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Threat of war and famine on Iran: False imagination

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ICOPMAS 2018 to host 36 countries in late Nov.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Representatives from 36 countries will participate in Iran's 13rd Biennial International Conference on Coasts, Ports and Marine Structures (ICOPMAS 2018) which will be held at Olympic Hotel in Tehran from November 26 to 28.

In a press conference held at the place of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) on Tuesday on details of the inter-

national event, Mohammadreza Allahyar, the deputy head of PMO for engineering and development of infrastructure, said the conference will provide the ground for strengthening ties between Iranian and foreign companies, IRIB reported.

The official also announced that an exhibition of maritime structures and technology will be held on the sidelines of the conference. **→4**

'Sales of nanotech products to hit \$175m'

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — It is predicted that 30 billion rials (about \$175 million) of nanotechnology products will be sold by the end of the current Iranian calendar year 1397 (March 20, 2019), an official with Iran Nanotechnology Innovation Council announced on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

Reza Asadifar said that nanotechnology

products were exported to 50 countries over the Iranian calendar years 1394 to 1396 (2015-2017).

He made the remarks at the Nanotechnology Economy Forum, which was held on November 19 and 20 in Tehran.

"The forum provided an opportunity that the firms announce their technological demands to academics and innovative companies," he said. **→10**

Assad sends first public message to Jordanian King

Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad sent his first public message to Jordanian King Abdullah II and to the Jordanian people, stressing that Jordan and Syria are one people.

MP (Member of Parliament) Awad Al Zawaida said in a statement that the Syrian President called for strengthening bilateral ties to what they used to be, and that Syria

is ready to overcome all difficulties.

Zawaida described the meeting of the parliamentary delegation with the Syrian President as smooth and light.

He stressed that Assad was understanding and responsive in all that which serves both countries, and that all the demands made by the delegation were catered to by the Syrian side. **→13**

EDITORIAL
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FATF member countries, the very center of money laundering

While Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif asks for joining FATF (The Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering), it is obvious that the member countries of this organization are already actively engaged in money laundering, Mehr news agency reported.

The foreign minister claimed that large amounts of money are laundered in Iran, but according to official sources 90 percent of European banks and Canada are systematically engaged in money laundering.

He further claimed that the opponents of joining FATF are against financial transparency and benefit from money laundering profits which amounts to billions and joining FATF would prevent such transactions.

It seems that the term "financial transparency" has turned into a pretext for FATF defenders to silence critics and justify their claims.

The important question here is "is FATF a reliable organization in combating money laundering and do its members have total financial transparency?"

By looking at the background of FATF member countries, it is revealed that money laundering is still closely interwoven with their financial and banking systems and this international organization has failed to prevent money laundering.

Money laundering statistics in FATF member countries

Money laundering happens when money resulted from illegal activities enter the clean financial or banking system of a country; this phenomenon has now turned into a major problem in international financial and banking systems.

European Union member countries and North American countries are the major members of FATF, so it is expected that these countries comply perfectly with rules set against money laundering; however, in recent months, several international news agencies have reported of these countries' extensive engagement in money laundering. **→7**

'Transatlantic differences justify European efforts to become more autonomous'

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
 By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Marc Finaud, the former French Foreign Ministry spokesman, says that "the reasons why France and Germany saw an interest in developing further EU strategic autonomy were related to the apparent reduced American interest in transatlantic solidarity, and the prospect of the United Kingdom leaving the EU, because the UK was one of the two leading military powers in Europe but always opposed any progress towards a 'European army'."

The former Senior Resident Fellow at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) adds "establishing a 'real European army' can only be a long-term goal, even if it has



been made easier with Brexit."

Senior member of Geneva Centre for Security Policy also says that "transatlantic differences indeed weaken the Alliance and justify European efforts to become more autonomous."

Following is the full text of the interview:

The idea of forming a joint European army is not a new idea, but in recent days, with the comments of Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel and the reaction of Trump has taken a new dimension. What are the reasons for the progress of this project by countries such as France and Germany?

A: Indeed this idea dates back to the Cold War and the failed attempt of the European Community of Defense in 1952 that paved the way for the establishment of the European Union and the integration of West Germany in NATO. Over the years, the European Union did develop its own common and security policy that included joint military capacities and coordination that were distinct from NATO's and are part of the 2007 Lisbon Treaty. **→7**

Gaza expects new developments, Netanyahu's possible adventure

By Farzad Farhadi

TEHRAN — Following the short war between Israel defense forces (IDF) and Palestinian resistance group, the question is what is awaiting Gaza particularly after the defeat of the Zionists.

Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett and Jewish Home leader, speaking at the Knesset in Al-Quds recently, has slammed Netanyahu saying, "Israel has stopped winning and Netanyahu won't quit government. Israel is facing a security confidence crisis not political crisis. There are enemies, but not an enemy that worries me. The source of the crisis is not its external enemies, but is the bad internal situation. Israel has not won as that was the case in the Second Lebanon War (33-day war against Lebanon) in 2006, and it was frustration, disunity and lack of spirit for

Israel. Hamas and Hezbollah have become more courageous, because they believe that we are afraid of confronting them. The Israeli ship is not going the right way."

Tsizka Fogel, an Israeli general and the former commander of the southern Israeli army told Moariv, "The Middle East is witnessing new enemies like Hezbollah in the north and Hamas in the south of Israel. Some 50 years ago, in June 1967, Israel fought with three Arab states, and defeated them all, but today, we cannot win the battle against Hamas. Israel's security condition today is an insult to the October 1973 war, because it seems that politicians do not care about the future of Israel and are engaged in political games, and even Benjamin Netanyahu's delivers an unacceptable illusion story to us.

Additionally, some other Zionist authorities have, too, spoken of defeat against Hamas. What remains to be seen is that after the recent grand victory of Palestinian resistance group and failure of Israeli security operation when Hamas fired 500 rockets to Israeli settlements, what the future holds for the Gazans. Will there be another conflict as Netanyahu is going to bring back glory to its worn down military among the Zionists?

A senior Hamas official doesn't see the likelihood of that and in an interview with Raialyoum newspaper said, "A military attack and retaliation against the Gaza Strip is very unlikely because Israeli military commanders have realized that another war will take a heavy toll on them, be it emotionally, financially or human life. **→7**



© Ministry of Defence

Mine-resistant armored vehicle unveiled

TEHRAN — A mine-resistant armored military vehicle dubbed Toufan (storm) was unveiled on Tuesday and delivered to the IRGC Ground Forces.

The armored vehicle, manufactured by the Defense Industries Organization (DIO), was unveiled in a ceremony attended by Defense Minister Amir Hatami, Mehr reported.

Speaking at the ceremony, Hatami described Toufan as a mine-resistant, ambush-protected 4x4 military vehicle designed to have high mobility and capable to pass through water canals with 1.5m depth, as well as vertical obstacles as high as 50cm.

He added that Toufan is capable of carrying ten passengers and can be equipped with semi-heavy weapons.

PERSPECTIVE
M.A.Saki
 Deputy editor-in-chief

Pompeo and Bolton want to torture Iranian nation

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and his special representative for Iran Brian Hook have claimed that humanitarian supplies such as food and medicine are exempt from sanctions against Iran.

If it were so, there must not have been shortage of medicine in Iran and some people should not have been worriedly going from one pharmacy to another to find medicine for their patients, especially those suffering from malicious diseases such as cancer.

It is clear that such remarks are nonsensical and deceitful.

While the Trump administration has imposed financial sanctions on Iran and threatened to punish banks that do business with the country, the channels for transferring money, even for buying medicine, are being blocked.

"When you want to transfer money, the bank does not ask whether it goes for food or other items — that is why sanctions always hit food and medicine," Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told The Guardian on Monday.

The people in Iran are not convinced why sanctions have been returned. In fact, they are surprised. They say we signed a pact (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) with the U.S. and other countries to end the sanctions. They ask what has happened that we are again facing shortage of medicine and other commodities. They say if the Trump administration is not happy with Iranian officials why it creates problems for us.

They are even questioning the competence and efficiency of the United Nations, asking if the UN is not able to deter the return of sanctions then what its use is!

These cold-hearted sanctions are affecting the livelihood and health of the people. The only chance is that Iran itself is an important pharmaceutical manufacturer, otherwise the sanctions would have badly affected the medicinal market. Yet the country must be able to import some raw materials to produce pharmaceuticals.

In fact, Pompeo and John Bolton, another violent-minded person who acts as the national security advisor to Donald Trump, are working relentlessly to torture the Iranian nation, an absolute majority of whom do not care about politics and are mostly concerned about their daily lives. **→13**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Europe undecided who should host SPV, Zarif says

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said European countries are facing a challenge over determining a host country for Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), emphasizing that Iran would decide on its options based on its national interests.

"Actually some countries which were proposed as host didn't accept it and negotiations for determining the host for SPV still continue," Tasnim on Tuesday quoted Zarif as saying.

"The European Union and other remaining parties to the nuclear deal know that continuation of the current situation is impossible without providing Iran with the deal's economic benefits," he added.



Zaghari convicted in a competent court: Qassemi

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Ghassemlou said on Tuesday that the issue of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian woman, was brought up by the British side during UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt's visit to Tehran, to which Tehran responded that her imprisonment is not political.

The Iranian authorities explained to the British side that she was found guilty in a competent court and emphasized that Iran's Judiciary is independent and acts according to the laws of the Islamic Republic, Mehr quoted Qassemi as saying.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe, 38, has been imprisoned in Iran for 2 years on charges of trying to orchestrate a soft overthrow of the Islamic Republic.



Zarif, Kadkhodaei, Joneydi discuss CFT bill

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy hosted a meeting attended by the country's top officials on Monday night on the CFT bill, chairman of the committee said on Tuesday.

The meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Vice President for Legal Affairs Layla Joneydi and Guardian Council spokesman Abbasali Kadkhodaei as well as a delegate from the Expediency Council, Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh told ISNA.

He further explained that the meeting aimed to fix the faults that the Guardian Council had found in the bill, and it showed that "we can reach a conclusion."



Aref, Jahangiri will run for president in 2021: reformist MP

POLITICS TEHRAN — Reformist MP Elias Hazrati has said Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri and Mohammad Reza Aref, chairman of the pro-reform Hope faction in the parliament, will run for the post of president in 2021.

"As far as I know, Mr. Aref is determined to run in the 1400 (2021) election; Mr. Jahangiri will naturally run as well," Hazrati said in an interview with Tasnim published on Tuesday.

Aref was a candidate in the 2013 presidential election but withdrew his candidacy upon an advice by Mohammad Khatami who acted as his right-hand man from 2001-2005. Jahangiri ran in 2017, but he withdrew his candidacy in favor of President Rouhani, who was seeking re-election.



Denmark sending ambassador back to Tehran

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's Ambassador to Copenhagen Morteza Moradian said on Tuesday that the Danish Ambassador to Tehran Danny Annan will return to Tehran on Wednesday, ILNA reported.

"Today I talked briefly with Danny Annan, the Danish ambassador to Tehran. He told me that he will return to Tehran tomorrow. We expressed hope that the issues will be resolved through efforts by the two countries' embassies," Moradian stated.

Annan was recalled over Copenhagen's allegations about an Iranian plot to kill an opposition activist in Denmark.

Danish Foreign Minister Anders Samuelsen also said Annan is returning to Iran "to intensify diplomacy and coordinate closely with our European partners."



Switzerland guarantees export of food, medicine to Iran

POLITICS TEHRAN — Swiss Ambassador to Tehran Markus Leitner has said his country will guarantee the export of food and pharmaceutical products to Iran by Swiss companies, ILNA reported on Tuesday.

"Today, we are witnessing the new round of U.S. sanctions against Iran. At such a time, I would like to emphasize Switzerland's role in providing food and medicine for the people of Iran," Leitner said.

He also underlined the importance of Iran-Switzerland ties, saying his country is in talks with the Americans in order to open up the necessary banking channels with Iran.

Europe's inaction to save JCPOA unjustified: Kharrazi

POLITICS TEHRAN — Kamal Deshk Kharrazi, head of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, said on Tuesday that inaction by the Europeans to immediately implement their obligations to save the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), will not be "justifiable".

"Europe's weakness and incapability against the U.S. pressure are understandable given Europe's internal problems. However, Europe's failure to implement its obligations under the JCPOA is not justifiable or acceptable and will not absolve it of responsibility towards the JCPOA," he said during a meeting with a group of German experts from Bertelsmann Foundation.

Kharrazi noted that saving the nuclear deal helps security in West Asia and also Europe.

In May, U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew Washington from the 2015 nuclear deal 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. France, Germany, Britain and the

European Union issued a joint statement condemning the U.S. move in reimposing sanctions on Iran and vowed to protect European companies doing "legitimate" business with Tehran.

The statement read that Europe will also seek to "maintain financial channels operational with Iran and to ensure the continuation of Iranian oil and gas exports".

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Monday that the Europeans are not still able to announce the so-called special purpose vehicle (SPV) because of the U.S. pressure.

SPV is a European Union's initiative intended to protect trade with Iran against newly reimposed U.S. sanctions.

"The U.S. exerts pressure to prevent formation of the SPV and to cut cooperation between Iran and Europe," the senior diplomat said during a speech at Allameh Tabataba'i University.

He noted that no European country has so far accepted to host the SPV for fear of U.S. punishment.

Zarif says Iran will thrive despite U.S. sanctions

Iran's foreign minister has said his country will not only survive newly reimposed U.S. sanctions but it will thrive.

The Trump administration announced sanctions this month covering banking, oil exports and shipping, aimed at forcing Tehran to stop what the U.S. described as its "destabilizing activities" in the Middle East.

Speaking after meeting the British foreign secretary, Jeremy Hunt, in Tehran on Monday, Mohammad Javad Zarif said, "We are used to pressure and we are used to resisting pressure. Sanctions always hurt and they hurt ordinary people, but sanctions seldom change policy, and that has been the problem with U.S. sanctions all the time. They do not take people back to the negotiating table. In fact, they strengthen the resolve to resist.

"We will certainly survive. We will not only survive — we will thrive. We have tried to minimize the impact on the population but the ordinary people are going to suffer, the economy is going to suffer."

Speaking to the Guardian, Zarif said he was confident the Iranian oil industry would find markets, even though the

U.S. measures have pushed down exports sharply. "There are always markets for oil, it depends on the conditions and the price," he said. "I believe Iran will always sell oil."

Zarif also challenged claims by the U.S. secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, that the sanctions had been constructed to exempt humanitarian supplies, such as food and medicine.

"The U.S. has imposed financial sanctions on Iran," he said. "When you want to transfer money, the bank does not ask whether it goes for food or other items — that is why sanctions always hit food and medicine.

"The U.S. is not living up to its promises. We believe all sanctions are unlawful, and against UN Security Council resolutions, but the U.S. is not even truthful to the commitment they have made."

Zarif said Iran was frustrated by the slow pace

Zarif insists restrictive measures will strengthen Iranian resolve to resist

of EU moves to help European companies that want to continue trading with Iran.

A clearing house known as a special purpose vehicle, designed to allow European companies that trade with Iran to bypass the sanctions, is due to be set up within the next few months. It has been seen as critical to reassuring Tehran that the EU wishes to reward Iran for signing the 2015 deal on its nuclear program by expanding business with the country.

"What is important is that Europe has made the political commitment but, unfortunately, so far as practicabilities are concerned, it has been very slow," Zarif said. "Hunt gave me commitment that the UK believes in the nuclear deal, but we also need to see some action."

On Yemen, where Iran stands accused of stoking the civil war by backing Houthi rebels, Zarif said his country had been pushing for a ceasefire for years.

"The humanitarian nightmare cannot continue," he said. "All the Yemenis are prepared to come to the negotiating table provided the [Saudi-led] coalition enables them to do so."

Some MPs move to impeach Zarif over money laundering comments



POLITICS TEHRAN — A number of MPs have started a move to impeach Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif over his comments about money laundering in the country.

MP Hossein-Ali Haji-Deligani told IRNA on Tuesday that Zarif was supposed to present evidence of money laundering in Iran but has failed to do so.

"The motion to impeach Mohammad Javad Zarif because of failure to present evidences of money laundering has been made and signatures are going to be collected from today," he said.

In an interview with the Khabar Online published on November 10, Zarif said, "After all, money laundering is a reality in our country and there are many who benefit from money laundering."

He added, "I do not want to attribute this money laundering to a certain place."

Zarif made the comments after criticisms surrounding the adoption of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

On October 7, Majlis (Parliament) approved the bill. However, the oversight Guardian Council has refused to endorse it, finding 20 faults with it.

'Zarif should not be impeached for one sentence'

Alaeddin Boroujerdi, a senior lawmaker who chaired the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee for many years, told IRNA that Zarif should not be impeached for a sentence that he said.

"Head of the diplomatic apparatus is not supposed to resign or be impeached for one sentence," he said.

However, he criticized Zarif for making the comments.

"It was better such issue would not be told by the foreign minister," he said.

Defense chief: Iran will fast overcome conditions created by U.S. bans



Iran's defense minister says the American sanctions have failed to slow down the nation's progress, and that the country will manage to prevail over the conditions created by the bans at a fast pace.

"Today, we rely on indigenous capabilities," Brigadier-General Amir Hatami said on Tuesday, noting that the country's current conditions are better compared to the situation before the re-imposition of the sanctions, IRNA reported.

"We will overcome the conditions brought about by the sanctions faster and more easily," he added.

The U.S. abandoned a 2015 multilateral nuclear deal with Iran in May. Ever since, it has reinstated all the sanctions it had removed under the deal, officially named the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"The enemy is trying to prevent us from using our resources, but, as we can see, great feats are being accomplished in the

country every day," the defense chief noted.

The United States has only grown more isolated in the international community after it failed to align world countries with itself in its antagonism towards the Islamic Republic, Hatami said.

"We witnessed at the United Nations that the American president was ridiculed. He, who was seeking to condemn Iran at the General Assembly, was himself faced with objection," Hatami said.

The defense chief was referring to Donald Trump's UN General Assembly Speech in September, which began with the U.S. president bragging about his achievements since entering the White House in January 2017.

A few of the world leaders present at the session laughed when Trump claimed that his administration had "accomplished more than almost any administration in the history of our country" in less than two years.

(Source: Press TV)

Iran to expand relations with Europe: MP

POLITICS TEHRAN — Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Chairman Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh said on Tuesday that Iran will continue expanding ties with European countries.

"Europeans are killing time while Iran is waiting for mechanisms to expand economic relations with them," he said during a meeting with Dragan Todorovic, the Serbian ambassador to Tehran, according to Iran Students News Agency.

Falahatpisheh said Iran attaches great importance to solidarity among Iran and Europe. He added that the U.S. sanctions on Iran will not affect Tehran-Belgrade ties.

Elsewhere, he said that the 2015 nuclear deal proved Iran's rightfulness.

President Trump pulled the U.S. out



of nuclear agreement in May and reintroduced sanctions on Iran. However, the Europeans have so far failed to announce the so-called special purpose vehicle (SPV) because of the U.S. pressure.

Military chief says Basij is a great capital

POLITICS TEHRAN — Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Mohammad Baqeri has said that Basij is a great capital of the country to counter plots hatched by the enemies.

In a message on the occasion of Basij week, he said that Iran's power and ability to counter the enemies come from spirit and ideology of Basij.

He noted that establishment of Basij upon the order of Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, showed his view on the future and the threats that the world of Islam would face.

He added that establishment of Basij has been one of the greatest events of the Islamic Revolution.

Elsewhere, he said Basij is something



more than countering military threats, noting it is a great capital in countering efforts which are being made to undermine ideological and religious foundations.

After Khashoggi, some Saudi royals drop MBS

Amid international uproar over the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, some members of Saudi Arabia's ruling family are agitating to prevent Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) from becoming king, three sources close to the royal court said.

Dozens of princes and cousins from powerful branches of the House of Saud want to see a change in the line of succession but would not act while King Salman - the crown prince's 82-year-old father - is still alive, the sources said. They recognize that the king is unlikely to turn against his favorite son, known in the West as MBS.

Rather, they are discussing the possibility with other family members that after the king's death, Prince Ahmed bin Abdulaziz, 76, a younger full brother of King Salman and uncle of the crown prince, could take the throne, according to the sources.

Prince Ahmed, King Salman's only surviving full brother, would have the support of family members, the security apparatus and some Western powers, one of the Saudi sources said.

Prince Ahmed returned to Riyadh in October after 2-1/2 months abroad. During the trip, he appeared to criticize the Saudi leadership while responding to protesters outside a London residence chanting for the downfall of the House of Saud. He was one of only three people on the Allegiance Council, made up of the ruling family's senior members, who opposed MBS becoming crown prince in 2017, two Saudi sources said at the time.

Neither Prince Ahmed nor his representatives could be reached for comment. Officials in Riyadh did not immediately respond to requests from Reuters for comment on succession issues.

The House of Saud is made up of hundreds of princes. Unlike typical European monarchies, there is no automatic succession from father to eldest son. Instead the kingdom's tribal traditions dictate that the king and senior family members from each branch select the heir they consider fittest to lead.

Senior United States officials have indicated to Saudi advisers in recent weeks that they would support Prince Ahmed, who was deputy interior minister for nearly 40 years, as a potential successor, according to Saudi sources with direct knowledge of the consultations.

These Saudi sources said they were confident that Prince Ahmed would not change or reverse any of the social or economic reforms enacted by MBS, would honor existing military procurement contracts and would restore the unity of the family.

One senior U.S. official said the White House is in no hurry to distance itself from the crown prince despite pressure from lawmakers and the CIA's (Central Intelligence Agency) assessment that MBS ordered Khashoggi's murder, though that could change once the U.S. President Donald Trump gets a definitive report on the killing from the intelligence community.

The official also said the White House saw it as noteworthy that King Salman seemed to stand by his son in a speech in Riyadh on Monday and made no direct reference to Khashoggi's killing, except to praise the



Saudi public prosecutor.

Trump on Saturday called the CIA assessment that MBS ordered Khashoggi's killing "very premature" but "possible", and said he would receive a complete report on the case on Tuesday. A White House official referred Reuters to those comments and had "nothing else to add at this time".

The Saudi sources said the U.S. officials had cooled on MBS not only because of his suspected role in the murder of Khashoggi. They are also rankled because the crown prince recently urged the Saudi regime defense ministry to explore alternative weapons supplies from Russia, the sources said.

In a letter dated May 15, seen by Reuters, the crown prince requested that the defense ministry "focus on purchasing weapon systems and equipment in the most pressing fields" and get training on them, including the Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile system.

Neither the Russian defense ministry nor officials in Riyadh immediately responded to Reuters requests for comment.

U.S. role

The brutal killing of Khashoggi, a prominent critic of the crown prince, in the Saudi regime consulate in Istanbul, Turkey last month has drawn global condemnation, including from many politicians and officials in the United States, a key Saudi ally. The CIA believes the crown prince ordered the killing, according to the U.S. sources familiar with the assessment.

The House of Saud regime's public prosecutor has said the crown prince knew nothing of the killing.

The international uproar has piled pressure on a royal court already divided over 33-year-old Prince Mohammed's rapid rise to power. Since his ascension, the prince has gained popular support with high-profile social and economic reforms including ending a ban on women driving and opening cinemas in the conservative kingdom.

