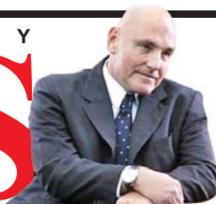


TEHRAN TIMES

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Iran's help to refugees undeniable: Swedish ambassador **2**



Leader: U.S. deception keeping businesses away from Iran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday that the United States is scaring businesses away from Iran despite the fact that the nuclear deal had lifted financial sanctions on the Islamic Republic. "On paper the United States allows foreign banks to deal with Iran, but in practice they create Iranophobia so no one does business with Iran," the Leader told hundreds of workers. The United States has resorted to "deception" to obstruct international trade with Iran despite the nuclear agreement, the

Leader noted. Ayatollah Khamenei gave reasons why Iran does not trust the U.S.

"We are seeing what causes pessimism and cannot turn a blind eye to them... I have said time after time Americans cannot be trusted and the reason for this is becoming clear."

Also, on the issue of terrorism, the Leader said Americans are "worse than any other terrorists," and as indicated by available evidence, Americans continue to aid terrorists.

See page 2



U.S. asset seizure is a 'big legal scandal': Rouhani

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that the seizure of 2\$ billion from Iranian assets by the U.S. is an "open theft" and "big legal scandal".

"The government, on behalf of the Iranian nation, has spared no effort to uphold the nation's right and will follow

this path until reaching a result," he said during a meeting with the cabinet members. Deciding for Iran's assets is "illegal" and runs contrary to international law, he noted. "Enemies of the Iranian people made efforts to prevent the Iranian nation from their right to enjoy nuclear technology and issued resolutions against Iran at international forums. →2

Over 1,700 companies to attend Iran Oil Show

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Tehran will host 1,787 domestic and foreign companies in the 21st International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition of Iran (Iran Oil Show 2016), which will be held from May 5 to 8, said an official with the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

"Some 996 domestic companies and 634 foreign ones from 35 countries, as well as 157 representatives of foreign companies in Iran will take part in the event," NIOC public relations director Mohammad Nasseri said, hailing the return of prominent international companies to Iran, the IRNA news agency reported on Wednesday. →4



OPINION

By Mehdi Sepahvand
Tehran Times journalist

The essentiality of economy and the Iranian political mindset

The Supreme Leader on Wednesday accused the United States of spreading Iranophobia with an aim to scare foreign investors from approaching Iran.

But Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's regard for economy has been showing itself in a stronger tone for at least a few years. The Leader has kept naming Iranian years in a message that he delivers to the nation in the very first minute of the New Year. His latest appellations have all been economically-minded, showing a new direction than previous years. →2

Intl. distributors to display books from about 6000 publishers at Tehran fair

ART **TEHRAN** — Forty six distributors will be offering books by about 6000 world publishers at the 29th Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF) this year including over 160,000 books in the English and Arabic languages published within the past three years

In addition, the American publishing company John Wiley & Sons is among the publishers showcasing their latest publications at the fair, Iran's representative of Wiley has announced in a press release published on Wednesday. Russia is the guest of honor at the book fair and director of Russia's Federal Agency on Culture and Cinema Mikhail Shvydkoi is expected to speak at the opening ceremony on May 5.

"Tomorrow Is Too Late to Read" is the motto of the 29th edition of the fair, which will run until May 15.

69 seats up for grabs in runoff parliamentary election

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran's parliamentary election is not off the media's radar screen. Twenty one provinces in the country will be casting their ballots on Friday in a run-off parliamentary election that could establish a new balance between reformists and principlists, as two arch rivals in the country.

Campaigning for the runoff election kicked off on April 21 and will continue until Thursday 8: PM. The new parliament is slated to start mission on May 28.

Eligible to participate in the Friday election are 17 million Iranians, where some 69 seats from the 290-member assembly are up for grabs for 138 candidates.

In the race for the 290 seats in the first round of the elections, 221 candidates could secure victory. However, no political faction could sweep a landslide victory.

The Feb. 26 parliamentary election had the distinction of reformists outmaneuvering principlists in the capital Tehran.

Saving Iran's precious Lake Urmia Iranian botanist Hossein Akhani wants to save this ecological treasure before it vanishes entirely

Many of Iran's once flourishing wetlands have dried dramatically in recent years. Lake Urmia in particular, the sixth largest salt lake in the world and a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, is dangerously receding and threatens to vanish entirely. Spanning an area larger than the Dead Sea and the Great Salt Lake combined, the dwindling lake lies tucked in the Zagros Mountain range in northwest Iran near the Turkish border.

Hossein Akhani, a biologist at the University of Tehran, argues that Iran's high water consumption and energy and agriculture demands put pressure on the lake. Disturbing photographs of the lake today compared to two decades ago show that now the southern half completely evaporates in summer. Plants, migrating birds like flamingos and pelicans, a unique species of brine shrimp, and other wildlife have begun to disappear.

Akhani, a longtime advocate on conservation issues, argues that people should take emergency actions to stop the lake from contracting further. Only then, he says, can Iran try to bring water back—from dams, river flow, and treated wastewater—to replenish, revive and restore the lake to its natural state. He believes efforts to save it will be more fruitful as the international community lifts sanctions, following successful negotiations involving Iran's nuclear program last year. As restrictions ease, Akhani says, there should be



more opportunities to collaborate among scientists, conservationists, and international organizations.

Akhani believes efforts to save Urmia will be more fruitful as the international community lifts sanctions. As restrictions ease, Akhani says, there should be more opportunities to collaborate among scientists, conservationists, and international organizations.

236 businesspeople to follow Park to Iran

South Korean President Park Geun-hye will be accompanied by 236 business people, the largest-ever business delegation, on her state visit to Iran.

Park is scheduled to embark on a four-day trip to the Middle Eastern country, Sunday, which will include a summit with its leader Hassan Rouhani, Monday.

"The business delegation will be comprised of 236 business people and representatives of economic organizations," said Ahn Jong-beom, the senior presidential secretary for economic affairs, at a briefing. "It is the largest-ever business delegation accompanying the President to

a foreign country."

The previous record is 166 representatives of public and private firms, who joined the President's trip to the United States last October.

The delegation includes representatives of 38 large groups and companies, including Samsung Electronics, Hyundai Motor, POSCO, SK Energy and Hanwha Group and 146 small and mid-sized firms. Iran is emerging as a land of opportunity following the Jan. 16 lifting of international sanctions on the country.

Iran holds the world's fourth-largest oil reserves and second-largest natural gas reserves.

In addition, it is seeking large-scale infrastructure development projects to rebuild its economy that was hurt by the decades-long sanctions.

The business delegation will participate in a business forum and an investment fair to meet local buyers, according to the presidential office.

Park's office said it is in talks with Iranian officials about a meeting between Park and Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

Park's trip to Tehran will make her the first Korean President to visit the country in its entire 54 years of bilateral diplomatic relations.

(Source: Korea Times)



PERSPECTIVE

By Ali Kushki
Tehran Times journalist

Bravo to Norwegian Air Force

It wowed me from the Middle East to hear a fighter jet has helped save a dying patient.

The credit all goes to the Norwegian air force which flew an F-16 not for pounding bombs but whisking medical equipment from Trondheim hospital in central Norway to another 280 miles (450km) away.

The dying patient urgently needed a special lung and heart procedure called extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, but the hospital had the equipment.

On receiving emergency call from the hospital staff and of course, with a stroke of good luck, a ready-to-jump F-16 transported the equipment, or better to say life, to the hospital in a jiffy of 25 minutes.

The world should take its hat off to the squadron for the move and I have reasons why the global community should stand at attention to the commander who gave the thumbs up and the pilot who stepped on it, landing ten minutes sooner than usual flight time.

I indulged myself with a soft smile as I learnt about the story, because fighter jets have always been claiming rather than giving lives. From the eight-year war triggered by Saddam Hussein against Iran, to Iraqi forces invading Kuwait, to the U.S. attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq through Yemen being pounded by Saudi fighter jets.

Had politicians had the same feelings as the Norwegian medical teams had, lives of thousands of thousands of humans would have been saved.

Let's wish for a day when all fighter jets will fly "dovishly" in the same manner the Norwegian F-16 scrambled.

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TEHRANTIMES
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Top Belgian, Iranian legislators say banking ties essential for economic ties

POLITICAL TEHRAN — On Wednesday, Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larjani held talks with President of the Belgium's Senate Christine Defraigne during which the two sides said banking transactions are necessary for economic ties.



Majlis will try to establish a parliamentary friendship group with Belgium as soon as possible.

The next Iranian parliament will start its work on May 28. The second round of parliamentary election will be held on Friday.

Defraigne said Iran-Belgium ties dates back to 150 years and this is the "best reason" for her trip to Tehran.

She also congratulated Iran for the success-

ful holding of parliamentary election on February 26, wishing the runoff election will also be held successfully.

She added that her country is small but it is very influential as it was one of the main architects of the European Union and now it plays a good role in the 28-member bloc.

Defraigne also said facilitating banking ties are key to expanding economic ties.

"We as legislative power will make necessary recommendations in this regard because we know that facilitating banking transactions are key to economic ties," Defraigne said, according to a translation of her remarks.

Talking to reporters in a joint press conference, Larjani said the cooperation between Tehran and Brussels have been relatively good, yet economic relations can be expanded and called for removing hurdles in this regard.

Larjani also highlighted the importance of close parliamentary ties between the two countries.

Defraigne also told reporters that Belgium is determined to expand parliamentary ties with Iran.

She also said that an international cooperation is required to fight terrorism.

"We should fight terrorism seriously because its fallouts have inflicted (some) European countries," she noted.

The top senator added if terrorism is not tackled "there is a concern that such horrible acts happen in the future."

MEDIA MONITOR



Iran's Judiciary chief to visit Iraq

TEHRAN — Iranian Judiciary chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larjani will travel to Iraq within the next few days for an official visit.

Judiciary spokesman Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei on Wednesday said Amoli Larjani will pay the official visit at the invitation of the Iraqi officials, Mizan reported.

Given the possibility of making a pilgrimage to the holy Shia sites in the Iraqi cities, the top judge's visit may last for more than three days, Ejei added.



Next Majlis will start work May 28

TEHRAN — The next Majlis will start work on May 28, Interior Ministry spokesman Hossein Ali Amiri said on Wednesday.

Amiri also said the run-off parliamentary elections will be held in 21 provinces across the country in which 17 million people are eligible to vote, Mehr reported.

"Elections in all constituencies will be held in a completely competitive atmosphere," added Amiri.

The campaigns for the second round of elections, which opened on April 21, will continue until Thursday 8: PM.

In this round of elections, 136 candidates will compete for 68 remaining seats in 55 constituencies.



Rouhani felicitates Togo on national day

TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday congratulated the people of Togo on their national day.

In a message to Togolese President Faure Gnassingbe, Rouhani expressed hope that given the backgrounds and shared interests, bilateral relations would expand even further in all spheres, Taghrib News reported.

Rouhani also wished prosperity and success for the Togolese government and people.

Togo gained its independence from France in 1960.



With House: Agreement on buying Iranian heavy water licensed

TEHRAN — White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest on Tuesday reiterated that the United States, through the Department of Energy, did make properly licensed purchase of about 32 metric tons of heavy water from Iran.

"This is consistent with Iran fulfilling their obligations as a part of their Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Part of the prescribed steps that they had to take was to reduce their nuclear stockpile and that involved reducing their technological nuclear capabilities.

So Iran did have to ship a bunch of its heavy water out of the country, and that's what they've done and now they're selling off the stockpile," he told reporters, according to the White House website.



Iranian F-7 fighter crashes

TEHRAN — An Iranian F-7 fighter jet crashed on Wednesday morning in central province of Isfahan during a training exercise, Fars reported.

The semi-official news agency, close to the Revolutionary Guards, quoted a source as saying the pilot and co-pilot ejected before the F-7 hit a mountain near the city of Nain.

The agency quoted its reporter as saying the crash was probably due to mechanical failure.



Iran's help to refugees undeniable: Swedish ambassador

TEHRAN — The Swedish ambassador to Tehran has appreciated Iran's support extended to refugees, defending the help as undeniable.

"No one can question the Islamic Republic's commitment to refugees," Peter Tiller told local officials in Kerman province, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

The help has been quite considerable, he said, hoping the refugees will offer their own service to society in return for the help they have received.

Leader: U.S. deception keeping businesses away from Iran

Ayatollah Khamenei highlights workers' role in resistance economy

1 → The Leader, who was speaking days before International Workers' Day, also expressed gratitude to the country's blue-collar community, conceiving of working as "value."

"Every working individual in the society, including officials, ministers, university professors, students, seminary students, managers, and all others are as such workers and in fact generate value," the Leader noted.

Ayatollah Khamenei said it is necessary to "resolve problems of the blue-collar community," "boost domestic production," "seriously counter goods smuggling,"

"We are seeing what causes pessimism and cannot turn a blind eye to them... I have said time after time Americans cannot be trusted and the reason for this is becoming clear."

and "ban import of goods with Iranian parallels."

'Workers' role in resistance economy'

Pointing to responsibility of workers, businesses, and officials in implementing policies of resistance economy, the Leader said, "The main message of Resistance Economy, Action and Implementation is that officials should plan for every single article of general policies of resistance economy and implement them really."

The Supreme Leader further reminded that the most important responsibility of workers with regards to resistance economy is to work rightly, qualitatively, and strongly.

U.S. seizure of Iranian asset is a 'theft' and 'big legal scandal': Rouhani

1 → From a political point of view, Rouhani said, the seizure of Iran's assets is a "continuation of hostilities against the Iranian people."

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled on April 20 that about \$2 billion of Iran's frozen assets must be turned over to American families of people killed in the 1983 bombing of a U.S. Marine Corps barracks in Beirut and other attacks blamed on Iran. The Islamic Republic has denied any role in the attack.

The Iranian cabinet has tasked a workgroup, led by the finance minister, to examine the court decision and reclaim Iran's "rights". The ministers of foreign affairs, and the heads of the intelligence agency, judiciary and central bank have joined the workgroup.

On Tuesday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry summoned Switzerland's ambassador to Tehran over the ruling.

Iran and the U.S. have not had diplomatic relations since 1979. The Swiss diplomat was summoned to convey Iran's protest to the Americans.

Ali Akbar Velayati, a foreign adviser to the Supreme Leader, described the court ruling as an act of robbery.

"Iran is insistent on safeguarding its rights and will retrieve the money," Velayati was quoted as saying. "The way to confront Americans is to resist their ambitions."

Iran said the U.S. court decision violated international obligations between the two countries, such as a 1955 economic treaty.

According to Press TV, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has also called the court ruling a "highway robbery".

"It is a theft. Huge theft. It is highway robbery. And believe you me, we will get it back," Zarif told The New Yorker in an interview published on Monday.

Zarif lashed out at the U.S. justice, saying it was the same system which last month held Iran liable for damages in the 9/11 terror attacks.

He was referring to a federal judge in New York who ordered Tehran to pay \$11 billion in compensation to families of 9/11 attack victims.

"I have lost every respect for U.S. justice. The judgment by the Supreme Court and the other, even more absurd judgment by a New York circuit court deciding that Iran should pay damages for 9/11 are the height of absurdity," Zarif noted.

"How would you explain Iran being held accountable for the damages to the victims of 9/11—and others being absolved of any responsibility, those who were actually responsible for it?" he said apparently referring to Saudi Arabia.

"These cases cannot stand in any serious civilized court of law.

When a U.S. court condemns Iran for 9/11, it finishes the credibility of the U.S. justice system when it comes to Iran," he added.

