



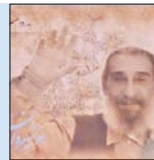
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© File photo

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Joint committee formed to spur exports to 15 countries

ECONOMY **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A joint committee with co-operation of Foreign Ministry, Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), NAJA (Iranian police), and Ministry of Intelligence has been formed to protect and improve Iran's exports to 15 countries across the globe, Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli was quoted by IRNA as saying on Monday. The committee seeks removal of exports

impediments and facilitation of trade of goods, the interior minister told reporters on the sidelines of a meeting. Highlighting the key role of free zones, Rahmani fazli also underscored the significance of injecting exporters' revenues back to domestic financial system and also combating traffic of goods at the border areas as the main objects of the government on the way to encourage exports of Iranian products.

Trump has launched 'economic terrorism' by halting Iranians' access to medicine: Hatami

POLITICS **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Monday that the Donald Trump administration has launched "economic terrorism" by preventing Iranians' access to medicine, calling the move "inhumane". "The U.S. has sanctioned us, because of our independence and free-

dom, sanctions which are inhumane and contrary to principles of human rights. It [the U.S.] even prevents the people from accessing medicine and basic needs by resorting to economic terrorism," he said during a speech at the 4th ICMM Pan-Asia Pacific Congress on Military Medicine in Tehran. ➔2

Assad stresses importance of upgrading historic Syrian-Iraqi relations

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad on Monday received Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and the accompanying delegation. During the meeting the two officials discussed the latest developments at the Syrian and Iraqi arenas and the regional and international situations. President al-Assad stressed that the

victories achieved in combating terrorism in Syria and Iraq are in common because the field in the two counties are one, where blood of the heroes who achieved these victories in both countries is mingled. President al-Assad stressed the importance of upgrading and consolidating the Syrian-Iraqi historic relations particularly at the two peoples' level. ➔13

Khashoggi case will force Trump to do something: ex-senior CIA official

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Paul Pillar, who was CIA intelligence analyst for 28 years, tells the Tehran Times that Khashoggi case will force Trump to do something, but his administration will resist doing more than a necessary minimum, because it does not want to upset its overall relationship with Saudi Arabia.

Pillar also says, "Most likely there will be some sort of sanctions placed on the individual Saudi officials whom Turkey has identified as being directly involved, but Trump will resist placing blame all the way up to the level of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman."

Following is the text of the interview:

■ Due to the relations between the West and the United States in particular with Saudi Arabia, the subject of Jamal khashoggi has become widespread. Usually, in the case of human rights violations, Western countries condoned Saudi Arabia because of Saudi arms purchases and guarantying oil sales by Saudis. But in this case it is different. What are the reasons?

A: There does indeed seem to be a difference between how the Khashoggi case is being viewed and how previous human rights violations involving Saudi Arabia have been treated. One reason is Jamal Khashoggi's relative prominence in the United States, where he resided and was

a regular contributor to a major newspaper in Washington. Another reason is the shock factor involving the nature of the alleged crime, with a possible murder and dismemberment inside a diplomatic mission.

■ Some believe that as Saudi Arabia did not lower the price of oil at request of Trump, the United States is putting pressure on Saudi Arabia through khashoggi subject. What is your opinion?

A: It is very unlikely that the Trump administration is thinking along any such lines. A close relationship with Saudi Arabia is a centerpiece of that administration's policies in the Middle East. The Khashoggi affair, far from being a tool of the administration, is a very unwelcome development for it. ➔7

Iran, India should bolster tourism cooperation

By Uzair Hasan Rizvi

TEHRAN — Is it safe for an Indian tourist to travel to Iran? How cheap is Iran for an Indian tourist?

While I was looking for ways to travel to Iran as a tourist, these were some of the common questions I came across on Google while researching for tourism avenues for an Indian traveler.

The coverage of Iran in the mainstream global media has largely been toxic for obvious reasons. The news that comes out from the country is either about the nuclear program, regional rivalries or the crippling economy due to U.S. sanctions. Whether Iran has the right to pursue nuclear program for peaceful energy purpose is a different debate.

With the Trump administration re-imposing draconian sanctions on Iran, this is an opportunity for Iran to find alternative ways to strengthen its

economic ties with friendly countries, including India. One of them is tourism.

Although India is yet to taken its final decision on oil imports from Iran, reports suggest that the Indian government would most likely continue oil trade with Tehran, defying U.S. sanctions. Two major Indian oil companies recently put orders for Iranian crude oil for November, when the petroleum related sanctions take effect, which is an indication that India won't buckle under the U.S. pressure.

Nevertheless, looking beyond the energy cooperation between India and Iran, tourism is one area that can bring the two time-tested allies closer and bolster their ties further.

Iran, known for its rich culture, is home to many historical places, but its tourism sector remains largely underdeveloped due to myriad problems ranging from infrastructural issues to mismanagement.

A report says that 72,809 Indians traveled to Iran during the last Iranian fiscal year (March 2017-18), accounting for 2.3% of total foreign visitors. Iranian tourism authority's data indicates a 6.6% drop in the number of Indian visitors, compared with the year before.

Although Iran boasts of a diverse landscape which offers plenty of recreational opportunities, tourism is largely confined to holy pilgrimage sites like Mashhad and Qom which are highly revered by Shias across the world, including in India.

A large percentage of Indians who are not Muslims have to be lured in a different way. Definitely, Iran with its Islamic and cultural heritage can be transformed into a lucrative tourist hub, the way Turkey has remodeled itself, where both sets of tourism, religious and recreational, co-exist. Turkey draws around 100,000 tourists from India every year. ➔6



EDITORIAL
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Terror business in Macron's style

In an exclusive interview with FRANCE 24 and RFI, French President Emmanuel Macron said: "It is incorrect to state that Saudi Arabia is important economically to France in any area. With Saudi Arabia and the UAE, we have a co-operative relationship based on the whole truth and clarity, but it's a strategic tie. The fight against terrorism goes hand in hand with these two countries."

But according to the latest polls in France, most citizens in the country are calling for a ban on arms sales to Riyadh. French authorities nevertheless continue to engage in "terrorist business" with Saudi Arabia.

In a recent YouGov poll, 75 percent of French people want Macron to suspend arms exports to countries involved in the war on Yemen, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. But Emmanuel Macron, and Le Drian and other Elysée officials ignore their citizens' requests and continue to support the Saudis.

It is obvious that the symbol of the alleged terrorism claimed by Macron and other European officials are the innocent Yemeni people who have been killed by bombing or starvation during this war. French officials are also well aware of Saudi interventions against Bahrain's innocent civilians.

It can be argued that Macron's remarks about the joint fight against terrorism between Paris, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi are so unbelievable and ridiculous that not even the closest people to the French president are persuaded, because these three countries are considered the real source of funding for terrorism in West Asia.

Regarding the political support given Paris by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, France, as a country with veto power in the United Nations Security Council, has used this as leverage to prevent Saudi Arabia's condemnation by the United Nations. In this regard, the French have a common approach with the other two Western countries, the United States and Britain. All three countries have had a devastating impact on the Middle East. One of the goals the French are pursuing is to create insecurity in the with the aim of continuous intervention. As noted above, there is a close co-operation between Paris, London and Washington. Emmanuel Macron and other French officials, in sum, are partly responsible for Saudi Arabia's and the UAE's crimes in West Asia and must be held accountable for them along with the Saudis.



ARTICLE
Masoud Hossein
Head of the Sport Desk of the Tehran Times

Para athletes beyond expectations

Head of the 2018 Asian Para Games, the National Paralympic Committee's officials said Iran would participate in the Games to defend its fourth place in Incheon but the sportspersons performed beyond the expectations.

Iranian para athletes came fourth in inaugural edition of the Asian Para Games in Guangzhou 2010, winning 27 gold, 24 silver and 29 bronze medals.

Not bad for the west Asian giant in Paralympic sports.

Four years later in 2014, in the second edition of the games, held in Incheon, South Korea, Iran once again finished in fourth place but with 10 more gold medals.

In that game, one more gold medal could have earned Iran third place instead of Japan, a missed opportunity for Iran.

In the 2018 Asian Para Games in Jakarta, Indonesia, Iranian para athletes surprised everyone by winning 51 gold, 52 silver and 53 bronze medals.

Iran has participated in the last eight editions of the Paralympic Games and has always displayed power in the prestigious event.

Paralympic will never forget Ghader Modabber as the most decorated Iranian para athlete with five gold medals.

He is the first ever Iranian athlete who has won five gold medals in Olympics or Paralympics, a perfect example that there is no limitation to what one can imagine and do.

Iranian disabled people face many hurdles in finding job, city transportation and sometimes discrimination, but they have proved themselves in sports.

Iranian para athletes are more successful than the healthy athletes in the international fields.

Take the following para athletes for example: super heavyweight powerlifter Siamand Rahman is the world's strongest man who has won two Paralympics gold medals so far.

Archer Zahra Nemat is the first Iranian woman to have won gold at either a Paralympic or Olympic Games.

Sitting volleyball player Morteza Mehrzad is the tallest athlete to compete in the history of the Paralympics, standing at an incredible 2.46m tall.

At any event, Iranian para athletes are getting stronger by day, good news for the country perhaps as the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games is getting close.



© Tehran Times / Mohammad Moheimeini

Chogan 'Peace & Friendship Cup' held in Tehran

TEHRAN — The first edition of the 'Peace & Friendship Cup' was held in Zoljanah Club in Tehran on Sunday.

Kioumars Heydari, commander of the Army Ground Forces, attended the competition. Chogan is an ancient Iranian team sport played on horseback with the objective of scoring goals using a long-handled mallet.

Chogan was included on UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in late 2017.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Guardian Council: Reforming electoral law is essential

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Abbasali Kadkhodaei, spokesman for the Guardian Council, said on Monday that reforming the electoral law is an “undeniable necessity”.

In a Twitter post, Kadkhodaei wrote, “The general electoral policies were issued two years ago. Clause 10 of the policies was: promotion of merit-based selection, with proper preparation in selecting competent candidates within the Islamic Republic of Iran who possess qualities commensurate with the relevant position.”

“Reforming the electoral law is an undeniable necessity,” he concluded.



Iran denies evacuation of its embassy in Ankara

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Foreign Ministry on Monday dismissed as a “lie” media reports that Iran had evacuated its embassy in Ankara after a suicide bombing threat.

“Our embassy’s personnel (in Ankara) are at work and doing their daily activities in full security and health,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said.

It came after some Turkish media outlets claimed that Iran’s embassy in Ankara had been evacuated after Turkish security services received a tip about a possible suicide bombing plot.

Also, a staffer of the Iranian embassy in Ankara was quoted by Tasnim as saying that the diplomatic mission was not facing any threat while the Turkish police have tightened security outside the building.



Fuel-smuggling groups arrested in Fars

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Forces from the Intelligence Ministry have managed to disband several groups involved in smuggling various kinds of fuels, the ministry announced on Monday.

In a statement, the Ministry stated its forces in the southern province of Fars have identified several fuel-smuggling groups and arrested six members of them, Tasnim reported.

The smugglers usually hid fuels through increasing the capacity of fuel tanks of buses and sold the fuels in the main routes between Shiraz, Zahedan, Iranshahr, and Chabahar, the statement said.

Ever since Iran’s national currency has dropped rapidly in value, the smuggling of fuel out of Iran has soared.



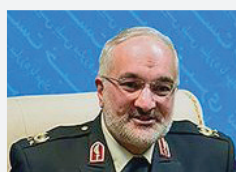
Iran-Pakistan border committee meeting begins

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The sixth meeting of Iran-Pakistan Permanent Border Committee commenced in Pakistan’s southwestern city of Quetta on Monday, IRNA reported.

Representatives from customs, security forces and other officials from Iran’s Sistan-Baluchestan and Pakistan’s Balochistan provinces are taking part in the two-day meeting.

Pakistan-Iran border affairs, security issues, trade activities in border villages and mutual cooperation were slated to be discussed in the meetings.

The committee regularly meets to enhance joint cooperation. The 5th meeting was held in Iran’s Zahedan.



403 tons of narcotics seized since March 21

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Some 403 tons of narcotics have been seized in Iran since the beginning of the Iranian calendar year (starting March 21, 2018), chief of the National Drug Control Agency has said.

“Iran holds the world’s record in seizing narcotics,” Mehr quoted Massoud Zahedian as saying. “Over the past 9 months, 1290 drug trafficking groups were (also) disbanded.”

Zahedian stressed the importance of beefing up borders as a part of the fight against drugs, emphasizing that the Islamic Republic is the “flag-bearer of fighting narcotics.”



Ashton voices concern over fallout of U.S. JCPOA exit

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Former European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton has voiced concerns about the U.S. unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA, and its consequences for other diplomatic talks and joint collaborations in the future.

Ashton made the remarks in an interview with the Director-General of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Karin von Hippel published on Friday.

She also pointed to Iran’s compliance with the deal, saying, “As far as I’m aware, the Iranians are 100% compliant with what they were asked to do, and that of itself is quite interesting because in many agreements you don’t get 100% compliance.”

Trump has launched ‘economic terrorism’ by halting Iranians’ access to medicine: Hatami

1 → On October 3 the United Nations’ top court ordered the United States to lift sanctions on “humanitarian” goods to Iran. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) unanimously ruled that Washington “shall 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 said 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.”

■ **‘Iran is a peace-seeking country’**
The defense chief went on to say that Iran is a “responsible” and “peace-seeking” country that is committed to principles of human rights and international obligations.

However, he said, Iran is “powerful” to defend itself.

The minister said the world realized that Iran was sincere in saying that its nuclear program was peaceful and it was the United States which proved it is not faithful.

“During the past years, the world has witnessed Iran’s good intention... and has practiced self-restraint and patience in spite



of the U.S. violations,” the minister remarked.

U.S. President Donald Trump announced Washington’s exit from the multilateral 2015 nuclear deal on May 8 and ordered restoration of sanctions. The first batch of sanctions was

snapped back on August 6 and the second wave of sanctions will return on November 4.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also announced in May that the U.S. will apply economic and military pressure against Iran

and will impose “the strongest sanctions in history” on the Islamic Republic.

The restoration of sanctions happened despite the fact that the United Nations’ International Atomic Energy Agency has issued dozens of reports each time confirming Iran’s full commitment to the terms of the nuclear agreement.

According to the nuclear agreement, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran was obliged to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

The JCPOA was confirmed by the UN Security Council resolution 2231, turning the agreement into an international law.

■ **‘The world will regret for not standing against violation of international law’**

Elsewhere, Hatami said that the world will finally regret not standing against violation of international law by the Trump administration.

“If the nation and countries do not stand against violations of law, they will witness emergence of new Hitlers and serious human disasters,” the defense chief warned.

Iran says studying opening of EU office in Tehran

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi has said Iran is considering the opening of a European Union office in Tehran and that both sides are weighing the conditions and possibilities on the matter.

“The issue was raised before by the European Union, but we’re still weighing the issue and we will announce our decision after examining the issue thoroughly,” Qassemi said at a press conference in Tehran on Monday.

Asked about efforts by the three European signatories to the nuclear agreement to salvage the deal through a mechanism, Qassemi said great efforts have been made in this regard and “we hope to receive this mechanism soon.”

“In fact, in addition to the three European countries, China and Russia also have responsibility in this regard. So they

have also been present in talks about this issue,” he stated.

The spokesman added that Iran’s relations with China and Russia goes beyond the JCPOA-related talks and that Tehran is willing to strengthen ties with the two countries.

On the case of the Iranian diplomat who was arrested months ago on suspicion of plotting a bomb attack on a meeting of Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO) in Paris, Qassemi said, “We firmly believe the diplomat is innocent and has fallen victim to a plot orchestrated by a terrorist group which aims to hurt Iran’s relations with European countries.”

He further said the European countries would sooner or later come to the same conclusion. “Nevertheless, we would spare no efforts to prove that he is innocent through

legal channels.”

■ **Iran receives ‘written note’ about U.S. exit from Treaty of Amity**

Qassemi also confirmed the receipt by Iran of a “written note” about America’s withdrawal from the “Treaty of Amity,” signed between the two countries in 1955.

The U.S. announced it would pull out of the treaty after it was handed a defeat at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in a case filed by Iran that had invoked the treaty.

Iran has filed another lawsuit against the U.S. at the same court but over a different matter. The Islamic Republic has invoked that same treaty in its new complaint.

Qassemi said that despite a declaration of withdrawal, the pullout from the “Treaty of Amity” would take at least a year to take effect.

Iran to sign deal to export marine medicine equipment

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Amir Rastegari, managing director of Iranian Defense Ministry’s Marine Industries Organization, said on Monday that Iran will soon sign agreements on building and selling marine medicine equipment with a number of countries.

“A number of countries have called for cooperating with us in building marine medicine equipment. We will start negotiation on designing, building and selling the equipment after this conference,” the rear admiral told reporters on the sidelines of the 4th ICM Pan-Asia Pacific Congress on Military Medicine in Tehran.

“This is the fourth congress of military medicine in the sphere of the Indian Ocean and Oceania in which more than 30 countries participated. An exhibition of Defense Ministry and the armed forces capabilities was also held on the sidelines of the congress,” he stated.



The rear admiral added that Iran exhibited a number of the systems and equipment which were built domestically in spite of sanctions.

“All the equipment in the exhibition are domestically-produced which were built by the knowledge-based corporations and Marine Industries Organization,” Rastegari explained.

Lawyer: U.S. violating intl. law by freezing Iranian assets

By staff and agency

Maryam Jalalvand, an Iranian lawyer from Tehran University, has said that the U.S. has violated international law by freezing nearly \$2 billion of Iranian assets.

In an interview with Sputnik published on Monday, Jalalvand said that “for many years now, the U.S. has been making false accusations against Iran.”

“On the basis of these accusations, Washington has been making illegal decisions to freeze Iranian assets and property, which is a direct violation of international law,” she explained.

She said that a lawyer representing the interests of the U.S. U.S. Department claimed during the first meeting of the ICJ in The Hague that Iran is allegedly an accomplice in terror attack in Lebanon in 1983 and will be held responsible for this under U.S. law.

“In response, Iranian lawyers accused the U.S. of speculation on the terrorist threat from Iran, stressing that Wash-



ington is trying to evade responsibility and hush up the discussion of the main issue for which a meeting was convened, namely, the illegal alienation of Iranian property,” Jalalvand said.

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

Saudi Arabia in existential crisis of own making: senior diplomat

Saudi Arabia has exposed itself to an existential crisis by repeatedly pursuing “abortive policies” on a regional level, says the Iranian administration’s point man on the Middle East.

In an exclusive interview with Press TV’s website, part of which was published on Monday, Hossein Jaber Ansari, senior assistant to the Iranian foreign minister on Middle East affairs, said Saudi Arabia is following policies that deserve its interests.

“With its abortive [...] policies and its incomprehension of the deep transformations that have taken place around it over the several past decades, Saudi Arabia has exposed itself to back-to-back crises and serious attrition, which has gobbled its entire economy, polity, and existence,” Jaber Ansari said.

“More than anyone else, Saudi Arabia itself is to lose as a result of these abortive policies, because it has entangled itself in a quagmire and a debilitating confrontation on the regional level, and especially in Yemen, [where] it has become consumed by its rhetoric,” he added.

Jaber Ansari said that the war “has turned into a bottomless chasm for Saudi Arabia.” Not only has it not removed Saudi Arabia’s purported security concerns in Yemen, it has bogged Riyadh down, he said.

The Iranian official said that Saudi Arabia considers Yemen its “historical backyard” and an extension of the Arabian Peninsula and claims that Iran has entered into that backyard to harm Saudi interests.

