



‘Europe’s delay in implementing SPV is unacceptable’ **2**



Gas produced in South Pars platform 13B injected to offshore refinery **4**



Iran v Oman; everything for winners and nothing for losers **15**



Eslami Nodushan’s “Testimony for Progeny” published in Tehran **16**



See page 2

‘Victimized for advocating African Americans’

576 industrial, mining projects to be inaugurated in early Feb.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — An official from the Iranian ministry of industry, mining and trade informed that some 576 industrial and mining projects will be inaugurated during the Ten-Day Dawn (February 1-10, marking the victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution), IRNA reported on Saturday.

“The projects have been implemented using 686 trillion rials (about \$16.3

billion) of investments,” Jahanbakhsh Sanjabi Shirazi said.

“From the total 576 projects, 19 ones are new and have been run utilizing 458 trillion rials (about \$10.9 billion) of credit and will provide 7,000 workers with jobs,” he added, “the rest 557 projects, which will create 28,000 jobs, have consumed 228 trillion rials (about \$5.4 billion) of investments.”

‘Expediency Council studies Palermo bill’

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Gholamreza Mesbahi-Moghadam, a member of Iran’s Expediency Council, has said that the council studied on Saturday an overview of the Palermo bill.

“The details were not discussed,” he told IRNA.

He added, “The judiciary, political and security committees of the council are supposed to further study the bill and present the result of their study in the

next session of the council.”

He noted that Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Laya Joneidi, the vice president for legal affairs, also attended the council’s meeting.

In an interview with IRNA published on Friday, Joneidi said that it is better to finalize issues related to the Palermo Convention to facilitate Europe’s financial mechanism to keep the 2015 nuclear deal.

‘Yellow Vests’ march through Paris in 10th weekend of protests

Five thousand “Yellow Vest” demonstrators marched through the French capital on Saturday, marking a tenth consecutive weekend of protests against President Emmanuel Macron’s government.

Protesters assembled by the Invalides esplanade near the Assemblée Nationale parliament and marched through the

city’s Left Bank. The demonstrations were peaceful, although many shops had nevertheless shut in case of trouble.

A police source said there were around 5,000 protesters in Paris, some of whom gathered near the Champs Elysees, while there were similar demonstrations in major cities across France. ➔13

‘Poland is weak and submissive enough to host U.S.’ aggression against Iran and Russia’

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN — Commenting on the U.S. isolation and differences with its heavy weight European allies on Middle East, Anthony Cartalucci says that Poland is the only weak and submissive European nation which is forced to host American’s aggression against Iran and Russia.

The U.S. State Department said in a statement on January 11 that an anti-Iran meeting will take place in Warsaw on February 13-14.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that the meeting would focus on international cooperation on Middle East stability and peace

and freedom and security in this region, and that includes an important element of making sure that Iran is not a destabilizing influence.

Many experts and officials around the world have expressed their doubt on success of the conference and have announced they will not attend the meeting.

The issue was discussed with Bangkok-based geopolitical researcher Anthony Cartalucci.

Following is the full text of the interview with him:

■ Despite having heavy weight allies in Europe like Germany and France, why the U.S. has chosen a weak European country like Poland to host the event?

A: Washington’s European allies have different ideas regarding the Middle East, especially regarding Iran - the undermining of which drives much of American foreign policy in the region. Poland has a compromised government and is easily coerced by the U.S. - it will eagerly host America’s meeting and politically bolster any outcome the U.S. arrives at. Poland serves a similar, subordinate and submissive role in America’s aggression toward Russia.

■ Iran has had a significant role in defeating ISIL and terrorists groups in the region, why the U.S. accuse Iran of destabilizing the region? How do you see the U.S.’s own role in destabilizing the region? ➔7

Religion is not necessarily in conflict with modernity: Kevin Richards

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Kevin Richards, chair of Liberal Arts Department at Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, tells the Tehran Times that “I would agree with the larger premise that religion is not necessarily in conflict with modernity.”

He also adds that “I don’t think religion or any single theory or field can help to resolve all the problems and issues in International Relations theory.”

Professor Richards adds that “This is no fault of religion, but, rather, part of the nature of plurality and complexity.”

Following is the text of the interview:

■ When did the religious issues have been a

matter of great in Theorizing of International Relations?

A: In exploring the role of religion within International Relations theory, it is important to explore the origins of International Relations theory as a whole. Yet, tracing the roots of International Relations theory also opens up a number of other questions. In a narrow sense, we can map International Relations theory as emerging out of the context of the interwar period in Europe, a historical moment that is critical not just in European history, but also within the history of the relations between the West and the Middle East. In this regard, the work of E. H. Carr is seen as marking a foundational moment. Within this context, however, one can see the development of realism and, in particular, the positivist/rationalist school of thought regarding

International Relations as being dependent on a Western notion of sovereignty and the nation-state, especially as marked by the early twentieth century. Yet, at the same time, the realist school also makes claims to originating out of Antiquity, as a number of classical Greek and Roman thinkers are invoked as the origins for International Relations theory, such as Thucydides. Either way, the initial perspectives provided by International Relations theory are informed by a Western metaphysical tradition that needs to be deconstructed to open up to other perspectives.

On the other hand, a number of idealist strains of International Relation theory map their origins in the work of Immanuel Kant and the post-Enlightenment thinkers who modernize the Western metaphysical tradition. ➔7



PERSPECTIVE
Roohullah Ghasemian
Journalist

Pompeo’s pointless Mideast trip

These days, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s trip to the Middle East and his meeting with his eight Arab counterparts have led some to think that Washington is planning to organize an Arab alliance against Iran and a war on Tehran will soon take shape in the region.

The wave of Iranophobia and drumming of the war against Iran is not over yet, and others believe that Trump’s erratic decision to withdraw the U.S. troops from Syria and Afghanistan, without coordinating with the Pentagon and Congress, is to keep the U.S. troops away from Iran’s missile shields and that means a war is about to break out.

The question, however, is whether the U.S. is really willing to fight against Iran? What does the Warsaw anti-Iran summit mean while the American troops are pulling out of Syria and Afghanistan? In response to these questions, three viewpoints are raised:

■ Frst viewpoint:

It appears that Pompeo has traveled to eight Arab capitals for several reasons: 1. An attempt to create a unified Arab coalition against Iran 2. Returning Qatar to Persian Gulf Cooperation Council and forge unity between its members. 3. Tracking the new American desire to get out of the Middle East.

Contrary to what Pompeo predicted, his visit to the region was not successful, as the Arab states’ dissatisfaction was generally highlighted in these meetings. In his meeting with Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi at the presidential palace in Cairo, Pompeo called for the formation of a coalition against Iran, but his Egyptian counterpart said that his country’s top priority was the overall fight against terrorism.

The U.S. secretary of state on his Qatar’s visit urged an end to the diplomatic rift between the Persian Gulf Arab states. But the Qatari officials emphasized that until Doha is viewed as sponsor for terrorism, nothing will happen. Even Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said that there is no consensus on the resolution of the Qatari crisis, and the priorities and approaches of the Arab states are different towards Iran. ➔13



© Tehran Times / Mehdi Bakshi

Iranian clerics hold demonstration against FATF, Palermo

A number of Iranian clerics held a demonstration against Iran’s joining to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Palermo Convention in Qom on Saturday.

Ayatollah Hossein Nouri Hamedani praised the clerics’ concerns and said that the country should not be distanced from the causes of Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, and Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Russia warns Israel against more Syria strikes

Russia has warned Israel against carrying out airstrikes near the Damascus International Airport in the Syrian capital.

Moscow said it would not tolerate further airstrikes in the area as it is seeking to renovate the airport, the London-based al-Quds al-Arabi newspaper reported on Friday, citing Russian sources. The Russians said the air raids were prompting airlines that want to resume Syria operations to reconsider their decision.

Israel frequently strikes the Syrian territory, attacking military targets belonging to Syria and its allies, which have been assisting Damascus’ war on foreign-backed terrorist groups. Observers view the attacks as a means of propping up the Takfiri terror groups that have suffered crushing defeat recently.

Last September, a Russian Il-20 reconnaissance aircraft with 15 servicemen on board was downed by Syria’s S-200 missile launchers, which were at the time responding to a wave of Israeli strikes on state institutions in the western Syrian Latakia Province. Moscow held Israel responsible, saying the regime’s pilots had intentionally used the Russian plane as cover to conduct air raids, effectively putting it in the crosshairs of the Syrian air defenses.

Russia stopped coordinating its airborne operations over Syria with Israel after the incident, and upgraded Syria’s defenses with its S-300 missile systems.

On October 4 last year, Israeli Regional Cooperation Minister Tzachi Hanegbi roundly rejected the idea that Syria’s acquisition of the equipment would trouble Tel Aviv. “The operational abilities of the air force are such that those (S-300) batteries really do not constrain the air force’s abilities to act,” he told Israel’s Army Radio.

A day later, however, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Vershinin told Russia’s Sputnik news agency that Russia hoped the Israeli regime would exercise “good judgment” on Moscow’s delivery of the missile system to the Syrian government as it will be followed by “additional steps.”

(Source: Press TV)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



600 kg Europe-bound heroin seized in Iran

POLITICS TEHRAN — Intelligence Ministry's forces have seized a big cargo of heroin destined to Europe at a southern port, IRNA reported.

In a statement on Saturday, the Intelligence Ministry said the cargo was adroitly embedded in four 40-feet containers, disguised as export commodities.

Iran, which has a 900-kilometer common border with Afghanistan, has been used as the main conduit for smuggling Afghan drugs to narcotics kingpins in Europe.

Despite high economic and human costs, the Islamic Republic has been actively fighting drug-trafficking over the past four decades, spending more than \$700 million on sealing its borders and preventing the transit of narcotics destined for European, Arab and Central Asian countries.



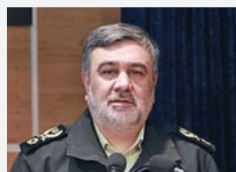
Air Defense opens new radar site in Sistan-Baluchestan

POLITICS TEHRAN — Chief of Iran's Air Defense on Saturday inaugurated a new radar site in the country's southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, Tasnim reported.

Accompanied by a group of top commanders, Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard launched the new radar site, dubbed Vahdat-e-Birak, in the city of Zahedan, the province's capital.

He also unveiled the site's homegrown radar as well as its dispensary and auditorium.

General Sabahifard further visited a number of other radar sites in the district of Zabol and evaluated their combat capabilities in the face of potential threats.



Police chief warns of plots to disrupt national unity

POLITICS TEHRAN — Police Chief Brigadier General Hossein Ashtari on Saturday warned of the enemy's plots to disrupt national unity ahead of the upcoming rallies marking the 40th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

Addressing a group of police commanders, General Ashtari stressed the need for efforts to ensure the security of the nationwide rallies which will be held on Bahman 22nd (February 11), Tasnim reported.

He said this year's rallies are going to be more magnificent than the previous years', adding, "We must try to hold magnificent ceremonies with special security."



Presidential office doing away with all printers

POLITICS TEHRAN — All of the printers at the presidential office were removed on Saturday in a move to modernize the government on the occasion of the National Clean Air Day, Mehr reported on Saturday.

In order to promote health, transparency and to upgrade the country's bureaucracy, the Rouhani administration has decided to carry out all of the presidential office's correspondence electronically.

According to the new decision, which went into force on January 19, governmental managers will use their electronic signatures instead of signing printed documents.



Tehran denounces attack at Colombia Police Academy

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Saturday voiced regret over the bitter incident of the explosion of a bomb-laden car in front of the Colombian Police Academy in the capital city of Bogota.

In a statement, Qassemi condemned such inhumane and disgusting moves that kill innocent people, Foreign Ministry website reported.

He also extended condolences to the families of the victims.

At least 21 people were killed and dozens wounded after a truck bomb exploded at a police academy in the Colombian capital, the worst attack in Bogota in 16 years.



'Warsaw summit aimed to create consensus against Iran'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Hamid Aboutalebi, a political advisor to President Hassan Rouhani, said on Saturday the U.S. is trying to revive the Obama era's global consensus against Iran through the Warsaw summit, after the Trump administration's unilateral pressure against Iran failed.

In a string of tweets, Aboutalebi said the Trump administration is realizing that its unilateral sanctions have failed, therefore it decided to create division among European countries to unify them against Iran.

And since Europe is aware of this, he continued, it should also know that the Iran nuclear agreement was the result of dialogue, "and to whatever extent the power of dialogue decreases, the power of challenge increases."

'Europe's delay in implementing SPV is unacceptable'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Kamal d e s k Kharrazi, head of the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, said on Saturday that the European countries' delay in implementing the special purpose vehicle (SPV) is "unacceptable".

"It is unacceptable that the European governments are not able to support and guide the European corporations' cooperation with Iran," he said during a meeting with a delegation from the Istituto Affari Internazionali of Italy.

He noted that it is beneficial to Europe to take practical actions in keeping the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

He added that the U.S. has "taken Europe hostage" which will cause more problems for the European countries in future.

Elsewhere, he said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran has paid a high price to maintain its independence and has adopted necessary strategies to meet its needs and will not bow to pressure."

SPV is a European Union's initiative intended to protect trade with Iran against



newly reimposed U.S. sanctions.

President Donald Trump withdrew the

U.S. unilaterally from the 2015 nuclear

deal in May and ordered sanctions against

EU set to slap anti-Iran statement on back of SPV

In Tehran on January 8 during a meeting with European envoys, Iranian officials abruptly stood up, walked out and slammed the door in an extraordinary break with protocol.

The French, British, German, Danish, Dutch, and Belgian diplomats in the Iranian foreign ministry room had incensed the officials with a message that Europe could no longer tolerate ballistic missile tests in Iran and assassination plots on European soil, according to four EU diplomats.

"There was a lot of drama, they didn't like it, but we felt we had to convey our serious concerns," one of the diplomats told Reuters. "It shows the relationship is becoming more tense," a second said.

An Iranian official declined to comment on the meeting. The next day, the European Union imposed its first sanctions on Iran since world powers agreed the 2015 Vienna nuclear arms control deal with Tehran.

The sanctions were largely symbolic but the stormy meeting encapsulated the unexpected shift in European diplomacy since the end of last year. Smaller, more dovish EU countries have joined France and Britain in a harder stance on Tehran, including considering new economic sanctions, diplomats say.

Those could include asset freezes and travel bans on Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Iranians developing the Islamic Republic's ballistic missile program, three diplomats said.

The new approach moves Europe closer to U.S. President Donald Trump's policy of isolating Iran with tough sanctions even though European governments still support the 2015 Vienna deal from which he withdrew in May.

Although there are diverging views in Europe, the shift could have consequences for President Hassan Rouhani's government as it looks to European capitals to salvage that deal.

It could also strengthen anti-Western sentiment in Iran. Iran's firing of short-range ballistic missiles into Syria on Sept. 30, missile tests and a satellite launch this month have niggled Western powers.

For Europe, alleged assassination plots by Iran on French and Danish soil in 2018 were the last straw, diplomats say.

Tehran denies the plots and says the missile tests are purely defensive.

EU foreign ministers planned to issue a rare joint statement on January 21 about what they say is Iran's role in the region and calling for an end to missile tests.

"The accusations against Iran over the past few months have awoken a few countries in Europe that were against a tougher line on Iran," a European-based Middle East diplomat said.

The same day as the meeting, the Netherlands publicly blamed Iran for killings on its soil in 2015 and 2017. Tehran denies any involvement. Then on Jan. 9, the EU designated a unit of Iran's intelligence ministry a terrorist organization, froze its assets and those of two men.

Alarmed by Trump's "America First" policy, Europe considered his May 8 decision to pull out of the Iran accord a severe setback but Iran's foreign policy appears to offer Brussels and Washington a chance to work more closely.

The European Union is set to officially launch a mechanism, the special purpose vehicle (SPV) to trade with Iran later this month but it will not be operational for several months. It will be registered in France, run by a German



Diplomats said Mogherini wants to see the SPV established first.

'Victimized for advocating African Americans'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Press TV d e s k anchor Marzieh Hashemi was arrested in the U.S. for her advocacy of African Americans, says a petition on change.org under the headline "FREE MARZIEH HASHEMI - American Citizen - Journalist".

"Sister Marzieh Hashemi is a political prisoner who is being punished by [sic] for her advocacy for the AFRICAN AMERICAN Community," said the petition, which was aiming at 15,000 signatories and had already surpassed 10,000 by the time of this report on Saturday at 19:00, Tehran time.

"She has used her position as a journalist to continuously highly the racial disparity and discrimination against black Americans. She was instrumental in organizing The New Horizon conference in Iran on the status of African Americans," it added.

United States District Court for the District of Columbia announced on January 18 that Hashemi is being held in detention in the U.S. as a material witness and has not been accused of any crimes.

Hashemi has been imprisoned in the United States since January 13, on a trip to visit her family members.

Upon arrival at St. Louis Lambert International Airport she was detained and transferred from Missouri to Washington DC, where she is currently being held in an FBI detention facility.



Over a phone conversation she told her daughter that she was being mistreated at the prison like a criminal, being handcuffed and shackled. She also said that her hijab was removed unwillingly and was photographed without a headscarf once she arrived at the detention facility and is now only wearing a T-shirt and using another one to cover her head.

Hashemi also told her daughter that she

had only a packet of crackers as food for the past few days as she has only been offered pork meat — which is forbidden under the Islamic law.

While it was first announced that she was imprisoned on unspecified charges, a court document issued on Friday shows that she was arrested on a material witness warrant issued by a United States District Court Judge in the District of Columbia.

Iran supports Venezuelan government amid U.S. meddling

Iran's Foreign Ministry has lashed out at U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for making meddlesome remarks against Venezuela, saying the Islamic Republic supports the "legal" government of the Latin American country.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran supports Venezuela's legal government as well as its nation in the face of Washington's illegal interference," Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Saturday.

Speaking to reporters in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates, on January 12, Pompeo described Venezuela's government under President Nicolas Maduro as illegitimate and said the United States would work with like-minded countries in Latin America to restore democracy there.

"The Maduro regime is illegitimate and the United States will work diligently to restore a real democracy to that country," Pompeo said.

In reaction to the claims, Qassemi warned that any foreign intervention in Venezuela's domestic affairs would be "unconstructive" and would merely further complicate the situation in the country.

Tehran believes that the solution to Venezuela's domestic problems is dialog among the country's political officials within legal frameworks, the Iranian spokesperson pointed out.

(Source: Press TV)

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.

In an interview with the European Council on Foreign Relations published on January 11, European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said that the United States cannot impose its policies on the 28-nation bloc's legitimate trade relations with Iran.

"We Europeans cannot accept that a foreign power — even our closest friend and ally — makes decisions over our legitimate trade with another country," Mogherini said.

She added that the EU is working with the rest of the international community to keep alive the landmark nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The Iran nuclear deal "has so far been implemented in full, as certified by the International Atomic Energy Agency in 13 consecutive reports," she explained.

and likely to include Britain as a shareholder.

Iran says Europe may not be able to safeguard the nuclear deal anyway and accused European officials of dragging their feet.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister and senior nuclear negotiator Abbas Araqchi said last week "operational steps" were needed from Europe as political support not enough.

Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, head of Iran's powerful Assembly of Experts said on Thursday Europe "would do nothing in our interest."

"The Europeans are worse than the Americans. If not, they are not any better," he said, state TV reported.

Last March, as part of efforts to convince Trump to stick to the nuclear deal, France, Britain and Germany proposed asset freezes and travel bans on the IRGC and Iranian companies and groups developing the missile program, according to a document seen by Reuters.

Now, a similar set of measures is being prepared, three diplomats say.

The diplomats say getting all 28 EU members to agree will take time.

The EU's top diplomat Federica Mogherini, who helped seal the 2015 deal, is wary of moving too fast for fear of provoking a complete collapse of the accord, four diplomats said.

EU foreign ministers planned to issue a rare joint statement on January 21 about what they say is Iran's role in the region and calling for an end to missile tests. Diplomats said Mogherini wants to see the SPV established first.

An EU official denied any split in policy between Mogherini and EU governments, saying the statement will be published as soon as the SPV is launched.

EU diplomats said eastern European governments could also go too far against Iran to please Trump in return for security guarantees against Russia.

EU diplomats said there was a risk that a two-day conference in Poland in February focused on the Middle East, particularly Iran, convened by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, could divide eastern and western Europe.

Mogherini is unable to attend due to another official engagement, an EU official said, and it is not clear at what level France, Britain and Germany will be represented.

New U.S. missile strategy will unleash arms race in space: Russia

Russia said Washington's new missile defense strategy would lead to a dangerous arms race in space and amounts to a relaunch of the Cold War-era "Star Wars" program.

U.S. President Donald Trump Thursday unveiled a plan which called for developing space-based sensors to detect incoming enemy missiles and exploring space-based weapons to shoot down missiles, among other steps to shield the United States.

In a statement, the Russian Foreign Ministry described the U.S. plan as confrontational and said it would deal a blow to already-fragile international stability.

"We are especially alarmed by the passages dealing with plans to develop the space arm of U.S. missile defense," the statement said. "The strategy de facto gives the green light to the prospect of basing missile strike capabilities in space.

"The implementation of these ideas will inevitably lead to the start of an arms race in space, which will the most negative consequences for international security and stability," it said.

"We would like to call on the U.S. administration to think again and walk away from this irresponsible attempt to re-launch, on a new and more high-tech basis, the still-remembered Reagan-era 'Star Wars' program," the statement said.



The ministry urged Washington to engage with Russia in constructive talks about the nuclear arms balance "before it's too late."

■ **Germany calls on Russia to prevent a new arms race**

Germany's foreign minister urged Russia to save a key arms treaty with the U.S., to

prevent a new arms race as a deadline looms.

U.S. President Donald Trump last year announced that the U.S. is going to withdraw from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty because of Russian violations. The United States has said it will exit the treaty in early February if Russia

does not end its violations.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, who is visiting Moscow, called on Russia to destroy the type of missile that the U.S. alleges is in violation of the treaty, saying that he doesn't think that "anyone in Europe would like to see the beginning of a new arms race."

The 1987 treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union bans production, testing and deployment of land-based cruise and ballistic missiles with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometers.

Germany and other European countries are worried about the impending collapse of the treaty because Europe is where the U.S. is likely to deploy the intermediate-range missiles, and Russia has said it would have to respond by targeting the countries where the missiles are based.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Friday insisted that Russia never violated the treaty, and said U.S. officials have told them that their decision is final and not negotiable.

"We have always wanted to keep the treaty in place," Lavrov told reporters after the talks with Maas. "They [the U.S.] told us during talks in October: 'President Trump's announcement that the U.S. is pulling out of the INF treaty is a done deal, and it should not be considered as an invitation to dialogue.'"

(Source: agencies)

Lindsey Graham: U.S.-Saudi ties can't move until MBS is dealt with

The United States Senator Lindsey Graham has said the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia cannot move forward until the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) is "dealt with".

Speaking in Ankara a day after meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Graham said Congress would reintroduce sanctions against those involved in the killing of Saudi writer Jamal Khashoggi.

"What has transpired over the less couple of years has been unnerving to say the least," Graham told reporters.

"The leadership coming from MBS is not what I have envisioned. Imprisoning the Lebanese Prime Minister, taking all of your critics and throw[ing] them in prison, the brutal murder [of] Mr. Khashoggi in Turkey, violating every norm of international behavior."

"I have concluded that the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States cannot move forward until MBS has been dealt with."

Last November, the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) inding that contradicts Saudi government assertions that he was not involved.

Khashoggi, a longtime royal insider who had become a critic of Prince Mohammed, was killed and dismembered by a Saudi hit team in the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul in October, prompting a global outcry.

"We will start sanctioning those involved in the killing of Mr. Khashoggi," Graham added.

