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Iranian shot put thrower earns country's 1st medal at Rio Paralympics

15

Iranians stage rally, urging Saudis to shoulder responsibility for Mina tragedy



See page 2

IAEA: Iran is sticking to nuclear deal, Reuters says

Confab introduces Iranian market to Turks

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Some 300 Turkish companies attended the conference on introducing Iranian market held in Konya, Turkey, IRNA news reported on Friday.

As reported, during the meeting Iranian and Turkish economic activists underlined expansion of bilateral ties between the two countries and admitted that economic activities in each country can be complementary to those in the other one.

Hamid Zadboom, Iranian Commercial Attaché to Turkey, called for creation of joint ventures between Turkish economic activists and the Iranian private sector in various sectors including furniture, home appliances, auto parts, textile, and petrochemical products.

He asked the Turkish businessmen to travel to Iran and get familiar with the Iranian market.

National libraries of Iran, South Korea ink MOU

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — The National Library and Archives of Iran (NLAI) and the National Library of Korea (NLK) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to expand bilateral cooperation.



The MOU was inked by NLAI Deputy Director Shahram Yusefifar and NLK Chief Executive Lim Won-sun during a meeting in Seoul on Friday, the Persian service of IRNA reported.

Based on the MOU, the NLK agreed to establish a department for Iranian and Islamic studies. The department will display about 300 books on Iran, Islam and the Islamic Revolution.

The NLAI also agreed to set up the same amount of space for publications on Korean studies.

POLITICS A confidential report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) seen by Reuters says that Iran has kept to a nuclear deal it agreed with six world powers last year.

The report did not point to any violations in Tehran's observance of the deal, Reuters reported on Thursday.

Rouhani congratulates Tajikistan on independence anniversary

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani sent a message to President Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan on Friday and congratulated the Tajik people and government on the 25th anniversary of the country's independence.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has stood beside the Tajik people since the time Tajikistan gained independence and has always made efforts to expand bilateral cooperation in line with common interests of the two countries by establishing deep and friendly relations," he said.



Saudi rulers benefit from Tehran-Riyadh rift: official



POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, top adviser to the Iranian parliament speaker, has said that the Saudi rulers benefit from the impasse in relations Tehran and Riyadh.

This is while for Iran "relations with other countries in the region are built upon mutual respect and interests, and Saudi Arabia is no exception," Ami-Abdollahian said, Tasnim reported on Friday.

Saudi Arabia cut its diplomatic ties with Iran following the storming of its diplomatic posts in Tehran Mashhad in January.

Denouncing the wayward protesters who stormed the Saudi diplomatic compounds, Ami-Abdollahian said that even the Leader of the Islamic Revolution spoke out against the incident and those who were to blame.

"The Saudis could have reacted differently," Ami-Abdollahian said.

"Iran could likewise have cut diplomatic relations with the Saudis over the Mina tragedy, but the Islamic Republic reacted rationally and pursued the case through legal and political

plus Germany - finalized the text of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in Vienna in July 2015.

In July 2015, the UN Security Council turned the JCPOA into international law by endorsing a resolution, setting the stage for the lifting of the Security Council sanctions against Iran.

The nuclear deal went into effect in January 2016.

Rouhani added that the two countries will expand cooperation in various areas given the cultural affinities between the two nations.

Tajikistan declared independence from the Soviet Union on September 9, 1991, as a result of the breakup of the Soviet Union.

According to Wikipedia, a civil war was fought almost immediately after independence, lasting from 1992 to 1997. Since the end of the war, newly established political stability and foreign aid have allowed the country's economy to grow.

Putin, Erdogan discuss Aleppo over phone

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan have discussed the Syria conflict in a phone conversation, the Kremlin says.

They agreed to continue coordinating efforts to achieve a resolution in Syria, it said in a statement on Friday.

Turkey's Anadolu news agency said Erdogan told Putin that it was essential to agree to a ceasefire in Aleppo "as soon as possible."

The Syrian army has put foreign-backed mil-

itants under siege in Aleppo and now hopes to capture the whole city in what would be a devastating blow to the country's enemies.

Turkey and other countries opposed to the Syrian government have intensified their parleys, putting forth a proposal through the "opposition" which they support, for Assad to step down.

Anadolu said Ankara is hoping a ceasefire will be implemented in Aleppo for the Feast of the Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha) Islamic holiday which

in Turkey begins around September 12.

Erdogan had met separately with Putin and the United States President Barack Obama on the sidelines of the recent G20 meeting in China, telling them both that it was essential to agree to a truce for Aleppo.

In a major blow to Takfiri groups on Thursday, Syrian soldiers liberated the militant-held district of Ramouseh, which served as a strategic corridor for the terrorists into other occupied districts of Aleppo.

France ready to expand banking ties with Iran

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — In a meeting with the Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), Valiollah Seif, the visiting President of the French Parliament's National Assembly (lower house), Claude Bartolone, announced his country's readiness for the expansion of banking cooperation with Iran, the portal of CBI reported.

The top French lawmaker, who arrived in Tehran late on Monday, said that high-ranking French officials are fully aware of potentials and capacities of Iran, making an all-out effort to expand ties with the Islamic Republic.

The Iranian bank governor, for his part, underscored the vitality of boosting bilateral banking relations and called such ties the prerequisite for enhancement of mutual economic cooperation.

"Italian, Austrian and German banks have developed cooperation with Iran in the post-sanctions era but the French banking system has been very cautious about improving bilateral relations with its Iranian counterparts," Seif added noting that three branches of Iranian banks have currently received the required permits to start their activities in France.

Kerry tries again with Lavrov on Syria

United States Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov resumed negotiations on a Syrian ceasefire plan on Friday, with U.S. officials saying they believed a deal was still possible but warning the talks could not go on forever.

Senior State Department officials briefing reporters on Kerry's flight to Switzerland played down the prospect of a final breakthrough on Syria from Friday's talks, although they said "steady progress" had been made in recent weeks.

"We've been taking issues off the table because we've reached an understanding on them and continue to have some issues that remain outstanding and that we have been unable to close," one official said.

Issues still to be resolved were "highly technical and complicated," the official said. "We can't guarantee at this point that we are on the cusp of finishing."

The United States and Russia have backed opposite sides in Syria's civil war, which shows little sign of ending after 5-1/2 years of violence in which half the pre-war population has been uprooted. Moscow supports President Bashar al-Assad and Washington supports the opposition, saying Assad must go.

Kerry's meeting with Lavrov is their third in two weeks and they have spoken several times by telephone to try to narrow differences on a Syrian peace plan.

A second U.S. official said that while Kerry would try to make progress, "patience is not infinite" and the United States would not simply keep talking if a conclusion was not reached "relatively soon."

The officials declined to elaborate on what Washington might do if the talks broke down.

Kerry's proposal for military cooperation with Russia over Syria has faced strong pushback from U.S. defense and intelligence officials who argue that Moscow cannot be trusted.

The second official said one of the reasons Kerry kept up the effort was because the Syrian opposition supported it as a way to stop the worst violence in their country.

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

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

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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Cleric blasts government for 'signing FATF'

TEHRAN — The interim Tehran Friday preacher has criticized the government for "signing the FATF."

"How dare you sign a document against the interests of the nation? ... What is the Majlis going to do? The Majlis should not sit silent," Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati said, Mehr reported.

"The contract is something very complicated that, if happened, we should say farewell to many things and surrender to the enemy."

"This is a tragedy... This will be prevented in any way," he added.



Leader condoles Army chief on wife's decease

TEHRAN — Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Thursday evening sent a letter of condolence to the Army chief on the occasion of his wife's death.

The letter addressed to General Ataollah Salehi reads, "Please accept my condolences on the decease of your wife, a patient and pious lady. I wish her bliss and divine mercy."

In similar letters, other Islamic Republic officials such as Judiciary chief Sadeq Amoli Larijani and IRGC chief Mohammad Ali Jafari also expressed condolences to Salehi.



Iran to pursue Mina tragedy case to the full: Qashqavi

TEHRAN — Iran's deputy foreign minister has said the country will pursue the case of last year's hajj stampede until the rights of the victims are fully redeemed.

"If anyone believes a case can be filed before international courts, please come forward," Hassan Qashqavi said on Thursday, ILNA reported.

The Iranian diplomat went on to underline that the Saudi government has refrained from paying for the blood of the victims of the tragedy so far.



House of Saudi unable to manage hajj: official

TEHRAN — The Supreme Leader's representative for hajj and pilgrimage has said the Saudi ruling family has proved over years that it is incapable of managing the hajj ritual.

"People still face many shortcomings in health and security spheres," Qazi Asqar said on Friday referring to the conditions of hajj pilgrims in Saudi Arabia, the IRIB reported.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the cleric said it is impossible for anybody to claim the ownership of the House of God in Mecca.



ASEAN welcomes Iran's joining TAC

TEHRAN — Heads of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in their final statement on Thursday evening said they are looking forward to annexation of Iran to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC).

In the statement, annexation of Chile, Egypt and Morocco to TAC was also welcomed, IRNA reported.

On annexation of Iran to the treaty, the heads of member states said they are looking forward to this move and called for completion of internal process of membership.



Envoy: Iran committed to JCPOA

TEHRAN — Iran's Ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency Reza Najafi said the UN nuclear agency's Thursday report did not contain anything new about the country's nuclear program, describing the document as a confirmation of Tehran's observance of the JCPOA.

"The agency's latest report on Iran does not contain any new point, and has only confirmed Iran's compliance with the JCPOA undertakings," Najafi said on Thursday, hours after the IAEA's quarterly report on Iran was issued, Tasnim reported.

Tehran dismisses Saudi FM's allegations as 'wrong'

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi dismissed on Thursday Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir's remarks who accused Iran of supporting terrorism, saying the accusations are "wrong."

He said that the Saudi foreign minister's claims are "repeated" and "unilateral."

"It has been a long time that Saudi Arabia has deprived the Yemeni defenseless people of peace and security and imposed a cruel and destructive war against this country's innocent people...and at the same time accuses others of interfering in neighboring countries' domestic affairs," he said.

Jubeir "repeatedly" and "ridiculously" accuses Iran of supporting terrorism and the Al-Qaeda terrorist group while heads of the terrorist groups, including Daesh, Taliban and Al-Qaeda, are either Saudi citizens or influenced by the Wahhabi ideology, Qassemi said.

He added, "This is a bitter reality, of which the whole world and the human conscience are gradually becoming aware."

The Saudi foreign minister claimed on Wednesday in London that Iran is interfering in the affairs of other countries, including Yemen and Syria.

In July, Qassemi called the Saudi kingdom "the founding father of Daesh and al Qaedaeh".

Iran urges Bahrain to focus on internal affairs

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said Thursday that Bahrain should avoid adopting a "repeated" position that is ordered by those who have gone astray in the Middle East region and focus on its domestic affairs.

His comments came as Bahraini Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifah said during his speech at the 146th ordinary session of the Arab League Council in the Egyptian capital city of Cairo on Thursday that Ira is politicizing hajj.



© Tehran Times/Mohammadreza Abbasi

In a stampede at the holiest Muslim pilgrimage site on September 24 last year, thousands of pilgrims were killed. Among the dead were 464 Iranians.

After several rounds of negotiation between Iranian and Saudis officials to

hash out discrepancies over the hajj issue, Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization of Iran (HPOI) announced on May 29 that it won't dispatch pilgrims this year to Mecca because of inconsistency at decision-making level by Saudis.

MP demands watching UK envoy: grounds and outlook

By Ali Kushki

TEHRAN — No matter Tehran and London have upgraded their relations to the ambassador's level, said a senior Iranian parliamentarian on Friday, Tehran should keep a vigilant eye on Britain's newly appointed envoy, given the perception here in Iran that the UK cannot be trusted anyway.

"We should be very careful England doesn't exceed its limits (in Iran) through its ambassador and acts only within the political framework outlined by the Vienna Convention and other international regulations," said Alaeddin Boroujerdi, the chairman of the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee.

Iran and the UK restored diplomatic relations to the highest level by exchanging ambassadors on September 5 after a near five-year moratorium.

The improvement of ties comes nearly one year after the signing of a deal between Iran and world powers, including the UK, over Tehran's nuclear program.

The UK closed its diplomatic compounds in Tehran in



November 2011 after being stormed by a crowd of protesters, itself a consequence of London imposing new sanctions on Iran at that time.

"While the government (of Iran) has decided to upgrade relations, the British diplomat must always be watched as the country has had a negative record both before and after the Revolution," the senior parliamentarian underscored.

Relations between Iran and the UK have been check-

ered over the past century, starting with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company crisis and continuing with the 1953 coup that ejected prime minister Mohammad Mosaddeq who championed the first democratic movement against the Shah.

Tehran insists London should apologize to the Iranian nation for the ill-fated movement.

"The English should avoid repeating their past mischiefs, and their performance needs to be watched continuously," said Boroujerdi.

Although the Iranian parliamentarian remains pessimistic toward the future of relations between the two countries, it remains to be seen whether the opening will prove effective enough to work against such pessimistic signals.

At least there is some clue to believe that the situation this time will be a bit different now that London has more leeway to act politically and economically after the positive Brexit vote.

Also, the two countries are now committed to the nuclear deal, a successful experience which can expand to other areas.

Tehran, Beijing discuss economic opportunities in Shanghai

TEHRAN — Iran and China have held the first round of meetings in Shanghai to discuss revival of New Silk Road projects and exchange ideas on cooperation opportunities between the two sides, IRNA reported on Friday.

In addition to members of Iranian Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai and Iran's Consulate General in the city, more than 200 representatives of Iranian and Chinese companies held talks during the event to promote bilateral ties between

the two countries.

Expansion of economic cooperation between the two countries and participation in projects related to the New Silk Road were among the issues raised in the meeting.

"The meeting was a follow-up to the 16th meeting of Iran-China Joint Commission held in Beijing last month," said Iran's Consul General in Shanghai Alireza Irvash.

Addressing the participants, Irvash said that during the sanctions era, Iran

had to limit its relations to only a few countries, including China, but now it has at will chosen China as its strategic trade partner.

He also referred to Chinese President Xi Jinping's previous visit to Iran, saying that signing 17 cooperation documents and one comprehensive strategic cooperation document is a clear sign of expansion of bilateral ties.

Since the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on 16 January 2016, Iran has been able

to expand its economic cooperation with other countries.

The latest official figures demonstrate that China has been the main exporter of goods to Iran during the first quarter of 2016. China's exports to Iran accounted for 22.86 percent of the Islamic Republic's total imports in terms of value.

The figures also show that Iran exported 11 million tons of non-oil goods, worth \$2.937 billion, to China during the same period.

Rafsanjani calls Saudis' crimes worse than Israelis'

TEHRAN — Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the chairman of the Expediency Council, said on Friday the Saudis' crimes against the Yemen are worse those committed by the Zionist regime of Israel in Palestine.

"It has been over a year that the regime which claims ruling the world of Islam is bombarding the oppressed and defenseless Yemeni people," he said during a meeting with political party members in Mashhad.

He called "unity" an "undeniable" necessity for the Islamic world.

Pointing to the teachings of Islam and the Islamic

world's interests, he said that Shia-Sunni conflicts are the "evil plan" of those who are against Islam.

Elsewhere, Rafsanjani said that different views on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action are "natural."

The powers who considered nuclear technology for Iran a threat against the world now have acknowledged Iran's right to enjoy nuclear technology, he said.

Iran and the 5+1 group - the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia plus Germany - finalized the text of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in Vienna in July 2015. The nuclear agreement took effect in January 2016.



Iranians stage rally, urging Saudis to shoulder responsibility for Mina tragedy

TEHRAN — Thousands of Iranians took to the streets on Monday in Tehran, carrying placards and chanting slogans against Riyadh, marking the first anniversary of the Mina incident, during which 464 Iranian pilgrims lost their lives.

The rally was also a condemnation of this year Iranian pilgrims' inability to attend the hajj ritual after talks between Tehran and Riyadh on security concerns voiced by Tehran broke down in May.

"While commemorating the memory of the sad and heart-wrenching Mina incident, the great, insightful nation of the Islamic revolution will severely condemn such inhumane and brutal acts of the Saudi wicked cursed dynasty...," read part of an statement announced after the rally.

The rally came as an acerbic retort to recent remarks by Saudi Arabia's Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz Al al-Sheikh who branded Iranians as non-Muslims, itself

a reaction to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei who in his statement issued on Monday blamed the 2015 Mina disaster on organizers' "incompetence."

"The incompetence of the Saudis and the insecurity imposed by them against the Hajj pilgrims to the House of God indeed demonstrated that this government is not qualified to manage the Two Holy Mosques and this reality must be spread

in the Muslim world and be understood," said the Leader in a meeting with the families of martyrs of Mina incident and Grand Mosque mishaps.

The war of words between Saudi Arabia and Iran has gone much beyond the hajj row, expanding to a number of regional issues, namely disagreements on what is going on in Syria, Bahrain, and Yemen.

"The valiant and insightful nation of

Iranians said during a rally staged in Tehran on Friday, "In support of the Supreme Leader's helpful remarks and guidelines against the wickedness of the puppet regime of Saudi Arabia and Al-Khalifa, we demonstrators shout once again our objection, revolutionary wrath, and hatred toward the irresponsible and anti-human acts of the Saudis..."

the Islamic revolution will unambiguously announce its support for the oppressed people of Yemen, Syria, and the great Muslim Leader of the Yemeni people..." another part of the statement said.

"In support of the Supreme Leader's helpful remarks and guidelines against the wickedness of the puppet regime of Saudi Arabia and Al-Khalifa, we demonstrators shout once again our objection, revolutionary wrath, and hatred toward the irresponsible and anti-human acts of the Saudis..."

The Iranian demonstrators also vowed harsh retaliation if Riyadh fails to reconsider its hostile regional policies and show further negligence towards the Mina disaster.

"...If the Saudis continue to shun responsibly for its acts during the terrible Mina crime and do not attempt to rectify its hostile and meddlesome acts in other Islamic territories... they will be buried beneath the revolutionary and sacred rage of the world's Muslims."

N. Korea conducts biggest ever nuclear test, China censures Pyongyang

North Korea confirms that it has conducted a successful "nuclear warhead explosion" test, saying it was meant to counter the United States hostility.

"Our nuclear scientists staged a nuclear explosion test on a newly developed nuclear warhead at the country's northern nuclear test site," a TV announcer said on Friday.

The confirmation came after South Korean authorities said they believed North Korea has conducted a fifth nuclear test — its biggest to date — following the detection of an "artificial earthquake."

South Korea's meteorological agency said the magnitude 5.3 quake was detected near North Korea's Punggye-ri nuclear test site.

"The 10-kiloton blast was nearly twice the fourth nuclear test and slightly less than the Hiroshima bombing, which was measured about 15 kilotons," said Kim Nam-Wook of South Korea's meteorological agency.

Reacting to the development, the White House said it was assessing the explosion near North Korea's nuclear test, but stopped short of confirming a nuclear test.

■ Beijing disapproves of latest nuclear test

Meanwhile, China has criticized North Korea for its latest nuclear test, urging Pyongyang to resolve issues in the region through dialog.