His reforms have been accompanied by a crackdown on dissent, a purge of top royals and businessmen on corruption charges, and a costly war in Yemen.

He has also marginalized senior members of the royal family and consolidated control over Saudi's security and intelligence agencies.

He first ousted then-powerful crown prince and interior minister Mohammed bin Nayef (MBN), 59, in June 2017. Then he removed Prince Miteb bin Abdullah, 65, son of the late King Abdullah, as head of the National Guard and detained him as part of an anti-corruption campaign.

Some 30 other princes were also arrested, mistreated, humiliated and stripped of their wealth, even as MBS splashed out on palaces, a \$500 million yacht, and set a new record in the international art market with the purchase of a painting by Italian Renaissance engineer and painter Leonardo Da Vinci.

The entire House of Saud has emerged weakened as a result.

According to one well-placed Saudi source, many princes from senior circles in the family believe a change in the line of succession "would not provoke any resistance from the security or intelligence bodies he controls" because of their loyalty to the wider family.

"They (the security apparatus) will follow any consensus reached by the family."

Officials in Riyadh did not respond to a request for comment.

The United States, a key ally in economic and security terms, is likely to be a determining factor in how matters unfold in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi sources and diplomats say.

Trump and his son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner have cultivated deep personal relationships with the crown prince. One Saudi insider said MBS feels he still has their support and is willing to "roll some heads to appease the U.S."

But Trump and top administration officials have said Saudi officials should be held to account for any involvement in Khashoggi's death and have imposed sanctions on 17 Saudis for their alleged role - including one of MBS's closest aides.

The U.S. lawmakers are meanwhile pushing legislation to punish Riyadh for the killing, and both Republican and Democratic senators have urged Trump to get tough on the

crown prince.

King Salman, 82, is aware of the consequences of a major clash with the United States and the possibility that Congress could try to freeze Saudi assets.

Those who have met the king recently say he appeared to be in denial about the role of MBS in what happened, believing there to be a conspiracy against the kingdom. But they added that he looked burdened and worried.

Allegiance council

When the king dies or is no longer able to rule, the 34-member Allegiance Council, a body representing each line of the ruling family to lend legitimacy to succession decisions, would not automatically declare MBS the new king.

Even as crown prince, MBS would still need the council to ratify his ascension, one of the three Saudi sources said. While the council accepted King Salman's wish to make MBS crown prince, it would not necessarily accept MBS becoming king when his father dies, especially given that he sought to marginalize council members.

Officials in Riyadh did not respond to a request for comment.

The Saudi sources say MBS has destroyed the institutional pillars of nearly a century of the House of Saud rule: the family, the clerics, the tribes and the merchant families. They say this is seen inside the family as destabilizing.

Despite the controversy over Khashoggi's killing, MBS is continuing to pursue his agenda.

Some insiders believe he built his father a new but remote Red Sea palace in Sharma, at the Neom City development site -- thrown up in a record one year at a cost of \$2 billion -- as a gilded cage for his retirement.

The site is isolated, the closest city of Tabouk more than 100 km (60 miles) away. Residence there would keep the king out of the loop on most affairs of state, one of the sources close to the royal family said.

Officials in Riyadh did not respond to a request for comment.

(Source: Reuters)

Dozens killed in a blast in Afghan capital Kabul

At least 43 people were killed and over 80 injured in an explosion at a wedding hall in the Afghan capital Kabul on Tuesday, said two government officials. However, there are conflicting reports regarding the number of casualties at the time being, as some sources have even put the death toll at 60.

More than 80 other people were injured in the blast, said Basir Mujahid spokesman for Kabul police.

"I have confirmed reports that 40 people have been killed," Mujahid told Reuters. There were no immediate claims of responsibility for the blast.

(Source: Reuters)

Riyadh, allied militants resume Hudaydah attacks despite UN ceasefire efforts

The House of Saud regime-led coalition and allied militants have resumed attacks on Yemen's strategic port city of Hudaydah amid United Nations efforts to bring an end to Riyadh's devastating war on the country.

Saudi regime warplanes carried out more than 10 airstrikes on Hudaydah late on Monday, residents were cited as saying by Reuters.

They said that intense fighting had broken out between militants loyal to former Saudi-backed president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, and fighters of the Ansarullah (Houthi) movement, which both runs state affairs and defends the country against the Riyadh-led aggression.

The locals also said fierce battles could be heard on the edges of the city. "The fighting is escalating and we can clearly hear machine guns and mortar fire. This is one of the worst nights we have experienced," said Hudaydah resident Mustafa Abdo.

The Saudi regime-backed militiamen and foreign mercenaries had last week been "ordered" to halt their offensive aimed at taking the Red Sea port city from the Ansarullah fighters amid growing international pressure on the Saudi regime to end the war.

The Monday attacks followed a draft United Nations Security Council resolution that urges an immediate truce in Hudaydah. The British-drafted resolution sets a two-week deadline for removing all barriers to humanitarian aid.

Yemen's Ansarullah movement backed the UN's peace bid on Sunday and announced it was halting its counterstrikes as a goodwill measure to speed up the process. The movement also said it was ready for a broader ceasefire if "the Saudi-led coalition waxes peace."

The UN welcomed the decision and called on all warring sides to show restraint to pave the way for talks.

In recent days, the military coalition led by the Saudi regime and militia groups loyal to Hadi have intensified their attacks on Hudaydah, which is seen as the main entry point for food imports and aid relief needed by millions in the war-torn country.

The Hudaydah offensive has sparked concerns over its impact on the civilian population as well as on humanitarian aid operations. The House of Saud regime and a number of its regional allies launched the devastating campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the aim of bringing the government of Hadi back to power.

According to a new report by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, the Saudi regime-led war has so far claimed the lives of around 56,000 Yemenis.

(Source: Press TV)

Pakistan summons U.S. envoy to protest Trump's bin Laden remarks

Pakistan has summoned the United States chargé d'affaires to protest the "baseless" accusations leveled against Islamabad by the U.S. President Donald Trump, who has criticized the Asian country's role in fighting terrorism as well as the capture of former al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

"The Foreign Secretary called in the U.S. Cda Ambassador Paul Jones to register a strong protest on the unwarranted and unsubstantiated allegations made against Pakistan," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Tuesday.

Trump, during a Fox News TV interview aired on Sunday, defended canceling financial aid worth hundreds of millions of dollars to Pakistan earlier this year because "they don't do anything for us, they don't do a damn thing for us."

The U.S. president suggested that Pakistani authorities knew bin Laden's location prior to his killing by the U.S. troops in a raid inside Pakistan in 2011. He said bin Laden had been living in "a nice mansion" in Pakistan next to a military academy and "everybody in Pakistan knew he was there."

On Monday, Trump tweeted again and doubled down on those claims. "Rejecting the insinuations about OBL (Osama bin Laden), Foreign Secretary reminded the U.S. Cda that it was Pakistan's intelligence cooperation that provided the initial evidence to trace the whereabouts of OBL," the ministry said, adding that "baseless rhetoric about Pakistan was totally unacceptable."

Earlier on Monday, Prime Minister Imran, who is known for his fiery anti-American rhetoric, defended his Pakistan's contribution to Washington's so-called war on terror, saying that "record needs to be put straight on Mr. Trump's tirade against Pakistan."

The premier went on to say that Pakistan had borne the brunt of Washington's so-called war on terror.

"Pakistan suffered 75,000 casualties in this war & over \$123 billion was lost to economy. U.S. 'aid' was a minuscule \$20 billion," he added. The latest friction threatens to further worsen the already fragile relations between Islamabad and Washington.

In August last year, the American president also in a major speech outlining the U.S. policy on Afghanistan accused Islamabad of offering a safe haven to "agents of chaos."

Successive U.S. governments have criticized Pakistan for what they call links with the Taliban and for harboring bin Laden.

Washington has also long accused Pakistan of ignoring or even collaborating with groups which attack Afghanistan from safe havens along the border between the two countries. Pakistan denies supporting the Afghan Taliban militants.

In addition, Pakistan and Afghanistan also regularly accuse each other of sheltering militants. Both sides, however, deny such allegations.

(Source: agencies)

China's Xi visits Philippines as Duterte pressed to take tougher line

Chinese leader Xi Jinping visited the Philippines on Tuesday to further strategic gains made under President Rodrigo Duterte, who hailed a "new impetus" behind a relationship that his massive infrastructure ambitions could depend on.

Xi's visit comes two years after the maverick Duterte declared he was reorienting his foreign policy away from longtime ally the United States and toward China, despite decades of mistrust and bitter maritime disputes with Beijing.

Duterte is facing criticism from opponents for making too many political concessions to China in return for billions of dollars of pledged Chinese loans and investments that have yet to materialize, or be committed to formally.

The two leaders on Tuesday oversaw 29 agreements of sorts, many of them broad or vague, from cooperating in education, culture and industrial park development to jointly promoting infrastructure, agriculture cooperatives and establishing sanitation protocols for shipping coconuts.

Duterte said there was "a deepening trust and confidence" between them and he and Xi had discussed increasing trade and investment, and China's involvement in his signature \$180 billion "Build, Build, Build" infrastructure program.

"With mutual respect, sincerity and adherence to sovereign equality, I will continue to work closely with President Xi," he said.

However, of the 38 Philippine projects earmarked for Chinese involvement two years ago, only four were among the commitments made on Tuesday.

One was approval for a Chinese loan for building a \$232.5



million dam, another a hiring of a consultancy for a rail plan. The other two were to start feasibility studies on an inter-island bridge, and a highway in Duterte's home province.

Xi said he and Duterte would elevate their relationship to one of "comprehensive strategic cooperation", adding that they had many common interests in the South China Sea, and would continue to "manage contentious issues".

Submissive strategy

Duterte's management of those issues has frustrated nationalists, who say he has been submissive in refusing to criticize China's military buildup, or asking for its compliance with a 2016 arbitration award that invalidated its claim to almost the entire waterway.

Though public opinion is largely supportive of Duterte's

presidency, surveys consistently show reservations about his China policy and his personal dislike of the United States.

A Social Weather Stations poll of 1,200 Filipinos released on the eve of Xi's visit showed 84 percent felt it was wrong not to oppose China's militarization of its manmade islands in the South China Sea.

It also showed trust in the United States remained "very good", but China was considered "poor".

Asked about that survey, presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said Duterte's strategy was to avoid a conflict while reaping the rewards of improved business.

"They are not aware of the real geopolitics in the region. The president is a very cautious diplomat," Panelo told news channel ANC.

"Rather than provoke, he'd rather talk with them and get some trade relations that will benefit this country."

In comments prior to the two leaders' meeting, Panelo accepted the slow pace of China delivering on its investment pledges, but said he expected Duterte to be brave enough "to exert pressure" on Xi.

"Knowing the man, he'll do that, he's that kind of person," Panelo said.

Duterte has heaped praise on Xi for his economic support, but some analysts say he is being exploited.

Other Philippine experts say delays in securing Chinese credit could be a blessing given the potential debt burden, echoing a warning delivered by the United States Vice President Mike Pence.

(Source: Reuters)

Putin: Russia will retaliate if U.S. quits nuclear missile treaty

Russian President Vladimir Putin said the Kremlin would retaliate if the United States withdrew from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty (INF), Russian news agencies reported. Putin discussed possible Russian retaliation with top Russian Defense Ministry officials and added that the Kremlin was ready to discuss the INF treaty with

Washington. The Cold War-era treaty, which rid Europe of land-based nuclear missiles, has come into question against a backdrop of renewed tensions between the West and Russia, most notably over Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea and role in eastern Ukraine.

The U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has accused Russia of non-com-

pliance with the 31-year-old missile accord and warned it will pull out of the deal as a result. The Kremlin denies violating the pact.

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and Russian envoy addressed the dispute during rare talks on Oct. 31, with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg urging Moscow to make quick changes to

comply in full with the treaty. He said Russia's development of the land-based, intermediate-range SSC-8 cruise missile posed "a serious risk to strategic stability".

European leaders worry any collapse of the INF treaty could lead to a new, destabilizing arms race.

(Source: Daily Star)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	176458.7
IFX	1914.98

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	\$55.94/b
Brent	\$65.33/b
OPEC Basket	\$66.00/b
Gold	\$1,225.70/oz
Silver	\$14.45/oz
Platinum	\$849.55/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Kish Island hosting intl. gold, gemstones expo

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Concurrent with Iran's first Gemstone Trading Symposium, the 4th Intl. Exhibition of Gold, Jewelry, Silver, Gemstones, and Related Industries (Kish Goldex 2018) is running during November 19-22 in Kish Island's international convention center.

As reported by IRNA, over 100 Iranian and foreign exhibitors from different countries are showcasing their latest products and services in jewelry and gemstone industry in the island in south of Iran.

The exhibition aims to introduce the industry's new machinery and technologies and to introduce domestic capabilities to promote production and exports of jewelry in the country.



Iran's 1st intl. conference on venture capital slated for late Jan. 2019

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Focusing on small and medium enterprises (SMEs), startups, accelerators, and mainly venture capitals (VCs), Iran's first venture capital international conference is due to be held on 27-28 January 2019 at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.

According to Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), some of the world's most renowned SMEs, startups, Fintechs, Cryptocurrency and blockchain developers as well as VCs from the United States, Britain, Sweden, Hong Kong and Australia are going to participate in this event.



Oil min. appoints new NPC head

ENERGY TEHRAN — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh named Behzad Mohammadi as the new of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC), IRNA reported on Tuesday.

Mohammadi, who was previously the managing director of Iran's Oil Industries Engineering & Construction Group (OIEC), is a replacement for the ex NPC-Head Seyed Reza Norouz-Zadeh.

Due to the implementation of Article 1 of the law banning employment of the retired officials, passed in mid-September by the Majlis, new appointments are being done in various sectors of the state-run organizations in a bid to employ the younger generation in top state jobs.



Catalog exhibition of Iranian products to be held in Berlin

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) plans to hold a catalog exhibition of Iran-made products at Iran-EU Economic Cooperation Center in Berlin on January 14, 2019, the portal of TCCIMA reported.

The one-month exhibition aims for introducing the capabilities and capacities of Iran's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

According to TCCIMA office of public relations, in catalog exhibitions instead of providing physical samples, the participants introduce their products and services through catalogs and brochures.

As reported, five specialized meetings on industry and trade; medicine and medical equipment; tourism, agriculture and food industries as well as information technology will also be held on the sidelines of this event.

ICOPMAS 2018 to host 36 countries in late Nov.

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Like the previous editions of the event, the inaugural ceremony will be attended by the first vice president as well as some high-ranking officials, Hamid Khalili, director general of Coasts and Ports Engineering Department of PMO, said in a press conference held previously in October on this event. He said the conference is sponsored and supported by many renowned Iranian and international organizations and institutes.

The official underlined that this conference is also a preparation for the 10th

edition of PIANC-COPEDEC, which is the World Association for Waterborne Transport Infrastructure (PIANC) Conference on Coastal and Port Engineering in Developing Countries (COPEDEC), to be held in Iran's southern island of Kish in November 2020 concurrent with the 14th edition of ICOPMAS.

ICOPMAS, as one of the oldest and the most important scientific events in Iran and the Persian Gulf region, provides an appropriate ground to exchange the latest scientific innovations and technical execu-



tive achievements by gathering engineers, designers, scientists and researchers in the field of coasts, ports and marine structures.

The conference will also be a think tank to improve the knowledge of coasts and ports engineering.

U.S. approach against Iran's maritime sector violates IMO's spirit

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) in a statement condemned the U.S.'s sanctions against Iran's maritime transportation and activities and said such approach is in contravention with the laws and regulations of International Maritime Organization (IMO).

The PMO's statement said that a country's maritime fleet's safety, security, technical and quality status is evaluated based on the international records and inspection reports not the claims of a country; and the U.S.'s approach against Iran's maritime sector is in contrast with the spirit of IMO, PMO's website published on Tuesday.

In the statement, PMO, as the competent maritime administration and port authority of the Islamic Republic of Iran, clarifies the status and stance of the Iranian maritime sector in guaranteeing maritime safety and security, and protecting the marine environment.

The following is a summary of the statement published on PMO's website:

The Iranian fleet is ranked 21st among national fleets, with over 700 vessels operating in the Caspian Sea, Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman. Their operation is closely scrutinized by the Iranian maritime administration (PMO),



as well as international classification societies. Strict national legislations have been approved and implemented on the Iranian port and maritime sector, especially cargo ships and oil tankers. These regulations cover all Iranian ships, including the non-convention sized vessels, as well as exempt areas such as the Caspian Sea that are not covered by the international conventions. Therefore, any substandard vessel would be seriously

dealt with through the Iranian legislation, even before setting sail toward international waters.

As a core for transport and commercial activities of this country, the Iranian shipping industry firmly believes in operating under the highest safety, environmental and quality standards possible. Iran will keep cooperating with the relevant international organizations, such as IMO, IHO, ILO, IALA, IAPH, and the like. Following a two-year period of

vice-chairmanship in the ROMPE Sea Area Hydrographic Commission (RSAHC), this country is also going to chair that commission for the next two years.

Iran is fully aligned with the global maritime community and IMO in promoting shipping and maritime activities.

Against the global trend of cooperation and interaction, the United States has levied heavy and unfair sanctions, aiming at crippling the Iranian shipping industry. They have even attempted to contaminate the international atmosphere against the Iranian maritime activities, by falsely accusing the Iranian fleet of being substandard in safety and environmental terms. Such claims have been automatically rejected by the excellent performance records of Iranian vessels as inspected and observed in different ports around the world.

Considering the above, the Ports and Maritime Organization would like to stress that 1) the United States is behaving against the IMO's spirit and orientation for promoting international shipping through cooperation; and 2) the quality and safety performance of a national fleet is assessed and verified by international records of PSC inspections, maritime accidents and audits, not by simple verbal allegations for or against them.

Pakistan underscores expansion of trade ties with Iran

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Speaking with the Pakistani media, Asad Umar, Pakistan's Minister of Finance, Revenue, and Economic Affairs, put emphasis on the necessity of strengthening trade ties with Iran. The official also underlined that the two countries can double their bilateral trade, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

The value of trade between Iran and Pakistan currently stands at \$1.5 billion which could be increased through some operating programs, Umar commented.

"There are many investment making opportunities in different sectors of Pakistan and we welcome any investor that is willing to make investment in our country", the Pakistani minister noted.

In his meeting with Iran's Ambassador to Islamabad

Mehdi Honardoost in September, Umar called for removal of existing trade and commerce barriers and reinforcing mutual transactions and trade meetings as well.

Honardoost, for his part, underlined the necessity of tackling banking and customs barriers besides easing trade ties.

Iran and Pakistan discussed expansion of trade ties during a joint business forum in Islamabad on March attended by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif heading a 30-member trade delegation and Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif.

As reported, creating necessary conditions for the expansion of bilateral economic ties and facilitating trade, especially between the two sides' private sectors were among the main topics of the forum.



U.S. companies aren't in a hurry to leave China despite the trade war, analysts say

U.S. companies aren't leaving China in a big way yet, despite escalating trade tensions between the two economic powerhouses, analysts said.

"A lot of companies are talking about making changes, but (are) not actively making changes," said Chris Rogers, research analyst at Panjiva, a supply chain data company that's part of S&P Global Market Intelligence.

"Nobody's going to make any changes until they see how this summit goes between President Trump and President Xi," he said referring to their upcoming meeting at the G-20 summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina on Nov. 30 and Dec. 1.

"(I) haven't seen any significant U.S. companies leaving China," Rogers said in a phone interview Friday.

Many hope the G-20 meeting will diffuse trade tensions between the world's two largest economies, which this summer began to apply additional tariffs on billions of dollars' worth of each other's imports.

The tariffs may encourage U.S. companies to step up a trend of increasing manufacturing operations outside China, analysts said.

As labor costs in China rise, many companies — including some Chinese firms — are looking toward Southeast Asian countries as new manufacturing centers.

But the desire to look outside China doesn't mean leaving the country altogether.

Rather than investing more in a Chinese factory, a foreign company may invest more in another country, such as Vietnam, Nick Marro, a Hong Kong-based analyst with The Economist Intelligence Unit, said in a phone interview Friday.

Indeed, a study from the research group found that Vietnam and Malaysia could benefit the most in the long run from a U.S.-China trade war. The two countries have strong infrastructure for supporting distribution, and are well-positioned in the manufacturing of low-end information and technology products and components, the report said.

Thailand also has potential to increase its role as a manufacturing center due to its experience in electronics manufacturing and the government's efforts to upgrade national infrastructure, the analysis found.

A spokesperson for the American Chamber of Commerce in Beijing also told CNBC that U.S. companies are staying in China, but they are looking to diversify where their components come from or products are assembled.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents to a survey by the chamber said they are not relocating or considering such a move. Only 13 out of more than 430 companies surveyed are considering leaving China — but rather than choosing the U.S., Southeast Asia is the top destination.

However, companies will likely move slowly. Marro said moving manufacturing operations from China to another country is a process that will realistically take three to five years.

Businesses may also want to gauge the political risks of what signals they are sending when they shift their production centers.

"You have to be careful it doesn't look like you're evading tariffs," Rogers said. "You may see a kind of reputational risk if you were in the Chinese market, then you leave. There's kind of a negative PR behind that."

"Companies are not going to make major changes to their supply chain until they're sure the tariffs are going to be around for the next couple of years," he added.

The U.S. is set to raise tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods from 10 percent to 25 percent at the beginning of the new year, a point Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross reiterated in an interview with Bloomberg last week.

Marro expects the U.S.-China trade tensions to be a relatively long-term conflict. However, he expects U.S. companies will stay in China for another reason — to tap the growing consumer market.

"We're not expecting to see a massive corporate exodus from China. These U.S. companies have been in the market for years and they're now aimed at gaining market share," he said. "If we remember the core concerns over the trade war, they're really looking at market access concerns. The whole goal of this from the U.S. perspective is not to abandon the region." (Source: CNBC)

Ghosn in no position to lead Renault, says French fin. min.

Carlos Ghosn should not remain in charge of Renault (RENA.PA) after his arrest in Japan, France's finance minister said on Tuesday, urging the carmaker to move swiftly to install an interim management team to limit the damage.

Ghosn, one of the best known leaders in the car industry, was arrested in Japan on Monday after Renault partner Nissan (7201.T) said he had engaged in wrongdoing including personal use of company money and under-reporting how much he was earning for years. Nissan plans to oust him as chairman on Thursday.

"Carlos Ghosn is no longer in a position where he is capable of leading Renault," Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told France Info radio.

"Nevertheless, we have not demanded the formal departure of Ghosn from the management board for a simple reason, which is that we do not have any proof and we follow due legal procedure," added Le Maire.

The French state owns 15 percent of Renault, which in turn holds a 43.4 percent stake in Nissan.

Le Maire also called on Renault's board to meet "in the



coming hours" to set up an interim management structure in light of the arrest of Ghosn, who is chairman and chief executive.

The board will meet later on Tuesday, a company spokesman said.

It will discuss temporarily replacing Ghosn while he

remains in detention in Japan sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

Le Maire said he would contact his Japanese counterpart over the matter, and reiterated that France's priority was to ensure the stability of the Renault company.

Le Maire added that Renault's partnership with Nissan was in the interests of both France and Japan and of both companies.

