



Religious enlightenment should be cherished **2**



Iran may adopt offensive approach to protect national interests **2**



Carlos Queiroz to mark 100th match as Iran coach **15**



Book Toon receives submissions from 73 countries **16**



Maduro denounces election call but says ready to talk

See page 13

VP: Without Iran, terrorists would have formed govt. in Mideast

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri said on Sunday that terrorists would have formed a government in the Middle East region if Iran had not rushed to confront them.

The vice president was openly referring to the Islamic State (Daesh) which fought hard to establish a caliphate in parts of Syria and Iraq.

In 2014, IS militants occupied large

swathes of land in Iraq and Syria. Iran deterred their rapid advances toward Baghdad and the Iraqi Kurdistan.

"The terrorist groups which sought to portray a new and violent image of Islam were in the region, especially in Iraq and Syria, and they would have had a government in the region if Iran had not helped and countered them," he said during remarks at the closing ceremony of the Farabi International Award. **→3**

First Iranian accelerator for IVD launched

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — The first Iranian accelerator for In Vitro Diagnostic Device (IVD) was inaugurated by a knowledge-based company during a ceremony on Saturday, Mehr reported.

A medical device is an IVD if it is a reagent, calibrator, control material, kit, specimen receptacle, software, instrument, apparatus, equipment or system, whether

used alone or in combination with other diagnostic goods for in vitro use.

An Iranian knowledge-based company established the accelerator with the support of vice presidency for science and technology.

The accelerator aims to cover different technologies for manufacturing IVDs as well as importing and exporting technological products and services. **→10**

Iran, Turkey consider preferential trade, bartering to develop trade

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and president of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (known as TOBB) met on Saturday to discuss various ways of developing bilateral

trade including preferential trade and bartering.

In the meeting, ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie and TOBB President Rifat Hisarcikloglu also discussed issues and problems in the way of the two countries mutual trade, the portal of ICCIMA reported. **→4**

ARTICLE
Hanif Ghaffari
Political analyst

Trump is afraid of the Sanders name

Announcement of Bernie Sanders' candidacy in the 2020 presidential election is the worst possible news for Donald Trump and his entourage at the White House. Many American analysts believe that Sanders could be a serious rival for Trump in the upcoming presidential election.

Three years after fighting a surprisingly competitive Democratic primary race against Hillary Clinton, Sen. Bernie Sanders, the Vermont independent, is making another run for the White House. Two sources with direct knowledge of his plans told Yahoo News that Sanders, an independent and self-described "democratic socialist," plans to announce his presidential bid imminently.

While Sanders has been considering a bid for months, one of the sources said he was emboldened by early polls of the race that have consistently showed him as one of the top candidates in a crowded Democratic primary field. In particular, the source said Sanders was heartened to see numbers indicating he is one of the leading candidates among African American and Latino voters, two groups he was perceived as struggling with in 2016.

Bernie Sanders, the old American senator, continues to oppose U.S. President Donald Trump. This confrontation started at the time Trump entered the White House (by early 2017). Sanders, in one of his most recent positions against the White House, called for an end to Washington's support for Riyadh in the Yemeni war. Sanders also condemned Trump's stance on the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. At any rate, Sanders' recent position against Trump has led to the U.S. President's concerns.

Sen. Bernie Sanders says it would be an "impeachable offense" if President Trump were to fire Robert Mueller the special counsel leading the federal probe into ties between Trump campaign associates and Russia.

"I've been very reluctant to talk about impeachment until we have all the information coming in from the investigation. But that would be a major, major obstruction of justice. That would be an impeachable offense in my view," Sanders said in an interview for The Intercept's newly launched podcast "Deconstructed" released Friday. **→7**

Sanctions 'blessing in disguise' for Iran to unlock potentials

By Morteza Rahmani

TEHRAN (MNA) — Months have passed since U.S. President Donald Trump started his hawkish game against the Islamic Republic, but Tehran is still finding ways to sidestep the effects of the sanctions and push its plans forward in the oil and gas sector.

Trump administration wished to choke off Iran's strategic energy sector by scaring off the international investors and customers of Iran's oil and gas, however, the pressure seems to have opened up new horizons for Iran to unlock own potentials in the industry.

■ **Keeping production goals grounded**
Departure of international giants from Iran's energy projects has made the Oil Ministry recon-

sider its ties with domestic experts to use their expertise so as not to let the strategic sector lag behind the envisaged production plans.

Most recently, subsidiaries of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) signed \$6 billion-worth deals with domestic companies to develop nine oilfields.

The agreements are part of a wider plan to have 33 projects for enhancing the production capacity at Iranian oil and gas fields.

The nine deals are expected to add nearly 90,000 bpd to Iran's production capacity within the next three years, while the 33 projects are designed to raise Iran's production capacity by 281,000 bpd.

This is while, before the new sanctions went into effect, several international giants had car-

ried out surveys on the same projects. Some had even won the bid to start operation, but, the mere threat of sanctions deterred them from doing business with Iran.

At the signing ceremony for the deals to boost Iranian production capacity, Iran's Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said, "We wanted to create projects only for Iranian contractors."

The veteran minister said the initiatives would generate some \$20 billion of revenues to the oil and gas field.

This could be a positive view, since leaning on own capabilities could help run bigger projects like that in the South Pars Gas Field's Phase 11, which was abandoned by France's Total late last year. **→7**

UN 'shocked' at 'terror' waged by Israeli settlers

The United Nations has voiced "shock" at the "terror" carried out by Israeli settlers that killed a Palestinian father of four in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

"Today's violence in al-Mughayer is shocking and unacceptable!" UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov tweeted on Sunday, referring to a Palestinian village that was violently stormed by Israeli settlers and where they killed one Palestinian.

"Israel must put an end to settler violence and bring those responsible to justice," he said. "My thoughts and prayers go out to the family of the Palestinian man killed and those injured. All must condemn violence, stand up

to terror," the envoy added.

Thirty eight-year-old Hamdi Taleb Na'san was killed and 30 others were wounded after Israeli "settler volunteer security teams" and regime troops stormed al-Mughayer, located 27 kilometers northeast of the city of Ramallah in the occupied territories on Sunday.

Israeli daily The Jerusalem Post claimed that the settlers were trying to find the "suspects" behind an alleged non-fatal stabbing of an Israeli hiker, and were joined by the military after attacking the village.

Hanan Ashrawi, the Palestine Liberation Organization's executive committee member, has called the settler groups "militias" and said they "raided" al-Mughayer Village under protection

from the Israeli army, "terrorizing the defenseless residents and wreaking havoc."

Na'san is the fourth Palestinian killed by Israeli violence across the Palestinian territories over three days.

On Saturday, Israeli forces killed a Palestinian in the city of al-Quds (Jerusalem) after he reportedly failed to heed their call to stop his car.

And on Friday, Israeli forces fatally shot a Palestinian while targeting stone-throwing "suspects" along a central highway in the West Bank. The military killed another Palestinian when they fired at people protesting in favor of their right to return to their occupied homeland in the Israeli-blockaded Gaza Strip. **→13**



© Tehran Times / Shahab Ghavami

Farabi International Award closing ceremony held in Tehran

TEHRAN — The closing ceremony of the 10th Farabi International Award on the Humanities and Islamic Studies was held in Tehran on Sunday.

36 award winners were announced during the ceremony attended by First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri; the vice president for science and technology, Sorena Sattari; and Science Minister Mansour Gholami in attendance.

Farabi International Award, which is specifically aimed at the development of Islamic humanities, is held by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology on an annual basis.

REPORT
Ramin Hossein Abadian
Mehr News Agency
journalist

MBS's leap towards realization of a nuclear dream

The Washington Post recently revealed the existence of the possible production of ballistic missiles in Saudi Arabia. The newspaper added: "Satellite images suggest that Saudi Arabia has constructed its first known ballistic missile factory, according to weapons experts and image analysts, a development that raises questions about the kingdom's increasing military and nuclear ambitions under its 33-year-old crown prince."

The facility is said to be located at the same remote Al-Watah missile base about 200 km southwest of Riyadh which houses foreign-bought missiles in Saudi Arabia's arsenal. A spokesman for the Saudi Embassy in Washington declined to comment on the nature of the facility at the missile base. The Pentagon, State Department and CIA also declined to comment.

Also, the Associated Press said in a report that a military base deep inside Saudi Arabia appears to be testing and possibly manufacturing ballistic missiles, experts and satellite images suggest. This is evidence of the type of weapons program it has long criticized Iran for possessing.

■ History of Saudi Arabia missile program

The Saudi Strategic Missile Force dates to the 1980s, when Prince Khalid bin Sultan — then commander of the Air Defense Force — traveled to China to purchase Dongfeng (DF-3) ballistic missiles. The Dong Feng 3 is also medium-range and nuclear-capable, but it uses liquid fuel and is not very mobile.

In 1999, Prince Sultan, then the defense minister, visited Kahuta Research Laboratories in Pakistan where A.Q. Khan was enriching uranium and building copies of North Korea's No-dong missile.

■ Who helped Saudi Arabia?

Meanwhile, China is seen as a possible help for the Saudis and a ballistic missile manufacturing plant. China has always been among the parties to sign contracts and military agreements on ballistic missiles with Saudi Arabia. **→7**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Judiciary issues instruction on the need to observe public rights

POLITICS TEHRAN — Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani has issued an instruction on "supervision and observance of public rights", which includes 16 articles and 8 notes.

The instruction underlines the protection of public rights and the necessity of pursuing cases regarding to property-related offenses, national interests and compensation for public damages, ILNA reported.

It also tasks the prosecutor general, the Administrative Justice Court, the General Inspection Office and all prosecutors across the country to take measures within the framework of the instruction.



Zarif: Iran values ties with neighboring Turkmenistan

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Sunday that Iran attaches great importance to its relations with neighboring Turkmenistan, Mehr reported.

Zarif made the remarks in a meeting with a visiting Turkmen deputy foreign minister in Tehran.

Iran has always wanted to expand ties with Turkmenistan in different areas, Zarif said.

"We hope to be able to benefit from all available potentials to expand friendship and brotherhood," he added.

He also pointed to the agreements on the Caspian Sea legal regime and voiced Iran's readiness to implement joint projects with Turkmenistan in the sea.



Israel will be the main loser for its warmongering policies: advisor

POLITICS TEHRAN — Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the Iranian parliament speaker, said on Sunday that the Zionist regime of Israel will be the main loser of warmongering policies in the Middle East.

During a meeting with Russian Ambassador to Tehran Levon Dzhagaryan, Amir Abdollahian said, "The Zionist regime's military and provocative actions are serious threats against regional security."

On bilateral cooperation, he attached great importance to expansion of parliamentary ties.

Dzhagaryan said that Russia welcomes and supports expansion of cooperation.

Iran and Russia share common position and strategies and should expand relations and cooperation, he added.



Majlis committee holds meeting on Warsaw summit

POLITICS TEHRAN — Chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee said on Sunday morning that the committee was scheduled to hold a meeting later in the day with regard to the U.S. government's plan to hold an anti-Iran summit in Warsaw, Poland.

"We believe the summit is a conspiracy similar to Daesh (ISIL), because during the last few decades the Westerners have created a new crisis and we believe that Poland is launching a new sedition," Mehr quoted Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh as saying.

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.

Al-Ahwaz claims responsibility for terror act in southwest Iran



POLITICS TEHRAN — The Al-Ahwaz terrorist group has claimed responsibility for an attack on a police patrol car in Iran's southwestern port of Bandar Imam Khomeini that killed two cops, a police official from Khuzestan Province announced on Sunday, Tasnim reported.

Gunmen opened fire on a police patrol car in the port city in the wee hours of Saturday, killing two cops.

The patrol car's driver, a soldier serving his compulsory military service, was martyred when the gunmen riddled the vehicle with AK-47 shots, and a first lieutenant of the police was pronounced dead later after being taken to the hospital.

Salehi: EU better launch SPV before it is too late



Iran's nuclear chief says the European Union (EU) had better launch a promised payment mechanism meant to maintain trade with Iran and bypass unilateral sanctions by the United States "before it is too late."

Speaking to IRNA in an interview published on Sunday, Ali Akbar Salehi warned that the EU's failure to launch the mechanism — known as the special purpose vehicle (SPV) — in time would have unspecified consequences.

"Before it is too late, Europeans, in particular, should fulfill what they have promised beforehand; otherwise, I am afraid that the future developments will not be conducive... neither for us nor for them or even for other participants of the JCPOA," Salehi said, using an abbreviation for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, a nuclear deal that Iran and originally six other countries struck back in 2015.

Under that deal, Iran agreed to apply certain limits to its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of the unilateral and international sanctions that had been imposed on it over its nuclear activities. Last year, however, President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the JCPOA and re-imposed sanctions on Iran as well as the countries that would do business with it.

Iran has remained in the deal but says continued compliance will depend on assurances by the remaining parties that the country will collect the economic dividends expected under the deal.

The EU, which disapproves of the Trump administra-

tion's withdrawal and its sanctions on European trade with Iran and which also seeks to keep Iran in the deal, has come up with the idea of the SPV to directly trade with Iran and circumvent the U.S. financial system.

Salehi said that the Islamic Republic "does not want

to see the deal disintegrated and breached" by any of the remaining parties to the agreement.

"Iran has been fulfilling its commitments regarding the deal," he said, adding that 13 reports by the International Atomic Energy Agency provide ample proof of this.

Iran's nuclear chief further complained that the Europeans' promise to set up the SPV has not yet been fulfilled.

Earlier this week, Maja Kocijancic, the spokeswoman for EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, said that preparations to launch the SPV were at "an advanced stage," Bloomberg reported.

"The SPV preparations have progressed; they are at an advanced stage," she said. "I hope that we can announce the launch very soon."

Three European diplomats told Bloomberg the official unveiling could come as early as Monday.

Commenting on the news, Salehi said, "I hope that they (the Europeans) will take this step because this is an encouragement and will help keep the trust that we worked so hard to build between the two sides; otherwise, we will be losing the trust; and once the trust is lost, everybody will be a loser in the game."

"We should win this battle and we can only win it together. Otherwise, it will become a battle already lost; and certainly this will not be in the interest of the Europeans, specifically if we notice that they look at the JCPOA mainly from the perspective of security," he added.

Tehran reiterates missiles are 'non-negotiable'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi has reiterated Iran's firm stance on its missile program, saying the country's missiles are "non-negotiable."

Qassemi was responding to recent comments by French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, who said his country is ready to impose further sanctions on Iran if no progress is made in talks over Tehran's ballistic missile program.

"[Our] French friends should again pay attention to [UNSC] Resolution 2231 and see that Iran's missile issues have no contradiction with Resolution 2231," he said, Mehr reported on Sunday.

He described Iran's missile program

as a domestic issue, which is based on principles of "deterrence" and "defense."

"The experience from past decades showed that in this chaotic region we have to develop the necessary capabilities for defending the country if needed," the spokesman added.

Qassemi also emphasized that the Islamic Republic has an "absolutely clear policy" toward regional countries and neighbors, which is based on seeking peaceful and friendly relations with them in order to move the region toward stability and development.

Also on Friday, Qassemi said Le Drian's threat to impose new missile sanctions was against the spirit of political talks and cooperation between the two countries.

Iran may adopt offensive approach to protect national interests: military chief

POLITICS TEHRAN — Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri, the Iranian Armed Forces Chief of Staff, said on Sunday that Iran may adopt an offensive approach to protect its national interests.

"To protect national interests, territorial integrity and independence our major strategies are based on defense, however this does not mean that we simply act defensively and passively in tactical and operational approaches," he said on the sidelines of a ceremony.

The senior general reiterated Iran's long-held position that Tehran does not seek to attack any country, yet it will not hesitate to respond strongly if the country's security

is put at risk.

"We do not intend any aggression against other countries, however, we may adopt offensive approach to protect our national interests. Iran would not sit idly if anyone seeks to take aggression against us and endanger the country's security," he asserted.

The remarks by General Baqeri comes as the Iranian Army flexed its muscles on Friday and Saturday with a focus on "offensive" tactics.

The "offensive" component was inaugurated in the country's deterrence strategy for the first time last December, when the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) held the main and final stage of massive exercises in the Persian Gulf.

Religious enlightenment should be cherished: Ayatollah Khamenei

POLITICS TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Sunday that Qom Seminary is expected to provide answers to religious ambiguities

"In the past there was no such expectation from Qom (Seminary)... but today there is such an expectation from Qom Seminary to have solutions for ambiguities and religious problems," he said during a meeting with administrators of the Office for Islamic Propagation affiliated to Qom Seminary School.

"Today, it is the time of revolution, days of working and progressive moves, and Qom needs these new views more than ever," Ayatollah Khamenei remarked.

The Leader said one of the major duties of the office is to provide answers to the questions posed the youth, university students and influential cultural groups.

Ayatollah Khamenei said new thinking and religious enlightenment should be cherished by the Office for Islamic Propagation.

He added those who do activities in areas of art and culture have various religious questions which should be answered by Qom Seminary and the Office of Islamic Propagation.

The Leader also called on the Office for Islamic Propagation to be active in social media to promote its agenda.

<p>NRC NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL</p> <p>Call for interest Vendor prequalification</p>	<p>NRC NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL</p> <p>فراخوان ثبت در فهرست فروشندگان تأییدشده</p>
<p>The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is an independent, humanitarian, non-profit, non-governmental organisation which provides assistance, protection and durable solutions to refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide. NRC has been working in Islamic Republic of Iran since 2012 and supports the Iranian governments efforts in provision of assistance to refugees and displaced populations. Presently, NRC is developing/renewing the list of suppliers providing all categories of materials, works and services related to its humanitarian operations. The main criteria for selecting new suppliers will be:</p>	<p>سازمان امور پناهندگی نروژی یک سازمان مستقل، انسانی، غیرانتفاعی و غیردولتی است که به پناهندگان و جابجاشدگان داخلی در سراسر جهان کمک، حمایت و راهکارهای پایدار ارائه می‌کند. سازمان امور پناهندگی نروژی از سال 2012 در ایران فعالیت داشته و به حمایت از اقدامات دولت جمهوری اسلامی ایران در تدارک کمک به جمعیت پناهندگان و جابجاشدگان می‌پردازد.</p> <p>در حال حاضر، سازمان امور پناهندگی نروژی در حال گسترش بازنگری فهرست تأمین‌کنندگان کلیه گروه‌های مصالح، کار، و خدمات مربوط به عملیات انسان‌دوستانه خود بوده و مهم‌ترین معیارهای گزینش تأمین‌کنندگان جدید به شرح زیر است:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competitive pricing Ability to meet specifications and standards Availability of products and ability to deliver within reasonable time Product and service quality Reliable delivery methods Quality control methods and practices Technical abilities and leadership Ability to provide niche or unique products and/or design concepts Financial stability & credit strength Payment conditions/requirements Compatibility with existing products Adequate distribution/warehousing facilities and resources Spare parts availability Warranty, insurance and bonding provisions Proven performance and experience Service support resources available Previous experience and past performance with the product/service to be purchased Security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> قیمت رقابتی توانایی رعایت مشخصات و استانداردها موجود بودن محصولات و توانایی تحویل ظرف مدت مورد توافق طرفین کیفیت محصول و خدمات روش‌های قابل اطمینان تحویل روش‌ها و شیوه‌های کنترل کیفی توانایی‌های فنی و راهبری توان ارائه محصولات خاص و یا طراحی مفاهیم ثبات مالی و اعتبار بالا شرایط پرداخت سازگاری با محصولات موجود تاسیسات و منابع مناسب توزیع/انبارداری موجود بودن قطعات یدکی تعمیر، بیمه و ضمانت عملکرد و تجربه اثبات‌شده موجود بودن منابع پشتیبانی خدمات تجربه قبلی و عملکرد گذشته در رابطه با محصولات یا خدماتی که خریداری می‌شود ایمنی
<p>Suppliers interested in being added to our list of Pre-qualified suppliers, in participating in future restricted tenders and/or in signing framework contracts with us should submit their request by 3 February 2019 at the address below:</p>	<p>از تأمین‌کنندگان علاقه‌مند به اضافه شدن در فهرست فروشندگان تأییدشده سازمان امور پناهندگی نروژی، شرکت در مناقصه‌های محدود آتی و یا امضای قراردادهای درازمدت با این سازمان، دعوت می‌شود درخواست خود را تا پایان وقت اداری تاریخ چهاردهم بهمن 1397 به نشانی زیر تسلیم یا ارسال نمایند:</p>
<p>No. 29, East Daneshvar, North Shiraz St., Mollasadra, Tehran, Iran</p> <p>Or via email to: irco.logistics@gmail.com</p>	<p>تهران، خیابان ملاصدرا، خیابان شیراز شمالی، خیابان دانشور شرقی، پلاک 29</p> <p>یا از طریق ارسال ایمیل به آدرس: irco.logistics@gmail.com</p>
<p>Please make sure to use the word "Vendor Prequalification" in the subject line of your communications.</p> <p>A Vendor prequalification form will be sent to the interested suppliers and will have to be returned, once fully completed, within 14 days to the same address as above.</p>	<p>خواهشمند است حتماً در قسمت موضوع ایمیل خود عبارت "vendor prequalification" را قید کنید.</p> <p>برای علاقه‌مندان، یک فرم جهت بررسی و تأیید صلاحیت فروشندگان ارسال خواهد شد که باید ظرف 14 روز تکمیل و به آدرس فوق ارسال نمایند.</p>

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Damascus condemns Turkish presence in north as breach of deal

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government has condemned Turkey's military presence in northern Syria as a violation of a 1998 protocol between the two countries.

The foreign ministry in Damascus accused Ankara of repeatedly breaching the Adana deal throughout Syria's eight-year war.

"Since 2011, the Turkish regime has violated and continues to violate this agreement," a ministry source said, quoted by state news agency SANA.

The source accused Turkey of "supporting terrorists", using the government's term for both Turkish-backed rebels and other armed groups including former al-Qaeda affiliate Hay'et Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).

It said Ankara was breaching the deal through "occupying Syrian territory via terrorist organizations linked to it or directly via Turkish military forces".

But Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has insisted the Adana Protocol gives his country the right to deploy troops in the neighboring country.

Turkey backs Syrian rebel factions who control part of the north and has observation posts across rebel-held Idlib province as part of a "de-escalation" agreement signed in 2017 with Assad's ally Russia, and Iran.

Ankara has threatened for months to launch a new offensive in northern Syria to drive out US-backed Syrian Kurdish fighters.

It has twice led incursions into northern Syria in 2016 and 2018. Since then, its



forces and allied Syrian proxies have controlled a patch of territory on the border.

Ankara has repeatedly threatened to march on areas further east, where the US-allied fighters of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) are in control.

The YPG is seen as an effective ground force by the US in the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS) armed group, but Turkey says it is linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which Ankara and Washington list as a terrorist group.

Washington last month said it would pull

its 2,000 troops from the country, leaving the Kurds scrambling to find a new ally in Damascus to avoid a potential Turkish assault.

On Friday, Erdogan said Turkey expected a "security zone" to be created in Syria in a few months.

The Adana deal was signed in 1998 to end a crisis between the neighbors, sparked by the presence in Syria of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan and bases run by the group.

Turkey argues the protocol provides Ankara with the legal ground to intervene in Syria against the PKK and its affiliates, because of the Syrian regime's failure to act

against the group.

Damascus has regained control of almost two-thirds of the country after Russia intervened militarily in 2015.