"Despite universal opposition from the international community, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) conducted its fifth nuclear test," said Hua Chunying, China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, on Friday at a press briefing.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry official said Beijing had "issued a statement and expressed Chinese government's stance of firm opposition."

"Realizing de-nuclearization of the



Korean Peninsula, preventing nuclear proliferation, and safeguarding peace and stability in Northeast Asia have always been China's firm stance," the foreign ministry spokeswoman stated.

She reiterated Beijing's commitment to resolving disputes on the Korean Peninsula through dialog, calling for its Pyongyang to refrain from unilateral action that could worsen the situation.

"We strongly urge the DPRK side ... [to] halt any move that could aggravate the situation ... and complicate the issue," the Chinese official said, adding, "China will continue to remain committed to solving the relevant issues of the Korean Peninsula through dialog and consultation."

■ Condemnations

Diplomats said the United Nations Security Council would discuss the test at a closed-door meeting on Friday, at the request of the United States, Japan and South Korea.

Under 32-year-old Kim Jong Un, North Korea has accelerated the development of

its nuclear and missile programs, despite United Nations sanctions that were tightened in March and have further isolated the impoverished country.

South Korean President Park Geun-hye, in Laos after a summit of Asian leaders, said Kim was showing "maniacal recklessness" in completely ignoring the world's call to abandon his pursuit of nuclear weapons.

U.S. President Barack Obama, aboard Air Force One on his way home from Laos, said the test would be met with "serious consequences", and held talks with Park and with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the White House said.

■ Calls for restraint

But, China's official Xinhua news agency said all parties in the international community should exercise restraint following the test as it is in nobody's interest for there to be chaos or war on the Korean Peninsula.

In a commentary, Xinhua said North Korea's nuclear test is "not wise," but

South Korea's decision to deploy an advanced U.S. anti-missile system has also seriously damaged regional strategic balance.

China's Foreign Ministry said it was "firmly opposed" to the test but called for the issue to be resolved through six-party talks. The long-stalled negotiations process chaired by China brings together the two Koreas, Japan, Russia and the United States.

The UN and the West have imposed a raft of sanctions on North Korea, prompting Pyongyang to step up its nuclear activities.

On Monday, North Korean Leader Kim Jong-un called on the country's military to bolster its nuclear capabilities after ordering the launch of three ballistic missiles.

In January, North Korea said it had successfully detonated a hydrogen bomb, its fourth nuclear test, and vowed to build up its nuclear program as deterrence against potential aggression from the U.S. and its regional allies.

North Korea says it will not give up on its nuclear "deterrence" unless Washington ends its hostile policy toward Pyongyang and dissolves the U.S.-led command in South Korea. Thousands of U.S. soldiers are stationed in South Korea and Japan.

Pyongyang is incensed by joint military drills held in the Korean Peninsula by the South and the U.S. as well as their plan to deploy the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) missile system in the region.

China and Russia have also voiced opposition to the deployment, saying the system would threaten security, stability and peace on the Korean Peninsula and cannot help denuclearize the volatile region.

(Source: agencies)

Turkey conducting 'largest ever' operations against PKK

Turkey is conducting the largest military operations in its history against Kurdish fighters in the southeast of the country, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said.

His statement on Thursday came as the government suspended thousands of teachers over suspected links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) and the army reportedly killed scores of PKK fighters.

Erdogan said in a speech to provincial governors in Ankara that the operations targeting civil servants with links to the PKK was a key element of the fight against the armed group.

"We will be removing civil servants with links to the PKK," he said.

The Turkish military said on Wednesday that 186 PKK members have been killed in the operations conducted in the southeastern district of Cukurca over the last few days.

A total of 11,285 personnel "linked to a separatist-terrorist organization have

been suspended," Turkey's education ministry said on its official Twitter account on Thursday.

The teachers suspended for their alleged links to the PKK will be able to receive two thirds of their salaries until the end of a formal investigation, according to the state-run Anadolu Agency.

Turkey, the United States and the EU have branded the PKK a "terrorist organization".

The autonomy-seeking group abandoned a two-year ceasefire in July, reigniting a conflict that has claimed more than 40,000 lives since 1984.

The government has accused the PKK of a series of attacks in the south-east of Turkey in recent weeks.

The teachers' suspensions came as Ankara pushes ahead with a purge against tens of thousands of supporters of U.S.-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen, who is accused by Turkey of orchestrating an attempted coup in July.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Uzbekistan to hold presidential election on December 4

Uzbekistan will elect a new president on December 4 following the death of long-time Leader Islam Karimov, Reuters news agency reported.

The country's elections authority made the announcement on Friday, just a day after the Uzbek parliament named Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev as interim president.

Under the Uzbek constitution, a presidential election must be held within three months, and Mirziyoyev, who was the official mourner-in-chief at Karimov's funeral, is widely expected to be elected.

Karimov died of a stroke last week after ruling the resource-rich country for 27 years. Nearly half of the country's 32 million citizens were born after he came to power.

Many analysts had anticipated that Karimov would be succeeded by his older daughter Gulnara, a businesswoman and pop star, but she fell from favor two years ago and there was no sign of her on Saturday among the

family members in the funeral cortege.

With no obvious successor, Karimov's death has triggered an outpouring of grief, mixed with uncertainty about the future.

Unrest would have repercussions for Russia, the regional power and home to hundreds of thousands of Uzbek migrant workers, and for the United States-allied government in Afghanistan.

The Kremlin's top political adviser, Yuri Ushakov, said on Saturday that Moscow expected the political situation in Uzbekistan to remain stable.

The Uzbek government has long been repeatedly criticized for human rights abuses, most notoriously in 2005 in the city of Andijan, where government forces are accused of killing hundreds of demonstrators.

Former British ambassador to Uzbekistan, Craig Murray, accused Karimov's security forces of executing two dissidents by boiling them to death.

(Source: agencies)

Trump attacks U.S. foreign policy, political press corps on state-owned Russian television network

The United States Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump criticized U.S. foreign policy and the American political press corps on Thursday during an interview on RT America, a state-owned Russian television network.

In a wide-ranging interview that aired on Thursday evening, Trump spoke with journalist Larry King about the presidential race, American intervention in Iraq and the Middle East, and the potential intrusion by Russian hackers into Democratic Party databases.



The interview came as Trump faced sustained criticism for praising Russian President Vladimir Putin, which he has regularly done on the campaign trail — to the discomfort of many members of his own party, who have distanced themselves from the comments.

During an NBC presidential forum on Wednesday evening, Trump went farther in his praise and said that Putin has been a better leader than President Obama: "Certainly, in that system, he's been a leader, far more than our president has been a leader," Trump said.

Asked during the RT America interview what has surprised him most about the political process, Trump unloaded on the American press.

"Well, I think the dishonesty of the media. The media has been unbelievably dishonest," Trump responded. "I mean they'll take a statement that you make which is perfect and they'll cut it up and chop it up and shorten it or lengthen it or do something with it."

"And all of a sudden it doesn't look as good as it did when you actually said it. But there's tremendous dishonesty with the media. Not all of it, obviously, but tremendous dishonesty," he said.

The Trump campaign recently lifted a ban on various news outlets, including The Washington Post, which he accused of bias in its coverage.

Trump also dismissed accusations that he doesn't have a firm grasp of military issues or a plan to combat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group. He said he has a "very distinct plan" and knocked foreign policy under Obama, Hillary Clinton, and former president George W. Bush.

"Hillary Clinton with her policies and Barack Obama — you know, look, we should have never gone into Iraq. Period. We should have never gone in. But once we went in, Larry, we shouldn't have gotten out the way we got out. And the way they got out really caused ISIS (ISIL), if you think about it. We got out in such a horrible, foolish fashion, instead of leaving some troops behind."

When King asked Trump if he believed reports that Russian hackers may have targeted Democratic Party databases, as part of an effort to influence the American presidential election, Trump said he did not believe that to be the case.

"I think it's probably unlikely. I think maybe the Democrats are putting that out. Who knows? But I think that it's pretty unlikely," he said. "I hope that if they are doing something I hope that somebody's going to be able to find out so they can end it, because that would not be appropriate."

King also asked Trump about Russian President Vladimir Putin's assertion that the hack was a "public service," even as he claimed the Russian government was not involved.

"I don't have any opinion on it. I don't know anything about it. I don't know who hacked. I'm not sure. You tell me. Who hacked? Who did the hacking?" Trump said.

Trump's critics have regularly insinuated that he is overly cozy with pro-Russian interests. Trump's former campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, came under fire last month after he was named in a Ukrainian corruption investigation that tied him to a pro-Kremlin political party. Manafort, who has since resigned from the campaign, denied all such connections.

Before that, Trump was widely condemned in July when, in an off-handed remark, he called on the Russian government to intervene in the election by releasing thousands of Clinton's private emails. "Russia, if you're listening, I hope you're able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing," Trump said during a press conference at one of his South Florida resorts. He added later, "They probably have them. I'd like to have them released."

Trump came under fire within minutes of the interview airing. Veteran GOP (Grand Old Party) strategist John Weaver, a vocal anti-Trump Republican, expressed incredulity on social media.

"Condemning the free, 1st amendment protected American media on Russian owned @RT.com is outrageous, even by the lowest of Trump standards," Weaver said in one tweet.

"I'm just stunned at the insanity of the campaign staff to even consider, allow a @RT.com interview, given the Russian ties already," Weaver wrote in another tweet.

The Trump campaign downplayed the interview on Thursday evening, explaining that they did not realize it would be broadcast on RT.

"Mr. Trump recorded a short interview with Larry King for his podcast as a favor to Mr. King. What Larry King does with the interview content is up to him, we have nothing to do with it," a Trump spokesperson told The Post.

(Source: The Washington Post)

UN panel blames South Sudan leaders for Juba violence

South Sudanese government forces have acquired two jet fighters and truckloads of small arms ammunition and were seeking to manufacture bullets, United Nations sanctions monitors said in a confidential report seen by Reuters news agency.

The report on arms flows and security threats to South Sudan added that opposition troops have not received any significant arms shipments from abroad.

The monitors also said that armed government actors were imposing "debilitating movement restrictions" on United Nations peacekeepers.

They warned that the economy of the world's newest nation had effectively collapsed because of government policies that included buying weapons instead of funding social services.

More than 200,000 people rely on humanitarian assistance, Morgan added.

The report strengthens the case for an arms embargo, a move recommended by the monitors to the Security Council in January. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has also called for an arms embargo.

"There is no evidence to suggest that more weapons are required in South Sudan for the government to achieve a stable security environment," the UN monitors said.

"Rather, the continued influx of weapons ... contributes to spreading instability and the continuation of the conflict."

The report said that while Sudan had provided small arms, bullets and logistical support to opposition troops, they "found no evidence to date that Sudan - or any other neighboring country - has provided heavy weap-

ons ... which has limited the opposition's ability to mount large-scale operations".

However, the monitors received reports that government troops have made significant, ongoing arms procurements, including the likely recent acquisition of two L-39 fighter jets.

"While the panel has received preliminary reports from two sources that the jets were serviced and painted in Uganda, the panel has not yet been able to confirm their origin or if these jets have been purchased or are on loan," the monitors said.

Two truckloads of ammunition were transferred to the capital, Juba, from Uganda in June, while late last year South Sudanese army chief Paul Malong asked a Lebanese company to begin developing a small arms ammunition manufacturing facility in Juba, the monitors said.

In the wake of deadly violence in Juba in July, the council said it would discuss an arms embargo if Ban reports this month that the government was not cooperating with the deployment of 4,000 more peacekeepers and was obstructing 12,000 UN troops already on the ground.

A UN peacekeeping mission (UNMISS) has been in South Sudan since the country gained independence from Sudan in 2011.

The UN monitors said that in rhetoric and action, government-affiliated forces "have actively threatened the operations and personnel of UNMISS and other UN agencies, and both parties have continued to target humanitarian workers".

During the violence in July, between 80 and 100 uni-

formed soldiers overran Juba's Hotel Terrain compound, home to the staff of international organizations, and in four hours killed an ethnic Nuer journalist and raped at least five foreign aid workers and other staff working at the compound, the monitors said.

The monitors said that given the number of soldiers involved, the number of items stolen and the systematic damage inflicted, "this attack was well coordinated and cannot be considered as an opportunistic act of violence and robbery".

The UN Security Council has long threatened to impose an arms embargo on South Sudan after the country spiraled into civil war in 2013, but veto powers Russia and China are wary that such a move would benefit opposition fighters because it would be harder to monitor them than to police the government.

The Security Council set up a targeted sanctions regime for South Sudan in March 2015, then in July black-listed six generals - three from each side of the conflict - by subjecting them to an asset freeze and travel ban.

A political rivalry between President Salva Kiir, an ethnic Dinka, and opposition leader Riek Machar, a Nuer, sparked the civil war.

The pair signed a shaky peace deal a year ago, but fighting has continued. Machar fled the country after the violence between their troops erupted in July.

The monitors said in the report - which was requested by the Security Council - that "the actions and policies of the two major parties" pose the most severe security threats to the peace deal and the transitional government.

(Source: Al Jazeera News And Agencies)

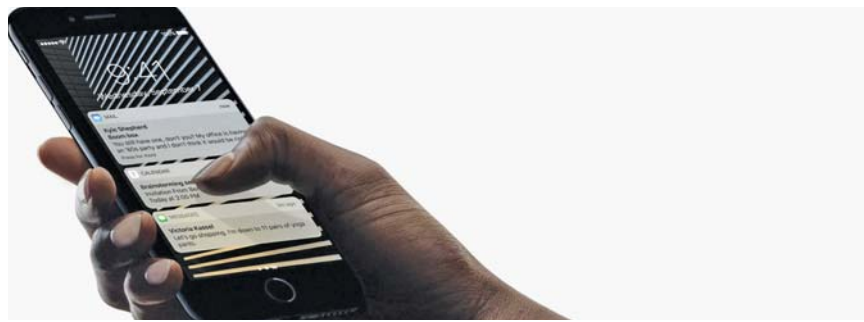
Addressing the House of Lords yesterday, where he announced that the autumn statement would be on November 23, Mr Hammond set out some possible measures. "I would hope that in designing a new fiscal stimulus, any sensible chancellor would seek to do as much as possible.

iPhone 7, iPhone 7 Plus, and Apple Watch Series 2 preorders are now live

The second weekend of September is nearly upon us, and tradition says we must now gather around the collective browser window to show our devotion to Apple's annual iPhone refresh. This time, we'll be saying goodbye to more than just \$650 — with the purchase of an iPhone 7 or iPhone 7 Plus, you're bidding farewell to the 3.5mm headphone jack and drawing on the courage to brace the future. Or buying into a near-term dongle nightmare — depends on how you look at it.

While it may seem like quite a few people are sitting this round out in protest of the audio port, there's still likely very high demand for a new premiere Apple product. So if you want the phone on launch day, you should be placing an order as soon as you can. Preorders for the iPhone 7 and 7 Plus went live a few minutes past 3AM ET on Friday, Sept. 9th, with shipments starting on September 16th. Both phones should be available on Apple's website and mobile store app — using the app is the easier route right now — as well as through the four major US carriers and retailers like Best Buy and Target. Those interested in the Apple Watch Series 2, which ships starting September 13th, can also place a preorder through Apple's store.

Putting aside the controversial standards change, the new phones are surprisingly fresh and come with their fair share of new perks and features. There's the dual-lens camera on the iPhone 7 Plus with superior zoom and a Portrait mode that generates a bokeh-inducing blur effect. Both phones are also now water resistant, and each contains a new Taptic Engine in place of a traditional home button. That component now simulates a button press with the same haptic vibrations you get with hard presses on the Apple Watch display and the new MacBook trackpad.



Of course, with each year, Apple upgrades its processor. The new A10 Fusion chip is said to be 40 percent faster than last year's processor, with 50 percent more graphics performance. Both phones also received a battery upgrade, with the iPhone 7 lasting two hours longer than its predecessor and the iPhone 7 Plus lasting one hour longer than the 6S Plus.

Apple's pricing scheme for buying the two devices from its website hasn't changed, but consumers now get more storage. (Plus, the company finally killed off its dreaded 16GB model.) So now the base model comes with 32GB for \$649. The next highest storage tier is a 128GB, for \$749, while the largest is an eye-popping 256GB for \$849. For the iPhone 7 Plus, the 32GB model costs \$769, while the 128GB model costs \$869. The largest iPhone 7 Plus, with 256GB of storage, will run you \$969. These are all contract-free prices.

You can also enroll in the iPhone Upgrade Program, which charges you a monthly fee for 24 months and comes

with Apple Care+, which now nets you a broken screen repair for only \$29, down from \$99. The real perk with the loan option, however, is being able to trade in your iPhone after 12 payments and get the new one, starting the 24-month cycle anew. You can think of it like a two-year contract from Apple itself, and it's financed through a loan with Citizens One Bank. The program starts at \$32.41 a month for the cheapest iPhone 7.

If you're already on the program and you're looking to get the new phone, you have to choose that option on the payment screen and schedule an in-store pickup, as Apple must inspect the phone before replacing it with a new one. Apple also offers a loan program without Apple Care and the annual trade-in, also financed through Citizens One, in the event you want to pay for an unlocked phone in monthly installments.

As is usually the case, Apple's website tends to get bogged down by the countless requests flowing in all at the same time. So it's always better to try and add a new iPhone to your shopping cart using the Apple Store mobile app. It's a reliable way to bypass the web store rush, and the app allows you to designate different purchase options, like the iPhone Upgrade Program or AT&T's Next installment plan.

On that note, there's some carrier deals to be aware of. T-Mobile announced yesterday it would give away the iPhone 7 32GB for free to any customer who traded in a iPhone 6 or a later model. It's not a com-

plete no-strings-attached deal. T-Mobile will simply reimburse you \$650 split up over the course of 24 months, effectively wiping out the cost of the iPhone 7 when bought with the company's Jump monthly installment plan. (If you want to own the phone outright before those 24 months are up, you'll need to pay T-Mobile the outstanding balance. So think of it like a contract under a different name.) Your can also pay a little more upfront to get a model with more storage or to get the iPhone 7 Plus instead of the standard model.

Sprint has since responded with a deal of its own. Like T-Mobile's, Sprint's upgrade option lets you pay upfront and the company will reimburse you \$650 over two years for trading in an iPhone 6 or later. Yet Sprint will also accept a Samsung Galaxy S7 or S7 Edge. Both AT&T and Verizon have trade-in deals for new phones, but no stand-out promotions for the iPhone 7.

You're probably thinking this myriad collection of purchase options is mind-numbing and perplexing. Don't worry, you're not alone. Phone contracts, installment plans, and upgrade eligibility requirements create a thorny mess for buyers, and making sense of it all can feel like doing your taxes. It's times like these that consumers are generally better off buying an unlocked phone outright, or through a company with solid customer service. In that sense, buying the new iPhone straight from Apple is the most pain-free route.

(Source: theverge)

FAA officially warns against using Samsung Galaxy Note 7 phones during flights



With all those Samsung Galaxy Note 7 devices exploding almost on a daily basis, it was just a matter of time before the Federal Aviation Administration would take into consideration the banishment of these particular phones from all flights.

We reported a few days ago that FAA and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration were working guidance related to this issue, and today we're here to tell you that a warning has already been issued.

