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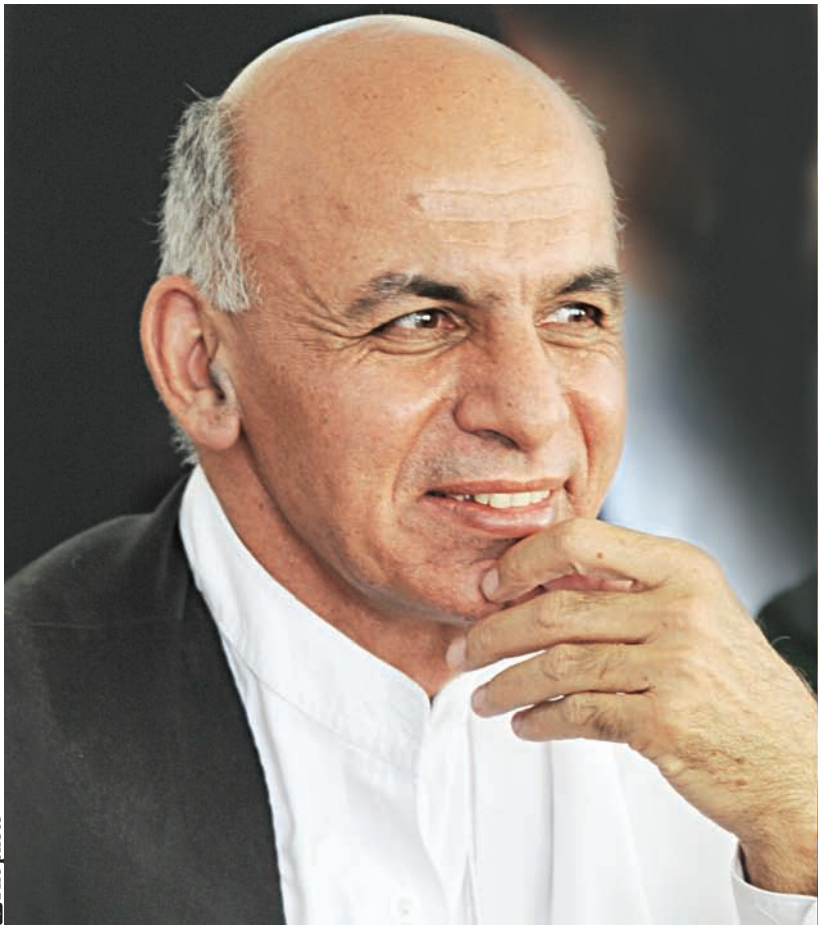


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Araqchi briefs Ghani on Iran's talks with Taliban



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'More potential buyers for Iran's oil despite sanctions'

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs and Trading Amir-Hossein Zamaninia said despite the U.S. sanctions more oil buyers have approached the country for negotiations, Shana reported.

"Despite U.S. pressures on Iranian oil market, the number of potential buyers of Iranian oil has significantly increased due to a competitive market, greed and

pursuit of more profit." Zamaninia said.

The official noted that all countries that were granted waivers from the United States to continue buying a certain amount of Iranian oil imports are complying with the waivers' ceiling.

"China, India, Japan, South Korea and other countries that were granted waivers from America to import Iranian oil are not willing to buy even one barrel more than what is allowed by the U.S.," he said. **→4**

Anti-money laundering bill of amendment past Expediency Council

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Expediency Council on Saturday endorsed a bill of amendment to the anti-money laundering law, a council member announced.

Gholamreza Mesbahi-Moghadam said the bill will be sent to Majlis speaker Ali Larijani for declaration.

Larijani, Economy Minister Farhad

Dejpasand, Chairman of Majlis Judicial and Legal Commission Allahyar Malekshahi and Laya Joneidi, the vice president for legal affairs, attended the council's meeting, Mesbahi-Moghadam said.

However, President Hassan Rouhani were among the absentees of the council's Saturday session. **→2**

France's 'Yellow Vest' protestors back on the streets

France's "Yellow Vest" (Yellow Vest's movement/yellow jackets movement/Mouvement des gilets jaunes/Gilets Jaunes) protestors were back on the streets again on Saturday as a government spokesman denounced those still protesting as hard-liners who wanted only to bring down the government.

Several hundred protestors gathered

on the Champs Elysees in central Paris, where around 15 police wagons were also deployed, an AFP journalist said. Marches were underway in several other cities across France.

This is the eighth Saturday of protests called by the grass-roots movement. The numbers turning out have fallen steadily since the start of the demonstrations in November. **→13**

I do not think SPV covering wide areas of trade: Nephew

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Richard Nephew, who served as the lead sanctions expert for the U.S. team negotiating with Iran, says "I do think that there will be something called the SPV eventually created that facilitates trade between Europe and Iran, but I do not think it will be the same sort of SPV that was announced in September, covering wide

areas of trade."

The fellow at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, believes "Iran will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to continue implementing its provisions of the JCPOA while not receiving any economic relief."

He adds that "I think that the sanctions pressure that will build on Iran in 2019 -- likely combined with the failure of the SPV to do much beyond humanitarian trade -- will make Iran's leaders

consider seriously withdrawing from or at least reducing their compliance with the JCPOA."

Following is the text of the interview:

■ Due to US is opposed to the financial mechanism between Europe and Iran and pushes European countries to prevent the implementation of the financial channel as called SPV, do you think this financial mechanism (SPV) will be implemented between Iran and Europe? **→7**

Stung by 'library' remark, India lists Afghan projects to "educate" Trump

By Syed Zafar Mehdi

TEHRAN — Donald Trump has become famously infamous for his eccentricity, grandiloquence, and off-the-cuff statements devoid of logic and lucidity. On the receiving end have been both friends and foes.

During his first cabinet meeting of the year, the megalomaniac reality show star turned president fired a salvo at an important regional ally — India. And the salvo backfired, putting him in a tight spot.

Trump mocked Indian Prime Minister Narendra

Modi for funding "a library" in Afghanistan, saying it wouldn't be used in the war-ravaged country.

"I get along well with India and Prime Minister Modi. But he is constantly telling me he built a library in Afghanistan. Library! That's, like, five hours of what we spend (in Afghanistan)," he said.

The remarks were made in the context of the growing cost of America's engagement in the war-torn country, saying that India, Russia and Pakistan should be the ones fighting the Taliban.

"Why is not Russia there? Why isn't India there? Why isn't Pakistan there? Why are we

there? We are 6,000 miles away," Trump said, while answering a reporter's question.

Referring to the library, Trump said Modi is "very smart". "We are supposed to say, 'Oh, thank you for the library'. Don't know who's using it in Afghanistan. But it's one of those things I don't like being taken advantage of."

Although there was no official reaction from the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) government in India, Indian media quoted many top government and opposition leaders denouncing remarks of Trump. **→6**

Hacker group releases '9/11 Papers', says future leaks will 'burn down' U.S. deep state

The Dark Overlord hacker group has released decryption keys for 650 documents it says are related to 9/11 (September 11 attacks/A series of four coordinated terrorist attacks by the al-Qaeda terrorist group against the United States on the morning of Tuesday, September 11, 2001). Unless a ransom is paid, it threatened with more leaks that will have devastating consequences for the United States 'deep state'.

The document dump is just a fraction of the 18,000 secret documents related to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks believed to have been stolen from insurers, law firms, and government agencies.

The Dark Overlord initially threatened to release the 10GB of data unless the hacked firms paid an unspecified bit-coin (a crypto currency/form of electronic cash/digital currency)

ransom. However, on Wednesday, the group announced a "tiered compensation plan" in which the public could make bit-coin payments to unlock the troves of documents.

A day later, the Dark Overlord said that it had received more than \$12,000 in bit-coin — enough to unlock "layer 1" and several "checkpoints," comprised of 650 documents in total. **→13**



REPORT

Fatemeh Salehi
Mehr News Agency
journalist

UK arms exports to Saudi Arabia

Britain is the second-largest exporter of arms to Saudi Arabia after the U.S., regardless of human rights violations of Saudi Arabia. After the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, UK military sales to Riyadh has not only declined, but surprisingly increased.

A British online newspaper the Independent has released a report, reading: "Britain continued seeking arms deals with Saudi Arabia in weeks after Khashoggi was murdered."

As the UK government called for answers over the dissident's death, British trade officials responsible for arms sales continued to hold high-level meetings with their Saudi counterparts.

A delegation from the Defense and Security Organization — an office within the Department for International Trade that promotes arms exports for UK companies — travelled to Riyadh on 14 and 22 October, according to a Freedom of Information request obtained by the Mirror newspaper.

The latter of those meetings came on the same day as the foreign secretary, Jeremy Hunt, condemned Khashoggi's killing "in the strongest possible terms" in a speech to parliament.

"Whilst we will be thoughtful and considered in our response, I have also been clear that if the appalling stories we are reading turn out to be true, they are fundamentally incompatible with our values and we will act accordingly," Hunt said on 22 October.

The foreign secretary made a point of announcing the cancellation of a planned visit to Riyadh by the trade secretary, Liam Fox. However, he did not disclose that meetings over arms sales were still taking place.

According to the Independent: "Even before the murder of Khashoggi, the UK government had been under pressure to halt arms exports to Saudi Arabia over alleged war crimes and rising civilian casualties in Yemen. Since the war began, the UK has licensed £4.7bn worth of weapons to Saudi forces, making it by far the largest buyer of UK arms."

Meanwhile, Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said on Friday his government was in favor of halting arms sales to Saudi Arabia and it intended to take a formal position on the matter. **→7**



ARTICLE

Mudasir Sheikh
Researcher and writer
from Kashmir

Eurasian strategic triangle and global peace

Graham Allison's 2017 book 'Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap' has become the topic of hot debate among Western think tanks as historical evidence indicates that Thucydides trap magnifies the chances of military confrontation between a ruling power and a rising power for dictating the terms of societal order.

To some other political scientists like Samuel Huntington, it is the cultural and religious identities that can become the source of war as explained in his 1996 book 'The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.'

Thucydides trap and clash of civilizations beautifully explains the prospects of military confrontation but the established 21st century international order that originated at the time of World War I, evolved through the World War II and reached its climax in 1974 with the establishment of petrodollar scam has become incredibly complex to comprehend with respect to any upcoming military confrontation.

The overthrow of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh in a CIA-backed coup in 1953 is a fine example of understanding the influence of corporations like British Petroleum to use the U.S. and British governments for securing its interests.

The coup of Mosaddegh in 1953 was meant to prevent the rationalization of Anglo Iranian oil company that later became British Petroleum in 1954. These facts were officially confirmed by CIA in 2013. It was not only the coup of democratically elected leader but it demonstrated how financial and business elites can orchestrate mega conflicts to push countries into catastrophic wars.

The World War I traces its origins to three powerful men — William T. Stead, Reginald Brett, and Cecil Rhodes. They used their enormous wealth and influence to form "Jesuit Order" based secret society with monetary consolidation for establishing a new societal order by replacing the prevailing one through orchestrating two mega conflicts in the form of World War I and World War 2. **→6**



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Bandar-Tang where desert meets sea

A small boat is at anchor in Bandar-Tang where barren desert reaches the Sea of Oman, southeast Iran, December 29, 2018.

Situated in Chabahar county, Sistan- Baluchestan province, the port area attracts tourists and nature lovers with its pristine and unique nature.

It features scenes of wind eroded landscape, sandy and rocky beaches divided by clear water.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Iran Air Force to receive 15 Kowsar fighter jets

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — 15 homegrown Kowsar fighter jets will be delivered to the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force (IRIAF) within three years, the force's commander Aziz Nasirzadeh announced on Saturday.

Brigadier General Nasirzadeh said the IRIAF has already received one Kowsar fighter jet, Mehr reported.

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

It was successfully test-flown on August 21 at the presence of President Hassan Rouhani.



Shahram Jazayeri may face long-term imprisonment

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Tehran Prosecutor Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi said on Saturday that Shahram Jazayeri, who was arrested months ago in one of Iran's towns, has been indicted and the lower court has sentenced him to a relatively long-term imprisonment.

The verdict is not definitive yet, but it will be announced as soon as a final verdict is issued, Dolatabadi said, ILNA reported.

Jazayeri, an Iranian tycoon who spent several years of his life in jail for being involved in a high-profile corruption case, was arrested last year near the Bazargan border crossing in West Azarbaijan Province while trying to flee the country.



Marine organization observes vessels construction standards

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Amir Rastegari, managing director of the Defense Ministry's Marine Industries Organization, said on Saturday that Iran observes international standards in manufacturing vessels and equipment.

Observing quality and technical indicators are important to build and provide after-sale services, Rastegari said in a meeting with the governor of Gilan province, IRNA reported.

"The capabilities and facilities of the Defense Ministry's Marine Industries Organization are aimed at developing tourism projects," he explained.

He also said the Marine Industries Organization has made great progress in production of floating structures.



Iranian, Chinese party officials meet in Tehran

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Mehdi Soli, deputy chief of the international affairs of the Islamic Coalition Party, on Saturday met with Deputy Chief of the International Liaison Department of the Communist Party of China, who was in Tehran at the head of a delegation to confer on ways to expand cooperation between the two countries.

During the meeting, the two sides voiced satisfaction with the expansion of bilateral relations, highlighting the importance of developing ties based on mutual respect and facilitating all-out strategic cooperation between Tehran and Beijing, Mehr reported.



'Pakistan eyeing Iran's experience on infrastructure'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Akbar Ayub Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province's minister for communication and works department, has expressed Pakistan's desire to benefit from Iran's vast experiences to develop its infrastructure.

Ayub Khan said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province wants to cooperate with Iran in technical and engineering sectors to develop its infrastructure, especially in building roads and bridges, Fars reported on Saturday.

He made the remarks in a meeting with Consul General of Iran in Peshawar Mohammad Baqer Beigi

Referring to close ties between Iran and Pakistan, the minister said Islamabad is willing to send a team of experts to Iran to see the country's progress in building roads, tunnels, and bridges.



Pompeo: U.S. has helped foster co-op between Israel, Arabs

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Thursday the Trump administration has helped facilitate cooperation between Israel and a number of Arab countries against Iran.

Speaking in an interview with U.S. channel NewsMax TV on Thursday, Pompeo said, "We made connections between [Israel and Arab countries] to form a coalition in the Middle East that will preserve U.S. security".

He criticized the Obama administration for its decision to adopt Iran "as its partner in the region... but, we completely changed it."

Pompeo also confirmed Trump's plan to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria, stressing that the U.S. plans to continue confronting Iran.

Anti-money laundering bill of amendment past Expediency Council

POLITICS According to IRNA, the bill to amend the anti-money laundering law had been approved by the cabinet ministers on November 8, 2017 and sent to the Guardian Council after a ratification by the Majlis.

However, the Guardian Council, after studying the bill, sent it back to Majlis after finding some faults with it. The Majlis insisted on its ratification and sent it to the Expediency Council, which acts as an arbitration between the Majlis and the Guardian Council.

The amendment was a preference of conservatives after the government introduced a bill on countering the financing on terrorism (known as the CFT) as a bid to facilitate the neutralization of Iran by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Rouhani's government has been trying to implement standards set by the FATF, a global group of government anti-money-laundering (AML) and counter financing of terrorism regimes, in the hope it will be removed from a blacklist that makes some foreign investors reluctant to deal with it.

In October, the FATF gave Iran until February to complete reforms that would bring it into line with its norms or face consequences.

However, the conservatives prefer to revamp an existing domestic law over



Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani (2nd right), who was appointed as the chairman of the Expediency Council on December 30 by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, chaired Saturday's meeting of the council. Larijani, the Judiciary chief, replaced Ayatollah Seyyed Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi, who passed away at the age of 70 on December 24.

accepting a law that strictly reflects the FATF's standards. So far two bills related amending the anti-money laundering law and the CFT have been confirmed.

■ 'Only two faults with CFT have been corrected'

Abbasali Kadkhodaei, spokesman of the Guardian Council, told a press conference

on Saturday that the council found a series of faults with the CFT, but only two of them had been corrected.

"The Guardian Council found certain faults with the bill, and the bill was sent to the Majlis. Only two of the faults have been corrected and the other ones still remain," he explained.

On October 7, the parliament (Majlis) voted in favor of the CFT. At the time, a total of 143 lawmakers, out of 268 ones present in the parliament, voted in favor of the bill. However, the oversight Guardian Council rejected the bill by finding 20 faults with it.

In December, the parliament made changes to the CFT. The bill was referred to the Expediency Council for further study.

■ 'Parliament to study CFT at presence of Kadkhodaei'

Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Chairman Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh told ISNA on Saturday that the committee will study the CFT at the presence of Kadkhodaei on Sunday.

"The Guardian Council found 22 faults with the CFT and three of them have been solved. The Majlis insisted to send seven items to the Expediency Council and the remaining 12 items will be studied in national security committee tomorrow [Sunday]," Falahatpisheh stated.

Iraq-Iran relationship a model for the world: ambassador

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad, Iraj Masjedi, has described the strong relationship between Iran and Iraq as a "successful model" of cooperation between two neighboring countries on the world stage.

Speaking at the Iraqi National Defense University in Baghdad on Saturday, Masjedi said Iran's approach toward Iraq is not based on sectarianism, rather it views the Arab state as a brotherly country, IRNA reported.

He underlined that Iraq will not have a "more sincere friend" than Iran.

The ambassador asserted that the Islamic Republic does not bully other countries and it does not tolerate bullying as well.

Tehran respects the sovereignty and dignity of other nations, Ambassador Masjedi remarked.

Pointing to U.S. bullying of other countries, Masjedi asked, "Why does the U.S. have military bases and forces in so many countries? Why does the U.S. think others must obey its orders?"

"With this regard, we as the Islamic Republic of Iran oppose U.S. bullying,"

he added.

The diplomat also said Iran has good political and economic relations with all countries, especially neighbors.

Describing Iran's relations with Iraq as a "strategic friendship", the envoy said the Islamic Republic is seeking peace, friendship and brotherly ties with Iraq.

Iran is rooting for an "Iraq which is powerful and advanced in all fields," he said, adding, "Iraq's progress pleases us and we will spare no efforts in helping with Iraq's progress."



Pakistan Navy flotilla visits Bandar Abbas

In line with Pakistan's maritime tradition and to strengthen the existing cordial bilateral relations, a Pakistan Navy Flotilla comprising four Navy ships will dock at the Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas from 6-9 January, Pakistan's embassy said in a press release on Saturday.

PNS KHAIBAR, PNS MADADGAR, PNS RAH NAWARD and PMS ZHOB will be commanded by Commodore Muhammad Saleem SI(M), commander of the 9th Auxiliary

Warfare Squadron.

Pakistan flotilla's visit to Iran is aimed at enhancing maritime collaboration between the navies of the two countries. The ships are bringing warm wishes and a message of solidarity, peace & prosperity for the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the region.

The port call of Pakistan Navy ships to Islamic Republic of Iran is a regular feature. Last year, two Pakistani ships PNS

RAH NAWARD and PNS DEHSHAT visited Bander Abbas.

During the visit, PN delegation will hold meetings with naval and military leadership of Iran on bilateral relations.

The port call by Pakistani ships is a testimony of growing security and defense relationship between Iran and Pakistan. The visit of the Pakistan Navy ships to Bandar Abbas enables both navies to enrich themselves from mutual experiences and enhance cooperation in future endeavors.

Iran calls British foreign secretary's remarks 'hasty', 'wrong'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Saturday slammed British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt's remarks against Iran as "hasty" and "wrong".

"The British foreign secretary's hasty and wrong remarks shows his lack of information and are a kind of interference in the internal affairs of an independent country," he said.

In a tweet message on Thursday, Hunt claimed that Nazamin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian woman jailed in Iran, is innocent and must be allowed to come home.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe, 38, has been imprisoned in Iran for 2 years on charges of trying to orchestrate a soft overthrow of the Islamic Republic.

Qassemi said, "The British foreign secretary should take a look at his respected government's record in the Middle East in



past decades and recent years and see human catastrophes and crises for the people of the Middle East caused by the British government's policies and supports for the terrorist groups."

Pointing to the "people's catastrophic situation in Yemen, Palestine, Syria" and other places, he said that the British government should be ashamed of providing certain countries with weaponry which has led to this situation.

IRGC to unveil progresses in building submarines

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps will start making submarines and unveil its technological achievements in this respect in the future, the IRGC Navy chief has said.

"[Progress] in the area of submarines is one of our needs which we should pursue," Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri told the Tasnim news agency in an interview published on Saturday.

Asked about the navy's preparedness, he said, "We are fully prepared and observe all the moves by our extra-regional enemies."

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has urged the Iranian Armed Forces to boost their military capabilities and preparedness.

"Enhance your abilities and preparations so much as you can so that the enemies of Iran do not even dare to threaten this great nation," Ayatollah Khamenei said



during a meeting with a group of navy commanders and officials in November.

Lauding the armed forces for their achievements, the Leader said, "The current generation of the Navy deeply believes in its ingeniousness and abilities, and the realization of projects such as the addition of Sahand destroyer, and Fateh and Ghadir submarines to the naval forces, heralds the possibility of more progress."

Araqchi briefs Ghani on Iran's talks with Taliban

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Seyyed Abbas Araqchi, who held talks with a Taliban delegation in Tehran on December 30, met Afghan President Ashraf Ghani in Kabul on Saturday.

During the meeting, the two exchanged views about a range of issues, including ways to boost bilateral relations between the two neighboring countries and a better use of Iran's Chabahar port.

Araqchi and Ghani talked about the peace process in Afghanistan and a comprehensive cooperation agreement between the two countries.

The office of the Afghan president said Araqchi briefed Ghani about the meeting between Iranian officials and the Taliban.

On December 31, Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi announced that Iranian diplomats had held a meeting with a Taliban delegation in Tehran a day before.

During a press conference, Qassemi said that the Iranian negotiators were headed by Araqchi.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran shares borders with Afghanistan and has cultural and historical affinities with the country. As an important player in the region which seeks peace, stability and security, Iran wanted to enter these talks after negotiations with the Afghan government," Qassemi stated.

Shortly before that, Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, had said Tehran had conducted a series of "contacts and talks with the Taliban group... with the knowledge of the Afghan government."



Araqchi (L) meets Abdullah in Kabul in September 2018 (FILE PHOTO)

"The trend will continue," Shamkhani said after visiting Kabul on December 26.

Last Tuesday, the Taliban confirmed that it had discussed Afghanistan's "post-occupation situation" with Iran.

Taliban's announcement signaled a growing confidence among the Taliban for U.S. troops to pull out of Afghanistan, after U.S. officials last month told various media outlets that President Donald Trump had decided to slash the number of boots on the ground.

Tehran's peace push will be viewed with concern by hawks in Washington, who fear that Trump's planned withdrawal of troops from Syria and Afghanistan will cede regional influence to Iran.

Iran and Afghanistan share a nearly 600-mile (960-kilometre) border, and have had a complex relationship in recent years.

Tehran has long supported its co-religionists in Afghanistan, the Shia Hazara minority, who were violently persecuted by the Taliban during its rule in the 1990s.

Araqchi held a separate meeting on Saturday with Afghanistan's Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah to discuss a comprehensive document on cooperation between the two countries.

Araqchi expressed hope that the document would be finalized as soon as possible.

In June 2017, Iran and Afghanistan held the first round of talks on the comprehensive strategic partnership document as part of efforts to boost bilateral relations in various areas, including security and defense.

