

**Trump showing true face of U.S. conspiratorial policies** **2**

**Saudi Arabia, UAE have monopolized PGCC** **2**

**PGCC was never effective organization: Shireen Hunter** **7**

**15 narrators to compete in Tehran Intl. Storytelling Festival** **16**



# 'Double-standards revealed in reaction to French riots'

See page 2

## Tehran hosting Caspian states' meeting on maritime safety, security

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — The desk fourth meeting of Collaboration on Maritime Safety and Security in Caspian Sea kicked off in Tehran on Monday participated by the representatives from five littoral states, IRNA reported.

The two-day event is hosting representatives from Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkmenistan.

Addressing the meeting on Monday, Hadi Haqshenas, the deputy for maritime affairs in Iran's Port and Maritime Organization (PMO), said that for the expansion of cooperation on safety and security of the sea and also preserving its environment as well as promoting shipping activities in Caspian Sea, it is very important that the littoral states take advantage of this sea in a proper way. **→4**

## Rouhani: OPEC agreement dealt yet a new blow to U.S.

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iranian desk an President Hassan Rouhani has said the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' recent agreement in Vienna marked a new defeat for the U.S. and thwarted its intrusive plots.

"Despite the Americans' attempt to interfere in OPEC's affairs and their ef-

forts to upset the balance of oil supplies, their plot was fortunately thwarted with the resistance of (OPEC) member states and the Islamic Republic of Iran and (oil minister) Mr. Zanganeh's firmness," Rouhani said at a cabinet session on Sunday evening.

He said the OPEC deal marked another defeat for the U.S. intrusive policies. **→2**

## Iraq tops Iran's visiting tourists list

**TOURISM** TEHRAN — Some 2 million Iraqi nationals visited Iran during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21), turning the country into Iran's largest source of tourists, ISNA reported.

"The number of Iraqi arrivals in Iran neared 2 million from [the first Iranian calendar] month Far-

vardin to the end of [the seventh month] Mehr," said Vali Teymouri, the deputy director of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization.

"This is while the number of travelers from Iraq stood at 1,356,185 in the last Iranian year (March 2017-18) and 1,398,201 in the year before," the official said. **→10**

## PGCC with excesses of MBS doomed to trash heap of history: Askari

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**  
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Hossein Askari, an expert on Saudi Arabia who also teaches international business at the George Washington University, believes that the PGCC has always been a Saudi 'thing' with a number of countries simply hanging on.

"But now it is rapidly becoming more a Saudi-Emirati 'thing'. Qatar and Oman are on the outs and I believe that Kuwait may begin to distance itself little by little," Hossein Askari, who served as special advisor to Saudi finance minister, tells the Tehran Times.



He adds that "But with the excesses of MBS, it is doomed to the trash heap of history." Following is the text of the interview:

## 'Genocide is slow strangulation of Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine'

By Syed Zafar Mehdi

The heart-rending stories of Rohingya refugees continue to pour out from the refugee camps of Bangladesh, where they live in impoverished condition, and from Rakhine state, where they face incarceration. The repatriation plan has been shelved following calls by the international aid organizations that the timing was not feasible for their return.

Shafiqur Rahman is a documentary film maker. He has been working on Rohingya issues for past two years. His widely acclaimed documentary 'Testimonies of a Massacre' was the first to describe the pre-planning of massacre in Tula Toli, Myanmar in August 2017. In an interview to Tehran Times, Mr. Rahman spoke about the condition of Rohingya in Bangladesh, the repatriation plan, reports about Rohingya fleeing to Malaysia because of incarceration

in Rakhine state of Myanmar and the solution to this crisis.

Following are the excerpts:

■ Myanmar and Bangladesh have been in talks regarding repatriation of Rohingya refugees. Is it safe for them to return to Myanmar?

A. Not a single international organisation involved in the crisis has seen fit to describe the situation in Rakhine as suitable for repatriation. Indeed they have cautioned Bangladesh not to repatriate Rohingya.

On the eve of the latest attempt at repatriation, 42 international NGOs emphatically opposed the move. Indeed Marzuki Darusman, Chair of the United Nations Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, made it clear in October of 2018 that all the root causes of the crisis remained and there

Q: The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council's (PGCC) annual summit was held in Riyadh while the Qatari Emir and the Sultan of Oman refrained from joining. What are the reasons behind their refusal?

A: In the case of Qatar, the reason is straightforward. The Emir could not attend simply because the Saudi embargo is akin to a declaration of war. Saudi Arabia has to begin discussions to lift the embargo before Qatar can attend a PGCC meeting. The Sultan of Oman has always been somewhat apart from Saudi Arabia. It has tried to be a mediator. The Sultan has disagreed with the embargo on Qatar and behind the scenes with the policies of MBS. This was a meeting the Sultan could not attend. **→7**

**ARTICLE**  
Saddollah Zarei  
Political analyst

## The nature of Zionist regime in Operation Northern Shield

On 4 December 2018, the Zionist regime announced the launch of Operation Northern Shield to destroy Hezbollah tunnels that reach into Northern Israel from Lebanon. According to Israeli Channel 10, the decision was made by the Security Council at the main headquarters of the Israeli army.

Immediately after the breaking news, media speculation poured in on Israel's attempt to either onset a new war or just a normal activity. There are some points in this regard:

The last conflict with the Islamic resistance group wasn't too long ago. Earlier on Tuesday November 13, the Zionist regime requested a ceasefire in a 36-hour war, demonstrating that Israel isn't after a war. The significance of the ceasefire was that Netanyahu was threatened with an internal political fragility.

Hezbollah has proved in the Syrian war that it needs no tunnel tactic to fight the opponent; however, The Israel defense forces (IDF) still claim looking for Hezbollah's tunnels on their border with Lebanon.

It seems Israel is not aware of the news that in case a war breaks out between Lebanon and Israel, as the Secretary General of Hezbollah in Lebanon had already announced, Hezbollah would not use their 33-day war tactic, which was digging tunnels.

So, the question is what Israel's objective of destroying Hezbollah tunnels is.

The Israeli army seems to pursue a number of goals. Operation Northern Shield is in the northern region from northern Haifa to the Lebanese border, a depth of about 80 km and a width of about 40 km. The operation can be a military exercise for new forces to reign in this most sensitive area, as well as the reappraisal of the defense strategy and its adaptation with new security conditions.

The experience of the recent Hamas war and its fireworks in a 30-50 km deep area reminded the Israeli army that Hezbollah could even be deeply targeted by the wider fireworks, which would disrupt the operational security of the northern region from the central region Israel. The operation of the Gaza Strip effectively depleted the area from the central region. **→7**

**ARTICLE**  
Syed Zafar Mehdi  
Journalist  
from New Delhi

## Truth about Hekmatyars' anti-Iran tirade

It's no secret that the Saudi regime has been investing millions in its no-holds-barred propaganda war against the Islamic Republic of Iran. The custodians of Islam's holiest shrines have not only managed to crush the voices critical of the regime's policies, but have been carrying out a systematic misinformation campaign against Iran through run-of-the-mill media outlets bankrolled by Riyadh.

One example is the London-based Iran International, which was in news recently following the brutal murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. A report in Guardian revealed that the journalist was killed because he had revealed sensitive information pertaining to Saudi's propaganda projects like Iran International to the newspaper's Iran correspondent.

There are more such projects waiting in the pipeline across the globe and many dubious characters are being roped in to aid kingdom's propagandists. The latest rabble-rouser to join Saudi's campaign is also a seasoned hate-monger who never gets tired of spewing venom against the Islamic Republic and keeps spreading rumors, innuendos and half-truths.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of Hizb e Islami Afghanistan, who last year signed a secret peace deal with the Afghan government, continues to be a notorious and controversial figure in Afghan politics. He return drew anger and outrage across Afghanistan as people took to streets to condemn Afghan government's amnesty to a 'war criminal'.

Although he claims to have renounced violence and joined the mainstream, he still quite brazenly bats for the insurgents. The terms and conditions of the agreement between him and the Ashraf Ghani administration in April last year are still shrouded in mystery.

Earlier this week, in an interview to Saudi-funded newspaper Ashraq Al-Awsat, Hekmatyar did what he does best smear campaign and propaganda against Iran. Hekmatyar-Saudi is a match made in hell.

He said Iran has harmed Afghanistan and its people the most by paying money to keep the war ignited. The interviewer had his task cut out to funnel out his bitterness and venom for Iran. That is the basic objective of Saudi-funded media outlets like Ashraq Al-Awsat. **→6**



## "The Third Script" performance underway at Vahdat Hall

Members of a troupe directed by Reza Musavi stage "The Third Script", an operatic performance composed by Mahyar Alizadeh, at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on December 9, 2018.

The performance features a love story from Kimia, Persian poet and mystic Rumi's step daughter, which is recounted in 14 stages.

Andisheh Fuladvand stars as Kimia in the performance.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



PGCC is neither 'council' nor 'cooperation': advisor

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the parliament speaker, has said that neither "council" nor "cooperation" has remained from the [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council.

"Neither 'council' nor 'cooperation' remains from the 'PGCC'; #Bahrain in legitimacy deficit, Saudis in #Khashoggi scandal & Riyadh & Abu Dhabi in #Yemen retreat," Amir Abdollahian said in a tweet on Sunday night.

"Requirement for strong region is Saudi-Emirati cooperation & establishment of new regional arrangement with #Iran & Iraq," he added.

The summit of the Persian Gulf Arab states concluded on Sunday in Riyadh in the absence of Qatari Emir and Sultan of Oman.



Iraq PM: Ties with Iran not influenced by foreign pressure

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi has said his country's relations with the Islamic Republic are within the framework of the national interests of the two countries, IRNA reported on Monday.

"Iraq is a sovereign country and attaches importance to its foreign relations, especially economic relations with Iran on the basis of its national interests and is not affected by the will and pressure of others," Abdul-Mahdi stated.

The Iraqi prime minister reiterated his position on the unilateral U.S. sanctions against the Iranian people, emphasizing that the Iranian and Iraqi economy had been linked together.



Minister says moves to turn Tehran smart underway

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The minister of communications and information technology said on Monday that the government and Tehran Municipality need to move towards smart management of the capital city, IRNA reported.

Speaking at the opening of the conference and the International Exhibition of Intelligent Tehran in Milad tower, Azari Jahromi said, "Tehran Municipality has made moves in this direction, which is very good and we must appreciate them."

"The e-government has come to help people in this area," Azari Jahromi said, adding, "We have already started moving towards the smart city management."



VP calls for better visa services for Iranian, British nationals

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iranian Vice President Ali-Asghar Mounesan has called for better visa services for Iranian and British nationals, saying Iranians should not face problem to receive UK visa, IRNA reported on Sunday.

"The level of relations between the two countries of Iran and Britain has increased, and we hope that this trend will continue," Mounesan said at a meeting with British Ambassador to Tehran Rob Macaire.

Macaire, for his part, said relations between Iran and Britain have increased since two years ago, and Britain is interested in increasing ties and engagement with Iran in all fields.



Iraq welcomes Iran's participation in reconstruction

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iraqi Construction and Housing Minister Bengin Rikani has hailed Iranian companies' participation in rebuilding Iraq, saying his country welcomes Iran's participation in reconstruction projects, IRNA reported on Sunday.

During a meeting with Iranian ambassador to Iraq Iraj Masjedi, the two sides discussed the latest developments in bilateral relations and cooperation.

Solutions for paying debts to Iranian companies and a readiness by big firms to participate in reconstruction of Iraq in the aftermath of terrorist acts by Daesh were among other topics discussed by the two sides.



Rouhani: OPEC agreement dealt yet a new blow to U.S.

**1 ->** After two days of talks at the OPEC headquarters in Vienna, OPEC members and 10 other oil producing nations agreed on December 7 to cut output by 1.2 million barrels a day despite opposition from U.S. President Donald Trump.

The OPEC members are planned to cut their output by 800,000 barrels and non-OPEC members by 400,000 barrels.

The Friday's deal, however, has exempted Iran, along with Venezuela and Libya.

# Sadeq Larijani: Double-standard revealed in reaction to French riots



**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iran's Judiciary chief has blasted the Western states for their double-standard approach to police violence against demonstrators in France's ongoing riots.

"You see the French police behavior towards people; the extent (of images and footages) which are released is enough to easily understand the lies in the West's claims of respect for the civil rights," Sadeq Amoli Larijani said, addressing Judiciary officials in Tehran on Monday.

The top judge warned that the protest rallies will spread to other European countries too as they are also facing injustice, expressing the hope that the European leaders would act wisely and based on human values about the demands of their people.

Since November 17, thousands of protesters, wearing yellow vests, have been gathering in major French cities including Paris to protest President Emmanuel Macron's controversial fuel tax hikes and the deteriorating economic situation.

The demonstrators, who generally live

in rural areas due to high rents in the cities, have called on Macron to cut fuel taxes and ease their economic difficulties.

According to a recent survey by The

Local, 84 percent of the French people, mostly from the middle-income group, support the protests.

Fuel prices in France have risen more

than 20 percent this year.

This movement spread to Belgium and the Netherlands in a short time.

French riot police fired tear gas and water cannon in Paris on Saturday, trying to stop tens of thousands of people from converging on the presidential palace to express their anger at high taxes and President Macron. Protesters smashed store windows and set fires around Paris and clashed with police, who fired tear gas and deployed water canon throughout the day in the French capital.

At least 135 people were injured in the protests on Saturday, including 17 police officers, while, throughout France, over 1,700 demonstrators were detained.

A total of 1,723 people were arrested across France during the latest round of "Yellow Vest" protests, in which demonstrators clashed with riot police, the Interior Ministry said on Sunday, adding that of these, 1,220 were ordered held in custody.

A total of 136,000 people demonstrated across France, including more than 10,000 in Paris.

## Tehran says Saudi Arabia, UAE have monopolized PGCC

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign Ministry on Monday indirectly slammed Saudi Arabia and the UAE for turning the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council into a body to express their own views.

"In practice, the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council has turned into a front for proclaiming the policies of a few of its members, and takes stances at the expense and in the name of all members, which do not help regional peace and stability in any way," its spokesman Bahram Qassemi said in a statement.

Chairing the 39th (P)GCC summit in Riyadh on Sunday, Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz claimed that Iran is continuing to promote terrorism and threaten regional stability. He also accused Iran of pursuing aggressive policies and interfering in the internal affairs of other countries.

Salman called on all the council's states to work with international partners to maintain regional and global security and stability, and to insist on achieving full and adequate guarantees towards Iran's nuclear program.

Qassemi called Salman's accusations against the



### "Positions announced in the PGCC meeting do not reflect the stance of all members."

Islamic Republic "baseless" and expressed regret about the continuation of the council's "unconstructive ap-

proach" toward Iran.

The Foreign Ministry spokesperson added that the council can use its potential to dispel internal and external misunderstandings and differences by adopting an "independent and logical" approach, but instead, it is "shamelessly lauding the divisive policies of certain extra-regional countries."

Iran believes that the positions announced during the Riyadh summit do not necessarily reflect the stance of all the council's members, he said.

"Saudi Arabia's failure to achieve its goals at the meeting can be seen in the contradiction between the text of the [final] statement and the practical approach taken by some members towards the Islamic Republic of Iran," Qassemi pointed out.

He emphasized that certain members of the council have a correct understanding of Iran's neighborhood policy, the regional realities and the requirements of good neighborliness, and have always been a pioneer in reducing misunderstandings.

## Trump showing true face of U.S. conspiratorial policies, Velayati says

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Ali Akbar Velayati, a top foreign policy adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, said on Monday that the United States has failed to impose its will on others over the past 40 years and the trend will continue.

Addressing religious scholars at a conference in Tehran, Velayati said U.S. President Donald Trump has shown the true face of Washington's conspiratorial policies since he became president, Mehr reported.

"The totality of Trump's actions does not represent measures taken by a person who is foolish and unfamiliar with politics, but demonstrates a scenario written by the U.S. ruling system," the veteran politician stated.

Velayati also called for unity among Muslims in order to be able to resist the hegemony's unilateral policies.

The senior advisor underlined that although the enemies have not been able to



reach their goals in the region, they have inflicted damages on Muslim nations.

This is obvious from the heinous strategies, such as spreading terrorism and extremism via Takfiri groups, that they have adopted in the past years to weaken Muslim nations, he added.

Velayati further expressed deep concern about the ongoing conflicts in the Muslim world, noting that putting an end to the bloodshed among Muslims is an "Islamic, humanitarian duty".

## Germany: Saving Iran deal important for European security

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said on Monday that salvaging the Iran nuclear deal is important for Europe's security, IRNA reported.

"We will protect the JCPOA, which is important for our security, as long as Iran remains committed to it without the slightest violation," Maas told reporters in the EU foreign ministers' monthly meeting in Brussels.

The German minister underlined European countries "will take steps to facilitate financial and economic activities in Iran."

"There have been talks between Germany and France that have to be implemented as a result," he said, with regard to the special vehicle purpose (SPV), a special payment channel created by Europe in defiance of U.S. sanctions.

"This issue is being considered in Brussels today," he added. President Donald Trump withdrew



the U.S. unilaterally from the JCPOA in May and ordered sanctions against Iran despite worldwide criticism.

Meanwhile, Iran has continued to comply with the terms of the JCPOA, which was struck in July 2015 after years of negotiations between Tehran and six world powers, including the U.S., Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany.

Iranian officials have occasionally criticized European countries for failing to secure its interests under the pact.

## Jubeir: Saudi in talks with U.S. for Arab front against Iran

Saudi Arabia Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir says the kingdom is in talks with the United States about a new security alliance of Arab countries specifically aimed at countering Iran.

Speaking at a press briefing in Riyadh Sunday, the Saudi FM said the new pact would be similar in style to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and would seek to protect the Middle East from "external aggression."

"Talks are continuing between the United States and the (Persian) Gulf states around this question and ideas are being drawn up," he said at the press call, which came after the annual Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit.

"The aim is to achieve security arrangements in the Middle East that can protect the region from external aggression... and strengthen relations between the United States and the countries of the region," Jubeir added.

The Saudi diplomat said the agreement, which is going to feature Egypt as a member as well, would be called the Middle East Strategic Alliance, or MESA.

The remarks confirmed months-long media reports

about a joint push between Riyadh and Washington for the establishment of a so-called "Arab NATO" that would also serve Israeli interests in the Middle East region.

U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Persian Gulf Affairs Tim Lenderking on Sunday toured the region to convince Arab leaders to commit to the plan.

The idea of an alliance comprising Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman along with the U.S., Egypt and Jordan was first floated during President Donald Trump's visit to Riyadh last year.

The remarks by Jubeir came amid a widening rift between the White House and U.S. lawmakers over Washington's ties with Riyadh.

While Saudi Arabia continues to receive unconditional support from the Trump administration, Riyadh's stature has plunged in the halls of Capitol Hill.

Trump has so far resisted strong pressure from Congress to go after the de facto Saudi leader, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, for his actions.

Besides leading a deadly war on Yemen since March

2015, the young prince stands accused of ordering a hit job on dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who was murdered after entering the Saudi consulate in the Turkish city of Istanbul on October 2.

Trump argues that subjecting Saudi Arabia to punishment in high times like this would alienate the longtime ally and push it towards Russia, jeopardizing Israel and billions of dollars in U.S. arms deals.

American lawmakers, however, argue that the U.S. can still punish MBS without harming ties.

Speaking to Fox News on Sunday, Republican Senator and close Trump ally, Lindsey Graham, said it was Washington that had the upper hand in the relationship with Riyadh and not the other way around.

Noting that the Saudi military "can't fight out of a paper bag," Graham said Washington's support was the only thing that helped Saudi Arabia survive Iran's influence.

"Let me put it this way -- I want to be very blunt with you," Graham asserted. "If it weren't for the United States they'd be speaking Farsi in about a week in Saudi Arabia."

(Source: Press TV)

## Hosting SPV by France, Germany is 'a step forward': expert

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — An expert on international affairs says the news report that France and Germany have agreed to host the special vehicle purpose (SPV) seems to be "a step forward" despite being long overdue.

The SPV is a special payment channel created by Europe as part of its efforts to keep trade flowing with Iran in defiance of U.S. sanctions.

"The mechanism, and in general the nuclear deal, is tied to Europe's dignity, and Europe has to comply with the deal to retain its credibility," ISNA on Monday quoted Nozar Shafeie as saying.

On the other hand, Shafeie continued, the nuclear pact cannot be implemented without first designing and implementing a payment channel with Iran.

Back in May, U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew his country unilaterally from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and ordered sanctions against Iran. The first round of sanctions went into force on August 6 and the second round, which targets Iran's oil exports and banks, were snapped back on November 4.

Shafeie pointed out that with U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, the mechanisms of



payment channel with Iran were blocked, adding that Europe needs to establish the SPV as fast as possible, otherwise Iran "may

change its policy direction."

Iran and the European side have been discussing ways to conduct non-dollar trade in order to offset the U.S. sanctions.

It has been reported that the SPV will be located in France and its director to be chosen from Germany.

The move comes after Luxembourg and Austria, under the U.S. pressure, refused to host the SPV, with Luxembourg officials being warned that hosting the mechanism could damage the country's place as a major financial center hosting many international investment funds.

# PGCC summit ends without roadmap to resolve ongoing crisis

The 39th Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) summit has come to an end in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, without any major breakthroughs to resolve a diplomatic crisis that continues to grip the region.

The Persian Gulf crisis, being described by observers as the elephant in the room, was not brought up at the annual summit that concluded on Sunday. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Egypt have imposed an air, land and sea blockade on Qatar since June 2017.

The blockading quartet has accused Qatar of supporting "terrorism". Qatar has denied the charges and said the boycott aims to impinge on its sovereignty.

While the crisis was not explicitly mentioned during the meeting, a call for unity was issued at the end of the gathering in a joint communique.

A Qatari foreign ministry spokesman blasted the communique on Twitter for not discussing or resolving the blockade.

Saudi king Salman bin Abdulaziz had invited Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to attend the talks, but the latter stayed away from the annual summit.

Instead, a delegation headed by Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad Al Muraikhi represented the country at the summit.

The decision was met with criticism from some of the council's members, but Doha brushed aside the comments.

"Qatar can make its own decisions and had attended [last year's] Kuwait summit while the leaders of the boycotting countries did not," said Ahmed bin Saeed Al Rumaihi, director of the information office at Qatar's foreign ministry.



## ■ 'Continuing' cooperation

The GCC, a political and economic alliance of countries in the Arabian Peninsula, was established in 1981 to foster socioeconomic, security, and cultural cooperation.

Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE gather every year to discuss cooperation and regional affairs.

During a press conference following the summit late on Sunday, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubair said that cooperation continues between Qatar and other GCC members in the fields of military operations and training, and security and ministerial exchanges.

"Members of the council are determined that the crisis with Qatar does not have a negative effect on the council in general and its structure," he said.

"In reference to security, things are continuing, military cooperation and training are continuing, and as for the programmes for specific ministries, such as the health ministries and trade ministries, affairs are continuing," al-Jubair continued.

"The goal is to preserve all of these important structures, until the crisis ends, hopefully soon."

Given last December's summit in Kuwait was cut short, many questioned whether this year's gathering would take place altogether. At the time, the UAE announced it had formed an economic and military partnership with Saudi Arabia separate from the GCC.

But in his opening remarks, Saudi king Salman noted that the objective of the gathering is to set up a coordination council and to

adopt a strategy for economic, development and military integration.

King Salman accused Saudi archrival Iran of "continuing to interfere in the affairs of the countries in the region".

He stressed the importance of the PGCC and the need to "defend, in collaboration with our partners, security and stability in the Persian Gulf".

Kuwait, a traditional mediator in the region, called for a halt to media campaigns in the Persian Gulf.

This year's summit also came amid the diplomatic crisis over Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi's assassination, for which Riyadh has faced global condemnation.

Khashoggi, a Washington Post columnist who lived in self-imposed exile in the United States, was killed inside the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul in early October.

The summit expressed support to the Saudi measures in dealing with the Khashoggi case, despite mounting international pressure.

As Saudi Arabia's de facto leader, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in particular, has come under scrutiny over the country's involvement in the war in Yemen, which has caused thousands of civilian deaths, as well as its intensifying crackdown on public dissent in the kingdom.

The closing declaration announced that the council would continue to support the Palestinian cause and a political solution to the war in Yemen.

It also revealed that member states would work to ensure financial unity until 2025, and work towards establishing a unified military command.

(Source: al Jazeera)

## Ansarullah says open for more talk if Sweden process yields



Yemen's popular Houthi Ansarullah movement says it is open for more talks with representatives of the country's former Saudi Arabia-backed government if underway negotiations in Sweden make progress.

"If we leave these consultations having made progress -- progress in building confidence and finding a framework -- we can hold a new round of talks" in the coming months, the spokesman and chief negotiator for the movement said on Sunday.

Speaking on the sidelines of the talks that are taking place in the rural village of Rimbo, Mohammed Abdul-Salam also reiterated his group's call for reopening of Sana'a International Airport in the country's capital. The terminal has been closed save for a few select aid flights for nearly three years now.

Separately, however, he said his delegation has participated in the UN-brokered peace negotiations to restore peace in the conflict-plagued Arab country, and not to surrender.