The entity has just released a short statement in which it advises all passengers not to use their Galaxy Note 7 phones during flights.

"In light of recent incidents and concerns raised by Samsung about its Galaxy Note 7 devices, the Federal Aviation Administration strongly advises passengers not to turn on or charge these devices on board aircraft and not to stow them in any checked baggage."

So, if you can't put them into your checked baggage and you can't turn them on either, then you will most likely carry the Galaxy Note 7 in your pocket. As long as it's turned off, there's no danger of explosion, so you, and the whole plane, should be safe until the latter lands.

From what we understand, FAA hasn't yet banned Samsung's Galaxy Note 7 from planes, but an official has already confirmed that the statement issued today will be updated "as more information becomes available."

Basically, this means that the Galaxy Note 7 could actually be banned from flights if reports about exploding units continue to emerge in the next couple of days. Let's hope Samsung manages to replace all these faulty devices before any more Galaxy Note 7 burn and cause damages.

(Source: Gizmodo)

The science behind exploding phone batteries



An exploding phone seems like a freak accident, but the same chemical properties that make batteries work also make them likely to catch fire. Samsung is learning this the hard way, as it becomes the latest company to recall a device — in this case, its new Galaxy Note 7 phone — because the batteries could be dangerous.

When batteries explode, it's often the failure of manufacturers to make sure no explosion will happen. Exploding batteries can be the consequence of over-eager companies pushing technology to the limit. As our screens gets bigger and phones more powerful, they need more energy, but most of us are unwilling to give up battery life or charging speed.

We've already achieved almost 90 percent of the maximum battery life theoretically possible from the lithium-ion battery, according to Lynden Archer, a materials scientist at Cornell University, so manufacturers are pushing the limits more and more to eke out only a little bit more energy. "There's been a bit of an arms race where every manufacturer of a smartphone wants to get the highest battery life," he says. "This trend in the field is producing more and more of a tendency for overcharging so all these models of failure are becoming more commonplace."

Samsung blames the Galaxy Note recall on the fact that, in some devices, two parts of the battery that should not have touched came together. But there are many common ways for rechargeable lithium-ion batteries to break, and this usually happens because we keep demanding more from the devices. (Lithium-ion batteries are the type used in almost all smartphones and electronics. Engineers use lithium because it's light and can hold a lot of energy.)

To understand what makes a battery safe, it's helpful to know how they work. There are two electrodes, or electrical conductors, on opposite sides.

(Source: theverge)

Google's DeepMind claims major milestone in making machines talk like humans



Google's UK artificial intelligence lab, DeepMind, has developed a deep neural network that produces more human-like speech than Google's previous text-to-speech (TTS) systems.

DeepMind has published a new paper describing WaveNet, a convolutional neural network it says has closed the gap between machine-generated and human speech by 50 percent in both US English and Mandarin Chinese.

Not only this, but the network can also seamlessly switch between different voices and generate realistic music fragments.

The researchers note that today's best TTS systems, generally considered to be powered by Google, are built on "speech fragments" recorded from a single speaker. Those fragments are then reconstructed to create utterances.

While this approach, known as concatenative TTS, has produced natural-sounding speech, it is generally limited to a single voice unless a new database is provided.

Another technique called parametric TTS, which relies on voice codec synthesizers, may be more flexible, but this hasn't achieved as natural-sounding speech.

WaveNet differs by being trained on raw audio waveform from multiple speakers and then using the network to model these signals to generate synthetic utterances. Each sample it creates is fed back into the network to generate another sample.

"As well as yielding more natural-sounding speech, using raw waveforms means that WaveNet can model any kind of audio, including music," DeepMind researchers note in a blogpost.

WaveNet is also capable of learning the characteristics of multiple voices, from both male and female speakers, including breathing and mouth movements.

(Source: FT.com)

IN THE NEWS

Lyft and Gett are now fully integrated into Google Maps

There's no denying that Google Maps is easily the most popular and powerful mapping solutions out there. The service has done nothing but grow and mature over the years, and while GPS maps and turn-by-turn navigation might not sound like that interesting of a subject, Google has continued to add more and more features to make the service as feature-rich as it possibly can. Earlier this year in March, Google added the ability to see how long and how much a ride with Uber would cost you directly within the Maps application on both Android and iOS. Considering the ever increasing popularity of Uber, this made a lot of sense.

However, Uber is far from the only ride hailing service like this out there. While Uber might be one of the most recognizable names in this field, that doesn't mean they hold a monopoly on this industry. As of today, users of Google Maps will start seeing integration for Lyft cars all across the United States. Lyft riding options will be display under the same main tab, but will be sanctioned off in its own subcategory. And, if you happen to live in New York City, you will also be able to hail rides with Gett within Google Maps as well.

With the new update, Google Maps now has support for 9 different ride sharing apps in over 60 countries all across the world. It's great to see Google continually at work to make this feature of Maps as robust as possible, and options for both Lyft and Gett are now available on the Google Maps app for users on Android and iOS starting today.

(source: Phone Scoop)

TENAA, Geekbench confirm that there is 3GB of RAM on the Apple iPhone 7 Plus

Unlike most Android manufacturers, Apple doesn't make a big deal about some of the internal specs found on their handsets. Battery size is one of those specs, as is RAM. Apple doesn't normally reveal the amount of RAM on the iPhone, so it wasn't until a Geekbench test of the Apple iPhone 7 Plus surfaced today, along with a TENAA certification of the device, that we could confirm that the iPhone 7 Plus is the first iPhone ever to sport 3GB of RAM.

Throughout the year, there had been rumors that the latest 5.5-inch iPhone phablet would see a 50% hike in RAM to 3GB. This number can not be compared to the amount of RAM used on an Android phone, which ranges these days from 2GB to 6GB. Because of the optimization used by Apple with iOS, it takes less RAM for the iPhone to run smoothly. The Apple iPhone 7 continues to carry 2GB of the sweet stuff.

The A10 fusion chipset that powers both new iPhone models has four cores. The two energy efficient cores used for light housekeeping (like checking email) are slower in order to save on battery life. The other two cores are high performance and run 40% faster than the A9. Those are the two cores employed on Geekbench, where the iPhone 7 Plus scored 3233 for the single core test and 5363 for the multi-core test.

(Source: GFXBench)

Chrome release 53 arrives with Android Pay support, stability fixes

Google has just announced that a new version of Chrome is now available for Android users. It's been a little bit more than a week since the search giant released Chrome 53 on desktops, but Android users can finally experience some of the features that were only available on desktops.

Aside from the usual under the hood improvements, Google confirmed Chrome release 53 brings support for Android Pay via PaymentRequest API, which should allow users to make smooth and secure payments online using a credit card or Google's service.

The addition of PaymentRequest API makes it easier to make payments on the web since you won't have to type information related to billing, shipping or payer. Basically, you will be able to check out with a single click if you're using Chrome on either desktop or mobile phone.

But that's not the only new features introduced in the update. According to Google, the new version of Chrome allows muted videos to start playing without the user having to interact with it. The only requirement for this to happen is that the video should be marked as muted with the autoplay attribute.

These are the highlights of this new release, but Google also mentioned that the update contains many performance and stability fixes, which are listed in the Git log for your viewing pleasure.

Keep in mind that while the launch announcement has already gone live, it might take a few days for the new version of Chrome to show up in Google Play all over the world. If you can't wait to take advantage of Android Pay support on your smartphone, then make sure to check out for the updated version in Google Play store.

(source: googlechrome)



FEATURE

Theresa May, a safe pair of hands as prime minister? Don't you believe it?

By Abi Wilkinson

Whatever we might think of Theresa May's policy, ideology and vision of Britain, we're told we should at least be grateful that she is competent. In the immediate aftermath of the EU referendum, her sensible, schoolmarm-esque demeanor contrasted sharply with the childish bickering and backstabbing of Michael Gove and Boris Johnson, and the adolescent recklessness of David Cameron and George Osborne.



When she won the Conservative leadership contest by default – her strategy being to simply remain quiet while the other participants took turns to self-immolate – the nation breathed a sigh of relief. She's not exactly what many of us would have hoped for, but at least the delicate, thorny task of Brexit negotiations would be tackled by one of the few genuine adults in the room.

But what if, in the midst of the post-referendum fallout and general Labour Party chaos, we've bestowed an image of mature, calm capability on someone who simply doesn't deserve it. Watching May at prime minister's questions, it was hard to escape the feeling we've been a little hasty.

Diplomatically, the performance could be described as "disappointing". She avoided pretty much every question she was asked, instead reaching for a series of weak, pre-written putdowns. "Even on rolling stock, Labour are a laughing stock!" she recited awkwardly, prompting forced chuckling from the government benches that sounded even more unconvincing than usual. It's possible that a stronger script and slicker delivery might have made her chosen strategy a success. As things were, though, she seemed shifty, uncomfortable and out of her depth on important policy issues such as Brexit and housing.

Serious questions

In a particularly bizarre moment, she answered a serious question from Corbyn about housebuilding by quoting a sarcastic response the Labour leader had received on Twitter: "Lewis writes: 'Does (May) know in a recent poll on who would make a better prime minister, 'don't know' scored higher than Jeremy Corbyn?'" she reeled off in her characteristically stilted style. For a politician with a reputation for being sober and no-nonsense, the move seemed jarringly trivial and childish.

Things went from bad to worse once the individual she'd quoted was identified. As it turns out, Lewis Collins – who uses the handle @swingaleg – has a fairly colorful Twitter history. A few days ago, he responded to a news story about a racist attack by opining: "Every time a Polish person is lamped, it will always be considered a Brexit hate crime. Even if they asked for it." Another time, he messaged the author Elizabeth Day to say "piss off you stupid, feminist piece of shit".

I thought the name seemed familiar, and it turns out I too have had the odd run-in with Lewis. In one particularly delightful interaction he informed me I was "mentally deficient". The account has now been deleted from Twitter, presumably in an attempt to minimize the backlash, but it seems likely the examples I've quoted weren't isolated incidents.

Political attention

All of which begs the question: why didn't May bother checking just who she was quoting? Given the political attention that has been devoted to social media trolling in recent months, it seems a fairly stunning oversight. Corbyn has been blamed for abusive tweets sent by people claiming to back him, despite issuing social media guidelines urging supporters to interact politely. In a rhetorical pincer move, the very fact he found it necessary to issue such guidelines has been presented as evidence of his responsibility.

Can you imagine what the reaction would have been if he'd read out a troll's tweet in parliament. At best, it would have been seen as evidence of extreme incompetence. In all likelihood, many people would have said that he was actively encouraging online abuse. Why, then, should things be any different for May?

Though it could be argued that the incident is inconsequential in the grand scheme of things, it's not like her reputation for capability is founded on anything deeper than surface presentation. Post-referendum, we seem to have developed a sort of collective amnesia about May's career history. At the time, her tenure as home secretary was widely regarded as an utter disaster. Her attempts to tackle immigration were both dystopian and cruel and hopelessly ineffectual according to her own criteria. She missed every target she ever set herself. When you think about it, it's hard to understand how she's come to be seen as something of a political savior.

Charitably, you could suggest that her failures, past and present, illustrate how difficult being a frontbench politician actually is. Everyone makes mistakes sometimes; and most of us don't have the fate of an entire country in our hands. Maybe the elusive quality of consistent political competence is actually a myth, and the goal is simply to project the appearance of having your shit together.

If Theresa May is faking it, perhaps they all are. What a genuinely terrifying thought.

(Source: The Guardian)

The Clinton campaign's plea for Republican mercy



as well as Leader Pelosi are well aware of," a Republican committee spokesman said.

Pelosi's plea

It's hardly coincidence that Pelosi's plea for charity and mercy parallels the attempt by the Clinton campaign to stifle questions about Hillary's health, and in

particular her coughing episodes. One of the fits early this week lasted more than four minutes, interrupting a conversation with reporters on her campaign plane. When Andrew Raffery of NBC News reported that the "frog in (Mrs.) Clinton's throat on Monday was one of the most aggressive she's had during her 2016

run," a Clinton spokesman, Nick Merrill, went semi-ballistic, and told him to "get a life."

But the story, which will not go away short of a miraculous recovery from whatever ails the lady, continues to spread from what the Clinton campaign calls the "fringes" of the media to the "mainstream," i.e., the big newspapers and the television networks eager to carry water for the Clintons.

The Clinton campaign, and particularly the afflicted candidate herself, is surely aware that their pain (in the throat as well as in the seat of a pantsuit) is similar to the pain of an earlier Clinton scandal and how it spread from the "fringes" to the "mainstream" and became the story of the year and finally to the impeachment of ol' Bubba his own self. The vast, right-wing media conspiracy, indeed.

Interest in Hillary's coughing fits has already spread to doctors who are better qualified than reporters and campaign flacks to know what to make of it. One prominent neurosurgeon in the nation's capital, speaking with the usual anonymity accorded as professional privilege, writes to tell me that he is "pretty sure that she suffers from pseudo bulbar palsy. These symptoms are due to a lesion in the brain stem. Generically, the causes are multiple trauma, neoplasm, stroke, autoimmune issues, infection. In her case the cause is most likely a venous infarct (stroke) secondary to her transverse sinus occlusion. She now takes coumadin, an anti-coagulant. She also has labile affect, inappropriate head bobbing and double vision as other symptoms."

That's doctor talk above a pundit's pay grade, but it's hard to argue with the doctor when he says "we should demand an MRI, with and without contrast, and repeat this demand every day until this subject cannot be ignored." And why not? The lady is only asking us to make her the president of the United States.

(Source: The Washington Times)

Fifteen years later, 9/11 commission director still sees dangers lurking

On September 11, 2001, Philip Zelikow was enjoying a gorgeous sunny day with a crisp, early-fall feel. Like so many of his fellow Americans, Zelikow's day would be shattered by televised reports of hijacked airliners slamming into the World Trade Center's Twin Towers and the Pentagon. Another crashed in Pennsylvania.

"I was as shocked and riveted as all Americans were," said Zelikow, who at the time directed the University of Virginia's Miller Center.

Zelikow was no stranger to issues related to terrorism. He knew before the attacks who Osama bin Laden was, and to a lesser degree, about the al-Qaeda terror network.

He began his career as a trial and appellate lawyer, was a diplomat overseas and in Washington, and then served on the National Security Council staff for president George H.W. Bush. Since leaving government service in 1991 he taught and directed research programs at Harvard University and UVA, but maintained his connections to Washington.

Soon enough, he would become deeply involved in the aftermath of 9/11 and in the country's efforts to learn from the experience. At the beginning of 2003, Zelikow became executive director of the 9/11 Commission, created by Congress as an independent, bipartisan panel to prepare a complete account of the circumstances surrounding the terrorist attacks, as well as provide recommendations to avoid future attacks.

The directorship, which lasted from 2003 to 2004, was one of two times Zelikow has taken public service leave from the University to return to Washington. From 2005 to 2007, he served as a deputy to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Zelikow has also advised the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's program in global development, was a member of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board under presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, and currently serves on the Defense Policy Board.

At UVA, he recently served as a dean leading the University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. He is the White Burkett Miller Professor of History.

Zelikow recently visited with UVA Today to recall his time leading the 9/11 Commission, and assessed how the U.S. response to global threats has evolved since. An edited version follows.

Why have a commission to review 9/11?

A. I think it is healthy for organizations and countries to conduct such after-action reports, especially if there has been a major national trauma. Not just an inspector general-type of report, wagging your finger, looking for the government misconduct – though there is that part of it – but more like "What really happened here? Why did this happen?" To understand it in a full way and then prepare a report that could be provided to the American people, as well as the recommendations as to how we could avoid this in the future.

What did you learn on the commission?

A. You learn details really matter. And a lot of pretty complicated, unglamorous, vital stuff can be discovered when you really look through how agencies work.

We learned that there is no single fix in the system. What you do to beat the terrorists is to create a system that has barrier after barrier after barrier, and every barrier might be overcome under some circumstances, but if there are six or eight of these barriers, they will start to think the odds of their getting through all of these doesn't look so good. They are willing to give up their



lives, but the essence of futility is that they might want to devote their lives to this grand act that is supposed to give their life meaning, but then get caught en route. That is the worst form of futility.

Hardening the whole system, layer after layer, turns out to be really important, even if none of the layers can be perfect. Americans have to work each of the layers and make them the best that you can without sacrificing their free society, because if we sacrifice our free society, that really is the terrorists' victory.

The report has been out 12 years. Were its recommendations implemented?

A. Most of the recommendations were implemented reasonably well. A lot of the biggest changes are in strategy and emphasis. Watch out when these groups get safe havens. Don't let wasps build wasps' nests. These are strategy points.

We changed the way agencies work together on the terrorist threat, creating the National Counterterrorism Center, which actually has worked really well.

One of the areas where Congress did not act on the recommendations is in reforming itself. So the way we manage appropriations for intelligence agencies is still broken. The way in which we do oversight for homeland security is still broken; it is fragmented and pulls these agencies in 20 different directions.

Can the security apparatus handle modern threats?

A. Fundamentally, we have a national security government that was built in the 1940s and 1950s, with some additions in the early 1960s. Eighty to 85 percent of these institutions, their DNA is World War II and the early Cold War.

We're now well into the 21st century. And 9/11 was a wake-up call saying the nature of conflict and security problems is really different than it was in the middle of the 20th century, but our institutions have not adapted. They are having trouble keeping up.

On the 10th anniversary of 9/11, in 2011, I thought that we had actually knocked the terrorism problem back to where it was still serious, but was no longer a catastrophic danger. But now the general terrorism problem is much more dangerous than it was in 2011.

By 2014, the Islamic State (the terrorist group) had gotten a substantial geographic safe haven. I believe it would like to carry out deadly attacks everywhere in the Western world. It has not yet organized attacks of genu-

inely catastrophic scale, though it has organized quite serious attacks in Europe and the Middle East and Africa. For all the serious attacks we have had in the United States, these have been done by unbalanced individuals, and not by an organization operating intercontinentally with groups of people.

But we are quite vulnerable to a number of attacks. And people in the business have been expecting some serious attacks to be carried out in the United States for years now. Which is why I support substantial efforts to destroy the terrorist group's safe haven in the Middle East and in Libya.

Americans are understandably reluctant to plunge into Middle Eastern wars. But another lesson we learned with 9/11 is if Americans don't take the necessary action on a more modest scale, they can face choices that are much worse. I think we should be doing more now in order to avoid having to do much more later.

So how do we do "more"?

A. You have to become partners with people in the region who are going to do most of the fighting.

There is no simple answer. Americans have to find constructive partners in this. Many Muslims really are trying to build a better world for their children. They are having a terrible struggle in their world for this next generation about how to reorganize their societies and cope with the modern world.

If we want to avoid radical surgery and avoid the bad experiences of the past, we have to get more involved now to head that off.

While the U.S. has been focused on the Middle East, Russia and China have been making various moves. How do they factor into U.S. concerns?

A. We have a return to real dangers of great power conflict. The situation has become much worse since 2014.

But the great power conflicts of the 21st century are not going to be a rerun of the Cold War movie. These are different kind of conflicts. The China of today is not like the Soviet Union of yesterday.

China is a country with a very uncertain future. And the Chinese leaders know it, which then creates a lot more play in: How could this turn out? Because they don't know how it's going to turn out. And it is a really interesting problem.

