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Iran is an example of progress

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Rouhani calls on Muslim nations to join hands against U.S. bullying

POLITICS TEHRAN — On Saturday, in his address to the 32nd edition of the International Islamic Unity Conference opening in Tehran, President Hassan Rouhani decried the U.S. for its bullying policy and for treating the countries in the Middle East like slaves.

With delegates from one hundred countries attending, the 2018 edition of the Islamic Unity Conference is held annually on Prophet Muhammad's birthday in an effort to reinforce solidarity among the Muslims and to come up with effective solutions for the issues of Muslim community. **→2**

Receiving waivers, Iran's Asian customers ready to resume oil imports

ECONOMY TEHRAN — After receiving waiver over U.S. sanctions on Iran's oil industry, the country's biggest oil customers in Asia, namely China, India, Japan and South Korea have announced readiness for resuming oil imports from Iran.

China won a waiver from the U.S. to keep importing 360,000 barrels a day of Iranian crude oil for six months starting November. Last week, India's biggest state-owned crude oil refiner Indian Oil Corp Ltd also announced that they aim to lift full volumes under their 2018/19 annual contract with Iran. "The company has a deal to buy 180,000 barrels per day (bpd) Iranian oil this fiscal year", Reuters reported quoting a company official. **→4**

Paris police fire tear gas against 'yellow vest' protesters

Police fired tear gas and water cannon on Saturday in central Paris against "yellow vest" protesters demanding French President Emmanuel Macron roll back tax hikes on motor fuel.

high-visibility jackets were set to cause another day of disruption after calls to bring Paris to a standstill.

Some 3,000 police were deployed in the capital as demonstrators who have blocked French roads over the past week wearing their now signature

AFP reporters said several thousand had gathered by early on Saturday on the famous Champs-Elysees where they clashed with police trying to prevent them moving down to the Place de la Concorde near the Louvre museum. **→13**

EU army won't threaten NATO future: ex-CIA official

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Paul Pillar, who was CIA intelligence analyst for 28 years, tells the Tehran Times that "today the idea of a European military force clearly is getting a boost from the many frictions between Europe and the Trump administration in the United States." Pillar says an irony is that European self-sufficiency in defense, as a European military force would embody, would mean Europe assuming more of the burden for its own defense--which is what Donald Trump has been calling for every time he complains about NATO and its members.

Following is the text of the interview:
■ The idea of forming a joint European army is not a new idea, but in recent days, with the



comments of Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel and the reaction of Trump has taken a new dimension. What are the reasons for the progress of this project by countries such as France and Germany?

A: The idea is indeed old, dating back to the proposed European Defense Community in the

early 1950s--which never was established for reasons largely involving domestic politics in the United Kingdom and France. Today the idea of a European military force clearly is getting a boost from the many frictions between Europe and the Trump administration in the United States. The highly nationalist and narrowly focused policies of Trump have led many Europeans to conclude that they simply cannot rely on the United States for their security.

■ Speaking to the "Europe 1" radio, French President Emmanuel Macron called for the formation of a real European military to counter Russia's threats and also independence from the USA. In the interview, the French president said: "We have to defend ourselves against Russia, China and even USA." Why does France now name the United States alongside China and Russia as a threat? **→13**

U.S. and Saudi nuclear options

By Javad Heirannia & Ramin Hossein Abadian

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) has recently pushed a plan to build seven strategic nuclear projects in the country, including a nuclear reactor in King Abdulaziz City of Science and Technology in Riyadh. The make of the first Saudi research reactor is unclear since Riyadh and Washington have not reached agreement yet on this nuclear project.

Americans strongly insist that Saudi Arabia purchase all of its nuclear technology from American companies. But MbS is moving forward regardless, sending a message to Washington that it will do what it wants regardless of the outcome of the nuclear negotiations with the United States.

Saudi Arabia has several goals in pursuing its nuclear program. It wants to strengthen its human resources, make progress in the field of science and nuclear engineering, increase its power in the field of scientific research, diversify its energy resources, and boost its nuclear industry. After mastering the nuclear fuel cycle, Saudi Arabia also intends to sell this knowledge to its allies.

Saudi pursuit of a nuclear program is more for strategic than economic reasons. In an interview last March, MbS warned, "Without a doubt, if Iran developed a nuclear bomb, we will follow suit as soon as possible." He made clear in this CBS interview that Saudi adherence to the nuclear nonproliferation treaty is conditional: if Iran opts for a bomb, so will Saudi Arabia.

According to Richard Nephew, who served

as the lead sanctions expert for the U.S. team negotiating with Iran, and Robert Einhorn, who served as the U.S. State Department special advisor for nonproliferation and arms control, the Saudis are motivated to acquire nuclear weapons but "their ability to do so is very much in doubt, at least for the foreseeable future."

One reason for Saudi interest in nuclear weapons is a declining confidence in U.S. support. For example, Donald Trump has said that the Saudi king wouldn't last two weeks without U.S. support. These remarks, and other indications like the U.S. failure to prevent the fall of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and its inability to apply red lines in Syria as well as Iran's activities in the region, have caused the Saudis to consider providing for their own security. **→13**

PERSPECTIVE
Ramin Hossein Abadian
Mehr News Agency
Journalist

Palestinian boosting resistance; what did the Zionists say about the defeat?

The defeat of Israeli forces by the Islamic resistance group in the Gaza strip has recorded a new setback in the Zionist blackmail report on the war on Gaza.

The Zionist regime thinking to break up the Islamic resistance groups in the early hours the military invasion in Gaza was unrealized. It was well understood that the battle equations in this stratum had completely changed and that the situation was no longer the way the Tel Aviv authorities imagined.

Resistance groups in Palestine have proved it to the world that Zionists are much smaller than they can assassinate and eliminate senior members and elites of the resistance.

The failure of the Zionist enemy to assassinate leaders of the Palestinian Islamic resistance groups brought a devastating blow to Tel Aviv, and the regime's authorities realized that the defense capability of the resistance was a reality they had failed to realize.

Zionist War Minister Avigdor Lieberman has been calling for assassinations of leaders of Islamic resistance movements in the occupied territories of Palestine and especially in the Gaza Strip over the past three years. He also recently announced that the Palestinian initiative to send arson balloons to Tel Aviv's positions should take the policy of terror.

Meanwhile, Israeli economy minister Eli Cohen has also called for assassinations of leaders of Islamic Resistance groups in Palestine. He argued that the use of the policy of assassination against resistance leaders would instigate terror among the Palestinians.

Education Minister Naftali Bennett has also sponsored a policy of assassination, saying that the leaders of Hamas must be assassinated and their missile infrastructure completely destroyed.

A long time ago, the Israel Security Agency (Shabak) issued a new list of commanders of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades is the military wing of the Palestinian Hamas organization for assassination. **→13**

ARTICLE
By Mahmood Khaghani
Oil expert

From America First to Energy First

■ **America First**
Anyone who has read Trump's book "Art of the Deal", as I have several times since buying the book when it was published, will understand that the rules of Trump's America First policies are very different to the current multilateral rules of the global game.

Most countries, not least Iran, view President Trump through the same lens as they viewed his predecessors, who worked within established global rules and norms.

I interviewed Chris Cook of the Institute for Strategy, Resilience & Security at University College London at length in respect of his assessment of President Trump and his America First foreign policy.

Cook began by saying that in order to understand President Trump's actions and America First doctrine it is necessary to understand Trump as a businessman and a person.

■ **Trump the Businessman**

Cook stated, and I agree, that President Trump is first and foremost a businessman, and he suggested that Trump's world view is that of a Chief Executive of U.S. Incorporated. So Trump's America First world view is transactional, pragmatic, neutral and non-ideological based on the exercise of dominant market power in making bilateral deals in the interests of America First. Trump has no interest in or understanding of conventional geopolitical considerations, and no patience for conflicting ideologies or religions.

So, President Trump is throwing away the multilateral rules which have historically constrained the USA, and in his view destroyed much of USA industrial base, in favour of bilateral deals in which the USA exerts economic power, through policies such as Energy Dominance.

Cook pointed out that because Trump is rich, he is therefore not susceptible to control or influence by Wall Street and financial interests. However, in identifying U.S. commercial interests with his own, Trump transgresses the conventional rules of behaviour which govern U.S. Presidents.

Finally, and most important of all, Cook said that Trump's perspective as a life-long developer is fundamentally constructive. Trump understands that development creates value; that global nuclear war is bad for property prices; and that no-one undertakes suicide bombings for profit. **→7**



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Intl. horseback archery held in Shiraz

TEHRAN — The International Horseback Archery Championship kicked off in Shiraz, Fars Province on Thursday.

The four-day competition brought 50 athletes from 19 countries together in the Iranian city.

The competition was held in different categories including javelin throw and fencing. Horseback archery is a fast-paced adrenaline ride that blends speed with accuracy.

Horseback archers use shooting techniques that differ from those seen in the Olympics. Olympic archers methodically shoot their arrows, repeating the same technique over and over.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Europe can't swim without getting wet

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Zarif said that Iran has the option to restore uranium enrichment as it deems it a right under the 2015 landmark nuclear agreement.

In an interview with Italy's Rai News24, Zarif said it is an option in response to the U.S. exit from the nuclear agreement.

Also, Zarif on Thursday urged European countries to fulfil their commitments if they want Iran to remain in the nuclear deal.

"We negotiated with the U.S. along with other countries, and reached a good conclusion. Now Europe and others should make investments and pay costs for their efforts and global security. You can't swim without getting wet," Zarif told the Mediterranean Dialogues Conference (MED) in Rome.



Presidential aides, advisors quit jobs

POLITICS TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani and his chief of staff, Mahmoud Vaezi, have accepted the resignations of ten officials who had resigned in compliance with a parliamentary legislation that bans the employment of retirees, ISNA reported on Sunday.

Rouhani accepted the resignations of president's representative at the University of Islamic Sects Masih Mohajeri; presidential aide for civil rights Shahindokht Molaverdi; special aide to president for religious and ethnic minorities Ali Younesi; and presidential advisor for renovation of rundown areas in cities Akbar Torkan.

Vaezi also accepted the resignations of Reza Akrami, Ali Jannati, Bahman Hosseinpour, Mohsen Mohebi, Fereydoun Verdinejad and Khalil Moazem Zadeh.



Tehran denounces terror chemical attack in Aleppo as inhumane

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Sunday strongly denounced the chemical attack launched by terrorists on civilians in the Syrian city of Aleppo.

In a statement, Qassemi expressed deep regret and concern over the reports of the incident, describing the attack as "inhumane" and "despicable", the Foreign Ministry website reported.

Rouhani calls on Muslim nations to join hands against U.S. bullying

1 → Likening the regional countries' capitulation to the U.S. to rolling out red carpets for the criminals, Rouhani notified that yielding to the U.S. and the West is a true treason against the Islamic values as well as the generations of Muslims.

The Iranian president referred to the current dire conditions in the Middle East, saying, "The situation in Palestine, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq is not what the Islamic community is expecting."

He called for Muslims' collective efforts to follow the Prophet Muhammad's instructions for safeguarding the dignity of Muslims and protecting their freedom. "What America is now after is slavery. They say that the whole world must think in an American way and admire American values," he said, adding, "We say that all people are free, and that the bullies cannot choose the path for us."

Elsewhere in his address, Rouhani pointed to the U.S. president's insult to Saudi Arabia and the fact that that U.S. is milking Saudis for money by selling a plentitude of arms to this country.

He stressed the need for Muslim to be united, underlining that Iran deems the people of Saudi Arabia as well as the people of the region as its own brothers.

"We are ready to make every effort to protect the interests of Saudi people against terrorism and superpowers, in the same way that we helped the people of Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan," Rouhani noted.



Rouhani says: "We are ready to make every effort to protect the interests of Saudi people against terrorism and superpowers, in the same way that we helped the people of Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan."

Iran says Afghan peace talks should involve central government

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met with former Afghan President Hamid Karzai on Saturday discussing the situation in Afghanistan.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always supported peace talks in Afghanistan and

will use all of its capacities to help the Afghan government in this respect," Zarif said.

The meeting took place on the sidelines of the 32th international conference of Islamic unity.

Karzai said during his speech at the conference that Iran's experience shows that the path

of progress can be taken through independence.

Zarif also held a separate meeting with Mohammad Mohaqiq, the second deputy chief executive of the National Unity Government.

By pointing to peace initiatives in Afghanistan, Zarif said any peace plan should include the Afghan government.

Zarif and Mohaqiq also discussed expansion of relations.

The comments by Zarif came after high-ranking members of the Taliban recently held three days of talks in Qatar with the U.S. peace envoy for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad.

Leader says Iran is an example of progress

POLITICS TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Sunday that the Iranian people and the Islamic Republic system present examples of progress to the Islam world.

"The Iranian people, with the help of God, have stood against all the plots like a mountain, and today the Islamic system and the Iranian nation are increasingly making progress and are examples of progress for the world of Islam," the Leader said, addressing the heads of government branches, a group of state officials, ambassadors of Islamic countries and participants at the 32nd International Conference on Islamic Unity on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Ayatollah Khamenei went on to say that the U.S. and the Zionist regime of Israel's threats will not be effective and definitely will end in failure.

He said because of the Islamic awakening the hegemonic system is "sensitive" towards the West Asian region.

The Leader attached great importance to boosting Islamic awakening and said it is the "only way to rescue the region".

He noted that certain countries in the region obey the U.S. instead of Islam and the Quran. "The U.S. humiliates these countries because of its hegemonic nature, and as all saw the U.S. president, who always says nonsense, likened the Saudi leaders to a milking cow."

Ayatollah Khamenei added that such humiliations are

insult to the Saudi people and the regional Muslim nations.

"Certain Islamic rulers are accompanying the U.S. in two criminal moves in Palestine and Yemen. However, the Palestinian and Yemeni people will definitely gain victory and the U.S. and its followers will be defeated," the Leader remarked.

He noted that the Muslims' resistance will definitely bear fruit.

The Leader also highlighted the importance of unity among the Muslims to foil plots.

'Extending hand of friendship to all Muslims'
Speaking at the gathering, President Hassan Rouhani also said, "We considers neighbors as brothers and extend the hand of friendship to all Muslims."

Zarif calls U.S. accusation of chemical weapons program 'obscene and dangerous'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Friday that accusations from the United States that Tehran has a chemical weapons program are "obscene and dangerous".

"[The] U.S. wants to resort to international conventions to make allegations against Iran when it's made a policy of violating them itself," Zarif wrote on his Twitter account.

Zarif said that allegations about weapons of mass destruction "by a country that supported Iraq's use of [chemical weapons] against Iran, then invaded Iraq to allegedly rid it of them is not just obscene, it's dangerous".

A day earlier, Washington accused Tehran of failing to declare a chemical weapons program to the global watchdog in breach of international agreements,

the Middle East Eye reported.

Earlier on Friday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said Tehran "strongly rejects" the Washington's allegations.

"The U.S. ... has made, as is its habit, baseless accusations against the Islamic republic which we strongly reject," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement, as reported by AFP.

"Such incorrect and false accusations are due solely to enmity towards the Iranian nation and are intended to deflect international attention from its own broken commitments and continued support for the Zionist regime's chemical arsenal and for terrorist groups," the ministry stated.

Earlier this year, the U.S. president also pulled out of a landmark 2015 nuclear deal between major powers and Tehran, a decision that has pit Washington against several of its key allies in Europe, who

remain committed to the agreement.

On Friday, Iran's envoy to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Kazem Gharibabadi, called on the international community to stand up to the "irresponsible conduct" of the US.

He said Washington is pressuring other states to cease doing business with Iran, in contravention of the 2015 nuclear deal, and said Tehran would consider pulling out of the agreement if it no longer guarantees the interests of the Iranian people.

"It will be a great shame if the achievement of 12 years of multilateral diplomacy would be shattered by irresponsible behavior and unilateral action of one state," IRNA quoted Gharibabadi as saying.

On 12 November, the IAEA said Iran was abiding by the restrictions outlined in the 2015 agreement.

First Announcement



IN THE NAME OF GOD

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 97/121-33/30

Tender Holder:

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Tender:

Purchasing of 56 sets Computer with accessories, 56 sets KVM Extender, 6 sets of KVM Switch, 5 sets KVM Daisy chain, 4 sets of Ethernet Switch, 7 sets of Rack, 8 pcs Patch panel, 2 sets of sound card and related cables and other terms and conditions mentioned in the tender documents.

Deadline and How to Receive the Tender Documents:

From **Monday 26th Nov. 2018 (1397/09/05)** by 4 p.m. on **Monday 03rd Dec. 2018 (1397/09/12)** with presentation of introductory letter by company or its representative and the receipt of paying the documents fee.

Place of Receiving the Tender Documents:

Interested participants may refer to purchasing (KALA) Dept., 4th Floor of IRIB Administration Complex, Hotel Esteghlal St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran Iran.

The Fee of the Tender Documents and How to Deposit it:

Submission of payment receipt for the amount of 1,000,000 Rials to Account No. 4101029171204273 (IBAN: IR310100004101029171204273) with CENTRAL BANK OF IRAN in the name of IRIB.

Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participation to Tender:

The amount of deposit for participant in tender is **USD 7,000** fixed or its equivalent in 945,000,000 Rials which should be in the form of Bank Guarantee.

Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:

The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted no later than 4 p.m. on **Saturday 05th January, 2019 (1397/10/15)** and at the address mentioned in the 4th clause.

Time and Place of Opening Envelopes:

The date of opening the envelopes A&B is on **Sunday 06th January, 2019 (1397/10/16)** at 3 p.m. in the office of Financial Vice President and opening of envelope C will be after technical evaluation.

For more information, please see:

www.iriboffice.ir/tenders and http://iets.mporg.ir/

Tel: 00982122167463

Purchasing (Kala) Dept. of IRIB

Second Announcement



Alumina Iran Co

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SALE OF ALUMINIUM INGOT (P1020)

Ref NO.	SUBJECT
97/447	Sale of 500MT Aluminium ingot (P1020)

Alumina Iran Company (IAC) affiliated with Iranian Mines & Mining Industries Development & Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) intends to sell 500 MT +/- 5 % of Aluminum ingot (p1020) by sealed public Bidding

DEADLINE: Till 04:00 PM TEHRAN Time on Monday DECEMBER 31, 2018.

Place of receipt of documents: Km 7 of Sankhast Road, city of JAJARM, Northern Khorasan Province, IRAN, P.O.BOX: 94415-1135, central secretariat of alumina or from: www.iranalumina.ir

Contact telephones for more information : 009858-32604230 and 009858-32605344

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Syria calls on UNSC to condemn Aleppo gas attack

Syria's foreign ministry has called on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to condemn the recent chemical attack carried out by the foreign-backed militants in the northern city of Aleppo.

"The Syrian government calls on the Security Council to immediately and strongly condemn these terrorist crimes ... (and take) deterrent, punitive measures against the nations and regimes that support and fund terrorism," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

"The terrorist attack in Aleppo is the result of the efforts by certain countries which sponsor terrorists groups," it added.

Foreign-backed militant groups have launched a chemical attack against a neighborhood in Aleppo, injuring scores of people.

The attack hit al-Khaldiya neighborhood in the government-held city on Saturday, foreign news agencies and state television reported, saying close to 50 people have been hospitalized.

Doctors said most of those admitted to hospitals have breathing problems and blurred vision. State TV showed footage of medical professionals treating men and women on hospital beds.

There was a stench of gas in Aleppo city after projectiles were fired, head of the Britain-based so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) Rami Abdulrahman. Health official Haj Taha said symptoms suggested that the poisonous gas used was chlorine.

According to Aleppo police chief Essam al-Shali, wind caused gas to spread and state TV later said the gas affected two other areas in the city but there were no deaths.

"There are often missiles on the city but this is the first time we smelled such a smell," one patient said without giving his name. Government troops reportedly retaliated, hitting the source of the attack.

Russia said the chemical attack had been launched from an area in the Idlib de-escalation zone controlled by al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra) terrorists.

In a statement, Russia's Ministry of Defense said it planned to talk to Turkey about the incident since Ankara was a guarantor of how the militants there upheld a ceasefire.

"According to our preliminary information, confirmed in particular by symptoms of poisoning among the victims, the shells used to bombard residential areas of Aleppo were filled with chlorine (gas)" Russian Major-General Igor Konashenkov said.

In the past, the United States and its allies have been using as pretexts to carry out missile strikes against Syria.

The first such attack came in April 2017, when the U.S. President Donald Trump ordered the U.S. Navy warships in the Med-



iterranean to fire a total of 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles at a Syrian airbase.

About a year later, Trump along with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron, and British Prime Minister Theresa May authorized a joint missile attack against alleged chemical weapons manufacturing sites inside Syria.

The latter attack, which came in response to what the U.S. and its allies had insisted was another chemical attack in Douma on the outskirts of Damascus, saw 105 cruise missiles being fired from sea and air at Syrian government targets.

In September, the U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton said his country had been in talks with France and Britain to orchestrate another military strike on Syria that would be "much stronger" than the joint operation staged by the three allies.

Syria finished dismantling its stockpiles of chemical weapons in 2014 under a joint mission led by the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

■ **U.S., Russian forces clashed in Syria 'dozen times'**

The U.S. and Russian military forces have clashed a dozen times in Syria, including instances of gun battles, said an American envoy involved in the illegal U.S. intrusion into the country, without elaborating on specifics.

The U.S. Special Representative for Syria Engagement, Ambassador James Jeffrey, made the remarks when asked during an interview with Russia's state news agency RIA Novosti to clarify casualty figures and

details of a February gun battle in which American forces reportedly killed as many as 200 pro-Syria forces who had launched a failed attack on a base held by the U.S. troops and their local Kurdish allies near the eastern town of Deir al-Zour.

"U.S. forces are legitimately in Syria, supporting local forces in the fight against Daesh and as appropriate -- and this has occurred about a dozen times in one or another place in Syria -- they exercise the right of self-defense when they feel threatened," Jeffrey further claimed in the interview as cited in a Saturday report by the U.S.-based military news outlet Stars and Stripes, insisting that none of the nearly 40 American troops at the outpost had been killed or injured.

"That's all we say on that," added the U.S. official, declining to offer specifics on the incident. He insisted, however, that it was not the only such confrontation between American and Russian forces in war-torn Syria, and that some of the clashes had involved shooting and some had not.

"There have been various engagements, some involving exchange of fire, some not," he told the Russian journalists in remarks confirmed on the official website of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. "Again, we are continuing our mission there and we are continuing to exercise our right of self-defense."

The U.S. has deployed hundreds of troops and equipment to eastern Syria as part of what it claims to be the coalition to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists, who are widely reported to be financed by the House of Saud regime and

partially trained and protected by American forces in Syria to support the terror campaign against the Syrian government and ordinary citizens.

The U.S. Defense Department officials, however, did not immediately comment on Jeffrey's remarks.

During the interview the U.S. envoy also censured Moscow's decision to supply Syria with S-300 surface-to-air missile systems, describing it as a "dangerous escalation," claiming that it was responsible for the downing of a Russian spy plane and its crew of 15 and that it could further lead to more mistakes in the future.

The development came as the U.S. declared earlier this week further sanctions aimed at curbing Russian and Iranian oil shipments to Syria.

Jeffrey also emphasized that Washington had further sought Moscow's assistance in urging the withdrawal of what he claimed as Iranian-led forces from Syria, which has repeatedly clarified that Iranian military advisers are in the country at the invitation of Damascus to help the country repulse the foreign-backed terror campaign that has so far left hundreds of thousands of casualties and millions displaced.