"Renault has been weakened, which make it all the more necessary to act quickly," said Le Maire.

Renault shares were down 2.8 percent in early session trading, with the stock having slumped 8.4 percent on Monday.

Bank of America Merrill Lynch cut its rating on Renault to "neutral" from "buy", while Exane BNP Paribas also downgraded Renault to "neutral" from "outperform".

Le Maire said he had asked French tax authorities to look into Ghosn's affairs and that they had found nothing of particular note. (Source: Reuters)

Oil declines due to supply concerns after four days of gains

Benchmark oil prices fell on Tuesday, set to snap a four-day winning streak amid concerns about rising global supplies as OPEC weighs production cuts.

Growing fears of an economic slowdown, which saw European and Asian stock markets tumble again, added further pressure on crude.

Brent crude futures, the international benchmark for oil prices, were at \$66.07 a barrel at 1016 GMT, down 72 cents, or 1.08 percent, from their last close.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$56.63 per barrel, down 57 cents, or 1 percent.

The head of the International Energy Agency (IEA) warned of the effects of geopolitical instability on prices.

"We are entering an unprecedented period of uncertainty in oil markets," Fatih Birol told a conference in Norway.

Oil prices are around a quarter below their recent peaks in early October, weighed down by surging supply, especially from the United States, as well as a slowdown in global trade. U.S. crude production has soared almost



25 percent this year, to a record 11.7 million barrels per day (bpd).

Amid the uncertainty, financial traders have become wary of oil markets, seeing

further downside risk to prices from the growth in U.S. shale production as well as the deteriorating economic outlook.

Portfolio managers have sold the equiva-

lent of 553 million barrels of crude and fuels in the last seven weeks, the largest reduction over a comparable period since at least 2013.

Funds now hold a net long position of just 547 million barrels, less than half the recent peak of 1.1 billion at the end of September, and down from a record 1.484 billion in January.

OPEC cuts expected

Concerned about an emerging production overhang similar to the one that led to a price slump in 2014, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is pushing for a supply cut of 1 million to 1.4 million bpd.

"We expect OPEC to agree to a supply cut at its next official meeting on 6 December," French bank BNP Paribas said.

The bank added that it expected Brent to recover to \$80 per barrel before the year-end. "In 2019, we expect WTI to average \$69 per barrel and Brent \$76 per barrel," BNP said.

The IEA, however, warned OPEC and other producers of the "negative implications" of supply cuts, with many analysts fearing a spike in crude prices could erode consumption.

(Source: Reuters)

Russian oil groups hit sweet spot as profits surge

Russian oil companies have rarely had it so good. Rising oil prices coupled with a weakening rouble have sent profits for exporters surging above forecasts.

Some companies have already made investment decisions to capitalize on high earnings, but the moves came just as the oil price started to slide.

It has dropped about \$20 a barrel since its four-year peak of \$86 in early October. The joy for the oil groups, therefore, may be short-lived.

However, the weakness of the rouble, which plunged to a two-year low in September, is still propping up earnings for groups as they repatriate foreign currency-based revenues back to Russia.

Indeed, third-quarter profits have been on the rise across commodities — for oil, gas, and metals companies, which together contribute a large chunk of Russia's budget.

But while metals businesses are more used to high earnings, and their shareholders to high dividends, it has taken energy companies by surprise.

"They [Russian oil and gas companies] are having an absolutely fabulous year," said Alexei Bolshakov, general director of Citigroup Global Markets. "They earn more per barrel than they did even during \$100 a barrel oil prices. These guys have exorbitant profitability."

Another senior analyst at one of Russia's leading banks said: "Russian oil and gas companies are flooded with cash, they don't know what to do with it."

Additionally for the oil companies, an improved macro environment and an increase in production quotas under Russia's deal with OPEC and other non-Opec producers since June, has resulted in higher sales at higher prices.

Rosneft, Russia's top crude producer and the world's largest listed oil company, kicked off Russia's oil reporting season in November with a tripling of net profits in both the third quarter and the first nine months of the year as well as a more than quadrupling of free cash flow, one of the key numbers looked at by investors.

Novatek, the country's top independent gas producer, increased net profit by 22 percent on the year in the third quarter as it started exporting liquefied natural gas last year at a time when largely oil-linked gas prices also rose.

Russian oil and gas companies' 2018 earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization will be 30-40 percent higher year on year on high oil prices, including for Russian Urals blend, said Denis Perevezentsev, vice-president of Moody's.

The trend continued on Friday with the announcement by Gazprom Neft, Russia's third-largest crude producer, that it had also sharply increased net profits, by 70 percent on the year in the third quarter.

Pipeline export monopoly Gazprom is also widely expected to post solid numbers on rising gas prices and supply growth as it nears a record in gas deliveries to Europe for a third year in a row.

Elsewhere, Russian metals companies with exposure to foreign markets have posted big gains.

Russia's top steel producer NLMK increased net profit by 69 percent on the year in the first nine months, Severstal, the largest steel exporter to Europe, by 86 percent, and top aluminum producer Rusal doubled its profit.

For the oil groups, which have enjoyed big increases in their share prices since the start of the year, the key question now is how to spend their money, the senior analyst said.

State-controlled Rosneft, which accounts for about 40 percent of oil production in Russia, plans a 20-25 percent year-on-year increase in next year's capital expenditures, and 80 percent of that will be pumped into upstream projects.

Yet, Rosneft does not think it can sustain profit increases, even until the end of the year. The tumbling price in Brent crude has already brought down expectations for fourth-quarter results.

"I frankly don't share the optimism of a situation where we would continue living in the same macro conditions. We consider the current situation temporary," Rosneft's first vice-president Pavel Fyodorov said in a recent conference call.

BCS analysts added: "Strong growth momentum will most likely disappear in the fourth quarter of 2018, given low spot quotes and we see no other positive catalysts for oil producers."

It appears the bumper profits may turn out to be a blip rather than a more permanent trend.

(Source: Financial Times)



Why the Khashoggi crisis could finally start to affect oil prices

The oil market has largely shrugged off the killing last month of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi agents. However, a new CIA assessment that reportedly links the slaying to the kingdom's crown prince could soon change that, according to a commodities strategist and former CIA analyst.

The assessment concludes that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman ordered Khashoggi's killing, according to the Washington Post and NBC News.

The CIA is expected to present its report to President Donald Trump by Tuesday, just two weeks before major oil producers including OPEC and Russia meet in Vienna, Austria. The group has been coordinating oil policy since last year, and the members are now considering a fresh round of production cuts after a sharp pullback in the oil market.

New supply caps would boost oil prices and prevent financial pain in countries dependent

on fossil fuel revenue, including Saudi Arabia. The kingdom expects to its crude shipments to drop by 500,000 barrels per day in December, and its energy minister recently said OPEC and its allies may cut output by about 1 million bpd next year.

But Trump, a populist focused on filling Americans' pocketbooks, opposes the output cuts because he wants prices to fall at U.S. gas stations.

Despite reportedly being shown evidence that links Khashoggi's death to Prince Mohammed, Trump continues to cast doubt on the royal's role in the slaying. The Trump administration is closely aligned with Prince Mohammed, and the president wants to preserve billions of dollars in potential arms sales to the Saudis.

In an interview with Fox News Sunday this past weekend, Trump stressed that Prince Mohammed has repeatedly denied any involve-

ment in the killing during the leaders' private conversations.

That gives the Saudis an incentive to hold off on cutting output, especially in light of growing pressure on the regime from Congressional Republicans, according to Helima Croft, the global head of commodity strategy at RBC Capital Markets and a former intelligence analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency.

"I think there is a corner of the market that says, 'Well wait a second, is Saudi Arabia really going to go forward with removing so many barrels in a situation where President Trump remains a stalwart ally of the Saudi government?'" she told CNBC's "Squawk Box" on Monday.

"Would they want to offend President Trump given the fact that he continues to stand by the Saudi leadership?"

On the other hand, Croft says there's a view that Saudi Arabia was led to believe the Trump administration would impose strict sanctions

on Iran. That expectation played a role in the kingdom's decision to back an output hike in June.

The talk in the region is that the Saudis are not pleased that Trump is allowing some of Iran's biggest customers to continue importing crude, said Croft. Trump's decision to grant sanctions waivers, after pushing the OPEC alliance to boost output, is contributing to the looming oversupply that has sent oil prices plunging into a bear market.

"Some believe [the Saudis] were sort of tricked into putting so many barrels on the market in advance of those sanctions," Croft said. "It's going to be very interesting to see where Saudi Arabia comes down on this issue."

Ultimately, Croft believes Saudi Arabia will protect its own economic welfare and push through output cuts, rather than see oil prices fall even further.

(Source: CNBC)

Wind, solar are now the cheapest sources of power generation

Thanks to falling costs, unsubsidized onshore wind and solar have become the cheapest sources of electricity generation in nearly all major economies in the world, including India and China, according to a new report by Bloomberg NEF.

The comparative costs for power generation—the leveled costs of electricity (LCOE)—showed that onshore wind and solar are the cheapest power generation sources for all major economies except for Japan.

Even in India and China, where "not long ago coal was king", solar and wind beat coal with cheaper generation, according to BNEF's latest half-year LCOE analysis.

"In India, best-in-class solar and wind plants are now half the cost of new coal plants," says the study, as carried by Renewable Energy Magazine.

In China, the utility-scale PV market has shrunk by a third so far in 2018, according to BNEF, because of the Chinese decision not to issue approvals for any new solar power installations this year and to cut the feed-in tariff subsidy. The market contraction in China, however, resulted in cheap equipment in the world, driving the LCOE for new PV down to \$60/MWh in the second half this year, down by 13 percent compared to the first half of 2018.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Second Announcement



Permit No.1397/4172

Invitation For Prequalification

TENDER NO. : 01-31-9746000

National Iranian South Oilfields Company intends to purchase the following goods

Description	Quantity.
P/F"COOPER BESSMER"CENTRIFUGAL GASCOMPRESSOR	59 Items including 710 Nos.

Vendors who intend to participate in the A/M tender are requested to send their resume & tendency letter via fax/ mail to the following address not later than 14 days after the second announcement. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide a bid bond of Euro 5,481 / Rl 263,100,000 in favor of NISOC. Iranian vendors shall submit their resume Acc. to forms Nos. 01, 02 and 03 which are available at www.shana.ir and www.nisoc.ir

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPT
Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site) Bldg NO 104, Ahvaz, Iran
Tel/FAX No.: +98-61-34457437

Public Relations
www.shana.ir www.nisoc.ir <http://iets.mporg.ir>

تهران تایمز نویت اول ۹۷/۰۸/۳۰ نویت دوم ۹۷/۰۸/۲۷

RENEWAL OF ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER

SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT

55/97/18350

21/11/2018

Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture

AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, affiliated to Ministry of Agriculture-Jahad of I.R. of Iran, is considering the purchase of the below 11 items of adjuvants, emulsifiers and technicals, through one step international tender.

1- 20000 Kgs Diazinon Tech 95%	7- 6000 Kgs Emulsifier FF4 or similar product
2- 30000 Kgs Cartap Tech 98%	8- 8000 Kgs Emulsifier FF6 or similar product
3- 10000 Kgs Propargite Tech Min. 90%	9- 7000 Kgs Adjuvant PAP
4- 3000 Kgs Deltamethrin Tech 98.5%	10- 5500 Kgs Adjuvant Epoxidized soy bean oil
5- 5500 Kgs Permethrin Tech 95%	11- 3500 Kg Emulsifier Termul
6- 32000 Kgs Chlorpyrifos Tech 97%	-----

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from Tuesday dated 20/11/2018 untill Saturday

dd. 1/12/2018 (7 working days) from our purchasing committee (9th floor, no. 1, Fourth Alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran).

The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of Iranian Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with Sheba no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of Satna or Paya with the 30 character identification code no. 358039782263500650000000000006 will be possible.

The bidders are requested to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on Wednesday dd. 2/12/2018 at 4:00 PM to our security office located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be held on Saturday dd. 5/12/2018 at 2:00 PM with the presence of bidder's representatives at our purchasing committee hall (9th floor, no. 1, Fourth Alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran).

We would like to emphasize that the bid bond amount should be in cash or bank guarantee as follows:

- A- €66845 for Diazinon Tech 95 pct. equivalent to Iranian Rials 3201000000.
- B- €14326 for Cartap Tech 98 pct. equivalent to Iranian Rials 686000000.
- C- €2856 for Propargite Tech Min. 90 pct. equivalent to Iranian Rials 136750000.
- D- €11451 for Deltamethrin Tech 98.5 pct. equivalent to Iranian Rials 548355000.
- E- €4538 for Permethrin Tech 95 pct. equivalent to Iranian Rials 217300000.
- F- €10160 for Chlorpyrifos Tech 97 pct. equivalent to Iranian Rials 486532000.
- G- € 752 for Emulsifier FF4 or similar product equivalent to Iranian Rials 36000000.
- H- € 1003 for Emulsifier FF6 or similar product equivalent to Iranian Rials 48000000.
- I- €700 for Adjuvant PAP equivalent to Iranian Rials 33521000.
- J- €894 for Adjuvant Epoxidized soy bean oil equivalent to Iranian Rials 42800000.
- k- € 613 for Emulsifier Termul equivalent to Iranian Rials 29350000.

For more information, you may refer to our web site www.assc.ir and <http://iets.mporg.ir>, or contact us at phone no. 00982188776325.

Public & International Relations Department
Agricultural Support Services Company (ASSC)

The lifting of UN sanctions will not solve Eritrea's problems

By Abraham T Zere

On November 14, the United Nations Security Council unanimously agreed to lift the sanctions it had imposed on Eritrea with Resolution 1907.

The measure, which included an international arms embargo, travel bans and the freezing of assets of high-profile Eritrean officials, had been in effect since 2009, when the UN accused Eritrea of supporting armed groups in Somalia - something the regime in Asmara always denied.

East African nations and the international community welcomed the UNSC's decision, which came on the back of a landmark peace deal between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

While the withdrawal of sanctions is a major diplomatic win for Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki, it is unlikely to change much for ordinary Eritreans. In fact, the regime continues to maintain its own form of crippling "sanctions" on the general population, limiting its rights and freedoms. And there are no serious signs that these sanctions are going anywhere.

Domestic sanctions

People living in Eritrea have long known that the lifting of the UN sanctions would not improve their lot much, despite the fact that the Eritrean regime regularly used them as a justification for some of its failures.

Likewise, the much celebrated Ethiopian-Eritrean deal also failed to bring major change to the lives of ordinary Eritreans. Months after it was concluded, the mandatory military service is still in place and civilians are still required to work as guards of official institutions as a form of national service. In fact, military drills and re-armament of civilians have intensified in recent days.

The crippling economic policies of the regime are also likely to remain in place. Import and export businesses were banned in 2003 and construction was outlawed in 2006. The movement of goods and labor was severely restricted and Eritrean nationals were banned from withdrawing more than \$300 a month from their saving accounts.

These extreme measures crippled the country's business sector and scared away investors. This, in addition to a massive brain drain caused by the regime's repressive policies, stripped the nation of its most talented and entrepreneurial people.

As a result of these policies and regardless of the UN sanctions, Eritrean nationals who had the potential to invest and develop businesses relocated to other African countries and non-Eritreans simply did not see the country as a safe investment environment.

The peace deal and rapprochement with Ethiopia also has not done much for the handful of remaining Eritrean businesses so far. In fact, the normalization led to an informal Ethiopian business "invasion".

Ethiopians are now able to enter the country and freely sell their goods in the streets of Eritrea, participating in the open market without paying any taxes or being required to acquire expensive licenses. Even for their daily bread, Eritreans are now dependent on Ethiopian producers.

As a result of this highly unbalanced and unfair trade arrangement, no Eritrean business managed to thrive following the rapprochement with Ethiopia.

In this context, probably the only economic sphere that could benefit from the lifting of the UN sections would be mining. But the proceeds from that industry are also unlikely to trickle down to ordinary Eritreans as the regime keeps tight control on mining contracts and profits.

An emboldened Afwerki

Some experts have expressed hopes that the peace deal with Ethiopia and now the lifting of the UN sanctions could usher in changes in the domestic affairs of the country. The absence of a conflict with Ethiopia and some form of international rehabilitation seemingly leave the Eritrean regime no excuse to continue its repressive militarization of society.

But these major diplomatic developments could also have the opposite effect. They could encourage President Afwerki to continue ruling the country with an iron fist and even embolden to tighten his grip on power even more. After all, none of these diplomatic breakthroughs came in exchange for concessions on human rights or internal political reforms.

For the last two decades, being a pariah in the eyes of the international community, Afwerki was relying on his loyal military commanders to help him hold on to power. However, he has now secured a powerful and widely popular ally in the face of Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

With Ahmed on his side and increasing international backing, he no longer feels the need to consult even his most trusted commanders when making decisions. He is now signing treaties and deciding the faith of a nation of over 5 million single-handedly.

Since the peace deal, Afwerki visited Ethiopia three times and Ahmed came to Eritrea twice. The two leaders met twice more - once in the UAE and once in Saudi Arabia - to receive awards. However, the results of these meetings, just like the details of the peace deal between the two countries, have never been shared with the Eritrean people.

Afwerki had always prioritized regional politics over domestic affairs and so far nothing appears to have changed. It looks like he is still more concerned over his own international standing and regional ambitions than improving the lot of his people at home.

He still has old scores to settle in Ethiopia, especially with the old guard of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). It is not unlikely that Afwerki played an indirect role in the recent arrests of former top TPLF officials.

Thus, the rapprochement with Ethiopia has provided the Eritrean leader with the opportunity to pursue his regional grand ambitions at the expense of the Eritrean people. The last week's decision by the UN will likely allow him to make himself more acceptable in the eyes of the international community and come one step closer to becoming an influential and internationally accepted regional actor.

In light of all this, Eritreans have little reason to celebrate the lifting of the sanctions that will likely benefit no one other than Afwerki himself. What the Eritrean people really need the UN to do is pressure the Eritrean regime to lift the devastating sanctions it has imposed on its own people.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Trump just can't quit MBS

By Ishaan Tharoor

Saudi authorities have spent almost two months obfuscating what happened to slain journalist Jamal Khashoggi. All the while, the White House has played along, seeking to tamp down the outrage over Khashoggi's murder at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul and shield Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi crown prince linked to Khashoggi's death.

After first denying any hand in Khashoggi's disappearance, Riyadh eventually admitted to presiding over his death in what the Saudis said was a botched operation carried out by "rogue" agents. Last week, a Saudi prosecutor announced charges against 11 participants in the plot against Khashoggi, five of whom could face the death penalty. The prosecutor, as well as other prominent Saudi officials, emphasized that the crown prince had nothing to do with the crime.

But that claim took a sharp blow over the weekend, when The Washington Post revealed that the CIA has concluded Mohammed himself ordered Khashoggi's assassination.

Close

"The CIA's assessment, in which officials have said they have high confidence, is the most definitive to date linking Mohammed to the operation and complicates the Trump administration's efforts to preserve its relationship with a close ally," my colleagues reported. "A team of 15 Saudi agents flew to Istanbul on government aircraft in October and killed Khashoggi inside the Saudi Consulate, where he had gone to pick up documents that he needed for his planned marriage to a Turkish woman."

As a European intelligence official told the Guardian, the CIA's analysis is "highly damaging to the kingdom's official narrative." The agency believes it is unlikely such an operation would have been carried out without the knowledge of MBS, as the crown prince is often called. Scrutiny of audio recordings



from inside the consulate in Istanbul as well as intercepted phone calls by Saudi officials - including at least one between a member of the hit squad and a close aide to the crown prince - further cemented their conclusion.

Publicly, both the White House and the State Department distanced themselves from the revelations. "Recent reports indicating that the U.S. government has made a final conclusion are inaccurate," said Heather Nauert, the State Department's spokeswoman. "There remain numerous unanswered questions with respect to the murder of Khashoggi. The State Department will continue to seek all relevant facts."

Earlier in the week, White House national security adviser John Bolton insisted that the intelligence he had seen did not implicate MBS. Trump, when pressed by reporters again Saturday, said little information had been "assessed" and that his administration would make its position clear on Tuesday. As my colleagues at The Post's editorial page argued, part of Trump's reticence may be due to his congenital unwillingness to admit

that he was wrong - in this case, in placing such a big bet on MBS as a staunch U.S. ally.

"This is a situation where everyone basically knows what happened," said a Trump adviser who spoke to my colleagues on the condition of anonymity, indicating that Trump privately seemed to also believe that the crown prince was behind the murder.

"For more than a month, Trump has struggled to balance his interest in maintaining strong relations with the Saudi government with growing pressure in Congress and around the world to punish the Saudi regime," noted my colleagues. "Trump has told aides that he wants Mohammed to stay in power and that he sees the Saudis as the best strategic check on Iran and as a vital source of oil. Mohammed has a close relationship with Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and senior adviser, who helps to lead the administration's Middle East strategy."

The right-wing government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also has publicly come to the defense of the crown

prince, who shares Netanyahu's antipathy toward Iran and reportedly harbors great admiration for Israel's economic success. In Trump, both the Saudis and Israelis have found an American leader eager to endorse their visions for the Middle East.

Mohammed's reckless behavior was already the subject of widespread scrutiny. Critics place blame on him for both the ruinous war in Yemen and a sweeping purge of rivals within the royal family and the Saudi business elite. But the death of Khashoggi, a Virginia resident with many influential friends in Washington, has focused attention on how the administration's own policies have further enabled that recklessness.

Trump's evasive messaging gave the Saudis room to brush off the latest allegations. "The claims in this purported assessment are false," Fatimah Baeshen, a spokeswoman for the Saudi Embassy in Washington, told my colleagues. "We have and continue to hear various theories without seeing the primary basis for these speculations."

On Capitol Hill, though, it's a different story. Lawmakers from both parties are preparing to raise the pressure on Riyadh.

"If he is going to be the face of Saudi Arabia going forward, I think the kingdom will have a hard time on the world stage," Sen. Lindsay O. Graham (R-S.C.) said Sunday, referring to MBS. "They are an important ally, but when it comes to the crown prince, he is irrational, he is unhinged, and I think he has done a lot of damage to the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia, and I have no intention of working with him ever again."

But no matter the negative press, MBS is likely to ride out the storm. Just ask the CIA. "The general agreement is that he is likely to survive," said a U.S. official who briefed my colleagues. Mohammed's role as the future Saudi king, the official added, is "taken for granted."

(Source: The Washington Post)

At home and abroad, Emmanuel Macron ploughs lonely furrow

By Simon Tisdall

Emmanuel Macron's domestic difficulties and plunging approval ratings present a sharp contrast with his rising international profile. In a Europe lacking strong leaders ready or able to stand up to hard-right, populist nationalists at home and authoritarian regimes abroad, the French president cuts an exceptional figure. Or, at least, that is how he would prefer to be seen.

As last weekend's gathering of more than 60 foreign leaders at armistice services and a "peace forum" in Paris showed, Macron - France's youngest leader since Napoleon - is not without ambition on the world stage. Le Figaro suggested the elaborate ceremonies marked the start of an "intense" French global diplomatic offensive in support of democratic, humanitarian and multilateralist values.

