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Forex market to stabilize: fin. min.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— Iranian Finance Minister Farhad Dejpasand announced that domestic foreign currency exchange market is moving toward balance, real rates and stability, IRIB news reported on Sunday. Making the remarks in a meeting with the members of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agri-

culture (ICCIMA) at the place of the same organization, Dejpasand added that in case forex market experiences stability, economy will also become steady. "Some €60 million were offered at Iran's domestic Forex Management Integrated System (locally known as NIMA), which is an acceptable figure showing that the market is moving toward steadiness," **→4**

Iran lauds global awareness to Yemen disaster

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi has praised global awareness about the calamities of the Saudi-led war on Yemen, expressing hope that it would help end the war in the country. "We hope that by actions that have been taken, we would enter a new phase to get close to achievement of all the ideals and wishes of the international community

for the Yemeni people," Qassemi told the Mehr news agency in an interview published on Sunday. He suggested that a ceasefire should be announced in under the supervision of the UN and efforts to deliver humanitarian aid be facilitated to the war-stricken country. According to the UN World Food Programme, about 12 million Yemenis are facing devastating famine. **→2**

Hudaydah cease-fire starts Tuesday

Clashes shook Yemen's flashpoint city of Hudaydah Sunday after airstrikes and deadly fighting on the outskirts overnight, residents said, despite a UN-brokered ceasefire between pro-government forces and rebels. Saudi airstrikes and fierce clashes have shaken the outskirts of Yemen's Hudaydah despite a UN-brokered ceasefire that Yemenis already feared could collapse at any moment.

Residents were hoping that the ceasefire reached in Sweden Thursday would provide them a respite after months of clashes which have seen a push by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to seize Hudaydah thwarted. But heavy clashes broke out on the outskirts of Hudaydah overnight following fresh attempts by Saudi and Emirati troops and their mercenaries to advance into the city amid aerial bombings. **→13**

Theorizing religion in international relations not only feasible but essential: Prof.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, professor of politics and religious studies at Northwestern University, says "religion was never excluded from international affairs, but has assumed different forms and occupied difference spaces in different regimes of governance, some of which are described as secular." She adds that "religion has never been absent from the practice of international relations, although it is the case that IR theory ignored or refused to deal with the subject for several decades." Professor Hurd also says that theorizing religion in international relations "is not only

feasible but essential." Following is the full text of the interview: ■ When did the religious issues has been a matter of great in Theorizing of International Relations? A: My first work was among the first to open up new conceptual and political spaces in which to think and talk about religion in the study of International Relations. Religion was never excluded from international affairs, but has assumed different forms and occupied difference spaces in different regimes of governance, some of which are described as secular. This was the subject of my first book on "The Politics of Secularism in International Relations" (Princeton University Press, 2008). Religion is not an isolatable entity and we

cannot treat it as such. Taking this as a point of departure forces us into a different field of play, epistemologically and politically. It becomes clear that any attempt to single out religion as a platform from which to develop law and public policy ends up privileging some religions over others. Looking ahead, we need to embed the study of religion deeply in a series of social, institutional, and interpretive fields. This requires disaggregating and complicating the category. It requires considering what the world looks like after we move beyond the ideology of separation and secularization, and also beyond the ideology of restoring or accommodating religion to public life. Neither is sufficient. They mirror each other, in fact. **→7**

Hamas marks anniversary with parade of new missiles

Tens of thousands of Palestinians have attended a huge rally in the besieged Gaza Strip to mark the 31st anniversary of the establishment of the Hamas resistance movement. Hamas was established in 1987 soon after the first Palestinian Intifada or uprising broke out against the Israeli occupation. The movement has been administering Gaza since 2007 when it scored a surprise parliamentary victory. On Saturday, Hamas marked the anniversary of its foundation with a military parade featuring the Palestinian resistance movement's new defensive hardware. Members of the group's military movement, the Izziddin al-Qassam Brigades, showcased various military vehicles and weapons. The ceremony was held in the southern city of Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip which is ruled

by the movement. The movement's special units staged a march-past during which truck-mounted missile defense systems were driven through the streets. The movement also honored its fighters who ousted and neutralized an Israeli infiltration near Khan Yunis last month. Undercover Israeli special forces infiltrated into the territory in a civilian car near Khan Yunis, opening fire and killing local commander Noor Baraka when they were discovered. The unit was chased by Hamas fighters who killed a ranking Israeli officer. Israel then launched dozens of airstrikes on Gaza, drawing Hamas retaliation. During a two-day flare-up, more than 500 rockets were fired at Israel, forcing Tel Aviv to accept a hasty declaration of a ceasefire. The Saturday ceremony also coincided with

the anniversary of the first Palestinian Intifada, which broke out in 1987 after four young Palestinians were killed by Israeli soldiers at a checkpoint in Gaza as well as the shooting death of a 17-year-old boy during an unarmed protest. An Arabic word that literally translates to "shaking off," Intifada has been used to refer to legitimate means of resistance against oppression across the Middle East for decades. In the Arab-Israeli conflict, it means a concerted Palestinian effort to shake off Israeli occupation and gain independence. ■ **Palestinian teenage boy killed by Israeli forces laid to rest** Palestinians have held a funeral procession for a teenager shot dead by Israeli forces during clashes in the occupied West Bank. **→13**

ARTICLE
Hanif Ghaffari
Political analyst

The U.S. Senate's role in the killing of Yemeni children

The U.S. Senate voted on Thursday to end American military assistance for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen. This was reported by the media as the strongest show of bipartisan defiance against Trump's support for the Saudi family over the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi journalist who was against bin Salman policies. Accordingly, the New York Times wrote: "The 56-to-41 vote was a rare move by the Senate to limit presidential war powers and sent a potent message of disapproval for a nearly four-year conflict that has killed thousands of civilians and brought famine to Yemen. Moments later, senators unanimously approved a separate resolution to hold Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia personally responsible for the death of the journalist, Jamal Khashoggi." It continues; "Together, the votes were an extraordinary break with Mr. Trump, who has refused to condemn the prince and dismissed United States intelligence agencies' conclusions that the heir to the Saudi throne directed the grisly killing." Although the U.S. Senate has initially approved the draft resolution, it seems that the American representatives are currently unwilling to put it into effect! On the other hand, Republican representatives in the House have announced that they would prevent the realization of this resolution so that the United States would be able to go on with exporting arms to the Saudi regime. In other words, the Republican officials have explicitly advocated the killing of the Yemeni people. But is this "vicious support" limited to the Republican members of the Congress? Haven't Democrats played any roles in the massacre of the Yemeni people over the past four years? Accordingly, there are some points that need to be taken into consideration: Firstly and most importantly, the Yemeni war began at the time of Barack Obama's presence in the White House. In April 2014, this harsh and unequal battle was raised by Democrats who claimed to be traditional supporters for peace the Human Rights Doctrine, by Jimmy Carter and other party leaders. At that time, Saudi Arabia was supposed to conquer Yemen within two weeks and defeat Yemeni resistance groups. **→7**

REPORT
Roohullah Ghasemian
Journalist

U.S. trying to avenge defeat at the United Nations

The U.S. House of Representatives and Senate approved a new draft law against leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah. Approval of the draft law follows the recent failure of the United States to condemn Hamas. Zionist broadcasts have claimed that Hamas and Hezbollah leaders have been using civilians as human shields, among other charges. The U.S. sources also emphasized that the draft law would be presented for final signature by U.S. President Donald Trump. The law was introduced and approved following efforts of the Zionist lobby in the United States. Donald Trump, since taking office almost two years ago, has taken a considerable action against the Palestinians, among which the most important is recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of the Zionist regime and, worse, the transfer of the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Now, the new aggressions against Hamas is in line with the same basic policy of the U.S. government and Trump particularly. The recent move by the United States to set up a new draft law against the leaders of the Hamas resistance movement can be seen as a kind of retaliation by Washington because of its recent fiasco in the United Nations General Assembly. The U.S. tried to condemn Hamas. The draft measure required approval by two-thirds of the members of the UNGA (the United Nations General Assembly). The sole governments that voted in favor of this draft were the United States, the Zionist regime, Australia, Liberia, Marshall Islands and Nauru. A few minutes before the vote on this draft, another vote was taken at the General Assembly, which determined the majority needed to approve the proposed draft. In the vote, the U.S. proposed that it would be enough to obtain a simple majority of votes, but Kuwait suggested that the adoption of such a draft requires a vote of at least two-thirds of the members. Finally, the Kuwaiti proposal was accepted. The U.S. and Zionist authorities, after the UNGA vote, have not been able to hide their anger at the non-adoption of a resolution against Hamas. **→7**



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Volunteers build houses for the underprivileged

TEHRAN — Volunteers have built 19 houses for the underprivileged, orphaned children as well as people with disabilities in the Persian Gulf island of Hormuz, southern province of Hormozgan. The houses have been built by Martyr Ahmad Kazemi Volunteer Group in the island. The volunteer group is planning on building more houses for the underprivileged in Hasht Bandi district as well.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



12 books unveiled on Leader's strategic thoughts

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Marine Industries Organization of the Defense Ministry on Sunday hosted a conference on "Elaborating the Defensive Thoughts of Imam Khamenei".

During the conference, 12 books were unveiled with regard to the strategic thoughts of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Mehr reported.

Army Chief Abdolrahim Mousavi, Army Ground Forces Commander Kioumars Heydari, Defense Minister Amir Hatami, and other senior military commanders attended the conference.



Establishing SPV faced with problems: Qassemi

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Sunday that establishing the special purpose vehicle (SPV), a European mechanism which aims to facilitate trade with Iran in defiance of U.S. sanctions, has been faced with a number of problems as it is the first time such mechanism is implemented.

Qassemi said facilitating trade between Iran and Europe is a substitute for the United States' withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal that Iran signed with world powers in July 2015, ISNA reported.

He also called on the United Nations to defy Washington's policies with regard to the deal by remaining committed to the international agreement.



Main culprits behind Chabahar attack arrested: MP

POLITICS TEHRAN — The main culprits behind the December 6 terrorist attack on Iran's southeastern port city of Chabahar have been arrested, a top lawmaker said on Sunday.

Heshamtollah Falahatpisheh, chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, also said the explosives used in the Chabahar attack might have been smuggled into Iran via the sea, ISNA reported.

The terrorist attack in Chabahar, Sistan-Balouchestan province, on December 7 left two policemen killed and tens of others wounded. The Ansar al-Forqan terrorist group has claimed responsibility for the suicide blast that occurred near a police station.



Iran condemns deadly terrorist attack in Pakistan

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign Ministry has strongly condemned a recent attack on a border checkpoint in Pakistan's Balochistan province which led to the death and injury of a number of Pakistani troops.

In a statement issued on Saturday, ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi sympathized with the Pakistani government and people as well as the families of the victims in the terrorist incident, the Foreign Ministry website reported.

Qassemi renewed Iran's call for any joint campaign with Pakistan against the scourge of terrorism in the region "in any form or shape".

According to the Star Tribune, some 30 militants attacked the Frontier Corps convoy on Friday, killing six soldiers and wounding 14. Four attackers were killed in the shootout.

The militants captured around a dozen Iranian border guards near the border in October.



Iranian, Pakistani MPs discuss border security

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian and Pakistani lawmakers have discussed bilateral ties and border security on the sidelines of the Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

During the meeting, the issue of the abducted Iranian border guards was raised, IRNA quoted MP Khadijeh Rabiei as saying on Saturday.

Rabiei added that the Pakistani lawmakers had promised to do their best to follow up on the issue.

Hadi Bahador, Mohammad Damadi and Sakineh Almasi were the other Iranian participants of the two-day event, which kicked off in Baku on Friday.



Baghdad hosts quadripartite meeting on intelligence sharing

POLITICS TEHRAN — The annual quadripartite meeting among Iran, Russia, Iraq and Syria was held in Baghdad on Sunday with the aim of intelligence exchange. It came on the anniversary of defeating Daesh (ISIL) terrorist group in Iraq.

The meeting was chaired by Major General Saad Mozher Al Allaq, head of Iraqi Military Intelligence, ISNA reported, citing Al Ekhbariya.

Al Allaq presented the achievements of intelligence exchange among the four nations, saying the efforts made by the four countries was one of the factors in defeating Daesh.

He added that the four countries will continue cooperation in the future.

Iran can't abandon boosting military power 'even for a second'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Sunday that Iran cannot abandon boosting its military capabilities "even for a second" in view of threats against the country.

The remarks by the defense minister comes as the United States has created a commotion over a test of mid-range ballistic missile by Iran, claiming that the test contravenes the resolution 2231 which endorsed the 2015 nuclear agreement. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo even attended a UN Security Council session on December 12 to create a consensus against Iran. However, he failed.

"Today, the enemies are disappointed with threatening [Iran] and exert pressure against us about missiles out of frustration. We know well that we cannot ignore boosting defense capability even for a second," he said during a conference at the Defense Ministry.

Speaking at the Doha Forum on Saturday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Iran's missiles are for defensive purposes and reiterated that the country's missile program is "not negotiable".

"Iran's missiles are defensive. We need them for deterrence. We use far less for mili-



tary than anybody else in the region and that is why we have said from the beginning that our missiles are not negotiable."

'Relying on the Leaders' guidelines'
Defense Minister Hatami went on say that

Iran would strengthen its defense capabilities and deterrence power by capitalizing on the guidelines set by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Hatami added that the Leader's guidelines

have foiled the U.S. plots to destabilize the Middle East region.

Referring to inauguration on the Kowsar fighter jet, Hatami noted that the Defense Ministry follows the Leader's guidelines and does not depend on foreigners for military equipment.

On November 3, the Defense Ministry inaugurated production line of the home-grown supersonic Kowsar fighter jet.

Kowsar is an advanced fighter jet with a close air support (CAS) role that has made Iran one of the few countries with the know-how of designing and manufacturing such jets equipped with the 4th generation avionics and fire-control systems.

Hatami said in the inauguration ceremony that production of the fighter jet is a symbol of resisting the hegemonic system and its excessive demands.

He noted that production of the fighter jet was a big step in line with reducing effects of sanctions and boosting defense capabilities.

The defense chief added that the country will manufacture more advanced generations of the warplane in the future.

Zarif: Blame Saudi Arabia and U.S. for regional instability

By staff and agency

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has rejected the label of the world's top sponsor of terrorism ascribed to Iran by Saudi Arabia and the U.S.

In an interview with CNBC on Saturday at the Doha Forum in Qatar, Zarif accused Riyadh and the U.S. of fomenting "dangerous escalations" in the Middle East.

"I think actions speak much louder than words; what is happening in our region, now people are witnessing the source of instability in region, be it in Yemen, be it elsewhere," he said.

He added, "It's the wrong policies that are being followed, not only by Saudi Arabia but by its allies in the West who have given it a blank check to continue to make these very dangerous escalations in the region."

Elsewhere, Zarif said that the U.S. is actually "the party that's violated the nuclear agreement."

He added: "It doesn't matter whether this admin negotiated it or



the previous administration. The U.S. government has negotiated it, they have violated it and it puts them in no position to accuse us of this."

President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. unilaterally from the 2015 nuclear deal in May 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.

Some overlook Trump's possible downfall: senior analyst

POLITICS TEHRAN — A senior political analyst believes that some in Iran are mistaken to disregard the strong possibility of the U.S. president's impeachment, while Trump is facing serious problems within America.

Some in Iran "do not regard as serious the U.S. president's move toward internal clashes with rivals and even some Republicans, and citing Trump's economic record, they already consider him the winner of 2020 elections," Davoud Hermidas-Bavand, professor of political science and international law, said in an article published in the Shargh newspaper on Sunday.

But the point is that Trump himself has referred to his impeachment as a move against America's economic interests and a blockage of his projects, which is likely to happen given that the Democrats won the U.S. House of Representatives in the November elections, Hermidas-Bavand remarked.

Pointing to the investigations surrounding the U.S. president, the analyst said, "In the past, similar corruption cases involving U.S. officials have had serious consequences for them."



"If the trend of disclosures about Trump continues and his ties with Russia during the [2016] elections are proven, without a doubt Trump's impeachment will be set in motion," he argued.

According to CNN, Trump's campaign, transition, inaugural committee and presidency are now under active criminal investigation. His business — the Trump Organization — and his defunct charity — The Trump Foundation are also under investigation. His college — Trump University — has already been deemed a fraud.

UK university tells Iranian student: Go home and get tuition fees in cash

Iranian university students in the UK are facing suspension from their courses because of U.S. President Donald Trump's newly reimposed sanctions on the country.

Law student Parsa Sadat of the University of Reading is among those Iranians who risk being unable to graduate, and possibly having their student visa removed, because they are unable to pay tuition fees.

The 23-year-old's family has the money but he has been unable to get it out of Iran because money transfers from the country have been targeted by U.S. sanctions.

The university has told him that the "only viable option" is for him to travel home to Tehran over Christmas and return with the £5,350 tuition fees payment in cash for the next term.

