# W W W . T E H R A N T I M E S . C O M INTERNATIONAL DAILY

16 Pages | Price 20,000 Rials | 1.00 EURO | 4.00 AED | 39th year | No.13281 | Tuesday | **DECEMBER 18, 2018** | Azar 27, 1397 | Rabi' Al thani 10, 1440



Sanctions
only hurt ordinary
Iranians 2



Iran doesn't sit
silent toward
destabilizing actions 2



Esteghlal, Persepolis to be ceded to private sector 15



Jamal Shurjeh fills in for late director in TV series on Moses (AS) 16

## "Exodus" named best doc at Cinéma Vérité



Documentarian Hossein Torabi (2nd L) accepts a lifetime achievement award at the 12th Cinéma Vérité festival.

## Iran's Syria negotiator talks constitution, election with Assad

POLITICS d e s k Syria negotiator Hossein Jaberi Ansari on Sunday evening met with President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus.

Top on the agenda of the meeting was the process of setting up a committee to draft a constitution for Syria.

Jaberi Ansari's trip came a day after he hosted Russian president's special envoy for Syria Alexander Lavrentiev.

The two diplomats preside over Iran

and Russia's delegations in the Astana talks on Syria.

The upcoming talks will focus on the committee to draft a new Syrian constitution and usher in elections.

On Friday, a UN statement said the United Nations special envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura will hold talks with senior officials from Iran, Russia and Turkey, as guarantors of the Syria peace process in Geneva this week.

## Iran travel balance turns positive as inbound tourism jumps

TOURISM
d e s k elbalance turned positive in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year 1397 (started March 21), a positive reading since two years ago.

"The travel balance shifted positive as a total of 4,704,509 outbound travels were registered against 4,739,413 inbound ones over the first seven months of the year," said Vali Teymouri, deputy director of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization for tourism affairs, CHTN reported.

Making direct comparisons for the past two [Iranian] years, he said Iran recorded over three million foreign arrivals and more than five million travels abroad in the same period last year.

## 'Iran expects EU to extend Airbus OFAC license to deliver purchased aircrafts'

ECONOMY
d e s k
TEHRAN—Farzaneh
Sharafbafi, the managing director of Iran Air, Iran's national flag
carrier, said on Monday that Iran expects
EU to get the U.S. approval for extending
the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets
Control (OFAC)'s license for importing
the airplanes Iran bought from Airbus.

Speaking in a press conference, the official mentioned the deals Iran Air has

with foreign aircraft makers and said Iran is strictly following these contracts. On January 28, 2016, Iran Air signed

On January 28, 2016, Iran Air signed a deal with the French giant plane maker Airbus for the purchase of 118 Airbus jets worth \$27 billion, however only three are delivered to the country.

Iran Air also signed a contract in April 2017, to buy 20 planes from Franco-Italian turboprop maker ATR.



## Red Sea legal regime: Spider's dream against Iran won't be realized

n Wednesday December 12, Saudi Arabia's Riyadh hosted the first Arab-African conference of foreign ministers of six countries bordering the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, a strategic area vital to global shipping.

Representatives from Egypt, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen and Jordan gathered in Riyadh to discuss the initiative.

The Red Sea is a seawater inlet of the Indian Ocean, lying between Africa and Asia. The connection to the ocean is in the south through the Bab el Mandeb strait and the Gulf of Aden. To the north lie the Sinai Peninsula, the Gulf of Aqaba, and the Suez Canal. About 15 percent of global trade is made through the Red Sea.

Alfred Thayer Mahan is one of America's leading geopolitical theorists. He was in the last wave of European imperialist expansionism and the globalization of American power. He considered sea power as the basis of national power.

In an analysis of the history of sailing, especially the global expansion of Britain, he concludes that sea domination, especially strategic straits, is essential for the existence of great powers. Based on this analysis, sea power plays a decisive role for national power and its growth.

According to Mahan's theory, domination of the Strait of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb is important.

#### The Saudi narrative of the Riyadh Summit and the support of Saudi allies for the Red Sea regime

During the summit an agreement was made on the ??establishment of a legal regime for the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The objective of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden regime was to support world trade, international shipping lines, regional stability, investment and development of the member states. The plan, proposed by the King of Saudi Arabia will be implemented in pursuit of security and stability in the region.

Saudi Arabian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announce on a December 12: Saudi Arabia agreed to establish a Red Sea regulatory regime aimed at strengthening security and investment in the Red Sea bordering countries.

## 'Reforming Muslim countries and Islamicity indices'

## EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW By Javad Heirannia

**TEHRAN** — Professor Hossein Askari, an expert on Saudi Arabia who also teaches international business at the George Washington University, believes that Islamicity Indices are based on Qur'anic teachings.

"The Holy Qur'an and its interpretation by the Prophet Mohammad tell us what Muslim societies should strive to do," Hossein Askari, who served as special advisor to Saudi finance minister, tells the Tehran Times.

He adds that "Unfortunately, for centuries, Muslims have abrogated their responsibility to go directly to this source and debate and discuss its application in their times." Following is the text of the interview:

Before I ask you about the progress you have made in this program of reform and institution-building in Muslim countries since we last spoke about a year ago, can we begin by reminding our readers what this project is all about. What are Islamicity Indices?

A: Islamicity Indices are based on Qur'anic teachings. The Holy Qur'an and its interpretation by the Prophet Mohammad tell us what Muslim societies should strive to do. Unfortunately, for centuries, Muslims have abrogated their responsibility to go directly to this source and debate and discuss its application in their times. Instead, they have allowed rulers to spoon feed them an interpretation of Islam that is far from that envisaged in the Qur'an and what we see in Muslim

countries bears little resemblance to Qur'anic teachings. The religion has been limited by some to the so-called Five Pillars and to memorization of the Holy Book with little understanding of its deeper message for thriving communities. Most Muslims have not spent the time to understand the deeper meaning of their faith and its application in their time.

In the first place these indices, divided into four broad areas of teachings—on the economy and financial system, legal system and governance, human and political rights, and international relations and then combined into an overall index—provide us with an easy way to convey the central message of Islam for Muslim communities and are also helpful for showing the meaning of Islam to non-Muslims. 

7

#### 'Rohingya refugees want to go back home but with safety and dignity'

#### By Syed Zafar Mehdi

**TEHRAN** — Prof. Nasir uddin is a cultural anthropologist based in Bangladesh, and professor of anthropology at Chittagong University. He has been working with Rohingya people in the borderland of Bangladesh and Myanmar for more than two decades and has written on the Rohingya refugee situation extensively in the form of both academic and popular pieces. His forthcoming ethnography is named The Rohingyas: A Case of Subhuman (Oxford University Press, 2019).

In an interview to Tehran Times, Prof. Nasir uddin talks about repatriation of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh to Myanmar, detention of Rohingya trying to flee to Malaysia, his fieldwork in Cox's Bazar refugee camps and what could be the possible solution to this crisis.

Following are the excerpts:

The governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh have been discussing repatriation of Rohingya refugees. Do you think the timing is right for them to return?

A. At this stage and under the situation prevailing in Rakhine state, I don't think it is safe for the Rohingya refugees to return to Myanmar. In fact, there are four stakeholders in the entire repatriation process: Bangladesh, Myanmar, Rohingyas and the international community.

None expect Bangladesh are in the position of supporting repatriation process at this stage. Rohingya refugees don't want to go back because they think that they are not safe in Myanmar as the situation there has not changed yet.

Myanmar has always been reluctant to bring the Rohingya back. International community also thinks that Myanmar situation is still not feasible to accept the Rohingya. Bangladesh, for valid reasons, wants to repatriate the Rohingya refugees because it has exerted huge process on it. However, I think it is not safe for them to be repatriated at this stage.

Many Rohingya refugees were detained recently while trying to flee to Malaysia. Could you tell us what exactly took place?

A. If you are talking about the recent case, to my knowledge, it was Myanmar which detained 93 Rohingya while they attempted to flee to Malaysia.

According to the available information, the boat heading to Malaysia was carrying 28 men, 33 women, and 32 children from the Darpaing displacement camp in Rakhine's Sittwe township. It was seized on Nov. 25 off the coast of Tanintharyi's Dawei district in southern Myanmar, according to a police document. Then they were detained.



## People shopping for Yalda Night celebrations

Over the past few days bazaars are jammed with people shopping for Yalda Night celebrations

Yalda Night, also known as Shab-e Yalda or Shab-e Chelleh, is the longest and darkest night of the year, marking the last eve of autumn and the beginning of winter.

Many gather in their grandparents' houses and spend the long night together. Guests are served with fresh fruits such as watermelon, persimmon and pomegranate as well as colorful Ajil (a mixture of dry fruits, seeds and nuts).



## U.S. military industrial complex's perpetual warfare

search Institute (SIPRI) on 10 December 2018 released its report on the sale of weapons and other military hardware by the world's largest 100 weapon manufacturers. The U.S. weapon manufacturers dominated the 'top hundred list' with a 57 percent share of arms sales.

According to the report, the U.S. companies benefitted from the U.S. Department of Defense's ongoing demand for weapons.

The pro-war U.S. foreign policy is meant to serve the interests of military industrial complex as the U.S. has a long history of waging unilateral, belligerent wars across the globe from Vietnam to Syria and constant escalation from the South China Sea to the Black Sea and from Strait of Hormuz to the Strait of Kerch.

The creation of al-Qaeda, scraping peace treaties, sanction game and orchestrating Shia-Sunni conflicts are all part of the U.S. military industrial complex agenda. The former CIA Director Robert Gates and former U.S. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski began funding extremists in 1979, barely six months before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Osama Bin Laden, Maktab al Khidmat and Afghan Mujahideen received about \$1 billion from the U.S. and Saudi Arabia through Pakistan's ISI. The brainchild of CIA by the name of al-Qaeda waged its war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

Later during the 1990s, al-Qaeda extended its reach to Bosnia that in turn justified the NATO air strikes against the country. After that al-Qaeda extended its network further to Kosovo and helped 'Kosovo liberation army' fight against Yugoslavia and Serbia for the creation of Greater Albania. The Kosovo Liberation Army was an Albanian terrorist faction backed by the U.S. and NATO and is responsible for ethnic cleansing of 90% of Serbians, while western corporate media portrayed Albanians as victims of Serbian aggression.

Another puppet of the U.S. military industrial complex, Saudi Arabia was brainwashed by the U.S. regime to fight against communism rather than the Israeli aggression against the Arab States.



## **Zarif to U.S.:** At least become ʻless lawless'

**OLITICS TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minise s k ter Mohammad Javad Zarif has said asking the United States to become lawful is like asking them for the impossible, but rather Iran asks the U.S. to become "less lawless"

Zarif on Monday tweeted part of his remarks at the Doha Forum policy conference in Qatar. On the prospects of talks with the U.S., the foreign minister said, "We will not talk to anybody who sets out 12 conditions for us to talk to them after having violated a Security Council resolution that they sponsored themselves.'

He added, "If anybody is to meet conditions, they are the ones who are supposed to meet conditions by becoming less lawless. I'm not asking them to be lawful, because that's asking them for the impossible. At least become less lawless.



## **General killed** himself by accident

POLITICS TEHRAN — The website of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) has said in a statement that Brigadier General Ghodratollah Mansouri has accidentally killed himself while cleaning a gun.

Mansouri shot himself in the head by accident while cleaning his pistol on Sunday morning, the statement read.

The general was a veteran of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war and had been serving as the commander of the IRGC ground forces in the northeastern city of Mashhad since 2014.

According to Tasnim, the burial ceremony of the general was held on Monday.



## **Majlis committee** protests low defense budget

TICS TEHRAN — The Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has protested the administration's decision to decrease the annual defense budget, the committee chairman has said.

"Recently, the national defense budget was received by the committee, which was not a good news," Tasnim on Monday quoted Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh as saying.

The defense budget of the upcoming year has decreased for the first time, while it must be five percent of the annual budget, Falahatpisheh remarked.

He added that following the committee's complaint, the administration seems to be making changes to the defense budget, which is "a good news."



## **Jurist: Officials** must do away with banned social networks

POLITICS TEHRAN — Mohsen Esmaeili, a Guardian Council jurist, has criticized authorities' active use of banned social media networks, saying everyone must obey the rules, ISNA reported on Monday.

'It doesn't make sense to be actively present in a [social media] network when it is banned," Esmaeili said, adding, "Then how do you expect people to obey the laws and regulations?"

He further argued that if the law is good, it's good for everyone and if it's bad, it's bad for everyone.

In recent years, some cabinet members have become pioneers in using banned networks, most prominently Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who regularly posts on his Twitter account.



## **Army Aviation** to form 'drone group'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's Army Aviation is set to establish a separate unit for organizing its drone operations, the commander of the Army Aviation announced on Monday.

According to IRNA, Yousof Ghorbani said the formation of a "drone group" for organizing the force's drone operations is high on the agenda.

"It will be established in the near future," Ghorbani added. Referring to the achievements of his forces in designing and manufacturing drones, the commander said a part of the reconnaissance missions, which were previously conducted by helicopters, will be assigned to drone units.



## JCPOA an asset for regional peace: Rouhani aide

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — The nuclear agreement is a valuable asset for peace and security in the region, Hesamoddin Ashna, a senior cultural advisor to the president, said on Monday.

Barjam (Farsi acronym for the deal) managed to disprove the accusation that Iran had been trying to attain nuclear weapons," Ashna said, IRNA reported.

He emphasized that Iran's peace-making efforts are not restricted to the nuclear pact, pointing to Tehran's efforts that prevented the collapse and disintegration of Syria.

Iran does not tolerate the overthrow of regional political systems through violence and foreign intervention, he added.

# French police's handling of protests 'unacceptable': Tehran

POLITICS TEHRAN—Tehran on Monday criticized the French police for its handling of the recent protests as "unacceptable", urging the French government to practice self-control in the face of the unrest.

Responding to a question by the Tehran Times correspondent, Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said the issue of "France is an internal matter and Iran does not comment on that.

However, Qassemi continued, the behavior of the French police has been "harsh, unconsidered and unacceptable.'

"We have called upon France's government to keep its self-control so that the protests take place in a peaceful atmosphere," he told a bi-weekly press conference.

"Also, the presence of some anarchist groups, who are after destruction and harm, in these protests is worthy of consideration, and these people need to keep their self-control as well," the spokesman added.

## SPV not just limited to medicine,

Answering a question about the special purpose vehicle (SPV), which the European Union is developing to save the 2015 nuclear deal, Qassemi said the SPV is not just for supplying medicine and foodstuff on Iran, but includes a variety of items.



Qassemi says Iran cannot 'sacrifice' its security for stances of certain foreign officials about Tehran's missile defense program.

benefit from the SPV, which includes a variety technology, he stated.

 $If implemented, other countries can also \qquad of fields including investment, industry and \\$ 

'Iran transparent about its missile program'

On Iran's missile program, Qassemi said there's a difference of opinion between Tehran and some European countries, whose concerns about Iran's missile program "stem from the efforts of those who want to wage a tough psychological war against Iran.

Iran's missile-related activities are part of its national defense security, he said. In an open reference to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran in the 1980 and bombardment of civilian areas and Israel's repeated military threats against Iran, Qassemi said, "Because of its historical experiences and its regional location, Iran has to follow such policy.'

The spokesman further said the Islamic Republic would not allow others to limit its missile program, but meanwhile it continues to act under the international law and regulations.

"We have talked about our [missile] policies with different countries for the sake of transparency, but will not hold negotiations about these policies," he emphasized.

"We cannot sacrifice our security for these kinds of stances and comments," Qassemi remarked, pointing to certain foreign officials like U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo who claim Iran's missiles are designed to carry nuclear warheads.

## Iran doesn't sit silent toward destabilizing actions: Kharrazi

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Kamal Kharrazi, head of d e s k the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, said on Monday that Iran does not sit silent towards destabilizing actions in the Middle East region.

During a security conference in the West Asia region, Kharrazi said that Iran is the most stable country in the volatile Middle East region.

'Anybody who enters Iran admits that many countries do not enjoy a security like Iran," he said.

Kharrazi, who was foreign minister from 1997 to 2005, suggested after making many successes, Iran should prove that it is also "a hero in arena of peace".

"We should see what actions can be taken to establish peace and stability in the region and how we can reach a regional security mechanism."

Elsewhere, the veteran politician noted that Iran has never sought hegemony in the region.

"None of the regional powers is capable of becoming



a hegemon or remove its rivals," he opined. Kharrazi also described the Iranophobia project as

an "unfounded psychological warfare". Kharrazi went on to say that certain regional coun-

tries rely on foreigners for their security because the cornerstone of their ruling is not based on people's vote. European SPV to come into force by end of 2018'

On the sidelines of the conference, Kharrazi also told reporters that the special purpose vehicle (SPV), a European Union's financial initiative intended to protect trade with Iran against newly reimposed U.S. sanctions, will come into force by end of 2018.

European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini has said that the SPV meant to help companies do business with Iran will be completed by the end of the year.

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.

## 'Those who violated nuclear deal are fake supporters of human rights'

reference to the Trump administration, Ali Akbar Nategh Nouri said on Monday that those who violated the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, are "fake supporters of human rights".

"We announced to the world that we seek peace and stood up for the JCPOA," Nategh Nouri, a member of the Expediency Council, said in a conference.

He added that those who violate the JCPOA and chant slogans about respect for human rights are "liars".

By unilaterally withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear agreement and reimposing sanctions against Iran, the Trump administration has caused a lot of problems for people, ranging from shortage of vital medicines to the price rises of basic food commodities.

Elsewhere, Nateq Nouri, who was par-

liament speaker from 1992 to 2000, said that the U.S. is aware of the Islamic Revolution's influence on the youths in other countries and that is why it has started the project of Islamophobia.

He noted that Islam is against violence and it is a religion of peace which supports justice.

## Iran's Syria negotiator talks constitution, election with Assad

According to the statement, talks among the UN diplomat and high-level officials from the three countries will focus on setting up a "credible, balanced, and inclusive" committee to draft a new constitution for Syria and hold elections.

It added that the meeting will take place ahead of de Mistura's monthly presentation to the UN Security Council set for December 20.

Late in November, the guarantor states of the Astana peace process ended their 11th round of talks in the Kazakh capital, reiterating their strong commitment to Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Iran, Russia and Turkey also rejected "all desperate attempts" by foreign-backed militant groups to undermine the sovereignty of the Syrian nation.

At the end of the tenth round of the two-day international meeting on Syria in the Black Sea resort of Sochi on July 31, Tehran, Moscow and Ankara expressed their firm determination to counter any



plot aimed at partitioning the Arab

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey confirmed their strong adherence to the sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of Syria," Russia's Lavrentiev said while reading a joint statement issued by representatives of the three

The Astana talks have so far resulted in the return of a succession of  $militant\ bastions\ to\ the\ government$ fold, the establishment of safe zones across Syria and the movement of civilians to those regions.

## Interferences prevent stabilizing Mideast, Iran regrets

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranik an Deputy Foreign Minister Gholam-Hossein Dehqani said on Monday that interferences by extra-regional countries prevent a stabilization of the Middle East. During a conference in Tehran named

"Peace and Stability in West Asia; One Region, One Fate", Dehqani said that certain extra-regional powers take some actions under the pretext of providing security which prevent stabilizing the region. He pointed to occupation of the Pales-

tinian territories by the Zionist regime of Israel, describing it as the most serious security threat against the West Asian region. The Zionist regime's weapons of mass

destruction are one of the factors that undermine regional security," he said. Dehgani added that another headache

for the region is that certain regional and extra-regional countries are using terrorism as a tool to reach their political objectives.

He also said that arms race in the region is another factor that threatens security. The regional countries define security

in their own way and many countries in the Persian Gulf region have signed



security agreements with the U.S. to purchase the security and have view on outside [of the region].

'Regional countries should cooperate

Dehqani also said that the regional countries should change their mindset and trust each other to cooperate.

"The regional countries should accept that we should negotiate with each other instead of competing," he said.

He also said, "Geography obligates us to live with each other. In spite of Saudi Arabia's hostile policies against Iran, the Iranian officials have always expressed readiness to hold talks and agree on regional order."

## Zarif: Sanctions only hurt ordinary Iranians but fail to change Tehran's policy

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister does solve Mohammad Javad Zarif on Sunday  $reiterated\,that\,U.S.\,sanctions\,will\,fail\,to\,change\,Iran's$ policy, reminding that sanctions only hurt "ordinary Iranians", Press TV reported.

In a post on his official Twitter account, Zarif pointed to his attendance at the Doha Forum on Saturday, saying he had told the conference that "sanctions have never worked". "They (sanctions) hurt ordinary Iranians but don't

change policy," Zarif remarked. In an open reference to the Trump administration, Zarif said instead of withdrawing from the nuclear deal, the new American government had better settle its disputes with Iran at the negotiating table like what the Obama

administration did, which led to the start of nuclear talks. "It was U-turn on part of U.S., which allowed #IranTalks to proceed. Same dynamic today," the

chief diplomat suggested. Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council – the United States, France, Britain, Russia and China – plus Germany signed the multilateral nuclear agreement, officially known as the TV reported. Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), on July 14, 2015 and started implementing it on January 16, 2016. Under the JCPOA, Iran undertook to put limits on its

nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of nuclear-However, President Donald Trump withdrew his country in May from the landmark agreement and ordered

reimposition of unilateral sanctions against Tehran. Zarif added in his Twitter post that Iran and the remaining signatories to the JCPOA "are at table," emphasizing that "it is [the] U.S., which has decided to walk away and sow violence & chaos.'

In his address to the Doha Forum on Saturday, Zarif said economic sanctions will fail to have any impact on the policies of the Islamic Republic at home or abroad.

"It's obviously the case that we are facing economic ressure because of the U.S. sanctions. [The] U.S. is a major global power and it can actually create painful conditions for other countries. But would that lead to a change of policy? I can assure you that it won't," he stated, Press

In November, the Trump administration announced the reimposition of the "toughest" sanctions ever against Iran's banking and energy sectors with the aim of cutting off the country's oil sales and crucial exports.

A first round of American sanctions took effect in August, targeting Iran's access to the U.S. dollar, metals trading, coal, industrial software, and auto sector.

The U.S. administration hoped to get the other parties to the deal with Iran to likewise scrap the deal, but instead, they stressed that not only would they stick to the agreement, but they would also work to sustain it in the face of increased U.S. pressure. Europeans believe that the nuclear deal is an important element of international security.

In November, Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi said sanctions will fail to stop the country's progress in different fields.

"In spite of sanctions, Iran's achievements in various fields, particularly in the defense and missile industry sectors as well as the nuclear industry have astonished the world," Salehi added.

the reopening of its embassy in Syria and

had been meeting with the Syrian government

based permanently in Damascus, while other

officials made regular visits to the Syrian capital.

soglu said Sunday the Ankara government would consider working with Assad if he won

control most parts of Syria while anti-Da-

mascus militants occupy just small pockets

significant area still held by Takfiri elements,

with the U.S. and its European allies sabo-

taging the Syrian army's plan to liberate it.
'U.S. plans to break up Syria

Sara Flounders of the International Ac-

She said the visit by President Bashir is

tion Center has spoken to Press TV about

suggestive of the fact that Syria has survived

and prevailed. "It is important that the visit is

coming from Sudan, which was also targeted

ment of the Arab Parliament calling on

the Arab League to end its suspension of

Syria. It is also a very important sign that

throughout the region, there is recognition

of Syria's accomplishments," Flounder said,

adding the U.S. efforts to pull down the Syrian

government and break up the country have

(Source: agencies)

"The visit is an important acknowledge-

for dismemberment by U.S. schemes.

the significance of this visit.

a democratic and credible election.

of territory on the country's fringes.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavu-

Government forces and their allies now

Idlib and its surroundings are now the only

A source in Damascus said Emirati officials

 $An\,Emirati\,diplomat,\,the\,source\,said,\,was$ 

return of its envoy to Damascus.

over the issue.

have failed'

evidently failed.

## Erdogan

Turkey's plans for an operation east of the Euphrates.

Erdogan made the comments during a speech in the central province of Konya. Last week he said Turkish forces would launch militia, considered a terrorist organization by Ankara, to the east of the Euphrates river in northern Syria.

(Source: daily Star)

## New Brexit vote would 'break faith' with British people: May

A second Brexit referendum would do "irreparable damage"

After a tumultuous week in

over her deal in the deeply divided British parliament.

With the European Ûnion offering little in the way of concesare calling for a second referendum.

ballot, saying it would deepen divisions over Britain's biggest decision since World War Two and betray voters who narrowly That increases the risk of Britain leaving without a deal in

less than four months, a scenario some businesses fear would

an impact, with data on Monday showing a drop in consumer spending, falling house prices and growing pessimism in house-

stage another referendum," May will tell lawmakers, according

integrity of our politics, because it would say to millions who other vote which would likely leave us no further forward than

Business minister Greg Clark said a second vote would only

increase uncertainty for the country.

May returns to parliament to update lawmakers on Brexit after a week in which she cancelled a vote on her deal because it was set to be defeated and survived an attempt by some of her

The Labour Party, which is under pressure from smaller opposition parties to propose a motion of no confidence against the government this week, said on Sunday it would seek to force May

May used a visit to Brussels last week to call on EU leaders to

But while EU leaders said they were willing to help May, they warned the

## Turkey may start new Syria operation at any moment:

Turkey may start a new military operation in Syria at any moment, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Monday, adding that U.S. President Donald Trump had given a positive response to

a new cross-border operation against the Syrian Kurdish YPG

to politics and "break faith" with the British people, Prime Minister Theresa May will say Monday, rejecting what some see as the only way to break an

which she survived a confidence vote and sought last-minute changes to a Brexit agreement reached with Brussels last month, May faces deadlock



sions to win lawmakers over, an increasing number of politicians But May and her ministers have repeatedly ruled out a new

backed leaving the EU at a 2016 referendum.

be catastrophic for the world's fifth largest economy. The political and economic uncertainty over Brexit is having

Let us not break faith with the British people by trying to

to extracts of her statement released in advance.

