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## State Duma ratifies temporary agreement on free trade zone between EAEU, Iran

The State Duma (lower house of parliament) ratified the temporary agreement on formation of a free trade zone between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Islamic Republic of Iran on Thursday.

The agreement signed in Astana on May 17, 2018 sets the main rules of trade between the EAEU and Iran most closely to those of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which Iran does not belong to. It also specifies the issues of most favorable

environment and national environment, the use of protective measures and customs administration.

Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) Tigran Sargsyan told TASS earlier that the provisional agreement on free trade zone with Iran was expected to come into force starting 2019, after the ratification procedure is completed in all countries that signed the agreement.

(Source: TASS)

## Cancer drug, lenalidomide, produced in Iran

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Iran succeeded in domestically production of lenalidomide, a cancer drug, for one-twentieth of its original price, IRNA reported on Thursday.

According to WebMD, lenalidomide is used to treat certain cancers (multiple myeloma, mantle cell lymphoma-MCL). It works by slowing or stopping the growth of cancer cells. It is also used

to treat anemia in patients with certain blood/bone marrow disorders (myelodysplastic syndromes-MDS). Lenalidomide may lessen the need for blood transfusions.

Lenalidomide-- with the trade name Revlimid--was approved in the United States in 2005. According to drugs.com price guide each Revlimid oral capsule 25 mg costs about \$730 per unit. ➔12

## Funeral prayers held for Khashoggi in Mecca and Medina

*By Staff & agencies*

Funeral prayers have been held in absentia for slain Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Grand Mosque in Mecca and Prophet Muhammad's mosque in the Saudi city of Medina, two of the holiest places of Islam.

The prayer, known as "Salat al-Ghaib" or "prayer for the absent", was offered at dawn in Medina with the participation of Salah Khashoggi, the son of the murdered Washington Post columnist. Muslims perform the prayer when the body of the deceased has not been found. ➔13

## Netanyahu govt. must pay the price for crime in Khan Yunis: Hamas senior spokesman

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**  
By Mohammad Fatemizadeh

**TEHRAN** — In the aftermath of the Zionist regime's infiltration of the Gaza Strip, which targeted and killed an Izz al-Din Qassam brigade commander, there were many questions raised about the incident. Why, for example, did the Israelis do it? It smashed the ceasefire in formation, but now apparently the ceasefire is back on again.

Israeli special forces made their way into the coastal sliver using a civilian vehicle which resulted in a drive-by shooting near the city of Khan Yunis in southern Gaza. Assassinated was Nour Baraka, a senior



commander in Hamas' military wing. In the clash a Zionist officer was also killed

and another wounded. The subsequent Israeli airstrikes killed five other Palestinians, including another commander with the Palestinian resistance movement.

The group defined the exact place where the targeted killing took place as the area of the Shahid Ismail Abu Shanab mosque, three kilometers (1.8 miles) east of Khan Yunis.

Tehran Times spoke to Ali Baraka, a senior member of the Palestinian Hamas movement in Lebanon. Following is the full text of the interview.

■ What was behind the recent Zionist crime in the Gaza Strip and the assassination of one of the Hamas leaders? What is your assessment of the Israeli take on the cease-fire agreement in recent days? ➔7

## Re-imposition of sanctions is violation of UN Security Council resolution: Jenkins

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**  
By Javad Heirannia

**TEHRAN** — Peter Jenkins, former UK Ambassador to the IAEA and UN says that the re-imposition of sanctions by U.S. against Iran puts at risk the July 2015 nuclear agreement known as the JCPOA.

Former associate fellow of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy also adds that "It is a foolish absurdity to put such an agreement at risk by denying Iran many of the economic benefits that Iran anticipated on entering into the agreement."

He adds that "Re-imposition of sanctions amounts to a violation of a UN Security Council resolution (2231) and so suggests the kind of disregard and disrespect for UN resolutions that the world has come to associate with rogue states."

Following is the full text of the interview:

■ As announced before, U.S. returned all nuclear sanctions against Iran. Do you think that this sanctions is according to U.S. national interest in long term?

A: No, I do not. The re-imposition of sanctions puts at risk the July 2015 nuclear agreement known as the JCPOA. The value of that agreement has been amply apparent over the last three years. It provides the International Atomic Energy Agency with the access it needs to determine the absence of undeclared, illicit nuclear activity in Iran. It enables Iran to build confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear program. It provides the international community with a formal assurance that Iran is committed in perpetuity to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

It is a foolish absurdity to put such an agreement at risk by denying Iran many of the economic benefits that Iran anticipated on entering into

the agreement. It is also an instance of self-harm, since it damages the image and prestige of the United States. By most of the world the United States is seen as behaving like a spoiled, willful child, seeking to destroy and destabilize for no good reason. Worse, the re-imposition of sanctions amounts to a violation of a UN Security Council resolution (2231) and so suggests the kind of disregard and disrespect for UN resolutions that the world has come to associate with rogue states.

The only obvious U.S. interest that this absurdity serves is currying favour with U.S. allies in the Middle East, allies that have opposed the JCPOA from its inception and fought it through proxies in the U.S. congress in 2015. Even that is an aberration. It damages U.S. prestige since it implies that it is possible for relatively minor, insignificant powers to exercise a disproportionate influence over, and pervert U.S. decision-making. ➔7



**ARTICLE**  
**Hanif Ghaffari**  
Political analyst

## Democrats vs Trump: The dispute is intensified

The mid-term elections in the United States ended with the majority of Republicans in the Senate, and Democrats' victory in the House of Representatives. Democrats in the House of Representatives are now preparing themselves to confront Trump and challenge his position at the White House, as they seem to be disappointed with the resistance of the Senate to Trump and his friends.

Describing the political sphere ruling over the U.S. House of Representatives, the Washington Post writes: "Democrats took control of the House on Tuesday night, a victory that will transform a Republican-controlled chamber that supported and protected President Trump into a legislative body ready to challenge and investigate him."

The Democrats intend to quickly start with a legislative package of anti-corruption measures aimed at strengthening ethics laws, protecting voter rights and cracking down on campaign finance abuses.

The Washington reports: "Tomorrow will be a new day in America," House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) declared from the Democratic Party headquarters in Washington. "It's about restoring the Constitution's checks and balances to the Trump administration. It's about stopping the GOP and [Senate Majority Leader] Mitch McConnell's assaults on Medicare, Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, and the health care of 130 million Americans living with preexisting medical conditions."

In another report, the Washington Post focused on the angry stances some of the new representatives of the House took in facing the U.S. President: "Energized by their success in last week's midterms and courting potential primary voters outraged by the actions of the Trump administration, virtually every Democrat considering a White House run is talking about fighting in one form or another — and trying to prove he or she is prepared for the match... Some, like Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, have taken aggressive stances that suggest a willingness to take on Trump directly." ➔7



**ARTICLE**  
**Martin Love**  
Political analyst from North Carolina

## The recent liberalized scene at Azadi is a purely good, smart anodyne

Just to demonstrate how inaccurate and craven the U.S. mainstream media can be, one must note a late-night news broadcast this week about the further carnage in the Gaza arena. The talking head commented that the Zionists responded with massive bombing runs on Gaza because Hamas sent flying 300 or so (ineffective) "firecracker" rockets in to Israel, and now Israel may be preparing another invasion of what amounts to the largest open-air prison on earth — an amplified and defenseless Warsaw Ghetto redux.

However, the broadcaster failed to mention that exactly at the moment where some sort of ceasefire between the Israelis and the Gazans was at hand, it was the Israelis who invaded Gaza, breaking any ceasefire, with a few handpicked guerrillas (gorillas?), some dressed as women, riding in a civilian vehicle to murder a targeted group of Hamas commanders. The Zionists expected Hamas to respond, and they did, creating a pretext for a massive assault on Gaza that may be forming.

There seems no end to Israeli cruelty and subterfuge, and no end to dishonest reporting about Israel in the mainstream U.S. media. But note also that probably the greatest living intellectual in the U.S., Noam Chomsky, formerly for decades at MIT and now semi-retired in Arizona, has just recently penned an article spelling out what most of the world already knows, and he is Jewish, too.

Echoing a prominent but now deceased Israeli scholar, Chomsky pulls no punches in describing what he terms "Judeo-Nazi" tendencies in the Holy Land. In short, those oppressed by the Nazis have become Nazi-like oppressors, but this really is no secret to astute observers. What's interesting is that a Jew in the U.S. of Chomsky's stature is saying it loud and clear.

Perhaps some in the U.S. Congress may eventually get around to saying something similar, but holding one's breath for that is not advised. However, it is heartening that with the midterm elections this month the Congress now has two Muslim women, for the first time ever, seated in the House of Representatives as well as a native American Indian. ➔7



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## Funeral procession held for Social Security Organization's head, deputy

**TEHRAN** — A funeral procession was held for Iran's Social Security Organization Director Taqi Noorbakhsh and his deputy for parliamentary affairs Abdorrahman Tajoddin in Tehran on Friday who passed away in a car crash on Thursday evening.

In a collision between their car and an oil tanker Noorbakhsh and Tajoddin both sustained fatal injuries and passed away at the hospital, IRIB reported.

The two late officials were on a mission accompanying Labor Minister Mohammad Shariatmadari in Golestan province, northern Iran. ➔12



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



World knows that Iran is 'honest': cleric

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Ayatollah Mohammad Emami Kashani, a Tehran Friday prayer leader, said on Friday that the whole world has realized that Iran is “trustworthy” and “honest”.

In an address to worshippers in Tehran, he said that the world is aware that Iran has always stood for the right.

The ayatollah said that the U.S. has always been “cruel”, but Donald Trump “has the worst face” among the U.S. presidents.

“Now the world should judge. Where do the corruptions in the world come from? How the Zionists and Al-Saud commit crime? The U.S. has the ugliest face in the world in these crimes,” he said.



'Weaponizing food and medicine is crime against humanity'

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — An Iranian diplomat to the United Nations on Thursday severely criticized the United States for limiting Iran's access to food and medicine through sanctions, saying such an action constitute an example of “crime against humanity”.

“Weaponizing food and medicine against civilians has no other designation but crime against humanity,” Eshaq Al Habib told the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly.

He added, “The U.S. secretary of state in an interview shamelessly threatens all Iranians to mass starvation.”



Army chief: U.S. dominance in West Asia has waned

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Army chief said on Thursday that the era of U.S. dominance in West Asia has come to an end.

Hailing the Iranian nation for tackling numerous threats on its path to progress, Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi said the Islamic Republic has attained a determining position in the region, Fars reported.

Mousavi enumerated a set of political, economic and security threats posed by enemies to Iran and the resistance front in the region, among them the emergence of the Daesh terror group in Iraq and Syria, U.S. and Saudi crimes in Yemen as well as an Iranophobia media campaign coupled with economic sanctions and political pressure.



Iranian ambassador's mission to Turkey ends

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — In line with a parliamentary legislation that bans the employment of retirees, the mission of the Iranian ambassador to Turkey, Ebrahim Taherian, officially came to an end on Friday.

The rule also applies to Ali Majedi, Tehran's ambassador to Berlin, and Gholam-Ali Khoshroo, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations in New York.

All Iranian officials whose employment status meets the conditions stipulated in this law are required submit their resignations by November 17.

So far no replacement has been named for Taherian.

Taherian started his mission in Turkey in 2015. Before that, he had served as ambassador in Croatia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.



Iran expresses sympathy with Californian people

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi has expressed sympathy with people in California, where wildfires have ravaged and left 59 people killed.

Qassemi expressed sympathy with the U.S. people and families of the victims.

The Camp Fire ignited on November 8 in the town of Pulga, continued to grow slowly, reaching 141,000 acres on Thursday, with containment reported at 40 percent. Officials say the fire is not expected to be fully contained until the end of November, according to NBC News.

Reportedly, the number of missing people has continued to raise from 297 on Wednesday night to 631 on Thursday night.



Iraqi president to visit Iran Saturday

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iraqi President Barham Salih arrives in Iran on Saturday for a two-day visit.

A number of cooperation documents are scheduled to be signed during the trip.

Salih plans to meet with President Hassan Rouhani and a number of other Iranian officials to discuss expansion of relations and other issues of mutual interest.

Salih, former prime minister of Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government, was elected president by the Iraqi parliament in October.

# EU has so far failed to find practical solutions to save JCPOA: Iran

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Friday that the European Union has so far failed to present a practical solution to save the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

“Iran expects the EU to fulfill its economic obligations under the JCPOA,” he told reporters in Rome, Italy.

He noted that Iran has fulfilled its obligations under the JCPOA and expects the Europeans to meet their economic commitments along with the political ones.

Since the nuclear deal went into force the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, has issued more than 10 reports each time confirming that Iran is fully abiding by the terms of the nuclear agreement.

Under the nuclear agreement signed between Iran, the European Union, Germany and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council in July 201, Tehran agreed to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

However, U.S. President Donald Trump officially withdrew Washington from the 2015 nuclear deal in May and ordered sanctions on Iran. The first round of sanctions went into force on August 6 and the second round, which targets Iran's oil exports and banks, were announced on November 4.

**■ Sanctions have endangered nuclear deal**

Araqchi said on Thursday that the renewal of U.S. sanctions has “endangered” the nuclear deal.

“The new wave of anti-Iran sanctions by the U.S. puts pressure on underway efforts to implement the commitments



*Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araqchi, left, meets with Vatican Foreign Minister Paul Richard Gallagher in Rome on November 15, 2018. (Photo by IRNA)*

existing under the agreement,” Araqchi said in Rome.

“The consequences of the reinstatement of the sanctions on the part of the U.S. are worrisome,” he added, according to Press TV.

The nuclear deal would offer the international community the guarantee that Iran would stay committed to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), he told the Vatican's Foreign Minister Paul Richard Gallagher during his one-day visit to Italy.

“The recent move by Washington can bring along insecurity across the international community as it overshadows

international relations and equations,” the Iranian official warned.

He said the other parties to the agreement consider the reimposition of the sanctions to be “a heavy blow” to the NPT.

**■ 'U.S. using dollar as weapon to pressure Europe'**

Araqchi also said the United States has turned its currency dollar into a “weapon” and is using it to challenge the sovereignty of European nations.

“Dollar has become a weapon for the United States to force its illegitimate demands upon its European partners, practically challenging their national sovereignty,” he said during his trip to Italy,

## Saudi Arabia's \$300 million aid to Reza Pahlavi for provoking protests in Iran

According to Saudi Arabia's closest sources, recently there was a visit between Ambassador of Saudi Arabia and some senior Saudi officials with Reza Pahlavi in New York in which the son of a former Iranian king has demanded Saudis to help him in his activities against the Iranian government. Saudi Arabia has accepted the request and promised to help him if he performs some protests in the big cities of Iran.

It has been also declared that the cooperation between Reza Pahlavi and Saudi Arabia has started in 2017 after creating a violent atmosphere by the supporter of Reza Pahlavi and has been continuing by the meeting held between the two parties. However, he had claimed that he is Aryan and would not worship Arab.

Although the Saudi sources have not mentioned the amount of money given to Reza Pahlavi, some reports has

been released by the UAE king counselor, George Nader, and FDD lobbyists and the U.S. secretary of state that has shown Reza Pahlavi's success in getting \$300,000,000 aid for protests and anti-government activities in Iran.

It has been reported that Pahlavi hopes to topple Iran's Islamic government and reinstate the monarchy by the help of his friends; the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

(Source: Critics Chronicle)

## Tehran condemns instrumental use of human rights

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Friday strongly condemning use of the human rights and international mechanisms as a tool.

“Use of the human rights, human rights resolutions and international mechanisms as tool by certain Western countries, the child killer Zionist regime of Israel, and certain reactionary countries in the region is strongly condemned and rejected,” Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi stated.

The remarks by Qassemi came after UN General Assembly's Human Rights Committee issued a resolution on Thursday accusing Iran of violating the human rights.

Qassemi said, “This resolution was issued without considering realities in Iran and based on selective and biased attitude and political motivations.”

He added that continuation of such moves weaken the international community's trust on the international mechanisms and makes them ineffective.

Speaking ahead of voting on the draft resolution, Iran's deputy ambassador to the UN Es'haq Al-e Habib said the same destructive forces behind the resolution have done everything in their power to suppress or derail struggle of Iranians for the causes of human rights and democracy.

“Orchestrating a military coup in 1953 against a democratically-elected government, unconditionally supporting a despotic ruler for the following two and half decades, supporting a war of aggression against Iranians during the 1980s, providing chemical weapons and reconnaissance to Saddam to target Irani-



ans, shutting down an Iranian passenger flight murdering all of its 290 passengers, colluding with renowned terrorist cults, and waging a full-fledged economic war against Iranians in defiance of the Security Council resolution 2231 and the mandatory ruling of the International Court of Justice are only a few examples to recall. In fact, not a single day has passed since 1953 in which the same forces have not harmed and tortured Iranians,” Al-e Habib stated.

He added, “Actually, human rights and democracy have no greater adversaries than those who conveniently abuse them against the nations and governments they dislike. For these few, a rigid dichotomy exists on the issues related to human rights.”

Blasting the U.S. and the West for imposing unilateral sanctions against Iran, Al-e Habib said such “sanctions of mass destruction” had killed more people around the world than all of the weapons of mass destruction “put together throughout history.”

## Iran's response to Saudis will be 'covert but painful': IRGC chief

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The chief of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) has threatened the Saudi regime's empty and hostile remarks against Iran will not go unanswered, noting that Tehran's reaction will be “covert but painful”.

Speaking on Thursday, Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari said Saudi Arabia's empty rants reveal Riyadh's anger at the Islamic Republic's gains in the region.

“Iran's numerous successes in the region, especially in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon, have led the all Saud into confusion,” Jafari remarked.

Iran's regional role, he added, irks Riyadh's rulers as it has led to the awakening of nations in the region and boosted the resistance movement.

**■ 'Syria has asked Iran to station units of peacekeepers in Idlib'**

Elsewhere in his remarks, Jafari pointed to the ongoing talks to settle the situation in Syria, saying the Damascus government has asked Iran to station units of peacekeepers in Idlib and northwest of Aleppo Province.

“There are currently no clashes in Syria, and a limited [number of] units are set to be deployed as peacekeepers to this region,” he added.

Idlib and the nearby areas are the last major militant stronghold in Syria, which has managed to liberate almost all other areas of the country from the grip of terrorists thanks to Iranian and Russian assistance.

In September, a Russo-Turkish agreement was reached on the situation of Idlib with the aim of facilitating its liberation without any bloodshed. That deal has put on hold a concerted Syrian army operation

## Five of Iran's abducted border guards freed

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), has said that five of the 12 Iranian border guards, who were kidnapped last month by Pakistan-based terrorists, have been freed.

Speaking at a press conference on Thursday, Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari stated that the freed forces were in Pakistan and would soon return home. He added that efforts were underway to secure the release of the remaining captives.

The 12 forces were kidnapped in mid-October by elements of the so-called Jaish ul-Adl terrorist group near the town of Mirjaveh in the southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, and then moved into neighboring Pakistan.

Jafari went on to say that the kidnappers are seeking to exchange the abducted soldiers with several of their accomplices that are behind bars in the Islamic Republic for committing crimes.

“This request is not acceptable,” added the senior military official.

Jafari further said the Islamic Republic will not accept any “irrational conditions” set by the terrorists and will secure the release of all troops with full force and in cooperation with the Pakistani government.

He added that securing the freedom of the captives “takes time,” but stressed that there should be no worries over the matter.

Later in the day, IRGC spokesman Brigadier General Ramezan Sharif said the freed soldiers were in good health. Pakistan also confirmed the news,



with spokesman of its Foreign Ministry saying in a tweet that the abductees were in good health and would be handed over to Iranian authorities.

Over the past weeks, Iranian military and political officials have been in constant consultations with the Pakistani side over the fate of the hostages. Tehran also offered joint operations with Islamabad to secure the release of the abductees.

Jaish ul-Adl was formed in 2012 by members of the Pakistan-based Jundallah, another terror outfit which was dismantled by Iranian intelligence forces in 2010 after its ringleader, Abdolmalek Rigi, was executed.

Iranian border guards have repeatedly come under attacks by terror outfits active on the Pakistani soil.

Back in August, Iran managed to release a guard from terrorist captivity. He had been abducted during an ambush on a border outpost in Mirjaveh and held in Pakistan for more than a year.

against the militants holed up there.

**■ 'Sanctions are Washington's last tool'**

The IRGC chief also played down the U.S. hostile campaign against the Islamic Republic saying sanctions are the last tool in Washington's hands for exerting pressure on the Iranian nation.

He reassured that the fresh wave of sanctions against Iran are doomed to failure like Washington's previous round of such bans.

“America's authority and dignity are on the decline, and the day will come, much sooner than expected, for the full elimination of this satanic power,” predicted the senior general.

“America four decades ago could not do any damn thing, let alone today's America that is on the decline,” he added.



# Bipartisan Senate bill to suspend U.S. arms exports to Saudi Arabia

A bipartisan group of senators is releasing legislation imposing sanctions, prohibitions and restrictions against Saudi Arabia and other entities considered responsible for the humanitarian suffering in war-torn Yemen, the most punitive proposals to emerge from Congress since Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi was murdered last month.

The group, which is led by Sens. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) and Todd C. Young (R-Ind.) and includes the United States President Donald Trump confidant Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.), is calling for a total prohibition on arms sales to Saudi Arabia that could be used for offensive purposes. The blanket embargo includes a ban on selling Riyadh munitions, bombs, missiles, aircraft, tanks or armored vehicles, according to a person familiar with the text, but does not prevent the sale of purely defensive systems, such as missile interceptors.

The measure would also codify the Trump administration's recent decision to stop refueling Saudi planes engaged in operations in Yemen against the Ansarullah (Houthi) Movement and impose sanctions on anyone supporting the Ansarullah within 30 days of the bill's passage. Those who prevent the delivery of humanitarian aid to Yemeni civilians would also be subject to new proposed sanctions in the bill that would go into effect immediately.

The bill came together in response to mounting outrage among lawmakers of both parties over the House of Saudi regime's conduct, particularly in the murder of Khashoggi at its consulate in Istanbul. Many lawmakers believe that operation could not have taken place without the blessing of the Saudi regime Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) — whom, thus far, the Trump administration has not sanctioned.

Congress's first response to Khashoggi's murder was invoking the Global Magnitsky Act — a law that requires Trump to decide within 120 days what individuals are responsible for human rights abuses and what sanctions should be imposed against them. On Thursday, the Trump administration announced it would sanction 17 individuals under that authority, just hours before



the bipartisan group of senators released their proposal.

But for many, President Trump's move fell short. Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) ridiculed "putting sanctions on people who are in prison" as a weak choice, while drafters of the new bill suspected that Trump was trying to draw attention away from their more comprehensive proposals.

"It looks like some shameless coordination with a government that has trampled on the rule of law," said a Senate aide familiar with the bill. "It would defy credulity that the announcement came out today when they know what we're doing here in the Senate. ?? they're willing to designate individuals in the inner circles of Mohammed bin Salman and they won't say a damn thing about the crown prince himself."

Several of the provisions of the new bill are designed to force Trump to take a harder

stance against the Saudi kingdom, which he all but fully embraced upon becoming president while distancing himself from Iran.

The bill would make sanctions mandatory for anyone found to have responsibility in Khashoggi's murder under the Global Magnitsky Act. It would also require the administration to produce two reports on Saudi Arabia.

The first of those reports would address the question of where the activities of the Saudi regime-led coalition, Ansarullah and others have risen to the level of war crimes, or otherwise violated international humanitarian law and the laws of war. Another would be focused on documenting Saudi Arabia's human rights abuses, focusing on the government's suppression of women, bloggers and religious freedom.

The product of those reports, the Senate aide said, could be easily compared to

existing international studies to see if the Trump administration's assessment of the situation in the Persian Gulf is notably kinder to Saudi leaders.

For Democrats, the bill's provisions address deep skepticism that the Trump administration will hold individuals at the highest levels of the Saudi government accountable, either for the human cost of its actions in Yemen or the murder of Khashoggi.

Republican supporters are trying to strike a more coaxing tone, encouraging the Trump administration to take advantage of the tools in the bill.

Senate Armed Services Committee ranking member Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.) and Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), who sits on both the Armed Services and Senate Foreign Relations Committees, are also original co-sponsors of the legislation.

(Source: The Washington Post)

## Cambodia: Khmer Rouge leaders guilty of genocide, court rules

Cambodia's Khmer Rouge regime committed "genocide" during its reign of terror from 1975 to 1979, a United Nations-backed war crimes court said on Friday in an historic ruling.

"Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea, 92, and Khieu Samphan, 87, are the last surviving senior leaders of the communist group that brutally ruled the Southeast Asian nation.

The tribunal judging their criminal responsibility for the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million Cambodians also found them guilty of committing crimes against humanity and other breaches of the Geneva Conventions.

"The chamber ... finds that the crimes of genocide ... were committed" against ethnic Vietnamese and Cham Muslims, presiding judge Nil Nonn said - the first time the court has issued such a ruling.

The large crowd of spectators attending the session included members of the Cham, a Muslim ethnic minority.

The leaders are already serving life sentences after being convicted in a previous 2011 to 2014 trial of crimes against humanity connected with forced transfers and disappearances of masses of people.

The Khmer Rouge sought to achieve an agrarian utopia by emptying the cities to establish vast rural communes. Instead their radical policies led to what has been termed "auto-genocide" through starvation, overwork and execution.

Lah Sath, a 72-year-old Cham man from eastern Kampong Cham province, brought his wife and four young granddaughters to the session. He said he often heard people



talking about the trial and sometimes watched it on TV, but decided it was time to see it with his own eyes.

Just talking about the Khmer Rouge brought back horrible memories of life under their rule, he said. The Cham were treated as enemies and exploited without mercy as they were forced to do intensive farm labor, he recalled.

Lah Sath said his younger brother was killed by the Khmer Rouge for failing to take good care of a cow.

The tribunal has carried out just one other prosecution resulting in the 2010 conviction of Kaing Guek Eav, known as Duch, who as head of the Khmer Rouge prison system ran the infamous Tuol Sleng torture center in the capital, Phnom Penh.

Prime Minister Hun Sen has declared he will allow no further case to go forward, claiming they would cause instability.

Hun Sen was a Khmer Rouge commander who defected and was later installed in government after the group was removed from power by a Vietnamese invasion. The tribunal has had its share of controversy after being set up in 2006 with more than \$300m spent.

Theary Seng, a human rights lawyer and Khmer Rouge survivor whose parents were killed, told Al Jazeera she welcomed the verdict but questioned why only three people from the regime have been tried.

Initial work had been done on two more cases involving four middle-ranking members of the Khmer Rouge, but they have been scuttled or bottled up by the tribunal, a hybrid court in which Cambodian prosecutors and judges are paired with international counterparts.

While the failure to have more extensive proceedings has discomforted some observers, others point to the tribunal's accomplishments

The events covered by Friday's verdict span the four years of the regime of Pol Pot, Khmer Rouge's leader known as "Brother Number One."

Pol Pot - who fled to the jungle after Vietnam's invasion - was captured by a Khmer Rouge splinter group in 1997 and placed under house arrest. He died in his sleep a year later from heart failure.

(Source: agencies)

## Merkel visits far-right stronghold at heart of anti-refugee campaign

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has visited a city at the heart of anti-refugee rallies and riots by far-right extremist groups, where wild protests last summer undermined her ruling coalition.

Merkel's Friday visit to Chemnitz served as a bellwether of support after she announced her decision not to run for office when her current tenure is over. The city was the site of violent clashes that highlighted the German public's apprehension over foreign asylum seekers. The violent rallies in Chemnitz, previously Karl-Marx-Stadt in communist East Germany, has been a thorn in Merkel's political coalition since 2015 and weakened her authority.

The protests were prompted by reported stabbing of a local resident by suspects identified as asylum seekers, provoking ferocious anti-refugee rallies that brought far-right activists onto the streets.

"As much as I understand and share the outrage and incomprehension, I can't allow that this be an excuse for hateful demonstrations," Merkel said during remarks before the parliament on September 12.

The unrest in Chemnitz and the intense debate that followed the incident compounded the political turmoil that has dogged Merkel's coalition since the spring.

Reacting to images showing right-wing protesters chasing dark-skinned men through the city's streets, Merkel's chief spokesman Steffen Seibert censured the "hounding" of foreigners.

The move, however, prompted accusations from Germany's political right that such language humiliated rightist demonstrators exercising their freedom of speech.

Secretary General of the Christian Democratic Union Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer said that the Hesse state election results are 'painful', speaking from the CDU headquarters in Berlin on Sunday.

Public frustration with the ruling coalition spelled into poll losses in regional polls last month in Bavaria and Hesse, where support plummeted for Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU), her Bavarian allies as well as the Social Democrats.

Merkel stunned the country on October 29 by declaring that she will step down as CDU chairwoman, prompting a leadership contest within her party. She further announced that she would not run again as chancellor at the end of her current term, which ends in 2021.

Meanwhile, the three candidates competing to succeed Merkel as leader of the Christian Democrats agreed on Thursday to revive their party's fortunes by cutting taxes and reducing Germany's dependence on the United States for defense.

In a three-hour debate in the northern city of Luebeck, the first of eight meetings with party grass roots across Germany before a leadership vote on December 7, the rivals barely clashed on broad policy. The race for leader of the Christian Democratic Union party has shaped up as a dual between Merkel protégé Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, widely seen as the continuity option, and Friedrich Merz, a millionaire who describes himself as "a free-trade man."

CDU General Secretary Kramp-Karrenbauer, the front-runner, won applause for saying she would continue the process of renewal, by taking into account the views of the party base.

Former Merkel rival Merz said he aimed to take the CDU back over the 40 percent mark and halve support for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), currently polling at nearly 16 percent. The CDU is at around 26-27 percent in most surveys.

(Source: Press TV)

## Chilli paste, books and chairs thrown in Sri Lanka parliament

Sri Lanka's parliament has descended into chaos for a second day as legislators supporting disputed Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa threw books, furniture and chili paste at rivals in a bid to block a second no-confidence motion.

The pandemonium began when Rajapaksa's supporters poured on to the floor of parliament on Friday and prevented Speaker Karu Jayasuriya from taking his chair for more than an hour.

Finally, Jayasuriya entered the red-carpeted chamber protected by dozens of unarmed officers and parliamentary staff. Rioting legislators then took away the ceremonial chair, but staff carried in an ordinary office chair as a makeshift replacement.

However, rioters grabbed that chair too, breaking it into pieces that were then used as projectiles to attack rivals and police.

The police held boards around the speaker to protect him from being hit by angry Rajapaksa supporters as he conducted a voice vote on a revised no-confidence motion against the disputed prime minister. After the motion passed, Jayasuriya adjourned the house until Monday.

Rajapakse lost a similar vote on Wednesday, when 122 legislators in the 225-member House passed a no-trust motion against him in a voice vote, followed by a signed document.

However, Rajapaksa refused to step down saying that motion should not have been put to a voice vote.

Sri Lanka has been paralyzed since October 26 when President Maithripala Sirisena appointed Rajapaksa, a controversial former president accused of corruption and grave human rights abuses, as prime minister after sacking Ranil Wickremesinghe.

On Thursday, Sirisena held an emergency meeting with the leaders of the opposition parties that voted for the first no-confidence motion against Rajapaksa and asked them to take up the motion again and allow it to be debated and then put to a roll-call vote.

Opposition lawmaker R. Sampathnan said it was Rajapaksa loyalists who prevented a roll-call vote on the motion as requested by Sirisena.

Rajapakse himself stayed away from the rioting and walked out of the chamber after the vote. A former parliament staffer said Friday's scenes were unprecedented. "We haven't had a situation where the speaker was prevented from entering the chamber," former sergeant-at-arms Wijaya Palliyaguruge told the AFP news agency.

"This is also the first time that the speaker had to come in with police protection."

A Rajapakse loyalist was seen throwing chilli powder at rival legislators and police. Several constables and legislators were taken to the parliament's medical center for first aid.

Gamini Jayawickrema Perera, a legislator from ousted Prime Minister Wickremesinghe's party, said he was among those treated after chilli mixed with water was thrown at his face.

Vijitha Herath, another legislator, said he suffered a forehead injury when a rival hit him with a hard-cover copy of the constitution that was on the speaker's table. Rajapakse's spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella denied they attacked police or staff, but blamed the speaker for the chaos. "He (the speaker) need not have rushed the vote," Rambukwella told reporters in parliament after sittings were adjourned.

(Source: agencies)

## Theresa May fights for survival amid Brexit deal crisis

British Prime Minister Theresa May has defended the draft Brexit deal reached with the European Union that triggered the resignations of senior ministers and mutiny within her Conservative Party.

May appeared on British radio station LBC on Friday, amid mounting speculation that Conservative MPs could trigger a vote of no confidence in her leadership in the coming days.

"I truly believe this is the best deal for Britain," May said of the proposed withdrawal agreement, adding that she was "very sorry" that ministers had quit her government.

When asked to resign by a caller during the radio phone-in, May said that her divorce deal delivered on the key issues for many people who voted to leave the EU.

"You're absolutely right that for a lot of people who voted 'Leave', what they wanted to do was make sure that decisions on things like who can come into this country would be taken by us here in the UK, and not by Brussels, and that's exactly what the deal I've negotiated delivers," she said.

"We are leaving the European Union on the 29 March, 2019," she added.

There was intense speculation on Friday morning in London that prominent Brexit hardliner Michael Gove was close to resigning, but he later announced his support for the



prime minister.

"I think it's absolutely vital that we focus on getting the right deal in the future, and making sure that in the areas that matter so much to the British people, we can get a good outcome," he told reporters.

British voted to leave the EU in a 2016 referendum, when 52 percent of voters opted for Brexit while 48 percent voted to remain in the EU.

But two years after the vote, the terms of the separation remain undecided.

The 585-page draft aims to ensure a smooth divorce from the EU after more than four decades of membership and outlines a transition period for both sides to adjust to the break.

It addresses issues including citizens' rights after Brexit, the controversial "back-stop" to avoid a hard border in Ireland and the divorce payment that Britain will pay when it leaves the bloc.

Opponents of the deal have cited concerns that it leaves too much power in Brussels

and places Northern Ireland in a separate regulatory regime to the rest of the UK.

Brexit Minister Dominic Raab and the Minister for Work and Pensions Esther McVey both resigned from May's cabinet on Thursday, saying they could not support the agreement.

Two junior ministers also quit and pro-Brexit Conservative MPs warned that May's deal would not win the approval of parliament.

A spokesperson for the prime minister said that a replacement Brexit minister is expected to be appointed.

Meanwhile, Jacob Rees-Mogg, who leads a group of anti-EU Conservatives, submitted a no-confidence letter against the prime minister on Thursday saying that "it would be in the interest of the party and the country if she were to stand aside".

At least 48 such letters from the ruling party MPs are required to trigger a vote of no confidence in the party leader, and a majority of the party's 315 legislators would have to vote against May in order for her to be removed.

MPs from the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), a Northern Irish party that props up May's minority government, have also expressed strong reservations over the proposed deal.

(Source: agencies)



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	181994.3
IFX	1957.15

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	48,494 rials
GBP	55,053 rials
AED	11,379 rials

Source: iribnews.ir

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$57.67/b
Brent	\$67.91/b
OPEC Basket	\$64.51/b
Gold	\$1,218.15/oz
Silver	\$14.24/oz
Platinum	\$844.00/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



**‘NDF allocates some reserves to market stability, production flourishing’**

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN**— Some portion of the reserves of National Development Fund (NDF) has been allocated to market stability and also to production flourishing, Iranian industry, mining and trade minister announced on Thursday.

Reza Rahmani also put emphasis on the necessity of expanding exports specially under the new condition and said: sanctions should be turned into an opportunity for promoting the quality of domestic products and increasing the exports, IRNA reported.

The current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21) has been named as the year of ‘support for Iranian products’ by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

In this due, the government has paid many loans to domestic productions units in the framework of production flourishing plan which has brought many units out of the activity returning to the production cycle.

China’s U-turn on market curbs brings back the speculators

Speculators are staging a forceful comeback in China’s stock market, bidding up shares in loss-making companies as regulators ease rules around trading, fundraising and backdoor listings to prop up struggling bourses.

In a bid to stop the kind of market meltdown China saw in 2015-16, authorities are urging funds to invest in cash-strapped companies and encouraging others to do mergers and acquisitions (M&As).

The measures mark a reversal of the more restrictive curbs introduced two to three years ago, which were designed to prevent a repeat of the boom-and-bust cycle that triggered the last major rout.

The relaxations, however, have resulted in an immediate surge in speculative bets on possible acquisition targets and trading in small-cap shares.

For some, the moves simply clear unnecessary regulatory interference that inhibits robust and open capital markets. But for others, the new policies are a dangerous “Faustian Bargain” that delivers short-term stability at the expense of sustainable valuations.

“Currently, all the emergency measures are deals with the devil,” said Yuan Yuwei, partner at Water Wisdom Asset Management. Imploring speculators to rescue the market could set the stage for trouble, he added.

Over the past year, speculators have largely laid low due to a relentless crackdown on market manipulation and insider trading. However, a pledge by China’s top securities regulator on Oct. 19 to boost market confidence through a series of measures has prompted a rapid return of the punters.

An index tracking so-called “Special Treatment”, or ST, stocks - loss-making companies that involve high risks or are candidates for possible delisting - has surged over 30 percent since Oct 19.

That compares with a mere 3 percent rise in the CSI300 index .CSI300, whose blue-chip constituents were market darlings last year.

Money is also pouring into companies that speculators think might become acquisition targets for backdoor listings, dubbed “shell companies”.

One company that appears to have benefited is Hengli Industrial Development Group Co (000622.SZ), whose share price tripled over the past three weeks as investors bet on a possible acquisition.

Speculators have ignored repeated warnings by the automotive air conditioner maker, who said the price surge defied fundamentals.

Based on current profitability and valuation, investors buying the stock would need to wait 2,800 years to recoup investment through dividend payments. An investor relations official at Hengli declined to comment, saying the company had no undisclosed information.

Speculators have also piled into Changsheng Bio-technology (002680.SZ), the company at the center of a nationwide vaccine safety scandal that faces the risk of delisting.

A “special treatment” stock, Changsheng rose the maximum 5 percent on Thursday for the sixth consecutive session, despite the Shenzhen Stock Exchange flagging risks to investors. Changsheng could not be reached for a comment.

(Source: Reuters)

Solar electricity output to reach 1000MW by March 2019

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s solar power output is due to reach 1000 megawatts (MW) by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019), ISNA reported on Friday quoting the Iranian deputy energy minister.

According to Homayoun Ha’eri, the government has doubled the solar capacity for the last three five years and it will continue this trend in the upcoming years.

“The country’s solar capacity was 250 MW in year of 1395 (2016-2017), in 1396 (2017-2018) the number reached 500 MW and in the current year it is going to reach 1000 MW”, the official said.

Earlier in August 2018, Seyyed Mohammad Sadeqzadeh, head of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (known as SATBA), said that the country’s total capacity of generating electricity



from renewable resources will reach 1100 megawatts (MW) by the end of the current Iranian calendar year.

Overall, in the next five years, Iran

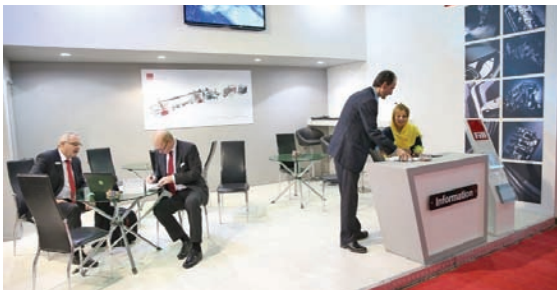
is aiming for a 5,000 MW increase in renewable capacity to meet growing domestic demand and expand its presence in the regional electricity market.

We won’t leave Iran’s auto market easily: European exhibitors

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Foreign exhibitors attending the 13th International Auto Parts Exhibition of Iran said they would not leave Iranian market easily, IRNA reported.

The exhibit, which was held from November 12-15 at the Tehran Permanent International Fairground, hosted 190 foreign companies from 11 countries including France, Greece, Turkey, China, Taiwan, South Korea, India, Italy, Poland, Malaysia and Romania, besides 510 Iranian exhibitors.

Some countries such as Turkey, China, Taiwan, South Korea and India set up their country’s group pavilion in



the international exhibit.

The foreign exhibitors of the event said that they see Iranian market a large and attractive one for their presence and as the new round of the U.S. sanctions on Iran has started they are seeking the ways to avoid sanctions for continuing business with Iran.

A new round of U.S. sanctions against Iran took effect on November 5 covering Iran’s oil exports and more than 700 banks, companies and individuals.

Under the new condition, many trade partners of Iran are searching for mechanisms to continue ties with the country such as using national currencies in trade.

Continuing trade co-op with Iran vital: German official

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN**— “Despite the U.S. sanctions against Iran, German businessmen and entrepreneurs underscore continuation of trade ties with Iran,” an official from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Transport, Agriculture and Viticulture of Rhineland Palatinate (MWVLW) told Deutsche Welle on Thursday.

“We plan to provide German companies, collaborating with Iranian counterparts, with required information,” the official added.

MWVLW held a specialized meeting on investigating available ways for continuing trade and financial transactions with Iran on Thursday with the presence of representatives from German financial and trade institutions.

Rhineland-Palatinate (Rheinland-Pfalz) is a southwest

German state bordered by France, Belgium and Luxembourg.

Visiting Tehran at the head of an economic delegation of chief executives and representatives of German companies few days ago, former German foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel announced small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can continue trade with Iran despite U.S. sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

Gabriel also sounded upbeat about opening a financial channel to continue trade with Iran in the face of new U.S. sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

Called the “special purpose vehicle (SPV)”, the mechanism would aim to “assist and reassure economic operators pursuing legitimate business with Iran”. Iran has welcomed the step but it is frustrated at the pace with which the SPV is being set up.



The European Union has said it is creating a new payment mechanism to allow countries to transact with Iran while avoiding the U.S. sanctions.

Central banks should consider issuing digital money, IMF’s Lagarde says

Central banks should consider issuing digital currencies as money faces a “historic turning point,” according to IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde.

In a speech at the Singapore Fintech Festival on Wednesday, Lagarde highlighted the changing nature of money as demand for physical cash decreases around the world. She said central banks have a role supplying money to the digital economy.

“I believe that we should consider the possibility to issue digital currency,” Lagarde said.

Lagarde said a central bank-backed digital currency could help promote financial inclusion, security, and privacy in payments as a low-cost and efficient alternative to paper notes. But she also warned of risks to financial stability and innovation.

“My message is that while the case for digital currency is not universal, we should investigate it further, seriously, carefully, and creatively,” Lagarde said.

Central banks around the world are weighing how the rise of non-cash payments affects their conventional role printing bank notes and managing money supply. Lagarde singled out central banks in China, Canada, Sweden and Uruguay that are “embracing change and new thinking” about how they might supply digital currencies to the public.

For example, Sweden’s central bank, the Riksbank, is planning to pilot a version of a digital currency called e-krona in 2019. Sweden is considered to be one of the most cashless societies in the world with just 13 percent of Swedes using cash for their most recent purchase in a shop, according to a recent survey from the Riksbank.

Deposits held in commercial banks are already digital, but a digital currency might be backed by the government in the same way cash is today, Lagarde said. Digital currencies could come in the form a state-backed token, or through an account held directly at the central bank.

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(Source: CNBC)

First Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 97-08/182

**Tender Holder:**  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

**Subject of Two-Stage Tender:**  
Prepare solution to equip instruments to create unified HD automation Chain for Nasim Namayesh and Tamasha TV Networks (IRIB Deputyship) according to the tender documents

**Deadline of Receiving Documents:**  
As of publishing second announcement of advertisement latest by the business hour dated on **Wednesday November 21, 2018.**

**Place of Receiving Documents:**  
Secretariat of Tenders' Commission, Technical Purchasing (KALA) Dept., Media Technology and Development Deputy Office, Bldg. No. 2, IRIB, Jam-e Jam St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran

**Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participating in Tender:**  
The amount of **USD 55,430** which should be in the form of extendable bank guarantee

**Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:**  
The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted within one main envelope marked with tender number no later than **15 p.m. on Saturday December 22, 2018** and submitted to the Secretariat of Commission of Tenders.

**Time and Place of Opening Envelopes**  
The date of opening envelopes A&B is at **8:30 a.m. on Monday December 24, 2018** in the office of Vice President of IRIB Planning and Financial Resources and opening of envelope C will be after technical evaluation.  
It should be noted that bidders should hold license from the authorized bodies.

For more information, please contact the following phone numbers: **0098-21-22166313**  
It is obvious that cost of publishing two advertisements shall be borne by the winner of tender.

Public Relations Dept. of IRIB



# Oil rises on expected OPEC cuts, though surging U.S. supply still weighs

Oil prices rose on Friday amid expectations of supply cuts from OPEC, although record U.S. production dragged.

Brent crude oil futures were at \$67.49 per barrel at 0747 GMT, up 87 cents, or 1.3 percent from their last close.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil futures were at \$56.96 per barrel, up 50 cents, or 0.9 percent.

Prices were mainly supported by expectations the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) would start withholding supply soon, fearing a renewed rout such as in 2014 when prices crashed under the weight of oversupply.

Saudi Arabia wants the cartel to cut output by about 1.4 million barrels per day (bpd), around 1.5 percent of global supply, sources told Reuters this week.

The Saudis would ideally have Russia participate, as it did when supplies were jointly withheld starting from January 2017, although Russia has so far not committed to any renewed joint action.

"The Saudis have already indicated they will reduce output by 500,000 bpd in December, and early indications are that OPEC will target 1+ million bpd of production cuts at the next General Meeting on December 6," U.S. investment bank Jefferies said on Friday.

Morgan Stanley warned a cut by the Middle



East-dominated producer group may not have the desired effect.

"The main oil price benchmarks - Brent and WTI - are both light-sweet crudes and reflect this glut," the U.S. bank said.

"OPEC production cuts are usually implemented by removing medium and heavier barrels from the market but that does not address the oversupply of light-sweet."

Due to the structural oversupply that has emerged in the market from record production by many countries, Morgan Stanley said that

"OPEC cuts are inherently temporary (because) all they can do is shift production from one period to another".

While OPEC considers withholding supply, U.S. crude oil production reached another record last week, at 11.7 million bpd, according to U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) data published on Thursday.

U.S. output has surged by almost a quarter since the start of the year.

The record output meant U.S. crude oil stocks posted the biggest weekly build in

nearly two years.

Crude inventories soared 10.3 million barrels in the week to Nov. 9 to 442.1 million barrels, the highest level since early December 2017.

This surge contributed to oil prices falling by around a quarter since early October, taking many by surprise.

"Oil bulls, us included, have capitulated and we no longer see oil climbing to \$95 per barrel next year," Bank of America Merrill Lynch said in a note.

While sentiment has turned bearish, some analysts warn that 2019 could be tighter than expected.

"We expect 2019 oil demand to reach 101.1 million bpd," natural resources research and investment firm Goehring & Rozencwaig said, up from just under 100 million bpd this year.

At the same time, the firm said production outside North America was set to disappoint.

Add OPEC's expected supply cuts, and Goehring & Rozencwaig said "those investors who are able to adopt a contrarian stance ... and stomach the volatility ... are being presented with an excellent investment opportunity" to buy into oil after the recent slump.

Bank of America agreed, saying "we believe oil is oversold and will likely bounce up from the current levels, as OPEC+ dials back production in December".

(Source: Reuters)

## Philippines suspends fuel excise tax hike on oil products for 2019

Philippines will halt the second round of excise fuel tax on refined products, which was due to come into effect January 1, 2019 after President Duterte formally approved the suspension, in a bid to grapple with high inflation, local media reported on Thursday.

"The President has formally approved the suspension of the next round of excise tax increase on oil products under the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) law," Manila Bulletin reported on Thursday.

The law was signed by President Duterte on December 19, 2017, and came into effect on January, 2018. The excise tax on fuel was raised by Philippine Peso 2.50/liter in 2018, and was expected to rise to Peso 2.00/liter in 2019, followed by another Peso \$1.00/liter in 2020.

"The latest tax relief measure was upon the recommendation of the President's economic team led by Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez," Manila Bulletin reported. According to the report, the suspension of the tax hike next year, meant that the government coffers would lose Peso 40 billion in revenues.

Under the Train law, the Philippines government can suspend the tax hike, if the three-month average price of S&P Global Platts Dubai crude oil price reaches \$80/barrel.

High crude prices before the recent slump in November, and the excise tax earlier this year, have been described as key causes for the country's rising inflation level.



For October, annual inflation rate in the Philippines stood at a nine and half year high of 6.7 percent, steady from the previous month, according to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority.

To combat rising inflation in the transport sector, the government looked into various methods, such as the consumption of Euro 2 compliant automotive diesel oil.

