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Musicians Hossein Alizadeh and Majid Khalaji to begin tour of Europe in March **16**

## Iran concludes war games despite Washington's threats

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — The

desks Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) on Wednesday finished a three-day military exercise that was launched in Dasht-e Kavir, central Iran, Tasnim news agency reported.

The drills were launched despite U.S. President Donald Trump's threatening remarks late last month, when he said Iran "was playing with fire" and all U.S. options were on the table.

Commander of IRGC Ground Force Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour told reporters on Wednesday that the drills were intended to send a message to "global arrogant powers".

Codenamed "Payambar-e Azam 11 (The Great Prophet)", the military exercise was launched on Monday under the motto of "Presentation of Power and Sustainable Security" to boast the country's military might with rockets, artillery, tanks and helicopters.

With the war game, Pakpour said, Iran wants to convey a message and warn the global hegemonic powers about the repercussions of any possible "foolish" action against the Islamic Republic.

The final stage of the maneuvers took place in Tayband County of Khorasan Razavi Province, where the IRGC's forces attacked mock enemy positions and vehicles.

# Rouhani: Intifada embodies resistance



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## Iran to start oil export to Russia within 2 weeks: Zanganeh

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Iran will

desks sign an agreement with Russia to start exporting 100,000 barrels per day of crude oil to the neighboring country by the next two weeks, Shana reported quoting Iranian oil minister as saying.

Bijan Namdar Zanganeh made the remarks after a meeting with Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak in Tehran on Tuesday.

Novak visited Iran to attend the inauguration ceremony of a 1,400-megawatt thermal power plant project financed to the tune of €1.2 billion by Russia in the city of Sirik, southern Iran.

According to Zanganeh, 50 percent of the oil payment will be in cash and the other 50 percent will be in the form of products and services.

Further in his remarks, the Iranian minister expressed appreciation for Russia's positive cooperation with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) regarding the last November's decision to cut production levels.

Novak said on Monday that Russia is cutting down its oil production in February ahead of the OPEC deal schedule, Reuters reported.

"In February, we are going ahead of the schedule planned for this month," Novak told reporters.



## ARTICLE

By **Roozbeh Aliabadi**  
Political Analyst

## Iran and Trump world order

U.S. President Donald Trump has unveiled a new and unusual foreign policy that has rarely been seen in modern U.S. history. Previous American presidents, although varied in their foreign policy approaches, all accepted and maintained the core ideology that the U.S. stood for more than just itself and that the global economic order was not a zero-sum game. Mr. Trump, however, believes foreign policy should have a nationalistic approach and visibly a transactional nature.

He is focusing most of his early efforts on securing a swift yet limited gains for the United States. In initial days of his administration and despite political turbulences that he has caused, the foreign policy and economic approaches have reflected the same narrow national interest that he has made as campaign promises.

Mr. Trump and his inner circle are attempting to shake up the global governance structure by reassessing Washington's long-lasting alliances with Europe. He is quick in tearing up trade deals with his neighbors, boosting trade barriers against China and others, denying the climate agreement and criticizing the nuclear deal with Iran among his other provocative aims. If he continues on this unique and dangerous path, he will indeed unleash forces beyond his control, intensifying and directing the crisis of the Western-centered global order to an irreversible path.

In this new path that Mr. Trump and his team are leading, some nations reactively will choose the policy of confrontation and protection by building new alliances to oppose Washington's new agenda. Some others will yield by maintaining ties with Washington, prefer to preserve a sense of security and economic gains and share a sense of ideological partnership. Other nations will react to these new signs and hedge their risks and managing uncertainties by diversifying their geopolitical and economic portfolios. **->2**

## 'America's 4-decade push for regime change in Iran a failure'

The new US administration is setting out on a collision course with Iran. Team Trump has already imposed new sanctions on Tehran, threatened to rip up the nuclear deal, and accused the country of sponsoring terrorism. As Iran goes ahead with new ballistic missile tests and the tone in Washington grows tougher, is the fragile peace between Iran and the US in jeopardy? And can the hard-fought nuclear deal survive the tensions? We ask the man who negotiated the agreement for Iran, former head of the Iranian National Security Council's Foreign Relations Committee and professor at Princeton university — Seyed Hossein Mousavian.

**■ Former head of the Foreign Relations Committee of Iran's National Security Council, spokesman for Iran in its nuclear negotiations, professor at Princeton university - Seyed Hossein Mousavian, it's really great to have you back on our program. Always a pleasure. So, professor, Right after taking office Trump's administration has imposed new sanctions against Iran for ballistic missile tests and put it 'on notice' for destabilizing behaviour in the Middle East - Is the American-Iranian detente over?**

A: I don't believe so. I would not really judge Trump's Iran policy based on one sanc-

tions they imposed on, because of the missile issue. Obama also did the same - when Iran had missile tests, they have sanctioned Iran. Trump also did the same. Here, there's no difference. This is issue number one. Number two is the fact that sanctioning Iran has been the core U.S. policy since 1979 revolution in Iran because the U.S. has always had expected Iran to continue to be U.S. allies and Iran has not been ready to be U.S. ally, and therefore it is for 39 years continuously the U.S., in every administration, Republican or Democrat, they have sanctioned Iran, pressured Iran to isolate Iran. **->13**

## OPEC cuts, weak freight rates help traders profit on Asia crude routes

Oil traders from around the world, including the United States, Britain and Brazil, have tripled their sales to Asia as they take advantage of an emerging supply gap following OPEC-led production cuts announced late last year.

Around 30 supertankers have this month made long-haul trips to ship crude oil from the Americas, the North Sea and the Mediterranean to refineries across Asia, the world's biggest and fastest growing consumer, data extracted from Thomson Reuters Oil Research and Forecasts shows.

The unusual movements follow the decision late last year by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers including Russia to cut

production by almost 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) during the first half of this year in a bid to rein in global oversupply and prop up prices.

Companies most involved in the long-haul deals include major oil producers such as BP and Royal Dutch Shell, private commodity traders Trafigura, Vitol and Mercuria, and Chinese refiner Unipet, trading sources say. Energy and mining giant Glencore, Azerbaijan's state-oil firm Socar and Brazil's Petrobras have also been involved.

Taking advantage of relatively low freight costs and regional crude oil price differentials - known as arbitrage, or arb - traders can profit from supply shortages in one region and oversupply in another.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures, for example, currently trade at around \$54.50 per barrel, while international benchmark Brent crude costs \$56.90 - a Brent premium over WTI of \$2.40 a barrel, compared with near parity in late November, just before OPEC announced its cuts.

"The OPEC cuts have ... led to an open arb for long-haul cargoes, leading to a rise in long-haul crude imports (which) make up for the decline in OPEC (supplies)," said Tushar Bansal, director of Ivy Global Energy, a Singapore-based consultancy.

The cuts are an OPEC policy reversal after two years of pumping out oil and keeping prices low as the cartel sought to squeeze rival exporters. **->4**



© Tehran Times/ Majid Haghdoust

## Plasco shopkeepers relocated

Hundreds of shopkeepers who lost their businesses during a massive blaze in a shopping center in downtown Tehran have been relocated as an immediate solution to help them resume activities.

The mission to put out the fire that engulfed the iconic Plasco building in central Tehran in January ended in the sudden collapse of the high-rise structure and the deaths of more than 20 firefighters. The towering inferno of death and destruction shocked and saddened Iranians around the world.

## No concessions on future Palestinian state: Jordan, Egypt

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and King Abdullah II of Jordan say there could be no concessions on the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, reaffirming their support for a so-called two-state solution to the decades-long conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

The two leaders held a meeting on Tuesday in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, where they "discussed ways to push the stagnant Middle East peace process, especially in light of U.S. President Donald Trump's administration coming to power," Egypt's presidential spokesman said in a statement.

The statement further said the so-called two-state solution that would lead to the establishment of "a Palestinian state... with East Jerusalem (al-Quds) as its capital is a nationalist principle that cannot be conceded."

The two statesmen also vowed to defend the rights of the Palestinian nation, and stressed the need for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in order to restore peace and stability to the Middle East region.

Earlier this month, Trump backtracked on Washington's firm support for a "two-state solution" to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, saying he would support any solution favored by both sides. **->13**

**First Announcement**

**Renewed**

**International Public Tender Notice (Two Stage)**

**"Purchase of One Set of Drive Through (High Speed) X-Ray Inspection System"**

**No: 46422116**

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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Iran to unveil domestically made stone centrifuge soon

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iran is going to officially unveil its first domestically made stone centrifuge on April 9, the director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran has said.

According to Ali Akbar Salehi, the centrifuge is going to be delivered to the Oil Research Institute after inauguration, Mehr news agency reported on Wednesday.

The centrifuge will be used to determine the porosity of stones so that water, oil, or gas reserves can be measured, Salehi explained.



Rouhani heading dust-hit Khuzestan

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani is travelling to the dust-hit province of Khuzestan on Thursday.

Rouhani's executive deputy Mohammad Shariatmadari told reporters on Wednesday that during the trip, the president will personally oversee the measures that are being taken to reduce the public affliction after heavy dust swept the province, IRIB reported.

As a result of heavy dust, the province suffered back-to-back power outages, which itself resulted in water treatment shortcomings and outage of water, severely disrupting the lives of the citizens.



'Zanjani hanging not stayed for restitution of assets'

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The Judiciary spokesman said on Wednesday that the execution of oil tycoon Babak Zanjani is not being stayed for the restitution of his assets as he owes, especially to the Oil Ministry.

"We are still busy identifying the assets. The convict might also have objections to the identifications, which need consideration," Qolamhossein Mohseni Ejei said, Fars reported.

However, he said according to law, if a convict tries to make up for his crime, he might receive commutation.



Tehran seeking to increase number of Hajj pilgrims

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iran has expressed hopefulness to increase the number of pilgrims it will be sending to Hajj beyond the previous 60,000, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

"This year we hope to be able to send 80,000 people on Hajj, because according to an Organization of Islamic Cooperation law, each country can send one thousandth of its population each year, and Iran's population is currently over 80 million," said Hamid Mohammadi, acting director of the Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization.



Iran condolences death of Russia's UN envoy

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman on Wednesday extended condolences to the Russian government on the death of the country's ambassador to the UN Vitaly Churkin.

Bahram Qassemi also sympathized with the family of the late Churkin.

Churkin passed away on Monday, February 20, in New York. Churkin had served as Russia's permanent representative to the UN and the Russian representative in the UN Security Council since April 2006. He would have turned 65 on Tuesday, February 21.



'U.S. spy's mission was to undermine family values'

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Security forces of Iran have said Nazar Zaka, who was arrested in 2015 on suspicion of espionage and had been identified as a Lebanese-American citizen, had a mission to undermine family values and downgrade the status of women in Iran.

"Zaka confessed he had a mission to undermine the family and women. He confessed that he had received 8 million euros to create 15 NGOs" to carry out his mission, Kermanshah's IRGC Deputy Commander Sardar Sayyari said, Mehr news agency reported on Wednesday.

# All nuclear related obstacles removed: Araqchi

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Wednesday that all obstacles related to Iran nuclear issue have been removed under the nuclear accord, ISNA reported.

Speaking in Ferdowsi University in Mashhad on Wednesday, Araqchi said the nuclear negotiations were primarily aimed at ending the Western-led sanctions targeting Iran's oil and the goal was achieved under the July 2015 agreement.

The primary sanctions put on place by the U.S. before the nuclear dispute were not discussed during the talks, he said.

The top diplomat added other issues such as the details surrounding the purchase of airplanes and the "performance" of the current administration are not related to the nuclear deal.

"And how the Oil Ministry has 'performed' following the sanctions relief is a separate issue and not related to BARJAM," he maintained.

BARJAM (JCPOA) is the acronym used in Iran when referring to the international



nuclear agreement signed between the country and six world powers including the U.S., Britain, France, China and Russia plus Germany.

Under BARJAM, which took effect in

January 2016, Iran received relief from international sanctions in exchange for a limited nuclear program.

"The things obtained are our [own] achievements and they [the U.S.] did not

do us any favors," said Araqchi, the second ranking negotiator after Foreign Minister Zarif in the nuclear talks which lasted for about two years.

He also casted serious doubt on Washington's sincerity, saying the animosity of the Americans towards the Islamic Republic has not ended.

Earlier in February, the U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis called Iran "the single biggest state sponsor of terrorism in the world". Mattis's remarks came days after the Trump administration banned citizens of seven countries, including Iran of course, from entering the United States.

In an interview with CNN reporter Christiane Amanpour, Iran's Foreign Minister Zarif responded to Washington's anti-Iran rhetoric, saying, "You cannot find an Iranian who has committed a single act of terror against Americans. Iran has always condemned every single terrorist incident in the U.S. since 9/11."

"We do not respond well to threats. We respond very well to respect -- mutual respect -- and mutual interest," he added.

## Rouhani Intifada embodies resistance

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani of Iran praised on Wednesday the Palestinian resistance, known in its Arabic name as Intifada, against the Israeli occupation, saying, "Intifada is the symbol of resistance and resistance is an emblem of human conscience."

Rouhani was speaking as the last lecturer of the two-day international conference on the Palestinian intifada which brought together around 700 foreign guests and representatives of the pro-Palestinian organizations including a number of parliament speakers from some Muslim states and some Jewish figures opposed to the Tel Aviv regime.

Rouhani said the "excruciatingly painful and deep wound" of the Israeli occupation of Palestine has caused pain in the heart of the Islamic world and the larger international community for more than 70 years.

The president went on to say that the Zionist regime is seeking to form an alliance with Arab and Muslim states against Iran as a supporter of the Palestinian resistance groups.

"The Zionists' project is to turn Arab and Muslim states into its own allies against Iran as the supporter of resistance," Rouhani told the participants.

At the end of the conference a statement was issued



*Palestinian National Council chairman Salim Zannoun (L) held talks with President Rouhani on Wednesday.*

in which the participants suggested the closing of the Muslim states' embassies in Washington if the U.S. moves its embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds (Jerusalem).

**'Muslims duty-bound to defend Palestinians' rights'**

Rouhani also said on Wednesday that Iran prioritizes the Palestine issue, noting the Islamic world is duty-bound to defend the rights of the Palestinians and pay for this.

"The Iranian people have paid high cost for supporting the Palestinians and opposing the Zionist regime of Israel's actions, however they will continue their supports," Rouhani said during a meeting with Salim Zannoun, the chairman of the Palestinian National Council, who had participated at the conference.

Rouhani also said, "We believe that the world of Islam should resist to uphold the Palestinian people's rights and is also duty bound to pay the cost."

For his part, Zannoun praised Iran's supports for the Palestinians and the Palestine cause.

He also said that the Palestine issue and fight against the Zionist regime of Israel should not be undermined by any other issue.

**'Iran will stand beside Syrians'**

During a separate meeting with Syrian Parliament Speaker Hadiya Khalaf Abbas, Rouhani said that Iran will stand beside the Syrian people in fighting terrorism.

He also said that peace and stability in Syria is beneficial to Palestine and the larger region.

For her part, the Syrian official said Damascus attaches great importance to relations with Iran and praised the country's supports for the Syrian government and people.

Rouhani also met separately with Parliament speakers of Malaysia, Jordan, Lebanon and Uganda.

## Iran insists on close interaction with Arab neighbors

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi has reiterated Tehran's position that the Islamic Republic is ready to expand its interaction with the Persian Gulf Arab littoral states.

In an interview with IRNA published on Tuesday, he said President Hassan Rouhani's visits to Oman and Kuwait demonstrated Tehran's "good will" and "willingness to have good relations" with its southern neighbors.

"The trip also shows our determination to establish relations with our southern neighbors and the necessity of interaction and dialogue in the current international system," Qassemi explained.

He noted that Iran has always sought to have "constructive" and "logical" interactions with the neighboring countries on the condition that these countries show interest.

The Foreign Ministry official also said

security and stability in the Middle East region can be established through "collective solidarity".

Qassemi said that the Islamic countries should consult with each other and have good ties in spite of different views.

He added Iran seeks relations based on the principle of sovereignty and non-interference in other countries' internal affairs.

Elsewhere, Qassemi expressed hope that all the Persian Gulf littoral states

would become aware of the danger of terrorism and adopt "logical" policies.

"The Persian Gulf littoral states should become aware of the fact that the states' interests are intertwined and that all the countries are influenced by regional developments," the diplomat remarked.

Rouhani visited Oman and Kuwait on February 15 on separate invitations sent to him by Oman's Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said and Kuwait's Emir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber Al Sabah.

## No dual nationalities in executive posts: intelligence minister

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iran's Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi on Wednesday dismissed the reports of dual nationalities in key governmental posts as "untrue."

"Intelligence Ministry will welcome reports on dual nationality officials, if any," he said.

The comments come a week after Prosecutor General Mohammad Jafar Montazeri railed against the Rouhani administration for not firing dual nationals with posts in the government.

"We have news that some officials have dual nationality and this is against

law, Montazeri was quoted as saying.

He added, "The government announced that it would oust them but didn't."

Reacting to the remarks, Alavi accused Montazeri of "overgeneralization".

Under Iran's employment law, a person who applies for naturalization or is stripped of Iranian citizenship, as authorized and confirmed by the Foreign Ministry, cannot hold governmental office.

While no official data has been issued on the number of dual nationals with a position in the government, MP Hossein-ali Haji Deligani put it at 12.

He gave no more comments.

The intelligence minister, however, categorically rejected all declared data, warning that the public opinion should not be disturbed with false news.

Earlier Hossein Naqavi Hosseini, a spokesman with the parliamentary national security and foreign policy committee, announced that the parliament was studying a motion to revoke the Iranian citizenship of dual nationals.

The issue of dual nationality has been an increasingly sensitive debate in Iran over the past years for security reasons.

It was brought up after a top bank

suggest to the aspiring hegemon that new opportunities for cooperation are available, provided that certain limits are observed.

Current trends of security hedging in the Middle East, with eroding Washington's influence, the growing active presence of Moscow and Beijing, as well as the spreading unnecessary rivalry in the region, will have tremendous cost for all regional players. This hedging is dangerously visible as the members of the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council are significantly ramping up their defense spending and enhancing their strategic cooperation.

Tehran should recognize that its economic hedging is inherently different from its geopolitical one. In the Trump era, in a rare reassessment, traditional trading partners will surely hedge their bets. This realignment of the partnership is an incredible opportunity for Tehran to take advantage of the post-JCPOA era. It appears that

current trading businesses are looking into other major economies, particularly China and the European Union to become the new engine for the stabilization of global trade. These alternative arrangements will not necessarily include the United States directly. Regional comprehensive economic partnerships such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, led by China and Russia, secure more promising Eurasian markets for goods and infrastructure investments.

Iran should also join the ranks of other major emerging economies and strengthen its efforts in seeking to finance infrastructure and promoting foreign investments by looking at non-traditional donors and investors, such as Brazil, China, and India. Global warming poses the biggest long-term threat to the Middle East region and the survival of the human species. There-

fore, Tehran should also take a robust regional leadership role when it comes to preserving a sustainable planet.

Iran in its political and ideological core should consistently exercise strategic flexibility in geopolitics as well as economics. The Trump era will require the most dramatic hedging in geopolitics as the world order, and regional power balances are rapidly shifting to unfamiliar territories. The past policy of confrontation towards the U.S. as a single strategy will not be the sound and prudent approach in the post-JCPOA era. Iran should, therefore, invest in forging strategic ties with growing global powers: China in Asia and Russia in Europe to strengthen their long-term geopolitical and economic position in the Middle East. So parallel hedging should also take place internally, as Iran builds up capabilities for self-defense, and sustain and further enhance its regional position.