Zarif said the U.S. was setting a bad precedent with such rulings. "People can legislate in other countries to confiscate American assets. Would you be happy with that?"

The foreign minister said, "The United States has committed a lot of crimes against Iranians, against the people of Vietnam, the people of Afghanistan, the people of Iraq."

"Can they legislate in their own countries that for every collateral damage suffered because of American bombing, for every person who was tortured by the Savak, which was created by the United States, those people can claim money from the United States and go confiscate it? Would you be willing to accept it?"

Zarif said, "The Supreme Court is the Supreme Court of the United States, not the Supreme Court of the world. We're not under its jurisdiction, nor is our money."

On Monday, Zarif also said Iran would take the United States to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to retrieve the two billion dollars.

"We hold the U.S. administration responsible for preservation of Iranian funds, and if they are plundered, we will lodge a complaint with the ICJ for reparation," he said.

Iran and China insist on the need to fight terrorism in Syria

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and China's Special Envoy for Syria Xie Xiaoyan highlighted on Tuesday the necessity of serious fight against terrorism in Syria.

Amir-Abdollahian said that the opposition armed groups and the terrorist groups in Syria are intertwined.

"(Even) the U.S. has confessed that it is difficult to differentiate the terrorist groups from the other armed groups," he added.

He expressed regret over the fact that no serious international action has been taken in countering terrorism.

Xie said that China is pushing for a "political solution" to the five-year-old Syrian conflict and adopting a "policy of patience and trust on (possible) result of the political talks".

He also described the crisis in Syria as a "complicated" issue.

The Chinese envoy said the future of Syria should be decided based on the people's will and no foreign country should interfere in the country's affairs.

Iran, Uruguay condemn all forms of extremism

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iran and Uruguay issued a joint statement on Wednesday condemning all forms of extremism that threaten the international peace and security.

The statement was issued at the end of Uruguay's Vice President Raul Sendic Rodriguez's three-day visit to Iran.

The statement said that Iran and Uruguay are committed to the UN charter in countering terrorism.

The two countries called for a "coor-

ordinated fight" against terrorism.

Elsewhere, it is said in the statement that the two countries are ready to expand relations in various areas.

Uruguay called the nuclear agreement between Iran and the 5+1 group (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany) a "document that helps establish international peace and security".

The statement also highlighted the importance of resolving crises through talks.

Parliament speaker hopeful: Massive turnout has global resonance

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Mohammad Reza Aref, a moderate reformer who topped the list of 30 winners in Tehran in the race for the parliament in February, said on Wednesday that massive turnout in the runoff elections has global resonance, laying the ground for refurbishing the country.

"You (people) should know that your votes have global resonance and your participation in the election brings more

might and legitimacy to Iran in the eyes of the world," said Aref who is a serious candidate for the post of parliament speaker in the next Majlis which will start its work on May 28.

Speaking to a gathering of reformers in Mamasani, Fars province Iran, Aref called on voters to once more make a February difference in the April runoff by voting for the reformist ticket.

The February 26 election was a surprise one at least in Tehran where reformist candidates outmaneuvered the fundamentalists, securing a clean sweep of all 30 seats allocated to the capital city in the 290-seat parliament.

The gathering came two days before the runoff, slated for April 29, in which 68 seats will be decided, for which 136 candidates are vying.

The essentiality of economy and the Iranian political mindset

1 → But that is not all. The settlement of an economic outlook in the Iranian political scheme found its most startling embodiment in the landmark nuclear deal that the country made with the world just last year. As much as the deal addressed security concerns of the West, it was economically justified for Iran.

Yet, another very conspicuous demonstration of the economic mindset dates back to 2013, when Hassan Rouhani became

president, thanks to his economic agenda announced most outspokenly during the campaign, and the trust that the Iranian body-politic had in his abilities to chisel something out of a defaced collection of business entities and links scattered here and there.

Economy especially grew into an indispensable part of being a powerful nation in the mind of Iranians during the few pre-Rouhani years when unwelcome hap-

azard changes in the personal and business-related lives of many looked to them as a kind of constant hemorrhage that needed instant care even at a high cost.

That created a sort of collective agreement in people from all walks of life in the country to feel deep in their bones the need for some serious thought about economy. In other words, economy turned into a national discourse that was finding a place among other

more ethereal notions of freedom, equality, peace for all, and fighting the ills of the time.

An Iranian saying goes: "The enemy will cause bliss if God so wills." Looking back to the sanctions time, it seems those years gave Iran some about-face to make it think about things whose lack does not leave room for higher ambitions. Iran has started building up on bread and butter this time a mansion that looks more likely than ever to go high.

MIZAN

MEHR

TAGHRIB

WHITEHOUSE

FARS

ISNA

Russia wants more details about U.S. special forces deployment in Syria

Russia wants to know more details about U.S. plans to bolster its special forces in Syria, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Wednesday.

U.S. President Barack Obama announced Monday the biggest expansion of U.S. ground troops in Syria since its civil war began.

The deployment of up to 250 Special Forces soldiers increases U.S. forces in Syria roughly six fold and is aimed at helping militia fighters who have clawed back territory from Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant terrorist group in a string of victories.

Meanwhile, Russian deputy foreign minister Gennady Gatilov said there is no legal basis for the presence of U.S. military personnel in Syria.

The Syrian government had not given the United States permission to deploy any troops in the country, according to the deputy minister.

"Of course, they were not," Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov told reporters, when asked whether the U.S. troops had been deployed in Syria legally.

In October, the United States deployed 50 U.S. troops in Syria to help local militia to fight against the Daesh (ISIL) terrorist group.

Vast territories in Syria and neighboring Iraq have been occupied by Daesh, which has proclaimed a caliphate on the land under its control. The notorious militant group is banned in Russia, the United States and many other countries.

(Source: Sputnik)



Saudi to open Israel embassy if peace plan accepted: general

A well-connected former general in the Saudi military has said the kingdom would open an embassy in Tel Aviv if Israel accepted a Saudi initiative to end the Middle East conflict.

Anwar Eshki was asked during an Al Jazeera interview how long it would be before Riyadh would open an embassy in Israel.

"You can ask Mr. Netanyahu," Eshki replied, referring to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the Jerusalem Post reported on its website.

"If he announces that he accepts the initiative and gives all rights to Palestinians, Saudi Arabia will start to make an embassy in Tel Aviv," Eshki said.

Eshki met publicly in June with Dore Gold just before the latter was appointed director-general of the Israeli foreign ministry. Gold said then Israel had contacts with "almost every Arab state."

In the interview, Eshki said the Saudis are not interested in "Israel becoming isolated in the region."

Saudi Arabia first proposed the peace initiative in 2002, offering Arab recognition of Israel in exchange for Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Eshki also deflected the question that the Saudi government was willing to take military action in Yemen but never physically protect Palestinians in Gaza "when they are being bombed."

"I told the Iranians about that: 'You support the Palestinians by weapons, but we support them with money. When we support the Palestinians with money, we want them to live well, and you give them weapons to destroy themselves,'" he said.

Yemen has been under airstrikes by Saudi Arabia since March 26 last year



Anwar Eshki

in a bid to bring former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi back to power.

Some 8,280 people, among them 2,236 children, have reportedly been killed and over 16,000 others injured. The strikes have also taken a heavy toll on the impoverished country's infrastructure.

Eshki, 73, is the chairman of the Jeddah-based Middle East Center for Strategic and Legal Studies and a former consultant of the Saudi prince and ambassador in the U.S., Bandar bin Sultan.

On Sunday, the Jerusalem Post wrote that "rather than being isolated, Israel is being incorporated into the Saudi-led orbit."

"Part of this includes the opening of a mission in Abu Dhabi and increasing contacts in the [Persian] Gulf States," it said.

"The Saudi-led initiative has its pedigree. During the second Intifada Saudi Arabia led a peace plan to grant Israel recognition in the region if Israel withdrew from the West Bank and Gaza," the paper went on to say.

According to the Jerusalem Post, Saudi Arabia and its allies want Israel to help them confront Iran.

(Source: Press TV)

Turkey visa deal only once 'all criteria met': EU

The EU's top diplomat Federica Mogherini said that Turkey would only get visa-free travel to the bloc once it has met all the required criteria.

Turkey has demanded its citizens be allowed to enter the European Union's passport free Schengen zone without visas by June, in exchange for it taking back migrants from Europe.

But the EU insists that Turkey must meet 72 conditions before allowing visa-free travel, of which it is believed to have fulfilled about half.

"On free travel, this will be done only once all the criteria are respected, as for all countries with which we negotiate free travel for a limited period," EU foreign policy chief Mogherini said on France Inter radio.

"It was the case with Georgia, it is the case with Ukraine, it is a discussion we are having with Kosovo. There are very strict, technical criteria that must be put in place, a very severe verification must be carried out to apply this measure."

The EU struck the deal with Turkey to send back all "irregular" migrants which arrive in Greece after March 20 in a bid to halt mass migration which has created enormous strain in Europe.

Two sets of deportations expelling 325 migrants from Greece took place three weeks ago, and another 49 were sent back Tuesday.

The operation has been hampered by last-minute asylum applications and Turkey has also sounded the alarm several times about the EU failing to keep its side of the bargain.

The accord is awash with legal and moral concerns, and critics have accused the EU of sacrificing its val-



ues and overlooking Turkey's growing crackdown on free speech in order to secure the deal.

The deal also promises to speed up talks on Turkey's accession to the EU.

Mogherini said resuming talks on Turkey's bid to join the bloc was "the only way we can help Turkey modernize its state (and) respect fundamental rights including press freedom... and also hold a larger conversation for example on relaunching peace talks with the Kurds."

European Council president Donald Tusk said last week that "Europe must set clear limits to its concessions. We can negotiate money, but never our values." "Our powerlessness could lead to a temptation to blackmail Europe," he warned.

The deal has already sharply reduced the number of people crossing from Turkey to Greece, though the International Organization for Migration has said the numbers are "once again ticking up," possibly as smugglers get more creative.

If Ankara meets its side of the agreement, the European Commission has promised to recommend next month that EU states approve visa-free travel for Turks.

(Source: AFP)

Paris attacks suspect Abdeslam transferred to France

Key Paris attacks suspect Salah Abdeslam has been transferred from Belgium to France where he charged later Wednesday over the bloody rampage, prosecutors said.

Abdeslam, a French national of Moroccan origin who grew up in Belgium, is believed to be the last surviving member of the terror squad that killed 130 people in the French capital in November.

His French lawyer, Frank Berton, told the regional newspaper Voix du Nord that his client was "anxious to explain himself" in France. He said he had spoken to Abdeslam only once and had found him "very despondent".

Paris prosecutor Francois Molins said 26-year-old Abdeslam was formally placed under arrest after arriving on French soil at 9:05 am (0705 GMT).

"He will be presented to judges during the day with a view to being charged," Molins said in a statement.

Sources close to the investigation said Abdeslam had been flown into France under tight security.

Justice Minister Jean-Jacques Urvoas said he would be placed in isolation in a prison in the Paris region and monitored by "hardened guards trained in the de-

tention of persons believed to be dangerous."

Abdeslam was arrested in Brussels on March 18 after four months on the run as Europe's most wanted man.

Prosecutors believe he was in charge of logistics for the coordinated series of attacks on Paris cafes, a concert hall and the national stadium, which were planned in Brussels.

Abdeslam rented the cars that the ISIL terrorist group squad used to travel to Paris, and booked the rooms where they stayed before launching the worst ever terror attacks on French soil.

His brother Brahim detonated his suicide vest in a bar, and after his arrest in Brussels Salah said he had been expected to do the same outside the national stadium, but had backed out at the last minute.

However Abdeslam has refused to answer questions since the day after his arrest.

Abdeslam's arrest came just days before coordinated attacks on Brussels airport and a metro station that left 32 people dead, and police have uncovered clear links between Abdeslam and the three Brussels suicide bombers.



Brussels investigators believe the attacks in their city and those in Paris were carried out by the same cell.

A key Paris suspect, Mohamed Abrini, who was wanted after being spotted in a video with Abdeslam en route to the French capital, turned out to be the so-called "man in the hat" seen in CCTV footage with two bombers shortly before the Brussels attack.

■ 'Little moron from Molenbeek'

Abrini grew up with Abdeslam in the gritty Brussels suburb of Molenbeek along with several other suspects, who

all share a similar story of getting on the wrong side of the law and becoming radicalized.

His Belgian lawyer Sven Mary gave a lengthy interview to the Liberation newspaper that appeared on Wednesday, describing the difficulty of representing such an infamous client.

"There have been moments when I thought of giving up. If I had known about the Brussels attacks, maybe I would never have taken this case," Mary said.

He described his client as a "little moron from Molenbeek, more a follower than a leader. He has the intelligence of an empty ashtray. He is the perfect example of the GTA (Grand Theft Auto video game) generation who thinks he lives in a video game."

"I asked him if he had read the Quran, and he replied that he had looked up what it meant on the Internet."

He said the attacks suspects should be judged by an "international criminal court. These people committed war crimes."

Mary said he had spoken to Abdeslam seven or eight times and he still was unsure how he had ended up radicalized. (Source: AFP)

NEWS

U.S. election: Trump and Clinton win in Northeast poll

Donald Trump swept all five presidential primaries held on Tuesday, strengthening his grip on the Republican party race for a U.S. presidential nomination, while Democrat Hillary Clinton raced ahead of rival Bernie Sanders.

Trump demolished Ted Cruz and John Kasich in Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island - a stunning show of force by a candidate seen as a populist political savior by millions despite being loathed by the party establishment.

Trump's campaign "is moving slightly to the centre" in order to appease the Republican establishment, political strategist Morris Reid told Al Jazeera.

"Once he secures the numbers, I think you'll see him nose dive to the centre," Reid said.

"I consider myself the presumptive nominee," the real estate mogul told a crowd at Trump Tower in New York, despite still being short of the 1,237 delegates required to win the nomination outright.

"As far as I'm concerned, it's over."

Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton won in four states: Connecticut, Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania.

Trump and Clinton were expected to do well in Tuesday's five contests, which also included Rhode Island where Democrat rival Bernie Sanders won.

Sanders' team has sent mixed signals about his standing in the race, with one top adviser suggesting a tough night would push the Vermont senator to reassess his bid and another vowing to fight "all the way to the convention" in July.

"Despite outpacing Clinton in political ads in all five states, Sanders couldn't overcome Clinton's wall of institutional support within the Democratic party," Al Jazeera's Kimberly Halkett reported from Baltimore.

Clinton was already looking past Sanders, barely mentioning him during recent campaign events.

"What a great night," the Democratic frontrunner told a crowd of supporters in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

"Let's go forward, let's win the nomination, and in July let's return as a unified party," she said.

Trump's huge night

The 68-year-old former secretary of state, however, deepened her attacks on Trump, casting the billionaire businessman as out of touch with Americans.

"If you want to be president of the United States, you've got to get familiar with the United States," Clinton said.

"Don't just fly that big jet in and land it and go make a big speech and insult everybody you can think of."

Trump's night was nothing short of huge, as he cleared 50 percent support in all five states, with nearly all precincts reporting. In Rhode Island, he earned 64 percent, trouncing Kasich (24 percent) and Cruz (10 percent).

Most importantly, the bombastic 69-year-old extended his lead in the all-important race for delegates who will officially choose the Republican nominee at the party's convention in July.

"Ted Cruz realizes that his brand of conservative Republicanism doesn't play particularly well in the northeast part of the country," Al Jazeera's Alan Fisher, reporting from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Trump's triumph comes in the heated aftermath of the revelation that Cruz and Kasich, desperate to prevent the frontrunner from securing the nomination, were teaming up to block him in future races.

