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Iran to build oil and gas storage facilities in Syria

POLITICS TEHRAN — On Tuesday, Tehran and Damascus signed five memorandums of understanding for economic cooperation including one on construction of oil and gas storage facilities and terminals in Syria by Iran.

The MOUs also set the stage for cooperation on operation of mobile phones, cattle husbandry and other agricultural fields.

The MOUs were signed in Tehran by the two countries' economy ministers at the presence of Iran's First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri and Syrian Prime Minister Imad Khamis in Tehran.

Efforts for a reconstruction of Syria have begun as there is a glimpse of hope for a political solution of the Syrian conflict.

Under a plan introduced by Iran, Russia, and Turkey a ceasefire went into effect in Syria on Dec. 30. The warring sides – the government and opposition- are set to sit for a dialogue in Astana, Kazakhstan on Jan. 23. The terrorists are not included in the talks.

The initiative for peace talks were drawn up after the Syrian army, with a support by Russia and Iran, succeeded to wrest the control of the strategic city of Aleppo from terrorists in northern Syria.

Damascus, Tehran and Moscow have announced that war on Daesh and other terrorist groups in Syria will go unabated. →2

Iran rules out nuclear deal renegotiation



Tehran Times/Mohammadreza Abbasi

Zarif to focus on Rohingya Muslims in OIC meeting

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif is set to visit Switzerland and Malaysia to discuss regional and international issues, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

Zarif is scheduled to pay a visit to the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur to take part in the upcoming emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), addressing the conditions of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.

Over the past four years, the minority Rohingya Muslim population has suffered from severe atrocities committed by the Burmese government and the xenophobic Buddhist nationalist movements. Since then, hundreds of Rohingya people have been killed and thousands have been displaced and forced to live in camps in dire conditions.

Muslim-majority Malaysia has taken a strong stance against what it called "ethnic cleansing" of the Rohingya Muslims, calling for an end to the atrocities committed against the minority in Myanmar.

Led by Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, the OIC meeting will be held on January 19 to gather fifty-six representatives from around the world in order to put more efforts into resolving the Rohingya Muslim crisis.

This is while Myanmar government denies full citizenship to the 1.1-million-strong Rohingya population, branding them illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. However, the Rohingya people are believed to be indigenous to Rakhine State, Myanmar.

In recent months, rights groups have expressed deep concerns over reports of killings, rapes, arrests and other violations in Myanmar's troubled Rakhine State.

They have called for independent investigations into the ongoing operations, rights abuses and killings in the area, which has been under military lockdown since 2012.

Iran's foreign minister also wrote to the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on January 6, urging international action to stop rights violations against the Rohingya Muslims.

Prior to his visit to Malaysia, Zarif will make a short stop in Switzerland to participate in the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, due to be held from Tuesday to Friday.

Nuclear agreement with Iran is working: Mogherini

POLITICS EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini has said that nuclear agreement between Iran and the 5+1 group is working.

"We can clearly say that the Iran deal is working and we need to maintain it," she wrote in an article published by the Guardian on Tuesday.

Following is an excerpt of the article titled "The Iran nuclear deal is a success – and the whole world is safer for it":

One year ago this week, the European Union, China, France, Germany, Russia, the UK, the U.S. and Iran began to implement the joint comprehensive plan of action on Iran's nuclear program. This agreement was the result of brave choices, political leadership, collective determination and hard work. A year on, we can clearly say that the Iran deal is working and we need to maintain it.

To those critics who have raised concerns,

both about the terms of the agreement or about the very idea of having an agreement at all with Iran, I say: take a close look at the facts.

The International Atomic Energy Agency – the United Nations' nuclear watchdog – has issued four reports on the matter and has regularly verified that Iran is complying with its nuclear-related obligations. The joint commission – which I coordinate – oversees constantly the implementation of the agreement, meeting regularly, which allows us to detect even minor possible deviations and to take necessary corrective measures if the need arises.

The deal is also working for Iran. Major companies are investing in the country: the oil sector, the automotive industry, commercial aircraft, just to give a few examples, are areas where significant contracts have been concluded. The International Monetary Fund

has forecast real GDP growth in Iran to rebound to 6.6% in 2016-17.

More work is needed, for sure, including domestic economic reforms, to make these positive results trickle down to the Iranian population, especially its youth. But the trend is absolutely clear, and progress undeniable. Trade between the EU and Iran has risen by a staggering 63% over the first three quarters of last year. After more than 30 years of a diplomatic ice age, the EU and Iran are also discussing cooperation on matters as diverse as the economy, protection of the environment, migration, and culture – and the list could continue.

Therefore – and despite criticism that deceitfully stresses the deal's perceived shortcomings and overlooks its proven benefits – it is important to state very clearly: the nuclear agreement with Iran is working. →2

Iran responds to Saudi letter on Hajj pilgrimage

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran has responded to an invitation letter by Saudi Arabia requesting Iran to resume sending pilgrims to Hajj, the representative of the Leader in Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization announced on Tuesday.

Seyyed Ali Ghazi Askar said the response to the Saudi invitation was written by Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Reza Salehi Amiri to the Saudi Hajj minister in which he elaborated on Tehran's views on observation of safety measures for Hajj pilgrimage.

Ghazi Askar said if the "necessary conditions" are met all officials are decided to allow Iranian nationals to resume visits to Mecca and Media for Hajj ritual.

In a stampede in Sept. 2015 more than 400 Iranians lost their lives. Following the tragic incident Iran refused to send nationals to Hajj as Saudi Arabia refused to give guarantees that such incidents will not happen again.

Ghazi Askar also said since Saudi Arabia has announced that countries' quota in sending pilgrims to the country will increase it is hoped that

Iran can send about 80,000 people to Mecca.

Relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia suffered a stroke with the death of pilgrims in 2015. Iran has also been a fierce critic of Saudi Arabia for sending military forces to Bahrain to suppress pro-democracy movement and also waging a destructive war against Yemen.

Iran's top security official, Ali Shamkhani, refuted claims on Monday that Iran is not seeking an overthrow of the Saudi government, saying a replacement for the current monarchy will be system ruled by Wahhabis.



Quintuplets born in Shiraz

A set of quintuplets were born at the Ghadir Mother and Child Hospital in the southern city of Shiraz early Monday morning.

Their 28-year-old mother gave birth to a twins in her first pregnancy and is happy that all her children are healthy.

"Bringing up and taking care of quintuplets may be hard but I'm happy that they all are healthy," she said.

The three baby boys and two baby girls are weighing 1 to 1.3 kilograms each and are in good condition.

Global ship insurers to resume near full coverage for Iran oil

Global shipping insurers have devised a way to ensure nearly full coverage for Iranian oil exports from next month after striking a deal to provide cover without involving U.S.-domiciled reinsurers, officials in Tokyo and London said.

The reluctance of U.S. firms to handle Iranian goods had greatly limited the number of reinsurers of cargoes, but the new arrangements – which essentially allow re-insurance of ships without the involvement of U.S.-firms – should boost the number of eligible shipments.

That will provide a boon to Iran, trying to raise oil exports after most sanctions were lifted last year, though banking restrictions that remain in place that could cap any major rise in exports.

"There will be no U.S.-domiciled reinsurer participation on the 2017 IG reinsurance program," Andrew Bardot, secretary and executive officer at the International Group (IG) of P&I Clubs in London told Reuters on Tuesday.

The new arrangements take effect on Feb. 20, he and other officials said.

"This will substantially address the potential shortfall in reinsurance recoveries in the event of Iranian-related claims," Bardot said in an email.

(Source: Reuters)

Iraqi forces liberate more Mosul areas from terrorists' grip

Iraqi forces have managed to retake control of several areas in Mosul as part of a large-scale military operation to purge the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists from the strategic northern city.

The Arabic-language al-Sumaria television network reported the recapture of Mosul's Suez and Sinharib districts by Iraq's Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) on Tuesday.

Moreover, the commander of Nineveh Liberation Operation, Lieutenant General Abdul Amir Yarallah, announced the liberation of al-Jazair, al-Darkazliyah, al-Zarai neighborhoods in Mosul's left bank, adding that the national flag was hoisted over buildings there.

He further noted that the Iraqi forces were in control of Mosul's Central Mosque after heavy clashes with ISIL terrorists there.

The districts of Bab al-Shams, Mo-handesin, Atshanah, Numaniyah, Eastern Nineveh, Souq al-Ghanam and al-Ma'a were among several areas in Mosul's western bank that were fully retaken from the militants.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Yarallah said that the ISIL terrorists had suffered heavy losses in the aforesaid areas, noting that Iraqi Air Force's strikes destroyed an explosive-laden bulldozer in Akab Vally in Mosul's eastern bank.

In northern Mosul, the Iraqi army troops moved into the militant-held Kindi military base, according an unidentified officer.

Additionally, the rapid response units of the Iraqi federal police secured much of the eastern bank of the Tigris River that divides Mosul in half.

Lieutenant-Colonel Abdel Amir al-Mohammedawi, a spokesman for the rapid response forces, said some ISIL elements had fled by boat and taken civilians as human shields.

"They fled the eastern bank for the west, and took women and children," he said.

Staff Lieutenant General Abdulghani al-Assadi, a high ranking CTS commander, announced on Monday that the ISIL terrorists had been driven out of 90 percent of eastern Mosul. →13



Foreign ambassadors pay tribute to Rafsanjani

IT d e s k **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — A number of foreign ambassadors in Tehran attended the secretariat of the Expediency Council on Tuesday to pay tribute to Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani who died on January 8 of cardiac arrest. The diplomats were from China, South Korea, Egypt, Yemen, Turkmenistan, Bosnia, Burundi, Uruguay, Sierra Leone, Thailand, Kazakhstan, and Syria. Writing in a book of condolence, the diplomats offered condolences to the Supreme Leader, the Rafsanjani family, and members of the Expediency Council. 56 countries flew their flags in half-mast over the death of Rafsanjani, the chairman of the Expediency Council. Rafsanjani, who was president from 1989 to 1997, was recognized as leading politician at home and abroad.



Iran condemns terrorist attacks in Afghanistan

IT d e s k **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman on Tuesday strongly condemned a recent terrorist attack in Kandahar, Afghanistan, which resulted in the death and injury of a number of UAE diplomats as well as Afghan officials and citizens. "Terrorism is the most important security problem in the region and the world, targeting peace and security of countries and nations without any discrimination," Bahram Qassemi said, Fars reported. Qassemi sympathized with the governments of Afghanistan and the UAE as well as the bereaved families of the victims.



Rally to be held against executions in Bahrain

IT d e s k **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The International Union of Unified Ummah on Tuesday issued a call for demonstrations in front of the UN office in Tehran to protest the execution of three political activists. All popular activists are therefore invited to show their sympathy with the people of Bahrain to hold peaceful demonstrations in front of the UN office in Tehran on Wednesday at 15:00, it read.



Foreign Ministry submits JCPOA report to Majlis

IT d e s k **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Ministry has submitted a written report to the Majlis on the process of implementation of the nuclear deal (aka JCPOA), Abbas Araqchi, the deputy foreign minister, said on Tuesday. The document, which is the Foreign Ministry's fourth report, was submitted to Alaeddin Boroujerdi, head of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, Araqchi said, according to Tasnim. The Foreign Ministry is required to submit a report to the Majlis regarding the nuclear deal implementation once in three months.



Guardian Council to study development plan from Wednesday

IT d e s k **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Guardian Council has received the sixth development plan from the Majlis and will start to study it on Wednesday, the council's spokesman said. Abbasali Kadhodaei made the announcement in a post on Telegram on Tuesday. The Majlis passed the plan on Sunday with 143 yeas, 15 nays, and one abstention. The plan covers a period of five years and is expected to start from the next Iranian fiscal year, which will begin on March 21.



Union of resistance-conscious parties being formed: party leader

IT d e s k **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The secretary general of the Islamic Coalition Party has said an international union consisting of resistance-conscious parties is being formed. Speaking in a meeting with the deputy head of the Organization Department of the Communist Party of China on Tuesday in Tehran, Mohammad Nabi Habibi said the union will be formed of parties which are unanimous in backing Palestine against Israel, Mashreq reported. Habibi also said, "We propose the Communist Party of China to strengthen its ties with Islamic parties."

Iran to build oil and gas storage facilities in Syria

IT d e s k **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — **'Syrian victories resulted from coordination with Iran'**

The first vice-president said the Syrian victories against terrorism resulted from Tehran-Damascus "political coordination" joint war against the militants on the ground. During a joint press conference with the Syrian prime minister, Jahangiri said more consultations and coordination between Iran and Syria are essential. He reiterated Tehran's support for the Syrian government in fighting terrorism. Elsewhere, Jahangiri said that the Syrian prime minister's visit to Iran opens a new chapter in political and economic relations between the two countries. Khamis said that Iran and Syria's fight against terrorism should be a role model for all countries. **'Iran backs political initiatives in Syria'** In a separate meeting with Khamis, Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani said that Iran will support any political initiatives in Syria which guarantee "independence" and "territorial integrity" of Syria. He also said continued efforts to liberate the remaining territories from the hands of terrorists in order to restore peace and security to Syria are "essential". The security official added the terrorists should not be able to use the ceasefire and political talks as an opportunity to rearm themselves. He also highlighted the necessity of raising awareness about plots being hatched to undermine "successful cooperation" among Iran, Syria and Russia in fighting terrorism. Elsewhere, Shamkhani said that the economic and political relations between the two countries should be expanded.



Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani shakes hand with Syrian Prime Minister Imad Khamis on Jan. 17, 2017.

Iran rules out nuclear deal renegotiation

BY: Ali Koushki

TEHRAN — With impulsive Donald Trump going to the Oval Office on Jan. 20, Tehran is flashing more warning signals over the fate of a 2015 international nuclear deal with global powers. Speaking at a press conference on Tuesday, moderate President Hassan Rouhani of Iran, who championed the deal, ruled out renegotiation of the nuclear deal, rejecting it as "meaningless." "Renegotiation (of the deal) is totally meaningless," he said in response to a question which pointed to Trump having recently said he will renegotiate the deal. "A return to the past" is impossible, Rouhani stressed. The comments come on the first anniversary of the his-

toric nuclear accord, censured by incoming U.S. President Trump as "the worst deal ever negotiated" and a "disaster." The accord lifted sanctions on the strategic Middle East country in exchange for it rolling back parts of its nuclear program. "Backwardness is meaningless," Rouhani said emphatically, reducing antagonistic stances by Trump to sheer "slogan." "Mr. Trump as president-elect of the U.S. has so far made some remarks about BARJAM (Persian acronym for the deal) that he is not happy with it, it's not a good agreement, etc. These are more of slogan."

"A return to the past" is impossible, Rouhani stresses.

Nuclear agreement with Iran is working: Mogherini

IT d e s k There should be no doubt that the EU stands firmly by the deal, which is a multilateral endeavor. It was born out of the efforts of the "E3/EU+3" – Britain, Germany, France plus the U.S., Russia and China – and Iran, but it now belongs to the entire international community, through its endorsement by the UN Security Council. Without the agreement, the re-

gional situation would be even more alarming. And we would be losing a historic opportunity if we missed the chance to build a more cooperative regional environment. Against a dramatic regional background, the nuclear deal is a glimpse of what is possible in international relations, by tackling the conflicts affecting the region in a cooperative manner.

"We would be losing a historic opportunity if we missed the chance to build a more cooperative regional environment."

Tehran against U.S. presence in Syrian talks

IT d e s k **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that Tehran is opposed to a U.S. presence in peace talks on the Syria conflict that are planned for January 23 in Kazakhstan's capital Astana, Tasnim news agency reported. "We have not invited them, and we are against their presence," Zarif said on Tuesday.

The foreign minister's remarks came after his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov said on Tuesday that he thought it was right to invite the Trump administration to peace talks on the Syrian conflict. Zarif and Lavrov held a phone call on Monday to discuss the upcoming peace talks. The two sides called for further coordination between

Tehran and Moscow ahead of the talks. The Astana negotiations will be held between representatives from the Damascus government and opposition groups. Many hope the talks could put an end to nearly six years of devastating militancy in Syria which has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

Wonderful to live in peace with Iran: Saudi FM

IT d e s k **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir said on Monday that the kingdom's relationship with Iran is "tense" at the moment, noting "it would be wonderful to live in peace and harmony with Iran." Relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia was strained after thousands of people, many of them Iranians, died in a stampede at the 2015 Haj rituals, when two large masses of pilgrims converged at a crossroads during the symbolic ceremony of the stoning of Satan in Jamarat. Following the incident, Iranian authorities slammed Saudi Arabia for being incompetent in managing Haj rituals, ap-

pealing to the Muslim world to hold Riyadh accountable for the tragedy. Ties between the two countries worsened when Saudi Arabia executed a Shia cleric a year ago. The execution angered some Iranian citizens who stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran. Therefore, Iranian pilgrims did not participate in the latest Haj rituals, which were held months ago, when Saudi Arabia declined to guarantee their safety. Al-Jubeir expressed optimism about the future U.S. administration's stance on Iran, saying Riyadh and Washington agree that Iran's influence in the region should be "contained". He accused Iran of destabilizing the region and described the regional poli-



cies of the Islamic Republic "aggressive" and "hostile". Following the implementation of the nuclear deal that ended nuclear-related sanctions against Iran in return for some limitation on the country's nuclear pro-

gram, Saudi Arabia, as some analysts say, feared that it may lose one of its closest western allies, the U.S. During Obama's term, Washington aimed at reaching a nuclear deal with Iran as well as limiting America's role in the Middle East, both of which have been criticized by Saudi Arabia. "We will look at the Trump administration's view as articulated. Wanting to restore America's role in the world, we welcome this. Wanting to defeat ISIS (Islamic State), absolutely. Wanting to contain Iran ... absolutely," said Al Jubeir, urging the upcoming U.S. President Donald Trump to take a more active role in the region and a more aggressive stance against Iran.

