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Nominee for health minister gets vote of confidence

POLITICS d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Lawmakers on Monday gave their vote of confidence to President Hassan Rouhani's health minister nominee, Saeed Namaki. During an open session of the parliament, the president took the podium to defend his choice, who was later approved with 229 in favor, 25 against and 4 abstentions. Namaki has served as the

scientific, cultural, and social deputy chief of the Planning and Budget Organization. The former health minister, Hassan Qazizadeh-Hashemi, resigned last month after a row over the budget allocated to his department. According to the budget bill proposed for the next fiscal year, 350 trillion rials (about \$8.3 billion) will be allocated to the health sector.

50,000 prisoners to be pardoned on Revolution anniversary

POLITICS d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Republic will pardon or commute prison terms of fifty thousand inmates on the fortieth anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, Iran's top judge announced on Monday.

In a meeting with senior judicial

officials, Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larjani said many of these inmates will be freed and the others' prison terms will be commuted. Article 110 of the Constitution grants the Leader the right to pardon or reduce the sentences of convicts upon a recommendation from Judiciary chief.

Russia: European recognition of Guaido foreign meddling in Venezuela

Nine European nations joined the United States in recognizing opposition leader Juan Guaido as Venezuela's interim president Monday, heightening a global showdown over Nicolas Maduro's socialist rule. France, Spain, Germany, Britain, Portugal, Sweden, Denmark, Austria and the Netherlands' coordinated move came after the expiry of an eight-day ultimatum for Maduro to call a new election. The Venezuelan leader, accused of running the OPEC nation of 30 million

people like a dictatorship and wrecking its economy, has defied them and said European rulers are sycophantically following President Donald Trump. Guaido, who leads the National Assembly, declared himself caretaker leader last month in a move splitting international powers and bringing Venezuelans onto the streets. Trump immediately recognized him but European Union nations were nervous over the global precedent. **→13**

Govt, politicians in Afghanistan on the warpath over talks with Taliban

By Syed Zafar Mehdi

TEHRAN — Afghanistan's politicians are on the warpath with government over peace talks with the Taliban, a situation that threatens to disrupt the fragile political environment in the run up to general elections in July. After refusing to hold talks with Afghan officials for very long, the insurgent group has finally agreed to talk to Afghan politicians, excluding President Ashraf Ghani, in Moscow this week, which has created a sense of unease in Kabul's presidential palace. President Ghani's supporters feel the decision of Afghan politicians to hold deliberations with the Taliban, while sidelining the elected Afghan government, will provide legitimacy to the group and undermine the national unity government

(NUG), which is already in tatters. A delegation of Afghan Taliban from its Qatari office led by Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai is expected to hold talks with a motley group of Afghan politicians in Moscow this week, most likely on Tuesday or Wednesday. Among those who have confirmed participation in the talks include former president Hamid Karzai, presidential candidate Hanif Atmar, former Balkh governor Ata Mohammad Noor, leader of Hezbe e Wahdat Mohammad Mohaqeq, besides others. Noor tweeted that he would attend the talks "alongside few prominent Afghan leaders", adding that the talks will be a "pathway towards strengthening peace efforts" in the country. Atmar said he supports Afghan-owned peace talks and will "push

for inclusion of Afghan government" in the talks. While the stage has been set for the high-profile Moscow summit, the political climate in Kabul is not favorable. President Ghani's supporters believe that if Afghan politicians, many of them Ghani's rivals in upcoming elections, take part in talks with the Taliban, his government would risk losing credibility and that would adversely affect his re-election bid. Afghan foreign ministry has termed it a "political drama" and deputy foreign minister Idrees Zaman took to Twitter to denounce the talks. "From the meetings in the lawns of Peshawar's Governor house to the sittings in Moscow and collective dementia of our political elite. Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it," he wrote. **→6**

Change never comes from within!

By Mahmood Khaghani

TEHRAN — It is often said that change never comes from within. So I am pleased to report that the presentation by Chris Cook, Senior Research Fellow of the Institute for Strategy, Resilience and Security, University College London at the Iranian and Tehran Chambers of Commerce on Sunday about Energy Fintech: Introducing the ECO, introduced refreshing innovations in the energy field. H E. Ambassador Dr. Shams Ardakani, convened and chaired the meeting, and in introducing Mr. Cook made clear his view of the necessity for a new energy paradigm for Iran, capable of addressing the era of 'hard oil' he identifies, as oil that is easy to extract

becomes scarcer, and the energy intensity of oil extraction increases. Perhaps the most important message conveyed by Mr. Cook was that Iran should adopt a 21st Century energy strategy based not on conventional economics of 'least \$ or Euro cost' — but as with Denmark, after the 1973 oil shock - an assumption of 'least carbon fuel cost'. That is to say, that Iran should maximize the delivery of energy services such as heat/cooling, power, and transport for any given use of Iran's raw energy commodities. He then outlined how innovative risk, cost, surplus and data sharing agreements come together with simple energy instru-

ments of energy swaps (eg gas for power) and the Energy Credit Obligation (ECO) as what he describes as Fintech Version Two (2.0). That is to say, the next generation of financial technology which is currently emerging from the initial blockchain and coin innovations which comprise Fintech Version One (1.0). There were numerous excellent questions and much discussion, and one of the key points which emerged was that there is a misconception that the proposed ECO will in some way compete with existing financial instruments traded on the Iran Stock Exchange and particularly on the Energy Bourse (IRENEX), which is noted for innovation in this field. **→4**



ARTICLE

Hanif Ghaffari
Political analyst

Business disorder between Europe and U.S.

The European Union remains cautious in the economic battle with the White House. U.S. President Donald Trump continues to pursue his protectionist policies in international trade system. This has led to raising concerns and serious discontent among the United States' European partners.

Disputes between the United States and other countries around the world are continuing on trade and economic issues. The fact is that U.S. President Donald Trump intends to exacerbate tensions until the presidential elections of 2020. Many international experts and analysts believe that a major part of the economic approach to the world of Trump has an electoral and political goal. Many international analysts now talk about the conflicts between the United States and Europe over imposing sweeping steel and aluminum tariffs as a transatlantic "trade war".

Conflicts that may extend in the near future and affect the widespread relations between Washington and Europe.

On the other hand, the authorities of Germany, Britain and France have not taken a proper approach to the policies of the President of the United States. Though politicians such as Emmanuel Macron, Angela Merkel and Theresa May seek to manage the situation and prevent the exacerbation of tensions with Washington, but people, business owners and European opposition parties are so angry at Trump and the U.S. government that the European troika's authorities aren't capable to control or even hide it.

One of the most important reasons for the continuation of Trump's economic policies in the world is the passivity of European leaders against the White House. Under such circumstances, Europe has threatened to retaliate against the U.S. if Trump imposes steel and aluminum tariffs on European exports.

After Trump made his first announcement on the tariffs, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker threatened to put tariffs on American goods in response to Trump's decision. That could decrease demand for those products inside EU borders and consequently lead to U.S. workers losing their jobs. But practically, European countries did not do anything about this. **→7**



ARTICLE

Syed Zafar Mehdi
Journalist from New Delhi

Imam's triumphant return and Islamic Revolution

One day in Paris, during Imam Khomeini's exile, there was an important phone call from Tehran. It was Dr. Syed Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti on the line, Imam's close aide and the martyr of Haft Tir tragedy.

"For Imam's reception, we have arranged an elaborate program. Tell Imam that we will roll carpet at the airport, decorate it with lights, and the parade will pass from Mehrabad Airport to Behesht-e Zahra by helicopter," he told Firdousi Pur, who was in charge of Imam's office in Paris.

When Firdousi Pur informed Imam about it, he listened carefully and with a characteristic grin said: "Go and tell the men that they are not welcoming Cyrus to Iran. This is not necessary at all! A student has left Iran and the same student is returning to Iran. I want to be among my people and go with them, even if I get trampled upon."

The flight back home after 14 years in exile was unarguably the most important journey undertaken by the founder of the Islamic revolution. All eyes were on him and his arrival in Tehran, even as nationwide protests against the Pahlavi regime and confrontation between protestors and military forces raged on.

Before heading home, Imam issued a brief statement thanking the French government. "I leave your country to go and serve my country," read the note.

Two weeks prior to Imam's triumphant homecoming, West-backed despotic ruler Reza Shah Pahlavi had fled the country, appointing his lackey Shahpour Bakhtiar as the head of caretaker regime. The popular uprising in Iran against the Pahlavi regime had forced Pahlavi to escape.

On board a chartered Air France Boeing 747, Imam sat quietly, surrounded by his close aides, a bunch of journalists and younger son Ahmad Khomeini.

Peter Jennings, a Canadian-American journalist who anchored a prime time show on ABC World News, asked him: "What do you feel?" Imam answered: "Nothing!" He asked again, the answer was same. **→6**



Director Narges Abyar (L) and actors Hutan Shakiba (C) and Shabnam Moqaddami attend a press conference for "The Night When the Moon Was Full".

Fajr festival movie recounts true love story of rebel Rigi

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The 37th Fajr Film Festival has premiered director Narges Abyar's latest drama "The Night When the Moon Was Full" about a true love story of Abdul-Hamid Rigi, a member of the Jundallah terrorist group.

The film tells the story of Abdul-Hamid Rigi, the younger brother of Abdul-Malik Rigi, the founder and leader of the Jundallah terrorist group in southeastern Iran, who marries Faezeh Mansuri, a woman from Tehran. **→16**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

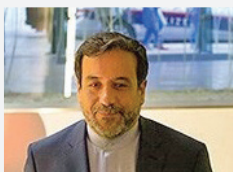


Iran to launch Friendship satellite into space

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Information and Communications Technology Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi said on Monday that Iran's new satellite, called Doosti (Friendship), is ready to be launched into the space.

"Soon we will have good news for the people because the Doosti satellite is ready and we are waiting for the final say of the Defense Ministry to put it into the earth's orbit," Azari Jahromi said as he inaugurated an ICT park in Mashad.

According to IRNA, he added the Iranian youth have built several satellites over the past couple of years.



Araqchi visits Paris for political talks

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi left Tehran for Paris on Monday to hold the sixth round of political talks with French officials.

He plans to meet with Secretary-General of the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs Maurice Gourdault-Montagne on Tuesday.

The fifth round of Iran-France political talks was held on June 20, 2018.

Araqchi started a European tour on January 28 by first visiting Austria and Slovakia prior to his trip to Bulgaria.

He met with International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Yukiya Amano in Vienna while in Austria.



'Iran bears message of peace and friendship'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi, a senior spokesman for the Iranian armed forces, said on Sunday that Iran bears "message of peace and friendship and not war or bloodshed".

"Iran defends nations and countries. We do not intend any aggression like the U.S.," he told IRNA.

He added, "The Islamic Republic of Iran manufactures any equipment it needs to defend the country and does not need anyone's permission."



Tehran denounces terror attack on pilgrims bus in Iraq

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Sunday voiced his deep regret over a terrorist attack on a bus carrying Iranian pilgrims in the Iraqi city of Balad, which led to the death and injury of a number of them.

In a statement, Qassemi strongly condemned the "brutal" and "inhumane" attack, saying Iran's Foreign Ministry and its embassy in Baghdad are looking into the incident and the condition of the wounded, the Foreign Ministry website reported.

The terrorists "think they can damage the strong bonds between the Iranian and Iraqi nations by committing such inhumane crimes, but they won't achieve their ominous goals," he stated.



Route to amend the constitution is open, ex-lawmaker says

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A former senior lawmaker believes the route to amend the constitution is open, but the central tenets of Islamic principles and republicanism cannot be changed.

In an interview with the Iran newspaper published on Monday, Mohammad Reza Bahonar said due to a lack of experience when writing the constitution, certain parts of the constitution had to be changed, which occurred 10 years after the Islamic Republic was established.

"Also, ten years from now, there might be a need for some amendments," he said, adding that such changes are natural and there's no problem in this regard.



Three fuel-smuggling cartels disbanded in Fars province

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Intelligence Ministry said on Monday that its forces have dismantled three major fuel-smuggling cartels in Marvdasht, Kazerun and Lamerd counties in the southern Fars province, Mehr reported.

In a statement, the Intelligence Ministry announced that the cartels were involved in smuggling 17 million liters of fuel, such as petrol and diesel, selling their consignments to foreign elements on the other side of the border in Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The statement added that five key members of the cartel were arrested during the operation.

The devaluation of Iran's national currency in recent months has turned fuel smuggling to a lucrative business.

'Zarif says INSTEX is not related to FATF'



FM Zarif at a meeting of the Majlis security committee

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — An MP said on Monday that Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that INSTEX (Instrument for Supporting Trade Exchanges) is not related to the Financial Action Task Force, ISNA reported.

Ali Najafi, spokesman for the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said that during a meeting of the committee Zarif said that Iran will not accept linking INSTEX to the FATF.

He added Zarif described Europe's move in formulating the financial mechanism to skirt the U.S. sanctions to do business with Iran as a "positive step".

On Thursday, France, Germany and Britain officially announced the creation of INSTEX, a special purpose vehicle aimed at facilitating legitimate trade between European economic operators and Iran.

The European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, French Foreign Minister

Jean-Yves Le Drian, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas and British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt issued a statement saying the INSTEX will support legitimate European trade with Iran.

It added that INSTEX will function under the highest international standards with regards to anti-money laundering, combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) and EU and UN sanctions compliance.

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

According to CNBC, Mogherini said in Bucharest, Romania, at a meeting of the bloc that the EU is "fully behind the full implementation of the Iran nuclear deal."

Baghdad to Trump: Iraq not a place to 'watch Iran'

Barham Salih: Trump did not ask Iraq's permission to monitor Iran

Iraqi President Barham Salih said on Monday that Donald Trump did not ask permission to station U.S. troops in Iraq to "watch Iran".

It follows an interview in which the U.S. president said America had "spent a fortune" on building a military base in Iraq and "one of the reasons I want to keep it is because I want to be looking a little bit at Iran because Iran is a real problem".

Trump was answering questions on his commitment to reduce U.S. military presence in the Middle East.

When asked if he was keeping troops in Iraq because he wanted to launch a strike against Iran, Trump said: "No, because I want to be able to watch Iran. All I want to do is be able to watch."

"We have an unbelievable and expensive military base built in Iraq. It's perfectly situated for looking at all over different parts of the troubled Middle East."

"Rather than pulling up, and this is what a lot of people don't understand, we're going to keep watching."

But the Iraqi president said Trump did not ask Iraq's permission to carry out such monitoring.

Speaking at a forum in Baghdad, Salih said U.S. troops were in Iraq as part of an agreement between the two countries with a specific mission of combating "terrorism" - and that they should stick to that, Sky News reported.

According to al Jazeera, Salih said any action taken outside that framework is "unacceptable".

According to Sky News, Salih said, "Don't overburden Iraq with your own issues. The U.S. is a major power... but do not pursue your own policy priorities, we live here."

Iraq is in a difficult position as tensions between its two biggest allies, the United States and Iran, increase.

Salih added, "It is of fundamental interest for Iraq to have good relations with Iran and other neighboring countries."

■ Abadi slams Trump remarks about use of Iraqi territory to "watch" Iran

On Sunday, former Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al Abadi also criticized remarks by Trump, the Iraqi News reported.

"The recent remarks about the use of American military bases in Iraq to target neighboring countries contradicts with the Iraqi constitution and agreements

President Salih tells Trump: "Don't overburden Iraq with your own issues... do not pursue your own policy priorities, we live here."

signed with the U.S.," Iraqi Al-Taghier TV channel quoted Abadi's media office as saying in a statement on Monday.

Abadi added that the U.S. participation in the anti-Islamic State international coalition is mainly meant to serve the purposes of logistic support, intelligence and military training, not to endanger Iraqi sovereignty.

Abadi further called on the government to affirm Iraq's unshakable stance that "Iraqi territory cannot be used against any neighboring country or any party."

■ Amar Hakim: We consider Trump's remarks as threat to our security'

Amar Hakim, leader of the Iraqi National Alliance, also reacted to remarks by Trump, saying Baghdad "definitely" will not allow any country to use its soil to settle an account with others.

"We oppose that Iraq be used as a place to watch neighboring countries or provoke these countries or attack these countries," Hakim wrote on his twitter post.

According to the constitution, Hakim said, Iraq must not threaten the security and stability of the region and the world.

"We consider such remarks as a threat to our national interests and security of our country and Baghdad will never allow such a thing," the political figure remarked.

"Use of American military bases in Iraq to target neighboring countries contradicts with the Iraqi constitution," former Iraqi PM Haider al Abadi warns Trump.

Hatami: Iran unshaken to advance defense capabilities



POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Monday that Iran is unwavering in its firm decision to promote its defense capabilities.

"We assure the great Iranian great that we will not back down from defending the people, our land, causes of Imam Khomeini and also following the Leader's guidelines and will have no fear for promoting our defense capabilities," ILNA quoted Hatami as saying.

The brigadier general added Iran will make more advances through maintaining unity and using scientific capacities.

In recent years, Iran has made great achievements in its defense sector and attained self-sufficiency in producing es-

sential military equipment and systems. Iranian officials have always stressed that the country's military and arms programs are for defense purposes and should not be perceived as a threat to any other country.

The Iranian Armed Forces have recently test-fired different types of newly-developed missiles and torpedoes and tested a large number of home-made weapons, tools and equipment, including submarines, military ships, artillery, choppers, aircrafts, UAVs and air defense and electronic systems during massive military drills, Fars news agency reported.

Just on Saturday the Defense Ministry unveiled surface-to-surface Hoveyzeh missile with a range of 1,350 kilometers.

Hoveyzeh missile can reach Israel undetected: Israeli report



By staff and agency

DEBKAFfile, an Israeli military intelligence website, has said that Iran's new Hoveyzeh cruise missile can reach Israel without being detected.

"Iran is confident that neither the United States nor Israel has the answer to this threat. And indeed, say our military experts, no military force in the world has so far found an effective means of intercepting cruise missiles before they strike, unless they are of short range," said the Israeli report.

On Saturday, Iran unveiled a long-range surface-to-surface cruise missile designed and built by experts at the Defense Ministry's Aerospace Industries Organization.

The missile, with a flight range of more than 1,350 kilometers, was showcased as Iran is marking the 40th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Hoveyzeh is the name of a city in southwestern province of Khuzestan known for its resistance during Saddam Hussein's war against Iran in the 1980s.

Speaking at the ceremony, Defense Minister Amir Hatami described the missile as "a symbol of self-confidence" and said it is a major defense achievement that indicates Iran's advances in military technologies.

The missile proves that nothing can block the Iranian nation's determination to develop its defense sector, the minister added.

Israel not ready for war with Lebanon: Hezbollah

Sheikh Naim Qassem, the deputy secretary general of Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement, has stressed that Israel is not ready for a confrontation with Lebanon.

"I don't think Israel is ready to start a conflict with Lebanon now because the situation is complicated and Israel is not interested in war," Sheikh Qassem said in an interview with a Lebanese TV channel on Sunday.

"But if it wants to launch a war, we are ready," he added.

Qassem also dismissed allegations made earlier in the day by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Hezbollah controlled the new government in Lebanon, "and thus Iran controls it."

"These allegations are not important. Hezbollah considers itself part of a national unity government in Lebanon," the cleric said.

The senior Hezbollah leader noted that only three of Lebanon's new government ministers are members of Hezbollah. "We are only 10 percent," he said.

Late in January, Lebanon's presidency announced the formation of a new government, putting an end to a nine-month stalemate on the political stage.

The breakthrough came after rival factions worked out a compromise allowing representation of Sunni lawmakers backed by the Hezbollah resistance movement.

Rival political groups had been locked in disagreement over the make-up of a new government since May, after the country's first parliamentary elections in nine years.

Hezbollah has taken three cabinet posts in the new government, the largest number of portfolios it has ever held.



The movement has received the health portfolio, the first time Hezbollah has controlled a ministry with a big budget. The resistance movement has chosen Jamil Jabak as the new health minister, despite the fact that he is not a member of the movement.

Reports have attributed Hezbollah's bigger role in Lebanon's new cabinet to Syria war gains.

Hezbollah forces have been assisting the Syrian government on the ground to clear areas bordering Lebanon from terrorist groups.

"This transformation is because Hezbollah has accumulated an excess of power after it has nearly finished with the military battles in Syria," Salem Zahran, an analyst with links

to Hezbollah leaders, said.

"I believe that Hezbollah will build up even more involvement in the Lebanese state," he added. Briefing a delegation of United Nations leaders who are in Israel on a mission headed by Israel's UN envoy Danny Danon, Netanyahu also spoke about an operation which Israel launched with the aim of "cutting off" Hezbollah tunnels near the occupied territories.

"Just as we stopped the tunnels, we will stop all acts of aggression from Lebanon, Syria or Iran," the Israeli premier said.

Last week, Hezbollah head Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah openly mocked Israel's claims that it had discovered secret tunnels used by the

group on the border between Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territories.

He said Israel was deeply wrong to think that the closure of tunnels would save it from future attacks by the resistance movement.

"What surprises us is that the Israelis were late to discover these tunnels ... some of those tunnels preceded the 2006 war," Nasrallah said.

■ Lebanese stage anti-Israel protest along border

About 60 Hezbollah supporters rode motorbikes along Lebanon's southern border with Israel on Sunday afternoon to express support for Hezbollah and protest against Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty.

Their slogan was "To al-Quds on millions of cross bikes."

"We're ready if you ask," one of the convoy members said, referring to Nasrallah. "If you want us on cross [motorbikes], then we are at your service."

Since the end of the 2006 war, Israeli forces have regularly violated Lebanese airspace and made incursions into its territory.

Israel is building a 130-kilometer-long border wall with Lebanon, parts of which Beirut says are located on disputed border points.

Hezbollah was founded in the 1980s following the Israeli invasion and occupation of southern Lebanon.

The movement waged a long resistance campaign against Israeli forces and pushed them out of southern Lebanon in May 2000. Since then, the group has grown into a powerful military force. Israel also suffered a humiliating defeat from Hezbollah in the 2006 war.

(Source: Press TV)

Pope Francis makes history with Muslim dialogue in UAE



Pope Francis, the first leader of the world's 1.3 billion Catholics to visit the Arabian Peninsula, will attend an interfaith meeting in the UAE Monday as part of his outreach to Muslims.

The pope's highly publicized 48-hour visit to the United Arab Emirates will also include an open-air mass on Tuesday for 135,000 of the Muslim country's million Catholic residents.

The pontiff, who made history when he touched down in Abu Dhabi on Sunday night, said he came "as a brother, in order to write a page of dialogue together, and to travel paths of peace together."

