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IRGC has been key in fighting terrorism: Zarif

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Saturday that the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) has provided the neighboring countries with utmost support in countering terrorist groups.

His comments came as the Trump administration is considering to designate the IRGC a terrorist organization.

"Such moves by the U.S. have never been beneficial for the country. All the world has admitted that the IRGC has provided the neighboring countries with utmost support in countering terrorism," he told reporters on the sidelines of a ceremony held to commemorate the martyrs of the Foreign Ministry.

According to Reuters, officials from the Pentagon and U.S. and foreign intelligence agencies have raised objections to naming the IRGC a terrorist group.

Reuters reported another of the officials as saying that adding the IRGC to the terrorist list would cause friction with U.S. European allies, who in the wake of the 2015 nuclear agreement are trying to rebuild business ties to Iran.

It has been acknowledged that if the IRGC had not rushed to the support of the Iraqi army in 2004, Daesh (ISIS) would have captured more Iraqi cities.

Iran to import 950 tons of yellow cake



Non-oil trade up 1.8%, hits \$77 billion

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The value of Iran's non-oil trade with other countries during the first eleven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2016-February 18, 2017) stood at \$76.907 billion, with 1.8 percent rise from the same period of time in the previous year; IRIB reported on Saturday citing Iran's Customs Administration.

The country's worth of non-oil trade was \$75.536 billion during the first eleven months of the preceding year.

Also, Iran's value of non-oil exports rose 0.21 percent during the mentioned time to stand at \$38.492 billion.

The country's imports of non-oil goods during the first eleven months of this year stood at \$38.415 billion, showing 3.47 percent growth from the same time span in the previous year.

Gas condensate was the top commodity in the country's non-oil export list with an export value of \$6.571 billion, accounting for 17.07 percent of the total 11-month non-oil exports value.

Liquefied natural gas (LNG) came in second followed by low-density oils, associated petroleum gas (APG) and hydrocarbon gas liquids and finally liquefied propane.

China, UAE, Iraq, Turkey and South Korea were the main importers of goods from Iran during the mentioned period.

China, UAE, South Korea, Turkey and Germany were the major exporters.

ARTICLE

By Hajjiali Sepahvand, Mehdi Sepahvand

Trump trapped in Orientalism, racism, and imperialist system

History is written by the winners and victors. Therefore, they always find an excuse to justify obscene and unjust behavior. Race has been one of the most preliminary concepts for that use, because some races have tapped their unquestionable superiority to justify all their abominable behavior as well as the inaptitude of other races.

Imperialism was one of those systems which tapped the idea of race extensively. According to Bill Ashcroft, founder of post-colonial studies, "Perhaps one of the most catastrophic binary systems perpetuated by imperialism is the invention of the concept of race. The reduction of complex physical and cultural differences within and between colonized societies to the simple opposition of black/brown/yellow/white is in fact a strategy to establish a binarism of white/non-white, which asserts a relation of dominance."

This is why the idea of race and colonialism are interwoven. They have the same motivation to depict the civilized/primitive dualism; and they share some necessity to hierarchically categorize humans. According to this system, the civilized man has a mission to improve the uncivilized, barbarian, and inferior people to a higher living standard. Therefore he is entitled to behaving the uncivilized man in any way he deems right.

■ The history and developments of 'race'

The word "race" has always provided an effective tool for establishing the simplest of models for classifying man according to their color. Color has grown into a tool for distinguishing between groups of people and identifying their behavior. For example, the Indians are expected to be savage, the black to be inferior, and the white to be decent and dignified! But it is necessary to question such viewpoints. Therefore, historically reviewing the formation of the viewpoint is needed. **→13**

Global Economy: Two percent inflation. A call to action?

U.S. President Donald Trump's address to Congress may make the most headlines, but inflation readings of 2 percent could prove more significant economic events next week - a call to action perhaps in America and an important milestone in Europe.

The U.S. consumer price index (CPI), published mid-Feb, has already shown prices rising at their fastest monthly pace in nearly four years in January and a year-on-year rate of 2.5 percent.

However, the Fed has often emphasized the inflation measure for personal consumption expenditures (PCE) because of its wider range of goods and services. And that too is now seen climbing to 2 percent on its release on Wednesday.

Rob Carnell, chief international economist at ING, sees the release as pivotal, nudging more Federal Open Market Committee members, who next meet on March 14-15, to favor action as the excuse of low inflation disappears.

"Their target inflation measure is hitting their longer-run objective and at that point, everybody should be waking up and saying: You know what, March is a

live month," he said.

In a Reuters poll of primary dealers earlier this month, none expected the next rate hike to occur before the second quarter. According to minutes released on Wednesday, many Federal Reserve policymakers said it may be appropriate to raise interest rates again "fairly soon", taken by markets as implying a reduced chance of a March hike.

"The only thing they can point to is all the uncertainty around Trump. Well, the only uncertainty is how much stimulus he's going to deliver," said Carnell. **→4**

Several Azerbaijani troops killed in Karabakh clashes

Deadly clashes have broken out between Azerbaijani troops and Armenian separatists over the breakaway Karabakh region, authorities on both sides say.

Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry said in a statement that Armenian forces "attempted an intrusion into Azerbaijani territory along the Karabakh frontline" in the early hours of Saturday.

"Fierce clashes erupted at the frontline's Khojavend-Fizuli sector," the statement said, adding the Azerbaijani military "suffered losses in manpower as they courageously repelled the enemy's attack." "The enemy continues shelling Azerbaijani positions from heavy artillery," the official statement added.

Armenian officials reported their own version of the clashes, accusing Azerbaijani forces of at-

tacking separatist positions along the south-eastern and eastern sectors of the frontline.

They accused "Azerbaijan's political and military leadership" of increasing tensions at the frontline and spreading disinformation.

"Armenia is committed to the ceasefire and calls on the Azerbaijani side to refrain from steps that would further escalate the situation," a Defense Ministry statement said.

The latest fighting came after three Armenian soldiers were killed in clashes with Azerbaijani forces on December 29, 2016.

The former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia have been locked in a lingering conflict over the disputed region and frequent exchanges of fire nearly spiraled into an all-out war last year.

In April 2016, at least 110 people on both sides were killed as simmering tensions flared into the worst skirmishes in decades over the region.

A Russian-brokered truce ended the four days of fierce clashes in April but attempts to re-launch the stalled peace process since then have not been successful.

Karabakh is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan but it is governed by the self-proclaimed Karabakh republic backed by Armenia.

Baku and Yerevan have quarreled over the region since Armenian separatists captured the territory in a war that claimed nearly 30,000 lives in the early 1990s and ended in a fragile 1994 ceasefire deal. The two sides, however, never signed a solid peace pact.

(Source: agencies)

Missile tests fall within province of national council: IRGC official

POLITICS TEHRAN — A spokesman for the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps said in comments on Saturday that missile launches are approved by the Supreme National Security Council, reacting to news that the force acts independently.

"Missile tests are carried out under a regular timetable, but the Defense Ministry's [missile test] plan was coincided with the beginning of Trump's tenure, which in turn led to controversies," Tasnim news agency quoted Ramazan Sharif as saying in a press conference in East Azerbaijan province.

Headed by the incumbent president, the national body is enshrined in the Iranian constitution as one of the most powerful decision makers.

Earlier in February, the White House strongly criticized Iran's missile tests and announced that it had officially put Iran "on notice", a decision denounced by Tehran as "provocative".

The IRGC spokesman rejected claims that the missile tests were intentionally scheduled at a critical time so as to stir controversy, saying the claims aimed at derailing the "public opinion."

"Missile tests have a significant deterrent effect and do not let the enemy act crazy," he said. Sharif also hailed the Islamic Republic's missile power, saying, "Our power, including our missile capability, brought the West to the negotiating table."



Ice Men Festival

Men pose for a photo while standing in the icy waters of Khiav-Chai, a river that runs amidst the north-western city of Meshkinshahr, Ardebil Province, on February 24, 2017.

The traditional winter entertainment titled "Ice Men Festival" was held under the auspices of Iran Sport for All Federation.

Iran Integrated Comprehensive Customs System (ICCS)

Modernization through Digital Customs

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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Prosecutor general says called in 10 dual national officials

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's prosecutor general **d e s k** has said he has reported over 10 officials with dual nationalities to the Ministry of Intelligence.

Speaking on Friday, Mohammad Jafar Montazeri said in his letter he has asked the ministry to take proper action against these officials, Resalat newspaper reported.

"Dual nationals cannot, according to the law, hold office in governmental or executive organizations. But they usually do not reveal their nationality status. So it is security organizations which have to take care and monitor them," Montazeri stressed.



Regional anti-Iran coalition unlikely: diplomat

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's ambassador to **d e s k** Kuwait believes that it is unlikely that an anti-Iran coalition is formed in the region.

Speaking to Etamad daily newspaper in an interview published on Saturday, Alireza Enayati said a coalition to create tension would go against the message of friendship and cooperation shared by the regional countries.

Nevertheless, he added, the region cannot tolerate more crisis. "If there is crisis, all will suffer damages. Right now the regional countries cannot overlook the high cost of crisis that exist in the area."