Macron has backed events to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Human Rights Day is on 10 December - and is preparing to use France's 2019 presidency of the G7 to advance what he deems a progressive, internationalist agenda. He views May's EU parliamentary elections as crucial to stemming Europe's populist tide, and will actively campaign.

Macron has already served notice on Viktor Orbán, Hungary's anti-immigrant, anti-EU prime minister who was re-elected in a landslide earlier this year, that his ideas about "illiberal democracy" cannot stand. He has also targeted Matteo Salvini, Italy's far-right deputy prime minister. Nationalism and hate were spreading "like leprosy all around Europe", he declared last summer.

Such a robust defense of Europe's postwar social democratic order goes down well with centrist voters in countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, where moderate parties of left and right have lost electoral ground. Macron frankly reviles France's Rassemblement National (formerly



French president's progressive global ambitions come up against reality of nationalism and authoritarian regimes.

the Front National) and Germany's anti-immigrant Alternativa für Deutschland.

But the issue is not as clear-cut as his fans might pretend. Europe's "mainstream" center of gravity has shifted palpably to the right following the 2008 financial crash and large-scale refugee influxes. Orbán has many allies among Polish, Czech and Slovak nationalists. His views are echoed in Sebastian Kurz's Austrian coalition, which includes the once-banned far-right Freedom party, and on the fringes of Angela Merkel's ruling CDU-CSU alliance in Berlin. Enduring support for Brexit in Britain reflects this shift.

Time for General Mattis to move on And some thoughts on who his replacement should be

By Harvey M. Sapolsky

There is word that President Donald Trump is thinking about pushing Gen. James "Mad Dog" Mattis out as his Secretary of Defense, tired apparently of Mattis' slow rolling or blocking his defense initiatives. I hope if this happens President Trump picks me as Mattis' replacement. Unlike Mattis, no one will think I am a hidden Democrat. Unlike Mattis, I heartily agree with Trump's foreign-policy instincts. Expanding NATO to Russia's borders wasn't a good idea. And our allies from the Sea of Japan to our neighbor to the North are freeriding on the backs of American taxpayers by having our security guarantees without paying much to help defray the cost for their own defense. I am ready to sing the praises of our wonderful leader.

There is a price. In exchange for putting up with all the honor guards, ribbon cutting, and fawning from flag officers and other ambitious types, I will insist upon having more competition among the services. Competition is good for the economy, for our universities, for our politics, and for developing effective military doctrine and weapon systems. We need more of it, not less. We have the best aircraft because we have multiple air forces. The same is true for our strategic missiles,



satellites and UAVs. The Army is better because there is a Marine Corps. Competition among the services is the key to innovation and to strong civilian control over military policy. I am all for a Space Force as long as the other services can develop space requirements independently to fit their own warfare needs and perspectives. Monopolies are bad.

I also will insist that the Department of Defense discourage Congress and others from offering more acquisition reform. The depart-

ment has to be honest in explaining to them that there is no magical way to acquire complex weapon systems cheaply, quickly, and without disappointment. In fact, the United States has the most experience and the most success in buying such systems. Reforms usually only add to the procedural complexity for buying weapons and/or repeat failed and now forgotten past "solutions." The weapons are complex, costly and difficult to perfect because United States has to be prepared to fight in all environments

"Orbán has helped create a new normal inside the EU, a situation in which the bloc faces a choice between trying to force illiberal governments to toe some sort of liberal line and compromising with them as an acceptable reality. There are indications the Brussels bureaucracy may be going for the latter option," wrote Bloomberg analyst Leonid Bershidsky.

Macron's attempt to play Europe's champion is further undermined by claims that he is not quite the progressive he likes to appear. His own record on immigration is mixed, featuring border spats with Italy and Spain. His critics say he, too, harbors a haughty, authoritarian streak and that his neoliberal economic policies favor the better-off. Thanks largely to Merkel's slow eclipse and Italy's fiscal rebellion, his vaunted eurozone reforms appear dead on arrival.

Macron's one-man crusade to save multilateralism and the rules-based international order, while praiseworthy in principle, looks similarly ill-timed - and ill-fated. His attempts to seduce the arch-nationalist and protectionist Donald Trump with a mix of Gallic charm and straight-talking seemed to work for a while. The two engaged in an embarrassing love-in at last year's Bastille Day parade.

But all Macron's wooing - he was dubbed the "Trump whisperer" - failed to shift Trump on key issues such as climate change, Iran, and trade tariffs. Last weekend, Macron lambasted America First-style nationalism, as Trump looked on stonily. Suddenly, the "bromance" was over. Caustic Tweets mocking France's wartime record and jibes saying Trump lacked "common decency" ensued.

The trouble is, where Trump leads, the world's current crop of like-minded authoritarian leaders, from Russia and China to Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, follows. Macron may be in the right. He certainly has history on his side. But is that enough? Abroad, as at home, he is treading a lonely path.

(Source: The Guardian)

against opponents with the most challenging capabilities. Neither Disney nor Silicon Valley, the French Acquisition Corps nor Japanese car manufacturers, as good as they are, have easy answers to our military technology problems. Too often a focus on acquisition reform in the Congress is a way of avoiding more important discussions of what wars are necessary to fight and for what ends.

I promise only the good wars, the ones we win. Of course, that means fighting wars we really care about because our security is at risk, not other people's civil wars or other people's boundary disputes. America is a terrifically powerful country which fortunately lives far from most of the world's problems. Our advice and soldiers should be very cautiously distributed overseas. Just because we are so powerful and can intervene far from our shores does not mean that our interventions will be wise, widely welcomed, or hold the support of the American people. Our military technology allows us to bomb with great precision and near immunity. That only means it should be used with great restraint. I think President Trump believes that. If so, and if Mattis has to go, then I am tanned, rested, and ready to serve.

(Source: The National Interest)

Gaza expects new developments, Netanyahu's possible adventure

1 → However, it is likely that the Mossad tries to assassinate some of the Hamas's top officials by the US help, especially since the US has recently offered a \$5 million reward for two Hezbollah officials, and one with Hamas who is Saleh al-Aroui, a prominent leader of Hamas.

The victory in Gaza has military and political importance and will strengthen Hamas' position. This is while Netanyahu's financial pressure on Gaza and Hamas has lost effect after the United Nations monitored the power plant in Gaza. In other words, after the victory of Hamas, the situation in Gaza will not be the same.

The Zionist regime is quite disturbed as it is apparent from their media which are mirror of all the thoughts of decision-makers in Tel Aviv.

The Israeli media analyzed Netanyahu's speech on Sunday, and some have suggested the possibility of a war without a frontier by Tel Aviv that is against Palestinian resistance group in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Syria and other areas.

Alex Fishman, an analyst at Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper said, "The longer it takes for Israel to have an election day, the more likelihood of a war between Israel and Palestinian resistance group. Netanyahu's speech on Sunday was the most dangerous speeches he has ever delivered in recent years



which may push him to a war to restore his face after their defeat in Gaza. Netanyahu's objective is to postpone election by relying on his position as Israel's prime minister. However, the election should be held very soon to prevent threats. It is very unlikely that Lt. General Gadi Eisenkot, commander of the Israeli army, whose term ends next December, and other Israeli generals agree to another war."

However, others consider Netanyahu's

speech an attempt to calm Israel's internal affairs and repair his damaged reputation after his recent defeat. Among these analysts is Simeon Schiff, who in his article in Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper called Netanyahu's speech "a campaign speech".

"The editor of Haaretz newspaper Alfur Ben resembled Netanyahu's speech to an election campaign speech, and said, "Any military adventure in the north or south will be as a major challenge for Netanyahu, which

will end its term."

However, some believe that the pressure that Netanyahu is struggling with may make him think of an adventure or a widespread anti-Gaza war in response to critics, especially since protests in occupied Palestine are still ongoing against Netanyahu.

The Palestinian resistance groups are prepared, especially since all the evidence show that Netanyahu may turn to a military confrontation in Gaza. Netanyahu will not do anything to rebuild his tarnished reputation.

It is unlikely that Netanyahu takes a new adventure in Syria, but carrying out an operation in Gaza is by far simpler, as he pointed in his speech on Sunday.

Fadi Abdulhadi, a Palestinian expert told the Palestine Alyoum, "Netanyahu's speeches carry two messages, one for the domestic front and one for the residents of Gaza. Netanyahu's words are dangerous and maybe pave the way for a war on Gaza."

Adnan Abu Amer, another Palestinian expert, in an interview with the Palestine Alyoum said, "Netanyahu's speech resembles a war speech."

Ahmad Al-Tayebi, a representative of the Arab Knesset, told the Palestine Alyoum, "It's not unlikely that Netanyahu would launch a new attack on Gaza to improve his condition."

In any case, it is not unlikely that Netanyahu seeks a new adventure in Gaza.

Transatlantic differences justify European efforts to become more autonomous: Finaud



1 → Because of the priority given by most EU Member States to NATO for ensuring collective defense but also the presence of neutral countries within the EU, the balance and distribution of roles between the two organizations was always carefully maintained, and the EU used its military and civilian capacities mostly in external crisis management operations (for instance in Bosnia, Somalia, Iraq, Ukraine, Libya, Niger, Kosovo, etc.). More recently, the reasons why France and Germany saw an interest in developing further EU strategic autonomy were related to the apparent reduced American interest in transatlantic solidarity, and the prospect of the United Kingdom leaving the EU, because the UK was one of the two leading military powers in Europe but always opposed any progress towards a 'European army'.

Speaking to the "Europe 1" radio, French President Emmanuel Macron called for the formation of a real European military to counter Russia's threats and also independence from USA. In the interview, the French president said: "We have to defend ourselves against Russia, China and even USA." Why does France now name the United States alongside China and Russia as a threat?

A: This was a distorted quote. In fact, President Macron said that the EU should have its own army to protect itself from Russia and China but also to become less dependent on the U.S. for its own defense.

Trump opposed the plan and in response to French President Macron's remarks called the formation of this army offensive. Due to the Trump reaction and his renewed appeal to Europeans to give money to NATO, can these disputes threaten NATO's future?

A: The fact that the Trump administration unilaterally announced its withdrawal from the JCPOA and the INF Treaty was indeed considered in Europe as a blow to European security, and the American pressure for increased defense spending by the European Member States of NATO in reality means pressure to import more American armaments. Such transatlantic differences indeed weaken the Alliance and justify European efforts to become more autonomous.

Ursula von der Leyen, the German defense minister, recently said that the founding of the European Army and its future activities could not only increase the security of European countries but also solve international crises. If the joint European army do missions outside Europe in addition to missions inside Europe, is this not a parallel with NATO?

A: For many years, both NATO and the EU developed their own distinct capacities to conduct external operations while maintaining good cooperation and coordination. This allows to avoid duplication while the EU conducts both civil and military crisis management operations in countries where NATO is absent. In any case, establishing a 'real European army' can only be a long-term goal, even if it has been made easier with Brexit.

Threat of war and famine on Iran: False imagination

By Hanif Ghaffari

TEHRAN — The Guardian newspaper in a report on Jeremy Hunt's trip to Iran wrote, "In his visit with Mohammad Javad Zarif, Hunt said that "Repetition of the first WWI in Iran is a possibility." Hunt, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the UK in an interview with the Guardian, threatened: "We are not a small power in the Middle East but a major actor."

Hunt added that "Saudi Arabia, not Iran, is Britain's strategic partner in the Middle East."

It is clear that the report, broadcast on the BBC on November 9, 2018, on the Great Persian Famine and the widespread mass starvation and disease in Iran under rule of the Qajar dynasty during World War I was not accidental and was a reminder of one of the greatest genocides of the 20th century which was used as an introduction to Hunt-Zarif visit.

The Guardian writes: "The great and powerful Iran today is the most popular revolution in contemporary history. Iran was



invaded by Saddam's Iraqi regime years ago, which, according to numerous documents, including the official report of the "Matrix Churchill Scandal", enjoyed widespread and covert weapons protection by British big companies."

Today, Iran is so powerful that it disrupted Kissinger's Balkanization plan - Tony Blair's plan in Syria and Iraq - and did away with the ISIS. Iran today is not the same country as it was during the First World War when it was faced with famine and a crippling, deep financial crisis. Iran was turned into a dead society through the Imperial Bank of Persia, a British bank that operated as the state bank and bank of issue in Iran between 1889 and 1929. Then at one point, 2500 Kazakhs occupied Tehran, and a "regime change" occurred.

Saudi Arabia and allies, who enjoy the most expensive and modern British-American weapons, still are struggling with the Yemeni war and its primitive tribes. It is preposterous that Jeremy Hunt thought of threatening prestigious Iran by recalling the tragedy of the genocide of the First World War.

FATF member countries, the very center of money laundering

1 → According to Wall Street Journal, two third of Canadian banks don't follow standards that combat money laundering.

According to the Week, at least 18 of the 20 biggest banks in Europe, including five UK institutions, have been fined for offences relating to money laundering over the last decade.

Donald Toon, director of prosperity at the National Crime Agency, admitted that money laundering in the UK was "a very big

problem" and estimated that the amount of money laundered each year has now risen to a staggering £150 billion.

According to Reuters, Estonia, the European Union member country of just 1.3 million people, has been at the center of a money-laundering scandal involving Danske Bank, handled more than \$1 trillion in cross-border flows between 2008 and 2017.

However, FATF had not put Estonia on the list of high-risk countries in terms of fi-

nancial transactions; and the country claimed that it cooperated with Council of Europe Select Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures (MONEYVAL).

According to these statistics, it seems that "fighting money laundering" is merely used as a cover-up to control some countries and holding them back in doing business with each other.

It seems that our Foreign Minister should

look for systematic money laundering in European Union and other world markets and publicize them. Contrary to his statement, there has never been money laundering with such magnitude in Iran and the existing money laundering activities can be controlled with complete enforcement of local laws against money laundering and following check laws as well as implementing the local scheme for tax on investment income.

Complicity: U.S. must stop supporting Saudi narrative on Khashoggi murder

TEHRAN (FNA) — Facing pressure to act against the Saudis over the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, but also clearly not wanting to imperil U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia, the Trump administration has announced sanctions on 17 Saudis over the grisly murder.

It's a way to keep everything in line with the oft-changing Saudi narratives, and their consistent theme that the crown prince MBS was wholly blameless.

Meaning, the U.S. won't sanction the despotic regime. Indeed, all 17 people they did sanction are people that the Saudis had already singled out as being targets of their own token investigation. The U.S. used almost that entire Saudi investigation list, except for military generals, as their own list of sanctions targets.

Now U.S. Treasury officials claim they did "achieve justice" for Khashoggi's family, which is far from the truth. They just want to sell the idea that they did something, without doing anything at all that might risk juicy U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

Here, the rules of Global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) which became International Law in 2014 are simple: If a country knows that the arms about to be sold will be used for genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes, then they must stop the transfer.

The ATT also means that every state that has signed up must obey strict rules on international arms transfers. This will at least help to stem the flow of weapons that fuel bloody conflicts, atrocities and state repression around its own citizens and the world, particularly in the Middle East.

Unfortunately, by ignoring the grisly murder of Khashoggi by the Saudi regime, the United States "knowingly" and "deliberately" has refused to adhere to the Arms Trade Treaty, reflect the rules of the treaty, or implement those laws as regards its Saudi vassals.

So far, the policy has had terrible results. The regime had had a free hand to murder its own citizens and critics almost everywhere, while thousands of people have also been killed, injured or forced to flee their homes because of the U.S.-backed, Saudi-led violence and atrocities in places like Syria and Yemen. The majority



of casualties are civilians, mainly women and children. What's more, U.S.-made weapons such as missiles and bombs continue to destroy vital civilian infrastructure, pushing survivors into absolute poverty and despair.

On that basis, the U.S. government is in breach of the Arms Trade Treaty for allowing the export of American-made missiles and military equipment to Saudi Arabia that have been used to kill civilians. The accusation comes from international lawyers, human rights groups and the United Nations as well. They are all expressing concerns about Saudi-led coalition attacks, accusing the U.S. government of failing in its legal duty to take steps to prevent and suppress violations of International Law and International Humanitarian Law. They further accuse Saudi Arabia of hiding the evidence and perverting the course of justice over Khashoggi's murder at the Saudi consulate in

Istanbul on October 2.

By now it should readily be evident that it is American weapons and complicity that have been central to Saudi Arabia's criminal behavior in the region. President Donald Trump and his administration have been complicit in this criminality, by continuing to support the Saudis and endorse their fake investigation, despite international concerns as well as strong and increasing evidence that Khashoggi was killed under a direct order by Mohamed Bin Salman.

Under these circumstances, the U.S. government will have to look elsewhere in legally justifying its arming of Saudi Arabia and its diplomatic support at the UN. Until that happens, as per the global Arms Trade Treaty, Washington must end its arms exports to the Saudis or further share responsibility for Saudi war crimes and the crime committed against Khashoggi.

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Laser therapy award named after Iranian scientist Ali Javan

HEALTH TEHRAN—World Association for Laser Therapy (WALT) named an award after the late Iranian scientist Ali Javan, the association's representative in Iran announced.

According to Reza Fekrazad, who is also the president of Iranian Medical Laser Association (IMLA), the Award was granted for the first time to five laser therapy scientists in a ceremony in France on October 15, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The winners were researchers in fields of fundamental science, medical science, plastic surgery and cosmetic surgery coming from Japan, Russia, England, India and Norway, said Fekrazad.

Henceforth, the Ali Javan Award ceremony will be held every two year in different countries and Canada will host the next ceremony, he said.

Ali Javan, the Iranian physicist and inventor was the driving force behind the invention of the first gas laser – technology that later revolutionized surgery and made possible compact-disc players and supermarket scanners; in 2007 he was ranked No 12 on The Daily Telegraph's list of the "Top 100 Living Geniuses".

Javan received numerous awards and honors such as the OSA Fredrick Ives Medal and Albert Einstein World Award of Science. He passed away on September 12, 2016, at the age of 90.

Ali Javan

Dec. 26, 1926 - Sept. 12, 2016



In 2007, Ali Javan was ranked No 12 on The Daily Telegraph's list of the "Top 100 Living Geniuses".

IRIMC calls on UN to lift sanctions against Iran impeding medicine import



HEALTH TEHRAN—The Iranian Medical Council (IRIMC) has called on United Nations Secretary General António Guterres to lift sanctions hampering medicine importation to Iran.

Iraj Fazel, president of IRIMC, and Mohammadreza Zafarqandi, head of IRIMC supreme council, in a letter to Guterres regretted about the adverse effects of brutal sanctions imposed on Iran by the U.S. following its withdrawal from Iran's nuclear deal also known as JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) on May 8, 2018.

As you know having access to healthcare services is a fundamental human

right and everybody is entitled to it, the letter reads, therefore, all countries are required to respect and safeguard this right and strive to exercise it.

In addition, all countries should avoid imposing limitations on any other communities' accessibility to the healthcare services.

Illegal economic sanctions imposed against Iran by the U.S. which is limiting international trade in pharmaceutical industry has seriously reduced our accessibility to medical services, pharmaceuticals and medical equipment, the letter added.

The letter lastly underscored the need for taking an urgent, humanitarian measure to change the current trend.

Iran's Mostafavi receives "Pasteur International Talent" award



HEALTH TEHRAN—Dr. Ehsan Mostafavi of the Pasteur Institute of Iran received the "Pasteur International Talent" award for his central role in the study of emerging and reemerging diseases in Iran.

The awards were granted during the fourth annual Institut (French for Institute) Pasteur International Network Symposium on November 16, the institute's website reported.

Dr. Claude Flamand from the Institut Pasteur in French Guiana was the other receiver of "Pasteur International Talent"; he was chosen for setting up an epidemiology laboratory in Guiana.

The "Pasteur International Talent" award, worth €10,000, aims to recognize,

support and kickstart career development for researchers with high potential within the Institut Pasteur International Network.

Dr. Ehsan Mostafavi is the director of the department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the Pasteur Institute of Iran. Mostafavi studies neglected parasitic diseases and tropical diseases. He directs the Research Center for Emerging and Reemerging Infectious Diseases at the Pasteur Institute in Iran, which houses the National Reference Centers for Plague, Tularemia and Q Fever.

The Pasteur Institut is a French non-profit private foundation dedicated to the study of biology, micro-organisms, diseases, and vaccines.

Mental health first aid should be mandatory in every workplace

Theresa May should ensure "mental health first aid" is available in every workplace alongside staff trained to respond to basic injuries, according to a letter backed by British businesses.

Royal Mail, WH Smith, Alan Sugar and management consultants PwC are among more than 50 companies asking the prime minister to fulfil her manifesto pledge to update health and safety regulations and put mental and physical conditions on equal footing.

They warn that the current burden of anxiety, stress and depression in the workplace carries an "astronomical cost" to the economy, but an untold human cost on individuals and their relationships.

"As an employer, we have a duty of care for our staff and whilst some employers are at the forefront of change and equalising their number of mental health first aiders with physical first aiders, we cannot afford to leave anyone behind," the letter says.

"Cost cannot be a reason for objections because, in the long run, it is inevitable that making mental health first aid in the workplace mandatory will save money.

"Success will ensure that employees everywhere can access a trained staff member to receive initial support and guidance if they are dealing with a mental health issue at work.

"Success will ensure every employee has the right to a mentally healthy environment. "Crucially it will also mean we can 'finally break the stigma of mental health in the workplace."

The campaign, launched by Mental Health First Aid England, estimates failing to address these issues costs the UK economy more than £35bn a year from 15.4 million days lost to anxiety, stress and depression.

However, an independent review com-



missioned by Theresa May last year, suggests the cost could be three times higher, up to £99bn, when accounting for the 300,000 people with long-term mental health conditions who are laid off every year.

While Theresa May has said she will introduce new legislation to protect against this for schools and employers, there has been little progress on the latter.

More than 865 employers have already signed the Time to Change pledge to take mental health conditions more seriously at work. However, the first aid campaign shows it is not enough to leave it up to businesses discretion and argues all employees have equal entitlement to support.

"This is just one part of improving approaches to workplace mental health, but it represents an important step forward," Fionnuala Bonnar, chief operating officer of Mental Health First Aid.

"Ensuring that first aid support is there for the millions of people who struggle with their mental health every year will make a big difference to how we all think about our health as a whole."

Stephen Clarke, chief executive of WH Smith, added: "We are calling for this legislative change, alongside many other leading employers, as we firmly believe that everyone should have access to first aid support for their mental health regardless of where they work."

(Source: The Independent)

What does autism look like in the brain?

People on the autism spectrum often dislike exposure to unexpected stimuli, but why is that? New research takes a look at what happens in the brain, and how that relates to a person's ability to tolerate exposure to various stimuli.

What happens in the brains of people with autism?

"People with autism do not like unexpected stimuli, and it may be because brains are not as efficient at rapidly shifting between ideas or thoughts," notes Dr. Jeff Anderson, a professor in Radiology at the University of Utah Health in Salt Lake City.

Recently, Dr. Anderson and colleagues decided to try and gain a better understanding as to why individuals with autism may experience some of their symptoms.

To do so, they directed their attention to the complex circuitry of the human brain. "We wondered if we could see how local circuits in the brain react in patients with autism," explains the researcher.

The research team reports the findings of their study in the journal JAMA Network Open. The full study paper is available online.