"Another vote which would do irreparable damage to the trusted in democracy, that our democracy does not deliver. An-

own lawmakers to oust her.

to bring the deal back to parliament for a vote before Christmas.

offer assurances over the so-called Northern Irish "backstop" – an insurance policy to prevent the return of a hard border between the British province and EU-member Ireland that its critics fear will tie Britain to the bloc in the long term.

deal, agreed

## Sudan's Bashir first Arab leader to visit Damascus in 8 years

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir arrived in Syria's capital of Damascus on Sunday in the first such visit by an Arab leader since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011.

Bashir was officially welcomed at the airport by his Syrian counterpart Bashar

al-Assad, official photos showed. The two leaders discussed the "situations and crises faced by many Arab countries", according to the Syrian presidency.

Assad and Bashir also stressed the need to build "new principles for inter-Arab relations based on the respect of the sovereignty of countries and non-interference in internal

The Syrian president was quoted as saying his country would remain committed to its "Arab identity" despite the conflict in which some Arab countries, led by Saudi Arabia, fueled it by arming militants seeking to overthrow the government of Assad.

He also said some Arab countries' dependence on the West will not bring any benefits to their peoples; therefore it is best to adhere to Arabism and to the causes of the Arab nation.

President al-Bashir, for his part, said that weakening Syria means weakening Arab causes, and what happened in it during the past years cannot be separated from this reality.

He expressed hope that Syria will recover its vitality and role in the region as soon as possible, and that its people will be able to decide the country's future themselves without any foreign interference, the official Syrian news agency SANA reported.

A Sudanese official late Sunday said that Bashir had returned to Khartoum "from an

important visit" to the Syrian capital. The Sudanese president last visited the Syrian capital in 2008 for the Arab League summit which was held there that year.

Under the influence of Persian Gulf monarchies, the Arab League suspended Syria's membership at the end of 2011.

Although many Arab countries have closed their embassies or downgraded their ties with Damascus, there have been growing calls in the Arab world in recent months to normalize ties with Syria and give it back its seat in the Arab League.

The Arab Parliament recently called on the Arab League to end its suspension of Syria's membership at the 22-member pan-Arab body.

"The decision to suspend the Syrian seat in the Arab League was, in my opinion, a very hasty decision," Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit said in April.

Earlier this week, head of the Russian National Defense Management Center Colonel General Mikhail Mizintsev said Syria should rejoin the Arab League in order to help support the process of a political solution to the

In November, Russian daily Nezavisimaya Gazeta reported that the UAE was negotiating

> Democratic leadership planned to focus first on their domestic agenda and have promised that their first bill will focus on voting rights. Pelosi is also juggling a stack of promises she made during her speakership campaign and the conflicting demands of new members.

Lobbyists  $\bar{b}$  acking the Khanna resolution are pledging

"Until we hear House Democratic leadership commit to publicly bring up legislation to end the illegal U.S. war in Yemen in January, the lobbying continues to make Yemen a top priority in the 116th Congress," Kate Gould, legislative director for Middle East policy at the Friends Committee on National Legislation, said in an email.

Gould noted Thursday's 56-41 vote in the Senate shows the bill can pass the Senate next year, when the GOP majority will rise by two seats.

Support for the Senate resolution has built since Khashoggi's killing. Nine months ago, supporters couldn't get a majority to kick a resolution out of the Foreign Relations Committee.

Now it has been approved by the full Senate.

Because supporters are bringing the Saudi resolution up nder the War Powers Act, they are able and planning to force a vote next year even though Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) is opposed to the effort.

Gould also said it "certainly appears" there are enough votes in the House.

"We understand that there is a general tendency to hold off on items not on the Democrats' top priority list until committees are reconstituted and there has been an opportunity for committees to hold hearings and markups before moving legislation to the House floor, she said

But she warned that a Yemeni child dies from disease 'every 10 minutes that this vote is delayed, on average.'

Rep. Mark Pocan (D-Wis.), a lead co-sponsor on Khanna's resolution, said in a statement that he and his colleagues "are actively working with Democratic Leadership to ensure urgent action in the 116th Congress to bring the conflict to a close."

(Source: The Hill)

## Pelosi faces pressure to act on Saudi Arabia

Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) is under pressure to quickly challenge President Trump on Saudi Arabia once she is elected Speaker and Democrats take back the House majority in January.

Members of her caucus are already planning hearings on the Saudi-led war in Yemen and are pressing for an early vote in January on legislation to withdraw U.S. support

The Senate approved a similar measure Thursday, but

it will not be taken up by the GOP-held House. Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.) says he'll reintroduce his Yemen resolution next year, which his office promises "will be a top priority for the congressman in the first week of January.

Noting public criticism from the left of the five House Democrats who backed a Republican effort to block Khanna's bill, his office expressed confidence the measure, which is being offered under the War Powers Resolution, would be passed easily in a Democratic House.

"Considering that the five Democrats who defected in [Wednesday's] vote are being pilloried on social media, he is confident that every single Democrat will realize it's in their political interest to support the War Powers Resolution in January," Khanna spokeswoman Heather Purcell told The Hill in an email.

What's unclear is how quickly Pelosi wants to move to

A spokesman for Pelosi said Friday she intends to bring a measure to the floor, but did not offer a timeline. "It is the Speaker-designate's intention to hold a floor

debate on Yemen in the next Congress," spokesman Drew Hammill said in an email. The Democratic leader, who essentially ended an uprising against her second stint as Speaker last week by agreeing to a deal that limits her Speakership to four years, herself

legislation to the floor. Earlier, she told reporters that there was an "appetite" within her caucus for taking action in the wake of the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

has been tight-lipped about when she would bring Saudi



But she offered no specific commitments.

"We'll see how events proceed, but there is bipartisan upport for doing something," Pelosi said Thursday after a briefing on Saudi Arabia when asked about bringing a war powers resolution for a vote next year.

Pelosi also said she'd support sanctions against Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman "if the evidence is that he was" involved in Khashoggi's killing, while declining to say if she thinks U.S. intelligence shows that. Pelosi is a co-sponsor of Khanna's resolution, as is her

top deputy and the incoming chairmen of the national security-related committees Asked why she wasn't publicly committing to a vote giv-

en her sponsorship of the Khanna measure, a Democratic House aide said Pelosi may have been waiting to see how the Senate vote played out Thursday.

The incoming Speaker is widely expected to be methodical about the order in which she brings bills to the floor, given the symbolic importance of legislation taken up first by the new House majority.

## France 'ready to use last-resort chemical weapon against rioting Yellow Vests'

French security forces are ready to smother the centre of Paris with a 'last resort' chemical weapon in a bid to keep rioters away from key buildings, it has emerged.

Astonishing revelations about the 'debilitating powder' - which can be spread across an area the size of six football pitches in just 10 seconds - highlights the increasing desperation of President Emmanuel Macron's administration as it faces up to a law and order crisis.

Paris has been hit by five straight weeks of violence by the Yellow Vests protest movement that has seen national monuments including the Arc de Triomphe ransacked.

There were 168 arrests in the city on Saturday alone as the demonstrators - who are named after their high visibility jackets fought running battles with police, who responded with water cannon, baton charges and teargas. Now senior officers have confirmed that some of the 14 armored cars deployed by gendarmes contained "a radical device that was only to be used as a last resort" against their own citizens.

A gun-like distributor on the vehicles' turrets can spray the powder over 40,000



square meters in 10 seconds, Marianne mag-

The high-density noxious product contains the same power as 200 teargas grenades,

and is designed to knock people out indiscriminately in an emergency. "If a large crowd forced barriers through

the security perimeter, then the powder would

be used as a last resort in order to stop them," said a source at the Paris police prefecture.

But it is sure to raise concerned questions among civic rights groups, as well as monitoring organizations, including the Hague-based Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, of which France is a member.

Colonel Richard Carminache, of the Gendarmerie, confirmed that the controversial devices had "never been used in cities to my knowledge'

Each distribution would result in "a highly concentrated teargas cloud, the equivalent of 200 grenades in one go," said Col. Carminache, who added: "It's best to run to get out."

Teargas is classed as a chemical weapon, and is actually banned from warzones, in line with international agreements. Yet French gendarmes and police – who

have been criticized during the latest law and order crisis for acts of extreme violence against civilians – use it constantly. In Britain, teargas use is heavily restrict-

ed, and never used indiscriminately against large crowds containing men, women and children, as happens in France.

(Source: Mirror)

British prime minister she could not renegotiate the		
l earlier this year.	(Source: DailY Star)	

#### Notice of tender for export sale No. Ei/97/03

📰 شرکت توسعه آهن و فولاد گل گهر

First Announcement

GolGohar Iron & Steel Development Co. announces selling and export 55.000±10% metric tons of Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) based on F.O.B –Shahid rajaee Jetty of Bandar Abbas Iran with the following specifications.

.Item No	DRI Properties	Typical
1	Fe (Total)%	88.1±0.2
2	Fe (Metal)%	81.5±0.5
3	MD%	92.5±0.5
4	C%	2±0.2
5	S%	0.005±0.001
6	P%	0.035±0.002
7	%	3±0.2
8	%	0.8±0.2
9	Cao%	0.7±0.2
10	Mgo%	1.85±0.1
11	Tio2%	0.075±0.005
12	Fine%	4±1
Hereby interested bidders are invited to the Marketing and sales dept.		

of the seller located at No.22, 31Th AVE. Alvand St. Argentina Square, Tehran, Iran, or refer to www.gisdco.ir within 7 days from the date of first announcement with an introduction letter of interested buyer and personal identification of the representative to purchase tender documents. All bids on conformity to tender instructions should be submitted by no later than 11:00 A.M. on 25/Dec./2018.

TEDPIX	159749.9
IFX	1809.7

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

## **CURRENCIES**

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,511 rials
GBP	52,849 rials
AED	11,380 rials

Source: iribnews.ir

## COMMODITIES

WTI	\$50.68/b
Brent	\$60.23/b
OPEC Basket	\$59.07/b
Gold	\$1,239.95/oz
Silver	\$14.61/oz
Platinium	\$792.30/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

## BRIEF



**Tehran hosting** 29th ECO Regional **Planning Council** meeting

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — The 29th meeting of Regional S k Planning Council (RPC) of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) kicked off on Monday at the ECO secretariat in Tehran.

During the four-day meeting, ECO committees will discuss the progress of the previously approved programs and projects. As reported the discussions cover a variety of areas including business and investment, transport and communications,

energy and minerals, agriculture and environment, tourism

The meeting was attended by the delegations from the member nations namely Iran, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

Aiming for sustainable economic development of its member states and the region as a whole, ECO was established in 1985 by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey and was later joined by seven new members: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.



#### **Liquidity almost** at \$403b in a month

**TEHRAN** — Iran's liquidity stood at 16.93 e s k quadrillion rials (about \$403 billion) during the seventh month of the present Iranian calendar year, Mehr (September 23- October 22, 2018), according to a report released by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

The CBI announced that the liquidity figure shows 20.7 percent growth in comparison with the same period in the preceding year, Tasnim news agency reported.

## **Mercedes-Benz cuts China** prices after tariff on U.S. made cars suspended

German luxury carmaker Mercedes-Benz on Monday said it would offer discounts on cars imported into China from the United States until March 31 after Beijing suspended additional tariffs on U.S.-made cars.

Prices of four models were cut by between 36,000 yuan (\$5,219.96) and 135,000 yuan, the Daimler AG-owned (DAIGn.DE) company

said on its microblog. China will temporarily suspend additional 25 percent tariffs on U.S.-made vehicles and auto parts starting January 1, the finance ministry said on Friday, following a truce in a trade war between

China and the United States. Tesla said on Friday it had cut prices on its Model S and Model X

 $vehicles \, in \, China \, after \, China \, `s \, tariff \, reduction.$ 

(Source: Reuters)

### **Boeing boosts value for Embraer's commercial** business to \$5.26b

Brazil's Embraer SA said on Monday it has finalized terms of a proposed deal to sell 80 percent of its commercial aviation business to Boeing Co, now valuing the division at \$5.26 billion.

The new valuation is 11 percent more than the 4.75 billion of fered when the deal involving Embraer's commercial division was originally announced in July.

Embraer expects it will receive \$3 billion after accounting for closing costs.

It is unclear whether any part of the difference relates to debt. Embraer had some \$4 billion in total debt, according to its most recent financial statements at the end of September.

Embraer's board Monday moved to present the deal for approval to the Brazilian government, which holds veto power over important business decisions at the plane maker. But a source close to the negotiations said they were optimistic about the prospects.

It was unclear how long the government could take to make a decision, but President-elect Jair Bolsonaro and his aides have spoken favorably of a Boeing-Embraer deal. Bolsonaro begins his presidency on Jan. 1. (Source: Reuters)

## Second platform of South Pars phase 13 installed on offshore spot

ENERGY destricted TEHRAN—The second platform of Iran's South Pars gas field's phase 13 of development was installed on its designated offshore spot on Monday, Public Relations Department of Pars Oil and Gas Company, which is in charge of developing the gas field, announced.

The first platform of this phase was installed on its offshore spot on December  ${\bf 5}.$ 

Platforms 13B and 13D of phase 13 becoming operational by the end of the next Iranian calendar month, Dey (January 20, 2019), phase 13 output will stand at one billion cubic feet (28 million cubic meters), Payam Motamed, the operator of phase 13, said.

Phase 13 is aimed at production of 56 mcm of gas, 75,000 barrels of gas condensate and 400 tons of sulfur per day in addition to one million tons of ethane and one million tons of propane and butane per annum.

Elaborating on the progress of phase 13,



Motamed said the phase is enjoying proper progress in a way that it has 89.5 percent progress in terms of manufacturing marine equipment and 94.8 percent progress in terms of building subsea pipelines.

South Pars is divided into 24 standard phases of development in the first stage. Most of the phases are fully operational at the moment.

The huge offshore field, shared with Qatar, covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which, called South Pars, are in Iran's territorial waters in the Persian Gulf. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, called North Dome, are situated in Qatar's territorial waters.

The field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of

## Tax revenues rise 14% in 7 months on year

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Iran's d e s k tax incomes during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 21) has risen 14.2 percent compared to the same period of time in the previous year, ISNA reported on Monday citing the data released by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

As reported, Iranian government has received 750 trillion rials (about \$17.85 billion) of tax incomes during the seven-month period of this year, while the figure was 526 trillion rials (about \$12.52 billion) in the same time span of the past year.

During the first seven months of the present year, Iran has managed to receive over 70 percent of the tax income planned to be collected.

CBI has previously announced that the



country's tax income rose 14.1 percent during the last Iranian calendar year (March 2017-March 2018) to reach 1.15 quadrillion rials (about \$27.3 billion).

The Iranian government earns budget from various sources including the revenues and offering capital assets and divesting financial assets to the private

President Hassan Rouhani's economic strategy is to significantly reduce the government's dependency on oil and instead collect tax more systematically.

#### **IRANIMEX 2018 running** in Kish Island

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Iran's e s k 20th International Maritime and Offshore Technologies Exhibition (IRANIMEX 2018) kicked off in Kish Island in south of the country on Monday, Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) announced.

The three-day event is hosting 270 domestic and 18 foreign companies showcasing their capabilities in maritime

Ali-Akbar Marzban, the chairman of headquarters for holding the exhibition, said the event is aimed at creating a ground for the companies for negotiations and signing contracts.

The inaugural ceremony of the exhibition was participated by a number of officials including PMO Head Mohammad Rastad, Gholam-Hossein Mozaffari, the managing director of Kish Free Zone **IRANIMEX2018** 

Organization, Mohammad Saeidi, the managing director of Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL), and Nasrollah Sardashti, the managing director of National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC).

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the event, PMO head said the U.S. sanctions cannot harm Iran's huge maritime capabilities.

"We have already had the experience of sanctions and we could pass them", Rastad noted, "And we will pass the present sanctions relying on our high capabilities.

## U.S. and China trade barbs at WTO amid calls for reform

The United States said on Monday that China's "unfair competitive practices" were harming foreign companies and workers in a way that violates World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, but vowed to lead reform efforts.

U.S. trade ambassador Dennis Shea drew fire from Chinese envoy Zhang Xiangchen who said the Trump administration's tariffs on steel and aluminum products allowed protectionism under the guise of dubious national security concerns.

The heated words, in texts seen by Reuters, were exchanged at the start of a closeddoor review of U.S. trade policies, held every two years at the WTO, which continues on

dispute settlement system having "strayed far from the system agreed to by members" and said that the Appellate Body had overreached in some legal interpretations.

Zhang countered that by blocking the selection of judges, Washington was putting the system into paralysis. To force reform at the WTO, Trump's team

has refused to allow new appointments to the Appellate Body, the world's top trade court, a process which requires consensus among member states. As a result, the court is running out of judges, and will be unable to issue binding rulings in disputes.

Shea described the U.S. economy as "one of the most open and competitive economies Shea expressed concern about the WTO in the world", with among the lowest tariffs

globally, rejecting criticism by some of the U.S. approach as "unilateralist and protectionist". China has pursued "non-market indus-

trial policies and other unfair competitive practices" aimed at supporting its domestic industries while restricting or discriminating against foreign companies and their goods and services, he said.

"The WTO is not well equipped to handle the fundamental challenge posed by China, which continues to embrace a state-led, mercantilist approach to the economy and trade," Shea said.

He did not refer to the dispute on steel or automobiles which brought the two powers to the brink of a major trade war but defended

in March that Chinese practices related to technology transfer, intellectual property and innovation were discriminatory. On Section 301, Zhang said the U.S. meas-

ures vastly increased tariffs, "bringing back to life the ghost of unilateralism that has been dormant for decades" Shea said the United States was commit-

 $ted \ to \ working \ with \ like-minded \ members \ to$ address concerns on the functioning of the WTO. "Reforms are necessary for the continued viability of the institution," he said.

Zhang echoed his call, but said: "If the roof of this building is leaking, we should work together to fix it, rather than dismantling it and exposing all of us to rains and storms.

## European markets slip amid fears of global growth slowdown; UK retailer Asos down 36%

European stocks traded lower Monday morning, amid escalating concerns of a sharp slowdown in global growth.

The pan-European Stoxx 600 was down 0.25 percent with majority of sectors in negative territory. The FTSE 100 opened 0.16 points lower, the CAC was down 0.3 percent, while the DAX was lower by 0.08 percent, according to IG.

In terms of stocks, retail was down the most, by more than 1 percent. UK retail stocks are making heavy losses on Monday, with Asos down 34 percent, Next down 8 percent, Marks & Spencer down 4.6 percent Boohoo shares down 19.4 percent.

On Monday, Asos cut its annual sales growth and profit margin forecasts, becoming the latest British retailer to highlight very poor November trading. ASOS lowered its sales growth forecast for the 2018-19 year to 15 percent from 20-25 percent previously and cut its earnings before

FTSE 100 6800.72 -44.45 -0.98% 36125518 DAX 10759.38 v CAC 4813.96 V

interest and tax (EBIT) margin target for the year to around 2 percent from 4 percent.

Meanwhile, basic resources found itself at the top of the best performing stocks, up o.8 percent.

Market focus is largely attuned to concerns surrounding cooling global growth after soft economic data from China and Europe in the last week added further concerns. On Friday, China reported weaker-than-expected retail sales data, growing at its weakest pace since November 2003.

Stocks in Asia mostly traded higher trade on Monday following a report suggesting further turmoil for the mar-

The Bank of International Settlements (BIS), an umbrella group for the world's central banks, said on Sunday that recent market tensions are a sign of more turmoil to come. It warned that a normalization of monetary policy is likely to trigger a flurry of sharp sell-offs in the near future.

Meanwhile, sterling hovered near its 20-month low touched last week, concerns that Britain was headed for a chaotic exit from the European Union increased.

Britain has just over 100 days to leave the bloc on March 29 and chances of a no-deal or a chaotic Brexit deal have gone up after strong oppositions to Prime Minister Theresa May's draft deal.

(Source: CNBC)

## Malaysia charges Goldman Sachs, ex-bankers in 1MDB probe

Malaysia on Monday filed criminal charges against Goldman Sachs and two of the U.S. bank's former employees in connection with an investigation into suspected corruption and money laundering at state fund 1MDB. Malaysia will seek jail terms as well

as billions in fines from Goldman Sachs and four other individuals who allegedly diverted about \$2.7 billion from 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB), Attorney General Tommy Thomas said in a statement.

This is the first time Goldman Sachs, which has consistently denied wrongdoing, has faced criminal charges in the 1MDB

A Goldman Sachs spokesman said the charges were "misdirected" and the bank would vigorously defend them. The bank continued to cooperate with all authorities in their investigations, he said.

Goldman Sachs has been under scrutiny for its role in helping raise \$6.5 billion through three bond offerings for 1MDB, which is the subject of investigations in at least six countries.

The U.S. Department of Justice has said

about \$4.5 billion was misappropriated from of Goldman Sachs. They have fallen short 1MDB, including some money that Goldman Sachs helped raise, by high-level officials of the fund and their associates from 2009 through 2014.

Thomas said criminal charges under securities laws were filed on Monday against Goldman Sachs, its former bankers Tim Leissner and Roger Ng, former 1MDB employee Jasmine Loo and financier Jho Low in connection with the bond offerings.

"The charges arise from the commission and abetment of false or misleading statements by all the accused in order to dishonestly misappropriate \$2.7 billion from the proceeds of three bonds issued by the subsidiaries of 1MDB, which were arranged and underwritten by Goldman Sachs," Thomas said in a statement.

He said the offering circulars filed with the regulators contained statements that were false, misleading or with material omissions.

"Having held themselves out as the pre-eminent global adviser/arranger for bonds, the highest standards are expected of any standard," Thomas said.

Prosecutors would seek fines against the accused "well in excess" of the allegedly misappropriated \$2.7 billion bond proceeds plus \$600 million in fees received by Goldman Sachs, he said.

Malaysia would also seek jail terms of up to 10 years for each of the individuals ccused, he said.

'Risks'

Thomas accused the four individuals charged of conspiring to "bribe Malaysian public officials in order to procure the selection, involvement and participation of Goldman Sachs in the bond issuances".

U.S. prosecutors filed criminal charges against the former Goldman Sachs bankers, Leissner and Ng, last month.

Leissner pleaded guilty to conspiracy to launder money and conspiracy to violate the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. Ng, detained in Malaysia, is facing extradition to the United States.

Lawyers for Leissner and Ng could not be reached immediately.

Loo, against whom Malaysia brought other 1MDB related charges this month, has not commented on the 1MDB case and her whereabouts are not known.

Low, whom authorities have described as a central figure in the suspected fraud, maintained his innocence.

"As has been stated previously, Mr. Low will not submit to any jurisdiction where guilt has been predetermined by politics and there is no independent legal process, Low's spokesman said in a statement.

Thomas also said the fees received by Goldman Sachs for the bond offering were higher than prevailing market rates.

Goldman has said the fees related to additional risks: it bought the unrated bonds while it sought investors and, in the case of a 2013 bond deal which raised \$2.7 billion, 1MDB wanted the funds quickly.

The 1MDB scandal was a major reason for former premier Najib Razak's shock election defeat in May.

He has been charged with corruption over the scandal and has pleaded not guilty. (Source: Reuters)

# Oil steady but oversupply, economic growth weigh

Oil prices steadied on Monday after slipping by around 2 percent last week, but remained under pressure from oversupply and concern over the prospects for global economic growth and fuel demand.

Brent crude oil was down 10 cents a barrel at \$60.18 per barrel by 0945 GMT. U.S. light crude was down 5 cents at \$51.15.

Both benchmarks fell more than 25 percent through October and November as a supply glut inflated global inventories but have stabilized over the last three weeks, trading within fairly narrow ranges as oil producers have promised to cut production.

Many investors doubt planned supply cuts by the Organization of the Petroleum **Exporting Countries and other producers** such as Russia will be enough to rebalance

OPEC and its allies have agreed to reduce output by 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) from January, in a move to be reviewed at a meeting in April.

But U.S. shale output is growing steadily, taking market share from the big Middle East oil producers in OPEC and making it harder for them to balance their budgets.



"The dust has settled on the decision by OPEC/non-OPEC to slash production," said Stephen Brennock, an analyst at London brokerage PVM Oil. "Yet the producer alliance has so far little to show for it.

"Far from breathing new life into the energy complex, oil prices are below the pre-OPEC meeting level. The truth of the

matter is that fresh OPEC+ cuts will not go far enough to overturn the incumbent supply surplus," he added.

Increasing concerns about weakening growth in major markets such as China and Europe have also dampened the mood in oil and other asset classes.

Chinese oil refinery throughput in November fell from October, suggesting an easing in oil demand, while the country's industrial output rose the least in nearly three years as the economy continued to lose momentum.

French business activity plunged un-expectedly into contraction this month, retreating at the fastest pace in over four years, while Germany's private sector expansion slowed to a four-year low in December.

But oil prices were supported after energy services firm Baker Hughes said U.S. drillers reduced oil rigs in the week to Dec. 14, pulling the total count to the lowest since mid-October at 873. RIG-OL-USA-BHI

However, the current U.S. rig count, which serves as an early indicator of future output, is higher than a year ago.

(Source: Reuters)

## **Qatar buys Mexican oil** stakes from Eni

Qatar Petroleum is buying stakes in three offshore oil blocks in Mexico from Eni SpA, as the Arab country signs another global expansion deal after leaving OPEC.

Eni and the government-owned energy company in Qatar, the world's biggest exporter of liquefied natural gas, will produce about 90,000 barrels of oil a day from the Amoca, Mizton and Tecoalli fields in the Gulf of Mexico by the end of 2021, Saad Sherida Al Kaabi, Qatar's energy minister, said in Doha. The fields hold 2 billion barrels of oil equivalent, he said at a press conference with Eni Chief Executive Officer Claudio Descalzi.

The companies are already working together on a separate offshore block in Mexico, according to press releases from both companies. Eni gained approval for the developments earlier this year and needs the Mexican authorities to sign off on Sunday's deal.

Global oil majors that have for years produced in U.S. waters are being attracted to the Mexican side of the Gulf as the government opens new blocks for development. Middle Eastern producers are exploring opportunities for offshore developments in the Americas and Africa as well as looking at prospects for shale oil developments in the U.S. Growing production from outside OPEC is challenging the producers' group.