Abdul-Salam told Lebanon-based Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network that it was not the Ansarullah delegates who called for indirect talks with representatives from the administration of former Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, but in fact it was the other way around.

He highlighted that Houthis are in Sweden for Yemen peace talks and not to surrender, saying, "We called for a transitional phase in order for the remaining issues of the national dialogue to advance."

Abdel-Salam said, "Military operations in Hudaydah must stop and invading forces must go back to their positions. Among the most critical issues that we want to be addressed that the fate of our fellow fighters currently being held captive in the United Arab Emirates."

The Ansarullah chief negotiator also expressed surprise at the Saudi-led military coalition's demand on Yemeni army soldiers and allied fighters from Popular Committees to lay down arms at the same time as thousands of Saudi mercenaries are fighting in Yemen.

Meanwhile, Head of Yemen's National Committee for Prisoners' Affairs, Abdulqader al-Mortadha, said on Sunday that the Saudi-backed pro-Hadi delegation has called for the postponement of a prisoner swap.

"We were ready today to exchange the lists of prisoners under the set deadline, but the Riyadh-supported group requested to put off the process until tomorrow," Yemen's al-Masirah television network quoted him as saying.

Mortadha further stressed that the prisoner exchange agreement is defined by an operational mechanism, expressing hope that the United Nations commits everyone to specific obligations so that no room is available for manipulation, disavowal and delay.

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

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

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

A number of Western countries, the U.S. and Britain in particular, are also accused of being complicit in the ongoing aggression as they supply the Riyadh regime with advanced weapons and military equipment as well as logistical and intelligence assistance.

(Source: Press TV)

## UN members adopt global migration pact rejected by U.S. and others



UN members on Monday adopted a deal aimed at improving the way world copes with rising migration, but almost 30 countries stayed away from the ceremony in Morocco.

The pact, meant to foster cooperation on migration, was agreed in July by all 193 UN members except the United States, but only 164 formally signed it at the meeting on Monday. Ten countries, mostly in formerly Communist Eastern Europe, were pulled out. Six more, among them Israel and Bulgaria, are debating whether to quit, a UN spokesman said after the pact was adopted. He did not say whether the rest of the countries absent from the conference in Marrakech might also pull out.

With a record 21.3 million refugees globally, the United Nations began work on the non-binding pact after more than 1 million people arrived in Europe in 2015, many fleeing civil war in Syria and poverty in Africa.

But President Donald Trump's administration said the global approach to the issue was not compatible with U.S. sovereignty.

Since July, the accord, which addresses issues such as how to protect migrants, integrate them and send them home, has been criticized by mostly right-wing European politicians who say it could increase immigration from African and Arab countries.

Angela Merkel, accused by critics of worsening the refugee crisis by opening Germany's borders in 2015, said cooperation was the only answer to tackle the

world's problems.

"The pact is worth fighting for," the German chancellor, one of around a dozen national leaders in Marrakech, told the forum. "It's about time that we finally tackle migration together."

Without naming Trump or his "America First" stance, she said multilateralism was the way "to make the world a better place".

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said migration needed better management and rich countries would benefit.

"In the many places where fertility is declining and life expectancy is rising, economies will stagnate and people will suffer without migration," he said in his opening address.

"It is clear that most developed countries need migrants across a broad spectrum of vital roles, from caring for elderly people to preventing the collapse of health services," he said.

On Sunday, Chile withdrew from the pact, while Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel saw the biggest party in his coalition quit in a dispute over the accord.

In November, Austria's right-wing government, which holds the EU presidency, said it would withdraw, saying the pact would blur the line between legal and illegal migration.

Australia said it would not sign up to a deal it said would compromise its headline immigration policy.

## Transcript of Khashoggi's last words reveals premeditated murder



A full translated transcript of an audio recording of the murder of Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul on October 2 has shown that the killing was pre-planned, refuting Riyadh's claims.

A source, who read the translated version and who has been briefed on the investigation into Khashoggi's killing, has made the revelations to CNN.

He said the transcript of the last words of the Washington Post columnist made it clear that the murder was no botched interrogation, rather the execution of a premeditated plan to kill him - unlike what Saudi officials initially claimed.

The source said the last three words that Khashoggi repeated three times as he was struggling against his perpetrators who attacked him shortly after entering the consulate were, "I can't breathe."

The transcript described the last painful moments of Khashoggi's life, noting that his screams and gasps could be heard on the tape. It also identified the sounds of saw and cutting as the victim's body was dismembered.

According to the source, Turkish authorities identified one of the voices of the attackers as belonging to Salah Muhammad al-Tubaiqi, the head of forensic medicine at Saudi Arabia's Interior Ministry.

In the audio, he is reportedly heard advising the hit squad to "Put your earphones

in, or listen to music like me" in order to help them deal with the appalling task.

The transcript does not specify the moment the journalist dies.

According to the source, at least three phone calls were placed by Maher Abdulaziz Mutreb, a former Saudi diplomat and intelligence official working for Saudi crown prince, briefing someone, whom Turkish officials say was in Riyadh, on the progress of the job.

"Tell yours, the thing is done, it's done." According to the source, the word "yours" refers to a superior, or boss.

The transcript of the phone conversation showed that the calls did not describe an unexpected situation, but Mutreb was describing a situation going entirely according to plan, the source said.

"The transcript is relatively short, given the time span it describes," the source told CNN, refuting the Saudi claim that Khashoggi was being interrogated.

The fullest account of the transcript is likely to increase pressure on U.S. President Donald Trump, who has avoided rebuking Saudi Arabia over Khashoggi's murder and vowed to stand with its ally, citing lucrative arms deals among the reasons for his support.

Trump has been at odds with the CIA, which is said to have concluded that bin Salman was behind the killing.

(Source: agencies)

## Armenia election: PM Nikol Pashinyan wins by landslide

Armenia's acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has won a convincing victory in Sunday's snap parliamentary election, consolidating his authority.

His bloc won more than 70% of the vote, the country's election commission said. A journalist turned politician, Mr Pashinyan spearheaded a peaceful revolution in April.

He now has a parliamentary majority to push through his programme of tackling corruption and reforming the economy. Poll turnout was low, at about 49%.

Historically, Armenia's elections have been marred by fraud and vote-buying.

However, international observers from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe said the elections had respected fundamental freedoms and were characterised by genuine competition.

### ■ What is the result?

Final official results show that the centrist My Step Alliance, which includes Mr Pashinyan's Civil Contract Party, won 70.4% of the vote.

Its nearest rival, the moderate Prosperous Armenia party

won just over 8%. Led by tycoon and arm-wrestling champion Gagik Tsarukyan, it was part of the ruling coalition in the outgoing parliament.

Bright Armenia, a liberal pro-Western party, won about 6% of the vote, the commission said.

Each party needed at least 5% of the vote to enter the 101-seat National Assembly.

Armenia's constitution states that 30% of seats in parliament must go to opposition parties.

### ■ What will it mean for Armenia?

At a polling station in the capital, Yerevan, voters said they hoped Mr Pashinyan would be able to deliver the ambitious changes he had promised.

One woman, who gave her name as Narine Harutyunyan, said she felt "very optimistic," adding, "I hope that my vote is going to play a role so that there will always be a smile in the eyes of Armenians."

Analysts say the 43-year-old will aim to keep his promises while staying in the good books of Armenia's key ally, Russia. A former Soviet state of three million people, Armenia

hosts a Russian military base and depends on Moscow for its security.

Mr Pashinyan has said he hopes to "step up co-operation with the United States and European Union".

### ■ How have the PM's critics reacted?

The revolution led by Mr Pashinyan ousted the country's 10-year President Serzh Sargsyan, a member of the Republic Party. He was accused of clinging to power after taking on the newly-enhanced role of prime minister when his term ended.

Now senior Republican Party figures have accused Mr Pashinyan of trying to turn Armenia into 1930s Germany, and of becoming a Hitler figure.

His critics say his "cult of personality" will weaken multi-party democracy.

Armen Ashotyan, vice-president of the Republican Party, complained before the election that "all political parties were deprived of time to prepare well".

He added that he expected "so-called post-revolutionary euphoria" would be reflected at the ballot box.

(Source: BBC)

## Scottish nationalists offer support to Labor to topple UK PM

The leader of the Scottish National Party, Nicola Sturgeon, has said she will support the opposition Labor party if it lodges a no-confidence motion on British Prime Minister Theresa May's rule.

May will reportedly cancel a parliamentary vote approving her preferred arrangement for leaving the EU, which was scheduled for Tuesday in the face of widespread opposition from within her party and the opposition.

"If Labor, as official opposition, lodges motion of no confidence in this incompetent government tomorrow, [the SNP] will support & we can then work together to give people the chance to stop Brexit in another vote. This shambles can't go on - so how about it?" Sturgeon wrote on her Twitter account.

More than 100 members of the prime minister's Conservatives were set to vote against the deal, as well as the Labor party.

If the vote had failed, it would almost certainly have ended May's rule. Instead she reportedly will head to Brussels in the hope of securing changes to her deal with the EU, which several European states have flat out refused to negotiate.

A motion of no confidence, if passed, would force a new election unless an alternative government can be formed by the opposition.

Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn has repeatedly stated he is ready to form a minority government or support a snap general election.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	166915.9
IFX	1857.74

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,994 rials
GBP	53,528 rials
AED	11,380 rials

Source: iribnews.ir

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$51.57/b
Brent	\$60.81/b
OPEC Basket	\$58.79/b
Gold	\$1,246.40/oz
Silver	\$14.60/oz
Platinum	\$788.25/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Iran, China resume banking transactions

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — “Iran and China resume their joint banking relations from today”, Deputy Head and speaker of Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce Majid-Reza Hariri announced on Sunday, Tasnim news agency reported.

“We needed a new plan for our banking relations with China following the new round of U.S. sanctions imposed on November 4, which impacted our ties,” he said, “the issue is resolved now and financial transactions becomes operational today via China’s Bank of Kunlun, as the only bank operating between Iran and China.”

“Iran imports one billion dollars per month from China but we were faced with serious difficulties within the past two months in our banking transactions with the country and there is two billion dollars of accumulated demand, presently,” he informed.

“The problem will be tackled within ten working days and our mutual banking relation will be continued as in the pre-sanction era,” he vowed.

Tehran hosting Caspian Sea littoral states’ meeting on maritime safety, security

The official also highlighted location of Caspian Sea in the North-South Transit Corridor and said that preserving the environment of this sea is a priority for the five littoral states.



At the Third Caspian Summit in Baku in November 2010, the leaders of the five states that surround the Caspian Sea signed an agreement on security cooperation, which was one of the main points of the summit’s agenda.

Iran-Iraq trade delegation exchange up 137% in 9 months

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iran’s commercial attaché in Iraq said the exchange of trade delegations between Iran and Iraq has increased by 137 percent since March, compared to the same period last year.

According to Naser Behzad, during the mentioned period, 19 Iraqi trade delegations constituting 300 businessmen and officials have visited Iran to attend various exhibitions and economic events, the portal of Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) reported.

Pharmaceutical and medical industries, ceramic tiles, furniture and home appliances, sweets and chocolates, livestock and poultry, agricultural equipment, plastic products, construction materials and machinery of production lines have been among the areas

focused by Iraqi delegations.

The official noted that such exchanges have resulted in several agreements signed between the two sides’ private sectors.

According to the TPO’s target for the current Iranian calendar year, it was expected that by the yearend (March 20, 2019) 10 delegation exchanges would take place between the two countries.

“The results so far show that we are already ahead of the planning, this is an indication of the determination of the two countries for developing business relations”, Behzad said.



Third train of SP phases 22-24 sweetening refinery comes online

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — The third train of sweetening refinery of phases 22, 23 and 24 of Iran’s South Pars gas field was put into operation and the phases are ready to receive sour gas, operator of the phases announced.

According to Farhad Izadjou, this line is currently producing 8 million cubic meters of sweet gas from the sour gas supplied by phases 6, 7 and 8.

“When reaches its full potential, this line will process 500 million cubic feet (14.2 million cubic meters) of sour gas,” he added.

Izadjou further noted that the first and second trains of South Pars phases 22-24 sweetening refinery are also receiving the sour gas produced in phase 6, 7 and 8.

According to the operator of the phases, while completely operational, this refinery complex will be able to process 1.5 billion



cubic feet (42.4 million cubic meters) of sour gas in a daily basis.

South Pars phases 22-24 development project aims for producing 56 million cubic meters of sour gas per day, a daily production of 50 million cubic meters of methane, 2900 tons of LPG, 2750 tons of ethane, 75,000 bar-

rels of gas condensate and 400 tons of sulfur.

South Pars, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world’s reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

TCCIMA honors exemplary exporters

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — In a ceremony on Monday, Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) honored 15 exemplary exporters of Tehran Province, TCCIMA website reported.

TCCIMA also praised five companies of the province for their valuable export activities.

The mentioned ceremony was participated by a number of officials including Industry Minister Reza Rahmani, Mohammadreza Modoudi, the acting head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO), Iran Export Confederation Chairman Mohammad Lahouti, and TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari, as well as representatives from some state-run organizations and some directors of private companies.

Addressing the ceremony, industry minister said that



the ministry has set up a think tank on exports besides those on mining, production, technology and market balance, IRIB reported.

“Boosting exports to the neighboring countries is one of our priorities in the current year and the unions and associations should contribute to this issue”, the minister noted.

“We are committed to create balance in the market for domestic producer and consumer and to have a sustainable export status we should preserve balance between domestic and export markets”, he added.

Lahouti, who was in charge of the secretariat of the taskforce to name the exemplary exporters, both in this year and the previous year, when the first edition of the event took place, was another speaker in the ceremony.

He referred to the problems and barriers that the exporters are facing and called for taking a consolidated approach toward exports.

Chinese state media distance Huawei arrest from U.S. trade talks

Chinese state media on Monday denounced the arrest of a top executive at tech giant Huawei HWT.UL, but did not link it to talks to resolve a trade dispute with the United States, an apparent effort not to undermine prospects for a deal.

Senior White House administration officials on Sunday insisted that Canada’s arrest of Huawei Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou on a U.S. extradition request was solely a law enforcement matter that would not derail talks with China.

China’s Foreign Ministry criticized what it called the U.S. “unreasonable demand” on Canada to detain Meng while she was passing through Vancouver on Dec. 1. But the commerce ministry, which is engaged in trade negotiations, has declined to comment on the matter.

“At present, it seems there has been a fragile adherence in China and the United States to not link the two,” the influential Global Times newspaper said in a commentary.

In a separate commentary, the Global Times suggested that the United States would isolate itself from the world’s digital economy if it shunned Huawei.

The China Daily newspaper said in an editorial on the arrest it hoped Canada would not “hold a candle while the devil does its dirty deeds”.

But there was scant mention in state media of tension over Huawei issue bleeding into the trade talks, a possibility that had roiled global markets as investors worried it

could torpedo attempts to ease trade tension.

Tu Xinquan, a trade expert at Beijing’s University of International Business and Economics, said the commerce ministry had not mentioned the Huawei issue because it was focused on negotiations.

“The Chinese government is trying to de-link the two things,” Tu said.

“If you don’t see any discussions in Chinese media, that’s the intention of the government.”

(Source: Reuters)

Euro zone recession risk climbs, rate rise conviction wavers

The European Central Bank is on course to raise its still-negative deposit rate in the third quarter of 2019 but economists’ conviction has faded over the past month as the chances of a recession have risen.

A Reuters poll conducted Dec. 4-7 also showed economists are unanimous in saying the risk is low that the Governing Council will extend its more than 2.6 trillion euro (\$2.96 trillion) asset purchase program beyond this month, which would break its long-held guidance.

The survey, taken during a period of extreme gyrations in global financial markets, also found it was a close call for economists on whether the ECB would hike its main refinancing rate in a year’s time, and it may be pushed into early 2020. The rate is currently zero.

A series of weak economic reports, including slowing momentum in key business surveys and a shock report showing euro zone growth halved to just 0.2 percent in the third quarter, which was the lowest in four years, is partly responsible for the hesitation.

But even if the economy does bounce back in the current quarter as most respondents still expect, there is not enough likely momentum or inflation pressure building to warrant several rate rises next year.

The survey is the latest in a series of Reuters polls on major world central banks, including the U.S. Federal Reserve, which show fading conviction for policy tightening.

“I would say we have strong doubts ... there is a genuine chance there will be no hikes at all next year. Within the next few years the only thing I see is a normalization of getting rid of negative interest rates,” said Peter Vanden Houte, chief euro zone economist at ING.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents who answered an extra question, 31 of 48, said their conviction around the ECB’s current expected rate hike path in 2019 has fallen over the past month.

Only three felt more confident, while the remaining 14 said there was no change.

“With actual growth rates set to lag potential growth from 2019 onwards, the ECB’s medium-term inflation target is unlikely to be attained on a sustainable basis,” wrote Juergen Michels, chief economist at BayernLB.

“Accordingly, the ECB is likely to distance itself more and more from its plan to raise its policy rates for the first time after summer 2019.”

The latest Reuters poll found the chances of a recession next year, while still low, crept up to 20 percent from 15 percent previously, where it had held since August.

Similarly, the probability of a recession in two years also rose, to 30 percent from 25 percent, the first rise since July, when Reuters first started polling on this period.

(Source: Reuters)



IN THE NAME OF GOD  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

**EXTENSION OF INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 97-07/171**

*First Announcement*

**Tender Holder:**  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

**Subject of Two-Stage Tender:**  
**Equipment procurement for HEAD END Mpeg-4 according to the tender documents**

**Deadline of Receiving Documents:**  
As of publishing second announcement of advertisement latest by the business hour dated on **Monday December 17, 2018.**

**Place of Receiving Documents:**  
Secretariat of Tenders’ Commission, Technical Purchasing (KALA) Dept., Media Technology and Development Deputy Office, Bldg. No. 2, IRIB, Jam-e Jam St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran

**Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participating in Tender:**  
The amount of **USD 11,000** which should be in the form of extendable bank guarantee

**Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:**  
The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted within one main envelope marked with tender number no later than **15 p.m. on Wednesday January 16, 2019** and submitted to the Secretariat of Commission of Tenders.

**Time and Place of Opening Envelopes**  
The date of opening envelopes A&B is at **8:30 a.m. on Sunday January 20, 2019** in the office of Vice President of IRIB Planning and Financial Resources and opening of envelope C will be after technical evaluation.

It should be noted that bidders should hold license from the authorized bodies.

For more information, please contact the following phone numbers: **0098-21-22166313**  
It is obvious that cost of publishing two advertisements shall be borne by the winner of tender.

**Public Relations Dept. of IRIB**

# Brent oil rises after deal to cut supply, but 2019 outlook weakens

Brent crude oil futures rose on Monday after producer club OPEC and some non-affiliated suppliers last Friday agreed to a supply cut from January.

Despite this, the price outlook for next year remains muted on the back of an economic slowdown.

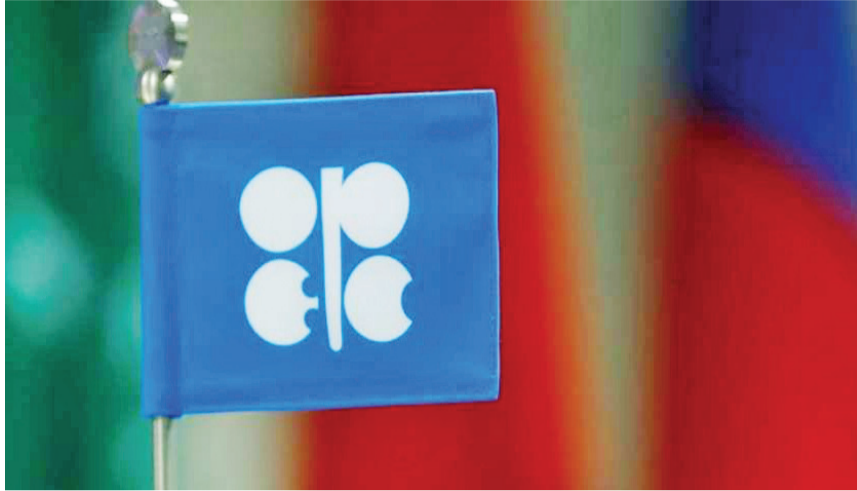
International Brent crude oil futures were at \$62.03 per barrel at 0748 GMT, up 36 cents, or 0.6 percent, from their last close.

Prices surged after the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and some non-OPEC producers including heavyweight Russia on Friday said they would cut oil supply by 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd), with an 800,000-bpd reduction planned by OPEC members and 400,000 bpd by countries not affiliated with the group.

The shutdown of the 315,000-bpd El Sharara oilfield in Libya also helped push up Brent, traders said.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were weaker, however, dropping 10 cents from their last settlement to \$52.51 per barrel, weighed down by surging U.S. output as the booming American oil industry is not taking part in the announced cuts.

"The surge in U.S. supply in recent months should be a reason for caution," Bank of America Merrill Lynch said in a note on Monday.



The OPEC-led supply curbs will be made from January, measured against October 2018 output levels.

U.S. bank Morgan Stanley said the cut was "likely sufficient to balance the market in 1H19 and prevent inventories from building".

It added that it expected "Brent to reach \$67.5 per barrel by 2Q19, down from \$77.5 before."

Bank of America said the reduction "should

lead to a relatively balanced global oil market and will likely push Brent and WTI prices back to our respective expected averages of \$70 per barrel and \$59 per barrel in 2019."

Not all analysts were so confident.

Edward Bell of Emirates NBD bank said "the scale of the cuts ... isn't enough to push the market back into deficit" and that he expected "a market surplus of around 1.2 million bpd in Q1 with the new production

levels".

Oil prices have fallen sharply since October on signs of an economic slowdown, with Brent losing almost 30 percent in value.

Japan, the world's No.4 oil consumer, on Monday revised its third quarter GDP growth down to an annualized rate of minus 2.5 percent, down from the initial estimate of minus 1.2 percent.

Meanwhile, the two world's biggest economies - the United States and China - are locked in a trade war which is threatening to slow global growth and battering investor sentiment.

Despite the expectations of a slowdown, demand on the ground remains healthy.

China, the world's biggest oil importer, over the weekend reported November crude imports rose 8.5 percent from a year ago, to 10.43 million bpd, marking the first time China imported more than 10 million bpd. That leaves the world's second-biggest economy on track to set yet another annual import record.

Demand is driven by Chinese purchases for strategic reserves, but also by new refineries, triggering excess supply of fuels, filling up storage tanks and eroding refinery profits across Asia.

(Source: Reuters)

## BP, Shell to face new shareholder challenge over climate in 2019

The activists who rankled Royal Dutch Shell Plc by filing climate-change resolutions for three straight years now are targeting other oil majors.

Following this, a Dutch group that accumulates shares in oil companies in order to press them over greenhouse gas emissions, has filed another resolution against Shell for 2019. It also filed its first resolution against BP Plc and may target Chevron Corp. and Exxon Mobil Corp. in the same way.

The group, led by former journalist Mark van Baal, has been a source of frustration for Shell management, even though its resolutions have gone down to defeat. Van Baal stood up at the Anglo-Dutch supermajor's May 2018 shareholder meeting and said Shell was misleading its investors by saying it was on track to meet global climate targets, prompting CEO Ben van Beurden to angrily retort that wasn't the case.

Last week, seven months after the exchange, Van Beurden softened his tone. He said Shell should do more on climate change and that the company will set public, short-term targets on emissions reductions starting in 2020, which could impact how the company deploys capital.

"We've seen how effective climate resolutions are in the case of Shell," Van Baal said in a statement. "However, we need the entire oil and gas industry to go along."

The resolutions will ask companies to align their investments with the 2016 Paris Agreement, in which countries agreed they would try to limit global warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit). Global carbon emissions need



to fall 25 percent by 2030 to reach the goal, while some oil companies, mostly in the U.S., haven't even indicated they'll cut greenhouse gases to that extent within their own operations.

Along with customer usage, the energy sector accounts for about two-thirds of global emissions, according to the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change.

BP said in a statement it had received the resolution and was considering it carefully, while also pointing to near-term targets to cut emissions from its own operations and its energy transition report. Shell said the resolution was "unnecessary" given its announcement on short-term targets last week. Exxon spokesman Scott Silvestri declined to comment.

"Chevron is taking prudent, practical and cost-effective actions to address potential climate change risks, including managing emissions, testing new technologies and increasing efficiency," Sean Comey, a Chevron spokesman, said in an email. "We actively engage with investors to encourage thoughtful dialogue that produces meaningful solutions to climate change."

(Source: Bloomberg)

## OPEC withdrawal fits Qatar's LNG strategy, says U.S. finance attaché

Qatar's recent decision to withdraw its membership from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a business decision that supports the country's development strategy for its liquefied natural gas (LNG) sector, industry experts agreed during the Euromoney Conference held in Doha on Sunday.

Qatar is OPEC's 11th-biggest oil producer. Lesley Chavkin, the U.S. Department of the Treasury financial attaché to Qatar and Kuwait, pointed out that Qatar's total output accounts for "only 2 percent."

"Qatar is not a behemoth in OPEC, and I think it (withdrawal from OPEC) fits with the strategy to focus the resources on LNG. That seems to be the future of Qatar's energy industry," Chavkin said during the panel discussion titled 'Qatar's Economy - New Directions, New Opportunities'.