"We will make a definitive statement that MBS knew about it and is responsible for it and come up with a series

of sanctions to let others know this is not what you do if you're an ally of the United States".

The U.S. Treasury sanctioned 17 Saudi individuals and the Senate adopted a resolution blaming Prince Mohammed. President Donald Trump, however, has so far been reluctant to directly implicate the royal or issue any punitive measures.

At least 21 Saudis have reportedly been arrested in connection with the case, with five facing the death penalty. Five officials were also fired, including senior royal adviser Saud al-Qahtani, the alleged mastermind of the operation against Khashoggi.

Saudi Arabia is yet to reveal what its agents did with the remains of Khashoggi.

Senator Graham also said he hoped the U.S. President Donald Trump would slow the U.S. withdrawal from Syria until the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit is destroyed.

Graham said he believed the U.S. Chief of Staff Joseph Dunford was working on a plan with Turkey to move Kurdish People's Protection Units (People's Defense Units/Yekineyen Parastina Gel/YPG) elements away from the country.

By arming the YPG group in Syria, Washington "created a nightmare for Turkey," said Graham.

Underlining that the YPG/PYD (Democratic Union Party/Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat) is "clearly" tied to the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party/Partiya Kararken Kurdistanê) - listed as a terrorist group by Turkey, the U.S., and the European Union - Graham told reporters that the U.S. strategy in Syria has the potential to cause harm to Turkey.



The South Carolina senator stressed the importance of protecting Turkey and solving the problem the U.S. "created" for Ankara, referring to the U.S. support for the YPG/PYD in the name of fighting ISIL.

Graham, a member of Congress since 1995 and a senator since 2003, serves on the Senate's Armed Services Committee.

Turkey has said it will soon launch a operation against the YPG/PYD in Syria, east of the Euphrates River, near the Turkish border.

There has been friction between Ankara and Washington over the upcoming operation amid the withdrawal of the U.S. forces from Syria.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Mueller disputes report claiming Trump directed Cohen to lie

The United States Special Counsel Robert Mueller's office took the rare step of disputing a news report on his Russia investigation, saying a BuzzFeed article alleging that the U.S. President Donald Trump directed his former lawyer to lie to Congress is "not accurate".

The rebuke of the report late on Friday came as Trump's allies strongly pushed back against the claim, which said that the president ordered Michael Cohen to lie about a Moscow skyscraper project they pursued during the 2016 election.

"BuzzFeed's description of specific statements to the Special Counsel's Office, and characterization of documents and testimony obtained by this office, regarding Michael Cohen's Congressional testimony are not accurate," spokesperson Peter Carr said in a statement.

In a tweet posted after Mueller's statement, BuzzFeed editor-in-chief Ben Smith said the news outlet stood by the original report.

"In response to the statement tonight from the Special Counsel's spokesman: We stand by our reporting and the sources who informed it, and we urge the Special Counsel to make clear what he's disputing," he wrote.

Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 vote and possible collusion between Trump's campaign and Moscow is the subject of frequent articles and even more frequent speculation.

But it is extremely rare, if not unprecedented, for his office to issue such a statement.

The statement was a cause for celebration for the president, who retweeted numerous supporters slamming BuzzFeed and later wrote

it was "a very sad day for journalism, but a great day for our Country!"

Trump's lawyer Rudy Giuliani had earlier called the allegation in the BuzzFeed report "categorically false" in a comment sent to several White House reporters, while Deputy White House Spokesman Hogan Gidley labelled the report "ridiculous". He said Cohen is someone "who now quite frankly has been proven to be a liar".

Democrats in Congress had pledged to investigate the report to see if the president had committed an impeachable felony.

"These allegations may prove unfounded, but, if true, they would constitute both the subornation of perjury as well as obstruction of justice," said Adam Schiff, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee.

The BuzzFeed article was based on interviews with two anonymous "federal law

enforcement officials" who are familiar with Cohen's testimony to the investigation led by Mueller.

No other media have confirmed BuzzFeed's reporting.

Cohen was the president's right-hand man for years at the Trump Organization, the umbrella company, often relied upon to quietly fix difficult problems and negotiate deals for the real estate mogul.

But he has turned on his former boss after he was charged with giving hush money to women alleging affairs with Trump ahead of the 2016 election, payments that violated campaign finance laws.

Cohen, who has been sentenced to three years in jail, said Trump ordered him to make the payments, and now says he regrets his work for the president.

(Source: agencies)

Syrian opposition sees window for political solution in Syria



Syria now has a good opportunity to reach a political solution to its devastating eight-year foreign-back war as cease-fires have brought calm to many areas of the country, Syria's chief opposition negotiator said Saturday.

"I think now that we have an opportunity, because nearly in Syria we have a cease-fire now, in the northeast of Syria and the north of Syria, and the efforts of fighting terrorism has achieved good results," Nasr Hariri told Reuters in an interview in the Saudi Arabian capital Riyadh, where he is based.

Hariri, the opposition's chief negotiator in UN peace talks, met with the newly appointed United Nations Special Envoy to Syria Geir Pedersen Friday.

"Now it is time to invest all of these developments: the cease-fire, fighting terrorism, the belief of the majority of the Syrian people that the only solution to the Syrian crisis is the political solution," Hariri added. In December, Russia, Iran and Turkey failed to agree on the makeup of a UN-sponsored Syrian Constitutional Committee but called for it to convene early next year to kick off a viable peace process. Syrian President Bashar Assad, whose forces have reclaimed most of Syria with Russian and Iranian support apart from the northern province of Idlib, has clung to power throughout the conflict and is widely seen as being loath to yield power after it ends. Arab states, including some that once backed rebels against Assad, are seeking to reconcile with him after decisive gains by his forces in the war, aiming to expand their influence in Syria at the expense of non-Arab Turkey and Iran.

"All the countries... Turkey, to some extent Russia and the Arab countries believe ... that without a political solution, the normalization with the [Assad] regime would be impossible," Hariri said.

(Source: Reuters)

Afghan Taliban reject talks with U.S. in Pakistan



The Afghan Taliban rejected reports in the Pakistani media that they were prepared to resume meetings with U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad in Islamabad and repeated their refusal to deal directly with the Afghan government. Pakistani newspapers and television stations reported that a meeting in Islamabad was in prospect following discussions between Khalilzad and Pakistani officials including Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday. Senior Taliban leaders said that regional powers including Pakistan had approached them and wanted them to meet the U.S. delegation in Islamabad and also include the Afghan government in the peace process but that the approaches had been rejected.

"We wanted to make it clear that we will not hold any meeting with Zalmay Khalilzad in Islamabad," Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid in a statement.

Talks between the two sides have stalled after the Taliban accused Khalilzad of straying from the agreed agenda and there is no clarity on when they may resume.

"We have made it clear again and again that we would never hold any meeting with the Afghan government as we know that they are not capable of addressing our demands," said one senior Taliban leader, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The United States says any settlement in Afghanistan must be between the internationally recognized Afghan government and the Taliban, who have so far refused to talk to an administration they describe as an illegitimate puppet regime.

The Taliban leader said peace talks with the U.S. delegation could resume if they were assured that only three issues would be discussed - a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, an exchange of prisoners and lifting a ban on the movement of Taliban leaders.

Khalilzad arrived in Islamabad on Thursday and met Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan as well as the Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and other officials.

"The two sides reviewed developments post Abu Dhabi, in order to take the Afghan peace process forward," a foreign office statement said. An Afghan Taliban delegation had a round of talks last month with U.S. officials in Abu Dhabi.

The statement didn't give any further details on the talks, but several local TV channels reported that Pakistan agreed to host the next round of talks between the Afghan Taliban and the United States in Islamabad. Khalilzad, an Afghan-born veteran U.S. diplomat who served as George W. Bush's ambassador to Afghanistan, Iraq and the United Nations, was named by the Trump administration four months ago as a special envoy to negotiate peace. Washington has long been pushing Islamabad to lean on Taliban leaders, who it says are based in Pakistan, to bring them to the negotiating table.

It often accuses the south Asian nation of covertly sheltering Taliban leaders, an accusation Islamabad vehemently denies.

The United States, which had more than 100,000 troops in Afghanistan at its peak during the first term of former President Barack Obama, withdrew most of them in 2014 but still keeps around 14,000 there.

(Source: Reuters)

Around 117 migrants unaccounted for after dinghy sinks off Libyan coast

Some 117 migrants who left Libya in a rubber dinghy two days ago are unaccounted for, the International Organization for Migration said Saturday, after three people were rescued from the vessel after it sank in the Mediterranean.

"The three survivors told us they were 120 when they left Garabulli, in Libya, on Thursday night. After 10 to 11 hours at sea ... [the boat] started sinking and people started drowning," IOM spokesman Flavio Di Giacomo said Saturday.

He said the people came mainly from west Africa, adding: "Ten women including a pregnant girl were aboard and two children, one of whom was only two months old."

An Italian military plane on sea patrol on Friday had first sighted the dinghy sinking in rough waters and had thrown two safety rafts into the water before leaving due to a lack of fuel, Rear Admiral Fabio Agostini told TV channel RaiNews24.

A helicopter dispatched from a naval ship had then rescued the three people, who were suffering from severe hypother-



mia and were taken to hospital on the island of Lampedusa. "During this operation at least three bodies were seen in

the water who appeared to be dead," Agostini said.

The Italian navy said it had alerted Libyan authorities who coordinated rescue operations, ordering a merchant ship to go to the site of the sinking, though rescue efforts had ceased after the search for the dinghy had proved fruitless.

According to the IOM, 2,297 migrants died or went missing in the Mediterranean last year, out of a total of 116,959 people who reached Europe by sea.

Arrivals in the first 16 days of 2019 totaled 4,449, almost all by sea, compared with 2,964 in the same period of 2018.

"As long as European ports will remain open ... sea-trafficers will continue to do business and kill people," Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini said in a Facebook post late on Friday.

Since Italy's populist government came to power in June, Salvini, leader of the anti-migrant League, has closed Italian ports to humanitarian vessels.

(Source: Daily Star)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	166131.1
IFX	2003.52

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,751 rials
GBP	54,074 rials
AED	11,439 rials

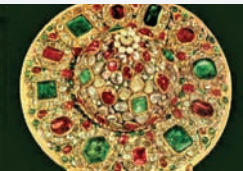
Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$54.04/b
Brent	\$62.70/b
OPEC Basket	\$59.63/b
Gold	\$1,283.25 /oz
Silver	\$15.46/oz
Platinum	\$812.45/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Precious stones, metals export increases 25% in 9 months on year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran’s exports of precious stones and metals during the nine-month period ended on December 21, 2108 rose 25 percent compared to the same period of time in the past year, IRNA reported citing the data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Customs Administration (IRICA).

IRICA data put the country’s worth of precious stones and metals exports at \$100,000 during the nine-month period of this year.



Tehran to host intl. logistics expo in late Jan.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The 4th International Exhibition of Logistics and Supply Chain related Industries and Equipment is slated to be held during January 23-26 at Tehran International Permanent Fairgrounds, IRIB reported.

Exhibitors from Iran and various foreign countries including Turkey, Germany, Russia, Azerbaijan and China are going through final preparations to attend this year’s event.

According to the exhibition’s organizers, this event aims to present a platform for the participants to get to know about various products and the latest technology and know-how in logistics industry, and consequently create a path for the country’s logistics industry to thrive.

World economy wobbles on eve of Davos with politics to blame

High in the Alps, the global elite will be feeling low about the economic outlook.

The ski resort of Davos, Switzerland, will again play host next week to the World Economic Forum’s annual meeting, drawing JPMorgan Chase & Co.’s Jamie Dimon, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Facebook Inc. Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg and Chinese Vice President Wang Qishan. Domestic political strife is forcing U.S. President Donald Trump and U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May to stay home.

Those still going will do so as their economies lose momentum just a year since they enjoyed a rare synchronized upturn. While few predict a recession, companies are the most bearish since 2016 as economic data falls short of expectations and political risks mount amid an international trade war, U.S. government shutdown and Brexit.

“The mood is going to be much darker than a year ago,” said Nari-man Behravesht, IHS Markit’s chief economist, who will be in Davos. “A recession isn’t imminent, but as economies slow it wouldn’t take much to topple growth.”

The summit formally begins on Tuesday although the tone will be set a day before when the International Monetary Fund publishes new growth forecasts and China releases data likely to show expansion in 2018 was the slowest in almost three decades. The Bank of Japan and European Central Bank also have meetings next week at which policy makers may recast their outlooks.

“The evidence is consistent with slowdown rather than slump, but downside risks have increased,” said Tom Orlik, chief economist at Bloomberg Economics.

Some of the companies sending executives to Davos are already sounding less upbeat. Dimon’s JPMorgan last week missed profit estimates and he warned the U.S. economy could stop growing if the government shutdown endures.

BlackRock Inc., which will be represented by CEO Laurence Fink, said this month it’s cutting jobs. Societe Generale, helmed by Frederic Oudea, this week reported “challenging” conditions as it warned fourth-quarter trading revenue probably fell 20 percent.

Such developments leave governments and central banks under pressure to respond at a time when global policy uncertainty is at a record high.

It’s not just Trump and May who have problems. French President Emmanuel Macron faces protests against his reform program, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras’s governing coalition has splintered, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is at odds with China over the arrest of a Huawei Technologies Co. executive and Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte’s populist coalition is under strain.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Gas produced in South Pars platform 13B injected to offshore refinery

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Gas produced in platform 13B of Iran’s South Par gas field was injected to the offshore refinery of phase 13 of the gas field development, Payam Motamed, the operator of this phase, announced.

He said the gas received from this platform was injected to the fourth train of sweetening refinery of phase 13 on Thursday, Public Relations Department of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of developing the gas field, reported.

This train of the refinery was put into operation one month ago.

In a press conference last month, POGC Managing Director Mohammad Meshkinfam put the current refining capacity of South Pars refineries at 2 billion cubic feet per day.

Phase 13 is aimed at production of 56 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas, 75,000 barrels of gas condensate and 400 tons of sulfur per day in addition to one million tons



of ethane and one million tons of propane and butane per annum.

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

Meshkinfam also announced that all development phases of the gas field, except for phase 11, will be completed by the end of the next Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020).

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

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

IME’s worth of trades up 49% in a week

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — During weekdays ending up to January 17, while 549,773 million tons (MT) of commodities worth over \$547.6 million were traded on Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), the trading volume and value experienced growth of 36 percent and 49 percent, respectively.

According to the report from IME International Affairs and Public Relations Department, last week, on the domestic and export metal and mineral trading floor of IME, 175,217 MT of various products worth close to \$248 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 164,080 MT of steel, 6,905 MT of copper, 2,000 MT of aluminum, 1,000 MT of cement, 100 MT of zinc ingot, 120 MT of molybdenum concentrates, 12

MT of precious metal concentrates as well as one kilograms of gold bullion were traded by customers.

The report declares that on domestic and export oil and petrochemical trading floors of IME, 371,746 MT of different commodities with the total value of \$320 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 136,500 MT of VB feed stock, 142,485 MT of bitumen, 68,730 MT of polymer products, 22,970 MT of chemical products, 605 MT of sulfur, 50 MT of slaps waxes, 30 MT of argon as well as 600 MT of insulation were traded.

Moreover, on the agricultural trading floor of IME witnessed trading 30 kilograms of saffron strands was traded by customers.



Turkish central bank says began transfer \$6.3b profit to shareholders

Turkey’s central bank said on Friday it began transferring dividends worth 33.7 billion lira (\$6.30 billion) to shareholders after moving forward its annual general meeting by three months.

Former central bankers had said bringing the meeting forward was aimed at moving funds to the treasury ahead of March local elections. Investors also see the central bank as being under pressure from President Tayyip Erdogan to lower rates.

Finance Minister Berat Albayrak said the move was aimed at providing liquidity to the market faster.

Following Friday’s annual general meeting, the bank said it agreed to transfer 90 percent of its profits to shareholders. The Turkish treasury holds the largest share in the bank with 55.12 percent.

The bank also said that it had changed an article so that the annual general meetings can be held within three months of the end of the accounting period.

China offers 6-year import boost in trade talks with U.S.: sources

China has offered a six-year boost in imports during its ongoing talks with the U.S., officials familiar with the matter told CNBC.

Chinese officials made the offer during negotiations in Beijing earlier in January, Bloomberg News reported. China would increase its annual import of U.S. goods by a combined value of over \$1 trillion, the officials told Bloomberg, which was first to report on the import boost offer.

China pegged its proposal to buy more U.S. goods through 2024 to President Donald Trump’s hopes of being re-elected in 2020, the sources told CNBC.

The U.S. had a trade deficit of \$323 billion with China in 2018. This deal would aim to reduce that annual trade difference to \$0 by 2024, one of the officials told Bloomberg.

Stocks rose to their highs of the day when news of the offer hit Wall Street.

The China Trade Index is an equally weighted index of 25 companies created by CNBC, with research by CNBC market analysts.

On Thursday the market jumped on a Wall Street Journal report that Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin had presented the idea of lowering U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods. However, a Treasury Department spokesperson working with the U.S. trade negotiations teams told CNBC that “neither Secretary Mnuchin nor Ambassador Lighthizer have made any recommendations to anyone with respect to tariffs or other parts of the negotiation with China.”

China’s top trade negotiator, Vice Premier Liu He, will visit Washington, D.C., on Jan. 30 for two days of talks with U.S. trade representative Robert Lighthizer.

(Source: CNBC)

Italy central bank slashes 2019 GDP growth forecast

The Italian economy will grow just 0.6 percent this year, the Bank of Italy said on Friday, slashing a projection of 1.0 percent made a month ago due to trade tensions and a weaker investment outlook.

The latest forecasts are bad news for the radical government which took office in June last year and is trying to boost the flagging economy without falling foul of European Union budget rules.

In its quarterly economic bulletin the central bank said activity had slowed more sharply than expected over the second half of last year, which will produce a negative carry-over effect on 2019.

It said gross domestic product, which fell 0.1 percent in the third quarter of 2018,

probably contracted again in the fourth quarter, producing what economists define as a “technical recession” of two straight quarters of declining GDP.

National statistics institute ISTAT will release official Q4 data on Jan. 31.

The sharper cyclical slowdown at the end of last year will reduce the statistical carry-over for 2019 by 0.2 points, the bulletin said, accounting for half of its downward revision to this year’s growth forecast.

The other factors behind the revision were “the cutback in firms’ investment plans, as confirmed by recent surveys; and the expected slowdown in global trade,” it said.

(Source: Reuters)

Draghi running out of time to sort ECB top jobs as Brexit looms

Mario Draghi is running out of time to say whether he’ll shake up the responsibilities of his top officials to ensure smooth leadership in the supervision of the region’s banks.

The European Central Bank president faces a deadline of Feb. 11, when Executive Board member Sabine Lautenschlaeger’s non-renewable five-year term as vice chair of bank supervision expires. He should technically give the post to another board member and allocate Lautenschlaeger a new portfolio.

The changeover comes at an awkward time though. A new head of the supervisory arm has only just started, and the institution is bracing for an influx of big banks when the U.K. leaves the European Union in March. No board member except Vice President Luis De Guindos, who has been with the ECB less than a year, could serve a full supervisory term before their time on the Executive Board is up.

All that has prompted some ECB policy makers to consider whether Lautenschlaeger’s term could in fact be extended.

A major hurdle is that she has repeatedly told colleagues she’s unwilling to stay, according to people with knowledge of the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity. Lautenschlaeger and an ECB spokeswoman both declined to comment.

Even if she can be persuaded, the ECB risks undermining its credibility by changing its procedures.

“The ECB calls on banks and countries to follow the rules, so it would be surprising if they bent their own,” said Mascia Bedendo, a professor of finance at Audencia Business School in Nantes, France. “I wouldn’t expect Draghi to change them to extend Lautenschlaeger’s term, but exceptional times can call for exceptional decisions.”

(Source: Bloomberg)

BlackRock, Goldman to move some fund managers to U.S. if no-deal Brexit: sources

BlackRock and Goldman Sachs Asset Management both plan to temporarily move some British-based fund managers to New York in the event of a no-deal Brexit, two sources told Reuters.

The portfolio managers would eventually be transferred to mainland Europe to handle client accounts there once Britain and the European Union agreed a regulatory framework, they added.

But neither of the firms, who together employ more than 10,000 people in London, expects a chaotic exit that would force them to carry out the emergency relocation, the sources said.

A spokeswoman for BlackRock, which is the world’s biggest asset manager and manages around \$6.3 trillion, declined to comment on the plan but in an emailed response to Reuters said:

“BlackRock maintains extensive regulatory licenses and permissions across Europe and globally to ensure it can continue to serve its clients post-Brexit.”

To avert such moves, the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) is in talks with Britain’s Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) on agreements which would oversee cross-border asset activity and managers.

The U.S. makes sense as a temporary base for Gold-



man and BlackRock as Europe has cooperation agreements with U.S. regulators, so managers could handle European clients’ accounts from there until ESMA and the FCA have theirs.

“By pulling the UK out of Europe, there’s potentially a regulatory hole because the UK doesn’t have a cooperation and information sharing agreement with each EU country,” said Neil Robson, regulatory partner at law firm Katten Muchin Rosenman.

An ESMA spokesman said it expects to have agreements in place before the end of March. If not, BlackRock will move around 10 equity portfolio managers to New York, one source said, adding they would later move to the euro zone.

Goldman’s asset management business GSAM, with 50 managers in London, has plans to send “a handful” to the U.S. financial capital until a framework is in place, the second source said, adding they too would eventually relocate to the euro zone.

GSAM has picked Dublin as a center for administrative staff when it no longer has access to the single market from London following Brexit.

“We continue to monitor the situation and are prepared to serve clients whatever the outcome,” a GSAM spokesman said.

It is not known whether other big U.S. asset managers are drawing up similar plans and State Street, Fidelity Investments and Northern Trust all declined to comment.

Although concerns about a chaotic no-deal exit have eased since the defeat of Prime Minister Theresa May’s draft plan in Parliament on Tuesday, the contingency plans highlight efforts by money managers to avoid major disruption before the March 29 deadline for Britain to leave the EU.

(Source: Reuters)

This is how much each OPEC+ member needs to cut

OPEC published on Friday the long-awaited list of oil production quotas for each country in the OPEC+ deal, as it seeks to shore up market confidence that the cartel and allies will do whatever it takes to rebalance the market.

OPEC and its non-OPEC partners led by Russia decided in early December to start a new round of cuts, aiming to lift the price of oil that had started to plummet in October on fears of building oversupply and uncertain demand growth going forward. The OPEC+ deal will be removing a combined 1.2 million bpd off the market in the first half of 2019. Initial reports just after the meeting in Vienna in early December suggested that OPEC and its allies would not be unveiling who is cutting how much under the new deal.

But two weeks later, Reuters quoted OPEC's Secretary General Mohammad Barkindo as saying in a letter:

"In the interests of openness and transparency, and to support market sentiment and confidence, it is vital to make these production adjustments publicly available."

Finally, OPEC published today the list of the countries which will be cutting production,



leaving out OPEC members Iran, Libya, and Venezuela who were granted exemptions from the cuts that began on January 1.

According to OPEC's list, OPEC and non-OPEC will withhold 1.195 million bpd from the

market and keep their combined production at 43.874 million bpd between January and June. The reference production level from which the partners will reduce their respective production is October 2018, except for Kuwait,

Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan, whose reference months are September 2018, September 2018, and November 2018, respectively.

OPEC is cutting a total of 812,000 bpd to a ceiling of 25.937 million bpd, while non-OPEC partners will be reducing production by a combined 383,000 bpd to 17.937 million bpd. OPEC's de facto leader and biggest producer Saudi Arabia will cut 322,000 bpd from its October baseline of 10.633 million bpd and keep output at 10.311 million bpd. Russia will be taking the lion's share of the non-OPEC cuts and will reduce production by 230,000 bpd from October's 11.421 million bpd, to 11.191 million bpd.