China to work for effective implementation of Iran nuclear deal

IT d e s k **POLITICS** China said on Tuesday it would continue to work with relevant parties for a comprehensive and effective implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), known as the Iran nuclear deal, IANS reported. The first anniversary of the JCPOA implementation fell on Monday. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said that China has made great efforts to settle the Iran nu-

clear issue. The JCPOA is an international agreement reached between Iran, the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council — China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States — plus Germany), and the European Union. The deal struck on July 14 2015 went into effect on January 16, 2016. The Chinese official said the deal is a successful example of international efforts to solve hot-spot issues

through political and diplomatic means. She said the JCPOA was implemented smoothly in the past year and contributed to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime as well as peace and stability in the Middle East. The JCPOA is an agreement officially recognized by the United Nations Security Council, stressed Hua, calling on all sides to continue to earnestly fulfil their obligations.

Syria government, rebels name delegation heads to Astana talks

France backs talks, insists on opposition presence

Syria's United Nations ambassador will head the government delegation to the upcoming peace talks, a Syrian daily reported on Tuesday, while the opposition said it would be represented by rebel negotiator Mohammad Alloush.

Talks on the nearly six-year-old foreign sponsored conflict, organized by Turkey, Russia and Iran, are set to begin on Jan. 23 in the Kazakh capital Astana.

The Al-Watan daily, reported on Tuesday that the government's delegation "will be led by Syrian diplomat and permanent representative to the United Nations Bashar al-Jaafari."

The government's team will also include "figures representing the military and the Syrian judiciary, so that the delegation will represent the whole Syrian state," the newspaper wrote.

Chief rebel negotiator Mohammad Alloush, a leading figure in the Jaish al-Islam (Army of Islam) faction, will represent the opposition, according to National Coalition member Ahmad Ramadan.

The opposition delegation will include around 20 people, Ramadan told AFP.

Rebel groups announced Monday that they would send a "military" delegation to Astana, as well as legal and political advisers from the High Negotiations Committee (HNC) umbrella group.

Alloush and Jaafari headed opposing teams at UN-hosted peace talks in Geneva last year, trading accusations throughout the ill-fated negotiations.

Jaafari described his rival as a "terror-



The Astana talks will aim to build on a nationwide truce in place since December 30 that was brokered by rivals Ankara and Moscow.

ist," while Alloush accused the regime of committing "massacres" in Syria.

The Astana talks will aim to build on a nationwide truce in place since December 30 that was brokered by rivals Ankara and Moscow.

Although they back opposing sides in the war, the two powers have worked closely in recent months to bring an end to the conflict.

In announcing their participation, rebels said that the talks would fo-

cus on strengthening the truce, while discussions on Syria's political future would be left for talks in Geneva in February.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Tuesday said "one of the goals of the Astana meeting is, first, reinforcing the ceasefire."

But Al-Watan on Tuesday reported that the government's delegation would head to Astana in pursuit of a "political solution" to the war.

"No one thinks Damascus is going to Astana to discuss a halt to military operations, as some want to suggest, or to reinforce the so-called ceasefire," the paper said.

"Damascus is attending in the framework of its vision for a comprehensive political solution to the war on Syria... and to re-impose the hegemony and sovereignty of the state on all Syrian territory," it wrote.

■ France insists on opposition presence

Meanwhile, France said on Tuesday it supported the objective of consolidating a nationwide ceasefire in Syria at proposed talks in the Kazakh capital Astana later this month, but said the talks needed to have a credible and large opposition representation, Reuters reported.

Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault told his Turkish counterpart that Paris "confirmed its support for the announced objectives ... and insisted on the importance of a large and credible opposition presence," Foreign ministry spokesman Romain Nadal said in a daily briefing.

He added that negotiations had to be within the framework of United Security Council resolution 2254 and Geneva communique leading to a political transition.

Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov said earlier he had information that some European countries were considering wrecking Syria peace talks because they felt left out.

(Source: agencies)

May: Britain to leave EU single market

Britain will leave the European Union's single market when it exits the EU, Prime Minister Theresa May said on Tuesday, putting an end to speculation that London might try to seek a "soft Brexit".

In a long-awaited speech in which she sought to define the country's future as a global player that aims to trade freely far beyond Europe, May said the final exit deal would be put to parliament for a vote.

That promise helped revive the pound on currency markets. Sterling GBP=D4, which has traded at the lowest levels against the United States dollar for more than three decades, rose during May's speech hitting a day high.

May said she would seek an equal partnership with the EU but that she would not adopt models already used by other countries that have free trade agreements with the bloc.

Her statement that Britain would leave the single market was by far the clearest indication she has ever given of her plans for the future, after months of criticism that she was not being sufficiently transparent.

"I want to be clear: What I am proposing cannot mean membership of the single market," May told an audience of foreign diplomats and Britain's own Brexit negotiating team at a mansion house in London.

"Instead we seek the greatest possible access to it through a new comprehensive, bold and ambitious free trade agreement. That agreement may take in elements of current single market arrangements in certain areas,"



May's speech comes as Northern Ireland, the part of Britain most exposed to Brexit due to its land border with the Irish Republic, faces a lengthy period of political paralysis after the collapse of its power-sharing government.

May said.

Her announcement that she will put the final Brexit deal to a vote in both houses of parliament comes ahead of a court decision on whether she has the power to start the process of withdrawing without parliamentary approval.

She has said she plans to launch the two-year exit negotiation process by the end of March.

Britons' vote to leave the bloc has opened a huge number of questions about immigration, the future rights of the many EU citizens already living in Britain, whether exporters will keep tariff-free access to the single European market and British-based banks will be able to serve continental clients.

The Brexit talks, expected to be one of the most complicated negotiations in post-World War Two European history, could decide the fate of her premiership, Britain and the future shape of the European Union that Britain leaves behind.

May's speech comes as Northern Ireland, the part of Britain most exposed to Brexit due to its land border with the Irish Republic, faces a lengthy period of political paralysis after the collapse of its power-sharing government.

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump has said that Brexit will turn out to be a great thing and the other countries would follow Britain out of the European Union. He promised to strike a swift bilateral trade deal with Britain.

(Source: The Guardian)

Germany: NATO concerned about Trump 'obsolete' remark

Germany's Foreign Minister said that United States President-elect Donald Trump's comments that NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) was obsolete had aroused concern across the 28-member alliance.

Frank-Walter Steinmeier, speaking after a meeting with NATO alliance Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg in Brussels, said Trump's remarks contradicted views expressed by designated Defense Secretary James Mattis. He spoke also of "amazement".

"I've spoken today not only with EU foreign ministers but NATO foreign ministers as well and can report that the signals are that there's been no easing of tensions," Steinmeier told reporters when asked about Trump's interview with Bild newspaper and the Times of London.

"Obviously the comments from President-elect Trump, that he views NATO as obsolete, were viewed with anxiety," he said.

Trump, who is due to be sworn in as U.S. president on Friday, said NATO was obsolete because it had not defended against terrorist attacks.

He said also he had always had "great respect" for German Chancellor Angela Merkel, but criticized her 2015 decision to



allow in a wave of a million migrants as a "catastrophic mistake" that opened the door to terrorist attacks.

United States Secretary of State John Kerry said it was "inappropriate" for Trump to weigh directly into the politics of another country by his remarks.

"He will have to speak to that, as of Friday he is responsible for that relationship."

■ Russia agrees

NATO has been seen since the 1950s

as the keystone of western European defenses, extending its zone of activity in the post-Cold War period to the borders of Russia - much to Russia's chagrin. The alliance's founding treaty commits members to consider an attack on any one state as an attack on all.

A Kremlin spokesman said he agreed with Trump that NATO, characterized by Russian officials as a hostile remnant of the Cold War, was obsolete.

Trump, who is due to be sworn in as U.S. president on Friday, said NATO was obsolete because it had not defended against terrorist attacks.

Turkey: New Year's nightclub attacker captured in Istanbul

Turkish police have captured the gunman who killed 39 people in an Istanbul nightclub on New Year's Day at a hideout in an outlying suburb of the city after a two-week manhunt, officials said on Tuesday.

Istanbul Governor Vasip Sahin named the man as Abdulgadir Masharipov and said he was born in 1983 in Uzbekistan and received training in Afghanistan.

Masharipov, who was captured with four others overnight, had admitted his guilt and his fingerprints matched those at the scene, Sahin said.

"He knew four languages and was well-educated," Sahin told a news conference.

There were strong indications he entered Turkey illegally through its eastern borders in January 2016 and it was clear the attack was carried out on behalf of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group, Sahin said.

The terrorist group claimed responsibility a day after the mass shooting, saying it was revenge for Turkish military involvement in Syria.

Masharipov was captured with an Iraqi man and three women from

Africa, one of them from Egypt, in the Esenyurt district on Istanbul's western outskirts, about 30 km (19 miles) from the Reina nightclub.

Two pistols, mobile phone SIM cards, and \$197,000 in cash were also seized, Sahin said.

Dogan news agency published a photo of the alleged attacker with a black eye, a cut above his eyebrow and bloodstains on his face and t-shirt. It broadcast footage showing plain-clothes police leading a man in a white sweater to a waiting car.

He was being questioned at Istanbul police headquarters, while other people were detained in raids across the city targeting Uzbek ISIL cells, the state-run Anadolu news agency said.

The gunman appeared to have repeatedly changed addresses before and after the attack. Remaining in Istanbul, he evaded a 16-day nationwide manhunt that included operations in cities from Izmir on the Aegean coast, to Konya in central Anatolia, and Hatay near the southern border with Syria.

"Five addresses were tracked and operations were carried out against them. He was found at one of the five addresses," Sahin said.

It appeared Masharipov and those seized with him had moved to the Esenyurt address three days ago, he said.

Masharipov had first rented an apartment in Basaksehir, another outlying Istanbul district, before switching addresses a day or two before the attack, the Istanbul governor said.

About 50 people have been detained in raids on 152 addresses since the shooting. Investigators analyzed 7,200 hours of camera footage in the search and police received more than 2,000 tip-offs, Sahin said.

■ "War with terror" will continue

Meantime, Turkish deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus, who is also the government spokesman, said on social network Twitter that "I congratulate our police who caught the perpetrator of the Ortakoy massacre."

"Our war with terror and the powers behind it will continue to the end," he said.

On Jan. 1, the attacker shot his way into the Reina nightclub and opened fire with an automatic rifle. He reloaded his weapon several times and shot the wounded as they laid on the ground.

Turks as well as visitors from several Arab nations, India and Canada were among those killed in the attack.

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) member Turkey is part of the so-called United States-led coalition against ISIL and launched an incursion into neighboring Syria in August to drive the radical militants, and Kurdish militia fighters, away from its borders.

The terrorist group has been blamed for at least half a dozen attacks on civilian targets in Turkey over the past 18 months. But, other than assassinations, the New Year attack was the first it has directly claimed.

Masharipov was caught in an apartment at a housing complex in Esenyurt at around 11 pm (2000 GMT) on Monday.

The shooting in Istanbul's Ortakoy neighborhood, an upscale district on the Bosphorus shore, followed a year in which Turkey was shaken by a series of attacks by radical extremist and Kurdish militants and by a failed coup.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said the attack, which targeted a club popular with local celebrities and moneyed foreigners, had been exploited to try to divide the nation.

(Source: Reuters)

Ukraine files 'terrorism' case against Russia at top UN court

Ukraine has filed a case at the United Nation's top court accusing Russia of sponsoring "terrorism" and demanding Moscow to pay damages for the shelling of civilians and the downing of flight MH17, the court said on Tuesday.

Kiev has asked the International Court of Justice to "declare that the Russian Federation bears international responsibility, by virtue of its sponsorship of terrorism... for the acts of terrorism committed by its proxies in Ukraine," the court said in a statement.

Ukraine also asked the court to order "full reparation" for the 2014 downing of flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine and "for the shelling of civilians" in certain towns in eastern Ukraine.

(Source: AFP)

(Source: Reuters)

Sinosure goes big on Iranian refinery

Chinese export credit agency Sinosure has opened a \$1.3 billion line of credit for the upgrade of an Iranian oil refinery.

The money will fund the development of Abadan Oil Refinery, Iran's oldest, and the borrower is the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC).

The Sinosure credit line is part of a \$3 billion deal with Sinopec, China's state-owned energy giant, which signed an agreement to upgrade and operate the refinery.

The aim of the renovation is to improve the quality of Iran's oil exports. Abbas Kazemi, the CEO of NIORDC, says that when work is projected to finish in four years, 20% of Abadan's produce will be mazut, a heavy, low-quality fuel oil often used to make diesel. Currently, mazut accounts for 40% of produce.

Iran as a whole requires investment of \$14 billion in order to replicate this process across its ageing refineries. The country was effectively banned from international credit markets for much of the past 10 years, owing to U.S. and EU-led sanctions. As a result, its energy infrastructure is crumbling.

The country's energy utility has signed a number of agreements with Asian firms with a view to upgrading, including the Korean engineering firm Daelim and JGC Corporation, a Japanese energy giant.

Iran's oil industry has been coming back online since the sanctions began to be repealed a year ago. The oil minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh estimates that in the fiscal year to March 2017, the country will earn \$41 billion from oil revenues.

That is a big increase on the \$25 billion in the previous fiscal year, with the rising oil price and OPEC's pledge to cut production helping to bolster Tehran's coffers. As part of the OPEC deal in October, Iran was the only country allowed to increase its oil production, given the fact that it had only recently been permitted re-admission to international markets.

Despite the easing of sanctions, there was still reluctance from U.S. firms to handle Iranian goods, due to the often complex detail of international trade policy.

However, Reuters have this week reported that global shipping insurers have found a way to offer almost full coverage for Iranian oil exports from February. By not involving any U.S.-domiciled reinsurers, policies can be issued without any confusion.

It remains to be seen whether the U.S. will continue along the program of sanctions relaxation under a Trump presidency. The incoming U.S. leader often used bellicose rhetoric when speaking of Iran on the campaign trail, and this has continued since his election victory in November.

The terms of the Sinosure loan have not been disclosed. *(Source: gtreview.com)*

IMF slashes Saudi Arabia growth forecast on lower oil output

The International Monetary Fund cut its growth outlook for Saudi Arabia on lower oil production, underscoring the challenges facing the kingdom as it seeks to overhaul its economy.

Gross domestic product will expand 0.4 percent in 2017, the lender said in its World Economic Outlook report update on Monday, citing the impact of the recent deal by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries to reduce output. It compares with the fund's October prediction of 2 percent, and a median estimate of 0.9 percent in a Bloomberg survey.

The forecast reflects cuts in government spending as well as the impact of lower oil production, Gian Maria Milesi-Ferretti, deputy director of the IMF's research department, told reporters on Monday. "There is a big adjustment in spending downwards," he said. "There is an adjustment in taxes upwards, and as a result non-oil growth is not going to be as good as it was during periods of strong oil prices."

Saudi Arabia is seeking to build investor confidence in its long-term strategy to reduce dependence on crude and boost non-oil sectors of its economy, while trying to plug one of the Middle East's biggest budget deficits. The kingdom is planning to borrow as much as \$15 billion this year on international debt markets to help fund its spending plans, following last year's \$17.5 billion sovereign bond sale.

"It will take time to diversify the economy in a meaningful way," said Monica Malik, chief economist at Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank. "Saudi remains dependent on oil; and at the current prices, the ability of the government to stimulate growth is limited."

Saudi Arabia's so-called Vision 2030 strategy derives from the global slump in oil prices since 2014, which severely dented revenue. Led by Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, it includes a plan to set up the world's biggest sovereign wealth fund and to sell a stake of less than 5 percent in state-run Saudi Arabian Oil Co. by 2018.

Saudi Arabia estimates growth fell to 1.4 percent in 2016, the lowest since the recession in 2009, as it cut spending by suspending bonuses for public employees and reducing ministers' salaries. The government has also raised the cost of fuel, and plans to introduce value-added taxes and fees on expatriate workers.

October's sovereign bond was the biggest ever emerging-market issuance, attracting \$67 billion of bids, people familiar with the sale told Bloomberg at the time. Saudi Arabia is "very likely" to tap debt markets again in the first quarter, including with an Islamic bond, Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan said last month.

The government plans to increase debt levels to 30 percent of economic output by 2020, from 7.7 percent, according to targets set out in June. By which time, it may be running a surplus, based on its latest budget in December -- the most-detailed in Saudi history.

Malik said she expects Saudi debt to remain attractive in international markets even with the negative impact of weaker growth, bolstered by the rial-dollar peg, low government borrowing and a stronger oil-price outlook for 2017.

The IMF forecast Saudi growth to rebound to 2.3 percent in 2018 -- still lower than its October projection of 2.6 percent.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Iran, Germany pen agreement on expanding transport co-op

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran and Germany inked an agreement on the expansion of cooperation in rail, air and sea transportation, IRNA reported.

Based on the agreement, which was signed in Tehran at Monday night by Iranian Transport Minister Abbas Akhoundi and the visiting German Federal Minister of Transport and Digital Infrastructure Alexander Dobrindt, the two sides agreed to set up a taskforce to develop mutual cooperation in different transportation areas.

portation areas.

In the signing ceremony of the agreement, Dobrindt said there are fortunately many areas for Iran-Germany cooperation in transportation; saying that Germany is very keen to commence cooperation for renovation of different transportation sectors in Iran.

He also expressed the readiness of Munich and Frankfurt airports for cooperation in development of Iranian airports.

The German minister, who visited Iran

Foreign investment in Iranian capital market up 42% in post-sanction era

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Presence of foreign investors in the capital market of Iran has risen 42 percent after removal of the West-led sanctions against the country, Head of Iranian Central Securities Depository and Settlement Funds Company (known as SAMAT) Mohammad Reza Mohseni announced in an interview with IRNA.

