# TERNATIONAL

16 Pages | Price 20,000 Rials | 1.00 EURO | 4.00 AED | 39th year | No.13282 | Wednesday | **DECEMBER 19. 2018** | Azar 28, 1397 | Rabi' Al thani 11, 1440



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### Spy services of neighbors have targeted Iranian security: Alavi

POLITICS TEHRAN—Iranian Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi said on Tuesday that spy services of certain neighboring countries along with extra-regional countries are taking actions against security of Iran and provide "logistical support" for terrorist

groups. "We are in a situation in which the

spy forces of the Zionist regime have fully embarked on taking actions and organize terrorist teams in coordination with the criminal U.S. and anti-revolutionary movements," he told the parliament.

The intelligence chief said these countries are training terrorist groups and providing money to them.  $\rightarrow$ 2

#### Tehran hosting high-level meeting on disaster information management

SOCIETY TEHRAN — A

high-level expert consultation meeting on disaster information management kicked off in Tehran on Tuesday, Mehr news agency reported.

As a regional institution of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM) has organized the 2-day event. APDIM is mandated to work with ESCAP members and associate members and other relevant stakeholders to reduce the risks, damage and losses resulting from disasters by developing human and institutional capacities of countries and organizations of the region in disaster information management  $and\,strengthening\,regional\,cooperation\,in$ this field.  $\rightarrow$  12

#### Yemen's Hudaydah calm as rival parties begin to observe truce

Fighting has subsided in Yemen's Hudaydah, hours after a United Nations (UN)-brokered ceasefire between warring sides took effect in the flashpoint port city.

The truce was reached last week in Sweden during peace talks between delegations from Yemen's Ansarullah (Houthi) movement and the former. Saudi-allied regime, on whose behalf a Saudi-led coalition has been pounding Yemen since March 2015.

The ceasefire took force at midnight on Monday. And while sporadic clashes and Saudi-led airstrikes continued to hit Hudaydah for several hours after midnight, they subsequently died down.

On Tuesday, a military source loyal to Yemen's former Saudi-backed regime said that the situation was calm in the Red Sea port city.  $\rightarrow$ 1:



#### French protests spread to Spain

he recent anti-government demonstrations which took place in 200 cities in Spain, has hit hard on Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. The massive demonstrations took place while Spain, traditionally, and due to its vulnerability to the economic crisis, has the potential of becoming one of the main centers of the crisis in the United Europe and the

This was proven during protests that took place after the economic crisis, and from 2007 to 2010 in Europe. Subsequently, Spanish citizens pursued their economic demands in the elections, or in public polls. However, the equation seems to be different this time! It seems that the rise of the "yellow vests" in Paris and other French cities has also affected the Spanish internal and social equations.

Accordingly, Daily Sabah reported that the month-long French "yellow vest" demonstrations, which have led to repeated rioting in Paris, have inspired protesters worldwide. Over the weekend, yellow vest protests spread to Canada and Spain, and protesters wearing yellow vests took the streets in various cities across the two countries on Saturday.

The report continues; "In Spain, protesters, inspired by the rallies that have been taking place in France, marched in Madrid during a demonstration by yellow vest movement calling for better pensions on Saturday. On Friday, several hundred yellow vest protesters demonstrated on the streets of Israel's commercial hub Tel Aviv against the high cost of living, mirroring the yellow vest movement. Videos on social media showed people in fluorescent-yellow safety vests holding Israeli flags, megaphones and signs on a central street in the coastal city.'

As mentioned, people took to the streets in two hundred cities in Spain, protesting the low income of retirees, in a massive public scene. At the rally, the protesters demanded an increase in minimum pension rights. Madrid, Barcelona, Corona and Seville were among the cities where protest rallies were held. However, the slogans that broke down in the protests signaled the disappointment of Spanish citizens of the Socialist and Conservative Parties. >13

## Pakistan senator: We should not look to the West

#### **EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**

**TEHRAN** — Asif Saeed Kirmani, a Pakistani senator, believes that Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey should not look to the West for economic progress, saying these countries are the gateway to Asia and enjoy good economic relationship with China as the second biggest economy in the world.

"We don't have to look to the West," Senator Kirmani told the Tehran Times on the sidelines of an anti-terrorism conference, which brought parliament speakers of Afghanistan, China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and Turkey together in Tehran on December 8.



Kirmani, who was part of the parliamentary team accompanying his country's National Assembly speaker to Tehran, also suggested the formation of a "special working group" to find

ways to strengthen economic ties between Iran and Pakistan as two important neighbors with large populations.

Following is the text of the conference:

The volume of trade ties between Iran and Pakistan as two great neighbors, Pakistan with 200 million population and Iran with more than 80 million population, is too low. Why is it so?

A: This is very unfortunate that trade between Pakistan and Iran is not as good as it should be. In the meeting we had with honorable President of Iran and honorable speaker of the Iranian parliament this subject came under discussion and both sides agreed that they must put some extra efforts to boost bilateral trade.

### Iranian missiles: Hypocrisy and paradox

It is hard to know why Britain's Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, claimed, in a statement on December 5, that Iran's testing of a medium-range missile on December 1 demonstrated that Iran's missile-related activities "go beyond what can be justified for national defence"

The claim suggests the existence of some kind of agreed international norm that can be used to assess whether or not a weapon system is justified as a defensive tool. But no such norm exists. And we can imagine how the British government would react if some UN member were to opine that British possession of a nuclear deterrent goes beyond what is "justified for national defence". Hypocrisy

The claim also seems unreasonable. Israel, a possessor of medium-range missiles and an open Benjamin Netanyahu—is located well beyond the range of Iranian short-range missiles. Is Iran not justified in acquiring missiles capable of reaching Israel in order to create the "balance of terror" on which mutual deterrence rests?

Another feature of Mr. Hunt's statement was the omission of any mention of Saudi Arabia and Israel. If one is concerned for regional stability in the Missile East, one should not single out Iran's medium-range missiles as uniquely destabilising, as Mr. Hunt did. Saudi medium-range missiles and Israeli possession not only of such missiles but also of nuclear and chemical weapons deserve places in the picture. They too have a bearing

Regrettably, it is not only the United Kingdom that applies such double standards. France's

enemy of Iran—especially under the leadership of foreign minister has been equally eager to single out Iranian missile-related activity for condemnation. Yet such one-sidedness runs counter to Europe's "soft power" need to appear just and even-handed when addressing a global audience. Given Europe's wish to preserve the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, such British and French diplomacy is also unwise: applying double standards can affect how Iran sees that deal.

#### Paradox

In reality Iran's missile-related activity may not be as destabilising as the UK and France believe.

It is possible that over the next decade Iran's missiles will gain in accuracy and reliability, and that the explosive force of their conventional payloads will increase. This is a trend that has been apparent in the United States and Russia,



## Giant puppets celebrate Intl. Storytelling Festival in Tehran

Giant puppets perform during a parade organized in downtown Tehran on December 17, 2018 to celebrate the opening of the 21st International Storytelling Festival.

Fifteen storytellers, including Oliver Villanove from France, Flor Carnales Bastidas from Spain and Seyda Cevik from Turkey, are participating in the event annually organized by the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults.

The festival will run at the institute until December 20.



#### British strategy in the Indo-Pacific region: Conquest of the world from the deck of a ship

he scope of British interaction with the Southeast Asian region extends from security-military to economic-educational, and as predicted, this gets more intense post-Brexit, with the Five Power Defense Arrangements (FPDA) treaty, Asia's only collective security arrangement.

British presence in the southeastern Asia security treaty, the adherence to the deployment and maintenance of some British military in the region to participate in joint exercises with the parties to the treaty, the periodic presence of British naval forces in the region, and the fact that the military chiefs of Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Brunei have all studied in the UK show the depth of London's relationship with the countries of Southeast Âsia.

Britain's assistance in combating terrorism and cyber-attacks, the fact that Singapore alone has 5,000 British  $companies\ in\ the\ country,\ the\ London$ multi-million dollar pledge to create economic reforms in Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and Myanmar, Britain's investment In the area of energy security in the region, and finally investment in the education sector in the countries of Southeast Asia, are signs of Britain's position in this part of the world.

With the withdrawal from the European Union, London has a dream far greater than simple alliance with the countries of Southeast Asia, and is independently seeking a strategy to revitalize British power in the global

Therefore, in pursuit of its dream, the post-Brexit Britain is looking for a much larger area than the Southeast Asia that covers the ocean's blue zone and adds a new vocabulary to the world's political encyclopedia by multiplying the word "Indo-Pacific". →7



**Isfahan MPs** slated to meet Nobakht, Larijani

**ITICS TEHRAN** — Representatives of Isfahan province were scheduled to meet Budget and Planning Organization chief Mohammad Bager Nobakht and Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani later on Tuesday.

Zahra Saeidi-Mobarakeh, a lawmaker who represents the city of Mobarakeh, said during an earlier meeting with Larijani, some promises were given to Isfahan's representatives, adding that they will remain united to achieve their desired goals, ILNA reported.

Earlier this months, all representatives of Isfahan province resigned to protest at the government's lack of enough cooperation in supplying water resources to the province which has faced repeated droughts.



#### First waterjet engine to be unveiled in three months

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — The Defense Ministry's Marine Industries Organization will unveil Iran's first waterjet engine in three months, head of the organization announced on Tuesday.

Rear Admiral Amir Rastegari said the organization has managed to produce marine diesels and has reached self-sufficiency in this area, Mehr reported.

Rastegari emphasized that with jihadi management, the Islamic Republic can progress and reach self-sufficiency in other fields as well.

Pointing to new sanctions imposed by the United States against Iran, he said no industry has been targeted with sanctions to the extent that the defense industry has been.



#### Iran voices readiness to help UNODC

POLITICS TEHRAN — Kazem Gharibabadi, the Iranian ambassador to the Vienna-based international organizations, has voiced Iran's readiness for cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Gharibabadi made the remarks in a meeting with UNODC Executive Director Yuri Fedotov.

The two side also discussed ways to promote cooperation between Tehran and UNODC on defined or developing programs, including the plans to equip Iran's anti-narcotics  $police\ with\ modern\ equipment,\ Tasnim\ reported\ on\ Tuesday.$ 

Pointing to close interaction between Tehran and UNODC, Gharibabadi expressed the hope that the UN office's secretariat would take advantage of Iranian experts' technical and professional capabilities in the war against drugs and crime.



#### Official: **Europeans** refusing fuel to **Iranian planes**

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's airspace remains open to all international flights, including U.S.

airliners, but most European countries refuse fuel to Iranian planes, an official has said.

"Iran's sky is open to all countries, except Israel," head of the Iranian Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) Ali Abedzadeh said, Press TV reported on Tuesday.

Currently, American airplanes are also passing through the Iranian sky and Iran has not imposed restrictions on any country, Abedzadeh said.

However, "unfortunately, most European countries are refusing to supply fuel to Iranian aircraft and this creates problems for us." he said.

Abedzadeh added, "We have plans to overcome this."



#### **Kuwait Emir** welcomes close ties with Iran

**CS TEHRAN** — The Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad, has underlined his country's interest in promoting collaboration with Iran, IRNA reported on Tuesday

In a meeting with Iranian ambassador to Kuwait Mo-hammad Irani, Al-Sabah said, "We consider Iran as our neighbor and we are interested in developing our beneficial cooperation with Tehran."

Irani submitted his credentials to the Emir during an official ceremony at Al-Bayan Palace.

He also conveyed the Iranian president's greeting message to Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad and described relations between the two countries as friendly and brotherly.



#### Man arrested for trying to smuggle opium to Canada

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — According to the chief of Tehran province's counter-narcotics police, a person has been arrested for attempting to smuggle opium from Iran to Canada in postal packages.

Mohammad Bakhshandeh said the police are investigating the case after the security staff in one of Tehran's post centers found the packages, the YJC reported on Monday.

Afterwards, police forces raided the suspect's house and found 8 kilograms of opium extracts in fruit leather packages,

Bakhshandeh said. He added that with the help of the suspect's wife, he was found and arrested within 2 hours.

# Zarif censures Netanyahu for warmongering

The West 'parrots' Netanyahu's whines about Iran's conventional missiles, Iranian foreign minister regrets

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign
d e s k Minister Mohammad Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Tuesday censured Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for openly boasting the regime's "offensive missiles" after threatening Iran with annihilation with nuclear bombs.

Zarif said the irony is that at the same time Netanyahu is whining about Tehran's "deterrent and defensive missiles"

'First, Netanyahu stands next to nuclear BOMB factory and threatens Iran with annihilation. Now, he openly boasts about his 'OFFENSIVE' missiles that can reach anywhere," Zarif said in a tweet.

Zarif was reacting to Netanyahu's comments, who said a day earlier that Israel was developing missiles capable of hitting any target in the Middle East. Netanyahu also said the regime was working on weapons systems with "special capabilities that no other country has." He added, "This is the offensive power of Israel which is very important for us in all sectors.'



Foreign Minister Zarif was in fact referring to Netanyahu's visit in August to the secretive Dimona nuclear weapons facility, from where he threatened Iran with a nuclear attack.

Netanyahu's latest comments come a few days after he said Israel was prepared to launch attacks inside Iran if what he called Israel's "survival" was threatened.

Zarif also pointed to the commotion created by some Western states over the test of a conventional ballistic missile by Iran, saying the hawkish Israeli prime minister "whines about Iran's Deterrent and DEFENSIVE missiles, and the West parrots his 'concerns'."

According to the Press TV, the UN Security Council met last week at the request of France and Britain days after Iran tested a conventional ballistic missile. At the meeting, Israel's European allies and the U.S. voiced "concerns" about Iran's national missile program. The U.S. even went as far as claiming that Iran's test was in defiance of UN Resolution 2231, which endorsed a 2015 multilateral deal on Tehran's nuclear program, without offering any evidence.

## Iran, Russia, Turkey agree on Syria constitutional body

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — The foreign ministers of Russia, Iran and Turkey said on Tuesday that a new Syrian Constitutional Committee should convene early next year, kicking off a viable political

In a joint statement read out by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov after the trio met UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura in Geneva, they said that the work of the new body "should be governed by a sense of compro-

mise and constructive engagement," Reuters reported.

The meeting between the foreign ministers of the three countries, who launched the Astana peace process to end the Syrian conflict, and the UN diplomat could pave the way for the drafting of a new constitution and for elections after a nearly eight-year-old devastating war in Syria.

The UN-backed constitutional committee will include 50 members chosen by Damascus, 50 by the opposition and 50 by the United Nations.

Meanwhile, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has asked Iran and Russia to "stop the interference of some Western states" as Syria is setting up a committee tasked with negotiating a new post-war constitution.

Assad stressed the importance of "efforts exerted by the friendly and allied countries of Syria, particularly Iran and Russia" as he met Hossein Jaberi Ansari, a senior adviser to the Iranian foreign minister, in Damascus on Sunday.

#### Spy services of neighbors have targeted Iranian security: Alavi

POLITICS TEHRAN —Iranian k Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi said on Tuesday that spy services of certain neighboring countries along with extra-regional countries are taking actions against security of Iran and provide "logistical support" for terrorist groups.

We are in a situation in which the spy forces of the Zionist regime have fully embarked on taking actions and organize terrorist teams in coordination with the criminal U.S. and anti-revolutionary movements," he told the parliament.

The intelligence chief said these countries are training terrorist groups and providing money to them. Elsewhere, he said that Iran's Intelligence Ministry annually foils 97-98

out of 100 terrorist moves. There is no intelligence force in the world that claims foiling 100 percent

of terrorist actions," he added. On December 6, a suicide car bomber attacked a police headquarters in the port city of Chabahar, killing two policemen and wounding several others including civilians. The so-called Ansar al-Furqan terrorist group later claimed responsibility for the assault.

After the attack, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a post on his tweeter account said, "In 2010, our security services intercepted and captured extremists en route from the UAE.

Alavi dismisses claim of U.S. green card to officials as absurd

Alavi also rejected claim that the U.S. has granted green cards to 2,500 Iranian officials, saying such a claim is "unfounded", "invalid" and a "lie" which was spread by anti-revolutionary

Fox News reported in July that the Obama administration granted citizenship to 2,500 Iranians, including family members of government officials, while negotiating the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

#### Rouhani due in Turkey to chair high council of strategic cooperation with Erdogan

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Presik dent Hassan Rouhani is scheduled to travel to Ankara on Wednesday afternoon for talks with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The two presidents are going to head the fifth round of Iran-Turkey high council of strategic cooperation, Parviz Esmaili, director of the presidential press office, said on Tuesday.

According to Esmaili, the visit follows Rouhani's initiative to boost Iran-Turkey trade ties to \$30 billion per year.

He added that during Rouhani's two

day stay in Ankara, the two countries will sign high-profile agreements in areas of politics, economy, and culture. Rouhani's Chief of Staff, Mahmoud

Vaezi traveled to Turkey on Thursday and Friday to lay the grounds for the joint meeting of the two presidents.

After meeting Turkish Minister of Trade Ruhsar Pekcan in Ankara, Vaezi said expanding cooperation with neighboring countries, especially Turkey, is of high strategic importance to Iran. He said the current atmosphere of

relations between the two sides gives hope for further efforts and a quicker pace to reach the desired level in trade and economic transactions.

The Turkish trade minister, for his part, deemed Iran as a strategic partner for Turkey, saying the Islamic Republic will always hold a special position in the country's political and economic

He further described the high-level meeting of Tehran-Ankara's strategic partnership as a golden opportunity to reach the \$30 billion trade target.

While in Turkey, Vaezi also met with President Erdogan, who expressed pleasure over the growing trend of bilateral ties. At the meeting, Erdogan said Rouhani's visit provides an ample opportunity for strengthening ties.

Turkish president maintained that promoting ties with Iran is of strategic significance for Turkey.

## The Harvard-educated woman helping lead Iran's sanctions fight

In Iran's hierarchical political system, it is rare to see an outsider granted a senior position. That is why the Islamic republic's newest weapon in its battle with U.S. president Donald Trump is so unusual.

Laya Joneydi, a 50-year-old academic, is a woman with no ties to conventional politicians and no personal stories from Iran's revolutionary years. But as Iran's vice-president for legal affairs she has already secured a rare if symbolic victory over the U.S. on the global stage.

After the Trump administration this year withdrew from the 2015 nuclear agreement and reimposed sanctions on Iran, Ms Joneydi filed a lawsuit in co-operation with other ministries against the U.S. at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) — and Iran won.

What the U.S. administration has done to the Iranian people is illegitimate from a legal point of view and more illegitimate from a moral point of view," she told the Financial Times in her first interview with a foreign media group. Ms Joneydi's is one of Iran's 12 vice-presidents, two of

In the ICJ case, Joneydi helped Iran argue that the U.S. reimposition of sanctions violated a 1955 Treaty of Amity between the two countries that encouraged trade, investment

On October 3, The Hague-based ICJ handed a victory



did not hit certain forms of trade, including humanitarian aid, food and medicine.

The provisional ruling cannot be enforced and the U.S. immediately terminated the treaty, saying aid was never a target of its sanctions. But the ICJ win was nonetheless heartening for Iran, whose economy has been hit by the sanctions. The measures began to hit oil exports last month and weakened the rial by about 50 percent against the dollar this year.

"This has been an injustice to Iranian people, who see their economy and welfare weakened while even their access

to basic needs is hit," said Joneydi.

"The U.S. knows that it cannot ignore the ICJ's rulings. It may not be the perfect option [for Iran] but... it has been useful."

The ruling had helped in Iran's efforts to capitalize on an EU decision to stick with the nuclear accord, she said. Without it, she suggested, European countries might not have been willing to set up a sanctions-busting payments channel for trade with Iran, due to be launched in the coming weeks.

In addition, Joneydi said, Iran was using the ICJ verdict in its negotiations with foreign companies and banks that are reviewing their ties with the country.

In a country where conservatives are vying with moderates for primacy, Joneydi is seen as a non-partisan pragmatist who is committed to defending Iran's sovereignty.

She was born into a middle-class family in the town of Babol on the shores of the Caspian Sea and moved to Tehran as a teenager to study law at the University of Tehran, where she was the only female student among her peers at masters and PhD levels. In 2002 she received a post-doctoral research scholarship at Harvard in the U.S.

She still teaches at the University of Tehran and is proud that most of her students are women. "This means growth. It is the ultimate satisfaction for me to see today's young and  $educated \,generation \,push \,for \,the \,country's \,progress," \,she \,said.$ 

Read full on tehrantimes.com

## Iran says Saudi coalition against Yemen had 'unwarranted illusion'

By staff and agency

and closer economic relations.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi has said that the Saudi-led coalition against Yemen had a kind of 'unwarranted illusion'.

"I believe the Saudi-led coalition forces had a kind of unwarranted illusion and believed they would be able to achieve their goals through attacking Yemen. They had a big strategic mistake in mind; so, they launched their operation and had no proper understanding of the realities behind the occupation of Yemen as well as the aggression against the country and Yemen's history," he told Arabic language network Al Alam in an interview aired on Monday.

He added, "Their behavior showed they were not well aware of the contemporary and past history, and they easily launched their aggression."

"It was clear to us that a military solution would be a nonstarter in Yemen, and no matter how much time would elapse, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as well as other forces providing arms support and contributing to the creation of large arsenals would face defeat at the end of the day," he said.

Qassemi described the humanitarian situation in Yemen as a "crisis and disaster of the current century".

"Such circumstances brought about a situation not only for Saudi Arabia, but also for its supporters, where they felt it was not the right time to sustain the situation. Hence, even ostensibly, they needed to put on a new mask and paint a fresh image of themselves to pretend that even they themselves did not approve of the situation. If the situation

continued, it could undermine the credibility of U.S. rulers and lead to more scandals for the White House," he remarked.

Elsewhere, he said nations which are willing to resist aggression and occupation are able to achieve victory and upgrade their status, at last.

Ansarullah and Yemeni people are a clear xample of this, he added.

"By putting up a stiff resistance against Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and )other) occupying forces, Ansarullah managed to present itself as an equal party to the peace talks held in the Swedish capital, Stockholm, and to attend the negotiations as the representative of Yemeni people,"

Qassemi explained. UN-brokered peace talks between the warring parties in Yemen's conflict began

on December 6 and ended on December 13 in Sweden.

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

Qassemi said, "Hudaydah and its port enjoy a strategic situation, and that's why the occupiers tried a lot and allocated so much funds in recent months to fully occupy this city and its port, but to no avail. It was due to the importance of this region that it was necessary during the first round of negotiations to announce a clear solution and approach, so that the issue might be followed up in the following consultative meeting slated to be held in Kuwait in January."

## Saudi-drafted rights resolution politically-motivated: Syria UN envoy

## U.S. envoy: We're no longer seeking regime change in Syria

Syria has dismissed as politically-motivated a United Nations draft resolution presented by the House of Saud regime that accuses Damascus of human rights violations.

 $Addressing \,the \,55th\,session\,of\,the\,Third$ Committee of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on Monday, Syria's UN Ambassador Bashar al-Ja'afari said Damascus considered voting in favor of the draft resolution submitted by the Saudi regime as a hostile act.

In November, Saudi Arabia submitted a draft resolution to the UN calling on the international community to condemn Syria for alleged human rights violations.

This is while Saudi Arabia is not a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and is itself under mounting international pressure over human rights violations at home and abroad.

The Saudi regime routinely jails and tortures political dissidents inside the kingdom. In October, a 15-member hit squad murdered a Saudi dissident inside the kingdom's consulate in Turkey's Istanbul on orders from the Saudi state. Rivadh has also come under massive criticism for its atrocities in a war it has been waging on Yemen since 2015.

The Syrian envoy added that Israel's support for such a vote uncovers the nature and identity of the draft and attests to the Saudi-Israeli alliance.

The diplomat said the content of the draft resolution is not balanced and is aimed at distorting facts and tarnishing the image of Syria's legitimate government and state institutions

Ja'afari said the Saudi regime is supporting terrorism in an attempt to spread chaos and hinder the ongoing political process

The Syrian official underlined that the Saudi regime does not possess the moral or legal capacity to submit such draft resolutions.

Ja'afari further criticized certain states, which are members of the United Satates-led coalition purportedly fighting Takfiri terrorists in the country, for backing the draft

The same coalition has been committing heinous crimes in Syria and violated human rights by targeting civilians and destroying their property, he said

Ja'afari further called on UN member states to remain vigilant in the face of attempts to politicize human rights mechanisms

and use them to put pressure on some states.

Saudi Arabia stands accused of propping up terrorist groups wreaking havoc in Syria. Wahhabism, the radical ideology dominating Saudi Arabia and freely preached

by its clerics, fuels the ideological engine of terror organizations such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) and Fateh al-Sham, al-Qaeda's Syrian branch formerly known as al-Nusra Front (Jabhat

#### Russian military police successful in Syria mission

Meantime, the head of the Russian Defense Ministry's main military police directorate says the country's military police have operated as a "successful structure" in their Syria mission and built a positive image among civilians in the country.

