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Oil export minus Iran impossible

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Leader: Retirees' employment ban will break 'closed management circle'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Tuesday that ban on employment of the retired managers will “break the closed management circle”.

“This is a very good law. This is one of those laws that we needed to have. This law, in fact, opens and breaks

the closed management circle... It paves the way for the youth” to get managerial posts, Ayatollah Khamenei told his theology students.

However, he said, there are managers who were employed when they were young and now they are experienced and there is no one to replace them. ➔**2**

Iran says OPEC members who increased output should take lead on cuts

Qatar's decision to quit OPEC shows the frustration of small producers at the dominant role of a Saudi and Russia-led panel, a top Iranian official said, adding that any supply cuts should come only from countries that had increased output.

The comments underline tensions within the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries ahead of this week's meeting to discuss curbing output and prolonging a supply-limiting pact with Russia and other non-members into 2019.

Iran has been angered by higher production from Saudi Arabia and Russia, which chair a panel called the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC), after calls from U.S. President Donald Trump to pump more oil to offset a drop in Iranian exports hit by U.S. sanctions.

“This is very regrettable and we understand their frustration,” Iran's OPEC governor, Hossein Kazempour Ardebili, told Reuters, referring to Doha's announcement on Monday. ➔**4**

Israel launches operation near Lebanese border against 'Hezbollah tunnels'

The Israeli military has launched an operation along Lebanon's border under the pretext of “cutting off” what it claims are tunnels dug by the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement near the occupied territories.

It announced the operation on Twitter on Tuesday, saying that a number of areas close to Lebanon's border,

including Metula, had been declared a closed military zone.

Israeli military spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Conricus claimed that “a number of tunnels” had penetrated the Israeli-occupied territories.

He said that the operation would not cross the border into Lebanon. ➔**13**

ARTICLE

Hanif Ghaffari
Political analyst

The G20 fruitless summit

The 2018 G20 summit in Buenos Aires, was the thirteenth meeting of Group of Twenty (G20), which was held on 30 November and 1 December 2018 in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Incidents such as Angela Merkel's airplane technical failure, Mohammed bin Salman wandering in Buenos Aires and his compulsory stay at the Residence of the Saudi Embassy in Argentina, Trump's cold behavior with the President of Argentina, mistaking the Chinese President with another by the President of Argentina and the minor 3.5-magnitude earthquake in Buenos Aires, taking place less than one day before the summit, were among the sidelines of this summit. However, the main question about the “philosophy of holding the G20 Summit” and the “outcome of this meeting” remains unanswered!

The fact is that the G20 members have been meeting several times during the Obama presidency and after the economic crisis in the West. Even at that time (during which there was no barrier called “Trump” at the White House), the top 20 world leaders could not come to a collective and credible solution to solve the existing economic crises.

More than ten years have passed since the beginning of economic crisis in the United States and Europe, and European officials continue to call for the adoption of austerity policies as the only way to keep the status quo. This is in spite of the fact that many of the economists and politicians in the West are pessimistic about the transition from this economic crisis which is ruling over the international system.

At the moment, in addition to the underlying crisis affecting the G20, we are witnessing another crisis called “the presence of Trump in the White House”! The U.S. President explicitly rejects the multilateralism considered by the G20 member states, and violates international trade law by unilateralism. Currently, the main concern of G20 members is how to confront with Trump's protectionist policies and orders. ➔**7**

Escalation of Saudi attacks against Yemen on the eve of peace talks

By Fatemeh Salehi

TEHRAN — Yemen peace talk is to start in Sweden this week between the warring sides with the presence of the Ansarollah delegation. There is a great deal of speculation over the success of the talks as a result of the Saudi-backed coalition's hindrances and the U.S. political and military interests in the continuation of the Yemeni war.

The talks will focus on agreements on exchange of captives, and reopening of Sana'a International Airport in order to halt the war and eventually running an election.

Mohammad Ali al-Houthi, head of Yemen revolution former President of the Revolutionary Committee or Revolutionary Council has recently said that the repetition of Saudi-led coalition's

terms and conditions for negotiations is an attempt to avert the UN-led peace talks.

Al-Houthi believes the UN envoy in Yemen, after the failure of previous talks, has reached the conclusion that any conditions set by the Saudis and its allies were an impediment to the talks.

Previous talks planned for September in Geneva failed to get underway because Saudi-led coalition prevented the Houthi delegation to participate.

According to an informed source, UN envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths is expected to travel to Yemen, Sana'a in an effort to preempt another premature collapse of talks.

Iran has supported the UN-led peace talks in Sweden and called on all Yemeni parties to engage in constructive negotiations and take confidence

building steps to pave the ground for reaching a comprehensive agreement to end the pain of the Yemeni people.

Escalation of Saudi-led coalition attacks in Yemen on the eve of the Stockholm talks

While the humanitarian situation in Yemen is worsening by day and the UN issues warnings against the deteriorating conditions in Yemen and calls for the lift of blockade of Yemen, the Saudi officials are seeking to create impediment for course of talks.

However, the Saudi-led coalition continues to carry out their brutal attacks against residential areas in Yemen, with 14 dead and wounded during just one attack on a house in Al Hudaydah. ➔**7**

Mogherini: EU fears 'rule of jungle' may win over rule of law

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini expressed fear that the “rule of the jungle” may prevail over the rule of law in global relations as important international treaties are being challenged.

Mogherini was speaking at the Harvard Kennedy School for Science and International Affairs in Boston, United States. “Today, I am afraid we have to admit that such a new world order has never truly materialized and worse, there is a real risk today that the rule of the jungle replaces the rule of law.

The same international treaties — so many in which we are together — that ended the Cold War are today put into question”, Mogherini said at the Harvard Kennedy School for Science and International Affairs. According to Mogherini,

instead of constructing a new world order, it is better to invest ‘in preventing the current rules from being dismantled’.

The diplomat has also repeatedly stressed the importance of close cooperation between the European Union and the United States for building a fair world order.

During her speech, Mogherini also mentioned the recent incident with the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) detaining Ukrainian ships in the Sea of Azov for illegal border crossing. We have seen in these very weeks that we share the same interest in addressing Russia's violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity: only together can Europe and America face the challenges that Russia poses on European soil, but also elsewhere...

ARTICLE

Martin Love
Political analyst from North Carolina

The loss of the American “empire” is baked in the cake

So much going on round the world of note, and too few remarking at attempts to torture or waterboard free speech in the U.S., except this time if the subject literally drowns or dies, which journalist Jamal Khashoggi did in his own blood, no problem — that may be the intent anyway, to eliminate all dissenting voices that are, to one degree or another and maybe too loud about it, appalled by various rampant, overextended “isms”: Zionism, Neo-liberalism, run amok Capitalism, Communism, Nationalism, Nazism, Wahhabism, Americanism, and others.

But clearly the most egregious of them all, as perhaps has been the case since the beginning of recorded time, is “stupidism”, the fatal ailment of too much of homo sapiens particularly when now we read about climate change, which may be the most dangerous development of all, which allegedly has gone past the point where it might be reversed. It's all rather frightening and in the case of Iran, too, when one considers limited water resources and a population which has soared in the past century. The remarkable “Qanats” worked well for centuries, but going forward? But that's another subject.

One must wonder that if everyone arose each morning, sat on their edge of whatever space comprised their bed, and asked themselves one question, it does seem anyway that the human world might be immediately improved. That question would be: Can I be aware enough today to evaluate and react properly and wisely and honestly to whatever I must face? But regarding press freedom, or simply the telling of truths by a few enlightened reporters, it remains remarkable that some reporters in Israel get to tell dissenting truths more than American observers without gross punishment. Gideon Levy, who writes for Ha-eretz, is a case in point.

Levy has done two things for years: he has slammed a cowardly American mainstream media in which the natives of the Holy Land can only be villainized, and he has pointed to the gross misuse of the charge of “anti-Semitism”. The recent firing by CNN of Marc Lamont Hill, a Black American writer and university academic who has called for the freedom of Palestinians in a speech at a U.N. conference, Levy has also condemned. ➔**7**



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Young Researchers' Think Tank inaugurated

Young Researchers' Think Tank, was inaugurated in Tehran on Tuesday with Education Minister Mohammad Bat'haei in attendance.

The think tank, affiliated to the Ministry of Education, was set up in an attempt to promote discussion among young talented medal winners at international scientific Olympiads.

The think tank's deputy director Enayat Salarian said on Tuesday that some 733 medal winner at international scientific Olympiads are the members of the think tank.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



58 Iranian fleets in Indian Ocean, Gulf of Aden

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Navy has already dispatched 58 fleets to the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden.

Navy Chief Hossein Khanzadi said on Tuesday that the move was aimed to secure the ships and fight piracy in those waters, ISNA reported.

“We’ve had fully independent operations in fighting piracy, thousands of kilometers away from our naval borders to achieve security and freedom of navigation,” the rear admiral said.

“We were so successful in this regard that the international community was unable not to give us credit ... The International Maritime Organization has issued consecutive acknowledgements to Iranian destroyers,” he added.

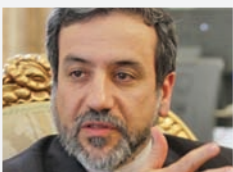


‘Zionists have no place in future Palestine’

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the Iranian parliament speaker, has said holding a referendum among the true inhabitants of Palestine, including Muslims, Jews and Christians, is the democratic solution to the issue of Palestine, adding that the Zionists will have no place in future Palestine.

Amir Abdollahian also condemned the killing and kidnapping of Palestinians by the Zionist regime’s forces in Gaza and lauded the Palestinian people for their resistance, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

He said the issue showed the Palestinians’ resistance and the Zionist regime’s weakness.



European financial mechanism to be announced soon: Araqchi

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Tuesday that European financial mechanism to save the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran now that the U.S. has exited the agreement will be announced in the near future.

“We are consulting with Europe on financial mechanisms, and we hope that the mechanisms will be announced in the near future,” he told IRNA.

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



Army ground forces boost offensive power

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Chief of the Iranian Army’s ground forces says his forces have boosted their offensive capabilities, Tasnim reported on Tuesday.

During a visit to a military base in northeast Iran, Brigadier General Kiomars Heidari said an upgrade in the mobility and effectiveness of the ground forces has increased their offensive power.

Mobility and agility are the main characteristics of the ground force, he said.

Heidari also said that updated ordnance and military equipment has enabled the Army to combat any threat.

It comes a week after Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei urged the Armed Forces to boost their military capabilities.



MP criticizes Zarif for signing Paris climate agreement

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A member of the Hope parliamentary faction has criticized Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif for signing the Paris climate agreement, saying the pact puts obstacles in the path of Iran’s development.

“Our role in producing greenhouse gases is not as large as that of the developed countries, therefore, accepting these restrictions in this way is illogical,” Mehr on Tuesday quoted Ali Ebrahimi as saying.

This is while the countries which played a more significant role in producing greenhouse gases have accepted the agreement relatively, Ebrahimi added.

The 2015 Paris agreement’s main aim is to keep a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius and to drive efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.



Iraqi tribal chiefs slam U.S. sanctions on Iran

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — During a conference in Baghdad, heads of 500 Iraqi tribes, including Shia and Sunni, have denounced Washington’s unilateral sanctions against the Islamic Republic, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

The tribal leaders came together from around the country to voice their support to the Abdul-Mahdi administration and their opposition to economic siege of nations.

They also underlined their support to the armed popular forces in opposition to the U.S. stance.

In a closing statement, the participants said that Iran has now reached a capability that nobody dares to threaten it.

Zarif urges Pompeo to study UN Resolution 2231

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The U.S. secretary of state needs to study the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has suggested in reaction to Mike Pompeo’s tweet which claimed that Iran’s missile testing activities violate the resolution.

Resolution 2231, adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council in July 2015, endorses the nuclear agreement between Iran, the 5+1 group, and the European Union. However, the United States, under Donald Trump, unilaterally withdrew from the agreement in May and ordered sanctions on Iran.

In an interview with ICANA published on Tuesday, Zarif stated that Pompeo does not value the UN resolution at all.

“This is not unexpected of him,” Zarif remarked.

He added, “Notwithstanding their international commitments, they [the U.S. officials] ditched the nuclear deal; besides, they punish those who implement the deal.”

The Iranian foreign minister highlighted that the JCPOA — the official name for the nuclear deal — does not prohibit Iran from testing missiles, and that the Resolution 2231 only requests Iran not to test nuclear-capable missiles.

It does not prohibit Iran from testing missiles, the chief diplomat added.

“Iran is not after nuclear weapons, and these missiles are not designed to carry nuclear weapons.”

Underlining that missiles designed for



carrying nuclear weapons do not require high degrees of precision, Zarif concluded that Iran’s missiles, for their high precision, are not the product of a nuke program.

“In the recent attack on the terrorists [in Iraq’s Kurdistan Region], Iran showed that its missiles are highly precise-guided.”

■ **‘Oil export, pivotal to EU-Iran trade mechanism’**

Also, in reaction to a recent news article by Reuters which claimed that the SPV, even if established, may not contribute to Iran’s oil export to Europe, Zarif said the SPV is a European-proposed payment mechanism

Rezaee urges Europe to stand up to Washington

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Mohsen Rezaee, secretary of the Expediency Council, has called on the European parties to the JCPOA, also known as the Iran nuclear deal, to stand up to Washington’s excessive demands.

Rezaee made the remarks in a meeting with German Ambassador to Tehran Michael Klor-Bercholdt on Tuesday, Mehr reported.

“We are unhappy with the Europeans. European authorities do not understand the issues as clearly as you, who have traveled across Iran,” Rezaee he told the German ambassador.

“Unfortunately, Europe does not provide a suitable response to cooperation with Iran,” he added.

Criticizing the delay in implementing the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), which has been designed to conduct banking transactions with Iran in defiance of U.S. sanctions, Rezaee said the Europeans talk the talk but do not walk the walk.

“This is a strategic mistake that the Europeans are making ... Europe should



not miss the opportunity of cooperation [with Iran],” the top official remarked.

He further said the Iranian government and Foreign Ministry believe in cooperation with Europe, urging the EU to “seize this opportunity before it’s too late.”

Klor-Bercholdt also expressed the hope that the banking channel with Iran will be established soon, saying this issue is tied to “our sovereignty and independence.”

Oil export minus Iran impossible in Persian Gulf, Rouhani warns U.S.

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — After five months for a second time President Hassan Rouhani warned the Trump administration that if Iran would not be allowed to export oil then no country will be given the permission to export oil from the strategic Persian Gulf waterway.

“The United States should know that we are selling our oil and will continue to sell, (but) the United States should know that if it wishes to halt Iran’s oil export then no oil will be exported from the Persian Gulf,” Rouhani told thousands of well-wishers in the city of Shahroud, Semnan Province.

One-fifth of the world’s oil passes in tankers through the Strategic Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf.

The first time, on July 5, 2018, Rouhani, during a visit to Europe, warned that Iran would block the Persian Gulf passageway in retaliation in his country would not be able to export oil.

“The Americans have claimed they want to completely stop Iran’s oil exports. They don’t understand the meaning of this statement because it has no meaning for Iranian oil not to be exported while the region’s oil is exported,” Rouhani said in Switzerland.

Later, Islamic Revolution Guard Corps chief Mohammad Ali Jafari, whose forces patrol the Strait of Hormuz said his forces were ready to put Rouhani’s words into action if necessary. “We will make the enemy understand that either everyone can use the Strait of Hormuz or no one,” Jafari asserted.

■ **Iran won’t bow to U.S.**

In continuation of his remarks on Tuesday in Shahroud, Rouhani said, “The great Iranian nation has not bowed and will not bow to the United States. The United States announced that they would deprive Iran of oil exportation and prevent Iran of economic interaction with the world.

this could not be true because if the income from oil trade is not deposited into an account, it is not clear whether there is any money for conducting any transactions.”

Zarif noted that oil is the major export of Iran, therefore some people are trying to create an atmosphere in order to make people lose their hope.

He further said, “The Islamic Republic of Iran has always insisted on its own internal strength. As a result, we continued our efforts with the Europeans.”

■ **‘Europeans should pay for their security’**

The foreign minister stressed that the JCPOA is crucial to the security of Europe and therefore “they have to pay for the implementation of the JCPOA and their own security.”

“We are in touch with the Europeans and following up on the technical issues to make sure the trade mechanism is developed. We hope the SPV can meet the needs of the country to an acceptable extent.”

Pointing to the significance of getting a practical guarantee for the implementation of the SPV, Zarif said though Iranian officials have received positive preliminary information concerning the establishment of the mechanism, excessive cautiousness can be sensed on the part of the Europeans.

“Europeans want to reap the benefits of the JCPOA without having to pay for alleviating their security concerns, and this is not possible,” Zarif stressed.

Don’t push Iran towards exiting JCPOA, Russia tells U.S.

By staff and agency

Dmitry Peskov, the Russian president’s press secretary, said on Monday that Moscow stands for keeping the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, after the U.S. withdrawal.

“Russia, like practically all the nations, stands for keeping the JCPOA in place. We see no alternative to this agreement. We call on everyone to refrain from steps that might push Iran towards withdrawing this deal. We think that it would have adverse impacts and we condemn the United States for its withdrawal from the JCPOA,” TASS quoted him as saying.

Peskov said unlike the UN Security Council sanctions, Washington’s restrictions on Iran are illegitimate and run contrary to international law.

“There must not be an obstacle for us to continue our bilateral relations and trade-and-economic cooperation with Iran,” he explained.

The Kremlin spokesman said that Russia is building mutually beneficial and quite close relations with Iran, which is playing



an important role in regional affairs and in the Syrian settlement dialogue.

“It is absolutely illogical and inadmissible to turn a blind eye on Iran’s role,” Peskov noted.

U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew Washington from the JCPOA in May.

Other signatories to the JCPOA — Russia, China, France, Germany and the United Kingdom — have repeatedly supported their commitment to the deal.

Leader: Retirees’ employment ban will break ‘closed management circle’

Larijani orders reformation of law banning retirees after Ayatollah Khamenei’s suggestion

➔ This is where they come to receive permission from the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist, the Leader added.

He suggested that the parliament should

revise the law so that they will not need to resort to the Leadership’s permission.

Kazem Jalali, chairman of the Parliament Research Center, said on Tuesday that Majlis

Speaker Ali Larijani has ordered a reformation of the law.

“So, we are supposed to prepare a plan to reform the law according to the Leader’s

view in cooperation with a group of (Majlis) representatives, experts and researchers,” Jalali said.

U.S. may be adjusting intelligence to fit its anti-Iran policy: Fitzpatrick

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Mark Fitzpatrick believes the United States may be in the process of adjusting intelligence to serve its anti-Iran agenda ahead, rather than basing its foreign policy on intelligence.

Fitzpatrick, executive director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), made the assumption, published in an article on the IISS website on Monday, after tracing Washington’s allegations that try to accuse Iran of pursuing a chemical weapons program.

He pointed to Washington’s accusation at a review conference of the Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) last month where U.S. officials claimed that Iran maintains an undeclared offensive chemical-weapons program.

“The U.S. representative expressed concerns that Iran was developing ‘central nervous system-acting chemicals’ for offensive military purposes, and cited three past cases of reporting failures by Iran,” Fitzpatrick noted, adding that the U.S. State Department in March said it could not certify that Iran does not maintain a suspected undeclared chemical-weapons stockpile.

“Now, suddenly,” Fitzpatrick continued, “the U.S. has changed its position from ‘not certifying a negative’ to a positive claim.”

“It is unlikely that new dispositive evidence of a chemical-weapons program has emerged in the past few months,” he wrote, adding, “Rather, there is a new policy of going after Iran on all fronts. Is the intelligence being adjusted to fit the policy?”



Macron makes U-turn on fuel-tax increases in face of ‘yellow vest’ protests

France's prime minister on Tuesday suspended planned increases to fuel taxes for at least six months in response to weeks of sometimes violent protests, the first major U-turn by President Emmanuel Macron's administration after 18 months in office.

In announcing the decision, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said anyone would have "to be deaf or blind" not to see or hear the roiling anger on the streets over a policy that Macron has defended as critical to combating climate change.

"The French who have donned yellow vests want taxes to drop, and work to pay. That's also what we want. If I didn't manage to explain it, if the ruling majority didn't manage to convince the French, then something must change," said Philippe.

"No tax is worth jeopardizing the unity of the nation."

Along with the delay to the tax increases that were set for January, Philippe said the time would be used to discuss other measures to help the working poor and squeezed middle-class who rely on vehicles to get to work and go shopping.

Earlier officials had hinted at a possible increase to the minimum wage, but Philippe made no such commitment.

He warned citizens, however, that they could not expect better public services and lower taxes.

"If the events of recent days have shown us one thing, it's that the French want neither an increase in taxes or new taxes. If the tax-take falls then spending must fall, because we don't want to pass our debts on to our children. And those debts are already sizeable," he said.

The so-called "yellow vest" movement, which started on Nov. 17 as a social-media protest group named for the high-visibility jackets all motorists in France carry in their



cars, began with the aim of highlighting the squeeze on household spending brought about by Macron's taxes on fuel.

However, over the past three weeks the movement has evolved into a wider, broad-brush anti-Macron uprising, with many criticizing the president for pursuing policies they say favor the rich and do nothing to help the poor.

Despite having no leader and sometimes unclear goals, the movement has drawn people of all ages and backgrounds and tapped into a growing malaise over the direction Macron is trying to take the country in. Over the past two days, ambulance drivers and students have joined in and launched their own protests.

After three weeks of rising frustration, there was scant indication Philippe's measures would placate the "yellow vests", who themselves are struggling to find a unified

position.

"The French don't want crumbs, they want a baguette," 'yellow vest' spokesman Benjamin Cauchy told BFM, adding that the movement wanted a cancellation of the taxes.

Another one, Christophe Chalencon, was blunter: "We're being taken for idiots," he told Reuters, using a stronger expletive.

■ Green goals

The timing of the tax U-turn is uncomfortable for Macron. It comes as governments meet in Poland to try to agree measures to avert the most damaging consequences of global warming, an issue Macron has made a central part of his agenda. His carbon taxes were designed to address the issue.

But the scale of the protests against his policies made it almost impossible to plow ahead as he had hoped.

While the "yellow vest" movement was mostly peaceful to begin with, the past two

weekends have seen outpourings of violence and rioting in Paris, with extreme far-right and far-left factions joining the demos and spurring chaos.

On Saturday, the Arc de Triomphe national monument was defaced and avenues off the Champs Elysees were damaged. Cars, buildings and some cafes were torched.

The unrest is estimated to have cost the economy millions, with large-scale disruption to retailers, wholesalers, the restaurant and hotel trades. In some areas, manufacturing has been hit in the run up to Christmas.

■ Change France?

Macron, a 40-year-old former investment banker and economy minister, came to office in mid-2017 promising to overhaul the French economy, revitalize growth and draw foreign investment by making the nation a more attractive place to do business.

In the process he earned the tag "president of the rich" for seeming to do more to court big business and ease the tax burden on the wealthy. Discontent has steadily risen among blue-collar workers and others who feel he represents an urban "elite".

For Macron, who is sharply down in the polls and struggling to regain the initiative, a further risk is how opposition parties leverage the anger and the decision to shift course.

Ahead of European Parliament elections next May, support for the far-right under Marine Le Pen and the far-left of Jean-Luc Melenchon has been rising. Macron has cast those elections as a battle between his "progressive" ideas and what he sees as their promotion of nationalist or anti-EU agendas.

Le Pen was quick to point out that the six-month postponement of the fuel-tax increases took the decision beyond the European elections.

(Source: Reuters)

Yemen's Ansarullah, Saudi-led coalition reach prisoner exchange deal

By staff & agencies

An Ansarullah (Houthi) movement official says the House of Saud regime-led coalition and militants fighting on its behalf in Yemen have signed a United Nations-brokered deal for exchanging prisoners with the Ansarullah movement, prior to the peace negotiations due to be launched in Sweden.

Abdul Qader al-Murtaza, chairman of the Ansarullah-run Committee for Prisoners' Affairs, confirmed the news to Turkey's Anadolu news agency on Monday.

"The UN special envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffiths, communicated to us that coalition forces and the Yemeni [self-proclaimed] government have also signed the prisoner exchange agreement that was signed in November by the Houthis," he said.

