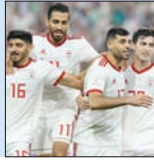




Rouhani highlights role of farmers for food security **2**



'IRGC scientific progresses would revolutionize global beliefs if divulged' **2**



Iran to meet Yemen in AFC Asian Cup opener **15**



Israeli artist Yossi Lemel's work scrubbed from Tehran poster exhibition **16**

It is Trump who begs for dialogue



See page 2

Daily gasoline output at 105m liters

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— The daily production of gasoline in Iran stands at 105 million liters, Nasser Ashouri, the secretary general of Iran's Oil Refining Industry Contractors Association (ORICA), announced in a press conference on Monday.

He also announced that the third phase of Persian Gulf Star Refinery will be officially put into operation during this year's

Ten-Day Dawn (February 1-10, marking the victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution), Tasnim news agency reported.

The refinery in the southern province of Hormozgan is the first of its kind designed based on gas condensate feedstock received from South Pars gas field which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf.

It is planned to play a big role to turn Iran into an exporter of gasoline.

Iran's defense power belongs to all Muslims: Hatami

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Monday that Iran's defense power belongs to all Muslims and friendly countries.

"The Islamic Iran's defense power belongs to all Muslim brothers and friendly countries," he said in his speech at a conference on defense and security in West Asia held at Supreme National Defense University.

The minister added Iran "believes that the intervening powers and certain puppet regimes of the U.S. will not be safe from consequences of spreading insecurity in the region."

The defense chief reiterated Tehran's long-held position that the regional countries are able to restore security and stability to West Asia through cooperation and coordination. **→2**

U.S. Syria pullout "old trick" to run regional crises: al-Muhandis

Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of the forces commonly known by the Arabic name Hashd al-Shaabi, warned that the U.S. claims about a pending pullout from Syria an old game by Washington to run crises in the region.

"The U.S. claim of pullout from Syria to Iraq is an old trick," al-Muhandis said on Monday.

He underlined Washington's support

for the terrorist groups in the region, and said, "The U.S. security and military bodies are after running the crises in the region."

Al-Muhandis warned of the U.S. plots against the region, and said, "As Kurdish forces have witnessed, the Americans can never be trusted in the region."

U.S. President Donald Trump announced late last month of his decision to withdraw forces from Syria immediately. **→13**

ARTICLE

Hanif Ghaffari
Political analyst

Merkel and Macron's secret disputes

In spite of European senior officials' emphasis on cooperation among the EU leaders, such a cooperation doesn't exist in practice. Under such circumstances, the political and economic disagreements between Berlin and Paris are still going on. These disagreements are indicative of German-French conflicts in resolving the European economic crisis.

Since Emmanuel Macron's presence in the Elysee Palace, German and French authorities tried to hide their economic disputes, but in fact these differences remain strong. The fact is that Angela Merkel continues to insist on austerity policies in Europe, and in particular, within the borders of the EU, while Macron believes in economic reforms in the Eurozone.

Over the past years, the differences between Berlin and Paris have been obvious not only in the economics, but also in the field of foreign policy. During the presidency of Hollande, and in the course of condemning the Syrian government for the use of chemical weapons (a false claim by the Western governments), the German government declared its opposition to any military strike against Syria.

However, French President, Francois Hollande, didn't consider such an attack as impossible, and he emphasized the participation of his country in this attack. This was while Angela Merkel's government has said that Berlin sees no reason to intervene in Syria.

The statements were made at a time when Francois Hollande, was planning a military intervention in Syria in case of the United Nations Security Council's agreement. At this time, the Macron administration has also adopted similar positions towards the Syrian people and government. He continues to emphasize the alliance with the United States in Syria. Of course, the announcement of the withdrawal of US troops from Syria hit Macron hard.

Berlin and Paris are currently taking two different approaches in different issues. Although Merkel has consistently stated that she agrees with Emmanuel Macron about the economic crisis in Europe and that the two countries will work together to solve the current financial and political crises in Europe, but the reality remains the other way around. The French president believes his plans are in contradiction with Merkel's economic plans, and Merkel had to face lots of problems since Macron's presence in power. **→7**

Minister's death blow to Tel Aviv with trampling on the occupation symbol

By Mohammad Ghaderi

TEHRAN — While some of the Arab leaders, particularly in the Persian Gulf region, are normalizing relations with the Zionist regime, the people of these states deeply despise the Zionists.

To show their protest, they normally set the Zionist flags on fire or they trample it down. Just recently Jordan's current Minister of State for Media Affairs and Government Spokesperson Jumana Ghunaimat walked over an Israeli flag painted on the floor of the headquarters of Jordan's professional Unions complex in Amman.

She was on her way to attend a meeting between Jordanian Prime Minister Omar al Razzaz and union representatives. Razzaz, however, entered the building through a rear door, avoiding having to walk over the flag.

In response, Israel's Foreign Ministry, on Sunday said that it filed a strong condemnation with the Jordanian government over a photo of the Jordanian Information Minister Jumana Ghunaimat stepping on the Israeli flag in the engineers' union building in Amman, which it described as an "act of disrespect." The ministry called the acting Jordanian

ambassador in Israel, Mohammad Hmeid, to its offices for "clarifications."

Jordanian Members of Parliament strongly supported Ghunaimat action. Yahya Saud, the chairman of the Jordanian parliament's Palestine Committee, said that Ghunaimat's action was the least she could do, and that the Zionist flag should be painted at the entrance of the Jordanian ministries and institutions for Jordanian citizens to walk on it. "Every day Israel tramples human, moral and religious values down, and the Jordanian minister action represents the position of the Jordanian people" he added. **→7**

After incarceration, Saudi deports 'handcuffed' Rohingya to Bangladesh

By Syed Zafar Mehdi

TEHRAN — Driven from their homeland in Rakhine state of Myanmar by the ultranationalist Buddhist monks actively backed by the country's military forces, Rohingya Muslims have been rendered homeless.

While a vast majority of them have temporarily settled in makeshift refugee camps in Bangladesh,

living under appalling conditions, many others have sought refuge in other countries.

But no country has really welcomed them with open arms. Worse, some countries like Saudi Arabia and India have started deporting them to Bangladesh or Myanmar.

According to reports, Saudi Arabia is continuing to deport homeless and stateless Rohingya

to Bangladesh, where they will join legions of other refugees.

Middle East Eye (MEE), which has received videos as evidence, says Rohingya Muslims have spent years in Saudi prisons and are being prepared for deportation to Bangladesh, which is currently 'home' to more than a million Rohingya refugees. **→6**

Ansarullah: U.S., Israel benefiting from continued war in Yemen

A senior member of Ansarullah (Houthi) movement resistance group's political council said that the United States and Israel are attempting to prevent termination of war in Yemen for the sake of their own interests.

"The U.S. and Israel benefit from continued aggression against Yemen, each of them in their own way," Hizam al-Assad said on Monday.

He explained that the U.S. is benefiting from the Yemen war by selling its weapons and military

equipment to the aggressive Saudi-led coalition.

"Israel is also attempting to rally Saudi Arabia and the UAE's support for the Deal of Century plot by supporting their aggression against Yemen in return," al-Assad said.

Meanwhile, a senior official from Yemen's popular Ansarullah movement, which has been defending the nation against a Saudi regime-led war, says the movement will comply with the Stockholm agreement on a ceasefire in the Red Sea port city of Hudaydah.



© IRNA/ Albar Tavakoli

Iran marks Takhti's 51st death anniversary

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian top sports officials, athletes and fans marked the 51st death anniversary of legendary wrestler Jahan Pahlavan Takhti.

The ceremony was held on Monday at Ibn-e Babouyeh cemetery in southern Tehran, near Shahr-e Ray, where Takhti is commemorated every year by the Iranians.

"We are here together to commemorate Takhti's 51st anniversary but he will not be forgotten even for 500 years," head of Iran's National Olympic Committee Reza Salehi Amiri said. **→15**

ARTICLE

Martin Love
Political analyst from North Carolina

A random litany of potentially better news for Iran seen from 8000 miles

Iran is allegedly planning joint naval exercises with Russia in the Caspian Sea. The government in Kabul is said to be open to stronger ties and cooperation with Tehran. More countries are allegedly intending to keep open trade channels with Tehran, especially India and Pakistan, even if there's no clear evidence yet of a European "Special Purposes Vehicle" to bypass U.S. economic sanctions on Iran for trade purposes.

There is evidence of more bilateral contact between Tehran and its neighbors. Reports exist suggesting that Iran is weathering the harsh sanctions to some positive degree at least. Some of Iraq's leaders have come out and stated they wanted the U.S. military out of Iraq. The Syrian government definitely wants the U.S. military out of Syria, and currently there is supposed to be a four-month timetable to withdraw American troops from Syria.

The Kurds allegedly are inviting Syrian soldiers in to areas of eastern Syria, perhaps in the realization that the Assad government will prevail in regaining all Syrian territory, and they fear the Turks more than they do Assad. Russia has allegedly warned the Zionists that further attacks on Syria will not be easily tolerated. There's almost universal sentiment against the war on Yemen and the humanitarian disaster it has been, even in the U.S. Congress.

The alleged trial and possible execution of those Saudis involved in Jamal Khashoggi's gruesome murder may be ahead, with the unfortunate whitewashing of Muhammad bin Salman's obvious role in the crime. On the other hand, one must wonder that IF the perps are slated for execution, might there be a backlash in Saudi Arabia with the perps pointing the finger at MBS, saying they were only following orders from him?

(At any rate, the Saudis are none too popular, even in the U.S., where most people understand now that Saudi "liberalization" schemes are a joke.) Lastly, a U.S. Grand Jury will be created for the first time to look into 9/11 and try to uncover the truth of what really happened and who was behind the attack. The official narrative is full of holes. **→7**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



‘IRGC scientific progresses would revolutionize global beliefs if divulged’

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Brigadier General Hossein Salami, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) second-in-command, said on Monday should the IRGC unveil its scientific and academic achievements, the beliefs of the people of the world would be “revolutionized”.

“The scientific and academic centers of Sepah (IRGC) have done great work in the field of science and research and have reached good products which, of course, it wouldn’t be expedient to mention them here,” Mehr on Monday quoted Salami as saying.

If unveiled, he continued, the world would realize that when the revolutionary spirit and jihadi thinking are put into any issue, then that problem can easily be solved.



Zarif leaves Tehran for New Delhi

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif left Tehran for New Delhi on Monday, as part of efforts to boost relations between the two countries in various areas, the economy in particular.

Accompanied by a high-ranking political and economic delegation, Zarif is slated to hold talks with senior Indian officials, including Foreign Minister Sushma Swara.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said senior executives from state and private entrepreneurship companies will accompany Zarif on the three-day visit, the Foreign Ministry website reported.

Zarif will also attend the annual international conference of the Raisina Dialogue, Qassemi added.



Iran arrests 25 for disturbing forex market

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Intelligence Ministry announced on Monday that it had arrested 25 members of two criminal networks that had infiltrated into Iran’s banking and foreign currency systems.

In a statement, the Intelligence Ministry said it had dismantled two criminal networks on charges of economic corruption, Mehr reported.

The arrests were made in provinces of Qazvin, Tehran, Mazandaran, and East Azerbaijan, the statement read, adding that the convicts have been handed over to judiciary officials to stand trial.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei last June ordered officials to deal firmly with those who “disturb the economy”.



U.S.-China trade war can benefit Iran: ex-diplomat

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Former Deputy Foreign Minister Ebrahim Rahimpour has said the ongoing trade war between the United States and China can create opportunities for Iran, Mehr reported on Monday.

Rahimpour stressed the need for continued cooperation between Iran and China, saying, “We should consider relations with China as beneficial to our national interests.”

“I think China’s economy will supersede that of the U.S. before 2030, and will be recognized as the world’s top economy,” he added.

He further pointed to China and Russia as two of the most important and influential countries with which Iran should expand its relations.



Official: No talks held on banning Instagram

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A member of the Criminal Content Definition Task Force has rejected rumors of banning Instagram, saying there has been no discussions about blocking Instagram within any of the responsible bodies.

“Recently, individuals who have no official responsibility in the area of cyberspace and relevant areas have made statements about social networks, especially Instagram, which have been perceived by the public as banning this network, while this is not the case at all,” Ramazan Ali Sobhanifar said, ISNA reported on Monday.

Sobhanifar added that Iran’s prosecutor general has also rejected any talks about blocking social networks.



About \$0.5m allocated for political parties

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Deputy Chairman of Iran’s House of Parties says 20 billion rials (nearly \$476,000) has been allocated for political parties, out of which 5 percent will be spent for the House of Parties and 95 percent will be given out to the parties.

Qodratoli Heshmatian also said the political body used to be divided between reformists and principlists, but in its current term independents and moderates also have their own share in the body, Mehr reported on Monday.

He added that different parties “coexist respectfully” within the House of Parties.

Addiction treatment in Iran hampered by U.S. sanctions



Next year’s budget bill has eliminated a budget that would go to insuring addiction treatment. Sanctions are seen as major reason behind dwindling incomes.

Iran’s currency.

The rial has depreciated by more than 50 percent this year while year-on-year food prices have increased by about 60 percent, according to the Central Bank of Iran.

Officials have said the budget is designed

to provide for the basic needs of low-income groups, including state employees and pensioners, and to support production and employment. They have also said that the budget calculations were based on a forecast crude price of \$50-\$54 per barrel and exports of 1

to 1.5 million barrels per day, down from a peak of almost 3 million bpd in mid-2018.

The proposed state budget for the coming year points to a 3.7 percent decline in revenues in rial terms, as U.S. sanctions continue to bite. Following the sanctions, Iran’s oil exports dropped radically from around 2.3 to about 1.2 million barrels per day.

Iran’s economy has struggled since Trump pulled out of the 2015 nuclear accord in May and re-imposed sanctions, including restrictions on oil sales.

Eight major importers of Iranian crude oil have received U.S. exemptions which will last up to 180 days since the sanctions came into effect in early November.

In the budget bill, the government forecasts tax earnings of 1,535tn and oil, gas and electricity sales of 1,426tn rials, but economic stagnation is expected to hit tax revenues while the decline in global oil prices will likely add to the pressure.

This is while in the current year, too, Iran has been facing a big budget deficit, which came in bigger than expected. In the first five months of the current fiscal year (March 21 to August 22) the deficit reached 369.1 trillion rials, according to the Central Bank of Iran.

The government’s overall revenues during the seven months to October 22 reached 415.7 trillion rials, indicating a rise of 25.8 percent, while its spending hit 807.2 trillion rials to register a 45.6 percent growth year-on-year. A deficit of 1,120 trillion rials is forecast but analysts believe the figure could rise much higher.

Shamkhani: It is Trump who begs for dialogue

‘U.S. requested talks with Iran two times when I was in Afghanistan’

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Ali Shamkhani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, announced on Monday that the U.S. requested talks with Iran for two times during his recent visit to Afghanistan.

“In my recent visit to Afghanistan, the U.S. sent me two messages for talks, and the claim that we send message asking for negotiation is a lie,” the security chief told the conference of defense and security in West Asia hosted by Supreme National Defense University.

He noted that Iranians do not hold talks with an “illogical” person.

Speaking to reporters at the White House on January 6, President Donald Trump claimed that Iran is not doing well and wants to hold talks with the U.S.

In a press conference at the White House on July 30, Trump said he would meet with Iran “anytime they want to” and without “preconditions”.

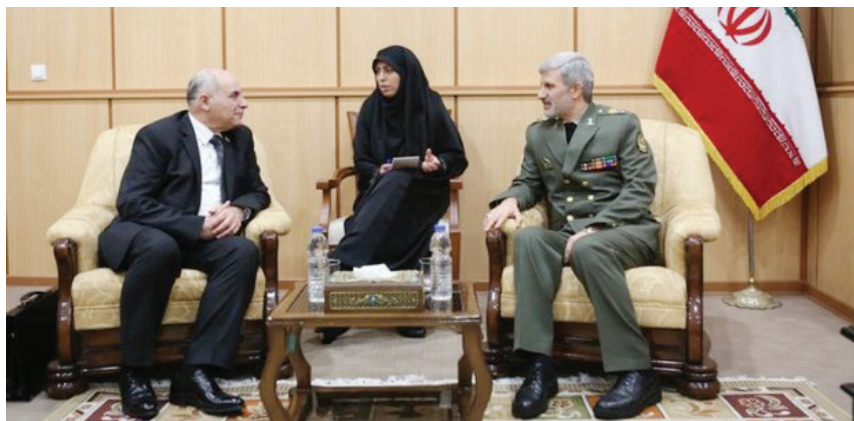
In remarks on August 13, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said there will be no war between Iran and the U.S. and nor will be any negotiation



between the two countries.

The Leader noted that negotiation with the current U.S. administration is impossible. “Even if we were to negotiate with the U.S., we would never hold talks with the current U.S. administration.”

Iranian, Syrian defense officials hold talks



countries such as Iran.

Speaking with IRNA on the sidelines of the event, al-Shawa said Tehran-Damascus

relations will be further strengthened in the future.

“The cooperation and relations be-

tween Syria and Iran are not newborn; such relations date back to the beginning of the Islamic Revolution in Iran,” he remarked.

He also pointed to the “illegal” presence of American forces in his country, saying there will never be negotiations between the Syrian and American forces because of this issue.

“According to what we have seen so far, the American forces are transferring their vehicles from Syria toward Iraq and U.S. President [Donald] Trump has met with some of the forces who left Syria,” al-Shawa added.

On 19 December, Trump announced via Twitter the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Syria, and thus set in motion the process to withdraw the estimated 2,000 U.S. troops in the war-torn country.

Rouhani highlights role of farmers for food security

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday that farmers play an important “security” role in Iran, meaning food security in the country is dependent on them.

“Farmers provide a major part of security in the society,” he said during a meeting with Agriculture Jihad Minister Mahmoud Hojati and other senior managers of the ministry.

He added, “When we use the word security, military capabilities come to mind, but a major part of the society’s security is being provided by farmers.”

Farmers who provide the people with food bring security to the country, he said, praising efforts being made by farmers. He noted that the government is duty bound to guarantee



gemonic system.

He noted that the West is no longer a cornerstone in creating security in the region and the U.S. forces’ withdrawal from the region shows Washington’s strategic defeat.

President Donald Trump announced on December 19 that the U.S. troops had defeated the Daesh terrorists in Syria and he sought to pull some 2,000 U.S. troops out of Syria.

Hatami also pointed to the U.S. act in quitting the 2015 nuclear deal, saying the move has revealed the true

face of the U.S.

“The U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA [the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action] has revealed the true face of the U.S. more than ever and showed that the U.S. uses any tool to harm independence of the countries,” he said.

Trump withdrew the U.S. unilaterally from the 2015 JCPOA 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.

■ **‘Talks with Taliban aimed to stabilize Afghanistan’**

Speaking on the sidelines of the security conference in West Asia, Hatami said Iran’s talks with Taliban are aimed at restoring peace and stability to Afghanistan.

The Foreign Ministry announced that Iranian diplomats held a meeting with a Taliban delegation in Tehran on December 30. Abbas Araqchi, the deputy foreign minister for political affairs, headed the Iranian negotiating team.

➔

The minister added, “Iran’s military strategy is deterrence and we do not seek arms race with other countries. We propose cooperation among the regional countries based on the Islamic principles.”

Elsewhere in his remarks, Hatami said, “Reactionary countries cannot provide security for themselves through spreading division and causing chaos.”

Referring to the planned U.S. withdrawal from Syria, he said the pullout shows end of the West’s he-

French women reclaim ‘yellow vest’ protests with peaceful demo

Hundreds of women Sunday marched in Paris to reclaim France’s “yellow vest” movement from violent activists, a day after protesters smashed their way into a government ministry.

The women, wearing yellow vests, turned out after 50,000 people returned to the streets of France Saturday amid violent clashes with police.

Some of the women waved yellow balloons and pushed prams. Protests were also held in other French cities.

“All the media ever reports is the violence, and we are forgetting the root of the problem” which is the fight against austerity, said one protester, Karen, a 42-year-old nurse from Marseille.

The women sang the “Marseillaise,” France’s national anthem, as they gathered on the steps of the city’s opera house at Bastille before marching through nearby streets.

The women’s demonstrations came as Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire called for an end to the “yellow vest” unrest, saying “those who believe in democracy” should now say “that’s enough,” he told Europe 1 radio.

There were also women’s demonstrations in Caen, northwestern France, and Montceau-les-Mines, central-eastern France. In the southwestern city of Toulouse, 300 women took to the streets shouting: “Macron your goose is cooked, the chicks are in the street.”

The “yellow vest” protest movement, which has now seen protests on eight consecutive Saturdays, was initially triggered by anger over an increase in fuel taxes.

But it has since morphed into a campaign against the high cost of living and the government of President Emmanuel Macron, seen by many as arrogant and beholden to



big business.

Government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux, who is also a minister, on Saturday had to flee his offices by a backdoor when a handful of protesters smashed down the large wooden door into his ministry compound with the help of a forklift truck.

He later denounced the break-in, in which some cars were damaged and windows smashed, as an “unacceptable attack on the Republic.”

Griveaux had earlier criticized the yellow vest movement, describing those involved as “agitators” who sought “to overthrow the government.”

The yellow vest protests have turned

into the biggest political crisis of Macron’s 20-month presidency and brought his popularity ratings to an all-time low.

He initially refused to make any concessions, but in mid-December, after weeks of violence, he scrapped the planned fuel tax hike and promised extra cash for minimum wage earners as well as tax cuts for pensioners.

Although public anger appeared to abate over the holiday period, the brief arrest on Wednesday of Eric Drouet, one of the leaders of the movement, seems to have rekindled resentment among his supporters.

The latest opinion poll, published Thursday by Odoxa Dentsu, indicated 55 percent support the protests – a figure which, although

lower than the 75 percent back in November, is still important enough to suggest the anti-austerity movement retains political clout.

Meanwhile, former cinema icon Brigitte Bardot, who is known today for her right-wing views and animal rights activism, on Sunday said she understood what motivated the yellow vest movement.

“When I see the millions spent on incredibly trivial things, when I see politicians using private planes and chauffeur-driven cars to get around [...] all this money spent is unacceptable,” she told the Midi Libre newspaper. “It should be given instead to people in need.”

■ **Italy populist leaders back France ‘yellow vest’ protests**

The two leaders of Italy’s ruling populist coalition Monday spectacularly threw their support behind the “yellow vest” protesters roiling neighboring France.

“Yellow vests, do not weaken!” Deputy Prime Minister Luigi Di Maio, who heads the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S), wrote on his party’s blog, echoed by his counterpart from the far-right League, Matteo Salvini.

“I support honest citizens protesting against a president who governs against his people,” Salvini said in a statement, while “firmly” condemning recent protest violence.

Di Maio’s M5S has vaunted direct democracy since it began in 2009 and he on Monday offered French protesters the use of their so-called Rousseau system to improve organization and “draw up an electoral program.”

(Source: AFP)

Gabon thwarts military coup attempt in President’s absence



Gabon foiled an attempted military coup on Monday, arresting several plotters just hours after they took over state radio in a bid to end 50 years of rule by President Ali Bongo’s family.

Government spokesman Guy-Bertrand Mapangou told Reuters that four of the five officers involved were arrested in the capital Libreville. A fifth officer fled and is being pursued, he said.

In a radio message at 4:30 a.m. (0330 GMT), Lieutenant Kelly Ondo Obiang, who described himself as an officer in the Republican Guard, said Bongo’s New Year’s Eve address from Morocco, where he is recovering from a stroke, “reinforced doubts about the president’s ability to continue to carry out of the responsibilities of his office”.

