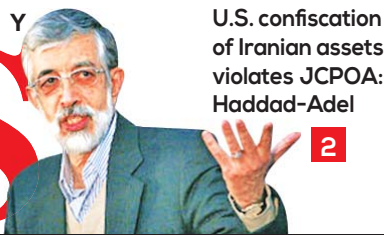


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Tehran Intl. Book Fair to experience new atmosphere this year: official

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Deputy Culture Minister for Cultural Affairs Seyyed Abbas Salehi who is also the director of the Tehran International Book Fair has said that the event will experience a new atmosphere this year at Shahre Aftab, a newly-constructed fairground in southern Tehran. He made the remarks on Sunday during a press conference held after a visit by journalists to the fairground, which will host to the 29th edition of the cultural exhibition from May 5 to 15.

He regarded Shahre Aftab, covering an area over 300,000 hectares, as a good and suitable location for the fair. "It is a good place for a big cultural event and fortunately the fairground will be launched with the opening of the book fair," he added.

"From now on, Tehran's citizens will possess a city of culture and books," he said, adding that the officials are well aware of the deficiencies of the fairground and that they will do their best to remove the obstacles in the coming days.

He further noted that after all these years the Tehran Book Fair is proud to be a landlord now and has finally found its own permanent location.



Rouhani upbeat over Majlis election results

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani on Sunday expressed happiness over the results of parliamentary election which is expected to give

him more leeway in advancing his economic policies.

Rouhani said this in a gathering of laborers on the occasion of International Workers' Day,

an event celebrated worldwide on May 1 as well as Teacher Day, an annual event named after Martyr Morteza Motahari.



Seoul determined to boost trade with Tehran to \$30 billion

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — South Korea is determined to enhance the worth of trade with Iran to \$30 billion, the Korean minister of land, infrastructure, and transport Kang Ho-in told reporters after a meeting with Iranian Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian in Tehran on Saturday.

South Korea is fond of expanding its energy and water ties with Iran and the country's state-run as well as private companies desire to find a route to the Iranian domestic market, the Energy Ministry's website quoted the South Korean minister as saying.

Also in a Sunday meeting with Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, the Korean official announced that his country is slated to sign a \$20-billion-agreement with Iran during the South Korean President Park Geun-hye's visit to Tehran, the Shana news agency reported.

Highlighting the pivotal role that Iran can play as a bridge between Asia and Europe, the Korean senior official underlined that South Korea tries to seize Iran's geographical location to improve bilateral relations.



Leader receives Islamic Jihad chief Ramadan Abdullah



Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, received the Islamic Jihad movement chief Ramadan Abdullah late on Sunday.

(See the full story on the Tehran Times website)

Park on landmark visit to Tehran, economy high on agenda

By Ali Kushki

TEHRAN — South Korea President Park Geun-hye arrived at Tehran on Sunday evening, coming under the spotlight in domestic and international media outlets.

President Park's three-day visit assumes both political and economic significance, considering that Iran is emerging from years of sanctions.

Politically, Park is the first South Korean president visiting Iran, showing political maturity, without which the trip might have been delayed to a much later time.

Also, back in November 2015, South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se met in Tehran with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif, where the two sides highlighted stronger ties between Seoul and Tehran.



From an economic angle, there are quite strong signs, indicating that Seoul and Tehran are bent on opening a new chapter in already robust bonds.

A strong sign is the 236-strong delegation accompanying President Park, the largest team ever dispatched to a foreign country.

The lucrative market of Iran is

so tempting to ignore and South Koreans know this well. They have been present in the Iranian market long before.

Now with removal of sanctions against Iran, South Korean companies are even thrifter to win ventures in the country.

There are at least three reasons for this: A drop in bilateral trade

due to the sanctions imposed on Iran internationally and unilaterally by Seoul, lifting of sanctions against Tehran after the nuclear deal, and finally, the slowing global economy which has influenced the South Korean economy.

The sanctions regime shrank trade to as low as \$6.1 billion much lower than \$10 billion in 2011. The trade is meager, according to people familiar with the matter, given the two countries' great capacities in different technological and industrial sectors, to name only few.

In a meeting with Iranian Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian in Tehran on Saturday, the Korean Minister of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport Kang Ho-in said his country is determined to enhance trade with Iran to \$30 billion.





PERSPECTIVE
By Martin Moslem
international relations expert

Mr. Blair, please do not beat the drums of war

In spite of being sinful, President Nixon was on the belief that "a good politician is the one who listen more than talk, do not take action hastily and learn lesson from the past!" However, the 37th U.S. president had not observed this moral principle during his professional work, but many politicians like him make claims contrary to the reality. We can conclude that Mr. Nixon's advice has no use in the world of politics. An example is Mr. Blair.



Swiss author Peter Stamm to meet with fans in Tehran

ART **TEHRAN** — Prolific Swiss author Peter Stamm is scheduled to meet with Iranian readers of his works on Thursday at Ofoq Publications, the Persian publisher of his books in Tehran.



He will also autograph some of his works for the Iranian readers during a session.

Stamm, who is also an established playwright and radio dramatist, plans to hold several meetings and reading sessions at the 29th Tehran International Book Fair, which will be held from May 5 to 15.

His literary debut "Agnes", a 1998 novel that follows a romance between a nameless older man and Agnes, and "Ice Moon" are among the works translated into Persian.

INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Saudi Arabia is losing its importance to Washington as the United States' dependence on "imported oil" is decreasing due to "the development of fracking technology", says Paul Pillar, a former senior CIA analyst and now a professor in security studies at Georgetown University.

"However," Pillar tells the Tehran Times, "the U.S. economy still can be affected significantly by anything that happens to the global oil market, in which Saudi Arabia continues to be a very important player."

By Maryam Qarehgozlou

TEHRAN — The first international conference on environmental pollutants sampling and monitoring kicked off in Tehran on Sunday.

The conference, co-organized by the Department of Environment (DoE) and the University of Tehran, additionally brought together United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), ministries of oil, energy, industry, agriculture, and science, as well as the national standards organization.

Following is the text of the interview:

■ The White House has threatened to veto a bipartisan bill to let families victimized by the 9/11 terrorist attacks sue Saudi Arabia. Why?

A: The bill has had substantial support from both Republicans and Democrats. This support reflects a broad sentiment among the American people that anyone who had anything to do with 9/11 ought to be called to account. There has been much public attention lately to possible connections between Saudi Arabia and the 9/11 attacks because of a still-secret passage in a Congressional report on 9/11 that refers to Saudi Arabia.

This part of the report may not actually contain any new information that is particularly important, but the speculation about what it may contain has sustained public interest in a possible Saudi role. President Obama has said he would veto the legislation partly because he realizes that the legislation would needlessly complicate relations with Saudi Arabia while serving no useful purpose in either finding out anything more about 9/11 or undoing the damage from that attack. The president probably also believes that individual lawsuits against foreign countries are not a very effective way to run foreign policy.



Conference on environmental pollutants kicks off in Tehran

The three day conference is comprised of 13 workshops which specifically center on monitoring and sampling environmental pollutants.

New technologies in environmental pollutants sampling, sampling standards of environmental pollutants, sampling methodologies of hazardous pollutants in wastes, online sampling and monitoring methodologies, international protocols and agreements in environmental sampling and monitoring, localizing environmental pollutant sampling

and monitoring standards, new technologies on environmental pollutants analysis, global warming and environmental monitoring role and sampling and monitoring of seas are the topics which will be discussed over the conference.

The DoE director, Masoumeh Ebtekar; the DoE deputy director Saeed Motesaddi; and the national standards organization director, Nayyereh Pirouzbakht delivered speeches during the opening ceremony of the conference.





ARTICEL
By: Haniyeh Sadat Jafariyeh
Tehran Times journalist

Aviation industry's renewal riddled with politico-economic challenges

As of the initial annulment of draconian anti-Iranian sanctions on January 1, which was assumed to open gateways to the international markets, Iran awaits seismic changes in various domestic economic sectors most eminently in its casted-out, time-worn aviation industry.

With the financial embargo rolled back, thanks to the implementation of the nuclear agreement - known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - by Iran and world powers, the Iranian aviation authorities have sought to revamp the country's aviation fleet through upgrading the existing aircrafts or purchasing new ones as well as improving technical infrastructure on a massive scale. In this regard, some prominent international aviation manufacturers and carriers have voiced willingness on hammering out deals with Iran. However, Iran and foreign aviation companies have met some challenges on the way to finalize new contracts.

On January 16, i.e., on the JCPOA implementation day, the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) issued a Statement of Licensing Policy (SLP) establishing a favorable licensing policy towards the sale of commercial passenger aircrafts and related parts and services to Iran, provided such transactions do not involve any person on OFAC's Specially Designated Nationals List (SDN List). Moreover, on March 24, the OFAC issued General License I authorizing U.S. persons to undertake certain transactions "ordinarily incident" to the negotiation of, and entry into, contingent contracts for licensable activities under OFAC's SLP. OFAC also updated its Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on sanctions relief under JCPOA to address inquiries related to General License I and provided additional guidance on license applications pursuant to the SLP.



MEDIA MONITOR



U.S. confiscation of Iranian assets violates JCPOA: Haddad-Adel

TEHRAN — An Iranian MP and senior political figure has said America's recent confiscation of \$2 billion of Iranian assets violates the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the official name for Iran's nuclear deal with world powers.

The Majlis has to question the foreign minister what actions the ministry has taken to confront the U.S. move, said Qolam Ali Haddad-Adel, who is also a senior advisor to the Supreme Leader, Mizan reported on Sunday.

The U.S. has to act according to the very deal that it has signed, he said, adding that Washington proved that the Supreme Leader was right that the U.S. is not trustworthy.



Majlis condemns U.S. court ruling

TEHRAN — The Majlis on Sunday once again called on the government to do whatever is needed to improve Iran's military power evermore in defiance of Western pressure.

The request was made during the consideration of an amendment to five-year development plans, Fars reported.

Also, addressing the MPs, Deputy Parliament Speaker Mohammad Hassan Abutorabi Fard condemned a ruling by the U.S. Supreme court which last week ordered to confiscate \$2 billion Iranian assets in the United States.



Iran launches 16 postgrad passive defense-related programs

TEHRAN — Iranian Minister of Science Mohammad Farhadi and Passive Defense Organization chief Qolamreza Jalali on Monday signed an MOU for closer cooperation.

Accordingly, the Ministry of Science will launch 16 postgrad university programs in areas related to passive defense, Tasnim news agency reported on Sunday.



Supreme Leader appoints envoy to Syria

TEHRAN — Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has appointed an envoy to Syria, a new report says.

Abolfazl Tabatabaei Ashkazri met the Leader last Wednesday to receive his credential as envoy to Damascus, Alam reported on Sunday.



Aref thanks nation for participation in runoff election

TEHRAN — Mohammad Reza Aref, a leading candidate who won the highest number of votes in the Tehran constituency in parliamentary elections in February, on Sunday thanked the nation for their significant turnout in the runoff held on Friday.

In a letter he said the massive participation is a national achievement and marks a golden chapter in the history of the Islamic Republic, Tabnak reported.



Aref's speakership not in his interest: lawmaker-elect

TEHRAN — A lawmaker-elect has tried to discourage Tehran's top choice into the next Majlis from running for the position of the speaker, ISNA said on Sunday.

"It will not be in his interest to become the speaker," Mohsen Kuhkan Rizi said of Mohammad Reza Aref.

"Speakership needs insight," ISNA quoted him as saying. Aref served as telecommunication minister as he holds a PhD in electrical and communication engineering from Stanford University. He has also served as Iran's first-vice president. He also withdrew his candidacy in the last hours of the 2013 presidential elections.



Iran, Russia, Iraq, Syria study ways to fight financing of Daesh

TEHRAN — Iran, Russia, Iraq, and Syria held a second meeting in Tehran on April 23 to study ways to stop the flow of money to Daesh.

The meeting, aimed at detecting and suppressing financial flows linked to ISIL, was highly successful in strengthening cooperation in fighting financing of the terrorist organization, Iran's Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance said in a press release on Sunday.



Rouhani upbeat over Majlis election results
President raps JCPOA opponents



"I congratulate the great Iranian nation on the impressive February and April elections and selecting the best," he said, hoping for a better coordination among the three branches of the government: legislative (parliamentary), judiciary, and executive.

"God willing with more coordination between the Majlis and other two bodies, the administration manages to deliver its election promises."

Finalized first and second rounds of parliamentary elections just hit the spot as more than 41 percent

of candidates are moderate-reformist figures, strong enough to cushion the government against the conservative principlist bloc which won only 29 percent of the 290-seat parliament.

■ President raps nuclear deal opponents

Rouhani also rapped opponents of the nuclear deal for "belittling" the major political breakthrough.

"Why do you belittle the performance of a great nation? This great work was not done by the government, rather by a great, powerful and resistant nation... a work done by all people and the guidance of the Supreme

Park on landmark visit to Tehran, economy high on agenda



There are many fertile grounds for the potential to flourish, including energy, technology, industry, transportation, and infrastructure.

Just before the arrival of President Park, more than 17 contracts between the two countries were inked in gas, water, and electricity sectors.

However, South Koreans should bear in mind that trade with Tehran is not a one-way street. Stronger ties with Tehran can help South Korean companies cushion against negative

Iranian ambassador to South Korea says Iran is a golden opportunity for South Korean companies now that their country's economy has been negatively influenced by sagging global economy.

Leader."

Iran and 5+1 countries (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany) forged the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in July 2015, ending years of sanctions against Tehran in exchange for restraints on the country's nuclear activities.

"The day we reached the agreement with the 6 world powers, worriers and pessimists said the agreement wouldn't take effect," Rouhani stated.

The deal's proponents used the moniker "worrier" to identify those in the "nay" camp.

Some of these nagging voices were kept being raised by MPs, who saw the pact antithetical to the anti-arrogant and invincible spirit of the 1979 Revolution.

However, many of the "nay" figures failed to secure victory in the February parliamentary elections and the ensuing runoff, giving the Rouhani administration more leeway for implementing economic reforms.

■ Knowledge-based economy is the only way forward

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani laid emphasis on the importance of knowledge-based economy, saying a more efficient and prosperous economy is contingent upon moving toward such orientation.

"Iranian companies should upgrade their compatibility against giant international firms and a healthier economy and better conditions for workers will hang on moving in the direction of knowledge-based economy."

impacts of the slowing global economy.

According to Iranian Ambassador to Seoul Hossein Taherianfar, the export-oriented economy of South Korea has been negatively influenced by the sagging global economy and given this, South Korean companies are looking for foreign markets.

In such situation, Iran can be a golden opportunity, Taherianfar said.