Abdullah, for his part, described the relations between the two countries as historic and based on friendship.

He also thanked Iran for hosting Afghan refugees.

Back in September, Araqchi visited Afghanistan and met with a number of high-ranking officials of the Central Asian country, including Abdullah.

Speaking in that meeting with Araqchi on September 11, Abdullah underlined the importance of his country's relations with Iran and said the relationship will never be affected by a third country.

He said the National Unity Government of Afghanistan is willing to complete and sign the comprehensive cooperation agreement between the two countries.

Israel sentences Palestinian teen to 11 years in prison over alleged stabbing attack

An Israeli court has sentenced a Palestinian teenage boy to eleven years in prison on the allegation of carrying out a stabbing attack in the southern sector of the occupied West Bank.

The Commission for Prisoners and Ex-Prisoners' Affairs said in a statement that the Ofer military court passed the verdict on 19-year-old Daoud Manasra on Friday, and demanded that he pay a compensation of 270,000 shekels (\$73,000) or serve three additional years of imprisonment in lieu of it.

Moreover, the court ordered the Palestinian teenage boy to pay a fine of 10,000 shekels (\$3,000).

The committee condemned the sentence and the exorbitant financial compensation imposed on Manasra and other political prisoners in Israeli detention centers.

"This proves the barbarity of the fake Israeli judiciary, which goes hand in hand with the policies of the Israeli intelligence service, aiming to inflict the greatest damage and sanctions on Palestinians," it pointed out.

Israeli forces detained Manasra in mid-2015 after he had purportedly attacked and injured an Israeli soldier at the Beit Einun crossroads in eastern al-Khalil, located 30 kilometers (19 miles) south of al-Quds (Jerusalem).

On December 16, 2018, the same Israeli court sentenced 18-year-old Ayham Bassem Sabbah, a resident of the Qalandiya refugee camp north of al-Quds (Jerusalem), to 35 years in prison, and also ordered him to pay a fine of one million Israeli shekels (\$264,700).

Sabbah and 14-year-old Omar Salim Rimawi were both shot and critically injured on February 18, 2016, after allegedly carrying out a stabbing attack that left one Israeli settler dead and another injured at the Rami Levi supermarket in the Shaare Benyamin industrial complex northwest of al-Quds (Jerusalem).

■ **Israeli forces injure at least 23 Palestinians in Gaza protests**

Meantime, Israeli forces have attacked anti-occupation protests along the border between the besieged Gaza Strip and the occupied territories, leaving at least 23 Palestinians injured.

Ashraf al-Qedra, the spokesman for the Gaza Health Ministry, said Israeli forces used gunfire and tear gas against the protesters east of the coastal enclave on Friday.

According to the report, 14 protesters



were injured during the clashes in addition to seven medics and a journalist.

Tensions have been running high near the fence separating Gaza from the occupied territories since March 30, which marked the start of the protests.

Palestinian protesters demand the right to return for those driven out of their homeland.

The clashes in Gaza reached their peak on May 14, the eve of the 70th anniversary of the Nakba Day, or the Day of Catastrophe, which coincided this year with Washington's relocation of the United States embassy from Tel Aviv to occupied al-Quds (Jerusalem).

More than 240 Palestinians have so far been killed and over 20,000 others wounded in the renewed Gaza clashes, according to the latest figures released by the Gaza Health Ministry.

Gaza has been under Israeli siege since June 2007, causing a decline in living standards as well as unprecedented unemployment and poverty.

■ **Brazil's president confirms al-Quds (Jerusalem) embassy move**

The developments follow as Brazil's new President Jair Bolsonaro has reaffirmed his plan of relocating the country's embassy in the Israeli capital to the occupied al-Quds (Jerusalem).

"The decision is taken, it's only a matter

of when it will be implemented," said the ultra-right-wing leader late Thursday during an interview with Brazil's SBT Television, confirming a reported statement by the Israeli regime's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who attended Bolsonaro's inauguration ceremonies on January 1.

"A large part of the Arab world is aligned or aligning itself with the United States," claimed the Brazilian president, who has widely been referred to as "Trump of the Tropics" due to his radical approaches similar to the U.S. President Donald Trump. "The Palestinian issue is already overloading people in the Arab world for the most part."

Blaming Iran as the major vocal opposition against the embassy move, Bolsonaro further added that "the only weighty voice speaking out against me is Iran."

Iran has not been the only country firmly opposing the U.S.-led embassy move to the occupied al-Quds as many Muslim and non-Muslim countries have officially or informally expressed opposition to the move amid many protest rallies in different countries against Washington's anti-Palestinian measure.

Bolsonaro further underlined that he did not think that most Arab states would take retaliatory measures against Brasilia, noting, however, that "more radical" Arab nations

"might adopt some sort of sanction — I hope only economic ones — against us."

He did not elaborate in his pointed remarks which Arab states he was referring to as "more radical."

Bolsonaro had backtracked on the embassy move soon after declaring in early November that he intended to go through with it.

In an apparent response to fears of the farming businesses in the agriculturally-rich country that an embassy move may threaten their \$1 billion in meat exports to Arab markets, the newly-elected leader rowed back his pledge within days, insisting: "it is not yet decided."

Bolsonaro's decision on the embassy move is highly controversial since the Israeli regime claims all of occupied al-Quds as its capital while Palestinians view the eastern part of the holy city as the capital of a future state.

Most countries across the globe hold that the status of al-Quds should only be determined through negotiations, which have long stalled by Tel Aviv's continued violations of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions against further expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

So far, only the U.S. and its client Central American state of Guatemala have opened embassies in occupied al-Quds. While Paraguay has backtracked on a similar decision, Washington and Tel Aviv are reportedly pressuring the U.S.-backed government of Honduras to move its Israeli embassy to al-Quds as well.

In yet another controversial move, Bolsonaro also announced his readiness to discuss the possibility of hosting a U.S. military base in Brazil, pointing to a major shift in the foreign policy of Latin America's largest and most populous country.

The 63-year-old former Army captain represents a sharp break with Brazil's recent record of left of center policies, veering his nation sharply to the right and towards the Trump administration in the U.S.

During the Thursday interview he also expressed concerns about growing Russian support for what he referred to as the Venezuelan "dictatorship" led by President Nicolas Maduro, who remains a target of Washington's so-called regime-change foreign policy.

(Source: agencies)

Talks to resume after Trump says shutdown could last 'years'



The White House officials and congressional staffers will continue negotiations on Saturday over the government shutdown, even after the United States President Donald Trump declared he could keep it going for "months or even years".

Trump met on Friday with congressional leaders from both parties as the shutdown hit the two-week mark amid an impasse over his demand for billions of dollars for a border wall with Mexico. Democrats emerged from the meeting, which both sides said was contentious at times, to report little if any progress.

Trump has designated Vice President Mike Pence, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, and adviser Jared Kushner to work with a congressional delegation at a meeting set for 11am (16:00 GMT) on Saturday.

Trump is framing the upcoming weekend talks as progress, while Democrats are emphasizing families unable to pay bills.

"I hope it doesn't go on even before a few more days," Trump said on Friday, referring to the shutdown. "It really could open very quickly. We had a very, very productive meeting, and we've come a long way."

Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi described Friday's meeting as "lengthy and sometimes contentious".

Key parts of the U.S. government shut down on December 22 after Trump refused to back down on his request for more than five billion dollars in funding for a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, which the Democrats oppose.

The standoff has prompted economic jitters and anxiety among some in Trump's own party.

"We won't be opening until it's solved," Trump said. "I don't call it a shutdown. I call it doing what you have to do for the benefit and the safety of our country."

The U.S. president reportedly said he preferred to call the action a "strike".

Trump said he could declare a national emergency to build the wall without congressional approval, but would first try a "negotiated process". Trump previously described the situation at the border as a "national emergency" before he dispatched active-duty troops in what critics described as a pre-election stunt.

Trump also said the hundreds of thousands of federal workers who are furloughed or working without pay would want him to "keep going" and fight for border security. Asked how people would manage without a financial safety net, he declared, "The safety net is going to be having a strong border because we're going to be safe."

Security officers at the U.S. airports have reportedly been calling in sick in droves since the shutdown began and their pay cheques stopped rolling in.

Democrats call on Trump to reopen the government while negotiations continue. Senate Democratic Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said, "It's very hard to see how progress will be made unless they open up the government."

House Democrats muscled through legislation on Thursday night to fund the government but not Trump's proposed wall. However, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has said those measures are non-starters on his side of the Capitol without the president's support.

A variety of strategies are being floated inside and outside the White House, among them trading wall funding for a deal on immigrants brought to the country as young people and now here illegally, or using a national emergency declaration to build the wall.

While Trump made clear during his press conference that talks on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program would have to wait and he was trying to negotiate with Congress on the wall, the conversations underscored rising Republican anxiety about just how to exit the impasse.

But with staff level talks, there is always an open question of whether Trump's aides are fully empowered to negotiate for the president. Earlier this week, he rejected his own administration's offer to accept \$2.5bn for the wall. That proposal was made when Pence and other top officials met Schumer at the start of the shutdown.

Trump was joined by Pence in the Rose Garden, as well as House Republican leaders Kevin McCarthy and Steve Scalise. McConnell, who went back to the Capitol unaware of the press conference, said it was encouraging that White House officials and the congressional contingent would meet over the weekend "to see if they can reach an agreement and then punt it back to us for final sign off".

Schumer said if McConnell and Senate Republicans stay on the sidelines, "Trump can keep the government shut down for a long time."

"The president needs an intervention," Schumer said. "And Senate Republicans are just the right ones to intervene."

Adding to national unease about the shutdown are economic jitters as analysts warn of the risks of closures that are disrupting government operations across multiple departments and agencies at a time of other uncertainties in the stock market and foreign trade.

■ **Trump: Shutdown could last 'months or even years' if border wall not funded**

Meantime, Trump says he is willing to keep the government closed for a year or more unless Democrats agree to fund his border wall with Mexico.

Trump confirmed on Friday he had made the threat during a meeting with Democratic leaders, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer, earlier in the day.

"Absolutely I said that," Trump boasted to reporters, adding, "I don't think it will. But I am prepared."

"It's very important that we have great border security," he continued. "It will be over with sooner than people think. I will do whatever we have to do."

The president said the nearly 800,000 federal workers who are affected by the government shutdown were also supporting him, despite the fact that many of them were forced to work without pay or go on unpaid leave.

(Source: agencies)

Muslim congresswoman vows to fight Trump's 'destructive' policy

Elsewhere, the first hijab-wearing Muslim congresswoman has vowed to fight efforts by the administration of Trump to divide the American public.

Ihlan Omar, a Democratic member of the U.S. House of Representatives from the state of Minnesota, was sworn in on the Holy Quran on Thursday.

"I plan to resist the current Administration's attempts to divide us and push destructive policies that chip away at our rights and freedoms," Omar said in a statement. "We have the opportunity to build a more inclusive and compassionate culture, one that will allow our economy to flourish and encourage more Americans to participate in our democracy."

The newly-elected representative was allowed to wear a religious head covering on the House floor after the easing of a 181-year ban on headwear of any type in the chamber.

Omar, 37, who emigrated as a refugee from Somalia at the age of 14, outperformed her rivals in the U.S. midterm elections after campaigning on a platform promoting legal



immigration, criminal justice reform and more accessible healthcare.

Along with Omar, a second Muslim woman — Rashida

Tlaib — was also sworn in on Thursday.

Tlaib, a Democrat and a social worker born in Detroit to Palestinian immigrant parents, was elected to the House in a district where she was running unopposed.

The two Muslim women are known as polar opposites of Trump and his Republican Party's policies.

The U.S. House of Representatives, chaired by Speaker Nancy Pelosi, is currently engaged in a long-running dispute with Trump over the passage of a controversial bill regarding the funding of a U.S.-Mexico border wall.

The standoff over the issue has led to a partial government shutdown, forcing around 800,000 federal workers to work without pay or expecting to be furloughed.

Trump made the wall a key election campaign promise in 2016, saying Mexico would pay for it and claiming it is needed to combat illegal immigration and drug trafficking. Democrats have time and again called a border wall immoral, ineffective and medieval.

(Source: Press TV)

Yemeni troops hit Saudi bases in retaliation for air raids

Yemen's army, backed by Ansarullah (Houthi) movement forces, has launched fresh retaliatory attacks against the House of Saud regime forces inside the kingdom, leaving an unspecified number of them killed or injured.

Troops fired ballistic missiles and artillery shells at Saudi mercenaries in the Najran region, Yemen's al-Masirah television network reported.

The al-Hammad and Akefah military bases were hit by the projectiles, including a Zalzal-1 rocket, with more missiles fired at the gathering of Saudi mercenaries in the

nearby Jizan region, it said.

Yemen's tribal forces in the southern province of Shabwa carried out their own retaliatory attacks against the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi regime mercenaries, killing at least 10 fighters.

The retaliation reportedly came after helicopters flown by the United Arab Emirates attacked the impoverished country's southwest, killing seven civilians.

The House of Saud regime has enlisted the UAE as its closest ally in the invasion which began in March 2015 to restore a former gov-

ernment after it resigned and fled to Riyadh.

The war has claimed thousands since its onset and placed Yemen very close to the edge of famine.

Last year, the Saudi regime-backed former officials and Yemen's popular Ansarullah movement hammered out a ceasefire agreement in Sweden.

The deal has mandated a truce in Yemen's western al-Hudaydah Province, whose main port receives the majority of vital aid sent for the country.

(Source: Press TV)



Police make arrests in London's pro-Brexit yellow-vest protest

Four people, including a 13-year-old girl, have been arrested during a demonstration to support Britain's withdrawal from the European Union (EU) as protesters donned yellow vests to copy-cat a highly popular movement in France.

The Evening Standard newspaper said police had used force to contain more than 100 people who were trying to approach the British parliament compound in Westminster, near London's Trafalgar Square.

Police said the demonstrators had caused disruption by setting off smoke bombs on the streets, saying those arrested would be charged with assaulting police and committing public

order offences. "Four arrests have been made following protests on Westminster Bridge, SW1 at approximately 11am today," said the Metropolitan Police, adding that the 13-year-old girl had attempted to attack police officers at the scene of the protest.

Pictures released online showed protesters wearing yellow vest outfits similar to those worn in France over the past weeks during protests against social injustice and poverty.

The British protesters, who were angry at a current political deadlock in the parliament over Brexit, sit down in the road to stop traffic while others let off smoke bombs,

again in tandem with the French yellow vest movement.

Police have been tough on any form of social activism in London and other large cities across Britain as the country prepares to leave the EU in March. Many expect chaos would erupt on the streets if the governments fail to secure its divorce deal with the EU in the parliament in the coming weeks.

There is a special threat of rioting by far-right, anti-immigrant groups after a no-deal Brexit as the government warns those groups would do their best to use the political situation to their benefit.

(Source: agencies)

on December 29 and had moved him to Florida.

The indictment accuses Makarenko, reportedly from the Russian Far East city of Vladivostok, and his associate Vladimir Nevidomy, a resident of Florida and owner

of Florida-based Primex Group Inc., of purportedly trying to move grade equipment, such as night-vision rifle scopes and ammunition primers, to Russia between April and November 2013.

(Source: Press TV)

Moscow says "FBI personnel" have detained a Russian citizen, describing the arrest of Russian nationals as part of a "hunt on our citizens" around the world, one week after Russian security agents arrested an American marine on suspi-

cion of spying.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Saturday that American authorities had detained Dmitry Makarenko in the Northern Mariana Islands, a U.S. commonwealth in the Pacific Ocean,

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	161107.4
IFX	1871.58

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	48,774 rials
GBP	53,434 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: iribnews.ir

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$47.96/b
Brent	\$57.06/b
OPEC Basket	\$52.95/b
Gold	\$1,286.89 /oz
Silver	\$15.74/oz
Platinum	\$827.20/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



NIDC's new projects to go operational soon: director

ENERGY

TEHRAN — Managing director of the National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) said some of the company's new projects are going to go operational in near future, Shana reported on Saturday.

According to Abdollah Mousavi, NIDC has drawn its roadmap based on active participation in domestic tenders for development of oilfields, especially in projects related to joint fields including the West Karun fields.

NIDC, a subsidiary of National Iranian Oil Company, undertakes most drilling operations across the country and drilled 4,489 onshore and offshore oil and gas wells in nearly 40 years.



Index performance of IFB at 71%

ECONOMY

TEHRAN — The performance of IFX, the main index of Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), has hit 71 percent since the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2018), Tasnim news agency reported on Saturday.

As reported, the weekly index performance of the IFB market stood at 2.1 percent in the past Iranian week ended on Friday. IFX stood at 1,875 points in the past week.

'More potential buyers for Iran's oil despite U.S. sanctions'

1 → The United States withdrew from a nuclear deal with Iran last year and snapped sanctions in place to choke Iran's oil and banking industries, while temporarily allowing eight customers to keep buying crude from the Islamic Republic.

Iran has urged European countries, which are still committed to the nuclear deal, to oppose the sanctions by creating a financial mechanism that facilitates payments of Iranian oil sales.

Zamaninia said the mechanism, known as SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle for trade), would be helpful but could not resolve the problems since U.S. influence will affect any European action.

China house price gains no longer a certainty: central bank adviser

A rising trend in property values in China is no longer a certainty as "unprecedented" state housing price controls come into effect, state media quoted a central bank adviser as saying on Saturday.

China's housing authorities have pledged to stabilize land and home prices in 2019 and ramp up the supply of rental housing to tackle home-affordability issues, state television reported in December.

The measures should be enough to ensure house prices as a whole will be stable over the next 10 to 15 years, the official China Securities Journal quoted Sheng Songcheng, a People's Bank of China (PBOC) adviser and dean of the research institute of China Chief Economist Forum, as saying.

Following a furious boom, China has gradually tightened regulatory controls over its massive property market from mid-2016. But home prices have continued to go up, even as economic growth slows, and managing risks in the sector remains a priority.

This round of control measures on the real estate sector is unprecedented, and the expectation that home prices will forever go up is now coming to a critical point, Sheng remarked at the 2019 annual meeting of the China Chief Economist Forum.

Sheng's comments come as some smaller cities ease property controls in a test of the central government's resolve as growth slows in the world's second-largest economy.

Sheng said stability or slight declines in China's housing prices was a good thing, and the government will steadfastly continue to impose regulatory curbs on the sector.

(Source: Reuters)

Petchem companies pump \$6b of exports revenues to NIMA

ECONOMY

TEHRAN — The secretary of Iran's Association of Petrochemical Industry Corporations (APIC) announced that from the beginning of the present Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2018) up to now petrochemical companies could manage to inject \$6.65 billion of their exports revenues to domestic economy, \$6 of which was pumped into the Forex Management Integrated System, locally known as NIMA in a bid to address the country's

foreign currency needs.

As Mohammad Abhari told IRNA on Saturday, Iranian petrochemical companies are estimated to earn \$12 billion of exports revenues in the current Iranian year 1397 (ending on March 20, 2019), of which \$8.1 billion has been gain by the present times.

NIMA, which seeks to boost transparency, create competitiveness among exchange shops and a secure environment for traders, is a new chance for importers to supply their required



foreign currency without specific problems and for exporters to re-inject their earned foreign currency to domestic forex market. Secondary foreign exchange market was



inaugurated in early July to allow exporters of non-oil commodities to sell their foreign currency earnings to importers of consumer products.

Major steel producers' output rises 18% in 8 months on year

ECONOMY

TEHRAN — Iran's major steel producers produced 16.64 million tons of crude steel during the eight-month period from March 21 to November 21, 2018, with 18 percent growth from the figure of the same period of time in the past year, IRNA reported on Saturday.

These producers produced 14.169 million tons of crude steel during the eight-month period of the previous year.

Also as reported by the World Steel Association (WSA) in November, production of crude steel in Iran stood at 20.59 million tons during the first ten months of 2018,



indicating 19 percent rise from 17.303 million tons in the same period of time in 2017.

"Iran produces 34 million tons of steel per year and is aimed at producing 55 million tons of the product by 2025," according to the previous industry minister, Mohammad Shariatmadari.

To hit the target, Iran is in need of attracting €8 billion of investments, he said in last July.

He also announced that the country exports 9 million tons of crude steel per year and plans to improve the figure up to 15 million tons by 2025.

Powell says Fed 'will be patient' with monetary policy as it watches how economy performs

Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell pledged that the central bank will be watching how the economy performs this year and will adjust policy should growth slow unexpectedly.

Financial markets have been in turmoil over the past several months, in part over concern whether the Fed was on an aggressive rate-hiking path. Powell himself has helped to fuel some of that speculation, and on Friday offered remarks to show that Fed policy will take into account economic conditions and be adjusted accordingly.

"As always, there is no preset path for policy," Powell said. "And particularly with muted inflation readings that we've seen coming in, we will be patient as we watch to see how the economy evolves."

Powell along with his immediate predecessors, Janet Yellen and Ben Bernanke, spoke Friday at the American Economic Association's annual meeting in Atlanta.

The policymaking Federal Open Market Committee raised its benchmark interest rate four times in 2018 and has indicated that two more increases this year are likely. However, markets believe differently, and in fact are pricing in about a 28 percent chance of a rate cut by the end of 2019 and no chance of an increase.

The Powell Fed has come under scrutiny from the markets and intense criticism from President Donald Trump, who believes the rate hikes pose the single biggest threat

to an otherwise thriving economy. Asked whether he would resign if pushed by the president, Powell said "no."

Comparison to 2016

Powell said the Fed has a history of adjusting its actions according to conditions. The Fed is "always prepared to shift the stance of policy and to shift it significantly" in order to achieve its dual mandate of full employment and stable prices.

He cited 2016 as a recent example. In that year, the FOMC had indicated four rate hikes were likely but ended up only approving one as financial conditions tightened particularly amid geopolitical concerns.

"No one knows whether this year will be like 2016," he said. "But what I do know is that we will be prepared to adjust policy quickly and flexibly and to use all of our tools to support the economy should that be appropriate to keep the expansion on track, to keep the labor market strong and to keep inflation near 2 percent."

Economic signals as of late have been mixed.

Less than two hours before the Fed panel began, the Labor Department reported that nonfarm payrolls grew by 312,000 in December, the best gain since February and well above Wall Street expectations. However, a key manufacturing report Thursday showed signs of a slowdown, and housing data has been disappointing as well.

(Source: CNBC)

Gold slides after solid jobs data; palladium crosses key \$1,300 mark

Gold prices fell on Friday, pulling back from a more than six-month peak hit earlier in the session, after stronger-than-expected U.S. jobs data, while palladium prices punched through the key \$1,300 level for the first time.

Spot gold slipped 0.78 percent to \$1,283.56 per ounce as of 2:00 p.m. ET, after dropping as much as 1.3 percent to \$1,276.40.

The metal was however on track for a third straight weekly gain, up about 0.2 percent so far, mainly helped by recent strong gains. It touched its highest level since mid-June at \$1,298.42 earlier in the day.

U.S. gold futures settled down \$9.00 to \$1,285.80 per ounce.

"Industrial commodities and currencies have rebounded therefore the precious metals which have been the safe haven such as gold, silver have retraced today," said David Meger, director of metals trading at High Ridge Futures.

"That is exacerbated by a stronger-than-expected payrolls data."

Data showed U.S. employers hired the most workers in 10 months in December while boosting wages, pointing to sustained strength in the economy that could ease fears of a sharp slowdown in growth.

