



Brian Hook enters 'childish show' **2**



Trump's offer for talks cannot be taken seriously **2**



Iran book FIBA World Cup ticket **15**



Italian documentarian Pannone to hold workshops at Cinéma Vérité **16**

Zarif, Haniyeh discuss U.S. draft resolution against Hamas



Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif



Hamas political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh

See page 2

Non-oil exports up 13% in 8 months yr/yr

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The value of Iran's non-oil exports during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21) rose 13 percent compared to that of the same period of time in the previous year. The country exported 75.27 million tons of non-oil products worth \$31.491 billion during the eight-month period, IRNA reported citing the data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

IRICA data put Iran's imports of non-oil goods at 21.498 million tons valued at \$29.549 billion in the mentioned time span, showing 12.5 percent and 14 percent fall in terms of weight and value, respectively. Gas condensate, liquefied propane, low-density oils and their byproducts except for gasoline, and methanol were the major exported products and corn as livestock food, auto parts, rice and soy bean were the main imported goods during the eight-month period of this year. **→4**

Germany's Meier: Claim that Iran has violated UNSCR 'factually wrong'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Oliver Meier, the deputy head of International Security Division of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), has said that UN Security Council Resolution 2231 does not prohibit Iran from missile testing activities, therefore the claim by the U.S. that Iran has violated the resolution are unfounded.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 (UNSCR 2231) was adopted in July 2015 to endorse the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which was unanimously supported by the permanent member states of the council. However, the U.S. disregarded the resolution as it pulled out of the JCPOA in May. **→2**

Iran backs upcoming Yemeni-Yemeni talks in Stockholm

The Iranian Foreign Ministry has offered the country's support for the upcoming Yemen talks in Sweden, calling on all Yemeni sides to have a "constructive and responsible" engagement in the Stockholm talks with the goal of putting an end to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

The full text of the Foreign Ministry's statement on the talks is as follows:

Ahead of the Yemeni-Yemeni talks to be held in Sweden under the supervision of the United Nations, the Iranian Foreign Ministry welcomes and offers its support for the talks and calls on all Yemeni sides to have constructive and responsible participation in the talks. The Ministry also wants all the Yemeni sides to take trust-building measures. **→2**



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

Incompatible with justice

The details of the national budget bill for the next Iranian fiscal year, which begins on March 21, 2019, have not been released yet.

It is expected that this time both the administration and the parliament join hands to put a partial if not complete end to the heavily subsidized gasoline.

When approving the current year's budget, the parliament voted against the administration's proposal to increase gasoline price by 50 percent. The parliamentarians used the December 2017 protests as an excuse to vote against the price increase.

However, with the exit of the Trump administration from the 2015 nuclear deal and the return of illegal sanctions, the prices of almost all commodities, even basic food commodities such as milk and meat, have increased greatly and it is only gasoline which has remained at a fixed price.

With the return of sanctions, which led to a sharp devaluation of the national currency, the trafficking of gasoline and diesel has increased. This problem existed even before the devaluation of the national currency, but it has surged greatly. Some figures now put the volume of gasoline trafficked to neighboring countries between 10-40 million barrels per day.

However, what is more panicking is the rapidly rising consumption of gasoline in the country at the cost of national resources and incomes.

In total, granting subsidy to water, electricity, household gas, diesel, and gasoline over long years has led to the waste of tens of billions of dollars and irreparable damages to the society in terms of health and depletion of resources.

Yet, subsidized gasoline has been proving a nuisance to the national economy. It is not necessary to study economics to realize the repercussions of subsidized energy, especially gasoline. Surprisingly, the consumption of gasoline has reached the terrifying level of about 100 million liters per day. It means that in the 80-million Iranian population, on average, every citizen consumes 1.25 liters of gasoline every day. **→13**

Why are the Zionists trying to assassinate Nasrallah?

By Ramin Hossein Abadian

TEHRAN — The Zionist military commanders, who are in pain over their recent defeat in the occupied territory of Palestine and in Syria against the Islamic resistance group, have called for assassination of Seyed Hassan Nasrallah, the General-Secretary of Lebanon's Hezbollah.

General Roei Leivi, a Zionist military commander, in an article in Maarkhot which is a Zionist publication has emphasized the need of

assassination of the Hezbollah leaders, particularly Nasrallah.

■ Assassination policy on the Zionists' agenda

This is not the first time that the Zionists have spoken of the need for assassination of the resistance leaders as the Zionist publication, Walla, had previously published a report on Tel Aviv's projects to assassinate Nasrallah and other resistance leaders in Lebanon.

French ambulance workers join protests as crisis talks held

French paramedics joined ongoing anti-government protests as the prime minister met with political rivals Monday in a bid to ease anger following violent riots that rocked Paris.

Dozens of ambulances blocked a bridge leading to the National Assembly and lines of riot police officers stood in the rain to prevent them from getting too close to the building. Paramedics are complaining about changes to working conditions.

It was the latest protest action that President

Emmanuel Macron's government has faced in recent weeks. The "yellow vest" movement is bringing together people from across the political spectrum complaining about France's economic inequalities and waning spending power.

Some demonstrators set fire to a small pile of debris and blocked traffic. One activist held up a sign reading "The State killed me" and others chanted "Macron resign!"

According to French media reports, students also joined the protest movement by blocking

Walla wrote, "Amir Peretz, former Zionist Minister of Defense in 2006, called on Israeli security and intelligence agencies to hand over Nasrallah's case to him as well as his hiding places to examine the possibility of his assassination. Surprisingly, Peretz never found much on Nasrallah.

It is clear that assassination of Islamic movement leaders has always been the Zionists' policy; however, they have failed in fulfilling their policy as Walla has already acknowledged. **→13**

MbS's visit to Algeria will be an insult to the nation's history

The Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman arrived in Algeria on Sunday. Bin Salman returned from Mauritania, resuming a tour of Arab countries after attending the G20 summit in Argentina.

His planned trip to the nation is considered by the Algerian civil society as an affront.

Hundreds of resentful activists and indignant journalists have decried his planned

visit to the Maghreb (North Africa). They have dismissed the trip as a PR stunt to whitewash his image in the wake of Jamal Khashoggi's murder as the Group of 20 summit gets underway.

MBS's responsibility in the war in Yemen, and his alleged involvement in the gruesome assassination and dismemberment of Khashoggi at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, makes him

a persona non grata in Algeria. Following the brotherly grin-and-hugging in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt (he did not appear in Morocco), he has been greeted by a torrent of public anger upon his arrival in neighboring Tunisia.

However, many observers believe that the Saudi de facto ruler's trip to Algiers would indisputably mortify the Algerian authorities. **→13**



ARTICLE
Syed Zafar Mehdi
Journalist
from New Delhi

U.S. propaganda war against Iran doomed to fail

At a time when the Trump administration is facing backlash at home over its military support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen and disgraceful defeat in Afghanistan after 18 years of war, spin doctors in Washington are looking for convenient scapegoats to escape accountability.

Last week, five human rights watchdog bodies issued a terse statement, saying the U.S. will bear shared responsibility for what may be the largest humanitarian catastrophe in decades if it doesn't end support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. Ironically, Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi's brutal murder has brought the spotlight on Saudi regime's war crimes in Yemen.

In Afghanistan, the U.S. imposed war, which has stretched into its 18th year now, has turned out to be an exercise in futility. Even the top-notch U.S. officials have admitted defeat there, thereby emboldening terrorist groups like Taliban and ISIS to up the ante.

Amidst this hullabaloo, the 'astute' advisors of Trump have come up with an innovative 'idea' to escape culpability for Yemen and Afghanistan. Only that this idea doesn't seem to work.

A few days ago, Pentagon unveiled what it called "new evidence of Iran's ongoing missile proliferation", claiming that Tehran's support of Houthi rebels in Yemen has "deepened" and it has been providing "materiel support" to the Taliban in Afghanistan.

A select group of journalists were invited for a briefing in Washington by Brian Hook, U.S. special representative for Iran. Hook began by saying that the U.S. deeply valued its "partnership with the UAE, Bahrain and Israel". That is how the agenda was set for the briefing.

UAE is an integral part of the Saudi-led alliance that has wreaked havoc in Yemen, with the U.S. support. Bahrain, where Al-Khalifa regime has been committing horrendous war crimes, is home to the American Fifth Fleet. Israel, a key U.S. ally, has been illegally occupying the Palestinian territories and brutalizing native Palestinians. **→6**



© ISNA/ Amir Hanrchi

Without hands in peace and serenity

Sheida Shokravi, 40, was born without hands. Since childhood, she has done with the help of her legs the same works ordinary people did. She started painting when she was a teenager. Since seven years ago, she has been a member of the Swiss Association of Painters. Nine years ago, she came to know that she has only one kidney and her only kidney doesn't work yet.

Although Sheida suffers from lack of hands and kidneys, but she finds peace and serenity in creating art works.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



No one in prison because of dual nationality

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — No one is imprisoned in Iran just because of his or her dual nationality. Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani said on Monday, stressing that the UK foreign secretary is in no position to warn the Islamic Republic over the issue.

“A while ago, the British foreign secretary had arrogantly warned the Islamic Republic of Iran to refrain from imprisonment of dual nationals,” Mehr quoted Amoli Larijani as saying.

“Such behavior is reminiscent of the colonial powers’ manner in previous centuries, and does not take into account the different nature of the Islamic Republic from its tyrant predecessors, who trembled with fear by foreign powers’ warnings,” he added.



No dead end in Islamic Republic: commander

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps second-in-command said on Monday that there’s “no dead end” for the Islamic Republic as it moving forward, Tasnim reported.

Hossein Salami said the Islamic Revolution terminated America’s political power and dominance over the region, noting the Islamic Republic have encouraged other countries to stand against the U.S. and oppose its policies.

The brigadier general also dismissed the idea of negotiations with the U.S., saying Americans always seek excessive demands and aim for war and invasion after negotiations and compromise.



JCPOA parties after compensating for U.S. pullout: Araqchi

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Monday that the remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal are trying to find operational solutions to compensate for U.S. withdrawal from the deal, officially called the JCPOA.

Araqchi said Iran is cooperating with the European Union, Russia, China and other countries regarded as Tehran’s business partners to keep the cooperation path open, Mehr reported.

Back in May, U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew his country from the JCPOA and ordered reimposition of sanctions against Iran. The move has been widely criticized by different countries across the world.



Iran Navy will be present in the Atlantic

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Navy plans to be actively present in the Atlantic Ocean, Navy Chief Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi on Monday announced.

“Being present in international waters means deepening of our strategic depth,” Khanzadi said, IRNA reported.

It is also a demonstration of Iran’s defensive power, he added.

Underlining the need to boost the country’s deterrent power despite pressures, the commander said Western powers are seeking to restrict Iran’s defense capabilities.

“In order to be present in the waters, a great scientific, infrastructural and industrial background is needed. Therefore, being present in the waters shows power,” he stated.



Ofcom probing lawsuit against Iran International

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian ambassador to London Hamid Baedinejad said on Monday that the UK’s communications regulator Ofcom has confirmed that it is officially pursuing the embassy’s lawsuit against the London-based TV channel Iran International.

The lawsuit was filed over the channel’s support for a terrorist group involved in an attack on a military parade in Ahvaz. Iran International broadcast an interview with the spokesman of the al-Ahwaziya terrorist group after the incident.

The station is believed to be directly supported by the royal Saudi court. The Guardian cited a source close to the Saudi government as saying that Iran International receives as estimated \$250m from the Saudi royal court each year.



EU to pursue Iran’s rights under JCPOA: envoy

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The European Union will attempt to secure Iranians’ economic benefits from the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Austrian ambassador to Tehran said on Monday.

Stefan Scholz also vowed to make efforts to develop cooperation between the EU and Iran, IRNA reported.

Thanks to its influence on the Middle East and Europe, Iran is of importance to the world, Scholz said.

He also said Austria is standing by Iran as a partner and is attempting to promote the private sector in Iran.

Trump’s offer for talks cannot be taken seriously, Larijani says

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — U.S. President Donald Trump’s calls for talks with Iran cannot be taken seriously until Washington returns to the 2015 nuclear agreement as a gesture of goodwill, Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani says.

At a press conference in Tehran on Monday, Larijani described Trump’s statements about Iran as diplomatic double-talk, saying the U.S. president’s anti-Iran rhetoric is in sharp contrast to his calls for new rounds of negotiations.

“How can a country be in favor of dialogue when it tramples upon an international agreement?” he asked, adding, “This offer is a ploy. They are not truly in favor of talks.”

If the Americans had taken the right path by adhering to their commitments under the nuclear pact, holding new talks would have been possible, he remarked.

The parliament speaker, however, refused to rule out the possibility of talks with the U.S., saying, “It depends on their behavior. They [must] take a step



and return to the nuclear agreement.”

Asked whether Iran would exit the nuclear deal, Larijani said given U.S. withdrawal, Iran is entitled to pull out of the deal, “but it will use such right

only when it serves its interests.”

He also said European countries must decide whether they want to establish the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), which has been designed to conduct

banking transactions with Iran after U.S. sanctions went into effect.

■ **‘Iran not ready to have a parliamentary system’**

Also asked when the country will move toward a parliamentary system, Larijani said, “The Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has recently pointed to this issue, which would be a good move in my opinion, but considering our current circumstances, the country is not ready for such a change.”

The speaker also rejected the notion of establishing a bicameral legislature, saying studying such issue would not be appropriate at the current situation.

“Today, the main challenge for our country is sanctions and economic issues,” he stressed.

Larijani went on to say that the need for national unity is of the utmost importance for the country, pointing out that the heads of the three branches of government hold regular meetings to promote unity and ensure better coordination.

Zarif: U.S. foreign policy based on surrealism

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that that “surrealism” shapes the United States’ foreign policy.

The remarks by Zarif came in response to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who had accused Tehran of testing a missile “capable of carrying nuclear warheads” in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

“‘Surrealism’ is now the US’ modus operandi in its foreign affairs: While itself violates UNSCR 2231—and even threatens to punish those who don’t wish to violate it in abiding with illegal US sanctions—it now falsely accuses Iran of violating the very SAME resolution. #Hypocrisy,” Zarif tweeted late on Sunday.

The resolution 2231, which endorsed the nuclear agreement between Iran and the 5+1 group in July 2015, ‘calls upon’ Iran not to build nuclear-capable missiles. It does not ban conventional missile program by Tehran.

Washington itself started breaching the resolution in May after it left the nuclear agreement. In the following months, it took further steps in breach of the resolution by restoring the sanctions that had been lifted under the agreement, and even threatened the



countries potentially ignoring the bans with “secondary sanctions.”

On Sunday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said Pompeo was talking in “paradoxical” terms since he had predicated his remarks on a resolution that the U.S. itself had breached.

Qassemi also repeated the country’s assertion that the Iranian missile program was entirely defensive.

He asserted that Iran had to equip itself with “whatever it needs to defend itself” in the light of the past and ongoing tensions in the region, and its own past experience of coming under an imposed war by Iraq’s Saddam Hussein in the 1980s.

U.S. seeking to ‘permanently’ destabilize region: Iran FM

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that the U.S. is seeking to destabilize the Middle East region “permanently” to justify its heinous policy.

“Complicity in Saudi & UAE war crimes with arms, intel & logistical support apparently not enough. US also proliferating advanced weapons to extremists incl Al Qaida & ISIS. First Syria; now in Yemen. Aim: Permanent instability to justify heinous policy,” he tweeted on Sunday.

The comments by Zarif came after the Guardian reported that investigators say weapons from the UK and U.S. have fallen into hands of groups some with links to al-Qaida and ISIS.

“In an apparent abuse of trade agreements by the Saudi and UAE-led coalition, sophisticated armoured vehicles, rocket launchers, grenades and rifles are among the weapons being purchased from European and U.S. companies and reaching local factions and groups,” the Guardian reported

on Wednesday.

The details, to be aired in an Arabic-language documentary, The End User, came from analysis of thousands of broadcasts, social media and closed internet groups, alongside intensive research to verify the origins of weapons.

The documentary accuses the Saudi coalition, weapons suppliers and governments of a sustained breach of “end user” certification laws stretching back to the beginning of the conflict in 2015.



children and other oppressed but resilient people of Yemen and a total humanitarian catastrophe in the country.

The Islamic Republic of Iran’s Foreign Ministry seizes the opportunity here to express its readiness to establish cooperation with the international community to immediately resolve the Yemen crisis.

It also underlines the necessity of facilitating the process of delivering humanitarian aid to Yemen, and maintains that it is the world’s historic responsibility today to make efforts to end humanitarian crisis and catastrophe in the Arab country.

(Source: mfa.ir)

Germany’s Oliver Meier: Bolton’s claim that Iran has violated UNSCR 2231 is ‘factually wrong’

➔ “This StateDept press release is factually wrong. UNSC Res 2231 ‘calls upon’ Iran not to test nuclear-capable missiles but does not ‘ban’ Iran from doing so. Prohibition of missile launches was not achievable in negotiations on resolution,” he wrote.

In his remark, Trump’s national security advisor had accused Iran of displaying “provocative behavior” by test-firing ballistic missile capable of reaching Israel and Europe.

Previously, Mark Fitzpatrick, the executive director of the International Institute for Strategic

Studies (IISS), also had repudiated Washington’s claims, stating that Iran’s missile testing activities do not violate resolution 2231.

Iran has always insisted that its missiles are only designed for defense purposes, and they are not intended to carry nuclear weapons.

Despite U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal and its renewal of the anti-Iran sanctions, Iran has remained committed to its undertakings, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has repeatedly confirmed its compliance to the deal.

Zarif, Haniyeh discuss U.S. draft resolution against Hamas

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh held a phone conversation on Monday discussing latest developments in Palestine including the U.S. draft resolution against Hamas at the UN General Assembly.

Haniyeh called on Iran to oppose the draft resolution that condemns Hamas.

Zarif assured Haniyeh that Iran will make any effort to halt approval of the resolution by the UN.

The chief diplomat noted that the behavior by certain countries in the region have emboldened the U.S. to take such actions.

The UN General Assembly is scheduled to vote on Thursday on the U.S. draft resolution which condemns Hamas rocket fire at Israel.

Reportedly, Washington has pressured, in the past few days, some European countries to support the draft resolution.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas’s Fatah party has vowed to support its rival Hamas resistance movement at the UN General Assembly against the U.S.-drafted resolution, Press TV reported.

“We will stand against all hostile efforts to condemn Hamas at the United Nations,” Fatah spokesman Osama Qawassmeh said.

Iran: Brian Hook enters ‘childish show’

Tehran won’t reject neighbors’ positive gesture: Qassemi

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Monday that Iran seeks a stable Middle East region and will not give negative response to any positive gesture by any neighboring country.

“Given Iran’s view and policy towards the regional and neighboring countries, any country that is interested in improving ties with Iran will face Iran’s positive response,” he told a regular press briefing when asked whether Iran would welcome any moves by Riyadh to restore ties with Iran.

“Iran seeks a stable region and a strong and peaceful relations with regional governments and nations and will not reject any positive response,” he added.

However, he said Tehran sees no gesture by Saudi Arabia to mend its ties with Iran.

“We do not see such readiness in the Saudi Arabian government and we think that they are still living with

illusions in the past and are dealing with problems they themselves have caused,” Qassemi explained.

■ **‘Childish show’**

Qassemi also said that U.S. Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook entered “childish” show and made claims that are worthless to respond.

Hook unveiled on Thursday pieces of missiles, rockets, drones and other weaponry at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling in Washington D.C., claiming that Iran is involved in supplying Yemen and Afghanistan with weaponry.

He said that military option against Iran could be possible.

Qassemi said that the military option against Iran is an “out of date” issue which has been repeated in the past years.

“Those who have worked on issues in Iran and the region are well aware of the reality in Iran and the country’s capabilities. I advise them to consult with more experienced people in political and military areas and

then make comments,” he added.

■ **‘We hope financial mechanisms would be implemented soon’**

Qassemi also said that Iran hopes the financial mechanisms by the European Union to save the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, would be implemented soon.

“Given their commitments, we expect the related sides work seriously and firmly to complete these mechanisms,” he said.

The Wall Street Journal published a report on November 26 according to which France and Germany will likely host the Special Vehicle Purpose (SPV), a special payment channel created by Europe as part of its efforts to keep trade flowing with Iran in defiance of U.S. sanctions.

The report said the governments participating in the payment channel will directly manage the company (mechanism) in order to prevent the U.S. from putting direct sanctions on it.

Trump asks Pakistan PM for help with Afghan peace talks

Pakistan said on Monday U.S. President Donald Trump has sought its help with faltering Afghan peace talks, part of intensifying efforts by Trump to end one of America's longest wars.

Trump, in a letter to new Prime Minister Imran Khan, asked for Pakistan's "support and facilitation" in negotiating an end to the war and offered to renew the strained relationship, Pakistan's foreign ministry said.

The overture to Khan represents a sea change from Trump's normally harsh rhetoric towards Pakistan, and will add to growing speculation that the United States is planning to pull out of Afghanistan in the near future.

The U.S. president wants to bring to a close the 17-year-old conflict between Afghan security forces and the Taliban, who are fighting to drive out international forces and reestablish their version of strict Islamic law after their 2001 ouster.

U.S. officials have long been pushing Pakistan to lean on Taliban leaders, who Washington says are based inside Pakistan, to bring them to the negotiating table.

"He has asked for Pakistan's cooperation to bring the Taliban into talks," Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry told Reuters.

Trump told Khan the Pakistan relationship was very important to the United States and to finding a solution to the Afghanistan conflict, Chaudhry added.

The U.S. embassy in Islamabad had no immediate comment on the letter.



Trump has been open about his desire to bring home about 14,000 U.S. troops who remain in Afghanistan as part of Resolute Support and a separate counter-terrorism mission aimed against militant groups such as al Qaeda and ISIL.