In one of his first television appearances since he suffered the stroke in Saudi Arabia in October, Bongo, 59, slurred his speech and he appeared unable to move his right arm. It is unclear if he is able to walk. He has been in Morocco

since November to continue treatment.

Outside the radio station, loyalist soldiers fired teargas to disperse about 300 people who had come out into the streets to support the coup attempt, a Reuters witness said. Helicopters circled overhead.

Most of the beachside capital was quiet, however, and a government spokesman said the situation was under control after the arrests. “The government is in place. The institutions are in place,” Mapangou told France 24.

The Bongo family has ruled the oil-producing country since 1967. Bongo has been president since succeeding his father, Omar, who died in 2009. His re-election in 2016 was marred by claims of fraud and violent protest.

The economy was long buoyed by oil revenues, much of which went to a moneyed elite while most of the two-million population live in deep poverty. In Libreville, expensive western hotels overlook the Atlantic Ocean to the west and the capital’s hillside shanties to the east.

A sharp drop in oil production and prices in recent years has squeezed revenues and stoked discontent. Oil workers’ strikes have become increasingly common.

The international community condemned the coup attempt, including former colonial ruler France which urged its 8,900 citizens registered in Gabon to avoid moving around Libreville.

“Gabon’s stability can only be ensured in strict compliance with the provisions of its constitution,” French foreign ministry spokeswoman Agnes von der Muhll said.

In a tweet on Monday, African Union Commission Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat reaffirmed “the AU’s total rejection of all unconstitutional changes of power.”

■ **Disputed election**

In a video on social media, Ondo is seen in a radio studio

wearing military fatigues and a green beret as he reads the statement. Two other soldiers with rifles stand behind him.

Ondo said the coup was being carried out by a group called the Patriotic Movement of the Defence and Security Forces of Gabon against “those who, in a cowardly way, assassinated our young compatriots on the night of August 31, 2016,” a reference to violence that erupted after Bongo was declared winner of the disputed election.

Bongo won the poll by fewer than 6,000 votes, sparking deadly clashes between protesters and police during which the parliament was torched.

The military officer said the coup attempt was carried out by one unit under the command of a high-ranking officer but that other units were monitoring the situation.

“President Bongo’s record as defense minister under his father lowers the possibility that current military leadership is supportive of his ouster,” said Judd Devermont of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

France has a permanent force of 300 soldiers in Gabon. The United States also sent about 80 soldiers to Gabon last week in response to possible violence in Democratic Republic of Congo after a presidential election there.

Bongo and members of his government have faced repeated suspicions by foreign governments of corruption. They have denied the accusations. During his father’s rule, Gabon was a pillar of “La Francafrrique”, a web of diplomacy, trade and French military might giving French companies favored access to African autocrats.

Gabon’s dollar-denominated sovereign debt tumbled in early trading, with both outstanding bonds losing around 3 cents in the dollar. However, prices recovered in late morning, with bonds trading around half a cent lower.

(Source: Reuters)

U.S. Navy ship sails in disputed South China Sea amid trade talks with Beijing

A U.S. guided-missile destroyer sailed near disputed islands in the South China Sea in what China called a “provocation” as U.S. officials joined talks in Beijing during a truce in a bitter trade war.

The USS McCampbell carried out a “freedom of navigation” operation, sailing within 12 nautical miles of the Paracel Island chain, “to challenge excessive maritime claims”, Pacific Fleet spokeswoman Rachel McMarr said in an emailed statement.

The operation was not about any one country or to make a political statement, McMarr said.

The statement came as trade talks between China and the United States were under way in Beijing, the first round of face-to-face discussions since both sides agreed to a 90-day truce in a trade war that has roiled international markets.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said that the conduct of the U.S. ship had violated China’s and international law, and China had lodged “stern representations”.

“We urge the United States to immediately cease this kind of provocation,” he said, adding that China had sent military ships and aircraft to identify and warn off the ship.

Asked about the timing of the operation during trade talks, Lu said resolving issues would benefit the two countries and the world.



“Both sides have the responsibility to create the necessary positive atmosphere for this,” he said.

China claims almost all of the strategic South China Sea and frequently lambastes the United States and its allies for freedom of navigation naval operations near Chi-

nese-occupied islands.

Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia and Taiwan have competing claims in the region.

U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping in December agreed to put on hold a spiraling trade dispute of tit-

for-tat import tariffs on hundreds of billions worth of goods.

Trump has imposed tariffs to pressure Beijing to change its practices on issues ranging from corporate espionage to market access and industrial subsidies. China has retaliated with tariffs of its own.

Fears have grown in recent months that the dispute is just one vector in a bilateral relationship that is fast cooling across the board, with top administration officials sharply criticizing Beijing for everything from human rights abuses and its influence operations in the United States.

The two countries are also at odds over regional security, including Washington’s overtures to the self-ruled island of Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own.

China and the United States have in the past repeatedly traded barbs over what Washington says is Beijing’s militarization of the South China Sea by building military installations on artificial islands and reefs.

China defends its construction as necessary for self-defense and says that it is rather Washington that is responsible for ratcheting up tensions in the region by sending warships and military plans close to islands Beijing claims.

(Source: Reuters)

Thailand, UNHCR confer on Saudi teen barricaded in Thai hotel

An 18-year-old Saudi woman who said her family wants to kill her barricaded herself inside an airport hotel in Bangkok to prevent being expelled by Thai immigration authorities who on Monday halted a plan to put her on a plane to Kuwait.

Rahaf Mohammed al-Qunun has been at Bangkok’s international airport since Saturday when she arrived from Kuwait. She has said she fears she will be killed if she is returned to her family, which could not be reached for comment on her accusations of abuse.

A representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) met Qunun at the airport and was to discuss the case with Thai immigration officials.

“We and UNHCR will talk to her and ask her what her wishes are, whether she wants to request asylum,” immigration chief Surachate Hakparn told a news conference.

He said Thai officials were following the law in initially refusing her entry, but added “if she is to be hurt or punished or killed, we will need to take into consideration human rights principles”.

Surachate also acknowledged for the first time Saudi embassy had alerted Thai authorities to Qunun’s arrival.

“The Saudi Arabia embassy contacted the immigration police ... and said that the girl had run away from her parents and they fear for her safety,” he said.

“We acknowledged this and checked her paperwork. She had a passport but no return ticket, no travel plan, and no destination or hotel reservation in Thailand ... so per airport security procedures, immigration denied her entry.”

■ **“They will kill me”**

Qunun posted a video on Twitter on Monday of her barricading her hotel door with a table and a mattress.

She told Reuters via text and audio messages she had fled Kuwait while her family was visiting the Gulf country and had planned to travel from Thailand to Australia to seek asylum. She said she was detained after leaving her plane in Bangkok and told she would be sent back to Kuwait.

“They will kill me,” Qunun told Reuters. “My life is in danger. My family threatens to kill me for the most trivial things.”

Qunun said she had obtained an Australian visa and booked a flight. She said she had planned to spend a few days in Thailand so she would not spark suspicion when she left Kuwait.

Surachate, however, said that Qunun did not have a visa for Australia. The Australian Embassy said it had no immediate comment.

The Saudi Foreign Ministry also denied her allegations that its embassy had confiscated her passport.

■ **Social media pleas**

Asked why she was seeking refuge in Australia, she said: “Physical, emotional and verbal abuse and being imprisoned inside the house for months. They threaten to kill me and prevent me from continuing my education.

“They won’t let me drive or travel. I am oppressed. I love life and work and I am very ambitious but my family is preventing me from living.”

In her initial social media pleas, Qunun said her family was powerful in Saudi society but she did not identify them.

Saudi culture and guardianship policy requires women to have permission from a male relative to work, travel, marry, and even get some medical treatment. The deeply conservative Muslim country lifted a ban on women drivers last year.

Right groups have rushed to assist Qunun following her pleas on social media.

The UNHCR said its representative had met her but would not comment on the details of the meeting or its outcome.

It said in a statement that Thailand had a responsibility not to expel or return anyone to a territory where their life or freedom would be threatened.

“This principle is recognized as customary international law, and is also enshrined in Thailand’s other treaty obligations,” the UNHCR statement said.

New York-based Human Rights Watch said Thailand should not send Qunun back to her family because she says she faces danger.

Thailand vowed to protect her while she remained in the country. “She is under Thailand’s sovereignty now. No one, no embassy can force her to go anywhere,” Surachate said. “We will protect her as best as we can.”

(Source: Reuters)

May to hold parliamentary Brexit vote on Jan. 15

EU again rules out reworking Brexit deal

Prime Minister Theresa May will hold a delayed parliamentary vote on her Brexit deal Tuesday, Jan. 15, the BBC reported Monday, citing government sources.

May was forced to pull the vote on her deal in December after she said it would be defeated by a large majority. The government had previously said the vote would be held in the week of Jan. 14.

May said Sunday that Britain would be in uncharted territory if her Brexit deal is rejected by parliament, despite little sign that she has won over skeptical lawmakers.

■ **EU rules out reworking Brexit**

The European Commission repeated on Monday that EU leaders would not renegotiate a Brexit treaty agreed last month with Prime Minister Theresa May and was pressing on with planning for Britain to crash out of the Union without a deal.

“The deal that is on the table is the best and the only deal possible,” chief spokesman Margaritis Schinas told reporters when asked about a phone conversation on Friday between May and Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

“This deal will not be renegotiated.”

He also repeated that there were no talks planned between negotiators from the two sides as “negotiations are complete”.

Schinas repeated that Juncker’s conversation with May on Friday was “friendly” and that the two would speak again this week.

May has failed to win parliamentary support for the treaty she agree with fellow leaders of the European Union last month and is expected to put it to a vote next week. At a summit on Dec. 14, she urged EU leaders to modify some terms but they insisted they would not reopen the agreement.

(Source: agencies)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	162323.6
IFX	1909.37

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	48,774 rials
GBP	53,434 rials
AED	28,720 rials

Source: iribnews.ir

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$49.67/b
Brent	\$58.73/b
OPEC Basket	\$52.95/b
Gold	\$1,286.89 /oz
Silver	\$15.74/oz
Platinum	\$827.20/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Tehran hosting intl. auto show

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The 3rd edition of Tehran International Exhibition of Automobile and Related Industries (Tehran Auto Show) became operational at Shahr-e Aftab International Exhibition Center on Monday, IRIB reported.

The exhibition aims to introduce Iranian Auto industry's capabilities in various fields including domestic production, spare parts and related industries.

In addition to the main exhibition, this year's event covers a variety of interesting programs, including classic car show, off-road car show and computer gaming section.

The show will wrap up on Thursday, January 10.



Iran's 1st national steel conference, exhibition kicks off

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's first national conference and exhibition of steel and related industries kicked off on Monday at Milad Tower in Tehran.

Renowned Iranian steel companies are presenting their latest achievements in the industry during this four-day event.

According to the organizers, the exhibition and conference aim to introduce Iranian steel industries capabilities and potentials and provide a platform for the related industries to share their knowledge and experiences.

Amazon could surge 20% this year as opportunities are 'mostly unconstrained,' analyst says

Amazon is set for a bull run in 2019 as shares could surge more than 20 percent, according to a new report from Pivotal Research Group.

In a research note published Monday, analyst Brian Wieser initiated coverage of Amazon with a \$1,920 price target for the end of the year, roughly 21 above the stock's current level. That price would put company's valuation close to \$1 trillion.

Amazon's stock is currently priced at \$1,575 and has a market valuation of \$770.3 billion.

"Despite its current massive size, we see Amazon's opportunities as mostly unconstrained based on a successful track record of capitalizing on consumer and IT department spending," Wieser wrote.

The analyst said Amazon will continue to take a bigger slice of global consumer spending, which totalled \$45 trillion in 2018, according to Euromonitor. Wieser said platforms like Amazon will increasingly rely on physical store locations in the same way that traditional retailers like Walmart and Target are turning to digital platforms.

"Amazon will be increasingly indifferent as to whether or not a sale is fulfilled in part or in whole online or at a store," he wrote.

The research firm estimates Amazon's digital advertising business will continue to be a source of revenue growth after accelerating more than 70 percent in 2018. Amazon took third place in U.S. digital ad sales in 2018, behind Google and Facebook, according to market research company e-Marketer.

Pivotal is not the only firm that is bullish on Amazon this year. Nearly all analysts polled by Reuters have a buy rating on the stock, with an average price target implying a 35 percent increase from current levels.

Key risks to Amazon this year include regulation, competition and a global economic slowdown, Wieser wrote.

"While AWS probably holds up well because of the secular growth trends it is driving and the long-term contracts it has with many of its customers, the retail business might face risks because of the relative maturity of e-commerce and likelihood that consumer spending trends would probably negatively impact the company in a way they didn't during the last recession," the note said.

Amazon rose 28 percent in 2018, outperforming other tech stocks including Facebook, Apple and Alphabet.

(Source: CNBC)

International bourse in free zones under discussion

By Mahnaz Abdi

In an interview conducted by IRNA on Monday, the Secretary of Iran's Free Zones High Council Morteza Bank announced that the council has submitted the draft bill on establishment of international bourse in the country's free zones to the economic committee of the parliament and this committee is investigating the draft which will be then proposed to the cabinet.

Elaborating on preparation of the mentioned draft, Bank said, "This draft was prepared through coordination between Free Zones High Council and Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) and then it was approved by the Supreme Council of Securities and Exchange and after that the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) made some amendments on it which made it ready to be submitted to the parliament's economic committee."

The official mentioned establishment of international bourse in the free zones as a new potential for the attraction of foreign currency resources especially foreign investment in the country and said it will provide financial resources for many projects and economic activities.

He said an international bank will conduct transitions related to this bourse and an international body will supervise its activity; emphasizing that all such issues have been considered in the mentioned draft.

■ Free zones' intl. bourse to combat sanctions

Approach toward free zones is generally an international approach and if a free zone



acts strongly it can attract high amount of foreign investment to the country.

Foreign investment attraction is very important for Iran under the current condition when the U.S. has imposed new sanctions against the country; and in this regard the role that the free zones can play in attraction of foreign investment comes under the spotlight.

And to this end, establishment of international bourse in the free zones is a measure that has been seriously followed up in the recent months.

Free Zones High Council is laying the ground for this target and its secretary has announced that an investment guarantee fund will be set up to create more security for investment making in the free zones.

■ Kish to host intl. bourse

Being the fifth stock market of Iran besides Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), the international bourse of free zones is planned to be set up on Kish Is-

Australia resolved to develop trade, industrial ties with Iran: envoy

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Australian Ambassador to Tehran Ian Biggs announced his country's decision to expand industrial and trade ties with Iran, the official portal of Iran's Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO) reported on Monday.

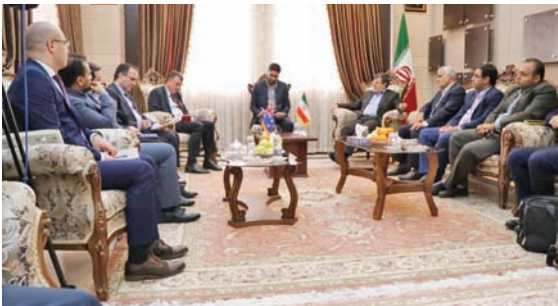
He made the remarks in a meeting with Deputy Head of IDRO Mohammad Nouri Amiri besides senior officials from Iran Ship Building and Offshore Industries Complex Company (ISOICO) and Head of Hormozgan

Chamber of commerce Mohammad Amin Sabaghizadeh in the southern Iranian province of Hormozgan.

Biggs announced his country's tendency for establishing a direct shipping line between Canberra and Hormozgan as well as a joint harbor to increase mutual economic ties.

Further cooperation would be done in future via Australian and Iranian companies' negotiations, he hoped.

Paying a visit to the site of ISOICO, the Australian ambassador also expressed Australia's readiness for development of marine industries and ship building cooperation with Iran.



EU hails U.S. soya bean imports on eve of renewed trade talks

The European Union hailed on Monday a sharp rise in imports of U.S. soya beans and said it could import more, comments likely aimed at winning concessions from President Donald Trump's administration in this week's trade talks.

EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom meets U.S Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer on Tuesday in Washington for talks on opening up their markets, the European Commission said.

Trump agreed in July not to impose tariffs on EU car imports while the two sides explored ways to boost trade including a possible deal to remove tariffs on non-auto industrial goods.

The U.S. president, who described the July deal with Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker as a win for U.S. soya bean farmers, told Reuters last month that auto tariffs were still an option if talks did not go well.

The Commission, which negotiates trade deals for the 28-nation EU, said on Monday the July agreement led to a 112 percent rise in U.S. soya bean imports in the second half of 2018. The U.S. share of the EU market is now about 75 percent.

The increase has been driven by a slide in the U.S. soya bean price, which slid after China imposed higher tariffs on U.S. beans in its trade row with Washington, rather than because of any concerted action by the EU,

analysts said.

The Commission also said U.S. soya bean imports were likely to rise further after it began a process to allow the use of U.S. soya beans for biofuels in Europe.

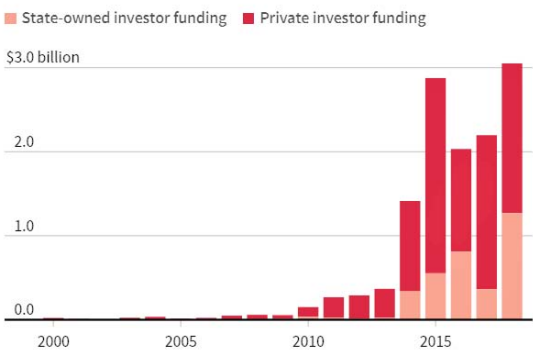
Malmstrom will also take part in a U.S.-EU-Japan meeting on Wednesday. The three nations will discuss subsidies made to state-owned firms and forced technology transfers. China is the clear target of those talks.

(Source: Reuters)

Chinese tech investors flee Silicon Valley as Trump tightens scrutiny

Chinese venture investment in U.S. tech

After years of near-consistent growth, Chinese investment in U.S. venture-backed companies confronts scrutiny from the Trump administration.



Note: Estimates all venture capital investments in U.S.-headquartered companies made by mainland Chinese-owned venture investors
Source: Rhodium Group
By Ally J. Levine | REUTERS GRAPHICS

attempts by foreigners to purchase minority stakes in U.S. startups.

China is in the crosshairs. The Asian giant has been an aggressive investor in technology deemed critical to its global competitiveness and military prowess. Chinese investors have bought stakes in ride-hailing firms Uber Technologies Inc [UBER.U] and Lyft, as well as companies with more sensitive technologies including data center networking firm Barefoot Networks, autonomous driving startup Zoox and speech recognition startup AISense.

A dearth of Chinese money is unlikely to spell doom for Silicon Valley. Investors worldwide poured more than \$84 billion into U.S. startups for the first three quarters of last year, exceeding any prior full-year funding, according to data provider PitchBook Inc.

Still, Chinese funders are critical to helping U.S. companies gain access to the world's second-largest economy. Volley's Kahn acknowledged that rejecting Chinese investment may make his startup's overseas expansion more difficult.

"Those of us who are operators and entrepreneurs feel the brunt of these tensions," Kahn said.

It is a radical shift for Silicon Valley. Money has historically flowed in from every corner of the globe, including from geopolitical rivals such as China and Russia, largely uninhibited by U.S. government scrutiny or regulation.

Reid Whitten, an attorney with Sheppard Mullin, said that of

the six companies he recently advised to get CFIUS approval for their investment offers, only two have opted to file the paperwork. The others abandoned their deals or are still considering whether to proceed.

"It is a generational change in the way we look at foreign investment in the United States," Whitten said.

■ Critical technologies

The decline in Chinese investment comes amid heightened tensions between Beijing and Washington. Trump has blasted China for its enormous trade surplus and for what he claims are its underhanded strategies to obtain leading-edge American technology.

The nations have already levied billions in tariffs on each other's goods. And Trump is considering an executive order to bar U.S. companies from using telecommunications equipment made by China's Huawei and ZTE, which the U.S. government has accused of spying.

CFIUS is emerging as another powerful cudgel. Led by the U.S. Treasury, it includes members from eight other government entities, including the departments of Defense, State and Homeland Security. The secretive committee does not disclose much about the deals it reviews. But its most recent annual report said Chinese investors made 74 CFIUS filings from 2013 to 2015, the most of any nation. The president has the authority to make the final decision, but a thumbs-down from CFIUS is usually enough to doom a deal.

Washington demonstrated its tougher stance even before the new law was passed, when Trump in March blocked a \$117 billion hostile bid by Singapore-based Broadcom Ltd (AVGO.O) to acquire Qualcomm Inc (QCOM.O) of San Diego. CFIUS said the takeover would weaken the United States in the race to develop next-generation wireless technology.

A White House spokeswoman did not respond to a request for comment.

In November, CFIUS rolled out a pilot program mandating that foreign investors notify the committee of any size investment in certain "critical technologies." The scope of that term is still being defined, but a working list includes artificial intelligence, logistics technology, robotics and data analytics — the bread and butter of Silicon Valley.

Research firm Rhodium predicted that up to three-quarters of Chinese venture investments would be subject to CFIUS review under the new rules.

Just the threat of that scrutiny has caused some Chinese investors to reconsider.

Peter Kuo, whose firm, Silicon Valley Global, connects Chinese investors with U.S. startups, said his business has slumped dramatically. In 2018, he said not a single Chinese investor took a stake in the companies he shopped to them.

(Source: Reuters)

Oil prices gain 2%, extending rally from December lows

Oil prices rose by 2 percent on Monday, extending a rally from December's 18-month lows with support from OPEC production cuts and steadying share markets.

Oil has gained nearly 12 percent since last Monday, its biggest week-on-week rally in two years.

Brent crude was up \$1.13 at \$58.19 a barrel by 0940 GMT, rising from December's slide below \$50, its lowest level since July 2017. U.S. crude rose 84 cents to \$48.80 a barrel.

"Momentum is coming back into the market from very depressed price levels," Petromatrix strategist Olivier Jakob said. "We've had five consecutive days of price gains already, so what you have today is a continuation of that."

The oil prices are drawing support from an agreed supply cut by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, well as some non-member countries such as Russia and Oman.

OPEC oil supply fell in December by



460,000 barrels per day (bpd), to 32.68 million bpd, a Reuters survey found last week, led by cuts from top exporter Saudi Arabia.

The aim of the production cut is to rein in a surge in global supply, driven mostly by the United States, where production grew by

nearly a fifth to over 11 million bpd in 2018.

Record crude oil production has also pushed up U.S. inventories, which rose by nearly 17 percent in 2018 to their highest in well over a year, according to weekly data by the Energy Information Administration (EIA) on Friday.

More upbeat equity markets also offered support on the back of expectations that this week's trade talks between the United States and China would ease a trade dispute.

The row has added to concerns about an economic downturn, which would hurt demand for oil.

Goldman Sachs said in a note it had downgraded its average Brent crude oil forecast for 2019 to \$62.50 a barrel from \$70 due to "the strongest macro headwinds since 2015".

Societe Generale cut its 2019 oil price forecast for Brent by \$9 to \$64 a barrel and also reduced its forecast for U.S. light crude by \$9 to \$57 a barrel.

(Source: Reuters)

Traded oil futures on TOCOM falls 9.8 percent on month to 492,161 trades in Dec.



Traded oil futures on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange fell 9.80 percent month on month to 492,161 trades in December, data provided by TOCOM on Friday showed.

Year on year, traded oil futures rose 9.38 percent from 449,955 trades in December 2017, TOCOM data showed.