"We need to see a de-escalation of the fighting in Syria," Jeffrey asserted amid reports that the U.S. has deployed hundreds of troops to the country since last year as Syrian government forces gained a clear upper hand over the foreign-backed terrorist across its territory.

(Source: agencies)

MBS on Arab tour to push normalization with Israel



An Arab affairs analyst says an ongoing tour of Arab states by the House of Saud regime Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, known as MBS, is meant to normalize relations with Israel.

Abdel Bari Atwan, the editor-in-chief of Rai al-Youm news and opinion website, said the United States President Donald Trump's latest remarks suggest that through the trip, Riyadh is actually seeking to promote normal ties between Arab states and Tel Aviv.

Israel has full diplomatic relations with only two Arab states, Egypt and Jordan, but recent reports suggest the regime is working behind the scenes to establish formal contact with the Saudi regime and its allies.

Critics say Saudi Arabia's flirtation with Israel would undermine global efforts to isolate Tel Aviv and harm the Palestinian cause. They say Riyadh has gone too far in its cooperation with Tel Aviv as a way of confronting Tehran.

However, the Saudi regime push has been overshadowed by last month's brutal killing of Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside the kingdom's Istanbul consulate.

In a statement released on Tuesday, the U.S. President Donald Trump said Washington intends to remain "a steadfast partner" of Riyadh to ensure the interests of the United States, Israel and the regional allies.

His announcement came after a CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) assessment, leaked by The Washington Post, concluded that the heir to the Saudi throne had ordered Khashoggi's murder.

On Thursday, Trump stressed that the stability of Saudi Arabia benefits Tel Aviv, saying "Israel would be in big trouble without Saudi Arabia."

■ **Anger mounts amid bin Salman trip**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) was bin Salman's first stop on his regional tour that would also take him to Bahrain, Egypt and Tunisia. He is also expected to travel to Argentina to attend the G20 summit at the end of this month.

Tunisian activists have been calling for protests over Khashoggi's death when bin Salman visits the North African country.

A group of 50 lawyers has also been tasked by journalists, bloggers and human right activists to lodge a complaint in Tunisian courts against the trip.

In a letter to President Beji Caid Essebsi, the National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists said bin Salman's visit is meant "to clean up his bloody reputation" for war crimes in Yemen and Khashoggi's murder. It further warned that the Saudi regime crown prince endangers the world security and stability.

Activists have called for protests in front of the presidential palace in Carthage on Tuesday, the day of the crown prince's arrival, and are trying to mount a legal challenge to stop the visit.

"The blood of Khashoggi has not dried yet, the murderer bin Salman is not welcome in Tunisia, the country of democratic transition," Neji Bghouri, the president of the journalists' syndicate, said.

Additionally, al-Quds al-Arabi newspaper quoted Abderrazak Makri, leader of the Movement for the Society of Peace, an Algerian Islamic party, as saying that bin Salman's trip is aimed at covering up his crimes.

Meanwhile, a well-known Saudi online activist, who goes by the nickname of @mujtahidd on Twitter, reported that security had been beefed up around the Saudi royal palace after bin Salman began his regional tour.

He added that 20 military jeeps equipped with night vision instruments have been stationed around the palace.

(Source: Press TV)

EU agrees 'best possible' Brexit deal, urges Britons to back May

European Union leaders warned the British parliament not to wreck British Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal, saying a package agreed with the prime minister on Sunday was the best Britain will get.

"Those who think that, by rejecting the deal, they would get a better deal, will be disappointed," European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker told reporters after the 27 other EU leaders formally endorsed a treaty setting terms for British withdrawal in March and an outline of a future EU-UK trade pact.

Asked whether there was any chance Brussels would reopen the pact if an alliance of pro- and anti-Brexit forces votes it down in the House of Commons, Juncker simply stressed "this is the best deal possible" — although summit chair Donald Tusk sounded more guarded, saying he did not want to consider hypotheticals.

May used a post-summit news conference to make a sales pitch for her plan, telling television viewers at home that it was the "only possible deal", offering control of UK borders and budgets while maintaining close cooperation with EU regulations that was good for business and the security of the broader region.

"In any negotiation, you do not get everything you want. I think the British people understand that," said May, who arrived after the endorsement to voice hopes for continued close ties. Parliament's vote could open the door to a "brighter future" or condemn the country to more division, she said. "I will make the case for this deal with all my heart," she added, declining to answer whether she would resign if parliament rejects it.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the bloc's veteran guiding force, echoed that unwillingness to speculate on what she called a "historic day" that was both "tragic and sad". But Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, whose country chairs EU meetings till the end of the year, said there could be no more negotiations.

"There is no Plan B," said Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte. "If anyone thinks in the United Kingdom that by voting No something better would come out of it, they are wrong."

Amid praise for Michel Barnier's team of negotiators for bringing home a deal after 18 months of grueling talks, Juncker said it was "no time for champagne", as one of Europe's great powers walks out after its 2016 Brexit referendum. The harder work of building new relations now lies ahead, he added.

The 27 leaders took barely half an hour to rubber-stamp



the 600-page withdrawal treaty, aimed at an orderly exit on March 29 to be followed by two to three years of a status-quo transition period. The outline of a future trading and security partnership was just 26 pages long. May's critics say it leaves Britain tied to EU regulations that it will no longer have a say in setting.

Her foreign minister, Jeremy Hunt, said that the Brexit deal was a "staging post" toward Britain getting everything it wanted from leaving the EU, but that the arithmetic for getting the deal approved was looking "challenging".

European Council President Tusk said the bloc was determined to have as close as possible a partnership with Britain, which has long been skeptical about EU integration: "We will remain friends until the end of days. And one day longer," he said.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Britain's Brexit vote showed Europe needed reform. He stressed that Paris would hold Britain to tight EU regulations, in return for giving it easy trade access. He also foreshadowed coming, fraught, negotiations by demanding access to British fishing grounds after Brexit.

Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė spoke of several scenarios if parliament blocks the package: that Britons would hold a second referendum; hold a new election to replace May or return to Brussels to try and renegotiate the package.

Britain could also simply crash out on March 29. Both sides have been making preparations for such a "no deal" scenario. The pound has strengthened since the deal came together over the past 10 days, but companies and investors remain nervous.

■ **Irish question**

Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which props up May's minority government, said it would try to block the deal because it binds London to many EU rules and the DUP fears it may weaken the province's ties to Britain — a result of efforts to avoid a risk of a "hard border" with EU member Ireland.

DUP leader Arlene Foster said on Sunday she would "review" the agreement to back May's Conservative government if the Brexit divorce is passed by Britain's parliament.

Wrangling over how to keep open troubled Northern Ireland's land border with the EU dogged much of the Brexit talks.

Britain's 300-year-old naval base in Gibraltar on Spain's southern coast, had also threatened to derail plans. But Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said he was satisfied with guarantees on Saturday of a say in Gibraltar's future, saying on Sunday that Spain wanted to claim a share of sovereignty over "The Rock".

(Source: Reuters)

Iraq floods leave 21 dead in two days

At least 21 people have died and tens of thousands displaced by heavy rains that have battered Iraq over two days, the health ministry and United Nations said on Sunday.

Women and children were among the dead, health ministry spokesman Seif al-Badr told AFP. Some had drowned, but others had died in car accidents, were electrocuted, or were trapped when their houses collapsed.

At least 180 more were injured, he added.

Iraq and neighboring countries have been hit by heavier-than-average rainfall in recent weeks, resulting in deaths and widespread damage.

The country's north has borne the brunt of it, and the UN's Iraq office said the downpour had forced tens of thousands of people out of their homes.

An estimated 10,000 people in Salahaddin province (Saladin/Salah ad Din Governorate) and 15,000 people in Nineveh are in desperate need of help, including families living in displacement camps, the UN said.

In the al-Sharqat district in Salahaddin, about 250 kilometers (150 miles) north of Baghdad, thousands of homes were left totally underwater by the rains.

And in Mosul, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant's (ISIL/Daesh) onetime bastion in Iraq, the heavy storms submerged two floating bridges along the Tigris River, which bisects the city.

They were the only way to move between Mosul's eastern and western halves, after its bridges were all bombed by the anti-ISIL fight.

Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi announced on Friday he was establishing a "crisis cell" of security forces and local authorities to coordinate a response.

The ministries of electricity, oil, and trade had also indicated their willingness to help.

Iraq is one of the hottest countries on earth but when heavy rains do hit, they can result in casualties because of deteriorating public infrastructure.

In 2015, 58 Iraqis were killed in floods and cases of electrocution due to intense downpours.

(Source: AFP)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	171252.9
IFX	1864.59

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,607 rials
GBP	53,838 rials
AED	11,430 rials

Source: iribnews.ir

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$50.42/b
Brent	\$59.04/b
OPEC Basket	\$62.33/b
Gold	\$1,223.70/oz
Silver	\$14.31/oz
Platinum	\$843.50/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Receiving waivers, Iran's Asian customers ready to resume oil imports

As reported, the Indian refiners are prepared to pay for Iran oil imports entirely in rupees through state-owned UCO Bank.

Reuters also reported that other Asian customers of Iranian oil, namely Japan and South Korea, are also looking to resume Iranian oil imports from January after receiving waivers from U.S. sanctions on Tehran.

The United States in November granted exemptions to eight countries, allowing them to import some Iranian crude for another 180 days. China, India, Japan and South Korea were among the top five buyers of Iranian crude and condensate before they stopped imports in the third quarter ahead of the sanctions.



Iran, Germany kick off co-op on energy efficiency market

By Haniyeh Sadat Jafariyeh

TEHRAN — The opening ceremony of cooperation between Vice-Presidency for Science and Technology of Iran and the Federal Ministry for the Environment and Nature Conservation on low carbon economy and implementation of integrated energy efficiency market was held in Parsian Evin Hotel in Tehran on November 21.

The ceremony sought to provide information of main Iranian stakeholders of the project, its planned activities and its potential input to the development of a market for energy efficiency and environment in Iran.

The German Ambassador to Tehran Michael Klor-Berchtold, Iranian Vice-President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari, Director of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Africa and Middle East in German Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety Jurgen Keinhorst, Manager of the consulting company of DIW Econ Petra Opitz, and several Iranian experts involved in the project attended the ceremony.

Iran to expand energy efficiency market

Making the remarks during the event, Sattari noted that the project has been designed based on the available infrastructure in the country and will be implemented according to Iran's energy consumption regulations.

"We plan to create a new energy market with novel models in Iran," he announced.

This project can help us find a better understanding of our energy market and create new start-ups and knowledge-based companies in this sector to tackle our environmental



problems such as air pollution, he added.

€3.5m of German budget

"The German Ministry for Environment will fully back this project by 2021 and providing up to €3.5 million of budget, which is a remarkable value and the result of Iran-Germany collaboration," the German Ambassador announced.

He referred to the several activities of German Ministry for Environment in Iran as of the implementation of the JCOA in January 2015 till the present day, announcing his government's comprehensive support for implementation of integrated energy efficiency projects in Iran.

Klor-Berchtold, also, referred to the significance of JCOA and Germany's full support for preserving it.

Naming U.S. unilateral sanctions against Iran illegal, he underscored that Iran has

fulfilled its commitments to JCOA.

"A German delegation, comprised of small and medium-sized enterprises traveled to Iran just a week after the withdrawal of the U.S. form the nuclear deal," he said, "which was a positive signal for Germany's support for JCOA."

The 28 European countries have unanimously backed Iran and their commitment to the nuclear deal, he noted.

"We are presently working hard on Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) [which allows European business people working with to bypass newly re-imposed U.S. sanctions]," he said, "This is not an easy job to do and the way is totally unknown to us but the job is being done and we hope to achieve practical results, soon."

"I assure you that we will find a solution," he vowed.

DIW Econ in Iran

Established in July 2007, DIW Econ is a subsidiary company of DIW Berlin – German Institute for Economic Research. It is an economics consulting company with a clear focus on business clients and international.

Within the past two years DIW experts and officials have traveled to Iran to investigate and discuss the possibly of low carbon economy projects with Iranian officials.

In cooperation with the Iranian partners DIW could elaborate a concept for practical implementation of Article 12 of the Energy Efficiency Directive (that requires that Member States (MSs) take appropriate measures to promote and facilitate an efficient use of energy by small energy customers including domestic customers and small and medium-sized enterprises) and the Bylaws on the market for energy efficiency and environment (M3E).

It initiated a continuous stakeholder dialogue regarding these instruments and supporting the main stakeholders in order to practically implement M3E.

DIW analyzed the energy efficiency potential of areas in PSEEZ in Assaluyeh and developed business and financing plans for at least two projects to be eligible under Article 12.

It, also, developed bankable pre-feasibility studies for energy efficiency projects eligible for Article 12 and for the derived market for Energy and Environment and elaboration of financing concepts for these projects.

After Assaluyeh, the German company plans to inaugurate similar projects in the southwestern Iranian city of Bushehr, its officials announced during the ceremony.

China's CNPC replacing France's Total in SP gas project: Zanganeh

ENERGY DESK **TEHRAN** — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said China's state-owned CNPC has officially replaced France's Total in Iran's multibillion-dollar South Pars gas project, Tasnim news agency reported on Sunday.

"China's CNPC has officially replaced Total in phase 11 of South Pars but it has not started work practically. Talks need to be held with CNPC... about when it will start opera-

tions," Zanganeh said.

Total signed a contract in 2017 to develop Phase 11 of South Pars field with an initial investment of \$1 billion, marking the first major Western energy investment in the country after sanctions were lifted in 2016.

The company was pressured to leave Iran after the United States threatened to impose sanctions on companies that do business in the country.

The French company said in August it had told Iranian authorities it would withdraw from the South Pars gas project after it failed to obtain a waiver from U.S. sanctions against Iran.

In May, industry sources said CNPC was ready to take over Total's stake in the project.

The offshore South Pars field holds the world's largest natural gas reserves ever found in one place.



Invitation to a Conference on Korea-Iran Business Opportunities

The Embassy of the Republic of Korea invites all Iranian businessmen who are interested in Korea-Iran business to the above-mentioned conference which will be jointly held by the Embassy and Iran-Korea Chamber of Commerce.

November 27, 2018-Conference Hall of ICCIMA



The Embassy of the Republic of Korea









OPEC refuses to panic amid oil market rout

OPEC is showing no public signs of panicking to the largest weekly plunge in oil prices since 2016, with five senior sources telling S&P Global Platts that the organization has not discussed any plans for an extraordinary meeting in the coming days.

ICE Brent crude futures crashed through the \$60/b mark Friday as the market's bearish mood continued to gather momentum in holiday-thinned trade with low liquidity amplifying the slide. That was amid expectations of oversupply as talk turned to whether OPEC and Russia can bring production levels down quickly enough in the months ahead.

At one point in afternoon European trading Friday, Brent crude fell more than 6 percent to \$58.45/b, the lowest intraday level since October 26, 2017. At that price, Brent's week-long slide was the biggest since January 2016.

"Thanksgiving did not stop European traders and those with itchy fingers in the U.S. making their feelings perfectly clear about the direction of oil prices," PVM analysts said in a note.

The oil market has been in a tailspin since October 3 when it peaked above \$86/b, dizzy on a concoction of U.S., Saudi Arabia and Russia record production. Bears have in recent days been focusing on Saudi Arabia's stated production of above 10.7 million b/d



and the regular tweets from U.S. President Donald Trump pressuring OPEC to drive prices lower and thanking the kingdom for its contribution in ramping up output.

"We are in a position of all round weakness," Ole Hansen, Head of Commodity Strategy at Saxo Bank said, adding the weakness was very likely to remain "until [the market] sees a fundamental change".

■ OPEC, U.S. stand-off
OPEC and 10 non-OPEC allies, led by Russia, will hold their regularly scheduled

meeting December 6-7 in Vienna to discuss output policy for 2019.

"It will be politically difficult for Saudi Arabia to organize a coordinated OPEC supply cut at the December 6 Vienna meeting. The U.S. President has provided close support to MBS [Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman] and we still don't see how Trump would accept the affront of an OPEC cut," Petromatrix said.

An OPEC/non-OPEC monitoring committee co-chaired by Saudi energy minister

Khalid al-Falih on November 11 strongly hinted that the coalition would consider production cuts of up to 1.4 million b/d to shore up what many analysts forecast as a tepid market ahead. But that was before Trump this week voiced his political support for Saudi Arabia, repeatedly calling out the kingdom to keep oil prices low, as it deals with the global fallout from the murder of dissident and journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

"Being hit in the pocket or being hit by Trump is the tough choice OPEC will be facing when it meets," Hansen said, with many analysts outlining the difficulty OPEC has in going against the wishes of the U.S. administration.

Brent crude futures prices have fallen more than \$10/b since the monitoring committee meeting. That has complicated visibility around OPEC's plans at the meeting, as the kingdom tries to balance politics with its desire for higher prices. Indeed, the recent collapse in oil prices brings OPEC's key producers' fiscal breakevens into focus once again, with the IMF's average breakeven for the wider Middle East for 2018 estimated at just above \$80 a barrel.

Oil majors' share prices also took a hit with the price plunge: BP's shares were down nearly 3 percent and Shell shares nearly 4 percent on the London Stock Exchange late Friday. (Source: Platts)

India's Modi targets gas exchange to ease shift from oil

India is working to establish a natural gas trading exchange, its Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday, as part of a shift away from a reliance on crude oil based products which are blamed for much of the country's pollution problem.

"We want to increase the use of natural gas by 2.5 times by the end of next decade," Modi said in New Delhi at the laying of a foundation stone for the setting up of city gas distribution (CGD) networks in 129 districts which have been auctioned.

India wants to develop a transparent market for natural gas where the price is determined on an exchange and aims to increase the use of natural gas in India's total energy mix from 6.5 percent to 15 percent between 2028 and 2030.

The price of making the switch has not been disclosed but analysts have often pointed out that using natural gas to fuel vehicles and households is cheaper than LPG and cleaner than petrol or diesel, which are causing pollution in India.

However, it is still hard to persuade people to switch to piped gas as LPG cylinders are well entrenched in India and the refueling infrastructure for natural gas is minimal.

As well as uncertainty about the cost,



there are also concerns about the length of time needed to install the infrastructure, which is expected to take two to three years.

Modi said India had begun the bidding process for a tenth round of CGD which will mean 400 districts or 70 percent of the country's population is covered in the next two to three years.

He said India is spending 130 billion rupees (\$2.5 billion) to set up a pipeline that will connect eastern India where there is latent gas demand which has not been tapped because of a lack of infrastructure.

The pipeline network, along with liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals being set up in the east coast and a CGD network are expected to help boost gas consumption. (Source: businessstimes.com.sg)

Rosneft's Sechin flies to Venezuela, rebukes Maduro over oil shipments

The head of Russian oil company Rosneft, Igor Sechin, flew to Caracas this week to meet Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and complain over delayed oil shipments designed to repay loans, two sources briefed on the conversation said on Saturday.

The visit, which was not publicly disclosed, is one of the clearest signs of strain between crisis-stricken Venezuela and its key financier Russia.

Over the last few years, Moscow has become Venezuela's lender of last resort, with the Russian government and Rosneft handing Venezuela at least \$17 billion in loans and credit lines since 2006, according to Reuters calculations.

State oil company PDVSA is repaying almost all of those debts with oil, but a meltdown in its oil industry has left it struggling to fulfill obligations.

Sechin and a large delegation of executives met with officials at PDVSA in a Caracas hotel this week. Sechin also met with Venezuela's leftist leader Maduro, and chided him over oil-for-loans shipments that are behind schedule.

"He brought information showing that they were meeting obligations with China but not with them," said one source with knowledge of the talks. "They're running around in PDVSA because



of this," added the source, asking to remain anonymous because he was not authorized to speak to media.

The country's oil production has fallen to just 1.17 million barrels-per-day, a 37 percent drop in the last year, according to reports from secondary sources to OPEC, leaving it struggling to ship Russian entities the roughly 380,000 bpd it has agreed to send, according to PDVSA documents seen by Reuters.

The closing of a dock at Venezuela's main oil export port, through which the vast majority of shipments to Rosneft transit, has delayed millions of barrels in crude since August.

Sechin handed Maduro graphics about oil shipments to Russian entities compared with China, the two sources said. (Source: Reuters)

Plunging oil prices weigh on Saudi bonds

For investors looking for stability and income, bonds are usually considered an attractive proposition. In the current environment of rising interest rates, international bonds are likely to outperform U.S. bonds. At first glance, that might seem counterintuitive given that many international bonds offer lower yields than U.S. bonds with some even providing negative yields. Yet, rising yields usually lead to a fall in bond prices that's usually more than enough to counteract higher yields thus leading to lower overall returns.

Case in point: the Vanguard Total International Bond ETF (BNDX) sports higher total returns compared to the U.S.-focused Vanguard Total Bond Market ETF (BND).

One such class of international bonds is Saudi bonds, which have been roiled by a sharp fall in oil prices as well as the ongoing outrage over the murder of international journalist and Washington Post columnist, Jamal Khashoggi.

Saudi Arabia is extremely reliant on oil, with oil revenue accounting for 90 percent of the nation's export earnings and 42 percent to GDP. Oil prices have declined sharply, with WTI falling from mid-70s per barrel to mid-50s in less than two months, partly due to the U.S. granting surprise waivers for sanctioned Iran crude.

Meanwhile, international outrage on the role played by the Saudi government in the murder of Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Turkey seemed to increase the risk that the U.S. would impose stiff penalties on the country.

The confluence of these factors has led to Saudi bonds falling quite dramatically with yields climbing. Saudi Arabia's \$5 billion bonds due 2028 have recorded a sharp rise in yield during the last week. The bonds now yield 4.6 per-



cent—significantly higher than the U.S. 3 percent yield for 10-year notes.

Meanwhile, the kingdom's five-year credit default swaps jumped 41 percent during the last quarter to 96 basis points, the most among 40 contracts tracked by Bloomberg across the globe.

■ Good entry point
Despite the murky geopolitical situation in the country, it doesn't seem very likely that the situation will deteriorate further.

Washington has already announced sanctions against 17 Saudi officials in connection with the murder of Khashoggi. However, it seems unlikely that President Trump's administration will announce measures that target the Saudi regime

more broadly despite some U.S. lawmakers calling for more punitive measures.

On Tuesday, Trump issued an extraordinary statement declaring that the U.S. will remain a steadfast partner to Saudi Arabia despite conceding that crown prince Mohammed bin Salman may have been aware of a plot to kill Khashoggi. Indeed, Trump has gone ahead and thanked Saudi Arabia for lower oil prices in a tweet on Wednesday:

The administration's willingness to overlook human rights abuses—even the murder of a U.S. citizen—seems to be the latest twist in a tacit deal between Washington and Riyadh where the former is expected to eliminate or reduce Iran's oil export revenue while the latter continues stabilizing prices in its traditional role as a swing producer. Nobody at this point expects oil prices to collapse to 2014 levels, so that provides a nice floor for investors.

The latest development, therefore, offers a good entry point for bargain hunters who are hoping that Saudi bonds will not continue dropping once they build positions.

But it's not just Saudi bonds that have recorded rising yields.

Oman and Bahrain, two of the region's weakest economies, have seen their bonds hit by the oil rout, with Oman bonds now yielding 6.6 percent. Despite the fall in crude prices, Persian Gulf economies are expected to remain strong. [P] GCC ([Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council) economies are expected to expand 2.4 percent this year and 3 percent in 2019 after contracting in 2017. (Source: oilprice.com)

Petro market rattled in 7th straight week of drops, OPEC to move meeting up

As global oil markets hit their seventh straight week of price drops, OPEC members scheduled to meet in Vienna on December 6 will gather earlier on the sidelines of this week's G20 in Buenos Aires, speeding up the process of attempting to control the worst price slide since January 2016.