Lieutenant General Vladimir Ivanovsky made the remarks on Tuesday after a cere-



mony at Hmeimim Air Base in Syria's Latakia Province, during which Russian military police officers received awards before returning home.

"According to the assessments of the leadership of the armed forces, local population, observers, the military police, first of all, have established themselves as a successful structure in conditions of these special objectives of humanitarian mission and peacekeeping operations," he said.

Ivanovsky also noted that the Russian military police have earned a good reputation among Syria's civilian population and gained considerable experience.

In addition to Hmeimim, several Russian military servicemen received awards on Tuesday at an observation point in the Idlib Province de-escalation zone and a demilitarized zone between Syria and the Israeli-occupied side of the Golan Heights.

Military policemen currently constitute the bulk of Russian troops in Syria.

They protect Russian bases in Syria, assist the Damascus government in maintaining order across the liberated regions, monitor a country-wide ceasefire, escort humanitarian aid convoys and protect humanitarian corridors that allow civilians to leave militant-held areas.

Russian jets have been targeting positions held by terror outfits inside Syria at the Damascus government's request since September 2015. The airstrikes have helped Syrian forces advance against the militants, who have been wreaking havoc in the country

Recently, Moscow bolstered Syria's air defense capabilities by deploying S-300 missile defense systems to the country

#### U.S. envoy: We're no longer seeking regime change in Syria

Elsewhere, the United States says it is no longer seeking to unseat Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, backtracking on the once strict regime change policy that Washington insisted on, but which has evidently failed

Speaking on Monday at the Atlantic Council, a Washington-based think tank, the U.S. Special Representative for Syria Engagement James Jeffrey said Washington is not looking for a "regime change" in Syria, but rather a "different" government.

"We want to see a regime that is fundamentally different. It's not regime change we're not trying to get rid of Assad," he said.

Jeffrey further estimated that Syria needs \$300-400 billion for reconstruction, saying Western countries and international financial institutions would not commit funds to rebuild the war-torn state unless there is a compromise on the part of Damascus.

"There is a strong readiness on the part of Western nations not to ante up money for that disaster unless we have some kind of idea that the government is ready to compromise," he said.

He also acknowledged that Washington may not find an ally anytime soon in Syria, saying, "It doesn't have to be a regime that we Americans would embrace as, say, qualifying to join the European Union if the European Union would take Middle Eastern countries.

The U.S. has long been accused of providing safe passage and logistical support to the Takfiri terrorists, who have been fighting to topple the Assad government since early 2011.

Washington has on many occasions argued with vehemence that peace in the country was inconceivable as long as Assad remained in power.

Currently, American military forces maintain a significant presence in Syria's north, where they openly support the anti-Damascus Kurdish militants.

The U.S. and its allies have also been running an illegal bombing campaign against what is claimed to be ISIL positions. Those raids have done little to uproot terrorism and, instead, hampered Syrian army advances against Takfiri militants on numerous occasions.

Russia said last month that the U.S. views

ISIL as an ally to push for regime change in Syria. On the other side, Damascus - backed by its allies Russia and Iran – has succeeded in defeating terrorists on almost all fronts

Idlib Province remains the last major terrorist stronghold in the country. The Syrian army has suspended a liberation operation in that area, giving room to peace efforts on the diplomatic stage – mediated by Iran, Russia and Turkey – aimed at working out a non-military solution to the Syria crisis.

Assad said in May that the U.S. "is losing its cards" as the militant groups it supports have lost significant ground on the battlefield against the army, emphasizing that the Americans "should leave" the Syrian soil.

#### UN Syria envoy set to host top diplomats from Iran, Russia, Turkey

Moreover, UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura is set to host top diplomats from Iran, Russia and Turkey, as guarantors of the Syria peace process, in Geneva this week.

De Mistura's office said on Monday that the talks scheduled for December 18 would likely be one of his last meetings with high-level officials from the three countries as the veteran UN diplomat is due to step down in the coming days.

A spokesperson from Sergei Lavrov's office said that the Russian foreign minister would attend the meeting. A Turkish diplomatic source also confirmed that Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu would be in Geneva along with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif.

The UN did not immediately confirm the list of attendees.

The UN said in a statement issued on Friday that the talks among the UN diplomat and high-level officials would focus on setting up a "credible, balanced, and inclusive" committee to draft a new constitution for Syria and usher in elections.

Following a round of talks in Geneva in September, Russian President's Special Representative for Syria Alexander Lavrentyev said the guarantor states of the Syria peace process had reached a consensus with the UN on candidates for the country's constitutional committee.

So far, 11 rounds of Syria peace talks, mediated by Iran, Russia and Turkey, have been held in Astana. The 10th round of the discussions took place in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi back in July 30-31

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.

The Astana talks, which have brought representatives from Syria's warring parties to the negotiating table, have so far resulted in the return of a succession of militant bastions to the government fold, the establishment of sate zones across Syria and the movement of civilians to those regions.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri terrorist groups wreaking havoc in the country.

(Source: agencies)

## Marking 40 years of reform, Xi says China won't be dictated to

China's President Xi Jinping has said that no one can "dictate" China's economic development path, in a closely watched speech marking 40 years since the opening up of the Chinese economy to the rest of the world, a move that has transformed the world's most populous country into a global economic powerhouse.

His address on Tuesday came as China is locked in diplomatic spats and a bitter trade war with the United States amid pressure to accelerate changes on the economic front.

Addressing Communist Party members for nearly 90 minutes, Xi promised to press ahead with economic reforms but offered no new specific measures.

"We must, unswervingly, reinforce the development of the  $state\ economy\ while, unswervingly, encouraging, supporting$ and guiding the development of the non-state economy," Xi said, while making it clear that Beijing will not deviate from its one-party system or take orders from any other country.

"The great banner of socialism has always been flying high over the Chinese land," Xi said. "The leadership of the Communist Party of China is the most essential feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the greatest advantage of the socialist system with Chinese character-

istics," he added. Xi, who has become the country's most powerful leader since Mao and secured this year a potential path to lifelong rule, delivered the speech to mark the 40th anniversary of



China's "reform and opening up" policy at the imposing Great Hall of the People off Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

The brainchild of late paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, the program was ratified at a Communist Party summit on December 18, 1978, breaking with the policies of his predecessor, Chairman Mao Zedong.

The reforms ditched Maoist-style collectivization that

left the nation impoverished and backward, launching a new era which led to double-digit annual growth that pulled

The world's second-biggest economy, behind the U.S., China now also boasts the most dollar billionaires in the world with 620, according to Shanghai-based magazine publisher Hurun Report. However, about 80 million people are still living on less than \$2 day.

The economic transformation has not brought changes to the Communist Party-controlled political system, however, with authorities harshly cracking down on the Tiananmen protests in 1989 and activists complaining of a deterioration of human rights in recent years.

In recent months, an escalating trade war between the world's two largest economies has seen the U.S. and China exchanging tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars worth

The two sides have agreed to a 90-day truce as they seek to negotiate a solution, with Washington is keen on a reduction in its massive trade deficit as well as deeper reforms in Beijing to stop the alleged theft of intellectual

China is also facing a debt mountain and a slowing economy, which grew by 6.9 percent last year and is expected by the government to slow to around 6.5 percent this year.

(Source: agencies)

#### Maduro vows 'to arm civil militia to the teeth'



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro has vowed to arm a civil militia group in the country "to the teeth," as their number, according to the Venezuelan president, grows to 1.6 million, more than triple in size since the beginning of the year.

We will arm the Bolivarian militia to the teeth," Maduro told the militia members during a speech broadcast on Monday, without detailing how many of the forces were armed. "An invading imperialist force may enter a part of our fatherland, but the imperialists should know that they will not leave here alive.

The so-called National Bolivarian Militia functions as a reserve force composed of civilian volunteers, which was founded by former president Hugo Chavez in 2008 to assist the Latin American country's armed forces.

Maduro said in his address that he had given an order in April to boost the size of the reserve force to one million members. At the time, he said the militia had "nearly 400,000" members.

Maduro's speech to militia members came less than a week after the socialist leader accused the United States of plotting to invade his country.

The United States President Donald Trump has formerly asked his aides whether a military invasion of Venezuela is possible. He has also talked of a "military option" to remove Maduro from power. But there is no clear indication that the U.S. is preparing to invade Venezuela.

Washington has targeted Caracas with harsh economic and political sanctions since 2014 under the pretext of alleged human rights abuses and threats to the U.S. national security.

Last year, Venezuela plunged into political unrest amid opposition protests, which left at least 125 dead from both the government and opposition camps.

In August, Maduro survived an assassination attempt during a military parade in Caracas. He was unharmed while seven Venezuelan soldiers sustained injuries in the incident.

The Venezuelan president accused the U.S. and Colombia of having had a role in the attack.

(Source: Press TV)

#### Kremlin rejects new U.S. reports alleging Russian election meddling

 $The \, Kremlin \, on \, Tuesday \, rejected \, two \, new \, United \, States \, reports$ alleging Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, saying they lacked detail and failed to explain how the Russian government was allegedly involved. Reports by private experts released on Monday by the U.S.

senators from both parties alleged that Moscow's election meddling on social media had been more widespread than previously thought and included attempts to divide Americans by race and

The Kremlin has repeatedly denied any meddling in the U.S. politics, casting the allegations as part of a politically-motivated anti-Russian campaign.

(Source: Reuters)

#### 'Time is running out': U.S. 'bans' Yemeni mother visiting dying son

The Yemeni mother of a dying two-year-old boy has been barred from travelling to the United States to see her son due to the U.S. President Donald Trump's controversial ban on visitors from her country. Shaima Swileh's husband, Ali Hassan appealed to the U.S.

State Department on Monday to expedite his wife's application for a waiver so she could say goodbye to their son, Abdulla, who is on life support. My wife is calling me every day, wanting to kiss and hold her son for one last time," the 22-year-old U.S. national said as

he broke down in tears. "Time is running out. Please help us get my family together again." Abdulla has a rare degenerative brain disease and may not be

able to withstand life support for much longer, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) said in a statement last week. Swileh's visa was rejected last year because of the so-called Muslim ban, under which the Trump administration imposed

travel restrictions on people from some Muslim-majority countries. The 21-year-old mother, who lives in Egypt, applied for a waiver, but has been waiting to hear back for more than a year, despite repeated requests to expedite her case, CAIR said.

In an interview with the San Francisco Chronicle on Sunday, Hassan said his child will not survive the journey to Egypt's capital, Cairo, where Swileh lives. The couple met and married in Yemen, according to the

Chronicle. Their son was born in Yemen, nearly two years after the Saudi regime aggression began. Swileh left Yemen for Egypt when Abdulla was eight months

old. Hassan met her in Cairo and obtained travel documents for his son from the U.S. embassy, the Chronicle said. He was forced to leave Swileh and travel to his hometown in Stockton in California because of Abdulla's deteriorating condition.

The State Department does award waivers, but very rarely. It has declined to comment on the case. In addition to Yemen, the third version of Trump administration's travel ban prohibits entry to the U.S. by most people from Iran, Libya, Somalia and Syria. It also affects visitors from

North Korea and some travelers from Venezuela. Rights groups sought to overturn the ban at the U.S. Supreme Court, claiming it was biased against Muslims. But the top court rejected the petition.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

TEDPIX	159146.4
IFX	1808.61

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

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

#### BRIEF



#### **Bonds worth** \$950m sold in 7 months

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Iranian government has sold bonds worth 39.842 trillion rials (about 948.6 million) during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 22), IRIB reported on Tuesday citing the report released by the Central Bank of

The CBI report indicated that four-year bonds worth 51 trillion rials (about \$1.2 billion) with the return rates of 15 percent and 20 percent have been issued during the sevenmonth period of the present year.



#### **Falahatian** appointed deputy oil minister for planning

ENERGY

TEHRAN— Houshang Falahatian was appointed as Iran's deputy oil minister for planning, Shana news agency reported on Tuesday.

Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh appointed Falahatian, who was previously the deputy energy minister for electricity affairs, to the post replacing Mohammad-Mehdi Rahmati.



#### Next year's budget bill to be submitted to parliament as soon as possible

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Deputy head of Iran's Budget d e s k and Planning Organization told reporters on Tuesday that the prepared budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (starting March 21, 2019) will be submitted to the parliament as soon as possible, IRIB reported.

The budget bill has been prepared by the Budget and Planning Organization and affiliated organizations but regarding the ongoing conditions of our country, the heads of the three branches decided to make some amendments on it," Hamid Pourmohammadi said.

The modifications are minor ones and the bill will be submitted to the parliament in a short time, he added.

The bill was expected to be submitted to the parliament

#### Iran seeks to preserve water, increase agricultural production

Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and Agriculture Ministry have vowed to increase agricultural production by 2.2 kilograms per square meter of water used in cultivation by 2026.



ICCIMA Head Gholam Hossein Shafei (L) shaking hand with Agriculture Minister Mahmoud Hojjati after signing an MOU on increasing agricultural production

The two sides agreed to help reach this objective as part of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) singed by ICCIMA Head Gholam Hossein Shafeiand and Iran Agriculture Minister Mahmoud Hojjati.

The 10-year agreement was signed on the sidelines of the second biennial Water Economy Conference that was held at the place of ICCIMA in Tehran on Tuesday.

So far, Iran food production stands at only 1.1 kilogram per square meter of water, according to the figures published in the MoU.

Iran is situated in a dry plateau with limited water resources. Tehran has been trying in recent years to decrease water consumption in its agriculture sector by introducing new irrigation methods. (Source: otaghiranonline.ir)

## New oil, gas fields discovered in Iran in past 2 years

ENERGY TEHRAN – The direcd e s k tor of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC)'s Discovery Department said new oil and gas fields have been discovered in the country during the past two years, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

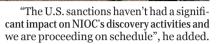
"The details of the discoveries will be revealed by the Oil Ministry." Saleh Hendi said. According to the official, there are currently about 40 newly discovered and already developed reserves across Iran which is an indication of significant work done by NIOC's Discovery Department.

"NIOC continues its cooperation with foreign companies in various areas like discovery of new fields and reserves and also boosting recovery from old fields." Hendi said.

He furthered noted that following the country's sixth five-year development plan (2016-2021), NIOC have had very good



in terms of oil and gas reserves.



#### Over 12,000 kilometers of roads, railways under construction

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — More e s k than 12,000 kilometers of roads and railways are currently under construction throughout the country, Iran's Deputy Transport Minister Kheirollah Khademi announced on Tuesday.

Khademi, who is also the managing director of Iran's Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructures Company (CDTIC), made the remarks in a press conference on the sidelines of the 3rd edition of Iran's Logistics, Transportation, and Related Industries Exhibition (IRAN TRANS EXPO 2018) running from December 16 to 18 at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla, IRNA reported.

The official put the length of under construction railways at 3,197 kilometers, that of freeways at 1,167 kilometers and the figure for the highways and main roads at 7,800 kilometers.



Khademi mentioned development as one of the main priorities of the government and said construction of 5,200 kilometers of railway is currently under study.

He has previously announced that road account for 90 percent while railway account for 10 percent of transportation

#### 'Investment making a necessity for railway sector'

ECONOMY TEHRAN—Managing Director of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) Saeed Mohammadzadeh said that development in the railway sector of the country is in need of large investment makings, IRNA reported.

Making the remarks in a ceremony held at the place of RAI on Tuesday to celebrate the National Transportation Week that was participated by the Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami, the official underscored that the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021) has seriously stressed development of railways.

He further expressed hope that through the underway planning, transportation of cargo via railways will jump in the country in the next Iranian calendar year (starts on March 21, 2019).

As Mohammadzadeh said on October,



some €20 billion is needed to supply the required infrastructure for development of national railway network by March

"According to the set programs, 54 percent of the needed investments will be made by the private sector and the rest will be supplied by the government,'

## Futures climb heading into Fed meeting

U.S. stock index futures climbed on Tuesday, following a rocky start to the week, as investors focus on a two-day meeting where the Federal Reserve is expected to raise interest rates for the fourth time this year and signal the path of future rate hikes.

Wall Street's three major indexes slid more than 2 percent on Monday, with the S&P 500 .SPX closing at a 14-month low, as bearish comments from Jeffrey Gundlach, chief executive officer of DoubleLine Capital, added to worries of a global economic slowdown.

While investors have already baked in a fourth rate hike for the year on Wednesday, turbulent stock markets and a host of other worries have fueled calls for the Fed to pause its tightening cycle or risk harming the U.S. economy.

On Monday, President Donald Trump as well as Gundlach, known on Wall Street as the bond king, both said the Fed should not raise rates this week.

Shares of banks, which are sensitive to interest rates, gained in premarket trading. Citigroup Inc (C.N), Goldman Sachs Group Inc (GS.N) and Bank of America Corp (BAC.N) rose between 0.60 percent and 0.74 percent.

Also helping sentiment early in the day was Oracle Corp (ORCL.N). The business software maker rose 5.6 percent after forecasting strong current-quarter profit on growth in its cloud business.

Boeing Co (BA.N) gained 2.5 percent after raising dividend and increasing its share repurchase program. At 7:03 a.m. ET, Dow e-minis 1YMc1

were up 90 points, or 0.38 percent. S&P 500 e-minis ESc1 were up 11 points, or 0.43 percent and Nasdaq 100 e-minis NQc1 were up 38.75 points, or 0.6 percent. But it remains to be seen if the gains hold.

In what has been a turbulent month for U.S. stocks, the market has more often than not failed to build on an uptick in early trading.

The S&P has ended lower in seven of the 10 sessions so far this month, notching up losses of more than 1.5 percent in four of them, including the last two sessions.

In yet another sign of deteriorating con-

fidence, Bank of America Merrill Lynch's December investor survey showed more fund managers expecting global growth to weaken over the next 12 months, the worst outlook in a decade.

The survey showed the U.S. dollar had replaced the FAANGs - Facebook Inc (FB.O), Apple Inc (AAPL.O), Amazon.com Inc (AMZN.O), Netflix Inc (NFLX.O) and Google-parent Alphabet Inc (GOOGL.O) as the most crowded trade for the first time

At 8:30 a.m. ET, data from the Commerce Department is expected to show housing starts might have fallen to 1.225 million units in November from 1.228 million in October.

(Source: Reuters)

## Chance of recession rises to the highest level of the Trump presidency

In a sharp change toward a darker outlook, respondents to the CNBC Fed Survey have boosted the chance of recession next year to the highest level of the Trump presidency, reduced their support for the president's handling of the economy and lowered their outlook for economic growth and Fed rate hikes - with some even flirting with the idea of a rate cut in 2019.

Still many of the 43 respondents, who include economists, fund managers and strategists, also argued that the market has overdone it to the downside.

"The notion that downgraded growth prospects are driving the stock market sell-off is backwards," wrote Mike Englund, chief economist, Action Economics, LLC. "Stock price declines have driven the growth slowdown narrative, which thus far faces little confirming evidence from actual U.S. economic reports.'

Still, the chance of recession in the next 12 months rose to 23 percent, the second straight increase, and up from 19 percent in the prior survey. That's higher than the 19 percent long run average for the seven-year-old survey and nine points higher than the low of the Trump presidency.

Rate cut? "Traditional signals of a U.S. recession from the shape of the yield curve to a fall in housing investment to corporate bond spreads are suggesting a recession in late 2019/early 2020," wrote Constance Hunter, chief economist at KPMG,

Hunter was among the 12 percent of respondents who think the Federal Reserve, after hiking in December, would next move to reduce the Fed Funds rate and do so by October. While the percentage is small, no forecasters predicted a 2019 rate cut in the September survey.

FED'S NEXT MOVE AFTER DEC.

And while the tone of responses is more negative, 63 percent of those surveyed believe the recent market sell-off reflects too pessimistic a view of the outlook, with about a third saying the market has it right. Just under 60 percent say the current low level of the spread between the yields on the 2-year and 10-year notes does not signal a recession.

"Market growth signals right now are out of line with economic fundamentals on our reading of both," wrote John Ryding, chief economist at RDQ. "A resolution of trade uncertainty should encourage corporations to respond more strongly to the tax changes of December 2017 and boost capex." But Jim Bianco, president of Bianco Research, said the

yield curve is "a signal the Fed is too tight and the risk of

breaking the economy is rising." Asked how different factors have contributed to the recent sell-off, respondents named "tariff concerns" as the most significant followed by worries about global economic weak-

ness and more Fed rate hikes. Sixty-seven percent expect that the current trade talks between China and the US will end on March 1 with an

agreement to continue talking and without the imposition of additional tariffs. On average, however, the group expects tariffs to subtract 0.2 percent from growth in 2019, double the estimate from the September survey.

Tariff hit

That among has taken on more significance now that growth forecasts have come down. The average estimate sees growth slowing to 2.3 percent in 2019 and 1.8 percent in 2020, down from just above 3 percent this year.

"The next recession is coming into view, but not in 2019 as ficit-financed government spending increases will suppor growth through much of the year," said Mark Zandi, chief economist, Moody's Analytics. The uncertainty is taking a toll on respondents' approval

rating of President Trump's handling of the economy. The group has generally given the president higher marks than the general public, and that remains the case. But the numbers are lower. Just 52 percent said they now approve of the president's

handling of the economy, down 14 points from the prior survey in which his approval had hit an all-time high. Disapproval rose ten points to 31 percent.

"The Trump-Navarro Trade War policy is a threat to the entire global growth direction and magnitude," said David Kotok, chief investment officer at Cumberland Advisors.

"I don't think I've ever been this uncertain about my forecast. The uncertainty stems from uncertainty about tariffs and about the response of nonresidential fixed investment to both tariffs and tax reform," said Robert Fry, chief economist of Robert Fry Economics LLC. "If tariffs go to 25% and stay there, my growth forecast is too high and my inflation forecast is too low. If a deal is reached before tariffs go to 25%, my growth forecast is too low..." (Source: CNBC

#### German economy faces "lean" Christmas as business morale sinks

German business morale fell in December, a survey indicated on Tuesday, suggesting that concerns among company executives about the growth outlook for Europe's big-

in response to the survey.

gest economy are rising.
The Munich-based Ifo economic institute said its business climate index fell for the fourth month in a row to 101.0, its lowest level in more than two years. This was weaker than a Reuters consensus forecast of 101.8.

"Concern is growing among German businesses," said Ifo chief Clemens Fuest. "Companies were less satisfied with their current business situation. Their business expectations also continued to deteriorate. The German economy faces a lean festive season."

Trade frictions, risks linked to the possi-

bility of Britain leaving the European Union next year without a deal and weaker growth in emerging markets are putting the brakes on a nine-year upswing in Europe's economic powerhouse.

Ifo economist Klaus Wohlrabe said the German economy was slowing but there was no recession in sight.

This has prompted the government to lower its growth forecast for this year to up to 1.6 percent. Ifo said the business climate level confirmed its prediction for 1.5 percent

As the year draws to a close, the risks for the German economy appear to be outweighing any impetus from the global economy, said Andreas Scheuerle of DekaBank.

'No Christmas delights' Scheuerle cited Brexit and mass anti-

government protests in France as possible headwinds for Germany, adding that signs of a detente in the trade conflict between China and the United States could spell good news for the German economy.

"Global news is fluctuating between concerns and relief," said Scheuerle. "Pre-Christmas delights are not to be expected," he wrote in a note.'

The government hopes tax cuts for middle and high income earners as well as higher child allowances that go into effect in January will boost consumption, which has replaced exports as the main driver of growth.

Ifo's Wohlrabe said consumption could

be performing better in view of increases in

income and employment. The economy is expected to rebound in the fourth quarter after a contraction of 0.2 percent between July and September, partly because one-off effects like bottlenecks in new car registrations due to stricter pollu-

tion standards should ease. A low interest rates environment created by the European Central Bank, a solid labour market and rising wages should provide growth momentum in the face of rising risks.

"The risks to our forecast for growth in Germany to rebound, from 1.5 percent this year to 1.8 percent in 2019, are clearly mounting," said Andrew Kenningham of Capital Economics. (Source: CNBC)

# Oil drops 4 percent on oversupply, equities sell-off

Oil prices fell 4 percent on Tuesday, dropping for a third consecutive session as reports of swelling inventories and forecasts of record U.S. and Russian output combined with a sharp sell-off in global stock markets.

U.S. crude oil fell \$2.04, or 4.1 percent, to a low of \$47.84, its weakest since September 2017, before recovering to around \$48.10 by 0920 GMT.

North Sea Brent crude fell \$2.41, or 4.0 percent, to a low of \$57.20, a 14-month low, and last traded around \$57.61, down \$2.00.

