



**Ties with Iran continues strongly: Iraqi Kurdistan** **2**



**Unity essential to overcome sanctions** **2**



**Iran chess master Khosro Harandi passes away** **15**



**Ancient animal motifs back to life in metal embossing art collection** **16**

## Iran, India commerce chambers ink trade co-op MOU **See page 4**

**Zarif: Traditional partners prioritized amid EU procrastination** **2**



Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif (L) shakes hand with Indian Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari as they meet in New Delhi on Tuesday, 8 January, 2019.



**EDITORIAL**  
**Mohammad Ghaderi**  
Tehran Times editor-in-chief  
@ghaderi62

### The black nightmare of the Green Continent

The deployment of about 147,000 police officers on Paris and other cities' streets in the early days of the New Year, and the increased security warnings in other EU member states, uncovers of a deep-seated crisis existing in the Green Continent. The "security crisis", which was a marginal crisis in the early months of 2018, has once again become the main crisis in European countries. But this time, the security crises in Europe are very different with what we saw during 2015 and 2016!

Over the past years, "the security crisis" in Europe was regarded as an independent crisis by experts of European and international affairs. It wasn't without a reason that Western security forces tried to "create an external source", such as ISIS, to justify these crises.

In other words, the security authorities in the European countries tried not to point out their policies in the creation of Takfiri groups and supporting them in West Asia, and their inability to manage these groups. But this equation has completely changed over the last months of 2018!

This time, the "crisis of security in Europe", besides being the result of the Takfiris' and nationalist groups' activities, was also the product of other social, political and economic crises in the EU member states.

This time, security officials in Europe couldn't deny the "internal source" of security crises in this block. The rise of social unrests in European countries on the one hand, and the emergence of nationalist and radical right movements, on the other hand, has led to a change in Western security equations.

The researches also show an increase of violence and crime in Western countries, which in parts, is indicative of this security crisis in Europe. This crisis has affected even more prosperous European countries such as Sweden. According to the latest statistics, firearm-related violence is increasing in Sweden, and this country is highly affected by these crimes. Only last year, more than 800 firearms were seized in Sweden. **→7**

### Who is the new member of the U.S. National Security Council?

**By Mohammad Ghaderi**

**TEHRAN** — Richard Goldberg, a Grand Old Party foreign policy expert, is joining the White House's National Security Council as its new Director for Countering Iranian weapons of mass destruction. Earlier in the Obama era, he was the main designer and negotiator of the Congress on Iran's sanctions and resigned after concluding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPOA. Goldberg, senior advisor at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), was a Republican negotiator for the United States Senate for several rounds of congressional sanctions against Iran. He also identified himself as one of the leading FDD ideologues in the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Among his prominent proposals, is to cut

funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) which has already come into effect.

#### Who is Richard Goldberg?

Goldberg holds a Bachelor of Science in Journalism and Master's in Public Policy and Administration from Northwestern University. He is an officer in the U.S. Navy Reserve with prior service in Afghanistan.

From 2004 to 2014, he worked on Capitol Hill, serving as deputy chief of staff and senior foreign policy adviser to former U.S. Senator Mark Kirk of Illinois. From 2015 to 2017, he served as deputy chief of staff for legislative affairs and later chief of staff for Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner.

As a staff associate for the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State-Foreign Operations, Richard worked on a wide range of issues related to U.S. foreign assistance, including foreign military financing, international security assistance, international peacekeeping, development, global health and economic support funds. He was a founding staff director of the House U.S.-China Working Group and was among the first Americans ever to visit China's human space launch center. A leader in efforts to expand U.S. missile defense cooperation with Israel, Richard played a key role in U.S. funding for the Arrow-3 program, Iron Dome and the deployment of an advanced missile defense radar to the Negev Desert. **→7**

### Armageddon in the Orient: How the Saudi-Connection targets Iran

**Book review by Mohammad Hashemi**

**TEHRAN** — On the afternoon of February 14, 1945, King Abdul Aziz, the founder of Saudi Arabia, set foot on board the USS Quincy in the Suez Canal for a secret official meeting with the United States president. It was a fairly cold and windy day and after an official welcome ceremony Abdul Aziz met Franklin D. Roosevelt for the first time. Roosevelt was returning from the Yalta Conference where he had met former Soviet leader Josef Stalin's and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The outcome of several days of talks established

the core themes of an enduring relationship in which the "Saudi-Connection" has played a major role. The term refers to the close political and economic ties between Riyadh and Washington, whose business relationship is largely, based on the exchange of U.S. arms and security with Saudi oil.

Michael Lüders, the prominent German writer and Middle East expert, in his recent book, "Armageddon in the Orient: How the Saudi-Connection targets Iran" (2018), traces in detail the U.S. alliance with Saudi Arabia from Roosevelt to Trump and explains the reasons behind the

U.S. systematic demonization of Iran. The author sheds lights on Saudi-Iran antagonism and asserts that the opposition to Iran is not primarily religious, but based on solid political motives. These developments, the author argues could lead to the U.S. confrontation with Iran and an escalating conflict in the region.

The statement becomes justified when we look at Trump's administration policies against Iran and the fact that Trump has allowed himself to come under the sway of Saudi Arabia and Israel that crave the U.S. backing for their regional rivalries. **→7**



**ARTICLE**  
**Haniyeh Sadat Jafariyeh**  
Tehran Times Journalist

### Currency reconversion not a turning point in economic reformation

One of Iran's main economic policies, under the framework of the sixth five-year development plan, is modification of banking system and reformation of monetary policies, moving forward toward which the Rouhani administration put forward the plan to shift the national currency from Rial to Toman earlier in December 2016 by eliminating specific number of zeroes.

However, the administration decided to postpone implementation of currency reconversion policy in 2016 due to some reasons including the expressed concerns about the time unfitting economic conditions which would ignite inflation and economic instability.

The policy basically seeks to facilitate monetary transactions among the Iranians and match the currency being transcribed in official documents and banking bills (rial) with the one utilized in real daily lives of Iranians (toman). Rial has practically been replaced by Toman in daily transactions as the result of the cumulative inflation over the recent years.

On Saturday, the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) submitted the bill on lopping off four zeroes of the national currency to the cabinet, the act which drew public attention to the issue again, forming a chorus of criticism and speculations.

Through its proposed bill, the CBI seems primarily able to re-empower the depreciated national currency, tangibly decrease the ever-increasing liquidity volume, and make a nominal reduction in prices of goods and services in the country.

The most remarkable achievements of implementing the bill, however, would be a psychological one among the society. Shifting from rial, the free market exchange rate of which is presently about 110,000 against the U.S. dollar, by cutting four zeroes to toman may cover the psychological aspects of the inflationary impacts of rial devaluation, which has unprecedentedly increased prices in Iran. It is said to be able to recover national currency's value against U.S. dollar to some extent and cool down the inflated prices, as well. **→4**

**هکوپیان**  
**HACOUPIAN**  
**25% OFF**  
**Big Sale of the year**  
**ENDS IN 3 DAYS.**  
For more information regarding prices of products and buying conditions, please visit our website at:  
**www.hacoupiyan.net**



The Tehran Times new pocket-sized glossary is now available on the market. The reader-friendly is a rich source of the most common journalistic terminology collected by the daily's retired staff.

It can benefit a wide range of tastes from students to professional journalists. Persian equivalents have been given for all entries, including idioms and expressions. The glossary also includes example sentences for entries the authors thought it would be a bit difficult to learn.

For more information contact:  
**(021)43051450**



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Startups bearing  
brunt of U.S.  
sanctions

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The secretary of the Iran d e s k E-Commerce Union says the new U.S. sanctions have had an impact on local startups and online businesses. “U.S. sanctions have impacted Iranian startups and the local e-commerce sector in three ways: harming the people’s purchasing power, forcing local and foreign firms to put their operations in Iran on hold and barring local startups from using online services sold by international firms,” Shayan Shalileh told Donyaye Eghtesad in an interview published on Tuesday. He added, “Purchasing power of the people has taken a hit. As such, households are cutting unnecessary spending. Due to this bitter fact, revenues of many local startups have also plummeted.” ors, who had made a foray into Iran’s on-line business sector after Tehran signed the historic nuclear deal in 2016 with the six world powers, have walked away,” fearing the U.S. wrath, Shalileh added.



Ties with Iran  
continues  
strongly: Iraqi  
Kurdistan

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Representative of the Iraqi Kurdistan autonomous region in Tehran on Monday advised the Kurdish people in the region to avoid being affected by the U.S. ploys against Iran, IRNA reported. Speaking to local media, Nazem Dabbaq said relations between the Kurdistan autonomous region with the neighboring countries will continue by the time the Iraqi government has not opposed, suggesting in the meantime that all should be vigilant not to be affected by the political ploys masterminded by the U.S. He said the U.S. economic sanctions against Iran have not left tangible impact on economic cooperation between the two sides and such relations will be continued with much strength. It is compulsory for the Iraqi Kurds to avoid relying on the U.S. or Russia and should mind relying on the neighboring countries which is among top priorities for Kurds, he said.



‘U.S. anxious  
about Iran’s  
cultural  
influence’

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The deputy head of the d e s k Leader’s Office for International Affairs says it is Iran’s cultural influence in regional states which has made the U.S. anxious. Mohammad Hussein Qomi said on Tuesday that Iran’s presence in the region enjoys the consent of local governments, according to IRNA. “If the Islamic Republic is taking some measures in the region, it is not for spreading Shia idealism but for the ideals of the Islamic world. For example, if the Islamic Republic was looking for Shia idealism in the region, support for Palestine and Afghanistan would no longer be necessary,” he stated. He added, “Over the past 40 years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has done the most for Palestine, a Sunni country.”



‘Ambassador  
should cement  
Tehran-Beijing  
ties’

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Shuaib Bahman, an international relations analyst, has said the Iranian ambassador to China should make efforts in line the policy to expand economic ties between the two countries. “China’s economic growth can be very important for Iran in the current juncture. [China] has been successful in international markets and is among the first five economic partners of most countries (in the world),” Mehr news agency quoted Bahman as saying on Tuesday. He noted that the Western countries have refused to invest in Iran and even not fulfilled their obligations under the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).



Denmark: EU  
agrees to sanction  
Iranian entity over  
assassination claim

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Anders Samuelsen, the Danish foreign minister, tweeted on Tuesday that the European Union agreed to enact sanctions against an Iranian Intelligence Service over claims of assassination plot. Danish intelligence chief Finn Borch Andersen claimed in October that an Iranian intelligence service had tried to carry out a plot to assassinate an Iranian Arab opposition figure on Denmark’s soil. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi dismissed the claim as a plot by enemies to affect Tehran’s growing relations with European countries.



Syrian official:  
Plan made to  
bolster Damascus-  
Tehran ties

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Syrian Deputy Defense Minister Mahmoud al-Shawa has said that Iran and Syria will boost their ties. “Cooperation and relations between Iran and Syria are not new and date back to Iran’s Islamic Revolution,” he told IRNA in an interview published on Monday. Good planning has been made to expand relations, he noted. Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami met on Monday with Shawa in Tehran. The meeting was held on the sidelines of the International Conference on Defense and Security in West Asia, which kicked off in Tehran on Monday morning.

# Unity essential to overcome sanctions: Jahangiri

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Pointing to d e s k harsh economic sanction against Iran by the United States, Vice President Es’haq Jahangiri suggested on Tuesday that national unity is essential to pass this hard time and solve the economic problems.

“The U.S. seeks to make living hard for the people and lead Iran towards economic and internal collapse. However, we can make this period [of difficult economic time] short through management based on certain conditions. The first condition is that the country’s political officials accept that they should protect the internal unity and integrity and not give in to hardliners,” he said during a ceremony.

U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew Washington unilaterally from the 2015 nuclear deal in May and ordered sanctions against Iran. The first round of sanctions went into force on August 6 and the second round, which targets Iran’s oil exports and banks, were snapped back on November 4.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo



announced in May that the U.S. will apply economic and military pressure against Iran and will impose “the strongest sanc-

tions in history” on the Islamic Republic. In an interview with BBC Persian in November Pompeo, Pompeo also said Ira-

nian officials must listen to Washington “if they want their people to eat”.

Also in November 2018, a week after a tough new round of sanctions against Iran came into force, Trump’s National Security Adviser John Bolton vowed to “squeeze” Iran “until the pips squeak”.

“As the British say, squeeze them until the pips squeak....We are also going to significantly increase the enforcement of sanctions,” Bolton said while visiting Singapore.

■ ‘Iran facing a demon like U.S.’

Jahangiri also criticized a number of Iranian officials who try to eliminate their rivals while the people are under economic pressure.

“We should help the people. The people face a demon like the U.S. which has put the country’s businessmen under pressure,” the vice president remarked.

Elsewhere, he attached great importance to entrepreneurs’ role in solving the economic problems.

Jahangiri promised that he will support entrepreneurs.

## Zarif: Traditional partners prioritized amid EU procrastination

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Tehran would not wait for the Europeans and their special payment system and will work with its traditional partners, like India, China and Russia, in order to fulfill the interests of Iranians, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said as he visited India late Monday.

“We continue to work with the Europeans for the special purpose vehicle but we are not waiting for them,” Zarif told reporters in New Delhi. “We are working with our traditional partners like India, like China, like Russia so that we continue to work in the interest of our people.”

Zarif was referring to the special purpose vehicle (SPV), a European Union’s initiative intended to protect trade with Iran against newly reimposed U.S. sanctions. The EU had promised to kick off the system on November 4 when Washington set the sanctions in motion. The package still remains untapped.

Iran will keep working with Europe to put into effect the SPV for international trade with Tehran under the 2015 nuclear deal, Zarif maintained. Tehran has told the EU if they want to have Iran in the deal while the U.S. violated it, they have to pay a price.

The top diplomat arrived in New Delhi late Monday for a three-day visit heading a diplomatic and economic delegation.

Zarif’s visit to India comes amid a six-month waiver granted by Washington to Indian companies to buy 300,000 bpd of crude from Iran. Iranian oil export funds will now be locked up in escrow accounts that can only be approved for humanitarian purposes including basic commodities and medicine.

The announcement of the sanctions had a domino effect for India, Iran’s second largest crude buyer, importing 540,000 bpd on average this year. Iran was India’s third largest crude supplier after Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

With one of the highest economic growth rates in the world, India imports 80 percent of its crude and the demand is on the rise. As a result of the uncertainties in crude supply

created by the sanctions, the Indian rupee fell to a record low of 73.81 against the dollar on October 5, cooling off the domestic stock market and escalating inflation.

Indian oil refiners had a good deal buying Iranian crude at \$3-5 a barrel cheaper compared to other Middle Eastern producers and benefits included \$2-4 discount for a barrel of crude, \$1 a barrel on freight subsidies and extended payment facilities.

Zarif said that Iran will enhance cooperation with its trade partners through various channels.

The Iranian foreign minister also pointed to his negotiations with Indian Transport and Shipping Minister Nitin Gadkari on economic cooperation, saying the two countries have launched cooperation in various fields, as in the development of the Iranian port city of Chabahar.

Pointing to the interaction between the Iranian and Indian banks, Zarif expressed hope that Tehran and New Delhi would broaden ties despite the U.S. sanctions.

Upon his arrival at the New Delhi airport, Zarif told reporters that Iran and India had good relations even after re-imposition of U.S. sanctions. “We have a good banking agreement with Indians, which was signed this fall and after [re-imposition] of sanctions, and this agreement allows our country to continue both exports and imports while meeting its financial needs.”

**The Iranian foreign minister said on Tuesday the European Union was moving more slower than expected in facilitating non-dollar trade with Tehran to circumvent U.S. sanctions, forcing it to explore avenues with other nations.**

## Tehran to Bolton: VR glasses useless if you’re blind

**1 →** The U.S. recognized al-Quds as Israel’s “capital” in late 2017, and relocated its embassy from Tel Aviv to the city last May in direct violation of international law.

The United Nations General Assembly voted soon after the recognition in favor of a resolution asking U.S. President Donald Trump to withdraw the decision.

Bolton’s visit further angered Palestinians as he allowed Israeli officials to accompany him on the tour.

Since the international community does not recognize al-Quds as Israeli territory, foreign dignitaries would usually avoid having Israeli officials at their side while visiting the Western Wall.

“Undermining international law by representatives of a superpower, will only lead to lawlessness, the logic of power rather than the power of logic. This behavior will not change the fact that East Jerusalem is occupied territory and the capital of the state of Palestine,” tweeted chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat in reaction.



Bolton (1st row-2nd R) and others are seen wearing virtual reality goggles during a visit to the Western Wall in East Jerusalem al-Quds’ Old City, January 6, 2019.

## Iran hopes India will seek fresh waiver from U.S. sanctions

Iran hopes India will strive to get another waiver from U.S. sanctions as New Delhi plans to continue buying oil from Tehran, Iran’s deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy Gholamreza Ansari said on Tuesday.

In November, the United States granted a six-month waiver from sanctions to India and allowed New Delhi to continue to import a limited quantity of Iranian oil.

In the previous round of sanctions India did not halt oil

imports from Iran, said Ansari, who is in India as part of a business delegation participating in a visit by Iran’s foreign minister Javad Zarif.

The official said there is also a chance for Indian companies to get development rights for Iran’s Farzad B gas field. Tehran could ease some terms associated with the project, he added.

(Source: The Economic Times)

## SPV to go on stream soon, EU says

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The d e s k European Union’s spokesperson said Monday that the bloc is still working on setting up a payment mechanism to facilitate trade with Iran and bypass U.S. sanctions.

“Actually, this is the work that is carried out by the (EU) member states. And according to the information that we have, the work is continuing and advancing well,” Maja Kocijancic, spokesperson for EU High Representative Federica Mogherini told a news conference in Brussels on Monday, the Kuwait News Agency reported.

She said the trade mechanism, formally known as the special purpose vehicle (SPV), will be established “soon”, adding, “We believe that it will be established in the coming weeks to promote legitimate business with Iran.”

The EU spokesperson went on to say that “this is part of the broader efforts of the European Union to preserve the nuclear agreement as long as Iran continues to respect its nuclear-related commitments.”



Following the U.S. unilateral withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA) last May and the re-imposition of sanctions against Tehran targeting the country’s banking sector, the EU promised to set up an alternative payment mechanism for Iran to continue business with the Islamic Republic in exchange for the country to remain in the nuclear agreement.

Iran has been critical of the EU’s delay in establishing the SPV, citing the bloc’s fear of the U.S. punitive measures against any country that decides to host the mechanism.

## Pakistan Navy flotilla visits Iran

Pakistan’s Navy flotilla PNS KHAIBAR, PNS MADADGAR, PNS RAH NAWARD and Maritime Security ship ZHOB visited the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas from 6 to 9 January 2019. The visit was part of overseas deployment of Pakistan’s Navy ships to the Persian Gulf.

On its arrival, the Pakistani flotilla was given a warm and traditional welcome by the Iranian Navy Military Band. In addition, large number of IRIN officers, including Deputy Commander of Iran’s first naval region, were present to receive the ships.

The visit is aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation particularly among the navies of the two countries. During their stay at Bandar Abbas, Pakistan’s Mission Commander called on Commander of Iran’s First Naval Region, Commodore Murtaza Mohammadi in which matters of mutual interest, including conducting bilateral exercises and exchange of visits were discussed. Expanding the existing scope of training of officers and men in each other’s institutions was also deliberated



upon. The Pakistan Navy delegation also called on Governor of Hormozgan Mr. Hemati as well as representative of the Iran’s spiritual Leader in Hormozgan. During these meetings, mutual cooperation based on religious and cultural commonalities were emphasized.

Naval forces play an important role in strengthening relationship between nations through goodwill visits. In this regard, the Pakistan Navy has been playing its role in bringing countries of the region together through enhanced maritime collaboration and participation in bilateral and multinational exercises.



# Afghan Taliban call off peace talks with U.S. over ‘agenda differences’

The Afghan Taliban said on Tuesday they had called off peace talks with U.S. officials in Qatar this week due to an “agenda disagreement”, especially over the involvement of Afghan officials as well as a possible ceasefire and prisoner exchange.

Two days of peace talks had been set to start on Wednesday, Taliban officials told Reuters earlier, but the hardline militant group had refused to allow “puppet” Afghan officials to join.

The war in Afghanistan is America’s longest overseas military intervention. It has cost Washington nearly a trillion dollars and killed tens of thousands of people.

“The U.S. officials insisted that the Taliban should meet the Afghan authorities in Qatar and both sides were in disagreement over declaring a ceasefire in 2019,” a Taliban source told Reuters.

“Both sides have agreed to not meet in Qatar.”

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said earlier the two sides were still working on the technical details and were not clear on the agenda for the talks.

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the cancellation.

The talks, which would have been the fourth round with U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, would have involved a U.S. withdrawal, prisoner exchange and the lifting of a ban on movement of Taliban leaders, a Taliban leader had told Reuters.

Taliban sources said that they had demanded U.S. authorities release 25,000 prisoners and they would free 3,000, but that U.S. officials were not keen to discuss



the exchange at this stage.

“We would never announce any ceasefire until and unless we achieve major gains on the ground. We have the feeling that Zalmay Khalilzad doesn’t have enough power to make important decisions,” a second Taliban official said.

The Taliban said Khalilzad would visit the United Arab Emirates, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and China to continue the discussion. Khalilzad’s office was not available for a comment.

The Taliban have rejected repeated requests from regional powers to allow Afghan officials to take part in the talks, insisting that the United States is their main adversary in the 17-year war.

The insurgents, seeking to reimpose strict law after their 2001 ouster by U.S.-led troops, called off a meeting with U.S. officials in Saudi Arabia this week because of Riyadh’s insistence on bringing the Western-backed Afghan government to the table.

Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the UAE took

part in the last round of talks in December.

Western diplomats based in Kabul said Pakistan’s cooperation in the peace process will be crucial to its success. Independent security analysts and diplomats said the neighboring country’s powerful military has kept close ties with the Afghan Taliban.

U.S. officials have accused Pakistan of providing safe haven to Taliban militants in its border regions and using them as an arm of its foreign policy. Pakistan denies the claim.

The United States, which sent troops to Afghanistan in the wake of Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on New York and Washington and at the peak of the deployment had more than 100,000 troops in the country, withdrew most of its forces in 2014.

It keeps around 14,000 troops there as part of a NATO-led mission aiding Afghan security forces and hunting militants.

Reports last month about U.S. President Donald Trump’s plans to withdraw thousands of troops from Afghanistan triggered uncertainty in Kabul which depends on the United States and other foreign powers for military support and training.

As peace talks gained momentum a draft agreement drawn up by the influential U.S. think tank RAND Corporation outlining the clauses for a potential peace deal was circulated among Afghan officials and diplomats in Kabul.

The document, reviewed by Reuters, suggests that the United States and NATO withdraw their military missions in phases over an expected period of 18 months. It adds that the United States may continue providing civilian assistance.

(Source: Reuters)

# Kim discusses expected summit with Trump in talks in China

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Chinese President Xi Jinping discussed an expected U.S.-North Korea summit in talks in Beijing on Tuesday, Yonhap news agency said, days after Kim warned he may take an alternative path if the United States does not ease sanctions.