"Within 72 hours of this pact being announced, Kasich said he wouldn't recommend to his supporters not to vote for him in Indiana. That was really just manna from heaven as far as Donald Trump was concerned, a real propaganda victory... saying that politicians can make promises but they can't get anything done," Fisher said.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Russia, India sign contract to supply S-400 missile defense system

Russia and India have signed a contract for the supply of advanced S-400 air defense systems, a senior Indian defense official has said. The delivery will happen "as soon as possible."

The signing of the contract has been confirmed by Rao Inderjit Singh, Minister of State for Defense Production of India, at an international security forum in Moscow, RIA Novosti and Interfax news agencies reported.

"We have signed this contract," Singh told Interfax. As for the start of deliveries of the order, he noted "it is difficult to say. As soon as possible."

Russia's Defense Ministry has not yet commented on the reports.

The S-400 is the latest and most advanced of the long-range surface-to-air missiles produced by Russia. The Russian military is the only operator of the system, but China and India are expected to be the first foreign nations to receive it.

Media reports in 2015 said that India wants to buy five S-400 battalions.

Russia recently delivered a previous-generation S-300 variant of the air defense system to Iran, implementing a key defense deal between the two countries after lengthy discussions.

(Source: RT)



NEWS

Iran-Germany Joint Economic Committee meeting to be held after 15 years

Sigmar Gabriel, the German vice chancellor and economy minister, will travel to Iran next week (May 2016) to attend the Iran-Germany Joint Economic Committee meeting in Tehran, a meeting held for the first time after 15 years.

This is Gabriel's second visit since the nuclear deal and with the hope that it will upswing the economic relations between the two countries.



Sigmar Gabriel, German vice chancellor and economy minister

"I expect strong measures since Mr. Gabriel is not only the minister of economy, he is also Germany's vice chancellor," says Helene Rang, the executive director of Germany's Near and Middle East Association.

Volker Treier, the managing director of the economic policy division of the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce, has also pointed to the importance of the visit to Iran and said, "It has been months that political and economic officials from different countries are traveling to Iran seeking billions in contracts, while Chancellor Angela Merkel is maintaining distance with Iran."

Since French President Francois Hollande has already met Iran's President Hassan Rouhani a few months ago, and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi already did the same, German companies expect that the government gives the signal to Iran that the revitalization of relations between the two countries is a subject of highest order.

Although much is still running slow, there is a lot of confidence in the German economy, with regard to Iran. German investors hope at least for one or two contracts to be signed during the visit, even if the scope of these contracts is not very wide. The fact that the Siemens group recently announced a comprehensive turbine cooperation with an Iranian partner, is seen as a good omen.

Treier is optimistic that economic relationship between the two countries which was greatly reduced as a result of sanctions, will rise again to 4-5 billion euros within the next two to three years. He hoped that the volume of trade will climb to 10 billion euros in the next five to seven years.

However, there are still some problems regarding business in Iran. The main problem that prevents many German companies from boosting deals with Iran is the lack of funding through German banks. "The key issue that needs to be solved in short term", said Rang.

Most German banks holding back on lending in order not to get lost in a maze of confusion which can cost them in the end. The reason is that they believe it is not yet clear which businesses are really allowed in Iran and which are still not, since they believe some of the sanctions are still in force.

Treier believes that when this problem is solved more financial institutions will be willing to get involved then also the instrument of state export credit guarantees for business with Iran should be available again.

Germany was the first Western country to dispatch a high-ranking political and trade delegation to Iran after nuclear deal. Gabriel led German officials and corporate managers on the business visit to Tehran.

During Gabriel's last visit, Iranian and German officials discussed economizing water and energy consumption, improving efficiency in power plants, building new power plants, constructing renewable energy power plants as well as new enterprises.

(Source: agencies)

Xi urges focus on jobs with China economy under growing strain

Chinese President Xi Jinping said more should be done to deal with unemployment as the government tries to curb overcapacity in state-owned enterprises, anticipating "many hardship" as the world's second-largest economy comes under increasing strain.

"As supply-side structural reform deepens, some employees will be laid off," the official Xinhua news agency reported Xi as saying during an April 24-27 visit to Anhui province. "We should pay more attention to employment, create more jobs, and implement and improve assistance measures."

Xi's remarks underscore the tightrope Chinese authorities must tread as they seek to overhaul the bloated \$18 trillion state-owned enterprise sector, with labor unrest emerging as a key concern. Steady employment and rising salaries are crucial to the shift toward an economy premised on consumption and services, and they also underpin the legitimacy of the Chinese government.

(Source: Bloomberg)

G U M P

Over 1,700 companies to attend Iran Oil Show

"This is the country's first oil show in post-sanction era and number of foreign participants has notably increased," he underlined.

As he added, China, South Korea, Turkey, Germany, Spain, Italy, France, Austria and Finland are among the countries that plan to set up their special pavilions in this show, which will be held at Tehran Permanent International Fairground.

On February 9, Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said that \$200 billion investment is required to develop the country's oil industry.

"Internal resources are not enough to meet such need, therefore we should attract foreign investment", the minister noted.

Foreign investors can purchase shares of Iranian state-run companies

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran Privatization Organization (IPO) is transferring shares of 140 Iranian state-run companies to the private sector, and foreign investors are welcomed to make purchase if they wish to, Deputy Head of IPO Davoud Khani said, the IRIB news agency reported on Wednesday.

Expressing content that implementation of the nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1 has set a proper bed for IPO and domestic investors to enhance their levels of ties with foreign counterparts, the official admitted that in a bid to improve economic infrastructure and reinforce domestic private sector, his organization has provided foreign applicants for buying Iranian shares with a list of the governmental companies with available stakes for being transferred.

According to him, IPO has transferred over half of the total of 1,100 state-run companies to the private sector since the Iranian calendar year of 1380 (March 21, 2001-March 20, 2002), however, some of the companies have been eliminated from the transfer list due to some problems.

Iranian state-run companies have transferred 109 billion rials (about \$3.144 million) worth of their shares to the private sector since the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 20), the Fars news agency reported on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, 29.662 trillion rials (about \$855.799 million) worth of the shares of state-run companies were transferred to the private sector in the past calendar year of 1394



(which ended on March 19).

The Iranian government envisioned a large privatization program in the Fifth Five-Year National Development Plan (2010-2015), aiming to privatize about 20 percent of the

state-owned firms each year.

Under the present interpretation of the Article 44 of Iran's Constitution, hundreds of state-owned companies have been privatized.

Monthly car imports into Iran up 164% yr/yr

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran imported 1,694 cars worth \$41 million in the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-April 19, 2016), recording 164 percent rise in number compared to the same month last year, the Tasnim news agency reported on Wednesday.

Some 976,836 cars were manufactured

in Iran in the past Iranian calendar year (which ended on March 19), a 13.7 percent fall from the past year.

It is while the country's car production had rose 53.4 percent in the previous calendar year compared to its preceding year.

Iran is scheduled to produce 1.35 million cars by the end of the current calendar year of 1395 (which will end on March 20, 2017),

according to Deputy Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Mohsen Salehinia.

As Salehinia underlined, the government seeks to improve the quality as well as the quantity of the domestically produced cars on the way to boost their exports, the IRIB reported on April 6.

"Iran has commenced cooperation with foreign partners in auto sector," he added,

"One of Iranian giant auto-makers has signed joint venture with one of the foreign eminent car-producers and the executive officials of the agreement have been assigned."

The deputy minister also noted that the cooperatively produced cars will be unveiled and presented to the domestic market in the last two months of the current Iranian Year.

IEA forecasts 4m bpd oil output for Iran by end of decade: World Bank

The International Energy Agency states that with foreign investment and technology, the Islamic Republic of Iran could increase its oil production capacity to 4 million barrels per day (bpd) by the end of the decade, the World Bank said in its April 2016 Commodity Markets Outlook report with the theme of resource development in an era of cheap commodities.

The Iran's oil output is expected to continue climbing, from 2.9 million bpd at end-2015 toward its estimated capacity of 3.6 million bpd, the report said.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has increased output 0.4 million bpd following the lifting of sanctions in January. Iran's ex-

ports have resumed to Europe, and Asian buyers have also increased purchases.

Crude oil prices are projected to average \$41/bbl in 2016, a decline of 19 percent from last year. This implies small increases through the rest of the year as the oversupply in the oil market diminishes. The market surplus is expected to extend in the first half of the year amid weak seasonal demand, but stocks are expected to fall during the second half of the year as refinery demand increases and U.S. production declines steepen. OPEC production excluding the Islamic Republic of Iran is expected to remain flat, while Iranian output is expected to climb by some 0.5 million bpd.

Energy prices fell 21 percent in the first quarter of 2016. Oil prices led the decline by dropping 22 percent owing to resilient non-OPEC oil production, expanding supplies from Iran, and weak seasonal demand.

At a meeting in Doha on April 17th, sixteen OPEC and non-OPEC countries failed to freeze production, as many anticipated. Non-OPEC members were Azerbaijan, Colombia, Mexico, Oman, and Russia. OPEC members Libya and the Islamic Republic of Iran did not attend. This failure was attributed to disagreement over whether to include the Islamic Republic of Iran and other producers in the freeze.

(Source: World Bank)

Oil prices jump on weak dollar, strong investor appetite

Crude oil futures rose around half a dollar on Wednesday and remained near 2016 highs on the back of strong investor sentiment and a weak dollar, although analysts warned this month's bull-run could soon run out of steam.

International Brent crude futures were trading at \$46.24 per barrel at 0535 GMT, up 50 cents, or 1.1 percent from their last settlement.

Brent received extra support from reports that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait appear no closer to restarting their jointly operated Khafji oilfield, which produced 280,000 to 300,000 barrels per day (bpd) before environmental problems forced a planned 18-month closure in October 2014.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was up 46 cents, or 1 percent, at \$44.50 a barrel.

WTI was further bolstered after the American Petroleum Institute (API) reported a draw of nearly 1.1 million barrels in U.S. crude inventories last week versus analysts' expectations for a 2.4



million-barrel build in a Reuters poll. Brent and WTI were near respective 2016 highs of \$46.49 and \$44.83 hit in the previous session.

Beyond strong investment appetite from financial traders, analysts said crude was being lifted by a falling dollar, which has shed 5 percent in value against a basket of other leading currencies since the beginning of the year.

A weak dollar makes fuel imports cheaper for countries using other currencies, potentially spurring demand.

(Source: Reuters)

Asia stocks slip with central banks in focus

TOKYO (Reuters) — Asian stocks were mostly lower on Wednesday, as investors stayed cautious ahead of U.S. and Japanese central bank policy decisions, while crude oil prices hovered near 2016 highs.

Spreadbetters expected Europe to behave similarly, forecasting Britain's FTSE, Germany's DAX and France's CAC to open little changed.

Japan's Nikkei lost 0.4 percent as Japan-based suppliers of iPhone parts fell after Apple Inc reported its first-ever decline in iPhone sales and its first revenue drop in over a decade overnight.

Taiwan stocks also fell, weighed down by a drop in shares of Apple suppliers.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan retreated 0.5 percent.

Australian shares were flat after weak local inflation data revived prospects for a rate cut there and prompted a brief spike.

South Korea's Kospi shed 0.2 per-



cent while Shanghai nudged up 0.1 percent.

While the U.S. Federal Reserve is expected to hold interest rates steady later in the day when a two-day Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting ends, it could also take a more upbeat view on the economy, keeping the way open for future rate rises.

The Bank of Japan makes its policy decision on Thursday amid some speculation it could ramp up its already extensive monetary stimulus scheme, which includes negative interest rates on some deposits at the BOJ.

Twitter shares plunge on weak earnings



Shares in Twitter plunged 13.6% after the results were out.

Twitter had 310 million monthly users in the first quarter while revenue was \$594.5m (£407.89m), which missed analyst expectations.

The company has for years struggled to generate profits from its large base of users.

Twitter's revenue forecast for the current quarter was given as between \$590m and \$610m, also short of what investors had been hoping for.

"These are troubling times for Twitter," says the BBC's North America technology correspondent, Dave Lee.

Apple revenue falls for first time since 2003



Apple reported a 13% drop in its second quarter revenue on Tuesday as sales of iPhones slipped.

The technology giant reported quarterly sales of \$50.56bn (£34.39bn) down from \$58bn last year - the first fall in sales for the company since 2003.

Apple sold 51.2 million iPhones during the quarter, down from 61.2 million in the same quarter of 2015.

China was a particular weak spot - sales there fell 26%. Results were also hit by the impact of a stronger dollar.

Apple shares fell 8% in afterhours trading. Its shares have fallen close to 20% over the last twelve months.

Apple's chief executive Tim Cook said the company performed well "in the face of strong macroeconomic headwinds".

Adidas raises 2016 guidance after first-quarter earnings jump



German sporting goods group Adidas hiked its guidance for 2016 sales and earnings a second time as it reported a 38 percent jump in quarterly underlying profit, citing strong brand momentum.

Adidas said on Wednesday it now expected its 2016 currency-adjusted sales to grow by about 15 percent, compared with a previous forecast for a rise of 10 to 12 percent.

It sees net profit from continuing operations rising by 15 to 18 percent this year, compared with previous guidance for a 10 to 12 percent growth.

Shares were indicated to rise 3.4 percent to the top of the German blue-chip index .GDAXI, which was seen unchanged in pre-market trade at brokerage Lang & Schwarz.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Poetic pilgrimage: Iran's Hafez and Sa'di tombs

Found in their native Shiraz, the capital of Fars Province in the southwest of Iran, are the tombs of two of the country's finest ever poets and minds, Hafez and Sa'di. These tombs have evolved with the world and reputations of their poetry, and have long been a popular tourist destination and an emotive pilgrimage for readers everywhere. Discover why, and find two tombs surprisingly full of both literature and life.

It is a question that has been faced by perhaps every civilization in every corner of the globe: how best to memorialize the life of a political or cultural leader? In trying to answer to this question, nations have produced many of the world's great architectural triumphs and seminal artifacts. The Great Pyramid of Cheops in Giza, Egypt, for example, was built as a tomb for the Pharaoh Khufu, and remained the tallest man-made structure in the world for nearly four millennia. The memorial to Abraham Lincoln in Washington, D.C. came to represent freedom and unity to the extent that Martin Luther King chose it as the location to deliver his 'I Have A Dream' speech from.

In trying to memorialize Shakespeare's death, his friends created one of the most important texts of all time, the First Folio, which brings together all but two of his extant plays for the first time ever. And in trying to eulogize the lives and works of two of their greatest poets, Hafez and Sa'di, 15th century Iranians built two tombs that have long since drawn in thousands of pilgrims looking for solace, inspiration or advice from these poetic masters.

Just as how we read and understand literary greats of the past changes through time, so have these tombs adapted to reflect the evolution of the legends of Hafez and Sa'di. Both began as small memorials, with Hafez's tomb constructed in northern Shiraz in 1452, and Sa'di's later in the 1860s. In fact, in Hafez's case it was the texts themselves that led to the development of larger mausoleums, with successive shahs ordering restorations based upon what they read as omens in his collected works, known as the Divan.

However, we have architect and historian André Godard to thank for their current states. As director of the Iranian Archeological Services, he oversaw their renovation in the 1950s, leaving Iran with two grand structures perfectly fitting the grand reputations of these two poets, both within Iran and throughout the world, with each being able to now accommodate triple the amount of visitors than they could before the work of Godard.