Nobody has right to use public property for campaigns: minister

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's interior minister **d e s k** on Saturday reiterated that nobody has right to use public property for the promotion of a person or group for the upcoming or any other elections.

"What the Interior Ministry expects is a legal, healthy, high-turnout, ethical, and secure election," Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said, IRNA reported.

He went on to criticize "some scenarios discussed in political circles lately" as being "outrageous, too much revealing, and unethical, whose outcome would be that whoever is elected through it would not be able to materialize the objectives of the establishment."



Iran, Azerbaijan agree on removing visa barriers

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's ICT minister **d e s k** announced on Saturday that Tehran and Baku have agreed on easing issuance of visas for the two countries' nationals.

"Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan reached the final agreement to issue visa at the borders and the agreement will be executed in the near future," Mahmoud Vaezi said, according to Fars.

The minister, in the meantime, said that the two sides have also held negotiations on boosting banking and tourism relations.



Iran, Russia to ink several MOUs during Rouhani's visit

POLITICS TEHRAN — An Iranian deputy foreign minister has declared that Tehran and Moscow will sign several memoranda of understanding during the upcoming visit by President Hassan Rouhani to Russia.

"Over five high-level documents on economic, consular, and cultural cooperation will be signed between Iran and Russia during President Rouhani's visit to Moscow in late March," Ebrahim Rahimpour said on Saturday, Mehr reported.

He added Iran and Russia are presently in talks over drawing up the documents.



Expert meeting on Iran-Ukraine ties due on Monday

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Institute for Iran-**d e s k** Eurasia Studies plans to host an expert meeting on relations between the Islamic Republic and Ukraine on Monday.

The expert meeting, titled "Iran and Ukraine: 25-Year Diplomatic Relations and the Prospects of Bilateral Ties", will be held at the IRAS conference center in Tehran, Tasnim reported.

The event will be attended by senior diplomats and political analysts, including Ukraine's Ambassador to Iran Sergey Burdilyak and former Iranian ambassador to Ukraine Akbar Ghasemi.

As elections approach Rouhani frets about bipolarity

POLITICS TEHRAN — In the **d e s k** run-up to the election period in May, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani warned against what he described as a "bipolar election" as it causes headaches for the country.

"We must not let the elections create bipolarity as it causes trouble," the president said in a speech to the election staff in Tehran on Saturday.

Iran will hold presidential as well as city and council elections on May 19, 2017, one month earlier than usual to avoid a coincidence with the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan which starts late in May.

"We already have the experience of the elections turning bipolar," Rouhani stated, hinting at the 2009 unrest when two of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's rivals claimed massive vote-rigging.

Seduced by rigging claims, thousands of protesters took to the streets in Tehran, objecting to the election results.

Rouhani said massive turnout in



the next elections is consequential for the fate and grandeur of Iran in the international arena, Rouhani, inviting the Iranian nation to stage a

"competitive and impressive" show.

Insecure regional situation also adds more sensitivity to the event, which is held in a region fraught with violence and feud.

Syria has been at war with numerous terrorist organizations for six years now, Iraq has been fighting ISIS since 2014, Saudi Arabia continues to pound Yemen, and Turkey has been insecure to levels unseen in decades.

Rouhani, who won in a landslide majority of 18.5 million in 2013 in a field of six candidates, is expected to stand as a viable candidate for a second term.

In the international arena, he championed a nuclear deal with six world powers and has been resuming stalled political ties with European countries.

However, questions remain if the administration has managed to renovate a sluggish domestic economy, hit by soaring inflation and raving unemployment bequeathed to him by the previous administrations.

Iran to import 950 tons of yellow cake

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran has **d e s k** placed a request to a joint commission of the international nuclear deal for yellow cake imports from Kazakhstan, its nuclear chief said on Saturday while lamenting that London is getting in the way.

"We have sent a request for the import of 950 tons of yellow cake from Kazakhstan," ISNA news agency quoted Ali Akbar Salehi as saying on Saturday.

Yellow cake imports follow the 2015 nuclear deal that removed economic sanctions against Iran after it agreed to roll back its nuclear program.

Imported yellow material will be processed to produce uranium hexafluoride enriched up to 3.6 percent, of which Iran is not allowed to have more than 300 kg.

Excess amounts of uranium hexafluoride have to be down blended to natural uranium level or to be sold on the international market and delivered to the international buyer in return for natural uranium delivered to Iran.

For Iran to purchase required material for its nuclear activities, a joint commission

of six signatories to the deal, the U.S., Russia, China, France, England and Germany, will have to agree.

England has so far shown hesitation to agree with Iran's request, Salehi, a U.S.-educated nuclear physicist, stated.

"While five signatories to the deal have declared their written agreement to the joint

commission, England changed its stance in the last moments,"

Salehi noted, citing results of the U.S. elections and Middle East issues as possible reasons.

"Still we are waiting for England to declare its final written stance."

Hesitation shown by London is unwarranted as Tehran has so far lived up

to its obligation as verified by the most recent report by the International Atomic Energy Organization.

A confidential report by the body, which oversees the implementation of the deal, obtained by Reuters made clear Iran's official stock of enriched uranium has fallen by half.

"As of 18 February 2017, the quantity of Iran's uranium enriched up to 3.67 percent U-235 was 101.7 kg," the IAEA said in a quarterly report on Iran, its first since the inauguration of U.S. President Donald Trump.

Also, Iran has already imported 382 tons of yellow cake in two shipments from Russia.

Tehran has announced plans to grow more independent of yellow cake imports considering deposits of natural uranium in the country.

"We have identified deposits of raw uranium and we hope to reach self-sufficiency in the next year," Salehi pointed out.

Processing facilities in Ardakan, central Iran, will be used for this purpose, he added.



Salehi says while five signatories to the nuclear deal have declared their written agreement to the joint commission, England changed its stance in the last moments.

Tehran insists regional cooperation needed to fight terrorism

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Minister **d e s k** Mohammad Javad Zarif reiterated Iran's position on Saturday that cooperation among the countries in the Middle East region is required to fight terrorism.

"We need regional cooperation to fight terrorism and extremism in the region," he told reporters on the sidelines of a ceremony held to commemorate martyrs of the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

He added, "Spreading sectarianism is not beneficial for anyone."

The minister expressed hope that the neighboring countries would understand the benefits of interaction in countering terrorism.

In a speech on February 19 during the Munich Security Conference, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu claimed that Iran was "undermining" regional stability through pursuing what he called a "sectarian policy".

■ 'Iran relies on its people'

During his speech at the ceremony in the Foreign Ministry, Zarif also said that the Islamic Republic relies

on its people.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has been able to maintain security in a region in which there is violence, brutality and murder and succeeded to make advances in various spheres of nuclear and other advanced technologies and the resistance economy," he explained.

He also said that Iran is able to hold negotiations at the diplomatic arena and resist against the pressures.

Principles of Iran's national power are comprehensive and the country needs no one to protect them, he said.

Defense Ministry working with 95 universities

POLITICS TEHRAN — Defense **d e s k** Minister Hossein Dehqan said on Saturday that his ministry is collaborating with 95 universities across the country and is planning to expand its cooperation with the Science Ministry.

The defense and science ministries have had close cooperation and need to work on more mutual projects, Dehqan told reporters after the two ministries signed a memorandum of understanding for cooperation.

Dehqan further said cooperation between the two ministries should become more systematic.

In recent years, Iran has celebrated significant achievements in its defense sector and has been able to attain self-sufficiency in production of hi-tech military equipment and systems. Earlier this month, the Islamic Republic put on

display its latest achievements in the area of space technology in a ceremony attended by President Hassan Rouhani, Minister of Science, Research and Technology Mohammad Farhadi and General Dehqan.

During the ceremony, which was held on February 1, the domestically-designed Nahid (Venus) 1 telecommunications satellite, and student-manufactured Cube satellite were unveiled.

Days later, on February 6, Dehqan said during an unveiling ceremony that Iran is mass-producing new homegrown defense equipment to enhance its capabilities in ground and aerial warfare.

Among the new achievements unveiled at the ceremony were the Fajr 5 guided artillery rocket, Misagh 3 shoulder-fired missile, a 40-millimeter grenade launcher, a caliber gun and a pistol.

UN atomic watchdog confirms Iran's compliance to nuclear deal

POLITICS TEHRAN — The UN **d e s k** atomic watchdog issued a report on Friday confirming that Iran is complying with the terms of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official name for the nuclear deal.

According to the JCPOA, which went into effect in January 2016, Iran has to slow down its nuclear activities.

A confidential report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) obtained by Reuters made clear Iran's official stock of enriched uranium has fallen by half.

"As of 18 February 2017, the quantity of Iran's uranium enriched up to 3.67 percent U-235 was 101.7 kg," the IAEA said in a quarterly report on Iran, its first since the inauguration of U.S. President

Donald Trump.

The IAEA's report is issued as fears have been heightened the U.S. may walk out of the milestone pact.

Even before the conclusion of the nuclear deal, repeated reports by UN watchdog body failed to produce the least evidence that that Iran's nuclear program has diverged from its rightful course.

The nuclear deal, which was struck between Iran and the 5+1 group - the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia plus Germany - in July 2015, reassured the world of the peaceful nature of Tehran's nuclear program.