Both Brent and West Texas Intermediate (WTI) oil prices have dropped significantly over the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday week — some 12 and 11 percent, respectively — as worldwide oversupply and slow-growth forecasts make

their mark, according to reports.

In meeting on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Buenos Aires one week ahead of schedule, key decision makers for the OPEC cartel are anticipated to make moves toward mitigating some of the damage, even as they attempt to shepherd oil prices for the upcoming year, according to Bloomberg.

Leaders of the world's two largest oil exporters, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman are expected to continue their glob-

al collaboration at the economic summit in the capital of Argentina on November 30 — December 1.

Also expected to attend the G20 economic summit is U.S. President Donald Trump, who has made no secret of his opposition to OPEC.

"I expect President Trump will be discussing the optimal price range with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and President Putin at the G20," noted former White House energy official Bob McNally, cited by the Colorado Springs Gazette. (Source: Spunk)

Analysts and experts note that oil markets are particularly volatile alongside talk that Riyadh's Prince Mohammed will not be able to stand up to Trump's demand for even lower oil prices, following White House support for the murder of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi.

"The market is assuming the Saudis won't be able to cut [output]," pointed out London's Energy Aspects Ltd chief oil analyst Amrita Sen, cited by Bloomberg. (Source: Spunk)

Oil's Black Friday drop could hit drilling budgets for 2019

North American oil producers that have been increasing spending to take advantage of this year's higher prices will dial back as November's reversal fuels worries about a 2019 surplus, energy executives say.

U.S. light sweet crude settled on Friday at \$50.42 a barrel, down nearly 23 percent since October and the lowest in more than a year over worries about oversupply and the Sino-U.S. trade war. The drop comes as many oil producers are assembling drilling budgets for 2019.

"Everybody's going to get hit," said Cole Frederick, co-founder of Peak Land Services, which helps oil companies acquire properties in Texas shale fields. He noted, however, that November's price is well above the lows that put hundreds of smaller companies out of business in early 2016.

"I was praying for \$50 oil two years ago when the price was \$26," Frederick said in an interview. "If you're a smaller guy, you've got to be more selective."

Oil in West Texas and North Dakota traded at discounts to the U.S. benchmark of around \$6 and \$15 a barrel, respectively, as production outran transport space to carry crude to markets. In Western Canada, heavy oil on Friday fell to a \$37 discount to U.S. crude futures.

"A lot of corporations are going to have a heck of a time determining what level of expenditure they can handle next year," Andy Mah, chief executive of Calgary-based Advantage Oil & Gas, told Reuters. His company may reduce its 2019 budget if weak prices persist.

Smaller Texas producers had already curbed some activity, said Ryan Sitton, who sits on the Texas Railroad Commission, the state's energy regulator.

"Six weeks ago some of these were profitable and now they're break-even," said Sitton. "The (price) swing has been large enough that we have some companies that are no longer generating free cash flow."

Some producers have alleviated the price drop by locking in favorable prices for fourth-quarter production using hedges that will lessen the near-term impact on profit and activity.

"All we've seen is increases" in drilling activity, said Clint Concord, a sales manager at drilling services firm Byrd Oilfield Services in Midland, Texas. The effect of falling crude prices "takes a while to hit the field."

Byrd this year doubled the number of well jobs to 350 per month and the company added several employees each week to take on work for producers, Concord said. (Source: CNBC)

Dominant China pushes for oil and gas deals in Asia

China is holding out the prospect of joint oil and gas development in disputed areas of the South China Sea as an inducement to its politically weaker south-east Asian neighbors, as it seeks to close off the waters to outsiders.

Beijing has until now used its internationally unrecognized "Nine-Dash Line" claim to exercise a de facto veto on other countries' attempts to exploit the rich mineral reserves within the disputed waters.

However, in visits to Brunei and the Philippines this week, Chinese president Xi Jinping presided over the signing of memoranda of understanding for joint oil and gas exploration and development with the two countries, promising to share the costs.

Critics in the region were quick to condemn China's offer on energy, a core economic issue at the heart of the multiple territorial disputes in the region. They warned it risked creating new legal facts on the ground as tangible and permanent as the artificial islands and airstrips China is building in the sea.

"Signing the Chinese draft will make the Philippines recognize an unlawful 'co-ownership' with China of the West Philippine Sea," two political opponents of the pro-Beijing president Rodrigo Duterte said in a resolution opposing the MoU as unconstitutional, and pressing the government to release a draft.

Journalists also pressed the government to release the full text of the MoU. Teodoro "Teddyboy" Locsin, the country's foreign minister, demurred, saying that he would need China's permission to release the full document. Brunei, an oil-rich sultanate that holds claim to many of the most promising portions of the sea, has also not released its MoU.

Locsin described the Sino-Philippine MoU as "an agreement to agree". He confirmed that the two governments would establish an inter-governmental steering committee and one or more "inter-entrepreneurial working groups" meant to pave the way for future joint exploration.

Industry specialists said that while joint exploration — much less drilling for oil and gas in partnership with Beijing — was still a distant prospect, the fact that the MoU was signed at all was a victory for Beijing.

"The MoU is politically significant," said Eufracia Taylor, managing consultant for Asia-Pacific with Verisk Maplecroft, a risk consultancy. "It stands as a win for Beijing in particular, which has successfully pushed its neighbor to prioritize exploration within its own exclusive economic zone on China's terms."

The Philippines needs the sea's oil and gas more than China does. The country's main gas deposit at Malampora, off Palawan island, is due to run out of reserves by 2030, while Manila has been unable to explore a promising region in the South China Sea known as the Reed Bank because of Chinese pressure.

Underscoring the country's weakness vis-à-vis China, Duterte's spokesman Salvador Panelo said that while a 2016 arbitration agreement recognized Manila's claim over the EEZ, it was powerless to enforce it alone.

"There must be a collective action by the countries of the world either to persuade or pressure China into respecting [the arbitration] decision," Panelo said at a briefing before Xi's red-carpet welcome to the Malacañang Palace.

The agreements signed this week will have been watched elsewhere in the region, including Vietnam. Hanoi has been more strident than most of its neighbors in rejecting China's maritime claim, but is also struggling to get its offshore oil and gas plans in gear.

Vietnam, under pressure from China, has since 2017 suspended two projects involving Repsol, the Spanish producer. Russia's Rosneft in May began drilling on a gasfield in another part of the sea, but this brought a public reprimand from China's foreign ministry.

Xi's signing of the MoUs with the Philippines and Brunei came after Xi's stop in Papua New Guinea for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, where U.S.-China rivalry and Beijing's designs on the sea were on display.

China and the U.S. are pushing south-east Asia to endorse very different visions of a "code of conduct" in the South China Sea. (Source: Financial Times)

Algeria can ill-afford more stagnation and drift

A fifth term for President Abdelaziz Bouteflika would be a mark of contempt for the public.

The study of Algerian politics has something of seismology about it. There is no doubt that there is an underlying volcano. Great numbers of unemployed young people make sure of that. Even if, for now, their anger is dormant, there is no cause for complacency. It could eventually erupt. The when and how are difficult to predict. For nearly 20 years, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika has kept the lid on one of the Arab world's many opaque regimes — which also happens to be a vital energy supplier to Europe. He was already something of a relic from post-independence years when he became president in 1999. Thereafter he won credit with the public for helping engineer an end to a near-decade of civil war and bringing about a measure of national reconciliation. But since suffering a stroke five years ago he has been physically incapacitated. He is rarely seen in public and never heard.

At his most recent outing Bouteflika was in a wheelchair, staring vacantly, looking decidedly frail. Yet the secretive cabal around him appear intent on wheeling him out in this advanced state of ill health for a fifth five-year term as president at elections due in January. This would be an act of what in Algeria is known as "hogra". Hogra is a uniquely Algerian expression describing contempt by one group or person for another, in this case the ruling elite for the masses. Algeria has had too much tragedy. Blessed with abundant natural resources, stunningly beautiful landscapes and with the makings of a dynamic and youthful workforce, the country ought to be thriving. Tourism could help diversify the economy away from reliance on petrodollars, providing at least some of the jobs that young people yearn for. But, as elsewhere, oil and gas revenues have turned Algeria into a rentier state. The resulting stagnation of the economy is compounded by the political paralysis that has set in since the end of the dark 1990s, when the annulment of the first free and fair elections set off a vicious war between extremists and the army.

Fresh memories of those horrors may have helped forestall upheaval in Algeria in 2011, when populations across the Arab world were rising up against their autocratic leaders. Meanwhile, the Algerian government has remained a reliable energy supplier. It has proved solid too in its analysis of regional affairs. Algeria was firmly opposed to western intervention in Libya in the knowledge that the collapse of the Gaddafi regime could lead to chaos. It has been equally opposed to European proposals to kettle African migrants on the north African coast. Keeping Bouteflika as a figurehead president, who will be rubber-stamped into a fifth term at elections not worthy of the name, postpones what could be a dangerous succession battle. But western governments would be short-sighted to think that the stability that he has presided over is anything other than tenuous, given his current state. For one thing, a fresh fall in energy prices would pitch the economy into crisis, testing the regime's ability to buy the peace. No one in Algeria, moreover, is fooled into thinking the president in his current health is anything other than a figurehead for the shadowy figures around him who really run government affairs. By putting an absentee president up for election at a time the nation is desperate for rejuvenation, they are delivering a cynical message to Algerians: that their hopes and frustrations do not matter.

(Source: FT)

The Trump administration seems to be doing everything it can to bias the 2020 census

The census has a clear purpose: to count how many people live in the United States and determine the population's general characteristics. The Constitution mandates a census every 10 years, and some of the nation's most important decisions are based on its data — such as the allocation of congressional seats and electoral college votes. Because of its reputation for quality and care, businesses rely on census data to make their own crucial investment decisions.

The Trump administration seems to be doing everything it can to bias the 2020 count.

To vouchsafe an accurate tally, Congress has twice enshrined in law the principle that all individual census forms must be confidential. Each response becomes one nameless entry into a vast pool, anonymized in the aggregated data the Commerce Department eventually releases. Federal lawmakers have prescribed massive penalties for Commerce Department officials who share secret census information with other branches of the government. If people knew their responses might be shared with the FBI or immigration authorities, many would lie on their forms — or decline to fill them out at all.

The Trump administration is muddying this picture and fiddling with that clear principle. First, it added a question on people's citizenship status to census forms. The census's own experts objected that adding the question would discourage participation among immigrants, and they said the government can get more reliable citizenship data in other ways.

Then, in defending a lawsuit over the citizenship question, the Justice Department turned over documents suggesting that its officials have considered the possibility of census data being shared with law enforcement. That would be lawless. But even raising the possibility will fan fears that President Trump's federal government cannot be trusted to keep individual responses confidential.

Which may be exactly the point. If undocumented or documented immigrants — or even naturalized U.S. citizens who understandably fear what this administration might do to them — refuse to cooperate with the census, then areas with many immigrants will seem less populated than they are. Those areas tend to be in places that vote for Democrats. Depressing the count in blue areas means they get less federal money and less congressional representation.

In another time, this theory might seem paranoid. But after the GOP's multifaceted and continuing campaign to discourage voting among poor and minority citizens, it seems perfectly in character.

(Source: The Washington Post)

Is the search on for a country to give Bin Salman refuge?

By Hussein Majdoubi

Is the search on for a country to give Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman refuge with international guarantees? That is the gist of a news report circulating in the West, which explains a lot of information in the international arena regarding the assassination of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on 2 October.

According to Al-Quds Al-Arabi, an anonymous Western source suggests that there are ongoing efforts to find a country willing to grant Bin Salman asylum and protect him from possible prosecution over the Khashoggi killing and several other crimes, including the detention of Saudi princes and businessmen last year and the war in Yemen. Eastern Europe or Asia appear to be the likely locations of such a country.

CIA Director Gina Haspel returned from Turkey two weeks ago where she listened to the recordings and had access to other evidence about Saudi Arabia's official involvement in Khashoggi's murder. The U.S. administration now has just two options: it can impose severe sanctions on Saudi Arabia for violating international law, or it can push Bin Salman to step down as Crown Prince and seek asylum in another country. The de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia is generally believed to have given the order for the journalist's killing.

Washington has given itself a few weeks to make up its mind, and finalize the procedures for whatever is decided. It is in this context that remarks made by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that it will take weeks to discuss sanctions can be understood. That also gives a deadline for finding a country that would welcome Mohammad Bin Salman.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's article in the Washington Post last Friday factors into this, as he stressed that the order to assassinate Khashoggi was issued by the highest authority in Saudi Arabia, excluding King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz. In doing so, he placed the weight of the blame on the Crown Prince, thus basically blocking any attempts by the U.S. administration to ab-



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solve Bin Salman.

Why would an Eastern European country be a likely candidate for Bin Salman's place of refuge? According to the explanations obtained by Al-Quds Al-Arabi, it would be impossible for him to go to a Western country like the U.S., France or Britain. Such countries generally cooperate with international courts, and public opinion would not allow a figure like Bin Salman to be granted asylum therein. It is ironic that the Saudi prince owns the most expensive palace in the world, in France, but cannot seek refuge there or even visit because of the Khashoggi crime.

"The American establishment rejects the continuation of Mohammad Bin Salman as Crown Prince because he is reckless and takes risks that may cost the United States

too much," claimed the unnamed source. "Hence, it has decided to get rid of him in order to protect American interests in the Middle East."

Saudi Arabia is a country with weight and prestige, but with Bin Salman, it has become a rogue state that cannot be dealt with. The solution is the departure of the Crown Prince. There are dozens of princes who can take over the throne. The decision has been made and Trump is the only one who is still hesitant."

The sourced added that if Bin Salman stays in his role, the U.S. Congress will impose harsh sanctions against Saudi Arabia.

Furthermore, if he abdicates, Bin Salman would not be able to remain in Saudi Arabia because he would undoubtedly face

retaliation from those powerful individuals whom he has slighted. There is even fear of a coup, both from within the royal family and by the army, which is concerned about possible military sanctions which will weaken its regional standing.

There is a loophole, though, which may spare Bin Salman from criminal prosecution. One interpretation of the crime is that it went ahead on the basis of an old decision by the Saudi authorities to task the Foreign Ministry and intelligence services to rein in all opponents living abroad so that they might not be exploited by countries hostile towards the Kingdom. Riyadh has stressed that, in Khashoggi's case, a terrible mistake was made in killing him. This is a story that was prepared in advance and is intended to hold Bin Salman politically responsible, while the criminal responsibility falls on the shoulders of his closest aides, General Ahmed Al-Assiri and royal court adviser Saud Al-Qahtani.

Israel stands to lose the most from Bin Salman's potential departure, and once it confirmed the news about Washington's decision to remove the Crown Prince it moved swiftly. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke in defense of Bin Salman and stressed his importance for stability in the Middle East. The Israeli leader believes that his removal would mean the end of the "godfather" of Arab-Sunni rapprochement with Israel.

The developments that Al-Quds Al-Arabi referred to — essentially the plan carried by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to Riyadh three weeks ago — are reflected in the Saudi acknowledgement of Khashoggi's assassination, the release of other princes and detainees within the Kingdom and, finally, the possibility of Bin Salman's abdication. The latter would be confirmed if the Allegiance Council meets to agree on a new Crown Prince to avoid a power vacuum that could lead to chaos. Violence could, in any case, result if Bin Salman insists on remaining in power as his father's health continues to deteriorate.

(Source: Middle East Monitor)

Congress to make determination on F-35s for Turkey

By Jack Detsch

Congress now has its chance to evaluate Turkey's participation in building the F-35 stealth jet after Defense Secretary Jim Mattis delivered a report to Capitol Hill on the NATO ally's \$12 billion contribution to the program.

Lawmakers are weighing whether to kick Turkish firms out of the F-35 program amid fraught relations with the NATO ally. Turkey has shown interest in purchasing up to 100 of the latest-generation aircraft and has already taken possession of two of them, but Congress froze further deliveries pending the report on the U.S.-Turkey relationship, including Turkey's participation in the fighter jet's supply chain.

The Pentagon shared a classified version of the report with Congress on Nov. 16 that outlines possible delays the program would face from removing Ankara. Defense officials were quick to point out that the report would not impact the U.S. military-to-military relationship with Turkey.

"Nothing has changed in our relationship with Turkey," a U.S. defense official told Al-Monitor. "The ball is in Congress' court."

Turkey builds the fuselage for the F-35 and is establishing engine depots for the airplane throughout Europe. Lockheed Martin handed over the first two Joint Strike Fighters to Turkey at an elaborate ceremony in Texas in August.

The Pentagon now expects members of Congress to come back with more requests for information, which could lead to a classified briefing on the report from Mattis. The defense secretary has jostled with lawmakers over keeping Ankara in the program, even as Turkey has detained several U.S. citizens, sought to acquire the Russian-made S-400 missile-defense system and engaged in cross-border attacks against Syrian Kurds helping U.S. troops fight the Islamic State (ISIS).

"If the Turkish supply chain was disrupted today, it would result in an aircraft production break, delaying delivery of 50-75 F-35s, and would take approximately 18-24 months to re-source parts and recover," the defense chief said in a



U.S. officials have expressed concern that the S-400 system would not operate in tandem with NATO systems.

letter to lawmakers this summer.

Should the United States decide to remove Turkey from the F-35 supply chain, it would also have to figure out how to reimburse Ankara for the jets, and find new suppliers for the airplane's fuselage and other parts.

But some experts who spoke with Al-Monitor said the risk of kicking Ankara out of the fighter jet program might be worth the reward.

"We have been willing to cut Turkey a great deal of slack, simply because we were afraid of risking access to Incirlik Air Base," Michael Rubin, a resident scholar at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, told Al-Monitor. "What it seems that happens is frenemies among countries we do

business with understand that hosting an American base or supporting an American supply chain is a get out of jail card, and that only makes their behavior worse."

Rubin called on the Pentagon "to make sure there's duplication in the supply chain so Turkey doesn't proverbially have us by the balls."

The classified report reflects the Pentagon's concern that Turkey's \$2.5 billion purchase of S-400 air defenses could allow Moscow to train the system's radar on the F-35. The system was first devised by Russia in the 1990s, partly as a response to U.S. stealth capabilities, such as night flying.

U.S. officials have expressed concern that the S-400 system would not operate in tandem with NATO systems. Turkish officials have responded by citing the case of fellow NATO member Greece, which acquired the Russian S-300 system from Cyprus in the 1990s but never integrated it with its air defense systems. Turkey's acquisition of the Russian system could also trigger State Department sanctions, which the United States can use against purchasers of Moscow's military equipment. In July, Mattis sought sanctions waivers for several countries considering S-400 purchases, such as India and Vietnam. CNBC reported earlier this month that as many as 13 countries have expressed interest in the Russian system, which may be cheaper than U.S.-made missile defenses.

Defense officials have floated the U.S.-made Patriot missile defense system and the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System — known as HIMARS — as potential alternatives to the S-400, but sales of those systems would have to be approved by Congress. In the meantime, training for Turkish pilots continues at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona.

The earliest the F-35s could leave the U.S. is next summer, another defense official told Al-Monitor, but delays could hold up delivery until 2020, accounting for training time on the aircraft. Congress could also weigh in to block the transfer of proprietary technology onboard, such as the F-35's computerized logistics system.

(Source: Al Monitor)

No excuse for Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingya

A plan to send the stateless Muslims back to Myanmar has been halted for now. But the cruelty and injustice endure.

Under international law — and the precepts of basic human decency — the nearly one million Rohingya people driven out of their homeland in Myanmar and crammed into refugee camps in Bangladesh ought to be able to return home. But simply pushing them back across the border, as Bangladesh and Myanmar tried to start doing last week under pressure from China, was wisely suspended.

The United Nations and dozens of rights groups dealing with the long-suffering Rohingya objected to the plan because it lacked any assurances that the returnees, members of a Muslim minority in Myanmar who had been the targets of a murderous campaign of ethnic cleansing, would be treated any better than before they fled. The United Nations high commissioner for human rights, Michelle Bachelet, said that sending the refugees to Myanmar at this point "effectively means throwing them back into the cycle of human rights violations that this community has

been suffering for decades."

Nobody asked the Rohingya about the repatriation plan, and they understandably panicked when Bangladesh troops entered their camp and told the first group of 2,200 to get ready to move. With one voice, young and old alike shouted, "We won't go!" Mercifully, Bangladesh — which has been lauded for providing refuge to the Rohingya — relented.

Over 15 months, more than 700,000 Rohingya fled a systematic campaign of killings, rapes and torched villages that the United Nations said "undoubtedly amount to the gravest crimes under international law." Crowding into refugee camps in Bangladesh, they joined more than 200,000 Rohingya who had fled earlier waves of violence.

The hurried repatriation was agreed to by Bangladesh and Myanmar under pressure from China, which has economic ties to both and ambitious plans for the region. But according to Human Rights Watch, the military-dominated government of Myanmar, which has denied the ethnic cleansing all along, has done nothing "to create conditions

for safe and dignified returns, or to address the root causes of the crisis."

The organization said refugees feared that if they returned without any assurances, they would be put in detention camps like those to which 124,000 other Rohingya have been confined in Myanmar since they were displaced by violence in 2012. The "reception centers" and "transit camps" Myanmar has set up, some on the site of razed Rohingya villages, are surrounded by barbed wire and security outposts.

The plight of the Rohingya ranks among the worst injustices in the world today. The Myanmar government, including the once-respected Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, has denied any culpability, invoking ancient grievances and skewed history to justify treating the Rohingya as Muslim interlopers in a predominantly Buddhist land.

When Vice President Mike Pence told Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi on Nov. 14 at a regional meeting in Singapore that the persecution of the Rohingya was "without excuse," she replied, "We understand our country better

than any other country does," and so are "in a better position to explain to you what is happening."

No, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, the world does not need your "explanations," nor repatriation schemes that fail to address the mistreatment of the Rohingya and give them assurances that they can rebuild their burned-out homes and live in security and dignity. The imprisonment in September of two Reuters reporters who were reporting on a massacre of Rohingya is further evidence that the rulers of Myanmar have no interest in anything but justifying and covering up their brutality.

It's long been clear that the only way to get proper action from Myanmar's generals and their civilian enablers is to compel it, through prosecutions of the offenders by the International Criminal Court, through sanctions, travel bans or a freeze on assets. China can play a more helpful role than it has to date by exerting its influence on Myanmar and Bangladesh to come up with something more than a superficial fix.

(Source: The NYT)

From America first to energy first

1 → Trump the Person

On whether Trump's America is bent on military domination, Cook said that in his view, President Trump is a pacifist, who detests violence. He pointed out that Trump has never once since taking office been to see U.S. troops, and recently refused point blank to hear or see any of the horrific evidence in the Khashoggi case.

As a developer, Cook said, Trump regards U.S. military expenditure increasingly complex, costly and functionally useless (but massively profitable) destructive weaponry simply as a waste of money. Trump prefers constructively addressing the \$multi-trillion backlog of deteriorating U.S. civil infrastructure, and creation of 21st Century U.S. transport and energy infrastructure. Trump sees the U.S. network of military bases and colossal naval fleet as largely redundant which address military threats which ended decades ago, but which it suits the military industrial complex to pretend still exist.