An email from a senior university official said: "This should hopefully provide you with sufficient time to bring the money back from Iran after the Christmas break. If payment is not received by this date, you would be suspended from your course."

Sadat said he had received at least six warnings telling him that he is liable to be suspended, most recently on 5 December. The student is in his final year and has already paid £30,600 to cover his first two years. "I am not in a unique position. One of the other students has his parents coming and bringing in cash. They're hitting ordinary people. It's basically an economic blockade," he said.



Labour MP says "Parsa is a victim of forces beyond his control."

It is unclear how many students are affected by the sanctions but the Iranian Association, based in London, described their plight as really sad.

Sadat's tutor, Mai Sato, associate professor in criminology, said: "Even if the funds for the flight and fees can be raised, requiring Parsa to transport large amounts of cash within and from a country classified by the Foreign Office

as a high-risk country, exposes the university to justifiable criticism. Parsa himself feels that carrying several thousand pounds in cash is dangerous.

The university has an opportunity here to be seen to take a stand against a clear injustice that flows directly from President Trump's policy towards Iran."

The Labour MP for Reading East, Matt Rodda, has written to the university, saying: "Parsa is a victim of forces beyond his control. I would request that you consider flexibility on the receipt of his third-year fees — if only on compassionate grounds."

Maziar Bahari, the editor of IranWire.com, said the U.S. sanctions were affecting hundreds of Iranian university students in the UK and that some had started using cryptocurrencies in an attempt to circumvent the banking restrictions.

"They are using Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies in order to get money," he said.

Bahari said that a friend had recently told him that "many" University of Cambridge students are struggling to get UK bank accounts due to the sanctions.

A statement from the university said: "We recognise that this student is facing exceptional circumstances and are monitoring the situation. We are working with him to try to resolve this issue."

(Source: The Guardian)

Rouhani felicitates Kazakhstan on Independence Day

President Hassan Rouhani sent a message to his Kazakh counterpart to offer congratulations to him and the people of the country on that Independence Day of the Republic of Kazakhstan, expressing hope that ties between the two countries further deepen.

President Rouhani's message is as follows: In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

Your Excellency Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev,

President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, I would like to offer my sincerest congratulations to Your Excellency and the people of Kazakhstan on the Independence Day of the country.

During that past years, relations between the two countries have developed and deepened in accordance with common interests.

I hope that by relying on valuable past experiences, relations further deepen to serve the welfare of the two nations.

The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Kazakhstan have common responsibilities and interests in promoting regional stability and security and Islamic solidarity. In doing so, continuous negotiations between the two countries at different levels is essential.

I wish Your Excellency health and success and the brotherly and friendly people of the Republic of Kazakhstan prosperity and felicity.

(Source: president.ir)



Iran lauds global awareness to Yemen disaster

1 -> Saudi Arabia along with the UAE have been pounding Yemen since March 2015 to restore the toppled government of Mansour al-Hadi.

Qassemi said, "Undoubtedly, this aggression by a delusional country (Saudi Arabia) against the people who are living in the worst situation is a clear example of a human catastrophe and war crime which cannot be continued."

He added, "History reminds us that no country can reach a result and inhuman objective through aggression against another country and occupation of it through use of force and violence."

UN-brokered peace talks between the warring parties in Yemen's conflict began on December 6 and ended on December 13 in Sweden.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said on Thursday that the Yemeni parties had reached an agreement on a ceasefire in the Red Sea port city of Hudaydah, bringing the first round of the Sweden talks to a close.

Qassemi said on Thursday that Tehran welcomes preliminary deals between the warring Yemeni sides, describing them as "promising" for continuation of talks.

He expressed hope that the truce would pave the way

to reach a final agreement to end the war in the country.

Qassemi said, "This agreement shows that the Yemeni groups who attended the talks have understood the disastrous situation of the oppressed Yemeni people and prioritized humanitarian aid and prevention of the worsening of the situation over their interests."

On December 14, the U.S. Senate voted to withdraw U.S. military aid for Saudi Arabia's war on Yemen.

The vote is the first time any chamber of U.S. Congress has agreed to pull U.S. forces from a military conflict under the 1973 War Powers Act.

Malaysia's Mahathir says no rights to recognize Jerusalem as Israeli capital

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad on Sunday criticized Australia's move to recognize West Jerusalem as Israel's capital, saying countries had "no rights" to do so.

Australia's move follows U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv in May, which infuriated Palestinians and the wider Islamic world and upset Western allies.

"Jerusalem should remain as it is now and not the capital of Israel," Mahathir told Reuters on the sidelines of an event in Bangkok.

"Jerusalem has always been under Palestine, so why are they taking the initiative to divide Jerusalem not belonging to them, but to divide the Arabs and the Jews? They have no rights," he added.

Malaysia is a majority-Muslim country and has long supported a two-state solution in the Palestine-Israel conflict.

The status of Jerusalem, home to sites holy to the Muslim, Jewish and Christian faiths, is one of the biggest obstacles to a peace agreement between Israel and Palestinians who want East Jerusalem recognized as the capital of a Palestinian state.

Israel regards all of Jerusalem as its capital, including the eastern sector that it annexed in a move not recognized internationally, after the 1967 Middle East war.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison reversed decades of Middle East policy by the country but said there are no immediate plans to move the Australian embassy from Tel Aviv.

Israel signals displeasure at Australia's "mistaken" West Jerusalem move



lem move

Israel signaled displeasure on Sunday with Australia's recognition of West Jerusalem as its capital, with a confidant of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saying it was a mistake to gainsay Israeli control over the whole city.

The premier, for his part, stayed silent on Canberra's move at a weekly Israeli cabinet meeting that is usually his opportunity to hold forth in public on major diplomatic developments.

Israel captured Arab East Jerusalem in a 1967 war and annexed it as its capital in a

move not recognized internationally. Palestinians want East Jerusalem as capital of the state they hope to found in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

A year ago, U.S. President Donald Trump outraged Palestinians by recognising Jerusalem as the Israeli capital, a designation that did not acknowledge their claim on the east of the city though it left open the question of its final borders.

On Saturday, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Canberra formally recognises West Jerusalem as Israel's capital

but reaffirmed his country's support for a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem under a two-state peace deal.

Israel's Foreign Ministry responded tepidly, calling the Australian move "a step in the right direction". At the cabinet meeting on Sunday, Netanyahu declined to elaborate.

"We issued a statement at the Foreign Ministry. I have nothing to add to it," he told reporters at the outset of the meeting.

Tzachi Hanegbi, Israel's minister for regional cooperation and a Netanyahu confidant in the right-wing Likud party, was more openly critical of Australia, though he deemed it a "deep and intimate friend of many years' standing". "To our regret, within this positive news they made a mistake," Hanegbi told reporters outside the cabinet room.

"There is no division between the east of the city and west of the city. Jerusalem is one whole, united. Israel's control over it is eternal. Our sovereignty will not be partitioned nor undermined. And we hope Australia will soon find the way to fix the mistake it made."

Morrison's move first surfaced in October, when it was viewed cynically in Australia because it came days before a crucial by-election in an electorate a strong Jewish representation. His party lost that poll.

Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat said Saturday's move was born of Australian "petty domestic politics".

"All of Jerusalem remains a final-status issue for negotiations, while East Jerusalem, under international law, is an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territory," he said.

(Source: Reuters)

Car bomb goes off at marketplace in Syria's Afrin, kills 8

At least eight civilians have been killed and dozens more were injured after an explosives-laden vehicle exploded at a marketplace in Syria's northern province of Aleppo.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that the explosion struck al-Hal market in the city of Afrin, situated 43 kilometers north of the provincial capital city of Aleppo, on Sunday afternoon.

The Britain-based monitor group added that security forces have sealed off the attack scene, members of the so-called White Helmets are rushing to the area to provide help to the victims.

The death toll is expected to rise as some of the injured are in a critical condition.

No militant group has claimed responsibility for the attack so far.

Afrin was captured in March this year from the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG/Yekîneyên Parastina Gel) by Turkish armed forces and Ankara-backed Free Syrian Army militants.

The explosion came as Turkey said that there would be a campaign against "terrorists" in the eastern Euphrates region.

"It is time to realize our decision to wipe out terror groups in the east of Euphrates," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday.

"We will start the operation to clear the east of the Euphrates from separatist terrorists in a few days," Erdogan added.

The commander-in-chief of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) said on Thursday that his fellow fighters would respond strongly to any Turkish attack, but noted that the U.S.-supported Kurdish-led forces were pressing diplomatic efforts to deter an assault.

Mazloum Kobani told Reuters that Washington had made "serious attempts" to prevent a Turkish offensive, but the US should ramp up its efforts further.

Kobani warned that a Turkish assault would tie up militants from the People's Protection Units (YPG), who are



purportedly fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit remnants in eastern Syria, which would allow the Takfiris to spread again.

"We are ready for any attack and will respond strongly ... within our areas. Till now, our diplomatic attempts are ongoing to deter this," he said.

Kobani said Turkey had been mobilizing militants from the so-called Free Syrian Army at fronts bordering the region, where SDF forces control areas in northern Syria.

EU calls on Turkey to refrain from any unilateral action in Syria

Meantime, European Union's top foreign policy official has called on Turkey to avoid taking any unilateral action in Syria that could destabilize the country.

Federica Mogherini said in a statement on Saturday that Turkey's promise for launching a fresh offensive into northern Syria to battle Kurdish militants was a source

of concern, adding that such unilateral moves would undermine efforts by a Western military alliance in Syria that alleges to be fighting the ISIL terrorist group and other militants.

"The statements of a possible Turkish military operation in northeast Syria are a source of concern," said Mogherini, adding, "We expect the Turkish authorities therefore to refrain from any unilateral action likely to undermine the efforts of the Counter-Daesh Coalition or to risk further instability in Syria."

The top EU diplomat further urged Turkey to help preserve West's efforts meant to end the ISIL-led militancy in Syria. "As the fight against Daesh is entering its final stages, all parties must work towards the goal of ensuring its upcoming defeat" she said.

Mogherini's statement came days after the United States, which leads the so-called anti-ISIL coalition in Syria, condemned Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's announcement that Ankara was planning to launch an offensive against the United States-backed Kurdish militants of People's Protection Units in northern Syria.

Ankara and Washington have been largely at odds over the YPG and its role in Syria as Turkey continues to designate the group as terrorist while the U.S. claims it has been a major help in the fight against ISIL and other terror groups.

Washington has tolerated Turkey's previous military operations against Syrian Kurds in areas west of the Euphrates river but there is a serious risk the two NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)-allied countries might directly clash with each other if Ankara decides to expand its offensive to the east of the river.

The Pentagon said on Wednesday, hours after Erdogan said that Turkey was "determined to bring peace and security to areas east of the Euphrates", that any unilateral military action in northern Syria would be "unacceptable".

(Source: Press TV)

UN calls for 'credible' probe into Khashoggi murder



UN chief Antonio Guterres called Sunday for a "credible" probe into journalist Jamal Khashoggi's murder in Saudi Arabia's consulate in Istanbul.

"It is absolutely essential to have a credible investigation and to have the punishment of those that were guilty," Guterres said at a conference in Doha.

The UN chief said he had no information on the case except what had been reported in the media.

Khashoggi, a Saudi contributor to the Washington Post, was killed on Oct. 2 shortly after entering the kingdom's consulate in what Riyadh called a "rogue" operation.

Saudi Arabia has repeatedly rejected Turkish demands to extradite suspects connected to the murder of the journalist, a critic of Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman.

Turkey's foreign minister said Saturday that his country would "not give up" on establishing the truth about the murder.

"We haven't received any new information or outcome of the investigation from the Saudi side," Mevlut Cavusoglu said.

"Turkey will not give up on this, we will go to the end." Earlier this month, the minister said Turkey was in talks over a possible United Nations investigation into the killing which has provoked global outrage.

According to Turkey, a 15-member Saudi team was sent to Istanbul to kill Khashoggi, a palace insider turned critic of the regime.

Riyadh has since detained 21 people over the murder.

Despite speculation that the powerful crown prince ordered the hit, the kingdom has strongly denied he was involved.

The murder has damaged Riyadh's international reputation, and Western countries including the United States, France and Canada have placed sanctions on nearly 20 Saudi nationals.

(Source: AFP)

Germany sees notable drop in asylum applications in 2018

The German government anticipates a drop in asylum applications in 2018, even including the thousands of babies born to recent migrants.

The Bild newspaper reported Sunday on a preliminary report it obtained showing about 166,000 asylum applications will have been filed by year's end, including 30,000 babies born to migrants in Germany.

That's down from 198,317 in 2017 and well below the government's target of a yearly maximum of no more than 180,000 to 220,000.

More than 1 million asylum-seekers entered Germany in 2015-16, most seeking refuge from violence in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Since then the flow of migrants has slowed significantly.

The head of Germany's employers group says the integration of migrants into Germany's workforce is going faster than expected, with 400,000 already in jobs or training.

(Source: AP)

North Korea condemns U.S. sanctions, warns denuclearization at risk

North Korea on Sunday condemned the U.S. administration for stepping up sanctions and pressure on the nuclear-armed country, warning of a return to "exchanges of fire" and that disarming Pyongyang could be blocked forever.

The North's stinging response came after the United States said on Monday it had introduced sanctions on three North Korean officials, including a top aide to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, for alleged human rights abuses.

Denuclearizing North Korea has made little progress since Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump met in Singapore in June in a historic summit. The two sides have yet to reschedule working-level talks between U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and senior North Korean official Kim Yong Chol, which were canceled abruptly in November.

While crediting Trump for his "willingness" to improve relations with the North, also known as DPRK, Pyongyang accused the U.S. State Department of being "bent on bringing the DPRK-U.S. relations back to the status of last year which was marked by exchanges of fire."

North Korea's foreign ministry said in a statement that Washington had taken "sanctions measures for as many as eight times against the companies, individuals and ships of not only the DPRK but also Russia, China and other third countries..."

If the U.S. administration believed that heightened sanctions and pressure would force Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons, "it will count as (its) greatest miscalculation, and it will block the path to denuclearization on the Korean peninsula forever - a result desired by no one," according to the statement.

The foreign ministry statement was released under the name of the policy research director of the Institute for American Studies.

(Source: Reuters)

Thousands of LAUSD teachers march in downtown LA for better pay, smaller class size

As a teachers' strike looms over the nation's second-largest school district, about 50,000 educators, parents and students marched through downtown Los Angeles Saturday morning demanding higher pay and smaller class sizes throughout the sprawling district.

Streets and sidewalks from LA City Hall to the Broad Museum turned into a sea of red with teachers proudly wearing their union T-shirts. Others wore red in solidarity.

The protesters held signs, used drums and noisemakers and chanted:

"When our students and teachers are under attack, what do we do? Stand up. Fight back."

The union is prepared to call for a strike in January, United Teachers Los Angeles President Alex Caputo-Pearl said in an interview. On Friday, Los Angeles Unified School District students were released for their three-week winter break. School is back in session on Jan. 7.

"If we are forced to strike, it will be because we think our kids deserve more, because we dare to have high expectations, because we dare to be audacious about all of our kids' futures," Caputo-Pearl told the crowd, to chants of "strike, strike, strike." "If we are forced to strike, it also will be a strike of hope. And there is hope in the air."

District officials Saturday declined to comment.

Negotiations are in the final stages be-



fore teachers can legally strike. An independent fact-finding panel is expected to issue its report early this week regarding the contract dispute. The district has 10 days publicly release the report, which is expected to contain a set of facts and recommendations to end the stalemate. But the panel's findings are non-binding. The district must then give its final offer before teachers can strike.

If teachers do take to the picket lines, it would be their first strike in nearly 30 years.

As they marched, several educators told the Daily News that they didn't want to strike because their students would lose instructional time and they would lose pay. But many said they felt a strike would result in better working conditions and a better education for their students.

The union is asking for a 6.5 percent raise,

smaller class sizes — which would mean hiring more teachers — more social workers and nurses and librarians in every school. Its demands also include giving teachers more leeway in testing and more say over charter schools.

The district's offer includes 6 percent pay raise and smaller classes only at schools where the student population is considered "high needs."

The main point of disagreement comes from how much the district has to spend on the contract.

UTLA argues the district's \$1.9 billion in savings can be used to fulfill its contract demands. District officials say the majority of that money is already allocated for purposes like employee raises, discretionary funds for schools and to fill an ongoing \$500 million operating deficit. They project this fiscal year's ending reserve balance will be \$689 million.

During the 1989 strike, nearly half of the district's students stayed home.

The district plans to staff classrooms with administrators, substitute teachers, and other employees.

The district issued an information guide to parents in the event of a strike. Officials have encouraged parents to continue to send their children to school and sought to reassure them that student safety is a priority.

(Source: Los Angeles Daily News)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	161708.1
IFX	1826.63

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,498 rials
GBP	52,871 rials
AED	11,380 rials

Source: iribnews.ir

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$51.20/b
Brent	\$60.28/b
OPEC Basket	\$58.67/b
Gold	\$1,239.95/oz
Silver	\$14.61/oz
Platinum	\$792.30/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Number of electricity consumers exceeds 35m

ENERGY TEHRAN — The number of electricity consumers connected to Iran's power network has increased by 633,000 in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 22 - October 22) to exceed 35 million, IRIB reported on Sunday.