Kim’s visit to China, confirmed by North Korean and Chinese state media, comes amid plans for a second summit with U.S. President Donald Trump aimed at denuclearizing the Korean peninsula.

South Korea’s Yonhap, without identifying its sources, said the two leaders held talks for an hour in which they discussed the second U.S.-North Korea summit and strengthening bilateral ties.

The meeting was followed by a dinner hosted by Xi and his wife, Yonhap said.

Kim held three summits last year with Xi, his most important ally, before and after summits with Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

Kim and Trump pledged to work towards denuclearization at their landmark June summit in Singapore, but the agreement was short on specifics. Negotiations have made little headway since.

“Kim is eager to remind the Trump administration that he does have diplomatic and economic options besides what Washington and Seoul can offer,” Harry J. Kazianis, Director of Defence Studies at the U.S.-based Centre for the National Interest, said in an e-mailed statement.

“In fact, during his New Year’s Day speech, Kim’s ‘new way’ that he referred to may well have been a veiled threat to move closer to Beijing. That should make America quite concerned.”

Kim left for China on a private train on Monday afternoon accompanied by his wife, Ri Sol Ju, and senior North Korean

officials, including Kim Yong Chol, a key negotiator in talks with the United States, and foreign minister Ri Yong Ho, North Korea’s state-run KCNA news agency said.

China’s official Xinhua news agency confirmed that Kim was visiting from Monday to Thursday at Xi’s invitation.

The visit coincides with what South Korean officials say is Kim’s 35th birthday on Tuesday.

Kim’s visit to North Korea’s most important economic and diplomatic ally follows reports of advanced negotiations for a second summit between Washington and Pyongyang aimed at resolving the standoff over North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs.

Kim said in his New Year speech he was ready to meet Trump any time to achieve their common goal of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. But he warned that he may seek an alternative path if U.S. sanctions and pressure against the country continued.

## ■ ‘Good partner’

In an interview with CNBC on Monday, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo praised China’s support for resolving the North Korean crisis and said he did not think the U.S. trade dispute with China would affect this.

Kim’s visit comes as a U.S. delegation opened a second day of talks with Chinese counterparts in Beijing aimed at ending the trade war between the world’s two largest economies.

“The Chinese have been very clear to us that these are separate issues,” Pompeo said.

“Their behavior has demonstrated that as well and we appreciate that. China has actually been a good partner in our efforts to reduce the risk to the world from North Korea’s nuclear capability; I expect they will continue to do so.”

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang, asked during a daily briefing whether there was a connection between



Kim’s visit and the possibility of another meeting between Kim and Trump, said China believed contact between the United States and North Korea was important.

“China has always supported both sides to continue to hold talks and to reach a positive outcome,” Lu said.

Shi Yinhong, an international relations professor at Renmin University in Beijing, said Kim’s trip would have no direct influence on the progress of trade talks.

While no details were released about an agenda in China, Kim has been seeking relief from sanctions, a peace declaration to formally end the 1950-1953 Korean War and more investment.

Ties between China and North Korea, which had frayed as Pyongyang stepped up its missile and nuclear tests up to late 2017, warmed over the past year as Kim engaged with China, South Korea and the United States.

(Source: Reuters)

## Hezbollah says still backs Hariri as PM

Hezbollah is clinging to Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri as its choice to form a new government, a senior Hezbollah official said Tuesday.

Hussein Khalil, a top political aide to Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah, told local daily Al-Akhbar that the party is “still convinced” that Hariri should be the prime minister at this stage.

Khalil’s comments come even as Hezbollah has stymied government formation efforts, now in their eighth month of deadlock. The party has backed the call for representation made by a group of six Sunni MPs not affiliated with Hariri’s Future Movement, refusing to submit the names of its Cabinet ministers until the demand is met.

However, both the prime minister-designate and President Michel Aoun have stated that the six MPs do not merit representation, because they did not belong to a single parliamentary bloc.

The six MPs, who are also pro-Syrian, are members of blocs affiliated with Hezbollah and the Amal Movement.

Officials within Hezbollah - both religious and political - have blamed Hariri for the prolonged government impasses. In November, Sheikh Nabil Qaouk, a member of Hezbollah’s central council, said: “The governmental crisis in Lebanon ... is becoming more complicated because of the designated premier’s denial of the results of the parliamentary elections.”

However, Khalil said Tuesday that the “recent positions of some officials” were not an indication of an “order of operations” to attack Hariri.

(Source: Daily Star)

## Twenty Chinese school children wounded in hammer attack

A Chinese man attacked at least 20 young children at a Beijing primary school with a hammer on Tuesday, state television reported, in a rare act of violence in the capital.

A 49-year-old man, a former maintenance worker at the school, was detained after venting his anger on the children after his work contract was not renewed, state television cited police as saying.

Twenty were taken to hospital, the government in the Xicheng district of the capital said in a post on its social media account.

Three suffered heavy injuries but their condition was stable, it said.

Police cars lined the main road close to the school when Reuters arrived at the scene.

Several police were seen coming from the school carrying items including sealed paper bags marked “physical evidence” and silver cases before driving off.

Parents waited outside for their children as the school day ended. Almost all of the parents Reuters approached declined to be interviewed.

“I heard that children were attacked (by someone) with a knife, so I’m very anxious,” said a woman surnamed Zhou as she waited for her child to finish school.

Another parent, surnamed Jia, said she was concerned about her child’s psychological wellbeing.

“Even though they were on the same floor as the one where this took place, they didn’t know anything about this. So I really don’t want this information to be spread widely so that he starts to feel scared,” she said.

The attacker, originally from northeastern Heilongjiang province, had been detained by police and an investigation was under way, state television said.

Violent crime is rare in China but there has been a series of knife and ax attacks in recent years, many targeting children.

In January 2017, a man in southern China stabbed and wounded 12 children with a vegetable knife. He was executed this month.

“People who hurt children do not deserved to be forgiven,” a social media user wrote in a post on Weibo, a Twitter-like microblog.

(Source: Daily Star)

## France to toughen sanctions on undeclared protests, PM says

France plans to introduce legislation to toughen sanctions on undeclared protests in response to violent “yellow-vest” demonstrations, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said on Monday in a hardening of the government’s stance on the unrest.

He spoke after rioters torched motorbikes and set barricades ablaze on Paris’s upmarket Boulevard Saint-Germain on Saturday, underscoring how protests against high living costs and President Emmanuel Macron have turned violent on the fringes.

“We need to preserve the right to demonstrate in France and we must sanction those who break the law,” Philippe told TF1 television.

“That’s why the government favors updating the law in order to sanction those who do not respect this obligation to declare protests, those who take part in undeclared protests, those who arrive at protests with balacabras,” Philippe said.

He said the government could model the new law on existing legislation against football hooligans whereby individuals can be banned from stadiums. It could be introduced as soon as February, he said.

Philippe also said the “casseurs”, or thugs, who have brought disruption and destruction to Paris and other major cities where shops have been looted and banks vandalized would be forced to pay for the damage they cause.

The latest “yellow vest” marches began peacefully but degenerated on Saturday afternoon as protesters threw missiles at riot police blocking bridges over the Seine.

Officers fired tear gas to prevent protesters crossing the river and reaching the National Assembly. One riverboat restaurant was set ablaze and a policeman was wounded when he was hit by a bicycle hurled from a street above the river bank.

Two months after they started blocking roads, occupying highway tollbooths and staging sometimes-violent street protests in Paris, the yellow vests aim to inject new momentum into a movement that weakened over the holidays.

(Source: Daily Star)

# Indian MPs pass contentious citizenship bill that excludes Muslims

India’s lower house passed Tuesday legislation that will grant citizenship to members of certain religious minorities but not Muslims, sparking protests in the country’s northeast.

The bill seeks to give citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Christians and Parsis from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, who came to India before Dec. 31, 2014.

Critics have called the proposal, contained in a Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019, blatantly anti-Muslim and an attempt by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party to boost its Hindu voter base ahead of a general election due by May.

The legislation, which still needs approval in the upper house, sparked a second day of protests Tuesday in the northeastern state of Assam, where millions have settled in recent decades after fleeing neighboring countries.

Demonstrators in the state are angry about the bill not because it excludes Muslims but because it grants citizenship to settlers from elsewhere, accusing the migrants of taking away jobs from indigenous groups.

India wants to give citizenship to immigrants belonging to religious minorities persecuted in neighboring Muslim countries, including Pakistan, because they have no



where go except India, Rajnath Singh told Parliament Tuesday. “The beneficiaries of the bill can reside in any state of the country.”

But there is significant opposition to the proposal, in particular from the northeastern state of Assam, where residents have for years

complained that immigrants from Bangladesh have put a big strain on resources.

But Singh tried to reassure Assam it would not have to bear any burden alone.

“The burden of those persecuted migrants will be shared by the whole country. Assam

alone should not have to bear the entire burden,” he said.

Last year the Assam government published a draft citizens’ register that left off four million people unable to prove they were living there before 1971, when millions fled Bangladesh’s war of independence.

A deadline to provide documents to be included in the registry passed on December 31, and the final list is due to be published on June 30.

In Tuesday’s protests in Assam, the militant North East Students’ Organization vandalized BJP offices and set banners and posters on fire.

Samujjal Bhattacharyya from NESO told AFP that people in the region would not “accept the political injustice perpetrated by the BJP”.

Police said that protesters threw stones at officers.

“We have identified the stone pelters by seeing video footage and they will be booked soon,” Assam police official Surjeet Singh Panesar said.

On Monday a small party in the BJP-led coalition in Assam, the Asom Gana Parishad, walked out of the alliance in protest at the bill, saying it would lead to an influx of Bangladeshi Hindus.

(Source: Daily Star)



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	163967.2
IFX	1922.09

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	48,040 rials
GBP	53,594 rials
AED	28,720 rials

Source: iribnews.ir

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$49.22/b
Brent	\$58.16/b
OPEC Basket	\$55.14/b
Gold	\$1,286.89 /oz
Silver	\$15.74/oz
Platinum	\$827.20/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Steel projects worth \$500m to become operational by March 20: official

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Steel projects valued at \$500 million will be put into operation in the country by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019), Iranian deputy industry, mining and trade minister announced.

Haddad Qaribpour further said that steel projects worth \$500 million have become operational in Iran since the beginning of current year, IRNA reported.

The official also put the country's value of steel exports at \$3 billion since the year start.



10th cement industry expo inaugurated

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The 10 edition of the Cement Industry Exhibition of Iran was inaugurated in the presence of Iranian deputy industry minister at Tehran's Goftegoo Park on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

"Some 35 percent of new cement projects have been implemented by the present time and in the next Iranian year (starting on March 21, 2019) the country's cement production capacity would be increased by two million tons," Deputy Industry Minister Ja'far Sargheini said in the exhibition inauguration ceremony.

"Iran's cement production capacity presently stands at 86 million tons per annum," the official added.

The two-day exposition, attended by tens of Iranian production companies and research units, would be opened to public visitors on Wednesday and Thursday, the report added.

Gloom in Germany pushes Eurozone growth forecasts to fresh low

Eurozone growth forecasts for this year have dropped to fresh lows, reflecting how global trade war concerns and political uncertainty are weighing on economic activity.

The revision is particularly steep for Germany, for years the locomotive of Eurozone growth. Germany is now forecast to grow more slowly than France this year, while Italy, the Eurozone's third-largest economy, is also expected to be one of the worst performers, with anemic growth of just 0.7 percent forecast for 2019.

Economists surveyed by Consensus Economics expect Eurozone gross domestic product to grow just below 1.6 percent this year — 0.4 percentage points lower than forecast last March, when estimates were at their most optimistic.

It compares with expected growth in 2018 of 1.9 percent and would mark a second consecutive annual slowdown. The Eurozone grew 2.4 percent in 2017, its highest level in a decade.

"We're inclined to view the current state-of-play as a mirror image of the euphoria at the end of 2017, when forecasters were extrapolating growth at nearly 3 percent into the distant future," said Claus Vistesen, chief Eurozone economist at Pantheon Economics.

James Nixon, chief European economist at Oxford Economics, said the Eurozone downgrades reflected the weakness in the second half of 2018, partly due to the pronounced effects of new emission standards on Germany's car sector.

Germany is now forecast to expand at below 1.5 percent in 2019, 0.4 percentage points below consensus forecasts of last March. Data released on Monday showed a 3.2 percent contraction in new foreign industrial orders for German companies in November compared with the previous month. Separately, a survey of sentiment showed German investor expectations dropping to the lowest level since August 2012.

The gloom follows Germany's first quarter-on-quarter contraction since 2015 in the third quarter, on the back of weakening domestic demand and a contraction in exports.

But Nixon said that the Eurozone growth forecasts' downgrades also reflected "continued anxiety about the new wave of protectionism emanating from the U.S." and the effects of protests in France in the last quarter of 2018.

(Source: Financial Times)

Iran, India commerce chambers ink trade co-op MOU

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Tuesday for expansion of trade and economic ties, IRNA reported.

The MOU was signed on the sidelines of an Iran-India business forum which was held in New Delhi in the mentioned day.

The business forum was attended by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Head of ICCIMA Gholam-Hossein Shafeie who are visiting India at the top of a high-ranking delegation.

Zarif also aims to attend the annual international conference of the Raisina Dialogue during his stay.

As reported, holding talks with the Indian private sector, signing of an MOU with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) as well as identifying and removing trade barriers, especially banking, transportation and customs problems, along with negotiations on a preferential agreement between Iran and India and the joint venture in Chabahar port are also among the important issues on the agenda for the Iranian delegation.

**■ Good time for preferential trade agreement'**

During the Iran-India business forum, Gholam-Hossein Shafeie mentioned the possibility of preferential trade between the two countries saying that currently,



ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie delivering a speech in the Iran-India business forum which was held in New Delhi on Tuesday.

there is a good opportunity for signing such an agreement which can quickly expand the economic relations between the two countries.

He also urged the Indian side to find solutions for the problems that the Indian banks like UCO bank and Central Bank of India are facing in trade with Iran.

Shafeie further mentioned the two

countries great potentials for expansion of trade ties and asked the Indian side to remove some of the unreasonable tariffs on Iranian commodities.

**■ Iranian bank to open Mumbai branch**

On Tuesday, Mohammad Javad Zarif also met with the Indian Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping and Water

Currency reconversion not a turning point in economic reformation

**1 →** Omitting zeroes from the national currency would surely facilitate calculations and money transfers in daily transactions and would seemingly retaliate for the sharp recent rial devaluation but it should not be expected to improve Iranians purchasing power at all.

It would not have any specific impact on economic indices, inflation, investments, job creation or demand and supply, either.

As a matter of fact, economic stability and single-digit inflation rate are the most significant prerequisites of implementing currency reconversion while Iran is experiencing none of the named factors.

Currency reconversion per se would have an inflationary effect. To curb its inflationary impact, it must be done simultaneous with taking contractionary measures and modifications in monetary policies.

In addition, printing new banknotes and injecting them to the market would impose an amount of costs on the shoulder of the central bank.

Addressing the issue in an interview with the Tehran Times, the Iranian economist and President of Iran World Trade Center Mohammad Reza Sabzalipour said that "the government aims to hit several targets with



one shot."

"It seeks to control money and liquidity volume in the society i.e. cutting four zeroes would change the present 17 quadrillion rials (about \$404 billion) of liquidity down to 1.7 trillion rials (about \$40.4 million) overnight," he explained, "but the zeroes will incrementally come back and liquidity will be increased over time, in case CBI continues printing fiat money."

"The act would appease the public opinion just for a short time when they see the price

numbers of the goods and services are decreased but after a while when their income also comes with lower zeroes, they will find out that what has happened has not improved their commonwealth," he added.

"There is no reason for us to consider a national currency with less zeroes a more valuable one," Sabzalipour said, "having a strong economy is not necessary related to having a national currency with low number of zeroes but to positive trade balance and high quality of the nation's livelihood."

Resources Nitin Gadkari during which the two sides discussed various issues including banking problems and Chabahar port.

After the meeting, Gadkar told the Indian press that the government has allowed Iran's Bank Pasargad to open its Mumbai branch within the next three months.

"They [Iran's Pasargad Bank] are going to open a branch in Mumbai in three months. That will be used for transactions." The official said.

"We have had a good discussion with the minister (Zarif). The first ship from Brazil has already been received at Chabahar. The financial arrangement is ready. There were some problems, but we have resolved the issues," Gadkar added.

**■ 'Iran won't wait for Europe to facilitate trade'**

On the sidelines of his meeting with Gadkar, Zarif said the European Union was moving slower than expected in facilitating non-dollar trade with Tehran to circumvent U.S. sanctions, forcing it to explore avenues with other nations.

"We continue to work with the Europeans for the special purpose vehicle but we are not waiting for them," Mohammad Javad Zarif told reporters in New Delhi. "We are working with our traditional partners like India, like China, like Russia so that we continue to work in the interest of our people."

Zarif also said he was talking to Indian officials about selling more urea to India at a "reasonable" rate.

"The decided monetary reconversion is mere a political and a psychological move," he underscored.

What the government is getting prepared to do should not be expected as a revolutionary step in Iran's economic and banking reformations, that would bring the nation a better livelihood and a more prosperous economy.

It is a postponed measure that has not been implemented in previous years due to lack of proper economic conditions and it is being done under the circumstances that the country is experiencing the toughest economic conditions in its history thanks to the U.S.-led draconian sanctions and when a rampant inflation rate is expected for the upcoming Iranian year.

The costly currency reconversion would, for sure, facilitate money transfer and calculations in daily transactions and also reduce the volume of exchanged paper money and etc., but its effect would be neutralized and the omitted zeroes would snap back one after the other in the long-run, in case of monetary mismanagement or any other unpredicted international, political or economic event which would threaten the economy.

India starts commercial activity at Chabahar Port

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — India has started its commercial activities in Iran's southeastern port of Chabahar, the Indian government said on Monday, Economic Times reported.

"The Government of India took over the operations of a part of Shahid Beheshti Port, Chabahar, in Iran during the Chabahar Trilateral Agreement meeting held there on December 24, 2018," the Indian Shipping Ministry said in a statement.

In October 2018, Iran, India and Afghanistan inked an agreement on transit of goods via Chabahar.

The agreement was signed in Tehran by Rastad, T.S. Tirumurti, the secretary of economic relations in India's Ministry of External Affairs, and Imamohammad Warymoch, Afghanistan's deputy minister of transport, during the first meeting of coordination council of agreement on the establishment of an international transport and transit corridor among Iran, India and Afghanistan (Chabahar Agreement).

These three countries signed a trilateral transit agreement in Tehran in May 2016, which allows them open new routes to connect among themselves via converting Chabahar Port into a transit

hub bypassing Pakistan.

Then during the visit of the Iranian president to India in February 2018, the lease contract for Shahid Beheshti Port-Phase I was signed between Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) and India's Ports Global Limited (IPGL).

India then inaugurated a headquarters called India Ports Global Chabahar Free Zone (IPGCFZ) at the port to help it commit to its part in the accord.

India's Shipping Ministry said in its Monday statement that commercial operations had begun at the IPGCFZ with the arrival of a Cyprus registered bulk carrier bearing 72,458 million tons of corn at the port on December 30, The Times of India reported.

The vessel MV Macheras discharged the cargo, which had been imported from Brazil, the statement added.

"This is the first time India will be operating a port outside its territories," the Ministry pointed out.

"India is to equip and operate two berths in Chabahar Port Phase-I with capital investment of \$85.21 million and annual revenue expenditure of \$22.95 million on a 10-year lease," the paper added.

China's current GDP growth is likely less than 6 percent, economist says

China's current economic growth is likely below the 6 percent level amid faltering domestic demand, an economist said Tuesday.

Recent signals about the world's second-largest economy point to weaker growth, including tech giant Apple recently lowering revenue guidance for the first quarter as it blamed a variety of factors including Chinese demand. And, on Monday, Hong Kong-listed automaker Geely said it missed its sales target in 2018 and was forecasting flat sales in 2019.

"It's intriguing that the domestic demand part is the weak part — the external demand is not that bad," said Taimur Baig, chief economist at DBS Group Research.

"Particularly weak" domestic demand was possibly signaling structural changes in the Chinese economy, Baig told CNBC's "Capital Connection."

For its part, DBS forecasts China's GDP growth to be "sub-6

percent" currently, Baig said.

Last year, China reported economic growth of 6.5 percent in the third quarter — marking its weakest pace since the global financial crisis. Still, the country's official growth target for 2018 was around 6.5 percent.

While official data indicated China's economy held up for much of last year, it now appears to be slowing as production metrics and export orders fall amid the country's trade dispute with the U.S., its largest trading partner.

Beyond the tariffs battle, China's economy has been facing its own domestic headwinds. Even before U.S. President Donald Trump kicked off the latest escalation in trade tensions, Beijing was already trying to manage a slowdown in its economy after decades of breakneck growth.

Despite negotiations between the two economic giants

underway in Beijing, Baig said it was unlikely that the trade war would end in the next three to six months because the areas of disagreement extend far beyond imports and exports.

In fact, he said, "We will breathe a little sigh of relief if things don't get worse."

At the beginning of December, Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to a 90-day ceasefire that delayed the planned U.S. increase of tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods that were initially due to take effect on Jan. 1, while the two sides tried to negotiate a deal.

A positive signal, according to Baig, would be an extension of the three-month truce into the summer, giving the global economy some respite for the first half of the year.

"But beyond that, let's keep our expectations checked," he said.

(Source: CNBC)



sources said.

An IOC official had previously said his firm would lift 180,000 bpd - the full volume contracted under an annual deal with Iran for this fiscal year ending March 31, 2019.

India recently exempted rupee payments to the National Iranian Oil Co (NIOC) for crude oil imports from a steep withholding tax, paving way for pending dues to be cleared.

HPCL, IOC and BPCL did not immediately respond to requests for comment, while MRPL declined comment.

(Source: Reuters)



# Oil prices edge up on trade talk hopes and OPEC cuts

Oil prices rose slightly on Tuesday, supported by hopes that talks in Beijing between U.S. and Chinese officials might defuse a trade dispute between the world's two biggest economies, while OPEC-led supply cuts also tightened markets.

International Brent crude futures gained 55 cents to \$57.88 per barrel by 0945 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil futures also climbed 55 cents, to \$49.07 per barrel.

"I think there's a very good chance that we will get a reasonable settlement that China can live with, that we can live with," U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said on Monday as officials from both countries held talks to end the spat.

Some analysts warned, however, that the relationship between Washington and Beijing remained shaky and that tensions could soon flare anew.

"Surely, there will be more twists and turns in the saga and increasing U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods after March from 10 percent to 25 percent cannot be excluded," Tamas Varga of PVM Oil Associates said. "For now,



however, optimism prevails."

There is also concern that a worldwide economic slowdown will dent fuel consumption.

As a result, the hedge fund industry has cut significantly its bullish positions in crude futures.