Russia: Deal with Turkey on Syria's Idlib not fully implemented

An agreement with Turkey on Syria's Idlib province has not been fully implemented, raising concerns in Moscow and Damascus, the Interfax news agency quoted a Kremlin spokesperson as saying.

Moscow and Ankara have tried to create a de-escalation zone in the region last year, where acts of aggression are expressly prohibited in order to allow the return of thousands of displaced Syrians to their homes.

Last week, Turkish President Erdogan went to Moscow to discuss with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin the steps needed to stabilise the situation in Idlib.

Russia said that the situation there was rapidly deteriorating and that it was almost under the full control of Hay'et Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) - a rebel group that was previously linked to al-Qaeda.

In September last year, Turkey pledged to disarm and remove HTS fighters in Idlib when a deal was signed between Turkey and Russia.

The deal succeeded in preventing a Russia-backed Syrian government offensive from launching in Idlib which is home to nearly three million people, including many internally displaced persons (IDPs).

(Source: agencies)

U.S. caught helping ISIL commanders escape from Taliban prison in Afghanistan



A large number of prisoners, all of them senior members of Daesh (ISIL) terrorist group, broke out of a Taliban prison in northwest Afghanistan after U.S. troops helped them escape through a covert operation.

According to Tasnim dispatches, American forces operating in Afghanistan carried out a secret military operation in the northwestern province of Badghis two weeks ago and helped the Daesh inmates escape the prison.

The report added that 40 Daesh ringleaders, all of them foreigners, were transferred by helicopters after American troops raided the prison and killed all its security guards.

Abdullah Afzali, deputy head of Badghis provincial council, confirmed the news. Informed sources have given a detailed account of the U.S. operation to rescue the Daesh forces and the developments that helped Americans pinpoint the location of the prison in the mountainous areas.

Aminullah, a man from Uzbekistan, was one of the Daesh commanders held captive in the Taliban prison. His success to escape from the prison led to the dismissal of the Taliban prison guard and his punishment.

Aminullah was one of the prominent Daesh leaders in northern parts of Afghanistan. Informed sources suggest that the Uzbekistani national had established close contact with the American military forces since the early days of moving to Afghanistan.

Americans used to employ Aminullah as an undercover among the Taliban to acquire information for carrying out operations against the Taliban in northern Afghanistan.

That is while, before Aminullah's escape from the Taliban prison, the American forces had launched an extensive intelligence operation using drones to locate the Taliban prison in which the Daesh forces were being held, but their failure to get any useful information had created a sense of humiliation among Americans.

The informed sources say Aminullah made contact with Americans immediately after escaping from the prison, let them know about the exact location of the jail, and helped them plan a rescue operation.

Thereafter, the U.S. forces analyzed the geographical position of the 'Panjboz' village and the Taliban prison and decided to carry out an aerial and helicopter operation to release the Daesh inmates, considering the number of the Taliban fighters and that the region was inaccessible by road.

Finally, the U.S. launched an attack on January 13 by bombing the areas around the prison and killing a number of the Taliban forces. Afterwards, the American helicopters were dispatched to the operation zone and disembarked troops who killed the prison guards, released the Daesh forces and took them away on board the choppers. Taliban forces had earlier captured the Daesh forces in Panjboz village after heavy clashes with Daesh terrorists. The videos below show how the Taliban fighters freed the village from Daesh and imprisoned the terrorists in one of the houses of the village.

In one of the videos received by Tasnim, one of top Taliban commanders introduces a number of Daesh's foreign members and their nationality.

It was not the first time that American forces helped the Daesh forces. During the armed clashes between the Taliban and the Daesh terrorists in western Afghanistan, the U.S. forces repeatedly bombed the Taliban positions and transferred prominent Daesh figures, including local leader Mullah Nangiyali, with copters to the military bases.

This video shows the transfer of top Daesh figures and their families by Afghan forces.

(Source: Tasnim)

Germany earmarks funds for Russian siege survivors

Berlin and Moscow announced on Sunday that Germany had provided 12 million euros to help Russian World War II veterans and siege survivors but Moscow said it was not enough.

The announcement came as Russia marked the 75th anniversary of the end of a World War II siege of Leningrad that claimed more than 800,000 lives.

The initiative was billed as a "voluntary humanitarian gesture towards the surviving victims of the blockade."

Saint Petersburg, formerly known as Leningrad, is home to around 86,000 siege survivors.

"We, foreign ministers of Germany and Russia, welcome the decision of the German government to provide 12 million euros (\$13.7 million) for the modernization of a hospital for war veterans and the establishment of a German-Russian meeting center," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov said.

"We are confident that this voluntary action will improve

the quality of life of the surviving victims of the siege and serve in the historical reconciliation of the people of both countries as a basis for our bilateral relations in the future," the ministers said.

In a separate statement, Moscow said that while the initiative was "important," Germany should compensate all living survivors of the 1941-44 siege of Leningrad.

"The launch of this humanitarian initiative does not mean that the issue has been put to rest of the German government providing individual compensations to all living siege survivors irrespective of their nationality," said foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova.

She added that Germany had earlier paid siege survivors of Jewish origin compensation of 2,500 euros "within the framework of Germany's responsibility for the Holocaust."

Encircled by the Nazi troops for 872 days, the city of around three million people endured unspeakable horrors.

More than 800,000 people died from hunger or disease,



or under shelling. Many historians say the true figures are higher.

(Source: AFP)

20 dead as bombs target Sunday Mass in Philippine cathedral

Two bombs minutes apart tore through a Roman Catholic cathedral on a southern Philippine island where extremist militants are active, killing at least 20 people and wounding 81 others during a Sunday Mass, officials said.

Witnesses said the first blast inside the Jolo cathedral in the provincial capital sent churchgoers, some of them wounded, to stampee out of the main door. Army troops and police posted outside were rushing in when the second bomb went off about one minute later near the main entrance, causing more deaths and injuries. The military was checking a report that the second explosive device may have been attached to a parked motorcycle.

The initial explosion scattered the wooden pews inside the main hall and blasted window glass panels, and the second bomb hurled human remains and debris across a town square fronting the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, witnesses said. Cellphone signal was cut off in the first hours after the attack. The witnesses who spoke to The Associated Press refused to give their names or were busy at the scene of the blasts.

Police said at least 20 people died and 81 were wounded, correcting an earlier toll due to double counting. The fatalities included 15



civilians and five troops. Among the wounded were 14 troops, two police and 65 civilians.

Troops in armored carriers sealed off the main road leading to the church while vehicles transported the dead and wounded to the town hospital. Some casualties were evacuated by air to nearby Zamboanga city.

"I have directed our troops to heighten their alert level, secure all places of worship and public places at once, and initiate pro-active

security measures to thwart hostile plans," said Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana in a statement.

"We will pursue to the ends of the earth the ruthless perpetrators behind this dastardly crime until every killer is brought to justice and put behind bars. The law will give them no mercy," the office of President Rodrigo Duterte said in Manila.

It said that "the enemies of the state boldly

challenged the government's capability to secure the safety of citizens in that region. The [Armed Forces of the Philippines] will rise to the challenge and crush these godless criminals."

No one has immediately claimed responsibility for the latest attack.

Jolo island has long been troubled by the presence of Abu Sayyaf militants, who are blacklisted by the United States and the Philippines as a terrorist organization because of years of bombings, kidnappings and beheadings. A Catholic bishop, Benjamin de Jesus, was gunned down by suspected militants outside the cathedral in 1997.

It came nearly a week after minority Muslims in the predominantly Roman Catholic nation endorsed a new autonomous region in the southern Philippines in hopes of ending nearly five decades of a separatist rebellion that has left 150,000 people dead. Although most of the Muslim areas approved the autonomy deal, voters in Sulu province, where Jolo is located, rejected it. The province is home to a rival rebel faction that's opposed to the deal as well as smaller militant cells that not part of any peace process.

(Source: AP)

Khalilzad visits Kabul to consult president on talks with Taliban

U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad arrived in Kabul on Sunday to try to secure cooperation from Afghanistan's president after breakthroughs in peace negotiations with Taliban leaders in Qatar.

With Khalilzad and his boss U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, as well as Taliban officials, hailing progress toward ending America's longest war, he must now win over President Ashraf Ghani - whose government the Taliban have so far kept out of the process.

Six days of talks ended in Qatar on Saturday with key parts of a draft pact mapped out, including an 18-month timeline for the withdrawal of foreign troops after the completion of a deal, according to Taliban officials.

The draft also includes assurances from the hardline group that it will not allow Afghanistan to be used by al-Qaeda and ISIL to attack the U.S. and its allies - a core U.S. demand. Similar assurances involving other groups are given to Pakistan in the draft pact.

The Taliban also want to be part of an interim government after any ceasefire, Taliban sources said.

It was not clear whether the draft described by the Tal-

iban sources was acceptable to both sides or when it could be completed and signed.

A fresh round of talks between Khalilzad and the Taliban is expected to take place on February 25 in Doha, two senior Taliban sources said. While he has not been directly involved until now, Ghani's role is likely to grow as a full deal gets closer and diplomacy intensifies.

Without going into detail on Saturday night, Khalilzad said in tweets that nothing could be agreed without an intra-Afghan dialogue and a full ceasefire.

"He (Khalilzad) will inform Ghani and his officials about all the developments, seek their opinion before traveling back to Washington," a senior Afghan official said on conditions of anonymity.

Khalilzad is also due to brief top regional diplomats on Monday morning.

Ghani's options

Western diplomats describe Ghani as being in a tight spot, with no authority to decide on the troop departure and the final decision to declare the ceasefire resting with the Taliban.

He, however does enjoy the power to decide to support an interim government rather than push for presidential elections which could prove to be a distraction to the peace effort. So far he has rejected talk of an interim government. "It is time for Ghani to choose between elections or peace process," said a western diplomat based in Kabul.

Despite the progress on a pact, violence is widely expected to continue, with the Taliban mounting daily attacks against the Afghan government and its security forces.

The Taliban now control about half of Afghanistan's territory and Ghani said in Switzerland last week that 45,000 members of the country's security forces had been killed since he took office in 2014.

A former Taliban leader said despite an agreement for an 18-month withdrawal, he predicted intense fighting ahead.

"I think Taliban won't stop their fight until they get 100 percent sure that foreign forces are leaving Afghanistan," said Sayed Mohammad Akbar Agha, who heads Ways to Save Afghanistan, an independent group run by tribal elders and religious scholars working toward securing peace.

(Source: Reuters)

Iran VP: Without Iran, terrorists would have formed govt. in Mideast

I → He noted that the region is still suffering from the negative consequences of wars which were waged by the U.S., a reference to the U.S. wars against Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 which helped energize terrorist groups.

Elsewhere, he said that Iran has been through many ups and downs during the past 40 years and is able to create opportunities in difficult situation.

He said that the U.S. has started an economic and psychological warfare against Iran and seeks to depict Iran's future as "vague".

"Comprehensive efforts should be made to show the bright future of Iran and show the people new prospects," the vice president remarked.

He noted, "Now it is the time to hold talks and increase public trust on the system and future of Iran."

'All bodies should be held accountable for their decisions'

Jahangiri also said all the country's institutions should be held accountable for any decision that they take for the destiny of the country. "The administration, Majlis (parliament), Judiciary, the Expediency Council, in proportion to domain of their power and duties, should be held accountable for the decisions that they take toward a nation and country," the pragmatic vice president insisted.

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, 2018 and the second round, which targets Iran's oil exports and banks, were snapped back on November 4.

John Bolton, the national security advisor to President Trump, said in November 2018, "We think the (Iranian) government is under real pressure and it's our intention to squeeze them very hard. As the British say, squeeze them until the pips squeak."

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	160798.0
IFX	1942.23

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,788 rials
GBP	55,435 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$61.59/b
WTI	\$53.69/b
OPEC Basket	\$60.22/b
Gold	\$1,303.95/oz
Silver	\$15.79/oz
Platinum	\$823.75/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Iran, Turkey consider preferential trade, bartering to develop mutual trade

In this regard, the recent meeting between the two countries' presidents and their decision on modifying the preferential trade agreement reached between the two sides, and Shafeie suggested that the two countries' chambers of commerce present their views and ideas for modification of the mentioned agreement to their governments.



ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie (R) met with Rifat Hisarciklioglu, president of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (known as TOBB), in Tehran on Saturday.

ICCIMA head further mentioned bartering as another way of expanding trade ties between the two sides saying, "The two countries' chambers could have a significant impact on increasing bartering of goods and services."

Hisarciklioglu for his part, welcomed Shafeie's proposals and noted that establishing a desirable bartering system is one of the main solutions for Iran and Turkey to pass through the U.S. sanctions.

President of TOBB visiting Tehran at the top of a trade delegation also announced that Kapikoy - Razi border crossing between the two countries will be reopened within the next two months.

Eurozone banks stop issuing €500 notes, but cash-loving Germany delays

Central banks in 17 of the Eurozone's 19 economies stopped issuing €500 (\$570) notes on Sunday, but cash-loving Germany and Austria are delaying the move until later this year.

The German Bundesbank and the Austria's Oesterreichische Nationalbank said they needed more time to "ensure a smooth transition" toward a system in which €200 will be the largest denomination note.

The European Central Bank stopped producing the large, violet-colored €500 note in 2016, citing its use in "illicit activities" such as money laundering, tax evasion and terrorism financing.

The note is known as the "Bin Laden," the former head of the jihadist terrorist group Al-Qaida, because of how easy it is for criminals to transport large amounts of it in a compact space.

But while other countries' reaction to the abolition has been muted, anxiety and criticism were widespread within Germany, where some fondly remember the 1,000 Deutschmark before euro notes were introduced in 2002.

Bundesbank chief Jens Weidemann denounced the decision, saying it would have little impact in combating crime and instead "damage confidence" in the euro.

A columnist in Die Welt newspaper lamented that the note's abolition would "restrict citizens' freedom," while weekly magazine Der Spiegel ran the headline: "The end of the 500 euro note: Is this the end of cash?"

The reaction was perhaps not surprising. Although most Germans rarely pay with a €500 note, they've been far more stubborn than consumers in other EU countries in dropping cash for alternative payment systems.

An ECB study found the average German carries more than €100 in their wallet. The bank also found that only 19 percent of cashless payments were made with cards in 2016. In the United Kingdom and France, the figure was 53 and 65 percent.

And that stubbornness doesn't seem to be going anywhere soon. In a recent Bundesbank poll, some 88 percent of respondents said they still wanted to pay with cash in the future.

But some German experts also question the ECB's rationale. The head of the Center for Economic Studies (CES) in Munich, Clemens Fuest, said the ECB wanted to make it harder for banks to avoid paying negative interest rates by parking their money in cash. (Source: DW)

Iran-Syria economic cooperation meeting held in Damascus

TEHRAN — The 14th preparatory meeting of Iran-Syria high joint technical committee of economic cooperation began on Saturday at the Damascus-based Dama-rose Hotel, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The event was attended by the Iranian Deputy Transport Minister Amir Amini and Deputy Head of the Planning and International Cooperation Authority of Syria Thoraya Idlbi.

"Holding this meeting proves both sides' strong tendency towards further cooperation and deepening the various aspects of strategic

relations," Amini said hoping that Iran and Syria can reach achievements and agreements which serve the interests of both nations.

The Iranian official also voiced his country's readiness for contributing to reconstruction of Syria in its post war era.

The Syrian official for her part, said that Syria welcomes strong political and economic relations with Iran.

Referring back to the signature of the joint economic cooperation agreement in 2015 and contracts in the fields of agriculture, oil and telecommunications, she clarified that the



long-term strategic economic cooperation agreement and its supplements was reached last year during meetings held in Tehran.

Preparatory meetings are held to pave the way for inking an MOU during Iran-Syria

high joint technical committee, which is to be led by the Syrian Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade Mohammad Samer Al-Khalil and Iranian Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami.

Value of exports from industry sector rises 13% in 9 months yr/yr

TEHRAN — The value of exports from Iran's industry sector during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21 – December 21, 2018) rose 13 percent compared to the same period of time in the past year, ISNA reported on Sunday citing the data released by Trade Promotion Organization (TPO).

TPO data show that some 31.813 million tons of industrial commodities

worth \$14.92 billion have been exported from Iran during the nine-month period, showing six percent rise in terms of weight compared to the same time span of the previous year.

Industrial exports accounted for 44.7 percent and 36.5 percent of the country's worth and weight of non-oil exports during the first nine months of the present year.

Iran exported 86.94 million tons of non-oil commodities, worth \$33.35



billion, during the mentioned period of time, showing 5.40 percent growth in terms of value compared to the same time last year.

The country's top export destinations in the said time span were respectively Iraq by importing \$6.92 billion of Iranian goods equaling 2.77 percent of the total exports, China (\$6.749 billion; 20.23 percent), and the United Arab Emirates (\$5.13 billion; 15.39 percent).

Tehran hosting intl. venture capital conference

TEHRAN — The two-day Iran International Venture Capital and Private Equity Exchange Conference is being held in Tehran on January 27-28, IRIB reported on Sunday.

As reported, visitors from 15 countries, different countries' ambassadors to Tehran and commercial attachés are taking part in the event.

The conference seeks to present a novel picture of Iran's economic potentials in particular those in small and medium-sized industries and new businesses to foreign investors.

"The share of domestic small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) from the total exports of the country presently stands at



\$2 billion, which is not a satisfactory level regarding the 40,000 active industrial units located in our industrial parks," Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Mohammad Reza Modoudi told IRIB in a televised interview. "Therefore, we are determined to show the real picture of our capacities to foreigners."

Over \$523m worth of commodities traded in IME in a week

TEHRAN — During weekdays ending up to January 24, approximately 502,106 million tons (MT) of commodities worth over \$523.8 million were traded on Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME).

According to the report from IME International Affairs and Public Relations Department, last week, on the domestic and export metal and mineral trading floor of IME, 226,410 MT of various products worth close to \$226 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 218,820 MT of steel, 5,465 MT of copper, 2,000 MT of aluminum, 120 MT of

molybdenum concentrates, 12 MT of precious metal concentrates as well as one kg of gold bullion were traded by customers.

The report declares that on domestic and export oil and petrochemical trading floors of IME, 279,550 MT of different commodities with the total value of \$269 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 54,160 MT of VB feed stock, 122,485 MT of bitumen, 68,730 MT of polymer products, 26,769 MT of chemical products, 5,580 MT of sulfur, 5 MT of slaps waxes, 150 MT of argon as well as 860 MT of insulation were traded.

Deutsche Bank to get Qatari commitment for more funds

Deutsche Bank AG has secured a commitment for additional investment from Qatar as the troubled German lender seeks to bolster its finances, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

The investment is likely to be made through the Qatar Investment Authority, the country's sovereign wealth fund, the people said, asking not to be identified because the talks are private. Two other Qatari investment vehicles, controlled by members of the royal family and other prominent politicians, already own a stake.

While the discussions are at an advanced stage, no final agreement has been reached, said the people. The timing and the size of the investment aren't clear. A Deutsche Bank spokesman declined to comment.

Representatives for QIA didn't respond to requests for comment.

The German government has been moving to fix Deutsche Bank as shares of the lender have slumped by almost half in the past year. The government is studying ways to make it easier for the lender to merge with Commerzbank AG, Bloomberg reported last month, while also considering other possibilities such as seeking fresh investment from existing or new shareholders.

Deutsche Bank, which has been trying to regain its footing after years of restructuring in the aftermaths of the global financial crisis, faces broadening U.S. scrutiny as a leading Republican lawmaker joined Democratic colleagues in questioning the lender's steps to combat money-laundering amid reports

that its U.S. unit may have been a key conduit for dirty cash.

QIA, which manages \$320 billion, is known for its big-name investments and has purchased stakes in companies including Rosneft PJSC and Volkswagen AG. QIA Chairman Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani suggested in an interview at the World Economic Forum in Davos that Deutsche Bank is among the major German companies the sovereign wealth fund is talking to about potential stake purchases.

QIA is looking "at different sectors" in Germany, said the chairman, who is also deputy prime minister and foreign minister of gas-rich Qatar. "Financial services is among them," as are infrastructure and industrials, he said.

Many sovereign wealth funds have been "underweighting traditional financial stocks and moving into the fintech space, so this would be an interesting investment," Rachel Pether, an adviser at the Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute. "The financial services industry holds a strategic importance in the development of a country's economy, and given the strategic importance of Deutsche Bank to the German economy, this is perhaps as much a political decision as a financial one."

Last year, Qatar said its projected investment of 10 billion euros (\$11 billion) in the German economy over the next five years would be its largest single investment in the country to date.

(Source: Bloomberg)

UK could avoid \$1.5 billion EU tax bill on no-deal Brexit

A no-deal Brexit could create yet another headache for the European Union as it prepares to hand dozens of UK-based companies a tax bill that is expected to top \$1.5 billion.

With just over two months left until Britain's scheduled departure date of March 29, time is running out for the European Commission to order the UK to recoup money from companies granted illegal tax breaks. A decision is likely just before Brexit, people familiar with the case have said. But how the EU could ensure UK compliance with any order is not clear.

"The issue is not the chance of an appeal," and which court would hear it, "but how to actually enforce a decision taken just before the Brexit date," said Raymond Luja, tax professor at Maastricht University in the Netherlands, and also counsel to law firm Loyens & Loeff in Amsterdam. "What if the UK simply would ignore it?"

A no-deal Brexit would mean the withdrawal agreement and transition period negotiated for months toward an orderly EU exit, wouldn't apply anymore. The UK and its two EU judges would also cease to be part of the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, leading to the question of how the EU could enforce court decisions on a country that's left the bloc.

Biggest firms

Fifty-three companies, including Diageo Plc, Pearson Plc and Compass Group Plc, have warned of potential costs arising from the EU probe, according to data compiled by Bloomberg Tax. Twenty-three of those, among the UK's 250 largest firms, have disclosed potential tax repayments amounting to about \$1.5 billion.

Amid a crackdown on fiscal loopholes designed to help big companies, the EU's competition commissioner Margrethe Vestager opened an in-depth investigation in October 2017 to uncover whether firms unfairly profited from a UK tax break introduced by the previous government. Like Ireland's battle over whether Apple Inc. owes unpaid taxes, the commission could force the UK to recover the relief businesses have gained.

The probe is one of the EU's last to target the UK before it is due to leave the bloc. The EU in December concluded a



separate probe into corporate tax deals in the British territory of Gibraltar, with an order to reclaim some 100 million euros (\$113 million) in tax breaks.

Normal circumstances

Under normal circumstances, the UK would have two months and 10 days to appeal any decision at the EU courts. An EU antitrust order taken before the end of March would remain valid and the UK will likely be able to appeal it at the bloc's courts, even as a non-EU member, lawyers said. But these are not normal circumstances.

"The UK might indeed just ignore the whole thing," said Howard Liebman, a tax partner at law firm Jones Day in Brussels. Given the uncertainty around Brexit, he said he can only speculate at this stage. "It may decide, depending on what happens to the UK government itself, not to lodge an appeal and simply say, we're out, and this decision doesn't impact us. Then what would happen?"

Ignoring an EU ruling might be counter-productive in the long-run, especially if the UK wants agreements on possible future trade deals.

'In step'

"Keeping UK and EU competition rules 'in step' is, in any case, generally seen as a prerequisite of a future trading agreement," in either scenario, said Jeremy Cape, a partner

at law firm Squire Patton Boggs in London.

The commission has to revert to the EU courts when a government fails to comply with a decision or a previous court ruling. Such disputes can drag out over years. How that will work in case of a former EU member nation isn't clear.