By liberal, I don't mean that word in the way that Americans tend to think "liberal" means the political left. In its classic meaning, which runs back to people like Thomas Jefferson, "liberal" means we actually believe in a politics of constant argument in which no one side controls it all. It is a world of pluralism, with lots of voices, lots of ethnic groups, different factions, all managed by a rule of law. It is a world in which people's future is determined by merit and not by heredity or party membership. It is a system where there is free enterprise rather than crony or state capitalism.

What all the foes of the United States have in common is that they all hate this idea of liberal government, in different ways for different reasons. Anti-liberalism is what unites them all. To them, liberalism is weak, divided and permissive. It is tolerant, and they hate its tolerance. And what they want is a world that is dominated by their version of the truth.

We should be proud that the United States of America stands for liberal ideals. We are in a quarrelsome political season, and sometimes it is a little harder than usual to remember what unites us. But that is it.

(Source: UVA Today)

Iran to reach distributed power generation capacity of 4000MW by 2021

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran plans to increase the capacity of power generation by its distributed power stations to 4000 megawatts (MW) by the end of its Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2021), according to Arash Kordi, the managing director of Iran's Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Management Company known as Tavanir.

The official put the country's current distributed power generation capacity at 800 MW, Iran's Young Journalists Club reported on Thursday.

Distributed generation is the production of electricity at or near the point of use, irrespective of size, fuel or technology.

Mentioning that electricity generation by distributed power stations is economically viable, Kordi said that Ministry of Energy will guarantee five-year purchase of the electricity generated by these stations.

Also referring to the support of his company to these stations, the official said that Tavanir has assigned an operator to expedite related administrative stages and also allocation of budget to this issue as well as benefitting from the facilities of National Development Fund are being followed up.



Iranian oil output stagnates for third month amid OPEC bargaining

Iran's steep oil output growth has stalled in the past three months, new data showed, suggesting Tehran might be struggling to fulfill its plans to raise production to new highs while demanding to be excluded from any OPEC deals on supply curbs.

Iran's oil output soared to 3.64 million barrels per day in June from an average of 2.84 million bpd in 2015 following the easing of Western sanctions on Tehran in January, adding to a global crude glut which has slashed oil prices.

But since June, output has stagnated and reached just 3.63 million bpd in August, according to fresh OPEC data based on secondary sources, which include consultants and industry media, and seen by Reuters. Iran also told OPEC it produced 3.63 million bpd in August, according to an OPEC source.

Iran became the main stumbling block to an initiative by OPEC and non-OPEC Russia earlier this year to freeze output globally. Tehran said it needed to first regain market share lost while it was under sanctions.

OPEC's largest producer Saudi Arabia insisted all nations should join and the freeze deal collapsed in April.

As Russia and Saudi Arabia are trying to revive the effort to prop up prices again, Iran has signaled it was more willing to cooperate when OPEC and non-OPEC producers meet in Algiers on Sept. 26-28. But it stopped short of saying it would join the freeze.

"This (production levels) is a million-dollar question," said a source familiar with Iranian thinking. "The shuttle diplomacy is going on to clear which level is considered an aim for Iran."

Big bargain

Iran has repeatedly said it needs to reach a level of output of at least 4 million bpd before it agrees to any deal, but one OPEC source said on Thursday the latest request from Iran was to set a target as high as 4.2-4.3 million bpd.

The difference between requested levels and current production would amount to over 0.5 million bpd or half a percent of global oil consumption.

And even if Iran were unable to produce it immediately, it would give Tehran an upper hand in dialogue with OPEC in the future - if and when Iran manages to bring onboard global oil companies to help it develop its massive oil fields.

Meanwhile, Persian Gulf producers led by Saudi Arabia are insisting that for any deal OPEC members should stick to OPEC's

secondary sources data to put everyone on a level playing field, the source added.

"If we could not do that and accept one system - which is to use secondary sources - it would complicate things further," the source said.

However, it might be a tough task as those figures show Iran has already returned to pre-sanctions output levels, pumping today as much as it was pumping back in late 2011.

That chimes with estimates from the International Energy Agency which believes Iran's production capacity is very close to what it is already producing.

For some in OPEC, the issue is settled. Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih said on Monday Iran's production has already reached pre-sanctions levels.

(Source: Reuters)

NEWS

Poland's Lotos may sign long-term oil supply deal with Iran

Polish refiner Lotos could sign a long-term oil deal with Iran after receiving its first supplies from Iran last month, the deputy head of Lotos said on Thursday.

Two tankers carrying 2 million barrels of oil from Iran arrived at the port of Gdansk on the Baltic Sea in mid-August.

"After the Iranian oil is refined, we will have detailed results of the analysis, which will confirm whether we will ultimately sign a long-term agreement with Iran on oil supplies to Gdansk," Marcin Jastrzebski told reporters.

Iran has been ramping up oil production and exports, aiming to regain market share since international sanctions over its nuclear program were lifted in January.

Poland imports most of its oil and gas from Russia, but wants to reduce that dependence. Lotos' bigger rival PKN Orlen signed an oil supply deal with Saudi Aramco earlier this year.

Lotos has said that 25 percent of the oil it refines comes from sources other than Russia.

(Source: Reuters)

Iran wants to sell more gas to Turkey

Mansour Moazami, Iran's deputy minister of Industry, Mine and Trade, said the country wanted to increase the amount of natural gas they consign to Turkey. Speaking on the natural gas trade between Turkey and Iran on Wednesday, Moazami said the talks about the issue between the two countries are only regarding price.

Noting that the pricing issue in the natural gas trade can be solved, Moazami said both parties can agree on it. "We want to increase the amount of natural gas we send to our neighbor, friend and fellow country Turkey," Moazami said, suggesting that this problem will be solved over negotiations and therefore the amount of natural gas Iran sends to Turkey will increase.

Stressing that Iran could not increase its oil production while sanctions were implemented, Moazami said Iran lost its market share during that time period and therefore the country wants to use all of its rights following the lifting of sanctions. "Our usual customers want to buy larger amounts of oil from us," Moazami said. "We have good customers, and we started holding talks in order to increase the oil export right after the sanctions were lifted."

(Source: Daily Sabah)

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The real cost of illegal immigration

By Peter Morici

Illegal immigration increases income inequality and corrupts our democracy.

No trained economist can deny that since the founding of the republic to the present day, immigrants — mostly legal but some not — have contributed mightily to our dynamic economy.

Farmers and skilled craftsmen from Europe helped settle the West and power the industrial revolution.

Today, scientists and engineers from abroad strengthen our universities, research laboratories and capacity to generate new knowledge with significant commercial potential.

However, when the nation is flooded with immigrants in skill categories without genuine shortages — shortages where, for example, employers simply cannot find enough qualified applicants or the wages they would have to pay are too high to keep their doors open — illegal immigration drives down wages and increases unemployment, especially for America's lowest-paid workers.

In some measure, U.S. immigration policies reflect these realities — offering speedier entry to immigrants who possess critical skills — but mostly those don't.

■ Genuine consideration

Family reunification visas give little genuine consideration to education and skill levels of applicants, but at the top of the list has been the failure of both the Bush and Obama administrations to enforce our borders and deport illegal immigrants.

Employers in labor-intensive manufacturing activities like meat packing and food processing, construction, hotels and restaurants simply would have to pay workers a lot more if the supply of low-skilled workers was limited to native-born Americans and legal immigrants. And it is doubtful many of those enterprises would go out of business if all employers were required to play by the rules and pay a bit more.

It is silly to deny that the influx of nearly 11 million illegal immigrants — mostly low-skilled adults and their children — strain resources in public schools and for other social services. And this most harshly affects the quality and availability of education and

assistance to the poorest Americans.

Unfortunately, these problems have been left to fester and have become an election year wedge issue along class and ethnic lines.

Americans with degrees from prestigious universities and high school graduates with advanced technical training are doing quite well in our new economy.

Just as they enjoy inexpensive imports they can purchase at Wal-Mart — and are disinclined to consider whether those are sent here thanks to illegal foreign government subsidies or manipulated currencies — they look the other way when the cleaning services, painting contractors and limousine companies arrive at their homes and businesses with inexpensive and often exploited immigrant labor to relieve them of chores or facilitate their work.

This is fundamentally unfair and exploitive, for example, to the nearly 7 million men between the ages of 25 and 54 unemployed and too discouraged to look for a job, and the millions more lower-skilled Americans stuck in jobs whose wages don't provide a decent living.



■ An abstract fact

It's an abstract fact that the economy can no longer get along without many of the illegal immigrants now firmly entrenched in important sectors of the economy, but tacit approval of lax immigration enforcement in our daily lives is no different than purchasing fenced or stolen goods. It decays our respect for the law and our compassion for less fortunate Americans.

Addressing the problem by granting amnesty — either explicitly through new leg-

islation or simply refusing to deport illegal immigrants — has become so appealing because a growing number of voters trace their heritage to the same Latin American and Asian counties that send us most illegal immigrants. They often have relatives and close acquaintances who live in fear of deportation.

Hillary Clinton's strategy is simple. By promising some form of amnesty either by creating opportunities for illegal immigrants to gain legal status or through permanent, blanket non-enforcement of U.S. deportation laws — she calculates she will gain enough votes among Hispanics, Asians and prosperous white Americans who prefer to turn a blind eye to the plight of less fortunate Americans to lock up the election.

Donald Trump's disturbing rhetoric about immigrants and making Mexico pay for a wall along our southern border notwithstanding, his positions that we strictly enforce our borders and not grant legal status to illegal immigrants already here is really a voice for common fairness.

(Source: The Washington Times)

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What your blood type says about you

Science and Japanese tradition suggest that your blood type can reveal much about your personality and your health.

By Melissa Breye

Blood is blood, right? Well, yes and no. Human blood is made of the same basic elements, but within that realm there are distinctions that account for four different blood types (further distinguished by negative and positive). What makes the four types of blood groups different is their antigens — the immune defense systems — on the surface of the red blood cells.

In 1930, a Japanese professor by the name of Tokeji Furukawa published a paper claiming that the individual blood types — A, B, AB and O — reflected the personalities of those who possessed them. Since then, blood type categorization, “ketsueki-gata,” has become firmly entrenched in Japanese culture. Much like astrological horoscopes, Japanese television and newspapers offer blood type horoscopes, and books that detail the link between blood type and personality are perpetual bestsellers. There are even matchmakers who specialize in finding future spouse based on blood types. But much like astrology, a scientific correlation between blood type and personality remains unproven.

That said, there’s been plenty of research detailing how blood types can reveal patterns of personal health — and that’s fascinating in and of itself. It’s thought that different blood types may protect us from different diseases; scientists have been finding links between blood types and illness since the middle of the 20th century. With that in mind, here’s what the science has to say about your blood type. And for fun, we’ve thrown in a little ketsueki-gata as well.

■ If you have blood type A
Type A only has A antigens on red cells and B antibodies in the plasma; if you have type A blood, you can donate red blood cells to types A and AB.

The makeup of a person’s antigens on red blood cells can determine how much of a certain hormone gets released. If you



have type A blood, you’re more likely to have higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol in your body, according to the National Institutes of Health. There are a number of health risks that are associated with type A blood, such as a 20 percent higher chance of developing stomach cancer compared to types O and B, and a 5 percent increased risk for heart disease compared to those with type O.

In addition, if you have type A blood, you are at higher risk for several types of cancer, such as some forms of pancreatic cancer and leukemia; according to the BBC, you are also more prone to smallpox infections and severe malaria. Ironically, those with type A also have been found to be less magnetic to mosquitoes — so there’s reason to rejoice!

According to ketsueki-gata, if you have blood type A, you have some great traits. You are earnest, creative, sensible, reserved, patient and responsible (even if you are also stubborn and tense).

■ If you have blood type B
If you have type B blood, you only have the B antigens on red cells and A antibodies in the plasma; you can donate

red blood cells to those with types B and AB blood.

Those with type B have an 11 percent increase in risk of heart disease over those with type O. A study at Harvard University found that women with AB or B blood have a raised risk of developing ovarian cancer, but if you have type B, it’s not all bad news. Those with type B blood have up to 50,000 times the number of strains of friendly bacteria than people with either type A or O blood, which means all kinds of good things.

And in terms of ketsueki-gata? You can be proud of your passion, active nature, creativity and strength. On the other hand, you’re also selfish, irresponsible, unforgiving and erratic.

■ If you have blood type AB
Those with AB blood have both A and B antigens on red cells, but neither A nor B antibody in the plasma. If you have AB positive blood, you are universal plasma donor.

People with type AB have been found to have a 23 percent increased risk of heart disease over those with type O blood. Having AB blood may double the

likelihood that a pregnant mother will suffer from the blood pressure condition called pre-eclampsia.

One intriguing blood type study published in the journal Neurology found that those with type AB blood were 82 percent more likely to have cognitive difficulties — specifically in areas like memory recall, language and attention — than people with other blood types. The researchers suspect that the clotting protein known as coagulation factor VIII is to blame. “Since factor VIII levels are closely linked to blood type, this may be one causal connection between blood type and cognitive impairment,” said study author Mary Cushman.

When it comes to ketsueki-gata, if you have type AB blood you’re cool, controlled, rational and adaptable ... and critical, indecisive, forgetful and irresponsible.

■ If you have blood type O
If you fall into the O blood group, you have neither A nor B antigens on your red cells, but both A and B antibodies in your plasma. O positive is the most common blood type; O negative is the universal donor type, meaning those with this blood type can donate red blood cells to anybody.

For those with type O, it’s a mixed bag. If you have type O, you are more likely to get ulcers — and believe it or not, to rupture your Achilles tendons. You are also at higher risk of cholera. The good news is that people with type O blood are at a lower risk for pancreatic cancer and face a lower risk of dying from malaria than people with other blood groups; that said, if you have type O, you are twice as likely to be a mosquito magnet as those with type A blood.

If you have type O blood, ketsueki-gata suggests that you are confident, self-determined, strong-willed and intuitive; unfortunately, you are also self-centered, cold, unpredictable and potentially a workaholic.

(Source: mnn.com)

DRINK ROSE WATER

Rose water



Used since the time of Cleopatra, rose water is thought to help with everything from stress to allergies. Besides the pretty name, drinking it has some surprising benefits:

- Hydrates the skin from the inside
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- A mood enhancer
- Relieves digestion troubles like bloating, upset tummy and constipation
- Helps heal colds, flu and sore throats
- Has a bronchodilator effect and helps with respiratory illness
- Calms nerves when feeling frazzled
- Relieves fluid retention and inflammation
- Gets rid of acne, dermatitis and eczema
- Good for hair by stabilizing the hair pH balance
- A great cleanser aids in removing oil and dirt accumulated in clogged pores
- Helps reduce the redness of irritated skin
- Good for cooking

NEWS

Second Intl. Conference on Epilepsy wraps up in Mashhad

TIMEDesk **MEDICINE TEHRAN** — The 2nd International Conference on Epilepsy ended on Friday in Razavi Hospital in Mashhad, eastern Iran, in a push to share the latest diagnostic and therapeutic findings on the disease.

Among the objectives of the event were to exchange the latest findings in the diagnosis and treatment of epilepsy, offer training and diagnostic workshops as well as assess the physical and psychological needs of patients with epilepsy along with their families, according to IRNA.

In the three-day conference, which commenced on September 7, around 700 national and international specialists from Germany, the Netherlands, and Canada, to name a few, were present.

Ways to prevent college weight gain

Although most first-year college students don’t gain the “freshman 15,” research does show that almost two-thirds pack on some pounds—typically about 7.5 pounds. And those numbers, like student loan debt, grow over the four years of college: On average men add on about 13 pounds; women, about 9 pounds.

Use these tips to help keep the pounds off

■ Eat breakfast
It’s important to eat three meals a day, especially since people who skip breakfast are at increased risk for being overweight, says Joan Salge Blake, R.D., spokeswoman for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and clinical associate professor at Boston University. If you don’t like eating breakfast in the dining hall, stock a small refrigerator in your dorm room with skim milk or low-fat yogurt to put over a quick bowl of whole grain cereal (bonus: add in some blueberries or bananas) before class in the morning.

■ Avoid sugary drinks
Energy drinks might keep you awake in your morning classes, but soda, energy drinks, and sports drinks account for more than a third of the added sugars many of us consume each day—and they cause you to crash. If you opt for water instead. Too boring? Add a slice of lemon or cucumber from the salad bar.

■ Don’t overdo it at the buffet
Resist the urge to pile on everything as you go down the buffet line. Instead, fill at least half your plate with vegetables and fruit and use the My Plate icon from the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a guide, Blake says. Can’t resist the pizza? Top it with vegetables and eat a salad with it. Better yet, Blake recommends starting with a salad and vegetable soup when you get into the dining hall and then getting up a second time for your next course—if you’re still hungry.

■ Exercise
After your classes are over, squeeze in some exercise by taking a brisk walk around campus, signing up for a gym class for credit like tennis, or getting involved with intramural sports like broom ball or Ultimate Frisbee.

Skip the unhealthy snacks
When it’s late at night and you get hungry, you might have the urge to eat a quick snack—but make sure it’s a healthy one. Campuses these days are filled with small shops where you can load up on unhealthy snacks. Instead, heat up a 100-calorie bag of popcorn in your microwave or a community microwave in a common area. “It’s a neat, efficient, yummy way to get whole grains,” Blake says. For quick snacks in-between meals, skip the instant mac-and-cheese and potato chips, and instead pick up low fat string cheese, chopped vegetables, and dips like hummus and salsa. (The snack suggestions also apply to late-night munching!)

(Source: consumerreports.org)

What to eat before and after a workout

To maintain your energy without overdoing the calories, here’s what to put on the menu

By Sari Harrar

Feeling wiped out or starving after a trip to the gym or a jog in the park? Start by taking a closer look at what you eat and drink beforehand, suggests sports nutrition expert Kelly Pritchett, Ph.D., R.D., an assistant professor in Nutrition and Exercise Science at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, Washington. Healthy eating and exercise go hand in hand, and it’s important to make the right food choices both before and after.

So, for healthy eating and exercise, what should you have, and when? “A lot of people assume they have to eat like Michael Phelps and for most of us, that’s not true,” says Leslie Bonci, R.D., C.S.S.B., owner of Active Eating Advice, which offers nutritional counseling to both professional athletes and regular folks. “But if you’re going to be exercising fairly vigorously for about an hour, and you haven’t eaten for about four hours, don’t do it on an empty stomach. And you want a little something post exercise too.”

■ Before a workout
Contrary to what you may have heard, it’s fine to have your breakfast, lunch, or dinner in the hour or two before your workout, though some people find that a large meal can cause digestive upset during physical activity.

Which is why a snack that combines fiber-rich carbs and protein 30 to 60 minutes ahead of a workout is your best bet. Keep it small, between 150 and 200 calories. “There’s no reason for 400 calories of anything before exercise,” says Bonci.

Your snack choice should depend on the kind of exercise you’re planning to do. For strength-training, for example, a bit of protein—six ounces of low-fat Greek

yogurt, a 100-calorie package of almonds, or a piece of low-fat string cheese—is sufficient to fuel you through a 30 to 45-minute class or routine.

