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No one can ignore Iran's regional importance: Larijani

POLITICS TEHRAN — Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said on Tuesday that no country can ignore the importance of Iran in the Middle East. "The enemies talk against Iran and interfere in our missile capabilities, however, they are aware that Iran has an importance in the region that cannot be ignored," he said in a meeting with members of a committee tasked to organize ceremonies marking the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

The scholar-turned politician described the Islamic Revolution as the "greatest achievement of the century" which the enemies seek to undermine because of its importance. The Islamic Revolution overthrew a corrupt regime and established a people-based government which is a great achievement, he noted. Pointing to Iran's advances in missile technology, Larijani said this has been achieved through reliance on domestic capacities which is a great achievement.

75 early cancer detection centers to be inaugurated

HEALTH TEHRAN — 75 early cancer detection centers will start operation on January 27 nationwide on the occasion of the national cancer week, said Ali Motlaq, the head of cancer department at the Ministry of Health. "The plan for building 137 early cancer detection centers was first devised in

2015, and we hope that the remaining 60 centers will start operation in the next [Iranian calendar] year (starting March 21)," ISNA quoted Motlaq as saying on Tuesday. He expressed hope that the early cancer detection centers would give services to at least 50% of the population by 2025. →9

Germany, France sign treaty building on 1963 Elysee accord

German Chancellor Angela Merkel warned Tuesday against rising nationalism in Europe and called for a revival of cross-border cooperation as she and her French counterpart signed a pact renewing their countries' decades-long friendship. The new accord was inked in the ancient western German city of Aachen exactly 56

years after the 1963 Elysee Treaty, which set the tone for the two countries' close relationship following centuries of conflict that ended with World War II. "Populism and nationalism are strengthening in all of our countries," Merkel told French, German and European officials gathered in Aachen's town hall. →13

EDITORIAL

Mohammad Ghaderi
 Tehran Times editor-in-chief
 @ghaderi62

Exploring Saudi-Emirati disagreements on Yemen

The Saudi-Emirati offensive in Yemen and bombing of innocent people in the country is some of the issues that have always been discussed between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on the developments in Yemen.

There was an unwritten agreement between the two countries on the spheres of influence: Saudi Arabia played a role in northern Yemen and the UAE supported southern groups. However, in the past three years, there has been a great deal of discord between the two countries over the division of influence in Yemen, and the field defeats. The launch of Yemeni ballistic missiles towards the UAE and Saudi Arabia, have also brought dispute between the two states.

When Saudi-backed exiled President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi of Yemen, told the Saudi leadership of his desire to return to Aden, Riyadh replied that the Emirates were unable to comply with his request because it was not the right timing. Saudi Arabia strongly supports President Mansour Hadi, while the United Arab Emirates supports the Southern Transitional Council (STC), which seeks for an independent South Yemeni state.

Following the UAE objection, the pro-Mansour Hadi media and Yemeni Congregation for Reform (al-Islah) once again accused the Emirates of sabotaging the legal Yemeni government. Emirate media, for the first time since the meeting of Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Mohammed bin Zayed, MbZ, with Chairman of the Islah party Mohammed al-Yadomi in December, resumed wave of attack on Yemen's al-Islah party.

An Emirati state-run newspaper Akhbar Al Arab in a report on Tuesday accused al-Islah party of managing the black market on classified information exchange, which refers to the operation of the secret information exchange carried out with the help of army and Ansarullah forces.

According to Arab sources, al-Islah party has not functioned as desired by the UAE, because an important faction of the party is connected to Qatar. →7

Who is winning in USA? Trump or Pelosi? Was a coup averted? What is next?

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
 By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Robert David Steele, a former Marine Corps infantry officer and CIA spy who was recommended for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017, regularly answers questions for Tehran Times. Steele recently recommended to replace James Mattis as Secretary of Defense, is a former candidate for President in the USA (Reform Party, 2012) and the founder of #UNRIG, the Election

Integrity movement in America. A prolific author he is also the top reviewer of non-fiction books in the English language, with over 2,500 reviews posted across 98 categories of literature. Today he answers questions about the U.S. Government shut-down, the rumored coup attempt against President Donald Trump by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, and his forecast of near term political, legal, and economic changes in the USA. ■ Doyle McManus, an established reporter

for the Los Angeles Times, has just published an article "Nancy Pelosi is winning in her battle with Trump." Do you agree with his assessment? A. Absolutely not. McManus is typical of the Deep State fake news apparatchiks who write what their audience wants to hear. I have published an open letter disputing his account. SPECIAL: LA Times is Wrong — Nancy Pelosi is Not Winning — An Open Letter from Robert Steele to Doyle McManus that I am happy to summarize here. →7

SPV does not have requisite mechanism to overcome U.S. opposition: Entessar

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
 By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN — Nader Entessar, professor emeritus of political science from university of South Alabama, still insists that the SPV is a hollow shell and does not have the requisite mechanism to overcome U.S. opposition. Following is the full text of his interview: ■ How successful do you see the anti-Iran

U.S. organized meeting in Poland? A: The success of the Warsaw meeting will depend on a number of factors. The full agenda of the meeting is not yet available. We don't know at what level the participating countries will be represented. What we do know is that the U.S. intends to turn the meeting into an anti-Iran forum, and the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will do his utmost to browbeat the participating countries into following the

U.S. line on Iran. ■ Why is Poland chosen by the U.S. to host the meeting? A: Several countries in the former Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe are now firmly in the U.S. camp, and Poland today almost always follows Washington's leads in world affairs. The meeting's venue could have easily been another Eastern European country like Hungary or the Czech Republic. →7

U.S. pressures cannot stop Iraq, KRG relations with Iran: Nazim Dabbagh

By Somayyeh Khomar Baghi

TEHRAN (MNA) — Nazim Dabbagh, the representative of Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to Iran says that KRG-Iran economic relations are continuing despite the U.S. anti-Iran sanctions. The recent visit of the Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif along with an economic and political delegation to Iraq and the Kurdistan

region, U.S. anti-Iran sanctions and possible visit of Iraqi President Barham Saleh to the United States as well as the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq and Kurdistan region were among the issues discussed in an interview with the representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to Iran Nazim Dabbagh by MNA correspondent Somayyeh Khomar Baghi. "The visit of Iran's foreign minister to Iraq

was important, both for Baghdad and for the KRG. The issues that were discussed during the trip were security issues, as well as cooperation and consultation in the current conditions of the region," Dabbagh said. "Another issue discussed was the U.S. sanctions against Iran. The two sides stressed that Tehran's relations with Baghdad and the Kurdistan region should continue. →7



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The Super Blood Wolf Moon of 2019

On January 20, 2019, the moon passed through Earth's shadow in a total lunar eclipse during the Full Wolf Moon, which is also a "Supermoon." Although it was a total eclipse, the moon never went completely dark but rather took on a coppery red glow - called a Blood Moon. It was also a full Moon that is especially close to Earth, called a Supermoon. And since it appears in January, when wolves howled in hunger outside villages, it has also earned the name Wolf Moon.

ARTICLE

Ebrahim Fallahi
 Tehran Times journalist

Will Iran's oil revenues satisfy next year's budget expectations?

Despite enjoying a great variety of income sources besides oil, Iran is undeniably dependent on oil revenues for managing its financial affairs. According to economists, near 70 percent of the Iranian government's total income comes from selling oil and oil products.

So, considering the significance of oil in Iran's macro-economic planning, every year in preparing the country's budget bill the government administration meticulously analyzes the market dynamics to estimate an average oil price and also an amount for the country's oil exports.

In the \$405-billion national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1398 (starts on March 21, 2019), which was presented to the Majlis by President Hassan Rouhani in December 2018, the estimated oil incomes stood at 1.425 quadrillion rials (about \$34 billion), with the country's oil exports expected to be 1.5 million barrels per day (bpd) and the oil prices estimated at \$54 per barrels.

Clearly, even in case of oil prices staying at the channel of \$54 throughout 2019, with 1.5 million bpd of oil exports still the expected \$34 billion for the oil incomes in Iran's next year budget will not be realized, this begs the question that "how well Iran's oil revenues could satisfy next year's budget expectations?"

Clearly oil prices and oil exports are the main variables in Iran's oil income equation. So in estimating the level of realization in the "oil share" of Iran's next budget bill, what is important is assessing the factors which can affect these two variables.

■ **The U.S. sanctions** Currently, the most important factor which plays a significant role in determining the amount of Iran's oil exports and consequently the outlook of the country's oil revenues in 2019, is the impact of U.S. sanctions.

In May 2018, Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from an international deal with Iran, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and in November the sanctions were reimposed on the country's oil sector. →4

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Zarif: U.S. still violating Blacks' rights

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said late on Monday that the detention and imprisonment of Press TV news presenter Marzieh Hashemi shows the U.S. is still violating "the civil rights of black men and women".

"The US gov needs to explain how Marzieh Hashemi—a journalist and grandmother—is such a flight risk that she must be incarcerated until she finishes her testimony to a grand jury," Zarif said in a message posted on his Twitter account.

Pointing to the murder of American civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, he added, "50 years after MLK assassination, US still violates the civil rights of black men and women".



Tehran denounces suicide attack in Kabul

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Tuesday condemned a suicide attack on a military center west of the Afghan capital Kabul, which claimed the lives of dozens of people.

In a statement, Qassemi offered his condolences to the Afghan government and people, especially the bereaved families, over the heinous crime, the Foreign Ministry website reported.

The spokesman said Iran denounces any use of violence, underlining the need for dialogue as well as national understanding in Afghanistan in order to achieve peace, stability and tranquility in the country.



'Ministers ask Leader to intervene in CFT, Palermo issues'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Labor Minister Mohammad Shariatmadari on Tuesday confirmed that some cabinet ministers have asked Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to advise the Expediency Council to expedite studying issues related to Iran's accession to the CFT and the Palermo Convention.

The story was first broken through a tweet by Alireza Rahimi, a member of the parliament's presiding board.

CFT is a convention to combat financing of terrorism, and the Palermo Convention is a 2000 United Nations-sponsored multilateral treaty against transnational organized crime.

The parliament on Sunday sent the CFT bill, which the Guardian Council says there is still 19 faults with it, to the Expediency Council.



Iran summons Swiss envoy over U.S. detention of TV anchor

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Tuesday that Iran had summoned Swiss Ambassador to Tehran Markus Leitner over the U.S. detention of Iranian TV anchor Marzieh Hashemi.

The Swiss embassy in Tehran represents U.S. interests in Iran. Hashemi, 59, was detained at St. Louis' Lambert International Airport on January 13 and then taken by the FBI to Washington.

On Saturday, a U.S. federal judge said Hashemi, who works for Press TV, has not been charged with any crime, but has made two appearances in District Court, NPR reported. She is expected to be released when she completes her grand jury testimony.



Ambassador honors Swiss professor's studies on Iran

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Ambassador to Switzerland Mohammad Reza Hajj Karim Jabbari on Monday expressed his gratitude to Swiss Iranologist Professor Johann Christoph Burgel for his outstanding contributions to the Islamic and Iranian studies as well as his invaluable translations in the field of Persian language and history, IRNA reported.

Burgel was born in Poland in 1931 and then migrated to Germany. He had been professor of Islamic and Iranian studies and Persian language and literature of University of Bern for 25 years. He used to chair the university's Institute of Islamic Studies. Now retired, he is considered one of the noted figures in the Islamic world.



\$3.5 billion drug money lost track of: judiciary

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Tehran prosecutor said on Tuesday that \$3.5 billion government-rate currency allocated to the import of drugs has been lost track of.

"It is not clear how the currency has been spent and nobody announces anything in this regard," Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi told a press conference, the YJC reported on Tuesday.

There is a sort of disarray in the way the registration, clearance and related systems operate, he said.

In the meantime, Jafari Dolatabadi said people's perception of corruption has heightened and people are expressing concern about prevalence of corruption.

He cited a recent study which shows 50 percent of Iranians are concerned about rampant corruption.

JCPOA became ideological target for conservatives in U.S., Israel, and S. Arabia: Michigan professor

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), became an ideological target for conservatives in the U.S., Israel, and Saudi Arabia, and that is the reason Washington walked out of it, Ronald Grigor Suny, professor of social and political history at the University of Michigan, has told ILNA.

The agreement made by President Obama and other nations with Iran was a significant and important improvement in the prospects for peace, Suny said, expressing sadness over the conservatives' approach to the deal.

"Imagine an agreement that brought Iran, the USA, Russia, and Europe together; that was quite extraordinary. There is no question that the nuclear deal was working well," he added.

"Donald Trump, who has an infantile knowledge of history or international relations, recklessly withdrew from the deal, and just as in the Paris Climate Agreement, dealt a severe blow to the future of the planet. Wiser heads in Europe, Asia, and Iran hopefully will



prevail and find a way around the colossal bully that the United States has become."

"In the Middle East and Afghanistan the 'good intentions' of the American political elite, from George W. Bush, through Obama, to Trump have resulted in enormous pain, damage, and actual deaths of hundreds of thousands of people," the professor said.

"America's liberal universalism, its desire to spread liberal democracy and capitalism to what they consider benighted and backward countries is a demonstration of arrogance by a superpower that has too much power and not enough intelligence to rule the world in the way it thinks the world ought to be ruled. Trump wants to destroy the liberal

international order dominated by the United States but has nothing to replace it except his narrow narcissistic insistence on America First."

Suny added that the United States needs to reassess its place in the world. "It is certainly the dominant power, but as Robespierre said, 'Nobody loves an armed missionary.'"

"Because of its wealth and power, the USA will remain a major player, but it has to think seriously about what it can and should seek to achieve. Other countries like Russia, China, and Iran have their own interests, which do not magically conform to those of the United States."

"There was a chance a quarter of a century ago when the Soviet Union disintegrated to rethink the world order, but instead the USA decided to recreate the division of Europe, expand NATO, isolate Russia, continue to give Israel unqualified support and sacrifice the Palestinian people, isolate Iran, invade Afghanistan, Iraq, support the Saudis in their obscene war in Yemen, betray once again the Kurds.... one could go on."

Shamkhani says negotiation with U.S. is futile

POLITICS TEHRAN — Given the White House's move to violate its obligations under the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council says any negotiation with the U.S. would be futile.

"The United States failed in the JCPOA test, so Iran cannot trust them in any other area," Ali Shamkhani told the Persian-language Tehran Foreign Policy Studies Quarterly.

"We are no longer allowed to devote the Iranian nation's time to fruitless processes."

The security chief further pointed to Washington's hostilities toward the Islamic Republic, saying, "Our nation, which has vigilantly neutralized all of the White House's acts of sabotage over the past forty years, will foil America's conspiracy through relying on domestic capacities this time too."

The remarks come as tensions between Iran and the U.S. have escalated since President Donald Trump walked away

from the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers in May and re-imposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

Trump on August 6 signed an executive order re-imposing many sanctions on Iran, three months after pulling out of the JCPOA.

He said the U.S. policy is to levy "maximum economic pressure" on the country.

The second batch of U.S. sanctions against the Islamic Republic took effect on November 4.

Germany claims honoring Iran deal while slapping sanctions on airline

Despite having just imposed sanctions on an Iranian airline, Germany claims it is honoring the 2015 nuclear deal which it is a signatory.

The deal prohibited the imposition of sanctions on Iran as long as the country remained faithful to curbing its nuclear program. The IAEA, the United Nation's nuclear watchdog, has so far confirmed Iran's compliance in reports that amount to 13 in number since the deal was brokered.

Germany revoked the license of Iran's Mahan Air on Monday, according to Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa).

The decision came days after the arrest of a man employed by the German military named only as Abdul Hamid S on alleged suspicion of spying for Iran. Tehran denied the allegation.

The step came as good tidings particularly to the U.S., which had set the precedent of violating the nuclear pact in March 2018. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo welcomed the step and called on other U.S. allies to follow suit.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said the move against Mahan Air would not affect

backing for the nuclear deal, which remained exceptionally important to Germany.

A ban on Mahan Air has been in place in the United States since 2011, and Washington has long called on its allies in Europe to withdraw landing rights from the airline.

U.S. Ambassador to Berlin Richard Grenell told dpa that the German move showed a "great leadership."

Mahan Air used to conduct four flights to Germany per week, three to Dusseldorf and one to Munich.

It continues to fly to around 20 foreign

destinations, including Paris, Milan and Barcelona.

Tehran has frequently accused its arch-enemies Israel and the U.S. of wanting to sabotage the nuclear deal and the country's improved relationship with the EU, especially with Britain, France and Germany.

Trump on August 6 signed an executive order re-imposing sanctions on Iran.

He said the U.S. policy is to levy "maximum economic pressure" on the country.

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Large turnout at Bahman 22 rallies to foil plots: Rahmani Fazli

Interior minister calls on Judiciary to counter 'disappointing talk'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli has underlined the importance of the Bahman 22nd (Feb. 11th) rallies marking the 40th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, saying the glory of the nation's large turnout would foil the enemies' plots.

"The enemies' campaign against the rallies and their focus on "sinister goals such as the overthrow of the (Islamic) establishment before the 40th anniversary of the revolution gloriously, Rahmani Fazli said in a speech on Monday night, Tasnim reported.

"The people's turnout and their support for the country have always led to the despair and disappointment of the enemies and the hegemonic system," the interior minister remarked.

He further hailed the Iranian nation as "the strongest element against the enemy".

In July 2017, John Bolton, prior to his term as U.S. national security advisor, called on the U.S. government to intensify measures to counter the Islamic Republic.

"The outcome of the president's policy review should be



to determine that the Ayatollah Khomeini's 1979 revolution will not last until its 40th birthday," he said, addressing the Free Iran Gathering in Paris.

In a speech in December 2018, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dismissed comments by U.S. officials that the Islamic Republic would not see its 40th anniversary, saying the Iranian nation will celebrate

the event this year more magnificently than before.

The Iranian nation topped the U.S.-backed Pahlavi regime on February 11, 1979, ending the 2,500 years of monarchy in the country.

Every year Iranians mark the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution from February 1 to 11, known as the Ten-Day Fajr ceremonies. On February 1, 1979, Imam Khomeini returned home from years of exile in Iraq, Turkey, and France.

Spreading disappointment unacceptable'

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rahmani Fazli said spreading disappointment and creating divisions in the society are "unacceptable acts", calling on the Judiciary to take a tougher stance on the issue within the framework of legal principles.

He argued that such moves are the epitome of "narrow-mindedness" and lack of true understanding of national interests and security, expressing regrets that certain individuals and movements believe they can defend the Islamic Republic by attacking the Rouhani administration.

"We're all in the same boat, so we all should strive for the country's national interests and security," the minister concluded.

Polish diplomat calls meeting with Araqchi 'constructive'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Maciej Lang has said that his meeting with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi on a joint U.S.-Poland conference on the Middle East was "constructive".

"We spoke about a wide range of issues, including misunderstandings about the Warsaw conference, and I presented our point of view on this issue. We had a long discussion and I hope that I did it in a clear way," Lang told AFP in an interview published on Monday.

"For Poland this conference is not against any country," he said.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced on January 11 that Warsaw will host a conference that "includes an important element of making sure that Iran is not a destabilizing influence" in the region.

The conference is set to be held on Feb. 13-14.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry summoned on January 13 Polish charge d'affaires to Tehran Wojciech Unolt to protest Poland's bid to co-host the anti-Iran conference.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has described the move as "shameful" in light of the fact that Iran



saved Poles during World War II.

"Polish Govt can't wash the shame: while Iran saved Poles in WWII, it now hosts desperate anti-Iran circus," Zarif tweeted.

During the meeting with the Polish diplomat, Araqchi said that Iran will not allow formation of coalition against its interests by any country in or outside the region.

Lang said the Warsaw conference "is not against any country including the Islamic Republic of Iran".

He added that Poland considers Iran as an important player in the Middle East and that the aim of the conference is to help resolve problems in the region and "Poland as the friend of Iran will not allow any move against Iran."

Iranians will rely on domestic capacities to beat sanctions, Jahangiri says

POLITICS TEHRAN — First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri said on Tuesday that the U.S. will not reach its objectives if Iranians maintain unity and integrity.

Inaugurating several major infrastructure projects worth \$690.2 million in south of Kerman province, Jahangiri said it is true that the country is in a difficult situation due to U.S. sanctions but the Iranians will overcome problems through reliance on domestic capacities and proper planning.

"The Iranian nation will defeat sanctions by relying on domestic capacities and capabilities," he said.

Enemies should know that sanctions cannot affect Iran, the vice president added.

"We should not underestimate ourselves, because Iran is a great country with many capacities," he remarked.

Jahangiri noted that the U.S. has waged economic war against Iran, however this will reach nowhere.

He said that the U.S. has spared no effort in taking actions against Iran during the past 40 years, however, it has not been successful and Iran has always followed the path of progress.

Elsewhere, he noted that Iran should fight corruption, support private sector and provide opportunity for competent managers.



The pragmatic vice president also said it is a duty to create "bright prospect" for the youths.

"Today, the three branches (of government) and political, academic and economic intellectuals have the mission of boosting hope in the society," the vice president stated.

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

In an interview with the European Council on Foreign Relations published on January 11, European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said that the EU is working with the rest of the international community to keep alive the landmark nuclear agreement.

U.S. demands security guarantee for Kurdish YPG from Turkey

Erdogan: Turkey not to allow Syria safe zone to turn into 'swamp'

By staff & agencies

The protection of allied forces who fought and died battling the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit in Syria must be guaranteed, the United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu in a phone conversation.

Pompeo and Cavusoglu talked on Monday as the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) allies try to reach an agreement over the fate of the U.S.-backed, Kurdish-led fighters, who fought against the ISIL, following the planned withdrawal of the U.S. troops from northern Syria.

The U.S. State Department said Pompeo also reiterated Washington's commitment to addressing Turkey's security concerns along the Turkish-Syrian border.

During the discussion, Pompeo emphasized "the importance that the United States places on the protection of forces that worked with the United States and the global coalition to defeat ISIS (ISIL)", department spokesman Robert Palladino said in a press release.

The U.S.-backed People's Protection Units (People's Defense Units/Yekineyên Parastina Gel/YPG), which spearheads the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) operations, played a role in the removal of ISIL terrorists after the armed group captured vast territory in Syria and Iraq in 2014.

Turkey considers the YPG a "terrorist" group with ties to the armed Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê/PKK), which has waged a bloody war in Turkey since the 1980s demanding Kurdish autonomy.

The U.S. demand for the YPG militia's safety has been a source of growing tensions between the NATO allies, which led to the U.S. President Donald Trump threatening Ankara with economic "devastation" if it hits the armed group in northern Syria.

In a surprise move, Trump announced on December 19 that the U.S. would pull its 2,000 soldiers out of northeastern Syria quickly, declaring ISIL had been defeated - a view not shared by many security experts and policy advisers.

The U.S. officials have since been walking back Trump's timeline, suggesting conditions for any such withdrawal would be finishing off ISIL and Turkey assuring the safety of its allied Kurdish fighters.

In a phone conversation on Sunday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told Trump that Turkey was ready to take over security in Manbij, a town in northeastern Syria held by the SDF and the YPG, where four Americans died in an ISIL-claimed suicide bombing last week.

Turkey has long demanded that YPG-led forces move to the east of the Euphrates River in Syria and leave control of Manbij to the Turkish army and its allied militias.

Trump and Erdogan have discussed creating a safe zone in Syria starting at the Syrian-Turkish border, but it's unclear if any progress has been made.

Turkey has vowed to launch a new cross border military operation to wipe out the YPG in Manbij.

The armed group's predominance east of the Euphrates River in northern Syria is a prime threat to Turkey that will be eliminated, Omer Celik, spokesman for Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve



Kalk?nma Partisi/AKP), said on Monday.

"Those talking about Syria's territorial integrity and its people's sovereignty should take a principled stance against terror groups," said Celik. "Turkey has the capacity to fight Daesh [ISIL] and to take over security in Manbij. Thus, it has the capacity to form a safe zone [in Syria]."

The SDF said last week it was ready to help create a safe zone amid Kurdish fears the U.S. withdrawal would give Ankara an opportunity to launch a new offensive.

Erdogan: Turkey not to allow Syria safe zone to turn into 'swamp'

This is while, Erdogan says the country will never allow the implementation of a militant-free safe zone in Syria to be turned into "a swamp" like the one in northern Iraq, where the U.S.-backed Kurdish militants launch attacks on Turkish soil.

Erdogan made the remarks at an official event in the Turkish capital Ankara on Monday.