"After the UK leaves, and if the EU wins before the court and then wins again as part of any appeals, what can the EU or the European Courts actually do to force the UK to comply with those judgments?" said Liebman. "I do not believe there is any enforcement mechanism available, regardless of the outcome."

No deal

The Brussels-based commission said it wouldn't speculate on the UK case or the situation following no-deal.

The UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy referred to August guidance, which confirms that the Competition and Markets Authority will take over from the commission in case there's no deal, while existing approvals of state aid will remain valid and "carried over into UK law."

The CMA set out last week how it plans to take over as state aid enforcement authority in case of a no-deal Brexit. This would also mean that UK courts would then rule on disputes concerning UK-based companies.

The CMA said it aims to follow a similar state aid framework to the EU's, so its decisions "in theory" could be in line, said Nicole Robins, a partner specializing in governmental aid at economics consultancy Oxera in Brussels.

The UK case tops the previous EU record, an investigation into a Belgian tax plan that benefited 35 businesses and led to a 2016 order to the government to recover about 800 million euros in back-taxes. The EU's UK probe looks at an exemption that enabled parent companies to pay little or no tax on certain intra-group financing between two units based outside the country.

While several fora could come into play, such as UK courts or even the International Court of Justice in The Hague, to sort out disputes over non-compliance with an EU order, "the bottom line will remain enforcement," said Luja. (Source: Bloomberg)

Oil bulls get bolder as OPEC cuts diminish the odds of a relapse

Oil's bulls are getting bolder. With production cuts orchestrated by OPEC taking hold and U.S. shale drillers promising to rein in spending, hedge funds boosted wagers on increasing Brent crude prices by 17 percent in the week ended January 22. That was the biggest increase since August. Meanwhile, short-selling bets have plunged by 36 percent this month, the biggest three-week drop in about a year.

Crude prices have recovered a third of 2018's late-year losses in a rally that's pushed the global benchmark up more than 20 percent since Christmas Eve. In the past few days, turmoil in Venezuela, holder of the world's biggest oil reserves, added some momentum to the rebound.

"Investors are continuing to get more constructive," said Brian Kessens, who manages \$16 billion in energy investments for Kansas-based money manager Tortoise. "The risks on the upside are much more likely than the risks of going lower from here. We don't see much 'down' for oil right now."



Whether investors have jumped on board just in time or overshot the mark remains to be seen. The price recovery stalled in recent days as the U.S.-China trade dispute

dragged on and the International Monetary Fund cut its forecast for global economic growth. Brent suffered its first weekly loss for the year.

"The market for the time being is giving OPEC and Russia the benefit of the doubt," said Tamar Essner, an analyst with Nasdaq Inc in New York. "Now, the big wild card is what happens with demand. We're sort of stuck in this tight range until we get a bit more clarity."

Net-long wagers – the difference between bets on a Brent increase and wagers on a decline – rose by 17 percent for the week ended January 22 to 202,934 options and futures contracts, according to data released on Friday by ICE Futures Europe. Longs climbed 2.7 percent to the highest in almost two months. Shorts slumped 26 percent.

Data on hedge fund sentiment for the U.S. benchmark price, West Texas Intermediate, weren't available this week because of the U.S. government shutdown.

(Source: Gulf Times)

As Europe's drivers ditch diesel, they get lucky in oil market

Europe's drivers are ditching diesel cars in favor of gasoline. The oil market is handing them something of a lucky break as they do.

In the continent as a whole, diesel's market share for new auto registrations shrank to 32 percent last year from 39 percent a year earlier, according to the International Energy Agency. As the great switch gathers pace, the price premium for gasoline across Europe has tumbled to the lowest since 2008.

"Directionally, gasoline demand will increase as diesel goes even more out of favor," said Steve Sawyer, a London-based analyst at industry consultant Facts Global Energy. Price pressure on gasoline will persist because the region's supply exceeds demand by about 1 million barrels a day, he said.

Still shunning

Once the dominant choice for Europe's car buyers, diesel's recent decline can be traced to the Dieselgate scandal in late 2015, when it emerged that Volkswagen AG had been cheating regulators and misleading buyers

by using software to suppress emissions from cars that burned the fuel during tests. Despite still being cheaper on average at the pump in Europe and giving greater mileage per gallon, consumers are still shunning diesel.

As they do that, gasoline's premium is whittling away. The average retail price of gasoline is just three euro cents a liter above diesel, compared with more than 23 cents back in 2015, according to European Commission data.

It could be even better for drivers of gasoline-powered vehicles were it not for tax. Excluding tax, gasoline is 9 cents a liter cheaper across Europe, having been 4 cents higher on average as recently as 2015.

Drivers of gasoline-fueled cars are benefiting in part from wider gyrations in oil markets. Where crude supplies are growing fastest -- notably in the U.S. -- they're often grades that are rich in gasoline. Unfortunately for diesel drivers, OPEC is scaling back on heavier grades that can yield more of the

distillate. On top of that, major producers of such barrels like Venezuela and Iran are scaling back involuntarily, while Canada also elected to do so.

The push toward gasoline-powered vehicles comes as a supply glut of the fuel builds and opportunities diminish to export that surplus to traditional markets such as the U.S. Gasoline is now a loss-making product for refineries in Europe, a rarely-seen occurrence, with independently held stockpiles in Amsterdam-Rotterdam-Antwerp trading hub at their highest seasonally in at least a decade.

'Dramatic collapse'

Diesel's share of auto registrations in Spain has slumped to just above 30 percent, the lowest in at least eight years, according to the Spanish Automobile Association. Gasoline's share of auto registrations in the country doubled in the past five years to more than 60 percent.

In Germany, diesel auto sales slumped to their lowest since at least 2009 last year,



accounting for about a third of registrations last year, compared with almost half in 2015, according to data from the Federal Motor Vehicles Office.

"There has been a dramatic collapse of new diesel car sales in the UK," said Luke Bosdet, a spokesman for the Automobile Association. Drivers are put off by a combination of rising fuel costs, pollution concerns, and increasing taxes and charges, particularly in cities, he said.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Nord Stream 2 can't be stopped, Poland's prime minister admits



It is practically impossible to halt the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline now that "two powerful countries", Russia and Germany, have committed themselves to building it, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said.

"Let's maintain hope, but let's be honest: two powerful countries, one of which – Russia, is a world power, and the other – Germany, is the world's fourth largest economy, have decided to build a gas pipeline," the prime minister said in an interview with the Interia Polish web portal on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum.

Calling the energy infrastructure project's implementation "selfish," presumably on Germany's part, Morawiecki said that what Poland needs is allies who could speak out against the initiative.

"We think this [project] is against European values. We also believe that this contradicts the assurances of security for our part of the world, for Ukraine, for Poland, and is a very selfish

activity," the politician said.

Poland, Morawiecki stressed, has been consistent in condemning the project, and has done its best to convince others to do the same.

"But back to the first point – these are two powerful states, so to speak, and it is not easy to forbid them from doing anything," Morawiecki reiterated.

Poland has been one of the most vocal critics of Nord Stream 2, praising efforts to replace Russian energy supplies for Europe with American and Qatari LNG, and successfully lobbying the European Commission to subsidize the Baltic Pipe project, which envisions the construction of an offshore gas pipeline connecting Poland and Norway via Denmark.

Nord Stream 2, a joint venture between Russian gas giant Gazprom and half a dozen Western European energy firms, including Uniper, Wintershall, Engie, OMV and Royal Dutch Shell, seeks to build a pipeline with an annual capacity of 55 billion cubic meters of gas, through the Baltic Sea, running from Vyborg, Russia to Greifswald, Germany. The project is expected to be completed at the end of 2019. As of December 2018, the companies involved indicated that they have invested over 6 billion euros in the project.

Earlier this month, the US threatened to introduce sanctions against European energy companies participating in Nord Stream 2, and said that the project could carry "reputational costs" for those involved. German Energy Minister Peter Altmaier responded by saying that it would not be easy to intimidate Germany on this issue, adding that the venture's critics were targeting "the wrong whipping boy."

(Source: Sputnik)

There's no slowing U.S. natural gas production

Last August I warned that a Natural Gas Price Spike May Be Looming. The reason for the warning was that natural gas in storage – which the Energy Information Administration (EIA) reports every Thursday – had fallen to abnormally low levels just ahead of high-demand season.

Indeed, natural gas inventories remained low throughout the fall, and by November prices had spiked by 60 percent. By late November, it seemed that prices were destined to hit the \$5 per million British thermal units (MMBtu) level.

However, the price peaked about the time inventory levels began to head back to the lower end of the normal range. Last week's report marked the first time since last June that the level reached the lower end of the 5-year minimum range.

As natural gas levels headed toward the normal range, prices tumbled. From a close of \$4.70/MMBtu in November, prices during the first week of January fell back below \$3.00/MMBtu.

Natural gas inventories are still



about 11 percent below average for this time of year, and there is a lot of winter left. But, unless the rest of the winter is unseasonably cold, the recent trend suggests that natural gas prices may spend most of 2019 below \$3.00.

Demand for natural gas continues to grow along multiple fronts. For example, the EIA reported that liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports set two consecutive monthly records in November and December 2018. EIA estimates that LNG exports averaged 3.6 billion cubic feet per day (Bcf/d) in November and 3.9

Bcf/d in December.

But supply is more than keeping pace. Not only does production in the Appalachia Region continue to grow unabated, but the associated gas (co-produced with oil) in the Permian Basin has started to have a large impact on the natural gas market over the past year or so. Due to logistical constraints in the Permian Basin, this at times has led to significant flaring and even natural gas prices falling below zero at times in the area.

For perspective, current natural gas production in the Permian Basin is about 13 Bcf/d. That reflects a doubling of production there in just over two years, and is now second only to the Appalachia Region's 31 Bcf/d.

Permian Basin gas production isn't growing quite as quickly as that in the Appalachia, but the resource potential suggests that both oil and gas production in the Permian will continue to grow for a number of years.

(Source: oilprice.com)

The era of ultra-cheap solar panels is over

Solar developers and investors may have to brace for solar panel costs to start rising after a 30-percent plunge last year.

The period of ultra-cheap solar panels is over, according to the president of one of China's largest solar panel manufacturers.

The party is definitely over, Eric Luo, president of China's GCL System Integration Technology, told Reuters this week, commenting on the super-cheap solar components on the global market.

According to the Chinese manager, solar panel prices have already stabilized and are expected to rise by 10-15 percent within two years.

Despite the expected higher costs for solar installations, the global solar industry will continue to add generation capacity this year, and China, the U.S., and India will drive the market, analysts say.

It was China that triggered the massive drop in solar panel prices last year.

China surprised everyone in June 2018 by announcing that it would not issue approvals for any new solar power installations in 2018 and would also cut subsidies. The major shift in Chinese solar policies led to local manufacturers flooding the global solar panel market, creating a glut and pushing prices down.

As a result of this, solar panel prices plunged by 30 percent last year. While this jeopardized smaller Chinese manufacturers, the ultra-cheap solar panels created a windfall for solar developers and investors in solar photovoltaic (PV) installations around the world.

The market, however, has started to adapt to these disruptions and prices of China-made solar panels are expected to rebound by 10-15 percent over the next year or two, because the Chinese solar manufacturing market is heading to consolidation as small producers suffered the most from China's solar policies, Luo told Reuters.

The solar market globally is set to gradually adapt in 2019 to the industry disruptions last year, which also included the U.S. slapping tariffs on imports of solar panel products. Together with continued declines in solar and wind costs, 2019 could be a brighter year for the U.S. solar and renewable energy markets, analysts and industry professionals say.

"2018 was certainly a difficult year for many solar manufacturers, and for developers in China. However, we estimate that global PV installations increased from 99GW in 2017 to approximately 109GW in 2018, as other countries took advantage of the technology's fiercely improved competitiveness," Jenny Chase, head of solar analysis at BloombergNEF, said last week.

BloombergNEF expects global PV installations this year to rise by 17 percent from 2018, with three key markets driving demand—China, the U.S., and India. Those three markets are expected to account for 52 percent of global installations in 2019, BloombergNEF's Pietro Radoia said on Friday. In China, despite the restrictions on new-build solar capacity, developers are still busy and planning to build subsidy-free projects, Radoia noted.

China also plans to only approve new solar and wind power capacity if it matches the country's coal benchmark on price.

In the U.S., the tariffs on imported solar cells and modules created uncertainty in the market in early 2018, resulting in quarterly creations of utility-scale solar dropping in Q3 2018 below 1 GW for the first time since 2015, according to Wood Mackenzie Power & Renewables and the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA).

(Source: oilprice.com)



Khouzestan Steel Company

IN THE NAME OF GOD

EXTENSION OF INTERNATIONAL TENDER

No.: 392583

KHOUZESTAN STEEL COMPANY INTENDS TO PURCHASE
500 MT ACTIVE BASIC THERMAL INSULATING POWDER
WITH THE FOLLOWING SPECIFICATIONS:

CHEMICAL ANALYSIS	SiO ₂	95 %
	MgO	< 0.5 %
	Al ₂ O ₃	< 1.0 %
	Na ₂ O+K ₂ O	2.0 %
	Fe ₂ O ₃	< 0.5 %
C	< 10 %	

PHYSICAL PROPERTIES	Appearance	Powder
	Bulk Density	0.25 gr/cm ³
	Melting Point	1650 °C
	Humidity	< 1.0 %
	Grain Size	< 2.0 mm

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

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

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

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

AND PRESENT THE PAYMENT RECEIPT TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:

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

Note1: BIDDER SHALL SUBMIT WITH TENDER A BID BOND ISSUED BY AN IRANIAN BANK OR BY A EUROPEAN FIRST CLASS BANK, IN THE AMOUNT OF 260,000 Euro FOR 500 MT ACTIVE BASIC THERMAL INSULATING POWDER AND MAY REDUCED IN PROPORTION WITH THE QUANTITY OF BIDDERS OFFER.

Note2: ALL BIDS MUST BE INFORMED US WHICH PARTICIPATE IN OUR TENDER UP TO 17th DEC., 2018. WHEN YOUR COMPANY IS CONFIRMED AND THE TENDER DOCUMENT IS SENT TO YOU, YOU MUST BE DELIVERED TO THE AFORESAID ADDRESS ON OR BEFORE THE CLOSING DATE 03rd FEB., 2019. THE OPENING DATE OF ENVELOPES WILL BE AT 11 AM ON THE 05th FEB., 2019 IN THE BUYER'S CONFERENCE ROOM LOCATED AT THE HEAD OFFICE OF KSC AHVAZ-IRAN AND THE BIDDERS OR THEIR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES CAN ATTEND THE MEETING OF THE TENDER.

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

Tel No. : +98 61 32908115 / 32136159
Fax No. : +98 61 32908115
Mr.M.FARZINEJAD EMAIL : m.farzinejad@ksc.ir OR VISIT: http://WWW.KSC.IR

Bashir's visit to Qatar must not be misunderstood by the Sudanese people



By Thembsa Fakude

Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir visited Qatar on Wednesday. His visit comes during the most tumultuous time of his presidency back in his home country, in which Al-Bashir and his government have been facing sustained protests calling for his resignation.

Al-Bashir has since asked a number of countries for assistance, including Turkey, Russia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). According to Al Jazeera, "the protests started over the rising costs of bread and fuel, but have since widened to call for the overthrow of long-time President Omar al-Bashir".

Al-Bashir came to power after he toppled the government of Sadiq Al-Mahdi in 1989.

His government has been accused of using excessive force in dealing with protests, with scores of injuries and deaths reported since the protests commenced.

During one of Al-Bashir's first public addresses since the protests began, he told crowds that "we admit that we have economic problems but they can't be solved by destruction, looting, and thefts". However, many Sudanese people doubt whether Al-Bashir will address these challenges, particularly given the manner in which the security forces have dealt with the protestors.

The people have accused the government of "calling for calm and promising redress [while] they have clamped down on protests, killing and injuring many in the interim".

Al-Bashir has blamed the deteriorating political economic conditions on outside interventions, including economic sanctions. He has blamed everyone but himself for the current problems in Sudan. He is totally oblivious to his complicity in the national socioeconomic and political challenges facing country.

While the trigger for the protests might have been economic conditions, there have been simmering political concerns in Sudan for years. Among them is Al-Bashir himself who, during his tenure as the president, has overseen rampant levels of corruption, the suppression of basic freedoms and heavy handedness in dealing with political dissent and other forms of civil dissatisfaction. These misjudgments have contributed to the current situation – the Sudanese people are simply "fed up".

Qatar inadvertently entered the picture this week by hosting Al-Bashir in Qatari capital Doha. According to Qatar News Agency (QNA), "[Emir of Qatar Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani] will meet at the Amir Diwan on Wednesday with HE President of the Republic of the Sudan, who will arrive in Doha on Tuesday. HH the Amir [Al-Thani] and the Sudanese President will discuss the fraternal relations between the two countries and ways of promoting them".

Al-Bashir's visit came during a very busy week for Qatar. The country was also facilitating a meeting in Doha between the Taliban and Zalmay Khalizad, the U.S. special representative on Afghanistan reconciliation. President of Pakistan, Imran Khan, was also in Qatar, where he later addressed thousands of Pakistani expats in a separate meeting in Doha. It was certainly a week full of political boons for Qatar – while some of its neighbors are fighting bad publicity, Qatar on the other hand seems to be riding on a high wave.

However, there is a twist to Qatar's week of public relations boons. Many in Sudan may have misinterpreted the visit of Al-Bashir, particularly at this point in their political history. There are already rumors gaining momentum that perhaps "he went to negotiate some sort of asylum in Qatar". Qatar has, over the years, been very active in assisting Sudan in solving its internal political impasses, a case in point being its ongoing efforts to achieve peace and stability in the western region of Darfur.

The other rumor is that Al-Bashir went to Qatar "to seek help", though what sort of help remains speculative. This is where things could turn against Qatar. The people of Sudan might view anyone seen to be assisting Al-Bashir, in any form, negatively. Qatar needs to move fast in communicating its relationship and indeed engagements with Al-Bashir at this stage – these speculations cannot be left to open interpretations. The politics of Sudan will never be the same after these protests, therefore clarifying its engagement with Al-Bashir is key, as Qatar will form part of important building blocks to future political realities in Sudan.

Whatever the reasons for Al-Bashir's visit to Qatar, it can be concluded that the protests will continue. Civil society has been emboldened and the protests have also given birth to a strong global movement among the Sudanese diaspora. This means the voices calling for Al-Bashir's removal from power and being placed under sanctions abroad will intensify. The heavy handedness with which the security forces have dealt with protestors has also strengthened protesters resolve – they are aware of the likelihood of government retribution if their demands fail. This is something Qatar might seriously consider moving forward, for the end is nigh and perhaps a discussion about an alternative must ensue.

(Source: Middle East Monitor)

Mike Pence calls for coup d'etat in Venezuela

By Stephen Lendman

Since Hugo Chavez established Bolivarian social democracy in Venezuela, a vibrant system, a model for other nations, the U.S. plotted to replace it with fascist tyranny.

Democratically elected and reelected Nicolas Maduro carries the torch Chavez lit. Venezuela's electoral system is the world's best, polar opposite America's money-controlled process, war party rule with two extremist right wings.

Venezuela is a prime target because of its world's largest oil reserves. U.S. dark forces want Big Oil controlling them.

They want fascist tyranny replacing Bolivarian social democracy. They're waging longstanding political, economic, financial, and sanctions war on the country – military intervention an option if current tactics fail.

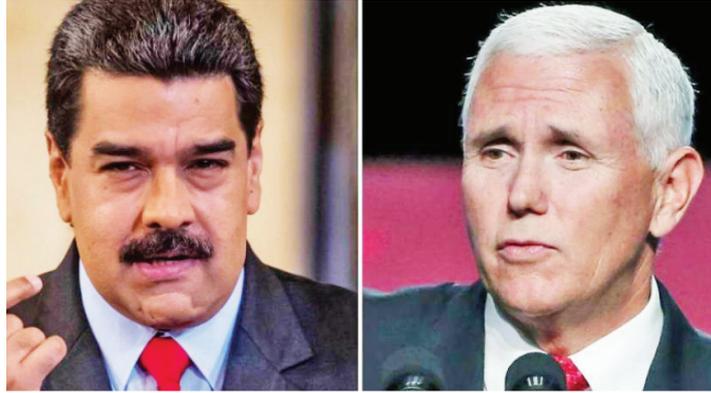
Previous U.S. coup d'etat attempts failed. Another slow-motion one is underway. On Tuesday, Mike Pence encouraged the toppling of democratically reelected Maduro.

He turned truth on its head calling him a "usurper," a "dictator with no legitimate claim to power," falsely adding "(h)e has never won the presidency in a free and fair election, and has maintained his grip of power by imprisoning anyone who dares to oppose him."

All of the above claims are bald-faced Big Lies. Pence "express(ed) unwavering support of the United States" for regime change, backing transitional puppet rule by unelected National Assembly head Juan Guaido.

Pence's Tuesday remarks may signal a plot to remove Maduro forcefully, the American way initiated time and again.

Maduro responded, saying the U.S. vice president hit a 200-year low in bilateral re-



Pence's Tuesday remarks may signal a plot to remove Maduro forcefully, the American way initiated time and again.

lations. He ordered what he called a "total revision" in bilateral relations.

He denounced the U.S. coup d'etat plot. Venezuela's Foreign Ministry accused the Trump regime of aiming to impose "puppet government" in Caracas, adding:

"The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela denounces once again the attempts by the supremacist elite that controls the White House to promote a coup in Venezuela, attacking the Constitution, Democracy and Peace in the country."

"While the Constitutional President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro, urges dialogue with respect between

countries, Bolton, in turn, embraces the script

of the coup-driven adventures, historically inserted in the imperialist agenda."

"No matter how powerful the pressures, threats, and attacks, the Bolivarian Government will never give in to the integral defense of the sovereignty of the Venezuelan people."

"Venezuela will use all its political, moral and constitutional power to defeat imperialism in all its forms."

Maduro denounced U.S. interventionism, saying: "the imperial attack against Venezuela is part of a regional dispute that promotes imperialism for the reconquest of what they see as their backyard."

On Monday, Venezuelan armed forces repelled an attack by a "small group of as-

sailants assigned to the zone commando No. 43 of the Bolivarian National Guard, betraying their oath of allegiance to the Homeland and its institutions," Captain Captain Gerson Soto Martinez, commander of the Macarao police coordination post, announced, adding:

The renegade insurgents "moved on two military vehicles, then broke into the headquarters of the urban security outpost located in the town of Petare, Sucrem, removing a cache of weapons of war and kidnapping under threat of death, two officers and two national guard members of the aforementioned outpost."

Elements involved surrendered when captured, their likely made-in-the-USA plot foiled. According to Venezuelan Communication Minister Jorge Rodriguez, they sought to generate violence during orchestrated January 23 opposition protests.

He accused extremists involved in the plot of following orders from Mike Pence. Following Maduro's overwhelming May reelection, the U.S. vice president turned truth on its head calling the process "a sham, neither free nor fair," adding: "The United States will not sit idly by as Venezuela crumbles... America stands against dictatorship and with the people of Venezuela."

The U.S. notoriously supports many of the world's worst tinpot despots, its longstanding agenda hostile to democratic governance anywhere – rule of, by, and for everyone equitably an anathema notion in Washington.

Pence's call to arms may have signaled the latest diabolical U.S. plot to eliminate Venezuela's social democracy once and for all by whatever tactics the Trump regime may have in mind.