"Today's U.S. jobs report throws more uncertainty into the direction of Federal Reserve monetary policy, which had already been seen as murky," Jim Wyckoff, senior analyst at Kitco Metals, wrote in a note.

Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell on Friday moved to mollify financial markets concerned about a U.S. economic slowdown, saying that while momentum is solid, the U.S. central bank will be sensitive to the downside risks the market is pricing in.

"Mr. Powell said he is open to a potential view change but so long as the data stays strong in the U.S. we will continue to project hikes in the interest rates in the U.S. by the central bank," said Bart Melek, head of commodity strategies at TD Securities.

Gold is highly sensitive to rising interest rates, as these increase the opportunity cost of holding non-yielding bullion.

Also pressuring bullion was a rebound in world stock markets, which rallied on hopes of upcoming trade talks between United States and China.

"In the near term we are probably still headed a little lower. Around \$1,280-\$1,290 is probably where we are going to be based," Melek said.

Elsewhere, palladium prices surged 2.18 percent to \$1,291.56 per ounce, having hit a record high of \$1,310 earlier.

"Palladium has broken out to the upside on tight supply, increasing demand, a weaker dollar," said Phil Streible, senior commodities strategist at RJO Futures in Chicago.

Platinum jumped 2.77 percent to \$820.40, after touching \$820.30 an ounce, its highest price since Nov. 30.

(Source: Reuters)

Turkey's central bank moves early to boost treasury buffer

Turkey's central bank scheduled an extraordinary board meeting for earlier than usual to share its profit, a move likely designed to shore up the Treasury's cash reserves.

The nation's fiscal authority -- which holds a majority stake in the central bank and collects profits in the form of taxes and dividends -- raised about 10 percent less than targeted in lira funding last year as it sought to keep a lid on borrowing costs before local elections in March.

While the central bank's board typically convenes each April, this year's first meeting

is planned for Jan. 18 and will discuss an advance payment from its 2018 profit, according to the agenda. The Treasury faces its biggest monthly financing needs since 2011 in February, and an earlier-than-expected cash injection would allow it to continue to curb bond supply and shore up the battered market.

"The idea seems to be to avoid borrowing larger amounts from the market ahead of elections," said Inan Demir, an economist at Nomura Plc. in London.

Bonds gained after the announcement, pushing the yield on two-year government

debt down 25 basis points to 19.6 percent, the lowest since July. Yields have dropped more than 850 basis points from a high in August. The Treasury has penciled in 21.8 billion liras (\$4 billion) of borrowing in February, the most since January 2011.

Income from the regulator has boosted Turkey's budget in the last few years and provided crucial revenue for authorities as they tried to maintain fiscal discipline. Earlier this year, the central bank sent more than 70 percent of its 2017 profit of around 21.5 billion liras to the Treasury, according to its most recent annual report.

The Turkish central bank is a joint stock company where the Treasury holds more than 55 percent of all the shares. But a legal cap on dividends has limited significant payouts to the estimated 6,300 shareholders. Unlike Switzerland and a few other countries where the central bank is publicly traded, Turkey has no market for these stocks.

The invitation didn't specify who called for the central bank's extraordinary meeting, but management is required by law to convene the board if requested to do so by the majority of shareholders.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Samsung, Huawei supply majority of own modem chips, Qualcomm says

The two largest smart phone makers in the world supply a majority of their own modem chips to help their devices connect to wireless data networks, according to evidence presented at an antitrust trial for chip supplier Qualcomm Inc (QCOM.O).

A trial between the U.S. Federal Trade Commission and Qualcomm kicked off in a federal courtroom in California on Friday, with the regulators arguing that Qualcomm engaged in anticompetitive patent licensing practices to preserve a monopoly on modem chips. The case is being closely watched because it may shed light on the likely eventual outcome of the global legal battle between Apple Inc (AAPL.O) and Qualcomm.

Apple has alleged that Qualcomm engaged in illegal business practices, and Qualcomm in turn has alleged Apple violated its patents, scoring victories in China and Germany last month.

Qualcomm has argued its licensing practices follow long-established industry norms and that it charges broadly the same licensing rates that it had for many years before it ever started selling chips.

That has become a big market for Qualcomm, which controlled 59.6 percent of the \$15.3 billion market for 4G modem chips in 2017, according to IDC's Phil Solis, who studies mobile chips for the research firm.

But Bob Van Nest, an attorney representing Qualcomm in



the case, also sought to show that Qualcomm is not dominant in the world's two biggest handset makers.

During opening arguments, Van Nest's presentation said that Huawei [HWT.UL] internally sources 54 percent of the modem chips it puts in its devices and gets only 22 percent of its modems from Qualcomm, with the remainder coming from other unnamed makers. Samsung (005930.KS) internally sources 52 percent of the modem chips it uses, with 38 percent from Qualcomm and the rest from other makers, according to the presentation.

Huawei and Samsung did not immediately respond to

a request for comment. Also, the FTC's case centers not on the overall modem chip market - which includes slower chips that go into cheaper handsets - but rather the market for speedy "premium" chips where Qualcomm is among the only options.

Huawei and Samsung are both large diversified technology corporations that make many other products aside from premium-priced smart phones. Huawei's HiSilicon unit supplies the chips for its high-end phones such as its Mate and P series. Samsung's chip division supplies processors and other components for many of its handsets and is also a dominant global supplier of memory chips beyond its own products.

The two firms are also Apple's fiercest rivals in the market for premium smart phones costing \$700 or more. Apple depends entirely on Intel Corp (INTC.O) and Qualcomm for modem chips, though the iPhones released in 2018 use Intel modems exclusively.

Technology news publication The Information last month reported here that Apple was designing its own modem chip, citing Apple job listings and a source briefed on Apple's plans. Apple declined to comment on its plans.

For the second quarter of 2018 - the most recent figures available from IDC - Apple was the third-largest smart phone supplier by volume, with Samsung and Huawei in first and second place, respectively.

(Source: Reuters)

Trump credits his ‘talent’ for gas price drop, suggests OPEC monopoly

Donald Trump said OPEC “is essentially a monopoly,” even as he credited his own “talent” for having brought down oil prices.

“Four months ago, oil hit \$83 a barrel,” Trump told reporters in the Rose Garden after meeting with Congressional leaders to try and reach a deal on the partial government shutdown. Oil “was heading to \$100 and then it could have gone to \$125.”

Trump repeated his statement from earlier this week that his efforts made the difference in bringing down the oil price. “After I made some phone calls to OPEC and the OPEC nations -- which is essentially a monopoly -- all of a sudden, it started coming down,” he said. “Didn’t happen by luck, it happened through talent.”

Trump has previously tweeted that OPEC is a monopoly, including as recently as July and September. Legislation, formally called the “No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels Act” but known as NOPEC, has been repeatedly introduced in both houses of Congress in recent years that would allow



the U.S. Justice Department to file suit against the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. U.S. Assistant Attorney General Makan Delrahim told members of a House Judiciary subcommittee last month that the administration “continues to study” the legislation, which would amend the 129-year-old Sherman Antitrust Act.

OPEC is consulting with lawyers to prepare a strategy to defend against the legislation, people familiar with the matter said in July.

Recent claims by Trump that he’s pressured OPEC into allowing oil prices to fall reflects an overlooked shift in White House policy, according to Bob McNally, former energy adviser to President George W. Bush and president of consulting firm Rapidan Energy Group.

“Whereas until early November President Trump was mainly interested in preventing oil price spikes, afterward his goal shifted to delivering a meaningfully lower oil price,” McNally said in an email.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Iraq vows to stick with OPEC production cuts



Iraq vowed on Thursday to adhere to the production cuts agreed to by OPEC and its allies that went into effect at the start of the year.

OPEC’s number-two oil producer will hold its production at 4.513 million barrels per day for the next six months, according to the Iraqi Oil Ministry, as cited by S&P Global Platts. If achieved, Iraq would produce 140,000 fewer barrels per day for the next six months than it did in October 2018—the date from which the cuts were calculated.

The news comes after Kpler and Refinitive Eikon data on Thursday showed that Iraq increased its oil exports to the United States in December by 140,000 barrels per day.

Iraq’s commitment to the latest deal is critical to the cartel’s success, and not just because it is OPEC’s second largest producer. In the first round of production cuts, Iraq was the largest overproducer and least compliant member of the group. Iraq’s oil production increased through

much of 2018, but has experienced slowing domestic demand in Iraq during H1 2018, according to OPEC.

Iraq produced an average of 4.392 million bpd in 2016 prior to the production cuts, and despite being part of the production cuts, Iraq managed to produce an average of 4.446 million bpd in 2017, according to OPEC’s MMOR. It’s production quota during the previous round of cuts was 4.351 million bpd. In 2018, Iraq’s production came in at 4.441 million bpd in Q1, 4.480 in Q2, and 4.631 in Q3—the highest volume in years and the benchmark used to calculate the new production volume.

Iraq’s compliance came in somewhere around 60 percent, according to S&P Global Platts. Even if Iraq is unable to reign in production this time around too, its vocal support from the deal can’t hurt today’s volatile oil market as traders eagerly await any fresh news regarding global oil production outlooks.

(Source: oilprice.com)

China to crack down on diesel trucks, raise fuel standards



China will take action against highly-polluting diesel trucks by imposing tougher fuel and engine standards, raising rail freight volumes and strengthening its monitoring capabilities, new guidelines published by the environment ministry said.

The Ministry of Ecology and Environment said in a policy document on Friday it would aim to “significantly increase” the number of diesel trucks capable of meeting emission standards by 2020, targeting a compliance rate of at least 90 percent by next year.

It also promised to improve the quality of diesel, crack down on low-grade fuel and reduce overall nitrogen oxide and particulate matter emissions from fuel combustion.

New trucks that fail to comply with state requirements will not be allowed to enter the market, and key regions will also be ordered to implement advanced “China VI” fuel standards starting in July this year, the document said.

China is in the fifth year of a “war on pollution” but average emission levels in many smog-prone northern cities remain signifi-

cantly higher than the levels recommended by the government.

The northern regions near the capital Beijing will eliminate more than 1 million outdated diesel-fueled trucks by the end of 2020. Tougher controls on diesel freight will also be imposed during smog build-ups, it said.

National rail freight rates would be increased by 30 percent compared with 2017, and China will work to ensure that long-distance bulk commodity deliveries are done via rail or ships, it said.

Tackling truck emissions has become a major part of China’s efforts to curb pollution. Though trucks produce 13 times more pollution per unit of cargo than trains, the share of rail in total freight amounted to just 7.7 percent in 2017.

The environment ministry said last year that while diesel trucks accounted for just 7.8 percent of China’s total vehicles, they contributed as much as 57.3 percent of total nitrogen dioxide emissions and more than three quarters of airborne particulate matter.

(Source: Reuters)

S&P Global Ratings slashes Brent oil view to \$55/b in 2019

S&P Global Ratings has slashed its average crude oil price assumptions by \$10 a barrel for 2019 in response to a worsening picture for global demand.

The institution said Thursday it has lowered its view for Brent crude to \$55/b, from \$65/b and WTI cut to \$50/b, from \$60/b for the year ahead.

The change in assumptions come after Brent plunged from a peak of \$86 a barrel in early October to briefly trade below \$50 a barrel at the end of December. Jitters have surfaced across the oil market over global demand growth and rising global inventory levels.

“The on-going trade war between the

U.S. and China as well as news of China’s economic slowdown, has led to concerns about the outlook for global demand,” S&P Global Ratings said in a statement with its new price assumptions.

Moreover OPEC, particularly Saudi Arabia and Russia, were producing at record levels to offset what was expected to be a meaningful reduction in global supply due to the Iranian economic sanctions,” it added.

The sanctions on Iranian oil imports fell short of expectations on November 2, as the U.S. granted waivers to eight producers for six months which included pivotal buyers China and India. That wrong-footed OPEC with Saudi Arabia and Russia both pumping

more than 11 million b/d at that time in a bid to offset the risk of lost Iranian barrels and left the market awash with crude.

The rating agency noted that the OPEC announcement “did little to stem the decline in oil prices as concerns about global demand and whether OPEC would honor the production cuts, continued to put pressure on prices” but said “the production cuts at a minimum, will offset the anticipated growth in 2019 from U.S. shale production.”

Much of the U.S. shale production will come from the Permian Basin, which is constrained by a lack of pipeline capacity. S&P Global Ratings argues that “production from the region has bumped right up against the

3.4 million bpd of regional take out capacity.”

However, S&P Global Platts expects an additional 2.6 million bpd of pipeline capacity will come on line in 2019 and in early 2020, so the clock is ticking on OPEC’s efforts to rebalance the market.

Analysts have been scrambling to revise their forecasts amid a rising tide of uncertainty over the economy, Iran sanction waiver extensions, U.S. shale output and OPEC cuts.

S&P Global Ratings’ competitor Moody’s has also recently noted concerns about the oil market. The agency has set a \$50-70/b range for WTI in the medium term, according to a press release issued Thursday.

(Source: Platts)

U.S. oil drillers cut rigs for first week in three: Baker Hughes

U.S. energy firms cut oil rigs for the first time in three weeks as producers started to reduce their 2019 drilling plans with the collapse in crude prices at the end of last year.

Drillers cut eight oil rigs in the week to Jan. 4, bringing the total count down to 877, General Electric Co’s Baker Hughes energy services firm said in its closely followed report on Friday.

The U.S. rig count, an early indicator of future output, is still much higher than a year ago when 742 rigs were active after energy companies boosted spending in 2018 to capture higher prices that year.

Some analysts, however, were forecasting the first decline in the rig count in three years in 2019 after drillers added 138 oil rigs in 2018 and 222 in 2017. They cut 11 rigs in 2016.

U.S. shale producers have slammed the brakes on 2019’s drilling with crude prices off 40 percent and mounting fears of oversupply, paring budgets that in some cases were set only weeks earlier.

U.S. crude oil output hit an all-time high of more than 11.5 million barrels per day in October, according to monthly government data released this week.

U.S. oil production broke its 1970 record of 10 million bpd in November 2017, and has set monthly record highs for five straight months since June. The United States has



become the world’s leading crude producer, surpassing Russia and Saudi Arabia.

U.S. crude futures were trading around \$48 a barrel on Friday, putting the front-month on track to gain 5 percent this week on proposed trade talks between the United States and China eased some fears about a global economic slowdown.

Looking ahead, crude futures were trading around \$50 a barrel for the balance of 2019 and \$52 for calendar 2020. Spot

crude prices at the U.S. West Texas Intermediate benchmark averaged \$65.23 in 2018.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration projected spot WTI prices would average \$54.19 a barrel in 2019.

U.S. financial services firm Cowen & Co this week said the exploration and production (E&P) companies it tracks have provided mixed guidance for 2019 after indicating they would spend about \$88.9 billion in 2018, a 23 percent increase over the \$72.2 billion they spent in 2017.

Cowen said the firms it tracks were so far only expecting to add 11 oil and gas rigs this year.

There were 1,075 oil and natural gas rigs active in the United States this week, according to Baker Hughes. Most rigs produce both oil and gas.

Analysts at Simmons & Co, energy specialists at U.S. investment bank Piper Jaffray, this week forecast the average combined oil and gas rig count will fall to 1,001 in 2019 before rising to 1,094 in 2020 - a significant decline from mid-December when they forecast 1,092 for 2019 and 1,227 for 2020.

In 2018, the combined rig count averaged 1,032, the most since 2014 when 1,862 rigs were active, according to Baker Hughes.

(Source: Reuters)

High output, not pipeline constraints hurt Canadian oil industry

Canada’s oil industry, most of which is housed in Alberta, has had a tough year, with the discount to WTI falling to record highs before Premier Alberta Notley mandated a production cut of over 300,000 barrels daily that went into effect this month. A new NEB report says the pipeline constraints are not the problem, contrary to popular belief.

Calgary, Alberta, yesterday reported a \$5 billion loss in commercial property in its downtown area, thanks to the province’s floundering oil industry that is drowning in the steep discount to WTI and insufficient pipeline capacity to take its oil across its borders.

Pipeline constraints in Canada, which has caused a backup of oil inventories in the country, is the main reason cited for the dramatic fall in Canadian oil prices. And now those low prices are snowballing into the commercial property sector. Cenovus Energy Inc. and Encana Corp. for one, saw their Calgary-based headquarters property lose almost 19% of its value in 2018.

The National Energy Board (NEB) said on Friday, however, that pipeline capacity constraints were not the only thing plaguing Canada’s oil industry. It instead shifted the blame onto increased oil production in the last couple of years, saying that if its oil producers weren’t producing so much oil—which came in at 4.3 million barrels per day in September—pipeline capacity at 3.95 million barrels per day would not have been an issue. The NEB also cited lower demand from US refineries—a significant market for Canadian oil producers—due to maintenance season. Western Canada’s largest customer in the US, BP’s Whiting Refinery in Chicago, went offline in September, exacerbating the discount of WCS to WTI, the NEB said.

Refinery maintenance season, however, is a routine occurrence experienced annually that was unlikely to come as a surprise.

Canada is the world’s fourth largest crude oil exporter, the NEB report said, exporting 3.3 million barrels per day.

WCS was trading at \$31.24 on Friday, while its WTI counterpart traded at \$48.09 per barrel.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Renewables beat coal in Germany power mix for first time

Renewable energy muscled out coal to become Germany’s biggest source of electricity for the first time last year, helped by a surge in solar panel installations and coal-plant closures.

Wind, solar, hydro and biomass produced just over 40 percent of Germany’s electricity in 2018, overtaking coal’s 39 percent share, according to the Fraunhofer Institute. An almost 20 percent increase in solar capacity, the shuttering of older coal plants and favorable weather conditions conspired to help green sources edge ahead.

The balance of electricity generation is watched closely by the government, which has seen its greenhouse emissions reductions goal for the end of the decade slip out of reach despite billions of euros in investment in renewables in recent years.

Green power is poised for an even bigger share in the future as Europe’s biggest economy is phasing out nuclear, as well as coal. A German commission has been set up to produce a phase-out plan for the world’s biggest power plant fuel. It will report findings next month.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Moving beyond fossil fuels: Spain to shutter all coal plants in 2019

Joining an increasing number of nations ending the heavily-polluting practice of fossil fuel extraction, Spain will shutter all of its remaining 26 coal mines in 2019, most of which are in the Asturias, Aragon and Castilla and Leon locales.

Over 2,000 workers will be affected by the closures, an employment number significantly lower than the 51,420 estimated coal mining industry workers in 1985.

Spanish coal is primarily sold to the nation’s own thermal power plants for electricity production, according to a report from Telesur.

Similar to other developed nations in Europe, the EU member has seen its coal extraction industry decline for some 30 years.

According to reports, two Spanish mining companies have stated their intention to continue extraction operations, despite Madrid law requiring the firms’ departure from Spain and the cash return of all financial and tax aid.

Although all Spanish coal mines will be closed, the mineral will continue to be imported from Russia and Columbia—among other sources—and burned to produce electricity for power grids until 2020, according to Telesurvt.net.

Madrid has decreed that in 2020 Spanish thermal power generation plants burning coal must cease operations, shuttering for good or switching to mandated sources, including solar and wind power.

(Source: Sputnik)

Venezuela oil exports slump to 28-year low

Venezuela, once Latin America’s largest oil exporter, ended 2018 with a whimper as overseas sales dropped to the lowest in nearly three decades.

Home to the world’s biggest crude reserves, the country exported 1.245 million barrels a day last year, the lowest since 1990, as production tumbles amid an economic and humanitarian crisis. Financial sanctions imposed by the U.S. have further tightened the screws on Venezuela’s ailing economy, while creditors have sought seize its assets including oil cargoes and its prized Citgo refineries in the U.S.

Falling exports compound the pain, as oil is the country’s main source of revenue and bankrolls the regime of president Nicolas Maduro. The OPEC member’s crude production fell by more than half in the past five years to a daily average of 1.346 million barrels this year, according to OPEC secondary source data.

The country is also bracing for more sanctions, as the Trump administration is said to mull new actions against Venezuela by Jan. 10, when Maduro’s current term expires. Maduro faced criticism back in May, when he was re-elected in a vote derided as a sham.

(Source: Bloomberg)

NEWS IN BRIEF



The national security advisers of India, Afghanistan hold talks

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Following the partial withdrawal of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, new alliances are taking shape between Afghanistan and its regional allies, paving way for new conversations.

Last week, Iran confirmed to have held 'discussions' with Taliban regarding 'post-occupation scenario' in Afghanistan, sparking a debate over complete U.S. withdrawal from the war-ravaged country.

India, an important regional player, has also started active involvement in Afghanistan, beyond development and reconstruction initiatives.

On Friday, a meeting took place between the national security advisers of India and Afghanistan, which focused on the evolving security scenario in Afghanistan and future engagement of India, according to sources.

Mohib, sources said, lauded India's role in reconstruction efforts in the war-ravaged country and briefed his Indian counterpart on the security situation and withdrawal of foreign forces.

Trump recently announced the withdrawal of 7,000 U.S. troops from Afghanistan, in an indication that the Americans had developed fatigue after 18 years of war that has proved futile exercise.



Turkey to host trilateral meet on Afghanistan

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** - Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan made his maiden visit to Turkey after coming to power and held wide-ranging talks with Turkish officials, including President Recep Erdogan.

The two sides, according to sources, pledged to increase cooperation in areas of mutual interest and coordinate efforts to bring peace to the region.

President Erdogan also announced that his country will host the leaders of Pakistan and Afghanistan as part of efforts to end the 17-year insurgency in Afghanistan.

Addressing a joint news conference with PM Khan on Friday, Erdogan said the trilateral meeting would take place in Istanbul after local elections in March.

Khan, who has shown more pro-activeness to end the Afghan quagmire than his predecessor, told reporters he hoped the meeting would bring "badly needed peace" to Afghanistan.

Last week, Taliban held talks with Iran in an effort to pave the ground for peace in the war-torn country. It was the first time Iran and Taliban both confirmed that the meeting took place.

U.S. officials have also been involved in 'negotiations' with the insurgent group although the talks have failed to produce a breakthrough.



Pakistan sends 'terror financing' report to FATF

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Pakistan has dispatched a Terror Financing Risk Assessment Report electronically to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in a bid to secure exit from the grey list of the Paris-based watchdog. The government has also appointed a 12-member team to explain the action plan it intends to follow to come into compliance with international obligations, according to a report in Dawn.

A senior government official was quoted in newspaper saying that the high-level delegation led by Secretary Finance Arif Ahmed Khan left for Sydney, Australia to attend a three-day meeting of the FATF.

It said a total of 4,643 suspected transactions relating to terror financing and money laundering had been identified and blocked since 2015, including 3,677 suspected transaction reports and 966 financial intelligence reports. A total of 1,167 transactions were captured during 2018 alone, including 975 STRs and 210 financial intelligence reports.

The report identified some key routes of the terror financing and money laundering, saying Pak-Afghan and Pak-Iran borders were two key routes of such flows.

Pakistan was put on the black list on FAFT last year for failing to curb activities related to terror financing and money laundering.



UN calls for probe into Bangladesh poll violence

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) has urged the Bangladesh authorities "to carry out prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigations" into alleged acts of violence and human rights violations related to last week's general elections.

Ravina Shamdasani, spokesperson for UNHCR, said in a statement on Friday that the authorities must carry out investigations to hold accountable those responsible, regardless of their political affiliations.

The UN body said they are concerned about violence and alleged human rights violations in Bangladesh before, during and after the recent elections on Dec 30.