Both crude oil benchmarks have shed more than 30 percent since early October due to swelling global inventories.

"A large part of the move (lower) is due to a broader market sell-off, with both U.S. and Asian equity markets coming under pressure," said commodities strategist Warren Patterson at Dutch bank ING in Amsterdam.

"Specifically for the oil market, there are no clear signs yet of the market tightening,"

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other oil producers agreed this month to curb production by 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd), equivalent to



more than 1 percent of global demand, in an attempt to drain tanks and boost prices. But the cuts won't happen until next month and meanwhile production has been at or

near record highs in the United States, Russia and Saudi Arabia, undermining spot prices. Russian oil output has hit a record 11.42 million bpd this month, an industry source familiar with the data told Reuters.

Oil production from seven major U.S. shale basins is by the year-end expected to climb to more than 8 million bpd for the first time, the U.S. Energy Information Administration said on Monday.

Inventories at the U.S. storage hub of Cushing, Oklahoma, delivery point for the oil futures contract, rose more than 1 million barrels from Dec. 11 to 14, traders said, citing data from market intelligence firm Genscape.

The United States has surpassed Russia and Saudi Arabia as the world's biggest oil producer, with total crude output climbing to a record 11.7 million bpd.

With prices falling, unprofitable shale producers will eventually stop operating and cut supply, but that could take some time, and meanwhile inventories keep growing.

"Rising U.S. shale production levels along with a deceleration in global economic growth have threatened to offset OPEC+ efforts," said Benjamin Lu Jiaxuan, at Singapore-based brokerage Phillip Futures.

"Market confidence remains extremely

(Source: Reuters)

#### Libya's NOC declares force majeure on operations at biggest oilfield

Libya's National Oil Company (NOC) has declared force majeure on operations at El Sharara oilfield, it said late on Monday, a week after the company declared force majeure on the field's exports.

 $NOC\ said\ in\ a\ statement\ that\ production$ from Libya's biggest oilfield will only restart after "alternative security arrangements are put in place"

"Clearly we cannot return to the security situation we were in before the field was shut." NOC Chairman Mustafa Sanalla was quoted as saying in the statement.

The NOC last week declared force majeure on exports from the 315,000-barrels-per-day oilfield located in the south of the North African country after the field was seized by a local militia

Tribesmen and security guards had seized the field demanding payments and



development funds for the neglected south.

The El Feel oilfield, which is also located in the south and uses the same power supply as El Sharara, has not been affected by the declaration and is pumping around 70,000 bpd, a field engineer said.

NOC could not be reached for immediate

(Source: Reuters)

#### Oman's oil output reaches new high in Nov., but exports continue to tumble

Crude production in Oman reached a two-year high for the second consecutive month in November, averaging at 1 million barrels per day (b/d), up from 995,300 b/in October, according to data released by the oil ministry on Sunday.

Crude exports from the Sultanate however, continued to drop month-onmonth for November, with an average rate of 758,219 b/d, down from 772,323 b/d the previous month. Over 90 percent of crude was traded to China. Japan, Malaysia, and India bought 3.79 percent, 1.94 percent, and 2.64 percent respectively.

Oman Crude Oil Future Contracts traded on the DME in November for delivery in January fell to \$66.28/b, down \$13.92/b for cargoes delivered in

The data arrives as Oman, part of the OPEC-Non-OPEC coalition, agrees to



cut global supply in a bid to claw back prices which have dropped substantially this year as a result of rising supply and slower-than-expected demand growth.

Non-OPEC members are expected to cut around 400,000 b/d collectively. while OPEC members will cut a total of 800,000 b/d.

(Source: Platts)

## China signs oil deals with majors as Xi underscores open trade

China signaled its openness for business with a raft of deals that'll give oil majors including Royal Dutch Shell Plc new opportunities to develop fields in partnership with the nation's biggest offshore explorer.

China National Offshore Oil Corp. said in Beijing on Tuesday that it had inked oil and gas accords with nine firms. The signing ceremony followed President Xi Jinping's address to party cadres marking 40 years of reform and broadly underlining the nation's commitment to global trade.

The agreements cover 64,000 square kilometers in the Pearl River basin, to a depth of up to 3,000 meters. In addition to the Netherlands-based Shell, France's Total SA and U.S.-based Chevron Corp. were also awarded parcels. All three majors hold existing production sharing contracts with CNOOC. The other firms involved are: ConocoPhillips, Equinor ASA, Husky Energy Inc., Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Co., Roc Oil Co., and SK Innovation Co.

"It's no coincidence that CNOOC made the statement a couple of hours after President Xi's speech," said Tian Miao, a Beijing-based analyst at Everbright Sun Hung Kai Co. "It's only reasonable to assume this is one of the real actions China is taking to show the world it's willing to open businesses to the whole

#### ■Increased output

 $CNOOC\,has\,signed\,\bar{}more\,than\,200\,PSCs$ since its inception in the early 1980's, even as it has increasingly relied on its own resources to tap deep-water projects in Chinese waters -- most recently the giant Lingshui 17-2 gas field in the South China Sea. The company has promised to increase spending and raise  $\,$ output, heeding Xi's call for enhanced energy security as imports grow and the nation contends with the U.S. over trade.

"The agreements will facilitate the establishment of a long term and stable cooperation

and share the development opportunities to a certain extent in the Strategic Cooperation Areas, creating conditions for the final signing of contracts," CNOOC's listed unit said in a statement.

At the ceremony, Chairman Yang Hua said the company's aim is to boost output to 2 million barrels of oil equivalent a day by 2025, from about 1.3 million last year, and that agreements with foreign companies could extend beyond upstream ventures in China to broader cooperation in other geographies. He also said the government is studying policies to support exploration and development of offshore oil and gas, and that "the sector will open wider to international

gas firms, CNOOC is its favored vehicle for international cooperation and holds the vast majority of reserves in Chinese waters. About three-quarters of its offshore production is

conducted independently, with the remainder tied up in PSCs, including deals signed in July with Australia's Roc Oil and Smart Oil LLC of the U.S. The agreements typically give CNOOC the rights on up to 51 percent of any commercial discoveries.

"From a business perspective, inviting international oil companies to join domestic offshore exploration helps reduce investment risks and bring in more offshore drilling expertise," said Tian. "It definitely helps CNOOC's promise to quickly raise oil and gas output om domestic fields.

CNOOC's shares fell 4.1 percent to HK\$12.16. They are up 8.4 percent this year.

Xi's address in the capital disappointed players going forward." those hoping for specific policies to counter a slowing economy and show the nation's intent to free up its markets. Instead, the president focused more on the accomplishments of the nation's Communist Party.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## Shale under pressure as oil falls below \$50

The OPEC+ cuts still are not doing very much to boost oil prices, dashing hopes for many U.S. shale producers. With companies in the process of formulating their budgets for 2019, the prospect of \$50 oil sticking around raises questions about the heady production figures expected

The IEA expects U.S. oil production to grow by 1.3 million barrels per day (mb/d) in 2019. But oil prices could significantly impact those projections. "Total U.S. shale oil growth is highly sensitive to WTI prices in the \$40-60 range," Morgan Stanley wrote in a December 13 note. The investment bank said that shale producers are growing more sensitive to prices below \$60 but less sensitive to price spikes above \$60. "If WTI remains around current levels (~\$50/bbl), US growth should start to slow."

The investment bank said that larger companies, such as ConocoPhillips or Occidental Petroleum, are less sensitive to price swings than smaller E&Ps. On the other hand, some companies could begin to slow production if prices linger at low levels. Morgan Stanley pointed to Apache Corp., Murphy Oil, Newfield Exploration, Oasis Petroleum, Whiting Petroleum and Chesapeake Energy. "With low oil prices, we see these companies slowing production growth in 2019 to spend within cash flow (or minimize outspend), [free cash flow] levels fall or turn negative, and leverage metrics move higher."

Other analysts also see price sensitivity from the shale sector. "We expect 5-10 percent capex growth on average at \$59 WTI, which should yield production growth of nearly 1.3mn b/d," Bank of America Merrill Lynch wrote in a note. "However producers may budget for lower oil prices given the recent decline in prices and increase in uncertainty."

BofAML went on to add: "We believe the \$50 to \$60 price range for WTI yields highly variable E&Ps budgets. In



a mid to low \$50s WTI scenario, producer budgets would likely come in flat to lower YoY and would likely lower US production growth to somewhere closer to 1mn b/d for next

There is one major obstacle that the shale sector faced in 2018 that could start to dissipate: pipeline constraints.

U.S. shale producers and pipeline companies have deployed a variety of methods to mitigate the impact of pipeline constraints.

The higher-than-expected production figures from .S. shale this year largely come down to the ability of producers and pipeline companies to work around the swelling bottleneck, particularly in the Permian. Pipeline operators have used drag reducing agents to speed up the flow of oil through the lines, allowing them to ship more oil than the nameplate capacity suggests. Also, the Plains All American Sunrise pipeline came online ahead of schedule, which also relieved some congestion. No major

outages occurred in 2018, which has been "an element of luck" given the high throughput rates, the IEA said in its Oil Market Report.

More projects are set to come online in 2019, which should reduce the pressure on oil producers. The Bridgetex and the Sunrise expansions will add 40,000 and 175,000 bpd in the first half of 2019, respectively. Another 100,000 bpd will come from the Cactus 2, while Enterprise Products Partners could add 200,000 bpd by converting a natural gas liquids pipeline to crude oil.

That should be close to enough to avoiding production impacts. "Takeaway capacity growth will therefore closely track output growth in the Permian, but it will still lag behind until the second half of 2019, when the 675 kb/d EPIC project comes online," the IEA said.

To be sure, the midstream challenges are not entirely resolve just yet. Pipeline "congestion at the Cushing hub should persist during 1H19, keeping pressure on WTI timespreads and differentials to Brent relatively wide,' Bank of America Merrill Lynch said in a note.

Also, the margin is tight – the multiple pipeline projects slated for operation in 2019 need to stay on schedule, while the midstream sector needs to avoid any unexpected outage. "Operators can ill afford major pipeline or refinery shutdowns during that time, as this would only exacerbate the shortage," the IEA cautioned.

However, by the end of 2019, there will be very few midstream constraints holding back the shale industry. New planned export terminals will also clear the path for oil to be shipped overseas in ever rising volumes. "[P]ipeline and export projects slated for completion by 2020 should unchain North American oil production growth early in the next decade," Bank of America Merrill Lynch wrote.

(Source: oilprice.com)

#### Asian LNG demand to quadruple by 2030

The biggest buyers of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in Northeast Asia which account for more than half of the world's LNG market-could see their total uncontracted demand rising fourfold by 2030, new research by Wood Mackenzie has shown.

At the same time, U.S. LNG export capacity is set to significantly increase in the coming years with several projects awaiting final investment decisions (FIDs) and several others currently in

Rising LNG demand in Asia is welcome news for the variety of projects under construction and commissioning in the U.S. Gulf Coast

With the massive surge in Chinese natural gas demand and legacy contracts of other Asian buyers expiring, the seven largest LNG buyers in the world are set to soon embark on a hunt for a mix of contracts to cut average costs and enhance security of supply sources, according

These seven major LNG buyers—CNOOC, PetroChina, Sinopec, CPC, JERA, KOGAS, and Tokyo Gas-account for more than 50 percent of the global LNG market.

On the supply side, next year could be a record year for FIDs on more than 220 million tons per annum (mmtpa) taken.

'Some of the less prepared or competitive projects will slip into 2020 and beyond, but nonetheless a bumper year beckons," WoodMac says. In 2019, the favorites to reach FID include the US\$27-billion Arctic LNG-2 project in Russia, at least one project in Mozambique, and three projects in the United States. Expansion and backfill projects in Australia and Papua New Guinea—closer to the Asian market—could

also see FID next year, according to Wood Mackenzie. As the LNG market is changing with more short-term and spot purchases, LNG suppliers have to ensure that they can meet the buyers' needs of a variety of contracts. Buyers will be looking not only at prices, but also at contract flexibility, diversification of sources, seasonality, and upstream participation, WoodMac said.

"Market liberalisation and uncertainty on longer-term demand in more mature markets, such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, will mean more room for spot and short-term purchases," research director Nicholas Browne said.

While oil indexation will continue to dominate markets due to familiarity and ability to hedge, Asian buyers should be more inclined towards hub indexation to boost diversity and enable sales into Europe,'

In the United States, export capacity of LNG is expected to more than double by the end of 2019—to  $8.9\,\text{billion}$  cubic feet per day (Bcf/d), which will make the United States the world's third-largest LNG export capacity holder behind Australia and Qatar, the EIA said last week.

The United States is now exporting LNG from Sabine Pass in Louisiana—the first LNG facility that began operations in 2016, from Cove Point LNG in Maryland, and most recently—from Corpus Christi in Texas. Cheniere Energy said last week that its first commissioning cargo of LNG had loaded and departed from Corpus Christi in Texas, marking the first LNG export from the state.

Cameron LNG in Louisiana and Freeport LNG in Texas are currently being commissioned, with all three trains at Cameron LNG and two trains at Freeport LNG expected to be placed in service in 2019.

Another four export terminals-Magnolia LNG, Delfin LNG, Lake Charles, and Golden Pass—plus a sixth train at Sabine Pass have been approved by both the U.S. Federal Regulatory Commission and the Department of Energy, and they are expected to make FIDs in the coming months, the EIA said.

Other projects are also planned in the United States, although they still hinge on regulatory approvals. Tellurian expects to receive a final environmental impact statement on its proposed Driftwood LNG project in January 2019 and to take FID in the first half of 2019. Tellurian has just signed a preliminary agreement to sell LNG from Driftwood to commodity trader Vitol based on the Platts Japan Korea Marker (JKM).

The LNG business is evolving into a true commodity market, which includes LNG purchases and sales based on actual LNG prices rather than indexing to other energy products. JKM has emerged as the most liquid and transparent pricing mechanism for LNG," President and CEO Meg Gentle said. (Source: oilprice.com)

#### **Kuwait oil minister's** resignation accepted by government

Kuwaiti Oil Minister Bakheet Al-Rashidi and two top executives of state-owned energy companies resigned amid persistent internal disputes that have been delaying projects in OPEC's fifth-biggest producing country.

Al-Rashidi's resignation has been accepted, according to a person familiar with the situation. Kuwait Oil Co. Chief Executive Officer Jamal Jaafar submitted his resignation last week, the person said. Hatem Al-Awadhi, acting CEO of Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Co., said he resigned for personal reasons.

A government spokesman couldn't immediately be reached

"The minister was driven to resign because of the grilling and because of a lack of support within the government," said Kamel al-Harami, an independent oil analyst and former executive of state-owned Kuwait Petroleum Corp. Kuwait's chronic internal disputes have contributed to delays in projects, he said.

The country's oil industry, which provides more than 90 percent of public revenue, has been caught up in political wrangling for about two decades, with 15 people serving as ministers over that period. A number of high-profile energy projects have been either

An Emiri decree is expected to be issued to appoint a new KPC board as the three-year term of the current board, including Chief Executive Officer Nizar Al-Adsani, ends this week.

Al-Rashidi, who had been oil minister since last December, submitted his resignation earlier this month, after lawmakers stepped up pressure on the government for his dismissal amid allegations of mismanagement. He still carried out his duties after that and traveled to Vienna to participate in the meetings of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Al-Rashidi survived a no-confidence vote in May after being questioned in parliament over the alleged mismanagement. A government-appointed committee formed to investigate the allegations has compiled a report, and MPs have since called for the resignations of Al-Rashidi and other senior officials. Lawmakers have said they plan to question the minister again.

Kuwait Petroleum issued a statement in October, responding to what was published about the committee's report in local media. The company said the report contained "erroneous information based on incomplete information, and lacks accuracy and professionalism." It denied any squandering of public funds or providing misleading information on the progress of projects.

(Source: Bloomberg)

# A child occupies the White House — and the world knows it

By Patti Davis

Lately, I've been looking at home movies and photographs of my childhood years; I'm working on a documentary about my family's life before politics claimed us. A time before the world moved in.

There is something transformative about looking back at your parents when they were younger than you are now and seeing yourself as a small child gazing up at them, reaching for their hands. It resonates in some deep part of us — they were the first adults we knew, and we relied on them to lead us into a big unfamiliar world. We didn't know that generations whispered behind us. We didn't know the pull of ancestry or the fears and doubts that may have trailed our parents throughout their lives. We only knew we were supposed to hold their hands and trust them to keep us from falling.

There is an inherently parental role to being president of the United States. The person holding that office is supposed to know more than we do about dangers facing the country and the world, and is entrusted with making the appropriate decisions to keep us safe and secure. The president is supposed to keep us from fall-

**Trump has** 

America's

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and shouts, "Go

as a petulant

ing. What happens when the president is the biggest child in the room—any room? It upends the natural order of things as surely as if a child's parents started throwing tantrums and talking like a second-grader.

I'm not sure the country has fully comprehended the damage being done by a president who misbehaves so frequently, it's a news

story when he doesn't. Globally, the United States has lost its power, its aura of seriousness and decisiveness that once made autocrats hesitate before crossing us. Now we are a country that can't seem to stand up to a ruler who orders the murder and dismemberment of a dissident who was a legal U.S. resident or call out Russia's intrusion into America's democratic process. Children know how to scream and sulk; they don't know how to take control and restore order. They don't know how to plot out a responsible position and then act on it. A child occupies the White House, and the world knows it.

A friend's young son thought it was really funny when the president called someone "Horseface." He giggled when he saw the president on TV telling a reporter that her question was "stupid" and that all her questions are stupid. Nine-year-olds should be able to look up to the president of the United States, not feel that the president is one of them.

Immaturity in adults has serious consequences. My friend, the author Marianne Williamson, once said, "Adults who behave like children do adult damage." We're starting to see some of that damage, most recently at the southern border. This president has slammed shut America's door as loudly as a petulant child slams his bedroom door and shouts, "Go away." The result is that thousands of migrants are living in squalid conditions just beyond the U.S. border, trying to keep babies from getting sick. This is adult damage, and there will be more.

What will happen if the country faces serious danger? I was 10 years old in 1962 when President John F. Kennedy addressed the nation about the Cuban missile crisis. I remember sitting on the floor in my parents' bedroom watching him on television. I remember asking my father if we would go to war. He replied, "I hope not. But the president is doing the right thing." Kennedy's somber confidence did make me a little less afraid. At the end of the speech, he said: "The cost of freedom is always high — but Americans have always paid it. And one path we shall never choose is the path of surrender or submission. Our goal is not the victory of might but the vindication of right."

Who would speak to the nation like that if global turmoil turned into a crisis that threatens America's future.

(Source: The Washington Post)

#### **Sinking not waving**

Theresa May has three objectives. The first is to remain prime minister. The second is to get a parliamentary majority for her withdrawal agreement made with the European Union. The third is to fulfil the first two objectives without splitting the Conservative party. She is unlikely to succeed. The reason rests with the principal opponents in her own party: those Tory MPs who want a second referendum and those who want a hard Brexit. Mrs May wanted both to act in their narrow self-interest rather than cooperating with each other by simultaneously rejecting her agreement. Her line had been that they must choose from among her deal, no deal, or no Brexit. However, the hardline Brexiters did not think her deal was enough to stop another referendum, while the supporters of another referendum in the Tory party did not see her deal as a way to stop the rightwing absolutists getting a no-deal outcome. Significantly, both wings of the Tory party condemned it as "vassalage". Mrs May's failure to win either of these factions to her side has been at the root of her parliamentary troubles.

Things will not improve with her procrastinations. Instead of peeling off internal opponents, she has hardened opposition. Despite claims to the contrary, Brussels has no reason to throw Mrs May a lifeline. Neither will the Labour party. Mrs May yearns for an opposition that would split in the way Labour did in the fractious politics of the early 1970s when Europe divided the left. If only, the prime minister and her allies thought, there were sizable numbers of Labour rebels – 69 rebelled in 1971 – who would back her on the principle of leaving the EU as the referendum of 2016 mandated. It is a sign of how deluded Mrs May's team were that they seriously weighed such a rebellion.

This country needs to have the vote on the Brexit deal to crystallize where the Commons stands. Late January seems to leave MPs hardly enough time to demonstrate which policy commands the majority or largest minority in parliament. This represents a test for the way the cabinet views the Commons. The riddle of Brexit will not be solved by a series of cabinet leaks which are job applications for prime minister dressed up as serious policy interventions.

# Did Saudi Arabia help to fund Trump's inauguration?

## The answer could be the key to dethroning the president

#### By Will Gor

Two years after Donald Trump stunned the world by winning America's presidential race, there appears to be no let-up in the controversy surrounding this most bombastic of all White House masters.

Last week saw Michael Cohen go on the record to say that the president directed the hush money paid to Stormy Daniels and Karen McDougal – and that he, Trump, knew the payments were wrong. When Trump suggested that Cohen only became a "rat" after the FBI broke into his office, many responded with the obvious point that "rats", in mob lingo, tell the truth.

Meanwhile, having decided to replace John Kelly as his chief of staff, the president for a few days appeared to be facing the prospect that nobody else fancied the job – until eventually he shifted the White House budget director, Mick Mulvaney, into the role (at least for now).

Immediately afterwards he was faced with another loss, as it was announced that interior secretary Ryan Zinke was to quit. Zinke himself had faced accusations of using his position for his own ends.

Special counsel Robert Mueller, having apparently cracked Michael Cohen – as he had previously cracked Michael Flynn and George Papadopoulos – was reported by The Daily Beast to be preparing "phase two" of his inquiry into alleged ties between Trump's presidential campaign and the Russian state (and possibly other foreign actors).

Commentators have suggested that the speed with which Cohen was sentenced last week was indicative of Mueller being close to finalizing a damning report.

Of course, Trump continues to excoriate Mueller's inquiry as part of a conspiracy against his leadership – the investigation of a mere "hoax"; another "fake news" machine.

Now though there are murmurings of a separate examination by federal investigators looking into the fundraising for Trump's presidential inauguration. The president's organizing committee raised nearly twice as much as the previous record



Until now, Trump's backing for the present leadership in Riyadh had been set in the context of his administration's broader view of Middle East affairs. But these allegations put his support for the Saudis in a different light.

for inaugural fundraising.

One of the questions being examined is whether any donations came from foreign sources. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar have all been mentioned in that breath—just as the former two and Israel are now said to be of interest to Robert Mueller.

Time will tell whether there is any substance to such alleged connections; but already critics of the president are

now examining his attitude towards Saudi Arabia in particular in a different light.

Until now, his backing for the present leadership in Riyadh – both in respect of the war in Yemen and the murder of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi – had been set in the context of the Trump administration's broader view of Middle East affairs, and against the backdrop of domestic economic needs (ie big orders

for U.S.-made weapons). A suggestion that Trump is indebted to Saudi Arabia because of assistance given to his election campaign or that oh-so-famously-well-attended inauguration paints the relationship in a very different light.

To make matters trickier for the president, he already knows that the Republican-controlled Senate doesn't have his back when it comes to U.S.-Saudi relations. Its resolutions condemning Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman for Khashoggi's murder and calling for an end to U.S. military support for Riyadh's intervention in Yemen are diametrically opposed to White House policy. When the Democrats take control of the House of Representatives next year — and potentially back the Senate's position — the president will come under even more pressure.

The response of the Saudi ministry of foreign affairs to the Senate vote on Khashoggi was to condemn it as having "contained blatant interferences in the kingdom's internal affairs, undermining the kingdom's regional and international role". Given Trump's seeming intention to stand by the Saudi crown prince – and to veto legislation that he regards as damaging to his Middle East policy – the reaction from Riyadh is hardly helpful. It simply serves to emphasize the fact that the president is more in tune with the leaders of foreign states than with his own lawmakers.

As to whether the circling wagons will make any difference to Trump's policy-making or his braggadocious personal behavior remains to be seen of course. After all, he has faced criticism from multiple quarters for the whole of his presidency and has yet to be derailed, with positive economic results at home enabling him to present his administration as a success.

Nevertheless, as investigators open new lines of inquiry, and as Trump's hirings and firings become ever more shambolic, it is hard to conclude that 2019 will be any easier for the president than this year was — and it may be an awful lot worse.

(Source: Independen

## How Britain stole \$45 trillion from India

## And lied about it

#### By Jason Hicke

There is a story that is commonly told in Britain that the colonization of India - as horrible as it may have been - was not of any major economic benefit to Britain itself. If anything, the administration of India was a cost to Britain. So the fact that the empire was sustained for so long - the story goes - was a gesture of Britain's benevolence.

New research by the renowned economist Utsa Patnaik - just published by Columbia University Press - deals a crushing blow to this narrative.