On the global market, Chavkin also said that Qatar is expanding its reach, veering towards the Asia Pacific region. She noted that Qatar may have to look into short-term contracts with its Asian buyers.

"Obviously, it's no surprise that the demand is coming from the Asia Pacific region. We have China aggressively moving from coal to gas...moving forward, it's going to be Asian-focused."

"What I think is a kind of interesting space to watch is LNG contracts. So, Asian buyers tend to prefer buying LNG on spot or short-term basis. LNG contracts here tend to be longer term, and Qatar has flexibility in adjusting some of its longer term contracts to maintain market share but that's something interesting that we



would be watching, going forward," Chavkin explained.

Mohamed Barakat, the managing director of U.S.-Qatar Business Council, said he agrees with Qatar's decision to withdraw its membership from OPEC, "because this is a business-focused decision."

"Qatar is in the gas business and its oil production doesn't affect the market that much as countries like Saudi Arabia," Barakat said.

He added: "Qatar's decision to increase its gas production will definitely increase the support and supplies that Qatar can provide globally, knowing that from a U.S. perspective, Qatar has provided a lot of LNG to U.S. allies, supporting them, and helping them to be more independent with a reliable partner in Qatar - that would help advance more the business interests globally in Qatar, as well."

Alexis Antoniadis, the director of International Economics at Georgetown University - Qatar, emphasized that the decision to withdraw Qatar's OPEC membership is a business decision and was not politically motivated.

(Source: Gulf Times)

## Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley warn oil uncertainty to persist

Oil's gains risk being quelled by uncertainty over how the OPEC+ coalition will implement its deal to cut output, according to Goldman Sachs Group Inc. and Morgan Stanley.

While producers including Saudi Arabia and Russia defied market expectations as well as U.S. President Donald Trump late last week to pledge 1.2 million barrels a day of curbs, the lack of specific country allocations and exemptions for Iran, Venezuela and

Libya cloud the market outlook, Goldman said in a report. For any sustained rally, a drop in stockpiles and evidence of the cuts being implemented are needed, it said.

"The need for this physical evidence emanates from both the surprisingly large surplus of the global oil market in the second half of 2018 as well as the absence of a clear picture on the implementation of the cuts," Goldman analysts Damien Courvalin and Jeffrey Currie wrote in a Dec. 7 report.

Global benchmark Brent crude surged as much as 6 percent to trade above \$63 a barrel in London on Friday on hopes that the higher-than-expected output curbs will drain the glut in supplies. Still, the rally quickly lost steam and halved its initial gain as the specter of slowing demand growth, fears of mounting pressure from Trump to lower prices and a potential increase in U.S. shale output haunted investors.

While prices can continue to rise as the

pace between the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and partners such as Russia significantly decreases the possibility of a glut, crude's four-year high in early October is unlikely to be reached again in coming quarters, according to Morgan Stanley. Analyst Martijn Rats sees Brent reaching \$67.50 a barrel by the second quarter of 2019, \$10 lower than the bank's previous estimate.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## Former Venezuelan general takes helm of OPEC

In what some saw as a sign of OPEC's growing irrelevance in the world of oil, Venezuela's Oil Minister Manuel Quevedo will take the helm of the cartel beginning next month for a year. In an analysis of the situation, the Wall Street Journal's Benoit Faucon and Kejal Vyas argued Quevedo's appointment could be the spark that starts an explosion in the cartel.

Although Quevedo, a former general, said he will seek stability, "a deal that is fair to everyone" and comes in response to oil fundamentals rather than politics, expectations are not very high.

There are internal tensions in OPEC that became painfully obvious in the days ahead of the Vienna meeting that took place yesterday. Some OPEC members are angry with the de facto leader of the group, Saudi Arabia, who has been getting cozy with Russia over the last two years, raising suspicions it is putting its own interests above the cartel's.

What's more, co-members of OPEC believe Riyadh bowed to Washington when it started pumping more in July, after President Trump accused OPEC of artificially keeping prices high. Now, thanks to this record-high production, prices are down once again and OPEC needs to begin cutting again. But not all members can afford it and Venezuela is one of them.

The South American country's oil production has slumped to 1.2 million barrels daily, down by some 29 percent over the past 12 months, which coincides with Quevedo's tenure



as minister and stands in contrast to efforts by Caracas to reverse the decline and increase production by 1 million bpd by the end of the year. Since it is already December, the chances of this happening are slim to none.

Quevedo's background and the government he represents are seen by some analysts as a problem in their own right, then. Caracas is at odds with Washington, which recently again started talking about sanctioning crude oil exports to the United States. But OPEC's leader is cozy with Washing-

ton, so there is certainly space to speculate about various national interests clashing within the cartel.

What makes the situation particularly challenging, however, is what looks like a growing feeling that OPEC is becoming irrelevant. Earlier this year the United States, Russia, and Saudi Arabia all hit new records in production, with the United States emerging as the top producer, at a daily rate of 11.7 million barrels, Russia pumping 11.4 million bpd, and Saudi Arabia producing 11.02 million bpd. These three, in other words, account together for about a third of global oil production, which is this year seen by the EIA at 100.09 million bpd.

Some smaller OPEC members have, unsurprisingly, begun feeling a little left out of the big picture in this situation. Qatar's decision to leave the cartel after almost six decades as a member came as a shock at the beginning of this week, despite the fact it is a small oil producer. The country's finance minister said the decision was motivated by a focus on growing natural gas production, but it did smack of leaving a sinking ship.

It's highly unlikely that any OPEC president could resolve the internal divide in OPEC. With a president who represents one of the more disgruntled members of the cartel at the helm, the future of the group becomes even more uncertain.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## Oil and gas traders fret over elevated risks in U.S.-China trade

An unrealistic window for Chinese importers to ramp up purchases of U.S. oil and gas, and unstable relations between the U.S. and China have elevated the risks of U.S.-China trades, according to market participants in China and Singapore.

Commodity traders said boosting purchases of U.S. crude oil for a 90-day period is inconsistent with the normal trading cycle for physical barrels, and for natural gas the prevailing conditions in the Asian LNG market make an immediate increase in spot procurement very difficult.

In most cases, Chinese oil and gas companies will struggle with reconciling commercial interests with Beijing's diktats, and are likely to take market positions that involve significantly higher risk.

Market uncertainties surged with the mid-week arrest of the chief financial officer of China's Huawei Technologies in Canada after an extradition request by the U.S., the latest jolt to the trade war ceasefire.

Several Singapore- and Shanghai-based commodity traders said the incident forced them to reconsider any opportunities that had emerged after the trade talks between U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping last weekend.

The lack of details around the agreement has not helped market confidence.

While the White House explicitly stated a 90-day deadline from the weekend talks in Buenos Aires, it wasn't until mid-week that the Ministry of Commerce confirmed it from the Chinese side.

The economic and trade teams of the two sides will actively promote the consultation work within 90 days in accordance with a clear timetable and road map, the ministry said in an interview transcript on its official social media account.

"China will start from implementing specific issues that have reached consensus, and the sooner the better," a ministry spokesman said, adding that it had confidence in the deal's implementation but not specifying any single commodity group.

Chinese oil and gas companies had to wind down exposure to U.S. energy supplies when the trade war escalated earlier this year, resulting in disruptions to trade flows, losses and general market uncertainty.

They could now be forced to ramp up trades in a short 90-day span ending March 1.

This is problematic for several reasons.

A Sinopec refinery typically submits its crude purchasing plan to the trading arm Unipet at least three months ahead of actual procurement, an executive with a Sinopec refinery, said. Additionally, it takes around 50-60 days for a crude cargo to be shipped from the U.S. to China.

That is at least a five-month trading cycle for importing a U.S. oil barrel into China, not counting the amount of time taken by Unipet to conduct spot trades.

Sinopec's refineries will submit their crude purchasing plan for barrels delivered in March around December 15, but as of Thursday, they still had not received any notice from their headquarters to submit plans for U.S. crudes, the executive at the refinery, which has processed U.S. crude oil in the past, said.

"We had replaced US barrels with West African crudes after Unipet stopped purchasing the former grade [earlier this year]," another Sinopec refinery source said.

It would not be so easy to switch back refinery configurations, even though at current prices the margins for processing U.S. crude oil are better than North Sea and West African grades.

Executives at Chinese independent refineries said they were still quite cautious about buying US crude due to the risks involved, but some were interested if prices are competitive. Refinery sources from state-run PetroChina did not comment on the possibility of purchasing U.S. crudes.

A key sticking point is the 90-day window. A vessel that departs the U.S. by end-December will barely make it to Chinese ports by the end of February when the deadline ends. But the Lunar New Year in February will mean that ports are congested and risks of delays are high.

### ■ LNG market glut

In LNG, weak winter demand and growing global supplies have continued to depress Asian LNG prices, with the Platts Futures JKM for January delivery cargoes assessed at \$8.806/MMBtu Thursday, down almost 9 percent from \$9.635/MMBtu a week earlier, bucking seasonal price trends.

PetroChina and CNOOC, the main buyers of U.S. LNG in China, have cut back on winter procurement of U.S. spot cargoes as they are struggling with full tanks and continue to request suppliers for cargo deferments of contracted volumes.

That is not to say that Chinese winter gas demand is absent. In fact, LNG imports into Northern China touched all-time highs of 11.1-Mcm/d by end-November despite the relative warmth as coal-to-gas switching has kicked in, according to Platts Analytics.

However, the importers have largely anticipated this increase and are well stocked, leaving very little room for more spot cargoes, unless temperatures sink. The previous 10 percent tariff on U.S. LNG is still in place and it's unclear if this will be removed to facilitate imports.

Hence, LNG buyers in China will have to take extraordinary measures to increase U.S. LNG imports in 90-days.

(Source: Platts)

## Forced shutdown of Libya's largest oil field would be 'catastrophic': NOC

Production from Libya's largest oil field is under threat due to a protest from the Petroleum Facilities Guards and a forced closure would have "catastrophic" consequences, the state-owned National Oil Corporation warned late-Saturday.

"A shutdown of the Sharara field would result in a production loss of 315,000 b/d, with a knock-on effect of 73,000 b/d at El Feel due to its dependence on Sharara electricity supply," NOC said in a statement.

NOC warned that the forced closure would have "devastating" consequences affecting the country's economy, other nearby upstream and downstream projects and exacerbate a local fuel supply crisis.

This comes as Libya's oil production has fallen sharply over the past few weeks as bad weather hit output and exports at its key oil facilities.

On December 5, all of its oil export terminals were shut but by December 7 all terminals reopened, according to a NOC spokesman.

Security problems continue to plague the Libyan oil sector, which has seen dramatic swings in production over the past few years, as rival militias vie for power and control of fields.

(Source: Platts)

## NEWS IN BRIEF



### Pollution killed 1.24m in India in 2017

**INTERNATIONAL** TEHRAN — With fast-paced industrialization and burgeoning factories, the pollution level in India has assumed alarming proportions in recent years.

According to a new study, the contaminated air in the world's second most populated country claimed 1.24 million lives in 2017, or 12.5 percent of total deaths recorded in the year.

Of the total, about 670,000 died from air pollution in the wider environment and 480,000 from household pollution related to the use of solid cooking fuels.

New Delhi, India's capital city, was most exposed to the tiny particulate matter, known as PM2.5, that can reach deep into the lungs and cause major health problems, the study said.

The city has been making headlines in recent years for its toxic air, which has dissuaded foreign tourists from coming to India.

Government in India has come under severe criticism for failing to initiate measures to reduce pollution levels and minimize the damage done by it.



### Pakistan harboring terrorists: Haley

**INTERNATIONAL** TEHRAN — The war of words between U.S. and Pakistani politicians doesn't seem to end. Latest to jump the bandwagon is U.S. envoy to UN Nikki Haley who has repeated allegations against Islamabad.

Haley, the first Indian-American to hold a senior cabinet position in Trump administration, said the U.S. did not need to give money to countries that wish harm to America, go behind its back and try and "stop us from doing things".

Haley, who recently resigned from her UN posting, launched a direct tirade against Pakistan for 'harboring terrorists'.

She said Pakistan should be told "you have to do these things before we will even start to help you with your military or start to help you on counterterrorism".

The relations between the two countries have deteriorated since last year and the top leaders of both countries have been engaged in intense war of words in recent months.

U.S. President Donald Trump has on many occasions alleged that Pakistan wasn't doing enough to dismantle terrorist sanctuaries while Pakistan's Prime Minister has maintained that Pakistan has gone out of its way in 'war against terrorism'. A few days ago, PM Khan, noticeably exasperated, said Pakistan won't be fighting anyone else's war now and it won't be a 'hired gun', in response to Trump's appeal to Pakistan to help in bringing peace to Afghanistan.



### AFF officials axed over sexual abuse

**INTERNATIONAL** TEHRAN — Following public backlash and widespread online protests, the top officials of Afghanistan Football Federation have been suspended over sexual abuse scandal that has rocked the country in past few weeks. Afghanistan's Attorney General, the top judicial authority, made the announcement on Sunday following a probe into allegations of sexual abuse leveled by members of the national women's football team.

President Ashraf Ghani had ordered an investigation after UK's Guardian newspaper reported last week that members of Afghan women's team had been molested by senior federation officials.

Jamshid Rasouli, a spokesman for the attorney general, said six officials had been suspended following a recommendation made by the investigating team, including federation chief Keramuddin Keram.

Earlier the Afghan Football Federation had issued a statement calling the allegations "groundless" and said it would fully cooperate with any probe.

When the accusations first surfaced, a spokesman at FIFA, the world football federation, said it had a "zero tolerance" policy on abuse and was looking into the Afghan case.



### Corruption hinders rule of law: Ghani

**INTERNATIONAL** TEHRAN — While Afghanistan is known as the hotbed of terrorism and home to dreaded terrorist groups like Taliban, the country has another enemy that does not get so much attention — corruption.

President Ashraf Ghani, speaking at an event in Kabul on Sunday to mark the International Anti-Corruption Day, said the scourge of corruption leads to poverty and hinders the implementation of law and order in the country.

"Corruption and injustice hinders the implementation of the constitution and, finally, corruption is the key element of poverty and insecurity," said President Ghani.

He said those who claim to spearhead the campaign to introduce reforms shouldn't have negative impression of government's reform policy.

He called on the media and civil society institutions to help government in its efforts to fight corruption in the country.

Vice President Sarwar Danish in his speech highlighted government's achievements in rule of law, war on corruption and the ratification of access to information act, plus the mines law.

Ashraf Ghani led 'national unity government' had pledged to combat the menace through reforms and accountability but very little has changed on the ground.

Observers believe eliminating 'corruption' in a country like Afghanistan is a long-term process and needs strong political will since many politicians are involved in it.

# India to begin interim operations at Chabahar Port within weeks

**INTERNATIONAL** TEHRAN — The deadly terrorist attack at south-eastern Chabahar Port last week gave rise to concerns regarding the sustainability of the project and whether any of the three parties — India, Iran and Afghanistan — would pull out of the project.

However, that doesn't seem happening as the three parties have reaffirmed their commitment to continue the project that has the potential to transform their economies.

Putting speculation and concern to rest, Indian government is making preparations to begin interim operations at the strategic port in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province.

According to a report in India's Business Standard newspaper, India plans to tweak the shareholding pattern of India Ports Global Limited and making it a government entity, which will fulfill the terms imposed by U.S. sanctions on Iran and allow India to operate the project.

The report, quoting a government source, said the operations will kick off in a few weeks. The government is buying out the shares of India Ports Global, which are now held in a 60-40 ratio by the Jawaharlal Nehru Port.

The strategic Chabahar port is being considered a gateway to golden opportunities for trade by India, Iran and Afghanistan with central Asian countries. The port will overwhelmingly reduce the dependence of Kabul and New Delhi on Karachi port to do business with each other.

In May 2016, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that India would



invest \$500m to develop and operate the strategically important port. In August 2017, India's minister for transport and shipping Nitin Gadkari announced that Chabahar Port would be operational by 2018.

The port was recently exempted from U.S. sanctions on Iran after New Delhi, according to sources, made it emphatically clear to U.S. officials that they cannot walk out of the project because of "heavy stakes involved".

While the port has extraordinary strategic significance for India and Afghanistan, for

Iran its development could bring economic dividends and cement the country's position as a regional bulwark.

Experts believe the port will also offer Iran an alternative coastal infrastructure and reduce its dependence on the shipping hubs in Persian Gulf, which carry heavy risks in the event of military incursions by adversaries.

Once it becomes operational, the port will also uplift the economic condition of people in Sistan-Baluchistan and revive province's

flailing economy. The province has been hit hard by drought and insurgency by Baluch militant groups.

Just last week, there was a deadly attack near the port, which killed two people and injured 35 others. The attack was claimed by a Baluch militant group. Many suspects in the attack have been arrested, the Intelligence Ministry announced on Sunday.

India joined the world community to condemn the "despicable terrorist attack" and offered condolences to the government and people of Iran.

Meanwhile, a senior official from Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization has downplayed the impact of terrorist attack on the development of Chabahar port and foreign investments.

"The terrorist blast was nothing more than playing with firecrackers outside the police headquarters in Chabahar, and had no direct link to Shahid Beheshti port," Hadi Haqshenas said.

The province of Sistan-Baluchistan has been the scene of similar terrorist attacks in the past as well, he noted.

"This is not the first time that such an attack is carried out in the province. Over the past year, the province was targeted by armed groups but the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) foiled them," he said.

"Our main project was to inaugurate the first phase of Shahid Beheshti port in a ceremony attended by presidents of Iran and Afghanistan as well as Indian prime minister," he said.

## 'Genocide is slow strangulation of Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine'

**1 →** There have been reports about Rohingya refugees being detained in Malaysia while trying to escape persecution in Myanmar. Could you tell us what exactly happened?

A. Almost 130,000 Rohingyas have been living in concentration camps in Sittwe for more than 6 years now after the 2012 violence. These internally displaced people are trapped in the IDP camps and live under dire circumstances and without any kind of livelihood. They are dependent on food distribution by WFP or ICRC.

Life is intolerable and they have been taking risky journeys to Malaysia by boat as you may have seen in the news in the last two weeks. In the past these attempts to reach Malaysia have led to the drownings of thousands.

Those who are not in IDP camps, effectively live in an open-air prison. There are restrictions on every aspect of normal life. The Rohingyas need to obtain permission from the village authority to travel from one village to another even if the other village is just a couple of minutes walking distance. Since late 2016 Rohingyas are not allowed to travel from one town to another. They need permission to seek emergency health care and many die because of the lack of proper medical facilities.

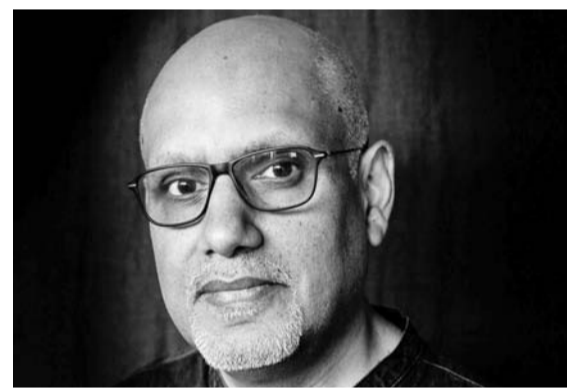
They have no access to education. They are subject to killings, extortion and marginalisation from every sphere of life that a citizen is entitled to. It is difficult to get married. It is difficult to register births. Their mosques are closed. There is no freedom of religion. People live in perpetual fear. And hence the desperation to flee elsewhere.

■ Do you think the world community must play more proactive role in resolving the Rohingya refugee crisis?

A. Today, 10 December, as I answer your questions, it is the 70th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Yesterday it was the anniversary of the establishment of the Genocide convention. Why do we have these declarations and mechanisms and conventions when we do nothing about them?

Clearly we only pay lip service to these grand ideals given the history of Myanmar? How many more times will world leaders utter the words "Never again" only for it to be repeated again and again? Genocide is not just catastrophic killing. Genocide is also the slow strangulation of Rohingya society in Rakhine state through incarceration in IDP camps and the severe restrictions on everyday life.

Myanmar is a signatory of the Genocide convention and around 150 states signed it. It is incumbent upon the signatories of the Genocide convention to prevent and punish actions of genocide. Clearly then the world community needs to be far more proactive. And here is the nub.



When you begin to ask why the world does not take firm action you start to unearth the economic and political self-interests that prevent firm action against Myanmar.

■ Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey had to face backlash when he tweeted pictures from his visit to Myanmar, asking people to visit the country. How important is social media in mobilizing public support for Rohingya campaign?

A. We should not expect billionaires to have progressive values. However we should hold them to account and scrutinise the entirely unregulated platforms they have created. In this context, the role of social media has been a double-edged one.

The Facebook behemoth has been rightly and widely blasted for giving platform to hate speech. Monetizing Myanmar was Facebook's goal. They didn't give a damn that they fueled anti-Rohingya violence and hate-mongering. They did very little, very late.

The lesson is that technology is not socially or politically neutral. And those who are trying to mobilize public support for Rohingya must maintain vigilance over what these platforms are doing.

■ There are 900,000 Rohingyas packed in 27 camps in Cox's Bazar, living in deplorable conditions. What kind of problems are they facing?

A. The humanitarian response for the Rohingya refugees remains seriously underfunded according to the main agencies in the field. Inevitably this will impact on a variety of services including medical services. Water and sanitation facilities remain highly uneven putting thousands at risk of waterborne diseases.

## Truth about Hekmatyars' anti-Iran tirade

**1 →** In journalism, they say, facts are sacred. But these rules don't apply to those agenda-based propaganda outlets. Their job is to distort facts and Hekmatyar is just the right man for the job.

In the course of the interview, which took place at his government mansion in Kabul, the former militant commander who fought against Soviets in Afghanistan on CIA's payroll said the U.S. has handed Afghanistan to Iran on a silver platter. I am sure he didn't know what he was saying. His conspiracy theories are so absurd and funny that it is hard not to have a good laugh at them.

It's not the first time Hekmatyar has suggested there is cooperation between Tehran and Washington. In May 2006, following the killing of former Taliban chief Mullah Akhtar Mansour in a drone strike, he accused Iran of providing information to U.S. spy agencies about Mansours whereabouts, which led to his killing.

Quite astonishingly, he seemed to believe there is some intelligence sharing agreement between Iran and America, the two adversar-

ies. Figments of imagination, as they say.

Hekmatyars only goal of life, it seems, apart from his lofty political ambitions, is to fabricate information about the Islamic Republic of Iran and to put a spanner in Afghanistan-Iran relations. His statements over the years bear testimony to that.

In July this year, he accused Iran of destabilizing Afghanistan to further its own economic interests. Using his fallacious arithmetic, he said Iran's exports to Afghanistan stand at \$5 billion, of which \$3 billion is done through smuggling. Even the top-notch economists at World Bank cannot churn out such mindboggling numbers without meticulous ground work, but this whiz kid made the calculation at home.

He further said that Iran was creating hurdles in TAPI gas pipeline project and wanted Afghanistan and Pakistan out of it. Those who follow regional developments closely would know that Iran has expressed readiness to export natural gas of Turkmenistan to Pakistan and beyond, given Iran's strategic location in the center of the region. But, the old man

doesn't even understand basic economics.

In December this year, he dropped a major bombshell, claiming that ISIS in Afghanistan was Iran's game and the U.S. or Saudi Arabia had nothing to do with the group. He said the ISIS fighters were infiltrating into Afghanistan from Iran.

He not only pushed the blame on Iran but gave clean chit to the U.S. his friends-turned-enemies-turned-friends. It is widely believed that the agreement between him and the Afghan government was brokered by Washington and Riyadh. That's why his language towards U.S. has softened after the agreement was inked.

Hekmatyar has gone to extreme lengths in the past for his political goals. During the Afghan civil war in early 90s, he played a particularly bloody role, just to gain power. He even won a sobriquet of 'The Butcher of Kabul' for his horrendous human rights abuses. Agreement between him and the Afghan government means his lust for power has not diminished.

He knows Washington and Riyadh's



blessings can prove handy to achieve that goal. But his smear campaign and venomous remarks against Iran won't help him or his masters. At the end of day, he is just a pawn in a very sinister game played out by Riyadh and Washington.

# PGCC was never effective organization: Shireen Hunter

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**  
By Javad Heirannia

**TEHRAN** — Shireen Tahmaasb Hunter, a professor of political science at Georgetown University, tells the Tehran Times that “the PGCC was never an effective organization. Certainly, it has been an unequal partnership in the sense that Saudi Arabia has dominated the Organization.”

“The PGCC was also created as a response to the 1979 Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, especially the perceived Iranian threat to the Persian Gulf security,” Hunter tells the Tehran Times.

She adds that “Now Iraq is practically out of the strategic equation at least for the foreseeable future. Iran no longer poses a viable ideological or security threat for the Gulf Arab states.”

Following is the text of the interview:

**■** The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council’s (PGCC) annual summit was held in Riyadh while the Qatari emir and the Sultan of Oman refrained from joining. What are the reasons behind this refusal?

**A:** The reluctance of Oman’s and Qatar’s leaders to attend the PGCC Summit and instead send lower level representation, reflects their differences with Saudi Arabia and their resentment of Riyadh’s efforts to dominate the PGCC. Saudi Arabia’s current problems following the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi has undermined its position and prestige, thus making it easier for Doha and Muscat to snub the kingdom.