The official said that some 264 foreign investors have received dealing

codes in Iran's market since the last Iranian calendar year's tenth month of Dey (December 21, 2015-January 19, 2016, when Iran signed the landmark nuclear deal with the world's major powers), adding that this figure shows 42 percent rise compared with the figure of the same period of time in the preceding year.

Also, Amir Hamooni, the CEO of Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), told



on the head of a delegation of 30 managing directors of some German companies, said that given the fruitful negotiations conducted in Tehran, it is hoped that the talks will continue in Berlin.

In a joint press conference with Dobrindt after signing the agreement, Akhoundi announced that the two sides

also agreed on manufacturing of 50 diesel locomotives in Iran's Mapna Group through cooperation of Germany's Siemens.

Dobrindt had also visited Iran in October during which he signed six transport cooperation agreements with Akhoundi.

Renault reports record sales, expects further growth

French carmaker Groupe Renault reported record sales for 2016 thanks to growth in Europe and in overseas markets such as India and Iran, and it expected more progress this year.

Sales rose 13.3 percent last year and vehicles sold in 2016 topped 3.18 million vehicles - a sales record, it said.

"Our strategy of product range renewal and geographic expansion, under way for several years now,

has proven to be successful. It enables the Groupe Renault to progress significantly in terms of volume and market share in every region," said Thierry Koskas, member of Renault's executive committee, in a statement.

Renault's figures painted a similar picture to that of rival PSA which last week also reported higher sales, with the lifting of international sanctions against Iran boosting PSA's sales there.

(Source: Reuters)

Swedish prime minister to visit Iran heading a trade delegation

Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven will visit Iran at the invitation of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

A business delegation, including representatives of a large number of Swedish companies and government agencies, will also be travelling to Iran.

The delegation, led by Minister for EU Affairs and Trade Ann Linde, is part of the Government's Team Sweden initiative and export strategy to promote increased Swedish presence in growth markets.

Historically, Iran has been one of Sweden's most important export markets in the Middle East and several Swedish companies have long had a presence in the country.

Iran is an important political and economic actor with a key role in the region. Developments in the Middle East increasingly affect both Europe and Sweden. The Prime Minister has therefore travelled extensively in the region and spoken with the major stakeholders.

(Source: government.se)

Trump, Brexit uncertainty hit stocks and dollar, gold jumps

Stocks, bond yields and the dollar fell on Tuesday, while gold rose as investors drew in their horns in response to comments on the dollar from U.S. President-elect Donald Trump and ahead of a speech on Brexit from British Prime Minister Theresa May.

Trump's remarks that the dollar is too strong and hurting U.S. competitiveness pushed the greenback down across the board, even against sterling, which is under heavy pressure as May is expected to confirm her "hard Brexit" stance later on Tuesday.

Britain's pound was higher on the day but still close to Monday's three-month lows, while the Japanese yen hit a six-week high as investors sought shelter from the mounting political risk of a week that also includes Trump's inauguration.

Investors are seeking clarity on his policies after campaign pledges on tax cuts and government spending helped lift stocks and the dollar and were deemed positive for economic growth.

In remarks to the Wall Street Journal published on its website late on Monday, however, Trump said U.S. companies could not compete with China "because our currency is too strong. And it's killing us".

Safe-haven investments such as gold and government debt also gained.

"Sterling is trading higher ahead of Theresa May's speech on Brexit but we're expecting a wild ride for the pound today," said Neil Wilson, senior market analyst at ETX Capital.

"These gains are largely down to dollar weakness, however, and gold has risen amid a bid for safer assets ahead of this speech and Donald Trump's inauguration on Friday."

The dollar was down a third of 1 percent against a basket of currencies .DXY, and down 1 percent against



the Japanese yen to a six-week low of 113.04 JPY=.

The euro was up 0.6 percent at \$1.0665 EUR=, while sterling rebounded 1 percent to \$1.2160 GBP=D4. The prospect of Britain losing access to the single market drove sterling as low as \$1.1983 on Monday, its weakest, barring an Oct. 7 "flash crash", for more than three decades.

Prime Minister May speaks at 1145 GMT and is expected to say Britain will not seek a "half in, half out" deal when it leaves the European Union. She will set out 12 priorities for talks with the EU, her office said, and media reports said these would include an indication she is prepared for Britain to leave the bloc's single market.

"We have taken back all of the move from yesterday morning. The speech has been so well telegraphed that I think people (betting against sterling) realize that is dangerous," said Richard Benson, co-head of portfolio investment with currency fund Mil-



GM's Cadillac sees double-digit sales growth in China this year

General Motors Co's (GM.N) Cadillac expects sales in China to continue growing at a double-digit rate this year, but at a slower pace than in 2016 when volumes saw a sharp spike after the brand opened its first dedicated factory in the country.

Cadillac, relatively late to introduce local production in the world's biggest auto market, is among a second wave of luxury car brands in China that seek to take market share from established brands such as BMW (BMWG.DE), Daimler's (DAIGn.DE) Mercedes-Benz, and Volkswagen's (VOWG_p.DE) Audi.



Hyundai Motor to boost U.S. investment as automakers respond to Trump

The Hyundai Motor Group said it plans to lift U.S. investment by 50 percent to \$3.1 billion over five years and may build a new U.S. plant - the latest auto firm to announce fresh spending after President-elect Donald Trump threatened to tax imports. Under pressure to deliver on campaign promises to revive U.S. industrial jobs, Trump has warned of a 35 percent tax on vehicles imported from Mexico where many automakers have taken advantage of the country's lower labor costs.

Toyota Motor Corp (7203.T), Ford Motor Co (FN) and Fiat Chrysler (FCHAM.I) have recently unveiled new U.S. investment plans. General Motors Co (GM.N) will announce as early as Tuesday it will invest about \$1 billion in its U.S. factories, a person briefed on the matter said.



BAT agrees to buy Reynolds for \$49b

British American Tobacco (BATS.L) has agreed a \$49.4 billion takeover of U.S. rival Reynolds American Inc (RAIN), creating the world's biggest listed tobacco company after it increased an earlier offer by more than \$2 billion.

BAT, which already owned 42 percent of Reynolds, will pay \$29.44 in cash and 0.5260 BAT shares for each Reynolds share, it said, a 26 percent premium over the price of the stock on Oct. 20, the day before BAT's first offer was made public.

Reynolds, the maker of Camel and Newport cigarettes, rejected the approach a month later, according to sources, although the two sides remained in talks.

Iran's 9-month petchem exports up 7% on year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's petrochemical sector's exports has increased by seven percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (ending December 20, 2016) compared to the same period last year.

The country exported 16 million tons of petrochemical products in the mentioned period, Ali Mohammad Bosaqzadeh, the production control director at Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC), told Shana on Monday.

According to the official some 40 million tons of petrochemical products were produced in the country during the said time span to register an eight percent rise compared to the previous year.

"Witnessing a 17 percent rise compared to the first nine months of the preceding year, this year's 12.5 million tons of the total production were used inside the country which is an indication of more activity in this industry's downstream sector," he said.

Bosaqzadeh also noted that the country's petrochemical complexes' output has witnessed a 5-10 percent rise during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-September 21, 2016) compared to the same period in the previous year.

After the implementation of Iran's nuclear deal, NPC has received high willingness from European companies for cooperation with Iran in the petrochemical sector both in financing and licensing.



According to NPC Managing Director Marziyeh Shahdaie, Iran has reached 70 percent self-sufficiency in manufacturing equipment needed in petrochemical industry.

Iran crude exports to Europe stay high

Iranian crude exports to Europe and Turkey rose to another post-sanctions high in December, offsetting lower shipments to Asia-Pacific compared with previous months, as overall export levels remained steady.

Crude shipments to Europe rose to just shy of 700,000 barrels per day (b/d), up around 155,000 b/d month on month — their highest since U.S. and EU nuclear-related sanctions came to an end in January last year. Two very large crude carriers (VLCC) also departed from Iranian terminals last month and are taking the longer Cape route to likely delivery to Europe, while part of the increase is also driven by higher spot sales.

As in the previous month, Italy was a key buyer in the region. Eni has finalized

a term contract to take up to 100,000 b/d with state-owned NIOC for 2017, for a minimum of one year from January. In November, Eni took two spot cargoes and another two vessels in December were seen heading to Italy for Eni, although this may rise to three.

Some crude in December was also delivered to Italy's Augusta port from the VLCC Sara, which had left Iran at the end of October, and sat off Malta until the end of December. The remainder of the cargo delivered to Fos-sur-Mer in France.

Iran has widened its pool of European customers since sanctions were lifted to include France, Spain, Greece, Italy, Poland, Croatia, Romania and the Netherlands. A one-million-barrel cargo of Ira-

nian Light loaded in late December for Polish refiner PKN Orlen's 325,000 b/d Plock refinery, aboard the Vilamoura — the second cargo to head to Poland after refiner Lotos took a cargo in August.

In December, term buyer Lukoil may also take its first shipment directly to Burgas — the destination currently being signaled — aboard the Aframax vessel Seafalcon, which left at the end of November. Lukoil sometimes takes spot cargoes in addition to its term volume contract of around 35,000 b/d.

Shipments to Turkey were stable month on month at around 160,000 b/d, on a preliminary basis.

Iran could continue to regain market share in Europe and Asia-Pacific at the expense of other Mideast Persian

Gulf producers and Russia in 2017, after OPEC gave Tehran special dispensation to boost its output next year. That said January export levels are expected to remain stable month on month at around 2.1 million b/d, although this will also partly depend on spot sales. Some current term buyers are taking below their contractual amounts and have room to increase.

OPEC agreed in Vienna on 30 November to reduce its collective production by 1.2 million b/d for six months starting from January, but Iran is exempt from the deal. The country has been allowed to increase production by an average of 90,000 b/d over the six-month period from a base of 3.71 million b/d.

(Source: Argus Media)

Iran's tankers to resume European deliveries

Iran's tanker fleet is poised to resume direct deliveries to European ports.

The 1mn bl Suezmax Sonia 1, part of state-owned NITC's fleet, has been outside the Spanish Mediterranean port of Algeciras since 14 December after loading in Iran in late November and subsequently passing through the Suez Canal. Fixture lists suggest the tanker is expected to berth at Algeciras on 18 December, before becoming open again for another cargo from 20 December.

There have been regular crude shipments from Iran to European ports this year — including deliveries to Spanish refiner Cepsa at Algeciras — but this might be the first cargo delivered on an NITC-owned tanker since the relaxation of EU and U.S. sanctions against Iran.

NITC owns a considerable fleet, comprising 42 very large crude carriers VLCCs — each capable of holding 2mn bl — and around nine Suezmaxes, but even since the nuclear deal was reached and sanctions lifted those tankers have been barred from European ports because of concerns about liability and indemnity, age, status and suitability. So the tankers have primarily remained engaged as floating storage, or in moving crude to traditional Asia-Pacific buyers such as India and Japan.

But NITC adopted the Panama flag in July for the majority of its fleet, giving the tankers a widely-used and recognized flag state. And the state-owned firm secured P&I coverage in August through a group of European P&I clubs.

(Source: Argus Media)

Oil prices mixed on Saudi commitment to cut output, investor skepticism

Oil prices were mixed on Tuesday, supported by Saudi Arabia saying it would adhere to a commitment to cut output, but held back by rising U.S. production and skepticism that OPEC as a whole would comply with its commitments to reduce supplies.

Brent crude futures, the international benchmark for oil prices, were at \$55.76 per barrel at 0813 GMT, down 10 cents from their last close.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures, however, were up 15 cents at \$52.51 per barrel.

Traders said markets were receiving some support from top crude exporter Saudi Arabia, which said it would adhere strictly to its commitment to cut output under the agreement between OPEC and other producers like Russia.

Under the agreement, OPEC, Russia, and other non-OPEC producers have pledged to cut oil output by nearly 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd), initially for six months, to bring supplies back in line with consumption.

(Source: Bloomberg)



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The world needs a new strategy to tackle the migration crisis

By William Lacy Swing

Thousands are dying trying to reach Europe. World leaders meeting at Davos should adopt a strategy to stop this unnecessary loss of life.

Inequality: how do we assess it? Sometimes it's about someone not having enough to eat. In this snowy season in the northern hemisphere, it's also about not having enough heat – and dying as a result.

As European and world leaders approach the World Economic Forum in Davos, they should reflect on the growing number of helpless migrants who have frozen to death in the current cold weather. We have learned of victims from Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Somalia, with the possibility of many more to be found in a grim archipelago of makeshift settlements – car parks, warehouses and other places migrants gather, from Bulgaria to the English Channel.

■ The UN's migration agency

For the past three years, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN's migration agency, has been compiling data on migrant and refugees' deaths for its Missing Migrants Project. We have calculated 18,501 deaths and migrants missing, most of them drowned in the Mediterranean and other deadly spots.

Nearly 7,500 of those worldwide fatalities were recorded last year, a total that is certain to rise as the last pieces of 2016 data are processed. This is an astounding statistic: roughly 17 men, women and children perishing every day for the last 1,096 days, or nearly one every hour.

Of course there are days no migrant dies – and other days when hundreds do. Nonetheless, it's time to stop counting and start changing, beginning with the way we manage migration worldwide. Because to do otherwise is to ignore the world's true plague of inequality – between the masses that have enough to eat and heat and the ones that do not.

Mass migration to Europe isn't going to end – not for decades. Economists forecast that with Europe's birth rate falling and its native-born population rapidly ageing, the continent's available labour force is contracting. In fact, Europe faces a worker shortage measured in the millions until at least 2050.

And with Africa's population expected to double during that same period (and African economies unlikely to create jobs fast enough to absorb the emerging talent), there is simply no way two opposites – ageing Europe and youthful Africa – won't attract. Nonetheless, Europe's citizens need to feel their borders are secure. Right now, they don't, so we must do better. We can start by abetting regular migration, which experience has shown has the direct impact of reducing irregular migration.

■ Fleeing conflict

We can assist those fleeing conflict with temporary protective status that offers asylum-seekers safety, but not permanently. We can accept young workers with short-term employment visas, while at the same time offer higher-skilled migrants student visas, which pay long-term dividends to issuers both by filling current labour gaps while generating higher incomes for migrant families for years to come.

This second part is crucial. The more regular migrants can earn, the more irregular migrants can stay at home.

This shared-wealth model has worked for centuries, starting with the Irish, Scandinavian and Mediterranean migration waves that left Europe in the 1800s, when the possibility of thousands earning livelihoods abroad let millions remain behind. It happened again after 1989, when Poles, Romanians and citizens of other post-communist regimes flocked (not always with legal work papers) to jobs abroad that kept their people housed and fed – and their infant democracies from collapsing into chaos.

Today, too much of the world sees a solution in blocking migration, despite clear evidence that restrictive migration policies mainly enrich smugglers. It costs migrants anywhere from €500 to €2,500 to risk their lives crossing the Mediterranean, sums many times greater than whatever expenses criminal organization face to stuff their victims into the un-worthy crafts that last year took thousands of lives.

■ A comprehensive migration plan

Europe seeks a comprehensive migration plan, which has eluded policymakers for years. Individual countries have made great strides, such as Germany's initiative to screen asylum-eligible Syrians in Turkey before attempting dangerous Mediterranean crossings. The EU is now working with IOM across 14 African countries to save lives by spreading information about the lethal perils awaiting some of the world's poorest migrants in their dash across the Sahara, well before those same migrants attempt sea crossings.

The captains of industry gathering with heads of state in snowy Davos might reflect on how they can bring the enormous resources of the private sector to the issue of migration.

In a globalized world, top corporations have the freedom to hire the best and brightest, but they're a minority. Too many employers – households, small businesses, farmers – must cope with increasing border restrictions, which ultimately push up the cost of imported labour. That only serves to enrich smuggling gangs. We need to put these criminals out of business by taking away demand for their services. We can emphasize family reunification – putting the burden of integrating new arrivals with those best equipped to handle that task: their relatives already established here. We can let industries desperate for lower-skilled labour – agriculture, cleaning services, nursing homes among them – bid to pay the transit and licensing fees European states may set to bring documented workers here.

Migrants would gladly pay these fees to come legally. We know this because we see how much they're already willing to pay to come here without them.

Last year, almost 7,500 paid with their lives.

(Source: The Guardian)

Trump to Europe: Drop dead

It's time to say it: Donald Trump is a mortal threat to the Western alliance.

By Alex Massie

It is, remarkably, no exaggeration to say that almost everyone in Europe awaits the presidency of Donald Trump with a sense of dread. Almost everyone, that is, save for the resurgent parties of the populist far-right who see, in Trump, an example they dearly wish to emulate.

The European mainstream, however, shrinks from Trump as it has never shrunk from any previous American president. No, not Ronald Reagan and no, not even George W Bush either. Trump has not even taken office and he is already the most dangerous U.S. president in living memory. Perhaps, even, of all time.

■ Not a politician

Whatever else they were, Reagan and Bush were both men of some political experience. Trump, as he told the Times of London and Germany's Bild, is "not a politician" and that is precisely the point. The generous assessment of the president-elect's potential allows that his less than conventional approach to international affairs ensures that America's foes will not easily be able to fathom or predict his intentions.

There is some merit in being a surprise package. But even if that is the case, the same consideration applies to the United States' allies. And the questions being asked in European capitals tonight are simple one: Is this a president we can rely upon? A president whose word is his bond? A president with whom we can do business?

The evidence, as revealed by Trump's first post-election interview with the European press, is not reassuring. For 60 years, NATO and the European Union have been at the heart of the transatlantic security and trade relationships. Judged by Trump's interview, that is no longer the case. The new president doesn't think the EU "matters very much for the United States"; NATO is "obsolete." If this rhetoric is etched by a shift in American foreign policy, then the rules and assumptions that have underpinned the Western world since the Second World War will no longer apply. We will be in uncharted territory.