Given the background, there is no doubt that closer relations between Tehran and Seoul are in the interest of both and this requires presidential-level visits.

Rafsanjani: Iran has a humanitarian view toward Iraq



TEHRAN — Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the chairman of the Expediency Council, said on Saturday that Iran supports the Iraqi government and people based on humanitarian and Islamic principles.

"Iran is ready to cooperate in various areas if the international community and the UN are honest and determined to solve Iraq's problem," he said during a meeting with Jan Kubis, the UN special envoy for Iraq.

Rafsanjani highlighted the importance of fight against terrorism and said people's dissatisfaction with elements of arrogant powers in various countries facilitates a recruitment of terrorists such as Daesh, also called ISIL/ISIS or IS.

He also said that Iraq is suffering from

divisive policies adopted by certain political groups.

For his part, Kubis highlighted the importance of Iran's role in supporting Iraq.

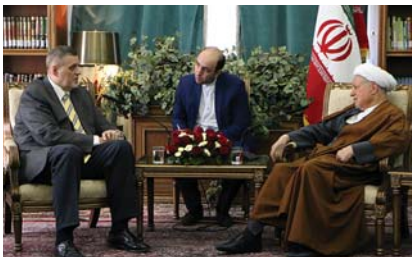
He also said that Iraq's territorial integrity and national unity should be maintained.

■ Plot to divide Syria and Iraq will fail: Velayati

During a separate meeting with Kubis on Sunday, Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior foreign policy adviser to the Supreme Leader, said a plot by certain countries to disintegrate Iraq and Syria will end in failure.

Velayati also said Iran has taken "serious" and "practical" actions in fighting terrorism and extremist movements.

The countries that support terrorism



will see the consequences of their behavior in various countries, he said.

The former foreign minister went on to say that Iran supports democracy in Iraq.

Kubis said that Iran has a "very good" cooperation with the UN in helping Iraq.

Iraq is entangled in a new crisis as the demonstrators loyal to Moqtada Sadr

have camped out near parliament, demanding a change in government.

Protesters have accused the government of neglecting much-needed reforms, as it is in war with Daesh.

Declining oil revenues have also added insult to injury.

Daesh claimed a twin suicide bombing on Sunday that killed at least 33 people and wounded more than 50 in the southern town of Samawa.

In parliament, some leading parties have locked horns over their share in the new cabinet line-up. Many prominent politicians, like former Prime Minister Nouri Maliki, are highly critical of Moqtada Sadr. Maliki said change could not be achieved through "intimidation or the occupation of the Green Zone."

Iran's parliament ratifies bill to increase missile power



TEHRAN — The Iranian MPs voted for a bill on Sunday to increase the country's missile power with the aim of boosting the Islamic Republic's deterrent and defense capability.

The MPs listed the following steps that should be taken to upgrade the country's deterrence power:

- Upgrading and increasing missile production
- Developing and strengthening anti-aircraft warfare system at various short, medium and long ranges
- Developing and updating secure communication networks.
- Strengthening electronic warfare power
- Making armed systems smart
- Designing and producing necessary items to counter terrorist groups
- Equipping navy forces with advances weapons

After a successful test-firing of two ballistic missiles by the IRGC in March the U.S. launched a propaganda campaign against Iran, claiming that the tests were a breach of the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 that

endorsed the JCPOA.

However, the resolution does not ban the testing of conventional weapons by Iran. Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also said the missiles tested by Iran are not programmed to carry nuclear warheads.

"It (Resolution 2231) doesn't call upon Iran not to test ballistic missiles, or ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads ... it calls upon Iran not to test ballistic missiles that were 'designed' to be capable," Zarif said in a speech at the Australian National University in Canberra on March 16.

"That word took me about seven months to negotiate, so everybody knew what it meant," he said, referring to "designed."

Zarif added that under the international nuclear agreement that resulted in the lifting of UN sanctions, which he had also negotiated, Iran would never develop nuclear weapons.

Iranian officials have said Tehran will not compromise on its defense capability.

Zarif said in a tweet on March 15 that if Iran had mis-



siles probably Saddam Hussein did not invade Iran or refused to bombard civilians.

"If we had missiles during Saddam's war on us, they may have discouraged or at least reduced his indiscriminate attacks on our civilians."

He also said, "Iran hasn't attacked any country in 250 years. But when Saddam rained missiles on us and gassed our people for 8 yrs, no one helped us."

U.S. lobby group to campaign against business investment in Iran

An influential American lobby group that tried to block the Iran nuclear deal is launching an international campaign to discourage big western companies from doing business in the country, warning that they could fall foul of remaining sanctions.

United Against Nuclear Iran, a bipartisan group which was at the forefront of the campaign against last year's landmark nuclear agreement, will use a mixture of newspaper adverts and public letters to put pressure on multinationals that have either returned to Iran since the deal or are thinking of doing so.

The ramped-up lobbying against business with Iran comes at a sensitive time when Tehran is already complaining loudly about what it believes to be the lack of economic benefits it has received so far from the agreement.

Western diplomats say that the tensions over sanctions relief have so far not reached a point that could undermine the deal but acknowledge that Iran feels it has been short-changed. John Kerry, U.S. secretary of state, has met his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif twice in the past fortnight to discuss how

the agreement is being implemented.

UANI plans to send letters warning about the continued risks of doing business with Iran to 140 international companies, 30 of which have already been written. It will also publish a series of newspaper adverts, starting in Europe this week ahead of a major conference in Zurich to encourage trade and investment in Iran.

"As they get on a plane to Tehran, companies need to have a hard look at the business risk," said Mark Wallace, a former U.S. ambassador to the UN who is chief executive of UANI. "The risk profile has not fundamentally changed."

Responding to the charge that he was using public pressure on multinationals to try to unpick the Iran deal, Mr Wallace said that the agreement did offer "limited sanctions relief" to Iran "but in terms of a flood of businesses going back in, that was never the idea".

Since the nuclear deal was implemented in January, European banks have been particularly reluctant to do business that involves Iran for fear that they will be caught up in the remaining sanctions and restrictions.

Peter Wittig, German ambassador to



the U.S., said: "We always believed that some trade resumption was part of the nuclear deal. This is what sanctions relief means." Although the Iranians argued that they had not received the economic benefits they were promised, he said, "We are not yet arriving at a breaking point."

Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian American Council and a strong supporter of the nuclear deal, said that a "successful campaign that puts a stigma on doing business with Iran would be a de facto sanction".

However, he said that the campaign would only have a genuine impact if it was accompanied by more "harsh rhetoric by the Republican candidate that gives companies the impression that the

Iran deal is not solid yet" and continued uncertainty about how the remaining sanctions will be applied.

The companies UANI has written to so far include General Electric, Bombardier, Maersk and Siemens. In its letter to GE, which has said it intends to do some business with Iran, UANI said the company's decision would "give aid and comfort to a lawless regime that fomenters terrorism and unrest". GE responded that any business it conducted in Iran would be "allowed by [U.S.] laws and regulations" and would be "consistent with the foreign policy of the United States and in the best interests of GE's shareholders".

UANI was set up in 2008 by a bipartisan group of former officials, including former CIA director Jim Woolsey, Richard Holbrooke and Dennis Ross, a Middle East expert who played a key role in several administrations.

Gary Samore, a former senior Obama administration official, resigned as the group's president last year after he concluded that the nuclear deal was in the national interests of the U.S.

(Source: FT)

Russia, U.S. in bids to halt fighting in Syria's Aleppo

Russia said on Sunday it was working to freeze fighting in Syria's Aleppo as United States Secretary of State John Kerry was due in Geneva in a bid to restore a nationwide ceasefire.

More than a week of fighting in Syria's second city has killed several hundred civilians and left a United Nations-backed peace process hanging by a thread.

Concern has been growing that the fighting in Aleppo will lead to the complete collapse of a landmark ceasefire between the Syrian government and rebels fighting the government that was brokered by Moscow and Washington.

On Saturday Moscow said it would not urge President Assad's forces to halt air raids on the war-ravaged city as they were targeting militant groups not covered by the ceasefire, which took effect in late February.

But on Sunday, after Washington called on Russia to push its Syrian ally to end the strikes, the head of Moscow's co-ordination centre in Syria said talks on a freeze had begun.

"Currently active negotiations are underway to establish a 'regime of silence' in Aleppo province," Lieutenant General Sergei Kuralenko was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies.

He said that a freeze in fighting in Eastern Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus, had been extended by another 24 hours

to the end of Sunday and that another freeze was holding in northern Latakia province.

"We are calling on all sides interested in establishing peace in Syria to support the Russian-American initiative and not to allow a regime of silence to be disrupted," Kuralenko said, speaking from Russia's Hmeimim air base in Syria.

Kerry was due to arrive in Geneva later on Sunday for talks with UN envoy Staffan de Mistura and the Saudi and Jordanian foreign ministers on reviving the ceasefire.

In calls to De Mistura and the lead Syrian opposition negotiator on Saturday, Kerry expressed "deep concern" about Aleppo, which has suffered some of the worst fighting in a war that has killed more than 270,000 people and displaced millions.

Kerry made clear that ending the violence in Aleppo and returning ultimately to a durable, nationwide ceasefire was a top priority, spokesman John Kirby said.

At least 253 civilians -- including 49 children -- have died in shelling, rocket fire and air strikes in both sides of the divided city since April 22, according to the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group.

Early on Sunday the provincial capi-



tal's rebel-held east was eerily quiet after days of bombing, an AFP correspondent said, with the last air strike there at around 1:00 am (2200 GMT Saturday) local time.

There were no reports of fighting in the city's government-controlled west, the Observatory said.

The Syrian army said on Sunday it was extending the freeze in fighting in Damascus and Eastern Ghouta to 1:00 am Monday (2200 GMT Sunday).

The same "freeze" was set to hold until 1:00 am Tuesday in Latakia, a regime stronghold.

The fighting has dampened hopes that the ceasefire could finally lay the groundwork for an end to Syria's five-year conflict.

Peace talks last month in Geneva failed to make any headway, though De Mistura has said he hopes they can resume "during the course of May".

(Source: AFP)

Police officers killed, dozens wounded in attacks near Turkey's southeast border

Man hit by police water cannon dies in Istanbul

Two police officers were killed and 23 people wounded in a car bomb attack on police headquarters in the southeastern Turkish city of Gaziantep, the provincial governor and police sources said, in one of two attacks on security forces on Sunday.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility; but Turkey has suffered attacks recently both from Kurdish militants and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group fighters, raising uncertainty at home and among NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) allies about spillover of conflict from neighboring Syria, Reuters reported.

A bomb-laden vehicle was detonated outside the gates of police headquarters on a street housing several

other provincial government buildings whose windows were shattered.

Footage from broadcaster CNN Turk showed forensics experts collecting pieces of the wrecked vehicle as well as rubble strewn by the blast felt across the city.

Police cordoned off the scene and police carrying rifles patrolled the area. Gunfire was heard at the time of the explosion and a second car was reported to have been driven away from the scene, CNN Turk's correspondent said.

Nineteen police officers and four civilians were wounded in the attack, a statement from Gaziantep governor Ali Yerlikaya's office said. One police officer died at the scene and a second in hospital, a security source said.

■ May Day

Meanwhile, a man hit by a water cannon security vehicle (TOMA) died in Istanbul's Beyoglu district on May 1, Dogan News Agency reported.

The 57-year-old Nail Mavus was hit by a TOMA while crossing the street in the Tarlabasi area of Beyoglu, near Taksim Square.

The heavily wounded Mavus was taken to a hospital in Istanbul's Sisli district, where he succumbed to his wounds.

Police took strict security measures around Taksim with TOMAs and thousands of police officers, in order to prevent groups trying to celebrate International Workers' Day from entering Taksim Square.

(Source: agencies)

Saudis free 40 Yemeni prisoners

Yemen's Ansarullah (Houthi) movement says Riyadh has released dozens of its fighters under a deal to quell fighting on the Saudi-Yemeni border as peace talks between the warring sides continue in Kuwait.

"We received 40 prisoners, 20 of those were captured inside Yemen," Reuters quoted an Ansarullah movement spokesman, Mohammed Abdulsalam, as saying in a statement on Saturday.

The official, however, did not elaborate on the location where the remaining prisoners are being held.

The development comes as Ansarullah fighters and their allies, on the one hand, and Saudi-backed loyalists to fugitive ex-president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, on the other side, are holding United Nations-brokered negotiations aimed at ending the conflict gripping the impoverished state.

The discussions, which started in Kuwait City on April 21 after a three-day delay, are underway against the backdrop of an open-ended ceasefire that began in the conflict-ridden country at midnight on April 10.

Warring parties also began face-to-



face negotiations for the first time on April 30.

Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the UN special envoy for Yemen, described the atmosphere of the talks as positive, saying "everyone renewed their commitment to cease hostilities."

"We are working to develop a frame-

work that builds on commonalities. Does this mean we removed all obstacles to a political solution? No, but we are getting there," he added.

On Saturday, an Asarullah delegation in the peace talks presented a plan to the UN for a transitional government to oversee a handing over of weapons and freeing of

political prisoners before elections.

The Asarullah have demanded the exclusion of Hadi from the future vote, according to a negotiating source. Meanwhile, the Hadi side wants the Asarullah and allies to hand over arms and withdraw from the areas under their control.

The Asarullah have been demanding a complete lifting of the blockade which has been imposed on Yemen by Saudi Arabia since March 2015. Hadi's delegation, says, however, that the Asarullah must first implement the terms of a UN resolution and withdraw from the areas they have captured in Yemen.

Yemen has seen almost daily military attacks by the House of Saud regime since late March 2015, with internal sources putting the toll from the bloody aggression at more than 9,500.

The Ansarullah fighters took state matters into their own hands after the resignation and escape of Hadi, which threw Yemen into a state of uncertainty and threatened a total security breakdown in the country, where an al-Qaeda affiliate is present.

(Source: Press TV)

Iraqi PM calls for arrest of parliament protesters

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has called for the arrests of protesters who stormed the parliament, clashed with police and broke the barricades of Baghdad's heavily-fortified Green Zone.

Abadi's statement on Sunday came a day after hundreds of followers of the influential Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr tore down blast walls and poured into the parliament building, exacerbating a long-simmering political crisis.

■ Iraq crisis deepens with storming of parliament

Videos on social media showed a group of young men surrounding and slapping two Iraqi legislators as they attempted to flee the crowd, while other protesters mobbed motorcades.

Protesters were also seen jumping and dancing on the parliament's meeting hall tables and chairs and waving Iraqi flags.

The protesters eventually left the parliament on Saturday night and rallied in a nearby square.

Sadr and his supporters want the political system, put in place following the United States-led invasion in 2003, to be reformed.