Murtaza also noted that the agreement marks the first step towards resolving the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

The prisoner exchange is only the third to be announced since Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) launched a coalition that has fought against Yemen for over three years. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said it welcomed the announcement and would oversee and facilitate the exchange.

Peace talks between Yemen's opposite parties are expected to begin in Sweden as early as Wednesday.

Griffiths arrived in Sana'a, the Ansarullah-run Yemeni capital, on Monday to escort the Ansarullah delegation to the planned discussions.

A UN source told Reuters that the former Saudi-backed regime had also confirmed that it would follow the Ansarullah to the Sweden peace talks.

■ UN aircraft moves 50 wounded Ansarullah fighters to Oman for treatment

Earlier, a group of 50 wounded fighters from Ansarullah movement have been flown out of the war-torn country for treatment as part of measures aimed at paving the way for planned peace talks brokered by the United Nations after nearly four years of war.

The wounded Ansarullah fighters along with their escorts and a team of doctors left Sana'a International Airport for



Oman on a UN-chartered flight on Monday.

A UN source confirmed that the wounded had been evacuated from the Yemeni capital in what was a "confidence-building measure" aimed at pushing ahead with negotiations held between Yemen's warring sides in Sweden this month.

The fate of wounded Ansarullah had been a stumbling block to the start of a previous round of collapsed peace talks in Geneva in September.

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 United States 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 House of Saud regime launched its devastating military campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the aim of bringing the government of Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi back to power and crushing Ansarullah.

Hoping to roll back advances made by the group, the alli-

ance has carried out more than 18,000 air raids, with almost one-third of all bombing missions striking non-military sites.

Weddings, funerals, schools and hospitals, as well as water and electricity plants, have been targeted, killing and wounding thousands.

According to a new report by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, the Saudi regime 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.

The war is estimated to have left 56,000 Yemenis dead. According to the UN, the war has ravaged the country's economy and caused the Yemeni rial to depreciate 180 percent.

Back in June, the Saudi regime-led coalition launched an offensive on the port city of Hudaydah despite international warnings that it would compound the war-torn nation's humanitarian crisis.

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

About 8.4 million Yemenis are now facing starvation. The number is likely to increase to 14 million.

The UN painted a bleak picture of the hunger crisis gripping the country, on Tuesday, warning that the number of people needing food aid was set to jump by four million.

The grim forecast for the country came as the United Nations humanitarian office (OCHA/United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) released its projected needs assessments for next year.

"The country with the biggest problem in 2019 is going to be Yemen," OCHA chief Mark Lowcock told reporters in Geneva.

He said that in 2017, the UN was providing food assistance to three million people a month, that figure rose to eight million per month this year and is expected to hit 12 million in 2019, Lowcock added.

Britain can unilaterally revoke Article 50: top EU court lawyer

EU countries can unilaterally end the divorce process from the bloc, the legal advisor to the union's top court said Tuesday in a closely watched case launched by anti-Brexit politicians in Britain.

The case was referred to the European Court of Justice by a Scottish court and hinges on whether the British parliament could simply revoke the country's "Article 50" EU withdrawal process.

"Advocate General Campos Sanchez-Bordona proposes that the European Court of Justice should declare that Article 50 authorizes the unilateral revocation of the notification of the intention to withdraw from the Union," a statement from the court said.

"That possibility continues to exist until the withdrawal agreement is formally concluded," the court added.

Judges at the ECJ usually, but not always, follow the legal opinions of the court's advocate general. To be valid, such revocation must be "decided in accordance with the constitutional rules" of the member state and be the subject of a "formal communication" to European



Union leaders, the court said.

Prime Minister Theresa May's government argues it has no intention of halting Brexit anyway and that the case has been brought as a political tactic by pro-European opponents.

May is trying to sell an agreement on a "smooth and orderly" Brexit to a hostile House

of Commons, arguing that their choice is to back a deal or face the economic calamity of crashing out of Europe without a plan.

But pro-Europeans hope that if the European court confirms that Britain has the right to stop the countdown then a third option would emerge: stopping Brexit altogether

and remaining in the EU.

The European Union institutions also oppose the Scottish case, fearing member states will be tempted to launch their own speculative exit bids to extract concessions from Brussels – only to reverse course.

Under Article 50 of the Lisbon EU treaty, any member state can declare its intention to quit the union, a decision which for Britain comes into effect on March 29 next year.

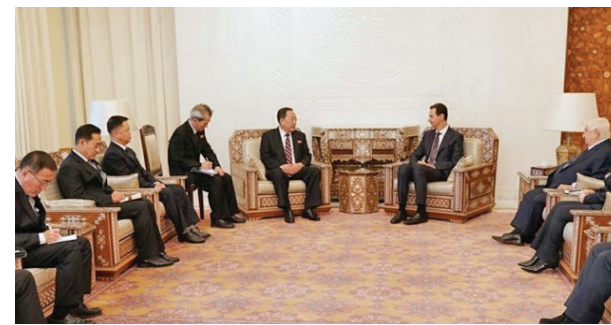
Britain invoked the article on March 29, 2017 – after voters backed Brexit in a national referendum the year before – and is on course to formally leave EU institutions in less than five months.

The decision remains hugely controversial, however, and a group of politicians – members of the Scottish, UK and EU parliaments – has brought a case arguing that Britain should have the right change its mind.

A court source told AFP that the decision could well be made before the end of the year, but the judges must first decide if the ECJ even accepts jurisdiction in the case.

(Source: Daily star)

Assad meets N. Korea's foreign minister



Syrian President Bashar Assad met with North Korea's Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho Tuesday in Damascus, an official statement from the Syrian Presidency said, at least the second meeting between the two sides in as many months.

"Despite the difference in the wars and pressures facing Syria and [the] Democratic People's Republic of Korea, [the wars and pressures] have the same goal of trying to weaken countries that stand in the face of Western projects," Assad told the North Korean delegation, the statement reported.

Both Syria and North Korea should be steadfast in their defeat of such projects to shift the global balance of power, he said, adding that "American hostility has no geographical boundaries."

Ri Yong Ho also reportedly conveyed a message from Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un to Assad that North Korea will continue to support Syria in its fight against "terrorism," stressing that both sides should coordinate in confronting international hostility. Pyongyang is also confident that the Syrian government will be successful in its current reconstruction efforts in the country, the statement added.

Ri Yong Ho also met his Syrian counterpart, Walid al-Moualem, to discuss economic sanctions levied by the international community against Pyongyang, according to Syria's Foreign Ministry.

Moualem said Syria was grateful for North Korea's support in international forums, a statement from the ministry said.

Earlier this year, United Nations experts accused North Korea of shipping supplies to the Syrian government to be used in the production of chemical weapons, which is a violation of sanctions. North Korea has denied the charge.

Syria was involved in another nuclear reactor scare in 2007, when Israel bombed a suspected reactor that it alleged was being constructed with help from North Korea and had been months away from activation.

Syria, a signatory of the 1970 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, has always denied that the site was a reactor or that Damascus has engaged in nuclear cooperation with North Korea.

Both countries have faced international isolation – North Korea over its nuclear weapons program and Syria over its nearly 8-year-old civil war.

A Syrian parliamentary delegation visited North Korea in October.

(Source: Daily Star)

CIA chief to brief senators on Khashoggi murder: U.S. media

The United States, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director Gina Haspel will give a closed-door briefing to leaders of several U.S. Senate committees this week on the killing of Saudi columnist Jamal Khashoggi, the U.S. media reported on Monday, citing unnamed sources.

According to the Wall Street Journal, the briefing will take place on Tuesday. Reuters news agency, citing a source familiar with the planned meeting, said Haspel will brief the Republican and Democratic leaders of the United States Senate Committees on Foreign Relations, Armed Services and Appropriations. The Reuters source added that the Senate Intelligence Committee already had been briefed by the CIA chief.

Glenn Carle, former CIA officer, said he does not anticipate any new revelations from Haspel.

(Source: agencies)

First Announcement

شرکت توسعه آهن و فولاد گل گهر
GOLOGHAR IRON & STEEL DEVELOPMENT CO.

Notice of tender for export sale

No. Ei/97/02

GolGohar Iron & Steel Development Co. announces selling and export 55.000 metric tons of Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) based on F.O.B - Shahid Rajaei Jetty of Bandar Abbas - Iran with the following specifications.

Item No.	DRI Properties	Typical
1	Fe (Total)%	88.1±0.2
2	Fe (Metal)%	81.5±0.5
3	MD%	92.5±0.5
4	C%	2±0.2
5	S%	0.005±0.001
6	P%	0.035±0.002
7	%	3±0.2
8	%	0.8±0.2
9	CaO%	0.7±0.2
10	Mgo%	1.85±0.1
11	Tio2%	0.075±0.005
12	Fine%	4±1

Hereby interested bidders are invited to the Marketing and sales dept. of the seller located at No.22, 31 Th AVE, Alvand St. Argentina Square, Tehran, Iran, or refer to www.gisdco.ir within 10 days from the date of first announcement with an introduction letter of interested buyer and personal identification of the representative to purchase tender documents. All bids on conformity to tender instructions should be submitted by no later than 11:00 A.M. on 15/Dec./2018.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	165701.7
IFX	1829.5

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	\$53.71/b
Brent	\$62.77/b
OPEC Basket	\$55.95/b
Gold	\$1,238.85/oz
Silver	\$14.59/oz
Platinum	\$808.45/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



National insurance, development conference held in Tehran

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The 25th National Conference on Insurance and Development titled “Insurance Industry, Innovation and Information Technology” was held at Milad Tower International Conference Center in Tehran on Tuesday.

The opening ceremony was attended by senior officials including the First Vice President Es’haq Jahangiri, and Finance Minister Farhad Dejpasand who were also speakers at the event.

An Insurance Information Technology System was also unveiled in the conference.

Gholamreza Soleimani Amiri, head of central insurance, and Nasrollah Jahangard, deputy minister of communications and information technology, were also among the speakers of this one-day conference.



Exports to Pakistan rise 59% in 8 months on year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The value of Iran’s exports to Pakistan during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21) rose 58 percent compared to the figure of the same period of time in the past year, according to Iran’s commercial attaché to Pakistan.

Mahmoud Haji Yousefipour said Iran exported \$860 million worth of goods to the neighboring country during the eight-month time of this year, rising from \$539 million in the same time span of the past year, the portal of Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) reported.

Bank of England’s Carney hits back at critics of Brexit scenarios

Bank of England Governor Mark Carney defended the central bank’s projections for the potentially major economic impact of Brexit which angered some lawmakers opposed to Prime Minister Theresa May’s plans for leaving the European Union.

The BoE said last week that under a worst-case scenario, Britain could suffer an even bigger hit to its economy than during the global financial crisis.



Carney told lawmakers on Tuesday that the scenarios set out by the BoE reflected preparatory work to ensure banks and other lenders were ready for Brexit, and were not off-the-cuff forecasts.

“There’s no exam crisis. We didn’t just stay up all night and write a letter to the Treasury Committee,” Carney told lawmakers at a hearing in parliament. “You asked for something that we had, and we brought it, and we gave it to you.”

Pro-Brexit critics of Carney, who have long accused him of political meddling, dismissed last week’s report as scare-mongering.

Former BoE Governor Mervyn King joined the criticism on Tuesday when he lamented the central bank’s involvement in what he said was an attempt to scare the country about Brexit.

“It saddens me to see the Bank of England unnecessarily drawn into this project,” King said in an article published on Bloomberg.

Carney stressed the worst-case scenarios were “low-probability events in the context of Brexit” which the central bank needed to consider to make sure Britain’s banking system could withstand any Brexit shocks.

“What you should take away from the worst-case Brexit scenarios is that the UK banking system has the capital, separately detailed the liquidity, the overall resilience to withstand that and be part of the solution not the problem,” he said.

Less than four months before Brexit, it remains unclear whether Britain will leave the EU with a transition deal to smooth the shock for the economy.

May agreed a plan with EU leaders last month but it faces deep opposition in parliament including from within May’s own Conservative Party. The plan faces a key vote on Dec. 11.

(Source: Reuters)

Iran to export renewable electricity to 6 countries

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — An official **d e s k** from Iran Renewable Energy Association announced that some negotiations for exporting renewable electricity to six Asian countries have been conducted, Tasnim news agency reported on Tuesday.

“The proper ground for transferring and exporting renewable electricity to Iraq,

Oman, Afghanistan, Turkey, Armenia and Tajikistan has been prepared and several meetings have been held in this regard to discuss the issue with the named countries,” Mohammad Javad Mousavi said.

Iran has increased its electricity generation capacity by 1000 megawatts (MW) from the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2018) to mid-

Budget bill sees \$3.5b in protective packages

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The **d e s k** budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (starts on March 21, 2019) is estimated supplying 100 trillion rials-150 trillion rials (about \$2.38 billion-\$3.57 billion) of protective packages to the qualified Iranians, IRNA quoted the Head of Budget and Planning Organization Mohammad Baqer Nobakht as saying on Tuesday.

The official had said on Monday that 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 and informed that the government has accomplished preparation of the budget bill and is to present it to the parliament this Thursday.

Also, Behrooz Nemati, the spokesman for the presiding board of the parliament, announced in a telephone interview with IRIB on Sunday night that the government has supposedly estimated sales of 1.5 million barrels per day of oil at the price of \$54 per barrel in the budget bill.

“Each dollar is predicted to worth 57,000 rials in the budget bill,” he added.

China eager for expansion of long-term economic ties with Iran: envoy

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The Chinese **d e s k** Ambassador to Tehran Pang Sen expressed his country’s willingness for expansion of long-term economic relations with Iran, IRIB reported.

The official made the remarks during a meeting with Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati in Tehran on Tuesday.

“China is interested in expanding its strategic and long-term relationship with

the Islamic Republic of Iran, and in this regard negotiations and planning are on the agenda of the Chinese government and various political and economic institutions,” Pang said.

Hemmati, for his part, emphasized the need for expansion of the banking and financial relations between the two countries, saying “Despite the efforts made by the United States to cut Iran’s banking and financial relations with the world, several

Macron reverses fuel-tax hike after yellow vest protests



French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe departs after announcing the fuel tax suspension on Dec. 4.

French President Emmanuel Macron’s government reversed course and suspended a planned fuel-tax hike that had sent as many as 300,000 protesters into the streets for three weeks in sometimes violent clashes.

Prime Minister Edouard Philippe announced the decision after detailing the plan in his regular Tuesday morning meeting with governing party lawmakers.

“No tax merits putting the nation in danger,” Philippe said in a televised address. The measures he announced didn’t include the supplemental increase in the minimum wage demanded by protesters.

The climbdown is a rare retreat by Macron, who has prided himself on sticking to his policies and ignoring his tumbling popularity ratings. He’s consistently defended the higher gasoline taxes, saying they are needed to wean the country off fossil fuels and have been compensated for by cuts to payroll taxes.

Even before it was officially announced, Members of Macron’s Republic on the Move saluted the turnaround, saying it would help calm Yellow Vests protests. Yellow Vests and opposition parties said it was too little, too late.

“It’s a first step that could have come weeks ago without all the rancor,” Benjamin Cauchy, an early organizer of the Yellow Vests, said on BFM TV. “But the French won’t be satisfied with just crumbs, they want the whole baguette.” He said he wanted all recent gasoline tax hikes rolled back, and higher taxes on multinational companies.

Stanislas Guerini, the head of Macron’s party, said on RTL Radio that a moratorium on new gasoline taxes would allow a debate on France’s energy policies to take place in a “calmer atmosphere.”

Marine Le Pen, head of the far-right

National Rally party, which has supported the Yellow Vests in hopes of capturing their votes, said on Twitter that “a moratorium is just a delay. That clearly doesn’t live up to the expectations and the precariousness in which the French people are struggling.”

Markets showed little reaction: The benchmark CAC 40 stock index was down about 0.7 percent at 12:45 a.m. in Paris, broadly in line with declines elsewhere in Europe.

The turnaround comes as Macron’s popularity hit a new low. A poll by Ifop for Paris Match magazine and Sud-Radio released Tuesday found the president’s support had fallen six points to 23 percent. Philippe was at 26 percent. While Macron and parliament, where his party holds a majority, don’t face new elections until 2022, the reversal on taxes may undermine the rest of his reform agenda.

Rising deficit

Ecology Minister Francois de Rugy told RMC radio Nov. 30 that a three-month moratorium on planned fuel-tax hikes would lower government revenue by 650 million euros (\$740 million). Any tax cuts and spending increases to mollify the protesters would raise further uncertainty over the path of France’s budget deficit, which is already heading close to the 3 percent limit imposed by the European Union.

The grassroots, leaderless Yellow Vests are struggling to structure themselves. Philippe’s office said that a meeting planned later Tuesday with self-declared representatives of the movement had been canceled; invitees were said to have received death threats from fellow protesters. The name yellow vests comes from the colored garments motorists are required to keep in their cars for emergencies.

(Source: Bloomberg)



November, 2018, IRIB reported citing energy ministry’s news portal (known as Paven).

Of the mentioned capacity, 92MW has been supplied by renewable power plants, 144 MW from dispersed generation units, 320 MW was accounted for by combined cycle

power plants, 383 megawatts came from gas power plants and finally 70 megawatts from hydroelectric units.

As reported, renewable power plants account only for 0.79 percent of Iran’s total power generation capacity.

Iran says OPEC members who increased output should take lead on cuts

I → “There are many other OPEC members frustrated that the JMMC is deciding on production unilaterally and without the required prior consensus of OPEC.”

Oil prices LCOc1 have fallen from a four-year high above \$86 a barrel in early October on concerns over excess supply. OPEC and its allies, which have had a supply pact since 2017, meet in Vienna on Thursday and Friday to discuss supply cuts.

“Since May, they have inflicted a \$30 loss on all members,” Kazempour said in reference to the JMMC, “flooded the market and created a huge glut, which is building stocks.

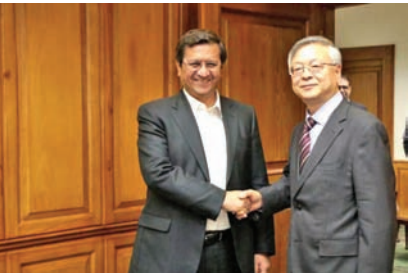
“With this behavior, for small producers there is no merit to stay in OPEC.”

Iran believes that any supply reduction should come from those who pumped more - Saudi Arabia and Russia have provided the largest increases - rather than all 25 OPEC and non-OPEC countries involved in the current accord.

“Now they are asking others to share in the cut. Whoever increased, they should cut,” Kazempour said. “The pilot and co-pilot crashed the plane and all 25 passengers are now in critical condition.

“With this record of failure, I doubt that the declaration of cooperation will be extended.”

Russia and Saudi Arabia, by contrast, want to renew and institutionalize the co-operation deal. (Source: Reuters)



countries have offered various solutions to maintain and develop their banking relations with Iran.”

Hemmati further noted that the U.S. has failed to realize their intended impacts on Iran’s economy.

At the end of the meeting, the two sides once again emphasized the urgent need for accelerating the removal of banking problems and expanding economic relations in various fields.

World stocks shrivel as trade truce doubts, economic woes gather



Deflating hopes of a swift resolution to the Sino-U.S. trade war knocked world stocks off three-week highs on Tuesday, while growing fears the U.S. economy could be headed for recession sooner than expected weighed on the dollar.

The rapprochement between U.S. President Donald Trump and China’s Xi Jinping at the weekend G20 meeting had fired up markets on Monday. But the upbeat mood quickly dissipated on skepticism that Washington and Beijing can resolve deep-seated differences on trade in the agreed three-month negotiating window.

Adding to market woes, was an inversion of the short end of the U.S. yield curve which raised the specter of a possible U.S. recession.

Following declines on Asian bourses, where Japan’s Nikkei stock index closed 2.4 percent lower, the mood was somber in Europe with the wider blue chip index slipping 0.3 percent. Frankfurt’s DAX and Paris’ CAC 40 fell 0.6 percent while MSCI’s index of world stocks declined 0.1 percent.

“The initial relief rally was never going to last. Investors need more detail now in order for that risk on sentiment to survive,” said Jasper Lawler, head of research at London Capital Group. “So far that detail has not been coming through and investors have more questions than answers.”

There was confusion over when the 90-day period, during which the U.S. and China would hold off on imposing more tariffs, would start. A White House official said it started on Dec. 1, while earlier, White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow told reporters it would start on Jan. 1.

Moreover, none of the commitments

that U.S. officials said had been given by China - including reducing its 40 percent tariffs on autos - were agreed to in writing and specifics had yet to be hammered out.

Meanwhile the U.S. yield curve focused investors’ minds. The curve between U.S. three-year and five-year and between two-year and five-year paper inverted on Monday - the first parts of the Treasury yield curve to invert since the financial crisis, excluding very short-dated debt.

Analysts expect the two-year, 10-year yield curve - seen as a predictor of a U.S. recession - to follow suit.

On Tuesday, the yield on benchmark 10-year Treasury notes was at 2.95 percent compared with its U.S. Monday close of 2.99 percent. And the spread between 10-year and two-year Treasury yields tightened to around 13 basis points - hitting its narrowest level since July 2007.

“The focus is now shifting to the inverted U.S. bond yield curve which has negative connotations, while implying the U.S. economy is heading towards what was only a few weeks ago an improbable economic slowdown,” said Stephen Innes, head of trading for APAC at Oanda.

“Now, even recessionary fear is starting to raise its ugly head.”

However, analysts said U.S. manufacturing data released on Monday pointed to a stronger economic outlook, with new orders a “key driver” in boosting activity.

Meanwhile oil prices extended gains, adding to Monday’s 4 percent surge as investors bet a key OPEC meeting on Thursday could deliver supply cuts.

U.S. crude and Brent crude added 1.6 percent to \$53.82 and \$62.7 per barrel respectively.

(Source: Reuters)

Oil jumps 2% on expectations of production cuts

Oil prices rose more than two percent on Tuesday, extending gains ahead of expected output cuts by producer cartel OPEC and a mandated reduction in Canadian supply.

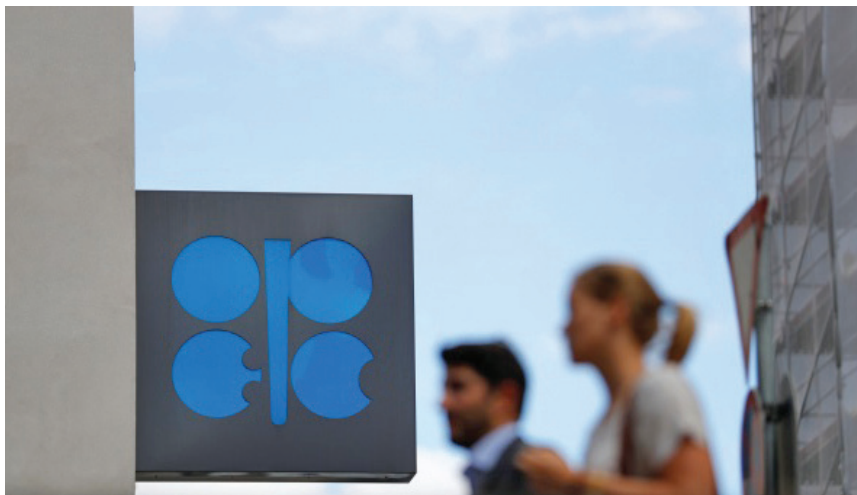
Brent crude oil rose \$1.55 or 2.5 percent to a high of \$63.24 by 0955 GMT. U.S. light crude was \$1.25 higher at \$54.20.

Both benchmarks climbed around 4 percent on Monday after U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed at a meeting of the Group of 20 industrialized nations (G20) to pause an escalating trade dispute.

"The market seems positively oriented following the G20 developments and heading into the OPEC meeting on Thursday," BNP Paribas commodities strategist Harry Tchilinguirian told Reuters Global Oil Forum.

"A commitment by Russia to cooperate with Saudi Arabia and achieve an agreement at the next OPEC meeting has certainly lifted spirits," he added.

The Middle East-dominated Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries will meet on Thursday in Vienna to agree future



output and will discuss strategy with other producers outside OPEC, including Russia.

OPEC and its allies are working towards a deal to reduce oil output by at least 1.3 million barrels per day (bpd), OPEC sources have told Reuters, adding that they were

still talking to Russia about the extent of its production cuts.

"We expect OPEC to follow suit and agree to a production cut in Vienna this coming Thursday," U.S. bank Goldman Sachs said in a note to clients.