The pope is expected to raise the issue of Yemen, devastated by a war in which the UAE is a key player, with Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Mohammad bin Zayed.

Yemen is home to what the U.N. calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis, triggered by the intervention of the Arab coalition in a war between the government and Houthi rebels.

More than 10 million Yemenis now risk imminent starvation. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Tayeb – imam of Cairo's Al-Azhar, Sunni Islam's prestigious seat of learning – greeted the pope with an embrace Sunday night as the pontiff arrived in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi. The emirate's crown prince was also at the airport to greet the pontiff, who has made strengthening ties between Christianity and Islam a cornerstone of his papacy.

Hours before he flies back to Rome Tuesday, the pope will lead a mass in a stadium in the capital, which local media say will be the largest public gathering ever in the UAE.

The UAE has dubbed 2019 its "year of tolerance," but rights groups have criticized the country for its role in Yemen, where an estimated 10,000 people have been killed since coalition joined the Yemeni government's fight against the Houthis in 2015.

Rights groups have also urged the pope to raise the issue of Ahmad Mansoor, an Emirati activist serving a 10-year prison term.

Before heading to the Gulf Sunday, Pope Francis urged warring parties in Yemen to respect a truce agreement and allow deliveries of food aid.

"The population is exhausted by the lengthy conflict and a great many children are suffering from hunger, but cannot access food depots," he said. "The cry of these children and their parents rises up to God."

The pope and his host Sheikh Mohammad are also expected to discuss "terrorism" and violence.

The UAE, which prides itself on its religious tolerance and cultural diversity, is a member of the U.S.-led coalition battling Daesh (ISIL) in both Syria and Iraq.

The UAE has eight Catholic churches. Oman, Kuwait and Yemen each have four. Qatar and Bahrain have one each, while Sunni powerhouse Saudi Arabia bans all non-Muslim places of worship. Muslims make up nearly four fifths of the UAE's population, but the country is also home to nearly a million Catholics, according to the Apostolic Vicariate of Southern Arabia.

Migrants from Asian countries make up about 65 percent of the population.

(Source: Daily Star)

U.S. envoy, South Korean official discuss 2nd Trump-Kim summit

The U.S. special envoy for North Korea met with South Korea's national security adviser Monday to discuss a planned second summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, Seoul's presidential office said.

Stephen Biegun explained to Chung Eui-yong Washington's stance toward North Korea ahead of talks on setting up the summit, the presidential Blue House said in a statement.

There is speculation that Biegun will meet his North Korean counterpart at the Korean border village of Panmunjom or in North Korea's capital, Pyongyang, this week.

The Blue House did not specifically say what was discussed during Monday's meeting, but said Chung told Biegun that South Korea hopes the planning talks between the U.S. and North Korea will pave the way for a successful summit. Biegun arrived in Seoul on Sunday and also held talks with South Korean Foreign Ministry official Lee Do-hoon.

Trump and Kim met last June in Singapore, where they issued vague aspirational goals for a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula without describing when or how it would occur. Post-summit nuclear negotiations between the United States and North Korea have been rocky, with the countries disagreeing on which should come first – North Korea's nuclear disarmament or the removal of U.S.-led international sanctions against the North. In an interview with CBS' "Face the Nation," Trump said the second summit "is set" with Kim, but provided no further details. He said there was "a very good chance that we will make a deal."

South Korea didn't say whether Biegun and South Korean officials discussed the possibility of partially easing the sanctions on North Korea to allow more inter-Korean cooperation and create more space for nuclear diplomacy.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who held three summits with Kim last year and helped set up the first Trump-Kim meeting, has described inter-Korean reconciliation as crucial for resolving the nuclear standoff. But the tough sanctions have limited the range of joint activities the two Koreas can undertake.

The Koreans have discussed ambitious plans, such as reconnecting railways and roads across their border, resuming operations at a jointly run factory park in a North Korean border town and restarting South Korean tours to the North's Diamond Mountain resort. But none is possible unless the sanctions are eased, which Washington says won't happen unless North Korea takes stronger steps toward irreversibly and verifiably relinquishing its nuclear weapons.

In his New Year's speech last month, Kim urged more cooperation between the Koreans and said the North is ready to reopen the factory park and resume joint tours to the resort.

Last year, North Korea released American detainees, suspended nuclear and long-range missile tests and dismantled a nuclear test site and parts of a rocket launch facility without the presence of outside experts. It has repeatedly demanded that the United States reciprocate with measures such as sanctions relief, but Washington has called for North Korea to take steps such as providing a detailed account of its nuclear and missile facilities that would be inspected and dismantled under a potential deal.

Satellite video taken since the June summit has indicated North Korea is continuing to produce nuclear materials at its weapons factories. U.S. intelligence chiefs told Congress last Tuesday that they believe there is little likelihood Kim will voluntarily give up his nuclear weapons or missiles capable



of carrying them.

Biegun said last week that Kim committed to "the dismantlement and destruction of North Korea's plutonium and uranium enrichment facilities" during his summit with Moon in September and at a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in October.

At a second Trump-Kim summit, some experts say North Korea is likely to seek to trade the destruction of its main Yongbyon nuclear complex for a U.S. promise to formally declare the end of the 1950-53 Korean War, open a liaison office in Pyongyang and allow the North to resume some lucrative economic projects with South Korea.

(Source: AP)

Taliban to take part in 'intra-Afghan' talks in Moscow

The Taliban say they will participate in what they call "intra-Afghan" talks in Moscow among prominent Afghan figures, including former President Hamid Karzai and tribal elders - but no Kabul government officials.

The office of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has criticized the meeting in the Russian capital, expected on Tuesday, as a gathering of the power-hungry.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. envoy tasked with resolving Afghanistan's 17-year war, has been pressing for such a dialogue, even as he holds separate negotiations with the Taliban.

The Taliban refuse to talk to Ghani's government, which they denounce as a U.S. puppet.

A statement released on Monday by Afghans attending the Moscow meeting describes it as "the first step toward intra-Afghan dialogue."

The Taliban delegation will be led by Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai.

■ Kabul sees Taliban-Afghan opposition talks in Moscow as betrayal

Senior Afghan officials warned on Monday that talks this week between Taliban militants and opposition politicians, including former President Hamid Karzai, betrayed the principles of democracy and Afghanistan's best interests.

The talks, starting on Tuesday in Moscow, come 10 days after peace negotiations between the United States and the Taliban in Qatar ended with signs of progress toward the withdrawal of thousands of foreign troops from Afghanistan and an end to more than



17 years of war. The push for peace comes as the Taliban, ousted by U.S.-led forces in 2001, have staged near daily attacks and are in control of or contesting districts across nearly half the country.

Moscow had decided to snub Afghan government officials, sources said, to ensure the participation of the Taliban who refuse to hold talks with representatives of Western-backed President Ashraf Ghani, branding them puppets of the United States.

Fazel Fazly, chief adviser to Ghani, expressed "regret" that politicians who previously led Afghanistan's democratic transition were to meet the Taliban.

"(They) are ready to bypass these principles and move toward (the principles') destruction due to differences and being away from

power," Fazly said in a Tweet.

Abdullah Abdullah, the government's chief executive, said the Taliban would have achieved their objective once foreign troops withdrew, ending the need for talks.

The United States has some 14,000 troops in Afghanistan as part of the NATO-led Resolute Support mission and a separate counter-terrorism effort largely directed at groups such as al Qaeda and ISIL.

Some 8,000 troops from 38 other countries are also involved in Resolute Support.

Also shut out of the U.S. discussions at the insistence of the Taliban, the Afghan government is alarmed at the prospect of the Taliban forcing their way into an interim government.

The Moscow talks will be closely watched

by Western diplomats, some of whom fear they could complicate the U.S. talks with the Taliban led by Washington's special peace envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, while potentially isolating Ghani.

While Russian officials are expected to remain in the background, the Moscow talks highlight the growing role Russia is playing in Afghanistan.

Karzai confirmed his attendance at the talks, saying in a tweet he would carry a message of "peace, unity sovereignty and progress for all of us".

Karzai replaced the Taliban's hardline role as Afghanistan's first democratically elected leader after the extremist were ousted by U.S.-backed Afghan forces, supported by U.S. air power.

Another delegate to the Moscow sessions, Mohammad Hanif Atmar, an influential former national security adviser to Ghani, said they would emphasize the need to include the government in future intra-Afghan discussions.

But he urged the government not to look at the peace process from a "narrow governmental window".

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the conference was about "opening channels to reach an understanding with non-government Afghan political groups".

He said the movement wanted to explain its policies toward an "enduring peace in the homeland and establishment of an intra-Afghan system of governance".

(Source: agencies)

Pentagon sending 3,750 extra U.S. forces to border with Mexico

The Pentagon is sending 3,750 additional U.S. forces to the southwest border with Mexico for three months to support border agents, the Department of Defense said on Sunday.

The deployment will raise the total number of active-duty forces supporting Customs and Border Protection agents there to about 4,350, it said.

The Pentagon disclosed the official figure days after a Democratic lawmaker said about 3,500 extra troops would be deployed.

President Donald Trump, who has portrayed the situation at the border as a crisis, was expected to talk about immigration and his proposal for a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico during the annual State of the Union address on Tuesday.

Trump's demand that money for the wall be included in spending legislation prompted an impasse with Democrats that led to a 35-day partial federal government shutdown that ended on Jan. 25. If lawmakers cannot reach a deal on the border security situation by Feb. 15, Trump has threatened to let the government shut down again or to declare a national emergency as a way to circumvent Congress and get his wall money.

"I don't take anything off the table," he said in a CBS interview broadcast on Sunday.

The Pentagon first approved the high-profile deployment of active-duty U.S. troops to the Mexico border in October, before the November congressional elections. The move was embraced by Trump's supporters, including fellow Republicans in Congress.

Critics called the deployment a political stunt and scoffed at Trump's comparisons of caravans of Central American migrants, including women and children, to an "invasion."

The Pentagon says the U.S. military will operate mobile surveillance cameras in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas, a mission scheduled to run through Sept. 30. Some of the additional troops will also string up 150 more miles (240 km) of concertina wire. Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan approved the latest deployment on Jan. 11, according to the statement. But a figure was not disclosed until Thursday, when Democratic U.S. Representative Adam Smith, chairman of the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, said 3,500 additional troops were being sent.

Smith criticized senior Pentagon officials for failing to disclose the information during a hearing before his committee in Congress on the issue just two days earlier.

(Source: Reuters)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	158043.9
IFX	1923.63

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	48,071 rials
GBP	54,918 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

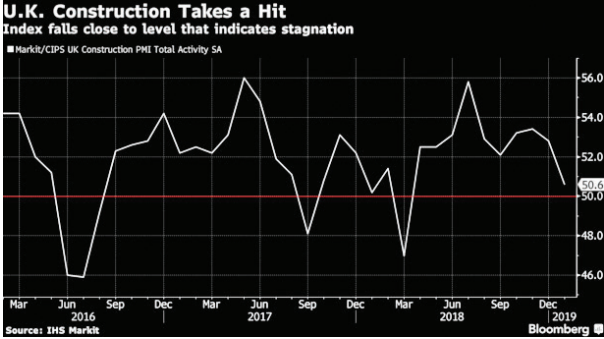
Brent	\$61.59/b
WTI	\$53.63/b
OPEC Basket	\$61.19/b
Gold	\$1,313.15 /oz
Silver	\$15.88/oz
Platinum	\$821.60oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

U.K. construction industry
nears stagnation amid
Brexit worries

The U.K. construction industry barely grew in January as Brexit uncertainty saw firms hesitate to start new projects.

IHS Markit's gauge for the sector fell to 50.6 from 52.8 in December, a markedly worse reading than the 52.5 forecast by economists. The drop took the index close to the 50-mark that separates expansion from contraction.



With less than two months to go until the U.K. leaves the European Union, uncertainty around the shape of the divorce is crimping investment and confidence.

Brexit was the most-cited concern among survey respondents, Markit said. Clients had a "wait-and-see approach" to spending, leading to softer demand.

Employment growth in the construction industry fell to a 2 1/2 year low, while new business growth was the lowest in eight months, the survey showed.

(Source: Bloomberg)

South Korea to resume gas
condensate imports from
Iran in Feb.

Hyundai Oilbank Co., a major South Korean refiner, plans to import 2 million barrels of Iranian condensate this month, a person familiar with the issue said Monday.

It would be Hyundai Oilbank's first imports of ultralight crude since September, two months before the United States imposed the most biting sanctions ever on Iran. U.S. President Donald Trump abandoned a landmark 2015 nuclear deal with Iran in May.

Still, the U.S. has allowed South Korea and seven other countries to continue to buy Iranian oil over the next six months.

South Korea is the third-largest buyer of Iranian oil.

Hanwha Total Petrochemical Co. - a 50-50 joint-venture between Hanwha General Chemical Co. and French energy giant Total - also plans to import condensate from Iran in February, a company official said.



He declined to elaborate on the amount of shipments, citing policy.

The company last imported Iranian condensate in July last year, when it brought in 2 million barrels.

The South Korean refiners and chemical firms had relied heavily on Iranian condensate for production of various petrochemical products thanks to a stable supply and price competitiveness.

Iranian condensate accounted for as much as 59 percent of South Korea's imports of the oil in April last year before dropping to the 30 percent range between May and August.

Naphtha, a key raw material for petrochemicals, is derived from condensate.

SK Trading International Co., a subsidiary of South Korea's biggest oil refiner, SK Innovation Co., also plans to import Iranian condensate in February, though it did not provide details.

In January, SK Trading International brought 2 million barrels of Iranian condensate.

(Source: Yonhap)

Japan's JXTG set for 1st loading of Iranian
crude oil after U.S. sanctions waiver

Japan's largest refiner JXTG Nippon Oil & Energy is set to resume loading of Iranian crude oil as early as Monday, almost three months after the U.S. sanctions waiver was granted.

A JXTG Nippon Oil & Energy spokesman confirmed Monday that it is resuming its Iranian crude oil loading in February. But the spokesman declined to comment on the specific scheduled loading by the Eneos Breeze.

JXTG Nippon Oil & Energy is the fourth Japanese refiner to resume Iranian oil loading, after Showa Shell, Fuji Oil and Cosmo Oil resumed crude oil loading from Iran in January - the first in four months - totaling around 4.9 million barrels.

With other refiners planning to resume imports in February, Japan is expected to load about 14 million barrels over January-February, according to Platts calculations based on market information.

That would put Japan's average Iranian



oil imports at 78,000 b/d during the 180-day waiver, down 49% from 153,000 b/d

imported over May-October 2018, according to Platts calculations.

Annual coal output to reach 1.6m tons
by March 20

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Annual production of coal in Iran will reach 1.6 million tons by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019), IRIB reported on Monday citing the data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

The IMIDRO data put the country's annual coal output at 1.5 million tons in the past Iranian year.

Meanwhile, as Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani has previously announced, coal extraction increased 25 percent in Iran during the first nine months



of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-Decemehr 21, 2018) compared to the same period of time in the past year.

The minister said that some 1.25 million tons of coal were extracted during the nine-month period of this year while the figure was about one million tons in the same time span of the previous year.

Foreign shareholders hold 300 codes for trading at IRENEX

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) Head Shapour Mohammadi put the number of codes held by the foreign shareholders at Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) at 300, IRIB reported.

"These codes are for trading different types of products currently offered at IRENEX, but finding customers for the new products such as crude oil takes some

time", the official noted.

Products such as Mazut have been welcomed at IRENEX, but as offering crude oil at this market has been recently started achieving the set objective in terms of this product requires some time, he added.

The first trading code was issued for a foreign shareholder in Iranian calendar year of 1373 (1994-95) to let it commence its activity in Iranian capital market.

As previously announced by Iranian

'Private sector should be in charge of
Iran's gas network management'

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — The managing director of National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) said the company is planning on putting the country's private sector in charge of managing the gas network, Shana reported on Sunday.

Hassan Montazer Torbati made the remarks on the sidelines of a visit to Hashemi-Nezhad Gas Refinery in northeastern Iran.

The official noted that NIGC's future policies are going to be mainly focused on supply management and in this regard in the near future, various

areas of activity including exploitation, refineries, and operation of pipelines as well as distribution of gas in the cities will be awarded to the private sector.

"NIGC plans to connect 3000 villages to the country's gas network every year so that within the next three years all the rural areas with the possibility of accessing the network will get connected," Torbati said.

The NIGC director put the total Iranian refineries daily gas output at 800 cubic meters saying, currently 37,000 kilometers of high-pressure gas pipeline distribute sweet gas across the country.

Change never comes from within!

1 → In fact, as Chris Cook emphasized, the ECO is a purely financial instrument which may be listed firstly on IRENEX, where it represents a simple but radical instrument for energy payments, short term financing and financial risk management, and may also be listed on the Iran Stock Exchange, where it enables direct Energy Loan investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency projects. Chris Cook pointed out that Energy Loans could potentially mobilize enormous Iranian wealth which currently sits idle in the form of gold, hard currency and is also locked up in real property investment.

In relation to the highly politicized physical energy markets, Mr. Cook suggests the possibility of a new generation of swaps of energy flows, where energy commodities may be supplied, rather than sold, for conversion to refined products and energy services. However, the sensitive issues of legal design, governance and location of such an energy swaps market remain open for discussion and development and are not Mr. Cook's current focus.

Several questioners raised the issue of subsidies, for which Chris Cook had suggested a new ECO Energy Dividend



Chris Cook (L) and Chamber's Head of Energy Commission Shams Ardekani at Tehran Chambers of Commerce

policy option, and there was wide acceptance that the ECO concept could be a powerful new policy tool during the next 1398 Iranian financial year. Mr. Cook suggested that

as with all new policies, proof of concepts of the ECO are necessary. It was suggested that these could be conducted in specific ECO-zone locations, for which Free Trade zones such as Kish Island, Qeshm Island, Arvand etc. are very well-suited.

In summing up, Ambassador Dr. Shams Ardekani made clear that the consensus of the meeting was that the proposed energy strategy, and implementation using Energy Fintech as outlined by Mr. Cook, potentially provides the basis not only for constructive Iranian domestic policy but also for constructive energy diplomacy in Iran's international relationships.

In view of this successful meeting held at ICCIMA, Mr. Cook has been invited to further outline and expand upon the proposed Energy Strategy and Energy Fintech concepts at further meetings, including a meeting convened for Tuesday 5th February by the Research Institute for Energy Management & Planning, University of Tehran jointly with Education & Research Institute-ICCIMA and supported by Farab, and also in other informal workshops before Mr. Cook departs Tehran.

Australia vows to clean up financial sector
after landmark misconduct inquiry

Australia's corporate regulators will be subjected to a new oversight body in a shake-up of the banking sector recommended by a high-powered independent inquiry into financial sector greed and malpractice.

The government-appointed inquiry known as a Royal Commission also recommended prosecutions for 24 cases of wrongdoing and advised that remuneration structures across the industry be overhauled to remove systemic conflicts of interest.

Authorities were urged to consider laying charges over behavior such as the charging of fees for services not rendered, including instances at major lenders Commonwealth Bank of Australia, National Australia Bank Ltd and Australia and New Zealand Banking Group.

The commission's recommendations were released by the government on Monday after the public inquiry heard 11 months of shocking revelations of wrongdoing which wiped A\$60 billion (\$43.5 billion) from the country's top finance stocks.

Misconduct reached into the sector's upper echelons, with top wealth manager AMP Ltd engaging in board-level deception of a regulator over the deliberate charging of

customers for financial advice it never gave.

Firms were found to prey on some of society's most vulnerable customers, highlighted by the case of an insurer who used aggressive sales techniques to sell an opaque product to a young man with Down Syndrome.

"The price paid by our community has been immense and goes beyond just the financial," Australian Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said as the government promised to take action on all 76 recommendations.

"Businesses have been broken, and the emotional stress and personal pain have broken lives."

The recommendations also include banning trailing commissions for third-party mortgage brokers, forcing financial planners to disclose any fees they receive for selling products, and banning banks from charging default interest for farm businesses affected by drought.

Regulators also needed greater oversight after they were accused of working too closely with the banks. When misconduct was revealed, it either went unpunished or the consequences did not reflect the seriousness of what had been done, the inquiry found.

(Source: Reuters)

Italy's bond yields test three-week
highs on economy worries

Italy's government borrowing costs briefly rose to their highest level in three weeks on Monday, pushed up by heightened concern that a deteriorating economic outlook will worsen the country's fiscal position.

While yields drifted lower as the session wore on, analysts said that was caused more by a lack of fresh drivers than a change in the bearish tone that gripped markets at the end of last week.

Data last week confirmed Italy's economy had slipped into a recession in the fourth quarter of 2018, while manufacturing contracted for the fourth month running in January — suggesting that things could get worse for the economy.

Weaker data in general has bolstered euro zone bond markets as investors bet the European Central Bank will keep record-low rates in place for longer.

But in Italy, the poor data has only exacerbated concern about a further deterioration in public finances and fuelled speculation about further budget measures. Italy is one of the most indebted countries in the euro area.

"The scepticism that we saw last year about the wisdom of the new government's fiscal plans is being revived by the economic data,"

said Chris Scicluna, head of economic research at Daiwa Capital Markets in London.

"There is a decent chance that we will see another quarter of negative growth in Q1."

Daiwa expects the Italian economy to grow just 0.1 percent in 2019. Last month, the Bank of Italy cut its 2019 economic growth forecast to 0.6 percent from 1 percent.

Italy's 10-year yield rose almost eight basis points to 2.806 percent before drifting lower to around 2.72 percent, down just one bp on the day.

After a heavy selloff, bonds across the curve found more stable ground, with two- and five-year yields also a touch lower on the day.

They remained within sight of three-weeks highs and analysts said the pain for Italy's bond market was not over yet.

"Italy has a huge debt burden and they (the government) had hoped for better growth," said Michael Hewson, chief markets analyst at CMC Markets. "At some point this year, Italy will flare up as problem once more."

Outside Italy, yields on most 10-year bonds in the bloc were a touch higher on the day. Germany's 10-year Bund yield, at 0.17 percent, held near recent one-month lows.

(Source: Reuters)

Oil hits 2019 high near \$64 on Venezuela sanctions, OPEC

Oil hit a two-month high close to \$64 a barrel on Monday as OPEC-led supply cuts and U.S. sanctions against Venezuela's petroleum industry offset forecasts of weaker demand and an economic slowdown.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies began a new round of supply cuts in January. These curbs, led by Saudi Arabia, have been compounded by involuntary losses that the Venezuelan sanctions could deepen.