Traded oil futures on TOCOM in December were all lower from the previous month, with Dubai crude oil contracts posting the smallest decline of 4.49 percent to 414,934 trades in December.

In contrast, kerosene contracts posted the largest month-on-month slump of 41.77 percent to 10,072 trades. This marked the second straight month of decline, TOCOM data showed.

The Asian jet fuel/kerosene spot market was uncharacteristically lackluster in December, weighed down by excess cargoes and weak demand.

This led FOB Singapore spot differentials -- the premium or discount a physical cargo commands over the benchmark Mean of Platts Singapore jet fuel/kerosene assessments -- to plummet to a three-year low of minus \$1.22/b on December 28. The

last time it was assessed any lower was on September 15, 2015 when it was at minus \$1.29/b, Platts data showed.

Meanwhile, traded gasoline contracts fell 28.92 percent month on month to 64,297 trades in December.

Sentiment in the Asian gasoline market throughout December had been persistently bearish, with fundamentals weakened by a chronic oversupply and sluggish demand.

The Chinese government's unexpected fourth batch of oil export quota in particular, which was announced in late November, saw Asia swimming in excess cargoes.

Coupled with seasonally tepid demand, the FOB Singapore 92 RON gasoline crack spread against front-month ICE Brent crude oil futures spent majority of December in the red.

In the physical gasoil market, market participants noted that bearish sentiment was still lingering citing consistent outflows from Northeast Asia and still-sluggish regional demand. "I think first half [of 2019] we see pressure on distillates," a trader based in Singapore said.

(Source: Platts)

Venezuelan crude sales to U.S. drop to lowest in almost 30 years



Venezuelan crude exports to the United States last year fell 15 percent to the lowest annual average in nearly three decades, according to Refinitiv Eikon data, as fast-declining oil output and financial sanctions continued to hit sales.

Crude volumes to the United States by state-run PDVSA and its joint ventures dropped to 500,013 barrels per day (bpd), a third less than five years ago and the lowest since 1989, figures from Refinitiv Eikon and the U.S. Energy Information Administration showed.

A lack of investment, mismanagement and fleeing workers have driven the OPEC-member's oil production to the lowest in almost seven decades. Under a military-led board of directors, output fell to an average of 1.516 million bpd from January through November last year, a 27-percent fall compared with the 2.072 million bpd for all of 2017, according to numbers officially reported to OPEC. Other estimates are lower.

Venezuela is struggling to fulfill crude-supply contracts, including those tied to oil-for-loan pacts with Russian and

Chinese firms. The insufficient export revenue has Venezuelans suffering through hyperinflation and lack of basic goods, fueling an exodus projected to reach 3 million people.

The United States, Venezuela's largest crude export destination ahead of India and China, has been particularly affected by the shipment drop, especially since sanctions on the country and state-run PDVSA were imposed in 2017 by President Donald Trump. The administration is considering new measures that could begin this month.

The largest U.S. receiver of Venezuelan crude last year was PDVSA's refining unit Citgo Petroleum with 175,873 bpd, followed by Valero Energy with 166,099 bpd and Chevron Corp with 83,041 bpd, Eikon data showed.

An export increase in December, when sales to the United States reached 533,358 bpd due to larger shipments of diluted crude made with imported naphtha, was not enough to avoid a decline in the whole year, according to the data.

(Source: Reuters)

Goldman slashes oil forecasts as new supply seen plentiful

Goldman Sachs Group Inc. cut its oil price forecasts for 2019, citing a re-emerging surplus and resilient U.S. shale production.

Global benchmark Brent crude will average \$62.50 a barrel this year, analysts including Damien Courvalin said in a Jan. 6 note, down from a previous estimate of \$70. U.S. marker West Texas Intermediate will average \$55.50 a barrel, down from a prior forecast of \$64.50. Societe Generale SA also lowered 2019 price outlooks by \$9 a barrel in a Jan. 7 note, with Brent now seen averaging \$64.25 for the year and WTI \$57.25.

A surge in OPEC production in late 2018 means the market started this year better supplied than the last, and pipeline constraints in the U.S. Permian Basin will clear up faster than expected, according to Goldman. Big projects in the works for years in Brazil and Canada will also ramp up output in 2019. Combined, those increases mean fewer high-cost marginal barrels will be needed to meet global demand growth this year, Courvalin said.

"We expect that the oil market will balance at a lower marginal cost in 2019 given higher inventory levels to start the year, the persistent

beat in 2018 shale production growth amidst little observed cost inflation, weaker than previously expected demand growth expectations (even at our above consensus forecasts) and increased low-cost production capacity," Courvalin wrote.

Crude prices ended 2018 after a roller-coaster ride, rising to a 4-year high of over \$86 a barrel in October and then plunging as much as 42 percent by the close of the year. The oil market was hit by a spate of risk aversion because of economic growth fears spurred by U.S.-China trade tensions, rising interest rates and tighten-

ing liquidity, SocGen analysts including Mike Wittner said in the research note.

That sell-off appears to have overshoot, according to both Goldman and SocGen. It prices in global economic growth plunging to about 2.5 percent in 2019, well below economists' forecasts of about a 3.5 percent increase, Courvalin said.

"The oil market has priced in an excessively pessimistic growth outlook," Courvalin wrote. "This sets the stage for prices to recover as long as global growth does not slowdown below 2.5 percent."

(Source: Bloomberg)

New data suggests shocking shale slowdown

U.S. shale executives often boast of low breakeven prices, reassuring investors of their ability to operate at a high level even when oil prices fall. But new data suggests that the industry slowed dramatically in the fourth quarter of 2018 in response to the plunge in oil prices.

A survey from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas finds that shale activity slammed on the brakes in the fourth quarter. "The business activity index—the survey's broadest measure of conditions facing Eleventh District energy firms—remained positive, but barely so, plunging from 43.3 in the third quarter to 2.3 in the fourth," the Dallas Fed reported on January 3.

The 2.3 reading is only slightly positive — zero would mean that business activity from Texas energy firms was flat compared to the prior quarter. A negative reading would mean a contraction in activity.

The deceleration was true for multiple segments within oil and gas. For instance, the oil production index fell from 34.8 in the third quarter to 29.1 in the fourth. The natural gas production index to 24.8 in the fourth quarter, down from 35.5 in the prior quarter.

But even as production held up, drilling activity indicated a sharper slowdown was underway. The index for utilization of equipment by oilfield services firms dropped sharply in the fourth quarter, down from 43 points in the third quarter to just 1.6 in the fourth — falling to the point where there was almost



no growth at all quarter-on-quarter.

Meanwhile, employment has also taken a hit. The employment index fell from 31.7 to 17.5, suggesting a "moderating in both employment and work hours growth in the fourth quarter," the Dallas Fed wrote. Labor conditions in oilfield services were particularly hit hard.

The data lends weight to comments made by top oilfield service firms from several months ago. Schlumberger and Halliburton warned in the third quarter of last year that shale companies were slowing drilling activity. Pipeline constraints, well productivity problems and "budget exhaustion" was leading to weaker drilling conditions. The comments were notable at the time, and received press coverage, but oil prices were still high and still rising, and

so was shale output. The crash in oil prices and the worsening slowdown in the shale patch puts those comments in new light.

What does all of this mean? If oil producers are not hiring service firms and deploying equipment, that suggests they are rather price sensitive. The fall in oil prices forced cutbacks in drilling activity. Oilfield service firms in particular are bearing the brunt of the slowdown. Executives from oilfield service firms told the Dallas Fed that their operating margins declined in the quarter.

In fact, roughly 53 percent of the oil and gas executives that responded to the Dallas Fed's survey said that the recent drop in oil prices caused them to "lower expectations for capital spending" in 2019. A further 15 percent said that it was still too early to make a decision on capex changes. Only 31 percent of oil executives who responded to the Fed survey said that the oil price downturn would not affect their spending plans.

The oil rig count climbed for much of 2018, but began to level off in the third quarter. The rig count, which stood at 885 in the last week of December, has barely budged since late October when prices began to fall.

The downturn is still in its early days. It takes several months before the rig count really begins to respond to major price movements. The same is true for a string of other data — production levels, inventories, as well as capex decisions.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Why Russia isn't worried about lower oil prices

Even as Saudi Arabia has scrambled to prevent a bust in the oil market, so far failing to head off a dramatic price slide, Russia seems just fine with prices where they are.

Russia is a key piece of the oil price puzzle. OPEC, once a coalition of oil-producing members that made joint decisions to maintain market stability, has morphed into a Saudi-led cartel that desperately needs Russian cooperation to strengthen the group's efforts. Many OPEC members are either at maximum capacity, are suffering from production declines at aging fields, or are characterized by instability, making any promises to boost or cut production hollow. That leaves Saudi Arabia and its new strategic partner, Russia.

But Russia is not as desperate for higher oil prices as is Saudi Arabia. There are a few reasons for this. One of the key reasons is that the Russian currency is flexible, so it weakens when oil prices fall. That cushions the blow during a downturn, allowing Russian oil companies to pay expenses in weaker rubles while still taking in US dollars for oil sales. Second, tax payments for Russian oil companies are structured in such a way that their tax burden is lighter with lower oil prices.

Saudi Arabia needs oil prices at roughly \$84 per barrel for its budget to breakeven. The international outrage over the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi has also left Riyadh isolated. The hyped-up economic reform plans from crown prince Mohammed bin Salman are in tatters, and Saudi Arabia is back at the drawing board, in desperate need of higher oil prices.

Russia is more stoic in the face of an oil price meltdown. "The drop in oil prices hardly bother us because our budget is based on \$42 a barrel," First Deputy Prime Minister Anton Siluanov told reporters in Moscow on December 26. "The price can stay around \$40-\$50 for a time — six months or a year," Siluanov said, before adding: "We think this won't last long." But even if the price downturn does persist, Russia won't be in trouble because of its ample foreign exchange reserves, he said.

Igor Sechin, the head of Russia's state-owned Rosneft, said that oil prices "should have stabilized, because everyone was supposed to be scared" by the enormous OPEC+ production cuts. "But nobody was scared," he said, according to Bloomberg. He blamed the Federal Reserve's rate tightening for injecting volatility into the oil market, because traders have sold off speculative positions in the face of higher interest rates.

The bottom line is that Russia does not feel the same urgency as Saudi Arabia. It was only a matter of days after Russia agreed to the OPEC+ agreement — which called for production cuts of 1.2 million barrels per day (mb/d) beginning in January — that Russian officials suggested that their output would only decline slightly at the start of the New Year.

Russia's oil minister Alexander Novak said in mid-December that output could dip by a modest 50,000 to 60,000 bpd in January, far short of the roughly 230,000 bpd of cuts Russia is supposed to take on. That would put Russian output at about 11.35 mb/d, not far from the post-Soviet high of 11.41 mb/d hit in October. "Everything will depend on technological and climate possibilities. We will get proposals from the companies," Novak said, according to Reuters. "We will see how the situation would evolve."

At the same time, Novak offered the market some assurances that the OPEC+ coalition would step in to stabilize the market if the situation deteriorates, suggesting that OPEC+ has the ability to call an extraordinary meeting. He told reporters in late December that the market still faces a lot of unknowns. "All these uncertainties, which are now on the market: how China will behave, how India will behave... trade wars and unpredictability on the part of the US administration... those are defining factors for price volatility," Novak said.

Some analysts echo Novak's sentiment that, despite the current panic in the market, the cuts should be sufficient. "We are looking at oil prices heading towards \$70 to \$80... quite a recovery in 2019. That's really predicated on the thought that first of all, OPEC still is here. And I think that the market is underestimating that they are going to cut supply by 1.2 mb/d," Dominic Schneider of UBS Wealth Management told CNBC. "And demand looks healthy... so we might find ourselves into 2019 in a situation where the market is actually tight."

(Source: RT)

Why Australia leads Qatar as the world largest LNG supplier

This winter, the liquefied natural gas (LNG) market experienced a different focus as U.S. gas exports were challenged by weaker Asia demand. That kept the global LNG market under pressure and led to weaker prices than previous winters.

At the same time, LNG shipping data shows that lately Australia has beaten Qatar as the world largest LNG supplier. Australia now produces 83 million tons per year of nameplate liquefaction capacity, versus Qatar's 77 million tons per year. Moreover, Australia still has more room for near-term production upside. Ship-tracking data from Reuters indicated that Australia exported 97 LNG cargoes, or around 6.58 million tons, in November 2018, and Qatar 82 cargoes, or 6.31 million tons.

Qatar's November exports decline on a month-on-month basis was attributed to planned maintenance.

Australia is already on the path to regaining the role of largest LNG exporter from the summer of 2019, when the Prelude and Ichthys floating liquefied natural gas (FLNG) facilities will be fully ramped up.

Qatar does not offer flexible LNG contracts as it imposes destination restrictions selling to end users only to ensure the LNG is not resold or traded afterward in order not to affect its market share.

China will likely be key to determining Australia's exports over the next five or six years, before the upcoming Qatari expansion makes itself felt. Australia will benefit more than Qatar from the strong Chinese demand growth with lower shipping costs.

China imported 17.4 million tons of Australian LNG in 2017, 10 million tons more than it bought from Qatar. Over the first 10 months of this year, it imported 18.4 million tons from Australia and 7.6 million tons from Qatar. Most of Australia's LNG exports reach the strong LNG markets in the Asia-Pacific region and India, while Qatar's location cannot help with the Australian competition except on sales to Europe and Latin America.

Australia's ascent to the top may push Qatar to come up with a different marketing strategy to regain the title of top world LNG exporter.

Although Qatar was the largest LNG exporter in 2016, Doha's marketing strategies failed to compete with Australia and the U.S., which both added significant supplies to the global LNG market.

Australia is now becoming an increasing threat to Qatar's position in the Asia-Pacific, while Qatar has lost the dominance of LNG market share to new supplies coming online, primarily from Australia, that meet the increasing demand from China and India.

One of the biggest challenges that Qatar now faces is its own LNG marketing strategies that cannot be overcome because its LNG is priced off crude oil at relatively high offsets.

(Source: Arab News)

NEWS IN BRIEF



China's population to peak in 2029 at 1.44bn

INTERNATIONAL DESK **TEHRAN** — The population of China, the world's most populous country, will peak in 2029 at 1.44 billion before beginning a period of "unstoppable" decline, a government report has said.

China Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) report states that the country must implement policies to handle a smaller workforce and an older population.

Both changes combined could cause "very unfavorable social and economic consequences", the report says.

Working population numbers were now stagnating, the report said, with a low fertility rate set to cause further issues. If fertility rates stay low, the population could drop as low as 1.17 billion by 2065.

In 2015, the world's most populous country ended its one-child policy in a bid to tackle the problems. While relaxing the one-child policy will help long-term, in the short term it will create more dependents, according to the report.

Previous forecasts reportedly suggest China's elderly population could hit 400 million by 2035, up from 240 million in 2017.

China has been the most populous country for many centuries. When China had its first post-1949 census in 1953, the population stood at 583 million. By the fifth census in 2000, the population had more than doubled, reaching 1.2 billion.



Turkey bans for UN resolutions on Kashmir

INTERNATIONAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Turkey has joined the debate over the long-standing issue of Kashmir, saying the imbroglio should be resolved according to the relevant United Nations resolutions.

It was mentioned in a joint statement by Turkey and Pakistan issued at the end of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's maiden visit to Turkey.

Khan and Turkish President Recep Erdogan reaffirmed their commitment to further enhance bilateral relations in all fields, according to the joint statement shared with the media.

The statement said the two countries "underscored the need for resolution of the issue of Jammu and Kashmir through a sustained dialogue process and in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions".

The statement is likely to raise eyebrows in New Delhi as India has maintained that Kashmir is a bilateral issue with Pakistan and third parties have no role in it.

Khan pitched for friendly-relations with India while opining that the "basic problem" between the two countries is Kashmir. "We've had a standoff with India where India refuses to talk to Pakistan under the pretext that until Pakistan stops terrorism, India will not talk to us. It's a bizarre situation, where we feel that how can you move forward if there's no dialogue," he added.



Malaysia's king abdicates after 2 years on throne

Malaysia's King Muhammad V abdicated on Sunday, the palace said, after two years on the throne, the first time a monarch has stepped down before completing their five-year tenure.

The king's resignation took effect immediately, the National Palace said in a statement. No reason was given and palace officials did not respond to requests for comment.

A week ago, the king, 49, had resumed duties after spending two months on medical leave. Images purporting to show him getting married in Russia appeared on social media in December. The palace did not respond to requests for comment on the photos or reports of a marriage.

Mahathir, known for challenging royalty during his past 22-year tenure as prime minister, said in a blog post last week that everyone "from the Rulers to the Prime Minister and Ministers, to the civil servants and ordinary citizens" are subject to the law. He did not elaborate.

In June, the government and palace faced a near two-week impasse over a plan to appoint a non-Malay as attorney-general. The king eventually approved the appointment, though the incident had stoked racial tensions.

(Source: Reuters)



Ghani's 'peace envoy' to visit Pakistan

INTERNATIONAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Afghan President President Ashraf Ghani's special envoy for peace and head of High Peace Council's (HPC) secretariat, Umer Daudzai is expected to visit Pakistan this week.

Daudzai is scheduled to hold talks with the top Pakistani political, military, religious leadership about Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, High Peace Council's spokesman said in a statement.

Daudzai, a former minister, was recently appointed by Ghani as his 'special envoy for peace' as the government in Kabul looks to open channels with the Taliban for direct peace negotiations.

His visit to Pakistan assumes significance as Islamabad is believed to be a key player in the peace process since many of the Taliban leaders are based in Pakistan.

The new government in Islamabad has shown eagerness to facilitate the peace process between the insurgent group and the Afghan authorities, even though former has rejected offers to hold direct talks with the government in Kabul.

"They (Iran) persuade the Taliban to present their demands through political and peaceful means," said Omid Maisam, deputy spokesman for Abdullah.

Pakistan rebuffs 'misleading Indian propaganda', vows 'befitting response'

INTERNATIONAL DESK **TEHRAN** — While spirited efforts are being made through back channels to recalibrate the stalled dialogue process between India and Pakistan, the top political leadership of the two countries continues to indulge in war-mongering and sabre-rattling.

On Saturday, Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi rebuffed what he termed the "misleading Indian propaganda" over surgical strikes across the Line of Control (LoC), the line that divides the two warring South Asian neighbors.

Qureshi, in a chilling message, warned the Indian leadership that any misadventure or aggression would be met with "befitting and swift response".

"Let me remind India in unequivocal manner that Pakistan's desire for peace and negotiations should not be taken as its weakness. Any aggression against Pakistan will evoke a befitting and swift response," he said.

"We have complete confidence in our armed forces, fully capable of defending the motherland, and in the unity of our nation," Pakistan's foreign minister told media persons.

He also dismissed reports that Pakistan had the intention to launch surgical strikes in Indian controlled Kashmir and termed it "unfounded and baseless".

Qureshi warned that the Indian leadership must have their political compulsions preceding irresponsible and provocative statements on their part which could destabilize



the regional peace.

Terming the statements of Indian political leaders as "highly baseless and hollow", he said Pakistan had responded to it with a measured and mature manner.

Last week, in an interview to ANI news agency, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said "it would be a huge mistake to believe that Pakistan would mend its ways anytime soon."

The statement was made in reference to 'cross-border terrorism'. India has repeatedly accused Pakistan of sheltering militant

groups that carry out attacks in India.

In September, the two countries had vociferously raised the issue of cross-border terrorism and human rights violations in Kashmir during 39th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Meanwhile, the intermittent border skirmishes continue between the two estranged neighbors, escalating political and military tensions.

Last week, the armies of the two countries again accused each other of trading fire on the Line of Control (LoC) in the disputed

After incarceration, Saudi deports 'handcuffed' Rohingya to Bangladesh

1 → The videos show Rohingya, having spent nearly five to six years in Saudi jails, being prepared for deportation at the Shumaisi detention centre in Jeddah.

One of the videos sent to MEE shows a Rohingya detainee sitting down, secretly filming the process, as dozens of Rohingya are queued for deportation in Shumaisi.

The report, citing voice notes received from anonymous sources, notes that some Rohingya were put in handcuffs after they attempted to resist their deportation to Bangladesh.

Nay San Lwin, an activist with Free Rohingya Coalition, condemned the ill-treatment meted out to Rohingya by Saudi authorities.

"They are not criminals to be held in handcuffs, and I am very sad to see them being treated like criminals by the Saudi authorities," he is quoted saying in the report.

Meanwhile, India also continues deporting homeless Rohingya refugees, despite global outcry.

Last week, India deported a second group of persecuted Rohingya to their home country from Assam in northeastern India, raising concerns among human rights campaigners.

The five Rohingya, including two women, had been living in a foreigner detention camp in the state since 2014, after escaping persecution in their home country, according to reports.

Last October, India had deported seven Rohingya Muslims to Myanmar after Home Ministry asked state governments to identify and deport illegal immigrants.

India's Supreme Court had allowed the deportation of Rohingya, saying they were found to be "illegal immigrants" and have been accepted by their country of origin as citizens.

Narendra Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) gov-



ernment told the Supreme Court in 2017 that it considers the Rohingya "a security threat."

According to media reports, about 20 Rohingya are still languishing in various jails in Assam, which borders Myanmar.

UN refugee agency has expressed regret over India's decision to deport Rohingya to Myanmar, saying it has sought clarification from India on the circumstances under which the asylum seekers were sent back.

The misery of persecuted Rohingya Muslims continues – both in the refugee camps of Bangladesh and in their native Rakhine province of Myanmar.

Despite the repatriation deal between the governments

of Myanmar and Bangladesh, homecoming did not happen as the conditions were not considered conducive for their voluntary repatriation.

As per conservative estimates, there are around 905,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar presently, although some human rights bodies have put the figure higher.

The exodus of persecuted Rohingya Muslims from Rakhine started in October 2016, following the crackdown by Burmese army. Almost 200,000 fled to neighboring Bangladesh. In August 2017, more than 720,000 of them escaped to Bangladesh following persecution, murder, arson and rape.

Myanmar and Bangladesh had signed a bilateral repatriation agreement last year, according to which the process of voluntary repatriation was to begin in 60 days. But the plan was shelved.

In June, Myanmar inked an agreement with UN to expedite the process of Rohingya repatriation, but the memorandum of understanding (MoU) was kept under wraps. Rohingya community leaders, after seeing the leaked MoU, rejected the agreement, saying it did not address their concerns.

International aid groups and bodies fighting for refugees have also opposed the idea of repatriating Rohingya refugees in current circumstances.

Bangladesh government on Sunday stressed the need for political will of Myanmar for expediting the process of repatriation of Rohingya people to Bangladesh.

Myanmar President Win Myint on Sunday expressed his intent to work with Sheikh Hasina, who was re-elected as Bangladesh Prime Minister last week, to address common challenges of the two countries.

However, the Rohingya crisis did not figure in the statement.

Streamline pro-poor initiatives urgently

The National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) released the fifth Integrated Household Living Condition Survey (EICV5) in December last year, which indicated a slight drop in poverty levels– from 38.2 from 39.1 in 2014 – representing a decline of 0.9 per cent.

The latest EICV also showed a marginal 0.3 per cent in extreme poverty levels, from 16.3 per cent down to 16 per cent over the last four years.

To fully appreciate the slow progress made in anti-poverty efforts over the last four years or so, one needs to look at the previous two household living conditions surveys.

The EICV4 showed that poverty levels

had reduced by 5.8 per cent from 44.9 per cent in 2011 to 39.1 per cent in 2014, which consequently saw some 660,000 people graduate from poverty. Extreme poverty also dropped from 24.1 per cent to 16.3 per cent in the same period.