# 'Israeli jets hit Syrian army positions near capital'

## Saudi Arabia ready to send troops to Syria: FM

Israeli military aircraft have reportedly carried out an overnight airstrike against Syrian army positions in the strategic and mountainous Qalamoun region, which lies north of the capital Damascus along the border with neighboring Lebanon.

A Syrian military source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said an Israeli fighter jet crossed into Syria's airspace at around 3 a.m. local time on Wednesday after circling the skies of Lebanon's Bekaa (Bekaa) Valley and flying above the eastern city of Baalbek, al-Masdar News reported.

The source added that the airstrike hit Jarb Nahlleh area of Qalamoun, located about 330 kilometers (205 miles) north of Damascus.

The Lebanese and Arabic-language online newspaper el-Nashra later reported that a convoy transporting weapons was the target. No injuries were reported.

The Israeli media outlets alleged that the weapons shipment was destined to fighters from the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement, who are fighting alongside Syrian government soldiers against foreign-sponsored Takfiri militants.

The aerial attack came two weeks after Israeli tanks shelled an open area in the occupied Golan Heights, without causing any casualties.

Israeli war-jets have time and again carried out sorties inside the Syrian territory under various pretexts.

On January 13, a huge explosion rocked Mezzeh Military Airport, less than eight kilometers southwest of Damascus and caused a large fire. There was no immediate report of casualties though.

Syrian state TV quoted the army command as saying that the rockets, which it said were fired from an area close to the Sea of Galilee in the north of the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories, hit the airport's compound.

The Syrian army vowed to take revenge for the "flagrant" attack and "amputate the arms of the perpetrators."

"The Syrian army command and armed forces warn Israel of the repercussions of the flagrant attack and stresses its continued fight against terrorism," it said in a statement.



■ Saudi regime troops in Syria

In another development, The House of Saud regime says it is ready to support the United States in its so-called war against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group in Syria by sending ground troops and special forces to the war-torn country.

Saudi regime Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir made the remarks in an exclusive interview with the German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung published on Monday, adding that there were consultations with the Americans to "find out what the plan is and what you need to implement it."

He also stated that along with Riyadh, other Persian Gulf Arab "countries" were also "ready to allocate forces to fight on the U.S. side," without giving further details about the potential military initiative.

Since 2014, the United States has been leading a campaign in Syria and neighboring Iraq with the declared objective of hitting ISIL.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Saudi foreign minister said the "main idea is that" the territories liberated from the

grips of ISIL must be handed over to the armed foreign-backed Syrian opposition groups to prevent the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement, Iran and the Syrian government from wresting control of them.

Jubeir also reiterated Riyadh's stance regarding Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, saying he must step down, claiming that the upcoming Geneva peace talks was to organize the political transition to the establishment of a "new Syria without Assad."

Damascus has repeatedly blamed the six-year-old militancy in Syria on some Western states and their regional allies, including Qatar and the House of Saud regime.

■ **U.S.-backed militants enter Syria's Dayr al-Zawr**

Meanwhile, at least 11 civilians have been killed as U.S.-backed militants make their first major incursion into the Syrian province of Dayr al-Zawr.

The so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an alliance of Kurdish and Arab militants, entered Dayr al-Zawr on Tues-

day as part of their operations aimed at liberating the ISIL-held city of Raqqah.

"Our aim is to cut the road to Raqqah and besiege Daesh (ISIL) ... We have liberated 15 villages," said SDF field Commander Dejjwar Khabat.

He added the SDF had set up their base on a fortified hill in Makmaneh, which is located some 100 kilometers from Raqqah -- ISIL's stronghold in Syria.

"We have entered the first villages of Dayr al-Zawr province," said another SDF commander Abu Khawlah. "Our entry into Dayr al-Zawr was a big surprise (for ISIL), and there will be more surprises coming," he added.

The SDF launched its campaign to capture Raqqah in November 2016 and took control of some areas up the Euphrates Valley.

The U.S.-led coalition says it is working with the SDF to try to defeat ISIL in the militant-riddled Syrian city. However, there have been numerous reports of U.S.-led airstrikes targeting Syrian civilians, military and infrastructure.

(Source: agencies)

## Netanyahu took two-hour flight detour to avoid Indonesian airspace

The Israeli prime minister was forced to take a two-and-a-half-hour detour en route to Australia, apparently to avoid Indonesian airspace.

Benjamin Netanyahu arrived in Sydney on Wednesday for a four-day visit, the first time an Israeli prime minister has visited Australia.

The average direct flight from Singapore to Sydney takes about eight and a half hours; according to the flight tracking site FlightAware, Netanyahu's total flight time was just over 11 hours as his flight path dodged Indonesia's airspace.

A member of Netanyahu's delegation confirmed the route to the Guardian.

The flight was operated by El Al, the flag carrier of Israel that is disallowed from venturing into the airspace of many Muslim nations, including Pakistan.

Indonesia is home to the largest population of Muslim people in the world -- the vast majority of the total population of about 240 million -- and it is staunchly supportive of the Palestinian cause.

It has no formal diplomatic ties with Israel, but does sanction some travel and trade. Its visa-free policy was extended to Israel and 83 other countries in December 2015 in a bid to increase tourism.

In March last year Netanyahu called for diplomatic relations to be formally established with Indonesia because of the "many opportunities for bilateral cooperation", especially in technology.

According to the Times of Israel report, he said the reasons for the two countries not to have a relationship were "no longer relevant" and that they were allied against terrorism.

He told the delegation of Indonesian journalists, visiting as guests of the Israeli foreign ministry: "I have quite a few Facebook friends who are Indonesian."

But the Indonesian government said in response that ties with Israel would only be normalized if Palestine gained independence.

(Source: The Guardian)

## Iraqi forces close in on Mosul airport

Iraqi government forces, supported by fighters from Popular Mobilization Units (Al-Hashd Al-Sha'abi), have closed in on the Mosul International Airport, forcing the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists to pull out of the facility.

The development came as Iraqi forces are engaged in a new offensive to fully recapture the country's second largest city and drive ISIL terrorists out of their last urban bastion in the war-shattered country.

Commander of Federal Police Forces Lieutenant General Raed Shaker Jawdat announced the news in a statement on Tuesday, saying that the airport had been a strategic stronghold for ISIL and the progress was made after fierce fighting with Takfiri terrorists.

He added that tactics employed by Iraqi forces, including heavy bombardment of ISIL positions by jets and helicopters, forced the group to fully withdraw from the facility, adding that liberation operation, commenced early morning on Tuesday, also inflicted substantial damage on the group.

Meanwhile, Iraqi Arabic-language al-Sumaria television network, citing a local source, reported that earlier in the day, chief security observer of ISIL at Mosul airport, identified as "Abu Abdullah," was killed along with two other companions in a drone strike at the main gate of the facility.

Iraqi forces on Monday had wrested control over a major military base in Ghizlani, a facility close to the airport, which had been under ISIL control since the group took over Mosul about three years ago.

The airport lies on the southern approach to Mosul, which is located some 400 kilometers north of the capital Baghdad, and on the east bank of the Tigris River. Iraqi forces plan to turn the airport into a support base for the offensive into the western part of the city. The airport and its premises are some two kilometers away from the newly-liberated village of Albu Saif.

"We are in Albu Saif and we [have] started to clear houses from bombs, and we are conducting house-to-house search," said Police Lieutenant Colonel Hussein on Tuesday.

The developments came a day after the Popular Mobilization Units announced that their volunteer fighters from the 26th Brigade of the force had also flushed terrorists out of the strategic village of al-Sahaji west of Mosul.

The operation, which led to withdrawal of the ISIL terrorists from Mosul airport, is part of a full-scale offensive to liberate the western side of the city that began on February 19. Last month, Iraqi government forces retook the eastern side of Mosul, which fell to the ISIL Takfiri terrorist group in 2014, when the terrorist outfit began its campaign of death and destruction in the country.

The northern and western parts of Iraq have been plagued by gruesome violence ever since ISIL mounted an offensive in June 2014.

The terrorists have been committing vicious crimes against all ethnic and religious communities in Iraq, including Shias, Sunnis, Kurds and Christians.

Iraqi army soldiers and allied fighters, including Shias, Sunnis, Kurds and Christians have joined forces to retake Mosul. They are now in the middle of a comprehensive offensive, which began on October 17, 2016, aimed at the full liberation of the city from the grips of ISIL. Since then they have made sweeping gains against the Takfiri elements.

(Source: agencies)

## Amnesty: Trump taking humanity to 'darkest' times

Amnesty International has censured the United States President Donald Trump for adopting a "poisonous" rhetoric that "dehumanizes" entire communities and sets the stage for "angrier and more divisive politics" in the world.

In a statement upon the release of its annual human rights assessment, Amnesty said on Wednesday that the divisive rhetoric used by people like the new American president led to an unprecedented spike in hate crimes last year.

"2016 was the year when the cynical use of 'us vs. them' narratives of blame, hate and fear took on a global prominence to a level not seen since the 1930s. Too many politicians are answering legitimate economic and security fears with a poisonous and divisive manipulation of identity politics in an attempt to win votes," said Salil Shetty, Amnesty's secretary general.

Specifically naming Trump and a number of other world leaders, Shetty charged that self-proclaimed "anti-establishment" politicians are "wielding a toxic agenda that hounds, scapegoats and dehumanizes entire groups of people."

Since taking office on January 20, Trump has signed a number of executive orders aimed at curbing immigration into the U.S., openly blaming Muslims and Latin Americans for the lack of security in the country.

On January 27, the former reality TV star authorized an entry ban against people from seven Muslim countries and halted refugee admissions for three months. Syrian refugee admissions were indefinitely suspended under the ban, which has been halted upon a federal judge's order.

Trump has also signed a directive to begin the construction of a controversial wall on the border with Mexico, while hiring thousands of new enforcement agents to carry out more deportation raids.

During his campaign run, Trump promised to deport the 11 million undocumented immigrants that are currently residing in the country. He also threatened to withdraw funding from states that harbor illegal immigrants.

In its statement, Amnesty said Trump's "hateful xenophobic" policies exemplified "the global trend of angrier and more divisive politics."

The rhetoric has led to a shift of "what is acceptable," Shetty argued, adding that some politicians were "shamelessly and actively legitimizing" their misogynistic and racist acts.

(Source: AP)



Second Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD



I.R. Iran Customs Administration (IRICA)  
Finance and Economic Affairs Ministry

**Renewed**

**International Public Tender Notice (Two Stage)**

**"Purchase of One Set of Drive Through (High Speed) X-Ray Inspection System"**

**No: 46422116**

Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) intends to purchase one set of Drive Through (High Speed) X-Ray Inspection System to inspect trucks and containers through Public international tender according to the following conditions. Therefore, all eligible Iranian or foreign company agencies are requested to refer to mentioned address to obtain the tender documents.

**1) Tender Participation:** International Public Tender Notice (Two Stage)"Purchase of One Set of High Speed X-Ray Inspection System

**2) The amount of Participation Guarantee Bank shall be either 7'000'000'000 Iranian Rials or 210'000 Euros**

**3) Tender Participation Guarantee:** As a Bank Guarantee issued by one of the Iranian banks (accredited by Central Bank of I.R.I) or be deposited to account No.4001001106370306 in the name of IRICA at the Central bank of I.R.I and submit the receipt

**4) Deadline for obtaining tender documents: 19 Feb, 2017- 24 Feb, 2017**

**5) The address for obtaining tender documents and submitting bid envelopes:** Tenders & Contracts Bureau, Room No.104, Development & Equipment Dept. 1 st floor Iran Custom Administration Bldg. Next to Nasser Alley, upper than Valiasr Sq. Tehran, Iran.

**6) Deadline for submitting bids: 3 Apr, 2017**

**7) Opening bid envelopes: 4 Apr, 2017**

Further information would be available at [www.irica.gov.ir](http://www.irica.gov.ir) also "National Database Portal of Iran Tenders Information" or Tel: +98 21 82992290

Development and Equipment Dept. of  
Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Tenders & Contracts Bureau





### New Zealand's economic delegation due in Iran on Saturday

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — An economic delegation d e s k from New Zealand to be led by the country's Minister for Primary Industries Hon Nathan Guy will arrive in Tehran on Saturday to discuss reinforcing ties with Iran in agricultural domains especially in dairy sector, Iran's Ambassador to New Zealand Jaleddin Namini Mianji announced on Wednesday.

According to Mianji, the CEO of Fonterra Company will be also among the New Zealander delegates, IRNA reported.

Fonterra Cooperative Group Limited is a New Zealand multinational dairy cooperative owned by around 10,500 New Zealand farmers. The company is responsible for approximately 30% of the world's dairy exports and is New Zealand's largest company.



### Iran plans to buy 12 Superjet-100 aircrafts from Russia in near future

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said in an interview with Rossiya 24 TV channel that Iran has confirmed its plan to purchase 12 Superjet-100 aircrafts from Russia in the near future.

He also noted that Russia is interested in establishing production of components for Russian aircraft in Iran, and, in case of the corresponding proposal is ready to consider such possibility, Tass reported.

In addition, according to the minister, Russia has offered Iranian partners to establish joint production of turboprop upgraded Ilyushin IL-114 aircraft.

"Our companies are currently working with Iranian partners to come up with specific solutions and proposals," Novak said.

Iran is hoping to rapidly upgrade its fleet now that sanctions have been lifted under the 2015 nuclear accord, in which Tehran pledged to curb its nuclear program.

## Eurozone January inflation confirmed at 1.8 percent year-on-year

Eurozone inflation rose to an annual rate of 1.8 percent in January, the European Union statistics agency said on Wednesday confirming its earlier estimates.

On a monthly basis, consumer prices in the 19-country currency bloc went down by 0.8 percent, confirming market expectations.

Stripped of the volatile components of energy and unprocessed food, an indicator closely watched by the European Central Bank, the annual inflation rate in January was 0.9 percent, confirming Eurostat's earlier estimate and the market consensus.

The rise of annual inflation was mostly driven by energy prices which increased by 8.1 percent in January year-on-year, jumping from a 2.6 percent annualized increase in December. *(Source: Reuters)*

## BOJ's Kuroda: Chance of more rate cuts small for now, growth picking up

Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda said on Wednesday the chance the central bank will deepen negative interest rates is low for now, backing market expectations that no additional monetary easing is forthcoming in the near future.

Kuroda said Japan's economic growth was accelerating and keeping inflation on track to hit the BOJ's 2 percent target during the fiscal year ending in March 2019, in line with its latest quarterly forecasts made in November.

"The BOJ of course stands ready to ease further if needed to achieve its 2 percent inflation target," the central bank chief told parliament.

"With economic growth accelerating, however, the chance of deepening negative rates is low," he said, when asked about the pain the BOJ's policy is inflicting on regional banks' profits.

Kuroda also dismissed the view that the BOJ could raise its yield targets if Japanese long-term rates their global counterparts higher, driven by expectations of steady rate hikes by the U.S. Federal Reserve.

"There's still some distance to our 2 percent inflation target, so it's necessary to maintain powerful monetary easing to achieve the target at the earliest date possible," he said.

A Reuters poll showed economists were largely split on the BOJ's next policy move as fewer of them now expect more monetary stimulus in Japan, signaling a possible turning point in expectations for its easing cycle.

The BOJ revamped its policy framework in September last year to one better suited for a long-term battle with deflation, after three years of aggressive asset purchases failed to accelerate inflation to 2 percent.

Under the current framework, the central bank pledges to guide short-term interest rates at minus 0.1 percent and the 10-year government bond yield around zero percent.

The negative rate policy and the BOJ's aggressive money printing have drawn criticism from financial institutions for narrowing their margins and drying up bond market liquidity.

While the BOJ already holds roughly 40 percent of the entire Japanese government bond market, Kuroda said he saw no signs market liquidity was diminishing.

"I don't think we will face difficulty buying bonds to achieve our yield curve control policy," he said.

*(Source: Reuters)*

# Tehran, Bishkek ink MOU on reduction of rail transport tariffs

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran and d e s k Kyrgyzstan signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on reducing rail transport tariffs between the two countries, IRNA reported citing the Public Relations Department of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (IRIR).

The MOU was signed on Tuesday by Ebrahim Mohammadi, the deputy director of IRIR for operation and traffic and Arman Sultanov, the deputy president of Kyrgyz Railway (KTJ) for development affairs.

In late December 2016, Iran and Kyrgyzstan signed a document setting the

roadmap for a ten-year cooperation.

The document was signed as President Rouhani along with a number of his ministers, aides, businesspersons made a trip to Bishkek.

During Rouhani's stay in Kyrgyzstan, five cooperation documents were signed between the two countries.

The documents were in the fields of telecommunication and information technology, fighting drug smuggling, cultural and art exchange program, health and medical equipment, and a memorandum of understanding in social field.

In a joint press conference with Kyr-

## Mexican central bank to provide some \$20b in currency hedges to aid Peso

The Central Bank of Mexico will provide up to \$20 billion in currency hedges to aid the national currency that has seriously depreciated over the last months, the bank said in a statement.

Mexico's President Enrique Pena Nieto and Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump end their joint statement at Los Pinos, the presidential official residence, in Mexico City.

According to the statement, the Central Bank was instructed to launch the liquid exchange program, amounting for some \$20 billion, which would cover exchange risks,

without resorting to the international reserves.

The bank's statement already led to the growth of the Mexican peso exchange rate, with the currency gaining 1.18 percent against the U.S. dollar.

The Mexican peso has fallen to record lows since last year. In early January, the exchange rate of peso against the U.S. dollar renewed its historical minimum on in the wake of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's statements that the country would proceed with the construction of a wall on the border with Mexico.

*(Source: Sputnik)*

## OPEC cuts, weak freight rates help traders profit on Asia crude routes

1 →

"OPEC production cuts... created distortions in the Asian crude market, changing global trade patterns," BMI Research said in a note to clients.

### ■ OPEC cedes market share

Helping fill the OPEC gap, crude shipments to Asia from the United States, Britain, Brazil, and even war-torn Libya jumped to over 35 million barrels in February, or 1.26 million bpd, from 10.4 million barrels in October, or 336,000 bpd, the data shows.

For OPEC, which typically meets around 70 percent of Asia's oil demand, that means a 5 percent loss of market share since October.

"Under current oil market conditions, OPEC risks losing market share with further production cuts," said Carole Nakhle, director of advisory firm Crystol Energy in London.

Although OPEC's relationship with customers in Asia tends to be good, refiners in North Asia's consumer hubs of Japan, China, and South Korea say they will readily turn to other suppliers

in order to meet their needs.

Loading schedules show U.S. crude exports to Asia increased to more than 3.5 million barrels this month - including a first U.S. oil cargo delivery to India - from below 1 million in October. UK shipments have jumped to more than 10.5 million barrels from just 1.6 million.

Shipments to Asia from Brazil have hit a record 16.7 million barrels in February, up from 6.9 million in October, and Libya, an OPEC-member exempted from the cuts, doubled its Asia shipments to 2 million barrels last month.

Shipping schedules show the trend continuing into March.

BMI said the OPEC cuts, especially of medium and sour crude grades, were "providing opportunities for (similar)... Mediterranean crudes to flow into the Asian market," which include Libyan oil.

### ■ Will the arb last?

One of the first major long-haul shipments to Asia in this round of arbitrage trading was by BP, which late last year used more than half a dozen



gyz President Almazbek Atambayev at the time Rouhani said a new chapter has been opened in relations.

Atambayev, for his part, said that Rouhani's trip to Bishkek was a great step in expanding relations.