As it stands, entrenched political blocs representing the country's Shias, Sunnis and Kurds rely on patronage, resulting in widespread corruption and poor public services. The major blocs have until now blocked Abadi's reform efforts.

On Sunday, protesters vowed to continue their sit-in inside the Green Zone until their demands are met.

Iraqi security forces initially responded to Saturday's events by tightening security across the capital, sealing off checkpoints leading to the Green Zone and stopping traffic on main roads into the city.

The United Nations mission to Iraq said it was gravely concerned. It issued a statement condemning violence against elected officials and urging "calm, restraint and respect for Iraq's constitutional institutions at this crucial juncture".

■ 38 killed, 86 injured in twin car bombs in Iraq

Elsewhere, at least 38 people were killed and 86 others injured in two car bombs in the southern Iraqi city of Samawa, security and medical officials say.

A police official said the first explosion took place around midday on Sunday near government offices in

the center of Samawa, while the second blast occurred minutes later at a bus station in an open-air area.

"The hospitals have received 33 dead," AFP quoted a senior official in the Muthanna health department, which covers Samawa, as saying.

Samawa, a Shia-dominated city, is located some 370km south of the Iraqi capital, Baghdad.

The official also noted that the death toll from both blasts is expected to rise. A medical official also confirmed the number of casualties.

Online photographs showed huge plumes of smoke rising above buildings and a number of burnt out cars and bodies lying on the ground at the site of the first attack.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group claimed responsibility for both attacks.

Iraq has been mired in political crisis for months, hindering the government's ability to combat the ISIL terrorist group, which still controls much of the country's north and west, or address a financial crisis largely prompted by the plunge in global oil prices.

(Source: agencies)

NEWS

No difference between Saudi regime and ISIL, Al-Qaeda: Saleh



In the aftermath of thousands of Yemeni civilians' deaths at the hands of the House of Saud regime-led coalition, Yemen's ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh told RT that there is no difference between the "Saudi regime" and terrorist groups like ISIL terrorist group and Al-Qaeda.

"A plot has been made against the Yemeni people. An unreasonable aggression against us has been prepared. Strikes at military, economic, cultural and social targets have been conducted; the whole infrastructure [has been targeted]. A total destruction of everything is taking place... I'm talking about Saudi aggression," Ali Abdullah Saleh told RT Arabic in an exclusive interview this week.

The former Yemeni president, who headed the Middle Eastern country for decades until February 2012, said that his nation has no conflict with any country in the world, but the House of Saud regime.

"They attacked us, we didn't attack them. They are killing our women, our elderly and children. Why? We've never had any religious disputes. Why have they appeared now? We have our religious views, you have yours. Why are you [Saudi] killing the Yemeni people, who are your neighbors and brothers?" Saleh said.

Saleh believes that the major terrorist groups are all derived from the Muslim Brotherhood organization, which itself, according to him, "is an invention of the Saudis."

"Al-Qaeda, ISIL and al-Nusra are all derivatives of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was invented and raised in Saudi Arabia. These organizations also operate in Russia and in Europe. All of them are Saudi Arabia's invention. Later Qatar and Turkey have also started using them, and finance them to achieve their own goals. There were none of them in Yemen for a long while, and everything that then appeared came from Saudi Arabia under different names, [such as] Salafis, Muslim Brotherhood, Al-Qaeda."

The politician added that both Russia and Europe have the wrong idea about the essence of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. Being the "creation" of Saudi Arabia, "they have no concrete political program, their program is money," Saleh said.

The former president, told RT that the damage to his country "amounts to billions" of dollars.

"More than 8,000 people have been killed. There were a lot of children, women and elderly among them. And I'm talking only about the number of casualties among the civilian population. Furthermore, 27,000 people have been injured. All of these people are casualties of the Saudi regime," Saleh said.

The former president said that his country has been devastated, with no income from tax, very little from customs, and no money from oil or gas. The latter is only produced for domestic needs, he said.

"And if there is some oil, it's being controlled and sold by Al-Qaeda in Hadramaut [a region in Yemen on the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula] and Shabwah [a governorate in central Yemen]. They sell it on the market within the country. Al-Qaeda gets all the money from it. And this all happens in full view of the Saudi regime. They tell the world, which doesn't want to understand anything: 'We are against Al-Qaeda.' What Al-Qaeda, what ISIL? They are ISIL. They are Al-Qaeda. Everyone knows what this regime is about. It buys people's conscience by making buy and sell deals on weapons, as well as inking political deals by paying money to influential people in different countries of the world... Saudi Arabia pursues only its own interests."

Yemen's ex-leader also said Saudi Arabia uses the claims that there are Iranian forces in Yemen "to justify its aggression." He went on to say that we would like to receive some military and other aid from Iran. Saleh called Iran's presence in his country a "fiction," and added the U.S. "has the most powerful intelligence services working in all countries and knowing and seeing everything," not a single Iranian military and no Iranian weapon has been discovered in Yemen.

Saleh believes that the exiled President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, whose forces are based in Aden and who is supported by Saudi Arabia, "has no legitimacy." He should "render himself to the international tribunal as a war criminal," Saleh said, adding that opposition forces only support dialogue with the people of Yemen.

The future of Yemen "should not be discussed neither in Geneva, nor in Kuwait," the politician said, adding that he and his supporters only recognize the unity of the country in accordance with its constitution and people's referendum on the matter.

"A government of national unity with participation of various political forces should be formed in the first place," Saleh said, adding that new parliamentary and presidential elections should be prepared in Yemen in accordance with its constitution. "But not the constitution of Hadi, which has divided Yemen," he added.

Saying that he now heads an opposition party which is "in opposition to any power in principle," but is in coalition with other forces "to fight the aggressors," the former president told RT that he would never again agree to be in power himself.

"I've been part of the political process for 45 years. Enough for me," he said.

(Source: RT)

JUMP

Aviation industry's renewal
riddled with politico-
economic challenges

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But as some hurdles fall, others raise; companies engaged in the aviation trade should structure their approach to this new General License I with some uncertainties and limitations in mind. For example, neither General License I nor the updated FAQs define what transactions are "ordinarily incident" to the negotiation of, and entry into, a contingent contract. Therefore, OFAC's imprecision has stopped western and some European top aircraft executives from showing initiatives in making aviation deals with Iran. Presently, they prefer to establish compliance procedures to avoid running afoul of the OFAC's requirements, which would definitely bring them hefty fines. In better words, foreign entities prefer to stay back to get a panoramic view of Iran-U.S. ongoing political relations.

In addition, Iran is still locked out of American financial system (U-Turn), thanks to some lingering sanctions imposed by OFAC, while aircraft financing agreements are majorly U.S. dollar-based across the globe. It is worth noting that Iran has been eliminated from reinstituting the U-turn in accordance with U.S.-led primary sanctions, those which would not be removed via JCPOA implementation. Additionally, under the current circumstances and for politico-economic reasons, Tehran does not express tendency towards getting relinked to U.S. financial system. "Being re-connected to U-Turn entails some risks for Iran's financial resources; a good example would be the U.S. recent decision to seize nearly \$2 billion of the Central Bank of Iran's blocked assets in an American bank," Abbas Araqchi, Iran's deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, said in a televised interview on April 24. In better words, rejoining the U-Turn may open the way for the U.S. Judicial System and courts to seize Iranian assets based on reasons that are not justifiable to Iranian authorities. Consequently, the Islamic Republic desires to pick up non-western aviation lessors and financiers, Chinese banks for instance, to be an alternative for American ones. However, the country has had limited international banking and financial interactions for decades and reviving brokerage relations would for sure be a time-consuming procedure.

The other issue raises when it comes to the question about how the intended aviation joint deals will be financed. The recent fall in oil prices and Iran's affordability in financing joint projects has set the alarm for international aviation activists. The concern, however, could be alleviated relying on Iran's income of the increasing number of commercial aircraft using Iranian safe and sound airspace. "The ever-increasing number of overflights can guarantee Iran's financial credit in common investments made with foreign companies," Ahmad-Reza Bayatidoosti an official in The Civil Aviation Organization of Iran (CAO) said after a meeting with a visiting English investing delegation, the company's public relations reported in early April.

The issue of property rights in Iran is the other factor which makes foreign entities startled. Prior to doing business with the Asian country, foreign lessors and aircraft owners wish to get fully informed of regulatory procedures and aircraft ownership rights, mainly because Iran is not yet a signatory to the Cape Town Treaty, which protects the interests of aircraft lessors and owners by guaranteeing rights concerning aircraft ownership, defaults on leases, recouping debts and repossessing aircraft. Iran is reportedly taking preparatory measures to sign up to the convention, which also takes time.

The aforementioned reasons, however, do not seem to stop Iran from making aviation deals with foreigners, for the country is currently in the course of finalizing a contract with the civil aircraft manufacturer, Airbus. For those international aviation entities that remain bullish to finalize deals with the Islamic Republic in post-sanction era, this contract can be a good sample of feasibility of signing pacts with Iran.

As reported, Iran inked an agreement to buy 118 Airbus planes by 2024 during a visit by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to France, in late January. Although the deal has not been finalized yet, having a brief overview on the published data about the contract declares that Airbus has won the U.S. export license to pen the agreement with Iran, Deputy Road Minister Asghar Fakhriyeh Kashan said, Tasnim reported on April 17; the deal is possible to be financed by Chinese and some European countries, ISNA quoted the Head of CAO Ali Abedzadeh; and all the 118 aircrafts are purchased under a lease-purchase agreement, Iranian Road Minister Abbas Akhundi announced, Tasnim wrote on January 28.

Although Iran's political ties with the U.S. are still tenuous, the country is struggling to give its economic ties enough room to breathe and grow independently of political upheavals. The country's comprehensive negotiations with aviation companies expected to achieve the intended goal.

Yet, Iran-U.S. political stand-off holds the fate of the Islamic Republic's international economic relations in its hand.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said on April 22 that the U.S. would not stand in the way of foreign banks or firms doing business with Iranian companies that are no longer subject to U.S. sanctions. Kerry also said the administration was willing to further clarify what transactions are now permitted with Iran and urged foreign financial institutions to seek answers from U.S. officials if they have questions. They should not assume, he said, that was once prohibited is still prohibited. Nor, he added, should they assume that transactions with Iran that remain illegal for U.S. companies are illegal for foreign firms, AP reported.

But, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said on April 27 that major global banks' reluctance to work with Iran results from Washington's intimidating policies and its push for provoking Iranophobia. "On the paper, the Americans claim that banks are free to work with Iran, but in practice, they take different measures to foment Iranophobia," the Leader noted.

Seoul determined to boost trade with Tehran to \$30 billion

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Park arrived in the Iranian capital on Sunday. Accompanied by a large business delegation, she will explore avenues for further ties with the Islamic Republic during her three-day stay. It will be the first presidential visit to Iran since South Korea and Iran established diplomatic relations in 1962.

Iran's crude oil, gas condensate exports to S. Korea up 300,000 bpd

Iran currently exports 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil and gas condensate to South Korea, a 300,000 bpd rise in the post-sanction era," Zanganeh told reports after the meeting with the Korean minister.

Addressing the issue of the contract that will be penned with the South Korean energy minister simultaneous with President Park's trip to Tehran, the Iranian oil minister clarified that Iran LNG project as well as the second stage of developing South Pars gas field's phase 12, and the project of Bid Boland II Gas Refinery are among the favorites of South Koreans for future cooperation.

According to Zanganeh, Iran seeks selling oil to the eastern Asian country and tries to attract their invest-



South Korean Land, Infrastructure and Transport Minister Kang Ho-in (L) visited Iranian Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian (R) in Tehran on Saturday.

ments in petrochemical sector and LNG projects. "Some negotiations have been conducted in this regard and conclusions have been made," he added.



Kang shaking hand with Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh in Tehran on Sunday

On April 26, the Korea Times reported that South Korea intends to more than double its imports of crude oil and natural gas condensate from Iran. Seoul's bid is aimed at ramping up energy ties with Tehran, the report said.

110 foreign companies to attend Tehran RAILEXPO 2016

ECONOMY
desk

TEHRAN — Some 110 foreign companies from Russia, Germany, Turkey, China, Italy, the Czech Republic, Bangladesh, and India are to take part in Iran's 4th International Exhibition of Rail Transportation, Related Industries and Equip-

ment, dubbed RAILEXPO 2016, Head of Iran Railroad Industries Association told reporters on Sunday.

According to Mohammad Hossein Qanbari, in a bid to encourage domestic and foreign companies' participation, the Iranian govern-

ment wishes to make Tehran RAILEXPO a hub of the regional railroad exhibitions.

As reported, the exhibition will be held at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds from May 15 to 18, where besides the 110 foreign companies, 90 Iranian ones will take part.

The official underscored that this exposition focuses on recovering from effects of the draconian anti-Iranian sanctions, increasing the exports volume, localizing railway industry, and introducing new technologies to domestic railway companies.

Seven reasons Iran could become an entrepreneurial powerhouse

By Elizabeth MacBride

The headlines about Iran's economy have faded, but the momentum hasn't. The \$400 billion economy, the second largest in the Middle East after Saudi Arabia, is expected to grow by almost 7% next year, according to the World Bank.

Consider what happens if you match that kind of economic growth with a university system that produces 233,000 scientists and engineers a year, in an environment newly connected to most of the world's economy. The product could be thousands of startups and small businesses — if nothing gets in the way.

A couple of months ago I spoke to Nasser Ghanemzadeh, founder of Opatan, an Iranian cloud startup. He was in San Francisco attending a workshop organized in part by the venture capital firm 500 Startups.

"The most important thing we want is the expertise is the mentorship and the knowledge," he said. "Most of the experiences are here in Silicon Valley.

"In the last three years, more than 200 startups have formed in Iran. A movement has begun. It's accelerating."

The business environment there still faces big hurdles. Whether the businesses thrive or not will depend in part on how much government policies support them, and whether geopolitical turmoil interferes with growth. Eco-

nomics freedom and personal freedom usually go hand-in-hand.

But here are seven reasons to look to Iran to produce a generation of fast-growth companies.

The size of the economy and the lifting of world sanctions: The country has a population of nearly 80 million; and manufacturing capacity unrivaled in the Middle East. Oil and gas account for only 10% of the GDP, meaning the country has a diversified base to grow from. Most American sanctions remain in place, so we won't see big American deals — but meanwhile, investments from companies in Europe and Asia are pouring in.

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Iran among 8 producers of antimony ingot

ECONOMY
desk

TEHRAN — Having got its first antimony ingot plant operational in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, Iran now stands among the eight producers of the product in the world, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The antimony plant kicked off operation in presence of the Iranian Deputy Industry Minister Mehdi Karbasian, the report said.

It has the capacity of producing 300 kilograms of antimony ingots per day.