Accompanying the publishing of the OPEC list of quotas was a brief statement from the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC), which called on all participating producers "to redouble their efforts in the full and timely implementation of the supply adjustments to ensure that the oil market remains in balance in 2019."

OPEC also confirmed that a JMMC meeting will take place in Baku, Azerbaijan on March 18, 2019.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Mexican pipeline blast during fuel raid kills at least 21



At least 21 people were killed and 71 were injured on Friday when a pipeline ruptured by suspected fuel thieves exploded in central Mexico as dozens of people tried to fill up containers, state and federal authorities said.

Mexican television footage showed flames leaping into the night sky in the municipality of Tlahuelilpan, in Hidalgo state north of Mexico City, as people screamed and cried for help.

Hidalgo's governor Omar Fayad told Mexican television that emergency services had registered the charred bodies of 21 people, and that at least 71 others had been injured.

Fayad said the number of victims could still rise depending on what emergency services discovered where the blaze had been hottest, which had been difficult to access.

Shortly before midnight, Public Security Minister Alfonso Durazo said the fire had been put out, and that the government would need time to establish the final death toll.

Images published on broadcaster Televisa showed people with severe burns from the blast as the government sent in ambulances and doctors to treat the victims.

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has launched a major crackdown on rampant fuel theft, which the government said cost the country more than \$3 billion

last year.

The explosion was one of the worst in recent history in a country that has suffered hundreds of illegal ruptures to its network of oil and gas pipelines.

The ruptured pipeline was near the Tula refinery of state oil firm Petroleos Mexicanos (Pemex), which in a statement blamed the incident on an illegal tap.

Separate television footage showed the pipeline gushing a fountain of fuel earlier in the day and dozens of people at the site trying to fill buckets and plastic containers.

Lopez Obrador expressed his concern on Twitter, and said he wanted "the entire government" to help people at the scene.

Separately, Pemex said on Friday evening it was also dealing with a separate pipeline rupture by suspected fuel thieves in San Juan del Rio in the neighboring state of Queretaro. There was no danger to the population, the firm added.

The president's crackdown on theft has significant public backing, though his decision to turn off pipelines to thwart the thieves disrupted fuel supply in central Mexico and raised concern that the shortages could damage the economy.

(Source: Reuters)

Jordan's switch to renewable energy with solar power



Jordan's movement towards renewable energy is gaining momentum.

The Kingdom, which is estimated to import around 97 percent of its energy, has ambitious plans to switch 20 percent of its power consumption to green energy by 2020.

With more than 300 days of sunshine each year, solar energy has fast become the focus of the state's energy investments.

Established in 1991, Jordanian project developer Kawar Energy has approximately 200 solar developments to its name.

"We have excellent (solar) radiation that helps generate more energy and electricity out of the plants," says CEO Hanna Zaghloul, "But what's really more important is the legal framework that we have developed in Jordan which attracts investors and the government's actual commitment to renewable energy."

Jordan officially took its place on the renewable energy map when it opened Shams Ma'an Power Plant in 2016, the second largest solar farm in the region.

Costing an estimated \$170 million dollars to build, the farm consists of 640,000 panels, spanning two-square-kilometers of desert land in the Southern city of Ma'an.

It generates one per cent of the country's total production of electricity.

The country has been setting green benchmarks since last year, when it implemented the world's largest solar project inside a refugee camp.

The 12.9-megawatt plant at Za'atari Camp, provides eighty thousand Syrian refugees with clean and free electricity.

Carbon dioxide emissions are also reduced by 13,000 metric tons per annum, which amounts approximately to 30,000 barrels of oil.

The initiative saves the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) around 5.5 million US dollars per year.

"We have started to receive 'zero dollar' electricity bills," says Hashim Ramouni an electrical engineering associate at UNHCR. "We can invest this five million in other services for the refugees, like protection, field services, roads and infrastructure."

Shadi Khalili is a Syrian refugee who worked to install the camp's solar panels. He is now employed by the UN to maintain the plant.

"Before the solar plant, we used to get 8 hours of power a day, which wasn't sufficient for the children to study," remembers Khalili.

(Source: Euronews)

OPEC+ countries have 'work cut out' countering U.S. oil surge: IEA

The International Energy Agency on Friday raised its estimate of the increase in non-OPEC oil supply this year on the back of supply surges from Russia and the U.S. and said participants in last month's cut agreement had "their work cut out."

In its monthly oil market report, the IEA shunted upward its non-OPEC supply growth number for 2019 to 1.6 million bpd, from 1.5 million bpd in last month's report, and also revised upward the corresponding growth estimate for 2018 to 2.6 million bpd.

It raised its estimate of the U.S.' crude output growth this year to 1.1 million bpd, from 1 million bpd in last month's report, adding that U.S. crude output would probably be higher than the production capacities of Russia and Saudi Arabia by mid-year.

The IEA questioned Russia's commitment to supply cuts agreed with OPEC in Vienna in December given the country's record-high production that month, with crude and condensate output hitting 11.45 million bpd. The report said most Russian producers had increased their output in December, with the exception of Rosneft, which is due to bring on stream a number of new oil field projects.

"While Saudi Arabia is determined to protect its price aspirations by delivering substantial production cuts, there is less clarity with regard to its Russian partner. Data show that Russia increased crude oil production in December to a new record near 11.5 million bpd and it is unclear when



it will cut and by how much," the IEA said, noting, however, Russia's assertions that it had started reining in production this month.

The report said global markets were on the way to rebalancing, noting a slight drop in oil stocks in the OECD developed countries in November, but added the process would be "a marathon, not a sprint." OECD stocks remained above the five-year average in November, at 2.857 billion barrels, down 2.5 million barrels on the month, it said.

■ Demand signals

The IEA left unchanged its estimates for global oil demand growth, at 1.3 million bpd for 2018 and 1.4 million bpd for this

year, saying slower economic growth this year would be offset by expected lower oil prices. Underlining the sense of fragility, however, it said China's apparent oil demand had fallen year-on-year in November, by 70,000 bpd, led by the gasoil segment, where the year-on-year drop was 345,000 bpd.

"Non-OECD Asia and OECD Americas will be the fastest growing regions [this year]. Oil prices exerted a strong negative impact on demand in 2018, when, for the year as a whole, they were 31 percent higher than in 2017. In contrast, based on the current futures curve, they could fall by 14 percent in 2019," it said.

(Source: Platts)

Oil refining capacity to grow at record pace this year: IEA

Global oil refining capacity is set to increase at its fastest pace on record this year, possibly boosting stocks of products such as diesel, gasoline and marine fuel, the International Energy Agency said on Friday.

Oil refining capacity will rise by 2.6 million barrels per day (bpd) and demand for refined products by around 1.1 million bpd, the IEA said in a monthly report.

It was not clear yet what that meant for margins, which slumped as the price of crude rose last year, said the Paris-based IEA, which coordinates the energy policies of industrialized countries.

"This (demand growth) utilizes only half of the new capacity coming on stream. If refining margins are supported by accommodating crude prices, utilization rates will not decline. This should mean that product stocks will increase," it said.

An increase in stocks of refined products could be "useful", the IEA said, ahead of the implementation next year of regulations by the International Maritime Organization to reduce sulfur content in shipping fuel.

Margins remain under pressure from rising oil throughput, which hit a historic high last month at 84.2 million bpd. Refineries will process 83.4 million bpd this year, compared with 82.2 million bpd last year, according to the agency.

"The global refining industry is facing a challenging 2019 ... If average crude prices continue moving higher for the third consecutive year, refining margins may decline to levels that force slowdown in some refining regions," the IEA said.

(Source: CNBC)

Chinese independent refineries see little impact from restrictions on oil products sector

Restrictions imposed by eastern China's Shandong provincial government on the production, sales and procurement of oil products would likely have limited impact on the operations of the province's independent refiners and blenders for now, company sources said this week.

The provincial government this week released a list strictly reiterating restrictions throughout the entire value chain, ranging from the production and usage of oil products, requiring oil companies to operate under their respective licenses, produce qualified materials, and to supply consumers with fuels meeting standards.

Shandong has also mandated nine provincial authorities to launch random checks on production, transportation, circulation, tax reporting, as well as storage of oil products at oil companies within the province.

"The wording was severe but the content was too general, leaving a wide gray area. We cannot assess the impact until we know how the government plans to monitor and punish those breaking rules," a Dongying-based refiner said.

The list did not refer to any specific national or provincial standards and mandate, nor did it provide details on the products banned from production or consumption.

For example, Shandong has prohibited blending oil products with chemicals but it did not list what blendstocks are banned. Independent refiners and blenders use a range of blendstocks such as light cycle oil, aromatics, solvents and methanol.

Meanwhile, various government authorities have been investigating the oil industry in Shandong since October 2018 in areas such as safety production and environment protection. But there was no significant impact seen, according to a Shandong-based analyst.

Shandong is home to most of China's independent refiners and blenders.

Those refiners ran at an average rate of around 65.7 percent in the fourth quarter of 2018, increasing from 59.5 percent in Q3, but down marginally from 66.6 percent in Q4 2017, data from local information provider JLC showed.

The robust refinery runs in the province indicated limited impact from the government checks.

"Most [independent] refineries have the qualified certificates regarding oil products production," the analyst said.

While one refinery was heard shut due to investigations, its low throughput has little impact on the overall independent sector.

The 2.4 million mt/year (48,000 b/d) Wudi Xinyue Petrochemical was shut briefly in December due to frequent investigations, according to the analyst.

It was not immediately clear if it was mandated to shut or had voluntarily suspended operations. The company could not be reached for comments.

The refinery processed around 1.1 million mt of crude last year, or at an average 46 percent rate of its capacity.

(Source: Platts)

Saudi Arabia plans oil refinery, petrochemicals plant in S.Africa

Saudi Arabia plans to build an oil refinery and a petrochemicals plant in South Africa as part of \$10 billion of investments in the country, Saudi Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said on Friday.

Saudi oil would be used in the planned refinery whose construction would be led by state energy company Saudi Aramco, Al-Falih said in comments following a meeting with South African Energy Minister Jeff Radebe in Pretoria.

"There have been exchanges of talks by Saudi Aramco teams and they have been supported by the South African energy ministry," Al-Falih said.

The exact location of the refinery and petrochemicals plant will be finalised in the coming weeks, Radebe said.

Saudi Arabia was also interested in using South Africa's major oil storage facilities, Al-Falih said, adding that Saudi utility developer Acwa Power was looking at investing in South Africa's revamped renewable energy program.

He also confirmed that there were discussions about the kingdom investing in South Africa's state defense company Denel, which was exclusively reported by Reuters in November.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa is trying to woo foreign investors to help revive a struggling economy as he prepares for a parliamentary election this year.

Saudi Prince Mohammed Bin Salman met with Ramaphosa on the sidelines of the Group of 20 summit in Argentina in November.

(Source: Reuters)

Kenyans will be asking tough questions after the Nairobi attack

Al-Shabab has been targeting Kenyan civilians and soldiers for years now. Why have no lessons been learned?



By Patrick Gathara

For a third January in four years, Kenya has suffered a terrorist attack organized by al-Shabab terror group. The attack on the DusitD2 Hotel in the heart of Nairobi comes on the third anniversary of the 2016 attack on a base manned by the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) in the Somali town of El Adde in which 173 soldiers were killed. A year later, in late January, another KDF camp this time in the Somali village of Kulbiyow, was stormed, which resulted in the loss of up to 68 troops.

Last week's attack is also eerily reminiscent of the one on the Westgate Mall in September 2013 in which four al-Shabab terrorists killed 67 people; in fact, it came just a day after a court acquitted one of four men who had been put on trial in connection with the terror act.

In Kenya, memories are also still fresh of the April 2015 siege on Garissa University College, which killed 147 people - the deadliest attack al-Shabab has unleashed so far on Kenyan civilians.

Kenya has been a regular target for the terror group since it invaded Somalia in October 2011.

The incursion, code-named Operation Linda Nchi (defend the nation), was undertaken to stop cross-border attacks by al-Shabab militants, but actually paved the way for deadlier and more frequent atrocities.

And for the past almost eight years, Kenyans have felt increasingly insecure as the security apparatus has failed to curb these attacks.

At Dusit Hotel, the response of the Kenyan authorities seemed much swifter and seemingly better coordinated than was the case at Westgate, where the government forces showed up too late and initial rescue efforts were carried out by private individuals.

This time, security officers, including the specially trained police anti-terror unit, the Recce Company, which ended the siege at Garissa University, were on the scene within the hour and rescued a number of people.

Buildings around the hotel, including a nearby hostel for university students, were also quickly evacuated.

Nevertheless, the fact that the attack still happened, at the scale and timing that it did (the Kulbiyow was meant to mark the anniversary of El Adde), will raise important questions about the effectiveness of the Kenyan security apparatus's counterterrorism strategy.

There will be questions asked about the government's failure to carry out a public inquiry into any of the previous terrorist attacks.

"There was never a review meeting on how we handled incidents," a senior police officer told the Daily Nation in July 2015.

"As a result, the police service has basically learnt nothing from [the terror attacks on] Westgate, Garissa, Mpeketoni and others".

The public will also demand answers about why the attack was not pre-empted. In October, the Kenyan newspaper The Star reported on a leaked police memo, claiming that six al-Shabab operatives were planning to attack targets in Nairobi "between Sunday 28th October 2018 and Sunday 4th November 2018".

There were no terror attacks in that period but initial reports from Dusit suggesting that there were six attackers will raise questions whether it was the same individuals and whether someone dropped the ball on useful intelligence.

There will also be hard questions asked about current pre-emptive tactics being used by the Kenyan security services.

Although there is a general acceptance that the government has become better at fighting terrorism, there is still much concern over the disappearance and killing of young men who took advantage of a government amnesty on al-Shabab recruits who wanted to leave the group.

Finally, there will doubtless be questions about the wisdom of continuing to maintain troops in Somalia as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia.

Since the 2011 invasion, Kenya has not had a public debate over its objectives in Somalia or the price it is willing to pay to achieve them.

The goals of Operation Linda Nchi kept shifting and the mission was wound down and integrated into AMISOM before any of them were achieved. Opposition leader, Raila Odinga, has previously called for the troops to be withdrawn and last year a lawmaker petitioned the National Assembly to demand the same.

A 2016 poll found that an overwhelming majority of Kenyans favored bringing the troops back home but President Kenyatta has said they will stay put until stability is restored.

Although AMISOM has announced plans to withdraw by next year, it is unlikely that Somali forces would be able to maintain security without its support, which puts in doubt any such plans.

The President has addressed the nation in the wake of the latest attack and declared victory over the terrorists, just as he did five years ago. But just as then, Kenyan security officials still have plenty of explaining to do.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Lawmaker-turned-Saudi lobbyist raises eyebrows with campaign donations

By Bryant Harris

Many lobbyists ditched Saudi Arabia after the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, but several clients are still sticking with their lucrative patron. And at least one of those lobbyists met with a key Senate staffer at a lawmaker's birthday party the same day his firm donated to the lawmaker's campaign.

Lobbying disclosure and Federal Election Commission forms reviewed by Al-Monitor reveal that former Rep. Buck McKeon, R-Calif., donated \$1,000 in unused campaign funds to the campaign for Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman James Inhofe, R-Okla. — the same day a McKeon associate met an Inhofe staffer on behalf of the Saudis. The Saudis paid McKeon \$450,000 three days after Khashoggi's death, according to lobbying disclosures for the six months through Nov. 30.

The California Republican, who now heads the McKeon Group lobbying firm just outside Washington, told Al-Monitor that the donation was unrelated, although the payment occurred on the same day.

"I've had some money left over in my campaign fund," McKeon said. "I served with Jim Inhofe when I came to Congress in 1993, we've been friends ever since and I have supported him on his campaign."

McKeon served as the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee from 2011-2015 and has lobbied for Riyadh since 2016. He also made two other recent donations to Inhofe — \$1,000 in October, shortly after Khashoggi's murder, and another \$1,000 in July.

The former chairman told Al-Monitor that David Keyser, the Chief Operating Officer for the McKeon Group, and McKeon's son attended Inhofe's birthday party on Nov. 14. During the event, Keyser, who is not a registered lobbyist for Riyadh, discussed Saudi Arabia and arranged a subsequent phone call. The two then discussed a Yemen war powers



McKeon served as the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee from 2011-2015 and has lobbied for Riyadh since 2016.

resolution by phone on Nov. 29.

The party came as Congress was gearing up to retaliate against Riyadh for murdering Khashoggi with the resolution, which would direct the Donald Trump administration to pull U.S. military support for the Saudi-led coalition against Yemen's Houthis. Inhofe voted against the resolution. It ultimately passed 56-41, only for House Republican leadership to forestall a floor vote in the lower chamber.

McKeon has also lobbied his former colleagues on the House Armed Services Committee on behalf of the Saudis. In July he asked Rep. Joe Wilson, R-S.C., to champion legislation sanctioning supporters of the Houthi rebel group. That same month, he arranged a meeting between Wilson and the then-Saudi ambassador to the United

States, Khalid bin Salman.

Congress never advanced the bill, and McKeon never donated to Wilson's campaign. But he has donated to several other former colleagues on the House Armed Services Committee. Federal law prohibits former lawmakers from using campaign funds for "personal use." But whether — and to what extent — for-profit lobbying qualifies is a gray area.

"Surprisingly, these same-day contributions are perfectly legal and do not violate any current campaign finance laws," Lydia Dennett, a foreign lobbying investigator with the Project on Government Oversight, told Al-Monitor. "When lobbyists make contributions on the same day that they meet with lawmakers on behalf of their foreign clients, it certainly gives the appearance of a quid pro quo relationship."

Trump and Pelosi: A game of spite and malice

She gets under his skin. He punches back. Game on.

It seems that the speaker of the House has gotten under the famously thin skin of the president.

On Wednesday, Speaker Nancy Pelosi raised eyebrows on both sides of the aisle by effectively disinviting President Trump from delivering his State of the Union address to Congress this month.

In a letter citing concerns about the security implications of the continuing government shutdown, Pelosi suggested, "sadly," that it might be best if she and the president could "determine another suitable date after government has reopened for this address or for you to consider delivering your State of the Union address in writing."

The communiqué was at once excruciatingly polite and brutally dismissive, driving home how the power dynamic has shifted on Capitol Hill. As congressional Republicans sputtered about how grossly political the speaker was being, Trump was reminded not only of the limitations of his own power, but also of how his House enablers have been stripped of theirs.

Surprised and clearly irked, Trump fired back Thursday with a petulant, taunting letter postponing a congressional delegation that Pelosi had been scheduled to lead to Brussels and Afghanistan — or at least canceling military support for it — for the duration of the shutdown. "Obviously, if you would like to make your journey by flying commercial, that would certainly be your prerogative," snarked the president.

It was a transparent bit of retaliation for Pelosi's taking his big television moment away from him — not to mention a blatant attempt to drag the speaker down into the sort of cheap playground tussle at which the president excels.

But if anyone has the chops to manage Trump's brattiness, it is Pelosi.

Trump may in some ways be a unique political animal, but Pelosi is not unfamiliar with his type, having risen to political prominence in a field full of arrogant, entitled, patronizing men.

Along the way, she has been repeatedly underestimated. In 1985, having reached the top of the California Democratic Party, she campaigned, unsuccessfully, to head the national party. As Ms. Pelosi tells it, one union organizer dismissed



Trump may in some ways be a unique political animal, but Pelosi is not unfamiliar with his type, having risen to political prominence in a field full of arrogant, entitled, patronizing men.

her as "an airhead." Other players told her that Democrats wouldn't risk elevating a woman to such a high-profile post on the heels of Walter Mondale's 1984 presidential loss with Geraldine Ferraro as his running mate. Ms. Pelosi never forgot those slights.

Upon arriving in Congress in 1987, she had to carve out a space in what was then still an old white boys' club. She succeeded through a combination of sweat, savvy and sheer will. She learned how Congress works, both as an institution and as a collection of egos. As she showed in quashing a challenge to her leadership after the midterm elections, she knows how to find people's pressure points.

She also knows how to handle pressure. As House minority leader, she helped derail President George W. Bush's efforts

to privatize Social Security by ignoring the conventional wisdom that Democrats needed to offer an alternative plan. Resisting criticism from both the White House and her own conference, Ms. Pelosi focused on taking down Bush's plan.

This time around, Pelosi is aiming not merely to rein in the out-of-control president but, in the process, to deflate his cherished image as a Master of the Universe. She has mocked Trump's obsession with what she terms his "manhood" and gone all in with the grandmother-wrangling-an-unruly-child shtick. What he paints as strong leadership and standing his ground, she dismisses as a temper tantrum. Rather than outrage or disbelief, Pelosi's most common response to Trump amounts to one long, exasperated eye roll.

The speaker's move is not without risk. Public sentiment can be fickle, and if the voters starts to feel like Democrats are trying to score cheap political points against the president, they could turn on Pelosi.

But, here again, few politicians are as well equipped to weather a political storm. Pelosi has been a polarizing figure for longer than most members have been in Congress. For years, Republicans have been using her as a boogeyman, painting pretty much every Democratic candidate nationwide as a tool of her and her radical San Francisco agenda. As a result, her public appeal is much like that of the Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, slightly above a root canal. But while Pelosi-bashing has its charms — Republican voters do love hating on the speaker — as the midterms showed, it also has its limits.

For her part, Pelosi is not overly concerned with personal popularity. Like McConnell, she has a job to do, and if getting it done requires taking some heat, so be it.

Word around Washington is that Trump admires the speaker, considers her more reasonable than many in her conference — possibly even likes her. This is said to be why he doesn't smack her as gleefully as he does other prominent Democrats and why he hasn't settled on a sophomore nickname for her like Cryin' Chuck or Crooked Hillary. This restraint is unlikely to hold, as Pelosi picks away at Trump. The big question is whether she can avoid getting pulled down into the muck right along with him.

(Source: The NYT)

A bolt of integrity in a big African election

In a surprise, the African Union intervenes in Congo to ensure a transparent vote count. The bloc could not ignore a rigged election — or the demand of young Africans for accountable governance.

How do you unrig a rigged election?

The question is now playing out in the heart of Africa after a disputed election in Congo last month. The simple answer, of course, is to insist on integrity in the vote count. To many people's surprise, the continent's 55-nation bloc, the African Union, did just that on Thursday.

The AU expressed "serious doubts" about the provisional results of the Dec. 30 presidential election and asked Congolese officials not to declare an official winner until it can help find a solution.

In an Africa known more for fantasy democracies than real ones, the surprise intervention by the AU is a blow for transparency and accountability in governance. And it comes at a time when Africa is expected to hold more than 20 elections in 2019 and when its level of democracy has been in decline for more



than a decade. For Congo's neighbors, the risks of postelection violence in a country the size of Western Europe may have been too high. The country saw widespread violence after disputed polls in 2006 and 2011 under outgoing President Joseph Kabila. The AU's action also suggests even many authoritarian

leaders in Africa have had enough of cross-border spillovers from political unrest.

The current pro-democracy protests in Sudan and Zimbabwe attest to the demand of young Africans for full democracy. Only about 40 percent of Africans believe their last elections were "free and fair," according

to a recent Afrobarometer survey.

The AU's hand may also have been forced by the fact that an accurate vote count was revealed by poll watchers of the Roman Catholic Church and by several European news organizations. The United Nations Security Council and several Western governments also expressed concerns after the electoral commission announced that a lesser-known candidate, Félix Tshisekedi, had won. That announcement was contested by Martin Fayulu, the opposition candidate widely perceived as the winner.