"Our offer for a safe zone aims at keeping terrorists away from our borders. In another words, we are not talking of a safe zone against Turkey, but rather one against terrorists. We will never allow a safe zone that will turn into a new swamp for Turkey like the one in northern Iraq where we still experience problems," he said. The Turkish leader also said Ankara had "no hidden agenda" over Syria's territorial integrity and that it would hand over the northern Syrian town of Manbij to its real owners.

Britain says to pull fighter jets from Syria after Trump's withdrawal decision

Meantime, the British Royal Air Force (RAF) is set to call back more than half of its fighter jets from Syria after Trump's decision to withdraw American forces from the country.

British commanders confirmed on Monday that at least eight RAF Tornado jets would return to their bases in Britain next month, reducing to six the total number of British aircraft committed to the U.S.-led aerial campaign in the country, the Daily Mail reported.

The U.S. and Britain, alongside their other allies, have been pounding alleged ISIL positions in Syria since 2014.

Besides fighter jets, London has also deployed a number of its special forces to parts of Syria to carry out secret missions in coordination with over 2,000 American

troops stationed in various bases across the war-torn country.

The ageing Tornados were scheduled to be retired in March but British officials shelved plans to replace them following Trump's decision, the report said.

The planned withdrawal leaves the UK with six advanced Eurofighter Typhoon jets and around 10 Reaper drones to carry out future operations.

The report said London would also reduce the number of its special forces in Syria in the coming weeks.

"The UK remains fully committed to the fight against Daesh [ISIL], and the retirement of the Tornado will be not lead to a reduction in the capability of the RAF's contribution to the global coalition," the Mail quoted a Ministry of Defense spokesman as saying.

1 in 3 British fighter jets can't fly, including Typhoons

Elsewhere, it was revealed on Monday that at least a third of British Royal Air Force's large fleet of fighter jets, including some Typhoons, were unable to fly.

Data made available under Freedom of Information (FOI) laws showed that 142 of RAF's 434-aircraft fleet were either under repaired or mothballed - cannibalized for parts or stored for future use.

The jets unable to fly included 55 out of RAF's entire fleet of 156 Typhoons, which Britain has used in its Syria operations.

They are the same jets that RAF uses to intercept Russian or other foreign jets that occasionally fly near British airspace.

Liberal Democrat spokesman Ming Campbell told The Mirror that the number was greater than what was expected for a fleet of this size. Nia Griffith, the shadow defense secretary, said: "Conservative cuts have had a crippling effect on this country's defenses and our ability to respond to the range of threats that the UK faces."

The RAF has shrunk to half its size in the last 25 years.

EU sanctions Russians, Syrians over alleged links to chemical attacks

Moreover, the European Union (EU) has imposed sanctions against a number of Russian and Syrian individuals over what it claims to be their links to chemical weapons attacks.

During a Monday meeting in the Belgian

capital, Brussels, EU foreign ministers agreed to slap travel bans and asset freezes on four Russians working for the country's military intelligence agency, the GRU, in connection with the poisoning of ex-spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury, England, in March 2018.

GRU, is the main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (G.U./formerly the Main Intelligence Directorate) and still commonly known by its previous abbreviation GRU, is the foreign military intelligence agency of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (formerly the USSR's General Staff).

The punitive measures target the GRU head, deputy head and two officials "for possession, transport and use in Salisbury of a toxic nerve agent," the ministers said in a statement. The Skripals escaped death, but months later, a Salisbury resident died after coming into contact with the nerve agent, which had been put in a perfume bottle, and her partner had to be given extensive medical treatment.

Britain's Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said the fresh bans "deliver on our vow to take tough action against the reckless and irresponsible activities of the Russian military intelligence organization."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov rejected the sanctions as "groundless," saying, "We have still not heard any evidence" against those accused in Skripal's case.

"We reserve the right to take retaliatory measures over this unfriendly step," a Russian Foreign Ministry statement read.

"An information campaign unleashed by the British authorities over this case primarily has a domestic agenda. It is telling that its new round coincides with a new crisis in Brexit talks," it added.

Alongside the Russian individuals, the EU slapped sanctions on Syria's state-run Scientific Studies and Research Center (SSRC) as well as five of its staff over what it calls the use of chemical weapons.

The EU foreign ministers said in their statement that the new sanctions contribute "to the EU's efforts to counter the proliferation and use of chemical weapons, which poses a serious threat to international security."

Hunt claimed that the Syrians targeted are responsible for chemical weapons attacks in Syria, including the one that hit the Damascus suburb town of Douma on April 7, 2018.

Western states blamed the Syrian government for the incident, but Damascus firmly rejected the accusation.

One week after the suspected gas attack, the U.S., Britain and France launched a coordinated missile strike against sites and research facilities near Damascus and Homs with the purported goal of paralyzing the Syrian government's capability to produce chemicals. This is while Syria surrendered its entire chemical stockpile in 2013 to a mission led by the OPCW (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons) and the UN.

Separately on Tuesday, the EU added 11 Syrian businessmen and companies that support the administration of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to another sanctions list.

They were described as being involved in luxury real estate and other government-backed projects.

Russian plane bound for Moscow in suspected hijacking

Russian police detained a drunken man who threatened the crew of a passenger plane flying Tuesday from a Siberian city to Moscow, forcing it to land shortly after take-off.

The Russian Investigative Committee said that the man told the Aeroflot crew that he was armed and demanded the diversion of the plane after it had taken off from the Siberian city of Surgut. The plane landed in the city of Khanty-Mansiysk, about 230 kilometers to the west.

The plane stood on the runway in Khanty-Mansiysk for more than an hour before law enforcement officials went onboard. The airport was evacuated and the area cordoned off. Aeroflot said no one was hurt.

The investigators said the man has been identified as a Surgut resident who has a past conviction for property damage. He will now face charges of hijacking.

(Source: AP)

EU, AU signal support, but no acclaim, for Congo president-elect



The European Union and the African Union said on Tuesday they had taken note of the decision by the Democratic Republic of Congo's Constitutional Court to back disputed president-elect Felix Tshisekedi, signaling they would work with him.

Asked about the Dec. 30 election, the EU and the AU said they discussed the outcome at a meeting in Brussels, noting the court's support for Tshisekedi. Officials at a news conference did not explicitly say in public that they recognized him as the winner and declined to congratulate him, however.

"We've taken note of the Constitutional Court's proclamation ... the challenge of the new president is a large one on many issues," EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini told a news conference, flanked by members of the African Union.

"We think all this requires that the president must be a unifying force," Mogherini told a news conference, saying the European Union would continue to work closely with Congo.

Rwanda's Foreign Minister Richard Sezibera, who represented the African Union at the meeting of the two region's foreign ministers, also said he noted the court's decision.

"The African Union has taken note that the institutions of the DRC have announced a final result and remains committed to working with the people of the DRC to continue to surmount the challenges that may remain."

African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security Smail Chergui, who spoke after Mogherini and Sezibera, said he was ready to work with Tshisekedi and with all Congolese political parties but declined to go into details.

Congo's Constitutional Court early on Sunday rejected runner-up candidate Martin Fayulu complaint that the election was rigged and backed Tshisekedi's victory, opposition to the vote appears to have softened. Tshisekedi is expected to be sworn in on Jan. 24.

(Source: Daily Star)

Jordan: Israel's new airport violates kingdom's airspace, territorial integrity

Jordan has lashed out at Israel for opening a new international airport close to the Red Sea and a few kilometers from the Jordanian border, denouncing the measure as a threat to the kingdom's airspace and territorial integrity.

Ramon Airport, located near the Red Sea resort city of Eilat in Israel, was inaugurated by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday.

The new Israeli airport sits just across the border from Jordan's King Hussein International Airport in the Red Sea port city of Aqaba.

"Jordan rejects the establishment of the Israeli airport in its current location," the head of Jordan's Civil Aviation Regulatory Commission, Haitham Misto, said, adding that the airport violated "international standards regarding respect for the sovereignty of airspace and territory of other countries."

Misto also said that Jordan had notified the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) of "the kingdom's strong objection."

The official said Amman had called on the ICAO to "take all necessary measures to ensure that Israel complies with international standards."

Misto said the committee had contacted the Israeli authorities and "informed them that the decision to operate the airport should not be taken unilaterally until all outstanding matters are resolved."

Jordan "reserves all options to ensure the defense of the kingdom's interests and protection," he added.

Jordanian media also said the kingdom's authorities had lodged a complaint with international bodies over the Israeli airport, without giving further details.

(Source: Press TV)

U.S. to formally seek extradition of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou

The United States will proceed with the formal extradition from Canada of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, Canada's ambassador to the United States told the Globe and Mail, as Beijing vowed to respond to Washington's actions.

David MacNaughton, in an interview with the Canadian newspaper published on Monday, said the United States has told Canada it will request Meng's extradition, but he did not say when the request will be made.

The deadline for filing is Jan. 30, or 60 days after Meng was arrested on Dec. 1 in Vancouver.

Meng, the daughter of Huawei Technologies Co Ltd [HWT. UL] founder Ren Zhengfei, was arrested at the request of the United States over alleged violations of U.S. sanctions on Iran. She was released on bail last month and is due in court in Vancouver on Feb. 6.

Relations between China and Canada turned frosty after the arrest, with China detaining two Canadian citizens and sentencing to death a Canadian man previously found guilty of drug smuggling.

Beijing has not tied any of the three Canadians' cases to Meng's arrest, but has warned of severe consequences if she was not immediately released. Western and former Canadian diplomats have said they have no doubt the cases are linked.

Huawei, the world's biggest maker of telecommunications equipment, said it had no comment on ongoing legal proceedings when contacted by Reuters on Tuesday. A U.S. Justice Department spokesman said: "We will comment through our filings."

The Canadian Justice Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment outside regular business hours.



China's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday reiterated calls for Meng's immediate release and said her case clearly was "not a regular judicial case."

Anyone with fair judgment would determine that Canada made a "serious mistake" in this matter, ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a regular news briefing.

"Canada and the United States arbitrarily abused their bilateral extradition treaty to seriously infringe upon a Chinese citizen's security and legal rights," Hua said.

China "strongly urges" the United States to correct its "mistake", cancel the arrest order for Meng, and not make a formal extradition request, she added.

Asked if China would retaliate against the United States if Meng is extradited, Hua said, "China will, of course, respond

to U.S. actions." She did not elaborate.

"Paying the price"

Canada is one of over 100 countries with which the United States has extradition treaties.

Once a formal request is received, a Canadian court must determine within 30 days if there is sufficient evidence to support extradition, and Canada's Minister of Justice must give a formal order.

In an article published on Monday, a former Canadian spy chief said Canada should ban Huawei from supplying equipment for next-generation telecoms networks, while Canada's government is studying any security implications.

Some of Canada's allies such as the United States and Australia have already imposed restrictions on using Huawei equipment, citing the risk of it being used for espionage.

Huawei has repeatedly said such concerns are unfounded, while China's ambassador to Canada last week said there would be repercussions if Ottawa blocked Huawei.

In Monday's interview, MacNaughton said he had complained to the United States that Canada was suffering from Chinese revenge for an arrest made at the U.S.'s request.

"We don't like that it is our citizens who are being punished," the Globe and Mail cited MacNaughton as saying. "The Americans are the ones seeking to have the full force of American law brought against (Ms. Meng) and yet we are the ones who are paying the price. Our citizens are."

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau previously said China was arbitrarily using the death penalty and called on world leaders to raise concerns about the detained Canadians.

(Source: Reuters)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	162805.7
IFX	1980.56

Sources: tse.ir, ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,710 rials
GBP	54,090 rials
AED	11,439 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$53.10/b
Brent	\$61.75/b
OPEC Basket	\$60.90/b
Gold	\$1,283.45/oz
Silver	\$15.35/oz
Platinum	\$796.80/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Worth of trades in IME rises 41% in a month

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The value of trades in Iran d e s k Mercantile Exchange (IME) stood at 73 trillion rials (about \$1.7 billion) in the tenth Iranian calendar month of Dey (December 22, 2018 - January 20, 2019), which shows 41 percent growth from the figure of its preceding year, Tasnim news agency reported.

As reported, over 1.77 million tons of commodities were traded at IME during the mentioned month, indicating 44 percent rise from its previous month.



Kish Island hosting intl. energy exhibition

ENERGY TEHRAN — Kish Island in south of Iran d e s k is hosting the 15th International Energy Exhibition (KISH ENEX 2019) until January 24, Shana news agency reported on Tuesday.

The exhibition which kicked off at Monday night in Kish International Exhibition Center is hosting 135 Iranian and foreign companies active in oil, gas, refining, petrochemicals, electricity and renewable energy industries.

Foreign exhibitors of this edition of the event are from Belgium, China, Italy, Japan, Britain, Czech Republic, the Netherlands, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Russia, South Korea and the U.S.

China's growth slowed by service, farm sectors, despite construction rebound

Weakness in the service and farm sectors slowed China's economic growth in the fourth quarter, despite a strong pickup in construction activity, official data showed on Tuesday.

Services grew 7.4 percent from a year earlier, slowing from 7.9 percent in the third quarter, while growth in agriculture slowed to 3.5 percent from 3.6 percent, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said.

The sector-by-sector breakdown follows release of headline GDP figures on Monday that showed China's economy in the last quarter expanded at its slowest rate since the global financial crisis due to faltering domestic demand and an ongoing trade war with the United States.

The services sector accounted for almost half of gross domestic product in the quarter by value as China continued to transition towards a service-oriented economy, while agriculture contributed about 10 percent, according to Reuters' calculations based on the latest data.

Services suffered a broad-based slackening from real estate to tech, as these industries braced for more cautious investor lending and softer consumer demand.

Growth in real estate services slowed to 2 percent year-on-year in the fourth quarter from 4.1 percent a quarter earlier, as government tightening measures to curb speculation and skyrocketing prices subdued overall demand. The sector contributed 6.4 percent to GDP in the quarter.

The retail and wholesale sector slowed to 5.5 percent from 6.2 percent as consumption of physical goods lost momentum. Auto sales in the world's biggest car market shrank for the first time in 2018 since the 1990s.

Though retail sales growth picked up marginally in December to 8.2 percent, the consumer strength gauge is around the weakest in 15 years.

"With consumer confidence now trending down and the labor market set to weaken further, we think households will turn even more cautious in the coming months, weighing on service sector growth," Capital Economics wrote in a note on Tuesday after the data release.

Having been a stellar performer benefiting from supportive policies, the tech sector still grew at double-digit rate but growth slowed to 29.1 percent in the fourth quarter compared with 32.8 percent in the third. It accounted for about 3 percent of GDP in the fourth quarter.

As fears for a sharp slowdown mounted amid uncertainties over whether the trade war will be brought to an end any time soon, Beijing has been drumming the message that it has plenty of room to deploy measures to spur economic growth.

Finance was one of the few bright spots in the service sector thanks to recent government stimulus measures to keep liquidity ample. (Source: Reuters)

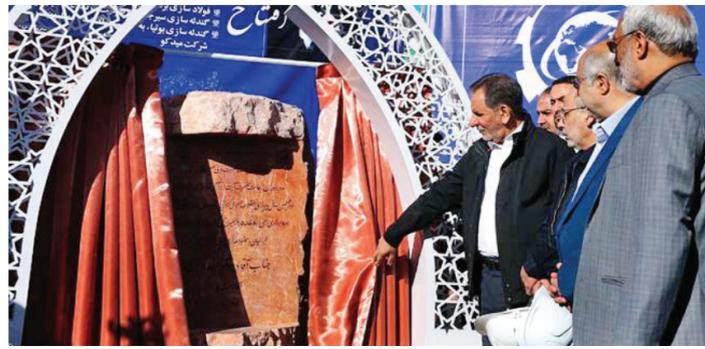
Industrial, energy projects worth \$700m inaugurated

ECONOMY TEHRAN — In his two-day visit to the southeastern province of Kerman, First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri, accompanied by some cabinet members, inaugurated several major infrastructure projects worth \$690.2 million on Monday and Tuesday, IRNA reported.

The vice-president inaugurated gas, electricity, and water supply projects valued at 7 trillion rials (about \$166.6 million) in south of Kerman.

The gas supply project worth 5 trillion rials (about \$119 million) will provide gas for 78 villages and industrial parks of the eastern and southern regions of the province, the report added.

Power substations in south and west areas



of Kerman, using 1.78 trillion rials (about \$42.3 million) of credit, also came online.

Butia iron ore pellet production plant, a subsidiary of Butia Iranian Steel Company (BISCO), with the annual capacity of producing 2.5 million tons of pellets was the other project inaugurated by Jahangiri.

Utilizing 7-trillion-rial (\$166.6 million) of investment, the project will create 300 direct and over 3,500 indirect jobs in the process.

Jahangiri also cut the ribbon on Bardsir Steel Industries Company with the production capacity of one million tons of steel pallets and investments of 15 trillion rials (about \$357 million), which is said to provide 600 workers with direct jobs and 6,500 ones with indirect jobs.

Inflation rate at 20.6%: statistical center

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The Statistical Center of Iran announced that the inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on January 20, which marks the end of the tenth Iranian calendar month of Dey, stood at 20.6 percent, IRNA reported.

Inflation rate in the mentioned period shows 2.6 percent rise from the figure of the twelve-month period ended on the last day of the ninth Iranian calendar month of Azar (December 21, 2018).

As reported, the average goods and services Consumer Price Index (CPI) stood at 154.1 in urban areas and at 158.4 in the rural regions in Dey, indicating 2.1 percent

and 2.8 percent increase, respectively, compared to the previous month.

In Iranian calendar year 1395 (ended on March 20, 2017), Iran could manage to experience a single-digit inflation rate after 26 years.

The inflations rate stood at 9.8 percent in that year according to the Statistical Center of Iran and at nine percent according to the CBI.

But since this year's calendar month of Khordad (ended on June 22, 2018), when the inflation rate stood at 10.2 percent, as announced by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), the country's experiencing a double-digit inflation rate again.



Will Iran's oil revenues satisfy next year's budget expectations?

I → Although shortly after the sanctions took effect, the U.S. government granted exemptions to eight countries - China, India, Greece, Italy, Taiwan, Japan, Turkey and South Korea - allowing them to temporarily continue buying Iranian oil, but the possible changes in the U.S. policies toward Iran and the continuous slowdown in the global economy as a result of U.S.-China trade war could create a less promising outlook for Iran's oil market throughout 2019.

Some analysts believe that the United States is likely to extend waivers in May but will reduce the number of countries receiving them.

As New York Times quoted analysts at Eurasia Group, "China, India, Japan, South Korea and Turkey are likely to be given waivers after they expire in May."

This means Italy, Greece and Taiwan will not be granted any more waivers.

So obviously, the U.S.'s stand toward Iran is the main factor determining the extent to which the oil revenues could realize the country's budget estimations.

Last year's budget bill was planned based on an estimation of selling 2.5 million bpd of oil and byproducts at a price of \$55 per barrel. The great reduction in the expected oil exports - 1.5m bpd - in the next year's budget, however, clearly shows how the situation could unwind.

U.S.-China trade war

Another factor which has had a drastic impact on the global oil markets in the last six months, is the trade war between the U.S. and China, a prolonged row which caused the oil prices to fall near 20 percent in Q4 of 2018.

Crude oil had a great start in 2018. The oil prices touched \$80 per barrel for the first



time in almost four years thanks to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) decision to extend the oil production cuts until end of 2018.

However, as the trade war between the U.S. and China got worse, crude oil was the first frontier to feel the pinch. Brent oil prices started declining since the beginning of July, thanks to the implementation of the U.S. tariffs on several billions of dollars worth of Chinese goods.

Now, nearly six months after the first signs of the trade war started to show in the oil market, still the concerns over the future of oil demand and a global economic slowdown are haunting the oil prices.

In its latest World Economic Outlook, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) cut its forecast for average oil prices to just below \$60 per barrel in 2019 from close to \$70 in its October edition.

Reuters said on Monday that "China this

week reported its lowest economic growth figure since 1990, with GDP rising by 6.6 percent in 2018."

Most economists and market analysts believe that slowing manufacturing activity in China will negatively impact the demand and consequently the oil prices in 2019.

With oil prices at their current \$62, Iran's budget expectations are to some extent satisfied, but is it going to stay like this for the rest of 2019?

OPEC+ cuts

Earlier in July 2018, under pressure from the U.S. for reducing the oil prices, Saudi Arabia decided to increase its oil production to a record high.

Following this decision and with Russia and some other OPEC nations like Iraq and Libya also increasing their output and of course with the surge in U.S. shale output, suddenly the market was overflown by oil and the stable market which was the result of

a long lasting deal between OPEC and non-OPEC members once again fell into chaos.

The reduction of global demand as a result of the trade war between the U.S. and China added to the severity of the situation and warning bells started to ring across the global oil market.

As a result, later in December despite opposition from U.S. President Donald Trump, headed by Saudi Arabia and Russia once again major oil producers agreed to cut oil production and rebalance the market.

In a meeting in Vienna, the OPEC+ decided to take 1.2 million barrels per day off the market for the first six months of 2019.

Although as an immediate response to the deal, oil prices rapidly recovered from an under-fifty ceiling, however the OPEC+ announcement didn't result the expected upward impact on the oil market.

The recent news regarding a gloomy global economic outlook has also spread a sense of skepticism throughout the oil market and the support from supply cuts that started in late 2018 by OPEC+ doesn't seem to be enough to withhold the darkening impact of dimming demand.

Considering all the above mentioned factors which could individually or together impact Iran's oil revenues in the upcoming fiscal year, it is hard to have any absolute view about the Iranian oil incomes in 2019.

However, what is clear is that Iran's oil exports are expected to rise in the upcoming months since the country's Asian buyers are stepping up their intakes. And with the prices at the current \$62, one can say that the current situation is standing exactly at the threshold of Iranian budget bill expectations.

So fingers crossed for a better situation or permanence of the current dynamics.

IMF pessimism + trade tensions = sickly stocks

Pessimism about global growth drove down world shares and commodity markets on Tuesday and left investors seeking refuge in the dollar, government bonds and gold.

The International Monetary Fund's warning of a darkening outlook on Monday, after China's confirmed its slowest growth rate in nearly 30 years, continued to weigh on the mood. European shares followed Asia into the red as disappointing earnings from Swiss bank UBS compounded what had been a catastrophic 2018 for Europe's banking sector, which lost nearly 30 percent of its value over the year.

In its World Economic Outlook report, the IMF predicted the global economy would grow at 3.5 percent in 2019 and 3.6 percent in 2020, down 0.2 and 0.1 percentage point respectively from last October's forecasts.

The downgrades heavily reflected weakness in Europe though, with Germany hurt by new car emission rules, Italy under market pressure due to Rome's recent budget standoff with the European Union and Brexit worries aplenty too.

"We have seen a little bit of a pull back, but whether it's the IMF growth downgrade or China related is neither here nor there," said CMC Markets' senior analyst Michael Hewson.

He pointed to the strong rebound markets like Germany's Dax has seen since the end of December as well as other major global stock markets.

"We are at the top end of the range for this year and given

the global uncertainty investors are probably taking the view that it is probably wise to take a bit of profit off the table."

Futures markets pointed to another weak start for the U.S. later although the mood had improved a touch since Asian trading with Wall Street futures last off 0.5-0.7 percent. [N]

In Asia, losses had been led by Chinese shares, with the blue-chip index off 1.2 percent. Japan's Nikkei skidded 0.5 percent, Hong Kong's Hang Seng index closed down 0.8 percent and Sydney faltered 0.5 percent. [SS][T]

In another sign of risk aversion, the Australian dollar, often used as a liquid proxy for China investments, eased 0.3 percent to \$0.7134, putting it on track for a third straight session of losses.

The same worries had also sent copper, used in electrical wires and vehicles, drifting lower in the metals markets. [MET/L]

Brexit plans

In the currency markets, the dollar held at a near three-week high as investors sought the relative safety of the U.S. currency. That knocked the euro and most emerging market currencies, many of which have had a decent start to the year.

Sterling was a shade firmer at \$1.29 after data showed British workers' pay growth hit a new 10-year high and employment had grown by much more than expected in the three months to the end of November.

Otherwise traders were still waiting to see whether UK Prime Minister Theresa May can push her Brexit plans through the

country's bitterly divided parliament.

May had offered tweaks on Monday by seeking further concessions from the European Union on a backup plan to avoid a hard border between the British-administered province of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

But she had also refused to rule out leaving the EU at the end of March without any deal.

"Any upside for sterling in the near term may be limited," said Capital Economics analyst Liam Peach. "Uncertainty would continue during the extended negotiations and there is no guarantee that it would last for only a short period of time."

There was demand too for the safe-haven yen with the Japanese currency last buying at 109.41 per dollar. The euro was near the floor of its recent trading range at \$1.1358. Against a basket of currencies, the dollar was barely changed at 96.393.