According to the energy ministry's news portal (known as Paven), of the mentioned figure, 28,552,000 subscribers are household consumers, 1,668,000 from public sector, 436,000 from the agricultural sector, 242,000 subscribers from industrial sector and 4,570,000 consumers are from other business areas.

As reported, in the mentioned time span the total number of electricity consumers has increased by 3.1 percent as compared to the same period last year.

OPEC has shown it can reach deal despite splits: Zanganeh

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh praised OPEC on Saturday for what he said was the producer group's ability to reach agreement despite intense internal political differences.



The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its Russia-led allies agreed on December 7 to cut output by more than expected, despite pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump to reduce the price of crude.

"OPEC ... has shown the capacity in which members can hold talks and reach important results regarding their common interests despite having the most intense political disputes or even military conflicts (such as during the Iran-Iraq war)," Zanganeh

said on Twitter.

The OPEC deal had hung in the balance for two days - first on fears that Russia would cut too little, and later on concerns that Iran, whose crude exports have been depleted by U.S. sanctions, would receive no exemption and block the agreement.

(Source: Reuters)

Germany plans to lower threshold for probes of foreign takeovers

Berlin plans to cut to 10 percent the threshold at which it can launch national security probes of stake purchases by non-European companies in German firms, business newspaper Handelsblatt reported on Sunday.

The decision follows years of mounting concern at the risk posed to the German economy by cash-rich Chinese investors buying stakes in strategically important companies, gaining access to valuable know-how and inside knowledge.

The takeover of robotics firm Kuka by China's Midea in 2016 spooked Germany, as did the surprise purchase earlier this year of a 9.7 percent stake in Daimler by Chinese carmaker Geely [GEELY.UL].

Ministers agreed the trigger threshold for probes of stakes in companies in areas relevant to national security should be cut from the current 25 percent, Handelsblatt said, citing the draft legislation, which it had seen.

In an interview with Reuters on Friday, Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said rule changes were due.

The move comes amid mounting Western concern at the security implications of investments by an increasingly assertive China.

The United States has been urging European countries not to buy advanced telecommunications infrastructure from China's Huawei, for fear it could plant technology accessible to the Chinese state. Huawei has denied it would ever do this.

(Source: Reuters)

TSE launches futures contract as an instrument for more market balance

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN — In a ceremony on Sunday, Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) officially launched futures contract, a new financial instrument in Iran's capital market.

Futures contracts (more colloquially, futures) are financial contracts obligating the buyer to purchase an asset or the seller to sell an asset at a predetermined future date and price.

The ceremony to launch the futures contract, which was held at the place of Central Securities Depository of Iran (CSDI), was participated by a number of Iranian capital market official including Iran Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) Head Shapour Mohammadi and TSE Head Ali Sahraei.

CSDI is the sole registrar, central custodian and clearing house for the Iranian financial market of four exchanges including TSE, Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), and Iran Energy Exchange (IEE).

Addressing the Sunday ceremony, TSE Head Ali Sahraei said that futures contract is one of the risk management tools (also called hedging tools) which is today becoming operational at the TSE.

He said: "Jurisprudence Committee of the SEO [which oversees compliance of capital market instruments with sharia rules] has approved the regulations related to the futures and we hope that it will act as a highly-applied



TSE Head Ali Sahraei speaking in the ceremony of launching futures contracts on Sunday

derivative for hedging in the capital market."

"Today we launch futures for seven indexes mainly in vehicles, banking, base metals, minerals, refined products and petrochemicals sectors", Sahraei further announced.

■ 'Futures highly significant for market balance'

Addressing the same ceremony, SEO Head Shapour Mohammadi said that futures are

some very important instruments for the market balance, while they are also some strong hedging tools.

They provide investment opportunities for those who are seeking the amount of profit more than they can earn in the normal market deals, the official noted.

He further highlighted the significance of taking the advantage of new financial

instruments to grab the opportunities for market arbitrage (purchasing and selling the same security at the same time in different markets to take advantage of a price difference between the two separate markets).

He also announced that launching short-selling and warrant by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019), Iran's basket of capital market's classic instruments will be complete, "while we are already complete in terms of Islamic financial instruments including sukuk."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mohammadi referred to the noticeable growth in the number of financial entities in the country and said, "We will have 650 financial entities by the end of current [Iranian] year that can strengthen all these instruments."

■ 'A turning point in developing new financial instruments'

Mahmoud-Reza Khajehnasiri, a board member of SEO, was the other speaker in the ceremony, who said that the speed of launching and operating the new instruments in the stock market of country indicates the proper group work behind it which is a turning point in development of new financial instruments.

He believes that the new financial instruments will empower the capital market and fill many gaps. "Enjoying these instruments and specialized financial entities we will bring wealth and profit", he stressed.

2018 Tehran hosting IRAN TRANS EXPO

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The 3rd edition of Iran's Logistics, Transportation, and Related Industries Exhibition (IRAN TRANS EXPO 2018) kicked off on Sunday at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla, the portal of Transport and Urban Development Ministry reported.

Senior officials including the Roads and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami and his deputies attended the opening ceremony.

Over 263 companies active in a variety of areas including light and heavy vehicles, intelligent transportation, road construction, bitumen and asphalt, road safety equipment, as well as contractors, consultants, and some publications in

addition to shipping departments are presenting their latest achievements and services during this three-day exhibition.

■ 1st Iranian-made locomotive engine starts operation

On the sidelines of the exhibition, the roads and urban development minister unveiled the first ever Iranian-made locomotive engine via a video conference during which a locomotive with the mentioned engine started operation.

According to the manufacturers, the Iranian engine complies with Euro4 standards for reducing fuel consumption and competes with the best European engines in terms of quality.



Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami cutting the ribbon on the 3rd edition of Iran's Logistics, Transportation, and Related Industries Exhibition (IRAN TRANS EXPO 2018) at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla on Sunday

Forex market to stabilize: fin. min.

➔ he said, "By the help of Iranian exporters and the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) which is applying some policies to manage demand and increase supply as well as controlling artificial demand, the market will do toward stability."

"One of the main plans of the Rouhani administration has been having a dialogue with the private sector who has been the leading sector under sanctions era and in cooperation with the government," Dejpasand said, "the private sector is able to overcome the crises and help the government to do so."

Making some remarks at the same event, ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie, for his turn, named modification of banking system, privatization, tax amendments, and managing non-generative sectors as the most significant requirements to be done in Iran's economy.

He urged the government to take the advices from Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei who recommend the government to pay specific attention to the private sector's points of view.

Japan plans to cut 6th JGB issuance for straight year

Japan plans to trim its annual government bond issuance by 3.6 percent during the financial year beginning April 1, sources with direct knowledge of the plans told Reuters on Sunday, as part of government efforts to curb public borrowing.

Japan's Finance Ministry is planning to issue 129.4 trillion yen (\$1.14 trillion) in Japanese government bonds (JGBs) in the next fiscal year, down from 134.2 trillion yen in the initial budget for the current year, two people told Reuters on condition of anonymity because the plan has not yet been announced.

That will mean the sixth consecutive year of reductions.

The government is expected to announce its initial budget plans for the 2019/2020 fiscal year this week. The Finance Ministry was not available for comment outside office hours.

Another cut would mark an ongoing decline in JGB issuance from a record high 156.6 trillion yen in the 2013 fiscal year. It would also further reduce the need for the Bank of Japan to buy bonds from the market, a pillar of the central bank's super-loose monetary policy.

Annual issuance for two-, five-, 10- and 20-year maturities will be reduced by 1.2 trillion yen each to 24.0 trillion yen, 22.8 trillion yen, 25.2 trillion yen and 10.8 trillion yen respectively.

Issuance plans for 30- and 40-year bond maturities will remain unchanged at 8.4 trillion yen and 2.4 trillion yen respectively.

(Source: Reuters)



IN THE NAME OF GOD
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

EXTENSION OF INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 97-05/162

Second Announcement

Tender Holder:
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Two-Stage Tender:
(Feeding of the System Supplying Refrigeration of the Chillers) according to the tender documents

Deadline of Receiving Documents:
As of publishing second announcement of advertisement latest by the business hour dated on **Saturday December 22, 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 17,857** 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 Monday January 21, 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 Wednesday January 23, 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

The revolution that Europe desperately needs

By Guy Verhofstadt

The spontaneous street protests in Paris over the past month come almost exactly 50 years after the mass revolt of May 1968. But that is not to say the two events are comparable. "Les événements de mai 1968" was an anarchist uprising by students and workers against the traditionalism and apparent authoritarianism of President Charles de Gaulle. Today's "Yellow Vests," by contrast, have eschewed intellectual and political debate, and quickly degenerated into a rioting mob.

What started as a decent, middle-class protest against a new tax on diesel fuel has been hijacked by professional thugs and extremists railing against migrants, the European Union, and French President Emmanuel Macron. "Paris is burning," gloated Steve Bannon, U.S. President Donald Trump's populist former consigliere, at a recent appearance alongside Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Rally (formerly the National Front). According to Bannon, "The yellow vests... are exactly the same type of people who elected Donald Trump... and who voted for Brexit."

Worse still, the extremist activism has already spread to neighboring Belgium and the Netherlands, which now have Yellow Vest movements of their own.

And in Italy, Matteo Salvini, the xenophobic interior minister, has capitalized on the riots to launch a broadside against Macron's policies. Never mind that Italy is in even more desperate need of a Macron-style reform agenda than France.

The fact that alt-right agitators are using the Yellow Vest movement as a platform to spew hate and lies should worry all Europeans. In one way or another, many of today's populist parties and movements draw financial support from the Kremlin.

The alt-right has been highly successful at exploiting people's fears to undermine global solutions for global challenges such as migration and climate change.

For those struggling to make ends meet, right-wing messaging about refugees and migrants taking jobs and destroying European culture can resonate powerfully.

And for rural households facing slightly higher fuel taxes, it is convenient to believe that climate change is just a hoax propagated by political elites and "the media."

A countermovement against such disinformation is long past due. The first step in stemming the populist, Euroskeptical tide is to tell the truth and point out the lies. But let us not be naive. Countering the alt-right threat to our societies will also require deep reform. A common populist criticism of the EU is that it functions opaquely and often incomprehensibly. Yet, if anything, the EU tends to be rather weak in the face of global challenges. Contrary to populists' claims of overreach, European institutions almost always do "too little, too late."

That must change, and radically so. We need to make the EU far more democratic, transparent, and effective which is to say, more sovereign than it is today.

This does not require us to reinvent the wheel. We need only return to the ideas of Europe's founding fathers: Jean Monnet, Paul-Henri Spaak, Robert Schuman, Alcide de Gasperi and others. These leaders had a clear vision of a simpler yet stronger Union, led not by a 28-member commission, but by a real government with 12 ministers.

They would have allowed Europeans to vote directly for a Parliament with full competencies and legislative authority, and without the system of unanimity that has allowed rogue member states such as Hungary to tie the entire bloc's hands. Above all, we must not equate liberal democracy with the status quo, which all but ensures slow, arduous decision-making.

If the EU suddenly were to make collective decisions by simple majority, the problems confronting it would no longer seem intractable. Europe would finally be able to stand on its own and address citizens' concerns. For example, with a European army serving as an autonomous pillar within NATO, the EU would no longer have to defer to the U.S. on security decisions.

With a single European digital market, European alternatives to Google, Facebook, Amazon, Samsung and Huawei could finally emerge. And with a European border patrol and coast guard, Europeans would be far less reliant on Turkey, Russia and others when it comes to managing migration flows.

Of course, controlling our borders does not mean closing ourselves off from the outside world. Europe will always need to engage with other powers. But it must do so from a position of strength. If the EU can rediscover its democratic potential, the alt-right will no longer have grounds on which to launch attacks against international cooperation and multilateralism. In a more democratic Europe, citizens who took to the streets would do so not to scapegoat migrants and journalists, but to demand solutions for the real challenges we face.

Before it was co-opted, the yellow vest movement was based on a genuine concern about economic security. The lesson for all EU member states is that we must shore up our national social-security systems, while moving forward on EU-level reforms. With a full-fledged banking union, citizens' savings would be secured, and taxpayers would not end up on the hook for private-sector profligacy. And with a complete monetary union and an autonomous joint budget, the eurozone would be far more resilient in the event of another financial crisis.

Until Europe gets serious about reforms, our economy will continue to underperform structurally vis-à-vis the rest of the world. Since 2010, the average annual growth rate in the euro area has been 1.3 percent, compared to 2.3 percent in the U.S. This gap represents 1.2 trillion euros (\$1.4 trillion) from 2010-2018, or approximately 500 billion euros lost in terms of tax revenue.

For France alone, this amounts to 10 billion euros every year the budgetary cost of what Macron recently proposed to meet the Yellow Vests' original demands. The uprising that Europe needs will not happen in the streets of Paris or Brussels, but within the EU's paralyzed institutions.

For more than five decades, power within Europe has been divided between conservatives and socialists who, collectively, have failed to address the challenges of the day.

It is time to leave the European talking shop behind us. The current era demands action. In the May 2019 European Parliament election, "Generation Europe" can break the old political order and take the revolution out of the streets and into the hallways of European democracy.

(Source: The Daily Star)

Washington sends the Saudis a long-overdue bill

The Pentagon's \$331 million invoice to the Kingdom and the UAE was another blow after a difficult week

By Samuel Oakford

Things are not going well for Saudi Arabia in Washington.

On Thursday, the Senate voted unanimously to blame Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for the murder of the Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, and 56 members — a clear majority — cast votes to end U.S. support for the Saudi-led war effort in Yemen. The rebuke was followed shortly afterward by a revelation about the Defense Department's refueling of that bombing campaign: According to the Pentagon, the department had somehow failed to bill the Saudis and the Emiratis for at least \$331 million in fuel and servicing costs. The Saudis, it appears, never directly paid the U.S. a penny.

The Pentagon's admission, relayed to the Senate, came a week after The Atlantic revealed "errors in accounting" in how the U.S. had tracked and billed the Saudi-led coalition for refueling costs—a service that was among the most visible and controversial elements of support as civilian casualties grew. Washington's support began in March 2015 under President Barack Obama, without explicit congressional authorization, and continued under the Trump administration, amid growing outrage in Congress over Saudi conduct. That changed last month when the Pentagon said it had ended aerial refueling at Riyadh's request. The Pentagon's acknowledgement puts a number to at least part of the expansive assistance that the U.S. provided to the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen over the last few years.

For years, the Pentagon proved slow or altogether unable to accurately inform Congress of the extent of refueling for the Saudi-led campaign — or to fix any issues in its tabulation of assistance. Top military officials also said that the results of American refueling weren't being monitored: U.S. Central Command chief General Joseph Votel told senators that the U.S. military did not track Saudi or Emirati jets after they were refueled, to see if they carried out strikes that harmed civilians.

It now turns out that there was a lot else they weren't tracking. It is no coincidence that the Pentagon's admission came from pressure in the Senate, where legislators have agitated to punish the Saudi regime over Khashoggi's killing. The sustained pressure signals that the Saudis may not continue to enjoy the level of support from Washington that they have received in years past. In parallel, the Pentagon may also expect further congressional oversight.

"This is good news for U.S. taxpayers and



Washington's support began in March 2015 under President Barack Obama, without explicit congressional authorization, and continued under the Trump administration, amid growing outrage in Congress over Saudi conduct.

underscores the need for strong oversight of the Department of Defense," Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said in a statement. "The Pentagon is taking action to reduce accounting errors of this nature and Congress must continue to be vigilant and fulfill its oversight mission."

The Pentagon said that the \$331 million shortfall was split between \$36.8 million in fuel and \$294.3 million in U.S. flight hours. It's unclear how much the Saudis and Emiratis owe individually. In response to a question about whether either had reimbursed the U.S. at all, the Pentagon stated that the "UAE has provided some repayment for refueling services." The Pentagon later confirmed that the Saudis have not made any payments — a stunning revelation given the amount of attention the campaign has received. The Saudi embassy did not respond to a request for comment. The Emirati ambassador, Yousef Otaiba, told The New York Times on Friday that "the UAE will cover its bills."

Part of the confusion stemmed from the fact that for the first year of the campaign, the Saudis didn't have a servicing arrangement, known as an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement, in place with Washington. In-

stead, it was funneled fuel — at least according to Pentagon ledgers — via a preexisting servicing agreement that Washington had with the UAE. As of the most recent defense-spending bill, such third-party transfers are now prohibited. In May 2016, a provisional agreement between the U.S. and the Saudis was put in place, but it was never formalized.

"Department of Defense is in the process of seeking reimbursement from KSA and UAE through their respective Acquisition and Cross-Servicing (ACSA) agreements," said the Pentagon spokesperson Commander Rebecca Rebarich in a statement. "Our partners have been individually notified about our intent to seek reimbursement, and have been given estimates as to how much they owe."

