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Congratulations on birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Imam Jafar Sadiq (AS)



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#YemenChildrenDay

'85000 Yemeni kids may have died of hunger amid Saudi war'

©Reuters

Tehran, Moscow discuss transport ties

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami met with his Russian counterpart Yevgeny Dietrich on Tuesday to discuss expansion of ties, the Iranian Transport Ministry's portal reported. The officials met on the sidelines of the Transport Week Russia 2018 which is being held during November 20–22 at the Gostiny Dvor Art Gallery in Moscow.

In the meeting, the two sides emphasized the need for development of rail cooperation, accelerating joint projects and the need for cooperation on the completion of the international North-South transport corridor. The international North-South transport corridor starts from Helsinki in Finland, and passing through Russia, Azerbaijan and Iran ends in Mumbai, India.

Jaberi Ansari meets de Mistura, Syrian opposition figures

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Hossein Jaberi Ansari, a senior advisor to Iranian foreign minister for political affairs, held separate talks with the outgoing UN special envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, and some Syrian opposition figures in Switzerland on Monday and Tuesday. The sides held consultations on the

resolution of problems in formation of the Syrian Constitution Committee and the forthcoming round of the Syrian International Peace Talks in Astana, the Foreign Ministry website reported on Wednesday. The peace talks are scheduled to be held at the in the Kazakh capital on November 28-29. **→2**

Trump under fire over backing Mbs

American lawmakers have blasted U.S. President Donald Trump for siding with Saudi leaders and refusing to blame Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for the murder of Virginia-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the kingdom's diplomatic mission in Turkey's Istanbul early last month. In a statement issued by the White House on Tuesday, Trump threw his

support behind denials earlier made by Saudi King Salman and the crown prince, saying that the two "vigorously deny any knowledge of the planning or execution" of Khashoggi's killing. Trump said U.S. intelligence agencies "continue to assess all information," however; he questioned whether the Saudi crown prince was involved in Khashoggi's brutal murder. **→3**

ARTICLE
Martin Love
 Political analyst from North Carolina

U.S. policy errors mount with Trump's banalities and delusions

It is aggravating to see Donald Trump and minions squirm and contort themselves about the misdeeds of Muhammad bin Salman, otherwise known as MBS. Might I suggest the real meaning of "MBS", and apply it to Trump and minions, too? Is not M-ighty B-ull S-hitter better? Yes, I think it is much better. It has been nearly two months since Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi was suffocated and chopped and sawed in to pieces and then possibly dissolved in acid in or near the Saudi consulate building in Istanbul. No body or parts of one have so far been discovered. All along the way the Saudis came up with one story, then another, then another. Finally, the Saudis admitted to the murder and MBS shrugged it off as the action of a rogue group of actors comprising a "hit" team close to him or whatever you want to call the current Saudi government. (The entire enterprise called "Saudi Arabia" looks rogue to me, a monster with far too much in the way of oil and gas, sold for the wrong things and the wrong reasons and making the wrong people wealthy.) But almost as bad has been Trump's response so far. Trump and gang have paid the usual knee-jerk lip service to the crime itself. Yes, it was "horrific or ugly or stupid" or whatever negative adjective that comes to mind, even to the puny mind of Donald Trump. But it's all okay, Trump and gang seem to be saying, too, there's no DIRECT proof tying the murder to MBS (even though it's a virtual certainty to anyone with a gram of brains that MBS gave the order to kill Khashoggi and was even informed when it was underway.) So Trump is apparently of the belief that given a few more weeks, Khashoggi and the murder will have been forgotten because, well, the Middle East is a "difficult" region anyway you cut it (forgive the pun), and any disruption of Saudi-U.S. relations is a no-no, and underneath festers billions of dollars and potential profits that would be at risk if, say, the Saudis and MBS were "sanctioned" or diplomatic relations were diminished to any degree. **→7**

Hunt completed the dirty Britain case with Iran's threat to war and famine

By Mohammad Ghaderi
TEHRAN — Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the UK Jeremy Hunt, who came to Iran on Monday, in an interview described the Middle East as a tinderbox and warned against a First World War-style catastrophe in the Middle East. Hunt said, "The Middle East is a tinderbox where one small event could lead to a catastrophe on the scale of the First World War. We have the issue of sanctions, we have regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia which is getting more and more dangerous and has led to a proxy war. If we put all these together and look at the warning signs of WWI, we will see that small incidents like a chain of events can have big consequences with a catastrophic aftermath." He called the Zionist regime another important



issue in the Middle East. He also pointed to the arrest and imprisonment of two dual nationals in Iran and warned Tehran against such incidents and went on to claim that Britain remains one of the major players in the Middle East.

■ Britain's hand in the Middle East crisis
 Hunt's warning about WWI and the importance of his country in the Middle East proves the role of Britain in the Middle East crisis. Hunt's referral to World War I could contain several messages for Tehran. One of the darker times in Iranian history occurred at the end of the that war and the occupation of Iran by an alliance that brought about the Persian Great Famine of 1917–1919. About 2 million Iranians died of hunger and disease in that period while occupying armies were confiscating foodstuffs. England's hoarding of food aggravated the condition and caused the massive famine in Iran. Unfortunately, this part of Iran's history and the role that Britain played is not addressed and may be one of the reasons that the missionaries of London allow themselves to threaten Iran. **→7**

'Muslims in Kashmir stand united against forces that seek to divide them'

By Syed Ali Safvi
TEHRAN — As the world gears up to observe the Week of Unity coinciding with the birth anniversary of the Holy Prophet (pbuh), it has become extremely important to follow in letter and spirit the teachings of the greatest man to have ever lived and assiduously espouse the cause of Islamic unity, peace, tolerance and brotherhood and promote intra-faith dialogue. Mirwaiz Maulvi Umar Farooq is the chief cleric of Kashmir (Mirwaiz) and the chairman of his faction of Hurriyat Conference, a conglomerate of separatist political organizations in Kashmir. He joined politics at a young age of 17 in 1990 after his father, Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq, was assassinated.

He speaks about the significance of Islamic unity, challenges for Muslim unity in Kashmir and why Imam Khomeini's message of unity and brotherhood is more relevant today than ever before. The interview was originally published in The Witness magazine. **■ Significance of Islamic unity:** It is the call of Islam that the entire Muslim Ummah should stand together. We, as Muslims, have to shun petty issues of discontent and be united at this critical juncture. Shia-Sunni unity is the call of the time, and we should always keep that in mind. We want the Ummah to be united and Islamic countries to show the real meaning of Islamic teachings and values.

In 2003, I formed the Muttahida Majlis e Ulema. The main objective was to address the contemporary issues in our society. The problem being majority of people don't follow a path that leads to unity. In my sermons, I strongly emphasize the need of unity among Muslims but I believe more needs to be done. We cannot rule out the fact that there are certain elements working on the ground who want to drive a wedge between communities. We have seen time and again that anti-Muslim remarks, propaganda, anti-Islam films have been scripted in the U.S., in the West and in other parts of the world. So there is a deliberate attempt being made to create tension between communities. **→6**

ARTICLE
Syed Zafar Mehdi
 Journalist from New Delhi

Kabul 'Mawlid' attack, Takfiri plot to divide Muslims

On Tuesday afternoon, a large congregation of top-notch Afghan clerics had assembled at a wedding hall in Kabul to mark the birth anniversary of the Holy Prophet (pbuh). Festive fervor pervaded the air, as clerics, young and old, greeted and embraced each other in a beautiful spirit of camaraderie and compassion that the Holy Prophet (pbuh) preached and propagated all his life. In a place like Afghanistan, where festivities barely mean anything and where mourning has become a defining feature of life, it was a rare occasion where religious scholars came together to celebrate birth anniversary of the man who was sent as a 'mercy' to mankind. "Muhammad is Allah's apostle and those who are (truly) with him are firm and unyielding towards disbelievers, (yet) full of mercy towards one another," says Holy Quran. This beautiful element of mercy towards one another enshrined in Holy Quran cannot be emphasized enough. Just as verses from the Hoy Quran were being recited to start the program, a young man quietly sneaked inside the jam-packed hall. No one raised an alarm because no one could possibly have expected anything. The young man turned out to be a suicide bomber, who swiftly made his way to the center of the gathering before detonating his explosives. Within moments, dozens of lifeless bodies were lying in the pools of blood. Copies of Holy Quran were stained in blood of the men who spent their lives reciting and memorizing the holy verses. The wedding hall that was buzzing with activity moments ago had turned silent. The silence was deafening. **→6**



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Saffron, red gold of Iran

Iran is the world's top producer of saffron. Some 95 percent of Iranian saffron is produced in the northeastern province of Khorassan. Much of the Iranian crop is exported to many countries all over the world. Iran's saffron exports increased 40 percent during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22) compared to the same period of time in the past year. This picture depicts a woman harvesting saffron flowers in Torbat-Heydariyeh County in northeast of Iran.

Dear readers,
 The next issue of the Tehran Times will be published on Monday, November 26.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Dream of 'uprooting Iranian nation' will never be realized: Zarif

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Wednesday slammed U.S. President Donald Trump for his hostility toward the Iranian nation, saying U.S. hawks' dream of "uprooting the Iranian nation" will never be realized.

"A nation is its people, @realdonaldtrump. Repeatedly calling Iran a "terrorist nation" reveals hostility toward an entire people & exposes the real reason for targeting them with your illegal sanctions. But US hawks' dream of 'uprooting the Iranian nation' will never be realized," Zarif tweeted.



Araqchi: EU political will to save JCPOA still strong

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Wednesday that the European Union's political will to salvage the 2015 nuclear pact, officially known as the JCPOA, is still strong. "Yesterday and today, I held good meetings with political leaders and nuclear negotiators of England and France. The political will of the European Union and the three European countries to keep Barjam (JCPOA) is still strong," Araqchi tweeted.

He added that new initiatives with regard to the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) are being undertaken and "our expert talks with them continues."



Iranian Navy to unveil new destroyer, submarine

POLITICS TEHRAN — Navy Chief Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi said on Wednesday that new defense achievements, including a destroyer and a submarine, will be unveiled next week.

"Sahand Destroyer and Fateh Submarine are to be unveiled over the next week," Khanzadi told a news conference, Fars reported.

The destroyer could carry large helicopters, missile defense systems and fighter jets, he stated.

He added that the indigenously manufactured medium-class submarine would surprise the Islamic Republic's enemies with its special capabilities.

The commander also hailed increasing coordination between the Navy and Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC).



Foreign Ministry denies plans to exit JCPOA

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Wednesday dismissed rumors that the ministry is getting ready to pull out of the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the JCPOA, saying such rumors are designed to negatively impact the Iranian economy.

"These rumors are certainly false, baseless and purposeful," Qassemi said in a statement, the Foreign Ministry website reported.

"They are created by certain domestic and foreign circles with destructive intentions and are aimed at making people worried, creating baseless tensions and negatively impacting the economy and people's livelihood," he explained.



Economy Ministry to form anti-sanctions office

POLITICS TEHRAN — Chairman of the Majlis Economic Committee announced on Tuesday that the Economy Ministry plans to establish an anti-sanctions office in a bid to counter the latest U.S. economic sanctions against Iran.

Mohammadreza Pourebrahimi said members of the parliamentary committee held a meeting in Tehran earlier in the day, which was attended by Economy Minister Farhad Dejjpasand and some banking officials, Tasnim reported.

"The formation of the anti-sanctions office in the Economy Ministry with the aim of monitoring the Americans' measures in the banking sector and moves to strengthen banking system was discussed at the meeting," he said.



Zarif in Rome to attend Mediterranean Dialogues

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif visited Rome late on Wednesday to attend the annual Mediterranean Dialogues (MED).

Zarif, who visited Italy upon an official invitation of the country's foreign minister, plans to deliver a speech at MED, which is expected to be attended by representatives from 56 countries, the Foreign Ministry said.

The foreign minister will also meet with officials of different countries on the sidelines of the main event and participate in various economic and cultural programs, he added.

Rouhani backs Zarif over money laundering remarks

POLITICS TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday defended the recent remarks made by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif about money laundering, saying not just Iran but the entire world is suffering from money laundering.

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 that those who profit billions of dollars from money laundering are spending millions of it to prevent the passage of the bills requiring more financial transparency.

The comments triggered a wave of enraged responses from some conservative politicians, who called for the impeachment of the foreign minister.

Speaking at Wednesday's cabinet meeting, Rouhani said, "Why do we fight over such obvious issues? Yes, the entire world is suffering from money laundering. Show me one country in the whole world in which money laundering does not take place and show me one country in the whole world in which corruption, narcotics and fake products do not exist."



"All of us should strive against money laundering and corruption," he said, rhetorically asking, "Why are we bickering with each other so much?"

The chief Iranian diplomat was also

summoned for more explanation to the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, forcing him to reiterate that he had not accused any state-run institution of money laundering.

On Monday, Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani criticized Zarif's remarks, saying, "If widespread money laundering exists in the country, why haven't you reported this issue to the Judiciary?"

While maintaining that such statements should not be used as tools to put pressure on the administration, Amoli Larijani also warned that the authorities "should not utter words that will be thrust into the heart of the system like a dagger."

On Tuesday, MP Hossein-Ali Haji-Deligani said the motion to impeach Zarif because of his failure to present evidence for his claims has been made and signatures are being collected.

Responding to criticisms, Rouhani further said corruption, bribery and drug addiction exist in Iran, and "we should not get angry with someone for stating these issues."

Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi also openly sided with the foreign minister. "Zarif's stance is correct, and it is in fact the administration's stance," he told reporters on the sidelines of Wednesday's cabinet meeting.

Vaezi expressed regret that "despite his correct stance, certain individuals attack Mr. Zarif because of their enmity towards him for some of the measures he has taken."

Jaberi Ansari meets de Mistura, Syrian opposition figures

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Tuesday met with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Foreign Minister Walid Muallem, and some other Syrian political and security officials to discuss the latest developments in the country and issues related to the constitutional committee.

In their meeting, Jaberi Ansari and Assad stressed the importance of Syrian-Iranian relations as a factor of stability, and reaffirmed both nations' determination to continue combat against terrorist groups operating across the region.

They also underlined the need that dialogue is the sole solution to the Syria crisis.

The Iranian negotiator and the Syrian leader also vowed to resist any pressure by

the United States, which is attempting to revive terrorists to topple the Damascus government.

Iran has been offering military advisory support to Syria at the request of its government, enabling its army to speed up its gains on various fronts against terrorist groups.

However, over the past few years, Israel, the closest ally of the U.S., has frequently attacked military targets inside Syria to prop up terrorist groups that have been suffering defeats in the battle against Syrian government forces.

In addition, the U.S.-led coalition has been conducting airstrikes against what are said to be Daesh targets inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from

the government or a UN mandate.

The military alliance has repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians. It has also been largely incapable of achieving its declared goal of destroying Daesh.

Jaberi Ansari and Assad also discussed a yet-to-be-formed constitutional committee, which is supposed to include representatives from various Syrian groups.

The committee is expected to include 150 members: 50 chosen by Damascus, 50 by the opposition and the final 50 by de Mistura. It will also include civil society representatives, religious and tribal leaders, experts and women.

The UN-prepared list has already been rejected by Damascus, which is to draw up its own list, along with Russia, Iran and Turkey.



Even if the committee is finally established, analysts say the task of discussing a post-war constitution will be difficult.

The Syrian government has on numerous occasions said that it would only agree with some alteration to the current constitution, whereas the opposition is pushing for an entirely new constitution.

Zarif to Trump: Perhaps Iran is also responsible for California wildfires

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Tuesday mocked U.S. President Donald Trump, saying that "perhaps we're also responsible for the California fires" after Trump earlier in the day attacked Iran in a statement reaffirming his support for Saudi Arabia.

In a tweet, Zarif also called Trump's statement on Saudi Arabia "shameful". In the statement, the president referred to Iran as "the world's leading sponsor of terror".

"Mr. Trump bizarrely devotes the FIRST paragraph of

his shameful statement on Saudi atrocities to accuse IRAN of every sort of malfeasance he can think of," Zarif wrote. "Perhaps we're also responsible for the California fires, because we didn't help rake the forests—just like the Finns do?"

According to the Hill, Trump issued a statement on Tuesday saying that the United States would continue its "steadfast" relationship with the Saudi kingdom despite the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul last month.

Trump used the first paragraph of the statement

to go after Iran, saying that the country is responsible for the Yemen civil war and accusing the nation of attempting to destabilize Iraq. He also criticized Iran for supporting Syrian President Bashar Assad.

"Likewise, the Iranians have killed many Americans and other innocent people throughout the Middle East. Iran states openly, and with great force, 'Death to America!' and 'Death to Israel!' Iran is considered 'the world's leading sponsor of terror,'" Trump added. "On the other hand, Saudi Arabia would gladly withdraw from Yemen if the Iranians would agree to leave."

Iran: U.S. will realize inefficiency of sanctions sooner or later

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Wednesday that the United States will become aware of the inefficiency of sanctions sooner or later.

His comments came as the U.S. Department of the Treasury issued a statement on Tuesday announcing it has designated nine targets to impose sanctions on because of working with Russian companies and providing millions

of barrels of oil to the Syrian government. Qassemi said, "These fruitless, illogical and inefficient sanctions against natural and legal individuals will not yield to the objectives of those who impose them and they will become aware that what they think is fruitless."

The department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) said in the statement that the sanctions prohibit material support to the Syrian government, including shipments of oil to Syrian government-controlled ports.

Iran says terrorist blast in Kabul is aimed to fuel religious divide

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi has strongly condemned a deadly terrorist blast in the Afghan capital Kabul, saying the act was intended to inflame religious division in the country.

"Hidden hands behind this terrorist operation had no objective but fueling ethnic and religious division," he said in a statement on Tuesday.

He expressed hope that the Afghans would take steps in line with establishing peace and stability through reinforcing their unity.

Qassemi also expressed sympathy with the Afghan government, people and families of the victims.

A huge explosion hit a building in Kabul where a large crowd of people, including religious scholars, were marking the birthday anniversary of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him).

The blast left more than 50 people dead and at least 83 people were wounded.

Reportedly, the suicide bomber gained entry and headed for the center of the gathering where he detonated his explosives.

The Afghan television station, Tolo News, citing a number of eyewitnesses, said at least 1,000 people were present in the hall at the time of the explosion, which is the deadliest of such attacks in Kabul in recent months, Press TV reported.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack yet.

'Unity is main source of Islamic power'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Moderator Hsen Pakaen, a member of the strategic council of the Islamic World Peace Forum, has said that unity is a source of power in the Islamic world and the key to defeat the enemies of Islam.

"Boosting this unity can be effective in countering the West's soft war against the world of Islam," he said in a message on the occasion of the Islamic Unity week.

The Western countries have targeted unity among Muslims because of their defeats in West Asia, the former diplomat remarked.

He called on the members to the Islamic World Peace Forum to use media outlets in line with fulfilling their duty of boosting unity among Muslims.

Pakaen described the forum's members as "soldiers of the cyber army" to counter threats to the unity among Muslims.

First Announcement



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Trump under fire over backing MbS

Turkey accuses U.S. of turning blind eye to Saudi killing of Khashoggi

1 → "Our intelligence agencies continue to assess all information, but it could very well be that the Crown Prince had knowledge of this tragic event – maybe he did and maybe he didn't!" the American head of state said.

This is while U.S. media reported on Saturday that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) believed with "high confidence" that the Saudi crown prince had directly ordered the killing.

The Tuesday statement prompted U.S. senators from Democratic and Republican Party to criticize Trump's siding with Saudi leaders in the case of the dissident journalist.

Senators Dianne Feinstein and Ron Wyden, the two senior Democrats on the Senate Intelligence Committee, and Senator Jeanne Shaheen, a senior member of the Foreign Relations panel, criticized the U.S. president's remarks.

"I'm shocked that President Trump said there will be no punishment for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for the killing of Jamal Khashoggi," Feinstein said in a statement.

"Given the fact that Saudi security organizations are under the absolute control of the crown prince, there's every reason to believe the crown prince gave the order," Feinstein added.

"Media reports now say the CIA is confident the crown prince directed Khashoggi's murder. To allow this to happen with no consequences is offensive to every value the United States holds dear," she noted.

Feinstein also said she would vote against any future arms sale to Saudi Arabia and called on Washington to impose sanctions on the crown prince.

Wyden slammed the American head of state for giving Riyadh what he called "a free pass."

"Donald Trump's statement makes clear that he does not care who ordered the brutal murder of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi," Wyden said in a statement.

"Giving the Saudis a free pass here reveals this administration's crippling weakness, even in the face of the murder of a journalist and U.S. resident," he noted.

Shaheen condemned "Trump's habit of siding with murderous foreign dictators over American intelligence professionals," describing his response to Khashoggi's killing "a stain on our democracy that undermines the American ideal."

"Congress must now stand up with bipartisan resolve to condemn the brutal slaying of Jamal Khashoggi and pass legislation to respond to this and other Saudi crimes," she said.

Senator Ben Cardin, a senior member of the Foreign Relations Committee, denounced Trump's statement as "outrageous and unprecedented."



"For the president to knowingly come to the defense of an individual who it appears ordered the murder of a political critic, is something I thought the world would never witness," he said in a statement.

Senator Jack Reed, the top-ranking Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, slammed Trump's "unwillingness to stand up to Saudi Arabia" for Khashoggi's murder as "feckless."

Senator Republicans also joined the chorus of criticism later on Tuesday.

Republican U.S. Senator Rand Paul blasted Trump's statement siding with Saudi leaders over denying responsibility for the death of Khashoggi, characterizing the president's remarks as "Saudi Arabia First."

Paul disputed the Trump's claim that he was pushing an "America First" policy since he refused to punish the Saudi crown prince in Khashoggi's case.

"The President indicates that Saudi Arabia is the lesser two evils compared to Iran and so the U.S. won't punish Saudi Arabia for the brutal killing and dismemberment of a dissident journalist in their consulate. I disagree," Paul wrote on Twitter.

"I'm pretty sure this statement is Saudi Arabia First, not America First. I'm also pretty sure John Bolton wrote it," Paul added, referring to Trump's national security adviser.

The Kentucky Republican, one of Saudi Arabia's most outspoken critics, has been calling for a vote on bipartisan legislation that would block a \$110 billion worth of arms sale to Riyadh.

"We should, at the very least, NOT reward Saudi Arabia with our sophisticated armaments that they in turn use to bomb civilians," Paul also said in his tweet. "I will continue to press for legislation to stop the

Saudi arms sales and the war in Yemen."

Senator Lindsey Graham, one of Trump's staunchest allies, warned the U.S. president against ignoring Saudi Arabia's bad behavior and said the kingdom must be held accountable for the death of the U.S.-based journalist.

"It is not in our national security interests to look the other way when it comes to the brutal murder of Mr. Jamal Khashoggi," the South Carolina Republican said in a statement.

Graham, who is set to become chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee in January, demanded that the Senate take action by voting on sanctions legislation against Riyadh.

"I firmly believe there will be strong bipartisan support for serious sanctions against Saudi Arabia, including appropriate members of the royal family, for this barbaric act which defied all civilized norms," he said in his statement.

"While Saudi Arabia is a strategic ally, the behavior of the Crown Prince – in multiple ways – has shown disrespect for the relationship and made him, in my view, beyond toxic," Graham added.

Blind eye

Turkey accused the United States Wednesday of trying to turn a blind eye to the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul, and dismissed comments from President Donald Trump on the issue as "comic."

Trump vowed Tuesday to remain a "steadfast partner" of Saudi Arabia, despite saying that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman may have known about the plan to murder to Khashoggi, a U.S. resident and Washington Post columnist.

Of the possibility Prince Mohammad had a hand in the murder, Trump said: "Maybe he did, maybe he didn't." His comments contradicted the CIA, which believes Khashoggi's

death was ordered directly by the crown prince, Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler.