“That is Saudi Arabia’s rhetoric. In the real world, regardless of what Iran’s policy is — we have our own

interpretation in that area and others may have theirs — the more Saudi Arabia has gone down that path, the more it has pushed the Yemeni nation away from itself,” he added.

He said Riyadh is “injecting a hatred of itself” into the Yemeni society. That hatred, he said, is “quietly” spreading even among those Yemeni politicians who are seemingly on the Saudi side.

“Everyone can see that it is Saudi Arabia and the coalition it is leading that have put Yemen on the brink of collapse, disintegration, hunger, contagious diseases, large-scale killing, and the silent death of a nation.”

Jaber Ansari said the Saudi-led coalition is following “an intentional military policy” of targeting “each and everyone, indiscriminately, to tire the nation out.”

Japan’s new ambassador submits credential to Zarif

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Japan’s new ambassador to Tehran, Mitsugu Saito, (left) met on Monday with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to submit a copy of his credential to him. Before embarking on mission to Tehran, Saito served as Japan’s ambassador to Oman.



© IRNA/Abdollah Heydari

Syrian army raises national flag on Quneitra crossing after official reopening

The Syrian army has raised the national flag over Quneitra crossing on the border with the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights after nearly five years since it was taken over by militant groups.

In a statement to Syria's official news agency SANA on Monday, Quneitra Governor Hammam Dbayat said the official reopening of the key crossing came after the great victory achieved by the Syrian army against anti-government militants and the return of the UN peacekeepers to the Golan Heights.

In August, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) returned to the border between Syria and the occupied territories and carried out a first patrol in the area, about four years after it was shuttered due to militant attacks.

The UN force returned to the area after Syrian government forces, backed by Russia, succeeded in recapturing territory near the Golan Heights and driving out armed militant groups from a "de-escalation zone."

SANA news agency said the reopening of the crossing would ensure communication with Syrian people in Golan, facilitate the transfer of humanitarian aid and crossing of students along the border.

In addition to Quneitra, Jordanian officials announced a day earlier the reopening of Naseeb crossing, Jordan's main border crossing with Syria, after a three-year closure due to the presence of foreign-backed terrorists.

In July, Syrian troops recaptured the crossing, which terrorists had seized in 2015, disrupting the major trade route between Syria and Jordan, Lebanon and oil-rich Persian Gulf countries.

The reopening of the crossing is a major boost to Jordan's struggling economy amid price rises and austerity measures which have sparked the country's worst protests in decades.

"The Naseeb crossing is a vital lifeline for trade between the two brotherly countries Jordan and Syria through them to other Arab countries," said Jordan's government spokeswoman Jumana Ghunaimat.

The resumption of commercial trade through the crossing is a diplomatic victory for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, whose government is facing boycott by Arab states allied to the House of Saud regime.

■ Deadline passes for Syria's Idlib buffer without fighters leaving

Meantime, fighters in Syria's Idlib have failed to meet a deadline to leave a planned buffer zone around the country's last rebel bastion as set out under a Russian-Turkish deal.

The armed groups were supposed to withdraw from the buffer on Monday as a final condition to implementing a Russian-Turkish agreement to stave off a Syrian government offensive on the northwestern region of Idlib.

The accord hung in the balance early on Monday, seven years into a grinding foreign instigated war that has killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced millions.

Just hours before the deadline expired, rebels vowed to continue to fight.

"We have not abandoned our choice of jihad and fighting towards implementing our blessed revolution," said Hay'et Tahrir al-Sham (HTS/Organization for the Liberation of the Levant/Levant Liberation Committee/Tahrir al-Sham/al-Qaeda in Syria), an alliance led by al-Qaeda's former Syrian affiliate.

"We appreciate the efforts of all those who strive inside and abroad to protect the liberated area," it said in an apparent reference to Turkey.

"But at the same time, we warn of the deceitfulness of the Russian occupier," it said of President Bashar al-Assad's ally.

Under the deal, heavy weapons were to have been withdrawn from the horseshoe-shaped buffer by October 10 and fighters to have left by Monday.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said it had not observed any fighters leaving the outlined demilitarized area by the time midnight struck.

"The jihadists not withdrawing gives the regime and Russia an excuse to carry out a military operation at least



within the demilitarized zone," Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman said.

HTS likely "tried to gain time by neither explicitly refusing nor accepting the deal" between Russia and Turkey, he said.

Late Saturday, "heavy mortar shells" were fired from the planned buffer area into regime territory, killing two soldiers, according to the Syrian Observatory.

Rebels reportedly fulfilled the first part of the deal, with Turkish officials, armed factions, and the Observatory reporting the area was free of heavy weaponry.

But the mortar fire that hit an army position in Hama province appears to have violated the accord.

It was unclear which groups fired the mortars late on Saturday as both the Turkish-backed National Liberation Front and rival factions were present in the area. The NLF holds about half of the Idlib region and has welcomed the accord.

The lion's share of Idlib is held by Hay'et Tahrir al-Sham, as well as more headline fighters such as Hurras al-Deen (Guardians of Religion Organization) and Ansar al-Islam.

Those groups also control more than two-thirds of the planned buffer zone and were supposed to withdraw by Monday.

Hurras al-Deen has publicly rejected the agreement, although it apparently withdrew its heavy arms from the area last week.

HTS, widely considered the most powerful force in Idlib, had quietly abided by the deal's first deadline and re-stationed heavy arms elsewhere.

But getting the group to agree to the second part of the deal has proven more difficult.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and other top government officials have warned the Idlib deal was only a "temporary" measure.

On Friday, residents around Idlib received warning messages on their mobile phones from the Syrian army. "Get away from the fighters. Their fate is sealed and near," one said.

The agreement signed on September 17 averted a large-scale offensive, which the United Nations had said could cause massive displacement and bloodshed.

The UN warned that such action would provoke a humanitarian disaster in the region, where as many as 800,000 people - half of whom are internally displaced from previous offensives - could be forced to flee again by a regime assault on Idlib and surrounding areas.

Nearly three million people live in the zone now, hundreds of thousands of them already displaced by the brutal seven-year foreign sponsored war and others heavily dependent on humanitarian aid to survive.

■ Syrian forces dig up U.S.-made guns in terrorist arms cache near Damascus

Syrian security forces have discovered considerable amounts of Western and the United States-made munitions, including submachine guns, Kalashnikov rifles, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and sniper rifles, used by foreign-sponsored Takfiri militants in the country's southwestern province of Rif Dimashq.

Syria's official news agency SANA reported that government troops launched a clean-up operation in the town of Yalda, located on the southern outskirts of Damascus, and uncovered a huge cache of ammunition and explosives carefully hidden inside a plastic water tank at a local farm.

The discovery included NATO(North Atlantic Treaty Organization)-standard sniper rifles, a LAW portable anti-tank weapon, thermal and night vision equipment, grenades, improvised explosive devices, multiple RPG launchers, Kalashnikov rifles and Dragunov sniper rifles.

Takfiri militants are thought to have hidden the weapons at the farm earlier this year before leaving the area to the troubled northwestern city of Idlib.

On May 4, Syrian army soldiers discovered Israeli-made weapons, including chemical warfare, digital equipment and drugs, destined for foreign-sponsored Takfiri militants and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists in the country's central province of Homs as well as Rif Dimashq province.

The Arabic service of Russia's Sputnik news agency reported that the ammunition and explosives were found in the southern part of Homs, located 162 kilometers (101 miles) north of the capital Damascus. They were meant to be distributed among anti-government extremists groups.

Elsewhere in al-Hajar al-Aswad city, located just four kilometers south of Damascus, Syrian soldiers found Israeli-made weapons stashed inside a network of secret underground tunnels.

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: agencies)

East of Euphrates Syria's next target after liberation of Idlib: FM

Syria's Foreign Minister Walid Muallem says the next target after the liberation of Idlib is to retake the area east of the Euphrates, which is held by the United States-backed Kurdish militants.

"After Idlib our target is east of the Euphrates," he said at a press conference with his Iraqi counterpart Ibrahim al-Jaafari in Damascus on Monday, stressing his country's determination to restore sovereignty over all Syrian territories.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Friday the U.S. is seeking to establish a quasi-state east of the Euphrates River and create illegal structures there.

"On Syrian territory there are vast lands east of the Euphrates where absolutely unacceptable things are taking place," Lavrov told France's Le Figaro.

"The U.S. is trying to use these lands through their Syrian allies - above all, through the Kurds - in order to establish a quasi-state there," he went on to say.

The U.S. has been conducting airstrikes against what it says are the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group positions inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a United Nations mandate.

The U.S. and its allies have repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians and drawn criticism over their failure to destroy ISIL, which they claim to be fighting.

Muallem on Monday said the U.S. has destroyed Raqqah Province under the pretext of fighting ISIL. The U.S.-sponsored militants are refusing to hand back Raqqah to the government control after taking it over from ISIL last year.

Amnesty International's new Secretary General Kumi Naidoo said on Friday he had been shocked by the horrific destruction and utter human devastation left by the U.S. airstrikes in Raqqah.

Muallem said Washington continues to support ISIL and evacuate its members to the east of the Euphrates.

In his remarks, Muallem touched on a deadline which passed on Monday without Takfiri terrorists leaving a planned buffer zone in Idlib as set out under a Russian-Turkish deal.

The minister said other options are on the table if the militants do not comply with the requirements of the deal, without elaborating.

The deal, agreed last month on Turkey's initiative, forestalled an imminent offensive by the Syrian government forces to liberate the province, the militants' last major stronghold in Syria.

"We cannot keep quiet about the continuation of the current situation in Idlib if the Nusra Front refuses to comply with this agreement," Muallem said.

The minister said it was up to Moscow now to judge whether the deal had been fulfilled.

"Now we must give the time to our friends the Russians to judge whether the agreement was fulfilled or not," he said.

Muallem said Ankara has the means to ensure the agreement is complied with.

"For us we said always Idlib, as any other province, has to return back to Syrian sovereignty. We prefer to have it through peaceful means, through reconciliation, but if not there (are) other options," he added.

(Source: Press TV)

Turkey suspends over 250 local officials amid crackdown

Turkey has suspended more than 250 senior local officials over alleged terror links and activities unrelated to their posts, the interior ministry says.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu removed 259 local neighborhood heads, known as "muhtar" in Turkish, from their posts, his office said in a statement on Monday.

The statement did not provide further detail on what terror organizations the officials were allegedly linked to.

The muhtar is the elected chief of a village or a city neighborhood, and responsible for day-to-day services for residents such as registration.

Turkey has suspended or sacked over 140,000 public sector employees because of alleged links to a movement led by the United States-based opposition cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom the Ankara government accuses of having masterminded the July 2016 coup attempt against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Tens of thousands of people have also been arrested in Turkey on suspicion of having links to Gulen and the failed coup.

During the 2016 botched putsch, a faction of the Turkish military declared that it had seized control of the country and the government of Erdogan was no more in charge. The attempt was, however, suppressed a few hours later.

Ankara has since accused Gulen of having orchestrated the coup. The opposition figure is also accused of being behind a long-running campaign to topple the government via infiltrating the country's institutions, particularly the army, police and the judiciary.

Gulen has denounced the "despicable putsch" and reiterated that he had no role in it.

The international community and rights groups have been highly critical of the Turkish president over the massive dismissals and the crackdown.

■ Turkey suspended over 500 village guards

Last week, the interior ministry suspended 559 village guards, locals employed to combat Kurdish militants, accused of links to terror organizations while 76 were accused of people trafficking and drug crimes.

Village guards, ethnic Kurds armed men paid by the government supporting the Turkish state, have the right to carry arms, to inform on suspected separatist activities.

Turkish authorities detained 137 people in country-wide operations earlier this month over alleged links to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) militant group. PKK militants regularly clash with Turkish forces in the Kurdish-dominated southeast of Turkey.

Turkey, along with the European Union and the United States, has declared the PKK a terrorist group and banned it. The militant group has been seeking an autonomous Kurdish region since 1984.

More than 40,000 people have been killed during the three-decade conflict between Turkey and the autonomy-seeking militant group.

(Source: Press TV)

Israeli forces shoot dead Palestinian over alleged stabbing attempt

Israeli military forces have shot and killed a Palestinian man in the occupied West Bank over allegations that he tried to stab their fellow soldier.

The regime's military said in a statement that the fatal shooting took place at a bus stop along a main highway between the settlements of Ariel and Barkan near the northern West Bank city of Salfit, without identifying the victim.

"A Palestinian attempted to stab a soldier at the site," claimed the statement. "Troops fired at him and he was killed. There were no casualties among our forces."

Palestinian officials have not yet made any comment on the report.

The Israeli military regularly opens fatal fire on Palestinians, accusing them of seeking to stab its personnel.

Human rights groups have repeatedly slammed Tel Aviv for its shoot-to-kill policy as a large number of the Palestinians killed at the scene of attacks did not pose any serious threat to Israelis.

The latest such incident came amid heightened tensions in the occupied West Bank over the regime's internationally-criticized plan to demolish the Palestinian Bedouin village of Khan al-Ahmar, which sits east of al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Earlier on Monday, Israeli military forces deployed to the village engaged in clashes with the residents protesting the demolition plan.

Several Palestinians were injured in the skirmishes, while a number of others were taken into Israeli custody, according to Palestinian media. To support the military's demolition plan, Israeli settlers also unleashed wastewater into Khan al-Ahmar, which the regime claims has been built illegally.

Palestinians, however, say the demo-



lition plan is part of the regime's forcible displacement policy to make room for its unlawful settlement construction activities on occupied land.

■ Tel Aviv approves 31 new settler units in southern West Bank

Meantime, the Israeli regime has approved plans for the construction of 31 new settler units in the occupied West Bank in grave contravention of international law and a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution against Tel Aviv's land grab policies in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Peace Now, an Israeli anti-settlement group that monitors settlement activity in the West Bank, said on Sunday that the units will be built in the southern West Bank city

of al-Khalil (Hebron), located 30 kilometers (19 miles) south of al-Quds (Jerusalem).

"For the first time in more than 20 years, Hebron will have a new Jewish neighborhood where a military camp once stood," Israel's minister for military affairs, Avigdor Lieberman, said after a weekly cabinet meeting.

He said in a statement that the project will comprise 31 settler homes and two kindergartens. Peace Now said in a statement that the land on which the settler homes will be built legally belongs to the Palestinian municipality of al-Khalil.

Less than a month before the United States President Donald Trump took office, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2334, calling on Israel to "immediately and completely

cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem" al-Quds.

About 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 illegal settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent Palestinian state with East al-Quds (Jerusalem) as its capital.

The last round of Israeli-Palestinian talks collapsed in 2014. Among the major sticking points in those negotiations was Israel's continued settlement expansion on Palestinian territories.

Trump backtracked on Washington's support for a "two-state solution" earlier this year, saying he would support any solution favored by both sides.

■ Palestine denounces illegal Israeli settlement plan in al-Khalil

Elsewhere, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has denounced an Israeli decision to expand an illegal settlement in the heart of al-Khalil city, describing the move as a declaration of war against the Palestinian people.

On Sunday, government spokesman Yusef Al Mahmoud said in a statement that the move was a blatant targeting of the existence of the Palestinian people and an attack on international laws and resolutions, Wafa news agency reported.

Al-Khalil, is holy to both Muslims and Jews, with important religious figures including Abraham, seen as the forefather of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, believed to be buried there. It is home to around 200,000 Palestinians and some 800 settlers living under Israeli army protection in several heavily fortified compounds in the heart of the city.

(Source: agencies)

Oil prices rise on Saudi tensions; demand outlook drags

Oil prices rose on Monday as tension over the disappearance of a prominent Saudi journalist stoked supply worries, although concerns over the long-term demand outlook dragged on sentiment.

Brent crude oil jumped \$1.49 a barrel to a high of \$81.92 before slipping to \$81.13, up 70 cents, by 0850 GMT. U.S. crude was last up 40 cents at \$71.74.

“Growing tensions over the disappearance of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul has proved supportive for oil prices,” said ING commodities strategist Warren Patterson.

Saudi Arabia has been under pressure since Khashoggi, a critic of Riyadh and a U.S. resident, disappeared on Oct. 2 after visiting the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

U.S. President Donald Trump threatened “severe punishment” if it is found that Khashoggi was killed in the consulate.

Saudi Arabia said it would retaliate to any action against it over the Khashoggi case, state news agency SPA reported on Sunday, quoting an official source.

“This has raised concerns that the Saudis may use oil as a tool for retaliation if any sanctions or other action is taken against



it,” Patterson said.

Analysts said, however, that it was difficult to imagine Saudi Arabia taking action that would hit world oil supply.

“So far the oil market is withstanding the verbal war and though prices are slightly higher ... they are a good \$5 below the peak last week,” said Fiona Cincotta, analyst

at City Index.

Exerting downward pressure on prices, Friday’s monthly report from the International Energy Agency said the market looked “adequately supplied for now” and cut its forecasts for world oil demand growth this year and next.

OPEC, Russia and other oil producers, such as U.S. shale companies, had increased production sharply since May, the IEA said, raising world crude output by 1.4 million barrels per day (bpd).

“These are very bearish for oil prices,” said Commerzbank commodities analyst Carsten Fritsch.

The secretary general of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said last week that the group saw the oil market as well supplied and that it was wary of creating a glut next year.

Societe Generale on Monday raised its forecast for Brent crude in the final quarter of this year to \$82 from \$78 per barrel after a sharp rise in prices over the past two months pushed Brent up from about \$70.

The French bank wrote that there were “high levels of risk and uncertainty in the oil markets”.

(Source: Reuters)

Libya’s NOC threatens to halt oil refinery over insecurity

Libya’s National Oil Corporation warned on Sunday it could be forced to suspend production at its Zawiya refinery due to growing security threats to its staff and facilities.

“National Oil Corporation’s board of directors has alerted the Petroleum Facilities Guard and competent authorities regarding the recent lack of protection and security at the Zawiya refinery,” NOC said in a statement.

“Any continuation or failure to address this situation, to ensure staff and site protection and increase security, will affect ongoing operations and result in their suspension.”

The refinery, located 45 kilometers (28 miles) west of Tripoli, receives around 125,000 barrels a day from the southern Sharara pipeline, representing less than half of Libya’s oil output.

It also supplies Tripoli, where fuel shortages are already rife.

Libya descended into chaos after the 2011 uprising that toppled and killed longtime dictator Moamer Kadhafi, with rival militias



and authorities vying for control of the country’s oil assets.

In July, NOC halted crude exports from its Zawiya terminal after a drop in production following an attack.

“This situation is not sustainable, either from a worker security or production standpoint,” NOC chief Mostafa Sanalla said in Sunday’s statement.

“We expect the most basic principles of security to be upheld by those guarding NOC facilities, and call upon the relevant authorities to remedy this inadequacy immediately,” he added.

(Source: Vanguard)

China’s Unipet sells first oil priced off INE crude futures to Shandong-based refiner

Chinese state-owned oil trader Unipet has sold its first crude cargo priced off crude futures traded on the Shanghai International Energy Exchange (INE) to a domestic oil refiner, three sources with knowledge of the matter said on Monday.

The deal illustrates a rising level of acceptance of the INE futures as a pricing benchmark for crude oil trades which may lead to others outside of China to use the INE prices for deals in the future.

Unipet sold 350,000 barrels of medium-sour crude oil produced in the Middle East to independent refiner Chambroad Petrochemicals located in eastern Shandong province at a differential to the Shanghai crude futures, they said.

The 350,000 barrels were sold to Chambroad for November delivery and will be priced against INE futures for December delivery, one of the sources said.