Overly persistent brain connections

First, the researchers conducted functional MRI (fMRI) scans on 90 male participants, of which 52 had a diagnosis of autism and 38 did not. The participants with autism were aged between 19 and 34, while the rest of the volunteers – who acted as the control group – had ages ranging between 20 and 34.

Then, to confirm the initial findings, the specialists compared their data with that collected from a further 1,402 people who participated in the Autism Brain Imaging Data Exchange (ABIDE) study. Of these, 579 participants (80 female and 499 male) had autism. The remaining 823 participants (211 female and 612 male) did not have autism and acted as the control group.

Dr. Anderson and team used a novel



fMRI method to explore brain activity in the participants on the current study. More specifically, they looked at the duration of connections established across brain regions.

"We don't have good methods for looking at the brain on these timescales. It's been a blind spot because it falls in between typical MRI and [electroencephalogram] studies," explains Dr. Anderson.

Thanks to the fMRI scans, the researchers were able to confirm that in the brains of people with autism, connections persist for more extended periods than they do in the brains of neurotypical individuals. In other words, in autism, the brain finds it harder to switch between processes.

In those with autism, brain connections remained synchronized for up to 20 seconds, while they disappeared faster in individuals without this condition. Moreover, in those with autism, symptom severity appeared to increase with connectivity duration.

'A whole new perspective'

These findings, which were consistent with data from the ABIDE study, may explain why people with autism can experience distress when exposed to numerous stimuli at once, the research team believes.

"Individuals with autism who have greater social dysfunction have an increase in synched activity in their scans," notes postdoctoral researcher Jace King, first author of the study paper.

(Source: Medical News Today)

WHO ready to assist Iran in improving road safety measures

Representative of World Health Organization (WHO) in Iran, today at the 4th National Traffic and Safety Conference expressed readiness of WHO to expand supporting Iran in reduction of road traffic fatalities and injuries.

During his opening remarks addressing hundreds of high ranking officers and experts of University of Traffic Police, Dr. Christoph Hamelmann underscored that currently WHO is working with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and other stakeholders including Police Department of the Islamic Republic of Iran (NAJA) on the implementation of key components of the national road safety plan that includes Improvements of emergency care, road safety reports and the work on an integrated traffic injury registry.

He referred to the national Road Safety Strategic Plan (2011-2020) of Iran that has 14 strategic objectives mainly on speed management, motorists' and pedestrians' safety, development of a comprehensive crash data bank, road infrastructure safety, vehicle safety, and post-crash management and said: "within 2 years the strategic plan would need a revision and WHO is ready to support this process".

More than 90% of global traffic fatalities occur in low and middle-income countries, which own only 48% of the world's registered vehicles.

The proportion of traffic injuries in Iran is higher than in most other parts of the eastern Mediterranean region and elsewhere in the world, and is one of the country's most serious problems.

To save millions of lives the UN General Assembly proclaimed the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. It evolves around five pillars including building road safety management capacity; improving the safety of road infrastructure; further developing the safety of vehicles; enhancing the behavior of road users; and improving post-crash response.

In 2018 more than 1.25 million people lost their lives on the world's roads which is among the top 5 leading causes of death in Iran.

On 18th of November the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims (WDoR) 2018 with the theme "Roads have stories" was commemorated across to world to increase awareness on importance of Safer Roads & Mobility.

(Source: WHO)

Sugary treats which cause obesity account for 70% of items at supermarket checkouts

Supermarket checkouts and promotional displays are loaded with obesity-fuelling sweets and sugary drinks aimed at enticing young children who are shopping with their parents, new research has revealed.

High-sugar or calorie products – set to be included on a government blacklist – account for 70 per cent of food and drink in these high-visibility areas at five leading supermarkets' stores, according to the Obesity Health Alliance (OHA).



Less than 1 per cent of food or drink in these high-visibility areas were fruit or vegetable products.

The findings suggest major retailers have not acted to change the use of unhealthy promotions, despite the government pledging a crackdown in the next round of its Child Obesity Strategy.

Caroline Cerny, who leads the Obesity Health Alliance, a coalition of more than 40 charities, said: "We know that where products are located in shops influences how likely we are to purchase them.

"Sugary treats prominently displayed at checkouts or store entrances will be highly tempting to anyone, but especially children who will then likely pester their parents to buy them."

The UK is currently grappling with an obesity epidemic that is affecting children at increasingly young ages, and contributing to the soaring cost of conditions like type 2 diabetes, as well as cancer and heart disease.

More than a third of children leaving primary school at age 11 are overweight or obese, according to the latest figures.

In response, the government introduced its "sugar tax" on soft drinks, which took effect in April this year, and is consulting on a second round of plans that will look at takeaways located near schools and promotional deals.

In August, the OHA visited five supermarkets – Asda, Aldi, Morrisons, Sainsbury's and Tesco – to assess products at store entrances, checkout areas and aisle ends.

It found 43 per cent of products are included on a Public Health England's draft proposal for its sugar reduction programme, while 27 per cent fell foul of calorie reduction guidelines.

"These powerful promotions tempt shoppers to make unhealthy last-minute decisions," said Bryony Sinclair, senior policy manager at the World Cancer Research Fund, who called the deals "unacceptable".

"Many of these food and drinks contain more sugar than the daily recommended amount for a young child. Eating too much sugar can lead to weight gain, and being overweight or obese increases the risk of 12 different types of cancer."

(Source: The Independent)

'Sales of nanotech products to hit \$175m'

He said that nanotechnology is used in many industries like printed electronics, lithium battery, solar cells and faucets.

Eleven sanitary faucet manufacturers, which cover 50 percent of the market in Iran, use nanotechnology in their products, he said.



Nano-based products increased from 13 items in 2008 to 494 products in 2018, he said.

There are 194 companies active in the field of nanotechnology in 2018 out of which, 60 percent were initiated as nanotechnology companies and the rest changed or developed as such companies.

He called Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Georgia, India, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia and China as the targets for exporting nanotechnology products.

Beware of tech money in entertainment, Liberty Media execs warn

The head of Liberty Media, one of the biggest long-term investors in the media business, has sounded the alarm about Silicon Valley money that has flooded the entertainment industry — and warned that even Netflix could eventually be subsumed by the likes of Google, Amazon and Apple.

"No traditional media player would find it possible to play on these terms," said Greg Maffei, CEO of Liberty Media, speaking at the company's investor meeting on Wednesday.

The comments reflect growing concern from traditional media companies about looming threats from tech giants that have been slowly entering into the realm of content production without necessarily needing to make much money off it.

"The people who are paying don't need to have it pay for itself," said Maffei, who suggested that Apple could afford \$20 million for a 30 minute "Carpool Karaoke" episode by selling a few more devices.

Amazon could justify a "mind blowing content budget," Maffei said, thanks to its 100 million Prime subscribers.

Maffei, a former chief financial officer of Microsoft, now oversees a company that is in the midst of digital shifts in a variety of entertainment businesses.

Liberty Media has stakes in music, sports and entertainment companies, and its assets include music streaming company Pandora, satellite radio company SiriusXM, ticketing company Live Nation, Formula One racing and the Atlanta Braves. It also owns stakes in Viacom, food-focused digital media company Tastemade and AT&T, as well as a position in iHeart Radio's debt.

Maffei was joined by John Malone, the Liberty Media Chairman who is considered the architect of the modern cable industry. Malone personally holds stakes in companies including as Discovery Communications, Lionsgate and Starz.

Malone said that as tech companies crowded out traditional media players, others companies could find opportunities in being purely content suppliers.

"Not everybody is going to be able to do a global direct-to-consumer platform, so many will be trying to move into that space as a supplier, in some cases branded and in other cases as part of the food chain."

Maffei also noted that money from tech companies had not just meant pricier productions — it also meant more content and places to consume it, highlighting in a slideshow presentation that online content has grown 680 percent since 2012, while the number of over-the-top services has shot up to around 200.

Just about every major media company either has or is working on its own streaming subscription service, with a wide variety of smaller niche offerings catering to particular consumers tastes.

Maffei said he did not expect them all to survive. "I have a full expectation that we will see a RIP for video platforms," he said ominously, when drawing a comparison to streaming music startups that were winnowed in recent years to a few players.

Maffei said that most people will pay just \$38 per month for streaming services, which he said would be fine for deep-pocketed tech companies but could be a problem for the current pay-TV ecosystem that relies on consumers paying in excess of \$100 per month in long-term contracts. Maffei also noted that piracy and discounting is rampant in the streaming world.

Maffei praised Netflix for becoming the "king" but questioned how long its run of success could continue.

"What does winning look like?" Maffei said. "You have to ask a few questions. They're going to burn \$3 billion of free cash flow this year," adding that the company had just raised \$2 billion in debt to fund content — its third debt raise this year.

(Source: nbcnews.com)

NDF provides \$430m for knowledge-based companies

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The National Development Fund (NDF) has provided 18 trillion rials (about \$430 million) for knowledge-based companies over the current Iranian calendar year 1397 (ending March 20, 2019), Mehr reported on Monday.

According to a tripartite agreement signed between NDF, vice presidency for science and technology, and Planning and Budget Organization, the credit is being offered to knowledge-based companies in the form of loans, said Seyyed Mohammad Sahebkar, an official with vice presidency for science and technology.

He added that the interest rates on bank loans for companies active in the field of water, agriculture, natural resources and environment is 10 percent and for firms active in industry and mine the figure is 12 percent.

The knowledge-based companies can file their request in the banks and benefit from its facilities after their case was approved by the vice presidency for science and technology, he explained.

Applicants can find more information on daneshbonyan.isti.ir.

In early July, the deputy science and technology vice-president for investments Alireza Daliri said that Iran has provided 120 trillion rials (2.8 billion dollars) facilities for 1400 knowledge-based companies during past five years.

During the previous Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 2017-2018) knowledge-based companies received 38 trillion rials (about \$905 million) facilities from banks, he said.

Daliri announced that the companies received over 10 trillion rials (around \$238 million) from banks from March 21 to June 21.

By March 2017, banks had provided 1.4 trillion rials (about \$33 million) while the figure reached 5 trillion rials (about \$120 million) in March 2018, Daliri added.



Plan devised to improve online environment for kids: minister

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plans to improve online environment for kids, the ICT minister wrote on his Instagram account, Mehr reported.

"Despite the rapid growth of IT in Iran, the content for children and online parental control has not improved in recent years, causing damages by ignoring the children's safety," Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi lamented.

The ICT ministry has urged NGOs and artists

in order to modify content creation for children in cyberspace, he explained.

The ministry also plans to hold a festival on web series and online short films for children, he explained.

In mid-November, the ICT ministry released a survey according to which, only eight percent of Iranian parents monitor their children's online activity in Iran, the minister wrote on his Twitter account last week.

The ministry is projected to introduce parental control applications in the near future.



China launches two new navigation satellites

China has successfully launched a pair of navigation satellites to expand the nation's Beidou (Compass) system to global coverage.

The launch is the 33rd the country has undertaken this year and the ninth contributing to the Beidou project.

The four-hour mission placed the satellites in medium Earth orbit (MEO) on the back of one of China's Long March rockets.

Launching from Sichuan Province, at the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre (XSCL), the satellites are smaller than a car - measuring 2.25m by 1.22m by 1m.

They will form part of the Beidou Navigation Satellite System (BDS) which the Chinese government has designed and constructed to meet its own national security standards.

Speaking to Sky News Wu Weiqi, the deputy director for XSCL, told Sky News: "Under the demands of our society, under the needs of construction of modernization, and to meet people's desire for a better life, China has big demands to



develop its own launch technology.

"China also has a blueprint for aerospace development, not only plans for manned space flight, but also has satellites planned for communication, navigation, climate prediction, earth environment monitoring."

Xiejun, the chief designer of Beidou Navigation Satellite, told Sky News: "The Beidou navigation system is very key for the future of Chinese aerospace."

"Step by step, China is getting closer to US GPS in this sector. The successful development of the Beidou system

marks Chinese aerospace's important development.

"But compared with US, navigation satellites are only one part of aerospace technology - we should also compete in other sectors too."

Speaking to Sky News about the security implications of the launch, Alexandra Stickings, space policy and security research analyst for think tank RUSI, said: "Global navigation satellite systems have become incredibly important for the military."

"What these systems do is provide very accurate navigation and timing systems. These are used for everything from maritime navigation to precision weaponry. It's what make smart bombs smart, essentially."

"The more that China is able to access these signals and the more accurate these signals become the more they can integrate that into their military, and then they could potentially start to rival the US in terms of precision military operations."

The BDS has been classed as providing

95% accuracy within six metres horizontally, and 95% accuracy within 10 metres vertically.

Navigation satellites are generally considered a shared global resource - with the American Global Positioning System (GPS) being among the most widely used.

A rival to GPS is being developed by the EU, called Galileo, and in the face of the UK potentially being frozen out of the Galileo project the prime minister announced that the country will develop its own satellite system.

While the satellite navigation systems are considered a public resource, the nations that operate them often reserve the most accurate bands of measurement for their own military uses.

Interference in GPS signals has become a significant threat for military forces and traditional map-reading and non-digital navigational skills are being stressed following suggestions that hostile nations are developing the capabilities to disrupt satellite navigation.

(Source: news.sky.com)

Tech hacks that help you beat holiday stress

It's supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year, but for many of us, the holidays are an avalanche of obligations, overspending, guessing-games, travel nightmares, and time-management woes. While technology might be lagging behind on ways to make your holiday companions more palatable, there are some ways to use it that keep your blood pressure in check and your bank account in the black.

Let's start with the workplace. The holidays can add extra stress around the office as gift exchanges and holiday cards - technically tokens of gratitude - wreak havoc on your time and budget.

■ Automate your gift exchange

Office gift exchanges are a major culprit when it comes to holiday stress. Whether it's Secret Santa or deciding which colleagues you feel obligated to buy a gift for, wracking your brain for ideas and staying within your budget take their toll. But there are a few ways to automate these tasks that keep you from indulging in holiday waste (whether it's adding to landfills, buying gifts that no one wants or needs, or overthinking it all).

The best part about these sites is that many allow you to upload a wish list. And while for some that might take the thoughtfulness out of the endeavor, it keeps participants from wasting money on generic gifts that get trashed or re-gifted (by some estimates, Americans spend \$16 billion a year on gifts that end up in the trash). You might as well get someone something they want if you're going to spend the money.

■ Be a holiday travel disaster prepare

Snow, freezing rain, clueless people in line for security — there are some things you just can't control, even with the best technology. But what you can do is prepare for the worst by loading up your smartphone with apps that make it easier to react to being stranded in the airport.

If you're not a frequent traveler, let's start with the basics. You should always download your airline's app to your phone before heading off to the airport. Even if you purchased your ticket from a third-party site,



the airline's app will let you keep track of any delays. Most, like the Delta app, will also let you change seats up until the last minute, track your bags, and even reschedule delayed or canceled flights without having to stand in line at the desk.

Plenty of people still don't know that the airline owes you almost nothing if a flight is delayed or canceled due to weather, but that won't stop people from clogging up the lines at the desk insisting that the airline put them up for the night. Don't fall into this trap and waste hours of your life listening to other people argue. If you're stuck in a city where you don't know anyone (for example, if you're on a layover), download and pre-register yourself on an app like Hotel Tonight — that way, if you need to grab your luggage and come back the next day, you can save yourself as much money as possible on a last-minute hotel room. The people in line are going to have to do that same thing, but you'll have snagged the best room and price by the time they're done with their futile lobbying.

■ Self-care

There's still no tech that can make the people around you more bearable. As you go about your shopping

or get stuck in that traffic jam near the mall, it might be a good idea to download some apps to your phone that can help you cope.

We know that music can help reduce stress. Download a few different playlists to your phone — one to hype you up for the grind and a few to calm you down when you're white-knuckling the steering wheel or shopping cart. If you're out and about, throw some headphones into your bag so you can access these on public transportation or in the store.

While you may not be able to sit down in lotus pose in the middle of your holiday grocery shopping, it's worth looking into apps like Headspace, Binaural, Simple Habit, or Inscapes, just to name a few.

Not into people telling you how to relax when you're already stressed out? Perhaps you're better off with the Calm app, which also carries a library of bedtime stories read by soothing voices. While the goal is not to fall asleep in the store, anything that chills you out could be worth a try.

■ Away-messages for your texts

Granted, you might not want to miss a text telling you what to pick up while you're still at the store, but if your phone is vibrating non-stop from friends wanting to share their drama while you need to get things done, go retro with an AIM away message-style auto response to your texts. You can use Safest Text Auto Reply and Away Messages to let your friends and family know that you're busy and will get back to them (though these apps won't automatically send messages for you—you'll still need to click send).

You can also pre-program auto-replies on your phone with these instructions if you just can't mute your life for an hour or two.

If you want a kind, gentle way to do it you might pre-program a message to say "Auto-reply: I'm just trying to finish up a couple little things and turned off my messages — be back with everyone in just a bit." It's nicer than anything you're thinking in the moment.

(Source: forbes.com)

Major natural carbon sink may soon become carbon source, scientists discover

Until humans can find a way to geoengineer ourselves out of the climate disaster we've created, we must rely on natural carbon sinks, such as oceans and forests, to suck carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. These ecosystems are deteriorating at the hand of climate change, and once destroyed they may not only stop absorbing carbon from the atmosphere, but start emitting it.

Ecosystems that host a carbon-dioxide rich type of soil called peat, known as peatlands, are the most efficient natural carbon sink on the planet. When undisturbed, they store more carbon dioxide than all other vegetation types on Earth combined. But when they're drained and deforested, they can release nearly six percent of global carbon dioxide emissions each year.

Climate researchers are worried that many of the peatlands soaking up carbon now will soon be doing the opposite.

Global land area

"Global peatlands cover only about 3 percent of global land area, but hold around 30 percent of the earth's soil organic carbon," said Qianlai Zhuang, a professor of Earth, atmospheric and planetary sciences at Purdue University.

"Peatlands act like a 'terrestrial ocean' because of their sequestering carbon, but will this large amount of peat carbon be released under a warmer climate, causing further warming?"

In collaboration with Sirui Wang, a



Ph.D. candidate at Purdue, Zhuang looked to peatlands in the Peruvian Amazon to try to answer this question.

According to an earth systems model spanning from 12,000 years ago to 2100

AD, this relatively small basin could lose up to 500 million tons of carbon by the end of this century. That's about 5 percent of current global annual fossil fuel carbon emissions, or 10 percent of U.S. emissions,

"Peatlands act like a 'terrestrial ocean' because of their sequestering carbon, but will this large amount of peat carbon be released under a warmer climate, causing further warming?"

being spit back out into the atmosphere.

By most estimates, South America will become both warmer and wetter by the end of the century. Zhuang's findings, which were published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences on Monday, show that higher temperatures lead to more peat carbon loss, while increased precipitation slightly enhances the build-up of peat carbon over long timescales. Together, this is likely to increase carbon loss from peatlands to the atmosphere.

Significant peat stocks

Peatlands in northwest Peru remain nearly intact, but this isn't the case in most places with significant peat stocks, which are being cleared to make room for agriculture. Peatlands in some parts of the world, including Canada, Siberia and Southeast Asia, have already turned into significant carbon sources. The same fate may be coming soon for the Peruvian peatlands.

"If the area we looked at could represent the whole Amazonia or tropical peatlands, the loss of peat carbon to the atmosphere under future climate scenarios should be of great concern to our society," Zhuang said.

"Agricultural intensification and increasing land-use disturbances, such as forest fires, threaten the persistence of peat carbon stocks. These peatland ecosystems may turn into carbon sources instead of sinks unless necessary actions are taken." (Source: eurekalert.org)

Stunning pinwheel nebula is a cosmic cataclysm in the making

This Wolf-Rayet star system is formally known as 2XMM J160050.7-514245, but to the researchers who recently investigated this enigmatic object, it's simply "Apep" — an exotic object named for the serpentine ancient Egyptian god of chaos. In a press release, Joseph Callingham, the lead author of the new study and an astronomer at the Netherlands Institute for Radio Astronomy (ASTRON), said "it's the first such system to be discovered in our own galaxy" — a system he never expected to find "in our own backyard."

Indeed, astronomers have observed Wolf-Rayet stars before, but only in other galaxies. These massive star systems are on the verge of entering into their death throes, at which time they'll generate a type of supernova that emits an extremely powerful and narrow jet of plasma — the dreaded gamma-ray burst.

Apep is one such gamma-ray progenitor system, featuring a massive triple star system at its core — a binary pair and a lone star — and vast spiral arms composed of gas and dust. The system is located around 8,000 light-years from Earth, which is uncomfortably close given its explosive potential.

"This was a very fun project to do in some ways, in the sense that Joe found this object and first showed it to me in 2012 when we were officemates as undergrads in Sydney — and it took us six years to gather all the data to reveal this surprising story," Benjamin Pope, a NASA Sagan fellow at New York University's Center for Cosmology

and Particle Physics and a co-author of the new study, told Gizmodo. "Sometimes science is slow! But I remember when last year, the day before my Ph.D. defense in Oxford, he was visiting and showed me the picture of the Apep spiral — I literally gasped, it was so shocking. There's really nothing quite like this."

Mid infrared camera

Using the VISIR mid-infrared camera on the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope, Pope, Callingham, and their colleagues measured the velocity of the dust within the spiral arms. At this end-stage of their brief life cycle (these systems only last a few hundred thousand years — a blink of the eye in cosmological terms), stars within Wolf-Rayet systems spin rapidly, producing stellar winds that move at horrendous speeds. These winds carry significant portions of stellar material into space, and they're responsible for forming the majestic plumes of dust particles. In the case of Apep, its spiral arms measure several light-years across.

By measuring the rotational speeds within this nebula, the researchers concluded that at least one of the three stars within the system is spinning fast enough such that it'll trigger a long-duration gamma-ray burst when it finally explodes as supernova (the exact timing is still impossible to predict). The speed of gas within the nebula was clocked at 12 million kilometers per hour, but the dust is moving at "just" 570 million kilometers per hour.

(Source: gizmodo.com)

Powerful new map depicts environmental degradation across Earth

UC geography professor Tomasz Stepinski created the new world map showing dramatic changes in land use over the last quarter century. Stepinski, a professor in UC's McMicken College of Arts and Sciences, turned high-resolution satellite images from the European Space Agency into one of the most detailed looks so far at how people are reshaping the planet.

"Right now there are caravans of people walking to the United States. Many of them are coming from Guatemala," Stepinski said.

News agencies such as The Guardian have called some of the Central American migrants "climate-change refugees" since many are fleeing successive years of crop failure. But Stepinski said climate change tells only part of the story. His map shows how Guatemala has seen widespread deforestation.

The digital map illustrates how 22 percent of the Earth's habitable surface has been altered in measurable ways, primarily from forest to agriculture, between 1992 and 2015.

"It's very informative. There is nothing else like it," Stepinski said. "There are maps of forest loss but no maps showing everything."

The map tells a new story everywhere you look, from wetlands losses in the American Southeast to the devastation of the Aral Sea to deforestation in the tropics and temperate rainforests.

"Of course, it raises alarm bells. But

they're not new ones," Stepinski said.

"We already knew about deforestation or wetland loss or increasing urbanization. But now we can see exactly where all of that is happening," he said.