Drawing on nearly two centuries of detailed data on tax and trade, Patnaik calculated that Britain drained a total of nearly \$45 trillion from India during the period 1765 to 1938.

It's a staggering sum. For perspective, \$45 trillion is 17 times more than the total annual gross domestic product of the United Kingdom today. How did this come about? It happened through the trade system.

Prior to the colonial period, Britain bought goods like textiles and rice from Indian producers and paid for them in the normal way - mostly with silver - as they did with any other country. But something changed in 1765, shortly after the East India Company took control of the subcontinent and established a monopoly over Indian trade.

Here's how it worked. The East India Company began collecting taxes in India, and then cleverly used a portion of those revenues (about a third) to fund the purchase of Indian goods for British use. In other words, instead of paying for Indian goods out of their own pocket, British traders acquired them for free, "buying" from peasants and weavers using money that had just been taken from them.

It was a scam - theft on a grand scale. Yet most Indians were unaware of what was going on because the agent who collected the taxes was not the same as the one who showed up to buy their goods. Had it been the same person, they surely would have smelled a rat.

Some of the stolen goods were consumed in Britain, and the rest were re-exported elsewhere. The re-export system allowed Britain to finance a flow of imports from Europe, including strategic materials like iron, tar and timber, which were essential to Britain's industrialization. Indeed, the Industrial Revolution depended in large part on this systematic theft from India.

On top of this, the British were able to sell the stolen goods to other countries for much more than they "bought" them for in the first place, pocketing not only 100 percent of the original value of the goods but also the markup.

After the British Raj took over in 1847, colonizers added a special new twist to the tax-and-buy system. As the East India Company's monopoly broke down, Indian producers were allowed to export their goods directly to other countries. But Britain made sure that the payments for those goods nonetheless ended up in London.

How did this work? Basically, anyone who wanted to buy goods from India would do so using special Council Bills - a unique paper currency issued only by the British



The British were able to sell the stolen goods to other countries for much more than they "bought" them for in the first place, pocketing not only 100 percent of the original value of the goods but also the markup.

Crown. And the only way to get those bills was to buy them from London with gold or silver. So traders would pay London in gold to get the bills, and then use the bills to pay Indian producers. When Indians cashed the bills in at the local colonial office, they were "paid" in rupees out of tax revenues - money that had just been collected from them. So, once again, they were not in fact paid at all; they were defrauded.

Meanwhile, London ended up with all of the gold and silver that should have gone directly to the Indians in exchange for their exports.

This corrupt system meant that even while India was running an impressive trade surplus with the rest of the world - a surplus that lasted for three decades in the early 20th century - it showed up as a deficit in the national accounts because the real income from India's exports was appropriated in its entirety by Britain.

Some point to this fictional "deficit" as evidence that India was a liability to Britain. But exactly the opposite is true. Britain intercepted enormous quantities of income that rightly belonged to Indian producers. India was the goose that laid the golden egg. Meanwhile, the "deficit" meant that India had no option but to borrow from Britain to finance its imports. So the entire Indian population was forced into completely unnecessary debt to their colonial overlords, further cementing British control.

Britain used the windfall from this fraudulent system to fuel the engines of imperial violence - funding the invasion of China in the 1840s and the suppression of

the Indian Rebellion in 1857. And this was on top of what the Crown took directly from Indian taxpayers to pay for its wars. As Patnaik points out, "the cost of all Britain's wars of conquest outside Indian borders were charged always wholly or mainly to Indian revenues."

And that's not all. Britain used this flow of tribute from India to finance the expansion of capitalism in Europe and regions of European settlement, like Canada and Australia. So not only the industrialization of Britain but also the industrialization of much of the Western world was facilitated by extraction from the colonies.

Patnaik identifies four distinct economic periods in colonial India from 1765 to 1938, calculates the extraction for each, and then compounds at a modest rate of interest (about 5 percent, which is lower than the market rate) from the middle of each period to the present. Adding it all up, she finds that the total drain amounts to \$44.6 trillion. This figure is conservative, she says, and does not include the debts that Britain imposed on India during the Raj.

These are eye-watering sums. But the true costs of this drain cannot be calculated. If India had been able to invest its own tax revenues and foreign exchange earnings in development - as Japan did - there's no telling how history might have turned out differently. India could very well have become an economic powerhouse. Centuries of poverty and suffering could have been prevented.

All of this is a sobering antidote to the rosy narrative promoted by certain powerful voices in Britain. The conservative historian Niall Ferguson has claimed that British rule helped "develop" India. While he was prime minister, David Cameron asserted that British rule was a net help to India.

This narrative has found considerable traction in the popular imagination: according to a 2014 YouGov poll, 50 percent of people in Britain believe that colonialism was beneficial to the colonies.

Yet during the entire 200-year history of British rule in India, there was almost no increase in per capita income. In fact, during the last half of the 19th century - the heyday of British intervention - income in India collapsed by half. The average life expectancy of Indians dropped by a fifth from 1870 to 1920. Tens of millions died needlessly of policy-induced famine.

Britain didn't develop India. Quite the contrary - as Patnaik's work makes clear - India developed Britain.

What does this require of Britain today? An apology? Absolutely. Reparations? Perhaps - although there is not enough money in all of Britain to cover the sums that Patnaik identifies. In the meantime, we can start by setting the story straight. We need to recognise that Britain retained control of India not out of benevolence but for the sake of plunder and that Britain's industrial rise didn't emerge sui generis from the steam engine and strong institutions, as our schoolbooks would have it, but depended on violent theft from other lands and other peoples.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## British strategy in the Indo-Pacific region: Conquest of the world from the deck of a ship

1 → Earlier, in drawing up the prospect of a world-wide geopolitical future, the United States cited a policy of "turning to the Pacific" that under Barack Obama's Presidency (2008-2016), pushed the current power of the international community to a balance of power across Asia. However, the incumbent US President Donald Trump, on his trip to India in November 2017, first used the term "Indo-Pacific" instead of the pacific.

In the UK, the terminology "turning to the Indo-Pacific" was used from the beginning of 2017, as former Foreign Minister Boris Johnson said during a trip to Australia in July of 2017, "To strengthen the relationship, nowhere is better here than the Indo-Pacific, an area that is economically third in the world and holds two thirds of the world's population."

In July 2018, British Secretary of State for Defence Gavin Williamson announced the adoption of a multilateral and strategic approach to the Indian Ocean to mark an agreement on the recognition of the Indo-Pacific. The adoption coincided with British Prime Minister Teresa May's trip to Delhi on April 18, 2018, when she met her Indian counterpart Prime Minister Nandranda Moody. On that day for the first time, the parties formally used the word Indo-Pacific in a joint statement instead of the Indian Ocean.

In addition to the Pacific, the Indian Ocean in comparison with the past has a more semantic meaning in the international trade. This body of water has 63 harbors, accessed by three straits including the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca (the Andaman Sea Point in the Indian Ocean to the South Pacific Ocean in the Pacific Ocean) and the Bab-Al-Mandeb Strait (which connects the India Ocean through the Red Sea to the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea). The Indian Ocean accounts for nearly 80 percent of the world's oil transit.

The Indian Ocean overlooks most world's conflict zones including, Palestine, Yemen,

Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Thus, the strategic position of the Indian Ocean plays a role in the future of the world's trade-security (energy). The Mahanian strategy governs the approach of global powers - a strategy that, in the event of a war, will control the sea front necessary for trade and other stuff.

The main reason behind the development of this Indo-Pacific arena is Beijing's insistence on expanding its naval influence in the Indian Ocean and beyond in the Mediterranean. China wants to develop its capabilities in deep waters and strengthen the strategic ports to ultimately control trade routes and energy lines originating from the Middle East.

With the withdrawal from the EU, the UK independently pursues a global recovery strategy, which is part of the US-UK Security Alliance. On the pretext of protecting the law-making system that is inclusive of all, the UK has stepped into this Indo-Pacific arena.

The deployment of three vessels last year to monitor the imposition of North Korea's sanctions and protect high seas shipping right, reveals the role of the British Navy in the global strategy.

The fact that Britain has been threatening the small Republic of Mauritius to preserve the Chagos Archipelago or Chagos Islands in the heart of the Indian Ocean illustrates the importance of the region and the determination of London to maintain its strategic position. Chagos Islands currently host the America's Diego Garcia military base. Britain had once claimed that it would return the islands to Mauritius when they no longer had military use for the location; however, the promise has been postponed in the Indo-Pacific area.

Among the recent British activities in the Indo-Pacific filed is:

In August, Britain, Australia, France and the US decided to open embassies in the Pacific region. The plan would boost



the number of diplomats in the area and further engage their involvement as leaders to curb China's power. The vote of each of these small populated nations is considered a political weight in the United Nations, while they control a large part of the ocean.

In September, British navy Albion broke the Beijing red line, while approaching Xisha Island in the South China Sea. Britain's top naval chief, Sir Phillip Jones, said his country is obliged to support its allies in the South China Sea region. His statement shows that Britain is planning to restart shipping near the Chinese artificial islands.

Also in September, Japan's largest aircraft carrier, known as Kaga, joined the British HMS Argyll in the Indian Ocean for a drill in the disputed area of the South China Sea.

In September the UK announced it is prepared to part take in a coalition of seven other countries including the US, Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, France, South Korea and Japan. The goal of this alliance is to monitor the United Nations sanctions against North Korea.

Also in September the United Kingdom announced intention to send the first domestic radar to orbit the earth using an Indian missile. This radar satellite, called NovaSAR, has multiple roles, but its main role is to observe suspicious shipping activities in the vast ocean.

In October, British forces conducted exercises on Japanese soil for the first time in history. It was the first time that another foreign troop, except the US, stepped in Japan's territory. The maneuver kicked off one year after May's visit and about two weeks after Britain's Foreign Minister Jeremy Hunt's visit to Japan, with the aim of strategic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region to curb China and confront the threats of North Korea.

However, the United Kingdom is cautious in dealing with china and pursues balanced relations and interaction with China. For example, Ian Levy, technical director for cyber security and resilience at the UK's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) in a recent statement urged London allies to engage and collaborate with China on cyber security. The reason for this change of approach, he argued was the speed of online penetration and the development of Chinese technology.

This is while Britain is still interested in

This is while Britain is still interested in the construction of a number of new power plants with China's largest nuclear company, China General Nuclear Power Group or CGN, while the US claims that the Chinese company is stealing information from its partners with the aim of using civilian nuclear technology for military purposes.

In recent years, we have been witnessing

In recent years, we have been witnessing cooperation between the British and Chinese naval forces, including the arrival of two Chinese frigates in the UK, tied up in the port of London in October 2017. Another area of British-Chinese cooperation is combating piracy and dealing with natural disasters.

So the British strategy in the Indo-Pacific region is to maintain close cooperation with the navy of all the countries on the scene, but the extent of this partnership changes as London's interest changes. If China decides to expand influence, Britain won't hesitate to support Indian-Japanese-Australian-American coalition, even a tripartite coalition between Britain-Australia-France is expected to be formed. This is while the Five Power Defence Arrangements, FPDA, between Britain, New Zealand, Australia, Singapore and Malaysia also exists.

So the ultimate strategy is to curb China through interaction and, at the same time, maintain unity with friends.

But Britain's return to the "East of the Suez Canal" will surely be difficult. Around half a century ago, with the decline of its empire and colonial independence like India and Singapore, Britain made a historic decision to leave East Asia and the Persian Gulf. However, in 2013, the Royal United Services Institute, RUSI, the world's oldest independent think tank on international defence and security, announced Britain's return to the east of the Suez Canal.

Indeed, the plan was to expand Britain's military power from the European continent to the Far East and the Persian Gulf, and the signs of it are the reopening of the Bahrain naval base and the establishment of a military base in Oman.

Britain post brexit faces two challenges: the commitment to securing Europe and the expansion of power beyond Europe. The first is due to the British geographic location and the shortage of manpower.

Second, exacerbating tensions with Moscow will prevent the UK to dispatch troops to the east of the Suez Canal. That is because, despite the withdrawal from the EU, the preservation of the continental is still a priority for London, while at the same time an increase in force in Afghanistan will prevent such ambition.

With this in mind, the only way to expand the power on the east of the Suez Canal is through the Navy, a plan that is backed by British Secretary of State for Defence Williamson, and comes from the theory of Queen Elizabeth's fleet deployment to the Indo-Pacific in the 2020s. However, due to the shortage of manpower and the need for maintenance and repair, Britain cannot simultaneously keep two aircraft carriers in the Indo-Pacific region unless they can get help from their allies' relief vessels.

Thus, the UK's decline of commitment to Europe is the biggest challenge facing London on the east of the Suez Canal.

The UK Foreign Ministry document in March 2018 sets out Britain's global strategy, and calls the United States, Europe, and the Indo-Pacific area, as the three major centers of the world economy and political influence for Britain's post-brexit, and says London must continue its path and prioritize affairs according to current issues in each region.

## Hazrat Fatima (A.S), the most oppressed Lady in the world

#### By Sadiq Aliyu Musc

**TEHRAN** — Both Shia and Sunni sources agree that, on a number of occasions, Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) had said, "Fatimah is part of me. Whoever makes her angry, makes me angry." This has been recorded in both Sahih Bukhari (Arabic-English, Volume 5, Traditions 61 and 111) and Sahih Muslim (in the section on the virtues of Hazrat Fatimah, Volume 4, pages 1904-1905), two of the most important Hadith books to Sunnis. It is also recorded in Sahih Bukhari Chapter of "The battle of Khaibar", Arabic-English, v5, tradition #546, pp 381–383, also v4, Tradition #325) that Hazrat Fatimah was angry with Abu Bakr and did not speak to him before she died.

Hazrat Fatimah is also reported to have said, according to Sunni sources, about Abu Bakr and Umar, "I take Allah and the angels to be my witness that you have not pleased me; on the other hand, you have angered me. When I shall meet the Prophet (S) I will complain about you two."

#### FADAK

Fadak is a land in Hejaz's desert surrounding Madina (two to three days travel by Foot) and near Khaybar, which a palm-grove and habitable land with enough water and had a good production. The land is belong to Banu Nadir's clan, the settlement of a Jewish agriculture, Prophet Mohammad acquired it by peace resolution during conclusion of a campaign in Khaybar's war.

Historians claim that in the way to the mosque, Hazrat Fatimah is walking calml and serenity, while she was very angry. At that time women were not allowed to attend in social fields, Hazrat Fatimah with self-confidence and serenity tried to get back her right. Moreover, she put on her veil and gown and came, with her maids and some of her fellow-women walking exactly like her father's gait, to Abu Bakr, who was in the mosque among a crowd of the Muhajerin, the Ansar and others. A curtain was put between women and men. She began to give a beautiful speech and told people that Abu Bakr took away her rights. Then she began to cry and people began to cry by her discourse. She waited until they stopped crying and became quiet and began her speech.

#### SERMON OF FADAK

Sermon of Fadak is Hazrat Fatimah's speech in the Prophet Muhammad's Mosque (P.B.U.H). Hazrat Fatimah Zahra (A.S) delivered this sermon in the presence of Umar, Abu Bakr and a group of Prophet Muhammad's Companions who had gathered in Prophet Muhammad's Mosque. She entered the mosque with group of women and her trusted servant. Fadak was part of the bounty given to Prophet Muhammad. Much before his Martyred, he bequeathed it to Hazrat Fatimah. Nevertheless, soon after Prophet Muhammad's demise, it was taken from her by Abu Bakr's order, and they also let out all lebourers working there. Thus the land became an object of dispute between her and Abu Bakr.

The sermon can be divided in several subjects and the main points are: praising Allah, declaring points through prophetic mission of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H), the events that occurred after Prophet Muhammad's departure, and a speech about Fadak and bringing proofs about her prerogative.

Hazrat Fatimah started her speech with moaning and people began to cry. She patiently waited for quiet, then she started her remarkable sermon by praising Allah:

"Praise be to Allah for that which He bestowed (upon us), and thanks be to Him for all that which He inspired, and tribute be to Him for that which He provided; from prevalent favors which He created, and abundant benefactions which He offered and perfect grants which He presented; that their number is much too plentiful to compute, and too vast to measure; their limit was too distant to realize. He recommended to them (His creatures) to gain more (of His bounties) by being grateful for their continuity. He ordained Himself praiseworthy by giving generously to His creatures, and promised, through supplicating Him, to give more like them. I bear witness that there is no God but Allah Who is one without partner; a statement which sincere devotion is made to be its interpretation, put into hearts its continuation, and illuminated in the minds its sensibility. He who cannot be perceived with vision, neither be described with tongues, nor can imagination surround His form."

Then she witnessed to prophetic mission of her father and said:

"I too bear witness that my father, Muhammad, is His slave and messenger, whom He chose before sending him, named him before creating him, and preferred him by missioning him; when creatures were still concealed in the unseen, guarded from that which was appalling, and associated with the termination and nonexistence. For Allah the Exalted knew that which was to follow, comprehended that which will come to pass, and realized the place of every event. Allah has sent him (Muhammad) as perfection for His commands, a resolution to accomplish His rule. and an implementation of His decrees. So he found the nations to vary in their faiths, obsessed by their fires, worshiping their idols, and denying Allah despite their knowledge of Him. Therefore, Allah illuminated their darkness with my father, Muhammad, uncovered obscurity from their hearts, and cleared the clouds from their insights. He revealed guidance among the people; So he delivered them from being led astray, led them away from misguidance, guided them to the proper religion, and called them to the straight path.

And she delivered words about Fadak and her inheritance right:

"O Muslims! Is my inheritance usurped? O son of Abu Quhafa, is it in the Book of Allah that you inherit your father and I do not inherit my father? Surely you have done a strange thing! Did you intendedly desert the Book of Allah and turned your back on it? Allah said: (And Sulaiman was Dawood's heir. 27:16) and said about Yahya bin Zachariah: (Grant me from Thyself an heir, who should inherit me and inherit from the children of Yaqoub. 19:5-6) and said: (And the possessors of relationships are nearer to each other in the ordinance of Allah. 8:75), and He said: (Allah enjoins you concerning your children: The male shall have the equal of the portion of two females. 4:11), and He said: (Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth for parents and near relatives. 2:180). You claimed that I have no position, and no inheritance from my father, and there is no kinship between us. So did Allah distinguish you with a verse, from which He excluded my father? Or do you say: people of two religions do not inherit each other? Am I and my father not of one religion? Or are you more aware of the Qur'an than my father and my cousin?

According to a number of sources, Hazrat Fatimah was martyred as a result of injuries sustained when her house was attacked and burned by Umar. She died between 75 and 95 days after the demise of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). According to many Muslim historians and scholars, including the likes of the Sunni Tabari and the Shia Morteza Motahhari, Hazrat Fatimah asked Hazrat Ali to bury her at night to ensure none of her enemies participated in her funeral.

#### Burial place of Hazrat Fatimah A.S

The burial place of Hazrat Fatimah (A.S) is a disputed issue among different sects of Muslims. Hazrat Fatimah was a daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) and Hazrat Khadijah, wife of Hazrat 'Ali ibn Abi Taleb, and mother of Hazrat Hasan (A.S) and Hazrat Husain (A.S). Hazrat Ali buried his wife in an unknown location, according to Hazrat Fatimah's decision with the aim of expressing her anger towards the caliph of the time. Different locations have been mentioned as the possible burial place of Hazrat Fatimah. Some of them are said to be nearer to fact: Al-Baqi', her house and between Prophet Muhammad's (P.B.U.H) tomb and his minbar.

Tradition states that, after the Prophet Muhammad's Demise and the Saqifah incident, the home of the household of the prophet was crowded with material to set fire for taking allegiance by force from Hazrat Ali (A.S). Defending Hazrat Ali's Divine successorship Hazrat Fatimah was seriously injured and desired no one attend her burial. Hazrat Fatimah's burial place remained secret. Also according to some references, Hazrat Fatima asked Hazrat Ali ibn Abi Talib no one attend her funeral except Umm Salimah, Umm Ayman, Fidha, Hazrat Hassan, Hazrat Hussain, Salman, Ammar, Miqdad, Abu Dhar and Hudhayfah. Also, the secret burial was done with the aim of avoiding the presence of caliph (Abu Bakr).

The next day; people, while blaming each other, gathered and proposed bringing a group of women for exhumation of Hazrat Zahra's grave.

The exact place of her tomb is unknown, for she had asked Hazrat Ali (A.S) to hide it as a proof of her anger against the people who bothered her. Also, other Imams and those who participated in her funeral never revealed the place of her grave. Three places has been specified as her grave; Al-Baqi', her house and between Prophet Muhammad's tomb and his minbar.

#### Shia view

According to Shaykh Tusi: 'You may visit her in shrine of Prophet Muhammad,

because there is her burial place."

Then continues: "regarding this matter, there are different ideas; some of them say that she was buried in Al-Baqi', some others say that she was buried in Muhammad's tomb while some others mention her house as her burial place and say that her grave fell in the mosque when Umayyads extended the mosque."

Based on the prophetic narration, some scholars believe that she is buried in Prophet Muhammad's shrine: "What is between my house and my minbar is a meadow of the meadows of Jannah"

Based on Allamah Askari, the last possibility about Fatimah's burial place is her house. This possibility is backed by several authentic documents. The main documents are those received from the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S), the main members of the prophetic house who know about the incident better than others. An

authentic tradition by Ali ibn Mousa Al-Ridha (A.S) narrated in Kitab al-Kafi, Tahdhib al-Ahkam, Man la yahduruhu al-Faqih, Oyoun Akhbar Al-Ridha and Al-Ma'ani al-Akhbar reports:

"She was buried in her house and when Umayyads extended the mosque, the burial place fell in the mosque."

#### Sunni view

It is narrated in Sahih al-Bukhari, Muwatta of Malik, Hilyat al-Awliya of Abu Nu`aym, Sunan of Tirmidhi, and Musnad of Ahmad ibn Hanbal[c] that Hazrat Fatimah is buried between Prophet Muhammad's house and his minbar, based on a prophetic narration which says: "What is between my house and my minbar is a meadow of the meadows of Jannah."

She was martyred on 3rd Jimada Al-Sani 11 years (A.H), At the age of only 18 years old.



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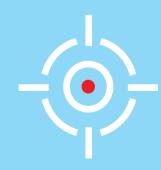


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# Iran's health coverage index above S. Asia average: WHO

HEALTH TEHRAN — According to World des Sk Health Organization (WHO) 2018 report on world health statistics, Iran's health coverage index is 65 (out of a maximum index score of 100) which is higher than the South Asia average estimated at 53.

WHO 2018 edition contains the latest available data for 36 health-related Sustainable Development Goal

Achieving universal health coverage, addressing health emergencies and promoting healthier populations were highlighted in the report as the three SDGaligned strategic priorities of the WHO's 13th General Programme of Work.

Achieving universal health coverage (UHC) means ensuring that all people receive the essential health services they need without being exposed to financial

As measured by this index, the levels of service coverage varied widely across countries in 2015, from 22 to 86. coverage of essential services is highest in regions of Eastern Asia (77) and Northern America and Europe (77), whereas sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest index value (42), followed by Southern Asia (53).

The report revealed that in Iran, 15.8% of people spend over 10% of their total household income on health and for 3.8% of people the health expenditure amounts to as much as 25% of their total income.

According to the report, At least half of the world's population do not have full coverage of essential health

#### Health emergency preparedness

WHO statistics indicated that the index of health emergency preparedness in Iran decreased from 85 (out of a maximum index score of 100) in 2010-2016 to 76 in 2010-2017.

 $Emergency \ preparedness \ is \ a \ program \ of \ long-term$ development activities whose goals are to strengthen the overall capacity and capability of a country to manage efficiently all types of emergency and to bring about an orderly transition from relief through recovery and back to sustainable development.

#### Life expectancy and mortality rate

Life expectancy in Iran is above world average and it moved up slightly from 75.6 in 2015 to 75.7 in 2016. However, healthy life expectancy dropped from 66.6 in 2015 to 65.4 in 2016.

72.0 years was the average life expectancy at birth of the global population in 2016.

An Iranian demography expert has predicted that by the year 2050 older persons will make up 20 percent of the country's population.



Achieving universal health coverage (UHC) means ensuring that all people receive the essential health services they need without being exposed to financial hardship as a result.

Census reports of 2016 indicate that the number of persons, aged 60 years or older, has increased by 1.5-fold over the past decade (2006-2016) in Iran. In 2006, some 5.1 million people were 60 or older, but the number rose to 6.1 million in 2011 and to 7.4 million in 2016. Currently, the country's total population stands at about 80 million, of which some 9.3 percent

The figures revealed that maternal mortality ratio in Iran was the same (25 per 100 000 live births) in

Road traffic mortality rate was 32.1 per 100,000 population in both years. However the ratio of suicide mortality increased from 3.6 to 4.1 per 100,000 and homicide mortality rates grew from 4.1 to 4.5 per 100,000. Communicable and non-communicable

According to WHO statistics about communicable diseases in 2015 and 2016, the prevalence of HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria fell during this period in Iran; as new HIV infections were down from 0.14 to 0.06 per 1000 uninfected population.