In commodities, the global growth worries pulled oil prices lower with Brent down 55 cents at \$62.19 and U.S. crude futures off 39 cents at \$53.41. [O/R]

Euro zone government bond yields also fell. Most 10-year yields were down two basis points on the day with Germany's at 0.225 percent compared to Friday's one-month high close to 0.28 percent.

The European Central Bank holds its first meeting of the year on Thursday.

(Source: Reuters)

Denmark to tighten rules for bank bosses as Danske Bank hits image

Danish financial firms risk problems getting financing and risk capital abroad if there is a repeat of the Danske Bank money laundering scandal, the country's financial regulator said, as lawmakers sought to toughen liability rules for managers.

Denmark's reputation for being "one of

the least corrupt countries in the world" has suffered "great damage" from the Danske Bank affair, the Financial Supervisory Authority (FSA) said in a risk assessment on Tuesday.

Danske Bank is being investigated in Denmark, Estonia, Britain and the United

States over 200 billion euros (\$227 billion) of suspicious payments through its Estonian branch between 2007 and 2015.

"A repetition may have consequences for the ability of Danish financial companies to obtain financing and risk capital abroad and enter into other financial transactions

with foreign counterparties," the FSA said.

Danish lawmakers are now looking for ways to tighten the liability rules for people managing the country's banks following the Danske Bank revelations and a Supreme Court ruling in another bank scandal last week.

(Source: CNBC)

IMF cuts 2019, 2020 oil price forecasts on global demand concerns

The International Monetary Fund Monday cut its forecast for average oil prices to just below \$60/b in 2019 from close to \$70/b in its last World Economic Outlook in October on concerns about global economic growth.

Further out, the IMF predicted oil prices would also average just below \$60/b in 2020, down from \$66/b in its previous report.

It pointed to the increased volatility in oil prices since August due to the influences of U.S. policy on Iranian oil exports and more recently fears of weakening global demand. Crude prices hit a peak of \$86/b in October as some in the market talked of a return to \$100/b oil before plunging to just below \$50/b in late December.

Saudi Arabia and Russia both pumped at record highs in November as the U.S. pressured the kingdom to pump more crude to keep prices low ahead of its re-imposition of sanctions on Iran.

The U.S. then issued waivers to eight countries to continue purchasing Iranian crude, tanking prices and leading to a fear of an oversupplied market that OPEC is now



struggling to ward off through a 1.2 million b/d production cut deal with its non-OPEC

allies. OPEC officials have said they were blindsided and wrong-footed by the waivers.

(Source: Platts)

The IMF predicted the global economy would grow 3.5 percent this year compared with an estimated 3.7 percent in 2018 and marks a downward revision from its October forecast, highlighting the risks from trade tensions between U.S. and China. A "greater-than-expected slowdown in China" was one of the factors that tilted global growth risks to the downside, the IMF said but kept its growth forecasts unchanged for China, which accounts for around a third of global growth.

"The further downward revision since October in part reflects carry over from softer momentum in the second half of 2018 -- including in Germany following the introduction of new automobile fuel emission standards and in Italy where concerns about sovereign and financial risks have weighed on domestic demand," the IMF said. The institution also cited "weakening financial market sentiment as well as a contraction in Turkey now projected to be deeper than anticipated."

Iraq's southern oil exports hold near record in January



Oil exports from southern Iraq are holding close to a record high so far in 2019, according to shipping data and an industry source, which could raise questions over whether OPEC's second-largest producer is following through on a deal to cut output.

Southern Iraqi exports in the first 21 days of January averaged close to 3.6 million barrels per day, according to tanker data on Refinitiv Eikon and separate tracking by an industry source. That's close to December's 3.63 million bpd -- a monthly record.

The figures suggest there is little sign yet of lower supplies from Iraq, despite a deal by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies to reduce output by 1.2 million bpd as of Jan. 1 to support the market.

"So far, no cuts," the industry source said on Monday of Iraq's export rate.

The south is the main outlet for Iraq's crude. An Iraqi official, the director of Iraq's Basra Oil Company, on Jan. 11 gave similar figures for January exports to those suggested by the tanker data and source.

Iraq, which has been expanding its oil export capacity, was reluctant to join a previous OPEC-led supply cut effort

which began in 2017 and was at times OPEC's least compliant member with the initiative.

To be sure, the OPEC-led deal applies to production, not exports. It is possible that Iraq could have cut production and maintained exports from crude held in storage, or reduced supply to domestic refineries.

Nonetheless, oil traders and analysts will be looking at exports to gauge whether the deal is lowering supply to the global market. So far, Iraq's shipments abroad from the north haven't declined significantly either.

Iraq's northern exports appear to have held steady in January at about 400,000 bpd, according to tanker data compiled by Reuters and the industry source. That is still far below levels of more than 500,000 bpd in some months of 2017.

Baghdad says it will stick to the accord. Oil Minister Thamer Ghadhban said on Jan. 4 Iraq would keep production at the level of its OPEC target in the first half of 2019.

Under the deal, Iraq agreed to cut production by 141,000 bpd to 4.512 million bpd as of Jan. 1.

(Source: Arab News)

Oil drops more than 1 percent as China slowdown bites



Oil prices fell more than 1 percent on Tuesday on signs that an economic slowdown in China was spreading, stoking concerns about global growth and fuel demand.

The gloomy news from the world's second-largest economy and top importer of oil pulled down financial markets across Asia.

International Brent oil futures were at \$61.94 per barrel at 0950 GMT, down 80 cents or 1.28 percent.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$53.16 per barrel, down 1.19 percent or 64 cents.

China reported the lowest annual economic growth in nearly 30 years on Monday. Its state planner warned on Tuesday that falling factory orders pointed to a further drop in activity in coming months and more job losses.

While China's oil imports have so far defied the economic slowdown, hitting a record above 10 million barrels per day (bpd) in late 2018, many analysts believe the country has reached peak energy growth, with its thirst set to wane.

"Slowing manufacturing activity in China is likely weighing on demand," said Singapore-based tanker brokerage Eastport, adding that industrial slowdowns tended to be leading indicators that fed gradually into lower demand for shipped oil products.

In a sign of spreading economic weakness, growth in South Korea's export-oriented economy slowed to a six-year low of 2.7 percent in 2018, official data showed on Tuesday.

The International Monetary Fund on Monday trimmed its 2019 global growth forecast to 3.5 percent, from 3.7 percent in last October's outlook.

"This was the second downturn revision in three months, and we can still see further downgrades in the near future if trade tensions escalate, the UK exits with a no-deal from the EU, or China's economic growth drops more sharply," said Hussein Sayed, chief market strategist at futures brokerage FXTM.

Despite the darkening outlook, oil prices have been getting some support from supply cuts since the beginning of this month by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

"The effects of OPEC-led cuts ... will undoubtedly place a price floor under crude oil," Singapore-based brokerage Phillip Futures said.

But official data from the world's top exporter Saudi Arabia on Monday showed its crude oil exports in November rose to 8.235 million bpd from 7.700 million in October, indicating there may be no shortage of supply in some markets.

(Source: Reuters)

Why OPEC+ output cuts take so long to materialize

The oil production cuts that OPEC and its partners led by Russia agreed at the end of last year are proving slower to materialize than most observers expected, with Russia breaking another post-Soviet production record in December, and Iran's and Venezuela's declines in output slowing down. That's one of the main conclusions from the latest edition of the monthly Oil Market Report by the International Energy Agency.

Russia produced 11.5 million barrels of crude daily last month and, according to the IEA, "It is unclear when it will cut and by how much." Russia undertook to reduce its production by 228,000 bpd beginning this month, with the cuts to last until April, when OPEC+ will meet to review the results of its latest price-boosting effort.

However, Energy Minister Alexander Novak warned early on—and recently repeated—that it would be difficult for Russian producers to cut quickly and by a lot. Due to weather and geological conditions in the cold Russian winter, Russia cannot cut its oil production too quickly, Novak said last week, adding that there were plans to reduce oil production by 50,000 bpd to 60,000 bpd in January as part of the new OPEC+ deal. Novak also added that plans were to achieve the full target by the end of March.

Russia is certainly one of the most



important factors to watch when it comes to OPEC+ cuts, but it appears that this time it is not the only wild card in the deck. News from Venezuela and Iran is also not what most industry watchers might have reasonably expected, and this will also weigh on prices as it enhances the uncertainty around whether OPEC will be able to live up to its promises.

Venezuela's PDVSA sealed two deals recently with a U.S. and a French company to boost its oil production. The state oil

company offered the newcomers more lucrative deals than usual as it struggles to at least curb the inexorable decline in output. The Chinese are also helping: a JV between PDVSA and CNPC reported doubled production for the seven months to December. The JV, Sinovensa, accounts for about a tenth of Venezuela's total oil output. As a result, the IEA said, output decline slowed to 10,000 bpd in the second half of the year from 40,000 bpd earlier in 2018.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Renewables boom fails to dent investment allure of hydrocarbons

The transition to a lower carbon economy has been long promised but the reality remains elusive.

There is no doubt that the costs of renewables — led by solar and onshore wind — are now materially cheaper than they ever have been, having fallen respectively to the point at which the International Energy Agency in its latest short term outlook sees prices falling to between \$20 and \$50 per megawatt hour.

That means they can compete with other fuels, even if some of the costs of providing back up to cover the intermittency of renewable supplies are included. In some markets, neither subsidies nor protected market shares will be necessary.

Why then is the pace of change in the sector, especially in the developed world, so slow?

Hydrocarbons continue to dominate with oil, gas and coal providing over 80 percent of energy supply. Most serious long term forecasts suggest that dominance will decline only slowly and that renewables will still be providing little more than 15 percent of the world's electricity needs in 20 years' time.

The challenge is investment and the economics of the industry. Readers might like to take a moment to consider the composition of the funds which provide their pensions or hold their savings. Unless you are a committed and active investor, most of those funds are likely to hold shares in the major oil and gas companies rather than in enterprises developing wind or solar power.

The reasons are straightforward. The energy majors continue to generate high yields. Despite price volatility, the returns look secure — the industry has successfully adapted to low oil and gas prices and most of the companies continue to generate plenty of new investment projects. For investors, the choice is easy.

The majors — from Chevron and Exxon to Shell and Total — can hardly be described as helping lead the way to a low-carbon economy in a profound way. Advertising such as Exxon's promotion of its investment in the technology which produces oil from algae is highly visible. But corporate investment remains predominantly focused on oil and gas.

As reported in the FT in December, none of the majors invests more than 5 percent of total capex on low carbon projects. In every case, oil and gas receive more than 95 percent of the annual total.

This too has a rational explanation. Oil and gas fields are large scale investments providing high returns. Few projects with returns of below 15 percent, even on highly pessimistic assumptions about market conditions and prices, are approved. Actual returns commonly turn out to be much higher, not least because advances in technology usually allow more oil and gas to be produced over time than is initially anticipated.

This makes it very difficult for renewable projects to compete for approval from any capital allocation committee. Solar and wind projects are much smaller — in many cases not meeting the materiality thresholds which companies usually set. Few offer returns which can match the oil and gas business. Supplying electricity is highly competitive and the barriers to entry (access to resources and experience in complex project development) are typically much lower. For all these reasons it is hard to see how the energy majors who are trying to integrate renewables into their existing business structures will ever lead the energy transition.

The other problem for investors is that the renewables sector remains fragmented, with thousands of small businesses often dedicated to a single geographic market.

With technology continually evolving it is tough for even the most committed investors to know where to put their money. The majors who do want to grow a distinct renewables business over time struggle to decide which of the existing ventures they should buy to create a base. The structure of the renewables business will always be different — the supply of solar and wind is inherently a widely distributed activity — but some significant consolidation of activity is essential if the energy transition is really going to take place.

One answer may lie in the already evident growth of renewables in China and elsewhere in the emerging economies of Asia. In China, government is leading investment in the field, reflecting state policy and the desire to create a new set of enterprises which can make the country a global industrial power. In such circumstances, short term financial returns matter less than growth and scale.

China already dominates the production of solar panels, wind turbines and batteries and is a world leader in grid technology. In the absence of a serious consolidation of the renewables sector in Europe and the U.S., we may soon find that the worldwide transition to lower carbon economy is a project led by Asia.

(Source: Financial Times)

U.S. oil and gas firms are ready to spend as confidence grows, survey says

Executives in the U.S. oil and gas industry are said to be much more optimistic about growth in the sector, compared to last year.

In its annual study, DNV GL, claimed that 85 percent of American executives questioned believed there were reasons to expect an increase in drilling in 2019. In the corresponding figure for 2018, the figure was 60 percent.

U.S. oil and gas executives appeared to be more bullish than the global average of positive voices which DNV GL recorded at 76 percent.

The group, which acts as a technical advisor to the oil and gas sector, added that almost half of U.S. companies were preparing for "significant increases" in spending on projects over the coming months.

"There are brighter prospects for activity and investment across the value chain this year and beyond," DNV GL's Americas Regional Manager Frank Ketelaars said in a press release.

Ketelaars added that expensive "Deepwater projects" could thrive thanks to reduced cost measures, while newer sources such as shale oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) were also set to grow.

Possible barriers to growth of U.S. oil and gas were the lack of skilled workers at the industry's disposal as the survey revealed that more than a third (37 percent) of U.S. executives expect to increase their company headcount in 2019.

That number was just 20 percent in the same survey last year. Global confidence in the outlook for the oil and gas sector for 2019 sits at 76 percent, more than a doubling from the 32 percent recorded in 2017.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at around \$76 a barrel last October but had slumped to around \$42 by December. Meanwhile, in a similar slump, Brent crude has fallen almost 30 percent since climbing to a peak of \$86.29 in early October last year.

The DNV GL's report said that recent volatility hasn't dented confidence around the world, suggesting that the sector was becoming more comfortable with fluctuating or lower energy prices.

(Source: CNBC)

Can Sudan protests succeed without a leader to replace Al-Bashir?

By Khalil Charles

A month after a spontaneous protest in the Northern Sudan of Atbara, known as the "City of Iron and Fire," morphed into a series of organized demonstrations, there are still no signs that the resistance movement is coming to an end. What began as a protest against bread, fuel and cash shortages, in a town famous for the intersection of the Sudanese railway system and its now-antiquated Cement factory, became a nation-wide campaign to drive President Al-Bashir and his government out of power.

Atbara has never been a friend of the Islamic movement that came to power in 1989. Located on the Nile River, where locals pride themselves on drinking its brown water for medicinal purposes, the city has been politically recognized as the Northern home of Sudan's Communist movement. Nevertheless, the question remains in the city and elsewhere in the country, is there a viable alternative political and economic program to the incumbent government? Will the protests that begun in Atbara lead to the fall of the government or real changes in Sudan?

Families in Atbara remain divided on this question. Some are public sector employees who have benefited from government links with the private sector awarding separate sources of extra income for security or ex-army officers. Others are disillusioned with the conditions created by a government they once supported. However, in the past few days, following government-organized rallies supported by hundreds of thousands of citizens. The danger has emerged of Sudan is fast becoming a highly divided and ungovernable country, at best; or falling into a state of lawlessness, at worst. The large crowds that showed up in the Green Square, the rally in Niyala in the Western State of Darfur and the President's visit to the White Nile, a few days ago, produced a defiant President unwilling to respond to the demand that he step down and give up power.

Ironically, much of the success of the protest has been its ability to galvanize support around some simple messages: #taskutbus hashtag "just fall" and the 2011 Arab Spring mantra: "The People want the fall of the regime." These messages have been strong enough to draw almost 400,000 demonstrations on to the streets, but increasingly there's a hollow response to the question what should happen after the Sudanese President Al-Bashir goes. For many, the lack of a definitive answer to that question leaves a worrying prospect.

Sudanese-born international businessman Mohammed Ibrahim has touched on the issue of what happens to Al-Bashir and how best to force him to leave. He suggests dropping the International Criminal Court charges against the 75-year old leader in exchange for him stepping down from power or at the very least concede that he will not run again in 2020.

Such a move may or may not bring a halt to these protests, but it would please a sizable band of opponents within Al-Bashir's party who do not want the President to run again for another term of office in the forthcoming elections. The 2020 elections have become a divisive issue, and it is believed that some of his opponents within the party have been chiefly responsible for helping to accentuate the economic crisis as a means of creating an unfavorable impression of Al-Bashir's leadership.

Questions remain about the 75,000 government sacks of bread flour allocated to the States, like Atbara, that were not delivered on time and why only 17,000 sacks were later found in government stores in Khartoum around the days the deliveries should have taken place. There are those in the internal opposition who appear to have turned a blind eye to the mismanagement of the fuel and bread distribution to the states and from the practice of selling off subsidized flour to outlets that produce cakes and sweets, such as baklava commonly known in Sudan as "baasta."

In the last few days, details of those leading the resistance movement have emerged. To date, a combination of breakaway professional unions has managed to galvanize the protests from inside and from outside of Sudan. However, the movement against Al-Bashir appears to be broadly inclusive of young and old, men and women of all ages and political persuasions.

No apparent links to any opposition party position or armed opposition groups have been established; although the government have pointed to armed groups, like Abdel-Wahid Al Nur of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) in Darfur, looking to spread chaos and dissension. Also, unsubstantiated reports are beginning to surface that the leader of the Reform Now party, Ghazi Salah Ad-Din is the principle face behind the protests — a former ally and adviser of President Al-Bashir — who led 22 parties away from the National Reconciliation Government.

The lack of a clear leadership suggests two things: either the movement will fizzle out in the absence of a united direction or alternative action plan to replace President Omar Al-Bashir. Or it is entirely possible that Sudan could be moving into a new-phase of its history where a populist leader — an unconventional politician — may emerge from the professional associations that have so far galvanized protesters via social media on to the streets.

Clearly, for peaceful change and a viable alternative government to happen, the protestors are hoping that the initial enthusiasm behind the protests over this last month is maintained. However, the government and the President will continue the drive to persuade people away from the protests through staging rallies of its own and through seeking financial support from foreign allies like Qatar.

In Atbara, where the troubles began, a series of peaceful protests have taken place since the first December insurrection. Few believe that the government's position is sustainable and perhaps even fewer are holding out hope that the economic, social and political woes of the country will disappear anytime soon.

(Source: Middle East Monitor)

The 2020 elections have become a divisive issue, and it is believed that some of his opponents within the party have been chiefly responsible for helping to accentuate the economic crisis as a means of creating an unfavorable impression of Al-Bashir's leadership.

Benefiting Israel tops U.S. Congressional agenda

America can easily be moved

By Phillip Giraldo

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu famously was unaware that he was being filmed when he commented that "America is a thing you can move very easily, moved in the right direction." His predecessor Ariel Sharon was even more to the point when he reportedly said "Every time we do something you tell me America will do this and will do that ... don't worry about American pressure; I tell you, we, the Jewish people, control America and the American people know it!"

If this were only chest thumping rhetoric one might just shrug and go about one's business, but actions speak louder than words, even in the world of corrupt politicians, where nothing is ever as it seems to be. In the past year alone, the U.S. government has moved its Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, has stopped criticizing the Netanyahu government's expansion of illegal settlements, and is reportedly currently contemplating recognizing as legal Israel's illegal occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights. All the moves were and are contrary to actual American interests.

Furthermore, Israel, a country having a European level standard of living to include free education and medical care, has received more than \$250 billion in "aid" from Washington. It currently is receiving \$3.8 billion yearly from the U.S. Treasury as a base figure guaranteed for ten years, with supplements for special projects and programs. Adding in trade arrangements favorable to Israel and the money it gets from American Jewish donors' tax-exempt contributions, the real total per annum approaches and may even exceed \$10 billion. Much of the donor money, including that from the Kushner Foundation, has gone to fund the illegal settlements on the West Bank in violation of U.S. law. And then there is the \$2.7 billion given yearly to Egypt and Jordan, essentially bribes to maintain friendly relations with Israel.

The ultimate irony is that any aid to Israel is illegal in light of the fact that it has violated the Symington and Glenn amendments to the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act due to its undeclared nuclear weapons arsenal and its refusal to sign the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty. Both Congress and the White House have chosen to ignore that complication, one more demonstration of Jewish power in the United States. In truth, Ariel Sharon, if he was quoted correctly, had it right. Jewish Americans do control or at least exercise considerable influence over key sectors in the U.S. They are overwhelmingly disproportionately present on Wall Street, in the entertainment and news industries, in academia, in high value professions and in government at all levels. Their collective power both enriches and protects Israel at the expense of the U.S. taxpayer and genuine national interests. It also enables Israeli agents in the U.S., like the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), to avoid scrutiny and regulation under the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938.

Some federal government agencies exist largely to promote Israeli interests, most notably the Treasury Department's Office for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, which has only had Jewish Under Secretaries heading it since it was founded in 2004. It is currently run by Israeli Sigal Mandelker. The office has focused on punishing Iran, Israel's principle enemy, throughout its existence.

Jewish power is most perniciously evident in U.S. foreign policy, where it has a strangle hold on relations between Washington and the Arab countries of the Middle East. Much of this leverage is derived from the fact that the principal donors to both the Democratic and Republican parties — Haim Saban and Sheldon Adelson — are both Jews having very



strong ties to Israel. Saban is an Israeli and Adelson may have Israeli citizenship. With both parties more than willing to act on behalf of Israel, the United States has engaged in a number of wars that serve no national interest and which have, on the contrary, brought with them devastating consequences, including the rise of new terrorist groups.

To be sure, many American Jews are not convinced by the love affair with Israel, but they are hard to hear amidst the cacophony coming from the Jewish oligarchs and hundreds of pro-Israel organizations that are constantly singing the praises of Netanyahu and his kleptocratic regime. For many young Jews in particular, it is difficult to empathize with a country that deploys army snipers to shoot thousands of unarmed demonstrators or a government that engages in starvation policies and the arrests, beatings and killings of children. Not to mention a governing system that believes that only Jewish citizens have full rights.

The Jewish oligarchs who manipulate the politicians do so with money, though one should in no way minimize the essential mendacity of the politicians themselves who are willing to sell out the interests of their country in exchange for thirty pieces of silver. Senator Marco Rubio of Florida, who is not one of the brightest bulbs in congress, is a prime example of a legislator who has been bought and paid for by Israeli interests in the form of campaign donations from casino magnate Sheldon Adelson and vulture capitalist Paul Singer.

Rubio's speech last week supporting Senate bill S.1 for 2019, which he sponsored, was remarkable and should serve as primary evidence for anyone who really wonders why we have a Senate at all. The bill itself should also be read in toto to learn the details of what largesse we give to Israel in exchange for absolutely nothing in return. To put it succinctly, Rubio is all about protecting and nurturing Israel, which he sees as a good move since he has aspirations to become president. S.1 was, notably, the first Senate bill to be considered in 2019 after what once upon a time used to be referred to as the Christmas Recess. The full title of S.1 is the Strengthening America's Security in the Middle East Act of 2019, which might be considered a bit of a fraud as it has nothing to do with the United States and is really all about giving Israel money and anything else it might desire, to include destroying the nonviolent Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement that has targeted Israel's apartheid. Rubio openly has admitted that the bill was crafted to help Israel and during his speech he registered his opposition to the impending pullout of U.S. troops from Syria because it would, according to him, "endanger" the Jewish state. Apart from that, the half hour presentation incorporated some remarkable oratory explaining S.1 including:

First of all, let me tell you what it doesn't

do. It doesn't outlaw BDS, if you're an American company and you want to boycott or divest from Israel, it doesn't make it illegal. It doesn't stop you from doing it. The only thing it says is if there is some city or county or state in this country who wants to support Israel, they have a right to say we are not going to buy services or goods from any company that's boycotting or divesting from Israel. That's all it does. It gives cities and counties like these 26 states the opportunity to have their elected officials who respond to the people of those states or cities or counties that elected them to make a decision that they are not going to do business with people who don't do business with Israel and boycott Israel. In essence, it allows us to boycott the boycotters.

It would be difficult to find a more stupid justification for S.1 than that provided by Rubio. He does not understand that the "state" at all levels is supposed to be politically neutral in terms of providing government services. It is not supposed to retaliate against someone for views they hold, particularly, as in this case, when it involves opposition to the policies of a foreign government that many consider to be guilty of crimes against humanity. Rubio clearly believes that you can exercise free speech but government can then punish you by taking away your livelihood or denying you services that you are entitled to if you do not agree with it on an issue that ultimately has nothing to do with the United States. The ACLU has addressed the issue succinctly, arguing that "Public officials cannot use the power of public office to punish views they don't agree with. That's the kind of authoritarian power our Constitution is meant to protect against."