"A cut in OPEC and Russia production of 1.3 bpd will be required to reverse the ongoing counter-seasonally large increase in inventories."

It added that it expected a joint effort by OPEC and Russia to withhold supply to push Brent oil prices "above the mid-\$60 per barrel level".

Helping OPEC in its efforts to rein in emerging oversupply was an order on Sunday by the Canadian province of Alberta for producers to scale back output by 325,000 bpd until excess crude in storage is reduced.

OPEC's biggest problem is surging production in the United States where output, mostly from its southern shale fields, has grown by around 2 million bpd in a year to more than 11.5 million bpd.

Barclays bank pointed out in a note to clients that oil production in the state of Texas alone "reached 4.69 million bpd in September, compared with Iraqi output of 4.66 million by our estimates".

Iraq is OPEC's second-biggest oil producer, behind Saudi Arabia.

(Source: Reuters)

Iraqi crude exports slump to seven-month low in November at 3.372 mil b/d

Federal Iraq's crude oil exports fell to 3.372 million b/d in November, the lowest since April this year, as loadings were affected by rough weather, according to a statement from the oil ministry released over the weekend.

Exports from the Persian Gulf terminals fell to 3.363 million b/d while loadings of Kirkuk crude transported through the Kurdistan-Turkey pipeline rose to 9,000 b/d, after pipeline exports from the Kirkuk fields resumed for the first time since October last year.

November exports by the federal government of Iraq dropped by 106,000 b/d compared to October and were down by 211,000 b/d compared to August when they reached an all-time high of 3.583 million b/d.

The fall in exports is attributed to a dip in loadings from its southern terminals as five days of rough weather during the

month affected berthing and loadings. On November 09, shipments of Basrah Heavy and Basrah Light were halted, according to shipping sources.

Loadings from Iraq's Khor Al-Amaya terminal continue to remain due to pipeline leaks and overall maintenance. Exports from this terminal have been suspended since the start of 2018.

Federal Iraq saw its first exports from Ceyhan since it was suspended unilaterally by the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government in June 2017. But the government of Iraq and the KRG agreed a tentative deal in mid-November under which the latter has given assurances that it will transfer all federal Iraqi crude to storage tanks operated by North Oil Company at Ceyhan for Iraq's State Oil Marketing Organization to sell.

(Source: Platts)

Russia's first LNG import terminal at Kaliningrad nears launch

Russia's first liquefied natural gas (LNG) import facility in the exclave Kaliningrad on the Baltic Sea is close to start-up. S&P Global Platts reported on Friday, citing vessel tracking data and Asia-based traders.

The region of Kaliningrad, a Russian exclave squeezed in between Poland and Lithuania and without a land or maritime border with Russia, has been receiving natural gas supplies via the Minsk – Vilnius – Kaunas – Kaliningrad transit gas pipeline. Due to the region's location, Russia's gas giant Gazprom has been building the Kaliningrad LNG import, storage, and regasification terminal. LNG regasification will be carried out with a floating LNG unit (FLNG), according to Gazprom's plans.

According to S&P Global Platts vessel tracking and to shipping data provider VesselsValue, a newly built Floating Storage Re-

gasification Unit (FSRU), named Marshal Vasilevskiy, loaded a cargo of LNG at Singapore earlier in November and is heading for delivery.

This Asia-Europe LNG trade flow is a reversal of the typical Atlantic basin-Asia LNG flows. Gazprom must have procured the LNG cargo at an attractive price in order to make the arbitrage from Asia to Europe viable, traders based in Singapore told Platts.

Platts Analytics assumes that the Kaliningrad FSRU will begin operations in January 2019, senior gas analyst Andre Lambine said.

According to Gazprom, the Kaliningrad Region will be able to receive up to 2.7 billion cubic meters of gas per year thanks to the LNG import terminal, which will bolster the region's energy security and make it self-sufficient with natural gas if need be.

(Source: RT)

Russia's oil production dips as possible production cuts near

Russia's oil output dipped in November, preliminary data from Russia's federal state budgetary organization CDU TEK over the weekend, days before the OPEC summit scheduled for December 6 that will serve as a forum for discuss another oil production cut.

The November data showed Russia's oil production had fallen to 11.369 million barrels per day, including condensates, an almost half a percentage decline from the record highs Russia kicked out in October of 11.41 million bpd. Production had previously been steadily increasing for months as Saudi Arabia and Russia attempted to lift production to make up for Iranian losses that most expected from the U.S. Sanctions.

The cuts come after Russia's energy ministry was reported as discussing potential oil production cuts with local producers to come up with a position on the oil production cuts before the December meeting scheduled for this weekend.

However, the slip in production for November is seen by analysts, according to Bloomberg, not as a deliberate attempt to curb production to balance the market, but more as the natural consequence of issues with specific oilfields, and possibly from seasonality.

The news of Russia's declining production served as another boost for oil prices that have seen a rocky few weeks.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said last week that it was "obvious" that Russia should cooperate with OPEC, stopping just shy of saying that that would definitely mean a production cut.

Oil prices continued to rise on Monday afternoon with Russia's falling production, a truce between China and the United States over trade, Alberta's pronouncement that it will curb production, and Qatar's withdrawal from OPEC, which is expected to go into effect in January 1.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Oil shipments from Georgia's Batumi port drop 49% in year to Nov.

Oil and oil-related shipments from Georgia's Black Sea port of Batumi fell 48.6 percent in the first eleven months of 2018 from a year earlier, an official at a KazMunaiGas-operated terminal at the port said on Tuesday.

Some crude oil has been re-routed to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and to the Caspian Pipeline Consortium this year, the official added, while some fuel oil has been sent to the port of Taman in Russia and Georgia's other Black Sea port of Kulevi.

The fall in shipments is partly because Azerbaijan prefers to send its oil through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline or via its own terminal in Kulevi, rather than from Batumi, which is operated by a Kazakh company.

January-November shipments of crude oil and refined oil products from Batumi totaled 978,705 tons, down from 1.906 million tons in the same period last year, said the official, who asked not to be identified.

(Source: Reuters)

Is this the beginning of the next Bull Run in oil?



It will be a busy few days for the oil market, and the week started off with a bang. Oil prices shot up on Monday on news that the U.S. and China has delayed the trade war, as well as on increasing odds of deal in Vienna.

A lot of news came out of Buenos Aires over the weekend at the G20 summit. President Trump met with Xi Jinping where they hashed out a deal on trade. Or, so it seems. The White House called it a "highly successful meeting," and Trump was quick to declare victory.

The meeting was widely hailed as a thaw in relations, with much of the press billing it as a "truce." But the deal isn't so much a deal as it is a delay in the trade war. The U.S. has decided to hold off on hiking tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports from 10 to 25 percent, which had been scheduled to take effect in January. China, in turn, promised to increase imports from the United States.

However, China was careful enough not to get locked into specifics. By Monday, signs that there were some misunderstandings about what the two sides agreed to quickly became apparent. Trump boasted that tariffs on U.S. autos going into China would fall from 40 percent to zero. China did not confirm that, and by all accounts, that is a concession too large for Beijing to countenance, at least at this stage.

More to the point, the same issues

that have divided the U.S. and China on trade – intellectual property issues, China's industrial policy, and more – remain. In fact, there has been very little progress on these overarching issues. For Trump, the decision to hold off on a trade escalation was borne out of political panic after the announced closure of several GM factories, growing unease from farm country, and sweeping losses in the mid-term elections.

So, the pause button allows the White House to buy some time on tariff hikes. But only 90 days. Many trade watchers find it hard to believe that Washington and Beijing can settle longstanding differences on trade in just three months, especially since there has been no discernible progress throughout 2018 amidst several rounds of tariffs, nor has there been progress over several years of on and off negotiations.

The Trump administration itself is also divided internally. The not-so-secret gulf between free-traders like Secretary of Treasury Steven Mnuchin and Larry Kudlow on the one hand, and trade adviser Peter Navarro and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer on the other, remains.

In fact, Trump has appointed Lighthizer to be the point person to lead the talks with China over the next few months, which makes it unlikely that the U.S. and China will simply back away from the cliff. He is very upfront about his hardline trade

beliefs vis-à-vis China. There will need to either be a sweeping deal that results in major changes in trade practices, or the trade war will resume.

Nevertheless, judging by the reaction of global financial markets, Wall Street desperately wants to believe that the trade "deal" reached over the weekend was for real. Stocks soared on the news.

To be sure, the delay of the tariff increase is important, even if it is temporary. The scheduled increase of tariffs from 10 to 25 percent on Chinese goods will lessen the economic damage from Trump's trade war. It also increases the political cost of returning to a bellicose position on trade. Trump and Xi both want to end the trade war, even if it's hard to imagine what a resolution might look like.

Oil traders also welcomed the news. Trade protections have slowed commodity demand, and have been a major headwind to the global economy, according to the IMF. The agreement between Trump and Xi, such as it is, is positive for oil prices.

Meanwhile, in what would normally be the headline news, Russia and Saudi Arabia apparently reached a deal to cut oil production at the upcoming OPEC+ meeting in Vienna. Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia would go along with output curbs, although the specific levels have not been agreed to. "We have an agreement to extend our deal," Putin said on Saturday after a meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman in Argentina. "There is no final decision on volumes, not yet."

The comments suggest a deal is highly likely later this week. "While no volumes or cut were specifically mentioned, we view this as the political agreement needed for the cuts to go through and reiterate our view that such a cut in production will be agreed upon this week in Vienna," Goldman Sachs wrote in a note.

In short, the G20 meeting in Argentina provided a lift to oil markets, even if some of the specifics still need to be hashed out.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Shell to become first oil major linking emissions with executive pay

Royal Dutch Shell plans to set short-term emission reduction targets and link these targets with executive pay, the oil major said on Monday, yielding to growing investor pressure about establishing short-term emission goals.

Shell, which didn't specify targets today, plans to set the emission target each year for the following three- or five-year period, beginning in 2020 and subject to shareholder approval.

Shell intends to link these targets and other measures to its executive remuneration policy, which will be put to shareholder vote in the Annual General Meeting in 2020.

"The announcement is part of a drive to increase transparency around the topic of climate change, and to create clear bench-

marks for performance," said Shell, which has so far resisted investor calls to start setting short-term emission targets.

Earlier this year, Shell recommended that shareholders vote against a proposal to set and publish targets that are aligned with the goal of the Paris Climate Agreement to limit global warming—and the proposal was voted down at the 2018 annual meeting.

Now Shell and a group of institutional investors on behalf of Climate Action 100+, an initiative led by investors with more than \$32 trillion in assets under management, jointly announced the initiative.

(Source: Platts)

Qualitative Tender for Tenderers

To Number 97/1044

(Assignment of the Project as EPCF)

First announcement



The Khuzestan Water and Wastewater Company intends, in accordance with the implementing regulation of paragraph (c), Article 12 of the Law on Tenders and Circulars No. 100/50225 dated 6/88/1 and No. 100/135946 dated 1385/8/21 of the Planning and Budget Organization of the country, the following project will be given to EPCF (engineering services, supply of goods, construction, installation and financing) to eligible companies with free capacity and with the general information indicated below:

Tender Number	Tender Title	Required field of work (having one of the following options)	Place of documents' sale	Deadline for selling documents an evaluation the date of ad	Date and time of opening evaluation envelopes
97/1044	Implementation of sewage installations in Masjed Soleyman city (main pipeline network, transfer and construction of wastewater treatment plant) by EPCF method	Contractors with a design and construction contract (EPC) in the field of water with expertise of water and waste water	Dezab Consulting Engineers Co.	To date (97/10/01)	At 14 97/10/30

● The Rules of Tenderers' Evaluation:

In addition to the criteria set out in the above qualitative assessment inquiries, the following criteria for verifying the tenderers' eligibility are required in view of the fact that the initial cost estimate is more than the permissible base level of a given discipline:

1. The name of the contractor is included in the National Competitive Bidding Information Database <http://iets.mporg.ir> and the Assistant's Office is located at: <http://tec.mporg.ir>
2. Having an empty capacity at the base of a given discipline or the above fields.
3. Perform at least one similar project to this project in the last five years at a minimum amount 1/3 of the estimated sum updated in the yearly estimate based on the group's moderation index.

Also, contractors are required to submit an agreement with the foreign financial provider to provide 85% of the project's financial resources.

4. The address and location of the evaluation documents are as follows:

● Engineering Dezab Co. in addresses:

Ahvaz, Golestan, Farvardin St., Dezab Consultant Engineering Co., Monitoring Unit, Phone No.: 33214524 Tehran, Shahr-e Ziba, Hakim Gharb, Taavon Blvd., Corner of Sharbani St., P. 13, Zip Code: 147883958, Phone Number: 44156725 & 44156504

The deadline for delivery of evaluation documents is up to 10 days to reopen the envelopes.

Place of Delivery Evaluation Packs: Ahvaz, Kianpars, First Square, Khuzestan Water and Wastewater Company, Fifth Floor, Secretariat of the Secret and Secret Affairs.

The opening of the envelopes in the Office of Contract Management is open and the Website of the company is: www.abfakh.ir and the National Information Agency of Tenders country is <http://iets.mporg.ir>

Public Relations and Education Department of the Khuzestan Water and Wastewater Company

The G20's Africa problem

By Cobus van Staden



Although the G20 has made a limited effort to broaden its engagement with Africa in recent years, it has yet to include Africans in discussions of global issues that bear directly on their own economic prospects. Yet by consistently treating the region as a ward instead of a coequal partner, the international community is undermining its own future interests.

This has not been an easy year for the G20. The 2018 summit of the leaders of the world's largest economies is being held in Buenos Aires, a city still reeling from a currency collapse. More broadly, the summit is taking place amid a fracturing of the multilateral order. Everything from NATO to the consensus on climate change appears to be coming apart at the seams.

Still, the G20 has long positioned itself as a global problem solver, having been conceived after the 1997 Asian financial crisis and then emerging as the primary global forum for addressing the crash of 2008. A decade later, a global crisis is on the agenda once again, only this time it has assumed the form of a mounting trade war between the United States and China.

Unlike in 2008, however, the world's capacity for multilateral decision-making is deteriorating. The European Union remains preoccupied with its own internal disputes, and the United States, under President Donald Trump, has abandoned multilateralism and weakened the institutions needed to solve complex challenges such as the threat of technological unemployment from automation. And the effects of the Trump administration's protectionism are already being felt. The World Trade Organization recently reported that in response to U.S. tariffs, G20 countries have imposed around 40 new import restrictions, affecting \$481 billion in global trade — a sixfold increase from the year before.

But while the world's economic giants have been withdrawing from multilateralism, Africa has been quietly moving in the opposite direction. Earlier this year, the continent's countries agreed on a new African Continental Free Trade Agreement, and committed to pursuing deeper cross-border economic and infrastructure integration within the framework of the African Union, as outlined in the AU's Agenda 2063.

But, despite its embrace of multilateralism, Africa has struggled to get the G20's attention. South Africa is the only African country in the G20, and it must constantly walk the fine line of speaking for the continent's interests without imposing its voice on its neighbors. True, representatives from the AU and the New Partnership for Africa's Development do attend G20 summits. But the countries occupying each institution's rotating leadership do not always have the capacity to advocate forcefully on the continent's behalf.

Moreover, this problem is compounded by the limited scope of the G20's interactions with Africa. Rather than including Africa in wider discussions about global trade architecture, climate change, and the future of work, the G20 has largely limited its engagement with the continent to addressing narrower development issues.

To be sure, Africa's large infrastructure gap, slow regional integration, and high levels of unemployment all stem from underdevelopment. No one is saying that development should be ignored; but nor should it be the only focus. When international engagement with Africa is confined to the silo of development, the continent is effectively reduced to a set of problems for external actors to solve. This tendency prevents Africa from participating as a legitimate and coequal member of the global community. If one lacks a seat at the table, then one is probably on the menu.

As matters stand, most of the G20's engagement with Africa happens through its Development Working Group, which focuses on the basic building blocks of development, like poverty eradication. This means that Africa has no say in a host of other issues relating to development, including infrastructure, the shape of the digital economy, and the global banking system. As a result, key problems such as Africa's structural exclusion from global markets — which is due in large part to G20 member states' own domestic agricultural subsidies — go unexamined.

This isn't just unfair to Africa; it also poses risks for the G20. Africa represents the world's demographic future, and its development trajectory will increasingly affect the global economy. By 2050, Nigeria will have the world's third-largest population, and by 2100, one-third of all people will be African. Clearly, any plan that the G20 makes for the future will have to put Africa at the forefront. Diminishing the region to a set of development challenges will no longer do. To its credit, the G20 has started paying more attention to Africa in recent years. Under the Chinese presidency in 2016, the body made industrialization in Africa a high priority. And this was followed by the Compact with Africa under the German presidency in 2017. For its part, Argentina has not launched an Africa initiative of its own; but it has devoted attention to improving cooperation with the continent via people-to-people diplomacy. The Compact with Africa is designed to facilitate economic reforms across the continent, and to attract investment from pools of private-sector funds in the global North. But though it has been well received among African leaders, the compact nonetheless perpetuates the trend of restricting African engagement to development issues.

Looking ahead, Africa must be afforded a greater role in setting the G20's agenda. The continent will be disproportionately affected by climate change and transnational migration. Yet it will not be able to meet those challenges if its development is being hindered by an unequal global trade system.

These issues are on the agenda in Buenos Aires, but discussion of them will be largely deprived of an African perspective. This must change. It is time for creative solutions to make the G20 more representative and more effective in its engagement with the world. Our collective future depends on it.

(Source: Project Syndicate)

Tunisia's tough lesson for MBS

By Shadi Hamid & Sharan Grewal

The notion of a Tunisian “model” is a convenience for Western observers who still hope that all is not lost from the once heady optimism of the Arab Spring.

It offers, however, little solace to Tunisians themselves, who sense — correctly — that their democracy remains imperfect. Tunisians, who haven't lived under the sheer brutality of Egyptian dictatorship or the collapsing state structures of Yemen, aren't comparing themselves to those countries; they are comparing themselves—rightfully—to what they wish they could be.

In our conversations with young Tunisians, we have often pointed out that Tunisia, unlike its neighbors, is at least relatively democratic. Our claims are often met with skepticism. The Tunisian rapper DJ Costa told one of us that: “We don't have democracy in Tunisia. It's like a man whose skin is dirty.

For months he hasn't washed himself, and then, one day, he puts on nice, expensive clothes. But you know him, who he really is.”

Well, who is he? Tunisia's democracy is indeed struggling. It is failing to improve the economy and reduce corruption, overreacting to terrorist attacks and postponing important but potentially polarizing decisions. But Tunisia nonetheless continues to stand out in ways that, for the region at least, are unusual.

That hundreds of Tunisians came out to protest the visit of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman isn't necessarily surprising. But the images still were striking considering how much rarer such protests—or protests, in general—have become



It's no mistake that the only Arab Spring democracy is the one where people are protesting Mohammed bin Salman.

in the Arab world after the Arab Spring turned dark.

Under democracy, Tunisians enjoy the freedom to protest Mohammed bin Salman for Saudi Arabia's assassination of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi, its devastating war in Yemen and its crackdown on women activists. Rule of law, meanwhile, isn't just a nice idea but something real and practiced. The Tunisian Journalists' Syndicate filed a lawsuit urging Tunisia to refer Mohammed bin Salman to the International Criminal Court. An independent judiciary responded

by beginning an investigation. And perhaps most importantly, Tunisians could do all of this without fear of government retribution.

These events are a small but powerful reminder of what Tunisia, despite its flaws and its struggles, can still teach us. It may not be a model, but it is, and can continue to be, an inspiration. And this is why—merely by existing—Tunisia represents both an exception and a threat to a new but ever-authoritarian Middle East. It's no mistake that the only Arab Spring democracy is the one where people are protesting Mohammed

bin Salman. Tunisia is the near-opposite of Saudi Arabia.

The Saudis' killing of Khashoggi was the culmination of a long list of sins and offenses, each of which have now come under greater scrutiny.

Critics have focused on the Yemen war and understandably so. The humanitarian catastrophe unfolding there is perhaps the most egregious example of MBS's recklessness. Yet Saudi Arabia's increasingly destructive impact on the rest of the region predates MBS. From 2011, the Saudi authorities worked tirelessly to strengthen dictatorships in the wake of the Arab Spring. Saudi Arabia intervened militarily to crush the uprising in Bahrain, and provided billions to shore up the monarchies in Morocco, Jordan and Oman. In his new book “Into the Hands of the Soldiers,” New York Times journalist David Kirkpatrick provides new and damning details on just how instrumental Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were in fomenting the 2013 military coup that ended Egypt's democratic experiment. In Egypt, they had a willing partner of the military general Abdel Fatah al-Sissi. In Tunisia they thankfully did not, and have—so far—been unable to push Tunisia off its democratic path despite considerable economic and diplomatic pressure.

Today, Tunisia offers lessons not just to its neighbors but also to the United States and Europe on how to deal with strongmen such as Mohammed bin Salman—not with business-as-usual, but with criticism, accountability and a faith that justice, however slow and uneven, can be done.

(Source: Bookings)

Macron needs to regain his popular touch

The French president needs to find a way to tackle both climate change and the anger on the streets

Almost two decades ago a new fresh-faced leader of the center-left emerged in Europe and appeared, having won a historic election, on the cusp of changing politics in his country. But as he flew higher, he lost a sense of the public mood and failed to face up early on to a crisis which brought his modern industrial society to a halt. In doing so he revealed an inability to control events or win around public opinion. Then the country was Britain and the young prime minister Tony Blair. Today the nation is France; and the leader is Emmanuel Macron. Then, as now, a series of seemingly leaderless protests saw aggrieved social constituents latch on to a narrowly framed but popular economic grievance: the rising cost of fuel due to green taxes. Blair considered bringing in the army. Macron weighs up whether a state of emergency will restore order.

It is tempting think plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose — but that would ignore the broader picture. President Macron faces a threat far more existential than Blair did. Liberal democracies are being destabilized by the ability of groups to organize and criticize on social media with arguments that previously would have taken longer to enter the political bloodstream. The gilets jaunes (yellow vest) unrest saw 170,000 take to the streets of Paris at the weekend. Rioters torched cars and buildings. Scribbled on the Arc de Triomphe was “Macron resignation”. Macron's pro-business rhetoric and tin ear for the street have seen him cast as the



embodiment of the nation's elite, disconnected from the country, and willing to favor the rich.

Macron was right to suggest that higher fuel taxes are needed to fight climate change. Promoting green policies is crucial in the week that climate talks begin in Poland. We have just a dozen years to reduce emissions and cap global warming at 1.5C above pre-industrial levels. Blair ended above-inflation increases of fuel prices. This was a mistake: the long-term survival of this planet rests on politicians making the right call. But while higher taxes can be useful to change people's behaviors, they are not sufficient when so many people feel they are an extra burden in precarious

times. Macron ought to recall the words of Louis XIV's finance minister, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, who remarked wisely that “the art of taxation consists in so plucking the goose as to obtain the largest possible amount of feathers with the smallest possible amount of hissing”. The sound of gilets jaunes hissing is now ringing in the French president's ears.

Seen as aloof and well-off, Macron needs to regain his popular touch. His party, La République En Marche, will square off against the far-right Rassemblement National (the re-branded National Front) in the European parliament elections next May. Macron staked his future on winning over Germany by delivering pro-market structural reforms in France, which would put an end to EU reprimands over Paris's budget plans. His bet that tax cuts would be more popular than more spending has not paid off. Whatever their benefits, the only tax cut people remember is the one for the rich. Macron's big ideas have also been relegated by Berlin in favor of smaller measures. It would be smarter now to steer Europe away from market-heavy policies and put a greater emphasis on growth in France's stuttering economy. The unemployment rate is still stubbornly close to 10%. Macron is right that the eurozone would operate better with a federal fiscal capacity and a full banking union. But he can only make those arguments by being canny enough to win over voters at home.

(Source: The Guardian)

From Central America to Syria there is a conspiracy against refugees

By Ramzy Baroud

Watching the ongoing debate between liberal and right-wing pundits on U.S. mainstream media, one rarely gets the impression that Washington is responsible for the unfolding chaotic situation in Central America. In fact, no other country is as accountable as the United States for the ongoing chaos and resulting refugee crisis. So why, despite the seemingly substantial ideological and political differences between right-wing Fox News and liberal CNN, are both media outlets working hard to safeguard their country's dirty little secret?