The Pentagon confirmed to The Atlantic on Friday that there was still no official ACSA in place with the Saudis, only the provisional one that has remained in use since 2016. The Pentagon said this month that the agreement remained incomplete—and therefore led to no congressional notification—because Riyadh had failed to fulfill "all of its internal procedures necessary for an Agreement to enter into force."

Even as pressure built on Capitol Hill against U.S. support for the Yemen war,

members of Congress struggled to get basic details about the refueling. As late as last year, several congressional offices had been told informally that refueling had ceased; this had not been the case.

In March, Democratic senators made three important requests, formalized in a letter to Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis. The group, led by Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut and Senator Reed, asked for details of the servicing agreements with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and the statutorily required congressional notifications that are meant to accompany them. They also asked how Saudi Arabia was offered inflight refueling assistance in the year before it ultimately signed a provisional ACSA in May 2016. Finally, the group asked for "a full accounting of reimbursements by both the UAE and Saudi Arabia for inflight refueling provided since March 2015."

In April, the military told the senators that it was still calculating the costs; it said the same last week, when The Atlantic reported that "errors in accounting" had led to undercharging. Forty-eight hours after the story was published, the Pentagon told The Atlantic that Centcom had finished recalculating the costs and was notifying the Saudis and Emiratis. That process was evidently complete by Thursday, when the Pentagon informed senators of the \$331 million debt.

"The fact that DoD is just now realizing that it had failed to properly bill the Saudi-led coalition after all these years is quite troubling," said Seth Binder, an advocacy officer at the Project on Middle East Democracy, who focuses on U.S. security assistance in the region.

"Congress must now continue to investigate how such an error could occur and force accountability upon the department as well as fix the loophole that could have allowed this to occur."

It is far from clear whether the Pentagon has fixed the issues that led to its failures in tracking and accounting. ACSAs are not widely tracked, and their use to fuel the Yemen war made it more difficult for Congress to track American involvement. The Government Accountability Office is expected to release a report on their use this spring.

Meanwhile, the outcry against Saudi Arabia in Washington appears to only be building up steam. The Senate's historic rebuke on Thursday of the Trump administration's Saudi policy, while mostly symbolic, showed that Congress appears, at the very least, more willing to scrutinize military cooperation with America's allies in the Persian Gulf. That may surely mean more bad news for the Saudis.

(Source: The Atlantic)

The next Merkel? not quite

BY Paul Hokenos

The election on Dec. 7 of Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer to lead Germany's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) has been hailed as a victory for the outgoing party chair, Chancellor Angela Merkel. She was Merkel's preferred successor as leader of Germany's center-right party and is now the presumptive favorite to become the first head of government in the post-Merkel era, which will begin, at the latest, at Germany's next scheduled national election in 2021.

German commentators seem certain that Kramp-Karrenbauer's leadership will represent both a continuation of Merkel's moderate style of conservatism—which kept the CDU in power in national politics for over a dozen years by steadily draining the center-left of support—and an improvement over her mentor's deficits.

It's not hard to understand why Germans would assume Kramp-Karrenbauer, widely referred to in Germany simply as AKK, is a sort of mini-Merkel. Like the current chancellor, she's a personable and unassuming middle-aged woman, someone who prefers to publicly seek consensus rather than use polarizing ideological rhetoric—unlike her male rivals for the leadership position, who were more pronounced conservatives. So why not expect marginal changes to Merkel's political strategy, with accordingly marginal improvements to the (largely successful) political outcomes?

This analysis misunderstands, however, the political situation that Kramp-Karrenbauer is being asked to confront at home—and, more important, it misunderstands the political identity she will be bringing to the task. She may seem like Merkel in style, but she differs in substance. And that will make all the difference.

The thought is that Kramp-Karrenbauer will asymmetrically demobilize the center-left—that is, she will persuade its voters to either defect for the CDU or stay at home on election day—by cribbing from its policy, just as Merkel did while driving the Social Democratic Party (SPD) to its current lowly 15 percent standing in national polls. Meanwhile, the new leader's identity as a Roman Catholic mother of three from deep in former West Germany—which is more in keeping with the party's traditional profile than Merkel's East German biography—is thought to be capable of healing divisions in the CDU that had opened up under Merkel and perhaps even reversing defections to the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, which has expanded from 12.6 percent of the vote in 2017 to as high as 18 percent support in some recent polls.

It's true that surveys show Kramp-Karrenbauer's vague policy agenda is highly popular with Social Democrats and



Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer is like her mentor in style, but not in substance—and, for Germany, that will make all the difference.

Greens (the latter who have benefited in recent years from the SPD's Merkel-fueled collapse). Greens polled by the weekly newsmagazine Der Spiegel viewed her even more positively (65 percent) than do CDU members (62 percent). "If the CDU elects a woman, and twice in a row," a Berlin Green Party member told FP, "it shows that all of the other parties can too, but they're not doing it. It shows them up." With such star quality, Kramp-Karrenbauer might even prove able to demobilize the Greens in the same way Merkel did the SPD.

At the same time, many conservatives are hoping she can leverage her Catholic faith to win back far-right voters. Throughout her career, Kramp-Karrenbauer has been an avowed, if mild-mannered, social conservative: She's on the record against same-sex marriage, and she firmly opposes any loosening of Germany's relatively restrictive abortion laws; her rhetoric on migration policy—which has included the suggestion of sending refugees back to Syria—has occasionally fallen on the CDU's far-right wing. Indeed, there's little reason to believe that she would have initiated any of the openly liberal social policies that Merkel undertook in recent years, such as ending mandatory military conscription and initiating conciliatory dialogue between the government

and Germany's Muslim community.

This, however, is the hitch in the logic of Kramp-Karrenbauer as savior of the party and leader of a more harmonious, united nation. The same surveys that show her fawned over by the left also show her rejected categorically by AfD voters and even seen as somewhat suspect by many traditional conservatives. In fact, only 4 percent of AfD backers in the Spiegel poll see her favorably. (SPD support for her is 10 times greater.) Just 2 percent of the AfD supporters surveyed said they believed that Kramp-Karrenbauer could lure back stray former CDU conservatives now voting AfD. Another poll yielded a similar result: AfD supporters were the least convinced of all the parties that she would unite the CDU.

Given Kramp-Karrenbauer's genuine conservative credentials, why do her charms fall so flat on AfD fans? The most likely answer is among the most ignored: misogyny. The AfD is the most male of all Germany's parliamentary parties. In 2017, nearly twice as many AfD voters were men than women, and in eastern Germany the party is even more strongly male than in the west.

A political commentator for the conservative daily Die Welt, Susanne Gaschke, summed up the problem concisely: "From the beginning, there was hatred in certain circles for Angela Merkel, which had nothing at all to do with her policies. ... The Merkel hatred of the past three years, in my opinion, has at least as much to do with frustrated masculinity as with concrete and legitimate questions about migration." Just maybe, hopes Gaschke, Kramp-Karrenbauer will catch less of it than Merkel: "Perhaps it is enough that Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer has three children and neither Merkel nor East German." Alas, nothing points in that direction now—on the contrary.

Kramp-Karrenbauer obviously understands the softness of her support on the right and thus is already making moves to make herself more appealing to the AfD. She has signaled that she'll begin by talking with opponents of the government's migration policies. Her new deputy, Paul Ziemiak, comes from the party's right wing. She will initially be focused on uniting the CDU under earning a narrow victory over more stridently conservative rivals for the job. "The fact that the election was so close also means that there is a need for a clear conservative policy in the CDU," opines the daily Berliner Zeitung. Kramp-Karrenbauer won't be able to get away with making occasional rhetorical feints to the right; she will have no choice but to endorse clearly conservative priorities and perhaps even reversals of some of Merkel's policies.

(Source: Foreign Policy)

Theorizing religion in international relations not only feasible but essential: Prof.

1→ We can see the inevitable interplay of politics and religion in the current refugee crisis, in claims for asylum in Germany. Because asylum claims coming from Pakistani Christians carry more weight in Germany, there has been an uptick in conversions to Christianity among asylum-seekers. Both politics and religion are being transformed in ways that cannot be disentangled. To attempt to separate the fields of religion and politics, or to "bring religion back in" misses the point. In the case of the asylum-seekers, those who cannot or choose not to identify as recognizably religious are simply less likely to be legally protected. These are the kinds of dynamics that we need to pay attention to. This means adjusting our conceptual frames so that we can ask better questions, and provide more sophisticated analyses of contemporary religion and politics.

Some argue that if the theory of International Relations means a constitutive and critical theory, then bringing religion into International Relations is possible, but if the theory of International Relations is an explanatory-empirical theory, the theorizing religion in International Relations is not possible and, in fact, there is not theological positivism theory in International Relations. What is your opinion?

A: I do not think it is useful to divide the field up using these categories. My research works on all of these fronts. My recent book "Beyond Religious Freedom: The New Global Politics of Religion" (Princeton University Press, 2017), for example, disaggregates discourse about religion into three categories: expert religion, official religion, and lived religion. The idea is to break down the monolithic category of religion, and to try to understand religious practices as they intermingle, shape, and are shaped by law, history, and politics. I am working toward a more integrative approach to religion, law and society, in which religion is seen as always already part of history rather than standing apart from it.

The analytical framework of "Beyond Religious Freedom" illustrates this argument. I distinguish between religion as construed by those who have legal and political power ("official or state religion"); religion as construed by experts who generate knowledge about religion ("expert religion"); and religion as lived and practiced by ordinary people ("lived religion"). Expert religion is religion as defined by those who generate what is known as policy-relevant knowledge about religion. This includes scholars, policy experts, government officials, and religious authorities. When we hear experts (religious or secular) talk about religion today, we often hear it either celebrated as a source of morality and cohesion, or feared as a danger to contain. You have probably heard versions of both narratives: good religion versus bad religion. Rather than the privatization of religion, today we hear about the need for governments to support good religion and tame or disrupt bad religion all over the world. The good/bad religion narrative is a powerful form of knowledge about religion; it's a form of expert religion. This is an interesting shift in public discourse that is worth following.



As I mentioned above, religion has never been absent from the practice of international relations, although it is the case that IR theory ignored or refused to deal with the subject for several decades. That has changed now, as discussed in my 2008 book mentioned above.

Some scholars such as "Michael Allen Gillespie" in the book "The Theological Origins of Modernity" believe that modernity was not initially against religion, and in later years, as a result of social, cultural and political conditions, it has led to secularism. So based on this conception, religion is not conflict with modernity, so can it be said that religion is not conflict with the International Relations theory stemming from modernity?

A: I do not think there is one thing called "religion" or one thing called "modernity," and so generalizations like this do not make sense to me. As I mentioned above, religion has never been absent from the practice of international relations, although it is the case that IR theory ignored or refused to deal with the subject for several decades. That has changed now, as discussed in my 2008 book mentioned above.

An example of how religion has always been with us in practice is a program I write about in "Beyond Religious Freedom". RelHarmony was a U.S. Agency for International Development-supported project to bring interfaith understanding and tolerance to Albania in the 1990s. The aim was to create the social, political and legal conditions in which political and religious 'extremism,' as defined by the U.S. and the EU, would wither on the vine. The reality was of course more complex. What does it entail politically and religiously to "engage with top religious leadership?" When officials court those leaders, as they did in this program, the heads of nontraditional religions and unorthodox versions of protected religions are ignored. RelHarmony's final report acknowledged this, noting that "religious leaders from Albania's traditional religious groups were supportive of interfaith initiatives, but that their views differed on the question of including mem-

bers of non-traditional religious groups in RelHarmony activities."

Religious-outreach programs operate on the questionable assumption that all religions can be treated equally. This masks the power relations involved. The religions of the majority, of the orthodox, of the ruling class, of allies of the United States, the United Nations, corporate interests or some other government or power broker inevitably carry more political weight than others. Less-favored groups are likely to be classified as cults or extremists. The former U.S. Ambassador for International Religious Freedom, Suzan Johnson Cook spoke about this during workshop attended by U.S. religious leaders and scholars: "There are certain areas where the U.S. government has muscle," she said. Her chief example: the promotion of foreign religious leaders. How do we square this with our domestic tradition of disestablishment? This is one of the questions I am thinking about now.

Some argue that the current International Relations theory cannot explain some of the current phenomena of international relations and we need a religious theory of International Relations, especially with regard to religious issues. What is your opinion? In general, theorizing Religion in International Relations is feasible?

A: It is not only feasible but essential. I study how "religion" has a category and set of practices is interpreted to shape projects of law and governance. This has both theoretical and empirical implications—I do not separate the two.

If theorizing Religion in International Relations is possible, can this religious theory in International Relations explain all the unresolved issues and problems?

A: Certainly not all of them! But we can offer insight into some perduring dilemmas

involving the politics of difference in contemporary public life. Let me give two examples.

The first is the legal protection of groups as "religious minorities." I am interested in the forms of subjectivity, both individual and collective, that are cultivated and reinforced through the law when groups are defined and legally protected as "religious" minorities. The Alevis of Turkey are a fascinating case. They hover at the boundaries of modern distinctions between secular/religious/superstitious as they interact with modern state-building projects. The Alevis as a community and a category were formally constituted as part of the Turkish nation-building project. In taking up their case I sought to understand how ordinary social and religious belonging gets translated, and transformed, through the process of becoming legalized. What happens when we designate groups legally as religious minorities? I argue that adopting religion as a category to draw together individuals and communities as corporate bodies that are seen as in need of legal protection to achieve freedom is a risky business. We need to think twice before rushing to create these legal regimes. I develop this argument through a study of two legal constructions of Alevism, by the Turkish state and the European Court of Human Rights. They are premised on differing assumptions about Alevism, but both erase the indeterminacy surrounding Alevism as a lived tradition. They also bolster the role of the state in defining and overseeing Turkish religiosities. My intention in that chapter is to encourage readers to see the inevitability of legal protections for religious minorities in a new light, and to seek out and affirm other possibilities and forms of identity and solidarity.

A second example is the category of "religious violence." There is a sense that if we talk about religion and politics we are talking either about religious freedom or about religious violence, or both. I am not convinced that these constructs help us understand what is actually going on in the world around us. One problem with talk of religious violence is that when we declare religion or religious difference to be the cause of an act of violence we obscure or submerge a much bigger picture. A lack of religious toleration shoulders the blame for an incident or episode. The explanation for violence becomes: they're doing this because they are religious and they don't like other religions.

They are religiously intolerant, backward, anti-modern. The minute we adopt this storyline, however, we make ourselves incapable of seeing the broader, often institutionalized, often state-sponsored, often racialized, and always politicized contexts in which violence and discrimination actually occur. Religion is one part of that story.

But we need a broader lens to see how religionized, racialized, and nationalist politics become intertwined. An example from my recent book is the current violence against the Rohingya people of Myanmar. I tell a different story about their situation that de-dramatizes the religious element, without ignoring it, while drawing our attention to other factors driving the violence against them. We need to tell more stories like this one.

The U.S. Senate's role in the killing of Yemeni children



1→ Yet, about four years have passed since the beginning of the Yemeni war, and the result of the presence of Mohammed bin Salman and his mercenaries in Yemen has been nothing but the defeat for Saudi Arabia. During the Yemeni war, the Democratic senators (who are now opposing to this war) said nothing against the killing of Yemeni children, but directly and indirectly supported it many times

Next, during the presidency of Donald Trump, he continued the same way which Obama administration took in support for the war in Yemen. Meanwhile, some of Mohammed bin Salman's atrocities, and Trump's excessive investments on the slaughterous prince of the Saudi Arabia, attracted the attention of the most Democrats and some American senators, such as Lindsay Graham.

The repeated defeats of Saudi Arabia in Yemen, and the global awareness about the crimes against Yemeni people, especially women and children, also accelerated the process. Besides, the

during the presidency of Donald Trump, he continued the same way which Obama administration took in support for the war in Yemen.

murderer of Jamal Khoshoggi worked as an accelerator in this regard. This was while the American Senators kept silent over the bombing of Yemeni school bus which led to the killing of dozens of children.

Finally, we should say that the current opposition of American senators to the Yemeni war is not due to their "peaceful mentality" or because they believe war is a bad thing! It is, however, the result of the heavy costs that they had to pay for their ally's failure in Yemen. This process continues until the war is stopped in Yemen.

The opposition of Democratic and Republican senators to Trump's support for bin Salman, is due to the intensification of opposition and hatred of bin Salman among the people all over the world, and among the American citizens. However, we shouldn't ignore the fact that American senators aren't basically opposed to war and bloodshed in the West Asian region and the Muslim world, but have been one of the main causes of these crimes over the past few years. And this same rule applies to Yemen's war.

U.S. trying to avenge defeat at the United Nations



1→ Nicky Haley said: "We cannot talk about peace in the Middle East, unless we agree on the Hamas condemnation." Zionist ambassador to the United Nations, Danny Danon, also criticized the failure to approve the draft U.S. anti-Palestinian resolution. He praised Haley's efforts on Twitter.