Brent crude, the global benchmark, hit \$63.63 a barrel, the highest since Dec. 7, and was up 66 cents at \$63.41 as of 1040 GMT. U.S. crude hit a 2019 high of \$55.75 and was later up 33 cents at \$55.59.

"You have the sanctions on Venezuela, on top of the reduced supply from Saudi Arabia," said Olivier Jakob, oil analyst at Petromatrix. "There's no sign of overhang in the crude oil markets."

OPEC supply fell in January by the largest amount in two years, a Reuters survey last week found. That offset limited compliance with the output-cutting deal so far by non-OPEC Russia.



The U.S. sanctions on Venezuela will limit oil transactions between Venezuela and other countries and are similar to those

imposed on Iran last year, some analysts said after examining details announced by the government.

Underlining the lack of excess supply, Jakob cited a rapidly clearing West African crude market and the structure of Brent crude futures, in which the first-month contract is trading near the price of the second month.

While OPEC and its allies are cutting output, the United States is expanding supply. Nonetheless, figures on Friday showed a drop in the number of U.S. oil rigs to their lowest in eight months, lending prices some support.

"The collapse in oil prices late last year has resulted in more cautious spending by U.S. oil explorers," Vivek Dhar, commodities analyst for Commonwealth Bank of Australia, said in a report on Monday.

The main drag on prices has been concern about a possible slowdown in demand this year due to a weaker outlook for economic growth and developments such as the U.S.-China trade dispute.

U.S. President Donald Trump last week said he would meet his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in the coming weeks to try to settle the dispute, and there are hopes that the two sides will come to an agreement.

(Source: Reuters)

Japan's tight oil demand, supply balance keeps it vulnerable to imports

Japan remained a net oil product importer for the second year in a row in 2018 and is likely to remain an active product importer in 2019 as any unexpected refinery issues threaten to further squeeze domestic supplies, making the tight supply-demand balance even more fragile.

Japan's oil product imports averaged 621,009 bpd in 2018, with imports of both gasoline and gasoil more than doubling year on year, exceeding oil product exports of 522,736 bpd, according to data released by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry data last week.

Naphtha accounted for the majority of Japan's oil product imports and were more or less unchanged year on year at 487,720 bpd in 2018.

The increase in Japan's oil product imports last year was partly due to a relatively heavy refinery turnaround season over the spring-summer period, coupled with occasional unexpected refinery shutdowns.

The country became a net oil product importer in 2017 as its nameplate refining capacity fell to 3.5188 million bpd across 22 refineries as of March 31 that year, down 7.1% from 3.7897 million bpd, following local refiners' response to refining regulations that led to a squeeze in capacity.

The capacity cut has tightened Japan's supply and demand balance, and has supported an increase in oil products imports during the spring and autumn refinery season over the last two years.

■ Unexpected refinery shutdowns

In addition to scheduled maintenance programs last year, Cosmo Oil unexpectedly shut the sole crude distillation unit at the 100,000 bpd Sakai refinery in mid-July, and it took almost three months to restart all units by mid-October, after having restarted the CDU on August 12.

Idemitsu Kosan's Hokkaido 150,000 bpd refinery -- the only refinery on the northern Japanese island - was automatically shut as a result of the 6.7 magnitude earthquake that rocked Hokkaido on September 6. It restarted all Hokkaido refining units on November 17, following the restart of the sole CDU on October 14.

The unexpected refinery shutdowns supported imports of gasoline and gasoil significantly over July-November, more than doubling imports of gasoline and gasoil to 35,167 bpd and 12,499 bpd, respectively last year.

Aside from refinery issues, Japan witnessed a rise in gasoline imports for most part of the year in 2018, except for December when imports slid 4.2% year on year to 23,186 bpd.

Relatively weaker overseas gasoline prices kept the arbitrage window to Japan open for most of the year, lead to rising inflows of cargoes.

The spread between rack Kanagawa 89 RON gasoline and FOB Singapore 92 RON gasoline prices reached the widest point last year on November 27, at \$27.71/b, according to S&P Global Platts calculations.

After adding freight, premiums, taxes and other costs on top of FOB Singapore gasoline, the spread between the import parity price and the domestic rack market was around \$16.90/b, according to Platts calculations.

(Source: Platts)

China's LNG imports reach another record amid high stocks

China's imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) rose to another monthly record in January, even as the country grapples with high gas inventories amid a warmer-than-usual winter, according to shipping data and industry sources.

The world's second-largest LNG importer took 6.55 million tons of LNG in January, beating the previous record hit in December by nearly 2 percent, according to Refinitiv Eikon shipping data.

China's imports last year surged 41 percent from 2017 after gas shortages the previous winter prompted Chinese companies to stock up on supplies and pre-order cargoes, with Beijing continuing to push millions of households to switch to gas from coal for heating.

But the import growth is not wholly due to a rise in demand, said an industry source

familiar with the Chinese market.

"When people see these numbers, they think Chinese demand is up ... but actually it is causing a headache (for importers) as (they) have overbought and can't find demand to absorb the cargoes," the source said, declining to be identified as he was not authorised to speak with media.

China National Offshore Oil Corp (CNOOC) resold at least one LNG cargo in January and possibly another, an unusual move during what is typically a peak demand period and highlighting this year's warmer weather, industry sources said.

Chinese traders are offering LNG cargoes to international buyers or selling into their domestic market at lower-than-expected prices, the first source said.

The Lunar New Year holiday has also made

the situation worse because factories are shut-down for a least a week, he said.

Wholesale LNG from small, land-based liquefaction plants fell to 3,500-3,950 yuan (\$519-\$586) a ton on Feb. 2, less than half levels of last year, according to Chinese gas-price monitoring agency yeslng.com.

Quotes at receiving terminals in East China's Shandong and North China's Tianjin last stood at 4,500 yuan (\$667) a ton, down 17 percent and 5 percent, respectively, from late November, shortly after heating season started.

China's gas demand growth should decelerate from the past two years, said James Taverner of energy consultancy IHS Markit.

"Coal-to-gas switching mandates are moderating due to ... security of supply concerns, and weakening economic growth," Taverner said.



There is also limited capacity in North China for further LNG ramp-up after big increases the past two years, he said.

Trade tensions between the United States and China have also tightened financial conditions, dragging China's growth last year to its weakest in 28 years.

(Source: Economic Times)

CEO of Chadormalu Mining & Ind. Co.:

Chadormalu Co.'s Mega Module Direct Reduction Unit Goes on Stream



Mega Module Direct Reduction Unit of Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company was inaugurated.

With the operation of mega module unit of direct reduction system of Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company, steel ingot of this factory is produced for the first time in the country using HOT CHARGE.

Eng. Mahmoud Nourian Chief Executive of Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company made the above remarks and said, "in this regard, world's most modern technology of HOT CHARGE has been used for designing and manufacturing Chadormalu Steel Production Factory with the annual production capacity of 1,300,000 tons of steel ingot and also Direct Reduction factory of this complex."

In this method, sponge iron (Direct Reduction Iron, DRI) is entered directly into the smelter furnaces of the factory before cooling with the temperature of at least 650 degrees and consequently, this method will save power consumption as much as 35 percent (35%), he reiterated.

In old method, sponge iron (DRI) was entered into the smelter furnaces in a completely cold form which high power was needed for melting it but in new HOT CHARGE method, DRI, before being cooled, is entered into the furnace at 650 degrees and consequently, power consumption is reduced significantly, he reiterated.

Moreover, consumption of other items such as electrode, which is one of the most exchange parts and equipment for melting steel, would be saved as well, Nourian highlighted.

Elsewhere in his remarks, CEO of the company pointed to the implementation of closed-looped coolant system as one of the other salient specifications in designing this industrial and production unit and added, "modulation of closed-looped coolant system will prevent water loss in a way that over 45 percent of water

is saved using this method."

With the coordination made in this regard, mega module Direct Reduction Unit of the company was supposed to be put into operation before Sept. 2017 but some part of this unit were delivered late due to the problems facing discharge of goods at customs offices of the country, he added.

Presently, all primary and initial tests have been carried out successfully and this unit is ready for operational, he emphasized.

Each of two steelmaking and Direct Reduction units of the company have been manufactured during sanctions, so that major part of its equipment has been indigenized using high technical knowhow of domestic experts and manufacturers, he opined.

It should be noted that Chadormalu Steel Mfg. Factory was put into operation last year (ended March 20, 2018) in a way that this industrial and production unit will produce more than 800,000 tons of steel ingot by the yearend, he opined.

With direct launch of Direct Reduction Unit in the company, steel ingot production capacity of the company will exceed one million tons, he added.

He pointed to the self-sufficiency of the company in the supply of raw materials in each stage of production, reduction of raw materials transport costs and saving energy as the salient achievements of the company and added, "all these measures would increase efficiency, output, reduced production cost and consequently, increased profitability of the company, the issue of which would be considered as an auspicious event for the real and legal shareholders of the company."

■ **Foresightedness and Safe, Secure Margin of Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Co.**

Elsewhere in his remarks, Eng. Mahmoud



Nourian pointed to the impacts of volatility of exchange rate on the trend of activities of the company and added, "managers of the company have predicted the impacts of fluctuation of exchange rate in programs and activities of the company, so that management of the company has taken effective steps to resolve problems facing the company."

With the drastic measures taken, the company managed to alleviate the negative effects of sanctions with the on-time supply of spare parts, he added.

■ **Manufacturing 11,287 Industrial Parts**

Benefited from specialty and innovations of domestic experts and technicians for designing and manufacturing required parts is one of the salient indicators of productivity in the company, the issue of which is of paramount importance in mining installations to a great extent, because, relying upon domestic technology will reduce

risk and guarantee continuation of activity of mining and industrial units, the managing director opined.

Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company has established very close relationship with research centers, universities, academic centers, industrialists, innovators and investors of the country, he said, adding, "so far, this industrial and production unit has thus far executed and implemented more than 50 research projects."

It is worth mentioning that over 11,287 industrial parts have been indigenized in Chadormalu mining and industrial complexes since the establishment of the company, he said, adding, "in this regard, 550 new parts have been indigenized only in last year (ended March 20, 2018)."

The management of the company has managed, moreover indigenizing parts, to get direct access to the world's most modern technologies in mining and steel sectors. In this regard, we succeeded in launching major projects of the

company using domestic capabilities and potentials."

■ **Participating in Water Transfer and Desalination Project of Persian Gulf:**

Believing in promoting environmental indicators, Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company has not only taken giant strides for reducing pollutants caused by the activity of industrial and production units, but also it has adopted necessary measures to prevent future crises.

This company also has established fair interaction with two companies including GOL-E-GOHAR Mining & Industrial Company and Sarcheshmeh Copper Production Company for materializing objectives of water desalination unit in the Persian Gulf and transfer of water to the central Iranian regions such as Yazd province and Ardakan.

Chadormalu, GOL-E-GOHAR and Sarcheshmeh Copper companies have predicted 15,000 billion rials worth of investment for launching this national and strategic plan, he added.

With the implementation of this project, 40 million cubic meter of water will be transferred to Ardakan annually which is able to supply water required to industries.

In the end, the managing director of the company pointed to the status of his company in stock market and said, "Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company has experienced a considerable growth in terms of profitability of stock since 2015 in a way that this industrial and production unit is among top 10 stock-paneled companies."

He reiterated, "the company is after increasing its capital from 33,500 billion rials to 67,000 billion rials. Accordingly, comment of auditor and legal inspector of the company with regard to the briefing report of the Board of Directors was registered in KODAL System and legal formalities for such capital increase is underway."

NEWS IN BRIEF



Modi visits Kashmir amid complete shutdown

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN**—First time since his Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) pulled out of the coalition government in Indian controlled Kashmir late last year, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the conflict-torn region on Sunday.

The visit comes on the heels of general elections in India as BJP seeks to retain power while opposition Congress seeks to wrest power from it.

Modi announced new infrastructure projects and started foundation work on several others related to health care, hydropower generation and education at three places in the region.

Security situation has deteriorated in the disputed Himalayan region in recent years with people accusing the BJP government of targeting civilians in a relentless crackdown. Civilian casualties have escalated alarmingly since the BJP government came to power in New Delhi.

Traffic was sparse, with public transport staying off the roads in Srinagar, the nerve center of protests against Indian rule.

They also shut internet on mobile phones and suspended train services in the Kashmir valley, a common practice to foil protests and discourage dissemination of protest videos.



Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan plummet

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN**—Pakistan's exports to neighboring Afghanistan have dwindled by 41.57 percent to just \$1.4 billion in 2018-19 from \$2.6 billion in 2010-11, according to latest figures.

The figures show how fast Pakistan is losing its most important captive market—Afghanistan.

Pakistan's captive market has massively shifted to Iran and India mainly on account of the frequent closures of trade borders between Pakistan and Afghanistan and intensifying diplomatic tensions, according to the report.

According to latest trade data of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration, Iran's exports to Afghanistan jumped to \$2.8 billion and out of which exports to Afghanistan climbed to \$2 billion in first ten months as of June 20, 2019.

However, "Iranian exports to Afghanistan in 2011 stood at \$1.88 billion which now has risen to \$2.88 billion with the increment of \$1 billion in exports", says UN COMTRADE database on international trade.

"Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan came across a mammoth decline due to the decrease in aggregate demand as a result of the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan, increasing trust deficit, worsening law and order situation, frequent closures of the Pak-Afghan border and diversion of Afghan trade to Iran," he said.



India in touch with key stakeholders in Afghanistan

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN**—In the wake of ongoing peace talks between various stakeholders in Afghanistan and the Afghan Taliban, India is preparing for any eventuality by being in touch with key political stakeholders in the country.

According to a report in Economic Times, quoting a senior government official, New Delhi, which has made massive investments in the war-ravaged country, is keeping in regular touch with stakeholders in Afghanistan and other nations including key regional powers that want stability there.

The entire Afghan political leadership, including former president Hamid Karzai, is holding consultations with India regarding future of their country, the report states.

Rising terror attacks in Afghanistan is a worry for both Russia and Iran and such phenomenon will have spillover impact across Afghan boundaries. The functioning of Chabahar Port, whose operations are run by India, serves the purpose of Afghanistan as well as the Eurasian nations that have high stakes in Afghanistan, it adds.

The situation in Afghanistan, it further adds, will be on the agenda when the foreign ministers of Russia, India and China meet in Shanghai later this month.



Xi, Trump likely to meet to discuss trade war

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN**—As the trade war between China and U.S. escalates, there is a likelihood of Donald Trump and Xi Jinping meeting in Vietnam, according to reports.

The presidents of China and the U.S. are considering meeting in the coastal city of Da Nang on February 27 and 28, according to a report in South China Morning Post.

Quoting a source, the report says Jinping and Trump are expected to continue pushing to resolve the trade dispute between the two nations, which threatens to affect global trade.

The 90-day trade war truce between the two trade rivals ends March 2. That's the deadline U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer has set to increase tariffs on a number of Chinese imports if there is no progress in trade talks this month.

According to experts, there is less likelihood of the high-profile meeting producing any breakthrough as far as resolving the trade war between the two countries is concerned. China would refuse to accept a compromise formula that shows them as a weaker party of the two.

It is widely believed that China seeks to displace U.S. as the world's sole 'super power'. The recent tension between the two countries, particularly the trade war and military escalations have put the spotlight back on their great rivalry.

India elections: Congress seeks to dislodge Modi's BJP from power

INTERNATIONAL d e s k It's the election season again in India and preparations are in full swing to woo voters with attractive manifestos and catchy slogans.

Although a strong third front is emerging, the main contest will be between the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the main opposition party Congress.

Led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP seeks to retain power while Congress led by the young Gandhi scion Rahul Gandhi seeks to dislodge the right-wing party.

This week, with eyes on the upcoming election, Modi government announced a populist budget designed to flatter voters, although analysts believe it might have come little too late.

The budget announced on Friday includes \$13 billion worth of measures including payouts for farmers, a pension program for informal sector workers and tax relief for India's squeezed middle class.

The policies are designed to compensate for Modi's slide in support, and come just one day after a report suggesting India's unemployment rate is at a 45-year high.

Modi government has faced blistering criticism after a leaked report revealed that the country's unemployment rate is the highest it has been since the 1970s.

The country's unemployment rate—6.1



percent—is the highest it has been since 1972-73, the earliest year for which comparable data is available. The number may not be dire, say experts, but it shines light on the truth about India's economic growth story.

Modi's economic policies have been a subject of examination among economists and policy analysts, especially the controversial demonetization drive that seems to have backfired badly.

The results in December state elections, some observers believe, was a verdict on Modi's



economic mismanagement and ill-advised decisions.

Since the debacle in three important states in December, BJP leaders have been looking to control the damage and stage a comeback.

BJP president and Modi's close aide Amit Shah addressing a rally in south India on Sunday said the "visionary policies" of Modi have helped establish the foundation for "long term development" in the country.

Modi himself tweeted seeking suggestions and feedback from people in the unique effort

by the BJP, saying "what you all share will form the blueprint of our 'Sankalp Patra' (manifesto) for the 2019 elections."

On the other hand, Congress has promised to guarantee a "minimum income for the country's poor" if it wins the general elections this summer.

The details of the minimum income plan will only be revealed in the party manifesto, which is due soon. However, according to reports, the scheme essentially promises a basic income support for India's poorest households after fixing an income eligibility threshold.

To prevent Modi from coming back to power, Congress has said it wants to form a post-poll partnership with BSP-SP, a formidable alliance in north India, though it will be fighting against it in 78 seats.

In an interview with Business Standard, global investor-writer Ruchir Sharma said there is a tendency in India to root for the underdog against any dominant figure but the Congress would need all the help it could muster to defeat the BJP in the 2019 general elections.

He added that the election setbacks in December 2018 have lowered Narendra Modi's chances of victory from near certain to 50:50.

"That's exactly how Indians like their leaders: on edge, fearing for their jobs and not taking voters for granted," he says.

Govt, politicians in Afghanistan on the warpath over talks with Taliban

1 → President Ghani's supporters have accused the opposition leaders of rushing to peace talks with Taliban to push their own political agendas ahead of elections.

Russian government has publicly distanced itself from the talks, but according to reports Russian envoy to Kabul Zamir Kabulov is behind the initiative. Moscow had hosted a multilateral summit on Afghanistan last November, inviting officials from regional countries, besides a Taliban delegation. The talks were hailed as "groundbreaking".

Pertinently, Taliban has held several rounds of talks with the U.S. government envoy Zalmay Khalilzad in recent months, latest being six-day talks in Qatar last month, following which the two sides reportedly reached an agreement.

The draft of the agreement stipulates 18-month timeline of withdrawal of foreign troops in exchange for assurances that Taliban will prevent al Qaeda and ISIS from using Afghanistan to attack U.S. and its allies.

The agreement, experts believe, is far from realistic. Colin Clarke, research fellow at Soufan Center, was quoted as saying by Think Progress that al Qaeda fighters were embedded with the Taliban.

She further said that if the U.S. was really interested in countering extremism, including al Qaeda, it should first counter Saudi Arabia's efforts to fund mosques and schools



that spread ultra-conservative Wahhabist ideology in the region.

"There's no will in the current administration to counter the Saudis at all. They've been given a free pass," said Clarke.

Following Qatar talks, President Ghani's office said the rights of Afghans should not be compromised in the name of peace with the Taliban. The statement said Khalilzad had no authority to discuss the future Afghan administration, referring to reports about possible role for Taliban in the future Afghan government.

There have been reports that the U.S. government has offered a role to the Taliban in the future Afghan administration provided it does not use Afghan territory to attack the U.S.

These reports have created panic in Kabul, with President Ghani's administration fearing the repeat of failed peace process in 1990s following the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan.

"We have the experience of Dr. Najibullah's peace process, how he was cheated, the UN had given him the peace guarantee, but unfortunately it led to tragedy," he said last week, clearly expressing his frustration over the unfolding events.

The secret deliberations between the U.S. government and the Taliban, overstepping the elected government in Kabul, have led to resentment not only among Afghan government officials but even young Afghans.

With elections just four months away, President Ghani's government is staring into the abyss, abandoned inside Afghanistan by powerful politicians and outside Afghanistan by the U.S. government.

Moreover, with Russia's increased involvement in Afghanistan and its leverage over Taliban, the great rivalry between Washington and Moscow is likely to be played out in Afghanistan again. What that means for peace in the war-ravaged country is not hard to predict.

Imam's triumphant return and Islamic Revolution

1 → In that "nothing", Imam said everything. That one-word answer reflected his extraordinary strength of character. Lack of emotions at that important moment signified that Imam sought nearness to Allah rather than nearness to the grandeur of world, power and fiefdom. He detached 'self' from his endeavors and sought pleasure of the 'ultimate power' above all powers.

On February 1, 1979, Imam touched down at the Mehrabad Airport in Tehran, ending his long exile. The packed airport reverberated with 'Allah is great' and 'Khomeini is our leader' slogans.

"We are succeeding, but this is only the first stage," Imam told his ecstatic supporters who had turned up at the airport to welcome him. "The movement will be successful only when the roots of colonialism are pulled out," he added, referring to the Pahlavi regime backed by the U.S.

The success of the revolution, he said, was the result of the unity of all Iranians, irrespective of their religious beliefs. Among those who had come to welcome Imam at the airport were representatives of the Armenian and Assyrian churches.

During the flight from Paris to Tehran, Imam had told journalists accompanying him that he would announce his own provisional government and the nationwide protests would be called off if Bakhtair agrees to resign.

The morning Imam arrived, millions of people poured into streets across the country to welcome him. They chanted vociferous slogans in support of the Islamic revolution and against the Pahlavi monarchy.

Upon landing in Tehran, Imam drove straight to Behesht e Zahra (sa) cemetery in south Tehran to pay his respects to the martyrs of revolution. The visibly jubilant followers lined the one mile stretch from the airport to the city's largest cemetery.

In his first address, he offered his condolences to the parents of martyrs and vowed to uphold the principles of resistance and resilience against the forces of evil. He denounced the interim government led by Bakhtiar and asked him to abdicate power immediately.

"I must tell you that Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, that evil traitor, has gone. This man, his government, his Majlis are all illegal. If

they were to continue to stay in power, we would treat them as criminals and would try them as criminals," Imam declared.

Imam soon announced formation of a new government with Mahdi Bazargan as the prime minister, forcing Pahlavi's lackey Bakhtiar to escape. His regime collapsed on February 11, ten days after the arrival of Imam.

Thus the West-backed Pahlavi monarchy crumbled and the Islamic revolution became a great success story. The overthrow of Pahlavi regime was followed by the takeover of U.S. embassy in Tehran.