Numan Kurtulmus, the deputy chairman of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party, dismissed Trump's assessment. "Yesterday's statement is a comic statement," he told state broadcaster TRT Haber.

"It is not possible for an intelligence agency such as the CIA, which even knows the color of the fur on the cat walking around the Saudi consulate's garden... to not know who gave this order," he said. "This is not credible either for U.S. public opinion or the world public opinion."

Since Khashoggi's killing at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul last month, Turkey has repeatedly said the order came from the "highest levels" of the Saudi government, although it has not directly accused Prince Mohammad.

Saudi Arabia has denied that the crown prince ordered the killing. After offering numerous contradictory explanations, Riyadh said last week Khashoggi had been killed and his body dismembered when "negotiations" to persuade him to return to Saudi Arabia failed.

Trump said Saudi Arabia, a major oil producer, was an important business partner and a "great ally" in the fight against Iranian power in the Middle East.

Following a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Washington, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Ankara is not entirely satisfied with the level of cooperation it is receiving from Saudi Arabia regarding the case.

Cavusoglu said Ankara may seek a formal United Nations inquiry if its liaising with Riyadh comes to an impasse.

(Source: Agencies)

Afghans try to identify group behind attack on preachers, toll climbs to 55

Afghan authorities were struggling Wednesday to identify the group behind a suicide bomb attack that killed at least 55 people at a gathering of religious scholars in Kabul after the Taliban denied any responsibility.

The victims included religious delegates from various parts of the country, invited by the Afghan Ulema Council to celebrate the birth anniversary of Prophet Mohammad Tuesday.

Without knowing who was behind the attack, it was unclear whether the aim was to undermine President Ashraf Ghani's government, or whether it was part of a strategy to keep the pressure on his government and its Western allies while they pursued talks with the Taliban, to end the 17-year long war. "As of now we don't know which militant outfit could be behind the attack. Investigations are at a preliminary stage," said a senior security official who was at the blast site on Wednesday to collect forensic evidence.

The council, the country's largest religious organization, gathered scholars from the Sunni sect, but it was uncertain whether the attack could have had a sectarian dimension.

Though Sunni themselves, Taliban and Daesh (ISIL) militants have targeted religious scholars aligned with the Afghan government in the past.

This time, the Taliban quickly denied responsibility and condemned the attack on religious preachers and scholars, but investigators in Kabul said the headline group's involvement cannot be ruled out.

The toll from Tuesday's attack could rise as most of the



80 wounded had severe injuries, hospital and government officials said.

On Wednesday, two rockets hit Ghazni city where the top U.S. general leading the NATO-led force in Afghanistan, Scott Miller, was meeting the provincial governor and senior officials at the governor's compound, said Ahmad Khan Serat, a spokesman for Ghazni police.

"Gen. Miller was not hurt in the rocket attack," Serat said, adding that two rockets fell on a money exchange market, about 200 meters from the governor's compound in the central strategic province.

Debra Richardson, a spokesperson for the NATO-led Resolute Support mission, said Miller was in Ghazni province

for a meeting with Afghan military leadership to discuss security.

"While he was there, the Taliban indiscriminately launched indirect fire but we do not believe General Miller was the target," Richardson said in a statement.

No militant group has claimed responsibility for the rocket attack in Ghazni.

In October, Miller survived an attack by a Taliban fighter in the southern province of Kandahar in which a legendary Afghan police general and the local intelligence chief were killed, and two Americans were wounded.

Last week, Taliban leaders met U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad at their political headquarters in Qatar in an effort to pave the way for peace talks. The three-day meeting was the second in the past month.

Khalilzad has declared a deadline of April 20, the day of Afghanistan's presidential election, to end the war, but the country's security situation has worsened since NATO formally ended combat operations in 2014.

U.S. President Donald Trump has angered neighboring Pakistan, which Afghan intelligence and Western military leaders have long suspected of supporting the Taliban.

Over the weekend, Trump said in an interview Pakistan doesn't "do a damn thing" for the United States despite billions of dollars in U.S. aid, and alleged Pakistani officials knew of former Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden's location before his killing by U.S. troops in a raid inside Pakistan in 2011.

(Source: Daily Star)

South Korean named Interpol president in blow to Russia

South Korea's Kim Jong Yang was elected as Interpol's president Wednesday, edging out a longtime veteran of Russia's security services who was strongly opposed by the U.S., Britain and other European nations.

The White House and its European partners had lobbied against Alexander Prokopchuk's attempts to be named the next president of the policing organization, saying his election would lead to further Russian abuses of Interpol's red notice system to go after political opponents and fugitive dissidents.

Kim's win means he secured at least two-thirds of votes cast at Interpol's general assembly in Dubai on Wednesday. He will serve until 2020, completing the four-year

mandate of his predecessor, Meng Hongwei, who was detained in China as part of a wide anti-corruption sweep there.

Kim, a police official in South Korea, was serving as interim president after Meng's departure from the post and was senior vice president at Interpol.

Most of Interpol's 194 member-countries attended the organization's annual assembly this year, which was held in an opulent Dubai hotel along the Persian Gulf coast.

Interpol was facing a pivotal moment in its history as members decided whether to hand its presidency to Prokopchuk or Kim, who were the only two candidates vying for the post.

Based in the French city of Lyon, Interpol

is best known for issuing "red notices" that identify a suspect pursued by another country, effectively putting them on the world's "most-wanted" list.

Human rights groups raised the alarm two years ago when Interpol's general assembly approved Meng as president. Amnesty International criticized "China's longstanding practice of trying to use Interpol to arrest dissidents and refugees abroad."

Two prominent Kremlin critics warned Tuesday that electing Prokopchuk – who has ties to President Vladimir Putin – would have undermined the international law enforcement agency and politicized police cooperation across borders.

Russia accused critics of running a "cam-

paign to discredit" Prokopchuk, calling him a respected professional.

The White House came out Tuesday against the election of Prokopchuk, with National Security Council spokesman Garrett Marquis saying "the Russian government abuses Interpol's processes to harass its political opponents." He said the U.S. "strongly endorses" Kim.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Washington encourages all nations and organizations that are part of Interpol to choose a leader with credibility and integrity that reflects one of the world's most critical law enforcement bodies. "We believe Mr. Kim will be just that," he said.

(Source: AFP)

Rights groups: Activists held in Saudi Arabia tortured

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch accused Saudi Arabia of subjecting several activists including some female human rights defenders detained since May to torture and sexual harassment, allegations denied by a Saudi official.

Over a dozen women's rights activists have been arrested since May, most of whom had campaigned for the right to drive and an end to the kingdom's male guardianship system, though some have since been freed.

A group of UN experts last month called for the immediate release of six female human rights defenders it said were still being held incommunicado in the kingdom.

"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's judiciary system does not condone, promote or allow the use of torture," a Saudi official told Reuters.

"Anyone, whether male or female, being investigated is going through the standard judiciary process led by the public prosecution while being held for questioning, which does not in any way rely on torture either physical, sexual or psychological."

The May arrests followed an earlier crackdown on clerics, intellectuals, and activists in September 2017 in an apparent bid to silence potential opponents of Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The torture allegations come with Saudi Arabia facing an international outcry over the killing last month of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

In a statement, London-based Amnesty said that according to testimony from three individuals it had gathered, some of the detained activists "were repeatedly tortured by electrocution and flogging" that left some "unable to walk or stand properly."

In a similar statement, Human Rights Watch quoted "informed sources" as saying Saudi interrogators tortured at least three female Saudi activists. Both Amnesty and Human Rights Watch said the detainees were subjected to sexual harassment.

"Only a few weeks after the ruthless killing of Jamal Khashoggi, these shocking reports of torture, sexual harassment and other forms of ill-treatment, if verified, expose further outrageous human rights violations by the Saudi authorities," Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International's Middle East research director, said in the statement.

Reuters could not verify the allegations and the rights groups did not clarify the identity of the individuals who provided testimony. Human Rights Watch said the sources were concerned that they and the activists would suffer reprisals if identified publicly.

A Saudi government communications office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Riyadh has in the past denied using torture and said that arrests were made on the basis of suspicious contacts with foreign entities and offering financial support to "enemies overseas".

Last June the Saudi government ended a decades-old ban on women driving cars as part of a bid to diversify the economy away from oil and open up Saudis' cloistered lifestyles.

But while many hailed the end of the ban on women driving as proof of a new progressive trend, it has been accompanied by a crackdown on dissent.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan has said the killing of Khashoggi was ordered at the "highest levels" of the Saudi government but has not directly accused Prince Mohammed. Saudi Arabia has denied that the prince ordered Khashoggi's killing.

(Source: Reuters)

UAE sentences British academic to life in prison for spying



A United Arab Emirates court sentenced British student Matthew Hedges to life in jail Wednesday after convicting him of spying, a family spokesperson said.

"We can confirm that he was sentenced to life in prison," the spokesperson told AFP.

"The hearing lasted less than five minutes, and his lawyer was not present."

Prime Minister Theresa May told lawmakers that she was "deeply disappointed" by the ruling, adding that her government would continue to press the matter at the highest level with the UAE.

British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said he was "deeply shocked and disappointed" by the decision of the UAE court.

"Today's verdict is not what we expect from a friend and trusted partner of the United Kingdom and runs contrary to earlier assurances," he said.

Hedges, a 31-year-old PhD student, was researching the UAE's foreign and internal security policies after the Arab Spring revolutions of 2011 when he was detained at Dubai airport on May 5.

He was granted temporary release on Oct. 29 but constantly monitored until Wednesday's court hearing, only his third since his arrest.

His wife Daniela Tejada, who had campaigned vigorously for his release, had said last month she could not allow herself to get too excited by his bail until he was fully free.

She had previously expressed concern for his safety saying he was being held in solitary confinement at an undisclosed location with limited access to the British consulate and his family.

UAE attorney general Hamad al-Shamsi said earlier this month that Hedges was accused of "spying for a foreign country, jeopardizing the military, political and economic security of the state."

Hedges has repeatedly denied the charges. (Source: AFP)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	17713.2
IFX	1907.95

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,763 rials
GBP	53,705 rials
AED	11,473 rials

Source: iribnews.ir

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$54.23/b
Brent	\$63.43/b
OPEC Basket	\$66.00/b
Gold	\$1,223.90/oz
Silver	\$14.46/oz
Platinum	\$850.00/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Tehran to host intl. apparel expo in early Dec.

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The 6th edition of Iran's International Apparel Exhibition (Iran Mode 2018) is due to be held during December 2-5 at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds, IRIB reported.

As reported, during this exhibition the Iranian participants will present their latest collections and productions to introduce the most up-to-date designs based on Iranian and Islamic culture.

Creating competition and exchanging information between manufacturers and exporters, improving domestic production, developing domestic designs, helping development of employment, marketing and increasing exports, and increasing efficiency have been mentioned as some of this event's main goals.

The good news hidden in China's slowing economy

There's good news hidden in China's tumbling stock markets and slowing economy.

A government bid to curb risky lending, clean up industry, and restrain home prices is holding firm even as growth heads for its slowest annual pace in almost thirty years and the U.S. trade standoff threatens to deepen.

Rather than reaching for the old investment spending and monetary binge playbook of 2009 or 2015, Beijing is cushioning economic blows with targeted tax cuts, investment incentives and efforts to get more credit to efficient private-sector companies. President Xi Jinping may be nudging his nation onto a more sustainable growth path even if it means swallowing some losses along the way.



"Chinese leaders have made impressive initial success in reining in some of the most speculative parts of China's financial system," said Andrew Polk, co-founder of research firm Trivium China in Beijing. "Many analysts aren't recognizing these considerable initial gains."

For the world, the prospect of steadier economic growth, even if at a slower pace, is welcome. And because China is so much bigger than it used to be, 6 percent growth can produce just as much global demand as the double-digit gains of old, meaning China will remain the world's biggest growth engine.

One dividend from Xi's policies to rein in excesses is productivity growth, which has risen from an average of about 1.9 percent annually between 2014 to 2016 to about 2.4 percent this year, said Morgan Stanley chief China economist Robin Xing in Hong Kong. Among key factors driving the improvement is the elimination of excess industrial capacity in industries from steel to cement.

Xing estimates the increase of debt will be flat this year, leaving the total ratio at about 276 percent of gross domestic product and says it's poised to rise about three percentage points in 2019. That compares to annual average 15 percentage point increases between 2007 and 2015.

"It's the first time China's policy easing is mainly focused on fiscal rather than monetary policy," said Xing. "They won't be giving up their hard-earned achievements on leverage and capacity control."

When viewed with a longer lens some of the pain Xi's policies are inflicting on investors and companies can be seen as a good thing.

Consider corporate defaults, which are at a record this year as the squeeze on shadow banking continues. The IMF and World Bank have long argued that the removal of implicit guarantees would reduce moral hazard and allow risk to be meaningfully priced. That is starting to happen. As the chart below shows, foreigners are piling into China's bond market.

(Source: Bloomberg)

807 industrial estates operating or ready to start operation in Iran

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Some 807 industrial estates are already operating or are ready to start operation throughout the country, according to Iranian Deputy Industry Minister Mohsen Salehinia.

The official said 33,000 production and industrial units have been already established in these estates, IRNA reported.

In August, Sadeq Najafi, the managing

director of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), announced that some 4,600 small and medium-sized units are under construction in industrial estates of the country and put the physical progress of constructing these units at over 70 percent.

The official further said that when these units start operation, 74,000 new jobs will



be created in the industrial estates.

He also has announced that 36 Iranian SMEs attracted above \$2.3 billion of foreign investments during the previous Iranian calendar year.

Iran's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for just 10 percent of the

country's exports, according to the managing director of Small Industries Investment Making Fund.

Mohammad-Hossein Moqiseh said it is while export by the SMEs is 60 percent in Japan, 70 percent in Taiwan, and 90 percent in Singapore.

PMO head presents Iran's maritime capabilities in IMO session

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) presented his country's maritime capabilities during the 121st session of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) held in London from November 19 to 23, IRNA reported.

Expounding upon the potentials and qualities of Iranian maritime fleet, Mohammad Rastad mentioned that Iran has been a member of IMO since 1958 and since then the country has been fully committed to all of its membership duties.

The official presenting a video clip on the ports and maritime activities of Iran during the session was highly welcomed by the audience.



Rastad said that Iran has complained about the limitations on Iran's maritime activities due to the U.S. re-imposition of sanctions against Iran and is hoping to receive support from IMO and its members in this due.

IMO is the United Nations specialized agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships. It is the global standard-setting authority for the safety, security and environmental performance of international shipping. Its main role is to create a regulatory framework for the shipping industry that is fair and effective, universally adopted and universally implemented.

Over 30 countries to attend Iran's intl. cooperative conference in late Nov.

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Over 30 countries will participate in Iran's International Cooperatives Conference which is due to be held at IRIB Conference Center from November 26 to 30, Head of Iran Chamber of Cooperative Bahman Abdollahi announced in a press

conference.

He said 150 companies from different European, Asian, African, American and Oceanian countries will attend the event, Mehr news agency reported.

Abdollahi mentioned the conference an opportunity for Iranian cooperative sector

to showcase its capabilities and said: "We hope that this event could lay the ground for boosting cooperatives' share in the national economy."

He also underlined the role of cooperatives in job creation and economic flourishing. Addressing the same press conference,

Mohammad-Ali Zeighami, the deputy head of Iran Chamber of Cooperative for economic and international affairs, announced that an exhibition is also planned to be held on the sidelines of the conference for showcasing Iran's achievements in cooperative sector and providing ground for B-2-B dialogues.

Britain records bigger-than-expected budget deficit in October

Britain recorded a much larger budget deficit than expected in October, according to the first borrowing figures since finance minister Philip Hammond promised an end to austerity was within sight.

The deficit in October rose to 8.820 billion pounds from 7.235 billion pounds a year earlier, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said, marking the biggest October shortfall for three years.

A Reuters poll of economists had pointed to a reading of 6.15 billion pounds.

While tax receipts continued to grow robustly, government spending increased compared with a year ago.

The ONS cited "notable" growth in expenditure on goods and services, as well as social benefits. Interest payments on government debt also increased.

Still, for the first seven months of the 2018/19 financial year, the deficit stood at 26.7 billion pounds, down almost 30 percent on the previous year and the lowest at this stage of the financial year in 13 years.

In his budget statement on Oct. 29, Hammond announced tax cuts for house-

holds and the easing of welfare curbs for poorer working families as well as a big increase in spending on the health services.

But he also warned that an end to the severe spending cuts endured by many government departments since 2010 would depend on Britain securing a Brexit deal with the European Union.

Prime Minister Theresa May last week agreed a draft withdrawal deal with Brussels. But it faces stiff resistance in her Conservative Party, meaning it could fail in parliament.

Hammond wants to steadily cut national debt as a share of GDP which he says is too high to easily support a big rise in public spending during a future recession.

Public debt, excluding public-owned banks and the Bank of England's stimulus program, stood at 1.5985 trillion pounds in October, or 75.0 percent of gross domestic product.

That was down from 79.0 percent in the same month of 2017 but still double its level before the financial crisis.

(Source: Reuters)

OECD urges Japan to keep easy monetary policy, proceed with tax hike

Japan must maintain its ultra-loose monetary policy and proceed with gradual hikes in the consumption tax, including a scheduled increase next year, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said on Wednesday.

The country's ageing population also requires labor market reforms such as abolishing the mandatory retirement age and promoting female employment, the OECD said in a twice-yearly Economic Outlook Report.

"Japan's unprecedentedly high level of public debt is a key risk," the OECD said, urging the government to come up with a "detailed and concrete" fiscal consolidation plan.

"A loss of confidence in Japan's fiscal sustainability could destabilize the financial sector and the real economy, with large negative spillovers to the world economy," the report said.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has pledged to go ahead, in October 2019, with a twice-delayed increase in Japan's sales tax rate to 10 percent from 8 percent.

The government is planning to compile a package of measures, including tax breaks on

cars and housing, to mitigate the pain from the higher levy.

The OECD said the impact of the higher consumption tax will be temporary and partially offset by the planned fiscal measures. "The 2019 consumption tax hike should be followed by increases that raise (the tax rate) towards the 19 percent OECD average," the report said.

Japan's economic growth is projected to remain around 1 percent in 2018-2019, the OECD said. After a temporary slowdown from the tax hike, the economy will resume growth in early 2020 due to additional government spending, it said.

Sustained economic growth and higher oil prices should boost inflation to 1.5 percent in 2020, excluding the impact of the sales tax hike, the report said.

The OECD said its projection assumes the BOJ will keep monetary policy ultra-loose through 2020.

"Monetary policy needs to remain expansionary until the (central bank's) 2 percent inflation target is achieved," the organization said.

(Source: Reuters)

Japan says ready to work for stability of Nissan-Renault alliance

Japan said on Wednesday it is ready to work for the stability of the Nissan-Renault global alliance following the stunning arrest of common Chairman Carlos Ghosn, as the Asahi newspaper reported prosecutors are weighing bringing a case against the Japanese automaker.

Nissan Motor Co has portrayed itself as a victim of Ghosn, one of the global car industry's best-known leaders, who it accused of years of wrongdoing, including personal use of company money and under-reporting

earnings. It plans to remove him from post on Thursday.

Japanese prosecutors arrested Ghosn on Monday, saying he and Representative Director Greg Kelly conspired to understate Ghosn's compensation at Nissan over five years starting in fiscal 2010 as being about half of the actual 10 billion yen (\$88.65 million).

The Asahi quoted unnamed sources as saying that the mis-stating meant Nissan also bore responsibility and that prosecutors were eyeing the possibility of putting

together a case against it.

Prosecutors were not immediately able to comment. Nissan declined to comment on the report. Ghosn and Kelly, who has also been arrested, have not commented on the accusations so far and Reuters has not been able to reach them.

Ghosn has bestrode the alliance as chairman and chief executive of Nissan's French partner Renault, and chairman of third partner Mitsubishi Motors Corp.

The alliance "is a symbol of Franco-Jap-

anese industrial success and we will continue to support it," Japan's top government spokesman said on Wednesday, calling for a "stable relationship" between the three automakers.

Japan's Nikkei business daily reported on Tuesday that Ghosn had received share price-linked compensation of about 4 billion yen over a five-year period to March 2015 but that it went unreported in Nissan's financial reports.

(Source: Reuters)

Asia stocks slip as growth worries grip global markets

Asian stocks slipped on Wednesday as intensifying concerns about global economic growth gripped financial markets, sending Wall Street shares tumbling and driving the safe haven dollar up from a two-week low.

Spread betters expected European stocks to open slightly higher on bargain hunting after several days of losses, with Britain's FTSE edging up 0.15 percent, Germany's DAX gaining 0.3 percent and France's CAC rising 0.25 percent.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan fell 0.45 percent.

The Shanghai Composite Index swerved in and out of the red and was last down 0.05 percent.

Australian stocks lost 0.5 percent, South Korea's KOSPI retreated 0.4 percent and Japan's Nikkei fell 0.35 percent.

U.S. stocks sold off for a second day on Tuesday as energy shares dropped with oil prices, while retailers including Target and Kohl's sank after weak earnings and forecasts, fuelling worries about economic growth.

The Nasdaq closed at its lowest in more than seven months on Tuesday while the S&P 500 and Dow ended at their weakest since late October.

"It is difficult to pinpoint a single factor driving the global risk aversion. Apple and trade tensions seem to be touted as factors every other day, but it is difficult to blame them for all the woes," said Soichiro Monji, senior economist at Daiwa SB Investments.

"The markets appear to be starting to prepare for a loss of



momentum in the global economy, although it is doing quite well at the moment.

The recent downturn in global equities has been led in part by a decline in U.S. technology shares, a group which had helped propel Wall Street's long bull market.

"We are anticipating more weakness in China, and a sharp slowdown in the United States next year. Given the highly-cyclical nature of the information technology (IT) sector, we have been arguing for a while that growth in its earnings would be hit especially hard in these circumstances," wrote economists at Capital Economics.

The dollar index against a basket of six major currencies was little changed at 96.776 after rallying 0.7 percent overnight, when it pulled away from a two-week trough of 96.042.

Earlier in the week, cautious comments by Federal Reserve officials about the global economic outlook knocked the dollar

to two-week troughs as they suggested the central bank could slow the pace of or even end its monetary policy tightening cycle.

The euro was a shade higher at \$1.1378 after sinking 0.75 percent the previous day.

The dollar rose 0.1 percent to 112.87 yen.

The Australian dollar, sensitive to shifts in risk sentiment, crawled up 0.25 percent to \$0.7231 following a 1 percent slide the previous day.

Commodity currencies such as the Canadian dollar struggled in the wake of tumbling crude prices.

The Canadian dollar was stuck near a five-month low of C\$1.3318 per dollar plumbled on Tuesday, when it shed more than 1 percent.

Oil prices managed to stabilize after Tuesday's slump. But the market remained shaky, with the International Energy Agency (IEA) warning of unprecedented uncertainty in oil markets due to the economic environment and political risk.

U.S. crude futures were up 1.45 percent at \$54.21 per barrel after retreating roughly 6 percent to \$52.77 on Tuesday, its lowest since late October 2017, caught in a broader Wall Street selloff fed by mounting concerns about a slowdown in global economic growth.

Brent crude bounced 1.3 percent to \$63.35 per barrel after sliding more than 6 percent on Tuesday, when it plumbed a near one-year low of \$61.71. The contracts had reached a four-year high above \$86.00 at the start of October.

(Source: Reuters)

Oil bounces above \$63 after slide, but glut worries persist

Oil bounced above \$63 a barrel on Wednesday to claw back some of the previous day's 6 percent plunge, lifted by a report of an unexpected decline in U.S. crude inventories.

The American Petroleum Institute (API) said on Tuesday that U.S. crude inventories last week fell by 1.5 million barrels, easing concerns for now that a supply glut is building up.