In recent years, state and gang violence — coupled with extreme poverty — have forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras, among other countries in Central and South America. The mainstream media in the U.S., however, is rarely interested in the root cause of that reality.

Fox News, for example, is tirelessly peddling the offensive language used by President Donald Trump, which portrays the refugees as criminals and terrorists who pose a threat to U.S. national security. At a press conference in October, Trump urged a reporter to take his camera into “the middle” of a caravan of migrants on the treacherous journey through Mexico, to locate “Middle Eastern” people who have, he alleged, infiltrated the crowd. In Trump's thinking, “Middle Eastern people” is a synonym for terrorists.

CNN, on the other hand, has labored to counter the growing official and media anti-immigrant sentiments that have plagued the U.S., a discourse that is constantly prodded and manipulated by Trump and his supporters.

However, few in the liberal media have the courage to probe the story beyond convenient political rivalry. Most persist in their

hypocritical and insincere humanitarianism that is divorced from any meaningful political context.

The fact is that the Central American refugee crisis is similar to the plethora of Middle East and Central Asian refugee crises of recent years. Mass migration is almost always the direct outcome of political meddling and military interventions by the West. From Afghanistan to Iraq, Libya and Syria, millions of refugees have been forced, by circumstances beyond their control, to seek safety in some other country. Millions of Iraqis and Syrians have thus found themselves in Lebanon, Jordan or Turkey, while a far smaller number trickled across to Europe; all sought safety from the grinding wars in their own lands.

So-called “populist” political opportunists in Europe are no different from their American counterparts. While the former have seized on the tragedy of the refugees to sow the seeds of fear and hate, Americans have blamed the refugees for their own misery.

Blaming the victim is nothing new. The Iraqis were once blamed for failing to appreciate Western democracy; Libyans for their failed state; Syrians for taking the wrong side in a protracted war; and so on. Yet the ongoing conflicts in Iraq, Libya and Syria are all, in varying degrees, outcomes of military interventions, a truth that does not seem to register in the self-absorbed minds of both right-wing and liberal intellectuals in Europe and the U.S.

The irony is that the hapless refugees, whether those escaping to Europe or to the United States, are perceived to be the aggressors — the invaders, if you like — whereas the reality is that it was the U.S. and its allies which had, in fact, invaded these once stable and sovereign countries.

Trump has often referred to the Central

American migrants' caravan as an “invasion”, a claim which has been parroted by Fox News. The U.S. President, incredibly, injected the possibility of having the refugees shot upon arrival. If Fox News lacked the decency to treat refugees as human beings deserving of sympathy and respect, CNN lacked the courage to expand the discussion beyond Trump's awful language and inhumane policies.

To expand the parameters of the conversation would expose a policy that was not introduced by Trump, but by Bill Clinton, and applied in earnest by George W Bush and Barack Obama. Media grandstanding aside, Democrats as well as Republicans are responsible for the current refugee crisis.

In 1996, Democratic President Clinton unleashed a war on refugees when he passed two consecutive pieces of legislation: the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, and the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act. Millions of people who had escaped U.S.-instigated wars and military coups were deported back to Central and South America. Two million people were deported during the Bush terms, with 2.5 million being deported under Obama. A terrible situation was exacerbated; violence and want flared even more.

To rally his angry and radicalized constituency, Trump waved the migrant card once more, threatening to build a “great wall” and to close “loopholes” in U.S. immigration law. Like his predecessors, he offered little by way of redressing an unjust reality that is fomented constantly by destructive U.S. foreign policy, stretching back decades.

Nevertheless, the refugees kept on coming, mostly from Central America's Northern Triangle region. Without proper political context, they, too, were duly blamed for their own hardship. Considering the lack of quality

coverage by Fox News and CNN, this is hardly surprising. Few Americans know of the sordid history of their country in that region, starting with the CIA-engineered coup d'état in Guatemala in 1954, or the U.S. support of the coup against the democratically-elected President of Honduras, Manuel Zelaya, in 2009; or of everything else that happened in between.

Indeed, the unhealthy relationship between the US and its southern neighbors goes back to as early as 1904, when President Theodore Roosevelt declared the “right” of his country to hold “international police power” in Latin America. Since then, the entire region has been regarded as Washington's business.

The free trade agreement (CAFTA-DR) signed between Central American countries and the U.S. has done its own share of damage. The deal “restructured the region's economy and guaranteed economic dependence on the United States through massive trade imbalances and the influx of American agricultural and industrial goods that weakened domestic industries,” wrote Mark Tseng-Putterman in Medium.

Acknowledging all of this is threatening. If U.S. mainstream pundits accept their country's destructive role in Central and South America, they will be forced to abandon the role of the victim (as embraced by the right) or the savior (as embraced by the left), which has served them well. The same stifling political and intellectual routine is also witnessed in Europe.

This denial of moral responsibility, though, will only exacerbate the problem, not resolve it. No amount of racism on the part of the right, or crocodile tears from the liberals, will ever rectify this skewed paradigm. This is as true in Central America as it is in the Middle East; there is a conspiracy against refugees.

(Source: Middle East Monitor)

The loss of the American “empire” is baked in the cake

1 → An Israeli newspaper gets to publish this condemnation by Levy, but not American media outlets. And Iran, too, had long been vilified for supporting justice in Palestine, or at least some kind of equality for half the beleaguered population west of the Jordan River.

The utter corruption over the issue of not merely relief for Palestinians but over a host of other issues is telling. For example, a recent bill circulating in the U.S Congress to halt U.S. military and other support for the Saudi and Emirates war on Yemen was condemned by a couple score of U.S. senators who happened to rake in many thousands of dollars paid by lobbyists for Saudi Arabia. And all the lies, too!

One whopper of late is that Iran's alleged testing of its latest defensive missile technology was claimed to be a direct violation of the original terms of the still alive but nearly moribund JCPOA deal, but it was not such. Yes, U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231 does “call upon” Iran not to conduct missile tests, and for all U.N. member states to try to refrain from actions that harm JCPOA commitments, but if Iran is in direct violation of anything, as Mike Pompeo claimed, so is the U.S. under Trump who completely canned U.S. participation in the JCPOA.

Iran has anyway long maintained that its missiles have never been designed to carry nuclear weapons, and given Iran's reliable and strict adherence to the JCPOA to date, only a fool would not believe Iran. Is not Iran, or ANY country for that matter, not allowed to



develop defensive deterrents in such a hostile environment? The Trump Administration and the Zionists and Saudis have been all about a desperate search for any pretext to attack Iran further, boasting recently of an extant “military option”. Iran must not provide a pretext because the U.S., despite its economic and military clout, is losing the battle for hearts and minds worldwide.

Perhaps the key to understanding what is likely to happen in future is a recognition of the fact that the U.S. “empire” of hegemonic pretensions cannot be maintained given its dependence on the strength of the U.S. economy. Even Neocon John Bolton is aware of this given a recent statement of concern about “national security” – which would not really be threatened by a debt crisis, but an

eviscerated dollar and any loss as the primary “reserve currency” would likely limit what the U.S. could do globally. This is what Neocon Bolton apparently fears the most. Real “national security” is NOT a valid concern for the U.S. because it is, quite simply, defense of the geographical U.S and its borders.

But make no mistake. A U.S. debt crisis is a certainty in coming years. Maybe not in the next two or so years, but eventually, because the U.S. government is literally addicted to profligacy and the careers and livelihoods of too many of the political oligarchy are dependent on it. The vast majority of the population would be in open revolt, say, if the causes of rampant debt creation, aside from overseas military activity and empire sustenance, such as Medicare and Social Security entitlements, were diminished substantially. And if they were, there would be immediate demands for the elimination of a huge chunk of misnamed military “defense” outlays.

It has been suggested, for one thing, that the reason Vladimir Putin has seemed wary about taking action against the lies and provocations by the U.S. against Russia is because he probably sees an implosion of U.S. financial markets ahead, which would of course curtail America's capacity to start additional wars and sow more mayhem internationally. The inevitability of a collapse under more debt than has ever been accumulated by any country in all of human history is precisely what leaders in Iran must await patiently to finally witness relief from U.S sanctions and hubris.

A tale of two cities: Western governments can't handle the truth unless you speak to them with a mirror

TEHRAN (FNA) — France's most violent urban riot in a decade continues to engulf central Paris as “yellow jacket” activists torch cars, smash windows, loot stores and tag the Arc de Triomphe with multi-colored graffiti.

Protesters angry about rising taxes and the high cost of living clash with French riot police, who close off some of the city's most popular tourist areas and fire tear gas and water cannon as they try to quell the mayhem in the streets.

Some might say France is marching toward a new revolution. Not so fast. That's hardly the case. This is just about so-called “violence” denounced by French President Emmanuel Macron. So those who attack police and vandalize the Arc de Triomphe will be “held responsible for their acts”.

Now imagine for a moment that this was all happening in Tehran. All hell would break loose in the West. Western governments would hold an emergency meeting in Brussels on the violent protests, calling it a revolution, while bashing any response from the Iranian government unacceptable, even taking the matter to the UN Security Council for a resolution that would trigger sanctions on Tehran.

But Paris is not Tehran and what is happening there is “violence that has nothing to do with the peaceful expression of a legitimate anger” and “no cause justifies” attacks on police or pillaging stores and burning buildings. Further still, the government of Macron sees no reason to answer any questions from journalists about the situation in Paris



- even though this is the third straight weekend of clashes in Paris with activists dressed in the fluorescent yellow vests

of a new protest movement and the worst urban violence since at least 2005.

Indeed, the scene and the international reaction sharply contradicts with last year's guild-related protests in Iran, where because of Western double standards, demonstrations were naively or deliberately considered by Western governments as “a new revolution” that would lead to “regime-change”.

Unlike in France, they condemned Iranian police deployed to try to contain the violence, which were similar to those in Paris about price hikes and unpaid wages. Western governments even voiced their concerns for arresting those involved in violence and burning shops, with little or no care for injured police officers. That's unlike the way they have all reacted to the ongoing violent clashes in Paris in recent week. They have backed the French government and condemned the protesters.

However, Western governments cannot have a double standard here. They cannot see the violent protests in France as different from the reality, or from those in Iran. They cannot use two different sets of judgment when it comes to a similar violence happening in Paris and Tehran.

It is time they stopped using a double standard for measuring their own and other nations' policies. Their demands for democratic practices in other lands will be no more effective than the guarantees of those practiced in their own country.

Escalation of Saudi attacks against Yemen on the eve of peace talks



1 → The Saudi-led coalition has intensified the blockade of the strategic port of Al Hudaydah, the serves as the only entry point for Yemen's humanitarian aid. Riyadh is making every effort to create obstacles on the way of the Stockholm talks to serve the U.S. political and military objectives which calls for the continuation of the Yemeni War which broke out with the U.S. approval in the first place.

Under the pretext of military aggression against Yemen, the U.S. signed significant arms contracts with Riyadh and gained financial rewards.

On the verge of the Yemen peace talks, not only the Saudi attacks haven't let up but have gained momentum in provinces of al-Bayda and Dhale and on common borders with Saudi Arabia and the West Bank.

Crown prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammad bin Salman considers the war in Yemen a proxy war between Iran and his country, although Riyadh has failed to achieve much in the past four years of battle against Yemen.

Since November, the Saudi Arabian-led intervention in Yemen has carried out over 100 air strikes against the residential areas in Al Hudaydah and the attacks have intensified in recent days, particularly in the border areas and regions close to Sana'a.

Although the U.S. and Western countries seem to have raised criticism of Saudi Arabia over Yemen, in practice

they don't take any concrete steps to lift the siege and cancel their arms contracts or boycott Riyadh.

Crown prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammad bin Salman considers the war in Yemen a proxy war between Iran and his country, although Riyadh has failed to achieve much in the past four years of battle against Yemen.

Although Yemen's Ansarollah has repeatedly expressed willingness to stop their attacks against the aggressors and initiate talks, the Saudi-led coalition took no steps for peace talks.

As it appears now, the Stockholm peace talks on Yemen won't reach a desirable objective. Although some analysts argue otherwise and believe following Jamal Khashoggi's case, the Saudis are more apt to agree to stop the war to get out of the world criticism.

The G20 fruitless summit



1 → In the meantime, there is essentially no opportunity for convergence among G20 members to face the current economic crisis in the international system. Numerous problems and damages had hardly hit the G20 member states' infrastructure as well as their superstructure, and it should be acknowledged that the top 20 economic powers in the world have not yet decided how to deal with these two types of problems.

Finally, it should be concluded that the recent G20 summit has become a symbol of the lack of cooperation between the participating members in the international system, rather than a symbol of convergence of the world's most powerful economic players.

The next point to be noted here is that the secret security and political equations among some of the G20 players (including the membership of some of these countries in NATO) has severely shadowed their economic relations. This has led many of the G20 member states' decisions to be influenced by other factors and relations.

At any rate, it was quite clear that this costly summit was of no significant role in solving the economic crisis of the world today, and except for some news stories which we heard about the G20 summit in Buenos Aires, there was no remarkable outcome. Without a doubt, unless the tensions between the Group 20 member states are resolved, this failure will remain strong, even if Trump leaves the White House forever!



Call for Identify Resources

Shahid Tondgooyan Petrochemical Company (STPC) intends to identify the following chemical suppliers which are qualified.

Subject:

ROW	CHEMICAL NAME	(CONSUMPTION RATE (TON/YEAR
1	ISOPHETALIC ACID	5000
2	TITANUM DIOXIDE	600
3	ANTIMONY (III) OXIDE	110
4	ANTIMONY (III) ACETATE	150
5	HYDROBROMIC ACID	250
6	Cobalt Acetate	60
7	CMB	600
8	Terminol 66	Up to process condition
9	SHELL OIL	Up to process condition

General Conditions of Suppliers & Specialized Degree Necessary:

1. Have at least 2 years relevant experience to chemical
2. License agency or distribution agency
3. Business cards
4. Submit the bid bond for tenders

Place & Deadline of Receive Evaluation Forms:

Legal & Contracts Affairs, Phase # 1, (STPC), Site # 4, Petrochemical Economic Special Zone (PESZ), Bandar Imam Khomeini, Khuzestan Province, Iran, **06152172045**

It shall be given latest by 16:00 pm on **15/Dec./18**

Place & Deadline of Submission Evaluation Forms Document:

Legal & Contracts Affairs, Phase # 1, (STPC), Site # 4, Petrochemical Economic Special Zone (PESZ), Bandar Imam Khomeini, Khuzestan Province, Iran.

It should be submitted latest by 16:00 pm on **29/Dec./18**

Contacts:

You can contact any of the addresses below:

Email: Moradpour.a@stpc.ir

Tel: 061 521 – 72045 Fax: 061 521 – 72043

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Second Announcement
call for public tender (First/Second publish)
One-Stage (semi-compressed) tender
Subject of Tender: PARTS FOR "ROSSHILL" SILICON CONTROL RECTIFIER

National Iranian Drilling Company

Tender descriptions:

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3,182,941	Tender No. :FP/09-97/043 Indent No.:01-22-9746016	17,449,000,000 (Rial)

Qualitative evaluation of tenderers

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

Purchasing & Submitting

Tender Document Distribution by Company	
Distribution Place	Hall No. 113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN – Tel : 061 34148601
Submitting Method	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR 52010004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.
Closing date	Days after the last time of Purchasing 14
Documents Receiving Method	Address Hall No. 107, 1 st floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 + 98-61-34148569

Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	872,450,000 Rials / 18,147 Euro
Type of guarantee	✓ Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ✓ Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 35010004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

(Foreign Procurement Dept.)
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Private sector provided with forex to import medicine, medical equipment

HEALTH DESK TEHRAN — The cabinet of ministers has agreed to provide the private sector with conditional access to foreign currency for importing medicine and medical equipment in special cases, ISNA quoted Kianoush Jahanpour, spokesman for Food and Drug Administration, as saying on Sunday.

Meanwhile, FDA Director Gholamreza Asghari said \$3.5 billion has been allocated to the health sector for this purpose, Tasnim news agency reported the same day.

Asghari announced that out of the allocated budget, \$2 billion was assigned to food and raw pharmaceutical materials, providing by now \$600 million worth of country's needs to raw pharmaceutical materials and \$1 billion

worth of medicine.

The remaining \$1.5 billion was assigned to providing medical equipment, \$1.1 of which has been used, so only \$800 million is left which will be used gradually for provision of required medicine and equipment, Asghari added.

In November, The Iranian Medical Council called on United Nations Secretary General António Guterres to lift sanctions hampering medicine importation to Iran.

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



UNICEF, UNDOC, WHO to strengthen collaboration to prevent suffrage of children

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in the Islamic Republic of Iran (UNODC), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) in the Islamic Republic of Iran and World Health Organization (WHO) in the Islamic Republic of Iran signed today a joint Interoffice Memorandum to prevent and alleviate suffrage of Children and their families as related to drugs.

The ceremony took place in Tehran Milad Tower and on the sideline of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) High Level Committee Annual Meeting, with the support of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Heads of different United Nations agencies and representatives from relevant national counterparts attend the event.

The UNDAF in the Islamic Republic of Iran (2017-2021) provides programmatic platform for joint programmes and programming and the parties are already collaborating in the area of drug prevention and treatment under the Pillar 4 of the UNDAF as "Drug Control".

(Source: UNIC)



The main objective of this Inter-office Memorandum is to develop a framework for strengthening partnership between the three UN agencies on prevention and treatment of drug use among children and their families. Within this framework the agencies should develop and fund-raise for specific activities, projects or programmes to be implemented in a spirit of cooperation and common commitment to broaden the inherent collaboration of these agencies under the UNDAF in the Islamic Republic of Iran (2017-2021) Pillar 4, "Drug Control".

(Source: UNIC)

The health risks of being a night owl

The first international review to compare night owls with early risers outlines the health risks associated with preferring late nights. However, these risks may not be set in stone.

A recent review takes a fresh look at the impact of being a night owl.

Most individuals fit one of two chronotypes: We are morning people or evening people.

Either we prefer to stay up late — and are referred to as night owls — or we rise earlier and go to bed earlier.

These patterns in circadian preferences are, to a certain extent, written in our genes.

Over the years, the medical community has debated the health impacts associated with each chronotype, and the findings have not always been conclusive.

To develop a clearer picture, a group of scientists from a number of institutions have conducted the most extensive review of relevant research to date. Their findings were published recently in the journal Advances in Nutrition.

■ Sleeping, eating, and health

The scientists were especially interested in understanding the relationship between circadian rhythms and eating patterns — called chrono-nutrition — and overall cardiometabolic health.

Because modern life is often hectic, eating and sleeping patterns may frequently be disturbed. Exposure to artificial light sources can also misalign our circadian patterns.

These disruptions can alter cyclical metabolic processes, such as glucose control, lipid metabolism, and blood pressure.

Scientists are working to determine the long-term health effects of these changes.

Because this area of study is in its infancy, the authors of the recent review delved into previous studies, hoping to identify patterns in results.

The team found that individuals who went to bed later tended to have less healthful eating patterns.

For instance, they generally ate later in the day, at less regular times, and they consumed more alcohol, sugar, and caffeinated products than earlier risers. Night owls were also more likely to skip breakfast.

In addition, night owls were likelier to consume fewer vegetables and grains. They

also ate less often but had bigger meals.

This eating pattern may explain the finding that night owls had an increased risk of heart disease and metabolic conditions, such as type 2 diabetes.

In fact, one study showed that night owls were 2.5 times more likely to have type 2 diabetes than early risers.

The leader of the study, Suzana Almoosawi, Ph.D., a research fellow at Northumbria University in the United Kingdom, explains that "In adulthood, being an evening chronotype is associated with greater risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes, and this may be potentially due to the poorer eating behavior and diet of people with evening chronotype."

According to the researchers, being a night owl can even affect the way a person manages their diabetes: "Our review also found that people who have a poorer control of their diabetes are more likely to be evening types," says Almoosawi.

The body's circadian fluctuations in glucose metabolism may mediate the link with type 2 diabetes. Throughout the day, glucose levels decline, and by the evening they are at their lowest point.

However, because night owls eat later in the day, glucose levels spike just before bedtime. This goes against the body's regular biological processes, and so it could impact metabolism.

■ Growing knowledge but gaps remain

The review uncovered some other interesting findings. Perhaps unsurprisingly, children were much more likely to be early risers, including 90 percent of 2-year-olds and 58 percent of 6-year-olds.

As people enter old age, they are more likely to revert to their early-rising preferences of youth.

Although this type of study is still in the initial stages, and much more research is needed, the findings to date may have huge implications for public health.

"Scientific evidence is providing increasing insight into the relationship between your chronotype, diet, and cardiometabolic health."

Study co-author Leonidas G. Karagounis, Nestlé Health Science

(Source: medical news today)

Tehran cultural heritage director rewards top disabled artisans

HEALTH DESK TEHRAN — Tehran province's cultural heritage director general, Delavar Bozorgnia, rewarded the top disabled artisans making handicrafts at Raad Charity on Sunday, observing the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Physically challenged people receive training in poetry, wood mosaic, and leather embroidery in Raad Charity, Tasnim news agency reported on Monday.

Raad Charity is a private institution, dedicated solely to promote the cause of the physically disabled community.

According to Bozorgnia, teaching handicrafts can lead to permanent employment for people with disabilities; besides, having vocational activity and making social contribution can help their healing process.

"We are trying to give disabled people the opportunity to sell their products online and take part in handicrafts' exhibitions," he noted.

On the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Iranian Welfare Minister Mohammad Shariatmadar announced one third of the budget at Iran's Welfare Organization should be allocated to rehabilitation services for people with disabilities.



According to Shariatmadar, 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.

According to the UN website, 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).

Surgeons successfully perform full face transplant

A team of surgeons has successfully performed a face transplant for a 26-year-old man who had a self-inflicted gun injury. The team used facial skin from a donor to replace much of the man's face, as well as partially replacing his bone structure.

Using many innovative technologies, a surgical team has successfully performed a full face transplant.

A team of over 100 medical professionals at New York University (NYU) Langone in New York City performed the transplant.

Dr. Eduardo D. Rodriguez — the Helen L. Kimmel professor of reconstructive plastic surgery and chair of the Hansjörg Wyss Department of Plastic Surgery at NYU Langone — led the surgical team.

The patient's name is Cameron Underwood. He is a 26-year-old man who lost most of his lower jaw, teeth, and nose as a result of a self-inflicted accidental gunshot.

The man had also damaged his maxillary and palate as a result of the accident.

Dr. Rodriguez and his team performed the transplant surgery on January 5, 2018. The procedure lasted 25 hours and ended the following morning.

Since then, the NYU Langone specialists have performed several follow-up procedures, and they now report on their achievement and the techniques they used.

■ 'Maximal aesthetic and functional results'

To carry out the transplant, the surgeons used several cutting-edge technologies. For instance, the following techniques allowed the surgeons to place the grafted face with a high level of precision:

- * 3-D computer surgical planning
- * 3-D-printed cutting guides tailored to the patient
- * intraoperative navigation
- * intraoperative CAT scan

The surgeons used the entire middle and lower parts of the donor's face and skull to complete the transplant. In all, they replaced and reconstructed the patient's upper and lower jaws, 32 teeth and gums, the roof and floor of the mouth, the lower eyelids and cheeks, and the nose and part of the nasal passage.

Also, Dr. Rodriguez and team used an innovative approach to preserve the identity of the donated face: a 3-D-printed mask of the donor's features.

After the transplant, when Underwood's face had healed and the inflammation had subsided, Dr. Rodriguez and team conducted several minor follow-up surgeries to achieve the best aesthetic results.

"Technical advances," Dr. Rodriguez says, "have increased our ability to tackle the most complex cases more precisely with maximal aesthetic and functional results."

He adds, "Advances in medical technology allow us to more rapidly evaluate donors and recipients for [a] face transplant, and to perform surgery more safely and efficiently."

The doctors also note that the first similar transplant they conducted lasted over 36 hours, so the fact that they managed to reduce surgery time by 11 hours is a highly significant achievement.

"Having already done two face transplants, we identified even before we entered the [operating room] where we could reduce surgical time," Dr. Rodriguez says.

"This is critically important," he adds, "not only from a fatigue factor for the surgical team, but also for Cameron's recovery. A shorter surgery often translates into less risk of complications."