(Source: globalresearch.ca)

The failure of the Arab Spring

By Abdeslam E. M. Maghraoui

More than eight years ago, millions of Arab citizens tuned to Al-Jazeera as it delivered round-the-clock coverage of the "Arab Spring" revolutions. For the first time, it seemed, people were taking charge of their own destiny, with no demagogues in command and no foreign interference.

The images of relentless demonstrations and entrenched autocrats being ejected one by one were gripping, as was the bewildering speed of events. The questions of who would replace them or what kind of political system would be put in place didn't seem pertinent at the moment.

Eight years later, it is tragic to see how little has been gained despite all the efforts and sacrifices for dignity and justice. Except for Tunisia, Arab leaders from Morocco to Bahrain adjusted their seats, rolled back the few concessions they were forced to make and resorted to business as usual.

The failure of the Arab Spring is not just a story about frustrated aspirations or authoritarian survival. The deeply troubling story here is the region's weak support for modern democracy beyond the promise of majority rule and social justice. Only weeks after the overthrow of the dictators, the creative artistic energy, progressive principles and forward-looking cultural ethos that animated young men and women in Tunis, Cairo and Sanaa were already forgotten.

In hindsight, the democratic ideals of the Arab Spring never stood a chance. Apart from a narrow circle of activists, demands for civil rights, individual liberties and fundamental freedoms didn't have a popular base, and none of the major political actors felt compelled to embrace them.

The Arab people's focus on the social benefits and majoritarian component of democracy is not surprising. Much of the region's social ills -- such as poverty, inequality and high unemployment -- have to do with the concentration of power



The instrumentalist use of democracy to solve social problems can easily give way to authoritarian adoration.

and wealth in the hands of tight knit elites whose decisions serve their narrow interests at the expense of the majority.

The most passionate lament of the Arab Spring was nepotism, and the primary demand of protestors was the decoupling of political and economic power. However, such a minimalist understanding of democracy can be a trap. One of its pernicious consequences is what my colleague, Stephen King, and I call "the lure of authoritarianism."

This simply means that the instrumentalist use of democracy to solve social problems can easily give way to authoritarian adoration. It leads to the election of autocrats who promise

meager material goods wrapped in conservative social and cultural clichés. In a context, where there is no free press, independent judiciary or robust civil society, this outcome is devastating for fundamental democratic rights.

Our surveys of the political evolution of five North African nations after the Arab Spring find the lure of authoritarianism to be driven by three main considerations.

The first is the quest for security and stability. The collapse of state authorities and ensuing civil wars in Libya, Syria and Yemen have given wind to the leaders' old claim that only they can preserve law and order in the region.

A second important finding is that the region's economic and demographic dynamics will continue to elevate the satisfaction of immediate social needs over individual freedoms or minority rights.

Finally, the strong grip of conservative social and religious norms on society frustrates any serious attempt to find a progressive path. This problem is most notorious in debates on gender relations, religious issues and freedom of expression.

The Trump administration's policy of embracing Middle East autocrats is obviously not helpful. The president's hard-headed support of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, despite strong evidence connecting him to the assassination of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, emboldens dictators. And Secretary of State Pompeo's tribute this month to Egypt's Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, flattens the hope of democracy advocates.

"Governments that protect (democratic) rights are ultimately more stable, successful and secure" warned President Obama in his 2009 Cairo address. That was less than two years before the popular uprisings shook the Arab world. These words carry greater meaning and urgency today.

(Source: The Hill)

Turkey's new presidential system and a changing West implications for Turkish foreign policy and Turkish-West relations

By Kemal Kiriçci & Ilke Toygur

In July 2018, having triumphed in the presidential elections the previous month, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan began to formally transform Turkey's long-standing parliamentary system into a heavily centralized presidential one. The new system entrenched his one-man authoritarian rule at home and is having profound implications for the making and substance of Turkish foreign policy as well as Turkey's relations with the West. This transition has taken place amid an international environment that is undergoing a significant transformation. Today, the West is far from a shining "city on the hill," attracting Turkey and other countries toward the liberal values it is meant to represent. Populism and nationalism are on the rise on both sides of the Atlantic. President Donald Trump's "America First" policies are eroding the world order characterized by multilateralism, free trade, and advocacy of liberal values.

This paper argues that the confluence of a "new" Turkey and an evolving international order is likely to continue to strain Turkey's relations with its Western allies. Although many of the challenges that crowd the Turkish-Western agenda predate Ankara's formal

introduction of its presidential system, these issues are likely to become more visible and harder to overcome. Yet, it is possible that the amount of authority and power the Turkish president has amassed for himself may also create new opportunities for transactional relationships. Furthermore, structural factors and geopolitical realities are likely to dampen Erdogan's temptation to break away from the trans-Atlantic alliance. This in turn may create some room for pragmatism and the possibility to improve cooperation between Turkey and the West in addressing common challenges. Against this background, anchoring Turkey to the West within a values-based framework no longer looks realistic. So how should the West approach Turkey? Which is better: engagement not based on rules, or rules-based non-engagement?

This paper recommends that moving forward, Turkey's Western allies should bear in mind that:

Geopolitical realities bind Turkey to the West. Trans-Atlantic allies should play the long game and try to find a functioning framework tied to credible conditionality. In the short term, the focus should be on realistic and pragmatic engagement with Turkey while insisting on rules-based cooperation.

One common challenge to Turkey's relations with its historical allies stems from pervasive negative discourse against the West in Turkey, as well as against Islam and Turkey in the West. To revive mutual trust between the two, leaders and policymakers on both sides should make a concerted effort to refrain from employing negative rhetoric toward each other.

For U.S.-Turkish relations, given Trump's disinterest in prioritizing the rule of law and basic rights and freedoms, it will be important that all branches of the government, business, and civil society keep these principles on their agenda. Urgently appointing a U.S. ambassador to Turkey and reconsidering U.S. tariff increases on Turkish aluminum and steel imports could be another confidence-building avenue to explore, especially given that the United States enjoys a persistent trade surplus over Turkey.

Finding a pragmatic solution to the issue of Turkey's purchase of Russian S-400 missiles will be an important step forward. A resolution that stops short of an outright cancellation of the purchase but limits the operationalization of the missiles in a manner that does not jeopardize NATO member countries' immediate security should be considered.

Once Turkey meets the relevant criteria, the



EU should fulfill its pledge of visa free travel for Turkish nationals, as part of a broader public diplomacy effort to reconstitute reciprocal trust. Areas of EU-Turkish cooperation, such as counterterrorism, transportation, migration, and energy, should be further deepened in the spirit of win-win cooperation.

Efforts to modernize the EU-Turkey customs union should be boosted and framed in the spirit of "rules-based cooperation" that benefits both sides.

Last but not least, there is urgent need to make progress on the Cyprus issue, starting with a concerted effort to resolve the irony that Turkey and Turkish Cypriots are currently being punished for having supported the reunification of the island.

(Source: Booking)

Planned anti-Iran 'circus' in Poland a waste of time: analyst

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — A former U.S. Senate candidate described the upcoming Warsaw summit against Iran as a "waste of time", arguing that it is the U.S., Israel and Saudi Arabia's "criminal policies" which are destabilizing the region not the Islamic Republic's.

"It is a waste of time since the 'destabilizing influence' in the Middle East is clearly the result of the criminal policies of the United States and its Israeli and Saudi friends in disregarding international law on a global basis," Mark Dankof, who is also a broadcaster and pastor in San Antonio, Texas, told Tasnim.

He added, "The fact that the Wall Street Journal is reporting that Pompeo is considering the cancellation of his circus in Warsaw is an indication to me that the European nations and Russia are all signaling to Washington that this ridiculous event inspired by Zionist, Neo-Conservative elements in the Trump Administration and the State Department is an absolute non-starter with anyone interested in peace and stability in the region and globally."

Mark Dankof is a broadcaster for The Ugly Truth Podcast. Born in Wiesbaden, Germany, the son of a United States Air Force Colonel, he graduated from Valparaiso University in 1977 and from Chicago's Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 1983. In recent years, he has pursued post-graduate work in systematic theology and theological German at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Formerly the 36th District Chairman of the Republican Party in King County/Seattle and later an elected delegate to Texas State Republican Conventions in 1994 and 1996, he entered the United States Senate race in Delaware in 2000 as the nominated candidate of the Constitution Party against Democratic candidate Thomas Carper and Republican incumbent William Roth.

Following is the full text of the interview:
Q: U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced recently that Washington will jointly host a global summit focused on Iran and the Middle East in Warsaw. Pompeo said the meeting would "focus on Middle East stability and peace, freedom and security here in this region, and that includes an important element of making sure that Iran is not a destabilizing influence." What is your take on the move by the U.S. administration?

A: Pompeo and Bolton have managed to bring American foreign policy to a new level of the tragic-comedic. Your own Tasnim News Agency now reports that the United States may have to cancel the Warsaw summit due to a combination of low attendance and the attendance of junior officials dispatched by key countries who are clearly signaling their disdain at what is clearly a waste of time.

It is a waste of time since the "destabilizing influence" in the Middle East is clearly the result of the criminal policies of the United States and its Israeli and Saudi friends in disregarding international law on a global basis. The illegal use of NATO in Libya



accompanied by the extra-judicial killing of Muammar Gaddafi; the employment of Wahhabic terrorists in Syria to overthrow the Assad regime; the utilization of the MEK/MKO terrorist organization to assassinate Iranian scientists in Tehran, even as the United States maintains high-level public contacts with the MEK/MKO leadership in Albania; the co-optation of the Trump regime by Zionist forces which has facilitated the theft of East Jerusalem, the continued illegal Israeli settlements on the West Bank, and Israel's genocidal war in Gaza; the direct American political, logistical, and military support for Saudi Arabia's genocidal activities in Yemen; and the unilateral cancellation by Trump of the multilateral P5+1 (nuclear deal) with Iran followed by wartime economic sanctions on Iran subsequent to Tehran's absolute compliance with the treaty, are only a few examples which illustrate that no thinking person in the world truly takes anything seriously that Pompeo and Bolton say about peace and stability in the region. When one adds to this the NATO military buildup on Mr. Putin's borders, and the American/EU inspired coup d'etat in Ukraine in February of 2014, the picture of who is a "destabilizing influence" and an aggressor becomes crystal clear.

Q: A group of activists in the United States and other countries have signed a petition calling on European countries to boycott the anti-Iran summit. The online petition urges EU countries to skip Pompeo's "belligerent conference" and "instead host an alternative one with all nations of the region, including Iran." What do you think? Do you believe European nations will resist against Washington's pressure campaign?

A: The fact that the Wall Street Journal is reporting that Pompeo is considering the cancellation of his circus in Warsaw is an indication to me that the European nations and Russia are all signaling to Washington that this ridiculous event inspired by Zionist, Neo-Conservative elements in the Trump

Administration and the State Department is an absolute non-starter with anyone interested in peace and stability in the region and globally. The European countries that signed P5+1 are trying to save the agreement. It is also dawning on them that a war in the Middle East risks a blockage of the Strait of Hormuz that would sink the world economy, and potentially draw the Europeans into a conflict with Putin's Russia that would be both unnecessary and devastating. It hasn't dawned yet on Trump, Pompeo, and Bolton and their Zionist Neo Conservative pals that such a war would lead the United States into a potentially devastating situation economically, as well as a military conflict with Russia and Iran, two nations with strong conventional military capabilities. In the case of Russia, the development of hypersonic missiles leaves the American Navy's aircraft carrier-based task forces vulnerable to instant devastation. China might well dump American debt instruments on the open market which would cause economic havoc on a world-wide basis. And if the American military finds itself in a quagmire in Afghanistan and Iraq, and effectively countered by Putin in Syria, why their masters would consider adding Iran, Russia, and possibly China into the mix indicates that a considerable number of people in the Trump Administration, the State Department, and the American National Security Establishment have taken complete leave of their senses.

There is one other factor Washington is not considering: the possibility of a Left-Right antiwar coalition in the United States domestically that may bring a final revolt against the War Party and its friends in the Israeli Lobby and the military-industrial complex that may be seismic in its implications and outcome. Mr. Trump needs to understand that his own political survival will be impossible if he betrays his America First constituency and commits his countrymen to another worthless foreign intervention

and war that no one can possibly win. There will only be losers and survivors.

Q: Do you think that it would make sense for Europe to participate in the conference as European countries are still a party to the Iran nuclear agreement? Some European officials have reportedly said that they will not join the event.

A: From what I have read in the Wall Street Journal, the Europeans are not about to be dragged into Pompeo's P. T. Barnum Circus in Warsaw. P. T. Barnum was a great circus showman and promoter in a by-gone era in the States. He made the infamous observation many years ago that, "There's a Sucker Born Every Minute." The Europeans and the Russians are not suckers. They won't buy tickets to Pompeo's opening night act, even if Stormy Daniels shows up.

Q: The Trump administration's withdrawal from the long-negotiated agreement and its increased hostility towards Iran have added to the instability of the region and are threatening to unleash another devastating war in the Middle East. Do you believe so?

A: I absolutely believe that the chain of events over time I have already described indicates that a war of aggression on the part of the United States, Israel, and Saudi Arabia is on the horizon. The most recent outrage which suggests this is the recent unlawful arrest and detention of Iranian-American journalist Marzieh Hashemi of Press TV/ Iran in the United States without criminal charges being filed, a process which has ended in Ms. Hashemi's release after 10 days. This is clearly a violation of the First and Fourth Amendments of the United States Constitution's Bill of Rights, and a less than veiled threat to antiwar, anti-Zionist journalists on both the American Left and the American Alt-Right issued by Mr. Pompeo and Mr. Bolton to these activists, broadcasters, and print journalists, that their work exposing the criminal plans of these malefactors is going to be shut down over time. The Zionist minions working through the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith (ADL), the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), and both American and Israeli intelligence are having tremendous success with censorship of Facebook, Google, YouTube, Twitter, and the like.

The latest is the Microsoft employment of the NewsGuard software in all of their mobile phones, and in research and academic centers and libraries in the United States, which would seek to discredit and demonize sources of news information that the Pompeos, the Boltons, and the Netanyahu of the world cannot tolerate. Eventually, American broadcasters and journalists using non-MSM means of distributing their stories and analysis will be subjected to what befell Ms. Hashemi recently. Thomas Jefferson understood this: The government that is the aggressor abroad becomes the oppressor at home. It's happening before our very eyes.

Trump is afraid of the Sanders name



1 → Sanders now considers himself the United States' potential president! Some analysts in the United States note that Sanders' opposition to Donald Trump and the White House policies have paved the way for his re-appearance in the upcoming presidential election. Polls recently conducted in the United States indicate Sanders' proper position among Democratic voters. Accordingly, Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders have both a good position among Democrat supporters and they both have a good chance to reach the final round of the 2020 presidential elections.

If Sanders can defeat Joe Biden in Democrat elections, he will have a great chance to defeat Trump. The issue that the president of the United States looks very worried about! Trump clearly knows that in the previous presidential election many Sanders' votes came to the benefit of the Trump. In other words, many Sanders fans did not want to vote for Hillary Clinton. Undoubtedly, if the Sanders reaches the final competition with Trump in 2020, the equation will generally be different....

MBS's leap towards realization of a nuclear dream



1 → Pakistan is also referred to as another country that has helped Saudi Arabia. It is said that China has already supported Pakistan with regard to a ballistic missile manufacturing plant, and now Islamabad has enough expertise and knowledge to build one. It is important to note that Saudi missile purchases, and in particular the availability of missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads, show Saudi intentions.

■ **Nuclear ambitions on the agenda**
The Saudi move to manufacture ballistic missiles is directly related to the nuclear ambitions of its officials, and in particular Muhammad bin Salman. Saudi Arabia does not possess nuclear weapons, so any missiles produced at any factory are likely to a prelude to the acquisition of nuclear weapons. The International Center for Peace Studies (IPSC), with its publication of an article on this subject, emphasizes that the Saudi missile program is linked to Mohammed bin Salman's nuclear ambitions.

Sanctions 'blessing in disguise' for Iran to unlock potentials

1 → The ministry seems to have geared up for making the most out of domestic players in other parts of the industry.

The Research Institute of Petroleum Industry (RIPI) and has signed several deals with local firms to develop catalysts used in the petrochemical sector to cut the needs from foreign markets.

■ **Keeping market share**
Close to 100 days have passed since the reimposition of the sanctions on the energy sector, with Iran's oil exports still continuing albeit at lower levels – Not the "zero" that many expected!

The U.S. had to let some of Iran's biggest customers continue importing its crude right after the sanctions came into effect in November. Now the administration is leaving itself wiggly room to leave the door open.

Earlier in January, the U.S. administration's special representative for Iran, Brian Hook, refused to say with certainty whether the White House will stop extending the waivers as they now forgoing Iranian oil and dealing with fluctuating prices is not that easy for the market. Not relying only on the waivers, Tehran is seeking to secure alternative paths to keep pouring its oil into customers' barrels. Iran is now diversifying channels to sell crude. Plans under consideration to circumvent the sanctions include an initiative to offer barrels of crude through a domestic energy exchange, or "bourse", and sell them in world markets through the private industry.

The Oil Ministry tried selling crude in the commodity market in 2014, offering 100,000 barrels of oil per day at Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX). The oil offered at the time was reportedly meant for consumption at home, but plans call



for a mechanism that would allow future oil purchases via IRENEX to be made available directly from the southern terminals for export.

The government has also provided the grounds for carrying out transactions in both rial and the dollar, offering more flexibility in trade.

In the first round of crude sales in October 2018, one million barrels were offered in the market but only 280,000 barrels were sold. In the second round in November, sales increased to 700,000 barrels. The third round this week did not go as planned. The third round, in late January, came with some change in procedures. It involved settling payments entirely in rials as well as foreign currencies. NIOC has announced the fourth round will be launched in mid-February with modifications

in a bid to sweeten the trading terms.

Just like the previous round of sanctions, the hurdles have made the government more creative by testing different ways to get what it wants.

For almost 40 years, Iranians have been living under tough economic sanctions by the U.S. Triggered by Jimmy Carter in 1979, the sanctions have lingered in different forms till now under Trump's administration.

These four-decade-long sanctions have made the country more creative to generate solutions to maintain trade and the economy. The 'Resistance Economy' proposed by Leader of Islamic Revolution could be deemed as the biggest solution which entails relying on own potentials and reaching self-sufficiency in different fields.

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* Qualitative evaluation of tenders:

Method	Criteria
	1- Based on minimum scoring made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms. (60 score) 2- Tenderers which has a four active current contract with NIDC, will not be allowed to participate in other tenders. 3- Tenderers which have a two active current contract with same subject (exactly same subject) with NIDC, will not be allowed to participate in other tenders.

* Purchasing & Submitting

Tender Document Distribution by Company	Distribution Place
	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 990,000 Iranian Rials under account number 400114006376636 in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.
Documents Receiving Method	Closing date
	Days after the last time of Purchasing 14
	Address
	Hall No. 107, 1-floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569

* Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	Type of guarantee
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Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

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Half of cancers preventable, half treatable: health official

HEALTH TEHRAN — While nearly 56,000 people die of cancer per annum half of all cancers are preventable and the other half are treatable, deputy health minister Reza Malekzadeh has said.

Malekzadeh made the remarks on Sunday over the inauguration of 75 early cancer detection centers nationwide on the occasion of the national cancer week, IRNA news agency reported.

In 2017 some 380,000 deaths occurred in Iran and 16 percent of them were caused by cancers, he said, adding that, cancer is the second leading cause of death in Iran.

Sven most common cancers in Iran include breast, gastric, colon, lung, bladder, prostate, and leukemia, he explained.

The main cause of cancers are unhealthy lifestyle habits such as poor diet, physical inactivity, obesity and overweight, smoking, consuming alcohol, as well as infections, jobs that increase cancer risk and hormonal imbalances, he highlighted.

For one gastric and esophageal cancer

are prevalent in northern Iran due to hookah smoking, poor oral and dental hygiene, drinking hot tea, smoking tobacco and obesity, he added.

Malekzadeh went on to say that one of the most significant measures taken to fight cancers in Iran is carrying out studies on most common cancers in Iran and so far some 54 cancer research projects are financially supported.

As 30-50 percent of cancers are preventable knowing the risk factors can help in avoiding developing them, he suggested.

Good oral and dental hygiene, eating enough vegetables and fresh fruits and having clean drinking water, physical activity, not smoking tobacco and avoid drinking alcohols can help preventing cancers, he added.

Some 62 percent of those who develop cancers are treated and should be careful about their diet and physical activities, Malekzadeh concluded.

Deputy health minister Alireza Raeisi, for his part, explained that breast cancer

constitute 32 percent of all cancers in the country while prostate cancer make up 16 percent of cancer nationwide.

Moreover, Raeisi noted, skin cancer as well as gastric and colon cancers each make up 14 and 13 percent of cancers respectively.

In the Iranian calendar year 1394 (March 2015 to March 2016) some 108,798 new cases of cancer were diagnosed with 54 percent of them developed in men, he explained.

Gastric cancer, skin cancer, prostate cancer, colon cancer, and bladder cancer are the most prevalent cancers among Iranian men respectively, he added.

Raeisi went on to say that breast cancer, colon cancer, skin cancer, gastric cancer and thyroid cancer are also the most widespread cancers among Iranian women.

Commenting on cancer registry in Iran the deputy health minister said that collection, storage, and management of data on persons with cancer is going well in Iran which would make it easier for planning for the disease on national level.



Data from cancer registries tells how many people are diagnosed with cancer, what treatments they have, how long they live, and whether this is getting better or worse. This information can then be used to help plan cancer services and identify where further progress is needed in order to improve the lives of all people affected by cancer.

Antibiotic-resistant infections a 'global health emergency'

Drug-resistant disease should be regarded as a "global health emergency", the health secretary is to say, as he unveils a plan to cut antibiotic-resistant infections in UK patients by 10 per cent by 2025.

The phenomenon is as great a threat to humanity as war and climate change, Matt Hancock will tell the World Economic Forum in Davos, warning that common surgical procedures including hip operations and caesarean sections could become "too risky to carry out" if super-bacteria is left unchecked.

"What would go through your mind if your child cut their finger and you knew there was no antibiotic left that could treat an infection? This was the human condition until almost a century ago. I don't want it to be the future for my children," he will say.

Under the plan the NHS and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence will attempt to devise a new way of paying drug companies based on value to the health service, rather than volume of antibiotics supplied, within six months, the government said. Extra funding will also be given to smaller firms to develop new treatments particularly ones targeted at resistant strains that must be treated urgently.

The government's own data shows that while the amount of antibiotics used in the UK has dropped 7 per cent since 2014 — and sales for use in food-producing animals by 40 per cent — the number of drug-resistant bloodstream infections rocketed by 35 per cent between 2013 and 2017.

Bloodstream infections affect the whole body, as opposed to ones that affect only the sinuses or throat, for example. Among Mr Hancock's new targets is a pledge to slash the incidence of these infections by half by 2024, the Department of Health confirmed to The Independent. The government will also announce details of 14 research projects awarded money by a global fund to combat drug-resistant infections. And new targets to cut antibiotics use in animals will be brought in by 2021, following a pledge to reduce usage by one-quarter between 2016 and 2020, it said.

Mr Hancock's strategy will include "new mechanisms to harness real-time patient data, to help clinicians understand when to use and preserve antibiotics in their treatment and help inform the development of new interventions", a government statement said.