Tuberculosis incidence also reduced from 16 to 14 per

100,000 population and Malaria incidence significantly dropped from 0.5 per 1000 population at risk to 0.2.

However, probability of dying from most non-communicable diseases including any of cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases between age 30 and 70 remained at 14.8% throughout 2015 and 2016.

#### Health sector share of total expenditures

The statistics imply that Iran's health sector share of total government expenditure is crucially higher than global average and it seems to keep soaring as the country's health expenditure amounted to 17.5% of its total expenditure in 2014 and it went up even further to 22.6% in 2015.

Globally, the average national percentage of total government expenditure devoted to health was 11.7% in 2014, ranging from 8.8% in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region to 13.6% in the WHO Region of the

Last week, Health Ministry spokesperson Iraj Harirchi announced that the next year (starting March 21) budget bill envisages allocation of 350 trillion rials (about \$8.3 billion) to the health sector.

#### Type 2 diabetes: Gut bacteria may influence drug effectiveness



best when given orally but does not work

researchers wondered whether the com-

position of the gut bacteria influences the

efficacy of certain diabetes medications.

viewed over 100 studies of rodents and

humans and published their results in the

So, based on these observations, the

To this end, Yadav and colleagues re-

How the microbiome can in-

The research focused on how the mi-

crobiome either boosted or inhibited the

effectiveness of the drugs. It found that

modulating the gut microbiome with drugs

could help boost, change, or reverse the

by saying, "We believe that differenc-

es in an individual's microbiome help

explain why drugs will show a 90 or

50 percent optimum efficacy, but never

capacity of a patient's microbiome could

influence the absorption and function of

these drugs by making them pharmaco-

continue to decipher the interactions be-

tween the gut bacteria and diabetes drugs

in clinical practice, caution the authors.

possibility of developing treatments derived

from bacteria related to or involved in spe-

cific diseases is tantalizing," Yadav adds.

the Centers for Disease Control and Pre-

vention (CDC), over 100 million adults

in the United States are currently living

with diabetes or prediabetes.

However, more studies are needed to

'This field is only a decade old, and the

According to the latest report from

(Source: sgtalk.org)

logically active, inactive, or even toxic."

"Our review showed that the metabolic

The study's lead researcher sums up

efficacy of drugs for type 2 diabetes.

when given through an IV."

journal EBioMedicine.

fluence drugs

100 percent."

New research investigating the effect of a commonly used anti-diabetes drug, works gut microbiota on the efficacy of type 2  $diabetes\,drugs\,suggests\,that\,the\,composition$ of gut bacteria may explain why diabetes medications work for some people and

Our gut microbiome can inhibit or boost the action of anti-diabetes drugs.

According to some estimates, over 415 million people worldwide currently have type 2 diabetes, which has led some scientists to refer to the condition as a "global pandemic.'

Although there is no cure for diabetes yet, treatment and lifestyle changes can help those living with the disease.

However, diabetes drugs have varying rates of success, which depend on the form of administration and may vary from person to person.

New research, led by Hariom Yadav, Ph.D., an assistant professor of molecular medicine at the Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, NC, investigates one of the possible causes behind such varying success rates — the gut bacteria.

Previous studies quoted by Yadav and colleagues in their paper show that the gut bacteria can "instigate" obesity and type 2 diabetes, and that people living with diabetes have an imbalance in the composition of

Also, as Yadav explains, some diabetes drugs are effective when given intravenously but do not work when taken orally. The bacteria in the gut are key to regulating how a person metabolizes drugs.

"For example," explains the lead researcher, "certain drugs work fine when given intravenously and go directly to the circulation, but when they are taken orally and pass through the gut, they don't work."

"Conversely," he continues, "metformin,

## using sound



How to make kefir more healthful

its potential health benefits. Using sound technology, Russian scientists believe they have found a way to increase some of these benefits.

Scientists are learning how to boost the benefits of kefir.

Kefir, which is a fermented milk-based drink, is made using kefir grains.

Originating in the Caucasus Mountains centuries ago, kefir has recently seen an impressive uptick in popularity.

Aside from its potential benefits as a probiotic, kefir contains a compound called kefiran that has interested medical researchers.

Kefiran is an insoluble polysaccharide constructed of galactose and glucose; it is produced by certain microbes, such as Lactobacillus brevis, that are present in kefir.

Previous studies have shown that kefiran might have antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and wound healing properties. There is also some evidence that kefiran might reduce blood pressure and lower cholesterol levels.

Other studies have hinted at kefiran's potential to work as an anticancer agent, and others have shown its ability to influence the immune system.

#### Increasing kefir's powers

Normally, kefiran is present in relatively low concentrations in kefir, so designing a way to boost this product could enhance the drink's healthful benefits.

Recently, researchers from South Ural State University in Chelyabinsk, Russia, set out to boost the levels of kefiran using ultrasound. They have published their findings in the journal Ultrasonics Son-

Prof. Irina Potoroko explains, "The main objective of our research was to step up the kefiran content in fermented milk

Kefir has shot to fame over recent years for drinks. To this end, we treated milk with ultrasound.

> The researchers worked alongside scientists from the Russian State Agrarian University and the National Institute of Technology Warangal in India.

Normally, manufacturers produce kefir by adding a fermentation starter to milk; kefiran gradually accumulates during the fermentation process.

In an effort to up kefiran production, the scientists subjected milk to ultrasound before starting the process. They refer to this as sonication.

#### Ultrasound and kefir

Ultrasound is high-frequency sound - much higher than the human ear can hear. Treating the milk with this type of sound increased the production of kefiran during fermentation. Currently, though, the researchers are not sure why this boost in production occurs.

'The effects of sonication are interesting; it is not quite clear if ultrasound boosts the development of healthy microorganisms or if it suppresses them and they start producing kefiran as a defense response.

In future studies, the team will try to unpick the molecular reasons for the boosted kefiran content. If they can understand why more is produced, they may be able to enhance its production even further.

In the recent study, the researchers also tried to find the optimal ultrasound frequency and duration to achieve the highest kefiran content; just 3 minutes was enough time to significantly increase kefiran levels in the final product.

They hope that this type of research could eventually lead to safe, environmentally friendly ways to boost the benefits of a range of dairy products.

(Source: latestmedianews.com)

#### **Simply receiving DNA** test results can alter your physiology

Knowledge is power but, when it comes to knowing our genetic risks, could too much information be a bad thing? A recent study suggests that merely knowing our genetic risks can impact our physiology.

The implications of genetic testing are more complex than we thought.

Over the years, researchers have identified genetic risk factors for a range of conditions.

As genetic testing has become quicker, more cost-effective, and increasingly accurate, DNA tests have become

Each year, millions of people access information about their genetic risk of developing conditions such as Alzheimer's. Some estimate that in 2017 alone, 1 in 25 people in the United States purchased personalized genetic tests.

One of the reasons why experts carry out these tests is to inform an individual what conditions they might be at increased risk of developing, giving them the impetus to make lifestyle changes to reduce the risk

#### Genetic risk, placebo, and nocebo

Currently, there is a debate about whether knowing genetic risk factors can motivate people to change their lifestyle and be an overall force for good.

In fact, there is some evidence that knowing about genetic risks could have a negative impact in some cases. This is because individuals tend to perceive their genetic makeup as being out of their control, perhaps convincing them to simply give up.

A new study in Nature Human Behavior approaches this new field of research from a slightly different direction. In it, the scientists ask whether merely receiving genetic risk information can change an individual's risk.

The study, from Stanford University in California, taps into the placebo effect — where an inert intervention, such as a sugar pill, has a measurable benefit.

The placebo effect is so powerful that, in drug trials, a placebo can exert just as large an influence as the drug undergoing testing.

The opposite of a placebo — where an inert intervention has an adverse effect — is known as a nocebo. For instance, as the Stanford authors explain, "simply disclosing potential side effects of medications can increase their prevalence, even when providers emphasize that these side effects are occasional or uncommon.'

For the current study, the research team informed their 116 participants that they were taking part in a study looking at the relationship between DNA and diet.

Firstly, each participant went through an exercise test to rate their fitness. Then, the research team gave them a meal. After the meal, the scientists measured the levels of certain peptides to assess how hungry or full (satiated) the participants were.

They then investigated each participant's genome for two particular genes: one which they associated with exercise capacity and one with obesity.

As expected, during the exercise and post-meal blood analysis, the researchers could see slight differences related to those particular gene variants. For instance, those with the protective version of the exercise gene performed slightly better in the exercise test.

#### The influence of imaginary genes

One week later, the participants returned for part two of the experiment. This time, the investigators gave them However, they gave some correct information and others

incorrect information. For instance, some people with a gene that protected them from obesity believed they had the high-risk gene and vice versa. After receiving information about what these genetic

factors might mean for their bodies, the participants undertook the same exercise and post-meal analysis they did As the scientists expected, the participants' new knowledge

of their genetic risk changed their physiology in a meas-

Individuals who understood they had a gene that protected them from obesity produced 2.5 times the amount of the fullness hormone after a meal.

As lead author Bradley Turnwald explains, the effect was physiological and psychological: "It was really a much stronger and faster physiological satiety signal, and this mapped on to how much more full participants said that

Conversely, individuals who the researchers had told were prone to obesity showed virtually no physiological or psychological changes.

#### Exercise genes

Individuals who the study authors had told carried the gene that would impair exercise performance, did poorly on the treadmill compared with how they had performed just 1 week earlier. Similarly, lung capacity was lower, and their bodies removed carbon dioxide less efficiently.

In other words, the participants performed significantly worse in a fitness test solely because the scientists had told them that they were genetically predisposed to perform worse.

However, individuals who understood that they had a gene variant that protected their ability to exercise performed similarly across the two experiments.

'It's interesting that in the exercise study we saw a negative effect for those who were told they had the high-risk version, but in the eating study, we saw a physiological improvement in people who were told they had the protective gene." Turnwald continues, "What was consistent in both studies

was that those informed that they had the high-risk gene always had a worse outcome than those informed that they had the protective gene, even though we essentially drew out of a hat which information people received.'

Most striking about these results is the strength of the effect. In some cases, the effect of the genes on an individual's physiology was smaller than the impact of merely being told about the (nonexistent) genetic risk factor.

The researchers plan to continue their investigations; lead investigator Alia Crum explains their plans and the questions that they want to answer:

"How can you deliver genetic information in a way that has the beneficial effects in terms of motivating people to change their behavior but that doesn't provoke a negative effect on physiology, emotions, and motivation? That's where I think a lot of really good work can be done.

(Source: Medical News Today)

#### 'Over 5m Iranians have e-documents'

**TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN** — Over 5 million Iranians have got electronic documents up to now, the head of Information Technology Organization of Iran (ITO) Amir Nazemi announced on his Twitter account, Mehr reported on Monday. Until December 16, 5.138 million citizens benefited from e-government services, he said.



Through registration of smart card for gasoline the electronic documents are activated for citizens, he explained.

Iran started issuing smart cards for purchasing gasoline on Monday through "Mobile Government" - the first phase of e-government services project which came on stream in May.

Applicants can register through the application or the website of Mobile Government. Through the project, the gasoline smart cards, which were used for rationing fuel in past years, is now connected to the bank cards for easy payment.

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

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

#### How technology is expanding the insurtech landscape

The insurance sector has a longstanding reputation for being resistant to change. Who can blame those who work in this industry? Avoiding risk is in their DNA.

Agencies are taking some of the boldest steps forward when it comes to launching artificial intelligence (AI) projects. The past few years of heavy venture investment in insurtech has brought a huge array of tools to market that are solving palpable insurance business problems and providing quick and

Early technologies tended to put distance between insurers from their policyholders. Phone auto attendants droning "Press one to talk to Sales" and voicemail that never seemed to get a return call. Artificial intelligence tools are different. They enhance and support the human connection and personal guidance that is core to the industry. Policyholders still want to feel like insurers understand them, empathize and listen. Customers continue to crave tailored recommendations and advice.

From underwriting, compliance, reporting, documenting, billing, quoting, so much time is spent on minutiae that the human connection gets shunted to the bottom of the priority list, and worse, the mundane or highly detailed tasks are simply

Allstate's recent push to have personal lines agents also sell their commercial lines encountered significant challenges. Agents were starved for guidance on how to sell and support these products that were unfamiliar to them. Agents would call support lines causing delays and frustration and bogging call center queues. Allstate implemented an AI-enabled virtual agent called ABIe that "speaks" to agents to answer questions and guide them through sales and underwriting processes. ABIe handles 25,000 agent inquiries monthly, allowing personal lines agents comprehensive, instant support and freeing up the call center queues.

#### Smartphones

This smartphone ecosystem dovetails perfectly with AI tools that give consumers what they want and how they want it, thereby improving the customer experience. A new twist has emerged with the ubiquity of smartphones -- the preference for texting, chatting and messaging over calling customer service for assistance. Research has revealed that not only do over 75% of Americans own a smartphone, but most prefer to connect with brands online via web and mobile self-service interactions.

Root, a recent entrant into the auto insurance space, connects with customers only via their smartphone app. The company sells insurance, monitors driver risk and connects with policyholders all via the phone app. Consumers benefit from the convenience of a well-designed app experience and a way to save by proving they are safer drivers.

Most well known of this set of tools are the customer-facing virtual insurance agents that have arrived in hundreds of varieties. Some live on agency websites, able to understand plain language questions and can also answer mirroring the customer's own tone and vocabulary. Others are versatile, able to carry on conversations in WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and on voice-enabled devices like Amazon Alexa. They are able to take care of insurance claims, handle questions about billing, take payments and churn out quotes by the thousands.

Blockchain continues this tradition. Digital transformation increases the speed and complexity of the insurance business, so there is a growing need for certainty, trust and automation in insurance transactions. With demanding regulatory compliance requirements, evolving fraud detection and mitigation needs, swelling numbers of third-party payments to make and a complex network of data sources, insurers can no longer work with manual processes and non-integrated systems. Blockchain promises trust and reliability among the market participants without the need to integrate with each and every system.

Blockchain applications are predicted to revolutionize all aspects of insurance, but a new product offering from AXA called Fizzy is a form of travel insurance that uses blockchain to transform travel insurance by automating reimbursement for flight delays and canceled travel.

(Source: forbes.com)

# Iran, a booming market for ICT in Asia: report

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — Iran is one of the booming markets for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Asia, the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) of Iran announced in its latest report.

The report explained that the country's youth population of around 27 million - most of them living in urban areas - make it as one of the best markets for ICT products.

Iran ranks 57 in exporting creative goods and in hi-tech products the country ranks 28, the report announced.

Creative economy paves the way for development of ICT manpower, which is considered as one of the most important factors, the report stated.

About 4,400 knowledge-based companies, 38 science and technology parks and 167 incubators are working in Iran.

About 2,500 higher education centers in

students study at the Iranian universities.

The report also shed light on development of communication infrastructure.

Transmission network bandwidth was increased from 1240 GB in 2013 to 22191 GB. The global transit communications bandwidth also increased from 364 GB in 2013 to 2844 GB.

In 2013, IP Network bandwidth was 580 GB, which increased to 7787 GB.

The internet penetration rate in Iran is 85 percent, 71 percent of which is for mobile broadband.

According to the report, some 175,721 SIM cards are distributed out of which, 90 millions are active.

Affiliated to the ICT Ministry, the CRA paves the way for competitive market of telecommunication and increment, promotion and optimization of service quality



Iran's youth population, most of them living in urban areas, make it as one of the best markets for ICT products.

#### Tehran mayor honored as top researcher



The 18th century Negarestan Garden and Museum in the heart of Tehran

**TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN** — Tehk ran Mayor Pirouz Hanachi named top researcher at the 27th Research Festival which was held at the University of Tehran on Monday.

During the ceremony, 47 researchers in different fields were honored, ISNA rported.

Pirouz Hanachi was announced as the top researcher of the University of Tehran for his renovation plan for

Parvin Etesami Library.
The library is located in 18th cen-

tury Negarestan Garden and Museum in the heart of Tehran. According to an agreement between Tehran Municipality and University of Tehran, the place has been renovated by the university since 2014.

Hanachi is professor at the University of Tehran's Fine Arts Faculty.

Hanachi, 55, holds a PhD in urban development, and has served as the deputy for architecture and urban development at the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development from 2001 to 2005.

#### Academic ecosystem can develop research projects: VP



**TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN** — Estabd e s k lishing an appropriate academic ecosystem based on the private

sector can develop research projects, the vice president for science and technology Sourena Sattari said on Monday, IRNA reported. The government budget is not sufficient

for research projects, he said.

The universities are responsible for development of economy in the country, he said.

The universities should overcome complicated bureaucratic systems as well as oil economy in Iran, he explained. He named practical productions as the main factor for development of academic-based economy. Moreover, the knowledge-based compa-

nies and startups can solve many problems in the society, he added. He named private sector as an important

factor which can turn the firm identity of research into industrial one.

The lack of right ecosystem in research lead to immigration of talented university students to other countries, he said.

Universities should acknowledge interdisciplinary subjects and researches with synergy amongst different fields,

## Japanese electronics firms look to re-engineer their design mojo

Akihiro Adachi, a 31-year-old audiovisual equipment designer at Panasonic Corp, longed for some personal space during his lengthy train rides from Osaka to Tokyo. So when his company set out to encourage innovation, he joined with some colleagues and came up with "Wear Space," a headset that limits noise and peripheral vision.

Many at Panasonic were puzzled.

"Someone said the office full of people wearing this would look weird," said Kang Hwayoung, another member of the 10-person design team.

But the prototype unexpectedly won a global design award and received positive feedback from unexpected quarters, such as sake fasters who wanted to limit sensory input The project is among a range of efforts in the Japanese

 $electronics\ industry\ to\ reinvigorate\ industrial\ design.\ After$ years of losing ground to design-first rivals such as Apple and Dyson, Japanese companies are now trying to recover the processes and creative flair that produced iconic products such as the Walkman.

Panasonic, Sony and Mitsubishi Electric are among those implementing practices that have been routine at many U.S. and European companies, such as engaging designers at every step and treating packaging as part of the product.

"We used to have designers involved only in final stages of our product development process, just for an aesthetic fix," Yoshiyuki Miyabe, Panasonic's technology and manufacturing chief, told reporters. "We are revamping the process so that designers can join us from the planning phase.'

The Japanese government is promoting the efforts: a report in May urged corporate executives to pursue "design-driven management, whereby a company leverages



design as a primary driver of competitiveness.'

It also called for tax incentives for design-related investments and new laws to better protect intellectual property. The government is set to revise such laws next year.

"Of course, we had an argument over how much the government can do and should do with private-sector issues like this," said Daisuke Kubota, director at the government's design registration system planning office, who was involved in the panel.

"But a lot of design experts asked us for government initiatives, saying that this is really the last chance and Japan would never be able to catch up with global rivals if this opportunity is missed."

Another member of the panel, Kinya Tagawa, visiting

professor at the Royal College of Art and co-founder of design firm Takram, says there has been a sharp increase in major companies' requesting design lectures for their executives. 'I'm seeing a sign of change," he said.

All agree there is a long way to go. C-suite designers remain a rarity at most electronics companies while technologists reign supreme, company officials and industrial

Japan last year received 31,961 applications for design registrations, only a fraction of China's 628,658 and half of South Korea's 67,374. In the heyday of the Japanese electronics industry in the early 1980s. Japan had nearly 60,000 applications every year.

Tagawa said the root of today's problems was the failure of Japanese firms to absorb lessons from the software revolution, which showed the importance of user-centered design principles and easy-to-use products such as Apple's iPhone. Instead, they remained fixated on engineering.

Ryuichi Oya, who retired as design chief of Sharp Corp last month, says he saw that attitude up close when he moved to Sharp four years ago after a long stint at automaker Mazda Motor.

 $\hbox{``Designers at home electronics companies have little say}$ compared to engineers," he said. "When engineers dismiss design proposals as too costly or difficult from an engineering point of view, designers easily succumb.'

"It's not about whether you like this color or that shape," he said. "There have to be design principles unique to Sharp and consistent across its product line.

(Source: reuters.com)

## Technologies you'll get sick of hearing about in 2019

A new year is upon us and so will be the hype factory that kicks off with CES and never seems to end. We'll take a stab at the big technology themes in 2019 as well as a few that may make you vomit by this time next year.

We're at peak Apple now

When Apple stops disclosing device units and revenue you know the company has peaked in terms of cultural zeitgeist, but let's not get crazy. Apple still has quite a business and a cash cow few others can match. Apple's services approach is a money winning strategy, but it's unclear where the growth is going to come from.

- Android devices makers will rally to 5G quickly as well as new designs to include foldable screens. Apple traditionally has waited and may
- not roll out 5G devices until 2020. • Prices are likely to continue to be a drain
- on smartphone sales as upgrade cycles go

If you can't gauge Apple units, there's less buzz about the hardware.

Apple will continue to make tons of cash and even improve profit margins with services. The catch is that software and services don't capture the imagination of the tech buyer.

The Apple worries will occur at the same time that Samsung is making its play on multiple fronts and driving new designs as well as the rush to 5G.

The peak Apple storyline will peak yet the company will make more money, capture enterprise market share and keep the installed base.

AI, algorithm backlash builds

Suddenly businesses, consumers and everything in between will start wondering what's in algorithms, AI and machine learning as well as how these systems will be developed. On the consumer front, Pew Research highlighted how consumers are questioning algorithms and whether it's right

for technologies to make decisions on humans. On the enterprise side, companies will face algorithm and AI sprawl. The big question is whether efforts from IBM to add more trans-

parency and bias detection to AI will pay off.

But until then, every vendor is going to affix AI to anything that has software and the tiniest dose of perceived intelligence with it. For such an example, look no further than chatbots with pre-programmed answers being flogged as smart assistants.

Here's the punchline: The AI genie is already out of the bottle and mainstream just as folks are getting wound up about it. **5G** the hype lands in 2019, but 2020 is the real roll out

There are two genuine new technologies coming to mobile in the near future: Foldable

phones, and 5G. Samsung has the lock on foldable OLEDs, so everyone else has to play the 5G card, and how they will endlessly play it. The first

5G services will roll out and carriers, and

smartphone makers will market us to death. What we don't know is the costs, battery life, standards, and a bevy of open ended issues. 2019 brings the 5G starter set, but the real impact on the Internet of things, consumption habits, and business and consumer

implications will play out in the years ahead. For the first time, a new generation of mobile communications is going to have negligible impact on how handsets are used -- streaming 8k Netflix is not that different

from streaming SD Netflix. The real benefits of 5G will be seen in standalone mode that doesn't rely on the existing 4G backbone, but until then telcos are going to do their best to convince people non-standalone is fine.

One thing is certain: 2019 will feature a lot of 5G overload. What is 5G? Everything you need to know about the new wireless revolution

(Source: msn.com)

# Scientists discover Big Bang fossil hiding in space

In the deep, distant universe, fossil relics hide within gas clouds -- and scientists have tracked them down.

Researchers at Swinburne University in Melbourne, Australia used their time at the W. M. Keck Observatory, home to two of the world's most powerful telescopes, to go on an astro-archeological dig through space. They discovered a "pristine cloud of gas" in the distant universe, seemingly untouched by heavy elements, suggesting it may be a "fossil relic" of the Big Bang.

Well, the universe has had quite a few birthdays -- it's some 13.7 billion years old. Over that time, a lot of stars have lived and died. At the end of a star's life, it can sometimes explode, becoming a supernovae. This massive explosion spews out a lot of waste heavy elements (metals), so generally when scientists look into space, they often find gas clouds murky with this material. Over 13.7 billion years, a lot of stars have exploded -- so there's a lot of waste in the clouds.

#### Gas clouds

Examining these gas clouds allows for scientists to gather insight on some of the earliest events in the universe. If the gas clouds are unspoiled by the waste, they may have existed in the infant universe.

"Our inspiration is actually to find relics of the first stars in the universe," said Professor Michael Murphy, one of the lead researchers on the study. Gas clouds that are relics of the first stars would be "almost pristine", according to Murphy, so there would still be traces of the heavy element



waste within them.

But the fossil relic they found had no detectable levels of waste -- it was completely clean -- suggesting it comes from the very early universe and has been untouched for 1.5 billion years after the Big Bang.

"This discovery – a seemingly pristine cloud – is really important," said Murphy. 'We need to know whether such clouds can last billions of years without being polluted

"Now we've proven that we can systematically find such fossils, we really have a chance of knowing how rare or common they are," said Murphy. "That's crucial for testing our understanding of how the first galaxies formed."

by multiple generations of stars."