The IAEA has said that its inspection of Iran's nuclear activities is unprecedented in the history of the UN body.

Trump's anti-IRGC move stalled, sources say

POLITICS TEHRAN — A proposal by the **d e s k** Trump administration to designate Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization has stalled over warnings from defense and intelligence officials.

Officials familiar with the matter claim that the move could backfire.

Speaking on the condition of anonymity, one of the officials said, "If you do that, there is no way to escalate, and you would foreclose any possibility of talking to the

Iranians about anything."

An internal debate in the U.S. government has raised concerns that the designation could undermine the fight against Islamic State, draw opposition from key allies, further strain any U.S.-Iran diplomatic prospects, and complicate enforcement of the Iran nuclear deal.

Another official added that adding the IRGC to the terrorist list would cause friction with U.S. European allies, who in the wake of the 2015 nuclear agreement are trying to rebuild business ties with Iran, which

often means contact with the IRGC and the companies it holds.

Sanctions were already imposed on individuals and entities linked to the IRGC after Iran's ballistic missile test, which the U.S. claims violated the UN Security Council Resolution 2231. The resolution, endorsing the 2015 nuclear deal, urges Iran "not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology."

Iraqi forces push deeper into western Mosul

Saudi foreign minister makes rare visit to Baghdad

Iraqi forces pushed deeper into western Mosul on Saturday, advancing in several populated southern districts after punching through the defenses of the ISLAMIC State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group's last major urban stronghold in Iraq a day earlier.

In the capital Baghdad, the House of Saud regime Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir met Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi on Saturday in the first such visit in more than a decade between the Saudi regime and Iraq.

The new push in Mosul comes after government forces and their allies finished clearing ISIL from the east of the northern Iraqi city last month, confining the insurgents to the western sector on the other side of the Tigris river.

Commanders expect the battle in western Mosul to be more difficult, in part because tanks and armored vehicles cannot pass through the narrow alleyways that crisscross ancient districts there.

But Iraqi forces have so far made quick advances on multiple fronts, capturing the northern city's airport on Thursday, which they plan to use as a support zone, and breaching a three-meter high berm and trench set up by the ISIL.

The advancing forces are less than three kilometers (two miles) from the mosque in the old city where ISIL Leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared a caliphate spanning Iraq and Syria in 2014, sparking an international military campaign to defeat the terrorist group.

Losing Mosul would likely deal a hammer blow to the militants' dream of statehood, but they still control swaths of territory in Syria and patches of northern and western Iraq from where they could



fight a guerrilla-style insurgency in Iraq, and plot attacks on the West.

Federal police and an elite Interior Ministry unit known as Rapid Response have recaptured Hawi al-Josaq along the river and begun clearing the Tayaran district north of the airport, said Brigadier

General Hisham Abdul Kadhim.

Counter-terrorism forces were also advancing on two fronts toward Wadi Hajr and Mamoun districts, said Lieutenant General Abdelwahab al-Saadi, a senior commander.

(Source: Reuters)

First planned N. Korea-U.S. contact canceled

Plans for the first contact between North Korea and the United States after President Donald Trump took office were canceled after the U.S. State Department denied a visa for the top envoy from Pyongyang.

The talks, between senior North Korean foreign ministry envoy Choe Son Hui and former U.S. officials, were scheduled to take place on March 1 and 2 in New York but were called off after Choe was denied a visa, the Journal said.

It was not clear what led the State Department to deny the visa but North Korea's test-firing of a ballistic missile on Feb. 12 and the murder of North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un's half-brother in Malaysia may have played a role, the report said.

South Korean and U.S. officials have said they believe North Korean agents assassinated Kim Jong Nam, the estranged half-brother of Kim Jong Un, on Feb. 13.

A U.S. State Department official

denied so-called track two discussions had been scheduled.

"The U.S. government had no plans to engage in track 2 talks in New York," the official said, declining comment on individual visa cases.

A South Korean foreign ministry official declined to comment on the report of the canceled meeting in New York, saying the reported plan did not involve the U.S. or South Korean government.

The meeting in New York would have been the first time a senior North Korean envoy would visit the United States since 2011 and the first contact between U.S. and North Korean representatives since Trump took office.

Choe, director general for North American affairs at the North's foreign ministry, has previously met former U.S. officials and academics, the last time in November in Geneva for informal discussions.

(Source: AP)

'Great world war for water' may be looming: Pope Francis

Water scarcity may cause conflict and the whole globe may be on its way to a great world war over water, Pope Francis has warned, adding that the situation is very "urgent."

"The right to water is essential for the survival of persons and decisive for the future of humanity," Pope Francis said during a meeting with international experts participating in a 'Dialogue on Water' at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, as cited by americamagazine.org.

"All people have a right to safe drinking water," he said, adding "I ask [myself] if in this piecemeal third world war that we are living through, are we not going toward a great world war for water?"

Pope Francis said that the figures on water published by the United Nations cannot leave the world indifferent.

"Every day, a thousand children die of illness linked to water and contaminated water is consumed

by millions of people every day... This situation must be stopped and reversed. Fortunately, this is not impossible, but it is urgent," the pontiff said, as cited by ANSA news agency.

A February 2017 report from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) states that "groundwater sources are being depleted rapidly," citing "water scarcities" as one of the major problems.

"Mankind's future ability to feed itself is in jeopardy due to intensifying pressures on natural resources, mounting inequality, and the fallout from a changing climate," it said.

In 2016, UN Water released a report saying that about 663 million people "lack ready access to improved sources of drinking water, while the number of people without reliable access to water of good enough quality to be safe for human consumption is at least 1.8 billion."

(Source: RT)

Democrats to pick chairman to lead party against Trump, Republicans

After a brutal election loss in November, the United States Democrats will choose a new leader to begin the daunting task of rebuilding the party and heading the political opposition to Republican President Donald Trump.

The 447 members of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), the administrative and fundraising arm of the party, will gather in Atlanta to pick a new chairman in one of the most crowded and competitive party leadership elections in decades.

The stakes are high for a party still struggling to recover from the surprising Nov. 8 loss of Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and anxious to channel the growing grassroots resistance to Trump into political support for Democrats at all levels of government across the country.

Seven candidates are vying for the



chairmanship, led by former Labor Secretary Tom Perez, a favorite of former Obama administration officials, and U.S. Representative Keith Ellison of Minnesota, backed by liberal leaders such as U.S. Senators Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts. Perez is the son of Dominican immigrants, while

Ellison was the first Muslim elected to the U.S. Congress.

The clash between candidates representing the establishment and progressive wings of the party echoes the bitter 2016 primary between Clinton and Sanders, a rift Democrats hope to put behind them as they turn their focus to fighting Trump.

The election also offers the DNC a fresh start after last year's forced resignation of chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, who stepped aside after the release of hacked emails that appeared to show DNC officials trying to help Clinton defeat Sanders in the primaries.

Other contenders are Pete Buttigieg, the mayor of South Bend, Indiana, Idaho Democratic Party Executive Director Sally Boynton Brown, election lawyer Peter Peckarsky, and activists Jehmu Greene and Sam Ronan.

All of the candidates have pledged to focus on a bottom-up reconstruction of the party, which has lost hundreds of statehouse seats under Obama and faces an uphill task in trying to reclaim majorities in Congress in next year's midterm elections. Ellison has pledged to start building Democratic organizations in each U.S. county.

(Source: Reuters)

Hollande fires back at Trump over Paris comments

French President Francois Hollande fired back at the United States President Donald Trump on Saturday after the U.S. president remarked in a speech that a friend thought "Paris is no longer Paris" after attacks by militants.

Hollande said Trump should show support for U.S. allies.

"There is terrorism and we must fight it together. I think that it is never good to show the smallest defiance toward an allied country. I wouldn't do

it with the United States and I'm urging the U.S. president not to do it with France," Hollande said.

"I won't make comparisons but here, people don't have access to guns. Here, you don't have people with guns opening fire on the crowd simply for the satisfaction of causing drama and tragedy," Hollande said, responding to questions during a visit at the Paris Agri fair.

During a speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference on

Friday, Trump repeated his criticism of Europe's handling of attacks by militants saying a friend "Jim" no longer wanted to take his family to Paris.

More than 230 people have died in a series of assaults in France since the beginning of 2015, and the country has been under a state of emergency rules since November the same year.

Trump's comments also drew a rebuke from the mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo.

(Source: Reuters)



Terror blasts kill 42 in Syria's Homs

Simultaneous bombings have targeted separate areas across the western Syria city of Homs, claiming a total of 42 lives.

The attacks struck the city on Saturday. Some reports said the fatalities included a senior security official, named Hossein Da'aboul.

The Britain-based so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said the sound of gunfire and explosions had been heard early in the day. It described the attacks as double bombings hitting "the headquarters of state security and military intelligence in two central districts."

Homs is largely under government control.

Responsibility for the Saturday attacks was later claimed by the al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra) terrorist group.

(Source: SANA)

Yemeni forces target Jordanian F-16 fighter jet over Saudi Arabia

Yemeni air defense forces, backed by fighters from allied Popular Committees, have reportedly intercepted and shot down a single-engine, supersonic and multirole F-16 fighter jet of the Royal Jordanian Air Force.