Finally, I asked his view of President Trump as a person. Cook's view is that Trump tries hard to demonstrate that he is a family man genuinely interested as human beings in the people he meets and above all their families, which for Trump is a high priority. Furthermore he wishes to demonstrate a genuine respect for other cultures and religions, and this respect is reinforced by his deeply religious Vice President Mike Pence.

Cook added that it is a major mistake to judge President Trump by his words, which change from day to day and moment to moment: Trump should be judged by his actions.

Cook concluded by saying that Trump, and his close advisers are conducting reality-based policy, which is to act, and continue to act, forcing others constantly to react and reflect while Trump moves on to act again.

I drew from these insights that neither Iran nor any other country can engage Trump's America First policy within U.S. rules of dollar economics and dollar diplomacy. We currently see the U.S. is attempting to impose its will on a deeply frustrated (but in some ways equally ambitious) European Union. Since the founding of the Euro, the European Central Bank and EU have aimed to obtain petroleum backing for the € (PetroEuro) from bank debt claims over oil & gas (energy) thereby enabling the EU both to secure supply and to escape from U.S. financial hegemony. As Cook pointed out, the attempt of the UK, France & Germany to set up a special purpose vehicle (SPV) to enable Iran to clear payments is doomed to failure, because no major bank wishing to conduct business in dollars will use it.

■ A Fintech Clearing Solution?

So in order to address Trump's America First policies a new set of rules (institutions) and instruments is now needed for the global economy. Cook believes that a new generation of financial technology (Fintech) is now emerging entirely outside the existing system and that this will provide an opportunity for Iran to engage the U.S. within a new services market paradigm – Energy First.

■ Energy First

I asked Mr Cook to explain firstly what is meant by Energy First strategy and secondly how it may be implemented without resistance from those who benefit from the existing commodity market paradigm.

He said that it has been clear for some time that the energy market is evolving from a capital intensive commodity market to a smart services market based upon what he terms intellectual capital (and which Exxon terms the Fifth Fuel) which requires fewer physical resources and financial capital. What he meant by this is that people do not use oil and gas; they use energy as a service delivered to them by utilities, such as heat or cooling, power for transport, lighting and even water.

He added that such a market in energy services is not an alternative to the existing commodity markets, but is additional or complementary to it. Energy Financial Technology (Energy Fintech) has been the subject of his research and development interest for two decades and comprises new agreements which convert energy commodities to services by sharing risk, costs, surplus and data, as well as new instruments for exchanging the intrinsic and objective value of energy.

I observed that Iran's introduction of oil sales by NIOC to the private sector at the Iran Energy Bourse was a conventional commodity exchange response to U.S. physical oil trading sanctions. On the other hand, Venezuela's Energy Fintech response to funding difficulties within the dollar system involved the issuance of a Petro Coin as a currency again based on oil.

I then asked Chris Cook his views on these conventional (Iran) and complementary (Venezuela) financial oil market initiatives. He said: "Most Venezuelans and Iranians do not own an oil refinery and therefore oil is irrelevant to their daily needs for energy, which are typically delivered as a service by utilities. So while the Petro currency is in theory backed by oil, in practice the Petro instrument is merely a proof of payment conferring only an abstract right over oil reserves. Crucially, the Petro is not convertible for oil since it is not accepted in payment by Venezuelan National Oil Company- PDVSA as an alternative to dollars, Euros or Venezuelan Bolivars. This lack of convertibility into useful energy renders the Petro meaningless and accounts for its failure as a policy initiative.

Meanwhile Iran's Energy Bourse difficulty is that as a new physical oil market it must compete with massive Western oil exchanges and benchmarks, and buyers are susceptible to both financial and physical U.S. sanctions."

■ Energy Fintech

Cook then went on to point out that a credit or token which can be used to pay for essential energy services is universally acceptable to the average person as a means of exchange or currency. This "Energy Credit Obligation" (ECO) instrument convertible for the utility of energy as a service has been proposed to the Scottish Parliament, and was presented at a recent conference in Moscow, following a visit he made earlier this year as a Senior Research Fellow at University College London to brief a Russian Deputy Minister.

At this point I consulted Ambassador Dr. Shams Ardakani, the current Head of Commission for Energy, Refinery and Petrochemical at the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) who is a retired Ambassador, but still a very active energy diplomat and has recently met EU officials.

His view of Mr. Cook's innovative Energy Credit Obligation (ECO) proposal was positive and he observed: "As every energy economist and diplomat knows, energy has no nationality. In my view the ECO could be implemented both domestically in Iran and internationally.



During my recent dialogue with Ambassador Dr. Shams Ardakani, he approved in principle the energy for peace strategy which the private and academic sectors may now actively implement based on Energy Swaps and Energy Credit Obligation (ECO) instruments to achieve an Energy First outcome.

The proposal is particularly relevant to cooperation with those countries which have shown they are honouring their signature on the JCPOA, and undoubtedly could resolve the current difficulties with the proposed SPV." Ambassador Dr. Shams Ardakani further added that the ICCIMA is planning to follow up this new initiative purely on a private and academic basis.

■ Energy Treasuries

Clearly, such an initiative cannot be introduced within the existing system for the simple reason that an ECO cannot be issued by banks because they do not supply energy.

So, it follows that the role of banks and states as institutions must also evolve to the provision of services such as risk management, administration, dispute resolution, standard setting, quality control and above all "Energy Loans" - introducing energy investors to investments in the flows of renewable energy and efficiency savings from new infrastructure required for Iran's transition to a sustainable low carbon 21st Century economy.

Chris Cook explained: "In the same way Germany, France & the UK are discussing a new institution outside the existing SWIFT messaging system from which Iran is now excluded, there is no reason why Iran's Central Bank, Petroleum and Energy Ministries should not likewise create new institutions." Russia has already taken steps in developing an alternative to the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication-SWIFT payment system. According to recent reports, the system envisions interweaving its operations between BRICS countries. This means that credit organizations and companies from this organization may join the Russian countertype of SWIFT. It is also reported that as of September this year, 416 Russian companies have joined the System for Transfer of Financial Messages (SPFS), including the Russian Federal Treasury and large state corporations including Gazprom Neft,

Rosneft, and others.

■ The concept of an "Energy Treasury"

Mr. Cook proposes, and Ambassador Dr. Shams Ardakani agrees, that the concept of an "Energy Treasury" which brings energy service providers together with banking service providers should be urgently explored and tested. Since energy services are of course delivered locally, proofs of concept at local level in Iran are necessary. Such decentralized local initiatives will naturally require participation of local authorities under the supervision of central authorities, with implementation by the private sector, and with access to research and development through a Resilience Network of academic institutions.

Such "Local Energy Treasuries" (LETs) would be responsible for accountancy, transparency and risk management in respect of Energy Credit Obligation (ECO) issuance. So, LETs would be members of regional energy treasuries, which in turn would be members of an Iranian National Energy Treasury, responsible for regional and national strategic issues. This concept may be implementable in cooperation with Energy Charter Secretariat, Economic Cooperation Organization Secretariat, and the EU & UK as well as with the World Bank to benefit regional and global energy security.

This seems to me a completely sensible domestic approach to energy policy which is likely to spread organically once the system becomes trusted. It would (especially if combined with reasonable amnesty concessions on a 'one-off' introductory basis) be likely to attract and mobilize the enormous amount of 'dark money' sitting in gold, dollars and Euros throughout Iran.

These hoards of idle and unproductive wealth could be invested via Energy Loans in new and efficient energy infrastructure which offers an energy return in ECOs to the investors.

■ How can Iran pay for essential goods and services?

At this point I returned to Mr. Cook and asked how Iran could access and pay for international goods and services urgently required.

He replied: "Iran could propose to the EU and UK that in addition to conventional (but difficult, due to U.S. intimidation) sale of oil to European and UK refiners in exchange for Euros and UK pounds, Iran could supply oil under swap arrangements. In return for oil supplied, Iran would be entitled to a flow of products such as Euro 5 gasoline from European & UK refiners, in respect of which "Energy Credit Obligation" (ECO) credits returnable in payment for products could be issued. Such energy swaps and credit obligations, if mutually assured within an "Energy Clearing Union" guarantee framework, would give Iran the choice of either taking delivery of such gasoline, or of using ECOs in exchange for European & UK goods and services."

By way of an illustration I reminded Mr. Cook we had discussed oil for product swaps in the Greek context at the Delphi Economic Forum earlier this year, as well in articles published by the Tehran Times. However, resistance to the concept from certain Iranian business groups probably reflected the fact that transparency is the enemy of private profit.

I pointed out that there are those in Iran and elsewhere who profit from sanctions. Cook agreed, saying: "Sadly that is the case. But please consider the fact that if Hellenic Petroleum, which is a major regional supplier of oil products, were to enter into oil for product swaps, then Iran's entitlement to Hellenic "Energy Credit Obligation" ECOs would undoubtedly be accepted in payment by businesses throughout the region eager to supply goods and services to Iran but unable to access conventional bank payments.

I could also imagine such swaps would work well with the Saras refinery in Sardinia and even the Grangemouth refinery in Scotland (which Iran supplied reliably for 60 years) which between them can supply products throughout the Mediterranean and North West Europe."

In summary, since a conventional Clearing House SPV is unlikely to work to any meaningful extent, an Energy Clearing Union agreement could guarantee performance of ECO issuance and clearing between the EU, UK (even after BREXIT) and Iran. Mr. Cook considers that: "In the same way that Italy, Greece, Spain and others could later be added to the SPV, so Russia, Turkey and Caspian littoral nations as well as Central Asian countries could be added as members of an extended Eurasian Energy Clearing Union."

■ Energy for Peace

During my recent dialogue with Ambassador Dr. Shams Ardakani, he approved in principle the energy for peace strategy which the private and academic sectors may now actively implement based on Energy Swaps and Energy Credit Obligation (ECO) instruments to achieve an Energy First outcome.

The Energy for Peace strategy aims to gradually build trust and to fund redeployment of immense financial and intellectual resources from wasteful destructive technologies to the existential threats of climate change and depletion of finite resources.

Cook pointed out that humanitarian exemptions to sanctions such as medicines, food and water and associated technologies have been ineffective due to the absence of payment channels, and that the ECO proposal may begin on this basis.

Such Energy for Peace humanitarian initiatives are not new: I myself was member of a team initiated and implemented as part of H E Zanganeh's energy diplomacy just such an initiative in relieving the Republic of Azerbaijan's (Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic) and the Republic of Armenia during winter fuel shortages in 2005.

■ Conclusion:

I hope that Mr. Cook's above commentary, analysis & Energy for Peace proposal could be given the attention they deserve by the relevant Iranian authorities, while Iran stands firm against current U.S. sanctions with minimal hardship. Mr. Cook believes that President Trump would also find it irresistible to create a constructive legacy as the U.S. President who led the introduction of a new era of global peace and prosperity through accepting an Iranian overture of Energy for Peace.



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The Kavand Nahan Zamin Co. is intended to sell its portfolio in the Borely Copper Mine (a mine in Kazakhstan Republic with resource of about 5.8 Mt oxide ore with mean grade of 0.35% Cu and 194Mt sulfide ore with mean grade of 0.37% Cu) through public bid.

Bidder companies are invited to refer to the Kavand Nahan Zamin Co. central office located in NO.49, first Floor, Sabanoor Building, west Haghtalab St, Saadat Abad Blvd, Tehran maximum till 15 days after the last advertisement (second advertisement) together with a written request and the original bank bill of 150,000,000 Iranian Rials paid to account No. 170323516305 by Bank Sepah, Jihad Square in the name of Kavand Nahan Zamin Co. to receive the said tender documents.

It is noted that 80% of the ownership belongs to the Kavand Nahan Zamin Co. and remaining 20% is belong to its Kazakh partner.

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 N.I.O.C 1397.4322		 National Iranian Drilling Company	
Call for public tender (First/Second publish) Two- Stages (semi compressed) tender Subject of Tender: (THREE CONE BITS)			
* Tender descriptions:			
The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No./Ident No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3179254	9522017	101,686,000,000
* Qualitative evaluation of tenderers			
Method Based on minimum scoring made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms. (Min 60)			
* Purchasing & Submitting Tender Document Distribution by Company			
Distribution Place	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following seventh day thereof.		
	A) Hall No.: 316, 3th floor, Foreign Procurement Dept. (DRILLING PROJECTS), National Iranian Drilling Company, After Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. B) jomhuri street, yaghma alley nicc 8th building floor no.: 04 room no. 428 -tehran -iran		
Submitting Method	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 5100 00 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR52010004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.		
Documents Receiving Method	Closing date	14 Days after the last time of Purchasing (23/12/2018)	
	A d d r e s s	H Hall NO. 107, 1st floor, Tender committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569	
* Tender Guarantee			
Value of guarantee	3,534,000,000 Rial/73,026 Euro		
Type of guarantee	- ✓ Bank guarantees, or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. - ✓ Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR35010004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran. "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.		
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.		
(Name of department)			
More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir http://sapp.ir/nidc-pr			
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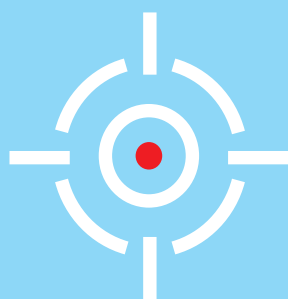
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Hypnotherapy can help manage IBS symptoms

Irritable bowel syndrome is a chronic condition that affects many people across the world. Due to symptoms such as abdominal pain, this disorder can have a big impact on life quality. New research, however, reveals that hypnotherapy can improve life for those with the condition.

People with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) can experience symptoms such as abdominal pain and abnormal bowel movements to various degrees of severity, and they can also face mental health problems, including anxiety and depression.

Some common approaches to managing IBS are by carefully controlling one's diet, improving one's lifestyle choices, and, if necessary, seeking mental health therapy.

In the past, some research has suggested that people with IBS may also benefit from hypnotherapy sessions.

Now, specialists at the University Medical Centre Utrecht and other institutions in the Netherlands have decided to delve deeper into the question of whether hypnotherapy can improve IBS symptoms — and if so, in what way.

The researchers recently conducted a randomized controlled trial, the findings of which now appear in *The Lancet Gastroenterology & Hepatology*.

Improved symptom relief

The study assessed the efficacy of individual and group hypnotherapy in IBS. It is the largest study to date to look into this issue.

In the study, the researchers worked with 354 participants aged 18–65 with IBS. The scientists randomly selected participants to take part in one of three interventions:

individual 45-minute hypnotherapy sessions twice per week for 6 weeks (150 participants)

group hypnotherapy sessions with the same timeframe (150 participants)

dedicated educational supportive care sessions (54 participants)

For the delivery of the hypnotherapy sessions, the team recruited psychologists who had trained in hypnotherapy. During the sessions, the hypnotherapists applied techniques of positive visualization, providing suggestions about pain and discomfort management.

They also gave the participants CDs containing materials that would allow them to practice hypnosis techniques on their own for 15–20 minutes on a daily basis.

The researchers asked the participants to fill in questionnaires assessing various factors relevant to the study — including the severity of their IBS symptoms, their quality of life, how much they spent on healthcare, and how often they had to miss work due to the condition.



The assessments took place at baseline, at the 3-month mark, and at the 9-month mark. The team also evaluated to what extent participants experienced relief immediately after the intervention (at the 3-month mark) and then again 9 months later.

The scientists found that the people with IBS who had participated in hypnotherapy — whether individual or group-based — experienced the most satisfactory degree of symptom relief, compared with participants in the educational supportive care group.

Participants who underwent hypnotherapy were still enjoying the benefits 9 months after the treatment. However, the researchers claim that despite reporting satisfactory rates of symptom relief, the participants did not actually see a significant improvement in symptom severity as such.

“We do not know exactly how gut-directed hypnotherapy works,” says lead researcher Dr. Carla Flik, “but it may change patients' mindset and internal coping mechanisms, enabling them to increase their control over autonomic body processes, such as how they process pain and modulate gut activity.”

Group sessions just as promising

Other than symptom relief, the tested-for factors — including quality of life, psychological problems, healthcare costs, and work absence — remained roughly the same among all the participants following the interventions.

The researchers also admit that their study faced a few

limitations. For example, some participants — 22 (15 percent) of those in the individual hypnotherapy group, another 22 (15 percent) of those in the group hypnotherapy sessions, and 11 (20 percent) of those in the educational supportive care group — dropped out of the study.

Also, a significant number of participants did not manage to fill in all the questionnaires, which, the researchers say, may have impacted the findings.

However, the researchers note that the results they recorded in the recent study may, in fact, have been an underestimation, since the hypnotherapists did not have previous experience in treating people with IBS, specifically.

Also, the participants only received six hypnotherapy sessions, which is only half the number of sessions that a person would normally expect to receive.

“Our study indicates that hypnotherapy could be considered as a treatment option for patients with IBS, irrespective of symptom severity and IBS subtype. It is also promising to see that group hypnotherapy is as effective as individual sessions, which may mean that more people could be treated with it at lower cost, should it be confirmed in further studies.”

“What's striking about these findings is the extent to which patients' perception of their illness has an effect on their suffering, and that their perception of symptoms appears to be as important as actual symptom severity,” adds Dr. Flik.

(Source: *Medical News Today*)

Rainforest vine compound kills resilient cancer cells



New research now published in the *Journal of Natural Products* shows that a vine compound is highly effective in the fight against treatment-resistant pancreatic cancer cells.

A type of rainforest vine may hold the key to effective cancer treatments. Pancreatic cancer is notoriously difficult to treat, and the condition has a poor outlook.

According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), the 5-year survival rate for people with early-stage exocrine pancreatic cancer is 12–14 percent.

A new study explains why that is and offers a potential solution.

Gerhard Bringmann, a professor of organic chemistry at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg in Germany, led the new research together with first author Suresh Awale, a professor at the Institute of Natural Medicine at the University of Toyama in Japan.

Part of the reason why pancreatic cancer resists treatment, explain Awale and colleagues, is that its cells can survive even the most inhospitable conditions.

Specifically, human pancreatic cells have an “ability to proliferate aggressively under hypovascular and hypoxic conditions in the tumor microenvironment, displaying a remarkable tolerance to nutrition starvation.”

In other words, pancreatic cancer cells take up all the oxygen and nutrients around them in order to spread as aggressively as they do.

Under the resulting austere conditions, most cells would die. However, pancreatic cancer cells defy these challenges by activating a molecular pathway called Akt/mTOR.

Akt/mTOR is a cell signaling pathway, or a pathway that helps cells communicate with one another.

The “anti-austerity strategy,” explain the authors, is “a new approach in anticancer drug discovery” aiming to find compounds that can target and stop

cancer cells from thriving under austere conditions — that is, when nutrient-rich blood and oxygen are scarce.

Awale and team tested one such compound: a substance called ancistrolikokine E3, which they derived from a vine called *Ancistrocladus likoko*, present in the Congolese rainforest.

How the vine compound kills cancer

When the scientists collaborated previously, they saw that certain alkaloids contained by the vines in the Congolese rainforests have anti-austerity properties. Alkaloids are natural, organic, nitrogenous compounds.

In this study, they isolated the alkaloid ancistrolikokine E3 from the twigs of a Congolese liana and tested its effect on cancer cells.

The scientists found that ancistrolikokine E3 caused “dramatic alterations” in the morphology of the cancer cells, which ultimately led to their death.

The compound killed the cancer cells by inhibiting the Akt/mTOR and autophagy pathways, which would otherwise have enabled the cancer cells to survive in an austere tumor microenvironment.

Also, the vine-derived compound stopped the pancreatic cancer cells from migrating and forming colonies “in a concentration-dependent manner.” This indicates that in certain doses, the compound could halt metastasis.

According to the investigators, this new study “provides the first live evidence of the effect of a naphthylidihydroisoquinoline alkaloid against [pancreatic cancer] cells in nutrient-deprived medium.”

“Ancistrolikokine E3 [...] and related [...] alkaloids are promising potential lead compounds for anticancer drug development based on the antiausterity strategy,” they conclude.

The ACS estimate that across the United States in 2018, doctors will diagnose pancreatic cancer in around 55,440 people.

(Source: *Medical News Today*)

One in eight children in England have a mental health disorder, NHS report reveals



One in eight children in England is living with a mental health problem, according to an NHS report that shows an increase in the conditions over the last decade.

In a class of 30 children, this means four could be expected to be contending with emotional disorders, such as depression and anxiety, behavioral or hyperactive disorders that are impacting their wellbeing.

Among pre-school children, one in 18 (5.5 per cent) now have at least one disorder according to the major report by NHS Digital, which has collected data for young children and older teens for the first time.

It was released within hours of a separate report by the children's commissioner's office that warned spending on adults' mental health is three times higher than on children's.

Unmet support needs can put children at risk and affect their success in later life, the authors of the NHS Digital report said, after finding that a quarter of 11- to 16-year-olds with a mental health disorder had self-harmed or attempted suicide. This compared with 3 per cent who do not have a diagnosed condition.

Among teens aged 17 to 19 with a disorder, that figure is as high as 46.8 per cent, with young women the most at risk.

The report is based on mental health assessments and surveys with 9,117 young people, along with their parents and teachers. It found a stark pattern of increased social media use, cyber bullying, smoking, alcohol and drug taking in those with a disorder.

Mental health disorder is an umbrella term, but these were assessed against clinical diagnostic criteria.

To qualify as a “disorder” it had to be causing “significant distress to the child or impacting their function”, the authors said.

Among five- to 15-year-olds, mental health conditions rose from affecting 10.1 per cent of children in 2004 to 11.2 per cent in 2017. This was chiefly driven by an increase of emotional disorders, which now affect 5.8 per cent of young people under the age of 15.

Katharine Sadler, one of the report's authors and a director at the National Centre for Social Research, said that the rise was

“less than some may have predicted, but is still significant”.

Young women were particularly affected, with 22 per cent of girls experiencing an emotional disorder at the ages of 17 to 19, compared with 8 per cent of boys. More than half of these young women reported self-harming or attempting suicide.

This included high rates of body dysmorphic disorder, an irrational feeling that parts of their physical appearance are flawed and must be “hidden or fixed”.

The report comes as ministers have called for time limits on harmful social media use among young people and the report showed people with disorders were more likely to be spending hours online.

Nearly a third said they spent more than four hours on these sites, compared with 12 per cent of 11- to 19-year-olds without a disorder.

“We asked children what they thought the impact of this was,” Ms Sadler said. “Young people with a mental disorder were more likely to agree they compared themselves to others; that likes, comments and shares impacted their mood; that they spent more time online than they meant to; and that they couldn't be honest with their feelings.”

The report also found one in three boys with a disorder, and half of girls, reported being cyber bullied in the past year.

Among the preschoolers with a disorder, boys were more likely to be affected largely down to higher rates of behavioral disorders — which affect 3 per cent of boys and 2 per cent of girls.

The main disorder identified was “oppositional defiant disorder” and the authors stressed that this had a serious and measurable impact on family life and their future prospects if left unaddressed.

“These are the kind of children where the family can't go out because if they do the child is very likely to throw a tantrum, run in the road or take their seatbelt off in the car,” Tamsin Ford, professor of child and adolescent psychiatry at the University of Exeter, said.

(Source: *The Independent*)

Men who eat lots of fruits and vegetables have less memory loss

Men who follow a healthful diet could be protecting their brains, according to a new study that tracked a large group of men for more than 2 decades.

Leafy greens and red and orange vegetables correlated with reduced memory loss in a new study.

Researchers from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston, MA, analyzed data from a study that had followed 27,842 men for 26 years.



The men had all filled in detailed surveys about their food and drink intake at the start of the study in 1986 — when they were aged 51 years, on average — and then every 4 years until 2002.