The European Space Agency in 1992 began capturing satellite images of the Earth to study climate change. Stepinski said. Surface cover can dramatically influence temperature depending on whether it absorbs or reflects sunlight. Likewise, forest cover absorbs more carbon dioxide than shopping centers.

"The great achievement for the European Space Agency was to make sure the satellite images were compatible from year to year so you could compare them," Stepinski said.

Stepinski said the map shows how finite natural resources are being exploited on a global scale.

"What makes this so depressing is that it's examining a timescale that is shorter than our lifetime," Stepinski said.

One of the most obvious examples of changing land use is found around cities, said the study's lead author and former UC postdoctoral fellow Jakub Nowosad.

"The direct impact of human actions is reflected in the patterns of urbanization. For example, you can see suburbanization and cities densification in North America and Europe," said Nowosad, now an assistant professor at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poland.

(Source: Science Daily)

Scientists have found rare giant viruses lurking in the soil of a U.S. forest

There's a forest in Massachusetts that for nearly 30 years has hosted the world's longest running soil-warming experiment, measuring how hotter temperatures impact the tiny life-forms that live in the dirt.

With the way climate change is going, you could say the future itself is buried in that heated dirt. But our unknown tomorrows aren't all that's hiding there.

In this oversized outdoor research laboratory, scientists have made an unexpected discovery, finding 16 rare 'giant' viruses that are completely new to science.

"We were not looking for giant viruses," says biologist Jeff Blanchard from the University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass).

"Our goal was to isolate bacteria directly from the environment to understand how microbial communities are changing in response to soil warming."

All viruses were small things

Once upon a time, when soil warming wasn't perhaps quite as crucial a phenomenon to understand as it is today, scientists thought all viruses were incredibly small things, much smaller than bacteria.

And because viruses appeared to be fundamentally unlike the three 'domains of life' — bacteria, archaea, and eukaryota — there was doubt whether they were, technically, alive.

In more recent times, however, the discovery of giant viruses has challenged some of these scientific concepts,



with researchers finding unknown viral strains that inhabit much larger physical forms (rivaling bacteria) and with much larger and more complex genomes too.

These giant viruses were only discovered this century, and up until now they've usually been found in aquatic habitats.

For that reason alone the Harvard Forest discovery is remarkable, as this represents the first time giant viruses have been discovered in a terrestrial ecosystem, and all from a single clump of dirt.

The "metagenomic data generated here from a single sampling site contained far more new giant virus genomes than any other data set I have seen to date," says one of the team, bioinformaticist Frederik Schulz from the Department of Energy's Joint Genome Institute (JGI).

"We recovered 16 distinct giant virus genomes in this study, but we are merely scratching the surface. If we sample more at the same site this number would easily double, triple, or even quadruple."

To identify the microbes, the researchers suspended them in a solution containing a non-toxic dye that binds to DNA, and used a technique called fluorescence-activated cell sorting (FACS) to isolate individual cells.

Sequencing the DNA of cells

An additional method, known as mini metagenomics, helped the team to sequence the DNA of approximately 2,000 individual cells, which ultimately yielded the discovery of the 16 giant viruses unknown to science before now.

According to the researchers, the approach could make it easier than ever to identify viruses in the soil metagenome in the future.

But already it's expanded our genetic understanding of these microbes, increasing our records of total giant virus phylogenetic diversity by more than 20 percent, and uncovering some of the largest viruses discovered to date.

"Soil is immensely diverse," says one of the UMass researchers, Lauren Alteio, "and we are only beginning to scratch the surface of the organisms and viruses that inhabit it."

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Possibility of Faster Management of Value-Added Services Provided via MY-IRANCELL

"MY-IRANCELL" Application Software was activated with the aim of easy accessibility of IRANCELL subscribers to the value-added services, the Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

In addition, information on the order of use of internet packages was updated, the report added.

As mentioned in above, the possibility of viewing and deactivating the value-added services is one of the newest facilities added to this application software in a way that this application can be viewed in the homepage of "MY-IRANCELL" available to the subscribers of IRANCELL without any updating

procedure.

Given the above issue, subscribers of 'MY-IRANCELL' can observe the list of value-added services on their accounts and/or embark on inactivating each of them if necessary.

Moreover, IRANCELL subscribers can be informed of accounts they use in

various online packages simultaneously.

To use this package, it is necessary that the number registered in the application software of "MY-IRANCELL" should be equal to the number of SIM card available in the handset of the mobile phone, the Public Relations Dept. of the company concluded.

New app lets people listen to orca sounds from the Pacific

An app for citizen scientists to take part in the effort to monitor the location of orcas has been launched this month.

Called Orcasound, the web app will live stream audio from hydrophones (underwater microphones) that will be placed near the San Juan Islands. This will help experts to locate and send boats to collect fecal samples or prey fragments to the area as soon as possible.

A computer algorithm currently analyzes the audio from a hydrophone and pinpoints the sound coming from orcas. However, the aid of human listeners is invaluable.

For a long time, citizen scientists have been useful at detecting orca noises from the trove of other sounds such as shipping traffic or the presence of other animals. Orcasound will make it easier for citizen scientists to access the audio and then alert experts of the marine mammals' whereabouts.

"We want to make it really easy for citizen scientists to listen to signals," stated Scott Veirs, a bioacoustician and lead researcher of Orcasound.

Orcasound has actually been around for years, but it was relaunched this month to make it a lot more user-friendly. The app picks up the audio coming from several hydrophones in San Juan Island and Haro Strait. There is another one at Bush Point, but it is currently under repair.

Once a citizen scientist has identified the presence of an orca from the audio livestream, they can log their observation into a shared Google Spreadsheet for analysis. Users can also shoot the people behind the project an e-mail.

The researchers also hope to one day add a button on the web app in order to make it easier for the citizen scientists to report orca sighting. For now, Orcasound can be accessed via any major internet browser on a computer or a mobile phone.

(Source: Tech Times)

First rain in centuries brought death to this desert, team suggests

The Atacama Desert, primarily located in northern Chile, is the driest nonpolar region on Earth. In its center, lies a hyperarid core in which no precipitation had been recorded for 500 years, until 2015, when a sprinkling of rain fell on the area.

You might expect that this rain would have caused a sudden blooming in the amount of life in the region — which is limited to a handful of microbe species. However, the water had quite the opposite effect, wiping out most of the microbes that lived there, according to a paper published in the journal Scientific Reports.



"When the rains came to the Atacama, we were hoping for majestic blooms and deserts springing to life," Alberto Fairen, co-author of the study from Cornell University, said in a statement. "Instead, we learned the contrary, as we found that rain in the hyperarid core of the Atacama Desert caused a massive extinction of most of the indigenous microbial species there."

The "hyperdry soils before the rains were inhabited by up to 16 different, ancient microbe species," he said. "After it rained, there were only two to four microbe species found in the lagoons. The extinction event was massive."

According to the team, the sudden and massive input of water in regions that have remained hyperarid for millions of years is harmful for most of the surface microbial species — which are exquisitely adapted to survive in the inhospitable conditions.

The sudden overabundance of water disrupts the normal functioning of the microbes via a process known as "osmotic shock."

A changing climate over the Pacific is thought to have been responsible for bringing the first rain in centuries to the Atacama's hyperarid core. These surprise precipitation events took place on March 25 and August 9, 2015, and again on June 7, 2017.

(Source: Newsweek)

Alien object 'Oumuamua' may be smaller than we thought: new research

Scientists have long expected that we would eventually find an object in our Solar System that started out orbiting another star. However, no one expected it to be so weird. The alien comet 'Oumuamua appeared in the sky last year as it tumbled past the sun.

From our limited observation time, astronomers have determined 'Oumuamua is a small cigar-shaped object, but we didn't know exactly how small until now. When attempting a follow-up observation with the Spitzer Space Telescope, 'Oumuamua was nowhere to be found. So, it's either an alien ship that engaged its warp engines or 'Oumuamua is smaller than we thought.

Sky-watchers first detected 'Oumuamua in the fall of 2017 using the University of Hawaii's Pan-STARRS 1 telescope. At that point, it had already curved around the sun on its way out of the Solar System. Analysis of 'Oumuamua's speed and trajectory confirmed it could not have originated in this Solar System. Scientists have pointed to several possible home systems for the object, but we may never know where it started out.

In late 2017, NASA pointed the Spitzer telescope at 'Oumuamua — or rather, where it should have been. That was about two months after its closest approach to Earth when it should have still been visible to the telescope. The team hoped that Spitzer's infrared instruments would shed more light on the nature of the probable comet. However, Spitzer couldn't spot 'Oumuamua at all.

Previously, astronomers figured 'Oumuamua could be as long as 2,600 feet (800 meters) along its longest dimension. However, Spitzer should have been able to spot something in that range. So, the non-detection tells us a lot about 'Oumuamua's actual size.

Using three different models, NASA now projects the object could be as much as 1,440 feet (440 meters) in length. It could also be much smaller — just 320 feet (100 meters). The wide range comes from our uncertainty about 'Oumuamua's composition.

(Source: extremetech.com)

Charity foundation completes building 57 healthcare centers

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Barekat Charity Foundation affiliated to Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam also known as Setad-e Ejraiye Farman-e Hazrat-e Emam has completed construction of 57 healthcare centers in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan.



As per a memorandum of understanding signed between Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam and the Ministry of Health the foundation is committed to set up 88 healthcare centers in the region of which 57 are already completed, Barekat Charity Foundation website reported on Monday.

The budget allocated to the establishment of the centers amounts to 310 billion rials (nearly \$7.4m), the report added. 31 more centers are still under construction and 11 of them will be finalized in the near future.

On Monday two newly set up healthcare centers were inaugurated in Zabol. A philanthropist woman also made 2 billion rials (nearly \$4,700) in cash contribution for the construction of the two centers, the report concluded.

Charity packages distributed in Sistan-Baluchestan
Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam has distributed some 2,100 charity packages among the underprivileged families in Nikshahr county, Sistan-Baluchestan province, ILNA news agency reported on Monday.

Mohammad Mokhber, director of Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, explained that the packages included food, shoes and stationeries worth of 3 million rials (about \$70) each.

He went on to say that unfortunately some 2,070 students are suffering from malnutrition in the area.

Charity packages will be distributed in the area quarterly, he highlighted.

\$240m earmarked for job creation in Sistan-Baluchestan

Mokhber also said that some 10 trillion rials (nearly \$240 million) is earmarked for generating jobs in the province.

He further highlighted that the amount will be spend on setting up necessary infrastructure and providing employment within the framework of a three-year program.

LEARN ENGLISH

Human Anatomy

A: OK class, so today we are going to continue with our **anatomy** class, today we will review everything we have learned. Can anyone tell me what the first major **organ** is?
B: **The brain!**

A: That's right the brain! It serves as a **control** center for the body, handling the **processes** of the central nervous system as well as cognition. Then what major organ is in our **chest**?
B: **The heart!**

A: Very good! It **pumps blood** throughout the body, using the circulatory system such as blood vessels and veins. Now let's not forget that our **lungs** provide **oxygen** to our heart and body to keep us alive! Now what about the organs that help us **digest** food?
B: **The stomach** and intestines!

A: Very good! Let's not forget that the stomach is the one that breaks down our food and our intestines process that food and then **expel** the waste. Are we forgetting anything?
B: Yeah! Our kidneys, liver and bladder!

A: Oh yes, you are right. Very important organs indeed.
B: So what do these organs do teacher?
A: Well, umm, they... Time for a break! We can talk about it when you get back.

Key vocabulary
anatomy: the trunk of the body from the neck to the abdomen
organ: a grouping of tissues into a distinct structure e.g. heart
brain: an organ enclosed in the skull that controls and coordinates the body.
control: the ability to direct the actions of something
process: a planned series of steps or actions that leads to something
chest: the front of the body, from neck to the waist
heart: an organ in the chest that pumps blood
pump: to supply, to circulate
blood: the fluid that circulates in the body
lung: body part that inflates with air and allows breathing
oxygen: a gas that we breath in order to live
digest: to swallow and dissolve something
stomach: the organ people use to digest food
expel: to release something

Supplementary vocabulary
skull: the bony framework of the head, enclosing the brain and supporting the face
embalm: to treat a dead body so as to preserve it, as with chemicals, drugs
spine: backbone of the body



Without water, everything withers

'Only 15% of Tehran's construction, demolition waste recycled'

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — While some 50,000 tons of construction and demolition waste is produced in Tehran daily, only 10 to 15 percent of which are recycled and the rest is dumped or disposed, Mohammad Hossein Bazgir, head of Tehran's department of environment (DOE) has said.

Waste materials, generally termed as construction and demolition waste, are part of construction materials' packaging, containers, and spent machinery and equipment parts that are no longer usable.

"A good portion of construction wastes can still be usable with proper planning and their usage can be a solution itself to the burgeoning waste issues that the communities and the construction industry face," Bazgir said.

He further referred to a construction waste management unit opened in Abali in Damavand county last week, and stated that the unit is capable of recycling some 3,000 tons of construction waste, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

In the capital, building waste materials amounting to 50,000 tons are generated each day, only 10-15 percent of which is recycled, which means a huge amount of over 80 percent is being dumped into abandoned sites, he lamented.

Construction wastes being bulkier, heavier and more toxic than domestic waste, need a huge dumpsite to be disposed which prove to be less of a solution but more of an aggravation of the issue in the long run as causing irreparable and irreversible adverse impact to the environment, he said, adding that so, it is of great importance to properly manage and recycle the building material wastes.

Bazgir went on to say that unfortunately, a large amount of waste has been deposited in only two places in the capital for many years, adding, although recent efforts have been made to improve the condition in these areas, it is still not enough.

In some instances, the contractor resorts to inappropriate or even illegal practices such as dumping in deserted areas, concealing in forested areas, burying in abandoned sites or burning, he regretted.

To eradicate the issue, construction waste trucks must be equipped with GPS to determine their route and not allow them to dispose the waste at any areas, he concluded.

Earlier in November, Ali Moridi, head of DOE's soil and



water office said that while reduction of waste generation and separation of waste at source are the two major processes in waste management, in Iran the focus is mainly on the last phase of waste management which is waste disposal.

According to a report published by United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in October 2016, waste generation per capita in Iran's urban areas is about 658 grams per day while Iranian waste generation per capita in rural areas is about 220-340 grams per day. Average Iranian waste generation per capita amounts to

some 240 kilograms per year.

In Tehran alone waste generation per capita is estimated at 750-800 grams per day and each Tehrani citizen generates about 270-450 kilograms of waste per years.

The report continues that unfortunately only 7 percent of the waste is separated at the source, 13 percent is recycled and only 2.5 percent of them end up in formal or sanitary landfills and some 77.5 percent of the waste will be burnt or buried in informal landfills located in the countryside or deserts near cities.

University of Tehran to host Iranian, Russian top universities summit

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The University of Tehran will be hosting the fourth joint meeting of Iranian and Russian top universities in the Persian Gulf island of Kish on November 24, ISNA reported on Monday.

The meeting will be held to expand cooperation between the two countries' universities, with chancellors of universities, embassy officials, and representatives of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology in attendance.

Sharing university management experience on international scale, cooperation to promote in world university rankings and attitudes and discussing universities approaches in applied and fundamental researches will be among the issues to be discussed in the fourth summit of top Iranian and Russian universities.

The event was first held at Lomonosov Moscow State University on Octo-



ber 28, 2015, while the second edition was hosted by the University of Tehran on October 20, 2016, attending by rectors of 13 Iranian and 18 Russian universities.

The 3rd summit of top Iranian and Russian universities also was held in Moscow on October 27, 2017 at the venue of Lomonosov Moscow State University of Russia in the presence of Iranian and Russian top universities officials.

Illegal bird traps identified, destroyed in northern Iran

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Some 400 illegal mist nets for catching birds have been destroyed and cleared from some areas of Babolsar and Fereydunkenar in Mazandaran province, northern part of the country, the provincial department of environment (DOE) chief has said.

Mist nets are fine nets that are suitable for capturing birds in woodlands. The fine net is strung across trees so as to lie in the flight path of a bird.

The third phase of operations on trap destroy was carried out with the presence of 60 DOE forces to prevent the poachers from hunting wild, migratory and native birds, YJC quoted Moslem Ahangari as saying on Tuesday.

Rangers of other cities also have joined the operation and destroyed about 150 traps in Fereydunkenar, he said, adding, with great efforts of



DOE forces all of the mist nets have been collected.

Obviously, any individual who violates the rules illegally shot, trap or persecute the birds will be treated in accordance with the law, he highlighted.

Some 250 traps in Babolsar county also have been destroyed during the operation, Ahangari stated, adding that the operation will continue to prevent trapping incidents and protect the precious species of birds.

Relief foundation allots \$1.5b to create jobs for the underprivileged

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation has earmarked a total of \$1.5 billion from the National Development Fund for generating jobs for the financially struggling individuals, the foundation's head has announced.

Considering the new economic conditions and the need for employment, new programs and financial resources are being provided to create more job opportunities, Mehr quoted Parviz Fattah as saying on Monday.

He further expressed appreciation to the banks for their good cooperation with the foundation in granting the loans, and stated that the process of granting loans has already started.

"Some \$1.5 billion in the form of 100,000 loans amount-



ing to 250 million rials (nearly \$6,000) has been allotted to facilitate job generation for the individuals under the Foundation's coverage," he explained.

The loans will be granted to the underprivileged who are covered by the Foundation and live in rural areas or cities with less than 20,000 residents, he added.

He further expressed hope that all 100,000 loans to be provided to the unemployed by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019), adding but if there are a few loans remained, they will be granted next year.

Another budget of 14 trillion rials (about \$400 million) has been already provided in this manner, which is granted through loans amounting to 200 million rials (nearly \$5,000), he concluded.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

'Joblessness causes 60% of migrations from rural to urban areas'

While some 60 percent of migrations from rural to urban areas are caused by the lack of appropriate jobs and sufficient income for educated people, so the government is intent on reversing migration through offering facilities and creating sustainable jobs in rural areas, deputy vice-president for rural development and deprived areas has said.

A total of 180,000 sustainable jobs have been created in rural areas last year (March 2017-March 2018), and also some 100,000 jobs in the current year, Abolfazl Razavi said, ISNA reported on Friday.

نبود شغل مناسب، علت ۶۰ درصد مهاجرت‌ها از روستاها به شهر

معاون توسعه روستایی و مناطق محروم ریاست جمهوری با اشاره به اینکه با پرداخت تسهیلات برای ایجاد شغل پایدار در برخی روستاها شاهد مهاجرت معکوس هستیم، افزود: با بررسی‌های میدانی مشخص شد ۶۰ درصد علل مهاجرت روستاییان به شهرها، نبود شغل مناسب برای فرزندان تحصیل کرده دانشگاهی و عدم درآمد کافی برای خانوار است. ابوالفضل رضوی در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا، گفت: در سال گذشته ۱۸۰ هزار شغل پایدار روستایی توسط دستگاه‌های اجرایی از پروژه ارتقای تولید ملی و اشتغال پایدار در مناطق روستایی ایجاد شد و حدود ۱۰۰ هزار شغل هم امسال از محل همین پروژه ایجاد شده است.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"arch-"

Meaning: chief or beginning
For example: *Archaeology* studies material remains in order to understand and explain human behavior.

PHRASAL VERB

Let somebody down

Meaning: to not do something that someone trusts or expects you to do
For example: She had been let down badly in the past.

IDIOM

Clean as a whistle

Explanation: extremely clean, also mean that a person's criminal record is clean
For example: Bob spent the afternoon washing and shining his car until it was as clean as a whistle.

'Bahrain has failed to provide conditions for free elections'

Human Rights Watch (HRW) says Bahrain has failed to provide conditions for fair and free voting in the upcoming parliamentary elections in the country.

The New York-based rights group said on Tuesday that the elections in Bahrain — slated for November 24 — are taking place in a repressive political environment.

It also cited the arrest of former Bahraini lawmaker Ali Rashed al-Sheeri and the life sentence handed to opposition leader Sheikh Ali Salman as the latest examples of the House of Khalifah regime's crackdown on peaceful dissent.

"By jailing or silencing people who challenge the ruling family and banning all opposition parties and independent news outlets, Bahrain is failing to create the conditions necessary for a free election," said Lama Fakih, the deputy Middle East director at HRW.

"Bahrain should immediately release political prisoners and review its decisions to shutter independent news outlets and political opposition groups," she added.

Additionally, HRW complained about the widespread ill treatment of Bahraini detainees, the forcible closure of the independent al-Wasat newspaper and the dissolution of all opposition political groups, including the



National Democratic Action Society (Wa'ad) and the al-Wafaq National Islamic Society. It further called on Bahrain to repeal the amendments to a law that bans anyone who was a member of a dissolved political organization or who was previously convicted and sentenced to over six months in prison from running for political office.

A group of Bahraini clerics has already denounced the planned parliamentary elections as "a sham." Additionally, HRW criticized Bahrain for complicity in serious human rights violations during the Saudi-led war on Yemen, urging Western countries to end weapons sales to Manama.

"Bahrain's allies, including the UK and U.S., should translate their criticism of Bahrain's human rights abuses into concrete action, including by not approving future arms sales until such time as Bahrain releases all human rights defenders and dissidents serving long jail terms for peaceful expression and holds accountable officials and security officers who participated in or ordered the widespread torture during interrogations since 2011," it said.

Fakih said Manama's allies "should not give Bahrain a free pass and conduct business as usual while mass rights abuses persist."

Bahraini people have been holding peaceful protest rallies regularly since February 2011, demanding that the House of Khalifah family relinquish power and let a just system representing all Bahrainis be established.

They have also been complaining against widespread discrimination against the Shia majority in the country.

Manama has responded to the demonstrations with an iron fist. The authorities have detained rights campaigners, broken up major opposition political parties, revoked the nationality of several pro-democracy activists, and deported those left stateless.

(Source: Press TV)

Spain to vote against Brexit accord if text on Gibraltar not changed: PM

Spain will vote against the European Union's draft Brexit deal on Sunday unless it is modified to make clear that the future of the disputed British territory of Gibraltar relies on talks between Madrid and London, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said.

Spain's demands on Gibraltar are the latest push by EU states to obtain more on national interests ahead of Sunday's summit of EU leaders, but diplomats said there was little concern these would scupper prospects for a deal.

"As of today, if there are no changes with respect to Gibraltar, Spain will vote no to the agreement on Brexit," Sanchez said during a conference in Madrid on Tuesday.

According to EU rules, the withdrawal treaty is adopted by qualified majority and not unanimity. So a single state like Spain cannot block it. The EU's executive said it was aware of Spain's concerns and it expected the issue to be resolved.

A small peninsula on Spain's southern coast and a British territory since 1713, Gibraltar is a major point of contention in Anglo-Spanish relations. Spain has long claimed sovereignty over it.

Gibraltar is due to leave the European Union along with Britain in March, although 96 percent of its population voted in the 2016 referendum to remain in the bloc.

■ Sunday summit

While Spain last week initially welcomed a protocol

on Gibraltar in the draft Brexit agreement, Foreign Minister Josep Borrell on Monday said there was confusion over Gibraltar in the main body of the agreement.

That needed to be clarified in the broader political declaration on the new relationship between the EU and Britain, Borrell said. Sanchez reinforced that message on Tuesday.