"The move yesterday was extremely sharp; after such moves you expect to have some rebound," said Olivier Jakob, analyst at Petromatrix. "The API reported a stock draw - it is not a big one but at least it's not a 10-million-barrel build."

Brent crude, the global benchmark, was up 92 cents to \$63.45 per barrel at 0944 GMT and traded as high as \$63.67. U.S. crude gained 98 cents to \$54.41.

Yet Wednesday's bounce did little to reverse overall market weakness. Crude fell more than 6 percent in the previous session and world equities tumbled as investors grew more worried about economic growth prospects.

Brent has fallen by more than 25 percent



Oil prices have rebounded since reaching a 4-year high of \$86.74 on Oct. 3, reflecting concern about forecasts of slowing demand in 2019 and record supply from Saudi Arabia, Russia and the United

States.

Worried by the prospect of a new supply glut, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is talking about a U-turn

just months after increasing production.

OPEC, plus Russia and other non-OPEC producers, is considering a supply cut of between 1 million barrels per day (bpd) and 1.4 million bpd at a Dec. 6 meeting, sources familiar with the issue have said.

Still, Saudi Arabia may find taking action to support prices harder, analysts say, given U.S. pressure to keep them low and President Donald Trump standing by the Saudi crown prince in the wake of the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Trump vowed on Tuesday to remain a "steadfast partner" of Saudi Arabia despite saying that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman may have known about a plan to murder Khashoggi.

"It is more difficult to expect a supply cut when you have the U.S. president giving full support to Saudi Arabia and asking Saudi to maintain low prices," Jakob said.

Analysts at JBC Energy said Trump's statement "highlights the potential for political fallout for Saudi itself from a hefty cut in production."

(Source: Reuters)

UAE says OPEC likely to agree to cut oil output at Vienna meeting

There is an initial agreement within OPEC to cut production in the coming meeting in Vienna on December 6, but the amount has not been decided yet, UAE OPEC Governor Ahmed al-Kaabi said on Tuesday.

He said that OPEC will very likely reduce production, adding that the (JMMC) technical committee at OPEC was still studying markets and will share final conclusions before Vienna's meeting, he told the Al Bayan newspaper.

He added that the UAE is committed to any OPEC decision. (Source: Reuters)

China's Oct. crude oil stocks rise 29 mil barrels on month, may rise further in Nov.

China's crude oil stocks as of end-October rose 29.09 million barrels from a month earlier, and stocks are expected to continue building in November on high crude oil imports amid a slowdown in refinery throughput.

The stockbuild in October surged 416.7 percent from the build in September, and contrasted sharply to a draw of 26.81 million barrels in the same month last year, S&P Global Platts calculations based on official data showed.

The high stockpile was within expectations as crude supply rose to a historical high, outstripping the increase in refinery throughput.

China does not release official data on stocks. Platts calculates the country's net build or draw in crude stocks by subtracting official refinery throughput data from the country's crude supply data. The latter takes into account net crude imports and domestic production.

China's overall crude supply in October surged 21.3 percent from a year ago to 415.96 million barrels, and rose 8.9 percent from September led by a sharp increase in net crude imports while domestic crude output was largely rangebound.

Buoyed by strong buying from the independent sector, China's net crude imports soared 32.2 percent year on year to 298.02 million barrels in October, data released by the General Administration of Customs showed.

Crude throughput at refineries rose 4.6 percent year on year to a record high of 386.88 million barrels in October, data released by the National Bureau of Statistics showed. But the increase lagged the sharp growth in crude supply.

This means monthly crude supply was 29.09 million barrels higher than throughput in October.

By the end of October, China's crude stocks rose 197 million barrels compared with the level at the end of December last year, which compares with 266 million barrels a year earlier.

Restocking amid high imports

China's crude stocks are expected to rise substantially in November due to continuously high crude imports by the year-end and a slowdown in throughput amid weakening oil product demand.

Platts trade flow software cFlow showed crude cargoes for delivery to Chinese ports in November are likely to rise 2 percent from October to 8.89 million b/d.

China imports crude through seaports and pipelines, while Platts cFlow data covers deliveries from the seaborne market.

Independent refineries' crude imports remain high. "Propelled by strong buying [from the independent sector], it is likely that their imports will stay above 9 million mt [2.16 million b/d] in the coming two months," a Beijing-based analyst said.

Crude imports by the independent sector rose 28 percent month on month to a seven-month high of 2.2 million b/d in October, according to a Platts survey.

Independent refineries typically try to use up their crude oil import quotas before the end of the year, so that they can secure full allocations for the next year. After taking October deliveries into account, around 40 million mt is still available for the November-December period, Platts data showed.

Meanwhile, "refining demand is weakening as the peak season for oil products will nearly end in winter, while they are not allowed to send more products to overseas in Q4," the analyst added.

Refining sources from both the state-owned and independent sector said they have seen a slowdown in gasoline sales amid high production in October and weak domestic demand.

"Cutting throughput is the only way to offset pressure from rising gasoline stock," said a refiner in northern China.

State-owned and independent refineries account for around 75 percent and 25 percent of China's total refining capacity, respectively. (Source: Platts)

Blockchain tokens introduced for oil and gas investment

Blockchain technology is being introduced to oil and gas investments by Canada-based PermianChain Technologies. The company is introducing the Permian Token (XPR), a crypto asset-class that will underpin holding rights to the value of potential but undeveloped oil and gas reserves.

Trading oil and gas is currently complex, slow and fundamentally inefficient, says Permian. Agreements are cumbersome and difficult to transfer without adding costs, and there are so many different steps involved in the process of getting oil and gas from upstream through mid-stream to downstream, that the knock-on effect of delays at any point can be significant and costly.

The levels of complexity and inefficiency mean that many potential investors are reluctant to involve themselves in the market, reducing the sector's potential liquidity and value. The Permian Token's system of smart contracts is intended to replace these complex agreements using the PermianChain. XPR is expected to reduce investors' liquidity issues by creating a tradable crypto-asset on a permissioned-access trust-protocol. The smart contracts will also remove a large proportion of the administrative and brokerage burden from oil and gas suppliers, which could turn marginal fields into profitable ones, says the company.

"Many private oil and gas opportunities are structured with an upfront fee due to their exclusivity and inaccessibility," says Mohamed El-Masri, Co-Founder of PermianChain Technologies. "Advisers and brokers take a proportion of the profit simply for placing investors' money in the deal, which means charging higher investment costs to cover administrative and brokerage tasks, rather than helping the project itself." (Source: maritime-executive.com)

UK solar energy policy could see some radical changes

The UK's Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Minister Claire Perry said on Tuesday that "solar power should not be provided to the grid for free," signaling that the UK government may introduce changes to its plans to end the generation tariff and the route to market tariff, the so-called export tariff, for small-scale renewables.

In July this year, the UK government presented a proposal to close the export tariff alongside the generation tariff on March 31, 2019, which would mean full closure of the Feed-In Tariffs (FIT) scheme to new applications after that date.

The proposal has drawn criticism from the renewables industry, which is concerned about the future of small-scale renewables in the UK.

"The bad news is that Government has been crystal clear today on what policy measures will stop - even very basic rights to fair export payments - but they are frighteningly vague on what comes next," Chris Hewett, CEO at the Solar Trade Association (STA), said at the time.

On Tuesday, Conservative Kevin Hollinrake asked Minister Perry in Parliament if she believed that householders should expect some form of payment "rather than simply subsidizing large energy companies." The UK minister replied:



"I do not completely agree that solar power should not be provided to the grid for free and that's why I'll shortly be announcing the next steps for small scale renewables."

"It would be wrong to have power provided to the grid for free," Perry also said.

Responding to the minister's comments from today, the Solar Trade Association said on Twitter that "We look forward to hearing her announcement on the issue in due course."

The share of renewables in the UK's electricity generation mix hit a record high in second quarter of 2018, while the share of coal in the energy mix slumped to an all-time low, UK government figures showed in September.

Between April and June this year, the share of renewables hit a record 31.7 percent, driven by a new record for solar generation, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy said in its UK Energy Statistics for Q2 2018.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Iraqi Kirkuk oil exports may reach up to 400,000 barrels daily

Resumption of oil exports from the Kirkuk oil field in the Iraqi Kurdistan will take place in several stages and could reach up to 400,000 barrels per day compared with 300,000 barrels daily before the halt last year. Hoshawi Babakr, the Kurdistan Democratic Party's (KDP) representative in Russia, told Sputnik.

"The export of oil from Kirkuk through the Iraqi Kurdistan oil pipeline, which transports oil to international markets through the Turkish port of Ceyhan, began on November 16. The increase in the volume of this export will take place in several stages: from 50,000 -100,000 barrels per day at the moment to 400,000 barrels upon reaching full capacity. I would like to note that prior to the suspension of the export of Kirkuk oil through the Kurdish oil pipeline in 2017, its volume was 300,000 barrels per day," Babakr said.

Iraqi Kurdistan in talks with the federal government of Iraq continues to insist upon preserving rights of Russian energy giant Rosneft on oil production in the Kirkuk oil field in line with the previously reached agreements. Hoshawi Babakr told Sputnik.

"The government of Kurdistan insists on preserving the rights of Rosneft, with which in 2017 an agreement was reached



on oil production in Kirkuk. According to this agreement, the Russian company received a partial right to extract, export and manage oil and gas pipelines from Kirkuk to Turkey. And Kurdistan intends to adhere to this treaty. And in the coming years, Russia should start exporting gas from Kurdistan to Turkey," Babakr said.

The statements were made after the authorities of Iraq and of Iraqi Kurdistan had agreed to resume oil exports from the Kirkuk oil field after a long suspension. The Kirkuk governorate has been hit by a number of terrorist attacks of late. Apart from that, the U.S. imposing sanctions on the Iranian oil sector has seriously affected oil production in the region leading to an agreement between Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and his Iraqi counterpart Barham Salih on creating a free trade zone between the countries.

(Source: Spunik)

Texas is about to create OPEC's worst nightmare

The map lays out OPEC's nightmare in graphic form. An infestation of dots, thousands of them, represent oil wells in the Permian basin of West Texas and a slice of New Mexico. In less than a decade, U.S. companies have drilled 114,000. Many of them would turn a profit even with crude prices as low as \$30 a barrel.

OPEC's bad dream only deepens next year, when Permian producers expect to iron out distribution snags that will add three pipelines and as much as 2 million barrels of oil a day.

"The Permian will continue to grow and OPEC needs to learn to live with it," said Mike Loya, the top executive in the Americas for Vitol Group, the world's largest independent oil-trading house.

The U.S. energy surge presents OPEC with one of the biggest challenges of its 60-year history. If Saudi Arabia and its allies cut production to keep prices higher, shale will thrive, robbing them of market share. But because the Saudis need higher crude prices to make money than U.S. producers, OPEC can't afford to let prices fall.

Cartel squeezed

So the cartel finds itself squeezed between the sky's-the-limit U.S. output and softer demand growth. The 15 members, and allies including Russia, Mexico and Kazakhstan, will discuss the possibility of their second retreat from booming American production in three years when they gather Dec. 6 in Vienna.

OPEC helped create the monster that haunts its sleep. After it flooded the market in 2014, oil prices crashed, forcing surviving U.S. shale producers to get leaner so they could thrive even with lower oil prices. As prices recovered, so did drilling.

Now growth is speeding up. In Houston, the U.S. oil capital, shale executives are trying out different superlatives to describe what's coming. "Tsunami," they call it. A "flooding of Biblical proportions" and "onslaught of supply" are phrases that get tossed around. Take the hyperbolic industry talk with a pinch of salt, but certainly the American oil industry, particularly in the Permian, has raised a buzz loud enough to keep OPEC awake.

Price tumble

"You've got an awful lot of production that can come in very economically," said Patricia Yarrington, Chevron Corp.'s chief financial officer. "If you think back four or five years ago, when we didn't really understand what shale could do, the marginal barrel was priced much higher than what we think the marginal barrel is priced today."

That shift makes shale resilient to a price tumble. After touching a four-year high in October, West Texas Intermediate, the U.S. benchmark, has fallen by more than 20 percent.

Shale boom

Only a few months ago, the consensus was that the Permian and U.S. oil production more widely was going to hit



a plateau this past summer. It would flat-line through the rest of this year and 2019 due to pipeline constraints, only to start growing again -- perhaps -- in early 2020.

If that had happened, Saudi Arabia would've had an easier job, most likely avoiding output cuts next year because production losses in Venezuela and sanctions on Iran would have done the trick.

Instead, August saw the largest annual increase in U.S. oil production in 98 years, according to government data. The American energy industry added, in crude and other oil liquids, nearly 3 million barrels, roughly the equivalent of what Kuwait pumps, than it did in the same month last year. Total output of 15.9 million barrels a day was more than Russia or Saudi Arabia.

Rail cars

The growth was possible because oil traders decided not to be stymied by the dearth of pipelines. They used rail cars and even trucks to ship barrels out of the region. But pipeline companies unexpectedly increased capacity, in part because they added chemicals known as "drag reduction agents" to increase flow. A new pipeline came online earlier than anticipated, and with three more expected between August and December next year, production is poised to skyrocket.

"The narrative has shifted significantly," said John Coleman, a Houston-based oil consultant at Wood Mackenzie Ltd. "Six months ago, the market expected the bottleneck to ease in the first quarter of 2020. Now, it expects it in the second to third quarter of 2019."

Knowing that more transportation would be available next year, Permian companies are drilling wells but, for now, aren't fracking many of them. Those wells are becoming a reservoir of ready-to-tap production once the new pipelines -- Gray Oak, Cactus II and Epic -- come online.

"We're going to see a re-acceleration of well completions in the Permian in the second half of 2019," said Corey Prologo, head of oil trading in Houston at commodity

merchant Trafifigra Group Ltd. "The pipelines are going to fill up very quickly."

The only obstacle for another surge is export capacity, as most of the incremental output will need to ship overseas. With terminals nearly full, Permian barrels could end piling up in the ports of Corpus Christi and Houston.

Transportation bottlenecks

Even so, few in Houston, or in Midland, Texas, the hub of the Permian region, believe that growth will be anything but gangbusters next year because of the clearing of transportation bottlenecks.

"It will be a series of events throughout 2019 that occur," said Jeff Miller, chief executive officer of Halliburton Co., the world's biggest provider of fracking services. "But it'd be easy to see, as we finish the year, things being perfectly normal."

American oil renaissance

Sources: 1918-1948 courtesy of Michael Lynch and adapted from American Petroleum Institute's "Petroleum Facts and Figures 1959"; for 1949-2017 U.S. EIA "Monthly Energy Review". 2018 and 2019 are forecast from the EIA.

By the end of 2019, total U.S. oil production -- including so-called natural gas liquids used in the petrochemical industry -- is expected to rise to 17.4 million barrels a day, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. At that level, American net imports of petroleum will fall in December 2019 to 320,000 barrels a day, the lowest since 1949, when Harry Truman was in the White House. In the oil-trading community, the expectation is that, perhaps for just a single week, the U.S. will become a net oil exporter, something that hasn't happened for nearly 75 years.

Saudis concede

Saudi officials concede that the tsunami is coming. OPEC estimates that to balance the market and avoid an increase in oil inventories, it needs to pump about 31.5 million barrels a day next year, or about 1.4 million barrels a day less than what it did in October.

Global oil demand has so far absorbed the extra U.S. crude barrels, limiting the impact on prices. The loss of output from Venezuela and to a lesser extent, Iran, even allowed Saudi Arabia, Russia and a few others to boost production. But for the cartel, U.S. shale remains as intractable as in the past.

In early 2017, Khalid Al-Falih, the Saudi oil minister, told an industry forum that Riyadh has learned the lesson that cutting production "in response to structural shifts is largely ineffective." The kingdom would only make one-time supply adjustments to react to "short-term aberrations," he said, and otherwise allow "the free market to work."

Nearly two years later, Al-Falih has lost enough proverbial sleep. He's about to make a U-turn. He'll battle what increasingly looks like a structural problem: booming U.S. production.

(Source: Bloomberg)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pakistan, IMF
bailout
talks in
progress

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — To tide over the flailing economy, Pakistan is currently in talks with International Monetary Fund (IMF) and both parties have made “significant progress” toward agreeing on an \$8 billion bailout package, the IMF said in a statement on Tuesday.

Pakistan’s Finance Ministry also confirmed there had been “substantive progress” between the two sides and they will hold more talks in the coming weeks.

Pakistani authorities had earlier acknowledged that the two sides are at odds over electricity rate hikes, interest rate hikes and tax collection targets, and said the IMF is looking for more than Pakistan’s new government feels it can manage.

Pakistan has been approaching the IMF since the 1980s, and it received a \$6.7 billion loan in 2013.

It’s also seeking fresh loans from China, which has already invested heavily in transport and energy, as well as Saudi Arabia which has reportedly committed an aid package.

Pakistan’s Prime Minister Imran Khan has drawn criticism at home for showing his ‘desperation’ for funds and heading to Riyadh to participate in a conference when many world leaders boycotted it over the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Taliban not
losing,
admits U.S.
general

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — In a candid admission of U.S. defeat in Afghanistan after 18 years of war that began in 2001, U.S. General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, says the Taliban “are not losing” in the war-torn country.

Dunford is among the growing number of U.S. officials to admit that there was no “military solution” to end the war in Afghanistan. Earlier the outgoing commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan had also made similar remarks at his farewell party.

Dunford’s remarks came amid U.S. and Afghan attempts to launch peace talks with the Taliban, which is believed to control more territory than at any time since the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan began in 2001.

Dunford, the top U.S. military officer, said the United States and its NATO allies were working to leverage military, political, and economic pressure to convince the Taliban to negotiate an end to the war. In recent years, the insurgent group has scaled up its operations across the country. UN records say the civilian casualties are at an all time high, raising many questions over the war that has stretched now into its 18th year and the objectives of the U.S. led coalition.

India,
Russia sign
\$500m warship
deal

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — Taking their defense partnership to the next level, India and Russia have signed a \$500 million deal for construction of two warships for the Indian Navy under the technology transfer model, media reports quoted Indian officials saying on Tuesday.

The agreement for the project was signed between India’s Goa Shipyard Ltd (GSL) and Russia’s state-run defense major Rosoboroneksprom under the government-to-government framework for defense cooperation.

Under the deal, Russia will provide design, technology and some materials to GSL for construction of ships in India.

He said construction of the ships will begin in 2020 and the first one will be ready for induction in 2026 while second one will be ready by 2027, report said.

India is going ahead with mega defense deals with Russia in utter disregard of warnings by the U.S. of sanctions. The Trump administration has put several Russian firms under sanctions as part of Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

The two countries finalized a lucrative defense deal during Russian President Vladimir Putin’s visit to India last month. Russia has traditionally been India’s most preferred defense partner and India has maintained that its relationship with Moscow would not be affected by U.S. sanctions and the rapidly changing regional dynamics.

Bangladeshi
activist
released
from jail

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — Shahidul Alam, an award-winning photographer and activist in Bangladesh, has been released on bail after spending more than 100 days in jail.

The 63-year old’s arrest had drawn widespread condemnation from rights bodies and activists across the world.

He was put behind bars allegedly for making “provocative” statements during an interview with Al Jazeera and on Facebook, commenting on the mass student protests that gripped Dhaka in August.

The widespread protests began in Dhaka when a speeding bus killed two teenagers on July 29. The following weeks were rocked by protests that turned violent with pitched clashes between protestors and police.

Despite being released from prison, Alam still faces a maximum of 14 years in prison, if convicted. His lawyers have argued that Alam’s detention was “a clear violation” of his fundamental rights under Bangladesh’s constitution.

Reacting to the news of his release, Amnesty International said Bangladesh authorities must immediately drop charges against him and “uphold its international commitments to protect the right to freedom of expression”.

“Shahidul Alam is a bold representation of Bangladesh through his lens. He should not have been detained at the first place,” Saad Hammadi, Amnesty’s regional campaigner for South Asia, said.

Pakistan-U.S. ties hit new low as Pentagon
suspends \$1.66 bn security aid to Islamabad

Syed Zafar Mehdi

TEHRAN — The relations between former allies United States and Pakistan continue to nose-dive with many skeletons tumbling out of the cupboard.

Barely two days after U.S. President Donald Trump launched a vicious tirade against Pakistan for “not doing a damn thing” for his country, which evoked angry reactions in Pakistan, his administration suspended the \$1.66 billion security assistance to Islamabad on Wednesday.

“USD 1.66 billion of security assistance to Pakistan is suspended,” Col Rob Manning, spokesman of the U.S. Department of Defense, was quoted saying in media. With this announcement, the already fractured ties between the two countries are likely to get worse, fear experts.

On November 19, in an interview to Fox News, Trump launched a no-holds-barred attack on Pakistan for not doing enough to dismantle terror pads on its soil. He referred to the killing of former al-Qaeda chief Osama Bin Laden in the garrison city of Abbottabad, alleging that Pakistan did not provide them information about it.

Trump later took to Twitter to claim in his characteristic hyperbolic manner that Pakistan never told the U.S. that Osama was hiding there. “Of course we should have captured Osama Bin Laden long before we did. I pointed him out in my book just BEFORE the attack on the World Trade Center. President Clinton famously missed his shot. We paid Pakistan Billions of Dollars & they never told



us he was living there. Fools!”

Trump said Pakistan was just another country which took money from the U.S. and did nothing. “We no longer pay Pakistan the \$Billions because they would take our money and do nothing for us, Bin Laden being a prime example, Afghanistan being another. They were just one of many countries that take from the United States without giving anything in return. That’s ENDING!” he tweeted.

Rebutting his claim, Pakistan’s Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua said it was Paki-

stan’s intelligence that provided the initial evidence to trace the whereabouts of Osama. She summoned the U.S. Chargé d’Affaires Paul Jones to the Foreign Office on Tuesday and registered a strong protest on what she termed were “unwarranted and unsubstantiated” allegations against Pakistan by Trump.

“Conveying her government’s disappointment on the recent tweets and comments by the U.S. president, the U.S. CdA was told that such baseless rhetoric about Pakistan was totally unacceptable,” the office of the foreign secretary said in a statement.

‘Muslims in Kashmir stand united against forces
that seek to divide them’

1 → Kashmir and Muslim unity:

Kashmiri Muslims have always stood for unity. We have always lived together in harmony. However, there is a considerable amount of effort being made to disturb this unity. Also, there is a certain policy at work where the Islamic character of Jammu and Kashmir is being diluted. That we need to resist.

We stand united and we condemn those people and those agencies that seek to divide Muslims. And we want to send across a very clear message that the entire Muslim community of Jammu and Kashmir stands united and any move to hurt the sentiments of Muslims in general and any section in particular is condemnable and will be opposed tooth and nail.

■ Imam Khomeini and Islamic unity:

I think his biggest contribution to Islamic Ummah was the message of unity that he preached and propagated all his life. For the first time we saw the re-emergence of Islamic thought which was primarily due to the efforts of Ayatollah Khomeini. He not only was able to unite people of Iran, but he also sent a very strong and clear message to the Ummah that the time has come to eschew little differences and focus on commonalities that can bring us together as a whole.

The lack of unity among Muslim countries and their internal bickering is a matter of huge concern as we see what is happening in Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan etc.

I think the biggest tribute to Ayatollah Khomeini today



from the Ummah, especially from the people of Kashmir, would be to spread his message across the message of justice and pursuing the cause with full determination. He is much more relevant today than ever before because right now the Muslim Ummah is facing a crisis. As Muslims, we

have to stand for our rights and we have to stand against oppression.

■ Religious processions and Islamic unity:

The Sunni Muslims in Kashmir have always stood by their Shia brothers in terms of observing Muharram and carrying out Muharram processions. We believe that Imam Hussain and the martyrs of Karbala do not belong to any particular sect. They belong to entire Muslim Ummah.

