4 Iran's ship-refueling future looks bright

10 17th WFTGA Convention kicks off in Tehran

15 Iran wheelchair basketball win AOZ U23 qualifying tournament title

16 Fajr festival pays tribute to Abbas Kiarostami in poster

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INTERNATIONAL DAILY



French FM due in Tehran on Monday 2

16 Pages | Price 10,000 Rials | 38th year | No.12755 | Sunday | **JANUARY 29, 2017** | Bahman 10, 1395 | Rabi' Al Thani 30, 1438

No time to build walls between nations



See page 2

© IRNA/ Ehsan Naderipour

India-Iran energy co-op in the pipeline

INTERVIEW
By Salman Parviz

TEHRAN — Marking India's 68th Republic Day, a flag-hoisting ceremony was held at the embassy on Thursday. It was followed by a speech by Ambassador Saurabh Kumar. After the ceremonies the Indian envoy talked with the Tehran Times about India-Iran relations.

Below is the text of the interview.

Seven agreements, valued over $3b, were signed on January 23 on the sidelines of the international conference on investment opportunities and sustainable development in Mokran coastal area in the Chabahar Free Trade Zone (CFTZ). The agreements were signed by Indian, Omani, Chinese and S. Korean investors. Could you please elaborate on this?

A: Chabahar is a very important symbol of cooperation between India and Iran. It was a very important issue of connectivity between India, Iran and Afghanistan and as well as the Central Asia region. Deputy Chief of Indian Mission, Davesh Uttam, was present at this ceremony which was attended by around a dozen Indian companies.



See page 2

Trump visa order 'flagrant insult' to Islamic world, Iran says

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN** — In an announcement on Saturday, Iran's Foreign Ministry denounced an anti-immigration order by U.S. President Donald Trump as a "flagrant insult" to the whole Islamic world, including Iran, characterizing it as a "great gift to radicals and their backers."

Trump put his stamp on an executive order Saturday to tighten visa-vetting protocols for people from seven predominately Muslim countries of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

The order temporarily suspends visas for applicants from the nations for a 30-day period, up for extension.

"The United States government's decision to restrict Muslims' traveling to American, though for a temporary three-month period, is a flagrant insult to the world of Islam and the great Iranian nation, in particular," read part of the announcement.

"The measure, unlike claims to counter terrorism and preserve the security of the American nation, will go down in history as a great gift to radials and their backers," said another part of the communique.

It also highlighted that Iran will take necessary statutory and political measures to defend its citizens.

Madeleine Albright tweets she is 'ready to register as Muslim'

Madeleine Albright snapped back at the news of President Donald Trump's plan to shut some people out of America with a call for human solidarity.

The former secretary of state tweeted Wednesday that she is "ready to register as Muslim" herself, even as Trump prepares to single out travelers from Muslim-majority countries.

"America must remain open to people of all faiths & backgrounds," she wrote below the image.

Albright's tweets came in response to news of a draft executive order that would ban refugee admissions for up to four months. It would also temporarily halt visas for people from the Muslim-majority countries of Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen. By issuing this order, Trump would make good on his campaign promise to ban immigration from countries "compromised by terrorism."

Albright is not alone in her public proclamation that she would register as Muslim in protest.

Feminist icon Gloria Steinem, speaking at the Women's March on Washington on Jan. 21, said she would register as Muslim if such a policy were implemented. Actress Mayim Bialik has also tweeted she would register in solidarity.

(Source: Huffington Post)

TEHRAN TIMES
Iran's Leading International Daily
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Ease in Saudi-Iran tensions will help Kuwait: Shireen Hunter

INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Shireen Tahmaasb Hunter, a professor of political science at Georgetown University, tells the Tehran Times that the "visit of the Emir of Kuwait's emissary to Iran could be an indirect way of preparing for possible Iran-Saudi Arabia talks."

Hunter says the tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia has had "negative impact on Kuwait". Hunter says, "Any improvement in Saudi-Iran tensions will help Kuwait as well."

Following is the text the interview:

Kuwait's foreign minister visited Iran on Wednesday to present a written message from the country's Emir to President Rouhani for reducing tension between Iran and certain Arab countries. What is the importance of the message?

A: The visit of the Emir of Kuwait's emissary to Iran could be an indirect way of preparing for possible Iran-Saudi Arabia talks further down the road. If this should be the case, then the trip could be quite important. It also could reflect the fact that Saudi-Iran tensions have had negative impact on Kuwait itself. For example, Saudi Arabia's spread of Salafism in Kuwait have caused sectarian tensions and have undermined Kuwaiti democracy. Even the ruling family have not been immune from these negative consequences as Kuwait's somewhat more independent foreign policy, including towards Iran, has angered the Saudis. Any improvement In Saudi-Iran tensions will help Kuwait as well.

During the visit, the two sides emphasized transparent dialogue between Iran and Arab countries on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf. Any comments on this?

A: After the creation of the GCC, major issues in Iran -Persian Gulf Arab relations have been approached in the context of the GCC. By and large the GCC states have had similar approaches towards Iran with the exception of Oman. Moreover, most GCC countries have similar problems with Iran. Some of these problems are due to the disparity between Iran and the GCC states, except Saudi Arabia, in terms of size and population plus differences in political ideology and attitude vis-a-vis world powers. Therefore it make sense that discussion or dialogue should take place at the level of Iran-GCC.

On What areas should the sides start negotiations?

A: At the beginning, the dialogue should focus on the most significant causes of current discord in Iran-GCC ties, such as Bahrain, Yemen, Iranian pilgrimage to Hajj etc. Underlying all these differences is the GCC states' perception that Iran is still a revolutionary country and wants a change in the political system of the (Persian) Gulf states. Although Iran has acted cautiously in the face of much provocation its rhetoric is still threatening to these states. →13

Iran says developed world's 1st herbal remedy for Alzheimer's

TT SOCIETY desk **TEHRAN** — Iranian scientists have managed to develop an herbal medicine which is said to be the first of its kind in the world for treating Alzheimer's disease.

The achievement was unveiled in a research center in Alborz province on Saturday.

The medicine dubbed "Melitropic" was developed by researchers at herbal medicines research center affiliated with Jahad Daneshgahi (an Iranian academic center for education) and was first unveiled with Health Minister Hassan Qazizadeh Hashemi in attendance.

Extracted from *Dracocephalum* the herbal medicine was tested on some 42 patient suffering mild to middle-stage Alzheimer's aging 65 to 80 in a placebo-controlled study for four months, Doctor Shams-Ali Rezazadeh, the head of herbal medicines research center, told IRNA news agency.

Compared to the placebo group the patients who received the drug have shown some visible progress with symptoms such as anxiety and irritability improved noticeably, Rezazadeh pointed.

He went on to highlight that the drug can be commercialized on international scale and that they have made some arrangement to introduce the drug internationally.



© Fars/ Danial Khodaei

dust storms choking southwestern Iran

Sand and dust storms, haunting the southwestern province of Khuzestan, has thrown people's life out of balance once again for some days now.

Some sources have announced that dust particles are 66 times higher than standard levels in the capital city of Ahwaz. On Saturday, air quality index hit 300, or very unhealthful, indicating that general population should avoid vigorous outdoor activity.

Syria forces retake spring near Damascus

Government forces have reportedly entered a key village in the Syrian capital's countryside, retaking control of a spring and water storage facilities that used to supply Damascus' water.

On Saturday, the forces moved into the Ayn al-Figeh Village, which is located in the strategic Wadi Barada area in the suburbs of the capital, sources associated with the Lebanese resistance movement of Hezbollah reported.

Wadi Barada is home to Damascus' main river, Barada, as well as springs used as sources of water for the capital. Al-Figeh houses one of those springs.

The armed opposition's al-Hadath television channel, however, denied reports that the army had seized the village.

Since late December 2016, government forces have been fighting in Wadi Barada against the militants who have damaged the water processing facilities there and cut the water flow to some five million people in the city.

In mid-January, the militants assassinated a representative of the Syrian government who would coordinate reconciliation talks between Damascus and the armed outfits in Wadi Barada.

According to Syria's government, the militants fighting in Badi Warada belong to the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (Front for the Conquest of the Levant), formerly known as the al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra) Takfiri terrorist group, al-Qaeda's branch in Syria.

An all-Syria ceasefire, which has been brokered by Russia and Turkey, forbids fighting across the country's territory. However, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham and its fellow Takfiri terrorist group of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) have been excluded from the agreement due to the barbarity of their actions and their refusal to fall into step with any pacification efforts.

Assad in excellent health: Presidential office

Meantime, Syria said President Bashar al-Assad is in "excellent health," refuting all rumors that the Syrian leader is suffering from some health problems. →13

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Iran plans presence in Atlantic, Pacific oceans

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN** — Iran's Navy commander said on Saturday that multiple voyages have been planned for the country's naval forces to the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari also praised Iranian warships' voyages to the Indian Ocean and the waters of Southeast Asia as part of naval diplomacy with the purpose of demonstrating Iran's capabilities and cultural interactions, Nasim reported.

He also said the Navy is going to hold drills codenamed Velayat-95 in the northern parts of the Indian Ocean by mid-February.



French FM due in Tehran on Monday

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN** — The French foreign minister will travel to travel to Tehran on Monday on a two-day official visit, the French Foreign Ministry's twitter account, FranceDiplomatie, announced on Saturday.

Jean-Marc Ayrault will meet with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif as well as President Hassan Rouhani while in Tehran.

A delegation of 60 companies will accompany Ayrault, who will also attend a joint economic committee of the two countries, where several agreements are expected to be signed.



Baghdad, Damascus would have fallen without Tehran: military advisor

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN** — A military advisor to the Supreme Leader said on Saturday that if it were not for the help of Tehran, the governments in Baghdad and Damascus would have fallen.

Yahya Rahim Safavi also said the "school of resistance", being inspired by Iran, formed 20 popular brigades in Iraq and are now fighting to free Mosul from the hands of terrorists.

It was the Iranians martyred during the Saddam invasion of Iran in 1980s who "taught" resistance to other countries, Fars quoted the former IRGC chief as saying.

In Syria, the school of resistance let the people learn how to withstand terrorists for 68 months, he explained.



Islamic world suffering from schism: MP

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN** — The Islamic world is still suffering from schism and sectarianism, Iranian MP Kazem Jalali said in a meeting with Niger's National Assembly President Ousseini Tinni on Saturday.

"Islamic countries need to stand by each other and resolve issues through dialogue," Jalali told Tinni in Bamako, the capital of Mali.

Jalali, who is also a member of the executive board of the Islamic Inter-parliamentary Union, said the issue of Palestine is the number one issue of the Islamic world, Mehr reported.



Araqchi to meet parliamentarians on JCPOA

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN** — Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi will attend a session of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee in the coming days to discuss the status of the implementation of the JCPOA, the committee's spokesman said on Saturday.

The meeting is necessary considering the anniversary of the JCPOA implementation and a recent Foreign Ministry report on it, Hossein Naqavi Hosseini told Tasnim.

He said the meeting had been set for last Thursday, but was postponed because Araqchi was in Vienna on that day.



Official decries Trump's screening of Iranians

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN** — A senior Iranian official, pointing to Iran's rich history and its aversion to violence and terrorism, has raised voice against U.S. President Donald Trump's screening of seven nationalities, including Iranians.

In a post on his Twitter account on Saturday, political director of Iran's presidential office Hamid Aboutalebi said Iran takes pride in hosting Muslims, Jews, Christians and Assyrians for millennia and that the "old and very civilized nation of Iran" does not tolerate violence and terrorism but opposes them.

Iran starts testing IR-8 centrifuges with UF6

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN** — Atomic Energy Organization of Iran said in an announcement on Saturday it had started injecting gas into its latest generation of centrifuge machines, IR-8.

"In line with the continuation of the peaceful nuclear program of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a critical stage in R&D with the advanced denegation of IR-8 centrifuges got underway with injection of UF6 gas," read part of the announcement, carried on the official website of the agency.

The testing is under the research and development section of an international 2015 nuclear deal with six world powers of the U.S., Russia, China, England, France and Germany, which lifted economic sanctions on Iran in exchange for it rolling back its nuclear program.

Under the deal, Iran will commence, upon start of implementation of the JCPOA, testing of the IR-8 on single centrifuge machines and its intermediate cascades.



It also will start the testing of up to 30 centrifuges machines from one and a half years before the end of year 10.

Also, consistent with its plan, Iran will begin manufacturing of IR-6 and IR-8 centrifuges without rotors through year 10 of the deal at a rate of up to 200 centrifuges per year for each type.

After year 10, Iran will produce complete centrifuges with the same rate to meet its enrichment and enrichment R&D needs.

Necessary infrastructure for the IR-8 will be installed at Natanz after year 10 in an above ground location under IAEA continuous monitoring.

IR-8 centrifuges are the latest generation of the machines designed and manufactured by Iranian experts, undergoing successful mechanical tests over the past three years.

The machines give Iran a 20-fold uranium enrichment capacity, compared to first generation centrifuges known as IR-1.

Over the past years, the county developed other centrifuge types of IR-2m, IR-4, IR-5, IR6, IR-6s, and IR-7.

Rouhani: No time to build walls between nations

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN** — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday that those days are gone to build walls between the nations.

Rouhani was indirectly referring to President Donald Trump who on Wednesday ordered construction of a U.S.-Mexican border wall as part of a package of measures to curb illegal immigration.

"Today, it is no time to build walls between the nations," Rouhani told a conference on tourism hosted by Tehran.

He added, "Have they forgotten that the Berlin Wall was demolished many years ago? If there is any wall between the nations, it should be removed."

The president said statesmen should avoid creating "division between the nations and people in various lands."

"Today is the day of neighborliness. We have become neighbors culturally and scientifically, and technology has made the distances shorter. Today, no one can counter globalization," he pointed out.

Rouhani also said annulling trade agreements does not benefit international trade and economy.

In his first days in office Trump also withdrew the U.S. from the Trans Pacific Partnership trade pact.

Rouhani said more "interaction between the nations" is essential to reach more stability and security in the world.

The president also said Iran has always helped to promote international peace and stability.

In today's world that terrorism is posing as a "serious threat" against the world more unity and interaction among nations are required.

Iran has benefited greatly from interaction with the world over the past years, the president said, adding that negotiation and dialogue is the best way to settle differences.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani said "political independence" is one of the greatest "fruits" of the Islamic Revolution.

Thousands of academics sign petition denouncing Trump's entry ban

TT POLITICS desk **TEHRAN** — Thousands of academics, in a condemnatory move, signed a petition against U.S. President Donald Trump's order banning citizens of 7 Muslim majority countries from entering the United States.

Trump signed an executive order on Friday stopping admission of refugees from Syria indefinitely, and suspending entry of citizens from Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen for 90 days.

"I'm establishing a new vetting measure to keep radical Islamic terrorists out of the United States of America," Trump said as he signed the order. "We don't want them here. We want to make sure we are not admitting into our country the very threats our soldiers are fighting overseas."

The controversial decision provoked a bitter backlash from thousands of academics, including 12 Nobel laureates and many well-known scholars, who condemned the ban and called on Trump to reconsider his decision.

"We, the undersigned academics and researchers from a variety of fields of study, backgrounds, and personal convictions, would like to voice our concern and strongly oppose this measure... We strongly denounce this ban and urge the President to reconsider going forward with this Executive Order," the petition said.

The petition signers also said the executive order was discriminatory, detrimental to the country's national interests and imposed "undue burden on members of our community."

"I am heartbroken," said Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani student activist and Nobel Peace laureate, "that today President Trump is closing the door on children, mothers and fathers fleeing violence and war."

Indeed, not a single American was killed by citizens of the aforesaid countries between 1975 and 2015, The New York Daily News said, citing statistics tallied by the conservative-leaning CATO Institute.

But what's even more noteworthy is that the ban has excluded a number of countries – such as Saudi Arabia – that have deep-seated ties to terrorism.

According to a declassified U.S. intelligence report known as the "28 pages", the Saudi government and its wealthy citizens actively funded radicalism in the U.S. around the time of 9/11 attacks.

Of the 19 hijackers involved in the 9/11 attacks, which became the worst terrorist incident in U.S. history, 15 were from Saudi Arabia but none from these 7 countries.

India-Iran energy co-op in the pipeline

Chabahar symbolizes cooperation between India and Iran, Indian ambassador says

1→ We have a few important initiatives which are presently under way. Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers and Gujrat State Chemicals and Fertilizers are two important Indian companies that manufacture fertilizers and are looking to establish urea and ammonia plant in CFTZ. They are searching for a reliable partner from the Iranian side.

Another initiative is an agreement between National Aluminum Company of India (NALCO) and Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) for an aluminum smelter plant in CFTZ. A delegation from NALCO was here in December and held extensive discussions with IMIDRO and visited various sights in Chabahar. At present NALCO and IMIDRO are looking at an independent consulting company to prepare a feasibility report.

In addition, there were other Indian fertilizer companies which held discussions with the Iranian side. If investments come about they would add significantly to the development of the Chabahar region and provide the needed traffic for the Chabahar Port.

It would be hard to put a deadline into these projects because of their technical nature and commercial aspects. One of the most critical issues is establishing an understanding on the gas price and again there are a lot of technicalities involved. Expectation is that they would reach a positive conclusion and we are encouraging these activities.

Minister of Transport and Urban Development Abbas Akhundi visited India last September. Both India and Iran had decided to hold an event in Chabahar in which Indian private sector and other stakeholders can be invited.



"There is no distinction between good terrorist and bad terrorist."

We had a high level Indian official from our foreign ministry who was in Tehran in January and he visited the Chabahar region. During those interactions, we decided that we are looking at this event on the second half of April. I emphasize the importance of this event because what Chabahar needs is investment.