Qatar Petroleum is now operating in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Oman, Congo, South Africa, Cyprus and Mozambique. The Middle Eastern country, which has been facing a blockade led by OPEC members Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, said this month it was



leaving the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to focus on its gas

Last week, Qatar Petroleum agreed to acquire a stake in a Mozambique energy project. The company is exploring for oil and gas in Cyprus, Argentina, Morocco and other countries. It plans to pump \$20 billion in U.S. fields and will expand its local LNG output by 43 percent to 110 million tons per year in 2025.

Eni has made offshore discoveries from the Americas to Africa and the Mediterranean. The Rome-based company has ceded stakes in natural gas fields in Egypt to BP Plc and Mubadala Investment Co. and is working with Russia's Lukoil PJSC in Mexico.

Eni, which this year won rights to develop crude and gas deposits in Abu Dhabi, also wants to partner in LNG expansion projects in Qatar, Descalzi said. Qatar isn't worried that Australia became the world's top LNG producer as the Arab country will regain the No. 1 position after completing expansion projects, Al Kaabi said.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## Scale of theft at Shell's Singapore refinery much greater, court documents show

Around \$150 million worth of oil was stolen from Shell's biggest global refinery over several years, Singapore court documents reviewed by Reuters show, far more than reported when police first revealed the heist earlier this year.

Almost a year on from raids that led to over a dozen arrests, including of several former employees of the local unit of Royal Dutch Shell, charge sheets state that around 340,000 tons of gasoil were stolen from the oil major's Pulau Bukom site in Singapore, in incidents

dating back to 2014. Charges filed in the first few months of investigations after police raids in January related to the theft of around \$10 million in oil. Further charges levied in May showed a total of \$40 million had been stolen.

A spokeswoman for Shell said the firm is "disappointed," adding that it has been working with investigators and taken measures to avoid repeat incidents at the Pulau Bukom facility, which lies just south of Singapore's main island.

"These include closer monitoring of products moving in and out of Bukom, tightening vessel management procedures, and stepping up ethics and compliance training," the spokeswoman said in an emailed statement to Reuters on

Southeast Asia is a hot spot for illegal fuel trading, with its island-dotted waters providing cover for small-scale smuggling of oil products across borders. But the regularity and audacity of the thefts at Shell's refining facility — some of which took place during working hours



stand out.

"Fuel is both ubiquitous and untraceable, making its theft a seemingly low-risk criminal operation compared to something like drug smuggling or arms trafficking, where the concern about being caught is much higher," said Ian Ralby, a maritime crime expert who works with both the U.N. and the U.S.-based think tank Atlantic Council.

"That false sense of security leads to some fairly brazen forms of theft."

Fuel theft could be worth \$133 billion a year globally, according to industry estimates, although Ralby said that figure might be conservative.

The case in Singapore looks like it could drag on, given the routine addition of new charges and amendments to older charges.

The police investigation is still on-

"We are at the stage that the charges are still being rearranged ... it's quite far from final sentencing," said Ho Lifen, a lawyer for one of the accused former Shell employees, Chai Zhi Zong.

(Source: CNBC)

## Under new management, Russia now runs OPEC

If anyone doubted that OPEC is now little more than a zombie organization, the last 10 days have proved it.

The group has shown itself incapable of making its own decisions. Its smaller members have borne the brunt of an agreement to cut output that was only achieved after Russia took control of discussions from the heart of OPEC's head office. Then, even after Saudi Arabia announced it would reduce supply by nearly a million barrels a day by January, oil traders merely shrugged.

It is a sad result for an organization that once made governments tremble. Here's how it unfolded.

OPEC oil ministers gathered in the group's secretariat building on a wintry Thursday in Vienna. Weakening demand growth and soaring U.S. production prompted agreement that they needed to reduce production in order to balance the market in 2019. What they didn't see eye to eye on was how to share that burden.

#### Saudi oil soars

Saudi Arabia insisted that all members should play an equal part, cutting by the same percentage from a new baseline set at October's production level. Naysayers argued that, given how the group's biggest producer had boosted its own output by more than a million barrels a day since May, it should therefore bear the brunt of the cuts needed to get the market back into balance. Furthermore, Iran led a contingent of countries claiming their special circumstances warranted exemptions.

The stand-off looked very similar to the one that had scuppered a deal in Doha in April 2016 – something that nobody wanted to repeat. But by the end of that Thursday, Dec. 6, officials had failed to reach an agreement and Saudi oil minister Khalid Al-Falih said he was "not confident" one was possible. The

gala dinner at the Liechtenstein Palace was sparsely attended, with both the Saudi and Iranian delegations, among others, skipping

Friday, the day originally scheduled for the group to meet with its partners, began little better. OPEC ministers were once again locked away in discussions. The talks went nowhere, and the OPEC+ meeting got pushed back to the afternoon.

Then the Russians arrived. Bilateral discussions to hammer out negotiating positions are a regular feature of the days and hours before the main OPEC gatherings. They take place in the suites of Vienna's grandest hotels, where the various delegations are holed up. In recent years, the Russians have been part of this scene.

But when Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak arrived Friday morning, he moved in to the office of OPEC's Secretary General. If ever there was a symbol of OPEC's demise, it was this. He then summoned first Iran's oil minister, then Saudi Arabia's, for

about 45 minutes each. Two hours later, the group reached a deal. And Iran, Libya and Venezuela got their exemptions, even if they didn't appear in the final communiqué.

The agreement that emerged is, on paper. fair and reasonable. OPEC will cut production by 800,000 barrels a day from a new baseline of October 2018 production, with participating members cutting by 3 percent. The group's partners will reduce their supply by 2 percent, contributing a further 400,000 barrels a day. That combined reduction is just about enough to balance supply and demand in the first half of next year.

Saudi Arabia went even further. Al-Falih said the kingdom's production would fall to 10.2 million barrels a day in January, down from 11.1 million last month.

That looks like a huge cut, but it is still 150,000 barrels a day above its target under the original deal.

And this is where the inequality of the new OPEC+ deal becomes apparent. Saudi Arabia, Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Iraq boosted their combined output by almost 1.6 million barrels a day between May and October. That not only contributes to the current glut, it also gives them much higher starting points for the latest cuts than for the previous ones. Other OPEC members all face ower starting points.

#### Unfair shares

The effect has been to shift a disproportionate share of the burden of OPEC's supply management since 2016 onto the group's smaller producers.

Handing control of OPEC decision making to the Kremlin has come at a high cost for the group, and most particularly for its smaller members. Some of the latter were already feeling marginalized. This latest deal will do nothing to change their view and the divisions between the organization's "haves" and "have nots" will only widen.

Russia has done very well out of this. It agreed to cut output by 230,000 barrels a day from its October output level of 11.42 million. That would reduce its production to 11.19 million barrels a day, a figure that is just 15,000 barrels below its original 2016 aseline — a cut of just 0.1 percent.

Contrast that with OPEC member Algeria, which produces around a tenth as much oil as Russia. Its new target will be 1.023 million barrels a day. That's a cut of 66,000 barrels a day, or 6.1 percent below the 2016 baseline.

Oil markets have reacted with indifference. After a brief rally when the deal was revealed, Brent subsequently sank back below the level it was trading at before the meeting began. Perhaps traders don't believe the group will be able to implement the arrangement, or are waiting to see evidence that it's taken effect.

OPEC has lost a lot for very little gain. (Source: Bloomberg)

## Big Oil is better prepared for the next price crash

The six largest international oil companies have shored up profits and cash flows this year, reporting incomes at their highest levels since the 2014 oil price crash. Cost cuts, conservative price assumptions in spending plans, and investment cherry-picking

Now the six biggest of Big Oil—Exxon, Chevron, Shell, BP, Total, and Eni--are in a good place to remain resilient at \$60 a barrel Brent Crude, thanks to diversified and robust portfolios, according to ratings agency S&P Global Ratings.

Even when oil prices hit four-year highs in October, the largest publicly traded international oil companies didn't change their underlying price assumptions for future investment in projects they continue to conservatively plan for a world of oil prices at

"Supermajors and these guys, the big players, the IOCs, they reckon they can break even with Brent at \$50 (per barrel)," Simon Redmond, senior director of corporate ratings at S&P Global Ratings, told CNBC this week. So, whether its \$65 or \$60, they're looking pretty good. And they

should be able to generate meaningful cash flow," Redmond said, singling out Exxon and Shell as the two majors with the strongest In October, when Brent Crude hit \$86 a barrel, oil majors didn't

get carried away like some analysts who started talking about a return of \$100 oil.

Big Oil reaffirmed that their base-case project planning scenarios continue to be in the \$55-65 range and that they can break even at around \$50 Brent Crude price or even below.

'As oil prices stay up over \$50 a barrel, we will be surplus free cash as we go into 2020, and 2021. And, of course, we have said our breakeven goes down to \$35-40 a barrel by the end of 2021, unless we chose to distribute to shareholders," BP's CFO Brian Gilvary said on the Q3 earnings webcast.

Answering an analyst question at what oil price BP is basing its plans, Gilvary said that this year the company set that at \$55 a barrel.

"We run those cases at \$50 and \$75 a barrel. And at \$75 a barrel real over a very long period of time, and \$50 is the base case that we run everything at. That's how we look at our projects," Gilvary noted. Total said in its strategy presentation in September that it had

more than halved its post-dividend breakeven to \$50 a barrel now, compared to 2014. Shell is aiming for its projects to be able to break even at \$40

oil, CFO Jessica Uhl said at the Q3 earnings call.

Eni has halved its cash neutrality point—the point at which it will be able to fund capex and dividend—from \$114 a barrel in 2014 to \$57 a barrel. In the Q3 earnings release, Eni confirmed

its cash neutrality for 2018 is at \$55 per barrel oil.
Big Oil's project and profitability estimates may be put to the real test next year, as oil prices slumped by around 30 percent from early October highs, with Brent currently sitting just above \$60.

OPEC and allies' deal to curtail production again may have put a soft floor under oil prices, but it has definitely failed to impress the market. Analysts have recently slashed projections for oil prices for 2019.

. Earlier this week, Morgan Stanley lowered its Brent Crude price forecast for 2019 by \$10 a barrel to \$68.50.

S&P Global Ratings sees Brent at \$65 next year and at \$55 in the longer term, and expects WTI at \$60 in 2019.

In its December Short-Term Energy Outlook (STEO), the EIA slashed its 2019 price forecasts for Brent and WTI to \$61 and \$54, respectively—both \$11 a barrel lower than forecast in the November (Source: oilprice.com)

## Mexico's new president allocates \$23 billion for state oil company to boost output next year

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador is boosting Petroleos Mexicanos' budget to 464.6 billion pesos (\$23 billion) next year to reverse flagging oil production and increase domestic fuel output.

Lopez Obrador is proposing that Pemex invest 211 billion pesos in exploration and production (\$10.4 billion) in 2019. That's a 26 percent increase compared to last year, when Pemex planned to invest 168 billion pesos in the unit, according to the finance ministry. Oil production is expected to stabilize at 1.847 million barrels a day in 2019 with Mexico's oil mix estimated at \$55 a barrel, the ministry said. The budget reflects Lopez Obrador's ambition to wean Mexico

from foreign fuel imports, which have been rising due to growing demand and lack of investment in refineries. To do that, the president plans to build a new refinery and refurbish the run-down existing ones, while increasing domestic oil production to feed the plants. Pemex is importing light oil from the U.S. for the first time to make up for the crude shortfall at its refineries.

"It's an embarrassment that we are buying light oil for our refineries. If we don't have the primary material, we can't do anything." Lopez Obrador told a crowd of oil workers on Saturday morning at the port of Ciudad del Carmen, Campeche, an oil hub that the president has promised will be the new Pemex headquarters. "We are going to rescue our dear Mexico and the national oil industry.

Lopez Obrador has shrugged off investor concerns that his government will worsen Pemex's fiscal situation. The beleaguered Mexican driller is the largest Latin American corporate borrower, with \$106 billion in financial debt. "We are going to invest where we know there's oil and where it costs less to extract it," he said. "We are going to reduce costs."

Under a new six-year business plan, Pemex's oil production will rise 52 percent to 2.624 million barrels a day by the end of 2024, up from 1.730 million daily barrels today, the company's new chief executive officer, Octavio Romero, said at the event in Campeche alongside Lopez Obrador. Pemex's output has declined every year since 2004, almost halving in that time.

The plan will focus on onshore and shallow water areas in the southeast basins as well as conventional areas in the northern basins, Romero said. As many as 20 fields will have new drilling and infrastructure contracts awarded by the end of January. Exploration investment will be increased by 10 percent each year, he added.

The boost in funds could help Pemex expand its major Ixachi field in Veracruz, which is believed to contain 1.3 billion barrels of oil equivalent in proven, probable and possible, or "3P," reserves.

The plan to build an \$8 billion refinery in his home state of Tabasco and revitalize Mexico's existing six plants could divert Pemex's resources away from drilling. The president has also called for a hiatus on new oil auctions for at least three years. This week, Mexico's oil regulator CNH postponed a Pemex farm-out tender and canceled the country's next two bid rounds planned for Feb. 14 so the government could review oil contracts and energy policy.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## NEWS IN BRIEF



### Rafale deal ruckus grows louder

INTERNATIONAL description of the political wrangling description of the political wrangling between India's two biggest parties—Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress—is intensifying over Rafale deal controversy.

The Congress has alleged that the BJP-led government misled the Supreme Court over the Rafale deal and committed contempt of court and periury.

mitted contempt of court and perjury.

Congress spokesperson Abhishek Manu Singhvi said the basis of the court ruling was a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) which has not been seen by anyone, nor has it been shared with Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC). In relief to the Modi government, the Supreme Court on Friday dismissed the pleas challenging the deal between India and France for procurement of 36 Rafale jets, saying there was no occasion to "really doubt the decision making process" warranting setting aside of the contract.

Rafale deal controversy is a political controversy in India related to the purchase of 36 multirole fighter aircraft for a price estimated to be worth Rs 58,000 crore by India' defense ministry. Congress has alleged that the procurement procedures were bypassed in acquisition of Rafale. The issue has since been a topic of discussion in India's political and intelligentsia circles.



## Pakistan welcomes talks with Taliban

INTERNATIONAL description of talks between the Afghan Taliban and international stakeholders expected to be held in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Pakistan's foreign office spokesman Dr. Mohammad Faisal said Pakistan is committed to peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. "Talks are being held in UAE. We hope this will end bloodshed in Afghanistan and bring peace to the region," he remarked.

In recent months, the process of talks has gained momentum with Moscow hosting an important conference on Afghanistan and the U.S. appointing special envoy to negotiate with the Taliban.

On Saturday, China also pledged to help Afghanistan and Pakistan in resolving the imbroglio, as officials from the three countries flew to Kabul for a trilateral meeting.

China's top diplomat, State Councillor Wang Yi, held the meeting with foreign ministers of Afghanistan and Pakistan on Saturday to chalk out a plan to support Afghan peace process. "China approves of this, and is willing to provide support and help for Pakistan and Afghanistan to improve their ties," Wang told reporters after the meeting.



### Afghan province bans Pakistan currency

INTERNATIONAL de s k and circulation of local currency, Afghan authorities have decided to ban trade in Pakistani rupee in southeastern Khost province, which borders Pakistan.

Talib Mangal, the governor's spokesman, was quoted saying by Pajhwok Afghan News that a commission has been created to implement the plan to promote transactions in 'Afghani' – Afghanistan's currency – instead of Pakistani rupee.

The use of Pakistani currency is common in Afghan provinces bordering Pakistan including Khost, Kunar and Nangarhar. Authorities have often expressed concern over it and encouraged the use of Afghan currency in local trade.

While Afghanistan and Pakistan have many cultural and geographical similarities, bilateral relations between them have always been strained. The trade volume between them, despite having a potential of \$5 billion, has fallen from \$2.5 billion to \$1.4 billion.

Pakistani ports of Karachi and Gwadar have traditionally been the most economical routes for Afghan transit trade, however Chabahar port in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan has provided another option now.



## Political crisis ends in Sri Lanka

INTERNATIONAL description of the political stale-description of the political stale-de

Making a remarkable comeback weeks after being expelled by President Maithripala Sirisena under controversial circumstances, Wickremesinghe's reinstatement has ended the two-month crisis.

The development is seen as an embarrassment for the president, who had replaced Wickremesinghe with former president Mahinda Rajapaksa following differences over policy matters and other issues.

However, Rajapaksa failed to win a parliamentary majority and resigned on Saturday, paving way for the reinstatement of Wickremesinghe.

"It is a victory for Sri Lanka's democratic institutions and the sovereignty of our citizens," Wickremesinghe said in a tweet following his reinstatement. "I thank everyone who stood firm in defending the constitution and ensuring the triumph of democracy."

Sri Lanka, although a small country, is an important player in the region. It shares close ties with neighboring India and China.

India welcomed the resolution of the political crisis in Sri Lanka. "This is a reflection of the maturity demonstrated by all political forces, and also of the resilience of Sri Lankan democracy and its institutions," said Raveesh Kumar, spokesman for India's Ministry of External Affairs.

# Kashmir shuts down to protest civilian killings

INTERNATIONAL description of the consecutive day on Monday, situation in Indian-controlled-Kashmir remained tense over the killing of seven civilians by security forces on Saturday.

The civilians, most of them youth, were killed when security forces opened "indiscriminate fire" at protesters following an encounter in south Kashmir's Pulwama in which three militants were killed.

Separatist leadership had called for a threeday shutdown and planned a massive march towards an army cantonment in Kashmir's capital city Srinagar on Monday.

In order to foil the plan and prevent them from leading the march, government put two top separatist leaders – Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Mirwaiz Umar Farooq – under house arrest.

Earlier, in a statement, Mirwaiz said people will march towards Badami Bagh Army cantonment in the heart of Srinagar "to ask government of India to kill all of us at one time rather than killing us daily."

Police and paramilitary forces in the troubled region quickly swung into action and sealed all sensitive parts of Srinagar city with barricades, including on roads leading to the army cantonment.

Shops, government offices and banks remained closed third consecutive day. Authorities also suspended mobile internet services fearing unrest.

In a statement late on Sunday, army warned the people against taking part in the march. "Army advises people not to fall prey to such



designs of anti-national forces," the statement said. "It's an attempt to pit the civilian population against the security forces".

The armed clashes between Indian security forces and militants have intensified in recent months in the Muslim-majority region with a spate of encounters in south Kashmir. According to official figures, 242 militants have been killed this year in the region, besides 101 civilians and 82 members of the security forces, making it the bloodiest year in more than a decade.

While many prominent militant command-

ers, most of them local Kashmiris, have been killed in recent encounters, civilians have also come in the line of fire.

Protests at encounter sites have become common in Kashmir in recent years, and government forces have come under severe criticism for not being able to manage the situation.

Following the Saturday killings, Omar Abdullah, the region's former chief minister, took to Twitter to slam the forces. "Any way you look at it this was a badly executed encounter," he wrote. "Protests around

encounter sites are now the norm not the exception. Why are we unable to learn how to handle them better?"

Abdullah termed it a "massacre". "There is no explanation for this excessive use of force, none what so ever. This is a massacre and that's the only way to describe it," he said.

Mehbooba Mufti, who headed a coalition government in the region with India's ruling BJP, said "no country can win a war by killing its own people". "How long are we going to shoulder the coffins of our youngsters? So many civilians killed today post encounter in Pulwama. I strongly condemn these killings, and once again appeal for efforts to stop this bloodbath," she tweeted.

Pakistan also condemned the Saturday killings. "Only dialogue and not violence and killings will resolve this conflict," Prime Minister Imran Khan said, adding that his country would raise India's "human rights violations" at the United Nations.

Meenakshi Ganguly, South Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said Indian authorities should investigate and prosecute those responsible for "indiscriminate use of force".

"Security forces are aware that villagers gather, protest during gunfights with Kashmir militants and have responsibility to ensure civilians are not at risk," she said in a tweet.

The region is currently under the rule of India's federal government after the state assembly was dissolved last month. Fresh elections are expected to be held in the coming months.

## 'Rohingya refugees want to go back home but with safety and dignity'

1 → Should the world community play more proactive role in resolving the Rohingya refugee crisis by putting pressure on the Myanmar government?

A. Yes, I think so because Bangladesh is not the creator of the crisis, but the worst victim. Myanmar has systematically created difficult living conditions in Rakhine state which has triggered massive influx of more than 730,000 Rohingya in 2017.

Bangladesh sheltered the Rohingya people on humanitarian grounds, but Bangladesh as an over-populated country cannot bear the 1.3 million (including old and new arrivals) for too long. So, international community must play more proactive role to resolve the crisis.

Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey recently came under fire after tweeting touristy pictures from his Myanmar visit. How important is social media in mobilizing public support for Rohingya campaign?

A. Jack's praise of Myanmar was widely criticized across the world, and finally he felt compelled to agree with the critical condition of the Rohingya although he stopped short of naming the Rohingya!

I do think social media can play a vital role in mobilizing public support for Rohingya campaign. But, at the same time, we need to be cautious that social media also contributes to 'hate-campaign' against Rohingya people. We know how Facebook instigated anti-Rohingya sentiment which supported mass killing in Rakhine state.

The top executives of social media platforms can play important role by standing beside the oppressed people and advocating social justice.

There are 900,000 Rohingyas in more than two dozen camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar, living in appalling condition. What are the problems they face?

A. The total number of Rohingya living in Bangladesh are now around 1.3 million (including old and new arrivals) and the number of camps are 32. While I was doing fieldwork in Rohingya refugee camp, I was trying to understand what kind of problems they face in Bangladesh.

In response to one of my question, Mr. Alam, a 52-year old Rohingya living in Kutupalong camp who crossed the border in September 2017, told me that they are no longer under life-threat in Bangladesh, and here the degree of safety is better than Burma. He said they feel human dignity here.

However, the conditions are more or less the same, for instance food scarcity, inadequate medical facility, no education for children, poor living conditions, no proper sanitation, insufficient water supply, and the threat of women and child trafficking.

d child trafficking.

You have been working with the Rohingya since long

time. Many of them have distressing stories of killings, rapes and torture in Rakhine. How did you get involved with them?

A. It is not something like a massive attack took place in Rakhine in 2017 which triggered a massive influx and I became interested in Rohingya people. I have been engaged in research on/with the Rohingya people for more than two decades, have been doing ethnographic research for years, and been a close observer of the evolving Rohingya refugee situations in Bangladesh for more than three decades as a local resident born in Cox's Bazar.

However, the recent case in terms of the intensity of atrocity and the degree of brutality has superseded all previous campaigns in 1978, 1991/92, 2012 and 2016.

The situation on the ground touched me deeply and prompted me to stand beside the Rohingya people and to help and support them.

What do you think is the possible solution to this simmering crisis?

A. Based on my year-long engagement, the Rohingya refugees gave me some ideas about how to resolve the problem. Fulfillment of three basic requirements could bring a lasting solution: Everyone wants to go back to Myanmar but everyone echoes the same narratives: joboner nirapotta (life-safety), nagorikottto (citizenship) and maanijjat (dignity).

I recorded hundreds of similar stories from many Rohingya men and women living in Ukhia and Teknaf refugee camps. Some, of course, demand an active involvement of the UN bodies like UNHCR in the repatriation process. But, majority of those I met and interviewed gave me the impression that they would go back to Myanmar if the following three demands are met: legal recognition, life-safety, and human dignity.

## U.S. military industrial complex's perpetual warfare

Prince Bandar Bin Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz was Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the U.S. from 1983 to 2005 and also the defacto leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq who helped in arming various terrorist factions all across the Middle East on the behalf of U.S. military industrial complex.

Back in 2012 Hamid Karzai stated that the

Back in 2013, Hamid Karzai stated that the U.S. is collaborating with the Taliban that is regularly conducting suicide attacks inside Afghanistan as it provides a pretext for the U.S. military presence inside the country. So the expansion of al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups from Afghanistan to Syria has provided an excuse to western war machine for conducting military aggression against different countries.

The creation of ISIS was meant to serve the interests of Israel in addition to war profiteering. According to a former CIA contractor Steven Kelly, the U.S. intention behind the perpetual war in the Middle East is to eliminate any opposition against Israel from its neighboring states like Syria. Kelly in a Press TV interview stated that the creation of ISIS was meant to nullify any opposition to Israel by the complete destruction of Syria and Israe.

In addition to this, a perpetual war in the Middle East provides a fertile ground for the U.S. military industrial complex to reap huge profits by selling weapons to both the U.S. and terrorist factions. Additionally, the expensive Iraq war drained the U.S. treasury; still the pro-Israel power configuration and military industrial complex have been batting for endless wars.

The scraping of peace treaties is also the



agenda of the military industrial complex. Recently President Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty of 1987. Back in 2002, the U.S. scrapped the Anti-Ballistic missile (ABM) treaty. According to Russian MP Alexi Pushkov, the abandoning of INF and ABM would bring humanity close to the ground zero.

The downfall of the Soviet Union in late 1980 brought an end to excessive military spending and the funds were diverted towards civilian purposes. Now it is obvious that Trump wants to revive the Cold War era as it will enormously benefit the U.S. weapon manufacturers.

According to a 2014 study by Morgan Stanley, the major U.S. arms manufacturers have witnessed a growth of 27,699% in the last 50 years. From 2010 to 2013 Northrop Grumman has returned 114%, Raytheon 124%, and Lockheed Martin 149% to their investors.

In April of 2017 and April 2018, the U.S. fired Raytheon manufactured Tomahawk missiles on Syria. Soon after the attack the Raytheon shares surged by 3% and closed above its 50 days moving average. The shares of other U.S. weapons manufacturers like Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and Northrop Grumman also edged higher. From 11 April 2018 to 17 April 2018, the shares of Raytheon

went from \$219 to \$228 per share.

The sanction game is yet another trump card of the U.S. military industrial complex as it is trying to exclude Russia from the international arms market. According to Rostec spokesperson, Washington's sanction against Russia is "just an excuse for pushing Russia out of the global arms market." The U.S. weapons manufacturers are losing their market even in the U.S. friendly states like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and also in Turkey and India. So the U.S. is targeting Russian defence industry as back in 2017 more than 30 Russian arms manufacturers were included in the list of potential sanctions target.