In any event, the Senate bill failed in two tries last week with a vote of 56 in favor and 45 against followed by a 53 to 43 tally, with 60 votes being needed to advance for a final vote. It was supported by every Republican senator, but never fear, S.1 will surely pass when the government shutdown ends and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, himself a beneficiary of generous pro-Israel PAC donations, brings it up again for yet another vote. The Democrats who voted against S.1 to embarrass President Trump and protest the shutdown included Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and Senator Ben Cardin who are unrestrained champions of Israel due to both their ethnic and religious ties. Schumer has described himself as Israel's "shomer" or protector in the Senate while Cardin has been a key player in advancing any and all pro-Israel legislation. They and most other Democrats will support the bill as they are in thrall to Israel as much as are the Republicans.

Over at the U.S. House of Representatives there was also early action on behalf of Israel. H.R.221-Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism Act "To amend the State Department Basic Authorities Act of

1956 to monitor and combat anti-Semitism globally, and for other purposes" passed by a margin of 411 to 1 in a mere twelve minutes with only congressman Justin Amash voting "nay." The bill, which was being pushed by the Israel Lobby, compels President Trump to name an anti-Semitism Special Envoy with Ambassadorial rank to "serve as the primary advisor to, and coordinate efforts across, the U.S. government relating to monitoring and combating anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic incitement in foreign countries." Criticism of Israel is considered to be anti-Semitism.

Another recent and related story reveals the power of Israel and its friends as reflected by their ability to force potential dissidents to fall in line. Senator Rand Paul, a critic of foreign aid in general, rightly received praise for his willingness to step up and block approval of last year's aid package for Israel. But even there he waffled, his office putting out a statement

"While I'm not for foreign aid in general, if we are going to send aid to Israel it should be limited in time and scope so we aren't doing it forever, and it should be paid for by cutting the aid to people who hate Israel and America."

Apparently Rand Paul believes that the people who hate Israel and America constitute an identifiable group receiving billions of U.S. Treasury dollars.

Senator Paul has also been involved in the current anti-BDS legislation declaring in an op-ed, that the bill would be damaging to first amendment rights. However, he did not back up his words with action, having voted both times in favor of S.1, and he also felt it necessary to preface his op-ed remarks with the usual sucking up to the Jewish state: "I am not in favor of boycotting Israel. Israel has been a good ally. I have traveled to Israel, and it was one of the best and most meaningful trips I have taken with my family. Standing at the Western Wall was special and powerful. Visiting old Jerusalem was incredible, and sailing on the sea of Galilee while a double rainbow glowed above us is something I will never forget. Israel is truly a unique and special place."

It is disgraceful that the legislature of the United States of America in the midst of a government shutdown is giving first priority to bills granting billions of dollars-worth of benefits to Israel while also appointing an anti-Semitism Czar to interfere with the domestic politics of foreign nations. It is shameful that an American Senator should find himself compelled, if he wants to survive politically, to grovel before a domestic lobby representing a foreign nation. Still worse is the compulsion to apologize to that nation even while honorably critiquing legislation that would do significant damage to freedom of speech in America.

Rand Paul also knows perfectly well, as does every senator, that Israel is not and has never been an "ally" in any real sense and has instead used its considerable political power to corrupt America's political culture and to entangle the United States in a series of unwinnable and inhumane wars in the Middle East. It is certainly his right to personally refuse to support BDS, but he surely understands that effective nonviolent pressure directed against Israel might well be the only way to deliver even a modicum of justice to the Palestinians. Senator Rand Paul clearly does not care about the Palestinians or about Washington's misadventures in the Middle East when his more compelling need as an ambitious politician is to placate the powerful Jews who, as Ariel Sharon put it, "control America." How disappointing. Is there anyone left standing who will actually defend the interests of the American people?

(Source: www.globalresearch.ca)

France and Germany reaffirm their treaty vows

When Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel meet on Tuesday to sign a new Franco-German treaty, the occasion will be rich in symbolism but light on substance. Fifty-six years to the day after Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer signed a treaty of friendship and reconciliation between their two nations at the Elysée Palace, today's French and German leaders will appear in the German town of Aachen to endorse a fresh bilateral accord.

Once the seat of Charlemagne, Aachen hosts an annual prize in the Holy Roman Emperor's name for services to European unification, an honor previously bestowed on both Merkel and Macron. Although intended to take Franco-German amity, upon which the EU is built, to a higher level, their new treaty makes only a modest advance in the cause of integration.

Compared with the 1963 text that instigated an entirely new framework for political and cultural exchange between two perennial antagonists, the Aachen treaty is largely an update that codifies habits of co-operation that have become routine over the decades.

There are some innovations. Frontier regions will be able to derogate from national law to facilitate cross-border

infrastructure or environmental projects. The two countries will strive to create a Franco-German economic zone with harmonized corporate law regimes. There will be deeper collaboration on research, particularly into artificial intelligence, and more cultural exchanges. A significant part of Tuesday's treaty relates to defense.

It repeats mutual security clauses contained in the NATO and EU treaties. Paris hopes this could make it easier for Berlin to come to its aid in the event of a terrorist attack, or perhaps as part of a wider counter-terrorist strategy, as in the Sahel, for example. But French hopes for a single policy on exports of Franco-German defense equipment have yielded a mere statement of intent.

All in all, this pact lacks the operational detail of France's Lancaster House defense treaty with Britain, a sign of continued German reticence.

Indeed, a lack of German ambition is clear throughout. There is barely a mention of the euro beyond the assertion that the two countries "are strengthening and deepening monetary union". But the completion of banking union and the creation of a eurozone budget to help members cushion shocks were the centerpieces of Macron's ambitious EU

reform agenda set out in detail in a landmark speech to the Sorbonne in September 2017. Merkel was too busy trying to form a coalition — and then trying to keep it together — to give his speech the substantive response it deserved. Anti-government protests have, meanwhile, forced Macron to refocus his energies on defusing domestic anger. Tax and spending concessions have put France in breach of the EU's deficit rules, a yardstick of budgetary discipline and commitment to reform in German eyes. Macron has probably invested too much in Berlin and not enough in wooing other capitals, whether the liberal but fiscally hawkish north or the pro-European south. Ideological fractures with nationalist counterparts in Rome and Budapest have turned unduly rancorous. Franco-German unity is no longer sufficient to push forward a diverse and increasingly disorderly EU, but it is still necessary.

The Elysée treaty created mechanisms for collaboration between the governments and peoples of France and Germany that have outlasted their political leaders. Merkel and Macron are right to reaffirm the importance of the relationship, even if some of the joy has gone.

(Source: FT)

Who is winning in USA? Trump or Pelosi?

Was a coup averted? What is next?

1 → First and most importantly, McManus is not doing evidence-based reporting – he is ignoring, for example, the successes of the Trump Administration that are “sanctioned” by the Deep State fake news media in the USA – here is one example of honest reporting by the Washington Examiner: Trump’s list: 289 accomplishments in just 20 months, “relentless” promise-keeping. Second, McManus is either ignorant or deliberately deceptive in not reporting on the reality that Nancy Pelosi is a “dead woman walking” (this is an American term for prisoners sentenced to death who are awaiting execution) and that regardless of whether or not she is indicted and convicted by a military tribunal, the Democratic Party has imploded – blacks and Latinos are no longer allowing themselves to be taken for granted, there is increasing wide-spread public understanding of the pernicious influence of traitors like Sheldon Adelson and other Zionists who do not place America First. Third, McManus may be excused for not understanding everything that Trump followers understand: in the next sixty days there will be a political, legal, and economic revolution in the USA, and the Deep State along with its Zionist underbelly will be if not fully defeated, at least gored so badly it becomes impotent in world affairs.



Peter Thiel to have PayPal offer interest free cash advances to every government person temporarily not receiving a paycheck. These loans are guaranteed by the U.S. Government, which has announced that all furloughed employees will receive back pay once the shutdown ends. The “suffering” is real for those not smart enough to learn of and take advantage of the PayPal offer, but drastically over-stated for the larger majority. Shutdowns are a form of political “chicken,” they always end, and the employees are always paid for their mandated time off. It also merits comment that most federal employees are connected to the Democrats, not the Republicans – at an operational level, the shutdown is hurting the Democrats more than the Republicans.

The shutdown should also be evaluated at a strategic level. At this level, despite the modest impact on airports and national parks, the reality is that most Americans think the U.S. federal government is too big and does not matter other than a waste of money and creator of toxic regulations. My friend and most respected colleague James Fallows has written a book with his wife, *Our Towns: A 100,000 Mile Journey into the Heart of America*, documenting a 100,000-mile journey that comes to the conclusion that most Americans live completely apart from the widely disrespected U.S. federal government. At the strategic level it is also vital to note that once the shutdown goes past 30 days, as it has, the President has the authority to demand a Reduction in Force (RIF) with the potential for reducing the size and budget of the federal government by no less than ten percent and perhaps as much as twenty percent.

I believe the government shutdown will end shortly, in part because the President has a number of political, legal, and economic initiatives to announce, and it is time for the final phase of the Trump Revolution. The Government is demonstrably 50% waste and should be cut in half starting with the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) that consumes 60% of the annual disposable (and mostly borrowed) budget of the federal government, and the secret intelligence world that my colleague William Binney and I have agreed can be cut by up to 70%, particularly if the President creates the Open Source Agency as approved twice by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

There is a great deal of skepticism in Iran and we imagine elsewhere, about the military tribunals actually taking place. There is skepticism about the so-called 70,000 sealed indictments. What do you think is happening?

A. For me as an observer with no direct knowledge, the “truth tellers” or core indicators are the testimonial exchange that Senator Lindsey Graham (R-NC) had with now Justice Brett Kavanaugh on this topic; the \$500 million being spent on Guantanamo

(which I believe should be returned to Cuba—our elites should be tried and imprisoned or put to death in the USA), and the assignment of additional military police to Guantanamo. This could of course be complex “signaling” to the elite – the 1% -- that their days are numbered. Similarly, however many sealed indictments exist, I doubt most of them will be opened. The elite are now aware that NSA has every email and every call they have made in the past twenty years. In my view most of the indictments are there to “neutralize” 90% of the elite “enablers” including corrupt judges and prosecutors as well as bank officials, paving the way for the actual indictment and conviction of perhaps 1,000 elites including Dick Cheney and both Bill and Hillary Clinton. In my view, Cheney must hang first for 9/11, then we can take down the Clintons for treason, pedophilia, election fraud, and charity fraud.

I do believe that the public is now insistent on justice, and the public is no longer going to tolerate covering up elite pedophilia and elite treason. It used to be “reprehensible” for anyone to suggest that someone like Jared Kushner was a traitor who was reported by MI-6 (I have no direct knowledge) to be in a clandestine homosexual relationship with a Zionist “sugar-daddy” that sodomized him regularly. That is no longer the case. Just as U.S. military generals and admirals are being brought to court by subordinates for such misbehavior, the rule of law is now creeping back up toward the elite.

Trump may not finish the job – there is now open speculation that he wants to quit and will not run again in 2020. I believe that 2020 will be generally focused on three things: genuine election reform that takes down both the Democratic and Republican parties in favor of Independents and small parties including the emerging Constitutional Party and the Sandernista-Ocasios; public exposure of elite pedophiles as well as financial criminals and traitors; and evidence-based governance such that we throw the United Nations (UN) out of New York, leave the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and close all of our military bases overseas. America First means not Zionist Israel First. I drew this line earlier with the Honorable Dr. Cynthia McKinney, and it is my intent to finish the job if Donald Trump does not. I must mention that HR1, which pretends to sponsor election reform is actually a scam – seeking to privatize gerrymandering of districts (Diebold fraud on steroids) – and treason – seeking to enable voting by non-citizens.

I speculate that known-Mossad affiliates Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell (daughter of famed Zionist spy Robert Maxwell who proliferated the original Zionist backdoor software program PROMIS) were doubled, and turned over to the Trump team all of the videos, the complete roster of compromised guests, and much more.

In my view as both a former spy and as a sponsor of a major book on pedophilia as well as an active participant in an international judicial inquiry into elite pedophilia, there will be three losers on the pedophilia front: the Zionists, the Catholic Church, and the Mormon Church.

I mention this to emphasize that while I regard the Zionists are the worst of the parasites in America, there are other cultural and economic and legal threats to our society, and the day must come when we are effective against all of them – particularly those that seek to divide & conquer, to attack family and community values, and as has recently emerged, to murder up and coming young straight white men (the Smiley Face Killers). It is a fact that neither the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) nor any of the 18,000 police jurisdiction across America are competent or coherent in dealing with organized white collar crime and Red Miyafa (Russian, Zionist, U.S.) crime. America has become a

Third World nation in relation to the rule of law and evidence-based decision-making in the public interest, neither of which exist at the federal level or at most state levels. We are overdue for a “cultural revolution” that restores power to the public at the local level – a distributed decentralized culture, economy, government, and society. I offer some additional commentary at *The Second American Revolution – Reflections on the Near Future*.

Q. What is next in the Trump Revolution as you call it in your Trump Revolution series?

I believe that President Trump will soon announce a gold-backed dollar, the nationalization of the Federal Reserve (at the same time that the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and many others also nationalize their Central Banks), the joint introduction by China, Russia, and the U.S. of a new economic system that recovers the mega-trillions stolen by the Deep State from all countries, and very soon – before 1 February -- the release of over a trillion dollars into the U.S. economy from the bottom up, the most audacious transfer of wealth from top to bottom in the history of mankind.

For myself, I have been promised a great deal of money to create a truth channel that replaces #GoogleGestapo, the Zionist-controlled social media ecology that censors, manipulates data, and digitally assassinates both conservative and progressive voices raised in opposition to the Deep State and the Zionists. You readers can learn more at my article, a list of references, and my posts on this topic. The core starting points are *Plans for Displacement of #GoogleGestapo UPDATE 2* and *Core Works UPDATED with 21st Century University*. While this truth channel will be in the service of our President should he wish to abandon Twitter and finally get serious about two-way communications with 200 million voters, it is explicitly designed to be both post-Trump and post-Western.

Will Donald Trump win re-election?

A. The short answer is yes. Not only is the U.S. economy and U.S. society stronger – including a new economic and political activism and consciousness among blacks and Latinos (I am a white Latino) – but he has already amassed a \$100 million political action fund. In combination with the dramatic effect of the political, legal, and economic actions I see him taking in 2019, and his ability to electrify crowds across the country when the time comes in 2020 to reconnect to the public, I see no possible opposition to his being re-elected. The Secret Service is now both competent and loyal and will not repeat the mistakes it made that allowed the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and there are layers of defense around our President that preclude the more modern biological and electro-magnetic pulse attacks that might succeed with a less well-defended individual.

My concern is that the President, for whom the White House is a huge burden – it is “low rent” quarters and a fixed schedule both of which he hates – might choose not to run again. I am hearing rumors of his having selected a businessman to receive his blessing as the candidate in 2020 – Pence will be gone by then, lucky to escape, perhaps with a secret Presidential pardon, back into his lazy ignominious habits. I want President Trump to finish the job. If he does not run I will be very likely to run, with a split ticket, coalition cabinet, balanced budget, and seven to twelve core policy planks including the legalization of marijuana and a student and elderly debt jubilee. There is nothing wrong with America the Beautiful that cannot be fixed by restoring integrity to how we elect and how we govern. I pray that Donald Trump will not quit in the final half of his mission from God. He has my support as long as he stays the course. No one, including me, could possibly be as good as he toward our shared goal of restoring America the Beautiful, America First.

SPV does not have requisite mechanism to overcome U.S. opposition: Entessar

1 → But Poland is a safe country for Washington, especially under its current right-of-center government and its strong pro-U.S. leaning.

It is said that John Bolton has asked Pentagon to prepare a plan for striking Iran? How serious it is? Isn't it a psychological war against Iran?

A: For many years now, John Bolton has been a leading proponent of war against Iran. He was a pro-war neocon before his current position in the Trump administration, and he will remain a pro-war advocate when he is no longer in power. In other words, Bolton has been very consistent in his policy towards Iran, and asking the Pentagon to prepare a plan for military strikes against Iran is in line with his publicly-stated views on Iran. Those who dismiss Bolton's war-making agenda as simply a psychological ploy do so at their own risk.

Will the EU be able to make operational the SPV (special purpose vehicle) despite the U.S. opposition?

A: I never took the EU's SPV offer very seriously when it was first proposed, and I remain more skeptical about its success today than when it was first proposed. The SPV is a hollow shell and does not have the requisite mechanism to overcome U.S. opposition. The EU simply does not have the wherewithal to bypass U.S. sanctions on Iran. The SPV was just another pie in the sky project the EU had come up with to assuage Iran's concerns, knowing well that the scheme was not going to deliver much.



How do you see the future of the JCPOA if the EU fails to make SPV operational?

A: First, as I mentioned in my previous answer, the SPV is not structured in a way to overcome U.S. opposition to the EU-Iran trade, nor are the Europeans eager to alienate the U.S. by bypassing Washington's regulations. Secondly, the JCPOA, as it was drafted and structured, could have never worked without the U.S. participation. In reality, the only party to the JCPOA that is still fulfilling its obligations is Iran. The other parties to this nuclear agreement have jumped ship to a varying degree. To be sure, the EU still plays lip service to the JCPOA and continues to encourage Iran not to jettison the JCPOA. This posture is not a surprise because the Europeans are getting everything they wanted from Iran without feeling obligated to fulfill their part of the agreement. As I have stated many times in the past, the EU is a fractious entity whose member states suffer from social, political and economic malaise today, and the bloc is generally subservient to Washington's policies towards Tehran.

Can Iran's economic transactions and operations with other JCPOA signatories Russia and China materialize Iran's goals under JCPOA?

A: Iran can continue its economic transactions with China and Russia, but these two countries are also affected by U.S. sanctions on Iran. They have more room to maneuver around U.S. sanctions, but they are not entirely free to ignore them. This is especially true in the case of China whose economy is heavily impacted by its relations with the United States. In short, neither Russia nor China is going to compensate for the role that the other signatories to the JCPOA were supposed to play.

U.S. pressures cannot stop Iraq, KRG relations with Iran: Nazim Dabbagh

1 → [On the trip] some agreements were signed whereby the bilateral cooperation between the two countries will continue,” the Kurdish diplomat added.

“According to Iraqi constitution, the Kurdistan region is committed to the necessary cooperation and maintaining the current conditions for the continuation of activities, and for this, there is no talk of a decline in the economic cooperation between Iran and Iraq. I think the cooperation will continue,” he went on to elaborate.

With respect to the previously reported increase in the number of US military bases on the Kurdish soil, Dabbagh stressed that there have been no new U.S. bases established in KRG territories and that only the previously existent bases that had been built at the time of that fight against ISIL terrorist group are there.



Meanwhile, he stressed that the Iraqi Kurdistan region acts within the framework of Iraq's territorial integrity and cannot unilaterally decide on the presence of foreign troops on its territory, and this should be within the framework of the existing agreements with Baghdad.

In response to the question how the KRG and Baghdad can resist U.S. anti-Iran economic sanctions, the Kurdish diplomat said that the United States is pressuring both Baghdad and Erbil to accompany with its anti-Iran sanctions and several U.S. authorities have visited Iraq to follow up on the issue. He added that the details of the mechanisms to counter the pressures are not clear yet.

He, however, said “we will not get involved with the hostility towards the Iranian nation. We will do whatever we can to stand outside the anti-Iran sanctions and in this regard we will act within our agreement with Baghdad.”

Dabbagh added that the bilateral relations between Iraq and Iran are continuing as usual at the moment and Iraq is not going to play a part in anti-Iran sanctions. He noted that Iran and Iraq share long borders and nobody can change the geographical reality.

At the end, he confirmed the news of Iraqi president's trip to the United States with securing Iraqi people's interests and preserving bilateral relations with Iran on his agenda.

Exploring Saudi-Emiratis disagreements on Yemen

1 → The root of the UAE and Saudi disagreements in Yemen

Although the Emirates has participated in the Yemeni war in the form of an anti-Yemeni coalition with Saudi Arabia, the field evidence suggests that the UAE's ties to Riyadh are not very large in the Yemeni arena, and even the UAE is now reluctant to win Saudi Arabia, because Saudi Arabia Unlike its dealings with Abu Dhabi, the pro-UAE elements have been marginalized and even fired by the Cabinet in the undercover government of Yemen.

The discord between the two countries is enormous, but the close relationship between Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) and the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi MbZ prevented the conflict escalation. However, the differences will come to the surface in due course of time.

David Hearst, Editor in Chief of the Middle East Eye, in an article says, “The rivalries between the UAE and Saudi Arabia over Yemen are competing for the leadership in the Sunni Arab world. The UAE tries to sabotage the power transfer by the Saudis in Yemen and defeat the Mansour Hadi administration which has some members of the al-Islah party affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood. Abu Dhabi, instead wishes to bring in Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh al-Ahmar, the eldest son of former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah

Saleh, who was a commander of approx. 80,000 troops of the Republican Guard unit of the Yemen Army and former ambassador to the UAE, to run for presidency in Yemen.”

Although this analysis was published before Sanaa's secession and the assassination of Ali Abdullah Saleh, it is largely in line with the Yemeni political and ground realities. The Emirates worked hard to bring in Abdullah Saleh to diminish the Saudis' role in Yemen; however, Saleh's death threw off all the political equations in Yemen and once again intensified the discord between the Saudis and Emiratis.

The discord over the Muslim Brotherhood
The Muslim Brotherhood and its role in southern Yemen have always been one of the major areas of conflict between Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Although Riyadh has repeatedly tried to resolve this issue in a variety of ways, the UAE still considers the Muslim Brotherhood an obstacle in southern Yemen.

The meeting between MbS and MbZ with the Muslim Brotherhood authorities in December 2017 sparked speculation of potential dispute resolution between the Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood and Abu Dhabi, though Emirati's media stance soon removed the speculation.

Dispute over the breakup of Yemen
The disintegration of Yemen is the second issue be-

tween Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. The economic importance of southern Yemen for the UAE has led the country to pursue the division of the region, and to do so, Abu Dhabi fully supports the Southern Transitional Council headed by Aidarus al-Zoubaidi.

In fact, in the Yemeni crisis, first and foremost, the UAE seeks to stabilize southern Yemen to keep the flow of free trade in the Strait of Bab al-Mandab and the surrounding area of Aden. Thus, Abu Dhabi will prefer the breakup of Yemen, if the STC, gets to have the upper hand.

The investment and widespread involvement of the UAE in southern Yemen, which the Mansour Hadi administration describes it as an occupation government, is largely due to this motive. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, unlike the UAE, does not have economic considerations in southern Yemen, because Riyadh has access to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean from its shores making the Strait of Bab al-Mandab less important for the Saudis.

Imposing influence on the Yemeni government and maintaining its territorial integrity, which will increase Saudi political influence in the Arab world, is of great significance for Mohammed bin Salman, and this has been the most important issue that has led to the difference between Abu Dhabi and Riyadh.

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75 early cancer detection centers to be inaugurated

1 → According to Motlaq, the early cancer detection plan first started in 2014 and it was piloted in 2015 and 2016 in four cities. After the pilot projects and recognition of their shortcomings, the new round of examining people for early diagnosis of cancer began and in 2018, 50,000 people in every medical science university were examined. "The centers are evenly scattered throughout the country and there is a minimum of 40 kilometers distance from each center to the city."

Focusing on three main cancers
"In the first round of executing this plan, we are mainly focused on detecting three cancers that are more likely to be diagnosed early, including cancers of the breast, cervix and colon. These cancers account for one quarter of all cancers and 40% of the cancers in women," Motlaq further noted.

"Screening and early detection tests of cancer are already widespread among the people. For example, 500,000 mammography tests, 350,000 Pap smears tests, one million breast ultrasonography and two million fecal occult blood tests are conducted yearly in the country; but they seem not to be effective enough as most cancers are still often diagnosed when it is too late. The rea-



He expressed hope that the early cancer detection centers would give services to at least 50% of the population by 2025.

son behind this is that there is no organized plan for early detection of the disease in the country," he explained.

According to World Health Organization, early detection of cancer greatly increases the chances for successful treatment. There are

two major components of early detection of cancer: education to promote early diagnosis and screening.

Recognizing possible warning signs of cancer and taking prompt action leads to early diagnosis. Increased awareness of possible warning signs of cancer, among physicians, nurses and other health care providers as well as among the general public, can have a great impact on the disease.

Last week, Deputy Health Minister Alireza Raeisi announced that a national campaign to combat cancer, aiming to increase hope among the patients as well as public awareness about the disease, has been initiated in Iran.

The national campaign is intended to increase public awareness about the fact that cancer is preventable and encourage public participation under the theme "cancer is preventable and treatable with self-care and hope".