The statement also noted that more than one-fifth of antibiotic prescriptions in primary care are "inappropriate", adding that resistant infections cost the NHS an estimated £88m a year. Mr Hancock wants to reduce human antibiotic use by 15 per cent.

Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard, chair of the Royal College of GPs, said: "This is a society-wide issue and not something GPs can be held responsible for tackling on their own."

"We need to get to a stage where antibiotics are not seen by patients as a 'catch all' for every illness, but rather as a serious drug option, usually reserved for when all other treatment options have either failed or been deemed inappropriate."

Mr Hancock's "20-year vision" is that antimicrobial resistance is under control by 2040.

(Source: The Independent)

Even low-level activity may help reduce dementia risk

Recent research suggests that doing even low-intensity physical activity allows older people to reduce their risk of dementia.

Several factors can affect a person's chance of developing dementia.

Some of the factors, such as age and genetics, are unavoidable. Others, such as smoking and other unhealthy behaviors, are lifestyle choices that a person can change.

Regularly exercising and eating a healthful diet may prevent the onset of symptoms, say the Alzheimer's Association.

However, a new study that appears in the journal Neurology has revealed that any kind of physical activity — including basic tasks such as doing housework — may protect a person's brain when they have already reached old age.

The researchers — from Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, IL — studied 454 older adults. Of these, 191 had a diagnosis of dementia. Every participant agreed to donate their brain for medical research purposes when they died.

Every year for 2 decades, each person underwent a full physical examination, along with a test, to determine their thinking and memory skills.

The scientists gave all the volunteers an activity-monitoring device called an accelerometer around 2 years before

each of them died. They wore it on the wrist, and it tracked any activity at all times — be it vigorous physical exercise or simply walking around the house.

Developing dementia

The scientists used 7 days' worth of these data to calculate an average daily activity score for each person. The average of the entire group of people was 160,000 counts per day.

However, those who had dementia averaged a daily count of 130,000, while those without the condition had a higher average count of 180,000.

This led the researchers to conclude that more daily movement is linked to better memory and thinking abilities. Higher levels of motor skills were also linked with better abilities in these areas. Also, more specifically, people were 31 percent less likely to develop dementia for every standard deviation of increase in physical activity. The same deviation increase in motor skills equated to a person being 55 percent less likely to develop dementia.

After death, specialists examined each participant's brain for lesions and biomarkers of dementia and Alzheimer's disease. The researchers adjusted results based on the severity of any brain lesions.

Despite that, the links between physical activity and de-

mentia and motor skills and dementia remained. Alzheimer's disease biomarkers appeared to have no effect on the results.

Further research

Lead study author Dr. Aron S. Buchman, an associate professor at Rush University Medical Center's Department of Neurological Sciences, concludes that their study "found that a more active lifestyle may have a protective effect on the brain. But," he goes on, "it is important to note that our study does not show cause and effect."

He adds, "It may also be possible that as people lose memory and thinking skills, they reduce their physical activity. More studies are needed to determine if moving more is truly beneficial to the brain."

It is also unclear how active the participants were over the course of their entire lives, and whether this played a part in their brain health. Similarly, the researchers cannot say whether a particular form of exercise is better for a person's brain than another.

The opportunity to physically study the brains of each participant was, however, a strength of the study. However, as Dr. Buchman explains, further research into the topic is necessary before experts can truly be sure.

(Source: Medical News Today)

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nice cases ready to move in.

Iranian fintechs reforming financial system: official

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The financial technology (fintech) startups launched during the past two years have paved the way for reforming the country's financial system, the head of management development department of the vice presidency for science and technology, said on Saturday.

The banking system did not support innovative business at first, however, now there is a good interaction between them, Alireza Daliri told IRIB.

There are 25 to 30 fintechs in Iran, which have contributed to fast financial services during the past two years, he explained.

Financial startups grow more than two times during



previous year in Iran, which is multiplied in comparison to non-financial ones, he said.

"We do our best to improve startups in financial field and provide blockchain for financial services in different parts of the country," he explained.

He expressed his hope that startups transform the traditional banking system in Iran in near future.

In May 2018, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi announced that as per an approval by the cabinet of ministers, the central bank is obliged to end PSP (Payment Service Provider) monopoly and create a competitive space for fintech market.

Up to now, the internet finance in Iran was PSP-based, which offers shops online services for accepting electronic payments by a variety of payment methods including credit card and bank-based payments. Fintech is a portmanteau of financial technology that describes an emerging financial services sector in the 21st century.

Originally, the term applies to technology applied to the back-end of established consumer and trade financial institutions. Since the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the term has expanded to include any technological innovation in the financial sector, including innovations in financial literacy and education, retail banking, investment and even crypto-currencies like bitcoin.

First Iranian accelerator for IVD launched

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The lack of a proper identification of real market demand and customer needs and the lack of financial and investment infrastructures are challenges startups active in IVDs are facing in Iran.



The accelerator eyes to be the most productive IVD platforms in the Middle East in five years, the managing director of the knowledge-based company Behrouz Tehrani told Mehr.

The accelerators attract Iranian expat experts from different countries and improve commercialization and production design through consultation, he explained.

Fidget spinners could be used for cheap, off-the-grid blood testing

When it comes to frivolous gadgets, fidget spinners would seem to be one of the most... well, frivolous. Recently, however, scientists from National Taiwan University discovered that the devices could be used for blood sample analysis in impoverished regions.

Fidget spinners generally consists of three weighted lobes, with a bearing in the middle. To burn off nervous energy, users hold them by the bearing, and spin the lobes with their fingers.

Another thing that spins is a centrifuge, which utilizes centrifugal force to separate plasma from blood cells when testing blood samples — plasma contains the proteins, viruses and other substances which indicate the presence of disease. Centrifuges can be costly, though, and require a power source. These factors limit their use in developing countries or remote locations.

With that in mind, Chien-Fu Chen, Chien-Cheng Chang and colleagues set out to see if a fidget spinner could serve the same purpose. In order to do so, they placed human blood samples in three small tubes, sealed the ends of those tubes, then taped them to each of the three lobes of a spinner.

It was found that by flicking the device with a finger and letting it spin three to five times, it was possible to separate around 30 percent of the plasma with 99 percent purity. The whole process took just four to seven minutes. The separated plasma was subsequently subjected to a paper-based test, in which HIV-1 protein that had been added to the blood was successfully detected.

A paper on the research was recently published in the journal Analytical Chemistry.

(Source: newatlas.com)

Starting a startup, a way for success in your own business

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — Founding a startup is a ray of hope for entrepreneurs to have their own businesses and to earn money. However, being successful in startup ecosystem has some secrets which enterprises can share with those who want to start their work.

The Sharif University of Technology held IT Weekend 5, which was held on January 24 to provide an opportunity for startup founders and entrepreneurs to gather and share their experience and ideas with each other.

Creating and nurturing a strong relationship with customers and innovation in product and service are keys of success for startups, the branding managing director of an Iranian telecommunications company Amir Pasha said during the event, IRNA reported on Friday.

Most Iranian startups are copies of successful global startups, however, for having a prosperous business, innovation is very important factor, he said.

"You should provide facilities and services for your costumers in order to have them," he said.

He said that most of times brands are not important for costumers and many of them do not pay attention to the brands for buying or using a service.

"You should pay attention to a customer who buys from you even one time during the year. You should find your place in everyday life of people. People love football, news, animal or tasty foods. If you can find a place there, you would be successful," he said.

Pasha also discussed advertising in social media, which may not be very effective most of times due to its vast nature.

The managing director of an Iranian



Most Iranian startups are copies of successful global startups, however creating and nurturing a strong relationship with customers and innovation in product and service are keys of success for startups

company Mohammad Naeini believed that self-knowledge is a very important factor for choosing your way as an entrepreneur.

In this way, you can do a job you really love and is in line with your character, and you will be successful, he said.

During the conference, the founder of an IT website Mehdi Yousefnejad explained about his experiences during his work.

Being successful is not an easy task and startup is not limited to developing an application, he said.

He named internet blockage and tax as some of the main challenges startups are facing.

Iran, a great market for startups According to reports and statistics, Iran is considered as a great market for startups

and online services.

In September 2018, the head of innovation department of science and technology vice presidency Hessem Zand-Hessami announced that there are about 4,000 startups operating in Iran which provide IT-based services to the public.

The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) announced in mid-September 2018 that over 93,700 job opportunities were created in the field of smart transportation system, e-commerce and mobile applications in Iran during the previous Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 2017- March 2018).

According to another report, which was released by the E-Commerce Development Center of Iran in September 2018, people in Iran spent 1,110 trillion rials (about \$26.5 billion) on online shopping during the previous Iranian calendar year 1396 (ended on March 20, 2018).

A total of 1,600 billion rials (about \$38 million) was spent in online transactions last year, equaling 11 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), digiata website announced.

According to the report, in the previous calendar year 72 percent of e-commerce businesses were run with less than five persons and only six percent of them were companies with more than 30 staff.

Some 43 percent individuals who are active in the field of e-commerce are 30 to 40 years old, and 36 percent between 20 to 30 years old. Meanwhile, only nine percent of e-commerce managers are women.

The center announced that about 46 percent of e-commerce transactions and 77 percent of e-commerce clients were in the capital city, Tehran.

Labor ministry provides special insurance services for startups



TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare Minister Mohammad Shariatmadari has said the ministry provides special insurance services for startups and innovative firms.

The ministry is providing infrastructure for special insurance services for those who are active in startups and knowledge-based companies, Shariatmadari told IRNA on Sunday.

The ministry is responsible for solving problems and challenges between cooperatives, traditional jobs and startups, he explained.

He said that the lack of information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure will lead to problems between traditional and online taxi services or the employment offices affiliated to labor ministry and some job and employment websites.

The ministry aims to develop infrastructures for knowledge-based fields in order to make appropriate policies for social problems, he said.

There are only 250 startups and knowledge-based cooperatives, which is a very small number out of the total number of 90,000 cooperatives in Iran, he said.

'Iranian knowledge-based firms pave way for exports'



TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The business-to-business (B2B) meetings of Iranian knowledge-based firms with their international counterparts have paved the way for exports and partnership between countries, the head of management development department of the vice presidency for science and technology has said.

The vice presidency for science and technology dispatched knowledge-based companies to Georgia, Turkey, South Africa and Kyrgyzstan for attending B2B meetings, Mehr quoted Alireza

Daliri as saying on Sunday.

"We have some brokers in other countries that provide facilities for Iranian knowledge-based companies to attend exhibitions and events," he added.

These meetings lead to facilitation of exports and cooperation between countries and lead to agreements, which improve relation between nations, he explained.

The B2B meetings also improve relationship between knowledge-based firms and banks and chamber of commerce, he concluded.

Modern technology is changing the way our brains work, says neuroscientist

Human identity, the idea that defines each and every one of us, could be facing an unprecedented crisis.

It is a crisis that would threaten long-held notions of who we are, what we do and how we behave.

It goes right to the heart - or the head - of us all. This crisis could reshape how we interact with each other, alter what makes us happy, and modify our capacity for reaching our full potential as individuals.

And it's caused by one simple fact: the human brain, that most sensitive of organs, is under threat from the modern world.

Unless we wake up to the damage that the gadget-filled, pharmaceutically-enhanced 21st century is doing to our brains, we could be sleepwalking towards a future in which neuro-chip technology blurs the line between living and non-living machines, and between our bodies and the outside world.

It would be a world where such devices could enhance our muscle power, or our senses, beyond the norm, and where we all take a daily cocktail of drugs to control our moods and performance.

Already, an electronic chip is being developed that could allow a paralyzed patient to move a robotic limb just by thinking about it. As for drug manipulated moods, they're already with us - although so far only to a medically prescribed extent.

Increasing numbers of people already take Prozac for depression, Paxil as an antidote for shyness, and give Ritalin to children to improve their concentration. But what if there were still more pills to enhance or "correct" a range of other specific mental functions?

What would such aspirations to be "perfect" or "better" do to our notions of identity, and what would it do to those who could not get their hands on the pills? Would some finally have become more equal than others, as George Orwell always feared?

Of course, there are benefits from technical progress - but there are great dangers as well, and I believe that we are seeing some of those today.

But one vital fact I have learnt is that the brain is not the unchanging organ that we might imagine. It not only goes on developing, changing and, in some tragic cases, eventually deteriorating with age, it is also substantially shaped by what we do to it and by the experience of daily life. When I say "shaped", I'm not talking figuratively or metaphorically; I'm talking literally. At a microcellular level, the infinitely complex network of nerve cells that make up the constituent parts of the brain actually change in response to certain experiences and stimuli.

The brain, in other words, is malleable - not just in early childhood but right up to early adulthood, and, in certain instances, beyond. The surrounding environment has a huge impact both on the way our brains develop and how that brain is transformed into a unique human mind.

Of course, there's nothing new about that: human brains have been changing, adapting and developing in response to outside stimuli for centuries.

What prompted me to write my book is that the pace of change in the outside environment and in the development of new technologies has increased dramatically. This will affect our brains over the next 100 years in ways we might never have imagined.

Our brains are under the influence of an ever-expanding world of new technology: multichannel television, video games, MP3 players, the internet, wireless networks, Bluetooth links - the list goes on and on.

But our modern brains are also having to adapt to other 21st century intrusions, some of which, such as prescribed drugs like Ritalin and Prozac, are supposed to be of benefit, and some of which, such as widely available illegal drugs like cannabis and heroin, are not.

Electronic devices and pharmaceutical drugs all have an impact on the micro-cellular structure and complex biochemistry of our brains. And that, in turn, affects our personality, our behavior and our characteristics. In short, the modern world could well be altering our human identity.

Three hundred years ago, our notions of human identity were vastly simpler: we were defined by the family we

were born into and our position within that family. Social advancement was high on impossible and the concept of "individuality" took a back seat.

That only arrived with the Industrial Revolution, which for the first time offered rewards for initiative, ingenuity and ambition. Suddenly, people had their own life stories - ones which could be shaped by their own thoughts and actions. For the first time, individuals had a real sense of self.

But with our brains now under such widespread attack from the modern world, there's a danger that that cherished sense of self could be diminished or even lost.

Anyone who doubts the malleability of the adult brain should consider a startling piece of research conducted at Harvard Medical School. There, a group of adult volunteers, none of whom could previously play the piano, were split into three groups.

The first group were taken into a room with a piano and given intensive piano practice for five days. The second group were taken into an identical room with an identical piano - but had nothing to do with the instrument at all.

And the third group were taken into an identical room with an identical piano and were then told that for the next five days they had to just imagine they were practicing piano exercises.

The resultant brain scans were extraordinary. Not surprisingly, the brains of those who simply sat in the same room as the piano hadn't changed at all.

Equally unsurprising was the fact that those who had performed the piano exercises saw marked structural changes in the area of the brain associated with finger movement.

But what was truly astonishing was that the group who had merely imagined doing the piano exercises saw changes in brain structure that were almost as pronounced as those that had actually had lessons. "The power of imagination" is not a metaphor, it seems; it's real, and has a physical basis in your brain.

(Source: dailymail.co.uk)

How compressed-air storage could give renewable energy a boost

Decarbonizing the world's electricity grids won't be an easy task, but it is a necessary one if we're going to mitigate some of the worst effects of climate change.

Since wind and solar power are intermittent, part of decarbonizing the grid will involve storing renewable energy for use when the Sun isn't shining and the wind isn't blowing.

While day-to-day storage will cover the gaps when the wind slacks or the sun sets, on grids with more than 80 percent renewable energy you're also going to want inter-seasonal storage.

This is because sun and wind are seasonal, and energy demand is also seasonal—people use a lot more energy in the winter than they do in the spring, because it's darker and colder outside.

Potential step

Researchers from the University of Edinburgh and the University of Strathclyde think that one potential step toward seasonal storage should involve identifying large underground saline aquifers where energy could be stored as compressed air. Saline aquifers are usually found underwater; the compressed air will displace some of the water, which can be discarded, as it's not potable.

Massive reservoirs of compressed air could handle the inter-seasonal gaps that high-renewable grids might struggle with. The researchers suggest a system where excess



renewable energy is used to compress air and pump it down into a saline aquifer over the course of several months. Then, when it's needed in the winter, the air is brought back up and expanded, powering a turbine that drives electricity back onto the grid.

The cycle is comparable to how many regions store and use natural gas. That is, excess natural gas is pumped into underground storage caverns where it sits for a few months. In the winter, when gas is needed to heat homes, those stores are drawn down.

Massive reservoirs of compressed air could handle the inter-seasonal gaps that high-renewable grids might struggle with. The researchers suggest a system where excess renewable energy is used to compress air and pump it down into a saline aquifer over the course of several months.

The difference here is that the energy being stored isn't chemical.

Geological mapping

The researchers used existing geological mapping that was conducted around the United Kingdom to find potential storage areas for carbon dioxide (CO₂), but their method for vetting geological repositories for compressed air storage could be applied to underwater geographies around the world.

They found that at least 77 to 96 terawatt-hours (TWh) of electricity could be stored in aquifers off the British coastline. (That is roughly 160 percent of the UK's electricity consumption in January and February 2017, so combined with other forms of electricity, it would be more than enough for a typical winter.)

For comparison, Lazard's 2018 Levelized Cost of Storage report (PDF) found that the high-end cost of lithium-ion batteries for wholesale energy storage was about \$298/MWh, or about \$0.30/kWh. Of course, most utility-grade lithium-ion batteries on the world's grids today are geared toward short-duration frequency response rather than long-duration applications like compressed-air energy storage schemes. Somewhat higher-cost, long-term energy storage schemes might be viable if governments start mandating more and more renewable energy on the grid.

(Source: arstechnica.com)

NASA sends new commands to Mars Opportunity rover

NASA's beloved Mars rover Opportunity has been silent for months after getting swept up in an enormous dust storm on the Red Planet last summer, and NASA engineers have been pinging the rover to answer to no avail. Now, NASA says it will send new commands to the resilient explorer in hopes of making contact, even as the possibility that it will respond becomes increasingly uncertain.

These new efforts to contact the 15-year-old rover will go on for several weeks and will address three possibilities, according to an update from the space agency, namely that Opportunity is experiencing problems with its radios or internal clock. NASA called the circumstances that would have resulted in the specific problems it's addressing "unlikely," but Opportunity's team hasn't lost hope yet.

"We have and will continue to use multiple techniques in our attempts to contact the rover," John Callas, project manager for Opportunity at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), said in a statement. "These new command strategies are in addition to the 'sweep and beep' commands we have been transmitting up to the rover since September."

Dust-clearing season

Opportunity went quiet in June following a massive Martian dust storm — the strongest ever observed on the planet — and NASA engineers believed that the solar-powered rover went into hibernation mode to save what power it had left. They hoped that strong winds during a subsequent



"dust-clearing season" would help clear its solar panels and allow it to power back up, but no luck thus far.

Now, as this season draws to a close, engineers are working against the clock. According to NASA, nearing low temperatures could pose new threats to Opportunity's systems

and batteries if the rover isn't able to boot up before then.

Steven Squyres, principal investigator for Opportunity's mission, told the New York Times that he still has hope. However, he added: "This could be the end. Under the assumption that this is the end, it feels good. I mean that."

Mars exploration

This month, Opportunity celebrated the 15th anniversary of its landing on the Red Planet as part of NASA's Mars Exploration Rover mission.

Together with its twin rover Spirit, which touched down on Mars weeks before it in 2004, Opportunity embarked on what was expected to be a 90-day mission to search for signs of water on the planet. Both rovers far outlasted their expected mission lifetimes. While Spirit's run on Mars effectively ended in 2011, Opportunity persisted and continued to make invaluable scientific discoveries.

"Fifteen years on the surface of Mars is testament not only to a magnificent machine of exploration but the dedicated and talented team behind it that has allowed us to expand our discovery space of the Red Planet," Callas said in a statement earlier this week. "However, this anniversary cannot help but be a little bittersweet as at present we don't know the rover's status. We are doing everything in our power to communicate with Opportunity, but as time goes on, the probability of a successful contact with the rover continues to diminish." (Source: gizmodo.com)

Could evolution ever bring back the dinosaurs?

Did you watch the 1993 movie blockbuster "Jurassic Park" and wonder, "Could this happen for real? Could the dinosaurs ever come back?" The idea that these mighty creatures could wander our Earth again someday is for most humans both fascinating and terrifying in equal measure.

Even real-life scientists are intrigued as to whether the evolutionary process could bring us back to the time of the Tyrannosaurs. But Susie Maidment, a vertebrate paleontologist at London's Natural History Museum, quickly dismissed the notion that a DNA-filled mosquito preserved in amber for millions of years — as in "Jurassic Park" — could ever help recreate an extinct dinosaur.

"We do have mosquitoes and biting flies from the time of the dinosaurs, and they do preserve in amber," Maidment said in a statement. "But when amber preserves things, it tends to preserve the husk, not the soft

tissues. So, you don't get blood preserved inside mosquitoes in amber.

In dinosaur fossils

Researchers have found blood vessels and collagen in dinosaur fossils, but these components don't have actual dinosaur DNA in them.

Unlike collagen or other robust proteins, DNA is very fragile, and sensitive to the effects of sunlight and water. The oldest DNA in the fossil record is around 1 million years old, and the dinosaurs died out about 66 million years ago.

Maidment added: "Although we have what appears to be blood from mosquitoes up to 50 million years old, we haven't found DNA, and in order to reconstruct something, we need DNA."

Jamal Nasir, a geneticist at the University of Northampton in the United Kingdom, said he wouldn't rule out the idea of dinosaurs

evolving back from the dead. In his opinion, evolution isn't fixed or planned. In other words, anything could happen. "Evolution is largely stochastic [randomly determined], and evolution doesn't necessarily have to go in a forward direction; it could have multiple directions. I would argue that going back to dinosaurs is more likely to happen in reverse, because the building blocks are already there."

Of course, Nasir pointed out, the right conditions would have to exist for dinosaurs to reappear. "Clearly, one could imagine viral pandemics that might disrupt our genomes, our physiology and behavior beyond our control," he told Live Science. This, in turn, could create the right conditions for evolution to take a path toward reinventing the ancient reptiles.

In any particular sense

However, while evolution might not be directional in any particular sense, something

we do know is that we don't see the same animal evolving again, Maidment countered. "We can see an animal that is closely related occupying a similar ecological niche — for example, ichthyosaurs were marine reptiles with long pointy snouts and dolphin-like body shapes and tails," she told Live Science.

Besides, dinosaurs never quite died out in the first place, Maidment said. Birds evolved from meat-eating dinosaurs, and thus in strict biological definition, everything that evolved from this common ancestor is a dinosaur, sharing the same anatomical characteristics, she said.

"Dinosaurs are still with us," Maidment said. "They say dinosaurs went extinct, but only the non-avian dinosaurs went extinct. Birds are dinosaurs, and birds are still evolving, so we will certainly see new species of birds evolving — and those will be new species of dinosaur." (Source: livescience.com)

Why biodiversity among marine mammals, birds rises in cold, temperate waters

A new study explores a curious exception to this trend, examining why biodiversity rises in cold, temperate waters among warm-blooded marine predators such as whales, seals and penguins.

The research — published on Jan. 25 in the journal Science — presents a possible explanation for this unusual pattern.

"We show with data and theory that cold waters slow fishes' and sharks' metabolism, causing sluggish movement and giving mammals and birds important hunting and competitive advantages," says John Grady, a postdoctoral research associate at the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center and former postdoctoral researcher at Michigan State University, who led the study. "Sharks are easier to avoid and fish are easier to catch when the water is cold."