The follow-up lasted until 2012, by which time their average age was in the mid- to late-70s.

During the last few years of the follow-up, they had also completed short tests to find out whether they had noticed any decline in their own ability to think and remember things.

The analysis showed that consuming higher amounts of certain foods and drinks was tied to lower risk of decline in memory and thinking skills.

The foods that most strongly showed this effect were leafy greens, red and dark orange vegetables, berry fruits, and orange juice.

The journal *Neurology* recently published a paper about the study and its findings.

“Our studies,” says first author Dr. Changzheng Yuan, who works in the school's departments of nutrition and epidemiology, “provide further evidence [that] dietary choices can be important to maintain your brain health.”

Subjective cognitive function test

The purpose of the subjective cognitive function (SCF) tests that the men completed was to discern changes in memory and thinking abilities that they had noticed themselves.

The SCF test contains six items, and the study authors note that its “validity was supported by strong associations” with a gene that is linked to Alzheimer's disease.

The subjective test can uncover decline in memory and thinking skills before they begin to show up in objective tests.

The men completed the SCF test twice: once in 2008 and again at the end of the follow-up in 2012. Typical questions included: “Do you have more trouble than usual remembering a short list of items, such as a shopping list?”

“Do you have more trouble than usual following a group conversation or a plot in a TV program due to your memory?”

The authors note that they “categorized the average of the [two] scores as good, moderate, and poor SCF.”

Early warning of mild cognitive impairment

Any memory decline revealed in the SCF results could herald the start of mild cognitive impairment (MCI).

MCI is a condition that often precedes Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia. However, not everyone with MCI will develop Alzheimer's.

In the United States, around 80 percent of those “who fit the definition of amnesic MCI” develop Alzheimer's disease within 7 years, according to the National Institute on Aging.

Amnesic MCI is the form of MCI that is most often tied to memory loss.

In the recent study, 55 percent of the men scored “good” on the SCF test, 38 percent scored “moderate,” and 7 percent scored “poor.”

Consumption of fruits and vegetables

The team split the men into five groups according to their fruit and vegetable intake. The results showed that the group that ate the most vegetables consumed about 6 servings per day, and that the group that ate the least consumed 2.

The daily consumption of fruit ranged from 3 servings for the group that ate the most to half a serving for the group that ate the least.

A comparison of the vegetable consumption against the SCF scores revealed that:

The men who ate the most vegetables were 34 percent less likely to report having experienced a reduction in memory function.

Of the men who ate the most vegetables, 6.6 percent scored poor on the SCF, compared with 7.9 percent of those who ate the least.

The results also showed a 47 percent less chance of having a poor SCF score among the men who drank orange juice every day compared with those who only drank it once per month. The link was most relevant for older men who drank orange juice every day.

In addition, men who ate the most fruit each day were the least likely to have a poor SCF score, but this link lost its strength after the team considered the effect of other foods.

The team also found that high levels of fruit and vegetable consumption near the start of the study period was linked to a lower chance of having a poor SCF score some 20 years later.

Whether or not the men kept eating lots of fruits and vegetables — up to 6 years before taking the SCF test — had no effect on the link.

The link does not prove cause and effect

Due to its design, the study cannot conclude that consuming lots of fruits, vegetables, and orange juice actually reduces the chances of developing memory loss.

The results do, however — by revealing the links between the two, particularly over a long period of time — support the idea that eating lots of fruit and vegetables helps avert memory decline.

The authors argue that the fact that the men did not undergo tests of memory and thinking ability at the start of study in order to assess decline over the whole period is not necessarily a big weakness.

All the men were or had been in professions that involved years of training requiring a high level of cognitive competence, such as dentistry, optometry, and veterinary.

They also note that because the study was confined to men in these groups, the findings do not necessarily apply to all men or women.

“One of the most important factors in this study is that we were able to research and track such a large group of men over a 20-year period of time, allowing for very telling results.”

(Source: *sgtalk.org*)

Mashhad to host startup weekend on dietary, herbal supplements

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The science and technology park of Mashhad in northeastern Iran will host the dietary and herbal supplement startup weekend on November 27 to 29, Mehr reported.

Startups and knowledge-based companies active in the field of producing probiotic and prebiotic supplements and brain function development as well as startups manufacture weight loss products and innovative technology in producing dietary and herbal supplements.

The event applies gamification, techniques intended to leverage people's natural desires for socializing, learning, mastery, competition, achievement, status, self-expression, altruism, or closure, or simply their response to the framing of a situation as game or play.

Three selected teams will be introduced to the investors and then they commercialize their products with the help of accelerators.



Black Friday deals lure U.S. shoppers, biggest sales gains online

Shoppers across the United States snapped up deep discounts on toys, clothing and electronics both online and at stores on Black Friday, giving retailers a strong start to their make-or-break holiday season.

A healthy economy and rising wages gave people the confidence to splash out on retailers' annual raft of bargains.

"The prices today are very good," said Jose Manuel Cruz Hernandez, 59, who hit the Del Amo Fashion Center in Torrance, California, with his sister Paulina Cruz, 66, who comes every year from Mexico City to shop.

The pair spent \$120 on princess dolls and other toys at the Walt Disney Co store, where items were 20 percent off. They spent a similar amount at Gap Inc, where items were discounted by about 55 percent.

Cruz Hernandez, a foreman at an aerospace firm, said he was comfortable with the U.S. economy and his own finances and plans to spend another \$1,000 on holiday gifts - about the same as last year.

A similar story played out online, where shoppers spent \$643 million by 10 a.m. ET, up 28 percent from a year ago, according to Adobe Analytics, which tracks transactions at most of the top U.S. online retailers. Smartphone sales in particular contributed to gains.

Foot traffic looked healthy at stores offering discounts, although detailed numbers on brick-and-mortar holiday sales will not be available for several days.

"Overall, Black Friday doesn't have the sense of urgency as in the past and feels more like a busy regular weekend day in many of the stores," said Dana Telsey at Telsey Advisory Group.

"Many of the promotions were available for the past couple of weeks," Telsey said. "We haven't noticed desperation from any retailer."

Shares of Macy's Inc, Kohl's Corp, and Target Corp all closed down on Friday and weighed on the broader S&P 500 retailing index, which closed down 0.56 percent.

People shop during the Black Friday sales shopping event at Roosevelt Field Mall in Garden City, New York, U.S., November 23, 2018. REUTERS/Shannon Stapleton

Investors are concerned retail sales growth may have peaked in the second quarter and business will slow down as comparisons get tougher, said Brian Yarborough, retail analyst with Edward Jones.

Victoria's Secret owner L Brands, Walmart Inc. and American Eagle Outfitters rose. J.C. Penney Co Inc. ended flat and Amazon.com Inc closed slightly lower.

The overall stock market finished a shortened session with losses.

Strong online sales

Early numbers showed overall retail sales, both in stores and online, were in line with expectations, according to Mastercard Inc's SpendingPulse retail report. The firm expects overall Black Friday sales to top \$23 billion this year, up from \$21 billion last year.

Mastercard combines sales activity in its payments network with estimates of cash and other payment forms. It said cold weather in the eastern United States and wet weather in the west may be pushing more consumers online.

Online spending is on track to hit \$6.4 billion on Friday, Adobe said. Online sales on Thanksgiving Day were up 28 percent at \$3.7 billion.

The National Retail Federation forecast U.S. holiday retail sales in November and December will increase between 4.3 and 4.8 percent over 2017 for a total of \$717.45 billion to \$720.89 billion. That compares with an average annual increase of 3.9 percent over the past five years.

About 38 percent of American consumers plan to shop on Black Friday, a Reuters/Ipsos poll showed last week.

Very cold weather in the U.S. Northeast may have kept some shoppers at home, although industry analysts also reported added demand for coats and other warm clothing. An Athleta clothing store in Tysons, Virginia, provided hot chocolate with marshmallows to women in line for the dressing room.

Deal frenzy

Shoppers picked up big-ticket items such as TVs, Apple Inc iPads and Watches at Target, while phones, toys, gaming consoles and cookware were top sellers at Walmart Inc.

Many shoppers sought out air fryers, which do not use oil to deep fry food and Instant Pots. Kohl's Chief Executive Michelle Gass told CNBC the company was selling 60 Instant Pots per minute online on Thanksgiving Day.

While most retailers have not changed their deals and discounts year-over-year, many have moved their start dates earlier and offered more teasers, according to deal site RetailMeNot.

The deepest discounts in apparel and accessories were offered by Michael Kors, which ran a 60 percent discount sale; Gap, which offered 50 percent off site-wide; and Nordstrom, which gave away up to 60 percent on merchandise.

(Source: Reuters)

'About 100 experts active in stem cell tech in Iran'

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — Some one hundred experts are now working in the field of stem cell technology in Iran, secretary of the council for stem cell sciences and technologies has said.

Amir Ali Hamidieh explained that stem cell technology was limited to research activities until three years ago, however, today it creates jobs and is a source of production.

"About 100 companies manufacture stem cell products in Iran, out of which, 80 are knowledge-based ones."

In each stem cell company 20 experts are working on average, which has resulted in generation of more than 1,400 jobs, he said, Mehr reported on Friday.

Stem cell is cutting-edge knowledge, which can create jobs in the country, he said.

Autologous bone marrow mesenchymal stem cell, Wharton's Jelly-Derived Mesenchymal Stem Cell and stem cell products for cardiovascular diseases, ischemic cardiomyopathy and dilated cardiomyopathy are amongst productions by the Iranian companies, he concluded.

In early July, Hamidieh announced that about 400 products in the field of cell culture and cell growth are made in Iran out of which three are manufactured by knowledge-based companies.

"We aim to establish accelerator centers and invest on high-risk research projects to support knowledge-based companies," he said.

According to the U.S. National Library of Medicine, stem cell technology is a rapidly developing field that combines the efforts of cell biologists, geneticists, and clinicians and offers hope of effective treatment for a variety of malignant and non-malignant diseases.

Stem cells are defined as totipotent progenitor cells capable of self-renewal and multilineage differentiation. Stem cells survive well and show stable division in culture, making them ideal targets for in vitro manipulation.



The future of typing doesn't involve a keyboard

There will come a time when sitting in front of a screen, tapping keys with your fingers, will seem impossibly clunky and laughably old-fashioned. Instead, researchers say, the most likely next phase of human-computer interaction will be typing in "thin air" while gazing—for example—at the ocean.

As computers become smaller and—ultimately—largely virtual, researchers are having to think of other ways for us to interact with them. The current generation of smartphone users may be willing to learn to type with just two thumbs; some of us have carried around bluetooth keyboards for train journeys and conferences. But no one wants to connect a keyboard to a smart watch, and while voice recognition software is improving, users are highly resistant to talking to computers in public. If the future of screens is augmented reality—as Tim Cook, Apple's CEO has predicted—a virtual space where the user sees both what's really in front of them and the "objects" on the screen, how are we going to interact with it?

The question is not just a philosophical one, but has major commercial applications. Per Ola Kristensson, a professor in Interactive Systems Engineering at the University of Cambridge, says desks in the future will likely be almost entirely free from hardware: No laptop, no phone, and certainly no keyboard. A move away from restrictive un-ergonomic keyboards would help those affected by problems like carpal tunnel syndrome, repetitive strain injury, back pain, and eye strain, which have become some of the modern worker's most troublesome physical problems, and can be debilitating.

There are two big challenges to designing human-computer interaction in this reality, Kristensson explained. Designers no longer control what



the user is looking at (what he calls the "pixel-space" of the traditional screen); and if someone's work takes place in a space without traditional limits—no buttons being pressed or screens swiped—there's an added challenge of working out what it is the user wants to do.

Kristensson presents a possible solution to this challenge in a forthcoming research paper. The researchers used a head-mounted piece of hardware to project a virtual screen and a virtual keyboard, on which users "typed." The fingers don't touch anything; their movement was detected by a depth-sensor, which tracked both where the fingers typed, and how 'deep' they pressed into the virtual surface.

The problem with the resultant data was that the imprecision of hitting a virtual key rather than a real one meant lots of errors. To correct for this, the researchers created a model of what humans were most likely to type. Working from a dataset of billions of words from Twitter, blogs, and other online sources, they used machine learning to train a program to recognize the most-common letter combinations. (The technology, which currently exists in English and German, is similar to that used in predictive text on a traditional smartphone.)

(Source: msn.com)

Driverless cars to be tested in London ahead of launch this Christmas

Driverless cars are to be tested on the streets of London this week as part of a plan to deploy the UK's first completely autonomous fleet on British roads by Christmas.

A Government-backed consortium will deploy cars to map the streets of Hounslow in West London to teach them to understand road signs and lane markings following successful tests in Oxford.

The cars will be able to share data with each other, such as warnings about obstacles on the road, to improve how vehicles perform under different conditions on the road.

The consortium, led by Oxford University spinoff Oxbotica, aims to run a fleet of autonomous vehicles between Oxford and London in 2019 following tests in both cities.

The consortium, which also includes insurance provider AXA, UK registry domain Nominet and Telefonica, was awarded an £8.6 million grant from Innovate UK to run the trials.

Dr. Graeme Smith, chief executive of Oxbotica, said: "These trials further demonstrate to the wider UK public that connected and autonomous vehicles will play an important role in the future of transport. This milestone shows the advanced state of our capabilities and firmly keeps us on the road to provide the technology needed to revolutionise road travel."

The vehicles will be fitted with software from Oxbotica as well as radar and a variety of sensors, on board computers and cameras.

According to Oxbotica, the tests will be repeated several times on different dates so that cars can learn how the streets change depending on lighting conditions.

The breakthrough comes days after the Government announced plans for the first driverless transport services by 2021, including a driverless bus service crossing the Forth Bridge to Edinburgh and self-driving taxis in four London boroughs.

Oxbotica signed a deal with taxi company Addison Lee last month to launch a driverless taxi service in the capital by 2021 and will be part of the Government's pilot scheme.

Both companies agreed to map over



250,000 miles of public roads in an attempt to refine the Artificial Intelligence used by the taxis to avoid and anticipate obstacles.

UK-based projects are racing to launch home-grown driverless car services in the UK ahead of Google's Waymo project, which is estimated to be worth \$175m (£136.4m) and Uber.

Uber rival Lyft bought a London-based technology startup to push ahead with driverless car plans last month. The US company bought Blue Vision Labs, a London-based firm that specialises in mapping street layouts using car-mounted smartphones.

London is classed as one of the few "mega-cities" in Europe and has some of the most challenging driving conditions in the world, caused by a combination of its complex historic road layout, congestion and poor road surfaces.

Experts have warned that US driverless cars cannot operate on UK roads because they are unable to spot British vehicles like Routemaster buses and black cabs.

Other companies, such as Volvo, which said they would start testing self-driving cars in the capital have yet to do so.

Research claims three quarters of the public fear autonomous cars on UK roads, with 76pc saying lack of vehicle control is their biggest worry and 60pc afraid that self-driving vehicles could be hacked by criminals, according to MoneySuperMarket.

(Source: telegraph.co.uk)

The 5 basic things you need to know about ConTech

Historically, ConTech (as it is commonly referred to) has had much less attention than the more "mainstream" forms of proptech. According to a recent report by the BPF, over 50% of proptech seeks to solve sales and leasing issues, while only 16% focuses on construction.

A few days ago, Autodesk announced the purchase of construction tech startup PlanGrid for \$875 million, the biggest exit to date in the Construction Tech space. Historically, ConTech (as it is commonly referred to) has had much less attention than the more "mainstream" forms of proptech. According to a recent report by the BPF, over 50% of proptech seeks to solve sales and leasing issues, while only 16% focuses on construction.

This is not necessarily surprising, for reasons I will explain later in this article, and it demonstrates that there is a big gap to be filled and huge gains to be made by bringing technological innovation to construction. Due to my work in construction and real estate development, I have a very strong interest in this field and, over the past weeks, I have been researching ConTech and the startups in the space. In an upcoming post, we will dive into the innovative solutions already out there and the untapped opportunities that exist and are just waiting to be grasped. But first, let's start with some simple facts. Here are the 5 basic things you need to know about ConTech.

What is ConTech?

There are plenty of definitions of the term out there. Some of these are broad, others narrow it down to just the actual construction process. In reality, there is a lot of overlap between construction and management (as we will discuss) and it is impossible to consider ConTech siloed away from the rest of technological innovation in the built environment. I like to define ConTech as the technology used to innovate the way we plan, design, and build structures, as well as the manufacture and installation of their components.



Is ConTech proptech?

This is a topic of contention for many. I absolutely believe that ConTech is, indeed, proptech, due to the overlap that naturally arises between the two. The best example I can give for this is BIM. (Building Information Modeling or BIM, according to Autodesk (one of the leading providers of BIM technology) "is an intelligent 3D model-based process that gives architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) professionals the insight and tools to more efficiently plan, design, construct and manage buildings and infrastructure." BIM itself is not proptech, as it is just a process, but the models that derive from it definitely are. For example, maintenance for buildings that have been built in BIM can be efficiently managed using AI and AR thanks to the accurate 3D models and centralized data.

What kind of tech goes into ConTech?

One of the biggest pet peeves for those in the ConTech space is that, when they hear the words construction technology, people often think only of the cute 3D printed house that was all over the Internet in 2017. 3D printing is definitely a very interesting part of ConTech, and in future, perhaps, entire buildings will

be extruded from gigantic printers in mere hours. For the time being, however, prefabrication, which in of itself is nothing new as it's been around for decades in some form, is a much more realistic way in which players in the space are starting to move away from traditional methods of construction.

The biggest gains in the space are currently being had in the management of construction processes, even when traditional methods are used. PlanGrid, for example, digitalizes construction workflow processes. There are startups that utilize AI for workflow management, others that deploy sensors throughout the construction process and provide a platform for management of that data. Drone technology is being deployed together with machine learning for job site analysis. Robots are tentatively starting to be used for repetitive on-site tasks. Wearable tech is used for worksite safety, and as we discussed before, AI analytics and AR will make the difference in the management of structures designed and built in BIM. We will delve into these applications and the startups innovating these fields in an upcoming post.

How big is the market for ConTech?

In one word - huge. The global construction industry was estimated to be worth over \$17 trillion in 2017 and is forecasted to exceed \$24 trillion in 2021. It is also an industry that is very much behind the curve in terms of innovation, especially with regards to construction methods. As we saw above, though there are significant advances being made around design and workflows, the actual construction still largely relies on traditional methodologies, with the exception of off-site manufacturing. 3D printing is still very much in the experimental "PR stunt" phase. Some estimate that even using only the ConTech tools we already have, widespread adoption would mean a sector productivity increase of 40%.

(Source: forbes.com)

For ants, unity is strength -- and health, researchers say

When a pathogen enters their colony, ants change their behavior to avoid the outbreak of disease. In this way, they protect the queen, brood and young workers from becoming ill. These results, from a study carried out in collaboration between the groups of Sylvia Cremer at the Institute of Science and Technology Austria (IST Austria) and of Laurent Keller at the University of Lausanne, were published in the journal *Science*.

High population density, as well as frequent and close contacts between individuals, contribute to a rapid spread of diseases. To protect their colonies, ants have developed disease defense mechanisms, including adaptations to their social organization.

Ants do not interact randomly with other colony members, but are organized in sub-groups according to their age and the tasks they carry out. While young worker ants, so-called "nurses," look after the valuable brood at the center of the colony, older worker ants become foragers that collect food outside the nest. These forager ants are more exposed to pathogens.

The researchers used a "barcode" system developed in the Keller group to follow the interactions between ants, especially to observe their behavior when disease spreads. In a first experiment, they placed digital markers on 2'266 garden ants.

Comparing the ant colonies

Comparing the ant colonies before and after pathogen exposure showed that the ants quickly detect the presence of the fungal spores and change their behavior to strengthen already existing defenses.

The "ants change how they interact and



who they interact with," explains Sylvia Cremer, the "cliques among ants become even stronger, and contact between cliques is reduced. Foragers interact more with for-

agers, and nurses more with nurses. This is a response by the whole colony -- also animals who are not themselves treated with spores change their behavior." Lau-

Comparing the ant colonies before and after pathogen exposure showed that the ants quickly detect the presence of the fungal spores and change their behavior to strengthen already existing defenses.

rent Keller adds: "This is the first scientific study that shows that an animal society is able to actively change its organization to reduce the spread of disease."

Using a highly sensitive qPCR method established in the Cremer group, the researchers could quantify exactly how many spores an individual ant carried on its body. qPCR monitors how a targeted DNA molecule is amplified during the so-called polymerase chain reaction. This allows researchers to draw conclusion about how much of the DNA, and by inference how much of the fungal spores, were present in the beginning.

High pathogen dose

Because the ants changed how they interact, spores transfer patterns also changed. Only few individuals received a high pathogen dose, which could cause disease. In addition, more ants received a low dose, which Cremer and her group previously showed to not cause disease but instead be protective in the face of future infections -- similar to vaccination in humans. The "pathogen is distributed on many shoulders, and the ants' immune systems can deal very well with this lower pathogen level, which provides a form of immune memory," says Cremer.

The analyses also showed that the colony protects especially valuable animals. The queen, the only individual that reproduces, and the nurses, young worker ants that can still contribute many hours of work to the colony, received less of the pathogen. "In a colony, not all animals have to be protected -- but the most valuable individuals should survive," Keller explains.

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

Strange grooves on Mars' moon were caused by boulders rolling around its surface: study

Back in the 1970s, NASA's Mariner and Viking Missions were sent out to explore other planets in our Solar System. All three of them (there were two Viking missions) captured images of Mars' moon Phobos during their travels.

There's been a debate about what caused these grooves. Some researchers suggested that Phobos was showered with debris from large impacts, and the debris carved the grooves into the surface.

Others thought that the grooves might be signs of structural disintegration as Mars' gravity tears the little moon apart. Others have said that there must be a connection between the Stickney impact and the grooves.

The study is from Kenneth Ramsley and James Head, both of Brown University, with Ramsley leading the study. They used computer models to simulate the movement of debris from the Stickney crater, a huge gash on one end of Phobos' oblong body.

Rolling boulders

Their models show that boulders rolling across the surface in the aftermath of the Stickney impact could have created the puzzling patterns of grooves seen on Phobos today. Head was one of the first to propose this idea back in the 1970s.

Phobos is a small moon, only 27 km wide at its widest point. Compared to that, the Stickney crater (named after the wife of Phobos discoverer, Asaph Hall) is enormous. At 9 km across, it dominates the tiny moon. Stickney is so big, it has another smaller crater inside it.

An impact the size of Stickney would have ejected tons of boulders away from the surface, and when they fell back, they would have caused the grooves. At least that's what the simulations show. But there are a couple sticking points.



Intuition might tell us that all of the grooves should radiate from the Stickney impact, but they don't. Some of the grooves cross on top of other grooves, which mean they must have been created at different times.

And some grooves run right through the Stickney crater, meaning the crater had to be there already when the grooves formed. The surface of Phobos also has a so-called dead spot where there are no grooves.

Pretty strong case

"We think this makes a pretty strong case that it was this rolling boulder model accounts for most if not all the grooves on Phobos," Kenneth Ramsley, Brown University.

The pair of scientists built their computer model with detailed data that took into account Phobos' shape and topography, as well as its gravitational environment, rotation and orbit around Mars.

The "model is really just an experiment we run on a laptop," Ramsley said in a press release. "We put all the basic ingredients in, then we press the button and we see what happens."

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Geoengineers say atmospheric spraying could work to reduce global warming

Injecting sulfates into the lower atmosphere every year could offset the warming effects by greenhouse gases. However, according to a new study, it would be very costly to carry out the project in addition to potential environmental consequences.