If cardio activity is on your workout menu, for healthy eating and exercise, complex carbs are an ideal energy source. Good options for an hour of brisk walking or cycling include a small box of raisins, which contains about two tablespoons; a small banana; or one slice of bread with a very thin spread of peanut butter. “These are small, won’t upset you’re stomach if you’re jostling it up and down as you do in aerobics, and aren’t calorie hogs either,” says Bonci. If you prefer a protein bar, limit yourself to half a bar—with a max of 150 calories. Save the rest of the bar for afterward.

And if even these small amounts of food bother your stomach during a workout, consider a pre-exercise liquid snack like a low-fat smoothie (eight ounces at most) or a glass of milk. These are usually easier to digest and leave the stomach faster than solid food.

■ After a workout
You may have read that a combination of protein and carbs soon after a workout has special benefits for building muscle and replacing fuel stores inside muscle cells. But for the average exerciser, says Pritchett, “As long as you’re fueling well throughout the day and getting adequate protein throughout the day, the timing of protein intake (for building stronger muscles) is not crucial,” she says. And only athletes who work out twice a day need to focus on protein- and carb-heavy “recovery foods” such as protein shakes.

But it’s still smart for recreational exercisers to nibble on an appetizer-sized snack within an hour after a workout session. “It helps curb your appetite so you’re



not ravenous a couple of hours later,” says Bonci. Such snacks also launch a recovery process—the replenishing of carbohydrate (glycogen) stores and rebuilding muscle that can break down during most kinds of exercise (the exception is strength-training, which builds muscle).

For healthy eating and exercise, a small amount of protein, like a tablespoon of nut butter spread on apple slices, makes a good after-exercise nosh—the apple’s fiber helps to fill you up and nut butters provide satiating proteins and healthy fats. Other good options: a 10-ounce bottle of low-fat flavored milk will help satisfy hunger and quench thirst. And if you prefer something plant-based, try a 100-calorie container of hummus with a few whole grain crackers.

If you’re trying to cut calories, and you’re a lunch-time exerciser, you can also eat half of your midday meal before you hit the gym and save the rest for afterward. This way, you’re not adding any additional calories to your day.

(Source: consumerreports.org)

What causes bedwetting?

While bedwetting can be a symptom of an underlying disease, a large majority of children who wet the bed have no underlying sickness that explains their bedwetting. In fact, an underlying condition is identified in only about 1% of children who routinely wet the bed.

That does not mean that the child who wets the bed can control it or is doing it on purpose. Children who wet are not lazy, willful, or disobedient. Bedwetting is most often a developmental issue.

■ Types of bedwetting
There are 2 types of bedwetting: primary and secondary. Primary means bedwetting that has been ongoing since early childhood without a break. A child with primary bedwetting has never been dry at night for any significant length of time. Secondary bedwetting is bedwetting that

starts up after the child has been dry at night for a significant period of time, at least 6 months.

■ What causes primary bedwetting?
The cause is likely due to one or a combination of the following:

The child cannot yet hold urine for the entire night.

The child does not waken when his or her bladder is full.

The child produces a large amount of urine during the evening and night hours.

The child has poor daytime toilet habits. Many children habitually ignore the urge to urinate and put off urinating as long as they possibly can. Parents usually are familiar with the leg crossing, face straining, squirming, squatting, and groin holding that children use to hold back urine.

■ What causes secondary bedwetting?

Urinary tract infection: The resulting bladder irritation can cause pain or irritation with urination, a stronger urge to urinate (urgency), and frequent urination (frequency). Urinary tract infections in children may indicate another problem, such as an anatomical abnormality.

Diabetes: People with diabetes have a high level of sugar in their blood. The body increases urine output to try to get rid of the sugar. Having to urinate frequently is a common symptom of diabetes.

Structural or anatomical abnormality: An abnormality in the organs, muscles, or nerves involved in urination can cause incontinence or other urinary problems that could show up as bedwetting.

Neurological problems: Abnormalities

in the nervous system, or injury or disease of the nervous system, can upset the delicate neurological balance that controls urination.

Emotional problems: A stressful home life, as in a home where the parents are in conflict, sometimes causes children to wet the bed. Major changes, such as starting school, a new baby, or moving to a new home, are other stresses that can also cause bedwetting. Children who are being physically or sexually abused sometimes begin bedwetting.

■ Is bedwetting inherited?
Bedwetting does tend to run in families. Many children who wet the bed have a parent who did too. Most of these children stop bedwetting on their own at about the same age their parent did.

(Source: webmd.com)

By Marjohn Sheikhi

“It is deeply saddening to be marking a whole year of violence in Yemen. A country whose people were already facing great deprivation and hunger, and who have had to deal since last March with the added horror of war, bombing, shelling; losing their homes and loved ones,” this is what Stephen O’Brien, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, said in his statement on Yemen on 24 March 2016. O’Brien was appointed by Ban Ki-Moon as the UN humanitarian chief on 9 March, 2015; 17 days later, Yemen came under heavy airstrikes by Saudi Arabia’s bombing campaign, which is backed by the United States and includes eight other Arab countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Qatar, Sudan, and United Arab Emirates.

Saudi Arabia was much aggrieved after Yemen’s Houthi Ansarullah movement took state matters into their own hands and forced the U.S. and Saudi-backed puppet-president Abde Rabbo Mansour Hadi to resign and escape the country. Perhaps afraid of the spread of revolutionary ideologies to their own despotic regimes, and under the pretext of defending the ‘legitimate government of Yemen’, Saudi Arabia and its Persian Gulf Arab states formed a coalition, without so much as a UN mandate, to restore Hadi – who had already lost his legitimacy for fleeing and being sought as a fugitive from justice – to power; a move that soon proved to be impossible as more and more people in Yemen, even those who did not side with the Houthis, started to reject Hadi as legitimate ruler, as he was the one who breached the sovereignty of the country by allowing external intervention and brought the country to the brink of disintegration and destruction. But none of these have deterred Saudi Arabia from pursuing its bombing campaign in Yemen. And the reports by Human Rights organizations across the world on the war crimes committed by the Saudi coalition, including child killing, attacks on hospitals and schools, and destruction of the country’s infrastructures, have not managed to rally the world, particularly the Western side, against Saudi’s unjustifiable aggression. Why is that?

Western media’s silence on Yemen’s crisis

“In just five months, the country is crumbling into a ‘Syria-level crisis,’” said the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) about the fast deteriorating state of Yemen. Yet, not much has been covered by Western media outlets, not to the scope of the coverage of the Syrian war, which makes one wonder whether the international community is still unconvinced about the catastrophic scale of this humanitarian tragedy, or whether they are reluctant to report on atrocities that would expose their respective countries’ complicity or undermine their false narratives about the crisis.

There is no questioning the powerful role of mass media in construction of public opinion and social change, and amid this, key opinion leaders have been created, on which many

UN Chief removes Saudi-led coalition from the blacklist of child killers under ‘undue’ financial pressure

people around the world rely to get their facts. When the body of three-year-old Syrian Aylan Kurdi washed up on a Turkish beach a year ago, it was the social media that managed to draw the world’s attention to the dire and perilous situation of Syrian refugees, galvanize public opinion, and by creating widespread sympathy for the humanitarian crisis, they managed to put pressure on European governments to be more accepting of the immigrants. By all accounts, the same trend was expected in regard to Yemen’s crisis, with its staggering death toll of at least 4500 civilians and 6,711 others wounded, according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the World Food Program also announced that Yemen is on the brink of cataclysmic famine, with over 50 percent of the 24 million population at immediate risk. Yet, there is a deafening silence from Western media outlets, which could have been a tremendous help to force the Saudi-led coalition to abandon its campaign under international pressure and thus, alleviate the sufferings of the Yemenis, but instead, they decided to become complicit in the U.S.-sponsored, Saudi-led nightmare that has been going on for one whole year and six months, with no immediate prospect of peace.

This reminds me of Iran’s nuclear program and the media hype around it, that aimed to distort facts and disturb the atmosphere of the negotiations. The hysterical media spin about Iran’s peaceful nuclear program and defense capabilities still continues, even months after the world powers reached a deal with Iran and admitted that a nuclear Iran had been a truly manufactured crisis. Western media outlets went into a frenzy for covering the delivery of Russian-made S-300 missile defense system, which are strictly for defense purposes, and threw a fit over Iran’s missile tests. Yet, they continue to ignore Washington and London’s

Media blackout on Saudi invasion of Yemen and UN’s shouts into an empty room



arms deals to Saudi Arabia, worth billions of dollars and used to slaughter innocent civilians. They are also very adamant in giving copious coverage of the Syrian crisis, where the U.S., UK and France are pushing for a regime change for strategic reasons, but Yemen still remains a muted case, because the Western media are reluctant to expose the complicity of the U.S. and UK in the deaths of thousands of people in Yemen, and to prevent the flow of Saudis’ dollars that funnel through the Western banks.

UN blacklists Saudi-led coalition for killing children in Yemen, later removes it under pressure

The Human Rights Watch in its reporting on violations by the Saudi-Led Coalition in Yemen, documented indiscriminate or disproportionate Saudi-led airstrikes that killed and maimed children in Yemen. Six such unlawful coalition attacks in early 2016 killed twelve children. In another airstrike, a bomb dropped by coalition aircraft on the Mastaba market in March 2016 may have killed 10 Houthi fighters but also killed 97 civilians, including 25 children. The report cites other attacks that killed more civilians than fighters, and among the civilians killed in airstrikes there have been at least 10 children. There is no denying the evidence, the astonishing bulk of which finally forced the UN Chief Ban Ki-Moon to publish a report on June 3 covering the period from January to December 2015, which documented the beginning of air strikes by the U.S.-backed, Saudi-led coalition in Yemen on 26 March 2015. According to the report, intensive aerial bombardment took a devastating toll on the civilian population and ‘grave violations against children increased dramatically as a result of the escalating conflict.’ The report listed the Saudi Arabia-led coalition for killing and maiming and attacks on schools and hospitals, maintaining that 60 per cent of child casualties (death of 510 children and 667 more injuries) were attributed to Saudi Arabia.

But the UN soon announced the removal of Saudi-led coalition from the child’s rights blacklist, after giving in to political manipulation by the Riyadh regime which threatened the international organization with de-funding several UN programs. Ban said he removed Saudi Arabia from the report under ‘undue’ financial pressure, adding the decision was ‘one of the most painful and difficult’ he has had to make as Secretary General. The decision drew a lot of heated criticism and condemnation from human rights groups, with Amnesty International censuring the United Nations “after it shamefully caved in to pressure to remove the Saudi Arabia-led military coalition from the UN’s list of states and armed groups that violate children’s rights in conflict.” Ban stressed that the omission was ‘temporary’ until further investigations were conducted, but Saudi diplomats to the UN were quick to describe the change as an ‘irreversible’ moral victory. Almost four months have passed since then, the UN still claims that it needs to conduct more investigations, all the while Yemen continues to be bombarded by Saudi airstrikes where civilians, including children, are not

UN humanitarian chief in Tehran: “UN is reaching about 5 million of the 21 million people in Yemen with life-saving services.”

spared, access to medical treatment, food and water is compromised, and the Western media chooses to remain remorselessly silent on Yemen’s suffering.

U.S., UK complicit in Saudi’s bombing campaign in Yemen

In the latest atrocity in Yemen, Saudi Arabia used internationally-banned cluster bombs in its air assaults against the impoverished country, dropping them on several areas in the district of Baqem in the northern province of Sa’ada on 4 August.



O’Brien: “I have been shouting into an empty room about the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen.”

The United Nations’ human rights office has recently called for an independent international investigation of cases of human rights violations in the Saudi war on Yemen, confirming the use of banned cluster bombs by Saudi Arabia against Yemen’s residential areas. According to a report by Human Rights Watch, an airstrike used U.S.-supplied cluster munitions in a December 12, 2015 attack on the Yemeni port town of Hodaïda, injuring a woman and two children in their homes. In May 2016, the U.S. placed a hold on transfers of cluster munitions to Saudi Arabia, but the Saudis are still in possession of significant amounts of cluster munitions, including some manufactured by

Britain, and the civilians’ lives continue to be endangered by the coalition attacks that are a blatant violation of human rights and international laws. Meanwhile, the U.S. continues to refuse joining the 119 countries in banning cluster bombs, having the audacity to defend them as having ‘demonstrated military utility [and] their elimination from U.S. stockpiles would put the lives of its soldiers and those of its coalition partners at risk.’

Right behind the U.S. in arms dealers’ circle, is the United Kingdom, which, according to a recent report published by the Independent on Sep. 5, has sold a full two-thirds of its weapons since 2010 to Middle Eastern countries. Meanwhile, statistics collated by UK Trade and Investment, a government body that promotes British exports abroad, show the UK has sold more arms than Russia, China, or France on average over the last 10 years.

Despite urgent calls on the British government to stop the sales of weapons to repressive, invasive regimes such as Saudi Arabia, British Foreign secretary Boris Johnson in a statement on Sep. 5 defended UK arms sales to Riyadh, saying the Saudi-led bombing campaign in Yemen is not “in clear breach” of international humanitarian law. The Government also said that it has not seen evidence of Saudi war crimes. Perhaps someone needs to refer British officials to the reports of Human Rights Watch on Saudi atrocities in Yemen?

But as Andrew Smith of Campaign Against Arms Trade once told The Independent, Saudi Arabia and other Arab regimes “aren’t just buying weapons, they’re also buying political support and legitimacy. How likely is the UK to act against human rights violations in these countries when it is also profiting from them?”

The world needs to know what is happening in Yemen

The UN humanitarian chief’s presence at a press conference on Sep. 5 in Tehran provided the perfect opportunity to draw the attention of the media, and subsequently the general public around the world, to the pressing matter of Yemen’s crisis and the Yemenis’ growing humanitarian needs.

Asking him about Iran and the UN’s cooperation in regard to Yemen, Mr. O’Brien referred to Saudi Arabia’s blockade of humanitarian aid delivery to Yemen – albeit, without a direct reference to Saudi Arabia, and said “I made it clear during my meetings with Iranian officials that looking back on the very unfortunate time when it was not possible for the humanitarian aid shipped to Yemen to reach those in need, there was a clear advantage in the Iranians delivering their help through the United Nations’ humanitarian response program, because that clearly shows that the motive and the intent of that humanitarian aid was not open to either misinterpretation or manipulation, because the UN humanitarian operations at all times act impartially.”

“That is a highly important and valuable character in everything that we do so that we cannot be accused of being partial in meeting those needs wherever they arise,” he added. “That is why we have asked Iran to send its humanitarian relief through the UN plan as this is

a way we can make sure that you are covered by that impartiality, since bilateral supply in a conflict inevitably draws wrong and unfavorable conclusions.”

Mr. O’Brien, in his address on 3 March 2016 to the UN Security Council, talked about the increasingly dire humanitarian situation in Yemen and highlighted the necessity of protecting the civilians, “millions of whom face relentless and often indiscriminate bombing and shelling of urban areas.” He presented a vehement argument that the war needed to stop, that “airstrikes and random shelling of civilian areas violate cardinal rules of international humanitarian law and constitute unlawful conduit of hostilities”, but the majority of the world, or at least that part of the world that contributes the most to the narratives of current developments, still chose to turn a blind eye to this humanitarian disaster unfolding in Yemen.

“I think you will find that no one would ever accuse me of not shouting about the humanitarian needs in Yemen,” O’Brien said during his press conference in Tehran. “I have often felt I have been shouting into an empty room, assessing the political views of both sides of a very nasty conflict, which has left 80 per cent of the Yemenis in some form of humanitarian need.”

“Of the 21 million people in Yemen who have some form of need, there are about 5 million that we are reaching with essential, life-saving services and we have managed to mobilize some funds,” he said. “I have been putting very strong UN leadership to make sure that the world knows how much we need that humanitarian relief in Yemen.”

The UN official welcomed the opportunity to talk about Yemen, as this would be further coverage of the humanitarian needs in the war-torn country, but he cautiously reminded that he tried not to get involved into politics while trying to mobilize as many humanitarian services as he could for the Yemenis.

“It is vital for my duty to observe impartiality, independent and neutrality in all humanitarian missions in the UN and across all other humanitarian partners and to make sure we identify the needs, and the means by which those needs can be met,” he stressed.

Due to this very same concept of impartiality, perhaps, and his reluctance to touch upon politics, the UN humanitarian chief refrains from pointing out the absurdity of the war that has been waged against Yemen under unjustifiable and selfish pretenses of Saudi Arabia. In fact, in the same address to the Security Council on 3 March, there is not even one single mention of Saudi Arabia as the country responsible for all the carnage that has been going on in Yemen for a year and a half. He mentions ‘Coalition’ three times, but does not make any reference to the countries responsible for the airstrikes, either directly or indirectly, and in a way, his omission falls in line with the purposeful silence of Western media outlets which are careful not to draw too much negative attention to

The UK has sold a full two-thirds of its weapons since 2010 to Middle Eastern countries.

the country that is supplying the U.S. and the UK with billions of dollars for arms deals; the same bloodstained dollar bills that managed to get Saudi Arabia off the UN blacklist of child killers.

“You will see from my public records my very firm presentations to the Security Council as well as the UN Secretary General Mr. Ban who made a pre-statement that further investigation was required in order to be clear whether there was a justification or not for the inclusion of any kind of allegations about the children’s deaths, which we take with the utmost seriousness,” O’Brien was once again careful not to even mention the name of Saudi Arabia against which those ‘allegations’ were leveled.

“The investigation is still ongoing, and we will come to see how that materializes,” he concluded. While we wait to see how the investigations of the UN would materialize, attacks on schools, hospitals and residential areas in Yemen continue. The country, already one of the poorest in the Middle East, has been dealt great damages to its infrastructures, and its economy is on the verge of collapse. A May 6 joint report by the World Bank, United Nations, Islamic Development Bank and European Union has estimated the damage costs in Yemen at almost \$7 billion and economic losses at over \$7.3 billion.

In the words of Mr. O’Brien himself, “humanitarian action can only temporarily alleviate human suffering. The people of Yemen want lasting peace and security now so that they can rebuild their lives and safely raise their families.” The war in Yemen has been going on far too long, and perhaps it is time the world took notice and did something definitive about it. The media owes it to the children of Yemen whose lives are constantly endangered by a war that should have never been.

These birds, found only in Hawaii, are about to go extinct because of climate change

A study in the journal Science Advances suggests that mosquito-borne diseases, including avian malaria, have helped cause rapid declines in nearly all the native bird species on the Hawaiian island of Kaua'i. The researchers suggest that rising temperatures have allowed mosquitoes to expand into the birds' high-elevation ranges, which were once too cool for them to tolerate — and as temperatures continue to heat up on the island, the situation will likely only worsen.

The study focuses on eight bird species native to Kaua'i, all of which are found only in the Hawaiian islands. Six of these species belong to a group of birds known as "honeycreepers" — a colorful and diverse group that has existed on the Hawaiian archipelago for millions of years. While there were once dozens of honeycreeper species found throughout the islands, more than half of them have gone extinct as a result of habitat degradation, invasive species and disease.

The other two species included in the study were a rare species of thrush and a type of bird known as a monarch flycatcher.