In fact, reputation seems an insufficiently strong word for the impact of these two poets on Iranian culture. It is said that every household in Iran is guaranteed to own two books: the Koran and the Divan (a neat piece of symmetry as the name Hafez itself is a ceremonial name given to one who has memorized the Koran in its entirety). Sa'di has an equally strong reputation, generally considered not only one of the Middle East's finest poets, but also one of its great thinkers. Many still rely on his wisdom, not only by visiting the tomb but also reading his works, of which



Roof of the Hafez Tomb

Golestan (The Rose Garden) and Bostan (The Orchard) are the most famous.

Many seek solace in his aphorisms, many of which call for a universal love and removal of all barriers between each other, a message that still holds as sound advice not only in present-day Iran but across the Middle East and worldwide. We see this in perhaps his most famous work, Bani Adam (Children of Adam), here translated by M. Arianpoor:

Human beings are members of a whole,

*In creation of one essence and soul.
If one member is afflicted with pain,
Other members uneasy will remain.*

*If you've no sympathy for human pain,
The name of human you cannot retain!*



Underground pool, under Sa'di Tomb

The wisdom of this poem in particular has spread far outside of Iran, with Barack Obama using it in a speech with Iranian leaders, and the message even being inscribed on the entrance to the United Nations building in New York as perfectly summing up its objectives. This shows us why Sa'di is seen as such a great thinker in Iran; after all, in Bani Adam he delivers a message of hope for humanity in the 13th century it would take leaders two world wars and nearly seven centuries to express

in the establishment of the United Nations. Their reputations confirmed, then, what about the tombs themselves? Central to Godard's expansions are the words of the poets themselves. In the Hafez mausoleum, he added 16 pillars to the original four of the 1773 memorial hall, creating a veranda on which are engraved many of Hafez's ghazals (a four-line Arabic poetic form based on rhyming couplets and a refrain) and excerpts from his longer works and poems. The location of the tomb is also central to its literary inhabitant, with the memorial placed in the Musalla Gardens, which featured heavily in Hafez's poetry.

Thus, in a sense what is so wonderful about the Hafez tomb is that it is almost a text in itself, with the engravings of the poetry in the locations in which they were written about really serving to place the visitor within the literary space of Hafez's poetry. It is no surprise, then, that it has become such a potent place of pilgrimage for lovers of literature from all over the world.

Sa'di's tomb presents us with a different, but by no means less powerful, atmosphere. As suits a poet and thinker so concerned with issues of universal humanity, life flows through the Sa'di tomb. This is the case in its murals, which intricately depict trees of life on beautiful Persian tiles, and in its gardens, where flowers and cypresses grow in abundance almost in celebration of the great poet. Take a few steps down below the tomb and there is an underground water system, used by local people since Sa'di's time and full of fish, which travel through the various channels leading to the central pool.

With all of this, it is no wonder that these have become such popular tourist

destinations, offering many experiences for many people just as the work of these two writers too does. These are not only beautiful tombs, but offer unique opportunities to immerse oneself into the worlds of Sa'di and Hafez, reflecting in the beauty and calm about the universal emotions and problems that unite us with the past, just as the pool under Sa'di's tomb links us directly to the past through everyone else who has wet their hands in the pond, from literary pilgrims to the great poet himself and even further back into history.

(Source: Culture trip)

A CLOSER LOOK Baluch embroidery

Baluch embroidery is a form of decorative needlework associated with the Baluchis. The Baluchis form an ethnic group in the extreme southeast of Iran and neighbouring parts of Pakistan (together generally called Baluchistan), and in the extreme southwest of Afghanistan. In addition, Baluch families can be found in India as well as in the Persian Gulf States and Oman.

A major feature of Baluch clothing is the embroidery that appears on the trousers and dresses worn by women. The cap is the main embroidered item for men. The basic outfit for a Baluch woman or girl consists of (a) a pair of baggy trousers (shalwar), (b) a knee-length dress (pashk) with pleats (chin) on either side of the waist, and (c) a large rectangular shawl or head covering (chadar). Nowadays, the trousers and the dress are made in the same material, with a complementary colored head covering.



A Baluch woman's dress invariably has four panels of embroidery (doch): a large yoke covering the chest (jig), which contains a central patterned strip (toi), two panels on the sleeve cuffs (banzar; banzari), and a long, narrow, rectangular pocket (pado, las), which runs from just above the waist line to the hem of the skirt.

The embroidery used for these panels is often referred to as pakka, meaning firm or solid, as the ground material is completely covered with fine stitching. The designs are geometric and often worked in lines. The style and quality of the embroidery depend on whether the garment is going to be used on a daily basis or is intended for a feast, such as a wedding. Cotton yarn is used for less complex forms of embroidery designs for daily dresses, while silk garments with silk and metallic threads are used for special occasions.

The basic designs, before the actual embroidering, are normally first printed onto the ground material using very small wooden or metal blocks. Sometimes, hand embroidered panels from worn-out dresses are cut off and re-sewn onto new garments.

Boys and young men wear caps (topi) that have a characteristic, scalloped shape cut out at the centre front. Normally, women embroider these caps for their husbands and sons. The colours used for the caps tend to be in orange, pink or red thread, with gold or silver coloured plate or lurex. In addition, small pieces of mirror (shisha) are often worked into the designs.

(Source: trc-leiden.nl)



First Call

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- Deadline of Extended Abstract Submission: May 21, 2016
- Conference: 31 Oct. - 2 Nov. 2016

Venue

- Olympic Hotel, Tehran, Iran

Address

- ICOPMAS Secretariat, 6th Floor Ports & Maritime Organization (PMO), Shahidi St., Shahid Haghani Highway, Vanak Sq., Tehran, Iran
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- icopmas@yahoo.com

For further information about registration and extended abstract submission, please visit conference website at:
<http://icopmas.pmo.ir>

PICTURE OF THE DAY Mehr/Alireza Eslampanah



The 4000-meter summit of Shahvar is located near Shahrud, Semnan Province

When schools and students become spoils of war

By Mausi Segun and Zama Coursen-Neff

Two years have passed since Boko Haram abducted 276 schoolgirls in Chibok, Nigeria, and 219 of the girls remain missing. The anniversary, and that of the kidnapping of another 300 schoolchildren from another town, marks a grim roll call for education in the country's northeast: more than 910 schools destroyed, 1,500 forced to close, at least 611 teachers deliberately killed, 19,000 forced to flee. Close to a million school-age children have fled the violence and now have little or no access to schooling.

These are children like 14-year-old Falimotu, who was in class in a school in northeast Nigeria when Boko Haram fighters, their faces wrapped in black scarves, entered her school and started shooting.

Her teacher was killed. A boy from the next class was shot in the leg as he ran and later died, and the fighters said they would return if the children

didn't stop going to school.

Falimotu stayed home for three months before her family fled. Nigerian soldiers moved into the school, causing more students to drop out.

Five months later, Boko Haram attacked, drove the soldiers away, looted ammunition stored there, and burned the school to ashes.

Brutal attacks

Boko Haram's increasingly brutal attacks aren't an aberration - Nigeria is ground zero for a practice that more and more characterizes war: the intentional targeting of schools, teachers and students.

At least 30 countries have had a pattern of such attacks in the past decade, according to the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack.

This includes places well-known for attacks on schools, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria, as well as many others, such as southern Thailand, South Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen.

Rami, a 12-year-old boy from Syria, described how government forces shelled his school with a tank.



He had left science class to go to the toilet when "(t)wo shells hit the fourth floor. I was on the first floor. People started running away." Pro-

government armed groups known as shabiha "came into the school and shot the windows, broke the computers. After that, I only went back to take

Military use of schools is pervasive, deeply harmful, and completely preventable. In the worst cases, students and teachers have been killed when opposing forces attacked the occupying troops.

my exams."

Boko Haram's name is loosely translated as "Western education is forbidden". The group literally sees Western-style schools as the enemy.

In other countries, schools are attacked because they are symbols of governments, they educate girls, they are vulnerable soft targets or, too often, because opposing forces are present.

Militaries and armed groups have used schools as barracks, bases, sniper posts, weapons depots and for other military purposes in at least 26 countries with conflict in the past decade.

Although in many instances troops use schools for their own convenience, some local community members may see them - and the troops may see themselves - as protectors.

But moving soldiers into schools is no solution. We spoke with people in northeast Nigeria who had invited soldiers in for this very reason, only to find that Boko Haram attacked the schools precisely because the troops were there.

At the same time, some attacks might have been prevented by other methods. Many schools and dormitories had no perimeter fences and security gates, even as attacks were escalating.

Local residents and school staff stated that when they reported Boko Haram threats to security forces, the forces ignored them - or the government provided untrained or inept civilian security guards.

In April 2012 Boko Haram fighters raided an unfenced government-run boarding school in a remote part of Nigeria's northeast.

Though no one was killed, a teacher saw the return of only a small fraction of students. "I don't blame them," he said. The "school still has no fence or quarters for teachers four years later."

Military use of schools

Military use of schools is pervasive, deeply harmful, and completely preventable. In the worst cases, students and teachers have been killed when opposing forces attacked the occupying troops.

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Not so rich anymore, Persian Gulf Arabs enter world of cuts and strikes

A cushy government job, cheap fuel, a mortgage-free home and a bit of five-star travel and luxury shopping were never too much to expect in Persian Gulf.

Yet what previously was taken for granted in the oil-rich region is being replaced by something more familiar to the western world: spending cuts, taxation, a scarcity of jobs and even strikes. There's discontentment among young populations rarely seen before as the countries come to terms with the collapse in energy prices blowing holes in budgets.

Kuwait had its first walkout by oil workers in two decades last week as 13,000 employees protested cuts to pay and benefits. Disgruntled Saudis, presented on Monday with a royal blueprint for life after oil, are complaining about the cost of water. Even in Qatar, the world's richest country, locals were told on Tuesday their gasoline subsidies were being scrapped.

Reality dawns

People aged under 30 make up more than half of the 44 million population living in the six Persian Gulf monarchies. While wealth has barely been dented in Qatar or the United Arab Emirates, more of them elsewhere are having to get used to a future with less abundance than that of their forebears.

In Oman, marketing graduate Tumahder Allawati, 22, has completed two unpaid internships, applied for two-dozen jobs and even went for interviews at nurseries and schools. After applying for posts in several government ministries, she was told not to bother because there's a hiring freeze this year.

Allawati, whose husband earns 800 Omani rials (\$2,078) a month, said that after paying the rent and bills, the new-lyweds are left with around \$210 of dis-



posable income. "Everything is getting more costly and no one is willing to give you a chance," she said.

More fragile

There is an unwritten agreement in the area where populations agreed to delegate the running of the state to ruling families so long as there was no tax and they shared the spoils, United Arab Emirates commentator Sultan Al Qassemi wrote in February.

That's now under threat, he said. "The traditional social contract has never been more fragile," he said.

Oil's slump could be "a blessing in disguise" to drive social change, said Kuwaiti business owner Lubna Saif Abbas, 52. It will push more Kuwaitis to become productive, ambitious and hardworking as they experience "real jobs," she said.

"Many in government jobs are just clocking in and out and not really doing

jobs that are needed by the economy," she said. "It's just a way for the government to pay them."

Draining budgets

Even talking about austerity would have seemed incredible as recently as a few years ago as Persian Gulf sheikhdoms used their vast oil wealth to remake their region. They have built man-made islands, financial centers, airports and ports that turned the Arabian desert into a banking and travel hub and the host of soccer's showpiece World Cup in 2022.

The International Monetary Fund forecasts a budget deficit of 12.3 percent of economic output this year for the six members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, which is led by Saudi Arabia. Before last year, when oil prices sank 35 percent, you have to go back to the 1990s to find anything other than a surplus.

Economic growth is also slowing, and based on the latest IMF projections, governments and private businesses in Middle East oil exporting countries would be able to create 7 million jobs, about 3 million short of the expected number of labor market entrants.

Restless youth

Responses vary between countries, but all the monarchies are aware of the dangers of discontented youth. An AS-DAA Burson-Marsteller survey of 3,500 young people in 16 Arab countries published on April 12 found that a majority wants subsidies to continue, while nearly half thought that any higher prices should apply only to expatriates.

The Saudis, who recorded a budget deficit of nearly \$100 billion last year, are planning a "restructuring of subsidies" while also developing a mechanism to provide cash to low- and middle-income Saudis who rely on them, the deputy crown prince told Bloomberg. King Salman fired the minister in charge of water after a bungled subsidy reduction led to astronomical bills.

In Kuwait, parliament voted to raise utility costs for foreigners and businesses for the first time in half a century. The homes of Kuwaitis would be exempted as more people feel the squeeze, at least compared with what they were used to.

Mohamad Al Kharsan has worked for the Kuwaiti state for about seven years. Aged 32, he still lives with his parents because moving into his own home would shrink his monthly disposable income to just over 200 dinars (\$663).

For many of his generation, it is tough "making ends meet on a government job salary," he said. "The golden years when we used to spend the summers in Europe and most people owned two homes instead of one are long gone." (Source: Bloomberg)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Brexit would cost Britons a month's salary by 2020: OECD report

Britain leaving the European Union after a June 23 referendum would lead to the average working Briton losing the equivalent of a month's salary by 2020, according to an OECD report due out later on Wednesday, cited by BBC radio.

OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría told the broadcaster in an interview it would be a bad decision to leave the 28-member bloc.

"We made a whole series of calculations and we came out saying Brexit is a tax ... It is equivalent to roughly missing on one month's income within four years and then it carries on ... and there's a consistent loss," Gurría said.

"The whole idea here is we have done the comparisons, we have done the simulations, we have gone through the different ways in which this will happen. In the end we come out and say why we are spending so much time, so much effort and so much talent in trying to find ways to compensate for a bad decision where you don't necessarily have to take the bad decision." (Source: Reuters)

German consumer morale brightens heading into May

German consumer morale improved heading into May with shoppers becoming increasingly upbeat about their future income, a survey showed on Wednesday, in a further sign that private consumption will continue to support growth in Europe's largest economy.

The GfK consumer sentiment indicator, based on a survey of around 2,000 Germans, rose to 9.7 heading into May from 9.4 a month earlier.

This was the highest reading since September 2015 and beat the Reuters consensus forecast for the headline figure to remain stable at 9.4.

"The mood among German consumers has hardly ever been better," said Rolf Buerkl, a researcher for Nuremberg-based GfK, adding that consumers were expecting another pay hike this year due to the solid labor market and record-high employment.

The GfK survey showed that consumers were more upbeat about their earnings for the next 12 months, with the index for income expectations rising by seven points to 57.5. This was the highest level since July 2015.

The willingness to buy improved by more than five points to 55.4 while consumers' expectations for the overall economic development brightened by nearly six points to 6.3. (Source: Reuters)

The International Monetary Fund forecasts a budget deficit of 12.3 percent of economic output this year for the six members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council.



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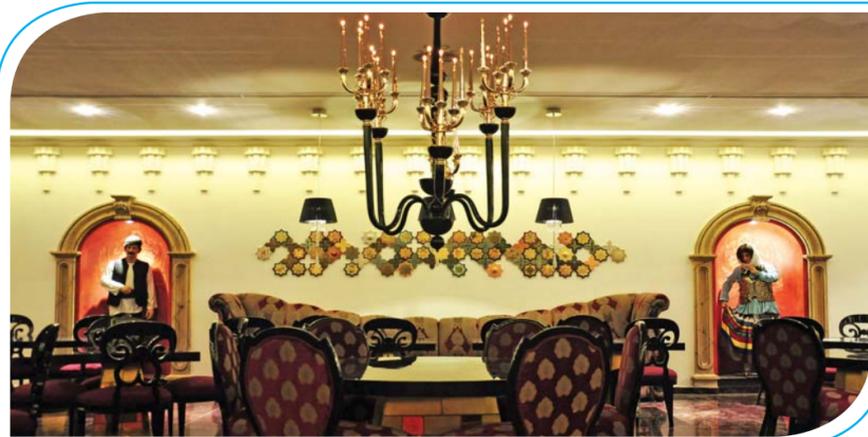


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NEWS IN BRIEF

Mind-controlled drones: the newest way to fly?