S&P Global Ratings said it had lowered its average oil price forecasts for 2019 by \$10 per barrel to \$55 and \$50 per barrel for Brent and WTI, respectively. "Our lower oil price assumptions reflect slowing demand and rising supply globally," said S&P Global

Ratings analyst Danny Huang.

## ■ OPEC vs shale

Crude prices so far in 2019 have been buoyed by supply cuts from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries including top exporter Saudi Arabia, as well as non-member Russia.

Saudi-based Arab Petroleum Investments Corp (APICORP), a firm specializing in funding petroleum projects, estimated in a report on Tuesday that oil prices are likely to trade at \$60 to \$70 per barrel by mid-2019.

But looming over the OPEC-led cuts is a surge in U.S. oil supply, driven by a steep rise in onshore shale drilling.

As a result, U.S. crude oil production rose by 2 million barrels per day (bpd) last year to a world record 11.7 million bpd.

With drilling activity still high, most analysts expect U.S. oil production to rise further this year.

Consultancy JBC Energy said it was likely that U.S. crude production was "significantly above 12 million bpd" by early January. (Source: Reuters)

## India offers 14 blocks for oil, natural gas exploration auction

India has offered 14 blocks spread across a total area of around 30,000 sq km for oil and gas exploration in the latest auction round under which winning bidders can carve out areas for drilling, oil ministry officials said Monday.

Open Acreage Licensing Policy second round (OALP-II) opens for bids January 8 and closes March 12. These blocks are expected to be awarded in May.

"Our focus in [the] oil and gas blocks auction is higher production and not solely to earn more revenue to the exchequer," Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said at the launch of the auction round.

This round will be the second auction under the new Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) approved by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government in March 2016.

HELP forms part of a government strategy to double India's oil and gas output by 2022-23.

India's oil import bill has been subject to wild swings in global prices as the country is dependent on imports for around 80% of its crude demand.

The new policy promises simpler rules, tax breaks, pricing and marketing freedom.

HELP brought in the Open Acreage Licensing Policy which allows prospective



companies to offer an expression of interest in any area currently not under a production or exploration license.

The blocks offered in OALP-II were identified by exploration companies, mostly state-owned, through expressions of interest submitted last year under OALP.

In the second OALP round, one block has been offered in deep water in the Krishna Godavari basin along with five shallow water blocks -- two each in the Andaman and Kutch basins and one in the Mahanadi basin.

OALP-II is also offering eight on-land blocks -- four in the Mahanadi basin, two in Cambay and one each in Cuvuery and Rajasthan.

The offered blocks are estimated to hold reserves of 15 billion mt of oil and oil equivalent gas.

(Source: Platts)

## Norway oil investment to rise in 2019 before sliding: lobby

Oil and gas investment in Norway is expected to grow for a second year in a row in 2019 but will fall back between 2020 and 2023, an industry lobby group said on Monday.

Western Europe's largest oil producer has seen a recovery in oil industry activity thanks to higher crude prices, after a slump in 2014-2016.

Investment in Norway's oil industry is estimated to rise by 16 percent year-on-year to 184.5 billion crowns (\$21.5 billion), the Norwegian Oil and Gas Association (NOG) said. It previously expected 2019 investment of 153 billion crowns.

"It is good news that activity is so high on the Norwegian continental shelf. We believe this is because of the significant restructuring the industry has done in recent years, which has increased competitiveness," the lobby said in a statement.

But it said investment would start to fall after 2019 to 182.5 billion crowns in 2020, 168 billion crowns in 2021, 156.5 billion crowns in 2022 and 141.5 billion crowns in 2023.

The group said its forecast for investment was based on a survey of companies that was completed before October when oil was trading at above \$70 a barrel. Since then prices had dropped and were trading



at \$58 a barrel on Monday.

NOG head Karl Eirik Schjoett-Pedersen said the price fall was not expected to have a major impact. "We think the projects are quite robust, because the companies have been focused to make them economic at even lower oil prices," he said.

Norway's Equinor said its new projects had an average break-even price of \$21 a barrel, while Aker BP said it would not invest in projects with break-even price higher than \$30 a barrel.

"I'm very concerned about the need to focus on the costs," Schjoett-Pedersen said.

NOG said exploration spending was expected to rise to 30 billion crowns in 2019 from 26 billion in 2018, although the number of wells being drilled was not expected to change from last year's 56.

(Source: Reuters)

## The overlooked factor driving the rally in oil

The overall sentiment among oil traders is wary these days. The OPEC+ production cuts went into effect at the start of 2019, but it's too early to say who is delivering on their promises and who is stalling. Demand seems to be all right but worry about a global economic slowdown persists. Amid all this, crude may get some support from the current trend in the U.S. dollar, according to Reuters' John Kemp.

Kemp wrote last week that the greenback's rally may be all but over, and when it started sliding, it would boost oil prices. An expensive dollar makes commodities and goods traded in the global reserve currency more expensive for buyers, but when it falls, these commodities and goods become more attractive and buying increases, eventually leading to higher prices.

Kemp explains that the strong dollar

has served to improve the United States' internal balance, keeping inflation low despite a tightening labor market, but at the same time it has had a negative effect on the external balance in the form of a deepening trade deficit. This may have to change, Kemp suggests, pointing to a similar fiscal policy pursued by the Reagan administration in the early 1980s. At the time, a strong dollar weighed on the U.S. economy so the administration pulled the strings of trading partners to curb their exports to the United States and strengthen their own currencies so the dollar could depreciate, making U.S. goods more competitive.

But the immediate future of the U.S. dollar is not the only tailwind for oil. In fact, some believe that algorithmic trading was behind the latest price drop. One of them is Investing.com senior analyst Haris

Anwar, who told Forbes author Panos Mourdoukoutas that the recent oil sell-off was driven by machine trading.

"Rather than saying that inmates are running the asylum, I think it's more appropriate to say that machines are running the oil market," Mourdoukoutas said. "And that's pulverizing oil, with the few remaining bulls in the market unable to make any sense of what's going on, particularly when you have U.S. stockpile draws and Libyan force majeure. The narrative remains on the glut and the combination of record U.S., Saudi and Russian production."

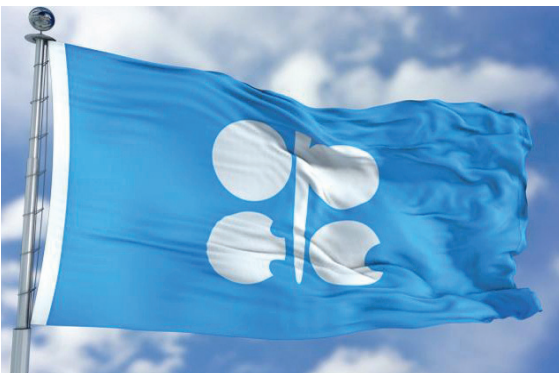
Indeed, in the past any supply disruption in a producer as large as Libya would have had a quick positive effect on oil prices. Not this time, however, even though the force majeure on the country's largest field has now been in place for more than two weeks, shaving off more than 300,000 bpd

from daily production in addition to the OPEC cuts.

Another tailwind is the latest update from the U.S. shale patch. A quarterly survey by the Dallas Fed unveiled a decline in activity in the oil industry on the back of falling prices. This decline could persist and lead to a slowdown in production growth. This, in turn, should serve to moderate the current pessimism and maybe even shift it into optimistic territory if OPEC+ delivers on its agreement to remove 1.2 million bpd from global supply.

Oil is already on the rise, with Brent climbing closer to the US\$60 mark and WTI even closer to US\$50 a barrel. Yet the possibility of a strong rebound in prices remains a distant one. This time, the decline came very soon after the last one and everyone is cautious what they bet on.

(Source: oilprice.com)



cut to a third — would be a drop in the ocean of U.S. production growth, which has become the primary driver of U.S. crude stockpiles.

In fact, Saudi arrivals to the U.S. in December had already dropped by nearly 0.35mb/d compared with early November, but this did not prevent U.S. stocks from building relative to the five-year average, even after refinery maintenance.

Moreover, U.S. Gulf Coast refinery maintenance is set at a near-record level in February of more than 1 mb/d. It would thus be February at the earliest before lower Saudi exports to the U.S. were seen in the data, given that these

are the kingdom's longest-haul export barrels.

By targeting the west again this time, the kingdom will end up reducing output of medium and heavy sour crudes, as no Arab Extra Light (AXL) or Arab Super Light cargoes head west.

But sour crudes are in short supply because of the loss of Iranian and Venezuelan oil supplies through sanctions and mismanagement, and the new refineries that began to come online late last year — some 2mb/d of new capacity — are designed to run on sour crude.

On the contrary, the world is swimming in light crudes thanks to the growth in U.S. production (and exports).

In short, Saudi Arabia may be able (at best) to stem stock builds in the U.S., but it will not be able to reverse them into draws, and lower builds will do nothing to repair such morbid market sentiment.

Worse still for Opec, the two most liquid global crude benchmarks — Brent and West Texas Intermediate — are both light sweets, reflecting the specific fundamentals of those grades rather than the tightness in sour.

As such, balancing the market will be as much about quality as it is about volume. The only way for OPEC to address the light crude overhang is by cutting AXL, and this means cutting eastbound exports. As with so much these days, Asia is the key.

(Source: Financial Times)

## Why this week's U.S.-China trade talks are a big deal for oil prices

The outcome of trade talks between the United States and China this week will play a major role in determining whether oil prices can continue to rally, analysts tell CNBC.

Oil prices have risen for six straight sessions, clawing back gains after falling to 1½-year lows last month. The cost of crude collapsed more than 40 percent between early October and late December on concerns about slowing economic growth and oversupply in the oil market.

Amrita Sen, chief oil analyst at research firm Energy Aspects, thinks crude futures have more room to run, but says the recovery is on shaky ground.

"I think as long as the global economy isn't collapsing, we should be able to climb a little bit higher, but it is going to be very fragile because the biggest, biggest uncertainty right now is the trade war going on between the U.S. and China," she told CNBC Europe's "Squawk Box" on Monday.

U.S. and Chinese trade representatives are meeting Monday and Tuesday to negotiate a path forward in the nations' ongoing trade dispute. The two countries have slapped tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars worth of one another's goods.

Additional tariffs threaten to weigh on global economic growth, and consequently, demand for oil and fuel. This comes at a time when forecasters have already warned that oil demand will grow more slowly than previously anticipated in 2019.

According to Sen, oil prices fell too far, too fast, largely due to technical factors such as automated trading strategies. On the supply side, production cuts by major oil producers and slower-than-expected U.S. output will help oil prices recover, she says. Whether or not the market is oversupplied will largely boil down to demand.

"At current levels, based on current fundamentals, the market is oversold," Sen said. "But it doesn't mean that it's going to correct straightaway, right? It can still take some time, unless and until you have the clarity, particularly with the trade talks over today and tomorrow."

The main driver for oil prices right now is the strength or weakness of broader financial markets and the mood around the economy, says Vandana Hari, founder of energy markets consultancy Vanda Insights. Whether or not OPEC and other major producers including Russia will stick to their production cuts is now a secondary concern, in her view.

In the coming days, oil prices will likely follow stocks on news from the U.S.-China trade talks, Hari says. But she also expects sentiment about the ongoing negotiations and underlying economic concerns to steer oil prices for the next few months.

"From an oil markets perspective, what would be very important to keep in mind is this is going to be a highly volatile environment," she told CNBC Asia's "Squawk Box."

"Today and tomorrow are the first days of the talks this year, but then these are expected to continue. Nobody is expecting a huge breakthrough or a complete solution to this any time soon."

(Source: CNBC)

## Saudis set sights on \$80 oil

Hoping to drive oil prices back up to \$80 per barrel, Saudi Arabia is preparing deeper production cuts this month.

Saudi Arabia plans on lowering oil exports to 7.1 million barrels per day by the end of the month, according to the Wall Street Journal. The Saudi budget does not breakeven unless Brent crude prices average in the mid-\$80s per barrel, vastly higher than today's spot price. The WSJ reports that Saudi Arabia plans on cutting exports 800,000 bpd below November levels, which appears to be a larger reduction than required as part of the OPEC+ agreement.

The news helped push up crude oil prices on Monday. "The market has jumped all over that," John Kilduff, founding partner at energy hedge fund Again Capital, told CNBC. The Saudis are "just being aggressive about trying to clean up the situation they fell into from oversupplying the market based on the fear of Iran sanctions," he said.

WTI and Brent were each up 2 percent during midday trading, with WTI closing in on \$50 per barrel and Brent jumping above \$58 per barrel. Both benchmarks have rallied more than 16 percent since hitting a low point in late December. "Momentum is coming back into the market from very depressed price levels," Petromatrix strategist Olivier Jakob said, according to Reuters. "We've had five consecutive days of price gains already, so what you have today is a continuation of that."

A few other factors are contributing to the nearly two-week rally. The softer tone from the U.S. Federal Reserve last week buoyed global equities, reducing fear that steadily tightening monetary conditions would push the global economy into recession. Meanwhile, the U.S. and China resumed trade negotiations this week, widely seen as a small sign of a thaw in the trade war. With both countries already starting to suffer from the effects of the trade war, there is pressure on both governments to reach an accord. If the worst can be avoided, there is a lot more room to the upside for crude prices, particularly since oil traders have grown pessimistic about the fate of the global economy. "The oil market is still pricing in a sharp slowdown in global growth despite our economists' forecast for resilient growth and robust late-2018 oil demand data," Goldman Sachs wrote in a note on January 6. "Absent such a large slowdown, we expect prices to recover further, although growth uncertainty will likely require strengthening physical oil markets to drive this rally, with encouraging evidence that the OPEC cuts are starting."

Indeed, the oil market is already tightening up relative to the outlook in December when prices dropped to 18-month lows. Saudi Arabia already slashed output by 400,000 bpd in December compared to a month earlier, and news that they will essentially cut another 400,000 bpd in January is raising expectations of a tighter market.

"If compliance by OPEC and the allied non-OPEC countries is similarly high as in the agreement two years ago, the oil market is likely to be rebalanced during the first half year," Commerzbank wrote in a note on Monday. "Less sharply rising US oil production may also play its part in this. According to Baker Hughes, drilling activity at least dropped noticeably in the last reporting week, doubtless as a result of the recent low prices."

With the OPEC+ cuts now phasing in, the supply glut that blew up the market in November and December could start to ebb. To be sure, there is not a consensus on this point. Some analysts see the OPEC+ cuts as coming up short relative to what is needed to balance the market. Nevertheless, the outlook appears dramatically tighter than it did in December.

WTI is now close to moving back above \$50 per barrel, and could be heading higher if Saudi Arabia goes beyond what it committed to in Vienna. Most investment banks see strong price gains in 2019, even if many of them do not see WTI and Brent returning to the highs seen last October.

(Source: oilprice.com)



## Al-Sisi's embarrassing interview

By Amira Abo el-Fetouh



For nearly a week, the international and social media have been talking about an interview between Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and well-known American correspondent Scott Pelly on 60 Minutes. The interview was filmed three months ago when Al-Sisi was in the U.S. attending the UN General Assembly. It was not broadcast at the time and remained on the shelf until CBS decided suddenly to air it. As soon as a broadcast date was announced it provoked the authorities in Cairo and angered the presidency. Egypt's Foreign Minister urged his country's ambassador in Washington to ask the television station not to air the interview. Of course, CBS rejected the request, as the American media generally does not take orders from anyone. It seems that the Egyptian authorities forgot that they were not speaking to the compliant media in their own country, which they created to serve themselves and follow orders. The American TV station went as far as to release a statement regarding the Egyptian government's request not to air the interview and its decision to go ahead.

Egypt was thus humiliated internationally, as no other country has made such a request, especially since 60 Minutes has been an important show in the U.S. and, arguably, the rest of the world since it first aired 50 years ago. It still holds its top ranking and no other program can compete; the average life span of an American TV show is three years.

The program has included interviews with the world's biggest political leaders and international figures, hosting heads of state such as the late Cuban President Fidel Castro, Chinese President Deng Xiaoping, Russian President Vladimir Putin, former French President Nicolas Sarkozy and U.S. presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump. The latter two guests chose 60 Minutes over all others for their first TV appearances after winning elections in 2008 and 2016 respectively. The program has also hosted many Arab leaders, such as President Anwar Sadat, Hosni Mubarak, Saddam Hussein, Muammar Al-Gadhafi, Yasser Arafat, Bashar Al-Assad and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman.

With such a list of previous guests, I am sure that someone played with Al-Sisi's mind and suggested that he follow in their footsteps and appear on the program in order to become internationally recognized. He obviously did not know the investigative nature of 60 Minutes, which doesn't take guests' words at face value, as if divinely revealed, which the Egyptian media does with Al-Sisi's utterances. Journalists in Cairo conduct interviews with him like frightened students, but in this program the tables were turned. Al-Sisi became the frightened student and looked confused and frazzled, as if he were sitting before a renowned detective asking him about his crimes against the Egyptian people. He was sweating as he tried to evade the presenter's questions. This prompted further ridicule on social media even before the full programmed aired.

Clips from the interview were released as trailers to develop audience interest. It was talked about on opposition channels based in Turkey and on social media; discussions in the days leading up to the broadcast focused on what Al-Sisi said in the clips. It was as if someone was managing public opinion expertly.

Then the big moment arrived and we saw a clearly shaken and even more clearly lying Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi on our TV screens. He denied the existence of political prisoners in Egypt and asked where Human Rights Watch obtained its statistics from. Mohammad Salah Soltan, one of those who were imprisoned and tortured in his prisons without committing any crime faced Al-Sisi and talked about the psychological and physical torture that prisoners suffer in Egypt's prisons. Soltan was in prison until his health deteriorated completely and he had been on hunger strike for over 200 days. He was released only because he is an American citizen and he left Egypt, the land of oppression and torture.

Al-Sisi was also faced by the former Deputy Speaker of parliament, Mohammed Al-Dardiri, who refuted the Egyptian President's claim that the Rabaa Al-Adawiya Square protests were an armed sit-in. It was notable that the former Director for Egypt and Israel Military Issues at the U.S. National Security Council in the Obama administration, Andrew Miller, spoke as if he were an Egyptian, and even better than the Egyptians themselves.

Aside from his lies and false claims, Al-Sisi was truthful about one thing: his relationship with Israel. He described this as a deep relationship that is unprecedented between the two countries. He also said they were cooperating militarily in the Sinai to tackle terrorism in the Peninsula. This is a major scandal that Al-Sisi's own government denied last year when the Washington Post reported such military cooperation between Egypt and Israel. In this interview, though, Al-Sisi confirmed what the newspaper had said, and it is a scandal no matter which way you look at it. How can any country allow the army of another country, especially one which the majority of its people regard as a hostile entity, to fly its military aircraft in its airspace and kill its people, even under the pretext of fighting terrorism?

Al-Sisi has shifted his alliance with Israel from behind closed doors into the public domain. It now looks as if the main purpose of the 60 Minutes interview was to announce Egypt's complete normalization of relations with Israel. It was embarrassing and shameful on every level.

(Source: Middle East Monitor)

# Saudi Arabia gets U.S. missiles despite Khashoggi uproar

The Donald Trump administration has approved nearly \$200 million in upgrades to Saudi Arabia's missile defenses, Al-Monitor has learned, despite continued congressional uproar over the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Under the commercial deal approved by the State Department in December, Saudi Arabia will receive \$195 million in upgrades to improve its Patriot PAC-3 defenses, including a guidance system that increases its ability to intercept ballistic missiles able to evade U.S.-made radars.

Though the State Department notified Congress of the sale in December, it did not make the exact dollar value of the transaction public. The figures were provided to Al-Monitor by the Security Assistance Monitor.

A State Department spokesperson told Al-Monitor on background that Trump had indicated the United States would remain a "steadfast" partner for Saudi Arabia, despite tensions over the war in Yemen and Khashoggi's death.

Frank Rose, a former assistant secretary of state for arms control, verification, and compliance told Al-Monitor that the missile defense upgrade would improve algorithms within the system's radar to target ballistic missiles.

While Riyadh has invested in Patriot batteries since the 1991 Persian Gulf War, major Saudi cities have faced a barrage of scud missiles as Yemen has fallen deeper into conflict. Since the start of the 2015 war, there have been 133 reports of missiles intercepted from Yemen, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank.



## The deal to bolster Saudi Arabia's missile arsenal comes as leading senators sought to block other U.S. weapons sales to the kingdom after Khashoggi's death.

"It's not theoretical anymore for the Saudis," said Rose, now a fellow at the Brookings Institution. "This situation has caused them to rethink many of their assumptions around missile defense."

The Patriots, Rose said, can help protect smaller installations such as airfields, but

don't provide enough coverage to defend a large city such as Riyadh, which has faced a series of near-misses from Houthi missiles.

The deal to bolster Saudi Arabia's missile defenses comes as leading senators sought to block other U.S. weapons sales to the kingdom after Khashoggi's death. In the wake of the

killing, a bipartisan bill sponsored by Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., the top Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, aimed to suspend all U.S. arms sales to Riyadh except ground-based missile defenses.

In November, Saudi Arabia signed a letter of offer to obtain 44 Terminal High Altitude Aerial Defense launchers, known as THAAD. The state-of-the-art Lockheed Martin-made missile defense is theoretically capable of intercepting any projectile fired from inside the Middle East.

The Patriot deal, which went through the State Department's direct commercial sales program that links up American weapons manufacturers with foreign customers, could provide another pipeline for the Trump administration to provide lethal assistance to Riyadh. The ballistic missile upgrades were among the last of \$4.4 billion in U.S. foreign military and direct commercial sales that the United States cleared for Saudi Arabia in 2018.

An accompanying U.S. Missile Defense Review, which could lay out the Trump team's road map for defending the Persian Gulf from missile threats, had been expected in early 2018. It has yet to be released.

Archer Macy, a retired U.S. Navy rear admiral who worked on air defense for years, told Al-Monitor that the Patriot sale would give Saudi Arabia "more tools in its toolbox" to defend against Houthi missiles.

"You have to decide what you're going to engage and what you're not," said Macy, now a senior associate with the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "If something's headed toward some chunk of the desert, you let it run."

(Source: Al Monitor)

# Who speaks for America? What happens when friends and allies can't take the commander in chief at his word?

President Trump and his administration have always had a mixed-messaging problem. Whether it had to do with the future of NATO, relations with the European Union, a rapprochement with Russia or a trade war with China, Trump has made norm-shattering pronouncements while his top advisers worked behind the scenes to preserve the status quo.

Most recently, his insistence that Congress pony up \$5.7 billion for a wall at the southern border and his threat to keep the federal government closed for "months or even years" if he doesn't get his way have undermined Vice President Mike Pence's efforts to reach a compromise over the shutdown with Democratic lawmakers.

But the president's mercurial approach to the conflict in Syria is in a category all its own. After Trump stunned the world last month by ordering the withdrawal of all 2,000 American troops in Syria within 30 days, the administration began backtracking almost immediately.

By the time John Bolton, the national security adviser, visited Israel over the weekend, the president's order was effectively reversed. Bolton laid down conditions, including the complete defeat of the Islamic State (ISIS) and guarantees from Turkey that it won't attack America's Kurdish allies. In other words, American troops are there to stay for months, or years, or indefinitely.