Trump's reasons for thinking NATO obsolete are also revealing. The alliance is decrepit because it isn't "taking care of terror." It never seems to occur to Trump that NATO, whose members include the Baltic states, could have other purposes than just targeting terror cells and movements around the world. (It's also worth noting that the only time in its history that Article 5 of the NATO charter, which requires allies to come to one another's defense, was invoked was in response to the 9/11 attacks.)

While deploring Russia's intervention in



The new president doesn't think the EU "matters very much for the United States"; NATO is "obsolete."

Syria, Trump insists there is an opportunity to "make some good deals with Russia."

How can Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania have any confidence in the Atlantic alliance now? At present, it is hard to believe so, which truly would render NATO obsolete.

As Nicholas Soames, a British Conservative MP and grandson of Winston Churchill, tweeted, "Trump needs to show he is not naïve." That naiveté is already on full and proud display. There was nothing in Trump's interview that would worry the Russian president but plenty to appall almost every significant European government. Indeed, Russian state TV greeted Trump's remarks with the satisfied headline, "Trump slapped the West"

Asked whether he trusts German Chancellor Angela Merkel more than he trusts Putin, Trump could say only, "Well, I start off trusting both—but let's see how long that lasts." This, like so much else Trump says, is a statement of flabbergasting proportions. The United

States, it seems, no longer has allies. But that, of course, is the logical implication of his 'America First' rhetoric.

Nor will Trump's enthusiasm for Brexit have gone unnoticed in Berlin, Paris or Brussels either. His predictions that the eurozone will collapse and that other member states will seek to leave the EU appeared to made with an unbecoming relish and confirmed that, for the first time since WWII, the United States is led by a man who views Europe as a problem -- and even as a competitor -- rather than as a partner and ally.

Revealingly, Trump rejected the traditional view that trade is a win-win proposition. In Trump's world, it is a zero-sum game in which only one side can win. Present arrangements, he said, are "very unfair to the United States" and transatlantic trade is "not a two-way street." Just as feckless Europeans refuse to pay enough towards the cost of their own defense, so they fleece a weak and timorous United States when it comes to trade. The concept of comparative, or even mutual, advantage

appears utterly alien to him. That thought alone should remind pro-Brexit Britons enthused by Trump's lukewarm words about post-Brexit U.S.-UK trade deal that not everything that glitters in Trump Tower is golden. Or reliable.

And that is the crux of the matter. Europe must now, as Merkel put it in response to Trump's shocking comments, "make its own future." Perhaps President Trump will be a more conventional figure than President-elect Trump, but the early indications are somewhat less than reassuring. The United States remains the world's indispensable nation, but we may be about to find out what happens when the indispensable nation decides it is no longer capable of assuming the role it once considered its birthright.

When the world's leader departs, what fills the void? America's oldest, closest friends are only now waking up to the grim idea that however bad they thought President Trump might be the reality may prove much, much, worse than that.

(Source: Politico)

The Paris peace conference was like a funeral without a corpse

By Motasem A Dalloul

The conference held in Paris on Sunday looking at the Palestine-Israel conflict concluded with the usual final statement calling for Palestinian and Israeli commitment to the two-state solution; among other things it encouraged "meaningful" direct negotiations and called on both sides to "refrain from unilateral steps". The conference was like a funeral with lots of mourners, but no corpse.

Neither the Palestinians nor the Israelis went to Paris, despite "their" conflict being the focus of attention; they didn't have any official representation at all. Furthermore, the French government went ahead with the conference even though the Israelis rejected it in advance; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described it as "futile" and dismissed it as being "among the last twitches of the world of yesterday."

Of course, the Palestinian Authority leadership applauded Paris although it knows that it will not have any impact on the ground. President Mahmoud Abbas said that the conference would help to stop "settlement activities and destroying the two-state solution through diktats and the use of force."

What sort of mindset does the PA leadership have? Abbas has just seen the Israelis dismiss out of hand a resolution by the UN Security Council condemning illegal settlements and yet he thinks that this pale shadow of a conference will stop settlement expansion and deter Israeli violations? The French themselves said that the peace conference was not intended to put any pressure on the Israelis or Palestinians. Faced with this fact, what can we expect from such a dead event which had a final statement that is not really worth the paper it is written on?

■ The moribund two-state solution

Keeping the moribund two-state solution alive does not reflect the position of the Israelis and the situation on the ground. Israel's Ynet News, for example, said that Netanyahu has ruled out a return to the 1967 borders (themselves based upon the 1949 Armistice — the "Green" — Line); many members of his coalition oppose Palestinian independence and support expanded settlements both on ideological and security grounds. This means that the "two state solution" is anything but



President Mahmoud Abbas said that the conference would help to stop "settlement activities and destroying the two-state solution through diktats and the use of force."

a solution as far as Israel is concerned. Hence, any effort towards that end is wasted.

Although Israel insisted that it would never commit to any of the conference recommendations, it nevertheless insisted on influencing the final statement, according to Ynet News and others.

Who did the dirty work if Israel was not there in Paris? The United States, of course. Israel basically told Secretary of State John Kerry to play the game on its behalf and he carried out his mission successfully. Netanyahu's office confirmed as much.

Furthermore, just to make sure, Britain — in Paris as an observer, not a participant — cast doubt on the qualifications of the 70 nations which did take part to sponsor anything relating to the Palestine-Israel conflict. As an observer, of course, Britain couldn't back any final statement which contained clauses against Israel's wishes,

even if Theresa May's government wanted to. Given her criticism of Kerry's post-resolution 2334 statement, it is doubtful if that would have been the case.

All in all, it is hard to see how anyone could think that the Paris Conference was a worthwhile exercise. Platitudes and rhetoric do not change the situation on the ground, nor do they give us Palestinians much cause to be optimistic. As its response to resolution 2334 demonstrated, Israel is going to do what it wants in terms of the colonization of Palestine and to hell with the international community. In both the outgoing and incoming U.S. administrations it has firm friends; nothing said in Paris or elsewhere is going to change that. If there is a corpse at this particular funereal gathering, it is that of an independent Palestinian state.

(Source: middleeastmonitor.com)

IEO conf. secretary: Trump's economic policies likely to hit Iranian economy

Iran Economic Outlook Conference will address prospects of Iran's economy with new contributing factor coming to the fore and no less important Trump's assuming power in the White House as a factor of huge impact on global as well as Iranian economy.

Amir Reza Hassani told a press conference held to discuss IEO 2017, a conference to be held in February 27, that despite the continued modest economic growth during 4 past decades, the growth had not been optimum, while the economy had only had negative growth rate in 12 years; "the Conference will present other factors of contribution on Iran's economy than those discussed in 2016 edition; apart from 9 factors, others will be among the topics discussed, notably, international conditions, JCPOA-related restrictions, financial outsourcing system, fiscal policies, market and unemployment



The impact from the changes in US economic policies is inevitable and would be negative or positive; if oil prices catapult, it will benefit Iranian economy.

rate, inflation, economic growth, law amendments, and oil incomes," he told the press.

Hassani also added that an important factor largely unnoticed by the investors had been the management of knowledge of the markets; "knowledge of the markets is crucial to develop any understanding of the market mechanisms; an investor who invests based on whims and not actual knowledge will not attain any benefit from a given market," he said. "For example, to trade on floating exchange rate would be damaging since in a floating market, fluctuations of the exchange rate would hit the trade suddenly; the Conference hypothesizes that technological advances translate readily into economic growth of the firms; while the economy had experienced only 12 years of negative economic growth, the average positive growth lacks the quality it should have had. This is



Iran Economic Outlook Conference to be held in February 27 will address prospects of Iran's economy.

ascribed to the fact that the economy is highly inefficient," said the conference secretary.

On possible impact of Trump's economic policies, Hassani believed the issue would provide the Conference with a major topic; "the impact from the changes in US economic policies is inevitable and would be negative or positive; if oil prices catapult, it will benefit Iranian economy; especially when Resistance Economy hugely invests

on the oil incomes as the major parameter; any Trumpian policy toward Japan, China, and South Korea which are major importer of Iranian crude would also be of importance," he said.

Changes in prices of major goods would also be a possible Trump effect, with JCPOA as an area to be under the impact of the power transition in the White House, Hassani was quoted as saying in the press conference.

Half of world's wealth, in the pockets of just eight men

By Baher Kamal

Just eight men own the same wealth as the 3.6 billion people who make up the poorest half of humanity, according to a major new report by an international confederation of 19 organisations working in more than 90 countries.

Oxfam International's report, 'An economy for the 99 per cent', which was released on January 16, shows that the gap between rich and poor is "far greater than had been feared."

"The richest are accumulating wealth at such an astonishing rate that the world could see its first trillionaire in just 25 years. To put this figure in perspective – you would need to spend 1 million dollars every day for 2738 years to spend 1 trillion dollars."

The report details how big business and the super-rich are fuelling the inequality crisis by dodging taxes, driving down wages and using their power to influence politics.

"New and better data on the distribution of global wealth – particularly in India and China – indicates that the poorest half of the world has less wealth than had been previously thought."

Had this new data been available last year, the report adds, it would have shown that nine billionaires owned the same wealth as the poorest half of the planet, and not 62, as Oxfam calculated at the time.

Obscene!

On this, Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of Oxfam International, said: "It is obscene for so much wealth to be held in the hands of so few when 1 in 10 people survive on less than 2 dollars a day. Inequality is trapping hundreds of millions in poverty; it is fracturing our societies and undermining democracy."

"Across the world, people are being left behind. Their wages are stagnating yet corporate bosses take home million dollar bonuses;

their health and education services are cut while corporations and the super-rich dodge their taxes; their voices are ignored as governments sing to the tune of big business and a wealthy elite."

Oxfam's report shows "how our broken economies are funnelling wealth to a rich elite at the expense of the poorest in society, the majority of who are women." (See Part II of IPS series).

Tax Dodging

Oxfam's report also tackles the critical issue of tax dodging.

Corporate tax dodging, it in-



Corporate tax dodging costs poor countries at least 100 billion dollars every year; this is enough money to provide education for 124 million children who aren't in school and fund healthcare interventions that could prevent the deaths of at least six million children every year."

Oxfam International's latest report, 'An economy for the 99 per cent', shows that the gap between rich and poor is "far greater than had been feared."

forms, costs poor countries at least 100 billion dollars every year.

"This is enough money to provide an education for the 124 million children who aren't in school and fund healthcare interventions that could prevent the deaths of at least six million children every year."

The report outlines how the super-rich use a network of tax havens

to avoid paying their fair share of tax and an army of wealth managers to secure returns on their investments that would not be available to ordinary savers.

Contrary to popular belief, many of the super-rich are not 'self-made'. Oxfam analysis shows over half the world's billionaires either inherited their wealth or accumulated it through industries, which are prone to corruption and cronyism.

It also demonstrates how big business and the super-rich use their money and connections to ensure government policy works for them.

World Income Inequality in Focus at UNU-WIDER – United Nations University. Photo: Ted McGrath. Creative Commons BY-NC-SA (cropped).

World Income Inequality in Focus at UNU-WIDER – United Nations University. Photo: Ted McGrath. Creative Commons BY-NC-SA (cropped).

A Human Economy?

"Governments are not helpless in the face of technological change and market forces. If politicians stop obsessing with GDP [Gross Domestic Product], and focus on delivering for all their citizens and not just a wealthy few, a better future is possible for everyone."

Oxfam's blueprint for a more human economy includes a series of measures that should be adopted by governments to end the extreme concentration of wealth to end poverty.

These include increasing taxes on both wealth and high incomes to ensure a more level playing field, and to generate funds needed to invest in healthcare, education and



If politicians stop obsessing with GDP and focus on delivering for all their citizens and not just a wealthy few, a better future is possible for everyone."

job creation; to work together to ensure workers are paid a decent wage; and to put a stop to tax dodging and the race to the bottom on corporate tax.

These steps also include supporting companies that benefit their workers and society rather than just their shareholders.

As well, governments should ensure economies work for women, and must help to dismantle the barriers to women's economic progress such as access to education and the unfair burden of unpaid care work.

Does Anybody Care?

Here, a key question arises: national governments, the UN, the EU, and major civil society and human rights organisations, all know about the on-going, obscene inequality. How come that nothing effective has been done so far to prevent it or at least reduce it?

On this, Anna Ratcliff, OXFAM's International's Media officer, Inequality and "Even It Up Campaign," comments to IPS that "tackling ine-

quality properly will mean breaking with the economic model we have been following for thirty years."

"It will also mean taking on and overcoming the powerful interests of the super-rich and corporations who are benefiting from the status quo. So it is not surprising that despite global outcry at the inequality crisis, very little has changed."

Nevertheless, says Ratcliff, some governments are bucking the trend, and managing to reduce inequality, listening to the demands of the majority not the minority.

Asked for specific examples, Ratcliff says that some governments, like Namibia's, have managed to decrease inequality by taxing the rich more and spending it on things such as free secondary education that help reduce the gap between rich and poor.

"These countries show that another world is possible, if we can reject this broken economic model and stop the undue influence of the rich."

Morocco bans the burqa

By Hakim Khatib

The Moroccan authorities have invoked security reasons to prohibiting the burqa, which is rarely worn by Moroccan women who prefer the hijab.

Moroccan authorities have prohibited the manufacture and sale of burqas for security reasons. The measure appears to be motivated by security concerns,



where "bandits have repeatedly used this garment to perpetrate their crimes," local media reports say.

Burqa is a traditionally integral Muslim veil to Afghani women of the Pashtun tribes. It is a long piece of clothing, blue or brown, completely covers the head and body with a cloth grid concealing the eyes.

According to the local press, le ministère de l'intérieur issued a communication to its agents in charge of business in towns, urging them not to allow the manufacture and marketing of burqas as of this week. No official announcement or public communication on the subject has however been made by the ministry.

On 09 January 2017, interior agents conducted "campaigns to raise awareness among traders" in Casablanca, the country's economic capital, "to inform them of the new decision of banning the burqa," according to the website Media 24.

Official documents show that Moroccan authorities ordered traders in the north and the south of the country to stop making and selling Afghani burqas and to liquidate their stock within 48 hours.

The burqa remains an extremely marginal phenomenon in Morocco, a country torn between modernity and conservatism, whose king, Mohammed VI, is the champion of the so-called "moderate Islam".

An almost similar piece of cloth, called niqab, remains a traditional clothing in the Moroccan society. The difference between the niqab and hijab is fundamental: While the niqab almost completely covers the head except for the eyes, hijab is a veil that only covers the hair.

In Morocco, niqab, an integral veil that reveals only the eyes, is worn by certain women, especially in Salafist circles in conservative regions in the north of the country and small towns. Thus, while responses and reactions to the ban of burqa have been limited so far, Salafists have been increasingly concerned about the scope of this decision and its probable extension to the niqab.

Ali Anouzla, a Moroccan journalist, said on his Facebook page as reported by The New York Times: "I am against the culture of banning in principle, but just to be clear, the Interior Ministry didn't ban the hijab or



niqab but banned the burqa, and the burqa isn't part of Morocco's culture."

A representative of the Morocco Observatory for Human Development considered the ban of burqa a "random decision and an assault on women's freedom of expression".

Nuzha Saqali, a former minister for Family and Social Development, welcomed the ban and described it as "an important step in the fight against religious extremism".

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Everything you wanted to know about cancer diets

While there is no magic diet that will cure or prevent cancer, intervention in a patient's diet will help them maintain an acceptable quality of life – as long as that intervention comes from a medically qualified professional with no vested interests. Which brings us to the case of Australian blogger Belle Gibson, who is facing legal action for "unconscionable conduct" after promoting a book in which she talked of curing herself of multiple cancers by eating the right things. The publisher, Penguin, paid more than A\$264,000 (£160,000) for the book and Gibson also made more than A\$420,000 from app sales before it emerged that she had never had cancer. Her claims to have donated over A\$300,000 to charities also turned out to be false.

In contrast, a recipe book for cancer patients experiencing weight loss from University College, Cork, and one for patients with swallowing difficulties from Breakthrough Cancer Research have been developed by dietitians and are available free of charge.

■ What is an oncology dietitian?

Oncology dietitians provide expert, evidence-based advice to cancer patients to help maintain their strength, wellbeing and quality of life. They can, for example, develop plans using fluids or tube feeding to help maintain weight and muscle mass. They also address side effects of treatment that affect a patient's ability to eat. Qualifying as an oncology dietitian involves a four-year undergraduate degree in human nutrition and dietetics, with a hospital placement. Alternatively, people with a related science degree can obtain a postgraduate qualification in dietetics, followed by at least three years of post-qualification hospital work.

Ruth Kilcawley and Fiona Roulston are oncology dietitians. Frustratingly, says Kilcawley, much of the misinformation about diet and cancer her patients receive comes from well-intentioned loved



The link between too much red meat and cancer is weak.

ones, while Roulston's patients often get information online. "If you enter 'nutrition and cancer' into Google, you get over 123m results. With so much conflicting information, it makes it so confusing and overwhelming for cancer patients at an already stressful time."

■ What about a vegan diet?

There isn't currently any strong evidence that eating too much red meat causes cancer. Some studies have shown a weak possibility that red meat may be associated with colorectal cancer in men. But an association is not a cause. There is some evidence that vegan diets may aid weight loss in certain people (though this may partly relate to vegans simply being more aware of what, and therefore how much, they eat). However, a healthy diet hinges on avoiding overindulgence and ensuring that we get enough nutrients to meet our essential needs. The few scientific studies on veganism and vegetarianism refer to a lack of data on vegan diets, but some vegan diets have been shown to result in calcium levels that are below

minimum dietary regulations. In a small study of men with early-stage prostate cancer, a vegan diet resulted in vitamin D deficiency.

"Unnecessary diet restrictions of food groups are not recommended during cancer treatment," says Roulston. Kilcawley adds: "The negative consequences include accelerating muscle loss. This leads to reduced ability to tolerate treatment, inadequate micronutrient intake (particularly calcium, which may compound bone mineral density issues with some types of chemotherapy), lack of energy, low mood and fatigue."