In early January, head of the Iranian Pediatric Hematology and Oncology Society, Hassan Abolqasemi, announced that currently, there is an estimated 900,000 cancer cases in Iran and 110,000 new cases are diagnosed each year. He also said that gastric, breast, lung and brain cancers are the most common cancers in the country.

Central obesity linked to brain shrinkage

Being overweight can lead to several health problems. Scientists now believe that obesity in the stomach area could even have associations with a smaller brain size.

A new study investigated the links between obesity and brain size. Researchers already know that the size of the brain can determine its health and function.

However, they know much less about what affects brain size itself.

According to Mark Hamer, a professor at Loughborough University in the United Kingdom:

"Existing research has linked brain shrinkage to memory decline and a higher risk of dementia, but research on whether extra body fat is protective or detrimental to brain size has been inconclusive."

Prof. Hamer is one of the authors of a new study focusing on the impact of body fat on brain size.

Published in the journal *Neurology*, the study used a particularly large sample size in comparison with others on the same topic.

In total, 9,652 people involved in the UK Biobank — which is a database that tracks the health of around 500,000 people — agreed to take part. Participants were aged 55, on average.

Taking accurate measurements
In order to determine body fat figures, the scientists worked out the body mass index (BMI), waist-to-hip ratio, and overall body fat of each participant.

Doctors can calculate BMI by dividing a person's weight by the square of their height. Dividing waist circumference by hip circumference provides waist-to-hip ratio. The higher the ratio, the larger a person's stomach compared with their hips.

Specialists consider people with a BMI of 30 and over to have obesity. Central obesity — or obesity around the stomach area — is a little different. In this case, a man with a waist-to-hip ratio above 0.90 and a woman with one above 0.85 is considered to have central obesity. The team calculated brain size using MRI scans and examined the volumes of both white and gray brain matter. Both of these are important in different ways.

In gray matter, the majority of the brain's 100 billion nerve cells are contained. It also houses parts that deal with muscle control and sensory perception. White matter, on the other hand, is full of bundles of nerve fibers that connect parts of the brain.

Before coming to any conclusions, the scientists took into account a number of things that affect brain volume — including age, high blood pressure, levels of physical activity, and whether a person smokes.

Gray matter changes
Their results indicated several links between body fat and brain size. People who had both a higher BMI and waist-to-hip ratio had the lowest brain volume overall. Those who just had a high BMI had slightly lower brain volumes than those who did not.

Also, 1,291 people with both a high BMI and a high waist-to-hip ratio had the lowest gray matter brain volume. On average, this equated to 786 cubic centimeters.

100 alcohol rehab centers to open soon

HEALTH TEHRAN — Alcohol rehab centers will soon open in 100 substance abuse centers that are already at work in the country, said Mehdi Shadnough, head of the Health Ministry's management center for transplantation and special diseases.

"We also aim to establish a specialized committee in order to devise specific clinical guidelines and determine a set of possible services for treating substance abuse in children and teenagers," said Shadnough.

On Sunday, deputy head of anti-narcotics taskforce said some 330 billion rials (nearly \$8 million) has been earmarked for drug addiction prevention programs,

but a greater budget is required to address the issue. According to Aref Vahabzadeh, parenting plays a significant role in preventing children from addiction or drug use, adding that parenting training packages are domestically prepared and supplied to families across the country.

Substance abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs.

Policies which influence the levels and patterns of substance use and related harm can significantly reduce the public health problems attributable to substance use, and interventions at the health care system level can work towards the restoration of health in affected individuals.

First Iranian-made digital stethoscope designed

HEALTH TEHRAN — An Iranian knowledge-based company has designed a digital stethoscope that overcomes the low sound levels by electronically amplifying the body sounds, said the company's managing director.

Electronic stethoscopes convert the acoustic sound waves obtained through the chest piece into electrical signals which can then be amplified for optimal listening.

Armin Karimi added that they are currently trying to get the required medical licenses and the product will be available on the local market in next Iranian calendar year (starting March 21), ISNA reported on Friday.

According to Karimi, electronic stethoscopes are among the equipment used

in tele medicine. Karimi added that this stethoscope is wireless, so all the data received from the heart, including the Electrocardiography (ECG) of the heart will be available on cell phones too.

Electrocardiography (ECG) is the process of recording the electrical activity of the heart over a period of time using electrodes placed over the skin.

According to Karimi, the patients can send vital information to their physicians without having any specialized knowledge about the heart sounds.

Foreign digital stethoscopes are currently available on Iran's market but this is the very first home-grown digital stethoscope to be made, according to ISNA.

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Knowledge-based products introduced in Bushehr

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — A total of 13 technological and biotechnological products manufactured by the students and academics at the Persian Gulf University in Bushehr, southern Iran, were unveiled during a ceremony on Monday.



Vice president for science and technology Sourena Sattari (r) pays visit to knowledge-based companies in Bushehr on Monday

The vice president for science and technology, Sourena Sattari, attended the event.

Alongside with four technological products, agar, wood pitch and nano silica fertilizer are amongst nine biological products, which were unveiled during the ceremony.

During his trip, Sattari also inaugurated the innovation center at the university and paid visits to knowledge-based companies at the university's science and technology park.

The government should provide conditions and necessary infrastructure for young generation's activities and wealth creation, Sattari said.

He said that development should be based on ecosystem, otherwise it will not be beneficial.

"In a knowledge economy we should pay attention to human resources, which should be self-confidence, innovative and motivated," he said.

The innovation ecosystem has led to job creation, knowledge economy and added value, he added.

"The government should support talented young generation and the ecosystem."

Entrepreneurs should be made sure that nobody can stop their business since the shutdown of each knowledge firm damages the country's development, he emphasized.

Actually an entrepreneur should start his or her business with personal investment and the government is responsible for safe ecosystem, he explained.

"Now there are about 4000 knowledge-based firms established in Iran and 34 knowledge firms are active in Bushehr province, which indicates a new approach toward research and innovative ideas that have a great influence on everyday life."

Oil money corrupts technology, innovation, human resources and research, he said.

Startups have already solved many problems of the country with their innovative ideas, he concluded.

University of Tehran to hold e-mental health startup weekend

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The University of Tehran will hold the first startup weekend on electronic mental health from February 20 to 22, IRNA reported on Tuesday. Mental health literacy, self-care, social-mental disorders and digital technology to prevent them as well as electronic psychiatric consultation will be discussed during the event.

The startup weekend, which will host about 100 students from different universities will attend the event, aims to collect ideas on development of mental health and decreasing mental-social disorders.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO), unipolar depression was the third leading cause of disease burden in the world in 2004.

Today, e-mental health refers to mental health services provided through the internet and related technology (including apps for smartphones).

In recent years, Asian countries have started thinking about how to incorporate electronic mental health into their national health systems to reach the vast populations in rural areas or those in large cities who do not have access to appropriate mental health care.

Uber is exploring autonomous bikes and scooters

Uber is looking to integrate autonomous technology into its bike and scooter-share programs. Details are scarce, but according to 3D Robotics CEO Chris Anderson, who said Uber announced this at a DIY Robotics event over the weekend, the division will live inside Uber's JUMP group, which is responsible for shared electric bikes and scooters.

The new division, Micromobility Robotics, will explore autonomous scooters and bikes that can drive themselves to be charged, or drive themselves to locations where riders need them. The Telegraph has since reported Uber has already begun hiring for this team.

"The New Mobilities team at Uber is exploring ways to improve safety, rider experience, and operational efficiency of our shared electric scooters and bicycles through the application of sensing and robotics technologies," Uber's ATG wrote in a Google Form seeking information from people interested in career opportunities.

Back in December, Uber unveiled its next generation of JUMP bikes, with self-diagnostic capabilities and swappable batteries. The impetus for the updated bikes came was the need to improve JUMP's overall unit economics.

"That is a major improvement to system utilization, the operating system, fleet uptime and all of the most critical metrics about how businesses are performing with running a shared fleet," JUMP Head of Product Nick Foley told TechCrunch last month. "Swappable batteries mean you don't have to take vehicles back to wherever you charge a bike or scooter, and that's good for the business." (Source: techcrunch.com)

Leave car keys on hook! Iranian startup helps you enjoy urban journeys

By Setareh Behroozi

Being a pedestrian in Tehran is not an easy job at all. You are surrounded by highways and that makes you feel helpless when you want to walk around the city or having a commuting trip. In a metropolis like Tehran it can be annoying not to use your personal vehicle for transportation. Either you do not know about the directions or about the bus and subway programs. But what if you want to be a responsible citizen and care about clean air? An Iranian startup has you covered.

Smartphone apps can be a wonderful asset when you decide to try carless transit. Ali Mahmoudi and his team initiated a startup and are developing a smart compound navigation device for walking and commuting trip.

Some services of Google Maps including route planning for traveling by foot, bicycle or public transportation are not available in Iran and there is no other application for them, Mahmoudi said in an interview with the Tehran Times.

Their target is citizens who do not want to drive to their destinations, walkers and commuters.

The application estimates and compares your journey time as well as costs for public transit according to your choice, he said.

Tehran is the first city in which the service

is provided and the user can choose the best available public transit lines and the application tracks your location, he explained.

"We can trade and train our algorithm in Tehran in order to offer the service across the city."

The startup is now in the research and development stage and will run its first product before summer 2019, he said.

"One of the reasons that we choose Tehran as our first place is that its buses are equipped with GPS devices and then we can estimate their schedule, he added.

"Besides, over 12 million journeys are done with public transportation in Tehran, which is a considerable figure."

Tehran is the city of workers and clerks too, who use public transportation daily, he said.

Mahmoudi said that the application finds the appropriate route for riding bicycles and appropriate sidewalks.

"Actually we need some professional experts who co-found in the startup, however, most of applicants prefer to be a mere clerk," he lamented.

As mentioned on their website, the startup team began its activity in spring 2018 and now is developing its application, which can be used for compound transport including subway, BRT, taxi and others for a fast journey.

With online information processing through the journey, the application saves



30 percent time and cost in daily journeys.

According to a report released by the Measuring Information Society of Iran at the Information Technology Organization on January 11, 64 percent of Iranians above six years are internet users.

With such a statistics, may be such applications be a great motivation for citizens to think twice public transportation. May be then, more people think about leaving their car key on the hook and try carless journeys in the cities.

The application estimates and compares your journey time as well as costs for public transit according to your choice

Biotechnology can increase Iran's export capacities: official



TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The use of biotechnology in industry can help increase added value and decrease related costs, which finally uplifts the country's export capacities, the secretary of the biotechnology development council said, Tasnim reported on Monday.

Mostafa Qanei said that developed countries use non-oil model to improve biotechnology economy.

"To this end, universities and the in-

dustry sector should have close collaboration," he said.

Now there are about 15,000 graduates of biotechnology in Iran, which is considered as a great opportunity to increase production, he said.

The council aims to create permanent jobs in the field of biotechnology, which is considered as a great share of knowledge economy and create synergy between universities and the industry sector, he explained.

ICT Ministry to support startups through VCs



TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Ministry plans to support startups through venture capitals instead of offering loans, said Hamidreza Ahmadian, an official with ICT Ministry, Mehr reported on Monday. Ahmadian attended the monthly session of ICT commission at Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines & Agriculture (TCCIM) at its venue.

"According to an agreement with ICT Ministry and Innovation and Prosperity Fund, the

ministry plans to change its method for its financial support." Due to current economic conditions, the private sector and state-run organizations should cooperate with each other to develop IT in the country, he said.

"The government should pave the way for exporting ICT products to countries like Iraq and Syria and provide information about their market for Iranian producers."

He urged ICT Ministry to hold meetings with representatives of the private sector to get acquainted with their problems for export, he concluded.

'Startups can raise public awareness on air quality'

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — Startups can raise awareness of people about the importance of air quality, Reihaneh Vahidian, the assistant director of the Information Technology Organization of Iran, said.

There are several startups which deal with solving urban challenges and the Internet of Things (IoT) provides good information on this issue, she said.

Through using applications, which monitor air quality in different spaces, people try to reduce air pollution and demand for good air quality, she said.

"May be we should invite entrepreneurs to be active in this field, which may do not seem economical at the first glance. However, if the air quality becomes one of the key values for citizens, it can boost startups as well," she explained.

She called the relation between startups and air quality monitoring as a win-win one, which lead to cultural and economic development.

"Although air quality is a national challenge but when it comes to sand and dust storms (SDSs) in the region it is turned into an international issue."

Since the past decade, SDSs have become of increasing concern among countries of western Asia and Iran due to its vast damaging effects on human health, agricultural land, infrastructure, and transport.

She said some startups are indirectly influential on raising air quality awareness among the citizens.

"For example, the startups which sell indoor plants or those who encourage citizens to use recycled materials are

appreciated," she said.

She also pointed to a newly launched startup, which provides a system based on Internet of Things (IoT) for its bike sharing service.

Tehran is a metropolis and it is not possible to use bike as the only vehicle for transportation, she said.

"However, the startup provides an opportunity for people to use these smart bikes for short rides and continue their way with other public transportation vehicle."

The most important role of the startups is raising people's awareness about the environment and to remind them that some of their activities may increase air pollution, she said.

"Tehran Municipality and the Information Technology Organization of Iran have some further cooperation to provide technological infrastructure to boost bike riding in the capital."

All citizens can be involved to improve air quality either as a startup founder or as a person who chooses bike riding for his or her personal healthcare as well as other issues, she said.

Air pollution control is a collective task. Tehran Municipality and other state-run organizations do the major part of the work; however, the citizens are also responsible for it, she concluded.

According to ISNA news agency since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2018) Tehraners have breathed 17 days of excellent air quality and 237 days of good air quality.



Based on the figures released by Tehran Air Quality Control Company last year in the same period the number of days with excellent air quality amounted to 12 and days of good air quality was 222 which indicates a 32-day increase in the number of excellent and good air quality.

PM 2.5 and PM 10 particulate matters are the main pollutants in Tehran.

PM10 is particulate matter 10 micrometers or less in diameter, PM2.5 is particulate matter 2.5 micrometers or less in diameter. Particles in this size range make up a large proportion of dust that can be drawn deep into the lungs. Larger particles tend to be trapped in the nose, mouth or throat and cause respiratory, lung and even heart conditions.

The AI market is growing, but how quickly is tough to pin down

If you work in tech, you've heard about artificial intelligence: how it's going to replace us, whether it's over-hyped or not and which nations will leverage it to prevent, or instigate, war.

Our editorial bent is more clear-cut: How much money is going into startups? Who is putting that money in? And what trends can we suss out about the health of the market over time?

So let's talk about the state of AI startups and how much capital is being raised. Here's what I can tell you: funding totals for AI startups are growing year-over-year; I just don't know precisely how quickly. Regardless, startups are certainly raising massive sums

of money off the buzzword.

Now, this is the part I normally include a chart and 400 words of copy to contextualize the AI market. But if you read the above descriptions closely, you'll see our problem: What the hell does "AI" mean?

Take Zymergen as an example. Crunchbase tags it with the AI marker. Bloomberg, citing data from CB Insights, agrees. But if you were making the decision, would you demarcate it as an AI company?

Zymergen's own website doesn't employ the phrase. Rather, it uses buzzwords commonly associated with AI — machine learning, automation. Zymergen's home page,

technology page and careers page are devoid of the term.

Instead, the company focuses on molecular technology. Artificial intelligence is not, in fact, what Zymergen is selling. We also know that Zymergen uses some AI-related tools to help it understand its data sets (check its jobs page for more). But is that enough to call it an AI startup? I don't think so. I would call it biotech.

That brings us back to the data. In the spirit of transparency, CB Insights reports a 72 percent boost in 2018 AI investment over 2017 funding totals. Crunchbase data pegs 2018's AI funding totals at a more modest 38 percent increase over the preceding year.

So we know that AI fundraising for pri-

vate companies is growing. The two numbers make that plain. But it's increasingly clear to me after nearly two years of staring at AI funding rounds that there's no market consensus over exactly what counts as an AI startup. Bloomberg in its coverage of CB Insights' report doesn't offer a definition. What would yours be?

If you don't have one, don't worry; you're not alone. Professionals constantly debate what AI actually means, and who actually deserves the classification. There's no taxonomy for startups like how we classify animals. It's flexible, and with PR, you can bend perception past reality.

(Source: techcrunch.com)

Rising temperatures may safeguard crop nutrition as climate changes, researchers claim

Recent research has shown that rising carbon dioxide levels will likely boost yields, but at the cost of nutrition. A new study in *Plant Journal* from the University of Illinois, U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS), and Donald Danforth Plant Science Center suggests that this is an incomplete picture of the complex environmental interactions that will affect crops in the future -- and rising temperatures may actually benefit nutrition but at the expense of lower yields.

Two years of field trials show that increasing temperatures by about 3 degrees Celsius may help preserve seed quality, offsetting the effects of carbon dioxide that make food less nutritious.

In soybeans, elevated carbon dioxide levels decreased the amount of iron and zinc in the seed by about 8 to 9 percent, but increased temperatures had the opposite effect.

Essential for health

"Iron and zinc are essential for both plant and human health," said Ivan Baxter, a principal investigator at the Danforth Center. "Plants have multiple processes that affect the accumulation of these elements in the seeds, and environmental factors can influence these processes in different ways, making it very hard to predict how our changing climate will affect our food."

"This study shows that a trade-off between optimizing yields for global change and seed nutritional quality may exist," said co-principal investigator Carl Bernacchi, a



scientist at the USDA-ARS, which funded the research along with the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The team tested the soybeans in real-world

Plants have multiple processes that affect the accumulation of these elements in the seeds, and environmental factors can influence these processes in different ways, making it very hard to predict how our changing climate will affect our food.

field conditions at the Soybean Free-Air Concentration Experiment (SoyFACE), an agricultural research facility at Illinois that is equipped to artificially increase carbon dioxide and temperature to futuristic levels.

The environment of crops

"It's a very controlled way of altering the growing environment of crops in agronomically relevant situations where the plants are planted and managed exactly like other fields in the Midwestern United States," Bernacchi said, who is also an assistant professor of plant biology and crop sciences at Illinois' Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology.

The open-access paper "Increased temperatures may safeguard the nutritional quality of crops under future elevated CO2 concentrations" is published by the *Plant Journal* (DOI: 10.1111/tj.14166) and available online or by request. Steven Huber and Iris H. Köhler are co-authors on this work.

Established in 2007, the Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology (IGB) is an interdisciplinary institute dedicated to transformative research and technology in life sciences using team-based strategies to tackle grand societal challenges. The IGB serves as a centralized location for biological and biotechnological research at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, with work ranging from basic research that expands the horizons of human knowledge to applied research that builds on this foundational knowledge to create new technologies. (Source: eurekalert.org)

Glaciers in North America now melting 4 times faster, team says

North America is fast losing the glaciers that have existed in the region for thousands of years and it might be due to global warming. An international team of researchers found that the glaciers in the United States and Canada have lost elevation, which means that they are losing ice faster than snow can replenish them.

The researchers monitored the elevation of glaciers from California to the Yukon using high-resolution satellite imagery. They found that from 2000 to 2018, glaciers located in western North America lost 117 gigatons of ice.

Moreover, they found that the rate of ice loss in the glaciers grew four times faster in the past decade. From 2000 to 2009, the researchers found that western North America lost an average of 2.9 gigatons of ice every year. From 2009 to 2018, the area was losing 12.3 gigatons every year.

"Our work provides a detailed picture of the current health of glaciers and ice outside of Alaska than what we've ever had before," stated Brian Menounos, a professor at the University of Northern British Columbia and the first author of the study. "We determined that mass loss dramatically increased in the last 10 years in British Columbia's southern and central Coast mountains, due in part to the position of the jet stream being located south of the U.S.-Canada border."

A jet stream refers to the winds in the atmosphere that can influence the climate, pushing air masses that affect weather pattern. In North America, the jet stream sways precipitation over the mountains, dumping snow that, over time, becomes ice.

However, the jet stream in the Southern Coast Mountain in British Columbia shifted, causing warmer and drier weather. Whether the changes are caused by global warming is something that needs to be probed in future studies, said Menounos. (Source: techtimes.com)

Our galaxy's supermassive black hole could be pointing a relativistic jet right at us

Things are officially getting exciting. New science has just come in from the collaboration to photograph Sagittarius A*, the supermassive black hole at the center of the Milky Way, and it's ponying up the secrets at our galaxy's dusty heart.

Because the image taken of the region is the highest resolution yet - twice as high as the previous best - the researchers were able to precisely map the properties of the light around the black hole as scattered by the cloud.

The "galactic center is full of matter around the black hole, which acts like frosted glass that we have to look through," astrophysicist Eduardo Ros of the Max Planck Institute for Radio Astronomy in Germany told New Scientist.

Using very long baseline interferometry to take observations at a wavelength of 3.5 millimeters (86 GHz frequency), a team of astronomers has used computer modelling to simulate what's inside the thick cloud of plasma, dust and gas surrounding the black hole.

Most of it is coming from an area just 300 millionth of a degree of the night sky, with a symmetrical shape. And, since black holes don't emit detectable radiation on their own, the source is most likely one of two things.



"This may indicate that the radio emission is produced in a disk of infalling gas rather than by a radio jet," said astrophysicist Sara Issaoun of Radboud University in The Netherlands.

"However, that would make Sgr A* an exception compared to other radio emitting black holes. The alternative could be that the radio jet is pointing almost at us."

Active black holes are surrounded by a swirling cloud of material that's falling into it like water down a drain. As this material is swallowed by the black hole, it emits jets of particles from its rotational poles at velocities approaching light speed.

We're not quite sure how this happens, but astronomers believe that material from the inner part of the accretion disc is channeled towards and launched from the poles via magnetic field lines.

Since Earth is in the galactic plane, having a jet pointed in our direction would mean that the black hole is oriented quite strangely, as if it's lying on its side. (Source: sciencealert.com)

Fossilized slime of 100-million-year-old hagfish shakes up vertebrate family tree

Paleontologists have discovered the first detailed fossil of a hagfish, the slimy, eel-like carrion feeders of the ocean. The 100-million-year-old fossil helps answer questions about when these ancient, jawless fish branched off the evolutionary tree from the lineage that gave rise to modern-day jawed vertebrates, including bony fish and humans.

Paleontologists at the University of Chicago have discovered the first detailed fossil of a hagfish, the slimy, eel-like carrion feeders of the ocean. The 100-million-year-old fossil helps answer questions about when these ancient, jawless fish branched off the evolutionary tree from the lineage that gave rise to modern-day jawed vertebrates, including bony fish and humans.

The fossil, named *Tethymyxine tapirostrum*, is a 12-inch long fish embedded in a slab of Cretaceous period limestone from Lebanon. It fills a 100-million-year gap in the fossil record and shows that hagfish are more closely related to the blood-sucking lamprey than to other fishes.

"This is a major reorganization of the family tree of all fish and their descendants. This allows us to put an evolutionary date on unique traits that set hagfish apart from all other animals," said Tetsuto Miyashita, Ph.D., a Chicago Fellow in the Department of Organismal Biology and Anatomy at UChicago who led the research.

Modern-day hagfish are known for their bizarre, nightmarish appearance and unique defense mechanism. They don't have eyes, or jaws or teeth to bite with, but instead use a spiky tongue-like apparatus to rasp flesh off dead fish and whales at the bottom of the ocean. When harassed, they can instantly turn the water around them into a cloud of slime, clogging the gills of would-be predators. (Source: sciencedaily.com)

No Planet Nine? Weird orbits of distant objects may have different explanation

The weirdly clustered orbits of some far-flung bodies in our Solar System can be explained without invoking a big, undiscovered "Planet Nine," a new study suggests.

The shepherding gravitational pull could come from many fellow trans-Neptunian objects (TNOs) rather than a single massive world, according to the research.

"If you remove Planet Nine from the model, and instead allow for lots of small objects scattered across a wide area, collective attractions between those objects could just as easily account for the eccentric orbits we see in some TNOs," study lead author Antranik Sefilian, a doctoral student in the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics at Cambridge University in England, said in a statement.

The hunt for Planet Nine — or, as some prefer to call it, Planet X or Giant Planet Five — began in earnest in 2014. That year, astronomers Chad Trujillo and Scott Sheppard proposed the existence of a large, unseen "perturber" beyond Neptune, whose gravitational influence could explain oddities in the orbits of distant objects like the dwarf planets Sedna and 2012 VP113.

Gravitational imprint

In January 2016, Konstantin Batygin and Mike Brown contributed more evidence, announcing that other TNOs also appeared to bear this gravitational imprint. Batygin and Brown estimated that the perturber is perhaps 10 times more massive than Earth and lies about 600 astronomical units (AU) from the sun on average. (One AU is the Earth-sun distance — about 93 million miles, or 150 million kilometers.)