The University of Florida's inaugural brain-computer interface (BCI) drone competition last weekend was a success for its 16 competitors, who used brain monitors to propel small UAVs through a 10-yard sprint across a basketball court. But the world's first ever mind-controlled drone race was also heralded as an achievement for the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) platform, and other technologies powered by brain waves.



The process was made possible by a BCI computer program which had the "racers" focus on digital cubes displayed on a laptop screen that translated into the drones' movements. An electroencephalogram (EEG) worn on their foreheads picks up the brain's commands, which programmers' codes then translate into ones that the drones, hovering over the court, can understand.

"With events like this, we're popularizing the use of BCI instead of it being stuck in the research lab," Chris Crawford, a doctoral student in computer science, told the Associated Press. "BCI was a technology that was geared specifically for medical purposes, and in order to expand this to the general public, we actually have to embrace these consumer brand devices and push them to the limit."

Brain-powered control is not a brand-new science: earlier advances are already being applied to developments in automobile manufacturing, artificial limbs for amputees and trauma victims, and even the control of others' bodies. But while the tech has been used before, it's now becoming accessible to people outside of medical and research settings and could provide progress in a variety of disciplines. (Source: The CSM)

Treating pregnant women for depression may benefit not just themselves but their babies as well. A study, in the May issue of *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, included 7,267 pregnant women, of whom 831 had symptoms of depression. After controlling for maternal age, race, income, body mass index and other health and behavioral characteristics, the researchers found that depressive symptoms were associated with a 27 percent increased relative risk of preterm birth (less than 37 weeks of gestation), an 82 percent increased risk of very preterm birth (less than 32 weeks of gestation), and a 28 percent increased risk of having a baby small for gestational age.

They also found that among those who were treated with antidepressants for depression — about a fifth of those with the diagnosis — there was no association with increased risk for any of these problems. But they acknowledge that this group was quite small, which limits the power to draw conclusions. Still, the lead author, Dr. Kartik K. Venkatesh, a clinical fellow in obstetrics and gynecology at Harvard, said that it was important to screen mothers for depression, not only for their health but for that of their babies.

"By screening early in pregnancy, you could identify those at higher risk and counsel them about the importance of treatment," he said. "Treating these women for depression may have real benefits." (Source: The NYT)

Treating pregnant women for depression may benefit baby, too

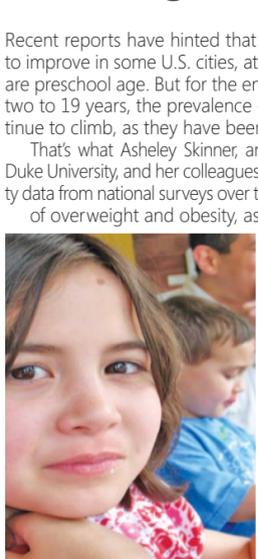
Recent reports have hinted that childhood obesity is beginning to improve in some U.S. cities, at least for the youngest kids who are preschool age. But for the entire population of children ages two to 19 years, the prevalence of overweight and obesity continue to climb, as they have been since 1999.

That's what Asheley Skinner, an associate professor medicine at Duke University, and her colleagues found when they analyzed obesity data from national surveys over the past 15 years. Since 1999, rates of overweight and obesity, as measured by body mass index (BMI) from children's height and weight, have continued to steadily increase. In the latest survey, conducted from 2013 to 2014, 33% of children were overweight, and 26% were considered obese.

The prevalence of overweight and obesity increased steadily year by year from 1999 to 2014. For overweight, it went up from 28.8% in 1999 to 33.4%, and for the least severe type of obesity, from 14.6% to 17.4%.

Even more concerning, the trend has also worsened among the most severely obese: children with BMI readings greater than 40 for their age group. The prevalence of this type of obesity increased from 0.9% in 1999 to 2.4% in 2014.

The uptick comes despite more public awareness about the health risks of excess weight. In recent years, public policies have been put into place to reduce risk factors for obesity, such as elimination of trans fats from certain foods and improvements to school lunch. "What this tells me is that for kids with severe obesity, they aren't being helped by small or single interventions," says Skinner. "Choosing small things and doing small things is not enough for kids with severe obesity." (Source: Time)



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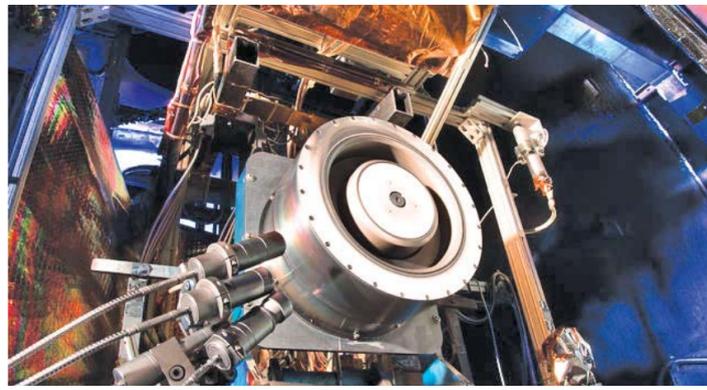
NASA planning new Mars orbiter with advanced communications

NASA is soliciting ideas from U.S. industry for designs of a Mars orbiter for potential launch in the 2020s. The satellite would provide advanced communications and imaging, as well as robotic science exploration, in support of NASA's Journey to Mars.

The orbiter would substantially increase bandwidth communications and maintain high-resolution imaging capability. It also may use experimental cutting-edge technologies, such as high-power solar electric propulsion or an optical communications package, which could greatly improve transmission speed and capacity over radio frequency systems.

Under the direction of NASA's Mars Exploration Program, the agency's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, California, is conducting pre-formulation planning for this possible orbiter mission.

Pre-formulation plans include the procurement of industry studies for a solar-powered orbiting spacecraft. This effort seeks to take advantage of industry capabilities to improve deep space, solar electric propulsion-enabled orbiters to accommo-



date scientific instruments, demonstrate capability for rendezvous and capture, and advance telecommunications capabilities.

Red Planet mysteries

"Our success in exploring Mars, to unravel the mysteries of the Red Planet, depends on having high bandwidth communication with Earth and overhead imaging,"

said John Grunsfeld, astronaut and associate administrator of NASA's Science Mission Directorate in Washington. "Currently, we depend on our orbiting science missions to perform dual service in making measurements and acting as communication relays, but we can't depend on them to last forever. This new orbiter will use cutting-edge

technology to revitalize our ability to continue to explore Mars and support transformative science, including a potential sample return mission in the future."

JPL plans to award concept study subcontracts of \$400,000 per subcontract in June. The concept studies for the spacecraft will be completed over a four-month period.

In response to an earlier request from NASA, the Mars Exploration Program formed an analysis group that proposed, in a 2015 report, possible science objectives for a Mars orbiter capable of replenishing and advancing the telecommunications and reconnaissance resources available at Mars.

NASA is studying how to implement this mission concept in concert with its international partners to the greatest extent possible. Historically, there have been significant international contributions to NASA Mars missions that include the Curiosity rover, Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter spacecraft and the Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution Mission orbiter, both currently orbiting the Red Planet. (Source: clarksvilleonline.com)

Music helps develop baby brains

Some might consider it cruel subjecting to you beautiful young baby to the poor music choices you've made in the past, but a new study has found that playing musical games with them improves their music and speech processing powers.

In the study, published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, scientists from the University of Washington's Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences compared the brain responses of two sets of babies who each underwent different types of active play.

In the first group the babies played along with their parents with toy cars, blocks and other fun bits and bobs that required significant coordination, but they conducted the session without music. The second group was led in



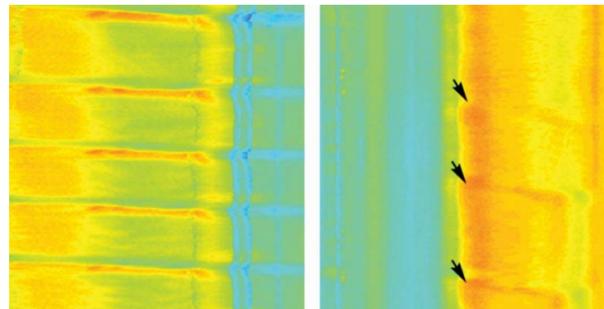
a music activity where they were helped by their parents to tap out a beat to a waltz, a difficult time signature for babies to grasp.

Body movements

"In both the music and control groups, we gave babies experiences that were social, required their active involvement and included body movements - these are all characteristics that we know help people learn," says lead author Christina Zhao. The "key difference between the play groups was whether the babies were moving to learn a musical rhythm."

Aside from discovering that babies playing the drums are utterly adorable, the researchers found that babies in the music group showed stronger brain responses to changes in speech and music when they underwent tests, suggesting they were better able to detect patterns in sounds. (Source: Science Focus)

GI problems in autism may originate in genes, study suggests



Researchers at Columbia University Medical Center (CUMC) have found evidence in mice that, for some types of autism, gastrointestinal (GI) difficulties may originate from the same genetic changes that lead to the behavioral and social characteristics of the condition. The study was published in the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*.

Children with autism spectrum disorder are four times more likely to suffer from gastrointestinal problems than other children. These GI troubles are often blamed on the tendency of kids with autism to limit their diets to a few favored food items.

"Gastrointestinal issues have been recognized as a common occurrence in people with autism since the condition was first described in the 1940s, but there was no indication that they were directly related," says the study's lead author, Kara Gross Margolis, MD, associate professor of pediatrics at Columbia.

Recent research by Jeremy Veenstra-VanderWeele, MD, the Mortimer D. Sackler, MD Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia, and Randy Blakely, Ph.D., professor of psychiatry at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, had linked some cases of autism to genetic muta-

tions that inhibit serotonin activity. Serotonin is a chemical that transmits signals from one neuron to another in the brain. The brain, however, contains only 5 percent of the body's serotonin; most of the rest is at work in the GI system.

Genetic mutations

Genetic mutations that affect serotonin's activity will thus have ramifications in the gut as well as in the brain.

"Because serotonin plays an important role in the gastrointestinal system as well as the brain, we wanted to see if there was a direct relationship between these genes and GI development and function," says Dr. Margolis, who conducted the study with Michael Gershon, MD, professor of pathology & cell biology at Columbia and a leader in the field of neurogastroenterology.

The researchers investigated gastrointestinal development in a mouse model, created by collaborators at Vanderbilt that carries a mutation found in some patients with autism. The mutation decreases serotonin activity by increasing the activity of the serotonin reuptake transporter (SERT), which pulls serotonin back into the neuron after it is released for neurotransmission. (Source: EurekAlert)

Scientists have developed shark vision



David Gruber sees glowing life forms everywhere he looks. He's found dozens of fluorescent corals in the Great Barrier Reef. In 2014, he reported on more than 180 fish species that fluoresce. Last year, he even stumbled across fluorescent sea turtles.

Now Gruber, a biologist at the City University of New York's Baruch College, wants to know why all these species are glowing. He and his colleagues built a "shark-eye" camera to simulate how fluorescent sharks appear to each other, in part so that humans view these creatures a little more kindly.

Animals like fish and turtles don't generate their own light, as a firefly does. Being biofluorescent means molecules in their skin absorb light of a certain wavelength, and bounce it back at a different wavelength. In the ocean, that usually means they absorb blue light and transform it into green, red, or orange. It's hard to notice with human eyes in the dim ocean, though a person might detect a greenish cast to a shark's skin, for example.

Finding biofluorescence in so many sea animals led Gruber to wonder what advantage it conferred upon a species.

He and his co-authors have begun to answer that question for two biofluorescent sharks, the Atlantic-dwelling chain catshark and the Pacific-living swell shark. They have done so by looking deep into their eyes—not in the romantic sense, but in the dissection sense. They found that although these species seem to have excellent low-light vision, they're monochromats. That means unlike humans, who build color vision using three types of pigment molecules in our eyes, these sharks have just one pigment. It detects blue-green light.

Huge blue filter

That makes sense, Gruber says. The "ocean is this huge blue filter, and it becomes more perfectly blue as you go deeper." If there aren't any other colors of light to see, why bother?

The researchers studied sharkskin in the lab, and used a special camera setup to vividly capture the sharks' fluorescence in the wild.

Next the team asked what parts of a shark's body fluoresce. Both species have mottled patterns, which in an aquarium's light would appear light beige-and-dark gray, or light-beige-and-black. (Source: The Atlantic)

Traffic bulletins drive motorists to distraction, study shows

Although motorists may believe that keeping an ear out for jams and crashes will help their journey flow more smoothly, in fact, it is dangerously distracting.

Researchers at University College Dublin and University College Cork believe that paying attention to traffic reports prevents drivers from concentrating on other more important tasks.

To test the theory, they asked 36 motorists to complete a course in a driving simulator while listening to a traffic update. Half of the participants only had to listen out for when the radio presenter switched gender, while the half had to pay attention to traffic reports for a particular road.

The researchers then added a gorilla or elephant to

their journey footage. Only 23 percent of the drivers who were listening out for traffic reports saw the animals compared with 71 percent of those who had the easier listening task.

Doctoral student Gillian Murphy, of University College Cork, said: "Road safety campaigns are so focused on telling us to keep our eyes on the road, and this is certainly important, but this research tells us that it's simply not enough. We should focus on keeping our brains on the road."

Road signs

Drivers undertaking the complex task were also worse at obeying road signs, remembering which vehicle had just

passed them and even at driving itself. Their speed, lane position and reaction times to hazards were all affected.

Anything that draws the attention away from driving can be problematic, even if it's auditory like listening to the radio or having a hands-free phone conversation. That doesn't mean that we should ban radios in cars, but that we should all be aware of the limits of our attention.

The "fact that we found this using a simple, naturally occurring task like listening out for a traffic update on the radio suggests that the load on our hearing may be an important and overlooked contributor to driver distraction and inattention." (Source: The Telegraph)

Russia says Syria peace talks will resume in the Swiss city of Geneva on May 10.

"They will resume approximately on [May] 10, this has been announced by de Mistura," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov cited UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura as saying on Wednesday.

The Syrian government said on Tuesday that it had held a final session of talks with de Mistura in a "useful and productive round."

De Mistura was to brief the Security Council on Wednesday in a closed-door session on his diplomatic efforts to end the war.

The foreign-backed opposition walked out of the Geneva-based negotiations last week, bringing the talks close to the breakdown.

Militant groups announced a new war against Syrian government forces after threatening to abandon UN-brokered talks in Geneva.

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem said on the same day that Turkey and other countries were supplying terrorists in Syria with advanced weapons.

Wednesday is the last scheduled day

Syria peace talks to resume in Geneva on May 10



of the UN-led negotiating round, but de Mistura hopes to reconvene both delegations.

His goal is to produce a paper with ideas shared by both sides on what a political transition for Syria would look like.

On Monday, Syria's chief delegate at the talks Bashar Ja'afari said he submitted "amendments" to the working UN document on a political transition.

"Today we submitted constitutional amendments to the paper submitted to us by the special envoy, and we consider such amendments to be an integral part of this paper," said Ja'afari.

Syria has previously ruled out negotiating over the presidency - specifically, over Assad's departure from it.

"I can describe this particular round as useful and productive," Ja'afari added, speaking of the round at which his opposition was not present.

De Mistura estimates that over 400,000 people have been killed in the conflict since 2011, which has further displaced over half of Syria's prewar population.