Before this discovery, only two such gas clouds had been discovered -- and those discoveries were mostly accidental. By actively seeking out the gas clouds and demonstrating that they are unspoiled by heavy elements, Murphy's team has shown that it's possible to go digging for them.

The first galaxies

"Now we've proven that we can systematically find such fossils, we really have a chance of knowing how rare or common they are," said Murphy. "That's crucial for testing our understanding of how the first galaxies formed."

It's not the first time these relic gas clouds have proven fruitful for Swinburne researchers. In 2016, the team discovered an "almost pristine" gas cloud using data from the Very Large Telescope in Chile.

"It proved that trying to hunt for these clouds – and the completely pristine clouds like the one we've now discovered - in a targeted way was feasible and could, in principle, identify a "smoking gun" signature of the first stars," said Murphy.

However, there may be alternate explanations for why the gas cloud is so clean

-- and those explanations are exciting, too. One possibility is that the cloud is polluted by one of the universe's first stars, leaving only traces of heavy elements, undetectable by the telescopes the team used. Another is that the gas cloud is moving through a galaxy for the very first time, so it has yet to be polluted by other stars just yet.

#### Scientists develop a new method to revolutionize grapheme- printed electronics

A team of researchers based at The University of Manchester have found a low cost method for producing graphene printed electronics, which significantly speeds up and reduces the cost of conductive graphene inks.

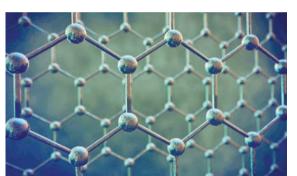
Printed electronics offer a breakthrough in the penetration of information technology into everyday life. The possibility of printing electronic circuits will further promote the spread of Internet of Things (IoT) applications.

The development of printed conductive inks for electronic applications has grown rapidly, widening applications in transistors, sensors, antennas RFID tags and wearable

Current conductive inks traditionally use metal nanoparticles for their high electrical conductivity. However, these materials can be expensive or easily oxidised, making them far from ideal for low cost IoT applications.

The team have found that using a material called dihydrolevogucosenone known as Cyrene is not only non-toxic but is environmentally- friendly and sustainable but can also provide higher concentrations and conductivity of graphene ink.

Harvesting energy
Professor Zhiurn Hu said: "This work demonstrates that printed graphene technology can be low cost, sustainable,



and environmentally friendly for ubiquitous wireless connectivity in IoT era as well as provide RF energy harvesting

Professor Sir Kostya Novoselov said: "Graphene is swiftly moving from research to application domain. Development of production methods relevant to the end-user in terms of their flexibility, cost and compatibility with existing technologies are extremely important. This work will ensure that implementation of graphene into day-to-day products and technologies will be even faster".

Kewen Pan, the lead author on the paper said: "This perhaps is a significant step towards commercialisation of printed graphene technology. I believe it would be an evolution in printed electronics industry because the material is such low cost, stable and environmental friendly".

The National Physical Laboratory (NPL), who were involved in measurements for this work, have partnered with the National Graphene Institute at The University of Manchester to provide a materials characterisation service to provide the missing link for the industrialisation of graphene and 2-D materials. They have also published a joint NPL and NGI a good practice guide which aims to tackle the ambiguity surrounding how to measure graphene's characteristics.

Professor Ling Hao said: "Materials characterisation is crucial to be able to ensure performance reproducibility and scale up for commercial applications of graphene and 2-D materials. The results of this collaboration between the University and NPL is mutually beneficial, as well as providing measurement training for Ph.D. students in a metrology institute environment.'

Graphene has the potential to create the next generation of electronics currently limited to science fiction: faster transistors, semiconductors, bendable phones and flexible wearable electronics. (Source: phys.org)

## Mysteries of the primrose unraveled

Plant scientists at the University of East Anglia have succeeded in unravelling the complete genome sequence of the common primrose -- the plant whose reproductive biology captivated the Victorian naturalist Charles Darwin.

The research team has identified, for the first time, the landscape of genes which operate within the primrose's two different flowering forms that are involved in the reproductive process. This adds fresh insight to a puzzle that scientists have been grappling with for over 150 years.

Primula vulgaris plants flower in one of two ways; they either have a long style and low anthers, or a short style and elevated anthers -- known as pins or thrums. Darwin was intrigued as to why some species, such as the primrose, develop two different forms of flowers, and devoted a whole book the subject. He concluded from his studies that they provided a mechanism to promote outcrossing between individuals.

More recently, a cluster of genes known as the S (Style  $\,$ length) locus have been shown to be the control center for the development of the flowers. This S locus is absent from half the individuals of this species, this cluster switches some genes on and others off, giving different patterns of gene expression in pin and thrum flowers.

Neighboring genomes

The UEA team, based at the neighboring genome



focused Earlham Institute, has previously sequenced the S-locus and described aspects of its evolution. The new

paper, published in Scientific Reports, describes the full sequence of the P. vulgaris genome and shows that the S locus controls hundreds of genes across the genome. The team also identify genes that are activated in its absence, in the pin form of the flower.

"We started many years ago with a packet of seeds and a vision to understand the molecular genetics and developmental biology of the reproductive system Darwin described in 1862.", says Philip Gilmartin, of the University of East Anglia and Earlham Institute, whose fascination with primrose biology has been a career-long pursuit.

'Completion of the genome sequence paves the way to identify the genes that are regulated by the S locus, and adds more pieces to the puzzle. A long line of scientists, from Darwin in the 1860s through Bateson in the early 1900s, to Haldane and Fisher in the mid 1900's have been gripped and we continue to unravel the mystery piece by piece.

The team aim to continue their investigations, and to understand how the two different architectures of pin and thrum flowers are orchestrated by the S locus and the genes that they regulate. They are also collaborating with researchers in Japan investigating a similar mechanism in buckwheat, the only crop plant with these two distinct forms, to see if there are similar genomics at work.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

#### **CEO of SINA Bank:**

#### 87% of Dividend of SINA Bank Materialized in H1

 $Statistics show that \, 87 \, percent \, of \, Dividend$ per Share (DPS) of SINA Bank in the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year in 1397 (March 21 - Sept. 21) was materialized, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

For his part, Eng. Pishro Chief Executive of SINA Bank made the above remark in an interview with our reporter and added, "gaining satisfaction of customers and shareholders was put atop agenda in the

At the unsparing and nonstop efforts of manpower of the bank, benefited from the most experienced manpower, objectives of the bank were materialized in the first half

of the current year (March 21 – Sept. 21). The bank made huge investment in economic, industrial and agricultural sec-

tors, he said, adding, "the bank managed to materialize all its objectives in the same period with establishing unity and amity among personnel and staff."

With the studies made in this regard, it

is predicted that the bank would gain 1,602 billion worth of profit before termination of the current year (to end March 20, 2019), the issue of which accounts for 87 percent of the budget, showing a significant 15 percent growth as compared to the same period of last year, the Public Relations Dept. of the

### AYANDEH Bank Membership Extended in Asia-Pacific Bankers Association

Membership of AYANDEH Bank was extended in the Asia-Pacific Bankers Association, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

AYANDEH Bank joined Asian Bankers Association in 2016 with the aim of optimal interaction with leading banks and taking advantage of opportunities, capacities and perspectives of the leading banks in Asia-Pacific region,

the report added.

With membership of more than 120 reliable banks from various countries such as Iran, Asian Bankers Association is the largest specialized nongovernmental bank in the Asia-Pacific region.

Establishing relationship among these countries will be effective in improvement of relevant activities and

facilitation of relationship of governments with one another. Moreover, creating a bedrock for exchanging views of members with regard to the current achievements in banking industry, taking membership in the Association will pave suitable way for the development of relations between member banks, the Public Relations Dept. of

#### 13-year-old boy genius creates revolutionary solar panels

According to Gadget Lab reader and grown-up Patrick Theiner, Dwyer made several schoolboy errors when making his experiments. An article debunking the experiment and results appears on the UVdiv blog. Apparently Dwyer was measuring the open voltage on the circuit, which "is practically independent of power output," and stays all but constant regardless of light falling on the cells.



This post also says that the theory is flawed, and that pointing the panels in different directions, most of which aren't at the optimal angle to the incoming light, will yield less power than a flat panel. You can read the full math here.

13-year-old Aiden Dwyer has managed to do something that grownup scientists haven't. He has wrung up to 50% extra electricity from

Trees and plants are pretty good at capturing sunlight, right? So Dwyer took these numbers and built his own tree, only instead of

I designed and built my own test model, copying the Fibonacci pattern of an oak tree. I studied my results with the compass tool and figured out the branch angles. The pattern was about 137 degrees and the Fibonacci sequence was 2/5. Then I built a model using this pattern from PVC tubing.

In place of leaves, I used PV solar panels hooked up in series that produced up to 1/2 volt, so the peak output of the model was 5 volts. The entire design copied the pattern of an oak tree as closely as possible.

As a control, he also built a regular flat-panel solar array, familiar to eco-hippies everywhere (but mostly Californian eco-hippies).

(Source: wired.com)

#### Saturn is losing its rings at 'worst-case-scenario' rate

New NASA research confirms that Saturn is losing its iconic rings at the maximum rate estimated from Voyager 1 and 2 observations made decades ago. The rings are being pulled into Saturn  $\,$ by gravity as a dusty rain of ice particles under the influence of

New NASA research confirms that Saturn is losing its iconic rings at the maximum rate estimated from Voyager 1 & 2 observations made decades ago. The rings are being pulled into Saturn by gravity as a dusty rain of ice particles under the influence of Saturn's magnetic field.

"We estimate that this 'ring rain' drains an amount of water products that could fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool from Saturn's rings in half an hour," said James O'Donoghue of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland. "From this alone, the entire ring system will be gone in 300 million years, but add to this the Cassini-spacecraft measured ring-material detected falling into Saturn's equator, and the rings have less than 100 million years to live. This is relatively short, compared to Saturn's age of over 4 billion years.'

Scientists have long wondered if Saturn was formed with the rings or if the planet acquired them later in life. The new research favors the latter scenario, indicating that they are unlikely to be older than 100 million years, as it would take that long for the  $\hbox{$C$-ring to become what it is today assuming it was once as $\overline{d}$ ense as}$ the B-ring. "We are lucky to be around to see Saturn's ring system, which appears to be in the middle of its lifetime. However, if rings are temporary, perhaps we just missed out on seeing giant ring systems of Jupiter, Uranus and Neptune, which have only thin ringlets today!" O'Donoghue added.

(Source: scienceDaily)

#### These sound waves can levitate and move particles in new ways

A new machine uses ultrasonic waves to make particles dance in midair like marionettes on (invisible) strings.

Unlike other devices that also use sound radiation to manipulate matter, the new system can move several objects in different directions at once (SN: 4/19/14, p. 8). This kind of levitation technology, described online the week of December 17 in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, could assemble microelectronics or maneuver small objects inside the body for medical treatment.

In the new device, an array of 256 speakers, each about 1 centimeter wide, faces another, identical speaker array across a distance of 23 centimeters. The speakers emit sound waves at frequencies too high to hear, creating an intricate sound field between the two arrays. This sound field has high intensity sound regions that repel particles, and pockets of relative quiet that trap particles. By controlling the timing of the ultrasonic waves released by each speaker, researchers can shift these quiet, particle-toting regions around in three dimensions.

While laser tweezers can steer much smaller microscopic objects, sound waves can hoist micrometer- to centimeter-sized cargo (SN: 10/27/18, p. 16). The new device's 40-kilohertz sound waves can juggle up to 25 foam beads at a time, each one to three millimeters across. A future version that emits higher frequencies could nab smaller objects, like cells that are mere micrometers

The device's ability to move many particles in all three dimensions represents "an excellent progression" in acoustic levitation technology, says Christine Démoré, an ultrasound scientist at Sunnybrook Research Institute in Toronto not involved in the work.

Since sound waves travel through tissue, acoustic tweezers may someday deliver drugs to specific organs, clear out kidney stone debris or steer implanted medical devices to new locations inside the body, says coauthor Bruce Drinkwater, an ultrasonic engineer at University of Bristol in England.

(Source: sciencenews.org)

## IoT bikes roll into streets of the capital

**SOCIETY TEHRAN** — New bikes based on Internet of d e s k Things (IoT) were placed for the first time on Tuesday into stations for use in Tehran, ISNA reported.

Some 300 bikes have been inaugurated in district 2 of the capital, the district's mayor, Rasoul Keshtpour, announced.

IoT-based bikes are a way to make Tehran a smart city, in which the quality and performance of services such as energy, transportation and utilities are enhanced in order to reduce resource consumption, wastage and overall costs, he added.

Due to intense air pollution, development of green transportation in Tehran is a must, so that bike-sharing scheme went into effect with initiatives to mitigate air pollution along with encouraging people to use green vehicles rather than emitting private cars," he highlighted.



He went on to say that with participation of residents, the number of bikes will be expanded and more regions will have stations offering IoT bikes.

Reza Baqeri, head of board of directors at Bdood Company, for his part, said that some 13,000 people have installed the app, and 540 users so far have paid the deposit of 1.59 million rials (about \$38), adding, each half an hour riding the bikes costs nearly 3 cents.

Bike-sharing scheme was first introduced by the Iranian startup Bdood in mid-August in an attempt to address air pollution in the metropolis of Tehran.

According to World Health Organization exposure to air pollution kills seven million people worldwide every year and costs an estimated \$5.11trn in welfare losses globally, a report released last week revealed.

It highlighted that in the 15 countries that emit the most greenhouse gas emissions – and have the worst air pollution - health impacts are estimated to cost more

Air pollution affects all regions of the world. However, populations in low-income cities are the most impacted. According to the latest air quality database, 97% of cities in low- and middle-income countries with more than 100,000 inhabitants do  $not\ meet\ WHO\ air\ quality\ guidelines.\ However,\ in\ high-income$ countries, that percentage decreases to 49%.

#### LEARN ENGLISH

#### **International Workers Day**

A: Alright everyone settles down. Let's get started. As you know, an important aspect of becoming a good citizen is understanding the **genesis** of our legal system. It is not enough to simply memorize our laws, it is necessary that we comprehend why and how they were formed. This brings me to our topic for today. Does anyone know what we celebrate on May first? B: Cinco de mayo?

A: No, that's May fifth in Spanish, James, no wonder you are failing my Spanish class. No, first day of May is International

B: Do we get a day off from school then?

A: No! It is not considered to be a national holiday here in the US, but in other countries it is.

A: In the nineteenth century, working conditions were appalling, with workers being forced to work ten, twelve, and fourteen nours a day. Support for the eight-hour work day movemen was growing rapidly, despite the indifference and hostility of many union leaders, and by April 1886, 250,000 workers were involved in the May Day movement. Previous legislative attempts to improve working conditions had failed, so labor organizers took **drastic** measures. They passed a **resolution** stating that eight hours would **constitute** a legal day's work. And, on May First 1886, the resolution took effect.

B: Cool! Is that why we only work eight hours now?

A: Yes! But the happy ending came at a high price. On May third, 1886, police fired into a crowd of strikers at the McCormick Reaper Works Factory, killing four and wounding many. A mass meeting was called for the next day to protest the **brutality**. B: And then what happened?

A: Well, as we say, the rest is history...

Key vocabulary settle down: relax, become calm

aspect: part

genesis: origin; beginning

comprehend: understand deeply

national holiday: the day that all people in a country will be on holiday

appalling: terrible, horrible, shocking indifference: showing no interest in

**hostility:** the attitude of treating something as enemy

legislative: relating to legal system

drastic: sudden and severe resolution: a formal document stating the wishes of a group

constitute: form, consist fire into: shoot guns into a place

brutality: violent treatment or behavior

Supplementary vocabulary

proletariat: the lowest socioeconomic class; workers rally: a public meeting of a large group of people to support or

oppose something **proclamation:** an official statement made by a person who

memorial: something like a statue, built to remember a person or event from history cialthing or ability that a person has triumph common noun, sin-gular a great success or achievement a person has/triumph

# Tehran hosting high-level meeting on disaster information management

1 → According to the UNESCAP website the consultative meeting will discuss strategies, approaches and mechanisms in developing information management for disaster risk reduction, including for combatting sand and dust storms, and for monitoring the progress in achieving the targets of the Sendai Framework and disaster related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

APDIM to open Tehran office
The office of APDIM is scheduled to officially open in Tehran on December 19, United Nations Informations Center

High level officials form the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and ESCAP as well as state members of APDIM Governing Council and a number of delegates from Asian and Pacific countries are also scheduled to attend the ceremony for the opening of the Centre.

In accordance with the ESCAP resolution 71/11 adopted in 2015, APDIM is established in the Islamic Republic of Iran with the aim of reducing the risk and negative impact of disasters in Asia and the Pacific by enhancing capacities of the countries and organizations of the region in disaster information management.

With the close cooperation and generous contributions of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the process for the establishment of APDIM has been finalized in 2018 and the Centre is ready to provide its services to the countries of the region. The opening of the Centre will be followed by the third session of the Governing Council of APDIM in the Centre's premises on 19 December.

#### Establishment of APDIM office in Iran a landmark'

In his opening speech at the consultative meeting Hamid Pourmohammadi, Chairman of APDIM's Governing Council and Deputy Vice President at Budget and Planning Organization, explained that the establishment of APDIM office in Iran is a significant landmark.

The opening of APDIM office in Tehran can be a starting point for south-south cooperation in international sphere, Pourmohammadi said.

"By using ESCAP members' experi-



strategic plans," he highlighted.

Asia Pacific region is the most disaster prone area worldwide, he said, adding that natural disasters would both carry enormous economic burden and are a serious threat for achieving sustainable development goals.

#### Disaster information manage ment critical in disaster risk reduction, resilience building

UN resident coordinator and UNDP representative Ugochi Daniels, for her part, also said that disaster information management is critical in all aspects and areas of disaster risk reduction and resilience building. "Holding the "High-Level Expert Con-

sultation Meeting on Disaster Information Management" this week in Tehran is a valuable opportunity to discuss ways and means for expanding and enhancing regional cooperation in this regard.

Despite important achievements in developing risk reduction and resilience building capacities by many countries of the region, various disasters such as floods, cyclones, earthquakes, and sand and dust storms continue to cause loss and damage at local, national and regional level.

"Iran has gained valuable experiences ence, I hope that we can run APDIM office and developed considerable knowledge on vigorously and do our best in planning disaster risk reduction and management. Effective response to major disasters such as Bam and Kermanshah earthquakes in 2003 and 2017 and to many other disasters such as floods, draught and sand and dust storms are a testimony for Iran's capacity to respond to natural hazards and disasters.

"The establishment of APDIM with the generous support of the Government of Iran is a great achievement and an important step toward enhancing disaster risk reduction and resilience building in

"Multilateralism is the only answer to the challenges we face today. We need a reformed, reinvigorated and strengthened multilateral system. In the end, multilateralism is nothing more than countries coming together, respecting one another, and establishing the forms of cooperation that guarantee peace and prosperity for all in a healthy planet.

"Such a commitment is needed now more than ever - from all around this hall, and around our world, and to make this a reality, the UN Country Team in Iran stands ready to support the Government of Iran and the international community and support all types of cooperation within the scope of APDIM's programmes as well as through other regional and multi-lateral cooperation mechanisms to reduce the risk and negative impact of disasters in the region," she concluded.

APDIM turns Iran into a hub for crisis management knowledge

Mostafa Mohaqeq, Regional Coordinator for West Asia and North Africa in the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), also said that setting up APDIM office in Iran is a great opportunity for Iranian organizations to have access to the best data available in disaster reduction worldwide.

Based on global reports having access to the disaster reduction knowledge is of great significance as we do not know much about the main reasons behind many devastating natural disasters and we also are not equipped with advanced technologies to fight such disasters," he explained.

APDIM would turn Iran into a hub for crisis management knowledge as many countries in the region will share their know-how on the disaster risk reduction in the center, Khabaronline quoted him as saying on Monday.

"APDIM's programs are focused around three service lines. Firstly, it will serve as a knowledge and information repository for all disaster related data in the region.

"Secondly, APDIM will lead on capacity development by developing knowledge management tools and facilities such as e-learning platforms for disaster risk resilience with specific training modules, and thirdly, APDIM will deliver information services on cross-border disasters to the countries and organizations of the region,' he added.

Due to various reasons Iranian don't have access to modern technology and knowledge on international scale and have to take part in international seminars and congresses to do so, however, he highlighted that establishment of APDIM in Iran, as an international entity, would enable Iran to have access to all data available in this field.

APDIM will also strengthen regional cooperation, Mohaqeq said, stating that at the time of brutal sanctions imposed on Iran establishment of a regional office in the country is a great sign demonstrating that Iran has its way to garner international and regional cooperation.

## 60 tons of hazardous medical waste pile up daily in southern Tehran

**ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN** — Some 60 tons of medical waste containing infectious toxic substances, is being stockpiled daily on Arad mountain in Kahrizak, southern part of the capital, deputy supervisor for Tehran City Council Afshin Habibzadeh has announced. Medical waste generating at health care facilities, in-

cludes a large component of general waste and a smaller proportion of hazardous waste, which contain infectious agents, toxic chemicals or pharmaceuticals, radioactive

All individuals exposed to hazardous health-care waste are potentially at risk, including those within health-care establishments that generate hazardous waste, and those outside these sources who either handle such waste or are exposed to it as a consequence of careless management.

There is no legal obligation for Tehran Municipality to properly dispose infectious medical wastes and, according to the waste management law, the hazardous waste must be separated, treated and disinfected by its producer, Mehr quoted Habibzadeh as saying on Monday.

"The Ministry of Health has announced that all infectious medical wastes are disinfected by autoclaves, strong heated containers used for chemical reactions and other processes using high temperatures, and the Municipality must take steps to dispose them, while based on the waste management law, the Department of Environment (DOE) must confirm whether the hazardous waste are disinfected or not," he further explained.

Even after the DOE's approval, the waste is not considered normal waste, however, the DOE has not yet endorsed the safety of these wastes, he highlighted, adding that therefore, as long as the DOE has not approved the wastes being harmless, in accordance with the waste manage-



ment law, medical wastes are still considered infectious.

He went on to explain that the Ministry must either comply with the law requirements in order to treat and dispose wastes generated in hospitals or clinical facilities at its own expense, or, if this is not possible, the Municipality is ready to perform the process in case the Ministry pay the costs.

"Unfortunately, the Ministry of Health has not tak-en any steps toward the issue already, which caused the capital's Municipality financial problems," he lamented.

Habibzadeh also added that in spite of the fact that there are no legal requirements, we are ready to provide the Ministry of Health with landfills and required infrastructure such as water, electricity and etc.

Referring to Arad mountain as a landfill where some 60 tons of hazardous medical waste is being dumped each day, he stated that there will be no capacity in the mountain by the next six months.

 $\hbox{``Nowhere in the world are dumping infectious was te},$ it must be burned," he noted, adding, hence, medical waste incineration devices are needed, the Municipality

will take the measure in this regard, only if the Ministry of Health signs the contract and pay the costs.

He further called on the Ministry of Health whether to fund the proper disposal of infectious wastes, or to construct a waste management unit to take action on disinfecting them, then the municipality will take meas-

Earlier in July head of the waste management working group affiliated to Department of Environment Kiyoumars Kalantari said that some 115 tons of medical waste is being generated on a daily basis in the province of Tehran. He also regretted that despite the efforts made by the Ministry of Health, except for a few of the hospitals, medical waste is not being regulated in other health-care providing centers.

According to the U.S. Environment Protection Agency, improper management of discarded needles and other sharps can pose a health risk to the public and waste workers. For example, discarded needles may expose waste workers to  $potential\ needle\ stick\ injuries\ and\ potential\ infection\ when$ containers break open inside garbage trucks or needles are mistakenly sent to recycling facilities. Janitors and housekeepers also risk injury if loose sharps poke through plastic garbage bags. Used needles can transmit serious diseases, such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)

Measures to ensure the safe and environmentally sound management of health care wastes can prevent adverse health and environmental impacts from such waste including the unintended release of chemical or biological hazards, including drug-resistant microorganisms, into the environment thus protecting the health of patients, health workers, and

#### **ENGLISH IN USE**

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

#### Road crashes claim 1,180 lives in Iran since summer

Some 1,180 persons have been killed in Iran because of road crashes since the beginning of summer (starting on June 22), traffic police chief Mohammad Hossein Hamidi has said.

"Drowsy driving accounted for almost 40 percent of the road accidents in the country," Hamidi said, ISNA reported on Friday.