The case has been building ever since, as astronomers have found more and more "clustered" TNOs; the tally is up to about 30 at the moment.

But Planet Nine's existence isn't a slam dunk: Some astronomers think the orbit-shaping tug is more likely coming from many small bodies. The new study,



which Sefilian conducted with Jihad Touma of the American University of Beirut, explores this latter scenario.

The duo's modeling work suggests that the strength-in-numbers explanation does indeed work — if the mass of the Kuiper Belt, the ring of bodies beyond Neptune, is a few to 10 times that of Earth. This is a pretty big "if," given that most estimates peg the Kuiper Belt's mass at less than 10 percent that of Earth (and one recent study put the figure at 0.02 Earth masses).

Harboring massive disks

But other solar systems are known to harbor massive disks of material in their outer reaches, Sefilian and Touma noted. And our failure to spot one around our own sun doesn't mean it doesn't exist, they stressed.

"The problem is, when you're observing the disk from inside the system, it's almost impossible to see the whole thing at once. While we don't have direct observational evidence for the disk, neither do we have it for Planet Nine, which is why we're investigating other possibilities," Sefilian said.

"It's also possible that both things could be true — there could be a massive disk and a ninth planet," he added. "With the discovery of each new TNO, we gather more evidence that might help explain their behavior."

The new study has been accepted for publication in the *Astronomical Journal*. You can read it for free at the online preprint site arXiv.org. (Source: space.com)

New study reveals local drivers of amplified Arctic warming

The Arctic experienced an extreme heat wave during the February 2018. The temperature at the North Pole has soared to the melting point of ice, which is about 30-35 degrees (17-19 Celsius) above normal. There have also been recent studies, indicating the mass of Arctic glaciers has declined significantly since the 1980's by more than 70%.

These sudden climate changes affected not just the Arctic regions, but also the water, food, and energy security nexus throughout the globe. This is why climate scientists from around the world are paying increasing attention to this accelerated warming pattern, commonly referred to as 'Arctic Amplification'.

An international team of researchers, including Professor Sarah Kang and DoYeon Kim in the School of Urban and Environmental Engineering at UNIST, has unveiled that local greenhouse gas concentrations appear to be attributable to Arctic Amplification.

Published in the November 2018 issue of *Nature Climate Change*, their study on the cause of Arctic Amplification shows that local greenhouse gas concentrations, and Arctic climate feedbacks outweigh other processes.

Computer models

Long-term observations of surface temperatures show an intensified surface warming in Canada, Siberia, Alaska and in the Arctic Ocean relative to global mean temperature rise. Arctic Amplification is consistent with computer models, simulating the response to increasing greenhouse gas concentrations.

Using complex computer simulations, the scientists were able to disprove previously suggested hypotheses that emphasized the role of transport of heat from the tropics to the poles as one of the key contributors to the amplified warming in the Arctic.

"Our study clearly shows that local carbon dioxide forcing and polar feedbacks are most effective in Arctic amplification compared to other processes", says Assistant Project Leader Malte F. Stuecker, the corresponding author of the study. (Source: natureworldnews.com)



Increasing anthropogenic carbon dioxide (CO2) concentrations trap heat in the atmosphere, which leads to surface warming. Regional processes can then further amplify or dampen this effect, thereby creating the typical pattern of global warming.

Surface warming

In the Arctic region, surface warming reduces snow and sea-ice extent, which in turn decreases the reflectivity of the surface. As a result, more sunlight can reach the top of layers of the soil and ocean, leading to accelerated warming. Furthermore, changes in Arctic clouds and of the vertical atmospheric temperature profile can enhance warming in the polar regions.

In addition to these factors, heat can be transported into the Arctic by winds. "We see this process for instance during El Niño events. Tropical warming, caused either by El Niño or anthropogenic greenhouse emissions, can cause global shifts in atmospheric weather patterns, which may lead to changes in surface temperatures in remote regions, such as the Arctic", said Kyle Armour, co-author of the study and professor of Atmospheric Sciences and Oceanography at the University of Washington.

Moreover, global warming outside the Arctic region will also lead to an increase in Atlantic Ocean temperatures. Ocean currents, such as the Gulf Stream and the North Atlantic drift can then transport the warmer waters to the Arctic Ocean, where they could melt sea ice and experience further amplification due to local processes. (Source: natureworldnews.com)

How hot are atoms in the shock wave of an exploding star?

A new method to measure the temperature of atoms during the explosive death of a star will help scientists understand the shock wave that occurs as a result of this supernova explosion.

An international team of researchers, including a Penn State scientist, combined observations of a nearby supernova remnant — the structure remaining after a star's explosion — with simulations in order to measure the temperature of slow-moving gas atoms surrounding the star as they are heated by the material propelled outward by the blast.

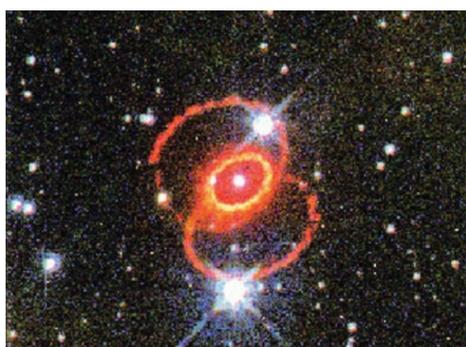
The research team analyzed long-term observations of the nearby supernova remnant SN1987A using NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory and created a model describing the supernova.

The team confirmed that the temperature of even the heaviest atoms — which had not yet been investigated — is related to their atomic weight, answering a long-standing question about shock waves and providing important information about their physical processes.

Cosmic laboratories

"Supernova explosions and their remnants provide cosmic laboratories that enable us to explore physics in extreme conditions that cannot be duplicated on Earth," said David Burrows, professor of astronomy and astrophysics at Penn State and an author of the paper.

"Modern astronomical telescopes and instrumentation, both ground-based and space-based, have allowed us to



perform detailed studies of supernova remnants in our galaxy and nearby galaxies. We have performed regular observations of supernova remnant SN1987A using NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory, the best X-ray telescope in the world, since shortly after Chandra was launched in 1999, and used simulations to answer longstanding questions about shock waves."

The explosive death of a massive star like SN1987A propels material outwards at speeds of up to one tenth the speed of light, pushing shock waves into the surrounding inter-

stellar gas. Researchers are particularly interested in the shock front, the abrupt transition between the supersonic explosion and the relatively slow-moving gas surrounding the star. The shock front heats this cool slow-moving gas to millions of degrees — temperatures high enough for the gas to emit X-rays detectable from Earth.

Stream of water

The "transition is similar to one observed in a kitchen sink when a high-speed stream of water hits the sink basin, flowing smoothly outward until it abruptly jumps in height and becomes turbulent," said Burrows. "Shock fronts have been studied extensively in the Earth's atmosphere, where they occur over an extremely narrow region. But in space, shock transitions are gradual and may not affect atoms of all elements the same way."

The research team, led by Marco Miceli and Salvatore Orlando of the University of Palermo, Italy, measured the temperatures of different elements behind the shock front, which will improve understanding of the physics of the shock process. These temperatures are expected to be proportional to the elements' atomic weight, but the temperatures are difficult to measure accurately.

Previous studies have led to conflicting results regarding this relationship, and have failed to include heavy elements with high atomic weights. The research team turned to supernova SN1987A to help address this dilemma. (Source: phys.org)

Majlis to assess Department of Environment performance

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — The agriculture committee of the Majlis (Iranian parliament) will assess performance of the Department of Environment (DOE) since 2013, Tasnim news agency reported on Monday.



On December 10 the proposal to evaluate the performance of DOE was submitted to the presiding board of Majlis and this week the efficiency of the department will be assessed.

Assessing the DOE performance in allocation of wetlands' water rights and wetland conservation, managerial appointments, waste management, especially in northern provinces, air pollution in metropolises, combatting sand and dust storms, and protecting the endangered biodiversity are among the main subjects of the assessment, the report added.

Moreover, the DOE stance on farming and importing of genetically modified products as well as performance of provincial departments of environment will be questioned.

Plan to combat SDSs in Tehran submitted to DOE

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — The plan to combat sand and dust storms (SDSs) in the province of Tehran is submitted to the Department of Environment (DOE), an official with the provincial department of environment has said.



The plan is including 50 projects to address SDSs in the capital, ISNA news agency quoted Mehrdad Katal Hosseini as saying on Tuesday.

The projects have three main objectives including controlling the current sand and dust storm hotspots, preventing new hotspots from forming and increasing public awareness and encouraging public participation, Katal Hosseini added.

One of the projects which is given priority is installing monitoring stations for sand and dust storms across the province for enhancement of dust detection and early warning on impending storms, he highlighted.

The plan will be assessed by the year-end (March 20) and the necessary budget for implementing it will be allocated, he concluded.

LEARN ENGLISH

Fortune Telling

A: Look at this newspaper article about this famous local **medium**. It says that she is really **gifted** and so popular now, that she is **booked solid** with appointments for the next twelve months!
B: You don't really believe in all that **hocus pocus mumbo jumbo** do you?

A: Well I have had many friends that went to a **psychic** and got their palms read and most of the things the psychic told her came true!

B: Of course it does! They tell you general and obvious things like that you will be successful or have a big house. I think most of the times they are just **scam artists**.

A: Well **historically** it is a **practice** that many cultures share. Reading the **tarot** cards, in the east they would even read tea leaves! I even heard that there are people that make you smoke a cigar, and then read your **ashes**.

B: All **superstitious** nonsense! I would still like to go to one and see what he or she has to say, **just for kicks**.

A: Great! I'll make an appointment!

Key vocabulary

medium: a person through whom the spirits of the dead are alleged to be able to contact the living
gifted: having great special talent or ability
booked solid: to be completely full
hocus pocus mumbo jumbo: foolish religious reverence, ritual, or incantation

psychic: sensitive to influences or forces of a nonphysical or supernatural nature

scam artist: a person who attempts to defraud others by presenting a fraudulent offer and pretending that it is legitimate; a con artist

historic: of, pertaining to, treating, or characteristic of history or past events

practice: to do or perform (something) repeatedly

tarot: any of a set of 22 playing cards bearing allegorical representations, used for fortunetelling

ash: the powdery residue of matter that remains after burning
superstition: irrational fear of what is unknown or mysterious, a belief that some objects or actions are lucky or unlucky, or that they cause events to happen, based on old ideas of magic

just for kicks: if you say that someone does something for kicks, you mean that they do it because they think it will be exciting

Supplementary vocabulary

talent: a special natural ability or aptitude

far-fetched: improbable

voodoo: black magic; sorcery

gypsy: member of a people scattered throughout Europe and North America

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Green industrial, service units lauded

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — The 20th National Congress for Green Industrial and Service Unites was held in Tehran on Tuesday during which green industrial and service producing units were lauded, ISNA news agency reported.

The industrial and service producing units are active in fields of agriculture, oil, petrochemistry, cement, agriculture, recycling and electricity, deputy environment chief Masoud Tajrishi said during the congress.

Some 253 units submitted for the evaluations, of which 217 were industrial and the rest were service producing, Tajrishi explained.

14 top green industrial units 67 green industrial units as well as 3 top green service producing units were awarded at the event, Tajrishi said, adding that 11 service producing units also received honorable mention at the congress.

The congress aims to encourage industrial and service units to go green and become more environment friendly and all those participating in the event volunteered, he added.

Complying with environmental rules and regulation is the utmost objective of the congress, the deputy environment chief suggested.

Recycling the waste, monitoring the pollutants, energy efficiency, and using clean energies are among the criteria green units should meet, he explained.

'Economic development resulted in environmental degradation'

Chief of the Department of Environment explained that industrialization to achieve



economic development has given rise to environmental degradation, Mehr news agency reported.

Over the past 40 years since the Islamic Revolution (1979) all sectors including health and industry have undergone development, Issa Kalantari said, adding that the only sector which has not achieved any improvement is the country's environment.

After 40 years I can't talk of any achievement in this sector, deforestation, soil erosion, water shortage, air pollution, etc. are all haunting the country, he added.

Unsuitable development have harmed the environment, he noted, saying that the congress is an opportunity to extend our gratitude towards those who have done small parts in going green.

■ Pollutions major environmental risks to health

Caretaker Health Minister Saeed Namaki, for his part, explained that not paying attention to environmental factors is posing a great risk to human health.

Air pollution, wetlands depletion, and polluting industries are threatening public health, Namaki said, adding that diseases caused due to negative environmental impacts on health are inflicting considerable costs on the governments.

Environmental pollutants are a great danger to health system and policy makers should take it into consideration, he highlighted.

In order to have a healthy society we have to respect the environment, he suggested.

Rainfalls brings life back to Gomishan wetland

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Gomishan international wetland, northern province of Golestan, is once again partially filled with water with recent rainfalls, the provincial chief of the department of environment has said.

Over the past few days more than 60 percent of the wetland was filled due to the recent rainfalls and now 20,000 hectares of the wetland are covered with water, Amir Abdous said on Tuesday.

Due to the decrease in the water level at the Caspian Sea the wetland has been dried specially during hot seasons, Abdous said, adding that in winter a small part of the wetland was covered with water.

Last year waterways which were leading the wetland water to the sea were blocked which also played a key role in bringing life back to the wetland. He added, IRNA news agency reported.

Once the wetland was revived various species returned to the region and tourism will be again booming in the area, he highlighted.



Abdous went on to say that bird species such as lesser white-fronted goose, cormorant, flamingo, duck, and pelican are spotted in the wetland.

Moreover, due to the recent rainfalls thick vegetation will cover the area which stop sand and dust storm hotspots from forming, he suggested.

From September 23, 2017 to January 21, 2018 the whole country received 38.7 millimeters of rain while this year the amount almost quadrupled amounting to 118.4 millimeters.

Province of Golestan received 262.6 millimeters of rain from the beginning of autumn to January 21 while last year's precipitation is measured at 168.9 in the aforesaid period.

Gomishan wetland is only fed by the Caspian Sea and no other river is flowing into it. The wetland is designated as a Ramsar site in 2002.

The Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) -- called the "Ramsar Convention" -- is an intergovernmental treaty that embodies the commitments of its member countries to maintain the ecological character of their Wetlands of International Importance and to plan for the "wise use", or sustainable use, of all of the wetlands in their territories.

'Environmental education must be acquired at earlier ages'

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Environmental education has been included in the country's school curriculum to prepare students for natural resources and environment protection, while it needs to be more efficient and acquired at earlier ages to make favorable cognitive and behavioral changes in the students, Mehr news agency reported on Sunday.

One of the main concerns for every nation is the environment and the interaction between the people and their surrounding environment; for the life of human as well as all other animals depends on the environment. Yet, in the past two centuries with the apparent great advances, human beings have caused damages to the environment consciously or unconsciously, and Iran is no exception.

In spite of the fact that Iran is dealing with 4 major environmental issues, including water scarcity, soil erosion, air pollution and endangered biodiversity, neither of the responsible officials, nor the public have the necessary knowledge to find proper solutions for containing the issues, thus their poor natural

resource management along with not being committed has exacerbated the country's environmental issues.

Environmental education and making the students committed and informed of the environmental values in early ages has become a great challenge for the Iranian school's curriculum, so that educational materials on environment protection have been included in 11th grade curriculum since the beginning of last school year (September 23, 2017).

The book entitled "human and environment", is comprised of 7 lessons focusing on the importance of water, soil, air, energy, waste, biodiversity and environment.

For environment to be an all-encompassing concern for the public, it should be based on the educational materials and school curriculum at different grades of education which in turn requires proper programming, fine materials and curriculum, providing textbooks in line with its objectives, and well-trained and informed teachers capable of perceiving the concepts and making them comprehensible for the students to consider environment

safeguarding not only as a material, but a human responsibility.

The students are trained to learn knowledge and values to employ them in their very life; so only textbooks cannot contribute much to this end.

Mehrdad Haqshenas, a teacher who has been teaching the book for two years, said that one of the important issues with the book is that it has not been devoted to attractive environmental subjects, for instance, the wildlife and behavioral characteristics of extinct animals are not included in the book, while could amaze and involve the students.

He went on to add that the Asiatic cheetah is not mentioned throughout the book, and only sufficed to a photograph of the precious endangered species.

The book is said to aim at informing the student of the environmental challenges the country is facing, however, due to conservative approach towards unsustainable development, such as excessive dam construction, water transfer, mines and Industries, the environ-

mentally-consciousness concept would not form in the students, he explained.

Another major problem with the book is that it is presented in high schools, when students are preparing for the university entrance exam, he lamented, adding that teachers are obliged to present the lessons as quickly as possible, so that students can practice for more important exams.

He regretted that the environmental issues can be presented by many educational films, traveling and workshops, though, the lessons are taught within 5 months, which makes the class uncompromising, without any attractive educational content.

In addition to the book's content not being applicable, the faculties teaching the book are almost biology teachers, not environmental specialists, Haqshenas also lamented.

"The experts believe that environmental education must be taught to students at early ages, so it was better to design the book for the elementary school students, who have fewer lessons and are living a more enthusiastic stages of their lives," he concluded.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ج

Studies on launching Iran's first tram started

An appraisal study on the country's first tram, to be established in the northern city of Rasht, has been started, an official with the municipalities and village administrations has announced. "The research project has been started since past few months, which, according to preliminary information, will cost about 250 million euros," ISNA quoted Hossein Rajab-Salahi as saying on Tuesday.

مطالعات برای راه اندازی اولین تراموای کشور آغاز شد

مدیر کل دفتر حمل و نقل ریلی درون شهری سازمان شهرداری‌ها اظهار داشت: فرآیند انجام مطالعات پروژه راه اندازی نخستین تراموای کشور در رشت آغاز شد.

حسین رجب صلاحی در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا افزود: مطالعه اولیه این پروژه از دو ماه پیش آغاز شده، و براساس اطلاعات اولیه اجرای آن حدوداً ۲۵۰ میلیون یورو هزینه دارد.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"-ene"

■ **Meaning:** an unsaturated organic compound
■ **For example:** Benzene is used in the manufacture of a large number of chemicals that contribute to the production of plastics.

PHRASAL VERB

Mark down

■ **Meaning:** to reduce the prices
■ **For example:** The coat was marked down by 40% - a real bargain!

IDIOM

Come to blows

■ **Explanation:** If two or more people come to blows, they start to fight
■ **For example:** The debate was so intense that the participants almost came to blows.



Without earth no birth!

Israeli forces fatally shoot Palestinian over an alleged stabbing attempt

Israeli forces have fatally shot a Palestinian man at an Israeli checkpoint in Nablus, in the northern region of the occupied West Bank. The 36-year-old victim, Muhammad Fouzi Adwi, succumbed to his wounds shortly after being shot, the Palestinian Health Ministry said on Monday.

The Israeli military later claimed in a statement that the man was shot following an alleged stabbing attack. No Israeli soldiers were, however, injured in the incident.

The Israeli military regularly opens fatal fire on Palestinians, accusing them of attempted attacks.

Observers believe Israeli forces continue to adopt a shoot-to-kill policy against Palestinians knowing Tel Aviv has offered impunity to kill Palestinians based on mere suspicions.

Human rights groups have repeatedly criticized Tel Aviv for its policy as a significant number of the killed Palestinians are known to have not posed any immediate threat.

The Israeli regime has also been enforcing the draconian policy of demolishing homes of Palestinians who are deemed to be behind fatal attacks against Israelis in the West Bank.

Israel has been occupying the West Bank, including East al-Quds (Jerusalem), since taking the Palestinian territory by force in 1967. Ever since the occupation, it has been propping up settlements throughout the land, in a move condemned by the United Nations, and considered illegal under international law, which bans construction on occupied territory.

■ Israeli regime forces deliberately attack Palestinian medics

Meantime, Israeli forces have been targeting medical crew in Gaza since the beginning of the Great March of Return rallies on March 30, 2018. This is in violation of international law and has led to numerous casualties among medical staff.

■ Hamas to Chad: Normalization with Israel's stab in the back of Palestine

Elsewhere, the Gaza-based Palestinian resistance movement, Hamas, has denounced Chad's normalization of relations with Israel as a "stab in the back" of the Palestinian nation, calling on the N'Djamena government to reconsider the move.



On Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu traveled to Chad, where he and Chadian President Idriss Deby "announced the renewal of diplomatic relations between Chad and Israel."

In a statement on Monday, Hamas condemned Chad's involvement in a "dangerous wave of normalization with the Israeli occupation."

The Palestinian movement further denounced Chad's policy shift "as a stab in the back of the Palestinian people and their just cause" against the Israeli occupation of their homeland.

"While Hamas realizes the dangerous repercussions of normalization with the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian cause, it calls on Chad to reconsider its move, isolate the Israeli occupation, and continue supporting the Palestinian people's freedom struggle against the occupation," the statement read.

Deby, who won a disputed fifth term in April 2016, visited the occupied Palestinian territories and met with Netanyahu in November, becoming the first Chadian leader to visit Israel, 47 years after the two sides severed ties.

Back then, Israeli media cited sources in N'Djamena as saying that Deby's visit was focused on "security" and that Tel Aviv had already been supplying weapons and other

military equipment to Chad.

Over the past two years, Netanyahu has been seeking to secure a foothold in Africa. He has traveled to several African states in a bid to convince them to stop voting against the Israeli regime at the United Nations in favor of Palestinians.

Israel is also said to be seeking to take advantage of insurgency and Takfiri militancy gripping parts of Africa to sell advanced military equipment to conflict-ridden states across the continent.

The Israeli regime is now seeking to restore relations with Mali, a West African country, The Times of Israel reported on Monday.

The report, citing unnamed Israeli officials, said the regime is preparing for a visit by Mali's Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubeye Maiga "in the coming weeks."

■ Prominent Palestinian activist wins legal battle over 'terrorism' database

Separately, a prominent Palestinian activist has won a two-year legal battle over his listing on the World-Check financial database, which linked him to "terrorism" based on an unsubstantiated claim by Israel.

In a settlement announced on Monday at the high court in London, Majed al-Zeer, the chairman of the Palestinian Return Center (PRC) -- which is recognized by the UN for

campaigning for the Palestinian refugees' right of return -- was removed from the "terrorism" category and paid \$13,000 in damages plus legal fees.

According to lawyers representing al-Zeer, he had been added to World-Check, the financial intelligence service owned by Thomson Reuters, because of a "politically motivated" proscription by the Israeli regime.

Zeer, who is also a British citizen, told the Middle East Eye news portal on Monday, "For the Palestinian cause, this is a historic moment."

Zeer said the designation had played a crucial role in the closure of three bank accounts belonging to him and the PRC between 2009 and 2015.

In comments to Al Jazeera, Zeer said, "World-Check has been a bad tool for governments to hammer people who are just trying to say the truth about their illegal activities."

"Israel has used all means - whether moral or immoral, legal and illegal - to deprive Palestinians of even a narrow space to shout," he added.

British Labour MP (Member of Parliament) Andy Slaughter, the secretary of the all-party parliamentary group on Britain-Palestine, who has spoken at PRC events, described the Monday ruling as a "significant victory for the Palestinian Return Center in challenging those who blindly adopt such labels and become vehicles for propaganda."

He said that "labeling organizations as terrorist or otherwise restricting them just because they are critical of" Israel's "policy or are promoting the rights of Palestinians is undemocratic and highly prejudicial."

Conservative MP Crispin Blunt also said, "It's pleasing to see justice at least partly done. The difficulty of representing Palestinian interests when they are under occupation supported by an alliance that includes the world's most powerful interests cannot be overestimated."

"This is a small step in correcting the record so Palestinian humanitarian organizations and their members can do the work needed to address the human consequences of continuing illegal occupation," Blunt said.

(Source: Press TV)

Germany, France sign treaty building on 1963 Elysee accord

➔ Citing Britain's departure from the European Union and the growing protectionist tendencies around the world, Merkel noted that international cooperation is going through a rocky time.



"Seventy-four years, a single human lifetime after the end of World War II, what seems self-evident is being called into question again," she said. "That's why, first of all, there needs to be a new commitment toward our responsibility within the European Union, a responsibility held by Germany and France."

Her words were echoed by French President Emmanuel Macron, who noted that France and Germany no longer pose a threat to each other.

"[The threat] comes from outside Europe and from within our societies if we are not able to respond to the growing anger," he said.

Outside the Gothic town hall, protesters staged noisy rallies -- some in support of the treaty, others against. Among those opposed were dozens of people wearing yellow safety vests, which have become the signature outfit of anti-government protesters in France.

The Treaty of Aachen aims to boost cross-border cooperation along the 450-kilometer Franco-German frontier, and also improve coordination between the two nations when it comes to tackling international problems such as climate change and terrorism.