Since January 2016, and under the country's Clean Air Act of 1999, oil firms are required to sell fuels that adhere to at least Euro 4 specifications. Euro 4 standards for both diesel and gasoline cap maximum sulfur level at 50 ppm while Euro 2 standards for both diesel and gasoline cap maximum sulfur level at 500 ppm.

The government through the Philippine National Oil Company-Exploration Corporation, or PNOC-EC, was also tasked to source for low-priced 50 ppm sulfur gasoil for imports to the country.

(Source: Platts)

## Russia committed to continuing OPEC cooperation, satisfied with current oil price: Putin

Russia is committed to continuing its cooperation with OPEC, and is satisfied with current oil prices of around \$70/b, President Vladimir Putin said Thursday.

"It is obvious that we need to cooperate with Saudi Arabia, and we are going to cooperate with Saudi Arabia. OPEC plus has been very positive, and we see that in the market situation," Putin told reporters in Singapore during a briefing broadcast on Russia 24.

"I'm not going to say anything about whether or not we need to limit oil production, we have to be very careful, as every word impacts the state budget," Putin said.

Russia is the key non-OPEC participant in the production cut deal with OPEC that has been in force since the beginning of 2017. Participants in the deal will meet in early December to discuss amendments to the deal, which may include a cut in output targets and a move away from using October 2016 production to more recent data as a baseline to measure compliance.

Putin added that he also discussed the oil market situation with US President Donald Trump when the two took part in events to commemorate the end of World War I in Paris at the weekend. Putin and Trump are set to have more in-depth talks on the sidelines of the G20 meeting in Buenos Aires on November 30. Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz may also take part in the G20.

Despite growing concerns about price volatility, Putin said Russia is satisfied with current prices.



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Putin is in Singapore for bilateral meetings with Asian leaders and to take part in the Russia-ASEAN dialog and East Asian Summit. In recent days the Russian delegation, which also includes energy minister Alexander Novak has held bilateral meetings with Chinese, Japanese, South Korean and Indonesian officials.

Developing energy cooperation with Asia is a priority for Russia, which is seeking to diversify its customer base and sources of investment in upstream and infrastructure projects. Risks associated with Western sanctions have further stimulated this cooperation.

(Source: Platts)

## Upset by Trump's Iran waivers, Saudis push for deep oil output cut

When U.S. President Donald Trump asked Saudi Arabia this summer to raise oil production to compensate for lower crude exports from Iran, Riyadh swiftly told Washington it would do so.

But Saudi Arabia did not receive advance warning when Trump made a U-turn by offering generous waivers that are keeping more Iranian crude in the market instead of driving exports from Riyadh's arch-rival down to zero, OPEC and industry sources say. Angered by the U.S. move that has raised worries about over supply, Saudi Arabia is now considering cutting output with OPEC and its allies by about 1.4 million barrels per day (bpd) or 1.5 percent of global supply, sources told Reuters this week.

"The Saudis are very angry at Trump. They don't trust him anymore and feel very strongly about a cut. They had no heads-up about the waivers," said one senior source briefed on Saudi energy policies.

Washington has said the waivers are a temporary concession to allies that imported Iranian crude and might have struggled to find other supplies quickly when U.S. sanctions were imposed on Nov. 4.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Nov. 5 that cutting Iranian exports "to zero immediately" would have shocked the market. "I don't want to lift oil prices," he said.

A U.S. source with knowledge of the matter said: "The Saudis were going to be angry either way with the waivers, pre-briefed or even after the announcement."

A U.S. State Department official said: "We don't discuss diplomatic communications."

The U.S. shift toward offering waivers adds to tension between the United States and Saudi Arabia, as Washington pushes



for Riyadh to shed full light on the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Turkey.

"The Saudis feel they were completely snookered by Trump. They did everything to raise supplies assuming Washington would push for very harsh Iranian sanctions. And they didn't get any heads up from the U.S. that Iran will get softer sanctions," said a second source briefed on Saudi oil thinking.

Saudi energy ministry did not respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Since the summer, Riyadh has led the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, Russia and other producers to hike supplies by over 1 million bpd to keep a lid on prices as U.S. sanctions were imposed.

Brent oil had surged above \$86 a barrel in October on tight supply worries, but prices have since slid to \$66 on concerns about oversupply.

### ■ Unexpected waivers

Trump had wanted lower oil prices before the U.S. midterm elections earlier this month. Washington gave waivers in November to eight buyers to purchase Iranian oil for 180 days. This was more waivers than were initially expected.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, a key Trump administration ally, wants prices at \$80 or more for his economic reforms, sources familiar with Saudi thinking say.

"The waivers were totally unexpected, especially after calls to raise output. A few people are upset," said a senior Persian Gulf oil source familiar with the discussions among OPEC and its allies on output policy.

While the United States set a time limit for the waivers, it did not tell the eight recipients how much oil they could buy and has not eased payment restrictions,

complicating purchases.

Iran's oil exports are expected to drop sharply to about 1 million bpd in November from a peak of 2.8 million bpd earlier this year. Although output is expected to recover from December thanks to waivers, it is still not clear by how much.

Riyadh's concern is to avoid the kind of oversupply in the market that led to a price collapse in 2014 to below \$30.

But the lack of clarity about the level of Iran's supplies makes it tough for Saudi Arabia to work out appropriate production levels, especially after Russia raised output steeply in recent months and has said it wanted to produce more in 2019.

Saudi Arabia would need to convince Russia to join in any move for new supply cuts.

"First the Saudis let oil prices rise to \$86 per barrel and then flooded the market. Can they now cut back enough going into a seasonally weak time of the year? Without Russia it won't be credible," said Gary Ross, CEO of Black Gold investors.

Saudi Arabia must also contend with rising U.S. production that has hit record levels above 11 million bpd and is set to climb further next year. U.S. exports could surge from the second part of 2019 when new pipeline infrastructure opens.

Rapidan Energy Group said it saw a supply glut now lasting much more than just a few months in 2019.

"Now that the market has correctly priced weaker-than-anticipated Iran sanctions and much bigger inventory builds next year, we wish to emphasize that 'OPEC plus' officials face more than a single-year supply tsunami in 2019," Rapidan said.

(Source: Reuters)

## Natural gas markets remain ultra-tight

Natural gas prices skyrocketed this week, shooting above \$4.80 per MMBtu on Wednesday, a price last seen during the polar vortex of 2014.

Low gas inventories are leaving the market on edge, and volatility has roared back to the market. In this column only a week ago, I marveled at prices soaring to \$3.50/MMBtu, which marked a 15 percent increase over the prior two months. However, in the last seven days, prices are up a further 30 percent.

The factors behind the price increase are the same as they have been for quite a while now. U.S. natural gas inventories are at a 15-year low for this time of year, just as we head into the winter drawdown season. U.S. natural gas inventories stood at 3,247 billion cubic feet (Bcf) for the week ending on November 9, or 528 Bcf less than at this point in 2017, and 601 Bcf below the five-year average. In other words, the U.S. has a thin buffer of storage to fall back on in the event of a sudden bout of cold weather.

And it is exactly that variable that helped spark the most recent rally in prices. Reports that cold weather has arrived in much of the U.S. already, plus indications that the upcoming winter could be an unusually cold one, helped fuel this week's rally. Natural gas had traded below \$3/MMBtu for much of this year, but climbed roughly 50 percent since mid-September.

Just a few weeks ago, Bank of America Merrill Lynch said that given the backdrop of a 15-year low for inventories, any unexpected cold weather could push prices up as high as \$5/MMBtu. That may have looked a little aggressive at the time, but now appears rather prescient.

A few other factors have played their part. "[E]arly-season cold, production freeze-offs, and the ramp up of exports from Corpus Christi - have shocked the gas market in ways not seen since the Polar Vortex winter of 2013/14," Barclays said in a note.

The bank estimates that since the weekend, freeze-offs have disrupted about 2 Bcf/d of pipeline flows, about three-quarters of which came in Texas. These disruptions could extend into next week. Skyrocketing associated gas production in the Permian heights the potential disruption to supply from freeze-offs.

Finally, trader positioning also played a role in Wednesday's price spike. Prices broke through technical resistance levels over the last few days and traders likely closed out short positions en masse, driving prices higher.

What happens next? The only certainty is that prices in the short run will be volatile. On Wednesday, prices spiked to \$4.80/MMBtu. But by Thursday, prices crashed again, falling by more than 15 percent. The EIA's storage data showed a slight build in inventories, taking some of the steam out of Wednesday's panicked buying spree.

But the small cushion of storage still leaves the U.S. market highly vulnerable to additional price spikes. As we saw in 2014, when the polar vortex temporarily pushed prices above \$7/MMBtu, extreme cold weather can entirely upend even the most careful price forecast.

"2018 has been a year of weather extremes in the U.S., including the coldest April in 35 years, the hottest May-Sept on record, and the first colder-than-normal Oct in 9 years," Morgan Stanley said in a note. "November is following the trend, with the current forecast one of the coldest since 2000."

The dip in the mercury means that power plants are ramping up to provide heating for much of the country, which could further slice into inventories.

But as we saw Thursday, price spikes can go too far. Barclays warned about this in a note just after Wednesday's rally, anticipating Thursday's price correction. "[B]ulls could not have hoped for better weather to start the winter," the investment bank wrote on Thursday. The bank argued that the price spike is likely temporary. "A regression to the mean poses real downside risks to prices," Barclays warned. A few hours after that report was published, prices began to crash.

Morgan Stanley also got ahead of the price correction. "We see modest downside from here assuming current weather forecasts, but a very wide range of potential short-term prices," Morgan Stanley said in a note. The investment bank says that with Henry Hub prices north of \$4/MMBtu, they have "now modestly over-corrected to the upside."

(Source: oilprice.com)

## Two words that sent the oil market plunging: negative gamma

As oil suffered its biggest one-day slump in three years, it wasn't OPEC or President Donald Trump that was shaking the market. Instead, trading desks were abuzz with chatter of "negative gamma."

So what is it?

This obscure concept starts out on the options desks of Wall Street. There's a lucrative business for banks that facilitate trades allowing crude producers -- individual companies, or sometimes entire countries -- to reduce their exposure to volatile markets by locking in a price for their future production.

Say the government of a large exporter needs \$60 a barrel to balance its budget and wants to avoid running a deficit in the event that prices slump. For a fee it can acquire the right to sell its production for \$60 guaranteed, otherwise known as a put option.

If prices stay above that level, the contract is never exercised and the producer's counterparty -- often a bank -- keeps the fee. If crude is below \$60, the country uses the option and still gets to balance its budget.

This seemingly sensible approach to risk management can suddenly boost volatility when price swings are large enough that buyers of those contracts start to earn big profits. As the options become increasingly valuable, banks have to sell more and more futures contracts to try and contain their losses.

This can become a vicious cycle: Traders frenetically sell futures to manage their options exposure; that drives down prices and brings more options into the danger zone; dealers are then forced to sell even more crude contracts.

That's the negative gamma effect -- so called because options traders use Greek letters to gauge how sensitive options contracts are to price moves in the underlying asset.

Its impact on Tuesday, when West Texas Intermediate crude slumped \$4.24 to \$55.69 a barrel, was exacerbated by the large number of options involved. The December options contract, which expired that same day, had more than 33 million barrels of puts at \$60 and 31 million barrels of \$55 puts outstanding. Over the next 12 months, the most held WTI contracts are \$60 puts, \$55 puts and \$50 puts. The CBOE/Nymex Oil Volatility index remained near a two-year high at around 45 points on Thursday.

"These large 'negative gamma' effects have become important in the current price environment as producers had already sold a large amount of forward production on the way up," Goldman Sachs Group Inc. analysts including Jeff Currie wrote in a report this week.

(Source: Bloomberg)



## How can countries reduce poverty faster?

By M Niaz Asadullah & Antonio Savoia & Antonio Savoia



While the total number of impoverished people worldwide is declining, the rate of progress is not as fast as it needs to be to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030. To increase the pace of poverty reduction, lessons from the recent past can help.

Can the world end poverty by 2030, the target set by the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development? The UN General Assembly recently reaffirmed this deadline but conceded that meeting it will require “accelerating global actions” to tackle poverty’s causes. As the international community explores new solutions, lessons from the past could be instructive.

Poverty reduction has been central to development policy for decades. During the 15 years of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the predecessor to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the percentage of people living in poverty – defined as less than \$1.90 a day – declined significantly, from nearly 27% in 2000, when the MDGs began, to about 9% in 2017.

At first glance, the rate of poverty reduction in the first few years of the SDGs has also been impressive. Between January 2016 and June 2018, an estimated 83 million people were lifted out of extreme poverty. And yet, to remain on track to meet the 2030 target date, about 120 million people should have escaped poverty during that period. Despite the welcome gains, the pace of progress has been less than satisfactory.

In a recent paper co-authored for the journal World Development, we examined what factors drive successful poverty reduction. Using poverty statistics from developing countries during the MDGs era, we assessed whether countries with higher levels of income poverty – that is, more people living on less money – experienced faster reductions in their poverty rates than economies with lower income-poverty levels. Using limits of \$1.25 and \$2 per person per day, we found that poverty tended to decrease faster in countries that started out poorer.

But these findings, while positive, tell only part of the story. In many countries, the end of poverty remains a distant goal. For example, at the current pace of poverty reduction, we estimate that Mali, where 86% of the population lived on less than \$1.25 a day in 1990, will require another 31 years to eradicate extreme poverty altogether. But even in Ecuador, where only 7% of the population lived on less than \$1.25 a day in 1990, eliminating poverty will take at least another decade.

The differing experiences of countries in Africa and Asia illustrate that while adoption of the MDG agenda did accelerate poverty reduction, the degree of progress has varied widely. In the early 1990s, poverty levels in Nigeria, Lesotho, Madagascar, and Zambia were similar to those in China, Vietnam, and Indonesia. But by the time the MDGs ended in 2015, the Asian countries had reduced levels of poverty dramatically; the African countries had not.

This divergence continues. Today, extreme poverty is mostly contained to Africa; according to the World Bank’s 2018 Poverty and Shared Prosperity report, 27 of the world’s 28 poorest countries are on the continent, and each has a poverty rate above 30%. In fact, at current rates of poverty reduction, more than 300 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa will still be poor in 2030.

Many factors have contributed to the shifting geography of poverty. In Africa, weak economic performance – fueled by conflict, ineffective policies, ethnic fragmentation, and external shocks – has made it more difficult for countries to fund poverty-alleviation programs. But the most important factor may be state capacity. After all, weak state institutions cannot effectively deliver public goods and services.

Of course, this leads to another question: what factors determine a state’s capacity? In general, states work better when ruling elites are bound by limits on their power. But administrative experience also plays a role. China, with a slightly longer period of modern statehood than most of its younger African counterparts, may simply have developed a greater ability to administer its territory.

And yet, whatever the reason for the variation, there is no doubt that state capacity is one of the key ingredients for successful poverty reduction. We found that during the MDGs, high-poverty countries with strong state institutions were able to reduce poverty twice as fast as countries with feeble capacity, and were more likely to achieve the MDGs’ target of halving poverty by 2015.

Poverty eradication remains a top priority for the 193 governments that have adopted the SDGs. But as the international community learned from the MDGs, goals do not guarantee progress. To ensure that the 725 million people who remained in poverty at the end of MDGs period can escape requires investing in programs that aim at building effective states. Otherwise, an end date for poverty will remain elusive.

(Source: The Project Syndicate)

# As the situation in Gaza worsens, it’s time for the EU to step in

By Beth Oppenheim

Gaza is once again in the grip of violence. Rockets and mortar shells are being exchanged at the highest rate since the 2014 war after a raid by Israeli special forces inside Gaza went seriously awry on Sunday night, leaving seven Palestinians and one Israeli colonel dead. Hamas has retaliated, firing 400 rockets and mortar rounds into Israel since Monday. Israel has hit back with over 100 bombing strikes.

There are reports of a ceasefire, but Israel’s miscalculation has already come at a heavy price. Five Palestinians have been killed in Gaza including two militants, 20 Israelis have been wounded, and a Palestinian civilian in Israel killed since the initial Israeli operation. The outbreak of violence has disrupted recent ceasefire talks mediated by the United Nations and Egypt.

These cycles of violence are unsustainable. The United Nations warned in September that Gaza will be uninhabitable by 2020 if current conditions continue, citing the damage caused by Israel’s eleven-year economic blockade and fighting between Israel and Gaza. Ninety-five per cent of Gazan tap water is undrinkable, and its beaches are choked with untreated sewage. Electricity is available for just four hours a day. Unemployment is at 44 per cent. The depth of human suffering and despair has been apparent since the Great March of Return began in March, where Gazans risk death on a daily basis to protest at the fence with Israel.

The European Union is quick to issue statements calling for de-escalation whenever violence flares in Gaza, but there’s more it can do to alleviate the suffering of Gazans. The bloc has an unprecedented opportunity to define its own strategy in the region, and step out of the U.S.’s shadow. The U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and cuts in aid have undermined America’s role as a mediator. Prospects for the U.S. peace plan look bleak. The EU should look beyond efforts to tackle Gaza’s immediate humanitarian crisis with aid and focus on reconciliation between the two major Palestinian political parties and deploy its economic leverage to foster peace.

The EU must continue to provide humanitarian aid to Gaza. But aid alone will not tackle the underlying causes. The Gaza Strip has been under a blockade by Israel and Egypt, and sanctions by the Palestinian Authority



## The EU has leverage over both the Palestinian territories and Israel, and could use it to great effect.

(PA), which controls the West Bank, since Hamas took control in 2007. But the strategy has failed. The EU should push Israel, Egypt and the PA to end their blockade and sanctions which have decimated the Strip, and empowered radical elements whilst weakening moderates.

Hamas is recognized as a terrorist organization by Israel, the EU, U.S. and Canada, so the Israeli government refuses to take action that could help the group, even indirectly.

But EU assistance at the Gaza border might help. In 2005, a mission of unarmed EU border police and customs officers supported the PA in monitoring the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt, providing relief from the desperate conditions in Gaza until it was closed in 2007 when Hamas took over.

The EU could offer observers for the Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings between Gaza

and Israel, as well as at Rafah. A specific EU remit to tackle weapons smuggling could help persuade Egypt, Israel and the PA to re-open the crossings.

Reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah, the secular nationalist party which controls the PA, is crucial for a viable Palestinian state. The two parties have always clashed over tactics: Hamas advocates armed resistance and Fatah renounced violence in 1993. Egypt is the only potential broker, but the EU should help prepare the groundwork.

Talks collapsed last February after Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, the leader of the PA, demanded he “control everything [in Gaza], including money and weapons”. A new reconciliation plan has been reached in Cairo, which includes the reopening of crossings, but the two sides cannot agree on its interpretation. The EU should push Abbas

to compromise, and criticize his sanctions on Gaza. As the largest donor to the PA, the EU possesses economic leverage, as well as diplomatic leverage as a mediator in the PA’s difficult relationships with its Arab neighbors and the U.S. The EU should also end its “no-contact” policy with Hamas, as part of an effort to bring about national elections for the whole of Palestine, and in order to conduct more effective diplomacy.

The EU also has leverage over Israel – the bloc is Israel’s largest trading partner, buying 34 per cent of its exports, and providing almost 40 per cent of its imports. Notably, their association agreement, which provides tariff-free trade in most goods, is conditional upon respect for human rights and democratic principles.

The EU has criticized Israel’s settlements in the West Bank and called for restraint by the Israeli armed forces, but it has so far shied away from attaching conditions to the bilateral relationship. The EU could introduce demands in exchange for any future upgrade to the relationship with Israel, for example on its 2021-2027 research and innovation program. This approach has worked in the past. In 2013, the EU excluded Israeli projects undertaken in the Occupied Palestinian Territories from its Horizon 2020 research program. The outcry from the research community and the public drove Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to sign up to the program on the EU’s terms.

Even if the latest reports of ceasefire hold, the sheer desperation in Gaza created by the blockade makes further violence inevitable. It is true that neither side wants a war. Israel needs Hamas to keep relative stability in Gaza, and Hamas cannot hold onto power if the socioeconomic situation deteriorates much further. But political pressure is high on both sides. For Hamas, Palestinian casualties cannot go unmet. On the Israeli side, elections could take place in early 2019, and Netanyahu faces accusations from senior cabinet figures and rival parties of being too soft on Hamas. Indeed, limited Israeli retaliation to attacks from Gaza over recent weeks may have emboldened Hamas to ratchet up rocket fire to this unprecedented tempo. The EU has the power to use a combination of relief, reconciliation and economic leverage to help foster a lasting peace. Now the EU must use it.

(Source: Independent)

# Saudi Arabia’s latest account of Khashoggi’s death is shocking in its audacity

The new account of Jamal Khashoggi’s death offered by Saudi Arabia on Thursday was shocking in its audacity. Having previously acknowledged that the journalist was the victim of premeditated murder, authorities in Riyadh reverted to an earlier, discredited tale: that Khashoggi was killed spontaneously inside the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul by a team sent to return him to Saudi Arabia. While reporting that 11 suspects had been indicted and that the death penalty would be sought for five of them, a Riyadh public prosecutor excused not just Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman – the chief suspect in the murder – but also two of his top aides, who the prosecutor said ordered or advised the capture operation but did not approve Khashoggi’s killing.

By offering up this incredible account, the Saudi regime is badly defying all those, including leading members of Congress, who called for full disclosure and accountability. Yet the Trump administration appears ready to accept its stonewalling. On Thursday, it announced sanctions against 17 people implicated by the Saudis – leaving untouched both the crown prince and top intelligence officials in Riyadh.

Accepting the Saudi story means ignoring a number of well-established facts. An audio recording of Khashoggi’s last moments, which Turkish officials shared with CIA Director Gina Haspel, indicates he was attacked and strangled immediately after entering the consulate. The Saudi version claims he died only after a quarrel and a struggle that prompted the head of the “negotiation team” to decide to murder him by injecting him with drugs.



## The Saudi cover story is just one more instance of Mohammed bin Salman’s arrogant and reckless behavior.

The Saudi account says the operation was ordered by the then-deputy chief of intelligence, Ahmed al-Assiri, and advised by Saud al-Qahtani, a court propagandist. Both are close to Mohammed bin Salman. The two aides, so Riyadh’s story goes, were not complicit in the decision to kill Khashoggi

and were fooled by their team’s claim that the journalist had left the consulate alive. That doesn’t explain a portion of the audio recording reported by the New York Times, in which Maher Mutreb, a close associate of the crown prince, instructs an official by phone to “tell your boss” that the mission was accomplished. As the Times reported, U.S. intelligence officials believe the “boss” is “almost certainly Prince Mohammed.”

Other contradictions and improbabilities abound. It’s known that a forensic expert who specializes in autopsies was on the Saudi team; the Turks said he arrived with a bone saw for dismembering Khashoggi’s body. Yet the Saudis would have the world believe that the specialist was recruited only to clean up any evidence of an abduction, and that officials in Riyadh didn’t know about him.

This all-too-transparent tissue of lies only underlines the need for a genuinely independent international investigation led by the United Nations, as Turkey’s foreign minister called for this week. Instead, the Trump administration is abetting the Saudi cover-up; the new sanctions do not even cover Assiri, the official who Riyadh says ordered the Khashoggi mission.

Congress should not allow this travesty to continue. It should suspend all military sales and cooperation with Saudi Arabia until a credible international investigation of the Khashoggi killing is completed. The Saudi cover story is just one more instance of Mohammed bin Salman’s arrogant and reckless behavior. The true murderers of Jamal Khashoggi must be named and punished.

(Source: The Washington Post)

# Macron’s EU army? It’s European integration

By Gregory R. Jackson

Late last week, French President Emmanuel Macron angered President Trump by calling for a European army. When the two met at the Elysée Palace Saturday, Macron soothed the U.S. counterpart by suggesting his proposal would help with burden-sharing in NATO.

Macron – who’s taking his play out of mid-20th-century NATO/EU history – is right, but only if Europe wants to further integrate.

The end of World War II ushered in a new era. The devastation wrought by Europe’s second war within three decades combined with the start of the Cold War had western leaders asking: (1) How do we best protect against communist expansion? (2) How do we avoid another catastrophic war? Many think only the first of these two questions led to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, but as world-renowned historian Dr. Lawrence Kaplan explains: “If there was a

long-run purpose in the North Atlantic Treaty ... it was the hope of breaking down the barriers of national sovereignty that had plagued the West since the advent of the nation state and that were held responsible for most of the disasters of the twentieth century.”