The integrity of the vote count is critical to ensure Congo can experience its first democratic transfer of power since independence in 1960. The country of some 85 million has suffered two major civil conflicts in the past quarter century and widespread corruption under Kabila. His reluctance to leave office without a successor in power whom he can control may be the cause of the rigged election. To Africa's credit, the AU decided to try to unrig the results.

(Source: The SCM)

Religion is not necessarily in conflict with modernity: Kevin Richards

1 → Out of this larger school of thinking, one can see more recent developments, such as complex interdependence, post-liberalism, and constructivism, that all can be viewed as potentially offering a role for considering the place of religion within International Relations theory.

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

A: From my perspective, a strict empiricist/positivist perspective is untenable in regards to International Relations theory. These realist approaches tend to reduce the motivating factors for nation-states down to base material needs. This approach may be useful for capitalist democracies that are ruled through maximizing profits, but it entails merely one perspective on the motivations of a nation-state and tends to do so from a Western, first-world perspective. It also tends to import a whole range of Western values that can cause foundational questions and challenges to an approach towards International Relations theory. Indeed, when accounting for material factors beyond the considerations of an empiricist/positivist perspective, the influence of post-structuralism and post-colonial approaches to International Relations theory can be helpful in exposing these cultural biases that come to delimit the effectiveness of traditional realist approaches to International Relations theory.

Instead, approaches that consider the complicated and contingent relations between nation-states would seem to offer a more conducive space to consider non-Western perspectives. One can see possibilities for such an alternative approach growing out of constructivist and post-liberal approaches. One can also suggest that ideas from post-structuralism and post-colonial theory would be very beneficial in shifting the terms of International Relations from the schools that seem all too intimately tied to Western values and concepts of the nation-state to progressive alternative models that would be inclusive of other perspectives, including religion. For instance, the concept of the rhizome, developed by Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, could be seen as offering a non-hierarchical, open-ended approach to thinking through the myriad phenomena that inter-connect nation-states.

Of course, this does not mitigate the complex space through which nations relate to one another, but it helps heighten an aware-

ness of the numerous factors that have to be considered as nation-states work together to try to resolve conflicts in a peaceful and productive manner.

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

A: I would agree with the larger premise that religion is not necessarily in conflict with modernity, though I would frame the relation between religion and modernity in two ways. First, the influence of humanism leads spiritual yearnings more towards art and aesthetics. That is to say, the nineteenth century sees the birth of modern museums and when one looks at the theorists of museology, most articulate the ideal that museums will play the role of places of worship within the modern world. This connection between spiritual yearnings and aesthetics also helps to explain the way that Western museums in the nineteenth century are modeled after religious temples from Antiquity. This perspective presents art as playing the role of religion within a secular world. In this way, religious feeling does not leave the West with modernity but gets rerouted through humanist ideals and institutions.

Second, while the Enlightenment helps to establish a tradition that leads to the growth of Western-style democracies, it also leads to some unquestioned assumptions. On the surface, Western-style democracy articulates an ideal of the separation of church and state, one that seems to contour the roots of International Relations theory. At the same time, however, the values and perspective of these democracies seem to be clouded by a privileging of Christianity. The tension between the ideal of separating church and state and the reality of the role of religion within domestic and international politics can be exemplified by America. Founded as a nation built upon religious tolerance, American politics has always been marked by religious intolerance.

In the mid-nineteenth century, for instance, American politics was marked by a paranoia surrounding Mormonism. Later, concerns arose around Catholicism, something that even clouded John F. Kennedy's run for the presidency in 1960. More recently, one can see how the rise of the religious right has impacted American domestic and foreign policy over the past thirty years, leading to figures who are extremely intolerant of non-Christian perspectives, despite the

ideals of religious tolerance that supposedly founded America. We even see this paradox on American money. A nation that espouses religious tolerance prints “In God we trust” on its currency. In this vein, religion never leaves Western society, but gets more deeply embedded into its ideology.

In this regard, Gillespie's premise bears a lot of merit, though I would consider the question of the relation between modernity and religion from a number of perspectives. In particular, I think Nietzsche's work becomes critical, especially his “Death of God” parable, as it poses a challenge to traditional Western ideals, playing on a tension between science and reason, on the one hand, and faith and religion on the other. In addition, Nietzsche also points to the way that Christian values become nihilistic within modernity. That is to say, capitalists compete and cheat Monday through Saturday, but try to absolve themselves of their sins on Sunday, or, in other words, they may say they're Christian, but only practice on Sunday, while worshiping capitalist ideals on all the other days. This leads to a gap between Western ideals and the material practices of Western capitalism.

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

A: I do think that religion has to be accounted for within International Relations theory. In part, this is tied to the historical moment in which International Relations theory was developed, a historical moment marked by Eurocentrism and a blindness to other perspectives. In addition, the way that the ideal of religious tolerance, discussed above, in concert with an assumption of a Christian perspective that Eurocentrism embodies, necessitates questioning the role of religion within International Relations theory both in how it contours Western values and also in the way that it excludes potentially non-Christian perspectives. In this regard, again, I find post-colonial and post-structuralist perspectives important in situating the role of religion in a more dynamic fashion, as well as one that opens up to other perspectives on the role of the nation-state.

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

A: I don't think religion or any single theory or field can help to resolve all the problems and issues in International Relations theory. This is no fault of religion, but, rather,



part of the nature of plurality and complexity. Of course, this reflects the influence of Jacques Derrida on my thought, something that would lead me to question any totalizing framework for International Relations theory. In regards to conflicts globally and thinking through some of the issues within International Relations theory, however, I think an interesting approach may be offered by William T. Vollmann in his seven volume Rising Up, Rising Down. In this monumental work, he looks to how violence is justified around the globe, breaking it down into several categories, precisely the areas that need to be thought through, given the way that they are implicated in unresolved issues and problems internationally. While writing from a perspective outside of International Relations theory, his categories offer a useful cartography of the motivations for conflict. Among the justifications for violence globally he lists “defense of honor,; “defense of class,” “defense of authority,” “defense of race and culture,” defense of creed,” “defense of war aims,” “defense of homeland,” “defense of ground,” “defense of earth,” “defense of animals,” “defense of gender,” “defense against traitors,” “defense of revolution,” as well as a few others. These justifications factor into what he terms ‘the moral calculus’ that nations and governments use to justify conflict and violence, even as he looks to the problems in using such justifications. In this regard, religion is just one motivating factor within conflicts and unresolved issues internationally and, while it is necessary to be able to account and provide apace for religion within International Relations theory, resolving conflicts and problems globally entails very complicated and highly contingent negotiations between states and their differing values.

Poland is weak and submissive enough to host U.S.’ aggression against Iran and Russia: expert

1 → A: U.S. rhetoric accusing Iran of destabilizing the region is a form of political projection aimed at diverting attention away from its central role in doing just that - destabilizing the region. By all accounts the rise of ISIL is a direct result of U.S. military intervention in the region beginning with the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003. Many sources including the United States’ own Defense Intelligence Agency suggest the U.S. and its allies intentionally created ISIL to isolate and overthrow the Syrian government when speedy regime change failed to materialize in 2011.

By blaming Iran for America's own destabilization of the Middle East the U.S. can politically undermine an adversary, deflect blame away from itself, and search for an additional pretext to remain involved in the region.

■ Will any plan to stabilize the region be successful without Iran?

A: The U.S. does not seek to stabilize the Middle East. But

if we imagine Washington did want to stabilize the region, it would be working with Russia, Syria, and Iran as well as with the Arabian monarchies to create a balance of power within which cooperation and healthy competition could take the place of the deadly and protracted conflict we see today. The fact is Iran has significant influence in the Middle East - which makes sense since it is a large Middle Eastern nation. That the U.S. refuses to recognize this or work with Iran helps to further understand the true source of what undermines the region's stability.

■ How successful do you see the conference?

A: The fact that the United States was forced to hold the conference in Warsaw - because Poland is the only nation weak and submissive enough to host such an event - already bodes poorly for the U.S. and whatever it hopes to accomplish with the conference. The conference is allegedly aimed at discussing the need to confront Iranian “extremism,”

which the U.S. ironically has spent the years fighting by sponsoring terrorist organizations appearing on the U.S. State Department's own foreign terrorist organization lists.

The conference has been described by the Iranian government as an “anti-Iranian circus.” Honestly, I think there is no better way to describe it.

■ UNSC is responsible for the peace and security of the world, why is the U.S. trying to lead the international community out of the legal framework of the UNSC?

A: Like any outlaw - be it an individual or a nation's government - when laws do not suit them they walk around them. The United Nations and its charter are clearly an obstruction to U.S. ambitions around the globe - including in the Middle East regarding Iran. The fact that the U.S. must not only do this outside the United Nations, but also - now - outside allied circles it has depended on for decades - points to Washington's growing isolation upon the global stage.

Is the violent dismemberment of Russia official U.S. policy?

By erik d'amato

If there's one thing everyone in today's Washington can agree on, it's that whenever an official or someone being paid by the government says something truly outrageous or dangerous, there should be consequences, if only a fleeting moment of media fury. With one notable exception: Arguing that the U.S. should be quietly working to promote the violent disintegration and carving up of the largest country on Earth.

Because so much of the discussion around U.S.-Russian affairs is marked by hysteria and hyperbole, you are forgiven for assuming this is an exaggeration. Unfortunately it isn't. Published in the Hill under the dispassionate title “Managing Russia's dissolution,” author Janusz Bugajski makes the case that the West should not only seek to contain “Moscow's imperial ambitions” but to actively seek the dismemberment of Russia as a whole.

Like many contemporary cold warriors, Bugajski toggles back and forth between overhyping Russia's might and its weaknesses,

notably a lack of economic dynamism and a rise in ethnic and regional fragmentation. But his primary argument is unambiguous: That the West should actively stoke longstanding regional and ethnic tensions with the ultimate aim of a dissolution of the Russian Federation, which Bugajski dismisses as an “imperial construct.”

Even more alarming is Bugajski's argument that the goal should not be self-determination for breakaway Russian territories, but the annexing of these lands to other countries. “Some regions could join countries such as Finland, Ukraine, China and Japan, from whom Moscow has forcefully appropriated territories in the past.”

It is, needless to say, impossible to imagine anything like this happening without sparking a series of conflicts that could mirror the Yugoslav Wars. Except in this version the U.S. would directly culpable in the ignition of the hostilities, and in range of 6,800 Serbian nuclear warheads.

So who is Janusz Bugajski, and who is he speaking for?

The author bio on the Hill's piece identifies him as a senior fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis, a Washington, D.C. think-tank. But CEPA is no ordinary talk shop: Instead of the usual foundations and well-heeled individuals, its financial backers seem to be mostly arms of the U.S. government, including the Department of State, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Mission to NATO, the U.S.-government-sponsored National Endowment for Democracy, as well as as veritable who's who of defense contractors, including Raytheon, Bell Helicopter, BAE Systems, Lockheed Martin and Textron. Meanwhile, Bugajski chairs the South-Central Europe area studies program at the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of State.

To put it in perspective, it is akin to a Russian with deep ties to the Kremlin and arms-makers arguing that the Kremlin needed to find ways to break up the United States and, if possible, have these breakaway regions absorbed by Mexico and Canada. (A scenario which alas is not as far-fetched as

it might have been a few years ago; many thousands in California now openly talk of a “Calexit,” and many more in Mexico of a reconquista.)

Meanwhile, it's hard to imagine a quasi-official voice like Bugajski's coming out in favor of a similar policy vis-a-vis China, which has its own restive regions, and which in geopolitical terms is no more or less of a threat to the U.S. than Russia. One reason may be that China would consider an American call for secession by the Tibetans or Uyghurs to be a serious intrusion into their internal affairs, unlike Russia, which doesn't appear to have noticed or been ruffled by Bugajski's immodest proposal.

Indeed, just as the real scandal in Washington is what's legal rather than illegal, the real outrage in this case is that few or none in DC finds Bugajski's virtual declaration of war notable. But it is. It is the sort of provocation that international incidents are made of, and if you are a U.S. taxpayer, it is being made in your name, and it should be among your outrages of the month.

(Source: Ron Paul Institute)

Hashd formations of Iraq: Interview with Harakat Ahrar al-Iraq



By Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi

There are dozens of formations on the registers of the Hashd Sha'abi Commission. One of them is the military wing of Harakat Ahrar al-Iraq ('Movement of the Free Men of Iraq'), which is itself linked to the Mufti of Iraq Mahdi al-Sumaida'ie and his Dar al-Iftaa' al-Iraqiyya (a Sunni religious body). To discuss the history of Harakat Ahrar al-Iraq and its military wing, I interviewed Anas Mahdi al-Sumaida'ie, who is the secretary general of Harakat Ahrar al-Iraq.

Any parenthetical insertions in square brackets are my own.

■ When was Harakat Ahrar al-Iraq formed and what was the reason for the formation?

A: Harakat Ahrar al-Iraq was formed under the name of Quwat Ahrar al-Iraq ['Force of the Free Men of Iraq'] on 14 June 2014 CE according to the fatwa of the Mufti Sheikh Dr. Mahdi al-Sumaida'ie, the mufti of the Republic of Iraq (may God make him mighty) on the necessity of enlisting and defending Iraq.

■ And Quwat Ahrar al-Iraq fought in Anbar in the beginning?

A: No it was formed in Baghdad and the first battles were in Tikrit and Baiji, and then in Anbar, beginning with the liberation of the al-Sufiyya area.

■ In addition to these areas, where as Quwat Ahrar al-Iraq fought in order to liberate the homeland from Da'esh?

A: In Anbar: al-Hawz area, al-Mal'ab, Hit, Haditha, al-Baghdadi, Jazirat al-Khalidiya, Jazirat Rawa, Rawa, Anah and Rutba. Salah al-Din: Tikrit, Baiji, Shirqat. Kirkuk, Mosul, Qayarra and the left-side bank [i.e. area to the east of the Tigris River] and Rabi'a [Ninawa countryside], as well as Baghdad, its belt and al-Mashahadah.

■ And the number of martyrs is known?

A: 250 martyrs, and more than 700 wounded.

■ What are the main activities of Harakat Ahrar al-Iraq currently?

A: Currently Quwat Ahrar al-Iraq holds land and undertakes obligations of protecting the areas in order to preserve the security stability.

■ And when did Quwat Ahrar al-Iraq become registered with the Hashd Sha'abi Commission?

A: The force was registered in the Hashd on 8 November 2014 CE.

■ But the forces doesn't have a brigade number within the Hashd Sha'abi Commission?

A: We have a brigade number officially established in the Hashd Commission: Quwat Ahrar al-Iraq 86.

■ Ah. So you are the 86th brigade in the Hashd Sha'abi Commission?

A: Yes.

■ Why does the force use the name of the Islamic Resistance? Did the Iranian friends help you in matters of training and arming for example?

A: We have used the name of resistance because we are a part of it and the Mufti was the first who launched the jihad in 2003 CE against the American occupier.

■ So you have no link with the Iranian side.

A: No one helped us, but rather they were supporting us morally and supporting our steps. And they were supporting our conferences concerning the force and movement. And in particular when we nominated candidates for the Parliament, the candidates affiliated with the movement were supported materially.

■ Yes. But I mean who supported you exactly?

A: No one ever supported us. Self-reliance from charitable people of the people of Iraq.

■ I see. Were any candidates from Harakat Ahrar al-Iraq elected?

A: Yes, one of the candidates affiliated with the movement obtained more than 13,000 votes in Ninawa province but regrettably the votes were taken after modification and the great conspiracy in the elections is not hidden to you sir.

■ So currently there is no one from the movement in the Parliament.

A: We don't have an MP in the Parliament.

■ Currently how are matters of salaries and rights of martyrs for fighters of the movement proceeding?

A: Concerning rights of martyrs and the wounded, the brothers in the Hashd Commission are working with the movement in all their capabilities and helping us. But you know that most of the factions of the Hashd do not have a salary, among them our fighters. We only have 8 regiments in Anbar province receiving salaries. As for the rest of the fighters, we are awaiting the decision of the [2019] budget

■ Yes, so not all the fighters affiliated with the movement are registered with the Hashd Sha'abi Commission right?

A: No, all are registered with the Hashd Commission, but most do not have salaries. And we are working on these matters, and there are attempts that we hope from God will be accomplished in the coming days.

(Source: aymennjawad.org)

Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

Apartment

Apt in Velenjak
3rd floor, 360 sq.m, 4 Bdrs.
modern furn, equipped kitchen
spj, parking spots
\$5500

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Penthouse in Zafaranieh
triplex, 835 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
2 suits, unfurn, spj, terrace
panoramic view
5 parking spots,
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Shahrak Qarb
15th floor, 100 sq.m, 1 Bdr.
unfurn, equipped kitchen
storage, parking spot
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Farmanieh
120 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
nice furn, equipped kitchen
fully renovated, storage parking
spot, **\$1200**
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Sheykh Bahaei
6th floor, 118 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.
fully furn, equipped kitchen
nice balcony with flower boxes
lobby, servant, BBQ
storage, parking spot
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Fereshteh
230 sq.m, 3 Bdrs., fully furn
equipped kitchen, spj
gathering room, parking spot
\$4000
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Villa

Villa in Zafaranieh
duplex, 564 sq.m, 6 Bdrs., fully
furn, spj, parking spot, **\$5500**
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Duplex Villa in Fereshteh
800 sq.m land, 600 sq.m built up, 4
Bdrs., unfurn, renovated
parking spot, yard, **\$5500**
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Triplex Villa
in Shahrak Qarb
1000 sq.m land, 750 sq.m
built up, 8 Bdrs., fully furn
sauna Jacuzzi, storage
outdoor swimming pool
parking spot, **\$10000**
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Villa in Niavaran
900 sq.m land, 1000 sq.m built up
8 Bdrs., 7 bath rooms
3 kitchens, 3 big reception saloons
with one suit for servant, Jacuzzi
swimming pool
outdoor / indoor parking spots
\$12000
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

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

Triplex Villa in Zafaranieh
1200 sq.m, 15 Bdrs. unfurn
parking spot, **\$10000**
Ms.Sara: 09128103207



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
brand new, 6 floors, each floor
4apts, each apt 124 sq.m totally
3000 sq.m built up
parking spot, **\$30000**
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Whole Building in
Shariati - Soheil
2 floors, 600 sq.m totally
8 Bdrs., 6 bath rooms
one 40 sq.m suit, renovated
12 parking spots, 3 storages
3-side entrances, **\$6000**
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Whole Building in Aqdasieh
2 apts, one apt 330 sq.m with
3 Bdrs., another apt 400 sq.m with
5 Bdrs., unfurn, storage
parking spot
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Modern Office in Jordan
administrative office license
brand new, 2nd floor, 2 apts
180 sq.m & 220 sq.m flat, modern
design, lobby, lobby man
lots parking spots
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Whole Building in Zafaranieh
3 apts, 568 sq.m land, 1220 sq.m
built up totally, 17 Bdrs. unfurn
storage, lots parking spots
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Office in Saadat Abad
administrative office license
2 apts, 110 sq.m, parking spots
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Ideal Offers

Apt in Fereshteh
6th floor, 205 sq.m, 3 Bdrs. furn
terrace, parking spot
\$1700

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Zafaranieh
brand new, 2nd floor 50 sq.m
1 Bdr., fully furn, good light spj,
parking spot, **\$1500**
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apartment in Velenjak
2nd floor, 200 sq.m, 3 Bdrs., furn
balcony elevator, storage spj
parking spot, 24/7 security
\$1700
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Jordan
1st floor 88 sq.m, 1 Bdr., furn
elevator, renovated, **\$800**
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apartment in Dezashib
3rd floor, 100 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.
furn, balcony, storage, parking
spot, good access, **\$1300**
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

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

Apt in Elahieh
3rd floor, 170 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
fully furn, equipped kitchens
beautiful yard, nice view
\$1350
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

مالکین محترم

بهترین مشاوره، برترین سرویس، بالاترین رضایت

مالکین محترم

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

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.

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

Zafaranieh Villa (\$7000)
2000sq.m, 6bdrs, S/p, yard

Jordan (\$2000)
220sq.m
3bdrs
F.F

Farmanieh (\$1800)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, & F.F

Jordan bldg
2000sq.m
5storey
pkgs

Velenjak (\$2100) 260sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, F.F

Don't Waste Your Time
Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties
www.DeltaHOME.ir
The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners
HOME
Real Estate
Member of DELTA Real Estate Group
(021) 88888865

Advertising Dept:
times1979@gmail.com

+9821 430 51 450
www.tehrantimes.com



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

Number one Real Estate in Iran

www.DELTA HOME.ir

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

HOME
Real Estate

<p>Fereshteh 120 sqm, 2 bdrs, FF, SP, parking \$1600 USD Davood: (+98) 9123488513</p>	<p>Zafaranieh, Villa, Best location 500sqm land, 1200 sqm building, duplex, 5bdrs, indoor pool, Luxury Price negotiable Davood: (+98) 9123488513</p>	<p>Elahieh 200sqm, 3 bdrs, nicely FF, best tower Nice view, Lobby, balcony \$2500 USD Davood: (+98) 9123488513</p>
<p>Elahieh 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</p>	<p>Zafaranieh, 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</p>	<p>Niavaran 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</p>
<p>Elahieh 260sqm, 7th floor, 3 bdrs, SPJ, lobby, ,Guard Garden, amazing view \$3500 USD Linda: (+98) 9351721171</p>	<p>Elahieh 205sqm, 3 bdrs, 4th floor, SPJ, sauna Gym, coffee shop, roof garden, Lobby \$3000 USD Linda: (+98) 9351721171</p>	<p>Farmanieh, villa 900sqm, 2500 sqm yard, 5 bdrs \$8000 USD Kaveh: (+98) 9128944169</p>
<p>Jordan, Office 1100 sqm, Flat, \$10000 USD Kaveh: (+98) 9128944169</p>	<p>Argantin, Guest house A whole building of 4 floors, totally 16 rooms plus one small suit, F.F Price negotiable Farshid: (+98) 9125540877</p>	<p>Must to see Elahieh 290sqm, 3 bdrs, 3 baths ,gym, brand new, green view Furn or unfurn Farshid: (+98) 9125540877</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>Elahieh, Velenjak, Penthouse ,Super Luxury, 450 sqm, 550 sqm Full facilities, Negotiable Hojati: (+98) 9309701169</p>	<p>Zafaranieh Office, 350 sqm, Negotiable Hojati: (+98) 9309701169</p>
<p>Shahrak-e- Gharb, Villa 600sqm building, 800 sqm land, 5bdrs, SPJ Negotiable Hojati: (+98) 9309701169</p>	<p>Jordan 275sqm, 4 bdrs, full facilities \$2000 USD Erik: (+98) 9372371391</p>	<p>Argantin 115sqm, 2 bdrs \$1000 USD Erik: (+98) 9372371391</p>

Health profiles soon available on mobile phones

HEALTH DESK **TEHRAN** — By the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), all Iranians can see their health profiles on their mobile phones, said the deputy health minister for planning.

"By providing this service and other future services we are taking steps toward setting up a comprehensive electronic health record (EHR) for every patient," said Ali Akbar Haqdoust, YJC reported on Friday.

An electronic health record (EHR) is the systematized collection of patient and population electronically-stored health information in a digital format.

According to Haqdoust, even the most developed countries have not yet managed to electronically record the patients' total health information, and only Singapore has been able to implement an ideally comprehensive HER system.

"Another step we have taken is surveying public opinion on the quality of health services by sending text messages to the people who have received a service in any health centers as of March 18, 2018," he further noticed.