In Pahlavi's disgraceful downfall, Americans lost an important ally in the region and they lost their grip over Iran. They continue to hold that grudge. Hence the bullying, saber-rattling and sanctions. Iranians stood unfazed then, they stand unfazed now.

Imam's legacy continues to guide the proud Iranian nation and his worthy predecessor Imam Khamenei has followed on the same path, refusing to surrender before the so-called 'superpowers' of the world despite enormous pressure.

Imam's socio-political ideology was deeply rooted in Islam. In Kashaf-ul-Asrar, he said religion is the "only thing that dissuades mankind from treachery and crime".

"Unfortunately, those

who take the helm of affairs in Iran have either a false faith or no faith at all (referring to Shah's regime of that time). These dema-

gogues who speak fervently of safeguarding the interests of the country actually look after their own interests," he wrote.

First Announcement

N.I.O.C
1397.5987

Subject of Tender: : PARTS FOR "ROSS HILL" SILICON CONTROL RECTIFIER

National Iranian Drilling Company

Call for public tender (First/Second publish)
One-Stage (semi-compressed) tender

Tender descriptions:

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3,190,461	Tender No. :FP09-97/043 Indent No.:01-22-9746016	17,449,000,000 (Rial)

Qualitative evaluation of tenders

Method	R Based on minimum scoring (60) made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers' pre-qualification forms.
	1- Applicants who have more than 4 in process contracts with NIDC are not allowed to participate in this tender. 2- Applicants which have more than 2 in process contracts with NIDC in similar subject (exclusively same subject) are not allowed to participate in another tender

Purchasing & Submitting

Tender Document Distribution by Company		The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof
	Distribution Place	Hall No.:113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN – Tel: 061 34148601
	Submitting Method	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. Avoid any payment other than the bank method (in person) and also provide a deposit. 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 st 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	872,450,000 Rials / 18,147 Euro
Type of guarantee	✓Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ✓Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

(Foreign Procurement Dept.)
More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on:
www.nidc.ir http://sapp.ir/nidc_pr
تهران تایمز نویت اول ۹۷/۱۱/۱۶ نویت دوم ۹۷/۱۱/۱۷

EU's INSTEX still months away from being fully operational: Italian analyst

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — A senior fellow with the Transatlantic Program of the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) hailed the creation of INSTEX as the first “tangible sign” by Europe to uphold the JCPOA, adding, however, that it is “still months away from being fully operational”.

“On the positive side, Instex is the first tangible sign that the E3/EU are serious about keeping the JCPOA in place notwithstanding the U.S. withdrawal. It is very significant that the mechanism has been based in France, will be run by a German director and provided with financial guarantees by the E3. This is as heavy a political investment as it gets. On the negative side, Instex has been registered but is still months away from being fully operational, and key technical issues still need to be defined,” Riccardo Alcaro told Tasnim.

Riccardo Alcaro was a nonresident fellow in the Center on the United States and Europe. He is an expert in transatlantic political and security relations with a focus on U.S.-European cooperation in Europe's neighboring regions, including the Middle East and North Africa, Iran and the Persian Gulf, the Sahel, Eastern Europe, and Russia.

Following is the text of the interview:

■ Late on Thursday, Britain, France and Germany issued a joint statement on the creation of a new trading system called the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) that will allow trade between the EU and Iran without relying on direct financial transactions. What do you think about the new mechanism?

A: On the positive side, Instex is the first tangible sign that the E3/EU are serious about



keeping the JCPOA in place notwithstanding the U.S. withdrawal. It is very significant that the mechanism has been based in France, will be run by a German director and provided with financial guarantees by the E3. This is as heavy a political investment as it gets. On the negative side, Instex has been registered but is still months away from being fully operational, and key technical issues still need to be defined.

■ The U.S. State Department reacted to the creation of the system, warning, “As the president (Donald Trump) has made clear, entities that continue to engage in sanction-

able activity involving Iran risk severe consequences that could include losing access to the U.S. financial system and the ability to do business with the United States or U.S. companies”. What is your take on this?

A: The E3/EU have taken special care in designing a mechanism that would facilitate trade in goods not sanctioned by the USA, such as food, meds and medical equipment. This should allow the Europeans and the Americans to get an agreement that at least this kind of trade will be risk-free for EU companies. However, clearly, this is not enough for the Iranians. Trade in

other non-sanctioned goods - machinery for instance - should be also allowed, and eventually also sanctioned goods such as oil. The E3/EU have said that Instex is open to include trade in more goods in the future, but then again it's uncertain what goods and when. So a lot has yet to fall in place before Instex starts delivering. This said, it's undeniable that this is a powerful political gesture by the Europeans, who are signaling that they want to do what they can to save the JCPOA within the limits they believe they are in. Whether such limits are real or perceived it's a matter of dispute.

■ Long anticipated, Thursday's EU announcement marks the most concrete action Europe has taken to thwart Washington sanctions after the U.S. pullout of the 2015 nuclear deal last May. How much do you think this could facilitate Iran-EU trade despite U.S. opposition?

A: I've answered this question already above. I think that even if Instex allows humanitarian trade to resume Iran's population would greatly benefit from it. On a broader strategic level, I understand that Iran's expectations are higher, and understandably so. Yet I believe the Iranians have now something they could point to and make the case that the JCPOA is still in their interest because by keeping abiding by it, they will force the Europeans to put real flesh on the bones, eg use Instex to trade with Iran. That would allow Iran to play on different tables - Russia, China, the Asian countries (eg India) and Europe - while keeping the moral high ground, avoid isolation and reduce the risk of a military strike against the nuclear facilities by U.S. and/or Israel.

Business disorder between Europe and U.S.

➔ Although some European citizens thought that the Chancellor of Germany would have a more determined approach than other European politicians, this was also a mistake! The German Chancellor stated that European Union member states must give the EU trade commissioner a clear mandate for negotiations with the United States over a long-term exemption from U.S. metal tariffs. Merkel added: “Of course, we think it's important that there are exemptions

not only for a limited period of time ... So far, we have had a very united stance, namely that we view these tariff demands as unjustified and that we want a long-term exemption.”

The fact is that Merkel's implicit threat, which she didn't address directly and explicitly because of her conservative policy towards the United States, is the same as the “European countermeasures” against the United States.

For months now, there have been months of anti-European

measures taken by the White House and customs duties on European aluminum and steel. However, European countries have preferred to keep Silent instead of confronting Washington!

Indeed, the prolonged U.S.-EU talks on steel and aluminum tariffs is going to increase the dissatisfaction and anger among the European public opinion. It will also affect the performance of American companies in Europe.

On the Occasion of Ten-Day Dawn Ceremonies:

30 Water and Wastewater Projects, Costing over 1,275bn Rials, Inaugurated in Isfahan Prov.



Concurrent with the 40th glorious victory of the Islamic Revolution (Ten-Day Dawn ceremonies), a number of 30 water and wastewater projects, costing more than 1,275 billion and 400 million rials, were put into operation in Isfahan Province.

Managing Director of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company Hashem Amini made the above remark and reiterated, “with the coordination made in this regard, 22 projects would be put into operation in water sector in this province concurrent with Ten-Day Dawn ceremonies.”

Of the most important water and wastewater projects that would be launched during this auspicious occasion, it should be referred to the operation of water-supply project to Golshahr, inauguration of second line of water-supply project to Toodashk, operation of water conveyance line to Dowlatabad and Shapourabad, water-supply project to Naeen Industrial Township, inauguration of water conveyance line to Barf Anbar and also operation of 2,000-cubic meter tank of the city, etc. he observed.

Operation of 258 km of water network across the province, digging and equipping well and launching water well transfer line in Zavareh, modification of water network and connections in Ardestan, operation

of telemetry system of water network, pumping stations and tanks in Khomeinishahr, correction of water network and connections in Mahabad, equipping auxiliary water pumping station in Ardestan, operation of Pir-Bekran water installation telemetry system, inauguration of two wells in Shahr-e Abrissham and also operation of Goldis Water Pumping Station of Shahinshahr.

Operation of 2,000-cubic meter water tank in Nikabad, inauguration of water conveyance line, operation of 5,000-cubic meter tank in Khomeinishahr, 2,000 cubic meter tank in District 6 of Isfahan, water pumping station in District 6 of Isfahan, digging and equipping water well in Khomeinishahr are of the most important projects that would be put into operation in this auspicious occasion.

He also pointed to the most important projects that would be inaugurated during Ten-Day dawn ceremonies in wastewater sector and added, “operation of 368 km wastewater network in this province, operation from the first phase of Khansar wastewater network, inauguration of wastewater treatment plant in the city, operation of wastewater treatment package in MEHR Housing Plan of Fereydounshahr, opening the pumping

station and wastewater transfer line in Mobarakeh of Isfahan, operation of pumping station in Karkvand, operation of wastewater network across the city and also Samirom Neighborhood, etc. are of the most important projects.”

Operation of Minadasht and Oshtorjan wastewater network, wastewater network on Kahndagh Street of Falavarjan, second phase of wastewater network of Samirom Waterfall Township are of the other projects that would be put into operation in wastewater network sector.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Amini pointed to the most important projects underway by the company and added, “supplying water to Dehaghan city as long as 47 km, costing 265 billion rials, is of the other project that would be put into operation in Isfahan province.

He put the physical progress of this important water-supply project to Dehaghan at 70 percent.

The managing director pointed to the implementation of wastewater installations in Tiran, as invested by Sazeh Gostar Monfared Company, and said, “presently, construction operation of Tiran wastewater installations, costing 564 billion rials, is underway by the company with 50% physical progress.”

Construction of Darcheh wastewater installation through Note 3, as long as 70 km, is of the other project which would be launched by public participation, he said, adding, “speed behind construction operation of wastewater collection network stands at 6fold than the average level.”

Amini pointed to the construction of wastewater installations in the cities of Mobarakeh and Lenjan which was put atop agenda with the investment of private sector and said, “speed of construction operation of wastewater in the cities of Mobarakeh, Karkvand, Zibashahr, Dizicheh, Zarrinshahr, Chamgardan, Zayandehroud, Sedeh and Lenjan, is 14fold more than the average level as compared to the past

25 years.”

Approx. 165 km wastewater network was implemented in the cities of Mobarakeh, Karkvand, Zibashahr, Dizicheh, Zarrinshahr, Chamgardan, Zayandehroud, Sadeh and Lenjan from 1989 to 2013.

More than 570 km wastewater network has been constructed since 2013.

The managing director of Isfahan Province Water and Wastewater Company said, “presently, construction operation of wastewater installations in the cities of Mobarakeh, Karkvand, Zibashahr, Dizicheh, Zarrinshahr, Chamgardan, Zayandehroud, Sedeh and Lenjan is underway with 89 percent physical progress.”

The managing director added, “taking advantage of high potential and capacity of private sector in implementation of wastewater installation network in the cities of Mobarakeh and Lenjan led to the construction operation of more than 98 km wastewater network in these cities.”

Before the conclusion of this contract, the average wastewater network in these cities stood at about 7 km.

He pointed to the construction of water pumping stations and wastewater water conveyance line in the city of Mobarakeh and added, “presently, a number of 9 wastewater pumping stations and two wastewater pumping stations have been put atop agenda.”

With the coordination made in this regard, two pumping stations in the Neighborhood of Vinicheh and also construction of pumping station in the neighborhoods of Hasanabad and Nekouabad in the cities of Zibashahr and Dizicheh are underway for the transfer of wastewater to Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company (EMSCO).

In this regard, wastewater network, as long as 27 km, has been constructed from 2004 to 2014, he highlighted.

Amini added, “it is estimated that

construction of wastewater network in Najafabad would be put into operation, costing over 2.900 billion rials.”

The managing director of the company also pointed to the construction of wastewater installations in the cities of Dastgerd, Khouzogh, Dowlatabad, Gorgab, Najafabad, costing 1,530 billion rials, which would be put into operation in the form of buyback.

Construction of wastewater projects in the cities of Imanshahr and development of Fooladshahr Wastewater Treatment Plant, costing 2,100 billion rials, as well as construction of Dehagh wastewater installations, costing 150 billion rials, are of the other projects that were put atop agenda with the investment of private sector, he said, adding, “construction of Natanz wastewater treatment plant in Natanz is underway as well.”

Presently, inspection and modernization operation of wastewater collection network in Isfahan is underway, costing 368.729.816 yuan, equal to 460 billion toman, through foreign financing.

Eventually, it can be said that speed of construction operation of wastewater network with the participation of private sector has been 14fold more than the average level as compared to the 25 years ago, Amini reiterated.

A Glance at 40-Year Services of Isfahan Water and Wastewater Co. as Compared to before Islamic Revolution

The managing director of the company pointed to the 40th glorious victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution and said, “since the beginning of activity of provincial Water and Wastewater Company, about 168,000 people were put under the wastewater network of this company from 1965 to 1978 while after the Islamic Revolution, more than 2,978,542 people in this province have benefited from wastewater network of this company, showing a considerable growth.”

U.S. withdrawal and fears of uncertainties in Afghanistan

By Asif Durrani

Ashraf Ghani's government is visibly upset over the proposed understanding between the U.S. Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban about the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan in return for Taliban's assurances that Afghan territory would not be available to Al-Qaida or ISIS. President Ghani has reportedly written a letter to President Trump pleading to review his decision of hasty drawdown. He has also appealed to the international community not to repeat mistakes of the past which culminated into a disaster for the world and Afghanistan.

President Ghani's unease with the evolving situation is understandable. It must be embarrassing for him that as an elected President of Afghanistan he has been left out of crucial dialogue which would decide about the future of his country. Ironically, power game in Afghanistan has exposed many vulnerabilities of the country's unstable politics which remains dependent on the goodwill of outsiders. This brings into question the sovereignty of a nation which has the proud history of being fiercely independent.

The outcome of the dialogue between Khalilzad and Taliban notwithstanding, a host of ground realities are shaping up the future contours of Afghan conundrum with serious implications for the country's neighbours. First, it has become clear that the Americans have accepted the Taliban as fait accompli and deem it necessary to sign a truce agreement with the latter. Former U.S. ambassador to Kabul Ryan Crocker describes American agreement of troop withdrawal as “surrender”. However, he is unable to answer President Trump's crucial question as to what objectives did the U.S. achieve in the past 18 years in Afghanistan after wasting one trillion dollars and losing 2400 American soldiers.

Second, and related to the first question, is the sad state of affairs with President Ashraf Ghani, who being the President of a sovereign state, is unable to offer assurances to the Americans that the Afghan territory would not be used by Al-Qaida or ISIS. That the U.S. considered the Taliban capable of defending their territory and denying any space to the Al-Qaida and ISIS. Therefore, it should not be surprising if the U.S. chose to negotiate withdrawal with the Taliban to save it from further embarrassment at the hands of a government which cannot defend itself or the country.

Third, it is ironic that President Ghani is pleading for the American presence in his country to save his government rather than future stability of the country. His score card shows a poor performance in terms of providing good governance or security to the people. Even now his team is in total disarray to chalk out a future strategy and provide a viable roadmap to salvage the country from future chaos. On the contrary, and much to the chagrin of many, Taliban are displaying confidence and holding assurances to the Americans of providing stable government, secure borders, and no room for Al-Qaida or ISIS. They already have a case as they control almost 70% of the country which, for a businessman President Trump, makes sense to do business with.

➔ 13



Ministry of Energy
Water and Wastewater Company
of Isfahan Province
Public Relations Dept.

Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

Apartment

Apt in Zafaranih
brand new, 180 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
beautiful furn, roof garden
parking spot, **\$3400**
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Jordan
5th floor, 220 sq.m, 4 Bdrs.
furn, equipped kitchen
fully renovated, parking spot
\$1400
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in South Dibaji
5th floor, 125 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.
fully furn, equipped kitchen spj
good light, elevator
storage, parking spot, **\$1500**
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Mahmoodieh
3th floor, 250 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
unfurn, equipped kitchen, spj
elevator, parking spot, **\$3500**
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Soheil
almost new, 5th floor, 190 sq.m 3
Bdrs., fully furn, balcony Jacuzzi
elevator, storage
parking spot, **\$3000**
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

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

Villa

Duplex Villa
in Shahrak Qarb
140 sq.m, 2 Bdrs., unfurn
yard, renovated, roof garden
storage, parking spot
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Triplex Villa in Zafaranih
260 sq.m, 2 master rooms
2 rooms, modern design
fully furn, 60 sq.m terrace
parking spot, **\$6500**
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

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

Triplex Villa in Velenjak
1000 sq.m, 14 Bdrs., semi furn
2 kitchens, lots parking spots
sauna, outdoor pool
indoor pool, **\$20000**
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

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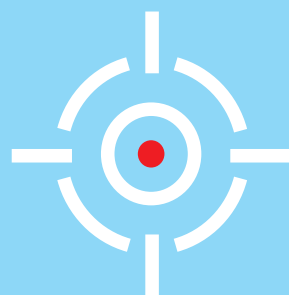
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The Tehran Times new pocket-sized glossary is now available on the market. The reader-friendly is a rich source of the most common journalistic terminology collected by the daily's retired staff.

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

For more information contact:

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Online autism screening website launched in Iran

HEALTH TEHRAN — Iran's Welfare Organization launched an online autism screening website on Monday, ISNA news agency reported.

Parents with children aged 2 to 5 years can refer to the website and answer to 10 online questions, the Organization director Vahid Qobadi-Dana said.

By answering the questions parents will be informed whether their children are likely to have autism or not, Qobadi-Dana explained, adding that children who are susceptible to autism will be referred to nearest welfare offices to confirm the disorder.

In May 2018, Afrouz Saffari-far, an official with Welfare Organization, said that online screening helps in diagnosing the disease in children and providing subsequent rehabilitating services.

She also stated that estimations show that 1 percent of Iranian children suffer autism.

According to the World Health Organization autism spectrum disorders refers to a range of conditions characterized by some degree of impaired social behavior, communication and language, and a narrow range of interests and activities that are both unique to the individual and carried out repetitively. Individuals with autism often present



other co-occurring conditions, including epilepsy, depression, anxiety and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The level of intellectual functioning in individuals with ASDs is extremely variable, extending from profound impairment

to superior levels.

It is important that, once identified, children with an ASD and their families are offered relevant information, services, referrals, and practical support according to their individual needs. A cure for ASD is

not available. Evidence-based psychosocial interventions, however, such as behavioral treatment and skills training programmes for parents and other caregivers, can reduce difficulties in communication and social behavior, with a positive impact on the person's wellbeing and quality of life.

According to priorygroup.com, it is so important to diagnose autism, as without a diagnosis this can make so many areas of life difficult, distressing and bewildering for the undiagnosed person. This can result in difficult behaviors and social isolation and young people who do not attain their best ability in school.

Once diagnosed, the young person can understand themselves better and realize that are not alone in the way they feel. Their parents and the professionals working with them can all learn how best to help them. The right services can be accessed and adaptations can be put into place in the educational setting.

A diagnosis can prevent so much distress as the child develops and can stop further psychiatric illnesses developing. Some young people with ASD do benefit from medication to help with anxiety or low mood or to help manage some behaviors.

IRCS to inaugurate 31 rehabilitation centers

HEALTH TEHRAN — The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) will inaugurate 31 rehabilitation centers in 12 provinces nationwide concurrent with the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution on February 11, IRCS secretary general has said.

The new centers will be launched in provinces of West Azarbaijan, Ardebil, Bushehr, Fars, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad, Kermanshah, Golestan, Lorestan, Markazi and Hormozgan to name a few. IRNA news agency quoted Mahmoud Reza Pirouzi as saying on Monday.

The centers will offer services to the people with disabilities and disabled war-veterans, Pirouzi explained.

With the new centers being established the number of rehabilitation centers will increase to 189 nationwide and with the inauguration of the aforesaid centers all provinces of Iran will have rehabilitation centers, he concluded.



'Iranian traditional medicine effective on reducing cancer pain'

HEALTH TEHRAN — Iranian traditional medicine can effectively help in reducing pain among patients with cancer, head of Iranian Society of Radiotherapy Oncology has said.

Herbal medicine can have soothing effects on patients with cancer and make them less anxious, Fars news agency quoted Mohammadreza Qavam-Nasiri as saying on Monday.

Traditional medicine cannot treat cancer and can only help in alleviating the pain, he highlighted, adding that, early diagnosis of cancer and receiving prompt treatment can help in treating it.

Chemotherapy cannot be replaced with traditional medicine and families should note that they should complete treatment course to get the best result, he concluded.



Obesity-linked cancers rising faster in young adults than over-45s, study shows

Medical experts have warned that obesity-related cancers are rising more quickly in younger Americans than in the older generation, a potential timebomb that could derail decades of progress in cutting cancer deaths.

There are 12 cancers whose risk is significantly linked to obesity, and half of these — including colorectal, kidney, pancreatic and multiple myeloma — are rising faster in the youngest age groups, the U.S. researchers found.

Far from being healthier than older generations, young adults are living more of their lives overweight. This increases the risk of cancer as well as a host of other conditions like bowel disease and diabetes, and UK experts said the NHS was already contending with similar problems

“Our findings expose a recent change that could serve as a warning of an increased burden of obesity-related cancers to come in older adults,” said one of the lead authors, Dr Ahmedin Jemal from the American Cancer Society.

“Most cancers occur in older adults, which means that as the young people in our study age, the burden

of obesity-related cancer cases and deaths are likely to increase even more.”

The study, released on World Cancer Day on Monday and published in the journal Lancet Public Health, used data from 25 U.S. cancer databases — spanning two-thirds of the U.S. population.

It found that between 1995 and 2014, the 25- to 29-year-old age group had the biggest increases in obesity-linked cancers, and that the size of the increase grew with each successively younger age group down from the age of 85.

Cancers are still more commonly diagnosed in older people, but the gap could shrink if trends continue.

For example, pancreatic cancer is one of the deadliest forms of the disease, with just 1 per cent of people who contract it surviving past 10 years in the UK.

In the U.S. there are 37 pancreatic cancers diagnosed for every 100,000 people age 50 to 84, compared to two for every 100,000 25- to 49-year-olds.

But the Lancet study shows the number of pancreatic

cancers diagnosed in those older than 45 rose by less than 1 per cent each year, while the numbers diagnosed in 25- to 29-year-olds rose 4.3 per cent a year.

To address this it called for more obesity screening and weight loss counselling, with fewer than half of GPs in the U.S. regularly measuring patients' BMI. It also proposes curbs on advertising for junk food and tax on sugary drinks, as has recently been implemented in the UK.

UK obesity experts warned that the Britain is seeing worrying rises in obesity-linked type 2 diabetes in young people.

“Shockingly, if the same is happening with cancer in the U.S. it could already be happening here though as yet unreported,” said Tam Fry chair of the National Obesity Forum.