## German business morale brightens despite political risks

German business morale brightened unexpectedly in February as managers' assessment of their business situation reached its highest level in more than five years, supporting expectations that Europe's biggest economy got a robust start in 2017.

The figures, published by the Ifo institute on Wednesday, were another sign that growth in the euro zone is picking up despite increased political risks, such as France's coming election and uncertainty about the trade policies of U.S. President Donald Trump.

"It seems the protectionist plans of Trump can't unsettle companies in the

long term," Bankhaus Lampe economist Alexander Krueger said, adding that the Ifo index pointed to strong economic growth in the first quarter.

The Munich-based Ifo institute said its business climate index, based on a monthly survey of some 7,000 companies, rose to 111.0 from an upwardly revised reading of 109.9 in January. That beat the Reuters consensus forecast for a dip to 109.6.

That assessment of the current business situation reached its highest level since August 2011. Companies also expressed greater optimism about the months ahead. *(Source: Reuters)*



tankers to ship almost 3 million barrels of U.S. crude as far as 30,000 km (18,641 miles) to Australia, Thailand and Japan.

In similar deals, Unipet and Trafigura have shipped U.S. oil from the Gulf of Mexico to China.

Shippers of North Sea crude to Asia have included Vitol, Mercuria, Trafigura, Glencore, Shell, Unipet and Socar.

The main exporter from Brazil has been state-owned Petrobras, shipping data shows, with traders say-

ing its crude has replaced oil from OPEC-member Angola.

Oystein Berentsen, managing director for crude oil trader Strong Petroleum in Singapore, said arbitrage for North Sea and U.S. oil to Asia has been possible due to the OPEC-led cuts, and these routes "may continue depending on freight and price spreads."

Benchmark Middle-East to Japan freight rates for supertankers (VLCC) are at 71 points on a so-called World-scale rate based on 100, compared to a long-term average rate of around 76 over the last 10 years.

"The whole reason arb opportunities are there is because of weak freight," said Matt Stanley, a fuel broker at Freight Investor Services in Dubai.

It's not clear how long this arb window will remain open.

Strong Petroleum's Berentsen said that despite the OPEC cuts "there is still oversupply, but the market will probably balance in the third quarter. Then we'll see if the arb still works."

*(Source: Reuters)*

## IMF eyes Islamic finance stability, warns of hybrid risks

The International Monetary Fund plans to formally include Islamic finance into its surveillance framework, a nod to the fast-growing sector but noting risks posed by complex hybrid products that replicate conventional ones.

The IMF's executive board said it had adopted a set of proposals on the role it should play in Islamic finance, including providing policy advice as requests for technical assistance from national regulators grows.

Islamic finance, which bans interest payments and pure monetary speculation, is estimated to have over \$2 trillion of assets globally with around \$1.3 trillion held by Islamic commercial banks.

The sector is now systemically important in 14 countries, accounting for over 15 percent of total financial assets, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates.

The IMF said there has been significant progress in developing prudential standards for the sector, but gaps remain in areas such as deposit insurance and liquidity management.



A lack of high quality liquid assets, in particular sovereign Islamic bonds, have undermined Islamic banks' capacity to manage liquidity, interact with central banks, and develop money markets, the IMF said.

"This situation has given rise to Islamic banking

practices that may achieve some liquidity management objectives but are inefficient and present risks."

A main concern rests with hybrid instruments like murabaha, a widely used cost-plus-profit arrangement, because these often mimic conventional loans which then expose Islamic banks to liquidity, market and even interest rate risks.

Such practices straddle the line between conventional and Islamic banking regulations, creating potential complex new risks and heightened financial stability concerns, the IMF said.

This stands at odds with the interest-free concept that Islamic finance extols, partly due to inconsistent regulation which has restricted the development of profit-and-loss sharing contracts.

The IMF wants to encourage more consistency among countries in applying Islamic finance rules and plans to develop a guidance note on Islamic banking.

It will also incorporate a standard on Islamic finance regulation issued by the Malaysia-based Islamic Financial Services Board during the 2018 financial year. *(Source: Reuters)*

## Oil slips but close to multi-week highs

cord 903 million barrels of oil.

The combined net long position has a notional valuation of more than \$49 billion.

"While net length in Nymex crude has grown more or less uninterrupted since the OPEC cut decision toward the end of last year, its share of total open interest in the contract has now reached the highest level since July 2014, back when WTI was trading in triple digits.

Both OPEC's Barkindo and Goldman Sachs, according to a new research note to clients, expect global inventories to fall, which would boost prices.

Goldman Sachs, however, noted that a rebound in U.S. drilling activity had exceeded even its own above-consensus expectations.

"While the reduction in supplies out of core OPEC in the Persian Gulf and Russia has exceeded our and consensus expectations, the market is starting to doubt that this will be sufficient to translate into large oil inventory draws by 2Q17," it said in a research note.

In the meantime, crude oil inventory data from the United States will potentially guide the markets for the rest of the week.

*(Source: Reuters)*



# OPEC chief sees higher compliance with oil cut, says confidence returning

OPEC and outside producers including Russia will boost compliance with agreed oil output curbs in a bid to clear a supply glut that has weighed on prices, the group's secretary general said on Tuesday.

OPEC Secretary General Mohammad Barkindo also said he was "cautiously optimistic" on the outlook for the oil market, almost two months into the group's supply cut deal with Russia and other producers.

"Confidence has returned to this market," he said at a news conference at Energy Institute's IP Week, an annual gathering of the oil trading industry in London. "It's work in progress, but the trend I think has commenced."

Oil prices rose after the comments, trading above \$57 a barrel in London. Crude, while up from the low \$30s a year ago, is still half its level of mid-2014 because of a persistent supply glut.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is curbing its output by about 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) from Jan. 1, the first cut in eight years. Russia and 10 other non-OPEC producers agreed to cut half as much.

Barkindo said that the production data for January in OPEC's most recent monthly report showed conformity from participating OPEC nations with agreed output curbs above 90 percent.

"All countries involved remain resolute in the determination to achieve a higher level of conformity," he said in a speech.

Russia and the other outside producers have so far delivered a smaller percentage, but Barkindo told reporters this would increase.

"You have to give them the benefit of the doubt in the initial stages," he said, explaining that voluntary output restraint is a new activity for the outside producers.

"I am confident that the non-OPEC will also raise



their level of conformity to bring it at par with OPEC."

## ■ Premature to talk of news steps

He said it was too early to say if the supply cut, which lasts for six months from Jan. 1, would need to be extended or deepened at the next OPEC meeting in May.

"I think it will be very premature," he told reporters. "The market is so dynamic it is becoming increasingly challenging for even professional forecasters."

OPEC sources last week said extending or deepening the cut was a possibility if stocks do not fall.

Barkindo said that oil inventories were expected to decline this year.

"It is expected that we will see a further drop during 2017," he said. "We will continue to focus on the level of inventory drawdown to bring the level closer to the five-year industry average." (Source: Reuters)

## Goldman says global crude stocks likely to keep falling

Goldman Sachs expects global crude oil inventories to keep falling due to production cuts and strong growth in demand, although stocks are likely to rise in the United States.

"We do not view the recent U.S. builds as derailing our forecast for a gradual draw in inventories, with in fact the rest of the world already showing signs of tightness," analysts at the bank said in a note dated Feb. 21.

"Given our unchanged 1.5 million barrels per day growth forecast for 2017, this higher base demand level should fully offset higher U.S. output."

The Wall Street bank reiterated its forecast for Brent and U.S. crude prices to rise to \$59 and \$57.50 per barrel respectively in the second quarter, before dropping to \$57 and \$55 for the rest of 2017.

Oil prices held near multi-week highs on Wednesday, with the U.S. West Texas

Intermediate April crude contract up 18 cents at \$54.51 a barrel at 0228 GMT, while Brent crude was up 24 cents at \$56.90.

Surging U.S. output has pushed crude and gasoline inventories to record highs, keeping a lid on prices after they climbed following an agreement by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers to cut output by about 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd).

"While the production cuts have so far

reached a historically high level of compliance at 90 percent, the rebound in U.S. drilling activity has exceeded even our above consensus expectations," Goldman said.

However, the increase in U.S. drilling points to factors including further improvement in shale productivity and funding for the industry, rather than expectations of an increase in prices, the bank said.

(Source: Reuters)

## U.S. oil holds near seven-week high; OPEC upbeat on output curbs

Oil prices held near multi-week highs on Wednesday after OPEC signaled optimism over its deal with other producers to curb output to clear a glut that has weighed on markets since 2014.

The U.S. West Texas Intermediate April crude contract, the new front-month future, was up 16 cents, or 0.3 percent, at \$54.49 a barrel at 0552 GMT. On Tuesday, the March contract expired up 1.2 percent after reaching its highest since Jan. 3.

Brent crude was up 23 cents, or 0.4 percent, at \$56.89, having touched its highest since Feb. 2 at \$57.31 in the previous session.

The data is set to be released on Thursday, a day later than normal, following a U.S. public holiday on Monday.

Last week's numbers showed U.S. output helped boost crude and gasoline inventories to record highs, amid faltering demand growth for the motor fuel.

That has kept a lid on prices after they climbed following an agreement by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other producers to cut output by about 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd).

Goldman Sachs, however, noted that a rebound in U.S. drilling activity had exceeded even its own above-consensus expectations. (Source: CNBC)

## Saudi Aramco weighs offering citizens discounted shares

Saudi Arabian Oil Co., gearing up for what may be the world's biggest initial public offering, is considering offering discounted shares to the kingdom's locals, according to people familiar with the matter.

The oil company has discussed methods to structure the sale so that retail investors in Saudi Arabia can buy shares for less than those buying on international exchanges, the people said, asking not to be identified as the information is private. Aramco, as the company is known, is considering listing venues in the U.S., UK and Asia, in addition to Riyadh, and is planning to choose local banks to advise on the Saudi listing, the people said.

No final decisions have been made on the share pricing or listing venue, they said. An Aramco spokesman said the company doesn't comment on rumors or speculation.

Saudi Arabia plans to sell shares in the company as part of plans by Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to set up the world's biggest sovereign wealth fund and reduce the economy's reliance on hydrocarbons. The sale could value Aramco at more than \$2 trillion, Bin Salman said in an interview with Bloomberg. (Source: Bloomberg)

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# A nation of immigrants enters dark chapter

By Raul A. Reyes

The deportation force is here. According to new Department of Homeland Security (DHS) memos, the Trump administration plans to vastly expand the pool of undocumented immigrants in the United States who will be targeted for removal.

Virtually everyone who is in the country without documentation is now eligible for deportation, and some in an expedited fashion. These memos, signed by DHS Secretary John Kelly, were rolled out on Tuesday.

There are two memos at issue here; one dealing with interior immigration enforcement, and the other with border security. They provide a scary picture of what life will soon look like for the estimated 11 million undocumented men, women, and children who live among us. But Trump's deportations won't necessarily make us safer, let alone "great again." Instead they are a mixture of harsh new policies and questionable ideas from the past.

The most important thing to know about Trump's deportation force is that they will be going after everyone they can.

Although the President likened the recent round of immigration raids to those carried out under Obama, these new memos specifically throw out Obama's 2014 deportation priorities, which were national security threats, dangerous criminals, and recent arrivals.

Now immigration agents can go after any undocumented person convicted of a crime, charged with a crime, or who an agent believes has committed a chargeable offense. While this may sound appealing to some, it defies law enforcement logic. With agents wasting time and resources going after undocumented moms, dads, and neighbors, it becomes easier for undocumented gang members, traffickers, and violent criminals to evade detection.

And what happens to DACA recipients -- those brought to this country illegally as children and granted temporary deportation relief since 2012 under Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy? Trump recently said that he wants to deal with their situation "with heart." He said that their situation is a "very difficult thing for me as I love these kids, I love these kids."

Really? While the immigration enforcement memo leaves DACA in place for now, a footnote states that it will



be addressed in the future. Moreover, the immigration enforcement memo notes that "The Department will no longer exempt classes or categories of removable aliens from potential enforcement." Taken together, this amounts to a chilling ambiguity for the 740,000 recipients of DACA. So despite Trump's expression of empathy, his memos say otherwise. At best, they tell these young people that immigration agents will deal with them later.

The immigration enforcement memo outlines plans to expand the use of local law enforcement partnerships in fighting illegal immigration. If you think this sounds like a good idea, think again. These partnerships, known as 287(g) programs, were wisely phased out by the Obama

administration because they did not work.

Deputizing local police and sheriffs to serve as immigration agents can lead to racial profiling and civil rights violations. It pulls them away from the real job of protecting their communities from crime.

#### ■ Federal responsibility

It directs local moneys to immigration enforcement action, which is a federal responsibility. Worse, it creates fear and mistrust of all law enforcement agencies among the immigrant community, which means that people will not come forward as witnesses to violent crime, as domestic abuse victims, or to report child abuse.

The 287(g) programs also create the potential for local

jurisdictions to run amok -- the most infamous example being Arizona's Sheriff Joe Arpaio, recently defeated in a reelection bid, who was found by the Justice Department to have engaged in widespread constitutional violations.

Arpaio's immigration enforcement squads were known to respond to complaints about Spanish speakers, or people with dark skin. His jails humiliated detainees, and punished them for failing to understand English. Last year, a federal court found him in contempt for refusing to stop racially profiling Latinos in his immigration sweeps.

The border security memo is equally harsh. It throws out special protections for undocumented family members of those on active duty military. It makes it harder for asylum seekers to make their case -- as if the thousands of women and children fleeing Central American countries for their lives were trying to game the U.S. immigration system.

The border security memo also advocates for an expansion of "expedited removals," a rushed process whereby people are deported without going before a judge. This would trample on the due process rights of undocumented immigrants -- protection they are guaranteed under the Constitution.

It is true that Trump's successful presidential campaign was centered on the mean-spirited idea that all undocumented immigrants "have to go," and he is now poised to make good on that promise. Yet most Americans did not vote for Trump, and most Americans do not favor mass deportations. A PRRI poll found that 79% of Americans favor a path to citizenship or legalization for the undocumented, while only 16% favor deportations.

What's more, when immigration enforcement ramps up, mistakes happen. A University of California, Berkeley study found that between 2008 and 2011, 3,600 U.S. citizens were arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) through the Secure Communities program -- a program Trump is bringing back. Sadly, what Trump does not realize is that we don't necessarily need more immigration enforcement; we need better immigration enforcement.

Trump's immigration policies offer a troubling view of what lies ahead for immigrant families and their allies. For Latinos, this may mean a greater threat of racial profiling and the risk of being mistakenly caught up in enforcement actions. For all Americans, it marks a dark, disturbing chapter in our history as a nation of immigrants.

(Source: CNN)

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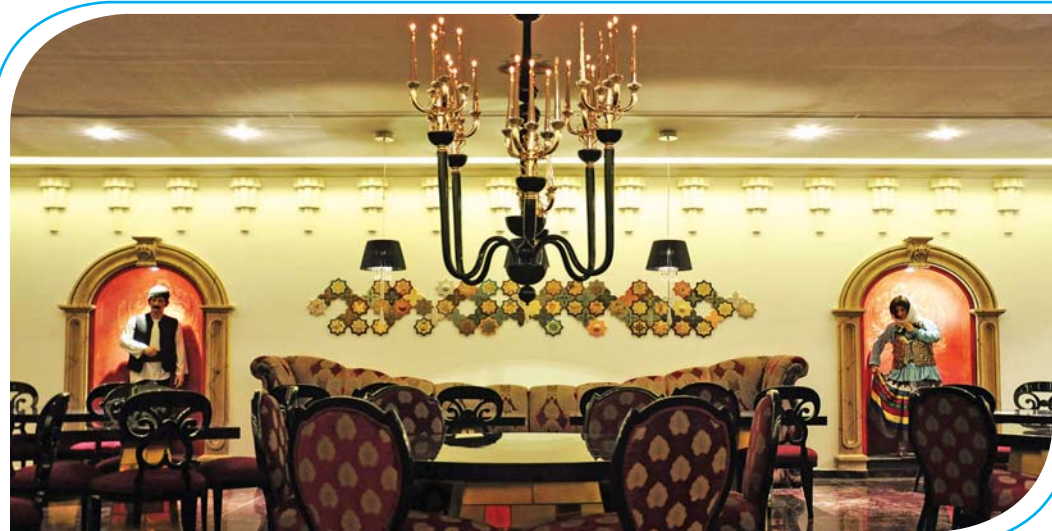


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## INTERVIEW

By Marjoun Sheikh

In an exclusive interview with Tehran Times, American political analyst Conn Hallinan stressed the effectiveness of a successful international boycott that would isolate Israel and move the Palestinian agenda forward.

Tehran hosted for two days the 6th International Conference on Palestinian Intifada on 21-22 February, 2017. Over 500 foreign guests representing 80 countries attended the event, with speeches from high-ranking officials such as Lebanese, Omani, and Malaysian parliament speakers in support of the Palestinian cause that has been regrettably pushed to the margins by the regional and international community in the past few years.

Palestine has gone through three Intifadas (Palestinian uprisings against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza) already. The first, known as Rock Intifada, dates back to 1987, which was driven by harsh economic, political, social and security pressures imposed by the Israeli regime on Palestine and was triggered after an Israeli truck driver ran over a group of Palestinian workers on December 9, 1987 in Gaza and caused Palestinians' anger and frustration at their dire situation to erupt. The first Intifada lasted for six years before it resulted in the Oslo accord.

The second Intifada, known as Al-Aqsa Intifada, began in 2000 after he then Israeli Minister of Settlement, Ariel Sharon, trespassed the al-Aqsa Mosque compound and declared the Oslo accord as over. The second Intifada which drew in support of Arab and Islamic states for the Palestinian cause continued until 2005 when Israel retreated from the Gaza Strip.

The third Intifada, known as Quds Intifada, erupted in October 2015 and has continued to date. Palestinians became exceedingly concerned as their cause was marginalized in the chaos after ISIL and as Arab states started to normalize relations with Israel. Meanwhile, the Israeli regime continued to expand settlements on the West Bank, intensified the siege on Gaza, and gained further support from the West for its policies. The situation started to look bleak and despairing for Palestinians who were in great need of putting their cause back on the forefront of international agenda. Tehran's conference in support of Palestine's resistance against Israeli occupation was an attempt to make the Palestinian cause relevant again.

On this occasion, Tehran Times reached out to Conn M. Hallinan, a columnist for Foreign Policy In Focus, who is of the firm opinion that the two-state solution in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is already a lost cause and the only viable way to hold Israel back from its aggressive moves against Palestine and advance the Palestinian agenda is a "successful international boycott" that would isolate and damage Israel.

The following is our interview with Mr. Hallinan who shared his views with us on the Palestinian situation, the unpredictability of Trump's foreign policy, and the need for an international boycotting campaign against Israel as the only way that could prevent the regime's advancing occupation and political and economic pressures against Palestinians:

**■ What is your take on last Wednesday's joint press conference of U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu? Where exactly does Donald Trump stand on Israel-Palestine conflict?**

It is hard to figure out exactly what Trump's foreign policy is going to be like. He started off threatening China, pledging to dump the nuclear pact with Iran, and applauding the potential breakup of the European Union. He has since modified those stands, although his hostility to Iran is worrisome. Trump says

# International boycott of Israel only viable way to advance Palestinian cause



**Trump's backing of the two-state solution is all smoke and mirrors.**

he backs the two state solution, but then so does Netanyahu and we know he doesn't. The Israeli prime minister says what he does because he knows that is what the rest of the world wants, and what a majority of Americans support. But it is all smoke and mirrors. The problem with Trump is that he is deeply ignorant on foreign policy and has the attention span of a gnat. Trump is impossible to figure out because he just shoots his mouth off. But while I don't think Trump is going to abandon the two-state solution, I also don't think that he will push the Israelis on it.