"President Trump has also acknowledged that the war had cost both USA and Pakistan. He has emphasized that Pakistan and USA should explore opportunities to work together and renew partnership," the foreign ministry said in a statement.



The ministry added that Pakistan is committed to playing "a facilitation role in good faith".

"Peace and stability in Afghanistan remain a shared responsibility."

■ Uneasy allies

Trump has appointed Afghan-born U.S. diplomat Zalmay Khalilzad as a special envoy for Afghanistan, tasking him with pushing through peace talks.

Khalilzad last month set a deadline of April 2019 for the war to end. But Afghan Taliban

militants last month rejected the proposed deadline and said a three-day meeting in Qatar between their leaders and Khalilzad, to pave the way for peace talks, ended with no agreement.

Khalilzad on Sunday began an eight-country tour, which includes Pakistan, Russia and Qatar, to promote peace and convince the Taliban to join negotiations.

Officially allies in fighting terrorism, Pakistan and the United States have a complicated relationship, bound by Washington's dependence on Pakistan to supply its troops in Afghanistan but plagued by accusations Islamabad is playing a double game.

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

Khan hit back by saying the United States should not blame Pakistan for its failings in Afghanistan.

Pakistani officials, who deny offering safe havens to the Afghan Taliban, say their influence on the group has waned over the years.

Last week, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said he had formed a 12-strong team to negotiate peace with the Taliban, but warned that implementation of any deal would take at least five years.

(Source: Reuters)

Trump wants to grant Kim Jong Un's wishes: Moon

South Korea's president says U.S. President Donald Trump told him he has a "very friendly view" of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and wants to grant his wishes if he denuclearizes.

North Korea has sought security guarantees from the U.S. and relief from international sanctions.

President Moon Jae-in's office quoted Moon as saying that Trump asked him to convey those messages to the North Korean leader if he visits Seoul this year as he promised. Moon spoke to reporters on Saturday aboard his presidential plane en route to New Zealand from Argentina, where he met Trump on the sidelines of a Group of 20 Nations summit.

"President Trump asked me to forward to [Kim] these messages; he has a very friendly view of Chairman Kim Jong Un and likes him. He hopes to fully carry out the remaining agreements [from their June summit in Singapore] together with him so that he will make Chairman Kim Jong Un get what he wants," Moon said.

Moon said he and Trump agreed during their meeting that Kim's trip to Seoul would play a "very positive role" in U.S.-North Korea nuclear diplomacy. Moon said it's still unclear whether Kim will visit Seoul by the end of this year,



and that it's up to the North Korean leader.

Moon, who has facilitated a series of high-level talks between the United States and North Korea including the

Trump-Kim summit, has met Kim three times this year. After their third meeting in Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, in September, Moon said Kim agreed to make a reciprocal visit to Seoul this year. Their two previous summits were held at the countries' shared border village of Panmunjom.

If Kim, a third-generation hereditary ruler, visits Seoul, he would be the first North Korean leader to do so since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. Two previous South Korean presidents visited Pyongyang to meet with Kim's late father, Kim Jong Il.

After sharply raising tensions with nuclear and missile tests last year, Kim Jong Un abruptly reached out to Moon and Trump with a vague nuclear disarmament pledge. Subsequent nuclear diplomacy hasn't made headway since the U.S.-North Korea summit in June.

Trump said on Air Force One while returning to Washington from Argentina that his next meeting with Kim Jong Un would likely happen in January or February. He said there were three sites under consideration, but declined to name them.

(Source: AP)

Khashoggi's private WhatsApp messages may offer new clues to killing

In his public writings, Jamal Khashoggi's criticism of Saudi Arabia and its Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was measured. In private, the Washington Post columnist didn't hold back.

In more than 400 WhatsApp messages sent to a fellow Saudi exile in the year before he was killed at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Khashoggi describes bin Salman -- often referred to as MBS -- as a "beast," a "pac-man" who would devour all in his path, even his supporters.

CNN has been granted exclusive access to the correspondence between Khashoggi and Montreal-based activist Omar Abdulaziz. The messages shared by Abdulaziz, which include voice recordings, photos and videos, paint a picture of a man deeply troubled by what he regarded as the petulance of his kingdom's powerful young prince.

"The more victims he eats, the more he wants," says Khashoggi in one message sent in May, just after a group of Saudi activists had been rounded up. "I will not be surprised if the oppression will reach even those who are cheering him on."

• JAMAL KHASHOGGI: Arrests are un-

justified and do not serve him (logic says), but tyranny has no logic, but he loves force, oppression and needs to show them off. He is like a beast "pac man" the more victims he eats, the more he wants. I will not be surprised that the oppression will reach even those who are cheering him, then others and others and so on. God knows

- OMAR ABDULAZIZ: Amazing
- Is there a possibility that when he becomes a King he would pardon them
- In a gesture to show pardon and mercy
- JAMAL KHASHOGGI: This is what logic says, but I no longer have faith in it to analyze the man's mind.

The exchanges reveal a progression from talk to action -- the pair had begun planning an online youth movement that would hold the Saudi state to account. "[Jamal] believed that MBS is the issue, is the problem and he said this kid should be stopped," Abdulaziz said in an interview with CNN.

But in August, when he believed their conversations may have been intercepted by Saudi authorities, a sense of foreboding descends over Khashoggi. "God help us," he wrote.

Two months later, he was dead.

Abdulaziz on Sunday launched a lawsuit against an Israeli company that invented the software he believes was used to hack his phone.

"The hacking of my phone played a major role in what happened to Jamal, I am really sorry to say," Abdelaziz told CNN. "The guilt is killing me."

■ SIM cards and financial support

Abdulaziz began speaking out against the Saudi regime as a college student in Canada. His pointed criticisms of government policies drew the attention of the Saudi state, which canceled his university scholarship. Canada granted him asylum in 2014 and made him a permanent resident three years later.

In almost daily exchanges between October 2017 and August 2018, Khashoggi and Abdulaziz conceived plans to form an electronic army to engage young Saudis back home and debunk state propaganda on social media, leveraging Khashoggi's establishment profile and the 27-year-old Abdulaziz's 340,000-strong Twitter following.

The digital offensive, dubbed the "cyber bees," had emerged from earlier discussions

about creating a portal for documenting human rights abuses in their homeland as well as an initiative to produce short films for mobile distribution. "We have no parliament; we just have Twitter," said Abdulaziz, adding that Twitter is also the Saudi government's strongest weapon. "Twitter is the only tool they're using to fight and to spread their rumors. We've been attacked, we've been insulted, we'd been threatened so many times, and we decided to do something."

The pair's scheme involved two key elements that Saudi Arabia might well have viewed as hostile acts. The first involved sending foreign SIM cards to dissidents back home so they could tweet without being traced. The second was money. According to Abdulaziz, Khashoggi pledged an initial \$30,000 and promised to drum up support from rich donors under the radar.

In one exchange, dated May this year, Abdulaziz writes to Khashoggi. "I sent you some ideas about the electronic army. By email." "Brilliant report," Khashoggi replies. "I will try to sort out the money. We have to do something."

(Source: CNN)

UK spy chief issues warning to Russia

The head of the MI6 foreign spy agency warned Russia Monday not to underestimate Britain's capabilities and determination to expose malign behavior, ahead of a rare public speech.

Alex Younger, who as head of the intelligence agency is known as "C," will use the speech to highlight adversaries who regard themselves as being in "perpetual confrontation" with Britain.

He will say they take advantage of the "blurred line" between the cyber and physical worlds to probe Britain's defenses and institutions in a way that falls short of traditional warfare.

In extracts released by the Foreign Office ahead of the speech, he urged "Russia or any other state intent on subverting our way of life not to underestimate our determination



and our capabilities, or those of our allies."

He will note the response of London and its allies to the chemical weapons attack in Salisbury in March, which they blamed on Moscow.

There was a coordinated expulsion of Russian diplomats worldwide, while Britain revealed a dossier on how the alleged Russian spies carried out the attack, complete with CCTV.

"The era of the fourth industrial revolution calls for a fourth generation espionage: fusing our traditional human skills with accelerated innovation, new partnerships and a mindset that mobilizes diversity and empowers the young," he said in the extracts.

The speech, to students at his old university of St Andrews in Scotland, is only the second in public in the four years since Younger has been "C."

(Source: AFP)

Trump says in future will discuss 'uncontrollable arms race' with China, Russia

U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday said that at some time in the future he will discuss military developments with his counterparts from China and Russia in the hopes of ending what he described as an arms race with the countries.

"I am certain that, at some time in the

future, President Xi and I, together with President Putin of Russia, will start talking about a meaningful halt to what has become a major and uncontrollable Arms Race. The U.S. spent 716 Billion Dollars this year.

Crazy! Trump said in an early morning tweet, the day after he returned from the

G20 meeting in Argentina.

Under the incumbent US president the country has made a sharp turn towards a more aggressive foreign policy. He reversed the Obama-era limitations on defense spending, pushing a multibillion hike in the military budget for FY2018 and FY2019 through Congress.

Trump's administration also passed a number of key national security documents like the Nuclear Posture Review and the National Military Strategy, which stated that a confrontation with Russia and China are primary goals for the US military.

(Source: Reuters)

Riyadh submits to Houthi demand to evacuate injured ahead of peace talks



Saudi Arabia has submitted to Yemen's demands to evacuate 50 wounded Houthi fighters to Oman for treatment ahead of new UN-brokered peace talks.

A UN-chartered plane will arrive at Sana'a airport Monday to evacuate the wounded combatants accompanied by three Yemeni doctors and a UN doctor, Saudi military spokesman Turki al-Maliki said.

The evacuation of the wounded fighters has been a key condition of the Houthi movement to attend peace talks in Sweden this week.

Previous peace negotiations broke down in September after Saudi Arabia refused to allow a Houthi delegation to fly to Geneva to attend the meeting.

On Monday, Maliki said the kingdom had agreed to a UN request to facilitate the medical evacuation "for humanitarian considerations and as part of confidence-building measures" ahead of the talks.

Saudi Arabia has been leading a ferocious military campaign against Yemen since 2015 without any tangible achievement. The kingdom's latest push to seize Hudaydah ahead of peace talks hit a brick wall as the strategic port's protectors put up a fierce resistance.

The Houthi movement and the UN were not immediately available to comment on the Saudi military announcement.

The negotiations were expected to take place this week, but UN chief Antonio Guterres has played down the early December schedule and said he hoped talks would start "this year."

In recent days, the UN peace envoy Martin Griffiths has held talks separately with officials from both sides in an attempt to bring the warring factions to the negotiating table.

The fresh push for peace comes amid mounting pressure on Saudi Arabia over the high civilian toll and a serious deterioration of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The kingdom is also under scrutiny over the assassination of Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Most Western countries, the US and Britain in particular, are accused of being complicit in the ongoing aggression for supplying advanced weapons and military equipment in addition to logistical and intelligence assistance.

The UN aid chief warned on Saturday that Yemen was "on the brink of a major catastrophe" as he wrapped up a visit to the improvised country.

Saudi Arabia launched its devastating military campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the aim of bringing the government of former Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi back to power and crushing Houthis.

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

The war has also taken a heavy toll on the country's infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories. The UN has said a record 22.2 million Yemenis are in dire need of food, including 8.4 million threatened by severe hunger.

(Source: Press TV)

KDP nominates Nechirvan and Masrour Barzani for Iraqi Kurdistan's top posts

Iraq's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) said on Monday it had nominated current premier Nechirvan Barzani to succeed his uncle Masoud Barzani as president of Iraqi Kurdistan, and Masoud Barzani's son Masrour as premier of the regional government.

With 45 of 111 seats, the KDP is the biggest party in the Kurdish assembly after September's regional election but 11 shy of an outright majority, and will have to govern in coalition.

Masrour Barzani is currently Iraqi Kurdistan's security chief. Both Masrour and Nechirvan have occupied senior roles within the KRG throughout the last decade.

Veteran Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani, still the head of the KDP, stepped down after 12 years as regional president in November 2017, less than a month after helping a referendum on Kurdish independence that backfired and triggered a crisis for Iraq's Kurds.

The post has remained vacant ever since. The president's powers were divided between the prime minister, parliament and the judiciary in a makeshift arrangement, leaving the future of the presidency uncertain.

The semi-autonomous region does not have a formal constitution, having failed to ratify it in parliament since it was drafted in 2009.

Any future power-sharing arrangement would require a rethinking of presidential powers, which would need to be ratified by parliament.

"We still don't know what the presidency will look like. Will it become a ceremonial post filled by parliament?" said Kamal Chomani, a Kurdish political analyst and non-resident fellow at the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy.

"In any case, Nechirvan will be weaker than Masrour but will stay powerful enough to control the foreign relations of the KRI. It all depends on how the presidential law will be amended," he said.

Relations with the previous Iraqi administration of prime minister Haider al-Abadi were strained by the referendum. But with a new Iraqi government in place, led by Adel Abdul-Mahdi, Erbil and Baghdad have in recent weeks signaled a willingness to work together.

(Source: Reuters)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	166304.4
IFX	1824.18

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,532 rials
GBP	53,564 rials
AED	11,380 rials

Source: iribnews.ir

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$52.90/b
Brent	\$61.63/b
OPEC Basket	\$58.09/b
Gold	\$1,229.20/oz
Silver	\$14.44/oz
Platinum	\$811.15/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Tehran hosting 15th IRAN METAFO exhibit

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds is hosting the 15th edition of Iran's international exhibition of metallurgy, dubbed IRAN METAFO, during December 2-5, IRIB reported.

The main focus of the exhibition is on minerals and mining industry, iron and steel technology and products, casting, molding, forging, and machine works, non-ferrous metals (aluminum, copper, zinc, lead and precious metals) and industrial ceramics as well as furnaces and measurement systems.

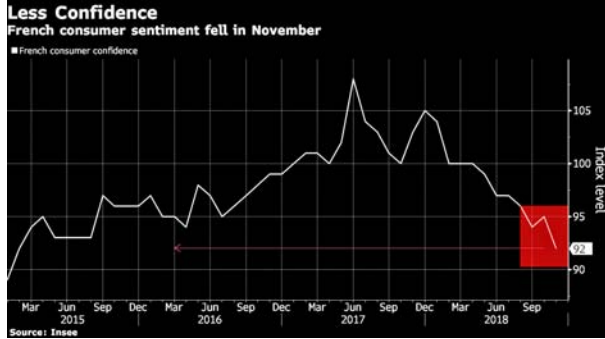
In the 2017 version of the exhibit, some 460 companies, 270 Iranian and 190 foreign ones, took part to showcase their latest achievements and products in metallurgy industry.

There may be a bigger problem than Brexit or Italy

Forget Brexit and Italian populists for a second. It's worth paying attention to what's going on in France.

For more than two weeks, the country has been disrupted by an unusual protest: the so-called "Gilets Jaunes" or "Yellow Vests." France is used to labor unrest and chaos affecting transport of course, with strikes something of a national pastime. But this time it's different. Some 100,000 people blocking toll roads, petrol stations and cross-roads is creating major disruption to transport and retail. It's also proving to be extremely tricky to defuse, as there's no single protest leader to negotiate with. For investors, the question is whether it could derail the outperformance of French equities in 2018.

One thing is clear. These protests are a real threat to the country's retailers, including Carrefour and Casino, which are already busy battling a price war and trying to fend off Amazon.com's efforts to penetrate their home market. Big-box retailers have been hurt by the demos and blockages throughout the country, with customers denied access to some hypermarkets and supermarkets for entire days at a time. They recorded an average fall in consumer-good sales of 35 percent on Nov. 17 and of 18 percent the following Saturday, according to Nielsen data.



All this is adding to the perception of shrinking purchasing power in France, in particular among people on lower incomes. And that "doesn't bode well" for the year-end holiday retail season, which needs a boost after the unseasonably hot weather of the previous months, according to Invest Securities. In fact, consumer confidence has been depressed since the summer, and this might be the final straw.

The impact on toll roads is harder to quantify, as demonstrators have been regularly opening them to let cars pass freely. Vinci is the largest operator in France and although motorway concessions only account for about 13% of its 2017 revenue, they generated more than 59 percent of its Ebitda. So brace yourself for an impact on earnings if the unrest gains traction.

The protests started on Nov. 10 with thousands of demonstrators demanding lower gasoline prices and taxes. Demonstrators marched on Paris's Avenue des Champs-Élysées two weeks later, triggering social unrest. Surprisingly, the protest is benefiting from a significant backing, with 84 percent of the French public calling it "justified," according to Odoxa-Dentsu poll for Le Figaro. Further rioting over the weekend shows the movement is spinning out of control.

I keep on fallin'

Emmanuel Macron's ratings have been in free fall this year. If this movement snowballs like we've seen in Italy with the Five Star Movement, Macron will have his hands full handling a crisis at home and have less time for the matters of the euro zone. After Greece, Brexit and Italy, this is another front that Europe didn't need.

This is something to keep in mind, although today, the market will be focused on positive developments coming out from the G-20 meeting. Commodities, Asian equities and U.S. futures are rallying. Euro Stoxx futures are trading up 2% ahead of the European open.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Oil price estimated at \$54 pb in next year's budget bill

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Behrooz Nemati, the spokesman for the presiding board of the parliament, informed that preparing the budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (starts on March 21, 2019), the government has supposedly estimated sales of 1.5 million barrels per day of oil at the price of \$54 per barrel, IRIB reported.

"Each dollar is predicted to worth 57,000 rials in the budget bill," he added in a telephone interview with IRIB on Sunday night.

As IRNA quoted the Head of Budget and Planning Organization Mohammad Baqer Nobakht as saying on Monday, the government has accomplished preparation of the next year's budget bill and is to present it to the parliament this Thursday.

According to Nobakht, reducing the posed pressure by U.S. sanctions on Iranians' lives, supplying basic goods, and paying a specific attention to domestic production and job creation are among the major options considered in the planned budget.



Paying cash subsidies and supplying protective packages to qualified Iranians stand among other focal points in the next year's budget, he added.

Non-oil exports up 13% in 8 months yr/yr

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iraq, China, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Afghanistan and India were the major export destinations of Iranian non-oil products, while China, UAE, South Korea, India and Germany were the main exporters of such goods to the country in the first eight months of this calendar year.

On November 28, Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri unveiled the package issued by resistance economy committee on June 18, 2018 to support non-oil exports announcing it to all the affiliated state-run organizations.

Jahangiri has required the Iranian Industry Ministry



to attach Iran's exports destinations and goals within ten days of the announcement of the package to it.

The ministry is also in charge of supervising the full implementation of the prepared package.

Iran's non-oil exports stood at \$46.931 billion in the past Iranian calendar year of 1396 (ended on March 20, 2018), with 6.56 percent growth from \$44.42 billion in its preceding year.

The country's imports of the non-oil products during the past calendar year stood at \$54.302 billion, indicating 24.31 percent increase from the figure of its preceding year.

Red meat production stands at 99,000 tons in summer

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran produced 99,000 tons of red meat during summer of this year which was the second quarter of current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), IRNA reported citing the data released by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI).

The figure shows 11 percent decrease compared to the figure of last year's first quarter.

A total of 429,000 tons of red meat were produced in Iran's officially registered slaughterhouses during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2018), registering a four-percent decline compared to the year before, the SCI reported on its website.



Beef and veal had the lion's share in the country's red meat output during the year with 223,000 tons (52%), followed by lamb and mutton with 162,000 tons (37.6%), goat meat with 34,000 tons (7.8%), and meat from other livestock reached 11,000 tons (2.65%).

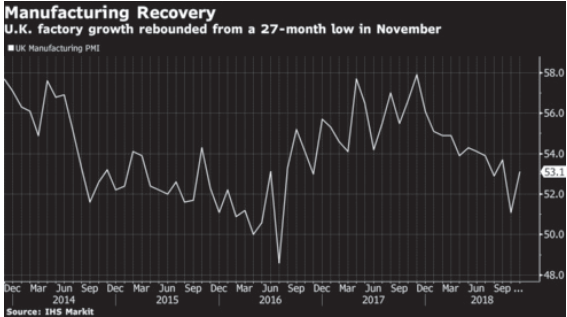
UK manufacturing growth recovers from 27-month low in Nov.

U.K. manufacturing growth recovered from a 27-month low in November as domestic new orders picked up and firms built up stocks to protect against Brexit risks.

IHS Markit's Purchasing Managers Index for the industry rose to 53.1 last month, up from a 51.1 in October and beating economists' estimates for reading of 51.7. Still, Markit noted that growth remained subdued, with new export orders decreasing for a second consecutive month.

Key insights

- The domestic market was the main source of new contracts, Markit said, with increases linked to new product launches and client stock-building.
- Manufacturers noted that stocks of purchases were being raised to protect against Brexit and supply-chain risks.
- Export orders saw their first back-to-back drop since



early 2016, with firms citing reduced interest and Brexit uncertainty as the reasons for the decline.

Trade war or not, experts say China's yuan is poised to become a global heavyweight

Trade war or not, one thing is clear, according to many experts: The global importance of the Chinese yuan seems destined to rise.

Strategists and economists say flows in the currency will grow over the long term if China continues to gradually open its financial system and further pushes use of the yuan internationally.

But it won't all be smooth sailing, and a gap in Chinese authorities' willingness to allow more funds into the country is likely to remain.

Chi Lo, senior economist for Greater China at BNP Paribas Asset Management in Hong Kong, said that the yuan will become more globally important as China further allows foreign capital into the country through selective financial opening and pursues its Belt and Road Initiative trade project, part of a policy to strengthen the country's international standing.

"So if you look along that direction there's no way the yuan can be a weak currency, otherwise people won't accept it and it cannot be a global currency if it's a weak currency in the long term," Lo told CNBC on Monday, projecting about a time frame of two or three decades.