A 2008 report by the RAND Corporation under the title "Unfolding the Future of the Long War: Motivations, Prospects, and Implications for the U.S. Army" warned that the U.S. will engage the Muslim world in unjustified warfare at least up to 2020. According to the report, the US military industrial complex will capitalize on the Sunni-Shiite conflict in order to sway the U.S. enemies. The report mentioned that the U.S. will provide a full-fledged support to pro-U.S. regimes by selling them sophisticated weaponry in order to contain the influence of Iran in the Middle-East.

Middle-East.

It is obvious that the "iron triangles" of the U.S. political system is the intersection of corporations, pro-war lobbies, and government officials. So, at least in near future, the U.S. will favor pro-war strategies, instead of negotiations.

Mudasir Sheikh is a Kashmir-based writer and independent researcher.

## 'Reforming Muslim countries and Islamicity indices'

are at the foundation of this religion. In turn, rules represent institutions and institutions are the foundation of a society's potential for development. These institutions include the rule of law and an independent judiciary, a constitution, strong property rights and the sanctity of contracts and so on. Societies that have effective institutions thrive and prosper and societies that have ineffective institutions languish and decay. These indices represent the institutions recommended in Islam and provide a benchmark to assess the performance of societies and a compass pointing to the changes (institutions) they should make. A country that scores high on these indices is a country where the people and their government have knowingly or unknowingly adopted and practice the institutions that Islam recommends. A word of caution, we have excluded four important but very personal dictates of the religiondeclaration of faith, daily prayers, fasting during Ramadan and pilgrimage to Mecca. We are interested in how a rule-abiding Muslim community should look like. If we included these four elements, then we would bias our results toward countries that profess Islam but do not necessarily follow its important teachings, and in that event could not compare the performance of Muslim and non-Muslim countries.

Most important, I must emphasize a point. As benchmark and compass, these indices enable governments and citizens to collaboratively agree to a set of reforms using these indices as indicators. They can of course use a variant of these indices that better suits their country's needs and a timetable for getting there. These indices then serve as an indicator of their successes and failures. Thus government and people can work peacefully towards a common goal, a compact that they have agreed to.

In sum, our mission in this program is to:
Encourage collaboration between government
and people in Muslim countries to build more
effective institutions in order to build thriving
communities based on Islamic teachings.

What do these indices tell us?

A: Well, the results are on the one hand surprising and yet on the other hand to be expected. The countries that perform best are the countries of Northern Europe along with New Zealand, Australia and Canada, countries that are generally seen as thriving and successful. Muslim countries perform

badly. The best performing Muslim country

since 2000 has been Malaysia, followed by Qatar, the UAE and Kuwait. Even Malaysia's performance is not that great. Malaysia has ranked only in the 30's in a sample of 154 counties. And the median rank of Muslim

countries has been around 120! The inescapable fact is that although Islamic institutions support thriving societies, most Muslim countries have actually failed to adopt the institutions and practices recommended in Islam, because if they had they would have thriving communities, as would be generally admitted of the countries that perform high on these indices. If Muslim countries want to enhance their performance, they must begin by adopting the effective institutions recommended in their religion. Let me just add that our results were broadly voiced over a century ago by Mohammad Abduh when he said 'I went to the West and saw Islam but no Muslims; I got back to the East and saw Muslims but no Islam.' Following our work, some have estimated indices based on Magsid Shariah and what they have found are essentially the same results as have we. Muslims must face facts. While they may pray, fast and memorize the Qur'an, their actions and their societies do not reflect what Islam recommends.

How do you plan to use these indices for reform and institution building?

A: Our approach is to develop a partner in every Muslim country and in many non-Muslim countries, encourage the collaboration and cooperation of millions of like-minded Muslims with their governments and across the world to become a virtual community and use these indices as a benchmark and compass to peacefully reverse the centuries of political, social and economic missteps and underperformance. This Muslim countries can do by working toward establishing effective institutions—the globally recognized foundation for sustained development and growth. When governments and the people decide to adopt these indices, or a modified version that they can agree on, then the people and the government have agreed to a plan of peaceful reform. This is something that Malaysia had done. We hope to disseminate our results widely to reach Muslims in every corner of the earth. We will estimate indices yearly. We will publish an annual report on pertinent developments. We plan to publish country reports annually highlighting areas of success and failure and with recommendations for important reforms. Eventually, we hope to hold conferences, with online



streaming, focusing on results and areas of reform and institution building. By going global, we hope to build a community that is familiar with the institutions that Islam demands and has cross-border reach to support peaceful reforms in all Muslim communities. Muslims will have support for peaceful reforms no matter where they are!

Over the last year, what have you done in forming an organizational structure to implement this initiative?

A: We have made much progress. First, we have incorporated the Islamicity Foundation to manage this program. Second, we are in the process of putting together an Advisory Board to guide us. The Advisory Board will guide the foundation toward achieving its mission. We hope eventually to establish a Board of 12 to 15 eminent women and men, with diverse professional and regional backgrounds, to afford the Islamicity Project a broad perspective on the process of institution building and reform across the Muslim World. We have been honored by our three initial members: Dr. Ali Allawi (former Minister of Finance and Minister of Defense of Iraq, Professor at University of Oxford, Princeton and the National University of Singapore and author of a number of highly acclaimed books), Dr. Abbas Mirakhor (Dean of the Executive Board of the IMF. First Holder of INCEIF Chair in Islamic Finance in Malaysia and the author of a number of highly acclaimed books on Islamic economics and finance) and Dr. Jomo Kwame Sundaram (Secretary General for Economic Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, Assistant Director General  $for \, Economic \, and \, Social \, Development, \, Food \,$ and Agriculture Organization, professor at Harvard and a number of other universities and author of numerous highly acclaimed books and articles). Third, we have progressed in establishing country partners in 15 countries that have over 50 percent of all Muslims who live in Muslim countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Co^te d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Senegal, Singapore, Tunisia and Turkey. Country partners are critical for the success of our mission. These individuals and institutions represent a connected global community who understand the message of Islam and who will work collaboratively toward establishing effective institutions. In time, we plan to have partners in all Muslim majority countries and in numerous non-Muslim majority countries who want to support the process of institution building and reform. Fourth, we have produced four short videos, which can be found on our website: (www. IslamicityFoundation.Org) to explain this program. We plan to produce more videos and podcasts in the coming months. Fifth, we have produced new indices for 2017 and we plan to publish the indices for 2018 in the spring of 2019. Sixth, we have had the book that underlies this effort translated into French and made available free on our website as we own the foreign language publication rights. We are hoping to have a Farsi translation on our website in early 2019. We hope that this book will be translated into other languages in the future. Seventh, we have produced our first annual report and we are working on country reports. And eighth and most important, we are beginning to reach a wide global audience.

■ Will this project be managed by The Islamicity Foundation or will it be merged into a larger existing entity?

A: We are hoping to find a welcoming home for the Islamicity Foundation and this program of reform and renewal. Our hope is to merge this into a world-class university anywhere in the world. The critical requirement is not location but rather an institution that is supportive and believes in this effort as do my collaborators and I. In a university setting, we can generate excitement in students who can become our ambassadors, develop exchange programs, hold conferences, facilitate fund raising efforts and I could teach seminars on these indices and related topics of development, economics and finance in Islam. I was exploring one such collaboration but it was not meant to be; and the same can be said for the university where I have taught for over 35 years. I have had interest from a university that I consider to be an ideal home for the Foundation and this Program but it has not developed into anything concrete yet. I will keep looking and I am open to any suggestions.

What are your next steps?

A: I would like begin by finding a university to house the Foundation and the Program. Second, I would like to round out our Advisory Board. In this regard, I would like to have a few slots reserved for the alumni of the university where the Foundation will be housed. Third, I hope that we will expand our country partnerships to reach about 40 partnerships by the end of 2019. Fourth, I hope that we can attract sufficient funding to allow us a small administrative staff. Finally, it would be nice to have a more dynamic website in order to attract a wider audience.

Is there anything you would like to add?
A: I fear that the world is marching down a track that has a catastrophic end in sight.
Western support for oppressive rule, armed conflicts and drone attacks in the name of stability will achieve the opposite—creating misery in failed societies, more enemies for oppressive regimes and also the West who support oppressive rulers. With more wars

o come.

Generally speaking, most Muslim countries are not thriving. If we are honest with ourselves, in most of these countries we see widespread injustice and corruption, little respect for human and civil rights, oppression, little freedom to express individual views, no freedom of the press and stagnant economies that do not produce acceptable opportunities for all citizens to develop and grow. At the same time. Islam is totally misunderstood in much of the non-Muslim World and seen as a militant, hostile and undemocratic religion that must be confronted, but Western leaders support tyrannical-strongman rulers in the Muslim world to maintain stability and crush fanatics. Some perverse academics even suggest that the best hope for Muslims is to abandon Islam and adopt Christianity! These ignorant academics attribute failure in the Muslim World to their own straw man, their manufactured and presumed defects in Islam. But our results show the opposite. Countries that we consider successful-in Northern Europe and the like—perform the best in Islamicity Indices.

We are advocating a different path to restore hope, cooperation and peace—the basis for a program of reform and renewal that is firmly anchored in the teachings of the Qur'an, the only realistic framework for Muslim countries. Reform is most likely to succeed in an Islamic framework, and where governments and the people agree on the best path forward and the institutions needed to support it. While this effort places the responsibility to bring about change in the first instance squarely on the shoulders of Muslims, the Western world can lend a helping hand by being less selfish and ending its support for oppressive rule in Muslim countries in the name of stability and selling arms to Muslims to use against Muslims. The US and other Western countries should stop supporting oppressive rulers who assassinate their own people and give Islam and Muslims a bad name. The West must begin to look beyond its nose and adopt a longer-term approach, encouraging meaningful reform based on a realistic timetable. It should practice what it preaches, human rights and not dictators.

To demonstrate my own commitment to this endeavor, I have resigned my endowed Professorship at my university effective January 1, 2019 and the work that I have done for the foundation has been and will continue to be on a pro bono basis.

## Red Sea legal regime: Spider's dream against Iran won't be realized

1 → According to the statement, the seven countries are Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Sudan, Djibouti, Yemen, Somalia and Jordan.

The goal of this regime is to support global trade, international navigation, and security and investment and the development of the regional states. The legal regime of the Red Sea is a plan by King Salman to achieve stability in the region.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir said the meeting discussed boosting trade and conserving the environment.

Djibouti Foreign Minister Mahamoud Ali Youssouf endorsed the request made by King Salman to convene the Arab and African regimes of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, declaring that this regime is a privilege and they'll be working to develop it.

Ali Youssouf welcomed the plan saying: We praise King Salman's plan, a project that the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden can provide security and support for the passageways. An international passage is in place and nobody can harm it. Everyone should be in alignment with the establishment of a regime that helps enhance security.

Zayed Mofel Al-Lawei of Jordanian Foreign Ministry said the Saudi plan is important to create a regime of Arab and African states adjacent to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The foreign ministers emphasized the formation of a team of experts to review the efforts of the plan in Cairo for in the near future.

Mohammed bin Abdullah al-Hadrami, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the incumbent government of Yemen praised the Saudis.

Ahmed Isse Awad, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Somalia, said: We thank King Salman for the role they played in establishing this regime for the stability of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden region. Somalia wants Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, to be the headquarters of this regime.

Anwar Mohammed Gargash, the advisor to the Foreign Ministry of the UAE, as always praised the Saudis.

Referring to Saudi moves on the establishment of a legal regime, Gargash said: Saudi efforts are inspiring to ensure stability and cooperation in the Red Sea region, and this, in turn, is a success for diplomacy in the countries of the region.

## Saudi Arabia seeks to confront Qatar and Turkey by creating this regime

Saudi Arabia's most important goal in holding this meeting and the establishment of the regime of the Red Sea is to control the regional rivals, especially Turkey. In the same vein, the Sudanese government, as one of the Red Sea coastal countries, has recently given up the privilege of developing Suakin Island in the Red Sea to Turkey. In fact, Saudi Arabia is trying to prevent some coastal countries' tendency towards Saudi rivals.

Due to the financial dependence that Saudi Arabia often has on the coast of the Red Sea, Al Saud is trying to prevent a Turkish regime in the coastal waters of the Red Sea by creating a legal regime

Another issue is that Saudi Arabia, with the es-

tablishment of the Red Sea legal regime, is trying to prevent the growing influence of Qatar in the coastal countries of the sea. Doha has invested heavily in the Red Sea coastal countries over the past two decades, especially during the last 18 months, and now Saudi Arabia is trying to somehow oppose these investments.

## Normalizing relations with Tel Aviv, reassurance for Zionist regime security

The third point is that Saudi action in the establishment of the Red Sea coastal regime has also been linked to the Saudi approach to normalizing relations with Tel Aviv, as Israel also has access to the Red Sea.

Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, a Qatari newspaper wrote: "Given Israel's access to the Red Sea coast, the formation of this council can be a secret measure to normalize relations with the regime."

In other words, although Israel didn't officially attend the Red Sea summit in Riyadh, it welcomed Saudi Arabia's move to establish a seafront regime in the Red Sea countries.

In any case, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden regime can be called a kind of alignment between Saudi Arabia and the Zionist regime, which many observers believe is to protect the interests of the U.S. and the Israel in the region.

It is noteworthy that the countries participating in this regime are mainly the countries that are present in the anti-Yemeni coalition. This regime is in fact a supporter of Israel, and the Saudis are contributing to this issue, especially since U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly said that if it were not for Saudi Arabia, Israel would have faced many challenges.

The King Salman plan is in line with the U.S. geopolitical and economic issues in creating a complete map of the Saudi-led region. The road map is based on disintegration of countries and destruction of the Palestinian cause in favor of the Zionist regime. The Saudis and the Emirati chant slogans on the security and stability of Yemen, but in reality the creation of this regime of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden is in line with the security of the Zionist regime.

The announcement of a new regime by the Saudis is evidence of ongoing developments in the region and the introduction of a regional and international power struggle to control the movement of world trade. The Americans are pursuing their plans through their devices, the Saudis and the Emirate

Riyadh's spider's dream against Iran

Meanwhile, analysts believes the Saudis' acts are aligned with the Israelis against Iran. Amani El Taweel, expert of the Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies (ACPSS) has announced to Al-Mesri news website: "The Red sea security is an important issues that has long been proposed to support its coastal countries that are Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Sudan, Jordan and Palestine. Previously, proposals were made by the Arab League, the European Union, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry and one of the major study centers in the UAE, but these proposals were not implemented."

El Taweel claims that the absence of a system that guarantees the safety of the Red Sea and the Bab-elMandeb, has caused interference from international parties such as Iran and Turkey to gain their interests, which has caused many problems for the coastal states of the Red Sea. In the future, the health of international trade, especially the Persian Gulf oil trade, the security of Bab al-Mandeb, the trade movement in the Suez Canal will be guaranteed to the benefit of all parties. Egypt will be the mainstay, especially at there is a strong rapprochement between Egypt and Saudi Arabia as the two major countries of the Red Sea. Iran and Turkey will seek to defeat this trend through financial and military assistance to some countries. "Saudi Arabia's plan to provide and stop

the security threats for the Red Sea has been raised after the Iranian Red Crusade Sailing Action, Saudi Arabian Navy Nayef al-Gha'a," said in an interview with Saudi newspaper Al Youm. He added: "Iran is threatening global trade with its attempts to infiltrate the Red Sea."

"The Red Sea is one of the most important waterways in the world," Ahmad Nasher, the Yemeni analyst said, adding that there are many greetings from the Portuguese to the recent era of the Israeli greek in the Red Sea and the attempt to buy the islands and the presence of the islands. In the northeast of

## Cairo and Riyadh's extreme disagreements and the empty promises of the Saudi Red Sea regime

The Egyptians won't accept Saudi leadership in the region and are opposed to Riyadh plans. Contrary to al-Jubeir's remark in the summit; the plan did not go far and ended without a political statement that defined the nature of the regime and its mechanism.

Saudis establishment of the regime occurs when the murder of Jamal Khashoggi still dominates the news. The Saudis are looking for their place in the region through such moves, but it seems that the Egyptians oppose it.

In addition to the severe discord between Cairo and Riyadh, Eritrea was not present in this meeting, especially as its coastal area is 1,150 kilometers. Ethiopia also didn't attend the summit, although the country is a member of the Red Sea coastal countries.

The absence of Ethiopia in the Riyadh summit means that the establishment of the Red Sea coastal regime has not been made by consensus of all coastal states.

Additionally, differences between Sudan and Saudi Arabia, as well as Sudan's close ties with Turkey and Qatar suggests that Saudi Arabia, through the establishment of this legal regime, cannot stop the growing trend of Turkey and Qatar's influence in some coastal states of the Red Sea.

Aside from that, the U.S., China, Japan, France, Turkey and Israel all have bases in the Red Sea and the coastal states should

take these countries interests into account.

Al-Juberi speaks of security and stability of the region as well as its development and investment, however, the question here is was the Red Sea previously a region of wars or conflicts? Aren't the Saudis dominating majority of the Red Sea?

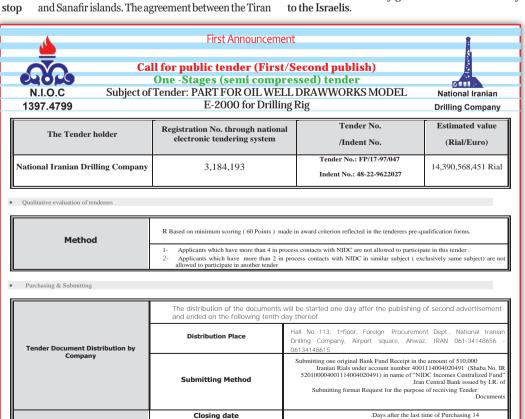
Saudi Arabia called one of the objectives of the Riyadh summit "security" but the fact is that Riyadh and its allies over the last 45 months waged a war on Yemen that undermined security in the sea.

Riyadh's initiation of the Red Sea regime and intervention in Yemen are over the issue of the Tiran and Sanafir islands. The agreement between the Tiran and Sanafir Islands and the transfer of its sovereignty from Egypt to Saudi Arabia guarantees the freedom of Israel's transit in the region.

The Yemeni war is also in support of Israel in the Red Sea. Israel was concerned about the domination of Yemen's Ansarullah over the Bab Al-Mandab, which led the Saudis to launch a war on Yemen to remove the Gulf of Aden and the Bab el-Mandeb from the reign of Ansarullah.

While the Saudis and Emiratis dominate the south entrance of the Red Sea, the agreement between Riyadh and Tel Aviv indirectly gives freedom and security to the Israelis.

Hall No. 107, 1ºfloor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569



Type of guarantee

Type of guar

(Foreign Procurement Dept.) More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir http://sapp.ir/nidc\_pr ۹۷/۰۹/۲۸ نوبت اول

## Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

## **Apartment**

Apt in Fereshteh 3th floor, 220 sq.m, 3 Bdrs. unfurn elevator, parking spot Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Zafaranieh 2th floor, 220 sq.m, 4 Bdrs. furn, equipped kitchen elevator spj, parking spot \$1800

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Elahieh .th floor, 165 sq.m, 3 Bdrs 1 fully furn, equipped kitchen spj, elevator, parking spot \$3800

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in North Dibaji 2th floor, 320 sq.m, 4 Bdrs. semi furn, equipped kitchen terrace, good light outdoor swimming pool renovated parking spot Ms.Sara: 09128103207

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

Apt in Qolhak 1th floor, 90 sq.m, 2 Bdrs. fully furn, equipped kitchen parking spot, \$900 Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Villa in Zafaranieh brand new, 105 sq.m, 2 Bdrs. with one75 sq.m suit, unfurn parking spot totally \$1400

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

**Duplex Villa** in Shahrak Qarb 140 sq.m, 2 Bdrs., unfurn yard, renovated, roof garden storage, parking spot Ms.Sara: 09128103207

**Duplex Villa in Niavaran** 650 sq.m land, 450 sq.m built up, 4 Bdrs., fully furn outdoor swimming pool yard, parking spot \$2600

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

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

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

**Duplex Villa in** Shariti-Mirdamad 290 sq.m, 4 Bdrs., unfurn balcony, renovated, fire place Storage, parking spot Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

**Duplex Villa in Farmanieh** 400 sq.m, 4 Bdrs., fully furn green & nice garden fully renovated, \$4500 Ms.Diba: 09128103206



Holder of ISO 9001:2008 ISO 10004:2012 ISO 10002:2014 From Oxford Cert Universal

## **Best Consultation** Best Services, Best Result

Intl. Department Manager "Tina 09128103205" Tel: 22662452-8, Fax: 22667173

info@parsdiplomatic.com www.parsdiplomatic.com **Building & Office** 

Office in Valiasr 13th floor, 165 sq.m, 2 rooms nice view, lobby, security full of foreign companies parking spot, renovated Price per each sq \$57 Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Office in Saadat Abad administrative office license 4 apts, 750 sq.m, parking spots <u>Mr.Shayan: 09128440156</u>

Whole Building in Zafaranieh brand new, 5 floors, each floor 310 sq.m, 3 Bdrs. indoor sauna, indoor Jacuzzi 2 parking spots for each apt Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Nice Office in Mirdamad 3th floor, 90 sq.m, 1 Bdr., storage parking spot, \$700 Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Whole Building in Shariati - Soheil 2 floors, 600 sq.m totally 8 Bdrs., 6 bath rooms, one 40 sq.m suit, renovated, 12 parking spots 3 storages, 3-side entrances

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

**New Whole Commercial Building** in Jordan

7<sup>th</sup> floor, each floor one office each office 140 sq.m flat, lobby parking spot, cozy Price per each sq \$40 Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Jordan 70 sq.m, 1 Bdr., fully furn parking spot, opposite to Mellat-Park

Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Farmanieh 2th floor, 81 sq.m, 2 Bdrs. fully furn, parking spot **\$900** 

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Niavaran 5th floor, 160 sq.m, 3 Bdrs. furn, elevator, sauna, Jacuzzi storage, parking spot \$1150

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Zafaranieh 220 sq.m, 3 Bdrs., fully furn very quite & cozy, parking spot, spj

Ms.Diba: 09128103206

**Apt in Fereshteh** 1th floor, 250 sq.m,4 Bdrs. fully furn, spj, 2 storages spj, 2 parking spots 2500 negotiable Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Suite in Yusef Abad 63 sq.m, 1 Bdr, fully, equipped kitchen, renovated, yard Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Elahieh 180 sq.m, 3 Bdrs., fully furn nice & cozy, spj, \$2500 Ms.Diba: 09128103206

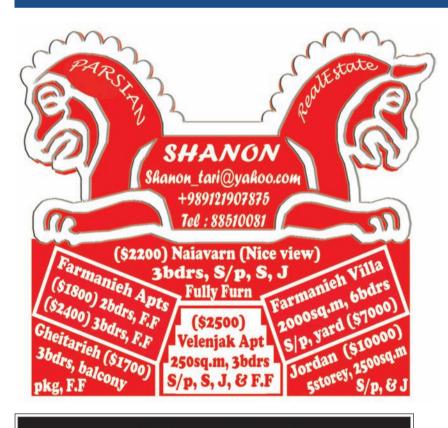
مالكين محترم

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

بهترین مشاوره، برترین سرویس، بالاترین رضایت

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

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



## **Don't Waste Your Time**

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www. Delta **HOME**. ir The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

Member of **DELTA** Real Estate Group (021) 88888865

**Advertising Dept:** times1979@gmail.com



+9821 430 51 450

www.tehrantimes.com

## **TEHRAN TIMES**

International Daily

**Advertising Dept** 





## **Number one Real Estate in Iran**

www.DELTA HOME.ir

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

120 sqm, 2 bdrs, FF, SP, parking \$1600 USD

Davood: (+98) 9123488513

Elahiyeh 240 Sqm, 3 bdrs, 3 baths, brand new Full facilities (spa, gym, coffee room,...) 24hrs lobbyman & seprate guard, mountain view € 4300 USD Adrian: (+98) 921 71 76 740

260sqm, 7th floor, 3 bdrs, SPJ, lobby, Guard Garden, amazing view \$3500 USD Linda: (+98) 9351721171

Jordan, Office 1100 sqm, Flat, \$10000 USD Kaveh: (+98) 9128944169

> 1- Jordan, 5 fl, 5 Units, 14 bdrs ,FF 2-Gandi, 5 fl, 19 Units, 38 bdrs, FF 3-Jordan, 5 fl, 20 Units, 55 bdrs,FF

Farshid: (+98) 9125540877

Shahrak-e- Gharb, Villa 600sqm building, 800 sqm land, 5bdrs, SPJ Negotiable Hojati: (+98) 9309701169

Zafaraniyeh, Villa, Best location

sqm land, 1200 sqm building,duplex, 5bdrs, indoor pool, Luxury

Price negotiable Davood: (+98) 9123488513

Zaferaniyeh, Velenjak 350 Sqm, 3 Master bdrs, 7th floor, brand new Full facilities (spa, gym, roof garden,...) Green view, balcony \$ 7000 USD Adrian: (+98) 921 71 76 740

Elahiyeh 205sqm, 3 bdrs, 4th floor, SPJ, sauna Gym, coffee shop, roof garden, Lobby \$3000 USD

Linda: (+98) 9351721171

Argantin, Guest house A whole building of 4 floors, totally 16 rooms plus one small suit, F.F Price negotiable Farshid: (+98) 9125540877

Elahiyeh, Velanjak, Penthouse Full facilities, Negotiable

Super Luxury, 450 sqm, 550 sqm Hojati: (+98) 9309701169

Jordan 275 sqm, 4 bdrs, full facilities \$2000USD Erik: (+98) 9372371391

Farmaniyeh, villa 900 sqm, 2500 sqm yard, 5 bdrs \$8000USD Kaveh: (+98) 9128944169

200 sqm, 3 bdrs, nicely FF, best tower

Nice view, Lobby, balcony

\$2500USD

Niavaran

250 Sqm, 3 bdrs, 2.5 baths, brand new

full facilities (spa, gym, roof garden, small

\$3600 USD

Adrian: (+98) 921 71 76 740

private cinama,...)