In comparison with the first transplant, the surgical team also achieved significant reductions in the time dedicated to post-operative care, as follows:

- * the total length of stay in the hospital was 37 days for Underwood, compared with 62 days for the patient who underwent the first transplant
- * the number of days spent in the intensive care unit was 23, compared with 51 for the first patient
- * the team managed to almost halve the number of days spent in rehabilitation, from 13 to 7

Dr. Bruce E. Gelb, a transplant surgeon at NYU Langone who also participated in Underwood's transplant, comments, "We are thrilled that Cameron is responding so well to the transplant."

"Our team has established a successful, novel, patient-donor matching protocol and immune suppression regimen that we believe provides the best outcomes for our patients because the risk of rejection and toxicity is greatly minimized."

Dr. Bruce E. Gelb

(Source: medical news today)

Tehran to host Intl. Endoscopic and Minimally Invasive Surgery Congress

HEALTH DESK TEHRAN — The 14th International Endoscopic and Minimally Invasive Surgery Congress opens today and will run till December 7 in Tehran, IRIB reported on Sunday.

Using laparoscopy in orthopedics, urology and Otorhinolaryngology was the main topic of the congress.



Hossein Zabihi, the congress director stated that in Iran all general, abdominal and cardiothoracic surgeries can be performed with laparoscopy.

"We have made great progress in minimally invasive surgeries, having almost all necessary equipment to perform them," he noted.

"Reducing the duration of operation and post-operation recovery are the main advantages of this method," he added

In Iran, aortic aneurysm surgery used to be open-chest and resulted in high death rates, but now the usage of laparoscopy has cut the mortality rates of these surgeries," said Zabihi.

"We are the best among the Persian Gulf nations in doing laparoscopy, competing mostly with Turkey on this field," he added.

According to Zabihi, physicians from France, Switzerland and Germany took part in the congress.

How electricity could be the new medicine

In the near future, your doctor might prescribe electricity for what ails you, says Benjamin W Metcalfe

when your only tool is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail. This saying is particularly apt in medicine where doctors treat nearly every condition — from depression to hypertension — with a pill. If your doctor prescribed you anything other than a pill (assuming you don't need surgery), you might think they were a quack. But this will soon change. Medicine is getting radical, and one of the radical new approaches for treating disease is electricity.

Why electricity? Well, everything you do, from walking to dreaming, is controlled or regulated by electrical signals. These tiny impulses travel through your nervous system, conveying information and allowing complex decisions to be made. The hub of electrical activity is in the brain, and from there the nerves branch out to all corners of the body.

The importance of these electrical signals is demonstrated by the impact of injury to any part of the nervous system, which often leads to irreversible paralysis. The most common trauma involves an injury to the spinal cord. Worldwide, spinal cord injury affects about 2.5 million people with about 130,000 new cases each year.

■ 'Clear evidence of mobile phone radiation link to cancers' in rats

If we could find a way to read and write the electrical signals, in other words understand the language of the nervous system, we would have a digital interface to the body. An implanted device would then be able to bridge the gap left by a spinal cord injury.

And it's not just people with spinal cord injuries who would benefit from this kind of technology. We could instruct the pancreas to produce more insulin, or we could raise or lower the heart rate without needing to resort to pills. In essence, we could take control of the body.

■ Dancing frogs

Luigi Galvani was one of the first scientists to realise that electricity might have some involvement in the normal operation of life. He discovered this in 1791 when he conducted experiments on frogs, making their legs twitch with electricity. A century later, the idea of an artificial cardiac pacemaker was first mooted.

Today bioelectronics is a highly active field of research, yet in the two centuries since Galvani first made his frogs dance there are still only a handful of commercially available devices that interface with the nervous system. The patient outlived both the surgeon and the engineer who invented it.

A promising target for new devices is the vagus nerve. This nerve, which runs down both sides of your neck, is connected to many organs, and devices that stimulate it may be able to treat diseases as far ranging as rheumatoid arthritis and alcoholism.

One of the key success stories has been a device for treating drug-resistant epilepsy. This device, made by LivaNova, has been used by over 100,000 people. It helps prevent the abnormal electrical activity that causes seizures within the brain by applying small electrical impulses at regular intervals 24 hours a day, every day. These impulses travel up the vagus nerve and into the brain.

More than 40 per cent of patients fitted with this device reduce their number of seizures by half. However, the constant stimulation can cause unwanted side effects, including pain, headaches and shortness of breath.

■ Advances are being made

While stimulating the vagus nerve with electricity is clearly beneficial, it's still quite a crude approach. Stimulating the nerve is like shouting an instruction rather than joining a conversation. It would be much more powerful if we could record the messages already travelling along the nerves. These messages might alert us to the onset of an epileptic seizure, for example, and enable on-demand stimulation that mitigates the unwanted side effects of the current system.

However, recording signals in a nerve isn't easy. The vagus nerve contains tens of thousands of neurons and each electrical signal is incredibly weak and hard to detect. Coupled with this is the fact that interfering signals from muscles are often 100 times larger than the signals within the nerves.

In order to detect an impending seizure, for example, an implanted device must be able to record and identify one small signal from another, at the same time. This is not unlike being at a rock concert and trying to listen to a conversation on the other side of the stadium.

(Source: the independent)

‘Some 20 million internet users are below 18 in Iran’

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — In Iran, about 20 million internet users out of 56 million users are below 18, deputy education minister for training Alireza Kazemi said, IRNA reported on Monday.

The children and young adults lack skills to cope with threats in cyberspace, he lamented.

“Nowadays the cyberspace is as important as family, school and society in training children,” he said.



The cyberspace has a crucial role in formation of characteristics of children, he explained.

People spends from 20 to 80 hours per week in cyberspace, which change sleeping time and encounter them to unnecessary information and issues, he said.

“We should try to boost skills of the students and families for using cyberspace at the schools,” he said.

Providing appropriate content is also important for protection of students from immortality in cyberspace, he concluded.

In mid-November, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Ministry announced that it plans to introduce parental control applications in the near future.

According to a survey conducted by the ICT ministry, only eight percent of Iranian parents monitor their children’s online activity.

The survey revealed that Iran is not very successful in content creation for children and to control children’s online activity.

‘Digital week’ to introduce transformation plans

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran plans to pursue the goal of digital transformation during the national digital week which is going to be held from December 8 to 12.



Internet of Thing (IoT), cloud computing, social media, Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Blockchain are the main theme of the event, IRNA quoted secretary of the event Mehdi Rouhaninejad as saying on Saturday.

“We aim to boost digital transformation in different fields of economy in the country,” he explained.

A total of 20 startups active in the field of IoT will display their works during a conference on December 10 and 11, he said.

Agriculture, smart city, energy, insurance, smart police and aerospace industry are the fields covered during the event, Rouhaninejad explained.

The ‘world’s first’ A.I. news anchor has gone live in China

A TV anchor has joined a Chinese news agency, but with a twist: he isn’t human. China’s state-run Xinhua News Agency has launched an artificial intelligence (AI) anchor, a move it claims to be a world first.

“English AI Anchor” debuted Thursday at the World Internet Conference in the country’s eastern Zhejiang Province.

Modeled on the agency’s Zhang Zhao presenter, the new anchor learns from live videos and is able to work 24 hours a day, reporting via social media and on the Xinhua website. “He’ learns from live broadcasting videos by himself and can read texts as naturally as a professional news anchor,” the company said in an online statement.

“The development of the media industry calls for continuous innovation and deep integration with the international advanced technologies,” the AI anchor said in his first broadcast.

“I will work tirelessly to keep you informed as texts will be typed into my system uninterrupted. I look forward to bringing you the brand new news experiences.”

Xinhua developed the robot anchor with Chinese search engine Sogou.com and has posted two more reports from the AI broadcaster on its Twitter feed. One covers China’s announcement that it will launch its first Mars probe in 2020 and ends with the AI anchor paying tribute to Chinese journalists.

“Before we go, I’d like to send my good wishes to all of the journalists across the country. As an AI anchor under development I know there is a lot for me to improve,” he said.

Concerns about the growing AI industry include loss of jobs and unintended discrimination. But research firm Gartner predicts that the industry will in fact create 2.3 million jobs and eliminate 1.8 million by 2020, while IBM has researchers tackling bias.

The industry could generate more than \$3.9 trillion within the next five years, according to Gartner, with companies such as Apple and Coinbase using it in recruitment where software engineers are interviewed online by AI platform Triplebyte.

(Source: cnbc.com)

Taking risk of indigenizing aerospace industry necessary: VP

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Domestic

managers should take the risk of indigenizing the aerospace industry, the vice president for science and technology has said.

Sourena Sattari said that for indigenizing the aerospace industry international standards should be met, ILNA reported on Monday.

Iranian experts and scholars active in the field of aerospace should take part in the industry, he said, adding that by signing contracts the vice presidency for science and technology supports the aerospace companies.

“However, the private sector should accept responsibilities to offer service and high quality products,” Sattari explained.

Iran will establish a national aerospace market in the near future to introduce aerospace industry products, services, technologies and software.

In late May, the head of the headquarters



for knowledge aerospace technologies at the vice presidency for science and technology Manouchehr Manteqi said that Iran plans to establish a national aerospace market in the near future to introduce aerospace industry products, services, technologies and software.

The market aims to support knowledge enterprises active in the field of aerospace industry and develop market for demanded products, he explained.

Aerospace is the human effort in science, engineering and business to fly in the atmosphere of Earth (aeronautics) and surrounding space (astronautics). Aerospace organizations research, design, manufacture, operate, or maintain aircraft or spacecraft.

Aerospace manufacturing is a high-technology industry that produces aircraft, guided missiles, space vehicles, aircraft engines, propulsion units, and related parts.

Startups can create wealth in water industry: official

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Startups have the ability to create wealth in the field of water industry, an official with the vice presidency for science and technology has said.

Knowledge-based companies and startups can solve water shortage problems and even creates wealth in water industry through innovative technology, Nader-Qoli Ebrahimi explained.

He made the remarks during the opening ceremony of the 2nd water, soil and environment exhibition on Tuesday.

Innovative ideas and technology have great role in solving environmental problems, he said.

“There are 107 knowledge-based companies active in the field of water industry and 50 of them attended the exhibition,” he explained.

The exhibition runs until December 5 at the venue of Agricultural Research,



Education and Development Organization in Tehran.

In July, the science and technology vice presidency announced that it supports knowledge-based companies which are dealing with water crisis and environmental issues as they transform technology from universities and research centers to projects.

‘67% of state-run organizations offering e-services’

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — A total of 67 percent of state-run organizations in Iran are currently offering e-services, the information and communication technology minister said.

Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi added that e-government optimizes administrative processes and save time and energy at organizations, Mehr reported on Sunday.

He highlighted the importance of data exchange between organizations, which is the right of nation.

“We proposed that the government allocate one trillion rials (about 240 thousand dollars) to development of e-government next year,” he explained.

The first phase of e-government services project in Iran officially came on stream under the title of ‘Mobile Government’ in mid-May 2018.



The project aims to facilitate some government services, reduce unnecessary expenses and ease traffic jam, which is the main cause of air pollution in big cities.

It is based on the National Information Network, an ongoing project to develop a secure and stable infrastructure network in the country.

What is mixed reality and what does it mean for enterprise?

Mixed reality is a significant advancement of augmented reality (AR) – the technology behind 2016’s Pokémon GO phenomenon. In a “hybrid” environment, interactive virtual objects can be mapped to the physical environment, blending the real and the virtual.

Whilst the core premise of both AR and MR is similar, the crucial difference is the underlying technology. Mixed Reality is (for the moment, at least) headset-based, whereas AR is viewed through a flat-screen such as a smartphone or tablet. MR is also aware of the geometry of the environment around you – using it as the canvas for you to create immersive content that is defined by the space you are in.

The recent release of Magic Leap (ML) has been causing a lot of interest in MR, but the tech has been around for a while - Microsoft launched HoloLens in 2016. Currently, Microsoft is focused on solving enterprise needs, while ML is looking at bringing wonder and delight to our world. However, over time, the choice of mixed reality technology will melt away and we will be left with the most important bit...the content.

■ MR promises to be a genuinely transformational technology

Smartphones changed our lives because they gave us access to something that already existed - the internet - in a more convenient way. Mixed reality is also going to change our lives. Not by taking something that already exists and putting it in our pocket, but by completely revolutionizing how we view and interact with the world.

The opportunity to decouple ourselves from our physical bounds will change how we exist in the world.

Just consider the impact it will have on travel. If we can have a life-like meeting via a mixed reality device, there’s less need for business travel and commuting. We’d save a whole lot of time, and money.

And what about education? If we have an always-on AI assistant that knows what we are trying to achieve - plus digital overlays bringing knowledge to us in real-time - do we need to learn skills in the same way? Imagine opening the bonnet of a broken down car and knowing exactly



what to do to fix it.

■ MR & enterprise

In May 2018, a Toshiba survey found that 82% of enterprises predict that ‘AR smart glasses’ (or mixed reality) will be used by their businesses in the next three years. Mixed reality poses a huge opportunity to solve business problems - being able to see what you are trying to do is very powerful in a business context.

An example of this can be found with French manufacturer Renault Trucks. In collaboration with technology partner Immersion, the company has been using a HoloLens at its Lyon-based facility to improve quality control processes with its engine assembly operations. In a company statement, an engineer leading the project said, “In practice, quality control operators will wear Microsoft HoloLens smartglasses in which all the digitalized engine parts will be integrated. Via the glasses and Mixed Reality interface, operators will see decision-making instructions that will guide them through the most complex control operations. At the moment, operators working on control points are still using paper instructions.” This is a clear step forward with regards to ease of operations.

Similarly, ThyssenKrupp, a German manufacturer of elevators and escalators, is also using HoloLens. Field technicians are using the device to ensure they have all the necessary

information, literally in front of their eyes, to ensure they can fix the machinery as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Using Microsoft HoloLens, 24,000+ service technicians at ThyssenKrupp can visualize and identify problems with elevators ahead of a job, and have remote, hands-free access to technical and expert information when onsite.

■ THYSSENKRUPP

BAE Systems, a multinational defense, security, and aerospace company, has also been using HoloLens in its processes to make electric propulsion devices. Through the use of the device, the company has realized a 50% reduction in assembly time.

■ Google glass, the second act

Mixed reality in business isn’t limited to Microsoft HoloLens. In 2014, Google Glass fell flat in the consumer marketplace because of privacy issues, but in an industrial setting, the tech has excelled, resulting in Google Glass Enterprise Edition. The ‘hands-free device for hands-on workers’ has helped diverse clients from doctors to automobile assemblers. Training videos, annotated images, and quality assurance checklists can be easily accessed to ensure jobs get done safely and quickly. The glasses can also connect you to co-workers so they can see what you see through a live video stream to enable real-time collaboration and troubleshooting.

■ A bright future

Deloitte predicts that ‘more than 150 companies in multiple industries, including 52 of the Fortune 500, are testing or have deployed AR/VR solutions’. This means that over 10% of Fortune 500 companies are looking at new technologies to help improve their businesses. While a recent Forrester Research report asserts that by 2025, nearly 14.4 million US workers will wear smart glasses.

And that’s just enterprise. Mixed reality can, and will, add magic to our daily lives. MR allows us to write our own rules on how people see the world, and how they react to it. By marrying the physical and digital in unexpected ways, we can reinvigorate, stimulate and inspire. The possibilities for entertainment are endless.

(Source: forbes.com)

AI app that helps deaf children read launched

Reading for most of us isn’t much of an issue, but when it comes to those who are deaf or hearing impaired, especially if they are only kids, then it can pose a challenge as parents or teachers might not necessarily know sign language well enough to convey information on a page to the child in question.

However it seems that Huawei wants to help with that and has since launched an app called StorySign. This is an AI-based app that when you point your phone’s camera at certain children’s books, it will be able to translate the printed words into sign language which will then be performed by a digital avatar.

If you’re wondering why the avatar in the video above seems to look so familiar, it is because it was created by Wallace and Gromit’s Aardman Animations. This app comes in handy as it helps children to read, while at the same time it can also help parents and educators learn the sign language for certain words so that they



can do it themselves later.

At the moment there aren’t many books supported by the app, and only supports 10 sign languages (mostly from Europe), so it might not be quite as useful as it could. However since it has only just been launched, presumably more support will come at a later date. In the meantime you can check out the video above to get an idea of how the app works.

(Source: ubergizmo.com)

Pager service in Japan is finally coming to an end

After nearly five decades, Japan is finally ending pagers for good. The last service provider in the country, Tokyo Telemesssage, announced that it will terminate its service in September 2019, according to SoraNews24. The company said about 1,500 people still use pagers in its service area, which covers Tokyo and several neighboring regions.

Pagers, which are known as “poke-beru” or “pocket bell” in Japan, certainly had their day. The small devices that send short messages via radio waves reached peak popularity in 1996 when as many as 10 million units were in use in Japan. Pagers were quickly overtaken by cellphones once the devices became widely available. Major telecommunications firm NTT -- the company that first introduced pagers in the country -- discontinued service for the devices in 2007. Now over a decade later, Tokyo Telemesssage is following suit and pulling the plug on its last users.

While the remaining 1,500 subscrib-



ers are likely to be disappointed to learn their pagers’ days are numbered, they probably should have seen this coming. Tokyo Telemesssage stopped manufacturing pagers device 20 years ago. That said, old technology has a way of sticking around in Japan. Faxes are still a popular means of communication in the country, and you can still find cassette tapes in convenience stores.

(Source: engadget.com)

New device can harvest drinking water from dry desert air, scientists suggest

Our environment is changing, and changing fast, putting pressure on our hardworking scientists to come up with ever more ingenious ways of meeting the needs of humankind – like pulling drinkable water right out of the air, in this case.

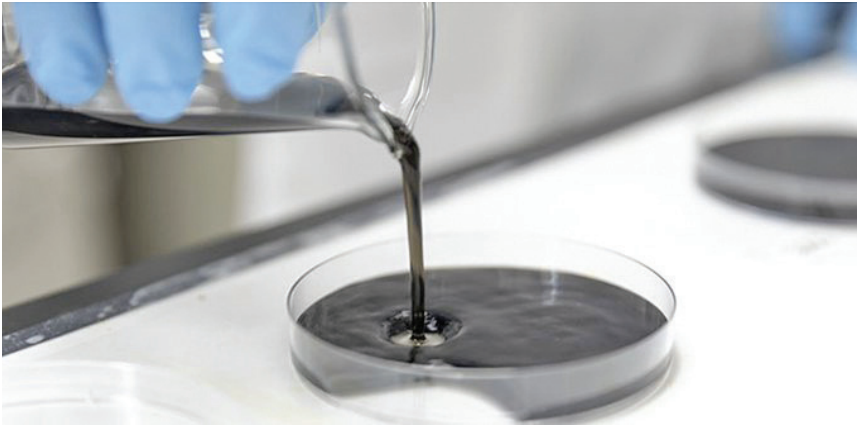
A new prototype device, developed at the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) in Saudi Arabia, is able to absorb water and then release it on demand. It's the sort of invention that could prove invaluable to people living in arid, desert regions, where water is already scarce.

Key to the device is a special hydrogel based on the salt calcium chloride. It can prove irresistible to water, but usually turns into a salty liquid as it absorbs vapor. But thanks to the engineers' innovation, here the hydrogel mixture keeps the whole thing in solid form until the water is needed.

With an estimated 13 trillion tons of water vapor in the atmosphere, being able to harvest some of that water to keep people hydrated would be a major breakthrough, especially for the hundreds of millions without a suitable water source. It's something numerous research teams are busy investigating.

Storing water

And while calcium chloride has been looked at before, making it practical as a material for storing water has been difficult. Here the team helped solve the problem by converting



the salt into a polymer so it keeps its shape until heated; additionally, carbon nanotubes would then help release the water.

The idea is the device could capture water from the air overnight, then release it when heated during the day.

That's exactly how the prototype tested by the researchers operated: 35 grams (1.23 ounces) of the hydrogel was able to capture 37 grams (1.31 ounces) of water during a night with a relative humidity of around 60 percent. The next day, 2.5 hours of sunshine was

Scientists have created a synthetic material inspired by the Namib desert beetles, which also shows promise as a way of condensing and capturing liquid water from the air where needed.

enough to release 20 grams (0.71 ounces) of the water, which was collected in the device ready to drink. The hydrogel is then ready to use again, the researchers report.

However the scientists aren't satisfied yet – they're hoping to tweak the design so that water is released continuously.

There's plenty of competition out there for these potentially life-saving devices, which we think is a good thing.

Another invention

Earlier this year teams from the U.S. demonstrated a device that used a specially engineered metal to capture water – this is another invention that doesn't need a separate energy source to work.

Another team of scientists have created a synthetic material inspired by the Namib desert beetles, which also shows promise as a way of condensing and capturing liquid water from the air where needed.

With all these initiatives, the challenge is to get them from lab prototype into commercial product, but this new hydrogel-based device is ticking a lot of the necessary boxes.

"This type of atmospheric water generator is cheap and affordable, works perfectly with a broad range of humidity, does not need any electricity, and thus is especially suitable for clean water production in remote areas," write the researchers.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Most powerful gravitational waves event stands out among four new detections

It's been more than three years since astronomers first detected gravitational waves – ripples in the very fabric of spacetime caused by some of the biggest cataclysms in the cosmos. Now, an international team of scientists has presented the full catalog of these events, gathered over the last few years across two observation runs.

The catalog contains a total of 11 gravitational wave events, four of which are being reported publicly for the first time. These events all begin as collisions between massive cosmic objects – mostly black holes, but in one case a pair of neutron stars – which are powerful enough to send ripples of energy spreading through the universe.

By the time those ripples reach us here on Earth, though, the distortions they create are minuscule, about a thousandth of the width of a proton. By beaming lasers down long tunnels and watching for disturbances, facilities like the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory (LIGO) in the U.S. and the Virgo gravitational-wave detector

in Europe are designed to detect even the tiniest ripples.

Between black holes

The four newly-described observations all took place in July and August 2017, towards the end of LIGO's second observing run. All four were the result of collisions between black holes, and some of them marked new records.

An event known as GW170729 has taken two top honors. Detected on July 29, 2017, this event is both the most distant and most massive gravitational wave source found so far. These two black holes smashed together 5 billion light-years away – in other words, 5 billion years ago – and released energy equivalent to the mass of five suns.

Another new event, GW170818, was pinpointed more precisely than any other black hole merger. The two objects crashed into each other about 2.5 billion light-years from Earth, and the resulting waves were detected by both LIGO and Virgo, allowing astronomers to identify its position in the sky to within 39 square degrees. That precision is second only

to the neutron star smashup detected just one day earlier, which was easier to pinpoint because it was accompanied by light and radio signals.

The more gravitational wave events detected, the more we can learn about black holes, gravity, and the formation of galaxies.

"We are learning things about the population (of black holes), such as how frequently binary black holes merge in the universe (once every few hundred seconds somewhere in the universe) and whether small (low mass) or large (high mass) black holes are more common – there are many more light black holes (around 5-10 times the mass of the sun) in the universe than heavy black holes (around 30-40 times the mass of the Sun), but the heavy ones are 'louder' in gravitational-waves, and easier to 'hear' colliding," says Simon Stevenson, an author on one of the studies describing the work.

(Source: New Atlas)

New machine learning method predicts additions to global list of threatened plant species

The International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species is a powerful tool for researchers and policymakers working to stem the tide of species loss across the globe. But adding even a single species to the list is no small task, demanding countless hours of expensive, rigorous and highly specialized research.

As a result of these limitations, a large number of known species have not yet been formally assessed by the IUCN and ranked in one of five categories, from least concern to critically endangered.

A new method co-developed by Anahi Espindola, an assistant professor of entomology at the University of Maryland, uses the power of machine learning and open-access data to predict species that could be eligible for at-risk status on the IUCN Red List. The research team created and trained a machine learning algorithm to assess more than 150,000 species of plants from all corners of the world, making their project among the largest assessments of conservation risk to date.

At-risk IUCN classification

According to the results, more than 10 percent of these species are highly likely to qualify for an at-risk IUCN classification.

The algorithm is a predictive model that can be applied to any grouping of species at any scale, from the entire globe to a single city park. Espindola and her colleagues published their findings online in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences on December 3, 2018.