The INE crude futures are the first yuan-denominated oil contract and is aimed at building a regional benchmark to reflect China’s purchasing and pricing power in the



crude market. China is the world’s largest crude oil importer.

Unipet, the trading arm of Asia’s largest refiner Sinopec, is among a handful of companies that made the first deliveries of crude through the sale of futures on the exchange in September.

In March, Unipet signed a supply deal with Shell to buy crude priced off INE futures.

“For sellers it’s easy to convert dated Brent or Dubai to INE, but buyers will have to bear the price volatility,” when they hedge the oil, said a Singapore-based trader.

(Source: Reuters)

The case of the missing Saudi journalist is creating major worries around the oil market

As Saudi Arabia pushes back against international pressure that it played a role in the disappearance of a prominent journalist, analysts are warning there could be fallout for global oil markets.

Relations between the kingdom and the some parts of the international community have deteriorated rapidly after Jamal Khashoggi, a journalist who resided in the U.S., disappeared early this month after visiting the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

Turkey reportedly believes the Washington Post journalist and critic of the Saudi administration was deliberately killed inside the building and his body removed. Riyadh has dismissed the claims.

The stock market in Saudi Arabia plunged on Sunday, and analysts believe oil could be the next to be affected.

Robert Carnell, chief economist head of research at ING, said the incident “opens a new source of risk.”

“Any Saudi retaliation will presumably mainly come through reduced oil supply and higher prices. That won’t help market sentiment,” he wrote in a note on Monday. U.S. President Donald Trump said on



Saturday there would be “severe punishment” for Saudi Arabia if it turned out that Khashoggi was killed in the consulate. But the Middle Eastern country said on Sunday it would retaliate to possible economic sanctions taken by other states over the case, the state news agency SPA reported, quoting an official source.

Michael Heise, chief economist at Allianz, told CNBC’s “Squawk Box” on Monday, that oil could indeed be used as a tool of retaliation by Riyadh.

“They might contemplate doing that, depending on how tough the sanctions, for example by the U.S., might be. That might lead them to, in the end, use oil as a weapon,”

he said. “I’m not too optimistic on that issue.”

“If the oil price continues to react in an upward direction ... that affects many markets, also many emerging markets in Asia, which are net importers of oil. I think that is the most important transmission channel of this crisis,” he added.

The incident is adding to already existing upward pressures on oil prices: Supply is set to fall after U.S. sanctions on Iran kick in next month. The Trump administration had been relying on Saudi Arabia — one of the world’s largest oil producers — to maintain supply and curb surging prices.

That could pose a conundrum for Trump if the situation deteriorates further as U.S. midterm elections loom.

“There’s this situation at the moment where President Trump is heading into the midterm elections, he doesn’t want a high oil price because that is reflecting through to a high gasoline price,” Matthew Smith, director of commodity research at tanker tracking firm ClipperData, told CNBC’s “The Rundown.” “At the same time, we’ve got these sanctions that are going to be kicking in on Iran.”

(Source: CNBC)

How petrochemicals are fuelling oil demand

The International Energy Agency’s report on the future of petrochemicals, which was published last week, provides salutary reading for those who imagine that oil demand is about to peak and then collapse.

Demand for petrochemicals has nearly doubled since 2000 and the sector now consumes 14 percent of daily global oil use (13m barrels a day) and 8 percent of gas (300bn cubic meters). In addition, China uses coal as the feedstock of a chemicals sector that has grown from a minimal base over the last two decades.

The environmental impact of the petrochemical sector is substantial. Emissions from their production may not be as substantial as those from steel and cement (both of which rely predominantly on coal) but they still account for 18 percent of the global total of industrial carbon dioxide emissions.

The sector is also a major user of water, adding to the stresses and shortages in some parts of the world, and significantly adds to waste. The sector produces some 10m tons of waste each year — islands of discarded plastic pollute the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, with one in the Pacific now three times the size of France,

the IEA says.

This week, the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change highlighted in a report the dangers from global warming even if the rise in temperature could be kept to the original target of “well below” 2C by 2100. It warned that emissions had started to rise again after being flat in 2015 and 2016.

Petrochemicals are described by the IEA as one of the “blind spots” in the standard analysis of the energy market, and it is right.

There is no sign of the growth trend being reversed. Petrochemicals run through our daily lives and are pervasive in key industries from automobiles to telecommunications. As the agency points out: “combinations of plastics in electronic equipment are increasingly displacing paper as the medium for conveying information in a digitized world”.

Without petrochemicals we would not have wind turbines or solar panels for renewable energy, of course. Demand growth is driven by the economy, an increasing population and technical advances. The fact that there are no obvious economically viable alternatives for most petrochemical products is equally as important.

The IEA authors describe two scenarios for the future of the industry: one based on current policies, the other a “clean” alternative, which looks highly optimistic.

Recycling can be encouraged, as can the capture of some of the waste that currently leaks into the oceans. Some petrochemical activity can be shifted from its reliance on coal to the use of natural gas. But it is hard to see either preventing substantial growth in both the consumption of petrochemicals fuelled by hydrocarbons and the associated environmental problems.

The central projection in this report is that demand for petrochemical products will grow by 30 percent by 2030 and by 60 percent by 2050, pushing feedstock demand up by 7m b/d of oil. This could offset a substantial proportion of any reduction in emissions achieved through the electrification of light vehicles and further improvements in energy efficiency.

Companies involved in the sector face significant change: the US is able to make use of the substantial volumes of gas released by the shale revolution, the Middle East is concentrating on using low-cost local feedstock and China continues to develop high-value chemicals through

conversion into methane. The European industry will struggle to compete.

With technology, we have yet to see the full impact of new processes such as the direct conversion of crude oil to chemicals, which is being pioneered by Saudi Aramco and the state-controlled group Sabic and could disrupt the refining business.

A big issue for the industry, however, may be growing environmental awareness of the impact of petrochemicals. Campaigns against the use of plastic bags because of their impact on the sea may not make much absolute difference but they signal to companies that change is necessary. Recycling or some means of breaking down plastics to allow safe and easy disposal could become the standard expectation of consumers, and regulation will follow.

An even greater challenge is to identify substitutes for fossil fuel-based petrochemicals in key applications. As the IEA makes clear, “chemical feedstock cannot be decarbonized” — carbon provides the structure and properties of most primary chemicals and the products they produce.

(Source: Financial Times)

U.S. Gulf of Mexico oil and gas output increasing after hurricane

U.S. Gulf of Mexico oil and gas production is returning to near normal levels following Hurricane Michael, data from an offshore regulator showed on Sunday, with oil output off 15.8 percent and natural gas production down less than 10 percent.

The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) also said in a midday update on Sunday that all oil and gas operators have returned to their production platforms. It can take several days after a storm passes to inspect platforms for damages, fully return crews and restore production after wells are shut-in ahead of a storm.

Michael entered the Gulf as a tropical storm and quickly spun into a major hurricane, producing rough seas and winds of up to 155 miles per hour (250 kph) when it made landfall as a Category 4 storm near Panama City, Florida, on Wednesday.

The Gulf production still offline on Saturday morning represented 268,824 barrels per day of oil production and 227 million cubic feet per day of natural gas output, BSEE reported from a survey of 17 oil and gas producers. In all, Michael cost Gulf producers about 3.27 million barrels of oil this week.

Offshore production in federal waters of the U.S. Gulf of Mexico accounts for 17 percent of total U.S. crude output and 5 percent of national natural gas production, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

(Source: Reuters)

India’s energy sector reforms intact despite price cut

India’s decision to reduce retail fuel prices may have raised questions on whether New Delhi would resort to similar cuts often as general elections draw near, but delegates attending the India Energy Forum by CERWeek said the move does not dilute the direction of the country’s energy policy reforms.

The twin blow from rising crude prices and weakening domestic currency prompted India earlier this month to cut retail fuel prices for the first time since aligning them with the global market a year earlier.

Although the move brings additional fiscal burden, delegates said that it’s an effort by the government to give some kind of interim relief to consumers.

“The process of energy sector reforms in India is irreversible. The price cut by the government is the best step taking into account the market situation,” B. Ashok, CEO of Ratnagiri Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd and former CEO of Indian Oil Corp, told S&P Global Platts on the sidelines of the India Energy Forum in New Delhi.

Even leading industry officials have said they don’t expect New Delhi to step back from pushing energy policy reforms.

“Clearly, one of the great initiatives the government took a couple of years back was to deregulate prices. On those premises, players like us have made substantial investments in the retail fuel space,” B. Anand, chief executive officer of Nayara Energy told Platts.

“There is a strong initiative from the government to get more and more private partners into the supply and distribution side. So we believe and we are hoping that there won’t be any change in the progress of policies the government has undertaken,” he added.

■ Balancing act

On October 4, the government reduced the excise tax on both fuels by Rupee 1.50/liter (\$0.02/liter). In addition, New Delhi has asked state-run oil retailers such as Indian Oil Corp, Hindustan Petroleum Corp and Bharat Petroleum Corp, to also reduce gasoline and diesel prices by Rupee 1/liter across the country.

The government said the relief to the consumer would not increase the existing fiscal deficit target of 3.3 percent for the current fiscal year -- 2018-19 (April-March) -- as the government’s direct tax revenue collection had risen in the first half of the fiscal year.

“Let me categorically assure all that there is no going back on deregulation of oil prices,” finance minister Arun Jaitley reiterated after he announced the price cuts.

Dharmakirti Joshi, chief economist at CRISIL, a unit of S&P Global, said a cut in excise duty can be seen as a “price smoothing tool” — raising the excise duty when crude prices are low and cutting them when crude prices rise.

“This is better than tinkering with the revenues of oil marketing companies, which should be avoided as far as possible, as petrol and diesel have been decontrolled,” he added.

■ Road ahead

But some analysts worry if New Delhi might resort to similar cuts again in the future.

“In our view, investors will also worry that the government could again do similar duty cuts, and ask OMCs to absorb a further oil price impact in future as well. The worries would increase in coming months, in our view, as governments typically take more populism closer to elections,” Nomura said in a research note.

New Delhi has also taken additional steps to ease the pressure from rising crude oil prices.

(Source: Platts)

Total in talks to buy stake in Adani’s LNG, city gas projects

French energy giant Total SA is in talks to buy up to half of Adani Group’s stake in LNG projects in Gujarat and Odisha, an under-construction LPG import facility and in its city gas projects, sources privy to the development said.

The French firm is keen on investing in fast growing gas market in India and finds Adani a suitable vehicle as it owns the crucial downstream infrastructure, they said.

Adani holds 25 per cent stake in just-completed 5 million tons a year liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal at Mundra. It is also building a similar capacity LNG import terminal at Dhamra in Odisha at a cost of Rs5,100 crore.

Sources said Total is in talks to buy half of Adani’s stake in the two terminals.

It is also looking at buying a 50 per cent stake in under-construction LPG import terminal that Adani is building at Mundra in Gujarat as well as a stake in Adani’s flourishing city gas distribution projects, the sources said, adding that a preliminary pact may be signed this week during the visit of Total CEO Patrick Pouyanne to India.

India is looking at more than doubling the share of natural gas in its energy basket to 15 per cent in next few years and is giving major push to city gas distribution projects. It imports half of its gas needs, which are projected to rise exponentially as it shifts from polluting liquid fuels to environment friendly natural gas.

While an email sent to Total for comments remained unanswered, Adani Group spokesperson wasn’t immediately available for comments.

(Source: Platts)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Indian minister
hits back
at MeToo
movement

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — Embroiled in the MeToo controversy, India's deputy foreign minister has threatened legal action against the group for women who have accused him of sexual harassment and assault.

M. J. Akbar, who returned from his overseas official trip on Monday, termed the allegations against him false and baseless. He also refused to step down as the deputy foreign minister.

The former journalist and editor with India's leading dailies including The Telegraph and The Asian Age, Akbar is the most prominent name that has figured in India's MeToo movement, which has grabbed headlines in mainstream Indian media.

In a statement posted on Twitter on Sunday, Akbar said that the allegations were politically motivated as the country gears up for the general election next year.

Why has this storm risen a few months before a general election? Is there an agenda You be the judge, he wrote. Many journalists reacted strongly to his statement, calling him a shame for Indian democracy.

Many top Indian journalists, entrepreneurs, filmmakers, and authors have been named in the MeToo movement by women from different walks of life.

Tensions
rise on
Afghan-Pakistan
border

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** - After a brief period of uneasy calm, the tensions between estranged neighbors Pakistan and Afghanistan are again on the boil. A key border crossing between the two countries was shut on Monday as the troops exchanged fire across the border.

The Friendship Gate near Chaman in Pakistan's Balochistan province was closed on Sunday after troops of the two sides exchanged fire, which lasted several hours, Pakistani daily Dawn reported. The gate was briefly opened on Sunday evening to let stranded people cross over.

Pakistani officials, the report stated, accused Afghan troops of opening fire on Pakistani personnel who were erecting a fence along the border in the Tandah Dara Sarochahan area. Afghan officials, on the other hand, accused the Pakistani troops of constructing the fence against legal norms and initiating the fire.

After the incident, Pakistani border authorities closed the Friendship Gate, leaving thousands of people stranded on both sides of the border, said the report.

The political and diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan have always been marked by acrimony and hostility. During the previous government in Islamabad, the relations hit a new low. Although the new government led by Imran Khan has offered to improve ties with Kabul, observers believe it will require strong political will from both sides to settle outstanding issues.

Pakistan
not to join
nuclear
race

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — Reaffirming his country's commitment to non-proliferation, Pakistan's newly-elected president Arif Alvi has said that Pakistan will not join the nuclear race, as nuclear weapons are for defense only.

Addressing an international conference on Global Non Proliferation Regime: Challenges and Response on Monday in Islamabad, Alvi said Pakistan was committed to maintaining strategic stability and peace in the region.

Alvi said that after the Cold War, there is an ongoing race of nuclear weaponry. There should be international laws on the use of nuclear weapons, he said. Pakistan wants peaceful relations with all countries in the region.

He also called for the resolution of ongoing disputes in Indian-controlled-Kashmir, saying that the United Nations should play its role in resolving the problem.

The Treaty was conceived with an objective to prevent nuclear proliferation, work towards full disarmament and promote the peaceful use of nuclear technology. The non-nuclear members states of NPT had agreed not to acquire nuclear weapons and the nuclear member states had pledged to promote the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

UN chief
decries violence
ahead of Afghan
polls

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — The United Nations chief has denounced violent attacks targeting electoral booths in Afghanistan as the country gears up for parliamentary elections later this week.

With terror groups upping the ante ahead of elections, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called on all parties to ensure peaceful and orderly elections.

In the run up to the parliamentary elections on 20 October, the Secretary-General urges all parties to ensure a peaceful and orderly electoral process by creating a safe environment for political candidates to campaign and for citizens to exercise their right to assemble and vote, added the statement.

According to media reports, at least 22 people died and more than 35 wounded when a bomb went off at an election campaign rally in Takhar province in north-eastern Afghanistan on Saturday, and at least two individuals, including a child, were killed in a separate attack on a candidate's office in Herat, western Afghanistan.

Last week, the Taliban issued a stern warning of disrupting the October 20 elections, adding to the anxiety of candidates and voters. In its statement, the group described the elections as a bogus U.S. move to consolidate its invasion of Afghanistan and urged Afghans to avoid participation.

Afghan refugee who defied odds to become
an accomplished physicist in Iran

By Syed Zafar Mehdi

TEHRAN — She was forced to leave her homeland as a small child, along with her family, when the country was battling civil war, much before 9/11 and the American invasion. She became a refugee at a tender age, and faced tremendous hardships while growing up. But, somehow adversities proved to be blessing in disguise for her, making her strong and giving her definite purpose and direction in life.

Forozan Faghiri, born in Kabul and raised in Tehran, has overcome insurmountable odds to carve a niche for herself. A young scientist and physicist, Faghiri did not allow her refugee status and difficult living conditions come in the way of her dreams. At 30, she has hit headlines in both Iran and Afghanistan for her accomplishments.

While talking about her incredible journey, Faghiri recalls the days when her family came to Iran as refugees and suddenly the struggle seemed real. Leaving their country was a difficult decision to take, as it was for thousands of other families that left during the civil war of 90s or during the Soviet invasion before that. Over the years, she overcame many hurdles while chasing her dreams.

When she appeared for the university entrance examination, Faghiri, who studies at Islamic Azad University, says she had difficulty in choosing courses and colleges, but eventually she settled for physics, as it offered great scope and opportunities. When I opted for physics, I tried to be the best, she says. My attempt was to link physics, which is a basic science, to the industry.

Her single-minded dedication and painstaking efforts resulted in a product that eventually became her claim to fame. Faghiri has grabbed headlines in Afghan and Iranian media because of this product, which speaks of her technological prowess. She has designed a pollution monitor with



remote registration and control that is believed to be cheaper and better than Western manufactured pollution monitors.

The device is small and portable and can measure parameters like LPG, CO, smoke, dust, temperature, pressure and humidity. Faghiri says she was able to make and use the device with the help of three different branches of science physics, computer science and electronics. This device is portable, small in size and suitable for everyone, says the young physicist.

Everyone, young and old can benefit from the device

In a first, India and China team up to
train Afghan diplomats

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — For all the major regional players, strategic presence in Afghanistan has a deep significance for host of reasons. It is considered as a laboratory for testing each other's power and influence in the region.

While India has used its soft power to good effect in Afghanistan, other regional powers like Pakistan and China have not managed to gain strategic foothold in the war-ravaged country. In yet another attempt to boost its diplomacy in Afghanistan, India has partnered with China to train Afghan diplomats.

Hailed as first such initiative, India and China came together on Monday to provide assistance to Afghanistan through a joint training program for Afghan diplomats.

The Joint India-China Training Program for Afghan diplomats, to be held between October 15 and 26, kicked off on Monday as part of an understanding reached between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Wuhan.

Ten Afghan diplomats are being trained at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) in India. The program began after the statements by India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi were read out by the diplomats of the two countries.

China's Ambassador to India Luo Zhaohui, in his remarks at the launch of the program, said such a China-India Plus cooperation should be extended from Afghanistan to other countries such as Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Iran and Myanmar.

Describing India as a regional major power, he said China and India can also join hands under the mechanisms of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation (BCIM), to promote regional peace, stability and prosperity.

Both of us (China and India) support an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process. Both of us uphold that Afghanistan should realize peace, stability and prosperity. Both of us are against terrorism, said the envoy, reiterating support to Afghan peace process, at a time when the



terrorist groups have upped the ante across Afghanistan.

We are talking a lot about the regional connectivity initiatives, such as International North-South Transport Corridor, India-Afghanistan-Iran transit and trade arrangement and China-Pakistan-Afghanistan cooperation. All of these have provided a solid foundation for the current and future cooperation between China and India in Afghanistan, he said.

Noting that the training program is the first step for the China-India Plus cooperation in Afghanistan, the Chinese envoy said this was just the beginning.

Swaraj, in her statement that was read out by FSI Dean Ambassador J S Mukul, said the seeds for joint cooperation in Afghanistan were sown at the meeting between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi when they met in Wuhan in April 2018.

Today, we see it blooming with the initiation of this training program. This marks the beginning of what we visualize as a long term trilateral partnership for the benefit of Afghanistan, Swaraj was quoted as saying.

She added that India is committed to partner Afghanistan in its efforts to emerge as a united, peaceful, secure, stable, inclusive and economically vibrant nation. Talking about India's New Development Partnership with Afghanistan, she said it aspires to bring prosperity to all 34 provinces of Afghanistan through high impact community development projects.