China, Russia, Bolivia, Australia, South Africa, Tajikistan, Mexico, and the United States are the producers of antimony ingot in the world.

Antimony ingots are mainly used in high-tech, electronics, aerospace, and chemical industries. Its trioxide is used in making flame-proofing compounds. Three other applications make up nearly all the rest of the consumption. One of these uses is as a stabilizer and a catalyst for the production of polyethylene terephthalate. Another application is to serve as a fining agent to remove microscopic bubbles in glass, mostly for TV screens. The third major application is the use as pigment.

PICTURE OF THE DAY SHANA Pedram Mohiti



Alireza Kameli (L), the managing director of National Iranian Gas Exports Company (NIGEC), and Lee Seung-hoon, the CEO of Korea Gas Corporation (KOGAS), shaking hand after signing a deal in Tehran on Sunday. Iran's export of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to South Korea, issues related to the gas market, and exchange of experiences in the field of gas trade are the main pivots of the deal.



Hackers' \$81 million sneak attack on world banking

Tens of millions of dollars siphoned from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. A shadowy set of casinos in the Philippines. A large bank in Bangladesh with creaky technology. An unknown group of anonymous thieves with sophisticated hacking skills.

What unites this curious cast of characters and enabled one of the most brazen digital bank heists ever is a ubiquitous and highly trusted international bank messaging system called Swift.

SWIFT is billed as a super-secure system that banks use to authorize payments from one account to another. "The Rolls-Royce of payments networks," one financial analyst said.



German fin-min criticizes Volkswagen management over bonuses: paper

Germany's finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble has criticized the executive board of scandal-ridden carmaker Volkswagen for not waiving bonuses despite bringing the company to the brink of collapse.

"I have no sympathy for managers who first drive a large blue chip-listed company into an existence-threatening crisis and then defend their own bonuses in a public debate," Schäuble told German weekly Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung. "That shows that something is not working."

Volkswagen plans to pay the 12 current and former members of its management board 63.24 million euros (\$72.44 million) for 2015, a year when Europe's largest carmaker posted a record loss due to legal and compensation costs for cheating diesel emissions tests.



Facebook hit with lawsuit over plan to issue new stock

A Facebook Inc shareholder filed a proposed class action lawsuit on Friday in a bid to stop the company's plan to issue new Class C stock, calling the move an unfair deal to entrench Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg as controlling shareholder.

The lawsuit, filed in the Delaware Court of Chancery, followed the social networking company's announcement on Wednesday of its plan to issue the shares.

The rejiggering of Facebook's share structure is effectively a 3-for-1 stock split. Zuckerberg's said in December that he intends to put 99 percent of his Facebook shares into a new philanthropy project focusing on human potential and equality.

Iran is one of the safest countries I have visited as a woman: German tourist

By Setareh Behroozi

“Iran is one of the safest countries that I have visited as a woman,” German tourist Dorothea Wisse, 26, told the Tehran Times.

On a hot afternoon, I met Dorothea in a cozy room at the Nakhoda Amini homestay in Tabl village on the Persian Gulf island of Qeshm. She, along with her fiancé, was on a 21-day visit to Iran, planning to stay on Qeshm for four days.

Dorothea had already visited many European countries as well as several other places including Canada, South Africa, and Ecuador.

“No one threatened us nor tried to rob us during our excursion in Iran,” she said.

The couple had visited several cities in Iran, including Kashan, Abyaneh, Natanz, Isfahan, Shahr-e Kord, Koohrang, Khur, and Yazd, and had come to see Hormuz and Qeshm islands.

“It is very hard to say, which one of these places is the most beautiful. Each of them has its own fascination and is very beautiful,” she said.

However, Khur was her choice as the best place she visited in Iran. Khur is a desert city located near Lut Desert in the



Abyaneh village, Kashan

central province of Isfahan.

In her view, Iran is not an expensive destination. “Food is quite cheap but it is not the case for tourist and historical sites,” she added.

“I have some problems with delicious Persian food since I am a vegetarian. I miss German bread as well,” she laughed.

Even in historical sites, Iranian visitors are the majority in comparison to foreign tourists, she said.

I think this is good. In cities like Paris you only see tourists and there are no Parisians in historical sites, Dorothea added.

“Friendly and nice people in Iran make our trip to the country very special,” she

explained.

During their stay on Qeshm, Dorothea and her fiancé visited Mangrove forests, the geo-park sites, Star Valley, Chahku Valley, and Qeshm roof.

She said she was fascinated by seeing turtles and sharks on Hormuz and Hengam islands.

“As a Western tourist, I find Iran very different from what you see in European countries. In France, the U.S. and many other Western countries, the lifestyle of people are the same,” she said.

The reason is that Iran has a different civilization and religion, different history and even different climate, she explained.

“Iran opens its door to tourists and you can experience what you have heard about the country,” she smiled.

She said that from the political viewpoint, media in the world only cover nuclear program, economic and political problems of Iran.

“Many people live a happy life in Iran and they are very open-minded people and daily life is more relaxed than it is portrayed by media. The young generation is very modern and open,” she said.

Historical gardens in Tehran to escape the city life

When the hectic city life of Tehran tightens its grip around our neck, most Tehraners usually hit the road to the Caspian Sea to catch some breath and refresh. But what if work, schedule and a ton of other stuff are trapping you in the capital? Then what?

Tehran is big, crazy and a bit hard to get around. But it doesn't mean we don't have our own little gems scattered across the city. Who says you have to go all the way to Shiraz for gardens or drive the extra kilometer to Esfahan for palaces? We have them all here! You just need to know where to look.

■ Sa'd Abad Complex

This over 110 hectares mountainside garden is a popular spot for Tehraners to go for long walks and observe nature's seasonal changes at its fullest. It was first built by the Qajars as a summer resident and later expanded by the Pahlavis.

There are 18 mansions and palaces erected between aged plane trees and cypresses which are currently functioning as museums. A gushing river flows through the park and spectacular views of snow topped mountains embellish your photo backdrops.

When to go: Serene at any time the garden doubles in beauty during autumn when planes decide to show off their coloured foliage. Spring is also a great time to visit since there's usually a huge Haftseen festival going on. Want to escape the summer heat? We make sure we head over here during summer to cool off from the mountain breeze.

Tip: I'd suggest visiting Darband (very close-by) early in the morning, having lunch over there and heading here after, for an afternoon walk. You can either just buy an entrance ticket and enjoy the outdoors or also buy tickets for a few palaces. Beware that you'd have to make up your mind at the entrance since that's the only place where tickets are sold. I would advice on visiting the Nation's Palace, the Nation's museum and the Green Palace.

■ Niavaran Complex

Not as big or extravagant as Sa'd Abad but Niavaran was also built as a summer home during the Qajar period. The modern mansion of Niavaran was built for Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and his family where they lived during most of his reign.

Where to eat: I specifically love the cute cafe right in

front of Ahmad Shah's Pavilion. Prices are high and the service is average but I'd say the view is totally worth it.

When to visit: Anytime really.

■ Negarestan

This place is unknown to tourists and even many Iranians but it's one of my favorites to escape the hustle and bustle of Tehran every once in a while. This Persian garden and its pavilion have seen a lot of important political events through the years and were once home to the first art school of Iran.

When to visit: Head over here in Noruz and there are concerts, exhibitions and many other activities to be done.

■ Masoudieh Palace (Emarat-E Masoudieh)

Built for Prince Masoud Mirza, son of Nasereddin Shah of Qajar and the governor of Esfahan as his residence in the capital, this beautiful Qajar palace is adorned with European inspired moldings, coloured glasses and Persian tiles.

Due to it being close to the parliament, the palace has seen some historic events through the decades such as the unsuccessful assassination of Mohammad Ali Shah. It was also once the first national library, national museum of Iran and home to the first independent ministry of education. While the palace is not open due to major renovations, the exterior and other buildings are open to visit.

Tip: Don't forget to check out the designer shops inside the complex. Their stuff are just amazing!

■ Museum Garden of Iranian Arts (Bagh-e Honare Irani)

I guess this one doesn't count for historic since it was opened in 2006 but the atmosphere resembles history and I guess that's good enough. The garden itself is a museum of replicas of ancient national monuments and contemporary works of art. The mansion inside is a display of precious cultural heritage pieces of Iran and many items are for sale. If you're looking to buy some really unique Iranian handicrafts I'd highly recommend here. They are quite pricey but extremely beautiful.

■ Persian Garden (Bagh-e Irani)

If you want a true Persian garden, then head over here. I was blown away when I visited last spring. It was as if I've stepped into Keukenhof, only somewhere in the



Persian Garden, somewhere in the heart of Tehran!

heart of Tehran! I was totally staggered by the variety of plants and flowers.

■ Moghaddam House

Hidden in the hustle and bustle of Imam Khomeini street close to the Grand bazaar is one of the most expensive houses of Iran. This house belonged to Mohsen Moghaddam a late professor of Tehran University and one of its pioneers.

He was an archeologist with a lust for collecting rare pieces from all over the world which are now exhibited in his house. Him and his French wife's peaceful spirit is resembled in the detailed yet careful architecture of their home. But above all it's the blissful garden that takes me here on an afternoon.

When to visit: Definitely in spring when the trees are green and the water is flowing.

■ Ferdows Garden (Bagh-e Ferdows)

Another summer resident for the Qajar royals and nobles and currently the museum of cinema. It was left abandoned after the death of Mohammad Ali Shah of Qajar but further constructions took place during the reign of Nasereddin Shah. The museum is actually a really good one if you're interested in cinema.

(Source: travestyle.com)

Irish tourism benefits from Europe attacks

Ireland's tourist industry has benefited from the Paris and Brussels attacks, with Ireland seen as a safer place to visit than other European countries, according to the head of Tourism Ireland.

“Certainly all the operators that we're talking to would appear to indicate that additional business is now being driven into Spain, Portugal, and Ireland, which would be seen as safer haven destinations,” Niall Gibbons said. “It's not the basis on which you want to build your brand, but is it an interesting observation?”

Gibbons said the agency is seeking to grab a greater share of the Chinese market and has recently appointed in its first director in that country. “We're likely to have over 50,000 visitors in 2016... we're leading out 17 companies in May, which will include the likes of the Guinness Storehouse, Titanic, the Merrion Hotel, and others.”

He said keeping Ireland financially competitive is “absolutely vital”. “It's been great to have the dollar and sterling go the way they have, but these are factors beyond our control. If they go back to where they were five years ago, we need to ensure that what we're offering is value for money.”

(Source: independent.ie)

NEWS

Turkey's tourism revenue drops 16.5 percent in first quarter

Turkey's tourism revenue decreased by 16.5 percent in the first quarter of the year compared to the same period of 2015 due to a significant decrease in the number of Russian tourists visiting the country and rising security concerns after a number of suicide attacks.

In the first three months of 2016, tourism revenue decreased to \$4.07 billion, according to data that was released by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) on April 29. While 71.3 percent of the revenue came from foreign visitors, some 28.7 percent was obtained from citizens who reside abroad, the data showed.

Tourism revenue was \$31.5 billion in 2015 with an 8.3 percent decline compared to the previous year.

The number of foreign arrivals in Turkey declined approximately 13 percent in March to 1.65 million compared to the same month of 2015, the sharpest drop since October 2006, according to data from the Tourism Ministry.

The number of foreign arrivals to Turkey declined by 10.3 percent to around 4 million in the first three months of the year compared to the same period of 2015, according to the ministry data. The number of arrivals from Russia saw a roughly 59 percent decline in the period in question, according to the data that was released on April 28.

According to official figures, the number of arrivals from Germany declined 17 percent in March compared to the same month of 2015. Meanwhile, the number of Japanese tourists dropped by 48 percent in the same period.

The Hoteliers Association of Turkey (TUROB) said the association expected a significant loss in the number of European tourists, mainly from Germany, this year, adding that many reservations and events had already been canceled due to security concerns.

The number of reservation cancellations from the German market has been around 40 percent, TUROB said April 4, according to Reuters.

The latest terror attacks in Turkey have created a big security concern for European tourists, so a significant loss in the number of foreign arrivals to Turkey from Germany, France, Spain and Italy is expected over this year, said TUROB.

German travelers' bookings for summer holidays in Turkey have dropped around 40 percent compared to a year ago, reflecting tourists' concern over security, German travel association DRV said in March. A meeting of around 600 tour agencies, which was scheduled to be held in the Aegean resort of Kusadasi in April, was canceled.

In order to support the sector during the current downturn, the government has announced a number of economic packages.

(Source: hurriyetdailynews.com)

A CLOSER LOOK

Best travel advice ever

With a new season of travel just around the corner, we asked our Facebook fans to share the best travel advice they've ever received. Their responses ranged from practical tips to inspirational musings.

To kick things off, Ben C. had wise words for those of us with wanderlust: “Travel with an open mind, light heart, and as insatiable curiosity.”

Cheryl C. suggested travelers carry two debit cards, one that stays in the hotel, and one to carry with you. That way, she said, “if you mess up with one (lost, stolen, ATM eats it) you have a back up.”

Along the same lines, Maria F. recommended carrying the “name of your hotel and the address” in case you get lost—and to help get around any potential language barriers.

Sally W. testified to the importance of keeping a diary and taking “souvenirs of your home country to give out to locals.” Spreading a little goodwill is never a bad idea—no matter where you are.

Walk with confidence so “you look like you know what you are doing” was Melissa J's advice to avoid being pick-pocketed. Shawn W. also had some tips for avoiding theft, counseling travelers to avoid wearing flashy clothing and jewelry—and to always “be aware of your surroundings.”

Dina M. had the right idea when she suggested bringing “a good sense of humor” along with your luggage. You never know what will happen when you're on the road—and it always helps to be able to shrug off the small stuff.

Many of our fans recommended brushing up on the local language before arriving in a destination. “When you show them you are willing to try with them, they are usually more than willing to try with you,” wrote David H. In terms of pre-trip preparations, Anne-Marie R. also advised learning about “the customs and culture of the country.”

Savis JS and Patricia P. are all about serendipity. Savis believes you should “put down the map and get wonderfully lost,” while Patricia put it this way: “Say yes to the adventure, and trust in the mystery of whatever happens.”

Tina G. encouraged travelers to carry an extra supply of their own medications. You “never know what will happen, and not all countries have the same medicines,” she wrote. Pamela M. also suggested carrying “large Ziploc bags” to help globetrotters keep organized—and safe—on the road. From storing dirty laundry to protecting valuables in a rain-storm, these simple (and highly packable) tools can prove incredibly useful.

Before embarking on her first solo adventure, Jessalyn J. said the following advice gave her the confidence to follow through: “Once you travel by yourself, you will fall in love and want to do it over and over again.”