The misconception is being created that the government would have allowed Ashura procession but they fear there will be sectarian clashes. Let me be very clear on this, there is absolutely no history of group clashes or sectarian clashes as far as Ashura processions are concerned.

■ Role of clergy in Islamic unity:

I believe clergy has an important role to play in it. History stands testimony to the fact that when Khilafat was changed to Badshahat, it divided the Ummah and the concept of Malookiyat left Muslim Ummah fragmented.

In the context of Jammu and Kashmir, the problem is compounded because of the political uncertainty. We don’t have any system where Ulema Councils can be formed and given a say in policy making.

It is obvious that Sunnis get more support from Arab world and Shias get support from Iran. Unfortunately the clergy in Kashmir took a step backwards following the political turmoil. They need to come forward to rescue the Ummah from further divisions.

Kabul ‘Mawlid’ attack, Takfiri plot to divide Muslims

1 → More than 50 people were killed in what is one of the deadliest attacks in Kabul in recent months. According to some Twitter users, Taliban spokesman claimed responsibility for the attack in a tweet but the tweet was quickly deleted, which prompted local and international news outlets to report that no group had claimed responsibility for the attack.

Given the spate of attacks across Afghanistan in recent months, it is pretty clear that the Afghan Taliban group, which adheres to the Wahhabi school of thought, is behind the attack as they deem celebration of Holy Prophet’s birthday (Eid Milad) ‘forbidden’ and term it an innovation.

President Ashraf Ghani, who has been desperately wooing the insurgent group for talks, condemned the terrorist attack and declared Wednesday as a day of national mourning. The UN mission in Afghanistan, which supports peace talks with the Taliban, said it was outraged by the deadly bombing. Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, whose country is accused of providing sanctuary to the insurgent group, condemned the cowardly act of terrorism.

It is important to mention that the country’s leading religious organization had previously issued an edict (fatwa), which quite unequivocally declared suicide attacks ‘forbidden’ in Islam. The members of the same organization came under attack on Tuesday. Interestingly, both sides accuse each other of indulging in



forbidden acts, former in celebration of Mawlid and latter in carrying out suicide attacks.

Taliban, which has made suicide bombings favorite method of warfare in Afghanistan, wants to send the message that they understand Islam better than these religious scholars.

The group’s activities are rooted in Takfirism, the phenomenon of declaring others as heretics which has gained traction across the world today. It is a grand project aimed at sowing discord among Muslims and to divide them on sectarian lines.

The attack has drawn angry reactions from netizens. Rafi Fazil, a development economist, said it is a moment of unity and solidarity. This has become a war of survival for my generation, he tweeted. Khalid Amiri, a young activist, said how anyone could target a gathering where the birth anniversary of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) was being observed. These are not just numbers but lives that matter, he said of the 53 people killed.

In recent weeks, Taliban has upped the ante in various provinces across Afghanis-

stan, carrying out attacks on predominantly Shia populated areas. After brief assault on Urugzan, Taliban fighters launched a coordinated attack on Ghaznis Jaghori and Malistan districts last week. In the absence of reinforcements, people there displayed exemplary bravery to repel the attack.

While the offensives continue unabated, the group is engaging in so-called peace talks facilitated by Washington and Moscow respectively. Just a few days ago, U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad reportedly held talks with Taliban officials in Qatar, second time in less than four weeks. A few weeks ago, Moscow had also hosted a landmark conference which saw participation of representatives from at least 12 countries, besides a delegation of Taliban and Afghanistans High Peace Council.

Let us make no mistake about it. Violence and dialogue cannot go together. By allowing the insurgent group to negotiate from a position of power, the facilitators are only emboldening them to carry out more such attacks in Afghanistan.

Dialogue should take place only when the group declares an unconditional ceasefire. It should not be too difficult for the U.S. government with its formidable military and intelligence to crack down on the group if it continues to kill innocent Afghans like we have seen in recent years and months and weeks. But the question is: Does the U.S. government really want that? No.

Australia Muslim leaders boycott meeting with PM Morrison

Muslim leaders in Australia have boycotted a meeting with Prime Minister Scott Morrison over his recent remarks suggesting that the Muslim community is to blame for terror acts by individual, self-proclaimed Muslims.

In an open letter on Wednesday, Australia’s Grand Mufti Ibrahim Abu Mohamed along with a group of other high-profile Muslim figures rejected an invitation by Morrison to a round-table meeting to discuss the issue of terrorism. Morrison had earlier singled out Muslim community leaders

as having a “special responsibility” to counter “the radical and dangerous ideology of extremist Islam” after a recent stabbing attack in Melbourne by an individual that killed one person.

The assailant had reportedly been inspired by the Takfiri Daesh terrorist group.

Muslim activists in the country have repeatedly raised questions in the past as to why Australian authorities do not attribute other murder incidents and crimes to the perpetrators’ respective faiths and communities. This is while a

number of Australian lawmakers have openly expressed controversial anti-Muslim remarks in the parliament and elsewhere.

Also on Tuesday, Australian police and intelligence officers arrested three Muslim men during a raid in Melbourne, accusing them of plotting a Daesh-inspired “mass-killing” attack in the city in what officials claimed was the 15th terror attack thwarted since 2014.

(Source: Press TV)

The sunset of France and the young president's concerns

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — Emmanuel Macron, French President, is going through hard times! The widespread public protests has almost paralyzed the country and created a special situation. Nearly 283,000 people were estimated to have taken part in more than 2,000 protests at roundabouts and on major motorways and thoroughfares across France.

It's reported that 227 people were injured and 117 detained, with 73 then taken into police custody. The demonstrations, were the result of a backlash against higher fuel prices, and echo complaints about a perceived squeeze in spending power and mounting dissatisfaction with Macron, who some view as out of touch with ordinary people. Protesters shouted "Macron, resign".

Some of the demonstrators sported slogans such as "give us back our purchasing power" on the back of the yellow high-visibility vests, which have come to symbolize the movement. Meanwhile, trade and labor unions in France have expressed their opposition to the policies of Emanuel Macron. It's to be noted that Macron's popularity among French citizens has fallen sharply, to about 25%. This is a catastrophe for the French President and his associates, a catastrophe that could result in the radical rights entry to the parliament and even the Elysées Palace.

Bloomberg accordingly reported that according to a poll by Ifop for the Journal du Dimanche weekly, Emmanuel Macron's



popularity has dropped to its lowest level since the French president took office 18 months ago." Macron's rating dropped four points in November from a month ago, to 25, while his Prime Minister Edouard Philippe's fell 7 points to 34, pollster Ifop said in a release. The number showing dissatisfaction with Macron climbed to 73 in November from 70 a month earlier, Ifop also said."

Only 25 percent of those questioned in an Ifop poll between Nov. 9 and 17 said they were satisfied with Macron, down from 29 percent in October, according to the survey. Inside France, many believe that the

movement formed against the president of the country is ambiguous, and it is not exactly clear that which political group or party the protesters belong to. However, some analysts have noted that the role of the French National Front and the Far-Right extremists can't be ignored in shaping and sustaining these demonstration.

In recent days, all the country's opposition parties tried to attribute this movement to themselves, but it seems that people from different classes have participated in the rally. The pensioners, workers, low-income groups, and even students' dissatisfaction

with Emmanuel Macron's policies has created a dire situation for the French president. In such a situation, opportunities for radical right movement have been created within the French community.

It's well remembered that in the presidential elections of 2017 in France, the two traditional parties, the Conservative Party and the Socialist Party, couldn't reach the final round of the electoral campaign, and Emmanuel Macron was appointed as an independent nominee, and Marine Le Pen as the president of the French National Rally Party, for the final round of the competition.

At that time, all the traditional French parties announced their support for Macron, only because they wished to prevent Le Pen from entering the Elysee Palace. Eventually, Macron could win the competition with almost 64 percent of the vote, and defeating Le Pen, he became one of the youngest politicians in Europe. Macron promised to improve the country's economy with his reforms.

The French president also sought to lead the European economy. However, after a year and a half, Macron failed to be a determining player in the European Union and the Eurozone, with the tensions raised inside his country. It seems that the same faith of Hollande and Sarkozy is waiting for Macron this time, and we shall soon witness the even more decreasing popularity of French inexperienced president.

U.S. policy errors mount with Trump's banalities and delusions



1 → The whitewash and MBS (and Trump himself) stink like rats. The thing is, if you do smell a rat, there's one close by. In fact, it's likely you will find an entire pack of them and they are called "Neocons" and "Zionists". The abrogation of the JCPOA and the re-imposition of draconian sanctions on Iran is precisely what rats do, if readers can forgive vitriol here. And as an American, my olfactory senses are also shared by many others inside the U.S. There are a couple dimension to all this mess that must be noted:

First, there is definitely something quite sociopathic about many who are in positions of "leadership" in the U.S., and in Israel, too, which has more or less dictated U.S. Mideast policies for decades. The great American Catholic monk and writer Thomas Merton, who died during the Vietnam War on a trip round Asia, once said about the Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann who was captured in South America and brought to trial and execution in Israel for his role in the so-called "Holocaust" after the war, that psychiatrists who examined Eichmann pronounced him perfectly sane. In many respects he was, because if Eichmann had also been a psychotic as well as a sociopath, his cruelty might have been easier to understand.

Merton wrote that the alleged banality and sanity of Eichmann was "disturbing" because normal people equate sanity "with a sense of justice, with humane-ness, with prudence, with the capacity to understand and love other people. We rely on the sane people of the world to preserve it from barbarism, madness, destruction. And now it begins to dawn on us that it is precisely the sane ones who are the most dangerous.... The whole concept of sanity in a society where spiritual values have lost their meaning is itself meaningless." Secondly, one can readily posit that ANY country that puts itself and profits and power and the enhancements of a narrow leadership at the top of its priorities is, in fact, a "meaningless" society and one that has already descended into chaos to one degree or another. The random shootings and murders by disaffected people of innocents in the U.S., which seems to occur almost weekly now, is just one example of social and political decline. The longstanding inattention to the health, education system and even the U.S infrastructure is obvious, while trillions are poured into the military and into senseless wars. There is now a thinness and desperation in U.S. society and America is NOT or no longer in fact the "richest" country in the world.

The real wealth, actually the social wealth of any society, is measured by the quality of its commonly lived environment. There is a reason why the U.S. for all its supposed "wealth", now looks and feels brittle. And even abject poverty, individual and social, which exists inside the U.S. today, is not an accident. It's all about the allocation, or misallocation, of resources. And that's exactly what the U.S. is dealing with now, and it's not a pretty sight as the country careens towards market dislocations and a possible economic recession of such proportions that it may well be a game changer.

Mention of such facts and ideas may seem to many extreme, even wrongheaded, but actually such mentions comprise warnings of a sort to any country or society where power, as in the U.S. currently, is exalted and where narrow-minded "leaders" like Trump and many others in Washington cling selfishly to their privileges to the detriment of the majority of citizens. The true "wealth" of any country, including Iran's, is not found in its natural resources, for example, but in the wisdom of its governance to serve others, even in hard times, no matter what.

One must fear for any country or society that has drifted, like the U.S., towards what is dangerously meaningless, to cite Thomas Merton. This is something that has completely eluded Trump, who has been claiming the U.S. has never been better off and that he has been the best of all possible Presidents in recent decades. His lies are enormous, his postures ridiculous, and ought to stand as a general warning to governments anywhere, including Islamic governments, to continue expressing and stressing spiritual values above all others.

Hunt completed the dirty Britain case with Iran's threat to war and famine

1 → Hunt's words "First World War-style catastrophe in the Middle East" is also important at a time when Europe hypocritically talks about holding on to the JCPOA. First, given the British and Saudi partnership, Iran is threatened and finds itself in the heinous triangle of the West, the Zionists and the Arabs. Secondly, it has put the Iranian people and government in a tough position with the unreasonable and aggressive demands and sanctions of the U.S. and Europe that could threaten another great famine. The BBC Persia has been on the mission to create a psychological war on the Iranians.

The threat of a global war in the Middle East comes at a time when Britain has recently begun to establish a military base in Oman and now pushed for the end of the Yemeni war.

Prior to his trip to Iran, Hunt had traveled to Saudi Arabia and discussed the necessity of ending the war in Yemen



with Riyadh leaders.

Looking at Britain's dirty laundry in the region, from the formation of the Zionist regime, to Pakistan and Afghanistan border disputes, the Iraq war, arms sales to terrorists in Syria and so on, all show that Britain has not stepped in to help end the suffering of the Yemeni people out of good will, but has another agenda in mind.

One can predict that if Britain's plan to end the Yemen War comes to fruition, its influence in the region will expand.

In his recent trip to Riyadh, Hunt called Saudi Arabia Britain's strategic partner and in his visit to Iran he threatened Tehran with another war in the Middle East. Since earlier times, the British have been called "old foxes" in Iran for being dishonest and cruel. However, it seems this time the Brits like Hunt are mistaken because Iran won't bow down to intimidation and threats.

U.S. blocks vote ending Yemen War: When international law fails, civilians suffer

TEHRAN (FNA) — American political leaders on Capitol Hill are at it again. They have blocked a vote to wind down U.S. military support for the Saudi-led war on Yemen.

The measure narrowly passed with a 201-187 vote, making it more difficult for the House to take action on the war on Yemen with legislative action. What's more, several of the co-sponsors of the Yemen resolution to end the war either voted to advance the bill or abstained from the vote entirely, meaning they played a part in preventing their own bill from reaching the House floor.

This comes at a time when Yemen's popular forces of Ansarullah seek truce and are ready for ceasefire ahead of Sweden peace talks.

Following the UN announcement of upcoming peace talks, the resistance movement has announced that they want a truce with the Saudi-led forces. Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, the group's leader, says they decided to halt the strikes amid requests from the UN to support the peace effort. The Saudi-led invaders have also said they support talks, and ordered their own ceasefire.

But this was only in words. Saudi Arabia and its allies are now launching new offensives in the Northwest, which suggests their previously announced ceasefire was overstated. Saudi Arabia's so-called ceasefire in the vital Yemeni aid port of Hodeida has also come to an end after a brief lull in fighting. Now, Saudi warplanes are again pounding the city, and Saudi-backed forces are again carrying out offensives in and around the suburbs.

This is unfortunate. The ceasefire didn't last up to the peace talks, and the Saudis and their American-British weapons suppliers are not willing to end the unnecessary conflict — Ansarullah truce and ceasefire announcement notwithstanding. This is not a good sign for the upcoming peace talks, though they may also represent an attempt to secure some last-minute gains before coming to the negotiating table. Either way, renewed Saudi airstrikes in Hodeida is doubtless to mean another upswing in civilian casualties, further blockade of the vital port city, and worsened humanitarian crisis that has affected at least 12 million people.

Also don't believe it when the U.S. military claims it has discontinued refueling Saudi warplanes bombing Yemen. The Congress has just voted to continue the conflict while the U.S. military continues to play a pivotal role in the war, providing arms and logistical support to UAE and Saudi forces occupying Yemen, blockading the country's ports, and bombing its civilians.

Let's we forget, The UNHCR's investigation has already concluded that there are "reasonable grounds" to conclude that the US-backed, Saudi blockade violates the proportion-



ality rule of international humanitarian law. Under that convention, the blockade is illegitimate because its impact on civilians is disproportionate to its military benefits. The advocacy group Human Rights Watch has also called on the UN Security Council to impose travel bans and asset freezes on Saudi Arabia and its coalition leaders, including Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman.

In the prevailing circumstances, it is silly for Saudi Arabia to claim that by blockading the port city they only aim to prevent the Houthi Ansarullah forces from receiving arms shipments from Iran. There is no way Iran could possibly send weapons and missiles into the country as it is completely under siege from air, land and sea. Besides, the resistance forces have the knowledge and the technology to make their own missiles that can easily target at the Saudi capital Riyadh.

In any event, the Saudis can only continue the illegal war and blockade with the much-needed military and diplomatic support they get from the United States. The good news is that several European countries

like Germany have decided to suspend arms exports to Saudi Arabia and its fighting partner the United Arab Emirates. Norway has also ceased such sales to the UAE. However, the U.S. and UK still support the Saudi-led coalition with weapons sales and logistical help. As long as such complicity in Saudi war crimes is there, the Ansarullah offer of truce and ceasefire will get nowhere. In consequence, the humanitarian crisis affecting millions of people will only continue to grow as the conflict rages on, and those in need will be prevented from receiving lifesaving assistance.

As is often the case, there is no military solution to the unnecessary conflict. The United Nations should call on Saudi Arabia and its partners to immediately end arms supplies, stop the airstrikes, and allow room for the new UN-led peace process in Sweden to take place in order to avoid further humanitarian catastrophe. After all, the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure in Yemen is an essential provision of international law. When these laws fail, civilians suffer.

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Third international AIDS conference opens in Tehran

HEALTH TEHRAN — Third International Conference and the 7th National AIDS Seminar is taking place in Tehran from November 21 to 23, ISNA quoted the conference's scientific director as saying.

Early diagnosis of AID/HIV patients, educational and preventive programs for controlling the disease and devoting extra attention to sexual transmission of the disease are the main topics of this year's conference, Masoud Mardani announced.

It is estimated that over 66,000 people in Iran have AIDS/HIV but over one third of them don't know they have the disease or deny it. This leads to adverse consequences for the society as they may transfer the disease to other people, he said, adding that identifying and treating these people is among the most important topics of the conference.

AIDS epidemiology in Iran has changed as using infected needles for injection of drugs is still the main method of transmission of the disease, but the rate of sexual transmission of the disease is growing, affecting specially the young and teenagers, he said.

In this year's conference, he said, special attention will be directed at sexually transmitted diseases including HIV and HPV and methods to diagnose and treat them as early as possible.

Last scientific findings about HPV, as well as precautionary measures against it and false beliefs about such diseases are also discussed over the conference, he added.

On Wednesday, Deputy Health Minister Alireza Raeisi announced that annually 2,000 new AIDS/HIV patients are diagnosed and the diagnosis rate is expected to double in future years.

According to Raeisi, The annual costs incurred by every AIDS/HIV patient is around \$14,000 to \$16,000.

HIV/AIDS prevalence in Iran and the world
Ministry of Health center for communicable diseases management announced that by the end of previous Iranian calendar year (March 2018) some 37,650 had been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS in Iran.

According to the Health Ministry, Some 83 percent of the patients are men and the rest are women. Almost half of



Deputy Health Minister Alireza Raeisi announces that annually 2,000 new AIDS/HIV patients are diagnosed and the diagnosis rate is expected to double in future years.

the patients are ageing 21-35. Out of the 37,650 individuals diagnosed with the virus so far some 13,393 have died. The HIV have led to AIDS in 15,278 of the patients.

Sharing the same needle for injection of drugs with 61.7 percent accounts for the highest number of HIV transmission in the country, while high risk sexual behavior are responsible for 21.3 percent of the infections. It was also indicated that some 1.5 percent of the infection transmission are passed from mother to her child. The rest of the cases are infected with the virus for unknown reasons.

According to the data provided by the World Health

Organization since the beginning of the epidemic, more than 70 million people have been infected with the HIV virus and about 35 million people have died of HIV. Globally, 36.7 million people were living with HIV at the end of 2016. An estimated 0.8% of adults aged 15-49 years worldwide are living with HIV, although the burden of the epidemic continues to vary considerably between countries and regions. Sub-Saharan Africa remains most severely affected, with nearly 1 in every 25 adults (4.2%) living with HIV and accounting for nearly two-thirds of the people living with HIV worldwide.

Suicide: Study finds 4 genes that may raise risk



New research finds four genetic variants that may raise the risk of dying by suicide, regardless of environmental factors. The study also identifies hundreds of other genes that require further analysis and that may also raise the likelihood that a person dies by suicide.

Middle-aged men are at a higher risk of dying by suicide.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), almost 800,000 people die by suicide every year.

Among people aged 15-29, suicide is the second leading cause of death worldwide.

In the United States, almost 45,000 people die as a result of suicide every year, making suicide the 10th leading cause of death among individuals of all ages.

Men who are white and middle-aged, however, are at the highest risk of dying by suicide.

Although the environment has an effect on the incidence of suicide, some studies have pointed out that genetic factors also play a key role. In fact, older studies have estimated the heritability of suicide at 50 percent.

New research that appears in the journal *Molecular Psychiatry* uses modern genomic sequencing techniques to find specific genetic factors that may raise the risk of suicide.

Dr. Douglas Gray, who is a professor of psychiatry at the University of Utah (U of U) Health in Salt Lake City, is the senior author on the paper.

He explains the motivation for the study, saying, "Past studies of families and twins informed us that there is significant genetic risk associated with suicide."

"Genes are like blueprints. The first step is to find the genes that increase risk. Identifying specific genes may lead to new treatments for those who [need them]," says Dr. Gray.

4 genetic variants and 207 genes found

To identify these genes, Dr. Gray and colleagues zoomed in on 43 families that were at a higher risk of suicide.

By focusing on such a "genetically homogeneous group," the researchers reduced the influence of environmental factors — such as stress due to a divorce, unemployment, or the loss of a loved one, or having easy access to means of taking one's life, such as firearms.

Hilary Coon, Ph.D. — a professor of psychiatry at U of U Health and the first author of the paper — explains the methods used in the research. "In this study," she says,

"we began by looking for the low-hanging fruit, the genomic changes that could affect the structure or function of a gene."

The researchers examined the cases of suicide among the very distant relatives of the 43 families. "We are using high-risk very extended families like a magnifying glass to get us to the right genes that increase the risk for this [...] outcome," Prof. Coon goes on.

Overall, Dr. Gray and team examined genetic variants in over 1,300 DNA samples from people who died by suicide in Utah. The researchers correlated the DNA results with the Utah Population database, which has genealogical data and the medical records of over 8 million people.

The analysis revealed specific variations in four genes that may raise the risk of suicide-related death: SP110, AGBL2, SUCLA2, and APH1B.

Also, the researchers identified an additional 207 genes that may prove to be key in influencing suicide risk and that need further analysis.

Previous studies have linked 18 of these genes with suicide risk and 15 of them with inflammation, further strengthening the hypothesis that inflammation and mental health are connected.

All in all, "the current work has produced several important lines of evidence," explain the authors.

Strengths and limitations of the study

Despite the significant findings, the authors point out some limitations to their study. For instance, most cases of suicide were from people of Northern European ancestry, which limits the results.

Also, the researchers did not have access to the mental health history of each and every person. Potential diagnoses of mental health issues that the researchers were not aware of may have influenced the results.

As with any complex human condition, cautions Prof. Coon, many environmental factors can still modify the genetic risk.

"Clearly genetics is only one part of [the] risk when it comes to suicide [...] But we are hoping these discoveries will lead us to highly susceptible individuals so we can develop better interventions to help them circumvent this risk."

"We think these results are just the tip of the iceberg. We will continue to search for additional gene changes that lead to risk," Prof. Coon concludes.

(Source: *Medical News Today*)

Why a low-gluten diet may benefit everyone



New research, published in the journal *Nature Communications*, finds that a diet low in gluten may also benefit the health of people who are not allergic to it. However, the benefits are not down to the mere absence of gluten.

A low-gluten diet may have unexpected health benefits, provided that it also contains high-quality fiber.

People living with celiac disease or gluten intolerance opt for a low-gluten or gluten-free diet to manage their symptoms.

In autoimmune conditions, such as celiac disease, for instance, the body's immune system reacts to gluten by targeting the small intestine.

Those with gluten intolerance, or gluten sensitivity, report that the protein triggers gastrointestinal symptoms, even in the absence of celiac disease.

However, an increasing number of people are adopting a gluten-free diet, even if they do not have celiac disease or gluten allergy. But some recent studies have suggested that doing so may have adverse health consequences, such as raising the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Researchers, led by professor Oluf Pedersen, of the Novo Nordisk Foundation Center for Basic Metabolic Research at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, set out to investigate whether a diet low in gluten is beneficial for people who are not allergic to it.