HSBC, meanwhile, said in a report released Thursday that markets have been focused on the trade war between China and the United States as the main factor affecting the yuan. But, it said, China's opening of its financial markets is "probably the more important and enduring influence" on the currency.

"The (yuan) will be increasingly driven by capital account flows, and not just trade-related flows," the bank said.

Multi-year trend

China's economic transformation kicked off 40 years ago when the Communist Party introduced a policy of "reform and opening



up" to the outside world.

That marked the initial step in what eventually took the country from a poor and agrarian nation to the industrial and technological giant of today that rivals the United States for global influence.

That process has been quite gradual and tightly controlled. That is likely to continue, Lo said, calling China's capital account opening "asymmetric" — meaning it allows more capital in than going out.

Authorities, for example, still keep a tight grip on the yuan, allowing it to trade only narrowly even if movements have gradually widened. The currency is ranked far behind its major global peers in how much it is used.

Global financial transfer system SWIFT said in its most recent monthly report on the yuan that it was the sixth most used currency in domestic and international payments value in October, just behind the Canadian dollar.

But HSBC stressed that China's financial opening accelerated this year, with portfolio investments by foreigners reaching an all-time high.

And with foreign buying of Chinese stocks and bonds still far less than in many other markets, the bank sees a significant shift coming as China opens the door further.

"We believe this is only the beginning of a multi-year trend for portfolio investment rebalancing, globally," it said.

(Source: CNBC)

EU delays euro zone budget, deposit insurance plans

EU finance ministers will agree on Monday to give the euro zone bailout fund new responsibilities, but they will delay decisions on the euro zone budget and a deposit guarantee scheme after failing to reach agreement, a draft document showed.

The ministers will discuss deeper economic integration of the 19 countries sharing the euro, to prepare the single currency bloc for the next potential crisis.

However, after a year of negotiations, fraught with political difficulties, little of the original ambition, championed by French President Emmanuel Macron, remains.

The two flagship ideas - a separate budget for euro zone countries to help stabilize their economies and a deposit guarantee scheme to make all euro zone bank deposits safe - are too controversial and will be worked on further until June 2019, according to the draft document, seen by Reuters.

In the case of the deposit guarantee scheme, mistrust among euro zone countries is so great that they could not even agree on a roadmap for beginning political negotiations on EDIS (European Deposit Insurance Scheme), as mandated by EU leaders.

"Further technical work is still needed to agree on a roadmap. We will establish a High-level working group with a mandate to work on next steps. The High-level group should report back by June 2019," said the draft report by EU finance ministers.

The report was produced for EU leaders, who will meet on Dec. 14. Britain, which leaves the European Union next March, will not be represented at Monday's meeting of finance ministers.

The Macron idea of a large euro zone budget of hundreds of billions of euros,



financed by dedicated taxes and national contributions to stabilize the euro zone in case of a crisis, is also shelved for six months, the document said.

The disagreement focuses on the budget's stabilization function which some northern European countries see as inviting too much moral hazard.

"The possible features of a stabilization function were also discussed. We did not reach a common view at that stage on the design of such a function," the draft report said.

"Subject to guidance from the Euro Summit, we stand ready to continue the work in the first half of 2019 on instruments for stabilization based on the different options that have been presented by the Commission or member states, including an unemployment reinsurance scheme," it said.

The ministers will announce, however, that they agree for their bailout fund, the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), to lend to the euro zone bank resolution fund (SRF) in an emergency should a potential crisis use up all of the SRF's resources.

The bailout fund would be ready from 2024 to come up with loans for bank resolution, although the money could be available earlier if a review in 2020 shows risks of bank collapse have fallen so much, the backstop won't be needed.

(Source: Reuters)

Qatar pulls out of OPEC as relations with neighbors sour

Qatar will quit OPEC from next year, a group that it has been a part of since 1961, the country's energy minister said on Monday.

Saad al-Kaabi told reporters the decision to leave the cartel of big oil exporting countries came after Qatar had reviewed the ways it could enhance its role abroad while shifting the focus of the country towards gas.

"Qatar has decided to withdraw its membership from OPEC effective January 2019 and this decision was communicated to OPEC this morning," he said.

The move comes amid a deteriorating political situation between Qatar and its neighbors. Four Arab states — Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt — have imposed a trade and travel embargo on the country since June last year over allegations that Qatar supports terrorism.

Al-Kaabi said the decision was not linked to the political and economic boycott.

Qatar, which is the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas, is among the smallest oil producers in the group, pumping 609,000 barrels a day according to the OPEC research arm's October oil market report. Al-Kaabi said the country was seeking to increase LNG



production from 77m to 110m tons each year.

The withdrawal comes as non-Opec countries, such as Russia, have become more influential in setting oil policy alongside Saudi Arabia, which is the largest producer within the cartel, and its de facto leader.

The Qatari minister said the country's im-

pact on OPEC production policy was small, which had influenced its decision to leave, but the country would still comply with coordinated oil deals among global producers.

Still it was his predecessor who played a crucial role in securing an agreement in 2016 among producers inside and outside the cartel

for coordinated production cuts that helped end a multi-year downturn.

Al-Kaabi said Qatar would still attend a meeting of ministers later this week in Vienna as they dictate oil policy for 2019, amid a slide in crude prices that has taken prices to below \$60 a barrel last week from above \$86 last month.

Qatar is trying to offset the impact of its blockade by spending \$200bn on infrastructure and opening new trade routes. It has also redirected \$50bn from its sovereign wealth fund towards protecting the banking sector and exchange rate.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt accuse Doha, which has long been considered a regional maverick, of financing and supporting terrorism. Qatar, which hosts the U.S.'s largest military base in the Middle East, has repeatedly denied the allegations and the dispute has been deadlocked since it erupted.

Al-Kaabi, the former chief of state-owned Qatar Petroleum, was named minister of state for energy affairs in a cabinet reshuffle that took place in early November.

(Source: Financial Times)

OPEC works on getting its message right to a skeptical and confused oil market

When OPEC ministers announce this week how much oil they plan to pump in the coming months, they'll be talking to a skeptical market searching for direction.

As OPEC's de facto leader, Saudi energy minister Khalid al-Falih faces his likely toughest test yet, when the organization meets Thursday in Vienna to debate output cuts that his country badly wants but may not have the geopolitical leverage to push through. Russia and nine other non-OPEC allies will join the talks on Friday.

ICE Brent futures have tumbled almost 30 percent in the past two months on fears of a supply glut and waning confidence in OPEC's resolve to withstand pressure from the US to keep pumping.

Negotiating an agreement on any cuts will be a tough task in itself, but then comes the hard job of selling the plan to investors, who will be

seeking a trading signal in every word uttered.

In Falih, the coalition has a spokesman who analysts say has grown adept at speaking the language of hedge funds and money managers to clearly signal his country's, as well as OPEC's, intentions on oil policy -- though US President Donald Trump's penchant for tweeting criticism complicates matters.

"What [Falih] has done very well through his dialogue and his attempts to understand the oil market is that his messaging is sharper," said Helima Croft, global head of commodity strategy for investment bank RBC Capital Markets. "Now, there are circumstances beyond his control, and he's had to evolve quickly."

Consensus within the OPEC/non-OPEC coalition is growing for a cut, which the fundamentals suggest will be needed to stave off

an oversupply in the first half of 2019, several ministers and delegates have said.

But there is yet to be any firm agreement on how much to cut, nor how to allocate quotas. Officials have cited market forecasts showing a surplus of 1 million to 1.4 million b/d in the months ahead.

However, Saudi Arabia remains under pressure from Trump to keep oil prices low. The kingdom is still trying to manage the international fallout from the murder of US-based dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi, which likely weakens its hand in negotiations.

The country is also facing discontent from fellow OPEC members who blame Saudi Arabia for a production surge over the last few months that has contributed to the price slump.

The Saudis may need to get creative in how they spin an agreement to convince the market

of its seriousness in addressing the looming supply glut, while satisfying Russia, the US and its OPEC counterparts.

It was only a year and a half ago when Falih learned the hard lessons of speaking inartfully to the market.

At OPEC's May 2017 meeting, when the organization was debating whether to extend the production cut agreement that had been in place since January, Falih told reporters that the coalition had not negotiated nor even discussed how the cuts would be eventually unwound.

"We don't intend to exit so there is no exit strategy," he said, which traders interpreted to mean that an all-out market share battle could resume once enough members saw no more value in cutting production.

(Source: Platts)

Russian Ambassador in a Ceremony of Granting Badge of Friendship Coop. by Russian President to Hadi Tizhoush Taban

Russia Seeking Expansion of Trade-Economic Activities with Iran



Russian Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran Levan Szahagaryan attended a ceremony of granting Badge of Friendship Cooperation by Russian President Vladimir Putin to Hadi Tizhoush Taban Chairman of Iran and Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce.

Every year, Badge of Friendship Cooperation is granted by Russian President Vladimir Putin to one person in the world who has tried to strengthen and develop trade and business activities with Russia.

This Badge of Friendship Cooperation has been granted by Russian President Vladimir Putin to Hadi Tizhoush Taban Chairman of Iran and Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce and Chairman of Gilan Chamber of Commerce.

Russian Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran Levan Szahagaryan pointed to the salient activities taken by the chairman of

Gilan Chamber of Commerce who managed to open a new chapter in broadening relationship between Iran and Russia and said, "for this purpose, Russian President Vladimir Putin awarded Hadi Tizhoush Taban a Badge of Friendship Cooperation for making his utmost efforts in line with enhancing trade and business relationship between Islamic Republic of Iran and Russia."

The senior Russian diplomat emphasized on this issue that representative agency of Russian companies in Iran are ready to support and help Iranian companies to exchange information and increase level of economic communications with one another and reiterated, "even effective steps have been taken in the field of facilitating visa for economic activists. Under such circumstances, Iranian economic activists can

establish fair relationship with Russian companies."

Mr. Hadi Tizhoush Taban and his colleagues in Iran made their utmost efforts to expand and develop level of cooperation between Islamic Republic of Iran and Russian provinces in the field of trade and business, he said, adding, "I also seize this opportunity to express my special thanks to Mr. Jalalifar who made his utmost efforts to strengthen relationship between private sectors of the two countries."

A New Chapter of Cooperation Opened for Broadening and Expanding Economic Coop. with Iran

Chairman of Iran and Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce Hadi Tizhoush Taban was the next speaker who expressed his special thanks to the special attention of

relationship with Russia, he said, adding, "for this purpose, Iran has opened a new window for broadening and enhancing trade activities with Russia."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Tizhoush Taban added that bilateral trade between Iran and Russia can be considered a golden opportunity for economy of the two countries.

The two countries of Iran and Russia enjoy high potentials and capabilities for promoting bilateral trade and business ties, he said, adding, "Iranian and Russia economic activists, entrepreneurs and investors can bring about a rosy and bright future for booming economy and business between the two countries."

He went on to say that Iranian private sector has not any restriction for developing and broadening economic cooperation with Russia,



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russian Ambassador to Iran Levan Szahagaryan on their positive attitude for the expansion of trade, economic and political cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Islamic Republic of Iran has taken positive steps in recent years for the expansion of trade and economic

he added.

The Deputy Chairman of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) for International Affairs Mohammad-Reza Karbasi pointed to the lack of restriction of economic cooperation with Russia's economic activists and said, "we are interested in broadening and developing economic coopera-

tion with Russian economic activists wholeheartedly."

Islamic Republic of Iran can meet a large portion of food requirements of Russian Federation, he observed.

Russia is one of vast and large country which is home to large industrial and production units, he said, adding, "Iran and Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce is ready to throw its heavyweight behind Iranian economic activists for doing trade and business in this country."

Iran Enjoys High Capability in Providing Russia's Foods and Other Products

Advisor to Iran and Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce Seyed Jalil Jalalifar was the other speaker who said, "awarding higher governmental badge by Russian President Vladimir Putin to Mr. Tizhoush Taban can play a leading role in defusing and thwarting US sanctions imposed on Iran's economy."

He put the Russia's annual trade exchange volume with the Islamic Republic of Iran at \$1.77 billion.

In this regard, he also put Iran's annual export value of products to Russia at \$392 million.

Representative and Advisor of

Russia's Lotus Special Economic Zone in Iran Jalalifar termed Russian provinces as powerful, industrial and agricultural provinces and put total Russia's import of products from the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2016 at over \$227 billion, \$36 billion of which was related to the import of foodstuffs.

Of total \$36 billion worth of goods imported into Russia, Islamic Republic of Iran accounted for \$214 million, he said, adding, "therefore, Russia is considered as a very valuable industry for food industry activists."

He termed quality of food in Iran for participating in Russia's wholesale market as a valuable chance for Iranian traders, producers and merchants and added, "Russia is home to powerful province such as Crimea, Kazan, etc. and these provinces can pave suitable ways for Iranian traders and producers."

In this ceremony, a high-ranking trade and economic delegation, comprised of senior managers of trade and commercial companies from Russia's famous cities like Saratov, Nizhny, negotiated and held talks with Iranian companies in B2B basis.



Oil surges 5% on trade truce, expected supply cuts

Oil prices jumped by more than five percent on Monday after the United States and China agreed to a 90-day truce in a trade dispute, and ahead of a meeting this week of the producer club OPEC that is expected to cut supply.

U.S. light crude oil rose \$2.92 a barrel to a high of \$53.85, up 5.7 percent, before easing to around \$53.00 by 0930 GMT. Brent crude rose 5.3 percent or \$3.14 to a high of \$62.60 and was last trading around \$61.60.

"From Argentina to Alberta, the oil market news is about supply curtailments," said Norbert Rücker, head of commodity research at Swiss bank Julius Baer. "A brightening market mood will likely extend today's price rally in the very near term."

China and the United States agreed during a weekend meeting in Argentina of the Group of 20 leading economies not to impose additional trade tariffs for at least 90 days while they hold talks to resolve existing disputes.

The trade war between the world's two biggest economies has weighed heavily on global trade, sparking concerns of an economic slowdown.

Crude oil has not been included in the list of products facing import tariffs, but traders said the positive sentiment of the truce was also driving crude markets.

Oil also received support from an announcement by the Canadian province of Alberta that it would force producers to cut output by 8.7 percent, or 325,000 barrels per day (bpd), to deal with a pipeline bottleneck that has led to crude building up in storage.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries meets on Dec. 6 to decide output policy. The group, along with non-OPEC member Russia, is expected to announce cuts aimed at reining in a production surplus that has pulled down crude prices by around a third since October.

"Markets are expecting to see a substantial production cut after Russian President Vladimir Putin said his country's cooperation on oil supplies with Saudi Arabia would continue," said Hussein Sayed, chief market strategist at brokerage FXTM.

Within OPEC, Qatar said on Monday it would leave the producer club in January.

Qatar's oil production is only around 600,000 bpd, but it is the world's biggest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG).

The Persian Gulf state has also been at loggerheads with its much bigger neighbor Saudi Arabia, the de facto OPEC leader.

Outside OPEC, Russian oil output stood at 11.37 million bpd in November, down from a post-Soviet record of 11.41 million bpd it reached in October, Energy Ministry data showed on Sunday.

Meanwhile, oil producers in the United States continue to churn out record amounts of oil, with crude output at an unprecedented level of more than 11.5 million bpd.

With drilling activity still high, most analysts expect U.S. oil production to rise further in 2019.

(Source: Reuters)

NEWS IN BRIEF



China rejects India's 'local currency trade' offer

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — China has refused India's proposal to conduct bilateral trade in local currencies which was aimed at bridging latter's growing trade deficit with the former, report said.

India's exports to China stood at only USD 13.4 billion, while imports combined to USD 76.4 billion in 2017-18, leaving a massive trade deficit of USD 63 billion. In 2016-17, it was USD 51.11 billion.

India has also proposed trade in national currencies with some other countries, including Russia, Iran and Venezuela. New Delhi has trade deficit with these three countries, too.

Recently, China has permitted exports of rice and sugar. But India wants to increase exports of several other items, including pharmaceuticals, engineering and services.

India has been voicing its concern to China over the huge trade deficit for many years and believes that more bilateral trade in IT services, agriculture products, pharmaceuticals and tourism will help bring down the deficit.

Last month, India's commerce secretary Anup Wadhawan held wide-ranging talks with Wang Shouwen Vice, China's Commerce Minister, to discussed bilateral trade issues.



'Indo-Pakistani friendship key to resolving Kashmir'

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The veteran Kashmiri politician and former Chief Minister of J&K, Dr. Farooq Abdullah has urged India and Pakistan to forge friendship in order to resolve the contentious issue of Kashmir.

Talking to media persons in Baramulla district of Indian controlled Kashmir; Dr. Abdullah said his party National Conference (NC) has always supported friendly relations between India and Pakistan.

He went to say that the part of Kashmir under Pakistan's control belonged to Pakistan while the part under India's control belonged to India.

Asked whether the National Conference would have some different proposal than the demand for internal autonomy if it comes to power in Jammu and Kashmir, he said the autonomy is his party's only proposal to improve center-state relationship.

He rejected the suggestion that the Central government has turned down the autonomy demand. "The Centre cannot reject that demand as the people of the state have absolute power to raise such a demand under the Constitution," he asserted.

Kashmir remains the bone of contention between India and Pakistan, as both countries claim the disputed territory in full. They have gone to war on two occasions over Kashmir.



Out-of-school children surge in Afghanistan

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The protracted war in Afghanistan, which has now stretched into its 18th year, has taken heavy toll on children. According to a latest study, the number of out-of-school children has increased for the first time since 2002.

According to Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), urgent action is needed to prevent more Afghan children from being excluded from the education system.

Education is key to Afghanistan's future, says the report, adding that the past year has seen a rise in targeted attacks on schools, teachers, and students.

Between 2001 and 2015 there was a nine-fold increase in the total number of children going to school in Afghanistan. However, more than 3.7 million children, including 2.2 million girls, remain out of school, and these numbers have begun to increase in recent years, the report noted.

In 2018, the report said, schools are being targeted for attack at some of the highest rates since 2011. In the first five months of this year alone, the government recorded 870 attacks on schools, threats or intimidation against students, education staff or facilities, or fighting in the vicinity of school grounds.



20,000 new HIV cases in Pakistan annually

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — In an alarming development, Pakistan is registering approximately 20,000 new HIV cases annually, the highest rate among all countries in the region, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

The international body says mortality among Pakistanis living with the virus, which causes the deadly AIDS disease, is also rising, in spite of the availability of lifesaving antiretroviral therapy.

The latest government figures show that only 16 percent of the estimated 150,000 people living with HIV had been tested and only 9 percent have access to lifesaving treatment.

"The remaining 135,000 people are walking around in the communities as carriers of (HIV) infection who are ready to transmit infections to those who are not infected, even to their unborn babies," Dr. Saima Paracha of the National AIDS Control Program, was quoted saying in media.

Pakistani officials say the HIV epidemic in Pakistan remains largely concentrated among the key populations, including people who inject drugs, the transgender community, sex workers and their clients and men who have sex with men.

The fear of maltreatment, and punitive actions by law enforcers impacts the willingness of these populations to pursue testing, which remains a major challenge facing national efforts to treat and prevent the spread of HIV, Dr. Paracha lamented.

Official estimates show that Pakistan has seen a 45 percent increase in new HIV infections since 2010.

China to provide multiple bailout packages to help Pakistan 'overcome its financial crunch'

INTERNATIONAL d e s k The growing strategic partnership between China and Pakistan has been one of the defining stories of past few years, especially after the Pakistan-U.S. 'marriage of convenience' ended in an acrimonious divorce.

China has become the new all-weather ally of Islamabad, investing heavily in the country and offering aid to the Imran Khan led government at a time when it has been trying to revive the flailing economy.

Reaffirming his country's commitment to support Pakistan, Chinese Consul General to Pakistan Long Dingbin said Beijing is investing in multiple sectors and launching business ventures, instead of providing loans, in order to "boost Pakistan's economy".

In an interview to Geo TV, a few days after an attack on the Chinese consulate in Karachi, Dingbin said that during Prime Minister Imran Khan's recent visit to China, the two countries signed as many as 15 new agreements which will lead to increased cooperation in the business sector and will also improve their cultural ties.

"Instead of hard cash, China plans to eventually provide multiple forms of bailout packages [to Pakistan] in the shape of phenomenal investments in fresh projects," he said, adding that the investments will help Pakistan "overcome its financial crunch".

He further said the new ventures that were being launched would broaden the scope of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The Chinese consul general claimed that China would "never leave Pakistan in a lurch"



and will provide "maximum resources" to ensure that it can strengthen its wavering economy.

In response to a question about Pakistan's crippling debts, Dingbin insisted that CPEC did not contribute to "Pakistan's debt burden". He said that only four of the 22 projects launched under CPEC provided concessional loans, while the rest were investment-based and would strengthen Pakistan's economy.

Early last month, PM Khan embarked on his maiden visit to China, during which he held talks with the top Chinese political leadership and business community. Following the visit, PM Khan said Pakistan has received a "big" package of financial assistance from China, stopping short of revealing the quantum of aid.

A week later, Finance Minister Asad Umar announced that Pakistan's balance of pay-

ment crisis was effectively resolved. Of the "\$12 billion financing gap, \$6 billion have come from Saudi Arabia, and the rest has come from China," he told the media.

In an interview to Tehran, Pakistan-based journalist and analyst Farrukh K Pitafi said Pakistan-China relationship "has and will go from strength to strength", adding that Washington, which has been engaged in tiffs with both Beijing and Islamabad, was displaying a "characteristic lack of imagination".

On November 23, security forces had averted a major terror attack on the Chinese consulate located in the upscale Clifton neighborhood of Karachi.

Following the gruesome attack, Chinese deputy chief of mission in Islamabad Lijian Zhao said the efforts of all those trying to "sabotage the friendship" between Pakistan and China will "go in vain".