With reports that the Earth is heading rapidly to a hothouse state, researchers looked at the capabilities and costs of various methods proposed to inject sulfates into the lower atmosphere to reflect sunlight back into space. The strategy could offset the negative effects of global warming of the world fails to control the emission of greenhouse gases.

The idea of injecting sulfates into the atmosphere was inspired by major volcano eruptions. In 1991, Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines erupted, sending about 20 million tons of sulfur dioxide aerosols into the stratosphere.

As a result, the temperature in the lower atmosphere dropped by 1 degree Fahrenheit. Eventually, the effect wore off when the sulfates dropped back to the ground a few years later.

"While we don't make any judgment about the desirability of SAI (stratospheric aerosol injection), we do show that a hypothetical deployment program starting 15 years from now, while both highly uncertain and ambitious, would be technically possible strictly from an engineering perspective," revealed Gernot Wagner from Harvard University and co-author of the study. "It would also be remarkably inexpensive, at an average of around \$2 billion to 2.5 billion per year over the first 15 years."

Existing aircraft

However, Wake Smith of Yale



University, the co-author of the study, warned that the project would need an entirely new kind of plane to deliver the sulfates to the lower atmosphere. He stated that currently, no existing aircraft has the capacity to reach the altitude required and carry the payload.

The researchers investigated how much it would cost to develop a new aircraft specifically to inject the sulfate into the atmosphere. They dubbed it SAIL or SAI Lifter, which has equal the weight of a large but narrow passenger aircraft and can sustain a level flight at 20 kilometers per second.

In addition, the SAI Lifter should have a wing area twice the size of a regular airliner, double the thrust, and four engines. They estimated that it would cost \$2 billion to develop the airframe and then \$350 million to modify an existing aircraft.

Doubts and concerns have previously been expressed over the impact of injecting the atmosphere with millions of tons of sulfate every year. The sulfates in the atmosphere could impact the ozone layer or turn the sky white.

(Source: Tech Times)

Mosquito genes may explain why some are prone to bites: new study

The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito is the primary species for transmitting dangerous pathogens such as Zika, dengue and yellow fever, infecting hundreds of millions of people around the world every year.

Many scientists think that having a better understanding of the insect's genome -- the complete set of genetic material in an organism -- could help to reduce infections. To that end, an international team of researchers has mapped the genome of *Aedes aegypti*, uncovering several new genes -- including some that could explain why the mosquitoes prefer biting certain people.

"We still don't have the answer yet as to why some mosquitoes target some people and not others, but we have identified that gene," Gordana Rasić, an author of a Nature study describing the results from the QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute in Brisbane, Australia, told ABC News.

According to Rasić, identifying genes such as these could help researchers curb disease transmission, by using a variety of methods such as genetically modifying mosquito populations.

Attractive to the mosquito

"Once we know the candidates, that might



determine what makes someone more resistant or more attractive to the mosquito, we can manipulate the genes," she said. "One of the key things that we want to achieve is to modify these mosquitoes in a way that will help control them."

Until recently, scientists only had only incomplete fragments of the mosquito's genome to work with, hampering research into the species.

"The genome was in so many pieces that we weren't sure how they fit together, and we also weren't sure that it was complete,"

Benjamin Matthews, an author of the study from The Rockefeller University, said in a statement. "And if you can't trust that the DNA sequence was correctly assembled, you're not going to get very far."

The international team began their undertaking in response to the Zika virus outbreak in 2015-2016. With the help of the latest advances in genomics, they now have the most "comprehensive catalog" of *A. aegypti*'s DNA.

High-quality map

"I was sick of hearing that my lab mem-

bers couldn't find complete versions of the genes we were working on," Leslie Vosshall, another author of the study from Rockefeller, said. "So, I took my frustration to Twitter, and quickly assembled the *Aedes* Genome Working Group."

Equipped with a high-quality map of the mosquito's genome, the researchers were then able to characterize previously unidentified genes. For example, they found genes that code for ionotropic receptors (IR), which detect odors in an environment and help guide the mosquitoes towards important locations, such as egg-laying sites, or human skin.

This new information could help researchers to develop novel insect repellants that interfere with the mosquito's ability to find and bite us.

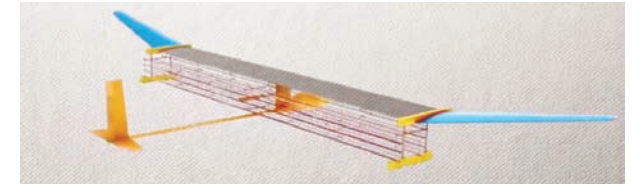
The team also found that some mosquitoes had multiple copies of genes that code for glutathione S-transferase (GST), an enzyme that neutralizes the toxic effects of insecticides. This discovery indicates that *A. aegypti* is evolving to protect itself against man-made toxins, according to Matthews, but now scientists may be able to create new insecticides that can kill even resistant mosquitoes.

(Source: Newsweek)

MIT engineers fly first-ever plane with no moving parts

Since the first airplane took flight over 100 years ago, virtually every aircraft in the sky has flown with the help of moving parts such as propellers, turbine blades, and fans, which are powered by the combustion of fossil fuels or by battery packs that produce a persistent, whining buzz.

Now the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) engineers have built and flown the first-ever plane with no moving parts. Instead of propellers or turbines, the light aircraft is powered by an "ionic wind" -- a silent but mighty flow of ions that is produced aboard the plane, and that generates enough thrust to propel the plane over a sustained, steady flight.



Unlike turbine-powered planes, the aircraft does not depend on fossil fuels to fly. And unlike propeller-driven drones, the new design is completely silent.

"This is the first-ever sustained flight of a plane with no moving parts in the propulsion system," says Steven Barrett, associate professor of aeronautics and astronautics at MIT. "This has potentially opened new and unexplored possibilities for aircraft which are quieter, mechanically simpler, and do not emit combustion emissions."

He expects that in the near-term, such ion wind propulsion systems could be used to fly less noisy drones. Further out, he envisions ion propulsion paired with more conventional combustion systems to create more fuel-efficient, hybrid passenger planes and other large aircraft.

Barrett says the inspiration for the team's ion plane comes partly from the movie and television series, "Star Trek," which he watched avidly as a kid. He was particularly drawn to the futuristic shuttlecrafts that effortlessly skimmed through the air, with seemingly no moving parts and hardly any noise or exhaust.

"This made me think, in the long-term future, planes shouldn't have propellers and turbines," Barrett says. "They should be more like the shuttles in 'Star Trek,' that have just a blue glow and silently glide."

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Pacific Ocean typhoons could be intensifying more than previously projected

Changes to the uppermost layer of Earth's oceans due to rising temperatures are likely causing an increase in intense Pacific Ocean typhoons, suggesting strong typhoons may occur more frequently than scientists project in the coming decades, according to new research.

The surface layer of the ocean, known as the ocean mixed layer, is approximately 200 meters (656 feet) deep on average. This layer is constantly exchanging gases with the atmosphere and experiencing mixing caused by winds, heat transfer, evaporation and changes in salinity.

Intense typhoons, like 2013's Super Typhoon Haiyan, are classified based on high wind speeds, often of 130 mph or more. Typhoon Haiyan was one of the strongest tropical cyclones ever recorded, and scientists have noticed an increase in the proportion of intense typhoons occurring each season in the Pacific Ocean since the 1980s but have not been able to explain why.

A new study published in *Earth's Future*, a journal of the American Geophysical Union, finds the ocean mixed layer deepened along tropical cyclone tracks by 1.7-2.0 meters from 2002-2015, while other factors changed only marginally. The authors conclude this deepening could be responsible for the uptick in intense typhoons from 1980 to 2015, and they project the increase of intense typhoons will continue at a greater rate than previously projected in the coming decades.

Understanding how climate variability within a climate system contributes to the observed increase in the proportion of intense typhoons helps scientists understand the hazards posed by devastating storms in the north Pacific Ocean, especially as the ocean and atmosphere continue to warm, according to the researchers.

"In the context of global warming, it's important to know how the ocean responds to global warming, which factors contribute, and how that changes the structure of the ocean," said Liguang Wu, lead author of the study and professor at Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology in Nanjing, China. "We need to be aware of how conditions are changing around us in order to prepare."

(Source: phys.org)

Team explains how air quality and the AQI are measured

Anyone who grew up near Los Angeles prior to auto emissions regulations knows what bad air looks like. The same is true for many who have grown up in countries that have perennial air quality issues. But for most of us in the U.S., our air quality is pretty good, and except for the occasional "Spare The Air" day when atmospheric conditions cause smog layers to stay stuck somewhere, we don't spend too much time thinking about it. But the recent fires in California and a new feature in iOS have made air quality and the Air Quality Index (AQI) headline news recently. Most of us don't really know much about how air quality is measured, or the AQI, for that matter.

Pollution particles come in a variety of sizes (Image Courtesy of the U.S. EPA) Air quality can be affected by many different pollutants, but for typical air quality measurement, several categories are typically used. In most situations, particles are the major consideration. The most common measurements are PM 2.5 and PM 10, measured in micrograms per cubic meter.

PM 2.5 is the concentration of microscopic particles less than 2.5 microns in diameter. Those particles are found in vehicle and motor exhausts, as well as smoke from burning wood, oil, or coal. Indoors, smoking, cooking, and burning candles also contribute. PM 2.5 particles can be blown hundreds of miles, such as what happened this week, where air quality throughout the San Francisco Bay Area has been affected by a fire much further north. PM 10 refers to the concentration of particles less than 10 microns in diameter.

Ozone can also be a major source of poor air quality. Yes, it's great up high in the atmosphere, as it helps protect us from some kinds of radiation, but it isn't great to breathe, or for our crops. Vehicle exhaust and industrial plants are major sources of ozone. Warm weather and lots of sunlight make it worse in the summertime, when it can be the primary factor in smog and poor air quality.

(Source: extremetech.com)

Volunteer dentists offer services in underprivileged region

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Some 36 volunteer dentists have offered free of charge dental care services in underprivileged villages of Rigan county, southeastern province of Kerman, IRNA reported on Saturday.



Mohammad Nasiri, an official with the Red Crescent Society, explained that volunteer dentists have set up 19 dental units in the area and offered services to the financially struggling individuals living in the region since Thursday until Sunday concurrent with the birth anniversary of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), which is called the Islamic unity week.

Dental services including veneers, root canals, teeth whitening, filling, dental extraction, etc. will be provided by the group, Nasiri added.

Islamic unity week refers to a ceremony held every year both by Sunnis and Shia. The event is held between two dates of the birthday of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). One of the dates is narrated by Sunnis and the other narrated by Shia.

14 days of clean air for Tehran

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Tehraners have breathed clean air for 14 days over the current year (Starting on March 21), Fars news agency reported on Sunday.

According to the Tehran Air Quality Control Company the amount shows a two-day increase compared to the last year (March 2017-March 2018).

So far since the beginning of the current year Tehraners have experienced 203 days of good air quality and 32 days of poor air quality for sensitive groups, the reported added.

11 provinces hit by flood, 4 gone missing

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Four have, unfortunately, gone missing in floods hitting 11 provinces across the country over the past three days, Rescue and Relief Organization head Morteza Salimi said on Sunday.



Provinces of Isfahan, Ilam, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Khuzestan, Fars, Kermanshah, Gilan, Lorestan, Mazandaran, and Sistan-Baluchestan are inundated by flood, YJC quoted Salimi as saying.

Some 307 received relief services in the aforesaid provinces, Salimi, said, adding that sadly 4 individuals have gone missing in the northern province of Gilan.

Salimi went on to say that in seven provinces including Ardebil, Isfahan, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Zanjan, Fars, Qazvin and Markazi are covered with snow as well.

Eleven rescue and relief teams have been dispatched to the areas affected by snow storms, he concluded.

LEARN ENGLISH

Out of Control Spending

A: OK, so now the last point on our agenda. Jill, let's go over the profit and loss statement.

B: Great. Well, the main issue here, as you can see, is that our expenses are through the roof.

A: Let's see... These numbers are off the charts! What's going on here!

B: Well, um, sir, the company expenditures on entertainment and travel are out of control. Look at these bills for example. Just this month we've paid over twenty thousand dollars for hotel charges!

A: OK, thank you. I'll look into it.

B: The list goes on and on. Here, this is a bill for five thousand dollars for spa treatments!

A: Thank you; that will be all. I'll take care of it.

B: Look at this one sir, eight thousand dollars were spent in one night.

A: OK, I get it!! Thank you for your very thorough analysis!

Key vocabulary
go over: revise, check

statement: a record showing amounts of money paid, received, owed etc.

through the roof: suddenly very high

off the charts: very high

expenditures: amount of money spent on something

out of control: not in control

look into: investigate, try to get information about something

go on and on: continues

spa treatment: a non-medical procedure to help the health of the body, such as a massage

take care of: do something about

Supplementary vocabulary
revenue: amount of money paid to a business

cash flow: the movement of money into and out of a business

the bottom line: the net profit; the amount of money a business makes after expenses

finances: the amount of money you have and how well it is organized

income: the amount of money a person or a company makes

assets: things of value that are owned by a company

(Source: irlanguage.com)

HIV/AIDS tests prior to football match scheduled

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Prior to a football match between Persepolis of Tehran and Tractor Sazi of Tabriz at Tehran's Azadi stadium on Sunday afternoon, mobile clinics were scheduled to run rapid HIV/AIDS tests, IRNA reported.

Tehran Adolescents' Well-being Club for boys CEO Vahid Jahanmiri has explained that prior to the football match special vans, parked outside Azadi complex were scheduled to run tests on the spectators who volunteer to take the tests from 11 a.m. to 13 p.m..

The tests are free of charge and the results will be kept confidential, Jahanmiri added.

About 20,000 brochures on HIV/AIDS are scheduled to be also distributed among the audience, he highlighted.

Sports complex are great places to increase awareness among people as adolescents constitute a vast population of spectators, he suggested.

According to the UNICEF the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Iran is classified as being "concentrated" and needs effective counter-measures to keep it from evolving into a more generalized epidemic. Sexual transmission of HIV in Iran is on the rise in recent years. Most AIDS cases are detected among 24-35 year old young adults, which implies that unsafe sexual contacts have likely occurred in adolescence and the first years of adulthood.

The increase in sexual transmission is associated with the growing use of



Sports complex are great places to increase awareness among people as adolescents constitute a vast population of spectators.

Amphetamine-Type Stimulants (ATS), which has also seen a rise in recent years. Adolescents are the only age group among which AIDS-related deaths are actually increasing globally. ALL-IN centers which are called "Ad-

Major government climate change report contradicts Trump and warns of devastating economic and health impact

The U.S. will face devastating economic and health impacts from climate change by the end of the century, a new federal report has warned.

National Climate Assessment outlines the projected impact of global warming in every corner of U.S. society, in a dire warning that is at odds with Donald Trump and his administration's pro-fossil-fuels agenda.

"With continued growth in emissions at historic rates, annual losses in some economic sectors are projected to reach hundreds of billions of dollars by the end of the century — more than the current gross domestic product (GDP) of many US states," the report said.

The report, released nearly a month early by a team of 13 federal agencies, called the U.S. Global Change Research Programme, said there is "no convincing alternative explanation" for climate change besides "human activities, especially emissions of greenhouse gases".

The report runs counter to statements frequently made by Mr Trump, who has claimed global warming is a hoax. The president once again tweeted on Wednesday, "Whatever happened to Global Warming?" as temperatures were set to reach record lows on Thanksgiving.

Meanwhile, his administration released the report — the second of two volumes and the fourth National Climate Assessment in history — on Friday during the extended Thanksgiving holiday weekend, leaving some to question whether the aim was to minimize its public impact.

The White House dismissed the report as inaccurate, despite it supplementing a study issued last year that concluded humans are the main driver of global warming and warned of potentially catastrophic effects to the planet.

White House spokeswoman Lindsay Walters said the new report was "largely based on the most extreme scenario, which contradicts long-established trends by assuming that ... There would be limited technology and innovation, and a rapidly expanding population."

Altogether, gross domestic product could be slashed by 10 percent by 2100, losses twice the size of that which occurred during the Great Recession.

The poorest communities nationwide would be among the most disproportionately impacted by global warming, the report indicated, as droughts, flooding and increasingly powerful storms begin regularly plaguing the country.

"Future risks from climate change depend primarily on decisions made today," the report said, making clear that projections could change, but only if greenhouse emissions are sharply curbed.

Mr Trump's administration has been rolling back Obama-era environmental and climate protections to maximize production of domestic fossil fuels, including crude oil, already the highest in the world, above Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Experts told the New York Times the president's political critics and climate activists could use the major report to battle Mr Trump's environmental policies.

"This report will weaken the Trump administration's legal case for undoing climate change regulations, and it strengthens the hands of those who go to court to fight them," Michael Oppenheimer, a professor of geosciences and international affairs at Princeton, said.

The dire impacts of climate change could cost the U.S. hundreds of billions of dollars annually, the report said, threatening agriculture production for corn and soybean farms, two major U.S. industries.

The changing climate will also cost fishers nearly \$230m by the end of the century as ocean acidification increasingly develops across the nation's coastlines.

Global warming could greatly increase the spread of disease and increase mental health issues, as well as a sharp decrease in air quality across the country.

Water supplies and damage to infrastructure would be likely under even some of the best case examples, in which the temperature would still continue to rise.

In a statement, Brenda Ekwurzel, director of climate science at the Union of Concerned Scientists and one of the authors behind the report, stressed the need for the U.S.



government to respond to the report with action.

"This report makes it clear that climate change is not some problem in the distant future. It's happening right now in every part of the country," she said.

The fourth National Climate Assessment supported previous research conducted by government analysts, which also showed extreme adverse impacts on the economy and community health due to climate change.

Last year, Mr Trump announced the U.S. was withdrawing from the 2015 Paris Climate Accord, claiming the environmental benefits did not outweigh the potential damage the agreement would have on the U.S. economy.

Climate change is likely to increase all Americans' exposure to food borne and waterborne diseases, as well as mosquito and tick-borne diseases like the Zika virus, dengue, and cases of West Nile, which could double in

levels by 2050, according to the report.

The impact of increasing temperatures is also expected to cause a surge in the rate of premature deaths to 2,000 annually by 2090.

Meanwhile, none of the countries included in the G20 have met their climate targets, according to research, despite the U.S. being among the only nations to withdraw its support from the Paris Accord.

The changing climate could pose enormous consequences when it comes to wildfire seasons — and may have already proven how dire those consequences can be.

California, which saw the deadliest and most destructive fire in history this month, could face blazes up to six times larger in size and scope by 2050, along with other regions across the U.S.

The report concludes "that the evidence of human-caused climate change is overwhelming and continues to strengthen, that the impacts of climate change are intensifying across the country, and that climate-related threats to Americans' physical, social, and economic well-being are rising".

It followed the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's latest report published in October, which indicated the world may have just a few decades left to prevent the depletion of virtually all coral reefs, and to keep temperatures from warming more than 2C, along with other detrimental consequences.

(Source: The Independent)

Second Announcement

Call for public tender (First/Second publish)
Two-Stage (semi compressed) tender
Subject of Tender: (THREE CONE BITS)

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1397.4322

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering syst em	Tender No. /indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3179254	9522017	101.686,000,000

Qualitative evaluation of tenderers

Method
Based on minimum scoring made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms. (Min 60)

Purchasing & Submitting Tender/Document Distribution by Company

Distribution Place	A) Hall No. :316, 3thfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept. (DRILLING PROJECTS), National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. B) jomhour street , yaghma alley nioc 8th building floor no : 04 room no 428 -tehran -iran
Submitting Method	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 5100 00 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR52010004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" Issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender
Documents Receiving Method	Documents. 14 Days after the last time of Purchasing, (23/12/2018)
Closing date	A d d r e s s H Hall NO. 107, 1st floor, Tender committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569

Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	3,534,000,000Rial/73,026Euro
Type of guarantee	• ✓ Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. • ✓ Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR35010004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran. "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

(Name of department)
More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on:
www.nidc.ir <http://sapp.ir/nidc-pr>

تهران تایمز نویت اول ۰۹/۰۳/۹۷ نویت دوم ۰۹/۰۵/۹۷

Paris police fire tear gas, water cannon against 'yellow vest' protesters

1→ Police said the protesters had tried to break through a cordon several times but had been prevented from doing so, with tear gas used more than once.

"We have just demonstrated peacefully, and we were tear gassed," said Christophe, 49, who traveled from the Isere region in eastern France with his wife to protest in the capital. "We see how we are welcomed in Paris."

Paris police authorities said Saturday's incidents were linked to the "presence of members of the far-right who harassed the security forces."

The 'yellow vest' protesters were seen ripping up paving stones or starting to build barricades.

Nearly 300,000 people blocked motorways, roundabouts, businesses, and fuel depots last Saturday and smaller protests have continued this week, with an estimated 5,000 people wearing the fluorescent yellow jackets taking part on Friday.

The demonstrations were sparked by an increase in diesel tax, justified as an anti-pollution levy by the government, but have since morphed into a broad opposition front to centrist Macron.

"I hope there will be a veritable yellow tide," one of the leaders of the movement, right-wing political figure Frank Buhler, said this week as he urged supporters to descend on Paris.

But with some protesters baulking at the cost of travelling to the capital, it was unclear whether the organizers would achieve their aim of causing gridlock in the City of Light.

Protesters had converged early on Saturday on the Place de l'Etoile at the top of the Champs-Elysee avenue, shouting "Macron resign."

More than 35,000 people had vowed



on Facebook to rally in the Place de la Concorde, a gathering banned by authorities due to its proximity to the presidential palace.

Police early on Saturday had cordoned off the zone that included the Place de la Concorde, the National Assembly and a section of the Champs-Elysee.

"In this zone, no demonstration, no gathering, no march linked to the 'yellow vests' can take place," said Paris Police Chief Michel Delpuech.

He said mobile police units backed by helicopters were ready to intervene in case of violence or attempts to block the Paris ring road.

Paris authorities have authorized a demonstration in a park next to the Eiffel Tower.

"The government has done everything to demonize the movement that will take

place in Paris," said Clement Jonie as he joined protesters gathering in the west of Paris early on Saturday.

"We hear the deputies from the [governing] LREM say 'we will hold the course' but the movement is on its way, it is not ready to stop," said the 47-year-old logistician, who had traveled in from the suburbs.

Two people have died and over 750 people, including 136 police officers, were injured during the week of demonstrations that shone a light on frustration over stagnant spending power and the rollback in public services in some areas of France.

On Friday evening, a man with an explosive device and demanding protesters to be allowed to meet the French president turned himself in to police in Angers in western France.

"He demanded that the yellow vests be received at the Elysee' presidential palace,

local prosecutor Yves Gambert told AFP.

Local official Bernard Gonzalez said: "There was a real risk, real danger, he had an explosive charge around his neck... This was not fake."

Former investment banker Macron was elected on a pledge to put more money in workers' pockets but the effects of his reforms on purchasing power – persistently shown as one of the biggest concerns of the French – have been limited so far.

The poor and low-paid are particularly incensed at his decision to hike anti-pollution taxes on diesel and petrol, while scrapping a wealth tax on the rich.

Opposition parties on the hard left and right have cheered on the protesters, whose revolt was described by 77 percent of respondents in an Odoxa poll for Le Figaro newspaper as "justified."

"It's the cry of a France that is struggling and fed-up," Jordan Bardella, spokesman for the far-right National Rally (former National Front) said.