The United States still fails to realize that the world is no longer unipolar. The Americans have shown they continue to believe that the universe is unipolar, and that it is only Washington that can put forward the first and last words on some matter. Wash-

Americans are pursuing their hostile and discouraging moves to achieve what the Zionists could not accomplish in the military battleground with the Palestinian Islamic Resistance groups in the Gaza Strip.

ton, before the start of the Friday poll on an anti-Palestinian resolution at the UN General Assembly, even threatened the members of the assembly that if there was no positive vote on the resolution, it would have heavy consequences for them.

Americans are pursuing their hostile and discouraging moves to achieve what the Zionists could not accomplish in the military battleground with the Palestinian Islamic Resistance groups in the Gaza Strip. What seems to be clear is that, as much as possible, further efforts of the United States against resistance groups are planned, though they may be as ineffective as the recent U.S. defeat at the UNGA.

Nigeria police force re-arrests prominent activist, Deji Adeyanju, couple of days after release, over murder case

INTERNATIONAL ABUJA - The federal capital territory desk (FCT) Abuja, police have detained Deji Adeyanju again, his consociate have said.

Deji Adeyanju is a prominent Activist in Nigeria who stand against any form of injustice and seriously criticising the present government of burahi for incompetence, calling the attention of the government towards the corruption, crisis, inhuman treatment towards the ordinary people and mass slaughter of its citizens by even the security agent, hes reawakening the consciousness citizens towards their civic rights and the civic responsibilities of the government

Deji Adeyanju vehemently goes against the atrocities perpetrated on the Islamic movement of Nigeria (IMN) by the Nigerian military and the unjust detainment of sheikh Ibrahim zakzaky and demand justice to this cruelty.

Ariyo-Dare Atoye, a friend of Adeyanju told Premium Times the political activist was arrested after 3:00 p.m. on Thursday. Were by Deji Adeyanju was released from detainment some days earlier before the re-arrest.

Form the look of things the police are demanding to establish the conclusion of a murder trial involving Mr Adeyanju in the mid and late 2000s, during his university period.

"He is been held at the Inspector-General of Police Monitoring Unit over a murder case from his university days," Mr Atoye said. It is crystal clear that these are fallacy and mere accusations with no base. "Even though it is true that he was arrested and charged for murder when he was a student of Bayero University Kano, we are very sure that he was discharged and acquitted in the case," said Mr Atoye.

Mr Adeyanju was at the unit, which was specially established to tackle specific serious crimes such as kidnapping to armed robbery, to retrieve the last of his three mobile telephone devices which the police seized from him when he was first arrested on November 28.

As of 9:30 p.m., Mr Atoye said he had contacted lawyers on behalf of Mr Adeyanju. The police reported that he skipped bail in 2005 and are asking for him to provide the certified true copy of the case in order to establish that he was indeed discharged,



Mr Atoye included. "We find this extremely embarrassing for our country, but we would try and get the copies tomorrow."

Mr Adeyanju spent four years in prison between 2005 and 2009 after he was arrested with three others on murder charges while a student of Bayero University.

Festus Keyamo, a rights lawyer and current campaign spokesperson for President Muhammadu Buhari, defended Mr Adeyanju and the three others. One of the other three was Musa Daura, said to be a relative of Mamman Daura, President Muhammadu Buhari's nephew.

"I represented Deji Adeyanju in the matter from 2005

until 2009, and I can tell you categorically that he was not only discharged but also acquitted," Mr Keyamo said by telephone Thursday night according to source.

Mr Keyamo said he represented Mr Adeyanju on a pro-bono (free) basis at the time, buoyed largely by his longstanding interest in helping students from legal dilemma.

"Immediately I heard he was a student, I picked up the case and by the grace of God we won it and he was discharged and acquitted," Mr Keyamo emphasised.

From the event of things is show the present government lacks essentiality of democracy but Autocracy in disguise.

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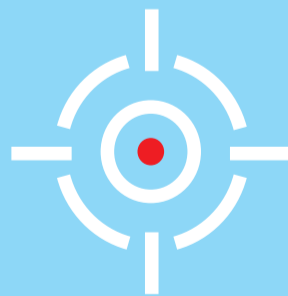
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Top tech experts, researchers lauded

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — The 19th festival for commending Iranian tech-savvy experts and researchers was held in Tehran on Sunday, Mehr news agency reported.



The event was held concurrent with “research week” (December 15-19) under the theme of “purposeful research, efficient technology promoting domestic production”. Some 24 top tech-savvy experts and researchers were lauded out of 226 individuals. Health Minister Hassan Qazizadeh-Hashemi, Science Minister Mansour Gholami, First Vice-President Es’haq Jahangiri, and vice president for science and technology Sourena Sattari attended the event.

Much more bandwidth for Iranian messaging apps: ICT ministry

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plans to provide over 1,000 gigabits per second of bandwidth for Iranian messaging applications by the next two weeks, Mehr reported on Sunday.



“The Iranian messaging apps can benefit from over 1,000 gigabits per second of added bandwidth, which is double the total bandwidth of foreign social networks in the country,” the managing director of Telecommunication Infrastructure Company Hamid Fattahi announced on his Twitter account. He said that the ICT Ministry used the capacity of the National Information Network for bandwidth.

“However, many messaging applications have not used their previous bandwidth capacity completely,” he lamented.

The replacement of Telegram, as the most popular messaging app in Iran, with Iranian messaging applications has turned into a challenge on the national level. Telegram, with 40 million subscribers in Iran, was on top list of messaging applications in the country. It was banned in the country on April 30. Hundreds of people and companies in Iran used the app for their marketing and sales. The alternatives for Telegram is a number of Iranian messaging applications introduced during recent months. Up to now, five messaging applications have been approved by the National Center for Cyberspace, an organization established by the Supreme Cyberspace Council. Soroush, Gap, iGap, BisPhone Plus and Wispi are the applications developed by Iranian experts and are supported by the center. Domestic messaging applications eye officials for further support to help them to convince subscribers to move to another application.

Ditch your smartphone for a year, win \$100,000

Vitaminwater is issuing a low-tech challenge to smartphone addicts: Ditch your device for a year, and win \$100,000. That’s right, all the successful contestant must do to go scroll-free and claim the \$100K prize is not use his or her smartphone — or anyone else’s — for 365 days. But first you must be selected. Enter the contest by sharing a post on Twitter or Instagram explaining what you’d do instead of scrolling through social media posts. All legal residents of the United States who are 18 or older and own and use a smartphone are eligible to enter. Vitaminwater said, adding that applications will be judged on originality, brand relevance, humor and other factors. People required to use a smartphone for work or other commitments “need not apply,” according to the official rules. And no cheating, please: The company will administer a lie detector test to help ensure honesty and adherence to contest rules. The seemingly simple challenge includes reverting to a 1996-era mobile phone for an entire year. No smartphone or tablet use is permitted, even if the device belongs to a friend. Laptops and desktop computers are OK to use, as are voice-activated devices like Google Home or Amazon Echo. The contestant who only lasts nine months will receive \$10,000. Twitter users peppered the platform with submissions this week, with many hopeful winners earnestly vowing they’d use the time to bond with family, learn new languages, and improve their relationships. “Dad, how come you’re always on your phone?” Those words ring in my ears. How can I teach my kids about relationships when I’m too distracted to practice it? I’m up for the challenge to change some habits and show my family how important they are,” Michael Plaisier said. Another contestant cheekily suggested he’d spend his money — and almost all his time in 2019 — drinking vitamin-fortified water, of all things. “The \$100,000 from #nophoneforayear can buy 4,332 24-packs of vitaminwater or 103,968 bottles. There are 525,600 mins./year. Drinking 103,968 vitaminwaters in 1 year would be drinking 1 every 5 minutes. I don’t think I’ll have enough time to swipe during this #contest,” Matt Davenport said. (Source: cbsnews.com)

Blockchain can help improve Iran’s economy: official

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Blockchain technology can help improve the national economy, the head of management development department of the vice presidency for science and technology, Alireza Daliri, IRNA reported on Saturday. “This is possible with boosting the infrastructure of the blockchain technology with the help of government and private sector,” he explained.

The science and technology vice presidency is responsible for development and hi-tech like blockchain, he said. “We should coordinate with other countries in the world in terms of new technologies and the blockchain is one of the issues,” he added. Nowadays over 140 countries are now benefiting from blockchain technology through the world, he said. Daliri then explained about the meaning of blockchain, a chain of blocks for recording information, which is shared with all member of the blockchain network and no one can change it due to its strong cryptography. Some governments concern about blockchain technology, however, its benefits are more than damages, he explained. The vice presidency decides to use this technology in different fields in the near



Iran boosts the infrastructure of the blockchain technology with the help of government and private sector

future, he said. Daliri said that blockchain would decrease bureaucratic procedures.

The vice presidency does its best to support and facilitate activities of the private sector active in the field of blockchain technology. In early December, a group of blockchain experts from Tehran’s Sharif University of Technology announced that they are developing a startup which is to introduce the first Iranian blockchain-based taxi app.

The startup founder Amir Abbas Emami said that they have launched Initial Coin Offering (ICO).

The latest report of Europe Union Blockchain Observatory and Forum (EUBF) details that for blockchain to realize its potential within government institutions, they must focus on using the technology to build two things: digital identity systems, and digital versions of their national currencies.

“Digital identity is the fundamental building block and a key area for governments to focus on,” the report reads. “Another important building block... is having digital versions of national currencies on the blockchain, for example through blockchain-based central bank digital currencies (CBDCs).



‘Over 1,000 knowledge-based firms active in health sector’

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — About 3,700 knowledge-based companies have been registered in Iran, of which 1,150 are active in the health sector, a health ministry official said, Tasnim reported on Saturday.

Hossein Vatanpour explained that 170 of these companies are active in the field of herbal medicine and Iranian traditional medicine. “We plan to support companies active in the field of herbal medicine technology in near future,” he added. Up to now over 2,500 knowledge-based products of herbal medicine have been offered in the domestic market, he said.

“A total of 52 knowledge-based companies export their products to other countries,” he continued. He said that the firms have exported about \$70 million to other countries during the past Iranian year 1396 (ended March 20). In July, Deputy Health Minister Reza Malekzadeh said that 73 types of medicine produced by Iranian knowledge-based companies are being exported to other countries. Over 1,200 knowledge-based companies are active in the field of healthcare products in Iran, of which 458 are in 60 incubation centers in different parts of the country.

37% of tech experts worry AI will make humanity worse by 2030

More than a third of AI experts surveyed by Pew Research said they are concerned that artificial intelligence will leave humanity worse off in 2030 than they are now, with the majority optimistic that the benefits will make life better for individuals. Pew surveyed 979 “technology pioneers, innovators, developers, business and policy leaders, researchers and activists,” asking whether they thought that AI advances would leave most people better off by the year 2030. Will it “enhance human capacities and empower them?” Pew asked. Or will it “lessen human autonomy and agency,” leaving them worse off? Overall, 63% said they were hopeful that people will be better off by 2030, with 37% believing they will not be better off. “Yet,

most experts, regardless of whether they are optimistic or not, expressed concerns about the long-term impact of these new tools on the essential elements of being human,” Pew wrote in its survey findings released this week. “2030 is not far in the future. My sense is that innovations like the internet and networked AI have massive short-term benefits, along with long-term negatives that can take decades to be recognizable,” Andrew McLaughlin, executive director of the Center for Innovative Thinking at Yale, said in response to Pew’s question. Many of those surveyed said the good or bad effects of AI applications will depend on how they are built and deployed. Most of the anticipated benefits of AI center around making people more effective in their work

and improving the ability of medical professionals to diagnose and treat diseases. Among the optimists is Erik Brynjolfsson, director of the MIT Initiative on the Digital Economy, who told Pew, “I think it is more likely than not that we will use this power to make the world a better place. For instance, we can virtually eliminate global poverty, massively reduce disease and provide better education to almost everyone on the planet.” Brynjolfsson also said that humans would need to work to guard against the negative potential of artificial intelligence. “AI and ML [machine learning] can also be used to increasingly concentrate wealth and power, leaving many people behind, and to create even more horrifying weapons,” he said. “We

need to work aggressively to make sure technology matches our values.” And while AI is expected to create some new jobs as well as make other jobs more productive, some respondents said that it could also lead to widespread job losses, and the sense of meaning that comes with work. “The answer depends on whether we can shift our economic systems toward prioritizing radical human improvement and stanching the trend toward human irrelevance in the face of AI,” said Bryan Johnson, founder and CEO of Kernel, a developer of neural interfaces. “I don’t mean just jobs; I mean true, existential irrelevance, which is the end result of not prioritizing human well-being and cognition.” (Source: msn.com)

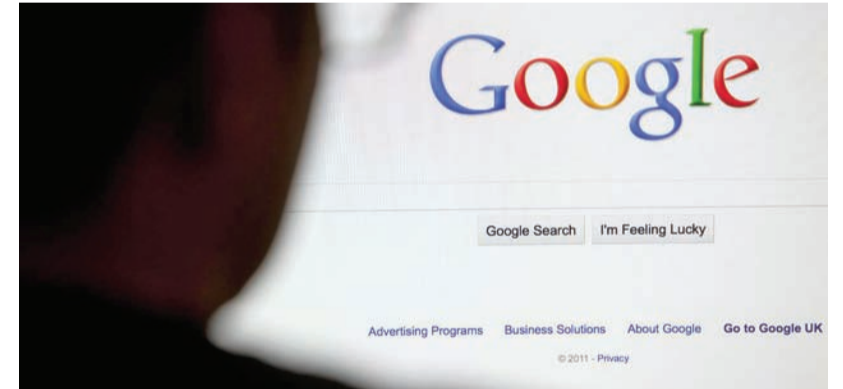
First tourism rocket ship launched into space



Sir Richard Branson, who cried during the test, has said a commercial flight could take place as early as March 2019. Virgin Galactic has successfully launched a tourism rocket ship into space for the first time - with Sir Richard Branson hoping a commercial flight will take place by March 2019. The Virgin Space Ship (VSS) Unity took off from the Mojave test center in California and climbed 51 miles (82km) before beginning its descent early on Thursday. The company considers the altitude to be the boundary of space, which contradicts a long-held view that it is reached at 62 miles (100km). Virgin Galactic CEO George Whitesides noted that recent research favors the lower altitude. And just after the successful return to Earth, Richard Branson told Sky News: “After 14 hard years, to have taken Virgin Galactic into space has been a momentous, historic occasion.” Two, which ignited its rocket engine and released the plane at an altitude of around eight miles. Two test pilots Mark “Forger” Stucky and former NASA astronaut Rick “CJ” Sturckow then hurtled the craft upward and out of sight. The rocket plane re-entered the atmosphere at 2.5 times the speed of sound and landed a few minutes later.

Virgin’s billionaire founder Sir Richard cried, high-fived and hugged spectators, as hundreds of the firm’s employees and family members watched the launch. One of the pilots handed Sir Richard a small Earth stress ball when the two hugged after the space ship landed safely following about an hour’s journey. He said: “The now-astronauts, who were pilots before, had this incredible experience, being in space... and had the ride of a lifetime.” The billionaire said he aimed for a commercial space flight with passengers, including himself, as early as March next year. He said: “Today we have shown Virgin Galactic can open space to the world.” Sir Richard added: “Space is Virgin territory!” And he later told Sky News that while he is “wary about making predictions” he hopes to go into space himself in the coming months and then, “the moment we can say every box is ticked” and the journey is safe, the flight will be open to the paying public. Mission official Enrico Palermo said: “We made it to space!” Sir Richard is battling other billionaire-backed ventures to offer space flights to tourists, including one from Amazon founder Jeff Bezos’ Blue Origin. (Source: news.sky.com)

The World Cup, Meghan Markle topped Google’s 2018 global search trends



The World Cup, Meghan Markle and “Black Panther” topped Google’s 2018 global search trends, while Unicorn cake, “Fortnite,” and “how to apply magnetic lashes” rose to the top of searches in the U.S. Google released its annual search engine trends on Wednesday, revealing the top searches of 2018 throughout the world as well as in the U.S. The terms reflected a variety of major events in subjects including politics, pop culture and tech. The World Cup reigned as the most-searched topic in the U.S. and across the globe. The rest of the global top 10 was filled with celebrities who passed away in 2018, including electronic dance music pioneer Avicii, rapper Mac Miller, comic book legend Stan Lee, chef and television star Anthony Bourdain, rapper XXXTentacion, physicist Stephen Hawking and designer Kate Spade. Meghan Markle, who married into the British royal family in May, ranked No. 6 on Google’s global search list for 2018 and was the only living person to make the top 10. The top U.S. searches included Hurricane Florence, Mega Millions lottery results and “Election Results.” Google Trends released the most popular search topics for 67 individual countries, as well as global trends in the Google search box.