"There are credible reports of fatalities and numerous injuries on polling day alone. There are worrying indications that reprisals have continued to take place, notably against the political opposition, including physical attacks and ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests, harassment, disappearances and filing of criminal cases," read the statement.

The main opposition Bangladesh National Party (BNP) led by Khaleda Zia slammed the election results as "farfetched", amid clashes between rival supporters that killed at least 17 people.

Waving of ISIS flag in Kashmir's biggest mosque sparks protest, condemnation

INTERNATIONAL d e s k

TEHRAN — Days after some masked men barged inside the biggest mosque in Indian-controlled-Kashmir and unfurled the flag of ISIS on the pulpit of the mosque, a protest was held on Friday across the valley.

A massive protest against the 'desecration' of Jamia Masjid saw participation of separatist leaders, civil society activists, religious clerics, representatives of trade bodies and students, who slammed the terrorist group's sympathizers in the region.

The incident took place last week when the masked men entered the mosque after Friday prayers and waved ISIS flags and chanted 'Dawlat-e-Islam' slogans. A video that was circulated widely over social media showed one of the men standing on the mosque pulpit with a black flag.

The incident drew widespread criticism from political leaders of all shades, besides civil society activists and trade leaders, who denounced it as a "sacrilegious act".

The biggest protest was held in Srinagar on Friday, led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Kashmir's chief priest and leader of Hurriyat Conference, a conglomerate of separatist parties. Farooq delivers Friday sermon at the mosque.

The protest was attended by representatives of both Shia and Sunni socio-political organizations.

"All of us need to stand up and defeat the elements that are trying to malign our struggle," Farooq said, referring to the December 28 incident at the 624-year old mosque.

Earlier on Wednesday, Farooq led a protest march to the mosque, joined by traders and civil society members, and cleaned the pulpit. "Not only has the incident saddened the people of Kashmir, but there is growing demand for isolating these elements (ISIS



supporters)," he said, addressing people.

"This is a vicious attempt to cause dissension among the Muslim fraternity in Kashmir. The people of Kashmir don't have any global agenda. Our indigenous struggle is for the right to self-determination," he stressed.

Following the incident, Farooq had met senior separatist leaders Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Yasin Malik to mobilize support against the elements behind the incident.

"The mosque is important from both the religious and political point of view. We discussed it and felt it was definitely a well thought attempt to divert our movement towards something which is totally alien and is globally condemned," he said, following the meetings.

Condemnations have been pouring in from all quarters. Kashmir Center for Social and Development Studies (KCSDS), a civil society forum, termed the incident as

a "deplorable act".

"This unfortunate act needs to be condemned by one and all. The Jamia mosque epitomizes peoples' identity, struggle and political aspirations. A sponsored group of miscreants tried to defame the indigenous Kashmir movement by linking it with global miscalled Islamic terrorist movement," chairperson of the forum Hameeda Nayeem said.

Kashmir Economic Alliance (KEA), an umbrella organization of different trade bodies in the region, also denounced the incident and supported Farooq's protest call.

"We can't afford to sit silent...there is a need to expose these miscreants who want to defame Kashmir," KEA chairman M. Yasin Khan said.

The black flags of ISIS have previously appeared at the funerals of slain militants, which have raised eyebrows in Kashmir's intelligentsia circles and reignited the debate over the presence of the global terrorist

organization in Kashmir.

While some see it as a worrying sign of extremism and radicalization among youth, some others dismiss it as a desperate attempt by a motley group of disenchanted youth to provoke India.

Unlike in Afghanistan, Iraq or Syria, Kashmir's freedom movement, which gained momentum in late 1980s, has remained largely indigenous, according to observers.

However, in recent times, global terrorist outfits like Al-Qaeda and ISIS have made desperate attempts to gain foothold in the troubled Himalayan valley, much to the consternation of local pro-freedom leaders, peace activists and common people.

Addressing media persons in Kashmir, region's police chief Dilbagh Singh ruled out the possibility of a large-scale presence of ISIS in Kashmir, though he said the ideology was "radicalizing youth" in Kashmir.

"A section of youth is being radicalized. Otherwise, the presence of ISIS is not that big in Kashmir," he said, adding desecration of the Masjid's pulpit was an "effort from ISIS elements to try and show their presence" in the valley.

Some Pakistan-based militant organizations also condemned the incident. Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) said there is no presence of "Daesh" (ISIS) in Kashmir. "This all is the handiwork of Indian agencies who cannot suppress the freedom movement of Kashmir through such tactics," a spokesperson of JeM Mohammad Hassan said in a statement.

United Jihad Council (UJC) also said there is no presence of Daesh (ISIS) in Jammu and Kashmir, and those waving ISIS flags in Jamia Masjid are "Indian agents," adding that the "black deeds" of ISIS in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Afghanistan are "known to everyone".

Stung by 'library' remark, India lists Afghan projects to "educate" Trump

1 → In an unofficial rebuttal, Modi government listed projects worth \$3 billion to "educate" Trump on the level of its investment, stakes and contribution in Afghanistan.

It pointed out the "critical role that developmental assistance can play in transforming human lives" and reminded the U.S. president that "India does not send its armed forces abroad except under the specific mandate of UN peacekeeping operations." A report in Times of India, quoting "official sources", said India objected to Trump's comments, stating that the libraries represent India's contribution to community development in Afghanistan, in addition to billions the country is spending on roads, dams and the country's new parliament building.

Indian embassy in Afghanistan stated that the current development partnership between New Delhi and Kabul makes India the war-torn country's largest donor in the region.

It was not clear which library Trump was referring to, but his remarks raised many eyebrows in India, across party lines. Both the ruling BJP and opposition Congress condemned Trump's attempt to "undermine India's developmental work" in Afghanistan.

"Maybe Trump should know that while he is decrying



every other help in Afghanistan. India has been building not only libraries, but roads, dams, schools and even parliament building," Ram Madhav, BJP general secretary and spokesperson, said.

"We are building lives, for which the Afghan people thank us, no matter what others do or don't," he added.

Eurasian strategic triangle and global peace



there are autonomous weapons and private armies at their disposal.

The 'Confession of Economic Hitman' by John Perkins, which was on New York Times' best-seller list in 2005, exposes the agenda of elite financial cabal and the true drivers behind globalization, corporate cronyism and also discusses the debt enslavement by World Bank and International monetary fund.

The corporatocracy transcends the national boundaries to subjugate governments in order to enhance their control over planets' resources and the U.S. is merely meant to support the agenda of these multinational

corporations.

According to John Perkins, the U.S. empire is a small part of the global corporate empire and from last 12 years, the U.S. itself has become the target of Vampire squid sucking the blood of American citizens through debt, underinvestment, enforced austerity and privatization.

Currently, 3% of the U.S population constitutes millionaires and astonishingly 40% of the U.S. congressmen and 78% US senators are millionaires. In 2004, 2008 and 2012 the U.S presidential campaigning expenditures were \$4.1 billion, \$5.3 billion and

\$6.3 billion respectively for a designation that pays \$400,000 a year.

The truth is simple that the presidential campaign is funded by corporations and later they use them as per their whim.

It is a trajectory to a mega conflict and beyond the explanation of Thucydides trap as in the past nothing has emerged more powerful than the governments. Whole countries can be destroyed by mega-corporations as obvious from 'Independent' article which noted that "Google planned to help Syrian rebels bring down Assad regime leaked Hilary Clinton emails claim."

Now the Eurasian strategic triangle of Iran, Russia, and China need to defend themselves and rest of the peaceful nations against any devastating war enforced by West on behalf of its private corporations.

So the need of the hour is to cut the head of the snake that is the monopoly and concentration of power with such organizations. Thus the model of state-owned defense industry of Iran, Russia, and China is a way to contain the influence of such corporations.

Currently, it may seem difficult to escape the predatory creditism based western economic model but the past revolutions like 'Islamic revolution of Iran presents hope for the world to propagate global peace and a sustainable economic model that will serve the humanity and save it from getting enslaved.

Writer is a Kashmir-based student and independent researcher.

U.S. deploys military troops to Gabon over Congo violence

U.S. President Donald Trump says the Pentagon has deployed 80 U.S. troops to Gabon to secure American citizens and the U.S. embassy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo after a presidential election there last week.

In a letter to Congress on Friday, Trump said the troops were deployed "in response to the possibility that violent demonstrations may occur" in the wake of the election in the Congo.

Trump's letter said the personnel arrived in Gabon on Wednesday and additional forces may be deployed "if necessary."

U.S. military personnel "will remain in the region until the security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo becomes such that their presence is no longer needed," the letter added. The Congo general election was mostly held in a peaceful atmosphere despite incidents of violence, according to a preliminary report by African election observers.

Congo's electoral commission is scheduled to release provisional results of the presidential election on Sunday. Congo's government says the election was fair and went

smoothly but the opposition says the election was marred by serious irregularities.

The international community has raised concerns that a disputed result could cause unrest, as was the case after the 2006 and 2011 elections.

The U.S. military has in recent years used the presence of Takfiri terrorists to build up its presence across Africa, where it reportedly has over 6,000 boots on the ground.

(Source: Press TV)

UK arms exports to Saudi Arabia

1 → He was answering a question on Italy's ongoing arms exports to Saudi Arabia in the light of its involvement in the conflict in Yemen and the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

"We are not in favor of the sale of these weapons and so now it is only a question of formalizing this position and acting accordingly," Conte told reporters at the prime minister's traditional end-year news conference.

Italy's foreign ministry announced last October that it will examine the option of stopping arms sales to Saudi Arabia following the killing of Khashoggi. Italian law 185/1990, which prohibits arms exports to countries engaged in armed conflict, ratified by the Italia Parliament.

Nearly a third of arms exports authorized by Britain over the past decade were to nations identified by the government as among the worst for human rights, new figures reveal.

Military arms deals worth an estimated £39bn were approved between 2008 and 2017, £12bn of which went to states included on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office human rights "priority countries" list, according to analysis by Action on Armed Violence.

The analysis of the figures, collated by the Campaign Against the Arms Trade using export control data from the Department for International Trade, shows a clear upward trend in arms sales approved to watchlist countries, although individual years vary. The data shows a record number of arms export licenses to nations on the watchlist in 2017, here were 855 military license approvals for Saudi, worth £1.3bn, compared



with 331, worth £680m, the previous year.

Britain is Saudi Arabia's second largest arms dealer after the U.S., providing military exports worth £10.3bn over the past decade despite continued condemnation of the kingdom's use of British weaponry in its bombing of Yemen. UN agencies allege that the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen has violated international humanitarian standards, including widespread and systematic attacks on civilian targets.

Britain has not confined military ties to

Saudi Arabia alone. Britain left the Persian Gulf waters in 1971. After leaving the Persian Gulf, Britain returned to the area for the first time in 2018 to expand its presence in the region through the construction of military bases in Bahrain and Oman. A significant increase in recent British activities is to strengthen its military presence in the Persian Gulf region and to strengthen military ties with Arab countries, in particular Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain.

The British are also seeking a military

presence in Kuwait, and after several months of talks between Kuwaiti and British officials, there are reports of an agreement between the two sides to establish a military base for Kuwaiti militaries training and it has also been announced that the talks continue.

The most important goals of Britain to strengthen its military presence in the Persian Gulf include Selling more weapons to the Arabs without regard to human rights concerns especially using them in Yemen war, gaining economic benefits after Britain withdraw from EU and trying to create a new regional order. Although this new regional order will not be suitable and efficient through foreign intervention.

Britain is seeking to trade and invest \$ 2 trillion in the Persian Gulf region in the next decade (2020-2030).

The European Union (EU) has created laws for selling arms to authoritarian and human rights violators. For example, Germany has been more cautious about selling weapons to Saudi Arabia. Thus, one of the objectives of the British withdrawal from the EU is that they want to get rid of the cumbersome laws that prevent them from selling arms to such authoritative regimes.

In any case, Britain's priority is to generate revenue from arms sells to countries that violate human rights, in particular Saudi Arabia. The House of Saud has blood on hands, with the murder of Khashoggi, invasion of Yemen for three years, and assassinations of opponents of the regime. However, all that has not been enough for Britain to stop selling arms to Saudi Arabia.

I do not think SPV covering wide areas of trade: Nephew



1 → A: I do think that there will be something called the SPV eventually created that facilitates trade between Europe and Iran, but I do not think it will be the same sort of SPV that was announced in September, covering wide areas of trade. I think that the sanctions implications of this are too severe for most banks and companies and, consequently, Europe will look to scope it to something more manageable, such as humanitarian trade.

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Bahram Ghasemi recently said that European countries were not able to implement the SPV because of US pressure. On the other hand, the failure to implement the SPV and the failure of the financial mechanism between Iran and the EU may lead to inappropriate results in relations between Iran and EU. In your opinion, if the financial mechanism of Iran and the EU fails, what will be the fate of the nuclear deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action)?

A: I continue to believe that Iran will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to continue implementing its provisions of the JCPOA while not receiving any economic relief. I think that the sanctions pressure that will build on Iran in 2019 -- likely combined with the failure of the SPV to do much beyond humanitarian trade -- will make Iran's leaders consider seriously withdrawing from or at least reducing their compliance with the JCPOA.

I think that this would be a very regrettable and dangerous decision, just as I believe the Trump Administration's decision to withdraw from the JCPOA was itself regrettable and dangerous.

Iran has also stated that it is not only focusing on a financial mechanism with the European Union. Tehran believes that, in addition to Europe, it will be able to continue to trade with other countries, including Russia, China and India. Will Iran's economic and financial cooperation with non-European countries meet the goals of Tehran in a nuclear deal (JCPOA)?

A: I strongly doubt it. The sorts of business that Iran does with India and China, and especially Russia, are not equivalent to what was being done and planned with Europe. I think that Iran's goals were much more robust and wide-ranging, including a variety of investment projects as well as trade. And, I think that it will be hard for anyone to substitute for Europe in Iran's eyes in this regard. That said, part of Iran's goal was also to address and resolve the nuclear issue once and for all.

Iran can still do that, if it remains compliant with the terms of the JCPOA notwithstanding this pressure. It may just be politically difficult for President Rouhani and the Iranian government more generally to justify doing so.

Who turned Syria into a land of 'Sand and Death'?

TEHRAN (FNA) — President Donald Trump couldn't be more accurate when he said on Wednesday, January 2, that Syria was lost a long time ago, and the US is getting out. He also said Syria doesn't have "vast wealth," only "sand and death".

Trump went on to say that he has not set any official timetable for the US withdrawal, and that the times being talked about elsewhere didn't come from him. This started weeks ago with talk of a 30 day drawdown, and has since been in the four month range.

Whether the four month figure came from the Pentagon or Trump, with an unnamed official saying it was the military "trying to please the President and not get everyone killed," is not important at all. The Pentagon might keep troops in Syria even longer if that's what they want. What's important to ask from Trump, however, is who did turn Syria, once a prosperous nation, into a land of 'sand and death' in the first place?

This is not an invention long after the fact:

- Trump cannot turn a blind eye to this problem. Before his presidency, he said the "world's biggest funder of terrorism" was Saudi Arabia - not Iran. In his 2015 book, 'Time to Get Tough,' which was published ahead of the presidential election, Trump wrote: "Then look at Saudi Arabia. It is the world's biggest funder of terrorism. Saudi Arabia funnels our petrodollars - our very own money - to fund the terrorists that seek to destroy our people, while the Saudis rely on us to protect them."

- To support this, Trump cited a 2010 article from the Independent, which reports on a secret memo written by the then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton. The memo, published by WikiLeaks, says Saudi donors "constitute the most significant source of funding to Sunni terrorist groups worldwide". Now, of course, Trump says the exact opposite and we all know why. Iran helped Syria to defeat the terrorist group of ISIL;



Iran is against the US-backed, Saudi-led war on Yemen; and Iran resists the expansionist policies of Washington, Tel Aviv and Riyadh (biggest US arms buyer) in the region.

- Despite the troop withdrawal rhetoric, the US has established its so-called zone of control in southern Syria (Tanf in Homs province), and has practically made the 55-kilometer area a safe haven for terrorists of the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, formerly known as the Nusra Front. According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, "Inside the al-Tanf zone, which the Americans unilaterally declared under their protection, terrorists are regularly reported to recover strength and attack Syrian army positions. This zone must be shut down immediately." Of course, the US is turning a blind eye to such attacks because it didn't send troops to Syria to fight its own terror proxies.


- The fact that the US has a long history of backing terrorist groups will surprise only those who watch the news and ignore history. The 2003 American invasion and occupation of Iraq created the pre-conditions for ISIL to take root. US occupation policy in Iraq exacerbated sectarian divisions and created

a fertile breeding ground for Sunni discontent, from which Al-Qaeda in Iraq (ISIL) took root. It was then that US foreign policy makers decided to arm their Qaeda-allied militants with links to ISIL to invade Syria, because Syrian government is a key Iranian ally. Together they then took large swathes of land in the Levant and turned Syria - and Iraq - into 'sand and death', all while destabilizing the entire planet.

- There is a reason why Trump is so jittery now. America lost Syria and America lost its bogus "War on Terror". In its Syria endgame, America never stops giving terrorists the motivation, the safe havens, and the resources to attack America's foes. Put simply, America's bogus War on Terror is terrorism; only, it is conducted in Syria on a much larger scale with jets and missiles and terror proxies on the ground.

Fortunately, Syria and its allies managed to defeat the foreign-backed terrorist groups. What Syria needs now is reconstruction, not Trump's jittery and certainly not his pessimism, which could only create yet another fertile breeding ground for public discontent, from which another terror group could easily take root.

Under international law and international humanitarian law, those who watched or turned Syria into a land of 'sand and death' have a responsibility to contribute to the reconstruction of Syria to allow millions of refugees to return home. There were 1 million refugees in Jordan, the same number in Lebanon, and 3 million in Turkey. To avoid a new humanitarian catastrophe and to prevent new flows of migrants, European governments must support the policy of Iran, Russia and Turkey for national reconciliation and reconstruction. They should never play along with war-party Washington's Syria endgame.



Second Announcement

Call for public tender (First/Second publish)

Two- Stages (semi compressed) tender

Subject of Tender: TUBING 3-1/2" & 4" & 5-1/2"

National Iranian Drilling Company

N.I.O.C
1397.5214

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Index No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3186870	48-22-9522018	181,689,000,000

Method

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

- The tenderers who have more than four (4) active contracts with NIDC are not allowed to attend in this tender.
- The tenderers who have more than two (2) active contracts with same subject (exactly compliance with this subject) with NIDC are not allowed to attend in this tender.

Purchasing & Submitting

Tender Document Distribution by Company	Distribution Place	Submitting Method	Documents Receiving Method
	A) Hall No: 316, 3th floor, Foreign Procurement Dept. (DRILLING PROJECTS), National Iranian Drilling Company, After Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: 06134146230 B) Jomhuri street , yaghma alley nio: 8th building floor no : 04 room no 428 -tehran -iran. 021-66700249	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of Iranian Rials under account number 400111400420491 (Shaba No. IRS 201000400111400420491) in name of "NIDC: Income Centralized Fund issued by I.R. Of Iran Central Bank". Submitting "format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents."	Closing date: 14 Days after the last time of Purchasing
	H) Hall NO.107, 1st floor, Tender committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98 61-34148580 +98 61-34148569		

Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	Type of guarantee	Duration of credit & quotation
5,134,000,000 Rial / 107,101 Euro	• V Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. • V Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IRS2010004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran. • "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.	Tender Guarantee & quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for onetime in initial validity duration.


(Name of department)
More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on:
www.nidc.ir http://sapp.ir/nidc_pr

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Amendment

Khuzestan Steel Company

IN THE NAME OF GOD

INVITATION TO INTERNATIONAL TENDER IN TWO STEPS

No.: 392583

KHOUZESTAN STEEL COMPANY INTENDS TO PURCHASE

500 MT ACTIVE BASIC THERMAL INSULATING POWDER

WITH THE FOLLOWING SPECIFICATIONS:

CHEMICAL ANALYSIS		
	SiO2	95 %
MgO	< 0.5 %	
Al2O3	< 1.0 %	
Na2O+K2O	2.0 %	
Fe2O3	< 0.5 %	
C	< 10 %	
PHYSICAL PROPERTIES	Appearance	Powder
	Bulk Density	0.25 gr/cm3
	Melting Point	1650 °C
	Humidity	< 1.0 %
	Grain Size	< 2.0 mm

INTRESTED BIDDERS MAY OBTAIN SET OF DOCUMENTS, CONTAINING THE RELEVANT TERMS AND CONDITIONS BY SUBMISSION OF A WRITTEN APPLICATION AND PAYMENT OF A NON-REFUNDABLE FEE OF:

EUR 50 "FIFTY EURO" TO THE ONE OF BELOW ACCOUNT No.:

- ACCOUNT No. **0100013543943** AT "EXPORT DEVELOPMENT BANK OF IRAN AHVAZ CENTRAL BRANCH"
- ACCOUNT No. **1902-750-4019644-1** AT "EGHTESAD NOVIN BANK- OF IRAN AHVAZ SHARIATI BRANCH" OR **Rials 2,000,000, "TWO MILLION RIALS"** TO THE ONE OF BELOW ACCOUNT No.:

- ACCOUNT No. **0102513186002** AT "MELLI BANK OF IRAN AHVAZ KSC BRANCH"
- ACCOUNT No. **0100304453001** AT "SADERAT BANK OF IRAN AHVAZ KSC BRANCH"

AND PRESENT THE PAYMENT RECEIPT TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:

CONSUMABLE MATERIAL PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
KHOUZESTAN STEEL COMPANY (KSC)
KM 10 AHVAZ – BANDAR IMAM KHOMEINI ROAD
P.O.BOX: 1378
POST CODE: 61397-31398
AHVAZ– IRAN

Note1: BIDDER SHALL SUBMIT WITH TENDER A BID BOND ISSUED BY AN IRANIAN BANK OR BY A EUROPEAN FIRST CLASS BANK , IN THE AMOUNT OF **1,653 Euro OR 160,000,000 Rial FOR 500 MT ACTIVE BASIC THERMAL INSULATING POWDER** AND MAY REDUSED IN PROPORTION WITH THE QUANTITY OF BIDDERS OFFER.

Note2: ALL BIDS MUST BE INFORMED US WHICH PARTICIPATE IN OUR TENDER UP TO **14th Jan., 2019**. WHEN YOUR COMPANY IS CONFIRMED AND THE TENDER DOCUMENT IS SENT TO YOU, YOU MUST BE DELIVERED TO THE AFORESAID ADDRESS ON OR BEFORE THE CLOSING DATE **27th Jan., 2019**. THE OPENING DATE OF ENVELOPES WILL BE AT 11 AM ON THE **29th Jan., 2019** IN THE BUYER'S CONFERENCE ROOM LOCATED AT THE HEAD OFFICE OF KSC AHVAZ-IRAN AND THE BIDDERS OR THEIR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES CAN ATTEND THE MEETING OF THE TENDER.

Note 3: FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT WITH FOLLOWING DETAILS:

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Fax No. : +98 61 32908115
Mr.M.FARZINEJAD EMAIL : m.farzinejad@ksc.ir OR VISIT: <http://WWW.KSC.IR>

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‘Iran’s nursing population far below world average’

HEALTH TEHRAN — The population of nursing personnel in Iran is one quarter of the world average, announced the deputy director of Iran’s Nursing Organization. Mohammad Sharifi Moghadam said the current nursing shortage is now at a critical point and should be quickly addressed, Fars news agency reported on Saturday.