Even greater progress was made between 2006 and 2011 during which the country registered a 12 per cent poverty drop from 56.7 per cent to 44.9 per cent, resulting in as many as a million Rwandans graduating from poverty.

Thanks mainly to the significant gains made between 2006 and 2014, poverty reduced by 18.5 per cent between 2006 and 2017, with extreme poverty dropping by 19.8 per cent

in the second period.

Like they say numbers don't like.

There is a reason why the country made significant gains as far as fighting poverty is concerned between 2006 and 2014 and why there has been negligible gains since.

It will be recalled that during last year's National Umushyikirano Council it emerged that the country's social safety net had been tampered with and that pro-poor services were no longer effective because funds had been diverted to Savings and Credit Cooperatives (Saccos) instead.

There is a correlation between the effectiveness of social safety net programs and EICV findings.

Ironically, there are more pro-people government schemes today than there were ten years ago.

It is imperative that officials in charge –from central to local government – urgently streamline the various pro-people initiatives, including VUP-Umurenge, Girinka, Ubudehe, among others, to reverse the recent trend and help accelerate national development.

It is good news that the economy remains strong (it is projected to grow by over 7 per cent in 2018) but this growth needs to be reflected across all sectors and segments of population to ensure that everyone benefits.

(Source: The New Times)

Sudan protests bear a scent of the Arab spring

Omar al-Bashir, Sudan's president, has an extraordinary capacity for survival. It has seen him endure years of international isolation and put down many uprisings since he seized power in 1989. So it would be unwise to predict his imminent demise. The past weeks of protests sweeping towns and cities across the country do, however, suggest that his day of reckoning is approaching.

Should it arrive, it would be a moment of great hope for the Horn of Africa but equally one of real danger. Freed of the stigma of having an indicted war criminal as head of state, and with a well-managed political transition, Sudan's economic potential would be great.

A chaotic end to the regime, on the other hand, could bring years more conflict and turmoil. What started in December as a provincial demonstration against rising food prices has morphed into a campaign by opposition activists for Bashir to go. Women, children and the elderly have risked tear gas and live bullets to join in scenes reminiscent of the Arab spring, when north African autocrats were toppled from the street in quick succession. Bashir comfortably weathered the 2011 stirrings in his own country.

The security services were fast to brutalize the student activists who hoped Sudan's president would be the next to exit. Besides, years of civil war and turmoil also meant that many Sudanese yearned as much for peace as they did for change. This time, however, the strength of opposition to the government feels more significant.

Wedding ceremonies, New Year celebrations and other events have all become impromptu demonstrations of grievance against the Khartoum regime and its chronic failure to manage the economy in the interests of the population. Ironically, were it not for the 2010 indictment for war crimes from the International Criminal Court, Bashir might have gone much sooner. Instead the ICC charges have reinforced his incentive to hold tight. He has his party's backing to contest elections again in 2020.

Sudan is stuck in political and economic limbo as a result. But Bashir's efforts at escaping his predicament are failing too. After losing billions in oil revenues to South Sudan when it seceded in 2011, the economy has been in a tailspin. Efforts to shake U.S.-imposed sanctions have delivered few dividends, although former U.S. President Barack Obama initiated moves

to lift some in recognition of the number of times Washington had shifted the goalposts. Sudan has co-operated on antiterrorism more than many Muslim countries.

But for political reasons it is still listed in the U.S. as a state sponsor of terrorism. Amnesty International reports that at least 37 protesters have been killed and many arrested during the protests, will make it harder still to persuade Congress to change the status quo.

Bashir has enjoyed some backing from the Persian Gulf since picking Saudi Arabia's side in Middle Eastern battles. But if the country is to break out of the impasse it needs much more than that. The roots of the economic crisis are at heart political. To escape it, draw investment and shed the burden of \$56bn in historic debt, a real political opening is necessary. With Bashir there, this seems unlikely. He is trapped in the paradox of many strongmen. To quell the anger of the crowds he needs to grant real concessions not just on wages and subsidies the state can ill-afford, but also on political freedom. Once the lid is off, however, he and his cohorts cannot be sure to survive.

(Source: FT)

Minister's death blow to Tel Aviv with trampling on the occupation symbol

➔ Jordanian MP Nabil Gishan called on the entire 130 Jordanian representatives to walk over Israeli flag at the entrance of the headquarters of Jordan's professional Unions complex. "As long as the Palestinian cities, including al-Quds, al-Khalil (Hebron) and Bethlehem, are occupied, we will trample on the flag of the Zionist regime" he said.

Gishan added the complaint coming from a regime that kills and displaces Palestinians is not very strange.

Ray al-Yaum newspaper writes: the Israeli occupation didn't step on our flags, but they trample on Arabs and Muslims' rights and dignity on a daily basis, through their criminal acts in Gaza and the West Bank. Israelis shot and kill innocent Palestinian civilians who demonstrate for peace or protest against Israeli settlements.

The Jordanian government should not pay heed to Israeli protests and show the occupiers that they have committed unpardonable insults. For instance, when one of the Israeli security guards at Israeli embassy in Amman cold heartedly opened fire on Jordanian citizens and killed them, Benjamin Netanyahu gave the cold shoulder to the Jordanian officials' formal demand to hold a murder trial for the offender and



returned to Tel Aviv a day after the incident.

The flag of Israel is a symbol of occupation, aggression and bloodshed, and stepping on it is a way of demonstrating resistance. If Israelis have forgotten or ignored this fact, one must remind them of it, and Jordanian Minister Ghunaimat did just that.

Jordan shouldn't turn into a plaything for the Zionist

regime and answer Israel's demands. The Jordanian government should strongly support Minister Ghunaimat's act and ignores Israel's huff and puff, because simply her steps on Israel's flag shows Jordanian anger towards the occupation regime and its crimes."

In any case, Arabs have proven to hate the invaders of the Muslims lands and have admiration for those rising against the Zionist regime.

Such measures are remarkable at a time when the Arab rulers are warming up to Tel Aviv. The agreement between Israel, Egypt and Jordan hasn't lessened the hatred for Tel Aviv, because the accord is just a piece of paper and has had no effect on the viewpoint of the Arab people of Israel.

Maier Uzul, a political analyst at Maariv, a national Hebrew-language daily newspaper in Israel, acknowledged, "Israel has a hateful and negative atmosphere against itself. All stratum of society in Egypt, from journalists, lawyers, teachers, engineers to workers, business owners and ordinary people hate Israel. They do not want to interact with us, and the word 'normalization of relations with Tel Aviv' is like a major and unforgivable crime."

Saudis, allies stealing food aid in Yemen: Int'l lawyer

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — A senior Canadian international attorney deplored "the largest man-made human rights crisis" caused by the Saudi-led war on Yemen and said there is evidence that the Riyadh regime and its allies have been stealing food aid that was destined for Yemeni civilians.

"There is evidence that the Saudis and their allies have been stealing food aid that was destined for the civilians in Yemen," Edward Corrigan from Ontario said in an interview with the Tasnim News Agency.

Edward C. Corrigan is certified as a specialist by the Law Society of Ontario, Canada in Citizenship, Immigration and Immigration and Refugee Law. He is also an analyst and commentator for a number of media outlets around the world.

The following is the full text of the interview:

■ Recently, the United Nations brokered a truce deal between the Yemeni warring sides as part of confidence-building measures at peace talks in Sweden to avert a full-scale assault on the port city of Hudeidah that is vital for urgent aid supplies for millions facing starvation.

However, the Saudi-led coalition and their mercenaries have violated the on-going ceasefire in Hudeidah many times, by attacking residential areas there. What

is your opinion about the truce violations and continued crimes committed by the Saudis and their allies?

A: It is clear that Saudis and their allies are not interested in peace talks in Yemen and are only using the talks as a diversion while they are continuing their attacks on Hudeidah and other cities in Yemen, including Sana'a. The Saudis and their allies have not proven capable of defeating the Houthis and their allies in the Yemen Army. However, the Houthis have not been able to defeat the Saudis and their allies in Yemen (either). Strategically, there is a stalemate. The Houthis appear to be serious about achieving a peace agreement. There is evidence that the Saudis and their allies have been stealing food aid that was destined for the civilians in Yemen. In the meantime, the suffering of the people of Yemen drags on with no end in sight.

■ The United Nations welcomed on Sunday any redeployment of Yemen's Houthi forces away from the port city of Hudeidah as part of the Stockholm cease-fire agreement. What is your assessment of the role of the UN and its forces in monitoring the ceasefire in Hudeidah?

A: The United Nations in my view is trying to be an honest broker. They have repeatedly called for a cease fire and for an

end of the largest man-made human rights crisis in the world. The problem is that while the Houthis have withdrawn some of their forces, the Saudis have taken advantage of the situation by advancing their forces in an attempt to seize the port which is a vital lifeline to the people of Yemen. Saudis back foreign forces and mercenaries do not seem to care about the mass starvation of civilians in Yemen.

■ What do you think about the international pressures on Saudi Arabia and their influence on the protracted war in Yemen and how do you predict the future of the conflict?

A: To date, international pressure on the Saudis has not reached the level that puts serious pressure to force the Saudis and their allies to seek a peace agreement or to end the conflict. Many European countries have stopped selling arms to the Saudis but the main arms suppliers; the United States, Great Britain, and France, have not halted their sale of arms to the Saudis and their allies.

Canada which has said it would halt the sale of arms to the Saudis has not yet taken concrete action to back up its position. Canada is being pressured by American arms manufactures not to take any action against the Saudis.



The brutal murder of Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul and the tremendous negative reaction from most of the world's countries and human rights organizations have increased the pressure but have to date brought little results. So long as US President Donald Trump and the British and French take no action and protect the Saudis, and especially the Crown Prince, little can be done. Even Russian President Putin has said he supports the Crown Prince. It is sad to see that human rights no longer seem to matter in world politics. Only money seems to matter but this is a great mistake.

Merkel and Macron's secret disputes

➔ Anyhow, we should say that they both agree that their adopted policies has terribly failed, and that they weren't successful in resolving the problems raising inside the EU borders, and in their own countries. Merkel's austerity policies hasn't worked, and Macron's economic reforms weren't accepted even by the French, let alone by other European citizens! The "yellow vests" protest well indicate this.

Merkel has announced that she will step down of her post in 2021. As for Macron, he isn't in a good position in the polls conducted, and the results show that his popularity has

fallen by about 22 percent. The same thing has led many to doubt Macron's reelection in France next general elections. Many political analysts in France believe that Macron's fate would be no better than Sarkozy or Hollande, and that he's going to leave the Elysee palace soon.

Undoubtedly, in the near future, we will see an intensification of the disagreements between Berlin and Paris over current issues and crises in the international system. Besides, the existing disagreements between Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron will remain strong

over the European financial crisis, although they prefer not to speak about it.

In the political and economic relations of Berlin and Paris, Merkel and Macron try, in every possible way, to challenge each other's economic and political decisions. The conflicts in the relations between Berlin and Paris is a clear example of the crisis that has spread all of Europe, and has affected the political and economic alliance of the EU member states. This process isn't going to stop, on the contrary, it's going to be intensified as the public discontents increase.

CPEC invites hybrid warfare against Pakistan

By Atta Rasool Malik

ISLAMABAD — All wars are costly in lives and treasure. Through the ages, this fundamental truth has driven military strategists to search for a quick and inexpensive victory in battle. The ultimate aim of any contesting nation is to force an unwilling enemy government to accept peace on their terms. In democratic countries, generally the actions of that hostile government are based upon the will of the people, therefore no victory can be complete until that 'will' is reshaped or molded.

Liddell Hart argued that a man killed is merely one man less, whereas a man unnerved is a highly infectious carrier of fear, capable of spreading an epidemic of panic. Liddell Hart argued that the resulting psychological pressure on the government of a country may suffice to cancel all the resources at its command—so that the sword drops from a paralyzed hand. Therefore, a strategist should think in terms of paralysis, not killing.

The mechanism for inducing or coercing quick change in the government's position can occur in at least three ways: First, key governmental leaders could be killed and replaced by a more sympathetic group; second, the government could be overthrown, either by popular revolt or from a faction within; or, third, the country's leaders could be influenced to change their minds.

Every country enjoys at least four instruments of national power or influence. They are: Political, Economic, Military, and Informational. In the modern age, the preferred method is to selectively attack or threaten those strategic or national level targets that most directly support the enemy's will to continue with her current behavior.

Hybrid Warfare, a relatively new term, is a multiple prong effort directed at the paralysis of enemy's leadership through military and non-military clandestine activities. Economic subversion or propaganda dissemination, all of these techniques have already been around

for ages, except incorporation of modern-day technologies and a perfect synergy of all efforts as mentioned earlier. Confusion and disorder follow when weaponised information aggravates the perception of insecurity in the populace as political, social, and cultural identities are pitted against one another.

A hybrid war takes place on three distinct battlefields: the conventional battlefield, the indigenous population of the conflict zone, and the international community. Sometimes, all that it takes is a small and dedicated group of provocateurs to spark clashes with the authorities, along with misleadingly reports that the security forces are attacking "hard-pressed peaceful protesters". The whole point to engineering a completely false narrative of "democratic freedom fighters" resisting a "tyrannical, incompetent and corrupt dictatorship".

It serves the dual purposes of encouraging more citizens to join in the growing riot and to generate support from abroad. Therefore, hybrid war could mean a synergised effort of disinformation, terrorism, cyber-attacks on digitally dependent vital communication networks, criminal activities, sponsoring proxies, rebellion, insurgency, or anything like that.

The U.S. has a grand interest in disrupting, controlling, or influencing the Silk Roads and CPEC. Pakistan through CPEC guarantees China's strategic freedom and flexibility in the face of the U.S.' naval threats and nullifies all the trouble that it is causing along its southern maritime borderlands. Though Pakistan needs fast development of communication network so essential for its cohesion and economic prosperity. However, the country is rife with historical, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, and geographic differences, which could be manipulated by U.S. and arch rival India to engineer violence and set a Hybrid War scenario in motion.



In today's world, apart from traditional media, popular social media platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube are the primary means of disinformation and propa-



ganda. On these media platforms, various activities related to hybrid warfare are challenging to detect and defeat. It is most likely that the authorities will always be one step behind the Hybrid War agents unless government out-rightly ban these services. Closure of such services on a permanent basis is not a wise option as it will shatter the credibility of the democratic government. However, imposing restrictions/banning is best employed for short periods during critical time that is few weeks before general elections and other similar situations.

It is also true that Information, fake or otherwise, home-grown or imported, will have no impact unless it is accepted as fact by the masses. Therefore, the timely provision of information and critical thinking is the antidote to 'fake news and hostile propaganda'. The government should work to enhance online digital platforms 'efficient and credible' for timely provision of information for consumption of the masses and interest groups.

All institutions of Pakistan must work together to ensure that the top leadership of Pakistan both civil and military remain most credible. It will help us beat back hybrid assaults against the state of Pakistan.

Second Announcement												
 N.I.O.C 1397.5245		 National Iranian Drilling Company										
Call for public tender (First/Second publish) One-Stage (semi-compressed) Retender Subject of Tender: : Hammer Plug Valve 1" & 2"												
* Tender descriptions:												
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>The Tender holder</th> <th>Registration No. through national electronic tendering system</th> <th>Tender No. /Tender No.</th> <th>Estimated value (Rial/Euro)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>National Iranian Drilling Company</td> <td>3,186,863</td> <td>Tender No. :FP/09-97/031 Tender No.:01-22-9646012</td> <td>69,683,215,000 (Rial)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Tender No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)	National Iranian Drilling Company	3,186,863	Tender No. :FP/09-97/031 Tender No.:01-22-9646012	69,683,215,000 (Rial)				
The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Tender No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)									
National Iranian Drilling Company	3,186,863	Tender No. :FP/09-97/031 Tender No.:01-22-9646012	69,683,215,000 (Rial)									
* Qualitative evaluation of tenders												
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Method</th> <th>R Based on minimum scoring (60) made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms.</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1-</td> <td>Applicants who have more than 4 in process contracts with NIDC are not allowed to participate in this tender.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2-</td> <td>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</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	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						
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												
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Tender Document Distribution by Company</th> <th>Distribution Place</th> <th>Submitting Method</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>Hall No.:113, 1stfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN Tel:061-34148601</td> <td>Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004029491 (Shaba No. IR.520100004001114004029491) in name of "NIDC Income Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Tender Document Distribution by Company	Distribution Place	Submitting Method		Hall No.:113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN Tel:061-34148601	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004029491 (Shaba No. IR.520100004001114004029491) in name of "NIDC Income Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank			Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof.		
Tender Document Distribution by Company	Distribution Place	Submitting Method										
	Hall No.:113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN Tel:061-34148601	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004029491 (Shaba No. IR.520100004001114004029491) in name of "NIDC Income Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank										
		Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents										
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Documents Receiving Method</th> <th>Closing date</th> <th>Address</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>Days after the last time of Purchasing 14</td> <td>Hall No. 107, 1stfloor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Documents Receiving Method	Closing date	Address		Days after the last time of Purchasing 14	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						
Documents Receiving Method	Closing date	Address										
	Days after the last time of Purchasing 14	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												
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Value of guarantee</th> <th>Type of guarantee</th> <th>Duration of credit & quotation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>59,917 Euro / 2,894,000,000 Rial</td> <td>✓--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.</td> <td>Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Value of guarantee	Type of guarantee	Duration of credit & quotation	59,917 Euro / 2,894,000,000 Rial	✓--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.	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.						
Value of guarantee	Type of guarantee	Duration of credit & quotation										
59,917 Euro / 2,894,000,000 Rial	✓--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.	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 نوبت اول ۱۷/۰۱/۹۷نوبت دوم ۱۸/۰۱/۹۷												

Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

Apartment

Apt in Qeytarieh
3rd floor, 230 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
fully furn, equipped kitchen fire
place, elevator, storage parking
spot
\$2200

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Zafaranih
2nd floor, 220 sq.m, 4 Bdrs.
furn, equipped kitchen elevator
spj, parking spot
\$1800

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Fereshteh
3rd floor, 220 sq.m, 3 Bdrs. unfurn
elevator, parking spot
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Elahieh
brand new, 4th floor, 300 sq.m
3 Bdrs., fully furn, spj
equipped kitchens
parking spot
\$3000

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Jordan
90 sq.m, 2 Bdrs., fully furn
equipped kitchen, housekeeper
storage, parking spot
\$1200

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in South Kamranieh
4th floor, 154 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
fully furn, spj, laundry
storage, parking spot
\$2500

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Villa

Triplex Villa
in Shahrak Qarb
1000 sq.m land, 750 sq.m built up
8 Bdrs., fully furn sauna Jacuzzi
storage

outdoor swimming pool
parking spot, **\$10000**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Duplex Villa in Zafaranih
650 sq.m land, 650 sq.m built up
7 Bdrs. unfurn, nice garden
completely renovated
parking spot
Price negotiable

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Duplex Villa in Jordan
1200 sq.m built up, 3700 sq.m
land, 6 Bdrs., servant quarter
2-side entrances
Suitable for Embassy

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Villa in Darous
3 floors, 640 sq.m, swimming pool,
6 parking spots, yard
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

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

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Villa in Ajudaniye
2 floors, 315 sq.m & 300 sq.m
furn, equipped kitchen swimming
pool, sauna
parking spot, gym, **\$4000**

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156



Holder of

ISO 9001:2008

ISO 10004:2012

ISO 10002:2014

From Oxford Cert Universal

**Best Consultation
Best Services, Best Result**

Intl. Department Manager "Tina 09128103205"

Tel: 22662452-8, Fax: 22667173

Hot Line: 28141

info@parsdiplomatic.com

www.parsdiplomatic.com

Building & Office

Whole Building in Zafaranih
4 floors, each floor one apt
each apt 350 sq.m with 4 Bdrs.
fully furn, equipped kitchen
elevator, spj, 2 parking spots
\$14000

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Whole building in
Shahrak Qarb
apts, 220 sq.m built up 4
from 75 sq.m to 150 sq.m
elevator, 6 parking spots
\$4000

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Whole Building
in Argentina Square
brand new, 6 floors, 6 apts
each floor 250 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.
elevator, parking spots
Price negotiable

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

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

Whole Building in Zafaranih
almost new, 5 apts, each apt
175 sq.m, 3 Bdrs., balcony
elevator, lobby, parking spot
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

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

Ideal Offers

Apt in Pasdaran
5th floor, 76 sq.m, 2 Bdrs
fully furn, elevator
parking spot
\$800

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Fereshteh
almost new, 89 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.
fully furn, parking spot
nice area
\$1400

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

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

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Niavaran
1st floor, 250 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
unfurn, sauna & swimming pool
parking spot
\$1800

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Fereshteh
185 sq.m, 2 master room with one
room, furn, spj
parking spot
\$1700

Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apartment in Dezashib
3rd floor, 100 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.
furn, balcony, storage, parking
spot, good access to subway
\$1300

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

مالکین محترم

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

بهترین مشاوره، برترین سرویس، بالاترین رضایت

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

مالکین محترم

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

SHANON
Shanon_tari@yahoo.com
+989121907875
Tel : 88745542

Darrous (\$2300) 280sq.m, 4bdrs S/p, S, J, & F.F	Elahieh (\$1500) 200sq.m, 3bdrs S/p, S, J, & F.F	Velenjak Villa 2storey, 10bdrs S/p, S, J (\$8000)
Gheitarieh (\$1900) 200sq.m, 3bdrs S/p, S, J, & F.F	Jordan (\$1100) 130sq.m, 2bdrs balcony, & F.F	Vali-e-Asr office 200sq.m, 3bdrs (\$25 per sq.m)

Don't Waste Your Time

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www.DeltaHOME.ir

The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

HOME
Real Estate

Member of DELTA Real Estate Group
(021) 88888865

Advertising Dept:

times1979@gmail.com

+9821 430 51 450

www.tehrantimes.com



FARDA
Legal Institute

Registration

- Brand
- Trademark
- Companies' Affairs
- Company Registration

**Local and
International Call**
+98 – 912 937 9869

**International
Call and WhatsApp**
+98 – 912 3756792

Number one Real Estate in Iran

www.DELTA HOME.ir

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

HOME
Real Estate

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The right way to google your symptoms

Is googling your symptoms a good idea or a bad idea? One way to find out is to google this question. Type "googling symptoms" into Google's search bar, and you'll be confronted by a slew of headlines like "Doctors really, really want you to stop googling your symptoms" and "Here's why googling your symptoms is a terrible idea" and even "Googling your symptoms is more dangerous than cancer itself." In seconds, you will understand that googling your symptoms is a terrible thing to do and that you should stop immediately. Still, about 1% of all Google searches, which corresponds to millions of searches, are related to medical symptoms.

But it isn't true that there's no upside to googling symptoms and health questions. Google is a powerful information tool, and we should make it work for us when it comes to our health.

The reality is that the harm of googling symptoms has been hyped up so much that we've lost sight of whether there are ways Google can help us. Our concept of how people use Google to answer their health questions might even be somewhat skewed. For example, we tend to think of it as something people do to understand their own symptoms, but research indicates that at least 50% of people who google symptoms and health questions are doing it on behalf of someone else.

Google might be a useful tool to help guide people in their interactions with providers, but if, and only if, we know how to evaluate the information we find and monitor our emotional responses to it.

What we know (and don't know) about googling symptoms

Most people have the experience of being curious or concerned about a symptom and googling it. But the results don't just depend on the symptom and the search terms. Whether we determine that our headache is a migraine or a brain tumor also depends on our level of anxiety going into the search, our prior experience with these symptoms, and the degree of our overall medical literacy.