Indeed, several mid-20th-century European leaders saw European unification as the answer to their problems. Britain’s Winston Churchill asserted in 1946, “We must build a kind of United States of Europe.” With this thinking, a number of “communities” began welding Europe together.

First came the European Coal and Steel Community, which included France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy, the Netherlands and West Germany in 1952. While the treaty aimed to improve the economies of its participants, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman aptly described its additional goal of preventing future wars through European integration: “The pooling of coal and steel production should immediately provide for

the setting up of common foundations for economic development as a first step in the federation of Europe, and will change the destinies of those regions which have long been devoted to the manufacture of munitions of war, of which they have been the most constant victims.”

More treaties created more “communities” in the years to come. They all increased European integration, finally merging as the European Union through the Maastricht Treaty in 1993.

But some communities – like the European Defense Community (EDF) – failed. Its purpose, to quote the 1952 treaty, was to “ensure the security of the member States ... within the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty.” The proposed treaty died in 1954 because the French National Assembly, which valued French sovereignty over a federal Europe, delivered the coup de grâce by refusing to ratify it.

It’s ironic then that a French president is

now the one reviving the idea of a European army, but the irony doesn’t make him wrong. If mustered along the same lines as the EDF treaty, this army would solidify Europe’s future commitment to NATO. Such an army could result in Europe paying its fair share to NATO without eroding U.S. interests – a double win for America.

Be it good or bad for the U.S., the real crux gets to one of the major causes of Euroscepticism – are EU states now willing to surrender so much national sovereignty? If so, German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s announcement that she will not seek re-election, combined with this talk of a European army, could set up Macron to step in as the new de facto leader of a unifying Europe. This seems like a long shot, but then again, so is creating your own political party out of thin air and winning the presidency of France. Seems these kinds of wild plays are within Macron’s wheelhouse.

(Source: The Salt Lake Tribune)



# Re-imposition of sanctions on Iran is violation of UN Security Council resolution: Jenkins

**1 →** ■ If Iran cannot export oil and cannot work by SWIFT, what means JCPOA for it? I mean if U.S. can impose their will on these two key issues for Iran, is it rational for Iran stay in JCPOA? What is the EU and Russia and China in this regard?

Yes, it remains rational for Iran to continue to be a party to the JCPOA. In 2015 much was said about the economic benefits that the JCPOA would bring to Iran. This was natural since Iran had suffered under global sanctions since 2011 and under certain U.S. sanctions – on civil aircraft, for example – for much longer. But from the outset the JCPOA was also about political benefits.

The JCPOA has enhanced Iranian prestige. This was evident when President Rouhani visited New York for the UN General Assembly in September. The assembly demonstrated much greater respect for him than it did for President Trump. That respect was nourished by the fact that President Rouhani could assure the assembly of Iran's commitment to,



and full compliance with the JCPOA. Another way of putting this would be to say that

President Rouhani enjoyed the advantage of occupying moral and political high ground,

whereas President Trump was floundering in a moral and political swamp.

Furthermore, as long as Iran is seen by the world to be complying with the JCPOA, it is inconceivable that the United States and its Middle East allies could win international acceptance for any significant military action against Iran. Yet another political benefit relates to Iran's relations with key international partners such as Russia, China and Turkey. None of these states wishes Iran to withdraw from the JCPOA. On the contrary, Iranian withdrawal would cause them acute concern. It might lead to their reviewing and reconsidering these relationships and the numerous benefits that stem from them.

Much the same would be true of the European Union and medium-sized powers like France and Germany. All of these are looking for ways of reducing the impact of U.S. sanctions on Europe's economic cooperation with Iran, and will surely succeed in due course. That search for enhanced cooperation would cease if Iran were to abandon the JCPOA.

# Netanyahu's gov. must pay the price for crime in Khan Yunis: Hamas senior spokesman

**1 →** A. The Zionists failed to fulfill their goals during a security operation near the city of Khan Yunis in southern Gaza on Sunday. The purpose of the attack was to abduct Nour Baraka, the military commander with al-Qassam, but al-Qassam battalions fought back with this special Zionist military group and imposed heavy damages on them.

The Zionist regime also confessed to the death of their unit commander who was a colonel. After that, the Zionist Air Force entered operations and created a cover for the retreat.

We declare that the Zionist regime is a wicked enemy who is not after peace and does not adhere to agreements. For this reason, the resistance forces ambushed them and defeated their criminal operations.

■ How did the resistance groups respond to the Zionist aggression, and what decisions have been made about that?

A. Naturally, security forces - the Islamic Resistance Movement - have begun investigations into the Zionist operation on Sunday. In the joint operation room, the resistance groups decided to respond to the Zionists to stop



them committing such crimes again.

So, the resistance group sent a message to the enemy, given the missile response. Blood for blood is the response. The

enemy will pay for its crimes against the Palestinian people.

Accordingly, on Monday evening, resistance groups from the Gaza Strip responded to the Zionists and hit Zionist settlements. Netanyahu's government must pay the price of Sunday's crime in Khan Yunis.

■ Is the Zionist attack on Gaza linked to the turbulent internal state of Israel as Netanyahu seeks to distort public opinion about its corruption?

A. The Zionist attack on Gaza had to do with Israel's domestic and political situation. Benjamin Netanyahu, the enemy's Prime Minister and Avigdor Lieberman, Defense Minister of Occupied Palestine, wanted victory in the Gaza Strip as they were seeking achievements in the next year's parliamentary elections, but the opposite happened. The head of Israeli Army headquarters also sought achievement against the Palestinian resistance group, but they all failed. God is dominant.

The resistance group continues to respond to the Zionist aggression and it is the resistance that decides to stop the clashes rather than the enemy.

# U.S., UK culpable for recent Saudi atrocities in Yemen: analyst

**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — An American political commentator deplored recent Saudi-led coalition's attacks on Yemen's western port city of Hudaydah, which led to the killing of about 150 people, and said the Washington and London governments are also complicit in the war crimes.

"As for the U.S. and UK, they are completely culpable regards Yemen," John Stepping, who is based in Norway, told the Tasnim News Agency in an interview.

"Totally, this is a Saudi/U.S./UK war, period!" he said, adding, "And the UAE is along for the ride too."

Stepping is a well-known author, playwright and an original founding member of the Padua Hills Playwrights Festival, a two-time NEA recipient, Rockefeller Fellow in theater, and PEN-West winner for playwriting. He is also a regular political commentator for a number of media outlets around the world.

Following is the full text of the interview:

■ As you know, the Saudi-led coalition has intensified attacks on Yemen. At least 149 people, including seven civilians, were killed in the latest clashes between Yemeni troops and Saudi-backed mercenaries in the western port city of Hudaydah, according to medics and military sources. What is the main reason behind the increased Saudi attacks on Hudaydah? Is it trying to gain some leverage at the negotiating table?

A: I think there are three strands to follow in trying to understand Saudi motivation here. The first is that the Kingdom does not want what they see as Shiite (Iranian) influence on the Arabian Peninsula. So, even if it is only rhetorical support from Iran (it is more but I'm not sure all that much more) the Saudis see themselves as the power broker in the region. This is maybe increasingly delusional but then they are prone to delusions. Second is the U.S. and UK weapons sales to Saudi Arabia. (Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad) Bin Salman carried favor with the U.S. and UK by going on a spending spree. And remember that the attack on Yemen started under Obama and with his support. The U.S. has targeted Iran for a long time, going back to the 1950s. And certainly, it was re-intensified again since 9/11. But then 9/11 was a great justification, in their minds, for almost anything. And third is the Saudi fear about regime change against them. And from the U.S. Look, I said a couple years ago that regime change was coming to KSA. They have far outlived their usefulness and the new generation, if MBS is an example, is just hopelessly out of touch. Who needs a medieval backward looking inbred dynasty of fanatics sitting on the oil of the world?

■ According to some political experts, the murder of Saudi columnist Jamal Khashoggi, along with sharply deteriorating humanitarian conditions and growing media attention paid



to the war in Yemen, has led to increased pressure on Saudi Arabia to end the war. Recently, Germany urged other European Union member states to follow its example in stopping arms exports to Saudi Arabia. What is your assessment of the international pressures and their influence on the protracted war in Yemen and how do you predict the future of the conflicts?

A: Look, I have no idea why Khashoggi was topped off. But I do know that the official response by the U.S. Department of State and Oval Office and secretaries of defense and state was highly stage-managed and carefully orchestrated. As if anyone is in the least surprised the Kingdom tortures and kills people in hotel rooms in Turkey. I'm sure this is an almost routine occurrence. Khashoggi was not exactly John Reed or Ryszard Kapuscinski. The moral outrage of the U.S. is laughable, if not for the dire state of things in that part of the world, a state in which laughter is strangely incongruous. Now if Germany and other EU (and NATO) countries are sincere, and I have no idea if they are, then this is a good time to cut some of the economic ties they have with the U.S. government. I am guessing they ARE genuinely angry since public opinion is so bad. This leads to a very important question regards Europe and NATO. Do they stop prostrating themselves before the U.S.? The sanctions do hurt Iran, but it is not going to topple anyone. Far from it. But then there is also the rise of the far right neo-fascist parties across Europe. The worst being Hungary and Poland, and Italy close behind. But even in Sweden and the Netherlands, in Denmark and France, and in Germany, too, the new anti-immigration hyper-nationalists are po-

sitions of influence. What will be the effect of this? The U.S. under Trump is a bit hard to read. But Pompeo is an evangelical nut job. Self-righteous and arrogant, a bloated preening Christian extremist. And a scary man. Now Israel would love to keep the focus on Iran. Israel will do what it is told, of course, but it always keeps whispering in Trump's ear. The problem is this war is starting to really create PR problems. Over 7000 dead civilians (a low ball estimate), bombs have hit over 300 farms and 250 schools. It is an appalling record even for the Kingdom. And there is no way to spin this. The UAE and UK and the U.S. are hand in hand with the Saudis in all this. And right now something like 80% of the country is in need of food. Eight million are outright starving. And yet all you get from the U.S. is this hand-wringing about the death of slightly sleazy marginally talented journalist like Khashoggi.

■ Some Western countries that claim to be champions of human rights are pursuing double-standard policies on Saudi Arabia's atrocities. What do you think about the roles of Washington and London in the Riyadh regime's heinous crimes against Yemen?

A: The western NGO establishment... the human rights institutions like Human Rights Watch and the like, are highly selective by nature. They are there to promote the status quo or they are out of a job. As for the U.S. and UK, they are completely culpable regards Yemen. Totally, this is a Saudi/U.S./UK war, period! And the UAE is along for the ride too. Now it is worth mentioning again here that the U.S. has openly said it wants a coup in Tehran. They, the U.S. diplomatic corps, the State Dept, and the Pentagon, all of them are Orientalists; they are xenophobic

and very aggressive in their thinking. The so-called regime change game sort of lumps all these regions into one basket. For the necons, Donbass is not all that different than Tehran. Honduras and Haiti are not so far removed in their minds from Sana'a. And this provincialism has gotten worse under Trump. And again its hard to read the Trump presidency. Who is deciding certain things? Trump himself we know is very ignorant. Who is the shot caller in the white house? I have no idea, but I do know that these human rights organizations cannot be trusted. They are western based and see things through the lens of neoliberal conceits. And then there is the question of how one is to see the UN. The point to remember, I think, is that the ruling class across the globe tends to have similar values and interests. These large economic blocs operate outside of national borders -- to some degree, and maybe largely. One has to remember that those very rich and powerful interests, in banking and finance, in the defense business, in mining and shipping and even packaging and of course oil -- the men behind the giant multinationals and those in aerospace and digital technology, whatever country they come from, they share common interests. And those interests are to, in a nutshell, control the world. That is not hyperbole. The problem is that increasingly mankind faces environmental problems, and pollution and this 1%, so-called, does not care about you and me. Billionaires are buying land in remote areas... New Zealand, or Patagonia or above the Arctic Circle in places, and they are preparing for dire social upheavals. They do not spend their money to solve these problems and help people, they spend their money and time preparing to protect themselves, period.

So it is important to know that the far right, those racist idiots in the U.S., and in Europe, the fascists and neo-fascists, they are unintentionally (for the most part) serving the interests of that 1%. The leaders of the West love having fascists in power. The U.S. loves the electoral outcome in Brazil. Perfect. So behind the scenes, they are supporting these parties. They are targeting Venezuela now and I expect a coup of some sort to at least be attempted there. The only chance is the vision of independent countries like Russia and China and Iran, like Cuba and the DPRK and Venezuela and Bolivia and Syria. Each has issues, and they are imperfect... but that is where the hope lies. The U.S./NATO alliance is an enemy to humanity. They are what destabilize regions. They are the danger that humankind faces. And in the U.S., the recent election is another example of a heavily indoctrinated populace voting for one or another party of war. Meanwhile, fires and floods and poverty are decimating the country.

## Democrats V.S Trump: The dispute is intensified



**1 →** It's to be noted that on election night, Warren said that Trump and his "corrupt friends" took the past two years "building a wall of anger and division and resentment." In her remarks, she pointed to the "fight" ahead more than two dozen times.

The Democrats are also planning to investigate Donald Trump's administration, and their potential targets include Russian interference, tax returns, money paid to individuals to keep them silent over the president's moral corruption, security clearances, etc. The Washington Post wrote accordingly: "Democrats are likely to launch investigations into numerous aspects of the Trump administration, from its ties to Russia to the president's tax returns, as well as to step up oversight into Trump's executive actions on immigration, the environment and other regulations."

Gerry Connolly, the Democrat Representative said: "Obviously the country gave us a mandate to provide some check and balance on the executive that that has been sorely missing these last two years, and that involves rigorous oversight and accountability." He added: "This is not a time for holding back or being less than vigorous."

Evidences suggest that in the coming weeks, the first phase of disputes between the House of Representatives and the White House will start. Democrats in the House of Representatives have threatened that they don't let the White House be indifferent to them. By this, they're referring to issues such as the GDP management which can disturb the activity of the government.

## The recent liberalized scene at Azadi is a purely good, smart anodyne

**1 →** In any event, with the full-on economic assault against Iran underway with sanctions, one would be a fool to misunderstand Iran's efforts to contain the damage by clamping down on any dissidents inside Iran. Iran's leaders have every right to be a bit paranoid.

(We Americans where I live especially, in the U.S. South, must imagine what it would be like to be members of an ethnic minority living in a house with one's family that has been surrounded, say, by white-robed Ku Klux Klan fanatics waving torches and burning crosses. Iran can hardly feel less set upon by the current fanatics in Washington and Tel Aviv and Riyadh.

It's just incredible, too, that many in the Trump Administration have been favoring the MEK, a known cult-like terrorist organization that formerly was designated as such by the U.S., to dominate Iran politically. This terrorist organization once tried to counter the Shah's pro-Western policies of modernization and opposition to Communism! The inanities and insanities just continue to pile up in Washington.

Consider, for example, that the New York Times just reported this month that unnamed sources have detailed how top Saudi intelligence officials allegedly conspired with the U.S. a couple of years ago to assassinate Iranian leaders, including Qassem Suleimani, in a vague plot that might have cost \$2 billion with the use of private contractors like Erik Prince, the former head of Blackwater and at the time an advisor to the Trump transition team.

Whether the plot was ever actualized to any degree remains unclear, but the fact that it was ever discussed gives absolute credence to the horrific pressures Iran has faced which, one must state again, arise ultimately from Trump's slavish attention to Zionist demands.

The only good part of the New York Times' revelations is that they were reported and that they fully demonstrate two things: one, the nefarious nature of the Trump Administration and most importantly, two, the ongoing restraint and cool of Iran's leaders so far which one must presume ought to be maintained no matter what lies ahead.

Iran's Ayatollah Larijani has been correct in stating that Iran has become or is becoming a "symbol of resistance" in the entire Mideast and beyond, and that Iran's "power" has been underestimated by its foes. It is power that resides not in the military, but rather in smart thinking and restraint that demonstrates Iran is not some bloody and stupid regime like the one the Saudis maintain.

Those in the U.S. and Arabia who hope to see Iran's economy literally collapse and usher in the fall of the Islamic Republic are going to be disappointed.

Economies don't collapse really, it has been noted, but they do shrink sometimes and Iran is facing that prospect right now with the sanctions. Iran's prospects for resisting and somehow managing economic contraction without tremendous internal upheaval (given the current round of sanctions) may be relatively good compared to previous periods of sanction stress because Iran enjoys what has been termed a "superior moral position" that is being recognized. Why?

Because Iran truly is facing an unpopular U.S. administration this time around and the European Union allegedly is attempting to set up a payment system that could permit Iran to continue at least some normative business as usual.

The latter can't come soon enough. And kudos to Iran's leaders for permitting hundreds of women to attend a football match in Azadi Stadium last week and enjoy a splendid and even musical halftime respite from the justified gloom in Tehran. More of that social liberation is definitely in Iran's longer-term interests.



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# FDA to impose severe restrictions on e-cigarette flavors

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration will issue a ban on the sale of fruit and candy flavored electronic cigarettes next week.

The ban will be placed in convenience stores and gas stations, an agency official said, in a move to counter a surge in teenage use of e-cigarettes.

This means only tobacco, mint and menthol flavors can be sold at these outlets, the agency official said, potentially dealing a major blow to Juul Labs Inc, the San Francisco-based market leader in vape devices.

The FDA also will introduce stricter age-verification requirements for online sales of e-cigarettes. The FDA's planned restrictions, first reported by The Washington Post and confirmed to Reuters by the official, do not apply to vape shops or other speciality retail stores.

There has been mounting pressure for action after preliminary federal data showed teenage use had surged by more than 75 per cent since last year, and the FDA has described it as an "epidemic".

"E-cigs have become an almost ubiquitous and dangerous trend among teens," FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb said in September. "The disturbing and accelerating trajectory of use we're seeing in youth, and the resulting path to addiction, must end. It's simply not tolerable."

That growth has coincided with the rise of Juul, whose sales of vaping devices grew from 2.2 million in 2016 to 16.2 million devices last year, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The agency threatened in September to ban Juul and four other leading e-cigarette products unless their makers took steps to prevent use by minors. The FDA gave Juul and four big tobacco companies 60 days to submit plans to curb underage use, a compliance period that is now ending.

The planned restrictions on flavors in convenience stores are likely to have the biggest impact on Juul, which sells nicotine liquid pods in flavors such as mango, mint, fruit and crème, previously called crème brûlée.

The only other e-cigarette competitors sold at convenience stores are those marketed primarily by tobacco companies such as Altria Group Inc, British American Tobacco Plc, Imperial Brands Plc and Japan Tobacco Inc.

Those products, sold under the MarkTen, blu, Vuse and Logic brands, have lost market share as Juul has risen to prominence over the last year, growing from 13.6 per cent of the U.S. e-cigarette market in early 2017 to nearly 75 per cent now, according to a Wells Fargo analysis of Nielsen retail data.

A representative for R.J. Reynolds Vapor, a unit of British American Tobacco, declined to comment until getting



**There has been mounting pressure for action after preliminary federal data showed teenage use had surged by more than 75 per cent since last year**

specifics from the agency, but added the company met with the FDA and supports measures to prevent online sales to minors and penalties for retailers selling to youth.

James Campbell, a spokesman for the Imperial Brands unit that makes blu, said the company supports strong age-verification requirements for online sales but still had questions on how the FDA would differentiate vape stores from other retailers.

A Juul spokeswoman declined to comment. Altria did not respond to a request for comment.

The companies have previously said their products are intended for adult use and that they work to ensure retailers comply with the law.

Juul has previously said the company wants to be "part of the solution in keeping e-cigarettes out of the hands of young people" but that "appropriate flavors play an important

role in helping adult smokers switch."

Meredith Berkman, a founder of Parents Against Vaping E-cigarettes, which seeks to curb underage use, said the agency's move was a good first step, but added that "the final step should have happened yesterday."

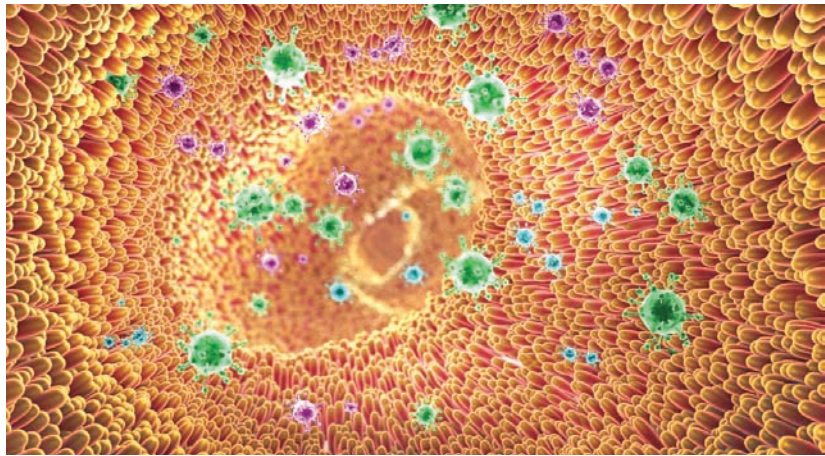
"Why not do away with flavors altogether, why not do away with online sales altogether?" she said.

E-cigarettes have been a divisive topic in the public health community. Some focus on the potential for the products to shift lifelong smokers onto less harmful nicotine products, while others fear they risk drawing a new generation into nicotine addiction.

Last year the FDA, under Gottlieb, extended until 2022 a deadline for e-cigarette companies to comply with new federal rules on marketing and public health.

(Source: The Independent)

## Interaction between immunity and gut bacteria influences aging



A mechanism that links the immune system, gut bacteria, and aging has come to light in recent research.

An imbalance in the gut bacteria may be what drives aging.

Immune system dysfunction can disrupt gut bacteria in ways that promote aging-related changes in the body, claim scientists at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) in Switzerland.

A study paper in the journal Immunity details how the scientists used genetically-altered fruit flies to reach their conclusions.

They introduced a dysfunction in the fly's immune system by switching off a gene. This led to an imbalance in gut bacteria, or microbiota that produced an excess of lactic acid.

The excess lactic acid generated chemicals called reactive oxygen species that can damage cells and have links to aging-related changes in organs and tissues.

Senior study author Bruno Lemaitre, a professor at EPFL's Global Health Institute, and his team suggest that mammals have a similar mechanism.

"Our study," says first author Igor Iatsenko, a scientist in Prof. Lemaitre's research group, "identifies a specific microbiota member and its metabolite that can influence aging in the host organism."

**Need to understand commensal dysbiosis**

The guts of nearly all animals are home to large colonies of bacteria and other microorganisms that are collectively known as commensal microbes.

There is increasing evidence that commensal microbes influence the immune system and other functions in the body and live in balance with them.

Disruption to this balanced co-existence is known as commensal dysbiosis and can occur for various reasons, such as illness and use of medication.

Studies have also linked commensal

sal dysbiosis to various disease-related changes as well as a shorter life span.

The biological nature of these relationships, however, and the mechanisms that link them, remain somewhat unclear.

The team decided to investigate this further by using the fruit fly, *Drosophila melanogaster*, as their model organism. Scientists often use this species to study gut bacteria and genetics.

**Commensal dysbiosis shortens life span**

In previous work, Iatsenko had identified a gene that enables the immune system in fruit flies to detect potentially harmful foreign bacteria and attack them. The gene is called peptidoglycan recognition protein SD (PGRP-SD).

For the new investigation, the team bred a mutant strain of immune-impaired fruit flies by switching off their PGRP-SD genes.

The result was that the immune-impaired flies did not live as long as normal flies. They also had much higher numbers of the bacterium *Lactobacillus plantarum*.

*L. plantarum* is a gut bacterium that produces lactic acid. The scientists found an excess of lactic acid in the immune-impaired flies, together with an associated increase in reactive oxygen species.

Activating PGRP-SD, on the other hand, "prevented commensal dysbiosis" in the flies and caused them to live longer. "Lactic acid, a metabolite produced by the bacterium *Lactobacillus plantarum*," Prof. Lemaitre explains, "is incorporated and processed in the fly intestine, with the side-effect of producing reactive oxygen species that promote epithelial damage."

Igor Iatsenko calls for further studies to find out more about metabolic interactions between commensal bacteria and the body during aging.

"There are definitely many more examples like this [...]."

(Source: Medical News Today)

## Hot baths reduce inflammation, improve glucose metabolism



According to new research, a hot bath could have effects that extend way beyond mental relaxation.

Scientists now believe they offer some potential benefits, including improved vascular function and sleep.