“There is currently only one and half nursing personnel per 1000 population in the country, while in many countries including Georgia and Tajikistan there are around 6 nurses per 1000 population,” said Sharifi Moghadam.

World Health Organization has announced that about 50% of its member states report to have less than 3 nursing and midwifery personnel per 1000 population (about 25% report to have less than 1).

In many countries nurses and midwives constitute more than 50% of the national health workforce. Though globally, it is estimated that by 2030,



World Health Organization has announced that about 50% of its member states report to have less than 3 nursing and midwifery personnel per 1000 population (about 25% report to have less than 1).

the shortage of nurses and midwives will reduce from the current 9 million to 7.6 million, the shortage in the African and Eastern Mediterranean Regions will actually worsen.

According to Sharifi Moghadam, in many countries, nurses have proper safety equipment and undergo a complete series of medical tests, periodically, however, such safety measures are not being carried out properly in Iran, exerting too much pressure on nurses.

“We should identify and study the nurses’ problems and make changes in our management methods,” he concluded.

In an interview with IRNA on Saturday, Majlis (Iranian parliament) health committee chairman announced that as many as 10 to 15 thousand nurses must be hired in the country annually.

Heidar Ali Abedi added that Planning and Budget Organization has agreed to allocate the necessary budget so that the required nursing personnel can be hired in the next Iranian calendar year, starting March 21.

Iranian researchers achieve formula of anti-cancer drug

HEALTH TEHRAN — Iranian researchers at Urmia University gained the technical knowledge to produce the anti-cancer drug, Busulfan.

Busulfan, also known by its brand names Myleran or Busilvex, is a chemotherapy drug used before a stem cell transplant to treat blood cancers. It may also be used to treat other blood-related disorders and cancers.

“The drug is majorly supplied only by USA and France. Currently, it is imported into the country and is quite expensive and hard to get,” ISNA quoted the research director, Dr. Nader Norouzi, as saying on Friday.

According to Norouzi, the Health

Ministry had asked the universities and research centers to manufacture 160 vital medicines and Busulfan was one of them, which now can be produced locally and with high purity.

“We expect the Health Ministry to issue the necessary permits so that we can run the necessary laboratory and clinical tests for quality control of the drug and manufacture it in large quantities,” Norouzi added.

“Last year, the drug’s price was set at 6 million rials (about \$142) by State Welfare Organization but if we can manufacture it locally, its price will be lowered to around 2 million rials (about \$47),” he noted.

Effect of temperature on lifespan depends on genes

Recent research into aging has challenged the notion that colder temperatures can increase lifespan simply by slowing metabolic rate.

How much impact does a colder temperature really have on lifespan?

Instead, it has revealed that genes determine the extent to which low temperature can influence a person’s lifespan.

The research is the work of scientists at the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) in Woods Hole, MA, which is an affiliate of the University of Chicago in Illinois.

The MBL team is investigating factors that affect aging using tiny aquatic animals called rotifers.

They chose rotifers because the microscopic organisms offer several ad-

vantages over other biological models such as fruit flies.

One such advantage is that they have more genes in common with humans. Another is that their bodies are transparent, so it is easier to observe their biology.

In addition, while their bodies only contain around 1,000 cells, rotifers possess a nervous system complete with brain, muscle tissue, and systems for reproduction and digestion.

‘Free radical theory of aging’ For decades, the free radical theory has been the “most popular concept in the area of aging.” In fact, journals have published thousands of papers on it every year.

(Source: medical news today)

Some 900,000 cancer patients living in Iran

HEALTH TEHRAN — Currently, there is an estimated 900,000 cancer cases in Iran and 110,000 new cases are diagnosed each year, announced the head of the Iranian Pediatric Hematology and Oncology Society.

Gastric, breast, lung and brain cancers are the most common ones in the country, IRNA quoted Hassan Abolqasemi as saying on Tuesday.

“Annually, around 30 trillion rials (about \$700 million) is spent in the health sector for cancer treatment and half of these expenses go to provision of cancer medicines,” he further remarked.

“Prevention should be a priority in our plans for controlling cancer, as 30% of cancers are preventable by changing lifestyle,” said Abolqasemi.

“Government resources are not enough to target the current issues, unless the NGOs get involved. Moreover, we should improve our scientific base,” Abolqasemi added.

“The prevalence of cancer in the country is now below world average but it might increase in future, so all people should participate in fighting the disease,” said Abolqasemi.

According to World Health Organization (WHO), cancer is the second leading cause of death globally, and is responsible for an estimated 9.6 million deaths in 2018. Globally, about 1 in 6 deaths is due to cancer.

Approximately 70% of deaths from cancer occur in low- and middle-income countries.

Around one third of deaths from cancer are due to the five leading behavioral and dietary risks: high body mass index, low fruit and vegetable intake, lack of physical activity, tobacco use, and alcohol use.

■ At-home medical care to reduce costs

According to Abolqasemi, at-home medical care for cancer patients is a new approach that would not only reduce the patients’ expenses, but it also has a positive effect on their mental health.

“In Ala charity, in Isfahan, we have tried to apply this method by bringing the doctors to the patients’ house instead of taking them to the hospital, especially for patients that are at last stages of their disease,” said Abolqasemi, who runs Ala, a charity dedicated to treating cancer patients based in Tehran and Isfahan.

“The Health Ministry has recently asked the universities to start running the model of at-home medical care, but running such projects need the support of health sector and different NGOs and charities,” he said.

According to him, every single day of hospitalization of a cancer patient costs around 1 billion rials (about \$24,000) for both the health sector and the patient.



Hassan Abolqasemi, the head of the Iranian Pediatric Hematology and Oncology Society.

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11 new eco-lodges in Kordestan get operating licenses



TOURISM TEHRAN — Iran's tourism body has issued operating licenses for 11 eco-lodges, which are being constructed across the western Kordestan province.

"Operating licenses have recently been issued for 11 eco-lodges being constructed in Kordestan," a local official said on Saturday, ISNA reported.

The provincial tourism department welcomes those who are applying for the construction of eco-lodge units and it is ready to cooperate in this regard, the official explained.

Experts say each eco-lodge unit generates jobs for seven to eight people on the average so that the scheme could create 160,000 jobs.

Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization said in 2018 that 2,000 eco-lodges will be constructed across the country until 2021.

Having a very diverse natural setting, Iran offers varied excursions to nature lovers. Sightseers may live with a nomad or rural family or enjoy an independent stay.

Ancient spearhead found in central Iran



HERITAGE TEHRAN — A metal spearhead, believed to be handmade in ancient times, has recently been discovered in Yazd province, central Iran.

A number of prehistorical and ancient relics were found in Panj Angoshti near Abarkuh, in which the spearhead is very noticeable, provincial tourism chief Sasha Riahi said on Saturday, ISNA reported.

The official didn't provide further details on the newly found objects.



ROUND THE GLOBE

Pre-Hispanic town of Uxmal

The ruins of the ceremonial structures at Uxmal represent the pinnacle of late Maya art and architecture in their design, layout and ornamentation, and the complex of Uxmal and its three related towns of Kabah, Labn? and Sayil admirably demonstrate the social and economic structure of late Maya society.

A UNESCO World Heritage site, Uxmal was founded c. 700 CE and had some 25,000 inhabitants. The site features a bazaar layout of the buildings, which date from between 700 and 1000, reveals a knowledge of astronomy.



The Pyramid of the Soothsayer, as the Spaniards called it, dominates the ceremonial center, which has well-designed buildings decorated with a profusion of symbolic motifs and sculptures depicting Chaac, the god of rain. The ceremonial sites of Uxmal, Kabah, Labna and Sayil are considered the high points of Mayan art and architecture.

The main characteristic of Puuc architecture is the division of the facades of buildings into two horizontal elements. The lower of these is plain and composed of carefully dressed blocks broken only by doorways.

Some of the most important buildings at the site are the Pyramid of the Soothsayer, the Quadrangle of the Nuns, the Governor's Palace, the House of the Tortoises, the Ball Court, as well as the still not extensively investigated Southern Complex, which includes the Great Pyramid and the Pigeon House. (Source: UNESCO)

Qanats offer clues to ancient way of life in Iran

HERITAGE TEHRAN — For thousands of years, qanat systems have supplied water to agricultural and permanent settlements in arid regions of Iran, tapping alluvial aquifers at the heads of valleys and conducting the water along underground tunnels by gravity, often over many kilometers.

The concept of "Persian Qanat" was registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2016, representing a select of eleven aqueducts across Iran.

According to UNESCO. The qanats provide exceptional testimony to cultural traditions and civilizations in desert areas with an arid climate.

The qanat system relies on snow fed streams, which flow down the foothills of surrounding mountains channeling through sloping aqueducts, often over far distances to discharge into city's

underground reservoirs or ab-anbars.

Such constructions are still in practice, many of which were made from 13th century onwards. Yazd is among ancient cities which have applied this concept to make urban settlements possible in central Iran.

The earliest water supply constructions in Yazd is believed to date from the Sassanid era (224 to 651 CE) while many others have been continually repaired and used over time, most surviving ab-anbars can be today traced to the late Safavid and Qajar periods.

When it comes to landscape architecture, ab-anbars and wind towers play a pivotal role in enriching the Yazd skyline.

The oasis city of Yazd, which is a UNESCO World Heritage, is wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain ringed by mountains.



A water reservoir equipped with wind catchers on the top, Yazd, central Iran

U.S. arrivals in Iran up 27% in 7 months on year



TOURISM TEHRAN — A total of 1,665 U.S. nationals visited Iran during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2018), an increase of 27 percent year on year.

"1,665 Americans visited Iran during the first seven months of the year, up 27 percent in comparison to the same period a year earlier," said Vali Teymouri, a senior tourism official, ISNA reported.

"214 American travelers arrived in the country during Aban (the eighth Iranian month), which, if taken into account, puts the number [of those travelers] at 1,879."

"Through consultations [which are underway] with relevant authorities, visa issuance process is to be facilitated for American nationals," the official said.

Teymouri added that over five million travelers visited Iran during the first eight months of the year, showing 57 percent rise compared to the same period last year.

Hundreds of historical sites such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bath-houses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, mansions stand tall across Iran, of which 22 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Iranian crafters to exhibit skills in Milan



HERITAGE TEHRAN — Several Iranian crafters are to attend the 2019 edition of HOMI Milano international fair, which will be held in the Italian city from 25 to 28.

Craftspeople from various provinces of Tehran, Kerman, Khorasan Razavi, Hamedan, Isfahan, Khuzestan and Zanjan will attend the biannual event, CHTN reported.

This will be the second time that Iran will have a pavilion in the event and the pavilion will cover 36 square meters in area, the report added.

Traditional personal ornamentations,

kilim carpets, leatherwear, semi-precious stones, paintings on wood are amongst Iran's offerings for the event that is directed exclusively to trade visitors.

The Homi Milano is an international trade fair for interior design and upscale home decor.

The exhibition is divided into 10 areas: living habits, fragrances & personal care, gift & events, kid style, hobby & work, home wellness, fashion & jewels, garden & outdoor, home textiles, concept lab. The fair also discusses multi-cultural themes, solutions for experiencing and wellness in every nuance.

Reviving the glory of Mofakham Mansion and Garden is around corner

By Seyed Amin Saneey Mehri

The city of Bojnord or Bijan Yord as it was called in the past, has been established in 1689 by Tavali Khan II, an Amir from Shadloo tribe, and has experienced many ups and downs during its lifetime.

Mohammad Khan Shadloo is one of the most famous men from this city, who is also called Sardar Mofakham, who built a place (Mofakham Mansion) to live in along with his family in 1921. Mofakham Dar Al-Hokoomah (Governor's House) is made of many sections including the mirror house, the mansion, the pavilion, the hoz khaneh (pools house) and the façade, all of which are located in Mofakham Garden with an area of several hectares.

However, this historical treasure of Bojnord has been ablated during these long years and literary shrunk, so that in the last two decades the only remaining buildings of that glorious mansion are the mirror house and the mansion. It should also be noted that urban development has even separated these two buildings and Shariaati St. has cut through them.

In 1941, the heirs devoted the mansion and its court to a hospital built by Imam Reza Hospital authorities.

By the passage of each day, the glory of this mansion lost its color.

Finally, in 1991, ICHHTO took the responsibility of this building, restored it and exploited it as an anthropology



museum. These procedures, insuflated a new spirit to these buildings that were at the verge of being forgotten. After North Khorasan became an independent province in 2005 and an office of ICHHTO was established in Bojnord, the revival of the great garden of Sardar Mofakham flourished and between 2007 and 2013, the surrounding lands of the mirror house were bought by ICHHTO and a small part of the garden was revived.

Recently, the management of ICHHTO, in collaboration with the governor and urban managers, approved many useful bylaws to revive Mofakham great garden and they are going to discharge the hospital building and had it over to ICHHTO. ICHHTO, along with a number of high-ranking authorities, provincial managers and cultural heritage

enthusiasts, are going to demolish the adjoining buildings and revive the 6-hectare Mofakham garden. Shariaati St. is also going to serve as a contributor to the revival of this magnificent garden.

The revival of this complex can be a turning point for reviving history-making buildings in this province and a road map for other historic buildings to be revived.

Abdollah Qajar is a name that must be remembered, because it is through his photographs that we can access many information about these historic buildings. People like him have preserved the historical memory of Iranian nation for the future generations.

Nowadays, many cities are confronting identity crisis, because they have been exposed to many fundamental changes without any link to their past. In fact, identity is connected with the mental savings, and preserving historic buildings can help preserving these mental savings, which are in fact our identity.

Now, a historical opportunity is provided for Bojnord and if Mofakham garden can be revived, it can contribute significantly to the revival of the history and identity of Bojnord. In addition, this event can attract many tourists because Bojnord is located in the main road from north-west to north-east, especially those who are traveling to Mashhad and see Bojnord as a mere passageway. But after the revival, this city can be a tourist destination per se for those who are interested in historical monuments.

Can we build an airliner 5 times the size of a standard aircraft? Here is the answer

Many think that creating a huge aircraft is the best of engineering. But in reality, what matters most is to build a highly efficient and innovative design! When the Wright brothers created the first ever aircraft nearly a century ago, most humans never imagined that flying was possible. When the first of the airplanes were created, most of the focus went to their performance and safety. After establishing air travel as a secure and reliable way of transport, a lot of different aircrafts emerged whose capabilities went beyond many people's imaginations.

Passenger aircrafts saw innovation, both in terms of speed and size, thus appeared the supersonic jet Concorde and NASA's Super Guppy which are capable of carrying a payload of thousands of tons.

Such a business of an airline requires airliners to be more efficient and economic than to have super capabilities. The aircraft most commonly used by passenger airlines include the Airbus A320 family and Boeing 747.

The A320 family lies on the smaller side of passenger airliners that airlines most commonly use for their economic performance; their length is around 37.75 meters. However,



Airlander-10

the Boeing 747 lies on the larger side with a length of about 70 meters.

Whether or not we can make a plane 5 times as large as a standard airliner, depends on the type of aircraft you consider as a standard.

Considering the A320 craft to be standard, we have already created aircraft three times

their size. If by size, we take into account the payload capacity, we have managed to achieve much more than the planes in the past. The Boeing 737 has a maximum take off weight of nearly 190,000 pounds, and the Antonov-225 can easily take off with a payload of 7 times as much as the 737.

For a really long time, the Antonov-225 was the largest aircraft in the world when the Airlander 10 appeared to surpass the behemoth in size. Soon after, we saw the Stratolaunch, the aircraft with a wingspan of 117 meters that is three times as much as the complete length of the A320. The purpose of the Stratolaunch is to carry a spaceship to the stratosphere and launch it there with a payload capability of over 550,000 pounds.

The development of all of these massive airplanes proves that it is possible to create an airplane as large as possible. There could be passenger airliner big enough to fit 1,000 people, spread on the sides of six aisles. However, the major problem is not their development, but their economic viability and security. These crafts would require more security, more wheels, more brakes, and a much stronger landing gear. If an aerospace company were to develop such an airliner, no airlines would be willing to buy one for its massive costs.

Oh! Don't forget the problem to accommodate such massive aircrafts on the normal-sized airport runways all over the world. (Source: wonderfulengineering.com)

Pacific Ocean has a long memory, research team suggests

Cold waters that sank in polar regions hundreds of years ago during the Little Ice Age are still impacting deep Pacific Ocean temperature trends. While the deep Pacific temperature trends are small, they represent a large amount of energy in the Earth system.

The ocean has a long memory. When the water in today's deep Pacific Ocean last saw sunlight, Charlemagne was the Holy Roman Emperor, the Song Dynasty ruled China and Oxford University had just held its very first class. During that time, between the 9th and 12th centuries, the earth's climate was generally warmer before the cold of the Little Ice Age settled in around the 16th century.

Now ocean surface temperatures are back on the rise but the question is, do the deepest parts of the ocean know that?

Researchers from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) and Harvard University have found that the deep Pacific Ocean lags a few centuries behind in terms of temperature and is still adjusting to the entry into the Little Ice Age. Whereas most of the ocean is responding to modern warming, the deep Pacific may be cooling.

■ Coldest winters

"These waters are so old and haven't been near the surface in so long, they still 'remember' what was going on hundreds of years ago when Europe experienced some of its coldest winters in history," said Jake Gebbie, a physical oceanographer at WHOI and lead author of the study published Jan. 4, 2019, in the journal *Science*.



"Climate varies across all timescales," adds Peter Huybers, Professor of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Harvard University and co-author of the paper. "Some regional warming and

cooling patterns, like the Little Ice Age and the Medieval Warm Period, are well known. Our goal was to develop a model of how the interior properties of the ocean respond to

"If the surface ocean was generally cooling for the better part of the last millennium, those parts of the ocean most isolated from modern warming may still be cooling," says oceanographer Jake Gebbie.

changes in surface climate."

"If the surface ocean was generally cooling for the better part of the last millennium, those parts of the ocean most isolated from modern warming may still be cooling," said Gebbie.

The model is, of course, a simplification of the actual ocean. To test the prediction, Gebbie and Huybers compared the cooling trend found in the model to ocean temperature measurements taken by scientists aboard the HMS Challenger in the 1870s and modern observations from the World Ocean Circulation Experiment of the 1990s.

■ World's oceans

The HMS Challenger, a three-masted wooden sailing ship originally designed as a British warship, was used for the first modern scientific expedition to explore the world's ocean and seafloor. During the expedition from 1872 to 1876, thermometers were lowered into the ocean depths and more than 5,000 temperature measurements were logged.

"We screened this historical data for outliers and considered a variety of corrections associated with pressure effects on the thermometer and stretching of the hemp rope used for lowering thermometers," said Huybers.

The researchers then compared the HMS Challenger data to the modern observations and found warming in most parts of the global ocean, as would be expected due to the warming planet over the 20th Century, but cooling in the deep Pacific at a depth of around two kilometers.

(Source: *Science Daily*)

Chlorate-rich soil may help us find liquid water on Mars, scientists say

If liquid water exists on the surface of Mars, it is most likely in the form of a briny mixture with magnesium chlorate salts, according to new experiments based on discoveries previously made by NASA's Phoenix and Viking landers, as well as the Curiosity rover.

Scientists at the Department of Earth and Space Sciences at the University of Washington, Seattle, studied mixtures of water with salts known to exist on Mars, to figure out which were most likely to be liquid on Mars' surface. The experiments compared the vapor pressure and water-absorbing ability of the salt solutions.

The results suggest that water mixed with magnesium chlorate would be less likely to evaporate or freeze on Mars compared with water mixed with sodium or potassium chlorate. The findings were presented in the September 2018 issue of *Earth and Planetary Science Letters*.

The 'triple point' of a substance is the temperature and pressure at which it can co-exist in all three phases: gas, liquid and solid. For water, the triple point is found at 0.01 degrees Celsius (32 degrees Fahrenheit) and 6.12 millibar, or 0.6 percent of the atmospheric pressure at the Earth's surface.

■ Vapor pressure

In other words, one might imagine a bucket of water at the triple point, where the water exists as ice floating on a layer of liquid water, with water vapor just above the ice that has sublimated or evaporated from it. The vapor that is in contact with the ice exerts a pressure on the ice, which we call the vapor pressure.

Although in some equatorial regions on Mars optimum conditions can be just below the triple point of water, for the rest of the planet the temperatures are usually well below the triple point. When the atmospheric pressure is lower than a liquid's vapor pressure, the liquid evaporates. Pure water would rapidly evaporate under the thin Martian atmosphere, which is approximately 1 percent that of the Earth. Salt solutions, however, do not evaporate or freeze as easily, and therefore would be more likely to remain liquid on Mars.

Understanding which combinations of salt and water are most likely to stay liquid



could help tell us where to look for evidence of liquid water, and therefore possibly life, on the red planet.

Salt solutions are hygroscopic, which means that they are good at absorbing water.

■ Water available on Mars

Certain salts may be able to absorb even small amounts of water available on Mars. Many different kinds of salts are found on Mars, such as chlorides, sulfates, chlorates, and perchlorates. These can be found all over the Martian surface, according to data from various lander and rover missions.

The new analysis suggested that the soil found at Chryse and Utopia Planitiae by the Viking landers contained perchlorates at a concentration less than or equal to 0.1 percent. Then, in 2013, the Curiosity rover's Sample Analysis at Mars (SAM) instrument found calcium perchlorate in soil samples from Rocknest, which is a spot within Gale Crater.

Most recently, the Compact Reconnaissance Imaging Spectrometer for Mars (CRISM) instrument aboard NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter detected magnesium perchlorate, magnesium chlorate and sodium perchlorate within recurring slope lineae. These are streaks running downslope during the warmer Martian season and, for a time, it was strongly thought that they were produced by running water. Because of the salts, the thin atmosphere and the frigid temperatures, any such water would likely be briny rather than pure. Although results now suggest that flows of dry material somehow produce the streaks, it remains possible that water could still exist as a liquid somewhere on the surface of Mars.

(Source: *space.com*)

Forest soundscapes monitor conservation efforts inexpensively, effectively: new study

Recordings of the sounds in tropical forests could unlock secrets about biodiversity and aid conservation efforts around the world, according to a perspective paper published in *Science*.

Compared to on-the-ground fieldwork, bioacoustics -- recording entire soundscapes, including animal and human activity -- is relatively inexpensive and produces powerful conservation insights. The result is troves of ecological data in a short amount of time.

Because these enormous datasets require robust computational power, the researchers argue that a global organization should be created to host an acoustic platform that produces on-the-fly analysis. Not only could the data be used for academic research, but it could also monitor conservation policies and strategies employed by companies around the world.

■ Better effective measurements

"Nongovernmental organizations and the conservation community need to be able to truly evaluate the effectiveness of conservation interventions. It's in the interest of certification bodies to harness the developments in bioacoustics for better enforcement and effective measurements," said Zuzana Burivalova, a postdoctoral research fellow in Professor David Wilcove's lab at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

"Beyond measuring the effectiveness of conservation projects and monitoring compliance with forest protection commitments, networked bioacoustic monitoring systems could also generate a wealth of data for the scientific community," said co-author Rhett Butler of the environmental news outlet Mongabay.

Burivalova and Butler co-authored the paper with Edward Game, who is based at the Nature Conservancy and the University of Queensland.

The researchers explain that while satellite imagery can be used to measure deforestation, it often fails to detect other subtle ecological degradations like over-hunting, fires, or invasion by exotic species. Another common measure of biodiversity is field surveys, but those are often expensive, time consuming and cover limited ground.