There were four broad pillars of the program building infrastructure, developing human resource, enhancing connectivity, and promoting trade and investment links, she said, noting that the India-Afghanistan friendship dam in Herat, Parliament building in Kabul, and operationalization of the

Chabahar port were prominent symbols of this partnership.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang, in his statement read out by the Chinese ambassador, said the launch of the program marks an important step forward as it reflects the closer coordination and cooperation between two countries on regional affairs and represents a positive development in Sino-India relations.

China and India have been active supporters of Afghanistan's peace, and reconstruction process. This Joint Capacity Building Program is an essential part of the international efforts to assist Afghanistan and marks the start of China-India-Afghanistan cooperation.

It is a testament to the joint aspiration and endeavor of China and India, both being major, responsible developing countries, to contribute to regional peace and stability, Wang said.

Iran, India should bolster tourism cooperation

1 → UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) predicts that India will account for 50 million outbound tourists by 2020. Operators say that at present around 25 million tourists from India travel abroad.

At a time when Indians are looking for more economically viable destinations, places like Dubai, Malaysia and Singapore are being talked about. These venues offer glitzy night-life and huge sky-scrappers, whereas Iran has all the charm to captivate Indian travelers with its historical and environment attractions.

Recently, Israel has jumped into the fray as well and is now becoming a preferred destination for Indian tourists. Israeli Tourism Ministry figures showed an 82 percent increase in the number of Indians visiting the country during the first half of 2018, compared to the previous three years. Around 44,000 Indians visited Israel between January and June, mainly dur-



ing the vacation season for Indians. Israel has spent around \$3-4 million in India for creating awareness about the country through various mediums.

Israel has also reduced its visa fee to Indian Rupee 1,100 (630,000 Iranian rials), besides starting direct flights between Tel Aviv and New Delhi.

India's multi-million dollar film industry knows as Bollywood which is very popular in Iran is also venturing into Israel for film shootings.

A few months ago, Iran started offering visa-on-arrival for Indians, however the visa fee is seven times higher than Israeli visa. Its two carriers Mahan Air and Iran Air connect New Delhi and Mumbai to Tehran. Besides this, Iran needs more services directly connecting India to its tourist hubs like Isfahan and Shiraz.

The relationship between Iran and India is deeply rooted in history. The existence

Abdul Mahdi, on path to form a cohesive, national Iraqi cabinet

By Ramin Hossein Abadian

TEHRAN — Adel Abdul Mahdi, an Iraqi politician, was elected as the prime minister of Iraq by the new President Barham Salih.

After months of deadlock of inconclusive national election, on October 2, the new Iraqi President Barham Salih picked Shi'ite Adel Abdul Mahdi as the prime minister.

As is required by the Iraqi constitution, Abdul Mahdi must submit his cabinet for parliamentary approval within 30 days of his election, or else another person will be appointed for that task.

After his election as prime minister, Abdul Mahdi quickly started his political efforts and consultations with parties to form the cabinet, and on that he has held various meetings with the heads of various political groups.

Abdul Mahdi has been very creative in selecting his cabinet. He announced the launch of an electronic database where candidates who wish to apply for a ministerial position can go online and submit resume through an e-portal.

Following the general call, within two days, 15,000 Iraqis enrolled, out of whom 601 have been identified as the most qualified for the posts. The process still goes on and the fittest people are being identified.

Abdul Mahdi intends to scale down the period granted to him by the constitution



to form a cabinet, finalize the government line-up and present it to the parliament by October 24.

In the process of the cabinet formation, Abdul Mahdi has an overwhelming support of the majority of Shi'ite parties and movements, and even the Sunnis to present their own representatives to the parliament.

It is quite rare that an Iraqi prime minister gets to pick his ministers without any internal pressure from various groups and parties. But for now, Abdul Mahdi is on track in the formation of a non-sectarian government in a calm climate and has the support of various Shi'ite groups such as a National Wisdom Movement led by Seyyed Ammar al-Hakim, the coalition Saeroon led

by Muqtada al-Sadr and the Fatah Alliance led by Hadi al-Amari.

Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi, secretary general of the Iraqi Shi'ite Movement of the Noble Ones has also supported Abdul Mahdi and called on the new PM to have dogged determination in the fight against corruption as he describes it "social terrorism."

Sunnis have also expressed support for Abdul Mahdi such as Salim Abdullah al-Jabouri, former Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, who is one of the prominent Sunni parties.

Besides enjoying support from various political groups and movements, what has saved Abdul Mahdi from imposition of ministers in his cabinet, is that he emerges at the time when a major political consensus has formed among parliamentary coalitions, including the Al-Islah and Al-Bana alliances.

As Abdul Mahdi considers himself elected by the parliament's majority, he won't give in to the demands of some Iraqi political groups to bring in their imposed figures.

Thus, there is anticipation of the formation of a new national majority, not a political majority and cohesive government in Iraq, if the current situation continues. The new Iraqi government won't be pleasant for foreigners such as the United States, as they wish to continue to meddle in Iraq's affairs through creating division and sectarianism.

U.S. and other Western states might remove bin Salman from Crown Prince: Hunter

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Shireen Tahmaasb Hunter, a professor of political science at Georgetown University, tells the Tehran Times that that the Khashoggi issue is very important and highly embarrassing to America that has so closely embraced Bin Salman.

"If America does not do something serious about Khashoggi, its credibility on human rights issues would further suffer," Hunter tells the Tehran Times.

She adds that before the Khashoggi affair some Western observers had grown critical of Bin Salman. Some of his policies, including his quarrel with Qatar, has created dilemmas for Western states. Therefore, it is conceivable that America and other Western states might ask King Salman to reduce his powers or even remove him from the position of Crown Prince.

Following is the text the interview:

■ Due to the relations between the West and the United States in particular with Saudi Arabia, the subject of Jamal khashoggi has become widespread. Usually, in the case of human rights violations, Western countries condoned Saudi Arabia because of Saudi arms purchases and guarantying oil sales by Saudis. But in this case it is different. What are the reasons?

A: The case of Jamal Khashoggi is special because he was reportedly murdered at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul on the order of the Crown prince himself. This act is



different form limiting the journalist's freedom of speech or even imprisoning them. This is much more serious and thus more embarrassing to Riyadh's Western allies. Moreover, Khashoggi was very prominent and was a columnist for the Washington Post. Therefore, the media in America sees it as a direct insult to them. Also, because in the past the Washington Post was very complimentary towards Bin Salman, they feel more pressure to show their impartiality and thus have been demanding a serious response to Khashoggi's murder.

■ Some believe that as Saudi Arabia did not lower the price of oil at request of Trump, the United States is putting pressure on Saudi Arabia through khashoggi subject. What is your opinion?

A: I don't believe that Saudi Arabia's unwillingness or

inability to lower oil prices has had an impact on reaction to Khashoggi murder. The Khashoggi issue is very important and highly embarrassing to America that has so closely embraced Bin Salman. If America does not do something serious about Khashoggi, its credibility on human rights issues would further suffer.

■ Some Western countries, including the United States, have threatened Saudi Arabia with sanctions. In contrast, Saudi Arabia has spoken of an appropriate response in the event of a sanction. How far do you think the opposition with Saudi Arabia will go?

A: In theory, Saudi Arabia can retaliate against America and other Western states by curtailing its oil production or cancelling its arms purchases. In reality, however, Riyadh's ability is limited as the Kingdom relies on the West for its security. I think it is more likely that some explanation would be found that would clear Bin Salman of the charge of direct involvement in the affair. I believe these Saudi statements are bravado.

■ What effects will have the subject of Jamal khashoggi, on the future power of Mohammad bin Salman?

A: Even before the Khashoggi affair some Western observers had grown critical of Bin Salman. Some of his policies, including his quarrel with Qatar, has created dilemmas for Western states. Therefore, it is conceivable that America and other Western states might ask King Salman to reduce his powers or even remove him from the position of Crown Prince. At any rate, the Khashoggi affair is certain to complicate succession issues in Saudi Arabia.

Congress may scrap Saudi arms deals if Trump remains reluctant: U.S. scholar

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — An American scholar said the U.S. Congress might act to scrap Washington's arms agreements with Riyadh if President Donald Trump fails to do so.

"There are multiple reports of a Saudi team of 15 interrogators/assassins having been dispatched to Turkey to terminate the outspoken critic, where Congress may act to cut off these arms agreements, even if Trump remains reluctant to act, given his motivation to strengthen the military/industrial complex," James Henry Fetzer from Madison told Tasnim in an interview.

James Henry Fetzer is an American philosopher of science. He is an editor at Veterans Today and co-founder of Scholars for 9/11 Truth.

The following is the full text of the interview:

■ As you know, Jamal Khashoggi entered the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on Oct. 2 to get documents for his forthcoming marriage. Saudi officials say he left shortly afterwards but Turkish officials and his fiancée, who was waiting outside, said he never came out. What do you think?

A: Reports indicate that his interrogation, torture and death in the Saudi Consulate may even have been recorded on his Apple Watch, which the Saudis were unable to delete. He entered the building but he never came out. The inference that he was murdered and possibly dismembered, alas, appears to be highly probable and, absent production of the live body, supported by the available evidence. That he had come to obtain documents to marry his fiancée, who was outside the consulate waiting for him, makes this case far more poignant than many more typical political assassination.

■ Turkish sources have said the initial



The kingdom has a very bad reputation with regards to women's rights and human rights generally, but the particulars of this case make it almost exquisite within the framework of world politics.

assessment of the police was that Khashoggi, an outspoken critic of the Saudi government, had been deliberately killed inside the consulate. Riyadh has dismissed the claims. Could you possibly say what motive Riyadh had for this?

A: Jamal Khashoggi was not your ordinary "man on the street", even in Saudi Arabia. He was born in Medina in 1958 to a rich

and powerful family, where his grandfather, Muhammad Khashoggi, was the personal physician to King Abdulaziz Al Saud, founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He was also the nephew of the infamous arms dealer, Adrian Khashoggi, the cousin of Dodi Fayed, who was engaged to Princess Diana and killed in a car crash in Paris. Because he had become critical of the current regime, there may have

been personal as well as political reasons to silence him.

■ U.S. President Donald Trump threatened "severe punishment" for Riyadh if it turned out Khashoggi was killed in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. Do you believe Trump will take any action against Riyadh taking into account Washington's arms deals with Riyadh?

A: The situation is complicated for President Trump, because he has enjoyed strong, positive relations with Saudi King Salman and other members of the family, where the United States has major arms deals with the kingdom that are jeopardized by this extraordinary series of events. There are multiple reports of a Saudi team of 15 interrogators/assassins having been dispatched to Turkey to terminate the outspoken critic, where Congress may act to cut off these arms agreements, even if Trump remains reluctant to act, given his motivation to strengthen the military/industrial complex.

■ When do you think the world would smell the coffee and stand up to Saudi human rights violations?

A: The kingdom has a very bad reputation with regards to women's rights and human rights generally, but the particulars of this case make it almost exquisite within the framework of world politics. The Turks are undoubtedly in the possession of both audio and video evidence of his death, because--although it cannot be admitted publicly--the consulate is bugged. His fiancée, Hatice Cengiz, has become a figure of sympathy and influence, where it would be appropriate for Congress to abort the sale of arms, especially when they are being used to slaughter the Houthis in Yemen who are seeking to restore democracy there.

Saudi Arabia, Khashoggi, and the path to Fascism



TEHRAN (FNA) — New details about the disappearance and murder of Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi have emerged, proving beyond any doubt that the mobster regime of Saudi Arabia has blood on its hands and shouldn't be allowed to pass the smell check.

According to Turkish newspaper Sabah, Khashoggi used his Apple Watch to record conversations with Saudi officials and prove he was tortured to death. The paper reports that Saudi officials realized Khashoggi was wearing the watch only after he was killed, and that they used his fingerprint to unlock it. They managed to delete some files, but not all of them.

The paper says Khashoggi, who went missing after entering the Saudi Arabia consulate in Istanbul last week, was wearing the watch in the crucial moments before his disappearance and murder. The paper cites "reliable sources in a special intelligence department" and reports that the Washington Post journalist had turned on the recording feature before entering the consulate.

"The moments when Khashoggi was interrogated, tortured and murdered were recorded in the Apple Watch's memory," the paper said, adding that the watch was in sync with his iPhone, which he had left with his fiancée Hatice Cengiz. She was waiting outside the consulate at the time. That's why Cengiz hasn't just called for an investigation into Khashoggi's disappearance; she has urged for the responsible party, "irrespective of their political positions," to be punished.

Of course, some media outlets in the West have been quick to debunk this report, arguing that a cellular connection is not available for Apple's smartwatches in Turkey, or that "it isn't possible for Apple Watch to roam outside a user's carrier network coverage area." Even if an Apple Watch with a data plan from another country will not work in Turkey, it still doesn't change the fact that Khashoggi's fiancée was waiting outside when he went into the consulate and never came back - CCTV footage recorded Khashoggi entering the embassy with his fiancée staying behind.

At any rate, Turkey says Saudi Arabia is responsible for the abduction and murder of Khashoggi, and this has nothing to do with its political tensions with Riyadh. Per usual, Saudi Arabia denies the reports, claiming Khashoggi left the embassy prior to disappearing on October 2. The denial, however, hasn't stopped UN Chief Antonio Guterres from demanding the truth over the journalist's disappearance, saying he feared such disappearances would otherwise become a "new normal".

But such disappearances are "normal" and predictable for the brutal regime in Riyadh and its brutal politics. Any doubters should read the numerous reports issued in recent years by the UN Human Rights Council and international rights groups. Indeed, the murder and dismemberment of the Saudi critic is not new. The brutality has been there for decades, helping the regime to spook, silence and murder its critics.

Many reports make clear that Saudi Arabia has a well-established habit of denying citizens basic human freedoms, arresting critics, and crucifying people; the regime is currently pushing a death penalty for human rights activist Israa al-Ghomgham. Although President Donald Trump has warned there will be "severe punishment" if Saudi Arabia is found to be behind the death of Khashoggi, many more imprisoned dissidents and peaceful activists remain vulnerable. They are still being held without trial amid international outcry, and Washington would do nothing about it.

It all boils down to this: Muhammad bin Salman, the Saudi crown prince and de facto ruler, is more of a rogue than a reformer. Murdering a critic on foreign soil is an escalation of this dismal trend. The good news is that his autocratic tendencies have had economic consequences, too. After the murder of Khashoggi, many Western investors, businesses and media groups decided to withdraw from an investment conference in Saudi Arabia later this month.

Certain principles are inviolable, though. The onus falls on the international civil community to take matters into its own hands, and impose swift and concrete consequences on the Saudis, whether it be in their brutal bombing of civilians in Yemen, or the murder of the US-based journalist in Istanbul.

The world community should condemn the Fascist regime of Saudi Arabia for its brutality, and make clear that it doesn't have a blank cheque for weapons and support. The autocratic regime cannot murder its critics and get away with it. That is all the more reason why the world needs to question the brutality of Saudi Arabia, and hold it to account.

Khashoggi case will force Trump to do something: ex-senior CIA official

1 → ■ Some Western countries, including the United States, have threatened Saudi Arabia with sanctions. In contrast, Saudi Arabia has spoken of an appropriate response in the event of a sanction. How far do you think the opposition with Saudi Arabia will go?

A: Other Western governments will feel less inhibited that the Trump administration in responding with some sort of sanctions. But the United States is the key player, especially given Khashoggi's U.S. connection. The uproar over this event will force Trump to do something, but his administration will resist doing more than a necessary minimum, because it does not want to upset its overall relationship with Saudi Arabia. Most likely there will be some sort of sanctions placed on the individual Saudi officials whom Turkey has identified as being directly involved, but Trump will resist placing blame all the way up to the level of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

■ What effects will have the subject of Jamal khashoggi, on the future power of Mohammad bin Salman?

A: He will be subject to additional internal criticism within the royal family, on grounds that he foolishly failed to anticipate the sharp reaction in the West to such an outrageous act. But he already has solidified his power to such an extent that even this event is unlikely to result in his downfall or a failure to succeed his father as king.

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Aspirin may reduce liver cancer risk

Researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital have found that regular aspirin use can reduce the risk of developing liver cancer.

Scientists reinvestigate aspirin and its impact on liver cancer.

The findings — which appear in JAMA Oncology — support the results of prior studies on the same topic.

Data from this report show that taking aspirin on a regular basis can lower the risk of developing liver cancer, or hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC).

The scientists defined “a regular basis” as taking two or more 325-milligram tablets per week for 5 years or more.

The study's results are promising. “Regular use of aspirin led to significantly lower risk of developing HCC, compared to infrequent or no aspirin use, and we also found that the risk declined progressively with increasing aspirin dose and duration of use,” says lead author Dr. Tracey Simon, who is a research fellow from the Massachusetts General Hospital Division of Gastroenterology in Boston.

Reopening the data

The researchers looked over data, including health information on more than 170,000 people that were collected for over 3 decades.

One part of the questionnaire these patients filled out was whether they took aspirin, how often they took it, and for how long. Another part of the data included liver cancer diagnosis.

One compound could improve survival rates and reduce the adverse effects of treatment.

When the scientists had analyzed the numbers, they revealed that people who took two (or more) 325-milligram doses of aspirin each week had a 49 percent reduction in their risk of developing liver cancer.

For those who took aspirin for 5 years (or more), that risk was reduced by 59 percent.

Also, the team saw that the risk reduction decreased if the participant stopped taking aspirin and disappeared entirely 8 years after they stopped taking aspirin. There was no decrease in risk of liver cancer when participants took acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

The facts on liver cancer

Liver cancer is not a particularly common type of cancer, but it has been on the rise over the past few decades. Someone's risk of developing liver cancer is elevated if they already have liver disease, such as hepatitis B or hepatitis C.

If somebody has cirrhosis of the liver — which is when scar tissue replaces normal liver cells and prevents the liver from working as it should — their risk of liver cancer is also elevated.

Liver cancer is now the third leading cause of cancer deaths around the world. Some signs and symptoms include: a hard lump just below the rib cage on the right side,



Liver cancer is not a particularly common type of cancer, but it has been on the rise over the past few decades. Someone's risk of developing liver cancer is elevated if they already have liver disease, such as hepatitis B or hepatitis C.

discomfort in that same area, a swollen abdomen, pain in the right shoulder blade or back, jaundice (a yellow discoloration of the skin and whites of the eyes), and bruising or bleeding more easily.

If a person experiences unintentional weight loss, nausea and vomiting, loss of appetite, and unusual tiredness or weakness, they should contact their doctor.

Next steps

Liver cancer is a serious disease with a 5-year survival rate of just 17.7 percent, so any news on how to cut our risk is welcome.

“While it's still too early know whether starting aspirin therapy might be an effective strategy to prevent HCC, efforts

to understand the mechanisms behind these beneficial effects could help identify,” claims Dr. Simon, “urgently needed prevention strategies or biomarkers for a cancer that is a growing public health problem.”

The scientists' next steps include conducting a study on how aspirin therapy works in a population with established liver disease, says Dr. Simon, since that group is already at risk of liver cancer.

Doctors already recommend aspirin to some patients to help prevent heart disease and colorectal cancer, so it is not a stretch to see how it may eventually become protocol for those at risk of liver cancer.

(Source: Medical News Today)

Sleeping too much is bad for your brain, world's largest sleep study says

From late night phone binges to stress-induced insomnia and restless newborns, many of us aren't getting the right amount of sleep.

We all know we need it and we're constantly being told that not getting enough can have serious knock-on effects to our physical and mental health.

Now though, new research is suggesting that getting too much shut-eye could in fact be just as damaging.