The private sector will be the major investor and it needs a lot more exposure to Chabahar and the facilities there.

India will invest $85m in equipment for phase one of Chabahar Port and the process is underway which would short list the Indian companies that would provide the needed equipment. As far as the $150m in line of credit is concerned we are waiting for the Iranian side to submit the projects for which the finances would be utilized.

■ In your previous interview with the Tehran Times you said "we are trying to put in place three important agreements", namely Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), double taxation avoidance and bilateral investment agreement (BIT). Any progress in this goal?

A: This is something that foreign ministries of both countries are monitoring. We had received a proposal from the Iranian side. Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry has examined these proposals and given its comments to the Iranian side.

On double taxation avoidance agreement we had a few suggestions from Iran. On BIT we have agreed on some dates to hold meeting in this regards. However, no documents have been finalized at this stage."

■ Is the idea of transferring of Iranian gas to India through seabed still under consideration?

A: There is a working group relating to this matter. As far as our cooperation for the hydrocarbon sector, which includes transfer of gas to India, both sides are considering all possibilities, including pipelines and LNG. We are looking for a techno-commercial feasible option to utilize.

■ Turning to political issues, how can Iran and India cooperate on containing the spread of terrorism, especially in Central Asia?

A: Terrorism is a major concern. It is becoming highly unpredictable. This is an issue on which both Iran and India have expressed serious concerns. We have mechanisms through which we exchange views. Very important dialogue has been held between Supreme National Security Council and the National Security Council Secretariat of India.

■ Can you elaborate on the steps needed for regional security, especially as Iran and India are very concerned about the scourge of terrorism.

A. All the countries have to be sincere in the fight against terrorism. India has always maintained that there is no distinction between good terrorist and bad terrorist. We have to target all terrorists. All means that sustain terrorism have to be attacked, including financing and material support.

"It (terrorism) is becoming highly unpredictable."

→13

INTERNATIONAL DAILY TEHRAN TIMES 3

Diplomatic debut: Trump makes uneven entry onto world stage

Trump's first seven days of false claims, inaccurate statements and exaggerations

One week into office, the United States President Donald Trump was trying to clean up his first international incident.

The president shifted a jam-packed schedule on Friday to make room for an hour-long phone call with Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto, who had abruptly snubbed the new president by canceling a visit. Trump's team had appeared to respond by threatening a hefty border tax on Mexican imports.

By the end of the conversation, Trump had tasked his son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner — a real estate executive with no national security experience — with managing the ongoing dispute, according to an administration official with knowledge of the call.

The episode, an uneven diplomatic debut, revealed the earliest signs of how the new president plans to manage world affairs. In a matter of days, he both alarmed and reassured international partners. He picked fights, then quickly backed away from them. He talked tough, and toned it down. And at each step, Trump relied on the small clutch of advisers that guided his norm-breaking campaign, a group with scant foreign policy experience but the trust of the president.

Much of the foreign policy decision-making has rested with Kushner and Steve Bannon, the conservative media executive turned White House adviser, according to administration officials and diplomats. Rex Tillerson, his nominee for secretary of state, is still awaiting confirmation. Officials at the National Security Council, an agency Trump has described as bloated, are still seeking marching orders from the new administration.

Some of Trump's early diplomatic moves have followed standard protocols. He scheduled early phone calls with friendly allies, including Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who both plan to meet Trump at the White House next month. Additional calls were planned on Saturday with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande, key European partners.

But Trump also moved swiftly to announce a new era. He declared an end to efforts to pursue multi-nation trade deals and used his first executive action to withdraw the United States from a sweeping Pacific Rim pact. He also effectively closed off the United States to refugees, at least temporarily, and risked angering the world by halting visas for people from seven majority Muslim nations for at least three months.

On his first full day as president, he told members of the intelligence community gathered at CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) headquarters that the U.S. should have taken Iraq's oil for "economic reasons," given America's efforts in the country, adding, "But, OK, maybe you'll have another chance."

Some officials at the National Security Council raised concerns over several elements of the refugee measure, as well as other early actions the president took on border security. But administration officials say Trump's inner circle has addressed few of their concerns.

Administration officials and diplomats insisted on anonymity to disclose private dealings with the White House.



Kushner and Bannon have been heavily involved in the Trump administration's early dealings with some European partners, leading during both phone calls and in-person meetings with diplomats and government officials.

In a discussion with British officials, Kushner is said to have angrily denounced Britain's decision to support a United Nations Security Council resolution condemning the expansion of Israeli settlements. The U.S. abstained from the vote before President Barack Obama left office, brushing aside Trump's demands that the U.S. exercise its veto.

In contrast with the Trump team's strong views on Israel, European partners have been left largely in the dark about Trump's approach to Russia. Some are on edge over a phone call with Putin on Saturday and fear he may strike a deal that leads to the removal of U.S. sanctions on Russia. The call was said to be arranged by national security adviser Mike Flynn, who has kept a low profile in recent days amid scrutiny over his ties to Russian officials.

Trump did little to ease anxieties on Friday when he pointedly refused to say whether he planned to keep in place economic sanctions on Russia as punishment for its provocations in Ukraine.

"We'll see what happens," Trump said during a news conference with British Prime Minister Theresa May.

The prime minister was the first world leader to meet Trump following last week's inauguration, underscoring May's eagerness to get a reading on a man who is a mystery to many world leaders. Trump was measured during their brief joint press conference, but he also showed flashes of charm, joking with May about a British reporter's pointed question about his position on torture and complimenting her for being a "people person."

A visit from Pena Nieto to Washington had been expected to follow May's. But after Trump needled the Mexican president on Twitter, saying it would be better for him not to come if he couldn't commit to paying for Trump's proposed wall along the U.S. southern border, Pena Nieto told the White House he wouldn't be coming.

The White House quickly threatened to slap a 20 percent tax on imports from Mexico to pay for the wall, though officials quickly tried to walk the proposal back, saying it was just one option being considered.

Kushner, who already wields enormous power in the White House, is expected to work through the dispute with Mexican Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray. The two men, who know each other from the financial circles, also worked together to arrange Trump's surprise visit to Mexico during the presidential campaign.

The readouts released by the two countries after Friday's call pointed to the work to be done. A statement from Mexico said the presidents agreed "to no longer speak publicly" about their dispute over payment for the border wall.

The White House statement made no such promise.

(Source: AP)

U.S. ambassador to UN vows to overhaul the world body

Nikki Haley, the new United States ambassador to the United Nations, has said Donald Trump's new administration will push for an overhaul of the world body and bluntly warned those who oppose Washington's policies that she is "taking names".

Haley made brief remarks to reporters as she arrived on Friday at the UN headquarters in New York to present her credentials to Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

"Our goal with the administration is to show value at the UN and the way that we'll show value is to show our strength, show our voice, have the backs of our allies and make sure that our allies have our back as well," Haley said.

"For those that don't have our back, we're taking names, we will make points to respond to that accordingly," added Haley, a former South Carolina governor with little foreign policy and no U.S. federal government experience.

"Everything that is working, we are going to make it better. Everything that is not working we are going to try and fix. Everything that seems to be obsolete and not necessary, we're going to do away with," she said.



During her confirmation hearing, Haley questioned whether the U.S. was getting what it paid for with regards to the country's monetary contributions to the UN.

The U.S .is by far the UN's biggest financial contributor, providing 22 percent of its operating budget and funding 28 percent of peacekeeping missions, which currently cost $7.8bn annually.

These are assessed contributions - agreed by the UN General Assembly - and not voluntary payments.

UN agencies, such as the UN Development Program, the children's agency UNICEF, the World Food Program and the UN Population Fund, are funded voluntarily.

The White House is reportedly preparing an executive order that could deprive the United Nations of billions of dollars in U.S. financial support.

Last year, Trump took to Twitter to disparage the 193-member world body after the U.S. abstained in a December 23 Security Council vote, allowing the adoption of a resolution demanding an end to settlement building by U.S. ally Israel.

Trump, who had called on President Barack Obama's administration to veto the resolution, warned that "things will be different" at the UN after he took office on January 20. *(Source: agencies)*

Report: Corruption rates have tarnished image of Persian Gulf Arab states

Burgeoning corruption rates have further tarnished the image of oil-rich Arab states of the Persian Gulf region, a report says.

The report by Transparency International, published on Saturday, shows that Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and the House of Saud regime have all seen their ranking collapse in the group's annual Corruption Perceptions Index of 2016.

Kinda Hattar, a regional coordinator for Transparency International, said corrupt Arab states, epitomized by oil-rich governments such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, have effectively failed to improve their legal and administrative mechanisms to prevent the rise of corruption in their countries.

The report said Qatar saw the biggest fall in the 0-100 scale as its ranking slid 10 factors from 71 in 2015 to 61 last year. Next is Kuwait and Bahrain that each fell eight factors, to 41 and 43, respectively, and then comes Saudi Arabia which has been placed at 46, six factors lower than the previous rankings.

Hattar said the deteriorating situation of the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf region in terms of corruption could have been related to increasing desire of the governments in those countries to consolidate their power, leading to more members of the ruling families to occupy key positions in the administration.

The costly war on Yemen

The official also made a reference to a military coalition of the Arab states of the region, which is currently involved in a war on Yemen, saying the campaign had forced the governments to exercise a policy of financial ambiguity to cover up war expenditures.

A global slump in oil prices and the war on Yemen has left an impact on Saudi Arabia's ability to finance its public institutions. The kingdom announced a series of deep spending cuts last year to compensate for more than 100 billion of deficit it had anticipated for the 2017 budget.

Qatar, a large oil and gas exporter, has faced similar allegations about corruption over the past few years, especially in relation to its way of obtaining the rights for hosting the 2022 World CUP and how it has treated foreign workers in construction projects meant for the tournament.

Reports have also revealed Doha's role in funding militant groups in Syria, a country that has been grappling with unrest over the past six years.

Some sources say Qatar has spent tens of billions of dollars to assist anti-Syria militants, a policy which seems to have permanently failed in light of recent victories and gains by the government in Damascus against militant groups across the country.

(Source: Press TV)

Donald Trump 'committed to NATO', says May in U.S. visit

The United States President Donald Trump is "100 percent behind" NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), Britain's Prime Minister, Theresa May, has said, after becoming the first foreign leader to meet the U.S. president since he was sworn in a week ago.

In a joint press conference after a White House meeting on Friday, May said that during their talks Trump gave strong backing to NATO, an alliance that he had previously called "obsolete".

The two countries "are united in our recognition of NATO as the bulwark our collective defense, and today we've reaffirmed our unshakable commitment to this alliance," she told reporters.

The meeting between the two leaders in Washington, DC, came a day before Trump is scheduled to speak by telephone to Vladimir Putin, his Russian counterpart.

When asked about his upcoming discussion with the Russian president, Trump said he wanted to have good relations with Russia but played down any talk that he was ready to lift U.S. sanctions against Moscow.

"We'll see what happens as far as the sanctions - very early to be talking about that," Trump said, adding that he hoped to have a "fantastic relationship" with Putin, but noted it was possible that would not occur.

For her part, May took a sterner line, insisting that Putin must live up to the Minsk Agreements that would put an end to Russian military interference in Ukraine.

May arrived in the U.S. on Thursday at a time when Britain is in the process of quitting the European Union, or Brexit.

Faced with withdrawal from the European single market, the British government is scrambling to secure bilateral deals around the world.

May said that a trade deal between Britain and U.S. was "in the national interest in both our countries", while Trump threw his weight behind Brexit, saying it would be a "wonderful thing" for Britain.

"I think when it irons out, you're going to have your own identity, and you are going to have the people that you want in your country," Trump said.

"You're going to be able to make free trade deals without having somebody watching you and what you are doing."

Torture 'absolutely' works

Before their White House meeting, May had tough words on Trump's assertion that torture "absolutely" works, telling reporters that she condemned the use of illegal interrogation.

Trump's views on torture have raised concerns that he will try to reverse laws put into place by predecessor Barack Obama outlawing the brutal interrogation techniques like waterboarding used by the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) on suspects following the September 11, 2001 attacks.

When asked about the use of waterboarding as an intelligence-gathering tool, Trump said he would defer to Secretary of Defense James Mattis regarding the practice - even though he said he still believes it is effective.

Trump said Mattis does not "necessarily believe" in waterboarding and other enhanced interrogation techniques, which many politicians and rights groups denounce as torture.

Mattis "will override because I'm giving him that power", Trump told reporters. "He is an expert. He is highly respected."

Mexico made us look foolish

Trump's first week in office has been marked by a war of words with Mexico over the building of a border wall, and his vow to make Mexico pay for it.

On Thursday, Mexican Enrique Pena Nieto called off a planned trip to Washington in protest.

During the press conference, Trump said he had a "very good" phone call with Pena Nieto on Friday and that the two had agreed to work to improve ties.

"They've made us look foolish," Trump told a news conference at the White House.

Trump said the call was friendly and he looked forward to renegotiating the U.S. trade relationship with Mexico in the future. *(Source: agencies)*

UN agency cuts food aid to 1.4 million displaced Iraqis

The World Food Program (WFP) has slashed food rations distributed to 1.4 million displaced Iraqis by 50 percent because of delays in payments from donor states.

The sharp cutbacks come at a time when a growing number of Iraqis flee the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group.

At least 160,000 people have been displaced since October when the Iraqi military, backed by Kurdish forces and Shia militias launched a military campaign to recapture Mosul from the armed group.

WFP spokeswoman Inger Marie Vennize said the United Nations agency was talking to the United States - its biggest donor, Germany, Japan and others to secure funds to restore full rations.

"We have had to reduce [the rations] as of this month," she was quoted by the Reuters news agency as saying.

"The 50 percent cuts in monthly rations affect over 1.4 million people across Iraq," she added.

The effect is already being felt in camps east of Mosul, ISIL's last major bastion in northern Iraq.

Mosul is still home to nearly 1.5 million people, who are at risk of being caught up in brutal urban warfare.

An estimated 650,000 people live without potable water in the city and the UN has warned of a potential humanitarian crisis and a refugee exodus.

(Source: agencies)

Iran's ship-refueling future looks bright

Iran says bunkering (refueling of ships) in Iranian ports is 5-7 dollars cheaper than the same service in UAE's Fujairah port.

"About 17 shipping companies are sailing to Iranian ports in Persian Gulf and this is a great opportunity to boost bunkering operations. International ships can refuel in Iran's Qeshm port, 120 miles far from Fujairah, to get cheaper fuel," Iran Shipping Lines chairman Mohammad Saeidi said.

Qeshm port's bunkering facilities with one million tons capacity were inaugurated Jan.26.

It should be noted that marine trade shares 85 percent of Iran's total trade turnover with foreign countries.

Just six countries, including UAE are responsible for almost sixty percent of global bunker sales, according to OPEC's estimations. Iran was not included in this list.

UAE's Fujairah is the world's second largest bunkering port, with annual sales of around 24 million tons. Iran claims that the about 80 percent of bunkered fuels in Fujairah is of Iranian origin, exported to UAE.

According to the official statistics of Iran's Port and Maritime Organization, the oil, gas condensate, LPG, NGLs and oil products loading from Iranian ports stood at 165.46 million tons in 2016, while the unloading operations reached 23.96 million tons. The loads and unloads indicate 5.213 million tons increase and 4.39 million tons decrease respectively year-on-year.

With inauguration of Qeshm facilities, Iran's annual bunkering capacity stood at 5.4 million tons.

Iran's bunkering service in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman was officially commenced in 2004, with selling 392,000 tons of fuel oil to the passing vessels in the first year. The figure reached 3.345 million tons in 2011, but after Iran got hit with sanctions in 2012, the figure plunged to 1.8 million tons per year, but it has been on the rise since 2013. Iranian officials say the figure reached 4.4 million tons in 2016.

(Source: bunkerportsnews.com)

China will likely withstand the shock of a trade war better than the U.S. will

By Evelyn Cheng

While China will suffer from a trade war with the United States, some experts say the Asian giant has more resilience than the U.S.

The "Chinese government has plenty of financial resources to step in," said Arthur Kroeber, founding partner of Hong Kong-based financial services and research firm Gavekal Dragonomics.

"I think the Chinese government has looked at this and is prepared to act," Kroeber said, speaking by phone from Beijing.

In the last few decades, the communist government in Beijing has built China into the world's second-largest economy with a state-backed form of capitalism and has expanded the nation's global reach. A large portion of that growth came from heavy-handed policies that favored domestic industries, displaced more than a million people for infrastructure projects and generated questionably high levels of debt.

But key to China's rise has been access to the global market, particularly the U.S. consumer. And in the very near term, that makes the Asian giant vulnerable to increased tensions with the U.S.

China was the largest source of goods imported to the U.S.in 2015, according to an estimate from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. The U.S. goods trade deficit with China was $366 billion in 2015, meaning the U.S. bought far more from China than the other way around.

"If there is a full-fledged trade war, China is going to get hurt disproportionately to the U.S.," said Jacob Shapiro, director of analysis at Geopolitical Futures, an online publication that analyzes and forecasts the course of global events.

"It's not really about what China wants. China needs access to the U.S. consumer market," Shapiro said. He doesn't expect tensions to escalate into a trade war.

U.S. President Donald Trump has promised a policy of "America First" and bringing back jobs, ostensibly lost to China. He has also threatened tariffs on goods imported from the Asian giant and chosen a group of outspoken China critics for top positions on trade policy.

However, Beijing has an array of tools to strike back with, and the message from the state is it will use them. China's state-backed Global Times said in an English editorial after the U.S. presidential election that:

"A batch of Boeing orders will be replaced by Airbus. U.S. auto and iPhone sales in China will suffer a setback, and U.S. soybean and maize imports will be halted. China can also limit the number of Chinese students studying in the U.S."