All of these species tend to be found at high elevations on the island, explained Eben Paxton, an avian ecologist with the U.S. Geological Survey's Pacific Island Ecosystems Research Center and the new study's lead author. This is typical of Hawaiian forest birds in general. The farther the birds go up the islands'



mountains and plateaus, the more protected they are from habitat destruction, invasive predators and non-native birds that might compete with them for resources at lower elevations.

■ **High elevation**
Higher elevations are also cooler, and

therefore less conducive to mosquitoes and the diseases they carry. Native Hawaiian birds — particularly the honeycreepers — tend to be highly susceptible to avian malaria, which arrived on the islands only in recent history, long after the birds had evolved there. It's believed that

While there were once dozens of honeycreeper species found throughout the islands, more than half of them have gone extinct as a result of habitat degradation, invasive species and disease.

mosquitoes were first carried to Hawaii sometime in the mid-1800s, and diseases like the malaria and avian pox began showing up afterward.

Conservationists believe that mosquito-borne diseases now pose a major threat to the honeycreepers' future. And the new study helps confirm those fears.

The researchers used survey data to assess changes in the birds' populations over the past three decades. They found that all of the honeycreeper species had experienced rapid declines throughout their ranges — by up to 94 percent at the edges of their ranges and up to 68 percent in the core areas. The flycatcher, on the other hand, exhibited mixed trends — decreasing around the outer parts of its range and increasing substantially toward the core areas of its territory. There was not enough data on the rare thrush to make an adequate assessment of its population changes.

While the researchers believe many factors are likely contributing to the birds' declines, the results make a good case for the idea that disease is one of the biggest culprits. Threats such as predators or competing bird species tend to be most pronounced around the peripheries of the native birds' ranges. But the honeycreepers exhibited marked declines throughout their ranges, not just at the edges.

(Source: The Washington Post)

Giraffe genetic study uncovers 4 distinct species of world's tallest mammal

Scientists had so far recognized only one giraffe species and up to 11 subspecies while the distinctness of each subspecies of the animal still remains unclear even after a century of research. But, according to what is claimed to be the most inclusive genetic analysis of the world's tallest mammal, there are actually four species of the animal, not just one.

As part of a new study, published in the journal Current Biology on Thursday, researchers examined the DNA evidence taken from skin biopsies of 190 giraffes collected from all across Africa. According to them, the genetic differences among giraffe species are as great as those between polar and brown bears.

"Our findings provide the most inclusive analysis of giraffe relationships to date and show that their genetic complexity has been underestimated, highlighting the need for greater conservation efforts for the world's tallest mammal," the researchers said in the study.

The genetic investigation of giraffe began when Julian Fennessy of Giraffe Conservation Foundation in Namibia approached Axel Janke, a geneticist at the Senckenberg Biodiversity and Climate Research Centre and Goethe University in Germany, about five years ago to ask for help with genetic testing of the animal. The goal was to figure out how similar the giraffes living in different parts of Africa were to each other, and to make greater conservation efforts for them.

■ **Genetic samples**

After looking at the genetic samples provided by Fennessy, Janke spotted significant differences between groups of giraffes that needed to be considered when devising conservation strategies. Further testing also revealed that they were in fact different giraffe species, and therefore they couldn't all



breed with one another.

The researchers said, based on genetic analysis, that there are four highly distinct groups of giraffe that apparently do not mate with each other. Therefore, they should be recognized as four distinct species, including southern giraffe (Giraffa giraffa), Masai giraffe (G. tippelskirchi), reticulated giraffe (G. reticulata) and northern giraffe (G. camelopardalis), which includes the Nubian giraffe (G. c. camelopardalis).

"With now four distinct species, the conservation status of each of these can be better defined and in turn added to the IUCN Red List," Fennessy said in a statement, referring to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, which recently submitted a proposed assessment of the giraffe on the IUCN Red List, taking into consideration the animal's rapid decline over the last 30 years.

Over the last three decades, giraffes are in dramatic decline across their range in Africa with their numbers dropping from more than 150,000 to fewer than 100,000.

"Now we know we have four distinct species, that makes it easier for conservation groups to convince African governments and other larger conservation groups to make a point that these giraffes need to be protected," Janke, who conducted the new research, told The Christian Science Monitor.

(Source: ibtimes.com)

An Indian scientist is on the verge of making genetically modified cotton

An Indian scientist whose team has developed a genetically modified (GM) mustard variety that is inching towards a possible commercial launch said he could soon hand to a state agency a GM cotton variety that can rival Monsanto's seeds.

Deepak Pental and his colleagues at the Delhi University worked on GM mustard for around a decade, and a government committee said on Monday it found the seeds to be safe for "food/feed and environment". Reuters reported the technical clearance last month for what could be the country's first GM food crop.

The "government has taken the right path and experts have looked at all the data," Pental told Reuters on Tuesday, acknowledging that public opposition to lab-altered food remains fierce. "Our scientists have the capability to do more, but you will have to strengthen research further, educate people."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's nationalist government, keen to cut the country's heavy annual food import bill, will soon decide on the commercial launch of the high-yielding mustard and plans to indigenously develop other GM food to reduce reliance on multinationals such as Monsanto.

■ **GM crops more productive**

The move has been opposed by activists and politicians amid fears GM food could compromise food safety and biodiversity. Some experts have also questioned claims that GM crops are more productive than normal varieties.

St. Louis, Missouri-based Monsanto dominates India's GM cotton market, but is embroiled in a high-stakes battle with the government which wants the company to cut the royalty it charges for its technology, apart from a proposal that will make the seed giant



share its technology with local firms.

Monsanto has even threatened to pull out, prompting Environment Minister Anil Madhav Dave to say that Indian scientists are capable of meeting the requirements of its farmers on their own.

New Delhi-based Pental said he was willing to help the government with that goal and would approach the state-run Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) to pass on a laboratory-tested GM cotton variety his team has developed over the past decade.

The variety is similar to Monsanto's Bt cotton but can be more resistant to pests, Pental said, adding he handed another GM cotton variety to ICAR last year for further research. No field trial has yet been done on either cotton strands.

This comes at a time when Monsanto has withdrawn an application to sell its next-generation cotton seeds protesting the Modi government's proposal to force it to share its technology with local seed companies, which has also worried other foreign firms such as Bayer, Dow, Dupont Pioneer and Syngenta.

Experts warn that even if India did develop a home-grown GM cotton variety in the next few years, it would struggle to sustain a program that needs to refresh seeds every decade or so.

(Source: Business Insider)

NEWS

Cassini probe discovers dunes and mountains on Titan

Among other things, the images revealed long straight dunes of what is thought to be hydrocarbon sand. These dunes were seen circling the majority of Titan's equator. NASA scientists said studying the dunes can help them learn about winds, landscapes and the sands themselves.

"Dunes are dynamic features. They're deflected by obstacles along the downwind path, often making beautiful, undulating patterns," Jani Radebaugh, a Cassini radar team member from Brigham Young University, said in a news release.

The new Cassini images also showed a place previously dubbed the "Xanadu annex" by the Cassini radar team. Cassini's radar had not taken pictures of this region, but previous measurements by the spacecraft indicated the terrain might be quite comparable to the large area on Titan named Xanadu, the first feature to be identified on Titan. The Hubble Space Telescope captured images of Xanadu's outline in 1994. The annex region went undetected until the Cassini mission.

"This 'annex' looks quite similar to Xanadu using our radar, but there seems to be something different about the surface there that masks this similarity when observing at other wavelengths, as with Hubble," said Mike Janssen, a member of the Cassini radar team. "It's an interesting puzzle."

Xanadu and its annex continue to be a bit of a mystery to NASA researchers. In other places on Titan, mountainous surfaces appear in small, separated patches, but Xanadu includes a large mountainous area. Scientists have proposed a range of theories on how it might have been created.

"These mountainous areas appear to be the oldest terrains on Titan, probably remnants of the icy crust before it was covered by organic sediments from the atmosphere," said Rosaly Lopes, a Cassini radar team member.

(Source: RedOrbit)

A tenth of the world's wilderness lost since the 1990s

Researchers reporting in the journal Current Biology show catastrophic declines in wilderness areas around the world over the last 20 years. They demonstrate alarming losses comprising a tenth of global wilderness since the 1990s -- an area twice the size of Alaska and half the size of the Amazon. The Amazon and Central Africa have been hardest hit.

The findings underscore an immediate need for international policies to recognize the value of wilderness areas and to address the unprecedented threats they face, the researchers say.

"Globally important wilderness areas -- despite being strongholds for endangered biodiversity, for buffering and regulating local climates, and for supporting many of the world's most politically and economically marginalized communities -- are completely ignored in environmental policy," says Dr. James Watson of the University of Queensland in Australia and the Wildlife Conservation Society in New York. "Without any policies to protect these areas, they are falling victim to widespread development. We probably have one to two decades to turn this around. International policy mechanisms must recognize the actions needed to maintain wilderness areas before it is too late. We probably have one to two decades to turn this around."

Watson says much policy attention has been paid to the loss of species, but comparatively little was known about larger-scale losses of entire ecosystems, especially wilderness areas which tend to be relatively understudied. To fill that gap, the researchers mapped wilderness areas around the globe, with "wilderness" being defined as biologically and ecologically intact landscapes free of any significant human disturbance. The researchers then compared their current map of wilderness to one produced by the same methods in the early 1990s.

This comparison showed that a total of 30.1 million km² (around 20 percent of the world's land area) now remains as wilderness, with the majority being located in North America, North Asia, North Africa, and the Australian continent.

(Source: EurekAlert)

Has humans' impact brought about a new era for the Earth?

A group of experts tasked with considering the question of whether we have officially entered the Anthropocene -- the geological age characterized by humans' influence on the planet -- has delivered its answer: yes.

The British-led Working Group on the Anthropocene (WGA) told a geology conference in Cape Town that, in its considered opinion, the Anthropocene epoch began in 1950 -- the start of the era of nuclear bomb tests, disposable plastics and the human population boom.

The Anthropocene has fast become an academic buzzword and has achieved a degree of public visibility in recent years. But the more the term is used, the more confusion reigns, at least for those not versed in the niceties of the underpinning science. Roughly translated, the Anthropocene means the "age of humans". Geologists examine layers of rock called "strata", which tell a story of changes to the functioning of Earth's surface and near-surface processes, be these oceanic, biological, terrestrial, riverine, atmospheric, tectonic or chemical.

(CNN.com)

Satellites predict which of the world's tropical forests are in trouble

Satellites are great for communication, weather forecasting, and a number of other activities. Now there's one application we haven't previously come across — building up heat maps of the world's tropical forests. When combined with some neat statistical tools, they can predict regions that might be in trouble.

That's the goal of a research project at Wageningen University in the Netherlands. It was recently described in a paper for the journal Nature Climate Change, entitled "Remotely sensed resilience of tropical forests."

"We've got large amounts of satellites monitoring these forests, and we discovered that we were able to use time series information from them to look at the dynamics and resilience of the forest," lead author Professor Jan Verbesselt told Digital Trends. "We found out that they're slowing down due to pressures like droughts.

That is a new indicator which can be derived from this data, and used for predicting where fragile forest are — so people can do something about it."

The work involved analyzing tree cover to see how it changed in response to climatic changes. In particular, alterations in greenness, and the speed at which these changes take place, is an indicator of a forest's ability to recover from stress. The statistical model based on the satellite images also proved that there is a "tipping point" at which forests collapse after a particularly dry period.

■ **Immediate conclusions**

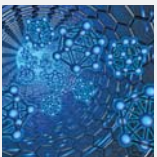
"We haven't drawn immediate conclusions about why these droughts are increasing," Verbesselt said. "We live in a changing world. What we're doing is studying those changes and how they impact our tropical forests."

Looking forward, Verbesselt told us that he hopes the model his team has developed can be used to help people intervene to save forests before they reach the point of no return. "There is more satellite data available than ever," he said. "For instance, the European Space Agency recently launched three new satellites, called Sentinel 1, 2, and 3. This massive amount of high-quality data is open access and available for free. The models we developed can be used on that satellite data to find out in detail what is happening in our ecosystem."

"There are various dynamic systems that can be monitored from space, like lakes, savanna, grasses," he concluded. "This is a predictive tool people from all over the world could use (to help monitor a variety of natural systems)."

(Source: Digital Trends)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Iran exports nano-products worth \$35m to 17 countries

TEHRAN — Iran's nano-products export to 17 countries worldwide was valued at \$35 million last year (March 2015-March 2016), the secretary for Iran Nanotechnology Initiative Council affiliated with the vice-presidency for science and technology, said on Thursday.

"Not only has Iran excelled at the nanoscience, but also at developing the technology and its application into new and various products. In that regard, Iran is among the top countries in nanoscience worldwide," Sa'eed Sarkar told IRNA news agency.

No single country can compete with Iran in the field of nanotechnology in the Middle East, Sarkar said, adding, however, developed countries may look down on Iran in the field of new technologies and considering it a developing country.

"What we are seeking is to change this mentality towards Iran," he noted.

Iran has made some improvements in developing nano-products in textile industry, detergent industry, agriculture and construction, Sarkar noted.



Iranian scientists make herbal ointment healing bed sore, infected wounds

TEHRAN — Scientists at an Iranian knowledge-based company succeeded in producing an herbal ointment which is useful in treatment of bedsores and infected wounds, IRNA news agency reported.

The ointment proved to be effective in healing chronic wounds, burns caused by disposable diapers in babies, and preventing new blisters from forming in addition to soothing pain and inflammation.

The ointment has antiseptic, antibacterial, anti-inflammatory and wound healing properties, said an official with the company.

Abukhalsa (a kind of herb) root extract, beeswax, and olive oil are of the ointment ingredients which are suitable for treating sunburns and various wounds such as bedsores and diabetes wounds, Farshad Akbarnejad said.

The ointment's efficacy has been ensured through clinical trials, Akbarnejad noted.

LEARN ENGLISH

Using Electronics While Traveling

Justin: Are you nearly **packed**?

Marsha: Almost. Let's see, I have **wall chargers** for my cell phone and other **devices**, extra **memory cards** for my camera, and **noise-canceling headphones** for the airplane.

Justin: Oh, yeah, I forgot to pack my headphones. I'd better **dig them out** right now.

Marsha: I've also packed **portable** batteries for our devices in case we **run out of** power **en route**. I've also brought a **power strip** to use in our hotel room.

Justin: Why?

Marsha: Hotel rooms never have enough **outlets**.

Justin: That's true. I hadn't thought of that. Maybe I should bring one, too. Between the two of us, we have a lot of **gadgets to plug in**.

Marsha: And I'm bringing some **cables** in case we want to **hook up** our devices to the TV.

Justin: Don't you think that's **overkill**?

Marsha: Not at all. How else will we entertain ourselves for an entire week?

(Source: eslpod.com)

Words & phrases

packed: if you are packed, you have put everything you need into cases ready to go somewhere

wall charger: something you plug into the wall usually with small whole that allows you to provide power to a cellphone or some other electronic devices' they are called wall chargers because you plug them into outlets which are on the wall

device: a machine or tool that does a special job; gadget

memory card: a piece of electronic equipment for storing data (=information), used in computers, digital cameras, mobile phones etc.

noise-cancelling headphone: headphones that reduce unwanted ambient sounds using active noise control

dig something out: to find something you have not seen for a long time, or that is not easy to find

portable: able to be carried or moved easily

run out of: to use all of something and not have any more left

en route: on the way

power strip: also known as an extension block, power board, power bar, or a plug board is a block of electrical sockets that attaches to the end of a flexible cable typically with a mains plug on the other end, allowing multiple electrical devices to be powered from a single electrical socket

outlet: a place on a wall where you can connect electrical equipment to the supply of electricity

gadget: a small, useful, and cleverly-designed machine or tool

plug in: to connect a piece of electrical equipment to the main supply of electricity, or to another piece of electrical equipment

cable: a plastic or rubber tube containing wires that carry telephone messages, electronic signals, television pictures etc.

hook up: to connect a piece of electronic equipment to another piece of equipment or to an electricity supply

overkill: more of something than is necessary or desirable

British Red Cross interested in fostering co-op with Iran

TEHRAN — The British Red Cross Emergency Response is keen on fostering cooperation in the fields of logistics, vaccination, and finance with the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), the British Red Cross Chief Executive, Mike Adamson, has said.

Adamson made the remarks during the visit he had with the chief of Iran's Rescue and Relief Organization, Nasser Charkhsaz, on Thursday, Mehr news agency reported.

Adamson additionally explained that visiting with various organizations affiliating with the IRCS would set the scene for further cooperation with the British Red Cross.

Mentioning IRCS humanitarian aids to the migrants, Adamson noted that "The British Red Cross provides migrants with emergency services such as first aids at the time of emergency alike."

"The British Red Cross is in close collaboration with 30 other national Red Crescent or Red Cross societies on disaster resilience



Mike Adamson (2nd R) and Nasser Charkhsaz (C)

750m illiterate adults, including 115m young people

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his message on International Literacy Day, 8 September 2016, while announcing that more than 750 million adults are illiterate, including 115 million young people called on governments and their partners to join forces for universal literacy.

The full text of his message reads:

This year, the world has embarked on implementing the ambitious and transformational 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With its 17 universal, integrated and interdependent Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda is an action plan for people, planet, partnership and peace.

Literacy stands at heart of the 2030 Agenda. It is a foundation for human rights, gender equality, and sustainable societies. It is essential to all our efforts to end extreme poverty and promote well-being for all people. That is why the Sustainable Development Goals aim for universal access to quality education and learning opportunities throughout people's lives.

One of the targets of Sustainable Development Goal

4 is to ensure that all young people achieve literacy and numeracy and that a substantial proportion of adults who lack these skills are given the opportunity to acquire them.

Fifty years ago, International Literacy Day was proclaimed to promote literacy as a tool to empower individuals, communities and societies. We have made significant progress over the past five decades, but the world is still very far from universal literacy. And today, with the world becoming increasingly digitized and information rich, new opportunities and challenges are emerging.

More than 750 million adults are illiterate, including 115 million young people. Two thirds are female. Some 250 million children of primary school age lack basic literacy skills and 124 million children and adolescents receive no schooling at all.

These obstacles to sustainable development can and must be overcome by developing and implementing the right policies, backed up by commitment and resources. We need to ensure that those out of school get access to quality learning opportunities, we need to improve the quality of schooling, and we need to pro-



mote adult education and learning.

On this International Literacy Day, I call on governments and their partners, including in the private sector, to join forces for universal literacy so we can translate the vision of the 2030 Agenda into reality and build peaceful, just, inclusive and sustainable societies.

(Source: UNIC)

IN FOCUS Tehran Times/ Iman Hamikhah



The fourth 'best grape cluster' national festival was held in Malayer, Hamedan province, on Thursday.



ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → چ

Third World Golden Adobe award slated for Oct. 31

The Third World Golden Adobe award ceremony for the best urban management projects worldwide will be held in Tehran on October 31 concurrent with the World Cities Day, IRIB reported.

The awards will be bestowed upon the urban managers and citizens who according to a jury are best at and most instrumental in executing key urban projects and sustainable urban growth, said an official with Tehran's Municipality. The award aims at improving urban life and encouraging international interactions in developing urban infrastructure which ultimately leads to transferring knowledge and information in implementing urban projects, Goshtasb Mozaffari said.