In what is being dubbed the world's largest sleep study, a team of neuroscientists from Western University's Brain and Mind Institute enlisted the help of more than 40,000 people from around the world to take part in an online scientific investigation made up of in-depth questionnaires and a series of cognitive performance activities.

“We really wanted to capture the sleeping habits of people around the entire globe. Obviously, there have been many smaller sleep studies of people in laboratories but we wanted to find out what sleep is like in the real world,” says Adrian Owen, Western's researcher in cognitive neuroscience and imaging.

The participants provided extensive information about their lives which may have contributed to some of the results, including which medications they were on, how old they were, where they lived and what kind of education they had received.

Approximately half of all participants reported sleeping less than 6.3 hours per night on average, about an hour less than the study's recommended amount.

Throughout the study, the team made a number of surprising revelations including that most participants who slept four hours or less performed as if they were almost nine years older.

Additionally, they also found that the amount of sleep associated with highly functional cognitive behaviour was the same for everyone — seven to eight hours — and that anyone who slept more or less than this performed worse cognitively regardless of their age.

The two actions which were most strongly affected by sleep were reasoning and verbal abilities, while short-term memory performance was relatively unaffected.

“We found that the optimum amount of sleep to keep your brain performing its best is 7 to 8 hours every night and that corresponds to what the doctors will tell you need to keep your body in tip-top shape, as well,” says Conor Wild, lab research associate and the study's lead author.

“We also found that people that slept more than that amount were equally impaired as those who slept too little.”

The findings are supported by a previous study presented at the European Society of Cardiology Congress in Munich earlier this year.

Using data from more than one million adults, scientists found that both sleep deprivation and excessive hours in bed should be avoided for optimum heart health.

Instead, they suggested that six to eight hours sleep a night is the most beneficial for the heart.

(Source: The Independent)

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Restoration underway on Atiq mosque in Shiraz



HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — A restoration project has recently been commenced on the Atiq Mosque in the southern city of Shiraz, CHTN reported.

A credit of 1.24 billion rials (some \$30,000) has been allocated to the project that includes partial restoration of the interior and exterior, waterproofing roof coatings, brickwork on the western entrance and the northern porch, plus tilework repairs on the southwest and southeast entrances.

The place of worship was originally built in 875 during the reign of Saffarid ruler Amr ibn al-Layth (r. 879-901) and it was rebuilt, restored, and expanded various times thereafter.

Most of what visitors to the four-iwan mosque can see dates from the seventeenth century onwards.

Frescos of Saint George Church restored



HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — A team of Iranian restores have completed restoration of historical murals and frescos at the Saint George Church, which is located in Haftvan village, northwestern West Azarbaijan province of Iran.

The team is also scheduled to restore flooring, landscaping, perimeter walls and indoor amphitheater of the 13th-century monument.

The Saint George Church dates from the late Safavid era (1501–1736) and is inscribed on the National Heritage List.

In 2008, UNESCO registered Monastery of Saint Thaddeus (Qareh Klise), St. Stepanos Monastery and the Chapel of Dzordzor, altogether under the title "Armenian Monastic Ensembles of Iran".



ROUND THE GLOBE

Cistercian Abbey of Fontenay

Located in the Bourgogne Franche-Comte region in the Cote-d'Or Department in the commune of Marmagne, the Cistercian Abbey of Fontenay was founded in 1119 by St Bernard in a marshy valley of Bourgogne. With its austere architecture, church, cloister, refectory, sleeping quarters, bakery and its ironworks, it illustrates the ideal of self-sufficiency as practiced by the earliest communities of Cistercian monks.

Built between 1139 and 1147 by Abbot Guillaume thanks to the generosity of Ebraud, Bishop of Norwich, the Abbey of Fontenay was consecrated by Pope Eugene III, a Cistercian and former disciple of St Bernard. This form of Romanesque Cistercian church is of great simplicity and strict modesty



Inside the Cistercian Abbey of Fontenay in France

with its basilica design in the form of a Latin cross, its blind nave, and transept devoid of a tower. The perfection of the proportions, the rigor of the wall openings and the science of the vaultings, the beauty of the wall masonry which places impeccable courses of ashlar side by side with crude rough-cut rubble constitute the value of this architecture.

The cloister and the chapter house have remained intact and were inspired from the same principles. Within its enclosing wall, the Abbey still retains other communal buildings: monks' day room and dormitory, warming room, refectory, guest house, bakery and iron works. This last building, dating to the end of the 12th century, recalls the part which the Cistercians played in the technological progress of the Middle Ages, and is one of the oldest industrial buildings in France.

(Source: UNESCO)

Tehran to host intl. workshop on restoring historical monuments

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization will hold an international workshop and conference in Tehran on restoration of historical monuments.

A host of experts from the U.S., Italy, Turkey, the Czech Republic, Romania, Japan, Poland, Mexico and Greece are scheduled to deliver lectures in the event, running from October 20 to 22, ILNA reported on Sunday.

The lecturers are affiliated with the International Scientific Committee on the Analysis and Restoration of Structures of Architectural Heritage (ISCARSAH) and the workshop is being organized by CHHTO's office for preservation and restoration of cultural property in close collaboration with the ISCARSAH.

According to organizers, the workshop is aimed to update expertise levels of Iranian fellows with the latest technology and knowledge in terms of solidification and restoration of cultural heritage, the report added.

The ISCARSAH was founded by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), which is a non-governmental organization dedicated to the conservation of the world's monuments and sites.

Members of the ISCARSAH are composed of internationally renowned engineers, scientists, architects, specialists, and educators with representation from Europe, Asia, Australia, North and South America.

Filled from corner to corner with ancient bazaars, museums, mosques, monuments, gardens, historical sites, rich natural and rural landscapes, Iran hosts some of the world's oldest cultural monuments, including 22 UNESCO World Heritage sites.



The mausoleum of Oljaytu, commonly known as "Dome of Soltaniyeh" is seen in an undated photo. Located in modern Zanjan province, the monument was constructed in 1302–12 in the city of Soltaniyeh, which was once the capital of the Ilkhanid dynasty, founded by the Mongols.

Luxury rail travelers on excursion across Iran



TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Tens of international travelers, boarding a Golden Eagle Luxury Train, have commenced their exploration of many of Iranian remarkable sites and scenic landscapes.

The private train, which arrived in southern Fars province early on Sunday, is giving ride to 66 passengers from the U.S., Germany, Australia, Russia, Malaysia, Italy and Singapore, IRNA reported.

"The passengers are to visit [Achaemenid-era sites of] Pasargadae, Persepolis and Naqsh-e Rostam and then will visit several historical sites in Shiraz, including Hafez and Sadi mausoleums, and Arg-e Karim Khan (Karim Khan citadel) before they leave for Isfahan," said Gholam-Hossein Valadi, the head of Fars Province railways department general.

Valadi said that three of the same trains will arrive in the country by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019).

Named "Heart of Persia", the excursion began on Oct. 8 and will last till Oct. 21 with an itinerary that includes Mashhad, Shahdad Desert, Rayen, Mahan, Kerman, Yazd, Shiraz, Persepolis, Isfahan, Kashan,

Shushtar, Choghazanbil, Pol-e Sefid and Tehran.

"Iran has it all. Exquisite palaces, domed mosques, bustling grand bazaars, peaceful gardens and gracious, welcoming people all make Iran a true travel gem waiting to be discovered. Experience the splendor of Iran yourself on board the Golden Eagle," Golden Eagle website says.

"The highlight of our stay in Tehran is undoubtedly the visit to the breathtaking Crown Jewels Museum in the Central Bank of Iran Building, with its vast array of crown jewels used by the Qajar and Pahlavid royalty."

Golden Eagle Luxury Trains has been fulfilling tours to Iran since 2014 and has received nothing but positive feedback, most travelers are pleasantly surprised at what an incredibly welcoming and friendly nation it is.

Russia's premier train, the Golden Eagle was launched in 2007 by UK based GW Travel (now Golden Eagle Luxury Trains Limited). The company offers exclusive, long-distance rail tours through Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Mongolia, China, and Iran.

Is Spain safe? Latest travel and flight advice after Hurricane Leslie chaos in Portugal

Spain holidaymakers have been warned of devastating effects as Hurricane Leslie sweeps across Europe. It has already caused chaos across Portugal with thousands of homes without power and many cancelled flights.

Spain holidays are to be affected by Hurricane Leslie which is causing devastation across Europe.

Winds of up to 110mph have been reported, with 15,000 homes in Portugal left without power and trees torn from the ground.

The hurricane has already caused a number of flights to Portugal to be cancelled as the storm heads towards Spain.

The UK Foreign Office is yet to update the latest travel advice for Spain in relation to Hurricane Leslie.

The latest warning in Spain following the flash floods in Majorca, which killed 12 people including two British tourists.

However, they have issued a travel warning for Portugal

which has already been hit.

They warn: "Hurricane Leslie is expected to bring heavy rains and strong winds to Portugal and Madeira this weekend 13 to 14 October.

"You should monitor local weather updates from the Portuguese Meteorological Institute website and follow the instructions of local authorities.

"If you're travelling to or from Portugal or Madeira, check with your tour operator or airline company for any delays or disruptions to your travel plans."

Most flights to Madeira have been cancelled, with airlines such as British Airways and easyJet flying to the island.

Flights to Spain don't appear to be affected but travellers are warned to follow local news reports and contact their airline if unsure.

Civil protection has advised anyone in Spain to drive

slowly and not stop in areas that are prone to flood, according to Spanish newspaper El Pais.

They also warn to stay away from trees and areas under construction following the high winds.

Regions including Zamora, Leon and Cantabria are thought to be affected the worst with heavy rain today.

Hurricane Leslie was downgraded to a tropical storm when it made landfall, although is thought to be the most powerful to hit Portugal since 1842.

It has been dubbed a "zombie storm", after it first formed on 23 September and remained strong to make landfall.

Hurricanes on the American side of the Atlantic rarely hit Europe with just five on record.

The latest was in 2017 with Hurricane Ophelia resulting in forest fires across Portugal and Spain.

(Source: express.co.uk)

Japan to introduce electronic visa system for tourists from April 2020



Japan will introduce an electronic system for tourist visa applications in April 2020 in an effort to help achieve its goal of 60 million foreign visitors a year by 2030, government sources said Sunday.

The online system will first be available to Chinese tourists for single-entry visa applications and then to travelers from other countries, the sources said. Tourist visas for Chinese visitors accounted for nearly 60 percent of all the visas issued in 2017, according to the Foreign Ministry.

The government plans to add other types of visas to the new system.

The electronic visa is designed to simplify the application process, reduce the workload at diplomatic missions and tighten immigration control, with visa data to be shared with airlines, ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Prospective visitors will be able to apply for tourist visas online through travel agencies.

Japan had a record 28.7 million foreign visitors in 2017, up 19.3 percent from the

previous year, and their spending last year rose 17.8 percent to an all-time high of ¥4.42 trillion (\$39 billion).

As the government is looking to boost tourism as a pillar of its growth strategy, it aims to bring the number of visitors to 40

million by 2020 and 60 million by 2030.

As part of its strategy, Japan has eased visa requirements and increased the number of low-cost carriers and other flights to boost inbound tourism.

Individual tourists and cruise passengers from China have contributed to the record pace of growth in foreign visitors, according to the Japan Tourism Agency. Visitors from South Korea and other Asian countries have also helped lift the overall figure.

Although this year's figure is expected to top 30 million for the first time, Japan has also had to deal with the effects of multiple natural disasters — including a massive earthquake in Hokkaido and torrential rains in the country's west — that could put a damper on the tourist numbers. Chinese visitors have represented the biggest chunk of foreign tourists to Japan by country and region. A recent survey showed Chinese people's views of Japan have improved after years of deteriorating relations over a territorial row and wartime history.

(Source: The Japan Times)

Why diving tectonic plates get stuck 400 miles beneath Earth’s surface

The Earth’s mantle acts like a giant churn, circulating cool oceanic crust downward toward the core, where it heats up into a goopy solid and then rises again — a process that powers everything from plate tectonics to volcanism.

But there are some hitches in this system, and new research reveals why: A slippery layer about 416 miles (670 kilometers) deep stops chunks of crust in their tracks, creating “stagnant slabs” in the middle of the mantle, the layer between the Earth’s crust and its core.

“This deflection of slabs was always puzzling to our understanding of [the mantle],” said Shijie Zhong, a physicist at the University of Colorado Boulder and the co-author of the new study published Oct. 1 in the journal Nature Geoscience.

There is no way to look directly at the mantle, but scientists study its dynamics using seismic waves from earthquakes. By detecting the waves as they propagate through the globe, researchers can construct a picture of the mantle, not unlike how radar can image objects using radio waves.

■ **Made of tectonic plates**

What happens in the mantle is related to what’s going on in the crust. The crust is made up of tectonic plates that ride across the mantle like rafts on a very, very thick sea (the consistency of the crust is similar to that of hot asphalt). In some areas, called subduction zones, one tectonic plate dives under another, grinding chunks of oceanic crust down into the mantle.

From seismology, Zhong said, researchers knew that some of these slabs of crust don’t



In the western Pacific Ocean, near Japan and at the Mariana Trench, for example, the slabs of crust seem to stall out at around 416 miles (670 km) deep. In these areas, they seem to deflect and travel horizontally as much as 1,243 miles (2,000 km).

always travel the full 1,860 miles (3,000 km) to the core-mantle boundary. Essentially, they get stuck partway down.

Particularly in the western Pacific Ocean, near Japan and at the Mariana Trench, for example, the slabs of crust seem to stall out at around 416 miles (670 km) deep. In these areas, they seem to deflect and travel horizontally as much as 1,243 miles (2,000 km).

■ **Sudden density increase**

The layer of mantle at that particular depth is unusual, Zhong said, because the rock there goes through a sudden density increase, which is the result of the pressure of all the rock pushing down on top of it. In the new study, Zhong and University of Colorado graduate student Wei Mao built a computer model of the mantle’s dynamics, including both this density increase and the past 130 million years of continental plate movements.

This more complete model of the mantle naturally produced the same sort of stagnating slabs seen in the real mantle, the researchers found. What seems to be going on, Zhong said, is that the accumulated pressure of the overlying rock at 670 km creates an area of reduced viscosity—in essence, the mantle is more slippery and less goopy.

This hitch in the machine is only temporary. The slabs are probably only trapped for 20 million years or so, Zhong said — a blink of the eye in terms of Earth’s history. But their dynamics might be important for some of the geological phenomena seen on the surface.

(Source: scientificamerican.com)

Tropical moths in the mountains are larger, new study says

Researchers from three universities have measured more than 19,000 tropical moths from 1,100 species to find out whether their size varies with elevation. Scientists from Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena (Germany) worked on the study together with colleagues from Marburg in Germany and Connecticut in the USA. “Body size plays a central role in the ecology and evolution of organisms,” explains Dr. Gunnar Brehm of the University of Jena.

The “extensive dataset from a biodiversity hotspot sets new standards, because never before has a study been carried out with so many species along a complete elevational gradient - from low-land rainforest to the summit of a volcano in Costa Rica,” says Brehm.

The researchers found clear patterns in their measurements: moths from two extremely species-rich families (Arctiinae (tiger moths) and Geometridae (geometer moths)) increase in size significantly at higher elevations. This is in line with expectations under what is called the ‘Bergmann rule’. However, this rule was originally laid down only for birds and mammals, and the situation is different for cold-blooded animals such as insects. “We had actually presumed that these animals would become smaller at higher elevations.

With a smaller wingload to carry, the moths would cope better with the thinner air when flying,” adds Brehm. “However, in actual fact the load clearly increases. In addition, with increasing elevation ecosystems become less productive, which ought to favor small species.” Other factors obviously play a greater role: the ‘temperature-size rule’ predicts that at lower temperatures, animals attain a larger size. The researchers were able to demonstrate this trend, not only in different species, but also within species.

With the new data, the research team has created a basis for experimental approaches aimed at achieving a better understanding of functional relationships, including in complex and species-rich ecosystems - especially in view of global warming.

(Source: eurekalert.org)



Stephen Hawking left us bold predictions on AI, superhumans, and aliens

The late physicist Stephen Hawking’s last writings predict that a breed of superhumans will take over, having used genetic engineering to surpass their fellow beings.

In Brief Answers to the Big Questions, Hawking pulls no punches on subjects like machines taking over, the biggest threat to Earth, and the possibilities of intelligent life in space.

Hawking delivered a grave warning on the importance of regulating artificial intelligence (AI), noting that “in the future AI could develop a will of its own, a will that is in conflict with ours.” A possible arms race over autonomous - weapons should be stopped before it can start, he writes, asking what would happen if a crash similar to the 2010 stock market Flash Crash happened with weapons.

In short, the advent of super-intelligent AI would be either the best or the worst thing ever to happen to humanity. The real risk with AI isn’t malice, but competence. A super-intelligent AI will be extremely good at accomplishing its goals, and if those goals aren’t aligned with ours we’re in trouble. You’re probably not an evil ant-hater who steps on ants out of malice, but if you’re in charge of a hydroelectric green-energy project and there’s an anthill in the region to be flooded, too bad for the ants. Let’s not place humanity in the position of those ants.

At some point in the next 1,000 years, nuclear war or environmental calamity will “cripple Earth.” However, by then, “our ingenious race will have found a way to slip the surly bonds of Earth and will therefore survive the disaster.” The Earth’s other species probably won’t make it, though.

■ **Escaping Earth**

The humans who do escape Earth will probably be new “superhumans” who have



used gene editing technology like CRISPR to outpace others. They’ll do so by defying laws against genetic engineering, improving their memories, disease resistance, and life expectancy, he says

Hawking seems curiously enthusiastic about this final point, writing, “There is no time to wait for Darwinian evolution to make us more intelligent and better natured.”

Once such superhumans appear, there are going to be significant political problems with the unimproved humans, who won’t be able to compete. Presumably, they will die out, or become unimportant. Instead, there will be a race of self-designing beings who are improving themselves at an ever-increasing rate. If the human race manages to redesign itself, it will probably spread out and colonize other planets and stars.

The question is, is the way the universe began chosen by God for reasons we can’t understand, or was it determined by a law of science? I believe the second. If you like, you can call the laws of science “God”, but it wouldn’t be a personal God that you would meet and put questions to.

(Source: qz.com)

Astronomers detect 20 new deep-space radio signals by outback telescopes

Fast radio bursts (FRBs) are one of the most intriguing celestial mysteries out there at the moment. These incredibly powerful radio signals last mere milliseconds, making it difficult to track what they are and where they’re coming from, but a huge radio telescope array spread across the Australian Outback is helping figure it out.

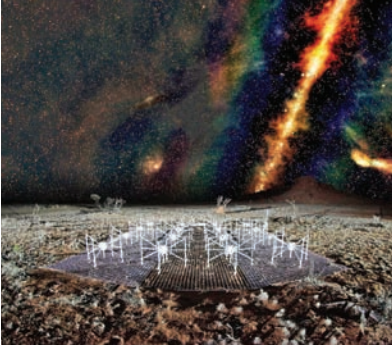
Astronomers have now announced the discovery of 20 new FRBs in a bit over a year, including the brightest and closest events yet seen.

The first FRBs was spotted in 2007 as an anomaly in old data, but it wasn’t until 2015 that the first one was directly witnessed live. Almost 30 of them had been detected by early 2017, when a CSIRO radio telescope in Western Australia began searching for them. And with the team now announcing the first big batch of results, it sounds like that hunt has been a successful one.