Trump insisted in a tweet on Monday that the way things stand is "no different from my original statements." But which senior administration official should the nation and the world believe — the boss or everyone below him?

In addition to a loss of American credibility, the collateral damage in all this mess includes the departures of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Brett McGurk, the State Department official managing the global coalition against the Islamic State (ISIS). They resigned in protest over an order from the commander in chief that could now be null and void.



## Trump has made norm-shattering pronouncements while his top advisers worked behind the scenes to preserve the status quo.

Or maybe it's not. One administration official said he thought an order for a 120-day pullout remained in effect, perhaps a sign of an internal struggle over the policy.

Deferring the troop withdrawal — which was opposed by politicians across the spectrum — would be a necessary course correction. But the incident was also a missed opportunity. The United States is overdue for an honest debate about the future of its troops fighting terrorism in Syria and 79 other locations around the world, and Trump could have contributed constructively to that cause.

But drastic changes in military strategy are difficult to

execute swiftly, especially when those decisions are made without input from a president's national security team, Congress and allied forces, as Trump's Syria swerve clearly was.

The United States shouldn't stay in Syria forever. But it shouldn't leave based on a tweet, either.

And this episode resurfaces profoundly troubling questions: Who speaks for the United States? Is the commander in chief being thwarted by his own national security team?

There is infighting in every administration. This goes beyond that.

Trump's penchant for disinformation long ago left America's friends scratching their heads over what to believe. Now they also must contend with a president who is likely to be overruled or redirected by his advisers.

That has had some benefit given Trump's lack of experience in national security, his refusal to consider long-term strategic interests and the need for a certain degree of reliability in international affairs. Because of the efforts of Mattis and others, the United States remains in NATO despite Trump's dismay with the alliance, for instance.

But the degree to which senior officials have had to reverse or slow roll precipitous, ill-considered, even dangerous decisions by the president also erodes civilian control of the military and sows uncertainty.

Such an approach will embolden adversaries, confuse friends and confound the servicemen and servicewomen who depend on their president for clear, principled leadership, especially when they are putting their lives at risk.

Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo are crisscrossing the Middle East this week to reassure friendly governments that the administration is pursuing a coherent agenda. Is Trump also on board?

(Source: The NYT)

# Congo's fragile steps toward a democratic transition must not be lost

Having never experienced a peaceful transfer of power since independence in 1960, Congo is in a precarious position. The Dec. 30 election, while not conducted in perfect conditions after two years of postponement and uncertainty, nevertheless took place to choose a successor to President Joseph Kabila, a testament to the determination of millions of voters.

Their patience is being tested anew by delays in counting the votes. The election — and Congo's fragile steps toward a democratic transition — must not be lost.

The electoral commission was supposed to have counted the vote by Sunday but announced that it had only about half the ballots tallied. The head of the commission said: "We ask the nation to remain patient for the time it will take to consolidate all our data."

But there are ample and disturbing suspicions that Kabila's forces are struggling to rig the election for his hand-picked candidate, former interior minister Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, who lacked popularity but is a loyal puppet of Kabila.

The conditions before, during and after the vote were chaotic. In advance, voting was postponed in three cities, all opposition strongholds, ostensibly because of concerns



in two of them about an ongoing Ebola outbreak and about ethnic unrest in the third — so those 1.2 million voters out of the country's approximately 40 million were disenfranchised at the start.

Then came what Human Rights Watch described as "rampant election-day obstacles" to voting, including problems with

voting lists, polling places, armed coercion and malfunctions in the electronic voting machines, which had never before been used in the country.

The day after the vote, Dec. 31, the government shut down Internet and text messaging nationwide, a tactic it has used before to control information. It cut the

signal of at least two television broadcasters and withdrew the accreditation of a French correspondent.

The most worrisome sign of all came with a statement Jan. 3 from the Catholic Church, which deployed more than 40,000 election observers.

The National Episcopal Conference of Congo said data in its possession showed there was a clear winner, though it did not identify who. Others said opposition candidate Martin Fayulu had triumphed, and Fayulu also told The Post that his team had "extremely conclusive" evidence that he had won.

The church demanded that the electoral commission publish the election results "in accordance with truth and justice." The State Department, in a strong statement, said despite the voting problems, "millions of Congolese citizens turned out peacefully across [the] DRC on election day to cast their ballots and make their voices heard." The electoral commission "must now ensure that these voices and votes are respected."

If the commission does not promptly publish the results, Congo may be convulsed by protests and the moment for a democratic handoff will have been lost.

(Source: The Washington Post)



# Armageddon in the Orient: How the Saudi-Connection targets Iran

**1 →** Lüders asserts that the current situation in the Middle East cannot continue for a long time. “Underdevelopment, repression, a Mephisto (evil) Saudi crown prince, Israeli ultranationalists who believe that the biblically promised land only belong to them, religious fanatics on all sides and proxy war are all a deadly mixture.”

He points out that the goal of the U.S. and “the same political forces that have moved the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem”, is a showdown and regime change in Iran.

## ■ Europe should beware of a crisis worse than Syria

While referring to the European Union “discomfort” with Donald Trump’s “political excesses”, Lüders believes that the EU lacks the necessary means and the readiness to stand up against those policies.

“The European politicians have failed to see the writing on the wall and recognize the severity of the situation. European countries especially France, Germany and the Great Britain, give the impression again and again, that they are still waiting for decisions to be made in Washington.”

The author cautions that “a new conflict in the Middle East would cause quite different, much more extensive afflictions for us (Europeans).”

He says in case of a war or collapse of Iran, the new wave of refugees from that country would neither go to the United States nor Saudi Arabia and Israel but they will arrive at the EU borders. He refers to the 2015 refugee crisis in the European Union and the flood of refugees to Germany as a recent example for such scenario.

## ■ Iran we don’t want to see

Lüders worked for many years as the Middle East correspondent of DIE ZEIT newspaper. He has appeared in many TV and radio programs as an expert on Islam and Middle East politics and has written dozens of books on relevant subjects.

While having his own criticism of the Iranian government and certain policies including freedom and censorship, he notes that “Contrary to the Western assumption that the ruling clerics are primarily irrational, it is more of the opposite. Especially in foreign policy, Tehran is reliable and predictable. The 2015 nuclear agreement is the best relevant example.” He goes on to say “the confrontation with Iran has a background and history beyond the nuclear program or ballistic missiles.”

In that regards, Lüders writes “No matter what we think about the Iranian regime, Iran is a country with a vibrant civil society, great diversity, individual freedoms, a confident mid-



MICHAEL LÜDERS

## Armageddon im Orient

Wie die Saudi-Connection den Iran ins Visier nimmt

C.H.Beck

dle class... Iranian people are Western-oriented - especially towards Germany ... these are the aspects of the Iranian society that we rarely notice. You cannot see all that in Saudi Arabia.”

In a recent TV interview on the same subject, he says: “If this country were liberated from all boycott measures, Iran would become a boom a country with immense political and

economic importance in a short period of time. However, Israel and Saudi Arabia do not want that. “

## ■ Collective action to prevent a new conflict

Lüders’s analysis and interpretation of the situation in the Middle East is quite different from what we would see in the mainstream western media and as a result his opinions and statements have received different reactions. His critics say he has nothing new to present, and the sources he used in the book are unreliable and sometimes questionable. In addition, they say he has failed to provide concrete policy alternatives instead of a war. Nonetheless, the reality is that, Lüders’s books are among the bestsellers and are mostly read by ordinary people who are not Middle East experts. In his latest work, the author has tried to present his statements and opinions based on facts that are readily available for the public. What makes this work valuable is the efforts he has put in place to gather all these library materials, newspaper articles, interviews and ... in a detailed historical format in one place.

For policy alternatives instead of a war, the reality is that the Trump’s administration is pushing for ever-increasing pressure on Iran and is continuing to intensify efforts to destabilize that country. For now there seems to be no real alternative. That’s why in the last chapter of the book, the author calls for collective action and urges readers to inform themselves, interact with their communities, hold the media accountable and seek the truth in order to contribute to the debate and further raise the public awareness about the dangers of a new conflict and possible ways prevent it.

In addition, the fact that Lüders has highlighted the role of Israel in the current conflict and its tough campaign against Iran is significant. Many experts in Germany prefer not to touch on the issue of Israel because Israel is a taboo subject among journalists and politicians.

On the prospect of a war with Iran he further notes in the last chapter that “Iranians are not waiting to see their country destroyed in the name of freedom. ... The country is not Iraq, not Syria, not Lebanon and therefore, not an easy target ... Iran has enough war experience. At the same time Iranians are well aware that a war would be devastating for them. However, if it comes to the worst scenario, the outcome would not be a Western-oriented Iran, but Armageddon in the Orient.”

*Armageddon in the Orient; How the Saudi-Connection targets Iran/ 265 pages/ language: German/ year of publication: 2018/ CH Beck, Nördlingen*

## Trump effect: Why is America a shadow of former self?

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Several members of the U.S. House of Representatives want to impeach President Donald Trump over his decision to shut down the federal government in order to promote his border-wall fantasy.

They also want to take on Trump and his lawless presidency for isolating the U.S. in the world:

A- The fate of millions of American Muslims and immigrants now looms over thousands of Southeast Asian refugees who could be uprooted after spending most of their lives in the U.S., because of Trump’s anti-immigrant policies. As Trump closes the borders and detains migrants en masse, many Asian refugees wonder if they will be next. As of September, the government reported that an estimated 1,900 Asian immigrants have pending deportation orders. The deportation drive violates humanitarian and constitutional principles and plunges already vulnerable communities into crisis.

B- While deportations are now accelerating under Trump, record numbers of Americans want to get out too. According to new Gallup polling results, “After years of remaining flat,

the number of Americans - particularly young women - who desire to leave the U.S. permanently is on the rise.” Most of the recent surge in Americans’ desire to migrate also include young Americans and people in lower-income groups. Gallup notes the numbers do put an emphasis on Trump’s low favorability and approval ratings.

C- Over 80,000 people are locked up in isolation cells every day in America, because the U.S. government refuses to reform its broken criminal justice system. By pandering to public fears, spreading misinformation, and posturing with macho slogans, “tough-on-crime” politicians have long opposed reforms and blocked efforts to rehabilitate people in prison, making it more likely that they will return to crime after their release.

D- American democracy seems rigged because it is. Big money, particularly from wealthy allies like Saudi Arabia and Israeli-American lobbies, continues to erode American democracy, and corrupt domestic politics and foreign policy - creating a vicious cycle of foreign wars and internal conflicts that funnels more wealth and power to the Military-Industrial Complex

and those at the top. A recent poll found that the majority of Americans say lawmakers are corrupt, out of touch with their constituents, and beholden to special interest groups and lobbies.

E- The Trump administration has “quietly and unnoticed” left unanswered at least 13 official requests from UN special rapporteurs on human rights since last May. The failure to respond began a month before Philip Alston, special rapporteur on extreme poverty, issued a scathing report detailing “devastating inequality” in the U.S., made worse by the policies of Trump.

F- U.S. officials and politicians are loudly shouting about democracy and human rights in front of the whole world, but they seem to lack the ability to implement these words within their own country. Thanks to the Trump effect, they also seem to lack confidence in their own rhetoric.

G- Going against his own statements, Trump says he is in “the process of evaluating” whether to withdraw troops from Afghanistan. This is unsurprising. The White House is also confirming that there is no definite timeline

for the U.S. leaving Syria. Trump has made clear he very explicitly never set any timeline for the process, which leaves the U.S. with an open-ended war on Syria on the pretext of fighting ISIL.

The implications of the current crisis should be evident by now. The U.S. no longer has the power and self-defined ideological influence in the world - democracy, freedom, and human rights - that it enjoyed before the illegal Iraq War. The stability and influence of the American political system, ideology, and value concepts have indeed greatly declined in the 21st century. This is reflected and apparent in domestic politics and more importantly in other areas such as the status, reputation, and influence of the U.S. in the world.

## Who is the new member of the U.S. National Security Council?

**1 →** In the Senate, Goldberg emerged as a leading architect of the toughest sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic of Iran. He called on U.S. President Donald Trump to bring Iran’s economy “to its knees.” He was the lead Republican negotiator for three rounds of sanctions targeting the Central Bank of Iran, the SWIFT messaging service, and entire sectors of the Iranian economy. Goldberg also drafted and negotiated legislation promoting human rights and democracy in Iran, including sanctions targeting entities that provide the Iranian government with the tools of repression. His Iran sanctions work was featured in the book The Iran Wars.

As the governor’s chief of staff, Richard managed government in America’s fifth-largest state with oversight of all day-to-day operations, including homeland security, public safety, and public health. He also spearheaded the first-ever state legislation to divest public pension funds from companies engaged in boycotts of Israel, which sparked a nationwide initiative in state capitols around America.

## ■ Designing common plans with Israel against Iran

He threatens to the boycott of central European banks and the board of directors of SWIFT on charges of facilitating trade with Iran, with an emphasis on crazy theory. He undermines international obligations on Iran’s nuclear deal and eliminates those who resist the U.S. sanctions on Iran. With the formation of the puzzle of the Trump consultants, the unveiling of his main goal of his administration in confronting Iran has fallen since the heavy defeat of Washington in creating an international consensus against Iran. One of the main goals of Goldberg’s membership since yesterday is to express a vague concern about Iran’s nuclear program and create conditions for a possible war with the country.

In summer, Goldberg met with the Israel Interim Council’s Jacob Nagel in which both sides agreed that the Trump administration should use sanctions power to target foreign governments as well as international agencies and their officials who have agreed to the JCPOA in order to reduce Iran’s ability to develop nuclear weapons.

For example, Goldberg and Nagel said that foreign governments involved in rebuilding and reconstructing Iran’s nuclear reactor should also be targeted by the U.S. sanctions. In fact, the move will allow Washington to respond to the alleged mitigation of the risks of its proliferation by targeting foreign governments for its scientific cooperation with Iran.

That way, the White House can claim that foreign governments engaged in building Iran’s nuclear activity, such as the reconstruction of the Arak



nuclear reactor, are engaged in activities that can effectively contribute to the risk or spread of weapons of mass destruction.

## ■ International Atomic Energy Agency is the next target of sanctions

Financial and technological support, even in form of attempts to reduce Iran’s capability of nuclear reactor, should be sanctioned and all assets of the parties involved in these activities will be subjected to U.S secondary sanctions.

Goldberg’s next suggestion is that Washington should reduce the IAEA’s budget if the Agency continues to provide technical assistance to Iran and host seminars and conferences in the country.

However, according to the JCPOA, the IAEA is responsible to contribute to all types of cooperation and technical assistance projects in Iran. For example, the JCPOA requires a joint commission to support Iran for the IAEA’s technical cooperation projects. The Arak reactor modernization project includes significant international support from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Nuclear power will be.

However, Trump’s National Security Advisers have other agenda on mind which is not to limit Iran’s nuclear technology, nor to reduce the risks of developing nuclear weapons, but to pave the way for a war with Iran. Consequently, they have made an all-out-effort to undermine the nuclear accord and intensify international monitoring on Iran to achieve the objective. It seems the U.S. is willing to impose sanctions even on its allies, and international organizations and agencies to attain malicious plan against Iran.

## The black nightmare of the Green Continent

**1 →** Also, about 300 people were arrested in connection with heavy crimes. Besides, according to the sources, 129 people were injured during the shooting incidents in Sweden last year, and 44 were killed, a figure that was unprecedented in previous years.

This rule applies to other European countries as well. In such a situation, many European countries are reluctant to publish the exact information on crime and violence in their countries.

Anyhow, the “2019 Europe” will be much more insecure than the “2018 Europe”. The recent changes which have taken place in Europe is such that the European citizens can no more be optimistic about the United Europe.

Rather, in this period which the security crises in the West are becoming more intense than any time before, the European citizens are more willing to see the “breakdown of the EU”.

The security crisis is a topic that today’s European Union is deeply touched by. Common European security policies have failed to improve the security situation inside the Schengen borders and other European borders, and became the Achilles heel of Europe’s security and intelligence.

On the other hand, nationalist and anti-EU, anti-immigrant movements (which are mostly of anti-Islamic tendencies) have been able to operate as official parties in the West and attract many people in the current political and social atmosphere.

A considerable part of the crimes committed in the West is done by the nationalist and racist groups against Muslims and immigrants. But such news are mostly censored by the Western media.

Under such circumstances, “security”, as a minimum requirement of the European citizens, is lost in their everyday lives, and this has become a widespread crisis in the West, along with other crises (social, political and economic ones). It’s not without a reason that any kind of civil disobedience, or social and economic protest will increase the level of security alert in the European Union.

Here, the main question is, what was the role of Western security policies in shaping this frightening process over the past decades?

Well, the answer to this question is clear! The indifference of the European security services to the rise of extremist movements, and even Neo-Nazi and Fascist groups in different European countries, and the subsequent support of these apparatus for the Takfiri groups in the West Asian region, had stuck Europe in a terrible security crisis.

Now that public dissatisfaction with European politicians has been contributed to it, the situation has worsened considerably for European countries.

Certainly, in the context of the security crisis, the West faces a hazardous structure that the European authorities themselves contributed to its creation and continuity. In the meantime, providing reverse interpretations and attempts to introduce external sources for the security crises in the West, can’t be of any help to the European officials.

As a result, the “2019 Europe” will be more vulnerable and more insecure than Europe in 2018. This vulnerability will be highlighted in the security, social, political and economic equations. However, the “security crisis” will be the main crisis in Europe in this year. The product of this process will be a “deformed Europe”.

The strengthening of anarchy and disorder in Europe is not something that the current leaders of the European Union and the Eurozone can manage and control, especially at a time when the European Troika has actually collapsed.

Second Announcement



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 %
PHYSICAL PROPERTIES	C	< 10 %
	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.:

1) ACCOUNT No.0100013543943 AT "EXPORT DEVELOPMENT BANK OF IRAN AHVAZ CENTRAL BRANCH"

2) 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.:

1) ACCOUNT No.0102513186002 AT "MELLI BANK OF IRAN AHVAZ KSC BRANCH"

2) 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 160,000000 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 14<sup>th</sup>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 27<sup>th</sup>Jan.,2019.THE OPENING DATE OF ENVELOPES WILL BE AT 11 AM ON THE 29<sup>th</sup>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:

Tel No. : +98 61 32908115 / 32136159

Fax No. : +98 61 32908115

Mr.M.FARZINEJAD EMAIL : m.farzinejad @ksc.ir OR VISIT:http://WWW.KSC.IR



# Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

## Apartment

New Apt in Jordan  
4<sup>th</sup> floor, 100 sq.m, 2 Bdrs. fully  
furn, balcony, parking spot  
storage, **\$900**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Velenjak  
5<sup>th</sup> floor, 320 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.  
fully furn, equipped kitchen  
spj, elevator, renovated parking  
spot, **\$2000**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Elahieh  
400 sq.m, 5 Bdrs., fully furn  
2 kitchens, servant  
swimming pool, parking spot  
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Zafaraniéh  
5<sup>th</sup> floor, 174 sq.m  
3 Bdrs., fully furn, elevator  
storage, parking spot, **\$3500**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Fereshteh  
4<sup>th</sup> floor, 420 sq.m, 4 Bdrs  
unfurn, equipped kitchen  
4 bath rooms, fire place, spj  
roof top, elevator  
parking spot, **\$6000**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in North Dibaji  
2<sup>th</sup> floor, 320 sq.m, 4 Bdrs.  
semi furn, equipped kitchen  
terrace, good light  
outdoor swimming pool parking  
spot, **\$3000**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

## Villa

Triplex Villa in Velenjak  
1000 sq.m land, 700 sq.m built up  
5 Bdrs., unfurn, very clean sauna  
outdoor swimming pool  
servant quarter, fire place  
renovated, green yard  
storage, parking spot  
**\$12000**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Super Luxury Villa  
in Shahrak Qarb  
brand new, 800 sq.m land  
700 sq.m built up, 4master  
bedrooms, super luxury furn  
spj, massage room, beautiful roof  
garden, play ground for kids, city  
view, parking spot  
**Price negotiable**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

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

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Triplex Villa in Zafaraniéh  
1200 sq.m, 15 Bdrs. unfurn  
parking spot, **\$10000**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Triplex Villa in Niavarán  
800 sq.m land, 550 sq.m built up  
sauna, outdoor pool  
parking spot

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156



Holder of

ISO 9001:2008

ISO 10004:2012

ISO 10002:2014

From Oxford Cert Universal

**Best Consultation**

**Best Services, Best Result**

Intl. Department Manager "Tina 09128103205"

Tel: 22662452-8, Fax: 22667173

**Hot Line: 28141**

info@parsdiplomatic.com

**www.parsdiplomatic.com**

## Building & Office

Whole building in Jordan  
administrative office license  
5 floors, 1700 sq.m totally  
almost new, elevator  
43 parking spots

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Office in Valiasr  
administrative office license  
3 apts, 102 sq.m, elevator  
lots parking spots

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

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

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

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

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Office in Saadat Abad  
administrative office license  
4 apts, 750 sq.m, parking spots

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Mahmoodieh Whole Building in  
5 floors, 2600 sq.m totally  
30 Bdrs., 1 penthouse  
40 parking spots, nice lobby  
spj, gym, rooftop

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

## Ideal Offers

Apt in Jordan  
3<sup>th</sup> floor, 110 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.  
furn, balcony, storage  
parking spot  
**\$1000**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Qolhak  
1<sup>th</sup> floor, 90 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.  
fully furn, equipped kitchen  
parking spot, **\$900**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Elahieh  
3<sup>th</sup> floor, 280 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.  
fully furn, terrace, spj, gym  
parking spot  
**\$2000**

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Mirdamad  
2 apts, each apt has 1 Bdr. fully  
furn elevator, parking spot, long &  
short term  
**\$23 daily**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Evin  
90 sq.m, 2 Bdrs., nice & clean furn,  
equipped kitchen  
parking spot  
**\$900**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Luxury Apt in Zafaraniéh  
brand new, 2<sup>th</sup> floor 50 sq.m  
1 Bdr., fully furn, good light spj,  
elevator, parking spot  
**\$1500**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

مالکین محترم

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

بهترین مشاوره، برترین سرویس، بالاترین رضایت

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

مالکین محترم

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

**SHANON**  
Shanon\_tari@yahoo.com  
+989121907875  
Tel : 88745542

<b>Niavarán Apt</b> 180sq.m, 3bdrs S/p, S, J, F.F (\$1800)	<b>Velenjak (\$2000)</b> 220sq.m, 3bdrs S/p, S, J, & F.F	<b>Tajrish Villa (\$3000)</b> 1000sq.m, 5bdrs S/pool, yard, F.F
<b>Jordan (\$1500)</b> 200sq.m, 3bdrs S/p, S, J, & F.F	<b>Kamranieh (\$2200)</b> 250sq.m, 4bdrs S/p, balcony, F.F	<b>Zafar bldg</b> 4storey, 10bdrs yard, & pkg lots (\$7000)

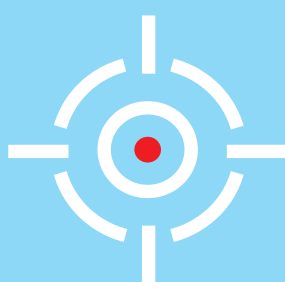
## Building in darus

280 sqm-300sqm  
private garden-fully  
furn-own parking  
In the rent of employees  
of embassies for last 6  
years (3 years japan-3  
years Argentina)-\$2000  
**(+98)9123337617**



TEHRAN TIMES

Iran's Leading  
International Daily  
Advertising Dept



Tel:

**021 -430 51 450**

## Number one Real Estate in Iran

www.DELTA HOME.ir

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

**HOME**  
Real Estate

Fereshteh  
120 sqm, 2 bdrs, FF, SP, parking  
\$1600 USD  
Davood: (+98) 9123488513

Zafaraniyeh, Villa, Best location  
500sqm land, 1200 sqm building, duplex,  
5bdrs, indoor pool, Luxury  
Price negotiable  
Davood: (+98) 9123488513

Elahiyeh  
200sqm, 3 bdrs, nicely FF, best tower  
Nice view, Lobby, balcony  
\$2500 USD  
Davood: (+98) 9123488513

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

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

Niavarán  
250 Sqm, 3 bdrs, 2.5 baths, brand new  
Full facilities (spa, gym, roof garden, small  
private cinema,...)  
\$3600 USD  
Adrian: (+98) 921 71 76 740

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

Elahiyeh  
205sqm, 3 bdrs, 4th floor, SPJ, sauna  
Gym, coffee shop, roof garden, Lobby  
\$3000 USD  
Linda: (+98) 9351721171

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

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

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

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

Guest House  
1- Jordan, 5 fl, 5 Units, 14 bdrs ,FF  
2- Gandi, 5 fl, 19 Units, 38 bdrs, FF  
3- Jordan, 5 fl, 20 Units, 55 bdrs, FF  
Farshid: (+98) 9125540877

Elahiyeh, Velenjak, Penthouse  
Super Luxury, 450 sqm, 550 sqm  
Full facilities, Negotiable  
Hojati: (+98) 9309701169

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

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

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

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

**Don't Waste Your Time**

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

**www.Delta HOME.ir**

The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

**HOME**  
Real Estate

Member of DELTA Real Estate Group  
(021) 88888865

**FIRST INDIAN RESTAURANT**  
IN IRAN

**PRIVATE PARKING LOT**

Jahan Hotel (Exelsior) – Rahimzade Alley – Taleqani  
Crossroads – Valiasr St. Tell: **66476855**





## FARDA Legal Institute

### Registration

- Brand
- Trademark
- Companies' Affairs
- Company Registration

Local and International Call

+98 – 912 937 9869

International Call and WhatsApp

+98 – 912 3756792

## ‘Blood pressure medications in Iran do not pose cancer risk’

**HEALTH DESK** **TEHRAN** — An official with the Iranian Food and Drug Administration announced that the blood pressure medications in Iran do not contain impurities that could cause cancer, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

The announcement was made after the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recalled losartan, a blood pressure medication, over concerns that it might cause cancer.