■ But surely we all know that sugar is carcinogenic

Eating too much fatty and sugary food is not good for anyone. But the idea that cancer has a sweet tooth and that a patient can "starve" their cancer by cutting all sugars and carbohydrates is a gross oversimplification for a complex disease that behaves differently from patient to patient. It simply isn't the case that cake feeds cancer while eggs feed healthy cells, and cutting carbs completely puts patients at increased risk

of malnutrition. A study of more than 1,000 patients across three Irish hospitals found alarming levels of malnutrition amongst cancer patients.

The case study of a 65-year-old woman who recovered from a brain tumour has been used to promote the idea that a low-carb, high-fat "ketogenic diet" is a cure for cancer. However, this patient had also received standard chemotherapy and radiation for almost all cancers.

Nutrition is complex. Patients should seek advice on their individual needs from a qualified professional. No competent professional will ever tell a patient to forgo evidence-based medicine in favour of a diet.

■ What about supplements and superfoods?

Anything that alters how your body works is a drug, even if it's "natural". Supplements not recommended by a dietitian can interact with other drugs, including anti-cancer therapies, and make them less effective. The Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre urges patients to stop taking any herbal supplements before starting treatment and lists some of the dangerous effects such "natural remedies" can have. The term "superfoods" is simply part of a marketing strategy, not based on science.

"There is huge manipulation of people's emotions going on when someone tries a fad diet, hoping against hope it will cure them, and then subsequently fails because it is restrictive, unpalatable, or the patient is simply too ill," says Kilcawley. "They risk blaming their own failure in keeping to the diet on any progression of disease, which is excessively cruel of those promoting diets without sufficient evidence that the diet if kept to would be effective. I see this a lot"

(Source: The Guardian)

Eating hot red chili peppers may help us live longer

New research brings some good news for lovers of spicy foods, after finding that eating hot red chili peppers might help to extend lifespan.

A study of more than 16,000 people in the United States revealed that individuals who consumed red chili peppers had a lower risk of death from all causes over an average of 18 years than those who did not eat the spicy food.

Chili peppers are the fruits of the Capsicum plant, which belongs to the nightshade family. There are many types of chili pepper, all of which have different heat levels.



In hot peppers, such as jalapeños, the fiery flavor comes from a compound called capsaicin. Studies have suggested that this compound can offer a wealth of health benefits.

A recent study reported by Medical News Today, for example, found that capsaicin might have the potential to halt breast cancer, while an earlier study linked the compound to a reduced risk of colorectal cancer.

According to Chopan and Littenberg, only one previous study – published in The BMJ in 2015 – has investigated how the consumption of spicy foods such as chili peppers can impact death risk. It found a link between regular consumption of such foods and reduced all-cause and cause-specific mortality.

The new study supports this association, after finding that people who eat hot red chili peppers might have a longer lifespan.

Chopan and Littenberg reached their findings by analyzing the data of 16,179 adults aged 18 or above who took part in the National Health and Nutritional Examination Survey III between 1988 and 1994.

At the point of survey, participants' consumption of hot red chili peppers over the past month was assessed using a food frequency questionnaire.

The all-cause and cause-specific mortality of participants were monitored over a median follow-up period of 18.9 years using the National Death Index. During follow-up, 4,946 deaths occurred.

Compared with participants who did not consume hot red chili peppers, those who did were found to be at a 13 percent reduced risk of all-cause mortality.

Because of the relatively small number of deaths in this study, Chopan and Littenberg say that their data on how red chili pepper intake might impact specific causes of death is limited.

Still, the available data suggested that hot red chili pepper consumption was most strongly associated with a reduced risk of death from vascular diseases, such as heart disease and stroke.

(Source: MNT)

Colic study stirs prickly debate on acupuncture

By Jacqueline Howard

The shrill sobs just won't stop.

Although some bawling is normal for babies, excessive crying for more than three hours a day, lasting more than three days a week, might be a sign that a doctor's intervention is in order.

Excessive crying is known as infantile colic, and a new study suggests that acupuncture may reduce colicky crying when other treatments don't help.

Colicky babies who received acupuncture in the new study appeared to cry less after treatment than those who didn't receive acupuncture, said Kajsa Landgren, a lecturer in the department of health sciences at Lunds

University in Sweden.

Landgren was lead author of the study, published in the journal Acupuncture in Medicine on Tuesday.

Many studies suggest that acupuncture can relieve pain, restore gastrointestinal function, and have a calming effect in adults, Landgren said. But, for infants, "a definite benefit is that acupuncture shortens the strenuous period of colic," she said.

"Infants seem to tolerate acupuncture with mild stimulation fairly well," Landgren said.

Yet not all experts agree that there is enough evidence to deem acupuncture a safe and effective approach to reduce a colicky baby's cries.

Infantile colic is the cause of 10% to 20% of all early

pediatrician visits for babies 2 weeks to 3 months old, and it typically peaks around 6 weeks of age.

■ 'I was a bit surprised'

The new study involved 147 infants in Sweden, between 2 and 8 weeks old, whose parents sought help for colic. The little ones were separated into three groups.

One group received minimal acupuncture: pricked at one acupuncture point for two to five seconds twice a week for two weeks. The second group received up to five pricks at acupuncture points, for up to 30 seconds twice weekly over the two-week period. The third group received no acupuncture, just standard care.

→13

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10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

Here are high rated IT titles in the world that reviewed by savvy tech users:

- Android 7.0 update halted in China for the Samsung Galaxy S7 and Galaxy S7 edge because of bugs and other issues on the official update.
- China begins censoring mobile apps. The new regulation is aimed the plethora of app stores cropping up in China by the month. There are currently over 200 app stores in China
- Microsoft patents revealed 2-in-1 foldable mobile device that can act both as a tablet and a smartphone.
- AnTuTu releases the top ten scoring phones of 2016 that the top average score of 181,316 belongs to the Apple iPhone 7 Plus.
- Google says Pixel audio issue is a hardware problem and your best bet is to put a claim in for the warranty replacement.
- Foxconn could build a Sharp LCD manufacturing facility in the U.S. Foxconn acquired Sharp in February 2016 for the price of \$6.2 billion. With that transaction, Foxconn picked up the glass producing capabilities of Sharp.
- LG says that the battery on the LG G6 won't overheat at high temperatures. This technology is commonly found in PC, laptop, and notebook batteries and lowers the temperature inside a device by 6% to 10%.
- Vodafone has partnered with Ericsson and Cisco to virtualize its core network in the hope that it will improve customer experience while reducing opex and capex spend.
- ?Baidu appoints former Microsoft, Yahoo executive as group president and COO. Baidu has announced the appointment of Dr Qi Lu as its group president and chief operating officer, who will be responsible for the organization's products, technology, sales, marketing, and operations, effective immediately.
- Airbus hopes to test self-flying taxi by end of 2017. The self-flying car may become more than just a figment of our imaginations, with aerospace giant Airbus looking to test its prototype in the air by the end of 2017.

ISIS has converted commercial drones into bombers

The latest bomber to make its debut over Iraq has four engines, no cockpit, and a flight time limited by the length of its battery. ISIS, the radical insurgent group holding territory in both Syria and Iraq, is fighting for its life in Mosul, the large city in Northern Iraq it has held since 2014. Most of the weapons ISIS uses are familiar, if still horrific: rifles and mortars, artillery and suicidal car bombs. To that arsenal, ISIS recently added commercial drones, converted into tiny bombers.



Previously, we've seen ISIS scratch-build drones, and as Iraqi Security Forces retook parts of Mosul, they discovered a vast infrastructure of workshops (complete with quality control) for building standardized munitions, weapons, and explosives. In October, Kurdish soldiers died dismantling a booby-trapped ISIS drone. These drone bombers recently captured by Iraqi forces and shared with American advisors appear to be commercial, off-the-shelf models, adapted to carry grenade-sized payloads.

"It's not as if it is a large, armed UAV [unmanned aerial vehicle] that is dropping munitions from the wings—but literally, a very small quadcopter that drops a small munition in a somewhat imprecise manner," [Col. Brett] Sylvia, commander of an American military advising mission in Iraq, told Military Times. "They are very short-range, targeting those front-line troops from the Iraqis."

Because the drones used are commercial models, it likely means that anti-drone weapons already on hand with the American advisors are sufficient to stop them. The Battelle Drone Defender, spotted in Iraq last summer, is a gun-shaped jamming tool that can send some models of drone crashing to the ground. It's part of a growing field of anti-drone countermeasures, many of which focus on radio-frequency jamming to disable the flying machines.

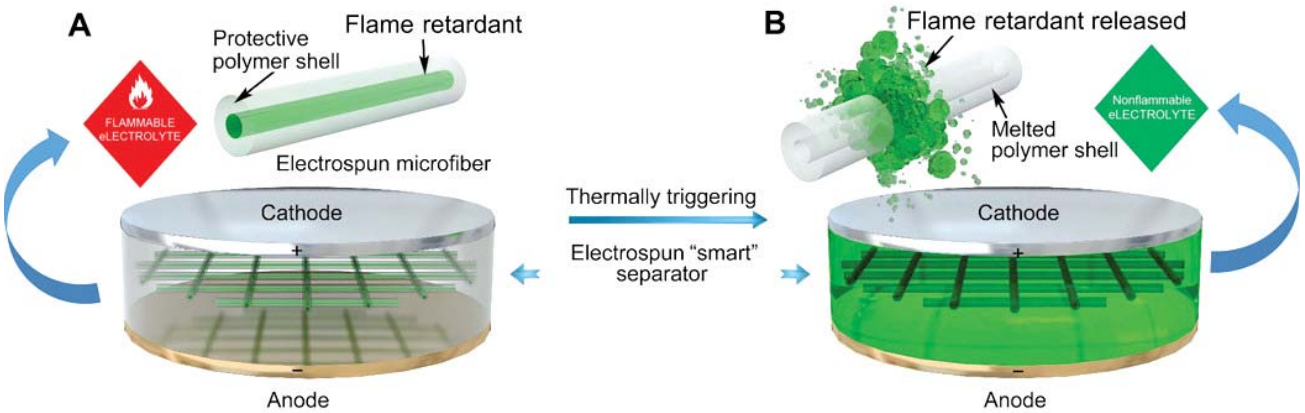
(Source: popsci)

The future of smartphones: fireproof batteries

As technology progresses, mobile devices become more and more powerful and capable. But with the increased power, also comes a greater need for higher capacity batteries, capable of sustaining the needs of their host devices.

As of late, however — meaning the last couple of years — there has been a growing number of reports about smartphones, and other mobile devices, bursting in flames while charging, or much worse, while on their owner. Most notably, last year the Samsung Galaxy Note 7 faced a global recall due to a still-mysterious defect that caused many units to catch fire, forcing the Korean tech giant to pull its latest flagship from the market. If there is a bright side to this whole fiasco, it would be the fact that major tech companies and researchers alike have taken note and are working toward preventing such issues in the future.

To tackle the problem, researchers from the Stanford University have developed a Li-ion battery with a “nonwoven electrospun separator with thermal-triggered flame-retardant properties”, or in layman's terms, a battery with a de facto fire extinguisher built-in. While the concept



is not exactly new, previous attempts have resulted batteries with significantly reduced performance. This one, on the other hand, performs just as well as it would without the new fireproofing system, claims Prof Yi Cui, the project's lead scientist.

The Stanford-developed battery employs a plastic fiber separator that keeps negative and positive electrodes away from each other, infused with a compound called triphenyl

phosphate, which has flame retardant properties. If the battery reaches a temperature of 150 °C, the separator melts and releases the phosphate. The Stanford University research team claims that this method of dealing with overheating batteries can extinguish any flames within 0.4 seconds, which is mighty impressive.

While it will be some time until this method, or a similar one, is successfully employed in mass produced Li-on bat-

teries, it's still reassuring to see that scientific researchers are constantly working on ways to solve overheating problems, or at least battle the consequences thereof.

On a semi-related note, LG has promised that the battery of the upcoming LG G6 won't overheat, thanks to a system of copper heat pipes that will drive heat away from the battery. To learn more about that, check out our story on LG's fireproof battery.

(Source: ScienceAdvances)

Microsoft CEO says AI should help, not replace, workers

Artificial intelligence has gone from being something relegated to science fiction, to a buzzword every tech company is eager to slap onto their latest innovations. When it comes to the implementation of AI, though, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella is urging for companies to take a considerate approach. "The fundamental need of every person is to be able to use their time more effectively, not to say, 'let us replace you,'" he said at the DLD conference in Munich, according to Bloomberg.

While acknowledging that AI will be democratized quite a bit this year, Nadella noted, "The most exciting thing to me is not just our own promise of AI as exhibited by these products, but to take that capability and put it in the hands of every developer and every organization." The notion goes back to his revised mission statement for Microsoft to "empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more."



It's nice to see a CEO take a more humanistic approach to fancy new technologies for once. But it's also hard to deny that even a light approach to AI could eventually lead to stronger implementations that could end up replacing human employees. That'll be even more pronounced as artificial intelligence is applied to automation, something that's already hurting manufacturing jobs (while increasing productivity for companies). As we've pointed out, technology could end up replacing retail jobs soon, similar to what we've seen with the Amazon Go concept store.

(Source: bloomberg)

Asus targets 35-40 million smartphone shipments per year

AsusTek Computer, or simply Asus, is hoping to expand its smartphone business twofold in the next three years, according to a report from Chinese publication Apple Daily. By 2020, the company aims to ship between 35 and 40 million devices per year, comprising about 3 percent of the global market.

The company sold about 20 million smartphones in 2016, in large part thanks to its flagship ZenFone 3 line of devices. Its successor, the ZenFone 4 series, will launch in the second quarter of this year, according to CEO Jerry Shen.

Last year saw AsusTek experience 5 percent overall growth in smartphone shipments, with that number going as high as 20 percent in individual countries. The company stated that it's committed to strengthening its foothold in the Chinese market, noting the recent release of its ZenFone Pegasus 3 in the country.

(Source: Digtimes)



Intel wants sensors to help you with your shopping

As quickly as technology is reinventing your shopping experience, Intel doesn't think it's moving quickly enough. The chip giant is launching a Responsive Retail Platform that creates a common set of sensors, software kits and other components for in-store tech. It promises to speed up inventory tracking, provide feedback on buying habits and personalize your shopping. Stores might not have to cobble together separate solutions or make their own -- they'd just have to turn to Intel and partners for everything they need.

The company is also backing up its words with cold, hard cash. It's investing over \$100 million into the retail industry over the next 5 years to help get the ball rolling.

It's not certain just what a complete Intel solution looks like. However, the company is showcasing the kind of tech-



nology it wants to see. Simbe Robotics' Tally keeps tabs on store shelves, for instance, while ShopperMXtM HIVE gives retailers a virtual reality preview of store layouts. In short: if it's Intel-powered and pushes technological limits, there's a good chance the company is thinking about it.

Intel probably isn't the first name you associate with retail, but it certainly has clear incentives to jump into this space with both feet. More than anything, it's a way to accelerate Intel's fledgling Internet of Things business -- someone has to design the sensors those stores will use. It also serves as one more hedge against a declining PC industry. It's hard to know if shops will welcome Intel with open arms, but something tells us that the company is willing to wait until people warm up to its presence.

(Source: Intel)

Samsung inquest finds Note7 battery is to blame



Reuters reports that Samsung's official investigation regarding the Galaxy Note7 fire bursts concluded that the battery mainly is to blame. The company is yet to officially announce the results of its investigation to the public.

The word "mainly" used by the anonymous Reuters source is interesting. As we reported back in December, experts from Instrumental ruled that Note7's exploding battery is caused by extreme reduction of internal margins.

If the Samsung Galaxy Note7 was designed with slightly more room for the battery, the phone wouldn't have caught fire.

Over 96% of Galaxy Note7 phones are back at Samsung and airlines are no longer warning users for the fire hazard that the smartphone imposes. We'll be waiting for the company's official statement which should come next week.

(Source: Reuters)

Huawei Mate 9 version with 6GB RAM surfaces



Huawei Mate 9 is one mighty impressive handset with massive battery life and amazing dual-lens camera by Leica.

Until now the two versions of the device MHA-L29 (Global unit) and MHA-L09 (Chinese unit) came with 4GB RAM. But the 5.9" octa-core device appeared in several online stores across the world with even better specifications - 6GB RAM and 128 GB ROM.

And no, this isn't the Mate 9 Pro, this is the vanilla Huawei Mate 9 with its flat 5.9" display, 4000 mAh battery power and EMUI 5.0 based on Android Nougat 7.0.

The new version is priced about \$800 in several Chinese stores but on the European market is expected to cost more due to various taxes. We spotted a unit at RON4,099 or about \$950 and this was on promo.

(Source: to2c)

Risk of tree species disappearing in central Africa a ‘major concern,’ say researchers

Human disturbance may often be criticized for harming the environment, but new research suggests a persistent lack of human attention in the central African forest could actually cause some tree species to disappear.

The study, from Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech – Université de Liège and the Royal Museum for Central Africa, both in Belgium, presents challenges to current practices in forest maintenance and suggests how more effective measures could be taken in future. The findings are published in the journal *eLife*.

“Populations of light-demanding trees that dominate the canopy of central African forests are currently aging. With previous studies showing that few young trees are growing to replace them, they are likely to disappear if the forests are not properly maintained. This is a major concern,” says first author Julie Morin-Rivat.

In the current study, Morin-Rivat and her team set out to understand what has happened in the central African forest to stop the regeneration of the light-demanding trees.

Their analyses, which focused on four species in the northern Congo Basin, showed that most of the trees in these species were about 165 years old, meaning they all grew from young trees that



“Populations of light-demanding trees that dominate the canopy of central African forests are currently aging. With previous studies showing that few young trees are growing to replace them, they are likely to disappear if the forests are not properly maintained. This is a major concern,” says first author Julie Morin-Rivat.