Where preys are slow

"As we conclude in the paper, 'Overall, warm-bodied predators are favored where preys are slow, stupid and cold,'" says co-author Adam Wilson, Ph.D., a biogeographer at the University of Buffalo. Wilson is an assistant professor in the Department of Geography in the UB College of Arts and Sciences.

"We are living through an era of rapid environmental change and biodiversity loss," Wilson adds. "Understanding the mechanisms that led to the current spatial distribution of



biodiversity is critical to conserving it for future generations."

The study was an international collaboration, with contributors from Michigan State University, Bryn Mawr College, the University of Arizona, the University of New Mexico, the University of Freiburg in Germany, Dalhousie University in Canada, the UN Environment Program World Conservation Monitoring Centre in the United Kingdom, UB, the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center, and Washington University in St. Louis.

As part of the study, Wilson co-developed a workflow that the team used to quantify and summarize the geographic

distribution of almost 1,000 species of sharks, fish, reptiles, mammals and birds.

Warm-blooded marine predators

"We used these data to show how warm-blooded marine predators such as seals, whales and penguins do not follow the typical geographic pattern of increasing biodiversity near the tropics. Our analysis showed that the diversity of these predators systematically increases toward the poles relative to cold-blooded competitors such as large sharks and fish," Wilson says. "This curious fact led to the development of the theory presented in the paper, which explains the patterns of biodiversity by taking into account the relative speed at which predators pursue their prey in different water temperatures."

Scientists found evidence to support this hypothesis when they examined consumption patterns among warm-blooded seals and active-hunting cetaceans (including dolphins, porpoises, beluga and narwhal).

"Analyzing global patterns of marine mammal abundance and consumption, we find seals and dolphins collectively consume approximately 80 times more of the available food near the polar seas than the warm equator," Grady says.

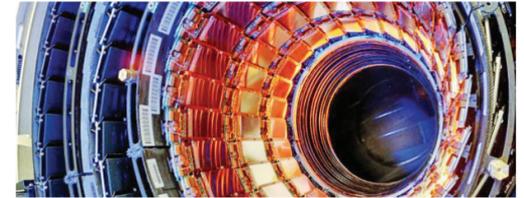
This may help to explain why these warm-blooded predators are more abundant and diverse in cold seas, Grady adds. (Source: phys.org)

Earth could be crushed to the size of a soccer, says astronomer

Martin Rees, a well-respected British cosmologist, made pretty bold statement late last year when it comes to particle accelerators: there's a small, but real possibility of disaster.

Particle accelerators, like the Large Hadron Collider, shoot particles at incredibly high speeds, smash them together, and observe the fallout.

"Maybe a black hole could form, and then suck in everything around it," he writes, as Sarah Knapp reported over at the Telegraph. The "second scary possibility is that the quarks would reassemble themselves into compressed objects called strangelets."



"That in itself would be harmless. However under some hypotheses a strangelet could, by contagion, convert anything else it encounters into a new form of matter, transforming the entire earth in a hyper-dense sphere about one hundred metres across."

And that's not all. The third way that particle accelerators could destroy the Earth, according to Rees, is by a "catastrophe that engulfs space itself."

"Empty space — what physicists call the vacuum — is more than just nothingness. It is the arena for everything that happens. It has, latent in it, all the forces and particles that govern the physical world. The present vacuum could be fragile and unstable."

"Some have speculated that the concentrated energy created when particles crash together could trigger a 'phase transition' that would rip the fabric of space. This would be a cosmic calamity not just a terrestrial one."

Sounds frankly terrifying. But should we really be worried? Surely the smart people at the LHC can clear this up.

The "LHC Safety Assessment Group (LSAG) reaffirms and extends the conclusions of the 2003 report that LHC collisions present no danger and that there are no reasons for concern," CERN writes on their website.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Envisioned 'octopus farms' would have far-reaching and detrimental environmental impact

Commercial octopus farming, currently in developmental stages on multiple continents, would have a negative ripple effect on sustainability and animal welfare, concludes a team of researchers in a newly published analysis.

"We are all living during the rapid domestication of aquatic species and research is almost entirely around the question of which aquatic animals we can farm, rather than which animals we should farm," says Jennifer Jacquet, an assistant professor in New York University's Department of Environmental Studies and the lead author of the work, which appears in the journal *Issues in Science and Technology*. "Universities and companies are investing time and money into farming octopus, which we believe is a big mistake. Mass producing octopus would repeat many of the same mistakes we made on land in terms of high environmental and animal welfare impacts, and be in some ways worse because we have to feed octopus other animals."

The analysis, which notes that nearly 190 countries currently farm approximately 550 aquatic species, is co-authored with Peter Godfrey-Smith of the University of Sydney, Becca Franks, an NYU research scientist, and Walter Sanchez-Suarez, a postdoctoral researcher from Spain working at the University of Sussex.

Spain, along with Mexico, Japan, and China are increasing scientific efforts to build the knowledge to scale-up commercial octopus farming. For instance, Nissui, a seafood company based in Japan, is advancing octopus farming and predicting a fully farmed market-ready octopus by 2020.

Unlike farmed animals, most of which evolved as herbivores, the majority of farmed aquatic animal species are carnivorous—for example, salmon, carp, and catfish. Feeding these animals puts additional pressure on wild fish and invertebrates for fishmeal—around 30 percent of the global fish catch is turned into feed for other animals, and the main consumer is aquaculture, which has been a driving force behind overfishing. Farming octopus, also a carnivore, would only exacerbate current conditions.

Octopus farming would produce high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus pollution from uneaten feed and feces, which contributes to oxygen depletion. (Source: eurekalert.org)

A reptile platypus from the early Triassic: new study

No animal alive today looks quite like a duckbilled platypus, but about 250 million years ago something very similar swam the shallow seas in what is now China, finding prey by touch with a cartilaginous bill.

Related to the dolphin-like ichthyosaurs, Eretmorhipis evolved in a world devastated by the mass extinction event at the end of the Permian era.

No animal alive today looks quite like a duckbilled platypus, but about 250 million years ago something very similar swam the shallow seas in what is now China, finding prey by touch with a cartilaginous bill. The newly discovered marine reptile Eretmorhipis paroldongi from the lower Triassic period is described in the journal *Scientific Reports* Jan. 24.

Apart from its platypus-like bill, Eretmorhipis was about 70 centimeters long with a long rigid body, small head and tiny eyes, and four flippers for swimming and steering. Bony plates ran down the animal's back.

Eretmorhipis was previously known only from partial fossils without a head, said Professor Ryoosuke Motani, a paleontologist at the University of California, Davis Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences and coauthor on the paper.

"This is a very strange animal," Motani said. "When I started thinking about the biology I was really puzzled."

The two new fossils show the animal's skull had bones that would have supported a bill of cartilage. Like the modern platypus, there is a large hole in the bones in the middle of the bill. In the platypus, the bill is filled with receptors that allow it to hunt by touch in muddy streams.

In the early Triassic, the area was covered by a shallow sea, about a meter deep, over a carbonate platform extending for hundreds of miles. Eretmorhipis fossils were found at what were deeper holes, or lagoons, in the platform. There are no fossils to show what Eretmorhipis ate, but it likely fed on shrimp, worms and other small invertebrates. Motani said. (Source: sciencedaily.com)

Wetlands restoration requires a budget of \$14b: DOE chief

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — In order to restore wetlands in the country a budget of 600 trillion rials (nearly \$14 billion) is required, chief of the Department of Environment (DOE) Issa Kalantari said on Sunday.

Kalantari made the remarks during his visit to the Gandoman wetland in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, ISNA news agency reported.



There are 80 big and small wetlands in the country and some are dries out, Kalantari regretted adding that last year (March 2017-March 2018) more than 20 trillion rials (nearly \$475 million) was allocated to wetlands restoration and the amount is projected to increase to 25 trillion rials (nearly \$595 million) for next fiscal year (starting on March 21), he said.

Some of the sand and dust storms originate from the dried bed of the wetlands and revival of these hotspots would help in decreasing sand and dust storms, he highlighted.

Flawed policies have given rise to the dryness of the wetlands by not allocating the water right of the wetlands, he added.

DOE chief went on to say that it is projected that next year some \$150 million will be allocated to fighting sand and dust storms, planning bushes and mulching from national Development Fund.

Recent rainfalls have diminished the incidence of sand and dust storms in the country in the current year, he concluded.

LEARN ENGLISH

Human Anatomy

A: OK class, so today we are going to continue with our **anatomy** class, today we will review everything we have learned. Can anyone tell me what the first major **organ** is?

B: The **brain**!

A: That's right the brain! It serves as a **control** center for the body, handling the **processes** of the central nervous system as well as cognition. Then what major organ is in our **chest**?

B: The **heart**!

A: Very good! It **pumps blood** throughout the body, using the **circulatory system** such as **blood vessels** and **veins**. Now let's not forget that our **lungs** provide **oxygen** to our heart and body to keep us alive! Now what about the organs that help us **digest** food?

B: The **stomach** and **intestines**!

A: Very good! Let's not forget that the stomach is the one that breaks down our food and our intestines process that food and then **expel** the waste. Are we forgetting anything?

B: Yeah! Our kidneys, **liver** and **bladder**!

A: Oh yes, you are right. Very important organs indeed.

B: So what do these organs do teacher?

A: Well, ummm, they...Time for a break! We can talk about it when you get back.

Key vocabulary

anatomy: the trunk of the body from the neck to the abdomen

organ: a grouping of tissues into a distinct structure e.g. heart

brain: an organ enclosed in the skull that controls and coordinates the body

control: the ability to direct the actions of something

process: a planned series of steps or actions that leads to something

cognition: the process of knowing, understanding, and learning something

chest: the front of the body, from neck to the waist

heart: n organ in the chest that pumps blood

pump: to supply, to circulate

blood: the fluid that circulates in the body

circulatory system: the system that circulates blood and lymph through the body, consisting of the heart, blood vessels, blood, lymph, and the lymphatic vessels and glands

blood vessel: one of the tubes through which blood flows in your body

vein: one of the tubes which carries blood to your heart from other parts of your body

lung: body part that inflates with air and allows breathing

oxygen: a gas that we breathe in order to live

digest: to swallow and dissolve something

stomach: the organ people use to digest food

intestine: the long tube in your body through which food passes after it leaves your stomach; gut

expel: to release something

liver: the organ used to produce blood

bladder: the organ in your body that holds urine (=waste liquid) until it is passed out of your body

Supplementary vocabulary

leg: lower limbs of the body

arm: the upper limbs of the human body

skull: the bony framework of the head, enclosing the brain and supporting the face

embalm: to treat a dead body so as to preserve it, as with chemicals, drugs

spine: backbone of the body

(Source: irlanguage.com)



Iran to mark World Wetlands Day in southern city of Bandar Khamir

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Iran's department of Environment will mark World Wetlands Day, February 2, in the southern city of Bandar Khamir, Hormozgan province, deputy environment chief for natural environment and biodiversity has said.

According to the World Wetlands Day official website February 2 each year is World Wetlands Day to raise global awareness about the vital role of wetlands for people and our planet. This day also marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea.

Wetlands are land areas that are saturated or flooded with water either permanently or seasonally. Inland wetlands include marshes, ponds, lakes, fens, rivers, floodplains, and swamps. Coastal wetlands include saltwater marshes, estuaries, mangroves, lagoons and even coral reefs. Fish ponds, rice paddies, and salt pans are human-made wetlands.

Wetlands are of great significance due to their ecological characteristics, Hamid Zohrabi said on Sunday, Mehr news agency reported.

Iran is an arid and semi-arid country and wetlands constitute 1.8 percent of the country's land areas, Zohrabi noted, adding that in an arid country like Iran the importance of wetlands is much greater.

This year's World Wetlands Day will be held in Bandar Khamir as requested by the locals and Hormozgan officials in an attempt to increase public awareness about wetlands, he highlighted.

Mentioning this year's theme "Wetlands



This year's World Wetlands Day will be held in Bandar Khamir as requested by the locals and Hormozgan officials in an attempt to increase public awareness about wetlands

and Climate Change" DOE deputy chief explained that by adopting to climate change human beings can protect the wetlands and forests effectively.

The theme also signifies that how wetlands can be effective in the fight against the climate change, Zohrabi suggested. Moreover, public participation is an in-

fluential factor in conservation of wetlands, he added.

Plans for management of 14 wetlands are already approved and plans for management of 7 wetlands are drafted, he said adding that plans for management of 6 other wetlands are being devised.

Abolfazl Abeshit, director of the plan for conservation of wetlands, also said on Sunday that local communities are directly involved in plans for conservation and management of wetlands.

The importance of wetlands

According to World Wildlife Fund wetlands are home to some of the richest biodiversity on Earth. They are found all over the world from the equatorial tropics to the frozen plains of Siberia and are as crucial to the planet's well-being as any other finely balanced part of nature.

Big or small, north or south, the function of wetlands is much the same: they provide humans with fuel, food, recreation and employment; they support an immense variety of wildlife that would otherwise become extinct; and they protect millions of people from the disastrous consequences of flooding.

Between 300 and 400 million people live close to - and depend on - wetlands. The world simply cannot do without them.

According to a report released by the United Nations Environment Program in 2012 over half of all wetlands in the world have been destroyed in the last 100 years due to residential and industrial development, water waste, over-consumption, and pollution.

World throwing away £50bn of electrical waste every year, UN warns

A "tsunami of e-waste" is engulfing the world as demand for cheap TVs, fridges and phones skyrockets, the United Nations (UN) has warned.

Last year electronic and electrical waste reached 50 million tons, more than the weight of all commercial airliners ever made. This figure is expected to double by the middle of the century.

While a fraction of this waste is recycled, the vast majority ends up on landfill, and a group of UN bodies has come together to call for a "global reboot" to tackle the growing problem.

E-waste often ends up being burned on dumps, often by some of the planet's poorest people, with harmful consequences for both their health and the environment.

But the report released at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, states that this waste also represents a vast, untapped resource.

Globally, e-waste is worth at least \$62.5bn (£48bn) the annual equivalent of Kenya's GDP.

Many devices are full of valuable materials that are ripe for recycling. In a ton of mobile phones, for example, there is 100 times more gold than can be found in one ton of gold ore.

Many of these minerals are considered in danger of



running out and the environmental and human impact of mining new ones in places like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and China are enormous.

Currently, only around a fifth of all e-waste is formally recycled and while millions of people are thought to work informally recycling these materials, they are often exposed to dangerous working environments.

While a shift towards cloud computing and the "internet of things" is expected to result in fewer new materials being

required, experts say there is also a need for more circular supply chains.

"Our planet's survival will depend on how well we retain the value of products within the system by extending their life," said Joyce Msuya, acting executive director of UN Environment

To do this, the coalition of groups behind the new report - which also includes representatives from business - called for industry, academia and civil society to unite to create new recycling infrastructure and boost the quantity of e-waste that is re-used.

They state the creation of appropriate policies could yield millions of new jobs to replace the informal industry that currently exists.

As an example of this in action, a newly announced cash injection for the Nigerian recycling sector is intended to create formal jobs for the 100,000 people currently trawling through the nation's e-waste.

"Thousands of tons of e-waste is disposed of by the world's poorest workers in the worst of conditions, putting their health and lives at risk," said Guy Ryder, director-general of the International Labor Organization.

(Source: The Independent)

London's ultra-low emission zone: good or bad idea?

"I'm just really glad the ULEZ is coming. Children's lungs can't wait," says Jemima Hartshorn, a Brixton resident who helped set up campaign group Mums For Lungs.

London's filthy air makes chronic illnesses worse, shortens life expectancy and damages lung development in children. Levels of nitrogen dioxide, mostly produced by diesel vehicles, have been illegally high since 2010 in the vast majority of urban areas in the UK. Noxious emissions make chronic illnesses worse and shorten life expectancy, typically by six months.

Aspokesperson for the mayor said: "London's toxic air increases the risk of asthma and dementia and can damage children's

lung growth. The mayor has delivered a series of hard-hitting measures to tackle our filthy air, from cleaning up the bus fleet to introducing a toxicity charge in central London for the most polluting vehicles. A vital step will be the introduction of the ultra-low emission zone in April next year, which will be the toughest emission standard adopted by any city in the world and will improve air quality for millions of Londoners."

Simon Alcock, head of public affairs at Client Earth, a firm of environmental lawyers, says the city has "no choice" but to bring in the ULEZ because of the already illegal levels of NOx in the city's air. "If water was as dirty as our air, we would have taken action much earlier," he says.

Earlier this year, the high court ruled that the government's current policy on air pollution was unlawful, and ordered changes.

But Alcock acknowledges the issues faced by diesel drivers.

"Everyone was encouraged to buy diesels by successive governments as they thought it was good for climate change. But it was really bad for your health. I think it's really important that we help drivers to make the shift, through scrap-age schemes or making electric vehicles cheaper to buy."

The case against: 'The poorest will be hit hardest'

The ULEZ charges will be "Sadiq

Khan's poll tax", warns Gareth Bacon, leader of the Conservatives in the Greater London Assembly.

"The introduction of a daily £12.50 charge simply to use their cars, when they had previously done so without incurring any charge (other than the usual cost of motoring, which is not cheap in the UK) is going to come as a shock to a great many people," he says.

He is supportive of the original central London ULEZ proposed by Boris Johnson, but with an implementation date of 2020, and is opposed to the 2021 expansion of the ULEZ to cover a bigger area.

(Source: The Guardian)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Iran's Rescue and Relief Organization to join INSARAG

The Iranian Red Crescent Society's Rescue and Relief Organization will join the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), the organization's deputy director Shahin Fat'hi has said.

In a collaborative attempt between the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Iran office, the National Disaster Management Organization, and the Embassy of Austria and with regard to the overriding need for training urban search and rescue teams the first training program is underway at managerial levels in Iran, ISNA quoted Fat'hi as saying on Saturday.

Over the 4-day programs some 45 managers at Iranian Red Crescent Society, National Disaster Management Organization, and fire department will receive trainings, he added.

ایران به تیم‌های پاسخگویی بین‌المللی سوانح می‌پیوندد

شاهین فتحی معاون عملیات سازمان امداد و نجات جمعیت هلال احمر از پیوستن ایران به تیم‌های پاسخگویی بین‌المللی سوانح خبر داد.

فتحی در گفت و گو با ایسنا، در مورد برگزاری کارگاه آموزشی جست و جو نجات شهری که امروز در سازمان امداد و نجات جمعیت هلال احمر آغاز شد، گفت: در راستای هماهنگی‌های انجام شده با دفتر اوجا در ایران، سازمان مدیریت بحران و سفارت اتریش و نیز با توجه به

نیاز کشور در زمینه تیم‌های جست و جو و نجات، بنا شد که دوره‌های سیستم مدیریت و پاسخگویی به سوانح در سازمان ملل که به اینساراگ معروف است، برای مدیران برگزار شود که خوشبختانه توانستیم امروز اولین دوره آن را برگزار کنیم. معاون عملیات سازمان

امداد و نجات جمعیت هلال احمر اضافه کرد: در این دوره ۴۵ نفر از مدیران جمعیت هلال احمر، سازمان مدیریت بحران کشور، سازمان پیشگیری و مدیریت بحران شهر تهران و آتش

نشانی شرکت دارند و این کارگاه‌ها در چهار روز برگزار می‌شود.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"-aceous, -acean"

■ **Meaning:** resembling or having the nature of
 ■ **For example:** Many gardeners grow **herbaceous** plants to add color and texture to the landscape.

PHRASAL VERB

Punch in

■ **Meaning:** to do something, such as signing in or stamping a time card, to officially record the beginning of a shift or day of work
 ■ **For example:** I keep forgetting to punch myself in when I get into work.

IDIOM

Many moons ago

■ **Explanation:** a long time in the past
 ■ **For example:** I used to be quite the athlete, many moons ago.

Maduro denounces election call but says ready to talk

Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro rejected an international ultimatum to call elections within eight days and said opposition leader Juan Guaido had violated the country's constitution by declaring himself leader.

Maduro, in an interview with CNN Turk aired Sunday, also said he was open to dialogue and that meeting U.S. President Donald Trump was improbable but not impossible. The broadcaster dubbed the interview from Spanish into Turkish.

Washington, which has recognized Guaido as leader, had on Saturday urged the world to "pick a side" on Venezuela and financially disconnect from Maduro's government.

Venezuela has sunk into turmoil under Maduro with food shortages and protests amid an economic and political crisis that has sparked mass emigration and inflation that is seen rising to 10 million percent this year.

Britain, Germany, France and Spain all said they would recognize Guaido if Maduro failed to call fresh elections within eight days, an ultimatum Russia said was "absurd" and the Venezuelan foreign minister called "childlike."

Washington, Canada most Latin American nations and many European states have labeled Maduro's second-term election win last May fraudulent.

Maduro retains the loyalty of the armed forces, though Venezuela's top military envoy to the United States on Saturday defected to Guaido.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had voiced his support for Maduro in a phone call on Thursday.

U.S. calls on countries to 'pick a side' in Venezuela crisis

The United States secretary of state has called on countries to "pick a side" on Venezuela, urging them to back opposition leader Juan Guaido and calling for free and fair elections as soon as possible in a speech at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

"Now, it is time for every other nation to pick a side. No more delays, no more games. Either you stand with the forces of freedom, or you're in league with [Nicolas] Maduro and his mayhem," Mike Pompeo told the 15-member UNSC on Saturday.

Pompeo was addressing the UNSC after Washington and its regional allies recognized Guaido as head of state and urged Venezuelan President Maduro to step down.

"We call on all members of the Security Council to support Venezuela's democratic transition and interim President Guaido's role in it," he said.

Russia unsuccessfully tried to stop the meeting requested by the United States. Moscow has accused Washington of plotting a coup attempt, placing Venezuela at the heart



of a growing geopolitical duel.

"Venezuela does not represent a threat to peace and security," Russia's UN ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, told the Security Council.

"If anything does represent a threat to peace, it is the shameless and aggressive action of the United States and their allies aimed at the ouster of the legitimately elected president of Venezuela," he said.

Russia, China block U.S. push for UN to back Guaido

Meantime, Russia, China, South Africa and Equatorial Guinea blocked a U.S. push for a UNSC statement expressing full support for Venezuela's National Assembly as the country's "only democratically elected institution".

Maduro stripped the National Assembly, currently headed by Guaido, of legislative powers nearly a year and a half after the opposition gained control of the House in December 2015.

The session comes a day after Guaido vowed to remain on the streets until his country has a transitional government, while Maduro dug in and accused his opponents of orchestrating a coup.

In rival press conferences, Guaido urged his followers to stage another mass protest next week, while Maduro pushed his call for dialogue.

Each man appeared ready to defend his claim to the presidency no matter the cost, with Guaido telling supporters that if he is arrested they should "stay the course" and peacefully protest.

The UNSC meeting comes on a day the European Union (EU) and several of its member nations, including France, Spain and Germany, called on Maduro to hold

free and fair elections within eight days or else they will consider recognizing Guaido as the legitimate leader of the beleaguered country.

Venezuela's foreign minister rejected the European ultimatum, insisting that Maduro remained the legitimate president.

"Nobody is going to give us deadlines or tell us if there are elections or not," Jorge Arreaza told the special UN session.

"How is it that you can issue an ultimatum to a sovereign government?" he said.

Venezuela 'coup' grew from secret talks in U.S.

Elsewhere, the political crisis which came to a head in Venezuela this week followed "weeks of secret diplomacy," including a visit last month to the United States, Colombia and Brazil by opposition leader Juan Guaido.