"There's an array of things China could do that are not trade related that would enable them to persuade in a personal way," Kroeber said, adding that Beijing could also make China a tougher business environment for U.S. companies operating there.

In the last few weeks, China's president, Xi Jinping, and other top Chinese leaders have also stepped up efforts to promote China as a globalization-friendly alternative to Trump's protectionist stance. The power play is especially important this year. Xi is set to consolidate his authority at a Communist Party congress this fall.

The political support for free trade rhetoric is more divided in the U.S.

"Trump also needs to show he's making things better for the American worker," Shapiro said. "He's also limited" in power due to the U.S. democratic system of checks and balances.

The challenge is if trade tensions escalate, Shapiro said, "The U.S. is going to be hurt anyways" from disruption to the supply chain. Many products sold in the U.S. are partly or wholly manufactured in China.

To be sure, it's still unclear whether U.S.-China tensions will heat up into a trade war that decimates one party over the other. China's economy is by no means as advanced as that of the United States, but can increasingly hold its own while U.S. presidents come and go. Meanwhile, deep business relations between the two countries will be complicated to unravel.

"I don't see trade as a zero-sum game where, if one country benefits the other loses," said Ira Kalish, chief global economist at Deloitte. "Certainly both countries depend on one another substantially." *(Source: CNBC)*

Japan, 1st customer for SP phases 20, 21 gas condensate



TT ECONOMY desk **TEHRAN —** Japan has shipped in the first cargo of Iranian gas condensate produced in phases 20 and 21 of South Pars giant gas field in the Persian Gulf, Shana reported on Saturday.

According to Pirouz Mousavi, the managing director of Iranian Oil Terminals Company (IOTC), the cargo included 160,000 barrels of SP's phases 20 and 21 gas condensate along with the output from phases 2-5 as well as 650,000 barrels of crude oil from Forouzan oilfield.

Condensate has been driving Iran's export growth in recent months, thanks to developments at the country's giant South Pars gas field.

According to a report released by Reuters in October 2016, Korea has been one of the main demand drivers for Iranian gas condensate although India and Japan have also raised imports.

Gas condensate was at the top of Iran's non-oil exports list during the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2016-January 19, 2017).

With an export value of $6.26 billion, the commodity accounted for 17.08 percent of the total 10-month non-oil exports value.

Iran's production of passenger cars mounts 41.2%

TT ECONOMY desk **TEHRAN —** Iran manufactured 1.012 million of passenger cars during the first ten months of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2016- January 19, 2017), showing 41.2 percent increase compared to the same period last year, IRIB news reported.

The number of automobiles manufactured in Iran during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (ending December 20) registered a 39.1 percent increase compared to the same period last year, Tasnim news agency reported.

Iran is scheduled to manufacture 1.35 million of cars by the end of the current calendar year (March 20, 2017), Deputy Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Mohsen Salehinia announced in last April.

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

Iran, Pakistan agree to enhance trade to $5b

Iran and Pakistan have agreed to increase the volume of bilateral trade to five billion dollars.

Chairman for the Committee for Foreign Policy and National Security of Iran, Alaeddin Boroujerdi made these remarks while addressing a press conference in Islamabad.

Earlier, Boroujerdi held talks with Pakistan National Security Adviser Nasser Khan Janjua on Friday and discussed matters pertaining to security of the region.

Janjua said that Pakistan attaches great value to its relations with neighbor country Iran.

Boroujerdi said that Iran is a very close friend of Pakistan and there is a need to further improve bilateral relations.

He said Gwadar and Chabahar are sister ports, and they will help boost bilateral trade.

(Source: Business Standard)

Chain stores' stake of Iranian retail sector to increase 20% by 2021

TT ECONOMY desk **TEHRAN —** The share of chain stores in Iranian retail sector is planned to hike to 20 percent by the end of the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2021), IRNA quoted a trade official in Iranian Industry Ministry as saying.

According to Abbas Tabesh, domestic chain stores currently possess an eight-percent share from the total Iranian retail sector.



At the present time, chain stores have some 2,000 branches and 60 companies across the country, he added.

50 dams to be inaugurated in Iran by Mar. 20

TT ECONOMY desk **TEHRAN —** According to the CEO of Iran Water Resources Management Company Mohammad Hajrasooliha, some 50 dams will be completed and inaugurated in Iran by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2017), which also marks the end of country's Fifth Five-Year National Development Plan, IRNA reported.



As the official added, this is the 10th year that Iran is coping with water scarcity and the country has not experienced a similar situation in its history.

Oil shipments show that OPEC is sticking to its cuts

Oil supplies from OPEC are plunging this month as the group implements production cuts aimed at erasing a global surplus, according to tanker-tracker Petro-Logistics SA.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries will reduce supply by 900,000 barrels a day in January, the first month of the accord's implementation, said the Geneva-based consultant. That's equivalent to about 75 percent of the cut that the producer group agreed. Eleven non-members led by Russia are to curb their output in support.

The data suggest "a high level of compliance thus far into the production curtailment agreement," said Daniel Gerber, chief executive officer of Petro-Logistics, which has monitored tanker movements for more than three decades. The estimates are one of the first outside assessments of OPEC's progress.

Adherence to the accord is "great," Saudi Arabia Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said on Jan. 22 when countries met to discuss monitoring implementation. Some analysts, such as London-based consultants Energy Aspects Ltd., have expressed doubts that Iraq will deliver its share of the cuts as the country presses on with the rehabilitation of its oil industry after years of war and sanctions.

While oil prices initially rallied in the two weeks after OPEC announced the supply curbs on Nov. 30, the gains subsequently stalled amid uncertainty over how much of the cutbacks would be delivered. Brent crude futures traded at about $55 a barrel in London on Friday.

Recognizing the skepticism among oil traders, the organization took additional steps to prove it will honor its commitments.

OPEC nations Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Algeria have said they've cut output this month by even more than was required, while Russia said its trimming production faster than was originally agreed. Saudi Arabia's Al-Falih said on Jan. 22 that producers have fulfilled their obligations so faithfully that OPEC probably won't need to extend the accord when it expires at the middle of the year.

Producers also set up a five-nation committee tasked with overseeing compliance, which will next meet in late March for a review of production data.

An implementation rate of 75 percent would be higher than the level OPEC typically achieved in the past. The best rate attained during its previous agreement, during the financial crisis of 2008, was 70 percent, according to Hasan Qabazard, OPEC's former head of research.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Iran may cancel $7b pipeline project with Pakistan



Iran has said it may cancel its high-profile, $7-billion 'peace pipeline' project with Pakistan over lengthy construction delays, with would deprive energy-starved Pakistan of the some 22 million cubic meters of gas a day it would have received from its neighbor.

If negotiations fail to come up with a way to feasibly realize the project, Iran's National Gas Company Head Hamid Reza Araqi said on Friday that the project could be cancelled entirely.

The project has already undergone 15 years of negotiations, beginning as the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project. Pakistan and Iran finally signed the initial agreement in 2009, while India withdrew from the deal. The deal was signed by Pakistani President Zardari and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. In accordance with this deal, Iran was to provide 22 million cubic meters per day of gas.

Pakistan was slated to begin importing Iranian gas imports in early 2015, but the country has not yet begun construction of the related pipeline, nor has Iran completed its project to transit South Pars gas to the Pakistani border. Iran was planning to build a 180-kilometer pipeline.

The pipeline was intended to connect Iran's giant South Pars gas field with Pakistan's southern Baluchistan and Sindh provinces.

The project is crucial for Pakistan if they are to avert a growing energy crisis already causing severe electricity shortages in the country of about 170 million, while it also grapples with Islamist militancy.

Tehran had at one point offered to loan Pakistan $500 million—a third of the cost of Pakistan's portion of the pipeline—to start pipeline construction in Pakistan's territory. This offer was later revoked due to financial problems caused by sanctions.

Pakistan's Petroleum Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi recently noted that in order for the 'Peace Pipeline" to be feasible, all sanctions against Iran would have to be removed.

The deal has also been plagued by pricing disputes, with Pakistan demanding that Iran lower gas prices. Pakistan has also claimed that gas prices offered by Turkmenistan through the TAPI pipeline are lower than those proposed by Iran.

(Source: oilprice.com)

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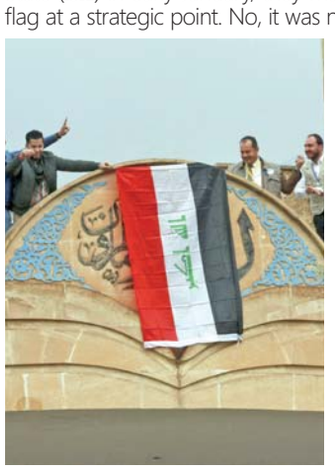
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Not only people are being liberated from ISIL

As Iraq retakes its second-largest city, it made a point of raising a flag at Mosul University, which the militants had all but destroyed. Such schools teach the virtues for running modern societies in the Mideast.

When Iraqi security forces retook eastern Mosul from Islamic State (ISIL) in early January, they made sure to raise the national flag at a strategic point. No, it was not a military position. Rather, the flag went up at Mosul University, which was once one of the premier educational institutions in the Middle East.



In its liberation, the school was reclaimed as a light of learning against the darkness imposed on the campus by the militant group.

After ISIL captured Mosul in 2014, it used the sprawling university as its headquarters in Iraq. Engineering labs were turned into chemical-weapons factories. Other buildings were used to make car bombs. ISIL burned much of the library. While some classes were retained, mainly to teach technical topics, courses in the humanities, law, political science, and the arts were banned or altered. These core topics, so essential to running modern societies, did not fit into the ISIL ideology. Much of the faculty was forced to flee while a few were killed. Female students were restricted to studying health care.

Mosul University had long served as a melting pot for Iraq, welcoming students of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. This purpose helped reinforce the study of such concepts as individual rights and universal liberty and equality. These virtues can bind countries under a secular government that respects freedom of religion.

Across the Arab world, education has become an important driver of progress. Between 1990 and 2010, the overall literacy rate in the region rose from 58 percent to 80 percent while postsecondary education has risen to nearly 25 percent.

In a United Nations report last year, a group of Arab scholars noted a shift among young people that is ushering in a new cultural epoch. "Already this generation of highly motivated and connected youth is upending expectations. More educated than their parents and highly empowered, they are part of a 'Participation Revolution' occurring across the region, where citizens are demanding roles in all aspects of their country's political, economic, and social life," the report stated.The latest evidence of this trend can be found at Mosul University, freshly free and rebounding as a dynamic center for ideas and growth. *(Source: The CSM)*

Trump-May meeting: They are playing with fire

It could have been a disaster. But it wasn't. The prime minister survived her first ordeal by Trump.

Most of Theresa May's visit to the United States this week followed a fairly familiar pattern for such trips. Except for one thing. The press conference between the prime minister and Donald Trump in the White House was an off-the-scale risk. Politically, it was a dash across sniper's alley. Trump might again say something new and shocking. May would have to respond. Not surprisingly, there was doubt about whether there would even be a press conference. Rightly, it went ahead. The stakes for both leaders were very high and different. But they got safely to the other side.

The dangers all concerned Trump. He duly said some provocative things and some embarrassing ones. He repeated his support for waterboarding and torture, several times, which was shameful. He said he was up for a great relationship with Vladimir Putin, which May was not. He was rude about Mexico. He was angry, with a smile on his face, with the BBC's political editor. His performance was a reminder of the immense damage his election has already done to America and its place in the world. But he said nothing new that will add massively to the many rows and outrages in which he is already embroiled.

For May the danger was of being collateral damage in a Trump explosion. Since there was no explosion, she will count the event and the visit more generally as successes. Her speech in Philadelphia on Thursday night raised her profile and went down well, deservedly so in some ways. The prime minister may even be tempted to think that she can take some credit for Trump's good – or less bad – behavior. That may seem naive if Trump's state visit to the UK implodes or turns sour in some way later in the year. May should beware any feeling of confidence about her relationship with the new president. Other prime ministers have passed this way before and ended up humiliated.

Political prize

The big political prize for May was her assertion, not repeated by Trump but not denied either, that the president is 100% behind NATO. This is an important outcome, if true. The message will be heard in every NATO capital, especially in eastern parts of Europe, and will be heard in the Kremlin too. Quite what Trump's 100% support means in practice remains to be seen. May seemed very keen to lobby for all NATO states to raise their spending level and to raise their defense equipment spending too. It is hard to know whether, post-Brexit, she has the clout or whether she and other Europeans see eye-to-eye on outcomes. Yet, given Trump's earlier scorn for NATO, this was a big prize.



Trump's vocal embrace of Brexit will have caused real anxiety in Brussels and around the EU – and annoyed his UK opponents too.

It is, though, early days, as Trump himself said. That applies in particular to any prospective trade deal between the UK and the U.S. The U.S. is traditionally a powerful and an uncompromising trade negotiator. It looks to advance American interests, not those of its partners – as Trump made clear on Mexico. Nothing will happen soon, and London's optimism is almost certainly misplaced. Trump's vocal embrace of Brexit will have caused real anxiety in Brussels and around the EU – and annoyed his UK opponents too. May's eagerness to get round the table in the Oval Office will be seen by some as a disruptive act against the EU, whatever she herself thinks.

The main danger facing any British prime minister in the relationship with America is hubris. Pushed by the press and fired by Britain's seemingly indestructible institutional desire to be loved by America, prime ministers feel the need to seize first friend status and hug it close. Sometimes, however, this can become a destructive desire, as Tony Blair found in his relationship with George W Bush. These visits ought not to matter too much. But they do. May will feel that she did well. All of us are glad it is now over. In the end, though, Trump is the master of his own fate and, if May is not careful, he will be master of hers as well.

(Source: The Guardian)

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Support for Al-Khalifa regime Western strategy to project power in Persian Gulf

INTERVIEW
By Lachin Rezaian

Canadian Human Rights Attorney Edward Corrigan rejected the 'muted' protests of the United States, Great Britain and other Western powers against the human rights violation in Bahrain as appalling.

Bahrain's human rights climate remains highly problematic. The country's courts convict and imprison peaceful protesters and have failed to hold officials accountable for torture and other serious rights violations.

Edward Corrigan said Western countries are more concerned about their strategic alliance with the Al-Khalifa regime than about human rights or the wishes of the majority of the population in Bahrain.

He warned if the population of Bahrain explodes in anger over the repression and discriminatory treatment, it will put in jeopardy the presence of the United States and Britain, given their long history of support for the Al-Khalifa repression.

"Strategic relationship with the Al-Khalifa regime is due to its strategic location of Bahrain which allows the United States and Britain to project their power in the Persian Gulf area," Corrigan noted in an exclusive interview with Tehran Times:

■ What is the outcome of Bahraini government's suppression of pro-democracy activists? How do you evaluate the role of international community in countering the crimes and torture in Bahrain?

The brutal repression of peaceful marchers who are protesting the execution by firing squad of the three young activists is only going to intensify the resistance to the Al-Khalifa regime. If the regime does not allow peaceful protest and recognize the right to free speech and address the concerns of the majority Shia population there will be more violence. If one suppresses peaceful protest, then it makes it inevitable that violent protest will result if there is no other alternative.

In September 2016 in a joint statement signed by 35 countries, the UN Human Rights Council expressed serious concern about human rights violations in Bahrain including imprisonment of those exercising their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, and lack of accountability.

In September 2016 in a joint statement signed by 35 countries, the UN Human Rights Council expressed serious concern about human rights violations in Bahrain.

In response to the executions the international community has been more vocal in their criticism. The United Nations Human Rights Commissioner issued a harsh rebuke saying that it was appalled by the executions. The UN Commission said they had "serious doubts whether the accused were provided with the right to have a fair trial."

The UN Committee was extremely critical of the trials and executions. In a Press Release they wrote: "We are appalled at the execution by firing squad of three men in Bahrain on Sunday. The men had been convicted of a bombing in Manama in 2014 that killed three police officers. They were found guilty after being allegedly tortured into making false confessions and their lawyers were not given access to all the evidence against them nor allowed to cross-examine prosecution witnesses during court hearings."

They were joined by the United States who said they were "concerned" about the executions. France also condemned the executions. Great Britain and the European Union deplored the use of the death penalty in this situation. Many other countries including Iran, and Iraq strongly condemned the executions of what they called "political" prisoners.

Here is what Human Rights Watch wrote about the trials: "The UN Human Rights Committee, which interprets the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Bahrain has ratified, has said that "in cases of trials leading to the imposition of the death penalty scrupulous respect of the guarantees of fair trial is particularly important and that any death penalty imposed after an unfair trial would be a violation of the right to life. Human Rights Watch opposes the death penalty in all circumstances because of its inherent cruelty." Amnesty International has made similar criticism of the trials and called them "unfair" and that noted that the confessions were based on torture. The trials did not meet the required international standards.



■ How do you analyze the role of other countries, including U.S. and UK, in raising tensions in Bahrain resulting in human rights abuses?

The muted protests of the United States, Great Britain and other Western powers is appalling. They are more concerned about their strategic alliance with the Al-Khalifa regime than about human rights or the wishes of the majority of the population in Bahrain. Britain has a military presence in Bahrain which they wish to protect. The United States 5th Fleet is based in Bahrain. The Americans also provide other support. In June 2016, the U.S. government lifted its embargo on arms sales to the Bahrain National Guard and Bahrain Defense Forces. In August 2016m it approved an $150 million deal to supply military aircraft parts, ammunition and communications equipment to Bahrain. These actions reward the Manama regime for its violation of human and political rights.