“Such a discovery could negate our own recent advances in treating cancers but until the NHS seriously begins to screen for obesity, as recommended by the study's authors, we may not know.”

(Source: The Independent)

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Anzali Free Zone, a popular spot for Azeri, Russian and Iraqi travelers

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Anzali Free Zone, which is located in northern Iran, is a popular destination for travelers from Azerbaijan, Russia and Iraq. Situated in Gilan province, Anzali Free Zone is the sole free zone in the southern part of the Caspian Sea with an area of 9,400 hectares and 40 kilometers shoreline.



A general view of Anzali Free Zone in northern Iran.

“Anzali Free Zone’s location is close to Bandar Anzali, Rasht and Astaneh-ye Ashrafiyeh in Gilan province making it a tourism destination. Therefore, the interest in natural resources of the region has attracted foreign tourists from Azerbaijan, Russia and Iraq,” Reza Masrour, managing director of the free zone, told Trend in an interview, Azer News reported on Sunday.

“In the past 10 months of the current Iranian year (started March 21, 2018), around 2,647 foreign tourists visited Anzali Free Zone and enjoyed the tourism, commercial and economic capacities of the region. The statistics indicate a 23 percent increase compared to the last year,” he stated.

“Eco-tourism houses have become popular among many tourists, and other projects, such as an aquarium and a reptile garden, a marina, a sea park, a coastal complex and sport centers, eco-tourism plans and building resorts alongside water festivals have attracted many foreign and domestic tourists to the region,” the official added.

Launched in 2005, the economic hub has special advantages such as strategic transportation and transit position by being in the International North–South Transport Corridor. It embraces some 15 hotels, motels and residential complexes with a capacity of 5800 beds.

Omani tourists in Iran rescued from floodwaters

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian relief forces have rescued 15 Omani travelers whose bus was stranded in floodwaters in southern Iran, IRNA reported on Monday.

The tourists had just left Bandar Charak for Shiraz, however, they were trapped in floods minutes after departure, Foad Moradzadeh, the governor of Shirkaveh district, said.

He added that rescue teams evacuated passengers using a loader.

Bandar Charak is a coastal town and capital of Shirkaveh district, in Bandar Lengeh, Hormozgan province.



ROUND THE GLOBE

Lower Valley of the Omo

The Lower Valley of the Omo is located in south-western Ethiopia. It extends over an area of 165 km2.

The age old sedimentary deposits in the Lower Omo Valley are now world renowned for the discovery of many hominid fossils, that have been of fundamental importance in the study of human evolution.

The Lower Omo Valley includes the Konso and Fejej paleontological research locations with sedimentary deposit going back to the plio-pleistocene period.



These have produced numerous hominid and animal fossils, including fragments of Australopithecus. The deposits of human vertebrae fauna, and paleo-environmental evolution, shed light on the earliest stages of the origins and development of Homo sapiens of Africa.

The discoveries of ancient stone tools in an encampment also offers evidence of the oldest known technical activities of prehistoric beings, thus making the property one of the most significant for mankind.

To ensure Omo’s position as the yardstick against which all other ancient deposits in East Africa are measured, researched evidence from the site has established bio-stratigraphical, radiometric and magneto-stratigraphical scales spanning between one and 3.5 million years.

Since 1966, scientific research has proved that the site significantly contributes to prominent archaeological, geological, paleo-anthropological and paleo-environmental studies.

(Source: UNESCO)

Caves of Paleolithic Age discovered in Iran

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — A total of 70 caves and rock shelters dating back to the Paleolithic Age have been discovered in southwest Iran during the first season of a newly-conducted survey on Izeh county, Khuzestan province.

“121 caves and rock shelters have been discovered in Izeh plain of Khuzestan, of which 70 have been yielded objects, which date from either the Lower Paleolithic or the Epipaleolithic (Final Old Stone Age),” ILNA quoted archaeologist Mojgan Jayez as saying on Sunday.

The exploration was conducted on Ab-bandan area, which is situated on the margins of a seasonal wetland that shapes a karst polje or karst field, she added.

In this specialized survey, document-

ing, mapping and sampling projects on cultural contexts including handmade objects were performed professionally, the archaeologist explained.

In 2018, some Paleolithic dwellings were spotted during another survey conducted in Hezarjarib district of Mazandaran province, northern Iran.

Paleolithic Period, also called Old Stone Age, is a period in human prehistory distinguished by the original development of stone tools that covers c. 95% of human technological prehistory.

The onset of the Paleolithic Period has traditionally coincided with the first evidence of tool construction and use by Homo some 2.58 million years ago, near the beginning of the Pleistocene Epoch (2.58 million to 11,700 years ago).



Handicrafts exports up 11%, hit \$190 million



HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran’s handicrafts exports reached \$190 million in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2018), showing 11 percent growth year on year.

Exports of handicrafts fetched over \$190 million during the first nine months of the year, an increase of 11 percent compared to the same period last year, said Ali-Asghar Mounesan, director of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, CHTN reported.

The official made the remarks on Sunday while visiting a major hand-

icrafts exhibit in downtown Tehran.

According to data compiled by the CHHTO, Iran exported \$237 million of handicrafts in [the Iranian calendar year] 1395 (March 2016-March 2017).

Traditional ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornamentations with precious and semi-precious gemstones are among Iranian exports to Iraq, Afghanistan and Germany, the U.S., the UK and other countries.

Some 75 percent of Iranian handicrafts are produced by females, Masoumeh Ebtekar, vice president for women’s and family affairs, said in April, 2018.

Remnants of historical bathhouse, sewage system unearthed in Rey



HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Vestiges of a centuries-old bathhouse and its sewage system have recently been discovered during an ongoing excavation project in Rey, southern Tehran, CHTN reported.

In early January, Iranian media reported that two clay jars had been found in a construction project in Rey while workers were digging the ground.

Weeks of excavations have been followed under supervision of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, during which pottery and glasswork fragments as well as animal skeletons have been found.

Archaeologist Mohsen Sa’adati, who leads the excavation, believes that findings are probably remnants of a Seljuk-era (1037–1194) public bathhouse.

“Although the types of potteries, glasswork and designs of architectural spaces show all are related to the Seljuk period but the probabilities will become definite after [our] experiments are completed.”

Also known as Shahr-e Rey, the city was one of the capitals of the Seljuk Empire in the 11th and 12th centuries.

Rey was devastated in the 13th century when the Mongols swept through and, these days, has been swallowed up by the urban sprawl of Tehran.

Travel the world for free as a £2,000 a week Instagram ‘apprentice’

Fancy traveling the world for free this summer? One cruise line is offering to pay an “apprentice” to do just that – and applications open today.

Those tempted to fill the “Shore Explorer” role will need to share their best travel story with Royal Caribbean using Instagram. The successful candidate will then be tasked with documenting their trip on the photo-sharing app, through images, Instagram Stories and videos.

The purpose of the position is to test out the cruise line’s shore excursions for three weeks this summer, for which the successful candidate will be paid £2,000 per week – the equivalent of a £104,000 annual salary – for their efforts.

Royal Caribbean said it is looking for “an adrenaline junkie” who “has a unique ability to capture a moment and tell a story in a simple social media post”.

Ben Bouldin, managing director of Royal Caribbean International UK and Ireland, said: “With Instagram it’s not just

a content platform anymore, but an area of inspiration and influence, especially for the next generation of travelers. This is a once in a lifetime role.” Walking Alaska’s glaciers, touring Osaka in Japan, white water rafting in the Norwegian Fjords and riding the world’s longest zipline in Dubai are among the many experiences the successful applicant will try.

They will also be the first to set foot on board Royal Caribbean’s new private island in the Caribbean, which is due to open in May. The entries will be judged by Bouldin; James McVey, writer and guitarist from the band The Vamps, who recently took part in I’m A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here!; travel writer Nadia El Ferdoussi and Russ Francis, the line’s ‘Instagrammer in Chief’, who took on a long-term role at Royal Caribbean following a similar process and subsequent three-week placement in 2018.

He said his role was “life-changing”, adding: “I went from working a night shift for seven years to travelling the world.”

Instagram is one way for cruise companies to attract younger and first-time cruisers. In a survey of 2,000 people aged 18-37, commissioned by Royal Caribbean, almost a third said they had booked a holiday or experience after seeing someone post about it on Instagram.

As part of the survey, people were asked to rate the experiences they’d most want to capture on Instagram. Topping a list of 50 was seeing the Northern Lights, with going on a cruise at number 20 – although many of the experiences listed are accessible by cruise, from the Aurora Borealis to attending the Mardi Gras in New Orleans.

While this is an enviable opportunity, Instagram has been implicated in a tick-list approach to travel where tourists flock to the same spots for the perfect shot for their feed. Last year a report showed a third of millennials considered posting on social media as important as the holiday itself.

(Source: The Telegraph)

Tips for traveling cheaply in any city

By Geoffrey Morrison

Staying comfortable and staying connected away from home can be expensive, but it doesn’t have to be.

I’ve spent most of the last five years traveling across dozens of countries. The question I hear most, by far, is “how can you afford that?” No one believes it’s possible to travel cheaply and comfortably, but it is. Since I live on the road for months at a time, I want both. I’m guessing you do too. Here’s how you can have it.

■ Stay at a hostel. No, really.

Forget everything you think you know about hostels. Today’s hostels are clean, cheap, for all ages, and in many cases, gorgeous. I’ve stayed in hostels that were better than most hotels I’ve been in. Though the average age skews younger, I’m 40 and I’m never the oldest in any hostel I’ve stayed at, and often I’m not even the oldest in my room.

If you’re curious about these low-cost, often-luxe living spaces, check out hostel booking sites like Hostelworld and Hostelz. You’ll get user reviews for each hostel, plus tons of pictures. I’ve stayed at over 100 hostels in the last few years and most were great, some were awesome, and only a handful were bad. Generally, though not always, you’ll have to share a bathroom, and the cheapest rooms are shared rooms. However, most hostels

have private rooms, too. Staying in hostels, even for just part of your trip, will save you hundreds. Who knows, you might even make some new friends.

■ Skip the restaurants

If it’s an important meal, or a spot you really want to try, don’t feel guilty about spending money in a restaurant. If the food is great, never feel guilty. But if it’s just a quick bite while you’re exploring, don’t waste the time or money.

Grocery stores and markets around the world offer far cheaper food than any restaurant. If you stay at a hostel or Airbnb, most have kitchens and refrigerators, so you can store easily prepared meals or ingredients you buy while you’re out and about.

Depending on where you’re headed, the street food might be exceptionally cheap and incredibly good. If street food isn’t your style, in many parts of the world, convenience stores like 7-Eleven have delicious fresh food, and corner stores offer cafeteria-style dinners for local-friendly prices.

■ Pack light

If your luggage is too heavy to easily carry, you’ve packed too much. Being able to carry your luggage with ease opens all sorts of money-saving options, like walking and public transport, instead of needing an expensive cab or car service to get you and your bags from place to place.

Regardless of how long your trip is, aim for no more than a carry-on and a day pack. That is, unless you’re going somewhere cold and you need to bring winter wear, or you’re traveling for a specific reason that requires extra gear. Otherwise, we have some tips on what you can leave behind on your next trip, like hair dryers and a lot of clothes.

■ Use local SIM cards

Roaming fees are like an ominous and pending threat looming over any trip. How much will checking email cost? Will I be charged \$5 to look at Google Maps? Get a local SIM (Subscriber Identity Module) card instead, if you can. SIM cards are available virtually everywhere you might travel. You may even find them in vending machines or kiosks in the airport, although those will likely be more expensive than one you’ll find once you get into town or closer to your hotel.

A local SIM will make your phone work pretty much just as it does at home, without the roaming fees. For around \$20, your local SIM will get you unlimited or near-unlimited data for your entire trip. You may want to stop by a local phone store just to make sure you get one that’ll pair your phone up with a carrier that will support it, and your phone will need to be unlocked if it isn’t already. For more, Wirecutter, the New York Times company that reviews products, has a com-

plete guide to using your phone abroad here, that full-disclosure, I wrote.

■ Buy a local metro card

The local transit system in nearly every major city have cards that offer discounted rates for people who ride frequently. If you’re in a city for more than a few days, these will likely save you a lot. Load the card with a bit of money, and each ride is cheaper than if you bought them individually. Plus, it feels pretty cool to slap down your card at a turnstile like a local.

Many local transit systems offer temporary visitor cards. Be wary, though, I’ve found these aren’t always cheaper than buying individual rides. Cities with reusable cards, like London’s Oyster, Tokyo’s Pasmo, and others, require a small deposit, which you can get refunded when you leave. Often they’ll give you the remaining balance too, though not always. I just keep mine. Maybe you’ll go back next year!

■ Avoid the tourist traps

I always thought this was obvious, yet restaurants near tourist hot spots are always packed. They’re almost universally overpriced, with mediocre food. The worst pasta I’ve had in my life was adjacent to St Mark’s Square in Venice. Instead, walk a few blocks in any direction. You’re bound to find something cheaper and better.

(Source: The New York Times)

Hubble fortuitously discovers a new galaxy in the cosmic neighborhood

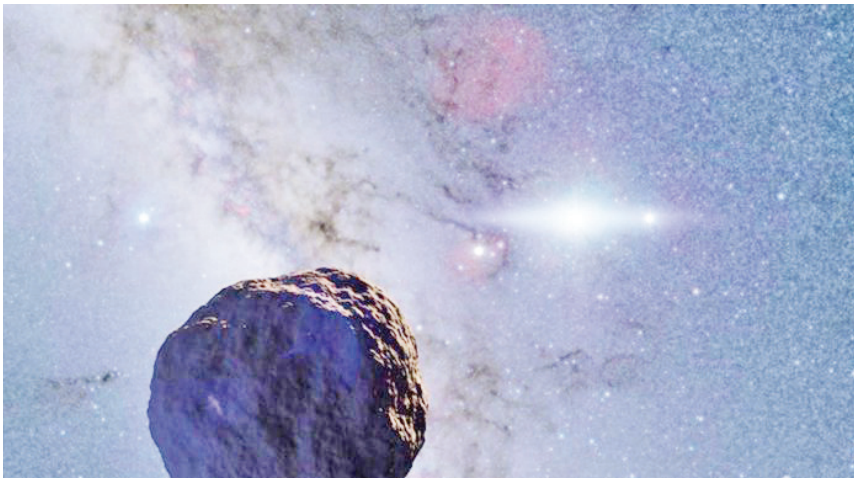
Astronomers using the NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope to study some of the oldest and faintest stars in the globular cluster NGC 6752 have made an unexpected finding. They discovered a dwarf galaxy in our cosmic backyard, only 30 million light-years away.

An international team of astronomers recently used the NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope to study white dwarf stars within the globular cluster NGC 6752. The aim of their observations was to use these stars to measure the age of the globular cluster, but in the process they made an unexpected discovery.

In the outer fringes of the area observed with Hubble's Advanced Camera for Surveys a compact collection of stars was visible. After a careful analysis of their brightnesses and temperatures, the astronomers concluded that these stars did not belong to the cluster -- which is part of the Milky Way -- but rather they are millions of light-years more distant.

■ Cosmic neighbor

Our newly discovered cosmic neighbor, nicknamed Bedin 1 by the astronomers, is a modestly sized, elongated galaxy. It measures only around 3000 light-years at its greatest extent -- a fraction of the size of the Milky Way. Not only is it tiny, but it is also incredibly faint. These properties led astronomers to



classify it as a dwarf spheroidal galaxy. Dwarf spheroidal galaxies are defined by

their small size, low-luminosity, lack of dust and old stellar populations (1). 36 galaxies

Dwarf spheroidal galaxies are defined by their small size, low-luminosity, lack of dust and old stellar populations (1). 36 galaxies of this type are already known to exist in the Local Group of Galaxies, 22 of which are satellite galaxies of the Milky Way.

of this type are already known to exist in the Local Group of Galaxies, 22 of which are satellite galaxies of the Milky Way.

While dwarf spheroidal galaxies are not uncommon, Bedin 1 has some notable features. Not only is it one of just a few dwarf spheroidals that have a well established distance but it is also extremely isolated. It lies about 30 million light-years from the Milky Way and 2 million light-years from the nearest plausible large galaxy host, NGC 6744.

■ The isolated dwarf galaxy

This makes it possibly the most isolated small dwarf galaxy discovered to date.

From the properties of its stars, astronomers were able to infer that the galaxy is around 13 billion years old -- nearly as old as the Universe itself. Because of its isolation -- which resulted in hardly any interaction with other galaxies -- and its age, Bedin 1 is the astronomical equivalent of a living fossil from the early Universe.

The discovery of Bedin 1 was a truly serendipitous find. Very few Hubble images allow such faint objects to be seen, and they cover only a small area of the sky. Future telescopes with a large field of view, such as the WFIRST telescope, will have cameras covering a much larger area of the sky and may find many more of these galactic neighbors.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

'Inkjet' solar panels poised to revolutionize green energy, scientists says



What if one day all buildings could be equipped with windows and facades that satisfy the structure's every energy need, whether rain or shine?

That sustainability dream is today one step closer to becoming a reality thanks to Polish physicist and businesswoman Olga Malinkiewicz.

The 36-year-old has developed a novel inkjet processing method for perovskites -- a new generation of cheaper solar cells -- that makes it possible to produce solar panels under lower temperatures, thus sharply reducing costs.

Indeed, perovskite technology is on track to revolutionize access to solar power for all, given its surprising physical properties, some experts say.

"In our opinion, perovskite solar cells have the potential to address the world energy poverty," said Mohammad Khaja Nazeeruddin, a professor at Switzerland's Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne, an institution on the cutting-edge of solar energy research.

Solar panels coated with the mineral are light, flexible, efficient, inexpensive and come in varying hues and degrees of transparency.

■ Producing electricity

They can easily be fixed to almost any surface -- be it laptop, car, drone, spacecraft or building -- to produce electricity, including in the shade or indoors.

Though the excitement is new, perovskite has been known to science since at least the 1830s, when it was first identified by German mineralogist Gustav Rose while prospecting in the Ural mountains and named after Russian mineralogist Lev Perovski.

Later, she developed an inkjet printing procedure that lowered production costs enough to make mass production economically feasible.

"That was a bull's eye. Now high temperatures are no longer required to coat things with a photovoltaic layer," Malinkiewicz told AFP.

Her discovery quickly earned her an article in the journal Nature and media attention, as well as the Photonics21 Student Innovation award in a competition organised by the European Commission.

The Polish edition of the MIT Technology Review also selected her as one of its Innovators Under 35 in 2015.

They panels can easily be fixed to almost any surface

She went on to cofound the company Saule Technologies -- named after the Baltic goddess of the sun -- along with two Polish businessmen.

They had to assemble all their laboratory equipment from scratch, before multimillionaire Japanese investor Hideo Sawada came on board.

The company now has an ultra-modern laboratory with an international team of young experts and is building an industrial-scale production site.

■ World's first production

"This will be the world's first production line using this technology. Its capacity will reach 40,000 square meters of panels by the end of the year and 180,000 square meters the following year," Malinkiewicz said at her lab.

"But that's just a drop in the bucket in terms of demand."

Eventually, compact production lines could easily be installed everywhere, according to demand, to manufacture perovskite solar panels that are made to measure.

The Swedish construction group Skanska is testing the cutting-edge panels on the facade of one of its buildings in Warsaw.

It also inked a licensing partnership with Saule in December for the exclusive right to incorporate the company's solar cell technology in its projects in Europe, the United States and Canada.

"Perovskite technology is bringing us closer to the goal of energy self-sufficient buildings," said Adam Targowski, sustainability manager at Skanska.

(Source: techxplore.com)

NASA astronomer has a potential explanation for strange interstellar object Oumuamua



Since it was first detected hurtling through our Solar System, the interstellar object known as 'Oumuamua has been a source of immense scientific interest.

Aside from being extrasolar in origin, the fact that it has managed to defy classification time and again has led to some pretty interesting theories. While some have suggested that it is a comet or an asteroid, there has even been the suggestion that it might be an interstellar spacecraft.

The study comes from famed astronomer Dr. Zdenek Sekanina of the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, who suggests that 'Oumuamua is the remnant of an interstellar comet that shattered before making its closest pass to the Sun (perihelion), leaving behind a cigar-shaped rocky fragment.

Having worked with the JPL for almost 40 years -- where he specializes in the study of meteors, comets and interstellar dust -- Dr. Sekanina is no stranger to celestial objects. In fact, his work includes groundbreaking studies on Halley's comet, the Tunguska event, and the break-up and impact of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 on Jupiter.

His latest study, titled "If 'Oumuamua As Debris of Dwarf Interstellar Comet That Disintegrated Before Perihelion", recently appeared online. In it, Sekanina addresses the possibility that the observations that began in October of 2017 by the Panoramic Survey Telescope and Rapid Response System-1 (Pan-STARRS-1) was actually a fragment of the original object that entered our system in early 2017.

■ The faint comets

For starters, Sekanina refers to previous research by another famed astronomer -- John E. Bortle -- that indicates how faint comets in nearly-parabolic orbits that take them closer than 1 AU from the Sun are likely to suddenly disintegrate shortly before they reach perihelion. Subsequent research, according to Sekanina, also indicates that in some cases, a sizeable fragment could be left behind.

As he states in his study, this fragment would resemble a "devolatilized aggregate of loosely-bound dust grains that may have

exotic shape, peculiar rotational properties, and extremely high porosity, all acquired in the course of the disintegration event." If this sounds familiar, it is because the description fits 'Oumuamua perfectly.

For instance, one of the first things astronomers determined about 'Oumuamua (aside from the fact that it was not likely to be a comet) was that it had a rather odd shape. Based on readings acquired from the Very Large Telescope (VLT), a team of researchers determined that 'Oumuamua was an elongated object likely composed of rocky material.

At the time, the team concluded that this was an indication of past collisions. But based on Sekanina's assessment, this could be the result of the original object's disintegration.

■ Comets reached perihelion

Sekanina then drew comparisons with C/2017 S3 and C/2010 X1 (Elenin), two comets that experienced disintegration when they reached perihelion.

In both cases, the disintegration of these comets involved an explosive event and the release of a "monstrous fluffy dust aggregate". From this, Sekanina deduced that 'Oumuamua would not experience outgassing and would be subject to the effects of solar radiation pressure.

Once again, this is completely consistent with observations made of 'Oumuamua. As Prof. Loeb of Harvard University and the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics (CfA) noted in one of several research papers on the subject, the acceleration of 'Oumuamua as it exited the Solar System could not be attributed to outgassing (as was previously suggested).