**■** Qatar left OPEC and according to some reports, it might break-up with PGCC. Do you think that Qatar will leave the PGCC?



**A:** Qatar’s decision to exit OPEC does not necessarily mean that it will leave the PGCC. However, given the divisions within the PGCC and the fact that most PGCC members sided with Saudi Arabia in its dispute with Qatar, it is conceivable that Qatar might leave the organization. However, given continued U.S. support for the PGCC, at least in the short term, such a decision might undermine Qatar’s security as well as its position in confrontation with Saudi Arabia.

**■** The PGCC failed to find a purely internal collective solution to the Qatar crisis. With regard to this failure, how do you see

the future of PGCC?

**A:** The PGCC was never an effective organization. Certainly, it has been an unequal partnership in the sense that Saudi Arabia has dominated the Organization. The PGCC was also created as a response to the 1979 Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, especially the perceived Iranian threat to the Persian Gulf security. Now Iraq is practically out of the strategic equation at least for the foreseeable future. Iran no longer poses a viable ideological or security threat for the Gulf Arab states. By contrast, it is the Saudi and Emirati ambitions and

behavior that is destabilizing the region. In other words the very raison d’etre of the PGCC has disappeared. Therefore, it is no wonder that the PGCC failed to reconcile Qatar’s and Saudi Arabia’s diverging interests and outlooks.

**■** In case of Qatar’s exit from PGCC, is there any possibility of a new alliance between Qatar and Turkey?

**A:** In the short term, the PGCC will survive, although its efficacy will be further undermined. In the long term, much would depend on what happens in Saudi Arabia and in Iran. A change in Saudi attitude in the direction of more cooperation and less bullying of regional actors might revitalize the PGCC. Iran’s reintegration into the international community, could even provide an opportunity to transform the PGCC into a more inclusive regional organization, with Iraq and Iran also joining it. As to a closer Turkish-Qatari alliance, it is not clear what shape such alliance could take. Anything beyond what already exists, especially extensive military cooperation and greater Turkish military presence in the Persian Gulf, would trigger concerns in other regional states, including Iran and Saudi Arabia regarding Turkey’s long term goals and ambitions. Greater Turkish military presence in the Persian Gulf could also cause anxieties among European countries. In general bilateral alliances between Persian Gulf states and extra-regional states, including Turkey could be destabilizing. A viable security organization must include all of the Persian Gulf’s littoral states. Other states such as Pakistan, Turkey and possibly Egypt could be affiliate members or participate as observers.

## PGCC with excesses of MBS doomed to trash heap of history: Askari

**1 → ■** Qatar left OPEC and according to some reports, it might break-up with PGCC. Do you think that Qatar will leave the PGCC?

**A:** No. Qatar will not do anything. It will simply wait and see what MBS does. There is a lot of pressure on MBS from the U.S. and Europe. The Emir can simply wait and see MBS cave under international pressure and pressure from Turkey and lift the embargo. If the Emir withdraws, he would give MBS an excuse and a free pass.

**■** The PGCC failed to find a purely internal collective solution to the Qatar crisis. With regard to this failure, how do you see the future of PGCC?

**A:** The PGCC has always been a Saudi ‘thing’ with a number of countries simply hanging on. It was nothing more. But now it is rapidly becoming more a Saudi-Emirati ‘thing’. Qatar and Oman are on the outs and I believe that Kuwait may begin to distance itself little by little. But with the excesses of MBS, it is doomed to the trash

heap of history. MBS will try to keep it going to save face but it is in a downward spiral.

**■** In case of Qatar’s exit from PGCC, is there any possibility of a new alliance between Qatar and Turkey?

**A:** If Qatar leaves the PGCC, and if as I have stated earlier, then yes. Qatar will develop a much stronger alliance with Turkey. And if Iran reduces its international rhetoric and after Trump’s exit develops better relations with the U.S., Qatar could have a loose alliance with Iran.

## The West’s ridiculous accusations against Iran

By Saied Sobhani

**TEHRAN** — The United Nations Security Council met behind closed doors on Tuesday over a medium-range ballistic missile test by Iran. This was after the United States, Britain and France claimed that Iran test-fired a medium-range missile at the weekend. Washington’s Iran envoy Brian Hook urged the European Union to slap sanctions that target Tehran’s missile program.

According to the 2015 U.N. resolution, Iran is “called

upon” to stop working on ballistic missiles designed to deliver nuclear weapons for up to eight years. This is while Iran has repeatedly emphasized that its missile program is defensive in nature and not aimed at ensuring the delivery of a nuclear weapon.

In a statement, Iran’s U.N. mission noted that Tehran was not in breach of the UNSC resolution and the missiles were only designed to be capable of delivering conventional - not nuclear - warheads.

“Iran has never sought to acquire nuclear weapons and



never will in the future,” the Iranian U.N. mission said.

Also, speaking to reporters after a weekly cabinet session, Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, has rejected allegations made by U.S. officials about.

“What has been obvious and acknowledged by the Americans themselves both in the current administration and the previous one is that neither the JCPOA (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) nor (UNSC) Resolution 2231 ban Iran’s missile activities,” Zarif said.

Regarding the recent claims of the US and its European allies, there are some points that should be taken into consideration: The UNSC 2231 was set in order to confirm the JCPOA. This is while the United States, by withdrawing from the nuclear deal, made it clear that it doesn’t accept this resolution and is in no way committed to it. Under such circumstances, their claim accusing Iran of violating the resolution is quite ridiculous.

Shortly before, Brian Hook had once again threatened Iran with a military attack. The Americans officials, while continuously threatening Iran, say that our country should reduce its missile capability and even give it up altogether. If the United Nations Security Council and the European Union are concerned about the security of the world, they should blame the United States for these aggressive and ruthless claims, rather than accusing Iran’s defenses power.

The European authorities, requested the Security Council to hold a meeting on Iran missile test while they basically did nothing to confront and denounce the U.S. unilateral withdrawal from then nuclear deal. Now instead of being responsible to Iran, the European officials try to condemn Iran.

The U.S. and Europe’s insolent behavior towards Iran has but one reason: They are sure that Iran is committed to the JCPOA, and is not to violate it under any circumstances. This confidence has let them not care about their own responsibilities. Now they’re attempting to limit our defense power and missile capability even more than before. When the United States and Europe don’t see themselves responsible for their minimum commitments, the continuation of the JCPOA will only lead to more insolence behavior of the Western powers. Anyhow, Iran should continue to stress that its missile program is non-negotiable and that such activities are not prohibited under Resolution 2231.

## The nature of Zionist regime in Operation Northern Shield



**1 → ■** Thus, IDF must prepare itself for future security conditions by studying more precisely the coordination of the region and the identification of forces that have joined the military over the past 12 years that is after the 33-day war.

However, the region has a much greater vulnerability than Gaza, because on the one hand, Hezbollah in Lebanon, unlike the Gazan resistance force, is not in siege and is attached to its strategic depth of Syria, on the other hand, Hezbollah is located at an high altitude while the northern area of Palestine sits in lowland and elevations are at Israel’s disposal.

In the 33-day war the condition of Israel and Hezbollah was pretty much the same and created a kind of defense and military equality between both sides and their strategy was “deterrence.”

When the Syrian war broke out, contrary to the West claims calling it as a civil war, it was a prolonged and intense global war. Israel thought that this war would severely reduce Hezbollah’s power and affect its internal situation, to an extent that Meir Dagan, the former head of Israel’s Mossad intelligence agency, who died in 2016, said the Syrian crisis will ingest Hezbollah, leaving no memory of it. However, the course of the war did not go as they expected, and Hezbollah managed to get out of proudly.

The effective and powerful presence of Hezbollah in the Syrian crisis has security-political importance for the country that was unbelievable for leaders and especially the majorities of Israelis.

First was the security and military achievement of Hezbollah. Before the Syrian war, Hezbollah had “infiltrated” only in parts of Lebanon, and this influence did not lead to a large presence in the geography of the Lebanese Shia. On the other hand, the existence of Hezbollah’s serious opposition in the Lebanese government made it impossible for Hezbollah to rely on the state’s support which ultimately led to its limitation. The effective presence of Hezbollah in the geography of Syria and its victory over the “military confrontation” removed the two restrictions for Hezbollah.

Now, Hezbollah enjoys a favorable geographical position, as well as the integrated support of the Syrian government. However, Hezbollah in Syria is not the same as Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The second major consequence of Hezbollah’s victory in Syria was his remarkable political victory in Lebanon. Previously,

**In Israel’s view, the “ceasefire” will increase the strength of the resistance in the region. Hence, while this regime is still refraining from launching a war against Hezbollah, it also considers security stability to be a major threat for itself.**

Hezbollah had limited influence in Lebanon’s parliament and cabinet, which only allowed them to defy against some of the security decisions of its opponents in these two institutions. After the 33-day war, Hezbollah was the “third guarantor” which their opponents called “a third delay” in the parliament. Hezbollah’s defeat in the Syrian crisis could have completely wiped out its political future, but with the unexpected victory of Hezbollah in that war, the political position of Hezbollah was not only stabilized, but enhanced.

For Hezbollah, after the election of April 5, 2017, some 75 delegates (out of 120) were fully consistent with Shia, Sunnis, and Christians, which means the share of resistance in the Lebanese political system has doubled from 33% to 62.5%. This is why Saad Hariri insists on eliminating the Hezbollah-dominated Sunnis in order to reduce Hezbollah’s position, which has challenged the formation of the new Hariri cabinet.

With all that said, today, Israel fears the new position of Hezbollah in Lebanon and Syria. In Israel’s view, the “ceasefire” will increase the strength of the resistance in the region. Hence, while this regime is still refraining from launching a war against Hezbollah, it also considers security stability to be a major threat for itself. To this end, Israel calls for preventing war and its costs, but at the same time not accepting a long-term ceasefire agreement that can strengthen the resistance group.

According to this policy, Israel raises the issue of “security inflammation” to the point where it does not lead to a war but prevents the expansion of the resistance force. Therefore, we see that Israel in Gaza does the same thing as it does in the Golan Heights, and in the south of Lebanon which is flipping the security and wrapping it up fast.

There the order of the Israeli military forces is minimal and at the same time provocative. The Zionist regime at the highest level of decision-making shows that there is no plan to enter a war. During the Gaza war, the Israeli security cabinet and even Avigdor Lieberman, who resigned as the Defense Minister of Israel in protest against Netanyahu’s cessation of hostilities, voted to stop the operation and agreed to begin negotiations with Hamas.

In Operation of Northern Shield, Israel army has insisted that the operation was a limited effort to blow up Hezbollah’s aggressive channels in northern Palestine. The Israeli air force has stopped flying over Syria after they shot down a Russian plane that killed 18 members of the Russian Air Force.

It shows that Israel continues to pursue a policy of incitement and fear as a regime that cannot have the upper hand and has no choice but to try to control the opponent.

**First Announcement**

**all for public tender (First/Second publish)**  
**Two- Stages (semi compressed) tender**  
Subject of Tender: : BOP Control Line Hose

**N.I.O.C**  
**1397.4654**

**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	3,183,501	Tender No.: JP/09-97/045 Indent No.: 08-22-9645024	8,460,843,204 (Rial)

\* Qualitative evaluation of tenders:

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

\* Purchasing & Submitting

Tender Document Distribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof.
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Distribution Place</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hall No.:113, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN Tel: 061-34148601</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Submitting Method</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 400114004020491 ( Shaba No. IR. 52010000400114004020491) 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.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Closing date</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Days after the last time of Purchasing 14</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Address</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hall No. 107, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569</p>

\* Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	423,100,000 Rial / 8,760 Euro
	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 400114006376636 ( Shaba No. IR. 35010000400114006376636) in name of “NIDC saving account” by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.
	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

(Foreign Procurement Dept.)  
More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on:  
[www.nidc.ir](http://www.nidc.ir) [http://sapp.ir/nidc\\_pr](http://sapp.ir/nidc_pr)

تهران تایمز نوبت اول ۹۷/۰۹/۲۰ نوبت دوم ۹۷/۰۹/۲۱

# Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

## Apartment

Apt in Darous  
2<sup>nd</sup> floor, 240 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.  
unfurn, equipped kitchen  
renovated, storage  
parking spot  
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Farmanieh  
1<sup>st</sup> floor, 350 sq.m, 4 Bdrs.  
fully furn, equipped kitchen  
4 bath rooms, spj, gym laundry  
green yard, storage parking spot  
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Elahieh  
4<sup>th</sup> floor, 180 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.  
furn, spj, elevator, storage  
2 parking spots, roof garden  
\$1500  
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Zafaranieh  
2<sup>nd</sup> floor, 220 sq.m, 4 Bdrs.  
furn, equipped kitchen elevator  
spj, parking spot  
\$1800  
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Manzarieh  
1<sup>st</sup> floor, 115 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.  
fully furn, parking spot  
\$900  
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Aghdasieh  
almost new, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor 121 sq.m 2  
Bdrs., furn, pkg, elevator  
\$2000  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

## Villa

Villa in Shariati-Elahieh  
1000 sq.m built up, 5000 sq.m  
land, 6 Bdrs., outdoor pool green  
garden, parking spot renovated  
\$20000  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Villa in Niavaran  
900 sq.m land, 1000 sq.m built up  
8 Bdrs., 7 bath rooms  
3 kitchens, 3 big reception saloons  
with one suit for servant, Jacuzzi  
swimming pool  
outdoor / indoor parking spots  
\$12000  
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Luxury Villa in the North  
duplex, 1200 sq.m built up 2000  
sq.m land, 5 Bdrs., big saloon  
servant, indoor pool spj renovated  
beautiful and green garden, semi furn  
\$18000 negotiable  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Duplex Villa in Soheil  
500 sq.m land, 600 sq.m built up  
8 Bdrs., 6 bath rooms, unfurn  
servant quarter, completely  
renovated, 3 storages  
12 parking spots  
3-side entrances  
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Duplex Villa in Fereshteh  
800 sq.m land, 600 sq.m built up, 4  
Bdrs., unfurn, renovated  
parking spot, yard, \$5500  
Ms.Sara: 09128103207



Holder of  
ISO 9001:2008  
ISO 10004:2012  
ISO 10002:2014

From Oxford Cert Universal

**Best Consultation  
Best Services, Best Result**

Intl. Department Manager "Tina 09128103205"

Tel: 22662452-8, Fax: 22667173

**Hot Line: 28141**  
info@parsdiplomatic.com  
www.parsdiplomatic.com

## Building & Office

Office in Shariati - Soheil  
brand new, 2 administrative  
offices, balcony, elevator  
storage, parking spot  
Price negotiable  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Whole Building in Mahmoodieh  
5 floors, each floor one apt each  
apt 170 sq.m with 3 Bdrs.  
unfurn, spj, 8 parking spots  
storage, elevator  
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Modern Office in Jordan  
administrative office license  
brand new, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, 2 apts  
180 sq.m & 220 sq.m flat, modern  
design, lobby, lobby man  
lots parking spots  
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Whole Building in Pasdaran  
almost new, 5 floors, each floor  
2 apts, 10 apts totally, 90 sq.m to  
100 sq.m, storage, parking spots  
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Whole Building in Aqdasieh  
2 apts, one apt 330 sq.m with  
3 Bdrs., another apt 400 sq.m with  
5 Bdrs., unfurn, storage  
parking spot  
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Whole Building in Gandi  
5 floors, 19 apts, 92 sq.m to 100  
sq.m, furn, lobby, \$28500  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

## Ideal Offers

Villa in Elahieh  
2<sup>nd</sup> floor, 300 sq.m, 4 Bdrs  
luxury furn, nice garden  
parking spot, \$4000  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Jordan  
1<sup>st</sup> floor 88 sq.m, 1 Bdr., furn  
elevator, fully renovated  
\$800  
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Office in Valiasr  
from 250 sq.m up to 7000 sq.m  
commercial office, ready for  
renting to foreign companies  
lobby, lots parking spots  
good access to highway  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Pasdaran  
5<sup>th</sup> floor, 76 sq.m, 2 Bdrs  
fully furn, elevator  
parking spot, \$800  
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apartment in Velenjak  
2<sup>nd</sup> floor, 200 sq.m, 3 Bdrs. furn  
balcony elevator, storage spj  
parking spot, 24/7 security  
\$1700  
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Commercial Building in  
Valiasr \_ Park Melat  
130 sq.m, 3 rooms, almost new  
lobby, security, guest parking spots  
good access to highway  
full of foreign companies  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

مالکین محترم

ملک های فروش و اجاره ای خود را (آپارتمان،  
ویلا، مستغلات، اداری و تجاری) به ما بسپارید.

بهترین مشاوره، برترین سرویس، بالاترین رضایت

مالکین محترم املاک مبله و غیرمبله، مسکونی، اداری و تجاری، ویلا و مستغلات  
شما را جهت اجاره به سفارتخانه ها و شرکت های خارجی نیازمندیم.

مالکین محترم

ویلاهای شما را جهت اجاره به منزل سفیر و مدیران  
شرکت های بین المللی در مناطق شمالی تهران  
نیازمندیم.

**SHANON**  
Shanon\_tari@yahoo.com  
+989121907875  
Tel : 88510081

<b>Farmanieh (\$2100)</b> 200sq.m, 3bdrs S/p, S, J, & F.F	<b>Dibaji (\$1300)</b> 2bdrs, S/p, & F.F	<b>Jordan Villa (\$3500)</b> 1200sq.m, 5bdrs S/p, S, J, & F.F
<b>Elahieh (\$2500)</b> 240sq.m, 4bdrs, pkg balcony, & F.F	<b>Sa'adat abad (\$1600)</b> 150sq.m, 3bdrs	<b>Niavaran bldg</b> 3storey, 12bdrs yard, pkgs (\$5000)

**Don't Waste Your Time**  
Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties  
**www.DeltaHOME.ir**  
The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners  
**HOME**  
Real Estate  
Member of DELTA Real Estate Group  
(021) 8888865

Advertising Dept:  
times1979@gmail.com  
+9821 430 51 450  
www.tehrantimes.com

TEHRAN TIMES

Iran's Leading  
International Daily  
Advertising Dept

Tel:  
021 - 430 51 450

Number one Real Estate in Iran

www.DELTA HOME.ir

TEL: 88 88 88 65 FAX: 88 88 93 35

**HOME**  
Real Estate

<b>Fereshteh</b> 120sqm, 2 bdrs, FF, SP, parking \$ 1600 USD Davood: (+98) 9123488513	<b>Zafar</b> 120sqm, 3 bdrs, FF, parking, balcony \$ 700 USD Davood: (+98) 9123488513	<b>Shahrak-e-Gharb</b> 150sqm, 2 bdrs, nicely FF, best view Full facilities, Lobby, balcony \$ 1900 USD Davood: (+98) 9123488513
<b>Elahiyeh</b> 240 Sqm, 3 bdrs, 3 baths, brand new Full facilities (spa, gym, coffee room,...) 24hrs lobbyman & seprate guard, mountain view € 4300 USD Adrian: (+98) 921 71 76 740	<b>Zaferaniyeh, Velenjak</b> 350 Sqm, 3 Master bdrs, 7th floor, brand new Full facilities (spa, gym, roof garden,...) Green view, balcony \$ 7000 USD Adrian: (+98) 921 71 76 740	<b>Niavaran</b> 250Sqm, 3 bdrs, 2.5 baths, brand new Full facilities (spa, gym, roof garden, small private cinema,...) \$ 3600 USD Adrian: (+98) 921 71 76 740
<b>Elahiyeh</b> 260sqm, 7th floor, 3 bdrs, SPJ, lobby, ,Guard Garden, amazing view \$ 3500 USD Linda: (+98) 9351721171	<b>Elahiyeh</b> 205sqm, 3 bdrs, 4th floor, SPJ, sauna Gym, coffee shop, roof garden, Lobby \$ 3000 USD Linda: (+98) 9351721171	<b>Farmaniye, villa</b> 900sqm, 2500 sqm yard, 5 bdrs \$8000 USD Kaveh: (+98) 9128944169
<b>Jordan, Office</b> 1100 sqm, Flat, \$ 10000 USD Kaveh: (+98) 9128944169	<b>Argantin, Guest house</b> A whole building of 4 floors, totally 16 rooms plus one small suit, FF Price negotiable Farshid: (+98) 9125540877	<b>Must to see Elahiyeh</b> 290sqm, 3 bdrs, 3 baths ,gym, brand new, green view Furn or unfurn Farshid: (+98) 9125540877
<b>Guest House</b> 1- Jordan, 5 fl, 5 Units, 14 bdrs ,FF 2- Gandi, 5 fl, 19 Units, 38 bdrs, FF 3- Jordan, 5 fl, 20 Units, 55 bdrs, FF Farshid: (+98) 9125540877	<b>Elahiyeh, Velenjak, Penthouse</b> ,Super Luxury, 450 sqm, 550 sqm Full facilities, Negotiable Hojati: (+98) 9309701169	<b>Zaferaniyeh Office, 350 sqm, Negotiable</b> Hojati: (+98) 9309701169
<b>Shahrak-e- Gharb, Villa</b> 600sqm building, 800 sqm land, 5bdrs, SPJ Negotiable Hojati: (+98) 9309701169	<b>Jordan</b> 275sqm, 4 bdrs, full facilities \$ 2000 USD Erik: (+98) 9372371391	<b>Argantin</b> 115sqm, 2 bdrs \$ 1000 USD Erik: (+98) 9372371391



# This form of brain training may help treat severe schizophrenia

New research has revealed that targeted cognitive training can successfully reduce cognitive impairment in treatment-resistant schizophrenia.

Altering certain neural pathways may improve cognitive ability in people with treatment-resistant schizophrenia.

Schizophrenia is one of the 15 leading causes of disability globally. In the United States, this condition affects more than 3 million people.

Symptoms of schizophrenia include psychoses, hallucinations, delusions, and unusual thinking patterns.

Emotional numbing, reduced motivation, difficulty forming and maintaining social relationships, and cognitive impairment are also among the symptoms that tend to characterize the condition.

Cognitive impairment in schizophrenia affects verbal and working memory especially. Some older research suggested that these cognitive difficulties are partly down to some deficiencies in the ability to process auditory information.

For instance, a study published in the journal *NeuroImage* found that "impairments in [auditory] discrimination may contribute to higher-order cognitive and psychosocial deficits in [schizophrenia]."

Recently, researchers set out to examine whether targeted cognitive training (TCT) — which uses specially designed computer games to change certain neural pathways — may improve auditory perception and verbal learning in people with a difficult form of schizophrenia.

Gregory A. Light, Ph.D. — a professor of psychiatry at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine — is the senior author of the new study, which was published



**Schizophrenia is one of the 15 leading causes of disability globally. In the United States, this condition affects more than 3 million people.**

in the journal *Schizophrenia Research*.

**TCT reduces hallucinations, boosts learning**

Prof. Light, who is also the director of the Mental Illness, Research, Education, and Clinical Center at Veterans Affairs San Diego Healthcare System, explains the motivation for the study.

He says, "Chronic, treatment-refractory patients mandated to locked residential care

facilities make up just a small subgroup of persons with schizophrenia, but they consume a disproportionately large share of mental health care resources."

"Finding an effective therapy for them is critical," he continues. So, Prof. Light and team set out to examine the effects of TCT in a group of 46 people with schizophrenia psychosis.

The participants had been previously

hospitalized, and at the time of the study, they were enrolled in a community-based residential care program as well as being legally under the care of a guardian.

The researchers assigned the participants to either a group that received treatment-as-usual plus TCT or a group that received treatment-as-usual only.

In the group that received both standard treatment and TCT, the participants used laptops to carry out some learning and memory tasks, which often included auditory cues. The treatments took place over a 3-month period.

At the end of the study period, verbal learning improved and hallucinations were less severe among those who received the TCT-enhanced treatment.

The age or clinical symptoms of the participants did not dampen these positive effects, and neither did the medications they were taking or how long they had been living with schizophrenia.

"Our results suggest that chronically ill, highly disabled patients can benefit from TCT," says Prof. Light. "That contradicts current assumptions."

He and his team previously studied the effects of computerized TCT in "more chronic, treatment-refractory patients." At the time, the study concluded that "even highly symptomatic, functionally disabled patients with chronic illness benefit from this emerging treatment."

However, Prof. Light cautions that much more research is needed. "We're somewhere between the Wild West and [the] golden age of cognitive training for schizophrenia patients," he says. "There is much still to be learned and done."

(Source: [sgtalk.org](http://sgtalk.org))

## Weight may affect the risk of flu hospitalization



According to a recent study, individuals may be more likely to be hospitalized due to the flu or another respiratory virus if they are underweight or at the higher end of the obesity scale.

The risk of hospitalization due to a flu is higher among people who are underweight or obese.

Observational data for the study came from six hospitals in Mexico, and they covered 4,778 people with symptoms of a flu-like illness.

Some of these people received their treatment in the hospital, and some did as outpatients.

The results of the study showed that: 43 percent of the people had a severe flu-like illness

16.3 percent tested positive for flu

55.2 percent tested positive for another respiratory virus

28.5 percent "had no respiratory virus isolated"

When the scientists plotted the risk of hospital admission against people's body mass index (BMI), for adults, it formed a "U" shape on the graph.

