ali Suri, Mehdi Sediqi, Sepideh Beirami, and Anita Ramezanpur. “Using a cast of unknown actors is the key to make a good horror film so I did that in this project,” said Abdollahi. The film was produced at Abdollahi’s Istanbul-based studio Rastak Film. He is seeking to receive official authorization from Iran’s Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to premiere the movie at the Fajr Film Festival, which will be held in Tehran during February 2019.

Opera singer Montserrat Caballe dies in Barcelona, aged 85

BARCELONA (Reuters) — Montserrat Caballe, who took opera into the pop charts by singing “Barcelona” with Freddie Mercury three decades ago, died aged 85 on Saturday. The Spanish soprano, who was born in the Catalan capital, had been in ill health for a number of years and was admitted to hospital in mid-September, a hospital official said. She died in Sant Pau hospital in Barcelona. The Gran Teatre del Liceu opera house in Barcelona, where Caballe performed more than 200 times, described her as “one of the most important sopranos in history”. Spanish tenor Jose Carreras said she possessed a voice of great range, combined with a flawless technique. “Of all the sopranos I’ve heard live in the theater, I’ve never heard anyone singing like Caballe,” Carreras said in an interview with Catalunya Radio. Spain’s royal family called her “the great lady of the opera, a legend of universal culture, the best among the best”. “Her personality and her unique voice will always be with us,” the royals said in a tweet. Caballe released the song “Barcelona” with the Queen frontman Mercury in 1987 and it was used again during the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, a year after Mercury’s death. “She went beyond opera and classical music showing that opera singers are not just limited to the opera houses but go way beyond that,” Christina Sheppelmann, the Liceu’s artistic director, told reporters on Saturday in Barcelona. Renowned for her performances of Italian opera, she also worked with the late tenor Luciano Pavarotti. The Royal Opera House in London, where Caballe sang on a number of occasions between 1972 and 1992, also expressed its condolences, saying she had “inspired millions”. Among other reactions, Spain’s Prime



Spanish opera singer Montserrat Caballe laughs during a concert at Konzerthaus in Vienna, Austria June 22, 2011. (Reuters/Lisi Niesner)

Minister Pedro Sanchez tweeted: “Sad news. A great ambassador of our country dies, an opera soprano recognized internationally. Her voice and her kindness will always remain with us.” A government source said Sanchez would attend Caballe’s funeral, which will be held in Les Corts morgue, in Barcelona, at midday today. Caballe was considered one of the finest modern exponents of the ‘bel canto repertoire’, Spain’s Culture Minister Jose Guirao said on Saturday. “Her loss leaves a huge void,” he said. Caballe’s almost 60-year international career took her from Basel to New York and beyond. She began in the Swiss city in 1956, as Mimi in La Bohème, then joined the Bremen Opera, where she sang from 1959 to 1962, in a wide variety of roles. Wider international recognition came in 1965, when she appeared in a performance of Donizetti’s Lucrezia Borgia at Carnegie Hall in New York. The performance won her great acclaim from the public and made her an overnight sensation. Her success led to her debut that same year at the Metropolitan Opera, as Marguerite in Gounod’s Faust. Her last performance took place in the Catalan town of Cambrills in August of 2014.



St. Louis festival to screen four Iranian movies



A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – Four Iranian films will be screening in different sections of the 27th St. Louis International Film Festival, which is scheduled to be held in the eastern central U.S. from November 1 to 11. “Lunch Time” by Alireza Qasemi will be competing in the Narrative Shorts: Girl’s Life category, the organizers have announced. The film is about a 16-year-old girl who is forced to deal with the harsh bureaucracy and the responsibility of identifying the body of her mother. “Injured” by Mohammad-Hossein Abedini and “Light Sight” by Seyyed Moslem Tabatabai will be screened in the Kids Family Shorts section. “Light Sight” is about a creature named M.E. who is fascinated by a white light outside its room. It tries to reach the light but there are obstacles in the way. “Injured” tells the story of a little girl who tries to find out the secret of the truck that is parked in front of her house. The Narrative Shorts will screen “Maned & Macho” by Shiva Sadeq-Asadi.

Russian tycoon sues Sotheby’s for \$380 million over art deals

MOSCOW/NEW YORK (Reuters) — Dmitry Rybolovlev, a Russian billionaire and owner of Monaco soccer club, has sued Sotheby’s for at least \$380 million, alleging the auction house helped his former art adviser to defraud him. The allegations, which Sotheby’s denies, deepen a long dispute between Rybolovlev and Swiss art dealer Yves Bouvier. According to Rybolovlev, he was overcharged by Bouvier for a collection of paintings. Bouvier denies any wrongdoing. Two companies owned by a trust of the Rybolovlev family and based in the British Virgin Islands filed a civil case against Sotheby’s in a New York court on Tuesday evening. The companies - Plaintiff Accent Delight International Ltd and Plaintiff Xitrans Finance Ltd - are claiming damages from Sotheby’s of at least \$380 million plus interest, according to their lawsuit. “Mr. Rybolovlev’s latest desperate lawsuit is entirely without merit, and we will vigorously defend the company and our employees against these baseless claims,” Sotheby’s told Reuters. Forbes magazine estimates Rybolovlev’s fortune at \$6.8 billion, mostly derived from the sale of Russian potash producer Uralkali in 2010-2011. Rybolovlev, 51, spent more than \$2 billion buying 38 masterpieces from Bouvier between 2003 and 2014, Sotheby’s was involved in 12 transactions, according to the lawsuit. A successful investment was his purchase of Leonardo da Vinci’s portrait of Christ, “Salvator Mundi”, from Bouvier for \$127 million in 2013. In 2017, Rybolovlev sold it for \$450 million at a Christie’s auction, making “Salvator Mundi” the most expensive painting ever sold. However, some of the purchases from Bouvier made a loss. According to the two companies,



Dmitri Rybolovlev, President of AS Monaco Football Club, arrives to attend AS Monaco training, La Turbie, France, March 29, 2018. (Reuters/Eric Gaillard)

Bouvier was the mastermind of a fraud, while Sotheby’s made it possible by instilling Rybolovlev with confidence in Bouvier. In response to the dispute between Rybolovlev and Bouvier, Sotheby’s filed a suit against Rybolovlev in a Swiss court almost a year ago seeking a declaration it had done no wrong. “The false allegations that Mr. Rybolovlev is making are already being litigated in the Swiss courts, which is the appropriate venue for this case,” Sotheby’s said, adding it would seek to dismiss the action in New York and continue to pursue its case in Switzerland. Daniel Levy, Bouvier’s lawyer, declined to comment on the lawsuit. But in a July brief to a U.S. appeals court, Levy portrayed Rybolovlev’s various legal actions against his client since 2015 in Singapore, Switzerland, Monaco and Hong Kong as a “global terror campaign” designed to get him to capitulate. Moreover, there was never a written agreement binding his client as an agent for Rybolovlev’s companies with fiduciary duties, meaning Bouvier was free to sell the art to Rybolovlev at any price he agreed to pay, Levy wrote in the brief.