"If on Sunday in the @EUCouncil the Brexit deal does not recognize that Gibraltar's situation must be negotiated directly between Spain and the United Kingdom, this government will not accept it," Sanchez said on Twitter.

"If this government, which is a pro-European government, finds itself in this situation, this means that someone in Brussels didn't do their work well," he said, adding that Spain had offered various drafting options both to Britain and to EU negotiator Michel Barnier.

In Brussels, EU spokesman Margaritis Schinas said the bloc agreed last year that "after the UK leaves the Union, no agreement between the EU and the UK may apply to the territory of Gibraltar without the agreement between Kingdom of Spain and the United Kingdom".

Diplomats in Brussels expected the issue to be resolved by adding more such language in the withdrawal agreement and the declaration on post-Brexit ties between the EU and Britain by Sunday, when they are due to be presented to EU leaders for approval.

Gibraltar borders the Andalusia region where re-



gional elections key for Sanchez's socialist party as well as his main opponents are held on Dec. 2. Several thousand Spaniards cross the border every day to jobs in the territory.

Gibraltar's Chief Minister Fabian Picardo on Monday issued a statement regretting the Spanish position.

"It does not come as a surprise that Madrid should seek to raise new Gibraltar issues at the last minute on our negotiations to leave the EU. Raising issue at the 11th hour is a well-known tactic that has been used by Spain in the past while were in the EU," Picardo said.

(Source: Reuters)

Turkish nationalist party head says net closing around Saudi crown prince

The leader of Turkey's nationalist party compared the House of Saud regime leaders to Osama bin Laden on Tuesday and said the net was closing around Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) over the murder last month of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

The comments by Nationalist Movement Party (Nationalist Action Party/Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi/MHP) leader Devlet Bahçeli, a parliamentary ally of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, amounted to the fiercest Turkish criticism of the Saudi monarchy since Khashoggi was killed on Oct. 2 by Saudi agents at

the kingdom's Istanbul consulate.

President Erdogan has said the killing was ordered at the "highest levels" of the Saudi regime but has not directly accused its de facto leader, Prince Mohammed. Saudi Arabia has denied that the prince ordered Khashoggi's killing.

In a speech to his MHP on Tuesday, Bahçeli said Saudi regime leaders had resorted to terrorist methods.

"I ask you, what difference remains between Saudi Arabia's administration and the mentality of Osama bin Laden? What separates this country from al Qaeda?" Bahçeli said. "The circle is closing in for the crown prince, the paths

of escape and salvation are closing."

Bahçeli's MHP supported Erdogan in Turkey's presidential election in June, helping him secure a narrow first-round victory. Its alliance with Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP/Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) also ensured a parliamentary majority for the AKP.

The United States, CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) believes Crown Prince Mohammed ordered Khashoggi's killing, sources familiar with the matter said on Friday — an assessment described by the U.S. President Donald Trump as possible, but very premature.

A source familiar with the CIA's

assessment said it was based largely on circumstantial evidence relating to the prince's central role in running the Saudi government.

The House of Saud regime's foreign minister said on Tuesday his country categorically rejects allegations against the crown prince, saying they had no basis in truth.

Last week, after Riyadh offered numerous contradictory explanations for Khashoggi's disappearance, the Saudi public prosecutor's office said he had been killed, after a struggle, by lethal injection and his body dismembered.

(Source: Reuters)

Clashes over chemical arms watchdog's role

World powers traded accusations of hypocrisy in bitter clashes over the global toxic weapons watchdog's new ability to attribute blame for attacks like those in Syria and Salisbury. The United States and Britain went head to head with Russia, China and Syria over the boosted powers that members agreed to give the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in June.

At a tense meeting in The Hague, Moscow and Beijing were accused of trying to stall the watchdog's new role indefinitely by proposing that the changes be subjected to "open ended" scrutiny before going live.

The U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Ward said Russia's claims that the OPCW's new powers were illegitimate were "pungent hypocrisy," and warned against allowing a "new era of chemical weapons use to take hold."

"What have they done for the last few years but to connive with their Syrian ally to bury the truth of what has happened in Syria, along with the dead killed by the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime," Ward said.

"And as if that wasn't bad enough, Salisbury comes along."

The West pushed through the new powers after a string of chemical attacks in Syria, as well as a nerve agent attack on Russian former double agent Sergei Skripal in the British city of Salisbury in March.

Britain accused Russia of carrying out the attack using a Soviet-era chemical called Novichok and the West has since imposed a series of sanctions on Moscow.

British envoy to the OPCW Peter Wilson called any attempt to limit the watchdog's power to attribute blame for chemical attacks "unacceptable."



But Russia's envoy Alexander Shulgin hit back, saying that Western claims of chemical weapons use by Damascus and Moscow were a "scam" and "out and out lies."

He added that Russia had a "principled position regarding the illegitimacy" of the new investigative powers, adding that they "infringe on the properties of the United Nations Security Council," where Russia has a veto.

Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad meanwhile launched a fierce broadside at the U.S. and Britain. "You have taught people to use chemical weapons, you have used chemical weapons in the first two world wars. The Syrian government has never used chemical weapons," he said.

"Where is your morality? This is sheer hypocrisy and sheer lies. I wish to use such undiplomatic language." The meeting is also the first since the expulsion of

four Russians accused by Dutch authorities in October of trying to hack into the OPCW's computer system, using electronic equipment hidden in a car parked outside a nearby hotel.

At the time the organization was investigating the attack on Skripal as well as a major chemical attack in Syria.

The OPCW says the two-week meeting of the 193 member countries is meant to "discuss the future of the organization." New OPCW director-general Fernando Arias warned in his opening address Monday that the "international norm against the use of chemical weapons has come under strain."

"Their repeated use poses a challenge that must be met with strong and unified resolve," he added.

Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013, the OPCW is responsible for upholding the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention to end the use of all toxic arms.

So far it says it has overseen the destruction of 96.5 percent of the world's chemical arms stocks.

But in recent years it has seen its role expand to cover the investigation of a wave of chemical attacks in the Syrian war, as well as the Salisbury attack and the 2017 killing in Malaysia of a half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

A "very small but very strong" investigative team will start work early next year with a mandate to go back and try to attribute blame for all chemical attacks in Syria since 2013, Arias said.

The watchdog will also be able to point the finger for future attacks anywhere in the world, so long as it is asked to by the country on whose territory where the incident happened.

(Source: AP)

Assad sends first public message to Jordanian King

Jordan and Syria have had strained ties since the start of the foreign instigated Syrian conflict in 2011; however, the recent move to reopen their borders has paved the way for rapprochement between the two nations.

Assad hosts Jordanian delegation for talks in Damascus

Meantime, Assad met with a Jordanian delegation of lawmakers in Damascus on Monday, signaling a re-establishment of ties between the neighboring countries.

Syrian government shared photos of the meeting with the delegation, headed by parliament member Abdul Karim al-Doghmi, on Twitter.

According to Amman-based Roya News, lawmaker Awad al-Zawaida said in a statement following the meeting that Assad extended his greetings to King Abdullah II and to the Jordanian people, emphasizing the unity of the two countries and calling for the restoration of strong bilateral ties.

Al-Zawaida described Assad as responsive to all demands made by the Jordanian delegation.

The meeting signals a warming of ties between Jordan and Syria. In October, Jordan opened its border crossing with Syria, a key Middle East trade route and export gateway for Damascus, after three years.

The resumption of commercial trade through the crossing is as much a diplomatic victory as an economic win for Assad

(Source: agencies)

Kremlin: U.S., meddling in selection of Interpol head

The Kremlin said on Tuesday that public opposition by a group of the United States senators to a Russian candidate to head the international police organization Interpol amounted to election meddling.

Interpol's general assembly is due to elect a new head at a meeting on Wednesday. On Monday, four U.S. senators issued a statement urging the U.S. President Donald Trump to oppose the candidacy of Russia's Alexander Prokopchuk.

The senators accuse Russia of abusing Interpol to settle scores and harass dissidents by issuing warrants, known as red notices, for their arrest. The senators said the election of Prokopchuk would allow Moscow to step up such abuse.

"This is probably a certain kind of interference in the electoral process of an international organization," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on a conference call.

Prokopchuk, a former major general in Russia's Interior Ministry and current vice president of Interpol, is generally considered the leading candidate for the presidency.

Bill Browder, a British fund manager critical of the Kremlin who has been detained repeatedly at Russia's behest before being released again, said it would be "outrageous" if Prokopchuk was named to head the global police agency.

(Source: Daily Star)

Newly elected Muslim congresswoman fights for right to wear hijab in Congress

Minnesota Representative-Elect Ilhan Omar has announced she will challenge a 181-year-old law that bans wearing headwear, including the Islamic hijab, in the United States House of Representatives.

Omar announced the decision on Saturday, voicing support for a Democrat proposal to end the ban that was publicized last week.

The rule change was proposed by former House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, ranking member of the House Committee on Rules Jim McGovern and the Muslim representative-elect.

Democrats say the ban will be lifted to allow others to wear headgear on the floor based on religious or medical considerations.

The current laws of the House of Representatives prevent Ilhan from wearing hijab as they oblige all members to be "uncovered" in order to enter the building and address the floor. The ban was instituted in 1837 as to push back against the British custom of wearing hats in parliament. The new rule would clarify that religious head coverings, including Muslim head scarves (hijab), are not included in this ban.

The law was called into question after Omar and Rashida Tlaib succeeded in becoming the first two Muslim women to be elected for the U.S. congress after the recent midterm elections.

A number of politicians from both sides of the aisle as well as numerous organizations have backed the move.

"We support the effort to update this anachronistic policy and to bring the House of Representatives into conformity with the Constitution and its existing protection of religious freedom," said the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

"Islamic head coverings, Sikh turbans, Jewish yarmulkes, and Mennonite bonnets are all expressions of religious belief and are therefore already protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution, which states that 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,'" added CAIR National Executive Director Nihad Awad.

■ Support for Palestine

The new hijab-wearing representative of Minnesota has, however, come under much scrutiny for her position on Palestine and her recently announced support for the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, prompting many reactions on social media.

Omar is, nonetheless, not the first recent representative-elect to make headlines about Palestine.

(Source: Press TV)

Pompeo and Bolton want to torture Iranian nation

There are reasons that certify these two men, among others, want to torture the Iranians: Pompeo told the BBC Persian on November 9 that Iranian officials must listen to Washington "if they want their people to eat"; Bolton, while in Singapore on November 13, also said, "It is our intention to squeeze them very hard. As the British say: 'Squeeze them until the pips squeak'."

So if the officials in Tehran do not want to surrender to Pompeo's 12 humiliating demands declared on May 21, the Iranian people should be starved and some patients die due to shortage or lack of medicine.

However, in conducting his mission of torturing and punishing Iranians, Bolton seems to be more aggressive in conduct and more unguarded when it comes to revealing his mind about Iran.

Bayern Munich 2017-18 turnover up slightly to 657 million euros

Bayern Munich's annual turnover for 2017-18 reached 657.4 million euros (584.95 million pounds), up almost three percent from last season but net profits were down, the German champions said on Tuesday.

Bayern won their sixth successive league title last season but European success eluded them again as they crashed out of the Champions League in the semi-finals, losing twice to eventual winners Real Madrid.

Turnover was up from 640 million euros the previous season while EBITDA stood at 136.5 million, down from 149 million in 2016-17.

Net profit was also down to 29 million euros from 39 million. "Bayern Munich can be very satisfied with the financial results for 2017-18," club CEO Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said in a statement. "Apart from the sporting success with victory of the German league title and the good run in the Champions League, these results are proof that Bayern also had a good year in financial terms."

The Bavarians have not had the best start to their current domestic campaign, lying in fifth place in the Bundesliga, seven points behind leaders Borussia Dortmund. However, they are all but through to the Champions League knockout stage, top of Group E with two matches remaining.

(Source: Eurosport)

Farah to run 2019 London Marathon



European record holder Mo Farah is to run next year's London Marathon for the third time, organizers said on Tuesday.

The multi-Olympic, world and European champion over 10,000 and 5,000 meters retired from the track after the 2017 season to concentrate full-time on the marathon, having dipped his toe in at London in 2014.

In this year's race he finished third in two hours, six minutes, 21 seconds to break Steve Jones's 1985 British record but was more than two minutes adrift of winner Eliud Kipchoge, who has since taken the world record down to 2:01.39.

Sponsored
With another six months of dedicated training under his belt, Farah claimed his first win over the 26.2-mile distance by taking September's Chicago Marathon in 2:05.11 — a European record. "I'm delighted to confirm I'll be returning to race the Virgin Money London Marathon again next year," Farah said in a statement.

"I've often said how racing in London is very special to me and the London Marathon gives me the chance to run in front of my fans, on my home roads, where the atmosphere is like nothing else.

"I feel I have made great strides in the past year, finishing third in London in April, and winning my first major marathon in Chicago in October. That and breaking both the British and European records has given me the confidence that I can compete against the best marathon runners in the world.

"London always puts together a world-class field and I expect that will be exactly the same in 2019 and I can't wait for the challenge."

Farah, 35, is the first athlete to be announced for the 2019 race, which will take place on Sunday April 28.

(Source: Reuters)

'He had tears in his eyes' — Van Dijk consoles referee after Dutch draw

Romanian referee Ovidiu Hategan was consoled by Virgil van Dijk after the Netherlands 2-2 draw with Germany on Monday.

It is understood the 38-year-old official had discovered his mother had died in the build-up to the match.

And the Liverpool defender showed his human side, embracing the emotional Hategan at the final whistle.

"That man broke down, stood with tears in his eyes because he had just lost his mother," Van Dijk said. "I wished him strength and said he had refereed well. It's a small thing, but I hope it helped him."

The official recently took charge of Barcelona's Champions League victory over Inter Milan. Hategan also refereed the second leg of Manchester United's Europa League semi-final win over Celta Vigo in 2017, with Jose Mourinho's side going on to lift the trophy. Van Dijk's intervention came just minutes after his injury-time equaliser ensured the Dutch reached the semi-finals of the Nations League.

Goals from Timo Werner and Leroy Sane had put Germany ahead. But the Dutch implemented a tactical switch — that manager Ronald Koeman was originally unaware of — with Quincy Promes' 85th-minute goal initiating their revival.

The Dutch boss passed on handwritten directions, penned by his back-up team, to full-back Kenny Tete which prompted Van Dijk to press forward.

"I got a note from [my assistants] Dwight Lodeweges and Kees van Wonderen," Koeman said.

"When we were 2-0 down they asked me if we should change things around and I said 'yes'.

(Source: BBC)

Four years to next World Cup but will it be 32 or 48 teams?

Wednesday marks exactly four years to the kickoff of the next World Cup in Qatar, which could yet be an instrument to help end regional tensions and the first 48-team tournament if FIFA president Gianni Infantino gets his way.

The head of world football's governing body has been pressing in recent weeks for the 2022 finals to expand from the 32 teams in Russia this year to 48, even though it was previously planned that the expansion of the World Cup would happen when Canada, Mexico and the United States jointly host the 2026 finals. "We are looking at it. If it is possible, why not?" Infantino said last month. "We are discussing with our Qatari friends, we are discussing with our many other friends in the region and we hope that this can happen."

Qatar have not yet responded to the idea but previously have sounded cautious about the country's capacity to go beyond a 32-team tournament.

Organizers are building only eight stadiums for the one-month tournament, which has been controversially pushed back to late in the year because of the fierce summer heat. It kicks off on Nov. 21, 2022 with the final on Dec. 18.

Any expansion would mean Qatar possibly sharing some matches with their neighbors but the country is the subject of an economic blockade imposed by four of them.

In mid-2017, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut transport and trade links with Doha, accusing it of supporting terrorism and Iran — charges Qatar denies.

■ IMPORTS BLOCKED

The boycott disrupted Qatar's shipping routes through the Gulf and blocked imports across its only land border, with Saudi Arabia, previously the route for its perishable food supplies and construction materials.

It has meant Qatar has had to dig into its deep pockets to find alternative trading partners and keep its World Cup preparations on track.

"To think there are people in the region who might not enjoy the first World Cup in the Middle East is very disappointing," said Hassan Al Thawadi, who heads the local organising committee. "We look forward to this matter being sorted out. Football is for the people and we want this tournament to reach the people of the region."



"Personally, as president of FIFA, I would be very happy if some matches could be shared with some countries in the region," said Infantino, adding that football had the power to break the impasse if all else failed. "Football unites, builds bridges; that could be a concrete result."

Qatar is the smallest country to host the finals, with the distance between the two furthest venues a mere 72 kilometres.

The country is a hub of building activity with Qatar promising to deliver the completed venues some 24 months before the tournament begins.

One is already completed: the Khalifa International Stadium in the capital Doha reopened in May last year after renovations, including the installation of a cooling system

that can take the temperature in the venue down to the mid-teens. Qatar is spending a staggering \$200 billion on hosting the tournament, although Al Thawadi said only between eight and 10 billion was being spent on the stadiums.

The rest is going on wider infrastructure projects, including a rail link, already partially completed, that will connect all the venues.

The Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor will be the most northerly venue, seating some 60,000 in a stadium covered by a giant tent structure, but the rest are in and round Doha, making for a World Cup that will have little in common with those that have come before it.

(Source: Reuters)

Macau GP horror-smash teen recovering after 'frightening' operation



The 17-year-old driver who survived a terrifying crash at the Macau Grand Prix was recovering on Tuesday after a "frightening" spinal operation which took hours longer than expected and was fraught with the risk of paralysis.

Germany's Sophia Floersch, whose Formula Three car was catapulted airborne over safety barriers and into a hut during Sunday's race, needed a bone graft from her hip to fix a spinal fracture.

Doctors said the Van Amersfoort Racing driver spent seven hours in surgery on Monday, much longer than the expected four to five hours, because of the bone graft and the need to set up neurological monitoring.

Clinical director Lei Wai-seng told reporters that Floersch can move her limbs freely but is expected to remain in Macau's Conde S. Januario Hospital for one or two weeks. He added that Japanese racer Sho Tsuboi, who was apparently protected by his safety arc or halo when Floersch's car hurtled into him, had been discharged, along with a photographer.

Another photographer, who suffered a lacerated liver, and a marshal with a broken jaw remain under observation, Lei said.

After a collision near the end of a high-speed straight, Floersch's machine bounced off a kerb, clipping the top Tsuboi's TOM's Racing car and flying backwards into a hut housing media and officials.

Team principle Frits Van Amersfoort told Motorsport.com that he received a picture of a smiling Floersch after the operation.

"The operation was frightening because it is known as a risky operation. She will have to stay there for a while, but let's hope we see her again soon where she belongs: in a racing car," he said.

He also described his panic immediately after the crash on Sunday, as the team tried in vain to get updates on the young driver's condition.

"The worst thing was the twenty minutes in which we did not know anything. I will not forget that my whole life," he said, adding: "(She) had an angel on the shoulder, because it could have been much worse."

(Source: AFP)

Napoli president plans to buy English club amid stadium frustration



Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis has said he is in the market to buy a club in England.

De Laurentiis, who completed the purchase of lower league side Bari earlier this year, is frustrated by the situation surrounding Napoli's San Paolo stadium.

The stadium is owned by the city, and De Laurentiis wants to renovate it. He has said that, if he is not allowed to buy it, he will take the club away and build a new ground elsewhere.

He has threatened to move their Champions League fixtures to Bari and said the situation had led him to consider looking at a club overseas.

"I'm working on buying another club, probably in England," La Gazzetta dello Sport reported him as saying. "There is a project in progress."

De Laurentiis said he did not feel he could take Napoli any further given the restrictions of a stadium which he claimed had not undergone major renovation since before the 1990 World Cup.

This season, delays in installing new

seats led to the club halting the sale of season tickets.

"The management of such a stadium is a huge problem," De Laurentiis said. "The city has done no more than keep it afloat."

"When I discover that PSG pay €1 million a year to rent the Parc des Princes, I realise how far behind we are.

"With 47,000 seats, they produce revenue of €100m a year. Napoli don't get beyond €17-18m because we can't do anything inside the San Paolo -- we can't do any other activities.

"The city has done nothing for the San Paolo since 1990. Nobody has assumed the responsibility and we've found ourselves with a stadium which is not only ugly but is falling apart. It even rains inside.

"There are millions of screws that are never checked so why are the city council demanding €1.8m a year in rent?"

"If it were up to me, I'd buy some land in two seconds and build a new stadium, but there's a lot of considerations to make.

(Source: ESPN)

Juventus head Agnelli denies Super League involvement

Juventus chairman Andrea Agnelli said on Monday that the Italian champions were not involved in talks over a breakaway European Super League and remained committed to UEFA competitions. Earlier this month, German magazine Der Spiegel reported that plans for a European Super League were back on the agenda after several previous discussions came to nothing. Der Spiegel and European Investigative Collaborations, a network of international media, citing leaked documents, reported that a fresh plan had recently been drafted by Spanish company Key Capital Partners for Real Madrid.

The plan foresees 11 top European clubs creating a Super League in 2021 when the current agreement on the Champions League format and revenue sharing ends.

Juventus were named as one of 11 prospective founders for the closed breakaway league but Agnelli told the BBC that the Italian club had not been involved.

Agnelli, who is also chairman of the European Club Association, which represents more than 200 European clubs, said: "I can confirm we have never seen, never discussed, never been involved in the creation of this document.

"We are fully engaged with UEFA in shaping the game going forward," he added.

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin told the BBC that



European soccer's governing body continued to look at new ideas for its club competitions but that a Super League was ruled out. "The Super League will not happen. It is in a way a fiction now or a dream," said Ceferin.

"We have some ideas. All I can say is that any Super League is out of the question. Participation stays. And everybody will have an opportunity to compete in every European competition," he added.

■ EMERGING MARKETS

UEFA currently runs Europe's elite Champions League

club competition and the second-tier Europa League, while it is expected to vote for a new third competition next month.

Ceferin said UEFA needed to make sure that emerging football markets were able to tap in to their tournaments.

"We have to think about Poland with 60 million people. We have to think about (countries like) Turkey, we have to think about Russia," added the Slovenian.

"Fans can rest assured that if we put our hands to making a new product it's because we want to make sure that fans across Europe engage."

Agnelli said that any expansion of European football, in terms of a new structure for the Champions League, could see less domestic football.

"Evidently if you want to have an overall rebalancing of European football and more international (European-wide) football all that would have to go hand in hand with a reduction of domestic games," said the Juventus chairman.

"There's a whole system of anomalies that have to be addressed. It might mean in certain leagues increasing the amount of games. It's not just about reducing, it's about making it a level playing field, which is very important."

(Source: Daily Mail)

Iran, Venezuela share the spoils in friendly

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran national football team were held to a 1-1 draw by Venezuela in a friendly match on Tuesday.

In the match held in Doha, Qatar, Udinese striker Darwin Daniel Machis found the back of Iran's net in the 35th net.

He blasted a right-footed shot into the goal from the edge of the six-yard box.

Seven minutes later, Charleroi striker Ali Gholizadeh equalized the match after dribbling past the Venezuelan defender.

In the 53rd minute, the referee awarded Iran a penalty but he was alerted to check the replay by VAR, and after reviewing the incident on a screen off the edge of the pitch, overturned his decision.

In 64th minute, Venezuela's goal was ruled out for offside.