Comparing low- and high-gluten diets

Prof. Pedersen and colleagues carried out a randomized trial of 60 healthy Danish adults aged between 22 and 65 years old who did not have celiac disease, diabetes, or any other disorders.

The participants adhered to an 8-week-long low-gluten diet and an 8-week-long high-gluten diet, respectively, with a 6-week washout period in between.

The low-gluten diet consisted of 2 grams (g) of gluten per day, while the one high in gluten comprised 18 g of gluten per day. The washout period involved a regular diet with 12 g of gluten daily.

The two diets were similar regarding the number of calories and the quality of the nutrients they contained. However, the composition of fiber differed: the low-gluten diet also contained less fiber from wheat, rye, and barley, as these are primary sources of gluten.

The researchers examined the changes in intestinal fermentation by performing

the metabolic profiling of urine samples and monitoring diet-related changes in the participants' gut microbiome.

Overall, the study found that a low-gluten diet changed the participants' gut microbiome, reduced their gastrointestinal discomfort, and resulted in a small weight loss. The researchers think the digestive changes, such as reduced bloating, are caused by the alterations in gut bacteria and function.

Prof. Pedersen further details the findings, saying, "We demonstrate that, in comparison with a high-gluten diet, a low-gluten, fiber-rich diet induces changes in the structure and function of the complex intestinal ecosystem of bacteria, reduces hydrogen exhalation, and leads to improvements in self-reported bloating."

"Moreover, we observed a modest weight loss, likely due to increased body combustion triggered by the altered gut bacterial functions," the leading researcher adds.

Dietary fibers are key

So, is a gluten-free diet good for you? It might be, say the researchers. But the health benefits found in this study seem to hinge more on the quality of the fiber in the diet, not merely the absence of gluten.

"More long-term studies are definitely needed before any public health advice can be given to the general population. Especially, because we find dietary fibers — not the absence of gluten alone — to be the primary cause of the changes in intestinal discomfort and body weight," says Prof. Pedersen.

"By now we think that our study is a wake-up call to the food industry. Gluten-free may not necessarily be the healthy choice many people think it is. Most gluten-free food items available on the market today are massively deprived of dietary fibers and natural nutritional ingredients," cautions the professor.

"Therefore," he goes on, "there is an obvious need for availability of fiber-enriched, nutritionally high-quality gluten-free food items, which are fresh or minimally processed to consumers who prefer a low-gluten diet."

"Such initiatives may turn out to be key for alleviating gastrointestinal discomfort and in addition to help[ing] facilitating weight control in the general population via modification of the gut microbiota." (Source: *sgtalk.org*)

Air pollution second leading contributor to NCDs

HEALTH TEHRAN — Air pollution is the second most common cause of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) which has a high correlation with heart and brain stroke, diabetes and many respiratory diseases, deputy Health Minister has said.

"NCDs often associated with preventable risk factors like physical inactivity, unhealthy diet and the harmful use of alcohol and tobacco, are related highly to recently-known environmental factors," IRNA quoted Alireza Raeisi as saying on Wednesday.

Referring to the first WHO Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health held in Geneva, Switzerland on October 30 to November 1, he said that air pollution is the leading environmental health risk people are facing worldwide.

"Some 92 percent of the people globally breathe polluted air, even indoors, which has affected over 2 billion people, breathing pollutants like wood smoke, cooking fires and etc.," he highlighted.

In Iran, especially in metropolises, air pollution mostly increases at an alarming rate in the second half of the year, Raeisi said, adding, despite the measures taken to mitigate traffic-related pollution, it is still far from the desired situation and more serious measures are required in this regard.

He went on to explain that the issue of sand and dust storms hitting provinces of Ahvaz, Sistan-Baluchestan and southern part of the country, is also worrisome, as air pollution in these areas have exceeded the safe levels more than the capital.

The World Health Organization also emphasizes that all related organizations and responsible bodies must cooperate efficiently to overcome the issue, he added.

The Ministry of Health is responsible for air pollution in two ways, initially, to prepare an annual report on the impact of air pollution on public health, including deaths and illnesses attributable to air pollution, secondly, to develop training courses on air pollution master's degree and train experts in this field, he further explained.

He also added that many other tasks lie with other responsible bodies, including fuel quality control, traffic congestion mitigation, pollutant businesses and industries closure.

Any industrial units must be issued a non-pollutant license, while over 60-70 percent of the country's large industries do not have the license, which is essential in order to reduce air pollution, he highlighted.

At least since last few years, there has been a stringent crackdown on issuing the aforesaid licenses, which the Ministry is also involved in, he concluded.

According to the WHO report 'Preventing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) by Reducing Environmental Risk Factors', ambient (outdoor) and household (indoor) air pollution caused more than 6 million deaths from these diseases in 2012.

Globally, 23 percent of all deaths could be prevented through healthier environments. Children are most at risk with growing evidence indicating that early life exposure to environmental risks like chemicals and air pollutants increases the lifetime risk of developing NCDs.

Worldwide, almost one third of the cardiovascular disease burden is attributable to indoor and outdoor air pollution by 17 and 13 percent respectively, second-hand tobacco smoke 3 percent and exposure to lead 2 percent. Globally 29 percent of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease deaths are attributable to indoor air pollution, 8 percent to outdoor air pollution and 11 percent in workplaces.

How aspirin and omega-3 may reduce cancer risk

Acetylsalicylic acid, best known as aspirin, and omega-3 fatty acids support various aspects of health, and scientists continue to uncover how these substances work. One recent study suggests that both could have an impact on colon cancer risk.

A new clinical trial looks into the effects of aspirin and fatty acids on key elements that determine colon cancer risk.

The National Cancer Institute estimate that doctors will diagnose around 140,250 new cases of cancer of the colon and rectum in 2018 in the United States.

Colon cancer develops from polyps or abnormal growths of tissue within the colon. Many of these polyps are benign, but some can lead to cancerous tumors.

Doctors identify precancerous polyps through colonoscopies that allow them to detect visible abnormalities in the large bowel.

In a new clinical trial, dubbed the seAFOod Trial, specialists from the universities of Leeds, Nottingham, Bradford, and Newcastle in the United Kingdom, in collaboration with researchers from other institutions, made an intriguing find.

They wanted to see if widely available drugs, such as aspirin and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) — one of the key fatty acids contained by omega-3 — would reduce the number of precancerous bowel polyps in people at high risk of colon cancer.

The researchers' findings appear in the prestigious journal *The Lancet*.

Aspirin and EPA therapy beneficial

The researchers recruited 709 participants via 53 hospitals across England. All the individuals were at high risk of colon cancer.

The team split the participants into four treatment groups. Of these, some were to receive an aspirin treatment only, others EPA only, the third group was to receive an aspirin and EPA combination, and the final group was to receive a placebo.

Those in the aspirin-only group took a 300 milligram aspirin tablet every day for a year. The participants in the EPA group took 2 grams of EPA in four capsules for the same period of time. This EPA dose was higher than the amount available in regular omega-3 supplements.

Participants who took aspirin for a year had 22 percent fewer polyps overall — including on the right side of the large bowel, which is more difficult to monitor through colonoscopy — than those who took a placebo.

Those who took EPA had 9 percent fewer polyps overall when compared to those in the placebo group, though this outcome was not statistically significant.

However, those in the EPA group did have 25 percent fewer polyps on the left side of the large bowel.

"The seAFOod Trial demonstrates that both aspirin and EPA have preventative effects, which is particularly exciting given that they are both relatively cheap and safe compounds to give to patients," notes the study's lead author, Prof. Mark Hull, from the University of Leeds.

"Given this new evidence, clinicians need to consider these agents for patients at elevated risk of bowel cancer, alongside regular colonoscopy surveillance."

(Source: *parallelstate.com*)

Golestan Palace to exhibit historical documents and rugs



HERITAGE TEHRAN — A select of historical documents, photographs and handwoven rugs will go on display today at the UNESCO-registered Golestan Palace in downtown Tehran.

The documents, which include international treaties and diplomatic reports, will be put on show for the first time, the palace's website announced.

The exhibit also features 40 pictures of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar, who was the King of Persia (Iran) from 1848 to 1896 when he was assassinated.

Golestan Palace became a center of Qajari arts and architecture which is an outstanding example and has remained a source of inspiration for Iranian artists and architects to this day. It embodies a successful integration of earlier Persian crafts and architecture with Western influences.

Mashhad to host intl. gastronomy festival



HERITAGE TEHRAN — Mashhad will host an international culinary festival from November 28 to 30.

Exhibitors from various countries including Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Qatar, Iraq, Kuwait, Malaysia and Georgia will be attending the event, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

Some 50 stalls will be set up for the gastronomy festival, which will be held at Homa Hotel.

The Iranian cuisine, usually dominated with fragrant herbs, varies from region to region. It principally accentuates freshness, deliciousness, and colorfulness.

Tehran ranks 2nd tourism market place in Mideast, Africa: WTTC

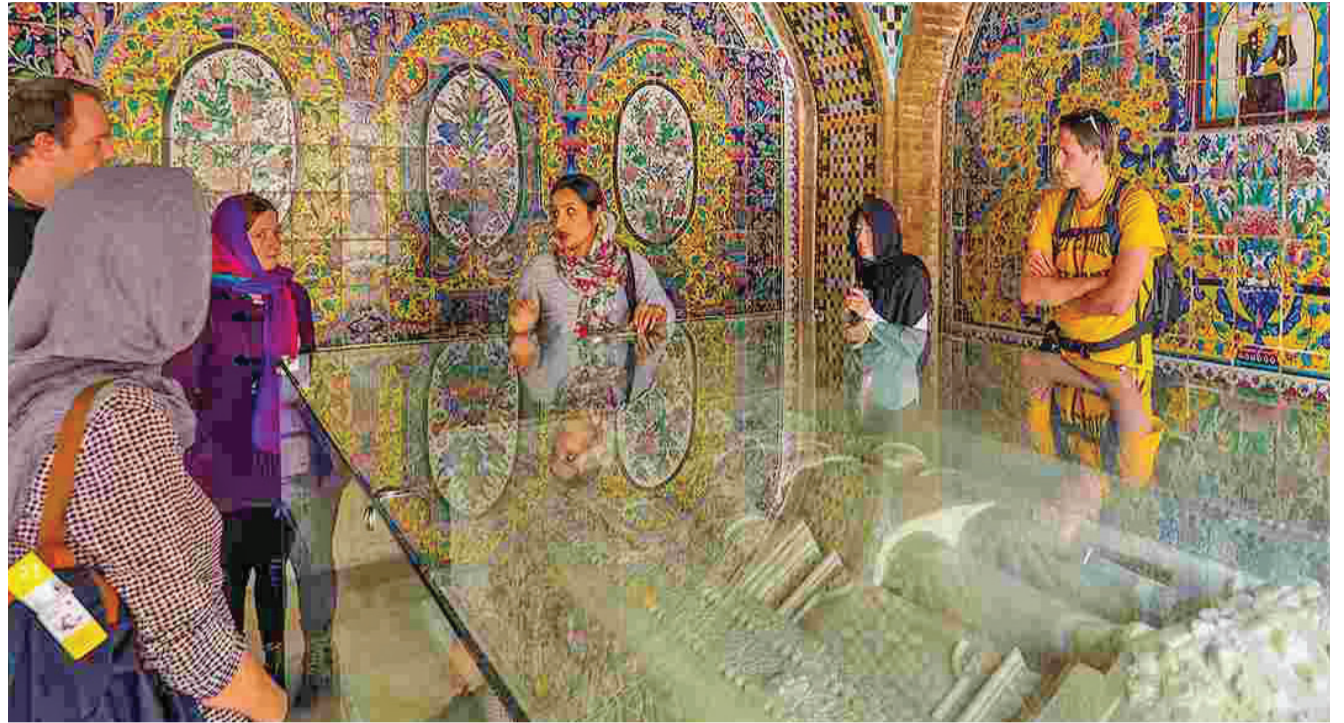
TOURISM TEHRAN — Tehran is ranked second after Dubai in terms of tourism market size and share of the country's GDP from the span of 2007-2017, according to the latest World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) report published in October.

Based on the report, the travel & tourism contribution to GDP in the Iranian capital has become more than doubled in the past ten years and is expected to increase by 1.5 times in the next ten years.

"Tehran accounts for nearly a third of Iran's overall travel & tourism GDP and 20% of overall tourism employment."

According to another WTTC report, visitor exports in Iran grew at an average rate of 19.9% during 2011-17 with the strongest growth witnessed during 2013 and 2014, when a newly elected government adopted a looser visa policy.

Home to hundreds of historical monuments and natural heritage including 22 UNESCO World Heritage sites, Iran has launched extensive plans to bolster its tourism sector. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, the country is expecting to increase the number of tourism arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million.



Travelers visit the UNESCO-registered Golestan Palace in downtown Tehran

Does Noah's Ark stranded in Iran?

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Over ten years ago researchers from the Bible Archaeology, Search & Exploration (BASE) Institute raised possibility of Noah's Ark may be landing in Iran.

Now, news by several media outlets broke that the institute has found strong evidence in a mountainous area in northern Iran, which may be remnants of the famed ark.

"The BASE group says they found wood fragments at the 15,000-foot elevation and took the samples to be analyzed in a lab," the New York Post reported on Monday.

"NOAH'S Ark is in Iran on the top of a mountain a group of Biblical scholars have claimed..." dailystar.co.uk said on Sunday.

Reports add that fragments of petrified wood were found at 15,000 feet elevation of the Takht-e Soleyman Massif that is a subrange of central Alborz Mountain, showing microscopic sea life in a rock sample that is normally found at the



A view of the Takht-e Soleyman Massif in northern Iran

bottom of the ocean.

"Is it the remains of Noah's Ark? The BASE Institute does not make the claim that we have found Noah's Ark. We'll let you draw your own conclusions.... In our opinion, it's a candidate. The research continues," reads part of the BASE report.

"It is no secret that we here at The BASE Institute have formulated certain possible scenarios (e.g. the probable location of historical Mt. Sinai and the possible historical mountains of Noah), based on the testimony of the Bible, personal investigation, examination of evidence, and other factors."

Mount Ararat in Turkey is another candidate for the place where the biblical ship ended up after a devastating flood.

Noah's Ark is one of the most sought after mysteries in the Bible - with the story saying it was ordered to be constructed by God to save Noah, his family, and the world's animals from a global flood.

Airline etiquette in the not-so-friendly skies

By Benet J. Wilson

I was sitting in an aisle seat on a flight earlier this year when a fellow traveler approached and politely said he thought I may be sitting in his seat.

After assuring him I was in the correct seat, he then demanded to see my boarding pass. I already knew I was in the right seat, but it was confirmed when he made his demand.

Knowing I was in the right, I refused to show him my pass. The real issue, I think, was that he didn't want to sit in the dreaded middle seat, so he thought he could cajole or intimidate me into moving.

He didn't call a flight attendant, probably because he knew the aisle seat was mine. Instead, he behaved like a spoiled child, muttering under his breath and throwing me hostile looks for the rest of the flight.

A veteran of the friendly skies

I have traveled more than 250,000 miles last year for my work as an aviation journalist, and I've also worked at two airlines, so I'm not new to this rodeo.

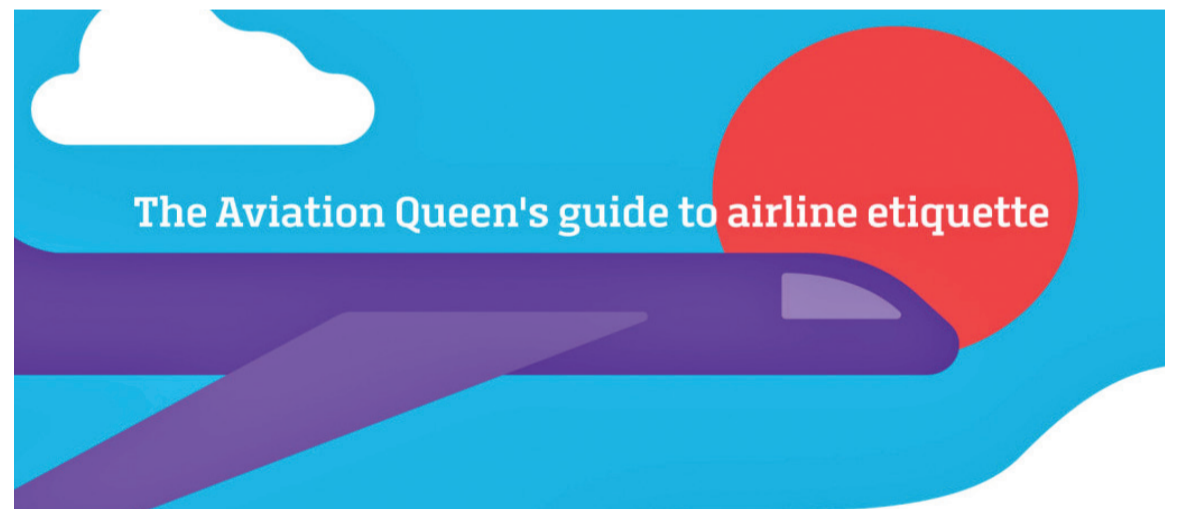
On my travels, I see people who have manners that would impress Emily Post on the ground seemingly lose their minds once they cross the threshold of an airport.

Remember my aisle seat? I choose the aisle because I'm claustrophobic, and I typically have to pay extra to ensure that I get one. But there are always travelers who don't want me to have it. Another scenario I encounter regularly is the seat switcher.

This person just asks to switch seats so they can either sit next to someone or avoid sitting in a window or middle seat. When I give them a simple no (with no further explanation), it turns into a debate and sometimes even escalates. I even had one person call a flight attendant on me because I refused to move from the seat I paid to have.

That's not your personal storage bin

Another situation that has only gotten worse since the airlines (minus Southwest Airlines) started charging checked baggage fees is the fight for limited overhead bin space. I'm



someone who never checks a bag if I can help it. Thanks to having status on two airlines (which means early boarding and plenty of space in the bins), I never have to worry about overhead bin access. But that hasn't stopped my fellow passengers from behaving badly.

One time on a completely full flight, a gentleman was desperately searching for a place to put his bag, with no luck. So he pulled my bag out of the overhead bin, placed it in the middle of the aisle, put his in and sat down.

When I asked him to put my bag back, he refused, saying he had a really tight connection and didn't want to check his bag, with no apology for moving mine. After a quick call to the flight attendant and an "exchange" over proper bin etiquette, the gentleman had his bag checked to his final destination.

Respect other passengers' space

I've had a passenger try to take a meal I ordered because

"you don't look like a vegetarian." I had a seatmate who, right after we landed, climbed over me to rush back three rows to grab her carry-on luggage and attempt to blow past her fellow passengers who were waiting to get off the plane.

I had a woman get upset after I asked her to put her cat back in its kennel under her seat (as required by the airlines) because I'm allergic, and his tail kept brushing me.

My dad is a retired Air Force colonel, so that meant a life that included travel throughout my childhood. I took my first flight on Pan Am from New York to London in 1970. Back then, flying was only for the wealthy or privileged few. People dressed up, coach seats were comfortable, and everyone was more civilized.

I know those days aren't coming back. But the current madness must stop, and I'm here to help. Here are five tips to make air travel better for everyone because, in the end, we're all in this together.

Skeletons of new species of vegetarian dinosaur discovered in South America

Bones of a newly discovered species of vegetarian dinosaur have been dug up in Brazil.

Three "astonishingly well preserved" skeletons were uncovered and shed new light on one of the earliest of the long-necked dinosaurs that lived more than 225 million years ago.

The new species, which lived before giant dinosaurs had emerged, would have weighed about 16st and grown to around 12ft long and 5ft tall.

Experts say the discovery is also remarkable because it shows the dinosaurs were social creatures at this early stage of their evolution, choosing to live in groups rather than alone.

Named *Macrocollum itaquii*, it is a distant

cousin of the sauropods – the later long-necked beasts that walked on four legs, such as *Brontosaurus*, which grew into the largest terrestrial animal to walk on Earth.

It roamed South America when it was still part of one huge supercontinent called Pangaea, before the land mass broke up.

Macrocollum, Latin for long neck, may help palaeontologists finally discover how the sauropods grew so big.

Like sauropods, the new species was also a plant-eater, but unlike them it walked on two legs.

The dominant vegetation at the time was ferns and gymnosperms, flowerless plants that produce cones and seeds, and the creature

would have gorged on them to nourish its substantial body.

Biologist Rodrigo Muller, of the Federal University of Santa Maria, Brazil, said: "The morphology of its teeth suggests this dinosaur was herbivorous."

Its long neck would have helped it access a lot more food, reports the Royal Society journal *Biology Letters*.

Mr Muller said: "Indeed, the neck elongation present in the new dinosaur may also have provided a competitive advantage for gathering food resources."

This Berlin museum features the *Brachiosaurus*, which is the tallest dinosaur in the world, on display at 41 feet, 5 inches (12.6 meters). The place is also home to a diverse

collection of bones from varied species excavated mostly from Tanzania in the 20th century.

"It would have allowed members of the group to reach higher vegetation compared to other early vertebrates."

"There are three articulated skeletons in five tons of rock. This is unique."

"It suggests these animals probably died together, as they share the same degree of disarticulation."

"So if they died together, these dinosaurs probably lived together."

"This gives us an amazing picture of how these animals lived, which has never been done before."

(Source: *The Independent*)

ROUND THE GLOBE

Luis Barrag?n House and Studio

Built in 1947-1948, the Luis Barrag?n House and Studio located in a working class suburb of Mexico City represents an outstanding example of the architect's creative work in the post-Second World War period.

Barrag?n created a regional adaptation of the International Modern Movement in architectural design. The concrete building, totaling 1,161 square meters, consists of a ground floor and two upper storeys, as well as a small private garden.



The architect's integration of modern design with traditional Mexican vernacular elements has been greatly influential, especially in the contemporary design of gardens. For example, his use of water and fountains reflects Mediterranean and Islamic traditions, in particular Moroccan.

The house and studio of Luis Barrag?n owes its singularity to being a personal and therefore unique reflection of its designer.

This autobiographical background did not prevent this artist manifesto from going well beyond its time and its cultural milieu and becoming a distinguished reference in 20th century fine art and architecture.

Of particular note is the profound dialogue between light and constructed space and the way in which colour is substantial to form and materials.

It is a house which appeals to all the senses and re-evaluates the ways in which architecture can be perceived and enjoyed by its inhabitants.

Many of its materials were found in traditional architecture and, distant as they are from industrial production, they reveal the aging of the house with a patina which the architect acknowledged as the poetic value of his architecture.

(Source: UNESCO)

Glaciers and volcanoes combine to release large amounts of methane: new analysis

Volcanoes and glaciers can combine to form a surprisingly robust source of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.

New analysis of the Sólheimajökull glacier, a volcanic glacier in Iceland, suggests methane production is fueled by the unique combination of wet, low oxygen conditions and geothermal warmth found where ice and volcano meet.

Sólheimajökull glacier is frequently visited by tourists and is renowned as a rather smelly, gassy place, with the distinctive eggy whiff of hydrogen sulphide in the air for much of the year. Hugh Tuffen, a volcanologist at Lancaster University, told UPI in an email.

Ten years ago, Lancaster geochemist Peter Wynn began visiting Sólheimajökull to investigate the gassy volcanic glacier. His efforts were aided by Rebecca Burns, who -- as part of her PhD work -- measured remarkably high concentrations of dissolved methane in Sólheimajökull's meltwater.

■ Main meltwater river

Follow-up investigations revealed Sólheimajökull's main meltwater river releases approximately 41 metric tons of methane every day during the summer months. That's the equivalent of 136,000 flatulent cows. For some perspective, there are 1.9 million dairy cows living in the United Kingdom.