Meanwhile a contingent of People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) arrived in Islamabad on Sunday to participate in Pakistan-China joint international air exercise "Shaheen-VII", which shows the growing military cooperation between the two countries.

The militaries of the two countries maintain high-level exchanges as well as defence and security cooperation. The strategic partnership has manifested itself in the form of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), infrastructure development and routine joint military exercises.

Indian gov. avoids dialogue with Pakistan

By Syed Zafar Mehdi

The relations between two estranged neighbors – India and Pakistan – continue to be marked by acrimony and distrust. Despite the new government in Islamabad headed by Imran Khan extending a hand of friendship to New Delhi, the response from the BJP-led government in India has not been too warm, owing to several reasons, including India's allegation that Pakistan supports terrorist groups.

Raza Rumi is a senior Pakistani journalist, commentator and Editor of Daily Times, presently based in the U.S. He is the Director of Park Center for Independent Media, Ithaca College and teaches at Cornell Institute for Public Affairs U.S.

In an interview to Tehran Times, Mr. Rumi talks about the strained India-Pakistan relations, mistrust between the two countries, BJP government's 'hawkish Pakistan policy' and how Kartarpur corridor project marks a 'positive development' between India and Pakistan.

Following are the excerpts:

■ At a time when the relations between India and Pakistan remain strained, how significant can Kartarpur corridor prove as a 'confidence building measure' to improve ties between them?

A. Kartarpur Corridor project is indeed a positive development between India and Pakistan. The state of affairs between two countries, however, will not improve until the general elections in India, scheduled for April/May, 2019. During the election cycle, the present ruling party cannot be seen as accommodating towards Pakistan given how it stirs passions against the Muslim past especially the narrative of 'invaders' who damaged India.

Also, Modi government has been striving to appear 'tough' on terrorism and even boasted of surgical strikes. After the elections, perhaps the new government in India might see Kartarpur project as a confidence building measure given that the project is scheduled to be operationalized in April, 2019.

■ At a ceremony to formally start construction work on the project, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said the two countries will make progress only when they free themselves from the chains of the past. What do you think are the roadblocks and how can the two sides overcome them?

A. The biggest roadblock is prevalence of mistrust between two countries. Pakistan and India can only move forward by building a genuine trust-based relationship. Secondly, progress towards addressing each other's core concern[s] will go a long way towards building the requisite levels of trust.

Such a process of trust building requires at the least uninterrupted bilateral dialogue process and engagement at all levels i.e., governmental, military, businesses, civil society,



people to people etc. Sadly, this has not been the case and it has damaged the long term peace prospects in the region.

■ India's Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj said the Kartarpur initiative did not mean "bilateral dialogue will start", adding that "terror and talks cannot go together." How would you react to that?

A. This statement reflected the prevalent mindset in India that before any talks/engagement, Pakistan should address Indian concerns related to the issue of terrorism. The Mumbai attacks of 2008 are a thorny issue. Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had attempted to make some headway but not much could be achieved. In fact, one of the reasons that he was thrown out of office had to do with his alleged soft stance vis-a-vis India.

Over the years, Pakistan has also hardened its position that it cannot unilaterally take measures to address Indian concerns, as any step taken by Pakistan has to be reciprocated by India. The two countries are locked in a vicious cycle.

■ Amid reports that Pakistan might send invitation to PM Modi for SAARC Summit, India has ruled out the possibility of Modi attending the summit. Do you think the BJP government is treading cautiously since it is election season in India?

A. Of course. BJP has implemented a hawkish Pakistan-policy during past four years. PM Modi has shied away from formally engaging Pakistan in a structured and formal dialogue. PM Modi and his team will not risk starting a dialogue process now that the elections season has started in India. We will have to wait and see as to what happens after May 2019 when a new government would take office in Delhi.

■ Imran Khan government in Pakistan has completed 100 days in office. It's early days yet but how would you rate its performance so far?

A. Imran Khan government's performance has been mixed and somewhat vacillating thus far. PM Khan and his team

U.S. propaganda war against Iran doomed to fail

➔ After the initial round of lavish praise for these three regimes, with terrible human rights record, Hook spoke about the imaginary 'dangers' posed by Iran's 'dangerous proliferation of missiles across the Middle East'. The agenda was clear: to spread misinformation against the Islamic Republic, which dares to say 'no' to the 'Big Satan' and all its allies, including these three regimes.

He conveniently forgot that his country's commitment under Article VI of Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to work towards total disarmament has turned out to be hogwash. He forgot that U.S. ally Israel has refused to open its nuclear facilities for UN inspections and refused to adhere with the resolution regarding non-proliferation.

Displaying pieces of what he said were 'Iranian weapons supplied to militants in Yemen and Afghanistan', a tried-and-tested ploy to intimidate Iran, Hook accused the Houthis of 'reckless use of advanced weapons provided by Iran'.

He didn't mention the billion dollar arms deal between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, the same arms being used to slaughter Yemenis.

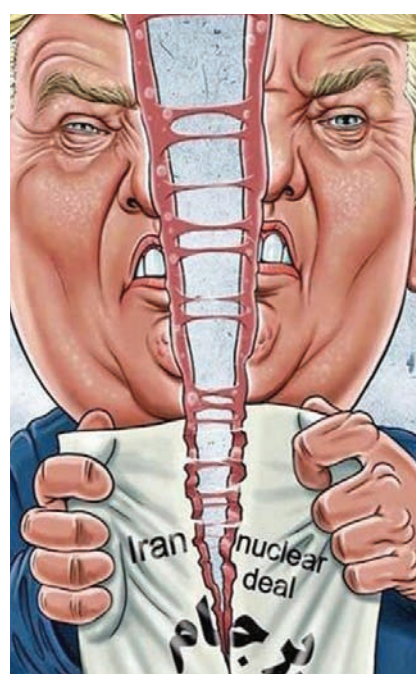
He didn't talk about the blockade of aid supplies triggering world's worst humanitarian crisis with thousands of deaths over the past three years and more than 22 million people in need of assistance.

Iran, he said, has 'no legitimate interest' in Yemen, other than to 'expand its sphere of influence and to create a Shia corridor of control'. So, what interest does the Saudi regime have in Yemen and what interest does the U.S. government have in supplying arms to Riyadh.

Pertinently, the U.S. State Department had admitted in leaked cables that Houthis were not Iran's proxy and they received neither funding nor weapons from Iran. That's what happens when you don't do your homework well. Or maybe, ignorance is bliss.

He went on to accuse Iran of arming the Taliban, the same militant group that was on CIA's payroll once. The same militant group that has been holding 'secret parleys' with the U.S. officials in Qatar. The same militant group the U.S. wants to keep alive to justify its occupation of the war-torn country.

Taliban spokesperson punctured his claim



saying the militant group has weapons depots spread in various parts of Afghanistan. He said the U.S. government was just seeking to deflect global attention from its failures in Afghanistan by leveling such unfounded allegations.

As a reminder, on the afternoon of Oct. 7, 2001, when the U.S. and its allies started the deadly air raid in Afghanistan, Rumsfeld said the objective of the 'campaign' was to decimate the Taliban and al Qaeda hide-outs in the country. As of today, the war has completed 17 years, consumed thousands of lives, and cost U.S. taxpayers more than \$150 billion. All this without achieving the stated 'objective'.

And it's not Iran supplying weapons to the Taliban. It is the United States. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), a U.S. government watchdog body, in a report last year detailed the horrible job Pentagon does at keeping weapons that eventually end up in terrorist hands. And some of the weapons are from Soviet war days when Americans and Taliban were fighting together. Hook perhaps needs lessons in history.

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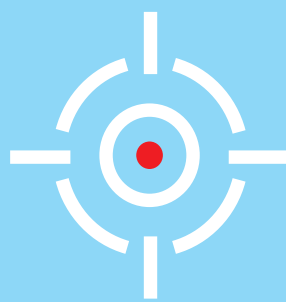
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World Day for Disabled People: minister calls on mayors to go to work on wheelchairs

HEALTH TEHRAN — Iranian Welfare Minister Mohammad Shariatmadari has asked mayors to experience going to work on wheelchairs for a day to see whether the city is disability friendly for physically challenged people.

"I ask [Pirouz] Hanachi [Tehran mayor] and mayors of other metropolises to go to work on wheelchair to see if it's possible or not. If not, they should start making cities accessible for such people," YJC quoted Shariatmadari as saying.

He made the remarks on Monday over a ceremony held on the occasion of the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

"Even the hall used for celebrating this day is not accessible for people with disabilities, and this is just the tip of the iceberg," Shariatmadari regretted.

The minister further suggested that people with disabilities should have a representative at governmental entities such as Majlis [Iranian Parliament] and the Welfare Ministry.

One third of the budget at Iran's Welfare Organization should be allocated to rehabilitation services for people with disabilities, he added.

The law on the rights of people with disabilities is good but most importantly it should be implemented and NGOs active in this field should ask for the proper budget allocation for the law, Shariatmadari highlighted.

He went on to say that in order to address



The minister further suggested that people with disabilities should have a representative at governmental entities such as Majlis [Iranian Parliament] and the Welfare Ministry.

problems of people with disabilities they should gather together quarterly instead

of once a year. The population is aging and the number of

people with disabilities is bound to increase accordingly, so that insurance coverage for better health services for them is a must, he concluded.

International Day of Disabled Persons

According to the UN website the annual observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons was proclaimed in 1992, by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 47/3. It aims to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development, and to increase awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

This year's theme focuses on empowering persons with disabilities for an inclusive, equitable and sustainable development as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda pledges to "leave no one behind".

Persons with disabilities, as both beneficiaries and agents of change, can fast track the process towards inclusive and sustainable development and promote resilient society for all, including in the context of disaster risk reduction and humanitarian action, and urban development. Governments, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, academic institutions and the private sector need to work as a "team" to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

More than 1b people with disability in the world

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his message on the International Day of Persons with Disability, 3 December 2018, said more than 1 billion people in the world live with some form of disability.

The full text of his message reads:

More than 1 billion people in the world live with some form of disability. In many societies, persons with disabilities often end up disconnected, living in isolation and facing discrimination.

In its pledge to leave no one behind, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents a commitment to reducing inequality and promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all, including people with disabilities. That means implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in all contexts and in all coun-



tries. It also means integrating the voices and concerns of people with disabilities into national agendas and policies.

Today, the United Nations is issuing the UN Flagship Report on Disability and Development 2018 – Realizing the SDGs by, for and with persons with disabilities. The Report shows that people with disabilities are at a disadvantage regarding most Sustainable Development Goals, but also highlights the growing number of good practices that can create a more inclusive society in which they can live independently.

On this International Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to work together for a better world that is inclusive, equitable and sustainable for everyone, where the rights of people with disabilities are fully realized.

(Source: UNIC)

Can nanotech slow the progress of osteoarthritis?

There is still no cure for osteoarthritis. However, one innovative nanotechnology approach may help send therapeutic agents deeper into the affected cartilage and remain active for longer.

As the population becomes progressively older and heavier — both risk factors for osteoarthritis — it is becoming an even greater problem.

The problem of drug delivery

Recently, researchers from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge got involved. They explored ways of using nanotechnology to enhance experimental osteoarthritis drugs.

They published their findings in the journal Translational Medicine earlier this week.

The authors of the new study believe that «[m]any of these shortcomings are rooted in inadequate drug delivery.»

This is for two main reasons. Firstly, the joints have a lack of blood supply, meaning that specialists must inject drugs directly into the joints themselves. Secondly, lymphatic drainage tends to rapidly remove compounds injected into joints.

To overcome this hurdle, the scientists focused on designing a way to deliver and keep drugs in the joint for a longer time while also diving deeper into cartilage, thereby taking medication directly to the cells where it is needed.

The medication they focused on was insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF-1), a compound that has shown promise in some clinical trials. This growth factor promotes growth and survival of chondrocytes, which are the cells that make up healthy cartilage.

Tiny spheres

The researchers designed a nano-scale spherical molecule as a carrier for IGF-1. The molecule is composed of many branches, called dendrimers that emanate from a central core.

Each branch ends with a positively charged region that is attracted to the negative charge on the surface of chondrocytes.

The molecules also include a swinging polymer arm that covers up and intermittently neutralizes the positive charges. The researchers attached IGF-1 molecules to the surface of this sphere and injected the compound into the joints of rats.

Once these particles are in the body, they bind to cartilage and lymphatic drainage cannot remove them. From there, they can begin to diffuse into the tissue.

However, the spheres do not bond



permanently, as this would keep them locked to the surface of the cartilage. The flexible polymer arm occasionally covers the charges, allowing the molecule to move and submerge itself deeper into the tissue.

«We found an optimal charge range so that the material can both bind the tissue and unbind for further diffusion, and not be so strong that it just gets stuck at the surface.»

Lead study author Brett Geiger, an MIT graduate student

As IGF-1 is introduced to the chondrocytes, it induces the release of proteoglycans, or the raw material of cartilage. IGF-1 also encourages cellular growth and reduces the rate of cell death.

Extending the therapeutic window

The researchers injected this hybrid molecule into rats' joints. It had a half-life of 4 days (the time it takes for the drug to reduce to half its initial volume), which is around 10 times longer than when scientists inject IGF-1 alone. Importantly, its therapeutic effect lasted for 30 days.

Compared with rats that did not receive the drug, those that did saw reduced joint damage. Also, there was a significant reduction in inflammation.

Of course, rat cartilage is much thinner than that of humans; theirs is around 100 micrometers thick, whereas a human's is closer to 1 millimeter.

In a separate experiment, the scientists proved that these molecules were able to penetrate to a thickness that would be relevant for a human patient.

This is just the first phase of research investigating the use of these molecules to deliver drugs into cartilage. The team plans to continue along the same lines and study other chemicals, including drugs that block inflammatory cytokines and nucleic acids including DNA and RNA.

Though the new method is in its infancy, this approach might eventually mean that doctors could significantly slow the course of osteoarthritis with biweekly or monthly injections.

(Source: sgtalk.org)

Infections could trigger cardiovascular disease

Researchers find a higher risk of coronary events during the 3 months after an infection. The body's immune response, they suggest, may explain why infections "trigger" heart attack and stroke.

Scientists encourage everyone to have their flu shots this year, as simple influenza viruses may trigger cardiovascular events.

The term cardiovascular disease (CVD) covers a range of conditions: from heart attack and heart disease to stroke, hypertension, and heart failure.

As many as 84 million people in the United States are living with one of the conditions above, and 2,200 people die every day as a result.

Several factors may raise the risk of cardiovascular conditions. Some of these factors are modifiable, such as smoking, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure. Other factors, such as sex, race, age, and family history, cannot be modified.

However, there are also a number of "acute" risk factors, or triggers that can lead to CVD. Some research has linked urinary infections and pneumonia, for instance, with the risk of having heart attacks and stroke.

A new study, published in the Journal of the American Heart Association, zooms in on the link between infections and adverse cardiovascular events.

Dr. Kamakshi Lakshminarayan, a neurologist and associate professor of epidemiology at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, is the senior author of the study.

Studying infections and coronary events risk

Dr. Lakshminarayan and colleagues examined 1,312 people who had had a coronary event such as a heart attack, or myocardial infarction, and compared them with 727 people who had had an ischemic stroke.

The study included both outpatients and people who were hospitalized to receive treatment for their infection.

The researchers looked for infections that these people developed up to 1–2 years before the cardiovascular event. The most commonly reported infections were urinary tract infections, pneumonia, and respiratory infections.

Overall, the study found that approximately 37 percent of the participants with heart disease had developed an infection in the 3 months leading up to the coronary event. Among people with stroke, this number was almost 30 percent.

In the first 2 weeks after having an infection, the risk of a stroke or a heart attack was the highest.



Though the analysis found this link among both inpatients and outpatients, people who received care in the hospital were more likely to have a coronary event.

Immune response may elicit coronary events

Although the study was observational, the scientists speculate on the mechanism that may explain the results.

During an infection, explains Dr. Lakshminarayan, the body's immune system produces more white blood cells to fight it off. However, this immune response also makes small blood cells, called platelets, stickier.

In a healthy body, the role of platelets is to bind to a damaged blood vessel and create a blood clot. This is very useful for accidental cuts, for example, but too many platelets, or platelets that are too sticky, can raise the risk of blood clots.

"The infection appears to be the trigger for changing the finely tuned balance in the blood and making us more prone to thrombosis, or clot formation," says Dr. Lakshminarayan. "It's a trigger for the blood vessels to get blocked up and puts us at higher risk of serious events like heart attack and stroke."

"One of the biggest takeaways is that we have to prevent these infections whenever possible [...] and that means flu shots and pneumonia vaccines, especially for older individuals."

In an accompanying editorial, Juan Badimon — who was not involved in the research — explains why the risk of a coronary event may have been higher in the hospitalized group. He says that for these people, the infection might have been more severe.

"And if the infection is that severe, we can assume a stronger inflammatory response will result in a higher cardiovascular risk," he said in an interview.

Badimon is a professor of medicine and the director of the atherothrombosis research unit at Mount Sinai School of Medicine's Cardiovascular Institute in New York City, NY.

(Source: Medical News Today)

Man who pretended to be a paramedic and 'treated' more than 100 patients faces criminal investigation

Police have launched a criminal investigation into a "fake" paramedic who responded to 999 calls and treated patients without being qualified.

The trainee emergency worker at London Ambulance Service (LAS) is said to have "gone rogue" after failing his exams. He was dispatched to urgent calls and discharged some patients rather than referring them to hospital, the Evening Standard reported.

The 21-year-old was sacked and reported to the Metropolitan Police in July after his "unauthorized actions" came to light.

Ambulance chiefs have since attempted to contact the patients involved — believed to number more than 100 — to inform them of potential safety breaches. None are thought to have come to any harm as a result of the rogue medic's actions.

Scotland Yard confirmed it had arrested a man in Hornchurch, northeast London, in September.

He was held on suspicion of fraud, theft by employee, dangerous driving, driving otherwise in accordance of license, and driving without insurance.

The suspect was also questioned over possible assault and burglary offences, which relate to potential unlawful physical contact with patients and entering homes under false pretenses.

He was taken into custody at a south London police station and released under investigation.

A spokeswoman for London Ambulance Service NHS Trust told The Independent: "We take our responsibilities to patients extremely seriously. As soon as we became aware of the activities of this individual, we initiated a full internal investigation, informed the police and contacted patients affected. The individual's employment with us was also immediately ended."

"Following our investigation, we have improved, and will continue to improve, our security, systems and processes."

The trust declined to say how the trainee came to be dispatched to 999 calls, but the spokeswoman said: "Changes designed to eliminate the possibility of anyone with internal knowledge of our computerized systems being able to misuse them in this way have already been implemented."

The man was sent on some calls alone but travelled with a trained paramedic in most cases, according to LAS.

The Care Quality Commission carried out an unannounced two-day inspection of the ambulance service last week after being notified of the case. It will publish its findings at a later date.

A spokeswoman for NHS Improvement, which oversees trusts, said: "London Ambulance Service NHS Trust reported this incident to us immediately and acted quickly to identify and support the affected patients. The police were informed and the staff member concerned no longer works for the trust."

"NHS Improvement has supported LAS during its investigation and we continue to do so as the trust ensures lessons are learnt to prevent this from happening again."

(Source: The Independent)

Social media photo overkill may boost narcissism

A recent study reveals that an increase in narcissistic traits may be an unwanted result of sharing images, including selfies, "excessively" on social media.

The findings, which appear in The Open Psychology Journal, show that participants who posted large numbers of photos and selfies on social media developed a 25 percent rise in narcissistic traits over the 4-month study period.

This uptick in traits pushed some participants past the diagnostic cutoff for narcissistic personality disorder.

Social media allows us to share major life events and daily musings alike with friends, family, and colleagues. It makes connecting with people around the world easy, and people who use platforms strategically can develop online followings.

However, posting too many photos, including selfies, may have drawbacks.

Social media and narcissism

Researchers from Swansea University in the United Kingdom and Milan University in Italy worked with 74 participants, who ranged in age from 18–34, for 4 months.

Sixty percent of participants used Facebook, 25 percent used Instagram, and 13 percent used Twitter and Snapchat each.

On average, the participants used social media for around 3 hours a day, not including use for work, but some participants reported personal use of up to 8 hours a day.

Overall, those who posted images in quantities that the researchers considered "excessive" showed an average 25 percent increase in narcissistic traits over the study period.

Interestingly, participants who posted words rather than images did not demonstrate this increase.

Narcissistic personality disorder

This distinct personality disorder encompasses many traits. According to the American Psychiatric Association, there are 10 types of personality disorder, and each affects at least two of the following factors: how a person thinks about themselves and others, how a person responds emotionally, how a person relates to others, how they control their own behavior.

Narcissistic personality disorder occurs when a person has a need for admiration from others, while at the same time lacking empathy.

Many people with this disorder experience self-importance and entitlement, which can result in taking advantage of people.

To receive a diagnosis, a person must exhibit persistent impairments, such as making excessive attempts to attract attention or experiencing problems with goal-setting or interpersonal relationships.

However, some individuals experience narcissistic traits without this type of impact.

How social media can spur narcissism

Social media focuses on the individual user. As numbers of likes or views go up, the user can feel more "seen," which can improve self-esteem. It can also lead to further attention-seeking.

The link between social media use and narcissism has been a focus of research in recent years, as cell phone use has increased, and it will likely continue to be a topic of study.

The ease of posting a photo in seconds, regardless of where a person is or what they are doing, can result in oversharing. This can feed the ego in potentially problematic ways, as the recent findings indicate.

"That the predominant usage of social media for the participants was visual, mainly through Facebook, suggests the growth of this personality problem could be seen increasingly more often, unless we recognise the dangers in this form of communication."