Davood: (+98) 9123488513

Must to see Elahiyeh 290 sqm, 3 bdrs, 3 baths ,gym, brand new, green view Furn or unfurn Farshid: (+98) 9125540877

> Zaferaniyeh Office, 350 sqm, Negotiable Hojati: (+98) 9309701169

Argantin 115sqm, 2 bdrs \$1000 USD Erik: (+98) 9372371391

## Vitamin D deficiency a serious nutritional problem: health official

even globally, vitamin D deficiency is a serious nutritional problem, director of the Health Ministry's nutrition office, Zahra Abdollahi, said on Sunday.

According to World Health Organization (WHO) vitamin D is active in the regulation of calcium and phosphorus which supports cellular processes, bone mineralization and neuromuscular function.

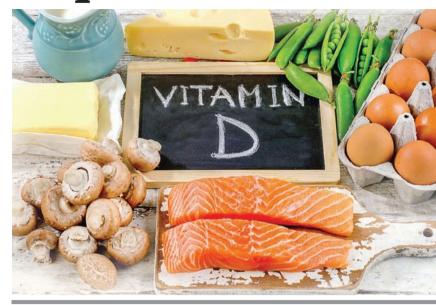
Evidence has shown that adequate levels of vitamin D may prevent multiple bone disorders such as rickets in children; and osteoporosis in adults. Vitamin D deficiency is thought to be a widespread public health problem globally; being more prevalent in places with limited sun exposure.

"Vitamin D deficiency can cause rickets, increase the chances of getting asthma and allergies, as well as non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, prostate cancer, breast cancer, colorectal cancer, esophageal cancer and some autoimmune diseases such as Multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis," Abdollahi warned.

Non-communicable diseases are the leading causes of 76 percent of the deaths in the country and in order to reduce the negative effects of such diseases addressing vitamin D deficiency should also be high on agenda, IRNA news agency quoted her as saying.

Vitamin D deficiency is traceable in different age groups and it should be addressed right away, she highlighted.

The health official went on to say that currently vitamin D-fortified breads are available in bakeries and also the vitamin



Vitamin D deficiency can cause rickets, increase the chances of getting asthma and allergies, as well as non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, prostate cancer, breast cancer, colorectal cancer, and esophageal cancer.

D supplements are being distributed at

Based on the studies on vitamin D deficiency conducted in 2001 to 2012 the prevalence of insufficiency among children

aging 15 to 23 months was 24 percent,

Moreover, in the same studies it was revealed that vitamin D deficiency in pregnant women increased from 55 percent in 2001

She went on to say that in the year 2012 vitamin D deficiency prevalence among children aged 6 was 62 percent and among adolescents aged 14 to 20 it was 76 percent.

The prevalence of vitamin D deficiency was 63 percent among people aged 45 to

Currently the first phase of a pilot program for fortifying wheat flour with vitamin D in south Khorasan is underway and using the results of the program a nationwide program will be devised and carried out to tackle the deficiency in the country, she remarked.

WebMd explains that vitamin D which is also as the sunshine vitamin, is produced by the body in response to skin being exposed to sunlight. It is also occurs naturally in a few foods -- including some fish, fish liver oils, and egg yolks -- and in fortified dairy and grain products.

Vitamin D is essential for strong bones, because it helps the body use calcium from the diet. Traditionally, vitamin D deficiency has been associated with rickets, but increasingly, research is revealing the importance of vitamin D in protecting against a host of health problems.

Bone pain and muscle weakness can mean you have a vitamin D deficiency. However, for many people, the symptoms are subtle. Yet, even without symptoms, too little vitamin D can pose health risks. Low blood levels of the vitamin have been associated with increased risk of death from cardiovascular disease, cognitive impairment in older adults, severe asthma in children,

## How to prevent festive weight gain without exercising



During the holiday season, it is difficult to avoid putting on a couple of extra pounds. A recent study investigated a simple, low-impact way to reduce the seasonal swell.

Resisting temptation can be tough during the holidays.

During the festive season, people's waistlines tend to expand as their self-control contracts.

While food and drink flow freely, restraint is in short supply, and sedentary activities abound. And, as we relax, we tend to throw caution to the wind and go back for a second helping.

Festive weight gain is so commonplace that it has become a running joke; however, it has a serious side.

Obesity is a growing problem in the United States, and reversing it through permanent lifestyle changes does not appear to work for the majority of people.

On average, people gain 0.4–1 kilogram (0.9-2.2 pounds) each year, and up to 50 percent of this occurs over holiday periods, such as Christmas.

#### A new approach to obesity?

Research has shown that when we gain weight during the holidays, we rarely manage to lose it once the tinsel has gone from the tree. As the years go by, this type of seasonal weight gain adds up.

The authors of a recent study believe that targeting this time of year might offer an innovative way to reduce the impact of obesity. By focusing attention on times when weight gain is most significant, it might be possible to slow annual weight gain, overall.

The results from the so-called Winter Weight Watch Study were published earlier this month in the BMJ.

Scientists from the University of Birmingham>s Institute of Applied Health Research and the School of Sport, Exercise, and Health Sciences at Loughborough University in the United Kingdom carried out the trial.

Specifically, they wanted to understand whether a relatively brief and straightforward intervention could reduce weight gain over Christmas. To find out, they recruited participants just before Christmas 2016 and 2017. In total, they involved 272 people; 78 percent were female, and 78 percent were white.

Researchers took the first weight measurements in November and then followed up in January.

The intervention

The researchers divided the partic-

ipants between an intervention group

The authors explain why regular weighins are essential:

and a control group. Members of the

intervention group were asked to record

their weight at least twice a week, although

preferably more often.

"Regular weighing and recording of weight to check progress against a target (self-monitoring) has been shown to be an effective behavioral intervention within weight management programs.

The researchers encouraged the participants in the intervention group to think about their weight and how it was changing over time. As the authors explain, the intervention "aimed to promote restraint of energy consumption.

Also, the participants were given tips about managing weight and provided with a list of festive foods along with information on how much physical activity they would need to do to burn off the calories of each food they had consumed. For example, it would take 21 minutes of running to burn off the calories found in one mince pie.

The control group, on the other hand, only received a leaflet about healthy living.

#### Did it work?

After adjusting the data for confounding variables, the researchers found that the individuals in the intervention group had gained less weight than those in the control group - an average of 0.49 kilograms (1.1 pounds) less.

Those in the intervention group also showed more restraint, managing to limit their calorie intake more than those in the control group.
Although the difference in weight gain

was smaller than the researchers had hoped, they are still excited by the results.

Because the holiday season is a yearlv event, even if people only prevent a small amount of weight gain each year, it could add up to a considerable amount over a lifetime.

The authors note some shortfalls to their study. For instance, it involved a relatively small group of people, and the follow-up duration was quite brief. However, the results merit follow-up. Lifestyle change is challenging, but shorter bursts of focus on weight management may be more achievable for some people.

The authors believe that their findings "should be considered by health policymakers to prevent weight gain in the population during high-risk periods such as holidays."

(Source: Medical News Today)

## Mediterranean diet reduces cardiovascular risk by a quarter



A recent study has put the Mediterranean diet to the test once more, attempting to unpick the molecular mechanisms that

Inspired by the traditional eating patterns of people from Greece, Italy, and Spain, the Mediterranean diet can seemingly do no wrong.

In a nutshell, the diet is rich in plants and olive oil but low in meat and sugary Over the years, studies have concluded

that this eating pattern lowers the risk of various health issues, including coronary heart disease and stroke. Studies have even concluded that the

Mediterranean diet might extend lifespan in older adults as well as reduce the risk of Parkinson>s and Alzheimer>s.

Evidence is mounting for its health benefits, but scientists still do not know exactly how these benefits come about.

## The Mediterranean black box

A new study published in JAMA Network Open asks the following question: "Is the Mediterranean diet [...] associated with lower risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) events in a [United States] population, and, if so, what are the underlying mechanisms?'

As corresponding study author Dr. Samia Mora explains, "While prior studies have shown benefit for the Mediterranean diet on reducing cardiovascular events and improving cardiovascular risk factors, it has been a black box regarding the extent to which improvements in known and novel risk factors contribute to these effects."

To investigate, the scientists took data from the Women's Health Study. Lead study author Shafqat Ahmad, Ph.D., led researchers from Brigham and Women>s Hospital, Harvard Medical School, and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health — all in Boston, MA.

In all, they had access to the health records and dietary habits of 25,994 women, all of whom were healthy at the start of the study. The researchers followed them for a maximum of 12 years.

The researchers measured the levels of 40 biomarkers, including lipids, inflammation, glucose metabolism, and lipoproteins. They split the participants into three groups — low, middle, and upper intake — depending on how strictly they adhered to the Mediterranean diet.

They were particularly interested in cardiovascular events, such as stroke and heart attack. They found that:

In the low intake group, 4.2 percent of women had a cardiovascular event.

In the middle intake group, 3.8 percent of women had a cardiovascular event.

In the upper intake group, 3.8 percent

of women had a cardiovascular event. This marks the first long-term study in a U.S. population to explore the impact of the Mediterranean diet on CVD. The authors conclude:

"[H]igher [Mediterranean diet] intake was associated with approximately one-quarter lower risk of CVD events over a 12-year follow-up period."

The authors also note that this effect size is equivalent to that present in people who take statins, which are common drugs that doctors prescribe to lower cardio-

#### Mediterranean metabolites

Next, they dived into the metabolic data to see if they could find any patterns. They discovered that variation in metabolites related to inflammation accounted for 29 percent of the reduction in CVD risk.

Glucose metabolism and insulin resistance accounted for 27.9 percent, body mass index (BMI) for 27.3 percent, and blood pressure for 26.6 percent.

The team also noted relationships between a number of other metabolites, including lipids, but these were less pronounced.

Dr. Mora says, "In this large study, we found that modest differences in biomarkers contributed in a multifactorial way to this cardiovascular benefit that was seen over the long-term.

Once again, the Mediterranean eating pattern seems to have come up trumps; and now we know that its benefits are most likely due to the way it interacts with inflammation pathways, glucose metabolism, and insulin resistance.

Of course, there are some limitations to the study. For instance, as the authors explain, CVD risk could have been influenced by as-yet-unknown metabolic factors that the scientists did not measure in this study.

Also, the dietary information that they analyzed relied on the participants keeping a food diary, which comes with a potential for human error. However, the size of this study and the detailed information about biomarkers make this a relatively reliable research endeavor.

As evidence in favor of the Mediterranean diet mounts, its popularity is sure to continue climbing.

(Source: newstrolley.com)

## **Health Ministry providing** services to 12,500 **HIV/AIDS** patients

HEALTH

d e s k

TEHRAN — The Iranian Health Ministry is providing healthcare services to some 12,500 patients suffering HIV/AIDS nationwide, head of communicable diseases center at the ministry has said.



All consulting and treatment services for patients diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and their families are free of charge, ISNA news agency quoted Mohammad Mehdi Gouya as saying on Monday.

Since last years some 570,000 pregnant women were tested for HIV and 113 were infected with the virus, Gouya said, stating that only two, who had referred to the centers too late, gave birth to HIV positive infants.

The number of HIV positive individuals receiving healthcare services from Health Ministry increased from 9,000 in last year (March 2017-March 2018) to 12,500 this year.

International funds are also still available, however, the amount have decreased, he said, explaining that they constitute five percent of the HIV/AIDS budget of the country.

International cooperation are mostly in form of technical and scientific know-how rather than financial support, he concluded.

In April, Parvin Afsar Kazerouni, the chairwoman of HIV/AIDS department at the Health Ministry, explained that some 36,571 were diagnosed with HIV virus up to late December 2017. She further regretted that the number only constitute 40 percent of those who are actually suffering the disease and the rest are still undiagnosed while they might not even know they are having the infection.

### Khwarizmi Youth Award announces winners

H E A L T H TEHRAN — The 20th Khwarizmi Youth Award ceremony which was held on Monday announced winners for scientific achievements, IRNA news agency reported.

The ceremony took place with Science Minister Mansour Gholami in attendance.

Khwarizmi Youth Award is a national version of Khwarizmi International Award which only Iranians who are less than 35 years old can participate. The national award started in 1999 to honor young scientists and embolden them to keep taking even bigger steps in their research career.

On the other hand the Khwarizmi International Award, which was named in memory of Abu Ja'far Mohammad Ibn Mousa Khwarizmi, the great Iranian mathematician and astronomer (770-840 C.E), is given annually by the Iranian Research Organization for Science and Technology (IROST) to individuals who have made outstanding achievements in research, innovation and invention, in fields related to science and technology.

## **Christmas Eve may bring** seasonal spike in heart attacks, study warns

With the festive season looming, researchers are warning that heightened emotions and over indulgence contributes to an annual spike in heart attacks.

In one of the largest studies to assess the hazards of the holidays, Swedish researchers pinpointed 10pm on Christmas Eve as the point where annual heart attacks are most likely.

While Swedish festivities peak on Christmas Eve, previous studies have shown other countries have higher rates on Christmas Day and during holidays such as Eid in Muslim-majority countries. However, the findings from Lund University also found an

event that unifies us all, with Mondays at 8am accounting for another rise in heart attacks Previous studies have also found evidence that major national events, such as the U.S. Super Bowl, stock market crashes and natural disasters also cause a spike, though this

The study was included in a Christmas edition of The BMJ and is one of the most in-depth looks at the annual variation in cardiac events using a single, high quality national record.

It involved the analysis of 283,014 heart attacks recorded in Swedish medical records over a 16-year period – from 1998 to 2013.

Heart attack rates at Christmas were 15 per cent higher than in the weeks before and after, while they were raised 12 per cent at Sweden's Midsummer festival.

But the greatest additional risk was at Christmas Eve, with heart attack rates as much as 37 per cent higher than on the same day a week later or earlier.

Risks were greatest in the over 75s and those with pre-existing heart conditions, or other diseases such as diabetes.

It said previous studies "have shown that acute experience of anger, anxiety, sadness, grief and stress increases the risk of myocardial infarction and thus possibly explains the higher risk observed in our study."

While New Year's Eve is typically seen as another peak of emotion and indulgence, the researchers found a higher risk on New Year's Day.

This may be down to family members visiting relatives on New Year's Day and noticing they're in a worse state, potentially caused by over indulgence the night before, the authors suggest.

Heart attack rates were broadly similar between men and women throughout the year, except for Midsummer when there were slightly more men admitted.

"It is possible that men are more likely to smoke, consume alcohol and eat to excess during this holiday than women," the authors added.

(Source: The Independent)

## **Tehran conference exploring** "**Iran in Transition**"



HERITAGE

d e s k
of Iran in the early 19th-century is being addressed in a two-day conference, which on Monday opened at the University of Tehran.

Titled "L'Iran en transition: de la révolution constitutionnelle à la fin de l'ère qajare," the event is explores the Persian Constitutional Revolution, also known as the Constitutional Revolution of Iran, that took place between 1905 and 1911.

It also turns the spotlight on the fall of the Qajar Dynasty (1794–1925), ISNA reported.

The event is supported by the Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, a Tehran-based archeological and historical institute which is part of the cultural wing of the French Embassy, and the Istanbul-based IFEA (Institut Français d'?tudes Anatoliennes).

The Constitutional Revolution opened the way for massive change in Persia, heralding the modern era. It saw a period of unprecedented debate in a burgeoning press as well.

## Shush offers fam tour for free



TOURISM

d e s k

recently organized a free familiarization tour in a bid to promote traveling to the southwestern Iranian city.

UNESCO-registered sites of Susa and Tchogha Zanbil along with several rural villages were among destinations people visited on the tour, CHTN reported on Sunday.

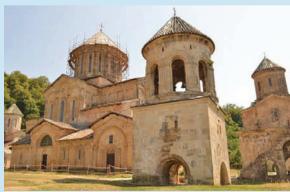
The largest ziggurat outside of Mesopotamia and the best preserved of this type of stepped pyramidal monument, Tchogha Zanbil overlooks the ancient city of Susa (near modern Shush) in Khuzestan province.

## ROUND THE GLOBE

## **Gelati Monastery**

On the lower southern slopes of the mountains of the Northern Caucasus, Gelati Monastery reflects the 'golden age' of medieval Georgia, a period of political strength and economic growth between the reigns of King David IV 'the Builder' (1089-1125) and Queen Tamar (1184-1213).

It was David who, in 1106 began building the monastery near his capital Kutaisi on a wooded hill above the river Tskalt-sitela. The main church was completed in 1130 in the reign of his son and successor Demetre.



A view of the UNESCO-listed Gelati Monastery in Georgia

Further churches were added to the monastery throughout the 13th and early 14th centuries. The monastery is richly decorated with mural paintings from the 12th to 17th centuries, as well as a 12th century mosaic in the apse of the main church, depicting the Virgin with Child flanked by archangels.

Its high architectural quality, outstanding decoration, size, and clear spatial quality combine to offer a vivid expression of the artistic idiom of the architecture of the Georgian "Golden Age" and its almost completely intact surroundings allow an understanding of the intended fusion between architecture and landscape.

Gelati was not simply a monastery: it was also a center of science and education, and the Academy established there was one of the most important centers of culture in ancient Georgia.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Iran travel balance turns positive as inbound tourism jumps

1 → Of the reasons behind, according to experts, is that touring Iran has become more wallet-friendly as the rial has lost over half of its value against major foreign currencies, the report said.

Cost-effective yet quality medical services, on the other hand, is turning the country a popular destination for medial travelers.

Medical tourist arrivals in the country has nearly doubled in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year, corresponding to spring 2018, from a year earlier, an official with the Ministry of Health said in September.

"People from Iraq, Republic of Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Turkey and Pakistan constituted the highest travelers to Iran respectively that visited the country for medical, pilgrimage and cultural heritage purposes," Teymouri said earlier this month.

Some 2 million Iraqi nationals visited Iran during the seven-month period, naming it Iran's largest source of tourists, the official said.

Filled from corner to corner with ancient bazaars, museums, mosques, monuments, gardens, historical sites, rich natural and rural landscapes, Iran hosts some of the world's oldest cultural monuments, including 22 UNESCO World Heritage sites.



## Ground broken for "7-star" hotel in Kish



TOURISM TEHRAN - Construction of a 7-star hotel has begun in the Persian Gulf island of Kish, southern Iran, ILNA reported.

An elegant and modern 10-strorey hotel will be built on a piece of land measuring 16,000 square meters meeting required standards, said Hossein Robati, the project investor from the private sector.

Senior MP Mohammad Reza Aref, CEO of Kish Free Zone Organization Gholamhossein Mozaffari and several local officials attended the ground-breaking ceremony, which was held on December 12.

The KFZO is in charge of handling the infrastructure affairs, development and economic growth, creating job opportunities, attracting local and foreign investors, regulating the good and labor market and ultimately utilizing the Island's tourist potentials.

The coral island enjoys free-trade-zone status, with ever growing hotels, shopping centers, apartment blocks and retail complexes dominate the once-empty desert landscape.

## Tehran festival to mark Yalda, Christmas bonds



HERITAGE TEHRAN — Yalda de s k the longest night of the year - and Christmas, as deeply-rooted-in-time celebrations, share common, cultural or historical links, which are set to be highlighted during a festival on December 20.

Yalda Night falls on December 21. It's a time for pleasant family reunions that entails laughter, merriment and good cheer.

Organized by the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, the festival aims to put the spotlight on cultural scenes that the two feasts have in common in order to promote peace and friendship across the globe, Mehr reported.

Time closeness between the Yalda Night and Christmas which commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ offers a good opportunity that by the means of cultural tools think of global peace and

unity, the report said.

The festival will be held at the Sa'dabad
Cultural-Historical Complex in northern

## Egypt unveils 'one of a kind' ancient tomb, expects more finds

SAQQARA, Egypt (Reuters) - Egypt unveiled a well-preserved 4,400-year-old tomb decorated with hieroglyphs and statues south of Cairo on Saturday, and officials expect more discoveries when archaeologists excavate the site further in coming months.

The tomb was found in a buried ridge at the ancient necropolis of Saqqara. It was untouched and unlooted, Mostafa Waziri, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, told reporters at the site. He described the find as "one of a kind in the last decades".

The tomb dates from the rule of Neferirkare Kakai, the third king of the Fifth Dynasty of the Old Kingdom.

Archaeologists removed a last layer of debris from the tomb on Thursday and found five shafts inside, Waziri said. One of the shafts was unsealed with nothing inside, but the other four were sealed. They are expecting to make discoveries when they excavate those shafts starting on Sunday, he said. He was hopeful about one shaft in particular.

"I can imagine that all of the objects can be found in this area," he said, pointing at



one of the sealed shafts. "This shaft should lead to a coffin or a sarcophagus of the owner of the tomb."

The tomb is 10 meters (33 ft) long, three meters (9.8 ft) wide and just under three

metres high, Waziri said.

The walls are decorated with hieroglyphs and statues of pharaohs. Waziri said the tomb was unique because of the statues and its near perfect condition.

"The color is almost intact even though the tomb is almost 4,400 years old," he said.

The tomb lies in a buried ridge that has only partially been uncovered. Waziri said he expects more discoveries to be made there when archaeologists start more excavation work in January.

The Fifth Dynasty ruled Egypt from about 2,500 BC to 2,350 BC, not long after the great pyramid of Giza was built.

Saqqara served as the necropolis for Memphis, the capital of ancient Egypt for more than two millennia.

Ancient Egyptians mummified humans to preserve their bodies for the afterlife, while animal mummies were used as religious offerings.

Egypt has revealed over a dozen ancient discoveries this year.

The country hopes the finds will brighten its image abroad and revive interest among travelers who once flocked to its iconic pharaonic temples and pyramids but who fled after the 2011 political uprising.

(Source: Reuters)

## Tourism chiefs want toll charges scrapped as bridges linking England to Wales become free for first time

Tourism chiefs have called for toll fees on British roads to be scrapped as two bridges linking England to Wales are to become free to use for the first time in history.

Tolls on the original Severn bridge were introduced in 1966, while the second Severn crossing, which was renamed after Prince Charles, opened in 1996. Car drivers are charged £5.60 to pass over both bridges while it costs £16.70 for HGV motorists.

At the Conservative Party conference in October, Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns declared both tolls would be lifted in a move he pledged would boost the Welsh economy by about £100 million a year.

Tourism groups are pressing authorities to rescind further charges in the wake of the changes, arguing an end to tolls could help visitor numbers flourish across the UK.

Kurt Janson, director of Tourism Alliance, said: "We welcome taking the toll off the Severn Bridge because that will remove a significant barrier for people using the bridge and therefore tourism flows in both directions to and from Wales.

"We are in a globally competitive market where people are able to choose anywhere in the world to go on holiday,

so it is important that destinations do everything they can to reduce the cost of visitors coming to their areas, so they can be more competitive, and one way of doing this to to get rid of toll charges."

Mr Janson singled out charges on the Humber Bridge, where drivers pay £1.50 for a one-way journey without an electronic tag, as the next toll which should be scrapped to increase Yorkshire's appeal as a tourist destination. Any such move would first have to be agreed by Parliament.

Patricia Yates, from Visit Britain, the UK's official tourism website, added: "Making it easier to travel between destinations is great news for domestic and international visitors.

"Tourism is a fiercely competitive industry and people have a lot of choice so removing barriers to travel not only promotes a message of welcome it helps boost visitor growth, spreading the economic benefits across more of our nations and regions." "VisitBritain welcomes initiatives that make it easier

for domestic and international visitors to travel between destinations and to explore more of the UK." But while charges are being lifted for drivers travelling between England and Wales, motorists visiting Hampshire face an increase in charges when crossing the Itchen Bridge. In October, Southampton City Council proposed raising the cost for car and van drivers crossing the bridge, who are not residents of the city, by 20p. The increase could be approved in February when the council is expected to pass its next budget.

Long-standing critics of toll charges have historically argued that the charges penalise commuters forced to pay when travelling to and from work as well as being harmful to businesses.

However, it has been suggested that toll charges are needed to help reduce congested traffic and pollution levels. Motorists in Kent and Essex using the Dartford Crossing

have been plagued with long queues for years, yet politicians fear axing the charges could result in worsening traffic volume.

Dartford Council leader Jeremy Kite said: "I would usu-

Dartford Council leader Jeremy Kite said: "I would usually want all highways to be toll-free but the truth is that Dartford suffers so much from the impacts of congestion and poor air quality arising from the crossing that even the slightest increase in demand resulting from free tolls could worsen things for our town."

(Source: The Telegraph)

# The future of drones might involve bees, researchers find

You've probably heard the phrase "save the bees." Well, the bees may be saving the

On Tuesday, engineers at University of Washington announced that they have designed wireless platforms to be worn by bees, in an effort to solve the issue of poor battery life on smaller drones.

Although drones have become a symbol of future technology, the limited battery life on small drones has been a constant issue. The bumblebee, nature's flying pollinator, can stay in the air a lot longer.

The researchers, Vikram Iyer, Rajalakshmi Nandakumar, Anran Wang, Sawyer B. Fuller, and Shyamnath Gollakota call their invention Living IoT — a flying wireless platform with sensors and trackers that rides live insects. Previously, the team had worked on another insect flight platform dubbed the RoboFly.

#### The sensor package

The sensor package is a small rechargeable battery that lasts up to seven hours of flight and is light on the insect, weighing 102 mg or around the weight of seven grains of uncooked rice.

"We decided to use bumblebees because they're large enough to carry a tiny battery that can power our system," said Iyer, a doctoral student in the UW Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering in an interview with NBC News.

Gollakota said not only can the bees fly



The sensor package is a small rechargeable battery that lasts up to seven hours of flight and is light on the insect, weighing 102 mg or around the weight of seven grains of uncooked rice.

what's around them unlike drones.

"With a drone, you're just flying around randomly," he said to NBC News, "while a bee is going to be drawn to specific things, like the plants it prefers to pollinate. And on top of learning about the environment, you can also learn a lot about how the bees behave."

Following multiple trials, the engineers track the bees through antennas and broadcast signals. And it does help that bees are always close to their hive. The bee collects data throughout its daily flight and as it returns to the hive, the battery recharges and researchers are sent the data.

#### Bee population decline

The researchers think their design could also help understand the reason behind the decline in the bee population. The population of bees is rapidly decreasing, which has led to fears that without them, our food industry could be in danger.

"With the sensors, now we can understand bees' behavior in the wild," said Gollakota. "We can potentially understand why these bees are going extinct. Now we have a bird's-eye view of what the bee is feeling or sensing.