Volcanoes are known to produce significant amounts of methane and CO₂ on their own, but Tuffen and his colleagues determined the methane being released by Sólheimajökull's meltwater isn't directly produced by Katla, the volcano that lies beneath.

The carbon and hydrogen isotopes in the methane tell us that the gas was generated by microbes, rather than coming straight from underground magma, Peter Wynn told UPI.



These microbes live in the wet, low oxygen sediments underneath the glacier and give off methane in a similar way to how yeast gives off carbon dioxide.

Researchers collected sediments from beneath the glacier and watched in the lab

as microbes living in the sediment samples produce significant amounts of methane.

Other researchers have shown that microbes make methane much more rapidly when they are warm, and so we suspect that the geothermal heat from Katla volcano, hidden

beneath the ice, is accelerating the methane production, Wynn said.

The lack of oxygen is an important part of the unique methane factor found beneath Sólheimajökull. When oxygen is present, methane is easily converted into CO₂. But very little oxygen is able to penetrate beneath the layers of glacial ice, allowing methane to become dissolved in the glacier's meltwater and drained before eventually bubbling out into the atmosphere.

■ In isolated cavities

In winter it's mostly trapped beneath the ice in isolated cavities, but in the summer there's a lot more meltwater around, these cavities connect, and the methane-rich water is quickly discharged to the glacier snout before the methane can all be converted to CO₂, Tuffen said.

The new research, published Tuesday in the journal *Scientific Reports*, suggests volcanic glaciers could be responsible for an underappreciated source of greenhouse gases.

The amount of methane emitted from Sólheimajökull during the summer months is more than all known methane emissions from European volcanoes put together, and 15 percent of estimates of the combined total of European volcanic and geothermal emissions, Wynn said. We have increasing evidence for large zones of geothermal heat beneath the world's biggest ice sheets in Antarctica and Greenland, so there could be a large amount of methane being produced there.

And while Sólheimajökull is producing prodigious amounts of methane, new research suggests the volcano beneath is releasing significant quantities of CO₂ into the atmosphere.

(Source: *Oil&gas360.com*)

The carbon and hydrogen isotopes in the methane tell us that the gas was generated by microbes, rather than coming straight from underground magma, Geochemist Peter Wynn told UPI.

How to convert climate-changing carbon dioxide into plastics and other products



Rutgers scientists have developed catalysts that can convert carbon dioxide -- the main cause of global warming -- into plastics, fabrics, resins and other products.

The electrocatalysts are the first materials, aside from enzymes, that can turn carbon dioxide and water into carbon building blocks containing one, two, three or four carbon atoms with more than 99 percent efficiency. Two of the products created by the researchers -- methylglyoxal (C₃) and 2,3-furandiol (C₄) -- can be used as precursors for plastics, adhesives and pharmaceuticals. Toxic formaldehyde could be replaced by methylglyoxal, which is safer.

The discovery, based on the chemistry of artificial photosynthesis, is detailed in the journal *Energy & Environmental Science*.

"Our breakthrough could lead to the conversion of carbon dioxide into valuable products and raw materials in the chemical and pharmaceutical industries," said study senior author Charles Dismukes, Distinguished Professor in the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology and Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology at Rutgers University-New Brunswick. He is also a principal investigator at Rutgers' Waksman Institute of Microbiology.

■ Conversion of carbon dioxide

Previously, scientists showed that

carbon dioxide can be electrochemically converted into methanol, ethanol, methane and ethylene with relatively high yields. But such production is inefficient and too costly to be commercially feasible, according to study lead author Karin Calvino, a chemistry doctoral student in Rutgers' School of Graduate Studies.

However, carbon dioxide and water can be electrochemically converted into a wide array of carbon-based products, using five catalysts made of nickel and phosphorus, which are cheap and abundant, she said.

The choice of catalyst and other conditions determine how many carbon atoms can be stitched together to make molecules or even generate longer polymers. In general, the longer the carbon chain, the more valuable the product.

Based on their research, the Rutgers scientists earned patents for the electrocatalysts and formed RenewCO₂, a start-up company. The next step is to learn more about the underlying chemical reaction, so it can be used to produce other valuable products such as diols, which are widely used in the polymer industry, or hydrocarbons that can be used as renewable fuels. The Rutgers experts are designing, building and testing electrolyzers for commercial use.

(Source: *phys.org*)

Solar System in the path of fast-moving 'dark matter hurricane'



A vast hurricane of dark matter with the speed of 500 kilometers per second is plowing the Solar System as of this moment, according to astronomers.

However, humans on Earth need not worry. Its presence will neither harm nor affect activities on the planet.

Astronomers first discovered the event while rummaging through the data released by the European Space Agency's Gaia satellite. While studying the locations of trajectories of 2 billion stars in the Milky Way Galaxy, astronomers identified a "stellar stream," the dissolving remains of a large dwarf spheroidal galaxy cannibalized years ago.

While several stellar streams have been detected in the Milky Way Galaxy, this one is unusual because the Solar System is right on its path. Astronomers named the group the S1 (stream 1) and it consists of a swarm of stars of similar age and composition. Earth will not directly be hit by these stars, but the stellar stream is also carrying a storm of dark matter.

Dark matter has never been observed, but scientists believe that the mysterious stuff makes up about 27 percent of the universe. A small dwarf galaxy like the Fornax, for example, has an estimated dark matter between 10 and 100 times greater than the

mass of any of its stars.

■ Amount of dark matter

While the effects of its passing through the Solar System will not be felt, the event is exciting. The possibility that a great amount of dark matter is flying through the Solar System as of this moment is an opportunity to detect it.

There is currently no existing technology that can detect dark matter. Ciaran O'Hare, a theoretical physicist from the University of Zaragoza in Spain, and her team calculated the density and distribution of dark matter coming from the S1 to predict signatures that can be detected on Earth.

They revealed that the Axion Dark Matter Experiment, which could pick up the axions -- the incredibly light particles that scientists suspect are the principal component of dark matter. Axions are still hypothetical, but if they do exist, they can be converted to photons which humans can detect and see in the presence of a strong magnetic field.

So far, Axion Dark Matter Experiment and other experiments involving the particle, still have not picked up signatures of axions. However, knowing what to look for would make it easier for scientists to improve technology and, one day, find more information about dark matter.

(Source: *techtimes.com*)

Researchers present new way to remove toxic mercury from contaminated water

Water which has been contaminated with mercury and other toxic heavy metals is a major cause of environmental damage and health problems worldwide.

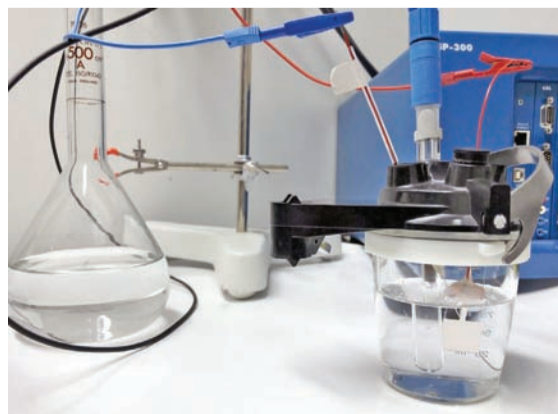
Now, researchers from Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden, present a totally new way to clean contaminated water, through an electrochemical process. The results are published in the scientific journal *Nature Communications*.

"Our results have really exceeded the expectations we had when we started with the technique," says the research leader Björn Wickman, from Chalmers' Department of Physics. "Our new method makes it possible to reduce the mercury content in a liquid by more than 99%. This can bring the water well within the margins for safe human consumption."

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mercury is one of the most harmful substances for human health. It can influence the nervous system, the development of the brain, and more. It is particularly harmful for children and can also be transmitted from a mother to a child during pregnancy. Furthermore, mercury spreads very easily through nature, and can enter the food chain. Freshwater fish, for example, often contain high levels of mercury.

■ Cleaning mercury from water

In the last two years, Björn Wickman and Cristian Tunsu, researcher at the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering at Chalmers, have studied an electrochemical process for cleaning mercury from water. Their method



works via extracting the heavy metal ions from water by encouraging them to form an alloy with another metal.

"Today, cleaning away the low, yet harmful, levels of mercury from large amounts of water is a major challenge. Industries need better methods to reduce the risk of mercury being released in nature," says Björn Wickman.

Their new method involves a metal plate -- an electrode -- that binds specific heavy metals to it. The electrode is made of the noble metal platinum, and through an electrochemical

process it draws the toxic mercury out of the water to form an alloy of the two. In this way, the water is cleaned of the mercury contamination. The alloy formed by the two metals is very stable, so there is no risk of the mercury re-entering the water.

"An alloy of this type has been made before, but with a totally different purpose in mind. This is the first time the technique with electrochemical alloying has been used for decontamination purposes," says Cristian Tunsu.

■ Mercury atoms

One strength of the new cleaning technique is that the electrode has a very high capacity. Each platinum atom can bond with four mercury atoms. Furthermore, the mercury atoms do not only bond on the surface, but also penetrate deeper into the material, creating thick layers. This means the electrode can be used for a long time. After use, it can be emptied in a controlled way. Thereby, the electrode can be recycled, and the mercury disposed of in a safe way. A further positive for this process is that it is very energy efficient.

Patenting for the new method is being sought, and in order to commercialize the discovery, the new company Atium has been set up. The new innovation has already been bestowed with a number of prizes and awards, both in Sweden and internationally. The research and the colleagues in the company have also had a strong response from industry.

(Source: *Mercury*)

4,000-year-old termite mounds found in Brazil are visible from space

Researchers reporting in *Current Biology* on November 19 have found that a vast array of regularly spaced, still-inhabited termite mounds in northeastern Brazil -- covering an area the size of Great Britain -- are up to about 4,000 years old.

The mounds, which are easily visible on Google Earth, are not nests. Rather, they are the result of the insects' slow and steady excavation of a network of interconnected underground tunnels. The termites' activities over thousands of years has resulted in huge quantities of soil deposited in approximately 200 million cone-shaped mounds, each about 2.5 meters tall and 9 meters across.

"These mounds were formed by a single termite species that excavated a massive network of tunnels to allow them to access dead leaves to eat safely and directly from the forest floor," says Stephen Martin of the University of Salford in the UK. "The amount of soil excavated is over 10 cubic kilometers, equivalent to 4,000 great pyramids of Giza, and represents one of the biggest structures built by a single insect species."

"This is apparently the world's most extensive bioengineering effort by a single insect species," adds Roy Funch of Universidade Estadual de Feira de Santana in Brazil. "Perhaps most exciting of all -- the mounds are extremely old -- up to 4,000 years, similar to the ages of the pyramids."

The mounds are largely hidden from view in the fully deciduous, semiarid, thorny-scrub caatinga forests unique to northeastern Brazil. They'd only really come into view by "outsiders," including scientists, when some of the lands were cleared for pasture in recent decades.

Soil samples collected from the centers of 11 mounds and dated indicated that the mounds were filled 690 to 3,820 years ago. That makes them about as old as the world's oldest known termite mounds in Africa.

(Source: *sciencealert.com*)

A hidden, radioactive heat source seems to be melting east Antarctica from below

When it comes to measuring ice loss at the poles, and predicting what might happen next, scientists need as much accurate data as they can get -- and a new study suggests there's a big source of geothermal heat underneath East Antarctica that we haven't yet factored into our calculations.

Ice in this area appears to be melting from the bottom up, according to radar readings taken by an aircraft flying over the frozen continent. The radar was able to penetrate through three kilometers (nearly two miles) of ice to map the conditions underneath it.

As the base of the Antarctic ice sheet melts, meltwater drains away and fills up subglacial lakes downstream.

While this process might not be a major contributor to ice loss right now, the international team of scientists says it could cause faster melting in the future, as water and ice can escape more easily.

The "process of melting we observe has probably been going on for thousands or maybe even millions of years and isn't directly contributing to ice sheet change," says lead researcher Tom Jordan, from the British Antarctic Survey (BAS).

"However, in the future the extra water at the ice sheet bed may make this region more sensitive to external factors such as climate change."

The team of experts thinks radioactive rocks and hot water spurting from inside Earth's crust is contributing to this additional melt, based on observations taken up to 750 kilometers (almost 470 miles) inland from the shore.

Without the latest in radar technology, we would only have surface observations to go off. The PolarGAP project that this research is part of is designed to fill in some of the gaps left by readings taken from the now-retired GOCE satellite.

(Source: *sciencealert.com*)

Scientists left stunned after melting gold at room temperature

Scientists were dumbfounded after finding it is possible to melt gold at room temperature using an electron microscope.

For thousands of years, famous scientists and alchemists attempted to find a way to turn common metals into gold. While this proved to be a thankless pursuit, a new discovery announced by a team from Chalmers University in Sweden has managed to find an altogether different and mysterious property of gold itself.

After placing a small piece of gold in an electron microscope, researcher Ludvig de Knoop ramped up the magnification to the maximum and increased the electric field step by step to see what would happen to the gold's atoms. To his amazement, he noticed that the surface layers of gold had actually melted at room temperature.

"I was really stunned by the discovery. This is an extraordinary phenomenon, and it gives us new, foundational knowledge of gold," De Knoop said.

Publishing his findings in *Physical Review Materials* along with his university colleagues and Finnish theoretician Mikael Juhani Kuisma, De Knoop explained that the melting occurred because the atoms became excited. Under the influence of the electric field, they suddenly lost their ordered structure and released almost all their connections to each other.

When they examined it further, they discovered it was also possible to switch between a solid and molten structure. The researchers have stressed this discovery to not just be spectacular, but also groundbreaking scientifically.

Using theoretical calculations, the researchers believe it is possible to melt gold at room temperature because the surface melting can be seen as a so-called low-dimensional phase transition.

Eva Olsson, professor of the Department of Physics at Chalmers University, said: "Because we can control and change the properties of the surface atom layers, it opens doors for different kinds of applications."

"For example, the technology could be used in different types of sensors, catalysts and transistors. There could also be opportunities for new concepts for contactless components."

(Source: *siliconrepublic.com*)



Iranian team, Rahart, came in 4th at WRO2018 Open Category Elementary

SOCIETY TEHRAN — A team of Iranian students, called Rahart, from Tabriz, East Azarbaijan province, secured the 4th place at 2018 World Robot Olympiad (WRO) Open Category Elementary, IRNA news



agency reported.

The competition was held on November 16 - 18, 2018 in Chiang Mai Thailand. First held in 2004 in Singapore, it now attracts more than 20,000 teams from nearly 60 countries.

The Iranian team secured the fourth place after teams from Malaysia, the Philippines and Russia.

Moreover another Iranian team, called Green Land, also came in the 11th place in Open Category Junior.

This year's WRO theme is "food matters", it focuses on the way we grow, share and consume food. It is an important theme, because one in nine people in the world today (795 million people) are undernourished. And with a growing population in the world, more and more food needs to be produced every year. We can use technology to help grow more and better food and reduce food waste.

The competition consists of 4 different categories, Regular, College, Open and Soccer and for the Regular and Open categories, it consists of three different age groups: Elementary, Junior High and Senior High.

The Open Category is a project based competition. Students create their own intelligent robotics solution relating to the current theme of the season. Teams will present their project and their robot model to a group of judges on the competition day.

The mission of Open category this year was to build a robot that supports the way we grow, share and consume food. The project should have focused around at least one of the following aspects of the Goal 2 of sustainable development: promote sustainable agriculture, improve nutrition, achieve food security, and end hunger.

The Regular Category is a challenge based competition. Students must design, construct and program their robots to solve specific challenges on a field. Points are scored for completed tasks. The teams bring their robot completely disassembled. In the first part of the competition they will have 150 minutes to assemble their robots from loose parts without instructions.

WRO Football is a fun and exciting game with teams of two autonomous robots playing football (soccer). Every year little changes are introduced for the game to motivate the students to keep on developing their robots. Teams need two robots to participate in WRO Football. The controller, motors and sensors used to assemble robots must be from LEGO® MINDSTORMS® sets (NXT or EV3). The teams bring their robot completely disassembled. In the first part of the competition they will have 120 minutes to assemble their robots from loose parts without instructions.

The Advanced Robotics Challenge (ARC) is our newest category. The games are designed to test older and more experienced student's engineering and programming skills to the limit. Teams compete on a set challenge. The maximum time differs depending on each competition. In the 2017 season it was introduced the Tetra stack challenge.

LEARN ENGLISH

Seafood Dinner

A: This is such a nice restaurant! I feel so **classy**!
 B: Yeah, it's a little bit **pricey**, but they serve the best seafood in town.
 C: May I Take your order?
 B: Yes, I would like some **marinated** grilled shrimp for **starters** and I'll also have the lobster.
 C: Excellent choice sir. And for you, Madame?
 B: I would like the baked oysters and the seafood **platter**.
 C: Very good, Madame.
 B: That seafood platter sounds good. Excuse me, what does the platter have?
 C: It's a great combination of **clams**, **scallops**, **squid mussels**, **calamari** and fillets of salmon and tuna. It comes with a side of butter sauce and French fries.
 B: That sounds great! Cancel the lobster and give me one of the same please.
 C: Very well sir. Anything to drink?
 A: Can we get a bottle of Cola please?
 C: Superb choice. I will be back shortly with your order.

Key vocabulary

classy: high class
pricey: expensive
marinated: to leave something to be soaked in a sauce for its flavor
starter: as the first step or part
platter: a course of a meal, usually consisting of a variety of foods served on the same plate
clams: Edible sea creature that buries itself in the sand
scallops: edible sea creature similar to oysters that move in the water by opening and closing their shell
squid: a sea creature having a having a torpedo shaped body
mussels: edible sea creature that attaches it to something such as a rock
calamari: cooked squid cut into rings
Supplementary vocabulary
eel: a creature with a long snakelike body, a smooth slimy skin
sushi: cold boiled rice moistened with rice vinegar, usually shaped into bite-size pieces and topped with raw seafood
dodgy: something not good
crab: a hard shelled sea creature

Iranian computer scientist wins University of Waterloo's Alumni Gold Medals

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iranian computer scientist Amir Hossein Karimi won Canada's University of Waterloo's Alumni Gold Medals in late October for Outstanding Academic Performance in a Master's Program at Waterloo's convocation ceremonies.

According to the University of Waterloo's website the award recognizes the academic achievements of graduating students by awarding Alumni Gold Medals during the University's June and October convocation ceremonies.

Graduates are bestowed a ten carat gold medal embossed with the University's official seal as a symbol of our academic heritage. Each medal is also personalized with the recipient's name and faculty.

Amir Hossein, who is originally born in Shiraz, southern Iran, finished high school in Iran, however, he travelled to Canada pursuing higher education.

After graduating from the University of Toronto in engineering science, Amir Hossein spent two years in industry and co-founded Brizi, one of a handful of teams selected nationally to take part in Canada's Next 36 Entrepreneurship Institute, University of Waterloo wrote.

Amir-Hossein Karimi had already worked as a software engineer at Facebook, BlackBerry and even founded a startup when he realized he wanted to go back to school.

In an interview Amir Hossein has told Waterloo's University Relations "I missed math. As a software engineer, I had a great job...I enjoyed the types of projects and technologies I was working with, but the studying math part, which I geeked out on, that was missing," said Karimi. "And coming back to school, to the University of Waterloo, and especially the computer science program, was the perfect place to be for something like that."

In his final year as a master's student at the University of Waterloo, he was a Scientist in Residence at Next AI, a Toronto-based incubator, where he consulted a new generation of entrepreneurs.

Currently, Karimi is pursuing his PhD at the Max Planck ETH Centre for Learning Systems in Germany. While participating in research and expanding his horizons, Karimi hopes his work will have a great impact on the understanding of human and computer intelligence.



From left to right: Amir-Hossein Karimi, Waterloo President Feridun Hamdullahpur, Statistics and Actuarial Science Professor Ali Ghodsi

Amir-Hossein Karimi had already worked as a software engineer at Facebook, BlackBerry and even founded a startup when he realized he wanted to go back to school.

"I just want to have an intelligence-themed career," said Karimi. "Whether that's consulting intelligence-based startups, or doing research in AI and cognitive science, or anything else."

Traffic-related deaths in urban areas drop by 6% compared to last year

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Road fatalities caused by traffic accidents occurred in urban areas have dropped by 6 percent during the first six months of the Iranian current calendar year (March 21- September 22) compared to the same period last year, Traffic Police chief said on Tuesday.

"Over 80 percent of the road casualties in urban areas are motorcycle riders or pedestrians," Mehr quoted Taqi Mehri as saying.

He further expressed hope that traffic incidents to come to a halt, saying that with the scientific research and cooperation of responsible bodies, traffic accidents decreased by 6 percent in the urban areas.

Transportation today is one of the most important issues playing an important role in the economic development of any country, Mehri noted, adding, the more use of railway and freight transport increase, the less traffic accidents will occur, this is while currently road transport constitute over 90 percent of the total transportation.

"There are more than 5,000 rural and



urban roads prone to traffic accident in the country and measures need to be taken in order to redesign them," he added.

In the Iranian calendar year of 1385 (March 2006-March 2007), road casualties accounted for 19.5 percent per 10,000 vehicles, while the number of cars have been increased by 85 percent by the end of the Iranian calendar year of 1396 (March 2017-March 2018), which means that road casualties also increased compared to 11 years ago.

Some 28 million people currently have driving license and over 21 million cars are running in the country, he further noted.

Referring to the significant role of seat

belts in survival of many people from car crashes, he noted that fortunately, more than 90 percent of drivers in Iran use seat-belts.

Mehri went on to highlight that traffic incidents cannot be reduced unless the risk factors are identified, the major one of which is definitely reckless driving.

"About 51 percent of the road accident victims have been adults aging 21-50, which means that the country has lost many of its workforce," he added.

He further explained that cars with only one passenger inside constitute 60 percent of the total cars moving in the country in early mornings, which has increased road traffic accidents and reduced biking and walking.

Approximately 15 percent of the accidents occur outside the cities are due to illegal overtaking, he said, regretting that child fatalities as a result of road traffic crashes also is estimated to be around 8 percent of the total road victims.

Pointing to the deaths due to the severity of injuries, he stated that about 7 percent of the people injured in crashes

die on the way to hospital and some 42 percent in the hospital, while the rest amounting to 51 percent lose life immediately in the accident scene.

At the 4th National Traffic and Safety Conference held on Tuesday Dr. Christoph Hamelmann Representative of World Health Organization (WHO) in Iran, said that 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.

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, he added.

"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."

South Korea's humanitarian aid for Kermanshah quake-stricken families

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The government of South Korea has provided an assistance of relief items for families affected by Kermanshah earthquake, Shahaboldin Sabounchi, an official with the Red Crescent Society (IRCS) has announced.

On November 12, 2017, a destructive earthquake measuring 7.3 on the Richter scale hit Sarpol-e Zahab in the western province of Kermanshah. Some 90,000 houses were partly or completely damaged by the tremor. Sadly, the quake took over 660 lives and left more than 10,000 injured.

"The South Korea's donations include 38 personal hygiene product items such as shampoos, washing machines powder, hand wash liquid, soap, facial moisturizers and other female hygiene products, which is distributed among



quake affected people based on field studies conducted by experts," Sabounchi said.

Along with the aforesaid items, the donations from Tehrani residents will be distributed among the children and adults which include clothing, footwear, toys and stationary in the next coming weeks, he said, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

Some 40,000 stationery packages made of high quality domestic products, have been provided to students living in rural earthquake-hit areas of Kermanshah and Sistan-Baluchestan provinces, he stated, adding that the packages first were distributed on November 4, and then on November 12, concurrent with the first anniversary of Kermanshah earthquake.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

Vision screening test for children to begin in Oct.

The Welfare Organization will start carrying out vision screening tests for children aging 3 to 6 years by the beginning of the eighth Iranian calendar month of Aban (October 23).