There are often concerns that googling symptoms leads to "cyberchondria," which involves misinterpreting normal bodily phe-



nomena as serious illness as a response to information garnered online. The term also refers to the phenomenon of searching the web excessively for health-related information. Cyberchondria can also involve persistent worrying spurred on by reading unsettling information online, and some people become so concerned by things they read on the web that even subsequent reassurance from a doctor that nothing is wrong doesn't make them feel less anxious. In these cases, people sometimes go on to seek third and fourth opinions on what turn out to be relatively minor health concerns.

But how much do we really know about what motivates people to google their symptoms and what actions they take as a result? Less than you might think. A Pew survey from 2013 found that about 35% of people have at one point searched symptoms online with the purpose of making a diagnosis. Of these people, about 46% decided to visit a healthcare provider subsequent to searching and 38% decided they could take care of their health issue at home.

Looking at these numbers, it may at first seem that many of these people are deciding not to seek care when they should. But the

authors of the Pew survey itself point out that the data they collected don't necessarily support this conclusion. The study was not designed to determine whether using the Internet had a good or bad outcome on health but rather to get an estimate of the overall frequency with which Americans utilize the web to research health questions. As the survey authors note, people have always tried to make decisions about whether to seek health care on their own, and the internet may just be another tool they've added to their toolbox. We don't have enough information to understand whether googling symptoms is leading to an increasing trend of people not seeking care when they should.

More than half of people who said they used the internet to get more information about medical conditions were searching on behalf of someone else. This is important because it's a type of internet health research that many physicians encourage. Healthcare providers often note that engaged caregivers who independently seek out information ask better questions and do a better job of making sure that nothing important is neglected.

The Pew poll and other similar research efforts give us some good data on how people

use the internet for health research, and it does seem that the news is not all bad. Yet even with all this great information, there are still unanswered questions. For example, do we know anything about how often people who google symptoms end up not seeking care when they should compared to how often people make that decision without Google? We also don't have a consistently reliable estimate of how often googling symptoms results in unnecessary visits to the doctor, diagnostic tests, or procedures. These questions are mostly unanswered, and without better information, it's hard to say for certain just how much harm googling symptoms actually does.

Combating cyberchondria

Despite some of this missing information, it does seem that googling symptoms can lead to heightened anxiety. This may in turn lead to unnecessary medical care, with patients pressuring their doctors for specific treatments they read about, or unknowingly skewing the way they present symptoms to be more in line with the conditions they read about online. But instead of disposing of the whole concept of googling health issues because of this, perhaps we can look at ways the search tool can be a useful part of our overall approach to our health, instead of a panic-inducing one.

For this, we turn to the world of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT is a standard treatment for anxiety and has been shown to be effective for cyberchondria and hypochondria more generally. For severe cases of diagnosed anxiety disorders, it's always best to see a therapist. But since googling symptoms may lead to heightened worry even in the absence of a diagnosable anxiety disorder, here are a few tips we can borrow from CBT to help prevent unpleasant worries:

Before you google anything health-related, evaluate your state of mind. Write down the thoughts that are going through your head. If your thoughts are panicked and catastrophic, walk away from the computer for a few minutes and re-evaluate.

(Source: The Quartz)

A new hope in treating neurodegenerative disease

A research team led by Professor Sung Bae Lee of Brain and Cognitive Sciences and Professor Daehee Hwang of New Biology (Vice-head of the Plant Age and Life Research Group, IBS) has identified the early neuropathology mechanism of structural characteristics of polyglutamine toxic protein on neurodegenerative brain disorders. It was through a joint research with Professor Yuh Nung Jan at the Howards Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) in the U.S.

The number of patients with neurodegenerative disorders is growing rapidly as humans' life expectancy is increasing. Although many scholars are devoted into researching the pathogenesis and the advancement of neurodegenerative brain disorders, not much has been identified yet. There is still too much work left to develop an actual treatment since it is difficult to diagnose the disease early.

In this study, the researchers identified that coiled-coil structure of polyglutamine toxic protein, which is like an entangled telephone wire, causes the rapid deformation of neuron and early neurodegenerative diseases, such as Huntington's chorea and spino-cerebellar ataxias.

Proteins have abnormal combinations with each other to form the coiled-coil structure of polyglutamine toxic protein. The research team discovered that the coiled-coil structure of polyglutamine toxic protein inside neurons cause early neuropathy by combining with 'Foxo protein', which is adjusts the formation of dendrite, as a transcription factor.

While the research focused on Foxo protein as the first factor of the early symptom of neurodegenerative brain disorders, it also predicted that other factors would exist. The research team thus expected to be able to speed the related studies in the future by focusing on clarifying additional factors based on this research.

Professor Lee said "The core of this research is that the coiled-coil structure of toxin protein that causes degenerative brain disorders entangle with the coiled-coil structure of other protein, which is an important cause of early neurodegenerative diseases. By developing a treatment targeting the entanglement based on coiled-coil structure through this research, we expect to be able to have effective treatments to alleviate the early symptoms of neurodegenerative brain disorders"

This study has been published on November 6th issue of international journal called Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences with another commentary on 'In This Issue' section of the journal, as it was even selected by editors as a paper of highlight. The research was also recommended as an excellent paper on F 1,000 Prime (Faculty of 1,000 Prime), an excellent paper search system of the U.K. This research was also participated by Minjee Kwon and Myeonghoon Han of the Brain and Cognitive Sciences at DGIST as the first authors, who are both in the integrated master's and doctoral program.

(Source: Science Daily)

TASHRIFAT INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE AGENCY

**SATISFACTION
GUARANTEED**

APARTMENT

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

VILLA

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



Mr. Shahin

Nobody does it better

09121081212

Since: 1987

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

Tel: 22723121

tehranfirstchoice@gmail.com

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

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

OFFICE

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

FOR: EMBASSY/COMPANY

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

Untouched ‘one-of-a-kind’ ancient tomb belonging to ‘divine inspector’ uncovered in Egypt



He was known as Wahtye, and served as royal priest or high-ranking religious figure carrying the title “divine inspector.”

And he must have been someone of great importance, for when he was buried in the southwest outskirts of what is now Cairo, his tomb was filled with colourful and elaborate stone carvings that give some sense of the rituals of life and death in ancient Egypt more than 4,400 years ago.

Egyptian antiquities authorities unveiled Wahtye’s tomb at a press conference in Saqqara southwest of Cairo at the weekend, and announced to plans to dig deeper into the well-preserved complex, which was discovered during excavation work that began in April.

The astonishingly well-preserved tomb provides insights into life in the 24th Century BC during the reign of Fifth Dynasty Egyptian King Neferirkare Kakair, a time of relative prosperity and order. Archaeologists are to begin inspecting five shafts that led out from the tomb, believing one will lead to Wahtye’s sarcophagus, which has yet to be discovered.

The chamber’s walls include scenes showing Wahtye with his wife, named Weret Ptah, his mother, and other relatives, as well as depictions of pottery, furniture, and wine production, religious rituals, musical performances, naval vessels, and men hunting animals, according to Egypt’s Ministry of Antiquities.

Mostafa Waziri, secretary-general of Egypt’s Supreme Council of Antiquities, described the discovery as “one of a kind” in recent decades. “The colour is almost intact even though the tomb is almost 4,400 years old,” he reportedly said, according to Reuters.

Nearly two dozen foreign diplomats, members of Egypt’s parliament, and heads of international archaeological missions and institutes attended the unveiling of the tomb on Saturday.

Egyptian authorities have been touting archaeological discoveries in an effort to entice tourists back to the country following years of turmoil ignite by the Arab Spring uprisings.

The tombs at Saqqara, located around 20 kilometers southeast of the Great Pyramid and Sphinx at Giza, though less famous than other Egyptian sites, boast some of the most well-preserved tombs in the nation, with elaborate hieroglyphs and vibrantly colored stone figurines.

Among the recent discoveries announced at Saqqara were the tomb of a high-ranking military official dating back 3,300 years, a 2,500-year-old mummy wearing a gold and silver mask, and a tomb complex filled with scores of statues depicting cats.

(Source: The Independent)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Gelati Monastery in Georgia

Founded in 1106 in the west of Georgia, the Monastery of Gelati is a masterpiece of the Golden Age of medieval Georgia, a period of political strength and economic growth between the 11th and 13th centuries.

It is characterized by the facades of smoothly hewn large blocks, balanced proportions and blind arches for exterior decoration. The Gelati monastery, one of the largest medieval Orthodox monasteries, was also a center of science and education and the Academy it housed was one of the most important centers of culture in ancient Georgia.



A view of the UNESCO-listed Gelati Monastery in Georgia

It was David who, in 1106 began building the monastery near his capital Kutaisi on a wooded hill above the river Tskaltsetla. The main church was completed in 1130 in the reign of his son and successor Demetre.

Further churches were added to the monastery throughout the 13th and early 14th centuries. The monastery is richly decorated with mural paintings from the 12th to 17th centuries, as well as a 12th century mosaic in the apse of the main church, depicting the Virgin with Child flanked by archangels.

Its high architectural quality, outstanding decoration, size, and clear spatial quality combine to offer a vivid expression of the artistic idiom of the architecture of the Georgian “Golden Age” and it’s almost completely intact surroundings allow an understanding of the intended fusion between architecture and landscape.

Gelati was not simply a monastery: it was also a center of science and education, and the Academy established there was one of the most important centers of culture in ancient Georgia.

(Source: UNESCO)

A small cottage in South Africa lets you sleep near 77 lions for \$100 a night

For some, vacations are meant to be calming and relaxing, and for others, trips are all about adventure. For the latter half of people, there are places like Lion House in South Africa.

Lion House is an Airbnb on a lion conservation where you can experience the natural predator up close, as they roam just a few feet from the front door. INSIDER spoke to host and director Suzanne Scott to learn more about what it’s like to stay amongst the lions.

Keep reading to learn about everything Lion House has to offer its adventurous guests.

Tourists from all over the world come to South Africa to stay in this quaint cottage — but it’s what’s outside that is really attracting travelers.

The small cottage is called Lion House because it sits on the GG Conservation, which is home to over 70 lions, including three lion kings.

Upon arrival, you are immediately greeted by lions at the gate.

Scott explains that guests have to be escorted onto the conservation by car.

“The reason guests have to be escorted in and out of the property is because we have to drive through a lion camp,” Scott told INSIDER, “with double security gates to get in and out.”

The cottage itself is surrounded 360 degrees by lions who can get quite close to the home.

Scott said there’s always a lion at least 10 feet away.

It’s common for the lions to come up right to the fence that’s between the sanctuary and the cottage.

“Lion House stands out from the rest as we are unique,” Scott told INSIDER. “Seventy-seven surround sound roaring lions is not the norm.”

“The best part of Lion House is the outside patio area,” Scott told INSIDER, “where guests can sit and relax, watch the sunset/sunrise and observe the lion prides getting up to their daily lion business in their organic, natural habitat camps.”

From the patio, you can also watch the lions as they play and roam the premises.



Scott says the lions love to swim and play in the water, despite the fact that” lion experts claim that lions hate water!”

Other times, you can catch them having a little snack.

As natural predators, lions love to eat raw meats. But that shouldn’t scare you because Scott says these creatures are more interesting than frightening.

“Watching lions is food for the soul. There are many life lessons to be learned from them,” she told INSIDER. “They are highly intelligent animals, full of unique idiosyncrasies and personalities.”

When you’re not outside enjoying the natural scenery, you can enjoy the cozy cottage inside.

Each room is equipped with a double size bed that is decorated with pictures of the view outside.

For \$104 per night, you can stay in the cozy cottage with lions roaming out the windows.

With three bedrooms, a full kitchen, a fireplace, and even WiFi, this cottage has something for every type of traveler.

But people don’t travel to the Lion House to stay inside. It’s the nature and scenery that captivates guests, including the Drakensberg mountains.

While the lion sanctuary surrounds the cottage, the GG Conservation actually goes on for thousands of acres.

While lions are the main attraction, you can also see zebras on the conservatory.

While staying at the cottage, you can book tours of the conservation where you can witness zebras, rare black wildebeests, bonteboks, waterbucks, elands, impalas, red hartebeest, oryxes, and wildcats.

The ostriches are also a common sight at the conservation.

All of the scenery surrounding Lion House will take your breath away.

But the conservation’s main purpose is to protect the main attraction: the lions.

“Our lions live in prides,” Scott said, “and we leave them to live as natural a life as possible within the confines of captivity. We fundraise to help cover our astronomical monthly costs and all the booking fees for

Lion House and Lion Lodge help to support the lions.”

Scott explains that the lions are kept on the sanctuary because they are in danger elsewhere.

On the conservation, the organization is protecting the lions from habitat loss, human conflict, poaching, hunting, and disease.

Scott says most people don’t know that lions are actually considered endangered, despite being at the top of the food chain.

“It’s critical we conserve and protect the lions in our care,” she said. “The wild lion species has declined from 500,000 to now approximately 20,000 in the space of 50 years.”

The money for each booking of the cottage goes right back to helping the conservation, Scott says.

“Lion House is a once in a lifetime experience — we’re still pinching ourselves,” one review from Cherie on Airbnb reads. “The lions are the most magnificent and captivating creatures imaginable. And most importantly they are completely happy and content! All of the lions are spoiled with huge camps to frolic in, plenty of food and endless love and attention.”

There are plenty of positive reviews for the cottage, highlighting the organization’s work to help the lions.

“GG Conservation is a fantastic place to go and experience lions up close,” a reviewer named Craig wrote. “They are doing a wonderful job of keeping their lions fit, healthy, and enriched. To see what a lion (or any animal) conservation project should be like, go and see GG Conservation.”

The Lion House is meant for any traveler who wants to reconnect with nature and help a good cause.

“At Lion House, one can hear nothing but the natural sounds of Africa,” Scott told INSIDER. “Lions communicating, birds singing, cicada beetles chirping, antelope alarm calling. It really grounds you and presses the human reset button.”

(Source: The Insider)

Rare desert snowfall creates a surreal winter wonderland in Arizona

You don’t normally think of the desert as having a proper “winter,” but parts of Arizona and New Mexico got more than a light dusting of snow to start the year. The result is sprawling desert vistas glazed in white, and it’s downright lovely.

Snow isn’t entirely out of the ordinary for states like Arizona and New Mexico at this time of year, but it’s certainly not something that happens regularly, and locals wasted no time capturing the surreal sights to share on Twitter and elsewhere.

Despite the chilly temperatures, the cacti seem to be handling things

just fine. In areas of the desert where vegetation is sparse, temperatures at night can creep incredibly low, so they’re used to it.

Along with plenty of shots of snow-covered cacti and flat land, visitors of the Grand Canyon captured views of snow-capped peaks and valleys. Tourists who planned a visit shortly after the New Year were greeted by some serious eye candy.

Folks in the now-snowy parts of Arizona and elsewhere can look forward to slightly warmer weather in the days ahead. Grand Canyon Village in Arizona is expected to hit the low 40s Fahrenheit

over the weekend, but that’ll remain the upper end of their daily temps for the next two weeks or so.

Nighttime temperatures will push down to the low teens, but the warmer daytime temperatures should be enough to melt a bit of the snow. There’s still plenty of winter left so this may not be the last time we see snow in the desert this season, but this round of snowfall isn’t going to last long. Unfortunately, that means the lovely views we’re seeing have a rapidly-approaching expiration date, so snap them while you can!

(Source: BGR)



Social media continues to influence the way we travel: Cox & Kings

One of the oldest travel companies in the world and also one of the leading leisure travel groups with operations across continents, Cox & Kings has been in operation since 1758.

Headquartered in India, C&K has over the last three decades transformed itself into a diversified, multinational travel conglomerate with a focus on the new-age global consumer. Peter Kerkar, Group CEO, Cox & Kings shares his views on trends that are set to define travel in 2019.

■ Travel to influence

For millennial, travelling to new places, exploring new experiences, trying out new cuisines and interacting with people from diverse cultural backgrounds have become an intrinsic part of their lifestyle. This passionate generation of travelers is more likely to make their travel decisions based on the travel posts of their peers on social media because social media is a more authentic source of information. At the same time, it is important for them to capture their best travel stories through photos and videos and inspire their circle of friends and colleagues to take up travel. Wi-Fi enabled places and hotels are bliss for such travelers as it enables them to post live travel updates.

■ Far and beyond

Curiosity drives travelers to pursue their travel dream. A rising number of them are keen on exploring what’s beyond at some of the most remote locations in the world. Based on the travel-searches made by holidaymakers in 2018, there is an evident trend of rising interest in places beyond city-centers and conventional tourist spots. Following the footsteps of Charles Darwin, a new tribe of travelers are making their way to Galapagos archipelago to experience the endemic species and inhabited islands. Similarly, cruising through Norwegian Fjords to reach the remote shores of Svalbard watching the passing shining glaciers and stunning landscapes are all experiences catching the eyes of avid travelers who wish to reach earth’s edges in 2019.

■ Walking tours

Each place, if observed carefully, tells you multiple stories about its history, culture, biodiversity, geography, food, architecture and people. Many travelers consider exploring destinations on foot as the best way to delve into several intricate aspects of the place, which one might miss otherwise. This is why many passionate travelers are relying more on guided walking tours to enjoy the experience. Though city walks are the most common form of walking tours, they are gradually moving to food walks, cultural trails and photography stroll among others according to the specific interest of the travelers.



While heritage walk in South Mumbai is common, one can get introduced to unusual sea creatures in Mumbai during a guided Marine walk near Haji Ali. Similarly, gourmet walking tours in France offer an amazing experience to the foodies with food, cooking classes, gourmet restaurants and even a bit of local culture like cheese and truffles.

Travelling on foot also offers the opportunity to spend sufficient time at any given place, explore the local culture and reach inaccessible spots. Walking tours at Machu Picchu is a great window into the colossal mountains, lush vegetation and ecological wonders while the forest trails of Japan are equally resplendent.

■ Multigenerational travel

The joy of travelling with the family is unmatched, and it seems to also take center-stage in 2019. Nuclear families with hectic lives find it difficult to meet their family members on a regular basis, for them, travelling with their grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, cousins have become a great time to spend some quality time. In addition, instead of closed-door celebrations, family members of different generations are travelling together to celebrate several occasions like birthdays, anniversary and other family events. Cruising is also one of the top five leisure options for multigenerational family groups as it is more relaxed and lesser activity based, especially when there are older family members travelling along.

■ Luxury travel

Over the next decade, the growth rate for luxury travel is projected to be at 6.2%. While the developing nations are at the forefront of the growth acceleration, an increase

in the disposable incomes in these countries is favorable to luxury travel. Although currency fluctuations in different nations slightly affected the segment, it has made the developed nations seek luxury travel at further discounted prices, fuelling the growth.

■ Dark tourism

Curious travelers always want to explore every nook and cranny filled with unforeseen surprises and great adventures. Some people find it thrilling and entertaining to visit mysterious places like Kuldhara village in Rajasthan that are believed to be haunted. While others may visit tragic sites such as Cambodian Killing Fields memorial or Berlin wall in Germany, some also visit the 9/11 Memorial at Ground Zero when in New York. Though for most of the travelers visiting the sites of death and disaster is only a part of a wider range of thing to do, a large number of travelers in some way are getting attracted to such sites because they wish to review these chapters in history and remind them of these incidents.

■ Bid adieu to over tourism

Although there is a trend of travelers being more sensitive towards geopolitical and other related issues, off late these factors have started influencing the travelers’ decision and over tourism is a great put-off.

It is non-desirable to get stuck in long queues or crowded streets on a leisure trip. While Italy is using phone apps to deal with overcrowding by giving real-time updates, Dubrovnik is experimenting with dispersing cruise timings through the week. 2019 will see more travelers taking trips in the off-season and new destinations near the saturated ones stand benefitted.

■ Responsible travel

There is no running away from the much devastation that has rocked our oceans, beaches, forests and Islands. Most being tourist places, the onus of the situation must be borne by the travelers as well as operators. However, there are organizations and operators that have highest regards for sustainability.

Travelers including majorly the millennial consider themselves equally responsible for the disaster and duty-bound to reverse it. 2019 will see a spurt in the number of responsible travelers demanding for sensitive travel packages as well as sustainable operators to ensure a guilt-free tour. Plastic-free travel, voluntourism, sustainable and green tours are predicted to be extensively used terms in the travel space.

(Source: traveldailymedia.com)

What a tiny electron reveals about the structure of the universe

What is the shape of an electron? If you recall pictures from your high school science books, the answer seems quite clear: an electron is a small ball of negative charge that is smaller than an atom. This, however, is quite far from the truth.

The electron is commonly known as one of the main components of atoms making up the world around us. It is the electrons surrounding the nucleus of every atom that determine how chemical reactions proceed. Their uses in industry are abundant: from electronics and welding to imaging and advanced particle accelerators.

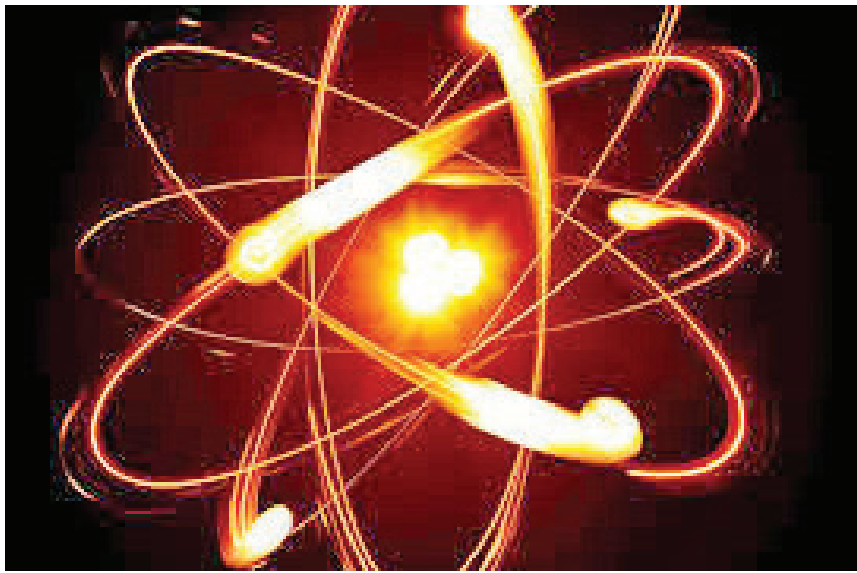
Recently, however, a physics experiment called Advanced Cold Molecule Electron EDM (ACME) put an electron on the center stage of scientific inquiry. The question that the ACME collaboration tried to address was deceptively simple: What is the shape of an electron?

As far as physicists currently know, electrons have no internal structure — and thus no shape in the classical meaning of this word.

Particle physics

In the modern language of particle physics, which tackles the behavior of objects smaller than an atomic nucleus, the fundamental blocks of matter are continuous fluid-like substances known as “quantum fields” that permeate the whole space around us. In this language, an electron is perceived as a quantum, or a particle, of the “electron field.” Knowing this, does it even make sense to talk about an electron’s shape if we cannot see it directly in a microscope — or any other optical device for that matter?

To answer this question we must adapt



our definition of shape so it can be used at incredibly small distances, or in other words, in the realm of quantum physics. Seeing different shapes in our macroscopic world really means detecting, with our eyes, the rays of light bouncing off different objects around us.

Simply put, we define shapes by seeing

how objects react when we shine light onto them. While this might be a weird way to think about the shapes, it becomes very useful in the subatomic world of quantum particles. It gives us a way to define an electron’s properties such that they mimic how we describe shapes in the classical world.