"Our method isn't meant to replace formal assessments using IUCN protocols. It's a tool that can help prioritize the process, by calculating the probability that a given species is at risk," Espindola said. "Ultimately, we hope it will help governments and resource managers decide where to devote their limited resources for conservation. This could be especially useful in regions that are understudied."

Espindola and her collaborators built their



predictive model using open-access data from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) and the TRY Plant Trait Database. Lead author Tara Pelletier, an assistant professor of biology at Radford University, worked together with Espindola to perform the machine learning analysis.

The model's accuracy

Espindola and Pelletier then trained the model using GBIF and TRY data from the relatively small group of plant species already on the IUCN Red List. This allowed the researchers to assess and fine-tune the model's accuracy by checking its predictions against the listed species' known IUCN risk status. The Red List sorts non-extinct species into one of five classification categories: least concern, near-threatened, vulnerable, endangered and critically endangered.

The researchers then applied the model to the many thousands of plant species that remain unlisted by IUCN. According to the results, more than 15,000 of the species—roughly 10 percent of the total assessed by the team—have a high probability of qualifying as near-threatened, at a minimum.

Espindola and her colleagues mapped the data and noted several major geographical trends in the model's predictions. At-risk species tended to cluster in areas already known for their high native biodiversity, such as the Central American rainforests and southwestern Australia.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Development threatens tropical forests, researchers say

Tropical forests in the Amazon, Indonesia, and Mesoamerica face multiple threats from mining, oil, and gas extraction and massive infrastructure projects over the next two decades, according to a study by Clark University researchers and their international colleagues in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS). This encroachment not only threatens forests and biodiversity but also indigenous and rural communities.

Across the world, governments and investors are teaming up on huge regional development projects to build roads, railways, port facilities, and waterways. Their goal is to access areas deep within the forest that are rich with known and potential mineral, oil, coal, and natural gas reserves along with other natural resources, the authors point out.

"Governments have made framework policy commitments to national and cross-border infrastructure integration, increased energy production, and growth strategies based on further exploitation of natural resources. This reflects political settlements among national elites that endorse resource extraction as a pathway towards development," according to the authors of "Resource Extraction and Infrastructure Threaten Forest Cover and Community Rights," an article published December 3 in PNAS.

The other authors include Denise Humphreys Bebbington, research associate professor in Clark's International Development, Community and Environment Department; and three more researchers associated with the Graduate School of Geography: Laura Aileen Sauls, a doctoral candidate; John Rogan, associate professor; and Kimberly Johnson '16, M.S. '17, who graduated from the Accelerated B.A./Master's Degree Program in geographic information sciences and now works as a data mapping analyst at the



Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation in Seattle.

Geospatial and qualitative data

The Clark researchers partnered with researchers and officials from community- and environment-focused NGOs and academic institutions in Indonesia, Brazil, Peru, the Netherlands, El Salvador, and Australia.

The researchers used geospatial and qualitative data, including that gathered through interviews and workshops with stakeholders in Brazil, Indonesia, Peru, Mexico, Norway, and El Salvador.

Past research has shown that the expansion of infrastructure has led to deforestation, they say. But fewer investigators have studied how the complex interactions between two massive forces—infrastructure investment and resource extraction—have combined to threaten forests and communities, according to the authors.

"This rich body of work on deforestation and associated policy recommendations focuses far more on agriculture and forestry than on resource extraction or associated large-scale infrastructure," the authors explain. "There is even less analysis of the types of social and political relationships that have been created by these large-scale investments and which become self-perpetuating through lobbying and the re-entrenchment of power relations."

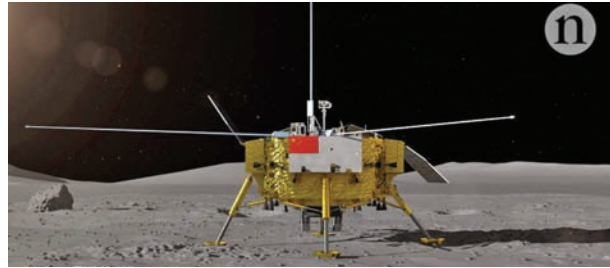
(Source: phys.org)

China set to launch first-ever spacecraft to the far side of the moon

Early in the New Year, if all goes well, the Chinese spacecraft Chang'e-4 will arrive where no craft has been before: the far side of the moon. The mission is scheduled to launch from Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Sichuan Province on December 8. The craft, comprising a lander and a rover, will then enter the Moon's orbit, before touching down on the surface.

If the landing is successful, the mission's main job will be to investigate this side of the lunar surface, which is peppered with many small craters. The lander will also conduct the first radio astronomy experiments from the far side of the Moon – and the first investigations to see whether plants will grow in the low-gravity lunar environment.

"This mission is definitely a significant and important accomplishment in lunar exploration," says Carolyn van der Bogert, a planetary geologist at Westfälische Wilhelms University in Münster, Germany.



The ultimate goal of the China National Space Administration (CNSA) is to create a Moon base for future human exploration there, although it has not announced when that might happen. Chang'e-4 will be the country's second craft to 'soft' land on the lunar surface, following Chang'e-3's touchdown in 2013.

The CNSA has remained tight-lipped about many of the mission's details, including the landing site. The most likely location is inside a 186-kilometer-wide crater called Von Kármán, says Zongcheng Ling, who studies the formation and evolution of planetary bodies at Shandong University in Weihai and is a member of the mission's science team. "We scientists are very happy" to have the chance to visit the far side, says Ling.

"It is a key area to answer several important questions about the early history of the moon, including its internal structure and thermal evolution," says Bo Wu, a geoinformatician at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, who helped describe the topography and geomorphology of this site. (Source: scientific American)

Why do tortoises live so long?

In life, Lonesome George was arguably the most famous tortoise in the world for being the last of his species. Now, over half a decade after he died, he's still making headlines by helping geneticists understand why giant tortoises have such long lifespans.

Scientists believe the lifespans of giant tortoises like George are so long because they have gene variants that tweak how their DNA is repaired and their bodies respond to inflammation and the development of cancer.

Prior to the study, little was known about the genes of these invertebrates. An international team of researchers at Yale University, the University of Oviedo in Spain, the Galapagos Conservancy, and the Galapagos National Park Service worked together on the paper, published in the journal Nature Ecology & Evolution.

The process started in 2010 when Dr. Adalgisa Caccone, co-senior author of the study and senior researcher in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Yale University, sequenced George's genome.

Then, Professor Carlos Lopez-Otin of the University of Oviedo, Spain, studied the resulting data, and that of the Aldabra giant tortoise, and noted gene variants which were linked to a long lifespan. The data was also compared to that from the P. sinensis, or Chinese soft shelled turtle, and humans.

Lopez-Otin explained: "We had previously described nine hallmarks of aging, and after studying 500 genes on the basis of this classification, we found interesting variants potentially affecting six of those hallmarks in giant tortoises, opening new lines for aging research."

The research "expands our understanding of the genomic determinants of aging" and could help restore giant tortoise populations, the authors wrote. (Source: Newsweek)

Combination of space-based and ground-based telescopes reveals more than 100 exoplanets

Astronomers using a combination of ground and space based telescopes have reported more than 100 extrasolar planets (exoplanets) in only three months. These planets are quite diverse and expected to play a large role in developing the research field of exoplanets and life in the Universe.

An international team of astronomers using a combination of ground and space based telescopes have reported more than 100 extrasolar planets (here after, exoplanets) in only three months. These planets are quite diverse and expected to play a large role in developing the research field of exoplanets and life in the Universe.

Exoplanets, planets that revolve around stars other than the Sun, have been actively researched in recent years. One of the reasons is the success of the Kepler Space Telescope, which launched in 2009 to search for exoplanets. If a planet crosses (transits) in front of its parent star, then the observed brightness of the star drops by a small amount.

The Kepler Space Telescope detected many exoplanets using this method. However, such dimming phenomena could be caused by other reasons.

Therefore, confirmation that the phenomena are really caused by exoplanets is very important. The Kepler space telescope experienced mechanical trouble in 2013, which led to a successor mission called K2. Astronomers around the world are competing to confirm exoplanets suggested by the K2 data.

An international research team involving researchers at the University of Tokyo and Astrobiology Center of the National Institutes of Natural Sciences investigated 227 K2 exoplanet candidates using other space telescopes and ground-based telescopes. They confirmed that 104 of them are really exoplanets. Seven of the confirmed exoplanets have ultra-short orbital periods less than 24 hours. The formation process of exoplanets with such short orbital periods is still unclear. (Source: Science Daily)

Over 4bn lit. of oil delivered to Imam Khomeini Oil Refinery in Six Months

More than 41 million barrels of crude oil and 4 billion and 790 million liters of oil products have been delivered to Imam Khomeini Refinery of Shazand and five oil distribution districts in the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21 – Sept. 21), the Public Relations Dept. of Iranian Oil Pipeline Telecommunication Company (IOPTC) reported.

IOPTC Manager for Operation Affairs Ali-Akbar Fazlikhani said, "this district is tasked with administering crude oil pipelines in provinces of Lorestan, Markazi, Hamedan, Qom and Isfahan."

He put the total pipelines under the management of this district at 1,600 km.

With due observance to the said issue, about 41 million oil barrels, 1,610,000,000 million liters of oil gas, 210 million liters of kerosene, 800 million liters of lead-free gasoline, 2,070,000,000 liters of Euro-4 gasoline, 30 million liters of super gasoline and 85 million liters of jet fuel have been delivered to five districts of this area, observing all requirements of international standards, to different destinations such as Shazand Oil Refinery of Arak, Shazand, Azna, Hamedan, Qom and Malayer oil distribution companies, he reiterated.

In addition, 651,804,499 liters of crude oil, 538,383,000 and 214 liters of oil products, totally 1,190,187,713 liters has been received through pipeline and then delivered to the

destination companies as mentioned in above, the deputy CEO of IOPTC emphasized.

Seyed Moslem Moslemi Public Relations Department Manager of the company was the next speaker who said, "in the same period, 54,477,591 liters of crude oil has been received through 8-inch Naftshahr-Kermanshah pipeline, the amount of which has been delivered and sent to Kermanshah Oil Refining Company.

Moslemi added, "in the said period, 313,475,618 liters of various types of products including gas oil, gasoline and kerosene have been delivered to Kermanshah Oil Products Distribution Company, the Public Relations Dept. of Iranian Oil Pipeline Telecommunication Company (IOPTC) ended.

Tehran mayor joins ‘car-free Tuesdays’ campaign

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — The newly-elected mayor of Tehran, Pirouz Hanachi, has joined ‘car-free Tuesdays’ campaign, cycling to his office or heading to work by bus or subway.

On the second Tuesday of his career as mayor of Tehran, Hanachi was spotted while riding a bicycle and last Tuesday he took subway to work, ISNA reported.



‘Car-free Tuesdays’ campaign kicked off in 2016 by Mohammad Bakhtiari, majored in architecture and a member of a local NGO with 1,000 members known as “the guardians of the environment of Arak city”.

It aimed to decrease the number of private cars in the cities hence mitigate air pollution.

After over 140 weeks on Tuesday, the campaign seemed to be losing momentum most probably because of the inefficient infrastructure in the country, as such movements towards cleaner transport options entail appropriate infrastructure such as bike lanes to ensure safety improvements and higher ridership numbers, as well as efficient, low emission public transport.

In June, Mohammad Darvish, the former head of the public participation office at the Department of Environment, said that the most important problem which led to car-free Tuesdays campaign failure was municipality officials who are not aware of the appropriate infrastructure of the cities, and they are designing the cities as automobile-based, which encourage people to use private transport rather than public.

Wedding ceremony for couples with disabilities held in Tehran

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Some 110 couples with disabilities celebrated their wedding during a ceremony held at Milad Tower in Tehran on Monday, Tasnim news agency reported.

The ceremony called Mehraneh (literally meaning kindness) was held concurrent with the International Day of Disabled Persons.



Annually observed on December 3, the International Day of Disabled Persons was held this year under the theme of empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusive-ness and equality.

Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpey, head of Welfare Organization, Ali Hemmat Mahmoudnejad, director of the Iranian association for rights of persons with disabilities, and some officials and representatives of Municipality of Tehran and the Welfare Organization also participated in the event.

LEARN ENGLISH

Urban Legends

A: Have you read all these crazy things that are going on around the world?

B: What do you mean?

A: I was reading about how some people get tricked or drugged in their hotel rooms and have their organs removed! Then they are sold on the **black market**.

B: Don't tell me you actually believe all that? Don't be so **gullible**, they are just **urban legends**. They are just stories people **make up** to scare you.

A: Well, I was also reading about how some popular songs have **subliminal** or even **satanic** messages if you play them backwards! Can you believe that?

B: You really think an artist or songwriter is going to go through the trouble of putting subliminal or satanic messages in a song? Don't be so **naive**!

A: Well maybe you are right, but how about the story of how KFC has rows of headless chickens which are super grown in order to get bigger chickens faster!

B: Sounds a bit too **farfetched** to be true don't you think?

■ Key vocabulary

black market: any system in which goods are sold and bought illegally

gullible: easily believing something that is not true

urban legend: stories that are exaggerated or not true

make up: invent

subliminal: something that persuades in a sub conscious way

satanic: relating to Satan or the devil

naive: having or showing a lack of experience, judgment

farfetched: improbable; not naturally pertinent

■ Supplementary vocabulary

Myth: an untrue story

boogie man: a fictional being that scares children

cynical: a person who believes that only selfishness motivates human actions

grounded: quality of not letting emotions or impulses get the best of you

realist: a person who tends to view or represent things as they really are.

Tehran metro to soon face car shortages

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Although currently some 121 trains are running in the capital's subway system, it will soon face lack of cars with inauguration of new lines being under construction, head of construction and transportation commission of Tehran City Council has said.

Currently, the total number of operational trains serving the passengers is 106 trains and 15 trains are running on the subway line 5 linking western Tehran to Karaj, Alborz province, so the city's subway system comprises 121 trains, Mehr news agency quoted Mohammad Ali Krouni as saying on Monday.

Referring to trains left out of service due to lack of equipment or proper facilities for maintenance, he lamented that the main problem which kept these trains from getting back to subway ridership is the lack of budget.

15 trains which used to be operational in lines 1 to 4 are out of order and also 25 non-functional cars and 11 broken locomotives are on Line 5, which have been out of service due to lack of equipment or incidents, he further explained, adding that the average cost of repairing the aforesaid trains is about \$50 billion rials (nearly \$1.2 million).

He went on to say that a budget of 750 billion rials (about \$18 million) is required to develop the subway fleet.

“If subway lines 6 and 7, which connects the northwestern Tehran to the southeastern parts, are exploited, we will face a shortage of cars, which is already a problem,” he added.

‘Green taxes not used for environmental development’

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — While the Municipality of Tehran receives green taxes paid by pollutant industries, the money is not used for developing the environment or improving the industries, Ali Moridi, head of department of environment's (DOE) soil and water office has said.

The DOE is trying to revise the law and receive green taxes to use it toward eradicating air and water pollution, wastewater treatment and environmental issues, along with technology and industries improvement, he said, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

Referring to proper laws adopted on waste management, he stated that there are rules which obliges the



The escalators of some subway stations are not functioning anymore, and the budget does not suffice the costs, so that newly ordered trains must be released from the customs to support public transportation fleet, he concluded.

Tehran subway system consists of five operational lines,

stretching to 170 kilometers, and two lines of 6 and 7 are under construction. The lines link south to north, east to west and are gradually covering more neighborhoods. By completing the two aforementioned lines 70 kilometers will be added to the current railways.



waste management affairs of the DOE to make the manufacturing and import industries pay taxes and spend the taxes on waste management and recycling.

“Accordingly, if industries do not produce contaminated or hazardous waste, they will be subjected to tax exemptions,” he added.

He went on to note that under these rules, industries which not manage their wastewater properly and cause water and soil pollution will be fined.

“To solve the problem, we must try to change all industries into the environmentally friendly industry, which can be fulfilled in cooperation with the industries as well as the universities,” he concluded.

Four things the UN chief wants world leaders to know, at key COP24 climate conference opening

During the UN COP24 Climate Change Conference grand opening on Monday, Secretary-General António Guterres told over 150 world leaders gathered for climate action that “we are in deep trouble” and asked decision-makers to focus on four key things: stepping up climate action, according to a solid plan, with more funding, as a smart investment in the future of the planet.

The two-week 24th conference in Katowice, Poland, of the parties to the UN Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC), technically started on Sunday, but Monday saw the high-level grand opening. It marks the deadline for the 197 parties that signed the Convention, to adopt guidelines for the implementation of the historic 2015 Paris Agreement.

In the French capital, three years ago, countries collectively agreed to keep global temperature rises to no more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and if possible, to limit the rise to 1.5°C. Now, in Poland, they have to agree on how they will achieve this collectively. “We cannot fail in Katowice,” said UN chief Guterres.

Kicking off the event, along with several other high-level representatives, he highlighted four key messages for the thousands of representatives of the world's nations, non-profit organizations, UN agencies, and private sector companies gathered in Katowice.

■ 1. ‘We need more action and more ambition’

The Secretary-General started by noting that climate change is already “a matter of life and death” for many people, nations and countries of the world, and that the science is telling us we need to move faster.

Citing various alarming UN reports – including one on rising global CO2 emissions and another one on increasing greenhouse

gas concentrations in the atmosphere – he called on nations to pay attention to the science and step up their pace as well as their ambitions.

“Even as we witness devastating climate impacts causing havoc across the world, we are still not doing enough, nor moving fast enough, to prevent irreversible and catastrophic climate disruption,” he stated.

“Last year I visited Barbuda and Dominica, which were devastated by hurricanes. The destruction and suffering I saw was heart-breaking,” he explained, noting that “these emergencies are preventable”.

He called on the international community to work to ensure that emissions must decline by 45 per cent from 2010 levels by 2030 and be net zero by 2050, and that renewable energy will need to supply half to two-thirds of the world's primary energy by 2050 with a corresponding reduction in fossil fuels.

“If we fail, the Arctic and Antarctic will continue to melt, corals will bleach and then die, the oceans will rise, more people will die from air pollution, water scarcity will plague a significant proportion of humanity, and the cost of disasters will skyrocket”, he warned the delegates ahead of their negotiations:.

■ 2. Implementation guidelines are essential to build trust among nations

Stating that “we have no time for limitless negotiations”, the Secretary-General insisted on the need to operationalise the Paris Agreement, and reminded Member States that 2018 is the deadline that they set for themselves to finalise the guidelines for implementation.

“We need a unifying implementation vision that sets out clear rules, inspires action and promotes raised ambition, based on the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national

circumstances”, said the UN chief.

“We achieved success in Paris because negotiators were working towards a common goal,” he added as he implored the delegated to maintain the same spirit of urgent collaboration to “ensure that the bonds of trust established in Paris will endure.”

■ 3. Adequate funding of climate action will be ‘central’

“We need concerted resource mobilization and investment to successfully combat climate change,” the Secretary-General told the delegates attending the COP24 grand opening, noting that three quarters of the infrastructure needed by 2050 for climate action still remains to be built.

He insisted on the need to focus efforts on five key economic areas: energy, cities, land use, water and industry.

“Governments and investors need to bet on the green economy, not the grey,” he explained, stressing the need to embrace carbon pricing (i.e. charging emitters of CO2 for their emissions), eliminate harmful fossil fuel subsidies, and invest in clean technologies.

“It also means providing a fair transition for those workers in traditional sectors that face disruption, including through retraining and social safety nets,” he noted, adding that “we also have a collective responsibility to assist the most vulnerable communities and countries – such as small island nations and the least developed countries – by supporting adaptation and resilience.”

In 2015, a total of 18 high-income nations committed to providing US\$100 billion dollars a year, by 2020, to lower-income nations to support their climate action. Mr. Guterres urged developed nations to deliver on this commitment.

He also urged Member States “to swiftly implement the replenishment of the Green

Climate Fund. It is an investment in a safer, less costly future”.

■ 4. ‘Climate action makes social and economic sense.’

“All too often, climate action is seen as a burden,” said the UN secretary-General, as he explained that “decisive climate action today is our chance to right our ship and set a course for a better future for all”.

The UN chief commended cities, regions, civil society and the business community around the world for moving ahead. “What we need is political more will and more far-sighted leadership. This is the challenge on which this generation's leaders will be judged.

According to the recent New Climate Economy report, “ambitious climate action could yield 65 million jobs and a direct economic gain of \$26 trillion US dollars compared to business as usual over the next 12 years”.

The UN chief stressed the need to ensure that this economic transformation is led with a commitment to gender equality, and the inclusion of youth.

“We must start today building the tomorrow we want,” the Secretary-General said.

“Audacity” and “five times more ambition” needed.

Echoing the UN Secretary-General's remarks, the Prime Minister of Fiji, Frank Bainimarama, who presided over COP23 called on the world to deliver “five times more ambition, five times more action” and avoid “becoming the generation that betrayed humanity.”

The President of the UN General Assembly, Maria Fernanda Espinosa, called for “audacity” in climate action and noted that multilateralism is the only way to reverse the negative effects of global warming.

(Source: UNIC)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → €

‘Salt particles raising from Lake Urmia contained by 80%’

Salt particles raising from the catchment basin of Lake Urmia has been contained by nearly 80 percent, Farhad Sarkhosh, head of the provincial department for the Lake Urmia restoration program at West Azarbaijan has said.

In cooperation with the Forests, Range and Watershed Management Organization, some saplings and shrubs have been planted in the catchment basin of Lake Urmia to slow down the wind giving rise to salt particles since past three years, which cost 600 billion rials (nearly \$14 million), Sarkhosh said.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ess”

■ **Meaning:** woman or girl

■ **For example:** Cases of **lionesses** showing maternal affection for animals they would normally see as prey are not unprecedented.

PHRASAL VERB

Line up

■ **Meaning:** to stand in a row or line, or you make people do this

■ **For example:** He lined us all up in the corridor.

IDIOM

Close shave

■ **Explanation:** a situation where an accident or a disaster nearly happened

■ **For example:** I almost hit the child who ran out in front of my car. It was a close shave.

Mogherini: EU fears ‘rule of jungle’ may win over rule of law

1→ I know that many people here in America, including in Washington D.C., understand this perfectly well: that our security is tied; that our destinies are connected more closely than we often admit.

So, I don't want to underplay the breadth and the depth of our disagreements with the current U.S. administration: they're there and they're self-evident. Sometimes they are so self-evident that they hide all the rest and this is a shame.

But it is true that on Iran or on Jerusalem we believe that this administration has taken decisions that run counter to our collective interest and to our collective security: our European one but also the US' interest and security. And I know that these are issues for debate inside the United States as is normal.

We continue to believe that a great country like America should not see international rules and multilateral structures as a constraint or even as an obstacle to remove. Multilateralism for us is a guarantee for global peace and security, and as such it is the best tool that



we have to advance our national interests, including, I believe, American interests.

Yet beyond these disagreements, our cooperation with the United States con-

tinues to be very close on most files. No other world powers are as close as we are. Close your eyes for a moment and think of it. Europe is immensely closer to the United States. No one can have any doubt about it. Think of China, Russia, others. We need not even ask the question.

This is only natural. The European Union is America's largest trading partner, is the largest foreign investor in the American economy, and, beyond that, there is much more that unites us than divides us. But the economy is a good basis to start on.

For 70 years we've been proud to be one transatlantic community. We've been part of the same history and the same destiny. We have shared the same aspiration to those four freedoms that Franklin Roosevelt described in the darkest moments of World War Two: freedom of speech; freedom of religion; freedom from fear; and freedom from want.

(Source: European External Action Service)

Israeli forces kill a Palestinian in Tulkarem raid

Pope meets Abbas, voices concern over al-Quds status

By staff & agencies

Israeli forces have killed a young Palestinian man during a predawn raid in Tulkarem in the occupied West Bank.

Mohammed Hosam Abdel Latif Habali, 22, was shot in the head and lower limbs with live ammunition early on Tuesday, the Palestinian news agency Wafa reported.

He was rushed to Thabet Thabet Hospital in Tulkarem, where he was pronounced dead.

Wafa reported that Israeli forces raided a number of Palestinian homes in several neighborhoods and that a crowd gathered in the area. Local sources said Israeli forces fired live bullets, rubber-coated steel bullets and tear gas.

An Israeli military spokesperson said that while troops were operating there, "a violent riot was instigated in which dozens of Palestinians hurled rocks".