(Source: Medical News Today)

Pomegranate festival kicks off in Tehran



HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — Yesterday, a major pomegranate festival, featuring various traditions from across the country, opened to the public at the Eshraq Cultural Center, northeast Tehran.

Varieties of pomegranate and related products are on show at the 20-day event titled “One Hundred Seeds of Ruby”.

The exhibit also stages local live performances and traditions, handicrafts, souvenirs, and culinary skills as well.

Visitors may grasp opportunity to have stopovers in ethnic siah-chadors (black tents) or enter cuisine contests with top cooks, IRNA quoted an official with Tehran Municipality on Sunday.

Throughout the Orient, the pomegranate has since earliest times occupied a position of importance alongside the grape and the fig.

During autumn, lots of pomegranate farmers hold such festivals to thank God and to celebrate harvest season. Pomegranates themselves can vary in color from deep red to yellow flushed with pink.

Restoration work commences on Dezful bridge



HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — A fresh restoration plan has put into action on the centuries-old Dezful bridge which stands tall in the southwestern Iranian city.

“Over five billion rials have been allocated to the project,” Dezful’s tourism chief Hojjatollah Aryaeinia said on Monday, Mehr reported.

The official estimated some credit between 60 to 70 billion rials (around \$1.5m) are needed for the monument being fully rehabilitated.

The Sassanid-era bridge, which its foundation dates back to roughly 1,700 years ago, has been extensively repaired and renovated in various eras to ensure its functionality and preservation. Nowadays, cars are no longer allowed to pass over the structure due to its historical value and fragility.

It is said that the monument was built by Roman prisoners of war after suffering a defeat at the hands of the Sassanid king Shapur I the Great, who reigned over Persia from around 240-270 CE.



ROUND THE GLOBE

Robben Island

Robben Island in South Africa was used at various times between the 17th century and the 20th century as a prison, a hospital for socially unacceptable groups, and a military base.

Its buildings, and in particular those of the late 20th century maximum security prison for political prisoners, testify to the way in which democracy and freedom triumphed over oppression and racism.



What survives from its episodic history are 17th century quarries, the tomb of Hadije Kramat who died in 1755, 19th century ‘village’ administrative buildings including a chapel and parsonage, small lighthouse, the lepers’ church, the only remains of a leper colony, derelict World War II military structures around the harbor and the stark and functional maximum security prison of the Apartheid period began in the 1960s.

The symbolic value of Robben Island lies in its somber history, as a prison and a hospital for unfortunates who were sequestered as being socially undesirable.

This came to an end in the 1990s when the inhuman Apartheid regime was rejected by the South African people and the political prisoners who had been incarcerated on the Island received their freedom after many years.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iran’s grape agricultural heritage gains worldwide fame

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Jowzan Valley traditional grape cultivation system has formally been recognized as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System, during a meeting of the GIAHS Scientific Advisory Group, which was held in Rome from November 28 to 30.

The same privilege was also granted to Italy’s Soave vineyards as the group approved their unique ways of growing grapes and grape-based products using traditional practices and knowledge while preserving biodiversity and ecosystems.

It is the second time that sites in Italy and Iran are added to the global agricultural heritage systems list. FAO’s global agricultural heritage network now consists of 54 remarkable landscapes in 21 countries around the globe, FAO website reported.

The selection criteria includes that sites be of global importance, have value as a public good in terms of supporting food and livelihood security, agro-biodiversity,

knowledge systems, adapted technologies, and culture, and have outstanding landscapes.

According to the FAO, Jowzan’s farmers make the grape cultivation possible in extreme cold conditions thanks to unique techniques while traditional knowledge and tools allow the farmers to process more than 40 different grape products out of 130 different grape varieties.

“This, together with higher yield per hectare, unique skills of gardeners, the right sugar level - are all factors that make grapes cultivation and raisins of the Jowzan Valley different from other parts of the country and a top seller among the consumers.”

Over the years, the system has significantly improved the people’s living standards, but also provided an impetus for tourism development, and a unique opportunity to boost rural economy.

Jowzan Valley is situated in Malayer county, Hamedan province.



Centuries-old Quran manuscripts restored



HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — Centuries-old manuscripts of the holy Quran have recently been rehabilitated with the efforts of Kordestan province’s cultural heritage department, CHTN reported.

“We identified all physical harms with four separate sets of manuscripts being kept in rural mosques across the province,” said Jalil Balaei, the provincial tourism chief.

With regard to their original authenticity, the manuscripts have been treated with deacidification, dressing, and strengthening processes, and will be put on show, he added.

Currency exhibit opens in Bandar Abbas



HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — Collections of domestic and foreign currencies have been put on show at the Persian Gulf anthropology museum in Bandar Abbas, southern Iran, CHTN reported on Sunday. Several collectors contribute to the one-month exhibit, which showcases paper money from Japan, Germany, Spain, Austria and the former Soviet Union amongst others. It also contains Iranian currencies from Qajar era (1794 to 1925) to the present time.

Ancient coffin discovered in southwest Iran



HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — An ancient coffin has recently been found in Jubji, a historical site in Iran’s southwestern Khuzestan province. Preliminary speculations suggest that the coffin may date back to the Parthian era (247 BC–224 CE).

A team of Iranian archaeologists has discovered the object while conducting a rescue operation in Jubji, Mehr reported on Sunday.

However, the team should complete studies before the coffin is fully unearthed.

AriaMedTour emerges as a giant in medical tourism in Iran: get your rhinoplasty done now!

Medical tourism is one of the new untapped potentials which is increasingly gaining ground in Iran. According to official statistics, the number of health tourists visiting Iran during the first quarter of 2018 almost doubled compared to the same period of the year earlier, announced the head of the Health Tourism Department of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education of Iran, Dr. Saeed Heshmzadeh in an interview with ISNA.

He said that Iran attracted over 300,000 health tourists during the last Iranian calendar. Another official of the country’s medical tourism, Mohammad Jahangiri also said that Iran has the capacity to earn \$7 billion from medical tourism annually, which is seven times more than the current figure.

The rising influx of medical travelers to Iran is partly because of the devaluation of the national currency of Iran, which makes healthcare services less expensive for foreign patients who pay in other currencies.

Another factor is the emergence of professional health tourism facilitators during the last few years, which provide services to patients who travel to Iran from other countries to receive medical or cosmetic treatments.

One such company is AriaMedTour, a young startup which has gained a lot of reputation in the field of medical tourism, having attracted a great number of foreign health tourists and offered them quality services since it launched



its operation. With a cadre of over 40 skilled employees, AriaMedTour makes use of a professional website to put on display its services in the field of health tourism.

Among the various treatments for which foreign patients choose Iran, rhinoplasty is the most popular. A look at the website of AriaMedTour will show that nose surgery constitutes the lion’s share of treatments sought out by foreign health tourists in Iran.

■ Rhinoplasty in Iran

Iran has been given the nickname ‘nose job capital of

the world’ because of the huge number of nose operation performed in the country, with seven times more per capita nose jobs carried out than in the United States. Rhinoplasty in Iran is so common that young people sporting a white tape over their noses is a very familiar sight in the streets of Iranian cities.

The high demand for nose surgery in Iran is a driving force behind the great competence and experience of Iranian nose surgeons. Some of the Iranian rhinoplasty surgeons have gained world-famous reputation in nose surgery, to the extent that some well-known celebrities have come to Iran in the past years to go under the knives of these skillful surgeons.

Rhinoplasty cost in Iran is also a strong incentive for people to choose Iran as their destination. The considerably lower price of nose surgery in Iran in comparison to other countries is highly contributing to the popularity of Iran as a rhinoplasty hub in the region -- if not the world.

As the most prestigious medical tourism facilitator in Iran, AriaMedTour is prepared to give foreign patients a very pleasant experience of medical tourism in Iran. The company arranges whatever service you need to travel to Iran for a cosmetic or medical treatment, ranging from clinic/hospital and doctor’s appointment, visa, accommodations, airport pick-up and drop-off, private transfer, and interpretation and tour guiding services.

Iraq’s ancient pottery struggles to outlive modern plastic

Adel Al-Kawwaz expertly spins the potter’s wheel, shaping the wet clay into a smooth jug. His family is famous for this millennia-old Iraqi craft, but Kawwaz is struggling to keep it alive.

For thousands of years, clay utensils for storing food and cooking were found in virtually every home in Sumer, the earliest known civilization in modern-day southern Iraq.

Kawwaz’s own family drew their name from the jug, or “kawz” in Arabic, which they have produced for more than 200 years from clay found at a lake by Najaf, a holy Shiite Muslim city.

“Making clay vases is a craft that my family had become famous for,” says 45-year-old Kawwaz wistfully.

Pottery has deep roots in Iraq, where ancient civilizations turned to clay to build their homes, shape their cooking utensils, and even make their ovens.

Cuneiform, one of the earliest forms of writing invented by the Sumerians, was also carved into clay tablets.

But now, with a flood of more modern products, demand for the handmade clay items has dried up, says Kawwaz.

His family’s jugs were shaped from Najaf mud, dried in the shade, then baked at high temperatures for no less than 15 hours.

In Iraq, one of the hottest countries on earth, they were indispensable.

“These vases were used to keep water cool or preserve food. They were placed in the shade

or hung in another high location,” he says.

Some Iraqis even used them to store jewelry.

“Those that practiced pottery would make a lot of money because they were common items in ancient Iraqi households,” says Kawwaz.

They were surprisingly handy during the era of Saddam Hussein, when many families struggled financially, as well as in the 1990s, when international sanctions hit Iraq.

With household appliances extremely rare or unaffordable for most of the population, Iraqis once again relied on clay.

“The income of most families did not allow them to buy a refrigerator or freezer to keep their water cold, so most used clay cauldrons,” he says.



Back then, his family sold their large jugs in bulk — sometimes thousands per week across every Iraqi province.

But times have changed.

(Source: Arab News)

Ohio university to return ancient Turkish mosaics

A set of ancient mosaics that were part of an Ohio university’s art collection will be returned to Turkey, more than half a century after looters removed them from the ruins of Roman homes and smuggled them out of the country.

Turkish representatives joined Bowling Green State University administrators at a news conference Tuesday to discuss the decision, the Toledo Blade reported.

Southern Methodist University art history professor Stephanie Langin-Hooper, one of the researchers who probed the history of the mosaics, praised the return of the artifacts.

“Today we have a modern triumph — a reverse triumph

if you will — where looted masterpieces get to go home,” she said. “It is a triumph for scholarship, for research, and for collaboration.”

Turkish Consul General Umut Acar thanked university officials for their cooperation in the matter.

“It’s that understanding and respect that brings together representatives from a city in southeast Turkey with Bowling Green residents,” Acar said.

Officials originally thought the pieces were from the Turkish city of Antioch but researchers later determined they probably came from the city of Zeugma.

Bowling Green bought the 12 mosaics from a New York gallery in 1965 and displayed them in the Wolfe Center for the Arts.

Bowling Green and Turkish officials agreed that the artifacts would be returned in May. The mosaics will be exhibited at the Zeugma Mosaic Museum in Gaziantep.

“The mosaic’s new home will allow these historic artifacts to be appreciated and studied where they originated and to be enjoyed by a much wider audience,” Bowling Green President Rodney Rogers said.

(Source: Fox News)

Saltier waterways are creating dangerous ‘chemical cocktails’, scientists find

A recent study led by University of Maryland researchers found that streams and rivers across the United States have become saltier and more alkaline over the past 50 years, thanks to road deicers, fertilizers and other salty compounds that humans indirectly release into waterways. The team named this effect “Freshwater Salinization Syndrome.”

New research from the same UMD-led group takes a closer look at the global, regional and local consequences of Freshwater Salinization Syndrome. The group found that salty, alkaline freshwater can release a variety of chemicals, including toxic metals and harmful nitrogen-containing compounds, from streambeds and soils in drainage basins.

The results further suggest that many of these chemicals travel together throughout watersheds, forming “chemical cocktails” that can have more devastating effects on drinking water supplies and ecosystems when compared with individual contaminants alone.

Field observations

The group’s latest work, which includes field observations from the Washington, D.C. and Baltimore metropolitan areas, highlights the need for new and more comprehensive regulation and pollution management strategies. The research team published its findings December 3, 2018 in the journal *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*.

The “bottom line of our findings is that when humans add salt to waterways, that salt also releases a lot of dangerous collateral chemicals,” said Sujay Kaushal, a professor of geology at UMD and lead author of the study. “It’s clear that regulatory agencies need



to find new ways to address these ‘chemical cocktails’ released by saltier water, rather than looking at individual freshwater pollutants one by one.”

Salty, alkaline freshwater is already known to create big problems for drinking water

Salty, alkaline freshwater is already known to create big problems for drinking water supplies, urban infrastructure and natural ecosystems.

supplies, urban infrastructure and natural ecosystems. For example, when Flint, Michigan, switched its primary water source to the Flint River in 2014, the river’s high salt load combined with chemical treatments to make the water more corrosive, causing lead to leach from water pipes and creating that city’s well-documented water crisis.

Chemical cocktails

Kaushal and his colleagues’ latest research project investigated the impacts of chemical cocktails created by saltier water in more detail. The group began by assessing previously published data from rivers in the U.S., Europe, Canada, Russia, China and Iran, substantially expanding the geographic boundaries of the researchers’ previous work. Their analysis suggests that Freshwater Salinization Syndrome could be a global phenomenon, with the most conclusive support showing a steady trend of increased salt ions in both U.S. and European rivers.

“Given what we are finding, I continue to be surprised by the scope and magnitude of the recent degradation of Earth’s surface waters,” said study co-author Gene Likens, president emeritus of the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies and a distinguished research professor at the University of Connecticut.

In one set of observations, the researchers sampled water from the Paint Branch stream near the UMD campus before, during and after a 2017 snowstorm. This aspect of the study allowed the team to trace the effects of road salt washed into the streams by the melting snow.

(Source: *phys.org*)

Study shows connection between brain size and cognitive performance

Using a larger dataset than all previous studies on the subject combined, researchers found a small but significant connection between brain size and cognitive performance.

The English idiom “highbrow,” derived from a physical description of a skull barely able to contain the brain inside of it, comes from a long-held belief in the existence of a link between brain size and intelligence.

For more than 200 years, scientists have looked for such an association. Begun using rough measures, such as estimated skull volume or head circumference, the investigation became more sophisticated in the last few decades, when MRIs offered a highly accurate accounting of brain volume.

Yet the connection has remained hazy and fraught, with many studies failing to account for confounding variables, such as height and socioeconomic status. The published studies are also subject to “publication bias,” the tendency to publish only more noteworthy findings.

A new study, the largest of its kind, led by Gideon Nave of the Wharton School and Philipp Koellinger of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, has clarified the connection. Using MRI-derived information about brain size in connection with cognitive performance test results and educational-attainment measures obtained from more than 13,600 people, the researchers found that, as previous studies have suggested, a positive relationship does exist between brain volume and performance on cognitive tests. But that finding comes with important caveats.

The “effect is there,” says Nave, an assistant professor of marketing at Wharton. “On average, a person with a larger brain will tend to perform better on tests of cognition than one with a smaller brain. But size is only a small part of the picture, explaining about 2 percent of the variability in test performance. For educational attainment the effect was even smaller: an additional ‘cup’ (100 square centimeters) of brain would increase an average person’s years of schooling by less than five months.

(Source: *SciTechDaily*)

NASA to launch new crewed craft in 2019

NASA and its commercial partners, Boeing and SpaceX, are nearing the end of their program to develop new crew capsules that will act as taxis between Earth and the International Space Station (ISS).

Two final uncrewed test flights have been confirmed for next year, which will be followed by the first astronauts in the summer.

The U.S. has been without the domestic means to launch its astronauts since 2011, when the Space Shuttle was retired. Since that time, it has been relying on Russian Soyuz craft to carry Americans into space.

In tandem, NASA has been developing capsules as part of the commercial crew program. That effort is reaching the final stages. On 7 January, SpaceX will launch its first Crew Dragon spacecraft, which will be an uncrewed test flight to the ISS that will pave the way for the first crewed flight in June.

In March, Boeing will perform a similar test of its CST-100 Starliner in the run-up to a crewed launch in August. Before the manned flights, the two companies will perform launchpad and inflight-abort tests. NASA is also conducting a review of its workplace safety culture at the companies.

The same technologies that connected us with a global audience had also shifted advertising revenues away from news publishers. We decided to seek an approach that would allow us to keep our journalism open and accessible to everyone, regardless of where they live or what they can afford.

More than one million readers have now supported our independent, investigative journalism through contributions, membership or subscriptions, which has played such an important part in helping The Guardian overcome a perilous financial situation globally. We want to thank you for all of your support. But we have to maintain and build on that support for every year to come.

(Source: *The Guardian*)

Black hole ‘donuts’ are actually ‘fountains’, say researchers

Based on computer simulations and new observations from the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA), researchers have found that the rings of gas surrounding active supermassive black holes are not simple donut shapes. Instead, gas expelled from the center interacts with infalling gas to create a dynamic circulation pattern, similar to a water fountain in a city park.

Most galaxies host a supermassive black hole, millions or billions of times as heavy as the Sun, in their centers. Some of these black holes swallow material quite actively.

Takuma Izumi, a researcher at the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan (NAOJ), led a team of astronomers that used ALMA to observe the supermassive black hole in the Circinus Galaxy located 14 million light-years away from the Earth in the direction of the constellation Circinus. The team then compared their observations to a computer simulation of gas falling towards a black hole made with the Cray XC30 ATERUI supercomputer operated by NAOJ.

This comparison revealed that the presumptive “donut” is not actually a rigid structure, but instead a complex collection of highly dynamic gaseous components. First, cold molecular gas falling towards the black hole forms a disk near the plane of rotation.

As it approaches the black hole, this gas is heated until the molecules break down into the component atoms and ions. Some of these atoms are then expelled above and below the disk, rather than being absorbed by the black hole. This hot atomic gas falls back onto the disk creating a turbulent three dimensional structure. These three components circulate continuously, similar to a water fountain in a city park.

“Previous theoretical models set a priori assumptions of rigid donuts,” explains Keiichi Wada, a theoretician at Kagoshima University in Japan, who lead the simulation study and is a member of the research team.

(Source: *Science Daily*)

Study suggests prehistoric whales may have sucked at feeding

In the distant past, all whales had teeth. Now, some feed using baleen instead. A new analysis of previously-discovered fossils has provided a fresh insight into the evolution of that baleen, suggesting that for a while, some whales simply sucked down their food.

Baleen whales feed by lunging forward and gulping seawater, then straining that water out through the fibrous baleen plates in their mouths. Those plates trap tiny crustaceans called krill, which the whale subsequently swallows. Theories vary as to whether or not certain types of prehistoric toothed whales evolved straight through to having baleen, or went through a toothless and baleen-less stage in between.

In the 1970s, the fossilized skeleton of a 15-foot (4.6-m) whale known as *Maiabalaena nesbittae* (illustrated below) was discovered in Oregon. It lived about 33 million years ago, and while it definitely didn’t have teeth, it might not have had baleen either – scientists have remained uncertain on this point, due to the fact that baleen doesn’t

fossilize well.

Now, using CT-scanning technology, a team from the Smithsonian Institute’s National Museum of Natural History has taken a more in-depth look at *Maiabalaena*’s skull. Lead scientist Carlos Mauricio Peredo determined that while the whale’s upper jaw was too thin and narrow to support baleen, muscle attachments on its throat bones suggest that it did have strong cheeks and a retractable tongue.

This would allow it to suck water into its mouth, along with small prey items such as fish and squid. No teeth would be required for this suction-feeding method, which could have set the stage for the subsequent evolution of baleen.

Interestingly, a 2017 study somewhat refutes the notion that baleen whales went through a toothless and baleen-less phase in their evolution. Upon analyzing the fossilized remains of a toothed whale called *Coronodon havensteini*, a team from the New York Institute of Technology determined that its teeth were evolving to serve a baleen-like filter-feeding purpose.

This implies that over time, *Coronodon*’s teeth could have actually become what we now know as baleen. Peredo, however, believes that the jury is very much still out on that theory.

“*Coronodon* is on one of the earliest branches of the baleen whale family tree. Its ability to filter feed has not been tested in a robust way; proposed living analogs such as crabeater seals and leopard seals remain understudied and probably do not feed the way fossil whales did,” he tells us. “Most importantly, *Maiabalaena* is at the right place on the baleen whale family tree for this transition; *Coronodon* represents a much earlier branch that is unlikely to inform us about the origin of baleen.”

A paper on the research – which also involved scientists from Virginia’s George Mason University, Texas A and M University, and the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture in Seattle – was recently published in the journal *Current Biology*.

(Source: *New Atlas*)

This little-known sea is a grim preview of what global warming will do to oceans



Scientists have observed fish in their samples whose white fatty underbellies had all but disappeared. “They just looked like they were starving,” marine ecologist Jan Dierking said.

Then came this past summer’s heat wave, which increased Baltic Sea temperatures to an unprecedented 80.6 degrees Fahrenheit (27 degrees Celsius), killing starfish and other fragile marine creatures.

The Baltic Sea is a sort of experimental pressure cooker for marine life, a test for how species fare – and whether they can survive at all – in conditions the world’s oceans may soon experience.

“Many of the pressures have hit here much earlier and more intensely than in other world regions,” said Thorsten Reusch, a marine ecologist based here at Germany’s largest ocean research institute.

Delicate marine ecosystems

It is also tucked between nine countries – including Sweden to the north, Russia to the east and Germany to the south – whose residents pollute and dump waste into, travel over and swim through its delicate marine ecosystems.

As a result, conditions have been changing rapidly. The temperature of the Baltic has risen at roughly three times the average rate of global oceans over the past decade.

It has experienced a tenfold expansion of no-oxygen “dead zones” that wipe out fish and their habitats in the past 115 years. And it is seeing increasing levels of acidification.