Almost 20 years ago, a paper concluded that hot water immersion of individuals with type 2 diabetes enhanced insulin sensitivity. However, it is still unclear how this might occur.

In the most recent study, the researchers dug a little deeper into the mechanisms at work. They theorized that the influence of a hot bath over glucose metabolism might revolve around the inflammatory response.

**Inflammation and insulin resistance**

There is some evidence that chronic, low-level inflammation increases insulin resistance. In other words, inflammation reduces a cell's ability to respond to insulin, potentially contributing to the development of diabetes.

Conversely, exercise has been shown to reduce inflammation and improve insulin sensitivity — meaning that the body has better control over glucose levels.

Although doctors often recommend exercise to reduce the risk of developing metabolic disorders, not everyone can exercise — perhaps due to health conditions or physical capacity. It is, therefore, essential to find alternative ways to improve insulin sensitivity for these people.

Exercise, as with other physical stressors, sparks a brief inflammatory response, followed by a more extended anti-inflammatory response. The researchers wanted to see if a different type of physical stressor — a hot bath — might have a similar effect on the immune system.

For this study, the researchers investigated the impact of a hot bath on overweight, mostly sedentary men. The findings were published recently in the Journal of Applied Physiology.

**Hot bath intervention**

Each participant immersed themselves in a water bath set at 102°F (39°C) for 1 hour. Scientists took blood just before and after the bath, and then 2 hours later.

Also, the researchers charted the participants' blood pressure, body temperature, and heart rate every 15 minutes.

Over the following 2 weeks, the participants had a further 10 hot water immersions.

The researchers found that a single hot water immersion caused a spike of interleukin — a marker of inflammation. Similarly, there was an increase in nitric oxide (NO) production.

The spike in NO is important because it causes blood vessels to relax, lowering blood pressure. NO also improves glucose intake into tissues, and scientists think it has anti-inflammatory properties.

As expected, the 2-week intervention saw a reduction in fasting blood sugar and inflammation. In the same way that exercise influences inflammation, the researchers saw an initial increase followed by a long-term decrease in inflammation.

**The authors' conclusion**

"[Hot-water immersion may] improve aspects of the inflammatory profile and enhance glucose metabolism in sedentary, overweight males."

The researchers also write that it "might have implications for improving metabolic health in populations unable to meet the current physical activity recommendations."

It is important to note that the people who took part in the study did report some discomfort. This was either due to the length of time that they were required to stay in the bath or the high temperature. Future research might investigate whether shorter periods or lower temperatures might have similar benefits.

Of course, hot baths alone cannot treat metabolic disorders, but they may be a simple, cost-effective intervention that can run alongside other treatments.

(Source: techsidestuff.com)

## Omega 3 and vitamin D fail to protect against heart attacks or cancer in major trial

The biggest trial to date of vitamin D and omega 3 fish oil supplements taken by millions to stave off ill health has concluded they do nothing to reduce heart attacks, strokes or cancer.

Those over 50 who were otherwise healthy and taking one or both supplements experienced the same number of heart disease related events and invasive cancers as those who were taking a placebo each day, Harvard University researchers found.



Health experts said they hoped the findings would counteract the claims of some of the most widely used supplements and stop the public thinking the pills can be a quick fix to mitigate the impact of poor diet and unhealthy lifestyles.

"By and large the marketing of supplements is done very cleverly, but it's not backed up by evidence," Naveed Sattar, a professor of metabolic medicine at the University of Glasgow, told The Independent.

"Most people buying supplements are giving themselves very expensive urine. They're wasting their time and getting false reassurance of protection from these supplements, when what they need is help to look at improving their lifestyles in ways which are enjoyable and sustainable."

However, a second trial, also published in the New England Journal of Medicine, suggests there may yet be a use for fish oils, but only when concentrated to a level more closely found in pharmaceutical drugs and given to patients most at risk of heart disease.

Vitamin D is an essential nutrient that helps lock calcium in bones and is particularly important in childhood and pregnancy.

It can be obtained through diet or the body can also produce it from sunlight, though this is often lacking in modern, office-bound life, and vitamin D deficiency is widespread in parts of the northern hemisphere with less sunlight.

This deficiency has been associated with higher levels of cancer and heart disease, but vitamin D levels are also lowest in people who smoke, are more obese and have other factors that increase their risk.

The picture is similarly unclear for omega-3 fish oils — the world's most popular supplement, which has been touted as helping to boost brain power, protect from heart disease and reduce deaths from all causes.

The Harvard trial, known as Vital, sought to settle the question of what benefits the public might gain from these supplements, and found nothing in their favor.

In the trial, 26,000 healthy over-50s took either double their minimum daily requirement of vitamin D, 1g of fish oil equivalent to the dose recommended by the American Heart Association for people with a risk of heart disease, or both.

After five years there were more than 805 heart attacks, strokes or other cardiovascular events, and 1,617 cancers diagnosed, but these were split virtually in half between the groups.

**Those over 50 who were otherwise healthy and taking one or both supplements experienced the same number of heart disease related events and invasive cancers as those who were taking a placebo each day, Harvard University researchers found.**

"In the absence of additional compelling data, it is prudent to conclude that the strategy of dietary supplementation with either n-3 fatty acids or vitamin D as protection against cardiovascular events or cancer, suffers from deteriorating Vital signs," an independent editorial published alongside the study concludes.

Professor Sattar's conclusion was similar.

Don't waste your time on vitamin D," he said. "There are thousands of people still popping it, but this is the biggest trial in the world to date, so forget vitamin D, and draw a line under it."

However he said that a second large trial, the REDUCE-IT study, involving universities across the U.S. has suggested there could still be uses for omega-3, just not in the dose you buy on the high street.

It looked at a concentrated dose of a particular fish oil, called eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) in a much more concentrated form, equivalent to four to eight times the dose in the Vital trial.

The study also focused on patients who already had heart disease, or a high risk of developing it because of conditions like diabetes, as well as high cholesterol not controlled by their statin medication.

After following more than 8,000 high risk adults for five years the trial found serious cardiovascular events were reduced as much as 25 per cent and deaths fell 20 per cent.

"It doesn't show any benefit in relatively healthy people, so you would think fish oils were done too," Professor Sattar said. "But the size of this benefit is substantial — for this specific dose in this specific group of people."

"It's one trial but it really bucks the trend."

(Source: The Independent)



## Ports and maritime systems to get smart: official

**TECHNOLOGY** **TEHRAN** — The Ports and Maritime Organization of Iran will establish a center for making smart its systems until the yearend (March 20, 2019), the head of the organization's information and communication technology office told IRNA.



Mohammad Tajgardoun said that the development of smart system for the organization has several dimensions and cooperation between different organizations.

The smart system aims to improve cross-border trade and the knowledge-based companies would greatly help pave this way, he said.

He named the logistics and multimodal transport as important factors for promoting maritime economy.

The Customs Administration, the Road Maintenance & Transportation Organization and the Railways Company have a crucial role in expansion of multimodal transport systems as well, he said.

## Tech companies aid California wildfire victims

"My heart is with the many people who have lost everything and will be spending the months ahead trying to pick up the pieces," Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg said Friday.

Tech companies — including Airbnb, Google, Facebook and Microsoft — are devoting resources and providing digital tools to assist first responders and people affected by the ongoing wildfires in California, which are now the deadliest on record.



Airbnb announced Monday that it will be working to accommodate relief workers and displaced victims, free of charge, through its Open Homes Program. The program, which started back in 2012 with Hurricane Sandy, facilitates temporary housing options though the site's many hosts.

"I think in moments like this, the images are so devastating and we can all feel a little helpless and we can all help," said Kim Rubey, Airbnb's head of social impact.

Thousands have been forced to flee their homes from the wildfires that have consumed more than 208,000 acres of land and killed at least 42 people, according to safety officials.

Rubey said Airbnb will be waving host fees and providing services like 24-hour support to all those who have chosen to offer up their homes in the region. The company spokesperson said close to 1,500 hosts signed up to help as of Tuesday afternoon.

"Ultimately, it's a very important and tangible way to help everyone who has been affected by these fires these last couple of days," she said.

As firefighters in the region work to contain the flames, companies like Google and Facebook also said they are customizing their tools to keep up with information demands on the areas affected.

Google spokesperson Marika Olsen said the company is continually updating its Crisis Maps to pinpoint fire boundaries and its navigation app Waze to show issues like road closures. As of Tuesday evening, Waze data estimated 71 roads closures as a result of the Woolsey Fire.

Google has also committed to donate \$500,000 to organizations assisting evacuees and will match donations by users who use the platform to give money.

Fires are unpredictable and fast-moving, but our map editor community is working around-the-clock to make sure that the map continues to stay up-to-date with Butte County closure and shelter info.

"The devastation we are seeing from these fires is heartbreaking," said Hector Mujica, Google's crisis response manager.

Facebook, which frequently monitors devastation among its global users, created two different Crisis Response pages for the Camp and Woolsey Fires and has activated "safe" status buttons for people in the area. The company will also donate \$250,000 to the American Red Cross and match up to another \$500,000 of donations made, according to Facebook spokesperson Aften Meltzer.

"Thinking of everyone affected by the devastating wildfires in California," Facebook chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg wrote in a post. "My heart is with the many people who have lost everything and will be spending the months ahead trying to pick up the pieces."

Microsoft, which is headquartered in Seattle, said it's also looking for ways to help.

"We're providing financial support through the American Red Cross and donations from our employees, which we are matching," Microsoft general manager Adrienne Hall said. "We're also providing Microsoft products and technical support to affected municipalities and responders."

While Apple has not released an official statement, CEO Tim Cook tweeted last week that the company is working to assist those in need.

Praying for the safety of our neighbors, loved ones and all those affected by the rapidly spreading fires in California. We're grateful to the firefighters and first responders working to keep everyone safe. Apple is donating to relief efforts for Northern & Southern California.

(Source: nbcnews.com)

# University of Kordestan launches innovation center

**TECHNOLOGY** **TEHRAN** — An innovation center was launched at the University of Kordestan in the Iranian western city of Sanandaj on Wednesday, the university's website announced in a press release.

The vice president for science and technology Sourena Sattari attended the opening ceremony of the center.

The center aims to empower university students in different fields of marketing through innovative programs and courses on content creation and adding value.

"The establishment of the center is a great step toward supporting entrepreneurship and innovative ideas in the region," the head of the center Sadeq Soleymani said.

The center offers different services for cellphone networks including SMS, voice calls, multimedia and content creation.

Contests for developers and startup weekends and exhibition will be held at the center, he announced.

The center also aims to hold workshops on entrepreneurship and seminars to empower students for business, he said.

The center will focus on Innovative ideas based on cultural natural and tourist attraction of the Kordestan Province, he added.

The first phase of the innovation center was opened in 200 square meter of land area and the second phase, which is 800 square meter, will be added in near future, he concluded.



The vice president for science and technology, Sourena Sattari, cuts the ribbon on the University of Kordestan's innovation center on Wednesday

## Reasons why working for a startup is a bad idea

Tired of your regular 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. job? Or are you jealous of your best friend at high school who has made a million dollar exit working for an early stage startup in the valley? The answer is often to take a career re-route and start working for an early stage startup. As you begin applying for jobs, you are looking forward to having a thoughtful discussion with your startup CEO. Secretly hoping that every idea you present will be valued and a handful of them might even get implemented.

Before you jump on to the dream team, here are five reasons why working for an early stage startup might be a bad idea for you.

### ■ You have to work extra hard

The under-staffed founding team often ends up over-promising deliverables to both investors and clients. As a result startup employees end up working beyond the 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. office hours and sometimes even on weekends. Also, employees in an early stage startup are not typically paid for working overtime. Since working hard and long is the norm, complaining against this is often perceived as a weakness by both colleagues and peers in the startup environment. The 'carrot' that the startup has to offer involves flexibility such as no bosses, no corporate hierarchy, no fixed working hours, the option of working while you travel and even free food or a gym membership. Startup employees are often quickly disillusioned by such perks. For example, although there is no strict corporate hierarchy in a startup, the employee still needs to report to a peer on a weekly basis.

### ■ Executive position in a startup means nothing

Startups often give fancy titles to their early employees, such as CXO, president or vice-president. The first few employees often individually tackle operations, without any managers or analysts reporting to them. It is a well-known fact that these titles do not reflect the set of responsibilities that are associated with such positions in larger corpora-



tions. As a result, when startup employees apply for a job at a bigger corporation they might have to start at the bottom or a mid-level position.

### 3. You are working in a chaotic environment

One of the main lures for employees in an early stage startup is the ability to take on a lot of new roles and learn to execute a wide range of activities in a business environment. However, the chaotic atmosphere in a startup often forces employees to deliver a task in the least possible time. As a result, the employees do not have the opportunity to do the required certifications and coursework. Also, startup employees find it difficult to mention in their resumes most of their skill sets as an area of expertise, since they might have only got a chance to deliver the task once. Human resources in large corporations often view the resumes of startup employees as 'Jack of all trades, master of none,' since they claim to have mastered multiple operational skillsets in an unbelievably short period.

### ■ Your return on investment is not great

The most significant advantage of working in an early stage startup for employees is that they also own a small

share of the company. The central idea is that the employee may work below market rate, but if the company becomes successful, the employees get rich overnight. So as long as the company valuation periodically increases the employees are happy. Although the value of employee's shares are directly correlated with the company's valuation, with dilution kicking in at every new round the net value of the shares might get diminished to obscure amounts.

### ■ The startup you are working for will probably fail

Over 90 percent of all startup will eventually fail. This may be because of a lack of product market fit, the inability of the founding team to rapidly scale their business model or lack of funding. The industry at large accepts failure to be the norm, and founders often end up with subsequent financing for their next startups or even a superior position in a large corporation. However, for startup employees co-founding their startup or getting a corporate job can be difficult. Early stage backers only recognize the founders as individuals with legitimate startup experience, and in corporations, people are often looking for experts.

Given all the above challenges, working for an early stage startup often comes with non-traditional return on investments. This may include, the joy of working with creative individuals, a chance to develop and deploy your own strategy and ultimately the rare opportunity of being part of a larger-than-life vision. The best approach is perhaps to join a startup post a Series A investment round. This allows the early stage employees to maximize the advantages of working in a startup.

Most early-stage employees who have been 'burnt' working for a startup, will often gladly take up a job in another startup. Working for a startup is not a job, but a way of life, and is best described by the Eagles song Hotel California. "You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave!"

(Source: forbes.com)

## Here's how technology is shaping the future of education

### ■ Expect technology to present some philosophical shifts in education, as well!

With technology making it easier than ever before to query Google or effortlessly calculate a math problem, educators are determining the types of knowledge students need in order to thrive in a technology-saturated workforce.

While educational models of the past focused on providing students with the requisite skills to turn them into skilled workers, the educators of today are more concerned with teaching students how to learn on their own.

"The real purpose of education is for the brain to be empowered with information," said Greenberg. "We're teaching students to learn to think, to learn to learn, and to critically assess a situation."

### ■ Even with technology being used in more and more classrooms, teachers will be as important as ever.

CEO of Silicon Schools Brian Greenberg says that evolving technology doesn't undermine a teacher's role in the classroom; instead, it augments it.

"Technology is important, but it's really just the means to an end," Greenberg said. "The real magic is in giving great educators freedom and license into how school works."

With more data available to track each classroom's progress, educators are provided with increasing insight into how their students are struggling.

Math education software DreamBox provides educators with recordings and data into how students are learning and progressing so that educators can focus on the areas where their classrooms need the most help.

In order for technology to function successfully in the classroom, DreamBox's SVP of Learning, Tim Hudson, says that it needs to be in touch with educators and their needs. "It's important that we listen to teachers and administrators to determine the ways tech-



nology can assist them in the classroom," Hudson told Business Insider.

### ■ Artificial intelligence is poised to play an integral role as well.

AI makes one-to-one tutoring increasingly possible at enormous scale.

The U.S. Navy has introduced an AI-based tutoring system called Education Dominance into an entry-level IT school in Pensacola. The platform works similarly to a human tutor, monitoring each student's progress and providing personalized assessments and tests.

The Navy reported that the students who had worked with the digital tutor made enormous strides in their education, and that they consistently tested higher than students who had studied without the program's benefit.

The platform provides a glimpse into how educational models might work in the next 15 years: computers acting as individual tutors in classrooms filled with diverse learning styles.

### ■ Students can assume more responsibility in the classroom.

With educators better equipped at understanding a student's learning process, classrooms are being formed around small groups, with students who match each other's skill level working together.

Greenberg says that this shift in tailor-made learning groups provides students

with independence in the classroom.

"There's an increasing push for students to take more ownership and have more involvement into how they learn," said Greenberg. "Creating agency in the classroom improves student's motivations."

With adaptive technology assisting individuals at every skill level, students are better equipped to learn on their own.

### ■ These are the technologies that are making a difference in education right now.

In the future it's likely that we'll start seeing classrooms adopt a one-to-one ratio between kids and devices. Here are the technology programs that are currently making waves in the field of education:

Tablets like Google's Chromebook are an ideal classroom device because they're relatively cheap, interchangeable, easy to manage, and provide access to a range of Google's educational software.

For math, DreamBox, Zearn, and ST Math are software programs that adapt to students as they learn.

In the area of language arts, programs like No Red Ink, Achieve 3000, and Newsela provide students with ways to easily understand reading and writing.

Software that allows educators to manage and test their classrooms like Quizlet are becoming widely used.

### ■ And despite the inundation of technology within the classroom, its role still remains to be determined.

"Technology is not silver bullet solution," said Greenberg.

"We have to be honest that we don't have definitive proof one way or the other yet that technology is improving education. We are cautiously optimistic that technology is having a very bold impact."

(Source: Business Insider)



# Animal populations shrinking due to their high-risk food-finding strategies

A study using animal-attached technology to measure food consumption in four very different wild vertebrates has revealed that animals using a high-risk strategy to find rarer food are particularly susceptible to becoming extinct, as they fail to gather food for their young before they starve.

In the first study of its kind, a team of researchers led by Swansea University used thumb-nail-sized electronic tags to record the movement of a number of individual condors, cheetahs, penguins and sheep in Argentina, South Africa and Northern Ireland over a six-year period.

Nicknamed the "Daily Diary", the tags record a mass of data - everything from the animal's minute movements through space and time, to the temperature of its environment and light levels.

Professor Rory Wilson of Swansea University, a world-leading expert on animal movement and lead author of the study, said: "We know that animal populations across the world are taking a hit, with the most charismatic animals like lions and cheetahs being among the worst affected, but up until now it hasn't been clear why.

**High-risk gambling strategy**  
"Our study has revealed that animals that use a high-risk gambling strategy to find food, like lions and tigers, which have to search for long periods before they get lucky and find prey, are more likely to fail to accrue the energy they need to breed, compared to animals that adopt



The catastrophic results of these animals using a high-risk food-finding strategy is highlighted in the study by comparing two penguin species.

a low-risk gambling strategy, like herbivores such as zebras."

The average time the young of each species can survive without food depends on their size (larger young can survive for longer) but newly hatched or newly born young of none of the species studied can live without food for more than a few days.

The catastrophic results of these animals using a high-risk food-finding strategy is highlighted in the study by comparing two penguin species.

**Food-finding stakes**  
While Magellanic penguins, which live in Argentina, can find fish easily, indicating that the odds are good for them, African penguins, whose population has been declining in southern Africa for decades, have very poor odds for their food-finding stakes.

"It appears that commercial fishing has changed the game rules for the worse for the African penguins. When animals are taking rare prey anyway, even small changes in the ecosystem stemming from human activities can be the straw that breaks the camel's back in terms of breeding success, and this seems to be the case for the African penguin, whose population is now just 1% of what it was 100 years ago," said Professor Wilson.

The researchers now hope that their model can be used to predict the fortunes of species across the globe, which could prove pivotal in helping to formulate conservation plans.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

## Orangutans just became the only non-human primates, who can talk about the past

Dogs, cats, or goldfish probably can't have conversations with each other about times long gone by - it's a feature we've thought was pretty much exclusive to humans.

But a new study is shaking up that idea, showing that orangutan mothers wait on average seven minutes after a potential predator is out of sight, before sounding the alarm to warn others.

The "results are quite surprising," Carel van Schaik, a primatologist at the University of Zurich in Switzerland who was not involved in the work, said to Science Magazine.

Orangutans have quite a specific alarm call - it sounds kind of like a human kiss noise. Scientists think it helps warn others about danger, but if it's used, it might also inform the predator that it's been spotted.

The team set out to investigate whether these alarm calls involved any displaced reference - which the team explains is the "capacity to transmit information about something that is not present or about a past or future event".

**Donning colored sheets**  
In the depths of Sumatra's Ketambe forest, the team began their experiments by donning colored sheets and crawling on the ground below seven mother orangutans.

The scientists ambled around in either a white, spotted, patterned, or tiger-stripe colored sheet for two minutes, while the mother would sit in the tree above.

We can't help but laugh at the idea of this, but it got the job done. All in all half of the encounters were rewarded with a kiss vocalization.

The tiger-stripe and patterned sheet got most of these responses, but they found only one of the vocalizations occurred when the 'predator' was still visible.

The rest were delayed, on average seven minutes after the perceived threat was gone, but up to 20 minutes in the



case of one particular older female orangutan.

"She stopped what she was doing, grabbed her infant, defecated [a sign of distress], and started slowly climbing higher in the tree," Adriano Reis e Lameira, one of the researchers, explained to Science Magazine. "She was completely quiet."

There could be other reasons - not ones to do with displaced reference - why the orangutans were waiting, such as being petrified with fear, but the researchers don't think this is the case.

Instead, the team thinks the mothers might have been waiting to protect their child.

**Vocal delay**  
"Vocal delay was also a function of perceived danger for another - an infant - suggesting high-order cognition," they write in the study.

"Our findings suggest that displaced reference in language is likely to have originally piggybacked on akin behaviors in an ancestral hominid."

This means that our ability to understand and vocalize about the past may have evolved from an ancient hominid relating to both humans and orangutans.

Now this is a big claim, and future research will have to back this up before we rewrite any textbooks.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

## New study reveals connection between climate, life and the movement of continents

A new study by The University of Texas at Austin has demonstrated a possible link between life on Earth and the movement of continents. The findings show that sediment, which is often comprised from pieces of dead organisms, could play a key role in determining the speed of continental drift. In addition to challenging existing ideas about how plates interact, the findings are important because they describe potential feedback mechanisms between tectonic movement, climate and life on Earth.

The study describes how sediment moving under or subducting beneath tectonic plates could regulate the movement of the plates and may even play a role in the rapid rise of mountain ranges and growth of continental crust.

Sediment is created when wind, water and ice erode existing rock or when the shells and skeletons of microscopic organisms like plankton accumulate on the seafloor.

Sediment entering subduction zones has long been known to influence geological activity such as the frequency of earthquakes, but until now it was thought to have little influence on continental movement.

That's because the speed of subduction was believed to be dependent on the strength of the subducting plate as it bends and slides into the viscous mantle, the semi molten layer of rock beneath the Earth's crust. Continental movement is driven by one plate sinking under another so, in this scenario, the strength of the portion of the plate being pulled into the Earth's mantle (and the energy required to bend it) would be the primary control for the speed of the plate movement, with sediment having little effect.

**The subducting plates**  
However, prior research involving UTIG scientists had shown the subducting plates may be weaker and



more sensitive to other influences than previously thought. This led researchers to look for other mechanisms that might impact plate velocity. They estimated how different types of rock might affect the plate interface - the boundary where subducting plates meet. Subsequent modelling showed that rock made of sediment can create a lubricating effect between plates, accelerating subduction and increasing plate velocity.

Planktonic foraminifera, such as these collected in the Gulf of Mexico, form the base of many marine and aquatic food chains. Upon death, their skeletons settle on the seafloor to form sedimentary rock such as limestone and chalk.

This mechanism could set in motion a complex feedback loop. As plate velocity increases, there would be less time for sediment to accumulate, so the amount of subducting sediment would be reduced. This leads to slower subduction, which may allow for mountains to grow at plate boundaries as the force of the two plates running into each other causes uplift. In turn, erosion of those mountains by wind, water and other forces can produce more sediments which feed back into the subduction zone and restart the cycle by increasing the speed of subduction.