In June 2016, the U.S. government lifted its embargo on arms sales to the Bahrain National Guard and Bahrain Defense Forces. In August 2016, it approved an $150 million deal to supply military aircraft parts, ammunition and communications equipment to Bahrain.



If the population of Bahrain explodes in anger over the repression and discriminatory treatment, it will put in jeopardy the presence of the United States and Britain, given their long history of support for the Al-Khalifa dictatorship.



it is the perceived "strategic relationship" with the Al-Khalifa regime and the strategic location of Bahrain which allows the United States and Britain to project their power in the Persian Gulf area that dominates the thinking of the Western Powers.

■ Why human rights pretenders like the U.S. and UK not only are silent against Bahraini government curtailing freedoms of expression, association and assembly and cracking down on dissent, but also provide the country with financial aids?

Again it is the perceived "strategic relationship" with the Al-Khalifa regime and the strategic location of Bahrain which allows the United States and Britain to project their power in the Persian Gulf area that dominates the thinking of the Western Powers. The importance of oil and the ongoing support of the British, and now the Americans, for the monarchical dictatorships in the Persian Gulf region necessitates a military presence to prop up the autocratic feudal regimes in the area. There is a realization on the part of the West that if they did not support the Persian Gulf States with weapons, money and military force if needed, these regimes would collapse given their precarious nature.

■ Do you think the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF)- a financial pool worth more than £1bn a year- is evidence of the militarization of Britain's development budget and UK complicity in abuses?

Yes. This budget is largely without oversight and is controlled by the Conservative British government at the present time. There has been funding to Bahrain in the amount of two million pounds. It does appear that this fund is being used to support dictatorships and not development.

■ Many activists, NGOs and Human rights campaigners in Bahrain, like the Labor party in Britain, complain about the lack of transparency surrounding how the reserves are spent and about a high degree of ambiguity about the status of the CSSF fund. What do you think about this?

This money is reportedly to help Bahrain to improve its justice system and to improve human rights in the tiny Persian Gulf monarchy. However, as critics have pointed out that the justice system in Bahrain is getting much worse. Torture is being used against prisoners and being used to convict activists with some receiving the death sentence. In addition there is violent suppression of peaceful demonstrators, the killing of unarmed demonstrators and the revocation of citizenship from more than 200 Bahrainis. Freedom of speech and political rights are under severe attack in Bahrain. There have been calls in Britain by the Labor Opposition and by human rights groups to stop sending money to Bahrain until the Al-Khalifa regime substantially improves its human rights record. This money should be used to improve human rights and not to reward human rights abusers.

Edward C. Corrigan holds a B.A. in History and a Master's Degree in Political Science from the University of Western Ontario. He also has a Law Degree from the University of Windsor and was called to the Bar of the Law Society of Upper Canada in 1992. His academic area of expertise is the Middle East and he has published many articles in academic publications including Middle East Policy, Middle East International, Outlook and Z Magazine.

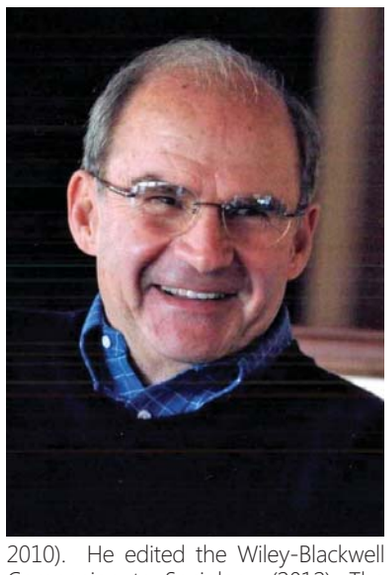
China rising globalizing force thanks to Trump

INTERVIEW
By Mohammad Mazhari

Trump's election to presidency in the U.S., his clear stand against global trade, and his persistence on American indigenous potentials have challenged theory of globalization, as Trump has pointed out to 'America First' policy and tries to protect American market from Chinese goods. In the same context, some experts consider Brexit and rise of right-wing parties in Europe as a failure of process of globalization and rise of a sort of 'de-globalization' which highlights national and local values and cultures.

To address the diverse dimensions of this subject, we reached George Ritzer, distinguished University of Maryland professor. Ritzer is well-known for Iranian students for his books on sociological theories.

Among his books in theory are Sociology: A Multiple Paradigm Science (1975/1980) and Metatheorzing in Sociology (1991). In the application of social theory to the social world, his books include The McDonaldization of Society (7th ed., 2013), Enchanting a Disenchanted World (3rd ed. 2010), and The Globalization of Nothing (2nd ed., 2007). His is also the author of Globalization: A Basic Text (Blackwell,



2010). He edited the Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Sociology (2012), The Blackwell Companion to Globalization (2008) and co-edited the Wiley-Blackwell Companions to Classical and Contemporary Major Social Theorists (2012) and the Sage Handbook of Social Theory (2001).

Here is our interview with him:

■ How do you see the relationship between "nationalism" and 'globalization'? Would you consider 'nationalism' as a major obstacle for the process of 'globalization'?

As in all things, it is complicated. For example, there can be a positive relationship between them as, for example, in the global trend toward increased nationalism during WW I and II. There could also be a negative relationship as in the global trend away from nationalism after those wars and their disastrous effects. At the moment, of course, the trend toward nationalism is serving as an obstacle to globalization. But these things are dialectical and sooner or later the pendulum will swing back.

■ Can we see Trump's election to presidency, UK withdrawal from EU and rise of right-wing parties in Europe as a failure for process of globalization? Or it's better to regard them as temporary phenomena?

As implied in the answer to question 1, it is temporary (of course, temporary could last years or even decades). I don't think it's a "failure" of globalization, but rather another moment in its ebb and flow.

■ What is the role of religion in the globalization process, given that religions such as Christianity and Islam claim universal values; can we suppose the religion as rival for globalization?

No, religion is one of the most important globalizing forces both historically and contemporaneously. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and others have globalized and have had a wide-scale impact on the world. I think you are assuming, as most people do, that globalization equals economic globalization, but from my point of view it is one of a number of aspects of globalization (this communication between us is another minor example)

■ Some countries and cultures resist against globalization, justifying their resistance by the premise that it would devastate cultural diversity in our world; instead, they put emphasis on local values and cultures. Would you think that the localization is a barrier to globalization? Or it can enrich our world and globalization process?

Both! Localization is a barrier to many forms of globalization and in that sense can be a barrier to the enrichments associated with globalization. On the other hand, the local is a source of great diversity and much of that can be, and has been, globalized. Of course, the exclusionary power of the local can limit or eliminate the spread of that diversity.

Europe is part of the west, but its independent influence on globalization is declining with the problems in the EU.



■ Does globalization equal westernization or Americanization? Or you recognize a model of multipolar world which includes China, Europe and Islamic-Arabic countries?

No, but they have been the most powerful globalizing forces in the last two centuries. With their decline we will have an increasingly multipolar world. China will be an increasingly important globalizing force, especially economically, in the years to come. Europe is part of the west, but its independent influence on globalization is declining with the problems in the EU. At the moment, at least under Trump, the U.S. is opting for a smaller role globally. Islam has had a powerful effect historically and to this day. Unfortunately, its positive influence today has been obscured by the tendency, at least in much of the West, to associate it, or at least its more radical elements, with terrorism.

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Subtle and slightly bizarre signs you need more sleep

By Jeff Cattel



There's plenty of stuff happening behind sleep scenes, from repairing damaged skin cells to flushing out toxins that build up in your brain.

Turns out we could all use a little more shut-eye: Four in 10 Americans don't get the recommended seven hours of sleep per night. As a result, we're pretty familiar with the signs that our bodies need more rest: endless yawns, heavy eyes, and sleeping in on the weekends.

But when you go from a few restless nights to more chronic sleep deprivation—where sleep debt accumulates over weeks—you tend to not realize how tired you are, says Joseph Ojile, M.D., medical director at the Clayton Sleep Institute. "With fatigue and sleeplessness, we are by nature impaired," he says. "So that also means our self-awareness and judgment is off." Luckily there are some subtle (and slightly bizarre) signs that reveal when we're truly sleep deprived.

1. You rely on clichés

Do you find yourself peppering platitudes ("What goes around comes around" or "It is what it is") into everyday conversation? No, you haven't switched bodies with an old fogy, you might just be sleepy. Studies have shown that the act of pulling an all-nighter can mimic the levels of impairment we feel when we're drunk, Ojile says. "When you're impaired, you rely on crutches, the things you know," he says. "That could mean clichés or anything that is rote and will allow you to stay in conversation without expending much energy."

And it's not just clichés. Sleep-deprived people start to sound drunk, with slurred speech, trouble finding words, and excessive giddiness, says Terry Cralle, the national spokesperson for the Better Sleep Council and author of the children's book Snoozby and the Great Big Bedtime Story.

2. You're unusually moody

You're usually a pretty patient person, but now you have the shortest fuse. Little things, like people being late or missing deadlines, rile you up, and that's totally normal for someone who's sleep deprived, says Robert Rosenberg, M.D., a sleep medicine specialist and author of Sleep Soundly Every Night, Feel Fantastic Every Day. One study even showed that people who were low on sleep struggled to accurately read facial expressions; they started seeing non-threatening people as threatening. As you can imagine, this would send most people into an emotional tailspin, thinking the world is out to get them.

3. You get sick all the time

You just got over one illness, and the next thing you know, another cold has you down for the count. Your body isn't railing against you (even if you ate a few too many helpings of chili cheese fries last weekend), but your immune system is weaker and struggling to fend off the germs you come into contact with every day. Case in point: One recent study found that people who slept less than five hours per night were four times more likely to catch the common cold than those who slept for six.

4. You have a serious case of the munchies

Find yourself digging into a pint of ice cream right after you polished off some late-night pizza? Your hunger just can't be sated—and there's a perfectly good explanation for that. Studies have found that short sleeps lead to a lowered level of leptin (the hormone that decreases your appetite) and an increased level of ghrelin (the hunger hormone). Talk about a bad combination! Even worse, another study found that participants who slept four-and-a-half hours for four consecutive nights showed increased insulin sensitivity and an elevated risk for diabetes—even though they didn't change their diet.

"Studies have shown that the act of pulling an all-nighter can mimic the levels of impairment we feel when we're drunk"

5. You can't seem to make a decision

Some choices are always hard to make (Netflix or Hulu?), and then there are days when every decision seems like it's do or die. If you're low on sleep, you'll have less blood flow to the pre-frontal cortex, the area of your brain responsible for critical thinking. At the same time, there's hyperactivity in the amygdala, which is wired for our responses to fear. "This leads to all sorts of problems with executive function," Rosenberg says. "That includes things like decision making, planning, organizing, and paying attention."

6. You're breaking out like crazy

If you wake up in the morning with acne clustered around your chin, don't think your high school years have come back to haunt you. It's a perfectly normal reaction to being sleep deprived or overly stressed, says Jennifer Reichel, M.D., a board certified dematologist and advisor to RealSelf. Poor sleep habits can start to make skin less firm and hydrated—in a word: older. We have cortisol to thank for that. The hormone spikes in people who are stressed and sleep deprived, and it can break down skin collagen, which stops it from being its usual smooth self.

The takeaway

Sleep is hugely important to your body. Sure, we all love that well-rested and alert feeling, but there's plenty of stuff happening behind the scenes too, from repairing damaged skin cells to flushing out toxins that build up in your brain. If you notice one of the aforementioned signs, it's time to start thinking about your quantity and quality of sleep. Luckily, most of the time, these issues are reversible with a concerted effort to catch more zzzs.

(Source: greaist.com)

What is bipolar disorder?

Bipolar disorder, also known in some parts of the world by its older name of "manic depression," is a mental disorder that is characterized by serious and significant mood swings. A person with this condition experiences alternating "highs" (what clinicians call "mania") and "lows" (also known as depression).

Both the manic and depressive periods can be brief, from just a few hours to a few days. Or the cycles can be much longer, lasting up to several weeks or even months. The periods of mania and depression vary from person to person — many people may only experience very brief periods of these intense moods, and may not even be aware that they have the disorder.

A manic episode is characterized by extreme happiness, extreme irritability, hyperactivity, little need for sleep and/or racing thoughts, which may lead to rapid speech. People in a manic episode feel like they can do anything, make plans to try and do all those things, and believe that nothing can stop them.

A depressive episode is characterized by extreme sadness, a lack of energy or interest in things, an inability to enjoy normally pleasurable activities and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. On average, someone with this condition may have up to three years of normal mood between episodes of mania or depression.

How is bipolar disorder treated?

According to researchers at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the exact cause of bipolar disorder is not yet known — but it can still be effectively treated.

Like most mental disorders, this condition is readily treated with psychotherapy combined with psychiatric medications (most people benefit more quickly from combined treatment). Treatment for this condition is effective and helps most people keep a balanced mood throughout their day, most days of the month. One of the biggest challenges of treatment is helping a person find and keep a treatment routine that works best for them over the long-term. Most people with this condition benefit from medications for much of their life, but it can be a challenge to stick with the medications when all seems well years down the road.

(Source: psychcentral.com)

Can you really build "long, lean" muscles?

You hear it from fitness instructors. You read it in ads for yoga, Pilates, or studios. You see it in #fitstagrams, magazines, and your newsfeed. I just got an email today about a new workout that promises that "long, lean body that everyone wants."

Sure, not everyone actually wants that lithe look. But for those who do, promises of longer, leaner muscles can be just the motivation you need, especially when you hear it from trainers and professionals you trust. But is it realistic—or even honest?

Muscles 101

Muscles contract and stretch to move bones, kind of like stretchy rubber bands, but they technically have fixed lengths. "You can't change where muscles begin and end; it's your anatomical predisposition," says Michael George, a certified functional fitness trainer and Ph.D. candidate.

Which is to say: Baby, you were born this way. If you happen to have a "short" calf muscle (compared to other people), you could spend all day downward-dogging, but that won't magically transform the length of your legs. Similarly, all the barre in the world won't make you taller, but it will improve your posture, strength, and flexibility. It doesn't mean it's not worth doing; it just means it won't perform a miracle. So what's the difference between a ballerina and a power lifter? The answer is a combination of two things: how they train and what they eat.

Get strong, not long

While you can't control the actual length of muscles, you can control the way you develop muscles.

Isometric contractions (think: tensing a muscle but not actually moving, like holding a plank) utilized in workouts such as barre or yoga develop muscles differently than dynamic or isotonic movements, where the muscle stretches and contracts through a range of motion, like push-ups. Plus, performing a high number of reps of tiny, controlled movements engages and strengthens a different set of muscle fibers (slow-twitch) than big, explosive movements, which work fast-twitch fibers.

There are pros and cons to each method, but on a structural level, both isometric and dynamic exercises lead to greater strength, firmness, and tone in the muscle, says Tanya Becker, certified trainer and co-founder of Physique 57. In fact, doing a combo of both is ideal for getting quick results.

You can't alter the actual length of muscles, but you can train and—more importantly—eat in a way that results in having leaner, more defined muscle tissue on your body.

It's also possible to train muscles at different lengths by performing exercises that first stretch the muscle and then engage it, says Bret Contreras, a certified strength and conditioning specialist. For example, a sprinter might train their hamstrings to be stronger when stretched by doing Romanian deadlifts. But this doesn't mean you'll actually see a big difference, Contreras says. We know this probably isn't what you want to hear, but if you really want to appear "longer and leaner," it's going to happen in the kitchen, not in the gym.

The skinny on body fat

To really see the changes from all your hard work, you need a reduction of body fat, George says. "It's 80 percent diet and 20 percent cardio and strength work."

And yes, women can and should strength train without worrying that they will turn into The Incredible Hulk. "It's a common misconception that if women use heavy weights, they're going to get big and bulky," George says. That's not going to happen, because women have less muscle tissue and less testosterone than men, he adds.

The false promise here is merely a matter of semantics. Saying you can build "long, lean muscles" is a flawed generalization that capitalizes on the fear of getting "big." We need to get more specific about what we want. What most people are looking for is not "length," it's definition and reduced body fat.

The bottom line

To answer the question: No, you can't alter the actual length of muscles, but you can train and—more importantly—eat in a way that results in having leaner, more defined muscle tissue on your body. Saying you can build "long and lean muscles" to market a workout or a method of training is just that—marketing. Find what works for you, fuel your body properly, and it won't matter how you label your muscles—you'll feel like an all-around badass from the inside out.

(Source: greatist.com)

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Tehran, Baku explore ways to deepen tourism ties

TT TOURISM desk **TEHRAN** — Iran and Azerbaijan have discussed developing cooperation in the areas related to tourism.

Aydin Ismiyev who presides over tourism department at Azerbaijan's Culture and Tourism Ministry met in Baku with Jalil Jabbari, the director of Iran's West Azarbaijan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department, AzerNews reported on Jan. 27.

During the meeting, Ismiyev touched on the issue of visa simplification, saying that the number of Iranian tourists visiting Azerbaijan and vice versa has considerably ramped up over the past two years.



Ways to enhance cooperation between tourism associate offices and agencies was amongst other topics put forward by Ismiyev.

The Azeri official also invited the Iranian side to take part in "AITF-2017", an international travel and tourism fair scheduled to be held in Baku on April 6-8.

In Dec. 2016, Azerbaijan's Economy Minister Shahin Mustafayev announced that the country plans to significantly simplify the visa regime for Iranian citizens in 2017. He made the remarks during the 11th meeting of the Azerbaijan-Iran intergovernmental commission on economic, trade and humanitarian cooperation in Baku.

Sadiq Khan wants visitors to London to pay a new tourism tax

LONDON (Business Insider) — Tourists visiting London face a hefty tourism tax under proposals from London mayor Sadiq Khan.

The plans, endorsed by Khan at a cross-party event inside London's City Hall on Friday morning, would see visitors paying up to 5% extra on their hotel bills.