**■ How probable or improbable is a two-state solution in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process? Can this really help the Palestinian issue, and if not what are other alternatives that could?**

The two-state solution is deeply damaged,

maybe fatally. The settlements have cut up the West Bank into a series of cantons – more like Bantustans in the old apartheid South Africa – and I just can't envision how such a state could exist independently. The problem is that if it doesn't happen, then the Palestinians will continue to live under military occupation. The Israelis are moving toward a one-state solution that would mean one of two things: either the expulsion of the Palestinians to Jordan, or an openly apartheid regime with the Palestinians as second-class citizens. My own feeling is that there should be a viable Palestinian state, which will require removing many of the settlements, a divided Jerusalem, and some kind of compensation (which the international community can help with). Or one secular one state. The latter may be best, but I am not convinced that the Palestinians want

**Every international action against Israel makes a difference.**



**US embassy relocation to Jerusalem will isolate US and Israel internationally.**

**There should be either a viable Palestinian state or one secular one state.**

to live with the Israelis. The occupation has – is – brutal.

**■ There is this growing concern among Palestinians that Trump's administration is going to endorse Israeli settlement program and the move of U.S. embassy to Jerusalem. How would the embassy relocation impact the situation for Palestine, Israel and the U.S.?**

If the Palestinians lose Jerusalem, they lose 60 percent of their economy and that is a killer. Trump has made mild – very, very mild – protests about the settlements and doesn't seem to be in a hurry to move the embassy. If he does, Israel and the U.S. will find themselves isolated internationally, and the Israelis do fear that. A successful international boycott would severely damage Israel.

found out what every common sense person knows, that there are two places you don't want to invade: Yemen and Afghanistan.

I would also point out that most Arab countries did very little for the Palestinians besides make speeches.

**■ Tehran is hosting a two-day international conference on Palestine in a show of solidarity with the oppressed nation in the face of Israel occupation. How do you assess the overall impact of such events on improving Palestine's situation?**

The most effective way to move the Palestinian agenda forward is through international pressure, in particular the boycott campaign. Israel should be treated the same way South Africa was and isolated internationally.



The Europeans have already dealt Tel Aviv some serious blows. But again, if Jerusalem is not split between the two parties there is no possibility of a viable Palestinian state.

**■ Why Palestine is no longer the foremost issue of the Muslim community? How come certain Arab countries are not supportive of the Palestinian cause and instead seek to normalize relations with Israel?**

Part of the problem is that the U.S. has successfully destroyed Libya and Iraq, and smashed up Syria. The only really independent voice in the Middle East these days is Iran, and to a certain extent, Turkey (although Turkey shares much of the responsibility for the Syrian war). The [Persian] Gulf monarchs are looking nervously over their shoulders at their own people. Saudi Arabia is a mess economically and it is in the middle of a disastrous intervention in Yemen. The U.S. and Israel are their natural allies, since the last thing either wants are independent voices in the Middle East. I have never thought this was about religion, but rather religion as a metaphor for power and control. The attacks on the Shias may take the form of religious strife, but it is really aimed at keeping Iraq and Syria divided and Iran marginalized. Egypt depends upon Saudi Arabia to keep it afloat, so it will support whatever the Saudis do, except something really stupid, like invading Yemen. The Egyptians are too smart to get involved in that debacle, plus they tried that in the 1970s and

**■ Meanwhile, Paris recently hosted a Peace Conference on Palestine on Jan. 15, where top official representations from 70 countries attended expect for representatives from the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority. The conference was slammed by Netanyahu as futile while Palestine welcomed the multilateral approach. How do you evaluate the impact of this conference especially in the light of the EU's apparent friction with Trump's various stances?**

The EU is very important here. Europe has supported the Israeli occupation through weapons sales, economic aid, and trade. The EU is the largest trade group on the planet with the greatest Gross Domestic Product production in the world. If the EU follows through and takes on Israel's violation of international law, that could make a major difference. So my view is that every international action makes a difference.

Conn Hallinan is a Foreign Policy In Focus columnist living in Berkeley, California. He holds a PhD in Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley. He oversaw the journalism program at the University of California at Santa Cruz for 23 years, and won the UCSC Alumni Association's Distinguished Teaching Award, as well as UCSC's Innovations in Teaching Award, and Excellence in Teaching Award. He was also a college provost at UCSC, and retired in 2004. He is a winner of a Project Censored "Real News Award".

## Racing for Palestine: Film review

By Barbara Nimri Aziz

One hardly expects a story of political struggle to feature a team of intemperate young women racing their cars around a dusty, fenced-in track. But in a Palestinian context, everything is political. Even if the new film 'Speed Sisters' doesn't chronicle an explicit struggle, it's a portrait of a people whose determination will remind Israelis that resistance to their occupation is not moribund.

My January review of Ghada Karmi's memoir Return, points to inexorable expressions of what it means to be Palestinian, how memories of Palestine are inexhaustible. Surely a half century of pursuits by writers, journalists, artists, lawyers, and three generations of boys-with-stones testify to the compelling Palestinian narrative, propelled by the unquenchable energy of these people and the virtue of their mission.

Some stories are tragic, some heroic (and at the same time tragic), some little more than nostalgia, and others simply facts-on-the-ground. Some, like Return, are forlorn and, grudgingly, sadly honest.

Filmmaking too documents the unfolding, always unfolding, story of Palestine. There was The Wanted 18, Amer Shomali's 2014 animated Palestinian film told from the viewpoint of dairy cows deemed a threat to Israeli security. Elia Suleiman's productions (Chronicle of a Disappearance, Divine Intervention, The Time That Remains) are augmented by Nida Sinnokrot's documentary Palestine Blues, focusing on the destiny of a farm tractor. Mai Masri, director of nine films, continues a distinguished career with a new production, "3000 Nights", now opening in several US cities.

Veteran filmmaker Masri is joined by a notable new generation of mainly women, among them Pales-

tinians Annemarie Jacir (Salt of the Sea), and Cherien Dabis (Amreeka). Canadians Ruba Nadda (Cairo Time), and Nadine Labaki (Caramel and Where Do We Go Now?) are well established feature filmmakers. Among newcomers are Rola Nashef (Detroit Unleaded) and Amber Fares, director of Speed Sisters opening in New York this month. A new twist on the Palestinian experience, these 'speed sisters' are four feisty women and their team captain. They're race car drivers spinning and screeching their vehicles through courses in Bethlehem, Jericho, and their hometown Ramallah. In sync with these women, the film is a fast-paced, raucous adventure that follows their pride, their energy and their drive to win.

Fares sets her camera sometimes from within the women's vehicles, sometimes in the middle of the dusty course as the racer spins and roars around her, sometimes in her

home, sometimes among youths cheering her on from the bleachers, all this within sight of ubiquitous Israeli troops. (All spaces here are militarily occupied.)

Car racing started in Palestine in 2005 and women joined the sport hardly a year later. One can't help admiring these women. Each snaps on her helmet and grits her teeth, jaws set firmly on victory even against competing teammates. We have the firm impression that each knows what she's doing and knows what she wants. Director Fares interweaves raucous racing scenes into the women's encounters with military occupation—passing through checkpoints en route to Jerusalem, slipping away for a day at the beach near Tel Aviv, courting a tear gas attack when they playfully approach an Israeli patrol.

If we as viewers remove ourselves from the excitement of the chase and the energy of each racer's per-



sonality, we might ask: where could this thrilling hobby possibly lead, for the individual women, and for Palestinian political aspirations?

On her drive to Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem to pray, team captain Maysoon is assaulted by young boys selling balloons. In the mo-

ments when the camera catches their stubborn exchange with Maysoon, we can feel the boldness of those boys, the same resolve that infuses these women racers. Their life is really tough, and they won't give up. You don't want to mess with this crowd.



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# Foods that are good for your heart

By Shereen Lehman

## 1. Red apples

Eating a healthy diet with the right number of calories is one good way to take care of your heart. The American Heart Association suggests a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, poultry, fish, and nuts. That's great advice. So before you write up your next grocery list, take a look at some of our favorite heart-healthy foods.

Apples contain a phytochemical called quercetin which acts as a natural anti-inflammatory agent and may help prevent blood clots as well. Apples contain vitamins and fiber, come in several delicious varieties and are portable. Eat an apple with a handful of walnuts or almonds as a healthy snack or add sliced apple to your salad.

## 2. Avocados

Avocados are rich in monounsaturated fatty acids, just like olive oil, plus they're loaded with vitamins and phytochemicals that work as antioxidants to protect your heart (and other parts of your body).

## 3. Green leafy vegetables

Green leafy vegetables are rich in vitamins, minerals and fiber, plus they're low in calories. Eating green leafy vegetables has also been associated with better retention of memory as you age. Use fresh spinach leaves as a salad green or serve Swiss chard or kale as a side dish. Munch on fresh broccoli with a veggie dip at snack time.

## 4. Oats

Oats contain a soluble fiber called beta glucan that helps reduce total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol. Soluble fiber also helps keep your digestive system healthy. Enjoy oatmeal with just a small amount of brown sugar and plenty of strawberries and walnuts for breakfast. Cold cereals made with oats are also good for you—just be sure to choose brands that don't contain extra sugar.

## 5. Olive oil

Olive oil reduces your risk of heart disease by lowering your LDL cho-



lesterol levels, and it's an essential component of a Mediterranean diet. Choose olive oil for cooking or make an excellent dip for whole grain bread by pouring a bit of olive oil in a small bowl and add a bit of balsamic vinegar and a sprinkle of oregano.

## 6. Salmon

Salmon is an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids that protect your heart by reducing both inflammation and the risk of blood clots. These fats also work to keep your cholesterol levels healthy. Eat salmon or another oily ocean fish like tuna, sardines, or herring at least twice weekly. For a heart-healthy meal, try grilled salmon steaks with a green vegetable and a side salad with a sprinkling of lemon juice instead of high-calorie salad dressing.

## 7. Soy and soy foods

Soy protein may prevent heart at-

tacks, especially if it's used as a substitute for red meat. Consuming soy instead of meat will also reduce your saturated fat intake and up your omega-3 fatty acids. Add tofu to your favorite stir fry or pour soy milk on your morning cereal.

## 8. Tomatoes and tomato products

Tomatoes are packed with vitamins, and concentrated tomato products are high in lycopene. Adding lycopene to your diet may help protect your heart, especially if your current diet isn't giving you all the antioxidants you need. So add a couple of thick slices of tomatoes to sandwiches and salads or enjoy a tomato-based sauce on whole wheat pasta.

## 9. Walnuts

Most nuts contain monounsaturated fats, vitamin E, and other natural

substances that help keep cholesterol levels in check. Walnuts are special because they're also a good source of plant-based omega-3 fatty acids. Walnuts make a great snack with a piece of fruit. For breakfast, sprinkle some chopped walnuts on top of a bowl of warm oatmeal along with a little honey or blueberries.

## 10. Whole grains

Whole grains provide vitamins, minerals, and fiber that will help to keep your heart healthy and lower LDL-cholesterol and triglycerides. Make a sandwich with two slices of 100-percent whole-grain bread, three ounces of lean turkey breast, lots of sliced tomatoes and avocado, plus lettuce and a bit of mustard. You can also switch from white pasta to whole grain pasta.

(Source: verywell.com)

## Not just for women: Kegel exercises good for men too

By Matthew Solan

Most exercises are considered gender neutral. Except for kegels — those exercises that strengthen pelvic floor muscles. They have long been tagged as "just for women," but older men may be wise to reconsider as they can help with some common unpleasant tries that can come with age. "Men can also have issues with these muscles, which can cause urinary leakage, bowel issues, and even erection problems," says physical therapist Celia Brunette with Harvard-affiliated Spaulding Rehabilitation Center.

## What is the pelvic floor?

Your pelvic floor area is made up of thin layers of muscle and tissues that stretch like a sling from your tailbone to your pubic bone. It does a lot every day. The muscles' primary job is to support the abdomen, bladder, and colon, and help with urine and bowel movements. Problems can arise when pelvic floor

muscles become too weak or too tight. Weakness can happen because of age, as with other muscles, but other causes include bladder, bowel, or prostate surgery, constipation, and chronic coughing from conditions like asthma, bronchitis, or smoking. Weak pelvic floor muscles can lead to stress incontinence where urine leaks when you cough, sneeze, or are participating in an activity like lifting something heavy or even hitting a golf or tennis ball.

On the other end, tight pelvic floor muscles can result from prolonged sitting, general muscle tension and stress, and even musculoskeletal problems with your back and hips. A tense pelvic floor is like trying to open your fist after keeping it clenched all day. "It would be very hard to relax your grip, and you

would lose function of your hand," says Brunette.

These tight muscles often can trigger pelvic pain, urgent and frequent needs to urinate, leakage, incomplete emptying, or straining during bowel movements. You also may suffer from sudden pain in your low back, hips, or genital area.

## How kegels work

"Pelvic floor muscles are treated like with other muscles," says Brunette. "If you strain your back, you massage and stretch the muscles to get them healthy. The same approach applies here." Kegels can be performed while lying down, sitting, or standing, and unlike other exercises, the movements and sensations are subtle. Imagine how you would stop the flow or urine, or to hold back gas.

The goal with kegels is to contract and hold only those muscles and not rely on other muscles like the abdomen or buttocks.

## Don't go it alone

Brunette says you should not try kegels on your own at first because if not performed correctly, the exercises could make muscles worse, or not help at all.

Talk with your doctor to make sure there are no medical issues related to your symptoms, such as prostate problems or a urinary tract infection. If your doctor recommends kegels, he or she can direct you to a physical therapist who can evaluate your needs and design an individual program. A typical routine consists of a set amount of "hold" time, followed by adequate rest between reps. "The therapist teaches you how to perform the kegels and draws up a schedule to follow in terms of number of repetitions and sets, so you can then do them at home," says Brunette.

(Source: health.harvard.edu)

**The goal with kegels is to contract and hold only those muscles and not rely on other muscles like the abdomen or buttocks.**

## Depression puts psoriasis patients at significantly greater risk of psoriatic arthritis

Psoriasis is a lifelong disease that is associated with significant cosmetic and physical disability and puts patients at increased risk for many major medical disorders. A multidisciplinary team of researchers at the University of Calgary, Canada, have found that psoriasis patients who developed depression were at a 37% greater risk of subsequently developing psoriatic arthritis, compared with psoriasis patients who did not develop depression. Their findings are published in the Journal of Investigative Dermatology.

Psoriasis is a long-lasting inflammatory skin disease characterized by red, itchy, and scaly patches of skin. Approximately 8.5% of psoriasis patients have psoriatic arthritis, which is characterized by psoriasis plus inflammation of and around the joints.

## Earlier detection

"For many years, the rheumatology and dermatology communities have been trying to understand which patients with psoriasis go on to develop psoriatic arthritis and how we might detect it earlier in the disease course," explained senior investigator Cheryl Barnabe, MD, MSc, of the McCaig Institute for Bone and Joint Health and the O'Brien Institute for Public Health, Cumming School of Medicine, at the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada.



Depression is common among patients with psoriasis. Based on recent laboratory work demonstrating that major depressive disorder is associated with increased systemic inflammation, the team of researchers hypothesized that psoriasis patients who develop depression are at increased risk of subsequently developing psoriatic arthritis.

Investigators used The Health Improvement Network (THIN), a primary care medical records database in the United Kingdom, to identify over 70,000 patients with a new diagnosis of psoriasis. Through follow-up records, they identified individuals who subsequently developed depression and those who developed psoriatic arthritis. Patients were followed for up to 25 years or until they developed psoriatic arthritis.

Statistical analysis showed that patients with psoriasis who developed major depressive disorder were at 37% greater risk of subsequently developing psoriatic arthritis compared with patients who did not develop depression, even after accounting for numerous other factors such as age and use of alcohol.

## Patients with psoriasis

The study highlights the need for physicians to manage patients with psoriasis to identify and address depression. This could include rapid, effective treatment of psoriasis and psychosocial management of the cosmetic burden of psoriasis. The study also draws into question the biological mechanisms by which depression increases the risk for developing psoriatic arthritis. These mechanisms may include altered systemic inflammation as a consequence of depression, or even the role of lifestyle behaviors such as physical activity or nutrition, which are typically worsened by depression, and which may place an individual at risk for psoriatic arthritis.

"There is a tendency to think of depression as a purely 'psychological' or 'emotional' issue, but it also has physical effects and changes in inflammatory and immune markers have been reported in depressed people," commented Scott Patten, MD, Ph.D., the O'Brien Institute for Public Health, Hotchkiss Brain Institute and Mathison Centre for Mental Health Research and Education, Cumming School of Medicine. "Depression may be a risk factor for a variety of chronic conditions and this research is an example of how big data approaches can identify these associations."

(Source: EurekAlert)

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## Tehran eyes tourist boost during Norouz

**TOURISM TEHRAN** — Tehran, embracing plenty of **d e s k** historical sites, museums and art galleries, is expected to draw more visitors during Norouz celebration, the Iranian New Year starting March 21.



A view of Tehran with snow-clad Alborz mountain range in the foreground

Up to 40% discounts for its hotels, less traffic and clear spring weather are amongst the compelling reasons behind.

Initiated by the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, the discount program pursues boost in arrivals during Norouz whilst the city grows quiet, the air becomes clean and traffic virtually becomes non-existent.

“Tehran hotels will offer up to 40% discounts during Norouz [March 21 - April 2],” said Mohammad Ali Farrokhmehr who heads the Association of Tehran Hotels and Hotel Apartments.

“Norouz is the best time to sightseeing in Tehran as it becomes much less crowded.”

According to the CHTHO, open-top double-decker buses would be added to Tehran transport fleet, offering unlimited hop-on, hop-off tours across the capital.

Every year, a large number of residents in Tehran set off journeys to benefit from a two-week-long school holiday.

## Paris says tourism is rebounding after a difficult 2016

**PARIS (AP)** — Tourism to Paris is showing signs of a revival after a yearlong slump attributed to deadly extremist attacks, violent labor protests, strikes and floods.

The biggest drop came in demand for Paris hotels from Chinese, Japanese, Russian and Italian tourists, according to 2016 figures released Tuesday by the Paris Île-de-France Regional Tourism Committee.

The Louvre Museum, Musee d’Orsay and Disneyland Paris saw visits drop between 9% and 13% last year and overall tourism-related revenue in the region fell more than 1 billion euros, or about 6%, according to the committee’s estimates.

Many potential Paris visitors were scared off by November 2015 attacks on cafes, a rock concert and the national stadium that killed 130 people.

However by the end of 2016, hotel reservations started rising again, the report said.

(Source: Travel Weekly)

## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Old walled city of Shibam

Surrounded by a fortified wall, the 16th-century city of Shibam in Yemen is one of the oldest and best examples of urban planning based on the principle of vertical construction.

Its impressive tower-like structures rise out of the cliff and have given the city the nickname of ‘the Manhattan of the desert’.

Located at an important caravan halt on the spice and incense route across the Southern Arabian plateau, the city of dwellings up to seven storeys high developed on a fortified, rectangular grid plan of streets and squares.

The city is built on a rocky spur several hundred meters above the wadi bed, and superseded an earlier settlement that was partly destroyed by a massive flood in 1532-3.



In the late 19th century, traders returning from Asia regenerated the walled city and since then development has expanded to the southern bank of the wadi forming a new suburb, al-Sahil.