One long-standing bone of contention has been the issue of military action outside Europe. Berlin's traditional hesitancy to send troops abroad -- rooted in Germany's grim history of militarism -- has softened somewhat in recent years.

Merkel said that with the new pact, the two countries pledge to develop "a joint military culture" that includes a Franco-German arms industry and a common stance on weapons exports. "By doing so we want to contribute to the creation of a European army," she said, noting that this would go hand-in-hand with greater foreign policy coordination in general.

Germany and France are often described as the engine of the European Union -- to the occasional annoyance of other members, who feel sidelined by the cozy relationship between Paris and Berlin.

The point was made by EU Council President Donald Tusk, Poland's former prime minister, who told Merkel and Macron bluntly that "Europe needs a clear signal from Paris and Berlin that enhanced cooperation in smaller formats is not an alternative to the cooperation of Europe as a whole. That it is full integration -- and not instead of -- integration of Europe."

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said some countries might feel the constant show of amity between France and Germany was "a bit much."

"But it will be very painful as soon as Germany and France are not of one and the same opinion," he said. "So you should stick to this policy because that means that we others can also forge a position together."

(Source: AP)

Is Press TV journo caught in crossfire as Trump intensifies Iran standoff?

By Alireza Hashemi

TEHRAN — A little over a week into the arrest of the senior journalist working for Iran's Press TV, the case has become a big controversy shrouded in mystery.

On January 16, Iranians were shocked to know that the US-born anchorwoman Marzieh Hashemi had been detained in the US three days earlier.

The 59-year-old widow was arrested by the FBI on January 13 at St Louis airport after visiting relatives in the New Orleans and just before boarding a plane to see her sick brother in Denver.

But it took days for the case to be publicised, as her family had been kept in dark and had no idea what had happened to their beloved one.

While the case grabbed headlines in international media, nothing was known about the reason for her confinement.

Her daughter, Sarah, who was eventually contacted by Marzieh on January 15, quoted her as saying that she was being treated disrespectfully by the US police.

They had handcuffed and shackled her, removed her hijab, and offered her only pork as a meal, which is banned under Islam.

Marzieh was suffering the same US discrimination against women, Muslims and African-Americans she had been trying to expose for decades.

■ Manufactured Pretext?

Further fueling suspicions and outrage, American officials did not confirm her detention until January 18.

On the day, a US federal judge formally announced the confinement in a statement, saying she is not accused of a crime, but her testimony is required over an unspecified case in Washington.

The statement said Hashemi was arrested on "a material arrest warrant" and will be released after the completion of her testimony to a jury investigating unspecified "violations of US criminal law."

The statement did not elaborate further, refusing to mention what judge ordered the arrest and on what alleged evidence.

Material witness warrants are used to arrest potential witnesses or suspects after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, to ensure that people with knowledge of others' crimes are available to testify, especially those with a perceived flight risk.

But Hashemi's family said she had not been contacted by the FBI before she was detained and she would have been absolutely willing to cooperate with the agency.

Moreover, such warrants appear to be unconstitutional and illegal, according to law experts.

Ricardo Bascuas, a professor at the University of Miami School of Law, has said the US government uses such tactics when it needs a reason to arrest somebody but it doesn't have one.

According to a Washington Post report, material witness warrants are rare, with the US courts' records indicating only two such cases were filed last year.

■ Justice Department Behind Case

Following the storm of controversy over Hashemi's detention, a US official hinted the Justice Department was behind the case.

The unnamed official told Reuters on Saturday that a US grand jury was investigating Press TV itself over charges that the station was a "propaganda outlet" and should have been registered with the Justice Department as an agent of a foreign government.



Perhaps, Hashemi, who had filmed a Black Lives Matter documentary in St Louis, was taken in for questioning in connection with the foreign registration case against Press TV.

If the channel Hashemi was working for is found to be violating the US law, Hashemi herself could face prosecution for filming a documentary in the US for the station.

On Sunday, Peyman Jebelli, CEO of IRIB World Service and the head of Press TV, responded by arguing that Press TV did not need to register in the US.

Jebelli said, "Our activities are conducted through social media and limited satellite broadcast. Why should we register Press TV with the US Department of Justice? Do all outlets with international broadcasting register in all countries?" he said.

In a similar case in late 2017, Russia's RT was forced to register as a foreign agent in the US, after a registration case filed by the US Justice Department was about to put the channel's US bureau at risk of blockage.

It's unclear how Press TV would react to such a court case, as it holds no office in the US.

Even if the channel wants to register its name with the DoJ, it might not be able to do as Iran is subject to heavy US sanctions.

■ Big Dilemma

Anyway, assuming the US DoJ is behind the unusual case, why has it decided to act now?

Press TV was founded in 2007, and Hashemi has been working for the channel since its launch.

According to her family, Hashemi used to travel to her homeland once a year to visit her relatives, usually working on documentaries as well.

Undoubtedly, something has changed, and that change could be the Trump administration.

Hashemi's arrest comes following two years of deteriorating relations between Iran and the US, in the wake of Washington's stepped-up pressure campaign against Tehran.

■ Trump Gets Angry

The incident came right after the news came out that Iran has arrested another American citizen.

On January 9, Iran confirmed it is holding ex-US sailor Michael White at a prison.

White, who had traveled to Iran for what his relatives claim was visiting a "girlfriend" in Iran's holy city of Mashhad, was arrested in July over espionage charges.

White is the fifth American known to be held by Iran on such charges, and the first to be arrested during Trump's tenure.

The others are Iranian-American Siamak Namazi and his 82-year-old father Baquer, Iranian-American art dealer Karen Vafadari, and Chinese-American graduate student Xiyue Wang.

Trump could have seen the arrest of White unhealthy for his credit, seeking a tit-for-tat move or something.

To get a better grasp of Trump's style of politics, one would only have to look at his decision to postpone House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's upcoming trip to Brussels and Afghanistan in return for her move to postpone Trump's 2019 State of the Union address to the Congress.

During his 2016 electoral campaigns and after taking power in the US, Trump had mocked his predecessor Barack Obama for being "too soft" on Iran.

Famously, he once threatened Iranian boats would be "shot out of the water" if they inappropriately approach US warships in the Persian Gulf during his presidency.

Since coming to power, Trump has bragged about his achievements on Iran, claiming his strong-arm tactics have pushed Iran not to threaten US interests in the Persian Gulf, among other interests.

■ Retaliatory Move?

A clear hint about Trump's approach towards the case could be found in remarks by unidentified US officials in interviews with CBS News earlier this month.

The US-based outlet reported on January 9, four days before Hashemi's arrest and on the same day Iran publicised the detention of White, that it has learned "Iran floated the idea of a prisoner exchange last year."

The outlet reported US State Department officials "have not said whether the Trump administration is willing to negotiate", noting that contact between the two countries was cut off after Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal in May.

Again, on January 16, CBS News points to the prisoner exchange issue in its article covering Hashemi's arrest.

The outlet quoted US sources as saying that they believe Iran is holding the Americans to try to get concessions, pointing as an example to a prisoner exchange deal with Trump's predecessor Barack Obama.

However, this time the agency claimed it was the Trump administration who had offered Iran to discuss prisoners last year, contradicting its own narrative.

"A senior administrative official told CBS News Iran turned that offer down, leaving the fate of the Americans unclear," it said.

■ Childish Game

Hashemi, a familiar face on the Iranian television, could be a valuable hostage for Trump.

Marzieh is a person Trump has every reason to hate: An African-American Muslim woman who works as a journalist for Iran.

Interestingly, the way she was arrested is Trump-style: unpredictable, unmannerly, and illogical!

Has Hashemi been detained on spurious grounds to serve as a bargaining chip in talks with Iran, as Trump might believe?

If so, we ought not hope she will return home anytime soon.

However, the case would most likely turn out to be a PR victory for Iran, as the global public opinion is not a fan of Trump and his childish games.

It remains to be seen if Hashemi has fell in the crossfire of Iran-US tensions.

Perhaps more information will be revealed on Wednesday, when another hearing session on the case will be held.

(Source: Iran Front Page)

Israeli strikes aimed at prolonging crisis in Syria: Damascus

Syria has once again written protest letters to the United Nations, urging the world body to take a decisive step and put an end to Israel's acts of aggression against its territory as Tel Aviv's hostile strikes are aimed at "prolonging" the crisis in the Arab country.

According to SANA official news agency, the development came after Syria's air defenses shot down more than 30 cruise missiles and guided bombs during Israel's aerial attacks in the early hours of Monday.

In two identical letters to the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the head of UN Security Council (UNSC), the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates said the Israeli aerial aggression was an attempt to raise the "morale" of the remaining terrorist hotbeds that are "subservient" to Tel Aviv.

The Syrian government also noted that the Israeli strikes were carried out by the occupying regime in an attempt to escape its "growing internal problems and for reasons precisely known to the international community."

Slamming the United States for its unbridled support for Israel, the letters said, "Syria affirms that Israel's persistence in its dangerous aggressive behavior wouldn't be possible without the unlimited support of the U.S. administration and the immunity provided to it by the US and other Security Council member states."

The Syrian government also called on the UN Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities as per the UN Charter and take immediate and decisive steps to prevent Israeli attacks from reoccurring, force Israel to respect the Security Council's resolutions on disengagement, and hold Tel Aviv accountable for its crimes against the Syrians and Palestinians.

On Sunday, SANA cited an unnamed military official as saying that the aerial defense units of the country managed to "thwart" a daylight missile attack conducted by Israeli warplanes against some localities in and around the Syrian capital.

Hours later, SANA said in a separate report that the Israeli regime conducted another aerial aggression in the early hours of Monday in which it conducted "land and air strikes ... through successive waves of guided missiles" against the country.

The report added that the Syrian defense system was promptly activated and shot down "most" of the "hostile" projectiles before reaching their designated targets.

The Israeli regime launches airstrikes on the Syrian territory from time to time. Such aggressive moves are usually viewed as attempts to prop up terrorist groups that have been suffering defeats at the hands of Syrian government forces.

(Source: Press TV)

Boateng makes surprise loan move to Barcelona

Kevin-Prince Boateng has completed a "dream" move to Barcelona on loan for the remainder of the season.

The former Tottenham and Portsmouth forward was handed the chance to make a surprise return to La Liga as Barca needed attacking cover for Luis Suarez.

Boateng made Italian side Sassuolo his ninth club on a free transfer last year and Barca have the option to sign the 31-year-old for £7.1m in the summer.

"It's a big dream come true," he said. "It's a big honour for me to be here."

After leaving Hertha Berlin in 2007, Boateng played for Spurs and Pompey before earning a move to AC Milan in 2010, helping them win Serie A in his first season.

He was praised for leading Milan players off the pitch during a friendly against Pro Patria in January 2013 because of racist chants. Boateng later played for Schalke before scoring 10 goals for Spanish side Las Palmas in 2016-17 and helping Eintracht Frankfurt win last season's German Cup. He has scored five goals in 15 games for Sassuolo this season, taking his career total to 61 in 398 games. Although born in Germany, he made 15 appearances for Ghana while his half-brother - Bayern Munich defender Jerome Boateng - plays for Germany and they faced each other at the 2010 and 2014 World Cups.

Barca were short of attacking options after the La Liga leaders sold Paco Alcacer and Munir El Haddadi this month.

"He doesn't seem to need much time to adapt," said coach Ernesto Valverde. "He knows his stuff and can start playing straight away. He's comfortable in many positions, as a central striker or playing off another striker, and even deeper too."

(Source: BBC)

Arsenal defender Bellerin out for up to 9 months with knee injury

Arsenal announced on Tuesday that defender Hector Bellerin will be out of action for up to nine months after rupturing knee ligaments in his team's win against Chelsea.

Bellerin, 23, went down unchallenged during the second half of Arsenal's 2-0 victory at the Emirates on Saturday and was carried off on a stretcher.

The 23-year-old was making his first start since mid-December, having overcome a calf problem, but will now miss the remainder of the season, and possibly the start of the 2019/20 campaign.

"Further to the injury sustained during our match against Chelsea on Saturday, we can confirm that Hector has ruptured the anterior cruciate ligament of his left knee," the club said in a statement on its website. "Hector will undergo surgery to repair this in the coming days. The rehabilitation process is expected to take between six to nine months and therefore rules Hector out of action for the remainder of this season. "Everyone at the club will now be working as hard as we can to ensure Hector is back on the pitch as soon as possible next season."

Head coach Unai Emery said after the Chelsea game that Bellerin could have an "important" injury and that the initial prognosis was not positive. Bellerin's Arsenal team-mate Rob Holding suffered a similar injury in a 2-2 draw at Manchester United on December 5.

While the January transfer window would allow Arsenal to bring in cover at right-back, Emery does have options in Stephan Lichtsteiner, Ainsley Maitland-Niles and Carl Jenkinson, who was expected to be allowed to leave the Emirates Stadium this month before Bellerin's setback.

Arsenal are fifth in the Premier League, three points behind fourth-placed Chelsea.

(Source: AFP)

Nadal beats Tiafoe in Australian Open quarter-finals



Second seed Rafael Nadal eased past unseeded American Frances Tiafoe to reach the Australian Open semi-finals and continue his bid to win all four Grand Slams for a second time.

The 32-year-old Spaniard cracked 29 winners in a 6-3 6-4 6-2 victory. Nadal broke 21-year-old Tiafoe in each of his first service games of the set.

The 17-time Grand Slam champion will play Stefanos Tsitsipas in the last four after the 20-year-old Greek beat Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut. Tsitsipas followed his last-16 victory over defending champion Roger Federer with another four-set win on Tuesday.

Nadal, who did have to stave off two break points at 2-1 in the second set, has not dropped a set as he aims to become the first man to win each of the four Grand Slams twice in the Open era.

Despite reaching at least the quarter-finals in 11 of his past 12 appearances, including four finals, he has only converted one of these runs into victory - his sole triumph at Melbourne Park in 2009. And, despite not playing competitively since September's US Open because of multiple injuries, he has cruised through his opening five matches.

Tiafoe, who celebrated his 21st birthday on Sunday by reaching his maiden Grand Slam quarter-final, could not cope with Nadal's quality and intensity.

He had spent almost 12 hours on court coming into the match - more than three hours longer than Nadal - including his four-set wins over Wimbledon finalist Kevin Anderson and former world number four Grigor Dimitrov.

Nadal broke again for a 5-2 lead in the third, going on to wrap up victory in one hour and 47 minutes.

(Source: Guardian)

Cardiff signing Sala was on missing flight, authorities confirm

Premier League footballer Emiliano Sala was on a light aircraft which went missing over the Channel Islands, the French Civil Aviation authority said.

The Argentine striker was one of two people on board the Piper Malibu which lost contact off Alderney in the Channel Islands on Monday night.

Cardiff City signed the 28-year-old for a club-record £15m fee from French club Nantes on Saturday.

Guernsey Police said there was "no trace" of the Cardiff-bound aircraft.

It left Nantes at 19:15 and had been flying at 5,000ft when it contacted Jersey air traffic control requesting descent, the force said.

The plane lost contact while at 2,300ft. Sightings of red flares were reported during a lifeboat and helicopter search, but "nothing of significance was found", a Channel Islands Air Search spokeswoman said.

Police said on Tuesday more than 1,000sq miles had been searched by five aircraft and two lifeboats. The search had resumed after being called off overnight "due to strengthening winds, worsening sea conditions and reducing visibility".

Cardiff Airport confirmed the aircraft was due to arrive from Nantes but a spokeswoman said there were no further details.

Guernsey harbour master Captain David Barker said no distress call had been received.

"It's far easier to see something on the surface in daylight," he said. "We are looking for any traces of an aircraft, a life raft, persons



in the water, life jackets."

The Met Office said conditions were not "too intense" at the time the aircraft went missing but had become wetter and windier later in the evening.

Cardiff signed Sala for a club record fee after protracted negotiations with Nantes and he was due to join his new teammates for training on Tuesday.

He has been among the top scorers in France in recent years and had scored 13 league and cup goals this season, third behind Kylian Mbappe and Nicolas Pepe.

■ 'Last goodbye'

When his move to Cardiff was announced, he said: "It gives me great pleasure and I

can't wait to start training, meet my new teammates and get down to work."

The most recent tweet from Sala's account was a picture of him and his former teammates, captioned "La ultima ciao", or "the last goodbye".

Sala began his playing career at Argentine side Club Proyecto Crecer, before moving to French club Girondins Bordeaux in 2012.

His previous side, Nantes, has postponed its games against Entente on Wednesday and St Etienne on Saturday, according to its match schedule.

The flight disappeared off radar near the Casquets lighthouse, infamous among mariners as the site of many shipwrecks, 8 miles

(13km) north-west of Alderney.

HM Coastguard said the disappearance was not in the UK search and rescue area, but it had sent two helicopters to help.

A spokeswoman said they were assisting Guernsey Coastguard with a search for a light aircraft off Alderney.

"HM Coastguard helicopters from Solent and Newquay have been helping to search overnight with nothing found," she said.

■ Born in Argentina, reputation forged in France

Emiliano Sala was born in Santa Fe, Argentina - but it is in France that he has forged his reputation.

Among the top five goalscorers in Ligue 1 this season, Sala has netted 12 times at better than a goal every two games.

That prompted Cardiff to pay Nantes a club record £15m for a man who has spent his entire professional career in the French leagues.

Sala was born on 31 October 1990 in the small rural community of Cululu in the Santa Fe province, about 340 miles north west of Buenos Aires.

After progressing through the youth set-up at Argentine side Club Proyecto Crecer, he moved to France to sign for Bordeaux.

But, after making his debut as a 21-year-old, he struggled for game time and a series of loan moves followed.

He spent the 2012-13 and 2013-14 seasons at US Orleans and Niort respectively, scoring 37 goals in 74 matches.

(Source: BBC)

Juventus' Cristiano Ronaldo fined for tax fraud, avoids jail term



Cristiano Ronaldo was fined almost €19 million (\$21.6 million) for tax fraud on Tuesday but will avoid serving a 23-month prison sentence.

The Juventus forward, who played for Real Madrid from 2009-18, agreed to settle the case by paying an €18.8m fine and accepting a suspended jail sentence. Under Spanish law, a first offender can serve anything less than a two-year sentence under probation and Ronaldo will not have to go to prison.

His court appearance lasted about 15 minutes as he only needed to sign off on the previously settled agreement. Ronaldo had to enter the courtroom through the front door after his request for special security measures to avoid the spotlight was denied on Monday. In 2017, Ronaldo denied the accusation that he knowingly used a business structure to hide income generated by his image rights in Spain between 2011 and 2014. After reaching the deal, he paid a fine of €5.7m, plus interest of about €1m, in July 2018, the prosecutor's office said last week.

Prosecutors had requested for Ronaldo to be handed a 23-month prison sentence. At his initial trial in July 2017, Ronaldo testified and said that he strongly rejected any wrongdoing and told the judge he felt victimised by the Spanish authorities.

According to the prosecutor's report, Ronaldo "obtained significant income" from image

rights between 2011 and 2014 and "should have paid tax in his subsequent declarations" to the Spanish authorities and failed to do so. He departed Madrid last summer after nine seasons at the club to join Juventus in a €100m transfer. The former Manchester United player claimed that the treatment received by the Spanish authorities played a part in his desire to leave Madrid.

Ronaldo earns an estimated \$93m (£80m) a year, according to Forbes, with approximately half coming from image rights deals with his many sponsors.

Separately, Ronaldo is facing a rape allegation in the United States. Kathryn Mayorga filed a civil lawsuit in Nevada in September claiming Ronaldo raped her in his Las Vegas hotel room in 2009. Police reopened an investigation into the allegation at her request. Ronaldo has denied any wrongdoing.

The trial of Ronaldo's former Real Madrid teammate Xabi Alonso, also in court on Tuesday over accusations of tax fraud, was suspended, a court magistrate said. Alonso said he was confident he had not committed a crime and would have to wait while the magistrates evaluated his case.

"I'd be worried if I thought I had something to hide or something I didn't do right but as that isn't the case I am carrying on," Alonso told reporters outside the court.

(Source: ESPN)

Warriors romp past Lakers, 76ers shoot down Rockets



Klay Thompson's blistering performance from three-point range propelled the Golden State Warriors to a 130-111 NBA victory over the injury-depleted Los Angeles Lakers on Monday.

Thompson joined former Denver Nuggets point guard Ty Lawson as the only NBA players to make their first 10 attempts from three-point range, finishing 10-for-11 from beyond the arc and 17-of-20 overall for 44 points before sitting out the fourth quarter.

By then the two-time defending champion Warriors were up 110-80 against a Lakers team missing injured superstar LeBron James along with guards Rajon Rondo and Lonzo Ball.

"Regardless, it's a good win," Thompson said after the Warriors wrapped up an eighth straight victory.

Kevin Durant added 20 points for the Warriors and Stephen Curry supplied 11 points and 12 assists, but it was Thompson in the spotlight having clearly sorted out the shooting troubles plaguing him in late December. "When you've got the hot hand you're just looking for an ounce of space -- that's all you need is an inch or two, that thing's just flicking off the wrist so easy," Thompson said. "It was one of those nights."

In Philadelphia, 76ers big man Joel Embiid scored 32 points and grabbed 14 rebounds as the hosts withstood a 37-point performance from James Harden in a 121-93 victory over

the Houston Rockets.

Harden notched his 20th straight game with 30 or more points, but the Rockets were no match for the 76ers in a sometimes testy encounter. Embiid added two assists, two steals and three blocked shots, provoking the ire of Harden in the final minute of the first half when he leaned in to guard the reigning NBA Most Valuable Player as he drove toward the basket.

Harden hit the court and as he rose the two traded words, both drawing technical fouls.

Embiid then blocked a Harden shot from behind as the half ended with the 76ers leading 65-50. Philadelphia out-scored the Rockets 29-13 in the third period pushing their lead to as many as 31 points. With the game out of reach, Harden sat out a fourth quarter that saw both team's starters mostly on the bench.

Harden admitted that the Rockets may have been feeling the effects of two straight overtime games -- a loss to Brooklyn on Wednesday and a win over the Lakers on Saturday.

"It's one of those games in the course of an 82-game season that you just have to wash away," Harden said.

In New York, Oklahoma City's Paul George scored 31 points while Russell Westbrook added 17 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists as the Thunder routed the Knicks 127-109.

(Source: AFP)

South Korea to launch major investigation of sex abuse in sport

South Korea will hold its largest ever investigation into sexual abuse in sport after an Olympic speedskating star accused her former coach of abuse and triggered a wave of similar accounts from athletes.

The inquiry will aim to address "systematic, sustained" abuse in sports, which had been hushed up for generations by victims afraid of being banished from their sport, said Choi Young-ae, chairwoman of the National Human Rights Commission, on Tuesday.

"We will conduct a fact-finding inquiry that will be the largest in scale ever," Choi said at a news conference in Seoul. A commission official said up to about 30,000 people - athletes from all games, coaches, officials and others - are likely to be interviewed over the course of the year-long investigation. Choi said for too long victims had not spoken out because of a "results-centred culture focussed on medals".

An "independent, constant, national surveillance system" would be established to gather data, conduct inquiries and educate officials on human rights, she said.

Investigators could look into cases without requiring an initial accusation, and take measures, including protection for victims and referring cases quickly to police and prose-



cutors, a spokesperson for the commission said.

■ Shameful tarnish

The #MeToo movement has taken off belatedly in male-dominated South Korea where discussion of sexual misconduct has long been a taboo.

But the issue exploded in the world of sport after Shim

Suk-hee, 21, accused her former coach, Cho Jae-beom, of raping her for years.

Cho, a former national short track speedskating coach, had already been convicted of assaulting the two-time Olympic champion - punching and kicking her during training - and jailed for 10 months in September.

In December, Shim made accusations of sexual abuse against him. Cho denied the accusation, media cited his lawyer as saying.

On Monday, the group Solidarity for Young Skaters announced that it had found five more skaters who had been sexually abused by their coaches. Other athletes from various games, including judo and archery, have also come forward with accounts of assault and sexual abuse.

President Moon Jae-in said last week the spate of accounts of abuse was a shameful tarnish on South Korea's "bright image as a sports powerhouse", and called for a thorough investigation and strict punishments.

The commission, noting that it had carried out an investigation into the abuse of student-athletes in 2008, said it would work to end a "nothing changes" culture.

(Source: Aljazeera)



Beiranvand reveals inspiration behind penalty heroics

Iran goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand has revealed that striker Sardar Azmoun's advice and a steely determination not to let his country down were behind his remarkable penalty save in Sunday's Round of 16 win over Oman at the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019.