Speaking to journalists afterwards, Khan said that tourists should contribute more to the city they visit.

"London is the number one destination for tourists in the world," he said."Hotels do very well out of that. What we're saying is when the tourists come they opt to pay a small level which will help improve the city."

The levy is based on similar taxes imposed in cities such as Berlin where tourists pay an extra 5% on their bill.

Under Khan's proposals local authorities would be given the option of imposing the levy, which would then be used to pay for infrastructure and environmental improvements in the city.

However, the plans were met with immediate fury by the hospitality industry.

"The British Hospitality Association regards any bed tax as absolute folly and asks the Mayor to think again," BHA Chief Executive Ufi Ibrahim said.

"The introduction of a London bed tax will not only cost tourists more but harm already hard-pressed London hospitality and tourism businesses.

ROUND THE GLOBE

Historic center of Santa Cruz de Mompox

Santa Cruz de Mompox, located in the swampy inland tropics of northern Colombia's Bolívar Department, was founded about 1539 on the Magdalena River, the country's principal waterway.

The historic center has preserved the harmony and unity of the urban landscape. Most of the buildings are still used for their original purposes, providing an exceptional picture of what a Spanish colonial city was like.



Santa Barbara Church, Mompos, Colombia

Mompox was of great logistical and commercial importance, as substantial traffic between the port of Cartagena and the interior travelled along the river.

It consequently played a key role in the Spanish colonization of northern South America, forming an integral part of the processes of colonial penetration and dominion during the Spanish conquest and of the growth of communications and commerce during the 17th to early 19th centuries.

Most of the buildings in its 458-ha historic center are in a remarkable state of conservation and still used for their original purposes, thus preserving an exceptional illustration of a Spanish riverine settlement.

Founded in 1540 on the banks of the River Magdalena, Mompox played a key role in the Spanish colonization of northern South America. From the 16th to the 19th century the city developed parallel to the river, with the main street acting as a dyke.

17th WFTGA Convention kicks off in Tehran

Tourism serves as 'a bridge between nations', Rouhani says

TT TOURISM desk **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani has said tourism and tour guides serve as bridges between nations and links between different cultures and civilizations.

"The era of building walls between nations has come to an end, Rouhani said addressing the opening ceremony of the 17th World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA) Convention in Tehran on Saturday.

"[They] have forgotten that the Berlin Wall fell some years ago. If a wall separates nations, it should be removed," Mehr news agency quoted Rouhani as saying.

"In today's world, all the countries are like neighbors to each other. Communications and globalization have cut distances. Disconnecting global trade ties would not be beneficial to the world economy."

Highlighting the principal role of tourism, the president referred to tour guides, saying: "You as the servants to the cultural heritage, tell the younger generation of ancient civilization of the human being and historical works."

He went on to say that BARJAM (the Persian acronym for the nuclear deal) has paved the way for more foreign tourists to visit Iran. "We do every effort to develop our tourism industry. To this end, we are renovating our aviation fleet, expanding railway system, and building highways in order to increase the tourist influx.



IRNA\Ehsan Naderipour

President Hassan Rouhani (c) stands by CHTHO Director Zahra Ahmadipour at the opening ceremony of 17th World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations Convention in Tehran on January 29, 2017. Other Iranian and international officials and tourist guides are seen in the picture as well.

Tourism's vital economic role

Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization Director Zahra Ahmadipour, for her part, reminded the attendees of 2017 being named as the "International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development" by the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

She said such an initiative by the UNWTO demonstrates tourism is a key factor that contributes to both lives and subsistence of people across the globe.

Ahmadipour who doubles as vice president touched on economic achievements of tourism for hosting countries when it comes to the generation of revenues, creation of jobs, and redistribution of wealth, saying "Tourism industry is of high importance as it accounts for 10 percent of global GDP and one out of every 11 jobs in the world."

Some $24 billion came into Iran over the past three and a half years because of foreign tourists, CHTHO Deputy Director Morteza Rahmani-Movahhed announced in Sept. 2016.

Iran expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots, including 21 ones that have been placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list, after it agreed to roll back its nuclear program in exchange for relief from economic sanctions in July 2015.

Foreign tourist arrivals in Iran has been more than double that of the global average since the implementation of the deal in January 2016, CHTHO announced in Oct. 2016.

The country has launched extensive plans to bolster its tourism sector. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, the country is expecting to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

Iran has also offered to grant years of tax exemption to both domestic and foreign businesses and individuals as an incentive for ramping up investments in its tourism sector.

For the time being, citizens of about 190 countries can obtain visa on arrival at the country's airports with one-month validation.

IN FOCUS IRNA/Reza Qaderi



A foreign tourist takes a shot of the courtyard of the historical Vakil Mosque in Shiraz, southern Iran on January 16, 2017.

Tasmanian tourism industry pushes for reform of 'outdated' parks

Tasmania's peak tourism body has used its budget submission to call on the Government to "re-write the rule book" for the state's parks and reserves management.

As it currently stands, Tasmania's National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002 is largely based on original legislation from 1970.

Luke Martin from the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania (TICT) said it was time the Government officially recognized the tourism potential and cultural significance of the state's iconic wilderness.

"If we can do that through a review of the legislation then that can provide a way for all stakeholders to contribute their perspectives in a way that's constructive," he said.

"I think all stakeholders in our parks acknowledge that it's dealing with legislation that's written in the 1970s and 1980s and it's very convoluted."

(Source: ABC Online)

Barcelona cracks down on tourist numbers with accommodation law

The city of Barcelona passed a law on Friday to curb tourism as visitors have begun to overwhelm the city and anger local residents.

Last year the city's 1.6 million residents were heavily outnumbered by an estimated 32 million visitors, about half of them day-trippers.

The new law comes after more than 25 years of relentless promotion of the city as a tourist destination, and coincides with a planned "occupation" on Saturday of La Rambla, a street that has come to symbolize what many view as the excessive and unsustainable number of tourists.

The occupation has been organized by the Barcelona Urban Neighborhood Association, along with more than 40 residents and community associations.

Under the slogan "Barcelona isn't for sale" the protesters are calling for an end to property speculation, which is pricing residents out of the city, and to low-wage jobs in tourist service industries.

"The tourist and restaurant sector is the worst paid in Barcelona," says Marti Cuso, a member of one of the community groups, the Neighborhood Assembly for Sustainable Tourism. "They earn half the average salary."

The new law, known as the special urban plan for tourist accommodation, seeks to limit the number of beds on offer from hotels and tourist apartments. It imposes a moratorium on building new hotels and a halt in issuing licenses for tourist apartments.



Huge crowds outside Barcelona's La Boqueria market. (Photograph: David Ramos/Getty Images)

However, as a number of projects are already in the pipeline, the plan is not expected to have an impact before 2019.

There are currently 75,000 hotel beds in the city and about 50,000 beds in legal tourist apartments, plus an estimated 50,000 illegal ones. Residents' associations calculate that some 17,000 flats are now tourist apartments and that the resulting shortage has driven up rents that are now the highest in Spain.

The proposal has met fierce opposition from the tourism industry, which claims the law demonizes tourists and says that limiting growth can only hurt an already weak economy in a city where tourism accounts for about 12% of the city's €72bn (£61bn) GDP, according to figures for 2014.

"The focus of the plan is wrong," insists Manel Casals, director general of the Barcelona hoteliers association. "Of the 32 million people who visited Barcelona last year, only 8 million stayed in hotels. Twenty-three million were day-trippers who spend very little money in the city. You're not going to regulate tourism by limiting the number of beds. They're not regulating tourism, they're only regulating where people sleep."

Daniel Pardo, a member of the Neighborhood Assembly for Sustainable Tourism who describes the group's negotiations with the city over the plan as "frustrating", says that while it doesn't go far enough, it's a start. "What's positive is there's a plan to tackle this problem, however flawed that plan is. No one has even considered doing this until now. Before the only plan was more, more, more."

In a survey carried out by the city council in October on what residents perceived the city's biggest problems, tourism was second only to unemployment.

Jordi Ferrer, an economist who specializes in the hotel sector, estimates that the city will face a claim of €400m in compensation for projects paralyzed by the moratorium.

(Source: The Guardian)

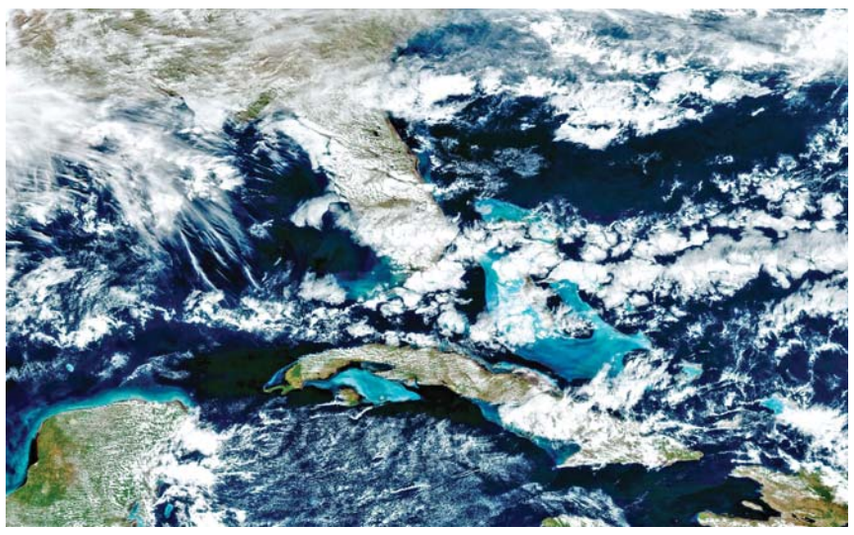
New weather satellites can spot floods before they happen

People should go easier on meteorologists when they get the weather forecast wrong. Those guys are doing their best, OK? Plus, they're dealing with some significant scientific handicaps. Even some of the most advanced like weather satellites in the world can't reliably tell the difference between clouds and ice.

But that won't be problem much longer. Last November, NASA launched GOES-16 — NOAA's next generation weather satellite — into geostationary orbit about 22,000 miles from Earth. On January 15th, it started to send back pictures.

The new satellite images aren't just pretty: Compared to the previous generation, GOES-16 has three times the spectral channels capturing images at four times the resolution, with five times the efficiency.

Scientists will have a whole lot more data to validate their weather and climate models, and a better chance to warn you when Mother Nature starts going rogue.



Scientists will have a whole lot more data to validate their weather and climate models, and a better chance to warn you when Mother Nature starts going rogue.

Distinguishing clouds, ice, fog

Being able to distinguish clouds, ice, fog, smoke, and ash seems pretty basic, but it isn't. With GOES-13's just five spectral channels, it all just looked, well, white. "When I saw those clouds, I just turned to someone and said, 'Holy cow.' It was jaw dropping for me," says Steve Goodman, senior scientist for the GOES-R program.

The heightened resolution

With GOES-16's 16 channels — two visible, four near-infrared, and 10 infrared, which you can see above — plus the heightened resolution, scientists can monitor everything from poisonous sulfur dioxide emissions from volcanic eruptions to melting snowpacks.

"With this kind of resolution, if you were in New York City and you were taking a picture of Wrigley Field in Chicago, you'd be able to see home plate," says Eric Webster, vice president and general manager of environmental solutions and space and intelligence systems.

The entire globe

And because GOES-16 can scan the entire globe in 15 minutes, the U.S. in five, and a major weather event (like a tornado or hurricane system) in 30 seconds, you'd better believe that weather prediction, turbulence forecasts, and storm warnings will improve too. "If you have five more minutes of warning, that's the difference between your kid playing down the street and being in your basement," Webster says. Which, in the long run, means studying climate change too.

The Trump administration isn't thrilled about spending federal money on climate research, but President Trump's Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross name-checked NOAA as a group whose science he respected — so they may even get to do it. "People will come up with hundreds of new things to do with this data," Goodman says.

(Source: wired.com)

Hubble confirms the universe is expanding far faster than expected

One of the biggest cosmological discoveries in history was Edwin Hubble's 1925 realization that the universe is not a static place — it's expanding.

Now, astronomers have used the Hubble Space Telescope, plus a collaboration of telescopes in space and on the ground, to take the most precise observations of the rate of expansion to date, but they used a strange quirk of spacetime to do it.

Strong cosmic lensing occurs when light travels from a distant point in the universe and encounters a massive object along the way. Massive objects, like galaxies, cause spacetime to bend and warp, as predicted by Einstein's general relativity. If the alignment is just right between us and the distant source of light, the massive object in between can create a spacetime "lens" that magnifies and distorts the passage of light through space.

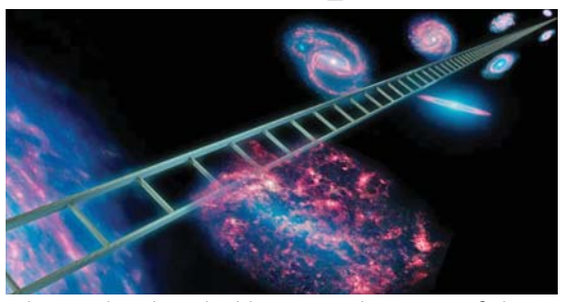
Multiple lensed images and distorted arcs are commonly seen in deep space imagery, showcasing the phenomenon. It's a bit like holding a magnifying lens in front of a candle; get the positioning right, and the candlelight intensifies and distorts. These natural lenses have been used by Hubble in the past to amplify its magnification potential as part of the Frontier Fields project, seeing deeper into space than its conventional optics will allow.

Cosmic lenses

But these cosmic lenses in spacetime can be used for other astronomical purposes, and one of them, as revealed by new research published in the journal Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society, is to test a fundamental constant that describes the universe's relentless — and accelerating — expansion. The research was carried out by the wonderfully named H0LiCOW collaboration.

An interesting detail with cosmic lenses is that they're not perfect. In other words, light from the same distant source (like an ancient quasar) may take different paths along different regions of warped spacetime. Rather than a single lens, there are many different lenses clustered together of different magnifications.

Now, for the bright quasars observed by Hubble, it



is known that these highly active galactic cores flicker in brightness and these flickers will be delayed from lensed image to image. Using flicker time delay as a measure, this new research has been able to get a very precise measurement of the rate of cosmic expansion, confirming previous measurements of the Hubble constant — a number that defines the rate of cosmic expansion.

(Source: Seeker)

KV ANNUAL DAY CELEBRATIONS



Kendriya VIdyalaya Tehran (Embassy of India School) celebrated its Annual Day on 25 Jan. 2017. His Excellency Mr. Saurabh Kumar Ambassador of India and Chairman VMC presided over the function as the Chief Guest. Mrs. Smriti Srivastav the First Lady of Embassy of India and President IWA was the Guest of Honour. The Chief Guest inaugurated the function by lighting the wisdom lamp.

Mr. P.C. Sharma, Principal of Kendriya Vidyalaya Tehran welcomed the Chief Guest, the Guest of Honour, Distinguished Guests from different Embassies and Officials from Ministry of Education of Iran and the Parents. He also presented the Annual Report 2015-16 and highlighted the co-curricular and academic achievements of the Vidyalaya.

It was followed by a Cultural programme which enthralled the audience. The participants performed the cultural events with great zeal and fervour. Iranian patriotic song was a scintillating performance. The audience were mesmerized especially the Haryanavi Dance and Bhangra stole the show.

His Excellency Mr. Saurabh Kumar Ambassador of India and Chairman VMC and Mrs. Smriti Srivastav gave away the prizes and Merit certificates to Miss. Marzieh Zahra Sofi, Miss Elika Abbasi and Miss Shafaq Gulzar Elahi for their outstanding performance in Class X CBSE Board Examination, 2015-16. Master Debarghya Biswas was also awarded the Merit certificate and prize for Class XII CBSE Examination, 2015-16. The other students were also presented prizes for excelling in Co-curricular Activities and Academics.

His Excellency in his address was all praise for the participants and the school. Also he congratulated the Principal and Teachers for putting up such a good show. He assured to extend all support to the school. He exhorted the students to excel both in academics and other activities for their harmonious development.

Tabriz Hand-Woven Carpet, Symbol of "National Production" and "Resistance Economy"

Tabriz Permanent Hand-Woven Carpet and Carpet Tableau Exhibition kicked off its work in Pasdaran District, Tehran with the aim of promoting real status of Tabriz hand-woven carpet in different parts of the country.

This prestigious exhibition and showroom was held at the initiative taken by one councilors in Tabriz City Council and also one of exemplary carpet exporters.

Esmaeil Chamani Activist in the field of Carpet Industry and Head of Tabriz Carpet Weavers and Producers Trade Union announced the above statement and said: "Since carpet industry is manifestation of culture and art of a geographical region and is considered as good-will cultural ambassador of Iran, effective steps have been taken in the Union in order to promote the status of Iranian carpet and recognize exquisite hand-woven carpets of Iran and Tabriz in international markets."

He, who is a member of Tabriz City Council, pointed to the relationship between producing hand-woven carpet and resistance economy and said: "A glance at the history of Iranian hand-woven carpet especially those carpets woven in Tabriz, it can be grasped out that significance of this art is of paramount importance whether in terms of economy or transfer of culture and art of this land and territory."

It should be noted that carpet industry especially hand-woven carpet has high potential in flourishing economy of country especially in the field of generation of more employment, he said, adding: "We cordially request investors



to make huge investment in carpet industry in line with materializing most objectives of resistance economy."

Manafi, as exemplary exporter of Iranian hand-woven carpet in Japan, was the other speaker in this prestigious exhibition who said: "With the coordination made in this regard, we have managed to set up Iran and Tabriz Hand-Woven Carpet Exhibition in Japan in cooperation with Iranian ambassador to Japan due to the value and antiquity of Iranian hand-woven carpet as well as monopoly of Iranian designs in this respect."