The dense layout of Shibam surrounded by contiguous tower houses within the outer walls expressed an urban response to the need for refuge and protection by rival families, as well as their economic and political prestige.

The surrounding landscape of spate irrigated land which has been, and still is in agricultural use, constitutes an integrated economic system involving spate agriculture, mud generation and the use of mud for building construction that no longer exists elsewhere in the region.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Under visitors’ eyes: Centuries-old Zeinodin Caravanserai

**HERITAGE TEHRAN** — For some visitors to **d e s k** Iran staying at or even a short visit to a caravanserai seems to be a must. The 16th-century Zeinodin Caravanserai, which is tastefully renovated, is amongst such time-honored roadside inns.

The caravanserai is situated on the Silk Road which used to be the main trade route between Europe and Asia. The building accommodates over 50 tourists daily.

In earlier centuries, it was reached after a two-day camel ride from south of Yazd, about 60 kilometers on the main road to Kerman.

Nowadays, while traveling by cars the sole mudbrick structure can be missed it in the blink of an eye. Exquisitely laid out with cozy bedrooms around a central courtyard, the place can easily evoke feelings of living in the past.

One can imagine hustle and bustle of the merchants selling their goods, bargaining on prices and describing their long journey to one another while their quadrupeds chew on hay and stock up on needed water.

The earliest caravanserais in Persia were constructed in Achaemenid era (550–330 BC) largely for several economic and military purposes.

However, the golden age of caravanserais in the country dates back to Safavid period (1501–1736), paved the way for Iranian merchandise to be exported to European countries in the West and China and India in the East.

The term Caravanserai is derived from the word ‘caravan’ meaning group of passengers traveling together and ‘serai’ meaning house and place.

Here is a select of comments that visitors to the caravanserai have posted to TripAdvisor, one of the most popular travel websites in the world:

■ **‘A truly exotic stay!’**

This shouldn’t be seen as a stopover but as a destination in itself. There are no private bathrooms and the facilities are pretty basic. But the place is



An exterior view of the Zeinodin Caravanserai in southern Iran

## Permanent handicrafts marketplace opens in Khomeini Shahr

**HERITAGE TEHRAN** — A permanent **d e s k** handicrafts marketplace opened its doors to the public in the city of Khomeini Shahr, central Isfahan Province, on Tuesday, in line with policies that the government pursues to liven up traditional crafts skills.

The opening ceremony was attended by the province’s Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department Director Fereidoun Allahyari and Khomeini Shahr Governor Ahmad Rezvani, CHTO reported.

Named Naqsh-e Jahan, the three-story marketplace



An interior view of the 16th-century Zeinodin Caravanserai depicts bedrooms encircling a central courtyard.

right out of a movie set- except its real. The food is outstanding and make sure you get up early in the morning or in the evening to catch the sunrise and sunset. This place was one of the best experience I had in Iran. (Andy Pubah form Singapore; stayed May 2016)

■ **‘Great experience in the middle of nowhere’**

Simply amazing! Being a basic place, the place has all the things you need to a great experience. Even the food, probably the weak point in Iran, was tasty and good. The staff also is so friendly. Absolutely recommended!! (Dosounds form Vietnam; stayed Dec. 2016)

■ **‘Visit and dinner - did not stay overnight’**

An interesting place, beautifully laid out with bedrooms around the central courtyard, also other simpler sleeping areas off the courtyard. An interesting insight into how early people travelled - but of course we were doing it in style!

is situated at a recreational complex of the same name. In 2015, the executives of the World Crafts Council picked Isfahan as world city of handicrafts.

Last October, Iran’s first permanent handicrafts marketplace was inaugurated in Oud Lajan historic neighborhood in downtown Tehran.

Over the past couple of years, dozens of Iranian handicrafts have gained the UNESCO Seal of Excellence. For instance, in 2010, a total of 65 handicrafts on various themes including enamel, tile, metalwork, leatherwork, wood carving received the privilege.

A large dining area is to the rear with an excellent buffet of hot and cold dishes.

This is not the place I would choose to simply call into for a one night stay and then move on - it deserves more. I would say that as a minimum one should arrive early afternoon, maybe have lunch, then relax and eventually enjoy a sun set over the desert from the easily accessed roof.

At night this area has so little light pollution that photographing the stars is no problem. (Signum32 from the UK; stayed Oct. 2016)

■ **‘A great stay for the curious traveler’**

Stayed here for one night, and loved it. Very authentic feeling, the desert all around, the open roof. It really helps set the mood for thinking about the Silk Road.

Nice hot showers, and the beds are pretty comfy, just if you are sensitive to hard beds, I would bring something to use as padding. (Michelle N. from Australia; stayed Nov. 2016)



Wood carving sculptures on show at a permanent handicrafts marketplace in Khomeini Shahr, central Iran

## Ski resort razed by the Taliban lifts Pakistan’s domestic tourism

**MALAM JABBA, Pakistan (Reuters)** — Atop the piste of Malam Jabba in Pakistan’s once dangerous Swat Valley skiers schuss downhill, a new Chinese-built chairlift ferries tourists to the peak, and a luxury hotel is under construction to replace one torched by the Taliban.

The Taliban declared skiing “un-Islamic” during their 2007-2009 reign of terror over Swat, but improved security in recent years has allowed ski tourism to re-emerge on Malam Jabba, a hill station in the Hindu Kush mountain range.

Locals tout Swat as “the Switzerland of Pakistan”, with an international ski tournament held there in January.

But the experience is uniquely Pakistani. Army checkpoints abound, while gun-toting policemen riding up the mountain flout chairlift signs warning: “No Smoking, No Weapons”.

There is no apres-ski boozing as alcohol is banned, nor Swiss Raclette cheese, but lentil curry and deep-fried kebab patties make ample fuel for skiers.

“I have never seen snow before. I am very excited,” said Usman Shaukat, a 22-year-old student from the sweltering Punjab in the south after his first ski lesson.

Shaukat, who traveled some 600 km (373 miles) and braved pot-holed mountain roads by public bus to reach the ski slopes, is part of a new wave of domestic tourists emerging as security improves, the middle-class prospers and social media sites like Facebook reveal a Pakistan many never knew existed.

It is also easier for Pakistanis to explore their own country than holiday abroad.

Regional road trips are difficult, with war-torn Afghanistan and arch-foe India next door, while the United States and many European countries have tightened visa restrictions as part of tougher security measures.

Part-time travel blogger Saira Ali, 27, began exploring her own nation after the United States denied her a visa in 2013.

“If my visa had not been rejected, I wouldn’t have seen Pakistan,” said Ali, who charts her travels on Instagram.

Growing car ownership and freshly-paved roads have cut journey times to remote holiday destinations, swelling the number of adventure seekers in a nation of 200 million people.

Hotel owners say Pakistan’s isolation has been a blessing for business. Last summer, visitors to cool northern areas slept in cars as budget hotels sold out, say tourist guides.

Guesthouses are now popping up along roads to Pakistan’s northern mountains, which until 1970s were a stop-off for Westerners on the “Hippie Trail”.

Outside Swat’s main city of Mingora, where the Taliban once hanged opponents from electricity pylons, one businessman is ploughing \$1.5 million into a 13-floor hotel with 60 rooms and a miniature zoo.

“In the future, Swat will prosper, as security here is now very good,” said Khan, sitting near two caged monkeys.

(Source: The New York Times)



# Could millions of wind-powered pumps reverse the loss of Arctic sea ice?

As humankind slouches toward acceptance of its inability to slow the pace of global warming, an appetite is growing for "geoengineering" solutions that attempt to fix the problem by intervening massively in the underlying process.

These fall generally into two groups, of which the most benign is an accelerated program to pull carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and store it somewhere — a great concept, with affordable methods and suitable locations yet to be identified.

The other, more worrisome set involves blocking sunlight with some sort of shield, typically clouds of aerosolized reflective material or even natural clouds "brightened" with moisture pumped from the surface.

Now comes an intriguing third approach to address one very large component of the problem: accelerating loss of the Arctic's summer sea ice, with a corresponding increase in ocean temperature as more solar energy is absorbed.

## ■ Previous extent, longevity

The idea is to restore the polar ice to its previous extent and longevity by distributing millions of wind-powered, buoy-mounted, mist-making pumps across the ocean at the top of the world. The job might take 10 years and cost from \$500 million to \$5 trillion, depending on how many pumps were deployed and



how rapidly.

Those are back-of-the-envelope calculations but nevertheless have much to do, I suspect, with the light coverage given so far to the notion as laid out in a

recent paper in *Earth's Future*, a journal of the American Geophysical Union.

I don't think it's either, really, although it certainly is a big and expensive proposition even in this broad, early outline.

**Obviously there are costs to letting the ice just disappear, which most scientists seem to think likely by the year 2050 and the Desch paper suggests, based on recent trend lines, might occur as soon as 2020.**

I can't do better than Canada's National Post, where I first saw it mentioned, in placing some reference points around it:

The plan would be one of the most expensive single projects in world history, an endeavor on the scale of the International Space Station, the entire U.S. auto industry or a major world conflict such as the Iraq War.

## ■ Earth exploration

The paper's authors, led by Steven Desch of Arizona State's School of Earth and Space Exploration, are more inclined to liken its scope to the Manhattan Project — which, of course, proved doable.

And obviously there are costs to letting the ice just disappear, which most scientists seem to think likely by the year 2050 and the Desch paper suggests, based on recent trend lines, might occur as soon as 2020.

Apart from endangering a range of species from polar bears to Arctic cod to caribou, and disrupting or destroying communities dependent on the ice in complex relationships, the disappearance of summer sea ice would also bring a major acceleration of warming at the very latitudes that are already warming the fastest.

(Source: minnpost.com)

## Experts say ancient beast had no backbone

The Tully monster, a bizarre beast that plied the seas 307 million years ago, has long mystified scientists. Its features, including eyes like a hammerhead's and a pincer-like mouth, look like they belong on Dr. Seuss creatures, and have made it difficult for scientists to classify it. But last year, two different scientific groups did just that, independently announcing that the ancient animal was likely a marine vertebrate.

However, those two groups got it wrong, according to a new paper published in the journal *Paleontology*.

"This animal doesn't fit easy classification because it's so weird," study lead researcher Lauren Sallan, an assistant professor in the Department of Earth and Environmental Science at the University of Pennsylvania, said in a statement. "It has these eyes that are on stalks, and it has this pincer at the end of a long proboscis, and there's even disagreement about which way is up. But the last thing that the Tully monster could be is a fish."

## ■ A sea monster

The sea monster has mystified scientists for nearly 60 years. Amateur fossil collector Francis Tully discovered the first specimen in Illinois in 1958, and scientists have

found thousands more since then.

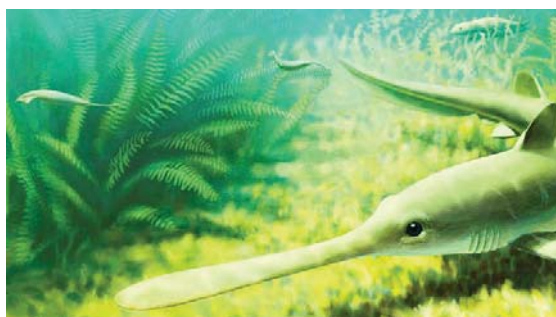
The species attracted so much public interest that it became the state fossil of Illinois, and murals of the creature still decorate the sides of U-Haul trucks.

However, no one could clearly define the monster: Some called it a worm; others classified it as a shell-less snail. And there was even a push to call it an arthropod, a group that includes lobsters, spiders and insects, Sallan said.

In the first study of the creature, published in March 2016 in the journal *Nature*, researchers looked at more than 1,200 Tully monster fossils. They reported seeing a light band going down the creature's midline. This band was likely a notochord, a type of primitive backbone, they said. Moreover, the fossils had remains of internal organs, such as gill sacs, that were characteristic of vertebrates, and teeth that looked like those of a lamprey, a jawless fish, they said.

## ■ The faint circles

However, these descriptions are off base, Sallan and her colleagues said. The faint circles that are interpreted as gill slits sit on septa (thin walls or cavities) rather than gill tissues or pouches, suggesting that they weren't involved in breathing, Sallan and her col-



leagues wrote in the study. In addition, a "dark circle under the 'gills' was interpreted as the liver, despite the liver's universal placement in vertebrates' posterior to [behind] the pharynx," the researchers wrote in the study.

In the other study, published in April 2016 in the journal *Nature*, scientists used a scanning electron microscope to show that the monster's eyes held melanin — structures that produce and store melanin.

(Source: Live Science)

## What will it take to keep elephants safe?

Forest elephants in a Central Africa park have seen their numbers decline by some 80 percent in the past decade as poachers entered protected areas to kill the endangered animals.

A new study from Duke University published Monday estimates that around 25,000 forest elephants in Minkébé, a nearly 3,000-square-mile preserve in Gabon, were slaughtered by poachers be-

tween 2004 and 2014.

Researchers say the hit to the population is extreme, and that immediate action must be taken to shift the trend and protect the elephants residing in the sanctuary area.

"With nearly half of Central Africa's estimated 100,000 forest elephants thought to live in Gabon, the loss of 25,000 elephants from this key sanctuary is a con-

siderable setback for the preservation of the species," John Poulsen, an assistant professor of tropical ecology at Duke's Nicholas School of the Environment, said in a statement.

## ■ Protecting elephants

Awareness campaigns and international efforts to protect elephants from poachers have become increasingly widespread in the past few dec-

ades. Ivory sales have declined in the West as more consumers understand the threat the market poses to elephants. Yet many herds continue to feel the effects of poaching as governments and transnational organizations grapple with ways to crack down on poaching and ivory sales around the globe.

(Source: The CSM)

## Winners of 3rd Drawing Lot of ENBANK Gift Card Festival Announced

The winners of drawing lot for the 3rd round of ENBANK (Eqtesad-e Novin) Gift Card Festival were introduced, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

The 3rd round of ENBANK Gift Card Festival, which started on Sept. 22 and ended on Dec. 21, ENBANK will grant valuable prizes to the owners of gift cards in a drawing lot including a Peugeot Passenger Card, 13 Cash Gifts for Buying iPad (each worth 20 million rials) and also 58 gift cards (each worth 5 million rials).

For further information on the number of winner's cards at the festival, owners of gift cards of the bank can embark on registering 16-digit number of their gift cards in the part envisioned for the calculation of score



at the following website address: <http://micard.enbank.ir> and/or <http://www.enbank.ir>.

In case of winning at the festival, type of prize will be notified, otherwise, the current score of the gift card will be announced.

It should be noted that Gift Card Festival of the bank is held seasonally, so that one point is considered for the owner of the card for each 250,000 rials balance in the card.

The winners should announce the required information to NOVIN Communications Center latest by the end of next season to the following phone number: 021-48031000.

In case of maintaining the least balance of 250,000 rials in each card, it is worth mentioning that the score will be transferred to the subsequent round of drawing.

## Bank Maskan Wins "Management Social Responsibility" Award

Bank Maskan managed to win "Management Social Responsibility" Award in National Organizational Culture Conference due to carrying out a series of measures taken in the field of planning, supporting and backing various housing plans for a wide spectrum of applicants, Public Relations Department of the bank announced.

As attended by the Minister of Cul-

ture and Islamic Guidance, secretariat of the Conference granted "Management Social Responsibility" Award due to the unsparing and unflinching efforts of the bank in designing and launching social responsibility criteria especially in the field of provision of housing and shelter for different walks of life and social groups, the report added.

Given the above issue, giant steps have been taken since 2014 for low-income families and first-home buyers in the field of provision of housing with fair and reasonable prices.

Presently, Bank Maskan pays more than 40 to 50 percent of purchasing power of the target society on average for buying house in a way that the bank has thus far paid more than 47,000

billion tomans loans to a number of 3,107,000 applicants within the framework of MEHR Housing Plan and with the aim of construction of housing units with fair and reasonable price.

It should be noted that Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Salehi Amiri appreciated the giant steps taken by the bank in the field of social responsibility, the report ended.

## Certificate EAC for Six IKCO Cars

IKCO achieved Certificate EAC for its cars, allowing the company to develop new export markets and revive its ex-markets in the CIS countries.

This certificate is allocated to IKCO's six sedans including Soren ELX, Samand ELX, Soren Turbo, Runna, Dena and 206 SD. Based on this IKCO can dispatch its cars to CIS markets with custom exemptions.

It should be noted that this certificate plays a crucial role in gaining an appropriate and sustainable share of

the market in Russia.

Russia in which IKCO has sold about 12,000 sets of cars holds 80% of the CIS car market demand. On the other hand, Russia is the largest country in the region and Kazakhstan is the entrance border to the EAC Customs Union countries for car export.

It is expected IKCO can boost export to CIS countries after gaining the certificate EAC. In the meantime, other foreign carmakers try presenting products with

improved quality, better facilities and lower prices to boost their competitiveness and win a greater share of global markets.

Fulfilling specialized market analysis and studies, identifying competitors and achieving business requirements and standards required for entering target countries are the main issues that IKCO works on to gain a stable and assured share of global markets.

## This real-time pollution map will enlighten you on your city's air quality

The map delivers real-time information on air pollution along with hourly forecasts and helpful weather-related health and fitness recommendations. Its data is drawn from "official air quality sensors" placed across cities that monitor airborne particles and combined with information on wind, weather and traffic conditions.

By simply searching a location, users will be shown a color-coded map of the pollution level in the surrounding area. They'll also receive useful information such as carbon monoxide and ozone levels, weather forecast updates, and health, sports and child care-related suggestions.

You can use the map to choose the cleanest park for a picnic, a running route for your next jog or even review pollen levels to help keep your allergies in check.

"Today's traditional air pollution monitoring methods include only annual traffic data, which doesn't reflect the day-to-day changes residents see and breathe on their local streets," BreezoMeter's CTO Emil Fisher said in a press release.

"BreezoMeter's newest algorithm serves as a massive research and development breakthrough, bringing air pollution data accuracy to a new and precise level, monitored worldwide," he said.

The company's CEO Ran Korber insists that BreezoMeter's map is changing the game. "Businesses and consumers previously had to rely on inaccurate and generic point data regarding pollution, a truly global health crisis," he said in a press release.

So far, major brands like Dyson, Dermalogica, AccuWeather and Cisco integrate BreezoMeter's air quality data in their products, and the company hopes its map will help people better understand their surroundings.

(Source: The Mashable)

## Tiny plastic particles from clothing, tires clogging oceans

Invisible particles washed off products like synthetic clothing and car tires account for up to a third of the plastic polluting oceans, impacting eco-systems and human health, a top conservationist body warned Wednesday.

Unlike the shocking images of country-sized garbage patches floating in the oceans, the microplastic particles that wash off textiles and roadways leave the waterways looking pristine.

But they constitute a significant part of the "plastic soup" clogging our waters -- accounting for between 15 and 31 percent of the estimated 9.5 million tons of plastic released into the oceans each year, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

In its report "Primary Microplastics in the Oceans," IUCN found that in many developed countries in North America and Europe, which have effective waste management, tiny plastic particles are in fact a bigger source of marine plastic pollution than plastic waste.

In addition to car tires and synthetic textiles, such particles stem from everything from marine coatings and road markings, to city dust and the microbeads in cosmetics.

"Plastic waste is not all there is to ocean plastics," IUCN chief Inger Andersen said in a statement, insisting that "we must look far beyond waste management if we are to address ocean pollution in its entirety."

While microplastics are hard to spot, they can seriously harm marine wildlife and as they enter the global food and water supplies they are believed to pose a significant risk to human health.