"Last year, vision screening test was conducted on 3.2 million children, 15,000 of them were diagnosed with Amblyopia (known as lazy eye) and referred to the treatment centers," ISNA quoted Minoou Rafiei, an official with the Organization, as saying on Wednesday.

آغاز غربالگری بینایی کودکان از آبان

معاون پیشگیری از معلولیت‌های مرکز توسعه پیشگیری سازمان بهزیستی کشور آغاز طرح غربالگری بینایی کودکان ۳ تا ۶ ساله از آبان ماه خیر داد.

مینورافیعی در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا، با بیان اینکه سال گذشته برای بیش از ۳ میلیون و ۲۰۰ هزار کودک بین ۳ تا ۶ سال سنجنش بینایی و غربالگری انجام شده است، گفت: بیش از ۱۵ هزار کودک با تبلی چشم از بین این تعداد تشخیص داده شد که برای درمان ارجاع شدند.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-aceous, -acean”

■ **Meaning:** resembling or having the nature of
 ■ **For example:** Many gardeners grow **herbaceous** plants to add color and texture to the landscape.

PHRASAL VERB

Level off/out

■ **Meaning:** to stop going up or down and continue at the same height
 ■ **For example:** After climbing steeply, the path levelled off.

IDIOM

Clean the air

■ **Explanation:** to remove the causes of fear, worry or suspicion by talking about the problem openly
 ■ **For example:** The atmosphere had become so unpleasant that he decided it was time to clear the air.

#YemenChildrenDay

'85000 Yemeni kids may have died of hunger amid Saudi war'

BY staff & agencies

A UK-based charity says more than 84,700 children under the age of five may have starved to death in Yemen since the Saudi regime and a coalition of its allies launched a brutal war on the already-improverished nation over three years ago.

Using data compiled by the UN, Save the Children calculated in a Tuesday report the mortality rate for untreated cases of Severe Acute Malnutrition among Yemeni kids between April 2015 and October 2018.

"We are horrified that some 85,000 children in Yemen may have died because of extreme hunger since the war began. For every child killed by bombs and bullets, dozens are starving to death and it's entirely preventable," said Tamer Kirolos, the aid group's Yemen director.

"Children who die in this way suffer immensely as their vital organ functions slow down and eventually stop... Parents are having to witness their children wasting away, unable to do anything about it," Kirolos added.

He also noted that since the beginning of the Saudi-led offensive the charity has fed 140,000 Yemeni children and treated over 78,000 for malnutrition.

Elsewhere in its report, Save the Children complained that fighting and blockades have forced the group to bring vital supplies for northern Yemen through the port of Aden instead of Hudaydah, tripling the time for that aid to reach those in need.

It further raised concerns about a "dramatic increase" in Saudi air raids on Hudaydah in recent weeks and stepped-up fighting in the Yemeni provinces of Ta'izz, Sana'a and Sa'ada.

"In the past few weeks there have been hundreds of airstrikes in and around Hudaydah, endangering the lives of an estimated 150,000 children still trapped in the city. Save the Children is calling for an immediate end to the fighting so no more lives are lost," Kirolos said.

According to the latest UN figures, up to 14 million Yemenis are at risk of famine and an estimated 400,000 children are expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition in 2018.

Saudi Arabia and its allies unleashed the deadly military aggression against Yemen in March 2015 in an attempt to reinstall the country's former Riyadh-allied regime.

Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement, which runs state affairs in Sana'a in the absence of an effective government, has been defending the nation against the Saudi aggression.



Back in June, the Saudi-led coalition launched an offensive on Hudaydah despite international warnings that it would compound the country's humanitarian crisis. Hudaydah is the point of entry for 80 percent of the country's commercial imports and nearly all UN-supervised humanitarian aid.

The Saudi-led offensive, coupled with a naval blockade, has destroyed Yemen's infrastructure and led to famine in the import-dependent state.

■ Malnourished boy in 'extremely bad' situation

Meanwhile, the AFP reported on the dire conditions of a malnourished Yemeni boy as a case in point.

It released a video showing Ghazi Saleh, 10, being treated for acute malnutrition at al-Mudhafar Hospital in the city of Ta'izz.

The boy only weighs eight kilograms and can barely breathe.

"He has not eaten properly for a while now, and he ultimately reached this situation," nurse Eman Ali said.

Sona Othman, head of nutrition at the hospital, said, "Ghazi's case was extremely bad and it mirrors the deteriorating health situation of the country," adding, "We receive such cases every day, and some of them are very terrible."

■ Yemen at critical juncture in its fight against Saudi-led aggression: Houthi

The leader of Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement says his country is now at an "important and decisive stage" in the fight

against Saudi-led military aggression as the "unjust onslaught is targeting the national dignity, identity and sovereignty" of the conflict-ridden Arab country.

Addressing his supporters via a televised speech broadcast live from the Yemeni capital city of Sana'a on Tuesday evening, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi said the Yemeni people reserve the right of self-defense in the face of the Saudi-led aggression besides the right to freedom and independence.

He described the young Yemeni people as the country's treasure, emphasizing that enemies are seeking to undermine their faith, awareness, honor and morale.

He warned the Yemeni youths that the United States, its regional allies and corrupt officials aim to strike their values in order to assert control over them.

Houthi further noted that hypocrisy dissipates the Muslim nations' weight and wealth, and cements U.S. hegemony and arrogance at the global level.

He said the Saudi war on Yemen, backed by the United States, shows Washington's support for Takfiri terrorists.

The Ansarullah leader also censured attempts by a number of Persian Gulf littoral states, notably Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, to forge diplomatic relations with Israel, stressing that the Palestinian cause is a major issue to the Yemeni people.

■ Ansarullah fighters ambush, kill pro-Saudi cmdr, aides in Yemen's Ma'rib

Fighters from the Houthi Ansarullah

movement have reportedly ambushed and killed a Saudi-backed field commander loyal to Yemen's former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur in the country's central province of Ma'rib.

A military source, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the Arabic service of Russia's Sputnik news agency that Ansarullah fighters mounted a surprise attack in an area of the Sirwah district on Tuesday, killing Ali Ameesan al-Ajdaei along with five of his aides in the process.

Yemeni forces foil Saudi-led push to seize Jabal al-Nar in Jizan

Meanwhile, Yemeni army troopers and allied fighters from Popular Committees have thwarted an attempt by dozens of Saudi mercenaries to take control of Jabal al-Nar mountainous area in the kingdom's southwestern border region of Jizan.

A Yemeni military official, requesting not to be named, said scores of Yemeni militiamen were killed and injured in the failed push. A number of military vehicles belonging to the Saudi-sponsored forces were destroyed as well.

Separately, three civilians lost their lives when Saudi fighter jets bombarded their home south of Kilo 16 district in the western Yemeni province of Hudaydah.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched a devastating military campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the aim of bringing the government of Hadi back to power and crushing the country's Houthi Ansarullah movement.

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

The Saudi-led war has also taken a heavy toll on the country's infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories. The UN has already said that a record 22.2 million Yemenis are in dire need of food, including 8.4 million threatened by severe hunger. According to the world body, Yemen is suffering from the most severe famine in more than 100 years.

A number of Western countries, the US and Britain in particular, are also accused of being complicit in the ongoing aggression as they supply the Riyadh regime with advanced weapons and military equipment as well as logistical and intelligence assistance.

Rights group sues Abu Dhabi Crown Prince in France over Yemen

A rights group filed a lawsuit against Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan during his visit to France on Wednesday, accusing him of war crimes, complicity in torture and inhumane treatment in Yemen, a lawyer for the group said.

The complaint by the International Alliance for the Defense of Rights and Freedoms (AIDL) said Prince Mohammed, who is Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, is responsible for attacks that hit civilians.

"It's in this capacity that he has ordered bombings on Yemeni territory," said complaint filed on behalf of the AIDL, which is based in France.

There was no immediate response from the Crown Prince's court or the UAE government media office to an emailed request for comment.

Diplomatic efforts to halt the war in Yemen have proved unsuccessful and attempts by rights group's to hold the war's protagonists to account have gained little international traction so far.

The complaint, filed in a Paris court, comes as pressure grows on French President Emmanuel Macron to curb arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

France also has a military base in Abu Dhabi. A number of Yemenis have joined the legal action, AIDL lawyer Joseph Braham said.

(Source: Reuters)

Californians left homeless by wildfire now face heavy rain and mud

Northern California residents left homeless by the deadliest, most destructive wildfire in state history braced for a new bout of misery on Tuesday (Nov 20) from showers expected to plunge encampments of evacuees into rain-soaked fields of mud.



The impending Pacific storm was also certain to hinder search teams sifting through ash and rubble for remains of additional victims in a disaster that already has claimed at least 81 lives and left hundreds more missing.

As much as 6 inches (15cm) of rain was expected to fall over several days starting early on Wednesday around the town of Paradise, a community of nearly 27,000 people, many of them retirees, that was largely obliterated by the Camp Fire.

Forecasters said there was a slight risk of rains unleashing rivers of mud and debris down flame-scorched slopes stripped of vegetation by the blaze, which has burned across 151,000 acres (61,107 hectares) of the Sierra foothills north of San Francisco.

But because of mass evacuations still in effect since the fire erupted on Nov 8, few if any people were believed to be in harm's way should any debris flows materialize, according to National Weather Service (NWS) hydrologist Cindy Matthews.

She also said due to the volcanic soil and relatively shallow slopes found in the fire zone, the ground is unlikely to become saturated enough for hillsides to give way to landslides that can occur in newly burned areas after heavy rains.

However, authorities in Southern California warned residents in areas burned by a pair of recent large wildfires in the coastal foothills and mountains northwest of Los Angeles to be wary of mud-flow hazards from the same storm this week. One of those blazes, the Woolsey Fire, killed three people.

While the showers will prove a boon to firefighters still laboring to suppress the flames, the storm will heighten the discomfort factor for many displaced residents who are essentially camping rather than staying in emergency shelters.

The rains, however, will help dispel heavy smoke that has lingered in the air.

Meanwhile, smoke from the recent California wildfires has drifted across the country to the East Coast, where it was widely noticed in the form of a brownish, orange haze in the sky and was credited with unusually vibrant sunsets on Monday.

Most of the transcontinental smoke plume, illustrated on a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration map he posted on Twitter, was "a couple of miles up" in the atmosphere, high enough to be carried east by the jet stream.

The Camp Fire incinerated some 13,000 homes in and around Paradise, mostly during the first night of the blaze when gale-force winds drove flames through drought-parched scrub and trees into the town with little warning, forcing residents to flee for their lives.

The remains of two more victims were found in a structure in Paradise on Tuesday, raising the death toll to 81. The Butte County Sheriff's Office has tentatively identified 56 of the victims whose remains have so far been recovered.

Meanwhile, the missing-persons list compiled by the sheriff's office was revised to 870 names late on Tuesday, from a high of more than 1,200 over the weekend.

The number has fluctuated dramatically over the past week as more individuals were reported missing or as some initially listed as unaccounted for either turned up alive or were confirmed dead.

Buffer lines have been carved around 75 per cent of the fire's perimeter and full containment is expected by the end of the month, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

The number of residents needing temporary shelter was unclear but as many as 52,000 people were under evacuation orders at the height of the firestorm last week.

The cause of the Camp and Woolsey fires are under investigation but electric utilities reported localized equipment problems around the time both blazes broke out.

(Source: Reuters)

Erdogan accuses Soros of aiding Turkish philanthropist

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday accused George Soros of aiding a jailed Turkish philanthropist facing hugely controversial charges of seeking to overthrow the government, describing the Hungary-born American billionaire as a "famous Hungarian Jew."

Erdogan suggested Soros had backed the Turkish financier and philanthropist Osman Kavala who organized civil society events and has been in prison for the last year awaiting trial.

In a speech to local officials, Erdogan accused Kavala of financing the 2013 protests over the redevelopment of Gezi Park in Istanbul which at the time marked one of the biggest challenges to his rule.

"There is a person who financed the terrorists in the Gezi events. Now he is behind bars," said Erdogan, referring to Kavala without naming him.

"And who is behind him? The famous Hungarian Jew Soros. This person sends people across the world to divide and tear up nations and uses the large amount of money he possesses to this effect."

He described Kavala as the "representative in Turkey" of Soros and accused Kavala of "using his means to support those trying to tear up this country."

Erdogan's verbal assault against Soros echoed the language of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, whose government has implemented a "Stop Soros" package targeting the 88-year-old's work in his country of birth using imagery that Jewish groups have said could stoke anti-Semitism.

Controversy over the Kavala case has intensified in the last week after 14 Turkish academics and activists were detained on Friday over links to the imprisoned philanthropist.

Those arrests were greeted with strong protests by the United States, European Union and the Turkish opposition.

Kavala's supporters say his charges of seeking to overthrow the government are absurd and that he had worked tirelessly to build bridges in society, in particular with Armenians.

They also say it is a disgrace he has yet to receive an indictment over a year after his arrest on October 18, 2017.

Erdogan also lashed out at Tuesday's decision of the European Court of Human Rights to urge the release of pro-Kurdish leader Selahattin Demirtas who has been held for two years on terror charges.

"Make any decision you like in your glass palaces, hold any vote you like. We have never made concessions on our state as democracy governed by rule of law," said Erdogan, accusing Demirtas of inciting October 2014 protests where dozens of mainly Kurdish protesters died.

■ Turkey requests extradition of Gulen, 83 other wanted people from U.S.

Elsewhere, Turkey has presented the United States with a list of wanted people for extradition, comprising Erdogan's arch-foe, Fetullah Gulen, and 83 members of his movement.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu handed over the list to his American counterpart, Mike Pompeo, during a visit to Washington on Tuesday.

Topmost on the list is opposition cleric Gulen, Erdogan's ally-turned-nemesis who stands accused of having masterminded an abortive coup against the Ankara government in July 2016.

Turkey has branded Gulen's movement as a terrorist organization. The Pennsylvania-based cleric is also accused of being behind a long-running campaign to topple the government via infiltrating the country's institutions.

Tens of thousands of people have been arrested in Turkey on suspicion of having links to Gulen and the botched coup. More than 110,000 others, including military staff, civil servants and journalists, have been sacked or suspended from work over the same accusations.

Cavusoglu said he had not received any "assurances" after meeting with Pompeo and the U.S. President Donald Trump's national security advisor John Bolton that the extraditions would take place.



Trump had "asked Erdogan to send that list and I gave that list to both Pompeo and ambassador Bolton," the Turkish top diplomat said.

The U.S. president said on Saturday that he had no plans to extradite Gulen, who strongly denies any involvement in the coup attempt.

"It's not under consideration," he told reporters, while also saying that Erdogan was "a friend of mine. He's a strong man, a tough man and a smart man, so whatever we can do, we'll do... but at this point? No."

Meanwhile, NBC News has reported that the White House is seeking ways to extradite Gulen in a bid to reduce Turkish pressure on Saudi Arabia over the murder of dissident Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Khashoggi was killed at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul on October 2 after entering the facility to secure documents for a pending marriage.

Turkey has been releasing back-to-back batches of information on gruesome details of the murder.

Trump has sided with Riyadh despite an all-out international condemnation of the assassination, which is widely believed to have been ordered by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS).

(Source: agencies)

Israeli minister Gallant warns Hamas leader against fresh onslaught on Gaza Strip

A senior Israeli official has warned the leader of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas against a large-scale operation in the besieged Gaza Strip, asserting that Tel Aviv is prepared for such an onslaught.

"Let me say it to be clear: [The Hamas leader] Yahya Sinwar's time is limited. He won't finish his life in a retirement home," Israeli Housing and Construction Minister Yoav Gallant said at the Jerusalem Post Diplomatic Conference on Wednesday.

"There will be another large cam-

paign in Gaza," Gallant said, claiming that it will be Israel, not Hamas, that decides when.

The recent rhetoric comes following the latest escalation of violence by Tel Aviv against the coastal enclave in which Israeli airstrikes and shells reduced Palestinian buildings to rubble and sent fireballs and plumes of smoke into the sky.

The fresh spate of the Israeli military aggression saw 14 people killed and several others injured in 48 hours.

Hamas and other Gaza-based resistance

groups announced a ceasefire with Israel in a joint statement on Tuesday evening, saying they would abide by the ceasefire as long as Israel did the same.

"Egypt's efforts have been able to achieve a ceasefire between the resistance and the Zionist enemy," the statement read.

It added, "The resistance will respect this declaration as long as the Zionist enemy respects it."

The regime regularly conducts air raids targeting Gaza.

In early July 2014, Israel waged a war

on the Gaza Strip. The 50-day military aggression, which ended on August 26, 2014, killed nearly 2,200 Palestinians, including 577 children. Over 11,100 others – including 3,374 children, 2,088 women and 410 elderly people – were also wounded in the war.

The Gaza Strip has been under an Israeli siege since June 2007. The blockade has caused a decline in the standards of living as well as unprecedented levels of unemployment and unrelenting poverty.

(Source: Press TV)

World Sailing happy with 'big improvements' in Tokyo 2020 preparations

World Sailing are confident that preparations for the sailing events at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics have greatly improved since the federation raised concerns in April.

At April's SportAccord Convention, World Sailing said Tokyo 2020 were one year behind in their preparations, criticising organisers over issues such as competition planning, communication and the venue at Enoshima Yacht Harbour.

The governing body's main concerns were over security and the fishing fleets that operate on the planned course in Sagami Bay, which is 50 kilometres south of Tokyo.

However, following an initial test event held at Enoshima in September, World Sailing believe many of the issues raised in April have been addressed. "Since April 2018 World Sailing has been working closely with Tokyo 2020 and seen a big improvement in the preparations for the sailing events at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games," a World Sailing spokesman said in an email to Reuters.

"A great deal was learnt by World Sailing and Tokyo 2020 at the test event. "The second test event will provide another opportunity for athletes, coaches, national federations, World Sailing and Tokyo 2020 to finalise their planning for a successful Olympic Games. "Although there is a great deal of work to be completed, World Sailing is confident that Tokyo 2020 will deliver an excellent Olympic sailing competition."

Speaking at an event in Tokyo to promote his new SailGP competition on Tuesday, Olympic gold medallist Russell Coutts said he expected the Games to go off without a hitch.

(Source: Reuters)

FIFA Ethics Committee judge held in Malaysia for graft

A FIFA Ethics Committee judge was arrested on suspicion of corruption in his native Malaysia and has resigned as director of an arbitration service, his lawyer and reports said Wednesday.

Sundra Rajoo was detained late Tuesday by anti-graft investigators after flying in from Zurich, where FIFA has its headquarters, to assist in a corruption probe.

He was held overnight, but released after a court accepted his representatives' arguments that he effectively has diplomatic immunity due to his high-profile legal roles, lawyer Cheow Wee told AFP. As well as sitting on FIFA's Ethics Committee, Rajoo was the director of the Malaysia-based Asian International Arbitration Centre. Cheow said the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) had applied to hold him for seven days as "they wanted to question him regarding a corruption allegation".

Rajoo has been accused of using his position to gain financial favours, reports said.

Local media reported that he has now given up his position at the arbitration centre.

"My client has offered assurances that he will extend the full cooperation to MACC regarding the investigation," his lawyer said, but added that authorities could not arrest him.

Rajoo was appointed last year as one of two deputy chairmen of the Ethics Committee's adjudicatory chamber, which has slapped lifetime bans on several football executives named in a sprawling US Justice Department probe into football corruption.

The adjudicatory chamber was responsible for banning former president of the governing body of world football Sepp Blatter and UEFA head Michel Platini.

(Source: AFP)

Champions League may use VAR this season - Ceferin

UEFA will consider fast-tracking the implementation of video assistant referees (VAR) for the Champions League knockout stages this season, according to the European governing body's president Aleksander Ceferin.

The organisation opted against using VAR this season, despite the technology being used by major European leagues in Spain, Italy and Germany, and the World Cup in Russia earlier this year.

Speaking at a news conference in Brussels on Tuesday, Ceferin said a referee report next week could allow UEFA's Executive Committee to revise their stance at a Dec. 2-3 meeting in Dublin.

"(UEFA referees chief) Roberto Rosetti and his team are very good. There are important points of view — the referees and all the technical aspects," Ceferin said.

"I expect the report in a week or so and then we will see when we can implement it. At the latest next season."

European Club Association chairman Andrea Agnelli, who was sat beside Ceferin, added: "At the latest next season also means there is space for earlier implementation."

(Source: Mirror)

Pep Guardiola warned by FA over referee comments

Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola has been warned by the Football Association after he spoke about referee Anthony Taylor before the Manchester derby. Guardiola broke FA rules by discussing the suitability of the Cheshire official, who is from Wythenshawe.

Although Guardiola backed Taylor and dismissed accusations of potential bias, managers are not permitted to talk about refereeing appointments. Manchester United's Jose Mourinho was fined for a similar charge in 2016. In November of that year the United manager was fined £50,000 for talking about Taylor before a game against Liverpool. However, Mourinho had previously been warned following comments he made as Chelsea boss in December 2014 about referee Neil Swarbrick before a game at Stoke.

Premier League leaders City won the Manchester derby 3-1 on 11 November.

(source: BBC)

How the UCL final could cause problems for UEFA Nations League finalists

The inaugural UEFA Nations League is in danger of being adversely affected by UEFA's decision to begin its first-ever finals just days after the Champions League final takes place.

The Champions League showpiece will be held at the Wanda Metropolitano, home to Atletico Madrid, on June 1, with the first Nations League semifinal taking place four days later.

Hosts Portugal are due to appear in that first semifinal on June 5, which is set to be played at the home of FC Porto, with the second semifinal being held 24 hours later in Guimaraes on June 6.

It means the hosts, as well as fellow Nations League finalists England, Netherlands and Switzerland, could be denied key players in the lead up to those semifinal ties — if they are even called up at all.

England have the highest chance of being adversely affected, with Manchester City (four players) and Liverpool (four players) backed to go far in the Champions League.

Netherlands also have two Liverpool players, plus Barcelona reserve goalkeeper Jasper Cillessen.

Portugal could be without Juventus' Cristiano Ronaldo, who did not play in the Nations League group stage, and Joao Cancelo, plus they also have players at Atletico Madrid, Barcelona, Bayern Munich, Borussia Dortmund, Inter Milan, Manchester City and Napoli.

Switzerland would appear to have the least chance of being affected.

UEFA decided to play the semifinals on June 5 and 6 to ensure they are standalone games, with all other European countries playing in Euro 2020 qualifiers on June 7 and 8. The Nations League third-place playoff



and final follow on June 9.

FIFA rules state that players must be released for a major finals tournament 14 days

before it begins, but the Nations League is being played on a designated international week in the football calendar and UEFA would

not want to devalue the Champions League by enforcing call-ups.

(Source: ESPN)

'Federer won't win a Grand Slam in 2019'



Roger Federer will not win a Grand Slam next year, according to the uncle and former coach of long-time rival Rafael Nadal.

Federer, 37, and Nadal, 32, have dominated Slam tournaments over the past 14 years, along with Novak Djokovic, 31.

But after Alexander Zverev, 21, beat both Federer and Djokovic at the ATP Finals, Toni Nadal feels the new generation of players have made a "quality leap".

"I find it hard to see Federer raising another Grand Slam trophy," he said.

Federer won the Australian Open in January to extend his all-time men's record to 20 Slam victories, but the veteran Swiss struggled to maintain that form throughout the rest of 2018.

"I do not say it for his game, although I do say it for the toughness of the five-set tournaments," Nadal added in his El Pais column.

"I have to confess that I said that on other occasions and the Swiss, repeatedly, surprised me."

Federer and Nadal were both world

number one this year, before Djokovic won Wimbledon and the US Open to finish 2018 on top.

Zverev is back up to fourth after the weekend, when his performances forced 57-year-old Nadal — who retired as his nephew's coach at the end of the 2017 season — into a rethink.

"For some time I had my doubts about whether the youngsters would be able to overcome the game of Federer on grass, the one of Djokovic on fast courts and the one of Rafael on clay," he said.