Seeing different shapes in our macroscopic world really means detecting, with our eyes, the rays of light bouncing off different objects around us.

What replaces the concept of shape in the micro world? Since light is nothing but a combination of oscillating electric and magnetic fields, it would be useful to define quantum properties of an electron that carry information about how it responds to applied electric and magnetic fields. Let’s do that.

As an example, consider the simplest property of an electron: its electric charge. It describes the force — and ultimately, the acceleration the electron would experience — if placed in some external electric field. A similar reaction would be expected from a negatively charged marble — hence the “charged ball” analogy of an electron that is in elementary physics books. This property of an electron — its charge — survives in the quantum world.

Likewise, another “surviving” property of an electron is called the magnetic dipole moment. It tells us how an electron would react to a magnetic field. In this respect, an electron behaves just like a tiny bar magnet, trying to orient itself along the direction of the magnetic field. While it is important to remember not to take those analogies too far, they do help us see why physicists are interested in measuring those quantum properties as accurately as possible.

In classical physics, EDM arises when there is a spatial separation of charges. An electrically charged sphere, which has no separation of charges, has an EDM of zero. But imagine a dumbbell whose weights are oppositely charged, with one side positive and the other negative.

(Source: space.com)

Climate warming experiment finds unexpected results, scientists suggest



Tropical forests store about a third of Earth’s carbon and about two-thirds of its above-ground biomass. Most climate change models predict that as the world warms, all of that biomass will decompose more quickly, which would send a lot more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. But new research presented at the American Geophysical Union’s 2018 Fall Meeting contradicts that theory.

Stephanie Roe, an ecology Ph.D. student at the University of Virginia, measured the rate of decomposition in artificially warmed plots of forest in Puerto Rico. She found biomass in the warmed plots broke down more slowly than samples from a control site that wasn’t warmed.

Her results indicate that as the climate warms, forest litter could pile up on the ground, instead of breaking down into the soil. Less decomposition means less carbon dioxide released back into the atmosphere. But it also means less carbon taken up by the soil, where it’s needed to fuel microbial processes that help plants grow.

Empirical studies

Roe said there are few empirical studies of how tropical forests will respond to climate change. She set out to address this gap in June of 2017, when she and her research team travelled to El Yunque National Forest in Puerto Rico. They landed at a site called TRACE — the Tropical Responses to Altered Climate Experiment.

TRACE is the first-ever long-term warming experiment conducted in a tropical forest. It was established by the US Forest Service in 2016 for research like Roe’s. The site consists of three hexagonal plots of land enclosed by a ring of infrared heaters raised four meters above the ground, and three more plots enclosed by fake heaters that are used as the “control” forest.

Roe collected leaves from the plots, dried

them out in the lab, and then returned them to the plots randomly. In addition to the native plants, she also included black and green tea, and popsicle sticks to represent woody biomass, to see how different materials would respond to the warming.

The heaters were programmed to continuously heat the plots to four degrees higher than the ambient temperature of the forest. The experiment was supposed to run for a full year, but at the beginning of October, Hurricane Maria swept across the island, destroying the TRACE sites.

Roe was back in Virginia when the storm struck. She had collected samples from the first few months of the experiment, and they were already showing signs of significant decomposition, so she decided to go ahead with the analysis based on what she had. And the results were not what she thought they would be.

Decomposing the litter

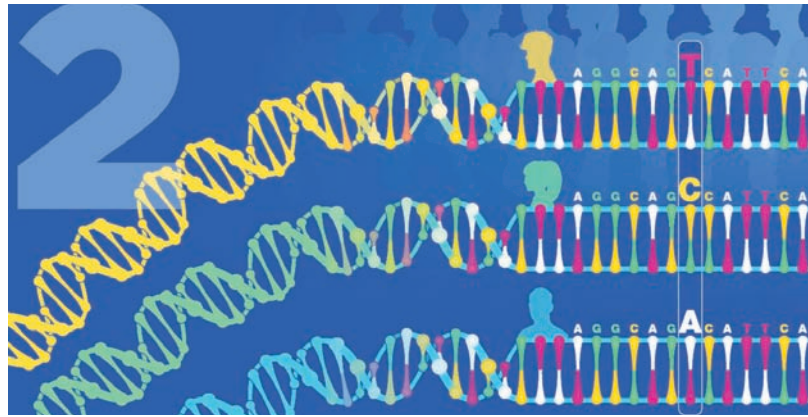
“We would expect that microbes tend to work faster, like their metabolisms increase, with warmer temperatures,” Roe said. “So we would expect to see an increase of activity of microbes and other decomposers to decompose the litter.”

But instead of seeing faster rates of decomposition, Roe observed the warming produced a drying effect in the plots, which slowed decomposition. “What we found is actually it went the other way because moisture was impacted so much,” Roe said. Moisture in the litter from the treatment sites was reduced by an average of 38 percent.

Roe pointed out that the increase in frequency and severity of storms in the region could amplify this effect. Hurricane Maria reduced significant portions of the tree canopy in El Yunque, allowing a lot more sunlight to reach the forest floor that can dry up the litter.

(Source: phys.org)

Scientists call for more diversity in genomic research



A growing number of genomic studies have generated important discoveries regarding human health and behavior, but new research from the University of Oxford suggests that scientific advancement is limited by a lack of diversity. They show that the people studied in genetic discovery research continue to be overwhelmingly of European descent, but also for the first time reveal that subjects are concentrated in a handful of countries - the UK, U.S. and Iceland, and have specific demographic characteristics. The authors caution that this lack of diversity has potentially huge implications for the understanding and applications of genetic discoveries.

The study published in Communications Biology contributes to a richer understanding of a multitude of facets which shape genomic bias over time. The work reviewed nearly 4,000 scientific studies between 2005 and 2018, curated by the NHGRI-EBI GWAS Catalogue, which contains all Genetic-Wide Association Studies (GWAS) to date.

These studies have identified multiple genetic groups related to diseases such as type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer’s, to psychiatric disorders, physical, behavioral and psychological traits. The study examined the explosion in the number of people studied, number and strength of genetic association discoveries, and growth and variation in the number of outcomes (or ‘phenotypes’) studied. It also looked at who was being studied in terms of ancestral background, geographical location and demographics, but also who was conducting the research, including the networks and characteristics of the researchers themselves.

Genetic discoveries

Despite a staggering growth in sample sizes, the number of traits and diseases studied and genetic discoveries, findings

from the study reveal that ancestral diversity has stalled and that non-white groups are still massively under-represented.

By extending research in this area they show that this has varied considerably over time and that when non-European ancestry groups are included, it is often only to ‘replicate’ results, as opposed to fundamental new genetic discoveries. Moving beyond ancestral diversity, the authors estimate for the first time that 72% of the (often repeatedly) utilized data came from individuals recruited from just three countries; the UK (40%), U.S. (19%) and Iceland (12%). Data was subject not only to geographical concentration, but also featured a higher than anticipated proportion of older people, women and in some of the most prominently used data, also subjects with higher socioeconomic status and better health.

Ancestral diversity

Professor Melinda Mills (MBE FBA), lead author and Nuffield Professor of Sociology, said: ‘The lack of ancestral diversity in genomic research has been an on-going concern, but little attention has been placed on the geographical and demographic characteristics of the people who are studied, who studies them, and exactly what they study.’

Genetic discoveries offer exciting medical possibilities, but without increasing the diversity of people studied and environments they live in, the usage and returns of this research are limited. There is increasing recognition that our health outcomes are a complex interplay between genes and the environment - or in other words nature and nurture - yet most discoveries have been taken from populations that are very similar, with limited environmental variation.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

DNA design that anyone can do

Researchers at MIT and Arizona State University have designed a computer program that allows users to translate any free-form drawing into a two-dimensional, nanoscale structure made of DNA.

Until now, designing such structures has required technical expertise that puts the process out of reach of most people. Using the new program, anyone can create a DNA nanostructure of any shape, for applications in cell biology, photonics, and quantum sensing and computing, among many others.

“What this work does is allow anyone to draw literally any 2-D shape and convert it into DNA origami automatically,” says Mark Bathe, an associate professor of biological engineering at MIT and the senior author of the study.

The researchers published their findings in the Jan. 4 issue of Science Advances, and the program, called PERDIX, is available online. The lead authors of the paper are Hyungmin Jun, an MIT postdoc, and Fei Zhang, an assistant research professor at Arizona State University. Other authors are MIT research associate Tyson Shepherd, recent MIT PhD recipient Sakul Ratanalert, ASU assistant research scientist Xiaodong Qi, and ASU professor Hao Yan.

DNA origami, the science of folding DNA into tiny structures, originated in the early 1980s, when Ned Seeman of New York University proposed taking advantage of DNA’s base-pairing abilities to create arbitrary molecular arrangements. In 2006, Paul Rothmund of Caltech created the first scaffolded, two-dimensional DNA structures, by weaving a long single strand of DNA (the scaffold) through the shape such that DNA strands known as “staples” would hybridize to it to help the overall structure maintain its shape.

Others later used a similar approach to create complex three-dimensional DNA structures. However, all of these efforts required complicated manual design to route the scaffold through the entire structure and to generate the sequences of the staple strands.

(Source: Science Daily)

An infrared hairdryer could make hair drying less hot

This might shock many of you, but it takes me about thirty minutes to dry my hair every night. I have long, coarse hair, a lot of it, and spending that much time shooting hot air at my head gets real heated after awhile.

Volo’s promise of a hairdryer that could cut that time down and keep me cool at the same time is real intriguing, but it comes with some caveats.

Unlike traditional hairdryers, Volo uses infrared bulbs and radiant heat to dry your hair “from the inside out”.

This way, it can supposedly cut down the time you need to completely dry your tresses, and it’s also meant to cut down frizz. But from my experience, the Volo Go didn’t get as hot as my regular hairdryer (the first-gen Dyson Supersonic) at max power. It was still plenty warm, though that leaves me dubious as to whether it can truly cut down my drying time.

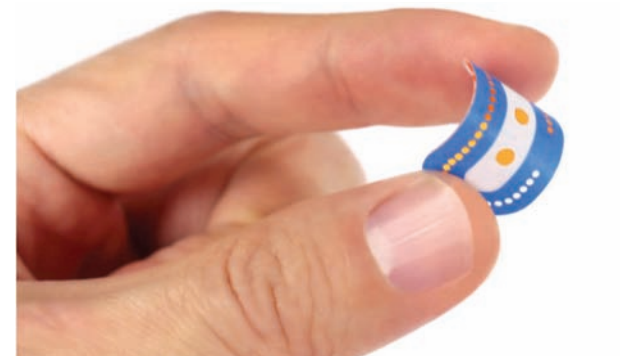
According to the company’s CEO and founder Ryan Goldman, the Volo System should be able to finish drying my thick long hair in about 11 minutes, based on testing they’d done on others with similar tresses. But I’d have to first make sure to dab my hair with the Volo Hero — a microfiber towel, which costs \$40 retail but will be bundled with Kick-starter purchases.

Another reason the Go better not take too long to dry my hair is its weight. It’s quite a heavy device thanks to its battery, which Goldman said is similar to those in electric cars and offers safety benefits. But it also makes the hairdryer quite unwieldy and significantly heavier than my Dyson. I could see myself getting tired pretty quickly if I had to use the Go. To make the device a little easier to hold, Volo designed a more ergonomically friendly grip and weighted the top and bottom for better balance. That helps, but frankly I still found it too heavy for prolonged use.

(Source: engadget.com)

A prototype sensor that can measure your skin’s pH levels

Last year, L’Oreal brought a nifty little UV sensor to CES. The idea was it was supposed to help you monitor your UV exposure and tailor a skin care regimen based on environmental factors. And while it worked as advertised, we found it a little lacking in practice. But this year L’Oreal is one-upping itself with a prototype sensor that can measure your skin’s pH levels.



The pH sensor is no bigger than your thumb and quite flexible, sort of like a tiny band-aid with a chic design. In person, I was impressed by how compact yet sturdy the prototype felt in my hand. It’s the type of device you see in the movies when the protagonist of a sci-fi flick visits the doctor.

The sensor works by capturing trace amounts of sweat from your pores using “microfluidic technology.” You stick the sensor on your inner arm and leave it for 5-15 minutes — just long enough for the two center dots to change colors. After, you’re meant to open the accompanying My Skin Track pH app and take a photo of the sensor. The app then reads your skin’s pH levels and analyzes the rate your skin sweats to figure out your skin’s health.

If you need a brush-up on high school biology, pH measures how acidic or basic a substance is on a numeric scale from 0 to 14. Zero is extremely acidic, while 14 is very alkaline — pure water would be smack dab in the middle at about 7. According to L’Oreal, healthy skin is slightly acidic, somewhere between 4.5 and 5.5. An abnormal pH balance could indicate skin conditions like dryness, eczema, and atopic dermatitis.

Like last year’s sensor, the My Skin Track pH is developed with L’Oreal’s La Roche-Posay brand and researchers from Northwestern University. It means any recommended skin regimens will likely be limited to La Roche-Posay products — one of our gripes with the UV sensor.

(Source: gizmodo.com)


Embassy of India School Tehran

On 2nd January 2019 a Farewell Function was organised in the Embassy of India School Tehran in honour of His Excellency Shri Saurabh Kumar, Ambassador of India to Iran and the Chairman, Vidyalaya Management Committee. Smt. Smriti Srivastava, the First Lady at the Station, dignitaries from the Embassy of India, Members of the VMC, Gurudwara, parents, teachers and students attended the function. After the floral welcome of the Ambassador, Master Sauqib a student of Class-X, Mr. K. Bhaskar, PGT (Physics) and Mr. Ripdaman Singh, Member of the Vidyalaya Management Committee expressed their views about the tall their

beloved Chairman.

Dr. S. S. Dakua, Principal of the School while highlighting the contribution of the ambassador of India the Principal offered a memento as a token of respect, love, and affection to His Excellency on behalf the Vidyalaya and appreciated the rich contribution of the Hon’ble Chairman towards smooth functioning of the Vidyalaya. His Excellency Shri. Saurabh Kumar in his last address congratulated the Principal, Teachers and Staff for running the Vidyalaya so well. He asked the students to do hard work for being successful in life. (Dr. S. S. Dakua, Principal)






N.I.O.C
1397.5358

First Announcement

Call for public tender (First/Second publish)
One -Stages (semi compressed) tender
COILED TUBING REEL SIZE (OD : 1 1/2"-W.THICKNESS)
(0.109"&0.125" - 165000FT,200000FT)



National Iranian
Drilling Company

Tender descriptions:

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3.187.617	Tender No.: FP/04-97/052 Indent No.: 08-22-9745035	72.380.568.000

*** Qualitative evaluation of tenderers**

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

*** Purchasing & Submitting**

Tender Document Distribution by Company	<p>The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="width: 30%;">Distribution Place</th> <td>Hall No.113, 1st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN 061-34148652</td> </tr> <tr> <th style="width: 30%;">Submitting Method</th> <td>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 Submitting formal Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents</td> </tr> </table>	Distribution Place	Hall No.113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN 061-34148652	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 Submitting formal Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents
Distribution Place	Hall No.113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN 061-34148652				
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 Submitting formal Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents				
Documents Receiving Method	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="width: 30%;">Closing date</th> <td>.....Days after the last time of Purchasing 14</td> </tr> <tr> <th style="width: 30%;">Address</th> <td>Hall No. 107, 1st floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569</td> </tr> </table>	Closing dateDays 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
Closing dateDays 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	2,948,000,000 Rial/ 61,280 Euro
Type of guarantee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓-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 & 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 نوبت اول ۹۷/۱۰/۱۸ نوبت دوم ۹۷/۱۰/۱۹

U.S. Syria pullout “old trick” to run regional crises: al-Muhandis

➡ But, later other U.S. officials modified the position by saying that the pullout would be done under specific conditions.

Then President Trump rephrased his earlier announcement to declare that he had never vowed to do the pullout fast, modifying his earlier statements when he had said that some troops are already coming back home.

A Lebanese military expert said on Monday that the U.S. Army would keep some of its troops in its al-Tanf base along Syria's Eastern borders in a bid to protect the terrorists in that region.

Brigadier-General Amin Hatit said one of the main reasons for reinstating some of the U.S. troops in al-Tanf military base is to help the U.S.-backed militants in the region.

He noted that the U.S. has realized that in case of retreating from al-Tan region, the terrorists stationed in the region will face the Syrian Army's military operations, and said that the U.S. is planning long-term presence in al-Tanf region to maintain security of terrorists.

Brigadier-General Hatit, meantime, pointed to the location of al-Tanf region in a triangle of Syria, Jordan and Iraq and deployment of the terrorists by the U.S. in the region, and said Washington should account for helping the Syrian terrorists in the vicinity of Iraq and Jordan.

The Lebanese military expert, meantime, pointed to doubts pertaining to the exit of U.S. troops from Syria, and said that the U.S. troops stationed in al-Sedqeh garrison in the Euphrates will probably remain there for good and other forces of the airbase near Hasaka will also remain for long-term in that region.

The remarks by Brigadier-General Hatit came as a senior U.S. official has recently said part of the U.S. troops would stay in Syria, specially al-Tanf base.

Arab media outlets and activists said on Monday that the U.S. has not yet withdrawn troops or equipment from Northern Syria, adding that Washington has even dispatched more military convoys to the region.

The U.S. has dispatched hundreds of



military trucks comprising weapons and military equipment to Deir Ezzur province in Eastern Syria since President Donald Trump declared his decision to withdraw troops from the country, the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported.

The SOHR said that a military convoy comprising a sum of 150 trucks carrying cars and logistic military equipment has been dispatched to the regions under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) specially on Eastern Euphrates from the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.

The SOHR noted that it was the third U.S. military convoy sent to Syria after Trump's decision on exit of the American troops from Syria, and said that a total number of 500 trucks containing weapons and military equipment have been dispatched to Eastern Syria so far.

On Saturday, the Arabic-language Xeber 24 news website affiliated to the Kurds reported that a large military convoy, consisting of 120 trucks carrying weapons and military equipment have arrived at al-Shadadi base

in Hasaka province.

It added that despite U.S. President Donald Trump's claims of withdrawing troops from Syria, the American military men are still in their bases and no soldier has left the region.

Meantime, the SOHR reported that withdrawal of the U.S. heavy military vehicles from Eastern Euphrates towards Iraq has not yet been monitored officially.

The SOHR reported that the Turkish media reports sating that the U.S. has withdrawn its forces from a base at the Syrian-Iraqi-Turkish border were related to the U.S. forces' traffic between Syria and Iraq.

The SOHR had also reported on Sunday that a long convoy of almost 200 U.S. army trucks, carrying weapons, munitions and logistical equipment, left the U.S. bases in Iraq on Saturday and arrived in coalition bases in Raqqa, Manbij and Ein Issa in Northeastern Syria.

The Kurdish militia reported that the trucks arrived in the town of Amouda and left then for the U.S.-run bases in Northeastern

Syria, adding that the arms and ammunition cargo is to be delivered to the SDF.

Meantime, Iraqi sources reported that Washington had deployed large groups of soldiers in Western Iraq, including a number of its military forces who were earlier stationed in Syria.

The sources were quoted by Russia's RT news channel as saying that dozens of U.S. troops stationed in Syria had relocated to Ein al-Assad base in al-Anbar province in Western Iraq.

"Reports that the U.S. forces who have left Syria are now stationed in Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan region are not all true. A major part of these forces have gone to Ein al-Assad base in al-Anbar province and a number of others have been deployed in the military bases in other Iraqi provinces," they added.

According to the sources, the U.S. forces are still stationed at the Iraqi-Syrian borders and have not left Syria completely.

An informed source said on Saturday that a large number of state-of-the-art U.S.-made weapons had been dispatched to Ein al-Assad airbase in al-Anbar province.

"A number of U.S. military planes, carrying weapons and military equipment, arrived at Ein al-Assad airbase in al-Baghdadi region in the town of Hit in Western al-Ramadi. No reason has yet been cited for these flights to the airbase and the details about the weapons which are said to be advanced," the source was quoted as saying by Iraq's al-Wa'e news agency.

He added that a few days ago, a large number of U.S. military vehicles had also arrived at Ein al-Assad, noting that the American forces take assistance from the security companies for transferring military equipment to their positions in Iraq and the military men are sent to different places on planes.

Iraq's Ein al-Assad airbase hosted U.S. President Donald Trump on December 26 before the New Year. Trump underlined in his remarks that he did not intend to withdraw forces from Iraq at all.

(Source: FNA)

Taliban storm security posts in west Afghanistan, kill 21

Taliban terrorists have stormed security posts in west Afghanistan, killing 21 police and pro-government militia members, officials said on Monday, the latest in a surge of attacks that has cast doubt on tentative steps towards talks.

The Taliban attacked the checkpoints in two different parts of Badghis province, which is on the border with Turkmenistan, late on Sunday, provincial officials said.

Abdul Aziz Bek, head of the Badghis provincial council, said 14 policemen and seven members of pro-government militias were killed, while nine were injured.

A second government official, Jamshid Shahabi, a spokesman for the Badghis provincial governor, said more than 15 Taliban militants were killed and 10 wounded in the clashes.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attacks, among the most deadly in the province in many months.

Qari Yousuf Ahmadi, a Taliban spokesman, said in statement they killed 34 members of the security forces

and pro-government militias and seized many weapons and ammunition.

Leaders of the terrorist group and the United States officials are scheduled to meet this month to discuss the withdrawal of foreign forces and a possible ceasefire.

Officials from the warring sides have met at least three times in recent months to try to agree on a way to end the 17-year war. But in the meantime, both sides are keeping up their attacks.

The Taliban say they are fighting to topple the Western-backed government and restore strict law after their ouster in 2001.

The United States and its allies say they want to stop Afghanistan from becoming a haven for international militants plotting attacks in the West.

In a separate incident on Monday, at least five civilians were killed and eight wounded in a bomb blast in the eastern province of Paktika.



The Taliban left the bomb in a village square, said provincial official Mohammad Rasoul Adel. A Taliban spokesman was not immediately available for comment.

(Source: Daily Star)

Hamas reclaims Egypt-Gaza Rafah crossing as PA staffers withdraw

Employees of the Palestinian Islamic resistance movement Hamas have retaken control of the Rafah Crossing between the besieged Gaza Strip and Egypt after the Palestinian Authority (PA) withdrew its own staffers from the important gateway, officials say.

The resistance movement took control of the crossing in a bid "to avoid a vacuum," AFP quoted a Hamas border official, speaking on condition of anonymity, as saying on Monday.

Furthermore, Hamas officials were seen at the border crossing's main gate and inside accompanying offices in southern Gaza Strip on Monday, AFP reported.

The development came just a day after the PA's civil affairs authority accused Hamas in a statement, cited by official Palestinian news agency WAFA, of "summoning, arresting and abusing our employees."

The PA, led by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, added that "hampering [of] their work and tasks" by Hamas ultimately led the authority to the conclusion that the presence of its staffers at the Rafah Crossing had been "futile."

Rafah, the sole crossing point between Egypt and blockaded Gaza, was closed on Monday due to the Orthodox Christmas

holiday. However, it was not clear whether it would reopen as scheduled on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Hamas' Interior Ministry Spokesman Iyad al-Bozum said that the resistance movement "will protect the interests of our people."

The Fatah party, led by President Abbas, and Hamas have been at odds ever since the latter scored a landslide victory in Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006. Since 2007, Hamas has been governing Gaza while Fatah has been based in the autonomous parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The two rival Palestinian factions finally agreed on a unity government in April 2014, but it fell apart months later.