By studying the Baltic, and comprehensive data sets that span five decades, scientists are learning valuable lessons from nature. At times, the ecosystem is seemingly unaffected by a huge flux in

conditions. At other times, species and their habitats are devastated when a tiny nudge in temperature or salinity disrupts the balance.

The Baltic offers an ominous but also in some ways hopeful vision of the capacity for species to adapt and what people working in collaboration might be able to do to mitigate environmental damage.

Cod, meanwhile, have been separated geographically from their main fish prey. To escape oxygen dead zones, cod have concentrated themselves in the southern Baltic, while the sprat they like to eat have shifted to the relatively cooler northern waters.

Tiny organisms

Cod still have access to tiny organisms on the sea floor as a food source. But the competition is fierce, and weaker cod may not get as much as they need.

Some species are evolving in ways that help them cope with the Baltic’s changing conditions – at least to a point. For example, certain local populations of mussels, jellyfish and stickleback have managed to adapt to a lower salt level in the water.

There is also evidence that Baltic cod may have adapted to a lower-oxygen environment than other cod populations.

Fischer noted that species such as sardines, sea bass and mackerel have migrated from southern waters that have become too warm for them.

Most scientists who study the Baltic Sea are less sanguine about the effects of climate change. But they see potential in the way the surrounding countries have cooperated in response to environmental problems such as overfishing and pollution.

(Source: *sciencealert.com*)

Scientists call for eight steps to increase soil carbon for climate action and food security



Leading scientists call for action to increase global soil carbon, in advance of the annual climate summit of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Katowice, Poland (COP24) and World Soil Day (5 Dec).

But one-third of the world’s soils are already degraded, limiting agricultural production and adding almost 500 gigatons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, an amount equivalent to the carbon sequestered by 216 billion hectares of U.S. forest.

Modalities for climate action in agriculture will be addressed 3 December at the first workshop of the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture, a breakthrough initiative of the 2017 UNFCCC climate negotiations.

The scientists suggest that the KJWA formally commit to increasing global soil organic carbon stocks through coordination and activities related to eight steps.

The eight steps are:

1. Stop carbon loss - Protect peatlands through enforcement of regulations against burning and drainage.
2. Promote carbon uptake - Identify and promote best practices for storing carbon in ways suitable to local conditions, including through incorporating crop residues, cover crops, agroforestry, contour farming, terracing, nitrogen-fixing plants, and irrigation.
3. Monitor, report and verify impacts - Track and evaluate interventions with science-based harmonized protocols and standards.
4. Deploy technology - Use high-tech opportunities for faster, cheaper and more accurate monitoring of soil carbon changes.
5. Test strategies - Determine what works in local conditions by using models

and a network of field sites.

6. Involve communities - Employ citizen science to collect data and create an open online platform for sharing.
7. Coordinate policies - Integrate soil carbon with national climate commitments to the Paris Agreement and other policies on soil and climate.
8. Provide support - Ensure technical assistance, incentives to farmers, monitoring systems, and carbon taxes to promote widespread implementation.

The eight steps

A joint forum for coordinated action and funding to close research gaps is needed, the scientists argue. The eight steps also inform the KJWA’s next workshop (June 2019), which will address soil carbon.

“Taking steps to increase global soil carbon requires multi-stakeholder collaboration at the science-policy interface. 4p1000 initiative, which has 281 partners from 39 countries, is showing how such collaboration can be used to address sustainable development goals in an integrated way,” said Cornelia Rumpel, lead author of the commentary and Research Director of the National Research Center at France’s Institute of Ecology and Environmental Sciences.

“We are amassing a rich body of knowledge on how to increase soil carbon stocks,” said Claire Chenu, a Professor of Soil Sciences at AgroParisTech.

“But further research is needed. For example, we know root systems make an important contribution to soil carbon stocks, but we are still researching how specific crops with deep roots, vs. cover crops, vs. agroforestry systems differentially contribute to increasing soil carbon.

(Source: *eurekalert.org*)

RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Baked beet root with yogurt walnut dressing

“This dish will look superb on your table any time of year, but is especially good as an autumn-time course. The beets are served at room temperature with a chilled yogurt dressing.”

Ingredients:



3/4 cup walnuts
5 medium beets, thoroughly washed
1 tablespoon butter
2 cups plain yogurt
1 minced hot green chili peppers
2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
Salt to taste
3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
1 red chili pepper, minced

Directions:

Spread walnuts in a single layer on a baking sheet. Roast at 300 degrees F (150 degrees C) for 15 to 20 minutes. Chop coarsely. Butter aluminum foil. Pierce beets with a fork, and wrap with foil. Bake at 375 degrees F (190 degrees C) for 1 hour, or until tender. Cool.

In a medium bowl, beat yogurt until smooth. Mix in green chili pepper, coriander, and walnuts. Season to taste with salt. Chill for 30 minutes.

Peel beets, and quarter without cutting all the way through. Place in a serving dish, and spread open. Spoon dressing over beets, and garnish with cilantro, and minced red chili peppers.

LEARN ENGLISH

Crime Scene

Detective McGee: Alright, Officer McGraw, **Give it to me straight**, what are we looking at here?

McGraw: Detective McGee! We're glad to see you! We could sure use your expertise on this one. It's a break-in, but nothing seems to have been stolen. We received a call from the Bear family at around ten thirty this morning. They had gone out for a walk before breakfast and came home to this mess! Broken chairs and porridge all over the place! Apparently, Momma Bear had made the porridge a little too hot, you see, and they were waiting for it to cool down.

Detective McGee: Okay then, let's start examining the evidence. . . . Have the **forensics** team been in yet?

McGraw: Yes sir. They found some fingerprints on the bowls and are analyzing them back at the lab as we speak. Hopefully, they will be able to **identify** the burglar soon.

Detective McGee: Hmmmm, Ah ha! What's this? A **strand** of golden hair . . . this is a very important piece of trace evidence McGraw. It tells me the suspect has long golden hair. . . . Very few men have long golden hair Our criminal could be a woman. . . .

McGraw: A woman? Was she working? Alone? Did she have an **accomplice**?

Detective McGee: An accomplice? No, no McGraw, she was definitely working alone. See here, there are footprints in the porridge, here on the floor. . . . Footprints, tells me that our suspect is small. . . . Could possibly be a child.

McGraw: A child? Surely not, sir. . .

Detective McGee: We must follow the clues, McGraw! The evidence doesn't lie! Now, let's **reconstruct** the crime. . .

The **suspect** came in, sat in each chair breaking the smallest one into little pieces. Next, the porridge. She obviously tried to eat it and because it was so hot, she dropped it on the floor. . . . This mess. Interesting. These footprints seem to lead upstairs. McGraw, did your officers clear the scene?

McGraw: Well, there was no one down here . . . and maybe we forget to check upstairs.

Goldylocks: Hey! What's with all the noise? I'm trying to sleep up here!

Detective McGee: There she is! Get her!

Key vocabulary

give it to me straight: tell me something directly and honestly

forensics: scientific tests used in the investigation of crime

identify: discover and define

strand: a single length of

accomplice: a person who helps another in committing a crime

reconstruct: form a picture of a crime by piecing together evidence

suspect: someone who is thought to be guilty of a crime

Supplementary vocabulary

yellow tape: a tape used by police to block off a crime scene

crime scene investigator: the person in charge of collecting evidence

trespasser: a person who illegally enters private property

destruction of property: the physical damage of private property

(Source: [irlanguage.com](#))



Two Iranian female referees to judge European futsal games

W O M E N d e s k **TEHRAN** — For the first time in Iran's futsal history, two Iranian women futsal judges are appointed to judge the European Women's Futsal Cup, chairman of the Football Federation Refereeing Department, Davood Rafati, announced here on Monday.

Gelareh Nazemi and Zari Fathi are gaining to judge the European Women's Futsal Cup to be hosted by Portugal, February 15-17, 2019, IRNA reported.

Nazemi, who has started futsal refereeing since the Iranian year 1380 (beginning March 21, 2001), has been selected twice as



the best referee for women's futsal in Iran. Nazemi has been the referee for the World Student Futsal Final Games in Germany and she has refereed women's futsal games between Japan and Portugal at the 2018 Youth Olympic Games in Argentina.

Fathi, the other appointed referee, has offici-

ated the Asian Women's Futsal Championship and the World's Students Futsal Games.

"I am very happy that a new event has happened for Iran's women's futsal refereeing," Fathi said expressing hope to be a competent representative for the Iranian women's futsal refereeing community.

8,000 women being trained to enter work market

W O M E N d e s k **TEHRAN** — In pursuit of women's empowerment projects, more than eight thousand Iranian women are being trained to enter the business environment, said Susan Radfar, advisor to the minister of communications and information technology for women's and family affairs, here on Thursday.

About 50 training courses for "women's empowerment through information technology" and "family and cyberspace" were presented in the provincial centers last Iranian calendar year, beginning March 21, 2017, IRNA quoted Radfar as saying.

In the second phase of the project, women were trained in cities and villages, the official added.

In urban and rural areas, the courses will be implemented in seven to eight stages, therefore, interested women can take the opportunity to enter the business environment, she explained.

The content of the course varies in the provincial centers, cities and villages and the training is to be



completed by the end of this year in 270 areas, Radfar added.

In rural areas, the content of the course is based on the entrepreneurial approach and empowerment of

women so that a rural woman will be able to market and advertise through their domestic messaging apps.

Making the families more acquainted with cyberspaces for children and avoiding the threats and challenges of the virtual world are among the goals of the training courses, Radfar stated.

According to the scheduled programs about 70 percent of the project is completed and it is predicted that the remaining 30 percent of the project to be done by the end of the current year (March 20, 2019), Radfar concluded.

Currently, women make up about 30 percent of the employees of the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology of Iran which is an effective factor leading to women's empowerment in information and technology, she noted.

According to the statistics released by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, currently women make up 72 percent of mobile users, and 48 percent of Internet users.

Girls deprived of education at border areas to be identified

W O M E N d e s k **TEHRAN** — The presidential office for women's and family affairs with the cooperation of the Ministry of Education is to identify girls deprived from education in border areas, said Masoumeh Ebtekar, the vice president for women's and family affairs, here on Wednesday.

Since many immigrant children are liv-

ing in the border areas and many of them are deprived from education, the social emergency centers with the cooperation of the Ministry of Education and Training are trying to identify and train them life skills, Ebtekar elaborated.

Children are not able to defend themselves and cannot express their problems, Mehr quoted Ebtekar speaking at the regional chil-

dren's rights conference held with the motto of Justice for Children and Young People.

Therefore, we should listen to children's voice and look at the problems from their viewpoint, she added.

Children deserve to access to education and health services, calm environment far from violence, and enjoy healthy food, water and environment, the VP noted.



Snoring may be bigger threat to women than men



The hearts of women who snore appear to become damaged more quickly than those of men who "saw lumber" at night, a new study suggests.

Evaluating nearly 4,500 British adults who underwent cardiac imaging, researchers also learned that obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) may be vastly underdiagnosed among snorers.

This finding surprised study author Dr. Adrian Curta, who heads cardiac imaging at Munich University Hospital in Germany.

"A further surprise was the different manifestation of disease according to gender," Curta said. "Females show different alterations in cardiac [measures]. A possible reason for this could be that women with OSA are more vulnerable to cardiac alterations."

Loud snoring is a hallmark of obstructive sleep apnea, which affects between 3 percent and 7 percent of adults

in the United States, according to the U.S. National Institutes of Health. Also characterized by brief periods where breathing stops, often followed by gasping for air, sleep apnea is becoming recognized as a contributor to serious health conditions, such as high blood pressure, heart disease and poor blood sugar metabolism.

Sleep apnea treatment depends on the cause. Treatments include surgery to open narrowed upper airways or using a CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine while sleeping.

Curta and his colleagues evaluated data from the UK Biobank, which follows the health and well-being of 500,000 volunteers. The researchers looked at data from nearly 4,500 participants who underwent cardiac imaging. These study volunteers were split into three groups: 38 with obstructive sleep apnea; 1,919 who reported snoring; and 2,536 without OSA or snoring.

In both men and women, those with sleep apnea and snoring tended to have larger left ventricles of the heart, meaning the walls were enlarged and the heart was working harder to pump, Curta said.

But when the snoring group was compared to the unaffected group, a more significant difference was found in the size of the left ventricle among women compared to men. These cardiac changes in self-reported snorers suggest earlier heart impairment in women and could point to undiagnosed sleep apnea, he said.

The findings suggest the transition from snoring to obstructive sleep apnea is an evolving process linked to a

potentially dangerous enlargement of the left ventricle. But the research did not prove that sleep apnea causes heart changes, only that an association exists between the two.

Curta noted that researchers are still uncertain why snoring would remodel women's hearts more quickly than men's. More research needs to be done to understand this process, he said.

"The most important clinical implication is that we need better prevention for OSA, such as a broader information program," Curta said. "Individuals with snoring should ask someone to observe them during sleep if they show periods of breathing cessation."

Those who do stop breathing while sleeping should undergo a sleep study to determine how advanced their sleep apnea is and the proper treatment, Curta said.

Dr. Tetyana Kendzerska is a sleep physician at Ottawa Hospital Sleep Center in Canada, and wasn't involved in the new research. Since obesity is a known contributor to snoring and sleep apnea, Kendzerska said losing excess weight is encouraged for those with snoring or sleep apnea.

"We know that men and women report different symptoms for OSA, and as a result, obstructive sleep apnea is seriously underreported and underdiagnosed in women," she said.

"Given that potential cardiovascular risk associated with sleep apnea may be greater in women than in men, first we need to identify women with sleep apnea [by] increasing awareness among health care professionals," Kendzerska added.

(Source: [HealthDay News](#))

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

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

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

Considering the new economic conditions and the need for employment, new programs and financial resources are being provided to create more job opportunities, Mehr quoted Parviz Fattah as saying on Monday. He further expressed appreciation to the banks for their good cooperation with the foundation in granting the loans, and stated that the process of granting loans has already started.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ectomy”

■ **Meaning:** surgical removal of

■ **For example:** She had been rushed into hospital for an emergency **appendectomy**.

PHRASAL VERB

Bite something back

■ **Meaning:** to stop yourself from saying or showing what you really think

■ **For example:** Tamar bit back the retort which sprang to her lips.

IDIOM

(As) clear as mud

■ **Explanation:** difficult to see or understand; not clear at all

■ **For example:** I guess I need to call a lawyer because these legal contracts are as clear as mud.

اختصاص یک و نیم میلیارد دلار ویژه اشتغال مددجویان کمیته امداد

رئیس کمیته امداد امام خمینی (ره) اعلام کرد: از محل صندوق توسعه ملی یک و نیم میلیارد دلار ویژه اشتغال به مددجویان تحت پوشش اختصاص پیدا می کند.

به گزارش خبرگزاری مهر پرویز فتح روز دوشنبه گفت: با توجه به شرایط اقتصادی جدید و نیاز مددجویان به اشتغال برنامه های جدید و منابع جدیدی را با کمک دولت برای ایجاد شغل مددجویان در نظر گرفته ایم.

وی به همکاری خوب بانک ها با کمیته امداد در جهت پرداخت وام اشتغال اشاره کرد و افزود: در حال حاضر پرداخت این وام ها آغاز شده است.

French ambulance workers join protests as crisis talks held

Government holds crisis talks after ‘yellow vest’ riots

➡ “We want a change in the method. One needs to come down from Mount Olympus,” Faure said, referring to Macron’s Greek god nickname of Jupiter.

Laurent Wauquiez, head of center-right Les Republicains party, urged Macron to hold a referendum to end the crisis but didn’t say what its topic should be.

“French people need to be heard again, and for that we must organize a referendum to decide these issues. Only these measures will restore calm,” Wauquiez said.

Since the movement kicked off on Nov. 17, three people have been killed and hundreds injured in clashes or accidents stemming from the protests. Over the past three weeks, protesters have been setting up road blockades across the country and their movement has garnered wide public support.

Philippe will try to defuse tensions this week before more possible protests this weekend, speaking with yellow vest representatives Tuesday. Members of the National Assembly will also hold talks on France’s social crisis later this week. Meanwhile, trade union CGT has called for a day of protest across France on Dec. 14.

■ French govt. holds crisis talks after ‘yellow vest’ riots

French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe holds talks with party leaders on Monday as Paris scrambles to forge a response to violence by anti-government protesters that has left hundreds injured nationwide and caused widespread destruction around the capital.

The talks follow a crisis meeting chaired by French President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday as he surveyed the damage from a day of riots across Paris that saw violence “on a level not seen in decades.”

Philippe has been asked to meet protest organizers and party leaders as part of a “constant wish for dialogue,” the Elysee Palace said.

Environment Minister Francois de Rugy met representatives of the so-called “yellow vest” protesters last week but failed to convince them to end the demonstrations that have taken place over the last two weeks.



The government has not ruled out imposing a state of emergency to combat the protests, which began over fuel taxes but have morphed into a broad opposition front to Macron, 40, a pro-business centrist elected in May 2017.

The president on Sunday assessed the damage at the Arc de Triomphe, the massive monument to France’s war dead at the top of the Champs-Elysees avenue, where rioters scrawled graffiti and ransacked the ticketing and reception areas.

Inside, rioters smashed in the iconic face of a sculpture, a partial reproduction of the frieze “La Marseillaise” by Francois Rude.

Macron also saw the wreckage of burnt-out cars and damaged buildings from rioting at other sites, where he praised the police but was also booed by sections of the crowd.

Paris police said 412 people were arrested on Saturday during the worst clashes for years in the capital and 378 remained in custody.

Paris police chief Michel Delpuech said the violence had been “on a level not seen in decades.”

A total of 263 people were injured nationwide, including 133 in the capital, 23 of

them members of the security forces.

“I will never accept violence,” Macron said. “No cause justifies that authorities are attacked, that businesses are plundered, that passers-by or journalists are threatened or that the Arc du Triomphe is defiled.”

The violence has caused deep concern in the French business community which claims it has already lost billions of euros, and representatives are set to attend a meeting at the economy ministry on Monday.

“Our worst fears have been confirmed: this is the third consecutive weekend of (protest) blockades which amounts to a major loss for the whole business community,” Jacques Creyssel, representative of a federation of retail businesses, told AFP.

Three people have died in incidents linked to the anti-government protests, which were sparked initially by a rise in taxes on diesel.

In Paris on Sunday as groups of workers set about cleaning up the mess from the previous day, the scale of the destruction became clear.

Around famous areas including the Champs-Elysees, the Louvre museum, the Opera and Place Vendome, smashed shop

windows, broken glass and the occasional burnt-out car were testament to the violence.

Dozens of cars were torched by the gangs of rioters, some of whom wore gas masks and ski goggles to lessen the effects of police tear gas.

One person was in a critical condition after protesters pulled down one of the huge iron gates of the Tuileries garden by the Louvre, crushing several people.

Nearly 190 fires were put out and six buildings were set alight, the interior ministry said. Graffiti was daubed at the Arc de Triomphe, with one slogan saying: “The yellow vests will win.”

■ State of emergency? -

Some 136,000 people joined demonstrations nationwide on Saturday, most of them peaceful, the interior ministry said.

The figure was well below the first day of protests on November 17, which attracted around 282,000 people, and also down on the revised figure of 166,000 who turned out last Saturday.

Interior Minister Christophe Castaner attributed the violence to “specialists in destruction”.

Referring to the possibility of imposing a state of emergency -- a demand made by the police union Alliance -- Castaner declared: “Nothing is taboo for me. I am prepared to examine everything.”

Macron faces a dilemma over how to respond, not least because the “yellow vests” are a grassroots movement with no formal leaders and a wide range of demands.

“We have said that we won’t change course. Because the course is good,” government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux told BFM television defiantly on Sunday morning.

Jacine Mouraud, one of the protest movement’s prime instigators over social media forums, told AFP that scrapping the fuel tax was a “prerequisite for any discussion” with the government.

Macron insists the taxes are needed to fund the country’s transition to a low-emission economy.

(Source: agencies)

Incompatible with justice

➡ Kazem Jalali, chairman of the Parliament Research Center, has said that about 60,000 billion tomans (about 14 billion dollars at the official rate) is being spent annually to subsidize gasoline. Jalali has said even the direct cash subsidy that is now being paid to millions of citizens is much lower than the sum spent to subsidize gasoline.



This amount of money that must be used to create jobs for the great number of jobless people and develop the economy is being somehow wasted.

In a country like Iran, which champions “justice” as an important principle, wasting such a huge sum of money to subsidize gasoline is in fact an instance of injustice. Only those who use private cars are mostly benefiting from this subsidy.

In a report on Nov. 24, the Donya-e Eqtasad newspaper said statistics by the central bank show that only 50 percent of families in Iran use private cars. This shows that the remaining 50 percent are being deprived of such a subsidy.

The wrong cycle of granting subsidy to gasoline has brought with itself chronic problems such as the production of fuel inefficient cars, air pollution, etc. But in the current situation that Donald Trump has started an economic war against Iran and created economic hardship for citizens, it is a strategic mistake to let this amount of money, which will undoubtedly continue to increase in its current speed, to be spent on subsidized gasoline.

All those officials, either parliamentarians, ministers, top managers, presidents, and so-called experts, who through their votes, decisions or advice have let billions of dollars being spent on unnecessary subsidies, have in fact been doing harm to the economy and injustice to the poor and the lower middle class society. This policy has been unintentionally in sharp contrast to their slogan of helping the poor.

Now that the government has drafted the national budget and plans to submit to the Majlis for ratification, it is essential to partially, if not fully, free up gasoline prices and allocate the money to develop public transport system across the country and subsidize basic commodities which their prices have increased under the illegal sanctions.

Why are the Zionists trying to assassinate Nasrallah?