After Azmoun had been caught on camera suggesting which way Beiranvand should dive, the Persepolis custodian's outstretched right-hand repelled Ahmed Al Mahajiri's spot-kick in the opening moments of the game which saw Team Melli go through to the quarter-finals.

Having already saved a penalty from Cristiano Ronaldo at last year's FIFA World Cup, Beiranvand's heroics in the United Arab Emirates only added to his burgeoning reputation, with the 26-year-old saying that his primary aim when facing Al Mahajiri was not to let his country down.

"I was only thinking about the people of Iran," he declared.

"I really wanted to make them happy,

because when you get to this stage, everyone watches the game. It's just the one game, if you lose it, you're eliminated.

"I knew people would be praying, and all I could do was focus. Thankfully, I was able to help my team, and make my people happy.

"Sardar told me [which way to go]. Although I had already made up my mind prior to that. I had decided and then Sardar told me, so I thought it had to mean something."

The 2-0 victory saw Iran maintain their perfect record at the tournament and register a fourth successive clean sheet in the process, two remarkable statistics which, according to Beiranvand, are inextricably linked.

"The penalty happened very early on, but thankfully it wasn't converted so we continued without conceding. We're a team that is guaranteed to win if we don't concede," he said.

"It's one of the characteristics of Team Melli, don't concede and we will go on and win the game, it has been like this so far."

(Source: AFP)



Maty Ryan proud to have played his role



S P O R T S Maty Ryan declared himself "happy" to have played a key role in ensuring Australia advanced to the quarter-finals of the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 after his heroics between the posts gave the defending champions a 4-2 penalty shootout win over Uzbekistan.

Ryan denied Islom Tukhtakhujaev and Dostonbek Khamdamov in the shootout after the game had gone through 120 minutes without a goal to set up a last eight meeting with hosts the United Arab Emirates.

"I was happy to be able to contribute to the team," said the Brighton & Hove Albion keeper.

"That situation for a goalkeeper is a very important one and if you can contribute to the team and help them get through and be the winning team at the end that's the objective and thankfully tonight, I was able to make that contribution."

Graham Arnold's team dominated much of the meeting with the Uzbeks but were

unable to breach a defense that was well drilled by head coach Hector Cuper and Ryan admitted the Socceroos need to find a way to be more ruthless in front of goal to continue to progress at the AFC Asian Cup.

"I think we were the team creating the more chances in the game between the two sides," he said. "Defensively I think there was only one save really I had to make in the first half and other than that we were pretty solid."

"We lacked the final bit of polish to put the ball in the back of the net and moving forward we'd like to be more clinical. Their keeper made a couple of saves and it's always difficult when an opposition like that sits so deep."

"We have to be efficient in moving the ball around order to try and find the spaces in the positions where we can get shots on goal. It was a bit of a shame we couldn't convert tonight."

(Source: the-afc)

Japan's defensive capabilities impress Moriyasu



S P O R T S It was a different Japan d e s k who sealed their AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 berth with a 1-0 win over Saudi Arabia on Monday.

Hajime Moriyasu's team opted to play defensively and it was a move that paid off for the Samurai Blue as they kept their bid for a record-extending fifth Continental title on track.

Japan's win came courtesy of Takehiro Tomiyasu's header in the 20th minute but they found themselves defending for the major part of the match.

However, Moriyasu's men held off the West Asians to earn a spot in the quarter-finals where they will face Park Hang-seo's Vietnam on Thursday.

"Winning is very important and facing Saudi Arabia, who are one of the top teams in Asia, was very difficult. My players played with patience, they kept a clean sheet. We now have a few days to recover and we're focused on the next match."

(Source: the-afc)

"We wanted to hold possession, see more of the ball but Saudi Arabia controlled the match. After the goal, Saudi Arabia were aggressive in attack but the key for us was our patience."

"We are improving as a team. People might say we could have done better offensively but I think we showed everyone today that we are also good at defending," said Japan head coach Moriyasu.

Japan had been imperious in the group stage as their attacking football saw them register wins over Turkmenistan, Oman and Uzbekistan.

But the team that showed up in Sharjah on Monday played a different type of football and Moriyasu was proud with the way his team adapted.

"As you saw by the way we started, it was obvious what our game plan was. We wanted to apply pressure but also be able to defend," Moriyasu concluded.

A. Korea book place at quarters after defeating Bahrain

Korea Republic needed extra time to seal their place in the quarter-finals of the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019, defeating Bahrain 2-1 in their Round of 16 tie at the Rashid Stadium on Tuesday.

Substitute Kim Jin-su was the Korea Republic hero with his headed winner at the tail end of the first period of extra-time and the two-time champions will now face either Qatar or Iraq, who play later on Tuesday, in the last eight at Abu Dhabi's Zayed Sports City Stadium on Friday.

Bahrain can walk tall despite the defeat as they took the match to the Koreans and in scoring, became the first team in the tournament to breach the East Asians defense.

The Taeguk Warriors, powered by Son Heung-min, seized control of possession when the match got underway but were unable to crack open the compact Bahraini defence.

Miroslav Soukup's charges also showed their intent with Mohamed Jasim Marhoon forcing Korean goalkeeper Kim Seung-gyu into a dive but his effort flew wide in the fourth minute, before Komail Hasan Alaswad tested the custodian a minute later.

Korea Republic, however, continued to dominate but their first glimpse at goal only came in the 34th minute when an exchange of passes saw Hwang Hee-chan with possession in the box but the Bahrain defenders reacted before he could unleash a strike.

The 22-year-old Hamburger SV was not to be denied though as two minutes from the half-time whistle, he put Korea Republic ahead from close range.

The move began with Son laying a pass to Lee Yong on the right flank, who then sent the ball into the box which was blocked by keeper Sayed Shubbar Alawi, only for it to land at Hee-chan's feet who then had the simplest of tasks of passing it into the net.

Korea Republic pressed from the start of the second half in search of a second goal to put the game to bed, forcing Alawi into action with back-to-back saves to deny Ui-jo and In-beom's shots on target.

Bahrain, however, did not sit back and troubled the Korean defence with their counter-attacks.

Bahrain had a golden opportunity to level the tie in the 70th minute when the Korean defenders failed to cleanly

clear a corner kick, allowing Jamal Rashed Abdulrahman to fire a shot which seemed headed into the top right corner, only for Seung-gyu to spectacularly palm it out.

The West Asians did not go unrewarded for their aggression as the Korean defence was breached for the first time in the tournament when Mohamed Saad Alromaihi slammed the ball into the net after Hong Chul had made a last ditch clearance of Mahdi Faisal Alhumaidan's attempt.

Ui-jo had a great chance to win the tie for Korea Republic when he intercepted a poor back pass in added time but his attempt to curl the ball past an onrushing Alawi went wide, which meant extra-time.

Korea immediately took control when the match restarted with attempts by Ju Se-jong, Lee Seung-woo and Kim Young-gwon.

Bahrain defended admirably but were caught off guard when Lee Yong sent in a brilliant cross from the right which Jin-su met with a thumping header to seal his team's place in the quarter-finals.

(Source: Fox Sports Asia)

Khalil eager to focus on the positives as Australia loom large

Matchwinner Ahmed Khalil has declared that the United Arab Emirates should put aside Monday's struggles against Kyrgyz Republic and focus on the positives after a 3-2 extra-time win sent the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 hosts through to the quarter-finals.

Khalil came off the bench to seal the win by converting a penalty in the 103rd minute of an absorbing encounter, the second time he has rescued his side following the 27-year-old's successful spot-kick in the final moments of the UAE's 1-1 draw with Bahrain

on Matchday One.

The victory helped set up an intriguing quarter-final tie with Australia, with Khalil eager to reflect on the importance of the UAE's hard-fought victory against tournament debutants Kyrgyz Republic.

"It was a tough game, and we undoubtedly made it harder for ourselves," he said.

"When you don't capitalize on the chances you get, things become tough. Everyone knows we were in a difficult situation, but ultimately the win is the most important thing and I think we should look forward

and think of what comes next.

"I am grateful that I was able to score the penalty to get a very important win for the Emirati people and for us as players. Hopefully we can continue [in the same way] and what comes next will be better."

The UAE met Australia in the semi-finals of the competition's last edition, a game which they lost 2-0 on a rainy night in New South Wales.

After seeing the Australians overcome Uzbekistan in their Round of 16 tie, Khalil, who played in the defeat four years ago, is

expecting another major test for the UAE.

"After finishing each stage, things become harder," he explained. "There are no easy teams in this tournament as they are all at a similar [high] level, especially when it comes to the knockout stage."

"We have to respect the Australian team, but without making a bigger deal of it than it actually is. They respect us as much as we respect them. We will be playing in front of our fans and I hope things will go well for us in the next game."

(Source: the-afc)

Newcastle offered Milad Mohammadi by Akhmat Grozny

English Premier League side Newcastle have been offered Iran defender Milad Mohammadi, 25, from Akhmat Grozny.

Rafa Benitez is desperate to strengthen his squad in a bid to avoid the drop, and securing cover at left back has been one of his priorities for a number of windows now.

Paul Dummett is the only recognized first-team player in that position, but the Wales international has missed the club's last four matches with a hamstring problem.

In his absence, Newcastle have reverted to three at the back, with Matt Ritchie dropping deeper to operate as a wing-back, while Javier Manquillo can also cover on the left flank, though it is not his natural position.

Speaking ahead of their victory over Cardiff on Saturday, Benitez explained his current predicament in covering for Dummett, explaining: "I said before that I try to maximize what we have."

"Obviously Dummett is injured so we have to find a solution in this position, and we've been looking for a left-full-back for three years. Hopefully we can find one."

Benitez was visited by Mike Ashley in his office following the 3-0 win against fellow Premier League strugglers Cardiff on Saturday.

With any takeover appearing to have fallen through, it is now up to the Sports Direct tycoon to sanction any deals that will allow the squad to be bolstered in the final few days in January.

Mohammadi is currently part of Iran's squad participating in the Asian Cup. They face Marcelo Lippi's China in the quarter finals on Thursday afternoon.

He has been on Celtic's and Rangers' radar after he caught the eye at the World Cup with Iran last year.

Mohammadi is out of contract at Akhmat Grozny this summer and Newcastle could try and land the defender for a cut-price fee before the close of this month's transfer window.

(Source: Daily Mail)

ACL: Persepolis choose Dubai to host Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli

TEHRAN — Iranian football giants Persepolis have chosen Dubai, the UAE as the neutral venue to host Saudi Arabian team Al Ahli at the group stage of the 2019 Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Champions League.

The Iranian Reds are going to play Al Ahli at the Al Wasl Stadium Zabeel on April 9 and 22.

According to Asian Football Confederation, clubs from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Iran should play on a home and away basis, but Saudi Arabia violated the order as their teams will not come to Iran to play the Persian teams.

The 2019 AFC Champions League group stage is scheduled to be played from 4 March to 22 May 2019.

A total of 32 teams compete in the group stage to decide the 16 places in the knockout stage of the 2019 AFC Champions League.

Qatar's Al Jassim to officiate Iran vs China match

TEHRAN — Qatari referee Abdulrahman Al Jassim has been chosen to officiate Iran's AFC Asian Cup quarter-final match against China on Thursday.

Al Jassim has been a full international referee for FIFA since 2013. The match will be Al Jassim's fourth contest in the tournament as he has already officiated Iran vs Vietnam match, South Korea vs China match and Australia vs Uzbekistan match.

He refereed games in the AFC Champions League, the AFC U23 Championship 2018 and Qatar Stars League.

The Qatari star was one of the referees for the 2017 Under-20's World Cup.

The 32-year-old referee was named as a video assistant referee (VAR) for the FIFA World Cup Russia 2018.

Lebanon sport minister lauds Iran role in his country

IRNA — Lebanon sport minister on Monday lauded the constructive role of Iran in his country.

Iran's Islamic Revolution had a key role in progress of Lebanon, Lebanese Sports and Youth Minister Mohammad Fneish said in a local ceremony in south Lebanon.

The Lebanese minister thanked Iran's support for the axis of resistance in the region.

He expressed Beirut's support for the allies of Lebanese resistance groups. Elsewhere in his remarks, Lebanon sport minister called for return of Syria to the Arab League.

He also criticized attempts made by certain countries to normalize relations with the Zionist regime.

Iran the best team in Asian Cup, Japanese star says

Japan defender Maya Yoshida believes that Iran national football team are the best team in the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

The Southampton center back played a key role in hard fought 1-0 win over Saudi Arabia in the second round of the Asian Cup at the Sharjah Stadium.

"Iran are currently the best (football playing) country in Asia but most important thing (for now) is that we go to the next round," Yoshida said. Japan, Asia's second ranked team, will play Vietnam, ranked 17th, in the quarterfinal at the Al Maktoum stadium in Dubai on Thursday before a potential semifinal clash against Iran at the Hazza bin Zayed stadium in Al Ain on Jan. 28.

"We don't have any information about Vietnam to be honest and we have to be ready for them. I will think about Iran after (we have beaten Vietnam)," he added.

(Source: Khaleej Times)

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

When differences appear in two utterances, the falsehood of one of them is revealed; for, right is only one.

Imam Ali (AS)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Fajr Film Festival announces jury for official competition

TEHRAN — The organizers of the 37th Fajr Film Festival announced the jury for the official competition on Monday.

The jury is composed of filmmakers Mohammad-Ali Bashe Ahangar, Mohammad Bozorgnia, Puran Derakhshandeh and Mohammad Ehsani.

Cinematographer Mahmud Kalari, film critic Mehrzad Danesh and actress Rima Raminfar are the other members of the jury.

The 37th Fajr Film Festival will take place in Tehran and several other Iranian cities from January 30 to February 11.



IIDCYA, Honar Pooya team up for "Extinction"

TEHRAN — The Honar Pooya Group, the producer of animated movies "The Elephant King" and "Princess of Rome", has entered into a contract with the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) to produce its new project entitled "Extinction", the IIDCYA announced on Tuesday.

Set in Iran, the story of the animation is about wildlife and the environment.

This is the third feature-length animated film produced at the Honar Pooya Group, a Tehran-based private company that was founded by a group of young animators in 2007.

"Extinction" will be directed by Hadi Mohammadian, who helmed Honar Pooya's previous movies "Princess of Rome" and "The Elephant King".

"Princess of Rome" grossed over 50 billion rials at the box office in 2016 and became the fifth highest-grossing movie nationwide.



Spanish film scholar Angel Quintana to hold workshop in Tehran

TEHRAN — Spanish film scholar Angel Quintana Morraja is scheduled to hold a workshop at the Iranian National School of Cinema in Tehran on January 28.

The topic will be "Comparative Studies in the Systems of Film Education in Iran and Spain", the school announced in a press release on Tuesday.

Quintana teaches history and theory of cinema at the University of Girona in Spain. Since 1980, he has contributed to the film section of El Punt newspaper. He is also the coordinator of the Spanish edition of Cahiers du cinema in Catalonia.

"Rambo" producer Vajna dies aged 74

BUDAPEST (Reuters) — Andrew G. Vajna, the Hungarian movie producer behind "Rambo", "Evita" and other international hits, died in his Budapest home on Sunday following a long illness, the Hungarian National Film Fund said.

Vajna produced 59 films in all, including the 1996 Evita starring Madonna and Sylvester Stallone's first three Rambo movies.

He was born in Budapest in 1944 and at the age of 12, when Hungary's 1956 revolution against Soviet rule was crushed, he fled the country and emigrated to Canada with the help of the Red Cross. He was reunited with his family in Los Angeles.

His 1997 comedy, based on a play titled "Out of Order" by English playwright Ray Cooney, holds the record for ticket sales among Hungarian movies produced over the past two decades.

Since 2011, he had worked as a government commissioner under Prime Minister Viktor Orban, presiding over a revival of Hungarian cinema.

"We are bidding farewell to the greatest Hungarian film producer. Hasta la vista, Andy! Thank You for everything, my Friend!" Orban said on his Facebook page.

Movies during his term as commissioner won hundreds of international awards. They included "Son of Saul", which won an Oscar for its portrayal of life in a Nazi concentration camp.

As part of Orban's efforts to expand his influence over the domestic media, Vajna also acquired one of Hungary's main commercial television channels and had stakes in the commercial radio market.

Photo exhibit features film critic's nights out in 40 cities

TEHRAN — Iranian film critic Parviz Jahed has showcased a collection of his photos in an exhibition displaying his nights out in 40 cities, including London, Istanbul and Prague.

The exhibition entitled "When a City Goes to Sleep" opened at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran on Monday, the forum announced.

"I have always been in love with cinema, especially the films noirs and, consequently, the urban spaces," Jahed said at the opening ceremony of the exhibition.

"After I migrated from Iran in 2000, I traveled to numerous cities where I took photos at night



Parviz Jahed (L) talks with Khosro Masumi (R) at the opening ceremony of his exhibit "When a City Goes to Sleep" at the Iranian Artists Forum on January 21, 2019. (IAF)

under the influence of film noirs," he added.

Photographer and filmmaker Seifollah Samadian, film critic Amir Purya, filmmaker Khosro Masumi

and a number of art aficionados attended the opening ceremony of the showcase, which will be running until January 28.

Barcelona center reviews 40 years of Iranian cinema



Masud Rayegan acts in a scene from "So Close, So Far" by Reza Mirkarimi.

TEHRAN — A lineup of seven Iranian films made between 1990 and 2005 have been selected to go on screen in Barcelona to celebrate the history of Iranian cinema over the past 40 years, Iran's Farabi Cinema Foundation announced on Tuesday.

The program entitled "Iran 40 Years" has been organized by Casa Asia, a Barcelona-based center promoting Spain's relations with Asian countries, with support from Iran's Cultural Office in Spain and the Farabi Cinema Foundation.

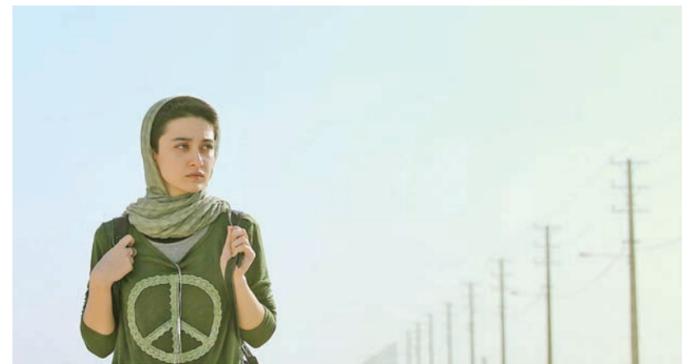
The event began at the Cinemas Girona with a screening of Abbas

Kiarostami's "Close-Up" (1990) and Bahram Beizai's "Travelers" (1992) and will continue with "The Blue Veil" (1995) by Rakhshan Bani-Etemad and "Leila" (1997) by Dariush Mehrjui.

"The Glass Agency" (1998) by Ebrahim Hatamikia, "I Am Taraneh, 15" (2002) by Rasul Sadr-Ameli and "So Close, So Far" (2005) by Reza Mirkarimi will also be reviewed during the program.

Also in summer 2018, Casa Asia reviewed Iranian cinema in the program entitled "Monograph on Iran: A Selection of the Latest Iranian Cinema" screening a lineup of ten films at the CaixaForum and El Ciculo de Bellas Artes, two cultural centers in Madrid.

"Dressage" tops at Prague Iranian Film Festival



Negar Moqaddam acts in a scene from "Dressage" by Iranian director Puya Badkubeh.

TEHRAN — Acclaimed drama "Dressage" by Puya Badkubeh was named best film at the Iranian Film Festival in the Czech capital of Prague on Sunday.

The film is about 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. "3 Faces" by Jafar Panahi, which is about a relationship between popular Iranian actress Behnaz Jafari and a provincial girl who lives with a dream of becoming an actress, won the audience award.

"Women with Gunpowder Earrings" by Reza Farahmand received the best documentary award, while "Lunch Time" by Alireza Qasemi won the best short film award.

About 30 movies competed in the various sections of the festival, which will continue screening the films in Brno, another Czech city and Slovakian capital of Bratislava until January 26.

Iran cancels Polish theatrical performances over Warsaw anti-Iran summit

TEHRAN — Iran has called off two performances by a Polish troupe arranged for the 37th Fajr International Theater Festival over Poland's decision to host the U.S.-led anti-Iran summit in February.

"Despite all efforts we have made to arrange the troupe's performances at the festival, we decided to cancel them in response to the Polish government's anti-Iran policy and the anti-Iran summit in Warsaw," the director of Iran's Dramatic Arts Center, Shahram Karami, said on Tuesday.

"In messages sent to the group, we told them that we could not host them due to the hostile policy the Polish government adopted against Iran," he added.

Polish director Pawel Zokotak was scheduled to stage "Bad City" and "Silence" during the Fajr festival, which will take place in Tehran from February 11 to 23.

This is not Iran's first cultural retaliation against the Warsaw summit. Earlier on January 13, the Cinema Organization of Iran (COI) canceled a Polish film festival, which was to take place in Tehran from January 27 to February 1.

"A guest who is not respectful toward his host could not expect to enjoy his stay with him any longer," COI director Hossein Entezami said and added, the Polish film festival "is suspended until there is appropriate behavior from Warsaw."



Iran's Dramatic Arts Center director Shahram Karami.

Poet quits Swedish Academy after being found to leak Nobel winner names

STOCKHOLM (Reuters) — The scandal-plagued Swedish body that awards the Nobel Prize for literature said on Friday that one of its members would leave after an investigation determined she had leaked the names of winners.

The poet Katarina Frostenson and her photographer husband Jean-Claude Arnault, who was jailed last year for rape, have been at the center of turmoil at the Swedish Academy, which led to it awarding no Nobel Prize in literature last year. Two prize winners will be picked this year.

The Academy said it would pay Frostenson, who denied breaching secrecy rules, a monthly pension worth around \$1,400 and rent subsidies in a settlement.

"Katarina Frostenson now chooses to leave the Swedish Academy," it said in a statement.

The Academy, founded in the 18th century to safeguard the Swedish language, picks the winner of the Nobel Prize only in the field of literature. Prizes in science, medicine and economics are awarded by other Swedish bodies and the peace prize winner is selected by a Norwegian committee.

Last year, Frostenson's husband Arnault was convicted of two counts of rape and sentenced to 2-1/2 years in prison.

Arnault, who ran a culture institute



The member of the Swedish Academy and wife of Frenchman Jean-Claude Arnault, Katarina Frostenson (C), arrives to the Svea Hovratt appeal court together with lawyer Bjorn Hurligt (R) and counsel Samuel Hartman (L) on the third day of Arnault's appeal trial in Stockholm, Sweden, November 14, 2018. (Jonas Ekstromer/TT News Agency/Via Reuters)

that had dealings with the Academy, was also accused of having leaked the names of the winners of the Nobel prize on several occasions after learning of them from his wife. He denied the accusation.

Several members of the Academy left in the wake of the scandal. The Academy has since appointed several new members and set up a new prize committee, aiming to restore public confidence and retain the right to pick the winners of the world's most prestigious literary award.

Notre Dame to cover up murals of Columbus in the New World

SOUTH BEND, Ind. (AP) — The University of Notre Dame will cover murals in a campus building that depict Christopher Columbus in America, the school's president said, following criticism that the images depict Native Americans in stereotypical submissive poses before white European explorers.

The 12 murals created in the 1880s by Luis Gregori were intended to encourage immigrants who had come to the U.S. during a period of anti-Catholic sentiment. But they conceal another side of Columbus: the exploitation and repression of Native Americans, said the Rev. John Jenkins, president of Notre Dame.

It is a "darker side of this story, a side we must acknowledge," Jenkins said in a letter Sunday.

The murals in the Catholic university's Main Building are painted directly on walls. Jenkins said they will be covered, although they still could be occasionally displayed. A permanent display of photos of the paintings will be created elsewhere with an explanation of their context.

"We wish to preserve artistic works originally intended to celebrate immigrant Catholics who were marginalized at the time in society, but do so in a way that avoids unintentionally marginalizing others," Jenkins said.

In 2017, more than 300 students,



In this Nov. 29, 2017, photo Kristin Fabian walks by a mural of Christopher Columbus at Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind. (Robert Franklin/South Bend Tribune via AP)

employees and Notre Dame alumni signed a letter in the campus newspaper that called for the removal of the murals.

The president of the Native American Student Association praised Jenkins' decision. "This is a good step towards acknowledging the full humanity of those native people who have come before us," said Marcus Winchester-Jones of Dowagiac, Michigan.

But Notre Dame law student Grant Strobl said the decision was disappointing.

"If we adopt the standard of judging previous generations by current standards, we may reach a point where there are no longer accomplishments to celebrate," Strobl said.