Guaido declared himself the interim president earlier this week and won immediate recognition from the U.S., in a move denounced by President Nicolas Maduro and a number of countries as a coup.

According to the Associated Press, Guaido quietly traveled to Washington, Colombia and Brazil in mid-December to brief officials on his plans to provoke unrest to coincide with Maduro's swearing-in for a second term on January 1.

Playing a key role behind the scenes was Canada, whose Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland spoke to Guaido the night before the swearing-in ceremony to offer support should he confront Maduro, AP reported.

At least 20 people have lost their lives in the unrest, but the planned "coup" hit the wall after the army rallied behind Maduro and countries like Russia, China, Turkey and Iran denounced outside interference.

According to an anonymous diplomat from the so-called Lima Group of 14 Latin American countries, some opposition elements had been anxious about the putsch going awry as Guaido's plan was endorsed for implementation.

"Some moderate factions were left in the dark or wanted to go slower, worrying that a bold move would lead to another failure for the opposition," AP quoted the source as saying.

Guaido, the president of the opposition-run congress, proclaimed himself interim president on January 23. Within 24 hours, the U.S. recognized him and announced \$20 million in "humanitarian aid."

A senior Canadian official told the news agency that the decision to confront President Maduro directly was only possible because of the strong support from the Trump administration.

While the U.S. says it's trying to rescue Venezuela's democracy, Washington has a long history of interventions - military and otherwise - in Latin American politics.

The Trump administration's leading role in recognizing Guaido as the interim president of Venezuela returns the U.S. to a more aggressive role in Latin America than it has had for years.

President Trump said in August last year that a "military option" was on the table to deal with the ongoing Venezuelan crisis.

Two drones packed with explosives reportedly flew toward Maduro in August in what the government has described as a failed assassination attempt.

On Saturday, Russia, China, South Africa and Equatorial Guinea blocked a U.S. push for a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) statement expressing full support for Guaido even as he has not run in any presidential race.

Russia has accused the United States of backing a coup attempt, placing Venezuela at the heart of a growing geopolitical duel.

In a speech at the UNSC, the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called on the world countries to "pick a side" on Venezuela and urged them to back Guaido.

"Now, it is time for every other nation to pick a side. No more delays, no more games. Either you stand with the forces of freedom, or you're in league with Maduro and his mayhem," Pompeo told the 15-member council.

The U.S. national security adviser John Bolton, who is known for his hawkish views, said on Thursday that Washington is making every attempt to cut Venezuela's revenue streams, and make sure the oil revenue goes to the opposition leader.

(Source: agencies)

UN 'shocked' at 'terror' waged by Israeli settlers

➔ Apart from Israeli soldiers, settlers engage in provocative, violent, and sometimes deadly actions against Palestinians on a regular basis.

In October 2018, an extremist teenage settler killed a Palestinian mother in the northern West Bank by throwing a rock at her.

The most violent incident of the recent years involving Israeli settlers was an arson attack against a Palestinian home in the town of Duma, located 25 kilometers southeast of Nablus in northern West Bank on July 31, 2015. The fire killed an 18-month-old baby boy, Ali Dawabsha, on the spot. Ali's mother, Riham and her husband, Saad, were severely injured in the attack and both died later in hospital.

(Source: Press TV)

Six killed, over a dozen injured in bomb and gun attacks across Iraq

Iraqi security officials and medical sources say at least six people have lost their lives and more than a dozen sustained injuries when separate bomb and gun attacks struck the country's northern provinces of Salahuddin (Saladin/Salah ad Din Governorate) and Nineveh as well as the eastern province of Diyala.

Shirqat police chief colonel Majeed Ghatran said two policemen died and eight others were wounded when a bomb hit a bus transporting security forces on their way to work near the town, located some 300 kilometers (190 miles) north of the capital Baghdad, on Sunday.

He added that another bomb struck a second group of officers, who were heading to the location of the first explosion, killing two and wounding three.

Moreover, Police Lieutenant Abdelkadir al-Jabbouri said unidentified gunmen fatally shot an Iraqi man and his wife in the town of Shoura, south of Mosul.

Police Captain Habib al-Shimari also said militants had attacked a security checkpoint in Diyala, injuring five security personnel.

There were no immediate claims of responsibility for Sunday's attacks, but such assaults bear the hallmark of those carried out by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorists.

Former Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared the end of military operations against ISIL in the country on December 9, 2017.

On July 10 that year, he had formally declared victory over ISIL in Mosul, which served as the terrorists' main urban stronghold in Iraq.

In the run-up to Mosul's liberation, Iraqi army soldiers and Popular Mobilization Units (PMU/Hashd al-Sha'abi) fighters had made sweeping gains against ISIL.

Iraqi forces took control of eastern Mosul in January 2017 after 100 days of fighting, and launched the battle in the west on February 19 that year.

ISIL began a terror campaign in Iraq in 2014, overrunning vast swathes in lightning attacks.

(Source: Press TV)

Trump's State of the Union address is still not happening on Tuesday

Despite the United States President Donald Trump ending the government shutdown, his State of the Union address is still up in the air.

One thing is for sure, however: It's not going to take place on Tuesday as originally planned.

"It's not happening on 1/29," said Drew Hammill, a spokesman for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

After a series of bitter letters back-and-forth, Pelosi postponed Trump's Jan. 29 address due to the longest shutdown in U.S. history, citing, among other things, security concerns as those tasked with the high-profile event were not being paid.

"I am writing to inform you that the House of Representatives will not consider a concurrent resolution authorizing the President's State of the Union address in the House Chamber until government has opened," the California Democrat wrote Wednesday in a letter to Trump.

By Friday, a deal had been made and Trump agreed to reopen the federal government for three weeks, offering both relief to the 800,000 federal workers who were without pay and time to lawmakers to broker a deal on border security.

After Trump's announcement of the government reopening, Pelosi told reporters a date would be worked out for the president's address but for the time being, "the state of the union is not planned now."

"What I said to the president is when the government is opened we will discuss a mutually agreeable date," Pelosi said, adding "I'll look forward to doing that" and welcoming Trump in the House chambers when that is done.

It's unclear whether Pelosi and the White House have since discussed another date for the annual address, which hosts all members of Congress, the president's cabinet and Supreme Court justices.

Trump, at first, lashed out at Pelosi after she canceled his address, claiming that the speaker "doesn't want to hear the truth. She doesn't want the American public to hear what's going on."

He added that Pelosi's decision was "a great blotch on the incredible country that we all love" and called it a "horrible mark" and "negative part of history."

The White House examined other venues to host the address but none matched the prestige of giving it in the House chamber, which has become customary in modern times.

Trump thanked furloughed federal workers for their devotion during the shutdown and credited them with helping to make America great again.

Trump changed his mind and posted on Twitter that he would not be giving the address until the shutdown ended, as Pelosi suggested.

He later called her request "reasonable" and said hosting the address somewhere else would have been "disrespectful."

"I could have got to a big auditorium and got 25,000 people in one day and you've been there many times, but I think that would be very disrespectful to the State of the Union, so what she said, I thought was actually reasonable," Trump said. "We'll have the State of the Union when the shutdown is over."

(Source: USA TODAY)

Yellow vest leader badly injured in police action during protest

A prominent anti-government "yellow vest" activist was badly injured in the eye after being hit by a rubber bullet used by the French police, his lawyer has said.

Philippe de Veulle, the lawyer of Jerome Rodrigues, fears he will be disabled for life following the injury in clashes with the police in Paris on Saturday during the 11th straight weekend of protests against President Emmanuel Macron.

"He is in shock. He will be handicapped for life. It is a tragedy for him and his family," the lawyer told French news station BFM TV, adding that he was going to lodge a complaint against the police.

Rodrigues was placed in an artificial coma overnight after the incident at the Bastille monument in central Paris.

Controversial methods

The bearded Rodrigues, who has become a well-known figure in the "yellow vest" movement with 50,000 followers on Facebook, was live-streaming images of the protest on the website when he was hit.

De Veulle said Rodrigues was struck with a "flashball", referring to the 40mm rubber projectiles used by French anti-riot police.

The use of riot-control guns using rubber bullets as the ammunition has become quite controversial in France, where

it has been blamed for dozens of serious injuries since the protests began in November.

On Saturday, police armed with anti-riot guns were for the first time deployed with body cameras in a bid to increase transparency.

Speaking to a local news channel from the hospital, Rodrigues said he was also hit by a "stingball" grenade, another controversial riot-control device.

"Everything happened very quickly. They threw a grenade at me and I took a [rubber] bullet. I was attacked twice - a grenade to the foot and the bullet," Rodrigues said.

He accused the police of carrying out "all the violence the rules allow". Witnesses picked up the projectile that struck Rodrigues. Police were set to investigate the circumstances of the incident.

Out-of-touch leadership

Originally sparked by an increase in fuel taxes, the "yellow vest" protests quickly snowballed into a widespread revolt over accusations that Macron, an ex-banker, is out of touch with rural and small-town France.

Named after the emblematic luminous road safety vests worn by protesters, the demonstrations have drawn tens of thousands of people to the streets.



But their numbers have eased in recent weeks after Macron announced a series of policy climb downs and launched a two-month consultation to allow people to vent their anger.

The interior ministry estimated that 69,000 turned out across France on Saturday, compared with 84,000 a week earlier.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Canadian PM fires envoy to China after remarks on Huawei case

In an unprecedented move, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said he had fired his ambassador to China, who prompted a political furor with comments about Huawei's high-profile extradition case.

John McCallum had embarrassed Trudeau's Liberal government by saying Huawei Technologies Co Ltd Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou could make a strong argument against being sent to the United States.

Opposition legislators and former ambassadors accused McCallum of unacceptable political interference in an affair which has badly damaged relations between Canada and China.

Meng, the daughter of Huawei's founder, was arrested in Vancouver last month over alleged violations of U.S. sanctions on Iran.

China subsequently detained two Canadian citizens on national security grounds. A Chinese court later retried a Canadian man who had been jailed for drugs smuggling and sentenced him to death.

"Last night I asked for and accepted



John McCallum's resignation as Canada's ambassador to China," Trudeau said in a statement that did not explain his reasons.

Veteran diplomats and experts told Reuters it was the first time a Canadian ambassador had ever been officially fired.

Trudeau said as recently as Thursday that he had no plans to replace McCallum,

who apologized the same day for his remarks earlier in the week.

But the Toronto Star newspaper on Friday quoted the envoy as saying that if Washington dropped the extradition request "that would be great for Canada". McCallum, 68, a long-time former Liberal cabinet minister, is not a trained diplomat.

(Source: Reuters)

Palace sign Sako on short-term deal from West Brom

Crystal Palace have signed winger Bakary Sako from West Bromwich Albion until the end of the season, the Premier League team said on Sunday.

The Malian spent three seasons at Palace before his contract expired at the end of the last campaign and the 30-year-old joined Championship side West Brom in October.

"I'm delighted that we've managed to bring Bakary back to Palace," manager Roy Hodgson said in a statement.

Sako scored three league goals in 16 appearances for Palace in his final season at Selhurst Park before breaking his ankle.

"He's a player with a huge amount of talent and as he showed when he was fully fit last year, he is able to provide a boost to our attacking options," Hodgson added.

"It's a particularly pleasing signing, because... he knows the club inside out and was such an immensely popular figure amongst the squad with his positive and upbeat attitude."

He is the second player to join Palace in January, following the arrival of goalkeeper Lucas Perri on loan from Brazilian side Sao Paulo.

Sako will be unavailable for Sunday's FA Cup game against Tottenham Hotspur, having played for West Brom earlier in the competition but could feature against Southampton on Jan. 30.

Palace are 14th in the league with 22 points from 23 games. (Source: Reuters)

Hudson-Odoi hands in transfer request amid Bayern Munich pursuit

Callum Hudson-Odoi has handed in a transfer request at Chelsea with Bayern Munich's £35 million offer still on the table, sources have told ESPN FC.

Hudson-Odoi, 18, has been the subject of four bids from Bayern Munich, but Chelsea have been reluctant to let their young star leave and offered him a new contract believed to be in the region of £85,000 a week.

But despite the offer Hudson-Odoi remains keen to leave Chelsea and head to the Bundesliga, with sources saying that Bayern's bid is the only one on the table, despite reported interest from RB Leipzig and Liverpool.

Hudson-Odoi was expected to start for Chelsea in Sunday's FA Cup fourth-round tie against Sheffield Wednesday at Stamford Bridge, but this latest development could complicate his involvement in the match.

Chelsea have mounted a public charm offensive in an attempt to change Hudson-Odoi's mind since Bayern's interest in signing him became known, with head coach Maurizio Sarri praising the teenager's improvement in training over recent weeks.

Bayern's public pursuit of Hudson-Odoi has also angered Chelsea and earlier this month sources told ESPN FC that the Blues were prepared to report the German giants to FIFA if evidence were found of an illegal approach to the player or his camp. (Source: Soccernet)

Breitenreiter fired as Hannover head coach

Hannover 96 has parted company with coach Andre Breitenreiter after the club lost its eighth Bundesliga game in a row on Saturday.

"Andre and his team have really put all their effort into getting the team back on track for success in the past few weeks and months," club manager Horst Heldt said. "Unfortunately, they weren't successful."

In his last match as coach, Hannover lost 5-1 to Dortmund, putting them second from the bottom in the league. The team only won two of their 19 games this season.

The club said they would announce Breitenreiter's successor "as soon as possible".

Former Hannover coach Mirko Slomka, Markus Gisdol, Thomas Doll, Steffen Baumgart and Peter Stöger are reportedly being considered as possible replacements.

Breitenreiter, a former Hannover striker, joined the club in March 2017 while they were in the second division. He helped the team win promotion to the Bundesliga within two months and after a year in the job, the club extended his contract until 2021.

Breitenreiter is the third coach to leave their club this season after VfB Stuttgart fired Tayfun Korkut and Bayer Leverkusen fired Heiko Herrlich. (Source: DW)

Everton boss angry over FA Cup VAR use in Millwall loss

Everton manager Marco Silva hit out at the FA Cup organisers for not implementing VAR at every match as his side crashed out of the competition in a shock 3-2 defeat at Millwall.

Richardson opened the scoring before Lee Gregory headed the Championship strugglers level just before half-time. Cenk Tosun put Everton ahead again but Jake Cooper levelled with a goal he later admitted was handball and left-back Murray Wallace smashed home an added-time winner.

VAR is only used in FA Cup games held at Premier League grounds this season -- a decision which left Silva bemused.

"Two points made the difference: we have to be more mature, taking the responsibility on the pitch, and the decision on their second goal," said Silva. "You can work 20 or 30 hours on the same things, set-pieces, but you have to take your responsibility onto the pitch with you."

"We knew what they would do before the match but we gave them what they wanted. And if the competition has VAR for some stadiums then it has to have it in all. Because it doesn't make sense. It was a clear handball. I'm sure handball is not allowed in football."

"We had seven, eight players in the penalty area. They all see that it's handball, so it's really difficult that the referee cannot see that also. And then it's also on the big screen, thousands of people see it there but the referee didn't see it again. (Source: Goal)

Dominant Djokovic Nadal to win record Australian open seventh title

Novak Djokovic won a record seventh Australian Open title and a third successive Grand Slam as he swept aside Rafael Nadal in Melbourne.

The Serb, rarely troubled on his serve, won 6-3 6-2 6-3 for his biggest victory in a major final over his great rival.

Spanish second seed Nadal, 32, looked rattled by the world number one's intensity and made 28 unforced errors.

Djokovic, 31, won in two hours and four minutes to move clear of six-time men's winners Roy Emerson and Roger Federer.

A forehand winner down the line brought up two championship points, Djokovic taking the second when Nadal clubbed a backhand long.

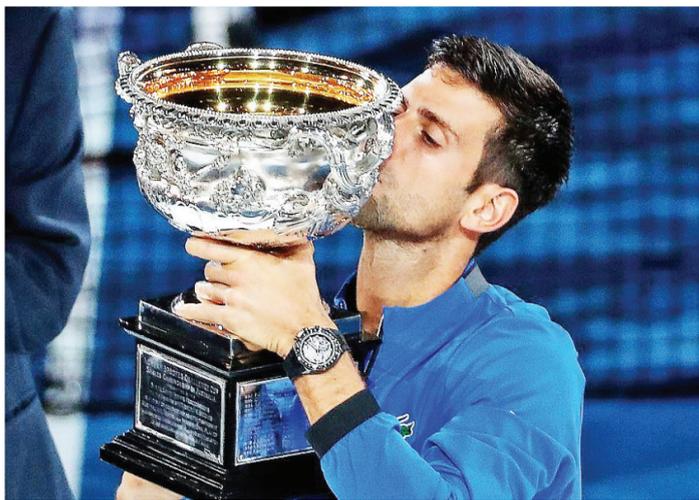
Djokovic, who was the top seed, fell to his knees after sealing another triumph on Rod Laver Arena, smacking the court with both hands and screaming towards the sky.

The reigning Wimbledon and US Open champion claimed his 15th Grand Slam title, moving him outright third ahead of American Pete Sampras in the all-time list, closing in on Switzerland's Federer (20) and Nadal (17).

Djokovic has now won 13 of his past 16 meetings with Nadal, who has not beaten the Serb on a hard court since the US Open final in 2013.

He leads 28-25 in their record 53 meetings between two male players.

Djokovic continued his fine record of going on to win the tournament every time he has



reached the semi-finals, while Nadal lost for a fourth time in the Melbourne showpiece.

The result meant the 2009 winner was unable to become the first man in the Open era to win all the Grand Slams at least twice and was the first time he had lost a major final in straight sets.

■ Djokovic's dominance stuns an expectant Melbourne

Djokovic said his clinical semi-final win over French 28th seed Lucas Pouille on Friday was one of his best performances on Rod Laver Arena.

Two days later, he surpassed that against the man with whom he shares what many consider to be the greatest male rivalry.

Most expected a much closer encounter between the pair, whose previous meeting at

Melbourne Park had been the epic 2012 final, which lasted five sets and almost six hours.

Quickly it became apparent that a repeat was unlikely in front of a stunned crowd.

Djokovic was as close to flawless as he could have been - dominating on serve, controlling the rallies with crisp groundstrokes, rarely making a mistake and showing incredible athleticism around the court.

His tally of 34 winners and nine unforced errors highlights how high his level was.

The Serb made a fast start by breaking in Nadal's first service game and, although that was the only break in the opener, the gap between the players felt much wider.

He took his first set point after landing a first serve which Nadal could only bat back into the net, wrapping up the opener in only 38 minutes.

More pressure came on Nadal's serve immediately in the second set, Djokovic eventually going a break up in the fifth game and, after surviving Nadal taking him to deuce in the following game, broke again to leave him serving for a two-set lead.

Djokovic then underlined his dominance by firing down three aces to leave him one set away from the title.

Another break for a 2-1 lead in the third put Djokovic on his way to a comfortable win, before he fought off a break point in the sixth game and then sealed victory on the Nadal serve.

(Source: BBC)

Swim star Sun Yang threatens legal action over doping report



Chinese swimming star Sun Yang threatened legal action against a British newspaper Sunday over claims that he faced a lifetime ban after allegedly clashing with anti-doping testers and smashing a vial of blood with a hammer.

The 27-year-old Sun, who has won Olympic gold in the 200m, 400m and 1,500m freestyle and is also a multiple world champion, strongly refutes the accusations contained in The Sunday Times.

The newspaper alleged that a confrontation took place after Sun -- who was banned for three months in 2014 for taking a stimulant -- missed an out-of-competition test on September 4 at his home in Zhejiang province.

"A clash with anti-doping testers ended in him and his security guard using a hammer to smash a sealed vial containing the swimmer's blood," The Sunday Times reported. After the story broke, Sun's lawyer Zhang Qihuai issued a statement saying that the newspaper had "a malign intention" and "severely damaged Sun Yang's reputation and violated his privacy".

"We reserve the right to file a lawsuit against the relevant international media which reported the incident," the

statement added, according to the state-run Xinhua news agency. The statement noted that a doping panel for FINA, swimming's world governing body, ruled in Sun's favor on January 3 and said that a dispute occurred because testers for IDTM -- the body which conducts tests -- had breached several rules.

That included failing to produce authorization letters and a nursing license, the lawyer's statement said.

"And they fabricated an untruthful report claiming Sun Yang broke anti-doping rules and sent it to FINA."

Zhang separately said Sunday in an interview, according to Xinhua: "Sun is entitled to reject any invalid doping test and safeguard the reputation and integrity of Chinese athletes."

The Sunday Times also noted that FINA had cleared Sun, but said that the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) "has demanded to know more about the extraordinary events".

The newspaper added that the doping panel "handed him (Sun) a series of cautions" and cited the panel as saying that his avoiding an anti-doping rule violation was "a close-run thing". (Source: AFP)

Emiliano Sala search resumes after crowdfunding effort raises €300,000



A GoFundMe page set up to start a private search for missing Cardiff forward Emiliano Sala has reached its €300,000 (£260,000) target, with two boats looking for the Argentine this weekend.

Sala, Cardiff's new €17m signing from Nantes, went missing on Monday when the Piper PA-46 Malibu plane he was travelling in disappeared over the English Channel and rescuers ended their three-day search for the forward and pilot David Ibbotson on Thursday.

Paris-based football agency Sport Cover, who list Sala as a client, set up the GoFundMe page, which has attracted donations from footballers including Nantes manager Wahid Halilhodzic, Manchester City's Ilkay Gundogan, Leicester City winger Demarai Gray, Paris Saint-Germain's Kylian Mbappe (who donated €30,000) and Adrien Rabiot, and Bayern Munich's Corentin Tolisso.

Although the search for Sala's plane has been officially called off, pleas from Argentinian football stars Lionel Messi, Diego Maradona and Sergio Agüero to keep looking have been made, while the Argentine government formally appealed to their French and British counterparts to restart it.

"President Mauricio Marci has instructed the foreign minister Jorge Faurie to make a formal request to the governments of Great Britain and France to ask that they maintain their search efforts," a statement from the Argentine presidency said.

In France, a petition to have the search resumed has over 85,000 signatures.

Cardiff City will pay tribute to Sala before Tuesday's Premier League clash at Arsenal, the Welsh club's chief executive Ken Choo said on Friday.

"We're going to plan a tribute on Tuesday at the Arsenal game for the fans to join in, and again at the home match against Bournemouth on Feb. 2," Choo told Sky Sports. "We're still planning the details and we'll speak to the family as well. We'll announce details in the next day or two."

The Premier League confirmed there would be a moment of silence during all matches next week as a mark of respect for Sala and Ibbotson.

"I just want to say, the Premier League and Arsenal have been incredibly supportive of our club and this situation," Choo added. (Source: ESPN)

Humbled Nadal says needs 'time, work' to beat Djokovic

A chastened Rafa Nadal said even his best tennis may have not been enough against a rampant Novak Djokovic after being thrashed by the Serb in the Australian Open final on Sunday.

The Spanish second seed came into the clash in outrageous form but was dominated throughout the 6-3 6-2 6-3 loss at Rod Laver Arena, the worst in his Grand Slam rivalry with the world number one.

Although reaching the final without dropping a set, Nadal said he was still short of his best after a long injury lay-off following the U.S. Open and lacked an edge to pressure the Serb.

"Of course, he played, I think, fantastic. At the same time it's true that when he's playing that way, I think I needed something else," the 17-times Grand Slam champion Nadal told reporters.

"I was not able to have that extra thing tonight, being honest."

"Playing the way he played tonight, I needed that defensive game to finally have the chance to be offensive."