According to FDA, the losartan lot being recalled was found to be contaminated with trace amounts of an impurity, N-nitrosodiethylamine (NDEA).

NDEA is an organic chemical that is classified as a probable human carcinogen and is used to make liquid rocket fuel. It's also a byproduct of pesticide manufacture and fish processing.

After the announcement, two major suppliers of the drug in United States, Sandoz Inc and Torrent Pharmaceuticals voluntarily recalled the drug from the market in August and December 2018, and then another patch in March 2019.

Losartan affected by the recall are 100 milligram/25 milligram tablets with the lot number JB8912.

According to Mohammad Abdzadeh, the director of drugs department at the Iranian Food and Drug Administration, only the 360 mg losartan with certain raw materials are dangerous, but the ones available in Iran's market are safe.

“We have inspected all different losartan products in the market and only one series of the product was considered as dangerous and it was subsequently recalled,” said Abdzadeh.

#### ■ Valsartan recall in Iran

In July 2018, FDA warned about another blood pressure medication, Valsartan.

This recall was due to an impurity, N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA), which was found in the recalled products. However, not all products containing Valsartan were recalled.



NDMA is classified as a probable human carcinogen (a substance that could cause cancer) based on results from laboratory tests. The presence of NDMA was unexpected and is thought to be related to changes in the way the active substance was manufactured.

The contaminated Valsartan was majorly supplied by a Chinese company, Zhejiang Huahai Pharmaceuticals which was also a distributor of the drug among five other companies; namely the Major Pharmaceuticals, Solco Healthcare, Teva Pharmaceuticals Industries Ltd, Solco Healthcare and Teva Pharmaceuticals Industries Ltd.

Following the concerns over the quality of Valsartan in Iran, Fereidun Noohi, head of the Iranian Heart Association, announced that all Valsartan products in Iran are standard and do not pose any risks to the people.

According to Young Journalists Club, after the FDA announcement in July, all the Valsartan products in Iran that contained the impurity were recalled. They were distributed in Iran by seven Iranian companies and one foreign supplier.

## Breast cancer rate in Iran up 6% yr/yr: expert

**HEALTH DESK** **TEHRAN** — The rate of breast cancer in Iran is growing by six percent every year, indicating a sharp rise in the disease prevalence, said a cancer expert at Tehran's Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences.

Every year, 10,500 new cases of breast cancer are diagnosed in women, IRNA quoted Dr. Mohammad Hadizadeh as saying on Monday.

“The incidence rate of breast cancer in Iran is now around 30 in every 100,000 women; however, the disease rate in USA and European countries is around two or three times higher than our country,” he said.

“The lower rate of breast cancer in Iran is due to the absence of some medical conditions among people and the fact that we have a young population, but in the next 10 or 20 years, the disease prevalence will rise to nearly the same level of the countries with large number of breast cancer patients, so we have to prioritize preventive strategies and early diagnosis programs,” Hadizadeh noted.

According to World Health Organization, breast cancer is the most frequent cancer among women, impacting 2.1 million women each year, and also causes the greatest number of cancer-related deaths among women.

In 2018, it is estimated that 627,000 women died from breast cancer – that is approximately 15% of all cancer deaths among women. While breast cancer rates are higher among women in more developed regions, rates are increasing in nearly every region globally.

Hadizadeh added that early detection of the disease is critical, if the cancer is diagnosed early, the patients may not have to go through chemotherapy, and they may even end up having total remission.

“Women account for around 99 percent of breast cancer patients and men account for only one percent. In Iran, there are 200 to 250 cases of breast cancer among men,” said the expert.

## TASHRIFAT INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE AGENCY

**SATISFACTION  
GUARANTEED**



**Mr. Shahin**

Nobody does it better

**09121081212**

Since: 1987

مالکین محترم املاک مسکونی و اداری شما را  
جهت اجاره به خارجی نیازمندیم

**Tel: 22723121**

**tehranfirstchoice@gmail.com**

**We give service with a  
difference... We care!**  
✓ Long & Short term rentals  
✓ Purchase Properties

**FURNISHED - UNFURNISHED  
Villa-Apartment-Office-  
Building**

### APARTMENT

Jordan 4 Bdrs,fully furn,260sq.m,spj,\$3000
Elahiyeh Chenaran Fantastic 4 Bdrs,500 Sq.m, for those seeking the best
Darous 2Bdrs,fully furn,3rd fl.,brand new,100 sqm,lobby 1600
Zaferaniyeh-Yekta, Apartment-villa French-style 3Bdrs,fully furn 360 sq.m.sp, EURO 5000
Valiasre-Bagheferdos 3 Bdrs,fully furn,brand new,5th fl., 150 sq.m ,indoor spj,\$1900
Mirdamad-Naft 3 Bdrs,fully furn,5th fl.,200 sq.m, \$ 2000 Close to Paladium Shopping center 3Bdrs,180 sq.m,fully furn,lobby,sp,garden,\$2000

### VILLA

Elahiyeh Triplex-800 sq.m built up,1000 sq.m land,Semi-furn,7 Bdrs,spj,\$9000
Zaferaniyeh Duplex, 4 Bdrs,unfurn,350 sq.m,spj,\$8000
Niavaran 2000 sq.m land,green garden,500 sq.m built up area,indoor spj,4Bdrs,fully furn,triplex,\$15000
Darous 1000 sq.m land,400 sq.m built up area, flat.4 Bdrs,spj.\$7000
Jordan 850 sq.m land,500 sq.m built up,5 Bdrs,spj,furn/ unfurn,duplex,\$7000

### OFFICE

From 50 to 8000 sq.m available With all facilities in different areas Jordan 100 sq.m,3 rooms,parking,brand new 3rd fl.,\$1700
Valiasre 150 sq.m brand new, all facilities,5th fl.,\$2300
Vozara 250 sq.m,all facilities 8th fl.,\$4000
Mirdamad-Naft 120 sq.m,6th fl., \$1700
vanak shariati pasdaran shahrak gharb saadatabad 4000-3000-5000-4000-1000 sq.m,full,reasonable price

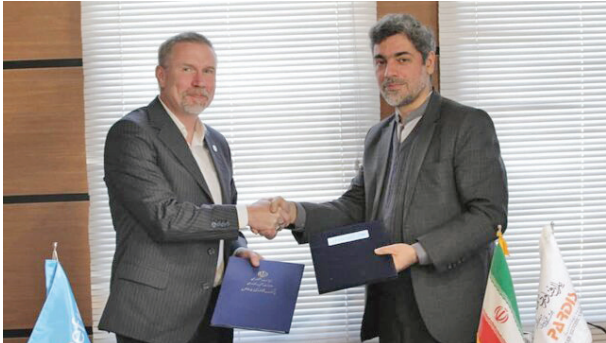
### FOR: EMBASSY/COMPANY

Farmaniyeh, 4-storey building,1000 sq.m, all facilities,\$10000
Zaferaniyeh Triplex villa,800 sq.m,built up,1000 sq.m land,12 rooms,\$8500
Niavaran Triplex villa,2000 sq.m land,600 sq.m built up ,spj,all facilities,\$15000
Darous Duplex villa,600 sq.m built up,1000 sq.m land ,all facilities,\$8000
Other areas: Farmaniyeh Aghdasiyeh Shahrak Gharb Shariati-Pasdaran Valiasre Tajrish Jordan Vanak Arjantin Zafar... nice cases ready to move in.



## UNICEF, Pardis tech park sign agreement

**TECHNOLOGY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) office in Iran and Pardis Science and Technology Park signed a memorandum of understanding, ISNA reported on Tuesday.



Pardis Technology Park Director Mehdi Saffarinia (r) and UNICEF representative in Iran, Will Parks, shake hands after signing an agreement

UNICEF representative in Iran, Will Parks, and head of Pardis Science and Technology Park, Mehdi Saffarinia, signed the MOU. The agreement aims to develop innovative plans in the field of children and to boost innovation for students. The agreement paves the way for further cooperation in different fields of innovation ecosystem and exhibition.

## Biotech center opens for medical plant tissue culture

**TECHNOLOGY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The first biotechnology center in Iran for medical plant tissue culture was established in Birjand, eastern South Khorasan province, on Monday. Plant tissue culture is a collection of techniques used to maintain or grow plant cells, tissues or organs under sterile conditions on a nutrient culture medium of known composition. Launched by Iranian researchers, the center focuses on different species of jujube. Jujube trees grow in the arid and semiarid zones of Iran, especially in Birjand. Because of the plant’s extensive utilization in food and pharmaceutical industries, production has increased sharply over the past decade. The vice president for science and technology, Sourena Sattari, attended the opening ceremony. The center is equipped with a hi-tech laboratory and a greenhouse.

## Hupnos sleep mask gets to work the minute you start snoring

In a nutshell, Hupnos -- the Greek word for “sleep” -- is a lightweight microfiber sleep mask that comes with a silicone nose piece plus breathing valves. It’s basically an EPAP (Expiratory Positive Airway Pressure) device but enhanced by various sensors. The idea came from founder and CEO Curt Ray, who decided to deal with his own snoring issue after his wife complained four years ago. Almost 60 design iterations later, Ray’s team brought out the Hupnos, which was successfully funded on Indiegogo late last month and is currently serving over 500 users.



Hupnos works by detecting your sleeping position and whether you’re snoring. If you’re indeed saving logs while lying flat, the mask will send vibrational cues to change your sleeping position, in the hopes of immediately stopping your snoring. Failing that, Hupnos will then close the expiratory valve -- by way of a motorized lever covering the hole -- to increase the exhalation pressure, thus clearing your airway to reduce snoring. Meanwhile, inhalation remains pretty much unaffected thanks to the two larger circular valves. If all goes well, the user wouldn’t even remember that the mask was in action the next day, as the EPAP feature only kicks in when the user is snoring. In contrast, the conventional EPAP devices don’t have adjustable pressure, so they actually made sleeping more difficult and users ended up using their mouths to breathe instead, according to the Hupnos team’s research. The smart part about Hupnos is that this is all controlled by the iOS or Android app via Bluetooth 4.0 LE, and likewise, the mask sends back sleep quality data as well as triggering audio recording for your snoring. Based on your sleep data, Hupnos can better determine when to send out vibrations or whether to increase the pressure. The app also lets you punch in factors like smoking, coffee or alcohol, so that you can observe how these may affect your sleep. On a full charge, Hupnos can monitor at least 20 hours of sleep, which should be good for about three nights for most people; just plug it into a micro-USB cable when charging is needed. While I obviously couldn’t test the Hupnos on the show floor, I did get to try one on and was impressed by how light and comfortable it was -- even if I were to sleep on my side, theoretically speaking. The head strap was easily adjustable via velcro on both sides, and due to the way it splits open in the middle, my head wouldn’t be pressing against it while resting on the pillow. As for the nose piece, it didn’t take long for me to get used to breathing through it, though I’d recommend taking it out for some cleaning every once in a while. Likewise, the face mask can be separated for machine washing.

(Source: engadget.com)

# Space tech development won’t wait for other countries: minister

**1→** Mesbah satellite was built in collaboration with Italy’s Carlo Gavazzi Space SpA (CGS) in 1998 and was unveiled in 2005. The satellite has been ready for launch for more than ten years in Europe, he lamented. Payam, Dousti and Nahid satellites have passed pre-launch testing and are ready to be launched. Dousti satellite is ready for launch and Payam satellite passed technical testing on Friday, which are imagery satellites with a resolution of less than 50 meters. **■ Satellites are for peaceful purposes** The three satellites recently manufactured in Iran are completely for peaceful purposes, he said. The satellites improve standard of living, food and water resources security, which are the most important aims for the government, he added. “We cannot wait for other countries to launch our satellites. That is nonsense that some countries stated that Iran should not improve.” “The ICT Ministry does its best for



promotion of peaceful satellite technology,” he explained. The Ministry of Defense is responsible

for sending satellites into orbit and they are more qualified for setting times to launch the satellites.

Dousti satellite will be sent to 250 km orbit using Safir satellite-carrier rocket and Payam satellite will be sent into orbit by Simorgh satellite, he added. **■ ISRC cooperates with aerospace experts** The ISRC cooperate with 13 universities, 20 professors and over 180 post-graduate students in aerospace, the ISRC Chairman Hossein Samimi said during the press conference. The ISRC provides equipped laboratories as main infrastructures, he said. The center is responsible for manufacturing remote sensing and telecommunication satellites as well as space-based researches, he explained. **■ Commercial space technologies era** Space economy is one of the main issues in the world today, head of the Iranian Space Agency (ISA), Morteza Barari, said during the event. He said that now is the commercial space technologies era and Iran should develop aerospace knowledge. The development of space technology will lead to more facilities for nations, he said.

## Iran Computer and Video Games Foundation launches CRM



**TECHNOLOGY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran Computer and Video Games Foundation has launched a customer-relationship management (CRM) system, YJC reported on Monday. Customer-relationship management is an approach to manage a company’s interaction with current and potential customers with the use of data analysis about customers’ history with a company to improve business relationships with customers. The foundation establishes CRM to

be in line with e-government projects, head of the foundation, Hassan Karimi Qodusi, said. “Although we provide electronic services we have some deficiencies to meet e-government criteria,” he explained. He said that with the help of CRM, the customers can solve their problems more easily. The website of the foundation is equipped with ticketing section, in which the customers can write down their problems for a quick follow-up, he added.

## Iranian knowledge-based IT firms seek Indian market



**TECHNOLOGY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Representatives of ten Iranian knowledge-based firms, which are active in the field of information technology (IT), travelled to India on Monday to find new markets for their products, Mehr reported. Headed by Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, a delegation of Iranian knowledge-based companies and industrial firms travelled to India, the director general for international business affairs at science and technology

vice presidency announced. Rouhollah Estiri called India as one of the main centers of freelancing in the world, which can be considered as a great potential market for Iranian firms. “Iranian firms have the ability to undertake some parts of the projects, hence we dispatch companies active in this field of IT,” he explained. The visit can boost cooperation between Iranian and Indian firms and lead to new joint projects, he said.

## The best tech for working from home



With a changing economy, more flexible job roles, and the continued spread of broadband internet, more and more of us are working from home. According to the most recent statistics, more than five percent of the U.S. workforce spends at least part of their office hours at home. While this habit lets us avoid the stress of commuting and spend all day in sweatpants, the consequences aren’t all positive. With so many distractions at home, and no manager looming nearby, productivity can take a hit. To avoid this, we rounded up some apps and tools to help you stay on task. Include some of these in your home office setup to raise your productivity and motivation levels.

### ■ Play background noise

Brain.fm offers a wide range of engineered sounds that you can run unobtrusively while you work.

If you work best with a constant murmur in the background, you’ll find plenty of white-noise apps to provide that hum. We’ve selected two reasonably-priced favorites.

Noisli is our top pick. It produces a wide variety of sounds—from morning coffee-shop clatter to a stormy forest to simple white noise—that you can combine and customize. Pick the noises you want to hear, and the relative volumes you’d like them to play at, and Noisli does the rest. For instance, you might choose a loud whoosh of blowing leaves with just a faint hint of rain in the background. The app also offers several preset soundscapes designed to help with relaxation or productivity.

On the more expensive side, we also like Brain.fm. Although it’s pricier and less customizable than Noisli, it still offers a decent number of sounds, from nature noises to electro. And Brain.fm claims that its original AI-created tracks can actually optimize your brainwaves to improve your cognitive function, helping you focus, relax, or drift off to sleep. Your mileage may vary, but I found the app to be very effective when I tested it out. If you’re still leery, you get five free sessions to test out Brain.fm before you commit to paying.

### ■ Track your time

Where does all the time go? With no boss around to check when you start work or take a break (or three), your routine can quickly stagnate. That’s why you need an app to help you keep track of how you’re spending your time.

One of the most impressive time-tracking apps we’ve encountered is Toggl. It syncs across multiple devices, produces useful reports analyzing your schedule, and lets freelancers see which clients help them make the most money. What really makes Toggl stand out, though, is its ease of use. You can set it up in minutes, tracking your time with just a few taps or clicks. If you forget to note particular tasks when you start them, you can return later to edit this information. Many of these features come free, but for bonuses like advanced reports and automated reminders, you’ll need to pay for a premium subscription. Although it’s our favorite, Toggl isn’t the only good

time-tracking app out there. We also like Hours. Unfortunately, this intuitive and comprehensive time-tracker only has a free version for iOS. Web access requires a premium subscription, which also gives you extra features like more reporting options and syncing across multiple devices.

### ■ Cut out distractions

At home, you’re surrounded by temptations like your snack-filled kitchen, potential Netflix binges, and, of course, the ever-present siren song of your smartphone. You need help tuning out these distractions in order to stay on track.

First, we’d like to flag Forest, which aims to keep you off your smartphone. It relies on a simple but effective motivation: The longer you avoid your device, the bigger the app’s digital forest grows. As virtual trees multiply, Forest rewards you with coins that you can spend to support the planting of real trees. This not only reduces your phone use, but also helps the planet at the same time.

For a more comprehensive method of avoiding distractions, we like Freedom. It actively prevents you from accessing pre-selected websites and apps, such as distracting social media or smartphone games. In other words, it locks you out of non-work programs until you’ve finished your tasks. Unfortunately, if you’re determined to do so, you can simply disable Freedom and cheat. But you might find that it creates enough of a barrier to derail your proposed Facebook binge and encourage you to do something productive instead.

### ■ Include some break time

All work and no play is a recipe for burnout: If you don’t take the odd breather, your productivity will experience diminishing returns. A simple tool like the free online Pomodoro Tracker builds breaks into your schedule. It reminds you to take five minutes of rest for every 25 minutes of work, and you can also adjust these parameters to split your time differently.

You should use those break minutes to refresh your brain. The highly-rated meditation app Headspace can help you be more intentional about downtime. It takes you carefully through a host of beginner-friendly guided meditations,

from short single sessions to longer courses. You can pick the topics that suit your needs, such as relieving stress or increasing focus, and the time periods that fit into your schedule. You get a limited number of basic meditations for free, and then if those work for you, you can pay for a subscription to unlock the entire Headspace library.

If you’d prefer distraction to meditation, why not rest your eyes while listening to a podcast? Google Podcasts and Apple Podcasts (both give you free access to a wealth of audio content. Learning about completely non-work-related topics—podcasts cover everything from life hacks to television shows—will give you a chance to rest and reset, so you can tackle your tasks afresh when you head back into the home office.

### ■ Stay connected

Even when you’re not in the office, you need to stay in touch with your colleagues. So apps that connect you with other members of your team are an essential part of working from home.

For your audio and video calls, we recommend Skype. This classic web caller works efficiently and intuitively, and it also boasts lots of useful features like text chat, group video calls, screen sharing, and file transfers. Because Microsoft owns it, the app integrates neatly with other Microsoft services—for example, you can access Skype directly from the Outlook web portal.

And for more granular communications, you can’t beat the ubiquitous chat app Slack, which aims to reduce our reliance on email. It has gained widespread popularity for its ease of use, ability to switch seamlessly between private direct messaging and open chat rooms, and integration with other work services like Google Docs and Trello. It can even make audio calls.

### ■ Improve your workspace

Besides the apps we’ve mentioned, you can also modify your physical home-office setup. A more comfortable working situation will make you more productive—and less vulnerable to distractions.

For your comfort and your health, you should make sure your chair and desk help you sit without straining your body. For example, keep your screen at eye level to avoid damaging your neck and back. No matter what type of computer you own, a basic stand like the SimpleHouseware Metal Desk Monitor Stand can help keep everything in alignment. And for a real upgrade, consider building a custom computer desk designed to help you sit ergonomically.

In addition to your computer, you probably have a few other gadgets on that desk. You’ll want to keep them all charged to make sure a dead battery doesn’t make you miss a call from the boss. A multi-port charger like the Anker 60W USB Wall Charger (\$26 on Amazon) can help. It lets you juice up to six devices at once using the ubiquitous USB port standard.

(Source: popsci.com)



# TESS discovers its third new planet, with longest orbit yet

NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS), has discovered a third small planet outside our Solar System, scientists announced this week at the annual American Astronomical Society meeting in Seattle.