The lowest risk of hospitalization was for those with a BMI in the "normal" weight range, and the highest risk was for those in the lowest and highest BMI ranges.

Children — which the researchers defined as all those under the age of 19 years — made up 32 percent of the people in the study. The scientists saw no clear link, however, between BMI and severe flu-like illness risk in this group.

The senior author of the study is Dr. John H. Beigel. He works for Leidos Biomedical Research Inc., a firm that operates National Laboratory facilities for the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) in Bethesda, MD. The other authors are from the NIAID and participating hospitals in Mexico.

The journal *Influenza and Other Respiratory Viruses* has now published a paper on this study.

**BMI and obesity**

A person's BMI is their weight in kilograms divided by the square of their height in meters. Because it is easy to measure, researchers often use BMI to explore weight-related health risks at the population level or in very large groups.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) define BMI ranges for adults as:

underweight is a BMI of less than 18.5

normal weight is a BMI of 18.5–24.9

overweight is a BMI of 25–29.9

obesity is a BMI of 30 and higher

A similar system exists for children and adolescents aged 0–19 years, except that the cutoff values depend on age and sex.

The World Health Organization (WHO) use the same BMI ranges, but not all of the same terms. For example, they use the term "pre-obesity" as opposed to "overweight" for a BMI that is 25.0–29.9.

Both the CDC and the WHO have three classes of adult obesity:

class 1 obesity is a BMI of 30–34.9

class 2 obesity is a BMI of 35–39.9

class 3 obesity is a BMI of 40 and higher

Population studies have linked overweight and obesity to premature death, diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular diseases, and some cancers.

The CDC recommend that clinicians only use BMI for screening and not for diagnosing individuals.

Scientists and clinicians sometimes refer to class 2 as "morbid obesity" and class 3 as "severe or extreme obesity." In the recent study, the authors used the term "morbid obesity" for a BMI of 35 and higher.

Underweight is a 'complex issue'

While a healthful diet and lifestyle can cause someone to have a low BMI, so can eating disorders, malnutrition, and other health conditions. In a 2017 report of a Norwegian study of 30,000 people, the authors commented that underweight constitutes "a rather complex group."

In fact, they found more people who smoke on a daily basis and just as many physically inactive people in the underweight group as the overweight group.

That study recommended that healthcare providers screen people who are underweight for health risks "to the same extent" as they would those with obesity.

The researchers behind the recent study suggest that their paper is the first published evidence that they know of to link low BMI to "severity of influenza-like illness."

"Being underweight," they note, "seems to be a consistent risk factor in all adult participants with influenza-like illness."

The authors point out that a "significant limitation" of their study was that it only included people who "sought medical care for an influenza-like illness." The results, therefore, may not represent the population at large.

(Source: *Medical News Today*)

## How safe are probiotics?



Amid the increasing rise of probiotic use in Western society, a recent journal article asks whether we should evaluate the products' safety with a little more scrutiny.

Probiotics are popular, but what does the evidence say?

For millennia, humans have consumed foods rich with live bacteria.

Yogurt, for instance, dates back to at least 5000 B.C., and in Korea, kimchi — fermented vegetables — has also been consumed for thousands of years.

Today, however, live microorganisms are added to a range of products advertised as providing a wide array of medical benefits.

Creative marketing and a general fascination for gut bacteria have combined to create a huge market for probiotics.

Perhaps surprisingly, to sell a product that contains live microorganisms there is no legal requirement to provide evidence that it works or, importantly, that it is safe.

An article published this week in *JAMA Internal Medicine* argues that this is a dangerous state of affairs. The piece was written by Dr. Pieter A. Cohen from the Cambridge Health Alliance at the Harvard Medical School in Boston, MA.

**The state of the evidence**

Dr. Cohen begins by outlining the proven benefits of probiotics. For instance, *Saccharomyces boulardii* has been shown to help treat some types of diarrhea in children and reduce recurrence of *Clostridium difficile* infections in adults.

In spite of the specific cases mentioned, he argues that the strains used in foods and supplements have not been proven to benefit health and neither have they been shown to be safe.

Manufacturers claim that probiotics help maintain respiratory, cardiovascular, reproductive, and psychological health. However, Dr. Cohen writes that "[d]espite the advertised indications, there are no large, long-term clinical trials proving that probiotics offer clinical benefits for people who are already healthy." He continues "Widespread use, particularly among people who are healthy, has greatly outpaced the science."

For instance, a comprehensive review of relevant literature published earlier this year concluded that "[t]he feasibility of probiotics consumption to provide benefits in healthy adults requires further investigation."

In other words, there may be benefits, but the evidence simply does not exist to definitively say either way.

Despite this, manufacturers are legally

permitted to tell consumers that their products "support the immune system" or "boost digestive health." Perhaps even more worryingly, they are not required to add information regarding potential adverse effects.

**What are the possible dangers?**

Over the years, dozens of case reports have underscored the potential hazards of probiotic supplementation. Risks include fungemia and bacteremia — the presence of fungi or bacteria in the blood, respectively.

Individuals with compromised immune systems are most at risk, including the very young and old. These organisms have evolved to infect, after all.

Because many probiotic trials do not report adverse events sufficiently, the exact scope of this problem is not known.

Aside from the risk of opportunistic infections sparked by probiotic consumption, there is the potential threat of low quality and contaminated products.

Although the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have stringent safety rules for the manufacturing of supplements, these are not always followed.

According to Dr. Cohen, an inspection of 656 facilities in 2017 found "violations in more than half." He continues:

"These violations were not trivial: Most commonly, companies had failed to establish the identity, purity, strength, or composition of their final product."

This potential threat is brought into stark focus by the case of an 8-day-old infant who developed a fatal fungal infection following the use of a probiotic supplement that had been contaminated with fungi.

As Dr. Cohen notes, although following FDA regulations more closely would help reduce the risk of product contamination, it would still not ensure that the probiotic itself was entirely safe.

The author ends his article by calling for more stringent controls from the FDA. He writes:

"The agency should [...] require manufacturers, as Canadian authorities already do, to provide the specific strain or strains, and the number of live microorganisms per serving, on every bottle of probiotic supplements."

He also urges them to introduce extra safety testing, focusing especially on "potentially transferable antibiotic resistance genes." As it stands, we do not know how consuming bacteria with an array of new genes might impact antibiotic resistance now or in the future.

(Source: *Medical News Today*)

## The signs and symptoms of Parkinson's disease

Parkinson's disease is a neurological condition with a wide range of effects, including problems with movement, blood pressure and thinking, and mood, sensory, and sleep difficulties.

The symptoms of Parkinson's disease (PD) usually begin gradually, and they affect each person differently. The symptoms a person has will vary widely, regardless of how severe they are or how quickly they develop.

Read on to find out more about the different types of symptoms and how to recognize the early symptoms of PD.

Around 7 out of 10 people with PD experience tremor at some stage. The symptoms of PD affect individuals differently, but some can be an early sign of the disease.

These are:

REM sleep disorder and other sleep problems  
the loss of the sense of smell  
**tremor, especially in one hand**  
a smaller size of handwriting  
difficulty moving or walking or a stooping gait  
constipation  
loss of facial expression, that may make the person look emotionless

a low or soft voice

**Primary motor symptoms**

The four main signs and symptoms include:  
slow physical movements, known as bradykinesia  
shaking, or tremor  
muscle stiffness, or rigidity  
problems with balance and coordination, known as postural instability

Symptoms often start on one side first.

**Slow physical movement**

The person finds it hard to start moving. Starting to get up from a chair can become more difficult, for example. It takes longer than before to do physical tasks. A lack of coordination can cause the person to fall or drop things.

The difficulty is not only with carrying out the movement itself, but also with planning and starting it.

Many people may experience slower movements and attribute these to older age, but sometimes they are a sign of PD.

**Tremor**

As the person experiences changes in their posture, coordination, and ability to move, falls can become more likely.

Tremor is a familiar symptom of PD to many people. The shaking often starts in one hand.

It may start in one foot, or the person may begin rubbing their forefinger and thumb together, back-and-forth. Less commonly, it starts in the jaw or face. Many people do not have a severe tremor.

It is usually more likely to happen when the affected part of the body is resting. Stress or anxiety may make it more noticeable.

Other conditions that may lead to tremor include:

multiple sclerosis  
encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain  
alcohol use disorder

The presence of tremor is not necessarily a sign of PD.

However, according to the Parkinson's Disease Foundation, around 70 percent of people with PD experience a slight tremor at some time during the disease.

**Rigidity**

The muscles feel stiff, and this can make some everyday tasks troublesome, such as getting out of a chair, rolling over in bed, using body language appropriately, or making fine finger movements.

Stiffness is most common in the limbs and neck. Severe stiffness can reduce a person's range of movements. Sometimes there is pain.

**Posture and balance**

Problems with balance and coordination, especially if the person feels stiff, can increase the risk of falling.

**Secondary motor symptoms**

In addition to the primary motor symptoms, a person may also: stoop or lean forward, as if they are walking quickly

walk with the arms held stiffly by their side

experience muscle cramps

experience drool

feel tired

write with a small, cramped hand

have difficulty with fine finger movements

have difficulty coordinating movements

make involuntary movements and have prolonged muscle contractions

lose facial expression, which can make the person appear uninterested when speaking or cause them to stare fixedly with unblinking eyes

experience sexual dysfunction

speak more softly, slur or repeat words, use a monotonous voice, or speak with varying speeds, either faster or more slowly

have difficulty swallowing

**not swing the arms when walking**

**Automatic nervous system changes**

PD affects the brain and the CNS, and specifically the parts that control movement.

Dizziness is common with PD, and people may feel faint when they stand up after sitting for a while.

Movement does not happen only in the hands, feet, and other parts of the body that we can see.

It is also responsible for essential functions such as digestion and the circulation.

For this reason, the following symptoms may occur:

Constipation: This is a common problem for people with PD. There may also be leakage of stool.

Changes in urinary control: The person may have some incontinence or difficulty passing urine.

Blood pressure problems: A person's blood pressure can vary as the circulatory system cannot control the blood flow as well as it used to.

People commonly experience low blood pressure, and this can make them dizzy as they stand up, for example, or lead to fainting.

Wide variations in blood pressure are also possible. In the long term, this can have an impact on the cardiovascular system.

**Emotions, thinking, and senses**

The main cause of symptoms in PD is a fall in dopamine production in the brain. This affects movement, but it can also affect a person's thinking and sense of well-being.

This can lead to:

Dementia: This is common in the later stages of the disease. The person may have difficulty remembering things and thinking clearly.

If clumps of protein — Lewy bodies — form in the brain, dementia is more likely. Some people with PD also have the tangles of protein that occur with Alzheimer's disease.

Sleep problems: These are a core feature of PD. Contributing factors include REM sleep disturbances, the use of some medications, restless leg syndrome, pain, and difficulty turning over in the night.

(Source: *Medical News Today*)

## Tehran exhibit displaying Yalda Night decorations



**HERITAGE** TEHRAN — Sets of decorative bowls, plates, platters, and salvers, which Iranians traditionally use on the graceful Yalda Night, has been put on show at the headquarters of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization in Tehran.

The two-week exhibit also showcases all food items usually arranged on a spread known as Sofreh (traditional table cloth available in various materials and patterns), CHTN reported on Sunday.

Yalda, which falls on December 21, marks the longest night of the year. It's a time for pleasant family reunions that entails laughter, merriment and good cheer.

## Unique find made at Danish UNESCO World Heritage site



An amateur archaeologist has made a startling find near the white cliffs of Stevns Klint on the island of Mon, one of the Danish sites listed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

While hunting for fossils on the beach near Stevn Klint, Peter Bennicke stumbled across a 66 million-year-old sea urchin that has bite marks from what could be a predator of some sort from that era.

"It's my best ever find — and that's saying something. I could see it was a pretty large sea urchin so I took it home to look at it more closely. That's when I saw that it had been bitten," Bennicke told TV2 News.

"This happened 66 million years ago and to think that I'm just standing here with it in my hand visualizing the drama that took place those many years ago."

The tooth marks are situated at the top of the fossil, indicating that the attack came from above and could very well stem from the jaws of the Mosasaurus — a marine apex predator of that time.

The fossil will be exhibited at Geomuseum Faxe from this coming February, but first it will be presented at an international palaeontology summit in Bristol this week.

"This is a very exciting find. Not only because of the unique story behind, but it also provides important information about how the animals in the sea lived and who devoured who," said Jesper Milan, the curator of Geomuseum Faxe.

(Source: cphpost.dk)



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Chitwan National Park

Nestled at the foot of the Himalayas, Chitwan has a particularly rich flora and fauna and is home to one of the last populations of single-horned Asiatic rhinoceros and is also one of the last refuges of the Bengal Tiger.

Chitwan National Park (CNP), established in 1973, was Nepal's first National Park. Located in the Southern Central Terai of Nepal, it formerly extended over the foothills, the property covers an area of 93,200 hectares, extends over four districts: Chitwan, Nawalparasi, Parsa and Makwanpur.



The park is the last surviving example of the natural ecosystems of the Terai region and covers subtropical lowland, wedged between two east-west river valleys at the base of the Siwalik range of the outer Himalayas.

The core area lies between the Narayani (Gandak) and Rapti rivers to the north and the Reu River and Nepal-India international border in the south, over the Sumeswar and Churia hills, and from the Dawney hills west of the Narayani, and borders with Parsa Wildlife Reserve to the east.

In 1996, an area of 75,000 hectares consisting of forests and private lands and surrounding the park was declared as a buffer zone. In 2003, Beeshazar and associated lakes within the buffer zone were designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Iraq tops Iran's visiting tourists list

Iran played host to over 4.7 million travelers during the 7-month period, he added. People from Iraq, Republic of Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Turkey and Pakistan constituted the highest travelers to Iran respectively that visited the country for medical, pilgrimage and cultural heritage purposes, Teymouri explained.

"People of Iran's neighboring countries were used to travel to Iran for pilgrimage, trade and work but nowadays Iraqi and Azerbaijani nationals are mostly pursue medical services in Iran, a king of tourism which usually fetches good income for the country."

He underlined that Iran's share of Western travelers is growing.

"The number of Western travelers declined by the end of Shahrivar month [Sept. 22], which is a low season for foreign tourism. However, statistics show their arrivals are getting boost over Mehr and Aban months [Sept. 23 to Nov. 21]."

CHHTO Director Ali-Asghar Mounesan said in November that the number of foreign travelers to the country has seen a considerable year-on-year growth as medical tourism gains momentum in the country.

The 2019 Travel Risk Map, which shows the risk level around the world, puts Iran among countries with "insignificant risk", a category where the UK, Denmark, Switzerland, Norway, and Finland are placed in.



## Ancient relics unearthed in northwest Iran



**HERITAGE** TEHRAN — A number of historical relics have recently been unearthed in the vicinity of Alajouq fortress, a centuries-old monument situated upstream of a dam, northwest Iran.

The discovery was made when a team of researchers and restorers were conducting a salvage operation strengthening the fortress before Emarat dam being inaugurated in

Germi county, Ardebil province.

The objects date from Seljuk (1037–1194) and Il-Khanid (1256–1353) eras, said Nader Fallahi, the provincial tourism chief, CHTN reported on Sunday.

In November, an Iron Age tomb was found in the county. Experts said the tomb dated a time between 2500 to 3000 years ago, belonging to a child who was between 5 and 7 years old.

## Iranian handicrafts, souvenirs to go on show in Iraq



**HERITAGE** TEHRAN — A major sales exhibition of Iranian handicrafts and souvenirs will open on December 26 in the Iraqi city of Sulaymaniyah and will run until January 5, 2019.

It would be the "first" exhibition of its kind in Iraq, which includes offerings from across Iran, Mehr reported.

The event will feature arrays of rugs, kilim carpets, chessboards, potteries,

regionals clothing, silverware, personal ornaments, woodwork, illuminated manuscripts, miniatures, textile printing, enamels, leatherwork, handwoven textile, calligraphy, traditional musical instruments, metalwork, and marquetry to name a few.

Over the past couple of years, dozens of high-quality Iranian handicrafts have been honored with UNESCO seals of excellence.

# Ancient, unknown strain of plague found in 5,000-year-old tomb in Sweden

In a nearly 5,000-year-old tomb in Sweden, researchers have discovered the oldest-known strain of the notorious bacterium *Yersinia pestis* — the microbe responsible for humanity's perhaps most-feared contagion: the plague.

The finding suggests that the germ may have devastated settlements across Europe at the end of the Stone Age in what may have been the first major pandemic of human history. It could also rewrite some of what we know of ancient European history.

The finding came about as the researchers were analyzing publicly available databases of ancient DNA for cases in which infections might have claimed prehistoric victims. They focused on the previously excavated site of Fralsegarden in Sweden.

Previous analysis of a limestone tomb at the site found that an estimated 78 people were buried there, and they all had died within a 200-year period. The fact that many people died in a relatively short time in one place suggested they might have perished together in an epidemic, lead study author Nicolas Rascovan, a biologist at Aix-Marseille University in Marseille, France, told Live Science. The limestone tomb was dated to the Neolithic, or New Stone Age, the period when farming began.

The researchers discovered the previously unknown strain of plague in the remains of a woman at the Fralsegarden site. Carbon dating suggested she died about 4,900 years ago during a period known as the Neolithic Decline, when Neolithic cultures throughout Europe mysteriously dwindled.

Based on her hip bones and other skeletal features, they



estimated the woman was about 20 years old when she died. The plague strain found with her had a genetic mutation that can trigger pneumonic plague — the deadliest form of historic and modern plague — suggesting the woman likely died of the disease.

By comparing the newfound strain with known plague DNA, the scientists determined that the ancient sample was the closest known relative of the plague bacterium's most recent ancestor. The study researchers theorized that the ancient sample diverged from other plague strains about 5,700 years ago.

The perils of innovation?

Study co-author Karl-Goran Sjogren, an archaeologist at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, told Live Science that the discovery of plague "in a relatively marginal area of the Neolithic world ... suggests well-established and far-reaching contact networks" at that time that allowed the disease to spread.

Indeed, it's possible that "the revolutionary innovations of that time — bigger settlements with more complex organization, wheeled transport, metallurgy, trading networks over large distances, and so on" — may have set the stage for "the emergence and spread of infectious diseases, and this eventually led to, what we think, was the first massive pandemic of human history," Rascovan said.

The researchers noted that the findings don't mean that plague single-handedly wiped out Neolithic settlements, but rather that it may have been one factor among others, Rascovan said. For instance, the Neolithic settlements may have overexploited their environment, potentially driving forests they depended on into extinction, the researchers said.

The researchers also cautioned they have not yet detected the smoking gun for their new theory — that is, plague in any remains from the mega settlements in which it may have evolved. "If we could find plague in those settlements, that would be strong support for this theory," Rasmussen said in the statement.

(Source: Live Science)

# The new train lines that could transform how you travel

It's been a good year for fans of rail travel, with speedy new train services opening around the world, linking major cities and slashing rail journey times.

Whether travelers are looking for an alternative to flying, or just want a faster train ride, these services are offering new travel opportunities.

Also known as the XRL, the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link opened in September.

The 26-kilometer (16-mile) service connects the semi-autonomous city of Hong Kong with mainland China's extensive high-speed rail network.

Read: What to expect from Hong Kong's new bullet trains

Bullet trains run from Hong Kong's newly opened West Kowloon station to 44 destinations. The journey between Hong Kong and Guangzhou, previously two hours by train, takes just 47 minutes. Trips to Shenzhen take 14 minutes.

Direct trains from Hong Kong to Beijing take nine hours and to Shanghai, eight hours. They each run once a day.

In an unprecedented arrangement, West Kowloon station is divided into Hong Kong and Chinese immigration controls — which means passengers can avoid an additional check when traveling in and out of Hong Kong.

The move has not been without controversy: part of the station is governed by Chinese authorities and patrolled by



A carriage manufactured by Stadler for the new Azerbaijan-Turkey direct route.

mainland police. Travelers from Hong Kong still need to have a valid Chinese visa or travel document to ride the train.

Officially opened last month, this high-speed rail line will link the Moroccan cities of Tangier and Casablanca via the capital city of Rabat, and Kenitra in the north.

The line will have French-made double-decker TGV trains that reach speeds of 200 miles (322 kilometers) per hour.

Located on the northwestern coast, Tangier has traditionally been a gateway between Africa and Europe. Casablanca is Morocco's largest city and its economic powerhouse.

Tangier is known for its bohemian vibe, abundance of cafes, and rich multicultural heritage — while Casablanca is famous for its architecture and beautiful beaches.

The two cities are 340 kilometers apart, and the new line will reduce travel time to two hours — down from almost five hours on existing trains.

The high-speed Eurostar has long offered daily services between London and various cities in mainland Europe, including Paris (two hours and 16 minutes) and Brussels (just under two hours).

In April 2018, Eurostar launched the

first ever direct service between London and Amsterdam, which takes three hours and 41 minutes.

There are currently two direct trains daily from London to Amsterdam. There is no direct return, however, because the British and Dutch governments haven't yet reached an agreement regarding border control.

Eurostar is "planning to introduce a direct return once the governments have come to an agreement," which is expected to happen by the end of 2019, according to a spokesperson.

The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway (BTK) actually opened in 2017. Connecting the capitals of Azerbaijan and Georgia with the ancient city of Kars in Turkey, the BTK stretches 513 miles (826 kilometers).

But in 2019, the railway will introduce a new route that will take passengers between Baku and the Turkish cities of Ankara and Istanbul — the first direct train link between Azerbaijan and Turkey that doesn't require stops in Georgia, which shares borders with the two countries. Trains will have a maximum speed of 100 miles (160 kilometers) per hour, according to Stadler Rail Management, which is manufacturing the carriages.

While journey times on the routes have not been announced, the direct services will be a vast improvement on existing train lines. Currently, those traveling by train have to endure a 40-hour journey with multiple stopovers to get between the two capitals. Trains from Baku to Istanbul take three days.

(Source: CNN)

# Why we don't need a moonshot to solve climate change

The prospect of solving climate change often prompts grand metaphors of moonshots and the Manhattan Project, with top scientists dedicating time and energy to come up with a breakthrough that will solve global warming.

A wide range of scientists, engineers and thinkers agree that we have the technological capacity to stem warming, keeping temperatures below the 1.5°C target that scientists warn would bring some of the most catastrophic impacts of climate change. What we're missing is not big technological improvements, but rather the right mix of policies and political will to implement them.

This is the challenge that has drawn thousands of politicians, policymakers, scientists and advocates from around the world here to Katowice, Poland, this month for the most significant United Nations climate conference since the landmark gathering that resulted in the Paris Agreement in 2015. The more than 20,000 people assembled in this industrial city at the heart of Polish coal industry will play a pivotal role keeping the Paris Agreement on track to help reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, leading climate officials say. Failure could derail the delicate multilateral process that has taken decades to reach this point.

## Some political traction

"After three years we're still negotiating the work plan to deliver on the Paris Agreement," María Fernanda Espinosa, president of the UN General Assembly, tells TIME. "We really need some political traction and



some real commitment."

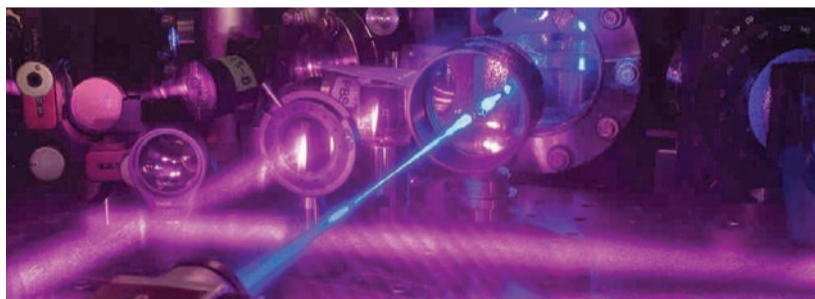
The chief debate here in Katowice does not center on questions about the need to reduce emissions or even the viability or costs of doing so. Instead, negotiators are haggling over a slew of technical questions about how to implement solutions that scientists know will work.

The key issue at hand is the so-called rulebook, a technical document that lays out how

countries report on their progress to address climate change. Negotiators are debating how to ensure that countries transparently report their emissions. Do developing countries have to abide by the same standards as their wealthy counterparts? How can we ensure that the reporting is transparent? The questions may sound simple, but they're enough to flummox seasoned climate policy experts whose views vary wildly.

**And, climate negotiators warn that if the rulebook doesn't come together, countries may not be willing to commit to take bigger steps to reduce their emissions.**

## Will dark matter mess with these ultraprecise atomic clocks?



Researchers are putting a global network of the most precise timekeepers ever made to the task of hunting for dark matter, the invisible and largely intangible substance that researchers think makes up about five-sixths of all matter in the universe.

The existence of dark matter is suggested via its gravitational effects on the movements of stars and galaxies. However, it remains a mystery as to what it might be composed of, and projects ranging from the most powerful atom smasher ever built to vats of chilly liquid xenon have failed to find a trace of it so far, lead study author Piotr Wcislo, a physicist at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toru, Poland, told space.com.