Last, but certainly not least, Jonathan S's words ring true: “Just go.”

(Source: National Geography)

PICTURE OF THE DAY 📷 Mehr/Payam Ahmadi



Saraye Ameriha in Kashan is the most outstanding mansion with seven nested yards and the longest windward of the city.

Tunisia's security first approach

By James Denselow

Tunisia may be getting a grip on the holes in its domestic security, but emergency powers becoming permanent pose a challenge to the ideals that underpinned the country's 2011 revolution.

After the intoxicating excitement of the revolution and a moment when Tunisia claimed to be the only success story of the Arab Spring came the cold, hard reality of the threat of

modern terrorism.

The brutal attacks at the Bardo museum in the heart of Tunis last March, followed in June by a lone gunman killing of dozens of tourists in the resort city of Sousse, were a sucker punch to the emerging post-revolution body politic.

It's no fault of the Tunisians that their emergence into the sunlight of a post-authoritarian era coincided with a civil war and the state collapse of their Libyan neighbor to the east as

well as the rise and rise of ISIL.

Tunisians are cited as having the largest number of foreign fighters operating under the black flag, with some 5,000 estimated to have traveled to Syria and Iraq.

Yet with tourism such a huge part of the Tunisian economy, comprising 8 percent of GDP directly but much more in associated industries, it has been a priority for the country to be seen as safe again for the cruise ship



passengers and the package holiday tourists to return to enjoy the country's beautiful beaches, ancient ruins and hospitable people.

On a recent trip to the country I saw first hand what this effort looks like. Bag scanners in every hotel lounge, CCTV everywhere, police with automatic weapons guarding tourist sites and military humvees on resort town roundabouts.

→ 9

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U.S. opposes placing Saudi, Turkish ‘proxies’ on UN terror list

The United States objects to adding Ahrar ash-Sham and Jaish al-Islam to the UN sanctions list because they operate as proxy forces inside Syria for key allies like Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar, experts told Sputnik.

Last Wednesday, U.S. State Department spokesperson Mark Toner said putting Ahrar ash-Sham and Jaish al-Islam on the sanctions list would be damaging to the cessation of hostilities in Syria.

Russia submitted a request to the United Nations last Wednesday to add the two groups to the terrorist list, which already contains the Daesh and al-Qaeda.

"Jaish al-Islam is Saudi Arabia's proxy [in Syria]. Ahrar ash-Sham is mixed... [they are] Saudi, Qatari and Turkish proxies," University of Ottawa Countering Violent Extremism specialist Kamran Bokhari told Sputnik.

The United States, Bokhari continued, objects to designating Ahrar ash-Sham and Jaish al-Islam as terrorist entities because three of Washington's key allies in the region are supporting these groups.

U.S. opposition to the move, Bokhari added, has nothing to do with a ceasefire in Syria that never existed in the first place.

Bokhari claimed that what these groups want, however, is irrelevant because of their limited territorial reach and dubious connections.

"One of the biggest problems with Ahrar Ash-Sham's is that one of their biggest allies is Jabhat al-Nusra," Bokhari pointed out. "This is a big complication for the



Americans."

Radio show host and political activist Stephen Lendman told Sputnik that Ahrar ash-Sham and Jaish al-Islam are not only proxies of Saudi Arabia and Turkey,

but the United States as well.

"These terrorist groups are U.S. proxy foot soldiers, serving U.S.-led Western and Israeli interests along with Riyadh's and Ankara's," Lendman claimed.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Lendman added, and other Russian officials have known all along that all of the Syrian anti-government groups are terrorists, not so-called "moderate rebels."

"Washington's goal from the outset of the conflict along with its NATO and regional partners is regime change," Lendman noted.

The United States wants to replace a sovereign independent Syrian government with a U.S.-controlled puppet state, he suggested.

(Source: Sputnik)

"Jaish al-Islam is Saudi Arabia's proxy [in Syria]. Ahrar ash-Sham is mixed... [they are] Saudi, Qatari and Turkish proxies," University of Ottawa Countering Violent Extremism specialist Kamran Bokhari told Sputnik.

ISIL is competing with al-Shabaab for recruits in Somalia and appears to be gaining traction

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL / Daesh) terrorist may be gaining a foothold in East Africa. The militant group took responsibility for an IED attack on a convoy of African Union peacekeepers traveling outside of Somalia's capital of Mogadishu on April 25.

African Union officials have said that ISIL may not have been behind the attack, which left no casualties. Still, there are worrying signs that the group is gaining traction in war-torn Somalia, where another extremist group, al-Shabaab, could serve as a ready pool of recruits for ISIL.

ISIL, which has been competing with al-Shabaab for recruits in "the little emirate" since last year, appears to be ramping up its efforts. It released a propaganda video on April 14 in which a group of fighters trains in an undisclosed location in Somalia and pledges allegiance to ISIL's leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.



One of the fighters featured in that video is ex-al-Shabaab leader Abdiqadir Mumin, a cleric who defected to ISIL last year, reportedly taking 20 fighters

with him. While the group's following is likely still small, its appeal may be growing among disenchanted al-Shabaab members who have seen their territory

in Somalia taken back by African Union forces, supported by the United States and other African nations. (Al-shabaab, whose name means "the youth," aims to oust the government. It declared allegiance to Al-Qaeda terrorists, ISIL's rival, in 2012.)

Earlier this month, a previously unknown group called Jahba East Africa, or the East Africa Front, came out in support of ISIL and called on fighters to desert al-Shabaab.

Analysts believe that younger al-Shabaab supporters might be attracted to a mission that goes beyond just Somalia. ISIL has pockets of support in northern and western Africa. When Boko Haram pledged allegiance to ISIL last year, it called on all sub-Saharan fighters to join its forces. For ISIL, Somalia's attraction may be that it borders key U.S. allies in East Africa like Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti.

(Source: Quartz)

Whichever candidate gets elected in November should expect a miserable honeymoon

By Doyle McManus

The presidential primaries are a long way from over, but they've already produced an unhappy paradox: Both parties appear headed toward nominating the two most unpopular candidates in the country.

Donald Trump, the Republican front-runner, has accomplished an unprecedented feat: More than two-thirds of voters say they can't stand him. In the same unpopularity contest, Hillary Clinton, the likely Democratic nominee, is runner-up: more than half the voters don't like her. Ted Cruz, who still has a shot at the GOP nomination, is almost as unpopular as Clinton.

In every major poll conducted since February, all three leading candidates are "underwater": more voters view them unfavorably than favorably. The negative numbers are driven mostly by partisan animosity. Republicans are divided over Trump, and Democrats are divided over Clinton — but voters in each party are united in disliking the other sides' front-runners by roughly 90% in each case.

When the Pew Research Center asked voters how good a president each candidate would make, the results were striking: 67% of Democrats said they thought Trump would make a "terrible" president. Almost as many Republicans, 58%, said they thought Clinton would be terrible in the White House.

"We've never seen numbers like this before," Carroll Doherty, Pew's chief

political pollster, told me.

And that has troubling implications for the next president, no matter who he or she turns out to be. After an election, presidents must bridge the partisan divide to get much done. But no need to wait for inauguration day 2017. We already know how this is going to turn out: We're pre-polarized.

It's easy to forget, but in 2009 Obama arrived at the White House with a massive 68% positive rating in the Gallup Poll, including 41% of Republicans. Eight years earlier, the newly elected George W. Bush enjoyed a 63% positive rating, including 37% of Democrats.

The honeymoon didn't last, but the numbers meant that these presidents at least had the benefit of the doubt from most independent voters and a significant minority in the other party. They both had a base of popular support from which to negotiate with Congress. But that's unlikely to happen this time.

■ Strategy example

With the next president already held in record low esteem, both parties will be tempted to follow the strategy example set by Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell during Obama's

presidency: constant confrontation, instead of bipartisanship, to heighten the chance of gaining ground in the next election.

"We worked very hard to keep our fingerprints off [Obama's] proposals," McConnell explained [to The Atlantic, in 2011]. "The only way the American people would know a great debate was going on was if the measures were not bipartisan."

Most voters still tell pollsters they want Congress and the president to work together and get something done, of course. But that sentiment never seems to be powerful enough to overcome partisan distaste for the other side. Political scientists call this "affective polarization" — meaning the two sides just dislike each other more.

Whatever you call it, it produces the central political frustration of our time: political parties that see little reason to cooperate, and plenty of reasons to fight.

■ Is anyone pushing back?

Last week, a bipartisan group called "No Labels" unveiled a hopeful centrist program: a glossy catalog of sensible policy ideas, complete with poll numbers to show that each has wide public support.

Among the proposals: Allowing Medicare to negotiate with drug companies to lower prices, which gets 82% support. Passing a "no budget, no pay" law to withhold Congress' paychecks if a federal budget isn't passed, which gets 81% support. Increased funding for childcare and early education; 79% support.

The group has assembled a centrist "problem solver" caucus in Congress, with almost 80 members drawn equally from both the parties.

"We're trying to disrupt the dysfunction," said former Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, the Connecticut Democrat who chairs the organization along with former Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman, a Republican.

"How do we encourage members of Congress and the next president to take these risks? Part of it is to say there is more support for these ideas than you think," Lieberman said. "The next president has to ask: What's my goal here? Do I just want to get reelected, or do I want to build a record?"

The group has a practical side, too. It's raising money to protect centrist members of Congress from being knocked out of office in primary elections.

It's a worthy effort. But the hill they are climbing looks steeper than ever — because in the presidential campaign each side is already demonizing the other. That will make it even more difficult for the next president to bring the two parties together after January 2017.

(Source: LAT)

COMMENT

Mismanagement is killing Iraq

Forget corruption. Waste, inefficiency and economic distortion have brought Baghdad to the brink.

Ever since Stuart Bowen led the first attempt to account for Iraqi reconstruction funds in mid-2004, it has been clear that Iraq hemorrhages money through corruption.

Since then, things have got worse as last year the late Ahmed Chalabi found twenty-nine companies who were stealing over \$4 billion with fake contracts. Stories of phantom projects and ghost employees abound, even after the last scandal in 2014 where fifty thousand names were found on the Ministry of Defense payroll, men no longer turning up to work. Commanders pocketed their salaries.

■ Years of mismanagement

But Iraq has another silent economic killer: years of mismanagement, which have seen around \$700 billion in mostly oil revenues produce little beyond a staggering seven million government employees, but not enough schools and infrastructure.

And while every administration promises to end corruption, many politicians in Iraq are oblivious to the financial black hole of mismanagement. This includes generous subsidies for anything that moves and the propping up of a host of failed state-owned companies, as well as absurdly bloated ministry payrolls and high politicians' salaries. In fact, ministry payrolls have become a kind of jobs-for-votes scheme.

Therefore, \$60 billion of Iraq's \$99 billion budget goes to state wages, blank checks for political hiring schemes. The Kurdish region has been no different, with over 70 percent of its budget going on government jobs.

In Iraq, mismanagement is driving the country off a cliff edge because of the oil price collapse.

Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi is now seeing his call for reforms shot down, because few have the will to admit what needs to be done. As such, Abadi has managed to cut civil-servant salaries by a pathetic 3 percent. Iraq's government revenues fell 60 percent, so salary reform should reflect that.

Ironically, this lack of strategy fosters corruption. It hinders the aim of successive Iraqi governments to attract private enterprise. Housing developments are often reserved for government employees, while other land is held back for state-owned enterprises.

Private investors that Iraq desperately needs find themselves walking into a minefield of political interests. Iraq is now ranked 161 out of 189 countries in the World Bank's ease-of-doing-business ratings.

Take natural gas. Iraq's oil and gas fields already produce enough to keep power stations running and electric lights on every summer, when demand peaks at 21,000 MW, 8,000 MW higher than what is generated. This gas could keep factories humming with plenty left over for export. There is one problem: most of this gas is burned or "flared" Iraqi National and

While every administration promises to end corruption, many politicians in Iraq are oblivious to the financial black hole of mismanagement.

International Oil Companies have failed to invest in the right technology to capture it, costing Iraq billions.

Therefore, the plan to eliminate flaring is now years behind schedule. Iraq burns away 1.9 billion cubic feet of gas, enough to keep power stations running and electric lights on in four million homes. However, gas flaring will triple at the current

rate if the oil production goal of seven million barrels per day is reached.

Gas isn't the only thing Iraq has been short of. Refined fuel has run out in the past too. Iraq doesn't have enough refineries, despite saying for years that enough will be built. Worse, the massive Baiji refinery has been destroyed in the anti-ISIL campaign, knocking out over a third of Iraq's refining capacity.

Most of Iraq's subsidies therefore legitimize corruption, allowing government officials dangerous oversight over a poorly accounted distribution system. Many of these subsidies help middle-income government employees, not the most vulnerable people.

Ending this waste will involve overhauling the political quota system that has turned Iraqi politics into a mad scramble for ministries.

Ministries have hiring power in a land of high unemployment, so they seek to dominate recruiting power, crowding out investment.

Unless the government can stop this, there will be a political train wreck. The next crisis in the world's fastest-growing energy provider can be avoided if we take action now. The international community must rally together to put funds where they will count the most, and this is in building capacity in ministries.

■ A drop in the ocean

This is a drop in the ocean and would be an obvious target for more foreign assistance, which is dominated by military funding. Ongoing aid for Iraq's millions of displaced people is of course vital, but without ministerial capacity, the next administration will flounder, no matter who is in charge.

One interesting reaction has been from the Kurdistan Regional Government. The Kurds have suffered many of the bloated state ailments of Baghdad, but the government has front-loaded economic pain, preparing their people for more shocks by taking a massive salary cut that includes the top tier of the civil service. But ominously, mass demonstrations have continued against Massoud Barzani's government.

For Baghdad, international donors could help Iraq swallow this bitter medicine, which would help cool anger on the Iraqi street, by toughening up the IMF and World Bank demands attached to loans. If not, there is a real danger the loans will simply add to the factional money scramble, kicking a debt problem to the next administration.

Of course, regardless of lending conditions, only Iraqis can take the radical steps needed to overhaul their political system. If Iraq does indeed get \$15 billion in loans, there is a chance politicians will simply play along until oil prices "rise". This is a mistake Iraq cannot make again. When reforms come, they will already be years too late.

(Source: The National Interest)

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- Help you feel fuller
- Unripe bananas improve insulin sensitivity
- Improve kidney health

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iranian physician properly diagnoses very rare disease

MEDICAL **BUSHEHR** — An allergist in the southern city of Bushehr has managed to correctly diagnose and properly treat a rare allergic disease in a three-year-old baby, IRNA reported on Sunday.



The doctor, Afshin Shirkani, called the toddler's condition 'good' and said once his patient receives bone marrow transplants, he will be back to his normal life.