The UW engineers promise the tiny creatures are safe with their new fashionable tech. The "whole process is very simple. All we are doing is just putting on a tiny backpack, and it is very easy for these bees to carry. They go and fly around and are completely fine.

(Source: Fortune)

## NYU researchers pioneer machine learning to speed chemical discoveries, reduce waste

Machine learning algorithms can predict stock market fluctuations, control complex manufacturing processes, enable navigation for robots and driverless vehicles, and

Now, researchers at the NYU Tandon School of Engineering are tapping a new set of capabilities in this field of artificial intelligence, combining artificial neural net-works with infrared thermal imaging to control and interpret chemical reactions with precision and speed that far outpace conventional methods. More innovative still is the fact that this technique was developed and tested on novel microreactors that allow chemical discoveries to take place quickly and with far less environmental waste than standard large-scale reactions.

"This system can reduce the decision-making process about certain chemical manufacturing processes from one year to a matter of weeks, saving tons of chemical waste and energy in the process," said Ryan Hartman, an assistant professor of chemical and biomolecular engineering at NYU Tandon and lead author of a paper detailing the method in the journal Computers & Chemical Engineering.

#### Microfluidic reactors

Last year, Hartman introduced a new class of miniaturized chemical reactors that brings reactions traditionally carried out in large-batch reactors with up to 100 liters of chemicals down to the microscale, using just microliters of fluid - a few small drops. These microfluidic reactors are useful for analyzing catalysts for manufacturing or

discovering compounds and studying interactions in drug development, and they promise to reduce waste, speed innovation, and improve the safety of chemical research.

Hartman and his team have increased the utility of these reactors by pairing them with two additional technologies: infrared thermography, an imaging technique that captures a thermal map displaying changes in heat during a chemical reaction, and supervised machine learning, a discipline of artificial intelligence wherein an algorithm learns to interpret data based on inputs selected by researchers controlling the experiments.

Paired together, they allow researchers to capture changes

in thermal energy during chemical reactions -- as indicated by color changes on the thermal image -- and to interpret ese changes quickly.

#### Requiring a sterile field

Due to the non-contact nature of infrared thermography, the technique can even be utilized for reactions that operate at extreme temperatures or in extreme conditions, such as a bioreactor that requires a sterile field.

The research team is the first to train an artificial neural network to control and interpret infrared thermal images of a thermoelectrically cooled microfluidic device. The potential impacts on both innovation and sustainability are significant. Large chemical companies may screen hundreds of catalysts while developing new polymers, for example, and each reaction can require more than 100 liters of chemicals and 24 hours or longer. Screening that number of catalysts using current laboratory processes can take a year. Using Hartman's approach, the entire process can be accomplished in weeks, with exponentially less waste and energy usage.

Along with Hartman, the research team includes NYU Tandon doctoral student Benjamin Rizkin and 18-year-old Karina Popovich, a Brooklyn Technical High School senior who joined Hartman's lab as part of InspirED, a National Science Foundation (NSF)-funded program that provides gifted juniors and seniors the opportunity to complete a thesis project in chemical engineering in Hartman's Flow Chemistry with Microsystems Laboratory.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

## Climate change is really, really bad for human health and well-being, researchers say

It's now beyond official: Greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, pose a danger to public health and welfare, according to an exhaustive review that looked at 275 scientific studies published over the past nine years.

Researchers did the report to investigate whether the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 2009 Endangerment Finding, which found that greenhouse gases pose a risk to human health, still held up.

The new study showed that there is now even more evidence that greenhouse gases are harming human health and welfare. The investigation also found an additional four areas, not listed in the original report, in which greenhouse gases threaten people.

"There's absolutely no scientific basis for questioning the Endangerment Finding," review lead researcher Philip Duffy, president and executive director of the Woods Hole

Research Center in Falmouth, Massachusetts,

#### told Live Science. The scientific process

The "Supreme Court said 'if you determine that greenhouse gases are dangerous, then you have to regulate them," Duffy said. "But, of course, the Supreme Court wasn't itself going to say whether greenhouse gases are dangerous. That's a scientific process not a legal one. So, the EPA undertook the scientific assessment of the dangerousness or not-dangerousness of greenhouse gases."

In December 2009, the EPA released that report, which found that greenhouse gases do endanger human health and welfare by causing climate change. The administration of president Barack Obama used this finding to implement new regulations, such as the Clean Power Plan and stronger vehicle mileage standards for cars and light trucks,

In response to these statements, Duffy and his colleagues decided to look at scientific studies published since the endangerment finding came out, to see whether the science strengthened or weakened the case for en-

The new review grouped the findings into different categories: public health, air quality, agriculture, forests, water resources, sea level rise, infrastructure and wildlife. The four new categories include ocean acidification, national security, economic well-being and violence. Here are more in-depth looks at several of them.

#### Exposure to ozone

People in more than 200 U.S. cities have an increased risk of premature death because of future warming, the researchers found. Extreme heat is linked with sleep loss, kidney

stones, low birth weight, violence and suicide. Exposure to ozone and other air pollutants, including smoke from forest fires, can be bad for human health.

Extreme weather events intensified by climate change can lead to physical trauma, disease outbreaks, interruption of health care delivery and mental health problems.

With less snowpack in the mountains, the West and Southwest may experience more droughts. Reduced snowpack can lead to reduced river flow, which can threaten rare and endangered species, such as salmon and

Climate change is also expected to erode water quality in the United States because of nutrient loading (such as from fertilizer or animal waste), especially in the Midwest and Northeast.

(Source: livescience.com)

## Biggest ever' sinkhole ripped open in New Zealand, and unearthed history

What is thought to be the largest known sinkhole in New Zealand ripped open across a farm on NZ's North Island earlier this year, revealing a gigantic cavernous void estimated to have been decades or even a century in the making.

As of May 2018, the sinkhole, situated about 15 kilometers south-east of the city of Rotorua in a region called Earthquake Flat, measured as long as two football fields and plunges to a depth that would swallow a six-story building.

The "largest I've seen prior to this would be about a third of the size of this, so this is really big," volcanologist Brad Scott from Kiwi geoscience firm GNS Science told AP at the time.

A farm assistant first came across the sinkhole in early May before the sun came up, narrowly avoiding riding into it on his motorbike when rounding up cows for milking early in the morning.

#### Gaping chasm

Only later in the day, when visibility was improved, did the sheer scale of the gaping chasm become apparent.

"It wasn't until I came down in daylight that I actually saw just how big it was," said



farm manager Colin Tremain.

"We'll keep it fenced off as it is to keep stock out, although stock aren't stupid, they're not going to walk into a hole, they can spot

According to Scott, the sinkhole could

have been forming for up to 100 years, after decades of rainfall slowly eroded the farm's limestone rock foundations.

After a period of intensive rainfall at the end of April that lasted for about a week, the last of the rock's resistance gave way, opening up to reveal this jagged, 200-metre-long (656 ft) ravine that looks like something out of

the movie 2012. The 20-meter (66 ft) depth of the hole isn't just vertigo-inducing. It also offers a fascinating scientific cross-section to geologists, showing the gradual build-up and layering of rock, sediment, and soil over unimaginably

#### long timescales. Volcanic deposit

"What I see in the bottom of this hole is the original 60,000-year-old volcanic deposit that came out of this crater," Scott told TVNZ.

What makes this sinkhole so much bigger than ones that have preceded it in New Zealand is the record-breaking rainfall that helped cause it – almost 170mm of rain in 38 hours.

Thanks to that decisive deluge, volcanologists and landslide scientists will be busy over the next few weeks, inspecting the chasm, and seeing what they can learn from it.

Others meanwhile, are just happy this giant void didn't swallow them whole – like the farm assistant, Gabriel Lafalla, who narrowly avoided riding into the sinkhole in the pre-dawn darkness.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

## **Electric cars of the future could** be recharged in 15 minutes

The next generation of electric cars could charge their batteries in the time it takes to fill up at a gas station.

A group of companies including Germany's BMW (BMWYY), Porsche and Siemens (SIEGY) say they have developed technology that could help make super-fast charging a reality.

They unveiled on Thursday a 450 kW charging station that needs only three minutes to provide enough juice for a 100 kilometer (62 miles) drive.

Ian Ellerington, head of technology transfer at the Faraday Institution, said the technology is significantly better than what's currently available, even if there are major issues to resolve before it's put into widespread use.

450kW is substantially quicker than the Tesla superchargers (120kW), and would in principle be 10 times quicker than the rapid chargers that are currently widely available," he said.

They slow down road trips, and they're a major inconvenience

for owners who can't charge their cars at home Ellerington said the next generation of chargers could help

solve the problem. "At 350-450kW, electric charging will take a time comparable to refueling with gasoline, which will make long journeys in (electric

vehicles) as practical as in cars using liquid fuels," he said. More development work is needed to make 450 kW chargers a practical option, however.

According to Ellerington, one major piece of the puzzle is building cars that can handle the increased power.

"I believe that there are no vehicles currently on the market that could accept this amount of power, and it will need the next generation of batteries to take advantage of the full capability," he said. For the 450 kW charging project, BMW and Porsche designed

cars specifically for the tests. Keith Pullen, a professor of energy systems at City, University of London, said that super-fast charging comes with other drawbacks. (Source: ktvz.com)

## First Dutch bananas could help tackle worldwide fungal threat: new study

A Dutch university has grown the Netherlands' first crop of bananas as part of a research program that could help protect the fruit from a deadly fungus that threatens production worldwide.

Wageningen University grew 60 banana plants in its greenhouses on coco peat and rock wool, avoiding the threat of a soilborne fungal disease that could destroy hundreds of thousands of hectares of banana plants around the world, local media reported. The crop will be offered to local hospitals and restaurants.

Gert Kema, a professor of tropical plant pathology, said the success would lead to further research into combating Fusarium wilt.

"It threatens banana production throughout the world," Kema said. "So we took the banana out of the soil. The plants grow very well, with only the application of a nutrient."

Bananas are a staple food for more than 400 million people in the tropics, according to the university. The Fusarium fungus contaminates soil for decades and cannot be suppressed, and is threatening banana production throughout south-east Asia. Growing bananas in an artificial medium allows for the nu-

trients the plants receive to be tailored according to their needs, and cuts down on nutrient losses through leakage, Kema told the university's website.

The "Dutch banana also does not need disease control, which makes cultivation more sustainable than in traditional production areas," he said. Under this kind of "precision cultivation", the plants can also be separated out more so that each gets more light, allowing individual bunches of bananas to ripen faster.

Several local companies and the Swiss-owned banana producer and distributor Chiquita are looking into expanding the research  $% \left( 1\right) =\left( 1\right) \left( 1\right) +\left( 1\right) \left( 1\right) \left( 1\right) +\left( 1\right) \left( 1\right)$ program, and a trial using artificial substrates is planned in the (Source: The Guardian)

## New research finds tornadoes form from the ground up, contrary to popular thought

Historically, scientists assumed tornado rotation began in storm clouds, creating a funnel that travels downwards. This theory matches what storm chasers commonly observe visually in the field. Viewers often report seeing funnel clouds gradually descending until they make contact with the ground. But new research combining a new type of Doppler radar

with photos and videos of tornadoes formed by supercell thunderstorms shows the opposite is true: Tornadoes materialize from the ground up. Weather forecasters typically issue tornado warnings based on

radar observations of strong rotation above the ground, but the new findings suggest forecasters must re-evaluate their warning procedure, according to the researchers.

'We need to reconsider the paradigms that we have to explain tornado formation, and we especially need to communicate this to forecasters who are trying to make warnings and issue warnings," said Jana Houser, a meteorologist at Ohio University in Athens who will present the new findings here today at the American Geophysical Union's Fall Meeting. "You are not going to really ever be finding strong evidence of a tornado descending, so we need to stop making that a priority in our forecasting strategies."

Research conducted in the 1970s suggested tornadoes form from rotation that starts several kilometers above Earth's surface. The theory was that this funnel gradually sucked in air from below, descending until it touched the ground.

Most meteorologists have accepted this theory of tornado formation, but a series of new observations from rapidly scanning radars has started to change that.

One of the pivotal cases contributing to the new understanding of tornado formation occurred on May 31, 2013. On this day, the El Reno tornado formed in central Oklahoma and shattered previous tornado records. It was the widest tornado ever recorded, peaking at 4.2 kilometers (2.6 miles) wide, and had wind speeds of more than 480 kilometers per hour (300 miles per hour), the second-highest wind speeds recorded on Earth.

(Source: phys.org)

## Walking linked to lower heart failure risk in older women

Walking is great for the body, mind and soul. And if you're a middle-aged woman, a new study finds that it may lower your

Heart failure affects roughly 3.6 million American women. Now when you have heart failure, this means that the heart is no longer pumping and circulating blood like it should. This causes fatigue because the body isn't getting enough oxygen, and other symptoms like shortness of breath, a persistent cough, rapid heart rate and swelling of the ankles, feet, legs or abdomen.

Now new research has found that exercise can lower the risk of heart failure in middle-aged and older women. More than 137,000 women aged 50 to 79 took part in the study. And researchers found the women who exercised the most were 35% less likely to develop heart failure. Quite a few of the women in study walked, about 38%. I love recommending walking because it's easy, doesn't cost any money and you can do it anywhere!

Besides exercising, there are other preventative steps you can take when it comes to heart failure, so here are my prescriptions: Know your blood pressure numbers and keep them in the

normal range. If it's uncontrolled, this can lead to heart disease. Know that coronary artery disease and diabetes can also damage the heart. If you have these, be sure to see your doctor regularly so that the conditions can be monitored.

If you suffer from depression, be sure to get help. Depression is often associated with heart failure.

Follow a heart-healthy diet, don't smoke and lose weight if you need to. Taking these steps can help prevent heart failure. (Source: WXYZ)

#### RECIPE OF THE WEEK

## Persimmon and pomegranate salad

"A sweet and tangy fall salad with a bit of crunch and nuttiness tossed in from the pecans. I love pecans so I often double the

Ingredients:



1/2 cup pecan halves

3/4 cup orange juice, divided 2 teaspoons cornstarch

11/2 tablespoons honey

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil 1/2 lime, juiced

7 fresh tarragon leaves, thinly sliced crosswise, or more to taste Salt and ground black pepper

1 (8 ounce) package herb salad

2 Fuyu persimmons, peeled and each cut into

8 pieces 1 large pomegranate, peeled and seeds separated

**Directions:** Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C).

Spread pecans onto a baking sheet.

Bake pecans in the preheated oven until toasted and fragrant, 5 to 7 minutes. Set aside to cool.

Whisk 1/2 cup orange juice and cornstarch together in a small saucepan; cook and stir over medium heat until mixture thickens,  $3\ to\ 5$  minutes. Remove saucepan from heat and stir in honey until dissolved. Stir remaining 1/4 cup orange juice, olive oil, lime juice, tarragon leaves, salt, and pepper into orange juice mixture. Chill dressing in refrigerator, at least 30 minutes.

Spread herb salad mix into a serving bowl or on individual plates; top with persimmon slices, pomegranate seeds, and pecans. Drizzle cooled dressing over salad.

## LEARN ENGLISH

A: Hey John! I haven't seen you in ages! What's new? What have you been up to?

you Well, on top the **norm**, you kno wife and kids and work, I've actually gotten into doing some

A: Trading? You, big guy? What are you trading?

B: Currencies.

A: Currencies? As in Euros, Dollars, Pounds and Rupees? B: It's called Forex. Foreign Exchange. The great thing about it is that I don't have to invest a huge amount. I put in a margin deposit and then I can buy and sell up to 100 times that much!

A: I don't understand. You're buying and selling money? B: You got it! Just last night I made USD 150!

A: Last night?

B: Yeah! It's a 24 hour market! I had bought some RMB earlier at a low asking price but last night it appreciated drastically so I made a split second decision and sold all my RMB at an amazing bid! I've also done some trading with CHF and AUD and HKD. I've made some good profits but I've also suffered some losses. It depends on a lot of factors just like any other market. In total I've made about USD 500 in the past few months.

A: You're kidding! I'm on! Where do I sign up?

■ Key vocabulary

norm: something is usual or expected

**currency:** the money that a country uses

margin deposit: the sum of money required to reinstate drastically: taking effect rapidly

split second: very quickly; just a second

bid: an offer to pay a particular amount of money

**■** Supplementary vocabulary depreciate: decrease in the value of a currency in response

to market demands **spread:** the difference between the bid and the ask for a

given currency pair **OTC: (over the counter market):** a market that has no central exchange so exchanges are done inter-bank

between two parties speculative: buying and selling in the hope of making a profit, rather than for some business-related need

**base currency:** the currency in which the investor buys or sells (Source: irlanguage.com)

Trace of women's growth in next year's budget bill

WOMEN TEHRAN—The budget headquarters, Ebtekar said elaborating that e s k bill for the next fiscal year (starting March 21, 2019) has proposed policies regarding improvement of women's condition in the country, Masoumeh Ebtekar, vice president for women's and family affairs, has said.

One of the duties assigned to the department for women and family affairs in the Sixth Five-Year Development Plan (2016-2021), is implementing gender equality, ISNA quoted Ebtekar, speaking on the sidelines of the cabinet's meeting on December 12.

Formation of national headquarters for women and family affairs has been one of the policies of the government, she added.

Three very good laws were passed in the

the first law was on regulating indicators of gender equity.

All specialized committees and workshops on gender equality were held with the participation of all members of the workshop, including representative of Judiciary Force and Cultural Revolution Council, she stated.

The VP expressed that general indicators which are mainly on education, health, employment and sports were composed and inalized at different sessions.

Before, during and after marriage trainings and strategies for happiness and sports of women and girls were also considered in the laws passed by the headquarters.



## Women play major role in water, environmental planning

W O M E N TEHRAN — Women play a great role e s k in planning to address water and environmental problems, Molood Shiva, advisor to the energy minister for women's and family affairs said here on Saturday. Women have played an effective role in water supplying

and water projects all over the world, Fars quoted Shiva, speaking at the congress titled "zero point water".

Due to population growth, all water resources were con-

sumed inefficiently, she added.

Water, food and energy are three sides of a triangle which together lead to humanity's survival, Shiva said, noting that women are managers of water, food and energy and a determinative in this triangle.

"Women also play active role in agriculture. They also play a role in changing the pattern of farming in agriculture."

Since women accompany their family in different situations, one of the most profitable trainings in the world is education for women, the official said.

Naturally women are more sensitive toward the environment and water, she emphasized.

Unions and associations formed by women have always been able to increase the speed of projects, Shiva concluded.

## In Iranian folktales, a woman heralds winter

By Naghmeh Mizanian

In Iranian mythology and symbolism, man is a sign of effectiveness and woman is an indication of being affected.

Nan-e Sarma (mother of cold) looks forward the light and his male mate Amoo Norouz felicitates the spring and Norouz (Iranian New Year)

The love story of Nan-e Sarma and Amoo Norouz is an example of what happens not only in the nature but the whole world.

This is one of the folk stories of Iran usually being narrated by grandmothers on the longest night of the year, Yalda, when the warmth of grandmother's home nullifies the cold weather of winter.

Once upon a time, Nan-e Sarma, the lady of cold spells, arrived with the cold weather. She was an old woman with her hair as white as snow.

The grandma frost lived in the sky. She had two sons who brought cold weather with themselves. One of her sons, Chelle Bozorge, was a kind man. He reigned the world from the first day of winter for forty days.

After the reign of Chelle Bozorge, the other son of Nan-e Sarma, Chelle Kocheeke, reigned the world. He was unkind and cold. He brought sever cold weather, ice and snow. But his sovereignty was short. Only twenty days.

The older brother told the younger one not to try to make the world so cold. "Don't try hard, the spring will take away cold," Chelle Bozorge told Chelle Kocheeke. However, the younger brother tried to freeze everything.

One day, another ruler came and imprisoned Chelle Kocheeke in an icy mountain. Nan-e Sarma became really sad. She took a hot bar with herself and went to the



mountain to fight with the ices and snows and save her son.

She won the fight and all snows were

Nan-e Sarma, happy and cheerful, made her home all clean and neat. She prepared everything and waited for Amoo Norouz, the "Uncle New Year", the kind messenger of the New Year and spring.
On the first day of spring, Nan-e Sarma,

dresses up and sets up her haft-sin, waiting for Amoo Norouz.

But she falls asleep while Amoo Norouz shows up. He drinks some tea and leaves her a marigold flower and disappears without waking her up.
So she should wait one more year until

next spring to see him again.

Some people believe that if these two meet each other, an apocalypse will happen.

Tehran Times Women's Desk wishes all readers a happy and cheerful Yalda Night (December 21).

## Majority of Australian women sexually harassed at work: survey

Two in three Australian women have been sexually harassed at work, with the majority of cases unreported according to a survey released on Tuesday that highlighted challenges activists said prevent women from advancing in their careers. Some 64 percent of women and 35 percent of men

said they had been harassed at their current or former workplace, according to the survey of over 9,600 people by the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the country's main group representing workers. The majority of those surveyed said they were subjected

to offensive behavior or unwanted sexual attention. However only about a quarter of them made formal complaints. due to fears of repercussion, the survey found.

"Everyone should go to work free from the fear of harassment and unwanted sexual attention," the council's president, Michele O'Neil, said in a statement.

"For many people - mainly women - today in Australia this is not the reality. Our workplace laws have failed women who are experiencing harassment at work.'

Campaigners said sexual harassment creates a workplace environment that is discriminatory towards women, which can prevent them from moving forward in their careers. 'Sexual harassment in the workplace closes off women's

 $opportunities \ and \ supports \ the \ attitudes \ that \ make \ violence$ more likely," Merrindahl Andrew, from the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance, said by email. Australia was ranked 35 out of 144 countries in the

World Economic Forum's 2017 Gender Gap Index, up from 46 in 2016 due to greater female representation legislators and managers Although the global #MeToo movement has helped

raised awareness about sexual harassment, the advocacy group Plan International said the lack of strong policies and enforcement has discouraged victims from coming forward in Australia.

The survey finding is disturbing, yet not surprising to us," the group's chief executive in Australia Susanne Legena told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

She urged the government to improve reporting mechanisms, including by setting up a specific hotline and enhance training for police officers to fight underreporting of cases.

(Source: Reuters)

#### **ENGLISH IN USE**

### **LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION**

## Iran seeking possible inclusion of **Aq-Qeshlaq wetland on Ramsar List**

Iran is seeking to register Aq-Qeshlaq wetland in the northeastern North Khorasan province on the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, the provincial department of environment chief has said.

"Despite the area is facing water scarcity, the wetland and its surroundings are filled with water," ISNA quoted Eskandar Gordmardi as saying on Tuesday. The main purpose of applying for the list of sites on the Convention on Wetlands is to protect the wetland and prevent it from drying, he added.

## تالاب «آققشلاق» در بجنورد بینالمللی میشود

رئيس اداره محيط طبيعي اداره كل حفاظت محيطزيست خراسان شمالي گفت: ریا کی از می ا پیگیری های لازم در حال انجام است تا تالاب آق قشلاق در خراسان شمالی بهعنوان تالاب رامسر سایت به ثبت برسد. اسکندر گردمردی روز سه شنبه در گفتوگو با خبرنگار ایسنا، افزود: بهرغم وجـود بحـران کم آبـی در ایـن منطقـه، ایـن تـالاب دارای آب اسـت و زمینهـای اطــراف آن زمینهــای تالابــی هســتند. وی هدف اصلی از ثبت این تالاب را حفاظت و مراقبت از آن اعلام کرد.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

"my-, myo-"

**Meaning:** muscle

For example: The patients is suffering acute myocardial infarction.

#### PHRASAL VERB

Fall about

**Meaning:** to laugh a lot about something: **For example:** It was so funny everyone just fell about laughing.

## **IDIOM**

## Beat about/around the bush

**Explanation:** to speak vaguely or euphemistically so as to avoid talking directly about an unpleasant or sensitive topic For example: Don't beat around the bush—just tell

## Qatar 1996 coup plot: New details reveal Saudi-UAE backing

A former French Army commander has revealed new details of a foiled military coup that was planned against Qatar by the now-blockading countries in the region in February 1996.

In an interview with Al Jazeera, Paul Barril, who oversaw the thwarted operation, said that a plan to overthrow the Qatari government at the time was backed by the House of Saud regime, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Bahrain.

The same countries, along with Egypt, severed diplomatic and trade ties with Qatar on June 5, 2017. The quartet has accused Qatar of supporting "terrorism". Qatar has denied the charges and said the boycott aims to impinge on its sovereignty.

The failed coup, dubbed "Operation Abu Ali", took place during the month of Ramadan on February 14, 1996, one year after the former Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani assumed the throne.

It was planned in conjunction with then-police chief Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani, the cousin of the former emir.

 $According \ to \ Barril, \ the \ UAE \ in \ particular$ had provided him with great support to carry out the operation. At the time, he had taken 40 highly trained soldiers to execute the plan.

He and his team were hosted in Abu Dhabi's InterContinental hotel, where many weapons were stored. They were also given UAE passports to facilitate their movement by the current Abu Dhabi Crown Prince,



Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, who at the time was commander-in-chief of the

Barril said the weapons had been transferred from Egypt and the military team that was supposed to carry out the operation included exiled Qatari officers.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia also prepared tribal fighters, while Bahrain was meant to be used as a hub for Barril and his communications team to oversee the operation unfolding in Doha via wiretappings.

Barril revealed that at the beginning of 1996, he carried out a private and covert

operation in which he crossed into Doha y sea to take photos of the targets - among them was Sheikh Hamad's residence, the country's local television station, and state security buildings.

The images were broadcast on Al Jazeera for the first time on Sunday.

He had also managed to bring to the region about 3,000 Chadian soldiers to participate in the attack by striking a deal with President Idriss Deby worth \$20m.

Barril put the cost of the entire foiled attack at \$100m.

According to Barril, what had affected the

operation was a call from former French Presdent Jacques Chirac, who personally ordered him to stop any "foolishness" from happening.