The new planet, named HD 21749b, orbits a bright, nearby dwarf star about 53 light years away, in the constellation Reticulum, and appears to have the longest orbital period of the three planets so far identified by TESS.

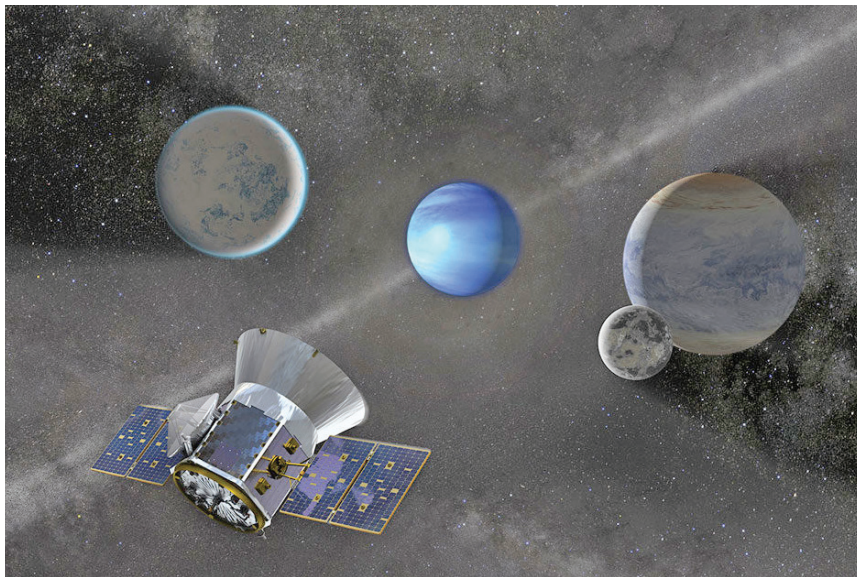
HD 21749b journeys around its star in a relatively leisurely 36 days, compared to the two other planets -- Pi Mensae b, a "super-Earth" with a 6.3-day orbit, and LHS 3844b, a rocky world that speeds around its star in just 11 hours. All three planets were discovered in the first three months of TESS observations.

The surface of the new planet is likely around 300 degrees Fahrenheit -- relatively cool, given its proximity to its star, which is almost as bright as the sun.

## ■ The coolest small planet

"It's the coolest small planet that we know of around a star this bright," says Diana Dragomir, a postdoc in MIT's Kavli Institute for Astrophysics and Space Research, who led the new discovery. "We know a lot about atmospheres of hot planets, but because it's very hard to find small planets that orbit farther from their stars, and are therefore cooler, we haven't been able to learn much about these smaller, cooler planets. But here we were lucky, and caught this one, and can now study it in more detail."

The planet is about three times the size



of Earth, which puts it in the category of a "sub-Neptune." Surprisingly, it is also a whopping 23 times as massive as Earth. But it is unlikely that the planet is rocky and therefore habitable; it's more likely made of gas, of a kind that is much denser than the atmospheres of

either Neptune or Uranus.

"We think this planet wouldn't be as gaseous as Neptune or Uranus, which are mostly hydrogen and really puffy," Dragomir says. The "planet likely has a density of water, or a thick atmosphere."

**The surface of the new planet is likely around 300 degrees Fahrenheit -- relatively cool, given its proximity to its star, which is almost as bright as the sun.**

## Quantum physicists in the 1920s helped found field of quantum biology

There's rarely time to write about every cool science-y story that comes our way. So this year, we're running a special Twelve Days of Christmas series of posts, highlighting one story that fell through the cracks each day, from December 25 through January 5. Our final installment: the historical origins of quantum biology as a scientific discipline.

In 1944, quantum physicist Erwin Schroedinger wrote a short book called *What Is Life: The Physical Aspect of the Living Cell*, exploring how the relatively new field of quantum mechanics might play a role in biological processes. It is considered by many to be one of the earliest forays into "quantum biology," a rarefied field that attempts to apply quantum principles to living systems. But the field actually dates back to the earliest days of quantum mechanics in the 1920s, according to a recent paper published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society A*.

### ■ Scientific discipline

"Quantum biology is wrongly regarded as a very new scientific discipline, when it actually began before the Second World War," said co-author John Joe McFadden, a microbiologist at the University of Surrey and co-director of its Center for Quantum Biology, along with his Surrey colleague and co-author Jim Al-Khalili.

"Back then, a few quantum physicists tried to understand what was special about life itself and whether quantum mechanics might shed any light on the matter."

Frankly, quantum biology has suffered from a lack of credibility until the last decade or so, when a number of intriguing studies suggested that there might be something to the idea after all. For instance, there is growing evidence that photosynthesis relies on quantum effects to help plants turn sunlight into fuel.

Migratory birds might have an internal "quantum compass" that helps them



sense Earth's magnetic fields as a means of navigation. Quantum effects might play a role in the human sense of smell, helping us distinguish between different scents.

### ■ Asking deep questions

"We've forgotten that there were these mavericks even before Schroedinger who were asking these deep questions."

More controversially, mathematical physicist Roger Penrose suggested in 1989 that mysterious proteins called "microtubules" might exploit quantum effects and hold the secret to human consciousness. Few researchers believe this is actually true, but Matthew Fisher, a physicist at the University of California, Santa Barbara, has recently proposed that the nuclear spins of phosphorus atoms might function as simple "qubits" in the brain. Consciousness, in other words, would work much like a quantum computer.

By 1927, physicists had laid out the mathematical framework for the new theory of quantum mechanics. "Flushed with their success at taming the atomic world, and with the arrogance of youth on their side, many quantum pioneers struck out of their physics laboratories and away from their blackboards to seek new areas of science to conquer," the authors write. And since microbiology and the related fledgling field of genetics remained largely unexplored, the intellectually restless physicists naturally gravitated there.

(Source: arstechnica.com)

## Should researchers engineer a spicy tomato?

The chili pepper, from an evolutionary perspective, is the tomato's long-lost spit-fire cousin. They split off from a common ancestor 19 million years ago but still share some of the same DNA. While the tomato plant went on to have a fleshy, nutrient-rich fruit yielding bountiful harvests, the more agriculturally difficult chili plant went defensive, developing capsaicinoids, the molecules that give peppers their spiciness, to ward off predators.

With the latest gene-editing techniques, it could be possible, although challenging, to make a tomato produce capsaicinoids as well, researchers argue in an opinion article publishing January 7 in the journal *Trends in Plant Science*. Their objective isn't to start a hot, new culinary fad--although that's not completely off the table -- but to have an easier means of mass producing large quantities of capsaicinoids for commercial purposes. The molecules have nutritional and antibiotic properties and are used in painkillers and pepper spray.

"Engineering the capsaicinoid genetic pathway to the tomato would make it easier and cheaper to produce this compound, which has very interesting applications," says senior author Agustin Zsögön (@shogur), a plant biologist at the Federal University of Viçosa in Brazil whose group is working toward this goal. "We have the tools powerful enough to engineer the genome of any species; the challenge is to know which gene to engineer and where."

### ■ Burning sensation

The spicy taste that capsaicinoids add isn't a taste, but a reaction to pain. They activate nerve cells in the tongue that deal with heat-induced pain, which the brain interprets as a burning sensation. Evidence suggests that the evolution of capsaicinoids helped chili peppers deter small mammals from eating their fruit.



Birds, which are much better seed dispersers, show no pain response to the molecules.

There are at least 23 different types of capsaicinoids, which originate from the pith of the chili pepper. The spiciness of a pepper is determined by the genes that regulate capsaicinoid production, and less pungent peppers have mutations affecting this process. Previous gene sequencing work has shown that tomatoes have the genes necessary for capsaicinoids but don't have the machinery to turn them on.

"In theory you could use these genes to produce capsaicinoids in the tomato," says Zsögön. "Since we don't have solid data about the expression patterns of the capsaicinoid pathway in the tomato fruit, we have to try alternative approaches. One is to activate candidate genes one at a time and see what happens, which compounds are produced. We are trying this and a few other things."

The sequencing of the chili pepper genome and the discovery that the tomato has the genes necessary for pungency paves the way for engineering a spicy tomato. The researchers write that not only will this endeavour help better understand the evolution of this unique botanical trait and allow for the development of tomato capsaicinoid biofactories, but perhaps allow for the development of some new varieties of produce in the grocery aisle.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

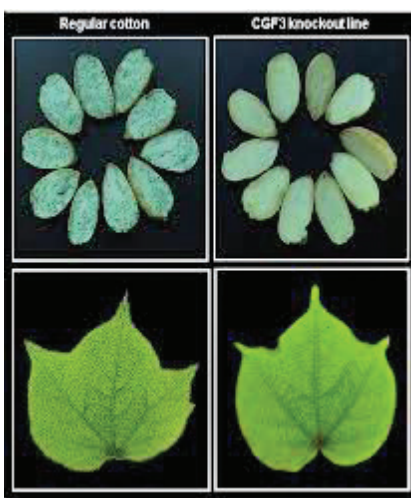
## Manipulation of gossypol-containing glands in cotton can boost plant's natural defenses

Development of a cotton plant with stronger natural defenses due to a greater gland density and thus more gossypol in the leaves could soon be a reality, according to a Texas A&M AgriLife Research plant biotechnologist in College Station.

Seeds and other parts of cotton possess dark glands containing toxic terpenoids such as gossypol that defend the plant against pests and pathogens, said Dr. Keerti Rathore, AgriLife Research plant biotechnologist in the Institute for Plant Genomics and Biotechnology at Texas A&M University.

Rathore and his team compared RNA production in the embryos from a glanded cotton and a mutant glandless plant. These analyses resulted in the identification of three genes that play a critical role in gland formation, he said.

The study, "Genes regulating gland development in the cotton plant," has been published online in the *Plant Biotechnology Journal*. The team used virus-induced gene silencing and CRISPR-mediated gene knockout to reduce/eliminate the glands in the plant, thus validating the function of the genes.



### ■ Aquaculture species

Rathore's lab recently announced development and deregulation of a gossypol-free cottonseed -- ultra-low gossypol cottonseed or ULGCS -- that could be a new source of protein for the more efficient aquaculture species and poultry or even as human food.

However, equally important in the world of scientific discoveries, he said, is the intriguing possibility of enhancing the expression of these genes to increase the number of glands in the leaves and floral tissues. This would allow for boosting gossypol production in those locations and strengthening the plant's natural defenses.

"There is an increasing need for such a natural defense mechanism against pests because more and more insect species are developing resistance to various forms of Bt-cotton," Rathore said.

He said the results of this continued study "is a very important scientific discovery, and it also has some historical significance."

Rathore explained that in the 1950s, a cotton breeder discovered a mutant cotton plant that was free of glands being grown by the native Americans of the Hopi tribe in Arizona. These cotton plants were the original source of glandless and, therefore, gossypol-free cottonseeds.

"A lot of human nutrition and animal feeding trials were conducted using these, including some at Texas A&M," he said. "However, these plants did not fare very

well in the field because they lacked the protection provided by gossypol."

### ■ Cottonseed work

He explained this is when his ultra-low gossypol cottonseed work proved helpful.

"We had selectively eliminated gossypol from the seed only," Rathore said. "Now, in this recent paper, we show exactly the genes that are defective and the nature of the mutations in this Hopi cotton for the first time. Even though breeders have known about the Hopi cotton for the past 64 years, no one knew the exact nature of mutations that made the plant free of glands."

The sequence of the genes now provides Rathore and other researchers with tools that can be used to selectively eliminate gossypol from the seed as well as increase the number of glands, and therefore gossypol levels, in the leaves and floral parts to help the cotton plant better defend itself against pests.

"To provide an analogy, our ULGCS trait is akin to iPhone 4, whereas this discovery represents technology that can be used to create iPhone 10," he said.

(Source: phys.org)

## Scientists patch photosynthesis glitch to make plants grow 40 percent larger

All that oxygen you enjoy breathing doesn't just appear magically in the atmosphere. Earth is livable because plants around the globe pump out oxygen as a byproduct of photosynthesis, and some of them become tasty food crops in addition.

However, photosynthesis isn't perfect despite many eons of evolutionary refinement. Scientists from the University of Illinois have worked to correct for a flaw in photosynthesis, and that could improve crop yields by as much as 40 percent.

At the heart of the new research is a process in plants called photorespiration, which is not so much part of photosynthesis as it is a consequence of it. Like many biological processes, photosynthesis doesn't work correctly 100 percent of the time.

In fact, one of the main reactions in photosynthesis is only about 75 percent effective. The change comes in the process that plants undertake because of that inefficiency.

In photosynthesis, plants take water and carbon dioxide and process it to create sugars (food) and oxygen. Plants don't need the oxygen, so it gets expelled. Happily, we do need oxygen, and we exhale carbon dioxide.

The problem addressed in the new study is with an enzyme called ribulose-1,5-bisphosphate carboxylase-oxygenase (RuBisCO). This protein complex attaches a carbon dioxide molecule to ribulose-1,5-bisphosphate (RuBP). Over the ages, Earth's atmosphere has become more oxygenated, and that means RuBisCO has to cope with more oxygen molecules mixed in with carbon dioxide. About a quarter of the time, RuBisCO grabs an oxygen molecule by mistake, and that has consequences inside a plant.

When RuBisCO screws up, plants are left with toxic byproducts like glycolate and ammonia. It takes energy to process these compounds (through photorespiration), which is added to the energy loss from photosynthesis inefficiency. The study authors note that rice, wheat, and soybeans all suffer from this glitch, and RuBisCO gets even less accurate as temperatures rise. That means food supplies could go down as global warming becomes more severe.

(Source: extremetech.com)

## Scientists to use swarm of small satellites to act as giant telescope

Researchers invented a cheaper and groundbreaking satellite imaging system. Called synthetic aperture systems, this technique will change how photographs are captured on space and on Earth.

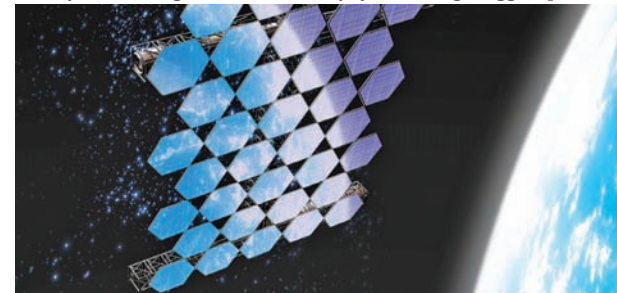
James Webb Space Telescope is the premier observatory of the next decade, but even before its launch, new research suggests that swarms of small satellites will make it obsolete in the near future.

This groundbreaking satellite imaging system that will revolutionize the way pictures are taken on space as well as here on Earth.

"This is an invention that completely changes the costs of space exploration, astronomy, aerial photography, and more," said Angika Bulbul, who is a Ph.D. candidate at the BGU Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering.

The invented technique, which is called synthetic aperture systems, lets the single tiny camera to capture photographs as it moves across space.

As it gathers and analyzes data, it produces images that can be created by a much larger camera basically synthesizing a bigger aperture.



In a paper published in December 2018 issue of *Optica*, the team of researchers demonstrates the two satellites, the size of milk cartons, in a spherical arrangement.

The two satellites move around the circle to collect data and beam it to the third stationary camera.

The configuration captures images with resolution, the same with the most advanced lens used in telescopes today. The researchers proved some previous assumptions about long-range photography to be wrong.

"We found that you only need a small part of a telescope lens to obtain quality images," Bulbul explained. "Even by using the perimeter aperture of a lens, as low as 0.43 percent, we managed to obtain similar image resolution compared to the full aperture area of mirror/lens-based imaging systems."

(Source: Tech Times)

## The Hupnos sleep mask claims to keep your snoring in check

The Hupnos sleep mask wants to solve your sleep problems by quieting down your snoring partner. It looks like a hybrid between a sleep mask and a scuba mask that goes over your nose to control your breathing while you sleep.

The mask pairs with an app that listens to you while you sleep to determine whether or not you're starting to snore. Once it detects a snore, it uses its built-in accelerometer to determine your sleeping position and vibrates to get you to move to a less snore-inducing position.

If that doesn't solve the problem, it increases the pressure when you exhale or Expiratory Positive Airway Pressure (EPAP) to help open up your airways and stop snoring.

The app doesn't assess the quality of your sleep, but it does keep track of your sleeping and snoring patterns over time. Users can also log other factors that could be contributing to their snoring like alcohol or exercise in the app.

The mask itself felt relatively comfortable when I tried it on, with its satin padded lining that doesn't press against your eyes, but the rubber module that went over my nose felt restrictive and smelled like the inside of a scuba mask. The vibration was strong enough to lull me out of sleep, but subtle enough to fully wake me and probably a much less violent move than what many of us do to our snoring spouse. And the EPAP feature was a lot less restrictive than I anticipated and just felt like someone slowing down my exhale.

I'm not sure I'd be able to sleep with it on, but then again I'm not a snorer (that I know of) and neither is my spouse, so maybe I'd feel differently if I was losing sleep over it.

(Source: cnet.com)



بهران تایمز نوبت اول ۹۷/۱۰/۱۸ نوبت دوم ۹۷/۱۰/۱۹



# Erdogan rebukes Bolton's 'unacceptable' comment on Syrian Kurdish YPG forces

'Bolton seriously mistaken on Syrian Kurd fighters'

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has censured as "unacceptable" and a "grave mistake" latest comments made by the United States National Security Adviser John Bolton about the Kurdish People's Protection Units (People's Defense Units/Yekîneyên Parastina Gel/YPG), which forms the primary component of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), in northern Syria.

"It is not possible for us to accept and stomach the message Bolton gave from Israel."

"Regarding this matter, Bolton has made a serious mistake and whoever thinks like this has also made a mistake. It is not possible for us to make compromises on this point. Those who are part of the terror corridor in Syria will receive the necessary lesson. There is no single difference between the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê), YPG, PYD (Democratic Union Party/Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat) and Daesh (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/ISIL)," Erdogan told lawmakers from his ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi/AKP) at the parliament in the Turkish capital, Ankara, on Tuesday.

He then accused Bolton of complicating the U.S. President Donald Trump's plan to withdraw the U.S. troops from Syria.

Trump said last month that he was bringing home the some 2,000 American troops deployed in Syria, alleging they had succeeded in their mission to defeat the ISIL Takfiri terrorist group.

His abrupt move sparked concern among officials in Washington, prompting Defense Secretary Jim Mattis to step down in protest.

"Despite reaching a clear understanding with Mr. Trump, different voices have started emerging from different segments of the administration. Despite that, Trump's views on Syria and his decision to withdraw remains our point of reference," Erdogan said.

The Turkish leader pointed out that his country has largely completed its preparations for a military offensive against the ISIL terrorists in neighboring Syria.

"In compliance with the agreement we reached with Mr. President (Donald Trump), we have largely completed our preparations for a military offensive against elements of



Daesh, who are still active in Syria. At the same time, we are determined to take steps against terrorist organizations such as PYD and YPG along with Daesh. We will mobilize to neutralize these terrorist organizations in Syrian lands very soon," Erdogan stated.

Bolton on Sunday outlined conditions for a U.S. troop departure from Syria. Those "conditions" appeared to contradict Trump's insistence that the withdrawal would be immediate and without conditions.

One of those provisions is that the government of Turkey guarantees the safety of YPG forces in Syria.

"There's no timetable for when that may happen or when the U.S. may begin withdrawing its ground forces from the region," Bolton said, but he highlighted that the U.S. will leave northern Syria.

"There are objectives that we want to accomplish that condition the withdrawal," Bolton told reporters in al-Quds (Jerusalem). "The timetable flows from the policy decisions that we need to implement."

Bolton touched down in Ankara on Monday to hammer out a deal for Kurdish YPG forces in Syria. He met Turkish officials on Tuesday, but left Turkey without holding expected talks with President Erdogan.

A spokesman for the U.S. National Security Council said on Tuesday that Bolton and his Turkish counterpart Ibrahim Kalin had a productive discussion regarding Washington's decision to withdraw military forces from Syria.

Garrett Marquis also said in a statement the two sides had exchanged viewpoints on other issues, and that the United States looks forward to ongoing military-to-military consultations.

Meanwhile, Kalin said there is no slowdown in the United States' withdrawal from Syria, stressing that Ankara is focused on what would happen to American bases and weapons given to Kurdish fighters.

Turkey considers the YPG a terrorist organization and an extension of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been fighting for an autonomous region inside Turkey since 1984.

Later on Tuesday, Kalin, echoing Erdogan's statements, said Ankara had been irritated by statements coming from Washington that associated Syrian Kurds with PYD, YPG and PKK.

The presidential spokesman also said Ankara would not seek U.S. permission to carry out military operations inside Syria

and would not allow the U.S. troop pullout to create a new opportunity for "terrorist" groups.

■ **Trump right on Syria, U.S. pullout must be done with right partners: Erdogan**

Elsewhere, the Turkish leader says Trump's plan to pull military forces out of Syria should be put into action carefully and with the "right partners," saying Turkey is the only country that can help its NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) ally get the job done.

In an opinion piece published in The New York Times on Monday, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said his American counterpart "made the right call" last month to withdraw some 2,000 U.S. forces from Syria.

The withdrawal, Erdogan said, "must be planned carefully and performed in cooperation with the right partners to protect the interests of the United States, the international community and the Syrian people."

"Turkey, which has NATO's second largest standing army, is the only country with the power and commitment to perform that task," Erdogan wrote.

The Turkish head of state further warned the international community against repeating the same mistakes Washington and its allies had made in Iraq.

"The lesson of Iraq, where this terrorist group was born, is that premature declarations of victory and the reckless actions they tend to spur create more problems than they solve," Erdogan wrote.

He went on to say, "The first step is to create a stabilization force featuring fighters from all parts of Syrian society. Only a diverse body can serve all Syrian citizens and bring law and order to various parts of the country."

Erdogan's comments come amid an uncertainty surrounding the timeframe for the U.S. exit. Trump administration officials have made it clear that the troop withdrawal from northeastern Syria would not happen quickly.

On Monday, Trump said the U.S. "will be leaving [Syria] at a proper pace," while continuing to fight Daesh terrorists "and doing all else that is prudent and necessary!"

(Source: agencies)

## Egypt limits crossing Rafah for Palestinians of Gaza: Hamas official

Egypt has blocked Palestinians from entering the country from the Gaza Strip after Palestinian Authority personnel left the Rafah border crossing and officers from the Islamic resistance movement Hamas replaced them, Hamas officials say.

Wael Abu Omar, a spokesman for the Hamas-run authority in charge of the border crossing, said on Tuesday that Gazans seeking to return from Egypt would still be allowed through but no one would be able to leave the Palestinian enclave.

"For now, it is just for one day, it is not clear if it will be extended," the spokesman said.

The resistance movement says it took control of the crossing in a bid "to avoid a vacuum."

Brigadier General Yehya Hammad, the Hamas-appointed director of the crossing, said his men had completed their deployment and were ready to operate the passage.

After they took up their posts, the body of a Palestinian who had died in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, and two women accompanying the coffin were allowed to enter Gaza. The women's passports were stamped by Hamas officers.