Karl Gustaf Lundin, who heads IUCN's Global Marine and Polar Program, acknowledged that few studies have been done so far on the impact of tiny plastic particles on human health.

(Source: AFP)



## Wintering ducks connect isolated wetlands by dispersing plant seeds

Plant populations in wetland areas face increasing isolation as wetlands are globally under threat from habitat loss and fragmentation. Erik Kleyheeg and Merel Soons of Utrecht University show that the daily movement behavior of wintering mallards is highly predictable from the landscape they live in and that their daily flights contribute to maintaining the connections between wetland plant populations across increasingly fragmented landscapes.

The researchers and co-authors are publishing their results today in the academic journal *Journal of Ecology*.

Mallards are among the most numerous and widespread duck species in the world, their global population estimated at approximately 19 million individuals. They are strong flyers, able to cover long distances at great speed (about 80 km/h) and part of the population migrates over long distances from their breeding areas to their wintering areas.

Mallards are omnivorous and in their non-breeding range, during autumn and winter, they feed largely on plant seeds. Many of these seeds are not digested and survive gut passage. In this way, the mallards play an important role in transporting the seeds between wetland feeding and resting areas.

(Source: EurekAlert)



## HIV infection risk rising in Iran: health official

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Psychedelic drugs and high-risk sexual behaviors are increasing the risks of HIV infection among people in Iran, head of HIV/AIDS department affiliated with the health ministry has said.

Currently the HIV prevalence rate among those who have risky behaviors such as injecting drugs and unprotected sex has gone up to 5 percent, IRNA news agency quoted Mino Mohraz as saying.



Right now transmission of HIV through high-risk sexual behaviors is increasing in the country and in case the current trend continues the risks of developing the infection among the general population is threatening the country, Mohraz said.

“Once the prevalence among the general population hits 1 percent we are seriously in trouble,” she warned.

“Unfortunately young individuals are not very much

aware of the risks of acquiring the infection and as there are not enough information available on the causes of the HIV at schools or medias the re more prone to develop the virus,” she regretted.

Just recently the use of psychedelic drugs have worsen the situation and increased the risks of unprotected sexual behaviors, she said stating, it is highly recommended to refrain from high risk sexual behaviors or at least use protection to avoid developing sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV.

“Parents, Education Ministry and medias should also inform the children and young individuals about HIV,” she said, “There is no escape from it and we cannot deny it.”

Based on the latest figures revealed by Health Ministry some 33,000 individuals are diagnosed with HIV in Iran but it is estimated that some 70 to 100 thousands of cases are remained undiagnosed.

Buses which provide the citizens with free of charge HIV counselling and testing services station in Tehran every now and then helping to diagnose those infected with HIV virus at early stages and start treatment.

Iran joined “Ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030” international program to halt spread of the disease by 2030 and committed to “Target 90-90-90” which aims at HIV treatment and prevention for 2020.

Ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 is a fast-track strategy of the United Nations which proposes rapid and massive acceleration of HIV prevention and treatment programs for ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. Target 90-90-90 would enable 90 percent of people living with HIV to know their HIV status, 90 percent of people who know their status to access HIV treatment and 90 percent of people on HIV treatment to achieve viral suppression.

## LEARN ENGLISH

### Going To The Gym

A: Hey there, you look a little lost. Are you new here?

B: Yeah how'd you know?

A: You can always spot the **newbies** . I can give you a few **pointers** if you want. Were you trying to use this machine here?

B: Yeah! I just started my training today and I'm not really sure where to begin.

A: It's ok, I know how it is. This machine here will work out your upper body, mainly your **triceps** and **biceps** . Are you looking to develop strength or muscle **tone** and **definition** ?

B: Well, I don't want to be **ripped** like you! I just want a good **physique** with weights and **cardio** .

A: In that case you want to work with less weight. You can start off by working ten to fifteen **reps** in four sets. Five kilo weights should be enough. Now it's very important that you **stretch** before pumping iron or you might **pull a muscle** .

B: Got it! Wow is that the weight you are lifting? My goodness that's a lot of weight!

A: It's not that much. Just watch... I'm ok...

#### ■ Key vocabulary

**newbie**: someone who has just started doing something

**pointer**: suggestions, help

**triceps**: the large muscle at the back of your upper arm

**biceps**: the large muscle on the front of your upper arm

**tone**: how firm and strong your muscles or skin are

**definition**: the clear edges or shapes that something has

**ripped**: having a strong and muscular body or shape

**physique**: the size and shape of a person's body

**cardio**: any type of exercise that makes the heart stronger and healthier, for example running

**rep**: one exercise that you do in a series of exercises; repetition

**stretch**: to straighten your arms, legs, or body to full length

**pump iron**: to lift weights in order to make your muscles strong

**pull a muscle**: to hurt (a muscle, tendon, or ligament) by stretch

#### ■ Supplementary vocabulary

**barbell**: a long metal rod to which heavy discs are attached at each end for weightlifting

**treadmill**: an exercise machine that consists of a continuous moving belt on which to walk or jog

**spinning**: an aerobic exercise that takes place on a specially designed stationary bicycle

**scale**: an instrument or machine for weighing

**sit-up**: an exercise performed to work out the abdominal muscles

**push-up**: an exercise in which you lie on the floor on your chest and push yourself up with your arms

**chin up**: an exercise in which you hang on a bar and pull yourself up until your chin is above the bar

(Source: irlanguage.com)

# 24-7 program reduces heart disease deaths

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — A heart care program, dubbed 24-7, which is being conducted within the framework of a national document to curb non-communicable diseases in Iran has reduced deaths caused by heart attacks, deputy health minister said on Wednesday.

“Giving twenty-four seven heart care services at 54 hospitals in 24 cities nationwide has prevented from 16,000 immediate deaths caused by heart attacks by performing angioplasty on the patients,” Mohammad Aqajani explained.

In that regard ambulances will soon be equipped with online electrocardiogram (ECG) services and report the recording of electrical activity of the heart to one of the 54 hospitals across the country and on call cardiologists would diagnose the patients and send them to a cardiac care hospital right away, Aqajani added.

He went on to say that “unfortunately cardiovascular diseases are the leading causes of death in Iran which constitute to 46 percent of the deaths.”

Heart attacks are the deadliest among heart diseases and some 50 to 60 thousand people die of massive heart attack annually in Iran, he regretted.

In 2011, the heads of states gathered in New York and decided to combat non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Following the gathering, the World Health Organization came up with a program that covers four specific categories of NCDs comprising ischemic heart diseases, diabetes, Asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), and cancer and four risk factors which are common across these categories including unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, smoking, and alcohol consumption.



WHO decided to combat these risk factors by taking nine specific measures such as reducing 25 percent of the premature death caused by NCDs until 2025 for age group 30-70 which is called 25 by 25, reducing smoking, increasing physical activity, reducing trans-fat, and providing the essential medication for those suffering from hypertension and diabetes.

In line with WHO's activities to combat NCDs in 2015 Iran established a committee called Na-

tional Non-Communicable Disease Committee at the Ministry of Health headed by the Health Minister, Hassan Qazizadeh- Hashemi. There are also six subcommittees affiliated with this committee responsible for controlling cancer, cardiovascular diseases, metabolic disorders, air pollution and inter-sectoral collaboration, traffic injuries, and a subcommittee for monitoring and evaluating whole action plan for the NCDs in Iran.

## Working together for the region

tive arrangement in the region.

There are certainly promising prospects for this largest regional bloc of Asia given its determination to foster the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2025, the benefits of which will be far reaching for the sub region with positive spillovers for the rest of Asia. Continued strengthening of policy and incentive frameworks, innovation and improvements in productivity is set to double the size of ASEAN economies to \$4.6 trillion by 2050 as the region will continue to be attractive destination for global investment flows, which already reached over \$120 billion by 2015. Further reduction in trade costs through the elimination of tariffs, implementation of trade facilitation measures, and progress on the liberalization of services and investment will deepen trade links within the sub region as well as with the wider global economy. Emerging as a consumer hub, almost 125 million household will witness the doubling of their annual income by 2025.

Despite ASEAN's progress and its impressive economic potential, considerable work still remains to narrow development gaps across countries. The partnership between ASEAN and ESCAP promotes complementarity between the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and AEC, which should over the next decade contribute to narrowing national as well as intra-regional disparities, creating balanced urban growth, and mitigating climate change as well as adapting to its effects. Implementation of urban sustainable goals will be crucial as an additional 25 million people will move to cities by 2025. Building urban resilience will be critical

as nearly 40 per cent of ASEAN's GDP growth will come from 142 cities hosting populations between 200,000 and 5 million people. Creating balanced and inclusive urban growth will require trillions of dollars in investment and effective financial management to provide public services and close gaps in public transportation, ICT infrastructure, housing, and urban environmental management.

The importance of balancing Southeast Asia's environmental and development needs has also never been more evident. Greenhouse gas emissions grew more rapidly in Southeast Asia than in any other region of the world, increasing by 227% over the past two decades. The impacts of climate change could see ASEAN's GDP falter by as much as 11 per cent if mitigation measures are not undertaken to curb emissions as part of global efforts. Reducing land use emissions and deforestation while improving energy efficiency and expanding the use of renewables or other low-carbon energy sources are some of the steps to put these countries on a low carbon growth pathway.

Regional cooperation facilitated by the intergovernmental platforms of ASEAN and ESCAP will be also critical to tackling these immense challenges. For instance, this partnership has helped safeguard and improve the livelihoods of many peoples in Southeast Asia. In the area of disaster response, when Cyclone Nargis struck the Ayeyarwady Delta of Myanmar in May 2008, ESCAP and ASEAN together facilitated the flow of humanitarian assistance. In the post-disaster recovery phase, ESCAP and ASEAN jointly organized the Post-Nargis Regional Partnership Con-

ference where over \$103 million were raised to support recovery plans. This partnership was further advanced in 2011 with ESCAP's support for the establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management.

The rich history between our institutions has set the stage for the next phase of progressive collaboration, guided by the AEC 2025 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As we work towards achieving both these agendas, coordinated action is needed to address transboundary challenges and unlock the possibilities of regional co-operation. These include deepening regional integration; facilitating trade; greater financial integration and widening access to finance; realizing the ASEAN Power Grid, connecting missing transport links; and bridging the digital divide. Our collective efforts, delivered through a coordinated approach under the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action, will provide South-East Asia with the strong foundation it needs to prosper in the face a changing world and improve the lives of its citizens.

ESCAP recognizes that we live in an interconnected region and as such, a prosperous ASEAN benefits the wider Asia-Pacific region. We congratulate ASEAN on achieving 50 years of productive subregional cooperation and promotion of peace and security. With the establishment of the forward-looking ASEAN Vision 2025 and the ambitious objectives of the 2030 Agenda, the future of collaboration between ESCAP and ASEAN to improve the future of all the people in ASEAN looks better than ever before.

(Source: UNIC)

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

### Intl. medical equipment exhibition opens in Kish Island

The Third International Exhibition of Medical Equipment, dubbed Hormoz Health, opened in Kish Island, southern province of Hormozgan, on Friday.

Co-organized with Iran's Food and Drug Administration and Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade, the three-day event is attended by some 132 Iranian and foreign companies, IRNA news agency quoted the exhibition executive secretary Es'haq Ameri as saying.

Companies from 13 countries such as South Korea, Japan, the U.S., Belgium, Germany, China, and the Netherlands, along with Iranian companies are showcasing their latest products and technologies on a land stretching 14,000 square meters, Ameri highlighted.

### ENGLISH PROVERB

#### Truth is stranger than fiction

■ **Explanation**: real life can be more remarkable than invented tale

■ **For example**: For example: In our two-month trip around the world we ran into long-lost relatives on three separate occasions, proving that truth is stranger than fiction.

### PHRASAL VERB

#### Chance on/upon/across somebody or something

■ **Meaning**: to find something or meet someone when you are not expecting to

■ **For example**: Henry chanced upon some valuable coins in the attic.

### ENGLISH IDIOM

#### Battle of wills

■ **Explanation**: a person who is full of beans is lively, healthy and active

■ **For example**: For example: He may be getting old but he's still full of beans.

### جزیره کیش میزبان نمایشگاه بین‌المللی تجهیزات پزشکی

سومین نمایشگاه بین‌المللی تجهیزات پزشکی «هرمزهلث» روز جمعه در جزیره ی کیش آغاز به کار کرد.

دبیر اجرایی نمایشگاه اسحاق عامری در گفت وگو با خبرنگار ایرنا گفت: در این نمایشگاه سه روزه که با کمک سازمان غذا و دارو و وزارت صنعت، معدن و تجارت راه اندازی شده ۱۳۲ شرکت داخلی و خارجی حضور دارند.

عامری خاطر نشان کرد: در این رویداد شرکت هایی از ۱۳ کشور همچون کره جنوبی، ژاپن، آمریکا، بلژیک، آلمان، چین و هلند در کنار شرکت های داخلی آخرین تولیدات و فناوری های خود را در فضایی به وسعت ۱۴ هزار متر مربع در معرض نمایش خواهند گذاشت.



# Yemeni fighters reach outskirts of Mocha, in serious blow to Riyadh

In a major blow to the House of Saud regime-led coalition supported by Washington, Yemeni fighters have reached the eastern outskirts of the port city of Mocha, which was overrun in early February by forces loyal to the former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi.

Latest media reports said on Wednesday that the Yemeni forces, backed by fighters from the Ansarullah (Houthi) movement, had reached the outskirts of the strategic coastal city in Ta'izz province following violent clashes the previous day with mercenaries fighting for Saudi Arabia against Yemen.

The advance comes despite the fact that Saudi regime warplanes conducted several airstrikes to support the troops loyal to Hadi and mercenary soldiers.

The latest round of battle for Mocha was a serious setback for an offensive launched by the pro-Saudi forces in January to try to recapture Yemen's 450-kilometer Red Sea coastline.

Hadi loyalists and mercenary soldiers overran Mocha on February 10.

For nearly two years, the regime in Riyadh has provided military support for pro-Hadi forces. However, their control is still largely restricted to southern Yemen and some areas along the Saudi border.



■ **Yemeni missile kills commander of Emirati troops**

Yemeni forces in a retaliatory act have launched an operation against Riyadh-backed militiamen loyal to the former government, killing scores of them, including the commander of the House of Saud regime-led Emirati troops in Yemen.

The media bureau of the operations

command in Yemen announced on Wednesday that a host of Saudi regime mercenaries died and sustained injuries when Yemeni troopers launched a medium-range ballistic missile at their gathering close to the strategic Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, the al-Masirah television network reported.

The report added that several

high-ranking pro-Saudi commanders were among the slain militiamen in the missile attack that hit the city of Mokha in Ta'izz Province.

Nasser Moshabib al-Atibi, the commander of Emirati troops in Yemen, was among those killed. Arabic-language Here Aden news agency later reported that Major General Ahad Saif al-Yafei, the second-in-command of the Saudi-backed military forces, had been killed in the missile attack.

Emirati officials have not made any comments on the report yet.

Separately, Yemeni soldiers and allied popular forces struck a position of Saudi mercenaries in al-Hanani area of Maqbanah district in the country's southwestern province of Ta'izz, leaving scores of pro-Saudi gunmen dead and injured.

Meanwhile, Yemen's army spokesman Brigadier General Sharaf Luqman praised the "stinging and painful" retaliatory missile attacks against Saudi Arabia.

Even though the assaults do not match Saudi regime's indiscriminate airstrikes in number, they have accurately hit the designated targets inside Saudi Arabia, Luqman pointed out.

(Source: Press TV)

## ‘America’s 4-decade push for regime change in Iran a failure’

➔ We need to wait to see for me practical decisions by President Trump to understand what is the real Trump's Iran policy.

■ **Some of the latest sanctions are related to Iran's ballistic missile programme - why is Iran even pursuing it, what does it need a ballistic missile for? Is it wise to be doing this now, with the nuclear deal hanging in the balance?**

A: Look, there's international consensus, the world powers, the P5+1 who have signed the deal with Iran, the IAEA, that missile activities of Iran has nothing to do with the nuclear deal. It is not a violation of a nuclear deal. Here, there's no dispute. However, Trump administration publicly announced that Iran missile test is a violation of Resolution 2231 - the UNSC Resolution 2231. Russia, China, and Europe - they believe it is not a violation of the Resolution 2231. This is only Trump administration. The reason Russia, China, they believe it is not a violation is because, first of all, this is not a type of nuclear capable missile, which Iran has already tested. Second, it says: "calls upon Iran" it means it is an invitation, it is not mandatory. I think neither Trump nor his new team, they have not really had time to read the nuclear deal, the JCPOA, because it is 170 pages, too much technicalities, they might not have time to go through different resolutions - and therefore, they really don't know what they're talking about.

■ **US Secretary of state Rex Tillerson is saying the nuclear deal needs a 'full review' - but other parties won't give up on the hard-won agreement easily, so will America go against its partners in this agreement?**

A: I don't believe the U.S. would be in position to withdraw from the nuclear deal, or to go for re-negotiating the deal, because it is a deal that took 12 years of negotiations. After 12 years of negotiations, Iran and the world powers, they agreed to a very-very comprehensive deal, which every says: "there's no dispute, this is the most comprehensive agreement during the history of non-proliferation". Therefore, this is a huge achievement for non-proliferation worldwide. The world is not going to go for another 10-12 years of negotiations because the new U.S. administration doesn't like it or Bibi Netanyahu doesn't like it. However, I think, the U.S. would try to derail the atmosphere and the nuclear deal by imposing new sanctions under the umbrella of missile, or "terrorism" or "human rights" or "regional issues" - in order to push Iran to withdraw from the nuclear deal.

■ **So you are saying you don't believe that Trump administration's statements... In that case, all this tough talk, is this all a big bluff?**

A: I think we have to wait to see the new figures, the National Security advisor, even the high-level diplomats are not yet appointed at the Foreign Ministry of U.S. - we need to wait until the whole team is completely established and then, I believe, they would have to go to read the deal carefully and then to have a better understanding of the deal. However, I still believe the U.S. is not going to withdraw from the deal, they would find other ways. They would try every other venue in order to make Iran angry. Because when Iran cannot benefit, the economic benefits of the nuclear deal, then why Iran should continue to be committed to nuclear agreement? Here is the game, I think, the U.S. would try to play.

■ **How will the American credibility hold out in the world if the nuclear treaty is sunk by Trump - how will other countries trust the US to stay true to its word in any other negotiations?**

A: It is clear, already, Europe has mentioned very openly that they are not going to re-negotiate the deal, and the U.S. should not withdraw, the U.S. should not violate the deal. Russia has publicly said, China has publicly said - therefore, the international community is united to support the deal. Also, the international community is fully convinced that Iran has complied with all its commitments within the nuclear deal. The IAEA frequently has said that Iran has complied comprehensively with every commitment within the nuclear deal. Therefore, from the international point of view, the deal is working well. Trump administration, if they are going to play with the deal, I think they would make the U.S. internationally isolated.

■ **Iran's President Hassan Rouhani declared : "Iranians will make those using threatening language against this nation regret it." - how can Iran counter American actions?**

A: Iran now has good international allies. Although Saudi Arabia, Israel, they are the U.S. allies to undermine the nuclear deal, but, first of all, there's a UNSC Resolution. Second, there's the signature of 6 world powers on the deal. Third, this is the IAEA which 100% is satisfied and is convinced that the deal would prevent any possibility for diversion toward weaponization in Iran. Iran now has a really big advantage of having many-many powerful international partners, include 120 of non-alignment movement, like India, like Brazil, which are supporting the deal. Therefore, Iran now has advantage to use such united international community to confront the U.S. playing with the nuclear deal.