"Troops responded with riot dispersal means and later on with live fire," the spokesperson said.

Another young Palestinian man was reportedly injured by Israeli fire.

According to a Palestinian NGO (non-governmental organizations), Israeli forces rounded up 24 Palestinians in overnight raids carried out on Tuesday across the occupied West Bank.

In a statement, the Palestinian Prisoners Society said 10 people were arrested in raids in the cities of Beit Lahm (Bethlehem) and al-Khalil (Hebron) in the southern West Bank.

Nine more Palestinians, including two children, were detained in the cities of Nablus and Tubas and another five were arrested in the city of Ramallah and the town of Hizma, northeast of Jerusalem.

The Israeli army frequently carries out wide-ranging arrest campaigns across the occupied West Bank on the pretext of searching for "wanted" Palestinians.

According to Palestinian statistics, more than 6,500 Palestinians continue to languish in Israeli detention facilities, including six parliament members, 52 women and 270 minors.

The Palestinian Authority (PA), which has limited autonomy in parts of the West Bank, says such raids are a breach of agreements Israel has signed up to under the Oslo II Accord.

Tulkarem is located in Area A, under full civil and security control by the Palestinian Authority.

During the month of November, Israeli forces killed 24 Palestinians (21 in Gaza and three in the West Bank). They also arrested 260 Palestinians, including children, and issued 33 deportation orders against Palestinian officials in al-Quds (Jerusalem).

■ Israeli forces attack new freedom flotilla in Gaza, dozens injured

Meantime, Israeli forces have opened fire on a new flotilla attempting to break the Israeli siege on the Gaza Strip and people rallying in its support, leaving dozens of them wounded, Press TV reports.

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip launched a new flotilla on Monday for the 18th week in a row in an attempt to draw attention to their plight under more than a decade of siege, but they were met with live fire from Israel.

Gaza has been under Israeli siege since June 2007, which has caused a sharp decline in living standards.

Dozens of demonstrators were injured by live ammunition and tear gas inhalation as Israeli troops attacked the boats and hundreds of peaceful protesters who had gathered on the coast to see off the flotilla.

The flotilla of boats is launched as part of the anti-occupation protests dubbed "The Great March of Return," which began on March 30. Palestinian protesters are demanding the right to return for those driven out of their homeland as a result of Israeli wars, occupation and other forms of aggression.

"Our peaceful rallies began on March 30 to draw the world's attention to the plight of the Palestinian people, who continue to suffer due to Israel's inhumane and illegal practices. Lifting the siege will be the first step in achieving our goals," flotilla spokesman Mahmoud Masoud told Press TV.

Late in November, Doctors Without Borders (MSF/Médecins Sans Frontières) said around 1,000 Palestinians shot by Israeli forces during the anti-occupation protests had infections that could leave them permanently crippled.

The international medical charity also warned that a "slow-motion healthcare emergency was unfolding in Gaza" as hospitals — already under-equipped due to the Israeli siege — were being overwhelmed by the "huge numbers of patients with complex and serious gunshot wounds."

■ Israel increased airstrikes, abductions, demolitions in November: PLO report

There has been an escalation of Israel's aerial aggression against the besieged Gaza Strip, Israeli soldiers' attacks against Palestinians across the occupied territories, demolitions of Palestinians' properties in the West Bank, and abductions, a PLO report says.

According to a report by the International Relations Department in the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), cited by the Palestinian Ma'an news agency on Monday, a total of 24 Palestinians were killed and 232 others sustained wounds during attacks by Israeli troops in the month of November.

The report added that of the 21 Palestinians lost their lives in the blocked sliver and the rest had been killed in the occupied West Bank.

It further said that the Israeli troopers shot dead seven Palestinians during a military attack in Khan Younis, in southern Gaza, while another eight lost their lives during three-day-long airstrikes conducted by Israeli fighter jets in the

impoverished enclave.

The remaining six Palestinian succumbed to their wounds received during protest rallies along a border fence, which separates Gaza from the occupied territories, where most of the injuries were sustained either from live ammunition or tear-gas inhalation, it added.

The report went on to say that three more Palestinians were shot dead by Israeli troops during alleged stabbing or car-ramming attacks against Israeli soldiers in the West Bank.

The report continued that Israeli army nabbed more than 260 Palestinians last month, mostly minors, adding that Adnan Ghaith, the Palestinian governor of al-Quds (Jerusalem), and many activists of the Palestinian Fatah movement had been among those abducted.

Elsewhere in the report, the International Relations Department in the PLO said that Israeli authorities had also demolished dozens of Palestinian buildings, including 16 shops and a four-story building with 12 apartments in Shufat refugee camp in East al-Quds (Jerusalem).

It added that Israeli authorities also demolished several other buildings and Palestinian-owned structures in different neighborhoods of East al-Quds (Jerusalem) as well as in Area C of the West Bank.

Furthermore, Israeli settlers uprooted and cut down a number of trees in the West Bank, mainly olive ones, which are a main source of livelihood for Palestinians, in November.

The Israeli military also ordered Palestinian farmers to uproot at least 260 olive trees in the village of Bardala, in the northern Jordan Valley, and seized 500 palm trees in Ariha (Jericho).

■ Palestinian farmers, fishermen demand end to Israeli siege on Gaza Strip

Elsewhere, hundreds of Palestinian protesters have staged a rally in the besieged Gaza Strip, calling for an end to a decade-long Israeli siege on the coastal enclave.

The protest was organized by local groups of Palestinian farmers and fishermen in Gaza outside the premises of the Palestinian Legislative Council on Monday.

The coordinator of the Agricultural and Fishermen Committees, Saad Ziyadeh, told the Palestinian Ma'an News Agency that the protest aimed to call on the international community to end the state of silence towards Palestinian rights and to hold the Israeli regime accountable for the atrocities it commits against Gazans.

Ziyadeh stressed that the Israeli siege had led to humanitarian consequences in Gaza, including extreme poverty, unemployment, food insecurity and hunger.

According to international estimates, 80 percent of Palestinians in the coastal enclave depend on international aid and 40 percent are under poverty line.

Israel launches operation near Lebanese border against 'Hezbollah tunnels'

1→ Lebanese online news portal Tayyar reported that the Israeli army was excavating areas opposite the Lebanese villages of Kfarkela and Adaiseh on the southern border.

Conricus, however, said the tunnels "are not yet operationally ready" and therefore did not pose an "immediate threat."

He claimed that Hezbollah has been developing an offensive plan that would "shift the battleground into Israel."

Hezbollah would use firepower and ground units and "the surprise component of that plan was supposed to be tunnels that would allow infiltrators into Israel," he claimed.

According to unnamed Israeli officials, the operation would likely "take weeks."

Separately, last night, the Israeli prime minister travelled to Brussels unexpectedly to talk to the United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, briefing him on the operation that started on Tuesday morning.

The Israeli army reportedly deployed tanks and con-

struction vehicles near the Lebanese frontier around midnight on Monday.

Israeli military spokesperson Avichay Adraee said the Lebanese government was responsible for the build-up of the tunnels.

Lebanese media also said forces with the United Nations peacekeeping force, known as UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon), monitored the Israeli operations, and that the Lebanese army did routine patrols in the surrounding towns.

In a statement on Tuesday carried by the state-run National News Agency, a UNIFIL official said the situation in the area was calm.

The resistance movement Hezbollah was formed following the Israeli regime's invasion of Lebanon and the ensuing occupation of its southern parts in the 1980s, and currently constitutes Lebanon's de facto military power.

Since then, the movement has helped the national army

retake the occupied regions from Tel Aviv and thwart two Israeli acts of aggression in 2000 and 2006.

The movement has also been playing a significant role in the Syrian army's fight against Takfiri terrorist groups, including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) and al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra), thus preventing the spillover of the war into Lebanon.

Hezbollah is also a powerful political party in Lebanon. The movement and its allies currently hold over half of parliamentary seats in the country.

Since the end of the 2006 war, Israeli forces have regularly violated Lebanon's sovereignty, with the regime's officials threatening another military offensive against the country.

Hezbollah has repeatedly warned Tel Aviv against launching a new war, vowing a crushing response to any such attempt.

(Source: agencies)

Saudi crown prince snubbed in Algeria, delays Jordan visit amid Khashoggi crisis

The House of Saud regime's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) has reportedly postponed a planned visit to Jordan after getting the cold shoulder in Algeria, where President Abdelaziz Bouteflika scrapped a meeting with him, citing flu.

Bin Salman, who has been struggling over the past weeks to distance himself from a scandal over the gruesome murder of dissident Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, arrived in Algeria late on Sunday for a two-day visit following a stop in Mauritania.

The trip is part of a tour of Arab states that the Saudi regime crown prince has resumed after attending the G20 summit in Argentina on the weekend. He traveled to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Egypt and Tunisia before the event.

Bin Salman's visits have been overshadowed by Khashoggi's assassination inside Riyadh's Istanbul consulate in early October — which is believed to have been ordered by the powerful prince — as well as the bloody war he has been leading against Yemen since early 2015.

On Monday, the Algerian presidency said in a statement that Bouteflika had been unable to receive the visiting Saudi crown prince due to "acute flu."

Bin Salman wished the Algerian president a speedy recovery, according to the statement carried by Algeria's official APS news agency.

■ Algeria PM under fire for welcoming MBS

Meanwhile, Algeria's largest Islamic party, the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP), criticized Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia for welcoming bin Salman, saying, "Those who roll out the red carpet for bin Salman do not care about Algeria."

MSP head Abderrazak Makri also accused Algerian politicians of being corrupted by Saudi money.

"Our rulers have destroyed the country's economy and then bin Salman drowned them in their financial crisis by reducing oil prices in response to [U.S. President Donald] Trump's orders," he said.

"They lost the Algerian dignity and manhood, so they accepted to be bribed by the killer of Yemeni children with his ill-earned dollars through the robbing of the resources of the Arabian Peninsula after the imprisonment and killing of its free citizens," the politician added.

Additionally, Louisa Hanoune, head of Algeria's opposition Workers' Party, described bin Salman's trip as a "provocation."

Opposition newspaper Liberte further published a cartoon showing a ghost telling the Saudi crown prince, "This is Bouteflika". The anxious prince then responds, "You frightened me. I had thought this was Khashoggi."

■ Jordan visit delayed amid criticisms

In another development on Monday, sources told the Al Jazeera media network that bin Salman's visit to Jordan had been postponed by at least two days, without elaborating on the reason behind the delay.

The crown prince was initially scheduled to arrive in Amman on Monday.

Meanwhile, a broad spectrum of Jordanian activists, political parties and journalists formed a group against the Saudi crown prince's visit to the kingdom.

Murad Adaleh, secretary general of the Islamic Work Front, Jordan's largest political party, said that bin Salman's trip comes at a time when "the investigation of the death of Khashoggi is not over, and there are specific accusations that Prince Mohammed is involved in it."

(Source: agencies)

Over 150 women, girls raped in South Sudan: UN agencies

Three United Nations (UN) agencies say at least 150 women and girls have been raped in attacks by armed men — many in military uniforms — in South Sudan over the past 12 days.

The women and girls were violently raped in the northern city of Bentiu, according to a joint statement on Monday by head of the UN's children agency, or UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund), Henrietta Fore; UN humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock; and the director of the UN Population Fund, Natalia Kanem.

They said, however, that the actual number of victims was far higher because the violence was severely underreported.

The statement condemned the "abhorrent attacks" and called on South Sudanese authorities to ensure that the perpetrators face justice.

Doctors without Borders (MSF/Médecins Sans Frontières) said in a report last week that 125 women and girls had been raped while walking to emergency food distribution centers set up by international aid agencies.

It said many of the victims had also been "whipped, beaten or clubbed with sticks and rifle butts" and robbed of their clothes, shoes, money, and the ration cards entitling them to food aid.

"In more than three years of working in South Sudan, I have never seen such a dramatic increase in survivors of sexual violence arriving at our programs looking for medical care," said Ruth Okello, an MSF midwife in South Sudan.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, who described the attacks as "horrific," urged all parties in South Sudan "to ensure the safety of civilians and address impunity for these crimes through investigation and prosecution of perpetrators."

"These horrific acts are a distressing reminder of how, despite recent commitments by South Sudan's leaders to a cessation of hostilities and a revitalized peace agreement, the security situation for civilians remains dire, especially for women and children," he said in a statement.

South Sudan, the youngest country in Africa, plunged into civil war two years after it gained independence from Sudan in July 2011. The brutal conflict has left nearly 400,000 people dead and millions of others displaced, a report said earlier this year.

A UN panel of experts warned in a report last month that there were "alarming levels" of sexual violence and human rights abuses in the country.

(Source: Press TV)



Revitalized Arsenal expect tough United test says Emery

Arsenal produced their best display yet under Unai Emery in their weekend Premier League victory over Tottenham Hotspur but the Spaniard said they would have to prove their mettle again in Wednesday's trip to Manchester United.

Arsenal beat Spurs 4-2 at home to leapfrog their north London rivals into fourth spot on goal difference with 30 points but Emery believes improving his team's away performance is vital if they are to continue their good form.

"If we're stronger now, we need to (show it) on Wednesday... It's a new match, a new challenge, a big challenge. It's away and we need to continue improving our mentality away," Emery told a news conference.

"We know we need to change to get more competitive away. I think the team is doing that, but it's Manchester United away, and the challenge is bigger than other matches.

"It's a very exciting match. The preparation for this match is also a big motivation for us. It gives me a big motivation for Wednesday."

Jose Mourinho's United side are struggling down in seventh place with 22 points after 14 games.

Arsenal's win over Tottenham extended their unbeaten run in all competitions to 19 games and the fans have started to believe the club can win their first league crown since they lifted the title in the 2003-04 season under Arsene Wenger.

"I want to think about the possibility, maybe not this year, of a title with Arsenal," Emery added.

"The Premier League is the first competition for us but the Europa League is exciting and we also have the Carabao (League and FA Cups. It's about progress, improving and our demands."

(Source: Reuters)

Samsung extends Olympics sponsorship to 2028 - IOC

South Korea's Samsung has extended its sponsorship contract with the International Olympic Committee by eight years and will remain a top sponsor until the 2028 Los Angeles Games, the world governing body said on Tuesday.

Samsung, who first signed up as a top sponsor with the IOC in 1998 and was a local sponsor at the 1988 Seoul Olympics as well, will support all Games up until and including the Los Angeles summer Olympics. "I am delighted that we will be building on two decades of partnership with Samsung for another 10 years," said IOC President Thomas Bach at the signing ceremony in Seoul.

"Together, we are able to connect with and inspire Olympic athletes and fans around the world, and we look forward to working with Samsung to build the digital future of the Olympic Games."

Samsung is one of 14 top sponsors of the Olympics that also includes Coca-Cola, Intel and Panasonic.

Many of them have signed on till 2028 or beyond. In September, German insurer Allianz became the latest addition to the group, signing up to 2028. No financial details of the deal were released but media reports have said the IOC has been seeking around \$50 million per year for similar deals.

The 2022 winter Olympics will be held in Beijing, while the 2024 summer Games will be staged in Paris. The hosts of the 2026 winter Games will be announced next year.

(Source: France24)

Banana-throwing Spurs fan will not face racism charge

The Tottenham Hotspur fan who threw a banana skin onto the pitch at the Emirates Stadium as Arsenal forward Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang celebrated scoring a penalty in front of Tottenham fans will not be charged with a racist offence.

Averof Panteli -- a 57-year-old grandfather -- will face a charge of throwing a missile after police judged it not to be a racially aggravated offence.

Panteli -- who says he will plead guilty to the charge when he is in court on December 18 -- has also been informed by Tottenham he will be banned from their games for life.

"The police were happy to say it was not racism," he told The Sun. "I phoned Tottenham to apologise and they said they would be getting in touch with me to ban me for life."

Panteli, who says his only previous brush with the authorities was when he ran onto the Spurs pitch aged 14 and was ejected from the stadium, said he had been irked by Aubameyang celebrating in front of the Tottenham fans.

The Gabonese star's spot-kick gave Arsenal an early lead and the Gunners eventually ran out 4-2 winners.

"I am not racist whatsoever," said Panteli.

"I am actually a Greek Cypriot. I am 100 percent not a racist. I swear on my kids' lives that I am not that kind of guy."

"The Arsenal player was gloating in front of the away fans. He came up towards the away fans about 10 metres away and he is basically nodding his head and clapping at us.

"Without thinking, I picked up this banana skin from the ground and threw it on the edge of the pitch.

(Source: AFP)

Spanish star Azpilicueta signs new contract with Chelsea

Spanish international Cesar Azpilicueta, one of the longest-serving players at Chelsea, signed a new four-year contract on Tuesday which if he sees it out will take him to 10 years with the Premier League club.

The 29-year-old defender -- who joined the Blues in 2012 from French outfit Marseille and has won the Premier League title twice as well as captained them this season in the league -- says his desire to fight for the club is stronger than ever.

Azpilicueta, who is two appearances short of 300 for the club, has been a pivotal player in the bright start to the Maurizio Sarri reign which sees them lying in third spot, seven points off leaders Manchester City.

"Delighted to be a blue until 2022," the 25-times capped Spaniard said on his Twitter account.

"Since I arrived in 2012, my desire has been always to give my best and fight for this club, and now more than ever, I feel the responsibility to bring more success to this family."

(Source: AP)

Modric wins 2018 Ballon d'Or, breaks Messi-Ronaldo dominance

Real Madrid's Croatia midfielder Luka Modric was named winner of the 2018 Ballon d'Or on Monday, breaking Cristiano Ronaldo's and Lionel Messi's decade-long hold on the prestigious award.

Juventus forward and 2017 winner Ronaldo came second, while Atletico Madrid and France striker Antoine Griezmann came third.

Paris St Germain's France forward Kylian Mbappe, who also collected the Kopa award for the best under-21 player, was fourth, with Barca forward Messi finishing fifth.

Olympique Lyonnais' Norway striker Ada Hegerberg won the inaugural Ballon d'Or for women's football, having led her side to the Women's Champions League title, scoring in extra time in the 4-1 win over VfL Wolfsburg in the final.

Modric, 33, helped Real Madrid win a third successive Champions League title in May and also captained Croatia to their first World Cup final, being named player of the tournament despite his side losing 4-2 to France.

"It's a unique feeling. I'm happy proud and honoured, I have a lot of emotions right now, it's hard to describe in words," said Modric, wearing a tuxedo as he collected the award from presenter and former France forward David Ginola after a glamorous ceremony at the Grand Palais in Paris.

"It's a big pleasure to be here among all these players. I am still trying to realise that I have become part of a group of exceptional



players to win the Ballon d'Or throughout history."

■ DIFFICULT START

Modric, who joined Real Madrid from

Tottenham Hotspur in 2012 for a reported 40 million euros (\$45.40 million), was criticised in his debut season at the Bernabeu and named the worst signing of the year in

Inter captain Icardi wins Serie A footballer of year award



Inter Milan's Argentina striker Mauro Icardi won the Serie A Footballer of the Year award at the Gran Gala del Calcio ceremony in Milan on Monday night.

The 25-year-old becomes the first player outside Juventus to win the Italian Players' Association award, voted for by his peers, since Zlatan Ibrahimovic with AC Milan in 2011.

Icardi was joint top scorer with Lazio's Ciro Immobile in Serie A last season with 29 goals. The Argentine also won the best goal award for his spectacular backheel during a four-goal haul against Sampdoria last March. Icardi disagreed with the choice, insisting his "one (goal) at AC Milan was more beautiful".

Juventus were voted top team with Massimiliano Allegri winning coach of the year after the Turin side won a league and Cup double for the fourth consecutive year.

"It's a group of great men, with a great club behind us," said Allegri, who has won the award four times.

"I'm fortunate to have worked with so

many marvellous players and tonight I see the maestro Andrea Pirlo too."

Allegri's side are on track for an eighth straight Serie A title, with Allegri hailing the impact of five-time Ballon d'Or winner Cristiano Ronaldo who arrived last summer.

"Ronaldo has brought professionalism, competitiveness and is a humble guy," said Allegri. Portuguese star Ronaldo finished runner-up to Croatia's Luka Modric in this year's Ballon d'Or prize which was awarded in Paris on Monday.

Fiorentina's Italian international defender Alia Guagni won the Serie A women's Player of the Year award.

Roma legend Francesco Totti and former AC Milan and Juventus great Pirlo both received Lifetime Achievement Awards.

Meanwhile, Gianluca Rocchi won the award for the best referee 24 hours after being whistled off the pitch at the Stadio Olimpico over his decision not to award Roma a penalty in a 2-2 draw against Inter Milan.

(Source: AFP)

Kobe Bryant: Lakers Nation will soon be 'laughing at Warriors fans'



Kobe Bryant says the growing pains LeBron James and the Lakers have endured for much of this season are a necessary evil but that they will square things away soon enough.

Bryant, speaking at the Lakers' annual "All-Access" event at Staples Center on Monday, said they have "a determination to figure it out."

"They will figure it out," Bryant said. "They have talented pieces and (Lakers general manager Rob Pelinka) has put them in position with incredible flexibility. They will figure it out."

So, enjoy the journey because we'll be champions before you know it, and then we'll just be laughing at all the Warrior fans who all of the sudden came out of nowhere."

Bryant said James' approach to his maiden voyage with the Lakers is not conducive to long-term success but that it was needed at this stage in the team's development.

"It's a test of Bron's patience and also

a poll by newspaper Marca.

But the diminutive playmaker began to demonstrate the quality he had shown at Spurs when Jose Mourinho deployed him in a deep lying role in Real's midfield rather than the attacking role he had been given at the start of that campaign.

Modric said the positional change, which was first suggested to him by Harry Redknapp at Tottenham, transformed his form.

"The change of position helped me a lot in my career. I used to play more offensively. When I dropped back, I was able to read the game better and show my creativity," added Modric.

He is the first Croatian to win the Ballon d'Or and also picked up FIFA's 'The Best' award in October.

The Ballon d'or, voted for by journalists and organised by French magazine France Football, has been dominated by Barcelona's Messi and Ronaldo, first when he was at Manchester United and subsequently with Real Madrid, since 2008.

The last player to lift the award apart from the Argentine and Portuguese, who have won it a joint-record five times each, was Kaka in 2007 when the Brazilian played for AC Milan.

The Ballon d'Or was first presented in 1956 and partnered with soccer's world governing body FIFA as 'The Best' award from 2010 to 2015, until becoming its own entity again.

(Source: Reuters)

River coach says fans 'robbed' by Libertadores switch

River Plate coach Marcelo Gallardo has accused the South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL) of "robbing the fans" with its decision to move the Copa Libertadores final to Madrid.

River drew 2-2 with arch-rivals Boca Juniors in the first leg on Nov. 11 but the return has been moved to Spain after Boca players were injured when fans attacked their team coach shortly before the match at River's Monumental stadium on Nov. 24.

"We have lost home advantage," Gallardo told reporters on Sunday after his team beat Gimnasia La Plata 3-1 in the Argentine league.

"As absurd as it may be, they made a decision. Some day we are going to rethink what happened and we will remember it as a total disgrace.

"Our preparations have changed. We are going to play 10,000 kilometres away. The Copa Libertadores of America. They've robbed the fans."

Each team will get 25,000 tickets for the game at the Real Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu stadium on Sunday but only 5,000 of them can be sold to fans inside Argentina, CONMEBOL said.

The decision is designed to prevent the infamous barra bravas, the often violent organised fan groups, from travelling to watch the game in Spain.

The Argentine government said on Monday it was working closely with its Spanish counterparts to neuter the barra



bravas and ensure that travelling fans would be kept apart in Madrid.

"We can't stop the barra bravas from leaving the country but we can stop them from getting into the Bernabeu," a security official told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

■ GALLARDO INDIGNANT

Gallardo was indignant at the situation and said the last 10 days was one of the most difficult periods of his

long career.

"After all that's happened, what we've gone through and had to chew over, it's not easy," he said. "They have damaged our spirit but that makes us stronger. This may be one of the hardest moments."

Gallardo, who ignored a dressing room ban in the semi-final against Gremio and was given another suspension for doing so, accused Boca of "taking advantage" of the situation to try and secure their seventh Libertadores title.

Boca have appealed against the decision to move the game and believe they should be awarded the match.

Their argument is based on a similar situation three years ago when Boca themselves were kicked out the Libertadores after their fans attacked River players with pepper spray at halftime during the first leg of their last 16 showdown.