An unnamed Yemeni military source told Arabic-language al-Masirah television network that the aircraft was targeted as it was flying in the skies over Saudi Arabia's southwestern border region of Najran earlier in the day.

It had purportedly taken part in the House of Saud regime-led military coalition strikes against Yemen.

This is while the General Command of Jordanian Armed Forces confirmed in a statement that one of its fighter jets had gone down inside Saudi Arabia, without providing any information about the cause of the crash.

The statement added that the pilot, identified as Adnan Naeem Abdulaziz Nabas, managed to eject before the plane crash. The Jordanian pilot will reportedly return to Jordan this evening in coordination with the Saudi regime air force.

Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) official news agency, WAM, reported that an Emirati soldier has been killed while fighting in Yemen as part of the Saudi regime-led military coalition.

The report identified the slain trooper as Khalid Ali Gha-reeb al-Balushi.

The development came only two days after the commander of Emirati troops in Yemen, Brigadier Nasser Mushabab al-Otaibi, was killed after Yemeni forces fired a medium-range ballistic missile at a gathering of Riyadh-backed militiamen loyal to the former government in the Red Sea port city of Mokha, situated 346 kilometers south of the capital, Sana'a.

(Source: Press TV)

Turkish premier: Yes vote in April referendum to stabilize country

In an attempt to rally support for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's prime minister has called for a yes vote in an upcoming constitutional referendum, arguing that a boost to the president's power would lead to a more stabilized country.

"For a strong Turkey, lasting stability, our choice is 'yes!' This is our wish, it will come," Binali Yildirim told thousands of people who had gathered in a sports arena in the Turkish capital, Ankara, in support of plans by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP/Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi) to increase presidential powers.

The rally was a kickoff to the AKP's yes campaign for the April 16 referendum, which aims to abolish the office of the prime minister and give more executive powers as an honor to the currently largely ceremonial position of president.

Yildirim said a yes to the changes, which he said should be a "willing" one and not created out of fear, would make the Turkish economy more robust and would make the government capable of dealing with terror threats successfully.

"We are taking the first steps on the path of a future strong Turkey," he said, adding, "There is no creating fear... We want a willing yes."

People were rallying by recordings of campaign songs with lyrics that said a yes vote would be a tribute to the martyrs of the failed coup of July 2016.

More than 250 were killed in a matter of a day on July 15 last year, when a group of renegade army and police officers attempted to oust Erdogan.

The coup failed permanently after the president returned to his office and people forced the putschists to lay down arms. Erdogan then ordered a massive crackdown, which has seen more than 40,000 people jailed and some 110,000 others discharged from their jobs.

Reports said the pro-referendum event on Saturday was held amid tight security as more than 6,500 police officers were deployed around the arena. People waved Turkish flags, but no AKP flags, apparently a bid by the ruling party to show that the referendum was a matter of national urgency and bipartisanship.

The crowd roared "Yes" when Yildirim said that ahead of the referendum "we will go square-to-square, street-by-street, door-by-door, and we know what we will say for change, don't we?"

The referendum faces stiff opposition in Turkey as critics say increased powers for the president would create a one-man rule and would slip Turkey into a dictatorship, especially at a time when Erdogan and the AKP are acting tough on opponents, including a large population of suspects in the Kurdish population.

(Source: Press TV)

Iran exports 24m barrels of gas condensate in January

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran exported 24 million barrels of gas condensate to European and Asian destinations in January, Shana reported on Saturday.

Asian countries have always been top buyers of Iranian gas condensate but recently Europe too has joined Iran's gas condensate customers as BP received its first one-million-barrel cargo in October 2016.

According to National Iranian Oil Company Managing Director Ali Kardor

Iran is currently producing 550,000 barrels of gas condensate on a daily basis and with South Pars giant gas field going fully operational this figure will exceed 1 million barrels per day in near future.

For the time being, Iran has about 25 million barrels of gas condensate stored in floating tanker storages and it is expected this storages will be fully sold out by the end of the next Iranian fiscal's first month (April 19).

Gas condensate was at the top of Iran's non-oil exports list during the first



11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2016-February 18, 2017). With an export value of \$6.571 billion,

the commodity accounted for 17.07 percent of the total 11-month non-oil exports value.

Iranian products' exhibition at expo center Karachi

Inaugurating the Iranian products exhibition at Karachi Expo center Iranian Deputy Minister for trade and industry and mining Mohammad Reza Fayaz said that Iran has completed the work on gas pipe line project and keeping eye on Pakistan for further action.

More than 60 Iranian companies have set up 80 stalls of various fields under the umbrella of Islamic Republic of Iran including pharmaceutical, Textile, sanitary, electrical and food.

Talking on the occasion Fayaz noted that Pak-Iran gas pipe line project and

bilateral trade will strengthen relation between both the countries.

Mayor Karachi Waseem Akhter citing the step positive said that providing employment opportunities and promotion of trade war against terrorism could be triumphed.

Traders said in their comments that the exhibition has provided the opportunity to get aware about Iranian products as the exhibition will prove itself as milestone in the promotion of relation between both the countries.

(Source: suchtv.pk)

UK city homes least affordable since 2008 as wage growth lags

The affordability of a home in U.K. cities is the worst in almost a decade, with the average house price nearly seven times annual earnings, according to Lloyds Bank.

Oxford is Britain's least affordable city, with property values almost 11 times wages, and Stirling in Scotland came top with prices 3.7 times income. While the average cost of a home in a British city rose 32 percent in the past four years to 224,926 pounds (\$282,000), annual earnings have

only increased 7 percent.

Greater London was the second-least affordable city, even as home costs in the capital posted their largest annual drop in almost six years in February, according to website Rightmove Plc. It underperformed the rest of the country during 2016 after Britain's vote to leave the European Union and tax increases on landlords in the early part of the year weighed on demand.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Trump picks conservative think tanker to chair Council of Economic Advisers

President Donald Trump has tapped an economist from the American Enterprise Institute, Kevin Hassett, to be chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, CNBC has confirmed.

Formal vetting for the CEA position is already underway, according to a source with direct knowledge on the situation.

Should he be confirmed, Hassett will work with National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn, tackling projects such as tax and budgetary reform.

Hassett is a tax expert with a Ph.D.



from the University of Pennsylvania. His presence in the Trump administration would address the concern of some economists, including former Republican and Democratic chairmen of the panel, that Trump lacked academic economists on his team. (Source: CNBC)

Thailand seals Iran rice deal

Thailand has secured a deal to sell rice to Iran for the first time in 10 years, with delivery of 50,000-100,000 tons of white rice due over the next 12 months.

Sombat Chalermwutinan, president of Asia Golden Rice Co, said the company has already reached an agreement to sell rice to the Iranian government after Iran's Health and Medical Education Ministry inspected Asia Golden Rice's factory late last year.

Initial purchase demand is 50,000-100,000 tons of white rice 5% and 100%. The company is in the process of asking for cooperation from the Export Import Bank of Thailand to help handle the payment and settlement system, which is

expected to take about one month.

Delivery is likely over the next 12 months or before June this year. "The purchase order is considered good news for Thailand after a close partnership between the government and private sector to resume Thai rice shipments to Iran after 10 years as a result of United Nations sanctions," he said.

In the past, Iran used to import 700,000 to one million tons from foreign countries, about 300,000-500,000 tons of which came from Thailand. With the easing situation in Iran, Thailand and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding in early 2016 to resume sales of 300,000 tons of rice worth 4.3

billion baht.

Thailand and Iran agreed later in October last year to a preferential trade agreement (PTA), a move intended to rev up bilateral commerce to \$3 billion by 2021. Both sides have agreed to cut import tariffs on 100 goods. The PTA differs from a free trade agreement (FTA), as the pact will be much easier to conclude and does not require the need to completely eliminate tariffs. Generally, tariffs will be cut to 10% or less, depending on the outcome of negotiations. An FTA generally requires that talks cover not only access to goods, but also for investment and services.

Iran is Thailand's ninth largest trading partner in the Middle East. In 2016, two-way trade volume totaled \$421 million, up 36.1% from a year before. Exports from Thailand came to \$267 million, up 23.1% from 2015.

Commerce Minister Apiradi Tantraporn said good signs have appeared since early this year for Thai rice export prospects, both through government to government and private to private deals.

The Commerce Ministry expects Thailand to ship 10 million tons of milled rice this year, but the Thai Rice Exporters Association said shipments would amount to 9.5 million tons.

(Source: Bangkok Post)

China overtakes U.S. and France as Germany's biggest trading partner

China for the first time became Germany's most important trading partner in 2016, overtaking the United States, which fell back to third place behind France.

German imports from and exports to China rose to 170 billion euros (\$180 billion) last year, Federal Statistics Office figures reviewed by Reuters showed.

The development is likely to be welcomed by the German government, which has made it a goal to safeguard global free trade after U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to impose tariffs on imports and his top adviser on trade accused Germany of exploiting a weak euro to boost exports.

German Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel has even suggested that the European Union should refocus its economic policy toward Asia, should the Trump administration pursue protectionism.

"Given the protectionist plans of the new U.S. president one would expect that the trade ties between Germany and China will be further strengthened," Germany's BGA trade association said in response to the shift.

Neighboring France remained the second-most important business partner with a combined trade volume

of 167 billion euros. The United States came in third with 165 billion euros.