However, the PA took control of Rafah in November 2017, as part of a deal for Egypt to reopen a border that had been completely closed from August that year and largely sealed for years before that. Cairo has allowed the crossing to be open regularly since August 2018, providing a lifeline to desperate Gazans.

The Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has already said that he would put his stamp on the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation only if Hamas recognizes Israel, cuts ties with regional power house Iran,

and disbands its military wing, known as the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, and its estimated 25,000 fighters, who have defended Gaza against three deadly Israeli wars over the past decade.

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

Back in July last year, Tel Aviv also restricted the fishing area for Gazans to just three nautical miles as part of punitive measures against them over the launch of incendiary balloons from the Palestinian coastal enclave into the occupied territories as part of ongoing protests against the decades-long Israeli occupation.

Over the past few years, Israeli troops have also carried out over a hundred assaults on Palestinian boats, arresting dozens of fishermen and confiscating several boats.

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

■ Israeli forces shoot, injure Palestinian girl over alleged stabbing attempt

Meantime, Israeli forces have shot and injured a Palestinian girl, whom they alleged to have attempted a stabbing attack against Israeli police officers at a checkpoint in the northern part of the occupied West Bank.

Local sources, requesting not to be named, said Israeli forces shot and injured the unnamed Palestinian girl at Za'tara checkpoint south of Nabulus, located approximately 49 kilometers (30 miles) north of al-Quds (Jerusalem), on Monday afternoon, and did not allow paramedics to attend to her.

The Israeli military later claimed in a statement that the Palestinian girl was shot when she did not stop upon orders by soldiers.

The development came a day after a Palestinian teenage boy sustained serious injuries after Israeli military forces stormed a city in central West Bank.

Tensions continue to simmer in the occupied Palestinian territories more than a year following the United States President Donald Trump's recognition of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel's capital and relocation of the U.S. embassy to the occupied city.

(Source: agencies)

Ansarullah: U.S., Israel benefiting from continued war in Yemen

Yemeni fighters complying with Stockholm agreement

➡ Elsewhere in his remarks, Houthi said a second round of negotiations between the warring parties could be hosted "soon" in the Jordanian capital, Amman.

Talks on Yemen's failed economy "could take place soon in Amman or by video conference, which I discussed with the UN envoy," Houthi said.

Senior Ansarullah officials also told the visiting UN envoy that the Saudi regime had repeatedly violated the UN-brokered ceasefire in Hudaydah over the past two weeks.

Griffiths arrived in Sana'a on Saturday for talks with Ansarullah leaders to shore up a ceasefire in the country's lifeline port city. He will later travel to the Saudi capital, Riyadh, to meet with former Yemeni government officials.

The UN envoy's trip is part of a new round of talks to follow up on progress made in the Swedish capital in December, when both sides agreed to a prisoner exchange and a truce in Hudaydah.

The city, a lifeline for millions of Yemenis, has seen some of the heaviest fighting in the Saudi regime-led war, which Riyadh began in March 2015.

■ Yemeni ballistic missile hits Saudi mercenaries' base in Ta'izz

Meantime, Yemeni army forces, supported by allied fighters from Popular Committees, have hit a military base in Yemen's southern province of Ta'izz with a domestically-manufactured high-precision ballistic missile as Saudi Arabia presses ahead with a campaign of military aggression against its impoverished southern neighbor.

Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television network, citing an unnamed military official from the missile unit of the Yemeni army, reported that Khalid military base, located in the western flank of the province, had been hit with a short-range and solid-propellant Badr P-1 missile on Sunday.

It added that the projectile had struck the designated target with precision, leaving an unspecified number of Saudi-sponsored militiamen loyal to Yemen's former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi either killed or wounded. The explosion also inflicted damage to the hardware and equipment of the base.

■ Over dozen civilians injured as Saudi mercenaries shell Hudaydah

Separately, more than a dozen civilians have been injured after the Saudi regime mercenaries lobbed a barrage of mortar shells at residential areas in the Hali and Hawak districts of the western Yemeni province of Hudaydah.

A provincial security source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the shells left at least 14 people injured, adding that some of the injured are in a critical condition.

The development took place irrespective of a UN-brokered ceasefire in Hudaydah.

The United Nations said on December 17, 2018 that a ceasefire had taken effect in Hudaydah, located 150 kilometers southwest of the capital Sana'a, at 3:00 a.m. local time (2400 GMT).

The truce was agreed at the UN-sponsored peace talks in Sweden last month.

The two warring sides welcomed the ceasefire in Hudaydah, and said they would comply with it.

The truce was supposed to be followed by the withdrawal of Ansarullah fighters as well as pro-Hadi militiamen.

A prisoner swap, involving some 15,000 detainees, was also planned and a "mutual understanding" to facilitate aid deliveries to the southwestern coastal city of Ta'izz has been reached.

Delegates from the Ansarullah movement and Saudi regime-backed Hadi loyalists have also agreed to meet again in late January for more talks to define the framework for negotiations on a comprehensive peace settlement.

The House of Saud regime and a number of its regional allies launched a devastating military campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the aim of bringing the government of Hadi back to power and crushing Ansarullah movement.

According to a new report by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, the Saudi regime-led war has so far claimed the lives of around 56,000 Yemenis.

The Saudi-led war has also taken a heavy toll on the country's infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories. The UN has already said that a record 22.2 million Yemenis are in dire need of food, including 8.4 million threatened by severe hunger. According to the world body, Yemen is suffering from the most severe famine in more than 100 years.

A number of Western countries, the United States and Britain in particular, are also accused of being complicit in the ongoing aggression as they supply Riyadh with advanced weapons and military equipment as well as logistical and intelligence assistance.

(Source: agencies)

Ocasio-Cortez: 'No question' Trump is a racist

There is "no question" that the United States President Donald Trump is a racist, New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said in an interview that aired on Sunday night.

Speaking on CBS's "60 Minutes," Ocasio-Cortez, a Democrat, told Anderson Cooper that Trump "certainly didn't invent racism. But he's certainly given a voice to it and expanded it and created a platform for those things."

"Do you believe President Trump is a racist?" Cooper asked. "Yeah, yeah, no question," Ocasio-Cortez replied.

"When you look at the words that he uses, which are historic dog whistles of white supremacy. When you look at how he reacted to the Charlottesville incident where neo-Nazis murdered a woman, versus how he manufactures crises like immigrants seeking legal refuge on our borders, it's night and day," she continued.

In a statement to CBS, the White House said in response to her comments that "Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez's sheer ignorance on the matter can't cover the fact that President Trump supported and passed historic criminal justice reform ... (and) has repeatedly condemned racism and bigotry in all forms."

The White House did not immediately respond to CNN's request for comment. Ocasio-Cortez, who was sworn in to her first term in Congress last week, is known for her outspoken criticism of Trump and the Republican Party. Following Democratic Rep. Rashida Tlaib's use of profanity last week in calling for Trump's impeachment, Ocasio-Cortez defended Tlaib and said removing Trump is "an issue that she's passionate about."

(Source: CNN)

U.S. and N. Korean officials met in Hanoi to discuss 2nd Trump-Kim summit

The United States State Department officials recently met multiple times with North Korean counterparts in Hanoi and discussed planning a second summit between the U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, a South Korean newspaper reported on Monday.

The U.S. officials discussed the schedule for the second Trump-Kim summit while in contact with North Korean officials in the Vietnamese capital city, fueling speculation that Vietnam could host the event, the Munhwa Ilbo reported, citing unnamed diplomatic sources in Seoul and Washington.

Vietnam has diplomatic relations with both the United States and North Korea, with North Korea maintaining a

diplomatic office in Vietnam, and has the symbolic significance of a communist country that has reformed its economy, the newspaper reported.

A spokesperson for the U.S. Embassy in Seoul did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

On Sunday, Trump told reporters in Washington that the United States and North Korea are "negotiating a location" for a second summit.

"It will be announced probably in the not too distant future," Trump said. "They do want to meet and we want to meet and we'll see what happens."

While the two sides had "a very good dialogue" and the Amer-

ican president had "indirectly" communicated with Kim, Trump said sanctions would be enforced until more progress is made.

In a nationally televised New Year address, Kim said he is willing to meet Trump again anytime to achieve their common goal of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, but warned he may have to take an alternative path if the U.S. sanctions and pressure against the country continued.

"I am always ready to sit together with the U.S. president anytime in the future, and will work hard to produce results welcomed by the international community without fail," Kim said.

(Source: Daily Star)

City counting on fit-again De Bruyne to boost title defence

Manchester City's chances of overtaking Liverpool and defending their Premier League title depend to a large extent on Belgian midfielder Kevin De Bruyne staying fit and in form for the rest of the campaign, manager Pep Guardiola said.

De Bruyne was a key player in the side that won the title last term, but injuries have restricted him to six league appearances resulting in City being nine points worse off than they were at the same stage last season.

"I've said many times how important Kevin is for us," Guardiola told reporters after his team trounced second-tier Rotherham United 7-0 in the FA Cup on Sunday. "Without him, last season maybe it would not have been possible.

"Last season he played incredible minutes but hopefully in the second leg of the season he will help us because we need him."

De Bruyne, who had eight league goals and 16 assists for City last season, played for more than an hour against Rotherham and looked close to full fitness, driving forward from midfield to create a host of chances for his team.

"Now he's back, he will be fresh in the mind and the legs, and is going to help give us extra creativity in the last third, in the fight," Guardiola said.

"He played an incredible game, created a lot of chances and has the vision to see what other people cannot see."

City, who trail league leaders Liverpool by four points, next host Burton Albion in the semi-finals of the League Cup on Wednesday before facing Wolverhampton Wanderers in the Premier League on Jan. 14.

(Source: Reuters)

Iniesta criticized for blackface photo

Former Barcelona and Spain midfielder Andres Iniesta has been criticized after posting a photograph of himself with two people in blackface as part of Epiphany celebrations in Spain.

Iniesta, 34, posed with his wife, two of his children and a group dressed in costumes related to Three Kings Day.

Two of the group are painted black - the role of Balthazar is often played by a white man in blackface in Spain.

Iniesta, who plays for Vissel Kobe in Japan, has not responded to criticism. "I love Iniesta like few other public figures, let alone athletes, he seems a supremely humble man and team-mate," said journalist and author Musa Okwonga.

"I just wonder how you can share a dressing room and so many trophies with Eric Abidal and Dani Alves and still not realise this is not cool. It's very disappointing."

BBC Radio 1 Extra presenter Nick Bright said: "I cannot believe in 2019 famous people are still doing or are around people doing 'blackface' and tweeting it, where are your friends Iniesta?!"

"Didn't anyone say, 'Andres, I don't think this is the one bro'?" Three Kings Day is an important Christian festive tradition on 6 January in Spain that commemorates the visit of magi Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar to the newborn baby Jesus.

Large parades are held in cities in Spain on 5 January and the Kings are usually councillors, most of whom are white, so Balthazar is frequently played by a white man in black makeup.

However, the mayor of Madrid Manuela Carmena ended that controversial tradition in 2016 by employing a black man to portray the role.

(Source: BBC)

Brahim Diaz vows to give all after 'dream' Real Madrid move



New Real Madrid winger Brahim Diaz vowed Monday to give his all after completing a "dream" move to the Spanish giants from Premier League champions Manchester City.

"This is the most important day in my life. I have joined the club which I have dreamed of playing at since I was a child," the 19-year-old said after being officially unveiled at Real's Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

"When I decided it was time to leave Manchester City I only considered three options: the first was joining Real Madrid, the second was playing at Real Madrid and the third and last was playing at Real Madrid. I didn't want to go anywhere else.

"I promise to give 100 percent from the first day."

Real announced on Sunday that Diaz had agreed to a six-and-a-half-year contract with the European champions.

Madrid have reportedly agreed to pay 17 million euros up front for Diaz, whose deal at Manchester City was set to expire in June, with a further seven million euros due depending on performance.

He moved to the Premier League from Malaga in 2013 but has struggled to establish himself in City's first team, having made just three League Cup starts in this campaign.

Diaz, who will play under the number 21 jersey at Real Madrid, will join a talented group of young Spanish players at the club, which already includes Marco Asensio, Dani Ceballos, Marcos Llorente, Alvaro Odriozola and Sergio Reguilon.

Real are currently fifth in La Liga, 10 points behinds leaders Barcelona, following their shock 2-0 defeat at home on Sunday to Real Sociedad. They are also struggling with a string of injuries as Wales forward Gareth Bale missed Sunday's shock 2-0 home defeat to Real Sociedad due to a calf injury, while Asensio has been out since mid-December.

Both are expected to return later this month but their injuries give Diaz a possible immediate route to the club's starting line-up.

(Source: AFP)

Sleeping pill contributed to Rooney's public intoxication arrest, says spokesman

Former England captain Wayne Rooney's US arrest last month for public intoxication resulted from mixing prescribed medication and alcohol, a spokesman told British media on Sunday.

Court records obtained by Washington ABC 7 News and The Athletic showed that the former Manchester United star, who now plays for DC United in Major League Soccer, was arrested by police at Dulles International Airport, located the northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, on December 16.

Rooney, who was returning from a promotional trip to Saudi Arabia, was charged with misdemeanor public intoxication and swearing in Loudon County, Virginia, and released on his own recognizance before paying a \$25 fine and court costs on Friday.

"During the flight Wayne took a prescribed amount of sleeping tablets mixed with some alcohol consumption and consequently was disorientated on arrival," his spokesman said.

"He was approached by police who arrested him on a minor misdemeanor charge.

"He received a statutory automatic fine and was released shortly afterwards at the airport. The matter is now at an end.

"Wayne would like to put on record his appreciation for the manner he was treated



by all involved."

DC United said they were aware of the reports of Rooney's arrest in a statement issued to US media. "We understand the media's interest in this matter but believe this is a private matter for RWayne that DC United Will handle internally," the club said.

Rooney is serving a two-year UK drink

driving ban stemming from a September 2017 arrest in England.

The 33-year-old forward came to the US capital last July, signing with DC United and taking the last-place Major League Soccer club into the playoffs in his first half-season with the squad.

Rooney was the centerpiece of United's

marketing campaign as the team opened a new stadium, the English star saying upon his arrival he looked forward to the challenge and enjoyed the relative anonymity afforded by suburban life in America.

His contract, which according to the MLS Payers Association pays him a salary of some \$2.8 million plus revenue from bonuses and sponsorship, runs through the 2020 season.

Liverpool-born Rooney was the latest addition to an elite list of former England captains to cross the Atlantic, following David Beckham and Steven Gerrard.

Rooney burst into the consciousness of English soccer when he made his Premier League debut for Everton at age 16.

He joined Manchester United for \$35 million in 2004 and stayed there for 13 seasons - winning five English titles, one Champions League, one FA Cup, three League Cups and becoming the club's all-time leading scorer with 253 goals.

He earned 119 caps for England - a national record for an outfield player - and in 2015 he surpassed Manchester United great Bobby Charlton's England goal scoring record, ending his international career with 53 goals for his country.

(Staff & Agency)

Turkey's banking association says will restructure club debts



Turkey's top football clubs such as Galatasaray and Fenerbahce will have their mounting debts restructured but not written off by the country's banking association as top tier teams have racked up more than 10 billion lira (£1.4 billion) in debt.

The "Big Four" clubs - which also include Besiktas and Trabzonspor - have spent heavily to attract foreign stars. Poor domestic and international results have exacerbated the debts they have amassed.

Over the weekend, Turkish media reported that state lender Ziraat Bank would restructure the debts of the 18 clubs in Turkey's Super Lig. However, the Turkish Banking Association (TBB) said no single bank would be transferred the debts of the clubs, and instead all banks would continue to manage their own loan risks.

"It is out the question for the debts to be erased or for there to be pricing that is out of market pricing standards in the restructuring," the TBB said, adding that the clubs' incomes could cover their expenditures.

Earlier on Monday, state broadcaster TRT had said the chairmen of the Turkish Football Federation, banking association and league clubs had met to discuss the terms of the restructuring at Ziraat Bank's headquarters.

It said the clubs were asked to present their income and expense reports by the end of January to the TBB, which would help set up restructuring plans for each

club, and that the TBB would evaluate a proposal for the debts to be split into five instalments.

As the clubs struggle with their debts, they have started to offload valuable players to alleviate some of the financial burdens - putting the teams under more pressure on the pitch. Fenerbahce, a regular contender for the league title in previous years, sit in 17th place with just 16 points from the first half of the season. The club has debts of nearly 4 billion lira.

Their bitter rivals and Turkish football's most decorated club, Galatasaray, are fifth and have been eliminated from the UEFA Champions League.

The club, which says that its debt stood at 2.97 billion lira at the end of September, spent 7.5 million euros in June to sign Brazilian centre back Maicon, who has made just nine starts in the league this season.

Like many Turkish businesses which took large foreign currency loans, clubs have also suffered from a currency crisis that saw Turkey's lira lose almost 30 percent of its value against the dollar in 2018.

Shares of the clubs surged following the reports of the restructuring.

Shares of Istanbul giants Galatasaray, Besiktas and Fenerbahce, rose between 5 and 8 percent, while Trabzonspor shares were up more than 3 percent at 1010 GMT.

(Source: Reuters)

Barca bets big on India in bid for global expansion



Soccer is slowly but surely getting traction in India and Barcelona see the world's second most populous nation as a key part of their global expansion plans, the Spanish side's Asia Pacific Director General Jordi Camps has told Reuters.

Cricket-mad India, home to 1.3 billion people, is a massive underachiever as far as football is concerned and the country has yet to make a single appearance at the World Cup finals.

Access to better coaching has long been highlighted as one of the key elements needed for Indian football to develop, though hosting the FIFA under-17 World Cup in 2017 could prove to be a turning point in attracting youngsters to the game who would otherwise be heading to the local cricket academy.

A number of European clubs have come to India over the last few years to set up academies on a franchise basis in a bid to establish a foothold in a potentially huge market. Barcelona have opened three centres in the country and Camps said they could prove a win-win for the La Liga side and India.

"The growth of the Indian Super League and the success of the under-17 World Cup held in India in 2017 have been absolutely vital for the development of the sport in the country," he said in an interview.

"Not only did it garner global coverage and engage young people of India, it also

helped develop infrastructure, upskill personnel and transfer knowledge to a range of governmental organisations and businesses to help stage major footballing events.

"We feel that we have a part to play in the growth of football in the country too."

After China embarked on a multi-billion dollar mission to become a soccer superpower by 2050, India followed suit with its own plan to raise its status in the game to match its burgeoning economic power.

Described as a sleeping giant by former FIFA president Sepp Blatter, India launched a programme in 2016 to engage more than 11 million children in soccer-related activities in the leadup to hosting the U-17 World Cup.

Barcelona have been in India with the Barca Academy since 2013 and say they have trained more than 25,000 young footballers through various programs. It has been rated as the top academy in India by the All India Football Federation.

"There seems to be a real interest and investment happening in grassroots football - with the AIFF grassroots programme launch in October 2012," Camps said.

"This isn't quite as ambitious as the growth proposed by President Xi (Jinping) in China, for example - but it's certainly a strong initiative for increasing the popularity of the sport.

(Source: Mirror)

‘Yellow vest’ boxer arrested after assaulting French policeman

French police arrested a former professional boxer on Monday who was seen punching police officers during a "yellow vest" protest in Paris, in shocking scenes that have highlighted the violence of recent protests.

The images filmed on Saturday show a heavily built man in a black duffel coat square up to several police officers before knocking them down in a hail of punches and kicking them on the ground.

One of the officers is then beaten by other protesters wearing yellow vests before he is rescued by fellow riot police in protective equipment and helmets.

The ex-boxer, identified by French media as 37-year-old Christophe Dettinger, is a former heavyweight professional fighter who reportedly works for the local government in the Essonne area south of Paris.

Interior Minister Christophe Castaner said Dettinger, known in the ring as "The Gypsy From Massy", a town south of Paris, had handed himself into police in the capital.

"He was immediately arrested and will be held accountable for his acts by the justice system," Castaner added.

Around 50,000 "yellow vest" protesters took to the streets again on Saturday in cities around France to denounce the centrist government of President Emmanuel Macron, leading to clashes in Paris, Bordeaux and Rouen.

Several men driving a forklift truck also smashed open the doors to the ministry building of government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux in Paris, who denounced the break-in as an "unacceptable attack on the Republic".

While the number of protesters has dwindled since December, the determination of a smaller but increasingly radical core of "yellow vest" protesters poses a dilemma



for the government.

On Friday, Griveaux said those still protesting were "agitors who want insurrection and, basically, to overthrow the government".

He called Monday for everyone to take part in a national debate on taxation and the government's pro-business programme, which is set to begin later this month.

Budget Minister Gerald Darmanin sought to distinguish genuine protesters, who want lower taxes and more help for low-income families, from those "who are in the business of ultra-violence".

"And faced with ultra-violence, we need to be ultra-severe. It needs to end," he told RTL radio on Monday.

French police signalled a tougher line last week when they arrested one of the leaders of the "yellow vests", truck driver Eric Drouet, for organising an unauthorised demonstration.

■ ‘Surrender plea’

The "yellow vest" demonstrations have been frequently violent since they began in late November, particularly on December 1 when crowds ransacked a museum in the Arc de Triomphe and daubed graffiti on the famed monument.

The French media has been targeted, while mock executions of Macron have also been a feature of some gatherings, notably in the town of Angoulême in southwest France.

Dettinger, the boxer, could face years in jail if convicted over his rampage on Saturday on the Leopold-Sedar-Senghor bridge which links the Tuileries gardens to the Musée d'Orsay in central Paris.

Assaulting a police officer can lead to up to three years in prison and a fine of 45,000 euros (51,000 dollars), though sentences can be increased in certain circumstances.

The French boxing federation issued a statement condemning the violence, saying that it "ran completely contrary to the values of our sport".

"The French Boxing Federation sends its support to the family and loved ones of the officer who was a victim of this individual, but equally to all the security forces who have been on duty these last weeks," it said.

Dettinger's former coach, Jacky Trompesauce, had urged the father of three to give himself up to police earlier on Monday.

"There was something that set it off, which I learned overnight," Trompesauce told RMC radio on Monday morning, claiming that a woman was attacked by the police, prompting Dettinger to respond with a flurry of punches.

(Source: AFP)



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran national football team started their AFC Asian Cup campaign with a 5-0 win over debutants Yemen at the Mohammed bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi, the UAE on Monday. Mehdi Taremi scored Iran's first goal after Yemen goalkeeper failed to save Sardar Azmoun's shot from outside the box and the Al-Gharafa forward took the rebound and easily tapped it into the net in the 12th minute. Iran's lead was doubled by an own goal from Yemen goalkeeper Saoud Al-Sowadi in the 23rd minute after Ashkan Dejagah's free-kick came back from the post, struck the goalie and went right in. Taremi made it 3-0 with a header from the center of the box to the top right corner. Azmoun scored Team Melli's fourth goal



in the 53rd minute. Substitute Saman Ghoddos was on target in the 78th minute with a powerful shot from the right side of the box to the center of the goal. Iran will play Vietnam On Jan. 12 at the Al Nahyan Stadium in Abu Dhabi and face Iraq four days later at the Al-Maktoum Stadium in Dubai. The 2019 AFC Asian Cup is being held in the UAE from Jan. 5 to Feb. 1. A total of 24 teams are separated into six major groups with four team members per group. The significant nations included in the AFC Asian Cup 2019 are India, United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Japan, Thailand, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, Vietnam, Oman, Lebanon, China & many more.