(Source: SANA)

Germany replaces spy chief after damning NSA report

Germany announced Wednesday it is replacing the head of its foreign intelligence service, which has been rocked by revelations it helped the U.S. National Security Agency spy on European targets.

Gerhard Schindler, 63, will take early retirement from July 1, leaving the reins of the BND service to Bruno Kahl, a trained lawyer and currently high-ranking finance ministry official.

"The BND faces major challenges in coming years," said Peter Altmaier, chief of staff of Angela Merkel's chancellery, in a statement.

These "include the development of its profile given the changing security challenges" as well as the "organizational and legal consequences of the work of the NSA investigation committee," he added.

Altmaier did not spell out the reasons for Schindler's departure and government spokesman Steffen Seibert declined comment when asked at a regular press briefing.

But German media speculated that

the change was down to a combination of factors that included the BND's controversial cooperation with the NSA.

An investigation committee said in a report seen by AFP in October that the NSA had handed lists of European government offices as targets for espionage to the BND, with the request for the results be sent back to the United States.

Although the report found that the BND whittled down the list of thousands of NSA targets over the years, it still maintained cooperation with Washington.

Beyond the consequences of the NSA scandal, German media said the change at the top of the BND was also partly motivated by the need for reform at the service to increasingly cover cyber security, and to oversee a complex move of the headquarters from the western city of Pullach to Berlin.

Kahl is a trusted aide of Finance Minister Wolfgang Schauble, and has been leading a ministry division in charge of privatizations, investments and federal real estate.

(Source: AFP)

UN rejects Israel's claim over Syria's Golan Heights

The UN Security Council has rejected Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's claim that the annexed Golan Heights in Syria would "for ever" remain under Israeli control.

The 15-member council agreed that the status of the Golan, which Israel seized from Syria in 1967, "remains unchanged", Chinese Ambassador Liu Jieyi, who holds this month's council presidency said.

Liu recalled a 1981 resolution which states that Israel's "decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights was null and void and without any international legal effect."

Liu said that the Council members "expressed deep concern" over Netanyahu's remarks from earlier this month that "the Golan Heights will remain in the hands of Israel for ever."

Israel's response

Israel's UN Ambassador Danny Danon issued a statement rejecting the council complaint.

"Holding a meeting on this top-

ic completely ignores the reality in the Middle East," he said. "While thousands of people are being massacred in Syria, and millions of citizens have become refugees, the Security Council has chosen to focus on Israel, the only true democracy in the Middle East."

"It's unfortunate that interested parties are attempting to use the council for unfair criticism of Israel."

Netanyahu's April 17 declaration came on the occasion of the first Israeli cabinet session on the Golan since the area was seized from Syria in a 1967 war and annexed in 1981.

Israel's annexation of the Golan has never been recognized by the international community.

Past U.S.-backed Israeli-Syrian peace efforts were predicated on a return of the Golan, where some 23,000 Israelis now live alongside roughly the same number of Druse Arabs loyal to Damascus. Liu said the council supported a negotiated arrangement to settle the issue of the Golan.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

World to watch as Trump outlines his foreign policy

Donald Trump has set aside his bad-boy antics Wednesday and, with the help of a teleprompter to keep him on message, outline what his foreign policies would be if he is elected U.S. president in November, campaign aides say.

Governments alarmed at the prospect of a Trump presidency will be paying close attention. Critics have accused the Republican front-runner of bigotry and posing a danger to U.S. national security.

Many foreign policy and defense advisers say his views are worrying, mingling isolationism and protectionism, with calls to force U.S. allies to pay more for their defense and proposals to impose punitive tariffs on some imported goods.

"Part of what I'm saying is we love our country and we love our allies, but our allies can no longer be taking advantage of this country," Trump told reporters Tuesday night in a speech preview.

He said he would focus on nuclear weapons as the single biggest threat in the world today. "I'm probably the last on the trigger," Trump told ABC's "Good Morning America" on Wednesday, citing his opposition to the Iraq war.

Trump, 69, said he agreed with President Barack Obama's decision to send an additional 250 U.S. Special Forces into Syria but would not have made the decision public. "I would send them in quietly because right now they have a target on their back," he told CNN.

He also said his speech would focus on the economics of foreign policy "because we're getting killed on economics."

The billionaire businessman promises to temporarily ban Muslims from entering the United States and to build a wall to block off Mexico.

His policies are popular with many voters who want change, but foreign policy elites are concerned.

"It's a perfect storm of isolationism, muscular nationalism, with a dash of pragmatism and realism," said Aaron David Miller, a foreign policy scholar who has worked in Republican and Democratic administrations.

The speech at noon in a Washington hotel will address issues including global trade, economic and national security policies as well as building up the U.S.



military, his campaign said.

It is expected to be the first in a series of policy speeches meant to show that Trump, fresh off a sweep of five Northeastern state nominating contests on Tuesday, is worthy of the White House even though he never held public office.

"He needs to show that he has the substance, the depth of knowledge and the vision to be the American commander in chief," said Steve Schmidt, who was 2008 Republican nominee John McCain's campaign manager.

Trump's biggest backer in Washington, Republican U.S. Senator Jeff Sessions, said the candidate would offer "a more restrained foreign policy, a more realistic foreign policy that counts the cost not only now but in the months and years to come."

Views popular at home

Driving much of Trump's rhetoric is what he feels is the need to ease the U.S. financial burden overseas, focus more on nation-building at home and make sure American companies pay a price for outsourcing jobs to countries where labor is cheaper.

"His views are reckless and dangerous, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they're unpopular," said Lanhee Chen, who advised former 2016 Republican candidate Marco Rubio and 2012 Republican nominee Mitt Romney. "That's part of the

challenge."

Trump has declared the North Atlantic Treaty Organization obsolete and said European countries should be pulling more of their weight in the post-World War Two alliance.

Obama has for years urged Europeans to bolster their defense spending to help NATO, but unlike Trump has never said the alliance needs to be reconfigured.

In a joint paper published this month, national security and regional experts at the Center for Strategic and International Studies rejected Trump's position on overseas bases.

"The United States gets the better end of the deal from its forward deterrent posture than any other nation, and its value outweighs its current costs," Kathleen Hicks, Michael Green and Heather Conley wrote in Foreign Policy magazine.

Trump says South Korea and Japan rely too much on the U.S. military presence there and should be paying for it.

He also has said they might need to develop nuclear programs to counter North Korea's atomic belligerence, prompting Obama to say Trump was ill-informed on international relations.

Former U.S. Navy chief Admiral Jonathan Greenert, a former commander of the Japan-based U.S. Seventh Fleet, said it was not accurate to suggest Japan and South Korea get a free ride from the United States, since both countries are each subsidizing their U.S. base presence by billions of dollars a year.

In the Middle East, Trump has said he would use U.S. forces to "knock the hell out of ISIL," an acronym for Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant terrorist group. He would get the forces out quickly and create safe havens for Syrian refugees so they do not come to the United States.

Dennis Ross, who was a Middle East adviser to both Democratic and Republican administrations, said Trump's rhetoric suggested his worldview was something of a throwback to political thinking that drew a significant following among Americans before the U.S. entry into World War Two.

"I don't think that anyone would feel they could count on the United States," Ross said.

(Source: Reuters)

Israeli forces shoot dead two Palestinians in West Bank

Israeli forces have shot dead two Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, for allegedly trying to stab Israeli officers.

The incident took place on Wednesday after a woman, purportedly holding a knife, and a man walked towards police and other Israeli security guards in a vehicles-only lane at the Qalandiya checkpoint between al-Quds (Jerusalem) and the city of Ramallah.

Israeli police said the two ignored sev-

eral orders to stop.

The woman "stopped a short distance from the officers, then walked the other way with the man, when she suddenly turned around to face the officers again, pulled a knife that was in her purse and threw it at an officer near her," Israeli police spokeswoman Luba Samri claimed.

A second knife similar to the woman's was also found in the man's belt, in addi-

tion to a butterfly knife, she added.

The Palestinian Health Ministry identified the victims as Maram Abu Ismail, 23, and her 16-year-old brother, Ibrahim Taha.

The woman was killed immediately, but her brother's death was confirmed shortly after he was shot.

An eyewitness told Palestine's Ma'an news agency that Israeli forces fired over 15 rounds at the woman's body.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Red Cres-

cent told Ma'an that Israeli forces denied Palestinian paramedics access to the victims for medical treatment.

No Israelis were injured in the incident.

The occupied territories have been the scene of heightened tensions since August 2015, when Israel imposed restrictions on the entry of Palestinian worshippers into the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East al-Quds.

(Source: Press TV)

JUMP

When schools and students become spoils of war

In other instances, troops displace students entirely, forcing children to travel long distances to another school or to drop out. Yet, until recently, very few countries had made schools off limits to their forces. This is beginning to change.

Last May, countries from around the world came together to join the international Safe Schools Declaration, pledging to protect education during war, including by avoiding the use of schools for military purposes.

To date, 52 countries, including Nigeria, have signed on. These include countries such as the Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, South Sudan - countries who have seen the long-lasting effects of wars on their schools - as well as others from all regions of the globe.

The Nigerian government, with international support, has recently taken some promising steps, including merging various presidential initiatives aimed at delivering services to victims of Boko Haram's violence, hiring 500,000 university graduates to improve the quality of teaching, and providing cash transfers to extremely poor parents with the condition of enrolling their children in schools.

Such progress could be undermined, though, unless, the government starts protecting schools better and keeping the military out.

Much-needed international assistance for education should be accompanied by pressure on the Nigerian military to vacate schools and investigate and prosecute violations by Boko Haram, government security forces, and pro-government militias.

School attacks are not unique to Nigeria and addressing the problem extends beyond that country's borders.

Countries truly concerned about the still-missing schoolchildren from Chibok and other towns in the northeast should join the international Safe Schools Declaration and commit themselves to make schools safer for children everywhere.

As in the words of the boy who had been abducted at the age of 12 from his school in Somalia by al-Shabab: "Lack of education is a lack of light. It's darkness."

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Riek Machar sworn in as South Sudan's vice president

South Sudanese rebel leader Riek Machar has returned to the capital after two years of war in what is seen as a step towards ending a conflict that has killed tens of thousands.

After landing at Juba airport on Tuesday, Machar was inaugurated as vice president by President Salva Kiir ahead of forming a unity government.

"Our people are tired of war and they need peace, now," Kiir said. "Together we can accomplish far more than when we are divided. Our strength lies only our unity."

About 2.3 million South Sudanese have been driven from their homes since war erupted in December 2013, plunging the country into a humanitarian crisis.

Kiir and Machar signed a peace deal in August, but fighting intensified in some areas afterwards.

"The war was vicious. We lost a lot of people in it, and we need to bring our people together so they can unite, reconcile, and heal the wounds," Machar said. "As long as there is political will, we can overcome all of these challenges and all of these obstacles."

Almost 200,000 live in camps for displaced people, protected by UN peacekeepers. In one camp in Juba, people ran through the streets celebrating after Machar's arrival.

'We are all South Sudanese'

"The return of Dr Machar will change many things," Chotlith Jany, a youth leader, told Al Jazeera. "People believe that all the fighting that took place, all the suffering ... will end."

Machar's return had been expected last week, but a series of delays by the government and rebels prevented it.

If peace holds, the unity government will now have to set about repairing an economy near the point of collapse. Fuel prices have plunged on the global market, depriving the country of its main source of income.

South Sudan's diplomatic relationships have also been strained by the conflict.

Last week, the government attempted to arrest an official from the body monitoring the peace deal, the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC).

Diplomatic sources told Al Jazeera that security officers entered a meeting of foreign ambassadors and diplomats and tried to arrest Aly Verjee, the Deputy Chief of Staff at JMEC.

"A national security officer was sent to arrest him and take him to the airport," Michael Makuei, the information minister, said, adding that South Sudan was a sovereign country and had the right to arrest him.

The ambassadors prevented Verjee's arrest, but he subsequently left the country.

Speaking at the presidential residence after Machar's return, Kiir apologized to the people of South Sudan, and the international community.

"Thank you for the long patience," Kiir said. "We are all South Sudanese."

(Source: Al Jazeera)



FOOD FOR THOUGHT



To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often. Winston Churchill

LEARN ENGLISH

Attending an Ex's Wedding

Andy: What did you do last weekend?
 Yuka: I went to Jamal's wedding.
 Andy: Jamal?! Your ex Jamal?
 Yuka: Yes, that Jamal.
 Andy: He had the nerve to invite you to his wedding?
 Yuka: I actually thought it was nice of him to invite me. Whatever happened between us years ago is water under the bridge. There are no hard feelings on either side.
 Andy: You told me that the breakup was mutual, but I always thought you still had a soft place in your heart for him.
 Yuka: The truth is, when we first broke up, I did harbor some hopes of the two of us getting back together, but that never came to pass. We both moved on and I wish him well.
 Andy: Well, how was the wedding?
 Yuka: It was very nice and Jamal's new wife seems to be a good match for him.
 Andy: And you didn't mind seeing them together?
 Yuka: Not at all, especially after I met Lorenzo.
 Andy: Lorenzo, huh? You've been holding out on me. Do tell!

(Source: eslpod.com)

Words & phrases

- ex:** someone's former wife, husband, girlfriend, or boyfriend
- have the nerve to do something:** if you say someone has a nerve, you mean that they have done something unsuitable or impolite, without seeming to be embarrassed about behaving in this way
- water under the bridge:** used to say that what happened in the past should be forgotten
- no hard feelings:** used to tell someone that you do not want to be angry with them or for them to be angry with you
- breakup:** the act of ending a marriage or relationship
- mutual:** when two or more people both agree to something
- have a soft place in your heart for somebody:** to continue to like someone even when they do not behave well
- harbor:** to keep bad thoughts, fears, or hopes in your mind for a long time
- came to pass:** to happen after a period of time
- move on:** to develop in your life, and change your relationships, interests, activities etc.
- match:** married someone suitable
- hold out on somebody:** to not tell someone about something important

QUIZ OF THE DAY

146) One word is missing in the sentence below. Find this word. Don't fill the glasses to brim.
 (Quiz No. 145 missing word is: *they* saw a boy)

PHRASAL VERB

Show up

- Meaning:** appear, arrive
- For example:** We expected William to come but he didn't show up.

ENGLISH PROVERB

(The) darkest hour is just before dawn

- Explanation:** the most difficult moment is just before a problem is solved.



Saving Iran's precious Lake Urmia

What was Lake Urmia like in the 1990s?

A: It was a large lake and people often swam there. Many people believed that swimming in the salty lake was healthy for their skin. There were a lot of hotels and tourist centers, but now unfortunately most of them are out of business.

Based on your research, what are the main reasons why the lake is receding?

A: The main reason is the extensive water use in the basin, which happened after 54 dams were constructed in the area. There are only eight permanent rivers, so there is no chance for running water to flow into the lake. There are also a lot of wells, which pump water from underground aquifers. These two pressures prevent water from accumulating in the basin.

When did you realize that the lake was shrinking and that this was a serious problem?

A: In 2001, when I visited the northeastern part of the lake to collect plants, I saw that the lake is receding and there were many areas where the salt was exposed to earth. It was completely different from what I saw in 1987.

Were plants and wildlife struggling to adapt?

A: Over thousands of years, salts accumulated in the lake's basin. When the lake shrinks, the area exposed to air is extremely salty. There is no chance for plants to grow there. After the lake became desiccated, we lost many vegetation types. Plants just dried up or were in bad condition.