“We’ve found 20 fast radio bursts in a year, almost doubling the number detected worldwide since they were discovered in 2007,” says Ryan Shannon, lead author of a study describing the new finds. “Using the new technology of the Australia Square Kilometer Array Pathfinder (ASKAP), we’ve also proved that fast radio bursts are coming from the other side of the universe rather than from our own galactic neighborhood.”

■ **New batch of events**

Among this new batch of events, the team observed the most powerful FRBs to date, as well as the nearest, which is estimated to be just 425 million light-years away. That might not sound particularly close, but it’s a cosmic stone’s throw considering most others are at distances of



several billion light-years.

The gone-in-a-flash durations of FRBs make it hard for astronomers to pinpoint exactly where in the sky they’re coming from, but there are other ways to figure that out.

As the signal travels those billions of light-years, it passes through huge amounts of dust, gas and other matter, which slows down certain wavelengths more than others. Measuring those delays can tell us plenty.

“Timing the arrival of the different wavelengths tells us how much material the burst has traveled through on its journey,” says Jean-Pierre Macquart, co-author of the study. “And because we’ve shown that fast radio bursts come from far away, we can use them to detect all the missing matter located in the space between galaxies – which is a really exciting discovery.”

This big batch of data shows how successful ASKAP has been in its first 20-odd months of operation, but this is just the beginning. The P in that acronym stands for Pathfinder, meaning this is just the precursor to a much bigger project known as the Square Kilometer Array (SKA).

(Source: New Atlas)

Sea snail shells dissolve in increasingly acidified oceans, study shows

Shelled marine creatures living in increasingly acidified oceans face a fight for survival as the impacts of climate change spread, a new study suggests.

Researchers from the University of Tsukuba, Japan, and the University of Plymouth, UK, assessed the impact of rising carbon dioxide levels on the large predatory “triton shell” gastropod (Charonia lampas).

They found those living in regions with predicted future levels of CO2 were on average around a third smaller than counterparts living in conditions seen throughout the world’s oceans today.

However there was also a noticeable negative impact on the thickness, density, and structure of their shells, causing visible deterioration to the shell surface.

■ **The species in water**

Writing in Frontiers in Marine Science, scientists say the effects are down to the increased stresses placed on the species in waters where the PH is lower, which reduce their ability to control the calcification process.

And they have warned other shellfish are likely to be impacted in the same way, threatening their survival and that of other species that rely on them for food.

Dr. Ben Harvey, Assistant Professor in



the University of Tsukuba’s Shimoda Marine Research Center, said: “Ocean acidification is a clear threat to marine life, acting as a stressor for many marine animals. Here we found that the ability of the triton shells to produce and maintain their shells was hindered by ocean acidification, with the corrosive seawater making them smoother,

thinner, and less dense.

The extensive dissolution of their shells has profound consequences for calcified animals into the future as it is not something they can biologically control, suggesting that some calcified species might be unable to adapt to the acidified seawater if carbon dioxide emissions continue to

rise unchecked.”

The research was conducted at a marine volcanic seep off the coast of Shikine-jima in Japan where carbon dioxide bubbling up through the seabed lowers seawater pH from present-day levels to future predicted levels.

■ **The structure of shells**

Using computed tomography (CT) scanning, the scientists measured the thickness, density and structure of the shells, with shell thickness halved in areas with raised CO2 while average shell length was reduced from 178mm in sites with present day levels to 112mm.

In some cases, these negative effects left body tissue exposed and the shell casing dissolved, with the corrosive effects of acidification far more pronounced around the oldest parts of the shell.

Jason Hall-Spencer, Professor of Marine Biology at the University of Plymouth, added: “Our study clearly shows that increasing carbon dioxide levels cause seawater to become corrosive to shellfish. As these calcified animals are a fundamental component of coastal marine communities, ocean acidification is expected to impact shellfish fisheries.

(Source: phys.org)

Should vegans avoid avocados and almonds?

Commercial farming of those vegetables, at least in some parts of the world, often involves migratory beekeeping. In places such as California, there are not enough local bees or other pollinating insects to pollinate the massive almond orchards.

Bee hives are transported on the back of large trucks between farms – they might go from almond orchards in one part of the US then on to avocado orchards in another, and later to sunflower fields in time for summer.

Vegans avoid animal products. For strict vegans this means avoiding honey because of the exploitation of bees. That seems to imply that vegans should also avoid vegetables like avocados that involve exploiting bees in their production.

The revelation that avocados might not be “vegan-friendly” could seem to be a reduction ad absurdum of the ethical vegan argument. Some people might point to this and claim that those who are vegan but still consume avocados (or almonds and the like) are hypocrites.

Alternatively, this sort of news might lead some people to throw up their hands at the impossibility of living a truly vegan diet, and so to give up.

However, one initial defense for vegans is that this is only a problem for certain vegetables that are produced commercially on a large scale and which are dependent on migratory beekeeping. In places such as the UK, this practice is still (as far as I can tell) uncommon.

Locally sourced butternut squash would probably be fine (although you could never guarantee a bee kept in a hive hadn’t pollinated a crop), while avocados and almonds (including most almond milk) sourced from California might be a problem.

Another answer might depend on someone’s view about the moral status of insects. Commercial beekeeping may injure or kill bees. Transporting bees to pollinate crops appears to negatively affect their health and lifespan.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Scientists unveil their new strategy to find alien life

After decades of broadcasting signals and sending probes to deep space, the human race has still not found evidence that there is life beyond Earth.

That is why, on Wednesday, Oct. 10, astrobiologists convened to reflect on the past few years and figure out a new strategy in the search for extraterrestrial life in the universe. A blue-ribbon panel made up of experts in the field assembled the 196-page report at the behest of Congress.

“If we’re really going to achieve a goal as lofty as this, then outside-the-box thinking is really required,” stated Barbara Sherwood Lollar, an astrobiologist and chair of the committee.

The report, which was made available online via The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine’s The National Academies Press, discusses the extent of the knowledge that scientists, through numerous extensive studies, have acquired in the field of biology, including about life here on Earth.

The report stresses that recent discoveries about organisms that thrive deep under the ocean or beyond the surface and places that the sunlight never touches completely change the way how science look at life and informs new avenues where future missions should search for life on other planets. In particular, it suggests that existence of subsurface life that otherwise might not be detected.

“Life doesn’t really do anything that chemistry can’t do, unless you talk about really complex molecules like drugs and things,” explained Sara Walker, another astrobiologist who is not involved in the report. “Life is a system-level property, so you can’t really take apart the components and say that the components are indicative of life.”

Another point that was discussed in the report was the newly identified exoplanets outside of the Solar System. The Kepler spacecraft that has nearly doubled the number of identified exoplanets since 2015 will enable further exploration in the search for extraterrestrial life.

(Source: Tech Times)

Autumn cheesecake

“This is a delicious apple cheesecake that I usually make in the fall.”

Ingredients:



- 1 cup graham cracker crumbs
- 1/2 cup finely chopped pecans
- 3 tablespoons white sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted
- 2 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 4 cups apples - peeled, cored and thinly sliced
- 1/3 cup white sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 cup chopped pecans

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). In a large bowl, stir together the graham cracker crumbs, 1/2 cup finely chopped pecans, 3 tablespoons sugar, 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon and melted butter; press into the bottom of a 9 inch springform pan. Bake in preheated oven for 10 minutes.

In a large bowl, combine cream cheese and 1/2 cup sugar. Mix at medium speed until smooth. Beat in eggs one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Blend in vanilla; pour filling into the baked crust.

In a small bowl, stir together 1/3 cup sugar and 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon. Toss the cinnamon-sugar with the apples to coat. Spoon apple mixture over cream cheese layer and sprinkle with 1/4 cup chopped pecans.

Bake in preheated oven for 60 to 70 minutes. With a knife, loosen cake from rim of pan. Let cool, then remove the rim of pan. Chill cake before serving.

LEARN ENGLISH

Skiing

A: Welcome ski lovers of all ages! My name is Rick Fields and here with me is the man that needs no introduction, Bob Copeland.

B: Thank you, Rick! What a beautiful day here in Aspen, Colorado where the sun is shining, and we've got twelve inches of fresh powder. It doesn't get much better than this.

A: That's right, Bob, but today we have a special treat for our viewers. We're joined here by Ian Roussy, the four-time giant **slalom champion**. And on this special edition of the show, Ian is going to teach us the basics of skiing! So, let's **hit the slopes**!

C: Well, first off, let's get those boots on. You're going to want to make sure your boots fit **snugly**. That's right; now **snap** them into your **bindings**. And you're also going to want a good pair of **goggles** to protect your eyes. It's a bright day today, so there's going to be a lot of **glare** out there on the **slopes**. We don't want you hitting any of those **moguls**!

A: Bob, since you're a beginner skier and might **take a few spills**, it is a good idea to have a good warm pair of dry **ski gloves**.

C: Easy there, Rick! Well, let's head on over to the **chairlift**, and test your skills! All right, we're up here on the bunny hill, so, Bob, why don't you do a few **snow-plow turns**. Gnarly run, Rick! Nice **carving**! You've got some mad skills! That was sick!

A: You wanna see **gnarley**? Well, see that **bump** over there, I'm going to **catch some major air**.

C: Butt plant!

B: Ha ha ha! He lost his skis! **Yard sale**!!!

A: Ahem, well. Thanks for joining us here today, I think **that about does it**. Bob, Ian, time for some **après-ski**?

C: No way, man! We're off to **grab some freshies**!!!

Key vocabulary

slalom: a skiing race where you must go through flags

champion: winner

hit the slopes: start skiing

snugly: fitting very tightly

snap: make something attach by pressing down

binding: a bottom part that attaches the boot to a ski

goggles: a pair of glasses used to protect one's eyes

glare: bright light that is reflected by the snow

slopes: a space on the mountain which is used for skiing

mogul: a bump on a ski hill

take a spill: fall

ski glove: a covering of hands with each finger separated

chairlift: a series of chairs hung from a moving cable, used for carrying people up and down a mountain

snow-plow turn: a slow, easy turn where you make a V with the skis

carving: make (a turn) by tilting one's skis on to their edges and using one's weight to bend them so that they slide in an arc

gnarly: awesome, cool (used by ski lovers)

bump: small hill

catch some major air: used to describe a skier jumps really really high

yard sale: falling so hard that you lose all your ski equipment

that about does it: it's finished; it's almost done

après-ski: the social activities and entertainment following a day's skiing

grab some freshies: ski on the area that has never been skied before

Supplementary vocabulary

lodge: the building that has restaurants and stores on the ski hill

pow: (powder) soft, light snow

avy: (avalanche) lots of snow falling of the mountain

liftie: a person who operates the chairlift

bowl: a steep hill with high sides, shaped like a bowl

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Female Iranian MP elected as member of IPU presiding board

W O M E N **TEHRAN** — Seyyedehe d e s k Fatemeh Hosseini, a member of Majlis (Iranian Parliament), was elected as a member of the presiding board of Forum of Women Parliamentarians of the Inter-Parliamentarian Union (IPU) in Geneva, Switzerland.

IPU is an organization made up of national parliaments from around the world. IPU protects and builds global democracy through political dialogue and concrete action.

The female MP gained the majority of votes in a meeting of the group of Asia-Pacific countries held on Sunday, IRNA reported.

She was elected to the position of a representative for the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF), the report added.

Consisting of eight Majlis members, the Iranian delegation entered Geneva to take part in the event on October 14-18.

Iranian delegation is to partake in the Committee on Peace and International Security, Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade, Committee on United Nations Affairs, Forum of Women Parliamentarians, Forum of Young Parliamentarians, and specialized panels.

Majlis trying to reduce gender inequality
Empowering women and promoting



their rights and dignity are the prerequisites for development in any society, said Parvaneh Mafi, another female MP, at the same meeting on Sunday.

“Discovering and supporting scientific elites, especially women researchers, commenced in Iran’s National Elites Foundation a decade ago,” IRNA quoted Mafi as saying.

Jurisprudential challenges of women’s rights to be studied

W O M E N **TEHRAN** — The d e s k 2nd meeting of jurisprudential conferences pivoting on the subject of women’s rights is to be held in three cities of Iran.

Thaghaleyn cultural institute is to manage the event which will be held on Nov. 29 and Dec. 13, 2018 and Jan. 3 2019 respectively in the cities of Tehran,

Mashhad and Qom, Shafaghna website reported on Monday.

The meeting subjects on the general principles of women’s rights in Islam, necessity of same religion in marriage, polygamy, women’s positions (management, judgment and authority).

It also deals with marriage rights, women’s alimony and family

52 percent of agriculture students and 53 percent of medicine students in Iran are also female.”

The 139th Assembly of the IPU is taking place in Geneva, Switzerland on 14-18 October.

All IPU statutory bodies, including the Governing Council, Standing Committees, Committees on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and on Middle East Questions, as well as the Forum of Women Parliamentarians and the Forum of Young MPs, will meet on this occasion, wrote the IPU official website.

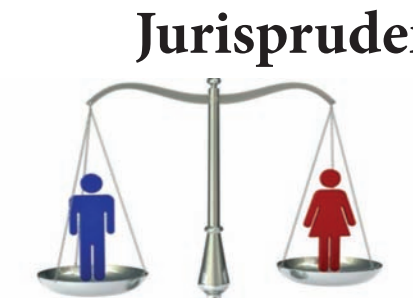
Currently, IPU has 178 member parliaments and 12 associate members. It works closely with the United Nations and other partner organizations who share the same goals.

Today, the IPU is an organization that most closely reflects world public opinion. More than 6.5 billion of the world’s 7 billion people live in countries whose parliaments are members of the IPU—and it is their elected representatives who engage in and steer IPU policies. By bringing parliaments together, IPU bring people together.

IPU is financed primarily by its members out of public funds. IPU headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland.

management including, education, employment after marriage, woman’s departure from home and husband’s permission.

The subject of equality or inequality of men and women in retribution, divorce right and many other jurisprudential subjects will be discussed at the meeting.



Obesity doubles younger women’s colon cancer odds

While rates of colon cancer have declined among people 50 and older, they’re on the rise for younger Americans. Now, new research suggests widening waistlines may be one reason why.

In the study, women aged 20 to 49 who were overweight or obese had up to twice the risk for colon cancer before age 50, compared with normal-weight women.

“Our findings really highlight the importance of maintaining a healthy weight, beginning in early adulthood, for the prevention of early onset colorectal cancer,” said study co-author Yin Cao. She’s an assistant professor of surgery at Washington University in St. Louis.

Even though obesity has been floated as a possible reason for rising colon cancer rates among the young, “we were surprised by the strength of the link,” Cao said in a university news release.

The study wasn’t designed to prove cause and effect, only an association. But one colon cancer expert wasn’t surprised by the finding.

Dr. Jeffrey Aronoff, a colorectal surgeon at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City, noted that obesity has long been a risk factor for colon cancer in people over 50. “I do believe that a healthy lifestyle, which includes diet, exercise,” may help curb even younger people’s odds for the disease, he said.

In the new study, Cao and her colleagues collected data on more than 85,000 U.S. women ages 25 to 44 who took part in a large, ongoing study.

Women who were heavy as teens and gained weight in early adulthood had an increased risk of colon cancer before age 50, the researchers found.

In fact, they estimated that about 22 percent of early onset colon cancers could have been prevented if those who were diagnosed had maintained a healthy weight. Across the whole American population, that could represent thousands of cases of early onset colon cancer that might be prevented.

The risk of early onset colon cancer for overweight and obese women was the same regardless of whether or not the woman had a family history of the disease.

Cao and her team members cautioned that the study cannot prove that increased weight causes early onset colon cancer, only that the two are associated. It is possible that weight is just a marker for other risk factors, such as diabetes or metabolic issues like high blood pressure or higher cholesterol, which have also been on the rise.

And the researchers stress that despite the rise in colon cancer among people under 50, it remains relatively rare, at about 8 cases per 100,000 people. Still, because screening for colon cancer usually starts at 50, those who develop it

younger are often diagnosed when the disease is in its late stages and more difficult to treat.

That’s why the American Cancer Society recently lowered its recommended age at which most people should have a first screening colonoscopy. The new guidelines advise that screening begins at 45, not 50 as in the previous guidelines.

Colon cancer expert Dr. Sherif Andrawes directs endoscopy at Staten Island University Hospital in New York City. He said the study “is very important and confirms a recent observation among clinicians and experts in the field.”

And Andrawes said there’s another reason to urge Americans to get screened for colon cancer earlier.

“A bigger concern is those younger patients with cancer present symptomatic at diagnosis -- which may reflect aggressive disease and an advanced stage at onset of discovery, which leads to overall worse outcomes in a younger individual,” he said.

And what about the risk for young obese men? According to Cao’s team, one limitation of the study is that it included mostly white women, so more research is needed to see if these associations hold for men and other populations.

The report was published online Oct. 11 in the journal JAMA Oncology.

(Source: HealthDay News)

Flu shot in pregnancy keeps women out of hospital

The flu shot reduces a pregnant woman’s risk of hospitalization for flu by 40 percent, new research shows.

“Expecting mothers face a number of threats to their health and the health of their baby during pregnancy, and getting the flu is one of them,” said study co-author Allison Naleway, of Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research, in Portland, Ore.

These “findings underscore the fact that there is a simple, yet impactful way to reduce the possibility of complications from flu during pregnancy: get a flu shot,” Naleway added in a news release from

the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Investigators, including CDC researchers, analyzed 2010-2016 data from more than 2 million pregnant women in the United States, Canada and Australia.

The flu shot was equally protective during all three trimesters, and among women with health problems such as asthma and diabetes, the researchers said.

More than 80 percent of the pregnancies in the study overlapped with flu season, highlighting the fact that many mothers-to-be are exposed to the virus at some point

during pregnancy.

Previous studies have shown that a flu shot can reduce the risk of flu in pregnancy. This study shows vaccination also reduces the risk of hospitalization for flu-related complications, such as pneumonia.

Flu poses a heightened risk in pregnancy due to changes to the immune system, heart and lungs. And women remain highly susceptible to flu-related illness for two weeks after pregnancy, according to the CDC.

In addition, a flu shot during pregnancy also protects babies for several months after birth, before they are old enough for

their own flu vaccination.

Only about half of pregnant women in the United States reported getting a flu shot during recent flu seasons. The CDC and other public health agencies want to increase that number, and recommend women get vaccinated during any trimester of pregnancy.

But pregnant women should be sure to get a flu shot, not the nasal spray flu vaccine, the CDC recommends.

The new findings were published Oct. 11 in the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases*.

(Source: HealthDay News)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Iran, UNDP prepare draft for Conservation of Asiatic Cheetah

Iran’s Department of Environment (DOE) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) have jointly drawn up the draft of the Conservation of Asiatic Cheetah Project (CACP) phase III. Hamid Zohrabi, deputy environment chief for DOE’s natural environment and biodiversity directorate said on Saturday that the project will go into effect by the end of 2018.

Zohrabi has explained that the project, devised in collaboration between experts and volunteers to address the threats and come up with measures to protect the species, will be implemented for 5 more years.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ic/ical”

■ **Meaning:** relating to, characterized by

■ **For example:** During the course, students will develop their **analytical** skills.

PHRASAL VERB

Dry something off

■ **Meaning:** to become dry or to make something dry, especially on the surface

■ **For example:** He dried the camera off, hoping it would still work.

IDIOM

Not be your cup of tea

■ **Explanation:** to not be the type of thing that you like:

■ **For example:** Jazz just isn’t my cup of tea - I prefer classical music.

پیش‌نویس فاز سوم پروژه بین‌المللی حفاظت از یوزپلنگ آسیایی تدوین شد

معاون محیط زیست طبیعی سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست از تدوین پیش‌نویس سند فاز سوم پروژه بین‌المللی حفاظت از یوزپلنگ آسیایی خبر داد با همکاری سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست و برنامه عمران ملل متحد

حمید ظهرابی با اعلام این خبر گفت: فاز سوم این پروژه از اواخر سال جاری میلادی آغاز خواهد شد.