In 2015, the United States became the top trading partner for Germany, overtaking France for the first time since 1961 thanks to an upturn in the U.S. economy and a weaker euro.

Separately, Germany's Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations said on Friday it expected exports to Russia will probably rise at least five percent this year, their first increase in years given Western sanctions.

Looking at exports alone, the United States remained the biggest client for products "Made in Germany" in 2016, importing goods from Europe's biggest economy worth some 107 billion euros.

France remained the second-most important single export destination for German goods with a sum of 101 billion euros, the data showed. Britain came in third, importing German goods worth 86 billion euros.

Britain accounted also for the biggest bi-lateral trade surplus: Exports surpassed imports from Britain by more than 50 billion euros, the figures showed.

The United States came in second with a bi-lateral



trade deficit: German exports to the U.S. surpassed imports from there by 49 billion euros.

This means that Britain and the U.S. together accounted for roughly 40 percent of Germany's record trade surplus of 252.9 billion euros in 2016.

The figures are likely to fuel the debate about Germany's export performance, its trade surplus and global economic imbalances ahead of a meeting of G20 finance ministers and central bank governors in Baden-Baden mid-March.

(Source: CNBC)

Global Economy: Two percent inflation. A call to action?

1 ->

Trump will address Congress in a speech on Tuesday expected to include some details of his infrastructure spending and tax plans, which could include a new border tax on imports.

By contrast, the European Central Bank, whose Governing Council next meets on March 9, will more easily brush aside an inflation rate of 2.0 percent, the market consensus for February, with a core rate, excluding more volatile energy and unprocessed food components, seen stubbornly below 1 percent.

Headline inflation in any case is unlikely to spiral higher.

Fabio Fois, European economist at Barclays, sees a "twin-peak" profile, with highs in April and September, boosted by rising airline, holiday, energy and food prices,

before receding toward the core level of around 1.2-1.3 percent by the end of 2018.

If inflation fails to spur central banks, what of its effect on consumers, the main drivers of growth in Europe and the United States?

U.S. consumer sentiment is seen easing further from December's 15-year high, with stock markets more subdued after initial euphoria following Trump's election victory. The February figure due on Tuesday will give a first consumer assessment of Trump's turbulent first month in office and his possible impact on the economy.

For the time being, rising inflation is not biting.

"Last year we got a bit of a boost from low oil prices. This year, it's more the nominal wage side, partly offset by higher oil

prices," said Harm Bandholz, chief U.S. economist at UniCredit.

In the euro zone's periphery, private consumption picked up with lower energy prices last year, with a reverse effect possible 2017. Among core countries, spending should stay healthy due to a strong labor market, wage increases and low interest rates, all factors that should be in place for the next year or two.

So far, consumers have shrugged off political risk factors, such as the Dutch who vote on March 15 and the British after the Brexit vote. However, British inflation could start to be felt with the rate set to approach 3 percent by the end of the year due to the fall in sterling.

Christian Schulz of Citi, behind a paper entitled "UK consumption - the only way is down", sees food and energy inflation

weakening consumer sentiment and driving up currently low savings rate.

Consumer sentiment data for February are due out on Tuesday.

Retail sales were strong from June to November, but the boom came to an abrupt end in December and January, with UK retailers now raising prices at their fastest pace in almost six years.

Fuel price rises are felt immediately, but the full impact of the lower pound may take some time to feed through to inflation because of hedging, such as by airlines, and companies having stock from before.

"We see it adding up to 2 percentage points per year," Schulz said, adding Citi views UK inflation as the biggest risk to consumption growth this year and next.

(Source: Reuters)

Tehran hosting intl. exhibition of building industry



ECONOMY TEHRAN — Some 82 Iranian and 57 foreign companies from China, Turkey and Pakistan are showcasing their latest products and achievements in the 4th International Exhibition of Building Industry, Façade, Structure, and Innovative Technologies of Iran (IRAN BuildEX).

The exhibition which kicked off on Friday will run until Monday at the Tehran Permanent International Fairground, according to the official website of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO).

The exhibition seeks to provide a platform for Iranian and international companies to learn and share about the latest developments of building industry in Iran and the global markets.

Tehran, Kuala Lumpur settle on trade using Chinese, Japanese currencies



ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran and Malaysia called for boosting of bilateral trade ties using Japanese yen and Chinese Yuan, Tasnim reported on Saturday.

Central Bank of Iran (CBI)'s Vice Governor for Foreign Exchange Affairs Gholamali Kamyab, who visited the South Asian country on top of a delegation, held talks with senior directors of Malaysian trade banks and officials of the Central Bank of Malaysia on Friday.

In a meeting with Assistant Governor to the Central Bank of Malaysia Adnan Zaylani Mohamad Zahid, Kamyab noted that CBI's policy is focused on using local currencies to facilitate trade.

The official further welcomed the Malaysian banks' interest in opening Ringgit accounts for Iranian trade banks.

Iran plans to issue \$4.5b in bonds for energy projects

Iran is looking to offer up to \$4.5 billion in rial and foreign currency-denominated bonds by March 2018, the oil ministry's news website SHANA reported on Saturday.

Iranian authorities have been keen to attract foreign investors after the end of sanctions on the country, where international bond issuance has been virtually non-existent since the late 1979 Islamic revolution.

Parliament approved on Saturday an item in the state budget for the Iranian year starting on March 21, which allows the oil ministry to issue \$3 billion worth of the rial and foreign-currency-denominated bonds, SHANA said.

Under another budget line passed on Saturday, the ministry can issue up to 50 trillion rials (\$1.5 billion) worth of the bonds, it added.

According to the text of the proposed budget, the \$3 billion in bonds are to be used to repay ministry debts for existing projects and the \$1.5 billion bonds are to be used to finance new oil and gas projects.

After being passed by parliament, the entire budget has to be approved by a clerical body that vets legislation before it becomes law. (\$1 = 32,401 rials)

(Source: Reuters)

Brazil faces almost lost decade due to crisis: economists

Brazil is likely to suffer nearly a lost decade of economic development with living standards not returning to pre-crisis levels until around 2022, economists said.

Brazil's slow recovery from its worst-ever recession means it will be another five years until per-capita gross domestic product - a measure of a country's living standards - returns to where it stood in 2013 before the crisis hit, said economist Bruno Lavieri.

"It's almost a lost decade," said Lavieri of consultancy firm 4E.

Latin America's largest economy probably contracted more than three percent for a second straight year in 2016, according to a Reuters poll on expectations for official growth figures due out on March 7.

Prospects of a lost decade raise the stakes for President Michel Temer and his ambitious agenda of economic reforms, seen by many analysts as the only way for Brazil to boost productivity and grow at a sustainable rate in the future.

The economy is expected to resume growth this year at a slow pace of around 0.5 percent after being pummeled by weak commodities prices and political fallout from the graft scandal at state oil firm Petrobras.

Since the recession began in 2014, GDP per capita has fallen 9.6 percent, said Julio Mereb, an economist with think tank Getulio Vargas Foundation. Economists like Alessandra Ribeiro, a partner with consultancy firm Tendencias, do not expect the indicator to return to its record 2013 level of 30,800 reais (\$9,903) until 2023.

Office clerk Andréia Zanetti, 34, is among Brazilians who have felt a dramatic fall in income. She spent seven months looking for a job and agreed to earn about half of what she used to before unemployment.

"I had to change shopping habits, stopped having lunch and dinner out and canceled my landline phone," she told Reuters. "I've even switched my son's milk to a cheaper brand."

(Source: Reuters)

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Trump's mixed message on immigration: An opening for a deal?

The president's approach is both tough and flexible, a sign he may be open to a comprehensive solution with Congress to ease fears about U.S. policy.

Despite a raw partisanship in American politics right now, a new poll by Morning Consult/Politico finds that both Democratic and Republican voters – about 70 percent – want political leaders to compromise to “get things done.” If lawmakers choose to reflect that cooperative spirit among voters, they could start with immigration.

That broad topic has so many moving parts, from better border security to improved legal immigration, that compromise is almost inevitable in order to “get things done.” A good example has already been set. Despite Trump's executive actions on immigration – a travel ban on those from certain countries, an order to build a wall with Mexico, and a wider net to catch those in the country illegally – he has also begun to walk back some of his rhetoric on unauthorized migrants.

During the campaign, for example, he said he would end an Obama administration program that promised not to deport some 750,000 migrants brought to the United States as children. Now the president is open to accommodating the so-called Dreamers. Even more, he recently met with a group of senators and said he would consider a comprehensive solution on immigration. “There was an almost universal interest in addressing our lauded immigration system,” Sen. John Cornyn (R) of Texas told CNN about the White House meeting.

Trump's official moves so far offer only a piecemeal approach. Yet he knows not all the estimated 11 million people in the U.S. illegally can be deported. Instead many would probably need to pay a penalty for violating U.S. law and perhaps return to their home country to wait in line before earning a chance at U.S. residency. He also knows he'll need help from Congress to upgrade current laws that set priorities on types of legal immigrants allowed into the U.S.

In other words, dealmaking is necessary and, along with it, goodwill on all sides.