Iran had defeated Venezuela 1-0 at the Goffertstadion in Nijmegen in the Netherlands in last year's November.

Team Melli are preparing for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup, where they are pitted against Iraq, Yemen and Vietnam in Group D of the competition.

The 2019 AFC Asian Cup will be held in the United Arab Emirates from January 5 to February 1.

Team Melli will travel to Doha on Dec. 10 and will hold a 23-day training camp until Jan. 2.

Carlos Queiroz's team will reportedly play Qatar, Syria and China in the training camp.



Oman defeat Bahrain, Qatar fight back to draw



A goal in added time saw Oman defeat Bahrain 2-1 while Qatar produced another impressive performance to hold Iceland 2-2 in international friendlies on Monday.

■ Oman 2-1 Bahrain

Muscat: Jameel Al-Yahmadi's strike in added time secured Oman a 2-1 win over Bahrain in an international friendly at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Monday.

It was a morale boosting win for Oman ahead of the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 while Bahrain won't be too disappointed, having produced a fighting performance.

After a tight first half in which neither team made much headway, Eid Al Farsi gave Oman the lead in the 56th minute.

That stung Bahrain into action and Sami Hussein scored the equalizer in the 68th minute.

Just when a draw looked the likely result, Yahmadi struck a dramatic winner for the hosts in added time.

The win was Oman's first in six matches, with the previous five having ended in draws.

The loss for Bahrain was their second in five matches, having beaten Myanmar 4-1 in October.

Both teams are preparing for the AFC Asian Cup with Bahrain in Group A with the

United Arab Emirates, Thailand and India.

Oman will play in Group F with Japan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in the January 5-February 1 Continental showpiece.

---Iceland 2-2 Qatar

Eupen: Qatar were denied another upset but the West Asians will still be pleased after playing to a 2-2 draw with Iceland in an international friendly at the Kehwegstadion in Eupen, Belgium.

Having upset Switzerland 1-0 last week, World No 96 Qatar went into the Iceland tie oozing with confidence.

Felix Sanchez's side enjoyed a dream start with Hassan Al-Haydos giving them the lead as early as the third minute.

However, an own goal by Saad Al Sheeb saw Iceland, ranked 36th in the world, draw level in the 29th minute.

Iceland took the lead when Kolbeinn Sigursson scored from the penalty spot in the 56th minute.

Qatar, however, were not to be denied a reward after a fine performance with Boualem Khoukhi equalizing in the 68th minute.

Qatar will play in Group E at the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 against Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and DPR Korea.

(Source: the-afc)

Bashar Resan one to watch in AFC Asian Cup



Five years on from helping Iraq win the AFC U-22 Championship in Oman, midfielder Bashar Resan has developed into a key player for the Lions of Mesopotamia as they look to impress in the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019.

Such is the talent of Bashar Resan, that the now Persepolis midfielder first represented the senior side at his hometown club Air Force Club seven years ago as a 14-year-old.

Resan's career has already taken him to bigger places, most recently competing in the 2018 AFC Champions League final.

Next challenge for the 21-year-old is making his AFC Asian Cup debut with Iraq in January, where he is set to be one of the key players in the Lions of Mesopotamia setup.

Resan has represented Iraq in all age groups since first emerging as a top prospect as an early teenager. After helping the U23 side become Asian champions, he made his debut for the national team in 2014 aged 17.

He has since gone on to earn 18 caps. New coach Srecko Katanec has given the midfielder a key role in his

starting XI as he prepares to take the Lions of Mesopotamia into the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019.

■ Style of play

After starting his career as a right-winger, Resan was moved into a central midfield role. His combination of trickery and tenacity means he is capable of contributing to the attacking and defensive phases of play.

At 176 cm, aerial challenges are not Resan's strongest point, but he makes up for it with his smart positioning. Meanwhile, his range of passing offers the team an outlet to unlock opposition defenses from deeper positions.

■ What to look for

Having been plying his trade in IR Iran for the past 18 months, Resan will come up against a few of his current and former Persepolis teammates as Iraq prepare to face Team Melli in Group B. Although Katanec's men are not amongst the top favorites for the title, the Iraqis have proven they are capable of upsets when they stunned the continent to lift the AFC Asian Cup title back in 2007.

(Source: the-afc)

Winning farewell for Cahill, Japan, Korea Republic stay unbeaten

Australia turned on the power in Tim Cahill's farewell as they defeated Lebanon 3-0 while Japan and Korea Republic maintained their unbeaten run in international friendlies on Tuesday.

■ Australia 3-0 Lebanon

Brisbane: Martin Boyle grabbed a brace on his Soccerroos starting debut as Australia farewell Cahill in style, defeating Lebanon 3-0 at ANZ Stadium on Tuesday.

The 25-year-old struck an opening-half double and laid out a strike for Mathew Leckie in front of 33,268 fans in Sydney in Australia's buildup to the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019.

Cahill entered the field to a standing ovation in the 82nd minute for his 108th and final Soccerroos appearance, as Australia extended their unbeaten run in international friendlies to six consecutive matches.

Mathew Ryan, Trent Sainsbury, Aziz Behich and Aaron Mooy were the only survivors from the starting 11 who drew 1-1 with Korea Republic in Brisbane last Saturday.

One change saw Boyle summoned for his first Soccerroos start, and the Hibernian attacker was rewarded for a lively opening when he fired in his first goal for Australia via the aid of a deflection after a mazy dribble from the left flank.

Boyle sealed his brace and underlined a dominant 45 minutes from the Soccerroos on the cusp of the interval, teeing a rebound across the line after Milos Degenek thumped Mooy's corner against the crossbar with a bullet header.

Behich came close to celebrating his 11th consecutive Soccerroos start early in the second half with a goal, but his fierce right-foot drive flashed into the side netting after some neat build up with Awer Mabil.

Australia did have their third midway through the second half, as Boyle drilled an inch-perfect cross into the area for Leckie to cliff home on the half-volley.



Andrew Nabbout sent two opportunities just over the bar and hit the post in an eventful late cameo, while only some desperate Lebanon defending prevented Cahill from etching another moment into his glittering Soccerroos record.

■ Korea Republic 4-0 Uzbekistan

Brisbane: Paulo Bento's Korea Republic cruised to a 4-0 victory over Uzbekistan at the The Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre Stadium in Brisbane as the Taeguk Warriors extended their unbeaten run ahead of their AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 campaign.

Bento's men, who conceded a late goal against Australia on Saturday, took an early lead through Nam Tae-hee's volley in the ninth minute and doubled the advantage in the 24th minute through Hwang Ui-jo as the East Asians took a 2-0 lead at half-time.

Korea Republic increased their intensity of play in the second half and claimed their third goal in the 70th

minute after Moon Seon-min latched on to a loose ball following a corner which took Uzbekistan goalkeeper Ignaty Nesterov by surprise.

There was more misery for Uzbekistan as they conceded another when substitute Suk Hyun-jun found the back of the net in the 82nd minute to win the tie 4-0.

Korea Republic will have Kyrgyz Republic, China PR and Philippines for company in Group C of the AFC Asian Cup in January.

■ Japan 4-0 Kyrgyz Republic

Toyota: Japan turned on the style as they powered past Kyrgyz Republic 4-0 in their international friendly at the Toyota Stadium, continuing head coach Hajime Moriyasu's unbeaten reign.

The Samurai Blue enjoyed a dream start with Ryosuke Yamanaka giving them the lead as early as the second minute. That set the tone of the match as Japan dominated the tie, with Genki Haraguchi doubling their lead in the 19th minute.

Japan took the foot off the pedal after that and their third, after several misses, came in the 74th minute through Yuya Osako.

The four-time AFC Asian Cup winners further extended their lead just a minute later, with Shoya Nakajima finding the back of the net to extend Japan's unbeaten run to five since their 3-2 defeat to Belgium in the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia.

Japan will now look forward to their final training camp in December ahead of their AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 Group J campaign against Uzbekistan, Oman and Turkmenistan.

Kyrgyz Republic, who will be making their AFC Asian Cup Finals debut, are in Group C with Korea Republic, China PR and Philippines.

(Source: AFP)

Iran basketball to face Qatar in preparation for Australia match

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran national basketball team will meet Qatar twice as part of preparation for the FIBA World Cup qualifier's fifth and penultimate window.

Team Melli are scheduled to play the Qatari team on Nov. 23 and 25 in Doha.

Iran take on Australia on Nov. 30 in Melbourne then the Philippines on Dec. 3 in Pasay.

Iran currently are second in Group F with a 6-2 record, behind Australia (7-1) and above the Philippines (5-3).

Also in the same group are Japan, Kazakhstan and Qatar. Iran coach Mehran Shahintab has not invited Hamed Haddadi, Samad Nikkhab Bahrami and Arsalan Kazemi to Team Melli.

The 2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup qualification (Asia) process will determine the seven teams from FIBA Asia and/or FIBA Oceania that will participate at the 2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup in China.

Esteghlal players, coaches visit MAHAK charity

TASNIM — Players and coaching staff of Esteghlal football club visited The Mahak Society to Support Children with Cancer on Monday.

Captain Mehdi Rahmati along with Khosro Heydari, Farshid Bagheri, Dariush Shojaeian, Farshid Esmaeili and Ali Karimi met the cancer-fighting children on behalf of the Esteghlal football club.



General manager Amirhossein Fathi and coach Winfried Schaefer also participated in the charity event.

Esteghlal players gave MAHAK a signed jersey to raise funds for a cancer charity and awareness of the disease.

MAHAK is a charity society dedicated to treating pediatric cancer in Iran.

Iran to host Junior World Fencing Championships

IRNA — Coach of Iran's national sabre fencing team says that Iran will host Junior World Fencing Championships class A on November 24-25.

The event is registered in the calendar of the International Fencing Federation (French acronym: FIE), said Reza Peikar-ara.

Thirty-four international fencers from 12 countries and 22 Iranian ones are to compete in the tournament, which may rise within next days.

He added that the tournament, which will be held in Iranian capital city of Tehran, is expected to see matches in both individual and team categories.

Reza Alipour tops IFSC World Ranking in 2018

MNA — Iranian speed climber Reza Alipour seats top at the latest 2018 World Ranking (WR) published by International Federation of Sport Climbing.

Collecting 324.68 points, Alipour, also nicknamed 'Asiatic cheetah' and 'Vertical World's Fastest Man', tops the World Ranking in the year 2018.

Bassa Mavem of France and Dmitri Timofeev of Russia stand next with 318.59 and 316.01 points respectively.

The WR is calculated since 1999 as the sum of all results of the last 12 months.

Alipour is the world record holder of speed climbing with 5.28 seconds. He gained three bronze medals in 2018 IFSC World Cup series in Italy's Arco, China's Xiamen, and China's Wujiang, as well as a gold medal in 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia's Jakarta.

Team Melli aim to win AFC Asian Cup: Carlos Queiroz

TASNIM — Iran national football team coach Carlos Queiroz says they want to win the 2019 AFC Asian Cup again after 43 years.

Team Melli have been drawn along with Iraq, Yemen and Vietnam in Group D of the competition, scheduled for January in the UAE.

Carlos Queiroz's men met Venezuela on Tuesday in Doha, Qatar as part of preparation for the AFC Asian Cup.

"We chose Venezuela since the team plays very well and they have so many European-based players. We played Venezuela last year," Queiroz said.

"Without a doubt, the teams with better preparation have more chance of getting positive results in the Asian Cup. Japan, South Korea and Australia are the best Asian teams in term of improvement and preparation. The UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have also prepared well for the event," he added.

"First, we are going to qualify for the AFC Asian Cup last four. The Asian Cup is the most difficult team. Iran traveled to Russia for their honor and pride but in the Asian Cup we want to win the title," Queiroz concluded.

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Salar Aqili's new album features duets with Iraj

A R T TEHRAN – Vocalist Salar Aqili has collaborated in his new “Song of Iran” with his legendary fellow singer, Hossein Khajehamiri, best known by the pseudonym “Iraj”.



Vocalists Salar Aqili (L) and Iraj pose after a ceremony organized at the Tehran Negarestan on November 19, 2018 to promote their joint album “Song of Iran”.

They have performed a duet on two tracks of the album, which was released on Monday. “I was one of the fans of master Iraj since childhood and always envied him,” Aqili, 40, said during a ceremony held at the Tehran Negarestan on Monday to promote the album, the Persian service of Honaronline reported. He called the collaboration his debt to Iraj and said, “I’m very proud to have his collaboration in this album and I hope that people will enjoy it.”

The 85-year-old Iraj, who also attended the ceremony, said, “I have always praised Salar Aqili and this collaboration was a good experience.”

The album also contains a music video featuring the two tracks, “Iran Is in the Limelight” and “Iran”.

Iraj recorded many albums with memorable songs, including “In Memory of Fardin” and “Bird”. He was also a playback singer for numerous movies starring Mohammad-Ali Fardin, Manuchehr Vosuq and Reza Beikmanverdi.

Italian musician Federico Albanese to gig in Tehran

A R T TEHRAN – Italian composer Federico Albanese who is famous for minimalist piano melodies, string arrangements and electronica is scheduled to give a performance in Tehran on December 7.



Italian composer Federico Albanese.

The performance, which will be held at Andisheh Hall, has been organized by Rooberoo Mansion to celebrate its anniversary, the cultural center has announced.

In 2007, Albanese founded the avant-garde duo “La Blanche Alchimie” with singer and songwriter Jessica Einaudi to release three albums.

As a solo-pianist, he released his debut album “The Houseboat and the Moon” in 2014.

In his latest album “The Blue Hour”, which was released in 2016, the 36-year-old musician presents crisp, very dynamic and complexly arranged compositions.

Mali singer Salif Keita highlights plight of African albinos

BAMAKO/DAKAR (Reuters) — Like many people, Malian musician Salif Keita first became aware he was different when he started school. His skin was white; all the other kids were black.

“I was the sole albino,” he told Reuters in an interview. “I knew immediately that I was different from the other children.”

Across Africa, the skin condition — where people are born with no pigment in their skin, eyes and hair — is often seen as an omen of misfortune. Albinos have been shunned, ostracized, beaten, killed, and in some places dismembered so their body parts can be used for magic potions.

But when 5-year-old albino girl Ramata Diarra was ritually killed and beheaded in the Malian town of Fana, 130 km west of the capital Bamako, in May this year, Keita decided to act.

“I was truly shocked,” he told Reuters before throwing a concert in Fana on Saturday as a tribute to Ramata.

“Albinos have problems integrating into society, which is something we wanted to expose,” he said. “We are saying that beauty lies in difference. We must be proud of what we are.”

His new album “Un Autre Blanc”, or Another White — the last before the 69-year-old retires — is dedicated to underscoring this message.

For decades, Keita’s sound — a hip-shaking yet curiously haunting blend of Mandinka folk music with a percussive jazz-funk — has delighted West African and Western audiences alike.

The new album is more eclectic than past ones, featuring collaborations with guests as diverse as French rapper MHD, Nigerian Afropop singer Yemi Alade and South African choir group Ladysmith Black Mambazo. “It was my way of saying goodbye, doing this with my friends,” he told Reuters.

At Saturday’s concert, Fana’s football stadium was crammed with revelers carrying slogans like “never again,” and “I am Ramata”. Albinos danced alongside everyone else.

“She wasn’t even old enough for school yet,” Ramata’s mother Hawa Toure told Reuters, choking back tears. “I will always have this pain in me.”

Fajr visual arts festival modifies policy to boost diversity

A R T TEHRAN – The new executives of the Fajr International Festival of Visual Arts have made modifications to the festival policy to attract artists holding different perspectives.

Veteran graphic designer Ebrahim Haqiqi, who is the new president of the festival, and Hadi Mozaffari, the director of the policymaking council of the festival, attended a press conference on Tuesday to brief the media about the 11th edition of the event.

Mozaffari said that they have scrutinized the previous editions of the festival to improve the upcoming event.

He criticized those certain people who had divided artists into groups of pro-revolution and counterrevolution over the previous editions of the festival that is organized every year to mark the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

He said that this year’s festival will be organized in close collaboration with art galleries.

The organizers plan to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the revolution in a special program titled “No. 40”.

Photo exhibitions on the revolution are scheduled to be organized in 40 cities and many artists will be honored for their lifetime achievements during the program.

The 11th Fajr International Festival of Visual Arts will be held in Tehran during February and March 2019.



The executives of the 11th Fajr International Festival of Visual Arts, Hadi Mozaffari (L) and Ebrahim Haqiqi, attend a press conference at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art to brief the media about the event. (Honaronline/Mahdieh Babai)

A wide array of programs, including discussions, will be held at the Saba Art Religious Arts Museum, Qasr Garden art exhibitions, workshops, panel and Cultural Institute, Imam Ali (AS) Museum and several art universities.

“Hendi & Hormoz” picked as best film at Toronto CineIran Festival

A R T TEHRAN – Abbas Amin’s “Hendi & Hormoz”, about an arranged marriage, was selected as best film at the 4th CineIran Festival in the Canadian city of Toronto, the organizers announced on Sunday.

The story of the film is set on the hematite-rich island of Hormoz where Hendi, a 13-year-old girl, is married off to Hormoz, a 16-year-old who is jobless and lives in poverty like most of the rest of the island’s inhabitants. When Hendi becomes pregnant, Hormoz turns to a drug smuggler in an effort to ensure his family’s livelihood.

Godfrey Cheshire, Babak Payami, Marjan Alizadeh and Arsalan Baraheni were the member of the jury at CineIran, which is a partner festival of the Toronto International Film Festival.

The jury and a number of Iranian cineastes attended the awards ceremony held at the



“Hendi & Hormoz” by director Abbas Amin.

TIFF Bell Lightbox.

Hedeyeh Tehran won the award for best actress in “Orange Days” directed by Arash Lahuti for the portrayal of Aban, the only female contractor in the cutthroat and male-dominated orange harvesting industry in northern Iran, who enters a competition to win a large contract.

The award best actor went to Hamed Behdad for his role in director Kamal Tabrizi’s political comedy “Sly”. Behdad stars as a presidential hopeful who pursues power at any cost.

“Dressage” by Puya Badkubeh was named best debut film and cinematographer Alireza Barazandeh won the Technical Achievement Award for his collaboration on “Invasion” by director Shahram Mokri.

The Best Screenplay Award was shared by “Orange Days” co-written by Arash Lahuti and Jamileh Daroshafai and “Dressage” written by Hamed Rajabi.

“Missing Picasso” found in Romania may be hoax – media

AMSTERDAM (Reuters) — A painting that Romanian prosecutors said on Sunday might be a work by Pablo Picasso stolen in 2012 is more likely a forgery created as a publicity stunt, Dutch media reported.

State broadcaster NOS cited author Frank Westerman, who helped locate the painting in Romania’s Tulcea county after an anonymous tip, turning it over to Romanian police on Saturday.

Westerman told NOS on Sunday he had received an e-mail from a Belgian theater company which is staging a play about a famed art forger. He said the painting he recovered appears to have been a forgery hidden as part of an elaborate hoax.

Separately a former curator of the museum that owned the real “Tête d’Arlequin”, or Harlequin’s Head, told Dutch television that based on photos he had seen of the painting that was found, it appeared to be a forgery.

Romanian prosecutors, who said Sunday they were trying to verify the work’s authenticity, could not immediately be reached for comment.

The Berlin theater company in Antwerp, Belgium, which is putting on the play about forgery, said in a carefully worded tweet that it had “brought back” Tête d’Arlequin in a new frame.

On its website it said it would “be back



A view of Rotterdam’s Kunsthall art gallery in the Netherlands October 16, 2012. (Reuters/Robin van Lonkhuijsen)

with more details on this issue within the next few days” and listed links to reports of the discovery of the painting.

The real Picasso was stolen from an exhibition in Rotterdam in one of the art world’s most dramatic heists. The other paintings taken were Matisse’s “La Liseuse en Blanc et Jaune”, Monet’s “Waterloo Bridge, London” and “Charing Cross Bridge, London”, Gauguin’s “Femme devant une fenêtre ouverte”, Meijer De Haan’s “Autoportrait” and Lucian Freud’s “Woman with Eyes Closed”.

A Romanian man and several accomplices were convicted of the theft in 2013, but none of the artworks have been recovered. Romanian experts believed at least three of them were burned in an attempt to destroy evidence.

Taylor Swift uses music muscle to seek higher payouts for others

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Pop music titan Taylor Swift on Monday announced a new record deal with Universal Music Group that will give her greater control over her own music and could boost future payouts to artists for music played on streaming service Spotify.

Swift, who with bestselling albums like “1989” and “Reputation” is one of pop music’s wealthiest and most influential artists, said the deal with Universal Music Group (UMG) included an agreement that any potential sale of UMG’s shares in Spotify “result in a distribution of money to their artists, non-recoupable.”

“They have generously agreed to this, at what they believe will be much better terms and paid out previously by other major labels,” the “Fearless” singer told her 113 million Instagram followers in a posting.

Spotify, which with some 83 million paid subscribers is the world’s most popular paid music streaming service, went public in April.

“I feel strongly that streaming was founded on and continues to thrive based on the magic created by artists, writers and producers,” Swift wrote.

Swift, 28, said she would also own all of her master recordings going forward. The financial terms of her deal with UMG were not released.

Swift has long used her leverage in



2018 American Music Awards - Photo Room - Los Angeles, California, U.S., 09/10/2018 - Taylor Swift accepts Artist of the Year. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

the industry to campaign for better payments to artists from streaming services. In 2017, she returned her music to Spotify almost three years after complaining publicly that streaming services did not pay artists enough.

Online streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music have become the recording industry’s single biggest revenue source, and last year overtook physical sales of CDs and digital downloads for the first time, global industry body IFPI said in an April report.

Universal Music, a unit of Vivendi, said the multi-album, multi-year agreement was effective immediately.

Universal Music chief executive Lucian Grainge said in a statement that he respected Swift’s campaign for better terms.

As he gets Hollywood Walk of Fame star, Snoop Dogg thanks... himself

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — California rapper Snoop Dogg received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on Monday, and celebrated by giving himself a big thank you.

The musician and star of an unlikely television pairing with lifestyle guru Martha Stewart - “Martha and Snoop’s Potluck Dinner” - was awarded the honor on the 25th anniversary of his debut album “Doggystyle”.

“I want to thank me for believing in me, I want to thank me for doing all this hard work, I want to thank me for having no days off, I want to thank me for never quitting, I want to thank me for always being a giver, and trying to give more than I receive, I want to thank me for doing more right than wrong, I want to thank me for being me at all times,” the “Drop It Like It’s Hot” singer said at the ceremony.



Snoop Dogg’s Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Snoop, 47, took his early success as a rapper into work as a film and television actor in shows like “Stargate” and “Training Day”, and as a television producer. He has also ventured into reggae and gospel music, survived several brushes with the law over drugs and guns possession, and last month published his first cookbook, “From Crook to Cook”.

“Snoop is just pure, raw talent. Nobody sounds like Snoop,” record producer Dr. Dre, who produced the “Doggystyle” album in 1993, said at the ceremony. “His style and charisma made me feel like he was destined to be a superstar.”

Snoop has won multiple music awards, but never a Grammy.

“Twenty Grammy nominations but not one won. They need to catch up,” Snoop told reporters.