"And I had the impression that the change would be caused rather by the decline of some than by the attack of others. The final in London has made me think about it."

"For now, for the coming year, I trust in the full physical recovery of Rafael. I feel new episodes of his rivalry with Djokovic and, in general, a more open panorama with the definitive incorporation of the new generation."

(Source: BBC)

Top Taiwan athletes speak out against changing island's name



Top Taiwanese athletes Wednesday urged the public to vote against changing the island's name at international sports events in a referendum this weekend, amid worries the move may jeopardise their right to compete.

Voters will decide Saturday if they want the island to compete as "Taiwan" instead of "Chinese Taipei" in a controversial referendum that has already angered Beijing.

China claims sovereignty over self-ruling, democratic Taiwan, and is particularly sensitive to the island's use of names, emblems and flags at international events.

These sensitivities mean Taiwan is forced to compete as Chinese Taipei — a name agreed upon in 1981 — at the Olympics and other international sports competitions.

Around 100 athletes and coaches gathered at the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee (CTOC), holding placards reading "I want to join the Olympics", "Support Chinese Taipei", and "Politics should not interfere in sports".

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has warned Taiwan that it could lose

its right to compete if it tries to change its name for the 2020 Summer Games in Tokyo.

In a letter to CTOC last week, the IOC said any name change was "under its jurisdiction" and warned of consequences if it felt there was political interference.

"I hope everyone will... vote 'no' in the referendum to support the athletes and not to sacrifice their rights to compete," said double Olympic weightlifting champion Hsu Shu-ching. The IOC has said it would see any attempts to pressurise Taiwan's national committee as external interference that could lead to "protective measures".

The local committee has already expressed concern that the island could lose its IOC membership over the issue.

However, the Sports Administration, Taiwan's top sports governing body, said Wednesday that it would respect IOC regulations.

"Your every vote concerns our future," sprinter Yang Chun-han told reporters. "I hope everyone will think clearly."

(Source: AFP)

Mancini nurturing green shoots of recovery at improving Italy

Twelve months after a humiliating 0-0 draw in a playoff against Sweden ensured Italy would miss the World Cup for the first time in 60 years, a repeat of that scoreline against Portugal at the weekend was greeted with far more positivity by the local media.

A year ago, the Corriere dello Sport said the 1-0 aggregate defeat to the Swedes was "an intolerable footballing shame" while the Corriere della Sera warned: "Italian football is about to be battered by an unprecedented storm".

The failure to reach Russia cost coach Gian Piero Ventura his job and it was left to Roberto Mancini to navigate Italy through that storm and salvage something from the wreck of a failed World Cup campaign.

Since taking over in May, the former Manchester City, Lazio and Inter Milan coach has successfully built foundations for a solid future, while beginning to restore the national team's tarnished reputation in the eyes of its public.

The goalless draw at the San Siro against Portugal on Saturday was only good enough to seal second place in their UEFA Nations League group, however, and afterwards Mancini described the task ahead of him.

"There's a long way to go and we are working, trying to renovate the national side with young players and a different tactical approach," he said.

The new tournament was his team's first competitive test and while results have not blown anyone away, the performances have been encouraging as Italy avoided relegation to the second tier by finishing ahead of Poland in



the three-nation pool.

Scoring goals has been the main problem but not for a lack of trying, and in four games against Portugal and Poland, the Azzurri hit 53 shots, 12 on target, but managed to score just three times.

PERFORMANCES WILL COME

The numbers are indicative of the style Mancini has implemented, built around a technically gifted midfielder who move the ball quickly in a 4-3-3 system, a game plan that has drawn comparisons to Maurizio Sarri's Napoli and Chelsea sides.

Although the goal drought remains a concern, the general consensus is that performances will eventually yield results.

Gazzetta dello Sport acknowledged the improvement, saying "we can console ourselves with a national team that's growing, playing well and knows how to fight", but warned: "In March, we can't make any more mistakes: the road to Euro 2020 starts."

Improvement on the pitch has also helped Mancini begin to win back supporters, with 73,000 fans packing out San Siro for the visit of Portugal.

(Source: Reuters)

Ehsan Haji Safi joins 100 club

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran international left back Ehsan Haji Safi wrote his name into his nation's history book when he made his 100th international appearance.

Haji Safi reached this landmark against Trinidad and Tobago and celebrated his 100th appearance Tuesday night in Doha, Qatar, where Team Melli drew 1-1 with Venezuela in a friendly match.

On 25 May 2008, Haji Safi made his debut in a friendly game against Zambia. He shone in his debut with two brilliant assists in Iran's 3-2 win at Azadi Stadium.

On 2 June, he then played in Iran's 2010 FIFA World Cup qualification against the United Arab Emirates at home.

His first international goal was against Qatar in the 2008 West Asian Football Federation Championship, when Iran went on to win 6-1.

In March 2014, he was assigned as captain for the first time in his 57th national cap against Kuwait.

Haji Safi has represented Iran in two AFC Asian Cups (2011, 2015) and two FIFA World Cups (2014, 2018).

The 28-year-old player will most likely be a member of Iran national football team in the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

Haji Safi, who currently plays for Iranian club Tractor Sazi, has scored six goals for Team Melli.



FISU President lauds Iran for celebrating International Day of University Sports



S P O R T S TEHRAN — President of International University Sports Federation (FISU) Oleg Matysin has praised National University Sports Federation of Iran (IUSF) for celebration of the International Day of University Sports (IDUS) in the country.

In a letter sent to IUSF President Mohammadreza Dehkhoda, Matysin praised Iran as an active member of the FISU.

"We would like to thank you for your commitment and contribution to the development of the University Sports by celebrating the IDUS on Sept. 20, 2018. FISU is proud to celebrate the IDUS

together with its members every year. This day is a perfect platform to promote University Sports values across the world and to remind young people about different ways they can get involved.

"The celebration of the IDUS in Islamic Republic of Iran was a good example of an active FISU member. Through all the activities organized, both sporting and cultural, the National University Sports Federation of Iran contributed the best possible way to University Sports development and sets an excellent example for other members.

"Please pass on our personal thanks to all collaborators that were involved in the IDUS

Carlos Queiroz laments Iran's lack of cutting edge



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran national football team coach Carlos Queiroz could not hide his displeasure at his side's lack of cutting edge in the match against Venezuela.

Team Melli were held 1-1 by the South American football team but the Asian first ranked team created so many chances in the friendly held in Doha, Qatar.

The draw extended Iran undefeated streak to five matches.

"We enjoyed the possession and had so many opportunities. When you are playing Portugal and Spain

you are forced to defend but in the match against Venezuela we created so many goalscoring chances," Queiroz said after the match.

"We could have scored six goals and we must take advantage of our chances in the 2019 AFC Asian Cup. I am not happy since we have missed so many goalscoring chances in the recent friendly matches," the Portuguese added.

"Our players must prove themselves within 21 days. I will announce the final list for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup on Dec. 17," he concluded

Asian football legends to join 2019 draw ceremony

Kuala Lumpur: Some of the finest stars to have ever graced the Continent's biggest stages will feature in the eagerly-anticipated 2019 AFC Champions League group stage draw at the AFC House on Thursday.

Sultan Rashed of the United Arab Emirates, Wesam Rizik of Qatar, Korea Republic's Choi Jin Cheul and Japan's Daiki Iwamasa will be draw ambassadors as Asia's top 32 clubs learn their opponents.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) General Secretary Dato' Windsor John welcomed the support of the four ambassadors who are widely known for their contribution in the sport, on and off the field.

"Less than two weeks ago, we witnessed Kashima Antlers claim their first-ever title and the competition's richest prize of USD\$4 million in a thrilling finale against Persepolis in front of a record crowd of 100,000."

"In 2019, the AFC will build on this great momentum and enhance the competition to ensure that it remains as



one of the best continent club tournaments in the world. "We thank the AFC Champions League Ambassadors.

They have given so much to the competition over the years and I am sure that their presence in the competition's group stages draw will be welcomed by football fans across Asia."

Representing the West Zone, Rashed was instrumental in helping Al Ain triumph in the inaugural AFC Champions League in 2003 while Wesam was part of the winning Al Sadd team in 2011 who defeated Korea Republic's Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors.

From the East Zone, Korea Republic's Choi was an important member of the 2002 World Cup side that reached the third and fourth playoff, which remains Asia's best-ever finish at the FIFA World Cup.

He also won the AFC Champions League winners' medal with Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors in 2006 while former Kashima Antlers star Iwamasa won three J.League titles and was part of the Japanese team that clinched the AFC Asian Cup title in Qatar in 2011.

(Source: the-afc)

Four years to go for 2022 World Cup: Preparations in full swing in Qatar

With exactly four years to go for the 2022 World Cup, Qatar is going full-steam ahead to complete and deliver all the infrastructure for the tournament well in advance.

The Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC) have already redeveloped one stadium for the World Cup while seven others are in various stages of construction.

Gianni Infantino, the President of FIFA, has called upon Qatar to better the 2018 World Cup held in Russia.

"I think this World Cup is extremely important, not only for Qatar but for the whole region — a region that has a passion for football and is investing a lot in the game.

"This World Cup is a unique opportunity — a chance to show the world what this region can offer; for football, but also for anybody in the world to come and visit a beautiful place, learn about a new culture and meet new people. In this world, especially in the current climate, it is very much needed that we open our doors and discover new places."

The recent World Cup in Russia set a high benchmark, said Infantino, who



is expecting fans to receive a warm welcome in Qatar in 2022.

"There are many lessons we can learn from Russia," said Infantino. "The first one is how to welcome so many people — 1.5 million people came to Russia to enjoy the World Cup and they were all welcomed in a way that was unexpected to many. There were many fears about Russia, but it turned out to be a very safe World Cup, a very welcoming World Cup, in a country that made fans feel good. The whole population contributed to that and I'm sure the same will happen here in Qatar. The Russian World Cup was the best ever, and the World Cup in 2022 has to be even better."

The Khalifa international stadium, which boasts a capacity of 40,000, in

Doha has already been opened.

At Lusail Stadium (80,000 capacity), the 24th — and final — main structural column to support the stadium façade has been installed. Meanwhile, concrete superstructure works are progressing in all zones.

The fabrication of containers for Ras Abu Aboud Stadium (40,000 capacity) commenced in August 2018, with the first batch expected in Doha in February 2019.

More than 80% of the stadium's concrete frame has been completed for the Al Thumama stadium.

More than 220,000m³ of concrete has been casted and fabrication of the shimmering façade is almost complete at the Education City stadium (40,000 capacity).

The installation of the compression and tensile roof steel structure modules has been completed at the Al Rayyan stadium (40,000 capacity).

The stadium structure has been completed, along with the installation of the retractable roof at Al Bayt Stadium (60,000 capacity) while the stadium structure is now completed and work

is progressing on internal finishes, the roof and façade works at the Al Wakrah Stadium (40,000 capacity).

The Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy Secretary General His Excellency Hassan Al Thawadi said, "In four years' time, 1.5 million fans will descend on Qatar from every corner of the globe and billions more will tune in on their TVs, smartphones and tablets to watch 28 days of football. It will be a momentous occasion for the teams participating, the fans watching, and for the whole Arab world, which is eagerly anticipating hosting the showpiece event of the most popular sport in the world for the first time ever.

"Football, more than any other sport, has the power to build bridges of understanding between people and cultures. With key tournament and national infrastructure projects on-schedule and each of our legacy initiatives proving a catalyst for positive change both locally and abroad, we are delivering on our promise of hosting a unique and transformational FIFA World Cup for Qatar, the region and the world."

(Source: Goal)

Lifesaving World C'ships: Iran's Ghasemi wins silver at beach sprint

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Reza Ghasemi from Iran claimed a silver medal at the the 2018 Lifesaving World Championships underway in South Australian shores.

At the beach sprint (90m course), Ghasemi finished in second place behind an athlete from the Netherlands.

The bronze medal went to an Egyptian swimmer. The event has brought more than 6000 participants from 44 countries from Nov. 16 to Dec. 2 at Glenelg Beach and the world-class South Australian Aquatic and Leisure Centre in Adelaide.

Lifesaving sport was primarily intended to encourage lifesavers to develop, maintain and improve the essential physical and mental skills needed to save lives in the aquatic environment. Lifesaving competitions consist of a variety of competitions to further develop and demonstrate lifesaving skills, fitness and motivation.

Football has different place in hearts of Iranians: Ghotbi

TEHRAN — Former Iran national football team and Persepolis coach Afshin Ghotbi believes that football has a different place in the hearts of Iranian people.

Ghotbi led Persepolis to Iran Professional League title after six years in 2008.

"Persepolis is one of the most popular, maybe the most popular, clubs in Asia because they have 30 million followers," Ghotbi said.

"If you are a player or a coach with Persepolis and you travel anywhere in the world you will meet an Iranian person somewhere in some street that will recognize you and run to you and talk about how you won or lost or how you performed in a particular match. That's the kind of passion that fans of Persepolis have," he added.

"Football has a different place in the hearts of Iranian people, and Persepolis has a very special place for Iranian fans. Persepolis fans are born and die as Persepolis fans, that's how they are," the ex-Shimizu S-Pulse coach stated.

(Source: Footballchannel.jp)

Iran U-23 defeat Oman in friendly match

TASNIM — Iran U-23 football team defeated Oman 2-1 in a warm-up match on Tuesday.

Ali Taheran and Mehdi Ghaedi scored in the 53rd and 56th minutes respectively in Muscat's Sultan Qaboos Stadium.

The friendly match was held as preparation for the qualification phase for the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) U-23 Championship 2020.

Iran has been drawn along with Iraq, Yemen and Turkmenistan in Group C, while Oman is pitted with Qatar, Nepal and Afghanistan.

The AFC U-23 Championship 2020 is scheduled to take place in Thailand. It will act as the AFC qualifiers for the men's football tournament at the 2020 Olympics.

Carlos Valderrama prefers Colombian coach over Carlos Queiroz

Colombia legend Carlos Alberto Valderrama Palacio, also known as El Pibe, says a local coach is better to lead the La Tricolor.

The Colombian football team is without a coach since parting company with Jose Pekerman in September.



Iran current coach Carlos Queiroz is among the candidates to take charge of Colombia but El Pibe says there is so many talented coaches in his country can be considered as a replacement for Pekerman.

"Without a doubt, the coach must be Colombian. We have trained coaches to lead the national team," Valderrama said.

Asked him about possibility of appointing Carlos Queiroz as the next coach, Valderrama said, "I'd rather look for the names like Luis Fernando Suarez and Alberto Gamero."

(Source: Fox Sports Radio)

Christian Pulisic 'honored' as he becomes youngest US captain

Christian Pulisic became the youngest captain in the modern history of the U.S. soccer program when the 20-year-old was the lone holdover in the Americans' starting lineup for an exhibition against Italy at Genk, Belgium.

At 20 years, 63 days, Pulisic beat Landon Donovan, who was 22 years, 220 days when he first captained the Americans in a World Cup qualifier at El Salvador on Oct. 9, 2004, a match regular captain Claudio Reyna missed because of a quadriceps injury.

Nine of the 11 starters on Tuesday night were 23 or younger, and the lineup's average age of 22 years, 71 days set a record, besting the 22-160 against Bolivia on May 28.

Ethan Horvath took over from goalkeeper Brad Guzan, his first international appearance since last November's friendly at Portugal.

(Source: ESPN)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A wise man's tongue follows his heart, and a fool's heart is behind his tongue.

Imam Ali (AS)

Majidi's "Muhammad" on screen in remote Iranian cities

A R T TEHRAN — "Muhammad, the Messenger of God", Majidi's epic about the childhood of the Prophet of Islam (S), is on screen for free in 45 remote Iranian cities.



A scene from "Muhammad (S), the Messenger of God" (Photo by Nader Foqani)

The screenings have been organized by the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to celebrate the birthday of Prophet Muhammad (S), which will be on November 25.

A number of movie theaters in Tehran also plan to arrange some special screenings of the movie at a discount.

Michelle Obama memoir tops U.S. book charts – with nine copies sold per second

LONDON (The Guardian) — Michelle Obama's "Becoming" sold almost nine copies per second on its first day on sale in North America to become the fastest-selling book of the year so far, while in the UK, the memoir is close to the top of the book charts.

Published last Tuesday, the former first lady's autobiography has been warmly greeted by both the media and the public. The New York Times called it a "polished pearl of a memoir", the Guardian said that it was "dignified" with a "refreshing level of honesty". On Amazon.com, more than 200 user reviews gave it five stars.



"Becoming" at the Washington DC bookshop Politics and Prose. (EPA/Michael Reynolds)

With a first print run of 1.8m copies in the U.S. and Canada, publisher Penguin Random House has already ordered an additional 800,000 hardbacks of "Becoming". On Monday, the company said that the memoir had sold more than 725,000 copies in its first 24 hours on sale, making it the biggest single-day seller of the year. Chief executive Madeline McIntosh called the response "extraordinary".

The U.S.'s biggest book chain, Barnes & Noble, said "Becoming" had had the biggest first-week sales of any book this year, beating Bob Woodward's "Fear". "[It] is among the fastest sellers in Barnes & Noble history," said the firm's senior director of merchandising, Liz Harwell.

In the UK, the title has leapfrogged to second spot on the charts, selling 64,732 print copies in five days, trailing only "The Ice Monster" by bestselling children's author David Walliams. Penguin reported that 86,000 copies had been sold across all formats, including audiobook, and that it had dispatched 350,000 copies, with two reprints already. "Becoming" is also No. 1 at Amazon.co.uk and Waterstones, which has partnered with Penguin and online magazine gal-dem to launch a pop-up shop stocking only books by women and non-binary people of color from 23 November, as part of promotions for the memoir.

"This book is, without a doubt, the most exciting publishing event of this year. Her remarkable story of growing up on the South Side of Chicago, through to her two terms as first lady in the White House, offers us all, in these days of polarisation and hate, a fresh alternative hope," said Waterstones non-fiction buyer Richard Humphreys. It was level with first-week sales of Philip Pullman's "La Belle Sauvage", which went on to become Waterstones' bestselling book of 2017.

Resistance festival on a mission to turn overseas filmmakers into art emissaries

A R T TEHRAN — Mohammad Deski Khazaei, the director of the 15th International Resistance Film Festival (IRFF), has said that the festival is seeking to transform the overseas filmmakers participating in the event into art ambassadors for resistance movements.

"As a result of the Islamic Revolution, a national resistance movement was formed and developed in Iran before any other," he said in a press conference on Tuesday.

"This can be considered as a role model for export to other countries," he added.

He also said that the festival seeks to turn into a favorite haunt of those independent filmmakers whose films have been ignored by other international events due to censorship.

London-based Venezuelan TV producer and documentary director Luis Castro and several other foreign cineastes have been invited to attend the festival, which will be held in Tehran from November 26 to 30.

Syrian actress Salma Almasri, the star of Iranian director Seifollah Daad's drama "The Survivor", is also among the invitees.

A large number of feature and documentary films have been selected to screen at the festival.

"Take Off" by Mahesh Narayan and "Tiger Is Alive" by Ali Abbas Zafar that depict the true story of the rescue of 40 Indian nurses held captive by ISIS in 2014, will be competing in the event.

In addition, "I Am Rohingya: A Genocide in Four Acts" by Yusuf Zine from Canada,



The director of the 15th International Resistance Film Festival, Mohammad Khazaei, attends a press conference in Tehran on November 20, 2018 to brief the media about the festival's program. (Mehr/Majid Haqdoost)

"The Occupation of the American Mind" by Loretta Alper and Jeremy Earp from America,

"The Coming War on China" by John Pilger from Australia, "On a Knife Edge" by Jeremy

Williams from America will also be screened in the documentary competition.

Dutch filmmaker Claire Pijman to hold master class at Cinema Verite



Dutch filmmaker Claire Pijman.

A R T TEHRAN — Dutch cinematographer and director Claire Pijman, mostly known for her acclaimed documentary films "Talking Guitars" and "Foot on the Moon", is scheduled to hold a master class on cinematography during the 12th edition of the Cinema Verite festival in Tehran.

Pijman who is a graduate of the Netherlands Film and Television Academy (NFTA) will organize the master class on December 10, the organizers announced on Tuesday.

Cinema Verite, Iran's major documentary film festival, will take

place at Tehran's Charsu Cineplex from December 9 to 16.

The Documentary and Experimental Film Center is the main organizer of the event.

Cinema Verite plans to review films from German-speaking nations in a special program this year.

A lineup of documentaries produced by German, Austrian and Swiss filmmakers in 2017 and 2018 will be screened in the program.

The festival has reviewed documentary films from Denmark, Italy, Japan and India during special programs over its previous editions.

French photographer Alain Ceccaroli to hang works in Tehran



A poster for French photographer Alain Ceccaroli's exhibition "Entre errance et eternite".

A R T TEHRAN — An exhibition is set to open this evening at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran to showcase works by French photographer Alain Ceccaroli.

A collection composed of 21 black-and-white photographs featuring mountain landscapes will be on view at the exhibition titled "Entre errance et eternite" ("Between Wandering and Eternity"), the forum announced.

Ceccaroli, 73, is scheduled to attend the opening ceremony of the exhibition and also hold a workshop on the sidelines of the exhibit on November 25.

The exhibition will run until Novem-

ber 30.

Ceccaroli is interested in the visible and invisible traces of history on the landscape.

In his visit to the Swiss Alps in 1988 and 1989, his passion for landscapes turned resolutely towards the mountain peaks and their surroundings. As a consequence, all visible and invisible traces of history on the countryside appeal to him.

He also created collections of landscape photos in Greece, Croatia, Syria and several other countries.

Galleries and museums across the world have frequently organized exhibitions of his photos.

Netflix star Millie Bobby Brown, 14, named youngest-ever UNICEF envoy

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) — The United Nations children's agency UNICEF appointed Millie Bobby Brown, the star of hit Netflix series "Stranger Things", as its youngest ever goodwill ambassador on Tuesday and the 14-year-old had a message for world leaders: "Listen to us."

"I want to raise issues about education and violence and ending bullying and... making sure children have a safe environment and clean water," Brown told Reuters at the United Nations. "But I'm still learning what I feel passionate about."

Emmy-nominated Brown, who plays a girl with special powers who tries to help rescue a missing boy in "Stranger Things", has spoken out in the past against bullying and last year deleted her Twitter account after a slew of hate-filled comments.

Her appointment as a UNICEF goodwill ambassador marked World Children's Day and comes after Brown co-hosted UNICEF's



Millie Bobby Brown, the star of hit Netflix series "Stranger Things". (Reuters)

70th anniversary celebrations in New York in 2016, interviewing David Beckham on stage.

When asked if she had a message for world leaders, Brown told Reuters: "Listen to us. Youth is very powerful."

Robert De Niro and wife split after 20-year marriage

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Oscar-winning actor Robert De Niro and his wife of more than 20 years have separated, media reports said on Tuesday.

De Niro, 75, and Grace Hightower, 63, have been living apart for some time, The Hollywood Reporter, celebrity website TMZ and People magazine said, quoting anonymous sources.

De Niro's spokesman did not return a request for comment.

The "Raging Bull" actor and Hightower married in 1997 and have two children. It was De Niro's second marriage.

"Sometimes things don't work out the way you hope or want them to," a source close to the family told People magazine.

De Niro, one of America's most respected actors and winner of two Oscars, has tended to keep his family and his private life out of the spotlight.

He made headlines last month when he was among a slew of critics of U.S. President Donald Trump who were sent crude pipe bombs in the mail. None of the devices exploded and a Florida man was arrested and is awaiting trial.



Cast member Robert De Niro and his wife Grace Hightower pose on the red carpet as they arrive for the screening of the film "Hands of Stone" out of competition at the 69th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France, May 16, 2016. (Reuters/Eric Gaillard)