Macron, who is under pressure to tackle pollution ahead of European Parliament elections in which the environment is expected to feature prominently, has refused to back down on taxing polluters.

But with his ratings languishing at record lows of under 30 percent, he has sought to present a more empathetic side.

Next week, he will unveil a new energy plan that will aim to make the shift towards cleaner fuel and power more "acceptable."

"We have heard the message of citizens," one of his aides said on Thursday.

Revolts against taxes have been a feature of French public life for centuries – citizens pay some of the highest in Europe as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – while fuel price protests are a common occurrence.

(Source: AFP)

EU army won't threaten NATO future: ex-CIA official

1→ A: President Macron probably did not mean that he envisioned a U.S. military attack on France or Western Europe. He probably meant there was a need to "defend" against the United States in the sense that the Trump administration's policies and perspectives were causing real danger to European security in other ways.

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

A: There is no reason NATO's future needs to be threatened by any of this. An irony is that European self-sufficiency in defense, as a European military force would embody, would mean Europe assuming more of the burden for its own defense—which is what Donald Trump has been calling for every time he complains about NATO and its members.

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

A: Parallel EU and NATO security missions outside the core European area are possible and feasible. They also would not be entirely unprecedented. Bosnia is a place where the EU and NATO have essentially been performing parallel security missions. Those missions began when that part of the Balkans was out-of-area for both the EU and NATO.

U.S. and Saudi nuclear options

1→ To compensate for a potential weakening in its alliance with Washington, Saudi Arabia has established military relations with Russia and, some time ago, secretly purchased missiles from China.



Saudi Arabia is also seeking to use its nuclear program to balance Iran's military capabilities. In this regard, Richard Nephew says, "The Saudis are concerned about Iran's nuclear program and want to ensure that they are in possession of a similarly advanced one. What exactly would be required in that—just reactors? Enrichment?—are subjects of speculation and interest of course." Paul Pillar, who was CIA intelligence analyst for 28 years, also believes that "the Saudis have been interested all along in developing a nuclear program, and keeping pace with Iran involves part of their motivations."

Washington is worried about the transfer of nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia. Even if the International Atomic Energy Agency closely monitors Saudi Arabia's nuclear activities, it cannot prevent the country from obtaining an atomic bomb. After all, some countries like India and Israel promised the United States not to seek nuclear weapons but ultimately broke their promise.

To prevent the Saudis from building a nuclear weapons program, the United States will need to insist on several guarantees. The most important issues revolve around dual-use technologies, such as uranium enrichment and spent fuel reprocessing, which can be used for either civilian or military purposes. As Richard Nephew says, "The Saudis may not wish to give up their right to such technologies (an opinion not unfamiliar to Iranians) but this is not the same as seeking those technologies outright." Further, Washington could insist that Saudi Arabia adopt the Additional Protocol, an agreement that provides the IAEA additional monitoring and access rights, acquisition from foreign suppliers of nuclear fuel for the entire life of the reactor, and the return of the spent fuel from the reactor to the supplier.

Of course, the United States worries that imposing more limits on the enrichment of uranium and reprocessing of spent reactor fuel will merely push Saudi Arabia toward non-U.S. companies.

As a model, the United States has looked to the agreement it reached several years ago with the United Arab Emirates. In that accord, the UAE agreed to forgo enrichment and reprocessing in return for receiving nuclear material, equipment, and know-how from the United States. This 123 Agreement (based on Section 123 of the U.S. Atomic Energy Act of 1954) has become known as the "gold standard."

Saudi cooperation with American companies requires such a 123 Agreement between the United States and Saudi Arabia. But the Trump administration hasn't decided whether it will insist on the "gold standard" provisions against enrichment and reprocessing, though some members of Congress and nonproliferation advocacy groups have insisted that it do so. The United States should promptly negotiate and finalize a 123 Agreement with Saudi Arabia. But it must follow the gold standard. In this way, the United States can contribute to Saudi Arabia's efforts to modernize its economy and society and yet also ensure that Riyadh does not acquire nuclear weapons and destabilize the Middle East even further.

(Source: Lobelog)

Palestinian boosting resistance; what did the Zionists say about the defeat?

1→ It is clear that increasing the self-defense and deterrence of Islamic resistance groups in the occupied territories has made the Zionist enemy to realize one of its most important war policies, namely, "the policy of terror" has failed.

Within a few days of come back of the Zionist regime, resistance groups fired a total of 500 missiles and rockets at the Zionist settlement that shocked the most powerful Zionist military commanders. It was a massive missile force that not only forced the enemy to retreat, but also led Zionist authorities and their affiliated media to admit defeat to resistance.

EU blasts new Israeli demolition campaign in East al-Quds

The European Union (EU) has denounced Israel's new demolition campaign in East al-Quds (Jerusalem) under which a number of shops and petrol stations have been demolished since Wednesday.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini issued a statement on Saturday against Israel's "policy of settlement construction and expansion," saying it is undermining any chances of peace with Palestinians.

The policy "continues to undermine the possibility of a viable two-state solution, with Jerusalem [al-Quds] as the future capital of both states, which is the only realistic way to achieve a just and lasting peace," she said.

Israeli bulldozers destroyed 16 shops and three petrol stations at the Shuafat refugee camp in East al-Quds on Wednesday as troops stood by.

The EU also denounced Israel's advancement of plans for construction of close to 800 units for settlers in East al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Last week, the bloc condemned Israel's "legal proceedings" that could lead to the eviction of 700 Palestinians living in the Silwan neighborhood of East al-Quds (Jerusalem).

"The European Union is strongly opposed to Israel's settlement policy, illegal under international law, and actions taken in that context, such as forced transfers, evictions, and demolitions," Mogherini's office said.

"The EU expects the Israeli authorities to reconsider and reverse these decisions," the statement added.

Israel occupied the Palestinian territory of the West Bank, including East al-Quds, in 1967. It later annexed East al-Quds in a move never recognized by the international community.

Ever since the occupation, the Israeli regime has been setting up hundreds of illegal settlements across the West Bank in direct violation of the international law, which bans construction on occupied territory.

In order to make room for settlements, it regularly levels Palestinian homes, claiming they had been built



without a "building permit."

Palestinians in East al-Quds (Jerusalem) and parts of the West Bank say it is nearly impossible for them to get approvals for constructions.

(Source: Press TV)

Mr Trump, you don't know anything about Afghanistan!

By Asif Durrani

President Trump's remarks against Pakistan last Sunday once again reminded the policy makers of the two countries about the seriousness of the Pakistan-U.S. relations negotiation, especially when a maverick person like Trump is directly involved in the conduct of bilateral relations. During an interview with the Fox TV President Trump again blamed Pakistan of "not doing a damn thing for the U.S. despite receiving billions of dollars". This was the second time in less than a year that President Trump so bluntly used derogatory language against Pakistan. Either he is so naïve or his advisors deliberately poison him about Pakistan that his remarks lack basic etiquettes of conversation about a sovereign country.

Prime Minister Imran Khan rightly put the record straight when in his twitter message he rejected Trump's tirade against Pakistan in a series of tweets, saying "Pakistan participated in the U.S. 'war on terror' even though no Pakistani was involved in the September 2001, attacks on America; Pakistan suffered 75,000 casualties in this war and over \$123 billion was lost to economy; U.S. 'aid' was a miniscule \$20 billion."

Regarding Trump's claim of giving billions of dollars, PM Khan reminded the American President that "Our tribal areas were devastated & millions of people were uprooted from their homes. The war drastically impacted the lives of ordinary Pakistanis. Pakistan continues to provide free lines of ground and air communications (GLOCs/ALOCs). Can Mr Trump name another ally that gave such sacrifices?" asked Prime Minister Khan.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Trump has chosen twitter, a public forum, to malign Pakistan in utter disregard of diplomatic norms and etiquettes. And he has been taking relations with Pakistan so casually that he dragged Pakistan without substantiating his argument.

It is apparent that Mr Trump is unaware of the ground realities of Afghanistan. He seems to be unaware of the reports of his own Special Inspector General on Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) which woe-



Former Pakistan ambassador in Iran

fully describes the wasteful expenditure on Afghanistan without returns to the U.S., either in terms of political stability or socio-economic development in the war-ravaged country.

What Prime Minister Imran Khan did not tell President Trump out of politeness and what he should know in earnest is, first, that Afghanistan has become a narco-state under the noses of U.S.-NATO forces, producing \$50 billion worth of heroine for the European markets. Out of which approximately \$5 billion returns to Afghanistan to line the pockets of who-is-who of Afghanistan, including Taliban. Therefore, America will have to accept the blame of making Afghanistan a narco-state and contributing to the war ravaged economy of the country. It is equally responsible for encouraging the warlords to keep the country destabilised and at times presenting notorious warlords as heroes which can hardly contribute to the stability of Afghanistan.

Second, SIGAR claims that the U.S. spent \$168 billion on Afghanistan's reconstruction during the past 17 years. Anyone familiar with Afghanistan and its socio-economic conditions in 2018, will hear this news with raised eyebrows as all socio-economic indicators tell a different story and despite claims

of spending billions of dollars Afghanistan is still ranked at the bottom of human development indicators. It is not surprising that 70-80 percent of the American money is straightaway taken away by the American contractors while the rest is spent at the whims of the American bosses serving in Afghanistan. Mr Trump needs to ask his own administration "where did the money go?"

Third, Mr Trump has not been briefed of Indian machinations in Afghanistan; under the guise of reconstruction Indian companies, especially Border Roads Organisation (BRO), have largely been hunting for moles to create chaos in Pakistan. India infiltrated Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and has been spending money through tribals to stoke unrest in Pakistan. Balochistan is the new target for Indians, where its smartness cost its ace spy Kulbhushan Jadhav a Commander rank Naval Officer deployed by the Indian Spy agency RAW. Obviously, Mr. Trump 'wouldn't know' what is happening in Afghanistan to create unrest in Pakistan. For him it is the 'billions of dollars' script which matters irrespective of the cost Pakistan has to pay for America's misadventure.

Fourth, Taliban and Haqqani Network are considered as products of Pakistan. Mr

Trump should not forget the old British adage about Afghans; "you can rent an Afghan, you cannot buy him". If Taliban and Haqqanis are in Pakistan's pocket then there is a need to change the history of Afghanistan which claims that "Afghans are fiercely independent people". Mr. Trump should know that their staunch allies Karzai and Ghani are labelled as 'American puppets' which is why Taliban have refused to talk to the Afghan government in Kabul. In Afghan, especially in Pashtun tradition you cannot survive with such a 'title' even if you were to stay in power for 17 years. Mr Trump's diatribe against Pakistan cannot deliver him Taliban come what may. He has to listen to Pakistan's advice of promoting reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Fifth, instead of wasting hundreds and million dollars of bombs, Mr Trump would be well advised to win the sympathies of Afghan population by giving them resources for which majority of Afghans have the absorption capacity. Agriculture and livestock are sectors in which Afghans have the expertise to excel and can engage in gainful employment. By making available livestock and substitute crops people can be persuaded not to grow poppy and the country can be turned into a sustainable economy in the shortest possible time.

Lastly, there is realisation at the regional level not to allow Afghanistan suffer perennially at the hands of unscrupulous warlords and drug barons. All of Afghanistan's neighbours support the idea of reconciliation in Afghanistan which was also evident in the statements of these countries at the Moscow Conference on Afghanistan held on November 9. The sooner the US heads towards reconciliation without encouraging warlords, the sooner the tone for the future contours of a stable and prosperous Afghanistan will be set. And for that the American president has to be on top of his brief about Afghanistan. Right now, you don't know anything about Afghanistan, Mr. Trump.

(Source: Published in Daily Times, November 25th 2018)

Mourinho criticises players after Palace draw

Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho questioned his players' heart and desire after they slipped further behind in the race for the top four with a drab 0-0 draw against Crystal Palace.

With 21 points from their first 13 league games, it is United's worst start to a campaign for 28 years and Mourinho pulled no punches after the stalemate at Old Trafford.

"Not enough intensity, not enough desire," Mourinho told a news conference.

"I think we played a game like one more game and I don't think the game is one more game. It is a game we really need to win. It was a game we need to win and my feeling is not enough from the heart, we must play with brain, we must also play with heart and I think there was not enough heart."

When it was put to Mourinho that desire should be the minimum for a professional footballer, the Portuguese coach replied: "I agree."

The 55-year-old went on to suggest he is having to work with players who would be tempted to go out on Saturday night despite suffering another disappointing result.

"I am what I am and every individual is different individual," he said.

"There are people who have a bad dinner, there is people that will enjoy a nice dinner and there will even be people that will party. I think that's the way it is."

United are back at Old Trafford on Tuesday with a place in the knockout rounds of the Champions League up for grabs against Young Boys.

(Source: Soccer.net)

Anti-doping agency says UEFA followed the rules in Ramos case

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has confirmed that UEFA acted properly in a case involving the possible use of a banned substance by Real Madrid captain Sergio Ramos ahead of the 2017 Champions League final.

UEFA complied with the relevant directives, WADA said in a letter.

The matter had become public on Friday after German news-weekly Der Spiegel ran a report from Football Leaks contending that Ramos tested positive for dexamethasone following Real Madrid's victory over Juventus in the Champions League final, reports Efe news.

Dexamethasone, an anti-inflammatory, is permitted if the player gives notice before testing. In this case, according to Football Leaks, the UEFA testers were advised that Ramos, 32, had taken a different drug.

UEFA accepted the explanation from Ramos and the club that the team's doctor made a mistake.

Der Spiegel's story also maintained that "no disciplinary action was taken, neither against the player nor against the team doctor from Real Madrid, despite all of the anomalies in the case."

Real Madrid reacted to the story within hours.

"Sergio Ramos has never breached anti-doping regulations," the club said in a brief statement, adding that UEFA "immediately closed the case referred to, as is customary in such instances, following tests carried out by experts from the World Anti-Doping Association and UEFA itself."

UEFA likewise rejected accusations of misconduct.

"All UEFA doping control cases are conducted in full compliance with the World Anti-Doping Agency Code," Europe's soccer confederation said in a statement.

"WADA itself has officially confirmed that everything was dealt with appropriately by UEFA and in accordance with the Code," the statement said.

(Source: Calciomercato)

Bayern chief Hoeness attacks players after Dusseldorf fiasco

Bayern Munich president Uli Hoeness launched a scathing attack on his players on Saturday night after the German champions surrendered a two-goal lead to draw 3-3 with Bundesliga minnows Fortuna Dusseldorf.

Troubled Bayern are in fifth place, nine points behind leaders Borussia Dortmund, who won 2-1 at Mainz thanks to a late Lukasz Piszczek winner, after hat-trick hero Dodi Lukebakio scored an added time equaliser for Fortuna to rob Bayern of what had looked to be a routine win. "What happened today is not acceptable," said Hoeness. "I need to recover from this shock, it's going to be a difficult evening for my wife."

"We will use the next few days to work out why we are playing such bad football, such uninspired football with so little self-confidence," added Hoeness, who said that some players' mistakes were "slapstick".

Hoeness said he had not written Bayern off in the title race, but it would be "presumptuous" to talk about winning the league after Saturday's performance.

The 66-year-old said coach Niko Kovac was safe in his job until next Tuesday's Champions League clash with Benfica, where Bayern can secure progress to the knockout stages with a win, but hinted that Kovac's position was not secure.

"We are going to sleep on it. Niko Kovac will definitely be our coach against Benfica," he said. "Then we need to do an analysis."

Niklas Sule opened the scoring for Bayern on 17 minutes, and Thomas Mueller doubled the lead with a typical poacher's finish a few minutes later. Poor defending saw Dusseldorf snatch a surprise goal just before half-time as Lukebakio popped up in the box to fire the ball in from close range.

Mueller appeared to have crushed the resistance in the second half, when he swept in Bayern's third from the edge of the box after a clever back-heeled assist from Robert Lewandowski. Yet Lukebakio twice beat the offside trap to score two late goals and leave Bayern stunned.

They remain a point behind fourth-placed Leipzig, who lost 1-0 away to Wolfsburg, Jerome Roussillon's second-half winner decided a hard-fought game, and ended a five-game run of clean sheets for Leipzig.

(Source: AFP)

The worst Real Madrid of the season

The 3-0 scoreline doesn't begin to reflect everything that happened on Saturday in Ipurua.

Eibar deserved an even larger margin of victory against the worst Real Madrid side we have seen yet this season.

Thibaut Courtois was the best of the visiting players, who managed just one real chance, and the Belgian made three important saves.

The talk afterwards among the 300 or so Real Madrid supporters who made the trip to Eibar was whether the defeat was worse or not than the one at the Camp Nou, where it seemed Los Blancos had hit rock bottom and which resulted in Julen Lopetegui being replaced by Santiago Solari.

However, the Argentine has been brought back down to earth after four straight wins thanks to an outstanding performance from Jose Luis Mendilibar's men.

They were lacking in many departments, with five of their issues discussed here.

■ Lack of attitude

The attitude is usually a recurring theme when it comes to Real Madrid defeats, but yesterday that word came out of the dressing room and not just from the journalists.

Sergio Ramos, the man in charge of offering explanations after the game, was forceful and critical of his team.

"We didn't match the opposition in intensity and attitude, it was a bad performance," he explained.

"We must self-criticise, look inward and congratulate Eibar because we were not at their level."

"When you don't have an attitude and the difference with the opponent is so big, then you lose."

"If you lack desire and intensity then you will lose."

■ Lack of football

Ramos critiqued the attitude of his teammates, but the football was also an issue.

Solari opted for Dani Ceballos to replace the injured Casemiro and, this time, his decision was the wrong one.

A mistake from the midfielder at a Real Madrid corner resulted in an Eibar goal, with the hosts mounting the perfect counter attack to go 1-0 in front.

"We have to improve in these areas," Solari noted.

"In one transition, they punished us from a corner in our favour." Apart from the specific failure of Ceballos in that instance, it wasn't the only thing that went wrong.

Real Madrid went to Ipurua with a clear plan that didn't



work. Solari, aware of the high pressure on a small field that would come, tried a direct game that ensured the ball bypassed the feet of Toni Kroos and Luka Modric on several occasions.

Ramos and Raphael Varane often looked to find Karim Benzema and Gareth Bale directly with long balls, but it was a misguided strategy.

Benzema did what he could with such service, but was also caught offside on seven occasions.

■ Lack of solidarity

Alvaro Odriozola started ahead of Dani Carvajal, who is

just back from injury, and he had a nightmare afternoon.

He was charged with dealing with the overlapping Marc Cucurella, the best of the bunch for Eibar, but failed miserably, although he didn't receive any help during the game.

Bale stuck to his role as a forward and didn't look to track back to help his teammate deal with the issues on the wing.

That resulted in Cucurella having the freedom of that flank and he made the most of it by causing endless problems for Los Blancos.

(Source: Marca)

Spurs signal intent with mauling of muddled Chelsea



Tottenham Hotspur buried Chelsea's hopes of a Champions League spot last season with a 3-1 win at Stamford Bridge and Saturday's impressive victory by the same scoreline at Wembley could be significant for the London teams in this campaign too.

Spurs, who for years seemed doomed to lose to their cross-town rivals, produced their best performance of the season as the muscular midfield pairing of Mousa Dembele and Eric Dier led a high-pressure harassment of the visitors.

Chelsea, by contrast, were their worst since Maurizio Sarri took over as coach this year and they meekly surrendered their 12-match unbeaten Premier League run under the Italian.

Spurs leap-frogged Chelsea into third place in the table and Arsenal will be only one point behind Chelsea in the fourth Champions League spot if they beat Bournemouth on Sunday. Spurs showed more urgency from the kick-off, snuffing out Chelsea's Italian playmaker Jorginho and Belgian forward Eden Hazard as they raced into a 2-0 lead within 16 minutes through goals from Dele Alli and Harry Kane.

The final score could have been much

worse for Chelsea had it not been for a string of saves by Kepa Arrizabalaga and wasteful Spurs finishing.

Chelsea's hopes of a second-half comeback were destroyed by a goal of individual brilliance from South Korean winger Son Heung-min who ran half the length of the pitch as he outpaced Jorginho and wrong-footed David Luiz before shooting past Arrizabalaga.

Sarri had warned before the game that Chelsea's strong start to the season risked running out of steam, in large part because of the unfocused way they began matches.

"I knew very well that we had a lot of problems to solve and I think that today was clear for everybody," he told reporters.

"I told (the players) in the last two weeks that we had a big problem with the approach to the match and today we had the same problem."

Sarri lamented the "disaster" of his side's defensive work and Chelsea were just as ineffective in attack, forcing the manager to substitute out-of-form striker Alvaro Morata and play Hazard as the focal point of a forlorn attack.

(Source: Mirror)

Dembele salvages Barcelona late draw at Atletico



Ousmane Dembele's 90th-minute strike rescued Barcelona a point at Atletico Madrid in a 1-1 draw on Saturday that kept the Catalans top of La Liga.

The French winger came on as a substitute and drove in a low shot that deflected past Jan Oblak.

Atletico striker Diego Costa's 77th-minute header from Antoine Griezmann's corner was the first effort on target in a four clash and appeared to have sent the Madrid side top of the standings.

But Dembele's late contribution stopped Barcelona from falling to a second consecutive defeat and kept them one point ahead of their opponents at the summit.

Barca coach Ernesto Valverde brought Samuel Umtiti back into the side after nearly a two-month injury absence, and started with Dembele on the bench after defending the player on Friday following media reports of unprofessional behaviour.

Atletico set the pace in a miserable first half. Diego Simeone's side were typically cautious, reluctant to give Barcelona's top players much space to move into.

Sergio Busquets was booked on his 500th

appearance for Barcelona, the seventh player to reach that milestone, while Atletico's Lucas Hernandez also had his name taken for a foul on Lionel Messi.

The Argentine forward curled the free kick over the bar and it was as close as either side came before the break in a half with no shots on target, the first time that has happened in La Liga this season.

Costa went close to breaking the deadlock when he slid in for Griezmann's cross but Barca defender Gerard Pique got a touch to divert the ball out of the striker's path.

Atletico appealed for a penalty after Arturo Vidal headed the ball against his own hand but VAR did not require referee Jesus Gil Manzano to watch a replay of the incident.

Costa broke the deadlock, ending a personal 18-match goal drought in La Liga and scoring against Barca for the first time, and Valverde sent Dembele on to try to rescue a point.

The World Cup winner obliged at the death, taking Messi's pass, cutting inside and firing in a shot that deflected off Oblak past Lucas on the line.

(Source: Reuters)

'Dream come true' as Belgium win golf World Cup

Thomas Pieters and Thomas Detry held off Mexico and a charging Australia to win Belgium's first ever golf World Cup by three shots in a "dream come true" Sunday.

The pair began the final day of foursomes action, where teammates take it in turns to play the same ball, with a five-stroke lead at Melbourne's Metropolitan Golf Club.

But Australia's Mark Leishman and Cameron Smith narrowed the gap to two coming down the home straight with three birdies in a row, and Mexico's Abraham Ancer and Roberto Diaz were also closing in.

In a tense finale, the Belgians restored a three-stroke lead with a birdie on the 16th but a nervy bogey on the next meant they had to keep their cool on the final hole.

A perfect approach shot eased the pressure and they holed out for a closing 68 and a 23-under-par win, with Australia and Mexico joint second.

Danish defending champions Thorbjorn Olesen and Soren Kjeldsen carded a 65 to tie for fourth alongside Canada's Adam Hadwin and Nick Taylor, six behind Belgium. Greece finished last from the 28 teams.