Previous research suggested that if dark matter is a field, structures could emerge within it — "topological defects" shaped like points, strings or sheets and potentially reaching at least the size of a planet, Wcislo said. These structures might have formed during the chaos after the Big Bang, and essentially froze into stable forms when the early universe cooled down.

## Dark-matter fields

Now scientists are testing the existence of dark-matter fields by looking for disturbances in some of the most accurate scientific instruments ever constructed — atomic clocks. These instruments keep time by monitoring the quivering of atoms, much as grandfather clocks rely on swinging pendulums. Nowadays, atomic clocks are so accurate that they would lose no more than 1 second every 15 billion years, longer than the 13.8-billion-year age of the universe.

Interacting with a topological defect could make an atomic clock's atoms temporarily shake faster or slower. By monitoring a network of synchronized atomic clocks that are spread far enough apart for a topological defect to have an effect on some clocks but not others, scientists could detect the existence of these ghostly structures and measure some of their properties, such as their size and speed.

The researchers employed optical atomic clocks, which use laser beams to measure the motions of atoms when they are slowed down by cooling them to temperatures near absolute zero.

## The electromagnetic force

They calculated that passing through a topological defect could increase or decrease the fine-structure constant, which describes the overall strength of the electromagnetic force. Such changes would alter how atoms respond to lasers and the rate at which those clocks ticked.

Another possible explanation for dark matter is that its effects are caused by fields that vary in strength over time, which in turn lead to regular fluctuations in the strength of the electromagnetic field. Atomic clocks could, in theory, help detect such "coherently oscillating classical scalar fields," the scientists noted.

By analyzing four atomic clocks on three continents — in Colorado, France, Poland and Japan — the researchers could look for subtle variations in the fine-structure constant with about 100 times greater sensitivity than previous experiments. However, they did not detect any signal consistent with dark matter.

(Source: Live Science)

## WSU researchers create 3D-printed glucose biosensors

A 3D-printed glucose biosensor for use in wearable monitors has been created by Washington State University researchers.

The work could lead to improved glucose monitors for millions of people who suffer from diabetes.

Led by Arda Gozen and Yuehe Lin, faculty in the School of Mechanical and Materials Engineering, the research has been published in the journal *Analytica Chimica Acta*.

People with diabetes most commonly monitor their disease with glucose meters that require constant finger pricking. Continuous glucose monitoring systems are an alternative, but they are not cost effective.

Researchers have been working to develop wearable, flexible electronics that can conform to patients' skin and monitor the glucose in body fluids, such as in sweat. To build such sensors, manufacturers have used traditional manufacturing strategies, such as photolithography or screen printing. While these methods work, they have several drawbacks, including requiring the use of harmful chemicals and expensive clean-room processing. They also create a lot of waste.

## Better stability and sensibility

Using 3D printing, the WSU research team developed a glucose monitor with much better stability and sensitivity than those manufactured through traditional methods.



The researchers used a method called direct-ink-writing (DIW), that involves printing "inks" out of nozzles to create intricate and precise designs at tiny scales. The researchers printed out a nanoscale material that is electrically conductive to create flexible electrodes. The WSU team's technique allows a precise application of the material, resulting in a uniform surface and fewer defects, which increases the sensor's sensitivity. The researchers found that their 3D-printed sensors did better at picking up glucose signals than the traditionally

produced electrodes.

Because it uses 3D printing, their system is also more customizable for the variety of people's biology.

"3D printing can enable manufacturing of biosensors tailored specifically to individual patients" said Gozen.

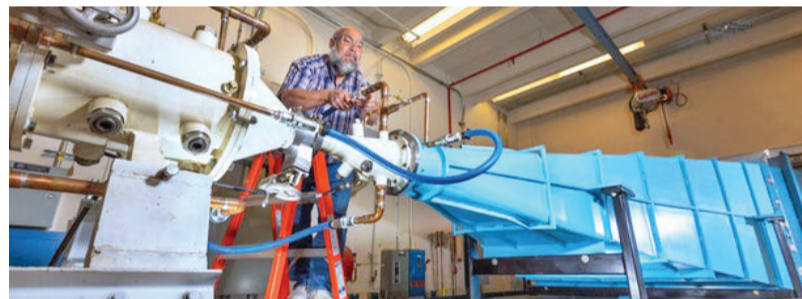
Because the 3D printing uses only the amount of material needed, there is also less waste in the process than traditional manufacturing methods.

For large-scale use, the printed biosensors will need to be integrated with electronic components on a wearable platform. But, manufacturers could use the same 3D printer nozzles used for printing the sensors to print electronics and other components of a wearable medical device, helping to consolidate manufacturing processes and reduce costs even more, he added.

"Our 3-D printed glucose sensor will be used as wearable sensor for replacing painful finger pricking. Since this is a noninvasive, needless technique for glucose monitoring, it will be easier for children's glucose monitoring," said Lin. The team is now working to integrate the sensors into a packaged system that can be used as a wearable device for long-term glucose-monitoring.

(Source: eurekaalert.org)

## "Friendly" EMP generator to help protect electronics against electromagnetic attack



Electromagnetic pulse (EMP) weapons might be a staple of movies and video games, but they pose a very real threat. With just about every facet of modern society reliant on electronic devices, Sandia National Laboratories has developed a "friendly" EMP generator to make sure military and civilian equipment can withstand such potentially devastating bursts of electromagnetic energy.

First studied in earnest during the early U.S. atomic weapon tests in the 1940s and '50s, an EMP is one weapon of mass destruction that, fortunately, has yet to be used in war or by terrorists. The principle is that detonating a nuclear weapon high in the atmosphere can generate a massive burst of radio energy that can overload electricity grids, and electric and electronic circuits and burn them out.

Over the decades, a lot of research has gone into EMPs and it makes for very unpleasant reading. A single EMP attack against even a country the size of the United States would have a devastating effect.

## Posing much danger

The explosion itself might not pose much danger to those below, but the EMP would damage or destroy phones, power grids, communications networks, computers, laptops, smart cards, vehicle electronics, fuel pumps, medical equipment, industrial robots, and just about anything else that has a microchip or even a slightly advanced electrical circuit.

Worse, large H-bombs aren't needed to create the pulse. Using magnetic coils, it's possible to produce EMP effects with tactical nuclear warheads or even conventional explosives that could be fabricated by

And, climate negotiators warn that if the rulebook doesn't come together, countries may not be willing to commit to take bigger steps to reduce their emissions. That is, some countries may be reluctant to promise to reduce their emissions if they don't have verifiable evidence that their counterparts will do the same.

## Addressing climate change

But the rulebook is just a small representation of a much bigger puzzle. Across the planet, efforts to address climate change have stalled because of a lack of policy and political will. Take carbon pricing, the policy most economists and policymakers say will serve as an important step to reducing emissions. Such a measure, which could take the form of a carbon tax or cap-and-trade system, would require companies to pay to pollute. The revenue could be used to support something like a green jobs program or fund a tax cut.

"It's about making markets work well," Nicholas Stern, former head of the British Academy and World Bank chief economist, tells TIME. "Markets can fail if people don't pay for what they're buying, and if you use fossil fuels you are causing big losses to other people."

But countries have struggled to find ways to make carbon-pricing efforts politically palatable. In Canada, where Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has tried to push through a national carbon-pricing scheme, the issue has become a controversial campaign talking point.

(Source: time.com)

## High-temperature electronics? That's hot

A new organic polymer blend allows plastic electronics to function in high temperatures without sacrificing performance.

From iPhones on Earth to rovers on Mars, most electronics only function within a certain temperature range. By blending two organic materials together, researchers at Purdue University could create electronics that withstand extreme heat.

This new plastic material could reliably conduct electricity in up to 220 degrees Celsius (428 F), according to a paper published Thursday in the journal *Science*.

"Commercial electronics operate between minus 40 and 85 degrees Celsius. Beyond this range, they're going to malfunction," said Jianguo Mei, a professor of organic chemistry at Purdue University. "We created a material that can operate at high temperatures by blending two polymers together."

One of these is a semiconductor, which can conduct electricity, and the other is a conventional insulating polymer, which is what you might picture when you think of regular plastic. To make this technology work for electronics, the researchers couldn't just meld the two together -- they had to tinker with ratios.

"One of the plastics transports the charge, and the other can withstand high temperatures," said Aristide Gumyusenge, lead author of the paper and graduate researcher at Purdue. "When you blend them together, you have to find the right ratio so that they merge nicely and one doesn't dominate the other."

The researchers discovered a few properties that are essential to make this work. The two materials need to be compatible to mixing and should each be present in roughly the same ratio. This results in an organized, interpenetrating network that allows the electrical charge to flow evenly throughout while holding its shape in extreme temperatures.

Most impressive about this new material isn't its ability to conduct electricity in extreme temperatures, but that its performance doesn't seem to change. Usually, the performance of electronics depends on temperature -- think about how fast your laptop would work in your climate-controlled office versus the Arizona desert.

(Source: Science Daily)

## Researchers seeking clues to longevity in lonesome George's genes

The giant tortoise lived for more than a century, carrying genes linked to a robust immune system, efficient DNA repair and resistance to cancer.

When Lonesome George, the only survivor of the Pinta Island tortoises of the Galápagos, died in 2012, the news landed with a blow.

Rationally, people had time to prepare for the reality that George would one day fade away, and with him, an entire lineage. He had lived for a century or more, a common life expectancy for giant tortoises, and all attempts to mate him during his last few decades were unsuccessful.

But emotionally, it's hard to brace oneself for the realization that something that was once there is finally, completely gone. It's the kind of stuff that makes you ponder life, our fleeting stint in the universe and the unrelenting, forward march of time.

Similar feelings drive longevity research. Recently, a team of scientists turned to George for help in this search, mining his genetic code for clues to his long life span.

In a paper published Monday in *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, the researchers reported preliminary findings of gene variants in George linked with a robust immune system, efficient DNA repair and resistance to cancer. The study also sets the stage for understanding giant tortoises' evolutionary past, which might help to conserve them in the future.

Giant tortoises helped launch the theory of evolution. When Charles Darwin visited the Galápagos, he noticed the tortoises' shell shapes were unique adaptations to their environments. He hypothesized that natural selection was at work.

The Galápagos tortoises have since continued to be a rich source of inquiry for evolutionary scientists. Adalgisa "Gisella" Caccone, a researcher at Yale University, has spent decades studying the reptiles that are the size of upright pianos.

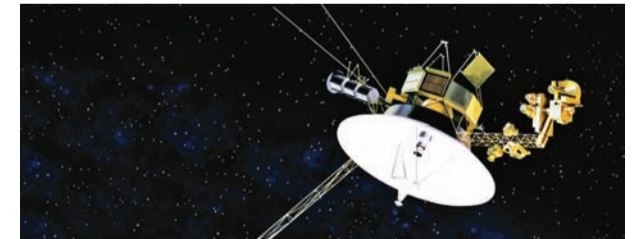
(Source: NYT)

## NASA might be about to announce huge Voyager 2 news, team says

When it comes to prodding the very boundaries of the Solar System we all reside in, astronomers have had a notoriously tricky time of figuring out where those edges truly lie.

For example, it took a whole year to officially confirm that Voyager 1 had reached the interstellar medium of space -- the first spacecraft to ever do so.

But we might be about to get a confirmation of its cousin busting through the heliopause and into the interstellar medium as well; right now, we're only at rumor level, but one promising clue is this tweet by freelance science journalist Jonathan O'Callaghan:



It's important to note that there's a number of ways you can measure the end of the Solar System. For starters, it makes sense to say that the Solar System extends to the edge of the influence of the Sun.

That can mean several things, though: the end of the reach of the Sun's light; or the edge of the Sun's magnetic field and solar wind (what Voyager 2 is on the brink of); or alternatively the influence of the Sun's gravity (which could push out the edge much farther than the Voyager probes, if the speculative Planet Nine is confirmed).

But reaching the interstellar medium is an impressive feat either way - it means both Voyagers would finally be flying through the void between the stars, where the Sun's solar winds are no longer able to reach them.

We're looking at a lot of speculation at this point, but here's one thing we know for sure - NASA has a press briefing this morning, coming up at the American Geophysical Union's 2018 meeting in Washington.

They might not call it just yet, as Voyager 1 entered the interstellar medium at around 121 AU (or 121 times the distance between the Sun and Earth), but Voyager 2 is currently at only 119 AU.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

## U.S. women earn half the income of men, new study finds

Women earned roughly half the income of men in the United States over a 15-year period, taking into account time off for family or child care, according to a report released on Wednesday, which found the pay gap is far greater than has commonly been assumed.

In an examination of women's income from 2001 to 2015, the Washington-based Institute for Women's Policy Research found that women's income was 51 percent less than men's earnings, which includes time with no income.

"Much ink has been spilled debating whether the commonly cited measure of the wage gap - that women earn 80 cents for every dollar earned by a man - is an exaggeration due to occupational differences or so-called 'women's choices,'" Heidi Hartmann, president of the institute and a co-author of the study, said in a statement.

"But our analysis finds that we have actually been underestimating the extent of pay inequality in the labor market," Hartmann said.

The study, "Still a Man's Labor Market," showed that the wage gap has narrowed since 1968, with women's inflation-adjusted income rising to an average of \$29,000 for the period from 2001 to 2015, compared with \$14,000 from 1968 to 1982.

But women are nearly twice as likely as men to take at least one year off work, and they pay a high price for it. Women who left the workforce for a year earned, during their years on the job, an average of 39 percent less than men, the study found.

(Source: Reuters)

## RECIPE OF THE WEEK

### Qabali - Afghani Rice

"This recipe is Afghani cooking - it's a rice dish that's very popular and very delicious. Serve with a nice meat sauce."

#### Ingredients:



- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 5 carrot, julienned
- 1 teaspoon white sugar
- 1/2 cup sultana raisins
- 4 cups uncooked basmati rice
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon white sugar
- 1 cup water 1 pinch saffron (optional)
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground cardamom
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin

#### Directions:

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees C). Place rice in a large bowl, rinse, and

then soak in cold water for 30 minutes.

In a large skillet, heat 3 tablespoons oil over medium heat. Add carrots and 1 teaspoon sugar; cook, stirring frequently, until tender. Stir in raisins, and continue cooking until the raisins are soft and plump. Remove from heat, and set aside to cool.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Strain rice, and then add to boiling water. Cook for about 5 minutes, then strain with a mesh strainer.

In a small saucepan, heat 1/2 cup oil and 1 tablespoon sugar. Cook until sugar dissolves completely, making a syrup. Remove from heat, and cool. Once cool, add 1 cup water, and return to a boil.

Return the rice to pan. Stir in carrots and raisins, and then mix in oil and sugar syrup. Season with saffron, cinnamon, cardamom, black pepper, and cumin. Poke some holes with a spoon all over the rice. Cover, and cook over high heat until you hear crackling noises. Remove from heat.

Bake, covered, in preheated oven for 20 minutes. Remove from oven, and toss rice with a fork.

## 105,000 girls are confirmed bachelorettes



**W O M E N** TEHRAN — A number of 105,000 girls, mostly residing in Tehran and the central cities of Iran, are confirmed bachelorettes, Ardehsir Garavand, designer of the center for social surveillance affiliated to the Interior Ministry said here on Sunday.

Moreover, there are 36,000 confirmed bachelors in the country, IRNA news agency quoted him as saying.

The active age of marriage is 39 and women older than 39 are considered confirmed bachelorettes.

"In absence of detailed and long-term planning in different administrations over the past decades, the number of single-person households are growing

and has been doubled since the last 20 years".

Immorality is the result of inequity between the population of men and women which happens when men are forced to immigrate in order to find a proper job, he explained.

"Unemployment and migrations, that affects the social balance, are serious elements in occurrence of crime and social damages".

Currently, three million families consisting 14 million people are living on the outskirts of the cities nationwide, Garavand said, noting financial sources are not available for constructing proper houses for them.

## High childhood BMI linked to obesity at age 24 in women

Girls who gain weight more rapidly between the ages of 5 and 15 are more likely to be obese at age 24, according to researchers.

"This highlights the importance of prevention efforts in childhood and adolescence," said Emily Hohman, assistant research professor of the Center for Childhood Obesity Research. The center is a college-wide collaboration of researchers from Penn State and elsewhere focused on evidence-based research that can be applied to treatment and prevention programs.

The Penn State researchers completed a follow-up study using data collected from a 10-year longitudinal observational study done by other researchers. In the original study, the researchers gathered 197 non-Hispanic white girls all 5 years in age.

The original study found four different BMI trajectory groups based on patterns of growth between the ages of 5 and 15. The four groups were classified as accelerated weight gain from ages 5 to 15; accelerated weight gain from 5 to 9 followed by a leveling-off;

weight tracked along the 60th percentile; and weight tracked along the 50th percentile. The previous study had found that the first group -- accelerated weight gain from ages 5 to 15 -- had higher fasting insulin, blood pressure and triglycerides at age 15 than the other groups.

The follow-up study tracked down 182 of the 197 original participants when they were 24 years old, 10 years after last contact. The researchers sent surveys that asked the women to self-report their weight, height, education level, dieting, relationship, student and work status. The women who reported having a child were excluded from the follow-up.

The researchers found the accelerated weight gain from ages 5 to 15 group had a 93 percent rate of overweight or obesity at age 24 compared to just 20 to 37 percent in the other three groups.

"There is a need for prevention in young adulthood, too," said Hohman. "Kids are going off to college, getting their first jobs, and leaving home. This is another

critical window where long-term health habits can develop, and obesity risk might increase."

A high BMI throughout childhood is associated with negative health outcomes in adulthood including obesity, cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes, according to the paper, which was made available online in July 2018 ahead of peer-review and publication this month in *Eating Behaviors*.

"We found that about 20 to 30 percent of girls who did not have accelerated weight gain in childhood or adolescence ended up having overweight or obesity at age 24," said Hohman.

This shows how eating behaviors and lifestyle choices can impact BMI as well.

For future work, the researchers plan to test additional psychological and physiological measures in person.

"We would love to bring the women back in to get additional data on eating behaviors and health," said Hohman. "We just need to find the funding."

(Source: Science Daily)

# 'Social presence of Iranian women, victim of Western censorship'

**W O M E N** TEHRAN — The active presence of Iranian women in foreign media has been victimized by the West's censorship, Kobra Aqazari, Iranian representative in the First Ever Global Women in Media Conference, held in Karachi, Pakistan said on Monday.

Western media create a false image about Iranian women, said Aqazari, adding tourists, officials and other cultural or political officials who visit Iran disprove false propagandas.

The Iranian women, like any women in any other place face the men's community constraints, however, they are active in all occupations including medicine, education and training, media, and other parts of the society, explained the Iranian female journalist.

Statistics show that women make up about half of the 80 million population of Iran and women account for more than 60



percent of Iranian students and 90 percent of literate people, she added.

The First Ever Global Women in Media Conference was held with the presence of a representative from Iran's official news agency, IRNA.

Karachi's global conference aimed at highlighting the role of women in the media whereas development in media, ethics of media, issues related to journalists also came under discussion during different sessions of the conference.

Pakistan Media Development Foundation has organized the four-day international moot in which representatives from 22 countries including Iran took part.

Other women journalists from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, India, Ireland, Kuwait, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Romania, Spain, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, UK and the USA also participated the conference.

## MP calls for formation of women's regional development association



**W O M E N** TEHRAN — Member of Majlis (Iranian Parliament), Fatemeh Zolqadr, here on Saturday called for formation of an association for women's regional development, ISNA reported.

Speaking on the sidelines of the second edition of 'Speakers' Conference' which kicked off in Tehran on Saturday, Zolqadr stressed the need for increasing economic relations through coordination of parliamentarian delegations of six member countries.

Women's empowerment and creating proper situation for women's entrepreneurship are great effort in line with developing economic goals, she noted.

Zolqadr further suggested formation of an association for women's regional development in order to consider women's role in a systemic method.

The two-day international meeting of parliament speakers from Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, China and Russia focused on peace, connectivity and prosperity in the region.

The final statement of the 2nd conference of parliament speakers of Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, China and Russia on the challenges of terrorism stressed the role that parliaments can play in the fight against terrorism and the expansion of international cooperation.

## LEARN ENGLISH

### That's Funny!

Announcer: Hello everyone, and welcome to **open mic night!** You're in for a real treat as we've got a lot of great comics here with us tonight. First up, we have a very funny man coming straight from the state of Montana, Robert Hicks!

A: Thank you, everyone! Well, what a lovely crowd. You know, there's nothing I love better than **standup comedy!** You know, I've been working on my **routine** for months now, and I've got some real **zingers** for you tonight. Let's start out with some short jokes, how about that? Where do you find a one legged dog? Where you left it.

A: Get it? mmm Anyways... What do you call a sheep with no legs? A cloud!

A: Tough crowd... Alright, now you're going to love this joke. It's hilarious! What do cows do for entertainment? They rent mooovies! mooovies

A: Okay, Okay, we've got a few **hecklers** in the audience, but this one is good! What does a fish say when it runs into a wall? DAM!

A: Okay, Last one! Why do gorillas have big nostrils? Coz they got big fingers!!!!!!!

Crowd: Get off the stage! You suck!

A: Thanks everyone that was my time.

#### Key vocabulary

**open mic night:** when a club or restaurant allows for anyone to sign or perform

**standup comedy:** when someone performs comedy while standing on a stage

**routine:** a series of things (such as movements or jokes)

**zinger:** a quick and clever comment that criticizes

**heckler:** someone who interrupts (someone, such as a speaker)

**Supplementary vocabulary**

**comeback:** a reply to an insult; a witty retort

**dis:** insulting or in some other way defaming someone or something

**punk:** to play a joke or prank someone

**mock:** make fun of or laugh at someone

**ad lib:** in an unrestrained manner; spontaneously

(Source: learnenglish.com)

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## University of Tehran to host Iranian, Russian top universities summit

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

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

## دانشگاه تهران میزبان اجلاس روسای دانشگاه‌های برتر ایران و روسیه

به گزارش ایسنا، چهارمین اجلاس روسای دانشگاه‌های برتر ایران و روسیه با هدف گسترش و تعمیق روابط علمی و دانشگاهی دو کشور ۳ آذر ۱۳۹۷، به میزبانی دانشگاه تهران در جزیره کیش برگزار می‌شود.

چهارمین اجلاس روسای دانشگاه‌های برتر ایران و روسیه با حضور روسای دانشگاه‌های سطح یک کشور، روسا و هیات‌های نمایندگی دانشگاه‌های روسیه، مقامات سفارتی، قائم مقام وزیر علوم و رئیس مرکز همکاری‌های علمی و بین‌المللی وزارت علوم، برای گسترش همکاری‌های دانشگاهی بین دو کشور برگزار خواهد شد.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

"eu-"

■ **Meaning:** good

■ **For example:** The minister delivered a long **eulogy**.

## PHRASAL VERB

Leave somebody/ something off

■ **Meaning:** to not include something such as someone's name in a list or other document

■ **For example:** Why was her name left off the list?

## IDIOM

Go with the flow

■ **Explanation:** to nonchalantly engage in a situation without trying to change it or assert control over it

■ **For example:** We always do things your way—can't you just go with the flow for once?

## Lebanese security forces thwart terrorist attack days before parliamentary elections: minister

Caretaker Lebanese Minister of Interior and Municipalities Nohad Machnouk says Internal Security Forces managed to foil a terrorist attack that was going to be carried out days before the parliamentary vote in the country.

Speaking at a press conference in the Lebanese capital city of Beirut on Monday, Machnouk said the act of terror sought to target places of worship and military positions during the legislative polls in early May.

He added that the terrorist attack was uncovered after ten months of hard work by members of the Internal Security Forces Directorate under an operation, codenamed "Lethal Cheese", stressing that terrorists had planned to conduct two massive bomb explosions.

"Lebanon is now safe for both its residents and visitors. We decided to publicize the operation to provide assurances that security is in a good condition in the country," Machnouk pointed out.

The Lebanese interior minister further revealed that terrorists had recruited a Syrian citizen since 2013 to carry out the terrorist operation.

Lebanon's first parliamentary vote in



FILE PHOTO: Lebanon's Interior Minister Nohad Machnouk talks during a news conference in Beirut, Lebanon, January 19, 2018. REUTERS.

nine years was held on May 6, with over 500 candidates vying for seats. Turnout was 49.2 percent, according to officials.

According to official results, Hezbollah and its political allies secured over half

the seats.

Hezbollah as well as groups and individuals affiliated to it won at least 67 seats in Lebanon's parliament, according to the results cited by politicians and campaigns

and reported in Lebanese media.

Hezbollah's allies include the Amal Movement led by Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and the Christian Free Patriotic Movement founded by Aoun. The parliamentary seats are split evenly -- 64 for Christians and 64 for Muslims, including Druze, with the two halves further divided among 11 religious groups.

Prime Minister-designate Saad al-Hariri has called on political parties to "show modesty" in their demands regarding the new government, emphasizing that he is not responsible for the serious delay.

"They are blaming me for the delay whereas each party is clinging to its stances and demands," he told reporters on August 7 ahead of a meeting for the Future Movement's parliamentary bloc.

"Everyone must display modesty and sacrifice for the sake of the country," Hariri said. Political rivalry led to years of governmental paralysis in Lebanon, and the country did not produce a state budget from 2005 until last year.