SCID is an inherited disorder that damages the immune system. ZAP70-related SCID is one of several forms of severe combined immunodeficiency, a group of disorders with several genetic causes.

The disease, which has been spotted only in 14 patients worldwide, had the first

occurrence in Iran.

Children with SCID lack virtually all immune protection from bacteria, viruses, and fungi. They are prone to repeated and persistent infections that can be very serious or life-threatening.

Baby born in midair in Iran

MEDICAL **TEHRAN** — A baby arrived in a helicopter, while flying over Kalat-e-Naderi, a city in north-eastern Khorasan Razavi Province on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

Shahram Taherzadeh, the head of disaster management bureau at Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, delineating the event, said an emergency call taker at the center received a distress call about an expectant mother experiencing a life threatening complication during labor.

The center then immediately dispatched a helicopter to the mountainous area to airlift the pregnant woman to a hospital in Mashhad, Taherzadeh explained.

However, he added, on the way to the hospital, while still in the chopper, the woman delivered her baby boy.

Thanks to the assistance of two midwives and a couple of paramedics in the air services, the mom and her newborn, who were having a close brush with death, are now safe and in good health.

How this French satellite could 'shake the foundations of physics'

A team of French scientists launched a satellite on Monday that will test an element of Albert Einstein's famous General Theory of Relativity.

Formulated in by Einstein in 1907, the Equivalence Principle states that there exists no observable distinction between inertial mass and gravitational mass.

Put another way, if you're standing in a sealed box and experiencing a "downward" force as though you were on Earth, there is no way to tell, from the force alone, if the box is actually on Earth or if it is inside a rocket, far from any planet, smoothly accelerating at 1g.

Similarly, if you're floating weightless inside the box, experiencing no acceleration, there is no way to tell if the box is in deep space or plummeting toward Earth. Einstein's Equivalence Principle helped him generalize his Special Theory of Relativity.

Developed by Einstein while working as a patent clerk in Switzerland in 1905, special relativity describes how, because the speed of light remains constant regardless of how fast the light source is moving, observations of space and time can vary according to an object's velocity relative to the observer. Special relativity carries with it several implications that have become fundamental to modern physics, including Einstein's famous formulation of the equivalence of the properties of mass and energy: $E = mc^2$. (Source: *The CSM*)

Insulating layer of air above the Greenland ice sheet reduces precipitation

The Earth's climate has been warming, but even though the Greenland ice sheet is melting rapidly in the coastal regions, there are large parts of the ice sheet (40 percent) where there has hardly been any melting on the surface.

A warmer climate usually also means that there is more precipitation, but there has been no increase in the amount of precipitation on the ice sheet.

New research with participation of the Niels Bohr Institute shows that this is due to an insulating layer of air that forms near the surface during the winter, which insulates the ice sheet from the upper atmosphere and reduces both evaporation and precipitation. The results are published in the scientific journal, *Science Advances*.

When the air gets warmer, it can hold more water vapor. The laws of physics state that for every degree the temperature rises in the air, the water content can increase by 7 percent, so the air in tropical regions is much more humid than in Arctic Regions.

Amount of precipitation

The amount of precipitation is there-



The laws of physics state that for every degree the temperature rises in the air, the water content can increase by 7 percent, so the air in tropical regions is much more humid than in Arctic Regions.

Tailless comet could offer more information about origin of Solar System



Scientists have discovered a new type of tailless comet. The comet that has returned from the edge of the solar system has been named it as Manx object, named after Manx cats, which are mostly tailless.

Study's lead researcher Karen Meech, an astronomer at the University of Hawaii, said that the newly discovered comet may help solve the mystery as to how the solar system has formed. With the help of the Pan-STARRS telescope in Hawaii, astronomers focused on a comet known as C/2014 S3.

In 2014, the comet was discovered and was little more than twice as far away from the Sun compared to the distance between Earth and the Sun. The comet, known as S3 in short, had long orbit, which suggested that it came from the distant Oort cloud.

S3 was different from others, as it was almost tailless and also, it was up to 100,000 times or so less active than typical comets. Comets become active when they approach the sun and their ice heats up that make a comet's tail.

Lacking ice

Lack of this activity in S3 suggested

that it was lacking ice. More observations were carried out of the dust in the comet's short tail. It revealed that S3 more closely resembled stony asteroids from the asteroid belt than a typical comet.

Study's co-author Olivier Hainaut, an astronomer at the European Southern Observatory in Garching, Germany, informed that they have found the first rocky comet. Lack of ice in the newly discovered comet suggests that it might have come from the Oort cloud.

"It is very exciting -- S3 would have been kicked out while the Earth was being formed, possibly even by the early-days Earth. S3 would then be a planetesimal like those which formed the Earth, but preserved since that time in the cold of outer space", said Hainaut.

Four and a half billion years ago, chunks of the same material that formed Earth and the other rocky planets are thought to have been flung into the Oort cloud, a ring of icy debris encircling the outermost edge of the Solar System. Untouched, they've been preserved for eons in the deep freeze of space.

(Source: *mainenewsonline.com*)

New brain map shows where words are stored inside your head



Researchers have created a new map of the human brain which shows where we organize words depending on their meaning — and it could help us read minds more accurately than ever.

Scientists from the University of California, Berkeley, have published an interactive version of the map online. It allows you to explore the whole brain, clicking around to see where different types of words — from social and spatial, to violent and visual — are stored.

The team constructed the maps by playing seven different participants a two-hour chunk of The Moth Radio Hour while scanning their brains using functional MRI. The brain scans showed how the oxygen levels in blood across the brain changed, and this data was then used as a measure of how active a particular part of the brain was.

Observed brain activity

The team then set about comparing the observed brain activity to the types of word that the participants were hearing at that exact moment. It allowed them to build 12 categories of words, which can be seen to appear all over the brain. The results are published in *Nature*, but you

fore linked to temperature. But researchers with participation of the Niels Bohr Institute discovered that even though the temperature has risen over the last 10 years, the amount of precipitation over the central parts of the Greenland ice sheet has not increased. Measurements showed that the amount of precipitation actually decreased. Why so?

Because of low-lying clouds and driving snow, direct observations of the ice sheet surface can be very uncertain. Instead, an international team of researchers from the United States and the Niels Bohr Institute in Denmark have studied the atmosphere over the 3½ km thick ice sheet.

"We decided to investigate whether you could find the answer in the atmosphere above the ice sheet by measuring the atmospheric processes directly. We therefore took measurements of the water vapor in the atmosphere for three years," explains Hans Christian Steen-Larsen, a postdoc at the Centre for Ice and Climate at the Niels Bohr Institute at the University of Copenhagen. (Source: *phys.org*)

Scientists are working to make cows obsolete

We depend on cows for food, clothing, and sometimes even insulin. Cattle, though, are expensive and inefficient — each cow drinks a bathtub of water and emits three times that volume of methane daily. There are also the ethics of animal slaughter. But we might no longer need the cow.

Scientists are synthesizing the substances we normally get from cows by using bovine cells, yeast, and even bacteria.

Since tissue engineer Mark Post debuted an in vitro burger in 2013, several companies have tried to create tasty, scalable test-tube meat. Though Memphis Meats recently unveiled a cultured meatball, two challenges — chewability and cost — have derailed other attempts.

To make lab-grown leather, Modern Meadow uses bo-

vine cells to grow sheets of collagen, which are then tanned and cut into leather goods, such as jackets. A bonus: Workers don't have to deal with the hair or subcutaneous fat that comes with animal skin.

Foreign antibiotics

Foreign antibodies can prevent animal tissue from being used on human injuries. But KOD — a synthetically derived collagen, stops bleeding, promotes tissue regrowth — and, because it lacks bovine genes, won't be rejected.

Biologists in Sweden are engineering cartilage tissue for human joints using cells from cow knees. Cartilage is tricky—it has to bend and stretch, but it regenerates slowly. "If we can make the process work with bovine cells, we can one day do the same with human cells," says team member

Janne Ylärinne.

Muufri, a bioengineering startup, makes milk that's more dairylike than almond or soy. The company adds 3D-printed cow DNA into yeast cells, then harvests the milk protein it produces—like making penicillin or beer. Adding calcium and potassium, the mixture emulsifies and gives it the same nutritional and textural qualities as milk.

Cow insulin moderates diabetics' blood-sugar levels but can cause allergic reactions, and synthetic analog insulin must be carefully dosed. Now, researchers at MIT are synthesizing a new form of insulin that stays in the blood and activates only when sugar levels are too high.

(Source: *Business Insider*)

Radiation and immunotherapy can destroy both primary and secondary tumors

Radiation therapy not only kills cancer cells, but also helps to activate the immune system against their future proliferation. However, this immune response is often not strong enough to be able to cure tumors, and even when it is, its effect is limited to the area that has been irradiated.

Now, however, research has shown that the addition of an immune system-strengthening compound can extend the radiation therapy-induced immune response against the tumor sites and that this response even has an effect on tumors outside the radiation field.

Ms Nicolle Rekers, MSc, from the Department of Radiation Oncology, Maastricht University Medical Center, Maastricht, The Netherlands, will describe to the conference how a combination of radiation therapy and L19-IL2, an immunotherapy agent, can increase significantly the immune response when given to mice with primary colorectal tumors.

L19-IL2 is a combination of an antibody that targets the tumor blood vessels and a cytokine, a small protein important in cell

signaling in the immune system.

Cancer cells

The researchers found not only that the mice were tumor-free following treatment, but also that when re-injected with cancer cells 150 days after cure, they did not form new tumors. There was also an increase in the number of cells with an immunological memory.

"Radiation therapy damages the tumor creating a sort of tumor-specific vaccine," Ms Rekers will say. "It feeds the immune system and ensures that it notices that something is wrong. What is unique about our latest ex-

periments is that we have been able to create a so-called abscopal effect, where a localized radiation treatment has also had an effect on other tumor sites outside this radiation field."

The lifespan of mice is quite short – about two years – so 150 days is a relatively long time. "Of course, these mice are models of human disease and can never be 100% comparable with a patient, but the fact that the cured mice never formed new tumors, compared with a 100% tumor formation in untreated mice of the same age, is significant. (Source: *eurekalert.org*)

Despite deep public misgivings in some countries, the European Union will this week drive forward a plan to grant Turks visa-free travel to Europe as a reward for having reduced a flood of refugees and migrants into Europe to a trickle.

The European Commission is set to declare on Wednesday that Turkey has broadly met the criteria for early visa liberalization in a blaze of last-minute legislation and ask EU governments and the European Parliament to approve the decision by the end of June, several EU sources said.

"We have not lowered our standards. Turkey has raised its game," a senior EU official familiar with the negotiations said.

He was seeking to explain how the EU executive could certify compliance after telling lawmakers just two weeks ago that Ankara had met fewer than half the so-called benchmarks.

The political reality is that Brussels cannot say "No" and risk a collapse of a much criticized March 18 EU-Turkey deal that was a turning point in Europe's migration crisis.

It may lack political support to sustain a "Yes", but the Turkish government won't take "Later" for an answer.

EU set to drive forward visas for Turks in migrant deal



So in the time-honored EU manner, the Commission will present a package aimed at offering something for everyone.

■ Aegean route shut

Determined action by Turkey, in concert with Greece and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), and the closing of borders across the Balkans,

has all but shut the main Aegean route for people fleeing war and poverty in Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East and Asia.

Figures delivered daily at 6 a.m. to European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker show new arrivals on the Greek islands were down to 63 last Thursday from an average 10,000 a day

at the peak last October.

Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has warned that Ankara would stop implementing its side of the bargain to take back all those who reach Greece from its shores if Europe does not deliver on what he calls its commitment.

EU officials insist the union made no promise, and the offer applies only if Turkey meets 72 legal and technical conditions. The Commission reported this month that Ukraine and Georgia had met those benchmarks, and will add Kosovo on Wednesday.

Turkey is the most sensitive because it has the biggest population with 79 million and due to its flawed record on civil and minority rights, freedom of expression and the rule of law. Turkish officials warn against any anti-Muslim discrimination.

■ "No discount"

Skeptics in the European Parliament and key member states such as France, Germany and the Netherlands, where there is substantial public opposition to opening borders to more Turks, insist they will examine Turkey's compliance with a microscope.

(Source: Reuters)

Mr. Blair, please do not beat the drums of war

➡ The former British prime minister does not follow ethics and talk too much and listen little and does not learn lesson from the past.

He has been one of the culprits of many wars during the last fifteen years and incited the U.S. to wage war on Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq and Syria and is known as a liar by the Chilcot Inquiry and has once again incited the U.S. to interfere militarily in the Mideast.

In response to the sending of 250 U.S. commandos to Syria, the former British prime minister, in an interview with CNN, expressed support for the act. He said, "The U.S. decision to dispatch 250 soldiers to Syria to fight Daesh will make a big change." He used classic interpretations from the U.S. role

in the world and noted, "If we want the U.S. power be used (in) the world, I support the issue, regardless of the probable future problems, it is essential to use this power."

It is not difficult to understand the reason behind Blair's war mongering language and his support for dispatching forces to the Middle East as far as we know him. Unfortunately, he is not able to distance himself from neo-militarism of his Atlantic conservatives. According to some political analysts in Washington, he incites the U.S. to militarily intervene and get out of quagmire at the right time.

Presence of 250 soldiers may not be remarkable. But the question is that if the Syrian crisis exacerbates and President Assad's forces advance towards

the opponents' position, will Pentagon be determined to dispatch more forces to the region? Or will the White House embark on sending forces in case of a more worrisome situation in the regional countries like in Afghanistan, Iraq of Libya? If the Pentagon's answer is yes, it is considered a clear contradiction to Mr. President's former and current policies. Is this approach a failure for President Obama's strategy based on providing security to the governments and local forces?

Mr. President is being strongly criticized for not having a clear strategy and not being determined in settling crises like those in Syria and Iraq and not supporting the Afghan government. But will a sending of military forces to the region

compensate for this lack of determination? Mr. President tries to underestimate the issue in an interview with the CBS News, saying, "The U.S. forces are not supposed to confront Daesh directly". Neither the public opinion nor the political critics in Washington described Obama's new decisions in contradiction to his earlier promises.

Now that no clear prospect is seen in the Middle East crises and the U.S. expectations are rising, is the promise of "we will not send the country's youths to war anymore" fading away after eight years? And will the U.S. return to the 2008 starting point in a way is not sought by Blair and even allies like Israel and Arabs? I am not willing to respond to this question.

Tunisia's security first approach

➡ ■ Security forces

A huge amount of resources has been rushed into equipment and training for the security forces. The country's army - the smallest in the region at some 45,000 active soldiers - is being invested in and saw action in March with fierce clashes with ISIL (also known as ISIS) that resulted in 50 of their fighters being killed.