The real manakin challenge

Let’s get the temptation to make bad jokes out of the way first. This story is about manakins, not mannequins. It is about mating acrobatics by Panamanian birds, not the mannequin challenge.

If you are one of the three people in the world who have not heard about the mannequin challenge that is terrific. You can concentrate without distraction on the beauty and complexity of bird behavior. And the way male manakins leap around and snap their wings to attract the attention of females is truly challenging.

They bring their wings together over their backs so they meet with an audible snap. A male manakin can do this 50 to 60 times a second. A series of wing snaps is called a roll snap.

They also do this wing snap when they are jumping from sapling to sapling around a neat portion of forest floor that scientists call a court. That is a jump snap.

Brain wiring

Barney A. Schlinger, a biologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, who studies manakins and how brain wiring relates to behavior, said, “At the last second they flip their wings and land perfectly. They look like the best gymnasts you’ve ever seen.”

Dr. Schlinger and his colleague Ioana Chiver, a re-

searcher at U.C.L.A., wanted to know whether females could do these acrobatics, because they normally do not. Eventually, they would like to find exactly what it is in the brain and muscles is responsible for these complicated actions.

But for the research they reported in the journal *Animal Behaviour*, Dr. Chiver and Dr. Schlinger just tried to see if females that received testosterone would perform the male mating wing snaps, twists and jumps.

For the experiment they caught and tested young manakins, male and female, and took them to the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama.

Analysis of blood

Even determining their sex was no small task, requiring analysis of a small bit of blood.

“Recording them was the fun part,” Dr. Chiver said. She spent the better part of two years doing the capturing and testing and preparation. So watching the performances was a reward.

The “males just dance the whole day” she said. And they eat only papaya and other fruit. “It’s unbelievable what a little fruit can do for you.”

In the experiment, the juvenile males did all the acrobatics that the adult males did. They also engaged in



another typical male behavior. They cleaned their territory, aggressively removing stray leaves and other debris from their mating court, a patch of ground in the middle of several saplings.

The females also proved they could do wing snaps and roll snaps. “That was a big surprise,” Dr. Chiver said. The researchers had expected that the acrobatics would be hard wired in the males, but not the females.

(Source: *The NYT*)

Giant gravity wave spotted on Venus

It looks like a giant ripple across the face of Venus, and that’s pretty much what it is. Not long after entering Venusian orbit in December 2015, the Japanese Akatsuki orbiter captured a strange atmospheric phenomenon: a gravity wave in the planet’s upper cloud layer.

Don’t confuse this with the gravitational waves caused by colliding black holes that made history last year. Gravity waves are common, and you’ve probably seen their effects on the clouds and oceans with your own eyes. They’re caused when

an atmosphere or body of water is disturbed, such as tides flowing over a sandbar, or air flowing over a mountain range. As gravity attempts to restore equilibrium, it overshoots, causing a wave effect.

This is what probably caused the 10,000-kilometre (6,214-mile) wave across the surface of Venus. As the atmosphere of thick sulphuric acid cloud rotates at a faster rate than the planet itself, details in the surface topography can cause these disturbances, resulting in large-scale gravity waves.

Bow-shaped structure

“Here we report the detection of an interhemispheric bow-shaped structure stretching 10,000 km across at the cloud-top level of Venus in middle infrared and ultraviolet images from the Japanese orbiter Akatsuki,” the study, led by Makoto Taguchi of Tokyo’s Rikkyo University in the journal *Nature Geoscience*, reads.

“Over several days of observation, the bow-shaped structure remained relatively fixed in position above the highland on the slowly rotating surface, despite the

background atmospheric super rotation. We suggest that the bow-shaped structure is the result of an atmospheric gravity wave generated in the lower atmosphere by mountain topography that then propagated upwards.”

Every planet in the Solar System has its own peculiarities, but Venus is a straight-up weirdo. Although it’s sometimes described as Earth’s “twin”, being rocky like Earth and of a similar size and mass, it’s also wildly different.

(Source: *CNET*)

Non-Communicable Diseases Research Center Wins 1st Rank in Razi Festival

Non-Communicable Diseases Research Center of Institute of Endocrinology and Metabolism, affiliated to Tehran University of Medical Sciences, managed to win first rank at 22nd Razi Medical Sciences Research Festival.

The validity of certificate awarded to this Center is between one to three years which does not enjoy an independent clinical budget. The lack of independent clinical budget is meant that this reliable scientific and research center has managed to attract proper financial contribution (GRANT) for the implementation of research projects in the field of health sector of the country, the report added.

The criteria for assessing scientific knowledge of faculty members at this edition of festival are as follows:

- Number of scientific research activities conducted and published by medical sciences research centers,



- Number of research projects conducted by domestic and foreign researchers attended the festival,
- Number of articles that domestic researchers have published them in world’s prestigious magazines,

- Establishing cooperation and coordination with distinguished researchers and also with leading scientific and research centers of other countries such as Harvard University, London Royal College, World Health Organization (WHO), etc.

It should be noted that Non-Communicable Diseases Research Center of Institute of Endocrinology and Metabolism, affiliated to Tehran University of Medical Sciences has currently conducted a number of large and national projects in the field of health sector, the most important of which are as follows: provision of a comprehensive atlas for diseases of the country (from 1990 to 2015) which is considered as one of the unique and unparalleled scientific researchers in the country as provided by the Center developed and authored by Dr. Farshad Farzadfar and his colleagues at the Center.

“Peugeot 207i Hatchback” & “Dena Plus” Unveiled by IKCO

In the presence of domestic and international media on January 15, Iran Khodro Industrial Group introduced two sedans of Peugeot 207i and Dena Plus, which are the new versions of their standard models.

During the press conference, Keyvan Vaziri, IKCO Deputy CEO in New Product Development told the press, “Introducing new cars is one of IKCO’s strategic objectives; thereby the two new sedans of Peugeot 207i and Dena Plus were developed in IKCO NPD center, however these two

will be mass-produced in Q2 2017.”

“In designing and developing Peugeot 207i, we have taken into consideration the taste of Iranian customers who look for family cars the most, while we can grab a better share of the market,” he declared.

IKCO Deputy CEO also claimed that rear bumpers, spoiler, new rear lights and a rearview camera were some of the changes that could be traced and at the same time, safety standards were boosted.

IKCO is also going to introduce a new

generation of Peugeot cars, which will be 508, 2008, 208 and 301, hitting Iran’s market in 2017 and 2018.

Presenting Dena Plus specifications to the press, Vaziri mentioned, “This car is the first Iranian sedan with four airbags and this is why its safety standards is more desirable.”

Given the equipment and facilities that have been used in this car for the first time among other Iranian brands, IKCO Deputy CEO stressed, “Dena Plus enjoys side airbags, in-built sunroof,

rearview camera and a multimedia system.”

“Designing bodylines that extends from side doors to rear fenders and taking advantage of LED daytime running lights are other newly added features,” he asserted.

Dena is IKCO’s latest product, the ex-version of which was fully received in Iran’s market and even abroad. Dena Plus that enjoys the latest technology is a B segment, family-friendly car with a reasonable price.

Scientists use light to turn mice into stone-cold killers

A team of scientists used brain control to turn about a dozen ordinary mice into killing machines. They employed a technique called optogenetics that manipulates neurons using light to make the fluffy critters go all Hulk on their prey.

With the light switched off, the mice were mostly chill, sometimes even scurrying around their cages to avoid prey or toys made to resemble prey. But when the switch was on, things got ugly. Crickets in cages were attacked and beheaded, and plastic toys that looked like prey received powerful bites that would have been lethal.

The scientists are not trying to create a monster. “Basically, we are trying to understand how large brain networks work,” said Ivan de Araujo, an author of the study, published Thursday in the journal *Cell*. Araujo, an associate professor of psychiatry and physiology at Yale University, and his co-authors, Wenfei Han of Yale and Newton Canteras, a neurobiologist at the University of Sao Paulo, sought to answer a long-standing question in their field: what parts of the brain trigger certain motor responses?

In neurobiology, studying the complex brain functions that govern predatory behavior is a good way to do that.

Predatory behavior involves complex motor actions, and studying it can help neurobiologists determine how different parts of the brain organize the see-how-they-run impulse to hunt, track, pounce, bite and kill. Over the three years of the study, Araujo observed signals that controlled the necks of the mice, their head positioning and the movement of their jaws.

“We ... targeted the groups of neurons that control predatory hunting, pursuit, capture and killing,” Araujo said. The team attached a sensory device to the rodents’ heads and pulsed blue light that activated neurons that had been engineered to respond to light, triggering the killing instinct.

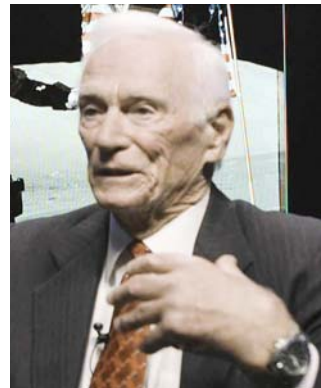
(Source: *the star.com*)

Farewell to Eugene Cernan, the last man to walk on the moon

It is a mark of America’s loss of cosmic daring that the footprints he left on the moon 44 years ago remain the freshest.

Gene Cernan never knew about the plan NASA approved to cut him loose in space — or at least he didn’t know about it at the time. When Cernan, who died Monday at age 82, did learn about it, long after any danger had passed, he could only laugh.

It was in June 1966, as he and Tom Stafford were heading to the launch pad to take off aboard Gemini 9, that Stafford — but not Cernan — learned of the plan. Stafford was the commander of the mission — the man who would sit in the left-hand seat of the spacecraft.



Cernan was the second in command of the two-man crew, but his subordinate position carried one important perk: the man in the right-hand seat was the one who would perform any spacewalks, while the commander stayed inside and tended to the ship.

Spacewalks, however — then and forever — were dangerous things. There was no certainty that an astronaut who ventured outside a Gemini spacecraft would be able to climb back inside again — all manner of problems from a breakdown in life-support systems to a snaring of the long umbilical cord connecting him to the ship potentially making it impossible. So, shortly before the two men rode the gantry elevator to the top of the rocket on launch day, Deke Slayton, the chief astronaut, pulled Stafford aside and told him that in an emergency like that, he was to do everything he could to save his crew mate, but if it all failed, he was to cut him loose, seal the hatch and fly home alone.

(Source: *Time*)

Flying cars to be here by end of 2017, says Airbus

One of the world’s biggest aerospace companies plans to test a prototype of a flying car by the end of this year, a move that could be a big step towards easing congestion on urban roads.

Airbus’s chief executive Tom Enders told a technology conference in Germany that its Project Vahana unit planned to test a small prototype vehicle for single passengers by the end of the year.

The company envisages passengers being able to hail autonomous air taxis via an app in a similar way to ride-sharing schemes such as Uber.

Airbus has been working on “vertical take-off and landing” (VTOL) technology that would allow vehicles to pick up passengers in busy urban areas, and has said it expects to be putting them into production by 2021.

Although flying cars have been a staple of science fiction for decades, investment in the concept is finally emerging. Google founder Larry Page has invested millions into two flying car start-ups, while Chinese company E-Hang has a prototype design.

Uber has also said it is researching VTOL as an alternative way for passengers to get around, while companies such as Amazon are working on delivery drones, suggesting the skies above cities could become crowded territory in the future.

“One hundred years ago, urban transport went underground, now we have the technological wherewithal to go above ground,” Enders told the DLD conference in Munich.

Airbus’s Urban Air Mobility unit has previously said it is working on ideas for individual vehicles as well as ones that could carry multiple people.

(Source: *The Telegraph*)

Iran, Sri Lanka to bolster technological co-op

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iran and Sri Lanka have inked a memorandum of understanding to improve technological cooperation.

The visiting Seri Lankan minister of science, technology and research, Susil Premajayantha, and the Iranian vice president for science and technology, Sorena Sattari, signed the MOU in Tehran on Tuesday.

The two sides pledged to consider and discuss possible future cooperation on nanotechnology, biotechnology, ICT, etc., IRNA news agency reported.



Mentioning Iran's remarkable scientific and technological advances Premajayantha highlighted that "by recognizing Iran's technological achievement despite years of sanctions we now see Iran in a positive light."

"We need other countries technology to make progress and considering Iran's advances we are willing to cooperate with Iran closely," the Sri Lankan minister stated.

The two countries are also due to follow up on equipping Sri Lankan oil and gas analysis laboratories and initiating cooperation between Sri Lanka's Industrial Technology Institute (ITI) and Iran's Nanotechnology Development Fund, he noted.

He further expressed hope for the negotiations to come to fruition in no time.

Sattari, for his part, also explained that Iran's economy is now less dependent on oil economy as there are some 2,800 knowledge-based companies operating in the country which are projected to grow to some 3,000 by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20).

Sattari also underscored the importance of trained manpower as the real treasure to the country saying that with some 4.8 million students in the country and a large number of engineering student graduating annually Iran can do greater by moving from resource-based economy toward one that is knowledge-based.

Southeast Asia's first heart transplant patient dies at 76

Southeast Asia's first heart transplant patient and one of the world's longest surviving cases has died, his family said on Monday, January 16, more than 31 years after his operation.

Singaporean Seah Chiang Nee, a former newspaper editor, died aged 76 in a local hospital on Saturday, his wife Patricia Wong told AFP. He was hospitalized in July.

Seah underwent heart transplant surgery on October 12, 1985 in Sydney, when doctors removed his organ in a five-and-a-half hour operation and replaced it with that of a 17-year-old boy who had just died.

"Based on his record he should be one of the longest-surviving in the world," said Kenneth Ng, a cardiologist at the Mount Elizabeth Novena Hospital in Singapore.

"The median survival rate for heart transplant is only 10 years... so it is definitely on the high end"

The world's longest surviving heart transplant patient was a Briton named John McCafferty, who died at age 73 last year, 33 years after the transplant, according to British media reports.

In an interview with AFP in 2005, 20 years after the operation, Seah said he would have been content to live for four or five years after the transplant.

He said he had never imagined he would be able to welcome the new millennium. *(Source: The Rappler)*

LEARN ENGLISH New Year's Resolution

A: So, did I tell you about my **New Year's resolution**? I've decided to go on a **diet**.

B: And you're going to completely **transform** your **eating habits**, right?

A: Exactly! I'm going to **cut out** all that **junk** I eat; no more chips, no more soda, no more fried food.

B: I've heard this one before.

A: But this time I'm going to **stick** to it. I really **mean it**! Trust me, Carol, I'm going to be a new man in one year's time!

B: Well, I guess we'll just have to **wait and see**.

A: Thanks, honey that was a great meal. I'm **stuffed**. Do we have any chips left?

■ Key vocabulary

resolution: a promise to yourself to do something

New Year's resolution: a decision to do something better or to stop doing something bad in the New Year

diet: eating plan to help you lose weight

transform: change

eating habits: usual ways of eating

cut out: remove, eliminate

junk: food that is not healthy, for example because it contains a lot of fat, sugar etc.

stick to continue doing something

mean it: to be serious about what you are saying

wait and see: remain in a state in which you expect something to happen, and see if it does

stuffed: filled with food; no longer hungry

■ Supplementary vocabulary

calorie: unit of energy in food

vegetarian: person who does not eat meat

fast food: food that is prepared and served quickly

work out: exercise at a gym

lifestyle change: change the way you live

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Environmental protection, industrial development intertwined: minister

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Protecting the environment and developing the industry are directly linked, Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammadreza Ne'matzadeh said on Tuesday.

He made the remarks over a conference held on the occasion of the national day of clean air, January 18, with Department of Environment Chief Masoumeh Ebtekar and Vice President Mohammad Shariatmadari in attendance, IRNA news agency reported.

"Preserving the environment and manufacturing products with least environmental impacts possible is an obligation we owe to the environment and we are under no compulsion to do so," Ne'matzadeh highlighted.

"Currently car manufacturer are required to maintain some 54 standards but we are planning on increasing the number to 80 to keep up with other world car manufacturing technology," he added.

He further explained that two Iranian manufacturing companies are developing new efficient and low-emission cars in association with Germany and Austria which will be soon available in the market.



Deputy environment chief Saeed Motesaddi (C) and Industry Minister Mohammadreza Ne'matzadeh (R) are seeing two electric motorcycles showcased on the sidelines of the conference.

■ Nuclear deal brings about new era of intl. interaction on green-tech

Ebtekar, for her part, pointed out that the nuclear deal has brought about a new era of international interaction and application on green and new technologies in

the country.

"Now we can enjoy considerable advantages in terms of using other countries experiences and taking foreign investment opportunities to develop green technologies in Iran," Ebtekar noted.

Paris vehicle pollution sticker scheme comes into force

Drivers in Paris must display an anti-pollution sticker in their vehicles or face fines in the latest attempt by the French authorities to improve air quality.

The sticker scheme, which became mandatory on Monday, includes cars, lorries, motorcycles and scooters, and bans some vehicles from the city during weekdays.

It follows numerous spikes in pollution in which smog has descended over the French capital, forcing traffic reduction measures and the introduction of free public transport on the worst days.

The six different coloured Crit'Air (air criteria) stickers indicate the age and cleanliness of a vehicle. Certain vehicles – including petrol and diesel cars registered before 1996; vans registered before 1997; pre-2000 scooters and motorbikes; and lorries, trucks and buses from before 2001 – are banned from the city between 8am and 8pm.

Foreign-registered vehicles have been given until March to obtain their stickers, which cost €4.18 each, payable online.

The scheme was unveiled last year and stickers have been available since July.

The French government announced 1.4m Crit'Air



stickers had been ordered through the official website, but a police check carried out across Paris last week found only one in 50 vehicles stopped had the sticker.