One model is a grand compromise reached in 2013 by a bipartisan group of senators known as the “gang of eight.” It was the best attempt at immigration reform in a generation. The plan passed the Senate by a wide margin but stalled in the more conservative House. Its range of reforms, however, might not be exactly right in 2017. Migration from Mexico has slowed. The U.S. economy has gained strength. And the politics of immigration is even more divisive.

Nonetheless, if Congress and the president want to “get something done,” they can work together and lessen two sets of fears: a fear among Americans about unauthorized migration and a fear of deportation among millions of migrants who have been in the U.S. illegally for years. (Source: The CSM)

Europe's critical elections

Upcoming elections in the Netherlands, France, and Germany will be held in what is arguably the most febrile political environment since the European Union's creation. The post-war liberal democratic order is under threat everywhere, but particularly in Europe, where the EU is confronting challenges that include the constant threat of terrorism, democratic disenfranchisement, and uneven economic growth.

Following the United Kingdom's Brexit referendum and Donald Trump's election as U.S. president, the question facing Europe is straightforward: Will populist and nationalist forces exert the same influence in core countries of the EU?

In the Netherlands, Geert Wilders and his far-right Freedom Party are polling strongly ahead of next month's election. Wilders approves of Trump's executive order barring entry to the U.S. for anyone from seven Muslim-majority countries. Like Trump's chief strategist, Stephen Bannon, Wilders views the world through a racist prism.

No other Dutch parliamentary party holds such views, so a Wilders-led government is still far from certain. With Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte holding his ground, Wilders will most likely be denied power in the end.

Meanwhile, in France, far-right National Front leader Marine Le Pen is currently ahead in the polls for the presidential election, which will be decided in two rounds in April and May. Le Pen has promised to hold a referendum on France's membership in the Eurozone, despite warnings from the Bank of France that leaving the monetary union could increase the French national debt by €30 billion (\$31.8 billion) annually. She has also expressed a desire to dismantle such fundamental components of European integration as free movement for European citizens.

In the UK's Brexit referendum and the U.S. presidential election, voters from large metropolitan areas overwhelmingly supported “Remain” and Hillary Clinton, respectively. We will likely see a similar



Marine Le Pen (C) and Geert Wilders (R)

The EU's powers are insufficient to address all of the challenges that now confront Europe.

pattern in the French election. But while older voters have fueled resurgent British and American nationalism, Le Pen owes much of her support to younger cohorts – a worrying sign of the extent to which key segments of the French electorate feel disenfranchised.

A Le Pen victory would undoubtedly destabilize Europe politically and economically. With the dangerous nationalist demons of Europe's past unleashed, the EU as we know it could easily disintegrate. But those who believe in liberal democracy, the rule of law, and European integration still have time to mobilize around an alternative candidate – who would most likely prevail in the second-round run-off with Le Pen and, one hopes, bring about much-needed reforms and uphold France's proactive role in Europe.

In Germany's election later this year, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) is unlikely to be able to mount a

credible bid for the Chancellery, despite any support that it receives from Russia. But the next chancellor – whether it is Martin Schulz of the Social Democrats (SPD) or still Angela Merkel – will have to lead a global coalition of the willing to defend what is left of the post-war order. Such an effort should include Canada, Australia, and Western allies in Asia, but it must start by putting Europe's house back in order.

The EU's powers

Europeans recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Maastricht Treaty, which marked a seminal moment in the history of European integration. As we have learned in the intervening years, the EU's powers are insufficient to address all of the challenges that now confront Europe. Germany must help to rectify this situation by offering a vision for a more confident and ambitious Europe – one that can overcome internal divisions,

see to its own security, and sustainably manage migration.

If new movements emerge to counter the forces of nationalism and populism, this would not be a far-fetched scenario. And while former UK Independence Party leader Nigel Farage, Wilders, Le Pen, and their peers continue to pose as plucky anti-establishment underdogs, this conceit is wearing thin, owing to their own success – and, in UKIP's case, to financial scandals.

If far-right nationalist leaders do come to power in some of the larger Western countries, they will soon discover that making populist promises is easier than keeping them – as Trump is now discovering amid the alarmingly chaotic start to his administration. Trump, the Brexiteers, and their counterparts elsewhere have yet to prove that they can ensure broadly shared economic prosperity and defend global-governance systems by conducting themselves competently and professionally on the world stage.

It should be obvious that, in a globalized world where individual nation-states are increasingly impotent, no heady brew of populist nationalism can deliver the change that people are demanding. Fortunately, liberal democracy still offers a progressive alternative, and a victory by Merkel or Schulz in Germany, following the defeat of Le Pen in France, could herald the emergence of a global counter-offensive.

Meanwhile, new pro-European centrist movements have already sprung up across Europe, from Nowoczesna (Modern) in Poland to Ciudadanos (Citizens) in Spain. Now that some populists have come to power, liberals have a responsibility to hold them to account and offer an alternative vision. Belittling the people who voted for Brexit, Trump, and their European equivalents is not a sound strategy. The new global demagogues must be judged by their deeds, and vanquished with truth, reason, and respect for democracy. (Source: project-syndicat.org)

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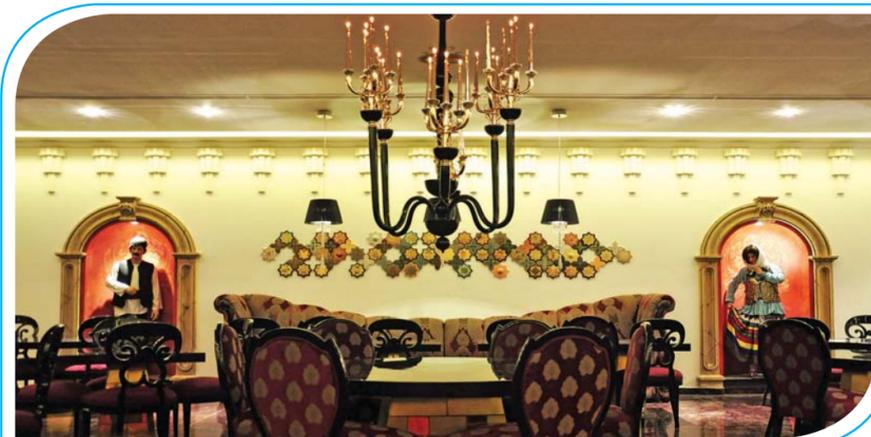
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INTERVIEW
By Lachin Rezaian

Canadian Human Rights Attorney Edward Corrigan denounced US Embassy's move to Jerusalem, saying it will in the short term embolden the Zionists in Israel to steal more Palestinian land and expand the "Jewish Only" settlements.

Corrigan asserted that today more than 130 countries, and the Vatican, now officially recognize the State of Palestine. "Increased awareness in progressive and liberal Jewish circles has caused more and more Jews to also speak out in support of the Palestinians," he noted.

Hailing the International Conference in support of "Palestinian Intifada" held in Iran, Canadian attorney said it can marshal support from the World Muslim community to support the Palestinians and to strongly oppose US President Trump's proposal to move the US Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

Israel has always sought an alliance with non-Arab countries in the Middle East namely Turkey, and Iran under the Shah and also with Ethiopia to strengthen its military position against the Arabs, Corrigan noted in an exclusive interview with Tehran Times newspaper:

■ **What are the consequences and advantages of International Conference in support of "Palestinian Intifada" held in Iran?**

Hopefully the conference can marshal support from the World Muslim community to support the Palestinians and to strongly oppose US President Trump's proposal to move the US Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. Trump is breaking with a long-standing American policy of keeping their Embassy in Tel Aviv until the final status of Jerusalem is decided in negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. However, words and diplomatic measures will not do there has to be real economic and political pressure put on the Trump Administration to stop this Embassy move.

■ **How do you evaluate Trump's position and possible actions regarding the two-state solution? What would the situation (Israel-Palestine conflicts) go in Trump's term?**

US President Trump when he re-

Trump helps Israeli regime expand "Jewish Only" settlements



International Conference in support of "Palestinian Intifada" held in Iran can marshal support from the World Muslim community to support the Palestinians and to strongly oppose US President Trump's proposal to move the US Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

cently met with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said that he would support either a "One State" or a "Two State" solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem. This statement broke with a long-standing American position of at least giving lip service to the "Two State" solution. For Netanyahu this gives him a "green light" for further expansion of "Jewish Only" settlements in the West Bank and to support right-wing Zionist efforts to drive more Palestinians from their homeland.

The irony is that many Palestinians realize that the presence of more than 500,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank, who can vote in Israel's elections, means that the Two-State solution is dead. Almost no Israeli Jewish Party can afford to alienate these hard line right wing Jewish nationalists who live in illegal settlements and have invested billions of dollars in expanding the Jewish pres-

ence in the occupied West Bank. The 2.5 million Palestinians who live in the West Bank cannot vote in the "Jewish State's" elections. The Palestinians are almost powerless and live under a brutal military occupation.

This harsh reality is that Trump, perhaps without knowing it, highlighted the need for a "One State" solution where all residents have equal rights.

Current Israel President Reuven

Rivlin strongly opposed a law, recently passed by the Knesset which allows private Palestinian land to be expropriated in order to retroactively legalize illegal Jewish settlements. The passage of the so-called "Regularization Law" could, according to Rivlin, cause Israel "to look like an apartheid state."