Simply put, if 'Oumuamua's composition included volatile materials (i.e. water, carbon dioxide, methane, ammonia, etc.) like a comet, it would have experienced outgassing as it neared our Sun, which would have been visible when it was detected after perihelion. However, this was not the case, which raised the question of how radiation pressure could be responsible for its acceleration.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Magnetic teeth hold promise for materials and energy: new study

A mollusk with teeth that can grind down rock may hold the key to making next generation abrasion-resistant materials and nanoscale materials for energy.

The mollusk, called a gumboot chiton, scrapes algae off ocean rocks using a specialized set of teeth made from the magnetic mineral magnetite. The teeth have the maximum hardness and stiffness of any known biomineral. Although magnetite is a geologic mineral commonly found in Earth's crust, only a few animals are known to produce it, and little is known about how they make it.

A better understanding of the biomineralization process, combined with a thorough understanding of chiton tooth architecture and mechanics, could help scientists not only improve wear-resistant coatings and tooling, but also help grow nanoscale materials for energy and water-based applications.

Now, for the first time, a team led by Michiko Nemoto, an assistant professor of agriculture at Okayama University and David Kisailus, a professor of materials science and chemical engineering in UC Riverside's Bourns College of Engineering, has discovered a piece of the genetic puzzle that allows the chiton to produce magnetite nanomaterials.

Chitons have several dozen rows of teeth attached to a ribbon-like structure. Each tooth is composed of a mineralized cusp, or pointed area, and base supporting the mineralized cusp. Magnetite is deposited only in the cusp region. As teeth wear down they are replaced by new teeth, so teeth in varying stages of formation are always present.

Rather than looking for specific genes, the researchers examined the transcriptome, the set of all RNA molecules in the teeth, to see what substances the genes were actually expressing. DNA contains the blueprints, but RNA is what "transcribes" the blueprints and helps carry them out.

They found that the 20 most abundant RNA transcripts in the developing teeth region contain ferritin, a protein that stores iron and releases it in a controlled fashion, while those in the mineralized teeth region include proteins of mitochondria that may provide the energy required to transform the raw materials into magnetite.

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

Flying squirrels glow pink in the dark, says biologist

One spring night in Wisconsin, John Martin, a biologist, was in his backyard with an ultraviolet flashlight. Suddenly, a hot-pink squirrel flew by.

It was a southern flying squirrel, a small, furry creature most active at dawn and dusk. Under most circumstances, it has a warm brown color. But in the beam of Dr. Martin's flashlight, it sported a gaudy Day-Glo hue closer to something you might see in a nightclub or a Jazzercise class circa 1988.

"He told his colleagues at Northland College, but of course, everyone was pretty skeptical," said Allison Kohler, a graduate student at Texas A&M University.

Dr. Martin asked Ms. Kohler, then a student at Northland, to look into it. After examining more than 100 specimens of flying squirrels across two museum collections and spotting five more squirrels under UV light in the wild, the researchers and their colleagues reported surprising results last week in the Journal of Mammalogy.

Three different species of flying squirrel -- southern, northern and Humboldt's flying squirrel -- turned that color under ultraviolet illumination.

What the flying squirrels get out of it is still a mystery. Confirming that the squirrels are even capable of seeing in ultraviolet wavelengths will require additional study, Ms. Kohler said.

Scientists suspect the flying squirrel may have evolved fluorescence to evade owls that hunt them. Alternately, the glow may have a mating function.

Birds and butterflies have many brilliant markings that are usually invisible to humans, who can't see ultraviolet wavelengths except under special lighting, but that are easily spotted by other members of their species. Fluorescence is common in the oceans, too.

Studies have found that birds may use fluorescent markings when choosing a mate, and fish flash at other members of their species while darting through reefs.

(Source: NYT)

Chinese astronomers find over 10,000 metal-poor star candidates

Chinese astronomers have discovered more than 10,000 metal-poor star candidates, which may help shed light on the early universe and the emergence of the first stars and galaxies.

Astronomers use the word "metals" to describe elements heavier than hydrogen and helium. This usage is distinct from the usual physical definition of a solid metal, said Li Haining, an astronomer with the National Astronomical Observatories of China (NAOC) under the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Astronomers believe that the majority of elements heavier than hydrogen and helium in the universe are formed in the cores of stars as they evolve. Over time, stellar winds and supernova deposit the metals into the surrounding environment, enriching the interstellar medium and providing recycling materials for the birth of new stars.

Therefore, the lower the metal contents in stars, the older the stars in the universe.

The research on metal-poor stars will help us understand the early universe, the origin of elements, as well as the emergence and evolution of the first generation stars and galaxies, Li said.

However, metal-poor stars are very rare and difficult to observe, she said.

Based on data from the Large Sky Area Multi-Object Fiber Spectroscopic Telescope (LAMOST), located in NAOC's Xinglong Observatory in north China's Hebei Province, astronomers have found more than 10,000 metal-poor star candidates with metal contents less than 1 percent of those in the sun.

LAMOST can observe about 4,000 celestial bodies at one time, and helped Chinese astronomers establish the world's largest databank of stellar spectra.

"This greatly improved the possibility of discovering rare celestial bodies like metal-poor stars," Li added.

The discovery was recently published in the Astrophysical Journal Supplement Series.

(Source: china.org.cn)

IME's Volume of Transactions at 11% Growth

In the week ending Bahman 11 (Jan. 31), 561,786 tons of various types of goods, valued at more than 23,000 billion rials, was traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), showing a considerable 11.5 percent growth in terms of volume and value, the Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

In the same period, 140,220 tons of mineral and industrial products, valued at \$8,884 billion rials, was traded in Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME).

Moreover, 127,120 tons of steel, 7,955 tons of copper, 4,000 tons of aluminum, 1,000 tons of cement, 15 tons of concentrates and precious metals and also 110 tons of molybdenum concentrate were purchased by customers in the same period.

Also, in the mentioned transaction week in two domestic and exports sectors of oil and petrochemical products, 419,891 tons of various types of goods, valued at \$14,817 billion rials, was sold.

In this regard, 185,040 tons of vacuum bottom, 84,420 tons of bitumen, 75,085 tons of polymerized materials, 50 tons of base oil, 30,767 tons of chemicals, 42,210 tons of sulfur and 2,246 tons of humid insulation were traded.

With due observance to the said issue, 120 tons of molybdenum sulfur, 2,000 tons of aluminum ingot and also 690 tons of aluminum alloy ingot will also be supplied at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), the Public Relations Dept. of the company concluded.

LEARN ENGLISH

Immigration and Customs

A: Good afternoon, **passport** and **arrival** card please.
B: Here you are.
A: Where are you coming from?
B: China.
A: Is this your country of birth or **residence**.
B: I just work there.
A: What is the **purpose** of your visit to the United States?
B: I'm here on **vacation**.
A: How long do you plan to stay in the United States?
B: Almost three weeks.
A: Sir, you didn't fill out the information on your arrival card of where you will be staying.
B: Oh, I'm sorry, but there are a couple of different places I will travel to within the United States, so I wasn't sure what to put.
A: You must specify an address of the place where you will spend most of your time.
B: Ok, here you are.
A: Do you have enough means to support yourself while you are here?
B: Yes. I have some **travelers** cheque and two credit cards.
A: Very good. Do you have anything to **declare**?
B: Nope. I only have my clothes and camera!
A: Very well sir, welcome to the United States, enjoy your visit.
■ **Key vocabulary**
passport: form of identification that allows someone to travel
arrival: an act of arriving; a coming
purpose: reason for doing something
vacation: have holidays
residence: the place, esp. the house, in which a person lives or resides; dwelling place; home
traveler: a person or thing that travels
declare: to state something officially
■ **Supplementary vocabulary**
metal detector: an electronic device for detecting the presence of metal objects
luggage: baggage such as suitcases and personal belongings
terrorist: a person, usually a member of a group, who uses or advocates terrorism body
scanner: a device that virtually strip searches a person in order to look for hidden objects without physically removing clothes or making physical contact
(Source: irlanguage.com)



Without water,
everything
withers

Ebtekar hails achievements in women, family arenas

W O M E N TEHRAN — Vice president for women's and family affairs, Masoumeh Ebtekar, has hailed achievements made by the country in the field of women and family affairs.

Statistics prove that the Islamic Republic of Iran has successful experiences related to women and family, IRNA quoted Ebtekar as saying.

Iran has established ties with different countries like Indonesia, Japan and Malaysia to exchange experiences in women and family affairs, she added.

Earlier Ebtekar and Indonesia's Minister of Women Affairs signed an agreement in Tehran to enhance cooperation to empower women, the report added.

Both sides made attempts for expanding women's role in policies and decision-making, supporting women and children against any kind of violence, expanding women's role in trade and technology, empowering women in economic affairs and exchanging experiences in the field of women and



children, she explained.

Ebtekar further emphasized that Iran gained achievements in improving wom-

en's status which results strengthening the foundation of the family.

Elsewhere in her remarks, she referred

to her meeting with executive director of UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) Natalia Kanem, and said, "We proposed to her that Iran has a successful experience in the strengthening the foundation of the family."

"We have a project now underway, the 'National Family Dialogue' which is a project that we are working with NGOs and the universities and it deals with the communicative disorders in the family where we are working to enhance the communicative skills among the different members of the family."

"We have shortcomings and challenges but we think that even those challenges and shortcomings have lessons in them that we can learn and we can share them with other countries", she added.

"So this is one of the areas that we are working with other countries in bilateral level and international level and international organizations like the UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF. We also have joint projects for example the role of the family in promoting environmental awareness in the society."

Fajr filmfest to name best movies on women and family affairs

W O M E N TEHRAN — At the 37th edition of the Fajr Film Festival, the presidential department for women's and family affairs views movies related to women and family affairs from two different aspects of "family" and "women's rights".

The presidential department considers certain criteria for selection the best movies in the field of women and family affairs, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The criteria includes decreasing family vulnerabilities through avoiding violence, necessity for moralities and equity among family members and consequences of absence of family relations.

Necessity of dialogue among family members and the effects of happiness and joy for sustainability of families are other elements to be considered for choosing the best films.

The selected films in the field of women and family af-



fairs also deal with women's rights and problems, defending women's identity both in family and the society far from their role as mothers and wives.

The nominated films will be those which create a multilateral outlook about Iranian women and provide a realistic view about existing problems women face at the society as well as demonstrating the real face of successful mother and wives

Creating strategies for decreasing women's vulnerabilities are also among the criteria for choosing the best film. Shirin Ahmadian, Tahoura Abolghasemi and Ashraf Geramizadegan are judging the movies presented in the field of women and family affairs.

The 37th edition of the Fajr Film Festival, Iran's major film event, opened at the Tehran Theater Complex on Tuesday night and it will wrap up at Milad Tower on February 11.

Iran, UNICEF to cooperate on helping girls with disabilities

W O M E N TEHRAN — The presidential department for women's and family affairs announced a new cooperation with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) regarding children focusing on

girls with disabilities.

UNICEF is cooperating with different organizations in Iran, ISNA quoted Leila Falahati, director general for international affairs at the presidential department for women's and family affairs, as saying on Saturday.

In a recent meeting held in Tehran between UNICEF official and the officials of presidential department for women's and family affairs, different subjects such as out-of-school and disabled children were discussed, however, currently the target group of both sides was

assigned as "girls with disabilities".

UNICEF's activities for disabled children in Iran were on promotion of awareness and influencing in policy-makings, Falahati said concluding the current meeting put emphasize on more cooperation in this field.

At the Threshold of 40th Glorious Victory Anniversary of the Islamic Revolution:

3rd Distillation Unit of Esfahan Oil Refining Company and Some Important Environmental Projects Inaugurated



Concurrent with the 40th glorious victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution and with the aim of increasing safety coefficient, the 3rd Distillation Unit of the company and some important environmental projects will be

inaugurated during this auspicious occasion.

Managing director of Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC) Morteza Ebrahimi announced the above statement and said, "the total capacity of Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC)

stands at 370-386,000 barrels of oil per day."

With the inauguration of 3rd Distillation Unit, this capacity would be distributed in three units, he said, adding, "this change will cause reduction of traffic load of feed in two current distillation units."

He added, "so far, refinery's input feed had been entered into two 100,000-barrel distillation units, the issue of which caused considerable increase of traffic of products of cooling towers of the distillation unit. With the commissioning of 3rd Distillation Unit, quality of manufactured products will also be increased."

He reiterated, "the refining capacity of the refinery will be increased about 60,000 to 70,000 barrels per day."

Designing and providing a major part of equipment and machinery of this unit has been carried out by the domestic engineers under the strict supervision of National Iranian Oil Building and Construction Company, he said, adding, "relying upon the assistance of the Almighty God, this unit would be put into operation by the yearend."

■ **Daily Production of 11mn Liters of EUR-5 Gasoline**

Ebrahimi termed improvement of quality of

produced products in the refinery as the most important optimization plans in this refinery.

Since the beginning of April 2018, quality of gasoline produced in the refinery has promoted to EUR-5 qualitative level, he maintained.

Turning to this point that the gasoline produced in the refinery is sent and distributed to 12 provinces of the country, he added, "the research work of construction of catalyst of isomerization unit of gasoline production complex of the refinery, that was earlier produced under the license of US and France and is considered as one of the most strategic catalysts of oil industry, was indigenized successfully with the direct investment of Esfahan Oil Refining Company."

■ **Operation of Important Water Purification Environmental Project**

Elsewhere in his remarks, the managing director revealed the launch of important environmental project for the treatment of water in the refinery concurrent with the 40th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution and said, "the capacity of this project stands at 700 cubic meters/hour that would be put into operation before the termination of the current month in Bahman (Feb. 21)"

He added, "with the launch of this project,

a major part of consumable water in the cycle of refining crude oil from grey water (wastewater) of Shahinshahr of Isfahan would be met."

He pointed to water as one of the most important problems facing industrial units in Isfahan and added, "research activities for this project started eight years ago and it can be said that the refinery is considered as a leading industry in use of grey water in the industry sector."

He termed water treatment unit of the refinery as one of the most important and unique water treatment units in the country especially in terms of volume and vastness in the country.

■ **Launching Gas Oil Treatment Units**

Elsewhere in his remarks, the managing director added, "the main objective behind launch of gas oil treatment units is to reduce (omit) sulfur from gas oil."

Turning to this point that a major part of equipment and machinery need in the refinery has been indigenized, he reiterated.

Relying upon the assistance of the Almighty God, it is hoped that construction operation of gas oil hydrogen treatment unit would be put into operation in the second half of the next year

in 1398 (to start March 21, 2019), he stressed.

Currently, 18 to 20 million liters of gas oil would be produced in the refinery on average, he said, adding, "the gasoline produced in this refinery is according to EUR-4 standard in order to provide fuel for bus services company in this province and neighboring provinces."

It should be noted that the fuel oil produced in this refinery, accounting for about 18 percent of produced products, will be minimized to zero level according to the environmental commitments, he said, adding, "in this line, with the completion of implementation of comprehensive plan for improvement and optimization of process of the company, objectives of this company in this regard would be realized."

■ **Active Presence of Domestic Manufacturers in Implementation of Environmental Projects in EORC**

The managing director of the company pointed to the project of separation of oil from water and supply of power of the refinery from the power plant in order to save water (with 93 percent physical progress) as the other projects underway in the refinery and reiterated, "all environmental and optimization projects would be put into operation by the expert domestic engineers."

At the Threshold of 40th Glorious Victory Anniversary of the Islamic Revolution:

Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC) Takes Giant Stride over Past Years

Forty years have passed since the glorious victory of the Islamic Revolution. The Islamic Revolution in Iran is the glimmer of hope that bestowed its blessing to the heart of the oppressed and deprived people.

The glorious victory of the Islamic Revolution in Bahman (Feb.) is reminder of the greatest memoirs of people and victory of virtuous over falsehood.

■ **Green area of EORC exceeds standard level**

Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC) started its activity in the field of refining crude oil and producing oil products and also provision of feed for downstream industries (petrochemical companies of Isfahan, Arak, Sepahan Oil, Jey Oil Refining Company and Iran Chemical Industries Company) since 1979.

Given its specific situation and high potentials, Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC) is not only considered as a large industrial unit, but also it undertakes about one fourth of daily requirements of the country to oil products.

In the same direction, Esfahan Oil Refining Company also provides feed of other industrial units such as Isfahan Petrochemical Company, Arak Petrochemical Company, Chemical Industries Company (L.A.B) and the units that

have separated from Isfahan Oil Refinery in the wake of privatization policies.

Esfahan Oil Refinery is located on a land area as large as 114.5 has, so that 340 ha of this land area is allocated to the green space.

Esfahan Oil Refining Company (PJS) is considered as one of the largest companies in the country in the field of producing oil products, stocks of which have been paneled in Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO).

In line with its mission and commitment to all its beneficiaries, Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EOIC) has relied on capabilities of its staff and personnel and managed to set up the following standards including Quality Management System (QMS), HSE (Health, Safety and Education), Occupational Health and Safety Assurance System (OHSAS) according to the latest version of ISO/TS-, ISO-9001-29001, ISO-14001, OHSAS- 18001 in order to materialize objectives of the organization. In Oct. 2018, Esfahan Oil Refining company managed to obtain Energy Management Standard certificate (ISO-50001).

■ **Productions of Company**

The productions of the company include: gasoline, kerosene, fuel oil, liquefied gas, crude oil, special solvents, sulfur, various types of

fuel for plane as well as other oil products

■ **Supply of Products at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME)**

Presently, ISO-icicle, vacuum bottom, heavy lube cut, sulfur, various types of solvents are supplied at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) consecutively.

■ **Esfahan Oil Refining Company in Eight Years of Sacred Defense**

Since its establishment, Esfahan Oil Refining Company has played a vital role in continuation of other activities of industries in the region, ensuring capital turnover of economic and industrial activities of the region.

In the course of eight years of Sacred Defense, considering the incessant attacks of enemy to the installations of the country and also requirement of the country to fuel, hundreds of micro and macro projects were launched in the country. therefore, a golden page was registered in all-time history of oil and refinery industry of the country.

In other words, supply of energy resources required in frontlines in the course of Iraqi imposed war against Iran (1980-1988) on the one hand and a thorough look to the motivation of society on the other hand, has been the base of changes and development that

Esfahan Oil Refining Company managed to increase its operational capacity.

Given the above issue, Esfahan Oil Refining Company managed to allocate specific status among refineries of the country to itself.

Undoubtedly, materialization of increase of operational capacity of Esfahan Oil Refining Company more than 90 percent was taken into consideration in line with meeting inevitable requirements of the country during Eight Years of Sacred Defense (1980-1988).

In this regard, Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EOIC) embarked on launching various projects within the framework of improvement plan, the most important of which is as follows:

- Improvement and development of power plant, study and completion of water recycling unit, construction of new cooling tower, study and exchange of water coolant network, increase of capacity of tanks of feed (crude oil) and storage of byproducts, increase in the efficiency of surrounding protection of the refinery as long as 10 km, increase in the safety coefficient of power access stations, project for purchasing and installing a boiler with the production capacity of 227 tons steam/hour in line



with provision of current requirements in compatible with the increase of operational capacity, project to study and improve water recycling unit in line with removal of operational bottlenecks, optimal consumption of resources and safeguard the health of environment through the installation of Reverse Osmosis (R.O) with the capacity of 400 cubic meter/hour, project for designing and constructing cooling tower with the capacity of 13,600 cubic meter/hour due to the increase in the capacity of operations of existing units.

Project for Construction of Azote Production Unit (COLD BOX): with the aim of meeting demand of operational units to liquid or gas azote to sufficient amount for being applied in the cases of: Blanketing Gas, Inert Gas, Purging, PACKINOX in line with optimizing exchange of heat in heat exchangers E-251 A/H, reducing consumption of fuel in catalyst conversion unit furnaces, purchasing and installing measurement systems with the aim of creating necessary facilities for accurate and precise calculation of feedstock, etc.

It should be noted that 15 staff and personnel of Esfahan Oil Refining Company (EORC) were martyred during eight years of Sacred Defense (1980-1988).

Russia: European recognition of Guaido foreign meddling in Venezuela

1→ Russia and China, who have poured billions of dollars of investment and loans into Venezuela, are supporting Maduro in an extension of their geopolitical tussle with the United States.

“From today, we will spare no effort in helping all Venezuelans achieve freedom, prosperity and harmony,” Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said, urging both fair elections and humanitarian aid.

British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said Venezuelans had suffered enough. “The oppression of the illegitimate, kleptocratic Maduro regime must end,” he said.

Maduro, 56, a former union leader, bus driver and foreign minister, replaced ex-president Hugo Chavez in 2013 after his death from cancer. But he has presided over an economic collapse and exodus of 3 million Venezuelans.

He blames Washington for an “economic war” and coup pretensions aimed at controlling oil. Venezuela has the largest reserves in the world, but production has plunged under Maduro.

Critics say incompetent policies and corruption have impoverished a once-wealthy na-



tion while dissent has been brutally crushed. Russia accused European nations of foreign meddling.

“We think that imposing some kind of decisions or trying to legitimize an attempt to usurp power is both direct and indirect interference in Venezuela’s internal affairs,”

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

The Maduro government is paying both Russian and Chinese loans with oil.

He won re-election last year, but critics say it was a sham. Two opposition rivals with a good chance of winning were barred from

standing, while food handouts and other subsidies to hungry Venezuelans were linked with political support.

Italy’s 5-Star Movement, which makes up half of the ruling coalition, dissented from the European stance, saying it would never recognize self-appointed leaders.

“Handing out ultimatums, sanctions, freezing Venezuelan goods ... It would mean opening the road to a military intervention,” Alessandro Di Battista, a prominent 5-Star figure, said Sunday.

But its governing partner, the League, has backed Guaido.

“I’m with the Venezuelan people against regimes like that of Maduro, based on violence, fear and hunger,” League leader, Matteo Salvini, said last month.

In an interview with Corriere Della Sera newspaper on Monday, Guaido said he “will do whatever it takes” to persuade Italy to join the position of other EU nations.

In addition to the European pressure, a bloc of Latin American nations plus Canada were to meet on Monday seeking to maintain pressure on Maduro.

(Source: Daily Star)

Turkey maintains ‘low-level’ contact with Syria: Erdogan

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has confirmed for the first time that Turkey has maintained direct low-level contact with the government of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria.

“Foreign policy is being conducted with Syria at a lower level,” Erdogan said in an interview with the state-run TRT television on Sunday, adding spy agencies could maintain links even if their leaders did not.

“Even if it’s your enemy, you will not entirely break ties in case you might need them,” he said, but ruled out any direct talks with President Assad.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said late last year that Ankara was only in contact with the Damascus government through third parties, namely Russia and Iran.