Gazan travelers hoped that the Egyptian side would open the crossing permanently.

"We hope the Egyptian side will open the crossing permanently as it did in the past to allow stranded patients, students, residents of third countries and humanitarian cases to travel," said Hammad, standing in the passport hall.

Human rights groups say Rafah, the only way for Gazans to leave the Palestinian enclave that bypasses Israel, has been the sole exit point from Gaza for an estimated 95 percent of its population of two million.

On Sunday, the Palestinian Authority (PA), which is led by President Mahmoud Abbas, announced its pullout from Rafah, accusing Hamas of undermining its operations and detaining some of its workers. The authority had retaken control of the crossing in late 2017 as part of a reconciliation deal between Abbas' Fatah party and Hamas. The deal has since broken down and Abbas has taken a series of measures against Gaza.

Hamas said Abbas, who has imposed a series of economic sanctions on Gaza, was destroying the prospects for unity.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has already said he would put his stamp on the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation deal only if Hamas recognizes Israel, cuts ties with regional power house Iran, and disbands its military wing, known as the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, and its estimated 25,000 fighters, who have defended Gaza against three deadly Israeli wars over the past decade.

Israel has restricted the movement of Palestinians in and out of the Gaza Strip since the early 1990s. Restrictions intensified in June 2007, when Tel Aviv imposed a land, sea and air blockade on Gaza, citing security concerns.

Nearly two million Palestinians in Gaza remain locked in and are prevented from having free access to the remainder of Palestine and the outside world. The blockade has also undermined the living conditions in the coastal enclave and fragmented its economic and social fabric.

■ **Egyptian president admits cooperation with Israel 'closest, deepest' than ever before**

Meantime, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has acknowledged that his administration has maintained very

deep relations with Tel Aviv and is engaged in military cooperation with Israel in the restive Sinai Peninsula.

Sisi made the rare acknowledgment during an interview with the U.S. television network CBS's "60 Minutes," which was aired on Sunday.

This comes as Egypt, under Sisi's rule, has quietly cooperated with Israel on security in the desert peninsula.

Asked whether the cooperation was the closest and deepest that he has had with Israel, Sisi responded, "That is correct. The Air Force sometimes needs to cross to the Israeli side. And that's why we have a wide range of coordination with the Israelis."

Asked why he had not managed to wipe the ongoing militancy out after receiving more than \$1bn in annual U.S. military aid, Sisi responded by pointing to the challenges that Washington has faced in Afghanistan against the Taliban.

"Why hasn't the U.S. eliminated the terrorists in Afghanistan after 17 years and spending a trillion dollars?" Sisi asked.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Sisi, who won a second four-year term in office last year after running virtually unopposed, said that cooperation with Israel can be a sensitive and potentially damaging topic in Egypt.

Egypt's military last year denied media reports that it was cooperating with Israel in the violence-hit region of northern Sinai.

The CBS networks broadcast the interview with Sisi despite a request by the Egyptian government not to air the program.

Before the airing of the interview, CBS had said the information given by Sisi was "not the kind of news his government wanted broadcast."

"The 60 Minutes team was contacted by the Egyptian ambassador shortly after and told the interview could not be aired," the network said.

Israel has full diplomatic relations with only two Arab states, Egypt and Jordan, but reports suggest the regime is working behind the scenes to establish formal contact with the house of Saud regime and its allies.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu secretly traveled to Egypt in May last year for talks with Sisi.

A senior official of the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement said in November 2018 that the willingness shown by the Saudi regime and its regional allies to establish diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv has exceeded all expectations of Israeli officials, with Netanyahu saying he was not dreaming the day would come when he sees normalized ties with the Persian Gulf kingdoms.

The fact that the sheikhdoms are dramatically warming their relations with Tel Aviv after secret contacts shows the policy is a decision dictated to them by the Saudi regime Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, known as MbS, Deputy Chairman of Hezbollah's Executive Council Sheikh Nabil Qaouq said.

Israeli Transportation and Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz visited Oman on November 4 last year to attend an international transport conference and pitch a railway project that would link the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean via the Israeli-occupied territories.



The trip came on the heels of a surprise visit by Netanyahu to Oman in late October 2018, where he met Sultan Sayyid Qaboos bin Said Al Said at the Bait al-Barakah Royal Palace in the coastal city of Seeb near the capital Muscat.

Netanyahu's unpublicized visit to Oman came on the same day that Israeli Culture and Sports Minister Miri Regev traveled to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to accompany Israel's judo team at the Abu Dhabi Grand Slam 2018.

It is evident that any progress in the Arab-Israeli relations can only happen at the expense of the Palestinians. Critics say Saudi Arabia's flirtation with Israel would undermine global efforts to isolate Tel Aviv and harm the Palestinian cause. They also say Riyadh has gone too far in its cooperation with Tel Aviv as a way of confronting Tehran.

■ **Dems want to block pro-Israel bill over Trump shutdown**

Elsewhere, efforts are reportedly underway in the U.S. Senate to block a pro-Israel bill in response to the ongoing government shutdown, blamed on Trump.

Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer and other Senate Democratic leaders are behind the effort, according to a report by Washington Examiner on Monday.

The bill is aimed at "allowing state and local governments to divest from entities that boycott, divest from, or sanction Israel because of its occupation of the West Bank."

The upper chamber of the U.S. Congress is set late Tuesday to hold a procedural vote on the bill against the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

The BDS movement was initiated in 2005 by over 170 Palestinian organizations to initiate "various forms of boycott against Israel until it meets its obligations under international law."

Schumer is reportedly joining Maryland Democratic Senator Ben Cardin, a top Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, to vote against moving the bill forward.

The two senators were themselves among the cosponsors of the bill as it was introduced in 2017.

The move is reportedly in protest to the government shutdown by Democrats, who are demanding that Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell facilitate reopening of nine agencies and departments closed over government shutdown.

Funding for the wall has led to a budget impasse, causing the ongoing partial government shutdown.

(Source: Press TV)

## Saudi forces conduct deadly raid in Qatif village

➔ Riyadh has suppressed pro-democracy rallies, but they have intensified since January 2016 when the Al Saud regime executed respected Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr.

In 2017, Awamiyah, another Shia-populated Qatif town, witnessed a deadly military crackdown on protests that were being held against the regime's attempt to raze the historical Musawara neighborhood.

Saudi rulers claimed the district's narrow streets served as a hideout for armed men who were behind the attacks on Saudi forces in Eastern Province.

Riyadh then deployed military forces with heavy weapons to the town, while bulldozers escorted by heavily armored military vehicles demolished several houses, businesses and historical sites across the region.

Dozens of civilians were killed during the weeks-long military crackdown. Some 30,000 people also fled the town.

(Source: Press TV)

## Syria: Russian military Police begin patrolling Manbij area near Turkish border

Russian Military Police have begun patrolling the Manbij area in the Syrian province of Aleppo near the Turkish border, as shown in footage released by the Russian Ministry of Defense on Monday.



■ **Four civilians, one Kurdish militant killed in ISIL bomb attack in Syria's Raqqah**

Meantime, a deadly bomb attack, claimed by the the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group, has hit a center for the United States-backed Kurdish militants in the northern Syrian city of Raqqah, leaving at least four civilians and a militant dead.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said the fatalities took place on Monday, when the attacker detonated his explosive vest after entering the center run by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (People's Defense Units/Yekîneyên Parastina Gel/YPG), part of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) that has close military cooperation with the U.S.

"A suicide attacker wearing an explosive belt blew himself up inside a YPG center after opening fire on a security checkpoint at its entrance," said Rami Abdel-Rahman, the Observatory chief.

Raqqah residents said the Kurdish militants had cordoned off the area and the nearby streets after the blast.

The ISIL claimed responsibility for the assault in a statement issued via its Amaq news agency, describing the site as a "recruitment center" for Kurdish forces.

The U.S. has been arming and training Kurdish militants under the banner of helping them fight ISIL, but Syria and several other countries see ulterior motives behind the deployment.

Syria and its allies pushed the Takfiri terrorist group out of its last stronghold in the eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr early last year.

Turkey, a key U.S. ally in the region, has repeatedly questioned Washington's deployment of heavy weapons in Syria despite the defeat of the ISIL in much of the country.

Ankara views the YPG as a branch of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê), which has been fighting a decades-long deadly war against Turkey for an independent state in the country's southeast.

Kurdish forces, who were left exposed by the U.S. President Donald Trump's pledge to pull out American soldiers from Syria, have asked Syrian government forces for help amid indications that Turkey is considering a military campaign against them.

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

■ **Pentagon rejects any troop withdrawal timetable for Syria**

Elsewhere, the U.S. Department of Defense has rejected any timetable for its allegedly finalized plan to withdraw troops from Syria.

A withdrawal framework for Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) has been approved and is currently being executed by the U.S. forces, said Pentagon spokesman Commander Sean Robertson in a statement on Tuesday.

"That framework is conditions-based and will not subject troop withdrawal to an arbitrary timeline. The framework will be influenced by a number of factors, including weather," said Robertson.

Operation Inherent Resolve is the name of a U.S. military campaign launched in August 2014 after the ISIL terrorist Takfiri group overran large swaths of Syria and Iraq.

The U.S. has ever since maintained military presence in Syria without any authorization from the Damascus government or a United Nations mandate.

The Pentagon statement came after Trump called for a swift troop pullout on December 19.

The announcement further resulted in the resignation of Secretary of Defense James Mattis, the U.S. anti-ISIL coalition envoy Brett McGurk and Pentagon chief of staff Rear Admiral Kevin Sweeney who disapproved of the president's decision.

The Pentagon's recent statement, nonetheless, further confirms what Trump's national security adviser John Bolton had said during a visit to Israel earlier this week.

(Source: agencies)



## Rowett sacked by Stoke City after poor run of results

Stoke City have sacked manager Gary Rowett with immediate effect after eight months in charge, the English Championship (second-tier) club announced on Tuesday.

The decision comes from the Stoke hierarchy after a run of one win in six matches across all competitions.

Rowett left Derby County to join Stoke in the close-season as the club eyed an immediate return to the Premier League having been relegated after 10 years in the top division, where they had mostly been a comfortable mid-table team.

However, instead of dominating England's second-tier, Stoke's struggles have continued as they have won just eight of their 26 league fixtures.

"Stoke City have terminated the contract of manager Gary Rowett," the club said in a statement.

"Members of his immediate coaching staff have also left the bet365 Stadium.

"The club would like to thank Gary and his staff for their efforts over the past eight months.

"A new managerial appointment will be made as swiftly as possible but in the meantime Rory Delap, Kevin Russell and Andy Quay will take charge of first-team affairs."

Stoke City, currently 14th in the second division, visit Brentford on Saturday.

(Source: Reuters)

## Egypt to host 2019 African Nations Cup

Egypt will host the 2019 African Nations Cup finals, the Confederation of African Football confirmed after a meeting of their executive committee in Dakar on Tuesday.

They will stage the expanded 24-team event in June-July after initial hosts Cameroon were stripped of the tournament last month over concerns at the slow pace of preparations.

The North African nation will host the competition for the fourth time, and the first since 2006, after the announcement was made by CAF president Ahmad at a media briefing in the Senegalese capital.

Egypt and South Africa were the only two countries to put forward their candidacies to replace Cameroon.

It will be the first time there will be 24 teams at the tournament and CAF, after several inspection visits over the last two years, said Cameroon would not be ready in time.

Egypt has extensive football facilities, although in recent years attendances at local matches have been restricted because of security concerns following the Arab Spring revolution and Tahrir Square demonstrations in 2011.

The final round of qualifiers for the tournament will be held in March, with 14 nations, including Egypt, having already sealed their place at the finals.

(Source: Eurosport)

## Triple Olympic gold medallist Yoshida retires

Japan's three-times Olympic wrestling champion Saori Yoshida announced her retirement on Tuesday at the age of 36.

Yoshida, who also won silver at Rio 2016, made the announcement on Twitter.

"I have decided to end the 33 years of being a wrestler," she said. "Thanks to all your encouragement and support."

The freestyle wrestler is a 13-times world champion, most recently winning the 53kg category in Las Vegas in 2015.

Yoshida had dominated the sport ever since her first world championship in 2002 until she was defeated by American Helen Maroulis in the Rio final for her only loss at an Olympic Games.

She was also part of the Japanese lobbying team that persuaded the International Olympic Committee to retain wrestling at the Tokyo 2020 Games and has been coaching the Japanese national team in the build-up to their home Olympics next year.

Her decision to retire so close to Tokyo 2020 surprised many of her fans on Twitter.

"Such a shame as I was looking forward to seeing you on the Tokyo 2020 wrestling mat," one user commented on her post.

"I was moved and encouraged many, many times by your fighting spirit," another said.

(Source: Mirror)

## Lovren joins Liverpool's growing injury list

Liverpool's Croatian defender Dejan Lovren will have to spend some time on the sidelines after suffering a hamstring injury in Monday's FA Cup third round loss to Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Lovren went off in the sixth minute and had to be replaced by 16-year-old Dutch defender Ki-Jana Hoever.

With central defenders Joe Gomez and Joel Matip also sidelined and Virgil van Dijk not used against Wolverhampton, Brazilian midfielder Fabinho filled in at centre-half.

"(It is his) hamstring, is what I heard - without any signs before. I asked everybody, no signs, nothing, just out of the blue, so that's the decision you have to make," said Klopp when asked about Lovren's injury.

"I am not sure what you all would have said if immediately from the beginning if our centre-half situation was Fabinho and Ki-Jana; then probably a few very smart people would tell me that I don't respect the competition or whatever," said Klopp.

"So, we tried to do all the things (we could). Of course, on the other hand it doesn't make sense to bring in a 16-year-old boy from the start. You don't bring him, you wait until he is completely ready, but he did well. That's how it sometimes starts - when you are really needed then it is only about if you are good enough and not how old you are.

(Source: Goal)

# Five women to watch at the Australian Open

Will Serena Williams make a triumphant return to the scene of her last Grand Slam win, can Caroline Wozniacki defend her crown or is Naomi Osaka capable of back-to-back majors?

AFP Sport picks five women to watch when the Australian Open begins in Melbourne on Monday:

### ■ Caroline Wozniacki

The Dane finally broke her Grand Slam hoodoo in Melbourne 12 months ago after 12 years of trying, and is determined to prove she remains a force at the top level after dropping the bombshell that she is suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. Wozniacki, 28, says the debilitating auto-immune condition is so bad that on some days "I wake up and can't lift my hands over my head". The shock diagnosis came after Wozniacki had returned to number one and taken her WTA tour title tally to 30 with victories not only in Melbourne, but also Eastbourne and Beijing. She arrives ranked three believing she can control her condition. "I've been feeling well. I've learned to cope after matches."

### ■ Simona Halep

The Romanian bounced back from losing to Wozniacki in an epic Melbourne final 12 months ago to claim her own maiden Slam at Roland Garros and climb back to number one despite a nagging back injury that forced the 27-year-old to miss the WTA Finals in Singapore. Top-seeded Halep is without a coach after long-time Australian mentor Darren Cahill stepped down for family reasons, and described 2018 as "very emotional" but



insisted it had made her mentally stronger. "When you have a target on your back it's not easy because everyone wants to play their best against you and beat you," she said. "But being number one is something you should embrace and be proud of."

### ■ Angelique Kerber

The Wimbledon champion and world number two will turn 31 on January 18 and is tipped to unveil a more aggressive approach under new coach Rainer Schuttler, who reached the Australian Open final in 2003 where he lost to Andre Agassi. Schuttler will add more "daring" to the 2016 Australian Open champion's game, said the German Tennis

Association's Barbara Rittner, who helped develop Kerber as a teenager. "In general, it's about her offensive game," Rittner told Deutsche Welle of the three-time Grand Slam champion who lost an agonising, breathless semi-final 9-7 in the final set to Halep in Melbourne last year. "She is unbelievably good with the volley --- in this more aggressive, more daring game. I'm sure they'll work on it."

### ■ Naomi Osaka

The popular 21-year-old's US Open triumph was overshadowed by Serena Williams' tantrum in the final at Flushing Meadows but Osaka has the opportunity in Melbourne to demonstrate she can withstand the spotlight

of being the new standard bearer for tennis in Japan, Asia and the next generation of women. She arrives as second favourite with the bookies behind Williams, and seems unfazed both by her stratospheric rise and by the prospect of the huge support she could receive at the Australian Open, often dubbed the Asia-Pacific Grand Slam. "I never feel pressure to perform. I enjoy Grand Slams the most," she said. "There is a certain degree of pressure, but it's from myself."

### ■ Serena Williams

Despite being ranked outside the top 10, few would be brave enough to count Williams out of the equation as she aims to equal Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 Grand Slam singles titles. The 37-year-old has won at Melbourne Park seven times, most recently on her last visit in 2017 when she was eight weeks pregnant with daughter Alexis Olympia. She has already been installed as a short-priced favourite, with the odds-makers confident she won't repeat her infamous US Open final meltdown where she called umpire Carlos Ramos "a thief" and was given three code violations to lose a game and derail her challenge. Williams missed the chance to equal the record in both the Wimbledon and US Open finals last season and says she is now avoiding focusing on the numbers. "It truly makes me excited for what's ahead in 2019," she said. "I always have crazy big goals but I like to keep them to myself. I think keeping them a bit of a secret helps me do the best I can."

(Source: AFP)

## Solari in the dark about VAR after Madrid penalty controversy



Real Madrid coach Santiago Solari on Tuesday called for the video assistant referee rules to be made clearer after admitting he has no idea how the system works following penalty controversy at the weekend.

Madrid fell to a limp 2-0 defeat 2-0 at home to Real Sociedad in La Liga on Sunday, and were denied a penalty in the second half while they still trailed by a single goal.

Solari was incensed after referee Jose Munuera ruled that Madrid forward Vinicius Junior was not fouled by Sociedad goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli while bearing down on goal in the 65th minute and then decided against consulting the VAR team, which did not refer the incident to Munuera.

"The rules have to be clear," Solari told reporters. "If the rules are clear and we know when it can be used, that's going to help everyone's understanding, not just for the players but the fans as well."

"It happens to me as a spectator too. I'm not even sure what the process is with VAR."

FIFA rules state that VAR can be used in relation to goals, penalties, red cards and cases of mistaken identity.

The referee can either request a review from his video assistant or the video assis-

tant can recommend a review to the referee.

Madrid sit fifth in La Liga, 10 points adrift of leaders Barcelona, with their best chance of further success this season now in the Champions League or Copa del Rey, in which VAR has been introduced for this season.

Gareth Bale will miss Wednesday's opening leg of their Copa tie against Leganes at the Santiago Bernabeu with a calf strain, and the Welsh winger is not expected to return in time for Real's league fixture at Real Betis on Sunday.

Bale was in the stands to watch the defeat by Sociedad last weekend but raised eyebrows by leaving the stadium around 10 minutes before full-time.

Asked about Bale, Solari said: "These are the sort of matters we deal with internally". Solari is likely to make several changes against Leganes and Brahim Diaz could make his debut after joining from Manchester City.

The 19-year-old was officially unveiled on Monday and Solari said his availability would depend on relevant paperwork being submitted in time.

(Source: AFP)

## Klopp defends changes as Wolves dump Liverpool out of FA Cup

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp believes an early injury to defender Dejan Lovren highlighted why he chose to name a second-string side in bowing out of the FA Cup 2-1 to Wolves on Monday.

Klopp made nine changes to the side that lost narrowly for the first time in the Premier League this season to Manchester City on Thursday, with Lovren one of only two players to retain their place.

However, the Croatian pulled up with a hamstring injury after just six minutes and was replaced by 16-year-old Ki-Jana Hoever.

"Hamstring, is what I heard - without any signs before," said Klopp on what forced Lovren off. "I asked everybody, no signs, nothing, just out of the blue, so that's the decision you have to make."

"I am not sure what you all would have said if immediately from the beginning if our centre-half situation was Fabinho and Ki-Jana; then probably a few very smart people would tell me that I don't respect the competition or whatever."

Goals from Raul Jimenez and Ruben Neves either side of half-time sent the hosts into round four, where they will face Shrewsbury or Stoke City, despite Divock Origi's fine strike briefly bringing Liverpool level after the break.

Hoever's introduction meant Liverpool fielded three teenagers for the majority of the match with Rafael Camacho and Curtis Jones also handed debuts.



However it was the visitors' most experienced player, Milner, who was at fault for the opening goal when Diogo Jota caught the former England international in possession in midfield and put Jimenez clean through for the Mexican to score his seventh goal of the season.

Without Mohamed Salah, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane, Liverpool were struggling to get any momentum going forward.

But the visitors were level out of nothing when Origi collected a loose ball on the edge of the area six minutes into the second period and smashed the ball high past John Ruddy.

Wolves, though, have made a habit of upsetting the Pre-

## Italy minister: Referee right to continue match after Koulibaly racist abuse



Far-right Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini said Monday he opposed a knee-jerk reaction of stadium closures and match suspensions to tackle the recent spate of racism and violence in Italian football, calling for at risk matches to be played during the day.

Napoli defender Kalidou Koulibaly was targeted by monkey noises and racist chants during a Serie A match against Inter Milan two weeks ago, while a 39-year-old fan was killed when he was struck by a car during heated clashes before the game.

"The closure of stadiums, the suspension of matches or a ban on fans travelling is a surrender of the State," said Salvini after a round table talk in Rome aimed at strengthening security at stadiums.

"I'm in favour of holding supporters accountable by saying that whoever makes a mistake must pay."

Salvini brought together police, sports federations, referees, coaches and supporters' club representatives to discuss what measures needed to be taken after the violence of December 27 in Milan.

That evening, Franco-Senegalese defender Koulibaly was targeted by racist

abuse which resulted in Inter being ordered to play two home matches behind closed doors as punishment.

The emotion is all the stronger in Italy as serious incidents also broke out outside the stadium, resulting in the death of a Inter supporter.

"We mustn't confuse the fans who are 99.9 percent good people but who move in the same world of football as the thugs," said Salvini, who insisted he wanted to "eradicate delinquency inside and outside stadiums."

For this, he announced a "single law" on safety in sport with new measures to speed up and simplify outdated procedures "to achieve faster judgements".

"We need to authorize collective transfers of supporters because it's easier to control the identity cards of 1,000 fans on a reserved train than 100 cars entering the city without any control," continued Salvini.

The death of an Inter ultra in clashes outside the San Siro prompted Salvini to call Monday's meeting and Italian FA president Gabriele Gravina said trouble-makers need to be "suffocated" to ensure true football fans can continue to enjoy the game.

(Source: ESPN)

mier League's established top six in their first season back in the top flight.

After beating Chelsea and Tottenham and holding City, Manchester United and Arsenal in the Premier League, Liverpool can now be added to the list of scalps for Nuno Espirito Santo's side thanks to a wonder strike from Neves.

"He has talent, he has done it before and we encourage him to shoot from range," said Wolves boss Nuno Espirito Santo. "It was a good strike."

Only a brilliant save from Ruddy denied Xherdan Shaqiri a stunning equaliser and Liverpool a replay as the Swiss's free-kick was touched onto the inside of the post by the Wolves goalkeeper.