Masoumeh Aqapour, representative of people of Shabestar in the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Iranian Parliament also called Majlis) was the next speaker who said: "A day should be name after "Iranian Hand-Woven Carpet" in the annual calendar, so that significance of Tabriz and Iran hand-woven carpet should be reflected across the world since Tabriz has been named after as the capital of World Hand-Woven Carpet in 2015."

It should be noted that this exhibition is open to public which is running from 9 a.m. to 21 every day for a period of 21 days, welcoming enthusiasts of handmade carpets.

Significant Recurrence of Bank Sepah Currency Transactions to Pre-Sanctions Era: Banker

With the implementation of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official title of nuclear deal, Bank Sepah managed to materialize most of objectives of its currency transactions with the same amount similar to the pre-sanctions era.

Chief Executive of Bank Sepah Mohammad-Kazem Choghazardi announced the above statement in a press briefing held on Wednesday and put the currency volume transacted by the bank in the past year at $4.4 billion, showing that 80 percent of objectives of the bank has been materialized similar to the pre-sanctions era.

He expounded on the achievements of the implementation of JCPOA for this bank and said: "Most activities of the bank were focused on currency transactions in pre-sanctions era and currency activities of the bank ceased in sanctions period."

Bank Sepah was put under severe sanctions imposed by the UN, he said, adding: "More than $7.5 billion of currency transactions of the country had been assigned to the bank."

To disturb and entangle foreign trade of the country, some European countries and U.S. embarked on punishing the bank through imposition of tough sanctions, the chief executive opined.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the branch offices of the bank in overseas and said: "With the coordination made in this regard, branch office of the bank in Frankfurt has been put into operation completely while talks are underway for launching branches of the bank in Rome, Paris and London."

In the end, Chief Executive of Bank Sepah Mohammad-Kazem Choghazardi said: "It is predicted that currency incomes of the bank will increase up to $5 billion before termination of current year (to end March 19, 2017), showing that most objectives of currency transactions of the bank have been materialized."

Should you be worried about the 'death asteroid' headed towards Earth?

By now you've probably heard of 2016 WF9. Everybody is freaking out about this 'death asteroid' and, if the predictions hold up, it really is something to worry about. Except, as you might have guessed, the predictions do not actually hold up.



There's really only one person saying WF9 is the Sweet Meteor of Death some people were rooting for in the 2016 election: Dyomin Damir Zakharovich, a Russian astronomer who claims that the asteroid is actually a piece of Nibiru. What, you might ask, is Nibiru? Why, it's a planet we were told about by Nancy Lieder, a woman who claims to be in telepathic contact with aliens from Zeta Reticuli. This would be a good point to bring up that the "Nibiru cataclysm" was supposed to have happened in 2003.

2016 WF9 will approach Earth's orbit on Feb. 25, 2017. At a distance of nearly 32 million miles (51 million kilometers) from Earth, this pass will not bring it particularly close. The trajectory of 2016 WF9 is well understood, and the object is not a threat to Earth for the foreseeable future.

But really, are you surprised? People predict asteroids are about to wipe us all out constantly. It was supposed to happen in 2016. And 2015. And 2014.

The problem with these internet conspiracy freakouts is that they're hiding a genuine, serious issue. Joseph Nuth, a NASA scientist, said just a month ago that if we found an asteroid heading for Earth, we wouldn't have the tools to stop it. We need five years' lead time, and we would simply spot the asteroid too late to do anything about it.

(Source: yahoonews.com)

Fake news 'vaccine' could stop spread of false information

It might be possible to prevent people from falling prey to fake news by "inoculating" them with warnings that false information is out there, new research suggests.

In an online study, scientists warned people about the type of misinformation they might encounter in a subsequent statement. This warning prevented the false information from taking hold in a way that wasn't possible by simply providing people with the correct facts after giving them a false statement, the researchers reported January 23 in the journal Global Challenges.

False information can be difficult to dislodge for many reasons, including that people may be motivated by political factors or issues of identity to want to believe things that the evidence doesn't support. People with vested interests may also intentionally induce confusion by claiming that there is scientific doubt about a particular conclusion, as has happened with climate change, wrote Sander van der Linden, a social psychologist at the University of Cambridge, and colleagues in the new paper.

Even when misinformation is corrected after it is presented, it can persist. A 2010 study in the journal Political Behavior found that issuing a correction after presenting false information didn't correct people's impressions of the facts. Some people even became more convinced that the original misinformation was correct after reading a correction that said it wasn't true.

But research on persuasion has also found that people do tend to believe facts more when they're told that there is a scientific consensus backing them up.

(Source: Live Science)

Girls see themselves as less talented than boys by age of six: study

Girls as young as six believe that exceptional talent is a male trait, according to "heartbreaking" research into gender stereotypes.

They also shun activities and games for the "really, really smart" from the same age, believing their male counterparts are more likely to exhibit "brilliance", the scientists said.

The stereotype being harbored from a young age is likely to reduce the chances of women pursuing prestigious careers, they wrote in the Science journal.

Study co-author Andrei Cimpian, a psychology professor at New York University, said: "Not only do we see that girls just starting out in school are absorbing some of society's stereotyped notions of brilliance, but these young girls are also choosing activities based on these stereotypes. This is heartbreaking."

His previous research has found women are less likely to gain degrees in fields where genius is regarded as necessary for success, such as maths, physics and philosophy.

Not only is this bad for equality, a study by the McKinsey Global Institute has argued that narrowing the yawning salary gap between men and women could boost the UK economy by hundreds of billions of pounds.

The scientists behind the latest study acknowledged that further research needs to be carried out beyond the largely white, middle-class pool of 400 children.

"Nevertheless, the present results suggest a sobering conclusion: many children assimilate the idea that brilliance is a male quality at a young age," the team, also from Princeton University and the University of Illinois, added.

(Source: The Telegraph)

LEARN ENGLISH

I Need More Time

A: So, Casey, how are things going with the photos for the **press kit**?
B: Yeah, **I've been meaning to** talk to you about that. I might need to ask for an **extension** on that **deadline**.
A: You've had over a month to get this **finalized**! Why are things **delayed**?
B: Well, the thing is, we **ran into** a lot of problems…
A: I'm not looking for excuses here. I just want to get this finished on time!
B: I know, and I apologize for the delay. But some things were just **beyond my control**. I had trouble booking the photographer, and then Michael was sick for three weeks, so I couldn't include him in the photos, and the design team lost all the files, so I had to redo the pictures.
A: I'm not going to **put this off** any longer, Casey! I want those photos ASAP!

Key vocabulary

press kit: group of photos, documents, articles, and information about a company given to reporters, newspapers, magazines, etc.
I've been meaning to: intend, plan to do something
extension: make a deadline longer, extra time to do something
deadline: the date when something must be finished
finalize: finish, decide on all the details
delay: late
run into: meet or encounter
beyond someone's control: not able to control something
put (something) off: plan to do something later

Supplementary vocabulary

due: the date when something must be finished or happen
postpone: not do something now that should be done; do something later procrastinate
behind: late with a project or things you have to do
hold up: delay or slow something
tight deadline: a deadline that is really difficult to meet

(Source: irlanguage.com)



Every action has a reaction. We have one planet; one chance.

Snow, blizzard sweeping across Iran



Tasnim/ Abdolrahman Rafati



Tasnim/ Abdolrahman Rafati

TT SOCIETY desk

TEHRAN — Twenty-two provinces of Iran have been struck by heavy snow and raging blizzard, the Rescue and Relief Organization director Morteza Salimi said on Saturday.

The howling blizzard began on January 25 in provinces of East and West Azarbaijan, Isfahan, Ilam, Tehran, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, North Khorasan, Khorasan Razavi, Khuzestan, Zanjan, Semnan, Fars, Qom, Qazvin, Golestan, Lorestan, Kordestan, Kermanshah, Kohgiluyeh and Boyerahmad, Mazandaran, Markazi, and Hamedan, Mehr news agency quoted Salimi as saying.

Rescue and relief operations are still ongoing and the rescue forces have so far rushed to rescue some 16,000 persons who were stranded in blizzard, Salimi said, adding, 11 were transferred to the hospitals, 30 received outpatient care and 561 were accommodated.

He further regretted that unfortunately two men aging 47 and 32 were killed in an avalanche in Baneh, western Kordestan province; "Two other individuals also got hurt by the avalanche who were taken to the hospital."

Meanwhile, 1,167 rescue forces provided people with rescue services and helped save people stuck in 4,090 cars in the snow storm and blizzard up until now.

Updating on road conditions director for traffic control center Nader Rahmani explained that roads in some of the provinces are closed due to the blizzard and it is strongly recommended to use snow chains when driving through snowy roads.

According to Fars news agency, some schools in 18 provinces shut down on Saturday.



ISNA/ Farshid Ardalan



ISNA/ Bayat Azadbakht

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INTERNATIONAL DAILY TEHRAN TIMES 13

Trump bars all refugees, and citizens from 7 Muslim nations

By staff & agencies

The United States President Donald Trump on Friday closed the nation's borders to refugees from around the world, ordering that families fleeing Syrian foreign instigated carnage be indefinitely blocked from entering the United States, and temporarily suspending immigration from several predominantly Muslim countries.

Declaring the measure part of an extreme vetting plan to "keep radical Islamic terrorists" out of the country, Trump also ordered that Christians around the globe who are seeking entry into the United States should be granted priority over Muslims, for the first time establishing a religious test for refugees.

"We don't want them here," Trump said of Islamic terrorists during a signing ceremony at the Pentagon. "We want to ensure that we are not admitting into our country the very threats our soldiers are fighting overseas. We only want to admit those into our country who will support our country, and love deeply our people."

Earlier in the day, Trump explained to an interviewer for the Christian Broadcasting Network that Christians in Syria were "horribly treated" and alleged that under previous administrations, "if you were a Muslim you could come in, but if you were a Christian, it was almost impossible."

"I thought it was very, very unfair. So we are going to help them," the president said.

The order said all immigration programs should include questions to "evaluate the applicant's likelihood of becoming a positively contributing member of society".

The executive order suspends the entry of refugees into the United States for 120 days and directs officials to determine additional screening "to ensure that those approved for refugee admission do not pose a threat to the security and welfare of the United States."

The order also stops the admission of refugees from Syria indefinitely, and bars entry into the United States for 90 days from seven predominantly Muslim countries linked to concerns about terrorism. Those countries are: Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen.

Announcing his "extreme vetting" plan, the president invoked the specter of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Most of the 19 hijackers on the planes that crashed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field in Shanksville, Pa., were from Saudi Arabia. The rest were from the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Lebanon. None of those countries is on Trump's visa ban list.



The president signed the executive order shortly after issuing a statement noting that Friday was International Holocaust Remembrance Day, an irony that many of his critics highlighted on Twitter.

"This is big stuff," Trump said as he signed the directive at the Pentagon on Friday, during the inauguration of Defense Secretary James Mattis.

Trump did not provide more details on the executive order, which is titled "Protection of the nation from foreign terrorist entry into the United States."

Additionally, Trump signed a memorandum on Friday directing what he called "a great rebuilding of the armed services," saying it would call for budget negotiations to acquire new planes, new ships and new resources for the nation's military.

"Our military strength will be questioned by no one, but neither will our dedication to peace," Trump said.

Trump's #MuslimBan sparks outrage, fear

The development followed by reaction from France and Germany. France and Germany are "concerned" over Trump's move to restrict refugee arrivals, French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said.

"This decision can only cause us concern," he said following a meeting with his German counterpart Sigmar Gabriel. "Welcoming refugees who are fleeing war is part of our duty."

Civil rights groups condemned the measures as discriminatory.

Anxiety in the U.S. over Trump's anti-immigration stance

"Disgraceful", "a travesty", "racist".

These were some of the words used to describe a measure signed off by Trump that suspends immigration from several Muslim-majority countries, and indefinitely bans Syrians - including refugees - from entering the United States.

Human rights activists roundly condemned Trump's actions, describing them as officially sanctioned religious persecution dressed up to look like an effort to make the United States safer.

The International Rescue Committee called it "harmful and hasty." The American Civil Liberties Union described it as a "euphemism for discriminating against Muslims." Raymond Offensheiser, the president of Oxfam America, said the order will harm families around the world who are threatened by authoritarian governments.

"Trump's latest executive order is likely to hurt the people most in need: those fleeing violence and terrorism - and on Holocaust Remembrance Day, no less," said Grace Meng, senior U.S. researcher at Human Rights Watch.

CAIR to file lawsuit challenging Trump's Muslim ban order

Meantime, a prominent Muslim advocacy group will file a federal lawsuit against U.S. President Trump over his far-reaching executive order targeting Muslims.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) immediately announced it would be challenging the constitutionality of Trump's directive in court "because its apparent purpose and underlying motive is to ban people of the Islamic faith from Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States."

"The American Muslim community has been the target of discriminatory policies for many years now," Lena Masri, CAIR's national litigation director, told The Independent.

According to data from the Cato Institute, a Washington-based libertarian think tank, between 1975 and 2015 there have been no American death on U.S. soil at the hands of foreign terrorists from the seven countries listed in Trump's executive order.

Senator Warren rips Trump for his Muslim ban directive

Elsewhere, Massachusetts Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren has ripped Trump for his executive order aimed at keeping people from certain Islamic countries away from the United States.

"Let's be clear: A Muslim ban by any other name is still a Muslim ban," Warren said on Friday night in her series of tweets.

"Donald Trump's order restricting immigrants from Muslim countries & freezing admission of refugees is a betrayal of American values," she added.

"We are a country of immigrants & refugees, of people fleeing religious persecution & seeking freedom, a country made strong by diversity," she continued.

Meanwhile, Democratic Senator Kamala Harris has blasted Trump for his executive order on Muslim refugees, calling it a Muslim ban.

"On Holocaust Memorial Day, Trump restricted refugees from Muslim-majority countries. Make no mistake — this is a Muslim ban," Harris said in a statement on Friday night.

Most of the 19 hijackers on the planes that crashed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field in Shanksville, Pa., were from Saudi Arabia. The rest were from the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Lebanon. None of those countries is on Trump's visa ban list.

California campaign to secede gains momentum

A campaign for the United States state of California to secede from the rest of the country over President Donald Trump's election is gaining momentum, with supporters allowed to start collecting signatures for the measure to be put to a vote.

California's Secretary of State Alex Padilla gave the green light on Thursday for proponents of "California Nationhood" — also known as Calexit — to start collecting the nearly 600,000 signatures needed for the measure to qualify on the November 2018 ballot.

The 585,407 signatures required by July 25 represent eight percent of registered voters in California — the most populous state in the country with nearly 40 million residents and the world's sixth-largest economy.

Should the initiative make it on the ballot, a "Yes" vote would repeal clauses in the California Constitution "stating California is an inseparable part of the United States and that the United States Constitution is the supreme law of the land," a statement by Padilla's office said.

Voters would then need to decide in another referendum in 2019 whether California should become a separate country.

Padilla said the independence measure — deemed highly unrealistic — would have a deep impact on the state and would likely face legal challenges.

"Assuming that California actually became an independent nation, the state and its local governments would experience major, but unknown, budgetary impacts," he warned.

"This measure also would result in tens of millions of dollars of one-time state and local election costs."

Calexit enthusiasts, whose campaign is called Yes California, are pushing for independence on grounds the state is out of step with the rest of the US and could flourish on its own.

"In our view, the United States of America represents so many things that conflict with Californian values, and our continued statehood means California will continue subsidizing the other states to our own detriment, and to the detriment of our children," according to their website.

The idea of independence became very appealing to many Californians following Trump's shock election.

Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton easily beat Trump in the progressive state, winning by more than 4.2 million votes, almost double the number of ballots cast for Trump.

(Source: AFP)

Saudi airstrike kills 14 civilians in Yemen

The House of Saud regime warplanes have targeted a civilian vehicle carrying 14 passengers in Yemen's southwestern province of Ta'izz, killing all of its occupants.

The charred bodies of the victims were discovered after the Saudi airstrike late on Friday.

Saudi regime airstrikes against civilian targets and urban infrastructure on Friday overall claimed the lives of 30 people and injured 10 others in Ta'izz, Sana'a, and Mareb provinces.

Saudi regime jets also bombarded the Salif district in Hudaydah Province, killing three civilians and injuring three others.

Elsewhere, in the northern province of Jawf, several Saudi mercenaries were killed and injured on Saturday in an attempted operation to infiltrate into Maton district.

Meanwhile, the media affiliated to Saudi mercenaries in Yemen have reported that their ground and naval forces have parachuted down to the southwestern port city of Mokha.

In response, Yemeni army forces launched missile and mortar attacks against the positions of Saudi mercenaries in the town of Maqbaneh in Ta'izz Province.

On Thursday, Yemeni army forces, backed by Ansarullah (Houthi) movement fighters, gained control over five military bases run by Saudi mercenaries in the al-Wazi'iyah District of Ta'izz Province and killed several Saudi-backed militants.

The House of Saud regime war on Yemen, which local sources say has killed at least 11,400 people, was launched in an unsuccessful attempt to reinstate a former government allied to Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi regime war has also taken a heavy toll on the country's facilities and infrastructure, destroying many hospitals, schools and factories.

Stephen O'Brien, the United Nations under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs, on Thursday warned of the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen in the wake of the nearly two-year-old Saudi war in the impoverished country. He said Yemen could face famine this year.

(Source: Press TV)

India-Iran energy co-op in the pipeline

2→ Most importantly India has put on the table at the UN a comprehensive convention on terrorism. However, the progress on this issue has not been to our satisfaction. We look forward to cooperation with our partner countries so that this initiative reaches its logical conclusion.