Depending on the vegetation of the area and the animals living there, bioacoustics can record animal sounds and songs from several hundred meters away. Devices can be programmed to record at specific times or continuously if there is solar power or a cellular network signal. They can also record a range of taxonomic groups including birds, mammals, insects, and amphibians. To date, several multiyear recordings have already been completed.

■ Zero-deforestation efforts

Bioacoustics can help effectively enforce policy efforts as well. Many companies are engaged in zero-deforestation efforts, which means they are legally obligated to produce goods without clearing large forests. Bioacoustics can quickly and cheaply determine how much forest has been left standing.

"Companies are adopting zero deforestation commitments, but these policies do not always translate to protecting biodiversity due to hunting, habitat degradation, and sub-canopy fires. Bioacoustic monitoring could be used to augment satellites and other systems to monitor compliance with these commitments, support real-time action against prohibited activities like illegal logging and poaching, and potentially document habitat and species recovery," Butler said.

Further, these recordings can be used to measure climate change effects. While the sounds might not be able to assess slow, gradual changes, they could help determine the influence of abrupt, quick differences to land caused by manufacturing or hunting, for example.

(Source: *eurekalert.org*)

Invisible killers hitchhike on native plant seedlings, scientists find

Laura Sims, a postdoctoral researcher in UC Berkeley's College of Natural Resources, collects samples of native coffeeberry that has been killed by the pathogen *Phytophthora crassamura* in a restoration site in San Mateo County. Sims is part of a team that has identified fungicide resistance in California isolates of *P. crassamura* from restoration sites due to exposure to the pesticides in plant nurseries.

More than a quarter of the seedlings sampled at native plant nurseries were infected with pathogens -- which could hamper restoration work. Christopher Intagliata reports.

When wildfires rip through a landscape, firefighters have the first -- and most immediate -- job. But then, that burned moonscape often passes into the hands of restoration ecologists, who yank out invasive species, and plant native seedlings instead.

"We try to artificially give a start to these communities that should resemble the communities that were there prior to a disturbance," Matteo Garbelotto, a plant pathologist at UC Berkeley. The problem, he says, is that microscopic killers sometimes hitchhike on native seedlings grown in



nurseries. As happened at one restoration site in the San Francisco Bay area, where restorers hoped that nursery-grown natives called toyons and sticky monkeyflowers could be reintroduced.

■ Toyons dying here

"Plant ecologists were saying why are these toyons

dying here, or why are these sticky monkeyflowers dying in large numbers in this restoration site? And so it happens that each one of those plant species was reintroduced in a restoration effort and had one or sometimes multiple of these pathogens that belonged to the genus *Phytophthora*, which incidentally is the same genus of the pathogen that causes Sudden Oak Death, and it's also the same genus of the pathogen that caused the Irish Potato Famine."

Garbelotto and his colleagues surveyed five native plant nurseries for the *Phytophthora* pathogen. And found that more than a quarter of the plants sampled were infected. They also discovered, in separate work, that a common chemical used to suppress the pathogen in nurseries can actually breed resistance. The "passage of these strains through these production facilities, sometimes it can make them more aggressive."

But there is a solution to root out these invisible killers. A year-long regimen of stricter sanitation at native plant nurseries -- like pasteurizing pots and soil -- appeared to eliminate the pathogen. And disease-free seedlings means damaged landscapes have a better chance at bouncing back.

(Source: *scientificamerican.com*)

China builds massive radio antenna 5 times bigger than NYC

China's Wireless Electromagnetic Method project has been in progress for 13 years to make communication with submarines underwater possible. However, researchers expressed concern about exposure to extremely low frequency (ELF) waves.

Researchers that are part of the controversial project reveal that the massive radio antenna facility is built on land five times the size of New York City.

China has worked on ELF technology for several years, which is now established on a 3,700 square kilometer land. WEM project consists of high voltage power supply lines capable of producing electromagnetic radiation that can travel thousands of miles through the air on Earth's surface.

Numerous studies conducted by scientists across the world have linked the prolonged exposure to ELF with an increased risk of leukemia in children. The WHO report has also highlighted that ELF radiation can lead to other conditions such as sleep deprivation, stress, depression, miscarriages, brain and breast tumors, and more.

The "money came from civilian budgets, but the military has intervened and muted the ministry's complaint," said a Beijing-based researcher, who does not wish to be named due to sensitive nature of the matter.

Although the study findings are inconclusive, WHO said that it is important to take reasonable precautionary measures to reduce the radiation exposure.

The "project will cause no harm to staff and residents in surrounding areas, it is not necessary to build extra facilities for the purpose of health protection", Qiao wrote in an article published in the research journal *Ship Science and Technology* in 2016.

The first low-frequency transmission military grade station was built in 2009. Scientists explained that the transmission could be detected by the submarine hundreds of feet below the sea without the need to resurface. According to Newser, this makes China the third country to develop this form of submarine communication system.

(Source: *Tech Times*)

Rolls-Royce is building the fastest electric plane ever

We've known for some time now that Rolls-Royce (the one that builds airplane engines, not luxury cars) has been working diligently on developing electric propulsion systems that it hopes will power a new generation of emissions-free planes freed from the expense of costly fuel.

But now, Rolls-Royce has revealed plans to build its own all-electric aircraft -- partially funded by the British government -- in partnership with fellow UK firms YASA and Electrolight.

Developed under the project name ACCEL (Accelerating the Electrification of Flight), the new aircraft is not only noteworthy for running solely on battery power, it is also designed to earn the title of world's fastest all-electric plane, with the goal of hitting speeds in excess of 300 mph.

The perennial problem facing electric aircraft manufacturers is that to add range and speed, you need more power, which means adding weight in the form of extra banks of batteries. To help alleviate this, the ACCEL will use some of the most power-dense batteries packs ever created. This will allow it to not only allow the propulsion system to deliver a maximum output of just over 1,000 hp, but will also give the aircraft a 200-mile range -- long enough to fly from London to Paris.



The aircraft is small and sporty, with the cockpit positioned towards the rear of the plane behind a long nose that gives it a shape reminiscent of a vintage roadster. However, this design serves a practical purpose as well, as the long nose section houses the banks of battery packs needed to power the plane.

While this particular design will probably never be made into a production model, it does serve as a great benchmark for the progress that has been made in the field of electric aircraft within a few short years. Rolls-Royce anticipates that the ACCEL will be completed by 2020, when it is also expected to attempt its record-setting speed run.

(Source: *Robb Report*)

Researchers suggest missing crust layer can be blamed on 'Snowball Earth'

An international team of researchers has found evidence supporting a theory that suggests a missing crust layer can be blamed on "Snowball Earth." In their paper published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, the group describes the evidence they found and why they believe it supports their theory.

Earth scientists have debated the reason behind what they describe as a missing crust layer for over a century -- in 1869, geologists noted that there appeared to be a missing layer of rock in the Grand Canyon. Samples showed a layer dating back 540 million years, and directly below it, a layer that was dated to 1 billion years ago. This posed the question: What happened in-between? That gap has been observed in other places on Earth, and has been named the "Great Unconformity." To explain the gap, scientists developed two theories -- either there was a dramatic increase in sedimentation, or there was a large and rapid erosion event. In this new effort, the researchers claim to have found evidence that supports the latter theory.

The researchers suggest that the large erosion event was the development of what has been termed "Snowball Earth" -- a period when the entire planet was completely covered with ice. They believe that as the ice receded, it took a whole layer of the crust with it, dumping it into the sea. If that was the case, logic suggests, testing the seafloor should show a large layer of rock from that time period. But no such layer has been found.

The evidence for this theory came in the form of crystals from the period in question -- the researchers had isotopes of hafnium and oxygen that were consistent with such crystals that have undergone erosion under cold conditions. The data came from a database of information on 30,000 zircon crystals. The researchers note that radioactive isotopes can serve as time keepers.

(Source: *phys.org*)

‘Playing to learn’ scheme to be implemented within month

SOCIETY TEHRAN — With the aim of providing opportunities for deeper learning in schools a scheme titled “playing to learn” will be implemented by the Iranian calendar month of Bahman (January 21-February 19), adviser to the minister of education, Mehdi Aliakbarzadeh, has said.



Referring to the high volume of content being taught in the schools, he said that educational games can come in helpful to bear learning especially in mathematics.

Traditional classrooms are not effective any more, as gamification helps students learn far more than they learn with textbooks, so we need to provide the proper infrastructure, he stated.

He further explained that interaction and opportunities to make choices as well as strengthening children’s social skills are among the virtues of the new game-based classrooms, while in the past we had very little notion of how children learn thus excluded game from the learning process at schools.

The scheme will be piloted in schools across the country by the next month, Aliakbarzadeh noted, ISNA reported on Saturday.

Deputy Education Minister Rezvan Hakimzadeh, for her part said that through the first phase of the scheme, 1000 schools from 10 provinces nationwide will implement the playing to learn scheme.

Each province comprising of 100 schools have been volunteered to hold game-based classes and assess the results, she further added.

She went on to say that literature, storytelling, role plays and arts can help develop social skills one should acquire as a child, and are far better suited to a game context than to a traditional classroom and textbook context.

Pointing to the removal of the traditional homework and its replacement with the skill-centered assignments since last year, she added that the draft of playing to learn scheme has been drawn up to be launched in the schools for deeper learning.

“Successful schools worldwide are using games along with other methods to involve the students in educational process, so we decided to pilot the scheme in volunteer schools and expand it to promote education quality,” Hakimzadeh concluded.

LEARN ENGLISH

Darwin’s Theory of Evolution

A: It’s been a long time since I last saw you. Where have you been?

B: The exams and plans I have to turn in in are driving me crazy. I don’t even have time to sleep.

A: It’s the same for me. I’m up to my neck in work, but at least finals are coming soon and we’ll have a vacation. Where are you going now?

B: I’m going to Anthropology class and now with the year anniversary of Darwin, it’s the only thing we study. Frankly, I’m sick and tired and tired of hearing about this guy.

A: What? Why? How can you not like Darwin? I mean the man changed the entire perception of how things came to and his theory is backed by pretty solid evidence!

B: I don’t like him. His theory of human evolution and natural selection is full of holes. It lacks the solid evidence of which you speak of.

A: That statement puts you at odds with half of the academy. Not to mention your professors! Furthermore, the explanation proposed by Darwin about the origin of species and the mechanism of natural selection constitutes a grand step toward a coherent understanding of the world and evolutionist ideas.

B: I’m not minimizing his grand contributions, it’s just that his theory reminds of the conundrum of the chicken and the egg.

A: What are you talking about?

B: The question is, which was first? The chicken or the egg? I feel the same regarding his theory. How does the first cell of life come to be?

A: Interesting. I think that question is better suited for my philosophy class. In the meantime, how about we settle this... with a duel!

Key vocabulary
sick and tired: bored or annoyed
natural selection: a process by which best creatures survive
full of holes: including many faults
at odds with: in a state of disagreement
academy: a school that provides training in special subject
coherent: logical and consistent
minimize: to make something as small as possible
conundrum: a confusing or difficult problem
Supplementary vocabulary
creationism: belief in the literal interpretation of the account of the creation of the universe and of all living things related in the Bible.
naturalism: the doctrine that the world can be understood in scientific terms without recourse to spiritual or supernatural explanations
transmutation: the process or act of change, especially from one thing to another



Highest number of out-of-school children in 5 provinces

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Five provinces of Sistan-Baluchestan, Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, Khuzestan and Kerman are home to the highest number of children not having access to school or education nationwide, Deputy Education Minister Rezvan Hakimzadeh has stated.

In the previous school year 1396-1397 (beginning Sept. 23, 2017), some 142,502 children were missing out on education across the country, but 31,910 of them returned to schools, Hakimzadeh noted.

She went on to announce that boys failing to have access to schooling amounted to 73,408 compared to the number of 69,094 girls in last school year, Mehr reported on Saturday.

While provinces of Sistan-Baluchestan, Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, Khuzestan and Kerman have the most out of school rates, provinces of Semnan, Zanjan, Ilam, Qazvin and Yazd have the lowest number of children not receiving education at schools, she further explained.

The literacy rate in the country has reached almost over 90 percent and also enrollment rate in primary education increased to 98 percent, she added.

Referring to providing education to these children as the main priority to the Ministry of Education and governors, she said that governors must set up special working groups to identify school dropouts and remove their barriers to education.

Many issues lead to children missing education, including social and cultural problems and financial problems, which is the main one among the others, she said, adding that poverty, immigration, addiction, social harm, ignorance of rights and responsibilities, discrimination, tension, lack of motivation are also among the issues preventing children from attending school.

Hakimzadeh also said that although there are no legal barriers, lack of proper law to



consider punishment for parents who do not send their children to school requires serious consideration, and children’s right to education is mandatory in the law.

Elsewhere in her remarks, she referred to 450,000 foreign national studying in the country’s schools and said that Iran is amongst the countries providing education not only to almost all its citizens but to many foreign nationals.

As per the decree issued by the leader of the Islamic Revolution, some 5,500 undocumented foreign nationals have been enrolled in primary schools this year, which demonstrates an 11 percent increase compared to past years.

Following a decree issued by the Leader in May 2015, all foreign nationals, even those who have no identification and are living in Iran illegally, are allowed to attend schools.

Pointing to Iran’s improvement in Human Development Index 2017, ranking 60 out of 189 countries, she highlighted that the average literacy level in HDI was 3.2, which have reached 9.2 in 2017.

One-month event in Isfahan puts spotlight on clean air



ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — On the occasion of the Transport Week, starting on December 17, up until Clean Air Day, falling on January 19, various events, including cultural, urban, educational and recreational activities are underway in the city of Isfahan.

The one-month event is concurrent with the launch of “Adam and air” campaign, according to Isfahan Municipality. The public-spearheaded campaign, demanding cleaner air, is picking up momentum in Isfahan.

Moreover, various cultural festivals are taking place using art as a common language to impart traffic knowledge to the public. Artists in different fields can also submit their works including poems, photos, cartoons, etc. under the theme of traffic and air pollution to the aforesaid festivals.

Additionally 30 renovated buses were added to the city transport fleet as well as buses accessible for people with disabilities.



Another scheme being implemented within the framework of the one-month event is “air pollution watch”, aiming to cracking down on high-emission vehicles. In this scheme citizens can report high-emission vehicles either by calling the hotline 137 or using a particular mobile app.

After reporting the polluting vehicles they would be transferred to the vehicle inspection center, the report added. In this scheme each citizen is an air pollution watch.

In Isfahan, Chahar-bagh street is close to the cars on car-free Tuesdays (a public-led campaign encouraging the citizens to use bicycle instead of car on Tuesdays) and create a 100-kilometers road for the cyclists to ride safely.

And now the report has highlighted that Abouzar street in Rehnan neighborhood in Isfahan is also close to the cars on car-free Tuesdays.

Hamid Ashrafi, an official with Isfahan Municipality, has explained that the street meet the basic criteria to



turn into a sidewalk and become closed to cars for good. Isfahan Mayor Qodratollah Nourozi also said that promoting cultural activities in some of the streets and neighborhoods of Isfahan is one of our policies, so that families can spend time together in a safe environment.

Cleaner air, less traffic congestion and safer streets are the outcomes of such schemes, he added.

Furthermore 15 bike stations were inaugurated in the city of Isfahan, as well, the report stated.

Alireza Salavati, deputy mayor for transport affairs, has said that the citizens can refer to the stations and use bicycles, electric motorcycles, scooters, etc.

Salavati added that the number of these stations will rise to 50 by the [Iranian calendar] month of Khordad (May 22-June 21).

Moreover, a bike-sharing program and an application for using the bikes will be released within the next two months.

China’s war on air pollution causing increase in dangerous ozone

China’s success in cutting air pollution has triggered an uptick in ozone, one of the most dangerous substance in the atmosphere.

A new study has revealed how ozone levels are increasing in Chinese “megacities” even as the government cracks down on their filthy air.

Amid concerns about the toxic smog enveloping many cities, Chinese authorities declared “war” on air pollution in 2013.

A raft of policies was introduced including restrictions on the number of cars allowed on the road and measures to cut emissions from coal-fired power plants.

These tactics have proven hugely successful by some measures, cutting levels of fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) in eastern China by around two fifths.

However, air pollution comprises many different types of pollutant, and while particulate levels have fallen another toxic substance has remained steady – ozone.

While ozone in the upper levels of the atmosphere is known for the role it plays in protecting the planet from harmful radiation, at ground level it is the main component in smog and is very harmful to human lungs.

Researchers have noted that ozone pollution from cars and industry has been getting worse, and in their new study a team was

able to show how summer ozone levels in built-up regions like Beijing and Shanghai increased from 2013 to 2017.

Crucially, the researchers noted the trend they were observing “cannot be simply explained” by an increase in the substances that form ozone.

Instead, they suggested the decrease in particulate matter changed the chemical composition of the atmosphere in an unfortunate way.

Particulates act like a sponge for the components needed to generate ozone pollution, sucking them up and preventing them from producing the harmful substance.

“There was so much particulate matter in Chinese cities that it stunted the ozone production,” explained Professor Daniel Jacob, an atmospheric chemist at Harvard University and one of the study’s authors.

With such a rapid reduction in particulates, more of the ozone components are now available to produce ozone.

“We haven’t observed this happening anywhere else because no other country has moved this quickly to reduce particulate matter emissions... It took China four years to do what took 30 years in the U.S.,” said Professor Jacob.

These results were published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The researchers said their findings show

how important it is to continue cutting all forms of air pollution in order to minimize health risks.

(Source: flipboard.com)

International public Tender

Seamorgh Company intend to purchase 500,000 commercial layer cages for one of its farms located in bardsir of Kerman province with 2200meter altitude and average temperature +42 in Summer and -5 in winter ,including all equipment &accessories like Silos, Ventilation sys, Complete heating &cooling sys, Automation , Electrical panel, Complete collecting egg system, and other requiring equipment along with installation ,from reliable manufacturer and sellers or their representative in Iran by opening letter of credit.

All applicants invited to submit their profile and their offers consist of all technical specifications and term of selling for delivery in one of Iran ports at least during 5 days after issuing date of this advertisement. To Seamorghsecretariat(5 floor).eamorgh secretariate Address:209No,Corner of GolfamSt,Nelson Mandela St,(Jordan) Tehran-Iran

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Postal Code: 1915673438 edari@seamorgh.ir

France's 'Yellow Vest' protestors back on the streets

1→ But the arrest on Wednesday of Eric Drouet, one the movement's spokesman, sparked anger among his supporters. Paris police picked up Drouet, who already faces trial for carrying a weapon at a previous demonstration, and detained him for around 10 hours.

In Paris, organizers called for a march from the City Hall to the National Assembly (parliament) building, and a rally on the Champs Elysees, the scene of violent clashes at previous demonstrations.

The latest opinion poll, published on Thursday by Odoxa Dentsu, indicated 55 percent public support for the "Yellow Vest" protests.

The government has deployed police around France to deal with the protests, backed up by specialist response units, sources told AFP.

■ Macron dismisses 'Yellow Vest' protesters as agitators

Meantime, French President Emmanuel Macron has dismissed "Yellow Vest" protesters as agitators, saying they aim to topple his government.

In his first cabinet meeting of the year on Friday, Macron said order and law must be restored in the country, according to government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux.

He called on his ministers to be more radical in their attempt to reform the country, Griveaux said.



"Since these announcements, the 'Yellow Vest' movement, for those who continue to protest, has become the thing of agitators who promote insurrection to topple the government," he added. "Maybe we have made too many concessions to conservatism; we'll have to change that," he said.

Griveaux also said that Macron ordered the authorities to organize a "national debate" in the coming weeks in all regions, for people to express their views, instead of taking to the streets.

Macron has hardened his stance while, he had already acknowledged the protesters' anger was "deep, and in many ways legitimate," and promised a minimum wage rise and tax concessions.

He has even introduced a package of emergency concessions last month to help cool weeks of anti-government protests, which first erupted last month in rural France among citizens who said they could not afford higher fuel taxes that was announced to minimize the country's reliance on fossil fuels.

The demonstrations then transformed into a broader rebuke of Macron's policies, and they took on a name of their own - the "Yellow Vest" movement, which is a reference to the vests worn by people active in the transportation industry, who have been at the forefront of the protests.

The package, which called for the removal of a planned tax increase for a majority of pensioners and tax-free overtime pay for all workers, was also approved by the National Assembly.

The president's package concessions, however, did not satisfy some of the protesters, who believed that "it doesn't tackle the problems of substance."

■ Stop treating people like beggars

Late on Thursday, a group of protesters posted a letter on social media, warning the president against treating people like beggars.

"Anger will turn into hatred if you continue, from your pedestal, you and your associates, to look at little people like beggars," read the three-page letter.

The group has even turned down the president's invitation to take part in the national debate.

They described the debate as a "political trap" designed to drown the issue that "terrifies" the head of state so much, the letter read.

(Source: agencies)

U.S. has no timeline for troop withdrawal from Syria

The United States says it has no timeline for pulling its troops out of Syria but does not plan to keep troops there indefinitely either.

"We have no timeline for our military forces to withdraw from Syria," a senior State Department official told reporters on Friday.

"Just to clarify, we do not — we do not intend to have an indefinite military presence in Syria. The president has made the decision that we will withdraw and we are formulating the plans to do that right now," added the official.

The remarks came as the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and national security adviser John Bolton will travel to the Middle East to shore up support from the U.S.' partners.

Pompeo is scheduled to leave on Tuesday for an eight-day trip to Amman, Cairo, Manama, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Riyadh, Muscat, and finally Kuwait City.

In Cairo, Pompeo is slated to deliver an address to underline the trip's overall message that "the United States is not leaving the Middle East," the official said.

"Despite reports to the contrary, false narratives surrounding the Syria decision, we are not going anywhere," the official added.

Bolton was to depart Friday for talks with "Israel and Turkey to discuss the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Syria," Garrett Marquis, a spokesman for the National Security Council, said.

President Donald Trump announced his decision to withdraw the US troops from Syria on December 19, asserting that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group had been defeated.

His unexpected announcement shocked allies and top U.S. officials, with Defense Secretary James Mattis and Brett McGurk, the U.S. special envoy to the so-called anti-ISIL coalition in Syria and Iraq, resigning from their posts.

The pullout was initially supposed to be completed within weeks, but slowed down as the president has acceded to requests from aides, allies and members of Congress to have a more orderly withdrawal.

Meanwhile, the U.S. officials have told Reuters that it could take several months to conduct a pullout, with Trump himself saying on Wednesday that the U.S. would get out of Syria slowly "over a period of time."

The U.S. deployed troops and equipment to Syria in 2014 as part of a Washington-led coalition supposedly fighting the ISIL terrorist Takfiri group.

The terrorists are widely reported to be financed by the House of Saud regime and partially trained and protected by American forces in Syria to support the terror campaign against the Syrian government and ordinary citizens.

However, as the Syrian Arab Army has increasingly liberated occupied territories from foreign-backed terrorist groups in recent years, many American and Israeli officials



have expressed concern about Israel's situation in the region.

Speaking to the Washington Post in November, Trump stressed that protecting Israel was a reason why the U.S. forces were deployed in the Middle East. "We have reached a point where we don't have to stay in the Middle East," said Trump before adding that "one reason to stay is Israel."

However, according to an Israeli report, Trump is currently ignoring Tel Aviv's demands about Syria.