The International Monetary Fund has said that Lebanon must urgently address its fiscal policy in order to sustain its high levels of public debt.

(Source: Press TV)

## May to withdraw parliamentary vote on her Brexit deal

British Prime Minister Theresa May is pulling a parliamentary vote set for Tuesday on her Brexit deal, the BBC reported, after repeated warnings from lawmakers that the scale of the expected defeat could sink her government.

May convened a conference call with senior ministers Monday to discuss what to do with her compromise deal that allowed the United Kingdom to exit while staying in the EU's orbit.

While there was no official word on the vote, two sources told BBC political editor Laura Kuenssberg that the vote was being pulled. A Financial Times reporter said an official close to the cabinet had also confirmed the vote would be pulled.

May will make a statement to the House of Commons at 1530 GMT on the issue, Labour Party lawmakers responsible for party discipline said after the reports were released.

May and her ministers had repeatedly insisted the vote would go ahead as planned. Her spokeswoman briefed reporters Monday that there was no plan to pull the vote.

Sterling fell to the lowest since June 2017.

The report that May could cancel the vote came just hours after the top EU court ruled that Britain could cancel its notice to leave the bloc, which it is due to exit on March, 29.

(Source: Daily Star)



## How France's far right infiltrated Marine Le Pen's National Front

An Al Jazeera investigation has revealed close ties between a violent far-right group in the French city of Lille and Marine Le Pen's National Front (FN/Front national-National Rally/Rassemblement national/RN), despite a push by the party to soften its xenophobic and racist image to broaden its appeal with voters.

At least two members of Generation Identity (GI), an anti-Muslim youth movement, held political posts at FN, a new documentary by Al Jazeera titled Generation Hate, revealed on Sunday.

Their enlistment with FN appears to be part of a broader bid by GI to infiltrate Le Pen's party and shape its policies.

In secretly-filmed footage, Aurelien Verhassel, the 34-year-old leader of GI Lille, claimed he wrote speeches for leaders of the FN, and was shown to have ties to Le Pen's aide, Sebastien Chenu.

Activists also told our undercover reporter that Verhassel, who has a string of criminal convictions for violence, including a five-month prison sentence for an attack on two North African teenagers, helped GI members find jobs at the FN.

Verhassel, who is appealing that prison sentence, was also filmed telling a Canadian journalist that GI, one of Europe's fastest growing and most prominent far-right movements, was not interested in winning political office because "we see ourselves in [the National Front's] ideas".

Other far-right activists from Bordeaux, south-western France, also in secretly-filmed conversations, claimed they provided security for FN leaders during the 2017 presidential election, which Le Pen lost to Emmanuel Macron in the runoff, while FN members professed support for a "civil war" during visits to a private bar run by Verhassel, called the Citadelle.

Responding to Al Jazeera, Le Pen denied links between GI and FN, which has since been renamed the National Rally. Verhassel has never worked or written speeches for

her party, she added.

The revelations on Sunday were part of a six-month undercover sting that began in September last year at GI's Lille branch. Members of the group were filmed carrying out racist attacks, admitting to a series of assaults on Muslims and making Nazi salutes.

That's despite GI, a pan-European group estimated to have thousands of activists and an online following of tens of thousands, claiming it is non-violent and non-racist. The group advocates the defense of what it sees as the identity and culture of white Europeans from what it calls the "great replacement" by mass immigration and "Islamization".

Verhassel, one of its most prominent leaders, sees GI as a feeder for FN. Describing the group as a "serious political movement that trains young leaders", he told a Canadian journalist visiting the Citadelle that the movement was not interested in winning political office.

Mathias Destal, a French journalist who has been investigating the country's far-right, said it appeared GI was undertaking a tactic called "entryism" - the infiltration of a political party in the aim of subverting its policies or objectives.

Indeed, many GI members profess support for the tactic.

In December 2017, Cloe Jelmoni, a GI activist from Paris, told our undercover reporter that the movement's goal was to apply political pressure on governments. Jelmoni claimed GI was the first to talk about stripping French citizenship from dual nationals convicted of terrorism - a proposal that gained majority support in the French parliament in 2016 but was later withdrawn by then-President Francois Hollande.

Our undercover reporter also discovered FN members were welcome visitors at the Citadelle. Some also accepted GI's language of a probable civil war between white Europeans and Muslims. Pascal Joye, a card-carrying member, said he expected a "revolt" if Le Pen came to power and began

expelling what he called "petty criminals".

"If there had to be a civil war, and you've got some darkie who's giving you sh\*\*\* for something, you shoot randomly from a window," he said.

As part of a push by Le Pen to sanitize the party's image, FN has made efforts in recent years to distance itself from extreme far-right groups.

When the 50-year-old leader took over the party in 2011, she kicked out dozens of people who were accused of racism and violence - including her own father and FN's founder after he made statements minimizing the importance of the Holocaust.

Destal, the journalist, said these moves were part of an attempt by Le Pen to "demonize" the party and break its "electoral glass ceiling".

They appeared to be working. In 2017, Le Pen polled more than seven million votes in the first round of France's presidential election. In the second round, she was backed by more than 10 million voters but lost to Macron.

Her defeat, coupled with disappointing results in subsequent legislative elections, in which FN won only eight seats, led to bitter recriminations within the party.

Meanwhile, Le Pen's right-hand man, Florian Philippot, a reformer who led the "de-demonization" strategy, left FN in September last year claiming the party was making an "absolutely terrifying" return to the dark days of its most hardline past.

Le Pen has rejected the claim. But GI Lille's links to FN suggested otherwise.

Verhassel told our undercover reporter that he wrote speeches and worked on "communication for elected officials" at FN, and claimed to have held meetings with Chenu, Le Pen's aide and a member of the French parliament.

Chenu, according to GI activist Romauld Matsuzak, also helped Verhassel gain entry to an FN campaign rally in April last year after he was initially barred by security guards.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Trump's top choice for chief of staff not taking job; other candidates in running

Nick Ayers, Donald Trump's top choice to be his next chief of staff, is no longer in the running and the U.S. president is now considering at least two other candidates, sources familiar with the matter said on Sunday, the latest sign of a chaotic White House staff shake-up.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Republican Representative Mark Meadows, chairman of the right-wing House Freedom Caucus, are among the possible contenders to replace current White House Chief of Staff John Kelly, one source told Reuters.

Ayers, 36, chief of staff to Vice President Mike Pence and known as a skilled Republican political tactician, had been in discussions for months about taking the job, but was unable to agree to terms with Trump, another source said.

Ayers tweeted that he would instead be leaving the White House soon, apparently to return to his home state of Georgia. One of the sources said Ayers would return to "America First Policies," a combative group that he helped found before joining Pence in the White House.

Several hours after the news broke, Trump essentially confirmed that Ayers would not get the job but offered few other details.

"I am in the process of interviewing some really great people for the position of White House Chief of Staff. Fake

News has been saying with certainty it was Nick Ayers, a spectacular person who will always be with our #MAGA agenda," Trump said in a message on Twitter, referring to his slogan "Make America Great Again." "I will be making a decision soon!"

Ayers wrote earlier on Twitter: "I will be departing at the end of the year but will work with the #MAGA team to advance the cause."

One source said Trump had sought a two-year commitment from Ayers but that he was unable to agree to that. Ayers, the father of young triplets, was willing to serve only until the spring of 2019 for family reasons, an administration official said earlier.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

A source familiar with Mnuchin's thinking said Mnuchin sees his role at Treasury as best suited to help the president and feels very committed to remaining in his current position.

A spokesman for Meadows had no comment on the matter.

### Replacing Kelly

With Ayers out of the running, it is unclear who will take over the top administrative post in the West Wing at a time Trump has been weakened by Democrats winning control of the House of Representatives in congressional

elections last month.

Trump will decide on his new chief of staff by the end of the year, the sources said. The president said on Saturday that Kelly would leave the post by year's end.

Trump brought Kelly in last year to restore order to his White House, but has clashed repeatedly with the retired Marine Corps general in recent months. The two men were no longer on speaking terms, according to one source with direct knowledge of the situation.

The constant staff upheaval at all levels has left Trump's White House grappling to try to advance his policies. Many of the resignations have come under pressure.

Trump now faces House probes into his businesses and most contentious policies, and Special Counsel Robert Mueller is investigating possible collusion between Trump's election campaign team and Russian officials in 2016. Trump, who has denied collusion, calls the probe a "witch hunt."

Ayers has advised a series of Republican governors and as Pence's chief of staff, has run one of the most effective political teams in Washington.

But critics questioned whether the young operative had the kind of experience needed to deal with the internal strife that has often engulfed the Trump White House.

(Source: Reuters)

## Venezuela ruling party wins local polls

Venezuela's ruling party emerged victorious in the local elections, marred by a high rate of abstention.

Only 27 percent of about 20.7 million eligible voters cast their ballot, handing President Nicolas Maduro's United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) a massive victory.



National Electoral Council chair Tibusay Lucena said the PSUV won 142 of the 156 jurisdictions in play. Lucena put the rate of abstention at 72.6 percent.

She called it "a calm day of civic and democratic action", while Maduro congratulated Venezuela on "consolidating its democracy" in a post on Twitter on Monday.

In the run-up to polling, analysts had predicted a record low turnout, citing mistrust in the electoral process, the banning of opposition parties and widespread exhaustion amid the ongoing socioeconomic crisis.

Interior Minister Nestor Reverol said 150,000 police and military personnel had been deployed to provide security at polling centres.

Maduro sought to strengthen institutional control as Venezuelans choose 2,459 members for 335 city councils.

But the choice was limited after the Electoral Council disqualified the main opposition parties, which had controlled a quarter of city councils prior to the vote.

### A country in crisis

The ballot took place as the country's economy continues to spiral out of control, with severe food and medicine shortages and a 1.35 million percent inflation rate, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Many have voted with their feet, with at least 2.3 million fleeing the crises since 2015, according to the United Nations.

The mass-migration has led to a crisis as Venezuela's neighbors and other countries struggle to cope with the influx of migrants and refugees.

Regional criticism of Maduro has grown in recent years amid anti-government protests over the economic crisis.

Peru had said it would ask the 12 members of the pro-democracy Lima Group, which includes several Latin American and Caribbean countries along with Canada, to break relations with Venezuela from January 10, when Maduro takes office for his second term.

### Consolidating power

Sunday's vote came one month before Maduro begins his second six-year term after winning a controversial election in May, which was slammed as illegitimate by political opponents, the European Union, the United States and most of Latin America.

The opposition has accused Maduro of bending the electoral and judicial authorities to his will.

On the eve of the election, the Venezuelan Episcopal Conference said the government's actions "in different public domains do not guarantee impartiality or truth".

The vote was the last in a series called by the governing Constituent Assembly, which effectively displaced the National Assembly, the only power in opposition hands.

The pro-government Constituent Assembly was created last year at a time when months of opposition protests, often harshly put down, left 125 people dead.

Speaking on state TV after casting his vote, Maduro reiterated claims that the US was plotting a coup.

"An attempt is under way today coming straight from the White House to destroy our way of life in Venezuela and to overthrow our constitutional democracy," he said without providing details.

In September, the New York Times reported that Trump administration officials had held secret meetings with Venezuelan military officers to discuss plans to overthrow Maduro.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Colombian police bust child sex network run by Israelis

Colombian police have arrested six Israelis on charges of running a sex tourism operation that exploited underage girls, prosecutors said.

After a two-year investigation, Prosecutor General Nestor Humberto Martinez told reporters Sunday that agents have broken up "an Israeli mafia that exploited and used girls, adolescents and women as sex slaves in Colombia."

Two Colombians were also arrested in the sweep, Martinez said. The "mafia" sold tour packages for Israelis with a destination to several Colombian cities that in reality was a front for sex services with minors, Martinez said.

Among those arrested was Israeli alleged gang leader Mor Zohar, and a Colombian police officer said to have helped protect the gang.

The Israeli citizens all have Interpol Red Notices, the closest thing to an international arrest warrant, a statement read.

Officials seized assets belonging to the suspects worth \$45 million.

The network was allegedly led by Israeli citizen Benjamin Mush, who has traveled in and out of Colombia and Central American countries, the statement read.

According to testimony obtained from victims, the minors received between \$65 and \$126 and were forced to belong to a WhatsApp group code-named after the Jewish holiday Purim.

The suspects, set to face a judge in the northwestern city of Medellin, face charges that include pimping minors, aggravated homicide, drug trafficking and money-laundering.

(Source: AFP)

## Kenyan men take first 17 places in Singapore marathon

Kenyan men finished in the first 17 spots of the men's Singapore marathon -- with winner Joshua Kipkorir completing the race about half an hour quicker than the fastest non-Kenyan.

Kipkorir -- 24, and competing in the Singapore marathon for the first time -- finished Sunday's race in two hours, 12 minutes and 20 seconds, the second-fastest time in the event's history, according to organisers.

Felix Kirwa was second, a minute behind Kipkorir, while Andrew Kimtai was third. A total of 22 Kenyan men took part in the marathon, according to organisers.

The fastest non-Kenyan was Singaporean runner Soh Rui Yong, lagging far behind the winner, with a time of two hours, 41 minutes and 49 seconds.

Kenyan runners also dominated the women's event, bagging the top five spots. Fifteen Kenyan women in all took part in the race. Around 10,000 people completed the 42-kilometre (26-mile) race.

The astonishing results underlined the dominance of Kenyans in marathons, with even Singapore's tropical heat and humidity proving no barrier to success for runners who typically train at high altitudes.

Last week Kenyan athlete Eliud Kipchoge -- who has been acclaimed as the greatest marathon runner of the modern era -- won the International Association of Athletics Federations men's 2018 award.

He has dominated marathon racing since making his debut in Hamburg in 2013. The Olympic champion set a new marathon world record in Berlin in September with a time of two hours, one minute and 39 seconds.

(Source: France24)

## United's Lukaku weighed down after muscling up

Manchester United striker Romelu Lukaku has attributed his sluggish start to the season to a more muscled physique and said he had been staying out of the gym in a bid to improve his form.

The 25-year-old was United's top scorer with 27 goals in all competitions last term and helped Belgium reach the World Cup semi-finals in Russia, but he has scored six times in 20 club appearances.

"Me and the medical staff did a lot of tests to see what was the problem," Lukaku said after scoring in United's 4-1 Premier League win over Fulham on Saturday.

"I put on a bit of muscle at the World Cup (but) in the Premier League I cannot play with the same amount of muscle as international football. I knew I had to lose muscle so I stayed out of the gym."

The striker, who now has two goals in his last three appearances for United, also said he had suffered from fatigue at the start of the Premier League season.

"After the World Cup, I think I really was a bit tired... I wasn't playing with enough intensity, enough aggression. Now I think I am in a decent level again and ready to go again," he added.

The victory over basement-side Fulham was United's first in four league games and moved Jose Mourinho's side up two places to sixth in the table.

(Source: Reuters)

## Villarreal sack coach Calleja

Villarreal on Monday have sacked coach Javi Calleja with the club just three points above the relegation zone in La Liga, the club said.

A former Villarreal midfielder, Calleja took over as coach in September 2017, leading the Yellow Submarine to a fifth-placed finish and Europa League football last season.

However, this campaign the club has struggled, winning just once in La Liga since September and progress through to the knockout stages in Europe is still in the balance.

"Villarreal has decided to rescind Javi Calleja's contract as first team coach. The club would like to thank the coach for his work, dedication and professionalism since taking over last season," read a club statement.

His successor has not yet been named, however the club have suggested one will be appointed "in the coming hours."

(Source: Goal)

## Klopp never worried about hat-trick hero Salah's form

Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp was never worried about Mohamed Salah being able to follow up his stellar first season at Anfield but conceded both the player and club must learn to cope with a raised level of expectations.

The Egyptian forward, who scored 44 goals for the Merseyside club in all competitions during his debut campaign, fired a brilliant hat-trick in Saturday's 4-0 victory over Bournemouth to send unbeaten Liverpool top of the Premier League.

A dislocated shoulder during the Champions League final in May and a disappointing World Cup seemed to hang over Salah at the start to the season, but Klopp believes the 26-year-old had never lost his scoring touch.

"I'm interested in the moment but I never judge it because the moment is just a little part of all what we do," the German manager told reporters.

"So I was not for one second worried.

"If you score 10 goals in the first five games everyone would say: 'It will happen again.' But if you score 39 (in a season), it would be: 'Yeah, but it's not 41'.

(Source: ESPN)

# River Plate snatch Libertadores glory over Boca in Madrid

River Plate battled back to beat arch Argentine rivals Boca Juniors 3-1 in extra-time in an unforgettable and unique Copa Libertadores final second leg, played in Madrid after violence had seen the original game postponed.

Dario Benedetto put Boca ahead at the end of a bruising first half at a raucous Santiago Bernabeu stadium that was equally split between supporters of the two teams but witnessed barely a hint of crowd trouble.

But River, who also came back twice in the 2-2 draw in the first leg at Boca's Bombonera stadium, levelled in the 68th minute through striker Lucas Pratto after a superb team move.

River, whose coach Marcelo Gallardo was banned from the sidelines, were given a huge advantage when Boca's Colombian midfielder Wilmar Barrios was sent off in the third minute of extra-time and seized it thanks to a sizzling strike from his compatriot Juan Fernando Quintero in the 109th minute.

Gonzalo Martinez sealed victory, 5-3 on aggregate, at the death with a tap in after Boca's entire team had poured forward in search of an equaliser, giving River a fourth Libertadores title and denying Boca a record-equaling seventh.

"I didn't think about it," Quintero said of his goal. "Camilo (Mayada) passed it to me and I looked for space and then hit it. It was a lovely goal and you have to celebrate it."

Martinez added: "We were the only team out there that tried to win. We played the



whole match in their half of the field."

River's victory means they will represent South America in the Club World Cup that kicks off on Dec. 12 in the United Arab Emirates and guarantees them bragging rights over their neighbours for many years to come.

The club are expected to fly directly to the Middle East but striker Lucas Pratto said the players would take some time to celebrate before their first match on Dec. 18.

"We want to enjoy this because I don't think we'll win another Cup against Boca like this," said Pratto.

The game was controversially moved

10,000 kilometres away from River's Monumental stadium to Madrid as Boca's team bus had been ambushed before the originally scheduled game, leaving several Boca players injured from the impact of the smashed windows and from tear gas that had been fired by police.

It meant that instead of a home game with the exclusive presence of River supporters, Real Madrid's Bernabeu was equally-divided between fans of both sides, a highly unusual situation in the Copa Libertadores, South America's equivalent of the Champions League.

### FURIOUS PROTESTS

The final, the first in the 58 years of the competition to be played outside of Latin America and the first between Argentina's two biggest clubs, provoked furious protests from both clubs, their fans and leading figures in Argentine football. Luis Cesar Menotti, Argentina's 1978 World Cup winning coach, called the switch "an aberration".

River decried the loss of home advantage Boca had enjoyed in the first leg, while Boca claimed they should have been awarded the trophy by default, pointing to when they were thrown out of the competition in 2015 when River players were attacked with pepper spray at halftime.

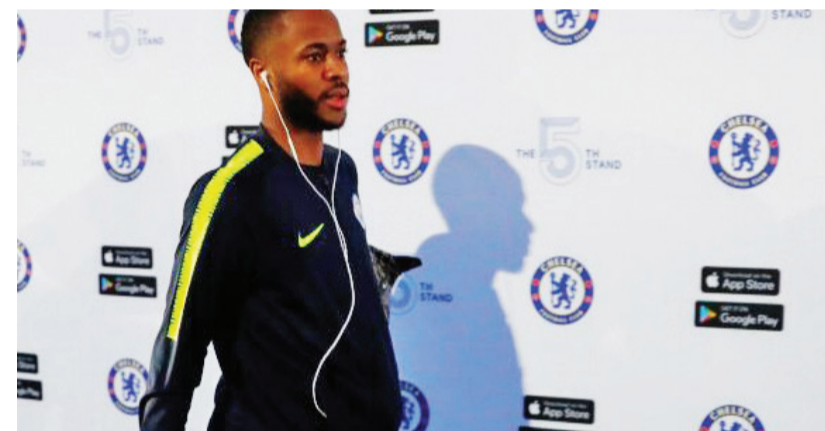
There was also a deep sense of irony at the fact a competition named in honour of the liberators of south America was to be played in the home of their former rulers.

Despite the controversy, a total of 10,000 fans made the long journey over from Argentina for the occasion, with the nation's considerable expatriate communities across Europe (250,000 reside in Spain alone) also flooding in to the Spanish capital, creating a carnival atmosphere that was mostly cordial.

The VIP box was stuffed with the biggest names in the game, from Barcelona captain Lionel Messi and Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone and forward Antoine Griezmann, to FIFA president Gianni Infantino and Real chief Florentino Perez.

(Source: Reuters)

## Harsh media treatment of Sterling fuels racism - PFA



The harsh treatment Manchester City's Raheem Sterling receives from the media is fuelling racism on the terraces, the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) said on Monday.

Sterling said on Sunday that newspapers were "unacceptable" in their portrayal of young black players.

The 24-year-old's comments came a day after he faced alleged racist abuse from a supporter during City's 2-0 Premier League defeat by Chelsea at Stamford Bridge.

The PFA, the trade union for footballers in England, strongly condemned reports of racist abuse which they say has increased from last season. "We commend Raheem for his professionalism during the incident and the statement he made via Instagram on Sunday," the PFA said in a statement.

"We stand with him in calling for the press to consider the coverage of all footballers carefully, and to end their imbalanced coverage aimed at young, black players.

"We have been aware for a few months of the targeting Raheem faces in the press, it is evident that he is often singled out and treated more harshly than his colleagues. As such, these stories are fuelling racism within the game, as reports of racist abuse continue to rise."

No arrests were made after Saturday's

league game but the Metropolitan Police and Chelsea said they would review footage to determine whether any racist abuse took place. Anti-discrimination charity Kick It Out last month released figures that showed reports of discriminatory abuse within football were up 11 percent from last season. Of the 520 reported incidents, 53 percent were racism related.

"While it may be true that no racial slurs have been used in the press coverage received by Raheem and others, we are in no doubt that the negative narrative influences public opinion and emboldens racist rhetoric," the PFA added.

Former professional John Barnes, who like Sterling played for England and Liverpool and faced abuse in his career, said the issues of race went beyond the pitch.

"More often than not the media influences society... The only way we can change racism is if we change the perception of the average black person in the street and then you will have many more average black people being given what they deserve," the 55-year-old told the BBC.

"It's a very long-term process, we're talking about hundreds of years of indoctrination ensuring that there are certain groups of people who are more worthy than others."

(Source: Mirror)

## Retiring an option as Robben, 34, confirms imminent Bayern exit



Arjen Robben says he may retire in June after confirming he will quit Bayern Munich when his contract with the defending Bundesliga champions expires.

Robben, who turns 35 in January, confirmed in Monday's edition of magazine Kicker that he will quit the Bavarian giants at the end of the season: "that's a fact".

"Of course it's a big step, which you don't just make in one day.

"I thought about it a lot and it feels good that it's now out, also for the fans and the club.

"It was the right point in time."

Having missed the last two games with a thigh injury, Robben could make his return when Bayern face Ajax away in the Champions League on Wednesday. Both teams are through to the last 16 and Bayern need only a point in Amsterdam to win Group E.

Robben also missed Saturday's 3-0 league win at home to Nuremberg which left Bayern third in the table and nine points behind Bundesliga leaders Borussia Dortmund.

Bayern's senior bosses are planning a squad clear-out for next season and Robben says now is the right time to go, despite two stunning goals in the 5-1 thrashing of Benfica a fortnight ago.

"The game against Benfica was a nice confirmation that I can play at the highest level," he added.

"On the other side, the club wants to change the face of the team and I want to prepare my future.

"I am simply happy and grateful that there is clarity for both parties."

However, Robben says he currently has no plans past the end of the season.

"That's not entirely clear, perhaps I will stop playing - it's about waiting and seeing what possibilities there are," he said.

"If offers come in, I'll really consider them 100 percent and if it's something nice, I'll play on, but if no ideal offers come, then that could be it.

"I have three children and they also must be happy, so it's not just about offers from China or places in the desert.

"The family plays a very important role in every decision of mine."

After spells at Chelsea and Real Madrid, Robben joined Bayern in 2009 and the highlight of nearly a decade with the Bavarian giants was his winning goal in the 2013 Champions League final at Wembley to seal a 2-1 victory over Borussia Dortmund.

(Source: AFP)

## 'Try something new, come to Italy,' Ronaldo urges Messi

Cristiano Ronaldo has urged long-time rival Lionel Messi to be more like him and push his limits by challenging himself in another league than Spain.

"I'd like him to come to Italy one day. I hope he accepts the challenge like me, but if he's happy there then I respect that," Ronaldo told the Italian press on Monday.

The two strikers have been rivals for the past decade winning five Ballon d'Or trophies each before their domination was broken by World Cup runner-up Luka Modric last week.

Asked if he missed the 31-year-old Argentinian, who has spent his entire senior career at Barcelona, Ronaldo replied: "No, maybe it's him who misses me ...

"I've played in England, Spain, Italy, Portugal and for my national team, while he's still in Spain.

"Maybe he needs me more... For me, life is a challenge, I like it and I like to make people happy.