(Source: phys.org)

## Scientists provide first-ever views of elusive energy explosion

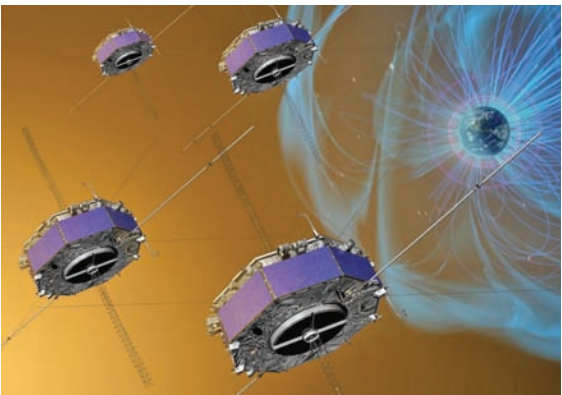
Researchers have captured a difficult-to-view singular event involving 'magnetic reconnection' -- the process by which sparse particles and energy around Earth collide producing a quick but mighty explosion -- in the Earth's magnetotail, the magnetic environment that trails behind the planet.

Researchers at the University of New Hampshire have captured a difficult-to-view singular event involving "magnetic reconnection" -- the process by which sparse particles and energy around Earth collide producing a quick but mighty explosion -- in the Earth's magnetotail, the magnetic environment that trails behind the planet.

Magnetic reconnection has remained a bit of a mystery to scientists. They know it exists and have documented the effects that the energy explosions can have -- sparking auroras and possibly wreaking havoc on power grids in the case of extremely large events -- but they haven't completely understood the details. In a study, the scientists outline the first views of the critical details of how this energy conversion process works in the Earth's magnetotail.

**The remarkable event**  
"This was a remarkable event," said Roy Torbert of the Space Science Center at UNH and deputy principal investigator for NASA's Magnetospheric Multiscale mission, or MMS. "We have long known that it occurs in two types of regimes: asymmetric and symmetric but this is the first time we have seen a symmetric process."

Magnetic reconnection occurs around Earth every day



due to magnetic field lines twisting and reconnecting. It happens in different ways in different places, with different effects. Particles in highly ionized gases, called plasmas, can be converted and cause a single powerful explosion, just a fraction of a second long, that can lead to strong streams of electrons flying away at supersonic speeds.

The view, which was detected as part of the scientists' work on the MMS mission, had enough resolution to reveal its differences from other reconnection regimes around the planet like the asymmetric process found in the magnetopause around Earth which is closer to the sun.

"This is important because the more we know and

understand about these reconnections," said Torbert, "the more we can prepare for extreme events that are possible from reconnections around the Earth or anywhere in the universe."

**A magnetic reconnection**  
Magnetic reconnection also happens on the sun and across the universe -- in all cases forcefully shooting out particles and driving much of the change we see in dynamic space environments -- so learning about it around Earth also helps us understand reconnection in other places in the universe which cannot be reached by spacecraft.

The more we understand about different types of magnetic reconnection, the more we can piece together what such explosions might look like elsewhere.

For the first reported asymmetrical event on October 16, 2015, and now this symmetrical event on July 11, 2017, NASA's MMS mission made history by flying through magnetic reconnection events near the Earth. The four MMS spacecrafts launched from a single rocket were only inside the events for a few seconds, but the instruments which UNH researchers helped to develop were able to gather data at an unprecedented speed of one hundred times faster than ever before.

As a result, for the first time, scientists could track the way the magnetic fields changed, new electric fields presented, as well as the speeds and direction of the various charged particles.

(Source: Science Daily)

## Astronomers find super-Earth orbiting the nearby Barnard's Star

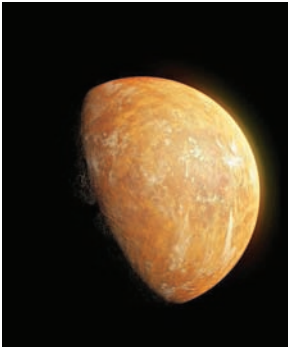
For most of human history, people wondered if there were other planets out there in the unfathomable reaches of space. It turns out there are some very close to Earth, though. A team of astronomers has revived interest in Barnard's Star, which hangs in space just six light years away. After dismissing evidence for an exoplanet orbiting this star in the 1970s, the team now says there's a very good chance Barnard's Star does indeed host a super-Earth.

Barnard's Star is a red dwarf and one of the closest stars to Earth. Only the Centauri system is closer, and we know there's at least one exoplanet there. Astronomers announced the discovery of Proxima Centauri b with great fanfare in 2016. At just 4.4 light years away, this planet will make an excellent target for future observation. The planet orbiting Barnard's Star is just a little bit more distant, but it's still close enough to be key to understanding exoplanets.

The tale of planet hunting around Barnard's Star starts in the 1960s when astronomer Peter van de Kemp released compelling data supporting the existence of an exoplanet. However, other teams were unable to confirm, and by the 1970s we knew the discovery was merely a product of defective instruments. Scientists kept looking at the star, and now astronomers from the Institute of Space Studies of Catalonia and the Institute of Space Sciences in Spain have assembled 20 years of data to reveal Barnard's Star b.

The newly published study lays out the basics of the exoplanet. Barnard's Star b completes an orbit of the star every 233 Earth days. It's about as far away from Barnard's Star as Mercury is from Earth, but Barnard's Star is much cooler. So, it's distinctly outside the habitable zone with a surface temperature of -170 degrees Celsius (-274 degrees Fahrenheit). It's the equivalent of a planet orbiting between Mars and Jupiter in our Solar System.

(Source: extremetech.com)



## Climate change could have damaging effect on male insect fertility, says study

A new study discovered evidence that climate change is contributing to the collapse of biodiversity worldwide. After scientists had exposed the beetles to heatwaves, they found that the insects produced less sperm and fewer offsprings.

A new study revealed that exposure to heatwaves caused damages to the sperm of male beetles, making them sterile. This adds to the growing list of the negative effects of climate change to biodiversity.

"We know that biodiversity is suffering under climate change, but the specific causes and sensitivities are hard to pin down," explained Matt Gage of the University of East Anglia and the research group leader. "We've shown in this work that sperm function is an especially sensitive trait when the environment heats up, and in a model system representing a huge amount of global biodiversity."

The study used red flour beetle and exposed them to either standard control conditions or heatwave temperatures. Afterward, the researchers assessed how the heatwaves affect the reproductive success of the insects, including their sperm function and offspring quality.

They found that after exposure to heatwaves, the sperm production of the male beetles reduced by three-quarters. Moreover, they found that the sperm from the male beetles struggled to move to the female beetles' tract. It means, there is a greater chance that the sperm does not survive to fertilize the egg.

The researchers used beetles as a test subject because there are about 400,000 species of the insects around the world. Beetles constitute 25 percent of all known animal species.

Perhaps more concerning, exposure to heatwaves has lasting effects to the lifespans and reproductive activities of the beetles' offsprings. The sons of the male beetles exposed to heatwaves for the experiment lived a couple of months shorter than average.

It has been suspected that climate change is driving the collapse of insect biodiversity around the world, but how it is affecting biodiversity is still poorly understood.

(Source: Tech Times)

## Scientists are turning human excrement into biofuel

A team of researchers has demonstrated, for the first time, a technique for converting human excrement into hydrochar -- a safe, renewable biomass fuel that resembles charcoal -- as well as a nutrient-rich fertilizer.

According to the team, this process could potentially address two major issues that affect many less-affluent countries -- poor sanitation and growing energy needs.

While access to waste treatment worldwide has improved significantly in recent years, approximately 2.3 billion people still lack basic sanitation services, according to the World Health Organization. Of those, around 892 million people -- most of whom live in rural areas -- defecate in the open.

"Human excreta are considered hazardous due to their potential to transmit disease," Amit Gross, from the Department of Environmental Hydrology and Microbiology at BGU, said in a statement. "While it is rich in organic matter nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, human waste also contains micropollutants from pharmaceuticals, which can lead to environmental problems if not disposed or reused properly."

Approximately 2 billion people worldwide use solid biomass -- such as wood -- which is converted into charcoal and then used for cooking and heating. However, these practices have a significant impact on the environment, contributing to air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation and soil erosion.

In a pilot study published in the Journal of Cleaner Production, the researchers described how they used a technique known as "hydrothermal carbonization" to heat raw solid human waste in a special "pressure cooker" to three different temperatures (180, 210 and 240 degrees Celsius) for periods of either 30, 60 or 120 minutes.

(Source: Newsweek)



## Funeral procession held for Social Security Organization's head, deputy

**1 →** Making an unsafe U-turn, unsafe road conditions as distracted driving on the part of the oil tanker driver were the main causes of the accident, Traffic police Ali Abdi said, IRNA news agency reported on Friday.

A funeral procession was also held for the two late officials in Golestan on Friday morning.



Noorbakhsh, 58, was an orthopedic surgeon who served as the head of Social Security Organization since 2013. During his 20s he took part in the 8-year Iran-Iraq war (1980-88) as a doctor. Tajoddin, 65, was a former parliament member who served as the deputy director of the Organization for 5 years. Many high-ranking officials including President Hassan Rouhani, Chairman of the Expediency Council Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi, as well as ministers extended their condolences over the tragic incident.

## Website provides couples with marriage counselling in 16 provinces

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — A website which offers consultation services within the framework of a marriage counselling program to reduce divorce is now up and running in 16 provinces with highest divorce rate nationwide, IRNA news agency reported.

Called Tasmin in Persian, literally meaning decision, the program was devised last summer in collaboration between Iran's Welfare Organization and Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution under the auspices of the Judiciary.

The counselling services are available in provinces of Khorasan Razavi, Semnan, Mazandaran, Alborz, Qazvin, Gilan, Zanjan, Qom, Markazi, Isfahan, Lorestan, Kermanshah, Ilam, Khuzestan, Fars, and just recently Tehran.

Couples who are planning to get a divorce have to first register on the website and will be referred to counselling centers before going to a court to file for divorce. That's how they may change their decision.

Marriage counseling is frequently considered as an option for preventing divorce and mending broken marital relations. However, the sooner the better.

According to the letsearchsuccess.com, the general consensus among therapists is that couples who seek therapy sooner, rather than later, see better results, and their relationships are more likely to recover.

Also, the longer the relationship is suffering, the higher the chance that one individual has already given up and therefore therapy would ultimately not fix the relationship.

Moreover, the most effective marriage counseling is going to take more than a couple sessions in most cases. A common mistake that couples make when in marriage counseling is quitting too soon.

Couples should aim for 6 months or more in therapy before considering quitting it.

## LEARN ENGLISH

### Vampires

A: You want to go to the movies tonight?  
B: Sure! What's playing?  
A: The new "Twilight" movie!  
B: "Twilight"? As in the **vampire** movies? No way am I watching that. I don't understand why everyone is so excited about these films about vampires. It doesn't make sense.  
A: Of course it does. It's like a modern **tale** of Romeo and Juliet. You have a couple that is in love but can't be together because they are so different. Add in the fact that **immortality** and **superhuman strength** is really attractive and there you have it! Plus the cast is **hip**, young people that make the movie even more **enticing**.

B: I don't buy into that. I think it's just a **fad**. Pretty soon this will pass and everyone will be into **werewolves** or **zombies**!

■ **Key vocabulary**  
**vampire**: a dead person who sucks the blood of living person  
**tale**: a story  
**immortal**: Alive forever  
**superhuman strength**: extraordinary power  
**hip**: cool, fashionable  
**entice**: to lead on by exciting hope or desire  
**fad**: a temporary fashion or notion  
**werewolves**: a wolf with extraordinary strength  
**zombie**: a dead corpse, likes to eat brain  
■ **Supplementary vocabulary**  
**Ghoul**: spirit or ghost  
**horror**: centered upon or depicting terrifying events  
**nightmare**: a terrifying dream in which the dreamer experiences feelings of helplessness  
**fan**: an enthusiastic devotee or follower of a celebrity, pastime, etc.  
**obsess**: to think about something unceasingly or persistently  
(Source: irlanguage.com)



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

# Iran's traffic police win International Safety Media Awards

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Iran's traffic Police won a silver medal at the International Safety Media Awards (ISMAs) 2018, IRNA news agency reported on Friday.

ISMAs was awarded at the 13th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion, in Bangkok Thailand, November 5-7, 2018.

ISMAs recognize high quality safety media from around the world. The ISMAs provide safety promotion and injury prevention professionals an opportunity to showcase their media initiatives in various categories of audio, print, short videos, ultra-short videos, online/web-based, and campaign.

Eynollah Jahani, deputy for social and cultural affairs of traffic police, said that Iran has took part in the competition in various categories of print, short videos, and ultra-short videos and managed to win a silver medal.

However, Jahani didn't mention the exact category Iran succeeded in winning the award. He further explained that two of the media submitted by Iran also earned honorable mention.

Past winners have leveraged their ISMA successes, resulting in increased funding and worldwide recognition.

According to ISMA website, in 2016 Iran managed to win a bronze Medal in the category of print for "Child Restraints and How to Use them" submitted by Safety Promotion and Injury Prevention Research Center, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences and Traffic Police of Iran.

Iran also received an honorable mention for "You Are Responsible!" in the category of ultra-short video which was submitted by Road Safety Supporters Society (RSSS) NGO.

Winners for the 2016 awards were announced September 21, 2016 in Tampere, Finland at the 12th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion.

The 13th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion objective are to share knowledge, experience, good practices, successful and non-successful stories, challenges of injury prevention and safety promotion in responses to SDGs, to promote safety and non-violence in all policies, and advocate effective multi-sectoral actions



Eynollah Jahani, deputy for social and cultural affairs of traffic police (L) and Traffic Police Chief Taqi Mehri

**, in 2016 Iran managed to win a bronze Medal in the category of print for "Child Restraints and How to Use them" submitted by Safety Promotion and Injury Prevention Research Center, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences and Traffic Police of Iran.**

for safety and non-violence, and to build and strengthen a global community of practice in order to promote safety and prevention of violence agenda worldwide.

Participants primarily included researchers, practitioners, advocates and policy-makers in the field of injury prevention and safety promotion.

## Cancer drug, lenalidomide, produced in Iran

**1 →** Sepideh Meshki, head of the oncology department of Abidi Pharmaceutical Company, explained that the drug is available in for different doses in Iran and is produced under license of Syntho Company [a Dutch multinational pharmaceutical company that produces generic human drugs].

She made the remarks on the sidelines of the 17th Congress of the Iranian Society for Oncology and Hematology (November 15-17) in Isfahan.

Hematology-Oncology Research Center and Stem Cell Transplantation head, Asadollah Mousavi, also explained that over the past few years many cancer drugs have been produced in Iran domestically.

These drugs, Mousavi said, are of high quality and they would help decrease the need for importation of certain drugs to the country.

In November 7 Food and Drug Administration Director Gholamreza Asghari said that some two third of Iran's required pharmaceutical raw materials are produced domestically.

"The production of pharmaceutical raw materials in the current [Iranian calendar] year (started March 21) has risen to 67 percent from two years ago when it stood at around 54 percent," he added.

Asghari highlighted that rapid development over the last two years has reduced the country's need to imported pharmaceutical raw materials by 33 percent.

■ **Myelodysplastic syndromes**  
Myelodysplastic syndromes are a group of disorders caused by poorly formed blood cells or ones that don't work properly. Myelodysplastic syndromes result from something amiss in the spongy material inside your bones where blood cells are made (bone marrow).

Treatment for myelodysplastic syndromes usually focuses on reducing or preventing complications of the disease



and its treatments. In some cases, treatment might involve chemotherapy or a bone marrow transplant.

■ **Mantle cell lymphoma**  
Mantle cell lymphoma is a cancer of white blood cells, which help your body fight infections.

These cancer cells start to form tumors in your lymph nodes. They may enter your blood and spread to other lymph nodes, as well as your bone marrow (the soft center where blood cells are made), digestive tract, spleen, and liver.

Often, mantle cell lymphoma has spread to other parts of your body by the time you get a diagnosis. Although in most cases it can't be cured, treatment and support can help you live longer and better.

■ **Multiple myeloma**  
Multiple myeloma is a cancer that forms in a type of white blood cell called a plasma cell. Plasma cells help you fight infections by making antibodies that recognize and attack germs.

Multiple myeloma causes cancer cells to accumulate in the bone marrow, where they crowd out healthy blood cells. Rather than produce helpful antibodies, the cancer cells produce abnormal proteins that can cause complications.

Treatment for multiple myeloma isn't always necessary for people who aren't experiencing any signs or symptoms. For people with multiple myeloma who require treatment, a number of treatments are available to help control the disease.

## WHO envoy to Iran highlights commitment to the vulnerable in time of conflicts and sanctions

Dr. Christoph Hamelmann, Representative of World Health Organization (WHO) in Iran by attending a three-day (November 14-16, 2018) international congress on "Health for Peace" in Shiraz highlighted the mission of the Organization to promote health, keep the world safe, and serving particularly the vulnerable in the time of conflicts and sanctions.

By referring to the new WHO General Programme of Work for 2019-2023 he said, our three strategic goals are focused on achieving universal health coverage, addressing health emergencies, and promoting healthier populations that will directly contribute to increasing social protection and social cohesion in different countries in the region including the Islamic Republic of Iran.

War and conflicts are a major cause for death and injury, the breakdown of and reduced access to health systems, the increase incidence of communicable diseases, reduced water and sanitation and disease prevention, psychosocial effects and malnutrition.

"The International Health Regulations play an important role for health, peace and security and we encourage and support all Member States in their commitment and obligation to implement them as signatories" Dr. Hamelmann said.

The Representative of WHO underscored: "we understand our role as advocate for the basic human right to health and a life in peace, security and protection, as one important voice of the United Nation family in a world of increasing conflict affecting in particular the most vulnerable populations, whether this in a context of sanctions, of armed conflicts or even direct attacks on the health workforce in humanitarian settings".

He also made reference to a Nov 8 WHO press release on the critical health situation in Yemen quoting Dr. Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for



the Eastern Mediterranean urging all parties in the conflict in Yemen to respect their legal obligations under the International Humanitarian Law to ensure the protection of health workers, patients, health facilities, ambulances, and communities and to facilitate humanitarian access to areas where people need our help most.

The WHO Emergency Risk Management and Humanitarian Response department works closely with Member States, international partners, and local institutions to help communities prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies, disasters and crises.

On the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with 17 goals, among them goal 16 calling for the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, for access to justice for all and for building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, and among them goal 3 calling for ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages.

The International Congress on Health for Peace that has been hosted by Shiraz University of Medical Sciences in collaboration with the Health and Medical Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran brought together a considerable number of medical experts and representatives from foundations and practitioners active in the realm of health from WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, International Committee of the Red Cross and some non-governmental international organizations.

(Source: WHO)

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

## Iranian students finish first at IOAA 2018

Iranian students came in first by winning 9 gold and silver medals at the 2018 International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics (IOAA), Fars news agency reported on Tuesday.

Fateme Mohajerani, an official with the Ministry of Education, explained that 9 Iranian students in two teams vied against their contestants and managed to win 6 gold medals and 3 silver medals.

Teams from Russia and China ranked second and third respectively, she added.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “de-”

■ **Meaning:** taking something away, the opposite  
■ **For example:** The substance is **dehydrated** and stored as powder.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Follow somebody around

■ **Meaning:** to follow someone everywhere they go, especially when this is annoying  
■ **For example:** She told him to go away and stop following her around.

## IDIOM

### Spill the beans

■ **Explanation:** to reveal something that was meant to be a secret  
■ **For example:** We had everything organized for Bruce's surprise party, but Kate accidentally spilled the beans to him at work.

## بازگشت دانش آموزان تیم نجوم ایران با کسب اولی جهان به کشور

به گزارش روز سه شنبه خبرگزاری فارس تیم دانش‌آموزی نجوم ایران که با کسب ۹ مدال طلا و نقره توانست در جایگاه اول دوازدهمین المپیاد جهانی نجوم و اخترفیزیک قرار گیرد. فاطمه مهاجرانی رئیس مرکز ملی پرورش استعدادهای درخشان و دانش‌پژوهان جوان اظهار کرد: دانش‌آموزان در دو تیم شرکت کردند و در مجموع توانستند ۶ مدال طلا و ۳ نقره کسب کنند.

وی افزود: در این دوره از رقابت‌ها، ایران اول شد و کشورهای روسیه و چین به مقام‌های دوم و سوم رسیدند.



# Funeral prayers held for Khashoggi in Mecca and Medina

Saudi regime squad involved in Khashoggi murder must be tried in Turkey: FM

➔ Short videos of the funeral prayers, including one performed after Friday prayer in Mecca, were shared widely on Twitter.

Funeral prayers were also held at the Fatih Mosque in the Turkish city of Istanbul and were expected to be held at Finsbury Park mosque in London later on Friday.

Anas Altikriti, CEO (chief executive officer) of the Muslim Association of Britain, said he expected hundreds of Muslims to attend Khashoggi's funeral prayer in London.

"After hearing the call by Hatice Cengiz, Khashoggi's fiancé, that Muslims around the world perform the funeral prayer, we believed the right thing to do was to respond."

Fatih Oke, a friend of Khashoggi, said the slain journalist's family would not get closure until "justice" was delivered.

**■ Saudi regime prosecutor seeks death penalty for five in Khashoggi murder**

Meantime, authorities in Saudi Arabia say they will seek the death penalty for five people who have been accused of carrying out the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul.

Speaking to reporters in Riyadh, Shaalan al-Shaalan, Saudi Arabia's deputy public prosecutor, said "the incident" began on September 29 when a "former" deputy chief of intelligence ordered the "leader of the mission" to "bring back the victim by means of persuasion, and if persuasion fails, to do so by force".

While the prosecutor's office did not give names, General Ahmad al-Assiri, who was fired as deputy head of intelligence in the wake of the killing, has been implicated in the killing.

The mission leader - also not named - then put together a 15-member team to "return" the journalist from Turkey.

The team included a forensics expert "for the purpose of removing evidence from the scene" and a local collaborator tasked with securing a safe house "in case force had to be used to return the victim".

Al-Shaalan said that on the morning of October 2, the leader of the negotiating team saw that he would not be able to force Khashoggi to return, "so he decided to kill him in the moment."

The 59-year-old then died from a lethal injection - the official cause of death is listed as a drug overdose - and his body was dismembered and taken out of the building, he said.

The body parts were "delivered" to the local collaborator and another man put on Khashoggi's clothes and posed as the journalist exiting the consulate.

According to Saudi regime investigators, the cameras inside the consulate were disabled during the drugging and dismemberment of Khashoggi.

Al-Shaalan said 21 people were now in custody, with 11 indicted and referred to trial, adding that Saud al-Qahtani, a former adviser to the royal court, had been banned from travelling and remained under investigation.

The prosecution is seeking the death penalty for five officials who gave the orders and oversaw the execution of the murder.

Al-Shaalan said the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, was not implicated in the gruesome murder that has triggered global outrage. Later on Thursday, Adel al-Jubeir, the Saudi regime's foreign minister, reiter-



ated that the crown prince had "absolutely" nothing to do with Khashoggi's death.

**■ Turkish dismissal**

Turkish leaders almost immediately dismissed the announcement, with Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu calling it "insufficient" and insisting the killing was "premeditated".

Turkish officials have repeatedly said it is unlikely Khashoggi could have been killed without the knowledge of MBS, with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan saying the orders came from "the highest levels of the Saudi government."

According to the New York Times, a member of the Saudi team that killed Khashoggi made a phone call shortly after his death, instructing someone in Saudi Arabia to "tell your boss" that the assassination had been carried out.

According to the New York Times, a member of the Saudi team that killed Khashoggi made a phone call shortly after his death, instructing someone in Saudi Arabia to "tell your boss" that the assassination had been carried out.

The Saudi regime announcement on Thursday failed to appease Turkish officials, who insist the killing and its cover-up were carried out by the highest levels of government.

**■ Saudi regime squad involved in Khashoggi murder must be tried in Turkey: FM**

Elsewhere, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu says the 15-man Saudi team involved in the murder of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi should be tried in Turkey.

Cavusoglu made the comment on Thursday in reaction to an announcement by Saudi Arabia's public prosecutor who detailed Riyadh's actions on the case and demanded death penalty for five defendants.

"We find the statement of Saudi Arabia about the murder of Khashoggi positive but not sufficient," Cavusoglu said.

"The Saudi side will share the details of its investigation with our prosecutor's office. But we already know that the murder was planned in advance and that the journalist was first killed and the body was later dismembered," he added.

"And how they would be killing and then disposing of the body was also planned, special devices were brought to the consulate general," Cavusoglu said, stressing that this is



not something that happens instantaneously.

Earlier in the day, Saudi public prosecutor released the results of the long-awaited investigation into the death of Khashoggi, saying a team of Saudi agents who had been dispatched to Istanbul with orders to bring him home alive had instead killed the journalist and dismembered his body.