India is the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases. What actions has India taken towards a green economy?

A: Our prime minister is very determined on this matter. For example during the Paris conference we had indicated initiatives including International Solar Alliance, which aims at greater utilization of solar energy.

Domestically we have set many targets for the utilization of renewable energy which includes wind and solar sector. We are trying to cut down on fossil fuel within our energy basket.

On the eve of our Republic Day in India (Wednesday), our president (P. Mukherjee) gave a speech and I quoted a paragraph of his speech in which he pointed that if we don't treat the environment with respect we have to bear consequences.

India is the third largest economy in Asia and the second largest military power in Asia and many believe that the future belongs to India and China. We are expecting more involvement of India regarding its capacities for resolution of conflicts, for example the crises in Syria and Yemen. Any comments?

A: India is a developing country. The focus of the government is to improve the livelihood of the people and for that we want peaceful international environment. That is the requirement for a lot of countries in the region. India has a considerable population in the countries of the (Persian Gulf) region and we have a lot of energy dependence from this region.

Remittance from the Indian diaspora in the region is a major ingredient in our economy. It is to our interest that the region is stable and we keep an eye on the regional developments.

India believes in dialogue for settlement of crises.

Swedish police urges public help amid major surge in anti-refugee crimes

A Swedish police chief has issued an urgent public plea for assistance in solving numerous serious crime cases against foreign refugees, including murders, beatings, rapes and dozens of attempted killings.

In an open letter, Malmo City Police Chief Stefan Sinteus called on local residents to offer testimonies that may help police authorities to identify perpetrators in an array of deadlocked investigations into violence against refugees amid a recent upsurge of such incidents in Sweden's third largest city.

Sinteus said police were doing everything they could for suspected perpetrators to be held accountable.

"But we cannot do it on our own. We depend on you, and your witness statements, to solve these violent crimes. Therefore I appeal now to you: Help us," he said.

The public plea followed reports that potential witnesses in the recent murder of a 16-year-old Iraqi boy – identified as Ahmed Obaid – were reluctant to provide any details regarding the case after racist threats against his former schoolmates were posted under the photo of his dead body.

Obaid was murdered on January 14 in Malmo's Rosengard district, which has attracted local media attention as Sweden's "most notorious refugee ghetto," with an over 80-percent refugee population, mostly from the Middle East, Africa and Eastern Europe.

Rosengard has repeatedly been a scene of gang and multi-ethnic violence and remains prone to social unrest since less than 40 percent of its residents are employed.

In his open letter, Sinteus specifically mentioned Obaid's murder and an attempted killing of another teenager last Saturday, vowing to deploy all means necessary to press ahead with both probes.

To assist Malmo police to tackle what Sinteus referred to as "an upward spiral [of violence] of large dimensions," reinforcements from the National Operations Department (NOA) were deployed to the city last week.

Extra police officers are expected to arrive in Malmo next week, according to the letter which further noted that a total of 130 police officers are currently working exclusively on probing serious offenses.

"Malmo police are currently investigating 11 murders and 80 attempted murders. Add to that other crimes of violence, beatings, rapes, thefts and frauds," Senteus wrote in the letter, conceding that his department is "extremely strained" by a staff shortage.

(Source: Press TV)

Syria forces retake spring near Damascus

1→ In a statement carried by Syria's state news agency SANA on Friday, the presidential office said that such rumors were "absolutely incorrect" and that the Syrian president was carrying out his job normally.

"Such lies are no more than dreams and are attempts to raise [the terrorists'] flagging morale, and they only elicit ridicule and mockery," it added.

It further said that such baseless rumors would not affect the Syrian people since they have become "immune against such lies," adding that the source of these claims are media of known affiliation and funding.

On January 21, Saudi-owned daily Asharq al-Awsat claimed in a report that the Syrian leader's mental health was deteriorating after almost six years of "psychological pressures" over the deadly conflict in the country.

Some other media outlets further claimed that Assad had suffered a stroke and had been taken to a Damascus hospital for treatment.

The Friday statement went on to say that the spread of such unfounded claims have coincided with the change in the political and battlefield situation in favor of the Syrian nation against terrorists, adding that such rumors were "hopes in the imagination of those who made them up."

(Source: Press TV)

Ease in Saudi-Iran tensions will help Kuwait: Shireen Hunter

1→ **A day before coming to Iran, NATO established it first regional office in Kuwait. From the Iranian perspective, NATO and other outsiders pose a threat. How can Iran and these countries agree on a regional security order under the shadow of NATO?**

A: NATO's recent presence in Kuwait is part of its post-Cold War strategy of establishing partnerships with countries outside of its geographical mandate. Also, the Persian Gulf is still very important to Europe and the United States. NATO's presence is intended to help secure these interests and also reassure the Persian Gulf Arabs.

"Saudi Arabia's spread of Salafism in Kuwait have caused sectarian tensions and have undermined Kuwaiti democracy."

As the largest country in the region, Iran has always been against the presence of outside powers. Even under the monarchy Iran always said that the security of the Persian Gulf should be the responsibility of "riparian" states. But, of course great powers and the local states have never accepted this. They see this concept as serving Iran's goal of becoming the dominant power in the region.

Consequently, Arab states have always welcomed foreign presence form the British to the Americans and now NATO.

Serena sinks Venus to win magic 23rd slam

Serena Williams reigned supreme in tennis's great sibling rivalry, edging an emotion-charged clash with sister Venus to claim her seventh Australian Open on Saturday and a record 23rd grand slam title in the professional era.

Beset by nerves early in the tense family affair, the American needed all her firepower and famed mental strength to fend off Venus, who scrapped hard to the end before going down 6-4 6-4 at Rod Laver Arena.

Fourteen years after beating Venus for her maiden title at Melbourne Park, Serena's seventh crown was sealed with a heady charge to the net that forced a desperate backhand from Venus to float wide.

Eyes ablaze in joyous disbelief, Serena slumped to the court and threw her hands in the air, the world number one ranking also re-captured from Angelique Kerber.

She paid tribute to Venus, her long-time doubles partner and enduring inspiration.

"She's an amazing person, there's no way I would be at 23 without her," said Serena, cradling the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup.

"There's no way I would have anything without her.

"My first grand slam started here, and getting to 23 here, but playing Venus, it's stuff that legends are made of. I couldn't have written a better story."

The win moved Serena past Steffi Graf on the list of all-time grand slam champions. Only Margaret Court, who watched the match from the terraces, is ahead of her on 24.

Serena arrived in Melbourne with only two matches under her belt, having cut short her season to recover from injury after the U.S. Open.

But she roared through the tournament without losing a set and, at the age of 35, the relentless pursuit of grand slam silverware will go on, and with sister in tow.

"We're both, like I say, 30-fun," said Serena of their longevity.

"Now I just feel like I'm satisfied with where I am, although I always want to win."

Venus, 36, had already proved an inspiration by reaching her first final since her loss to Serena at Wimbledon in 2009. It made her the oldest woman to do so at Melbourne Park since tennis went professional in 1968.

BATTLING HARD

She lost her seventh of nine grand slam title deciders to her younger sister but won over the Rod Laver Arena crowd by battling hard to the finish.

"Congratulations Serena on number 23, I've been right there with you, some of them I've lost right there with you," said the seven-times grand slam champion, raising a laugh from the crowd.

"Your win has always been my win, you know that."

The sisters' combined ages added up to the ‹oldest' grand slam final in the professional era but they ran like the teenagers they were in 1998, when they played each other for the first time in a tour match at the same tournament.

Nerves weighed heavier, however, and in a tense start, both dropped serve twice in the opening four games.

Serena was the worst afflicted, and she smashed her racket in a rage in the third game, having slipped behind the baseline when chasing down a ball.

The game's greatest server double-faulted three times to be broken a second time, causing a gasp from the crowd.

But she soon settled to forge a 5-3 lead before sealing the set with a thumping pair of aces.

Venus was quickly under siege, with Serena feasting readily on her modest second serve.

Serena pounced in the seventh game, breaking her in the seventh game with a searing backhand return and she served out to love to come within a game of the title.

Venus pushed hard to break back at 5-4 but flung her racket away in despair after hammering a forehand into the net to give up match point.

It was all Serena needed and after a furious exchange of shots, she charged in to the net swinging to claim yet another major title.

(Source: Reuters)

Zidane: Benzema having great season

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane has brushed aside criticism of Karim Benzema and insisted the striker is having a "great season".

The France international was the subject of jeers from the Madrid faithful during last weekend's 2-1 La Liga win over Malaga, while his recent displays have come under fire.

Benzema has failed to find the net in his last four outings, although prior to that run he had scored in five successive matches either side of the mid-season break.

A recent poll in AS showed that 88 per cent of Madrid fans would prefer to see Benzema start on the bench and while Zidane concedes that playing for the club brings an added pressure, the coach shrugged off any talk of a "campaign" against his compatriot.

"We're not concerned, he's having a great season," Zidane said ahead of Sunday's home clash with Real Sociedad. "We know what Karim can offer the side but the fans always want more from their players and that's something we must accept.

"He has the right character, he can accept the fans' point of view. He won't hide and he will always have my support."

Zidane also rejected the notion he gives his countryman preferential treatment.

"There's no difference," he said. "I love all of my players. I have 24 players and regardless what is said about each they are my footballers. They all play for Real Madrid so you are exposed to criticism, it's part and parcel of being a footballer.

"The only thing we have in common is the language, that's our special bond but I treat all of my players the same, they're all important.

"I'm not going to talk about campaigns but he can accept what he reads. The team comes first and he'll keep playing for the side and his team-mates.

"I just want my players to give their all. Sometimes they receive praise, sometimes not, sometimes it's fair and sometimes unfair but you keep giving your best."

(Source: Goal)

Deja vu slam to climax with vintage Roger-Rafa show



Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal take to Rod Laver Arena to reprise one of the great sporting rivalries of the modern age on Sunday, a fitting climax to an Australian Open which has sent tennis back to the future.

After the thirtysomething Williams sisters play their own throwback final on Saturday, Federer and Nadal will meet in a grand slam final for the first time in more than five years.

Their ninth meeting in a grand slam final is all the sweeter for being so unexpected.

Last October, as both men have recalled this week, Federer traveled to Mallorca for the opening of his friend's new tennis academy.

The Swiss was on "one leg" after knee surgery and the Spaniard still hampered by the wrist injury that wrecked his 2016 season. "At that moment, for sure we never thought that we had the chance to be in a final again, and especially in the first of the year," recalled Nadal.

"Both of us I think worked very hard to be where we are. It's great that we are again in a moment like this."

As Nadal and Federer arrived at Melbourne Park as ninth and 17th seeds, therefore, the first drafts of the obituaries of two great sporting careers were being prepared.

They were hurriedly dropped back into the files, however, as it became apparent the duo were playing vintage tennis: Federer all fluidity and peerless shot-making, Nadal at his brutal best from the baseline.

The early departures of reigning champion Novak Djokovic and top seed Andy Murray, the players who had joined Federer and Nadal to make up the "Big Four", then opened up the path to a grand final reunion.

Although it has often felt more like 2007 than 2017 at Melbourne Park this week, even great champions are not immune to the ravages of time.

RECOVERY TIME

At 35, Swiss Federer is the oldest men's grand slam finalist since Ken Rosewall lost the U.S. Open final in 1974 at the age of 39.

Nadal might be five years younger but has been on tour since his late teens and the effort required for his attritional playing style puts tremendous strain on his body.

And while Federer has been able to rest up after his three-hour semi-final victory over Stan Wawrinka on Thursday, Nadal must recuperate as best he can after his epic five-hour victory over Grigor Dimitrov on Friday.

"That's what I'm going to try," the 14-times grand slam champion said. "I did it in 2009. I am seven, eight years older."

That five-set 2009 victory over Federer earned Nadal his sole Australian Open crown and another would make him the only man in the open era apart from Roy Emerson to have won all four grand slams twice.

Federer has four Australian Open titles but just a single French Open crown, his path to Roland Garros glory more often than not blocked by Nadal.

Immediately after his semi-final, as he was finally able to ponder meeting his great rival, the 17-times grand slam champion suggested his 11-23 record against Nadal might have been in part due to them meeting on clay so often early in their careers.

Afterwards, in his news conference, he was less candid, noting only that the pace of the Rod Laver Arena this year allowed him to be more aggressive.

"Now it's a different time," he said. "A lot of time has gone by. I know this court allows me to play a certain game against Rafa that I cannot do on center court at the French Open."

Nadal has a 6-2 edge over Federer in grand slam finals but few are making a call with any confidence over who will win Sunday's contest.

"I just know that two of the greatest players of tennis are going to square off on Sunday, and it's going to be a freakin' amazing match," Dimitrov said on Friday.

(Source: Reuters)

Mandzukic: Juventus have not achieved anything yet



Mario Mandzukic has stressed Juventus cannot afford to get carried away regardless of their fine results, insisting they have won nothing yet.

Massimiliano Allegri's men, the reigning domestic champions and Coppa Italia holders, are in contention to win a historic treble, but Mandzukic has urged his team-mates to remain grounded.

"Everything has been going really well so far. We are top of the league in Italy, through to the next round in the Champions League and now in the semi-finals of the Coppa Italia, so I am happy with how things are going," he told Sky.

"That said, there is a long way still to go and we have to keep up the good work because we have not achieved anything yet and we can play even better than we already are doing. If we do that, we can achieve the goals we have set ourselves.

"Juventus are a big club and of course everyone expects us to win every game, besides always playing brilliantly, but we know that is not always possible. If we have our critics, we should not ever be worried about them. We just have to do our jobs on the pitch.

"When we do lose, we know how to pick ourselves up again in the next game, as we have shown several times before and we will keep doing it."

Juve, who reached the Champions League final in 2014-15, losing 3-1 to Barcelona in Berlin, face Porto in this season's round of 16, with a trip to Sassuolo in Serie A coming up on Sunday.

(Source: Goal)

Klopp hits 10-year low as Liverpool›s woes continue



Jurgen Klopp saw things go from bad to worse for Liverpool on Sunday, with a 2-1 defeat to Wolves seeing the German hit a 10-year low.

The Reds bowed out of the FA Cup at the fourth-round stage to Championship opposition, with Anfield proving to be something of an unhappy hunting ground for Klopp›s charges of late.

Liverpool have now lost three successive fixtures in front of their own supporters, with Swansea City and Southampton having left Merseyside with the spoils in recent weeks.

The Swans secured a thrilling 3-2 victory in the Premier League, while the Saints dumped Liverpool out of the EFL Cup in a two-legged semi-final.

Wolves have now compounded Klopp's misery, with the German coach enduring his toughest run on home soil in close to a decade.

Breaking their home hoodoo is not about to get any easier for Liverpool either, with Chelsea next up at Anfield on Tuesday.

Tottenham then pay a visit on February and their north London rivals Arsenal head to the north-west on March 4.

Liverpool will hope to have recovered by then, but there are issues to address.

The FA Cup has eluded them once again, with another setback suffered against second tier opposition.

It is back to the drawing board for Klopp and his squad, with attention now narrowed on a fading Premier League title challenge.

(Source: Goal)

Instagram



@atpworldtour A walk down memory lane @rogerfederer @rafaelnadal #ATP #tennis #throwback #Federer #Nadal #Fedal



@3gerardpique Waiting my friend @edmundyechu at the airport trying to go unnoticed with my new @kypers_eyewear



@fabiocannavaroofficial Happy Birthday Gigi!!! #Buffon #nazionale #azzurri #italy #italia #happybirthday

Persepolis extend lead with win over Saba

TT SPORTS desk Persepolis football team eased past relegation strugglers Saba 2-0 in the 19th week of Iran Professional League at Qom's Yadegar-e Emam stadium on Saturday.

Former Esteghlal defender Hanif Omrazadeh scored an own goal in the 73rd minute to give Persepolis the lead.

Seven minutes later the referee awarded Persepolis a penalty when Ramin Rezaiean was fouled inside the box by Hamidreza Divsalar. Rezaeian chipped the ball into the back of the net to ensure the three points for the Reds.

Branko Ivankovic's men extended the lead at the top to six points while they will host their main title rivals Tractor Sazi next week.

Elsewhere, Foolad and Siah Jamegan played out a goalless draw in Ahvaz, Saipa edged past Padideh 1-0 in Mashhad, Zob Ahan was held to a goalless draw against Gostaresh Foolad in Tabriz, Sepahan forced to settle for a 0-0 draw against Sanat Naft while Naft Tehran and Esteghlal Khuzestan also shared the points after a 1-1 draw.



Iranian women polo team to meet Australia in Sydney



TT SPORTS desk Iranian women polo team will play their Australian counterpart in Sydney, Australia in late April.

"Iran and Australia women's teams play after more than 10 years. Iran, Australia and England took part in a tournament in Tehran in September 2006. We have attempted to register polo as an Iranian sport and these kinds of the games will help us achieve our goal," President of Iran's Polo Federation Golnar Vakil Gilani told IRNA.

The Iranian team will play with Australian horses, Vakil Gilani said.

The first recorded polo game took place in 600 BC, with women's polo being recorded as early as the 4th Century AD.

Iran is also home to the world's oldest known polo field at Naqshe Jahan Square in Isfahan, where the marble goal posts still stand at each end the field which dates from the 16th Century AD.

Iran wheelchair basketball win AOZ U23 qualifying tournament title



TT SPORTS desk Iran claimed the title of the IWBF Asia Oceania Zone U23 Wheelchair Basketball Championships on Saturday.

The Iranian team, who had qualified for the U23 World Wheelchair Basketball Championship, defeated Japan 67-51 and finished in the first place.