"Up to now, we have sent 50 million such messages, and 13 million people have ex-



pressed their opinion on healthcare services. Besides, the survey also covered the patients admitted in 60 hospitals," he added.

HER and referral scheme as new priorities

Haqdoust went on to say that collecting patients' electronic health record and the referral of patients from their family phy-

sicians to specialists are two major goals of health ministry and implementing them might become the new priorities of "healthcare reform plan".

The healthcare reform plan, aiming at decreasing the out-of-pocket expenses for the patients, promoting natural birth, and supporting underprivileged patients suffering

from rare or incurable diseases, was launched in the country in May 2014.

According to Haqdoust, the healthcare reform plan is currently being revised and new priorities are being determined.

Healthcare reforms to minimize sanctions' effects

Another new priority of healthcare reform plan is to counteract the effects of sanctions on the health system. The revisions are supposed to cut the expenses and increase the efficiency of health providing system, according to Haqdoust.

U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew Washington unilaterally from the 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018 and ordered sanctions against Iran. The sanctions have restricted transfer of money which affects importation of food and medicine.

"Fortunately, there has been no remarkable changes in medicine market and we have not faced any acute shortage except for around 40 medicines that are still missing."

Currently, a new scheme for cutting hospitals' expenses is being launched, and hospitals have cut around 35% of their expenses," Haqdoust remarked.

High-tech brain imaging devices become operational

HEALTH DESK **TEHRAN** — Four advanced devices for medical optical imaging of brain and optogenetic examinations were built and put into operation in Laser and Plasma Research Institute (LAPRI) of Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran.

The devices use methods of intrinsic signal optical imaging (ISOI), voltage-sensitive dyes (potentiometric dyes), laser speckle contrast imaging (LSCI) and optogenetics to take image of the brain, ISNA reported on Saturday.

Medical optical imaging is the use of light as an investigational imaging technique for medical applications.

Optogenetics is a biological technique that involves the use of light to control cells in living tissue, typically neurons that have been genetically modified to



express light-sensitive ion channels. It is a neuromodulation method that uses a combination of techniques from optics and genetics to control and monitor the activities of individual neurons in living tissue, even within freely-moving animals, and to precisely measure these manipulation effects in real-time.

According to LAPRI, neuroscientists from all over the country can now use the devices to do research.

20 Iranian traditional medicine centers under construction

HEALTH DESK **TEHRAN** — Twenty health centers offering Iranian traditional medicine are being constructed in 20 different areas across the country, said the president of Iran School of Traditional Medicine.

Hossein Rezaeazadeh added that a university unit of study offering Iranian traditional medicine will be added to the program of all medical science courses across the country by the beginning of the next Iranian calendar year (March 21), IRNA reported on Friday.

According to Rezaeazadeh, there are currently eight schools of Iranian traditional medicine in different universities across the country.

"Up to now, more than 600 students, general practitioners and pharmacists were accepted in Iranian traditional medicine



programs and 240 of them have already graduated," Rezaeazadeh added.

He expressed hope that Iranian traditional medicine would lead to generation of new techniques and medical solutions by development of its research centers and allocation of more budget.

He added that he is also hopeful that the insurance companies start covering some of the services and products offered by traditional medicine.

Stress may raise the risk of Alzheimer's disease

New research suggests that vital exhaustion, a marker of psychological distress, may raise the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

Psychological distress in midlife may bring about dementia later on, suggests new research.

Many factors may increase Alzheimer's risk, including age, family history, and genetic makeup.

Certain health issues, such as cardiovascular disease or diabetes, may also influence the odds of experiencing dementia because they impact the blood vessels.

New research indicates that psychological factors could also affect risk. Psychological distress, in particular, may increase the likelihood of developing dementia, suggests the new study.

Specifically, researchers led by Sabrina Islamoska, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Public Health at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, set out to investigate the possibility of a link between vital exhaustion and Alzheimer's disease.

Vital exhaustion describes "a mental state of psychological distress" that manifests as irritability, fatigue, and a feeling of demoralization.

As the researchers explain, vital exhaustion may be a reaction to "unsolvable problems" in one's life, especially when the person has been exposed to stressors for a prolonged period. So, vital exhaustion can be seen as a sign of psychological distress.

Previous studies have noted that vital exhaustion may raise the risk of cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome, premature death, and obesity, among other conditions.

Islamoska and her colleagues published their findings in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease.

Stress may raise risk by up to 25 percent

The researchers analyzed data from a survey of almost 7,000 individuals who participated in the Copenhagen City Heart Study between 1991 and 1994. The participants had been 60 years old, on average, at the time.

As part of the survey, the participants had been asked questions about vital exhaustion.

Islamoska and her colleagues clinically followed the participants until the end of 2016. They also examined the participants' hospital records and mortality and prescription registers in search of diagnoses of dementia.

The study revealed a dose-response link between vital exhaustion in midlife and the development of Alzheimer's later on. The lead author reports, "For each additional symptom of vital exhaustion, we found that the risk of dementia rose by 2 percent."

"Participants reporting five to nine symptoms had a 25 percent higher risk of dementia than those with no symptoms, while those reporting 10 to 17 symptoms had a 40 percent higher risk of dementia, compared with not having symptoms," Islamoska continues.

The authors explain that the results are unlikely to be due to reverse causation, that is, it is unlikely that dementia causes vital exhaustion, rather than the other way around.

(Source: medical news today)

TASHRIFAT INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE AGENCY

**SATISFACTION
GUARANTEED**

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



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**

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.

Archaeologists, restorers resume work on Manujan fort

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Teams of archaeologists and restorers have commenced a new round of work on the ancient Manujan fort in the southeastern Kerman province.

“Archaeological research and exploration as well as restoration of towers are being pursued in a large scale,” archaeologist Alidad Soleymani said, CHTN reported.



During previous rounds of excavation, the fort yielded relics and remains dating to various Islamic eras, Soleymani said.

Manujan fort is nestled on top of a smooth natural rock and in the heart of a city of the same name.

The vast and sprawling Kerman province has long been a cultural melting pot since antiquity, blending Persians with subcontinental tribe dwellers. It embraces tens of historical sites and scenic landscapes including Bazaar-e Sartasari, Jabalieh Dome, Ganjali Khan Bathhouse, Malek Jameh Mosque and Shahdad Desert to name a few.

Cyprus smashes tourist arrivals record in 2018

Cyprus welcomed a record 3.93 million tourists last year, smashing the previous record set in 2017 by a whopping 7.8 percent, official figures showed on Thursday.

The eastern Mediterranean island has benefited from its reputation as a regional safe haven as unrest has hit the tourism sectors of its traditional competitors Egypt, Tunisia and Turkey.

The island saw a surge in arrivals from its largest market Britain with 1.32 million visitors, up nearly six percent on 2017.

There was also a revival in arrivals from Sweden -- up 12.5 percent at 153,769 -- and Greece -- up 9.8 percent at 186,370.

Poland and Ukraine have become new emerging markets for the island with annual increases of 58 percent and 44.5 percent respectively.

The tourism boom has helped Cyprus to return to robust GDP growth of 4 percent after it was forced to agree a painful 10-billion euro bailout from international lenders in March 2013 to rescue its crumbling economy and insolvent banks.

Tourism revenue figures for 2018 have yet to be released but income from tourism accounts for more than 13 percent of GDP and is credited with underpinning the quick recovery.

Earlier this month, Cyprus swore in its first junior tourism minister, tasked with heading a new dedicated department to replace the state-funded Cyprus Tourism Organization.

(Source: France 24)



ROUND THE GLOBE

City of Quito

Quito, the capital of Ecuador, was founded in the 16th century on the ruins of an Inca city and stands at an altitude of 2,850 m. Despite the 1917 earthquake, the city has the best-preserved, least altered historic center in Latin America.

The city offers a remarkable example of the Baroque school of Quito (Escuela Quiteña), that brings together the indigenous and European artistic traditions and which is renowned for providing the greatest contribution of



Spanish America to universal art.

The height of this art is represented by veritable spiritual citadels, among which are San Francisco, San Domingo, San Augustin, La Compana, La Merced, the Sanctuary of Guapulco and the Recoleta of San Diego, to name just the principal ones. These are recognized not only for their artistic value from the architectural viewpoint but also for their decorative elements (altarpieces, paintings, sculptures).

The city of Quito forms a harmonious ensemble where nature and man are brought together to create a unique and transcendental work. The colonizers knew how to adapt their artistic sensibility to the reality that surrounded them, building their architecture in a very complex topographical environment.

In the city center, there are convents and churches as well as houses (1 or 2 floors with one or several patios), usually built with earthen bricks and covered with stucco, combining the monumental with the simple and austere.

The city of Quito, the cradle of Pre-Colombian cultures and an important witness of Spanish colonization maintains, for the time being unity and harmony in its urban structure despite centuries of urban development.

(Source: UNESCO)

Gonbad-e Soltaniyeh: Iran’s magnificent “Taj Mahal”

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Locally known as Gonbad-e Soltaniyeh, the UNESCO-registered Mausoleum of Oljaytu is a prime tourism destination while traversing Iran.

Dominating the skyline, the 14th-century monument is highly recognized as an architectural masterpiece particularly due to its innovative double-shelled dome and elaborate interior decoration.

According to UNESCO, the mausoleum’s interior decoration is so outstanding that scholars like A.U. Pope have described the building as “anticipating the Taj Mahal”.

The dome is embellished with turquoise-blue faience tiles, the stunning structure dominates the skyline of Soltaniyeh, an ancient city of the same name in Zanjan province, north-western Iran. It rises dramatically 48m above from its base that neighbors dusty archaeological digs and crumbling walls.

The city of Soltaniyeh was briefly the capital of Persia’s Ilkhanid dynasty (a branch of the Mongol dynasty) during the 14th century.

UNESCO says that the Mausoleum of



Oljaytu is an essential link and key monument in the development of Islamic architecture in central and western Asia.

The fairly large dome is the earliest

extant example of its type in the country, and became an important reference for the later development of the Islamic dome.

Also, the extremely rich interior of the

mausoleum, which includes elaborate brickwork, glazed tiles, marquetry or designs in inlaid materials, stucco, and frescoes, can be conceived as a masterpiece in the arena of Islamic architecture.

The UN cultural body adds the Mausoleum of Oljaytu is an essential link and key monument in the development of Islamic architecture in central and western Asia. Here, the Ilkhanids further developed ideas that had been advanced during the classical Seljuk phase (11th to early 13th centuries), during which the arts of Iran gained distinction in the Islamic world, thereby setting the stage for the Timurid period (late 14th to 15th centuries), one of the most brilliant periods in Islamic art.

Excavations carried out in the 790-ha Mausoleum of Oljaytu property have revealed additional vestiges of the old city, and a large part of this property has retained its archaeological character. As the ancient capital of the Ilkhanid dynasty, Soltaniyeh represents an exceptional testimony to the history of the 13th and 14th centuries in Iran.

Gate of All Nations, Hafez Mausoleum sculptures to embellish Iran pavilion at FITUR



The Gate of All Nations in Persepolis

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Sculptures of Gate of All Nations and Hafez Mausoleum, two iconic symbols of tourism in Iran, will be showcased at

the country’s pavilion at the 39th FITUR tourism trade fair in Madrid, Spain, from January 23 to 27.

The monumental sculptures will be built based on the moulage technique, which is assumed to improve realism by the means of special modeling and casting techniques, CHTN reported.

Iran’s pavilion will be running by the Touring & Automobile Club of the Islamic Republic of Iran (TACI) under the auspices of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization.

Live performances of regional music, craft workshops, public meetings, as well as exhibits of handicrafts, souvenirs and handmade clothing are among programs TACI has on agenda.

Iran’s pavilion will cover an area of 357 square meters, which is 53 square meters bigger than that of the previous edition.

In 2018, FITUR beat the participation record with 10,190 exhibiting companies from 165 countries/regions, 140,120 trade participants and 110,860 people from the general public.



A view of Hafez Mausoleum in Shiraz

The attendance of 7,856 journalists is a turnout that shows the importance of FITUR on the international circuit of tourism industry events.

Iranian province exports \$1.25b of wool felt in 5 years



HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Wool felt exports from Iran’s Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province reached \$1.250 billion during the Iranian calendar years 1391-96 (March 2012- March 2017), provincial tourism chief has said.

“The [wool] felt exports reached some \$1.25 billion during 1391-96, which shows this industrial art can be one of the most important export goods from Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari,” CHTN quoted Mehrdad Javadi as saying on Saturday.

He made the remarks in an address to a celebration titled “Shahr-e Kord, Shahr-e Namad”, meaning “Shahr-e Kord, the City of Wool Felt.”

Shahr-e Kord is the capital of Chaha-

rmahal-Bakhtiari province.

The U.S. and Sweden are the main importers of felt products from the province, the official added.

Some 500 crafters in 265 workshops are producing handmade felt products across the southwestern province.

Currently some 40 tons to felt are yearly being made in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari using traditional and modern methods the official said, adding, the amount could be increased to 50 tons. “Nowadays, more than 40 types of products are produced and supplied to the market.”

Experts believe that Shahr-e Kord has a potential to be a world city of felt products.

New eco-lodges come on stream in Yazd



HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — A total of 18 eco-lodges have been constructed across the central Yazd province from the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2018), CHTN reported.

“These units have been built with the aim of experiencing traditional life, preserving historical houses and enriching [domestic] life in historical sites and villages,” Mohammad Mirshamsi, a local tourism official, said.

The eco-lodges have been built in various areas including Ardakan, Meybod, Mehriz, Ashkezar, Abarkouh, and Yazd [the capital of Yazd province], he explained.

Mirshamsi, however, didn’t provide any information on the number of eco-lodge units in the province.

In the field of employment, the eco-lodges have provided 50 job opportunities for 50 people, the official added.

According to the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, 2,000 eco-lodges will be added to Iran’s hospitality sector in a span of three years starting from 2018.

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

Classic tips to travel smarter



Whether you’re a seasoned jet-setter or a first-time traveler, it never hurts to be prepared. Check out these 10 quick tips to ease your transit and enrich your destination.

■ Before you go

● Reliable travel advice

Solicit advice from friends, relatives, and colleagues. Someone who knows your destination well may be in your social media network. Guidebooks or posts from a professional reviewer are the next best choice.

● Booking your trip

Competent travel agents really are worth their weight in gold. But if you’re booking your own trip, take extra care, especially if venturing abroad: Check dates and times, airports, and names on your documents. It is crucial that you understand the terms of your purchase and any passport or visa requirements.

● Packing up

Before you go, research your luggage options, how to protect your bags en route, and your rights when they’re lost. Being prepared will save additional grief.

■ Getting there

● Road trip

Take a car (yours or a rental) if you have the time and

want the freedom to explore. Pack a map in case GPS isn’t available. If train or bus travel appeals to you, look into the peculiarities of that mode of travel on your route before booking your trip.

● Making the most of your layover

Hate searching for an outlet so you can charge your devices? Bring a small power strip that works as an extension cord and lets others plug in too.

■ When you arrive

● Keep connected

Call your provider to find out whether your cell phone is “locked.” If it is, you can’t just swap out your SIM card to one that works in the country you’re visiting. You may need to buy an unlocked phone, which you’ll be able to use on any compatible network.

● Ideal lodging

Not excited about a standard hotel stay? Informal and alternative choices include B&Bs, home swaps, glamping, hostels, and, of course, Airbnb. Decode which conveniences you can live without and make your choice accordingly.

● Managing money

If you’re traveling abroad, carry at least one credit card (preferably two) and some local currency. Both payment forms have risks and rewards, but both will serve you well. Mind the fine print and fees, and call the company in advance of your trip to avoid having a card suspended by its fraud monitoring department.

● Finding food

Food can easily become one of the most disappointing parts of a vacation, so plan ahead and avoid falling back on “first available” choices. Be open to cooking when possible and to packing picnics for the road.

(Source: The National Geographic)

Scientists ID another possible threat to orcas: pink salmon

Over the years, scientists have identified dams, pollution and vessel noise as causes of the troubling decline of the Pacific Northwest's resident killer whales. Now, they may have found a new and more surprising culprit: pink salmon.

Four salmon researchers were perusing data on the website of the Center for Whale Research, which studies the orcas, several months ago when they noticed a startling trend: that for the past two decades, significantly more of the whales have died in even-numbered years than in odd years.

In a newly published paper, they speculate that the pattern is related to pink salmon, which return to the Salish Sea between Washington state and Canada in enormous numbers every other year — though they're not sure how. They suspect that the huge runs of pink salmon, which have boomed under conservation efforts and changes in ocean conditions in the past two decades, might interfere with the whales' ability to hunt their preferred prey, Chinook salmon.

■ On the brink of extinction
Given the dire plight of the orcas, which officials say are on the brink of extinction, the researchers decided to publicize their discovery without waiting to investigate its causes.

The "main point was getting out to the public word about this biennial pattern so people can start thinking about this important, completely unexpected factor in the decline of these whales," said one of the authors, Greg Ruggerone.

Ruggerone, president of Seattle-based



Natural Resources Consultants and former chairman of the Columbia River Independent Scientific Advisory Board, and the other authors — Alan Springer of the University of Alaska at Fairbanks, Leon Shaul of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and

independent researcher Gus van Vliet of Auke Bay, Alaska — have previously studied how pink salmon compete for prey with other species.

As news stories chronicled the struggles of the orcas last year — one whale carried

her dead calf on her head for 17 days in an apparent effort to revive it — the four biologists looked at data on the Center for Whale Research's site.

■ Previous research
Thanks to their previous research, it took them only a few minutes to recognize a trend that had escaped the attention of other scientists.

"We know that some are good years for the whales and some are bad years, but we hadn't put it together that it was a biennial trend," said Ken Balcomb, the center's founding director, one of the foremost experts on the so-called Southern Resident killer whales.

Further analyzing the data, the researchers found that from 1998 to 2017, as the population of whales decreased from 92 to 76, more than 3.5 times as many newborn and older whales died during even years — 61, versus 17 in odd years. During that period, there were 32 successful births during odd years, but only 16 during even years.

That biennial pattern did not exist during a prior 22-year period from 1976 to 1997, when the whale population was recovering from efforts to capture orcas for aquarium display, the researchers said.

But in 1998, salmon harvests were curtailed amid efforts to boost runs decimated by overfishing, pollution and habitat loss. A strong change in ocean conditions occurred around the same time, benefiting pink salmon especially by increasing the abundance of zooplankton, which make up much of the pink salmon's diet.

(Source: phys.org)

Given the dire plight of the orcas, which officials say are on the brink of extinction, the researchers decided to publicize their discovery without waiting to investigate its causes.

More animal species under threat of extinction, new method shows

Currently approximately 600 species might be inaccurately assessed as non-threatened on the Red List of Threatened Species. More than a hundred others that couldn't be assessed before, also appear to be threatened. A new more efficient, systematic and comprehensive approach to assess the extinction risk of animals has shown this.

Currently approximately 600 species might be inaccurately assessed as non-threatened on the Red List of Threatened Species. More than a hundred others that couldn't be assessed before, also appear to be threatened. A new more efficient, systematic and comprehensive approach to assess the extinction risk of animals has shown this. The method, designed by Radboud University ecologist Luca Santini and colleagues, is described in Conservation Biology on January 17th.

Using their new method, the researchers' predictions of extinction risks are quite consistent with the current published Red List assessments, and even a bit more optimistic overall. However, they found that 20% of 600 species that were impossible to assess before by Red List experts, are likely under threat of extinction, such as the brown-banded rail and Williamson's mouse-deer.

■ Striped mouse
Also, 600 species that were assessed previously as being non-threatened, are actually likely to be threatened, such as the red-breasted pygmy parrot and the Ethiopian striped mouse. "This indicates that urgent re-assessment is needed of the current statuses of animal species on the Red List," Santini says.

Once every few years, specialized researchers voluntarily assess the conservation status of animal species in the world, which is then recorded in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. Species are classified into five extinction risk categories ranging from Least Concern to Critically Endangered, based on data such as species distribution, population size and recent trends.

"While this process is extremely important for conservation, experts often have a



limited amount of data to apply the criteria to the more than 90,000 species that are currently covered by the Red List," Santini says. "Often these data are of poor quality because they are outdated or inaccurate because certain species that live in very remote areas have not been properly studied. This might lead to species to be misclassified or not assessed at all."

■ Systematic and comprehensive approach

It's time for a more efficient, systematic and comprehensive approach, according to Santini and his colleagues. They designed a new method that provides Red List experts with additional independent information, which should help them to better assess species.

The method uses information from land cover maps that show how the distribution of species in the world has changed over time. The researchers' method couples this information with statistical models to estimate a number of additional parameters, such as species' abilities to move through fragmented landscapes, to classify species into a Red List extinction risk category.

The new approach is meant to complement the traditional methods of Red List assessments. "As the Red List grows, keeping it updated becomes a daunting task. Algorithms that use near-real time remote sensing products to scan across vast species lists, and flag those that may be nearing extinction, can improve dramatically the timeliness and effectiveness of the Red List," says Carlo Rondinini, Director of the Global Mammal Assessment Program for the Red List.

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

Why don't black holes swallow all of space?

But given their talent for consumption, why don't black holes just keep expanding and expanding and simply swallow the Universe? Now, one of the world's top physicists has come up with an explanation.

Conveniently, the idea could also unite the two biggest theories in all of physics.

The researcher behind this latest explanation is none other than Stanford University physicist Leonard Susskind, also known as one of the fathers of string theory.

He recently gave his two cents on the paradox in a series of papers, which basically suggest that black holes expand by increasing in complexity inwardly — a feature we just don't see connected while watching from afar.

Weirder still, this hypothesis might have a parallel in the expansion of our own Universe, which also seems to be growing in a counterintuitive way.

■ Cosmological growth
"I think it's a very, very interesting question whether the cosmological growth of space is connected to the growth of some kind of complexity," Susskind was quoted in The Atlantic.

"And whether the cosmic clock, the evolution of the universe, is connected with the evolution of complexity. There, I don't know the answer."

Susskind might be speculating on the Universe's evolution, but his thoughts on why black holes grow in more than they do out is worth unpacking.

To be clear though, for now this work has only been published on the pre-print site arXiv.org, so it's yet to be peer reviewed. That means we need to take it with a big grain of salt for now. On top of that, this type of research is, by its very nature, theoretical.

But there are some pretty cool idea in here worth unpacking. To do that, we need to go back to basics for a moment. So ... hang tight.

For the uninitiated, black holes are dense masses that distort space to the extent that



even light (read: information) lacks the escape velocity required to make an exit.

A common analogy is to imagine the dimensions of space plus time as a smooth rubber sheet. Much as a heavy object dimples the rubber sheet, mass distorts the geometry of spacetime.

The properties of our Universe's rubber sheet means it can form deep gravity funnel that stretches 'down' without stretching much further 'out'.

■ Sheets useful analogies
Most objects expand 'out' as you add material, not 'in'. So how do we even begin to picture this? Rubber sheets are useful analogies, but only up to a certain point.

To understand how matter behaves against this super stretchy backdrop, we need to look elsewhere. Luckily physics has a second rulebook on 'How the Universe Works' called quantum mechanics, which describes how particles and their forces interact.

The two rule books of GR and QM don't always agree, though. Small things interpreted through the lens of general relativity don't make much sense. And big things like black holes produce gibberish when the rules of quantum mechanics are applied.

This means we're missing something important — something that would allow us to interpret general relativity's space-bending feature in terms of finite masses and force-mediating particles.

One contender is something called anti-de Sitter/conformal field theory correspondence, which is shortened to Ads/CFT.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Scientists accidentally create mice with unusual tails

Millions of mice are used in scientific research every year in all manner of experiments, many of which involve genetic manipulation. So perhaps the news that two teams of scientists have accidentally created mice with both unusually long and short tails during their investigations shouldn't come as a surprise.