A statement by Saudi Prosecutor Saud al-Mojeb, circulated by Saudi Press Agency, concluded that the murder had been authorized by a minor official.

His conclusion contradicted assertions by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who had said the orders to kill Khashoggi had come from "the highest levels of the Saudi government."

Al-Mojeb's statement implicated two higher level officials in what the prosecutor said was an operation intended to either convince or force Khashoggi back to Saudi Arabia. One of them, Ahmed al-Assiri, the former deputy head of intelligence, issued an order for Khashoggi's return on Sept. 29, the prosecutor said.

According to the prosecutor, another official, Saud al-Qahtani, a close adviser to the crown prince, was also involved in planning Khashoggi's repatriation.

In reaction to the statement, an adviser to the Turkish president said on Thursday that al-Mojeb's remarks were aimed at covering up the murder, adding the Saudi probe was unlikely to find the perpetrators.

**■ It won't happen again**

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir told a press conference on Thursday the kingdom has taken steps to make sure that this kind of incident does not happen again.

He also noted that the murder of Khashoggi is now a legal case and should not be politicized.

Jubeir added that there were still unanswered questions in need of answers, but Ankara had refused three requests from Riyadh to provide proof of their accounts of the killing.

His comments come as Ankara has repeatedly urged Riyadh to explain who had given the order for killing Khashoggi, and where his body is.

Asked about possible international sanctions in response to the case, Jubeir said there was a difference between sanctioning individuals and holding the Saudi government responsible.

Jubeir also noted that bin Salman had

"absolutely nothing to do" with the murder of Khashoggi.

**■ U.S. imposes sanctions on 17 Saudis over Khashoggi killing**

The developments followed as the United States has imposed economic sanctions on 17 Saudis involved in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, including top aides of the Saudi regime Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The U.S. Treasury Department declared the sanctions on Thursday after Saudi Arabia's public prosecutor announced that five officials face a possible death sentence in the case but exonerated MBS.

"These individuals who targeted and brutally killed a journalist who resided and worked in the United States must face consequences for their actions," the U.S. Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin said in a statement.

The sanctions were the first concrete response by the administration of President Donald Trump to Khashoggi's death in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, in October 2.

Among those sanctioned were Saud al-Qahtani, who has been removed from his position as a top aide to MBS, as well as the Saudi Consul General Mohammad al-Otaibi and members of a 15-person team Turkey has identified as being involved in Khashoggi's death.

The sanctions limit access to the U.S. financial system and freeze people's assets. They will be implemented under an act which targets perpetrators of serious human rights abuses and corruption.

However, the sanctions do not affect America's lucrative arms sales to Saudi Arabia that Trump has vowed to preserve.

The measure was unusual for Washington, which rarely imposes sanctions on Saudi nationals. The sanctions do not target Riyadh, an important U.S. security and economic ally.

The U.S. government did not impose sanctions on Saudi officials over the September 11, 2001, terror attacks on the United States, in which 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudi citizens.

The U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said there could be further penalties against Riyadh.

Canada, which had a major diplomatic dispute with Saudi Arabia this year over human rights, welcomed the U.S. sanctions and said it was weighing similar action.

**■ Who was Khashoggi?**

Khashoggi, a critic of the House of Saud regime's policy, was killed in the Saudi regime consulate in Istanbul on October 2. He was a U.S. resident and columnist for The Washington Post newspaper.

The killing has triggered a political crisis in Saudi Arabia as well as tensions with Western allies.

Some members of the U.S. Congress said that even with the sanctions the administration has not been tough enough, specifically in regard to the crown prince, Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler.

"I remain concerned that the administration is enabling the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in its effort to protect Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman from accountability," said Democratic Senator Ben Cardin.

## U.S. preparing indictment against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange

The United States Justice Department is preparing charges against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, whose website published thousands of classified U.S. government documents.

The U.S. federal prosecutors inadvertently disclosed the existence of a sealed indictment in a federal court filing in an unrelated case, WikiLeaks said on Thursday.

The court document, which prosecutors say was filed by mistake, asks a judge to seal documents in a criminal case unrelated to Assange.

The U.S. officials had no comment on the disclosure and the exact nature of the charges against Assange was not immediately known.

Prosecutors sought to keep the charges confidential until after Assange's arrest, saying the move was essential to ensure he did not evade or avoid arrest and extradition in the case.

The U.S. officials have previously acknowledged that federal prosecutors based in Alexandria, Virginia, have been conducting a lengthy criminal investigation into WikiLeaks and its founder.

Senior officials in the administration of the U.S. President Donald Trump, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, have publicly called for Assange to be aggressively prosecuted.

Assange and his supporters have periodically said the U.S. authorities had filed secret criminal charges against him.

Assange took refuge in Ecuador's embassy in London in 2012 after facing a warrant for arrest following allegations of sexual assault and rape from the Swedish government. He has denied the allegations, and the investigation was closed last year.

(Source: Press TV)

## Russia warns France over C. Africa peace role

Russia warned France on Thursday that it must put aside "parochial national interests" and recognize its peace efforts in the Central African Republic (CAR) as negotiations continued on a contentious United Nations Security Council resolution.

France has presented a draft resolution that takes aim at recent Russian efforts to broker peace deals in CAR by specifying that an African-led initiative is "the only framework" for a solution.

"We are pro-actively helping the CAR, knowingly with the support of the people and we would like our efforts to be duly reflected in the French draft," Russian Deputy Ambassador Dmitry Polyanski told the council.

"In the CAR, there will be work for all to genuinely help the country get back on our feet," he said, adding that it was time to "set aside historical complexes, egotism and parochial national interests."

Working with Sudan, Russia in August convened talks in Khartoum of Central African militias who signed a preliminary agreement, drawing criticism from France of unhelpful meddling in its former colony.

Russia has sent military trainers and equipment to the Central African Republic, and a security adviser is working with President Faustin-Archange Touadera, under a bilateral agreement.

French diplomats and some UN officials have complained that the Russian peace initiative has complicated diplomatic efforts, sending mixed messages to the parties.

"There must be no ambiguity about the central role of the African Union initiative, as asserted in our draft resolution," French Ambassador Francois Delattre told the council.

The Central African Republic is struggling to recover from the bloodletting that exploded in 2013 after the ouster of leader Francois Bozize, a Christian, by mainly Muslim Seleka rebels.

Touadera controls only a fraction of the country, most of which is overrun by militants who claim to protect either the Christian or Muslim communities.

France also faced objections from the United States over a plan for UN peacekeepers in CAR to support newly-trained national forces as they deploy across the war-scarred country.

But agreement was reached over language that specifies that the new task given to the MINUSCA peacekeeping mission will not lead to additional costs.

(Source: AFP)

## California wildfires: 'If this town recovers, it will take years'

At least 63 are now dead in the United States deadliest wildfire in a century as officials announced they have a missing persons list with 631 names on it in an ever-evolving accounting.

The nearly 570 square kilometer blaze in northern California was 40 percent contained, the state fire agency said on Thursday, and firefighters succeeded in slowing the flames' advance towards populated areas.

More than 450 searchers were assigned to look for remains in Paradise, which was all but destroyed on November, and in outlying areas such as Magalia, a forested town of about 11,000. Many of the missing were elderly and from Magalia.

Police drove around town, searching for those still in their homes and checking if they needed food and water.

Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea said on Wednesday night that 130 people were missing. His office later released a list of 300 people who were unaccounted for.

Honea said the number of missing had more than doubled on Thursday as investigators went back and checked emergency calls made when the fire broke out a week ago.

"I want you to understand that the chaos we were dealing with was extraordinary," he told journalists, in explaining the staggering new number.

Honea said he believes there are people on the list who fled the blaze and don't realize they were reported missing. He said authorities were making the list public so people could see if they're on it, and let authorities know they are safe.

At the other end of the state, crews continued to battle wildfires in southern California, including a blaze of more than 396 square km that destroyed over 500 structures in Malibu and nearby communities. At least three deaths were reported.

**■ Homes destroyed**

Officials in Northern California put the number of homes lost there at nearly 8,800, and the sheriff said the task of recovering remains had become so vast that his office brought in 287 more searchers Wednesday, including National Guard troops. The search crews used 22 cadaver dogs.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke joined California's Governor Jerry Brown on a visit to Paradise on Wednesday, saying it was the worst fire devastation he had ever seen.

(Source: AP)

## Pentagon: Number of troops at border has 'pretty much peaked' at 5,800

The number of active-duty United States military personnel at the southern border has "pretty much peaked" at roughly 5,800 troops, a top Pentagon official said Thursday.

President Trump at one point threatened to send up to 15,000 service members to the border ahead of the arrival of a migrant caravan of Central American asylum seekers.

While Republican lawmakers largely supported sending troops to the border, Democrats and immigrant rights advocates accused the president of seeking to stoke anti-immigrant fears ahead of the midterm elections earlier this month.

"We've pretty much peaked in terms of the number of people that are down there," Deputy Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan told reporters at the Pentagon on Thursday. Shanahan said that a large number of additional troops are likely not required, with the current mission scheduled to end Dec. 15. He added, however, that the end date "could always be amended."

Reuters reported earlier on Thursday that the commander in charge of the mission is looking next week at whether to begin sending forces home.

Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan said he would also look at possibly shifting some troops to new border positions, a move that indicates the mission — hastily ordered by Trump late last month ahead of the Nov. 6 midterm elections — is nearly complete.

The troops were sent to Arizona, California and Texas to help bolster the southern border ahead of the expected arrival of a caravan of several thousand Central American migrants.

The deployment, in support of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), was initially expected to reach

more than 7,000 troops and last through Dec. 15.

Buchanan, the commander of the U.S. Army North, said he did not think an extension of the mission was likely at this point.

"It is a hard date. And we have no indications that CBP is going to need us to do our work for longer than that," Buchanan told Reuters on Wednesday at Base Camp Donna in Texas.

"If we get an extension, we get an extension. But I've got no indications of that so far."

Buchanan also said he believed troop levels had peaked. He estimated that about 1,500 troops were deployed in California, 1,500 in Arizona and 2,800 in Texas.

"We might increase by a hundred here or there, but probably not."

He added that he might shift forces east or west along the border if needed.

In the weeks leading up to the elections earlier this month, Trump spoke publicly about the migrant caravan in dramatic terms, calling it an "invasion." But since the polls closed last week, Trump has said little about the border deployment or the caravan.

Defense Secretary James Mattis, who toured Base Camp Donna on Wednesday, defended the deployment to reporters, saying he believes it is "so far improving our readiness for deployments."

He also said that the mission was reviewed by Justice Department lawyers and was "absolutely legal."

Buchanan has said his mission guidelines were to support CBP personnel and that he was "not being directed to do anything unnatural."

Pentagon officials have said the troops will not directly



interact with migrants approaching the U.S. Instead, the soldiers are assisting Border Patrol staff with stringing up concertina wire and setting up temporary housing for U.S. personnel.

Mattis on Wednesday said that within 10 days the military personnel at the border will have finished all tasks initially requested by CBP. Additional tasks, however, may be added.

Buchanan indicated soldiers would go home once they had fulfilled the CBP requests.

"At some point in time, I'm not going to keep troops here just to keep them here. When the work is done, we're going to start downsizing some capability," Buchanan said.

"I'm looking as early as next week to start thinking through rightsizing, if we need to change, or do I need to shift (troops elsewhere on the border)," Buchanan said.

(Source: The Hill)



## Swiss prosecutor cleared of wrongdoing in FIFA probe

A top federal Swiss prosecutor has been cleared of wrongdoing after being suspended amid questions about his conduct during investigations into suspected corruption at world soccer body FIFA, a special prosecutor in Zurich said on Friday.

Ulrich Weder, a Zurich prosecutor who had been appointed to investigate, confirmed that his probe into the behaviour of Olivier Thormann, the head of the Swiss Attorney General's (OAG) white-collar crimes unit, has been dropped.

Since taking up his investigation, Weder had looked into possible secrecy violations, favouritism, bribery and accepting benefits, but found Thormann had done nothing wrong.

"The initial suspicion was undermined by the investigation, rather than being substantiated," Weder said, adding his probe against Thormann has been "completely closed".

Thormann had been suspended after Attorney General Michael Lauber in late September received allegations against him involving the OAG's criminal proceedings in the field of soccer and its governing body FIFA. Initially, Lauber's office raised concern that the allegations "may be of criminal relevance", but Weder said that was not the case. So far, more than 40 entities and individuals have been charged by U.S. prosecutors in connection with the FIFA investigation. The Swiss OAG has filed no charges in its investigations, to date. Thormann's suspension was not linked to two meetings between leaders of the OAG and FIFA that became public following publication of the so-called "Football Leaks" earlier this month, the OAG has said. Thormann's economic crimes division has been investigating many high-profile cases, including into scandals surrounding Malaysian state fund 1MDB and Brazilian energy group Petrobras.

(Source: Reuters)

## West Ham, Watford against FA bid to cap foreign player quotas

The English Football Association's plan to cap the number of overseas players at Premier League clubs has run into opposition from West Ham United and Watford.

The FA has proposed reducing the number of foreign players in each Premier League squad to 12 from 17 after Britain leaves the European Union in an attempt to boost the number of homegrown players in the English top-flight. If the proposal goes through, 12 of the league's 20 clubs will have to reduce the number of overseas players in their squads, though the FA contends this will not result in a net fall in the total number of overseas players in the league. FA chief executive Martin Glenn explained the proposal at Thursday's Premier League shareholders meeting, but West Ham United co-chairman David Gold told the Daily Telegraph there was no evidence to support the governing body's view.

"Why would you change it?" Gold asked. "We have to do some further investigation and make sure we have all of the details. There's no evidence so to speak to support (Glenn's) proposal.

"(The FA) are looking into it and we are looking into it. We are very supportive of English football... but we don't want to be doing things that isn't going to work. We have got to look at the options and look at the evidence."

West Ham have 16 overseas players in their 25-man squad for the 2018-19 season and the FA plan would see them need to reduce that number by four if the proposal came into effect.

Watford operations director Glyn Evans, whose club are at the current maximum limit of 17 overseas players, is also opposed to the idea.

(Source: Eurosport)

## Jaw-breaker Atonio handed six-month suspended sentence

France international Uini Atonio escaped a prison term for breaking his victim's jaw during a drunken brawl when he was handed a sixth-month suspended sentence on Friday.

Atonio, a New Zealand-born prop who plays for La Rochelle and the France national team, was among several players caught up in the fracas outside a nightclub in the west coast city in September 2017.

Although club-mate Matthieu Tanguy was "implicated" in the incident, according to presiding judge Candice Gratecos, "it was Uini Atonio who threw a very violent punch" which left his victim with a double fracture of the jaw and unable to work for 40 days.

The sentence will not be registered on the player's criminal record, meaning it cannot be consulted by authorities or future employers. Atonio has 31 caps for France after making his debut against Fiji in 2014 and was voted the best prop in France in 2014-2015. But the 28-year-old, named the "biggest" player at the 2015 World Cup, has previously courted controversy off the field.

In 2017 then France coach Guy Noves sidelined the big Kiwi -- who is of Samoan parentage -- from his touring squad in South Africa amid reports he and another player had run up a mini-bar bill of 200 euros.

(Source: AFP)

## Juventus apologize for China 'suicide' condolence message

Juventus have apologized after the Italian champions came under fire for posting a message on Chinese social media about the apparent suicide of a fan, which was later exposed as untrue.

The Serie A giants issued a message of condolence on China's Twitter-like Weibo in response to a post on the platform claiming that a fanatical supporter had committed suicide following a row online about striker Cristiano Ronaldo.

However, it transpired that Weibo user "Juventus changing room cleaning lady" -- whose real name has not been reported -- was alive and unharmed after Chinese media and police tracked her down.

The case has drawn about 40 million views and generated thousands of comments in recent days on Weibo, where many European football clubs and players connect with their Chinese followers. Juventus's post to its 725,000 followers mourning the supposed suicide triggered several days of criticism and shrill calls for the club to apologize.

(Source: AFP)

# Rooney says farewell as England beat United States

There was no farewell goal but plenty of pride and appreciation as Wayne Rooney made his 120th and final appearance for England in a 3-0 win over the United States in a friendly at Wembley on Thursday.

England's all-time top scorer Rooney came on as a 58th-minute substitute, to roars from the crowd, with the team 2-0 up thanks to excellent first-half strikes from Jesse Lingard and Trent Alexander-Arnold with his first goal for his country.

The game, played in front of a well-below capacity crowd of 68,155, had been billed as a tribute match to Rooney and he was given a guard of honour by both sets of players and received a presentation from the Football Association before kick-off.

Rooney retired from England duty in August, 2017 but the FA decided to turn the friendly into a tribute game for the Liverpool-born player.

The 33-year-old former Manchester United and Everton forward, who now plays in the U.S. for Major League Soccer team D.C. United, did not have a major impact on the game but forced goalkeeper Brad Guzan into a save in stoppage time.

A 54th goal for England would have been the perfect way to bow out but it was typical of Rooney's modest approach to the match that he never tried to create chances for himself, instead showcasing, for a final time at Wembley, his passing ability.

"Tonight was great, a great way to finish my international career, I thought the lads played great. Unfortunately I couldn't get a goal but I'll remember it for a long time," Rooney said. "I've had my time, I can sit back and watch them now and it's my opinion that England are in very safe hands from what I've seen this week".



Callum Wilson, the Bournemouth striker making his England debut, made it 3-0 in the 77th minute to complete a fine night for the debut starters.

### ■ IMPRESSIVE SANCHEZ

Jadon Sancho, the 18-year-old Borussia Dortmund winger, was impressive in his first start, setting up Alexander-Arnold with a well-timed weighted pass for the Liverpool full-back, who drilled home with a fine low shot.

Lingard, one of the few England regulars

to start, put in a good performance and his 25th minute goal, a perfect curling shot into the top corner, was a carbon copy of his strike against Panama at this year's World Cup.

England, who face Croatia in a winner-takes-all shootout in the Nations League at Wembley on Sunday, rested a number of regular starters such as striker Harry Kane.

England can top Group 1 in League A with a victory over the Croatians that would take them above Spain into top spot and secure a place in the four-team final tournament next

June. England manager Gareth Southgate said he was pleased with his team's display and with the send-off for Rooney.

"From our point of view, we are talking about respecting the shirt and those who have gone before and all of the players did that this week. We gave Wayne a week that he deserved.

"It would have been perfect for him to score but we saw some moments of real quality from him."

(Source: Reuters)

## Referees plan to use rock, paper, scissors in support of official



Referees at some grassroots football matches are planning to use the rock, paper, scissors game at kick-off to show support for a suspended official.

They are angry at the decision to ban David McNamara after he used the same method in place of a coin toss.

McNamara accidentally left his coin in the dressing room before the televised WSL match between Manchester City and Reading on 26 October.

A coin toss to decide kick-offs is a requirement under the laws of the game.

One referee told BBC Sport why he would use rock, paper, scissors at the start of a junior match this weekend.

"I will be doing it to show support. It will probably serve as a light-hearted way to introduce myself to both captains," said the Derbyshire-based ref, who asked to remain anonymous.

"Others will do so as well but not admit it publicly for fear of reprimand.

"I'll have a coin just in case anyone is unhappy but I don't see it being an issue. Rock, paper, scissors is an equally fair way of doing things.

"The suspended ref has shown initiative and thought quickly on his feet. The whole thing is a bit ridiculous and massively out of proportion."

The BBC is aware of several others who, in protest at the Football Association's suspension of McNamara, plan to use RPS - as the rock, paper, scissors game is now being described among the referee community.

It is unclear how many officials at amateur matches will follow suit, with estimates ranging from dozens to hundreds.

Another referee pointed to the challenges they face and referred to Sunday's incident where Daniel Sweeney suffered a broken jaw when he was attacked following an amateur match in the Republic of Ireland.

"All current research shows a decline in the number of refs - I suspect because of the abuse and assaults they can suffer," he said.

"Yet here the FA is punishing a perfectly able and qualified ref for the most menial of things. Why would you want to take up the whistle?"

(Source: BBC)

## Fans slam Premier League boss' \$6.4M 'greedy golden handshake'



Outgoing Premier League executive chairman Richard Scudamore will receive a "golden handshake" worth £5 million (\$6.4M) despite strong opposition from the Football Supporters' Federation (FSF), the league has confirmed. Chelsea chairman Bruce Buck suggested top division clubs should contribute £250,000 each to the farewell bonus.

Buck chairs the league's audit and remuneration committee and was part of the search for Scudamore's successor, Susanna Dinnage. His idea was opposed by the FSF and reportedly by some clubs.

A Premier League statement, which said Scudamore would be retained in an advisory role, read: "The decision was made by the audit and remuneration committee and the non-executive directors, supported and endorsed by the clubs.

"The payments, which will eventually total £5 million, will be spread over the next three years." "It was agreed that it is crucial for the League's ongoing success that Richard's unique knowledge and experience remain available in an advisory capacity. The payments are in recognition of the outstanding work Richard has carried out."

The move has been condemned by several fan groups, with Liverpool's Spirit of Shankly describing it as "laughable," while sources told ESPN FC a number of clubs were initially against the idea.

In a statement released before the bonus was confirmed, umbrella group the FSF urged clubs not to contribute to a payment to Scudamore, who is leaving the Premier League after 19 years. "Premier League clubs have always told fan groups that budgets are planned in advance and there's not a surplus of cash lying around from their extremely lucrative TV deal," the organization said in a statement. "In the meantime, loyal football supporters continue to be inconvenienced by fixture changes to fit TV schedules, often losing out on travel costs or struggling to get to and from games in the first place.

"Now it appears clubs can stick their hands down the back of the sofa and find £250,000 at a moment's notice.

"Fans strongly oppose the 'golden handshake,' and we urge clubs not to make a decision which is hugely unpopular with supporters."

(Source: ESPN)

## Spain had 'unfair' loss to Croatia in UEFA Nations League - Luis Enrique

Spain coach Luis Enrique said football had been unfair to his side after Thursday's dramatic 3-2 defeat in Croatia left them in danger of failing to reach the UEFA Nations League finals.

The 2010 World Cup winners had to chase the game twice in the second half, with Dani Ceballos cancelling out Andrej Kramaric's opener and captain Sergio Ramos levelling from the penalty spot after Tin Jedvaj had made it 2-1 to the hosts.

Spain were left with virtually no time to respond, though, when left-back Jedvaj struck again in stoppage time.

"We created a lot of chances, some of them where it looked impossible that the ball would not go in, we hit the crossbar, and football has been unfair to us," Luis Enrique told a news conference.

"In their first goal we made a mistake, their second came from a set-piece and they were lucky at the end. In the second half we deserved a lot more, we certainly didn't deserve defeat but this is football and we need to accept it."

Spain have experienced a slump since thumping Croatia



6-0 in September and beating England in their Nations League opener.

Their place in the finals of the new competition now hangs in the balance, however, after losing 3-2 at home to England and defeat in Zagreb.

Spain still top Group 4 with six points after four games but to reach the final round they need England to draw with

Croatia in the group finale on Sunday.

Luis Enrique appeared resigned to his side not making it through, turning his attention to the qualifying campaign for Euro 2020.

"I would love to qualify for the final four, but our top objective is the European Championships," he said.

"We knew we were in a group with two of the best teams in the world but I'm not worried about my team. I can see areas we need to improve in, but I think today's result is completely unfair."

Croatia had taken one point from their previous two Nations League games after appearing to suffer a hangover from reaching the this year's World Cup final.

But Jedvaj's late winner now means victory at Wembley over England, who they beat 2-1 in the World Cup semifinals, would put them in the final phase.

"I am sure we have it in us to beat England," Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic said. "The best of this new-look team is yet to come."

(Source: Soccernet)



# Iran edge Trinidad and Tobago in friendly

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran national football team defeated Trinidad and Tobago 1-0 in a friendly match here at the Azadi Stadium on Thursday.

Iran edged past Trinidad and Tobago thanks to Karim Ansarifard's 50th minute strike.

Team Melli, the No. 1 team in Asia in FIFA world rankings, are preparing for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

Iran are pitted against Iraq, Yemen and Vietnam in Group D of the AFC Asian Cup.

Iran are also scheduled to play Venezuela in a friendly on Tuesday and Quieroz will be aiming for another win as the Central Asians continue with their rich vein of form stretching back to the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia.

Although their Russia 2018 campaign ended in the group stage, Iran showed quality as they opened their campaign with a 1-0 win over Morocco before losing to Spain by the same scoreline.