Earlier in the day, Australia defeated Thailand and qualified for the World Championship.Wheelchair Basketball Canada will host the world-class event from June 8-16, 2017 at the Mattamy Athletic Centre in downtown Toronto.

Twelve competing nations, including the host team from Canada, will showcase the future of the sport as they battle for the world title for junior men.

The 2017 Men's U23 World Championship is the sixth edition of the tournament, which takes place every four years. The IWBF is the international governing body responsible for wheelchair basketball. It is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to provide opportunities for persons with a disability to play the game of wheelchair basketball.

Persepolis, Al Hilal's matches to be held in Muscat

Iran's Persepolis and Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia will play in Muscat, Oman in the 2017 Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Champions League group stage.

Iran's Persian Gulf Pro League professional football club and Saudi Arabian professional football team have chosen Oman as the neutral venue to host the forthcoming matches in Group D.

The first match will be held at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat, Oman on February 21.

The second match will be held in the same stadium on April 24. The 2017 AFC Champions League group stage will be played from 20 February to 10 May 2017.

A total of 32 teams compete in the group stage to decide the 16 places in the knockout stage of the 2017 AFC Champions League.

The winner of the tournament will qualify as the AFC representative for the 2017 FIFA Club World Cup in the United Arab Emirates. *(Source: Tasnim)*

Iranian Navid Nasseri on Coventry City's radar



Former Birmingham City winger Navid Nasseri has caught the eye of Coventry City.

The Iran U-21 international used to play for Birmingham City and is now trying to win himself a contract with West Midlands neighbor Coventry City.

Navid Nasseri had his contract terminated by mutual consent with Birmingham City just six months into a one year deal.

The Iran U-21 international played 80 minutes for Coventry City's U-23 side in their 0-0 draw with Crystal Palace U-23s on Monday.

The Manchester born midfielder joined the Blues from Bury, footballleagueworld.co.uk wrote.

Nasseri has also played for Blackburn Rovers and Manchester United's academies.

(Source: Tasnim)

Volleyball coach Igor Kolakovic to arrive in Iran Monday



Iran volleyball coach candidate Igor Kolakovic will arrive in Tehran Monday morning to meet the country's top volleyball officials.

Another candidate Radostin Stoychev of Bulgaria left Tehran on Thursday after negotiating with the Iranian officials.

Iran Volleyball Federation will host the Serbian coach on Monday.

Kolakovic was the coach of the Serbia men's national volleyball team and led the team at the 2006 FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship and 2014 FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship.

Raul Lozano's contract expired and the federation didn't renew that.

Under guidance of the Argentinean coach, Iran finished in fifth place in the 2016 Olympic Games.

(Source: Tasnim)

Chelsea legend Frank Lampard not ready to announce retirement yet

Frank Lampard has told the Daily Mail that he has "turned down a few Premier League offers" and is not yet ready to officially hang up his boots.

Lampard, 38, left New York City FC at the end of the 2016 Major League Soccer season and has been without a club since.

Fellow Premier League legend Steven Gerrard opted to quit playing when his deal with LA Galaxy expired at the same time, but Lampard is still keeping his options open.

In an interview with former England teammate and ex-Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher, he explained why he is still to accept his playing days are over.

"I see you, Rio [Ferdinand] and Stevie [Gerrard], all retired," Lampard, who played for West Ham, Chelsea and Manchester City in the Premier League, said. "There is a part of me that wants to stay in the game. Sometimes I don't know why. It just feels this is what I do.

"I've had two months off now. It takes me six weeks to relax and realise I haven't got to train every day and think about the pressures.

"Stevie made up his mind and was comfortable finishing the way he did. I wasn't sure. I loved being in America. It was a great experience. People will be drawn to China because of the money but the lifestyle, everything about America, I couldn't recommend it enough.

"But in terms of not retiring? I don't want to leave and think to myself, 'Maybe I should have stayed a bit longer.' I'm dwelling on it. I have turned down a few Premier League offers. But the fact is, after being at Chelsea for so long and a year with Manchester City, I don't want to get involved in a relegation dogfight.

"I don't mind challenges but there comes a point when you have to take stock. I understand my weaknesses. It's late January now and to try and get fit and then get into a team and make a massive impact ... I don't feel I could give enough.

"I just want to make sure I make the right decision. I've appreciated getting options at 38. If something comes along that floats my boat, who knows? But nothing has, so we will see."

(Source: ESPN)

Bolt returns gold medal from 2008 4x100 relay

Jamaican Usain Bolt says it is rough losing one of his nine Olympic gold medals after relay team mate Nesta Carter was found guilty of doping at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. "It's rough that I have to give back one of my medals and I already gave it back because it was of course required by the IOC", Bolt told Reuters on Friday in his first comments since the International Olympic Committee ruling.

"I'm not happy about it but it's just one of those things that happen in life.



"I can't allow that to deter me from my focus this season, so I am focused but I am not pleased."

Carter was found in re-tests of his sample to have taken the banned stimulant methylhexaneamine, the IOC said on Wednesday, meaning the entire Jamaican relay team had to return their gold medals.

The loss of the 4x100 meters medal leaves Bolt with eight Olympic golds, and he does not think the ruling tarnishes his glittering career record.

And he still might have one last chance to reclaim his medal, with an appeal by Carter to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in the works, according to Jamaica Olympic Association president Mike Fennell.

Bolt was non-committal about whether he would financially contribute to Carter's appeal.

"That's up to my management, there are a lot of variables so we will discuss that and see where we go from there," he said.

Bolt is considered the greatest sprinter of all time, having won an unprecedented treble of consecutive Olympic golds in the 100m and 200m in 2008, 2012 and 2016.

He also was part of the winning Jamaican 4x100 relay team in 2012 and 2016.

Bolt is credited with being a key factor in maintaining a global interest in athletics at a time when the sport has been ravaged by doping violations.

"I think I've still accomplished a lot, it hasn't changed what I have done throughout my career," said the 100m and 200m world record-holder.

"I have worked hard and pushed and done things that no one has done before. I have won three gold medals over the 100m and 200m."

Bolt, 30, says he will retire after the 2017 world championships in London.

(Source: Reuters)

LeBron leads Cavs to much-needed victory over Nets

LeBron James scored 31 points and made 11 assists, Kyrie Irving scored 28 points and the Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Brooklyn Nets 124-116 for just their third win in nine games on Friday.

The outcome was closer than it should have been after the Nets tallied 43 points in the fourth quarter, continuing a trend of scoring at least 40 points in the final quarter of three losses to Cleveland this season.



The defeat was the fourth straight for the Nets and the 15th in their last 16 games.

Perhaps sensing the impending doom, coach Kenny Atkinson rested Brook Lopez and Caris LeVert in a weakened lineup already missing Trevor Booker (illness), Joe Harris (sprained ankle) and Jeremy Lin (hamstring).

Cleveland's Kevin Love scored 13 points and grabbed 14 rebounds one day after he was named an All-Star and Tristan Thompson added 10 points and 10 rebounds.

It has been a volatile week for the Cavs, who needed a victory to shift some of the focus off the relationship between James and the rest of the organization.

He was terrific again on Friday, making 13-of-18 shots and adding five rebounds as Kyle Korver scored 14 points off the bench after a slow start.

Sean Kilpatrick scored 18 points for the Nets and Bojan Bogdanovic scored 17, while Isaiah Whitehead and Randy Foye each scored 16.

Atkinson knew before the game he was walking into a trap.

"Putting them on edge isn't the best thing in the world (for us)," Atkinson said. "But I think (Cavs coach) Tyronn Lue said it best: they're a great team."

Lue reminded his players before Wednesday's overtime loss to the Sacramento Kings they were the defending champs. He is confident they will eventually start playing like it again.

"We're the champs and right now we're going through a tough stretch but that's nothing," Lue said.

"Everybody goes through a tough stretch. Now you got to dig yourself out of it. We're capable of doing it.

"We are going to do it. We are the champs, we do have a great team and we have the (fourth) best record in the NBA right now so we got to play like it."

(Source: Reuters)

TEHRAN TIMES

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
http://www.tehrantimes.com/culture

SINCE 1979

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.o. Box: 14155-4843
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Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
www.eshterak.ir **Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.** Tel: 88911433
Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
Printed at: Kayhan - ISSN: 1017-94

Poem of the day

SLEEP on thine eyes, bright as narcissus flowers,
Falls not in vain
And not in vain thy hair's soft radiance showers
Ah, not in vain!

Hafez

Prayer Times

Noon:12:17 Evening: 17:48 Dawn: 5:40 tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:06 (tomorrow)

JANUARY 29, 2017

Actor Kazem Afrandnia dies at 71

ART desk **TEHRAN** — Veteran Iranian actor Kazem Afrandnia died at Tehran's Firuzgar Hospital on Saturday. He was at 71.

Afrandnia suffered a stroke last week and went into a coma.



Afrandnia began his career in 1971 with a role in the Iranian TV series "Braves of Tangestan" directed by Homayun Shahnavaz. He collaborated in dozens of films and series.

He had been unemployed over the past two years.

In his last interview, Afrandnia lamented about Iranian filmmakers' reluctance to collaborate with older actors.

"Everybody has forgotten us. It seems that old actors are only supposed to wait for death," he added.

His credits include "Killing the Rabid Dogs" (2001) by Bahram Beizai, "Kanimanga" (1987) by Seifollah Daad and "Mirza Noruz' Shoes" (1985) by Mohammad Motavasselani.

Japan organizing cultural day at Tehran center

CULTURE desk **TEHRAN** — The Embassy of Japan is scheduled to organize a cultural day at Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center today.

A variety of art and cultural programs has been arranged for the cultural day, which is part of the Japanese Cultural Festival that opened at the center on January 16.

Japanese Ambassador Hiroyasu Kobayashi plans to attend the program, which will be followed by Japanese calligraphy inscriptions and the tea ceremony.

The Japanese Cultural Festival will be running until February 3.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Book City Institute to review "Notes on Kafka"

CULTURE desk **TEHRAN** — Tehran's Book City Institute plans to review German philosopher Theodor W. Adorno's "Notes on Kafka" during a session on Tuesday.

The book is a collection of essays by Adorno (1903-1969) about the prominent Czech writer Franz Kafka, who is considered as one of the major figures of 20th century literature.

Translated by Saeid Rezvani into Persian, the book has recently been published by Agah Publications in Tehran.

The translator and Iranian scholar Mostafa Mehr-Ain are scheduled to speak at the meeting.



Vocalist Alireza Qorbani to perform in France

ART desk **TEHRAN** — Iranian vocalist Alireza Qorbani is scheduled to perform a concert entitled "Gulistan" (The Rose Garden) in Rouen, France on April 7.

The organizer of the event is the French music agency Accords Croises.

South African artist shapes salt into famous faces

PRETORIA (Reuters) — South African artist Percy Maimela stumbled upon his talent by chance, when some salt crystals spilled on the floor of the shop where he worked and as he tried to collect them he realized they formed shapes that he now turns into portraits.

His latest inspiration is former U.S. President Barack Obama.

"You can just take small stones and make something that no one ever thought of," he told Reuters in the capital Pretoria.

"Even salt companies, they wouldn't say salt is just for food anymore," he said, crouching over his portrait of Obama on his dining room floor.

The 31-year-old applies glue to cloth and then sprinkles table salt to sketch the portrait. Some of the famous faces he has drawn include global icon Nelson Mandela. Often, he'll chance his luck with passers by.

Fajr festival pays tribute to Abbas Kiarostami in poster



ART desk **TEHRAN** — The 35th Fajr Film Festival is commemorating Abbas Kiarostami by a poster featuring the legendary Iranian filmmaker.

The poster has been designed for Art and Experience Cinema, a section dedicated to art films and other movies aimed typically at a limited audience.

It also bears verses of one of Kiarostami's poems reading, "I told the moon my secret, My secret got out when the sun was up."

Kiarostami, who won awards in many international events, passed away last July at the age of 76. His "Taste of Cherry" won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1997.

Earlier last week, the organizers of the Fajr Film Festival unveiled the official poster featuring prominent filmmaker Ali Hatami (1944-1996).

The festival will be held in Tehran and several other Iranian cities from January 30 to February 9.

Keivan Saket's book on radif in Iranian music unveiled

CULTURE desk **TEHRAN** — "Selection of Practical Radifs in Iran's National Music", a new book by tar virtuoso Keivan Saket, was unveiled during a ceremony held at Tehran's Arasbaran Cultural Center.

The total collection of more than 200 gushehs -- traditional melodic modes -- in all 12 dastgahs is known as the radif.

Musicians Mohammad Sarir, Ali-Akbar Shekarchi and Milad Kiai were among the participating guests at the ceremony.

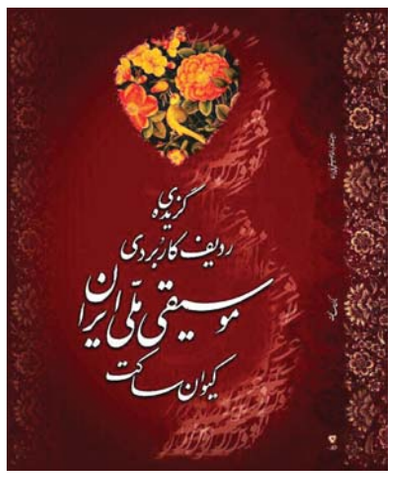
A music video screening part of the book and how to make use of its different parts was screened for the participants.

Sarir in his short speech called radif the most precious cultural and intangible heritage, and said that it is the duty of every individual to preserve and transfer this heritage to the next generation.

"Keivan Saket's music and teaching is significant in its kind since his language is more comprehensible," Sarir said.

Shekarchi called such art activities on the history of Iran necessary.

"Only an individual who brings



innovation can remain eternal in history and surely Keivan Saket is the one," Kiai said on his part.

Hooman Asadi also talked about radif in the Iranian music and its complexity.

Saket was last to speak and ended the program by reciting a poem composed by his father.

Veteran calligrapher Gholamhossein Amirkhani also handed a tableau to the musician bearing the calligraphy he inscribed of poetry by the father of Keivan Saket.

Australia to host Persian Art and Culture Expo



Sydney Opera House

ART desk **TEHRAN** — Australia will host the Persian Art and Culture Expo in the two major cities of Sydney and Melbourne during February and March.

A number of musical performances, standups and handicraft exhibitions have been arranged for the expo, which has been organized by the Australia-Iran Friendship Association, the director of the expo, Saeid Mohammadzad-Akbari, said during a press conference in Tehran on Saturday.

Legendary vocalist Shahram Nazeri and his son, Hafez, along with their group are scheduled to give concerts at the expo, which will be held from February 20 to March 12.

In addition, tar virtuoso Hossein Alizadeh will perform concerts.

Chartar band will do performances featuring a fusion of Iranian and Western music, and pop stars Reza Sadeqi, Moshen Yeganeh and Maziar Fallahi are slated to play gigs in both Sydney and Melbourne.

A group of Iranian actors has been invited to attend the event. Actors Mehran Modiri and Mehran Ghafurian are scheduled to perform standups.

Mohammadzad-Akbari said that over 100,000 Iranians live legally across Australia.

In addition, about 60,000 Illegal Iranian immigrants are being held in detention camps in the country.

PICTURE OF THE DAY Honaronline/*Ramona Mirian*



Iranian vocalist Alireza Qorbani gives a concert at Tehran's Milad Tower on January 27, 2017. He paid tribute to the victims of Tehran's Plasco Building collapse by performing "Mourning" composed by Fardin Khalatbari about 15 years ago.

Rudaki Foundation, Puccini Festival sign MOU

ART desk **TEHRAN** — Managers of Iran's Rudaki Foundation and Italy's Puccini Festival Orchestra have inked a memorandum of understanding in Tehran.

Based on the MOU, the Tehran Symphony Orchestra will give a concert under the baton of maestro Alberto Veronesi, the chairman of the Puccini Festival, in Tehran in April 2017, the Rudaki Foundation has announced in a press release published on Saturday.

In addition, the Tehran Symphony Orchestra conducted by Shahrdad Rohni will be performing in the Puccini Festival 2017.

Musicians from the Orchestra del Festival Puccini and the Young Musician European Orchestra gave a joint concert at the 32nd Fajr Music Festival this year.

Orwell's "1984" back as bestseller amid focus on 'alternative facts'

NEW YORK (Reuters) — George Orwell's "1984" novel about a dystopian future under an authoritarian regime is back as a bestseller and being reprinted decades after it was written as readers grapple with Donald Trump administration's defense of "alternative facts."

The book, first published in 1949, features a devious "Big Brother" government that spies on its citizens and forces them into "doublethink," or simultaneously accepting contradictory versions of the truth.

Sales spiked after a senior White House official, Kellyanne Conway, used the term "alternative facts" on NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday during a discussion about the size of the crowd at Trump's inauguration.

Some commentators denounced her expression as "Orwellian."

By Monday, the novel by the late British author hit Amazon's list of top 10 bestsellers, which is updated hourly. On Wednesday, it was No.1.

Responding to the renewed interest, its publisher ordered a 75,000-copy reprint this week, Signet Classics said in a statement. A company spokesman told CNN late on Tuesday that was more than would normally be reprinted.

The West Virginia chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, which has vowed to "resist" the president's policies on immigration and other issues, said on Twitter it picked "1984" as the read of the month for its book club.

Conway was responding to accusations that the Trump administration was fixated on the size of his inauguration crowds, saying: "We feel compelled to go out and clear the air and put alternative facts out there."

Amid widespread criticism of the expression, even Merriam-Webster chimed in to challenge Trump's former campaign manager. "A fact is a piece of information presented as having objective reality," the dictionary publisher tweeted.