Simon Rogers, a data editor at Google News Lab, introduced the trends in a blog post, reflecting on the search engine’s role during the year’s turbulent “highs and lows.” “In a year when we said goodbye to many cultural icons, like Anthony Bourdain and Aretha Franklin, people searched for how they, too, could influence the next generation, asking ‘how to be a good role model,’” Rogers wrote. “And when first responders rescued a team of soccer players from a cave in Thailand, the world was inspired — searches for ‘scuba diving lessons near me’ increased by 110% that week.” Google continued to dominate the search engine market in 2018, serving as a platform for people to search for not only “everyday queries, but also the moments, people, ideas, and questions that made that trip around the sun so unique,” Rogers wrote. Google also broke down the most popular searches by subject, providing a window into some of the major U.S. trends of 2018. In beauty, “how to apply magnetic lashes” was the top search. In video games, smash hit “Fortnite” led the pack. In diets, the high-fat, low-carb Keto diet topped the list. The most popular how-to question of the year in the U.S. was “How to vote,” while the most searched-for politician in 2018 was Stacey Abrams, Georgia’s Democratic gubernatorial candidate.

Satellite spies methane bubbling up from Arctic permafrost, research team says

Temporarily trapped in ice, these bubbles of methane seeping up from melting permafrost at the base of an Arctic lake will eventually escape into the atmosphere, where the potent greenhouse gas can amplify global warming.

For the first time, scientists have used a satellite to estimate how much methane is seeping into the atmosphere from Arctic lakes. Preliminary data presented this week at a meeting of the American Geophysical Union in Washington DC help to explain long-standing discrepancies between estimates of methane emissions from atmospheric measurements and data collected at individual lakes.

As icy permafrost melts to form lakes, microbes break down organic matter in the thawing ground beneath the water and release methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Researchers have measured the amount of methane seeping out of hundreds of lakes, one by one, but estimating emissions across the Arctic remains a challenge. Understanding how much methane is being released by these lakes is crucial to predicting how much permafrost emissions could exacerbate future climate change.

Solving the problems

In an effort to solve this problem, a team led by Melanie Engram, a remote-sensing scientist at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, turned to the synthetic-aperture radar measurements taken by Japan's Advanced Land Observing Satellite. This type of radar measures changes in ground height.



Engram's team found that the sensor aboard the Japanese satellite was sensitive enough to detect how constant streams of rising methane bubbles deform the surface

of ice that forms on Arctic lakes in autumn and winter. "It's really exciting," she says. "We can see roughness in the ice — divots created by methane bubbles."

Understanding how much methane is being released by these lakes is crucial to predicting how much permafrost emissions could exacerbate future climate change.

The team compared the satellite data with field measurements of methane at 48 lakes, and then used the correlations they found to analyze emissions at more than 5,000 lakes in 5 regions across Alaska. "For the first time, we can move up from a handful of lakes and look across the landscape," says Katey Walter Anthony, a biogeochemist at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, who helped to conduct the research.

Climate models

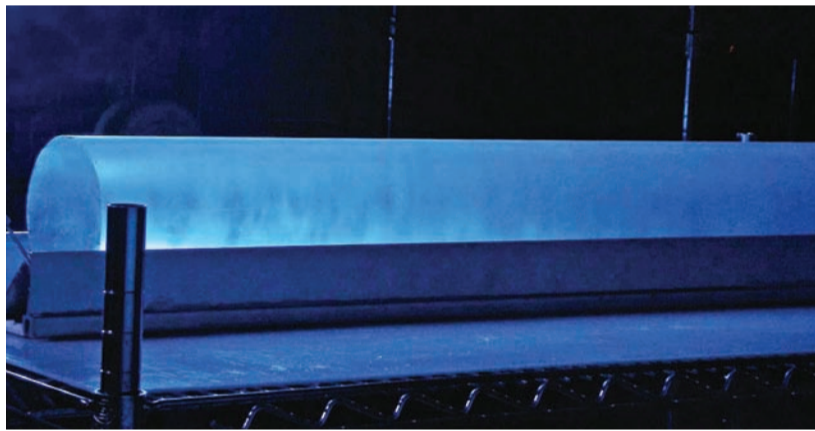
Finding better tools to estimate Arctic methane emissions will help scientists to bridge data gaps and improve projections from climate models, says Clayton Elder, a biogeochemist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

Elder presented new findings at the meeting from a high-resolution airborne sensor that NASA has deployed as part of a decade-long field campaign to assess how climate change is affecting the Arctic.

In a 2,000-square-kilometer area around the Barrow Peninsula in northern Alaska, for instance, the team calculated that lakes release an average of 0.6 grams of methane per square meter of water surface each year — which equates to around 141 kilograms of methane per square kilometer. That is about 84% lower than some previous estimates based on measurements at individual lakes, Engram says, but lines up well with estimates based on atmospheric measurements.

(Source: scientificamerican.com)

How complexity science can quickly detect climate record anomalies



The history of our climate is written in ice. Reading it is a matter of deciphering the complex signals pulled from tens of thousands of years of accumulated isotopes frozen miles below the surface of Antarctica.

When making sense of the massive amount of information packed into an ice core, scientists face a forensic challenge: how best to separate the useful information from the corrupt.

A new paper published in the journal Entropy shows how tools from information theory, a branch of complexity science, can address this challenge by quickly homing in on portions of the data that require further investigation.

"With this kind of data, we have limited opportunities to get it right," says Joshua Garland, a mathematician at the Santa Fe Institute who works with 68,000 years of data from the West Antarctic Ice Sheet Divide ice core. "Extracting the ice and processing the data takes hundreds of people, and tons of processing and analysis. Because of resource constraints, replicate cores are rare."

The initial drilling

By the time Garland and his team got a hold of the data, more than 10 years had passed from the initial drilling of the ice core to the publishing of the dataset it contained. The two-mile ice core was extracted over five seasons from 2007-2012, by teams from the multiple universities funded by the National Science Foundation. From the field camp in West Antarctica, the core was packaged, then shipped to the National Science Foundation Ice Core Facility in Colorado, and finally to the University of Colorado. At the Stable Isotope Lab at the Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research, a state-of-

art processing facility helped scientists pull water isotope records from the ice.

The result is a highly resolved, complex dataset. Compared to previous ice core data, which allowed for analysis every 5 centimeters, the WAIS Divide core permits analysis at millimeter resolution.

"One of the exciting things about ice core research in the last decade is we've developed these lab systems to analyze the ice in high resolution," says Tyler Jones, a paleoclimatologist at the University of Colorado Boulder. "Quite a while back we were limited in our ability to analyze climate because we couldn't get enough data points, or if we could it would take too long. These new techniques have given us millions of data points, which is rather difficult to manage and interpret without some new advances in our (data) processing."

The information theory

The West Antarctic Divide ice core contains over a million data points, and 68,000 years of Earth's climate history. Joshua Garland, a mathematician at the Santa Fe Institute, explains how his team uses information theory to quickly flag which portions of massive data set stand out.

In previous cores, Garland notes that decades, even centuries, were aggregated into a single point. The WAIS data, by contrast, sometimes gives more than forty data points per year. But as scientists move to analyze the data at shorter time scales, even small anomalies can be problematic.

"As fine-grained data becomes available, fine-grained analyses can be performed," Garland notes. "But it also makes the analysis susceptible to fine-grained anomalies."

(Source: phys.org)

For these critically endangered marine turtles, climate change could be a knockout blow



Hawksbill turtles aren't the only marine turtles threatened by the destabilizing effects of climate change, but a new study from researchers at Florida State University shows that this critically endangered species could be at particular risk.

In a study published in the journal PLOS ONE, researchers from FSU's Department of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Science suggest that projected increases in air temperatures, rainfall inundation and blistering solar radiation could significantly reduce hawksbill hatching success at a selection of major nesting beaches.

Earth's history abounds with examples of climate shifts, but researchers say today's transforming climate, paired with unabated human development, imperils hawksbills and other marine turtles in new and alarming ways.

Adapted to climatic changes

"Marine turtles have been around for millions of years, and during this time they have adapted to substantial climatic changes," said Assistant Professor of Oceanography Mariana Fuentes, co-author of the study. "In the past they have adapted by shifting their nesting grounds and nesting season to align with more favorable conditions. However, increasing impacts to nesting habitats from coastal construction, storms and sea level rise are jeopardizing their ability to adapt."

To evaluate climate change's effects on hawksbill hatching success, FSU researchers analyzed more than 5,000 nests from the five Brazilian beaches where a majority of the region's hawksbill nesting occurs. The team focused specifically on five climatic variables — air temperature, rainfall, humidity, solar radiation and wind speed — in order to render a more comprehensive model of the various

and subtle effects of a changing climate on the sensitive incubation process.

"Research is lacking on how climate change may influence hawksbills, and this population in particular," said former FSU graduate student Natalie Montero, who led the study. "We chose to study how climate change may impact hatchling production because significant changes to how many baby marine turtles are born can dramatically alter population stability."

As reptiles, marine turtles' body temperature regulation relies on external sources of heat. That makes hawksbills and their cousins especially dependent upon and responsive to air temperature.

Extreme temperature fluctuations

Nowhere is that responsiveness more apparent than in marine turtle nests, where extreme temperature fluctuations can influence egg incubation, dictate sex ratios and determine hatching success.

For some marine turtle species, rising temperatures may not necessarily mean less successful incubation. For example, a study from Montero and Fuentes published earlier this year revealed that, for loggerhead turtles in the temperate nesting beaches of North Florida, changing conditions could yield potential short-term increases in hatching success by 1 to 7.6 percent.

Montero and Fuentes found that rising air temperatures, accompanied by increased rainfall and solar radiation, are projected to reduce overall hatching success at the Brazilian nesting sites by up to 11 percent by the year 2100. Higher temperatures may warm nests beyond the threshold for healthy incubation, they said, and increased rainfall could saturate the soil and suffocate the embryos.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Digikala Launches Online Shopping Celebration in Longest Night of Year 'YALDA'

Like previous years, "Digikala" will launch the largest online shopping event on the eve of the Longest Night of the Year 'YALDA Night', running on Dec. 18-21, 2018, the Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

In 2018 Amazing YALDA, Iranian high-quality products and brands play a leading role in this respect. This celebration is held in cooperation and collaboration with more than 3,000 top suppliers of Iranian high-quality products, selected from 15,000 Marketplace Platform suppliers of "Digikala".

In this memorable night, a number of 20,000 types of high-quality goods and products will be offered to the applicants.

"Digikala", Supporter of Iranian Businesses and Brands in 2018 YALDA

2018 Amazing YALDA is a fully Iranian festival with the aim of promoting and boosting the culture of purchasing

Iranian products. All products in this prestigious festival have been made domestically and will be offered to the noble people of the country through online services.

As mentioned in above, Digikala is supporter of 1,500 high-quality Iranian products.

In line with gaining customers' satisfaction, "Digikala" is improving and developing supervisory and control tools on the performance of suppliers in its Marketplace Platform.

Improving transparency in performance of suppliers in each economic condition and in various sectors [such as the way of pricing, preventing fake discounts, improving goods delivery processes and return of orders, differentiating selected suppliers with the desirable performance, ranking them according to the opinion of customers and also avoiding activity of suppliers with lackluster performance, etc.] have

been cited as some of these activities, the report added.

For the first time, "Digikala" will publish a report entitled "Digikala Record" which is based on the realities from feedback of customers of this prestigious company.

It should be noted that 4th Edition of Competition of Highest Quality Products of Digikala started last week which is a bedrock for the reflection of Iranians' outlook from the most popular brands and products as supplied in the past year.

This competition was held in nine groups including the topmost Iranian brands of manufacturer of home appliances, the topmost Iranian brand of producer of supermarket and food products, garments, accessories, mobile handsets, the most creative innovation in electronic goods, the best video game of the year, the most successful company in the field of digital technology, etc.

MIT engineers have devised a way to create 3-D nanoscale objects

Researchers have invented a new way to fabricate nanoscale 3D objects of nearly any shape. They can also pattern the objects with a variety of useful materials, including metals, semiconducting quantum dots, and DNA.

MIT engineers have devised a way to create 3-D nanoscale objects by patterning a larger structure with a laser and then shrinking it. This image shows a complex structure prior to shrinking.

MIT researchers have invented a way to fabricate nanoscale 3-D objects of nearly any shape.

"It's a way of putting nearly any kind of material into a 3-D pattern with nanoscale precision," says Edward Boyden, an associate professor of biological engineering and of brain and cognitive sciences at MIT.

Using the new technique, the researchers can create any shape and structure they want by patterning a polymer scaffold with a laser.

These tiny structures could have applications in many fields, from optics to medicine to robotics, the researchers say. The technique uses equipment that many biology and materials science labs already have, making it widely accessible for researchers who want to try it.

Boyden, who is also a member of MIT's Media Lab, McGovern Institute for Brain Research, and Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research, is one of the senior authors of the paper, which appears in the Dec. 13 issue of Science.

Existing techniques for creating nanostructures are limited in what they can accomplish. Etching patterns onto a surface with light can produce 2-D nanostructures but doesn't work for 3-D structures. el Oran and Samuel Rodrigues.

It is possible to make 3-D nanostructures by gradually adding layers on top of each other, but this process is slow and challenging. And, while methods exist that can directly 3-D print nanoscale objects, they are restricted to specialized materials like polymers and plastics, which lack the functional properties necessary for many applications.

(Source: Science Daily)

Researchers identify irisin's receptor in bone and fat

Exercise helps beef up bones, but exactly how hasn't been clear. A study published today (December 13) in Cell points to irisin, dubbed the "exercise hormone," as a messenger between muscle and bone tissue that triggers the process of replacing old or damaged bone cells with new ones.

"This is a pretty big discovery because in the past years, nobody has identified the receptor for this particular hormone," says Jake Chen, a bone biologist at Tufts University who studies irisin but was not involved with this work.

Irisin is a hormone secreted from muscles during exercise. In animal studies, researchers have found it plays a part in strengthening bones and burning calories.

Previous studies on irisin were mired in controversy, and people even doubted its existence because of inconsistencies in the assays used to detect it. But these concerns have largely died down since 2015, when Bruce Spiegelman's group at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Harvard University and collaborators, which first identified irisin in 2012, used mass spectroscopy to directly detect the hormone in human plasma.

This new research sought to understand exactly how irisin works in bones, with the ultimate goal of exploiting the knowledge to treat diseases such as osteoporosis.

Earlier studies have shown that low doses of irisin build stronger bones in mice. In this latest study, Spiegelman's team injected mice with low doses of irisin and observed a boost in the production of sclerostin in mouse osteocytes, one of the major types of bone cells. Sclerostin is a protein that helps break down bone, presumably so that the tissue can be rebuilt.

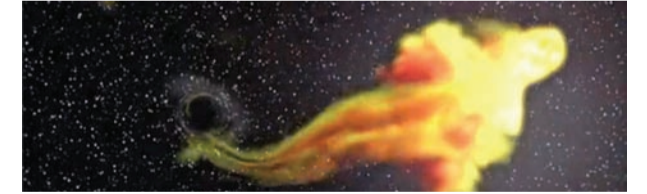
Based on his team's results, Spiegelman says, he likens irisin to a message from the muscle that gives instructions to bone to begin this process of reconstruction.

(Source: the-scientist.com)

Supermassive black hole violently swallows star, researchers find

The immense power of a supermassive black hole's gravity pulled in a star, ripped it to shreds and then ate it, researchers said.

Scientists Miguel Perez-Torres, of the Astrophysical Institute of Andalusia in Granada, Spain, and Seppo Mattila, of the University of Turku in Finland, staffed with a team of 36 scientists, were surprised when they caught the supermassive black hole in the act while observing the galaxy through radio and infrared telescopes.



The black hole, positioned between colliding galaxies called Arp 299 more than 150 million light-years away, is 20 million times larger than the sun. The star the black hole ate was more than twice the sun's mass, according to the scientists.

This is the first time scientists have witnessed this type of astronomical event.

"Never before have we been able to directly observe the formation and evolution of a jet from one of events," Perez-Torres said in a statement, referring to the jets of material that spew out of the star at the speed of light when it's ripped apart.

Researchers believed that black holes eat stars fairly regularly, but previously had not witnessed the act. When stars are consumed, the material from the star creates a "rotating disk around the black hole, emitting intense X-rays and visible light."

One of the tools scientist used to see the jet material that blasted across galaxies was the National Science Foundation's Very Long Baseline Array (VLBA), a radar that amplifies and records the on-goings in space using a 25 meter antenna.

Supermassive black holes, with a gravitation pull so strong that light can't escape, are present in most galaxies, the researchers said. But the recent discovery will help scientists comprehend what exactly happens in black holes and the type of environment present when galaxies first come into being.

"By looking for these events with infrared and radio telescopes, we may be able to discover many more (jet streams), and learn from them," Mattila said.

(Source: USA Today)

University entrance exam to be eliminated within 3 years: minister

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The Iranian science minister, Mansour Gholami, has announced that Konkur, annual multiple choice exam for gaining admission to universities in Iran, will be eliminated by the next three years, IRIB reported on Sunday.

Elimination of Konkur being rigorous and impossible is a misconception, the ministry has seriously considered the issue and it must be implemented by the next few years, Gholami stated.

Last year, 85 percent of the students gained admission to top state-run universities due to their professional academic background rather than their Konkur exam results, so this can be considered as the first step to remove the demanding exam, he further explained.