"It's unfortunate that he isn't paying attention to the evidence provided by the intelligence services," said an unnamed senior Israeli official speaking to the Israeli Ynet news website on Thursday.

■ Syrian Kurds seek deal with government regardless of U.S. pullout

Meantime, Syrian Kurdish leaders seek a Russian-mediated deal with President Bashar al-Assad's government regardless of the U.S. plans to withdraw from their region, a senior official has said.

The deal would mark perhaps the most important milestone because the two biggest chunks of Syria splintered by seven years of war would be rejoined, leaving only a corner in the northwest in the hands of militants.

Senior Kurdish official Badran Jia Kurd told Reuters the Kurdish-led administration that runs much of northern Syria presented a roadmap for an agreement with Assad during recent meetings in Russia.

"The final decision is to reach an agreement with Damascus, we will work in this direction regardless of the cost, even if the Americans object," Reuters quoted Jia Kurd as saying in the northern Syrian city of Qamishli.

The main aims of the roadmap, the report said, are to protect the Syrian border with Turkey, to integrate the governing structures of northern Syria into the constitution, and to ensure a fair distribution of resources.

Last week, residents in Manbij asked the Syrian government to retake the northern city on the Turkish border after a U.S. pledge to withdraw troops from the country.

Jia Kurd said the local Kurdish-led administration was ready to cooperate with the government on ending Turkey's

occupation of Syrian territories and defeating the remaining terrorists in the north.

The region is controlled by the U.S.-backed YPG (People's Protection Units/People's Defense Units/Yekineyen Parastina) militia which Turkey views a terrorist group but the fighters have mostly avoided confrontation with the Syrian government during the war.

Jia Kurd said the ball was in the court of Russia and Damascus, but much depends on reconciling the regional demands with Syria's sovereignty.

Kurdish leaders convened political talks in Damascus last year, but they broke down without progress. The government has said it is determined to reunite Syria, with Foreign Minister recently making it clear that a federal Syria is unacceptable.

Turkey, initially a staunch supporter of a Western campaign to topple President Assad, has moderated its stance over time and is currently working with Russia and Iran to return stability to the country.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said last week that once the "terrorist organizations" leave Manbij and other areas near its border in northern Syria, "we will have nothing left to do there."

Turkey is supporting several militant groups based in Idlib, but they are under pressure from the Syrian army.

Turkish-backed NFL militants are currently engaged in a fierce battle with al-Qaeda-linked Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS/Organization for the Liberation of the Levant/Levant Liberation Committee), which broke out on Tuesday.

HTS reportedly initiated the fighting after NFL-affiliated Nour al-Din al-Zenki militants killed five of members of the Takfiri group.

On Friday, HTS terrorists reportedly captured more than 20 villages in the northern Aleppo Province after four days of clashes with rival militants.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that the fresh fighting had killed 114 militants on both sides as well as eight civilians.

"HTS was able to take control of areas previously held by Nour al-Din al-Zenki in the west of the Aleppo countryside," the British-based monitoring group added.

Unconfirmed reports also said the Turkish-backed militant outfit had announced its dissolution after recent defeats.

■ U.S.-made missiles uncovered in Homs

In another development on Friday, Syrian government forces discovered a sizable cache of weapons and munitions, including the U.S.-built anti-tank missiles, during a clean-up operation in the country's central Homs Province.

Syria's official SANA news agency reported that the U.S.-made TOW missiles (Tube-launched, Optically tracked, Wire-guided) had been left behind by the terrorists in farm lands in Homs' Houla region.

(Source: agencies)

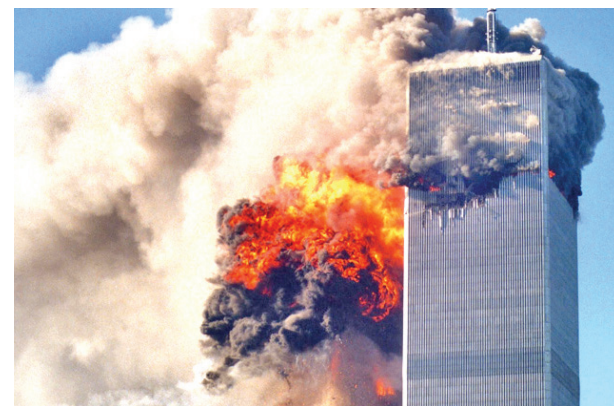
Hacker group releases '9/11 Papers', says future leaks will 'burn down' U.S. deep state

1→ There are four more layers that remain encrypted and, according to the group, "each layer contains more secrets, more damaging materials... and generally just more truth."

The hackers are asking for \$2 million in bit-coin for the public release of its "mega leak," which it has dubbed "the 9/11 Papers."

The group has also offered to sell the documents to terrorist groups, foreign governments, and media outlets. When RT approached the hackers for comment, they proposed providing the channel exclusive access to the potentially explosive papers — for a price, of course.

"They were willing to sell those documents to me. So it's all about money for them," RT America correspondent Michelle Greenstein said.



By design, the "layer 1" documents — if authentic — do not appear to contain any explosive revelations. The publications focus mostly on testimonies from airport security and details concerning insurance pay-outs to parties affected by the 9/11 attacks. However, the data dump suggests that the group is not bluffing.

The documents — which were immediately scrubbed from Reddit, Pastebin and Twitter — are available for download on Steemit at the time of writing.

Shortly after releasing the decryption keys, the group posted an ultimatum addressed to "the nation-state of the United States of America and the greater deep-state."

"To all the other parties involved (airlines, litigation firms, investigation firms, FBI, TSA, FAA, banks, security companies and more), we're going to burn you down unless you begin to 'play ball,'" the message reads. Apparently angered by the fact that the ransom has not yet been met, the message warned: "We're peeling these layers back like an onion. No one can save you except for us. Pay the f*** up."

Although the group insists that it is financially motivated and not interested in "hacktivism," they nonetheless expressed hope that continued crowd-funding would secure the full release of the 18,000 documents. "We can't allow the mainstream media to silence the truth any longer. We must ensure their propaganda is crushed by the truths we're dealing today," the hackers wrote after providing the decryption keys for "layer 1."

The Dark Overlord claim to have hacked documents from not only major global insurers like Lloyds of London and Hiscox, but also Silverstein Properties, which owned the World Trade Center complex, and various government agencies.

The "mega leak" purportedly includes secret documents that were meant to be destroyed but were instead retained by legal firms, allegedly revealing "the truth about one of the most recognizable incidents in recent history." (Source: RT)

Egypt, Israel in close cooperation against Sinai fighters: Sisi

Egypt's president has told a U.S. broadcaster his country and Israel are cooperating against armed groups in the Sinai Peninsula, a potentially damaging acknowledgement that could explain a request that the network not air the interview.

Excerpts from the interview released by CBS over the weekend also showed President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi denying there are political prisoners in Egypt, where he has overseen one of the largest crackdowns on dissent in the country's modern history since the overthrow by the military, then led by him, of a divisive president.

CBS, which will air the full interview Sunday on its show 60 Minutes, said it has rejected a request by the Egyptian government not to show it. It did not say which part of the president's comments Cairo objected to, but the cooperation with Israel, with whom Egypt has a 1979 peace treaty, appears to be the most contentious part.

Egypt's military last year denied press reports that it and Israel were cooperating against insurgents in northern Sinai, a region of rugged mountains and desert bordering Israel and the Gaza Strip where Egyptian security forces have for years battled the fighters, now led by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group.

(Source: agencies)

Turkey seeks 'major' U.S. military assistance in Syria: WSJ

Turkey has asked for major military assistance from the United States in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit in Syria, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reported, weeks after Washington announced its plan to withdraw troops from the country.

The substantial request for military support included air raids, logistics and transportation so Turkish forces could finish off the remaining terrorists of the ISIL in Syria, senior U.S. officials were quoted as saying by the WSJ on Friday.

"The Turkish requests are so extensive that, if fully met, the American military might be deepening its involvement in Syria instead of reducing it," the newspaper reported.

The unidentified American officials told the Journal there was little chance Washington would agree to Ankara's requests in full.

The U.S. President Donald Trump announced on December 19 his plans to withdraw the U.S. troops deployed in northern Syria following a telephone conversation with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Turkey and the U.S. appeared to agree to coordinate the troops' withdrawal from the area to avoid a power vacuum that could attract a number of parties interested in filling it.

Talks on the fight against ISIL are expected to take place on Tuesday in Ankara. US officials - including White House National Security Adviser John Bolton, General Joseph Dunford, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs and James Jeffrey, the State Department envoy for Syria - are expected to attend.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Canada charity used donations to fund Israeli army projects: CBC

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) has published an expose on a Jewish charity in Canada, which has been under investigation for using its donations to build infrastructure for the Israeli forces in violation of the country's tax rules.

The Jewish National Fund (JNF) of Canada, one of the country's long-established charities, has been the subject of a Canada Revenue Agency audit after a complaint was filed in October 2017.

The JNF funds numerous projects in Israel, such as reforestation efforts in areas hit by wildfires but it has also funded infrastructure projects on Israeli army, air and naval bases, the CBC, the country's public broadcaster, reported on Friday.

Their activities are in violation of Canadian law which prohibits charitable funds from supporting a foreign army.

CBC's article details many troubling aspects of the charity's projects which, along with funding infrastructure on Israeli military bases, it has also contributed directly to the construction of at least one hilltop settler outpost - illegal under international

law, and considered illegal by Israel itself.

The organization, which disclosed to donors last year that it has been under audit by the Canada Revenue Agency, said it stopped funding those projects in 2016, according to the CBC.

A complaint was submitted in October 2017 with the support of Independent Jewish Voices Canada (IJV), which presented detailed evidence that JNF Canada works in violation of the Income Tax Act and contravenes Canadian foreign policy in numerous ways.

According to CRA guidelines, funding for projects intended to increase the "effectiveness and efficiency" of a foreign military cannot be considered charitable and therefore should not be tax-deductible.

"It is unconscionable that Canadians are subsidizing an organisation that has used tax-deductible donations to support the Israeli military, especially when that army has killed nearly 200 unarmed protesters in Gaza this past year, including medical personnel, members of the media and children," said Canadian Rabbi David Mivassair, one of four complainants.

According to IJV, JNF Canada has funded

well over a dozen projects to support the Israeli forces in the last few years alone, and has officially partnered with the Israeli forces and the Israeli Ministry of Defense.

Its military projects include "the new planned [Israeli military] Training Base City in the Negev" desert and "helping the development of the Bat Galim (naval) training base complex area", according to the CBC.

In 2014, JNF Edmonton held a Negev Gala dinner, where proceeds were to "develop three areas of the Negev's Tse'elim army base, the largest military training facility in Israel. The project will upgrade and landscape the family visiting area, intake and release facility and the barracks' main plaza. The base is the national center for ground forces training," its Facebook page read.

JNF Canada has also funded security roads along Israel's hostile borders with Lebanon and Gaza, which in the words of JNF Canada, are designed to "enhance military activity" in these border regions, IJV wrote.

JNF Canada missions in Israel also have contributed directly to the construction of at least one illegal hilltop settler outpost,

LeBron to miss at least three more NBA games for Lakers

NBA superstar LeBron James, who has already missed four games with a strained left groin, will miss at least three more before being re-evaluated, the Los Angeles Lakers announced Friday.

James suffered the injury on December 25 when the Lakers beat defending NBA champion Golden State 127-101. The Lakers have dropped three of four games without the four-time NBA Most Valuable Player.

The Lakers said James will not play Friday at home against New York or travel on the club's road trip to Minnesota on Sunday and Dallas on Monday. James, who has been receiving daily treatment by the Lakers training and medical staff, is making progress on his recovery and will be re-evaluated in a week, making his availability for next Wednesday's home game against Detroit unlikely. His next evaluation would come next Friday, the same day the Lakers visit Utah. Two days later, the Lakers will entertain James's former club, the Cleveland Cavaliers.

James, a three-time NBA champion who has played in the past eight NBA Finals, left Cleveland in July to sign with the Lakers.

James ranks fifth in the NBA in scoring with 27.3 points a game and is also averaging 8.3 rebounds and 7.1 assists a game.

At 21-17, the Lakers hold the eighth and final playoff position in the Western Conference.

(Source: AFP)

Djokovic beaten by Bautista Agut in Doha semi-final

Novak Djokovic suffered his first defeat of the new season in the Qatar Open semi-finals on Friday, losing in three sets to Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut. World number one Djokovic, who was pushed to the limit in his last two matches in Doha by Marton Fucsovics and Nikoloz Basilashvili, failed to find a way past a determined Bautista Agut who won 3-6 7-6(6) 6-4 in two hours and 35 minutes.

The 30-year-old Spaniard will face Tomas Berdych in the title clash after the Czech beat fourth-seeded Italian Marco Cecchinato 7-6(6) 6-3 in the other semi-final.

"I will remember this match all my life," said world number 24 Bautista Agut, whose victory over Djokovic slightly improved his win-loss record against the Serb to 2-7.

"It was an unbelievable atmosphere. I work every day to play this tennis. I know it's difficult to play at this level. That's why Novak is number one in the world. But I cannot be more happy than I am now."

Defeat meant Djokovic, who won Wimbledon and the U.S. Open last year in a spectacular return to form after elbow surgery, missed the chance to reach his sixth straight final.

The Serb cruised through the opening set before Bautista Agut dragged the contest into a decider by edging the tiebreak in the second set. With the momentum swinging his way, Bautista Agut secured an early break in the final set before closing out the match.

"I wanted to give everything I had and fight until the last point," added Bautista Agut, who will look to win his ninth ATP title in Saturday's final. "Finally I could turn the second set. Novak was up and it was tough. He was solid and I had to play good tennis. I had to play a lot of lines and serve well."

(Source: Reuters)

Rummenigge defends Bayern's Qatar training camp



Bayern Munich chief executive Karl-Heinz Rummenigge defended his club's ties with Qatar on Friday as the squad headed for a training camp in the Gulf state for the ninth year in a row.

Bayern faced protests from their own fans at a home match last year when supporters displayed banners which read "money (over) human rights", "capital (over) morals" and "open your eyes when it comes to sponsor choice."

Qatar, which will host the 2022 World Cup, has faced several allegations of migrant worker abuse from human rights organisations including Amnesty International.

In particular, it has been criticised for the work-sponsorship system known as 'Kefala' which requires all foreign workers to obtain their employer's consent to travel abroad.

In September, Qatar said it would end the exit permit system in move described as a "significant step" by the International Labour Organisation.

Rummenigge said Bayern were one of many German companies involved in business with Qatar, which he said had been responsive to criticism.

"Like other football clubs and sports associations, we are also engaged in a dialogue in the Gulf region," he said in an interview with the Munich-based daily Abendzeitung.

Rummenigge said Bayern had regular exchanges with their partners in Qatar "including the issue of human rights and the rights of workers."

He added: "International trade unions and NGOs have agreed that Qatar has responded to public criticism and made changes, including the positive development of the legal status of migrant workers and improvements in Qatar's labour rights."

Bayern first held their training camp in Qatar in 2011, saying at the time it had perfect conditions for a winter break.

The club subsequently strengthened its ties by signing a sponsorship deal with Doha airport and in July last year Qatar Airways became one of its partners.

Bayern are Germany's most successful soccer club and have won the Bundesliga for the last six seasons, although they went into the winter break in second place, trailing six points behind leaders Borussia Dortmund.

(Soruce: Mirror)

Maradona out of hospital after internal bleeding scare

Argentine soccer great Diego Maradona was released from hospital after being admitted earlier on Friday with internal bleeding in the stomach which was discovered during routine examinations, his daughter Dalma said.

"For those who were really worried about my dad I can tell you that he is well," Dalma wrote on twitter after fears over her father's health spread. "He is going home soon."

The 58-year-old was having a routine medical in his homeland before returning to Mexico, where he is coach of second division side Dorados de Sinaloa, when doctors discovered the problem.

However, a source close to the family told Reuters the problem was not serious and that the former Boca Juniors, Napoli and Barcelona midfielder, who famously led his country to the 1986 World Cup title, was not in any danger.

Another source said Maradona, who left the hospital without talking to the media, may have to undergo more tests.

Friday's scare was the latest for Maradona, who has suffered frequent periods in hospital over the years, often due to the extravagant lifestyle that helped make him one of the most admired and iconic footballers of the



20th century.

He last fell ill at the 2018 World Cup in Russia, where he was filmed passing out in

an executive box at the Argentina-Nigeria game. Argentina won 2-1 to reach the last 16, where they were knocked out of the tourna-

Llorente hat-trick helps Spurs crush Tranmere 7-0 in Cup



Tottenham Hotspur's Fernando Llorente got a hat-trick as they chalked up their record competitive away win with the 7-0 thrashing of fourth-tier Tranmere Rovers in the opening game of the FA Cup third round at Prenton Park on Friday.

Defender Serge Aurier broke the deadlock with a deflected shot from the edge of the area five minutes before the break to breach a Tranmere side who had competed well in the first half before the floodgates opened after the break.

Spanish striker Llorente, restricted to a place on the bench for much of the season, got his first goal of the night when he slotted home from close range after fellow forward Son Heung-min burst down the right and delivered a perfect low cross.

Right back Aurier then added his second goal, driving the ball home after excellent creative work from Son.

South Korean Son himself made it 4-0 with a solo run from inside his own half, without a challenge from Tranmere's defenders, which ended with a clinical finish.

Tottenham's promising 18-year-old midfielder Oliver Skipp then delivered a wonderful through ball for Llorente who slipped the ball home to make it five in the 71st minute.

A minute later the former Athletic Bilbao striker completed his hat-trick, poking home a low cross from Lucas Moura, and within minutes Mauricio Pochettino had taken him off, adding to Tranmere's troubles by

bringing Harry Kane off the bench.

The England captain added the London club's record-breaking seventh by cleverly flicking the ball over goalkeeper Scott Davies after a defence-splitting pass from Dele Alli.

While the introduction of Kane could be seen as an unnecessary step, Pochettino suggested he did so to be fair to the Tranmere supporters who had turned out on a cold night.

"It was the plan to give Harry Kane 15-20 minutes to play, he always wants to play. It is important too for the fans here and the opponents to enjoy Harry Kane, he's an icon in England and not everyone can have the opportunity to see him," he said.

"It was important to show some respect to the people who are here, it was very nice for everyone."

Tranmere manager Micky Mellon acknowledged his team, who won promotion to League Two from the fifth-tier National League last term, were outclassed by a side who are third in the top flight.

"You have to say that Spurs are fantastic haven't you? We will be disappointed with certain moments and a lot of the goals. But listen that's what happens when you make mistakes. You get punished. We got punished very, very heavily."

"They are a fantastic football team with outrageously good players. Sometimes you have to put your hands up and say they were brilliant," he said.

(Source: Reuters)

Bale injury shown to be minor, say Real Madrid



Real Madrid were handed a boost on Saturday when tests on Gareth Bale's calf injury revealed only a grade-one tear.

Bale was forced off at half-time against Villarreal on Wednesday as Madrid were held to a 2-2 draw.

But the club have confirmed the problem is minor. Grade-one tears are the least severe of the three classifications.

A statement read: "After tests carried out today on our player Gareth Bale by the medial services of Real Madrid, he has been diagnosed with a grade-one injury in the left calf."

Bale will miss the La Liga game against Real Sociedad on Sunday and is unlikely to be risked against Leganes in the first leg of the Copa del Rey on Wednesday.

Madrid will hope to have him back later this month, however, with league games against Real Betis, Sevilla and Espanyol to come.

"We think the injury is not too serious," Solari said at a press conference earlier on Saturday. "He will go through tests today and we all hope he is back with us quickly."

Expectations were high for Bale this season following the departure of Cristiano Ronaldo last summer, but the Welshman's rhythm has been disrupted by fitness issues.

He has made 22 appearances for Real but played 90 minutes only five times.

Bale's absence could mean a reprieve for Isco. He has been out of favour since Solari took charge but replaced the Welshman

ment by eventual winners France.

Maradona was taken into hospital in 2004 with severe heart and respiratory problems linked to cocaine use. He later underwent drug rehabilitation in Cuba and Argentina before a stomach-stapling operation in 2005 helped him lose weight.

In 2007 he checked himself into a clinic in Buenos Aires to help him overcome alcohol abuse problems.

In recent months he has walked with the aid of crutches due to problems with his knees.

The unexpected news of his admittance to hospital on Friday came just hours after Maradona's lawyer confirmed he would coach in Mexico for a second consecutive season.

Maradona took over at struggling Dorados de Sinaloa in September and got them into the playoffs where they lost to Atletico San Luis.

"Diego Maradona has arranged to continue with the Dorados de Sinaloa and will stay as coach of the team for the whole season," his agent Matias Morla wrote on twitter.

The club said his assistant Jose Maria Martinez would lead the team until Maradona returned.

(Source: Eurosport)

Federer wins record third Hopman in dramatic fashion

Roger Federer has become the most successful player in Hopman Cup history after leading Switzerland to a 2-1 win in an enthralling final of the mixed teams tournament in Perth Saturday.

In what is tipped to be the final edition of the unique tournament, the best was saved for last as Federer became the first player to win three Hopman Cups, teaming with Belinda Bencic for the duo's second consecutive title.

For the second year in a row, the Swiss beat the German pairing of Alexander Zverev and Angelique Kerber by claiming a deciding mixed doubles rubber loaded with drama.

It was Switzerland's fourth title overall, behind only the United States with six. Federer first won the Hopman Cup back in 2001 when he teamed with Martina Hingis.

The 37-year-old gave the Swiss the early ascendancy with a straight sets win against Zverev, before Kerber squared the tie by beating a dogged Belinda Bencic to set up the mixed doubles decider.

Federer was a dominant figure in an extraordinary doubles match as the Swiss claimed the abbreviated format 4-0, 1-4, 4-3 (5/4) to clinch the title.

Fittingly, it was Federer who served out the match in the third set tie-break, having been unable to do so earlier in the set, when after an extended rally Zverev dumped a backhand into the net to hand the Swiss victory.

■ **High-octane**

In the men's singles, Federer bounced back from a No-



vember loss to Zverev in London to beat the big-serving German 6-4, 6-2 and make it a clean sweep of his singles matches in Perth for the second year running, less than two weeks before he defends his Australian Open title.

It was a high-octane match, with plenty of big serves and clean winners, but Federer was able to answer everything the 21-year-old threw at him.

He broke Zverev in the 10th game of the first set and then tightened the noose on the German, with two more breaks in the second set.

Federer, who also beat Zverev in three sets in last year's Hopman final, clinched the match with a typically crisp

forehand volley.

He was pleased to maintain his unbeaten singles record during the week, during which he never dropped his serve.

"I am happy I was able to maintain the good, high quality tennis I showed all week," he said.

"It is good to finish on a singles performance like this, I was able to come up with some good serve and volley and it all worked out today."

World number two Kerber appeared set for an easy win in her singles match against Bencic, taking the first set and then claiming an early break in the second.

The German served at 5-4, but the match took a sudden twist as Bencic broke back, only for Kerber to immediately break again.

For a second time Kerber was unable to serve out the match, as Bencic forced it to a tie-break.

Kerber had two match points at 6-4, but Bencic again hung on grimly and won the next two points.

It wasn't until Kerber's third chance that a backhand winner secured the 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) win.

Critical was Kerber's ability to convert all four of her break points during the match, while Bencic was only successful on two of seven.

Kerber praised Bencic's tenacity, saying she was always a determined opponent.