"It's a dream come true to play it, let alone win it," said Detry, 25, after pocketing the biggest cheque of his short two-year professional career.

"It was a huge thrill to play with Thomas (Pieters). We were on a college team (University of Illinois) together as amateurs in the US and we are great friends."

The win earned the pair US\$1.12 million each and a



maiden World Cup crown for their country, although Ryder Cup player Flory Van Donck captured the individual title in 1960.

The more established Pieters, a three-time European Tour winner and Ryder Cup player, said that winning the World Cup was not something players normally have on their bucket list.

"But when it happens it feels every bit as good as winning an individual event," said the 26-year-old.

"We'll both gain a lot of confidence out of this. We felt Australia coming behind us and we answered."

- Best team all week -

Australia's Leishman said that despite not winning, he and Smith were happy to make a fight of it and congratulated Belgium for being "the best team all week".

"They (Belgium) didn't really give us a chance. We took it to them and played good and made it interesting," he said. "It's a pity that we weren't a couple of shots better, but we put up a good fight."

Australia, who set out six behind the Belgians, cut the margin to two after Smith holed out from a greenside trap for a birdie at the 14th.

The Belgium duo, playing two groups behind, could not ignore the mighty cheer that went up from the gallery.

Pieters and Thomas had been ice cool for most of the front nine and made the turn in 33, helped by an eagle three at the fourth.

But they got the wobbles on the back nine, dropping a shot at the par-three 12th when Pieters' tee shot put his partner in a greenside trap.

The Belgians were able to stretch their lead out to three again at 14 and when Leishman missed a birdie chance at 16, the Aussie challenge looked over.

But then the Belgians shot themselves in the foot with Detry missing a three-footer for par at 15.

(Source: AFP)

IPL: Persepolis, Tractor Sazi play out stalemate

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Persepolis and Tractor Sazi of Tabriz football teams have played out a tense goalless draw in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Sunday.

Persepolis were the better team in the first half and could have scored from a set-piece by their Iraqi midfielder Bashar Resan but Tractor Sazi goalkeeper punched away the ball.

In the second half, Tractor Sazi scored a goal by Ehsan Haji Safi but the goal was ruled out by the referee for offside.

"I am satisfied with the way my boys played against Persepolis. We were the better team in the second half and scored a goal. Of course, I respect the referee's decision," Tractor Sazi coach Mohammad Taghavi said after the match.

"Tractor Sazi need time to play as we want. I think we will be a better team in the future," he added.

IPL leader Padideh, earned a late victory over Saipa in Mashhad thanks to a Mohammad Ghaseminejad's 82nd minute goal.

Esteghlal defeated rock-bottom Esteghlal Khuzestan 1-0 courtesy of a goal from Rouhollah Bagheri in Ahvaz.

On Friday, Paykan lost to Foolad 3-2 in Tehran, Sepahan were held 1-1 by Machine Sazi in Tabriz, Naft Masjed Soleyman edged past Sepidrood in Rasht and Sanant Naft drew 1-1 with Nassaji in Abadan.

On Saturday, Zob Ahan lost their home match 1-0 to Pars Jonoubi.

Padideh remain top of the table with 29 points from 12 matches.

Sepahan are second with 26 points. Tractor Sazi sit third with 23 points and Persepolis remain fourth with 21 points with two games in hands.



Iran's Esteghlal in 'Group of Death' in 2019 ACL

GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C	GROUP D
01 AL NASR (UAE)	01 AL ITIHAD (KSA)	01 AL DHABAB SC (QAT)	01 PERSEPOLIS (IRN)
02 AL ZAMALEK (EGY)	02 AL WAKHRA FC (KWT)	02 AL HILAL (KSA)	02 AL SAAD (QAT)
03 PLAY-OFF 4 WINNERS	03 ESTERKHAH (IRN)	03 AL AIN (UAE)	03 AL SHU'BAH (KSA)
04 PLAY-OFF 2 WINNERS	04 PLAY-OFF 3 WINNERS	04 ESTEGHLAGH FC (IRN)	04 PLAY-OFF 1 WINNERS

GROUP E	GROUP F	GROUP G	GROUP H
01 KOREA REP. 2ND CLUB	01 SANGHVI VIKRAMS (CHN)	01 JAPAN FC (JPN)	01 SENGHVI (IND)
02 JOKER (SRI LANKA)	02 KOREA REP. 1ST CLUB	02 CHINA FC 2ND CLUB	02 DAMASKUS FRONTALE (SYR)
03 PLAY-OFF 4 WINNERS	03 MELBOURNE VICTORY (AUS)	03 JONDA HYUNDAI MOTORS (KOR)	03 SHANGHAI SIPG (CHN)
04 PLAY-OFF 3 WINNERS	04 PLAY-OFF 2 WINNERS	04 BURIRAM UNITED (THA)	04 PLAY-OFF 1 WINNERS

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran's Esteghlal and Persepolis learned their fates at the new season of the 2019 AFC Champions League (IPL) on Thursday.

The challenge for the group stage of the ACL was finalized following the competition's official draw in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Esteghlal of Iran have been drawn with Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal, the 2017 runners-up and two-time winners, Al Duhail SC of Qatar and the UAE's Al Ain in Group C.

Persepolis, who lost 2-0 to Kashima Antlers on aggregate in this year's final, will begin their campaign in the West Zone's Group D where they have Qatar's Al Saad

SC, Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli Saudi FC and the Play-off 1 (UAE/UZB/IRQ) winners for company.

Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal, the 2017 runners-up and two-time winners, will face Al Duhail SC of Qatar, UAE's Al Ain and Iran's Esteghlal FC in Group C.

In the East Zone, two-time winner Jeonbuk was drawn in Group G and is set to face Japan's second-placed club, China PR's runner-up and 2018 Thai League 1 champion Buriram United.

Guangzhou Evergrande FC of China PR, champion in 2013 and 2015, will face the second qualifier from Korea Republic, Australia's Melbourne Victory and winner of Play-off 3 (JPN, THA, PHI, MYA) in Group F.

Iran down Thailand in IFCPF Asia-Oceania Championship opener



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran started the 2018 IFCPF (International Federation of Cerebral Palsy Football) Asia-Oceania Championship on a high note on Saturday.

Team Melli defeated Thailand 7-1 in Kish Island in southern Iran in Persian Gulf.

Iran captain Abdorreza Karimizadeh scored five goals and Mehdi Torabi was on target two times.

Earlier in the day, Australia defeated South Korea 11-0.

2018 IFCPF Asia-Oceania Championships

is an important event for the participants since the top two teams will advance directly to the 2019 IFCPF World Cup – Pinto Madrid, Spain.

Football 7-a-side was introduced to the Paralympics during the 1984 New York Games, originally called Cerebral Palsy football. The sport now includes athletes with other brain injuries and similar conditions.

Football 7-a-side is governed by the Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association (CPISRA) using the modified rules of the International Federation of Associated Football (FIFA).

Iran basketball team beat Qatar in friendly



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran national basketball team defeated Qatar 75-64 in a friendly match in Doha on Friday as part of preparation for the FIBA World Cup qualifier's fifth and penultimate window.

Team Melli are scheduled to play the Qatari team once again on Sunday.

Iran take on Australia on Nov. 30 in Melbourne then the Philippines on Dec. 3 in Pasay.

Team Melli currently are second in Group F with a 6-2 record, behind Aus-

tralia (7-1) and above the Philippines (5-3).

Also in the same group are Japan, Kazakhstan and Qatar.

Iran coach Mehran Shahintab has not invited Hamed Haddadi, Samad Nikkhab Bahrami and Arsalan Kazemi to Team Melli.

The 2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup qualification (Asia) process will determine the seven teams from FIBA Asia and/or FIBA Oceania that will participate at the 2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup in China.

Luis Figo promotes blind football

Portuguese football star Luis Figo and UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin were among the attendants at the blind football training sessions in Almaty, in early November, looking to introduce the sport in Kazakhstan and Eurasia.

The workshops, which were part of the UEFA-funded "IBSA Blind Football Development Project Europe", took place at the academy of country's leading football club FC Kairat and brought together 10 players and 10 coaches.

"Visit of the @fc_kairat facilities. Thanks Kairat Boranbayev for the wonderful experience!" tweeted Figo, referring to the president of the Kazakh club.

IBSA Football Committee chair Ulrich Pfisterer, who delivered the sessions, was impressed with the set up and the team's potential.

"The training sessions have gone very well and I believe the team has a great future. I was very impressed with the support from FC Kairat to set up the programme and it is an example of how to integrate blind football within a major club," Pfisterer said.

"It's a good practise that other football clubs should follow. We will continue to support Kazakhstan's efforts to develop the game, and we look forward to welcoming the Kazakh national team to IBSA tournaments soo," Pfisterer added.

FC Kairat blind football captain Kanat Akymbaev was



delighted with the workshops.

"I've only been playing for two months now, but blind football is good for our health and it helps us develop our spatial awareness and build up our self-confidence in all areas of our daily life.

"When I'm playing I forget I'm blind and I feel at home

on the pitch. All the players are blind, and we understand each other."

Aiming for Tokyo 2020

Akymbaev went on to explain his hopes for the future. "We have strong support from the club – from the administration and all the coaches – and we'll work hard to develop and improve the game in the country."

"Our goal is to play at international level and represent Kazakhstan, competing in tournaments and maybe looking to qualify for Tokyo 2020. In short, our aims are to develop, grow, improve and win."

FC Kairat coach and team coordinator Chingis Temerkhanov highlighted the ambitious plans in place to expand blind football nationwide.

"FC Kairat is developing an 'Equality Plan' to roll out the game in the whole country. We will meet with potential sponsors soon to seek additional support, and the aim is to set up a national blind football youth league."

According to Temerkhanov, the plan includes visits to schools to introduce blind football to local children.

"There are nine schools for the blind in Kazakhstan and we plan to visit all of them and hold workshops to introduce the game to the children, the staff and parents."

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Mardani takes bronze at World Taekwondo Grand Pri

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Sajjad Mardani from Iran won a bronze medal at the World Taekwondo Grand Prix in Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates on Friday.

Mardani beat Kazakhstan's taekwondo athlete in golden round at over-80kg.

Vladislav Larin of Russia won his fourth heavyweight Grand Prix title this year as he defeated Kyo-don In of South Korea.

The 2018 World Taekwondo Grand Prix is the 6th edition of the World Taekwondo Grand Prix series.

This is the first year where it is five Grand Prix events.

Iran likely to play friendly matches with Palestine and Lebanon

Persian football — Iran national football team, known as Team Melli, will likely play two friendly matches with Palestine and Lebanon in Doha, Qatar.

Team Melli will travel to Doha on December 17 and will hold a training camp until January 2.

Team Melli are preparing for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup, where they have been drawn alongside Iraq, Yemen, and Vietnam in Group D.

Carlos Queiroz's team will reportedly play two friendly matches with Palestine and Lebanon during their Doha training camp.

The 2019 AFC Asian Cup will be held in the United Arab Emirates from January 5 to February 1.

Iran to host AFC Futsal Club Championship 2019

Mehr News — According to the official portal of Iran's Football Federation, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has given the green light to Iran to host the next edition of the competition, which is scheduled to be held in August 2019.

AFC representatives will pay a four-day visit to Isfahan from Dec. 4-7 to see if the city meets the requirements for hosting the international event.

The previous (9th) round of AFC Futsal Club Championship was held in Indonesia in August, where Iran's Mes Sungun claimed the title by gaining victory over Vietnam's representative in the final.

The competition was first introduced in 2006, when a trial edition, named 2006 Asia Futsal Cup, was run with six teams participating. Iranian team Shensa Saveh beat Uzbek Ardu FC 5-1 in the final. However, the first recognized edition by the AFC was held in 2010 and ran with ten teams, forming two groups of five teams. The top two finishers then proceeded to the semi-finals.

Since 2015 the final tournament is played with 12 teams.

Branko Ivankovic linked with Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors: Report

TASNIM — Iranian Persepolis football team's coach Branko Ivankovic has been reportedly linked with South Korea's champion Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors.

The Croatian coach is a nominee to replace Choi Kang-hee, who left the Korean giant after 13 years to join Chinese side Tianjin Quanjian.

Under leadership Choi, Jeonbuk won six K League 1 titles and lifted one Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Champions League trophy in 2016. He has been named league MVP four times since he joined Jeonbuk.

Branko Ivankovic has one-and-a-half year remaining on his contract with the Iranian football team.

Portuguese football coaches Jose Morais and Rui Faria also are the other two candidates to take the charge of Jeonbuk, Korea Football News reported.

Azmoun tops in FC Rubin Kazan

IRNA — Iranian striker Sardar Azmoun has been known by spectators as the best player in Russian association football club FC Rubin Kazan over the past two months.

Azmoun has achieved over 70% votes of fans.

Russian goalkeeper Ivan Kononov with 14% votes and the Russian central midfielder Igor Kononov with 10% votes ranked second and third.

Earlier, Azmoun was listed by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) as one of the six Asian stars that have shined during previous qualifying campaigns.

"Azmoun's talent was first noticed after his displays for Iran's U-19 teams in various competitions with his fine form earning him a move to Russia's Rubin Kazan at the age of just 18," AFC earlier said.

"During the qualifiers for the 2014 AFC U-19 Championship, Azmoun was particularly impressive in the 6-1 win over Lebanon as he scored twice and registered an assist," AFC added.

"Since then, Azmoun's rise has been meteoric, with the 22-year-old boasting 22 goals in 28 matches for the senior national team after making his debut in 2014."

Other starts were from UAE, China, Japan, Qatar and Thailand.

Iran crowned World Taekwondo Team champion

TASNIM — Shahr-dari Varamin of Iran claimed the title of the Fujairah 2018 World Taekwondo Team Championships.

The Iranian representative defeated Russia 31-30 in a breathtaking contest in the final match.

On the way to the final, Iran defeated Azerbaijan 66-58, China 45-44 and Uzbekistan 54-37 in Group B and collected 165 points.

Shahr-dari Varamin also defeated Kazakhstan 49-29 in the semi-final.

The competitions are being held in Fujairah, the UAE from November 22 to 25.

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Managing Director: Ali Asgari
Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
editor@tehrantimes.com
Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450
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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

One can purchase the world with contentment
and live in happiness with benevolence.

Imam Ali (AS)

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Painting

An exhibition of paintings by Sepideh Sahar is underway at Shirin Gallery.

The exhibit entitled "The Burned Garden" runs until December 5 at the gallery located at No. 5, 13th St., Karim Khan Ave.

Paintings by Nazanin Zadmehr are currently on display in an exhibition at Vista Gallery.

The exhibit titled "Three Quarters of the None Real Reality" runs until December 3 at the gallery that can be found at No. 11, 12th Alley, Mir Emad St.

Ace Gallery is hosting an exhibition of paintings by Marzieh Baqeri.

The exhibition named "Dinner, TehranParis" will run until November 30 at the gallery located at No. 1831 Shariati Ave., near the Qeitarieh neighborhood.

An exhibition of paintings by Ebrahim Faraji is currently underway at Tehran's CAMA – Contemporary and Modern Art Gallery.

The exhibit entitled "Retrospective" will run through December 4 at the gallery located at No. 44, 10th Golestan, Pasdaran St.

Elizabeth Holthaus-Mashayekhi is showcasing her latest paintings in an exhibition at A Gallery.

The exhibition named "Past in the Future" will be running until December 3 at the gallery that can be found at 7 Arshad Alley, off Azodi St., Karim Khan Ave.

Negar Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Jeiran Mahdavi.

Entitled "Sadhana", the exhibit will run until November 28 at the gallery located at 33 Delaram Alley, Roshanai St. in the Qeitarieh neighborhood.

Elaheh Asadi, Zahra Hosseini, Reihaneh Vafapur, Farzaneh Mahdavi, Azar Naeimi and several other artists are hanging their latest paintings in an exhibition at Sherveh Gallery.

The exhibition named "47 Colors" runs until November 28 at the gallery located at 9 Khojasteh Alley, Daemi St. off Fatemi St.

Shalman Gallery is hosting an exhibition of paintings by Mina Hassanzadeh, Ahmad Hosseini, Susan Sharifi and four other artists.

The exhibition will run until November 28 at the gallery that can be found at 27 Kavusi Alley, West Rudbar St., off Mirdamad Blvd.

Sculpture

A collection of sculptures by Abdorreza Qomashchi is on display in an exhibition at Etemad Gallery.

The exhibit named "Requiem" will be running until December 18 at the gallery located at No. 4 Bukan St., off Yaser Ave. in the Niavaran neighborhood.

Calligraphic painting

Calligraphic paintings by Ali Pasandideh are currently on display in an exhibition at Atashzad Gallery.

The exhibition will be running until November 28 at the gallery located at 3 North Abbaspur (Tavanir) St. near Vanak Sq.

Multimedia

Sheis Gallery is showcasing paintings and photos by a group of artists, including Zeinab Samimi, Fahimeh Mohammadi, Shideh Mirashrafi and Mahsa Firuzi.

The exhibition titled "Bright Fountain" runs until November 28 at the gallery, which can be found at Shirzad Alley, near Daneshju Park.

Graphic design icon Morteza Momayyez remembered at Iranian Artists Forum

A R T TEHRAN – The 13th anniversary of the passing of Morteza Momayyez who is considered to be the father of modern graphic art in Iran was commemorated at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran on Friday.

A number of Iranian artists and cultural figures attended the memorial organized in collaboration with the Morteza Momayyez Foundation, the forum announced in a press release on Saturday.

An exhibition displaying a collection of Momayyez's works also opened at the Shahnaz Hall of the forum. In addition, French graphic designer Thomas Huot-Marchand hung a number of his works in an exhibit at the forum in memory of Momayyez. Huot-Marchand also attended the opening ceremony of the exhibition.

"It's an honor to have Thomas Huot-Marchand here," said Anushirvan, the son of Momayyez, who is in charge of the Morteza Momayyez Foundation.

Due to the renewed U.S. sanctions, he said that the foundation had trouble transferring Huot-Marchand's works into Iran via post for the showcase. "He brought the collection with himself for the exhibit."

Momayyez's fellow artist, Ebrahim Haqiqi, also delivered a speech at the ceremony.

He called Momayyez an influential figure in modern Iranian graphic art and added, "He always found the best solution for all of his problems."

Momayyez died of cancer in 2005 at the age of 70.



French graphic designer Thomas Huot-Marchand speaks to visitors at an exhibition of his works opened in memory of the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran on November 23, 2018. (Honaronline/Saeid Rabiei)

Music duo Kosecka, Samimi touring Europe

A R T TEHRAN – Iranian composer Idin Samimi-Mofakham and his wife, Polish pianist Martyna Kosecka, are touring Europe.

The duo has arranged Zij, an audio-visual and multi-instrumental performance based on Iranian music and Islamic astronomical sciences, Samimi-Mofakham told the Persian service of Honaronline on Saturday.

Chang-e arjan, chang-e narsina and dozalleh, three Iranian instruments, and piano and saxophone are being used in the performances.

They embarked on the tour at Atrium Zizkov in Prague, the Czech Republic on November 20.



Polish pianist Martyna Kosecka (L) and Iranian composer Idin Samimi-Mofakham in an undated photo. (Musicema/Amir Khameneh) wife.

The program continued at the Carl Maria von Weber College of Music in Dresden, Germany on November 22.

The Krakow Music Academy in Poland hosted the duo on Friday and Saturday.

The Royal College of Music in Stockholm, the second-oldest music college in the world, will be the next stop for the group.

The tour will come to an end in Barcelona in mid-December.

Kosecka conducted Iran's Nilper Orchestra at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on November 17 during a concert organized to mark the centenary of Poland's independence.

"Reza" wins award at French festival



Alireza Motamedi acts in a scene from "Reza".

A R T TEHRAN – Iranian director Alireza Motamedi's film "Reza" received the Ciné+ Distribution Support Award at the 33rd Belfort Entrevues International Film Festival in France, the organizers announced today.

The film tells the story of a divorced

man named Reza who is trying to adapt to his new life after a divorce while he finds a new romance.

"Classical Period" by Ted Fendt from the U.S. won the grand prix for the best film, while "Long Way Home" by André Novais Oliveira from Brazil received the audience award.

Director calls on President Rouhani to watch play "Consent to My Death"



A poster for "Consent to My Death, Please!"

A R T TEHRAN – Director Kurosh Sasanian has invited President Hassan Rouhani to watch his play "Consent to My Death, Please!", which premiered at Tehran's Mehrab Theater on Sunday. The play is about a young man with cancer who asks the president to grant approval for his doctor to perform a euthanasia on him.

"This play is dedicated to the president and I hope Hassan Rouhani will come to a theater to watch a play for the first time during his term of office," Sasanian wrote in a statement for his play.

Elena Ahi, Javad Inanlu, Alireza Dehqani and Mandana Abqari are the members of the cast for the play.

Three foreign cineastes selected for Resistance festival jury

A R T TEHRAN – Three foreign cineastes have been selected to judge the films in the international competition of the 15th International Resistance Film Festival (IRFF).

Luis Castro from Venezuela, John Gianvito from America, and Federico Tomas are the cineastes, the organizers announced on Sunday.

Iranian filmmaker Ebrahim Fayyaz and Nader Talebzadeh

are other members of the jury.

Over 20 movies will be screened in the official competition of the festival, which will be held in Tehran from November 26 to 30.

A group of foreign cineastes, including Syrian director Basil Al-Khatib and his fellow actress Salma Almasri, the star of Iranian director Seifollah Daad's drama "The Survivor", are scheduled to attend the event.



A combination photo shows the jury of the 15th International Resistance Film Festival.

France returns 26 artworks to Benin as report urges restitution

DAKAR/PARIS (Reuters) — France will return 26 works of art to Benin, Emmanuel Macron's office said on Friday, as the French president took delivery of a report recommending the widespread return of cultural artefacts removed from Africa during the colonial era.

The report by Senegalese economist Felwine Sarr and French art historian Benedicte Savoy marks a potential milestone in the fight by African countries to recover works pillaged by Western explorers and colonisers.

Macron became the first Western leader to initiate a comprehensive review of colonial loot after telling Burkinabe students last year that "African heritage can't just be in European private collections and museums".

Some 90 percent of Africa's cultural heritage is now believed to be in Europe. The Quai Branly Museum in Paris alone holds some 70,000 African objects, as does London's British Museum, Savoy told Reuters earlier this year.

Western museums have traditionally resisted appeals to return objects to their countries of origin, which they often argue lack the necessary resources to care for the works.



Two Heads of a royal ancestor (Uhunmwun Elao), from the former Benin Kingdom, a part of modern-day Nigeria, 18th century (R) and 19th century (L) are displaying at the Quai Branly Museum in Paris, France, November 23, 2018. Reuters/Philippe Wojazer

of a prized sculpture.

The French report calls for legislation to ease the return of artefacts from museum collections, according to newspaper reports. It identified around 46,000 objects at the Musée du Quai Branly museum in Paris that would qualify for repatriation.

"We have sensed a real desire by the executive to act," Sarr told daily Liberation. "I was sceptical at the beginning. I am now convinced this is not just a publicity stunt."

The 26 artefacts to returned to Benin from Quai Branly were seized in 1892 as the spoils of war. They are among some 5,000 works requested by the West African country.

Several European museums agreed last month to lend works to a new museum in Benin City, Nigeria. British soldiers seized thousands of metal castings, including the iconic Benin Bronzes, from the Kingdom of Benin in 1897.

But other governments, such as Ethiopia and Greece, have rejected the idea of loans, saying they should not have to borrow back their own stolen property.