Rivlin has come out in favour of "One State" option with equal rights for all of its citizens. He knows that the alternative



As awareness of Israel's violation of Palestinian civil and political rights and its Apartheid like policies becomes known it is difficult not to be sympathetic to the Palestinians.

is a fully entrenched Jewish Apartheid State or a Jewish state that has ethnically cleansed most non-Jews from its territory. Rivlin knows that the World will not tolerate either of these options.

■ **Why does Trump seek to move US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem? Does he want to establish a political base in Jerusalem? What are the political incentives behind? Will the decision help reduce Israel-Palestine's conflicts?**

Trump is by nature a political bully. He is also catering to the well-organized Christian Zionist movement in the United States and who supported him in the US election. Trump is also attempting to get right-wing Jewish Zionists in the United States to support him. This move will in the short term embolden the Zionists in Israel to steal more Palestinian land and expand the "Jewish Only" settlements. It will be much more difficult for the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation.

■ **What is your evaluation about Turkey's conference on Palestinian issue on February 25-26 and due to the friendly ties between Turkey and Israel, will it be useful to Palestinians politically? What are the outcomes of Turkey-Israel ties for oppressed Palestinians?**

The Turkish conference can only help the Palestinians. Most Turks are supportive of the Palestinian cause and even Turkey's President Erdogan is sympathetic. When Israel attacked the Turkish boat that was bringing food and medical supplies to Gaza and killed a number of Turkish citizens there was genuine outrage in Turkey.

Israel has, however, always sought an alliance with non-Arab countries in the Middle East namely Turkey, and Iran under the Shah and also with Ethiopia. Israel has sought these strategic alliances with non-Arab regional states to strengthen its military position against the Arabs. It remains to be seen if Turkey's Muslim identity will prevail over its

so-called perceived benefits of a strategic alliance with Israel. It is here that the Muslim World can reach out to the Muslims of Turkey.

■ **Why Palestinian issue is not only the issue of Muslim World anymore but expanded to the whole world?**

More and more people are expressing their support for the Palestinians. More than 130 countries, and the Vatican, now officially recognize the State of Palestine. As awareness of Israel's violation of Palestinian civil and political rights and its Apartheid like policies becomes known it is difficult not to be sympathetic to the Palestinians. Increased awareness in progressive and liberal Jewish circles has caused more and more Jews to also speak out in support of the Palestinians.

In a strange sort of way Netanyahu and the other right-wing Jewish Zionist extremists, who have come to dominate the politics of the "Jewish State," are so extreme that even many European states are showing increased support for the Palestinians. The Zionist extremists are the Palestinians best friend in terms of promoting their cause. However, the West has still not overcome their guilt over past terrible treatment of Jews in Europe and the Zionists exploit this guilt to great effect. Times are, however, changing and the current generation sees what Israel is doing to the Palestinians today and are not burdened so much by guilt from the past.

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

Trump's move to expand the "Jewish Only" settlements will be much more difficult for the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation.

U.S. war on ISIL designed to fail

By Ulson Gunnar

Any U.S. general providing candid views on fighting and winning a war admit the impossibility of victory as long as the source of an enemy's fighting capacity remains intact.

In fact, as an excuse for why the U.S. is still struggling in Afghanistan over a decade and a half after initially invading the Central Asian state in 2001, U.S. General John Nicholson blamed outsiders including Pakistan, Iran and Russia for aiding, abetting and harboring anti-U.S. forces.

No amount of military might have brought to bear on forces fighting the U.S. within Afghanistan's borders can disrupt finances, recruitment, training, weapon supplies, logistics and refitting taking place beyond Afghanistan's borders and thus beyond the U.S. military's reach. The United

States suffered a similar problem during its prolonged occupation of Vietnam. North Vietnam, China and neighboring states provided support and safe havens for fighters in the south facing off against U.S. troops and their South Vietnamese counterparts.

Despite killing up to 4 million people and dropping more ordnance on the region than had been dropped during the entirety of World War 2, the U.S. ultimately failed to defeat North Vietnam or prevent the reunification and independence of the Vietnamese people.

Despite both a historical and contemporary example of futile warfare fought out of reach of the source of an enemy's fighting capacity, the U.S. is presenting to the American public a "plan" to fight and defeat the so-called "Islamic State" in Syria completely ignoring the terrorist front's



Despite both a historical and contemporary example of futile warfare fought out of reach of the source of an enemy's fighting capacity, the U.S. is presenting to the American public a "plan" to fight and defeat the so-called "Islamic State" in Syria completely ignoring the terrorist front's state sponsors.

The plan includes a possible expansion of U.S. troops already operating illegally and uninvited in Syria.

state sponsors.

■ **The "Plan" to defeat the ISIL**

The plan includes a possible expansion of U.S. troops already operating illegally and uninvited in Syria. In the Guardian's article, "U.S. military will retain core strategy against Isis as Trump mulls escalation," it states:

[U.S. General Joseph] Votel, speaking from Jordan on Wednesday, said that one option to speed up a long-sought attack on Raqqa was to "take on a larger burden ourselves". Shouldering more of the task would mean U.S. forces, conventional as well as special operations, bringing more artillery and logistics options to the fight.

Absent from U.S. President Donald Trump's "plan," and from comments made by U.S. commanders, is any mention of the source of the Islamic State's fighting capacity. No mention is made as to where they are drawing their fighters from, who is paying for and overseeing their training, arming, outfitting and continuous supplying of when finally, they reach the battlefield, or how they have managed to fight the summation of Syrian, Iraqi, Iranian, Lebanese and Russian forces for years now.

Unlike in Vietnam and Afghanistan, two theaters the U.S. desper-

ately sought or seeks victory over indigenous resistance and had openly and repeatedly accused neighboring states of aiding and abetting that resistance, the U.S. has been strangely quiet during both President Barack Obama's and now President Trump's administrations regarding neighboring states aiding and abetting the Islamic State.

However, without addressing the very source of the Islamic State's fighting capacity, defeating the terrorist front will be difficult if not impossible.

■ **A pretext for U.S. occupation**

A plan to place large numbers of U.S. troops in Syria, without the Syrian state's consent and amid an intentionally unwinnable, open-ended war against the Islamic State will create a pretext for the long sought after de facto U.S. occupation of Syria. It will also give the U.S. the ability to carve out yet another "safe haven" within Syrian territory, complimenting NATO-member Turkey's in the north.

From these two locations, terrorist forces can and will be harbored, trained, armed, supplied and sent off deep within Syrian territory to further divide and destroy the Syrian state.

Far from mere conspiracy theory, such plans have been repeatedly articulated by U.S. policymakers since at least as early as 2012, including a Brookings Institution paper literally titled, "Assessing Options for Regime Change".



In it, the document clearly advocates a possible full scale U.S. invasion and occupation of Syria, as well as the creation of what it calls "safe-havens and humanitarian corridors" that would be used not for any sort of actual humanitarian purpose but to further exert what the paper calls "coercive action."

The paper also specifically mentions Turkey's role both in creating "safe-havens" and as serving as a base from which Syria is to be invaded and occupied.

The paper, written in 2012 under the administration of President Obama, depicts a strategy being reintroduced and expanded under U.S. President Trump.

It represents not only a dangerous continuity of agenda, but a complete commitment by the special interests

occupying Wall Street, Washington, London and Brussels to divide and destroy the Syrian state, a commitment that persists despite many setbacks.

A real "war" on the Islamic State would involve first and foremost the exposure, condemnation, isolation and destruction of its state sponsors who U.S. intelligence and political circles have repeatedly admitted include interests within their own nation, as well as among their allies including Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Anything less indicates a ruse serving as nothing more than a pretext for an expanded U.S. presence in Syria, not to fight and defeat the Islamic State, but to preserve it while attempting to further divide and destroy the Syrian state.

(Source: New Eastern Outlook)

A plan to place large numbers of U.S. troops in Syria, without the Syrian state's consent and amid an intentionally unwinnable, open-ended war against the Islamic State will create a pretext for the long sought after de facto U.S. occupation of Syria.

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There are multiple types of mouthwash, each with its pros and cons

By Steven Lin

It's probably the most common question I get as a dentist: "which mouthwash should I be using?" Or, "is this mouthwash good?"

The answer often depends on what your needs are. People look to mouthwash as a breath freshener or to stop bad breath, but mouthwash is also used to stop bleeding gums, tooth decay, and some are used for teeth whitening.

One big misconception is that mouthwash can remove plaque from your teeth and gums.

Swishing a mouthwash may have antibacterial action, but won't remove plaque itself, so it should never replace brushing and flossing.

Before using any mouthwash you should go through these steps:

1. Determine the primary reason for using the mouthwash. Is it to treat a condition or simply to prevent dental disease?

2. Consult your dentist. You should first gain a diagnosis of your problem and get your doctor's recommendation before using a mouthwash.

3. Read the label carefully: be judicious in understanding what is in the product.

4. Follow the directions. The health claims and benefits of mouthwash vary quite a bit, so let's see which contains what and if they live up to their claims.

■ Mouthwashes with alcohol
Alcohol is one of the most common mouthwash ingredients. The thought is that alcohol kills bacteria that cause diseases in the mouth, but alcohol in mouthwash isn't the active ingredient. Alcohol is present to help diffuse other active ingredients, like essential oils.