"She was fighting until the last one (point)," she said.

(Source: AFP)



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S P O R T S

INTERNATIONAL DAILY

TEHRANTIMES

15

Team Melli partake at Asian Cup with boosted confidence

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran's national soccer team will attend the 2019 AFC competitions with high confidence following a good performance at 2018 World Cup in Russia, Iran's defensive midfielder Omid Ebrahimi said on Saturday.

Ebrahimi, 31, stole the show in the 2018 World Cup in Russia where Iran narrowly missed the chance to reach the knockout phase.

Iran defeated Morocco 1-0, lost to Spain 1-0 and drew 1-1 with Portugal in Russia.

Now, the 2018 World Cup has boosted their confidence for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup, Ebrahimi said.

"We have a difficult task ahead because the Asian Cup has brought so many strong teams together. However, we can emerge victorious from our matches if we play as we did in the World Cup. I hope we make our people proud in the



competition," Ebrahimi pointed out.

"I think Australia and Japan are the most powerful teams in this edition.

Both teams have the capability of winning the title," Qatar's Al Ahli midfielder added.

Iran were knocked out of the 2015 AFC Asian Cup in the penalty shootout against Iraq and Ebrahimi says it's time to get revenge on them.

"I have not forgotten the defeat and I will do my best in our match against Iraq to take revenge on them," Ebrahimi added.

Iran had a training camp in Doha for two weeks since Dec. 17.

Iran have been drawn along with Iraq, Yemen and Vietnam in Group D of the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

The competition will be held in the United Arab Emirates from January 5 to February 1. Iran will start the campaign with a match against Yemen on January 7.

Martin Forkel named Esteghlal assistant



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian football club Esteghlal confirmed the signing of German coach Martin Forkel as the club's assistant coach.

Forkel, 39, will join Esteghlal in Doha's training camp.

Esteghlal coach Winfried Schaefer traveled to Germany in the Iran Professional League winter break and negotiated with his countryman in his hometown.

Forkel, most recently, has coached Vietnamese football club Ho Chi Minh City. Furthermore, Esteghlal has named

Farhad Majidi as another team's assistant. Majidi was playing under coaching of Schaefer in Al Ahli of the UAE in 2007. Majidi played in the Iranian popular team for several years and hung up his shoes in 2013.

"I selected Farhad, a man I know for a long time. We won a title in the UAE and I believe we'll work successful in Esteghlal too. The president and I are still try to attract new players. I hope soon I'll be able to share more positive news," Schaefer posted on his Instagram account.

Mario Budimir close to joining Persepolis



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian football club Persepolis have reportedly reached an agreement with Croat striker Mario Budimir.

Budimir, 32, will replace Godwin Mensha, who has been deemed as surplus to requirements in January.

The Nigerian forward has netted just two goals in the current season and has reached 1,000 minutes without scoring for Persepolis.

Budimir, who most recently played at Dinamo Zagreb, will reportedly finalize

his contract with Persepolis in the next few days.

Persepolis served transfer ban in the last two windows and now are allowed to sign new player.

The Iranian giants, who finished runners-up in the 2018 AFC Champions League, are going to strengthen for new season.

Persepolis are pitted against Qatar's Al Sadd and Al Ahli of Saudi Arabia in Group D, while they want to win Iran Professional League for the third successive year.

Preview - Group B: Australia v Jordan

Australia coach Graham Arnold has consigned his nation's AFC Asian Cup victory four years ago to the history books as he prepares to lead the defending champions into their first game of the 2019 edition against Jordan in Al Ain on Sunday.

The Socceroos claimed their first-ever AFC Asian Cup title on home soil in 2015 but, with a rejuvenated squad and a new man at the helm, Arnold was quick to stress he and his players are focused only on what lies ahead.

"That was four years ago, it was in our own nation and it's a great memory for the Australian public, but in four years many things change in and around the team and also in people's personal lives," said Arnold, who took over as Australia coach following the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia.

"It's a great memory, but we're totally focused on what's in front of us. We can't do anything about the past and what's in front of us is the Asian Cup. For the players and myself it's time to get the show started. Everyone's been talking about it for a long time and we've prepared for it and we're ready."

Arnold confirmed Mathew Leckie will not be fit enough to feature against the Jordanians in the Group B meeting after sustaining a hamstring injury in the build-up to the tournament, but he remains hopeful the Hertha Berlin winger will return soon.

"He's coming along really well," said the coach. "Obviously it's one game at a time and we've really thrown



our belief behind him, and he has a strong will to be with us. He's worked hard since he came into camp and at this minute he's only out for the first game and we'll reassess for the second game."

The Australians take on a Jordan side that has changed significantly since the two countries faced off in the second round of qualifying, when Jordan won the first meeting 2-0 in Amman before the Socceroos cruised to a 5-1 success in the return in Sydney.

New coach Vital Borkelmans has been in charge since October last year and the Belgian is focusing on trying to emulate the country's previous best performances at the AFC Asian Cup, with Jordan reaching the quarter-finals in 2004 and 2011.

"Australia is very good, the country and the coach have made good performances and also they were at the World Cup and the experience they have at the Asian Cup is amazing," he said.

"For us, we are preparing for every game, not only Australia is very important. There are good games also against Syria and Palestine. There are three teams in this one group from Arab countries, so this is a special group.

"This tournament is so special, for every team and every country the start is always dangerous and every team is scared to lose."

The Jordanians come into the tournament off the back of just one win in their last five friendly games, with their three matches in Qatar during their pre-AFC Asian Cup training camp yielding only one goal.

That came in a 1-1 draw with China after Borkelmans' team had already lost to both Kyrgyz Republic and Qatar, leaving the Belgian hoping his players' fortunes in front of goal take a turn for the better after seeing his side create goal scoring opportunities.

"My team is ready physically and mentally and tomorrow they will hopefully make a good game like they did in Qatar and make a lot of chances as we did against China, Kyrgyzstan and Qatar," he said.

"They made a lot of chances and it's very important they make a lot of chances and one day it will change, and maybe that will be tomorrow."

(Source: the-afc)

Iran completely focused on Yemen match: Carlos Queiroz

TEHRAN — Iran national football team coach Carlos Queiroz says Team Melli are completely focusing on the first game against Yemen.

Iran will face Yemen on Monday in Abu Dhabi in Group D.

"I know we are in a good position when we talk about the (FIFA) rankings. But tell me one thing, how many teams from the top five, as per the rankings, reached the World Cup final in Russia? What counts

is what you're able to do on the day, on the pitch," said Queiroz.

The Iranian side has been together for over three weeks now with a camp in Qatar before they headed for the UAE last week. And Queiroz sounded confident of his side's chances here.

"We are in the final phase of our preparations. We are in the taxiway and moving toward the runway. We want to ensure that everything is fresh and ready when

we take off on Monday.

"The team is completely focusing on the first game against Yemen. Right now, that's all that matters for us. We respect them, and we know that even they come with an ambition to qualify. We want to have a good start to the competition," Queiroz said.

"It's been a long journey for us. And inshallah, we will play as many games as possible here at the Asian Cup. But it's im-

portant to have a good start, but moreover, this is not about how we start. It's about how we finish. But every big achievement starts with a small step and that we need to be consistent going forward too.

"We must be ready, in our journey, to face some wonderful moments and also moments that won't be that easy. We need to be mentally tough here," the Portuguese Tactician added.

(Source: Sportskeeda)



Tractor Sazi eye Sardar Azmoun: report

TASNIM — Iran and Rubin Kazan striker Sardar Azmoun has reportedly reached an agreement with Tractor Sazi football club.

The Tabriz-based football team, who are going to win first ever title in Iran Professional League, have reportedly reached an agreement with the striker.

Azmoun had been reportedly linked with a move to Liverpool and Celtic before the 2018 World Cup.

Following poor performance in the World Cup in Russia, Azmoun announced his retirement from the international football but returned to Team Melli soon after.

Now, the Iranian media reports suggest that the 24-year-old forward has reached a final agreement with Iranian club Tractor Sazi.

Azmoun is a member of Iran national football team in the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

Asian Cup: Japanese referee Sato chosen to officiate Iran's opener

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Japanese international referee Ryuji Sato has been chosen to officiate Iran's opening match in the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.



Team Melli will meet Yemen in Group D of the competition on Monday at the Mohammed bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi.

Sato has refereed many matches in the AFC Champions League and FIFA World Cup qualifiers at the international level. He is also a referee in J. League Division 1 in Japan.

The 2019 AFC Asian Cup will be held in the UAE from Jan. 5 to Feb. 1.

Nenad Trunic parts company with Iran basketball

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Republic of Iran Basketball Federation (IRIBF) parted company with Serbian coach Nenad Trunic by mutual consent.

Trunic signed a two years contract with Iran in April 2017 as technical director, coordinator of coaching staff and manager of training technology for youth program in the Iranian Basketball Federation (all teams below the senior team).

The Iranian federation decided to terminate the contract of the coach three months before whose contract runs out.

The Serbian was a member of Iran staff where the Asian team finished in 15th place out of 16 teams at the 2017 FIBA U19 Basketball World Cup in Egypt.

Iran, Japan, S. Korea favorites to win Asian Cup title: AS

Iran, Japan and South Korea football teams are favorites to win the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

The Asian Cup will kick off on Saturday and will run until February 1 in the UAE.

Iran, Japan and South Korea are the favorites for the title in the competition which will be held with 24 teams for the first time.

The winner will qualify for the Confederations Cup of Qatar in 2021. The Asian Cup is the second oldest continental competition in the world of football, after the Copa America that started for the first time in 1916.

The first Asian competition was organized in 1956 in Hong Kong and was won by South Korea.

Australia are the current champions and won their only trophy in 2015, after beating South Korea in the final.

Japan are the country with the most titles, with four, followed by Saudi Arabia and Iran, which have three each.

(Source: As.com)

Siamand Rahman a powerlifter to watch at world c'ships

Siamand Rahman from Iran is a powerlifter to watch at the World Para Powerlifting World Championships, Paralympic. org reported.

The competitions will be held in Astana, Kazakhstan from June 29 to July 6.

Since lifting a world record of 310kg in the men's over 107kg at Rio 2016, everyone has been waiting for the world's strongest Paralympian to take it even further.

But Rahman is hoping to target another attack on the world record at either a World Championships or Paralympic Games.

The Iranian easily won the Asia-Oceania Open Championships and Asian Para Games in 2018 but decided to leave the world record lift for another time – could 2019 be his chance?

Rahman will have a busy year and will be looking to claim the world title and set new world records.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Former AC Milan midfielder Constant joins Iran's Tractor Sazi

Former AC Milan midfielder, Kevin Constant, signed with Tractor Sazi soccer club on Friday to play in Iran's Super League.

Constant, 31, joined the Tabriz-based club on a three-and-half year contract.

According to the reports, he moved to the Iranian club for five million euros (5.7 million U.S. dollars) cash.

The French-Guinea national will play as a defense midfielder in Tractor Sazi of Tabriz.

Constant began representing the French U-17 squad in 2004, and in 2006, he was promoted to Toulouse's first-team squad.

In September 2010, he was signed by Italian club Chievo on a loan deal, ultimately made permanent in June 2011

On 20 June 2012, Constant moved to AC Milan on a loan deal, which carried an option to buy.

In 2014, he joined Turkey's Trabzonspor, and two years later he returned to Italy to play for Bologna.

Currently, Tractor Sazi sits at the fourth place in the standings of Iran's Super League.

(Source: Xinhua)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A believer divides his day and night into three parts: he spends some of it in communion with God; another part in repairing his life and needs; and the third part in providing his body and soul with legitimate and admirable joys.

Imam Ali (AS)

“Who Is Not Afraid of the Lunatics?” published in English

CULTURE d e s k TEHRAN — Persian writer Mehdi Rezaei’s novel “Who Is Not Afraid of the Lunatics?” has been published in English.

Who is not afraid of the lunatics?

Front cover of the English version of Persian writer Mehdi Rezaei's novel “Who Is Not Afraid of the Lunatics?”.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Book City to showcase offerings from foreign publishers

CULTURE d e s k TEHRAN — The Book City Institute plans to organize an exhibition of foreign books at its central shop in Tehran.

Latest offerings from foreign publishing houses will be put on display at the exhibit, which will open on January 9, the institute has announced.

The book fair has been organized to celebrate the New Year.

Beyonce and Jay-Z help Paris Louvre to record number of visitors

PARIS (Reuters) — A music video by Beyonce and Jay-Z set in the Louvre helped boost visitor numbers to a record 10.2 million last year, the most for any museum in history, the Louvre said on Thursday.

A rebound in tourist numbers to Paris, following a drop after Islamist militants killed 130 people in the French capital in November 2015, also helped the museum achieve a 25 percent increase in visitors on the previous year.



Visitors take pictures of the painting “Mona Lisa” (La Joconde) by Leonardo Da Vinci at the Louvre Museum in Paris, France, December 3, 2018. (Reuters/Charles Platiau/File Photo)

The Louvre said it was happy at the response to the video by Beyonce and her husband Jay-Z for the song “APES*T” in which they perform in front of the Mona Lisa, the Venus de Milo and other famous artworks. It has been viewed nearly 150 million times on YouTube.

“It is good to see that these American artists, creators of today, are interested in a museum of archaeology and ancient art,” Louvre Director Jean-Luc Martinez told Reuters.

The Louvre’s previous record was 9.7 million visitors, in 2012, when the museum inaugurated its Islamic Art section and held exhibitions on Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael.

Three-quarters of the visitors are foreigners, with about 1.5 million American and 1 million Chinese tourists.

Indicating that the sometimes violent “yellow vest” protests in the final weeks of last year had not damaged tourism, the French Center for National Monuments also reported record 2018 numbers, with 10.2 million visitors, up 8 percent, to the 100 sites it manages. The previous record was in 2014.

The Arc de Triomphe, despite being closed for two weeks last month after being defaced by yellow vest protests against government reforms, was France’s most popular monument in 2018, with 1.7 million visitors, followed by the Mont-Saint-Michel island in Normandy, with 1.4 million.

“Sea Closed” documents Chinese plunder of Persian Gulf marine life

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Iranian young filmmaker

Mahmud Shahbazi has recently completed a documentary named “The Sea Closed” that traces the plunder of seafood resources in the Persian Gulf by Chinese vessels over the past few years.

Adel Qasemi also worked with him as an assistant director.

Qasemi who is also a freelance journalist made a trip to the southern Iranian port of Jask in 2017 to pursue the subject of stealth fishing by Chinese ships.

Due to fear for their security, local fishermen refused to give any information to Qasemi or help him. Therefore, he rented an unlicensed boat to get close to the Chinese ships in the sea.

“I found 12 fishing ships whose employees didn’t allow me to enter,” Qasemi said in a press conference organized after the premiere of his documentary during the Ammar Popular Film Festival at Tehran’s Felestin Cinema on Friday.

“However, I disguised myself as a businessman to enter one of the ships. I saw a variety of fish caught and stored in the ship, so I promised myself to pursue the issue because 90 percent of people in Jask earn a living as fishermen,” he noted.

Qasemi teamed up with Shahbazi who had previously made “Suffocation” about embezzlement in the sale of the Almahdi Aluminum Company in Bandar Abbas to the private sector.

“The Sea Closed” was finally completed and scenes of the documentary were published on the Internet. As a result, the issue came under the spotlight and Saeid Jalili, a member



Iranian filmmaker Mahmud Shahbazi (R) and his assistant Adel Qasemi (L) attend a press conference on their documentary “The Sea Closed” during the Ammar Popular Film Festival at Tehran’s Felestin Cinema on January 3, 2019.

of the National Security Council made a trip to Bandar Abbas to hold a meeting with local fishermen.

“Afterwards, 91 ships were detained. Of course, the Chinese nationality of the ships was a type of cover and they were originally

working for a group of corrupt Iranian politicians,” Shahbazi said.

The ships are only allowed to catch several species of the large family of Myctophidae, he said and added, “However, they sweep up all marine creatures from

the sea, because catching only the several species of Myctophidae is not economical for them.”

The 9th Ammar Popular Film Festival is currently underway in Tehran and several other cities, and will run until January 10.

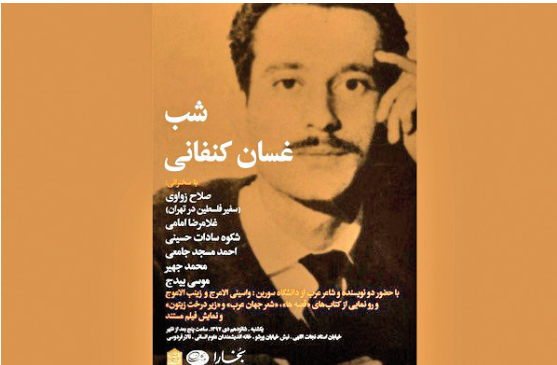
Palestinian author Ghassan Kanafani to be remembered in Tehran

CULTURE d e s k TEHRAN — A number of Iranian and Arab literati will come together today in a meeting at the Ferdowsi Hall of the House of Humanities Intellectuals in Tehran to pay tribute to Palestinian author Ghassan Kanafani.

Kanafani was a modernist political writer and a leading member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. He was killed by Mossad in a car bomb explosion in Beirut in 1972.

Palestinian Ambassador Salah al-Zawawi, Arab scholars Wasini Al Araj and Zaynab al-Awaj and Iranian literati Gholamreza Emami, Mohammad Jahir, Musa Bidaj, Shokuh Sadat Hosseini and Tehran City Council member Ahmad Masjed-Jamei are scheduled to speak at the meeting entitled “A Night with Ghassan Kanafani”.

Organized by the House of Humanities Intellectuals



A poster for “A Night with Ghassan Kanafani”.

and Bokhara magazine, the meeting will also unveil three books from Arabic literature. The books are “Arab World’s Poetry”, “The Olive Tree” and “The Tales”, all published by Ruzbahan Publications in Tehran.

“Arab World’s Poetry” is an anthology of poems by Arab poets, including Mahmoud Darwish, Kahlil Gibran, Adunis and Nizar Qabbani. The collection has been compiled and translated into Persian by Firuz Shirvanlu.

“The Olive Tree” is a collection of works by Samih al-Qasim, Fadwa Tuqan, Tawfiq Ziad, Salem Jubran and several other Palestinian poets, which has been compiled by Kanafani. The book is rendered into Persian by Sirus Tabbaz and Gholamreza Emami.

A new edition of the Persian translation of Kanafani’s short stories “The Tales” by Gholamreza Emami will also be introduced at the meeting.

Tehran theaters set for “The Two Executioners”, “Waiting for Godot”

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — The Neauphle-le-Château Theater in Tehran is hosting Spanish playwright Fernando Arrabal’s play “The Two Executioners” as Irish writer Samuel Beckett’s “Waiting for Godot” will go on stage at the Qashqai Hall of Tehran’s City Theater Complex on Tuesday.

Mahmud Yusefi is the director of “The Two Executioners”, which is about Francoise, who reports her husband to the authorities for an unnamed crime. As he is tortured upstairs, Francoise and her two sons argue over their guilt and betrayal.

Mohammadreza Farabi, Omid Qanbari, Alieh Sharifi and Mohammad Hossein Khademi are the main members of the cast for the play, which will be on stage until January 20.

“Waiting for Godot” will be staged by director Hessam Lak.

Vahid Ajorlu, Saeid Ahmadi, Meisam Damanzeh, Zaya David and Shahu Rostami will star in the play, which will be on stage until February 7.

The play is about Vladimir and Estragon waiting for the arrival of someone named Godot who never arrives.



This combination photo shows posters for “Waiting for Godot” (L) by Iranian director Hessam Lak and “The Two Executioners” by Mahmud Yusefi.

“Black Panther” and “Dunkirk” actors among BAFTA Rising Star nominees

LONDON (Reuters) — “Black Panther” actress Letitia Wright and “Dunkirk” actor Barry Keoghan are among the five nominees for the 2019 EE Rising Star Award, the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) said on Thursday.

The annual prize, the sole award voted for by the public at the glitzy BAFTAs ceremony in London, recognizes “outstanding achievement by upcoming actors”. Past winners include “Get Out” star Daniel Kaluuya, “Star Wars” actor John Boyega and Oscar

nominee Tom Hardy.

Alongside Wright and Keoghan, this year’s list of nominees also features Tony and Grammy Award winner, “Widows” actress Cynthia Erivo, “Get Out” and “War Machine” actor Lakeith Stanfield and stage

and screen actress Jessie Buckley.

The full list of nominees for this year’s BAFTAs will be announced next week. The film awards, hosted by “Absolutely Fabulous” actress Joanna Lumley, will be held on Feb. 10 at London’s Royal Albert Hall.

Hollywood ready to party in (possibly) Trump-free Golden Globes

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — The Golden Globes kick off the showbusiness awards season on Sunday with Hollywood apparently in the mood for a party, and with plenty to celebrate.

After a record \$41.7 billion global movie box-office in 2018, crowd-pleasers like “A Star is Born,” “Black Panther,” “Bohemian Rhapsody” and “Mary Poppins Returns” are competing for Golden Globe honors.

This year, the boozy, informal dinner in Beverly Hills, organized by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, is expected to leave politics behind.

Golden Globe hosts Andy Samberg and “Killing Eve” nominated actress Sandra Oh say they are aiming for a fun evening.

“Everyone is depressed and maybe that’s as good a reason as any that everyone could use a little time to laugh and celebrate,” Samberg told the Hollywood Reporter.

Oh said she is “not interested at all” in talking about U.S. President Donald Trump, who has been a focus of attacks at award shows since his 2016 election campaign.

Last year’s Golden Globes were marked by celebrities turning out en masse in black in solidarity with the #MeToo sexual harassment scandal that was roiling Hollywood.



Actor Bradley Cooper accepts the 32nd American Cinematheque Award during a ceremony to honor him in Beverly Hills, California, U.S., Nov. 29, 2018. (Reuters/Danny Moloshok)

“After Trump’s election and #MeToo, people felt like they had to speak up,” said Tim Gray, awards editor at Hollywood publication Variety.

“This year it’s, ‘let’s celebrate the work’. They are looking forward to the fun of the Globes,” Gray added.

Lady Gaga, Idris Elba, Bradley Cooper and

veteran Dick Van Dyke will be among dozens of famous faces turning out on Sunday.

Scathing comedy “Vice,” about former U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, has a leading six nominations, including for actors Christian Bale, Sam Rockwell and Amy Adams.

But competition is strong for the best comedy or musical statuette, with historical

romp “The Favourite,” romantic comedy “Crazy Rich Asians,” 1960s road trip “Green Book” and “Mary Poppins Returns” all vying for honors.

“Vice” director Adam McKay really takes chances with that movie. Sometimes he goes too far, and some people love it and some people are having a hard time with it,” said Gray.

Pop star Gaga and actor-director Cooper are seen taking home statuettes for “A Star is Born,” with Gaga’s version of “Shallow” widely viewed as a shoo-in for best original song.

Despite being musicals, both “A Star is Born” and “Bohemian Rhapsody,” starring Rami Malek as the late Queen frontman Freddie Mercury, will compete in the more prestigious best movie drama category. They will face off against three films focusing on racial issues - superhero movie “Black Panther,” “BlackKkKlansman” and “If Beale Street Could Talk.”

Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón’s lovingly shot “Roma” is expected to win the Golden Globe for best foreign language film.

The Golden Globes ceremony will be televised live on NBC on Sunday, starting at 8 pm ET/5 pm PT.