ENGLISH PROVERB

A monkey in silk is a monkey no less

■ **Explanation:** no matter how someone dresses, it's the same person underneath

■ **For example:** He was dressed like a gentleman. I thought he had changed but after a week I understood a monkey in silk is a monkey no less.

PHRASAL VERB

Be cut up

■ **Meaning:** very upset about something that has happened

■ **For example:** He was very cut up about Stephen dying.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Answer for something

■ **Explanation:** if someone has to answer for something, they have to accept responsibility for their actions

■ **For example:** He will have to answer for his dishonesty.

برگزاری سومین دوره جایزه جهانی خشت طلایی تهران ۱۰ آبان

به گزارش خبرنگار خبرگزاری صدا و سیما سومین دوره جایزه جهانی خشت طلایی برای بهترین طرح های مدیریت شهری در جهان ۱۰ آبان در تهران و همزمان با روز جهانی شهرها برگزار می شود.

یکی از مسوولین شهرداری پایتخت گفت: خشت طلایی تهران به مدیران شهری و شهروندانی که بر اساس ارزیابی هیات داوران بیشترین تاثیر گذاری را در اجرای پروژه های مهم و کلیدی شهری و توسعه پایدار شهری داشته اند، اهدا می شود.

گشتاسب مظفری گفت: جایزه خشت طلایی با هدف ارتقای کیفیت زندگی شهروندان، توسعه دامنه ارتباطات و تعاملات بین المللی در زمینه گسترش زیرساخت های شهری که در نهایت منجر به تبادل دانش و اطلاعات شهرها در اجرای پروژه های شهری می شود برگزار خواهد شد.

More than 400 additional United States troops have been deployed to Iraq in recent days as government forces together with volunteer fighters from allied Popular Mobilization Units (al-Hashd al-Sha'abi) are gearing up for a major offensive to retake the strategic northern city of Mosul from Takfiri Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) militants.

Colonel John Dorrian, a spokesman for the so-called U.S.-led coalition allegedly fighting ISIL terrorist group in Iraq and Syria, said that the number of American soldiers in Iraq has increased from about 4,000 a week ago to 4,460.

Dorrian said an estimated 3,000 to 4,500 ISIL terrorists are currently in Mosul, located some 400 kilometers (250 miles) north of the capital Baghdad, noting that it is hard to say how many of them are "hardcore" militants.

He, however, stopped short of providing information about the task that the American soldiers would undertake in Iraq.

Lieutenant General Stephen Townsend, the new commander of the U.S.-led coalition, told business-focused, English-language international daily The Wall Street Journal late on Wednesday that the operation to liberate Mosul from ISIL could start within the next month.

There are speculations that Iraqi security forces and their allies would push from the southern part of Mosul, while Kurdish Peshmerga forces would attack from the north in a multi-pronged operation.

Mike Pence says it's 'inarguable' that Putin is a stronger leader than Obama

Indiana Gov. Mike Pence said on Thursday that he agrees with Donald Trump's assertion that Russian President Vladimir Putin is a stronger leader than the United States President Barack Obama.

"I think it's inarguable that Vladimir Putin has been a stronger leader in his country than Barack Obama has been in this country," Pence said during an interview with CNN at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library on Thursday. "And that's going to change the day that Donald Trump becomes president of the United States of America."

Pence said Trump's bold statement is similar to some of those made by Reagan, who famously met with Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Pence clarified that Trump "doesn't particularly like" the way Putin, the Russian president, operates without the same checks and balances that exist in the United States.

Trump regularly praises Putin and has continued to do so while faced with continued criticism for seeming to embrace the Russian leader, a former KGB (Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti/Committee for State Security) intelligence officer whose administration has been accused of unfairly jailing and even killing political detractors and journalists. Trump's latest praise came on Wednesday night during an NBC candidate forum.

During the forum, Trump was asked what he would do to lessen tension between the United States and Russia. Trump responded that he expects to have a "very good relationship with many foreign leaders" and a "very, very good relationship with Putin," who he said could work with the United States to "knock the hell out of ISIS (Islamic

Over 400 new U.S. soldiers arrive in Iraq

3 new mass graves found in central Iraq



■ Mass graves

Meanwhile, Iraqi fighters from pro-government Popular Mobilization Units have found three mass graves containing the remains of over two dozen victims of the June 2014 massacre by ISIL terrorists at an air force camp.

Hussein al-Asadi, the Imam Battalion spokesman, said on Tuesday that his fellow fighters had found the graves inside former dictator Saddam Hussein's palace compound in Tikrit in the north-central

province of Salahuddin (Saladin Governorate), Arabic-language al-Sumaria satellite television network reported.

Asadi added that the mass graves contained the remains of more than 30 victims.

On June 12, 2014, ISIL terrorists killed around 1,700 Iraqi air force cadets after kidnapping them from Camp Speicher, a former U.S. base. There were reportedly around 4,000 unarmed cadets in the camp when it came under attack by ISIL militants.

Following the abductions, the attack-

ers took the victims to the complex of presidential palaces and killed them. The terrorists also threw some of the bodies into a river.

The massacre was filmed by ISIL and broadcast on social media.

An investigation committee later revealed that 57 members of Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party aided ISIL terrorists in the massacre.

Late last month, Iraqi judiciary officials hung 36 men convicted of involvement in the carnage.

■ Terror cell in Diyala

The Iraqi forces have foiled a terrorist bombing attack on a shrine in southern Baghdad and dismantled an ISIL terrorist cell in the country's eastern province of Diyala.

"Military intelligence forces managed to seize a booby-trapped vehicle that was prepared to target the visitors of Imam Muhamed al-Jawad (PBUH) shrine in Dawra area in southern Baghdad," Iraq's Joint Operations Command spokesman Yahia Rasoolonsaid.

The northern and western parts of Iraq have been plagued by gruesome violence ever since ISIL terrorists mounted an offensive there more than two years ago. The militants have been committing vicious crimes against all ethnic and religious communities in Iraq, including Shias, Sunnis, Kurds and Christians.

The Iraqi army and volunteer fighters from the Popular Mobilization Units have been engaged in joint operations to retake militant-held regions.

(Source: agencies)

EU seeks to soothe Turkey ties, but no breakthrough on visa deal

Two of the European Union's top officials sought to smooth fractious relations with Turkey on Friday, vowing deeper trade ties and continued cooperation on migration, but there was no immediate end to a deadlock over visa-free travel for Turks.

The visit by European Union Foreign Policy Chief Federica Mogherini and Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn comes almost two months after a failed coup which tested Turkey's relationship with the 28-member bloc it aspires to join.

Many Turks were incensed by what they saw as Europe's failure to show speedier solidarity over the July 15 putsch, in which more than 240 people died, accusing it of xenophobia and hostility to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

"I was, I think, the first in those dramatic hours to communicate publicly the need to strongly defend and support the democratically elected institutions," Mogherini told a joint news conference with Turkey's foreign and EU ministers, defending Brussels' reaction to the events.

Turkey has long aspired to join the EU, but has accused Europeans of blocking progress because of bias against the Muslim nation. European officials have said Turkey still falls short of EU demands on basic rights and freedoms.

Mogherini said the talks in Ankara had been "frank, open, respectful and constructive", touching on issues including deepening a customs union and supporting Turkey as it copes with an influx of some 3 million Syrian refugees.

She said both sides had agreed to "talk more to each other and a little bit less about each other".

One of the biggest obstacles in Turkey's relations with the EU is Ankara's refusal to recognize EU member Cyprus, the Mediterranean island divided for four decades between the Turkish-controlled north, recognized only by Ankara, and the Greek Cypriot south, which has international recognition.

"We see a window of more hope for this issue to be solved ... in the coming months," Mogherini said, adding both Turkey and the EU had a common interest in a solution.

But there appeared less hope of an immediate solution to the deadlock over a deal to grant Turks visa-free access to Europe by October. Brussels first wants Turkey to change its anti-terrorism law, which it deems too broad for European standards.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said a concrete roadmap needed to be agreed for the deal, but Hahn said the timing would be up to the Turks.

Turkey says its anti-terrorism law is needed to fight threats from the Islamic States in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group and Kurdish militants. The EU says the law has been used too broadly, pointing to the prosecution of journalists and academics.

Hahn also said that internal preparations for discussions on upgrading a customs union with Turkey should be finalized by the end of the year and that negotiations should start in 2017.

Turkey wants to upgrade its 20-year customs union with the EU to include agriculture and services. That could nearly double its trade with the bloc to \$300 billion and make it the EU's third-largest trading partner, officials have said.

(Source: Reuters)

NEWS

Mosul battle plans ready, could be concluded by year-end: Kurdish leader

Military plans to retake Mosul from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group, are ready and the northern Iraqi city might be recaptured before the end of the year, the president of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) said on Friday.



The army and Kurdish Peshmerga forces, backed by a United States-led coalition, will conduct the offensive but the role of pro-government militias has not been determined, Massoud Barzani said in an interview with France 24.

"There have been multiple meetings between leaders of the Peshmerga and the Iraqi army. They have finally agreed on the military plan and the role of each side," Barzani said, without providing details.

Barzani said the timing for launching the push on Mosul, 360 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, had not been determined, though Iraqi commanders have said it could begin as soon as late October.

Mosul, the largest city in ISIL's self-proclaimed caliphate, was taken by the terrorists in 2014 when Iraqi security forces dropped their weapons and fled.

Since then, peshmerga have entrenched in its eastern and northern outskirts while retrained Iraqi forces have advanced to Qayyara, 60 km south of the city, last month.

Mosul, a mosaic of diverse ethnic and sectarian communities, poses challenges to war-planners, including which forces will participate in the battle and how the city will be governed after.

Barzani said Shia Muslim volunteers and a Sunni militia run by former Mosul governor Atheel al-Nujaifi, which have pledged to take part in the offensive, had not yet been given a role.

"Regarding the Hashid Shaabi or the Hashid Watani, there must be an understanding between these forces and the residents of the Mosul area. Until now that does not exist," he said.

The People's Mobilization (al-Hashd al-Sha'abi), also known as the National Mobilization (al-Hashd al-Watani), and as the Popular Mobilization Forces/Units/Committee (PMF/PMU/PMC), is an Iraqi state-sponsored umbrella organization composed of some 40 militias, which are mainly Shia Muslim groups, but there are Sunni Muslim, Christian, and Yazidi groups as well. The People's Mobilization was formed for deployment against the ISIL.

Asked if the city could be retaken by the end of 2016, Barzani said: "It is possible, but the post-liberation period must be prepared for."

"It is very important for us to have certain guarantees that this tragedy will not be repeated in the future," he said. "So we must agree with Baghdad and with the local people as well, how can we ensure that what happened will not be repeated?"

(Source: Reuters)

U.S. air raid kills Syrian rebel commander, rebels say

A senior military commander and founding member of the Syrian rebel group Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, formerly known as the al-Nusra Front, has been killed by a United States air strike that hit a meeting of the group's leaders, rebels said.

Abu Hajer al-Homsi, whose real name was Abu Omar Saraqeb, was killed in a raid on a rural part of Aleppo province on Thursday, which was most likely carried out by a U.S. fighter jet, a rebel source told the Reuters news agency.

Another source told Reuters that the rebels were at a hideout in the village of Kafr Naha when the strike hit them.

The AFP news agency also reported Saraqeb's death, citing rebels.

Few other details emerged, but a photo of another top leader known as Abu Muslim al-Shami was circulated on social media showing him alive to refute reports he had also been killed.

The leader of the group, Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, was not believed to be at the meeting.

Since a U.S.-led coalition began launching raids on groups in Syria and Iraq in September 2014, bombing raids have frequently targeted al-Nusra Front figures in Syria, also resulting in the deaths of scores of civilians. But Thursday's attack marked the first time a key figure had been targeted since the group changed its name.

The al-Nusra Front announced in July that it was ending a relationship with al-Qaeda and changing its name to Jabhat Fatah al-Sham in an attempt to appeal to those Syrians who had misgivings about its links with al-Qaeda, and the presence of foreign fighters in its ranks.

The move was dismissed by Washington, which said it would continue to consider the group "terrorists".

The foreign backed militancy in Syria began as in March 2011.

More than 280,000 Syrians have been killed during the war, 4.8 million have fled the country, and 6.6 million have become internally displaced by the violence, according to the United Nations.

The UN special envoy to the country, Staffan de Mistura, has estimated that more than four million people may have been killed, but that is not an official figure.

(Source: agencies)

Trump, Clinton continue clash over national security

United States presidential nominees, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton continued their "commander-in-chief" debate on Thursday, the day after a nationally televised forum that featured a number of contested statements by the Republican nominee.

While Trump tweeted that "the reviews and polls from almost every one of my Commander-in-Chief presentation were great," Clinton and others challenged his comments about U.S. generals "reduced to rubble," discussion of a classified national security

briefing, and praise for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In a brief news conference en route to a speech in Charlotte, Clinton said her opponent "trash-talked generals," made inappropriate comments about officials who conducted national security briefings, and made "scary" comments suggesting that he preferred Putin to President Obama.

"Every Republican holding or seeking office in this country should be asked if they agree with Donald

Trump about these statements," Clinton told reporters while standing beside her campaign plane.

NBC News, which sponsored Wednesday night's "commander-in-chief" forum, listed "nine controversial statements" Trump made during a 24-minute interview. They included Trump's defense of a past tweet suggesting that sexual assault in the military is due to men and women serving together, and his long-standing claim that the U.S. should have seized oil reserves in Iraq and Libya.

(Source: USA TODAY)

Putin, Erdogan discuss Aleppo over phone

Calls for a ceasefire have risen following a chlorine gas attack in Aleppo which mainstream media antagonistic to Assad have tried to blame it on the Syrian government.

Damascus has denied the accusations, saying the charges are an attempt by militants to divert attention away from their defeats.

The use of chlorine gas by militants against rival militant groups has already been confirmed by independent groups. A chemical attack in a militant-held area and a concerted campaign then to blame it on the Syrian government is a familiar scenario.

Kerry tries again with Lavrov on Syria

Under the plan being discussed by Kerry and Lavrov, a cessation of hostilities agreement would halt violence between rival forces and open humanitarian corridors.

Russia has insisted that opposition groups separate from al-Qaeda linked militants in cities such as Aleppo. Washington wants Assad's air force grounded to stop its attacks on opposition forces and civilians.

The second U.S. official stressed that any agreement with Russia would have to include an end to the siege by government forces and their militia allies

around Aleppo.

"That is still very much the focal point of the conversations we have been having and will be very much an issue (on Friday)," he said.

Kerry and Lavrov had an unwelcome distraction ahead of their talks in Geneva after news that North Korea had conducted its fifth nuclear test, setting off a blast that was more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

Both expressed concerns about North Korea at the start of the meeting.

(Source: AP)

FUTSAL

2016 FIFA Futsal World Cup: Road to Colombia

As the cream of the futsal world descend on Colombia for the eighth edition of the FIFA Futsal World Cup, the-afc.com takes a look at Asia's five representatives and how they qualified for the global showpiece.

■ **Iran**
Group F (Spain, Morocco, Azerbaijan)

Asia's futsal powerhouse, and winners of eleven of the fourteen AFC Futsal Championships, Iran will arrive in Colombia with yet another continental title under their belt, after beating Uzbekistan in this year's final.



The 2016 AFC Futsal Championship, which doubled as the qualifying tournament for the FIFA Futsal World Cup, saw the Iranians qualify easily, scoring 48 goals and conceding just four in their six matches.

Big group stage wins over Jordan (6-0), China (7-0) and Iraq (13-2) were followed by similar routs in the Knockout Stage as they beat Kyrgyzstan 7-0 to secure World Cup qualification before trouncing Vietnam 13-1 in the semi-final.

Iran were sternly tested by Uzbekistan in the final but prevailed with a 2-1 win, and thanks to players such as Ghodrat Bahadori and Farhad Tavakoli fresh from outstanding individual performances at the 2016 AFC Futsal Club Championship, this may be the year Iran unlock their potential and reach the latter stages of the finals.

■ **Uzbekistan**
Group A (Colombia, Portugal, Panama)

The Uzbeks had the advantage of hosting the 2016 AFC Futsal Championship, but their performances were of sufficient quality that they would have qualified had the tournament been held anywhere in Asia.

Consecutive wins over Saudi Arabia (5-2), Kyrgyzstan (2-1) and Lebanon (2-0) put Uzbekistan within touching distance of their first World Cup, and they finished the job with a 3-0 win against Iraq in the quarter-final.

What no one expected was that Uzbekistan might actually win the tournament, but they came very close.

A superb penalty shootout win against a very strong Thailand in the semi-final was followed by the Uzbeks taking an early lead in the final, before Iran reeled them in and eventually secured the title.

■ **Australia**
Group D (Ukraine, Brazil, Mozambique)

Australia's qualification for a seventh FIFA Futsal World Cup was done the hard way, having to go through two play-offs for the final Asian ticket to Colombia after being defeated in the quarter-final by Thailand.

It was in those cutthroat matches that Futsalroos excelled, beating Iraq 5-3 before securing qualification with a 3-1 over Kyrgyzstan.

Earlier in the tournament wins over Malaysia (2-1) and Qatar (5-2) were followed by a 3-1 loss to Japan, with goals to Greg Giovenali – who contributed six for the tournament – the common factor in all three matches.

Australia have been placed in a somewhat daunting Group D with five-time World Champions Brazil and world number eight Ukraine, although they will be expecting to beat Mozambique.

■ **Thailand**
Group B (Russia, Cuba, Egypt)

Having hosted the 2012 World Cup, and featuring some of the stars – rising and established – of Asian futsal, Thailand enjoyed a steady qualification campaign made easier by the constant goals of Suphawut Thueanklang.

The 27-year-old star racked up a tournament-best 14 goals at the AFC Futsal Championship, and scored in five of six matches, with Jetsada Chudech chipping in with five goals of his own.

Group Stage wins over Tajikistan (5-4), Chinese Taipei (7-2) and Vietnam (3-1) were followed by a 6-1 win over Australia which secured qualification, although Thailand will have been disappointed to lose to hosts Uzbekistan on penalties after a 2-2 semi-final draw.

Thailand will kick off their tournament against European powerhouse Russia, but with Suphawut and 2016 AFC Futsal Club Championship golden boot winner Jirawat Sornwichian in tow, the Southeast Asians have a real chance to cause an upset.

■ **Vietnam**
Group C (Paraguay, Italy, Guatemala)

The surprise package of the 2016 AFC Futsal Championship, Vietnam stunned three-time Japan in the quarter-finals to qualify for the World Cup for the first time.

Vietnam began with a hard-fought 5-4 win over Chinese Taipei, before flexing their muscles with an 8-1 destruction of Tajikistan. A 3-1 defeat at the hands of Thailand then set up a meeting with perennial contenders Japan.

It was what perhaps the most memorable match of the tournament - Vietnam scored late equalisers in normal time (3-3) and extra time (4-4) to force a penalty shootout, which they won, leading to wild and emotional celebrations among the Vietnamese delegation.

The job of qualifying was done, but Vietnam suffered a 13-1 hiding at the hands of Iran in the semi-final before taking another beating against Thailand in the third place play-off, suggesting the debutants will have to be on their game if they are to be competitive against some of the world's best in Colombia.