Officials from the Tunisian Ministry of Tourism admit that traditions around welcoming guests and hospitality were unsuited for the security challenges of the modern day.

The gun attacks in Sousse lasted for hours, pointing to shortfalls in coordination among the security forces that the new governor of the city claims have been addressed.

His manpower has been doubled and the restoration of power and influence by the Ministry of Interior means there is far more intelligence available to thwart attacks.

Tunisia expects to attract 5.5 million visitors this year - the same as last year - as it increasingly believes that it has taken the necessary measures to protect tourists from harm.

However British Foreign Office Travel advice continues to warn its nationals against all but essential travel to the country.

Despite the wide-ranging steps that the government

has taken to improve security, the British government advice currently states that "further attacks remain likely".

This advice, powerful enough to ward off most British tourists on its own, also affects their ability to get travel insurance, which has led the larger British tour operators to cancel trips to the country for now, with the obvious knock-on effect for the tourism industry in a country where youth unemployment remains a big issue.

■ Attack on plane

Ironically, Tunisia's 5.5 million visitor number target has been helped with increasing numbers of Russian tourists traveling to the country after Turkey's dropping off their agenda for political reasons and Egypt's suffering following the attack on a passenger plane in November.

What this shows is how the short-term picture is in

After the intoxicating excitement of the revolution and a moment when Tunisia claimed to be the only success story of the Arab Spring came the cold, hard reality of the threat of modern terrorism.

Iran's 21st Oilshow: bigger and richer than before

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — On the eve of Iran's 21st international oil, gas, refining and petrochemical exhibition (known as Iran Oilshow) Mohammed Nasser, head of the public relations of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and the director of the exhibition had an interview with NIOC's web site.

Below a summary of this interview is presented.

Considering the fact that the main axis of the twenty-first exhibition is attracting investors and enhancing technology transfer to the country, what has been done to increase the participation in this event?

By implementing new marketing and promoting methods the event's organizer has tried to provide a better condition for companies' participation and presence in the show.

International marketing and registering foreign companies was started in Iranian calendar month of Shahrivar (August) last year and in this regard, 17 organizers and marketing companies worked with us which was twice the number of last year.

How much space is allocated to the 21st Iran OilShow?

The total indoor area allocated to this year's show is 80000 sq.m which is increased by 10000 sq.m compared to the last year's 70000 sq.m. This increase is a result of utilizing number 20, 21 and 22 Halls, number 26 whole series and constructing B38 and C38 new Halls.

The total indoor space sold to domestic companies this year is 24,500 sq.m which given the increasing presence of foreign participants shows a decrease of

3,750 sq.m. The outdoor space of 10102 sq.m sold to domestic companies indicates that the number is nearly constant compared to last year.

Regarding the indoor space reserved by foreign companies, the number is 15550 sq.m which has increased by 1002 sq.m compared to the last year show. The total outdoor space sold to foreign companies is reported to be 2213 sq.m which is nearly doubled compared to the last year's 1002 sq.m.

How many domestic and foreign companies participate in the 21st show?

So far 996 local companies, 634 foreign companies and 157 representatives of foreign companies have completed their registration process and have been settled on the floorplan, this means a total of 791 foreign companies are regis-

tered in the show.

Which countries have registered for this year's show?

More than 35 foreign countries are showcasing in this exhibition. For instance China, South Korea, Turkey, Germany, Italy, France, Austria and Finland have an active participation in the show and have been settled in halls number 35 and 38.

What other features can be mentioned for the show?

In this year's show, a number of prestigious international firms which have been absent for a few years are participating again.

In the end, Mohamad Naseri invited specialists and experts in the field of oil, gas, refining and petrochemicals to participate in this event and make it richer as it is.

"With the assembly line establishment, Azerbaijan will turn into IKCO's export hub in the region," he noted.

Tafazzoli cited Samand, Soren and Runna as the vehicles to be assembled in first phase of cooperation with the Azeri side; the production of commercial vehicles for public transport fleet of Azerbaijan has also been predicted in the LOU.

The letter of understanding was signed by Iranian and Azeri ministries. The line is set to be established in Neftchala city with the direct investment of Azeri side.

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran Khodro Company has signed a letter of understanding with an Azeri company to assemble completely knocked down (CKD) vehicles in Azerbaijan, said IKCO's Deputy CEO for Export and International Affairs.

Saeed Tafazzoli said IKCO would not make any investment in Azerbaijan adding the partnership with the Azeri company is set to offer only technical and engineering services to set up an assembly line.

He also noted that many studies have already been made on Azerbaijan's markets adding IKCO's products

are well-known in the country.

Iran Khodro Company has produced various vehicles in Azerbaijan including Samand. With its adaptability with the cold weather of Azerbaijan, Samand has been among the most popular passenger vehicles in the country.

"Iran Khodro used to export vehicles' CBU to Azerbaijan" Tafazzoli stated, adding that given to the warm welcome the vehicles are receiving in Azerbaijan, IKCO has come to the conclusion to set up an assembly line there.

NEWS

'Less dependence on imported oil has reduced Saudi importance to U.S.'

➡ ■ Some argue that the strategic importance of Saudi Arabia to the U.S. has diminished. Do you agree with this view?

A: Oil has always been the main topic mentioned when the strategic importance of Saudi Arabia is raised. The lessened dependence of the United States on imported oil, mainly because of the development of fracking technology, reduces the direct importance of Saudi oil to the United States. However, the U.S. economy still can be affected significantly by anything that happens to the global oil market, in which Saudi Arabia continues to be a very important player. Saudi Arabia also is a vital player in any security arrangements for the Persian Gulf.

■ It seems that Arab states bordering the Persian Gulf like to involve the U.S. in a military bloc. For example, in a summit between President Obama and leaders of GCC countries in Riyadh on April 21 the sides agreed on common patrol forces against Iran. Is this a huge achievement for them?

A: The GCC states undoubtedly would consider as very important any joint military endeavors in which the GCC states themselves are cooperating as well as involving the United States. So yes, they would consider that a very big achievement. It probably would be important to them not so much for the direct military effects as it would as a symbol of continued U.S. support.

Seven reasons Iran could become an entrepreneurial powerhouse

➡ The population is highly educated: Some 9.4% has a tertiary education — that's about 7.5 million people with a university education. "This is as large as the country of Jordan or Israel," said Nadereh Chamlou, former senior advisor to the World Bank, at a recent event at the Washington, D.C.-based Atlantic Council's Future Of Iran Initiative. (I listened to it online).

Iran has particular strength in tech fields: The country is home to a university known as the MIT of Iran. In Cairo a few months ago, the Iranian businessman Kamran Eliahian highlighted nanotechnology as nascent area of growth.

Despite the American sanctions, ties are forming between entrepreneurial communities in Iran and the United States. At the Atlantic Council event, Lily Sarafan, an Iranian American who is co-founder of Home Care Assistance, talked about iBridges conferences and TedxKish, a tech community gathering held on an island off Iran. Americans aren't legally permitted to mentor Iranians, Sarafan said, but they can communicate.

The fight over visa restrictions that make it more difficult for Iranian Americans to travel to Europe is also coalescing the Iranian American community, which could become a force advocating for more ties between the new countries. "Where you have an organized group of companies advocating," she said "the next step might be advocating for sanctions relief."

The country's infrastructure is undergoing a renewal. At the same Atlantic Council event, Chamlou said that on a trip to the country in January, "some people in the telecom sector told us some of the plans that are in the books," she said. "The sector will be radically restructured."

Change is happening faster than people expect. Christopher Schroeder, a U.S. based venture investor and author of Startup Rising: the Entrepreneurial Revolution Remaking the Middle East, told the story of two visits to Iran. "My first trip to Iran, there was very little access to 3G and 4g. It's coming, people told me. But the oligarchs told me, 'No way, it won't happen,'" he said. "A year later, I came back and there were 20 million subscribers."

One of the hallmarks of an entrepreneurial economy is the pace of change and that the rate of change increases over time.

The startup scene is just entering what could be a heyday. In the United States, many industries have already been disrupted by technology: entrepreneurs come up with ideas, and hope they find a market or a problem. Sarafan said that in Iran, the young entrepreneurs are facing real issues, whether it's pollution or climate change or the sociopolitical change. At TedxKish, she said, "we had startup workshops where entrepreneurs were bringing their ideas ... it wasn't a matter of the transactional value of my company. It was how do I play a role in the progress of my country?" (Source: Forbes)

Majlesi Appointed as IKCO-Peugeot JV CEO

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Morad Majlesi has been appointed as the IKCO-Peugeot JV CEO by IKCO CEO, Hashem Yekhezare.

Majlesi's previous appointments in IKCO were Advisor to IKCO Senior Vice-president in Technical Affairs, Production and Product Engineering, Brands Manager, Body Shop Manager, IKCO Board of Director's Member, IKCO Deputy CEO in Design and Development and Passenger Car Project Executive.

He had also worked in other organizations as the Bus Plant Manager, Engineering Organization Manager, Kerman Motor Vice-president, Bam Carmakers' Chairman of the Board, Chairman of the Board in Kerman Khodro Company and Kerman Khodro Parts Engineering and also Rayen Vehicle Manufacturers' Chairman of the Board.

According to the agreement between IKCO and Peugeot companies, a 50-50 JV will be established, while the CEO and chairman of the board will be appointed by the two partners every two years.

In the meantime, 30% of the jointly manufactured vehicles are to be exported and the production capacity will be boosted from 15,000 sets to 200,000 sets in four years.

IRAN'S WILDLIFE

Iranian zoologist discovers unexpected species of rare intertidal spiders

By Farnaz Heidari

In a recent study by Iranian Alireza Zamani, Russian Yuri M. Marusik and American James W. Berry, arachnologists, a new species of intertidal spiders has been discovered in shores of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman in Iran, and named as *Paratheuma enigmatica*, hence its quite unexpected, enigmatic distribution.



Alireza Zamani

Discovering the genus *Paratheuma* in Iran was particularly interesting. Previously, they were known from Australia, USA, West Indies, Mexico, Japan, Korea and a few islands in the Pacific Ocean. The closest reported locality of this genus is in Korea, more than 6000 kilometers far to the east from one of the localities in southeastern Iran.

As a result, this record fills a gap in the middle of the whole known distribution range of the genus. The distribution of *P. enigmatica* supports the previous observation that there is only one species per island, but one species may be found on several islands.

It seems that dispersal must have been of primary importance in the evolutionary history of the Pacific *Paratheuma*. These spiders are of particular ecological interest as they inhabit broken coral rubble below the tide mark, and feed upon intertidal crustaceans, but the ecology and full distribution range of this particular rare species remains unknown.

As a result of this study, the whole genus *Paratheuma* which have had a doubtful systematic position is moved from Desidae to Dictynidae using both molecular and morphological evidence. The study's findings were published in the recent issue *Zoology* in the Middle East.



■ Unexpected for Iran biodiversity

In order to gain a better knowledge of the spider fauna of Iran (currently comprising more than 600 species in 48 families), several surveys in various regions of the country have been recently carried out especially by Alireza Zamani and his colleagues during 2014, 2015a, 2015b.

Zamani told *Tehran Times* that "While studying the spider fauna of the coastal and tidal zone of the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf in Iran, several interesting species were found in the collected material e.g. *Filistatidae*."

Zamani added that "perhaps the most unusual finding was the occurrence of *Paratheuma*, a genus previously unknown from the shores of the Indian Ocean. This genus currently comprises 10 species of intertidal spiders, distributed in Australia, Hawaii, Florida, West Indies, Mexico, Japan, Korea and a few islands in the Pacific Ocean (World Spider Catalog, 2015)."

■ Pristine ecosystems

Zamani as a corresponding author told that "the first series of ten *Paratheuma* species are remarkably similar in size, setae, elongated spinnerets and general body morphology. The new species reported in Chabahar, southwest Asia, has several differences: individuals have more setae, shorter, less conspicuous spinnerets and more neutral coloring."

However, he said, the copulatory organs are similar to those of the previously described species and the distribution of this species supports observation that there is only one species per island, but one species may be found on several islands.

Dispersal must have been of primary importance in the evolutionary history of the Pacific *Paratheuma*. There is a strong possibility that several, perhaps many, species of the genus await discovery; perhaps, their characters and distribution may considerably change interpretation of their relationships and natural history with further studies.

■ Importance of intertidal spiders

The intertidal spiders' family Desidae which is now moved to Dictynidae, are named for members of which live in a very unusual location or better say between the tides. The family has been reevaluated in recent years and now includes inland genera and species as well, such as *Badumna* and *Phryganoporus*.

Those intertidal spiders that are truly marine commonly live in barnacle shells, which they seal up with silk; this allows them to maintain an air bubble during high tide. They emerge at night to feed on various small arthropods that live in the intertidal zone.

Conference on environmental pollutants kicks off in Tehran

→1

■ Monitoring and sampling fundamental to environmental strategies

Motesaddi explained the significance of monitoring and sampling of pollutants as being the fundamental components of environmental strategies.

"Regular monitoring and sampling of pollutants indicates if we are succeeding in minimizing the pollutants or not or whether they are increasing or decreasing," he noted.

"What we seek in this conference is to make improvement on the accuracy and validity of the monitoring and sampling measures," he added.

■ What DoE accomplished so far

Motesaddi went on to say that "we succeeded in decentralizing monitoring bodies and currently they all have distributed to all the cities across Iran."

Over the past two years 29 online river monitoring stations are added to the system and there are 188 air monitoring stations over the country, he highlighted.

Motesaddi also noted that "our dust monitoring stations are now completed with 50 stations for monitoring particles



[From left to right] Nayyereh Pirouzbakht, Saeed Motesaddi, and Masoumeh Ebtekar

smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter."

"We are now able to monitor 200 industrial units online and we are hoping to increase the number in the future," he said.

■ Air pollution accounts for one death out of seven

Ebtekar warned that based on a report by World Health Organization (WHO) one death out of seven is caused by air pollution and at least 35 million Iranian are affected by air pollution.

"Right now if someone draw blood

from us they can detect traces of dioxin in it which can affect and wreck our immune system," she lamented.

This shows how important monitoring is and it is not just limited to our country but it is one of the important subject matters discussed in Paris climate change conference as well, she said.

Fortunately this conference which particularly aims at training the environmental experts can pave the way for further improvements, she added.

■ 600 environmental standards set by ISO

Pirouzbakht, for her part, pointed that "out of 19,000 standards set by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 600 are related to the environment which emphasizes the global importance of the environment."

Iran's national standard organization has been working side by side with the DoE for almost three years and plays a key role in promoting sustainable growth, she added.

She also highlighted that after the removal of the sanctions Iran's standards are approved by the countries in Asia and Oceania.