Klopp had a final roll of the dice by throwing on Salah and Firmino for the final 20 minutes, but even their firepower failed to spark a fightback and Klopp's team selection will now be seriously questioned as he is still to deliver a trophy in his four seasons in charge.

However, with Liverpool still in pole position to deliver a first league title in 29 years, the German coach defended his selection to minimise the chance of his stars suffering injuries. "We played a similar line-up and had three tough games in the last couple of weeks, so it was clear we had to change," Klopp added after a run of four Premier League games in 13 days over the festive period.

(Source: Express)





# Carlos Quieroz praises Iran focus after flying start

Iran head coach Carlos Quieroz believes the impressive focus shown by his side played a major role in Monday's 5-0 win over Yemen at the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019.

In a tournament that has already witnessed several surprise results – notably Jordan's defeat of Australia – the Portuguese tactician was thankful that the three-time champions of Asia avoided any sort of upset at the start of their Group D campaign.

Instead, Mehdi Taremi's brace along with goals from Ashkan Dejagah, Sardar Azmoun and Saman Ghoddos helped seal a relatively straightforward victory and a provide a perfect start to Team Melli's 14th AFC Asian Cup campaign.

"Of course, it is always good to win and have a positive result when you have scored plenty of goals, as it gives the team the perfect start in terms of motivation and confidence," declared the former Real Madrid and Portugal boss.

"I really want to congratulate my players for the way they played. We are still at the beginning though and we are certainly not looking at results elsewhere as it is really none of our business.

"Having said that, some of the games we



have seen so far have been, to be honest, a great lesson for Iran. I told my players that they had to focus on their first game, and some of the early results have proved that if you don't play with focus any team [here in the UAE] can beat another."

The Iranians will seek to repeat their impressive win over Yemen when they face Vietnam on Sunday, with Queiroz believing that their early success was also down to an intensity to which the Yemenis had no answer.

"The match was a typical first game at a [major] competition as some players started a little nervously," he said.

"However, I think after we began with such a high intensity, we started to force Yemen into mistakes and we were able to use that to our advantage.

"Fortunately, the first goal came early on and when that happens it is something which gives you confidence. We controlled the game for 90 minutes and we were the better team on the day."

Meanwhile, opposite number Jan Kocian remains optimistic that there is more to come from Yemen, who are making their debut in the competition as a unified nation.

"Iran are a team full of experienced players, some of who played in last year's FIFA World Cup," the Slovakian explained.

"We only had a short time to prepare and our players are not as experienced as our opponents. The real problem for us was the quick goals Iran scored [in the first half].

"It was a dominant performance from Iran, but we will now talk to the team and analyze this performance. We know that we can play better than we did. I am sure that we can play better in our next games."

(Source: the-afc)

## Philippines did a lot of good – coach Sven-Goran Eriksson



Despite losing 1-0 to Korea Republic, the Philippines impressed in their AFC Asian Cup 2019 debut as they held their own against perennial contenders.

A goal in the 67th minute proved to be Korea Republic's saving grace as they were pushed to the limit by the Azkals in their tournament opener.

And despite eventually losing, the Philippines heaped praises and coach Sven-Goan Eriksson believes the team proved something in front of the viewing public.

Speaking to AFC, he said: "They played well, they won and we cannot complain too much about that, but anyhow, I am proud of the team we had out there.

"I think we stood up to them. They had the ball much more than we had, but we created some chances, and with a little bit of luck we could have had a different result for sure.

"I think we showed the people here in the stadium, in front of the television that this country (Philippines) can play football, because I think we

did a lot of good things."

At the moment, the Philippines are at the bottom of the table but the 70-year-old believes they still have hope to turn things around with pending matches against China PR and Kyrgyz Republic.

"I think we played one of the best (teams) in this tournament tonight, and we created chances against them, so that gives up hope for the next two games in this group that we can do something even better," the Swede shared.

"Even after we lost, the confidence went up. I spoke briefly with the players in the dressing room, and the mood is good (even though) we lost the game, and they know they did a good job.

"I want to see that we dominate and keep the ball better against China. We created some good chances (against Korea Republic), and I'm sure we can do that against China as well, but we must keep the ball a little more than today. Good for the heart of the coach too."

(Source: Fox Sports Asia)

## Mehdi Taremi wants more of the same from Iran



Islamic Republic of Iran forward Mehdi Taremi is hoping that his side's 5-0 win over Yemen in their AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 opening encounter is just the start of things to come.

The 26-year-old Al Gharafa favorite scored twice on a night when the three-time Asian champions were rarely troubled by opponents making their debut in the competition as a unified nation.

Iran's impressive victory saw them assume pole position in Group D, a flying start that Taremi believes will stand his side in good stead going forward.

"We are very grateful to have won the first game," he said.

"The first game of any tournament is always very important as it is that game which gives you the motivation for the other matches [which are to come].

"We can now move on with a great win [to our name] and, hopefully, we will be able to continue in a similar manner."

Taremi's brace – the first a neat finish from close-range, and the second a powerful header – saw him sail to the top of the albeit embryonic goalscoring chart – a

statistic the former Persepolis ace insists he already is paying little attention to.

"For us, the key thing is for the team to win," he said.

"We don't care who scores and who becomes the top scorer. Of course, as forwards, we have to score and must always be looking to score.

"However, I really don't think about it that much because the priority is always for the team to win."

The Iranians are next in action on Saturday when they face Vietnam at Abu Dhabi's Al Nahyan Stadium, with Yemen set to face Iraq in Sharjah on the same day. The 2019 AFC Asian Cup is being held in the UAE from Jan. 5 to Feb. 1.

A total of 24 teams are separated into six major groups with four team members per group.

The significant nations included in the AFC Asian Cup 2019 are India, United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Japan, Thailand, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, Vietnam, Oman, Lebanon, China & many more.

(Source: the-afc)

## Yoshida want Japan to fight Asian Cup pressure

Japan captain Maya Yoshida has called on his side to cope with pressure to perform at the Asian Cup as they look to make up for their flop four years ago.

The Southampton defender admitted on Tuesday that several of the Japan team were still smarting from their shock penalty shootout loss to United Arab Emirates in the quarter-finals last time out in Australia.

"That was a huge disappointment but this is a new team with a new manager," Yoshida told reporters before the Blue Samurai's opening Group F game against Turkmenistan in Abu Dhabi.

"After the World Cup last year expectation is really high," he added, pointing to Japan's surprise run to the last 16 in Russia, where only a remarkable comeback by Belgium from two goals down prevented them reaching the quarter-finals.

"But unlike the World Cup the expectation on Japan is different at an Asian Cup, where we are expected to win. That brings its own pressure obviously and we need to be able to cope with that and not freeze up."

Japan captured the last of their record four Asian Cups in 2011, but coach Hajime Moriyasu has brought a new-look team to this year's tournament, leaving out the likes of Dortmund playmaker Shinji Kagawa and Leicester striker Shinji Okazaki.

Unbeaten in five matches under Moriyasu, the Japanese will rely instead on the lightning-quick attacking trio of Takumi Minamino, Shoya Nakajima and Ritsu Doan.

"We've brought in some fresh blood since the World Cup but we have a nice mix of youth and experience," insisted Moriyasu.

"It's a chance for the young players to forge their own paths as Japan internationals."

### ■ Create history

Japan will expect to easily advance from a group also including Uzbekistan and Oman, but the Asian Cup has already thrown up its share of upsets, with holders Australia stunned 1-0 by Jordan in their opening game.

"Australia got beaten, Thailand lost to India and South Korea struggled to win their first game so the first game is

hugely important for us," said Yoshida.

"The first order of business will be to make sure we get out of our group. We have to grow into the tournament step by step.

"The new players have a responsibility to build on what previous Japan teams have done and fight with pride to add a new chapter in our history. It's a big tournament for us."

South Korea, who will be boosted by the arrival of Tottenham forward Son Heung-min after their second game, and Iran -- 5-0 winners over Yemen on Monday -- are the favorites to lift Asian football's most coveted trophy.

And Moriyasu is under no illusions as to the size of the task in the Emirates.

"There won't be any easy games out here," he smiled. "We know every opponent will be tough and deserve our utmost respect. We need to be firing at 100 percent if we want to progress."

(Source: AFP)

## Lippi says China facing striker crisis

Marcello Lippi said an influx of foreign forwards had decimated China's striking stocks and could damage their Asian Cup campaign after an unconvincing start in the United Arab Emirates.

China's threadbare options up front were underlined when makeshift forward Yu Dabao grabbed the winner in Monday's 2-1 win over debutants Kyrgyzstan, which also left key attacker Wu Lei nursing a suspected collarbone injury.

Yu played as a defender last season for Beijing Guoan and Lippi said the overseas forwards flooding the cashed-up Chinese Super League have squeezed out Chinese players.

"This shows our situation in China. In

China, nearly all the foreign players are forwards," said Lippi, who led his native Italy to the 2006 World Cup title.

"It means for our attack, I have to pick a player who spent the season in central defence."

China's attacking play was far from convincing against Kyrgyzstan, who led at half-time and should have grabbed at least a draw if not for a bungling own goal by their goalkeeper.

But Lippi's team had problems in defence too as they were continually picked apart by an inventive Kyrgyzstan, who dominated the first half and had chances for a late equaliser.

The news did not improve for China as the influential Wu, reportedly linked with

Premier League outfit Wolverhampton Wanderers last year, was left in doubt for Friday's second Group C clash against the Philippines.

"I really hope not," said Lippi, when asked if the injury was serious. "I hope he'll be available (against the Philippines) but it's not certain."

Alexandre Pato, Hulk and Oscar are among the well-paid foreign attacking players in China, where football authorities have tried to clamp down on expensive new arrivals by imposing a heavy tax on transfer fees and a salary cap.

However, Lippi was also a beneficiary of the trend during his time at Guangzhou Evergrande, when the likes of Dario Conca,

Elkeson and Muriqui inspired the club to four CSL titles and the 2013 Asian Champions League crown.

Goal-shy China scored just five goals in their six friendlies since September and Lippi revealed he gave his players a half-time rocket after a typically slow start against Kyrgyzstan.

"It's not the first time. In the two-and-a-half years I've been the national team coach, it's happened many times that we've played a negative first half," he said.

"I start to get angry and push my players, and then I get the reaction that I wanted from the first minute. It seems like it's a characteristic of Chinese players."

(Source: AFP)

## Iran chess master Khosro Harandi passes away

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran International Master Khosro Harandi died at the age of 68 early

Tuesday.

Harandi was a pioneer in the development of chess in Iran and he was the country's first International Master.



Harandi was a member of the Iran national team in five Chess Olympiads namely, 19th Chess Olympiad in Siegen (1970), 20th Chess Olympiad in Skopje (1972), 21st Chess Olympiad in Nice (1974), 22nd Chess Olympiad in Haifa (1976) and 29th Chess Olympiad in Novi Sad (1990).

He also represented Iran at first board in 19th World Student Team Chess Championship at Graz, Austria in 1972.

Harandi won twice zonal FIDE tournaments held in Tehran (1975 and 1978).

He was awarded the International Master title in 1975 and FIDE Senior Trainer title in 2009.

The Tehran Times staff offer heartfelt condolences to his bereaved family.

## Belgium KAS Eupen to meet Persepolis of Iran in friendly

**TASNIM** — Belgium First Division A KAS Eupen will play a friendly match against Persepolis of Iran in Doha, Qatar.

The match has been scheduled for January 13 at the Aspire Academy complex.

"Persepolis will play this game without their international players, who currently play in the AFC Asian Cup, but KAS Eupen expect a strong team. Iran's 11-time champions reached the AFC Champions League final in November but lost to Japan's Kashima Antlers 2-0 and became runners-up," KAS Eupen announced.

Persepolis, who have won Iran Professional League in the last two seasons, seek to claim the title for the third time in a row.

The Iranian team will also prepare for the 2019 AFC Champions League.

## Olympic water polo champion Antal Bolvari dies at 86

**BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP)** — Antal Bolvari, a two-time Olympic water polo champion who scored a goal in Hungary's famous 4-0 win over the Soviet Union in the "Blood in the Water" match at the 1956 Melbourne Games, has died. He was 86.

Bolvari, who also won gold at the 1952 Olympics, died Tuesday in the hospital after a long, undisclosed illness, his family said.

The Olympic match against the Soviet Union, just weeks after the Soviets crushed the 1956 Hungarian uprising, turned violent and became known as the "Blood in the Water" match after Hungarian player Ervin Zador bled profusely from cuts around his right eye after being punched by an opponent.

After his playing career, Bolvari coached Hungarian club teams, as well as Hungary's junior and senior national squads. He was also an officer in the Hungarian army, dedicated to sports.

## Iraq 3 Vietnam 2: Ali Adnan's late free-kick seals opening win

Vietnam twice led against Iraq but were unable to hold out for a point in the Asian Cup as Ali Adnan struck a 90th-minute free-kick.

A brilliant last-gasp free-kick from Ali Adnan earned Iraq a dramatic 3-2 victory over Vietnam in their Asian Cup Group D opener at Zayed Sports City Stadium.

Iraq twice fell behind to last month's confident AFF Championship winners, but Ali Adnan punished Nguyen Phong Hong Duy's tackle on Safaa Hadi by curling a sublime 20-yard set-piece into the top-right corner.

Vietnam took the lead when Ali Faez comically put through his own net in the 24th minute, but teenage striker Mohanad Ali equalised with a cool finish 11 minutes later.

Nguyen Cong Phuong managed to bundle Park Hang-seo's side back in front before half-time, but Ali Adnan added to Humam Tareq's goal to send Iraq level on points with Iran, who beat Yemen 5-0 on Monday.

Vietnam moved ahead when Ali Faez beat Cong Phuong to a pass into the box and his attempt to turn to safety saw him knock the ball into his own net.

Mohanad Ali pounced on an error from Do Duy Manh and jinked past Que Ngoc Hai before firing into the bottom-left corner, but Vietnam regained their lead in the 42nd minute. Jalal Hassan Hachim parried a low shot from Nguyen Trong Hoang to his right and Ahmed Ibrahim's attempt to clear went in off Cong Phuong.

Iraq got another equaliser on the hour mark when Vietnam failed to clear after keeper Dang Van Lam kept out Mohanad Ali's header and Tareq picked out the roof of the net.

The turnaround was completed late on when Ali Adnan's exquisite free-kick left Vietnam with nothing to show for their efforts.

(Source: Goal)



INTERNATIONAL DAILY

www.tehrantimes.com

■ Managing Director: Ali Asgari

■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895 editor@tehrantimes.com

» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000

» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450

» Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807

» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603

» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.

Tel: 88911433

» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com

» Printed at: Rooztab - ISSN: 1017-94

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran

P.o. Box: 14155-4843

Zip Code: 1599814713

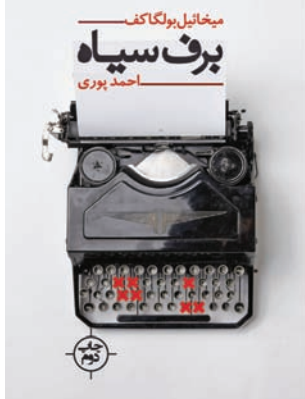
GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

He who accepts the opinions of the clear-sighted, will recognized mistakes and prevent them in time.

Imam Ali (AS)

## Tehran book café to review works by Mikhail Bulgakov

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — A number of Iranian literati will come together for a session at the Nimaj Publications Book Café in Tehran on Friday to review works by Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov and theater in the Soviet Union.



This combination photo shows the front covers of three books from Elise Parsley's series "Magnolia Says Don't" published in Persian.

The meeting will focus on Bulgakov's unfinished novel "Black Snow: A Theatrical Novel", which was written in 1936 after his final break with the Moscow Art Theater.

Published in 1967, 27 years after Bulgakov's death, the book is about Moscow's theatrical world, Soviet politics, censorship and the writers' world.

The Iranian translator of the book, Ahmad Puri, stage director and playwright Reza Sarvar and writer and translator Asghar Nuri will attend the session.

Photo: Front cover of the Persian version of "Black Snow: A Theatrical Novel" by Mikhail Bulgakov.

## "The Second War of the Dog" at Iranian bookstores

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Jordanian-Palestinian poet and novelist Ibrahim Nasrallah's novel "The Second War of the Dog" has recently been published by Golazin Publications in Tehran.

Translated by Sattar Jalilzadeh, the book focuses on Rashid, who transforms from an opponent of the unnamed regime into a materialistic and unscrupulous extremist.

The book won the 11th International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF) in April 2018.

## Fast cars and rickety bridges as "The Grand Tour" returns

**LONDON (Reuters)** — Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May return for a third season of their thrill-seeking motor show "The Grand Tour", with plenty of fast cars and stunning scenery they hope will take viewers' minds off the real world.

The Amazon program follows the presenters as they test out all sorts of cars around the world, and this season sees them travel to Colombia and Mongolia.



A car is crashed during a media stunt for Jeremy Clarkson's new television show Grand Tour, in central London, Britain, November 15, 2016. (Reuters/Dylan Martinez)

"There's a refugee crisis and politics going on left, right and center," Clarkson said in an interview.

"It's quite nice to sit down to just go 'thank God we can just park that for five minutes and watch these three fat old imbeciles falling over and catching fire' because that's what entertainment supposed to do, take your mind off the horrors of everyday life."

The series launched in 2016, re-uniting the three former presenters of the BBC's "Top Gear", a program Clarkson was dropped from after he attacked a production staff member.

"Driving (Formula One racing driver) Jim Clark's Lotus 25 was an amazing experience," Hammond said when asked about the show's highlights.

"That, plus in Colombia getting over the biggest, tallest, most rickety bridge you've ever seen in your life in a massive pickup truck. It was not a highlight doing it but getting off the bridge at the other side was."

The third season of "The Grand Tour" debuts on Jan. 18 on Amazon Prime Video, the online retailer's subscription service. A fourth series has already been announced.

# Ancient animal motifs back to life in metal embossing art collection

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Iranian artist d e s k Sorayya Mohammadi has used a number of ancient Iranian animal motifs to create her latest collection of copper embossing art.

She has carried out an in-depth study on art common among the Scythians, the Eurasian nomads that inhabited large areas of the western and central Eurasian Steppe from about the 9th century BC up until the 4th century AD, as well as on the Lurs.

She learned that the two ethnic groups have deeply influenced art with their animal motifs during the Achaemenid era and in other successive dynasties in the region.

"This study also pushed me to learn how they used the animal motifs to create the

fascinating metal embossing artworks that still remain," Mohammadi said in a press release published on Monday.

Afterward, she decided to use some of the images and patterns to build up a copper embossing art collection, which is scheduled to be showcased in an exhibition opening at Tehran's Mess Negar Gallery on Friday.

Many Iranian artisans are still working in the field of embossing art, but Mohammadi said they need to distance themselves from their current boring patterns and designs, and to create something new.

The exhibition will run until January 14 at the gallery that can be found at No. 5 in the Park Prince Building on Molla Sadra Highway.



An artwork from Sorayya Mohammadi's latest collection of copper embossing art.

## 72 miniature paintings to compete in Fajr Intl. Festival of Visual Arts



A poster for the 11th Fajr International Festival of Visual Arts.

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Seventy-two miniature paintings will be competing in the 11th Fajr International Festival of Visual Arts.

"The artworks have been selected based on the pictures of about 330 submissions, so some of them may be removed from the list after we receive the original works," the director of the miniature section of the festival, Abdollah Moharrami, said in a press release on Tuesday.

The selecting committee composed of Mehrzaman Fakhar-Monfared, Amir-Hossein Qahramani and Reza Yasavoli has asked artists to give consideration to contemporary themes in their works that

they are planning to submit to this section.

"Artists generally disregard this point and send one of their artworks that seems to them to be more attractive," Moharrami noted.

"Noticing modern themes has not been properly perceived by our young artists in this field," Fakhar-Monfared said in the press release.

"We applied strict criteria to qualify the artworks for this section," she noted and added, "However, we must see the original artworks to make our final judgment."

The 11th Fajr International Festival of Visual Arts will be held in Tehran in several categories from January 25 to March 6.

## Madame Tussauds-owner Merlin to build Legoland Park in South Korea

**SEOUL (Reuters)** — Madame Tussauds-owner Merlin Entertainment Plc has entered into a partnership agreement to build a Legoland theme park in South Korea, the company said on Monday.

Merlin, which operates the London Eye, said the deal with the Gangwon Provincial Government is valued at 290 billion Korean Won (\$259.26 million) and Legoland Korea would be open by 2022.

The park, based on the children's toy favorite for its

colorful plastic bricks, is set to be located on the island of Hajungdo in Chuncheon and expects to employ 1,600 people.

Following Legoland New York's scheduled opening in 2020, Legoland Korea will be the company's tenth Legoland Park.

The company said it would invest 210 billion Korean Won and the remaining amount would be financed by LL Developments, the investment arm of Gangwon Province.

Lego, an abbreviation of the Danish "leg godt" meaning

## Actor Kevin Spacey denies sexually assaulting teen on Nantucket

**NANTUCKET, Mass. (Reuters)** — Former "House of Cards" star Kevin Spacey stood impassively in a Nantucket courtroom on Monday before pleading not guilty to sexually assaulting an 18-year-old man at an island bar over two years ago, a charge his lawyer dismissed as "patently false."

Spacey did not speak during a brief hearing in Nantucket District Court to face one count of felony indecent assault and battery, though a plea of not guilty was entered on his behalf.

Defense lawyer Alan Jackson persuaded Judge Thomas Barrett to order Spacey's alleged victim to preserve all data from his cell phone for six months following the July 7, 2016, incident. He said in court papers the charges were based on "patently false allegations."

Jackson said police reports showed the 18-year-old busboy exchanged numerous text messages and Snapchat videos with his then-girlfriend about his interactions with Spacey at the Club Car bar on the beach resort island off the coast of Massachusetts but never mentioned the alleged assault.

Spacey could face up to five years in prison if convicted.

The 59-year-old actor is one of dozens of men in entertainment, business and politics who have been accused of sexual misconduct since accusations against movie producer Harvey Weinstein in 2017 sparked the #MeToo movement.

Monday's hearing drew dozens of journalists from around the world at what is normally a quiet time of year on the island.



Actor Kevin Spacey arrives to face a sexual assault charge at Nantucket District Court in Nantucket, Massachusetts, U.S., January 7, 2019. (Reuters/Brian Snyder)

Nantucket residents normally take pride in not making a fuss about rich and powerful vacationers, who have ranged from the NFL's New England Patriots Head Coach Bill Belichick to former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, according to local media.

Megan Keller, the manager of a coffee shop, called the prospects of a high-profile criminal trial "obnoxious."

"That's not a reason I'd like people to come, because someone committed a crime," she said.

Spacey became embroiled in controversy in October 2017 when actor Anthony Rapp accused him of trying to seduce him in 1986 when Rapp was 14.

Spacey apologized for inappropriate conduct with Rapp. The controversy led to Spacey being dropped from the Netflix series "House of Cards" and erased from the film "All the Money in the World."