About 600,000 vehicles are estimated to drive in and around the city every day. Those found without stickers can be fined €68 for cars and €138 for lorries.

Other cities in France have anti-pollution sticker schemes, but Paris has chosen to make it permanent. The authorities say that in the event of high pollution

it will make it easier to ban less clean vehicles from the city, instead of banning half of all cars depending on the registration plate, as has been done up until now.

The mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, has made it clear she will continue her campaign to reduce by half the number of cars in the city by making life increasingly difficult for motorists.

City hall plans include closing roads to traffic and pedestrianizing areas of the capital as well as an eventual ban on all diesel vehicles.

"More cars means more pollution, fewer cars means less pollution. It seems obvious but in this post-truth age there are those who would argue that fewer cars means more pollution. We prefer to stick to the truth," Hidalgo told journalists last week.

Experts dispute the estimated number of premature deaths caused by air pollution in France, but Hidalgo said there were about 40,000 a year.

"The lead particles are found not just in the lungs, but the heart and brain, especially those of children. So we will continue to try to make Paris a city where people can breathe."

(Source: The Guardian)

IN FOCUS 📷 Mizan/ Ali Shirband



A young Iranian entrepreneur has set up a farm on a business loan in Jiroft, Kerman province. Doing this he has provided six people with job as well.



ENGLISH IN USE LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ↔ ب

Iran allots loans of up to \$3,000 to bicycles, electric motorcycles

Iran has allotted loans of up to 100 million rials (nearly \$3,000) to bicycles and electric motorcycles, an official with the Department of Environment has said.

"People can take out loans of 30 million rials (nearly \$1,000) to 100 million rials to buy bicycles and electric motorcycles," YJC quoted Mohammad Darvish as saying.

Mentioning car-free Tuesdays campaign Darvish explained that in line with the policies to mitigate air pollution in the country, phase out single passenger commutes to work, and reduce noise pollution such loans are arranged for the citizens.

ENGLISH PROVERB More haste, less speed

■ **Explanation**: once makes more progress if they take time to do things carefully

■ **For example**: I know we're all eager to get the new software released to the public, but remember: more haste, less speed. We don't want to end up wasting time fixing bugs that could have been avoided.

PHRASAL VERB Bust somebody for something

■ **Meaning**: if the police bust someone, they charge them with a crime

■ **For example**: Davis got busted for drugs.

ENGLISH IDIOM Load of baloney

■ **Explanation**: the term refers to idle talk, or pretentious, untrue or insincere statements that nobody can believe

■ **For example**: That's a load of baloney! I don't believe a word of it!

وام ۱۰ میلیون تومانی برای خرید دوچرخه و موتورسیکلت برقی

یکی از مسئولین سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست گفت: ایران برای خرید دوچرخه

موتور و سیکلت برقی به متقاضیان تا سقف ۱۰ میلیون وام می دهد.

به گزارش باشگاه خبرنگاران محمد درویش گفت: افراد می توانند برای خرید

دوچرخه موتور سیکلت برقی ما بین ۳ میلیون تا ۱۰ میلیون وام دریافت کنند.

وی با اشاره به پوشش سه‌شنبه‌های بدون خودرو گفت: اختصاص وام به خریداران

دوچرخه و یا موتور سیکلت برقی در جهت کاهش استفاده از خودروهای تک

سرنشین، آلودگی هوای شهر و آلودگی صوتی در نظر گرفته شده است.

Syrian troops clash with ISIL in Deir al-Zor

Syrian government forces clashed with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group fighters for a fourth day on Tuesday in an eastern city where an extremist assault has left more than 100 dead, activists said.

ISIL began a fierce attack on Saturday on the remaining parts of Deir al-Zor under government control, and has managed to divide the city's eastern half from the west.

It has also cut the supply route running from the city's key military airport, limiting the government's ability to bring in supplies and military reinforcements.

The Britain-based so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) activist group said on Tuesday that Syria's military and allied forces were carrying out airstrikes against ISIL, as government troops battled the extremists on the ground.

ISIL already controlled more than half of Deir al-Zor city, and has laid siege to around 100,000 people inside since early



2015.

But the latest assault, which included waves of suicide bombers, is the "most violent" attack on the city in more than a year, according to the Observatory.

The activists said on Tuesday that three days of fighting had killed at least 116 people, among them 21 civilians, 37 members of government forces and 58 ISIL terrorists.

It said the government was flying re-inforcements into the military base and had called up local residents to fight on the front lines against ISIL, including some without military training.

Since the siege began, the government has been able to fly limited supplies into the airport, and international aid has been intermittently dropped into the city.

But residents have nonetheless faced shortages and rising prices, as well as being unable to leave the city.

Deir al-Zor sits in the oil-rich eastern province of the same name, most of which is controlled by ISIL.

The ISIL terrorist group has lost swathes of territory in northern Syria to Kurdish fighters as well as a Turkish-backed rebel alliance, but it remains on the offensive in other parts of the country.

More than 310,000 people have been killed in Syria since the foreign backed conflict began in March.

(Source: AFP)

180 missing people presumed dead after shipwreck

Four people are dead and nearly 180 are missing, presumed dead, after a ship capsized in the Mediterranean, officials said after interviewing a handful of survivors.

Humanitarian workers from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) recounted harrowing details of the latest major tragedy in waters off Libya after talking to four rescued passengers - two Eritreans and two Ethiopians - who arrived on Monday evening in the Sicilian port of Trapani.

The survivors, three men and one woman, were described as "traumatized and exhausted". They said their two-tier, wooden boat had left Libya on Friday with more 180 people packed on board, all of them originally from East Africa.

After five hours at sea, the engine cut out and the boat started to take on water. As it slowly sank, more and more of the people on board were submerged.

One of the survivors described a desperate effort to find his wife, who had taken a spot in the center of the ship.

After hours in the water, the survivors were rescued on Saturday, 30 nautical miles from the Libyan coast, by a French boat operating as part of the European borders agency's Operation Triton before being transferred to another agency ship, the Siem Pilot.

Siem Pilot, provided by the Norwegian coastguard, arrived in Trapani on Monday evening with the four survivors, four recovered bodies and 34 people rescued from another stricken boat.

The latest deaths and rescues follow a record year for the number of people trying to reach Europe on the western Mediterranean route from North Africa to Italy.

Some 181,000 people were registered at Italian ports in 2016 while the UNHCR recorded more than 5,000 deaths and presumed deaths on all migration routes across the Mediterranean.

Despite the mid-winter weather making crossings particularly perilous, the start of 2017 has brought no sign of departures slowing, with some 2,300 people already registered in Italy since January 1.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

26 House Democrats boycotting Trump's inauguration

More than two dozen Democratic lawmakers have announced their boycott of United States President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration on January 20, particularly over Russia's alleged meddling in the 2016 election and his criticism of a civil rights leader.

Some Democrats have said they will be protesting in Washington, DC, and in their districts instead of participating in the swearing-in ceremony of the 45th president of the United States on Friday.

All the 26 lawmakers, who will be shunning Trump's inauguration, are members of the House of Representatives; no senators have said they are boycotting the event.

Some of the Democrats had declared their absence during the oath ceremony on the Capitol Hill prior to Trump's row with African American civil rights icon and Democratic Congressman John Lewis.

Last week, Trump sparked outrage by condemning Lewis after the congressman said he would boycott the president-elect's inauguration because he doesn't see him as the "legitimate" president in light of reports of Russian

interference.

"You cannot be at home with something that you feel that is wrong," Lewis said.

In a Twitter outburst on Saturday, Trump said Lewis, the Representative for Georgia's 5th congressional district, should spend more time trying to fix his "horrible" and "crime-infested" district rather than "complaining" about the Russia's role in the United States presidential election.

Earlier this month, the U.S. intelligence community released an unclassified 25-page report, claiming that the Russian government had directed hackers to target various Democratic Party organizations and operatives to influence the outcome of the election.

The intelligence community's document accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of personally ordering his government to help Trump win the November election.

Meanwhile, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has denounced the intelligence community's report on the alleged Russian meddling as a politically motivated "press release."

(Source: Press TV)

Turkey Kurd leader risks up to 142 years in jail

Turkish prosecutors are demanding up to 142 years in prison for pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP/Halklar'n Demokratik Partisi) co-leader Selahattin Demirtas on charges of links to Kurdish militants, state media said on Tuesday.

The charismatic Demirtas was detained in November along with another nine HDP lawmakers and his female co-leader Figen Yuksekdag.

Prosecutors in the Kurdish-majority southeastern city of Diyarbakir in the same indictment asked that Yuksekdag serves up to 83 years in jail, the state-run Anadolu news agency added.

The MPs are charged of links with and membership

of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê), which has waged an armed insurrection against the Turkish state since 1984.

But Demirtas, as well as the other MPs, has denied having any links to the PKK and denounced the case as political.

The Kurdish leader says he is being punished for daring to oppose President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's drive for a presidential system.

The government had pursued a strategy of peace talks with the PKK but clashes flared in 2015 after the collapse of a two-and-a-half year ceasefire.

The PKK is designated as a terrorist group by Ankara and its Western allies. Over three decades of fighting are

estimated to have claimed over 40,000 lives.

■ PKK bombing

In another development, four Turkish police officers have lost their lives and two others sustained injuries in a roadside bomb explosion that targeted their patrol vehicle in Turkey's southeastern and Kurdish-populated province of Diyarbakir.

A security source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said militants with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), detonated the explosives near an excavation site in the Sur district of the province, situated 676 kilometers east of the capital, Ankara, on Monday afternoon as a police vehicle was passing by.

(Source: agencies)

Colic study stirs prickly debate on acupuncture

➡ Outside of occasional crying and a single drop of blood appearing in 15 occasions, no significant adverse effects occurred during the acupuncture sessions.

Meanwhile, without knowing which group their children were in, all the parents were asked to record their babies' fussing and weeping in a daily diary.

After the two weeks, the amount of crying that the parents recorded among all of the infants dropped, which the researchers noted in their study was expected, since colic tends to clear up on its own over time.

However, the magnitude of this reduction was greater in infants who received acupuncture compared with those who didn't, the researchers found.

"I was a bit surprised that there was no significant difference between the two acupuncture groups," Landgren said. "During the second intervention week, only 38% of the infants who received acupuncture fulfilled the criteria for colic, compared to 65% in the control group."

A similar study of 81 infants conducted by Landgren and her colleagues in 2010, published in Acupuncture in Medicine, also found that acupuncture shortened the duration and reduced the intensity of crying in infants with colic.

On the other hand, a study of 90 infants published in the Scandinavian Journal of Primary Health Care in 2013 found

no statistically significant or clinically relevant effect of acupuncture.

■ Don't call the acupuncturist quite yet

Whether acupuncture can be an effective approach for infantile colic has been the subject of an ongoing debate.

Researchers at the University of Turin in Italy called for more research into treatments for infantile colic in a 2014 paper in the Italian Journal of Pediatrics. The paper noted that there is limited evidence supporting the use of alternative treatments, such as acupuncture.

The lead author of that paper, Francesco Savino, said Sunday that although he read the new study "with great interest," his opinion on acupuncture for the treatment of infantile colic hasn't changed.

Dr. Jason Homme, a pediatrician at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, who was not involved in the new study, also said more research is needed in the efficacy of baby acupuncture.

"I don't intend to change my current practice or recommendations based on this study," Homme said. "The finding that acupuncture is superior to the gold standard may be supported by the statistics provided but, to a practicing clinician, seems overstated."

In the study, the researchers noted that many parents of infants who received acupuncture accurately suspected that

their baby was in one of the acupuncture groups, more so than the parents of those not in the acupuncture group. So if parents believed their child was receiving the acupuncture treatment, they might have been more prone to indicate in their daily diary that the amount or quality of crying was improving, Homme said.

Additionally, infantile colic is difficult to measure, he said. Though researchers have explored whether allergies or bacteria in the digestive system may be linked to colic, the ultimate cause remains a mystery.

"Despite attempts to define infant colic, it still represents somewhat of a moving target for research," Homme said. "It relies on the subjective assessment of parents and caregivers."

***** Tips for parents, caregivers
What's a parent of a colicky baby to do? Many experts, including study author Landgren, recommend omitting cow's milk from an infant's diet.

Based on parents' diaries, only 157 out of 426 infants met the criteria for colic after cow's milk was eliminated from their diets, Landgren said, citing a finding that emerged during the screening process of participants for the new study.

As for other home remedies, "time-honored soothing techniques include swaddling, soft sounds, such as white noise, and gentle motion, such

as rocking," Homme said. But overall, a doctor should examine any infant who is excessively crying, as it could indicate a more serious health condition, he said.

If there is no serious health condition, "parents and caregivers should be counseled that, while the infant may seem distressed, the crying in and of itself isn't harmful to the child, and sometimes it's best to simply put them in a safe location, like a crib, and take a short 10-minute break from soothing attempts," Homme said. "These efforts can be very wearing on the caregiver."

Parents should keep in mind that infantile colic typically ends by 3 to 9 months old, according to the American Pregnancy Association. "Many things have been tried for infantile colic, but time is the only consistent remedy for most children," Homme said.

To determine whether your baby has infantile colic, Landgren recommends keeping a daily diary of how often your baby cries. It can be helpful to present the data to your doctor.

"When parents experience excessive crying in their baby, the first important thing is to record the crying in a diary to evaluate the duration and intensity of the crying," she said. "Tired and worried parents often overestimate normal crying."

(Source: CNN)

Iraqi forces liberate more Mosul areas from terrorists' grip

➡ "Roughly all the eastern axes for which CTS is responsible will be completed and we will announce the liberation of the entire eastern side," said CTS spokesman Sabah al-Numan.

Since last October, a 100,000-strong force of Iraqi army troops and allied fighters has been leading the Mosul offensive, the second phase of which began last month. Advances have gathered pace over the past few days.

Defeating the ISIL terrorist group in Mosul would deal a crushing blow to the Takfiri outfit that launched its campaign of terror in northern and western Iraq in 2014.

■ Car bombs

Meanwhile, two car bombs have targeted the Tal Yabes district of eastern Mosul, killing 14 civilians and one soldier.

The bombings, which occurred on Tuesday, also wounded 12 people.

Mosul is the last urban area in Iraq that is still controlled by the ISIL. Large-scale operations are underway by the Iraqi military from several fronts to liberate the city.

Iraq's Counter-Terrorism Service recently announced that around 90 percent of eastern Mosul had already been purged of ISIL.

The ISIL terrorist group has been attempting to slow the progress of the advancing Iraqi forces by planting car bombs on their way. Just days earlier, Iraqi troops were targeted with at least three car bombs in Mosul's neighborhoods of Shurta and Andalus.

A total of 137,880 people have been displaced from Mosul and neighboring areas ever since the start of the Iraqi operations, according to figures released by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on January 9.

(Source: agencies)

Underwater search for MH370 is suspended

The deep-sea search for missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 ended on Tuesday without any trace being found of the plane that vanished in 2014 with 239 people on board, the three countries involved in the search said.

The location of Flight MH370 has become one of the world's greatest aviation mysteries since the plane disappeared en route to Beijing from the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur.

"Despite every effort using the best science available ... the search has not been able to locate the aircraft," Malaysian, Australian and Chinese authorities said in a statement.

The last search vessel left the area on Tuesday, the three countries said, after scouring the 120,000sq km area of the Indian Ocean sea floor that has been the focus of the almost three-year search.

Malaysia, Australia and China agreed in July to suspend the search if the plane was not found or new evidence uncovered once that area had been checked.

Australia last month dismissed an investigators' recommendation to shift the search further north, saying that no new evidence had emerged to support that.

A next-of-kin support group called Voice 370 said in a statement that investigators could not leave the matter unsolved.

"In our view, extending the search to the new area defined by the experts is an inescapable duty owed to the flying public in the interest of aviation safety," Voice 370 said.

Most of the passengers were from China.

The only confirmed traces of the plane have been three pieces of debris found washed up on Mauritius, the French island Reunion and an island off the coast of Tanzania.

As many as 30 other pieces of wreckage found there and on beaches in Mozambique, Tanzania and South Africa are suspected to have come from the plane.

■ Families of victims 'dismayed'

Meantime, Voice 370 criticized the decision not to search waters north of the existing search zone based on a new analysis.

It called on the three nations to reverse their decision, while acknowledging the "tremendous effort" of the governments involved in the search.

The suspension of the search, while disappointing for the families of the victims, did not come as a surprise, said Al Jazeera's Andrew Thomas, reporting from Sydney.

"Family members have got together and made a statement saying they are dismayed ... they say the search must go on," he said. "This search has cost in the region of \$150m."

Chandrika Sharma, an Indian national, was one of the 239 people on board Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 when it crashed.

Her husband, KS Narendran, said it was "mind-boggling" that Australia would not search an area north of the existing search zone where experts recently concluded the plane probably crashed.

Authorities want more specific information about the plane's location.

Narendran said the families involved expect to one day get a "credible explanation to what has happened" even if they never see their loved ones again.

Without an explanation, Narendran said he feels there is a "good chance that this could happen in the future".

The husband of a flight attendant, meanwhile, said he was extremely disappointed.

Lee Khim Fatt said that he still holds a small glimmer of hope that his wife, Foong Wai Yueng, is still alive somewhere.

Lee said that he has held no memorial for his wife and that all her possessions in their house have remained untouched.

"I told my children to keep praying. As long as nothing is found, nothing is proven," Lee said. His two children are aged 7 and 13.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Djokovic fends off Nadal-slayer Verdasco

Novak Djokovic may have cursed the draw for throwing up Fernando Verdasco as the first opponent in his Australian Open defence on Tuesday but the tough match-up against the Spanish giant-killer ultimately proved a blessing in disguise.

The Serb launched his bid for a record seventh title at Melbourne Park with an impressive 6-1 7-6(4) 6-2 win over the man who knocked Rafa Nadal out in the first round of last year's tournament.