According to separate papers published in the journal Developmental Cell, a gene known as LIN28B — which influences characteristics such as metabolism and body size — was responsible for the strange outcome.

The "same regulatory networks that control mechanisms regulating how a body pattern is formed are often co-opted for other developmental processes," Moisés Mallo, a researcher at Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência in Lisbon, Portugal, and senior author of one of the two papers, said in a statement. "Studying these networks can give us relevant information for understanding other developmental processes."

One of the teams was trying to model kidney tumors by controlling the gene expression — the process by which genetic code is used to direct the production of proteins or other molecules — of LIN28B.

"What we found was that the animals with this gene over-expressed had remarkably long tails," Daisy Robinton, an author of one of the studies from Harvard, told Newsweek. "So long, in fact, that we didn't even need to genotype them to know that they had this gene turned on — it was so dramatic."

The other team, meanwhile — led by Mallo — were investigating a gene called GDF11, which scientists know triggers the development of the tail in the embryo. They noticed that mice with mutations in this gene had shorter and thicker tails than normal mice, while also finding that LIN28B had an important influence on this process.

Essentially, LIN28B regulates the timing of how certain blocks of cells — which become skin, muscle, cartilage, tendons, and vertebrae — develop in the embryo, thus affecting the shape of the tail.

(Source: Newsweek)

Bizarre 4-star system forms planets in a vertical disk orbit

One of the common features of star systems is that both stars and their planets tend to orbit in the same plane. That means the equator of the star tends to align with the plane of the planets in orbit around it. In our own Solar System, for example, all of the major planets follow this trend (although the dwarf planet Pluto has an eccentric orbit caused by gravitational interactions with Neptune).

Now, scientists have discovered an unusual pair of binary stars (four stars total) that appear to have created planets that orbit in a vertical plane over the poles of the stars rather than the horizontal dimension one would typically expect. The system in question, HD 98800, consists of two binary pairs (HD 98800 A and HD 98800 B). The stars in each pair are also labeled with "a" and "b," which (as Ars Technica details) means the paper is filled with a discussion of the sigh BaBb binary.

It's been known for years that various events could disrupt the formation of a standard protoplanetary disk around a star, but this is the first time we've observed a misaligned vertical orientation as predicted by theoretical models. We've been aware of HD 98800 and its protoplanetary disk for years, but this is the first time researchers have attempted to analyze the orientation and composition of the ring using the ALMA (Atacama Large Millimeter Array) telescope system.

Finding a protoplanetary disk in this orientation confirms theoretical models, but it doesn't tell us how common these types of planets actually are. Binary stars have proven to be more common in the universe than some models initially predicted; astronomers currently estimate that up to 85 percent of stars may be binary stars. If planet formation around binary stars can happen in both these disrupted perpendicular disks and the conventional protoplanetary disk configuration, this has implications for our search for exoplanets.

(Source: extremetech.com)



Bodies of tardigrades, crustaceans found in Antarctica's Lake Mercer

Scientists have discovered bodies of tiny, ancient creatures preserved undisturbed for millennia in a kilometer-thick slab of ice deep in an Antarctic lake.

Researchers with the Subglacial Antarctic Lakes Scientific Access (SALSA) project found the remains during a mission to drill into the Mercer subglacial lake.

Scientists found the carcasses of the small animals, which ranged in size from 0.1 mm to 1.5 mm, after inspecting mud from an instrument lowered into the lake's icy waters. The mud contained remnants of algae that lived here millions of years ago, when Antarctica was much warmer.

It also contained the remains of tardigrades, also called "water bears," eight-legged creatures known to be capable of surviving in extreme environments.

Researchers also found a plant or fungus, a shrimp-like crustacean, and another shelled organism with delicate hairs.

"It hints that life may exist in more complex forms than thought previously underneath the massive ice sheet in Antarctica," Martin Siegert, head of the Lake Ellsworth Consortium, which aims to explore a subglacial lake under the ice of west Antarctica, commented on the discovery.

Scientists do not know how the organisms came to be in the icy lake, but the creatures may have lived in nearby ponds and streams during warm periods, when the glaciers retreated 10,000 to 120,000 years ago.

They may have been washed into the lake through rivers under the ice. They may have also been transported into the lake after becoming stuck to a glacier.

The mission marks the third time scientists have explored an Antarctic subglacial lake. It is also the first time to access Lake Mercer, which spans 160 square kilometers in area, which covers twice the size of Manhattan.

(Source: Tech Times)

Scientists turn carbon emissions into usable energy

A recent study, affiliated with UNIST has developed a system that produces electricity and hydrogen (H2) while eliminating carbon dioxide (CO2), which is the main contributor of global warming.

Published This breakthrough has been led by Professor Guntae Kim in the School of Energy and Chemical Engineering at UNIST in collaboration with Professor Jaephil Cho in the Department of Energy Engineering and Professor Meilin Liu in the School of Materials Science and Engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology.

In this work, the research team presented Hybrid Na-CO2 system that can continuously produce electrical energy and hydrogen through efficient CO2 conversion with stable operation for over 1,000hr from spontaneous CO2 dissolution in aqueous solution.

"Carbon capture, utilization, and sequestration (CCUS) technologies have recently received a great deal of attention for providing a pathway in dealing with global climate change," says Professor Kim.

■ The easy conversion
The "key to that technology is the easy conversion of chemically stable CO2 molecules to other materials." He adds, "Our new system has solved this problem with CO2 dissolution mechanism."



Much of human CO2 emissions are absorbed by the ocean and turned into acidity. The researchers focused on this phenomenon and came up with the idea of melting CO2 into water to induce an electrochemical reaction.

If acidity increases, the number of protons increases, which in turn increases the power to attract electrons. If a battery system is created based on this phenomenon, electricity can be produced by removing CO2.

Their Hybrid Na-CO2 System, just like a fuel cell, consists of a cathode (sodium metal), separator (NASICON), and anode (catalyst).

Unlike other batteries, catalysts are contained in water and are connected by a lead wire to a cathode.

When CO2 is injected into the water, the entire reaction gets started, eliminating CO2 and creating electricity and H2. At this time, the conversion efficiency of CO2 is high at 50%.

■ Generating electrical energy
"This hybrid Na-CO2 cell, which adopts efficient CCUS technologies, not only utilizes CO2 as the resource for generating electrical energy but also produces the clean energy source, hydrogen," says Jeongwon Kim in the Combined M.S/Ph.D. in Energy Engineering at UNIST, the co-first author for the research.

In particular, this system has shown stability to the point of operating for more than 1,000 hours without damage to electrodes. The system can be applied to remove CO2 by inducing voluntary chemical reactions.

"This research will lead to more derived research and will be able to produce H2 and electricity more effectively when electrolytes, separator, system design, and electrocatalysts are improved," said Professor Kim.

(Source: eurekaalert.org)

4 consecutive days of excellent air quality in Tehran

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — In a rare phenomenon Tehraners have breathed excellent air for four consecutive days, Tasnim news agency reported on Saturday.



While for many years the onset of cold weather was synonyms with persistent, stubborn air pollution in metropolises, concurrent with national clean air day, January 19, citizens of the capital experienced four days of excellent air quality in a row.

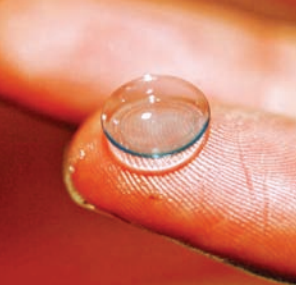
The recent rainfalls and snowfalls have played a great role in cleaning the air.

Tehran received 154 millimeters of rain from the beginning of autumn to January 18 while last year's precipitation is measured at 20.1 millimeters in the aforesaid period.

UK’s first contact lens recycling scheme launches

The UK’s first free national recycling scheme for plastic contact lenses – worn by an estimated 3.7 million people – is being rolled out this week.

Wearers of any brand of soft lens will have the option of either having their discarded items and packaging collected or dropping them off at a network of recycling bins at Boots Opticians and selected independent stores.



Recycling contact lenses is challenging, and 20% of wearers admit they dispose of their lenses by flushing them down the toilet or the sink. The new scheme aims to reduce plastic waste in landfill and the oceans by providing a simple and practical alternative. The recycled contact lenses, blister and foil packaging will be turned into products such as outdoor furniture.

The scheme is a collaboration between the medical manufacturer Johnson & Johnson Vision and the recycling firm TerraCycle. Contact lens wearers are encouraged to check the Acuvue and TerraCycle websites for details of their nearest public drop-off location points or courier collection.

Seven in 10 Britons say they are confused about the types of household items they can recycle, according to recent research by Johnson & Johnson Vision. When it comes to contact lenses, 39% of wearers say they believe they can recycle them or are not sure.

“Seventy-seven per cent of British contact lens wearers said they would recycle their contact lenses if they could and we share their interest in reducing the amount of plastics in the environment,” said Sandra Rasche, of Johnson & Johnson Medical. “We are committed to doing our part to combat climate change, protect our planet’s natural resources and reduce waste.”

(Source: The Guardian)

LEARN ENGLISH

Cheese Lovers

A: Hello everyone my name is Laurie and I want to welcome you to this course. We will learn all about one of the oldest yet most delicious foods on this planet; **cheese**! Let's get started!

A: Cheese is usually categorized into four types: soft, semi-soft semi-hard and hard. The designation refers to the amount of **moisture** in the cheese, which directly affects its **texture**. Making cheese is an ancient practice, dating back thousands of years, and the home cheese maker can usually find recipes for cheese that falls into any of the four categories.

A: Soft cheese includes cottage cheese, cream cheese, ricotta, brie, bleu, Roquefort, mozzarella, muenster and similar cheeses. These cheeses generally **pair** well with fruit or meats, or can be used as breakfast **cheeses** in an omelet nor as pasta fillings. They are usually **mildly flavored** and very high in moisture.

A: American, Colby, co-jack and similar cheeses are in the semi-soft category. These are slightly stronger in flavor and cover a wide range of uses. Co-jack cheese, a blend of Colby and Monterrey jack is one of the most popular. This allows the sharper flavor of Colby to be combined with the milder jack cheese, and also **melts** better than plain Colby. Grilled cheese sandwiches often use American cheese, and Mexican cheeses such as Asadero and Queso Fresco are becoming more popular.

A: Hard cheeses include Parmesan, Romano, Asiago, Swiss, Gruyere and others. Parmesan and Romano are most familiar as the grated powder used to top spaghetti, but they are also used as accompaniments for fruit, nuts and other appetizer items. Swiss is a popular sandwich cheese and melts well, unlike some other hard cheeses.

■ **Key vocabulary**

cheese: solid product made from milk

moisture: a small quantity of water

texture: the way something feels

pair: to match something

mild: soft, not strong

flavor: the way something tastes

melt: to become liquid

■ **Supplementary vocabulary**

blue: a type of cheese

mature: fully aged

organism: a form of life

Drought-stricken southeastern Iran hoping for rain

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — While an intense burst of snow has blanketed 22 provinces of the country, the southeastern province of Kerman is suffering from the lack of downpours along with severe sand and dust storms (SDSs), Mehr news agency reported on Friday.

Last [Iranian calendar] year (March 2017-March 2018), Kerman province experienced a 60 percent drop in rainfall compared to a year earlier, resulting in a significant decrease in agricultural production. In the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2018), weather forecasts demonstrated an increase in rainfall in the province, while after the first month of winter, Kerman province has met the lowest precipitation rates, facing the same pattern as the previous year.

According to the provincial disaster management organization, over the last 72 hours, storms reaching speed up to 70 kilometers per hour led to particulate matter (PM) concentration heading for 20 times above the safe levels, causing respiratory problems for the residents and blocking the roads over the province.

This is while, the province has been receiving snowfall during the first month of winter last year.

Hamideh Habibi, the provincial meteorological organization chief said that PM concentration exceeding the safe levels by 20 times in Rigan county, led to 23 linking roads being surrounded by sandy soil.



Recurrent droughts and the lack of rainfall in recent years led Kerman to become a major SDSs hotspot, generating sand and dust particles which is already haunting the city over and over.

After the southwestern province of Khuzestan, Rigan county is the second region in the country being severely haunted by the intensity of PM concentration,

leaving 16 villages depopulated.

The region’s governor, Amin Baqeri, warning the residents to take safety precautions, noted that the Road Maintenance

Viral 10-year challenge reveals effects on Iran’s environment

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Environmentalists took up the 10-year challenge on social media, posting photos of the lakes and wetlands drying up across the country, to raise awareness about the devastating impact of climate change on the environment, Mehr reported on Saturday.

The 10-year challenge hashtag has recently gone viral among the social media users, as participants posted two photos taken at least ten years apart, to show how they have not aged a day, which has soon turned into a perfect avenue toward showing drastic changes on earth due to temperature rise.

Lake Urmia is among the environmental sites trending upwards through the challenge, which has been shrinking at an unprecedented rate over the past decade.

The volume of water which measured at 30 billion cu-



bic meters dramatically decreased to half a billion cubic meters in 2013 and accordingly lake surface area of 5,000 square kilometers in 1997 shrunk to one tenth of that to 500 square kilometers in 2013.

The photos of Karoun River, the country’s most affluent and only navigable river located in Khuzestan province, taken back in 2009 and then 2019, showing deep dryness of the river over the last decade also has raised concerns through the #10yearchallenge trend.

Zayandehrud River in Isfahan province, suffering severe lack of water due to excessive water withdrawal, became another major issue of the environmental challenge.

Moreover, Hamoun Lake in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, has also drawn attention of the environmentally-conscious users on social networks.

Insect collapse: ‘We are destroying our life support systems’

“We knew that something was amiss in the first couple days,” said Brad Lister. “We were diving into the forest and at the same time both Andres and I said: ‘Where are all the birds?’ There was nothing.”

His return to the Luquillo rainforest in Puerto Rico after 35 years was to reveal an appalling discovery. The insect population that once provided plentiful food for birds throughout the mountainous national park had collapsed. On the ground, 98% had gone. Up in the leafy canopy, 80% had vanished. The most likely culprit by far is global warming. “It was just astonishing,” Lister said. “Before, both the sticky ground plates and canopy plates would be covered with insects. You’d be there for hours picking them off the plates at night. But now the plates would come down after 12 hours in the tropical forest with a couple of lonely insects trapped or none at all.”

“It was a true collapse of the insect populations in that rainforest,” he said. “We began to realise this is terrible – a very, very disturbing result.”

Earth’s bugs outweigh humans 17 times over and are such a fundamental foundation of the food chain that scientists say a crash in insect numbers risks “ecological Armageddon”. When Lister’s study was published

in October, one expert called the findings “hyper-alarming”.

The Puerto Rico work is one of just a handful of studies assessing this vital issue, but those that do exist are deeply worrying. Flying insect numbers in Germany’s natural reserves have plunged 75% in just 25 years. The virtual disappearance of birds in an Australian eucalyptus forest was blamed on a lack of insects caused by drought and heat. Lister and his colleague Andrés García also found that insect numbers in a dry forest in Mexico had fallen 80% since the 1980s.

“We are essentially destroying the very life support systems that allow us to sustain our existence on the planet, along with all the other life on the planet,” Lister said. “It is just horrifying to watch us decimate the natural world like this.”

It was not insects that drew Lister to the Luquillo rainforest for the first time in the mid-1970s. “I was interested in competition among the anoles lizards,” he said. “They’re the most diverse group of vertebrates in the world and even by that time had become a paradigm for ecology and evolutionary studies.”

The forest immediately captivated Lister, a lecturer at Rensselaer Polytechnic University in the U.S. “It was and still is

the most beautiful forest I have ever been in. It’s almost enchanted. There’s the lush verdant forest and cascading waterfalls, and along the roadsides there are carpets of multicoloured flowers. It’s a phantasmagoric landscape.”

It was important to measure insect numbers, as these are the lizards’ main food, but at the time he thought nothing more of it. Returning to the national park decades later, however, the difference was startling.

“One of the things I noticed in the forest was a lack of butterflies,” he said. “They used to be all along the roadside, especially after the rain stopped, hundreds upon hundreds of them. But we couldn’t see one butterfly.”

Since Lister’s first visits to Luquillo, other scientists had predicted that tropical insects, having evolved in a very stable climate, would be much more sensitive to climate warming. “If you go a little bit past the thermal optimum for tropical insects, their fitness just plummets,” he said.

As the data came in, the predictions were confirmed in startling fashion. “The number of hot spells, temperatures above 29C, have increased tremendously,” he said. “It went from zero in the 1970s up to something like 44% of the days.” Factors important elsewhere in the world, such as destruction of habi-

tat and pesticide use, could not explain the plummeting insect populations in Luquillo, which has long been a protected area.

Data on other animals that feed on bugs backed up the findings. “The frogs and birds had also declined simultaneously by about 50% to 65%,” Lister said. The population of one dazzling green bird that eats almost nothing but insects, the Puerto Rican tody, dropped by 90%.

Lister calls these impacts a “bottom-up trophic cascade”, in which the knock-on effects of the insect collapse surge up through the food chain.

“I don’t think most people have a systems view of the natural world,” he said. “But it’s all connected and when the invertebrates are declining the entire food web is going to suffer and degrade. It is a system-wide effect.”

To understand the global scale of an insect collapse that has so far only been glimpsed, Lister says, there is an urgent need for much more research in many more habitats. “More data, that is my mantra,” he said.

The problem is that there were very few studies of insect numbers in past decades to serve as a baseline, but Lister is undeterred: “There’s no time like the present to start asking what’s going on.”

(Source: theguardian.com)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Flood haunting northern Iran brings \$166m of loss

Flash floods hitting Mazandaran province, northern Iran, have caused an estimated 7 trillion rials (about \$166 million) worth of damages, destroying infrastructures, residential units, roads and huge tracts of farmlands, the province’s governor has said.

Heavy rain has led to severe flood in Mazandaran province since last week, which have claimed 5 lives.

The largest damage caused by flooding has been inflicted to infrastructure facilities amounting to 5 trillion rials (nearly \$120 million), IRNA quoted Mohammad Eslami as saying on Tuesday.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ish-”

■ **Meaning:** like, resemble

■ **For example:** Stop your **childish** behavior!

PHRASAL VERB

Laugh off

■ **Meaning:** to joke about something in order to show that it is not important

■ **For example:** They just laughed off the rumors that they are getting married.

IDIOM

A red rag to a bull

■ **Explanation:** a deliberate provocation

■ **For example:** telling him that he is a wheezing fat man was like a red rag to a bull.

سیل مازندران، ۷۰۰ میلیارد تومان خسارت زد

استاندار مازندران گفت که سیل گذشته حدود هفت هزار میلیارد ریال به تاسیسات زیر بنایی، کشاورزی، واحدهای مسکونی و تجاری و راه های استان خسارت وارد کرد.

محمد اسلامی روز سه شنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: بیشترین خسارت های ناشی از سیل به تاسیسات زیربنایی با حدود پنج هزار میلیارد ریال وارد شده است.

Bahrain detains 5,000 prisoners of conscience

An independent human rights group says it has documented the arrest of more than 5,000 prisoners of conscience in addition to 200 victims of excessive use of force, murder and torture in the tiny Persian Gulf kingdom, as the ruling Al Khalifah regime presses ahead with its heavy clampdown on political dissidents and pro-democracy activists.

The head of the Bahrain Center for Dialogue and Tolerance, Sheikh Maytham al-Salman, said in a statement during a conference held in Lebanese capital Beirut that "human rights as well as civil and political situation in Bahrain have deteriorated."

Continued deterioration of the human rights situation in Bahrain is taking place amid silence from the international community, including the United Kingdom and the United States of America," Salman added.

Salman then called on international diplomatic missions to investigate the trials of political and human rights activists in Bahrain, record the violence they face in prisons, and use diplomatic visits to examine the status of detainees.

Thousands of anti-regime protesters have held demonstrations in Bahrain on an almost daily basis ever since a popular uprising began in the country in mid-February 2011.

They are demanding that the Al Khalifah regime relinquish power and allow a just system representing all Bahrainis to be established.

Manama has gone to great lengths to clamp down on any sign of dissent. On March 14, 2011, troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were deployed to assist Bahrain in its crackdown.

Scores of people have lost their lives and hundreds of others sustained injuries or got arrested as a result of the Al



Khalifah regime's crackdown.

On March 5, 2017, Bahrain's parliament approved the trial of civilians at military tribunals in a measure blasted by human rights campaigners as being tantamount to imposition of an undeclared martial law countrywide.

Bahraini monarch King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah ratified the constitutional amendment on April 3, 2017.

■ Top Bahraini cleric Qassim re-hospitalized in UK

Meanwhile, Bahrain's most prominent Shia cleric, Ayatollah Sheikh Isa Qassim, will undergo a second surgery on his eye on Thursday in a hospital in the British capital, London.

The team tasked with caring for the Sheikh released a statement on Thursday asking Bahrainis and Sheikh Qassim supporters to "pray to God Almighty to heal him and that the surgery be successful and that God grants him good health

and wellness."

They also revealed that this latest surgery is "complicated and accurate and needs a longer period and more accurate follow-ups."

The latest operation follows on from two other "successful" procedures which were carried out by doctors also in London.

Sheikh Qassim left his home country for England on July 9 after doctors emphasized the need for his immediate transfer to a specialized hospital to prevent further deterioration of his health.

The Sheikh was initially hospitalized in Bahrain after his health began to deteriorate following a lengthy spell living under regime-imposed house arrest.

Sheikh Qassim is the highest religious authority on the island of Bahrain and is the spiritual leader of Bahrain's main Shia opposition group, the Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society. He has been an outspoken

critic of the Manama regime's policies.

A regime court convicted the Sheikh last year for allegedly collecting illegal funds and money laundering. He was sentenced to one year in jail, suspended for three years.

He was also ordered to pay \$265,266 in fines in a ruling which sparked widespread outrage and demonstrations across Bahrain. Sheikh Qassim and his supporters strongly rejected all the allegations.

The cleric was also stripped of his Bahraini citizenship on June 20, raising fears that after his stay in London he may not be allowed to return to the country.

The Al-Wefaq opposition party, which has been banned in Bahrain, recently announced a boycott of the kingdom's upcoming parliamentary elections.

At an opposition press conference, held in London on Tuesday, opposition figures publicly urged for a boycott denouncing the elections as "a sham."

"Nothing can be gained from these elections or this parliament. It is just legitimizing all the crimes committed against the people of Bahrain. Today we have more than 4,500 political prisoners which is the largest number in relation to population in the world," said Jawad Fairouz, a former-Bahrain MP and Chairman of Salam for Democracy and Human Rights, while speaking to Press TV.

Ali al-Aswad, an opposition Al-Wefaq representative present at the conference, explained the opposition's demands, urging the regime to "postpone the elections, to call the opposition for dialogue, to discuss all the conflicts and issues in Bahrain, starting from the constitution, speaking about discrimination, political naturalization."

Sheikh Isa Qassim has not commented on the upcoming 2018 elections.

(Source: agencies)

Lords of war: U.S. weapons factories dominate global arms trade

The latest report by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) revealed that sales of arms and military services by global majors totaled \$398.2 billion in 2017, marking a 44 percent growth over the past 15 years.

"The overall number excludes Chinese data due to the lack of available information to allow for a reasonable or consistent estimate," the report reads.

Here's the top ten of the world's biggest defense corporations by sales, according to the institute.

■ 1. Lockheed Martin

The U.S. company reportedly sold arms worth \$44.9 billion in 2017, marking an 8.3 percent growth against the year prior. The Bethesda-based arms giant remained the world's number one weapons producer by sales. Lockheed Martin produces various defense systems, from combat ships to hypersonic missiles to fighter jets. The company delivers the F-35 fighter jet, the world's most expensive weapons system, to Pentagon.