■ **Like you've said, during the sanctions era, Iran developed strong ties away from the West - trading**

**with India, China, Russia. Now that the sanctions are lifted, is Iran going to weaken those ties and turn back towards the West?**

A: What President Obama did during his term - 10 years extension of Iran's Sanction Act from 2016 to 2026 - Iran already believes it is a clear violation of the nuclear deal. However, every party who disputes violation of the nuclear deal by the other party, has to go to a joint commission already foreseen within the JCPOA to bring its reasons. Iran up to now has not been able to convince the world powers unanimously that the extension of Iran Sanctions Act has been a violation. Russia believes it is a violation, the U.S. has violated the nuclear deal by extending the sanctions. China, definitely, is not happy. Europe is criticizing - however, Europe believes it is not a violation. Therefore, there's dispute between the world powers whether this is a violation or not. However, if Trump is going to continue in the same manner, I believe, then Europe, Russia, China, everybody would be convinced that the U.S. violating the nuclear deal; and, of course, Iran is not going to continue to be committed to the nuclear deal.

■ **Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei has said that it's pointless to have a diplomatic relationship with the U.S. and he is very skeptical about the nuclear talks. Does this mean there are powerful opponents to the deal in Iran as well as Washington?**

A: Definitely there was more opponents in Iran compared to Washington. I mean, when I was watching the year of internal fighting's in Iran on the nuclear deal, I was also at the same time comparing it with the fights within Washington - I was totally convinced that the opposition to Iranian nuclear deal in Iran, it was much more than in the U.S. However, under the leadership of Ayatollah Khamenei, although he was skeptical about the deal, but he could manage the country somehow that the Iranian Parliament ultimately approved the deal, National Security Council ultimately approved the deal, government approved, and the supreme leader who is the ultimate decision-maker also agreed. Therefore, the most important security and political establishments of Iran: Parliament, National Security, Government, the leadership - they all agreed. Therefore, from the Iranian side, I believe the deal would be very much sustainable, but Obama was not able to convince the Congress to approve the deal. That's why, still, I believe, the deal is vulnerable, is shaky, from the U.S. side. Therefore, I would not be afraid from the Iranian side, despite of all opposition, I would be afraid about the situation in Washington. (See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

## British suicide bomber in Iraq had won compensation for Guantanamo stay

An Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group suicide bomber from Britain who blew himself up in an attack on Iraqi forces this week had been given compensation for his detention in the Guantanamo Bay military prison, Western security sources said on Wednesday.

ISIL terrorists said Abu-Zakariya al-Britani, a British citizen who was originally known as Ronald Fiddler and then cast himself as Jamal Udeen al-Harith, detonated a car bomb at an Iraqi army base southwest of Mosul this week.

The militants also published a photograph of the smiling bomber surrounded by wires in the seat of what appeared to be the car in which he blew himself up.

The ISIL statements could not be independently verified by Reuters but three Western security sources said it was highly likely that Britani was the bomber and now dead.

Britain made a civil damages settlement with British former Guantanamo Bay inmates in 2010 but did not disclose the size of the payouts, citing confidentiality agreements, then-Justice Secretary Kenneth Clarke told parliament at the time.

The Daily Mail reported that Britani had been awarded \$1.25 million by the British government after claiming British agents knew or were complicit in his alleged mistreatment.

Originally from the northern English city of Manchester, he converted to Islam in his 20s. He was detained in Afghanistan by U.S. Special Forces and taken to Guantanamo in 2002.

He was released in 2004 after the government of then-Prime Minister Tony Blair lobbied for his release. He later traveled to Syria to fight with ISIL.

(Source: Reuters)

## Over 200 Trump protesters indicted for rioting

More than 200 protesters arrested during the inauguration of the United States President Donald Trump have been indicted on felony rioting charges.

A federal grand jury in Washington, DC, indicted a total of 214 people in connection with the January 20 demonstration which drew thousands of protesters to downtown Washington as Trump was being sworn in.

The prosecutors alleged that those indicted used "black bloc" tactics, causing violence and attempting to disguise their identities by covering their faces.

According to the indictment, some protesters were armed with hammers, crowbars, bricks, rocks, flares, firecrackers and other explosive devices.

They have been accused of attacking a limousine driver, smashing windows of local businesses, damaging a government vehicle and committing other violent acts.

If convicted, the protesters could face a maximum jail sentence of up to 10 years, and a fine of up to \$25,000.

Six police officers were hurt during clashes with Inauguration Day protesters who reportedly hurled rocks and firecrackers at them.

A total of 231 people were arrested during protest rallies in downtown Washington.

Since his inauguration, Trump has faced nearly non-stop protests and rallies condemning his divisive rhetoric and controversial immigration policy.

(Source: Press TV)

## No concessions on future Palestinian state: Jordan, Egypt

➔ "Looking at two-state or one-state, I like the one that both parties like. I'm very happy with the one both parties like. I can live with either one," Trump said during a joint press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Cairo meeting came days after Israel's Haaretz newspaper reported that Netanyahu had dismissed a regional peace initiative at a secret summit meeting with former United States Secretary of State John Kerry in the Jordanian resort town of Aqaba. The Jordanian monarch and Egypt's Sisi were in attendance as well.

The report added that Kerry had outlined a proposal that included recognition of Israel and resumption of peace negotiations with the Palestinians. Netanyahu did not agree to the plan, saying members of his coalition administration would not approve it.

During the secret meeting, Abdullah and Sisi tried to talk the Israeli prime minister into accepting the proposal, but Netanyahu presented a plan of his own and demanded that a regional summit be arranged to include senior figures from the House of Saud regime, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other Arab states.

The last round of Israeli-Palestinian talks collapsed in 2014. Among the major sticking points in those negotiations was Israel's continued settlement expansion on Palestinian territories.

Since the inauguration in January of Trump, who is a steadfast supporter of Israel, the regime in Tel Aviv has stepped up its construction of settler units on occupied Palestinian land in a blatant violation of international law.

Less than a month before Trump took office, the United Nations Security Council had adopted Resolution 2334 in December, calling on Israel to "immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem (al-Quds)".

About 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 illegal settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds.

Palestinians wants the West Bank as part of a future independent Palestinian state, with East al-Quds as its capital.

(Source: agencies)

## Our nationals duped of \$350 million, received over 200 complaints against Indian fraudsters: Iranian Embassy

Iranian nationals are slowly becoming the victims of mass fraud in India. According to the Iranian Embassy in the Capital, an estimated 200 cases of duped Iranian nationals have come to the notice of the embassy with a staggering \$350 million being taken from them fraudulently.

Speaking exclusively to DNA, Dr. Hossein Bamiri, the commercial counselor at Iranian Embassy, said. "I have lived here for 15 years, and I have encouraged my countrymen to come here. But everything seems to have changed after US led sanctions on Iran. I receive one email every day of Iranian businessmen being cheated, and even though I tell everyone that the fraudsters do not represent India, I am becoming increasingly fearful of encouraging my countrymen to do business here."

Dr Bamiri added that the issue has become so alarming in Iran that the embassy has now a compiled list of Iranians

who have allegedly been 'duped'.

The embassy has been particularly concerned regarding a case regarding Iranian national Ali Kaboo Shakeri. Shakeri, owner of Tehran-based Wist General Trading unit, filed a complaint with the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in September 2016 where he alleged that he had been duped by Indian fraudsters of Rs 18.64 cr.

On the basis of his complaint, CBI officials have initiated a probe against UCO bank officials and the accused Indian fraudsters.

CBI documents reveal that Shakeri was introduced to a Delhi-resident Rajesh Khanna three years ago. In the introduction, Khanna told Shakeri he was a world supplier of dry fruits, and the two struck a deal. Khanna was supposed to send 3,10,800 kilograms of cashew nuts to Teheran, and in return Shakeri would pay around Rs 18 crore within 30 days

of placing the order which was on January 20, 2015. Khanna was supposed to receive the money after providing the required documents in support of the import. CBI sources revealed that right after Khanna received the money, the phone numbers that Shakeri used to contact Khanna fell silent.

The complaint states that in mid-2015, Shakeri's representatives came to India to confirm what had happened, but they found that UCO bank had allegedly released the money without Khanna providing the necessary proof.

Queries sent to UCO bank did not elicit a response till the filing of this story.

Shakeri then contacted the Iranian Embassy, and the Embassy got in touch with the CBI who then filed a case in September 2016 against Khanna, Pradeep Kumar Thakur, Gandass Dharmvir, Sanjay Kumar, Praveen Kumar and OPV Prasanna Kumar, their private companies, and

unknown officials of UCO bank.

Dr Sumit Sharma, legal advisor to the Iranian mission in India, said the duping cases have taken a devastating toll on families in Iran. "In some cases the businessmen victims were poached in Indian Embassy in Iran like the case of Bikadi, and in others they were poached in the Iranian Embassy in India. The defrauding has ripped apart families, and more importantly the image of India as a business-friendly country is being ruined," Sharma said.

According to Sharma, the reaction by authorities in India has been disappointing. He said the Embassy had written to the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) but nothing concrete came out after this.

Phone calls and emails sent to senior DGFT officials did not elicit a response till the filing of this story.

(Source: [dailytalk.in](http://dailytalk.in))



## Budapest Olympic bid on last legs as mayor to bring in government

Budapest's mayor will tell the government that political unity over the city's bid to host the 2024 Summer Olympics has broken down, according to a council resolution widely seen as the first step to it pulling its candidacy.

Under the resolution seen by Reuters and being put to the City Council on Wednesday, Budapest Mayor Istvan Tarlos will ask the government to "clarify whether, as national unity ended, there is any point in sustaining Budapest's candidacy."

Bidding alongside powerhouses Los Angeles and Paris, Budapest has been considered a long-shot candidate, pinning its hopes on the International Olympic Committee's Agenda 2020 initiative that seeks a return for the event to simpler values and smaller price tags.

After local opponents of the candidacy last week submitted a quarter of a million signatures on a petition for a referendum on the bid, Tarlos suggested the city might quit the race.

But he also rejected responsibility for allowing the bid to fail, saying the issue was a national one.

Wednesday's council resolution is due to authorise Tarlos to discuss the bid with the national government and Olympic committee.

According to a survey published on Wednesday by pollster Median, half of Hungarians would like Budapest to withdraw the bid, with only a third supporting it nationally.

In Budapest, 56 percent of voters are against the bid, which the poll showed was unlikely to survive a referendum.

With the ruling Fidesz party holding a comfortable majority on Budapest's city council, the resolution is expected to pass on Wednesday.

The document also blames opposition parties for having "significantly weakened" Budapest's chances of hosting the event.

Attempting to shore up backing for the bid, Olympic Committee Chairman Zsolt Borkai told the council meeting: "Support can never reach 100 percent. Especially if there are people who want to turn the Olympics into politics. We should not allow that to happen."

(Source: Reuters)

## Liverpool gained from mid-season camp in Spain, says Mane

Liverpool will reap the benefits of their mid-season training camp in Spain when they travel to relegation-threatened Premier League champions Leicester City on Monday, forward Sadio Mane said.

With the Merseyside club devoid of any domestic cup or European commitments, Jurgen Klopp's charges took advantage of their fortnight break and went for a four-night camp in La Manga in a bid to rediscover their best form.

"It was just like one (a pre-season)..." The last few weeks have been quite difficult for obvious reasons, but we didn't stop working during that period and that was important," Mane told the club website (www.liverpoolfc.com).

Liverpool's league victory over Tottenham Hotspur on Feb. 11 marked their first league win of the year and was also just their second victory in 11 games.

Liverpool's title bid has faltered in recent weeks as they have dropped to fifth, 11 points behind leaders Chelsea with 13 games remaining.

"But re-finding our form against Tottenham and the way we did it, we thought 'we're back now and we've got to maintain this'. We have to play the match against Leicester with the same attitude," Mane said.

"We had a good time (in Spain) but we also worked very hard, we trained together well and we also had a friendly game amongst ourselves. The weather wasn't brilliant but a bit better than here."

(Source: Reuters)

## Wayne Rooney set to leave Manchester United in summer if first-team absence continues

Wayne Rooney is highly unlikely to leave Manchester United next week and has been left surprised by José Mourinho's claim he could do so, though the striker is set to depart the club in the summer.

Rooney is determined to try to see the season out, so unless United actively tell him he can depart or there is lucrative last-minute offer from China's Super League before their window closes on Tuesday, the striker will remain at Old Trafford.

Mourinho's comments he could not guarantee Rooney would still be a United player beyond 28 February caught him and his camp unawares as he has no wish to do so. On Tuesday, when asked about Rooney's future, the manager said: "You have to ask him. Of course I can't guarantee he will still be here next season. I cannot guarantee that I'm here next week, how can I guarantee that a player is here next season? What I can guarantee is that, if one day Wayne leaves the club, it is not because I want him to leave the club.

"I would never push a legend of this club to another destiny. You have to ask him if he sees himself staying in the club for the rest of his career or sees himself moving. It is not a question for me because I am happy to have him. You have to ask him, not me. I was very open with you in the answer. I don't want him to leave."

While this bemused the captain, he is unhappy at his lack of regular starts under the manager and unless this situation vastly improves before the season ends he will depart in the close season. There have been exploratory discussions between Paul Stretford, Rooney's agent, and Tianjin Quanjian, who are coached by Fabio Cannavaro, but these have amounted to no material offer.

"We did make an approach for Rooney," Cannavaro told Tianjin TV. "It was just a chat because he simply doesn't suit our style of play. No further discussion was necessary."

It is thought that SIPG and Shenhua, the two Shanghai-based clubs, do not currently have an interest in Rooney and so his options in China are limited.

(Source: Guardian)

# Low: We experienced the spirit of optimism in 2005

A player's international career generally lasts a number of years. However, the same cannot be said of coaches, for whom life is such that a run of bad results can mean you are shown the exit door relatively quickly.

For example, take a look at the most recent FIFA/Cola-Cola World Ranking and you will see that the coaches of the top 20 sides have been in their job for an average of around three years. That list has two exceptions: Uruguay's Oscar Tabarez, in charge for 11 years, and Germany's FIFA World Cup™-winning coach Joachim Low. He began as the national team assistant way back in July 2004 before succeeding Jurgen Klinsmann as head coach after the 2006 FIFA World Cup Germany.

Low's record in the job certainly stands up to scrutiny. He has led Die Nationalmannschaft to a third-placed finish at the 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa, second place at UEFA EURO 2008 and a glorious, historic triumph at the 2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil. Now he is aiming to guide the three-time European and four-time world champions to an achievement no other Germany coach has managed before him: to lift the FIFA Confederations Cup, which next takes place in Russia this June/July.

"It's a good tournament, and an important one," said the 57-year-old in an interview with FIFA.com, before reminiscing about Germany's last participation in the event, on home soil back in the mid-2000s. "We experienced it ourselves in 2005, when a kind of spirit of optimism came over the country."

Germany came third, a vast improvement on their tournament debut in Mexico in 1999. Back then, they were reigning European champions, but a team that included Lothar Matthaus, Jens Lehmann and a young Michael Ballack were eliminated at the group stage following defeats to Brazil (4-0) and USA (2-0). A 2-0 win over New Zealand was rendered academic.

This time, Low is hoping to go one better, and he had Russia 2018 in mind when he talked about the experience that this year's FIFA Confederations Cup tournament will bring his team. "It's important that you prepare the players for what happens at a



tournament, like a World Cup, for example. You can get a better idea of a situation," said Low. "They can get to know the conditions, the atmosphere in the country, the stadiums and the journeys involved. It was like that in Brazil. We, the coaching staff, were there beforehand, although not with the team. But those are important experiences that help you going forward."

After four straight qualifying wins with 16 goals scored and none conceded, Germany now comfortably lead Group C and have a five-point advantage over second-placed Northern Ireland and Azerbaijan. Qualification for Russia 2018 is firmly in sight for the

team captained by Manuel Neuer.

"Only one team can qualify automatically and the others go into a play-off, so we set ourselves the target of dominating the campaign from the start," added a satisfied Low. "I think we've done that well. In 2014, after we became world champions, we had a few difficult moments. A tournament like that saps you in terms of physical and emotional strength. The players only had a short holiday and a brief pre-season, and sometimes it's the case that teams who go far in a tournament can have some problems getting back into a rhythm. Other countries that

don't compete in those tournaments can relax and recharge the batteries. So from that point of view, it's not always that easy. But for us, it's worked out well so far."

Awaiting Germany in Group B at the FIFA Confederations Cup this summer are Australia (19 June), Chile (22 June) and Cameroon (25 June), and Low hinted that his team would be well motivated. "We'll take this tournament seriously and be focused, and we'll aim to achieve the best result we can." Lifting the trophy aloft for the first time in St Petersburg on 2 July would be to do exactly that.

(Source: FIFA)

## Lakers trade guard Williams to Rockets



The Los Angeles Lakers, who named Magic Johnson as their new president of basketball operations earlier on Tuesday, have traded guard Lou Williams to the Houston Rockets, according to multiple media reports.

The Lakers are expected to receive a 2017 first-round draft pick along with forward Corey Brewer in exchange for Williams, who wrote on Twitter: "Thanx for the love L.A., I've enjoyed my stay".

Williams, 30, led the Lakers with an average of 18.6 points, 3.2 assists and 3.2 rebounds per game

this season despite coming off the bench.

He leads all NBA reserves in scoring average and will provide the Rockets (40-18), third in the Western Conference, with another spark for their high-scoring offense.

In addition to promoting Johnson, a Hall of Famer who won five NBA titles with Los Angeles in the 1980s, Lakers Governor Jeanie Buss also fired general manager Mitch Kupchak and her brother, Jim, from his role as vice president of basketball operations.

(Source: Reuters)

## Too many foreigners managing Premier League teams - Giggs



There are too many foreign managers in the Premier League and little opportunity for local talents, according to former Manchester United winger and assistant manager Ryan Giggs.

Giggs, who was the caretaker boss for four games at United in 2014, was linked with a return to management at Swansea City before American Bob Bradley's appointment in October and was considered again before Englishman Paul Clement took charge in January.

"I don't think there's enough (British managers) at the moment," Giggs told the BBC.

"I think it is (important British coaches get a chance). There's a lot of top

quality foreign coaches in the Premier League, but there's also a lot of quality British coaches and managers out there."

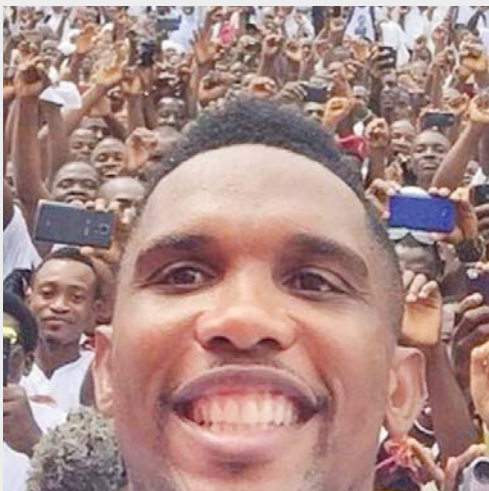
Seven of the 20 Premier League clubs have British managers, but the current top-seven sides are all managed by foreigners, with Welshman Tony Pulis' West Bromwich Albion the highest-placed team with a British manager.

"As I say, there are quality foreign coaches as well. I just think on the balance, there's too many foreigners at the moment and British coaches probably just don't get the chances."

(Source: Reuters)



♥ @falcao The key is open. The results it wasn't we expected. We can do it in Monaco. ...