Ankara broke off ties with the Syrian government at the start of the foreign-backed militancy in 2011 and called for the ouster of President Assad.

However, it has moderated its initial hostility toward Damascus and been working with Iran and Russia to restore peace to Syria within the framework of the Astana talks.

During his last meeting with Erdogan in Moscow on January 23, Russian President Vladimir Putin encouraged the Turkish leader to establish contact with the Syrian leadership in line with a security pact the two nations signed in 1998.

Asked about the US plan to withdraw American troops from Syria, Erdogan said he hoped Washington would pull out its forces soon.

He warned that Turkey “will do whatever is needed” to avert any threat posed by US-backed Kurdish militants in case the United States does not implement its planned withdrawal.

In December, Trump announced to withdraw around 2,000 US forces from Syria amid preparations by Turkey to launch an operation against the Kurdish militants in northern Syria.

Turkey is pushing for a 32 km “security zone” or “safe zone” on the Syrian side of the 900-kilometer joint border after receiving US backing.

In the interview, Erdogan showed the negotiated “security zone” on the map, saying it would stretch from Jarabulus in northern Syria to the Iraqi border.

He called on Washington to hand over the zone’s security to Turkish forces. “We cannot leave the safe zone to coalition forces,” Erdogan said.

“Such a safe zone should be entrusted to Turkey. We’ll then provide the security of that zone,” he said.

“We don’t support the disintegration of Syrian people, but unfortunately, coalition forces aren’t bothering with that,” he added.

Erdogan further said that he would meet with Putin in



the Russian city of Sochi on February 14.

The summit would come as Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov announced late January that the next round of peace negotiations for Syria within the Astana format would be held in the Kazakh capital in mid-February.

He added that the 12th Astana talks would be attended by the three guarantor nations of the peace process, namely Russia, Iran, and Turkey, as well as observers from Jordan and the United Nations.

(Source: Press TV)

Japan, Germany share responsibility to work towards global peace: Abe

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Monday that he and German Chancellor Angela Merkel share a responsibility to work towards global peace and prosperity, with both hoping for a prompt, democratic solution to Venezuela’s leadership crisis.

Merkel, on a two-day visit to Japan, said that Germany recognises opposition leader Juan Guaido as the nation’s interim president, joining many European nations, and said he should organise new elections as soon as possible.

“Guaido is the person with whom we are talking and who we expect to initiate an election process as quickly as possible, and he is the legitimate interim president for this task from the German perspective and also from the perspective of many European partners,” Merkel told a news conference

with Abe.

“And we hope that this process is as short as possible and of course peaceful,” she added.

Abe emphasized his cooperation with Merkel during a visit aimed at forging an “alliance of multilateralists” to resist U.S. President Donald Trump’s “America First” approach to trade and China’s pursuit of narrow national interests.

“Our responsibility towards working for global prosperity and security has merely increased,” he said, adding that the two leaders would work for a global order “based on rules.”

Merkel referred to an EU-Japan trade deal that entered into force on Feb. 1, saying: “All in all, a trip at a time in which we have demonstrated that, even at times when mul-

tilateral agreements are in difficult straits, we are ready to conclude such things.”

“...very good win-win situations can occur when all partners talk to each other. Of course, fairness and reciprocity are part of this, but that is what we advocate.”

Abe did not comment on Guaido’s status, but he said Japan wanted a stable, democratic and prompt solution to Venezuela’s political crisis. Several European nations have joined the United States in recognising Guaido as interim president, intensifying a global showdown over Nicolas Maduro’s socialist rule.

Merkel said Germany would do everything possible to avoid a no-deal Brexit, but she did not want to see Britain’s divorce deal with the EU - the so-called Withdrawal Agreement - renegotiated.

British Prime Minister Theresa May said on Sunday she would seek a “pragmatic solution” to a parliamentary impasse over the terms on which Britain leaves the European Union when she tries to reopen talks with Brussels less than two months before Britain is due to leave the bloc on March 29.

“There are definitely options for preserving the integrity of the single market, even when Northern Ireland isn’t part of it because it is part of Britain, while at the same time meeting the desire to have if possible no border controls,” Merkel said.

“To solve this point you have to be creative and listen to each other, and such discussions can and must be conducted,” she added. “We can still use the time to perhaps reach an agreement if everyone shows good will.”

(Source: Reuters)

Palestinian mosque desecrated in apparent hate crime in West Bank

Several extremist Jewish settlers have desecrated a mosque in the central part of the occupied West Bank, spraying racist slogans and Hebrew graffiti messages on the walls of the sacred place.

Mansour Mansour, the mayor of the city of Dayr Dibwan, located east of Ramallah, told Palestine’s official Wafa news agency that settlers stormed the city early on Monday, and spray-painted anti-Palestinian slogans on the walls and asphalt of the mosque and several vehicles there.

Among the slogans spray-painted on the walls of the mosque were “Here people incite to murder Jews” and “The Jewish nation lives.”

Palestinian sources also reported that settlers poured flammable material on the shoe rack placed at the entrance of the mosque, but apparently didn’t light it.

Palestinian Minister of Religious Affairs Sheikh Youssef Idais denounced the act, saying, “There are no longer safe places of worship in light of Israeli forces’ and settlers’ attacks and crimes [against Palestinian people].”

“This racist attack is a new [act of] provocation added to

the list of Israeli crimes against the holy sites,” he added.

He highlighted that Israeli violations and attacks against places of worship, including their closure, and Tel Aviv’s prohibition of the Muslim call to prayer attest to the magnitude of barbarism being enforced by the Israeli regime.

Idais then urged Arab and Muslim countries in addition to the international community to intervene and protect holy places in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Last Tuesday, Israeli police opened an investigation after eight cars were vandalized overnight in the northern West Bank Palestinian village of Lubban al-Sharqiyah.

Locals said Israeli settlers raided the village, slashing the tires of Palestinian-owned vehicles and spray-painting Hebrew slogans on them, in another “price tag” attack.

The so-called price tag attacks are acts of vandalism and violence against Palestinians and their property as well as Muslim holy sites by Israeli settlers.

More than half a million Israelis live in over 120 settlements built since Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank in 1967. This is while much of



the international community considers the settler units illegal and subject to the Geneva Conventions, which forbid construction on occupied land.

(Source: Press TV)

U.S. withdrawal and fears of uncertainties in Afghanistan

7→ It is being feared that the U.S. is repeating the same mistake when it left the region soon after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Quite plausible, but the moot question is what did the U.S. and its supported Afghan governments (both Karzai and Ghani) achieve in the country? A glimpse in the past 18 years would reveal an Afghanistan ruled by the warlords while drug barons have had the field day; nepotism and corruption has been the hallmark of governance with no accountability. Even the American government has been utterly frustrated over the issue of bad governance frequently expressed in its watchdog organisation Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR)’s reports.



In fact, by withdrawing from Afghanistan, President Trump has by default thrown the ball into the regional countries’ court-Pakistan, Iran, China and Russia-to fend for the chaos. India, being in the vicinity, becomes a proxy stakeholder which can play a spoiler’s role unless a tacit understanding is reached with Pakistan to stabilise Afghanistan, and also initiate the bilateral stalled talks. (Role of regional countries in bringing Pakistan and India to the negotiating table would be crucial in breaking the ice although such a possibility rests with the outcome of the Indian elections).

The coming days and weeks would be fraught with dangers of more bloodshed and chaos unless sanity prevails amongst the Afghan stakeholders and the regional countries eschew from playing favourites with various Afghan religious or ethnic factions. The regional countries, therefore, should make it clear to all and sundry in Afghanistan what they expect of the country. The forthcoming Moscow meeting should provide such an opportunity to all the participants to flag their apprehensions about the future dispensation.

First and foremost, the neutral status of Afghanistan in the region has to be ensured by the Afghan leadership and neighbours of Afghanistan. In return, the regional countries, especially the neighbours of Afghanistan, may facilitate Afghanistan becoming a transit hub for South and Central Asia as well as the Middle East.

Second, Afghanistan has to ensure effective measures against opium production in the country. In return, the regional countries and the international community may provide assistance in substitute crops, dairy and livestock development and horticulture. Similarly, Afghanistan’s capacity in the industrial sector has to be enhanced in order to make the country’s economy sustainable.

Third, while respecting the cultural ethos of Afghanistan, the future dispensation will have to ensure that people are not persecuted on the basis of their beliefs or attire. Taliban or anyone else cannot claim monopoly over religion; the element of insult and violence to implement Islamic edicts has to go without exception. Pakistan will have to strictly resist such tendencies creeping into its borders.

For Pakistan, it is important that future changes in Afghanistan do not impinge upon our security and stability. We must protect our way of life as a moderate and progressive Muslim society and shun extreme tendencies which have crept into our body politic during the past four decades. We have already suffered immensely due to brotherly Afghanistan; we allowed a free ride to the Afghan Mujahideen to roam around the country; opened the doors for unregulated Afghan refugees and looked the other way when drug barons made Pakistan a launching pad for their businesses. Our rulers of the time unscrupulously encouraged the Kalashnikov and Pajero culture, which encouraged corruption and bigotry in the country and shook the foundations of a peaceful and law-abiding society. Therefore, while churning out reams of wisdom about the possible dangers of precipitous US withdrawal from Afghanistan, our analysts must forewarn the people of the forthcoming challenges we are likely to face when a new dispensation in Afghanistan takes over. The real challenge is still ahead. Our policy makers should not fall for temporary gains or take trees for the jungle.

(Source: Daily Times)

‘No question of going back’ on Brexit withdrawal deal: French minister

There is “no question of going back” on the Brexit withdrawal agreement, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said Monday.

“On the withdrawal deal, there is no question of going back,” Le Drian told France Inter radio, adding it was hard to find a way out of the current impasse regarding the Irish backstop.

Le Drian said it was up to Britons to decide whether they wanted to hold a second referendum on whether to leave the European Union.

(Source: Daily Star)

U.S. exit from nuclear pact would not mean new Cold War: Russia

The United States’ full withdrawal from the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty would not herald the start of a new Cold War, the RIA news agency quoted Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov as saying Monday.

“I don’t think we’re talking about the development of a Cold War,” Lavrov said. “A new era has begun.”

Russia suspended the Cold War-era nuclear arms treaty on Saturday after the United States announced it would withdraw from the arms control pact, accusing Moscow of violations.

Washington has said it will withdraw fully from the INF in six months unless Moscow ends what it says are violations of the 1987 pact.

(Source: Reuters)

Jordan to host new talks talks on Yemen prisoner swap

Yemeni government delegates and Houthis will reconvene in Jordan from Tuesday for a new round of talks to thrash out a deal on a prisoner exchange, the United Nations said.

The swap, which could involve up to 15,000 detainees from each side, was agreed in principle as a confidence-building measure ahead of peace talks in Sweden in December.

In mid-January, representatives of Yemen’s warring parties held two days of talks in Amman during which they submitted lists of prisoners they wanted to see released to UN mediators.

Those talks were also attended by UN representatives, which brokered the swap agreement, and the International Committee

of the Red Cross, which will supervise its implementation.

On Wednesday, government and Houthi representatives would meet again in Amman for “technical” talks to “discuss the steps taken ... [by both sides] to finalize the list of prisoners,” a U.N. statement said Tuesday. UN envoy Martin Griffiths and ICRC

president Peter Maurer would also be present, it said.

At the end of January, the Iran-linked Houthis released the first prisoner under the deal struck with the Saudi-backed government while Saudi Arabia set free seven Houthi prisoners.

(Source: AFP)

Kagawa scores after 18 seconds for new club Besiktas

When a player moves clubs, scoring a debut goal inside 20 seconds is probably the right way to introduce yourself to fans.

Former Manchester United midfielder Shinji Kagawa did just that when he stepped off the bench for his latest club Besiktas following his loan move from Borussia Dortmund.

If that was not enough, two minutes later he added a second goal as the Turkish club ran out 6-2 winners at Antalyaspor in the Turkish Super Lig on Sunday.

Kagawa, 29, came on after 81 minutes with his side leading 4-2, and cut in from the left flank to fire in a low finish after just 18 seconds before doubling his tally with a free-kick from 30 yards.

The Japan international helped Dortmund win the German league-and-cup double in 2012 and moved to United for two years before returning to the Bundesliga club in 2014.

He has fallen out of favour with Dortmund coach Lucien Favre and joined Besiktas on transfer deadline day in January.

(Source: BBC)

Liverpool defender Gomez to have surgery on leg fracture

Liverpool defender Joe Gomez is to have an operation on the leg fracture he sustained against Burnley in December.

The England centre-back, 21, was taken off after 23 minutes following a challenge with Clarets captain Ben Mee.

He was initially ruled out for up to six weeks and is expected to feature again this season - but Liverpool have put no timescale on his recovery.

“Obviously being out for longer than we’d first hoped for is hard to swallow,” said Gomez.

“It was an injury caused by an impact - like nearly all the injuries I’ve had in my career - so I know it’s just a case of when it’s fully healed I’m good to go again.”

Gomez had made 18 appearances for the Premier League leaders before suffering the injury on 5 December.

“It’s a blow for the boy and for us - because prior to the injury he was in such fantastic shape,” said Reds boss Jurgen Klopp.

“He is too valuable to take any risk with, both for our present and future, so we get this procedure done and he comes back when he’s ready.

“His attitude during this rehab has been outstanding but it just hasn’t healed as we’d have liked, so we will make this intervention and then he will come back.”

With Gomez and Dejan Lovren (hamstring) still out, Liverpool only have Virgil van Dijk and Joel Matip as fit centre-backs.

(Source: Mirror)

Pogba considered leaving; happy now - brother

Paul Pogba considered leaving Manchester United towards the end of Jose Mourinho’s tenure, but is much happier since Ole Gunnar Solskjaer took over, his brother has said.

Pogba started the final three matches under Mourinho on the bench before being restored to a starring role once Solskjaer came in, scoring six goals and contributing nine assists in that time.

“Things were not going well under Mourinho,” Mathias Pogba told Telefoot. “Now that Solskjaer has given him the keys to the team, so to speak, things have started up again. That’s what my little brother needs.

“Of course that [leaving] crosses your mind But now, he is where he is. “He was under contract, and above all he had to just keep quiet, grit his teeth, and keep working.”

Mathias also said his brother had considered leaving whilst Mourinho was at the helm and Solskjaer, who Paul worked under during his time in United’s reserves, knows how to motivate the World Cup winner. “As Solskjaer had Paul with the reserve team, he knows exactly what to say and how to say it to Paul,” he said. “And when you give my little brother that responsibility, you will only see the best of him.”

Meanwhile, goalkeeper David De Gea said Pogba’s form has been key to United closing the gap in the race for the top four.

“He is very young, but he has a lot of character and personality, on the pitch,” the Spain international said. “That’s always positive for a team like us.

“Right now, he is scoring a lot of goals, that helps us, but I think he’s the same player as three or four months ago, with great qualities. He’s very important for us.

“The closer Paul is to the penalty box, the more balls he gets in the zone of truth, and that’s better for us because it’s more dangerous for our opponents.

“He scores goals, he has a lot of talent, and excellent vision, that’s very important for us.”

(Source: Soccernet)

PSG’s Lyon defeat must have pleased Solskjaer, says Silva

Paris St Germain’s first loss of the season must have pleased Manchester United’s caretaker coach Ole Gunnar Solskjaer ahead of the Champions League last-16 clash between the teams, reckons PSG centre back Thiago Silva.

Solskjaer was among the spectators at the Groupama Stadium to witness Olympique Lyonnais prevail 2-1 against PSG who lacked steel in the midfield in the absence of injured Marco Verratti and missed the spark of Neymar, who will also miss the Feb. 12 first leg clash against United.

“It’s going to be a great clash against Manchester,” Silva, who fouled Moussa Dembele in the box to hand Lyon the winning penalty, was quoted as saying by French sports daily L’Equipe on Monday.

“To beat them we will have to be at 110 per cent. Solskjaer possibly walked away from here happy because we did not play really well.”

PSG still lead the Ligue 1 standings on 56 points from 21 games, 10 ahead of Lille who have played two more games.

(Source: Goal)

Emiliano Sala search: Body seen in plane wreckage

One body has been seen in the underwater wreckage of the plane that was carrying footballer Emiliano Sala and pilot David Ibbotson.

A search on Sunday found the Piper Malibu plane on the seabed off Guernsey, almost two weeks after it went missing.

The Air Accident Investigation Branch (AAIB) confirmed the sighting on Monday morning.

It added it was now considering the next steps.

The “substantial amount of wreckage” of the plane, which went missing on 21 January, was found on Sunday morning after a privately-funded search began.

The flight had been carrying Argentine striker Sala, 28, and pilot David Ibbotson, 59, from Nantes, north west France, to Cardiff after Sala completed his £15m move to Cardiff City.

In a statement, the AAIB said: “The remotely operated vehicle (ROV) carried out a further search of the area overnight, but did not identify any additional pieces of wreckage.

“Tragically, in video footage from the ROV, one occupant is visible amidst the wreckage. The AAIB is now considering the next steps, in consultation with the families of the pilot and passenger, and the police.”



The AAIB added it intends to publish an interim report within a month of when the accident happened.

A decision has yet to be taken on whether to raise the wreckage to the surface.

Oceanographer and marine scientist David Mearns confirmed the wreckage had been found on Sunday, about 63m (207ft) underwater, after “a couple of hours” of searching the seabed.

An online appeal started by Sala’s agent had raised £324,000 (371,000 euros) for the private search, which Mr Mearns offered to help with.

Working jointly with the AAIB, Mr Mearns’s ship and another search vessel, the Geo Ocean III, began combing a four square mile area of the channel, 24 nautical miles north of Guernsey.

The AAIB ship remained in place, send-

ing down a remotely controlled submersible overnight, which captured the footage of the wreckage.

Speaking on Radio 4’s Today programme on Monday, Mr Mearns said: “We located the wreckage of the plane on the seabed at a depth of about 63m within the first couple of hours [of searching].”

He said the plane was identified by sonar, before a submersible with cameras was sent underwater and was able to confirm it was the plane.

“They saw the registration number and the biggest surprise is that most of the plane is there - we were expecting to find a debris field.” he added.

Mr Mearns said he approached the Sala family offering his services after seeing an emotional plea from Romina, the footballer’s sister.

He said: “We wanted to go out there and find plane. We’re pleased that that happened.

“It’s going to be, people use the word closure, but this is just the first step. It’s a long, long way. But at least this is the route for people, for them, to have answers.

“That said, if they never had these answers, if the plane was never located, I don’t think the family would ever rest.”

(Source: BBC)

Andy Murray ‘unlikely’ to return to tour after hip surgery



Andy Murray opted for hip surgery instead of resting for Wimbledon and a leading arthroscopic hip surgeon says it’s unlikely he returns to the tour.

Sports medicine expert Dr. Derek Ochiai of Arlington, Va., told UPI he would not be surprised if Murray returned to the court on an exhibition or recreational level, but not against top completion in Grand Slams.

“The amount of impact and training necessary to be able to compete on the men’s tour [along with the five set matches in majors], makes it unlikely he will play again at that level,” Ochiai said. “In addition, that level of training and competition will put more stress on his artificial hip, potentially making it wear our more quickly.”

There is recent evidence that shows results of hip arthroscopy are worse if symptoms have been present for two years or longer, which is the case with Murray.

The former world No. 1 had hip resurfacing surgery on Jan. 28.

“I underwent a hip resurfacing surgery in London yesterday morning ... feeling a bit battered and bruised just now but hopefully that will be the end of my hip pain,” the 31-year-old said after the surgery.

“I now have a metal hip as you can see in the 2nd photo and I look like I’ve got a bit of a gut in photo 1.”

Murray also had surgery on his hip in

January 2018. He told reporters last month the 2019 Australian Open could be the final tournament of his career. At the time he hoped to rest until Wimbledon and make that the final tournament of his career.

Ochiai said resting would not have cured Murray’s hip and opting for surgery was the right choice.

“Sure, physically, he may have been able to play and perhaps go through a match or maybe two,” Ochiai said. “Andy Murray knows his hip better than anyone else. Hip pain can be mentally fatiguing, and he had an operation that will relieve that pain. I am sure he made the right choice.”

Hip labral tears are the most common hip injuries for athletes, particularly those who compete in sports that involve twisting and jumping.

“The labrum is a rim of cartilage surrounding the hip joint,” Ochiai said. “When this is torn, the protective effect of the labrum on the gliding cartilage of the hip is diminished, and can lead to hip arthritis at an earlier age than would be expected by actuarial tables. Hip labral tears an inextricably linked to hip FAI [femoroacetabular impingement]. FAI hips develop in early teenage years to be ‘out of round’ in certain positions, which puts increased stress on the hip joint.”

(Source: UPI)

Famed Finnish ski-jumper Matti Nykanen dies



The famed Finnish ski-jumper Matti Nykanen, who was dubbed the Flying Finn for his exploits, has died at the age of 55. While he was famous in his sport, in his private life he battled alcohol and personal problems.

Nykanen won his first World Championships at the age of 18. At 19 he won the Four Hills Tournament and at 20 he claimed Olympic gold and silver medals in Sarajevo. In 1988, at the winter Olympics in Calgary, he became the first man to ever win all three gold medals in his event.

For most of his career, Nykanen was competing with Jens Weissflog, an East German ski-jumper.

The director of Finland’s ski jumping federation, Clas Brede Brathen, called him an icon in the sport.

“Matti was to ski jumping what Lionel Messi or Diego Maradona are for football,” Brathen said. “He took our sport to the next level. He was the hero, an idol for generations. Everybody wanted to jump like Matti.”

Back in 2008, Nykanen’s long-term coach Matti Pulli said he considered Nykanen, who claimed 46 World Cup wins, as the best ski jumper ever.

“His structure was excellent, he had very good thrust and he was persistent,” Pulli said. “He was child-like, almost like a cherub and that charmed people.”

But despite all his success on the hill, Nykanen’s private life was a troubled one.

He battled alcohol addiction, was married three times and often ran into money trouble, which even led to him moonlighting as a stripper and erotic film actor.

His alcohol problems led to run-ins with the law. In 2004 he was sentenced to 26 months in prison for a stabbing incident. In 2009, he was again sentenced to prison for 16 months following an assault on his wife.

“When you’re drinking, you live in a kind of bubble, you don’t see sense.” Nykanen once said in a bid to explain his problems to the world. “For many years I was the focus of attention, everyone wanted something from me. I was tired of it, it was too much. I was unhappy and started to build a wall inside me. I was very young when I became successful, the media was around me all the time — I could have used some help. That was the beginning. Later in life.”