The decision to stop the operation from going ahead was ordered by the founding father of Qatar, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani, after he was told that the operation against his son may leave about 1,000

Barril said that the plan, if implemented, would have resulted in a "massacre", pointing out that his team was tasked with arresting Sheikh Khalifa and Sheikh Hamad, as well as the country's foreign minister, among others from the ruling family.

Meanwhile, Germany's former Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel has revealed that Qatar was on the verge of a military invasion in early June 2017, when the blockading quartet announced they had severed ties with Doha.

The German politician said in an interview with Al Jazeera that former United States Secretary of State Rex Tillerson played a key role in preventing the attack from taking place, at a time when the Saudi regime's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) - the kingdom's de facto ruler - believed he had full U.S. backing.

Gabriel had warned at the time that the rift in the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) could lead to war, citing what he called a "dramatic" harshness in relations between allied and neighboring countries in the Persian Gulf.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## New report on Russian disinformation, prepared for the Senate, shows the operation's scale and sweep

A report prepared for the Senate that provides the most sweeping analysis yet of Russia's disinformation campaign around the 2016 election found the operation used every major social media platform to deliver words, images and videos tailored to voters' interests to help elect President Trump — and worked even harder to support him while

The report, a draft of which was obtained by The Washington Post, is the first to study the millions of posts provided by major technology firms to the Senate Intelligence Committee, led by Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.), its chairman, and Sen. Mark Warner (Va.), its ranking Democrat. The bipartisan panel hasn't said whether it endorses the findings. It plans to release it publicly along with another study later this week.

The research — by Oxford University's Computational Propaganda Project and Graphika, a network analysis firm - offers new details of how Russians working at the Internet Research Agency, which U.S. officials have charged with criminal offenses for interfering in the 2016 campaign, sliced Americans into key interest groups for targeted messaging. These efforts shifted over time, peaking at key political moments, such as presidential debates or party conventions, the report found.

The data sets used by the researchers were provided by Facebook, Twitter and Google and covered several years up to mid-2017, when the social media companies cracked down on the known Russian accounts. The report, which also analyzed data separately provided to House Intelligence Committee members, contains no information on more recent political moments, such as November's midterm

"What is clear is that all of the messaging clearly sought to benefit the Republican Party - and specifically Donald Trump," the report says. "Trump is mentioned most in campaigns targeting conservatives and right-wing voters, where the messaging encouraged these groups to support his campaign. The main groups that could challenge Trump were then provided messaging that sought to confuse, distract and ultimately discourage members from voting.<sup>\*</sup>

Representatives for Burr and Warner declined to comment. The report offers the latest evidence that Russian agents sought to help Trump win the White House. Democrats and Republicans on the panel previously studied the U.S. intelligence community's 2017 finding that Moscow aimed to assist Trump, and in July, they said investigators had come to the correct conclusion. Despite their work, some Republicans on Capitol Hill continue to doubt the nature

of Russia's interference in the last presidential election. The Russians aimed particular energy at activating conservatives on issues such as gun rights and immigration, while sapping the political clout of left-leaning African American voters by undermining their faith in elections and spreading misleading information about how to vote. Many other groups — Latinos, Muslims, Christians, gay men and women, liberals, Southerners, veterans - got at least some attention from Russians operating thousands of social media accounts.

The report also offered some of the first detailed analyses of the role played by YouTube, a subsidiary of Google, and Instagram, owned by Facebook, in the Russian campaign, as well as anecdotes about how Russians used other social media platforms — Google+, Tumblr and Pinterest — that have received relatively little scrutiny. The Russian effort also used email accounts from Yahoo, Microsoft's Hotmail service and Google's Gmail.

The authors, while reliant on data provided by technology companies, also highlighted the companies' "belated and uncoordinated response" to the disinformation campaign

and, once it was discovered, their failure to share more with investigators. The authors urged that in the future they provide data in "meaningful and constructive" ways.

Facebook, for example, provided the Senate with copies of posts from 81 Facebook pages and information on 76 accounts used to purchase ads, but it did not share posts from other user accounts run by the IRA, the report says. Twitter, meanwhile, has made it challenging for outside researchers to collect and analyze data on its platform through its public feed, the researchers said.

Google submitted information in an especially difficult way for the researchers to handle, providing content such as YouTube videos but not the related data that would have allowed a full analysis. The YouTube information was so hard for the researchers to study, they wrote, that they instead tracked the links to its videos from other sites in hopes of better understanding YouTube's role in the Russian effort.

Facebook and Google did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

In a statement, Twitter stressed it had made "significant strides" since the 2016 election to harden its digital defenses, including the release of a repository of the tweets that Russian agents previously sent so that for researchers can review them. "Our singular focus is to improve the health of the public conversation on our platform, and protecting the integrity of elections is an important aspect of that mission," the company added.

Facebook, Google and Twitter first disclosed last year that they had identified Russian interference on their sites. Critics previously said that it took too long to come to an understanding of the disinformation campaign, and that Russian strategies have likely shifted since then. The companies have awakened to the threat - Facebook, in particular, created a "war room" this fall to combat interference around elections — but none has revealed interference around the midterm elections last month on the scale of what happened in 2016.

The report expressed concern about the overall threat social media poses to political discourse within nations and among them, warning that companies once viewed as tools for liberation in the Arab world and elsewhere are now threats to democracy.

"Social media have gone from being the natural infrastructure for sharing collective grievances and coordinating civic engagement to being a computational tool for social control, manipulated by canny political consultants and available to politicians in democracies and dictatorships alike," the report said.

Researchers also noted that the data includes evidence of sloppiness by the Russians that could have led to earlier detection, including the use of Russia's currency, the ruble, to buy ads and Russian phone numbers for contact information. The operatives also left behind technical signatures in computerized logs, such as Internet addresses in St. Petersburg, where the IRA was based.

Many of the findings track, in general terms, work by other researchers and testimony previously provided by the companies to lawmakers investigating the Russian effort. But the fuller data available to the researchers offered new insights on many aspects of the Russian campaign.

The report traces the origins of Russian online influence operations to Russian domestic politics in 2009 and says that ambitions shifted to include U.S. politics as early as 2013 on Twitter. Of the tweets the company provided to the Senate, 57 percent are in Russian, 36 percent in English and smaller amounts in other languages.

The efforts to manipulate Americans grew sharply in 2014 and every year after, as teams of operatives spread their work across more platforms and accounts to target



larger swaths of U.S. voters by geography, political interests, race, religion and other factors. The Russians started with accounts on Twitter, then added YouTube and Instagram before bringing Facebook into the mix, the report said.

Facebook was particularly effective at targeting conservatives and African Americans, the report found. More than 99 percent of all engagement — meaning likes, shares and other reactions — came from 20 Facebook pages controlled by the IRA, including "Being Patriotic," "Heart of Texas," "Blacktivist" and "Army of Jesus."

 $Together, the 20\,most\,popular\,pages\,generated\,39\,mil$ lion likes, 31 million shares, 5.4 million reactions and 3.4 million comments. Company officials told Congress that the Russian campaign reached 126 million people on Facebook and 20 million more on Instagram.

The Russians operated 133 accounts on Instagram, a photo-sharing subsidiary of Facebook, that focused mainly on race, ethnicity or other forms of personal identity. The most successful Instagram posts targeted African American cultural issues and black pride and were not explicitly political.

While the overall intensity of posting across platforms grew year by year — with a particular spike during the six months after Election Day 2016 — this growth was particularly pronounced on Instagram, which went from roughly 2,600 posts a month in 2016 to nearly 6,000 in 2017, when the accounts were shut down. Across all three years covered by the report, Russian Instagram posts generated 185 million likes and 4 million user comments.

Even though the researchers struggled to interpret the YouTube data submitted by Google, they were able to track the links from other sites to YouTube, offering a "proxy" for understanding the role played by the video platform.

"The proxy is imperfect," the researchers wrote, "but the IRA's heavy use of links to YouTube videos leaves little doubt of the IRA's interest in leveraging Google's video platform to target and manipulate US audiences.

The use of YouTube, like the other platforms, appears to have grown after Trump's election. Twitter links to You-Tube videos grew by 84 percent in the six months after the election, the data showed.

The Russians shrewdly worked across platforms as they refined their tactics aimed at particular groups, posting links across accounts and sites to bolster the influence operation's success on each, the report shows.

"Black Matters US" had accounts on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Google+, Tumblr and PayPal, according to the researchers. By linking posts across these platforms, the Russian operatives were able to solicit donations, organize real-world protests and rallies, and direct online traffic to a website that the Russians controlled.

The researchers found that when Facebook shut down the page in August 2016, a new one called "BM" soon appeared with more cultural and fewer political posts. It tracked closely to the content on the @blackmatterus Instagram account. (Source: Washington Post)

## Israel sentences Palestinian teen to 35 years in prison over alleged stabbing attack

An Israeli court has sentenced a Palestinian teenage boy to 35 years in prison on the allegation of carrying out a stabbing attack in the occupied West Bank.

The Ofer military court passed the verdict on 18-year-old Ayham Bassem Sabbah, a resident of the Qalandia refugee camp north of al-Quds (Jerusalem), late on Sunday, and also ordered him to pay a fine of one million

Israeli shekels (\$264,700).

Sabbah and 14-year-old Omar Salim Rimawi were both shot and critically iniured on February 18, 2016 after carrying out a stabbing attack that left one Israeli settler killed and another injured at the Rami Levi supermarket in the Shaare Benyamin industrial complex northwest of al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Israeli police spokesperson Luba al-Samri said at the time that two Palestinians had "infiltrated" the Israeli settlement and entered the supermarket before stabbing the two Israeli settlers.

Both Palestinians were shot and critically injured by an armed civilian present at the scene, al-Samri noted.

Israeli court sentences Palestinian

mother to eleven months in jail for "incitement"

Separately, an Israeli court has sentenced the mother of a young Palestinian man, who was killed by Israeli military forces last year, to eleven months in prison on charges of "incitement on social media networks."

(Source: Press TV)

## Justin Trudeau: Canada looking for way out of Saudi arms deal

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said for the first time that his Liberal government is looking for a way out of a multibillion-dollar arms deal with Saudi Arabia.



Speaking in a TV interview that aired on Sunday, the comments represented a notable hardening in tone from Trudeau, who previously said there would be huge penalties for scrapping the \$13bn agreement for armored vehicles made by the Canadian unit of General Dynamics Corp.

Last month, Trudeau said Canada could freeze the relevant export permits if it concluded the weapons had been misused.

"We are engaged with the export permits to try and see if there is a way of no longer exporting these vehicles to Saudi Arabia," Trudeau told CTV. He did not give further details.

Political opponents, citing the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi and the House of Saud regime's involvement in the Yemen war, insist Trudeau should end the General Dynamics deal, which was negotiated by the previous Conservative government.

In October Trudeau maintained that he was reluctant to cancel the controversial contract with the Saudi regime in the wake of the Khashoggi case as it would cost Canada C\$1bn (\$747m).

Trudeau said that the "difficult" contract was made in a way that "makes it very difficult to suspend or leave the contract".

"I do not want to leave Canadians holding a billion-dollar bill because we're trying to move forward on doing the right thing," Trudeau said in October. "So we're navigating this very carefully.

Relations between Ottawa and Riyadh have been tense since a diplomatic dispute over human rights earlier this year. Ottawa says it has been consulting allies on what steps to take after Khashoggi was killed inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

The murder of a journalist is absolutely unacceptable and that's why Canada from the very beginning had been demanding answers and solutions on that," said Trudeau. Human rights groups have been issuing letters to Trudeau since 2016, asking him to cancel the controversial arms deal with Saudi Arabia.

To provide such a large supply of lethal weapons to a regime with such an appalling record of human rights abuses is immoral and unethical. The spirit and letter of both domestic export controls and international law support this view," said the letter signed by representatives of human rights organizations such as Amnesty International.

'We believe the regime's integrity has been utterly compromised with the government's decision to proceed with the largest arms sale in Canadian history to one of the world's worst human

There is a "reasonable risk" that Canadian-made military hardware is being used against civilians, the letter noted, considering Saudi Arabia's "abysmal and worsening human rights record, both within Saudi Arabia and in neighboring Yemen".
(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Taliban say they're meeting U.S. officials again

The Taliban said they are holding "another" meeting on Monday with U.S. officials, this time in the United Arab Emirates and also involving Saudi, Pakistani and Emirati representatives in the latest attempt to bring a negotiated end to Afghanistan's 17-year war.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid offered no further details. Khalil Minawi, director of Afghanistan's state-run Bakhtar news agency, also confirmed the meeting. He said on Twitter that officials from the United States, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the UAE held meetings Sunday ahead of "the Pakistani-sponsored U.S.-Taliban meeting."

While Afghan officials are not expected to attend Monday's meeting, their presence in the UAE is a significant step in efforts to get the two sides talking. So far, the Taliban have refused to hold direct talks with the Afghan government, calling it a puppet of America and insisting only on negotiating with the U.S.

While the U.S. State Department has neither denied nor confirmed previous meetings with the Taliban, Washington's special peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad previously said he has held several meetings with all Afghans involved in the protracted conflict – a reference that would include the Taliban, who control or hold say in nearly half of Afghanistan.

Washington has spent \$1 trillion in Afghanistan since the U.S.-led coalition ousted the Taliban in 2001. The war there has become America's longest war.

A Taliban statement last month said they held three consecutive days of talks with Khalilzad in Qatar, a Mideast country where the insurgent group maintains a political office. Afterward, Khalilzad went to Kabul where he urged Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to cobble together a team that could hold talks with the Taliban with the intent of reaching an agreement on a "roadmap for the future of Afghanistan."

Khalilzad said he would like to see this agreement reached before Afghan presidential elections, scheduled for next April.

Since his appointment in September, Khalilzad has tried to jumpstart peace talks and has made several tours of the region. Earlier this month, he held meetings in Islamabad. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan later said Khalilzad asked Pakistan to assist in getting the Taliban to the negotiating table.

Khan said Pakistan would sponsor the UAE talks and insisted that a military solution is not the answer.

President Donald Trump has long accused Islamabad of taking billions of U.S. dollars while doing nothing to aid peace efforts and has assailed Khan since his election as prime minister last summer. Washington has suspended hundreds of millions of dollars in military aid to Pakistan.

Khan meanwhile has responded to Trump's rebukes by saying that his country was drawn into the war on terror although no Pakistanis were involved in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, and that the war has cost Pakistan \$123 billion. Khan has also described the U.S. contribution of \$20 billion to Pakistan as minuscule.

(Source: AP)

## Chelsea travel to Sweden to face Malmo in Europa League last 32

Former champions Chelsea will face Malmo in the last 32 of the  $\,$ Europa League while Arsenal will lock horns again with BATE Borisov. The two sides met in the Europa League last season, the Gunners hammering the Belarussian side 6-0 at the Emirates.

Five-time champions Sevilla, currently second in La Liga, face a difficult tie against Lazio, beaten finalists in this competition

in 1998, who are fifth in Serie A.
The 2004 champions Valencia will have to overcome Scottish champions Celtic while another Spanish side Villarreal, currently hovering just above the Liga relegation zone, face an Iberian battle when they take on Sporting.

Napoli, demoted to the Europa League after they were knocked out of the Champions League at the group stage, face Zurich.

Portuguese giants Benfica, three times runners-up, tackle Turkish side Galatasaray, UEFA Cup winners in 2000, and Inter Milan, another team who failed to progress to the Champions League knockout stage, will play Rapid Vienna.

The ties will take place on 12-14 and 20-21 February.

## Chelsea chairman greets fans after allegations of racist chanting

Chelsea chairman Bruce Buck greeted Blues fans at the turnstiles before the Premier League win at Brighton, following allegations of racism levelled against the club's supporters.

Chelsea and the Metropolitan Police are investigating claims Manchester City forward Raheem Sterling was subject to racist abuse earlier this month.

Chelsea say Buck was a visible presence at Brighton's Amex stadium on Sunday. A spokesman said some fans stopped to shake the chairman's hand. Chelsea officials, who condemned anti-Semitic chanting during the Europa League tie midweek, said the atmosphere among the away support at Brighton was positive, but fans were reminded that they are currently the focus of attention. However, the club are also keen to stress that only a small minority of supporters are to blame for recent incidents.

Chelsea say they will continue to take a lead to address any issues that arise and will continue the club's anti-Semitism education programme, which involves workshops in schools and awareness courses for fans.

The club released a statement following Thursday's 2-2 draw with MOL Vidi in Hungary, after reports of offensive songs aimed at Tottenhand fans. They said the vocal minority of supporters had "shamed the club" and questioned the "brainpower" of supporters engaged in the chanting.

Earlier this week, four Blues fans were suspended following the alleged racial abuse of Sterling, during the 2-0 win over City at Stamford Bridge.

A club statement said evidence of racist behaviour will result

in "severe sanctions, including bans".

(Source: BBC)

## Anderlecht fire coach Vanhaezebrouck after poor run of results

Belgian soccer club Anderlecht have dismissed coach Hein Vanhaezebrouck after a series of poor results that led to their exit from the Europa League and drop to fourth in the domestic first division. Anderlecht finished bottom of their Europa League group after three draws and three defeats and lost 2-1 to Cercle Bruges on Sunday to leave them 11 points beyond league leaders Genk. Their previous three league matches had been a draw and two losses.

 $\hbox{``The $\overline{t}$eam does not have enough points in the Belgian cham-}\\$ pionship and we have been eliminated from the Belgian Cup and the Europa League. We need to stop this trend soon," Anderlecht sporting director Michael Verschueren said in a statement late on Sunday. "We want to thank Hein Vanhaezebrouck for his hard work for the club."

Vanhaezebrouck steered Ghent to their first ever league title in 2015 and helped them become only the second Belgian side to advance beyond the group stage of the Champions League.

He joined Brussels-based Anderlecht at the start of last season, ending third in the league.

(Source: Reuters)

## **Tour de France winner Thomas** voted UK sports personality

Geraint Thomas was crowned the BBC's UK sports personality of the year on Sunday after his maiden Grand Tour triumph in the Tour de France. Welshman Thomas beat out Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton and World Cup Golden Boot winner Harry Kane into second and third respectively.

"It is insane that I am stood here," said Thomas after collecting the prestigious prize in Birmingham.

Seeing kids on their bikes back home, you take great pride in winning this. "It's been an amazing year for British sport and long may it continue." There was some success for England's World Cup team as Gareth Southgate picked up the coach of the year award. "I'm incredibly proud of the team," said Southgate.

"There was a disconnection with the fans for a long period and that was understandable.

"Huge credit to the players, they played with great pride, great style and I think people really appreciated how they conducted themselves and represented their country.'

Francesco Molinari, a 36-year-old Italian golfer who won the British Open and claimed five points as part of the winning

European Ryder Cup team, was named 'world sports star'. England's footballers lost out to England's netballers, though, for the team of the year prize courtesy of their Commonwealth Games gold medal. Tennis legend Billie Jean King was awarded the lifetime achievement award.

(Source: France24)

## Bayern Munich to face Liverpool, **PSG** meet Man Utd

Bayern Munich and Liverpool, both five-times European champions, will meet in one of three England-Germany clashes in the Champions League round of sixteen following the draw made at UEFA headquarters on Monday.

English champions Manchester City will take on Schalke 04 and Tottenham Hotspur will face Borussia Dortmund in the other clashes between the Premier League and the Bundesliga.

Holders Real Madrid will face four-times winners Ajax Amsterdam, who have reached the knockout stages for the first since 2005-06.

In other ties, Manchester United take on Paris St Germain for the first time while Serie A champions Juventus face Europa League winners Atletico Madrid, Barcelona meet Olympique Lyonnais and AS Roma

Liverpool coach Juergen Klopp has the chance to renew a fierce rivalry with Bayern which dates back to his days in charge of Borussia Dortmund where he won two successive Bundesliga titles. Overall, however, Klopp's record against

Bayern is not the greatest with eight wins, five draws and 16 defeats.

Liverpool, who finished second in their group behind Paris St Germain, will play the first leg at home.



Recent form would appear to favour Manchester City against Schalke as Pep Guardiola's side are unbeaten in their last seven matches against German clubs, winning six of those.
Tottenham forward Harry Kane will also

be looking forward to facing Dortmund, having scored three times in two matches

Real Madrid are firm favourites against Ajax, having won their last six games against the Dutch side, scoring 20 goals in those fixtures and conceding only two.

They were 4-1 victors both in the Netherlands and Spain in the most recent contests, in the 2012-13 group stage.

History is also in Barcelona's favour against Lyon as the Catalans have won five and drawn

one of six previous meetings.
Juventus and Atletico Madrid have met only twice before, in the Champions League

group stage in 2014-15.

Those games produced one goal between them and with the same coaches still in charge — Massimiliano Allegri at Juve and Diego Simeone at Atletico — another cagey encounter is likely.

"We have a very strong team so we are confident," said Juventus director Pavel Nedved. "Atletico are a very balanced team, difficult to face.

"They can defend deep and always create trouble with Diego Costa and Antoine Griezmann. I see two hard-fought games, maybe with not many goals."

However, Atletico are also one of Juventus forward Cristiano Ronaldo's favourite  $opponents-the former\,Real\,Madrid\,player$ has scored 22 goals against them, a total he has bettered only against Getafe (23) and

(Source: Eurosport)

## Ex-captains Keane, Neville slam Man **Utd after Anfield loss**



Former Manchester United captains Gary Neville and Roy Keane turned their fire on their old club after Jose Mourinho's side fell to a dispiriting 3-1 defeat to old rivals Liverpool at Anfield on Sunday. United are now 19 points behind Juergen Klopp's Premier League leaders and sit

11 points off fourth place and Champions League qualification.

But while the numbers speak for themselves, Neville and Keane, both working as analysts on Sky Sports television, suggested the club's problems ran much deeper than just their current league position. Mourinho's decision to leave Paul Pogba

as an unused substitute raised eyebrows with Neville saying the midfield was not up to scratch.

"I can't get over United's central midfield. If you're Paul Pogba watching (Nemanja) Matic, (Ander) Herrera, (Marouane) Fellaini, Fred, who played the other night ... not one of them can pass a football," he said.

vone of them can actually receive the ball and pass the ball. I just find it absolutely staggering. I thought United were awful today....It's not good enough," added the former full-back who won eight titles in Alex Ferguson's team.

Neville said it would not make sense to sack Mourinho mid-season and pointed the

finger at the club's directors for extending the manager's contract last season.

"The board are so naive, giving him a new contract. Manchester United need to reset. It's not just the manager, it's deeper than that. They lost control of the football club when they gave him a contract extension 18 months in.

"The minute he came back from pre-season he was at it and the club lost control. There is not that experience or knowledge in the football club above him to be able to manage or control him and handle him.

Keane said he was not surprised by the performance he witnessed at Anfield.

"I looked at United and thought they're going to be found out today. And they were.

"It's a huge concern going forward. I certainly believe a lot of their players are not good enough to be playing for Manchester United. They're good players but not good enough for Manchester United.

They're so far behind the likes of Man City, Liverpool, Tottenham and Chelsea. The biggest problem is defensively; you have to have some foundation to go forward. They look like they're all over the place."

The Irishman suggested that Pogba might not have a long-term future at the club. (Source: Reuters)

## Ajax's De Ligt beats Alexander-Arnold to Golden Boy award



Ajax defender Matthijs De Ligt has been named Golden Boy 2018 by Italian newspaper Tuttosport, with Liverpool's Trent Alexander-Arnold coming second.

De Ligt, 19, who has been linked with Barcelona and Juventus, succeeds Kylian Mbappe, who won the 2017 award. He picked up 224 votes from a panel of sports writers across Europe, with Alexander-Arnold earning 149 votes and Roma's Justin Kluivert coming third with 101.

He will pick up his award at a ceremony in Turin on Monday evening.

"I'm really happy and also very proud

to have won this trophy, particularly when I look at who has won it before me," De Ligt told Tuttosport. "It's almost incredible to see my name added to a list which includes [Paul] Pogba, Mbappe, [Lionel] Messi and [Rafael] van der Vaart. Amazing.

"I know who won this prize almost by heart and to be honest, I appreciate it a ot. There are lots of very big names on the list, but if I were to name one, then Messi stands out for me. Everybody recognises what he has done for and in football. I really like him a lot as a footballer so I'm very proud to have won the same trophy which he lifted before me, 13 years ago, when I was only six."

De Ligt also paid tribute to runner-up Alexander-Arnold as two defenders stood on the highest steps of the podium for the first time, after 15 years in which either a forward or a midfielder had won.

"He's a great player with huge talent," he said. "He's shown his quality and ability as Liverpool's right full-back and he's already played a Champions League final. I think that says more than something for a player of his age.

I love the way he attacks down the wing, but doesn't forget his defensive duties in a more than perfect manner. I'm sure we're going to hear a lot about

"I'm delighted to become the first defender to win this prize, and knowing that only forwards or midfielders have won it so far makes it all the more special. Usually you see forwards or midfielders in the photos so this means a lot for me since I play a different role.

De Ligt only came fourth in a separate poll conducted on Tuttosport's website in which fans instead picked Kluivert as their favourite, ahead of Everton's Thomas Davies and Vinicius Junior of Real Madrid.

(Source: ESPN)

## Five talking points from the Premier League weekend

Liverpool regained top spot in the Premier League with a 3-1 victory over rivals Manchester United on Sunday while Arsenal's unbeaten run came to an end against Southampton. There were also wins for Manchester City, Tottenham Hotspur and Chelsea.

Here are five talking points from the weekend's action: Shaqiri completes Liverpool

While much of the focus has been on Manchester United's dire play, it should not be overlooked just how good Juergen Klopp's Liverpool are playing right now.

The unbeaten league leaders had 36 shots on goal and dominated possession throughout the emphatic win, their passing at times seeming to force United's players to twist and contort in circles. It was the introduction of Xherdan Shaqiri after 70 minutes that really turned the screw, as the Swiss forward showed why he could be the missing piece of the puzzle for Liverpool to go from Champions League runners-up last season to trophy winners.

New boss beer bounce at ST MARY'S

Southampton's new manager Ralph Hasenhuettl had quite a task to rescue a side without a win since the beginning of September, although he put that to bed quickly with a thrilling 3-2 win over Arsenal on Sunday.

After defeats in his first two games, it was the Austrian's opening match at home that got his Southampton project up and running, as he opted for a 3-4-3 formation made to get the best out of strikers Danny Ings, Stuart Armstrong and Nathan Redmond.