وی ادامه داد: فرایند تدوین پیش‌نویس سند فاز سوم در کارگروهی متشکل از کارشناسان و داوطلبان پیشنهاد شده و برای مقابله با تهدیدها و پیدا کردن راه حل هایی برای حفاظت از این گونه و برای مدت ۵ سال است.

UN condemns ‘horrific’ attack on passenger buses in Yemen

Yemen on brink of ‘world’s worst famine in 100 years’ if war continues

By staff & agencies

Condemning an attack on passenger buses in Yemen’s Hudaydah Province (governorate), the top United Nations humanitarian official in the country has called on warring parties “to do everything possible” to protect civilians.

“This is a horrific incident,” Lise Grande, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, said in a news release on Sunday.

“The UN agencies working in Yemen unequivocally condemn the attack on civilians and extend our deepest condolences to the families of the victims,” she added.

Grande also reiterated that under international humanitarian law, parties to the conflict are obliged to respect the principles of precaution, proportionality and distinction.

“Belligerents must do everything possible to protect civilians – not hurt, maim, injure or kill them,” added the UN official.

At least 15 civilians have been reported killed and 20 others injured when the minibuses they were traveling in were struck in Jabal Ras district in war-ravaged Yemen’s western Hudaydah, on Saturday.

Meantime, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) also slammed the air raid, denouncing such frequent strikes on Yemeni civilians as “unacceptable”.

“Attacks that kill and maim civilians are no longer an anomaly in Yemen’s war,” the humanitarian group said in a statement, referring to a rising and regular toll of civilian deaths since last summer.

The group said dozens of people were killed by explosions outside a hospital and market in early August, adding that more than 50 people lost their lives a week later when air raids hit a school bus.

A week later, over 25 people were killed



in fighting while fleeing their homes near Hudaydah, it added.

“The drumbeat of assaults on men, women and children is one that has become appallingly routine,” the NRC stressed.

■ **Video shows bus hit by Saudi regime jets littered with groceries**

A newly-surfaced video shows a mangled bus littered with groceries and a woman’s hand bag after a Saudi airstrike on Yemen’s Hudaydah Province that killed civilians.

The Saudi planes targeted two buses that were carrying civilians fleeing the port city of Hudaydah on Saturday.

Yemen’s Ansarullah movement released the video footage on Sunday as a proof that the passengers were civilians.

According to Yemenis sources, many women and children were among the casu-

alties, including five members of the same family who were killed in the aerial attack on the vehicle.

Hudaydah has become a flashpoint of the war being waged by Riyadh and its allies against the poorest Arab nation in the world. It came under a concerted invasion by the Saudi regime and the UAE in June.

■ **World’s worst famine in 100 years**

Elsewhere, Yemen could be facing the worst famine in 100 years if airstrikes by the House of Saud regime-led coalition are not halted, the UN has warned.

If war continues, famine could engulf the country in the next three months, with 12 to 13 million civilians at risk of starvation, according to Grande.

She told the BBC: “I think many of us felt

as we went into the 21st century that it was unthinkable that we could see a famine like we saw in Ethiopia, that we saw in Bengal, that we saw in parts of the Soviet Union – that was just unacceptable.”

“Many of us had the confidence that would never happen again and yet the reality is that in Yemen that is precisely what we are looking at.”

Speaking on Sunday evening, Grande said: “There’s no question we should be ashamed, and we should, every day that we wake up, renew our commitment to do everything possible to help the people that are suffering and end the conflict.”

The House of Saud regime and some of its allies, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), launched the brutal war in an attempt to reinstall former fugitive resident Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi and crush the country’s popular Ansarullah (Houthi) movement, which has played a significant role, alongside the Yemeni army, in defending the nation.

Numerous UN and rights groups have repeatedly pointed at grave human rights violations happening as a result of the Saudi regime onslaught. A UN child rights panel urged the Saudi regime to halt strikes against civilian targets on October 11.

Some 15,000 Yemenis have so far been killed and thousands more injured as a result of the bloody campaign which has also left a record 22.2 million Yemenis in a dire need of food, including 8.4 million threatened by severe hunger, according to UN statistics.

Yemeni Health authorities announced last week that 1 in 3 Yemeni children suffer from severe malnutrition and that 8,000 dialysis patients may face death if the Saudi blockade persists in the war-torn country.

Turkish police: Audio recording shows Khashoggi murdered

By staff & agencies

Turkish police are reportedly in possession of an audio recording, which allegedly indicates that the missing Saudi dissident journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, was killed at the House of Saud regime’s consulate in the Turkish city of Istanbul, a Turkish official and a security source claim as the Saudi regime still insists that it has no knowledge whatsoever regarding the fate of its national.

“Turkish police have an audio recording that indicates that Khashoggi was killed at the Saudi consulate” the Reuters quoted the two sources speaking on condition of anonymity as saying on Monday, giving no further details.

Turkey’s probe into the disappearance of Khashoggi has reportedly revealed recordings made on his Apple Watch, which was synced with his iPhone being carried outside the consulate by Khashoggi’s fiancée.

Turkish officials have reportedly shared with Washington the contents of video and audio recordings that allegedly contain evidence supporting claims that the journalist was murdered by the Saudi regime.

Saudi Arabia has strongly denounced the murdering allegations, branding them as a bunch of “lies.”

■ **Saudi king, Turkey’s Erdogan discuss Khashoggi case over phone**

Meantime, The House of Saud regime’s King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan have discussed the disappearance of Jamal Khashoggi as pressure builds up on Riyadh to come clean about the fate of the prominent journalist.

Erdogan has behaved cautiously in the controversy, expressing concern but stopping short of directly accusing Riyadh.

King Salman phoned Erdogan on Sunday evening “to thank the president for welcoming the kingdom’s proposal to form a joint working group” to discuss the disappearance, the Saudi regime foreign ministry said.

Few details have emerged over how the joint working group will function, sparking suspicion that the Saudi regime might be trying to coax Turkey with certain concessions at a time of the latter’s economic problems.

Turkey’s Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Saudi Arabia had not cooperated in the investigation, despite proposing to create the joint working group with Turkish authorities.

The Saudi regime foreign ministry said King Salman affirmed his country’s “solid” relations with Turkey in the phone call with Erdogan, stressing that no one could undermine their relationship.

For his part, Erdogan reportedly expressed his keenness to enhance ties between the two countries.

■ **Saudi king orders internal probe into Khashoggi’s case**

Meanwhile, as diplomatic pressure is growing on Riyadh to give a fuller explanation, Saudi regime King Salman issued an order for launching an internal investigation into the unexplained disappearance of the 60-year-old journalist.

“The king has ordered the public prosecutor to open an internal investigation into the Khashoggi matter based on the information from the joint team in Istanbul,” an unnamed official was quoted by Reuters as saying.

A Turkish diplomatic source also said on Monday that investigators would inspect the consulate on Monday afternoon, following delays last week when Riyadh and Ankara reached an agreement to work together to figure out what had happened to the journalist.

■ **Trump calls Saudi king on journalist’s disappearance**

Separately on Monday, the United States President Donald Trump said he had spoken with the Saudi king regarding the missing journalist earlier in the day, and that he was sending American Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to meet with the king immediately.

Trump added that King Salman had denied “any knowledge of whatever may have happened” to Khashoggi. The Saudi monarch also told Trump that Riyadh was working closely with Ankara on the case.

Trump initially made it clear that whatever the outcome of the inquiry into the disappearance of Khashoggi, the U.S. would not forgo billions of dollars in arms deals with Saudi Arabia.

However, he told CBS News on Saturday that the U.S. was investigating the case which he called “really terrible and disgusting” and that “there will be severe punishment”.

His remarks prompted the Saudi regime to threaten to use its economic muscle to respond to any punitive measure but Rai al-Youm, a pan-Arab newspaper based in London, said the kingdom might have to ready itself for new “milk-ing” by the U.S.

Saudi Arabia appears to be increasingly cornered. Britain, France and Germany, which have also tended to prioritize economic ties with Riyadh, issued a joint statement saying they “expect the Saudi government to provide a complete and detailed response”.

The kingdom seems to be taking on each challenge one by one, beginning with Turkey where the macabre incident took place.

Meanwhile, Spain also called for an urgent probe into the mysterious disappearance of the Saudi journo.

The Saudi regime has responded to Western statements by saying it would retaliate against any pressure or economic

sanctions “with greater action”, and Arab allies rallied to support it, setting up a potential showdown between the world’s top oil exporter and its main Western allies.

■ **Economic impact**

The Saudi riyal fell to its lowest in two years and its international bond prices slipped over fears that foreign investment inflows could shrink amid international pressure.

The Saudi stock market had tumbled 7.2 percent over the previous two trading days but rebounded 2 percent on Monday.

Foreign capital is key to Saudi plans for economic diversification and job creation.

But concern over the disappearance has seen media organizations and a growing number of attendees pull out of a “Davos in the Desert” investment conference set for Oct. 23-25, which has become the biggest show for investors to promote Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s reform vision.

On Monday, a source familiar with the matter said Blackstone CEO (Chief Executive Officer) Stephen Schwarzman and BlackRock Chief Executive Larry Fink were pulling out of the summit. Both companies declined comment.

Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund (PIF), which hosts the conference, has tentatively committed \$20 billion to an infrastructure investment planned with Blackstone Group. Prince Mohammed told Reuters last year that Blackstone and BlackRock Inc were planning to open offices in the kingdom.

Bahrain called for a boycott of Uber, in which PIF has invested \$3.5 billion, after its chief executive officer said he would not attend the conference.

Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi entered Saudi Arabia’s consulate in Istanbul on October 2 to obtain a document certifying he divorced his ex-wife. He has not been seen since.

Turkish sources have told media outlets they believe the Saudi writer and critic was killed inside the consulate in what they describe as “premeditated murder”.

The Saudi regime officials have countered that claim, insisting Khashoggi left the building before vanishing.

Khashoggi, an outspoken critic of the Saudi regime, had been living in self-imposed exile in the United States since 2017, when Saudi authorities launched a massive crackdown on dissent. He was seeking to secure documentation for his forthcoming marriage when he entered the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on October 2, but never came out despite Riyadh’s claim that he exited the mission less than an hour after entering.

His fiancée waited outside the consulate for hours without hearing from him, prompting her to report his disappearance to Istanbul police. Ankara says there is no proof Khashoggi left the consulate.

of Representatives

The economy and healthcare rank as the most important issues for the midterm voters, followed by changing the way things work in Washington and the equal treatment of women and men, followed by taxes, immigration and the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court.

Republicans are also heavily campaigning on the positive trends in the U.S. economy, with the unemployment rate falling to 3.7 percent last month, its lowest in nearly 50 years. However, many economists still fear that much of the economic boom seen from tax cuts and deregulation have not affected middle-income families as much as corporate America.

(Source: agencies)

Assad stresses importance of upgrading historic Syrian-Iraqi relations

➔ considering that in spite of the security circumstances of both countries and in spite of all foreign attempts to prevent the development of the bilateral relations, there has always been coordination at different levels and a mutual understanding with regard to what is going on in the region and the world.

For his part, Minister al-Jaafari pointed out that the regional and international circumstances are changing positively towards what is going on in Syria and Iraq due to the legitimacy of the cause defended by the two brotherly countries, which requires action for achieving more victories and promoting them for upgrading the two countries and the region in general.

Al-Jaafari considered that Syria possesses a cultural and historical heritage and having approached triumph over terrorism, it will have a role in the region more than any stage before.

The meeting also discussed agreeing on intensifying efforts for re-opening the border crossings between the two countries in a way that contributes to broadening prospects of cooperation between them.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign and Expatriates Minister Walid al-Moallem, Presidential Political and Media Adviser Dr. Bouthaina Shaaban, Deputy Foreign and Expatriates Minister Fayssal Mikdad, Assistant Director of the Department of the Arab Nation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Iraqi Ambassador in Damascus.

(Source: SANA)

North, South Korea agree to reconnect roads, rail amid U.S. concern over easing sanctions

North and South Korea agreed on Monday to begin reconnecting rail and road links, another step in an improving relationship that has raised U.S. concern about the possible undermining of its bid to press the North to give up its nuclear program.



The agreement on transport links came during talks in the border village of Panmunjom, aimed at following up on the third summit this year between South Korea’s President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, last month.

“The South and North reached the agreement after sincerely discussing action plans to develop inter-Korean relations to a new, higher stage,” said a joint statement released by the South’s Unification Ministry.

They agreed to hold ceremonies in late November or early December to inaugurate work on reconnecting the railways and roads that have been cut since the 1950-53 Korean War.

The two sides will carry out joint field studies on the transport plans from late this month, according to the joint statement.

They also agreed to discuss late this month a plan to pursue a bid to co-host the 2032 Olympic Games.

The talks were led by the South’s Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon and Ri Son Gwon, chairman of the North’s committee for peaceful reunification that handles cross-border affairs.

“We are at a very critical moment for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and the advancement of inter-Korean relations, and there’s also a second North Korea-U.S. summit coming up,” Cho told reporters before leaving for Panmunjom.

Talks between the two Koreas are running in parallel with the U.S. efforts to press North Korea to give up nuclear weapons and missiles that the North says can hit the U.S. mainland.

Kim held an unprecedented summit with the U.S. President Donald Trump in June in Singapore and the two sides are arranging a second meeting, which Trump said would likely happen after U.S. congressional elections on Nov. 6.

But despite the meeting between Kim and Trump, the United States is still pursuing a policy of “maximum pressure” to get North Korea to give up its nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programs.

Trump said on Wednesday South Korea would not lift sanctions on North Korea without U.S. approval.

The rail and road initiative and the joint Olympics bid were agreed by Moon and Kim at their latest summit, in the North Korean capital, Pyongyang.

Moon also said the North would permanently abolish key missile facilities in the presence of foreign experts.

The leaders of the two Koreas also endorsed a military pact, which includes the halting of military exercises, a no-fly zone near their border and the gradual removal of landmines and guard posts within the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo expressed “discontent” over that agreement, South Korea’s foreign minister Kang Kyung-wha said last week.

Kang’s remarks amounted to a rare confirmation of discord between South Korea and the United States, though the allies have said they remain in lockstep on North Korea.

In August, a plan for an inspection by the two Koreas for the rail project was scrapped after the United Nations Command (UNC), which overlaps with U.S. forces in the South and oversees affairs in the DMZ, rejected the passage of a test train carrying fuel, military sources said.

Cho, asked before the meeting if the UNC had given approval for a study of transport links over the DMZ, said: “We’re in close consultation with relevant countries.”

(Source: Reuters)

Voters say they are more likely to cast ballots in this year’s midterm elections

The United States voters are expressing significantly more interest in turning out to vote in one of the most polarized midterm congressional elections in decades, with Democrats enjoying more support than President Donald Trump’s fellow Republicans, according to a new survey.

Some 77 percent of registered voters say they are certain to vote next month or have already voted, up from a 65 percent majority in Post-ABC polls in October 2014, according to the Washington Post-ABC News poll.

Enthusiasm is up across almost all demographic groups, but the increases are greater among younger adults, non-whites and those who say they favor Democratic Party lawmakers for Congress, the survey found.

Compared to Republicans, Democrats maintain a double-digit advantage in overall support for Congress, the poll finds.

Four years ago, midterm voter turnout fell to its lowest level in more than half a century. Republicans were able to capitalize by expanding their majority in the House of Representatives and taking control of the Senate.

The U.S. midterm elections take place at the halfway point during each presidential term and usually experience weak turnout due to a lack of enthusiasm. But President Trump’s election in 2016, has made Americans more engaged than ever with the polarized political climate.

Democrats hope to change Republican

momentum in Washington following a bitter defeat when the U.S. Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh was confirmed by the Senate by the narrowest majority in the U.S. history.

The confirmation added to the current Republican advantage over all three branches of government, controlling the White House, both houses of Congress and now a 5-4 majority on the country’s highest court.

The new poll offers no definitive answer to the question of how the partisan battle over Kavanaugh has affected intensity among voters from both parties.

According to the latest forecast by FiveThirtyEight, Republicans have an 81 percent chance to keep control of the Senate. The forecast also predicts Democrats have a 77.5 percent chance to take control of the House

Pep Guardiola open to coaching in Serie A in future

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola could see himself coaching in Serie A in the future.

Guardiola, who extended his contract with City through the end of the 2020-21 season in May, played for both Brescia and Roma in Serie A and was in Italy over the weekend to participate in the Festival dello Sport, where he was asked whether he could imagine returning as a coach one day.

“Why not?” he said as part of a podium discussion with Arrigo Sacchi and Carlo Ancelotti. “After my experience at Barcelona, who would have thought I’d go to [Bayern] Munich and Germany? Yet that happened.

“I overcame the arduous challenge of learning German, so everything is possible. I’ve coached in Spain, in Germany and now in England, so why couldn’t I coach in Italy? I don’t know what the future holds for me, but the food’s good here.”

Guardiola, who guided City to the Premier League title last season, ended his playing career in 2006. After coaching Barca for four seasons beginning in 2008-09, winning La Liga three times and the Champions League twice, he joined Bayern in 2013.

He won the Bundesliga in each of his three seasons with Bayern and made three Champions League semifinal appearances, then was appointed at City in 2016.

Guardiola later told reporters that his Brescia and Roma days made him feel at home in Italy, which is why a longer stay than just a weekend appeals to him.

(Source: ESPN)

Slovak national team coach resigns

Slovakia’s national soccer team coach Jan Kozak resigned on Sunday after more than five years in the job, a period during which he got his side into the European Championships for the first time.

Kozak took over the national side in July 2013 and led the team to 29 victories in 54 matches.

His side made it into the round of 16 in its debut Euro Championships in 2016 before getting knocked out by Germany. But it failed to extend its successes and just missed out on the 2018 World Cup.

“He created a side that achieved a number of fantastic results written into the history of our country’s football,” the Football Association said on its website.

Slovakia lost 2-1 to neighboring rivals the Czech Republic in a Nations League match on Saturday.

Assistant Stefan Tarkovic will lead the team in a friendly match against Sweden on Tuesday, the association said.

(Source: Eurosport)

Sri Lanka great Jayasuriya faces ICC corruption charges

Ex-Sri Lanka captain Sanath Jayasuriya has been charged by the International Cricket Council with two breaches of its anti-corruption code.

The 49-year-old former all-rounder is accused of failing to co-operate with an investigation by the governing body.

He is also charged with obstructing the investigation by “concealing, tampering with or destroying evidence”.

Jayasuriya, a former chair of the Sri Lanka selectors’ committee, is regarded as one of the greatest one-day players.

He has 14 days to respond to the charges.

Jayasuriya was player of the tournament as Sri Lanka won the World Cup in 1996 and he scored 21 centuries and took 323 wickets in 445 one-day internationals. He also averaged 40.07 runs in 110 Test matches.

He retired from international cricket in 2011, but continued playing Twenty20 matches until 2012.

Earlier this month, Alex Marshall, general manager of the ICC anti-corruption unit, announced an investigation into “serious allegations of corruption” in Sri Lanka.

(Source: BBC)

Bolt puzzled by Australian anti-doping test

Usain Bolt has questioned why he has received a notice for a drugs test from Australia’s anti-doping authority (Asada), saying he is not yet a professional footballer.

The eight-time Olympic sprint champion has been on trial with A-League club Central Coast Mariners and scored twice on his first start in a friendly on Friday.