■ 2. Boeing

U.S. space and aircraft giant Boeing brought in \$26.9 billion in sales. 2017 marked a substantial gap of \$18 billion between Lockheed Martin and Boeing.

"The fall in Boeing's arms sales can be partially attributed to delays in the delivery of KC-46 tanker aircraft and the end of deliveries of C-17 transport aircraft," according to the SIPRI report.

Arm's sales accounted for only 29 percent of the aircraft manufacturing giant's total in 2017. Last year, Boeing managed to seal a wide range of contracts with the U.S. Government. The corporation signed over 20 deals with a total value of \$13.7 billion in September alone.

■ 3. Raytheon

This U.S. arms manufacturer is reportedly the world's biggest producer of guided missiles and



missile defense systems. In 2017, Raytheon saw a sales increase of two percent compared to 2016. The company reportedly earned \$23.9 billion.

Its portfolio includes the Patriot missile system, a combat-tested platform, which is reportedly the backbone of European ballistic missile defense. Raytheon's Patriot system is used in nine countries outside Europe.

■ 4. BAE Systems

The British arms producer sold \$22.9 billion worth of weapons, demonstrating a 3.3 percent growth against the previous year. The UK remained the largest arms producer in the region in 2017, with total arms sales of \$35.7 billion.

■ 5. Northrop Grumman

This U.S. arms-manufacturing corporation brought \$22.4 billion in sales in 2017, marking a modest year-on-year growth of 2.4 percent. The aerospace and defense tech firm bought American rocket maker Orbital ATK, with the aim of expanding its business in the space market.

■ 6. General Dynamics

The Virginia-based defense company sold arms worth \$19.5 billion, marking a slight decrease from

\$19.6 billion the previous year. Its M1 Abrams tank has been used in nearly every major U.S. military operation over the past 40 years.

■ 7. Airbus Group

The second largest defense contractor in Europe, Airbus, brought in \$11.3 billion in arms sales in 2017. Arms sales are not the key revenue earner for the European aerospace giant accounting for only 15 percent of its \$75 billion revenue. Its business is mostly focused on commercial aircraft and space sectors.

The Eurofighter Typhoon fighter jet, the result of collaboration between the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and Spain, is Airbus's most recognizable military product.

■ 8. Thales

In 2017, French defense corporation Thales demonstrated sales of \$9 billion, which is around half of its total 2017 revenue. The company managed to raise weapon sales by nearly seven percent from the previous year. Thales manufactures a wide range of defense products, from armored vehicles to missile defense to navigation equipment.

■ 9. Leonardo

Italian weapon producer brought in \$8.9 billion in 2017 arms sales, which makes 68 percent of its total revenue. Leonardo produces helicopters, missiles and drones, as well as equipment for non-military space programs.

■ 10. Almaz-Antey

The Russian weapons supplier entered the top ten of the SIPRI's annual ranking. In 2017, the country's biggest arms company increased sales by 17 percent to \$8.6 billion. The company's flagship product, the S-400, a mobile long-range surface-to-air missile system, has managed to lure dozens of foreign military buyers over the last five year.

(Source: RT)

Pompeo's pointless Mideast trip

1 → Regarding the U.S. willingness to leave Syria, these days the Arab nation believes that the White House has destroyed the Arab region and has left it without resolving the turmoil it created.

Thus, Pompeo's visit to the region was unsuccessful because he failed not only to persuade the Arab states to form an anti-Iranian alliance but to establish peace between Qatar and other countries.

■ Second viewpoint

After Trump unexpectedly announced that the U.S. would be pulling troops out of Syria, the U.S. government faced plenty of opposition from the regional allies and within the American community.

The fact is that since Saudi Arabia and the Zionist regime have incurred huge costs in destroying Syria and the Assad government, the withdrawal of the U.S. from Syria has brought about fear for the allies. The experienced and strong resistance forces have full control over the conflict zones. Considering the political victories of the resistance forces in Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon, we understand the purpose of Pompeo's trip into the region and his effort to reassure Washington's allies about the U.S. withdrawal from Syria and Afghanistan.

Now, it's time for the triangle of Iran, Russia and Turkey, to end the crisis of Syria quickly by designing plans that won't allow John Bolton and Pompeo run Syria. Therefore, the U.S. Secretary of State has never been able to address the concerns of the regional allies. The U.S. naval movements in the Persian Gulf is also understandable.

■ Third viewpoint

The third issue is the discussion of the Polish Summit and the necessity of a global consensus on confronting Iran that Washington intends to exploit. It has apparently been announced that such summit was essential to hold to implement the plan to control Iran and Russia and to shape the Syrian political future and to force these countries to cooperate in Syria. They pretend to have shaped public opinion in the war on Iran as if they will soon launch that war and force Iran to negotiate and to submit to them. In this regards, a few points are worth considering:

The Polish Summit reminds us of the formation of a "group of friends of Syria!" A group formed by the participation of 85 countries to overthrow the Syrian government, but after a few years of its establishment nobody knows about the fate of that

coalition. The same countries are now in line to open their embassy in Damascus.

The summit in Poland shows a country that claimed to be a superpower and put Iran under the most severe pressures and sanctions for four decades, is no longer the old America, which alone cannot be an opponent of another country.

Pompeo called Russia and Iran "Middle Eastern vicious executors" and said that we hope to bring them along with the government and all the beneficiaries in Syria to discuss the future structure of Syria. This marks the complete disappointment of the U.S. diplomacy to intervene in the future of Syria. Undoubtedly, none of these elements will go to Warsaw, and this meeting will fail as well as other American strategies for Western Asia, as it is not consistent with reality.

All attempts to cut Iran from the Mediterranean region have failed so far and, without a doubt, we will see another way that China also connects to the Mediterranean Sea through Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Syria. This has made Washington decide to spend huge sums in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

U.S. withdrawal from Syria and Afghanistan are two current strategies in Iran, the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq is

not a complex task. Americans are deeply concerned that sooner or later the resistance forces will take control of the borders of Iraq and Syria and that Americans will not be able to be border guards.

The Secretary of State's remarks in Cairo against Iran were not the statement of the foreign minister's superpower, and had a very negative feedback from White House officials. Pompeo speaks of Iran as an invincible power, which is completely in the interest of Tehran.

Therefore, the Islamic Republic of Iran today, with all the problems arising from foreign sanctions, internal mismanagement and factional rivalry should be proud to have become a powerful country. Trump is still frightened by how the Iranians resist imposed sanctions. Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif well declared that "Americans must believe that they have lost Iran". Therefore, the visit of the U.S. Secretary of State and the decisions of Trump to leave Syria and the summit of Poland all reflect the difficulties facing the U.S. Therefore, no war will break out in the region, but the United States will do its best to make Iran and its allies to converse. We must believe in ourselves.

Former Afghan warlord Hekmatyar enters presidential race

A former warlord accused of historic war crimes entered Afghanistan's presidential race on Saturday in a new challenge to President Ashraf Ghani who allowed him to return from exile two decades he was forced out by the Taliban.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, whose fighters killed thousands in Kabul during the bloody civil war of the 1990s, has remained a divisive figure since his return from exile in 2016.

His decision to contest the presidential polls in July is seen by analysts as the ex-warlord's attempt to legitimize his Hizb-i-Islami party. The faction has been blamed for atrocities committed during Afghanistan's brutal civil war, which led many Afghans to welcome the emergence of the Taliban in 1996 in the hope the hardline group would restore law and order.

In 2003, the U.S. State Department listed him as a terrorist, accusing him of taking part in and supporting attacks by al Qaeda and the Taliban. But Washington later welcomed Ghani's decision to sign a peace deal with Hekmatyar.

In 2016, President Ghani's government granted immunity to Hekmatyar but the former warlord has been critical of his administration and the parliamentary election process in 2018.

Announcing his candidacy, Hekmatyar pledged to restore peace and security and said the current government had failed to end the war with the Taliban.

"Our country's situation requires a powerful central government lead by an elected president supported by the majority of people," he told a news conference in Kabul.

The July election faces serious security challenges with the Taliban threatening large parts of the country. The polls will be a crucial test for election officials who were criticized for failing to conduct free and fair parliamentary elections last October. The 2014 presidential election won by Ghani was also tainted by accusations of widespread cheating.

Afghanistan's presidential race is now in full swing, with several former officials, politicians lining up to challenge Ghani who is expected to register his candidacy for a second term on Sunday.

On Saturday Interior Minister Amrullah Saleh resigned to run for the vice-presidency as part of Ghani's team, according to two political sources.

In December, Ghani appointed Saleh, a former security official and an uncompromising opponent of the Taliban, to his government in a bid to secure the support of former opponents for a second term.

(Source: Reuters)

Iraqi Hashd al-Sha'abi forces kill, injure dozens of Daesh terrorists in Syria

Iraqi pro-government fighters from the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) have carried out a counter-terrorism operation in Syria's eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr, killing and injuring dozens of terrorists from the ISIL (Daesh) Takfiri group in the process.

The commander of the volunteer forces – better known by the Arabic name Hashd al-Sha'abi – in western Anbar, Qassim Mosleh, said 35 Daesh extremists were eliminated or sustained injuries as Iraqi forces pounded their positions in the village of al-Susah.

Mosleh went on to say that three militant commanders, identified by the noms de guerre Abu Wadah, Abu Hamza and Abu Fatoum, were killed in the offensive.

On December 31, 2018, Iraqi military aircraft pounded a strategic position of Daesh terrorists in Syria's Dayr al-Zawr, after Syrians President Bashar al-Assad allowed Iraqi fighter jets to conduct airstrikes against the extremists in Syria.

The media bureau of Iraq's Joint Operations Command announced in a statement that Iraqi F-16 fighter jets had bombed and destroyed a two-story building on the outskirts of the village of Susah and killed 30 Daesh commanders as they were holding a meeting.

The statement added that the aerial assault was carried out following close surveillance by the Iraqi Intelligence Service.

The development came a day after a high-ranking Iraqi official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Russia's RT Arabic television news network that Iraqi warplanes would be able to enter the Syrian airspace and bombard Daesh sites under Assad's directives.

The Iraqi official, however, highlighted that the Syrian president had demanded that the Baghdad government inform Syrian authorities before launching any aerial raid.

Former Iraqi prime minister Haider al-Abadi declared the end of military operations against Daesh in the Arab country on December 9, 2017.

On July 10 that year, he had formally declared victory over Daesh in Mosul, which served as the terrorists' main urban stronghold in Iraq.

In the run-up to Mosul's liberation, Iraqi army soldiers and Hashd al-Sha'abi fighters had made sweeping gains against Daesh.

Iraqi forces took control of eastern Mosul in January 2017 after 100 days of fighting, and launched the battle in the west on February 19 that year.

Daesh began a terror campaign in Iraq in 2014, overrunning vast swathes in lightning attacks.

(Source: Press TV)

'Yellow Vests' march through Paris in 10th weekend of protests

1 → "Macron, resign!" some of the protesters shouted.

Some had also made coffin-type objects to denote the deaths of 10 people so far during the protests, mainly due to accidents when demonstrators blocked roads.

The "Yellow Vest" protests – named after the fluorescent jackets French motorists must have in their cars – began in November over higher fuel taxes.

Those fuel taxes were subsequently scrapped, yet the movement has morphed into a broader anti-Macron protest.

December's demonstrations wreaked some of the worst violence seen in decades in Paris, as rioters burned cars and damaged shops and businesses.

Protests so far this month have not witnessed the same level of trouble, although video of a former French boxing champion punching and kicking police in Paris shocked many.

Macron has launched a series of national debates to help quell public discontent and restore his standing.

(Source: Reuters)

Premier League to take legal action over pirate channel

England's Premier League has appointed legal counsel to take action in Saudi Arabia against illegal pirate channel "beoutQ".

The channel has been accused by world soccer's governing body FIFA, tennis ruling bodies and other sports organizations of illegally airing content, whose exclusive TV rights in the Middle East belong to Qatar-based broadcaster beIN Sport.

BeIN Sports has the rights to broadcast the Premier League and other sports competitions in the Middle East and North Africa.

"The League has already appointed legal counsel in Saudi Arabia to begin the process of bringing action against the parties involved in this piracy," the Premier League said in a statement on Friday.

"We have also made representations through the Sports Rights Owners Coalition to the European Commission and made the UK government aware of the issue," it said, describing the broadcasts as "highly organised and sophisticated illegal broadcast piracy".

BeoutQ emerged in 2017 after Saudi Arabia and its allies launched a diplomatic and trade boycott of Qatar, accusing the tiny Gulf state of supporting terrorism, which Doha denies.

BeoutQ is widely available in Saudi Arabia. But Riyadh says it is not based there and that the authorities are committed to fighting piracy, including announcing the confiscation of 12,000 pirating devices last June.

It is unclear who owns or operates the channel.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) also said last week it was taking legal action regarding beoutQ's illegal broadcasts of the continent-wide Asian Cup.

BeINSport this week published a dossier of what it called "industrial scale piracy of global sports and entertainment content".

Saudi authorities did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The World Trade Organization said last month it would investigate Qatari allegations of intellectual property breaches by Saudi Arabia, including the piracy of beIN content, despite Riyadh's objections on national security grounds.

FIFA said last July it would pursue legal action against beoutQ after the illegal broadcast of last year's World Cup, but details of the case have not yet been made public.

Saudi Arabia said at the time that the football governing body's decision would supplement its "relentless efforts" to combat beoutQ's activities.

(Source: Reuters)

Liverpool's Trent Alexander-Arnold signs new long-term contract

Trent Alexander-Arnold has become the latest player to commit his future to Liverpool by signing a new long-term contract, the Premier League leaders have announced.

A source has told ESPN FC that the deal runs until 2024 and reflects the 20-year-old's rapid development after establishing himself as Liverpool's first-choice right-back and earning five caps for England.

In recent months, Premier League leaders Liverpool have managed to tie down the long-term futures of Mohamed Salah, Sadio Mane, Roberto Firmino, Joe Gomez, Andrew Robertson and captain Jordan Henderson.

"As soon as they offered the contract, there was no hesitation whatsoever," Alexander-Arnold told Liverpool's official website.

"The thing that made it easiest for me was having the people around me to make sure I was able to focus on football as much as possible and get the deal done as soon as possible. That is down to my brother especially, my manager, who took that role and allowed me to focus on football and not get distracted, which is the main thing.

"The last 18 months especially have been very special. Hopefully the next 18 months and even further on than that will be even more special."

Alexander-Arnold has been at Liverpool since the age of six and has 67 first-team appearances to his name after making his senior debut in October 2016.

(Source: ESPN)

Football club opens doors to London homeless



Crystal Palace have opened up their Selhurst Park stadium to rough sleepers seeking shelter from the winter weather, the English Premier League side said.

A lounge at the south London ground can be turned into a temporary overnight shelter for up 10 rough sleepers whenever temperatures are forecast to drop below freezing.

Under a deal with the Croydon Council local authority, people formally identified as sleeping rough are referred to Selhurst Park, where they can access a camp bed for the night, a hot evening meal, breakfast and washing facilities.

Eight people used the shelter on Thursday night, the first time it was opened, the club said in a statement.

The lounge was then converted back again on Friday morning. "The club wants to be a force for good in the community and we are happy to do our bit to help those most in need," said chief executive Phil Alexander.

(Source: AFP)

Arrested Portuguese hacker is Football Leaks 'whistleblower' - lawyers

A Portuguese man arrested in Hungary on suspicion of extortion and secrecy violations hacked football bodies' documents - which later appeared on the Football Leaks website - because he was "outraged" by criminality in the sport, his lawyers said.

The man, named by his lawyers as 30-year-old Rui Pinto, was detained in Hungary on Wednesday on a European arrest warrant filed by Portuguese police who want to extradite him. His lawyers said they would oppose this.

Speaking to Reuters, the lawyers said Pinto, whom they described as a "whistleblower", would remain under house arrest in Hungary until a decision on his extradition had been made.

Portuguese police said a national had been detained on Wednesday on a European arrest warrant. The individual was suspected of qualified extortion, violation of secrecy and illegally accessing information, the police said.

Asked by Reuters if the arrested man was Rui Pinto, Carlos Cabreiro, the Portuguese police's head of cyber crime, said he could not comment.

He also declined to comment on the lawyers' intention to oppose Pinto's extradition.

The Football Leaks website includes emails, contracts and presentations relating to football clubs.

German magazine Der Spiegel, which shared access to the documents with Reuters and more than a dozen other media outlets



in cooperation with the European Investigative Collaborations (EIC) reporting project, said the material came from a source who identified himself as a Portuguese man named "John".

Reuters could not determine if Pinto was the source mentioned by Spiegel. Spiegel and EIC said in a statement that they do not comment on the identity of sources.

Reuters was also unable to determine what

information the arrest warrant related to or whether it was linked to reporting by the consortium.

His lawyers, William Bourdon and Francisco Teixeira da Mota, said in a statement to the media that Pinto was not a criminal.

"(He) was outraged with practices in the sport (football), which he believes do not dignify the players and damage their image," they wrote.

Pinto, they said, became an "important European whistleblower for Football Leaks" and his revelations have "enabled numerous European judicial authorities to gain knowledge of criminal practices in the world of football".

The EIC started releasing information based on Football Leaks in late 2016, prompting the European Parliament to question representatives of football bodies.

According to Pinto's lawyers, Doyen Sports, a Malta-based investment company providing funds to football clubs, filed a criminal complaint against Pinto in Portugal in 2015. The lawyers declined to give details of the complaint, which Reuters hasn't viewed.

A Doyen spokesperson told Reuters it had initially contacted the Portuguese police in 2015 after receiving an email from an "unknown user" who threatened to leak confidential documents, including players' contracts, unless the company paid a "generous donation".

The spokesperson said the case had been on hold until emails from Portugal's biggest football team, Benfica, were leaked in 2017, prompting Portuguese police to act.

Portuguese police said they could not comment on investigations related to the Benfica emails leak, citing laws that prevent them from disclosing any details of an ongoing investigation.

(Source: Reuters)

'Grave defeat for football': Napoli furious as racism victim Koulibaly loses appeal



Serie A club Napoli have blasted an Italian football federation appeals court's decision to reject Senegalese defender Kalidou Koulibaly's appeal against his two-match ban as "a great opportunity missed to fight racism".

French-born Koulibaly was targeted by monkey noises and racist chants in Napoli's 1-0 defeat to Inter Milan at the San Siro on December 26, before being sent off for sarcastically applauding referee Paolo Mazzoleni. But an FIGC appeals court on Friday said it did not want to create a precedent where being subjected to racist abuse "could otherwise be used to justify any act of violence".

"(The) unacceptable atmosphere that was created inside the stadium during the match has no relevance and cannot be considered justification for an athlete to mock the referee," the FIGC said.

The 27-year-old had already missed Napoli's 3-2 win over Bologna on December 29, and will miss this weekend's game against Lazio.

"The rejection of our appeal is a grave defeat for football," Napoli said in a statement issued through spokesman Nicola Lombardo. "A battle that UEFA have been carrying on -- with Napoli's support for many years -- has been humiliated.

"But the defeat is also for those who, mistakenly, maintain there is no racism

in stadiums, that hurling abuse at black people, Neapolitans and Jews is only done by a handful of people.

"Thousands of people (7,400 estimated by the Federal representative in the stadium) insulted Koulibaly because he is black.

"Koulibaly, football, the institutions, everyone emerges from this situation feeling humiliated. Removing Koulibaly's ban should have been logical regardless of the regulations and red tape.

"UEFA and FIFA condemn what happened, saying the protocol was not respected and the game should have been stopped.

"And then the appeal, with judges who tell us they are fully aware of what happened, that they stand with Koulibaly as a man, who urge him not to give up or feel alone, the way this wonderfully honest gentleman said he felt that night."

In their emotional statement, Napoli added that their player had been stripped of his dignity.

"There was one thing that had to be done: give Kalidou Koulibaly back the dignity that a lad from Senegal deserves, for all that happened, all the bad and all the good that is happening now in Italy.

"This evening, a great opportunity was missed. Unfortunately, we received confirmation that there is a lot still to be done and much still to be changed."

(Source: AFP)

'Just getting started', says Serena as juggernaut rolls on



Serena Williams marched into the Australian Open last 16 Saturday and warned she was still improving after taking time out to console the latest victim of her quest for a record-equaling 24th major.

Williams swatted aside Ukrainian teenager Dayana Yastremska 6-2, 6-1 in a Melbourne Park mauling that reduced the world number 57 to tears.

The 37-year-old, who is in the hunt for her first Grand Slam since having a baby, comforted the youngster at the net, telling her: "You did amazing, you're gonna make it, don't cry".

But Williams, who is in ominous form and has dropped only nine games in her opening three matches, also had a message for her rivals, saying she was not yet at the top of her game.

"I think I'm getting there. I don't feel like I'm there yet," she said. "I feel like I'm still getting there."

Williams will face either sister Venus, who is unseeded this year, or world number one Simona Halep in the next round.

The 37-year-old won her 23rd Grand Slam Down Under two years ago while two months pregnant and is the bookies' favourite to claim an eighth Australian title, despite being seeded 16th.

Another major would match Margaret

Court's tally and Williams is focused as she chases down the Australian great's record.

"I'm here, I'm playing as hard as I can and doing the best I can, which is really all I can do," she said.

Yastremska was not even born when the American won her first major at Flushing Meadows in 1999.

Williams said she did not like to see an opponent so distressed but she appreciated that Yastremska cared so much about trying to win their match and "came out swinging".

"I kind of liked that. It shows she wasn't just there to play a good match, she was there to win," the American said. "She wanted to win. That really broke my heart."

Her compassion contrasted with Maria Sharapova's attitude when she left Harriet Dart in tears after serving the Briton a 6-0, 6-0 "double bagel" in the first round.

"There's no time for that, I'm sorry to say," the Russian responded when asked if she had any sympathy for her opponent.

Yastremska's only previous appearance at a Grand Slam was a first round exit at last year's US Open and she looked like roadkill as soon as Williams raced to a 4-0 lead in the first set.

(Source: AFP)

'Agitated' Djokovic regrets meltdown in floodlight fury

Top seed Novak Djokovic admitted he should have "known better" than to let a floodlight row get to him after copping a code violation during a mini-meltdown in the Australian Open Saturday.

The Serb angrily blamed floodlights for dropping a tournament set for the first time as he beat Denis Shapovalov 6-3, 6-4, 4-6, 6-0 in the third round.

He seethed when leading 3-0 in the third set against the 25th-seeded Canadian when the powerful lights blazed on all around Rod Laver Arena -- in broad daylight.

An incandescent Djokovic lost his focus, swore towards a wise-cracking fan and dropped six of the next seven games as the red mist descended under bright sunshine.

"I think there was no sense to turn on lights on court at 5pm when we have another four hours of daylight," fumed the Serb 17-time Grand Slam winner.

"Completely unnecessary to turn on the lights. The explanation I got was for TV reasons. I hope the viewers enjoyed it," he added.

The normally mild-mannered Djokovic earned his warn-

ing from French umpire Damien Dumusois for snapping at a cheeky fan who shouted "Nervous?", as he faced three break points at 4-4, 0-40 in the third set.

"I miscondacted myself verbally. That's why I got the code violation," a sheepish Djokovic told reporters after he had calmed down.

"It was very bright. There was no reason for the lights. For the first two sets, just had things under control. At 4-1 (up in the third set), I was agitated.

"As I said, should not happen to me. I know better. I have experience. But it does happen, I guess. I allowed him to come back to the match.

"Other than the little letdown that I had when I was 4-1, 4-2 up in the third set, other than that I thought I played well, especially in the fourth set."