♥ @setoo9 Meeting my fans is always MAGICAL! ...



♥ @davidbeckham Can't say I'm not impressed with the kids dinner tonight ...



# Iranian teams held in AFC Champions League

**S P O R T S** Persepolis and Zob Ahan **d e s k** football teams were held to draws against Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal and UAE's Al Ain respectively on Tuesday.

In the match held in Muscat, capital of Oman in Group D of the AFC Champions League, Persepolis were on the verge of bagging three points after Mohsen Mosalman found the back of the net with a low shot from outside the area but Al Hilal Brazilian Carlos Eduardo equalized the match with a header with eight minutes remaining.

Elsewhere in Dubai, Zob Ahan drew 1-1 with Al Ain.

Jerry Bengtson gave the Iranians the lead against the run of play in the 57th minute when he slid in to score from close range after Al Ain had failed to turn their dominance into goals.

But Ahmed saved a point for the club from the United Arab Emirates when he rose highest to meet Bandar Mohamed's corner and power a header past Mohammadrashid Mazaheri in the Zobahan goal.



## Draw was a fair result, says Persepolis coach



**S P O R T S** Persepolis head **d e s k** coach Branko Ivankovic believes that the 1-1 draw against Al Hilal in the first week of AFC Champions League was a fair result for both teams.

"It was the biggest game of Matchday 1 in the tournament. Al Hilal is a great team full of big player but we played well and I think the 1-1 draw was

a fair result for both teams. I'm satisfied with my players overall performance in the game. Now we have to be prepared for the next two games against Al Rayyan and Al Wahda in order to grab enough points," Branko told reporters in the post-match press conference.

Persepolis held to a 1-1 draw against Saudi side Al Hilal in the first game of AFC Champions League on Tuesday.

## We got what we wanted, says Zob Ahan coach



**S P O R T S** Zob Ahan head **d e s k** coach Mojtaba Hosseini stated that his team had a defensive approach against Al Ain with an eye on counter attacks.

"We played defensively and looking for counter attacks. Fortunately we got what we wanted and a 1-1 draw against one of the best teams in Asia is definitely a good result for us.

"We were playing well when we conceded on a set-piece but at the end I'm proud of my young squad who did their best during the 90 minutes," Hosseini told reporters in the post-match press conference.

Zob Ahan managed to get a 1-1 draw against Al Ain in the in the first game of AFC Champions League on Tuesday.

## Iran beats Kenya to book Rollball World Cup final berth

The Iranian women's national rollball team has proudly marched into the final showdown of the fourth edition of Rollball World Cup in Bangladesh after wrecking reigning champion Kenya's hopes in the prestigious tournament.

On Wednesday morning, the Iranian outfit notched up a hard-fought 3-2 victory at Court 3 of Mirpur Indoor Stadium in the Bangladeshi capital city of Dhaka, amid stiff resistance from the East African side to defend its championship title.

The Kenyans got off to a strong start, and could open the scoring early into the match. The Iranian sportswomen went forward after the goal. They mounted a string of attacks and placed Kenya's goal under pressure. Their efforts finally bore fruit and the Persians drew level with the Kenyans.

After that, the Kenyan rollball team did their utmost and doubled the scoreboard.

The Iranian side, however, was resolute not to let the



opposite team fulfill its dream of featuring in the title clash.

In the dying moments of the match, Iranians grasped a marvelous opportunity and scored the winner.

The Iranian women's national rollball team will play the final against India, who won through an emphatic victory against Senegal in the other semi-final 8-3.

Additionally, the Iranian men's national rollball team clinched a thrilling 11-3 semifinal win against Bangladesh at Court 3 of Mirpur Indoor Stadium. Now, Iran will play against India in the final later on Wednesday.

The fourth edition of Rollball World Cup started in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on February 17, and will conclude on February 23, 2017.

Rollball is played on skates and between two teams of 12 players. Only six players out of the 12 are allowed to play on court at a time. A player can hold the ball in one hand or both hands, but must dribble the ball while carrying it.

The game was created by Indian sports teacher Raju Dabhade in Pune, India. Dabhade is now the secretary of the International Rollball Federation.

(Source: PressTV)

## Iran, Kazakhstan sign MoU on mutual sports cooperation

The National Olympic Committee of the Islamic Republic of Iran (NOCIRI) and the National Olympic Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to further expand cooperation in various sports.

During a ceremony on the sidelines of the 69th Executive Board Meeting of Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) in the northern Japanese city of Sapporo on Tuesday, NOCIRI President Kioumars Hashemi and his Kazakh counterpart Timur Kulibayev exchanged viewpoints on the promotion of Tehran-Astana sports relationship and signed an agreement.

The MoU calls for all-out efforts from Iranian and Kazakh authorities to cement sportive relations between the two neighboring countries. It also demands the exchange of sports delegations, experts and trainers.

The accord further asks for the participation of Iranian and Kazakh sports teams in the two countries' international tournaments, and organization of joint training camps.

Additionally, the Iranian and Kazakh Olympic committees agreed to exchange information in the fields of sports, sports medicine and anti-doping programs.

(Source: PressTV)

## UEFA to wait and see on any Red Bull teams' Champions League ban

UEFA said any potential Champions League ban for RasenBallsport Leipzig or Red Bull Salzburg for having the same owner is "hypothetical" until the qualifying places have been decided at the end of the season.

Austrian daily Salzburg Nachrichten reported on Wednesday that European football's governing body UEFA had offered a "early signals" that one of the two clubs - both owned by Austrian energy drink giant Red Bull - would be prevented from playing in the Champions League, should both qualify.

Both RasenBallsport Leipzig, enjoying a marvellous debut campaign in Germany's Bundesliga, and Austrian Bundesliga leaders Red Bull Salzburg are on course to qualify for the Champions League based on their current league positions.

A total of 22 teams automatically entered the 2016-17 UEFA Champions League group stage with the remaining slots taken by the 10 sides who come through qualifying.

In the case of multiple teams with the same owners qualifying, only one of them would be admitted to a

UEFA club competition, it said.

Oliver Mintzlaff, global head of soccer for Red Bull and RB Leipzig CEO, was quoted as telling German news agency SID: "If we qualify there is no reason why we should have any doubts about playing in Europe next season."

A spokesman for Red Bull Salzburg said: "Even UEFA said that any presumption regarding this topic is only speculation - nothing more. And FC Red Bull Salzburg are not willing to take part in any kind of speculation."

(Source: Reuters)

## Sunjic: Brazil 2014 was an experience I'll never forget

The past few months have not been easy for Toni Sunjic. In May 2016 the centre-back suffered the disappointment of relegation with VfB Stuttgart, and in the previous November, was part of the Bosnia and Herzegovina side that missed out on a place at UEFA EURO 2016 after a defeat to Republic of Ireland in the qualifying play-offs.



As a result, the angular 6'4 (1.93 metres) defender found himself involved in the rebuilding process with two sides. While Stuttgart are aiming to return to the Bundesliga, the national team's objective is to reach the 2018 FIFA World Cup™.

Nevertheless, Sunjic's club career has not gone entirely according to plan. In the first half of the season the defender was a regular in the Stuttgart starting line-up, only to fall down the pecking order and be loaned out to Serie A side Palermo in January. "When the new coach arrived in Stuttgart I wasn't in the first team any more," he said in an interview with FIFA.com. "That's why I wanted to try my luck in Palermo and I'm very happy here now. I've settled here very quickly and Mato Jajalo, as well as the other players from the Balkans, have helped me with that."

Palermo are currently in the midst of a relegation battle, and after Sunjic initially only made a few cameo appearances, he featured for around 40 minutes in a 4-1 defeat away to leaders Juventus last Friday. "I can see already that Serie A is a very strong league," he said. "If we can play all our games like we did against Napoli [a 1-1 draw] and Crotone [a 1-0 win] then we've got a good chance." In his short time in Sicily so far, the 28-year-old has already recognised a difference between Italian and German football: "In Italy it's more tactical. In Germany teams are much more open."

Road to Russia

Sunjic will soon join up with his colleagues in the national team as they resume their quest for a place at Russia 2018 – an objective coach Mehmed Bazdarevic's charges are well placed to achieve. So far they have won two, drawn one and lost one, leaving them on seven points in third spot in Group H behind leaders Belgium (12 points) and Greece (10). "When you consider that Belgium are in our group we're not doing too badly, but it'll be difficult to finish top," said Sunjic, who won the Bosnian championship with in Zrinjski Mostar 2009.

Sunjic says that Bazdarevic has "not changed much" since his side's defeat in the European Championship qualifying play-offs. "Ireland didn't really suit us as an opponent and in the end they deserved it more than we did. We still have the same core of players. We just need to show more than we did in the last qualifying campaign."

Memories of the 2014 World Cup in Brazil are no doubt helpful in that regard. Bosnia and Herzegovina's participation there was the nation's first at a major tournament since independence was declared in the early 1990s. Sunjic was part of the squad and played two matches from start to finish. "It was an experience I'll never forget and is something I can be proud of for the rest of my life," he said. "Unfortunately we didn't make it out of the group stage and I think we could've done a lot better." The team ended up just one point behind Nigeria in third place in Group F, and are now eager to make amends in Russia.

The country's route to the tournament suffered a setback in Greece in the team's last match in November. They were 1-0 up for a long time thanks to Miralem Pjanic's goal, only for Georgios Tzavelas to equalise for the hosts in the fifth minute of stoppage time. "Taking a point in Greece isn't bad, but we deserved to win and their goal hurt us," Sunjic said.

All of which means challenging times are ahead for Sunjic, with both club and country: "As I said earlier, it'll be difficult to top our group. If we can finish second I hope we'll have better luck in the play-offs."

(Source: FIFA)

## Shandong Luneng line up move for Man United's Ashley Young - sources

Shandong Luneng are pushing for a deal to sign Manchester United's Ashley Young, sources close to the Chinese Super League club have told ESPN FC.

United captain Wayne Rooney has been strongly linked with a switch to China, and now Young is being lined up for a move.

Shandong have been pursuing former England star Young for several weeks and are trying to convince him to agree a move before the Chinese transfer window closes on Feb. 28.

Sources have told ESPN FC that the club, managed by Felix Magath, are in talks with the 31-year-old's agents and have enlisted the help of a representative based in England.

Young is keeping his options open as he wants to be playing regularly and has been used sparingly by Jose Mourinho so far this season.

The former Aston Villa and Watford player has made just seven starts in all competitions for United and been played out of position at right-back.

Young, in the final 18 months of his contract, is happy at Old Trafford as long he remains part of the manager's first-team plans.

The club would be reluctant to lose him as they battle for silverware on four fronts.

(Source: ESPN)





# Abtin Golkar wins first Abolhassan Najafi Award

**CULTURE TEHRAN** — Abtin Golkar, the d e s k Persian translator of “A Nest of the Gentlefolk” by Russian novelist Ivan Turgenev (1818 – 1883), has received the first Abolhassan Najafi Award.

The award was established in the name of Abolhassan Najafi (1930-2016), the linguist and translator of French literature, by his family members last year and will be given to the best translation of a novel every year.

The award including a medal bearing the image of Najafi in addition to five Bahar Azadi gold coins was presented to the 39-year-old Golkar, who is also a Russian literature and language researcher, during a ceremony at the Book City Institute on Tuesday.

“Heart of a Dog” (Mikhail Bulgakov) and “Inspector General” (Nikolai Gogol) are among other translations by Golkar.

The jury members included Zia Movahhed, Ali Masumi Hamedani, Abdollah Kowsari, Mahasti Bahreini, Madmud Hosseinzad and Mojdeh Daqiqi.

Najafi died of pneumonia at the age of 86 on January 22, 2016. He was a senior member of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature with a career spanning over half a century.

He translated dozens of illustrious works including “The Devil and the Good Lord” by Jean-Paul Sartre, “Antimemoires” by André Malraux and “The Thibaults” by Roger Martin du Gard.

Najafi’s heirs have donated his prestigious personal library to the academy.



This file photo shows the Iranian translator shaking hands with President Hassan Rouhani before receiving an award for translation of Russian writer Edvard Radzinsky’s “Stalin” during Iran’s Book of the Year Awards ceremony at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on February 9, 2016. (IBNA/Amir Gholami)

Filmmaker Bahman Farmanara, linguist Omid Publications Hossein Karimi are among the Tabibzadeh and Managing Director of Niloofar supporters of the award.

## Musicians Hossein Alizadeh and Majid Khalaji to begin tour of Europe in March

**A R T TEHRAN** — Iranian d e s k tar virtuoso Hossein Alizadeh and master of tonbak Majid Khalaji will begin a tour of Europe in March.

The two masters will begin with Hannover in Germany on March 4 and Berlin will be their next stop on March 5, Khalaji has announced on his official website.

They will continue their concerts in Paris on March 11, and will be heading to Gent in Belgium on March 12.

Geneva in Switzerland will be



hosting the musicians on March 16, and Enschede in the Netherlands will be the host on March 18.

The Swiss city of Basel will be their last destination on March 19.

## Passion plus timing makes magic formula for 2017 Oscars

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — This year’s Oscars is filled with projects fueled by passion and deeply-held personal visions that prevailed over skepticism, funding troubles and conventional wisdom.

For favorite “La La Land”, which took director Damien Chazelle six years to get made, and indie challenger “Moonlight”, made on such a tight budget the cast and crew shared one trailer, the tortured path to the Academy Awards has only added to their allure.

Other recent films like Martin Scorsese’s “Silence” was 28 years in the making, while Warren Beatty flirted for two decades with the idea of “No Rules Apply”. They were notably snubbed in awards season and at the box office, however, as was Ben Affleck’s personal project “Live by Night”.

Hollywood awards watchers say that may have little to with the skill and commitment of the filmmakers. But certain passion projects and their creators found a way of breaking through to audiences at what turned out to be the just the right moment, years after they were first conceived.

“Timing is everything on these movies and how they resonate. It’s about passion

but it’s also about being in the right place at the right time,” said Pete Hammond, awards columnist for Deadline.com.

“Moonlight”, the tale of a young black man struggling to grow up in an impoverished Miami neighborhood, was drawn from the personal experiences of director Barry Jenkins and writer Tarell Alvin McCraney.

“No one was doing it for the paycheck,” said “Moonlight” Oscar-nominated supporting actress Naomie Harris. “We didn’t have a publicity budget, it was all word of mouth and us doing interviews.”

Despite such hardships, the unsentimental view of bullying, and drugs issues arrived just as Hollywood was clamoring for movies about modern, black stories rather than “maids and slaves” fare. “Moonlight” has eight Oscar nominations.

The film shows “a very specific place and point of view and I think people right now want to experience genuine and authentic stories,” Jenkins said.

Meanwhile, “La La Land”, a new, romantic musical with old world charm but a not-so-happy ending, is favorite to take the best picture Oscar on Sunday after getting a leading 14 nominations.

## Angelina Jolie says ‘we’ll always be a family’ despite divorce

**NEW YORK (Reuters)** — Angelina Jolie said on Tuesday she hoped her family would be stronger after her divorce from Brad Pitt, but that the actress still thinks of him as a wonderful father.

“We are focusing on the health of our family, and so we will be, we will be stronger when we come out of this because that’s what we’re determined to do as a family,” Jolie told ABC Television’s “Good Morning America” in an interview.

Jolie, in some of her first comments on the divorce from Pitt, was asked if she still thought of the actor as the “wonderful father” she had called him several years ago.

“Of course,” she replied. “We will always be a family, always.”

Jolie and Pitt’s surprise split last September after more than 10 years together turned bitter after fights over custody of their six children and accusations of child abuse against Pitt involving one of the children after the “Moneyball” star lost his temper.

Pitt has since been cleared of any wrongdoing but Jolie has primary custody of their children pending a final settlement of the divorce.

Jolie, in Cambodia to promote her new movie “First They Killed My Father,” told the BBC in an interview at the weekend that the split with Pitt has been difficult.

“Many people find themselves in this situation. My whole family have all been through a difficult time. My focus is my children, our children,” she said.

All six of the children flew to Cambodia for Saturday’s world premiere of “First They Killed My Father,” which is a real life account of the Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s in which more than one million people died of starvation, exhaustion, disease or in mass executions.

Jolie, who adopted her eldest child Maddox, now 15, from Cambodia, directed the film and said she made it to better understand the recent history of Cambodia.

## Flying Turtle Awards to honor Darvishian, Taqavi

**CULTURE TEHRAN** —Writer d e s k Ali-Ashraf Darvishian and illustrator Nayyereh Taqavi will be honored at the Flying Turtle Awards, which are annually presented to top children’s literary works.

Darvishian and Taqavi will receive the Flying Turtle Special Medal for their lifetime achievements during a celebration at the Book City Institute on Saturday, the organizers announced on Wednesday.

Darvishian, 75, is the author of over 50 books, a number of which are for children. Among his credits

are “When Will You Come Back Dear Brother?” and “The Children’s Library on Fire”.

Taqavi, 66, illustrated over 20 works by Iranian and foreign writers, some of which were acclaimed at cultural events. She created illustrations for “Sweeter than Flying” by Gholam-Ali Serami, “The Crystal Tree” by Shokufeh Taqi and dozens of other books.

The Flying Turtle Awards event was established by the Book City Institute and the Children’s Literature Studies Periodical.

## NEWS IN BRIEF



### Ahmad Vakili’s exhibition of printmaking to open in Tehran gallery

**A R T TEHRAN** — The Sareban Gallery d e s k in Tehran will be holding an exhibition of printmaking by veteran artist Ahmad Vakili in an exhibition opening on Friday.

The 33-year career of the master will be reviewed in the exhibit named “Thirty Three”, while a book reviewing life and works of Ahmad Vakili will also be introduced at the opening ceremony.

Vakili is one of the famous printmakers in Iran. He is a graduate of art and has held several solo exhibits in different galleries in Iran. He has also participated in several international festivals.

The exhibit will be running until March 6 at the gallery located at 8 Mehmandust St., off Shahid Beheshti Ave.



### Charles Bukowski’s poems come to Iranian bookstores

**CULTURE TEHRAN** — A selection of d e s k prominent American poet Charles Bukowski’s poems has recently been published in Persian in a book titled “Don’t Be Sad for Me”.

Translator Sina Kamalabadi selected the poems for the book, which was released by Onvan Publications.

## WHAT’S IN ART GALLERIES

### Painting

■ An exhibition of paintings by Elham Zare is underway at Not Gallery.

The exhibition named “Being towards Death” runs until February 26 at the gallery located at No. 3 Shabnam Alley, Qaem Maqam St.

■ Paintings by Mahsa Mohammadi are on display in an exhibition at Delgosha Gallery.

The exhibit entitled “The Dreams of the Dead People” will run until March 7 at the gallery that can be found at No. 30, Mohajer Alley, Iranshahr St., Karim Khan Ave.

### Installation

■ Sets of installation art by Shaqayeq Arabi are currently on display in an exhibition at Mohsen Gallery.

The exhibition entitled “Elsewhere” runs until March 10 at the gallery located at 42 East Mina Blvd., Naji St., off Zafar St.

### Multimedia

■ Aaran Projects Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings and installation art by Homa Emami.

The exhibit named “The Life of the Garden” runs until March 6 at the gallery located at No. 5 Lolagar Alley, Neauphle-le-Chateau St.

### Calligraphy

■ An exhibition of calligraphy works on wood and metal by Ali Ashrafpur and Reza Pajuhesh will be held at Shokuh Gallery from February 24 to March 1.

The gallery can be found at 19 Amir Nuri Alley, North Salimi St. near Andarzgu Blvd.