Mane event: 33 lions flown home after rescue from life in the circus

Big cats arrive in South Africa, where sanctuary beckons, after having suffered cruel treatment in Colombia and Peru

The roars of lions filled the cargo section of Johannesburg's main international airport on Saturday evening as 33 lions rescued from South American circuses landed in South Africa.

The animals will now be released into a bush sanctuary for big cats.

It was the largest airlift of lions in history, said Jan Creamer, president of Animal Defenders International, which carried out the operation.

"These lion have suffered tremendously," Creamer said as the lions were loaded in crates on to trucks.

"They lived in small cages on the backs of trucks for their entire lives. Some of them had their teeth bashed in with steel pipes in circuses in Colombia and Peru. Some of them had their claws removed ... it is a wonderful feeling to bring them back to their home."

Nine of the lions were surrendered by a circus in Colombia. The remaining 24 were rescued in raids on circuses in Peru by the animal defense group and officials enforcing a crackdown on wildlife trafficking.

The lions will be placed in quarantine in enclosures at the 5,000-hectare (12,355-acre) Emoya big cat sanctuary in Vaalwater in northern South Africa, started three years ago by Savannah Heuser and her mother Minunette.

The 33 lions will be monitored by a vet for their first weeks in Africa. They will then be introduced to each other in a 1-hectare bonding enclosure. Many of the lions were never allowed to have direct physical contact with other lions and have never been together without a fence or a cage separating them.

Their poor physical state means the lions will never be able to hunt again and will have to be cared for with



One of the 33 rescued lions in its travelling crate at Johannesburg's airport. Photograph: Dan Kitwood

food and water for the rest of their lives. The Emoya sanctuary will feed the cats with game meat which it buys in bulk.

The enclosures will be fitted with drinking pools, platforms and toys to ensure the lions do not become bored and will be steadily expanded as they become familiar with their new life, said Savannah Heuser.

Emoya, in an area with a mix of habitats including mountainous regions, rolling grasslands, forests, cliff caves and river gorges, has a strict non-breeding policy, Heuser said.

Female lions may receive contraceptive medications so they can remain with their mates, while males may undergo vasectomies to make sure that no lions are bred in captivity.



The lions' crates are loaded on to a lorry prior to their transportation to a sanctuary. Photograph: Brett Eloff

"The animals have no conservation value whatsoever. Many of them have been inbred," she said.

"When we are sure that no breeding will take place, we allow males to interact with females. By then a pattern will have emerged ... and we will know which lions can be placed together."

Emoya was opened in 2012, when Savannah Heuser was 16. The sanctuary's first cat, a lion rescued from Cairo, arrived in June 2013. The sanctuary is currently home to eight big cats, including two Siberian tigers.

The lions are part of a group of 100 animals which were rescued in Peru. Bears, monkeys, birds and other native wildlife have been relocated to sanctuaries in Peru and a tiger has been sent to a new home in Florida.

(Source: *The Guardian*)

3 Sumatran tiger cubs step out at San Diego Zoo

Three endangered Sumatran tiger cubs have made their debut at San Diego Zoo Safari Park.

Visitors got their first glimpses Tuesday of Nelson, Cathy and Debbie as

the 3-month-old cubs romped and munched on plants in their habitat.

The trio was born in late January to Joanne, a Sumatran tiger that's a popular attraction at the zoo. Zookeepers say

Joanne is a doting mother.

They say Nelson, the male, is the largest and calmest of the three cubs. His sister Cathy is the most vocal, and Debbie is the most adventurous.

Fewer than 350 Sumatran tigers are thought to exist in the wild. They are found only on the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

(Source: *Washington Post*)

1 million goldfish dive into Tempe Town Lake near Phoenix

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) — More than 1 million goldfish now have a giant fishbowl to call home in a Phoenix suburb.

Tempe officials dumped roughly 1.2 million goldfish and minnows into Tempe Town Lake on Friday.

They say the fish will serve as a natural insect control for midge flies' larvae, which are at the bottom.

KPNX-TV in Phoenix reports that the fish were transported from Arkansas by truck.

The man-made lake already has a variety of fish including bass and carp. The goldfish are expected to be a food source for the larger fish.

The lake was drained in March to replace a dam its west end. The lake is expected to reopen in May.

Officials say the new dam will be more cost-effective, dependable and last for at least 50 years.

IN FOCUS iew.ir



A Persian fallow deer calf named Javid, literally meaning eternal, was born in Pardisan rehabilitation center on Sunday morning. Another calf was born on April 21 in this center. The species are on the verge of extinction and only some are being kept in captivity in preserved areas or rehabilitation centers.

AFC Asian U-19 Championship: Iran draws holder Qatar in Group C

SPORTS Iran was placed in Group C of the AFC Asian U-19 Cup to be held in Bahrain in October this year.

Iran has been pitted against defending champions Qatar, Japan and Yemen in Group C.

Sixteen nations discovered their AFC U-19 Championship Bahrain 2016 fate on Saturday when the draw for October's competition was held in the Bahraini capital of Manama, the-afc.com reported.

Draw Result

Group A: Bahrain, Thailand, Korea Republic, Saudi Arabia

Group B: DPR Korea, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Vietnam

Group C: Qatar, Japan, Yemen, IR Iran

Group D: Uzbekistan, China PR, Australia, Tajikistan

Each group will play a one-round league, from which the top two teams in each group (eight teams in total) will qualify for the knockout stage (quarter-finals).

The four winners of the quarter-finals will qualify for the semi-finals and the winners of semi-finals will advance to the final.

The Championship's top four ranked teams will then fly the Asian flag at the FIFA U-20 World Cup Korea Republic 2017.

If Korea Republic finish among the Championship's top four teams, three play-off matches will be organized among the four losing teams of the quarter-finals to determine the fifth placed team that will qualify for Korea Republic 2017.



Iran's Hajisafi set to leave FSV Frankfurt



SPORTS Iranian international player Ehsan Hajisafi is set to leave German second division side FSV Frankfurt as the team nears relegation.

Following the 4-1 loss against Kaiserslautern, FSV dropped to 16th place two weeks before the end of the season.

Hajisafi, who joined FSV from Sepahan in August 2015 with a two-year contract, is set to leave the club in the summer. He has a term in his contract which let him go if FSV relegates to the third

division.

Hajisafi's agent revealed that he has offers from Belgium and Austria while playing in Bundesliga is an option.

The 25-year old winger has scored two goals in 24 appearances for FSV this season. His superb long-range goal against Freiburg nominated as one of the best goals of the month.

Hajisafi has represented Iran at the 2011 AFC Asian Cup, 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2015 AFC Asian Cup, in addition to Sepahan at the 2007 FIFA Club World Cup.

Iran's Ehsan Hadadi to participate at IAAF Diamond League



SPORTS Iranian discus thrower Ehsan Hadadi will take part at the 2016 IAAF Doha Diamond League set to be held in Doha at Qatar Sports Club on Friday May 6.

The IAAF Diamond League brings together the world's finest track and field athletes to compete in an annual series spread across four continental areas.

Olympic silver medallist Ehsan Hadadi of Iran has also won the 2011 world bronze as well as multiple gold medals from the Asian Games and Asian Championships.

2016 IAAF Diamond League calendar

6 May – Doha, QAT
14 May – Shanghai, CHN
22 May – Rabat, MAR
28 May – Eugene, USA
2 Jun – Rome, ITA
5 Jun – Birmingham, GBR
9 Jun – Oslo, NOR
16 Jun – Stockholm, SWE
15 Jul – Monaco, MON
22-23 Jul – London, GBR
25 Aug – Lausanne, SUI
27 Aug – Paris, FRA
1 Sep – Zurich, SUI
9 Sep – Brussels, BEL

President congratulates national archery team's championship

President Rouhani sent a message to congratulate the championship of the national team of archery at 2016 Shanghai Archery World Cup.

President's message is as follows:

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

Once again, the Iranian compound men's championship at Shanghai Archery World Cup caused happiness and pride for the Iranian nation which has raised many

heroes.

I hereby congratulate this success and appreciate the athletes, coaches, managers and all people working hard in the archery team, as well as the officials of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and wish for increased pride for the youth of the country in all sport fields.

Hassan Rouhani

President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

(Source: President.ir)



Qatar investigates death at World Cup site as labour rights under scrutiny

The organisers of Qatar's 2022 World Cup said on Sunday they were investigating the death of an Indian labourer at one of its sites but denied it was caused by working conditions which the wealthy Gulf country is under pressure to improve.

Along with accusations of corruption during its World Cup bid, Qatar has long been under fire from rights groups for labour abuses. Last week, world soccer body FIFA urged Qatar to hasten improvements for builders on World Cup sites and said it would monitor conditions.

Qatar, an energy exporter which has the highest income per capita in the world, is also under pressure from the United Nations to address workers' rights before World Cup construction peaks in 2017.

Labourer Jaleshwar Prasad, 48, fell unconscious on Wednesday while performing steel work at Al

Bayt stadium in Al Khor, 50 km (31 miles) north of Doha, a witness told Reuters.

Organisers said the death was not caused by working conditions.

"Al Khor Hospital reported the cause of death as cardiac arrest," the Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy of the 2022 World Cup said in a statement.

"The family of Mr Prasad were informed of the tragedy immediately. A full investigation is underway."

Qatar's efforts to become the competition's first Arab host have been dampened by accusations including that workers were forced to live in squalor and to work without proper access to water and shelter in the blazing sun.

About 5,100 construction workers from Nepal, India and Bangladesh are building stadiums in the country.

Unions and labour protests are banned and authorities penalise

dissent with jail terms or immediate deportation.

Prasad is the third Indian employed on a World Cup site to die of a heart attack in the last six months, according to a February report by the Supreme Committee.

Qatar's Supreme Committee says there have been no work-related fatalities on World Cup sites, but law firm DLA Piper, in a review for the government in 2013, found evidence of dozens of work-related deaths among migrant labourers from South Asia.

Qatar's government has also denied claims there are higher instances of heart attacks among construction workers and does not publish independently-verified statistics on worker-related injuries and fatalities.

Autopsies and post-mortems on people who die sudden and unexpected deaths are forbidden by Qatari law unless a crime is suspected.

"Workers dying suddenly from heart attacks is something we hear about often, the causes are not always clear. But we're moving now into the hottest time of the year when the risk of fatality increases," said Amnesty Gulf researcher Mustafa Qadri. "When a worker dies, Qatar needs to get to the bottom of what happened. People's lives are in danger."

Amnesty reported on abuses at a World Cup stadium in a wide-ranging report three weeks ago based on the accounts of 132 workers.

DLA Piper recommended that Qatar launch an independent study into cardiac deaths among migrant workers.

The head of Qatar's Supreme Committee has said Doha is working to reduce abuses he described as occurring on construction sites all over the world.

(Source: Reuters)

PARALYMPIC GAMES

Iranian para-archer Zahra Nemati among ones to watch

Here are some of the para-archers to keep an eye on as they focus on the target at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games.

Familiar faces such as Iran's Zahra Nemati and the USA's "armless archer" Matt Stutzman are expected to return to the Paralympic Games this summer, whilst there were other names who emerged from the 2015 World Championships and could be on target for Rio 2016.

MEN

Eric Bennett (USA)

Bennett surprised many at the 2015 World Archery Para Championships in Donaueschingen, Germany. Although the eighth seed in the recurve men's open division, he defeated Russia's top-ranked Bato Tsydendorzhiev and Iran's eventual bronze medallist Gholamreza Rahimi, en route to winning gold. Bennett changed his recurve technique just months before World Championships and shoots with a mouth-tab. He is currently ranked third in the world.

David Drahonisky (CZE)

Drahonisky has consistently been one of the top para-archers in the world since his debut in 2003. He is currently ranked No. 1 in the world and won gold in the W1 category at the 2015 World Archery Para Championships, which turned out to be his first world gold ever. Drahonisky took gold at the Beijing 2008 Paralympics and silver at London 2012.

The veteran para-archer has been shooting for 26 years and has shown he can still contend for the podium at Rio. He won gold at the 2015 World Archery Para Championships, in the men's compound open. During Barcelona 1992, his first Paralympic Games, Lee won a bronze medal in the team event. His team defended that medal at the Atlanta 1996 Paralympics, where he also won a gold medal in the men's individual W2. Lee added another team Paralympic bronze medal in Sydney 2000, which was the last time he medalled at a Paralympic Games.

Matt Stutzman (USA)

Stutzman gained fame and notoriety as the iconic "armless archer" during London 2012. He won silver in the men's individual compound open and hopes to turn that into gold at Rio. On 9 December 2015, Stutzman hit a target from 310 yards, breaking the longest Guinness-ratified distance by any individual in the world.

Bato Tsydendorzhiev (RUS)

The top-ranked Russian para-archer in the recurve open men's division had a disappointing finish at the 2015 World Archery Para Championships where he finished sixth. Tsydendorzhiev started archery in 2011 and made his international debut in 2012, and he is looking for a comeback in Rio.

WOMEN

Zahra Nemati (IRI)

Nemati is one of the most popular Paralympians from Iran. She took gold at the 2015 Asian Para Championships and qualified to compete at the Rio 2016 Olympics. At London 2012, Nemati set a Paralympic record and won the gold medal in the women's individual recurve W1/W2. She also claimed a bronze medal in the women's team recurve open. Nemati's success resulted in significant media coverage in Iran and inspired other women to take up para-sport, especially archery.

Eleonora Sarti (ITA)

Sarti started her archery career in 2013 by winning a team bronze medal at the World Championships in Bangkok, Thailand. She switched sports from wheelchair basketball after discovering archery. In just two years, Sarti has become world No. 1 and won gold in the women's compound open at the 2015 World Archery Para Championships. Now she has her eyes on the podium in all her events at Rio 2016.

(Source: Paralympic)

Ronaldo returns to Real Madrid training ahead of Manchester City clash

Cristiano Ronaldo has returned to Real Madrid training as he battles to be fit in time for his side's Champions League semi-final second leg against Manchester City.

The Portuguese star has missed Madrid's last three games due to a hamstring injury but has taken to social media in recent days to show he is working hard to regain his fitness.

Zinedine Zidane admitted prior to Saturday's 1-0 win over Real Sociedad that both Ronaldo and Karim Benzema were doubts for the clash with the tie delicately balanced at 0-0 after the first leg at the Etihad.

However, Real Madrid have now confirmed that Ronaldo, who is the top scorer in this season's Champions League with 16 goals already, is back in training as they begin their preparations for the clash at the Bernabeu.



(Source: Goal)

From January through March, 37 percent of Comcast's total revenue came from its content and theme park unit, NBCUniversal. Tapping into Asian markets could help that grow further, analysts said.