He went on to say that the universities are required to come up with their own specific plans and guidelines for admission policies.

We intend to connect small universities to state-run or private top universities in order to receive more support and expert supervision, he stated, adding that it is also planned to close or merge small universities.

Referring to a huge number of graduated unemployed youth, he regretted that universities have never been training human resources but graduating numerous job seekers.

Iranian universities ranked first in the region and sixteenth in the world in the field of research and development, he highlighted, adding that to increase the applicability of university researches, we need to conduct researches ordered by governmental or non-governmental organizations [to raise finances].

The Ministry focuses on these tailored to meet the needs of organizations, and so far, have focused on applied university researches of pilot areas of 10 provinces of the country, while any misconduct in the authorship of the theses will be pursued in the court of law, Gholami added.

Referring to allocating 15 percent of university budgets to research, he noted that universities and institutions of higher education are not satisfied with the amount of budget they are receiving.

However, the provision of laboratory equipment for the expansion of research and development is among the Ministry's priorities, he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Gholami noted that next year, university faculties and students will be provided with study and research opportunities in the country's industries for a six-month period.

Earthquake risk high in 78% of cities in Iran, says IRCS

SOCIETY TEHRAN — There are 120 active faults in Iran and about 78 percent of cities nationwide are located in earthquake prone regions, director of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) Rescue and Relief Organization, Morteza Salimi, said on Saturday.

Salimi made the remarks over an International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) training program for search and rescue teams here in Tehran, Tasnim news agency reported.

INSARAG is a global network of more than 80 countries and organizations under the United Nations umbrella. INSARAG deals with urban search and rescue (USAR) related issues, aiming to establish minimum international standards for USAR teams and methodology for international coordination in earthquake response based on the INSARAG Guidelines.

The event was co-organized by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Iran office, the National Disaster Management Organization, and the Embassy of Austria and with regard to the overriding need for training urban search and rescue teams.

Moreover, Salimi warned, the metropolis of Tehran, as the capital city of



Iran, is also at risk for a big quake and has been awaiting a devastating earthquake measuring over 7 on the Richter scale for years.

Based on the studies and previous quakes reported in Tehran the city is most likely to be stricken with a massive quake every 158 years, he said, adding that the

risk is 70 percent, he explained.

However, the last powerful quake hit Tehran 182 years ago and that means the imminent earthquake of Tehran has 24-year-old delay, he added.

Had an earthquake hit Tehran the city, which is also the cultural and economic hub of the country, will face a catastrophe,

he lamented.

Salimi went on to say that it is projected that in Tehran with a population of 10 million, more than million buildings will be razed to the ground and about 1.5 million will die.

He further underscored the importance of forming highly trained urban search and rescue teams in the country which live up to international standards.

Salimi also expressed hope that with the Iranian Red Crescent Society's Rescue and Relief Organization joining the INSARAG in near future would make the matter more feasible.

3,544 schools in Tehran susceptible to quake

Ahmad Sadeqi, director of the Tehran Disaster Mitigation and Management Organization also said on Saturday that Tehran is very much vulnerable to earthquake and that some 3,544 schools in Tehran are susceptible to a temblor.

He further underlined the importance of establishing local and national search and rescue teams to offer relief services soon after the quake hits, YJC reported.

Buildings which are not resistant to earthquake and run-down areas are the most important issues which must be dealt with in no time soon, he noted.

Rainfalls bring back life to Bamdej wetland, southwestern Iran

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Bamdej Wetland, located 40 kilometers northwest of Ahvaz, Khuzestan province, has been filled with water after autumn rainfalls, while suffering a significant drop in water level during summer, deputy director of Khuzestan province's environment department general said.

The fresh water wetland covering an area of 4,000 hectares, is home to over 40 different animal species including fox, jackal, wolf, hyena, marten, bat, hedgehog, frog, toad, turtle, gecko and snake. It also is a preferred habitat to many birds including Basra reed warbler, African sacred Ibis, white-tailed plover, duck and Iraq babbler.

"With water level rising, the number of migratory birds choosing the wetland to pass the winter on, is increased," ISNA quoted Adel Mola as saying on Saturday.

This summer (June 21-September 22), water levels have started to fall in Bamdej



wetland, however, increased precipitation levels in Autumn led to the flow of water in the wetland again, he explained.

Considering recent rainfall and good water condition in the wetland, the diversity and density of migratory birds is expected to be higher than last year, he added.

Referring to census for migratory birds as one of the main environmental issues, he highlighted that the accurate data of migratory birds' population in this wetland will be reported on mid-January concurrent with annual bird census.

Charity foundation provides wheelchairs for 3,000 people with disabilities

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Ehsan-Barekat Charity Foundation has provided some 3,000 wheelchairs to people with disabilities in underprivileged areas, director of Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order said on Sunday.

Following a campaign launched by the charity called Charkh-e Zendegi (literally meaning the wheel of life) public have started making generous donations, so that 3,000 wheelchairs are bought and dispatched to deprived provinces, Mehr news agency quoted Mohammad Mokhber as saying.

There are 450,000 physically challenged people living in Iran and some are living in financial distress and can barely afford to have wheelchairs and may even be trapped at homes not having wheelchairs, Mokhber regretted.

However, over the past few days the public and other charity organizations



have joined hands in helping with providing people with physical disabilities with wheelchairs by taking part in the campaign, he added.

Ehsan-Barekat Foundation offers social services to the underprivileged to eradicate social harms, and is affiliated to the Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order and Barekat Foundation which has been established on December 11, 2007, in order to act as an organization to uproot deprivation, to realize economic and social empowerment and to carry out public affairs.

COP24: Environmental groups criticize 'morally unacceptable' climate deal reached after major Poland summit

Diplomats from around the world have agreed a major climate deal after two weeks of United Nations talks in Poland.

But climate campaigners warned the deal — effectively a set of rules for how to govern the 2015 Paris climate accord — agreed between almost 200 countries lacked ambition or a clear promise of enhanced climate action.

Activists cautiously welcomed elements of the plan, saying "important progress" had been made on ensuring that efforts to tackle climate change by individual nations can be measured and compared.

But environmental groups were also highly critical of the agreement, warning it lacked ambition and clarity on key issues, including financing for climate projects for developing countries.

The COP24 deal, which is aimed at providing firm guidelines for countries on how to transparently report their greenhouse gas emissions and their efforts to reduce them, was confirmed on Saturday evening after talks overran from Friday.

The agreement establishes rules to govern the 2015 Paris climate accord, which includes a goal of capping global temperature increases at no more than 1.5C.

However scientists say emissions of gases such as carbon

dioxide need to drop sharply by 2030 to prevent potentially catastrophic global warming.

And the meeting postponed decisions on pledging more ambitious action to fight global warming and on regulating the market for international carbon emissions trading.

Jennifer Morgan, executive director at Greenpeace International, said: "A year of climate disasters and a dire warning from the world's top scientists should have led to so much more."

"Instead, governments let people down again as they ignored the science and the plight of the vulnerable."

"Recognizing the urgency of raised ambition and adopting a set of rules for climate action is not nearly enough when whole nations face extinction."

Ms Morgan added: "Without immediate action, even the strongest rules will not get us anywhere. People expected action and that is what governments did not deliver. This is morally unacceptable."

The talks in Poland took place against a backdrop of growing concern among scientists that global warming is proceeding faster than governments are responding to it.

"Through this package, you have made a thousand little

steps forward together," said Michal Kurtyka, a senior Polish official chairing the talks.

But Gareth Redmond-King, head of climate change at WWF-UK, said world leaders were in a "state of denial" about the problem.

"They've made important progress, but what we've seen in Poland reveals a fundamental lack of understanding by some countries of our current crisis," he added.

"Luckily, the Paris Agreement is proving to be resilient to the storms of global geopolitics. Now we need all countries to commit to raising climate ambition before 2020, because everyone's future is at stake."

A recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, concluded that while it's possible to cap global warming at 1.5C by the end of the century compared to pre-industrial times, this would require a dramatic overhaul of the global economy, including a shift away from fossil fuels.

Alarmed by efforts to include this in the final text of the meeting, the U.S., Russia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait blocked an endorsement of the IPCC report midway through this month's talks in the Polish city of Katowice.

(Source: The Independent)

LEARN ENGLISH

Job Interview III

A: Very good. Now, I have a couple of final questions.
 B: I hope they're not too hard!
 A: Well, why should we hire you?
 B: I think that I would be a **perfect fit** in this company. I have a unique combination of strong **technical acumen**, with outstanding soft skills; you know, I **excel** at building strong, long-term customer relationships. For example, when I **headed** the customer support department in my previous company, our team resolved about seventy percent of our customers' problems. I decided that we needed better information and technical preparation on our products, so after I **implemented** a series of **training sessions** in coordination with our technical department, we were able to solve ninety percent of our customers' issues. Given the opportunity, I could bring this kind of success to this company.
 A: Impressive! So, what would you consider to be your greatest weakness?
 B: To be honest, I **struggle** with organization and time management. **Punctuality** has never been a strength of mine. I find it hard to organize my time efficiently. I have actually **addressed** this weakness recently, by attending a workshop on efficient time management. It helped me a lot, by providing me with great insights on how to get organized and use my time efficiently, so I think I'm getting better now.
 A: Great... Well, let me tell you that I am very pleased with this interview. We are **short-listing** our candidates this week, and next week we will inform our short listed candidates of the day and time for a second interview with our CEO.
 B: Great, thanks a lot! I hope to hear from you! Good bye.

■ **Key vocabulary**
a perfect fit: the right person for the job
acumen: the ability to think clearly and make good decisions
excel: be superior to, among the best
head: to be the leader of something
implement: to make something active or effective
training session: a meeting where people acquire skills and knowledge about a subject
struggle: have a difficult time
punctuality: arriving or doing something at the expected or planned time
address: to deal with (a matter, issue, problem, etc.)
short list: to select a few candidates in order to make a final selection or decision
 ■ **Supplementary vocabulary**
prospect: someone or something that is likely to succeed or to be chosen
CV: curriculum vitae; a short document that describes your education, work experience, etc.
shortcoming: a weakness that someone has
asset: a valuable or beneficial thing or ability that a person has
 (Source: irlanguage.com)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ب

Rare Corsac fox coming to the verge of extinction

The Corsac fox, a small intelligent hunter, having a limited range in Turkmen Sahara, northeastern Iran, is endangered due to habitat fragmentation and lack of safety, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

An official with the Golestan DOE, Mahmood Shakiba, said that living conditions for this rare species in the country is so improper that spotting a few nests of the specie is a pleasure.

روبه ترکمنی به دالان مرگ می‌رود

دشت «اینچه» تنها زیستگاه روبه ترکمنی در ایران دیگر امن نیست و در سایه تخریب زیستگاه‌ها کرساک در معرض انقراض است. محمود شکبیا، رئیس اداره نظارت بر حیات وحش اداره کل حفاظت محیط زیست گلستان به خبرنگار مهر اظهار کرد: شرایط روبه ترکمنی در کشور آنقدر بد شده که به عنوان گونه‌ای نادر در ایران مطرح است و دیدن چند لانه از این جانور باعث خوشحالی است.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ise, -ize”

■ **Meaning:** resemble or become
 ■ **For example:** How should I **organize** my research?

PHRASAL VERB

Talk down to somebody

■ **Meaning:** to talk to someone as if they are stupid, although they are not
 ■ **For example:** The students felt that they were talked down to as though they were children.

IDIOM

Not have a clue

■ **Explanation:** don't know anything about something
 ■ **For example:** My wife's grandmother's maiden name? I don't have a clue!

Iran, Croatia boost cooperation

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Reza Salehi Amiri, President of Iran's National Olympic Committee (NOC), met with his Croatian counterpart Zlatko Mateša on Saturday.

In a meeting which was held at the Croatian Olympic Committee (COO) headquarters, both sides agreed to further strengthen bilateral relations in sports fields.

Salehi Amiri was accompanied by Iranian Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia Mohammad Reza Sadegh and head of Iran Swimming Federation Moshen Rezvani in the meeting.

Zlatko Mateša, former Prime Minister of Croatia, who currently is President of the Croatian Academy of Sciences, President of the Croatian Football Federation, Davor Suker, and head of the Croatian Olympic Committee's Department for International Cooperation, Ljiljana Ujlaki Subic attended the session.

The two sides agreed to step up experience sharing in the sports field and exchanges of athletes, coaches, teachers and sports knowledge, especially in football and water sports.

"Croatia's sport has improved a lot in the recent years. For example, the country's football advanced to the final match of the 2018 FIFA World Cup and they can be a role model for others," Salehi Amiri said.

"Iran also is strong in some sports and our athletes have performed well in Asia and in the world. But we believe that we need to strengthen our sports in the future," he added.

Salehi Amiri also met with Suker in this meeting.

The legendary Croatian footballer, who helped the Chequered Ones finish third in the 1998 World Cup, said he is interested in visiting Iran in the near



future. Suker also said the Croatian U-23 football team can travel to Iran to play friendly match with Iran Olympic football team.

Kashima's Oiwa aiming for Real Madrid



Kashima Antlers coach Go Oiwa immediately set his sights on European giants Real Madrid after watching his side come from behind to beat Guadalajara 3-2 in their FIFA Club World Cup UAE 2018 quarter-final on Saturday.

The 2018 AFC Champions League winners scored three second-half goals to advance to Wednesday's semi-final, where the reigning European champions await in Abu Dhabi.

It is a rematch of the 2016 FIFA Club World Cup final, which Real won 4-2. But Oiwa, who was Kashima assistant coach two years ago, is now focused on causing an upset this time around.

"In 2016 we made a great impact on a lot of people," Oiwa said in his post-match press conference. "In that final against Real Madrid we really wanted to win and it was disappointing."

"But now, right here we have the opportunity to put that disappointment behind us. We will try to show what we didn't manage to do against Guadalajara and play aggressive football and take the game to Real Madrid."

Oiwa is still able to call on a number of players who played in the 2016 final and the 46-year-old believes that the memory of defeat could spur his side on to an unlikely victory.

"I must analyze Real Madrid fully before I decide on the team for the match on Wednesday. Madrid is Madrid but we will be solid and aggressive in our fighting spirit and the way we approach the game, then we will see."

Kashima found themselves 1-0 down

after just three minutes against Guadalajara but fought back thanks to second-half goals from Ryota Nagaki, Sergio and Hiroki Abe.

Oiwa revealed that at half-time he told his players they had a duty to improve their performance for the Kashima supporters who had travelled to Al Ain.

"We conceded a goal at an early stage in the match and our positioning wasn't good," he said. "I felt we were playing too much of their game and allowing them to set the pace."

"At half time I told my players we had to change and take the game to Guadalajara and identified how we would do this. "I also told the players that a lot of fans had made the trip from Japan to support us and they were making plenty of noise for us, so I said we had to show our fighting spirit and perform for our fans."

While Kashima were celebrating victory, Guadalajara were left to ponder what might have been. The Mexicans' coach Jose Carozzo bemoaned his side's lack of focus but took responsibility for their failure to hold on to their lead.

"After the first half we talked about staying organized but then we lost our way. I am the only one to blame for this. The players gave everything but they lost a little mental strength, we lost our focus. It's very painful because everybody worked hard to get here."

Guadalajara now play Mexico's Esperanza, who lost 3-0 to Al Ain in their quarter-final on Saturday, in the fifth-place playoff on Tuesday.

(Source: the-afc)

Marco Reus plays like 'Ferrari' in middle of field - Nuri Sahi



Werder Bremen midfielder Nuri Sahi compared former teammate Marco Reus to a Ferrari after Borussia Dortmund beat Werder Bremen 2-1 on Saturday night to extend their winning streak to six games.

Reus scored the winning goal in the 27th minute after Paco Alcacer had opened the scoring 19 minutes into the game. Max Kruse's wonderful strike from distance 10 minutes before half-time wasn't enough for the guests to come away with a point, though.

Sahi, 30, singled out Reus as the main source of Bremen's problems after the game.

"The problem is Marco playing between the lines. When a Ferrari or Lamborghini plays between the lines it gets very difficult," Sahi said.

It was an emotional day for Sahi, who returned to the Westfalenstadion for the first time since joining Bremen in the summer, receiving a warm greeting from the Dortmund fans before and after the game.

The central midfielder came through BVB's youth ranks and remains the youngest Bundesliga debutant at 16 years old. He was the key-player in BVB's first championship under Jurgen Klopp in 2010-11 before joining Real Madrid. He rejoined the Westphalians after unsuccessful stints at the Bernabeu and at Liverpool in 2013.

"It was very special to be here, to be back at home," Sahi said. "It was a strange feeling to play here as an opponent, but on the other hand it

was very nice to be here and see the fans today."

Meanwhile, Dortmund were crowned as the unofficial "Herbstmeister" (autumn champions) on Saturday since they cannot be knocked out of first place before the end of the year with a nine-point lead over Borussia Monchengladbach and FC Bayern and only two rounds left to play in December.