Argentina president Mauricio Macri, a former president of Boca Juniors, said he hoped the massive international focus on the scandal would force his compatriots to change.

"This should cause us all to reflect deeply on what happened," he said. "International football authorities can't tell us that we can't finish a football match in our country again."

(Source: Eurosport)

IPL: Persepolis emerge victorious over Zob Ahan

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Persepolis earned their second 1-0 victory in a row in Iran Professional League (IPL), edging past Zob Ahan in here at the Azadi Stadium.

Persepolis defender Shoja Khalilzadeh, who scored an injury time goal on Thursday against Machinesazi last week, was on target once again.

He headed the ball into the goal from the corner kick in the 15th minute. In the second half, Persepolis could have scored more goals on the counter-attack but the team's strikers lacked the cutting edge.

With three minutes remaining, Milad Fakhreddini was shown his second yellow card.

Persepolis sit on third place with 27 points, two points behind IPL leaders Sepahan and Padideh.

"I would like to congratulate my boys, since they have earned 10 points from four matches after the final match of the 2018 AFC Champions League," Ivankovic said in the post-match news conference.

The Persepolis coach also criticized the referee over his decisions.

"It's very shameful, because the all decision went against us. In the match against Machine Sazi, our goal wrongly ruled out for offside. In this match, our players were shown yellow cards while they did anything wrong," the Croat added.



Klopp fined by FA for Merseyside derby celebration



Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp has vowed to not repeat his celebration in Sunday's Merseyside derby again after being fined £8,000 by the English Football Association.

Klopp reacted to Divock Origi's stoppage-time winner against Everton at Anfield by running to the center circle and celebrating with Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson.

The FA said in a statement on Tuesday that the Reds boss "admitted an FA improper conduct charge and accepted the standard penalty."

"I didn't want to do it and I can say it won't happen again," Klopp told a news conference on Tuesday. "It was not on my radar that it was still possible."

"We make mistakes, but usually I learn from it -- at least over a long period. It's not a massive mistake. If there was no rule against it, we as managers would constantly celebrate on the pitch."

"I don't think anybody thought it's massively wrong or whatever, not even the ref -- they were probably surprised themselves. There's nothing to say actually. It's a fine, I pay it. Let's carry on."

Klopp said he apologised to his counterpart Marco Silva at the final whistle on Sunday, although that version of events was disputed by the Everton manager in

the immediate aftermath.

However, Silva told a news conference on Tuesday that he does not feel Klopp's actions warranted punishment from the FA.

"If you ask me, I think he shouldn't [be fined]," Silva said. "But the FA has to decide the rules."

"Of course in that moment, the manager cannot think of fines or not. It's a moment to celebrate. I know the last two days everybody is talking about the situation."

"But, for me, it's not even a matter because it's normal in football. It's really important as well, even if sometimes you get fined. It's something important, this passion of the game."

Klopp will be in the dugout on Wednesday as Liverpool travel to Burnley in the Premier League.

Sadio Mane and Andrew Robertson are doubts for the trip to Turf Moor with injuries sustained in the Merseyside derby.

"Sadio and Robbo, we need to have another look at today," Klopp said. "Sadio really had an awful cut on his foot. It needed to be stitched. He is OK, but walking around here now in flip-flops and you don't play in flip-flops. That means in this moment he is not ready, but we will see later."

(Source: ESPN)

Ones to Watch: Akram Afif (Qatar)



Kuala Lumpur: After a breakthrough season in which he helped Al Sadd reach the 2018 AFC Champions League semi-finals, Akram Afif is set to take on his first AFC Asian Cup next month.

Despite being just 22, Akram Afif already has playing experience in Belgium and Spain, the Qatari midfielder will look to cement his status as one of Asia's top talents during January's AFC Asian Cup.

- Nationality: Qatar
- Date of birth: 18/11/1996
- Position: Midfield
- Current club: Al Sadd (Qatar)
- Previous clubs: Eupen (Belgium), Villarreal, Sporting Gijon (both Spain)

International background

Afif was already a star for Qatar at the youth level, taking the nation's U-19 team all the way to the 2014 AFC U-19 Championship final, where he scored one of his tournament total of four goals to help them clinch the trophy against DPR Korea.

His senior debut came a year later when coach Daniel Carreno called him up ahead of the 2018 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers. A lone goal in the 15-0 thrashing of Bhutan was enough to kickstart his international career, as he would go onto score ten more in 35 appearances, most recently in the

1-0 friendly win over Switzerland.

Style of play

Afif primarily operates in the whole behind the attack line, creating scoring chances as well as carving ones for himself. He has also frequently been used on the left flank where he cuts inside onto his right foot to attempt long range shots or deliver in-swinging crosses.

Since joining Al Sadd, Afif has developed a telepathic understanding with fellow attacking midfielder Hassan Al Haydos, which sees the pair make up a core creative force for club and country.

What to look for

In their final major tournament ahead of hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, Qatar will look to better their best-ever AFC Asian Cup performance, reaching the quarter-finals in 2000 and 2011. Standing in their way will be three-time winners Saudi Arabia as well as DPR Korea and Lebanon.

For Afif, this will be his first international tournament at the senior level, and with his loan deal from Villarreal to Al Sadd running out in June, he will look to impress his parent club in the hope of booking a place in the Yellow Submarines' squad for the 2019-2020 La Liga season.

(Source: AFC)

Korea Republic unveil roster for training camp in Ulsan

Seoul: Korea Republic's football body on Tuesday unveiled the men's national team squad that will participate in a local training camp for the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019.

The Korea Football Association (KFA) announced a list of 23 players who will train in Ulsan to prepare for UAE 2019, which is scheduled to kick off in the United Arab Emirates on January 5.

The KFA said the players will assemble next Tuesday and train until December 20. Typically, the KFA calls up national players two weeks ahead of the tournament, but it recently reached an agreement with the K League, the operator of the country's pro football leagues, to allow local clubs to release their players early for the national team.

The roster doesn't feature Europe or Central/West-based players, due to their club schedules. However, the 23-man roster has three players from Japanese clubs, including Gamba Osaka striker Hwang Ui-jo, and two players from the Chinese Super League.

There were some surprises on the roster as head coach Paulo Bento included four new faces who received their first senior national team call up. They are Ulsan Hyundai FC midfielder Han Seung-gyu, Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors midfielder Jang Yun-ho, Suwon Samsung Bluewings midfielder Kim Joon-hyung and FC Seoul forward Cho Young-wook.

Among them, Kim Joon-hyung is considered the most surprising pick. The 22-year-old defensive midfielder played only five matches with his K League 1 club and



has not represented Korea Republic at any age level.

Han Seung-gyu, 22, was voted the Young Player of the Year at the 2018 K League Awards on Monday. He scored five goals and contributed seven assists in 31 matches and helped Ulsan finish third in the K League 1.

Jang Yun-ho, 22, is a back-up midfielder for reigning K League 1 champions Jeonbuk and helped Korea Republic to win the gold medal at the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia.

Cho Young-wook, 19, is a roving forward who played for Korea Republic at the 2017 FIFA U-20 World Cup and the 2018 AFC U-23 Championship in China.

Another noteworthy national team member is Jeonbuk left-back Kim Jin-soo (pictured above), who last played for Korea Republic in March. The former Hoffenheim man, who has 34 caps, missed the 2018

Lisa Gjessing won her fourth consecutive world title in the women's under 58 kg K44. Mongolia's Enkhtuya Khurelbaatar continued a breakthrough year in the sport. She had upset the world No. 1 to win the Asian title earlier that year, and then captured the world title in the women's under 49 kg K44. Multiple-European champion Amy Truesdale also celebrated

on home mat after winning the women's over 58kg K44.

The 2015 Championships took place in Samsun, Turkey, and saw 130 athletes from 38 countries compete. It was the first Worlds held after the International Paralympic Committee announced Para taekwondo would be part of the 2020 Games program.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Aitor Karanka's treatment of Nottingham Forest signing is harmful

Karim Ansarifard was given another late cameo appearance by Aitor Karanka in Saturday's 2-0 win over Ipswich Town. The 28-year-old has amassed less than 10 minutes of playing time in the Championship since joining on a free transfer in October.

Against Ipswich, Ansarifard completed just one pass, took one shot, won one aerial duel and made three touches. It's a meagre contribution for a player who was at Olympiacos in August and Karanka's treatment of the Iranian international is harmful.

It's common for new signings to be bedded in slowly, but the Forest manager is hardly giving Ansarifard a chance to develop in the Championship. In four league appearances, the striker has managed around eight minutes of football and has unsurprisingly failed to make a telling impact.

The 28-year-old has played for the likes of Saipa (Iran), Persepolis (Iran), Tractor Sazi (Iran), CA Osasuna (Spain), Panionios (Greece) and Olympiacos (Greece), so he's used to having to adapt to new surroundings. Forest need to give Lewis Grabban a rest, with the forward having scored 14 goals in 16 Championship starts. Karanka should give Ansarifard more minutes.

(Source: vitalfootball.com)

Iran lose to Japan at Asian Women's Handball C'ship

TASNIM — Iran national women's handball team lost to Japan at the 2018 Asian Women's Handball Championship on Tuesday.

Team Melli were defeated against Powerhouse Japan 31-8 at the Yamaga Gymnasium, in Yamaga, Japan.

Iran had already lost to Kazakhstan (41-26) and Australia (29-24) in Group A.

The Iranian woman football team will meet New Zealand. Group B consists of South Korea, China, India, Hong Kong and Singapore.

The 2018 Asian Women's Handball Championship is the 17th edition of the Asian Women's Handball Championship, is being held from 30 November to 9 December 2018 in Kumamoto, Yamaga and Yatsushiro, Japan.

The tournament is held under the aegis of Asian Handball Federation and will act as the Asian qualifying tournament for the 2019 World Women's Handball Championship.

Gucci, Taremi linked with Tractor Sazi

PLDC — Reza Ghoochannejhad "Gucci" and Mehdi Taremi have been linked with move to Iran's top-flight football team Tractor Sazi.

The Tabriz-based football team has not won Iran Professional League so far and is determined to end title drought this season.

Gucci, 31, currently plays at Cypriot football team APOEL. He represented Team Melli at the 2014 and 2018 FIFA World Cups and the 2015 AFC Asian Cup.

Gucci is the seventh highest all time goalscorer for Iran with 17 international goals.

Taremi also plays in Al-Gharafa but the Qatari club's officials are reportedly unhappy with their Iranian international striker.

Tractor Sazi general manager Alireza Asadi has confirmed the negotiations with the two players.

Tractor Sazi Irish striker Anthony Stokes parted company with the team last week and Scottish forward Lee Harry Erwin returned to his country after feeling homesickness.

Iranian chess grandmasters to vie at Asian Championship in Philippines

MNA — the 17th edition of Asian Continental Open and Women's Championship 2018 will be held in the city of Makati, Philippines from Dec. 9-19, with three Iranian chess players participating in the event.

The chess grandmasters, Alireza Firouzja and Parham Maghsoodloo, along with Mobina Ali Nasab will vie at the event for the Iranian team.

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.

According to the latest FIDE (World Chess Federation) ratings, Maghsoodloo stands at the world's 4th place with 2,688 points in the juniors' standard category. Firouzja (2607) stands in 12th spot in the same category.

In the ranking of countries, which is measured by the average rating of their top 10 players, Iran has moved one place up compared to last month with 2555 points, sitting in the 25th place.

Vahid Savabieh will be the only Iranian referee officiating in the event.

Athletics: Budapest to host 2023 world championships

MONACO (Reuters) — Budapest will host the 2023 athletics world championships, the governing IAAF announced on Tuesday.

The Hungarian capital is the first host city to be named under a new bidding process announced in February last year by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF).

IAAF president Sebastian Coe said after a meeting of the IAAF Council in Monaco that Hungary boasted both athletic tradition and experience in organizing world-class sports events.

"It has been the scene of some of our greatest moments as a sport. We are excited about their plans for a new stadium that will become a great legacy for athletics," he said.

The new stadium will be built on the eastern bank of the River Danube with a capacity of 40,000 for the championships, reduced to 15,000 for future events.

Budapest has twice hosted the IAAF world indoor championships and the European athletics championships.

The 2019 world championships will be held in Doha, Qatar, and the 2021 edition in Eugene, Oregon.

Wuxi to host 2021 Para taekwondo Worlds

Wuxi, China, has been awarded the 2021 World Para Taekwondo Championships. It will be the eighth Worlds, but the first to take place after the sport's Paralympic debut at Tokyo 2020; the competition dates will be announced later.

Wuxi will also host the able-bodied World Championships that year. Wuxi Vice Mayor Liu Xia said: "I am happy and excited. We will

do our best for preparing those big events."

The last Worlds were held 2017 in Great Britain at the same venue that hosted taekwondo during the London 2012 Olympics. The 2017 Championships saw 260 athletes from a record-breaking 59 countries fight for titles across 14 medal events.

A number of fighters had memorable performances in London. Denmark's

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The welfare of countries depends on the judgment and management of governments. If governments are honest and wise in judgment, good fortune follows; if not, it will turn away and go.

Imam Ali (AS)

Tehran gallery to open with “Reprise”

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — A gallery will be inaugurated in Tehran on Friday with an exhibit titled “Reprise”, which will showcase a collection of calligraphy works and paintings.



A poster for the “Reprise” exhibition at Kolahduzan Gallery.

Iranian and Islamic motifs are the common elements among the artwork selected for the show, Kolahduzan Gallery announced in a press release on Monday.

Works by veteran artists such as Mohammad Ehsai, Nasrollah Afjei, Yaqub Emdadian, Faramarz Pilaram, Reza Mafi, Hossein Mahjubi, Sadeq Tabrizi, Manuchehr Niazi and Gizela Varga Sinai have been selected for display at the exhibit.

The exhibition will also hang artworks by Hojjat Amani, Mehdi Hosseini, Maryam Salur and Davud Qanbari.

The artworks will be on view until December 14 at the gallery located Saya Building near Tenth Alley off Mosaddeq St., Dastgerdi (Zafar) St. The gallery has been established by Seyyed Hamzeh Kolahduzan.

“Melbourne” director Nima Javidi on jury of Tbilisi film festival

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Nima Javidi, the director of the acclaimed Iranian drama “Melbourne”, is on the jury of the 19th Tbilisi International Film Festival, which is currently underway in the Georgian capital.



Iranian director Nima Javidi in an undated photo.

until December 9.

Raimundas Banionis from Lithuania, Celine Nusse from France, Kanako Hayashi from Japan and Archil Kikodze from Georgia are the other members of the jury.

Javidi’s 2014 movie “Melbourne” is scheduled to be reviewed at the festival.

The film is about a young couple, Amir and Sara, who plan to leave Tehran to try a new life in the Australian coastal city of Melbourne. However, a tragic event puts their plan at risk.

The Tbilisi International Film Festival will be running

Beyonce leads all-star line-up at Mandela tribute concert

JOHANNESBURG (Reuters) — Thousands turned out on Sunday for a concert in Johannesburg to honor the life of Nelson Mandela, with Beyonce leading an all-star line-up.

The event, held to mark 100 years since the birth of South Africa’s first black president, was organized by advocacy group Global Citizen. It also aimed to highlight the fight against poverty, gender inequality and hunger, causes that Mandela championed.

World Bank President Jim Kim was among a number of political and business leaders attending the event and he announced a \$1 billion investment in health and education across Africa in 2019.

“Be-yo-nee! Be-yo-nee!”, chanted a group of ladies as they waited in a long queue to enter Johannesburg’s FNB stadium, where Jay-Z, Usher and Ed Sheeran were also set to perform.

Thousands of fans, some wearing Global Citizen T-shirts and temporary tattoos on their shoulders, cheered, danced and cried at the sight of their favorite artists.

Many fans had been given free tickets in exchange for signing petitions and sending tweets to world leaders, urging them to take action to improve education, water supplies, sanitation, health and other issues.

Kenya’s President Uhuru Kenyatta appeared via video link and pledged to increase his country’s education budget to 30 percent of the total budget.

“For Freedom” to celebrate Islamic Revolution at Cinéma Vérité opening

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

TEHRAN — The 12th edition of the Cinéma Vérité festival will open on Sunday with screening Iranian filmmaker Hossein Torabi’s documentary “For Freedom” to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The 1980 film, which ranked last on the British Film Institute Southbank’s list of Ten Documentaries That Shook the World, will be reviewed in a special category dedicated to screening documentaries on the revolution.

A newly edited version of the film has been prepared for screening at Cinéma Vérité, which is Iran’s major international festival for documentary cinema, event director Mohammad-Mehdi Tabatabaiejad, who also presides over Iran’s Documentary and Experimental Film Center, said during a press conference on Tuesday.

“Pulse of History” (1979) by Asghar Fardust and Davud Kanani, “New Blood” (1979) by Kianush Ayyari and “Search” (1980) by Amir Naderi are among the films selected for screening in the section.

The festival also plans to honor Torabi and Manuchehr Moshiri, who is famous for his social and biographical documentary films, for their lifetime achievements.

In addition, a selection of films screened at the 20th edition of the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival in Greece during



A scene from “For Freedom” directed by Hossein Torabi.

March will be reviewed at the festival.

A large number of international filmmakers, including Gianfranco Pannone

from Italy and Nicolas Philibert from France, will attend this year’s festival to promote their latest films.

They also hold various workshops at the festival that will run in Tehran and dozens of Other Iranian cities until December 16.

Albanese to perform “Blue Hour” in Shiraz



A poster for Italian pianist Federico Albanese’s concerts, which will be performed in Shiraz next week.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Italian pianist Federico Albanese will repeat his concert “Blue Hour” at Hafez Hall in the southern Iranian city of Shiraz on December 9, the organizers announced on Tuesday.

He is already scheduled to perform the concert at Tehran’s Andisheh Hall this Friday.

Pieces from his 2016 album “The Blue Hour”, which features crisp, very dynamic and complexly arranged compositions, will be performed during the concerts.

Albanese is famous for minimalistic piano

melodies, string arrangements and electronica.

The performances have been organized by the executives of Rooberoo Mansion to celebrate the anniversary of the Tehran-based cultural center.

The concerts are the second leg of the Resonance Project launched by Rooberoo Mansion in 2017 to invite prominent musicians from across the world to perform in Iran.

The first part of the project was carried out by Icelandic pianist Olafur Arnalds in December 2017.

Luke Skywalker’s lightsaber to light up “Star Wars” props auction

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Luke Skywalker’s lightsaber from the first “Star Wars” film - one of the most iconic movie weapons - is going up for auction in Los Angeles next week and could fetch up to \$200,000.

Auctioneers Profiles in History said on Monday it also is selling some 25 other “Star Wars” items, including an original black TIE-fighter pilot helmet from the first, 1977 movie that could fetch even more money - up to \$300,000.

“Star Wars” movies have made billions of dollars at the box office worldwide and

props and costumes from the sci-fi saga can fetch sky-high prices at auction.

A complete R2-D2 droid used in the first, 1977 movie sold for \$2.76 million in 2017, and a different lightsaber used by Skywalker fetched \$450,000 last year.

Profiles in History called next week’s offering unprecedented for “Star Wars” memorabilia.

The lightsaber up for auction was used by actor Mark Hamill’s young Skywalker character in “Star Wars: A New Hope” and was designed by Oscar-winning set decorator

Roger Christian.

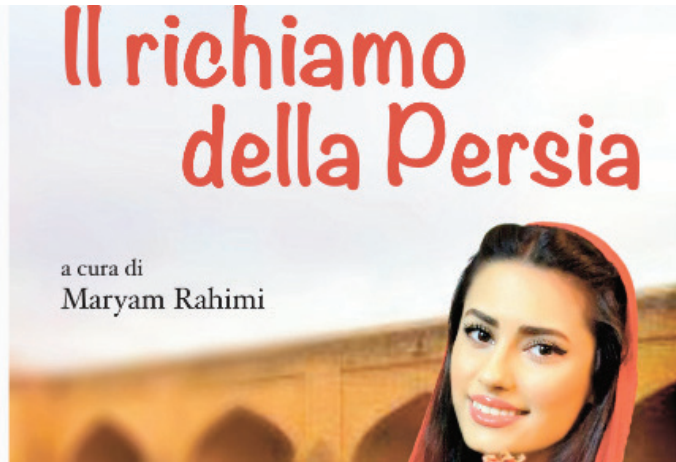
In a letter accompanying the sale, Christian describes how the hand made the lightsaber, one of about five used in the first film, “using whatever I could lay my hands on at the time.”

Profiles in History said the estimate was conservative and the sale price could easily go higher given the 2017 sale.

The “Star Wars” items will be sold during the Profiles in History Hollywood auction from Dec 11-14 in Los Angeles.

Other lots include a high-speed visual

Stories from Iran published in “Il richiamo della Persia” in Italy



Front cover of “Il richiamo della Persia” by Maryam Rahimi.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Seventeen stories by Iranian writers have been published in a book titled “Il richiamo della Persia” (“The Call of Persia”) in Italy, publisher Artebaria has announced.

The stories have been exclusively translated by the Italy-based Iranian writer Maryam Rahimi.

One of the stories is authored by Rahimi herself. Others are from Mona Rasta, Arash Mahmudi, Nilufar Mehrparvar, Vahab Nazari, Piruz Ebrahim, Mansur Alimoradi, Mojdeh

Shaban, Behnam Allami, Razieh Mehdizadeh, Yasser Noruzi, Farid Hosseini, Fatemeh Bakhshi and Saedi Bardestani.

Rahimi’s first novel, “Un sussurro nel silenzio” (“A Whisper in the Silence”), was published in 2000.

She is also the writer of “Yalda la notte lunga e la lotta dura”, “Un pugno della mia terra” and “Il sogno verde di Teheran”.

A Persian translation of “Un pugno della mia terra” by Nahal Mahzaf was published by Varajvand Publications in Tehran in 2016.

Female film directors and producers shine in Romanian New Wave

BUCHAREST (Reuters) — Starting out as a unit production manager in Romania’s film industry more than two decades ago, Ada Solomon felt she needed to punch above her weight.

But after fighting with crew on set early on in her career, Solomon, now a producer of some of Romania’s most internationally renowned films, took the advice of an assistant director that she would get farther by staying calm and treating them as partners.

“It was perhaps the first lesson in movie production I ever got,” Solomon told Reuters at the office of her production company, HiFilm. “Since then, this is how I’ve functioned with my teams.”

Today, Solomon is one of Europe’s leading film producers and the woman behind some of the most critically acclaimed dramas of recent years, including Berlinale winners “Child’s Pose” and “Aferim!” and the Oscar-nominated “Toni Erdmann.”

She is also at the forefront of an increasing number of female producers and directors working in Romania at a time when more established film industries are struggling with issues of diversity and inclusion.

The increasing role of women in Romania’s film industry is being showcased at the Making Waves Romanian Film Festival taking place in New York until Dec. 5.

Now in its 13th year, the festival is devoting a section



Romanian director Ada Solomon (R) is pictured during a movie production in this undated handout picture. (Courtesy of Rollercoaster PR/Handout via Reuters)

to films directed by women, including this year’s Berlin Golden Bear winner “Touch Me Not,” an exploration of intimacy by Adina Pintilie, as well as the thriller “Moon Hotel Kabul”, which won Anca Damian the best director prize at the Warsaw International Film Festival. Ten out of the festivals’ 17 films were produced by Solomon.

The former communist country has emerged as a powerhouse of cinema over the last two decades and much has been made about the Romanian New Wave, a genre of naturalistic and unflinching films that have been consistently winning top prizes such as the Palme d’Or in Cannes and awards at the Berlin and Venice festivals.

“Over the last two years or so, the number of female directors has grown visibly,” said Anca Damian, who first won praise for her 2011 animated feature “Culic – the Path to Beyond.”

“You can feel the wind of change. A decade ago, a woman had to make films for children. There were moments when you felt like you didn’t exist in the film community, you were just transparent,” she said. “But I’ve always felt that what I wanted to say has pushed me forward.”

Documentary filmmaker Mona Nicoara said Romania’s economic growth, which has potentially made funding more accessible also helped. There are more women working in the industry overall, from editors and cinematographers to camera operators and set designers.

“Barriers that used to exist are no longer in place, there used to be few female directors, few women in general in the industry,” said Nicoara, whose documentary about the dissident poet Nina Cassian features at Making Waves.