➡ Illusion of breaking the fighting spirit of Hezbollah

One of the illusions of the Zionists over assassination of resistance leaders in Lebanon, with Seyed Hassan Nasrallah on top of the list, has to do with their illusion over breaking the fighting spirit of Hezbollah.



This is while the assassination of any of the Hezbollah leaders, be it in the battle field, in Lebanon or in Syria, not only hasn’t had any impact on the movement, but has increased their determination to gain more victories and confront the Zionist enemy and their-backed Takfiri terrorists.

A clear example of such achievement is Syria where after over 8 years of crisis, with backing of resistance group and the undeniable role of Lebanese Hezbollah, 90 per cent of the Middle East country has been liberated from Takfiri terrorists. That is exactly why the Zionists stress the withdrawal of Hezbollah form Syria.

■ Fear of the strategic plan of resistance seyed

Another issue is that the Zionists know full-well that Nasrallah is determined to take back the Golan Heights from the Zionists. The Zionists fear raises as more areas in the southern part of Syria, which sits close to the Golan Heights, gets clear from the Taikfiri groups.

Abdullah Atwan, the famous writer and analyst of the Arab world says, “Seyed Hassan Nasrallah’s strategic decision to reopen the occupied Golan Heights front has made the Zionist authorities nervous so much so that the Hebrew language media are shouting for the assassination of Seyed Hassan Nasrallah.”

■ The Zionists frustrated at the superb resistance military power

The other frustrating issue for the Zionist commanders is the superb military power of Hezbollah. According to reports, Hezbollah has at least 150,000 advanced missiles that can penetrate and hit strategic locations of the Zionists.

In addition, during the 33-day war in 2006 Hezbollah’s Islamic resistance forces gained valuable experience in the ground combat field that when in need, they can use the viable option against the Zionist enemy.

Al-Yaum newspaper writes, “Therefore, Seyed Hassan Nasrallah proved for a thousand times that he is a man of his word. This man showed that he knows no lies and does not say anything but the truth. This man is not afraid of martyrdom, but according to what we have heard from his followers, he believes that he has lived more than he should’ve and his martyrdom has been delayed.

MbS’s visit to Algeria will be an insult to the nation’s history

➡ Though the government is willing to roll out the red carpet for a man who is responsible for the atrocities in Yemen and the vicious murder of Khashoggi that happened under his tutelage, the authorities are apprehensive about this visit. They are concerned that it would provoke a nationwide surge of indignation and could also be directed against those in the Algerian government who accepted this embarrassing and offensive visit.

It should be noted that the Algerian authorities took almost two months to condemn the assassination of Khashoggi. To add insult to injury, and running counter to the CIA’s reported assessment that MBS ordered Khashoggi’s slaying, they claim that they trust the Saudi judicial system to carry out a fair investigation. Yet, many academics, reporters, human rights activists, NGOs and leaders of opposition political parties question the timing of such a denunciation. They also refuse to be part of the programmed whitewashing.

Many people view this visit to Algeria as an insult to the memory of all journalists jailed or murdered for denouncing tyrannical Arab regimes where dubious anti-state laws are implemented to muzzle nonconforming political views.

For Abderrazak Makri, the leader of Algeria’s main Islamic political party, the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP), the crown prince’s visit “does not bode well for Algeria’s image and reputation.” Similar strong feelings are shared by the Algerian Francophone journalist and writer Kamel Daoud. “Mohammed bin Salman is a murderer and whoever shakes his hand in Algiers will be his co-conspirator,” he

tweeted. It is crystal clear that the diplomatic issues the authorities have taken into account to agree to this inopportune visit are not shared by the majority of Algerians.

Truth be told, even before Khashoggi’s brutal murder was brought to light, Algerians have always expressed their revulsion of the anachronistic Saudi kingdom. Overlooking the implications that such a posture would have on Algerian-Saudi state relations, many in Algeria still recall the vexing role of the Saudi monarchy during the Algerian Civil War, which Khashoggi covered in the 1990s. In his memoirs, retired general Khaled Nezzar revealed the huge financial aid the Algerian regime got from Riyadh. Saudi Arabia’s pathological hatred of elected bodies did not favor the blossoming of a democratic Algeria, as it was the first country in the Arabic-speaking world to experience an “Arab spring.” The House of Saud did not spare an effort to help crush that. Its act plunged the country into a horrific civil war, which claimed the lives of more than 200,000 people. During the 2011 Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia was terrified by the repercussions of the uprising. It vehemently opposed pro-democracy movements in Tunisia and Egypt, manipulated armed militias in Libya, and energetically assisted in the brutal repression of Shiite protesters in Bahrain.

But the main issue here is: Who is going to meet-and-greet the Saudi crown prince? Especially when the real prince here is Jamal Khashoggi?



When MBS decided to go on a tour of several Arab countries, he thought he would make a home run, as most Arab leaders have tortured relations with the rule of law and moral principles. One can easily understand the exigencies of realpolitik, the constraints of international relations and the safeguard of national interests. Nevertheless, MBS’s visit is undignifying for a country that once hosted great revolutionary leaders such as Che Guevara, Samora Machel, Amílcar Cabral and Agostinho Neto. Receiving a Saudi-killer-of-journalists in Algiers is neither an honorable thing to do, nor a commendable feat.

(Source: Washington Post)

Fateh al-Sham obtains 100 drones for chemical attacks in Syria

Terrorists from the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham Takfiri terrorist group, formerly known as al-Nusra Front, have reportedly gained access to 100 unmanned aerial vehicles through a Turkish merchant to use them in chemical attacks against Syrian government forces in the country’s northwestern province of Idlib.

Local sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the Arabic service of Russia’s Sputnik news agency that the drones have

transported from the city of Harem, which lies close to the border with Turkey, to a militant position in the town of Ma’arrat Misrin.

The drones have been handed over to Moroccan and Libyan terrorists, the sources added.

“Terrorists are working under the supervision of a British expert to make modifications on the drones to become lighter, and to able to carry small shells

loaded with toxic chemical substances,” the sources pointed out.

On November 22, Sputnik news agency reported that French experts had arrived in Syria’s northwestern city of Idlib in order to upgrade missiles, which are in the inventory of foreign-sponsored Takfiri militant groups, and load them with toxic chemical agents.

Local sources, requesting not to be named, said the professionals aim to use the munitions in a fake chemical attack carried out by

terrorists as a pretext for the United States and its allies to launch possible airstrikes on Syrian government forces.

Jabhat Fateh al-Sham terrorists transported 200 drones from Samarra town al-Muhandseen neighborhood in Idib city as Turkish and Chechen experts made technical and electronic modifications on them. The unmanned aerial vehicles had entered the Syrian territories earlier via Turkey.

(Source: Press TV)

Mexico’s new president takes aim at violence during first day in office

On his first full day in office, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador defended a plan to end lawlessness with a new national guard, an initiative that risks upsetting some supporters who favor a less militarized approach.

In a Sunday morning speech, Mexico’s first leftist president in decades continued to pivot from an emphasis during the campaign on peaceful reconciliation and even amnesty for some involved in the country’s grueling drug war to a more traditional approach defined by more soldiers and police.

“We must adjust to a new era,” he said, flanked by generals at a military base in the capital, while emphasizing that his security policy will also respect human rights.

In the first phase of his plan, a 60,000-strong national guard force made up of army, navy and other federal police will battle crime while a constitutional reform will be pursued to cement the new strategy.

Lopez Obrador has said the strategy will be put to a public vote, likely in March. A second phase will add additional

military forces to the effort.

“The people of Mexico need their armed forces to address this grave problem of insecurity and violence right now,” said Lopez Obrador, often turning toward the uniformed officers assembled behind him to address them directly.

“We’ve opted for this plan because we trust the armed forces,” he said. Over the past dozen years, Mexican security forces have toppled some high-profile drug kingpins but more than 200,000 people have been killed and tens of thousands more disappeared since a military-focused approach was initiated in 2006.

The last couple years have seen record numbers of murders, including in some of the country’s most fabled tourist destinations like Acapulco and Los Cabos.

Lopez Obrador’s new security focus has already stirred unease among some human rights activists, who argue the plan ignores past abuses stemming from the “militarization” of public safety. “We call on the new government to

back a civil security model that can create conditions for a gradual withdrawal of the armed forces in public security work,” a coalition of leading human rights groups said in a statement late last month.

In addition to the national guard plan, Lopez Obrado has offered a six-year security blueprint that criticizes drug prohibition as both ineffective and arbitrary. The new president’s allies in Congress have already proposed legislation to decriminalize and regulate the use of marijuana.

During the campaign, his security aides outlined plans to reduce jail time for some crimes, as well as stiffer controls on weapons. The strategy leaned heavily on “transitional justice,” which often involves leniency for those who admit guilt, truth commissions to investigate atrocities and the granting of reparations for victims.

The landslide election winner has not yet detailed how those policies will be implemented.

(Source: Reuters)

Champions League VAR to be fast-tracked for round of 16

The Associated Press, citing sources with knowledge of the situation, reported that video review is being fast-tracked into the Champions League this season, according to a report.

The sources told AP that UEFA's executive committee is set to approve video assistant referees from the round of 16 in February. The people spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss UEFA's plans publicly ahead of Monday's meeting in Dublin.

European football's governing body had originally intended to introduce VAR from next season, starting in the the Champions League qualifying playoffs in August.

Video review can help referees overturn clear errors in game-changing situations. This means incidents involving goals scored, the award of penalty kicks, red cards, and cases of referees showing cards to the wrong player.

Without VAR this season in the Champions League group stage, Cristiano Ronaldo was sent off for Juventus after a disputed red card and Manchester City's Raheem Sterling won a penalty for tripping on the turf.

Video review is already used in Serie A and the Bundesliga and will be in place for the 2019-20 Premier League season.

(Source: ESPN)

Southampton sack Hughes after eight months in charge

Mark Hughes has been sacked as Southampton manager after eight months in charge.

The Saints, who drew with Manchester United in the Premier League on Saturday, are 18th in the table.

Southampton confirmed the move in a statement, adding: "The search for a new manager to take the club forward is already under way."

First-team assistant coach Kelvin Davis will take charge of the team for the game against Tottenham on Wednesday.

Hughes, who also had a spell at the south coast club during his playing career, joined Southampton in March, two months after being sacked by Stoke City.

The club were one point above the relegation zone at the time and the 55-year-old led them to safety last season by securing two wins from their last four games.

However, they have struggled again this season and, across his spell, have won just three of their 22 league games.

Before the draw against Manchester United, Southampton were beaten 3-2 by relegation rivals Fulham and knocked out of the EFL Cup on penalties by Leicester.

Along with Hughes, assistant first-team manager Mark Bowen and coach Eddie Niedzwiecki have also left the club.

(Source: BBC)

Patriots QB Brady finally joins 1,000-yard rushing club

Tom Brady has five Super Bowl championships, the NFL's all-time mark for passing yards (regular season and playoffs) and three league Most Valuable Player awards. On Sunday, he reached the mark that has eluded him for so long: the 1,000-yard-rusher club.

In his 264th career game, Brady surpassed the mark with a 5-yard scramble for a first down on a third-and-3 play in the first quarter against the Minnesota Vikings.

The 41-year-old Brady, in his 19th season, had been talking about milestone since early November as he moved toward it.

"I've kind of inched along there for a long time," he said earlier. "It really hasn't been a part of my game."

The longest run of his career — 22 yards — came in 2006. Entering the day, he had accumulated 995 yards on 577 rushes for an average of 1.7 yards per carry.

Brady could have fallen back under the 1,000-yard mark as the Patriots were running out the clock against the Vikings, but Brady specifically moved forward as he knelt down, coming down on the line of scrimmage to prevent losing yardage.

ESPN Stats & Information said that entering Sunday, Brady had lost 160 rushing yards to kneel downs since 2006, the year plays began being classified as such.

Meanwhile, in the third quarter on Sunday, Brady threw his 579th touchdown pass (regular season and playoffs) to tie Peyton Manning for tops all-time. Brady is 31 touchdown passes shy of Manning's all-time regular-season mark (539), though New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees (518) appears more likely to reach that milestone first.

(Source: Reuters)

Spurs fan arrested after banana skin thrown

A Tottenham supporter was arrested after a banana skin was thrown on to the pitch during Sunday's ill-tempered derby with Arsenal at Emirates Stadium.

It was thrown from the away end after Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang had scored for the Gunners, who won the game 4-2.

A Spurs spokesman said the supporter would be banned, with anti-discrimination charity Kick It Out calling for a life ban.

"We condemn this action and welcome the investigation," Kick It Out said. "Our latest reporting figures show incidents of racism are on the rise and the banana throwing at the north London derby should be seen in that context."

Police said there were also six arrests for public order offences, at least two of which were believed to be Arsenal fans who lit smoke canisters during the match.

"Behaviour such as this is completely unacceptable and the supporter in question will be issued with a ban," a Tottenham spokesman said of the banana-skin incident.

A Premier League statement said: "Discriminatory behaviour has no place in football or society as a whole."

"The police and the Football Association are rightly investigating and the Premier League will support whatever action they deem necessary."

(Source: BBC)

UEFA approve new European club competition from 2021



European soccer's governing body approved the creation of a third-tier UEFA club competition on Sunday, a tournament which will mirror the current Champions League and Europa League format from 2021.

At their meeting in Dublin, UEFA's Executive Committee finalized plans to introduce the event, with the working title 'UEL2' and featuring 32 teams in the group stage, in the 2021 to 2024 competition cycle.

The Europa League group stage, meanwhile, will be reduced from 48 teams to 32.

UEFA said that the Champions League would remain unaltered, meaning that the four top-ranked leagues — currently Spain, England, Germany and Italy — would each keep four guaranteed places in the group stage.

"No changes will be made to the format and access list of the UEFA Champions League," said UEFA.

The umbrella organisation representing Europe's domestic leagues had asked UEFA to reduce the number of places guaranteed to teams from the top leagues, reversing changes made for the current cycle.

UEFA said the new setup would ensure that at least 34 countries would be represented in the group stages of UEFA club competitions, compared to today's total of 26.

"The new UEFA club competition makes UEFA's club competitions more inclusive

than ever before," UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin said.

"There will be more matches for more clubs, with more associations represented

in the group stages. This competition was borne out of ongoing dialogue with clubs through the European Club Association." The format will see eight groups of four

Jurgen Klopp apologises for wild derby celebrations



Jurgen Klopp has said he apologised to Everton boss Marco Silva for excessively celebrating Liverpool's stoppage time winner in the Merseyside derby on Sunday.

Divock Origi was the unlikely hero at Anfield as he scored from inches out in the 96th minute to ensure the gap between Liverpool and Premier League leaders Manchester City remains at two points.

Klopp reacted to the goal by running to the centre circle and celebrating with Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson.

"Immediately after the game I apologised to Marco Silva when we spoke to each other," Klopp said. "I told him how much I respect his work because it's incredible what he did with that team. They are just an outstanding side and it was a difficult game today."

"Derbies are always difficult but it was a completely different difficult to the last few years. 'What can I say about it? I didn't want to run, it was not my plan. I didn't want to run to Ali [Alisson]. I couldn't stop obviously. Not cool, but it happened."

Match-winner Origi emerged as a substitute in the 84th minute, replacing

Roberto Firmino.

Before the striker's intervention which came from a mishit shot by Virgil van Dijk, Liverpool had been frustrated by Everton and, in particular, their goalkeeper Jordan Pickford.

"Both teams delivered a proper fight, proper derby from the first second," Klopp said. "Our high pressure was outstanding, our counter-pressing was really at [the] highest level. Football-wise, in a lot of moments [we were] really good."

"[We] tried to control the game, which is difficult because they controlled the spaces really well. How [is] always, we could have done better in a few moments."

"Ali made an outstanding save and then Joe Gomez made an outstanding save. I don't know how those two guys cleared that situation."

"We had our moments. Sadio was in very good positions to finish off, but both goalkeepers were really there and had an outstanding performance tonight. That's why it was open until the last second obviously."

(Source: Soccer.net)

Manchester City set to rest Aguero ahead of busy December schedule



Sergio Aguero may not be risked for Manchester City's midweek trip to Watford with Pep Guardiola desperate to avoid injuries ahead of a busy December schedule.

The City striker missed Saturday's 3-1 victory over Bournemouth because of a slight muscle injury with club doctors warning that making it worse would rule him out until the new year.

City have nine games this month, including Saturday's away game at title rivals Chelsea, and Guardiola is trying to rotate his squad through a busy period, having made five changes at the weekend.

"The doctors told me Sergio cannot play," Guardiola told a news conference. "If he plays, maybe four or five weeks off. In that situation this month, with a lot of games, he was not safe."

"It's going to happen in the future, the next games. People start to be tired in a lot of games. That's why we have a deep squad."

"We play nine games, but many of our contenders and opponents do too. It's not because we play more than the other ones. It's the same, so why should we complain?"

teams, followed by the round of 16, quarter-finals, semi-finals and final. Like the Europa League, matches will be played on Thursdays.

As with the established competitions, there will also be four rounds of qualifying matches played in July and August.

An additional knockout round will be played before the round of 16 between teams ranked second in their groups and the third-ranked teams in the groups of the Europa League, which will run concurrently.

Similarly, the teams finishing second in the Europa League groups will play in a knockout round against teams ranked third in the Champions League groups for a place in the Europa League round of 16.

The seventh-placed teams in Europe's four top-ranked leagues will qualify directly for the final qualifying round of the new competition.

Teams entering the early qualifying rounds of the new competition will be mainly those finishing second, third and fourth in Europe's smaller leagues.

Teams eliminated in the Europa League qualifiers will also drop down to the new competition.

The new competition will feature 141 matches over 15 match weeks, exactly like the Europa League. The winners of the new competition will be entitled to participate in the Europa League in the following season.

(Source: Reuters)

Maradona's Mexican club fall short in second-division final

Diego Maradona's new club, Dorados, fell just short of winning the Mexican second-division final and a shot at promotion on Sunday, abruptly ending the Cinderella story of the Argentine legend's latest foray into coaching.

Dorados, from the western state of Sinaloa, lost their second-leg final to Atletico San Luis, who pulled off a 4-2 victory in extra time at home to win the title series 4-3 on aggregate.

Maradona raised eyebrows when it was announced in September he was taking the managing job at struggling Dorados, who were then in 13th place in their 15-team league.

Skeptics questioned what interest the 1986 World Cup champion from Argentina, who has publicly battled drug addiction and alcoholism, could have in moving to a place better known for drug cartels than football.

But he answered his critics with an emphatic series of wins, improbably coaching the team to the championship and within spitting distance of promotion to the first division.

Maradona, 58, had to watch the match from the stands, after being sent off near the end of Dorados's first-leg victory for launching a tirade against the officials when he thought his team should have been awarded a penalty.

His club opened the scoring in the central city of San Luis Potosi, and claimed the lead again in the 57th minute



after the hosts equalized.

That second Dorados goal, in particular, elicited a euphoric celebration from El Diego, who used a walkie-talkie throughout the match to give orders to his assistant coach, Luis Islas, on the sideline.

But San Luis tied it up again nine minutes later on a Dorados own goal, and then drove home two more of their

own -- the latter in extra time, courtesy of Argentine Leandro Torres -- to claim the match and the series.

■ **Fan base boosted**

Maradona's arrival has fueled unprecedented interest in the Mexican second division.

A plethora of Maradona scarves, jerseys and other merchandise was on offer outside the stadium ahead of the match.

Ecstatic Dorados fans who had traveled more than 12 hours by car for the match were buoyant going in.

"The team was down on its luck, but since he arrived, he's raised them up enormously," said Daniel Santiago, 28.

Back in Culiacan, the state capital of Sinaloa, the large crowds of fans who had gathered to watch the match in local bars and restaurants were disappointed, but not giving up hope.

"Here's hoping they keep Maradona on and sign some new talent. He's already shown he knows how to do the job right," said one fan.

This would have been the first coaching championship for Maradona, whose managerial career has lacked the sparkle of his playing days.

His previous coaching jobs included teams ranging from the Argentine national side to clubs in his home country and the Middle East.

(Source: AFP)

Iran book FIBA World Cup ticket

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — With two games remaining, Iran national basketball team advanced to the 2019 FIBA World Cup. Team Melli defeated the Philippines 78-70 in Group F of the Asian Qualifiers on Monday at the Mall of Asia Arena. The Iranians, who entered the game on a two-game losing skid, played minus veteran stars Hamed Haddadi and Samad Nikkhah Bahrami. But they simply showed tremendous focus to end their skid and regain the second spot in Group F with their 7-3 card. Mohammad Jamshidi and Behnam

Yakhchali scored 26 and 21 points, respectively, for Iran. Jayson Castro led Gilas with 19 points, five rebounds and two assists. Naturalized big man Christian Standhardinger had 17 and 12 boards, while Marcio Lassiter, who had three triples in opening quarter, finished with 12. Iran will host Japan and Australia on Feb. 21 and 24, respectively in Tehran. The 2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup will be the 18th tournament of the FIBA Basketball World Cup for men's national basketball teams. The tournament will be hosted in China and it will mark a new era for the competition as described.