(Source: AFC)

Falcao: No better honour than being a futsal ambassador

Alessandro Rosa Vieira may not be a household name in the world of futsal, but that is because the Brazilian player goes by another moniker, that of Falcao, one guaranteed to bring nods of recognition.

To some the 39-year-old Brazilian wing, who is about to appear at an unprecedented fifth FIFA Futsal World Cup, is the greatest player in the history of the game. He has the record to back up that lofty status too, having won two world titles, two adidas Golden Balls and an adidas Golden Boot.

What is the source of rather less debate is the role he has played in the last few years in popularising the sport, thanks in no small part to his magical skills and the impact his goals and trickery have had on social media.

"That's something I could never have imagined," the eternal No12 told FIFA.com. "My original aim was to make the national team and do so many things for my sport, but this has just got so big it's ridiculous. There are lots of places in the world where they don't know or don't understand what futsal is, but they do know Falcao. For me, being the ambassador of a sport that is so popular around the world today is the best accolade you can get."

Falcao has been going "viral" yet again in the last few hours. During an interview at the end of Brazil's World Cup warm-up win over Solomon Islands, he was interrupted by the opposing players, who asked him for photos and shared a joke or two with him. Falcao was only too happy to attend to their requests, with the video of the interview proving another smash on social media.

"Futsal is my life, and I owe everything I have to the game," explained the legend-



ary Brazilian. "I've always played this game since I was a kid, despite having offers to go and play 11-a-side football. It's been my school of life and I don't regret it for a single minute."

■ **An entertainer on any stage**

Explaining that his determination to stay faithful to his style of play has been the key to his career, Falcao said: "The way I do things now is the way I've always done them: in the street, at home, at school or with my friends. I didn't change when I turned professional, and I don't pick out any matches or opposition in particular. When the situation merits a bicycle-kick or I'm in a position to flick the ball over an opponent's head, I just do it. To my mind there's no difference between a World Cup final or an exhibition match."

It is for that very reason that he believes

the sport of futsal has grown so fast: "You have to show the fans who don't know futsal what it's all about. That's where the skills, spectacular tricks and the joy of playing the game need to come in."

Show-stopping aside, Falcao acknowledged that improved tactics and fitness have allowed the gap between the best and the rest to narrow, and pointed to a general development in the game that he believes will manifest itself at Colombia 2016.

"Back in the day you could win by ten goals or more, but now you have to work hard to win by two or three, and you're going to have a scare or two along the way as well," he said. "There won't be any easy rivals at this World Cup. You're thinking about Vietnam? You'll have to work your socks off to beat Vietnam. Uzbekistan? You'll need to work hard against them too."

Iran give Qatar a mighty beating



Hosts Iran took full advantage of a seemingly anemic Qatar to open their account at the 2016 FIBA Asia Challenge, 80-73, in Tehran, Iran. Because of this, Iran take the early lead in Group C.

Turning Point: Right off the bat, Iran asserted their supremacy on both ends of the floor. Team Melli outplayed Qatar in the first quarter to take a big 28-7 lead, and they never looked back since.

Stats Don't Lie: No team can shoot under 30% from the field and get out-rebounded by 25 and still hope for the win. That's exactly what happened here as the Qataris just couldn't get anything going. Naturalized player Boney Watson was limited to 7 points and no players outside of Hassan Mohamed

and Mohd Mohamed scored in double-digits.

Game Hero: As expected, Iranian giant Hamed Haddadi asserted himself early and often in this encounter. The former NBA player scored 11 of his game-high 15 points in the first half as the hosts took a 47-22 lead to the locker rooms at the break.

The Bottom Line: Iran played to expectations in their first match of the competition, exploiting their edge in size and familiarity to completely outclass Qatar. Al Annabi, however, have a prime chance to bounce back tomorrow against Iraq, while Iran take a rest in preparation with their own game against the Iraqis on Day 3.

(Source: FIBA)

Shaikh Salman sends best wishes to Asia's FIFA Futsal World Cup sides



Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, the President of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), has sent his best wishes to the five Asian teams competing at the FIFA Futsal World Cup which starts in Colombia on Saturday.

The AFC is represented by Australia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Vietnam, who all qualified through the 2016 AFC Futsal Championship held in Uzbekistan in February, with the Islamic Republic of Iran lifting the trophy.

Shaikh Salman said: "All our teams showed in the AFC Championship in Uzbekistan that futsal is thriving in Asia and now they will test themselves against the best sides in the world who have gathered in Colombia."

"The high-tempo, captivating matches and stunning goals at the AFC Futsal

I like it that way though. Close games are more exciting."

■ **Goals aplenty**

Colombia 2016 will mark the end of an era for Falcao, the final act of his international career: "I said 2008 would be my last World Cup. In 2012 I was sure it was my last too. And here we are in 2016, and in pretty good shape too, because this year I'm really focused on having fun."

That determination to enjoy himself stems from the taxing time he had at Thailand 2012, as he explained: "I had a lot of physical problems. I suffered a loss of movement in my facial muscles and I had calf problems too. I only played 29 minutes in total. I chipped in with those goals against Argentina and Spain, but I didn't enjoy it."

It was during that quarter-final meeting with Argentina that Falcao pleaded with his coach to let him go on, with his side trailing 2-0. On duly entering the fray he scored the goal that took the tie into extra-time and then went on to hit the winner. "That was the most important moment of my career, because of everything I'd been through," he recalled. "I even rank it above the goal I got against Spain in the final."

Falcao has a number of objectives to fulfil as he heads into his final World Cup. As well as becoming the first player to grace the competition five times, he is also looking to set a new appearance record, become the all-time leading scorer and the first player to win the world title three times, all with the captain's armband on. "I want to play well," he said. "I want to be a champion, be the top scorer and be the best player. That's what motivates me."

(Source: FIFA)

Cristiano Ronaldo to return for Real Madrid against Osasuna - Zidane

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane has confirmed that Cristiano Ronaldo will make his first appearance of the season against Osasuna at the Bernabeu on Saturday.

Portugal captain Ronaldo has not played since injuring his knee early in the Euro 2016 final.

But Zidane told a news conference on Friday: "He is back from his injury and happy to be with us. It is his first game, 60 days since his last game, so we must just give him time. He will play tomorrow."

Reports in Spain have claimed the 31-year-old would accept being rotated more this season to avoid injury and tiredness later in the campaign, but Zidane said: "We have not agreed anything. Cristiano is Cristiano."

"I will try so that he is with us every day, and ready to play. Cristiano is an important player for this team. I want him always with me, nothing else."

Madrid's plans for the season were hit when it was confirmed by FIFA that they, along with Atletico Madrid, were banned from registering new players in the next two transfer windows.

They were found guilty of breaching four articles 19 as well as parts of the regulations on the status and transfer of young players.

Both clubs plan to appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, and Zidane said he was hopeful the "absurd" deci-



sion could be overturned, claiming his own children were affected by the FIFA decision.

"I don't understand it at all," he said. "My kids were born here, spent their whole lives here, so it is absurd they cannot play football."

"Now we must wait, and we hope it will all be resolved quickly. It is annoying, for sure. I do not understand it and it annoys me. It is absurd. The club want this changed quickly."

Madrid were surprisingly quiet in the summer transfer window, but Zidane said he was "very happy with the

squad we have."

"We have a big squad -- 24 players available," he added. "The [FIFA] punishment is there, we cannot change that. The players are happy to be here. If we must be like this for some years, we will have this squad for that time."

Newly-promoted Osasuna have been beaten on their last nine visits to the Bernabeu, but Zidane warned: "Tomorrow, we will not have an easy game. They are a team who will come here to try and play. We must be ready."

"I am happy that we have all our players back and ready to play. We are almost all ready, that is good news for me."

Striker Karim Benzema is available, having overcome a niggling hip complaint, and Zidane said: "He can play some minutes, but we must see how we will start the game."

However, Colombia international James Rodriguez and Brazilians Marcelo and Casemiro will be rested following their busy international break.

"James, Marcelo and Casemiro have played two full games [in South America this week]," Zidane said. "They are a bit tired, so it's best with all the games coming up to give them some rest."

Meanwhile, goalkeeper Keylor Navas, playmaker Isco and left-back Fabio Coentrao are all nearing comebacks from injury.

(Source: Soccernet)

This paralympian is targeting the magical 300kg lift

Having powerlifted the equivalent of three baby elephants, Siamand Rahmand Iranian believes he is on course for his attempt on September 14

Siamand Rahman's serious bid to become the first Paralympian to lift more than 300 kilos will be one of the highlights of the Rio Games.

And having powerlifted the equivalent of three baby elephants, the 28-year-old Iranian believes he is on course for his attempt on September 14.

Rahman set a world record of 280kg when he took the over 107kg class gold medal in London four years ago.

He won the title by 38kg from his nearest rival.

He has since set eight more records. Rahman's current best of 296kg dates from the powerlifting World Cup in Dubai in February.

But he failed at 301kg in London and did not try for the elusive 300kg at the Asian Paralympics in South Korea in 2014.

"It is on my agenda to reach records above 350 kilos and I intend to set the historic record of 400 kilograms," said Rahman, who has been disabled since birth.

Rahman has already been filmed lifting more than 300kg in training and his nearest rival, Keun Bae Chun of South Korea said that winning a gold medal at Rio 2016 is "almost impossible."



"I am working hard for more than a year to set a historic record in Rio," Rahman told the Iranian Paralympics website.

"I am fit at the moment and I work hard

at training ahead of Rio 2016 Paralympic Games. Seeing people happy is priceless."

Paralympic powerlifting is a bench press contest. Athletes lay flat on a specially de-

signed bench and have to lift the weighted bar above the chest and return the bar under control to the starting position.

(Source: AFP)



Iran wheelchair basketball beats Germany at Paralympic Games

Iran wheelchair basketball team defeated Germany in its opening match at the Rio Paralympics.

The Iranian team beat its rival 69-63 in Rio de Janeiro's Carioca Arena 1 in Group B on Thursday.

Iran has been scheduled to meet Britain on Friday.

"I am very satisfied since we earned a great victory. I know we have a difficult task ahead of us but we will do our best to qualify from our group," Iran coach Abbas Aghakouchaki said.

Iran has been drawn along with London 2012 Paralympic bronze medallist and 2014 World Championship runner-up the USA, host Brazil, Britain, Germany and Algeria.

Iran has participated at the 2016 Summer Paralympics with 111 athletes in 12 sport fields.

The Iranian delegation finished in 11th place in the previous edition, winning 10 gold medals, seven silvers and seven bronze medals.

(Source: Tasnim)

Iran football 7-a-side defeats Argentina

Iran 7-a-side football team started the 2016 Paralympic Games with a victory over Argentina.

The Iranian team defeated its South American opponent 3-1 at the Deodoro Olympic Park on Thursday.

Mohammad Kharrati, Jasem Bakhshi and Sadeqh Hassani scored for the Iranian team.

Mariano Morana pulled a goal back for the Argentina.

Iran will play USA on Saturday

Team Melli has been drawn in Group B along with Argentina, USA and the Netherlands.

Group A consists of Brazil, Ukraine, Great Britain and Ireland.

Iran has participated at the 2016 Summer Paralympics with 111 athletes in 12 sports.



The Iranian delegation finished in 11th place in the previous edition, winning 10 gold medals, seven silvers and seven bronze medals.

(Source: Tasnim)

Iranian shot put thrower earns country's 1st medal at Rio Paralympics

The first day of the Rio Paralympic Games was packed with sporting action, and that being said, Iran's Saman Pakbaz won the country's 1st medal at the games, and it was silver.

The Iranian sportsman vied in the men's shot-put F12 category and came 2nd with a throw of 15.98 meters.

Shot Putter Gonzalez Lopez from Spain exhibited some inspiring displays at the sporting event, and threw 16.64 meters to snatch the gold, while the bronze went to Ukraine's Roman Danyliuk.

Another Iranian athlete Younes Seifpour finished in fifth place in the Men's Shot Put - F32.

Iran has participated at the 2016 Summer Paralympics with 111 athletes in 12 sports.



The Iranian delegation finished in 11th place in the previous edition, winning 10 gold medals, seven silvers and seven bronze medals.

(Source: Staff & Agencies)

Team Iran march in Rio 2016 Paralympics opening ceremony

Iran's team arrived at the opening ceremony of the 2016 Rio Paralympics at the Maracana stadium on Wednesday.

It was in this festive spirit that Iran's 111 athletes made their debut, led by Eshrat Kordestani in white. She is a member of Iranian women's sitting volleyball team.

Each delegation, including independent Paralympic athletes, marched out with a puzzle piece, one side representing the country and the other with images of participating Paralympic athletes. As nations entered the stadium and the 1,160 puzzle pieces were assembled, they took the shape of a human heart.

With a heart beating in the center of the stadium, one was reminded of the core concept of the ceremony: "The

heart knows no limits. Everybody has a heart."

President of the Organizing Committee for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games Carlos Arthur Nuzman and International Paralympic Committee President Sir Philip Craven delivered speeches before acting President of the Republic of Brazil Michel Temer declared the Games open.

The ceremony concluded with the lighting of the Paralympic cauldron by Brazilian Paralympic swimmer Clodoaldo Silva. A wheelchair user, Silva faced a flight of stairs between himself and the cauldron. The stairs transformed into ramps, allowing Silva to light the flame and prove – in a fitting message preceding 11 days of competition – that anything is possible.

■ How does the classification system work?

Every athlete competing at the Paralympics will have gone through an evaluation that is conducted by authorised technical officials known as "classifiers". These people have been appointed by the international governing body of each particular sport. Classifiers assess the athlete's impairment and how it impacts on their ability to perform certain functions before assigning them to a particular class. The process of classifying athletes is an ongoing process, which takes place at all major events, before and during competition. Thus, a competitors' classification can change throughout their career as their level of impairment evolves.

■ Is there a medal for each classification?

Not necessarily. In some cases, athletes from different classifications will compete for the same medal because the sport's governing body has decided that their particular impairments place them at around the same level of ability. For example, cyclists in the C1, C2 and C3 categories compete together in the C1-3 500m time trial. The results are then

determined by a points system, known as Raza.

■ What is Raza?

Raza is a mathematical formula that is applied to each athlete's performance to calculate a points score. The athlete with the highest score wins, meaning that the person with the least impairment does not receive an unfair advantage over those who are more severely affected by their impairment. The algorithm was established by tracking a number of athletes' performances over a range of years.

■ Is Raza always used to determined combined-class events?

No. Sometimes when there is not an event available for a particular classification, athletes are given the option of competing up a class with competitors who are less impaired. For example, there is no T45 or T46 100m in Rio, so athletes in those categories are permitted to compete in the T47 race. For these events there is no Raza points scoring system – the fastest run and furthest throw or jump wins.

FUTSAL

Excitement awaits Asia's FIFA Futsal World Cup hopefuls

With the FIFA Futsal World Cup Colombia 2016 set to start on Saturday (local time), join the-afc.com as we give you a handy guide to Asia's five representatives and the tournament as a whole.

■ Asia's Hopeful Five

Iran, Uzbekistan, Thailand, Vietnam and Australia

■ How They Got There

Iran, Uzbekistan, Thailand and Vietnam were the top-four finishers at the 2016 AFC Futsal Championship, while Australia were winners of the play-off between the four losing quarter-finalists.

There have been seven FIFA Futsal World Cups - Brazil have been crowned champions five times

■ Who They Are Up Against

Vietnam booked their place at the finals of a FIFA tournament for the first time after recording a stunning win over defending champions Japan in the quarter-finals of the 2016 AFC Futsal Championship. And the ASEAN side will take on Guatemala in their historic first match in the FIFA Futsal World Cup after being pooled with the Central Americans in Group C, which also features 2004 finalists Italy and Paraguay, who are taking part in their sixth finals.

Like Vietnam, Uzbekistan are also appearing at the FIFA Futsal World Cup for the first time, with the 2016 AFC Futsal Championship hosts and runners-up playing their maiden fixture against Panama, who reached the Round of 16 at Thailand 2012 in their tournament debut. The Central Asians then face the daunting prospect of taking on hosts Colombia before rounding off their Group campaign against five-time qualifiers Portugal, third-place finishers at the end of their tournament debut at Guatemala 2000.

Asian futsal superpower Iran, who defeated the Uzbeks on home soil earlier in 2016 to claim their 11th continental crown, have been pooled in a tough-looking Group C alongside two-time world champions Spain, African champions Morocco, and tournament debutants Azerbaijan, while Thailand, the 2012 FIFA Futsal World Cup hosts who reached the Round of 16 at the last edition of the global tournament, have been drawn in Group B, where the 12-time ASEAN champions have Russia, Cuba, and Egypt for company.

But the AFC representative that has the toughest match of the group stage is undoubtedly Australia, with the Futsalroos drawn in Group D with five-time world champions Brazil. In addition to A Seleção, Australia will face newcomers Mozambique as well as renewing acquaintances with Ukraine, who defeated the Australians 11-2 on their tournament debut in 1996, a FIFA Futsal World Cup record win for the most goals scored by a team in their maiden match.

Groups And Fixtures

■ GROUP A

A1 - Colombia

A2 - Portugal

A3 - Uzbekistan

A4 - Panama

10/09/16 Colombia v Portugal

10/09/16 Uzbekistan v Panama

13/09/16 Colombia v Uzbekistan

13/09/16 Panama v Portugal

16/09/16 Panama v Colombia

16/09/16 Portugal v Uzbekistan

■ GROUP B

B1 - Thailand

B2 - Russia

B3 - Cuba

B4 - Egypt

10/09/16 Thailand v Russia

10/09/16 Cuba v Egypt

13/09/16 Thailand v Cuba

13/09/16 Egypt v Russia

16/09/16 Egypt v Thailand

16/09/16 Russia v Cuba

■ GROUP C

C1 - Paraguay

C2 - Italy

C3 - Vietnam

C4 - Guatemala

11/09/16 Paraguay v Italy

11/09/16 Vietnam v Guatemala

14/09/16 Paraguay v Vietnam

14/09/16 Guatemala v Italy

17/09/16 Guatemala v Paraguay

17/09/16 Italy v Vietnam

■ GROUP D

D1 - Ukraine

D2 - Brazil

D3 - Mozambique

D4 - Australia

11/09/16 Ukraine v Brazil

11/09/16 Mozambique v Australia

14/09/16 Ukraine v Mozambique

14/09/16 Australia v Brazil

17/09/16 Australia v Ukraine

17/09/16 Brazil v Mozambique

■ GROUP E

E1 - Argentina

E2 - Kazakhstan

E3 - Solomon Islands

E4 - Costa Rica

12/09/16 Argentina v Kazakhstan

12/09/16 Solomon Islands v Costa Rica

15/09/16 Argentina v Solomon Islands

15/09/16 Costa Rica v Kazakhstan

18/09/16 Costa Rica v Argentina

18/09/16 Kazakhstan v Solomon Islands

■ GROUP F

F1 - Iran

F2 - Spain

F3 - Morocco

F4 - Azerbaijan

12/09/16 Iran v Spain

12/09/16 Morocco v Azerbaijan

15/09/16 Iran v Morocco

15/09/16 Azerbaijan v Spain

18/09/16 Azerbaijan v Iran

18/09/16 Spain v Morocco

(Source: AFC)