Djokovic was forced to save five match points to beat Verdasco at the recent Qatar Open and was broken twice during a thrilling second set under the lights of Rod Laver Arena.

But the second seed defended brilliantly to defuse the veteran lefthander's power game and closed out the two-hour 20-minute clash.

"I knew that winning the second set would be crucial because I definitely didn't want to give him wings," Djokovic told reporters after setting up a second round clash against

Uzbek Denis Istomin. "I didn't want to have him start swinging at the ball, as he knows.

"I don't know how he felt about the draw. But I personally think that I could have drawn... an easier player. But nothing is easy obviously.

"From one perspective it was good that I got to have the very tough first-round match, because it made me prepare better and kind of approach this match and the tournament with the right intensity right from the blocks, right from the first point."

Djokovic has owned Melbourne Park for almost a decade and his continued reign seemed assured as he roared to a 5-0 lead in the first set.

Verdasco felled Nadal in five sets last year by swinging at every ball and his aggression was rewarded when he broke Djokovic twice early in the second.

But he was furious with himself for letting the chances slip, cursing in Spanish and bouncing his racket off the court in disgust.

He double-faulted at 4-4 to give Djokovic two break points but saved them both before holding serve, leaving the Serb yelling out his own frustrations from his chair at the change of ends.

It took a moment of Verdasco madness to open the door, the Spaniard wafting a sliced backhand well beyond the baseline to concede two set points.

Djokovic wrapped up the tiebreak with a monster serve and sprinted away in the third set.

Beaten emphatically in a string of baseline skirmishes, Verdasco fell behind 4-1 and he threw his racket at his chair.

It felt more like a towel being tossed into a ring as there was no stopping Djokovic in full flight.

"It feels like home," said the Serb on the court where he won his sixth Australian Open title a year ago.

"Already in the last couple of weeks, I was really eager to come back to the court and get into the competitive mode, just be back in the office."

(Source: Reuters)

Zidane on Keylor Navas: Real Madrid went on 40-game streak with him

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane is satisfied with Keylor Navas this season and has defended the Costa Rica international from recent criticism over his performances.

The 30-year-old goalkeeper came under scrutiny for conceding two late goals during Real's 2-1 defeat at Sevilla on Sunday, a result that ended the team's record 40-games unbeaten run in all competitions.

Marca stated that Navas should have done better in both goals, a Sergio Ramos' own goal and Stevan Jovetic's well struck shot into the middle of the goal.

Speaking ahead of his team's Copa del Rey quarterfinal first leg at home to Celta Vigo on Wednesday, Zidane said in a news conference: "I see Keylor doing very well. Keylor's season has been very good.

"We went 40 games without losing and he was there."

Navas kept 22 clean sheets in 45 games in all competitions for Real last season before undergoing surgery on his left Achilles tendon in the summer.

The former Levante player has struggled to find his best form this season, starting in 18 games but keeping just four clean sheets.

Looking ahead to Real's midweek game, Zidane does not believe Sunday's loss, his team's first in nine months, will affect his side.

"It's not going to change anything," he said. "But I do ask our fans to stand by the team. To lose a game doesn't change anything.

"But we need to work harder and make sure it doesn't happen again."

Zidane kept his cards close to his chest and did not reveal if Cristiano Ronaldo would start against Celta or rest him in view of Saturday's home game against Malaga.

The Portuguese star did not feature in Real's 3-3 draw at Sevilla in last Thursday's Copa del Rey round-of-16 second leg but started on Sunday.

"We are playing every three days until March," Zidane said. "We will see tomorrow who plays."

Zidane expects a difficult game on Wednesday against a Celta side that eliminated Valencia 6-2 on aggregate in their previous Copa del Rey tie and that are eighth in La Liga.

"I'm not surprised by what they do," Zidane said. "They have a very good team that plays well.

"We know it's going to be a complicated game and we need to start the game as we know how."

(Source: ESPN)

Van Gaal ends coaching career after family tragedy

Former Manchester United and Netherlands manager Louis van Gaal has ended his coaching career following a family tragedy, Dutch media reported on Tuesday.

The 65-year-old, who is out of work since United sacked him in May last year, has turned down a lucrative offer from China.

"I could have gone there (China), but I'm still here," van Gaal told De Telegraaf. "So much has happened in my family that I have been forced to look at things differently."

The sudden death of his son-in-law had been the catalyst, he said. "I had said (after leaving Manchester United) that I would stop but I changed that into a sabbatical, but now I believe that I will not return to coaching."

Asked if he did not have any remaining ambitions, van Gaal said: "No, actually not. I have got everything in my life. I find it boring to mention it all but look at the countries where I have worked and the level of the clubs that I have

coached, and there is nothing that remains.

"I actually wanted to stop after the World Cup (in Brazil in 2014) but then the opportunity in England came up. And that was a fantastic country that is now also on my CV."

Van Gaal said winning last year's FA Cup, against the backdrop of his impending dismissal, was the greatest achievement of his career.

"I was standing on the gangplank for the last six months. My head was in the guillotine, put there by the English media. And then in those circumstances you have to try and stick to your vision and inspire the players of Manchester United."

He also managed Ajax Amsterdam, Barcelona and AZ Alkmaar.

(Source: Reuters)



Arjen Robben signs new Bayern deal



FC Bayern München winger Arjen Robben has signed a one-year contract extension, keeping him at Germany's most successful club until 30 June 2018.

The 32-year-old, whose existing deal was due to expire at the end of the current campaign, is the fourth Bayern player to commit his future to the club during the winter break, after Franck Ribery, Robert Lewandowski and Rafinha.

"I'm pleased to be playing for Bayern for another year," said Robben. "The club is one of the best in the world and Munich has become a second home for my family and me. I want to continue playing at the highest level and win as many titles as possible."

"Arjen is one of the best players in the world in his position," added Bayern chief

executive Karl-Heinz Rummenigge. "He's been in Munich for nearly eight years now, and in that time he has become an integral part of our club. We're very happy he will don the FC Bayern shirt for another year."

Robben, a summer 2009 signing from Real Madrid CF, has played a leading role in one of the most successful eras in Bayern's history, winning five Bundesliga titles, four DFB Cups, the 2012/13 UEFA Champions League, the 2013/14 UEFA Super Cup and the 2014 FIFA Club World Cup.

The 89-time Netherlands international has scored 82 goals in 152 Bundesliga appearances to date, including five in 10 top-flight outings so far this season.

(Source: Bundesliga)

Juventus must forget about Paul Pogba and refocus - Sami Khedira



Sami Khedira has said Juventus need to stop living in the past and must forget about Paul Pogba.

Juve lost 2-1 to Fiorentina on Sunday -- their fourth defeat of the season, one fewer than in the whole of the previous campaign -- and defender Giorgio Chiellini suggested they are lacking a dominant midfield player like Pogba.

But Khedira urged Juve to move on and said they have enough quality to win a sixth straight Scudetto without the France international.

"He's the past -- he's not here anymore," Khedira told Sky Sport Italia. "He's a great player, but now he's at Manchester United and I think Paul's doing well in Manchester.

"We've got other players here like

[Claudio] Marchisio, [Stefano] Sturaro, [Miralem] Pjanic and [Tomas] Rincon, so it's pointless talking about Pogba."

Khedira said he believed Juve had lowered their guard after a sustained run of domestic success but added: "We have got to keep believing in ourselves.

"We played a poor first half on Sunday, but we improved in the second and now we need to move on. The Italian league is complicated. Roma and Napoli are catching us up, but we're optimistic."

Juve's advantage at the top has been cut to a single point from Roma and four from Napoli, although Massimiliano Allegri's men still have a game in hand.

On Sunday, they host fourth-place Lazio, who are just five points behind them.

(Source: Soccernet)

Moroccans left empty-handed, reigning champs stumble

Defending champions Côte d'Ivoire stuttered to a disappointing share of the spoils with Togo in their opening Group C match at the CAF Africa Cup of Nations. This was good news for Congo DR, who went top of the section after catching a profligate Morocco side on the break. FIFA.com looks back at Monday's pair of encounters at Gabon 2017.

■ The day's results

Group C
Côte d'Ivoire 0-0 Togo
Congo DR 1-0 Morocco

■ The analysis

The Ivorian machine never really got going against a well-organised Togolese unit in Oyem. Les Eperviers, who got their tactics right and exhibited great teamwork, initially allowed Les Éléphants to knock the ball around in the first half, before launching a few attacking forays of their own. Efforts by Jonathan Kodjia and Wilfried Zaha both stung the hands of Togo goalkeeper Kossi Agassa, while Emmanuel Adebayor tried his best to cause havoc in the Moroccan defence without ever truly achieving his aim.

The second half continued along similar lines, although the general level of intensity increased as the Togolese



began to threaten Sylvain Gbohouo's goal more often. Overall, Claude Leroy's men will be happy with a well-deserved point, but Michel Dussuyer's charges will need to up their game if they wish to live up to their status of one of the pre-tournament favourites.

Morocco, meanwhile, took early control of their clash with Congo DR, whose midfield struggled to retain possession of the ball or get it forward to an isolated

Manchester United confirm contract extension for Antonio Valencia

Antonio Valencia's contract at Manchester United has been extended by a further year, the club have confirmed.

Valencia, 31, signed new a three-year deal with United in 2014 which included the option for a one-year extension. United have opted to trigger that agreement, meaning the wing-back is now tied to the club until 2018.

Valencia signed for the Red Devils from Wigan in 2009 and has since made 271 appearances, scored 21 goals

and won six trophies. He won a clean sweep of the club's Player of the Year awards in the 2011-12 campaign, as well as Goal of the Season.

The Ecuador international has been a regular in Jose Mourinho's starting XI at right-back this season, making 18 league appearances.

Valencia follows Marouane Fellaini who also agreed a 12-month extension to his deal last week.

(Source: ESPN)



Sanat Naft holds Tractor Sazi, Esteghlal suffers defeat

TT S P O R T S Tractor Sazi has suffered another blow in the title race as it was held to a 2-2 draw against Sanat Naft in the 17th week of Iran Professional League at the empty Yadegar-e Emam Stadium in Tabriz on Tuesday.

Mohammad Ebrahimi put the host in front in the 8th minute but Zobeir Niknafs scored an equalizer for Sanat Naft in the 60th minute. Just two minutes later former Persepolis player Omid Alishah scored the second goal for Tractor Sazi but Ali Abdollahzadeh leveled the scoreline again for Sanat Naft four minutes before the final whistle.

Amir Ghalenoei's men failed to keep the pressure on league leader Persepolis while the Reds will take on Foolad in Ahvaz on Wednesday. On the other side Sanat Naft has not been beaten since the arrival of new coach Firouz Karimi as it managed a win and a draw.

Elsewhere in Qom, Saba who couldn't earn a single point in the last seven games, beat Paykan 1-0 thanks to the 82nd minute goal by Omid Jahanbakhsh.

In Tehran, Esteghlal suffered a 2-1 defeat against the reigning champion Esteghlal Khuzestan. Hassan Beyt Saeed scored a wonderful goal in the 68th from a direct free kick from edge of the box. In the 83rd minute substitute Ali Asghar Ashouri scored the second goal for the visitors. Kaveh Rezaei reduced the deficit three minutes before the final whistle but it was too late for the Blues to come back.

The five remaining games of the week will be held on Wednesday as follows:

- Sepahan – Naft
- Foolad – Persepolis
- Saipa – Zob Ahan
- Siah Jamegan – Padideh
- Gostaresh Foolad – Machine Sazi



Yadollah Jahanbazi hangs up his whistle



TT S P O R T S Iranian international matches during the period from 2009 to 2011, but he was no longer included on the FIFA list as of 2013.

The 43-year-old referee has been a full international referee for FIFA.

"I would like to give very special thanks to Iran Football Federation and the Referees' Department," Jahanbazi said.

Jahanbazi officiated international matches during the period from 2009 to 2011, but he was no longer included on the FIFA list as of 2013.

He has served as a referee at competitions including the 2014 FIFA World Cup qualifiers, beginning with the opening-round match between Cambodia and Laos.

Two Iranian sailors to take part in Oman's event



TT S P O R T S Iran will participate at the 2017 Mussanah Race Week (MRW) with two sailors.

The event will take place at Oman Sail's racing center at the Mussanah Sports City starting on January 18.

The upcoming seventh edition of the MRW will feature 120 youngsters

from 20 nations, vying for glory in the Optimist and Laser classes.

The competition will be held from January 18-21.

Shahab Khatam and Masoud Janinasab are Iranian participants in the competition.

The Iranian duo will be headed by Ammar Raoufi.

CISM World Football Cup 2017: Iran 0 – 2 N. Korea

Iran lost to North Korea 2-0 in the 2017 International Military Sports Council (CISM) World Cup at the Seeb Sports Stadium in Muscat, Oman Monday night.

Iran will face Algeria in Group B on Wednesday and North Korea also meet Germany in another group match.

Fajr Sepasi represents Iran in the second edition of the CISM.

Sixteen teams are taking part in this championship, which are classified into four groups.

Group A comprises Oman, Guinea, Bahrain, and

France, while Group B include teams of Algeria, Germany, Iran, and North Korea.

Group C has teams of Ireland, Mali, Qatar, and USA, while Egypt, Poland, Canada and Syria are in Group D.

The top two teams will advance to the quarterfinals that will be played on January 24 and the semi-final will take place on January 26.

The third-place playoff and the final will be held on January 28.

(Source: Tasnim)

Afghanistan captain Shayesteh reaches agreement with Iran's Paykan



Afghanistan national football team's captain Faysal Shayesteh has reportedly reached an agreement with Iran Professional League team Paykan.

Shayesteh started professional football career in Germany and started to play for the Afghanistan national football team in 2014.

The 25-year-old midfielder joined Bulgaria's Etar Veliko Tarnovo in 2013 and after one year he moved to Thai

club Songkhla United.

Shayesteh currently plays for Malaysian football club Pahang FA.

He has made 24 appearances for Afghanistan and scored 17 goals.

Paykan has recently signed a contract with French midfielder Jeremy Manzorro.

Afghan keeper Owais Azizi was on the verge of joining Iranian football club Naft Tehran in early January.

(Source: Tasnim)

We have no issues wearing hijab while playing volleyball: Borhani



Maedeh Borhani says that they have no problem with wearing a hijab while playing volleyball.

The Iranian international volleyball player joined Bulgarian club Shumen W last week.

Her countrywoman Zeinab Giveh also joined Shumen W three days later.

"The Bulgarian media focus on our hijab but I have to say we have no issues with wearing hijab while playing

volleyball," Borhani said.

"I am satisfied with my move to Shumen W. Bulgarian people are kind to me and I don't feel unhappy or lonely here. We are training two sessions each day and I'm highly motivated to progress," she added.

"I and Zeinab Giveh can pave the way for the Iranian women's players to join the European teams," Borhani concluded.

(Source: Tasnim)

Q&A: Iranian chess player Sarasadat Khademalsharieh

Sarasadat Khademalsharieh, who won her first major title aged 12, talks of a sport gaining popularity among young people in Iran.

Sarasadat Khademalsharieh is a 19-year-old chess player from Iran who holds the titles of International Master and Woman Grandmaster.

Like most other chess players, Khademalsharieh took up chess at an early age. She was eight when she first touched a chess board. Four years later, she was a world champion, winning the under-12 world championships.



Questions were asked when Tehran was named host of the 2017 women's world championships.

Nazi Paikidze, US women's champion, called for a boycott of the games.

But Khademalsharieh shares the tale of a sport gaining popularity in Iran, especially among girls and the youth.

■ You took up chess at the age of eight and, four years later, you were a world champion. How did that happen?

I was in the second grade when my friend talked about playing chess. I hadn't seen a chess board before. No one from my family played chess. I just took it up randomly and I guess I started liking it a lot. That's why I put in a lot of hard work, lot of effort - training for six to seven hours as a kid. I guess it all paid off four years later.

■ Chess wasn't a common sight in Iran at that time. Was your family supportive of your decision and did it affect your studies?

My family actually liked chess as they heard chess helped with concentration and studies. But actually [laughing], it didn't help me because after I started playing, I was missing out on school.

I just went to school for my exams and only read the text books two days before the exams.

■ So how did you manage to get through high school?

My father helped me with physics and maths. He has a maths background. All the other subjects, I had to follow and grasp myself. I couldn't get good grades, but I passed the exams.

■ At what point did you decide that chess would take priority?

This happened when I won the world championship aged 12. I was only the third Iranian to have won that title. After that, it became a profession for me. I do want to study. I plan on taking up graphics designing at university. I've applied for a place, but [am] not sure what the outcome will be.

■ Did that get you a positive response from those around you once you decided to take up chess professionally?

Well, there was a mixture. Some friends were positive while some were negative. Some said it was a good sport and one for the smart people. I don't think that's true though, but somehow they thought of chess like that, while others said it's a boring game.

So I was getting a bit of both sides.

■ How has it helped you in life?

Chess helps with concentration and imagination. Especially the way you think about things as an eight-year-old. At that age, thinking or five hours a day, chess helps you with life and thinking.

■ How difficult has it been to a female chess player in Iran?

I get asked this very frequently but I don't think it's a lot different from being a male chess player in Iran. We kind of have the same coaches, the same tournaments, so I don't really feel the difference.

Chess is actually developing in Iran and I've been hearing good things from people who are not chess players, but have been following my matches and progress.

Our men's national team has players aged 12, 13, 15 and 16. It has a great future. I saw in local media that chess was the second main sport in Iran after football last year. That's phenomenal.

The great thing is that a lot of girls are also interested and they are actually doing better than the boys.

■ But that's not the case on the international circuit. Why is that the case? Why are there fewer grandmasters when it comes to female players?

I don't have an answer. We do have less chess players than men but I don't think that explains the gap.

Maybe girls find other sports more interesting. But whatever the reason is, we need more female chess events around the world so we can increase participation.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