To many he was known as the Flying Finn.

“Unfortunately, Nykanen was only a genius on the hill. He was lost in real life,” said Germany’s national ski-jumping coach Werner Schuster.

When Nykanen retired, a group of executives tried to turn him into a pop singer. He released an album that sold 25,000 copies.

(Source: DW)

Six things we learned in European football this weekend

While Real Madrid are ominously finding form ahead of the return of the Champions League, Paris Saint-Germain’s first Ligue 1 loss of the season will have encouraged their future European opponents Manchester United.

With Juventus and Bayern Munich having defensive difficulties exposed too, AFP Sport looks at what we learned from the weekend across Europe:

- **Momentum with Madrid**
There have been few weekends in La Liga this season when Real Madrid can claim to have come out on top, but this was one. Perhaps not in terms of the table, where they still trail Barcelona by eight points and Atletico Madrid by two. But the gaps were reduced after a 3-0 win over Alaves took advantage of Barca drawing with Valencia and Atletico losing at Real Betis. Barcelona are still very much in the driving seat but the momentum appears to be with Madrid, who have put together a run of five wins in a row.
- **PSG form will encourage Solskjaer**
Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was in attendance to watch his side’s future Champions League opponents Paris Saint-Germain as they lost 2-1 in Lyon. And the Norwegian can have taken plenty of positives from the way a makeshift PSG side -- without the injured Neymar or a recognisable central midfielder in their starting line-up -- had their unbeaten record in Ligue 1 this season ended. United are approaching the first leg of their last-16 tie next week in terrific shape with nine wins and a draw in 10 games under Solskjaer.



- **Leaky defence not worrying Allegri**
Massimiliano Allegri insisted that his Juventus side’s leaky defence was only a temporary setback and not a worry ahead of their upcoming Champions League last-16 first leg at Atletico Madrid. For the first time in seven years Andrea Barzagli, Leonardo Bonucci and Giorgio Chiellini were all out injured at the same time as Juve were held 3-3 by Parma, three days after a 3-0 Cup defeat at Atalanta. The last time they conceded three goals in consecutive games was under Antonio Conte in 2013.

- **Zaniolo in Totti footsteps**
Nicolo Zaniolo, 19, rescued a 1-1 draw against AC Milan to become the youngest Roma player to score his first three senior goals for the capital side since club legend Francesco Totti, aged 18 years in 1995. “He’s like Totti, one who speaks little and always wants the ball,” said coach Eusebio Di Francesco of the youngster. “I hope he can continue to play with that joy and verve.”
- **Bayern vulnerable on break**
Jurgen Klopp would have noted with interest just how easily Bayer Leverkusen’s slick attack tore open the Bayern Munich defence as they beat the Bavarians 3-1 on Saturday, proving the vulnerability of the defending Bundesliga champions to quick counter-attacks. Kevin Volland and Lucas Alario finished off rapid-fire breakaways with superb second-half goals for Leverkusen. “We got into an exchange of blows with Leverkusen and they killed us,” admitted Bayern coach Niko Kovac, whose side face Liverpool at Anfield on February 19 in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie.
- **Ronaldo no lucky charm**
A day after scoring twice for Juventus in their draw with Parma, Cristiano Ronaldo was in Lisbon to watch his first club Sporting in the derby against Benfica. But Ronaldo’s presence certainly did not inspire the Lions, who were outplayed in a 4-2 home defeat that leaves them well off the pace in fourth in the Portuguese league. According to local media, Ronaldo had seen enough after Benfica went 3-1 up early in the second half, and headed for the exit.

(Source: AFP)

Bert van Marwijk nominated for Team Melli

S P O R T S Former Netherlands, Saudi Arabia and Australia coach Bert van Marwijk has been reportedly shortlisted to take charge of Iran national football team.

Carlos Queiroz stepped down from the post of Iran football team coach after Team Melli's semifinal exit in the AFC Asian Cup 2019.

And within weeks, fresh reports have emerged linking a high-profile name with the vacant seat.

According to reports from Saudi Arabian journalist Saad Al Harthy, Bert van Marwijk will replace Queiroz at the helm

of affairs of the Iran national football team. The Portuguese was the longest-serving coach in the history of Iran national team, managing the team for almost eight years between 2011 and 2019.

He took the side to two FIFA World Cups and this year to the semifinal of the Asian Cup, where they lost to Japan.

Van Marwijk, on the other hand, led the Netherlands to the final of the 2010 World Cup, where the Oranje lost 1-0 to Spain in extra-time. His second most notable achievement is winning the UEFA Europa League, then known as UEFA Cup, with Feyenoord in 2002.



2019 AFC Champions League set for thrilling campaign

The race to join Asia's elite in the group stage of the 2019 AFC Champions League will kick start on Tuesday, as Ceres Negros of the Philippines meet Yangon United FC of Myanmar at Pana-ad Park and Football Stadium while Singapore's Home United face Persija Jakarta of Indonesia at the Jalan Besar Stadium.

With 32 teams confirming their places in the group stage, the preliminary stage will see 27 aspiring football clubs in Asia from 22 Member Associations vying for the eight remaining spots in the group stage.

In another preliminary stage match played on the same day, Al Wehdat of Jordan meet Kuwait SC at the King Abdullah II Stadium.

Meanwhile, the second round of the Preliminary Stage qualifiers commences on February 12, with Pakhtakor of Uzbekistan playing host to three-time AFC Cup champions, Air Force Club, who will be the first Iraqi club to feature in Asia's premier club competition since 2008, at the Pakhtakor Stadium.

Last year's champions Kashima Antlers of Japan, who defeated Islamic Republic of Iran's Persepolis FC



in the two-legged final, await their fate in the playoff stages which begins on February 19.

The AFC Champions League has grown from strength to strength in recent years and today is widely regarded as one of the best Continental club

competitions in world football.

The 2019 showpiece looks set to continue on this trend, with the total travel contribution doubling from US\$4.2 million in 2018 to US\$8.4 million.

AFC General Secretary, Dato' Windsor John, was delighted to see the AFC Champions League grow in stature and quality over the years.

"The AFC Champions League is one of the leading club competitions in the world. The AFC Champions League exemplifies our ambitions through the AFC's Vision and Mission in providing an avenue for Asia's top football clubs to showcase their undeniable talent, while presenting a platform for Asia's stars to shine.

"I'm confident the AFC Champions League 2019 will continue to excite and capture the imagination of football fans from around the world. The increase of the total travel contribution is one of many ways which we hope will further support and bring out the best in the teams."

(Source: the-afc)

Fans call for FIFA investigation as Adnan's contract gets terminated by Serie A giants



Fans and supporters recently expressed their frustration and anger at Italian club Atalanta when it was revealed that they terminated Iraq defender Ali Adnan following the AFC Asian Cup 2019.

The Iraqi defender was said to have left the club earlier than expected to join the Iraq national team but many considered that he was due for a fine – and a contract termination was the last thing on their mind.

Adnan, on loan to Atalanta from Udinese, had returned to Atalanta following the AFC Asian Cup and even participated in training sessions with the club

ahead of their match against Juventus. However, he was suddenly dropped without his prior knowledge.

The termination of the contract comes at a very inconvenient time for the defender as the January transfer window has closed and his parent club already submitted their official squad list to the Italian Football Federation.

Upon getting this information, supporters were understandably upset at what happened as this leaves Adnan in limbo for the remainder of the campaign as he is unable to move to any club.

(Source: Fox Sports Asia)

Man United's Nemanja Matic escapes ban for Harvey Barnes tackle



Nemanja Matic will not face retrospective action from the Football Association for his tackle on Harvey Barnes during Manchester United's win over Leicester, sources have told ESPN FC.

The midfielder, who had already been booked, escaped punishment for his challenge on Barnes in the second half at the King Power Stadium on Sunday as United held on for a 1-0 victory after Marcus Rashford's early goal.

Sources have told ESPN FC that referee Mike Dean saw the incident at the time and the FA will not review the footage, leaving Matic free to face Fulham at Cra-

ven Cottage on Saturday.

The United squad were given the day off on Monday before preparations begin for a tough run of six games in 22 days. They play Fulham in the Premier League on Saturday before Paris Saint-Germain visit Old Trafford for the first leg of the Champions League round of 16 tie next Tuesday.

United then face back-to-back games against Chelsea in the FA Cup and table-toppers Liverpool in the league before a trip to Crystal Palace on Feb. 27 and a home game against Southampton on March 2.

(Source: Soccernet)

Shoya Nakajima joins Al Duhail



move to Wolverhampton Wanderers, but Portimonense reportedly rejected a bid from the English Premier League side.

After being left out of the squad for the 2018 FIFA World Cup, Nakajima has emerged as one of Japan's next

generation of stars under new manager Hajime Moriyasu. A calf injury forced him to pull out of the squad for the just-concluded AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019.

Nakajima joined Portimonense on loan from J-League side FC Tokyo in the summer of 2017. He ended his impressive first season with 10 goals and 12 assists in 29 league games. This season, he has scored five goals and six assists in 13 games.

Nakajima, who was a member of the Japan U-23 squad for the 2016 Rio Olympics, has two goals in six international caps for Japan.

Al Duhail are currently second in the Qatari top flight - two points behind Al Sadd - with seven games left in the season.

For the 2019 AFC Champions League, Al Duhail - quarter-finalists last season - are in Group C with Al Hilal from Saudi Arabia, UAE side Al Ain and Islamic Republic of Iran's Esteghlal.

(Source: the-afc)

Teenage gymnast invited to national team after his display goes viral

TASNIM — A teenager from Iran's southeastern port of Chabahar has been reportedly invited to the national team after his display went viral on social media.

He performed spectacular acrobatic flip before his classmates in a school located in Chabahar.

Reza Salehi Amiri, the president of the National Olympic Committee of Iran, has reportedly watched the video and demanded the Iran gymnastic federation to invite the prodigy to the national team.

The teenager will reportedly participate at the training in Tehran, capital of Iran, within the next few days.

Ayanda Patosi happy to join Iran's Esteghlal

IRNA — Iran's Esteghlal new signing Ayanda Patosi is very happy to join the Iranian popular football team.

The South African midfielder Ayanda Patosi, who has recently joined Esteghlal from Cape Town, cannot wait to start with his new team.

"I've also received so much support from the fans of Estaghlal and received so many messages welcoming me," the 26-year-old midfielder wrote on his Instagram account.

"I can't wait to play for you guys. This journey is exciting and I can't wait to start my new life with Estaghlal,"

Esteghlal will face Paykan on Thursday in Iran Professional League (IPL).

AC Milan reportedly sent scouts during AFC Asian Cup 2019

It seems that the AFC Asian Cup 2019 wasn't only watched by fans within the participating continent, but also in European countries as well.

According to a report, Serie A club AC Milan were monitoring the competition and had scouts watching Qatar star Almoez Ali.

Ali, who plays club football for Al-Duhail, broke the record for the most goals in an AFC Asian Cup competition with nine, leading the team to their first-ever title in a 3-1 win over Japan.

AC Milan's Serie A rival Juventus already signed a player from Al-Duhail in the January transfer window, defender Mehdi Benatia and AC Milan are looking to bring in Ali in the next window.

A young and budding star, Ali would do well to experience European football in one of the biggest clubs in Italy and he could end up playing alongside Krzysztof Piatek and Patrick Cutrone in the coming years.

(Source: Fox Sports Asia)

Tehran to host 1st ever Central Asian indoor track & field contests

IRNA — Tehran is to host the first ever indoor track and field contests among Central Asian countries in the second half of February this year.

Enghlab complex in Tehran is to host such regional contests.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstani, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan are to attend in such contests but presently all except Uzbekistan have voiced readiness to partake.

Asian track and field championship will be held in Doha of Qatar within coming months.

'little man' Koulibaly, deny abuse was racial

Inter Milan fans located in the Curva Nord of the San Siro have branded Kalidou Koulibaly a "little man" and slammed their club for the way they dealt with sanctions for the racial abuse the Napoli defender received.

Fans returned to San Siro on Sunday for the first time following the Boxing Day incidents which saw Inter forced to play two games behind closed doors, and a further with the Curva Nord closed.



Greeting fans at the stadium ahead of their 1-0 defeat to Bologna was a fanzine in which they said Koulibaly got what he deserved -- unlike them, who they feel were not defended by their club.

"We don't care about racism, we go to the stadium to support our players, be it Keita [Balde], who is black, [Danilo] D'Ambrosio, who is from the south, [Samir] Handanovic, who is Slovenian, or Lautaro [Martinez], who is Argentinian," it reportedly said.

"For us, Koulibaly was a little man who resorted to lies to clear his conscience. If he'd been white, yellow or blue, we would have behaved in the same way. San Siro booed Koulibaly for an unacceptable gesture [in applauding the referee after being booked]."

(Source: ESPN)

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A person who analyzes himself receives a benefit, and he who neglects it, is a loser. He who learns a lesson from others, finds insight, and with such insight comes understanding and avoiding ignorance, and he who understands, will be well aware.

Imam Ali (AS)

FAJR FILMFEST MIRROR

Fajr Film Festival heralds development in Iran: Rouhani

A R T d e s k TEHRAN – President Hassan Rouhani has regarded the Fajr Film Festival as Iran's most important film event that can herald maturity, growth, and dynamism in the country.



In a message sent to the 37th Fajr Film Festival, Rouhani emphasized the need for increasing Iran's share in the film industry of the world.

"Cinema is a rational explanation to transfer concepts and can be regarded as an efficient tool to

improve culture. The film industry is the common language of all people and all generations," he said.

"Cinema is one of the most powerful media in the world, which can see through the most complicated layers of the souls and does what thousands of pages of texts and words cannot do," he added.

The president also said that Iran's cinema has turned into "a huge leafy tree" which enjoys an international credit.

"In addition to its entertaining aspects, Iranian cinema can help boost Iran's economy and create a number of jobs for the youth. It can also help people better go through these hard days," he concluded.

"The Blood of God" on miracle screens at Fajr filmfest

A R T d e s k TEHRAN – The 37th Fajr Film Festival has screened "The Blood of God" that features Iranians' belief in miracle and their respects for Imam Hussein (AS).



"I believe that Imam Hossein (AS) is alive and lives among us and in our lives, we need such miracles," Director Morteza-Ali Abbas-Mirzai said in a press conference held after a screening of his film on Sunday.

He said that several Iranian superstars have rejected his proposal to play a role in his film and added that most of them are unwilling to engage on religious-themed movie projects.

Producer Siavash Haqiqi also confirmed the remarks and said, "For years, we had let superstitions dominate religious beliefs in society naturally people are bound to push such movies away."

Chicago hosts Iranian film festival

A R T d e s k TEHRAN – Eight Iranian films are on screen at the 29th Annual Festival of Films from Iran, which is underway at the Gene Siskel Film Center in Chicago.

Veteran director Bahman Farmanara's "Tale of the Sea" and "I Want to Dance", Hooman Seyyedi's "Sheeple" and



Reza Kianian acts in a scene from "I Want to Dance" by Bahman Farmanara.

Mani Haqiqi's "Pig" have been selected to screen at the festival opened on Saturday.

"Rona, Azim's Mother", a co-production between Afghanistan and Iran by Jamshid Mahmudi, "Sly" by Kamal Tabrizi, "Reza" by Alireza Motamedi and "Mouth Harp in a Minor Key: Hamid Naficy in/on Exile", a documentary by Maryam Sepehri, are also among the films.

Sponsored by the Muslim American Leadership Alliance, the festival will come to an end on March 3.

Fajr festival movie recounts true love story of rebel Rigi

1 → He forces Faezeh to leave her homeland along with her brother to live in Pakistan where they find themselves involved in the Jundallah terrorist activities.

The Rigi brothers were arrested by Iranian security forces and were executed in 2010 after a court found them guilty of dozens of criminal charges.

"The arrest of Abdul-Malik Rigi is not the subject of my film," Abyar said in a press conference after a screening of her film at the festival on Sunday.

"I intended to look at the religious radicalism through the eyes of leading character of the film and say that even love can be victimized," she noted and added, "I tried to avoid working conservatively on the film."

"Since the 9/11 terror attacks, we have seen the religious radicalism has been developed particularly in our region and I made the film to feature the suffering the people have seen in the Sistan-Baluchestan region."

Abyar met members of the Rigi ethnic group on her travels in the region to collect information about the Rigi brothers.

"Abdul-Malik was just a member of the Rigi ethnic group, which have a background in the fight against colonialism in the region," she said.

"They wanted a film made to differentiate them from the Rigi brothers," added Abyar who called the Rigi ethnic group a respectable tribe.



Elnaz Shakerdoost (L) and Hutan Shakiba act in a scene from Narges Abyar's drama "The Night When the Moon Was Full".

Library opens in Mashhad with Leader's donation



A librarian presents a copy of the Holy Quran donated by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei to the Imam Khomeini Central Library during the opening ceremony of the library in Mashhad on February 4, 2019. (Mehr/Ramin Saffari)

CULTURE d e s k TEHRAN – The Imam Khomeini Central Library was inaugurated in Mashhad on Monday with the donation of a copy of the Holy Quran by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Iran Public Libraries Foundation director Alireza Mokhtarpur and the Minister of Culture and Islamic

Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi.

IFLA Public Libraries Section Information Coordinator Jan Richards and National Library and Archives of Iran (NLAI) director Ashraf Borujerdi was also among the attendees in the ceremony.

As a major cultural structure in Mashhad, the library has also been equipped with separate sections for the visually and hearing impaired individuals.

Tehran Vocal Ensemble to perform at Fajr Music Festival



Tehran Vocal Ensemble in an undated photo.

A R T d e s k TEHRAN – The Tehran Vocal Ensemble, also known as Vocabella, will give a concert during the 34th Fajr Music Festival.

Milad Omranlu will conduct the performance, which will be held at Tehran's Rudaki Hall on February 16, the organizers announced on Monday.

The group is scheduled to perform pieces by American composer Richard Stone and German musicians Johann Sebastian Bach and Ludwig van Beethoven.

Pieces from Iranian and Latin American music will be also performed during

the concert.

The ensemble has been awarded in several Iranian and international events.

It won two gold medals at the 4th Asia Pacific Choir Games in 2017 and three silver medals at the 9th World Choir Games in 2016.

In 2009, the ensemble received a gold medal in the 11th International Folksong Choir Festival in Barcelona as well as two gold and silver medals at the 2nd Asian Choir Games in South Korea.

The 34th Fajr Music Festival will take place in Tehran from February 13 to 19.

"Theater Management" published in Persian

CULTURE d e s k TEHRAN – A Persian translation of the book "Theater Management", a comprehensive text and indispensable reference for all arts managers, has been published in Persian.

Majid Sarsangi is the translator and Shahr Publications is the publisher of the book co-written by David M. Conte and Stephen Langley.

The Persian version was unveiled during a ceremony at the University of Tehran on Sunday, the Persian service of ILNA reported.

The ceremony was attended by a number of theater, art and cinema scholars including film critic Akbar Alami.

Alami called the book a comprehensive one on theater and said, "It is a reference book for the PH.D. students at the Academy of Fine Arts of the University of Tehran."

He also said that Sarsangi has represented a good



Translator Majid Sarsangi attends the unveiling ceremony of "Theater Management" at the University of Tehran on February 3, 2019. (ILNA)

and precise translation of the book.

"Academic theater has been found in the country by the great efforts of the masters and this type of theater is mostly being respected by the students," he added.

Sarsangi, who is also the deputy director of the University of Tehran for cultural affairs, said, "There are some objections that part of the facts in the book do not match our theater of today, while I believe our theater is not supposed to remain forever like what is today, and we need to think of the future of theater and its economy."

He also noted that the book not only deals with the management in theater but the management of other types of art like music.

The book bears a comprehensive view of theater and performing arts management based on the premise that all the performing arts share the same core issues.

In Mosul exhibition, Iraqi artists process brutal rule of ISIS

MOSUL, Iraq (Reuters) — A raven perched on the shoulder of a woman with flaming hair is Iraqi artist Marwan Fathi's symbol for the terrible events he and his home city Mosul have had to endure.

Three years under the oppressive and violent rule of ISIS and the military campaign which drove it out in 2017 left much of the northern city in ruins. Thousands were killed, rendered homeless or maimed. Those who survived are deeply traumatized.

"I still jump awake at night thinking an air strike is about to hit or that they are coming to take one of us," Fathi, 36, said. "Everyday is a struggle."

Fathi's work is on display in "Return to Mosul" – the city's first art exhibition since before it was seized by ISIS, whose ultra hardline version of Sunni Islam prohibits

most art forms.

Artists from across Iraq are taking part in the six-day show, including many who lived in Mosul when it was in the militants' grip.

Hawkar Riskin's haunting work 'destruction' depicts a giant skeleton standing on one leg, while Mohammad Al Kinani's series of paintings – 'Caliphate I', 'Caliphate II' and 'Caliphate III' represents the beginning and end of ISIS, and Mosul's rebirth.

Fathi said the artists who stayed in the city lived in constant fear and despair.

"There was a time when we considered killing ourselves. We reached that low. But then we thought, what would happen to the children?" Fathi, a professor of fine arts, said.

The show is in the newly re-opened Royal Hall of the Mosul Museum, which was looted and destroyed by ISIS and in the ensuing war

to wrest control of the city.

Ahmed Mozaheem, another Mosul-born artist, continued to work in secret while the city was under the militants'. Using a writing pad he kept hidden to avoid discovery, Mozaheem produced 40 pencil drawings which are now among his most cherished possessions, an expression of what he and his family suffered.

For "City of the Whale", his painting in the exhibition, Mozaheem drew on the story of the prophet Jonah and the whale, which features Nineveh, the ancient Assyrian city which stood roughly where Mosul is today.

Following their capture of the city in 2014, ISIS went on a rampage, destroying many of Mosul's ancient sites and artefacts, including a shrine believed by many to be Jonah's tomb.

The militants not only destroyed the city, Mozaheem said. "They also killed something

inside, our spirit."

But Matthew Vincent, an American archaeologist, says technology can help preserve some of what was lost. Vincent is a co-founder of a crowdsourced, digital preservation project called Rekrei, which collects photographs of damaged or lost monuments and artefacts to re-create these in 3D representations.

At the Mosul Museum, visitors are now able to catch virtual glimpse of ancient Assyrian treasures destroyed by ISIS. One of them, the Lion of Mosul, was a colossal Assyrian guardian lion from about 860 BCE, one of two which stood at the entrance of the Temple of Ishtar at Nimrud, Iraq.

"It is never going to replace the original but new technology is giving us a path we simply didn't have before," Vincent said.