Up till his mini-meltdown, Djokovic had made his outing on centre court look like an afternoon practice session for two-and-a-half sets against Shapovalov, one of the NextGen stars tipped to take over from the sport's old guard.

He skilfully dominated the 19-year-old, who could not

find enough winners to throw the 14-time Grand Slam winner off his stride until the dazzling interruption to concentration.

"I expected Denis to come out and be aggressive. He made a lot of unforced errors, I thought, for the first set and a half," said Djokovic who extended his winning streak against left-handers at Grand Slams to 18 matches.

The last leftie to beat him at a major was Rafael Nadal in the final at Roland Garros in 2014.

Djokovic left the court at the end of the third set and came back refocused.

He unleashed a massive primal scream to relieve his tension as he broke for 2-0 before closing out the whirlwind last set in a match that lasted 2hr 22min.

Djokovic's victory means he is guaranteed to stay world number one when the new rankings are released after the tournament.

He next plays another young gun, Russia's 22-year-old 15th seed Daniil Medvedev.

(Source: Eurosport)



Iran v Oman; everything for winners and nothing for losers

Iran head coach Carlos Queiroz has labelled his side's AFC Asian Cup Round of 16 match against Oman as a '50-50' tie.

Queiroz is highly impressed with Pim Verbeek's Oman and has warned his players to be on their toes against the Persian Gulf Cup champions ahead of the last 16 tie at the Mohammed bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Sunday.

"The Oman team is a very good team. They have prepared well and have achieved fantastic results over the last year or so. They played 23, 24 matches and only lost two or three.

"They have a very good coach in Pim Verbeek and we must be careful against them," said Queiroz.

Oman may have qualified as one of the four best third-placed teams but turned heads with fighting performances against Uzbekistan and Japan before losing 2-1 and 1-0 respectively.

Their determination to qualify for the knockout stage was so great that they kept pushing right till the end against Turkmenistan on Matchday Three, with the third goal coming deep in stoppage time, with the 3-1 win sealing their place.

"They have been very impressive but having said that, I am confident that if we play our game and the players express themselves, we will progress," said Queiroz.

Focus, said the Portuguese tactician, will be key.

"The group stage results do not matter

now. We played for points then but now, it is about survival. I rate the match as 50-50 with everything for the winners and nothing for the losers.

"There is no room for mistakes, regrets, apologies and tomorrows. It all comes down to 90 minutes and we must make sure we come out on top."

Iran, stressed Queiroz, will keep the game simple.

"I always tell my players to keep it simple. Control the ball, pass the ball, don't lose the ball and score. When we have the ball, we must always be positive and think of scoring."

That they have done very well, having defeated Yemen 5-0 and Vietnam 2-0 before playing to a 0-0 draw with Iraq.

"We have our dreams, our aspirations and our targets. When we started, I said we had seven finals to play and Oman match is the fourth one. I am confident my players will deliver what is expected of them."

Verbeek's Oman are also equally confident, despite having to face the Continent's top ranked team.

"Rankings do not matter in a match like this. We will do everything we can to advance to the quarter-finals. My players are excited and confident," said Verbeek, who has guided Oman to their first AFC Asian Cup knockout stage in four attempts.

"These are the kind of games we train for, whether as coaches or players. Iran are



a fantastic team and they will be a challenge but as everyone saw, we are a team who fight till the end," said Verbeek.

The Dutchman said he isn't concerned about Iran's defense, which has been a fortress.

"They are very strong in defense but no team is perfect. We have seen some weaknesses and if my players can create chances, I am sure we will score.

"We have a chance to make more history and there will be total commitment from us."

Neither side have injury worries with Iranian forward Alireza Jahanbakhsh, who featured for 60 minutes against Iraq, fit to be considered for selection while Oman midfielder Mohsin Al Khaldi has also been training well.

(Source: the-afc)

Sardar Azmoun plays down Iran 'favorites' tag



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran national football team forward Sardar Azmoun has played down his side's tag as 'one of the favorites to win the AFC Asian Cup' underway in the UAE.

Team Melli are going to bring an end to 43-year title drought in the competition but the striker believes that the fans' expectations could make life difficult for them.

Carlos Queiroz's team advanced to the Round of 16 as Group D winners after beating Yemen 5-0 and Vietnam 2-0 and a goalless draw against Iraq in the group stage.

"Iran will play Oman on Sunday and if we beat them we will play either China

or Thailand but I really don't care who we will play," Azmoun said.

"I believe Iran are a good team but Saudi Arabia, Japan, Australia and South Korea are also strong teams. The Iranian fans must help us to win but I think the expectations will put us under pressure. For example, the match against Iraq was not an important match but the fans and media provoked the players," he added.

Azmoun is Iran's best goalscorer in AFC Asian Cup with three goals but he says he doesn't care who scores.

"What is the most important is that we keep progressing in the tournament," Azmoun concluded.

César Ramos chosen to officiate Iran clash against Oman: Asian Cup



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Referees' Committee has selected César Arturo Ramos Palazuelos to officiate the match between Iran and Oman.

Team Melli will meet Oman in Round of 16 of the 2019 AFC Asian Cup at the Mohammed bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi, the UAE on Sunday.

The Mexican professional football referee has been a full international for FIFA since 2014.

César Ramos refereed some matches in CONCACAF Champions League and in the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

Ramos refereed the 2017 FIFA Club

World Cup Final between Real Madrid and Gremio.

He was the only Mexican center referee assigned to referee at the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

The Mexican officiated Syria and Australia match in group stage at the Khalifa Stadium in Al Ain on Tuesday, where the Syrian heartbreaking 3-2 loss saw them eliminated from the Asian Cup.

Ramos was involved in several controversial decisions during the match, including opting not to give handball against Socceroos captain Mark Milligan and tight goal-line call with Chris Ikonomidis' second half strike.

Ashkan Dejagah among 10 top players

The group stage of the AFC Asian Cup 2019 has seen its share of standout performances from the established stars of Asian football to the emergence of a new generation of talent.

But just who has been the best performer overall?

We want you to have your say, vote in our poll below to decide which of the following 10 players you think has been the best performer of the group stage.

1) Salem Al Dawasari (Saudi Arabia)

While he was rested from Saudi Arabia's final match against Qatar, in his first two performances against DPR Korea and Lebanon the dynamic midfielder showed all his guile and class as he controlled the midfield and linked up perfectly with those in front of him to create a plethora of chances for his side.

2) Almoez Ali (Qatar)

With seven goals in three matches at this AFC Asian Cup, Almoez Ali has announced himself as a genuine star of Asian football.

His four goals against DPR Korea put him in rarefied air as one of only five players to ever score four goals in a single match at the AFC Asian Cup, while his brace against Saudi Arabia ensured Qatar finished top of Group E.

3) Ashkan Dejagah (Islamic Republic of Iran)

The 32-year-old midfielder has wound back the clock with a series of superb performances in midfield for one of the tournament favourites.

Using all his experience in an advanced midfield position, he has been key to Iran's attack, with his set piece delivery in particular a highlight, which was on full display with a wonderful free-kick goal in their 5-0 win over Yemen.

4) Yassen Bakheet (Jordan)

Jordan have been one of the surprise packets of this tournament, defeating Australia and finishing top of Group B, and one of the keys to their success has been lively winger



Yassen Bakheet.

One of the highlights of the group stage has been seeing the 29-year-old in full flight, running directly at defenders and weaving his way past those that stand in his way.

5) Nguyen Quang Hai (Vietnam)

The talent of Nguyen Quang Hai has been well known to fans in Southeast Asia for some time, but now the AFF Cup 2018 MVP has put his talent on display for all of Asia to see as the Golden Stars have progressed to the Round of 16.

The attacking midfielder has been instrumental for Vietnam and it's his incisiveness that has created the best of Vietnam's chances.

6) Kim Min-jae (Korea Republic)

Given the attacking talent they possess it's somewhat of a surprise that Korea Republic's leading scorer is defender Kim Min-jae.

But the strongly build 22-year-old has proven his worth, not just in defense - three clean sheets - but in attack, with two headed goals from set-pieces.

7) Mohanad Ali (Iraq)

One of the most exciting talents to emerge from Iraq in some time, 18-year-old Mohanad Ali has announced himself as a future star with goals against Vietnam and Yemen.

It was his solo effort against Yemen, when he skipped and glided past a mesmerized Yemeni defense, that made everyone sit up and take notice.

8) Awer Mabil (Australia)

After their opening loss to Jordan, Graham Arnold made a number of changes for the match against Palestine and one of the beneficiaries has been dynamic winger Awer Mabil.

The former refugee has scored two goals in as many matches and his spectacular left-footed curling effort against Syria is a contender for the Goal of the Group Stage.

9) Yuto Nagatomo (Japan)

While Japan look to develop a new generation of talent, some things never change and the performance of Yuto Nagatomo is one of those.

At 32 he's one of the oldest players in the Japanese squad, but age is no barrier for the flying full-back who has belied his age by turning in typically vibrant displays down the left.

10) Eldor Shomurodov (Uzbekistan)

The Russian-based striker is another young star to emerge from the group stage, with goals in all three group stage games against Oman, Turkmenistan and Japan and four goals in total.

(Source: the-afc)

Malaysia says it stands firm to ban Israeli athletes

IRNA — Malaysia says it will stand firm on its decision not to allow any Israeli sports persons to take part in any sport event in Malaysia.

Malaysian Foreign Minister, Saifuddin bin Abdullah, says his country will not issue visas for any Israeli athlete that wants to take part in sport events that are or will be held in the South East Asian country.

"The Malaysian government is firm in its decision no to host in the future any sport event in which Israeli athletes would participate," bin Abdullah told reporters in Kuala Lumpur.

Swimmers from about 70 countries are to compete in the World Paralympic Swimming Championship that is to be held in Kuching, the provincial capital of Sarawak later in July. The competition, that will run up to the fourth August, is an important milestone towards next year's Tokyo Paralympics.

The minister stressed Kuala Lumpur firmly holds to its decision that is 'based on its strong support for the Palestinian cause.'

Earlier Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahatir bin Mohammad, had said he will not back down from his position although the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), which is organizing the competition, could cancel the event and hold it somewhere else. 'Malaysia isn't ok with Israelis entering the country and if they want to strip us of the right to host the event, they can go ahead and do it,' warned Mohammad.

Kuala Lumpur's move has drawn harsh reaction from Israel that denounced the ban on its athletes as Mahatir bin Mohammad's 'shameful' anti-Semitic decision.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry says it has called on the IPC to change the competition's venue or persuade the Malaysian government to backtrack from its position.

The Malaysian foreign minister said for more than half a century, Israel has continued to disregard the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, while committing inhumane policies and practices that are in clear violation of international laws.

'Israel has no right to talk about moral values when they themselves are the exact opposite,' Saifuddin said in a statement on Friday.

However, the Palestinians have welcomed Malaysia's move. The Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) has thanked the South Asian prime minister's firm rejection to normalize ties with Israel.

'This step shows Malaysia's real and historical position to support the Palestinian people that are exposed to all kinds of cruel actions by the Zionist regime,' said Hamas Prime Minister Ismael Haniya in a statement.



11 countries ready to take part in int'l tournament in Iran

IRNA — Some 11 countries well-known in Greco-Roman wrestling have voiced their readiness to take part in the Int'l Tournament Takhti Cup slated to be held in Andimeshk, southern Iran, said secretary of Khuzestan Wrestling Department.

Mohammad Amin Kajbaf added that teams from China, Armenia, Serbia, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Georgia, Turkey, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Croatia and Cuba will take part in Takhti Cup and Russian team is also expected to show up in the event. Over 100 wrestlers will compete in the tournament.

Some six Iranian teams will take part in the event to be hosted by Andimeshk, a hub of Iran's Greco-Roman wrestling, Kajbaf said.

International Tournament Takhti Cup was named after an Iranian Olympic Gold-Medalist wrestler Gholamreza Takhti (1930 –1968).

International wrestling tournament titled 'Takhti Cup' is held every year in Iran to honor the legendary Iranian wrestler.

Carlos Queiroz confirms negotiating with Colombia

Iran national football team coach Carlos Queiroz confirmed Colombia has showed interest in hiring him as its new coach.

The Portuguese coach has been recently linked with a move to the South American football team.

"There's no doubt that Colombia expressed its interest and confidence in me," Queiroz.

"It is an unbelievable national team with fantastic players and a very high FIFA ranking (12) -- it's prestigious, an honor and something that makes me very proud.

"But at the moment my responsibility is with Iran," added the 65-year-old, who almost steered Iran to the knockout stages of last year's World Cup in Russia.

"After the Asian Cup I will take into consideration for sure Colombia's invitation," Queiroz stated.

(Source: AFP)

Iran U-23 football defeat Kuwait in Qatar tournament

Tasnim — Iran U-23 football team defeated Kuwait 5-0 in Qatar four-nation tournament on Friday.

Alireza Arta and Allahyar Sayyadmanesh scored two goals for Iran in the first half.

Younes Delfi, Amir Hossein Hosseinzadeh and Omid Nourafkan scored three more goals in the second half.

The Iranian football team, who had lost to Tajikistan 2-1 in the first match, will win the tournament by beating Qatar in the last match.

Iran prepare for the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) U-23 Championship 2020.

Zlatko Kranjcar's team have been drawn along with Iraq, Yemen and Turkmenistan in Group C.

The AFC U-23 Championship 2020 is scheduled to take place in Thailand. It will act as the AFC qualifiers for the men's football tournament at the 2020 Olympics.

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: Hamshahri No. 3 - ISSN: 1017-94

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.o. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713



One who is sure of God's compensation, shows much generosity himself.

Imam Ali (AS)

“An Inspector Calls” on stage at Tehran theater

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — An Iranian troupe is performing English playwright J.B. Priestley's “An Inspector Calls” at the Mehregan Theater Hall in Tehran.



A poster for “An Inspector Calls” on stage at the Mehregan Theater.

Ali Alavinejad is the director of the 1945 play, whose story is set in 1912. The play is about the upper middle-class Birling family that lives in a comfortable home in the fictional town of Brumley. On the night of the engagement party of Sheila, the daughter of the family, a man calling himself Inspector Goole arrives and questions the family about the suicide of a young working-class woman, Eva Smith.

“The play tells us to care about our ill treatment in order to avoid mental damage to the others,” Alavinejad told the Persian service of IRNA on Saturday.

Puria Aslan, Shailin Jalali, Aida Jahandideh, Nakisa Oqbai and Farshad Kokabian are the main members of the cast for the play, which will be on stage until January 23.

Ahmad Shamlu's poems to appear in Arabic

CULTURE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian translator Maryam Heidari has recently translated a collection of poems by the Persian blank verse poet, Ahmad Shamlu.



Iranian translator Maryam Heidari.

The collection contains 70 poems and is scheduled to be published by Al-Mutawassit, an Arab publishing house in the Italian city of Milan. It will be distributed in Arab countries.

Shamlu (1925-2000) wrote under the pseudonym “A. Bamdad”. He was one of the contemporary poets who openly defied the conventional restrictions of formal Persian poetry in favor of heartfelt free-flowing verse.

Heidari has also translated books by several Arab writers into Persian including books by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008).

Catherine Deneuve to part with Saint Laurent gowns at auction

PARIS (Reuters) — A beaded dress worn by Catherine Deneuve when she first met Alfred Hitchcock in 1969 are among dozens of glamorous gowns up for auction next week in Paris, where the French actress is due to part with her Yves Saint Laurent collection.

Close to 130 one-of-a-kind styles crafted by the late designer for Deneuve, a close friend, will go on sale at Christie's on Jan. 24. They include red carpet looks like a shimmering gold number worn by Deneuve to the Oscars, which is expected to fetch between 2,000 to 3,000 euros (\$3,400).

The “Belle de Jour” actress, a fashion fan often spotted among guests at Parisian catwalk shows, is selling the designs after parting with a house in Normandy, northern France, where she had stored them for decades.

“When she found herself in possession of all these clothes, she didn't have cupboards in Paris big enough to hold them all,” said Francois de Ricqlès, president of Christie's France.

Deneuve, 75, has not said what the funds raised would be for.

Saint Laurent - one of the 20th centuries' most influential designers, who popularized tuxedos for women, or “Le Smoking” - died in 2008. He and Deneuve met when the actress was only 22, and remained close.

Eslami Nodushan's “Testimony for Progeny” published in Tehran

CULTURE d e s k **TEHRAN** — “Testimony for Progeny”, a book authored by Persian language scholar and expert on Ferdowsi's Shahnameh Mohammad-Ali Eslami Nodushan, which contains helpful advice for the younger generation, has recently been published in Tehran.

The book was unveiled at Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Historical Complex on Friday during a ceremony attended by Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi.

“Testimony for Progeny” carries some advice for the younger generation in Iran on how to find their ways in life in the future.

The advice has been inscribed by prominent calligraphers Gholamhossein Amirkhani, Asghar Daadbeh, and Fereidun Majlesi.

In his brief remarks at the ceremony, Salehi called Nodushan a scholar who has bridged the gap between the classical Persian literature and the modern.

“The master has given us a great number of lessons teaching us how we can move to the classical literature and return with full hands,” he added.

He also called Nodushan a teacher in life and a doctor who has comprehended the pains of contemporary Iran and has found their proper cures and treatments.

“What has brought us together here is the book ‘Testimony for Progeny’, which carries the experience of the master that, if one wants to go through it, would take a lifetime,” Salehi concluded.



Calligrapher Gholamhossein Amirkhani (2nd L), Culture Minister Seyyed Abbas Salehi (3rd L) and his colleagues attend the unveiling ceremony of Mohammad-Ali Eslami Nodushan's book “Testimony for Progeny” at the Niavaran Cultural Center in Tehran on January 18, 2019. (ISNA)

Iranian stuntmen seek domestic film festivals' recognition

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian stuntmen came together in a meeting in Tehran on Friday evening to ask the organizers of Iranian film festivals and events to recognize them as a group active in the film industry.

Renowned Iranian stuntman Arsha Aqdasi, who is the founder Stunt 13, a major studio for Iranian stuntmen, came on stage during the meeting held at the Shafaq Cultural Center while his head was burning and announced his plan to organize a festival for Iranian stuntmen.

“The first festival for Iranian stuntmen will be organized on May 7 as we have the potential to hold it internationally,” he added.

He said that stuntmen have so far been ignored at the Oscars and only three festivals in Russia, America and Hong



Renowned Iranian stuntman Arsha Aqdasi (C) and his colleagues pose during a meeting of stuntmen at Tehran's Shafaq Cultural Center on January 18, 2019. (Mehr/Mohammad Moheimani)

Kong are held for stuntmen.

“We want to be the fourth,” he noted.

The meeting went on with a speech by director Rambod Javan who has collaborated with Aqdasi on several projects, including the TV series “The Address”.

“I really love action movies and I think that one of cinema's missions is to get the audience excited by action scenes,” he said.

The high cost of production and lack of experts on action films are the main reasons behind Iranian directors' hesitation in making action movies, Javan stated.

The organizers also screened some videos in which a number of Iranian actors, including Shahram Haqiqatdust and Kambiz Dirbaz, asked the Iranian film festivals to allocate an award for stuntmen.

The meeting came to an end with the honoring of several stuntmen.

“Dressage”, “Return” win awards at Dhaka film festival

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Two Iranian films won awards at the 17th edition of the Dhaka International Film Festival in Bangladesh, the organizers announced on Friday.

Puya Badkubeh was named best director for his acclaimed movie “Dressage”, while “Return” by Shahriar Purseyeydan won the award for best short spiritual film.

“Dressage” tells the story of Golsa and her friends who rob a corner shop. But while evaluating the booty, they are dismayed to realize that they forgot to take the security camera footage. One of them must return to the crime scene and retrieve it. The vote falls on Golsa, who bravely completes the mission. Her friends' behavior makes her think, and she hides the hard

drive somewhere in secret. But her accomplices and their well-to-do families, worried about their social standing, put more and more pressure on Golsa.

“Return” is about Rahim, a man who after 23 years in prison returns to his hometown to meet his brother.

“The Song of the Tree” by Aibek Daiyrbekov from Kyrgyzstan received the best film award in the Asian film competition and “Namdev Bhau in Search of Silence” by Dar Gai from India was picked as best film in the spiritual film section.

A lineup of 29 Iranian feature and short films went on screen in various sections of the 17th Dhaka International Film Festival, which was held from January 10 to 18.



A scene from “Dressage” by Puya Badkubeh.

Gladys Knight defends decision to sing U.S. anthem at Super Bowl

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Singer Gladys Knight has defended her decision to perform the U.S. national anthem after receiving criticism from supporters of former quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who used the pre-game tradition to protest racial injustice.

Knight, a 74-year-old native of Atlanta, where the game will be played, agreed to sing “the Star Spangled Banner.” Her decision was blasted on social media by supporters of the “take a knee” stance championed by NFL players who kneel during the anthem to protest racial injustice. U.S. President Donald Trump and other conservatives have called the players unpatriotic.

Knight, known as “the empress of soul” for a career that stretches back five decades, said she wanted to “give the anthem back its voice” to include Americans struggling for racial justice. She said she did not need to prove her commitment to civil rights.

“I have fought long and hard for all my life, from walking back hallways, from marching with our social leaders, from using my voice for good,” the “Midnight Train to Georgia” singer said in a statement.



Gladys Knight performs a tribute to Aretha Franklin at the 2018 American Music Awards Show in Los Angeles, California, U.S. October 09/2018. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

the Super Bowl,” Knight added.

Kaepernick started the “take a knee” movement in 2016 to protest police shootings of unarmed black men. His decision to kneel during the anthem sparked a heated national debate, and he has not found an NFL team to play for in recent years.

Many entertainers who back Kaepernick have been reluctant to perform at the Feb. 3 Super Bowl, the biggest sporting and television event in the United States.

Knight said it was “unfortunate that the national anthem had been dragged into this debate.”

Sony's RCA parts ways with R. Kelly after abuse uproar - media reports

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — R. Kelly has parted ways with his Sony Music-owned RCA record label, Billboard magazine, Variety and the New York Times reported on Friday, and he no longer appears on the roster of artists on RCA's website.

The reported split follows decades of allegations of physical abuse by the Grammy-winning singer, which were the subject of a new six-hour television documentary aired earlier this month. Kelly's attorney has denied the allegations.

RCA and Kelly's representatives did not return calls for comment on Friday.

Variety, quoting an unidentified source, said Sony Music had decided to “dissolve its working relationship” with Kelly, but that no external announcement would be made.

Billboard reported that the musician and the record company had agreed to part ways, citing unidentified sources. It said Kelly's catalogue would remain with RCA. His music is still available on digital retailers and streaming services.

RCA came under renewed pressure this month to drop Kelly, best-known for the hit “I Believe I Can Fly,” in the wake of a Lifetime documentary in which multiple women, including his ex-wife, made on-camera allegations of emotional, sexual and physical abuse.

Campaigners from the #MuteRKelly pressure group delivered a petition signed by some 217,000 people to Sony headquarters in New York City earlier this week asking the record company to drop the musician.

Lady Gaga was among a number of artists who said they would no longer work with him and asked for previous collaborations to be removed from streaming services.

“Thank you @Sony and @RCARecords for your leadership in refusing to profit off the trauma of Black girls and women,” tweeted Times Up, a group campaigning against sexual harassment.

Kelly, 52, released his last album in 2016. He tweeted earlier this month that a new album was on the way.

The latest accusations in the Lifetime documentary are similar to ones made against the singer over the past 25 years.

Separately on Friday, a former manager for the singer turned himself into authorities in Georgia, where he was wanted on a charge of making threats against one of the families that took part in the Lifetime documentary.

Henry Mason was released on bond after surrendering to an arrest warrant issued in July 2018, according to a Sheriff's Department spokesman in Henry County, Georgia.