"He's a fantastic player and a good guy, but I don't miss anything here. This is my new life and I'm happy.

"I left my comfort zone and took on this challenge here in Turin, everything has gone well, I've proven I'm still an incredible player," said Ronaldo.

Ronaldo joined Juventus for 100 million euros (\$114 million) last summer as the Turin giants bid to lift the Champions League trophy after two runners-up finishes in the past four seasons.

To mark his 150 days in Italy he gave interviews on Mon-



day to three leading sports dailies: La Gazzetta dello Sport, Corriere dello Sport and Tuttosport.

"I had different options. I won't say which but I had them. Juventus is a solid club. It has a long history," he said of his decision.

"I knew the atmosphere in the stadium. I'd played several times in Italy. I like the city, the people and the club. I knew it could work.

"I couldn't be 100 percent sure I was joining the best club in the world. After nine years at Real Madrid it was difficult to compare.

"Now I'm 100 percent sure it was the right option."

- 'Not an obsession' -

Ronaldo has scored 11 goals this season, bringing his career total to 584.

Finishing second in Ballon d'Or voting to Modric, said Ronaldo, just motivates him even more.

"Of course I'm disappointed, but life goes on and I will continue to work hard," said the 33-year-old.

"On the pitch I've done everything to win the Ballon d'Or, numbers do not lie, but I'm no less happy if I do not win, I have wonderful friends and a family, I play in one of the best clubs.

"Congratulations to Modric, who has earned the award, but next year we will meet again and I will do everything to win the prize again.

"Do you think I'm going home and crying?"

Juventus play Young Boys in their final Champions League group game in Switzerland on Wednesday, having already booked their place in the knockout rounds.

And Ronaldo is hoping his experience of winning the trophy five times can serve his new team.

"The Champions League cannot be an obsession, you have to think about it calmly," he warned.

"Yes we all want it but we have to get there step by step.

"Look at the game against Manchester United (2-1 defeat), if it had been a quarter-final we would have gone out. You need a little luck."

(Source: AFP)

# FIFA to decide whether Qatar's neighbors could host some of 2022's games

**S P O R T S TEHRAN** — Gianni Infantino reiterated that FIFA will decide in March whether neighboring countries could be allowed to host some of Qatar 2022's games.

Thirty-two teams contested this year's World Cup in Russia, widely feted as one of the most entertaining editions of the modern era.

Although FIFA is intent on 48-team future editions of the World Cup from 2026, a decision on Qatar won't be known until next year.

"We'll decide in March," Infantino said Sunday on French TV show Telefoot. "We've already decided that future editions should feature 48 teams, we all think it's a good idea."

When the next edition is held in Qatar, it will be the first to be held in the Arab world and the first in a majority-muslim country.



Due to the soaring summer temperatures, it will be held over November-December instead of the European summer months of June and July.

As a result, the competition has been shortened by three days -- a factor that could be decisive in the considerations on the 48-team format.

"It's not easy because it will be played over 28 days, instead of 31 for a normal World Cup," said Infantino.

In March, FIFA will hold a meeting in Miami, where it could also decide whether neighboring countries could be allowed to host some of Qatar 2022's games.

"Why not, if it's feasible?" added Infantino.

"We're talking to Qatar about the possibility of holding some matches in nearby countries."

"Why not dream, it's not impossible."

## Iranian duo nominated for the world's best futsal player



**S P O R T S TEHRAN** — Farhad Tavakoli and Hossein Tayebi have been nominated for the Best Player in the World by futsalplanet

Tavakoli and Tayebi were members of Iran national futsal team who won the AFC Futsal Championship.

Tayebi also helped Mes Sungun win the AFC Futsal Club Championship.

The Best Player in the World nominations are as follow:

(in strict alphabetical order!)

• Bruno Alexandre Dias Coelho (POR) Sport Lisboa e Benfica (POR) - PORTUGAL N.T.

• Danilo Baron (BRA) Pato Futsal (BRA) - BRAZIL N.T.

• Douglas Júnior da Silva Negreiros (BRA) Kairat Almaty (KAZ) - KAZAKHSTAN N.T.

• Fabricio Bastezini "Gadeia" (BRA) Movistar Inter FS (ESP) - BRAZIL N.T.

• Leandro Lino Dos Santos (BRA) Magnus Futsal (BRA) - BRAZIL N.T.

• Adrián Alonso Pereira "Pola" (ESP) Movistar Inter FS (ESP) - SPAIN N.T.

• Ricardo Filipe da Silva Braga "Ricardinho" (POR) Movistar Inter FS (ESP) - PORTUGAL N.T.

• Damián Stazzone Alvarez (ARG) Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro (ARG) - ARGENTINA N.T.

• Farhad Tavakoli Roozbahani (IRN) Sherkat Melli Haffari (IRN) - Naft Al Wasat (IRQ) - Qingdao Impulse Chenxi (CHN) - IRAN N.T.

• Hossein Tayebi Bidgoli (IRN) AFC Kairat Almaty (KAZ) - Mes Sungun Varzaghan FSC (IRN) - IRAN N.T.

• Yanar Asadov (RUS) MFK KPRF Moscow (RUS) - RUSSIAN N.T.

• Iván Brizuela (ARG) Villa La Nata (ARG)

• Evandro Borges (BRA) ADFT/Tabarão (BRA) - BRAZIL N.T. U20

## Tohid Lotfi nominated for the world's best young player



**S P O R T S TEHRAN** — Tohid Lotfi from Iran's Mes Sungun Varzaghan has been nominated for the Best Young Player in the World award.

Lotfi was a member of Mes Sungun team who won the 2018 AFC Futsal Club Championship in August after beating Miguel Rodrigo's Thai Son Nam 2-1 at Yogyakarta.

The 20-year-old player also helped Iran national futsal team win the 2018 AFC Futsal Championship.

The Best Young Player in the World nominations are as follow:

(in strict alphabetical order!)

• Yanar Asadov (RUS) MFK KPRF Moscow (RUS) - RUSSIAN N.T.

• Iván Brizuela (ARG) Villa La Nata (ARG)

• Evandro Borges (BRA) ADFT/Tabarão (BRA) - BRAZIL N.T. U20

• Antonio Fernando Aguilera Sancho "Fernan" (ESP)

• ElPozo Murcia F.S. (ESP) - SPAIN N.T.

• Guilherme Henrique Borges Sanches "Guilherme" (BRA)

• Sport Club Corinthians Paulista (BRA) - BRAZIL N.T. U18

• Touhid Lotfi (IRN) Mes Sungun FSC (IRN) - IRAN N.T.

• Marcel de Mendonça Marques (BRA) Magnus Futsal (BRA) - BRAZIL N.T.

• Muhammad Osamanmusa (THA) Santiago Futsal (ESP) - Bangkok BTS Futsal Club (THA) - THAILAND N.T.

• Sergio González Pérez (ESP) Aspil Vidal Ribera Navarra (ESP) - SPAIN N.T.

• Kazuya Shimizu (JPN) Fugador Sumida (JPN) - ElPozo Ciudad de Murcia (ESP) - Japan N.T.

## Head coach resigns after remarks about mental health

**LONDON (Reuters)** — Brandon 'Saintvicious' DiMarco has resigned as head coach of esports team FlyQuest after a furious reaction to his comments deriding mental health conditions like depression.

He had described depression, anxiety and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder as "made up bullshit".

Later he backtracked and claimed he had suffered from depression himself.

But in a statement on Sunday he apologized for "callousness".

"I said some seriously inconsiderate things on my stream yesterday," he said.

"I said that mental issues were exaggerated and that people suffering from those issues should be able to overcome it on their own. "This was an ignorant statement stemming from my severe lack of subject matter knowledge.

"I was surprised to realize just how uninformed I was regarding mental health, especially because it is an important part of my responsibilities as a coach.

"I hope, through this reality check, that I can grow to become an advocate for mental health issues and a better pillar for the people I care about."

FlyQuest is a professional League of Legends esports team based in the U.S.

## Augsburg goalkeeper played for an hour after losing part of tongue



Augsburg keeper Andreas Luthe bit off part of his own tongue after colliding with an opposition striker but played on for more than an hour to finish his team's Bundesliga match at Bayer Leverkusen.

Luthe collided with Germany international Kevin Volland 30 minutes into the match, and was cleared to carry on after following the concussion protocol.

"It felt like I was hit by a car," Luthe told Sky after the match. "I bit on my tongue and a part came loose. It's nothing to show on TV."

"I spit blood all the time. But at one point the bleeding stopped. But when I suck there's still blood."

"The doctors asked all the questions and I knew all the answers. My name, the score and so on."

Luthe was not able to help his side pick up a crucial point at Leverkusen as a 75th minute strike from Lucas Alario won it for the hosts, condemning Augsburg to four successive losses.

Augsburg are 14th in the Bundesliga and host Schalke, who they could overtake with a win, on Saturday. (Source: Soccernet)

## Real Madrid job interests every coach - Germany boss Joachim Low



Joachim Low has told ZDF TV he would be interested in joining Real Madrid when his time as Germany coach comes to an end but is unlikely to work in the Bundesliga.

Low, who has worked for the German FA since 2004 and is under contract until 2022, led Germany to the 2014 World Cup.

But following what he called "an overall bad year" in which the defending champions went out in the World Cup group stages and were relegated from UEFA Nations League Group A, Low said he had started looking to the future.

"I'll hopefully see out my contract,

but my race as a national team coach is almost run and you must start making plans at some point," he said.

"I'd be interested in coaching at club level. I don't plan on retiring. It would be abroad. I don't think it'll be in Germany."

When asked specifically about Real Madrid, Low said the European champions were "a club which is interesting for every coach, right?"

Meanwhile, the 58-year-old dismissed reports that he could drop Germany keeper Manuel Neuer until the 2020 European Championships. (Source: Soccernet)

## Hamid Reza Garshasbi steps down as general manager of Persepolis

**S P O R T S TEHRAN** — Hamid Reza Garshasbi stepped down from his post as general manager of Persepolis club.

He will remain with the team as an advisor.

Iraj Arab, who was working as deputy chief of the club's administrative and financial, replaced Garshasbi as acting president.

Garshasbi was appointed as interim general manager of Persepolis in last year's November and named Persepolis GM in August 2018.

Under leadership of Garshasbi Persepolis defended their title in Iran Professional League and advanced to the final of the 2018 AFC Champions League, where the Reds became runners up.

Garshasbi was forced to leave his post due to the law barring the employment of retirees in government, state or public institutions which use state funds or facilities.



## Colombian football federation officials meet Carlos Queiroz

**TASNIM** — Directors of the Colombian Football Federation held a meeting with Carlos Queiroz during the Libertadores final match between River Plate and Boca Juniors.

According to 'Blu Radio' correspondent Julio Bolaños, the Colombian officials talked about future of their teams with the experienced Portuguese coach.

Former Brazil coach Luiz Felipe Scolari has recently confirmed he has been contacted by Colombian Football Federation over the national team's vacant manager role.

Jose Pekerman left his role as coach of Colombia after the 2018 World Cup, where the Cafeteros lost to England on penalties in the round of 16, and has since been under the guidance of under-20 boss Arturo Reyes on an interim basis.

Queiroz currently is coach of Iran national football team and his contract will run until the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

## Iran to face Qatar behind closed doors

**MNA** — The friendly match between national football teams of Iran and Qatar will be held behind closed doors.

According to Qatari outlets, the friendly match between national football teams of Iran and Qatar, which is scheduled for December 31, will be held behind closed doors at Doha-based Khalifa International Stadium.

According to plans, Team Melli will depart for Doha on December 17 to do its final preparations for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup. The team is slated to play friendly matches with Qatar, Palestine, and Lebanon during the stay in Doha. Then it will depart for Abu Dhabi on January 2, 2019.

The event will kick off on January 5 with the match between the host, United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain. Iran will meet Yemen on January 7 and Vietnam on January 12 before playing with Iraq on December 16. Queiroz's men eye to claim the title for Iran after some 42 years.

## Iranian wrestler wins silver at Alans Intl. Tourn.

**MNA** — Iranian freestyle wrestler Jaber Sadeghzadeh pocketed the silver medal of Alans International Tournament in Russia.

In the final of 125kg category held on Sunday, Sadeghzadeh, the Junior world champion, conceded a 1-10 defeat to the world champion and Olympics bronze winner Geno Petriashvili of Georgia.

Vitali Golojev and Mukhammagazi Magomedov, both from Russia, collected the bronze medals of this category.

The three-day Alans International Tournament wrapped up on Sunday in Vladikavkaz, Russia.

Freestyle wrestlers competed in 10 weight categories and Russian athletes managed to earn a total of 9 gold medals in the event.

## Iceland's Hallgrímsson to coach at Qatar's Al-Arabi

Heimir Hallgrímsson, the Icelandic coach who steered his country to their first ever World Cup finals, is to take over at Qatari league side Al-Arabi, the club announced on Monday.

His appointment was confirmed in a video message on social media.

A press conference to unveil the 51-year-old officially is expected to take place on Tuesday.

It will be Hallgrímsson's first job since standing down as Iceland's national team coach following the Russia World Cup earlier this year.

His time with Iceland saw the country achieve unparalleled success, qualifying for its first ever major tournament, the 2016 Euros in France, when Hallgrímsson was joint manager alongside Lars Lagerback.

It was during that tournament, Iceland famously beat England 2-1 in the knockout stage.

As sole manager, he guided Iceland to this year's World Cup, their first ever global tournament.

However, Iceland failed to win a single game and were knocked out at the group stage.

As part of the preparation for the World Cup, Hallgrímsson took his Iceland side to play a friendly in Qatar in November 2017.

Al Arabi currently stand mid-table in the 12-team Qatar Stars League at the halfway stage, 15 points behind leader Al-Duhail. (Source: AFP)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY  
www.tehrantimes.com

Managing Director: Ali Asgari  
Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895  
editor@tehrantimes.com  
Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000  
Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450  
Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807  
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603  
www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.  
Tel: 88911433  
Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com  
Printed at: Rooztab - ISSN: 1017-94

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran  
P.O. Box: 14155-4843  
Zip Code: 1599814713



GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

This world is a road for going to the next one,  
and if had been created for itself, man would  
have lived eternally in it.

Imam Ali (AS)

## “Cold Sweat” scoops awards at French filmfest

**A R T** TEHRAN — Iranian filmmaker Soheil Beirazi's drama “Cold Sweat”, also known as “Permission”, won three awards at the 1st International Political Film Festival, which was held in Carcassonne, France from December 4 to 8.

The film received the grand prize as well as the student prize of the festival. The film's star Baran Kowsari also received the award for best actress.

“Cold Sweat” tells the story of Iran's national women's futsal team that makes the Asian Games final in Malaysia. But at the airport on departure day, the team captain finds her husband hasn't signed the document to permit her to exit from the country.

“A Man Is Dead” by Olivier Cossu from France won the youth prize while “The Silence of Others” co-directed by Almudena Carracedo and Robert Bahar from Spain received the critics' award.

## Kohan ensemble to perform during Neutrality Day in Ashgabat

**A R T** TEHRAN — Iranian ensemble Kohan will give a concert in Ashgabat, during Neutrality Day, a national public holiday in Turkmenistan, on Wednesday.

Led by composer and dotar player Kamyar Fanian, the ensemble will take part in the celebration by invitation of the Turkmenistan ambassador to Tehran, Gurbanov Ahmet Kakabayevich, the Persian service of IRNA reported on Monday.



*Iranian composer Kamyar Fanian (L) and Turkmen dotar virtuoso Agh Morad Charief perform in an undated photo.*

He will perform accompanied by singer Parsa Hassandokht and other members Javid Ebrahimpur, Saman Sadeqian, Sajjad Mansuri, Mohsen Arekesh and Yahya Mehri.

Fanian is also scheduled to perform a duet with Turkmen dotar virtuoso Agh Morad Charief.

Earlier in 2017, Fanian and Charief released the music video album “Dotarchi”.

Neutrality Day falls every year on December 12. It commemorates a UN resolution, adopted in 1995, on the permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan. Since then Turkmenistan celebrates the day by organizing parades, speeches, concerts and official ceremonies.

## Ex-Fleetwood Mac guitarist Buckingham says his lawsuit is settled

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — Guitarist Lindsey Buckingham and his former Fleetwood Mac bandmates have settled a lawsuit he filed after he was axed from a tour, the musician said in a television interview that aired on Saturday.

Buckingham, a key member of the British-American band with hits such as “Don't Stop” and “Go Your Own Way,” did not disclose the terms of any settlement agreement, but he expressed little hope of rejoining Fleetwood Mac.

“I'm pretty much figuring that I won't,” Buckingham told CBS News.

Buckingham filed a civil lawsuit in October in Los Angeles Superior Court, accusing other members of the band of breach of contract and saying the dispute stemmed from a clash between the planned 2018/19 Fleetwood Mac tour and his wishes to play some solo dates.

# 15 narrators to compete in Tehran Intl. Storytelling Festival

**A R T** TEHRAN — Fifteen storytellers from Iran and other countries will be performing in the international competition of the 21st International Storytelling Festival in Tehran, the organizers announced on Monday.

Oliver Villanove from France, Flor Carnales Bastidas from Spain and Seyda Cevik from Turkey are among the overseas contenders at the event, which is annually organized by the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA).

Alicia Dongjoo Bang from Korea, Kiran Kantilal Shah from Australia, Ahmad Hossein Zaher from and Zohreh Sharifi from Afghanistan are other foreign participants in the festival, which will be organized from December 17 to 20.

In addition, a number of Iranian storytellers have also been selected to perform in the international category.

Fatemeh Ruhirahim, Esmail Zabihi, Parisa Sedai, Golshan Hassanvand, Najmeh Ahadzadeh, Somayyeh Amiri, Maryam Fahimpur and Farzad Shirmohammadi are the Iranian storytellers.

The storytellers have been picked from about 400 persons who made submissions to the organizers.

The performances in this section will be judged by actress Mahtab Keramati and writer and journalist Mansur Zabetian, both from Iran, and Kasper Sorensen from Denmark.

Celebrated Iranian children's writer Hushang Moradi Kermani, actors Ehteram Borumand and Leili Rashidi, and literary scholar Ali Khanjani will judge the national section of the festival.

The festival aims to promote storytelling traditions among the younger generation.



*Spanish storyteller Flor Carnales Bastidas performs for schoolchildren in Montevideo, Uruguay in an undated photo. She is scheduled to give a performance during the 21st International Storytelling Festival in Tehran. (Facebook)*

## Italian pianist Olaf John Laneri to perform in Tehran



*A poster for the piano concert by Olaf John Laneri at Tehran's Rudaki Hall.*

**A R T** TEHRAN — Italian pianist Olaf John Laneri will give a concert at Tehran's Rudaki Hall on Thursday, Iran's Rudaki Foundation announced on Monday.

The performance has been organized to celebrate the 248th birthday of renowned German composer Ludwig van Beethoven.

Laneri is scheduled to perform works by Beethoven, Chopin and Debussy, and Iranian composers Fuzieh Majd and

Morteza Shirkuhi. In a post published on Laneri's Facebook page on December 7, he also announced his plan to hold concerts and master classes in Tehran, Isfahan and Shiraz during December.

A graduate from the Imola Academy of Music in Italy, Laneri has won several awards at various international events, including the Ferruccio Busoni International Piano Competition and the World Music Piano Master of Monte-Carlo.

## Graphic designer Ahmadreza Dalvand dies at 60



*Graphic designer Ahmadreza Dalvand in an undated photo.*

**A R T** TEHRAN — Iranian graphic designer Ahmadreza Dalvand who learned the basic principles of the art from masters such as Morteza Momayyez and Hannibal Alkhas died of diabetes at his home in Tehran on Monday. He was 60.

He underwent surgery due to a diabetic foot ulcer a few days ago. However, he failed to recover from the disease and finally died in the early hours of Monday, Persian media announced.

Born in 1958, Dalvand studied graphic design at the University of Tehran and was an ardent disciple of prominent graphic artists such as Morteza Momayyez, Hannibal Alkhas and Sadeq Barirani.

He also worked for many newspapers and magazines, including Jame'e, Sharq, Adineh, Donya-ye Sokhan and Film.

Seyhun, Atbin and several other galleries showcased his works during numerous solo and group exhibitions.

## Plundered ‘Gypsy Girl’ mosaics back in Turkey after decades in U.S.

**GAZIANTEP, Turkey (Reuters)** — Missing fragments from one of Turkey's most striking ancient treasures, the haunting, wide-eyed “Gypsy Girl” mosaic, have returned home more than half a century after they were plundered and smuggled to the United States.

On Saturday, the returned pieces went on display alongside the nearly 2,000-year-old mosaic of the girl, whose piercing gaze and disheveled hair have become a symbol of Turkey's southeastern city of Gaziantep.

Turkish archaeologists discovered the mosaic 20 years ago during an excavation of the old city of Zeugma, founded by one of Alexander the Great's generals, near the modern city of Gaziantep.

They also realized that several accompanying pieces had already been looted.

Those pieces had been smuggled out of the country in the 1960s and bought by Bowling Green State University in Ohio in the United States, which displayed them until 2012 when their true provenance was established and Turkey asked for their return.

The university initially asked Turkey to buy them back, a request which Ankara rejected, according to Sedat Gulluoglu, Turkey's tourism ministry attache in the United States.

After more than five years of talks, an agreement was signed for their return. “The university has signed off on a very important and significant cooperation by returning these pieces to our country as goodwill,” Gulluoglu said by email.

He added that Turkey would provide the university with exact replicas of the mosaics to display.

The old city of Zeugma, on the Euphrates river, flourished under Greek



*Visitors take pictures of the missing pieces of the historic “Gypsy Girl” mosaic on display in an exhibition at their origin in Gaziantep, Turkey, December 8, 2018. (Reuters/Umit Bektas)*

and then Roman rule before it was destroyed in war in the 3rd century AD. The 15 square meter (160 square foot) Gypsy Girl mosaic is the most prominent symbol of that history.

On Saturday, the pieces were put on exhibit at the Zeugma Mosaic Museum in Gaziantep in a ceremony to celebrate their return, before which a song composed to celebrate the homecoming of the mosaic pieces was played by a harp artist.

Turkey's Culture and Tourism Minister Mehmet Nuri Ersoy, who lifted a cover to unveil the mosaic as visitors poured in to see the artwork, told Reuters the returned pieces would greatly contribute to tourism in Turkey and Gaziantep.

“It is a very important day for Turkey. A six-year process has been completed and our pieces have returned where they were born,” Ersoy said.

Gaziantep mayor Fatma Sahin said putting the full mosaic back together was a national triumph.

“It returned to Gaziantep, to its nation,” Sahin told Reuters. “The Gypsy Girl has been reunited with her family.”

## Vatican's St. Peter's Square gets 720-ton sand nativity scene

**VATICAN CITY (Reuters)** — The traditional nativity scene in St. Peter's Square won't be so traditional this year. For the first time, it is made of sand - 720 tons of it.

For the past two weeks, Rich Varano, a professional sand artist, has been guiding three sculptors from the Netherlands, Russia and the Czech Republic, to craft the work, which measures about 5.5 meters high by 16 meters wide (18 feet high by 52 feet wide).

Varano, 60, the artistic director of the massive work, doesn't mind if you call him “Mr Sandman”. Sand is his life and love. The American from Florida divides his time between the United States and Italy.

“It's very special to be making one here in a place with so much history, so much culture, so much art and in the shadow of such masters,” he told Reuters on Thursday as his team worked quietly to finish ahead of Friday's unveiling to the public.

For the past two weeks, Rich Varano, a professional sand artist, has been guiding three sculptors from the Netherlands, Russia and the Czech Republic, to craft the work, which measures about 5.5 meters high by 16 meters wide (18 feet high by 52 feet wide).

Varano, 60, the artistic director of the massive work, doesn't mind if you call him “Mr Sandman”. Sand is his life and love. The American from Florida divides his time between the United States and Italy.

“It's very special to be making one here in a place with so much history, so much culture, so much art and in the shadow of such masters,” he told Reuters on Thursday as his team worked quietly to finish ahead of Friday's unveiling to the public.

“It is an incredibly humbling experience to be here,” he said.

Heavy trucks brought the sand, of a type particularly suited for sculpting, from the northern Italian seaside city of Jesolo, near



*An artist works on a sand sculpture representing part of nativity scene in St. Peter's square at the Vatican, December 6, 2018. (Reuters/Alessandro Bianchi)*

Venice, in mid-November. It was compacted into a large rectangle and the artists started sculpting away from the top down with tools including sticks, trowels, and even dental utensils for the finer parts.

“What separates us professionals and the average person playing on the beach is that we understand how to make sand stick together well,” the white-bearded Varano said, wearing a yellow hat.

The scene consists of Joseph, Mary, the infant Jesus, angels, shepherds, animals and the three wise men, kings the Bible says followed a star in the east that led them to Bethlehem.

Varano said beach sand is not suitable, partly because it is not very compactable. The sand is taken from more inland areas and is similar to river sand.

A large overhead canopy will protect the scene from any heavy rain and plastic curtains will be lowered in case of storms or strong winds before it is dismantled in January.

“It's an ephemeral art in the sense that it is not intended to last forever,” he said, “even though we could make it last indefinitely if we wanted to”.