The salinity tolerance of brine shrimp is 160 grams of salt per liter, but now the salinity of the lake is almost 450 grams per liter, so they cannot survive these conditions. In the surrounding wetlands and estuaries, the salinity is lower, so we can still find them there. When the shrimp are gone and flamingoes come and find the remaining water extremely salty, then it's dangerous for them. We've lost many migratory birds coming to the area.

If nothing were done, what would happen to the lake?

A: If land use and water consumption remained as it is now, then the lake would disappear pretty soon. There's no doubt about that—unless there is an unexpected rainfall, but we cannot rely on that. We believe that the only way to help the lake survive is to take emergency actions to stop further reductions, and then try to restore it in a reasonable time and reduce water consumption in a well-managed plan.

What do you think are the main



courses of action Iran should take?

A: Agriculture in the area is currently unsustainable. You could provide technologies and improved irrigation systems that require less water. Agricultural products that use lots of water, such as sugar beets and apples, should be reduced. Previously, the area was famous for its grape gardens, which needs one-fifth the water of apple production. We need to support the farmers to change the crops they are cultivating and the government needs to compensate them during this transition.

Many dams transfer water to urban areas where the population has grown tremendously in recent decades. With the restoration projects running now, the construction of new dams is prohibited, fortunately. It should be our goal to remove many dams.

It sounds similar to Mono Lake. Los Angeles was taking a lot of water from the lake and it was shrinking and its habitat was suffering.

Mono Lake is a good example of a correct decision to restore a lake. Thanks to the activities of Friends of Mono Lake Reserve—about 16,000 people who were involved took judicial actions and got water rights back to the lake—it was a great success. We should learn from Mono Lake history.

Owens Lake [in eastern California] is completely dry, and they are spending \$1.2 billion dollars to prevent dust emission in the area. This lake is only 5% the size of Urmia Lake. If we were to use the same measures, it would take hundreds of billions of dollars. It is less costly and more practical to save the habitat.

In your presentation, you mentioned the government's current restoration plan. Are people working on it now?

A: Yeah! The Urmia Lake Restoration Committee set up expert committees who made an action plan in 2014, which was approved. In the Iranian calendar for 2015 until 21st of March in 2016, 660 million dollars was invested in 88 projects in the area. For example, they gave 200 million cubic meters of dam water to the lake and connected two rivers so the water flows more easily. They are constructing a canal to bring water from a river near the Turkish border to the lake. They also started subsidizing agricultural sectors to reduce their water use.

How will the lifting of the sanctions aid these efforts to restore the lake?

A: When the sanctions are lifted, there will be more opportunities for cooperation between Iranian and international scientists. Then we can learn more from [similar water problems] in the States.

The new era will also help restoration programs. Environmental conditions in Iran became worse after the revolution, because of sanctions and the eight-year war in Iran and Iraq. I'm sure that if relations between Iran and the world improve, then there will be chances for foreign investment in the country, implementing new jobs for people, and supporting industries that reduce pressure on the environment. Environmental problems are world problems, and the world should work together to solve them. But sanctions make them worse, when you can't import necessary technologies, talent or manpower.

Are people in other countries trying to help in some way?

A: In recent years, the case of Urmia became more publicized in international media and generated interest among scientists and international organizations. For example, Japan invested \$1 million in the area to improve agricultural management. Several international meetings took place in Iran, and even scientists from the United States came. The Iranian government is very open and welcomes any kind of contribution.

Instead of criticizing Iran, the world should do something! It's the duty of developed countries that have more scientific facilities and funding to help.

What are your thoughts about how things will change after the sanctions are lifted, especially for Iranian scientists and science in Iran?

A: Iran's education and universities expanded in the last 20 years. There are more than four million students in Iranian universities and the number of scientific publications in Iran has increased. But during the sanctions, we couldn't get equipment and didn't have opportunities to participate in international conferences, and exchanging students became difficult. Lifting sanctions will be beneficial for Iranian universities and universities in developed countries.

We have seen thousands of Iranian scholars [working] in the United States and Europe. Iran is a huge country and provides a unique platform for top researchers, especially in fields of photosynthesis, plants, adaptation to harsh environments, and other environmental and biodiversity issues. When the economic situation and the stability in the area improves, our educated students should have opportunities to stay, too.

Are there other things that you've been thinking about lately or that you look forward to after the sanctions?

A: Our big concern now is that [U.S.] Republican presidential candidates say that if they're elected, they will cancel these agreements. This would disturb an achievement that cost decades of negotiations. We should not destroy what has been planted—such a very expensive cultivation. I hope we'll always think that relations and cooperation are the best solution for solving problems.

How long do we have to have conflicts? We are big nations! Not all Iranians love America—but they have a lot of enthusiasm for development, a better life, and to be in contact with the world. We have to try to respect each other in spite of our differences.

(Source: Scientific American)

S.Korea, Iran sign pact on driver's licenses

South Korea and Iran signed an agreement to allow their citizens to drive in both countries with a license obtained in their home country, the Korean Foreign Ministry said Wednesday, in a move to further enhance bilateral exchanges.

Seoul's top envoy to Iran Kim Seung-ho signed the agreement with the chief of the Islamic republic's traffic

and policy agency, the ministry said in a press release. The agreement went into force upon the signing.

"With the agreement, peoples of the two countries can live in each other's country conveniently, and it will especially help South Korean businesses operating in Iran," the ministry said.

Some 350 South Koreans reside in Iran as of last year.

The agreement was clinched ahead of President Park Geun-hye's landmark visit to Tehran, slated for May 1-3.

Her visit -- the first by a sitting South Korean president since the two countries established diplomatic ties in 1962 -- is expected to focus on bolstering economic cooperation and exchanges.

(Source: Yonhap)

Free diabetes screening on Tehran's subway

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Over 600 medical students from universities of medical sciences of Tehran will carry out free of charge diabetes screening at 77 Tehran's subway stations on Thursday.

The volunteer program, called 'heavenly hands', is administered by Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences in association with Tehran's Municipality, according to IRNA news agency.

On the occasion of the 'health week' in Iran and in step with the World Health Organization (WHO) that marked 2016 as the year to beat diabetes by calling for action on it the medical students are going perform free diabetes screening on the passengers from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Thursday. Medical students will run blood pressure

and blood sugar tests on the passengers and will refer at-risk patients to the hospitals.

They will additionally educate the citizens about the diabetes, cancer and other chronic diseases.

The programs aim at fostering and promoting self-care and being attentive to one's health and all citizens can get the aforesaid services by referring to the subway stations such as Imam Khomeini, Shahid Beheshti, Tajrish, Imam Hossein, and Vali-Asr.

Besides, 100,000 leaflets on health and diseases will be out and distributed among the passengers.

So far 18 healthcare centers affiliated with Shahid Beheshti, Iran and Tehran universities of medical sciences expressed readiness for free diagnostic and treatment services up to May 5.

Norwegian fighter jet helps save dying patient

Quick-thinking medical staff in Norway saved a patient's life by calling in a fighter jet to whisk live-saving medical equipment from another hospital.

The dying patient urgently needed a special lung and heart procedure called extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, but the hospital in the town of Bodø in central Norway had neither the equipment nor the skills to carry it out.

However, a hospital in Trondheim, about 280 miles (450km) south, did have a machine available, and staff contacted the air force on 4 April for help in transporting the equipment. The request reportedly came just as two F-16 fighter jets were preparing to take off from an airbase nearby.

"They didn't ask any questions, except for what size the machine was," Anders Wetting Carlsen, chief doctor at Trondheim's Saint Olaf hospital, told AFP.

In a further stroke of good luck, one of the fighter jets was equipped with an external hold that allowed it to transport equipment. The machine was loaded on to the aircraft, which made for Bodø at top speed.

"Usually we cover that distance in 35 minutes," air squadron head Borge Kleppe told the Norwegian daily Verdens Gang. "But given the special nature of the cargo, the pilot stepped on it and arrived at the destination less than 25 minutes later."

(Source: The Guardian)

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

People banned from Oshtorankuh preserved area, Gahar Lake for a month and half

People are forbidden to set foot in Oshtorankuh preserved area and Gahar Lake, in western Lorestan province, up to June 4, 2016, Mehr news agency reported. As the breeding season has started and in order to protect the newly sprouted plants, humans are not allowed to enter the preserved areas. The chief of the department of environment of Lorestan province, Mehrdad Fat'hi-Beiranvand, warned that they would take legal action against poachers, adding, livestock are also banned from the area and not allowed to graze in them.

ورود به منطقه حفاظت شده اشترانکوه و دریاچه ی گهر تا ۱۵ خرداد ماه ممنوع شد

به گزارش خبرگزاری مهر گردشگران تا ۱۵ خرداد امسال حق ورود به منطقه حفاظت شده ی اشترانکوه و دریاچه گهر را نخواهند داشت. با توجه به آغاز فصل زایش و رویش، ورود گردشگران به منطقه حفاظت شده اشترانکوه و دریاچه گهر ممنوع شد. مهرداد فتحی بیرانوند مدیرکل حفاظت محیط زیست استان لرستان هشدار داد: با صیادان و شکارچیان متخلف و غیرمجاز در منطقه حفاظت شده اشترانکوه برخورد قانونی می شود و همچنین در این مدت از ورود دام ها نیز جلوگیری می شود.

Our ultimate goal is to become Asian champion, says Branko Ivankovic

SPORTS Persepolis head coach Branko Ivankovic revealed his team's ultimate goal as they preparing for the tough clash against Naft Tehran in the 28th week of Iran Professional League.

"First, I would like to thank my players who did a great job against Esteghlal Ahvaz in a bizarre situation at Ahvaz's Takhti Stadium last Friday," Branko Ivankovic told reporters in a pre-match press conference.

"Mohsen Bengar, Ramin Rezaeian, Milad Kamandani and Reza Khaleghifar are all injured and could not be available for our important game against Naft Tehran. But we have good players on the bench who can help us just like the first team players," he added.

"We have a tough game against Naft who is a great team with a good coach. They have Jalal Hosseini, Vahid Amiri and Alireza Beiranvand who are all international players. We will go to take the three points and get a step closer to the title and I would like our fans to come to the stadium to support us," Persepolis coach added.

"We have set the goals at the start of the season. First we wanted to book a place in the next year's Asian Champions League and fortunately we have achieved it. Our next goal is to win the title while our ultimate one is to become the Asian champions," he added.

Persepolis, who is currently at the top of the IPL table with 51 points from 27 games, will take on Naft on Thursday while second-placed Esteghlal meet Saipa. Third-placed Esteghlal Khuzestan will play Rah Ahan at home.



Masoud Ashrafi elected as new Secretary General of Iran Paralympic Committee



SPORTS Masoud Ashrafi was elected as the new Secretary General of I.R. Iran National Paralympic Committee on Wednesday.

In the 14th General Assembly of I.R. Iran NPC that was held at the Iran's Sports Federation for the Disabled (IRIS-FD) Headquarters, Ashrafi was elected as the Secretary General of I.R. Iran National Paralympic Committee after winning 45 votes of 48 votes.

Alireza Hosseini and Aliasghar Hasanzadeh withdrew from the election in favor of Ashrafi.

Ashrafi took charge of the role until 2020. Masoud Ashrafi's first term of office at this position, ended after the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing.

Two deputies of Ministry of Sports & Youth, I.R. Iran NOC Secretary General, Deputy of Education Minister as well as the Head of I.R. Iran Welfare Organization attended the Assembly.

During the assembly, the attending members and officials appreciated Amir Mandegarfar, the former NPC Secretary General, for his great efforts during his term of office.

Sourian to represent Iran at Wrestling Olympic Qualification



SPORTS Hamid Sourian will represent Iran in the World Wrestling Olympic Qualification Tournament 2.

The competition will be held in Istanbul, Turkey from May 6 to 8.

The 59kg Greco-Roman wrestler has lost in two Olympic qualifications in Kazakhstan and Mongolia and it's the last chance for him to secure his place in the Olympics.

The six-time world champion won the gold medal in the 55 kg Greco-Roman competition at the 2012 Summer

Olympics.

The 2016 World Wrestling Olympic Qualification Tournament 2 is the second of two worldwide qualification tournaments for the 2016 Olympics.

Competitors of this tournament failed to qualify for the Olympics through performance at the 2015 World Wrestling Championships, at their respective regional qualifier, or at the 2016 World Wrestling Olympic Qualification Tournament 1.

The top two competitors in each weight class will qualify.

Iran beats Kyrgyzstan at AFC U-14 Girls' Championship

SPORTS Iran beat Kyrgyzstan 2-0 in Group A of the AFC U-14 Girls' Regional Championship for the South and Central zone campaign on Wednesday.

Roghayeh Jalalnab netted a brace for the Iranian team in the 18th and 60th minutes.

"I am satisfied with the way we played against Kyrgyzstan and our players are motivated to defeat Bhutan on Thursday as well," Iran coach Masoumeh Jahanchi

told Fars news agency.

The competition has brought seven teams together in two groups of three and four teams.

The top two teams of each group will qualify for the next stage.

Iran opened the completion with a 3-0 win over host Tajikistan on Tuesday.

The next match-ups in Group A on Thursday will see Iran taking on Bhutan.



FIFA President Infantino condoles passing of Iran's Oladi

SPORTS FIFA President Gianni Infantino extends his deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Iranian football player Mehrdad Oladi who passed away last Tuesday at the age of 30.

"I wish to extend my deepest sympathy to Oladi's family and Iranian football fans. He was very young and we were shocked by the news at FIFA. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Oladi's family and friends," said Infantino in a letter to Iran Football Federation President Ali Kafashian.

Oladi started his career at Persepolis in 2003 before transferring to Dubai club Al Shabab for a season.

He also plied his trade for Iranian Pro League giants Naft Tehran and Esteghlal, with the latter releasing him in 2014 before he joined Malavan.

Oladi made his debut for the IR Iran senior team against China, going on to amass 13 caps for Team Melli, scoring his solitary goal against Bahrain in the 6th West Asian Football Federation Championship.

Eden Hazard aiming to be the star of Euro 2016

The Belgian winger only scored his first Premier League goals of an injury-hit campaign at the weekend.

Eden Hazard wants to put his difficult season behind him by finishing Euro 2016 as the star of the tournament.

Winger Hazard was named the best player in the country last season after inspiring Chelsea to a Premier League and Capital One Cup double.

But he has had a nightmare 2015/16 campaign along with Chelsea, suffered a huge dip in form and been dogged by a troublesome hip injury.

Hazard returned from his latest lay-off to score twice in Chelsea's 4-1 win at Bournemouth on Saturday.

They were the Belgian's first Premier League goals for 355 days and 29 games for Chelsea.



But he hopes he has timed his return to form and fitness perfectly to shine in France this summer.

He said: "Being out (injured) is not cool but it allows you to be able to relax and get some rest."

"So I will probably be fresher for the European Championships but we'll see whether it was a good thing or a bad thing."

"I want to be the star of the European Championship."

"I'm going to give the maximum in order to succeed and I hope that I will be ready at the start of the tournament."

"I hope to be 100% and not have to bother with more injuries. I will give everything to win the European Championship. You never know..."

(Source: Mirror)

PAPER ROUND

Bayern want Alexis Sanchez, Mats Hummels snubs Manchester United

Bayern Munich sound out Alexis Sanchez, Mats Hummels snubs Premier League clubs and Arsenal attempt a raid on a Chelsea starlet. It's Wednesday's Paper Round.

Bayern Munich want Alexis Sanchez

The Mirror are reporting that German powerhouse Bayern Munich are after the signature of Alexis Sanchez. The report says that Bayern have been making enquiries about whether Arsenal and Arsene Wenger would be prepared to sell their star forward, and that Bayern are seeking to take advantage of the fact Sanchez has been in poor form recently. The interest comes as Arsenal seek to tie Sanchez down to a new contract, since it's been two years since he came to London for a transfer fee of £33 million.