Perhaps the new manager bounce at St Mary's was not just about what was on the pitch, as Hasenhuettl had sent drinks vouchers to season ticket holders before the game



Spurs late show

The story goes that Spurs often crack under pressure. Yet Christian Eriksen's stoppage-time winner against Burnley on Saturday was the fourth time in nine games in all competitions they have scored a decisive goal within the final 10 minutes of a match.

Indeed, the strike was almost identical to the Dane's winning goal against Inter Milan at Wembley last month that rescued their Champions League hopes

Eriksen and Heung-min Son both came off the bench to help break down a dogged and ultra-defensive Burnley side who had frustrated their more talented opposition.

But Spurs did not panic and, as is becoming part of the narrative now in north London, bided their time to find

the crucial breakthrough in manager Mauricio Pochettino's 100th Premier League victory.

Referee questions

Watford and Cardiff City could dominate the goal of the month contenders all on their own after the 3-2 victory by the Hornets at Vicarage Road on Saturday.

But Cardiff manager Neil Warnock was aggrieved at some of the decisions by referee Andrew Madley, who was officiating only his second Premier League game of his career and his first of the season.

"When I've got Andre Marriner (fourth official) beside me and I've got a young referee, first game of the season, I

don't understand that at all, me," Warnock said. "Whether it's because it's only Cardiff City, 'we'll let someone have an experiment today.' We've got one of the best

referees (Marriner) at the side of me. I'm flabbergasted.' Warnock's frustrations may hint at a wider problem in the English game, that the level of top-class officials is dropping off and younger blood has to be brought in quickly to fill the widening gaps.

Goal gap

Worries of a growing chasm between the top sides in the Premier League and the rest are highlighted by the fact that only six sides have a positive goal difference while 10 have all conceded more than they have scored.

Bottom side Fulham have already shipped 42 goals, just a few less than the top four, combined, have conceded this season. Not that it is just a problem for Fulham, as the four teams directly above them all have a goal difference of more

(Source: Mirror)

## Iran football team named for Qatar training camp

Queiroz has named his 21-man Team Melli squad for the AFC Asian Cup 2019 on Sunday.

Queiroz will announce his main team

Those selected do not include Iran players who are plying their trade in Europe.

Iran national football team traveled to Doha on Monday to hold a training camp in the Persian Gulf country until Dec. 24.

Team Melli will also play a friendly match with Qatar as part of preparation for the Asian Cup.

Iran national football team have been drawn along with Iraq, Yemen and Vietnam in Group D.

The 2019 AFC Asian Cup will be held in the United Arab Emirates from January 5 to February 1.

**Squad:** Goalkeepers:

Alireza Beiranvand (Persepolis), Hossein Hosseini (Esteghlal), Payam Niazmand (Sepahan)

#### Defenders:

Ramin Rezaeian (Al-Shahania SC), Mohammadreza Khanzadeh (Qatar's Al Ahli), Rouzbeh Cheshmi (Esteghlal), Milad Mohammadi (Akhmat Grozny), Vouria Ghafouri (Esteghlal), Mohammadhossein Kananizadegan (Machine Sazi), Ehsan Haji Safi (Tractor Sazi), Pejman Montazeri (Esteghlal)

#### Midfielders:

Omid Ebrahimi (Qatar's Al Ahli), Ashkan Dejagah (Tractor Sazi), Masoud Shojaei (Tractor Sazi), Ahmad Nourollahi (Persepolis), Ali Karimi (Esteghlal)

#### Strikers:

Ali Gholizadeh (Charleroi), Mehdi Taremi (Al Gharafa), Sardar Azmoun (Rubin Kazan), Mehdi Torabi (Persepolis), Ali Alipour (Persepolis)

## Esteghlal, Persepolis to be ceded to private sector



**S P O R T S TEHRAN** — Iranian Minister of Youth Af-

fairs and Sports Masoud Soltanifar has confirmed that the country's most popular football teams Esteghlal and Persepolis will be ceded to the private sector by auction.

The government cabinet has agreed abandoning the two big cultural-sport companies to the private sector, Soltanifar said.

The long awaited privatization of the clubs will be done before the next Iranian

Soltanifar said the enactment of the order has been confirmed by the government cabinet.

Pricing procedure of the two clubs should be conducted within the next two months, Soltanifar said.

Iran President Hassan Rouhani had already said that the government cannot get involved in business and manufacturing sector so that they back economic

## Ex-Iran defender Hossein Kaebi retires from football



**SPORTS TEHRAN** — Iran's d e s k Sepidrood right back Hossein Kaebi brought an end to his 16year playing career on Monday

Kaebi, 33, has been added to Sepidrood coaching staff.

He made 84 appearances for Iran national football team from 2002 to 2010 and scored one goal for Team Melli against New Zealand at the AFC-OFC Challenge Cup in October 2003. Kaebi was a member of the Iranian team who won the 2002 Asian Games in Busan, South Korea.

In the 2006 World Cup, Kaebi brought down Portugal captain Luiz Figo with a kick in the face and picked up a yellow card.

He won two titles in Iran Professional League (IPL) with Foolad Khuzestan (2005) and Persepolis (2008).

Kaebi joined English championship side Leicester City in July 2007 for an undisclosed fee, but left the team by mutual consent in February 2008 after playing just three matches

## Jaber: This is Palestine's strongest generation

Palestine left-back Abdallah Jaber is confident his side can produce a strong showing at next month's AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019, declaring the current squad the nation's best in living memory.

Palestine, ranked 99th, are returning to the Finals after conceding 11 goals in three successive defeats in their debut on the Asian stage in Australia in 2015, but the experienced side will surely present a more determined challenge this time around

Buoyed by strong showings against some of the Continent's heavyweights since 2015, Jaber, the No. 14 defender, believes anyone expecting his side to be pushovers in the United Arab Emirates in is for a shock

"We have improved a lot," said the 25-year-old. 'Now almost 90 percent of the national from the first Asian Cup have changed. This generation is a very good generation. I think it's the best generation of

"When we are facing Saudi Arabia, (United Arab) Emirates, Qatar - these big countries who have a history in football - we can look at them in the eyes. Before it wasn't like this.

"We are going to matches and starting from 2-0 (behind). Now we can challenge them and get good results against these teams."

 $\bar{Knockout}\,stage\,appearances\,at\,this\,year's\,AFC\,U23$ Championship and Asian Games underline the promise of Palestine's young brigade, including 20-year-old Oday Dabbagh, while Chilean-born Yashir Islame has



been a revelation since his 2016 call-up, scoring six goals in 12 matches.

Now under the tutelage of Algerian head coach Noureddine Ould Ali, the team dreams of a first ever appearance in the AFC Asian Cup knockout stage, but their path is by no means easy.

In UAE 2019, Palestine have been drawn alongside the reigning champions - this time Australia - and neighboring Jordan, with a Syrian side boasting some of the Continent's most prolific forwards completing what looms as a testing Group B.

But Jaber isn't interested in conceding defeat, insisting Palestine are more than capable of challenging their illustrious opponents.

"I hope from this Asian Cup to do well and get a

good result. We know our group is very difficult but we've developed ourselves a lot, we have confidence in ourselves and we hope we can create something,'

"In football everything can happen - the last World Cup was a lesson for everyone - if we believe we can do it, and until now we are believing and working

"Our dream is to qualify from this group. That's the dream, but we want to start with getting points. Our mission is to get points from this group, because if we get points it will be the first time for our country in this competition - the Asian Cup. So let's start from this and then develop ourselves and see where we can be.

Now a senior member of the national team with over 40 appearances. Jaber also sees bright futures for many of his teammates at club level, stating success in UAE 2019 could lead to high-profile transfers.

"All of our group are talented and, for anyone who will do well in this competition, we know that a lot of agents and clubs are searching for talent," he declared.

"(The AFC Asian Cup) will be a good opportunity to show the world that Palestinian players deserve to play in the biggest leagues. Why not?

Palestine's AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 campaign gets underway on January 6, with their first match against Syria to be held in Sharjah.

(Source: the-afc)

## Pepe leaves Besiktas staff cash tip as parting gift after contract terminated

Pene left Besiktas club staff a cash tin as a parting gesture after agreeing to have his contract with the Turkish club terminated, sources have told ESPN FC.

The former Real Madrid defender's deal was set to run until June 2019 but he has left with the Istanbul-based club in the process of slashing their wage bill to reduce expenses amid struggles with growing debts.

Reports in Spain over the weekend had claimed Pepe had covered the wages of several members of staff who had not been paid.

However, sources told ESPN FC that, while the Portugal international did not make up for unpaid salaries, he did leave an envelope with a large tip as a gesture to the maintenance, kit and cooking staff at Besiktas.

Pepe enjoyed a close relationship with the staff at the club and has paid out generous tips in the past as well, the source added.

Considering the strength of the Euro to the Turkish Lira (1/6.1 on Dec. 17), the payment will serve as a considerable bonus to their monthly wage.

Pepe ended up leaving Besiktas on good terms with the club and attended the 2-2 draw against Trabzonspor where he bid a final farewell to the fans at the Vodafone Park Stadium.

Pepe was one of the highest paid players in the Besiktas squad. The 35-yearold signed a two-year deal worth €9.5 million before bonuses when he joined in 2017 after his Real Madrid contract

expired. The experienced centre-back also received a bonus of €4,000 per game.

Pepe was part of the Besiktas side that topped their Champions League group last season before being eliminated by Bayern Munich in the round of 16. The Black Eagles did however, struggle towards the end of the season, finishing fourth in the league, four points behind

reigning champions Galatasaray. Besiktas have yet to release an official statement confirming the centre-back

The Black Eagles also parted ways with Spanish striker Alvaro Negredo, who joined Dubai-based club Al-Nasr in September. Netherlands international Ryan Babel, meanwhile, has just six months remaining on his contract and



will not be offered a new deal, a source told ESPN FC. The Dutchman has been told to find a new club.

Besiktas are third in the Super Lig, eight points behind leaders Basaksehir, but crashed out of the Europa League in the group stage

(Source: ESPN)

## Iran wins silver at world ice climbing champs

IRNA — Iran national team finished runner-up to grab the silver medal of 2018 UIAA Ice Climbing World Combined Championships which was held in Russian capital of Moscow.

The award ceremony of the event, which was held in both lead and speed categories, was held on Sunday to announce Iran as the second team in overall rankings.

Mohammadreza Safdarian and Mohsen Beheshti Rad in Men's category and Zeinab Mousavi and Shabnam Assadi in Women's category represented Iran.

The competition was held in Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium area on December 14-16, where the opening and closing ceremony of 2018 FIFA World Cup took place.

### Iran U23 football team to participate in Qatar tournament

**TASNIM** — Iran U23 football team will take part at the Qatar four-team tournament, Hamid Estili, technical manager of

The Iranian team are now holding a training camp in southern island of Kish in the Persian Gulf and are scheduled to play two friendly matches with Syria. "We will likely participate at the four-team tournament in

Qatar with the participation of Qatar, Kuwait and probably China. The tournament will kick off on January 14. Iran will also take part at the Central Asian Football Association (CAFA) championship," Estili said.

Iran prepare for the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) U23 Championship 2020.

Zlatko Kranjcar's team have been drawn along with Iraq,

Yemen and Turkmenistan in Group C.

The AFC U23 Championship 2020 is scheduled to take place in Thailand. It will act as the AFC qualifiers for the men's football tournament at the 2020 Olympics.

## **Club World Ranking:** Persepolis, Esteghlal move up

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran's Persepolis and Esteghlal football teams have climbed up at the Club

Persepolis have climbed one place up to 196th with 3624 points. Persepolis' arch rivals Esteghlal have climbed up four places to 192nd with 3185 points.

Zob Ahan, the third Iranian club in the ranking, moved up 10 spots to 290th with 2124 points.

Tractor Sazi have also climbed one place to 518th with

Clubworldranking.com is a weekly ranking system of the best soccer teams, top scorers and coaches in the world, based on match results over the past 52 weeks.

## Carlos Queiroz rues lack of respect for Team Melli

TASNIM — Iran national football team head coach Carlos Queiroz said that the Iranian sports officials had to attend the Team Melli's goodbye ceremony.

Iran national football team left Tehran for Doha on Monday to hold a training camp in the country but the top officials didn't attend the ceremony.

'Whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger," Queiroz told

'We are going to make the Iranian people happy but I think, as the players said, the sports minister had to come here to see off the team before leaving Iran to participate at the 2019 AFC Asian Cup," the Portuguese added.

Iran national football team will be based in Doha from December 17-24, with a friendly against Qatar also part of the training plan.

Three-time champions Iran are in Group D of the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 with Iraq, Yemen and Vietnam.

## **Blackhawks G Crawford** diagnosed with concussion

Chicago Blackhawks goaltender Corey Crawford left Sunday's game against the San Jose Sharks late in the first period and was later diagnosed with a concussion after hitting his helmet on the goal post during an ugly collision with multiple players.

Crawford made an initial save on Logan Couture's mini-breakaway, but Evander Kane drove the net and knocked Blackhawks defenseman Dylan Strome into Crawford, who was down in his butterfly. Crawford was bowled over, and the back of his helmet hit the post, with the net giving way as Strome fell on top of him. Kane was given a minor penalty for goaltender interference.

After remaining down on the ice for a minute or two, Crawford skated off under his own power and walked with trainers to the locker room. He was replaced by Cam Ward and quickly ruled out by the team. The Blackhawks signed Ward in free agency as insurance for Crawford.

The longtime starter for Carolina is on a one-year deal worth \$3 million.

Crawford, who turns 34 on New Year's Eve, missed most of last season and the first five games of this season while recovering from a concussion sustained on Dec. 23, 2017. He entered Sunday's game with a 6-14-2 record, a 3.23 goals-against average and a .903 save percentage, and had allowed two goals on eight shots before departing.

The 12th-year goalie has been a part of three Stanley Cup champion teams in Chicago, and he topped 30 wins in six of seven seasons from 2010-11 to 2016-17. He has never finished a season with a record below .500.

(Source: Reuters)

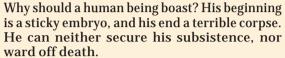
#### INTERNATIONAL DAILY www.tehrantimes.com

- Managing Director: Ali Asgari
- Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi
- Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 88808895
- **Switchboard Operator: Tel**: (+98 21) 43051000
- Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450
- Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
- Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603 www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
- 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







Imam Ali (AS)

"The series should be

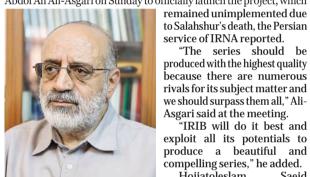
"IRIB will do it best and

Bahmanpur is the writer of the

## Jamal Shurjeh fills in for late director in TV series on Moses (AS)

R T TEHRAN – Jamal Shurjeh, the director of "Ahmed Bey", has replaced late director Farajollah Salahshur to complete a TV series on Prophet Moses (AS).

He along with producer Seyyed Ahmad Miralai held a meeting with Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Managing (IRIB) Director Abdol Ali Ali-Asgari on Sunday to officially launch the project, which



exploit all its potentials to produce a beautiful and compelling series," he added. Hojjatoleslam

project, which will be made in 52 episodes. He has completed

dated photo. (Tasnim/Siamak writing 44 episodes of the TV

Shurjeh also spoke about his plan to pick an obscure stage actor who is familiar with Quranic teachings to star as Prophet

Earlier in 2010, Farajollah Salahshur, the screenwriter and director of the TV series "Prophet Joseph (AS)", announced his plan to make a TV series on Prophet Moses (AS).

However, he failed to fulfil the plan after he was diagnosed with lung cancer. He ultimately died in 2016 after which IRIB decided to implement the project with another director.

## Iranian, American films share award at Japanese festival

A R T TEHRAN – Iranian director Kaveh Moein-d e s k far's movie "Life without Life" and American director April Mullen's film "Badsville" shared the award for the best drama film at the 4th Bloodstained Indie Film Festival in Tokyo, Japan on December 7.

"I ife without I ife" is about father is fighting cancer, but amid music and death, life goes on. "Badsville" tells the story of the leader of a violent gang, who

finds love and wants to leave Badsville, a town where love doesn't Abbas Atai, the star of "Life without Life" received the best actor

award, while Madeleine Coghlan from the U.S. was named best actress for her role in "Still Hungry" directed by Rowan Russell.

Sky Wang from China was selected as best director for his film "Lost in Apocalypse" and "I Am the White Tiger" by Chiu Lee from Hong Kong won the best documentary award.

## **Ivory Coast painter gives new** life to e-waste

ABIDJAN (Reuters) - Desire Koffi often walks through Koumassi, a popular district of Ivory Coast's main city Abidjan, to collect old mobile phones that he buys from people for 500 CFA francs

Back home, the 24-year-old Ivorian artist dismantles the phones with a hammer to pull out the screens and keyboards. He uses them for his paintings. One can take him up to three or five days of work.

Koffi grew up in Koumassi and says he was drawn to recycling and incorporating e-waste in his art, after seeing how it affected his environment.

"My number one goal is to try, in my own small way, to reduce electronic waste that is found in the streets and in the bins," he said. "Here, we are in one of the city's most popular neighborhoods,

where you usually find old phones which can no longer be repaired." With a population of about 5.5 million, Abidjan generates up to 1,500 tons of e-waste per year, according to the European Union-funded E-waste Implementation Toolkit. Koffi says a significant amount of this waste can be used to make money.

With several exhibitions abroad and at home under his belt, Koffi is quickly becoming one of Ivory Coast most important figures in contemporary art.

"I think his work is great. He has decided to go into recycling, and it really suits him because his work stands out from all others,

fellow Ivorian artist Ezechiel Guibe said. "Despite incorporating recycling material into his work, he manages to capture all these forms, faces and emotions in his work, which really blew us away," added art gallery director, Olivier Pepe.

## "Exodus" on return of Afghan migrants from Iran named best doc at Cinéma Vérité

**TEHRAN** – "Exodus", S k Bahman Kiarostami's latest documentary that studies the return of undocumented Afghan migrants from Iran following the deep recession facing the country, was selected as best feature-length  $documentary \, in \, the \, international \, competition$ of the 12th Cinéma Vérité festival, the organizers announced on Sunday.

"I just came on stage to express my thanks for your participation, especially for the guests coming from other countries," director of the festival, Mohammad-Mehdi Tabatabainejad, said during the closing ceremony of Iran's major documentary film festival at Tehran's Andisheh Hall.

The special jury award in the feature-length category went to "Alicia" by Dutch filmmaker Maasja Ooms. It tells the heartrending story of Alicia, who is removed from her home when she was just a year old and is placed in an

orphanage.
"Lulu: The Pearl Boxer" by Tanzanian filmmaker Asimwe John Bibagamba received the special jury award in the medium-length and short documentary sections.

"Shouting at the Wind", the story of a teenage boy who lives along with his family in the slums of Tehran and dreams of becoming a singer, won the award for best mediumlength documentary.

The award for best director was presented to Farah Zare' for her short documentary "Mahiak" about a young woman who plans to marry, but her strange skin problem thwarts her plan. Winners in the national competition were

also honored at the ceremony. "A House for You", produced by Mehdi Filmmaker Manuchehr Moshiri (C) poses after receiving his lifetime achievement award from director Rakhshan Bani-Etemad (R) and film expert Fakhreddin Anvaar during the 12th Cinéma Vérité festival at Tehran's Andisheh Hall on December 16, 2018. (IRNA/Amin Jalali) Shahmohammadi about a young bankrupt of the Spider-tailed Viper" by Fat'hollah Amiri

picked as best documentary. The audience award went to "In the Realm

person who makes new decisions after he about the spider-tailed viper that lives in the western Iranian province of Ilam. is diagnosed with an advanced cancer, was

In addition, Ĥossein Torabi, the director of the acclaimed documentary "For Freedom"

about the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and Manuchehr Moshiri, who is famous for his social and biographical documentary films, were honored with lifetime achievement

## Iranian shorts to compete in Polish film festival



A scene from "The Fox" by Sadeq Javadi.

R T TEHRAN – Five e s k Iranian short films will go on screen in various sections of the 22nd edition of the International Film Festival ZOOM - ZBLIZENIA, which will be held in Jelenia Gora, Poland from February 18

"Are You Volleyball?" by Mohammad

Bakhshi, "Year of the Dog" by Ramin Kupai and "Animal" by Bahram and Bahman Ark will go on screen in the short fiction film

"Ŝnowy Roads" by Hayedeh Moradi will compete in the short documentary section, while "The Fox" by Sadeq Javadi will be screened in the short animated film section.

### Sri Lanka hosts Iranian film festival



 $A\ poster\ for\ a\ festival\ of\ Iranian\ films\ in\ Colombo,\ Sri\ Lanka.$ 

**TEHRAN** – A festival of Iranian films entitled  $\hbox{``Cinema of Post Islamic Revolution Iran''} was$ held in the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo from December 12 to 16.

Seven Iranian films with English subtitles were screened during the festival, which was organized by Iran's cultural office in Colombo.

"The Girl in Sneakers" by Rasul Sadr-Ameli, "M for Mother" by Rasul Mollaqolipur, "Tears of Cold" by Azizollah Hamidnejad and "The Sand Storm" by Javad Shamaqdari were among

"The Song of Sparrows" by Majid Majidi, "Superstar" by Tahmineh Milani and "The Secret Club" by Jamal Shurjeh were also screened.

## "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse" swings to \$35 million debut, "Mortal Engines" sputters

LOS ANGELES (Variety.com) — "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse" is the new box office king, collecting a solid \$35.4 million during its first three days of release.

That's hardly the biggest opening for an animated film this year, but it does rank as the best start for a cartoon in the month of December. Illumination's "Sing" previously held that title, debuting with \$35 million

Another weekend release, Warner Bros.' "The Mule," snagged the No. 2 spot with \$17 million. Clint Eastwood directed and stars in the R-rated crime drama about a nonagenarian who gets caught smuggling drugs for the cartel. "The Mule," Eastwood's first acting gig since 2012's "Trouble With the Curve," brought out a much older crowd. Moviegoers over the age of 35 accounted for 78 percent of audiences. In addition to Eastwood, "The Mule" cast includes Bradley Cooper, Laurence Fishburne, Michael Pena, and Dianne Wiest.

Not all newcomers were able to stick the landing.

Universal's "Mortal Engines" launched in fifth place with a disastrous \$7.5 million when it debuted in 3,103 venues. That could be catastrophic for the sci-fi saga that cost over \$100 million to make. The post-apocalyptic steampunk adventure has fared slightly better overseas, picking up \$34.8 million from 54 international territories, but "Mortal Engines" looks like it could still lose a sizable chunk of change. Peter Jackson produced the CGI spectacle, adapted from Philip Reeve's YA novel. The middling reviews haven't helped build momentum, and it carries a paltry 28 percent on Rotten Tomatoes. It'll be an uphill battle for "Mortal Engines" to break through a crowded holiday frame and attract the kind of audience it needs to justify its



Actor Garcelle Beauvais attends the world premiere for the movie "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse" in Los Angeles, California, U.S., December 1, 2018. (Reuters/Monica Almeida)

expensive price tag.
"Spider-Verse," based on Sony's catalog of Marvel heroes, is resonating with a slightly older audience than most animated adventures. It also has plenty of time to make up ground during a holiday frame, though Warner Bros.' "Aquaman" might

cannibalize a bit of the superhero crowd. Philip Lord and Christopher Miller produced "Spider-Verse," which cost \$90 million and takes place in a universe where more than one Spider-Man exists. Miles Morales (voiced by Shameik Moore), a Brooklynite with a Puerto Rican mom and an African American dad, puts on the Lycra-tights for this rendition. Mahershala Ali, Hailee Steinfeld, Jake Johnson, Brian Tyree Henry, Lily Tomlin, and John Mulaney round out the voice cast.

"Spider-Verse" has already racked up plaudits, including a Golden Globe nod for best animated feature, and boasts an impressive 97 percent on Rotten Tomatoes. Weeks before "Spider-Verse" opens in theaters, Sony announced the development of a sequel and spinoffs set in the shared

## **Anti-harassment groups share \$20** million CBS handout after Moonves exit

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — CBS Corp on Friday named the Time's Up antisexual harassment group and 17 other organizations that will share a \$20 million donation stemming from the exit of its chief executive Les Moonves following allegations of sexual misconduct.

Time's Up and the body representing Hollywood producers swiftly announced that they will spend their share of the funds on programs to increase diversity in the entertainment industry, and provide anti-sexual harassment training.

CBS said in a statement that the \$20 million grant was part of the company's separation agreement with Moonves and "was deducted from any severance benefits that may be due to him.

Moonves, a major figure at the CBS broadcast network for more than two decades, was forced out in September after multiple allegations of sexual misconduct.

Moonves has acknowledged three of the encounters but said they were consensual, and denied others. He was the most powerful U.S. figure to have been brought down in the #MeToo scandal that has roiled Hollywood, politics and boardrooms since October 2017.

The organizations receiving the CBS funds, including the #MeToo social media movement and the anti-sexual violence group RAINN, said the money would 'drive real progress" in ending sexual harassment.

But they added in a joint statement: "We also recognize that these funds are not a panacea, nor do they erase or absolve decades of bad behavior."

The entertainment unit of Time's Up said it would use its \$500,000 grant on a mentoring program aimed at increasing



CBS chairman Moonves arrives for "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert" at the Ed Sullivan Theater in Manhattan, New York, September 8, 2015. (Reuters/Brendan McDermid)

the numbers of women and people of color rising through the producer and executive ranks of the entertainment industry. The program will also offer financial support to low-paid juniors and assistants.

"There is nothing short of an urgent need to have the people who buy, create and promote entertainment content be more representative of the people we serve," film producer Jenno Topping

said in a statement. The Producers Guild of America Foundation said it would use its \$2 million grant from CBS to provide free anti-sexual harassment training and legal consultation on smaller, independent film and television sets.

RAINN, which also received \$2 million, said it will support its national sexual assault hotline, which has seen a huge surge in calls.

RAINN said that by the end of December, more than 270,000 people will have received help from RAINN's victim services programs in 2018, up more than 60,000 from the prior year.