## مرگ ۱۱۸۰ نفر در تصادفات از ابتدای تابستان

رئیـس پلیـس راه کشــور اظهـار داشــت: از ابتــدای تابســتان امســال ۱۱۸۰نفــر در کشــور بــر اثــر تصادفــات جــان خــود را از دســت داده انــد. به گُـزُارشُ ایسنا، سـردار حمیـدی در کمیسـیون ایمنـی راه هـای زنجـان افـزود: ۴۰ درصـد از تصادفـات جـاده ای ناشـی از واژگونـی بـه دلیـل خسـتگی و خـواب

#### PREFIX/SUFFIX

"dia-"

**Meaning:** through or across

For example: Draw a *dia*gram of the fence line.

#### PHRASAL VERB

Pull up

Meaning: to stop the vehicle that you are driving For example: He pulled up in front of the gates.

#### **IDIOM**

**Collect dust** 

**Explanation:** when something hasn't been touched

or used for a long period of time

For example: My dad doesn't play golf any more. His clubs are collecting dust now.

## Yemen's Hudaydah calm as rival parties begin to observe truce

since 03:00 a.m. Yemen time (1200 GMT) in the city of Hudaydah," he said.

Hudaydah residents also confirmed a halt in fighting between pro-Saudi militants and Ansarullah fighters.

The truce is expected to be followed by the withdrawal of forces from both sides and the deployment of UN monitors to the port as well as a mass prisoner exchange.

On Sunday, UN Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths said that the world body was working with Yemen's warring parties to ensure that the ceasefire was "implemented timely and properly."

#### UN considering draft resolution to back truce

Separately, diplomats said that the UN Security Council was considering a draft resolution that would ask Secretary General Antonio Guterres to put forward proposals by the end of the month on how to monitor the Hudaydah ceasefire.

Britain circulated the motion among the Security Council's 15 members on Monday, but it was not clear when it would be put

The draft, seen by Reuters, asks Guterres to submit proposals on "how the United Nations will support the Stockholm Agreement



odyguards escort the motorcade of UN envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths following his meeting with the President of the Houthi Revolutionary Committee, in the capital Sana'a, on November 24, 2018. (Photo by MOHAMMED HUWAIS/AFP/Getty Images)

not limited to, monitoring operations for the ceasefire and mutual redeployment of forces from the city of Hudaydah and the ports of Hudaydah, Salif and Ras Issa.'

The draft resolution further "calls on all parties to the conflict to take further steps to

as requested by the parties, including, but facilitate the unhindered flow of commercial and humanitarian supplies including food, fuel, medicine and other essential imports and humanitarian personnel into and across the country.

> Hudaydah, a lifeline for millions of Yemeni people, is the entry point for

and vital aid. The port has seen some of the heaviest fighting in the Saudi-led war on Yemen.

The House of Saud regime and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) launched an offensive against Hudaydah in June but have faced strong resistance from Yemeni armed forces — led by the Ansarullah — as well as the city's residents.

#### Clashes reported soon after truce takes force in Yemen

Meantime, sporadic clashes have been reported in the western Yemen port city of al-Hudaydah soon after a UN-brokered ceasefire takes force in the province of the same name.

The violence broke out in the city's eastern areas in early Tuesday minutes after the truce took effect at midnight, an official allied with Yemen's Saudi-backed former government told AFP.

International medical aid group Doctors Without Borders (MSF/Médecins Sans Frontières) voiced alarm about "the continuous fighting" in the devastated city. It said its teams were treating victims of gunshots, shelling, and airstrikes, urging the concerned parties "to respect the presence of civilians and health infrastructures.

(Source: agencies)

#### Kosovo and Serbia trade accusations over Kosovo's new army

The presidents of Kosovo and Serbia have faced off in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), days after Pristina's parliament voted to transform their existing security force into a fully-fledged army.

All parties in Kosovo's 120-seat parliament, excluding the Serbs who boycotted, voted on Friday in favor of laws establishing a defense ministry, transforming the existing Kosovo Security Force (KSF) of 3,000 into an army and regulating the service.

Kosovo's President Hashim Thaci said on Monday there was "nothing extraordinary" about the decision and that it was a "natural step" to establish an army to cement Kosovo's status as a sovereign nation.

"If Kosovo made a mistake, it's only that we waited for five years to establish an army," Thaci said.

"Kosovo soldiers will be soldiers of peace and Kosovo's army will be a contributor of stability to the region," he added.

Thaci said the degree of UN involvement should be reviewed, as the attention of the international body is needed

elsewhere "to address real problems facing the world today". Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, however, called on the UN to "curb" and "tame" Kosovo, and take on a bigger role in the dialogue between the two groups in future. He also dismissed the "so-called sovereign right" of Kosovo to form their own military.

Serbia continues to claim predominantly Albanian Kosovo as its own, despite the region having declared independence nearly 11 years ago.

Vucic said he was "very much worried, very much concerned and even a bit afraid" about the implications of a Kosovan army for the region.

Ethnic Albanians rebelled against Belgrade's rule in 1998-99 in a war that eventually drew NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) to intervene against Serbia. A NATO-led peacekeeping force has been in Kosovo ever since.

The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has expressed concern over the plans to strengthen the Kosovo Security Force, noting in a statement that any restriction to the security responsibilities of the NATO-led KFOR (Kosovo Force) peacekeeping mission would be inconsistent with the UNSC resolution that regulates KFOR.

Russia's UN ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said expanding the army was a "blatant violation" of Security Council resolutions and called the creation of the army "illegal".

Russia is traditionally the protecting power of Serbia, from which the primarily Albanian-populated Kosovo broke off in 2008. The current and incoming European Union members

of the UN Security Council recognized the transition of the KSF (Kosovo Security Force) as Kosovo's sovereign right, in a joint statement. Britain, France, Germany, Belgium



and Sweden were among the countries calling on Kosovo to make the transformation of their armed forces "transparent and inclusive" and in close cooperation with NATO.

They also called on both Pristina and Belgrade to lower tensions and resume dialogue, noting that a comprehensive normalization agreement to set out the conditions of the future relationship between the two sides still needs

Recent tensions between Kosovo and Serbia have frustrated an EU-brokered normalization process.

## Ex-FBI chief Comey: Trump undermines rule of law with 'lies'

The United States former FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) Director James Comey on Monday accused the U.S. President Donald Trump of undermining the rule of law in the United States by lying about the FBI, and he urged Republican lawmakers to "stand up and speak the truth" about Trump's behavior.

Comey, who was fired by Trump in May 2017 while he was leading an investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. election and possible Trump campaign collusion, made his remarks after his second appearance this month before two House of Representatives committees.

 $Comey said \, law makers \, had \, again \, asked \, about \,$ former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's emails and a dossier that Republicans claim was used to justify a warrant to conduct secret surveillance of a Trump presidential campaign aide.

"This while the president of the United States is lying about the FBI, attacking the FBI and attacking the rule of law in this country. How does that make any sense at all?" Comey told reporters after spending more than five hours being interviewed behind closed doors by the House Judiciary

and House Oversight committees.

"Republicans used to understand that the actions of a president matter, the words of a president matter, the rule of law matters and the truth matters. Where are those Republicans today?" Comey asked.

Republican Trump has called the Russia investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller a "witch hunt" and on Sunday on Twitter labeled his own former personal lawyer Michael Cohen a "rat" for cooperating with prosecutors. Trump also accused Federal Bureau of Investigation agents of breaking into Cohen's office when they were in fact acting with a search warrant.

Cohen was sentenced to three years' prison last Wednesday for crimes including orchestrating hush payments to women in violation of campaign laws before the 2016 election. Cohen said he was directed by Trump.

"The FBI's reputation has taken a big hit because the president of the United States, with his acolytes, has lied about it constantly," Comey said when asked whether he bore any responsibility for damaging the FBI's reputation.

(Source: Reuters)

### Qatar marks National Day 2018 amid ongoing blockade

Qatar is celebrating its National Day on Tuesday amid an ongoing blockade by neighboring countries, which appears to have created a sense of unity among nationals and residents in the peninsula.

The December 18 holiday marks the date in 1878 on which Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani succeeded his father as the emir and led the country towards unity.

"As long as it was proven by our deeds, Qatar will remain free." is this year's National Day slogan, combining a verse from Qatar's national anthem and a verse from the founder, Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin Al Thani.

The celebrations take place in different cities and towns across Qatar, namely Doha, Al Wakra and Al Shamal. A

one-day holiday was announced to celebrate the occasion. The main event is the Corniche Parade in Doha in the presence of Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and a number of high-ranking individuals from government bodies and foreign mission representatives.

This year's military parade will be three times larger than last year, Major-General Salem Al Ahbabi said, adding the event will feature land and naval forces, in addition to an airshow by the country's air force.

It is the second year Qatar celebrates its National Day amid the blockade that has been imposed by the House of Saud regime, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain

(Source: Al Jazeera)

#### Pakistan senator: We should not look to the West

1→ Iran is a really rich country. It has natural resources; it has gas; it has oil. Pakistan is an agriculture-based country. So we can do a lot of business in different areas; and we are going back with this message that the Iranian leadership is very eager (and) very willing to increase trade with Pakistan. We the parliamentarians go back and we can do our best to help promote trade between the two countries. The gas pipeline is still pending from our side. Iran has almost completed its part of the gas pipeline.

It's also really vital for us to have a real transport link between Pakistan and Iran.

In general, I would request that the both countries form a special working group to look for ways and means how to increase trade. We have wasted a lot of time, and I personally feel that Pakistan and Iran, as two brotherly Islamic countries, should enjoy strong ties.

Also if there is some misunderstandings, shortcomings or problems between the two sides, they should be cleared up and removed as soon as possible because this is ideal for the two neighbors.

Our Allah is one; our Quran is one, and our hearts have the same rhythm.



We have a heart-to-heart relationship. The Iranian government and people are very close to our hearts. Pakistan and Iran should sit down and seriously resolve differences as differences do happen in a family, but those families succeed who can resolve their differences. I hope that things get better and the relationship between Pakistan and Iran would improve.

What is your view of the anti-terrorism conference in Tehran?

A: Pakistan and Iran have suffered from terrorism. The recent terrorist attack in Chabahar port is very saddening. In Pakistan over 70,000 people,

including men, women and children, and security forces, have been killed brutally in terrorist attacks. And the conference on December 8 in Tehran was intended to coordinate efforts in the fight against terrorism. I am verv hopeful that these six countries will cooperate and find strategy how to counter terrorism.

What is your analysis of economic interaction between the countries participating in the conference?

A: They should also work to create more opportunity for business ties, bilateral and multilateral. Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Turkey and Russia can bring financial revolution to the region. We don't have to look to the West; if these 5 countries become united with the Central Asian states they can become game changers. In that case there will be more job opportunities and more prosperity to the region. So I am very hopeful to see that day very soon. Pakistan and Iran are the gateway to Asia. You have Chabahar Port in Iran, we have Gwadar Port. Why not to do something jointly to elevate the living standards of citizens.

#### **French Protests spread** to Spain

essentially called for a third party that would redefine Spain's economic and political equations on the basis of the "transition from existing conditions" and "creation of new foundations". Participants in the demonstration chanted against the leaders of the left and right parties. The parties were accused by angry protesters of inability to

During the demonstrations, the Spanish citizens

provide a fundamental solution to the economic problems (especially for the retired). The charge applies to both major political trends in Spain that traditionally hold the power in the country.

The recent protests in Spain have raised many concerns at both domestic and European levels. At the domestic level, Pedro Sanchez is concerned about the escalation of the protests and the collapse of his government. Because the current economic crisis in Spain is so severe that he can't offer many concessions

At the same time, the protesters are so angry with the Spanish government that perhaps only some economic and welfare benefits can calm them down. In this regard, it is possible to compare the anger of Spanish demonstrators with the anger of the yellow vests in France.

Some experts believe that if the protest rallies in Spain are repeated, and it becomes a trend, the administration of Pedro Sánchez can't stop the protesters' anger even by granting some economic and welfare benefits, and thus he'll have no way but to resign from power. In this case, even the holding of an early election and the presence of rival leaders can't be a fundamental solution to the current crises in Spain.

Spain's Prime Minister, Pedro Sanchez, has recently promised a huge jump in the minimum wage to be in effect from the beginning of 2019. It's to be noted that the 22 percent rise is the largest in more than 40 years. This move came two days after French President Emmanuel Macron announced a 100 euro increase for minimum wage earners following the yellow vests protests.

However, it seems that the anger of Spanish citizens of the economic process that has been taking place in Spain (since 2007) is such that Sanchez administration is incapable to manage it. In the past, economic and social protests in the European Union began in countries like Greece and Spain, and spread to other countries. This created the opportunity for the European troika to "temporarily curb the crisis."

But this time the current protests in Europe started from France, which is the second economy in the Eurozone, and then spread to other countries. Obviously, under such circumstances, restraining the crisis by the European authorities would be far more difficult, and the impact of the crisis on other member states and even non-members in the Eurozone will be even greater, and Spain is no exception to this rule.

#### Sinking not waving

1→ If the "safety valve" of a parliamentary vote is not opened then Britain's political system will move inexorably towards an unmanageable level of polarization, which will render it impossible for the country to manage many basic tasks, let alone implement fresh policies to address emerging social and economic realities. There is a good reason that a no-deal will win very little parliamentary support - it represents too high a price to pay in terms of economic loss for leaving the EU.

For much of her time as PM, Mrs May has hidden behind a mask acceptable to the hard Brexiters. It was not until this summer that the mask was removed, allowing the party to see through the disguise: that the trade-offs and compromises would see Britain knocked about by the EU, a global heavyweight; that smaller countries or old rivals such as Ireland or France could, in the words of the UK's former top diplomat in Brussels, Sir Ivan Rogers, "take back control of things you would rather they didn't"; that Britain outside the EU might be a bystander in the setting of policies that would affect voters' lives; that we had not intended to vote in June 2016 to make ourselves poorer, but that is what we are going to be. The penny has dropped. Brexit has been to the Tory party less of a mask that hid – or even subverted – a reality. Instead Brexit is more akin to a political shirt of Nessus, burning anyone who puts it on.

(Source: The Guardian)

#### Iranian missiles: Hypocrisy and paradox

1 thas created potential for conventional missile strikes on strategic targets that can reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in strategic calculations.

A similar trend in Iranian missile technology could lead Iran to calculate that it has the capacity (augmented by ever more effective cyberweapons, perhaps) to inflict sufficient damage on the strategic assets of an adversary for there to be minimal benefit in developing a nuclear deterrent once restrictions on Iranian

uranium enrichment fall away.
In other words, paradoxical though this may seem, Iranian conventional medium-range missiles can become a basis for strategic stability in the Middle East, as well as a reassurance to those who doubt the sincerity of Iran's 2015 pledge never to acquire nuclear weapons.

More Hypocrisy

As a footnote, in connection with the British and French proclivity for double standards, it has to be stressed that neither the UK nor France has condemned publicly a U.S. "inconsistency" with UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2231, even though this "inconsistency" is far more egregious than the Iranian missile-related "inconsistency" to which Mr. Hunt drew attention on December 5.

In fact the United States is guilty of much more than an "inconsistency": the United States is in violation of UNSC 2231. Since denouncing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) the United States has failed to comply with paragraph 7 of UNSC 2231: "[the Security Council] Decides, acting under Article 41 of the Charter... that .... All states shall comply with paragraphs 1, 2, 4 and 5 [of UNSC 2231]".

Decides, acting under Article 41" creates a legally-binding obligation. Paragraph 1 urges full implementation of the JCPOA. Paragraph 2 calls on all states to take appropriate action to support  $implementation\ and\ to\ refrain\ from\ undermining\ implementation.$ 

The United States is neither implementing the JCPOA nor refraining from undermining its implementation by others. On the contrary, the United States is doing its damnedest to undermine implementation by others. Surely, Mr. Hunt, this deserves regular public condemnation until such time as the United States returns to compliance. In yuletide parlance, what is sauce for the goose ought to be sauce for the gander.

(Source: Lobelog)

#### Messi claims record 5th **Golden Shoe**



Lionel Messi collected a record fifth Golden Shoe award on Tuesday for finishing last season as the top goalscorer in Europe.

The striker scored 34 goals in 68 games for Barcelona, putting him ahead of Liverpool's Mohamed Salah and Tottenham's Harry Kane. Cristiano Ronaldo, who has won the award four times, hit 26 goals in 52 matches for Real Madrid.

After being prsented with his latest prize in Barcelona, Messi said: "The truth is I had no idea this would happen when I started. I dreamt of playing professional football and enjoying success, I love the game, but I never imagined I would have so much.

"I enjoy the work, the effort, I'm at the best team in the world and play with the best team-mates in the world, so everything is easier." The ceremony was attended by Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu, as well as fellow players like Sergio Busquets and Sergi Roberto. Messi also discussed Monday's Champions League draw, which pitted Barca against Lyon in the round of 16.

Lyon will be a complicated opponent," Messi said. "Even if they are not known as one of the strongest teams, they are dangerous as they showed against Manchester City, one of the best teams in the world.

"It will be difficult to go through, but the opportunity is there for us. We have several Frenchmen in the team like Samuel Umtiti and Malcom, who played in France, so perhaps they can help

(Source: AFP)

#### Slovenia's Stuhec storms **World Cup downhill**

Ilka Stuhec produced a pulsating run to clinch victory in the women's World Cup downhill race here on Tuesday ahead of Italy's Nicol Delago and the Austrian Ramona Siebenhofer.

In fast skiing conditions under bright blue skies Stuhec, the reigning world downhill champion, flew over the feared camel hump half way down the Saslong slope at 112km an hour to finish in 1min 22.81sec, 0.14sec ahead of Delago and 0.51sec faster than 3rd placed Siebenhofer.

Michelle Gisin, whose brother Marc was hospitalised after a high speed fall on the same slopes in the men's downhill on Saturday, finished outside the top ten over 1.5sec off Stuhec's pace despite coming second in the last downhill.

(Source: Mirror)

#### **Manchester United shares** rise after manager Mourinho leaves club

Frankfurt-listed shares in Manchester United climbed in early deals after manager Jose Mourinho left the Premier League football club, an indication investors welcomed the move after

The stock rose 1.4 percent by 1030 GMT after extending gains following the news. Manchester United's primary listing in the United States had not yet started trading.

(Source: Reuters)

#### Vialli's crowdfunding platform creating 'bond' between clubs and fans

Former Italy international Gianluca Vialli and business partner Fausto Zanetton believe their innovative crowdfunding platform Tifosy can help arrest the growing feeling of estrangement between football clubs and supporters.

The co-founders of the platform are targeting clubs outside the top 20-30 globally, raising capital through the issue of equity, or debt, in the form of mini-bonds.

So far they have enjoyed success with crowdfunding for Italian clubs Frosinone and Pescara -- Pescara recently raised 2.37 million euros (\$2.7 million, £2.1 million) from nearly 400 investors -- as well as Norwich, in England's second-tier Championship.

"I think what Luca (Vialli) always says, and he has been here (England) a long time and has seen the evolution since the English Premier League was created -- that bond between fans and clubs has been diluted over time," Zanetton told AFP.

"Financial interests become very material for the owners, who really have to think about maximising revenues, in a way making money off fans and on the other hand keeping the balance they still feel they are really engaged with the club.

"A tool like this (the platform), enabling people to invest and which creates a real bond, could be very helpful."

Zanetton, a former investment banker in London specialising in financing sports and entertainment, says the crowdfunding model works for the clubs as it attracts fans as opposed to institutional investors. Institutional investors, says Zanetton, are not attracted by such a volatile investment and prefer assurances such as predicted cashflow over two years, which football clubs cannot give. "On the one hand it is flexible for the club, more flexible than institutional markets," said Zanetton. "All the people know what they are getting into, the risk factors, all financials are there.

"It is quite sophisticated. It isn't 'Hey put in 500 quid (pounds) and the money is going to go to Norwich and you won't really know what is going to happen with it'.

(Source: Guardian)

## Manchester United run out of patience and sack Mourinho after dire start

Jose Mourinho's relationship with Manches ter United reached the point of irretrievable breakdown a long time ago but the club finally served the divorce papers on Tuesday as the world's biggest club sacked the game's most famous manager.

The decision came as United laboured to their worst start for 28 years, playing dull, defensive football, with Mourinho cutting an ever-angrier figure after each setback, but Sunday's 3-1 defeat by Liverpool was one humiliation too far.

After decades of being the biggest fish in the English soccer pond, United had just about come to terms with the fact that bottomless new funding had enabled Chelsea and then Manchester City to displace them in terms of

spending power and trophy accumulation. But when Liverpool, in whose shadow United laboured for so long before Alex Ferguson finally "knocked them off their perch", brushed them aside on Sunday like the mediocre mid-table team they have become, it was the end of the line for the Portuguese coach.

"Manchester United announces that manager Jose Mourinho has left the club with immediate effect," the 20-times English title winners said in a brief statement.

That followed Sunday's defeat that left them 19 points behind Juergen Klopp's Liverpool side in sixth place and 11 points off the Champions League places. The 29 goals they have conceded is their worst at this stage of a season for 56 years.

For the current crop of United fans and



officials who gorged on success during Alex Ferguson's 26-year reign that is just not ac-

Mourinho will point to the fact that after replacing Dutchman Louis van Gaal in May 2016 he won the Europa League and the League Cup in his first season, before guiding United to second place and a place in the FA Cup final, where they were beaten by Chelsea, in his second. His 58.33% win record is considerably

better than that of David Moyes (52.94) and Van Gaal (52.43) and only marginally behind Ferguson's 59.67.

But those figures mask the fact that he has been poor against the other top-six teams, while his tactical approach has alienated just about everyone at the club.

With every passing defeat he found new ways to blame the players while reminding his critics of his previous successes at Porto, Chelsea, Inter Milan and Real Madrid.

United's customary panache he may have survived a little longer.

But while City, Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur have been thrilling fans with their swashbuckling approach, Mourinho has become the arch-proponent of "parking the bus" — a phrase he introduced to English football's lexicon when complaining about teams packing their defence to foil his exciting Chelsea team.

His fallout with 90 million pounds (\$114.17 million) French midfielder Paul Pogba summed up his failure.

Good enough to inspire France to win the World Cup this summer, Pogba has spent the last two weeks sitting on the bench, effectively punished for daring to suggest the team should be more attacking and play like the Wolverhampton Wanderers team who drew 1-1 at Old Trafford.

Instead Mourinho has opted for the stur-dier qualities of the likes of Nemanja Matic and Marouane Fellaini.

Mourinho, bucking the trend of "ultimate responsibility" has been ever-more critical of his players, accusing them of lacking technical expertise, mental fortitude and physical

The smiling, charming Mourinho who arrived at Chelsea declaring himself "a special one" 14 years ago, has long been replaced by a surly, haggered-looking operator, dismissive of any and all questioning of his personal responsibility.

(Source: Reuters)

#### Spurs fan fined after throwing banana skin at Arsenal's Aubameyang



A Tottenham fan was fined on Tuesday for throwing a banana skin at Arsenal forward Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang after a court ruled it was a targeted incident with a "racial element".

Averof Panteli admitted hurling the item onto the pitch at the Emirates Stadium after the Gabon striker scored and celebrated in front of Spurs' travelling support on December 2.

The 57-year-old van driver said he threw the banana skin in a "spur of the moment" action but strongly denied there was any racist intent, a magistrates' court in London heard.

But magistrate Mervyn Mandell said: "We find it was a targeted gesture to throw a banana skin after a goal was scored by a black player. We have in the circumstances found the racial element

Panteli was handed a four-year football banning order after pleading guilty to throwing a missile and was also fined £500 (\$634).

Leila Rasool, mitigating, said Panteli had been going to Tottenham games for 50 years without incident and was of "exemplary character" but had since been banned for life by the club.

She told the court: "It was a spur of the moment thing. He picked up the closest article to him and that happened to be a

"He realised the grave error he had made. He has not been charged for any

racially aggravated public order offence." After the pulsating 4-2 derby win, Premier League joint topscorer Aubameyang posted a picture of himself on social media with the caption: "whysmandoingthis?" accompanied by a banana emoji.

The incident triggered a fresh debate about racism in football, with former Arsenal striker-turned-pundit Ian Wright saying it had "embarrassed" the Premier

Raheem Sterling was subsequently subjected to alleged racial abuse during Manchester City's defeat at Chelsea -- the Stamford Bridge club banned four supporters pending an investigation.

Chelsea also condemned anti-Semitic chanting from some of their fans during last week's Europa League tie with Vidi

The Premier League called on supporters to back their teams in the right way and for fans to report any abuse.

#### **Reaction to sacking of Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho**



Following is reaction to the sacking of Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho, who was dismissed by the Premier League club on Tuesday.

#### FORMER UNITED CAPTAIN **GARY NEVILLE**

"I've been fortunate to spend time at Tottenham's training ground, and for me he (Mauricio Pochettino) feels like the ideal candidate. United have tried managers who have won European cups, they've tried managers who have won multiple leagues.