They held European champions Portugal 1-1 in their final match to only just miss out on a place in the Round of 16.

In the buildup to the AFC Asian Cup, which Iran will be seeking to win for the fourth time but first since 1976, they defeated Uzbekistan 1-0 and Bolivia 2-1 before playing Trinidad & Tobago on Thursday.

Iran will open their AFC Asian Cup campaign against Yemen on January 7 before playing Vietnam (January 12) and Iraq on January 16.



## Iranian athletes win four medals at 2018 Lifesaving World C'ships

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iranian representatives claimed four medals in Day 1 of the 2018 Lifesaving World Championships underway in South Australian shores.

The event has brought more than 6000 participants from 44 countries from Nov. 16 to Dec. 2 at Glenelg Beach and the world-class South Australian Aquatic and Leisure Centre in Adelaide.

The Iranian team consists of Ilkhan Nouri, Mohammad

Nazeri, Soheil Ashtiani and Hamid Ghodsinejad beat the Italian team to win 4x50m Obstacle Relay gold medal.

Iranian swimmers also won three medals in individual section.

Soheil Ashtiani seized a gold medal in the 200m Obstacle Swim with a clock of 02:07:85.

Ghodsinejad won the silver in the discipline with a time of 02:15:15 and the bronze medal went to Nazeri who clocked 02:17:44.



## Alireza Jahanbakhsh one to watch at AFC Asian Cup

With right-sided midfielder Alireza Jahanbakhsh, who finished as top scorer in the Netherlands' Eredivisie with AZ Alkmaar, Team Melli possess a star with the potential to illuminate the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019.

The Qazvin-native has long been a favorite of Carlos Queiroz, who took the then 20-year-old to the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil, where, as the youngest player in Team Melli's squad, he came off the bench in all three of his country's group stage matches.

A year later he was part of the squad that reached the knockout rounds of the AFC Asian Cup in Australia, where he scored from the spot in the quarter-final defeat to neighbors Iraq — a game regarded as



one of the competition's all-time classics.

Jahanbakhsh was a key component in the national team set-up and helped Team Melli advance to the 2018 World Cup following a highly impressive unbeaten campaign.

Twenty-one for AZ Alkmaar saw him finish as the Erevisie's leading scorer in the 2017-18 campaign, while he was also third in the assists charts.

With goals, assists and industry it was unsurprising that Europe's bigger leagues took notice, and it was English Premier League side Brighton & Hove Albion who snapped him up for a club record fee in July 2018.

With Sardar Azmoun, Karim Ansarifard, Mehdi Taremi and, of course, Ja-

hanbakhsh, Team Melli has a wealth of talent going forward and, as one of the tournament favorites, many will hope it set out to attack in the UAE.

Jahanbakhsh has yet to transfer his goal scoring feats from club to country but all eyes will be on him come Iran's opening game against Yemen in Abu Dhabi, and Iranian fans will be expecting both Jahanbakhsh and Azmoun, in particular, to realize their potential on the Continental stage.

Forty-two years have passed since Team Melli last won the AFC Asian Cup — too long for such a giant of the Asian game — and if that drought is to end, the amiable midfielder will need to be at his best.

(Source: the-afc)

## Four Iranian players at Fans' AFC Asian Cup XI

After weeks of voting to choose your best ever AFC Asian Cup XI, it is time to announce the winners.

Over the years, the AFC Asian Cup has produced some brilliant footballers and coaches. So, we gave fans the opportunity to vote for who they considered as the greatest 11 players in the competition's history.

After 2.6 million votes on the-AFC.com over the past few weeks, it is now time to announce the players who made the final XI alongside six substitutes who narrowly missed out on a starting XI place.

### Coach:

#### ● Heshmat Mohajerani

The last Team Melli coach to win the AFC Asian Cup, leading the IR Iran to win the title in 1976. Mohajerani cemented his status as an all-time great by taking the team into their first ever FIFA World Cup two years later. His impact was not limited to his home country, as he led the UAE to their AFC Asian Cup debut.

### Goalkeeper:

#### ● Nasser Hejazi (Overall Vote Winner)

The Iconic Iranian goalkeeper led his country to win back-to-back AFC Asian Cup titles in 1972 and 1976. He was also their number one in the 1972 Olympic Games and was a key member of the first Team Melli squad to qualify to the FIFA World Cup in 1978.

At club level, Hejazi led Esteghlal (then known as Taj) to become the first Iranian side to win the Asian Club Championship in 1970.

#### ● Substitute: Noor Sabri

Iraq's goalkeeper for 16 years, Sabri was a member of the Lions of Mesopotamia's golden generation that finished fourth in the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens and went on to become AFC Asian Cup champions three years later.

### Defenders

#### ● Mehdi Mahdavia (Overall Vote Winner)

Team Melli's fourth most capped player with 110 appearances, Mahdavia appeared in two FIFA World Cups and helped IR Iran reach the semi-finals of the AFC Asian Cup in 1996 and 2004. He spent the majority of his club career playing in Germany, where he was most synonymous with Hamburg.

#### ● Saleh Al Nuaimah

The only captain in the history of the AFC Asian Cup to lift back-to-back trophies, Al Nuaimah won the title with Saudi Arabia in 1984 and 1988, scoring the pen-



alty shootouts in the 1984 semi-finals and in the 1988 final. He retired in 1990 having represented the Green Falcons 99 times.

#### ● Zheng Zhi

China PR's fourth most capped player with 102 appearances, and one of only two Chinese players to have ever been named AFC Player of the Year, winning the award in 2013. Zheng helped his country reach the 2004 AFC Asian Cup final on home soil, while being named in the Team of the Tournament.

### Substitutes:

#### ● Jamal Mubarak

Mubarak was named in the 2004 AFC Asian Cup Team of the Tournament as Kuwait reached the quarter-finals. He was also part of the side that reached the semi-finals four years earlier.

#### ● Soh Chin Aun

With 114 caps to his name, Soh led Malaysia to their only ever appearance in the Olympic Games and was named in the 1980 AFC Asian Cup Team of the Tournament.

### Midfielders

#### ● Ali Karimi (Overall Vote Winner)

The 2004 AFC Asian Cup joint top scorer and Asian Player of the Year in the same year, Ali Karimi helped IR Iran finish fourth in that edition of the competition, and is widely recognised as one of the best Iranian players of all time.

#### ● Nashat Akram

Another member of Iraq's golden generation of the mid 2000s, Akram become an Asian champion at the U-19 level in 2000 before narrowly missing out on an Olympic medal, as the Lions of Mesopotamia finished fourth in the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. He was named in the Team of the Tournament in Iraq's historic 2007 AFC Asian Cup winning campaign.

#### ● Shao Jiayi

The midfielder was named in the 2004 AFC Asian Cup as China PR reached the semi-finals for the first time in their history, scoring three goals in the competition. He was also a key player in the team that reached the 2002 FIFA World Cup.

### Server Djeparov

Two-time Asian Player of the Year, Djeparov led Uzbekistan to the AFC Asian Cup semi-finals for the first time in 2011, scoring two and assisting two more. The winger played club football across the continent, representing clubs in Korea Republic, Saudi Arabia, IR Iran as well as Uzbekistan.

### Keisuke Honda

One of the most globally recognisable Asian players, Honda was the tournament's MVP as Japan lifted the AFC Asian Cup trophy in 2011. Honda is the only Japanese player to score in three World Cups.

### Substitutes:

#### ● Fahd Al Harifi

Al Harifi scored the winning penalty in the 1988 AFC Asian Cup final. Four years later, he was the tournament's top goalscorer with four goals as Saudi Arabia finished runners-up.

#### ● Koo Ja-cheol

Koo was the 2011 AFC Asian Cup top scorer as Korea Republic finished third. He played and score in the 2012 Olympic Games and the 2014 FIFA World Cup.

### Forwards:

#### ● Ali Daei (Overall Vote Winner)

The AFC Asian Cup's all-time top goal scorer, Daei was the top scorer in 1996 with eight goals, and he went on to score in the 2000 and 2004 editions. The IR Iran legend bagged 109 goals in 149 caps as the highest scoring player in international football.

#### ● Yasser Al Qahtani

The 2007 AFC Asian Cup top scorer helped Saudi Arabia reach the final with his four goals, before the Green Falcons lost to Iraq. Al Qahtani's performances won him that year's Asian Player of the Year.

### Substitute:

#### ● Younis Mahmoud

The Iraq icon scored in four AFC Asian Cup editions; 2004, 2007, 2011 and 2015, but his best performances came in the title-winning campaign of 2007 where he was both the joint top scorer and MVP of the tournament.

(Source: the-afc)

## Iran a well-coached football team, Trinidad coach says

Trinidad and Tobago football team coach Den-nis Lawrence says they played an experienced Iran team.

Iran defeated the Caribbean team in Tehran's Azadi Stadium in a friendly match on Thursday.

Nottingham Forest striker Karim Ansarifard was on target in the 50th minute.



Team Melli is preparing for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

"First, I would you like to con-grat-u-late the Iran-ian team on the vic-to-ry. It was a com-pet-i-tive game, ex-act-ly the type of game we were ex-pect-ing," said Lawrence. "Iran is a very experienced team and both teams ben-e-fit-ted from the ex-er-cise."

In the first half, Iran dom-i-nat-ed ball pos-ses-sion and al-most took the lead in the 32nd minute but Ansar-i-fard missed from the penal-ty spot.

"The Iran-ian team is well coached. They know what they are do-ing but at the same time we came pre-pared and it was not go-ing to be easy for them," said Lawrence. "I felt in the first half we allowed Iran to have too much pos-ses-sion of the foot-ball and we tried to cor-rect it in the sec-ond half, which we did."

On the re-sump-tion, Iran kept at-tack-ing and was re-ward-ed five min-utes in-to the sec-ond half with Ansar-i-fard get-ting one past T&T goal-keep-er Mar-vin Phillip.

"There wasn't many chances for us but we did have a few and we should have done bet-ter," said Lawrence, who made three changes in the sec-ond half.

Karl Muck-ette re-placed de-fend-er Ataullah Guer-ra in the 62nd minute while Jo-evin Jones was sub-sti-tut-ed in 72nd minute. In the fi-nal eight min-utes, Lawrence opt-ed to use Isa-iah Lee in place of Lester Pelti-er.

(Source: Guardian.co.tt)

## Alireza Mansourian appointed Zob Ahan coach

**TASNIM** — Former Esteghlal coach Alireza Mansourian was named the new coach of Zob Ahan football team on Thursday.

Mansourian replaced Omid Namazi, who parted company with the Isfahan-based football team by mutual consent Wednesday night.

Under coaching of Namazi, Zob Ahan earned two wins, five draws and suffered four loses.

Zob Ahan sit 11th in Iran's 16-team league, 15 points adrift of leaders Padideh.

Mansourian was without a team since leaving Esteghlal in September 2017.

The 47-year-old started his coaching career in 2009 taking charge of Pas Hamedan.

Mansourian has also coached Naft Tehran and Esteghlal in Iran football league.

## Pushovers? Swiss win shows Qatar is in a 'good way' ahead of 2022

For those who thought Qatar would at the very best make up the numbers at its own World Cup in 2022, this week's eye-catching victory over Switzerland will have come as a big surprise.

It may only have been a friendly, but undeniably the 1-0 win -- in Lugano, Switzerland -- was a landmark and symbolic result in many ways for the Qatari team.

It was the first time Qatar had beaten a European team in their own country.

Switzerland, who reached the last 16 of the 2014 World Cup and are currently eighth in FIFA's rankings, are also the highest-ranked side ever beaten by Al-Annabi (the maroons), ranked 88 places lower.

And for good measure the 86th-minute winner was scored by Akram Afif, the first Qatari to play in Spain's La Liga and a product of Aspire Academy, an expensively-built Doha training center which seeks to hothouse local talent.

The victory, almost four years to the day before the 2022 World Cup begins, was perhaps the first sign that Qatar is catching up with more established football powers.

"We are in a good way," Xavi Hernandez, who earned 133 caps and a World Cup winners' medal with Spain, told AFP referring to Qatar, where he now plays.

"We have many talented players and it means that [coach] Felix Sanchez is doing a really good job.

"We must keep going like that. It's a big win, of course."

Sanchez said the result would make the country "very proud".

While much of the attention on the 2022 World Cup has focused on off-field matters -- corruption allegations, human rights, regional politics -- there has also been deep concern about how the host country will perform on the pitch.

Qualification for Russia ended in failure as Qatar finished bottom of six in their final group stage.

They had more coaches (three) than victories (two) during this final stretch of 10 games, and were beaten by, among others, a homeless Syria team.

They limped out of the World Cup at the expensively-refurbished Khalifa Stadium, one of the 2022 venues, beaten by an abject Chinese side.

The symbolism was apparent even to the few fans who bothered to turn up that night.

It confirmed Qatar would become the first country to host a World Cup without ever before playing in a finals since Italy way back in 1934.

Critics said elimination emphasized the country's lack of footballing pedigree and predicted they would become the first host nation not to win a game at their own World Cup.

(Source: AFP)



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## Resistance festival to screen films in Beirut

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** – The 15th International Resistance Film Festival (IRFF) plans to screen movies in Beirut in a 4-day program titled “Resistance Film Week”, the organizers announced on Friday.

The program has been arranged based on an agreement signed between the Al-Risalat Institute located in the Lebanese capital and the festival.

“The Emperor of Hell”, Parviz Sheikhtadi’s film on the Arab muftis’ role in the rise of the extremism of ISIS, is a highlight of the program.

Acclaimed movies such as “The Lost Strait” by Bahram Tavakkoli, “The Midday Event” by Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian and “The Underwater Cypress” by Mohammad-Ali Bashe-Ahangar, will be screened during the program, which will open on December 3.

Members of the films’ crews will attend the review sessions, which will be organized on the sidelines of the program.

The Resistance festival is scheduled to take place in Tehran from November 26 to December 1.

## WHAT’S IN ART GALLERIES

### Painting

■ An exhibition of 20 paintings on crows by 20 artists is currently underway at Mojdeh Gallery.

The exhibition will be running until November 23 at the gallery located at No. 27, 18th Alley off North Allameh Blvd. in the Saadatabad neighborhood.

■ Shadi Rahmati, Bahar Afshari, Farzaneh Salehi and Arezu Sarvarpur are hanging their latest paintings in an exhibition at Ehsan Gallery.

The exhibition runs until November 21 at the gallery located at No. 22, East 14th St. in the Ajudanah neighborhood.

■ Adnan Mosallai is showcasing his latest painting collection, “The Messages of the Fish”, in an exhibition at Shokuh Gallery.

The collection will be on view until November 21 at the gallery located at 19 Amir Nuri Alley, North Salimi St. near Andarzgu Blvd.

■ Ashian-e Naqsh-o-Mehr Gallery is displaying paintings by Nilufar Mozaffari in an exhibition titled “Divine Thoughts”.

The exhibition will run until November 21 at the gallery which can be found at 4 Golmohammadi close to 18th St. off Bokharest St.

■ An exhibition of paintings by Morteza Ashtiani is currently underway at Atbin Gallery.

The exhibit named “Beyond Endurance” will run until November 27 at the gallery located at 42 Khakzad Alley, Vali-e Asr Ave. near the Parkway Intersection.

### Sculpture

■ Abdolnasser Givqassab is displaying his latest series “Existence” in an exhibition at Aria Gallery.

The exhibit will run until November 27 at the gallery located at No. 10 Zarrin Alley, near Beheshti St., Vali-e Asr Ave.

■ An exhibition of sculptures titled “Iron Imaginations” by Mohammadreza Ghanimat is currently underway at Pol Gallery.

The exhibition will run until November 23 at the gallery that can be found at 34 Ferdowsi Alley off Dabestan St. near Seyyed Khandan Bridge.

### Calligraphic painting

■ A large group of artists, including Maryam Nuri, Shaqayeq Mirqobad, Shiva Moshfeq, Fatemeh Kashef and Kimia Atefi, is displaying their latest calligraphic paintings in an exhibition at Hepta Gallery.

The exhibition titled “The Scribbled Syllables” will continue until November 28 at the gallery located at 3 Nikushahr Dead End, Iranshahr St., Karim Khan Ave.

### Ceramics

■ Ceramic plates by Reza Hedyat are currently on display in an exhibition entitled “The Sixth Incident” at Basmeh Gallery.

The exhibit runs until November 30 at the gallery located at Block A, Park Prince Bldg., Hakim-Azam St., North Shiraz St.



This combination photo shows designs and buildings from Iran competing in the World Architecture Festival in Amsterdam.

# Iranian designs receive nominations at World Architecture Festival in Amsterdam

## A R T d e s k

**TEHRAN** – A large number of designs from Iran have been nominated for awards at the World Architecture Festival in Amsterdam, which will be held from November 28 to 30.

The festival will be organized in two main categories: Future Projects and Completed Buildings, the organizers have announced.

The Chitar Commercial Bridge in Tehran by Caat Studio, the Floating City in Salmanshahr by Kamran Heirati Architects and the Tehran World Trade Center by Fluid Motion Architects have been shortlisted for an

award in the Commercial Mixed-Use section of the Future Project category.

In the Competition Entries - Future Project, the Sadra Civic Center in the new town of Sadra by Next Office received a nomination. Next Office will also be competing in the House - Future Project section for the Guyim Vault House in Shiraz and in the Villa - Completed Buildings category for the Safadasht Dual in Safadasht.

The Iranian nominees in the Office - Future Project are the Turoboseal Tech Headquarters in Tehran by New Wave Architecture and

the Tehran Trade Towers by Tabanlioglu Architects.

Niavaran residential in Tehran by Opia is Iran’s sole nominee in the Residential - Future Project section.

Fluid Motion Architects also won two nominations in the Mixed Use and the Religion - Completed Buildings categories for Ava Center and the Vali-e Asr Mosque in Tehran respectively.

White Gallery in Tehran by the Shift Process Practice Company will be competing for an award in the Culture - Completed

Buildings section.

Saba Residence in Tehran by TDC Office was nominated in the Housing, Small Scale category and System Warehouse in Karaj by Mehran Khoshru is on the shortlist for an award in the Production Energy and Recycling - Completed Buildings.

In the School - Completed Buildings the Nur-e Mobin School in Bastam by the Fundamental Experience of Architecture Studio received a nomination.

Winners will be announced on November 30.

## Iranian, Russian culture ministers meet in St. Petersburg

## C U L T U R E d e s k

**TEHRAN** – The Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, met his Russian counterpart Vladimir Medinsky in St. Petersburg on Thursday.

Salehi expressed his thanks over the support from the Russian Culture Ministry for organizing an Iranian cultural week in Russia, and said that Iran is ready to help the country organize a Russian cultural festival in Iran, the Persian service of IRNA reported on Thursday.

He also stressed the need to organize mutual book fairs in Russia and Iran.

“Organizing the book fairs complement the cultural festivals, and are ways to help people of both countries learn more about each other,” he said.

Salehi is in Russia to attend the 7th St. Petersburg Inter-



Russian Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky (L) and his Iranian counterpart, Abbas Salehi (2nd L) meet in St. Petersburg, Russia on November 15, 2018. (IRNA)

national Cultural Forum, which opened on Thursday and will run through Saturday.

“St. Petersburg is familiar to the Iranian cultural community, and this trip will undoubtedly leave numerous impressive images of the city in our minds,” he noted.

Medinsky thanked Salehi for his attendance at the St. Petersburg forum and announced Russia’s readiness to expand cultural relations with Iran.

The forum is organized by the government of St. Petersburg with the support of Russia’s Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Several thousand cultural experts, actors, filmmakers, musicians, public figures, representatives of government and business, and academics from all over the world are attending the forum.

## Apple partners with Oscar-winning movie studio A24 for feature films

**SAN FRANCISCO (Reuters)** — Apple Inc (AAPL.O) has inked a multi-year deal with A24, the studio behind Oscar-winning projects “Moonlight” and “Amy”, a source familiar with the plans told Reuters, as the iPhone maker pushes deeper into original content and movies.

Apple, which had allocated an initial \$1 billion for programming, earlier inked deals with Hollywood celebrities including Oprah Winfrey and ordered two seasons of a series starring Reese Witherspoon and Jennifer Aniston to bring in more content for its users.

Other projects Apple had announced include a remake of Steven Spielberg’s 1980s science fiction anthology series “Amazing Stories”, based on Isaac Asimov’s influential “Foundation” science fiction novels, and a drama from “La La Land” movie director Damien Chazelle.

New York-based A24’s Academy Award nominations include “Lady



The Apple Inc. logo is shown outside the company's 2016 Worldwide Developers Conference in San Francisco, California, U.S. June 13, 2016. (Reuters/Stephen Lam)

Bird” and “Room”.

The deal comes at a time when top online streaming service providers including Netflix Inc (NFLX.O), Amazon.com Inc’s (AMZN.O) Prime Video and Time Warner Inc’s TWX.N HBO are spending billions to create original content.

## “Spinal Tap” creators, Vivendi to mediate \$400 million U.S. fraud lawsuit

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — The creators of “This Is Spinal Tap” have agreed to put their fraud lawsuit against Vivendi SA on hold while a mediator tries to resolve their \$400 million case over the 1984 cult film.

In a court filing on Tuesday, lawyers for Vivendi and for the plaintiffs Christopher Guest, Michael McKean, Rob Reiner and Harry Shearer said they have chosen a mediator who will “attempt to resolve or narrow” the lawsuit.

A mediation was scheduled for March 11, 2019, the earliest date everyone could agree on, and the case against Paris-based Vivendi was stayed until April 1, 2019.

The filing followed an Aug. 28 ruling by U.S. District Judge Dolly Gee in Los Angeles that the plaintiffs could try to show that Vivendi’s StudioCanal unit deprived them of a “fair return” from “Spinal Tap”, its music and its merchandise by breaching a 1982 agreement to finance and produce



A man walks past the main entrance of the entertainment-to-telecoms conglomerate Vivendi's headquarters in Paris July 23, 2013. (Reuters/Christian Hartmann)

the film.

Vivendi has controlled “Spinal Tap” rights for nearly three decades. The plaintiffs have said it has estimated their share of “Spinal Tap” income as just \$81 from merchandising between 1984 and 2016, and \$98 from music sales between 1989 and 2016.

## Carrie, Chris and Keith steal the show at the Country Music Awards

**NASHVILLE (Reuters)** — Chris Stapleton was the big winner but Carrie Underwood and her unborn baby stole the limelight at the Country Music Association (CMA) awards on Wednesday.

A heavily pregnant Underwood, one of country music’s biggest celebrities, chose the live televised show in Nashville to reveal for the first time that the second child she is expecting is a boy.

Underwood, who co-hosted the show with singer Brad Paisley, won female vocalist of the year for the fifth time and brought the house down with an emotional performance of her single about bringing people together, “Love Wins”.

“Thank you God. I have been blessed with so much in my life,” Underwood said.

Stapleton won three awards - male vocalist of the year, single and song of the year for “Broken Halos.”

But in a surprise result, he lost the night’s biggest prize - entertainer of the year - to Keith Urban, the former “American Idol” judge and husband of actress Nicole Kidman.

“I am shocked beyond shocked,” a tearful Urban said. “I feel very grateful that I get to do what I do. God bless country music.”

Garth Brooks opened the show with a minute of silence



Chris Stapleton speaks after being honored as male vocalist of the year at the 52nd Country Music Association (CMA) awards in Nashville on November 16, 2018. (Reuters/Harrison Mcclary)

for the 12 people shot dead last week at a bar in Southern California that was popular for country line dancing. The gunman, a former U.S. Marine, died of an apparently self-

inflicted gunshot.

“Tonight, let’s celebrate their lives,” Brooks said. “Let the music unite us with love in their enduring memory.”

On a male-dominated night, Kacey Musgraves, 30, won her first big CMA prize, taking home album of the year for “Golden Hour”. No women were among the five nominees this year for entertainer of the year.

“2018 has been a huge year for men in country music,” quipped Paisley as he opened the three-hour show with Underwood.

“Finally!” Underwood retorted.

The oldest and youngest stars were among the most-talked about performers.

Veteran bluegrass musician Ricky Skaggs, 64, got an extended showcase, playing with Paisley and Urban, while Brooks, a country staple for 30 years, debuted an acoustic ballad, “Stronger Than Me”, dedicated to his wife, Trisha Yearwood. On the younger end, Kelsea Ballerini, 25, performed her defiant dance-pop ode to female empowerment, “Miss Me More”.

Other winners on Wednesday included Old Dominion, Brothers Osborne, Thomas Rhett, and best new artist Luke Combs.