Iran learn fate at AFC Beach Soccer Championship

AFC BEACH SOCCER CHAMPIONSHIP THAILAND 2019			
GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C	GROUP D
A1 THAILAND	B1 UAE	C1 JAPAN	D1 IR IRAN
A2 AFGHANISTAN	B2 LEBANON	C2 SAUDI ARABIA	D2 OMAN
A3 MALAYSIA	B3 CHINA PR	C3 QATAR	D3 IRAQ
A4 PALESTINE	B4 KYRGYZ REP.	C4 KUWAIT	

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Defending champions Iran learned their opponents at the 2019 AFC Beach Soccer Championship Thailand. Team Melli will begin title defense against Oman and Iraq in Group D following the official draw in Pattaya, Thailand on Monday. Fifteen teams, three more than the inaugural edition in 2017, will battle to be crowned champions next March. Host nation Thailand will face Afghanistan, Malaysia and Palestine in Group A while the United Arab Emirates, who finished second

in the 2017 edition in Terengganu, Malaysia, were drawn alongside Lebanon, China PR and Kyrgyz Republic in Group B. Japan, ranked third in the competition in 2017, take on Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait in Group C. The second edition of the premier beach soccer championship in Asia will be an important competition as the top three teams will represent the Continent in the 2019 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in Paraguay. The AFC Beach Soccer Championship Thailand 2019 will be played in Pattaya from March 9-17, 2019.

Persepolis striker Alipour linked with Suwon Bluewings: report

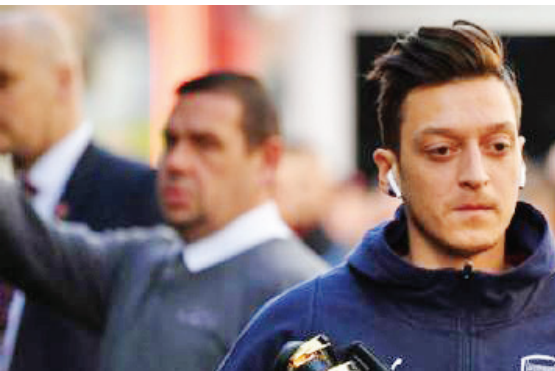


S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Persepolis striker Ali Alipour has been reportedly linked with a move to South Korea's Suwon Bluewings. Alipour, who has 18 months remaining on his contract, has been a key player for Persepolis in the past years, helping the team win back-to-back Iran Professional League (IPL) titles. He also qualified for the 2018 AFC Champions League final with Persepolis, where the Reds lost to Japan's Kashima Antlers. Persepolis have been banned from sign-

ing players in the last two transfer window and the club are allowed to sign player in upcoming January transfer window. Alipour, 23, was named the IPL's top scorer with 19 goals last season. At the age of 19 years and 185 days, Alipour is the youngest player ever to score in the Tehran derby after scoring in Persepolis 1-0 victory on 15 May 2015. He is the only player in Tehran derby history so far, who has scored the only winning goals in two different derby matches.

Ozil doubtful for Manchester United clash – Emery

Mesut Ozil is a doubt for Arsenal's trip to Manchester United because of his back problems, Unai Emery has confirmed, with the German midfielder training on his own at London Colney on Monday. Ozil was left out of Arsenal's squad for Sunday's 4-2 win over Tottenham in the North London Derby, and Emery said he could miss Wednesday's game at Old Trafford as well. "Today he was working alone, I don't know if he's OK for Wednesday," Emery told a news conference on Monday. "I said yesterday he's had backache since last Tuesday. "He couldn't play in Kiev [against FC Vorskla] or yesterday. At the moment, I don't know if he can play in Manchester. " Ozil's absence came after he was on the bench for the entire game against Bournemouth last weekend, raising new speculation about whether his role in the team is under threat. In his absence, Arsenal rallied from 2-1 down, with Aaron Ramsey coming on as a halftime substitute to set up two goals. Ramsey has also been on the bench regularly after the club decided to rescind a new contract offer, meaning he is set to leave the club at the end of the season when



his deal expires. The Spurs game showed Ramsey could still have a big part to play at the Emirates, though, and Emery praised the midfielder for being able to keep his focus even though his future remains uncertain. "Two months ago we spoke together [about] his pres-

ent and future," Emery said. "I think it was a very good conversation. "I said to you also here in the press conference that I want his focus only on the team, on giving us his performances. His present is as I want, and his future is very important for him and his family. "We need calm and to [see] the difference between his future and his present now. I think in the last matches his focus [is there]. We were speaking between us [the coaches] and I look at him in every match. His focus is positive for us, it helps us. "He needs to think about his future, for his family and for him. If he plays like yesterday, it's the best for him and the best for us." However, Emery refused to answer a direct question on whether Ramsey could still stay at the club beyond this season. "This conversation is not for today, for us or for me," he said. "It's one situation that was closed one or two months ago. "At the moment the most important thing is he is smiling. He has the commitment, the behavior and the performances like yesterday -- that's the best for him and for us."

Olympics: 2020 organizers vow to guard against complacency

TOKYO (Reuters) — Tokyo 2020 organizers vowed no let-up in their drive to host a successful Summer Games on Monday as International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach once again heaped praise on the city's preparations. Bach, in opening remarks ahead of a meeting between IOC and 2020 officials, repeated that Tokyo was the most prepared city for an Olympics he could remember, and while organizers were happy with the compliments they said there was much work to be done. "We have a saying in Japanese that says that loosening your tension is a big enemy," said Tokyo 2020 President Yoshiro Mori. "So we shouldn't be too relaxed. "We... will work hard for the success of this big project and do hard work even in its small things because those are the most

important things." With some 600 days to go until the start of the Games on July 24, 2020, organizers find themselves in a relatively comfortable position, with preparations back on track following some initial bumps in the road. In 2015, Tokyo 2020 scrapped their initial Games logo due to allegations of plagiarism and the original design for a new Olympic stadium was also changed due to costs. However, since budget cuts of \$300 million were announced in December last year, organizers have had a relatively pain-free ride. Despite this, there is still work to be done, especially regarding transport, accommodation and counter-measures to the summer heat in Tokyo, which reached a record 41.1 degrees Celsius in July this year. Bach said organizers had to guard

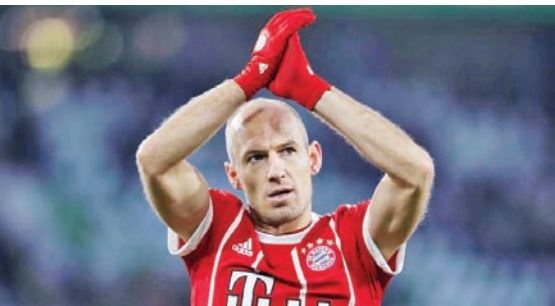
against complacency as preparations enter the home stretch. "I cannot give this Coordination Commission any major tasks here but only the warning," said Bach, who delivered a similar message following the IOC Executive Board meeting at the weekend. "I know it is unnecessary, knowing the Japanese people, but we should never get complacent. "I know I don't need to say this to Japanese people and I know I don't need to say this to my friends and colleagues in the Coordination Commission." Bach said preparations for 2020 were well in advance of those of previous Olympic hosts "In some of the (host) cities – even in most – we had to organize crisis meetings with the Executive Board a couple of months



before the Games and some of them, maybe three months before the Games, were maybe not where you are today already," said Bach. "So, you have really reached a very high level of preparation." The next landmark for organizers will be the announcement of the next version of the budget later this month.

Robben to leave Bayern Munich at end of season

Arjen Robben has said he will leave Bayern Munich at the end of the season after a decade of success at the German champions. The 34-year-old joined the club in 2009 and formed a formidable attacking partnership with Franck Ribery, who is also likely to leave at the end of the season. "I can say that this is my last year [at Bayern] and it is good like that," Robben told reporters after a meeting with fan groups. "I have taken the decision, personally, that this will be my last year. "I think it is the right moment after 10 years. The club moves on and I may move on. It is the end of a very good



and long period." Robben has scored 98 goals in 198 Bundesliga games for Bayern and, since his arrival in 2009, he has played in three Champions League finals -- in 2010, 2012 and 2013 -- winning the title at the third attempt. He has also won seven Bundesliga titles, including the last six in a row, and four German Cups with the club. Robben, who has also won league titles with PSV Eindhoven, Chelsea and Real Madrid and featured in the 2010 World Cup final for Netherlands, added that he had no plans to retire. "I may move on. I won't stop completely yet," he said.

Iran's Firouzja wins gold at World Youth U16 Chess Olympiad

MNA — The 2018 World Youth Under-16 Chess Olympiad wrapped up on Sunday with Iran claiming the fifth place and Iranian chess grandmaster Alireza Firouzja picked as the best player in the tournament. The World Youth Under-16 Chess Olympiad 2018 was organized by Turkish Chess Federation (TCF), held in the Turkish city of Konya from November 25 to December 2. The Iranian outfit took part in nine rounds of competition, winning six of them against Romania, Slovakia, China, Serbia, Belarus and the United States, and conceding defeat in the other three rounds against Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan and India. Uzbekistan won the championship, followed by India, China, Belarus, and Iran in the second to fifth place, respectively. Meanwhile, 15-year-old Iranian chess grandmaster Alirez Firouzja was picked as the best player of the tournament and received a gold medal by gaining 8 points from participating in 9 rounds, and a performance rating of 2736. Firouzja won the Iranian Chess Championship at age 12 and earned his grandmaster title at the age of 14. He is currently the No. 3 ranked Iranian player after Parham Maghsoodloo and Pouya Idani.

Carlos Queiroz praises ex-Iran captain Jalal Hosseini

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran national football team head coach Carlos Queiroz applauded Jalal Hosseini, saying he can be a role model for all the players on and outside the pitch. Hosseini bade farewell to international football on Sunday. The Persepolis captain hung up his boots after 11 years in national team. His international career began back in February 2007 when he debuted Team Melli in a friendly match against Belarus. Hosseini made 116 appearances for Team Melli and scored eight goals. He was a member of Iran national football team in three AFC Asian Cups (2007, 2011, 2015) as well as 2014 World Cup in Brazil. In a statement posted to his Facebook page on Sunday, Queiroz praised the 36-year-old defender. "Thank you Jalal for sharing the major part of your international career with Team Melli and with me as the National Team coach. It was a great privilege. I will always remind you as one of the great captains I worked with, as a top competitive professional, a loyal and enormous character and a role model for all the players on and outside the pitch. More than setting these impressive 116 caps for Team Melli, you set a fantastic career example for the Iranian football and all those who come after you. It was an honor to witness this. Thank you," Queiroz wrote.

Iran book place at AFC U-20 Futsal Championship

TASNIM — Iran defeated Afghanistan on Monday to book a place at the 2019 AFC U-20 Futsal Championship. The Iranian team, who had defeated Turkmenistan 6-3 in Group A of the Central Zone on Saturday, emerged victorious over Afghanistan 4-2. Behdad Sheikh Ahmadi scored a hat-trick and Salar Aghapour was on target one time for Iran. Iran advanced to the 2019 AFC U-20 Futsal Championship as the group winner. Group B consists of host Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The top three teams book their places in the 2019 AFC U-20 Futsal Championship. The 2019 AFC U-20 Futsal Championship qualification is the qualification process organized by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) to determine the participating teams for the 2019 AFC U-20 Futsal Championship to be held in Iran. Of the 47 AFC member associations, a total of 23 teams entered the competition. The qualification process is divided into four zones: ASEAN Zone, Central Zone, East Zone and West Zone (no teams from South Zone entered qualification).

Djeparov reaches agreement with Esteghlal

PLDC — Uzbekistani midfielder Server Djeparov has reportedly reached an agreement with Esteghlal football team. The 36-year-old player, who left Esteghlal for Zhetysay of Kazakhstan in July, is on the verge of return to the Iranian club. Esteghlal first should pay off its \$130,000 debt to Djeparov. Djeparov completed his move to Esteghlal in 2017, however his internal contract could not be registered with Esteghlal due to a FIFA imposed transfer ban. Later he joined Sepahan on loan until the end of the season. Last season, Djeparov was a key player of Esteghlal and helped the team win Iran's Hazfi Cup. He was also named "Persian Gulf Pro League top assister of the Year at the end of the season. Djeparov will reportedly join Esteghlal in January transfer window.

Iran taekwondo team wins World Military Champs

IRNA — Iranian taekwondo team with three gold and one bronze medals ranked first in the 24th International Military Sports Council (CISM) World Military Taekwondo Championship held in Brazil. The event was held with the attendance of 25 countries in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Iran won the military championship for the third consecutive time. Russia with two gold, one silver and three bronze medals ranked second and China stood on the third place.

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Man is always the target of death and in the clutches of cares. Each mouthful of water suffocates him, and each bite gives him pain. No one receives a blessing without losing another blessing, and he cannot meet another day without ending one day of his life. So, we are accomplices of death, and our existence is exposed to annihilation. How can we, thus, hope to stay here? These days and nights not only do not offer us an exalted place, but rather they ruin what they have built up, and disperse all they have gathered.

Imam Ali (AS)

Tehran center to host Algerian cultural exhibition

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — An Algerian cultural exhibition is scheduled to open at Tehran’s Melal Cultural Center today.

The exhibit has been organized the Art and Cultural Organization of the Tehran Municipality and the Embassy of Algeria, the center announced on Monday.



A poster for an Algerian cultural exhibition, which is scheduled to open at Tehran’s Melal Cultural Center today.

Collections of artwork and handicrafts created by Algerian artists and artisans will be showcased at the exhibition.

The event also intends to familiarize visitors with Algerian cuisine, as well as a number of national rituals and social customs of the country.

Photos of a number Algerian luminaries and sets of traditional costumes will also be on display at the exhibition.

A lineup of films will also be screened during the exhibition, which will run until Friday. “The Battle of Algiers”, a war drama directed by Gillo Pontecorvo, is on the lineup.

Iran, India cultural execs meet in Tehran

C U L T U R E d e s k TEHRAN — The Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Seyyed Abbas Salehi, and the president of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Vinay Prabhakar Sahasrabuddhe, have met in Tehran.



Iranian Culture Minister Seyyed Abbas Salehi (L) presents ICCR president Vinay Prabhakar Sahasrabuddhe a book during his visit to Tehran on December 3, 2018.

Plans to expand cultural relations were discussed at the meeting, the ministry announced in a press release on Tuesday.

ICCR’s objectives are to actively participate in the formulation and implementation of policies and programs pertaining to India’s external cultural relations.

The council is also seeking to foster and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries.

Italian documentarian Gianfranco Pannone to hold workshops at Cinéma Vérité

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Italian documentarian Gianfranco Pannone will be in Tehran next week to hold workshops on dramaturgy in documentary films during the 12th Cinéma Vérité festival, the organizers announced on Monday.

Pannone is a graduate of the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, the Italian national film school in Rome.

“Red Sunrise”, “Waste in Freedom. The Incredible Adventure of Nuclear in Italy”, “Oil, Miracles and Stones”, “On the Volcano”, “The World’s Smallest Army” and “Leave the Saints Alone” are among his credits.

His films have won accolades in several Italian and international festivals, including the Locarno International Film Festival and London International Documentary Film Festival.

His latest documentary “Mondo Za” will also go on screen at the Cinéma Vérité festival.

The film focuses on the life of Cesare Zavattini, an Italian screenwriter and one of the first theorists of Italian neorealist cinema.

A large group of cineastes from across the globe have been invited to attend the Cinéma Vérité festival, which will take place at Tehran’s Charsu Cineplex from December 9 to 16.

Fifteen directors and programmers of international film festivals, including the founder and programmer of the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, Doug Hawes-Davis from the U.S. and the programmer of the Parnu International Documentary and Anthropology Film Festival, Vaiko Edur,



Italian documentarian Gianfranco Pannone in an undated photo.

from Estonia, have been invited.

The director of the Kasseler Dokfest, Gerhard Wissner Ventura, from Germany, and the director of the Moscow International Documentary Film Festival DOKer, Irina Shatalova, are also among the invitees.

Iranian game developer warns about brain drain



A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Shahriar Az’harianfar, the developer of the acclaimed android game “Amirza”, has warned cultural officials of the immigration of young talents in the game industry from the country to work for companies such as Google and Microsoft.

“Persons who were geniuses at game developing in Iran and had good experiences in the industry have left the country over the past few years and have been employed by companies such as Google and Microsoft,” he told the Persian service of IRNA on Monday.

He said that a member of the team involved in developing the games ‘Quest of Persia: Nader’s Blade’, ‘Quest of Persia: The End of Innocence’ and ‘Quest of Persia: Lotfali Khan Zand’ is now working at Microsoft.

He also added that the writer of Iran’s first motor game is now working for Google as a middle manager and some people have

also been employed at Santa Monica Studio, an American video game developer, and at several other overseas companies.

“We do not have many persons in the country that have enough knowledge of game development,” Az’harianfar lamented and asked the authorities to consider other game developing talents who have chosen to remain in the country.

He called the huge government bureaucracy the biggest obstacle in the way of game developers trying to obtain a license for their products.

Governmental filters to prevent online businesses and lack of investors are other major problems facing game developers, he added.

Az’harianfar pointed to the entrepreneurial side of game developing and noted the industry has the potential to create thousands of jobs even in unrelated fields.

Iranian cineastes on India’s All Lights festival panels



A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Three Iranian cineastes are members of the jury panels at the All Lights India International Film Festival, which is currently underway in the Indian city of Hyderabad.

Actor Amir Aqai and film director and producer Hassan Nazer are members of the jury for the Debut Film Makers Competition, while actress Rana Azadivar is judging the films screening in the Feature Films and Student Short Films Competition, the organizers have announced.

Korean director Soo Sung Lee, Indian cinematographer Ajayan Vincent, Russian producer Nadezhda Gorshkova, Sri Lankan cinematographer Dhanushka Gunathilake and French actress Marianne Borgo are the other members of the juries.

In addition, a number of Iranian films are competing in the event, which opened with a screening of Vahid Jalilvand’s acclaimed drama “No Date, No Signature”.

“Amir” by Nima Eqlima is competing in the international section of the festival, while “Kupal” by Kazem Mollai has been selected to be screened in the Debut Film Makers Competition.

“Pale White” by Gholamreza Jafari and “Blows with the Wind” by Hazhir Asa’adi is an entry in the children’s film competition.

“Forbidden” by Hassan Yektapanah, “Lollipop” by Hossein Farahbakhsh, “Privacy” by Ahmad Moazzami and “Time to Love” by Alireza Raisian are being reviewed in a special section dedicated to Iranian cinema.

The festival also pays tribute to the legendary Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami by screening his films “Taste of Cherry”, “The Wind Will Carry Us” and “Certified Copy”.

The All Lights India International Film Festival will come to an end on Wednesday.

Cher, Reba McEntire and ‘Hamilton’ creators shine at Kennedy Center Honors

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — Cher, Reba McEntire, and the creators of the Broadway musical “Hamilton” — superstars of the entertainment world — gathered in Washington on Sunday to enter the ranks of highly celebrated artists as recipients of the Kennedy Center Honors.

Cher, the Oscar-winning actress and pop icon, and McEntire, a country music singer and songwriter who has acted on stage and television, joined jazz musician Wayne Shorter and composer Philip Glass to receive the awards, which recognize a lifetime of contributions to the arts.

In an unusual move for the arts organization, the Kennedy Center also recognized the creators of “Hamilton” with a special award for a “transformative work that defies category,” recognizing Lin-Manuel Miranda, who wrote and starred in the show; Thomas Kail, who directed it; Andy Blankenbuehler, who designed the show’s choreography; and Alex Lacamoire, who did the orchestration.

Though celebrities and high-ranking Washington politicians attended the annual gathering, President Donald Trump and his wife, Melania, stayed away for the second year in a row.

That drew mixed responses from the attendees.

Cher, who has made no secret of her disdain for the Republican president, suggested she would not have shown up if Trump had



2018 Kennedy Center honorees, back row from left, the co-creators of “Hamilton,” Thomas Kail, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Andy Blankenbuehler and Alex Lacamoire; and front row from left, Wayne Shorter, Cher, Reba McEntire, and Philip Glass appear on stage during the 41st Annual Kennedy Center Honors at The Kennedy Center in Washington, U.S., December 2, 2018. (Reuters/Al Drago)

been present.

“If he came ... someone would have to give me the little Honor in a bathroom,” she told reporters on Saturday night at a gala at the State Department ahead of the Sunday program.

Some others lamented the fact that the president was not there. Politics, however, were not a theme of the night, with the exception of a tribute by the show’s host, Gloria Estefan, to former President George H. W. Bush, who died on Friday.

Soviet-era ‘moon rocks’ sell for \$855,000 at New York auction

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Three fragments of rocks retrieved from the moon by a Soviet space mission in 1970 were sold for \$855,000 at a New York auction on Thursday.

Sotheby’s auction house said the “moon rocks” are the only known documented lunar matter in private hands. They were offered for sale by an unidentified private American collector who purchased them at auction in 1993 for \$442,500.

Sotheby’s said the buyer on Thursday was another private American collector, but the name was not disclosed.

The auction house said ahead of the sale that the fragments, ranging in size from about .079 inch x .079 inch (2 x 2mm) to .039 inch x .039 inch (1 x 1mm), could fetch up to \$1 million.

The lunar samples originally belonged to Nina Ivanovna Koroleva, the widow of former Soviet space program director Sergei Pavlovich Korolev. They were presented to her as a gift on behalf of the Soviet Union in recognition of her husband’s contributions to the program, Sotheby’s said.

The particles were retrieved in September 1970 by the unmanned Luna-16, which drilled a hole in the surface to a depth of 13.8 inches (35 cm) and extracted a core sample, the auction house said in a statement.



Three lunar samples, which Sotheby’s says are the only known documented moon rocks in private hands, from the unmanned Soviet Luna-16 Mission in 1970 which returned to earth, are shown encased under glass below an adjustable lens, in this photo taken in New York City, New York, U.S., October 15, 2018. (Courtesy Sotheby’s/Handout via Reuters)

Most other known samples taken from the moon remain with the two entities that collected them: the United States during the Apollo 11-17 missions and the Soviet Union via the unmanned Luna-16, Luna-20, and Luna-24 missions.

Collectors pay huge sums for space exploration artifacts. Last year Sotheby’s sold a zippered bag stamped with the words “Lunar Sample Return” laced with moon dust which was used by Neil Armstrong for the first manned mission to the moon in 1969, for \$1.8 million.