"My view is they need someone who meets the three key principles of the football club, and that is promotion of youth, entertaining football, and to win football matches."

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR MAN-

#### AGER MAURICIO POCHETTINO

'I feel so sorry because vou know very well I have a very good relationship with him, so it's very sad news what happened today. It's  $not\,m\overset{\circ}{y}\,business\,what\,happened\,today\,and$ only I want to send my best wishes to Jose.

'There are a lot of rumours about my position as manager at Tottenham. I cannot answer this type of question. The business you know very well, a lot of rumours happen. I'm so focused in trying to deliver my best in this football club.'

#### **RIO FERDINAND** "I was one of his biggest advocates two

and a half years ago when he joined Man United and felt he stabilised our club when has achieved as a manager previously, but I feel the time has come for fresh ideas at MUFC."

## FORMER ENGLAND INTER-NATIONAL GARY LINEKER

"With United 19 points behind Liverpool after 17 games, with the vast majority of players playing way below their best ... and dour football to boot.

"Given Mourinho was allowed to spend hundreds of millions on those players, the split seemed inevitable.

"Would imagine one of the main reasons for sacking Mourinho now would be to stop the attempted mass exodus of their best players next month.' FORMER LIVERPOOL BOSS

#### **GRAEME SOUNESS**

"I think he (Mourinho) would have known this was coming. I'm not surprised.. with the money he has spent and how the players are playing at this present moment in time... I said on Sunday, I couldn't see any light at the end of the tunnel for them. (Source: Mirror)

FORMER UNITED DEFENDER

## Women in football face daily battle, says France coach

Trailblazing France coach Corinne Diacre said women in football face a constant struggle for acceptance and are often regarded as "objects" despite rising visibility and media coverage of female players. Diacre made history when she became the first female

coach of a French men's professional team in 2014, and she is now hoping to guide Les Bleues to the women's World Cup title next year on home soil. But the former France captain, who amassed 121 caps

and 14 international goals -- including the strike that took France to their maiden World Cup in 2003 -- said it hadn't been an easy journey. "When I started in football in the 1980s, it was very rare to see a girl playing, we were really looked down upon. Because football was supposedly restricted to men," she told AFP in an interview.

"But unfortunately there are still too many negative things in football. (Not just) sexism, but I also hear a lot of talk about racism and these are things that are very difficult to put up with in 2018."

Diacre was speaking in Hong Kong during a FIFA-organised trip to work with Chan Yuen-ting, another history-maker who, in 2016, became the first woman coach to win a topflight men's championship.

Attitudes to women in football came into focus this month when Ada Hegerberg, the first female winner of the prestigious Ballon D'Or, was asked if she knew how to "twerk", a sexually suggestive dance, as she received her award.



"Quite honestly, we're confronted by that kind of thing every day. I want to tell you that today nothing shocks me, said Diacre, who coached men's team Clermont in the French second tier for three seasons. "Today, women are still objects," she added. "You still get asked questions about things that to my eyes are quite frankly completely ridiculous... but we still have to fight today about these issues.

From campsite to dug-out Diacre said media coverage of women's football, including stepped-up live broadcasts of France's top league, had "developed enormously" ahead of the World Cup. But despite such advances, she said life in football re-

mained doubly complicated for women because they have to contend with factors not faced by men.

"It's true that it's more difficult for us, the difficulties are multiplied by two. We know it's always been like that, so we have to deal with it," the 44-year-old said.

"But there (can be) a lot of wickedness. Really a lot of wickedness, a bit of jealousy I think too. The worst thing is when you prove you're capable of success, it's complicated for them (to accept).'

When Diacre leads France at Paris's Parc des Princes against South Korea for the World Cup opener on June 7, it will underline how far she has travelled.

Diacre, already an international at the time, watched France's home victory at the 1998 men's World Cup in far more humble surroundings -- at a campsite, where she had a summer job as a physical instructor to fund

However, she said she wasn't day-dreaming about lifting the World Cup in Lyon in July, but was treating it more as a mission handed her by the president of the French Football Federation, Noel Le Graet.

"I'm not dreaming about it, but yes I've been given this objective by my president: to go and win the World Cup,'

(Source: France24)

Qatar head coach Felix Sanchez said that the friendly matches ahead of the AFC Asian Cup 2019 will be a good opportunity to

Qatar will play friendlies against Jordan and Kyrgyzstan on December 23 and 25 and will face Algeria and Iran on

December 27 and 31 in Doha before they leave for UAE for

Qatar are in Group È of the competition alongside Lebanon,

"The friendly match with Iran and other teams will be a good

"Every team goes into any competition eyeing the title. The

opportunity to prepare the players. I have several players to

choose from the preparatory camp and I will wait till the friendly

Qatari team's goal is no different. I know Qatari fans have big hopes from the current batch of players and I hope we can de-

liver. Having said that we are in a tough group, and all the teams  $\,$ 

(Source: Gulf-times)

matches to decide on the final squad," Sanchez said.

deserve the respect," the Spaniard added.

Friendly with Iran a good

opportunity for Qatar:

**Felix Sanches** 

the Continental showpiece.

DPR Korea, and Saudi Arabia.

# Iranian duo nominated for best footballer in Asia

TEHRAN — Alireza Beiranvand and Alireza Jahanbakhsh from Iran have been nominated for the Best Footballer of Asia Award by Titan Sports and Fox Sports Asia.

 $Beir an vand \, was \, a \, standout \, in \, the \, 2018$ World Cup in Russia. The goalkeeper starred as Team Melli came close to getting out of a tough group containing Spain, Portugal and Morocco.

Beiranvand also played a major part in Persepolis reaching the final of the Champions League for the first time since the tournament started in 2003.

His compatriot Jahanbakhsh, currently plays in Brighton & Hove Albion, did not quite have the World Cup that was expected, but – in the first place it was his brilliant performances for
 AZ Alkmaar in the Eredivisie that lifted those expectations to stratospheric levels as he ended the 2017-18 season as the league's top scorer – an amazing achievement especially considering he



plays primarily as a winger. First launched in 2013, the award is one of the most important events of the

year for Asian footballers.

For the first time, the nomination is open to all jurors. After a two-week nomination stage and discussion within the prize organizing committee, a 24-man nominee list will be drawn up to contest for the supreme individual footballing award for Asian football excellence.

Unlike the Asian Football Confederation's Asian Footballer of the year judged by AFC technical department and match commissioners, Best Footballer in Asia, founded by Titan Sports, the only media representative of China voting for Ballon d'Or, applies the similar organizing structure and voting rules as France Football's Ballon d'Or.

The juror panel is constituted by media representatives of nearly 40 AFC football associations and some Asian football experts of European football media outlets, bringing the total amount of jurors to 42 (2017 edition). The eligibility of the nominees for Best Footballer in Asia, is wider than AFC Player of the Year.

The deadline for the vote is Decem-

#### Iran chess player ranks 2nd in Asian champs

IRNA — Iranian chess player Mohammad Amin Tabatabaei finished runner-up of the Asian Continental Championship 2018 held in Makati, the Philippines.

 $\label{thm:chinese} \textbf{His match with the Chinese opponent resulted in tie to increase}$ Tabatabaei's score in the tournament to 6.5 and win a spot in

Chess World Cup 2019. This has been the best result for Iranian men's chess players

since 2003, where Grandmaster Ehsan Ghaem Maghami grabbed an Asian silver medal.

Another Iranian men's chess player Parham Maghsoudlou, who had secured the world cup spot earlier, sat in the seventh place. The Blitz category of the fournament will be held on Tuesday,

where 10 of Iranian chess players are contenders for the gold medal. Asian Continental Championship 2018 was held on Decem-

#### Ali Kafashian resigns as vice president of FFIRI

TASNIM — Ali Kafashian, Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) vice president, has stepped down as his role on Tuesday.

Kafashian left his position according to the law barring the employment of retirees in government, state or public institutions which use state funds or facilities.

He also was director of Iran's futsal committee.

Davoud Parhizgar replaced Kafashian as director of futsal committee by head of FFIRI.

Mohammad Reza Saket had already resigned as FFIRI secretary general for the law barring the employment of retirees.

#### **Ariza joins Washington** Wizards

Trevor Ariza is officially a member of the Washington Wizards An ill-fated, three-way trade involving the Memphis Grizzlies and Phoenix Suns fell apart on Friday before the Wizards and Phoenix Suns engaged to pull off the deal involving Kelly Oubre and Ariza, who passed his team physical in Washington on Monday.

Trevor has been one of the most effective, efficient and versatile players at his position for over a decade," said Wizards President Êrnie Grunfeld. "We are obviously very familiar with the leadership and experience he brings as one of the league's most respected professionals and look forward to welcoming him back to the team."

Ariza has 102 games of playoff experience and is back with Washington for his second stint with the team (2012-14), which included a playoff run into the second round.

The 15-year veteran is a career .353 shooter from 3-point range in 968 career games (667 starts), including stops with Phoenix, Houston, Washington, New Orleans, the Los Angeles Lakers, Orlando and New York.

Ariza averaged 9.9 points, 5.6 rebounds, 3.3 assists and 1.5 steals in 26 games (all starts) with the Suns this season.

Oubre, 23, was the 15th overall pick in 2015 after one season at Kansas. He is averaging a career-high 12.9 points and 4.4 rebounds in 29 games, including seven starts, this season.

(Source: Reuters)

#### Iran can end Asian Cup title drought: Dejagah



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran midfielder Ashkan Dejagah believes that Team Melli can end their  $43-year\ title\ drought\ in\ the\ AFC\ Asian\ Cup.$ 

The last of Iran's three triumphs in the AFC Asian Cup was in 1976, meaning that it will be 43 years since Team Melli last won the title by the time the action in UAE 2019 kicks off next January.

Team Melli have been drawn with Iraq,

Vietnam and Yemen in Group D.
"We did well in the 2018 World Cup and narrowly missed the chance to reach the knockout phase. Since then, the Asian teams consider us as the favorites to win the title in Asian Cup. We also think it's time to end the title drought. We want to do our best in the competition and make the Iranian people happy," Dejagah said.

"I missed the 2018 World Cup due to injury and I don't want to miss the 2019 AFC Asian Cup," he stated.

"Contrary to Australia, Japan, Qatar and South Korea, we faced lack of infrastructure. But we don't care about these problems and will fight tooth and nail to win the title," he added.

"Australia, Japan, South Korea as well as some Arabian teams are favorites to win the title," the former VfL Wolfsburg

#### Branko Ivankovic wishes Team Melli all the best



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Persepok lis head coach Branko Ivankovic wished Iran national football team all the best in the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

Team Melli left Tehran on Monday to hold a training camp in Doha, Qatar as part of preparation for the Asian Cup.

Carlos Queiroz's will meet Qatar on Dec. 31 in a friendly match before they leave for the UAE for the continental showpiece.

"I've been always a big fan of Team Melli and I wish them all the best in the AFC Asian Cup. Team Melli's success is my success too. Iran national football team doesn't belong to a special person, Team Melli is for all Iranian people," Ivankovic said.

Ivankovic and Queiroz engaged in verbal warfare from the last year following mismanagement of Team Melli's preparation programs.
"I want to emphasize once again, Perse-

polis club, our fans, coaching staff, players and me will support Iran national football team. Please don't ask me about Team Melli from now on because my answer is clear,' Ivankovic said.

Iran national football team are the only team in the history of the competition to win thrice successively from 1968 - 1976. But since then they have not been able to win it for the fourth time.

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

## Le Fur elected new President of French Paralympic and Sports Committee

Triple Paralympic Games gold medallist Marie-Amélie Le Fur has been elected as the new President of the French Paralympic and Sports Committee (FPSC).

The 30-year-old from Vendôme was chosen as the replacement for compatriot Emmanuelle Assmann at the FPSC General Assembly in Paris.

Assmann, a former wheelchair fencer and winner of a Paralympic Games bronze medal in the team epee at Athens 2004, had been President since 2013.

She was re-elected in 2017 but decided to step down due to "professional reasons" in October.

Le Fur won the women's 100 metres T44 at London 2012 and added another two golds medal in the T44 400m and long jump at Rio 2016.

Overall, she has won a total of eight Paralympic Games medals, including four silver and a bronze.

Le Fur, whose left leg was amputated below the knee



following a motor scooter accident in 2004, also became the first female Paralaympic athlete to long jump over six metres at the 2018 European Championships in Berlin in August.

Her new role will take place alongside training for the 2020 Paralympic Games in Tokyo.

"I am very happy and honoured with the mission I am given and I wish to use my personal experience and my status as a high-level athlete," Le Fur said.

"Emmanuelle Assmann has, for five years, developed

She has brought a modern and innovative vision while making FPSC a legitimate and respected key player within the sport movement.'

"I am committed to perpetuating the dynamics infused by my predecessor; working more closely with our member federations as well as with the various actors of the French sports movement and the Ministry of Sports so as to enhance our teams and develop the leisure practice, everywhere and for all."

(Source: Insidethegames.biz)

## Carlos Queiroz and Laurent Blanc frontrunners for Manchester United caretaker role

Jose Mourinho has left Manchester United and now the club must turn its sights on appointing his immediate successor. In their statement announcing the

news, Manchester United said: "A new caretaker manager will be appointed until the end of the current season, while the club conducts a thorough recruitment process for a new, full-time

Michael Carrick took training on Tuesday morning and the former United midfielder will be appointed as acting interim manager for the next 48-hours before returning solely to coaching duties.

This news sparked rumors that former midfielder would be taking over until the end of the season, but this has since been rubbished by BBC Sport journalist Simon Stone amongst others.

Stone has confirmed that the club will not be appointing Carrick in a temporary position until a permanent appointment

He will, however, continue to take training at the Aon Complex in the meantime. MailSport reporter Mike Keegan, meanwhile, has suggested that Mourinho's replacement will be someone 'steeped in the traditions of the club', with an announcement expected before the weekend.

This has led to Carlos Queiroz, who served as Sir Alex Ferguson's assistant between 2002-03 and 2004-08, being touted as a candidate to see the club through until the end of the season.

Queiroz is currently the manager of the Iranian National Team. He has taken them to the World Cup twice during his reign and was close to helping them escape their group with Portugal, Spain and Morocco at the finals in Russia last summer.

Laurent Blanc, given his ties with the club as a player and his immediate availability, is another name gaining traction. Whether the Frenchmen would be happy to take the job only to then be replaced in the summer remains to be seen.

Former Real Madrid manager Zinedine Zidane is currently the favourite to take the position permanently, with bookies offering odds of 2/1. Spurs boss Mauricio Pochettino is close behind at 3/1, whilst you can get Antonio Conte and Laurent Blanc at 12/1.

(Source: Joe.co.uk)

## Tearful S. Korean Olympic champion tells court of coach abuse

Double Olympic gold medalist Shim Suk-hee broke down in tears as she told a South Korean court of the years of abuse she suffered at the hands of her coach.

to her name, including relay golds at both Sochi 2014 and on home ice at this year's Pyeongchang Games. But she told a court that her coach Cho Jae-beom had

Aged 21, the short-track skater has four Olympic medals

been beating her since she was seven -- on one occasion breaking her fingers -- leaving her "deeply traumatized". His violence "kept escalating" as she grew older, she said at the hearing in Suwon, south of Seoul.

"He frequently beat me and verbally abused me since I was seven... at one point beating me with an ice hockey stick and breaking my fingers," she said.

Another time he hurled metal nuts at her, ripping open her forehead.

Just weeks ahead of the Pyeongchang Olympics, "he kicked and punched me so hard, especially on my head, that I even thought 'I could die here'," she said,

South Korea is a regional sporting power and is regularly in the top 10 medal table places at the summer and winter Olympics. It is the only Asian country other than Japan to have hosted both Games.

But in an already intensely competitive society, winning is everything in its sports community -- where coaches hold immense sway over athletes' careers, and physical and verbal abuse are known to be rife. Those who speak out are liable to be sidelined and castigated as "traitors".

#### **UEFA** investigates 'alleged racist incidents'

UEFA has confirmed that it is investigating "alleged racist incidents" during Chelsea's Europa League match against Vidi earlier this month.

Reports on social media said antisemitic chanting had come from the section of Groupama Arena housing the travelling Chelsea fans from the opening minutes of the game.

After the match, a Chelsea spokesman said those who had used a derogatory word in reference to Tottenham had "shamed the club." In a statement, UEFA said: "UEFA has commissioned an

Ethics and Disciplinary Inspector to conduct an investigation in relation to the alleged racist incidents that occurred at last week's UEFA Europa League group stage match between Vidi FC and Chelsea FC played in Hungary.

'Information in respect to the results of this investigation will be made available by the middle of January.'

If Chelsea are found guilty, UEFA could impose a partial closure of Stamford Bridge for the Europa League tie against Malmo on Feb. 21.

Asked about UEFA's response on Tuesday, Chelsea assistant coach Gianfranco Zola told a news conference: "We are still talking about an investigation, so it's very difficult to say anything about that.

"We will see what happens and then, obviously, we can comment upon that."

(Source: ESPN)

#### 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.

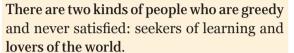
- Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com

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)

#### **Institutions sell Iranian films** illicitly to YouTube: producer

**TEHRAN** – The spokesman of the Association e s k of Iranian Independent Producers, Morteza Shayesteh, said on Tuesday that a number of Iranian institutions have illicitly sold some of their fellow filmmakers' movies to YouTube.

The executives of the institutions have disguised themselves as producers of the films and made deals with YouTube, he stated in a press release.



He noted that the association is currently preparing a list of the imposters to convince them to compensate the true owners of the films, otherwise the associate will reveal the list and sue them.

Shayesteh also said some members of the association have recently posted online messages from some individuals introducing themselves as representatives of Netflix Inc., an American mediaservices provider, who express an interest in making deals with

He said that the association is conducting an investigation to determine the true identity of the persons.

#### **Overseas publishers** acquire rights to Ebrahim Hassanbeigi's books

CULTURE TEHRAN – The Pol Literary and Translation e s k Agency, a Tehran-based institution that translates Iranian books and presents Persian language publications around the world, has sold rights to eight books by Iranian writer Ebrahim Hassanbeigi.

Foliant, a major Kazakh publishing house, Sama

Publishing House from Egypt

and Zengin from Turkey are the

publishers, the Persian service

has purchased the rights to "Gisu and the Magic Lamp", "Sufi and the Magic Lamp", "Aladdin and the Magic Lamp" and "Mayor's Excellency", which

will be translated and published "The Rose on the Rug" will be translated and published in Turkish by Zengin Publishing

Sama Publishing House



Front cover of the Persian copy House. of Iranian writer Ebrahim

The rights to the "Gisu and Hassanbeigi's "The Rose on the Magic Lamp", "Sufi and the the Rug".

Magic Lamp" and "Aladdin and Magic

the Magic Lamp" were sold to Foliant and the books will be

#### **Philip Colbert updates** pop art for the digital age in new show

**LONDON (Reuters)** — Artist and designer Philip Colbert, whose surrealist clothes have been worn by Lady Gaga and Rita Ora, brings pop art back to British painting with a new show that comments on consumerist culture, climate change and our appetite for social media.

Scottish born Colbert, who has worked across music, fashion and design, says his large-scale oil paintings interweave art history references with Internet and social media images, such as emojis and like buttons, in bright cartoon-like collages featuring his lob-

"People are consuming art a lot through phones and the computer so I like the idea that those elements are reflected in my paintings, he said at his studio in London, where his latest show is running

His preoccupation with digital media has led Colbert to create a virtual reality world to explore the boundaries of art.

"It's a language you can create and it can be free from the realities that we, that exist in, in normal life and that's the beauty of it, the potential freedom."

## Alex Ferguson's last chewed gum subject of comedy play on stage at Tehran theater

A R T TEHRAN – The stick of gum chewed by the legendary football tactician Alex Ferguson during his last coaching session with Manchester United is the subject of a comedy play on stage at Tehran's Shahrzad Theater.

A chewed gum, a rusty nail, a used needle, and a cigarette butt and an observer are the characters of "The Recyclables", written by Reza Heidari who is also the director

"The Recyclables" is about the chewed gum that claims it is Ferguson's famous chewing gum that was sold for £390,000 in an online auction site Ebay in 2013. Later, the other junk finds out that it is only an expired stick of chewing gum with banana flavor and it is just a show-off.

"I really like objects and they make me feel good," Heidari told the Persian service of ILNA on Monday.

"I respect them and since I am a lighting designer; projector lights and lamps are

my good friends," he added.

"These things can be ambitious, can have dreams or perhaps they want to change, just like humans," he noted.

A cast composed of Nader Fallah, Amir Karbalaizadeh, Elham Shabani, Mehdi Borumand and Ali Puya-Qasemi performs the play, which will be on stage until January 16, 2019.



A scene from "Recyclables" by Reza Heidari.

## Iran's "No Date, No Signature" misses out on Oscar

TEHRAN – "No Date, No Signature", d e s k Iran's submission to the Oscars, has failed to make it to the shortlist in the best foreign film category.

Directed by Vahid Jalilvand, the film that won accolades in several prestigious international events, including the Venice film festival, was expected to repeat another success for Iranian cinema at the Oscars after Asghar Farhadi's "A Separation" and "The Salesman".

"Birds of Passage" from Colombia, "The Guilty" from Denmark, "Never Look Away" from Germany, "Shoplifters" from Japan, "Ayka" from Kazakhstan, "Capernaum" from Lebanon, "Roma" from Mexico, "Cold War" from Poland and "Burning" from South Korea were the shortlisted films, the Academy Awards announced on Monday.

The films have been selected from among 87 submissions to the category. Members will vote to nominate five films for final Oscar consideration.

"No Date, No Signature" was sent to the 91st Academy Awards amid calls from certain people for the Farabi NO SIGNATURE

A poster for "No Date, No Signature".

Cinema Foundation, the organization that selects Iran's submissions to the Oscars every year, to boycott the Oscars

over Washington's withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear

'The Academy is a non-governmental institution and belongs to American cineastes," Farabi said in a press release announcing the movie as Iran's entry to the Academy Awards in September.

"In addition to the American cineastes, the Academy also enjoys filmmakers from Europe, Latin America, Africa, Asia, as well as groups of honorable Iranian filmmakers. American cinema, in particular the Academy members in their frame of mind, along with the absolute majority of the U.S. press and media, are the main centers for opposition, criticism and divergence against Trump's populism and his racist and despotic policies," the foundation added.

"Iranian cinema as part of the general diplomacy of the country, can use the Oscar competition as an opportunity to reinforce its ties with other nations, to influence public opinion in the world and, as a result, to increase the global pressure on the U.S. government.'

## **CBS fires CEO Leslie** Moonves and denies \$120 million severance

**NEW YORK (Reuters)** — CBS Corp said on Monday it has fired Leslie Moonves for cause and has denied a \$120 million severance package as it girds for a potential legal battle with its former chief executive who has been accused of sexual harassment and assault that allegedly took place before and after he joined the company.

The decision to deprive Moonves of his severance follows a board of directors review of the findings of an investigation into Moonves' behavior and the CBS culture conducted by two law firms, Debevoise & Plimpton and Covington & Burling,

"We have determined that there are grounds to terminate for cause, including his willful and material misfeasance, violation of company policies and breach of his employment contract, as well as his willful failure to cooperate fully with the company's investigation," CBS's board of directors said in a statement that did not disclose details of the investigation.



A draft report of the investigation was leaked to the New York Times this month. It accused Moonves of destroying evidence and seeking to mollify accusers with promises of jobs at CBS.

Moonves has denied any wrongdoing and has described his sexual encounters as consensual.

"Mr. Moonves vehemently denies any non-consensual sexual relations and cooperated extensively and fully with investigators," Moonves's attorney Andrew Levander, said in a statement adding that the conclusions of the CBS board were "foreordained and are without merit."

It was not immediately clear if Moonves planned to take legal action against CBS and a spokesman for Levander said there was no further comment.

The CBS board also said investigators found that harassment and retaliation were not pervasive at CBS but found that its policies and practices failed to prevent past incidents.

CBS suspended Charlie Rose, co-anchor of CBS's morning show and "60 Minutes" in November 2017 after several women accused him of harassment and misconduct and fired him last September. Jeff Fager, "60 Minutes" executive producer, was also fired in September after threatening a CBS News reporter investigating allegations of harassment of colleagues.

Investigators did find that the company failed to hold "high performers" accountable for their conduct, the board said. The board said it has retained outside advisers to fix its

human resources problems. Last week, CBS named 18 recipients of a \$20 million donation  $drawn\,from\,Moonves's\,severance\,to\,support\,eliminating\,sexual$ harassment in the workplace.