Team captain Reus was, however, not fully pleased with his team's performance. He told Sky after the game: "We didn't play well in the second half. We just should have made it 3-1. Ahead of Christmas, these games cost a lot of energy. We could have easily avoided that today."

BVB coach Lucien Favre agreed with the 29-year-old, telling his news conference: "Marco has it right. We were up 2-0 early and you mustn't concede then. That made it much tougher. Bremen played very well in a 4-4-2 diamond. They outnumbered us in midfield and found the gaps too easily. We will correct that."

"Bremen had too much possession as we couldn't win the ball often enough. Fifty-two percent possession is not enough for our standards. That makes the match very problematic for us. However, it wasn't undeserved to win and we should have scored the 3-1 sooner."

Dortmund will travel to 16th-placed Fortuna Dusseldorf on Tuesday night before hosting second-placed Gladbach on Friday night to close out 2018.

(Source: ESPN)

Iran's Mardani takes gold at World Taekwondo Grand Slam Champions series

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Sajad Mardani from Iran claimed a gold medal at the World Taekwondo Grand Slam Champions series in Wuxi, China on Sunday.

The Iranian representative defeated Stephan Lambdin from the U.S., South Korean Bil-young Byeon and Qiang Xu from China en route to the +80kg final.

Mardani beat defending champion Kyo-don In of South Korea in the final.

Mardani also won \$50,000 cash prize.

Armin Hadipour from Iran also won a bronze medal in the competition.

Hadipour defeated number one seed Tae-hun Kim from South Korea in the -58kg to win the bronze medal.

He also won a \$5,000 cash prize.



Alhaji Gero parts ways with Esteghlal

TASNIM — Esteghlal of Iran's Nigerian striker Alhaji Gero parted company with the Iranian team.

Gero moved to the Iran Professional League side Esteghlal from Ostersunds on a three-year contract in August after successful medicals but failed to meet the expectations.

The 24-year-old attacker replaced Mame Baba Thiam who scored 12 goals in 13 matches for Esteghlal but he has netted just one goal in nine matches for the Blues.

"The moment you stop challenging is the moment you stop moving forward. It has been an amazing experience playing in one of the best teams in Asia. Fun with everything since the first day I arrived here. I want also thanks my coaches, my teammates, and the club officials and also a big thanks to the lovely fans with their unbelievable heart support and once again thanks to everyone for my time I spent here in Iran and Esteghlal. Wish you all the best in the future," Gero posted on his Instagram account.

Server Djeparov edges close to Esteghlal return

Persian Football — Uzbekistani midfielder Server Djeparov is on the verge of a return to the Esteghlal club in the January transfer window.

Djeparov, 36, currently plays at Zhetysay of Kazakhstan. Djeparov joined Esteghlal in 2017, however his internal contract could not be registered with Esteghlal due to a FIFA imposed transfer ban. Later he joined Sepahan on loan until the end of the season.

Last season, Djeparov was a key player of Esteghlal and helped the team win Iran's Hazfi Cup.

Djeparov was also named "Persian Gulf Pro League top assister of the Year at the end of the season."

Nigerian striker Alhaji Gero left Esteghlal on Sunday.

Iran ready to host international car racing in 2019

IRNA — Head of Motorcycle and Automobile Federation of Iran said meetings would be held with the specialized committees and proposals would be offered to host an international competition in Iran in 2019.

"The cost of hosting is high and we should be able to create a new approach in Asia by introducing one of the branches of the federation," Mahmoud Seydanlou added Sunday.

"At a meeting with president of the International Motorcycle Federation, we discussed effective positions in Asia and the world for Iran," he said while referring to the efforts to win Asian and international seats.

"Regarding the years of history of Motorcycle and Automobile Federation of Iran, we have good practitioners and champions who can enter into various commissions to defend the sport of the region and the country."

Qatar's Al-Arabi eye Iranian defender Morteza Pouraliganji

TASNIM — Iranian international defender Morteza Pouraliganji has been reportedly linked with a move to Al-Arabi of Qatar.

Pouraliganji, who currently plays for KAS Eupen, had been previously linked to join the Iranian football teams.



The 26-year-old defender was a member of Al Sadd of Qatar from 2016 to 2018 and now is a target to join Al-Arabi football team, Qatari newspaper Al-Arab reports.

Pouraliganji will be a key players of Iran national football team in the 2019 AFC Asian Cup in January.

Team Mellii have been drawn along with Iraq, Yemen and Vietnam in Group D.

World Cup heartache drives Cheshmi

Islamic Republic of Iran defender Roozbeh Cheshmi has admitted the injury suffered after the first game of the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia that subsequently ruled him out of the tournament motivates him to fight even harder for the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 title.

Cheshmi was a rock in the center of defense as Iran scored late to open their campaign with a 1-0 victory over Morocco in Saint Petersburg, but he was injured before the next game and had to watch from the sidelines as his teammates put in valiant performances against Spain and Portugal.

Team Mellii ultimately narrowly missed out on qualification to the next stage to end their and Cheshmi's dream of a first appearance in the knockout rounds, but the 25-year-old is now back to full fitness and raring to go ahead of UAE 2019.

"That injury was a very sad moment for me as I lost the chance to play against Spain and Portugal," reflected Cheshmi, who was part of the Esteghlal side that progressed to the 2018 AFC Champions League quarter-finals.

"But that regret only motivates me to fight more for the Asian Cup, to me part of Team Mellii's side and to get good results. It was a bad time [personally], but it has given me a huge desire for the rest of my football career."

"It is every young football player's dream to play for their national team and I am so glad this dream has come true for me. I will always give everything when I play for Iran."

Cheshmi made his international debut in a goalless draw



with Korea Republic during the FIFA World Cup qualifiers in August 2017, after Iran had already confirmed their place in Russia, and the defender did enough to persuade coach Carlos Queiroz that he was worthy of a place in the final 23-man squad.

Since returning from injury he has been a regular fixture in the national team set-up and, with Iran feeling of the benefit of the long-serving Portuguese's near eight years at the helm, the next aim is to break a run of three successive quarter-final eliminations and lift a title they last won in 1976.

"Of course, Queiroz's tactical knowledge has helped us all, but the most important thing is the fighting spirit he has given us," admitted Cheshmi.

"I think people saw at the World Cup that we were fighting until the 90th minute in every match and gave it all we had to make our country successful."

"This is the most important thing he has brought to the national team, and now the dedication and spirit of the Iranian players is very clear."

Iran suffered the disappointment of exiting Australia 2015 after penalty shootout defeat to Iraq in the last eight to mean their wait for a fourth continental title dragged into its fourth decade.

But the Central Asians were superb in progressing to the FIFA World Cup, going nine games without conceding in the third round of qualifying, and then went toe-to-toe with some of the best sides on the planet.

They will travel to the AFC Asian Cup as many people's favorites ahead of their Group D opener against Yemen in Abu Dhabi on January 7, before games against Vietnam and, once again, Iraq.

"I think, as always, Japan, Korea Republic and Australia are the teams who have the biggest chance of winning the title, along with Iran, and it will be the same this time," added Cheshmi.

"When you think that a country, a generation, is supporting you and they are praying for you to succeed, it's a very precious feeling which makes me proud. We will do our best to make our people happy."

(Source: the-afc)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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» 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



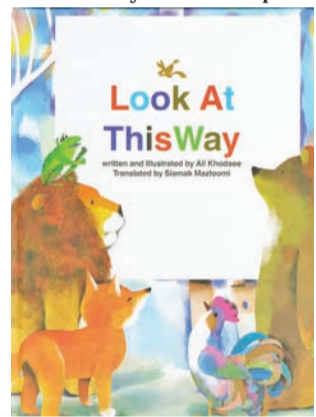
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A sleep which is based on certainty, is better than a prayer which is performed with doubt.

Imam Ali (AS)

“Look at This Way” published in English

A R T TEHRAN – Iranian children’s book writer and illustrator Ali Khodai’s “Look at This Way” has been published in English in Tehran.



Siamak Mazlumi is the translator of the book published by the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA), the publisher announced on Sunday.

The book tells the story of a group of jungle animals who find an obscure painting. Each of them tries to understand the picture and look at it in its own way.

Moreover, the University of Science and Technology of China Press has acquired the rights to the book and it will be released in China in the near future.

Front cover of Iranian children’s book writer and illustrator Ali Khodai’s “Look at This Way”.

Pakistani qawwali group performs in Tehran

A R T TEHRAN – Renowned Pakistani singer Fareed Ayaz Abu Muhammad and sons performed a qawwali, a form of Muslim Sufi musical performance, at Tehran’s Andisheh Hall on Saturday.



Renowned Pakistani singer Fareed Ayaz Abu Muhammad and sons performs a qawwali at Tehran’s Andisheh Hall on December 15, 2018.

Poems from Allama Iqbal and Iranian poets Rumi, Ferdowsi and Hafez were recited during the performance, the Embassy of Pakistan announced on Sunday.

The performance was organized to promote cultural relations between Pakistan and Iran.

Pakistani Ambassador Riffat Masood welcomed the audience and expressed his hope that organizing such events would help reinforce the close relationship between the two countries.

Tokyo meeting reviews Persian, Japanese poetry

A R T TEHRAN – The Iranian Embassy in Tokyo organized a meeting on Saturday to discuss the similarities and differences between Persian and Japanese poetry.



The former Japanese ambassador to Iran, Kinichi Komano, speaks at a meeting on Persian and Japanese poetry at the Iranian Embassy in Tokyo, Japan on December 15, 2018. (IRNA)

The former Japanese ambassador to Iran, Kinichi Komano, who is also the head of the parliamentary friendship group of Iran-Japan, and Iranian cultural attaché Hossein Divsalar attended the meeting entitled “A Comparative Study between Persian and Japanese Poems”.

Speaking at the meeting, Komano praised Persian poet Sadi (C. 1213-1291), famous worldwide for his masterpieces Bustan (The Orchard) and Gulistan (The Rose Garden).

He also recited some poems from Hafez, Sadi and Rumi and compared them with poems from Japanese literature.

New Persian exegesis of Quran published

A R T TEHRAN – A new Persian exegesis of the Holy Quran has recently been published by Bustane Ketab, a publishing company in Qom.

Hojjatoleslam Mostafa Borujerdi, the Iranian ambassador to Tunisia, is the writer of “Tafsir Shams”, which was unveiled at the International Quran News Agency in Tehran on Sunday.

Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, the director of the Department of Islamic Sciences at the Iranian Academy of Science, Ayatollah Seyyed Mostafa Mohaqeq-Damad, and a large number of Quranic scholars attended the unveiling ceremony of the book.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also sent a message that was read by the dean of the School of International Relations, Mohammad-Hassan Sheikholeslam.

“We witness the birth of this invaluable book after ten years of strenuous efforts,” Zarif wrote.

“I feel honored when I see that our colleagues are working persistently in the promotion of Islamic thought and Quranic sciences on the sidelines of their weighty activities in diplomacy,” he added.

Ayatollah Seyyed Mostafa Mohaqeq-Damad also delivered a brief speech.

“This book eschews any ideological agenda, divisive issues among Muslims and contumacy,” he noted.

“Shams is a center of the light, and the writer has avoided exhaustive writing while providing a valuable and appropriate exegesis,” he added.



Hojjatoleslam Mostafa Borujerdi (3rd L), Ayatollah Seyyed Mostafa Mohaqeq-Damad (4th L) and several unidentified clerics unveil “Tafsir Shams”, a new Persian exegesis of the Holy Quran, at the International Quran News Agency in Tehran on December 16, 2018. (IQNA/Ali Chashnigir)

Opera to stage story from “The Conference of the Birds”



A poster for “Seven Cities of Love”.

A R T TEHRAN – An opera is scheduled to be performed at the Grand Hall of the Interior Ministry in Tehran next week, which will recount a story from “The Conference of the Birds”, Farid ud-Din Attar’s allegorical masterpiece from the Persian classical literature.

A number of screen stars such as Merila Zarei, Mohammadreza Forutan and Abolfazl Purarab head the cast of the opera “Seven Cities of Love”, which will be directed by Mohammad Abdizadeh, the Persian media have announced.

The Tehran Symphony Orchestra will perform along with the troupe, including about 200 actors and performers.

Vocalist Salar Aqili and pop singers Ruzbeh Bemani and Ruzbeh Nematollahi will also collaborate with the troupe as Esfandiar Qarebaghi, Abbas Abedinzadeh, Vadud Moazzenzadeh, Shahid Arian and Hadi Qozat will sing the tenor solos.

The troupe is scheduled to give six performances, the first of which will be on December 22.

The opera was first set to be performed for three nights, but co-producers Marzieh Mahdizadeh and Ali Aqinasab have agreed to arrange three more performances due to popular demand.

VIP tickets for the opera are being sold by scalpers online for 10,000,000 rials (about \$240), four times the original price.

1947 best-picture Oscar sells for nearly \$500,000 at auction

LOS ANGELES (AP) — One Academy Award trophy sold for nearly \$500,000 and the second for well over \$200,000 in a rare auction of Oscars that ended Friday in Los Angeles.

A best-picture Oscar for “Gentleman’s Agreement,” the 1947 film starring Gregory Peck that took on anti-Semitism, sold for \$492,000. A best picture statuette for 1935’s “Mutiny on the Bounty” fetched \$240,000.

Both were outpaced by an archive of papers on the origin and development of “The Wizard of Oz” that brought in \$1.2 million.

Auction house Profiles in History announced the results after four days of bidding on Hollywood memorabilia that brought in more than \$8 million in total.

Other items sold include a TIE fighter helmet from the original “Star Wars” that went for \$240,000, a Phaser pistol from the original “Star Trek” TV series that fetched \$192,000, a hover board Marty McFly rode in “Back to the Future II” that sold for \$102,000, and a golden ticket from “Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory” that brought in \$48,000.

The “Mutiny on the Bounty” Oscar price came close to auction-house projections, but the “Gentleman’s Agreement” statuette brought in more than twice what was expected, for reasons that are not clear. The buyers of both Oscars and “The Wizard of



This undated file image provided by Profiles in History shows the best picture Academy Award for “Gentleman’s Agreement”. (Lou Bustamante/Profiles in History via AP, File)

Italian filmmaker Gianfranco Pannone admires Iranian cinema



Italian documentarian Gianfranco Pannone poses during a photocall for “Mondo Za” during the 12th Cinema Verite festival at Tehran’s Charsu Cineplex on December 15, 2018. (DEFC)

A R T TEHRAN – Italian documentarian Gianfranco Pannone has said that he knows Iranian cinema well and loves Iranian culture and cinema.

He made remarks during a meeting at the 12th Cinema Verite festival in Tehran on Saturday.

Pannone was in Tehran over the past few days to promote his latest documentary “Mondo Za” at the documentary film festival and also to hold a workshop during the event.

“Although I have never been to Iran, I know it very well through the Iranian films I have seen. I love Iranian culture, music

and cinema,” he stated.

“I introduce the celebrated Iranian filmmakers like Abbas Kiarostami and Asghar Farhadi to my students. I adore Kiarostami’s point of view. I believe his film “Close-Up”, without a doubt, is one of the five world’s best films ever,” Pannone said.

“I also admire Farhadi, who depicts middle-class families in his movies and puts the spotlight on women. He is a really modern director,” he concluded.

The 12th edition of Cinema Verite, Iran’s major documentary film festival, will come to an end at Tehran’s Andisheh Hall tonight.

Janet Jackson gets Rock Hall of Fame place on Brit-heavy list

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Janet Jackson finally won her place in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame on Thursday when the pop singer was named as one of seven music acts to be getting a place in music history.

Jackson, 52, the younger sister of the late Michael Jackson, will join Fleetwood Mac singer Stevie Nicks and five British bands - Def Leppard, Roxy Music, Radiohead, The Cure and The Zombies - as the latest inductees, the Rock Hall announced.

Billboard magazine said it was the biggest British line-up in the 33-year history of the Cleveland-based Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Janet Jackson, a five time Grammy Award winner, had been nominated twice previously, but never made the cut with the 1,000 artists, historians and members of the music industry who select the inductees.

“We did it u guys. Thank U for all your love and support,” Jackson tweeted on Thursday.

Nicks, 70, a two-time Grammy winner known for her haunting vocal style, was inducted into the Hall 20 years ago as a member of the popular 1970s group Fleetwood Mac. She will be inducted this time for her solo career.

All seven acts will be formally inducted at a ceremony in Brooklyn, New York on March 29. Artists must have released their



Singer Janet Jackson makes a heart symbol after receiving the Global Icon award at the 2018 MTV Europe Music Awards at Bilbao Exhibition Center in Bilbao, Spain, November 4, 2018. (Reuters/Vincent West)

first recording at least 25 years ago to be eligible for induction.

“What a way to wrap up an incredible year,” tweeted Glam metal band Def Leppard, which formed in 1977 in northern England and toured North America and the UK in 2018.

The Zombies, formed near London in 1961 and best known for their hit singles “She’s Not There,” and “Time of the Season,” were part of the British invasion of pop music that made it big in the United States in the 1960s along with The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and The Kinks.