AFC Asian Cup: Iran's Faghani to officiate Japan, Turkmenistan match

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian's Alireza Faghani has been chosen to officiate Group F match between Japan and Turkmenistan in their 2019 AFC Asian Cup opener. The match will be held at the Al Nahyan Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday. Faghani will be assisted by his countrymen Reza Sokhandan and Mohammadreza Mansouri. In his impressive career, the 40-year-old has officiated finals of the 2014 AFC Champions League, 2015 AFC Asian Cup, 2015 FIFA Club World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Football Tournament. Faghani started his career in 1994 and became a FIFA referee in 2008. In 2009, he become an elite referee and went on to build his career by officiating in the AFC Cup, AFC Champions League and two years later, participated

in the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil as a support referee. The 2016 AFC Referee of the Year built on the experience and officiated in the 2017 FIFA Confederations Cup semi-final and was also tasked with the 2018 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers Asian play-off match between Syria and Australia. In the 2018 FIFA World Cup, Faghani officiated German and Mexico match, Serbia and Brazil match and France and Argentina match. He was also chosen to referee third-place playoff between Belgium and England. Sokhandan has been an active FIFA assistant referee since 2003 and has overseen numerous AFC competitions as well as the Olympic Football Tournament and the FIFA Confederations Cup. Mansouri also began his career about 20 years ago and has been an international referee since 2012.

Al Soma: Syria will shine



A disappointed Omar Al Soma says Syria still have a lot to play for despite their goalless draw with Palestine in an AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 Group B tie on Sunday. Syria, who are featuring in their sixth AFC Asian Cup, had never drawn at the Continental showpiece in their last 13 games - with a record of five wins and eight losses. The Qasioun Eagles raced off the blocks at the Sharjah Stadium and came close to scoring in the opening minutes of the game but were often halted by a stout Palestine defence, who had Rami Hamada between the sticks. "Regardless of the final outcome, we are thankful, we should have got the three points from this match," said captain Al Soma, who partnered Omar Khrbn in attack. "We want to apologies to our fans, but nothing has been decided yet, and we are still looking to qualify from the group, we still have two matches (against Jordan and Australia) to make up for this result." The prolific striker, who plays for Ah

Ahli in the Saudi Pro League, was unable to find the target against Palestine, despite Syria dominating possession and having numerous opportunities. "We controlled from the start of the match, and were the better side. We kept trying but were unlucky in front of goal, because Palestine defended by numbers. "Honestly, after the Palestine sending off, we should have used that to our advantage and played more offensively. Looking ahead, we have to get the results in the coming matches." Syria have never made it out of the group stages in the AFC Asian Cup but Al Soma believes that his teammates have what it takes to achieve their target when they play Jordan on Thursday. "The next match (against Jordan) is not easy, this is the AFC Asian Cup and there are no easy matches, but we will have discussions with the team, and we hope to perform better and bring joy to our fans". (Source: the-afc)

Hwang decisive as S. Korea stutter to victory



South Korea got their 2019 Asian Cup campaign off to a winning - if underwhelming - start, beating Philippines 1-0 in Group C. Hwang Ui-joo scored the decisive goal as South Korea just about made the most of their superiority to defeat Sven-Goran Eriksson's Philippines 1-0 in their 2019 Asian Cup Group C opener on Monday. Paulo Bento's side were without Tottenham star Son Heung-min and they clearly missed their talisman against a well-organised Philippines, but South Korea's higher class eventually told in the second period. Unfancied Philippines - playing their first ever game in the competition - certainly held their own in the first half, but after half-time they came unstuck, as Hwang ensured South Korea avoided a shock of any sort. The first period was generally devoid of excitement before bursting into life

in the final five minutes. South Korea went close first, when Hwang turned just inside the area and saw a low drive saved by Michael Falckesgaard, before Javier Patino's sweetly struck volley on the break forced Kim Seung-gyu into action at the other end. Hwang tested Falckesgaard again soon after, and although the ball squirmed through the goalkeeper's legs, the contact was enough to divert it away from goal. Bento's men remained in the ascendancy after the break, but Philippines' threat on the counter was obvious and they nearly took a shock lead in the 53rd minute, only for Patino to produce a feeble finish at the end of a swift move. South Korea's dominance paid off in the 67th minute - Hwang slotting home from close-range following Hwang Hee-chan's cut-back. (Source: Four Four Two)

Five talking points as Marcelo Lippi's China beat Kyrgyz Republic

With China PR coming from behind to take all three points against a surprisingly well-drilled Kyrgyz Republic side in the AFC Asian Cup 2019, FOX Sports Asia looks at the five major talking points from the game. Akhliidin Israilov struck for Kyrgyzstan in the 42nd minute with a sensational volley, before a howler by goalkeeper Pavel Matiash just five minutes into the second half allowed China back into the game. The Chinese looked completely rejuvenated after the goal, finally showing some well-worked attacking play before grabbing a second late on in the 78th minute to complete their comeback - seeing the game through to seal their first win of the AFC Asian Cup 2019. **■ 1) Strong Kyrgyz Republic start forces Lippi into 24th minute substitution** Ranked 15 places below China in the FIFA World rankings, Kyrgyz Republic were widely billed as the underdogs prior to the commencement of the match. Managed by World Cup-winning coach Marcelo Lippi, a footballing legend in his own right, the Chinese were expected to dominate the game. They were left shell-shocked however, by a strong start from their opponents, who went toe-to-toe with them and even dominated proceedings at times. China's need to shuffle things up was evident and such was the start by Kyrgyz Republic that coach Lippi was forced into a tactical switch in the first half itself - Yu Dabao coming on for Jin Jingdao to freshen things up in the middle. **■ 2) Underdogs cap off a brilliant first half with audacious goal** Playing some scintillating football at times in the first half, the Kyrgyz team finally got their reward near the end



of the first half. Just as China was looking to get into the game, Akhliidin Israilov scored with a strike of pure quality - volleying it past the Chinese keeper and into the net. Having scored what was their first-ever goal in the tournament, the players and staff went into complete delirium and with respect to the quality of their performance in the first half, it's hard to say the goal was anything less than well-deserved. **■ 3) Matiash's howlers gift game to China** Looking to claim their first win in their first-ever Asian Cup game, Kyrgyzstan were well on track until a calamitous error by goalkeeper Pavel Matiash let China back into the game just five minutes after the restart. The Chinese looked nervy once they had gone behind and a routine ball which should've been easily caught by the Kyrgyz keeper was instead palmed by him into his own net, giving China

the breakthrough they so desperately craved. That wasn't all as the Kyrgyz keeper was culpable for China's second goal as well, coming off his line far too early and making it ridiculously easy for substitute Yu Dabao to slot the ball into the net after rounding him up - completing China's comeback. **■ 4) Poor finishing costs Kyrgyz Republic** While China had their own share of blunders in front of goal which could've changed the game's flow much sooner, Kyrgyzstan might have been out of reach had they worked their openings better. As early as the 26th minute, Lux spurned a glorious opportunity to put his team a goal up. They came close again in the 39th minute before finally breaking the deadlock as the clock struck 42. Another header late on might have given them a draw, but alas, for the Kyrgyz team - it just wasn't meant to be today. 5) Nervy China relieved after lucky win Had it not been for some huge blunders and poor finishing by their opponents, China might well have been on the losing side against a team they are expected to beat every day of the week. Marcelo Lippi's men looked vulnerable throughout the first half - rarely looking like a side managed by a World Cup winning coach. The only credit to Lippi's men was the fact that they upped the ante tremendously after their lucky break for the first goal - putting Kyrgyzstan under pressure for the first time in the game and continued their resurgence throughout, which finally led to their second goal while giving them enough momentum to see the game through as well. (Source: Fox Sports Asia)

Iran marks Jahan Pahlavan Takhti's 51st death anniversary

1 → "A Pahlavan will always be remembered in people's hearts," he added. Takhti was born in 1930 in a working-class district of southern Tehran. He competed in the Helsinki 1952 Olympics, and became one of the first Iranian athletes to win a medal in the global games. Four years later, during the 1956 Melbourne games, he would become the very first Iranian to win an Olympic gold together with fellow freestyle wrestler Emam-Ali Habibi, who won his gold later that same day. He also claimed a silver medal in 1960 Rome. Takhti won two World Championships gold medals in 1959 Tehran and 1961 Yokohama. The freestyle wrestler has also seized a gold medal in the 1958 Asian Games held in Tokyo, Japan. He is the most famous wrestler in Iranian history. The legend was known for his chivalry and sportsmanship and continues to symbolize the essence of sports to the Iranian people. Pahlavani refers to a traditional athletic ritual, now recognized by UNESCO as part of the world's "intangible cultural heritage". The ritual used to train warriors of the ancient Persian Empire, centuries before the birth of Christ. But Pahlavani has also come to mean sportsmanship, fairness and devotion to people. The belief that Takhti was a Pahlavan par excellence is exemplified by the nickname he was given: Jahan Pahlavan, or in English, the Pahlavan of the world.

In the ring, Takhti was thought to always be fair to his opponents. Aleksandr Medvev, a Soviet wrestler known as being among the best in history, once told a story of how Takhti had refused to touch his right leg because he knew it was injured. But it is the stories outside the ring that have defined much of Takhti's legacy.

Mohammad Reza Akhbari joins Iran's Tractor Sazi

TASNIM — Tractor Sazi Tabriz football team completed the signing of Mohammad Reza Akhbari on Sunday. Akhbari has joined Tractor Sazi on a four-year contract for an undisclosed fee. He started his career with Saipa from youth levels. Akhbari is also one of the unknown young players which was presented to the Iranian football by German coach Engin Firat. Akhbari joined Tractor Sazi for a two-year contract to complete his conscription. He became the starting goalkeeper for Tractor Sazi and led the team to the Round of 16 of the 2016 AFC Champions League. In 2017, the 25-year-old goalkeeper returned to Saipa after military service, but remained an unused substitute.

Iranian handball referees to officiate at Norway competitions

IRNA— The Norwegian Handball Federation invited two Iranian international referees to officiate a tournament which is underway in Norway. The tournament will be underway with the attendance of the Netherlands, Brazil, Iceland and Norway until January 7. The Norwegian federation invited Ali Reza Mousavian and Majid Kolahdouzan for the purpose. They will judge the match between Norway and the Netherlands. The two mentioned Iranian referees had earlier officiated at international competitions.

Sheikh Salman hands out 'AFC Referees Special Award' to Iranian referees

MNA — Sheikh Salman Bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa, the president of Asian Football Confederation, presented 'AFC Referees Special Award' of 2018 to world-class Iranian referees. In a ceremony held on Friday on the sideline of AFC Asian Cup in the United Arab Emirates, the AFC chief presented Alireza Faghani, Reza Sokhandan, and Mohammadreza Mansouri with their 'AFC Referees Special Award'. Iranian referees were absent at the main ceremony which was held on November 28, 2018, in Muscat, Oman. The Iranian trio delivered a superb performance in the 2018 FIFA World Cup, officiating four games including the third-place playoff between Belgium and England.

Firoozja not afraid of competing with best chess players

IRNA— Asian Speed Chess champion called competing with the best players of the field as a prerequisite to succeed. Alireza Firoozja said that confronting the renowned champions of the discipline will strengthen the person and reduce stress for other tournaments. Firoozja said the condition of victory in the big competitions is not to fear and have anxiety. "All competitions must be taken seriously, and if they have no panic about competition, their look at opponents will be the same he noted. "Of course, the secret of success is the first step in the day-to-day practice and effort that I had to a 10-12 hour training session in advance of the world championship in Russia," he added. Ranked 6th in World Speed Chess Championship, Firoozja referred to the role of coach in the mental recovery of chess players, saying. "In the Championship of Asia in Hamadan Ivan Sokolov was in the team, but in the Russian championship, we could not have a coach. It's better to be a coach in the world to coach mentally the chess player but due to the lack of funds, there is no possibility of using a full-time coach," Firoozji stated. Alireza Firoozja, Iran's chess genius, turned into a new face in 2013 with the defeat of Ehsan Ghaemmaghami. He has two championships in his career, a runner-up trophy and a third-world title for the Under-16 World Championship.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

■ Managing Director: Ali Asgari
■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
editor@tehrantimes.com
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450
» Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433
» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
» Printed at: Rooztab - ISSN: 1017-94

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.O. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713



GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Satisfaction is a good companion; knowledge is a rich heritage; courtesy is a novel adornment, and thought is a clear mirror.

Imam Ali (AS)

Elise Parsley's bestselling series "Magnolia Says Don't" at Persian bookstores

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Three books from American children's book writer Elise Parsley's bestselling series "Magnolia Says Don't" have been published in Persian in Tehran, publisher Mobtakeran announced on Monday.

Sara Qorbani is the translator of the series, which has been published with its original illustrations created by Parsley herself.



This combination photo shows the front covers of three books from Elise Parsley's series "Magnolia Says Don't" published in Persian.

The three books are "If You Ever Want to Bring an Alligator to School, Don't!", "If You Ever Want to Bring a Piano to the Beach, Don't!", and "If You Ever Want to Bring a Circus to the Library, Don't!".

"If You Ever Want to Bring a Pirate to Meet Santa, Don't!" is another book of the series.

The "Magnolia Says Don't!" series is about Magnolia, "a charismatic kid who's got a terrific knack for terrible ideas!", as major U.S. bookselling company Barnes and Noble describes.

Mental health photography exhibit receives submissions from 78 countries

A R T **TEHRAN** — Over 3,000 photographers from 78 countries have applied to the 5th edition of the Mental Health International Exhibition of Photography with over 18,000 submissions, the organizers announced on Monday.

The exhibition will be held in the two categories of open and mental health in Zanjan from April 3 to 10.

The event is organized by the Zanjan University of Medical Sciences and Health Services in collaboration with the Focus Photo Club, Iran's branch of the International Federation of Photographic Art (FIAP).

"Animal Scientists" series published in Persian

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) announced on Monday that it has published British children's book writer Leon Gray's series "Animal Scientists" in Persian.



Front covers of the Persian version of the "Animal Scientists" series.

The IIDCYA has previously acquired the copyright to the book from Brown Bear Books, a London-based publisher of illustrated non-fiction books for children.

Translated by Majid Amiq, the series includes "Amazing Animal Super-Sleuths", "Amazing Animal Communicators", "Amazing Animal Shape-Shifters", "Amazing Animal Tool-Users and Tool-Makers" and "Amazing Animal Engineers".

"Animal Scientists" combines ecology with simple scientific principles so young readers can see how animals have adapted to cope with their environment and how they relate to other animals. The series explores animals' use of science and engineering to overcome environmental challenges such as escaping predators, making a shelter, finding food and finding a mate.

Israeli artist Yossi Lemel's work scrubbed from Tehran poster exhibition

A R T **TEHRAN** — A work by Israeli graphic designer Yossi Lemel has been removed from an international exhibition in Tehran of posters on the theme of drought and water shortage after the organizers discovered his real nationality.

He had declared himself a Palestinian in his application for participation in the exhibit, Mohsen Soleimani, the director of the Qasr Museum Garden, the organizer of the exhibit, said in a statement on Saturday.

The organizers realized Lemel's true nationality after he posted a copy of his entry, "Water Is Life", to the exhibition on his Instagram.

"Following the opening of the exhibition, our investigations showed that a person with the nationality of the Zionist regime has participated in the showcase as Palestinian artist," Soleimani said.

"His work was immediately removed from the exhibition," he added.

In a statement published on Monday, the Revolution and Sacred Defense Visual Arts Association criticized the organizers for display of Lemel's work at the exhibition.

The Art and Cultural Organization of the Tehran Municipality, which is the owner of the garden museum, announced on Monday that Soleimani has stepped down from his post over the gaffe. However, it was not mentioned if his resignation has been accepted.

Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran has refused to recognize Israel as a sign of support for Palestinian people.

The exhibition entitled "In Color of



Art lovers visit the In Color of Life poster international exhibition at the Qasr Museum Garden/Elaheh Karimi

Life" opened at the Qasr Museum Garden last Thursday and will continue displaying works of about 50 posters by artists from

Iran and 17 other countries, including Poland, Peru, South Korea, Kenya, Greece and France, until January 10.

The museum is organizing the event in collaboration with Tehran's Arasbaran Cultural Center.

Khayyam Intl. Exhibition of Photography to open on Friday

A R T **TEHRAN** — The 6th edition of the Khayyam International Exhibition of Photography will open at the Iranian Academy of Arts in Tehran on Friday.

Winners will be honored during the opening ceremony of the exhibition, the Focus Photo Club, Iran's branch of International Federation of Photographic Art (FIAP), announced in a press release on Monday.

The exhibition will showcase dozens of photos selected from over 13,000 submissions from 50 countries.

Moreover, a workshop on selecting and judging photos during international events will be held by Riccardo Busi, the president of the International Fed-

eration of Photographic Art (FIAP), his assistant Freddy Van Gilbergen and the president of the Focus Photo Club Ali Samei on the sidelines of the exhibit.

Organized by the Focus Photo Club in collaboration with the Photographic Society of America (PSA) and FIAP, the exhibition will run until January 17.



A poster for the 6th Khayyam International Exhibition of Photography.

"Aquaman" swims to third straight victory, nears \$1 billion globally

LOS ANGELES (Variety.com) — Leave it to Jason Momoa and his perfectly tousled man bun to dominate box office charts for the third straight weekend. "Aquaman" easily retained its No. 1 spot, pulling in a solid \$30 million for a domestic haul of \$259 million.

The DC superhero adventure directed by James Wan has now crossed \$940 million worldwide, making it Warner Bros. biggest comic-book title since "The Dark Knight Rises" amassed over \$1 billion globally in 2012. If "Aquaman" continues at this pace, Arthur Curry could give Batman a run for his money. "Aquaman" generated another \$56.2 million in foreign markets this weekend, bringing its international total to \$681 million. The Atlantean blockbuster has already nabbed the distinction as DC's highest-grossing title overseas, surpassing the record previously set by "The Dark Knight Rises" with \$636 million.

With no major studio releases, "Aquaman" didn't have much competition to maintain its reign in North America. The only newcomer was Sony and Columbia Pictures' "Escape Room," a psychological thriller about a group of strangers who get trapped in a deadly (you guessed it) escape room. The PG-13 horror film secured second place with \$18 million when it debuted in 2,700 locations. That's a strong start considering the film only cost \$9 million to produce.

"Escape Room" was neck in neck with Disney's "Mary Poppins Returns" for the No. 2 slot, though Sunday estimates show the latter coming in third with \$15.8 million during its third weekend of release. "Mary Poppins Returns," a sequel to the 1964 classic, has earned \$138 million at the domestic box office. The movie starring Emily Blunt and Lin-Manuel Miranda has been a slow burn in theaters, which is to be expected for a movie-musical. It has collected \$119 million internationally and over \$250 million globally, though it will need to keep chugging a long at multiplexes to justify its \$130 million price tag.

Elsewhere in moviegoing, it was holdovers galore. Paramount's "Bumblebee" and Sony's "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse" are in a close race for fourth and fifth place. Both titles pulled in roughly \$13 million over the three-day frame, so we won't be able to



Actor Jason Momoa attends the world premiere of "Aquaman" movie in London, Britain November 26, 2018. (Reuters/Simon Dawson)

officially tell until final numbers come in on Monday.

Hailee Steinfeld stars in "Bumblebee," the "Transformers" origin story that has made \$97 million since debuting just before Christmas. Meanwhile, the domestic haul of "Spider-Verse," an animated flick from Sony's arsenal of Marvel characters, currently sits at a robust \$133.8 million.

With the Golden Globes on Sunday, Annapurna's "Vice" could get a box office boost if Adam McKay's scathing Dick Cheney biopic is able to walk away with some trophies. The political movie has seriously divided critics, but the Hollywood Foreign Press Association was high on "Vice" and handed it a leading six nominations. For now, the \$60 million film earned \$5.8 million this weekend, taking its domestic tally to \$29.7 million.

Fellow Christmas Day release, Sony's "Holmes & Watson," continues to struggle. Despite featuring the comedic duo of Will Ferrell and John C. Reilly, the movie made \$3.4 million over the three-day stretch for a tepid North American total of \$28.4 million. Overseas, the buddy comedy based on the famed detective and his trustee sidekick has made a dismal \$7 million, bringing its worldwide bounty to \$35 million. It holds an 8 percent average on Rotten Tomatoes, so it might not be a mystery if "Holmes & Watson" fails to recoup its \$40 million budget.

"Bohemian Rhapsody" takes upset win at Netflix-dominated Golden Globes

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Queen musical "Bohemian Rhapsody" and U.S. segregation-era comedy "Green Book" took home the top Golden Globes on Sunday on a night of upsets that saw presumed favorite "A Star Is Born" largely shut out, and big wins for Netflix.

Tears and astonishment marked the winners podium as Glenn Close for "The Wife" beat front-runner Lady Gaga as best drama actress, and "Green Book" triumphed over more high profile comedies "Vice" and "The Favourite."

"Oh my God. I just don't believe it," a tearful Close said of her win, before issuing a rallying cry to women to seek fulfillment in their careers.

"We have to say, I can do that, and I should be allowed to do that," the 71-year-old said, to huge applause from the gathering of A-list stars.

Streaming service Netflix, which has upended Hollywood by spending billions on original programming, won five Golden Globes across movies and television, including best foreign language film "Roma." The Mexican movie, which also took the prize for best director, is seen as an Oscar frontrunner in February.

Rami Malek, who won best drama actor for his role as late Queen frontman Freddie Mercury in 20th Century Fox film "Bohemian Rhapsody," dedicated his award to the British singer, who died of AIDS in 1991. "I love you, you beautiful man. This is for you, and because of you, gorgeous," Malek said.

"Vice," a scathing political comedy about the rise to power of former U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, went into Sunday's ceremony with a leading six nominations but emerged with just one win, for Christian Bale for his performance as Cheney. Instead, small Focus Features CMSCA.O movie "Green Book" went home with the biggest haul - three - including best comedy, supporting actor (Mahershala Ali) and screenplay.

"This is beyond anything we ever imagined when we began shooting," said director and writer Peter Farrelly. He said the story of the black pianist who strikes up a friendship with his Italian-American driver gave him hope.

"I wanted to share that hope with you because we are still living in divided times," Farrelly said.

Co-host Sandra Oh, who was born in



76th Golden Globe Awards-Show-Beverly Hills, California, U.S., January 6, 2019-Christian Bale, Best Actor-Motion Picture, Musical or Comedy, "Vice," accepts his award. (Paul Drinkwater/NBC Universal/Handout via Reuters)

Canada of Asian descent, paid tribute to the slew of Golden Globe-nominated films and TV shows featuring black and Asian actors and directors, including "Crazy Rich Asians," "Black Panther," and "BlacKkKlansman."

"I wanted to be here to look out into this audience and witness this moment of change," Oh said. "Right now this moment is real. Because I see you ... all these faces of change. And now so will everyone else."

It was a good night for Oh, who as well as co-hosting her first Golden Globe ceremony was named best television drama actress for BBC America thriller "Killing Eve."

In contrast to the political barbs, often directed at U.S. President Donald Trump, that have marked recent awards shows, Sunday's Golden Globes had a more positive vibe.

Lady Gaga, whose role in Warner Bros "A Star Is Born" was her first lead part after a successful music career, won best original song for "Shallow."

British actress Olivia Coleman was a winner for bawdy historical romp "The Favourite."

In television, the big winners were Cold War spy thriller "The Americans," limited series "The Assassination of Gianni Versace," and new Netflix comedy "The Kominsky Method."

Carol Burnett and Jeff Bridges were both awarded lifetime achievement Golden Globes.