Bolt says he has been told he is being tested as he is an “elite athlete”.

The 32-year-old Jamaican retired from athletics in 2017. “So guys I’ve retired from track and field looking to become a footballer but look at this,” Bolt said in an Instagram post on Monday, in which he showed the drugs test notice.

The notice from Asada requesting blood and urine appears to have been issued by Football Federation Australia.

It is understood that even as a trialist, Bolt is officially registered with the club, and is therefore subject to drug testing.

Bolt’s trial period came to an end at the weekend and the Mariners now have to decide whether to offer the Jamaican a permanent deal, a further trial period or release him.

“How am I going to get a drug test today? I’m not even a professional footballer yet. Seriously,” the 100m and 200m world record holder added.

“So I asked the lady, ‘Why am I getting drug tested when I haven’t signed for a club yet?’ and she said they told her I’m an elite athlete so I have to get tested. Okay then.”

Asada defines an athlete as a person who “competes in sport and who is subject to the National Anti Doping Scheme”.

(Source: Yahoo Spotsrs)

The teams, the stars and life after LeBron James - NBA season preview



As a child, Larry Nance Jr couldn’t help but be influenced by basketball.

His father - three-time NBA All-Star Larry Nance Sr - won the league’s first Slam Dunk Contest; his home town - Akron, Ohio - is the birthplace of the legendary LeBron James.

It came as little surprise, then, that Nance Jr should forge a career in the sport.

Now 25, he is preparing for his second season at the Cleveland Cavaliers, whom he joined from the Los Angeles Lakers last season.

A move back to the city he loves was followed by the Cavs taking his father’s number out of retirement for him - which he says was a “dream come true”.

James, his idol, has since moved in the opposite direction.

But how have the Cavs adapted to his departure? And who are the players - and teams - to watch in the new NBA season?

■ **What is life like after LeBron James?**

James’ achievements have led to comparisons with all-time greats such as Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant. After featuring in four consecutive NBA Finals with the Cavs, and giving the city its first NBA championship, James signed a four-year contract with the Los Angeles Lakers worth \$154m (£116m). James has opted for the glitz and glamour of Hollywood; ideal for his lead role in the forthcoming Space Jam movie.

“You never want to lose a player of his calibre, but that being said we’re all very excited to show that we’re more than what we’ve got to show the past couple of years,” Nance Jr said.

“He demands so much attention from other teams - and he’s so good - that we all have to take a back-seat role and just accept and enjoy playing with him.

“We’re all very excited to step out of that role and get to show the kind of players we really are.”

Asked whether the Cavs face extra pressure following James’ departure, he added: “No, not really. I feel like there’s no pressure on us. We lost the best player in the league, so nobody’s really expecting anything. They’re not even expecting us to make the play-offs.

■ **Who are the teams to watch?**

The past four NBA Finals have been between the Golden State Warriors and the Cavs. The Warriors have won three of those, including the past two. Can they make it three in a row? Can the Houston Rockets topple them in the Western Conference? Do the Boston Celtics deserve favouritism in the Eastern Conference, or can the Toronto Raptors make a push?

“I have to start with Golden State - they’re

the returning champions two years straight and they added the best centre in the NBA [DeMarcus Cousins] so that kind of speaks for itself,” Nance Jr said. “They’re probably number one.

“I think number two is the Houston Rockets. They had the Warriors against the ropes last season. They’re a very, very good team.

“Obviously the LA Lakers can’t be overlooked now they have LeBron. Any time you bring in a player of the calibre that [Golden State and Los Angeles] brought in - DeMarcus Cousins and LeBron - your off-season can’t be overlooked.

■ **How can the Warriors be stopped?**

The Golden State Warriors won their third

NBA Championship in 1975, then went 40 years without another. But, as they seek a third straight title, how can Steph Curry and his team-mates be stopped?

“If I knew, then we would have won a couple of games,” joked Nance Jr.

“They were so good last year, and to add a talent like DeMarcus Cousins is a whole new ball game, so I don’t know.

“I’m glad we don’t play them until the middle of the season, so hopefully I can watch a couple of teams beat them and we can get a few ideas.

“I do think Golden State are going to end up taking it home again, but I think Houston could give them some problems.

(Source: BBC)

Ex-German football bosses’ World Cup tax evasion trial canned



A German court has decided not to pursue a tax evasion case against three former DFB officials, including two former DFB presidents. They have been charged in connection with the awarding of the 2006 World Cup.

A regional court in the German city of Frankfurt on Monday decided not to open proceedings against three former high-ranking members Germany’s football association (DFB).

The three officials — former DFB presidents Wolfgang Niersbach and Theo Zwanziger and former general secretary Horst Schmidt — were charged in May with tax evasion in connection with the awarding of the 2006 World Cup. All three were members of the organizing committee for Germany’s successful bid to host the tournament.

The Frankfurt district court ruled that there were insufficient grounds to proceed to a trial. Public prosecutors have one week to appeal the decision to the high district court.

“I have always stressed that the accusations against me are completely unfounded. Now I am just very relieved,” Niersbach, who stepped down as DFB president in November

2015, told German news agency SID.

The charges against them relate to a payment of €6.7 million (\$7.3 million) which the DFB made to FIFA, world football’s governing body, in 2005. The payment was declared as a contribution for a cultural event at the World Cup in Germany, but the event never took place.

Public prosecutors maintain the payment was wrongly declared in the DFB’s 2006 tax return, but the football association continues to insist that it was made for operational reasons.

Investigators also believe the money was actually a concealed repayment to the late chief executive of Adidas, Robert Louis-Dreyfus.

Three years earlier, Louis-Dreyfus had extended a loan of 10 million Swiss francs to Franz Beckenbauer, then the president of the World Cup organizing committee. Around the same time, a similar sum was transferred from an account belonging to Beckenbauer and his manager to a company in Qatar belonging to Mohamed Bin Hammam, then a FIFA executive.

(Source: DW)

Saudi Arabian prince interested in huge Manchester United takeover



Manchester United could be set for huge Middle East investment as Saudi Arabia’s crown prince - a man worth around £850billion - ‘eyes up a potential takeover’.

It has been reported that Mohammad bin Salman - who currently holds the second highest position in the Saudi government behind the King - wants to take on the Abu Dhabi-based owners of Manchester City in the Premier League.

The Sun report that 33-year-old Bin Salman wants to make his mark in the world of football, and views the Glazer-owned Manchester United as the perfect acquisition.

If United’s current owners were to sell the club, it would cost the Saudis more than £3bn, but there is a chance that the crown prince could instead just buy a portion.

Saudi Arabia have already delved into the world of sport with purchases in both F1 and WWE, but football has been a difficult subject in the past.

The Qatari channel beIN Sports has been banned from broadcasting in the country,

but the Sun report that BeoutQ, based in Saudi Arabia, has been pirating beIN Sport’s coverage of the English top flight.

It is as yet unclear whether the Glazer family would be willing to sell the club, and they have made no comment on it since their arrival back in 2005.

Co-chairman Avram Glazer’s recent whereabouts have fuelled rumours of an imminent sale though, with him spending a large chunk of his time in the Middle East.

He is even due to attend the Future Investment Initiative conference in Saudi Arabia’s capital Riyadh next week, alongside leading bankers and investors based around the globe.

Manchester United’s current share price values the club at more than £2.5bn, which is slightly down from the record high of £3.1bn recorded in August.

It is understood that any offer to the Glazers would have to be significantly higher, given the earning power and global brand of the club.

(Source: Daily Mail)

Simona Halep earns 2nd straight year-end No. 1 ranking



Singapore on Oct. 21.

“I hope first to be able to play here (in Moscow) because ... I have already 3-4 days getting ready for this tournament,” Halep said. “But if I will not be able to play here, I’m very doubtful that I will be able to play in Singapore because it’s very fast.

“So I don’t know now, but for sure I will take a decision for my health first.”

Despite the injury, Halep is still relishing in her season. She has been at the top of the rankings for nearly the entire year even though her results suffered as the season wore on.

Halep has played in 15 tournaments so far in 2018, but she followed up her first major title by losing in the third round at Wimbledon. She then lost in the first round at the U.S. Open.

Keeping her best level throughout the long season is something Halep has struggled with, even though she has qualified for the WTA Finals in each of the five years since its move to Singapore.

“It’s really difficult and I feel it every year, and I feel it more and more, to be honest. I give everything I have the first part of the year and then it’s difficult for me to play,” said Halep, who also reached French Open finals in 2014 and 2017 but lost both times. “My goal for the next years is to be better in this position, if I would be able to qualify again for the Finals. I want just to be better and ready to play the tournament.”

But before she takes the court in Singapore, or in Moscow, there’s that back injury that is still bothering her.

(Source: ESPN)



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National Orchestra performs in honor of Imam Hussein (AS)

A R T TEHRAN — Iran’s National Orchestra performed a repertoire of popular religious pieces in honor of Imam Hussein (AS), the third Imam of the Shia, at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on Saturday evening.

Vocalist Mohamad Esfahani (L) and conductor Fereidun Shahbazian acknowledge the audience after a performance by the National Orchestra at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on October 13, 2018. (Mehr/Majid Hagdoost)

Vocalist Mohammad Esfahani accompanied the orchestra during the concert conducted by Fereidun Shahbazian. The concert named “Hadith of Greatness” was organized in memory of Imam Hussein (AS) and his companions who were martyred in Karbala in 680 CE. Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Seyyed Mojtaba Hosseini, Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi and director of Iran’s Institute for Development of Contemporary Art, Mehdi Afzali, were also among the concertgoers. The repertoire featured pieces by Shahbazian, including “Mourning”, “Hadith of Greatness” and “Depressed Buds” with lyrics by Soheil Mahmudi, Hessian Chaichian and several other songwriters.

Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society to screen “Lotus”

A R T TEHRAN — “Lotus”, a documentary by Iranian filmmaker Mohammadreza Vatandoost, will go on screen at the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society in England, the society has announced.

“Lotus” by Mohammadreza Vatandoost. The doc tells the story of an old woman who is waiting for a permit to enter an island to visit her son’s grave. The documentary is scheduled to go on screen on October 20. Other documentaries coming from the USA, Germany, Brazil, India and Norway will also be screened during the society’s screening program, which started on Monday and will run until October 22. The Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society located in Cornwall County in southwestern England promotes innovation in the arts and sciences through film screening sessions, exhibitions, talks, music, plays and workshops.

After “Night Manager” hit, Le Carre’s “Little Drummer Girl” heads to TV

LONDON (Reuters) — John le Carre fans will see a new adaptation of one of his spy novels when “The Little Drummer Girl” hits TV screens this month but the British author said there was huge pressure in making the series after the success of hit show “The Night Manager”. Le Carre’s 1983 book, previously made into a film starring Diane Keaton, is set in the 1970s and follows British actress Charlie as she is recruited by a spy master to track down a Palestinian militant. The mini-series was made by the makers of Golden Globe-winning “The Night Manager”, with le Carre’s sons once again executive producers. The author described the story as “quite different”. Actors Michael Shannon, Florence Pugh and Alexander Skarsgard, together with director Park Chan-wook and author John le Carre, arrive at the world premiere of “The Little Drummer Girl” during the London Film Festival, in London, Britain, October 14, 2018. REUTERS/Simon Dawson “The one thing you can’t do, you can’t be a one-trick pony, you can’t repeat it. We had a massive audience (for “The Night Manager”),” le Carre said at “The Little Drummer Girl” premiere at the BFI London Film Festival on Sunday.

National library honors four Iranian cultural luminaries

A R T TEHRAN — Four Iranian cultural luminaries were honored for their lifetime achievements during a ceremony held at the National Library and Archives of Iran (NLAI) on Sunday. Mohammad-Mehdi Jafari received the honor for a Persian translation of the Nahj-ul-Balagha, and Mohammad-Hassan Semsar won the honor for his lifelong studies on Iranian architecture. Children’s book translator Majid Amiq and expert on the history of Islam Ali Bahramian were the other honorees. Speaking at the ceremony, Jafari said that he regards the Nahj-ul-Balagha as a hereditary issue and added, “My father was a scholar educated in Najaf. Although he died when I was a child, I saw the interpretation of the book among his books.” The Nahj-ul-Balagha (“The Peak of Eloquence”) is an anthology of political discourses, sermons, letters and sayings attributed to Imam Ali (AS), which were compiled by Seyyed Razi (d. 1015). Semsar also talked of his interest and activities in Islamic art and his articles published in different art magazines. He also said that he was the one who initiated the idea of converting palaces into museums after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Amiq said that he has studied English literature at the university and that he has always wanted to be perfect in his work. “I wanted to be in love with what I do in

Left to right, scholars Majid Amiq, Mohammad-Mehdi Jafari, Mohammad-Hassan Semsar and Ali Bahramian pose after being honored at the National Library and Archives of Iran on October 14, 2018. (NLAI)

the field of children’s books because those who are in love are much better,” he said. For his part, Bahramian expressed his hope that he finds an opportunity to collect and publish what he has learned about the history of Islam.

Religious play crew pays tribute to actor Anushirvan Arjmand

Actor Borzu Arjmand speaks during a ceremony held by the crew of the play “Khatun” at Tehran’s City Theater Complex on October 14, 2018 to commemorate his father, Anushirvan. “Khatun” director Hossein Aalambakhsh is also seen in the photo. (Honaronline/Ahmad Aqasiani)

A R T TEHRAN — The crew of “Khatun” commemorated actor Anushirvan Arjmand, mostly famous for his roles in historical and religious plays and TV series, before premiering the religious play by writer and director Hossein Aalambakhsh at the main hall of Tehran’s City Theater Complex on Sunday. “Love of Imam Hussein (AS) was a key aspect of his personality and he never ignored it,” said director Hossein Mosafer Astaneh who collaborated with Arjmand in several religious theatrical projects, including “The Sun of the Caravan”, which was performed for about a decade during

Muharram. Arjmand’s family, including his son, Borzu, who is also an actor, attended the premiere of the play. “I am really glad to see that my father is being commemorated during the premiere of ‘Khatun,’” Borzu said on stage. “In some way, he had made a vow to act in ‘The Sun of the Caravan’... and I believe that the play was a turning point in our lives,” he added. Anushirvan Arjmand who did his most memorable acting in TV series, which included “Imam Ali (AS)” and “Mokhtarnameh” directed by Davud Mirbaqeri, died at age 73 in December 2014.

Battersea Arts Centre seeks new artistic director after David Jubb stands down

LONDON (Guardian) — Battersea Arts Centre, the vibrant London venue that recently fully reopened after a devastating 2015 fire, is searching for a new artistic director and CEO. After 15 years in the joint role, David Jubb has announced that he is to step down in April or, in his words, “bugger off and let someone else have a go”. Jubb, who is “heading off to grow children and vegetables”, arrived at BAC as a development producer in 1999. He has been the artistic director and CEO since 2004. His collaborative “scratch” method of working — where everyone has a say in developing new ideas — was used not just on BAC’s productions but also on the renovation of the Grade II*-listed building after the fire. Artists championed and nurtured during Jubb’s time at the venue have included 1927, Kate Tempest, Little Bulb, Inua Ellams, Jess Thom aka Touretteshero and Bryony Kimmings, whose show I’m a Phoenix, Bitch opened this week to rave reviews as part of BAC’s Phoenix season. One of the theatre’s greatest hits was 2007’s “The Masque of the Red Death”, an immersive experience inspired by Edgar Allan Poe and created by the Punchdrunk company. The gothic adventure invited audiences to roam the building in cloaks and masks, and featured a walk-on part for the theatre’s cat, Pluto. It had a seven-month sellout run and was seen by more than 40,000 people. BAC’s productions have reached wider audiences in recent years thanks to their strand of BBC programming, Performance Live, which has included television broadcasts

Battersea Arts Centre. (Photograph: Morley von Sternberg)

of theatre shows by Thom and Tempest and companies including Common Wealth and Gecko. During Jubb’s time at BAC the centre has also merged with Wandsworth Museum to create the new BAC Moving Museum. Jubb described BAC as “one of those places where people’s lives often begin again. They have an experience; they meet someone or a community of people; they discover a new passion. I think it’s why the organization and the building are held with such affection. All great cultural centers are places of transformation — it is why they are such important institutions in our communities because they enable us to imagine a different future. I think BAC has always been one of the very best. It has been a massive privilege.” Michael Day, chair of the BAC board, said Jubb had “moved minds and hearts, always collaboratively and with humility and grace. In the aftermath of the fire, he showed us a future to believe in and worked tirelessly to bring everyone’s efforts together.”

Linz festival honors Iranian films “Birthday Night” “Animal”

Babak Behshad (L) and Nader Fallah act in a scene from “Birthday Night” by Omid Shams. **A R T** TEHRAN — Iranian films “Birthday Night” and “Animal” won awards at the Linz International Short Film Festival in Austria, the organizers announced on Monday. Directed by Omid Shams, “Birthday Night” received the award for best fiction, and “Animal” by Bahram and Bahman Ark won director of photography Ali Abpak an award for best cinematography. “Birthday Night” is a film about Ahmad and Ali, two friends and business partners who face a dramatic situation on their birthday night. “Animal” tells the story of a man who attempts to cross a frontier disguised as a ram. Farnush Samadi, director of the

“Venom”, “A Star Is Born” repeat box office wins, “First Man” launches to \$16.6 million

LOS ANGELES (Variety.com) —Tom Hardy’s “Venom” grabbed \$35.7 million to repeat as the winner of the North American box office, followed by Lady Gaga’s “A Star Is Born” with \$28 million. Ryan Gosling’s “First Man” launched in third place at the low end of expectations with \$16.6 million at 3,640 sites, edging the opening of Sony’s “Goosebumps 2: Haunted Halloween” with \$16.2 million at 3,521 venues. “Venom”, which declined 56 percent, is the first repeat winner at the box office since “Crazy Rich Asians” won three straight weekends in August. Moviegoers have continued to shrug off negative reviews as the movie has taken in more than \$142 million domestically at 4,250 locations in its first 10 days for Sony. It’s also continued the dominance of Marvel’s characters in the superhero movie realm. “A Star Is Born”, bolstered by stellar reviews and fans excited over the Lady Gaga-Bradley Cooper collaboration, declined by only 33 percent and lifted its 10-day total to more than \$94 million at 3,708 venues. “First Man” audiences gave the film a B+ CinemaScore. Universal’s distribution president Jim Orr said that the “First Man” results were not disappointing, given that the core audience is an older demographic. “As we’ve seen in this release corridor, quality films like ‘First Man’ — Certified Fresh at 88 percent on Rotten Tomatoes — have strong playability and will have tremendous legs at the box office,” he said. “This weekend’s results are a just a starting point. Quality adult dramas released in this time period produce very healthy multiples. This is very much a

Cast member Tom Hardy attends the premiere for the movie “Venom” in Los Angeles, California, U.S., October 1, 2018. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

marathon, not a sprint.” “First Man”, directed by Damien Chazelle, follows Neil Armstrong’s life and the years leading up to the Apollo 11 mission to the moon in 1969. “First Man”, which premiered at the Venice Film Festival, is receiving a major campaign for awards. Chazelle won the Best Director Academy Award last year for “La La Land”. “Goosebumps 2: Haunted Halloween” debuted slightly above expectations as it aims at family audiences. The original opened with \$23.6 million in 2015 on its way to an \$80 million domestic total. Warner Bros.’ third weekend of animated comedy “Smallfoot” took the fifth spot with \$9.3 million at 3,606 locations for a 17-day total of \$57.6 million. Universal’s third weekend of “Night School” followed in sixth with \$8 million at 2,870 sites giving the Kevin Hart-Tiffany Haddish comedy nearly \$60 million.