"When he was hitting, it's true that maybe it was difficult to beat him even if I was at my 100 percent (level). But probably it would have been a little bit more of a fight."

Beaten in just over two hours, Nadal won barely a third of the match's points, was broken five times and



only nine, in an astonishing display of control.

He racked up 28 unforced errors while Djokovic leaked

only nine, in an astonishing display of control. Despite the thrashing, the defiant Spaniard said his five-set semi-final loss to Djokovic at Wimbledon last year was more disappointing than Sunday's defeat.

He has now lost eight successive matches to Djokovic on hardcourts, his last win coming at the 2013 U.S. Open.

But he was adamant he could rebound and find the skill to challenge again.

"What I need is time, I need work and I need more weeks like this one," said Nadal.

"That's really the only thing that I hope, is to have the chance to keep practising well and to have the chance to keep playing with healthy conditions."

"I can't be sad. It would not be fair to be sad. I played against a player that today was better than me."

While buoyed to have played seven matches at Melbourne Park following a litany of injuries, he conceded that he would still need to manage his schedule carefully.

"I need matches, but I can't go crazy to play matches. I have my age," said the 32-year-old.

"If I am healthy, I am competitive, I am happy, I have the chance to win tournaments. If not, things change 100 percent." (Source: Reuters)



My players must trust themselves against Japan: Carlos Queiroz

Carlos Queiroz has told his players to trust themselves and in his methods as Iran prepare to face Japan in the first semi-final of the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 on Monday at Al Ain's Hazza bin Zayed Stadium.

The Iranians are appearing in the last four of the AFC Asian Cup for the first time since 2004, when they missed out on a place in the final in a penalty shootout, and are taking on a nation that has won the title on four occasions since 1992.

But while the pressure is mounting on Team Melli to claim the title for the first time since 1976, the experienced Portuguese coach wants his players to continue to believe in the methods that have taken them to the Finals of the last two FIFA World Cups under his watch.

"It's one more day, one more game," said Queiroz. "This Japanese team, they have great movement on the pitch and with their actions and decisions they are very accurate. They are very accurate with their passing, but we cannot lose our identity."

"What is important is that we have a great team and great players, but we cannot risk our identity. We need to be ourselves and play with confidence and trust. We have our own weapons to play with but, of course, we have to pay attention to the Japanese team and adapt and try to control the strong points, and they have a lot."

"But the most important thing is to be ourselves. If we are not able to play one game without being ourselves that doesn't make sense. After eight years and after so many sacrifices and so many games, now we have one game, the semi-final, to play against a great team."

"We need to be ourselves, we need to go inside the pitch and no matter what happens express our football and say: 'We are Iran' and play our football against Japan. That's the most important."

Iran and Japan have not met at the AFC Asian Cup Finals since 1992 and last faced each other in a competitive clash back in 2005, when Japan triumphed 2-1 in a 2006 FIFA World Cup qualifier. Team Melli had won the corresponding



fixture by the same score five months earlier.

The two countries have shared some epic encounters, with the most thrilling coming in November 1997 when Japan beat the Iranians 3-2 late in the second period of extra-time to qualify for the FIFA World Cup Finals for the first time.

Hajime Moriyasu's Japan have yet to excite in a similar manner in the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019, but Queiroz is refusing to underestimate the Samurai Blue.

"We don't need to talk about our expectations, it's just the next game and as always we would like to be ready and try to play a good football match against a

great team from Japan," he said.

"They're a country that I don't need to extend too much my praise, my words for Japan's national team. We are very excited and proud to be here after so many years of crossing some difficulties and adversities to play in the semi against Japan. It is fantastic for the players and for the Iran national team."

"I do not see anything defensive in this Japan team. It's just a different opinion. I know we play against the most prestigious and successful national team in Asia. They have brilliant players, play brilliant football."

(Source: the-afc)

Carlos Queiroz to mark 100th match as Iran coach

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Carlos Queiroz will mark his 100th match as head coach of Iran national football team in the game against Japan.

The Portuguese reaches the milestone when Team Melli take on Japan at the 2019 AFC Asian Cup semifinals

on Monday.

Queiroz took over Iran national football team in April 2011. Team Melli defeated Madagascar 1-0 in a friendly match in his first match as Iran coach.

Under tutelage of Queiroz, Iran have won 60 matches and suffered 12 losses.

Team Melli have also registered 27 draws.

The 65-year-old steered the team to back-to-back qualifications for the World Cup for the first time in Iran's history.

Queiroz was also coaching Iran national football team in the 2015 AFC Asian Cup, where the Persians lost to Iraq in

a penalty shootout at the competition's quarter-finals.

The ex-Real Madrid coach is the longest serving coach in the history of Iran's national football team.

Team Melli are going to win the Asian Cup after 43 years.

Moriyasu wants Japanese spirit in abundance



Hajime Moriyasu wants his Japan team to show more of the spirit that has taken them into the semi-finals of the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 when they take on Iran at Al Ain's Hazza bin Zayed Stadium on Monday.

The Japanese have ground out a series of results that has seen them reach the penultimate round of the tournament with a perfect record of five wins out of five and the former Sanfrecce Hiroshima coach has called for more of the same against Carlos Queiroz's team.

"When we came to this tournament we already knew every game would be difficult and we prepared for that," he said. "We're not a perfect team and we're not a mature team, so we're developing in every game we play."

"In each game the players are learning as well as getting the result and moving to the next step. Winning by small margins is important because winning is important no matter how we play."

"The players know that we are playing with persistence and they are trying each time to express our team concept. I want them to do the same thing tomorrow, to play aggressively and hopefully get the result."

The Iranians go into the game rated the leading team in Asia according to the FIFA Rankings and Moriyasu knows his young side will have to be at the top of their game to progress further having already seen off Saudi Arabia and Vietnam in the knockout rounds.

"Iran are a top class team, both in Asia and in the FIFA rankings and that has been shown at the Asian Cup," he said. "We respect every opponent, but it's about how we express our own football and utmost quality and that will be the same. In order to win we will play aggressively and I want

the players to do their utmost on the pitch.

"Football is a game about scoring goals, but before that you have to win the ball and I want my players to show their strong spirit around the ball and to win the ball. After that, we want to play both offensively and defensively."

Moriyasu will become the first person to win the AFC Asian Cup as both a player and as head coach should he take Japan past Iran and defeat either Qatar or the United Arab Emirates in Friday's final after the former midfielder won the title in 1992.

Iran and Japan faced off in the group phase of that tournament in Hiroshima, with Kazuyoshi Miura scoring the only goal, and Moriyasu is looking for his players to perform a similar feat on Monday.

"I hope the players here will play as well as we did in that game," he said. "When we compare the situations from when I was a player and now, there's a big difference."

"When I was a player, Japan was transitioning from amateurism to professionalism and at the first Asian Cup in Japan I felt the attention from the people was growing higher and higher each time we played. We had never won the title, so we had a lot of motivation."

"Now, the J. League has matured and more Japanese players are playing in the top leagues in Europe and abroad. But I think the mood of the national team and the fact they play as a unit, that has stayed the same after many years and the motivation of the players towards the national team is the same."

"But now winning is normal and the players have to play with a lot of pressure and that's the different part."

(Source: the-afc)

Preview - Semi-final: Iran v Japan



Al Ain: Ahead of the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 semi-final between two unbeaten giants of Asia, the-AFC.com looks at the key facts and history surrounding the eagerly-anticipated clash.

No Taremi for Team Melli
The major team news ahead of the semi-final is the enforced absence of Mehdi Taremi, who will miss Monday's clash through suspension having collected a second yellow card against China.

While card trouble has cost them the Al Gharafa star, who has scored three goals in UAE 2019, the Iranians will welcome back Vahid Amiri, while Yoshinuri Muto returns from suspension for Japan.

Outstanding yellow cards were erased following the quarter-finals, meaning only a red card in Monday's match will result in a player missing the final.

Statistical streaks: Beiranvand and Japan

Carlos Queiroz's Iran have become one of only three teams in history to go through their first five games at an AFC Asian Cup without conceding a goal, but the amazing record of goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand goes back even further.

The Persepolis shot-stopper has represented his country in 20 competitive matches (including UAE 2019 and FIFA World Cup qualifiers and finals) and conceded only four goals, keeping a remarkable 17 clean sheets, with only Portugal, Spain and Syria finding a way past him.

Japan have claimed a piece of statistical history of their own in the UAE. Hajime Moriyasu's side are the first ever to win five successive matches by a single-goal winning margin.

(Source: the-afc)

Omid Noorafkan joins Iran's Esteghlal

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Esteghlal football team from Iran have completed two signings in the January transfer window on Saturday.

Omid Noorafkan joined Esteghlal on a loan deal until the end of the season.

The 22-year-old defensive midfielder joined Belgian First Division A club Charleroi in the summer but returned to his former club on loan.

The Blues had already signed an 18-month deal with Bissau-Guinean forward Esmael Goncalves.

The details of the contract have not been revealed.

The 27-year-old striker has joined Esteghlal from Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor.

Goncalves started his playing career in Nice and has also played at Portuguese club Rio Ave, Cypriot Anorthosis Famagusta, Greek Veria and Scotland's Heart of Midlothian.

Though born in the Guinea-Bissau, Goncalves is a naturalized citizen of Portugal. He has represented Portugal at under-17 level.

Iran occupies 1st int'l seat in ANOC

IRNA — Iran's National Olympic Academy director Reza Qarakhlanu was elected as a member of Culture and Education Commission of International Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) on Sunday.

ANOC that has a sub-set of the Asian Olympic Council in each of the five continents, the European National Olympic Committees, the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa and the National Olympic Committees of Oceania, is responsible for protecting the goals of the Olympic Charter and communicating with the Olympics national committees of countries in each continent.

Malaysia stripped of 2019 world para swimming championships

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) on Sunday (Jan 27) stripped Malaysia of the right to host the 2019 world para swimming championships after the country banned Israeli athletes from participating.

The championships, a qualifier for the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics, had been scheduled for Kuching between Jul 29 and Aug 4.

The IPC said a new venue would be sought for the same dates, although there might have to be some flexibility in the light of circumstances.

"All World Championships must be open to all eligible athletes and nations to compete safely and free from discrimination," said IPC president Andrew Parsons in a statement after a meeting of the IPC governing board in London.

"When a host country excludes athletes from a particular nation, for political reasons, then we have absolutely no alternative but to look for a new Championships host."

Malaysia, a majority-Muslim country that does not maintain diplomatic relations with Israel, announced this month that it would bar Israelis from any event held in the Southeast Asia nation.

Israel had condemned the ban as "shameful" and said the decision was inspired by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's "rabid anti-Semitism".

Mahathir has for decades been accused of anti-Semitism for his attacks against Jews. In an interview last October, he described Jews as "hook-nosed" and blamed them for the troubles in the Middle East.

Some 600 swimmers from 60 countries had been expected to compete in the championships in the eastern state of Sarawak, with more than 160 titles to be won.

The IPC said all potential replacement hosts were asked to express an interest by Feb 11.

(Source: Channel News Asia)

Olympic downhill champion Svindal to retire after worlds

KITZBUEHEL, Austria (AP) — Aksel Lund Svindal said a few days ago he will not race anymore before the world championships in February.

Turns out he will not race anymore after the worlds, either. The Olympic downhill champion from Norway announced his retirement from ski racing Sunday.

Svindal, saying he plans to compete in the super-G on Feb. 6 and the downhill three days later at the championships in Are, Sweden, before calling it a career.

His persistent right knee injuries that hampered him in the last three years are preventing him from continuing.

"I will focus on the races in Are, they are my last races on top level," said the 36-year-old Svindal, who announced his decision on the fringes of the classic Hahnenkamm event. "The decision has come over the last few weeks. Now I can give it all one more time and then it's over."

Svindal skipped this weekend's races to rest his knee and he will also sit out next week's speed events in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany.

While visiting Sunday's super-G race, he said farewell to the thousands of ski fans along the Streif course.

"Ciao, thanks, it was an honor," said an emotional Svindal, who has won four Olympic and eight world championship medals, and earned the overall World Cup title twice in 2007 and 2009.

While he returned from severe injuries many times in his 17-year World Cup career, the damage to his right knee after a frightening downhill crash in Kitzbuehel in 2016 proved too much.

He tore his ACL and meniscus, but still managed a return to top-level racing. He even won the Olympic downhill in Pyeongchang a year ago, but was in so much constant pain that he considered quitting last summer.



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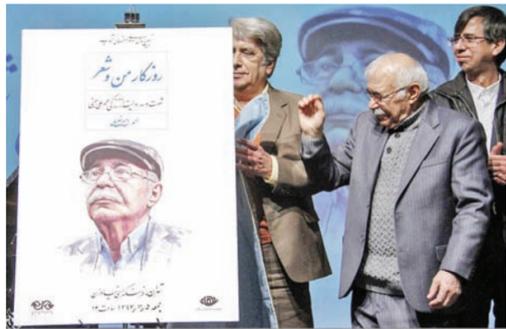
The envy of a friend is a sign of the weakness of his friendship.

Imam Ali (AS)

Book recounts 63 stories on songwriter Mohammad-Ali Bahmani

A R T TEHRAN — A book containing 63 stories from 76-year-old songwriter Mohammad-Ali Bahmani's life has recently been published.

"Me and Poetry Age" authored by young lyricist Ahmad Amir-Khalili was unveiled during a ceremony at the Niavaran Cultural Center in Tehran on Friday.



Songwriter Mohammad-Ali Bahmani (2nd R) unveils a poster for lyricist Ahmad Amir-Khalili book's "Me and Poetry Age" at Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center on January 25, 2019. (Honaronline/Hassan Motahhari)

In his remarks made earlier last week, Amir-Khalili said that biographical writings are not useful for literature and added, "With an artistic view, I wrote Mr. Bahmani's memories of various topics in story writing style."

He said that he began his career in poetry in 2011 when he met Bahmani.

"He narrated the memories during evening parties. In my opinion, he is the sole person who began poetry at nine and has lived a poetic life until today when he is 76. All Bahmani's life has been blended with poetry and he has breathed every moment with poetry over these years," Amir-Khalili mentioned.

Amir-Khalili said that four types of Bahmani's poems inspired "Me and Poetry Age", which was published by Negah Publications.

"The poems that produced certain outcomes, the poems that were composed as a result of certain accidents, the poems that were dedicated to certain persons, and the poems that offered an excuse for an emotional, social or political dialogue," he stated.

Amir-Khalili, 30, published his first collection "Wanted" in 2014.

Songs composed by Bahmani have been acknowledged by Iranian singers, both those who live in Iran and those who are in exile.

House of Music Celebration honors educational, research books

A R T TEHRAN — The 19th edition of Iran's House of Music Celebration was dedicated to honoring best books on education, research and translation.

The celebration is annually held to honor Iran's top musical products.

The honoring ceremony attended by House of Music director Hamidreza Nurbakhsh and a number of veteran musicians took place at Tehran's Eyvan Shams Hall on Saturday night.

"The Structure of Melody in Iranian Music" written by Mohammadreza Azadefar was introduced the best book of the year in the research section.

The award for best translation went to "A History of Western Music". Kamran Ghabrai is the translator of the book co-authored by Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca.

"60 Chaharmezrabs for Tar" by Ali Kazemi also won the award in the education section.

Last year, Nurbakhsh announced a plan to establish an office to protect the rights of musical products in Iran, however this year he informed that the office has been established to pursue any appeal or complaint by musicians.

"The House of Music makes its greatest efforts to remove the obstacles and protect musicians' rights. We should not forget we are members of a body and must follow the interests of all members," he said.



Pop singer Simin Ghanem (R) accepts her lifetime achievement award from Tehran City Council member Ahmad Masjed-Jamei during the House of Music Celebration at Tehran's Eyvan Shams Hall on January 26, 2019. (ILNA/Alireza Ramezani)

Santur player Mina Oftadeh, songwriter Fatemeh Rezaei, and pop singer Simin Ghanem also received lifetime achievement awards at the celebration.

Book Toon receives submissions from 73 countries

A R T TEHRAN — About 500 cartoonists from 73 countries have submitted their works to the 4th edition of the Book Toon, Iran's international cartoon biennial on books.

This year's biennial will focus on the connection between books and topics such as city, life, family, children and media, the secretary of the biennial, Masud Shojaei-Tabatabai, said in a press conference held at the Iran Public Libraries Foundation on Sunday.

Most of the cartoonists are from Turkey, Indonesia and China, he added.

In addition, the biennial has received works from 237 Iranian cartoonists this year.

Michael Kountouris, the founding member of the Greek Cartoonists Association, will attend the biennial.

Iranian cartoonist Saman Torabi, Alireza Pakdel and Bahman Abdi and Mikhail Zlatkovsky from Russia and Hicabi Demirci from Turkey are the members of the jury.



Iran Public Libraries Foundation CEO Alireza Mokhtarpar (L) and secretary of the Book Toon Masud Shojaei-Tabatabai attend a press conference in Tehran on January 27, 2019. (Tasnim/Mohammad Hassanzadeh)

Shojaei-Tabatabai said that the biennial will be held in Tehran sometime between February 20 and March 20.

Veteran graphic designer Ebrahim Haqiqi still dreaming of making films

A R T TEHRAN — The 69-year-old Iranian graphic designer Ebrahim Haqiqi, who is scheduled to receive a lifetime achievement award from the 37th Fajr Film Festival, has said that he still wishes to become a filmmaker.

"I almost achieved everything I have always wanted but I still have a dream to fulfil. I wish I could make a film but considering the way Iranian cinema works, it seems impossible," he told the Persian service of ISNA on Sunday.

"To achieve their goals, I believe, people have to fight, maintain a business or play. The people who play are those whose inner child is still alive," he stated.

"I also play, sometimes I just change my toys and when I play I am really happy... but there is still a dream of becoming a filmmaker for my inner child," he added.

Haqiqi will receive the lifetime achievement award from the Fajr Film Festival for the posters he has created for



Iranian graphic designer Ebrahim Haqiqi in an undated photo.

Iranian movies over his career spanning for over a half a century.

"Producers don't care about the artistic elements in film posters," he lamented and added, "They are just satisfied with posters that bear images of the superstars of their films."

Fajr festival to screen children's movies

A R T TEHRAN — Five children's movies by Iranian filmmakers will go on screen on the sidelines of the 37th Fajr Film Festival, the Farabi Cinema Foundation announced on Tuesday.

Acclaimed movies "Stammer" by Mohammadreza Hajjigholami, "Knockout" by Gholamreza Ramezani and the award-winning animation "The Last Fiction" by Ashkan Rahgozar will go on screen in a section entitled "Simorgh and Butterflies".

"Pastarioni" by Soheyl Movaffaq and "Benjamin"

by Mohsen Enayati will also be screened during the five-day program, which will run from February 2 to 6.

The screenings are free for children and schoolchildren.

The program has been organized for the second time to support children's films.

The 37th Fajr Film Festival will take place in Tehran and several other Iranian cities from January 30 to February 11.



A scene from "Stammer" by Mohammadreza Hajjigholami.

Judge OKs new Harvey Weinstein lawyers who once represented accuser

NEW YORK (Reuters) — A New York state judge on Friday approved Harvey Weinstein's overhaul of his legal team to defend him against criminal sexual assault charges, though two of his new lawyers represented one of the disgraced Hollywood mogul's most vocal accusers, actress Rose McGowan.

At a Manhattan court hearing, Weinstein told Judge James Burke he accepted the potential conflicts of interest that Jose Baez and Ronald Sullivan might have from recently representing McGowan in a Virginia drug possession case, where she pleaded no contest.

The judge said McGowan had accused Weinstein of having cocaine planted in her wallet, and his new lawyers might have email evidence where he supposedly wrote about it.

"He was commenting on the absurdity of the allegations," Weinstein's former lawyer Benjamin Brafman told Burke, referring to Weinstein and the alleged email evidence.

But the judge cautioned Weinstein his new lawyers "might not cross-examine Ms. McGowan as vigorously as they might otherwise" if she testified at his trial, which is not expected. Weinstein said he understood.

Weinstein has pleaded not guilty to five criminal charges, and could face life



Film producer Harvey Weinstein departs after a hearing to change his counsel at New York Supreme court in the Manhattan borough of New York City, New York, U.S., January 25, 2019. (Reuters/Carlo Allegri)

in prison if convicted.

"He is innocent," Baez told reporters after the hearing. "He should be entitled to the same presumption as anyone else."

More than 70 women have accused Weinstein of sexual misconduct. He has denied all accusations and said any contact was consensual.

Weinstein's case helped launch the #MeToo movement, in which dozens of powerful men in entertainment, politics and other fields were accused of sexual misconduct.

On Jan. 7, a not guilty plea was entered in a Massachusetts court on behalf of Oscar-winning actor Kevin Spacey to assaulting an 18-year-old man in 2016.

Berlin auctioneer expects British, Russian interest in Hitler watercolours

BERLIN (Reuters) — The pictures - three anemic watercolours showing a mountain scene, a river and a distant figure sat beneath a tree - are little different from wares on sale at flea markets the world over, except for the autograph scratched in the corner: "A.Hitler".

But it is thanks to that attribution to Germany's wartime Nazi leader, guilty of some of the worst crimes in history, that a Berlin auction house hopes a sale on Thursday afternoon will net thousands of euros for the family selling them.

"They are watercolours by Adolf Hitler," said Heinz-Joachim Maeder, a spokesman for Kloss auctioneers. "In my view they have no artistic value - it's simply adequate craftsmanship. The value of these objects and the media interest is because of the name at the bottom."

Before the outbreak of World War One, in which he fought, a penniless Hitler eked out a living as a jobbing painter in Munich, churning out dozens of postcards and paintings for petty cash.

His earlier dream of becoming an artist was dashed when the young man twice failed to pass the entrance exam for the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts.

"If you walk down the Seine and see 100 artists, 80 will be better than this," Maeder said.

The paintings' elderly sellers did not want to be identified.



A signature is seen on a watercolour of an unknown landscape attributed to former German dictator Adolf Hitler, before an auction at Kloos house at a starting bid of 4,000 Euro (4,548 US Dollars) in Berlin, Germany, January 24, 2019. (Reuters/Fabrizio Bensch)

Hundreds of Hitler artworks are known to exist, though most are held by the United States Army, which confiscated them after the allies defeated his regime at the end of World War Two. That collection is never exhibited.

There are also many forgeries in circulation, though these three paintings have been authenticated by a U.S.-based handwriting expert Frank Garo, whose certificate of authenticity noted the autograph "shows spontaneity, proper letter size... and no sign of being drawn or forced."

The auction house expects strong demand from online bidders in Britain, Scandinavia, the United States and, above all, Russia.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iranian Academy of Arts to review motifs in Achaemenid art

A R T TEHRAN — The Iranian Academy of Arts plans to review artistic motifs used during the Achaemenids, members of the ruling house of ancient Persia from 550 BC to 330 BC, in a workshop on Wednesday.

The workshop, which is open to the public, will be held by Iranian scholar Saba Latifpur, the academy announced on Sunday.

Fajr theater festival announces jury for national competition

A R T TEHRAN — The 37th Fajr International Theater Festival announced the jury for the national competition on Sunday.

Actress Elham Korda and directors Reza Guran and Hossein Mosafer-Astaneh are the members of the jury.

The festival will be held in Tehran from February 11 to 23.

Photo: This combination photo shows the jury members for the national competition at the 37th Fajr International Theater Festival Reza Guran (L), Elham Korda (C) and Hossein Mosafer-Astaneh.