Paper Round's view: The ball is comfortably in Arsenal's court regarding this issue. There is no way on God's green earth Arsene Wenger allows his prized asset to just up and leave because of some poor form and fitness issues. Bayern will probably have to look elsewhere.

Dortmund ace Mats Hummels set to snub Man United for Bayern Munich

The Sun are reporting Borussia Dortmund's defensive rock Mats Hummels is finalising a £23.5m move to Bayern Munich, at the expense of Manchester United who have been monitoring him for some time. The report says Hummels will likely return to his old club in the summer, after eight years at title rivals Dortmund. Both United and Manchester City were keen on sounding out for a move Hummels, but now appear to be beaten to the punch.

Paper Round's view: That's a fairly big blow to a few Premier League clubs that have been eying Hummels for a while. He's an incredible player, equally physical at the contest and skilled on the ball. Sometimes even the prestige of the Premier League and the riches that come along with it, isn't enough to get a player over the line.

Arsenal planning raid of Chelsea young gun Dominic Solanke

Chelsea's 18-year-old Dominic Solanke is demanding a £50,000 a week contract to stay at Stamford Bridge, leaving the door open for an Arsenal raid according to the Sun. While Arsenal are reportedly not willing to meet the youngster's high wage demands, they're willing to offer him a bigger role within the squad.

Paper Round's view: It's a very bold statement of intent from Solanke. Perhaps he is not worth the wages he's asking for, but his desire for first team football is no different to a lot of Chelsea youngsters. They're mostly loaned out multiple times or have been waiting behind underperforming first team stars for too long.

Nigel Pearson closing in on Aston Villa gig

Leicester City's former boss Nigel Pearson is closer to landing the job at Aston Villa, as the Mirror report he's had a second round of talks with the Championship bound club. Pearson hasn't been working since his controversial removal from Leicester in June of last year, but remains highly regarded as a candidate as Villa seek to bounce back from their horror year and return to the Premier League.

Paper Round's view: Pearson was responsible for bringing Leicester back into the Premier League with some shrewd scouting decisions and a sustainable style of football, so no wonder he's top of Villa's list. Whether Pearson can go back to the well and recreate that magic is another matter entirely.

(Source: Eurosport)

Comeback kings Liverpool face Villarreal in Europa League

Liverpool's reward for their stirring Europa League fightback against Borussia Dortmund was a semi-final against Spanish side Villarreal in Friday's draw that also pitched holders Sevilla against Shakhtar Donetsk.

Juergen Klopp's Liverpool came from 3-1 down against Dortmund to win 4-3 with a goal in stoppage time that secured a 5-4 aggregate success.

They will now travel to Spain for the first leg against Villarreal, who are fourth in La Liga, on April 28 with the return at Anfield on May 5.

The Spanish side owe their nickname, Yellow Submarine, to Liverpool's most famous sons, The Beatles.

They have a terrible record playing against Premier League opposition, however, and are without a win in their last 10 games against English sides.

Liverpool, despite their struggles in the Premier League this season, will begin as favourites as they bid to reach a 12th European final, meeting a Villarreal side who have never contested a single one.

"Liverpool are used to winning trophies, we're going to experience a very special atmosphere there," former Spain and Villarreal midfielder Marcos Senna said.

Sevilla, who are bidding for a record third straight Europa League title, will play Shakhtar, who lifted the trophy in 2009.

The holders, who beat fellow Spaniards Athletic Bilbao on penalties in the quarter-final, will have home advantage for the second leg.

The tie gives Shakhtar coach Mircea Lucescu an opportunity for revenge after the Ukrainians were beaten by Sevilla in the last 16 of the UEFA Cup nine years ago when the Spanish side's keeper Andres Palop headed a 94th-minute equaliser.

Sevilla won the tie in extra time and went on to win.

"I don't think about that game anymore," Lucescu said. "We will try to take revenge, but it will be very difficult."

The final will take place in Basel on May 18.

(Source: Reuters)



Poem of the day

The wind had in the shade of its trees
Spread out a bed of all kinds of flowers.

Sadi

Prayer Times

Noon:13:02 Evening: 20:08 Dawn: 4:42 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:14 (tomorrow)

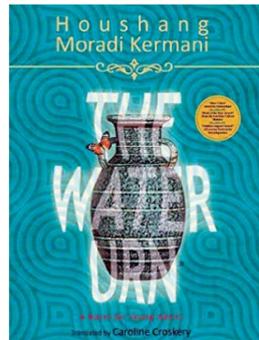
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NEWS

Italian translator working on Moradi Kermani's "Water Urn"

CULTURE TEHRAN — Italian translator of Persian literature Daniela Meneghini of the Ca'Foscari University of Venice is working on renowned Iranian author Hushang Moradi Kermani's "The Water Urn".

"The Water Urn" has been previously translated into English by the U.S. Persian literature scholar Caroline Croskery.



"The Water Urn" has been translated into 14 languages. A movie was also produced based on the book titled "The Jar" by Ebrahim Foruzesh, which won The Golden Leopard of Locarno International Film Festival.

The story is set in a two-room schoolhouse in a village near the city of Kerman, the hometown of the author.

The students from all grades attend a common class, which is led by a teacher. They all use the water contained in a big clay jar in a corner of the school to quench their thirst.

The students find the jar broken when they arrive at school in the morning on a freezing winter day. A great controversy is aroused as they begin to trace who is involved in the incident.

Finally, the schoolmaster, Mr. Samadi, finds out that the water urn has been broken as a result of freezing due to the cold weather. Then, the students and villagers unite to repair the jar.

Istanbul graphic design exhibit hangs works by Iranian artists

ART TEHRAN — A number of Iranian artists' works are on display at the Istanbul Graphic Design Week exhibition, which is currently underway at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University.

The artists are from the Vjeh School of Visual Communications in Tehran, graphic designer Amrollah Farhadi said in a press release on Wednesday.

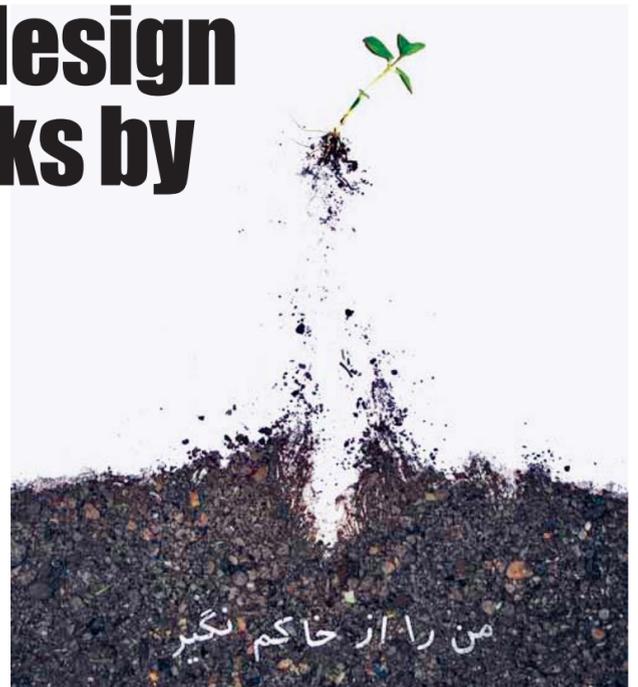
A collection of 80 posters by Rasul Khosravi, Fatemeh Afshar, Elham Es'haqi, Mostafa Behzadi, Hamed Shamlu, Puneh Shafiei and several other artists have been selected for the exhibit.

He added that Rasul Khosravi from Iran has also received an encouragement award at the competition "Crossing Frontiers", while the first prize was given to Michele Santella from Italy.

Five of the participating Iranian students have been selected to attend a five-day workshop during the program, he added.

Farhadi also said that the displayed works will later be shown in Tehran's Vjeh Gallery.

The Istanbul Graphic Design Week, which will run until May 18, is an educational activity organized annually by Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University.



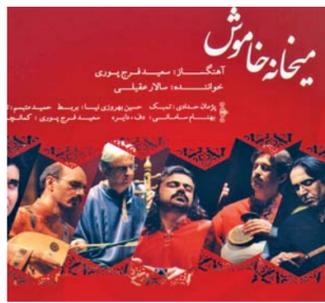
A poster by Fatemeh Afshar

Salar Aqli starts North American tour

ART TEHRAN — Renowned Iranian vocalist Salar Aqli along with his fellow instrumentalists started his tour of North America in Philadelphia last Friday, performing selections from the album "The Silent Tavern".

Aqli will also perform in Washington D.C., Atlanta, Chicago, St. Louis, North Carolina, Dallas, Miami, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Jose, Vancouver and Toronto.

His band features Saeid Farajpuri on kamancheh, Hossein Behruzinia on barbat, Hamin Honari on daf and Harir Shariatzadeh



on tombak.

The tour will end in Waterloo, Canada on May 8.

Leymer to perform at French festival

CULTURE TEHRAN — Leymer, a folk music group from the southern Iranian city of Bushehr, will perform at the 44th World Cultures Festival, which will be held in the French city of Montoire-sur-le-Loir from August 10 to 15.

The leader of the ensemble, Mohammadreza Beladi, is also scheduled to deliver a speech about the rituals, folk music and traditions of his native land on the sidelines of the event on August 11.

Bands from Argentina, Armenia, Bulgaria, the Ivory Coast, France, Hawaii, Japan, Thailand and Venezuela will participate in the event.



In the Bushehr local dialect, Leymer refers to a seasonal wind that is believed to bring blessings.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Iranian troupe to take "Timeloss" to Taipei

ART TEHRAN — Mehr Theater Group, a Paris-based Iranian troupe led by director Amir-Reza Kuesthani, plans to perform their acclaimed play "Timeloss" in Taipei, Taiwan in November.

"Timeloss" tells the story of two former lovers sitting in a room bickering over an argument they have had so many times and began so many years ago that they know it by heart.

The play, starring Hassan Majuni and Mahin Sadri, has previously been performed in Switzerland, France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, the U.S. and several other countries.



Tehran museum to showcase posters by Polish artists

ART TEHRAN — The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in collaboration with Lajevardi Foundation will host an exhibition of posters by Polish graphic designers from April 29 to May 1.

Polish Ambassador Juliusz Jacek Gojlo and a number of his compatriot artists are scheduled to attend the opening ceremony of the event, which also will include several meetings and workshops.



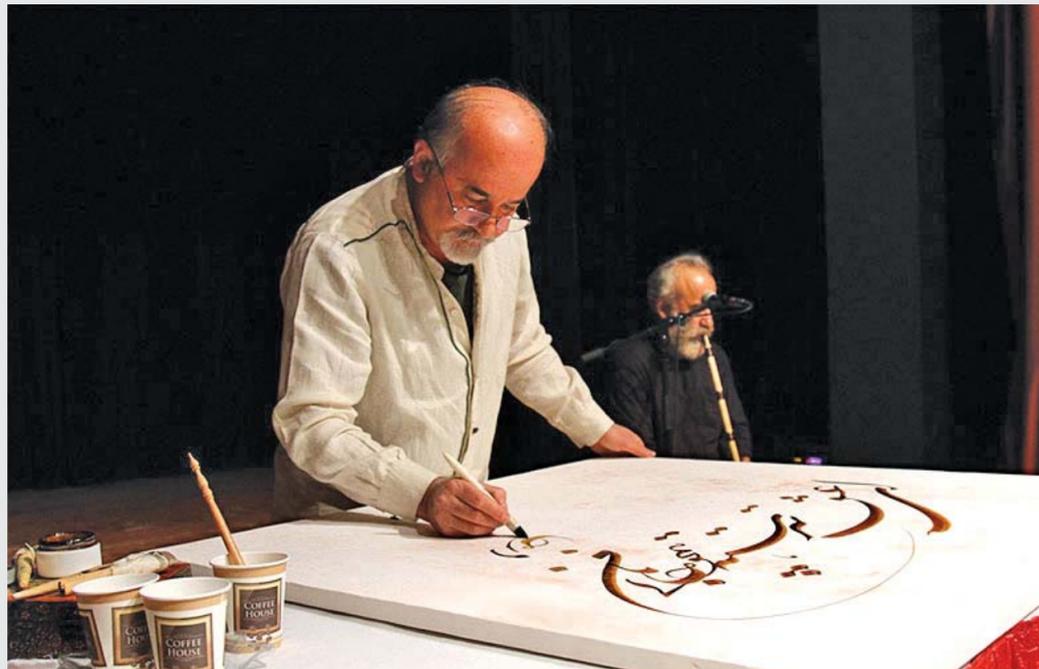
Tehran to host meeting of Iranian, Korean poets

CULTURE TEHRAN — A meeting of Iranian and South Korean poets will be held at the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage and Tourism (RICHT) in Tehran on May 2.

The meeting has been organized in collaboration with the Literature Translation Institute of Korea to celebrate the visit of South Korean President Park Geun-hye to Tehran.

Korean literati, including Chung Ho-sung, Kim Hu-run, Shin Dal-ja and Jang Seok-nam, and Iranian poets Mohammad-Ali Bahmani and Fatemeh Rakei will attend the one-day meeting.

PICTURE OF THE DAY Honaronline/Hassan Motahhari



Esrafil Shirchi creates a calligraphy work during the closing ceremony of the 1st Art and Health Festival at Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center on April 26, 2016. (Honaronline/)

Iranian director stages "Berlin Wall" based on Pink Floyd's "The Wall"

ART TEHRAN — Iranian director Shayan Afkari plans to showcase a performance art entitled "Berlin Wall" based on "The Wall", British group Pink Floyd's bestselling 1979 album.

Speaking to the Persian service of MNA on Tuesday, Afkari said that Pink Floyd's "The Wall" concert in Berlin in 1990, the year after the Berlin Wall was dismantled, inspired him to work on the performance.

"I was thrilled by the way the band performed the concert when I saw a video of the performance," he said.

"Afterwards, I began to translate lyrics of the album's songs into Persian to stage what is being described in the songs in a performance art," he added.

"I have no political intention of staging the performance," Afkari noted and added, "The intentions of the performance is to condemn war."

Alireza and Mohammadreza Sharifi will collaborate in the project as designers of movements.

The performance art will be held every night from May 10 to June 2.

Abbas Kiarostami released from hospital

ART TEHRAN — Renowned Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami was released from Tehran's Jam Hospital on Tuesday.

Leaving the hospital, he told the Persian service of ISNA that he expect to make a full recovery in his home.

Kiarostami, 76, was hospitalized in mid-March due to a severe gastrointestinal disease and underwent several operations.

"I leave the hospital today after 50 days, but



this does not mean I have fully recovered. I hope to continue to improve and gain full recovery at home," Kiarostami said.

According to his brother Bahram, the medical treatment will take 10 more days, but his family expects the filmmaker to recover sooner while he is resting in his own home.

All the doctors and nurses wished Kiarostami better health and asked the filmmaker to better look after himself before he stepped out of the hospital.

Eric Bana returns to comedy in "Special Correspondents"

LONDON (Reuters) — Australian actor Eric Bana returns to comedy on the film with "The Office" creator Ricky Gervais as "too much fun".

"Quite often when you're working on a drama it can go the other way. Getting to work with the most famous corker of all time in Ricky Gervais and

not get in trouble for it was nice," Bana said in an interview.

The film follows two journalists, Frank Bonneville (Bana) and Ian Finch (Gervais) who are due to visit Ecuador and cover an ongoing conflict for

a New York radio station. But when Finch loses their passports they make up an elaborate lie that they have been kidnapped.

"Special Correspondents" premieres on Netflix on Friday.