Most alcohol mouthwashes are used to freshen breath and fight bleeding gums or gum disease.

Bleeding gums and bad breath are due to the presence of certain types of bacteria in the mouth. The problem is that little is known about the specific mode of action alcohol has against the. Generally, it's believed that alcohol destroys bacterial cell walls, but it's not known whether it is effective against those that cause gum disease and bad breath.

● Concerns
Alcohol mouthwash has drawn wide concern regarding alcoholic content being a risk factor for oral cancer. There is research to show that alcohol makes the mouth's cells more vulnerable to cancer-causing agents. When alcohol is broken down, the product is acetaldehyde, a known human carcinogen.

■ Temporary side effects
There can be temporary side effects of alcoholic mouthwash, such as:



A mouthwash may have antibacterial action, but won't remove plaque itself, so it should never replace brushing and flossing.

- Taste disturbances
- Tooth staining
- Sensation of a dry mouth

Worsening bad breath: Alcohol-containing mouthwashes may make dry mouth and halitosis worse since they dry the mouth out more. Soreness, ulcerations, and redness may sometimes occur.

● Conclusion
Do your best to avoid alcoholic mouthwashes. They aren't particularly effective against gum disease or bad breath and may increase risk of oral cancer.

■ Chlorhexidine Mouthwash
Chlorhexidine is an antibacterial used as an active ingredient in certain mouthwash brands. It is a broad spectrum antimicrobial with particular use against bacteria that cause gum disease.

Dentists do sometimes employ chlorhexidine mouthwash to treat patients with gum disease. Studies have shown it can reduce inflammation caused by periodontal bacteria.

One concern is that chlorhexidine may not be that effective against the particular bacteria known to cause bad breath.

● Concerns
Long term use of chlorhexidine mouthwash is known to cause tooth and tongue swelling. It can also alter or decrease taste and cause dry mouth. In some patients it can increase build-up of dental tartar. This may be due to shifts in oral bacteria. It may also interact with toothpaste ingredients, so should always be used separately.

Some people experience rash or burning sensations, in which case use

should be ceased immediately.

● Conclusion
Chlorhexidine mouthwash may be helpful in treating gum disease, however it is not effective for bad breath. It should always be used under guidance from your dental professional.

■ Fluoride mouthwash
Many mouthwashes contain fluoride to help prevent tooth decay.

Fluoride has been shown to be effective in preventing tooth decay, with five to 50 percent less dental decay. However, it should only be used in high risk cases.

Situations where fluoride rinses may be effective are:

- For orthodontic patients: this is a good alternative (or supplement) to foam tray applications if you are having orthodontic treatment.
- Moderate to high caries risk, including for elderly patients and early enamel caries
- Partial dentures
- Patients with xerostomia
- Concerns

It's important that you don't accidentally swallow fluoride-containing mouthwash, as it can be toxic.

Fluoride mouthwash should be avoided in children under seven because the chance is too high that they will swallow it.

The daily rinses are probably the most effective and contain about 0.05 percent fluoride. Weekly or fortnightly mouth rinses at 0.2 percent are also available.

Fluoride rinses probably only have a significant effect if you are at an increased risk of dental caries and certainly should

not be used as a substitute for brushing with a fluoride toothpaste—you need to do both.

● Conclusion
Fluoride containing mouthwash should only be used for patients with high risk tooth decay. It should be taken under direction from your dental professional.

■ Hydrogen peroxide mouthwash
Hydrogen peroxide is the active ingredient found in most household cleaning products. It has wide antimicrobial properties due to its oxidizing chemical action. Oxidation acts to damage and kill bacterial cells.

It has been proven safe at one to three percent concentrations. The problem is that people have very different reactions to hydrogen peroxide and safe use depends on proper dilution.

Studies suggest that there may be a slight decrease in gum inflammation. There also may be a slight teeth whitening effect.

● Concerns
Hydrogen peroxide is known to cause damage to the cells of the dental pulp. It can cause the tooth nerves to become infected and eventually die (called a pulpitis).

● Conclusion
Do your best to avoid hydrogen peroxide mouthwash. There doesn't seem to be enough research on the benefits to balance the risks that hydrogen peroxide mouthwash has.

■ Essential oils
Essential oils are extracted from plants that are known to have aromatic or healing properties. Some mouthwashes do have essential oils added to their ingredients. However, you can make your own by adding drops of essential oils to water.

Essential oils contain the "essence of" the plant's fragrance—which is characteristic of the plant from which it is derived. Their properties include antioxidant, antimicrobial, and anti-inflammatory actions. These healing oils are rapidly growing in popularity because they act as natural medicine without any side effects.

Generally these mouthwashes are considered safe as they are natural products. Some essential oils have been found to have particular antibacterial properties that may make them useful as a mouthwash. These include:

- Peppermint oil
- Spearmint oil
- Clove oil
- Eucalyptus oil
- Conclusion

Essential oils mouthwash may be a good breath freshener. You shouldn't solely rely on essential oil mouthwash ahead of oral hygiene practice, though.

UNAIDS urges everyone to make some noise for zero discrimination

Everyone will have experienced discrimination of some kind during their lives; however, non-discrimination is a human right. Equally, states and individuals have a legal obligation not to discriminate. This year, on 1 March, Zero Discrimination Day, UNAIDS is urging people to make some noise around zero discrimination, to speak up and prevent discrimination from standing in the way of achieving ambitions, goals and dreams.

Discrimination has many forms, from racial or religious discrimination to discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation or age, and to bullying at school or at work. In only three out of 10 countries worldwide do equal numbers of girls and boys attend upper secondary school, and people living with disabilities are nearly three times more likely to be denied health care than other people.



"Everyone has the right to be treated with respect, to live free from discrimination, coercion and abuse," said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. "Discrimination doesn't just hurt individuals, it hurts everyone, whereas welcoming and embracing diversity in all its forms brings benefits for all."

Zero discrimination is an integral part of UNAIDS' vision and for this year's Zero Discrimination Day UNAIDS is calling for zero discrimination in health-care settings. The right to health is a fundamental human right that includes access to affordable, timely and quality health-care services for all, yet discrimination remains widespread in health-care settings, creating a serious barrier to access to HIV services.

"Health-care settings should be safe and supportive environments. It is unacceptable that discrimination is inhibiting access to care today," said Mr Sidibé. "Eliminating discrimination in health-care settings is critical, and we must demand that it become a reality."

Data from 50 countries from the People Living with HIV Stigma Index show that one in eight people living with HIV report being denied health care. Around 60% of European Union/European Economic Area countries report that stigma and discrimination among health-care professionals remains a barrier to the provision of adequate HIV prevention services for men who have sex with men and people who inject drugs.

This year, UNAIDS is calling on everyone to make some noise for #zerodiscrimination. Zero Discrimination Day is an opportunity to highlight how everyone can be part of the transformation and take a stand for a fair and just society.

Find out more about the campaign at unaids.org
UNAIDS Zero Discrimination music video recorded by UK hip hop artist Adian Coker is also available in broadcast format.

(Source: UNIC)

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Iran Integrated Comprehensive Customs System (ICCS)

Modernization through Digital Customs



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

Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) established the Iran Integrated Comprehensive Customs System (ICCS) based on ICT aiming at speeding customs clearance as a major factor in foreign trade facilitation.

Surveys within the past few months have shown that IRICA was rather successful in trade facilitation. It is worthy to mention that the system and modernization framework of customs is not a mere software or computerized program, but all the customs processes completely re-engineered. Following this step, the processes were rectified and modern systems designed to assist trade facilitation.

It can be said that more than 97% of Customs houses fully automated; the remaining ones are lack of ICT basic infrastructure.

In this project, continuous efforts of IRICA staff members along with Tehran University experts are notable. They contributed together to implement the electronic system of the single window of foreign trade and its sub-systems with reasonable cost comparing to the projects which had been conducted by foreign experts (e.g. UNCTAD); and IRICA raised its rank among stakeholders, and even it acquired the first rate among Iranian IT based agencies. Iran Customs with a rich background and experience in implementing electronic projects proved that it is moving ahead in line with the WCO 2016 theme: Digital Customs, Progressive Engagement. IRICA efforts in applying ICT in computerization of its business have attracted praises of stakeholders and political levels, as well acquired an outstanding position and awarded with a golden trophy at the 6th national productivity competition and officially known as the most productive agency among 83 government agencies.

**Masoud Karbasian
Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance & President of IRICA**

Iran Integrated Comprehensive Customs System

Introduction:
IRICA as one of the members of World Customs Organization, with a long background, is in the process of finishing the year 2016 after taking effective executive actions on the basis of the Digital Customs: Progressive Engagement slogan with a special approach to liaise with the beneficiaries, and the most important actions are presented as follows:

- This organization has proceeded to fulfill the customs reengineering formalities, in execution of the international conventions and the recommendations of World Customs Organization (WCO), in order to facilitate trade having taken advantage of information technology and having implemented the Integrated Comprehensive Customs System (ICCS), through which, commissioning the EPL system may cause concentration of the information, removal of the physical actions, decrease in expenses, number of required documents, duration for goods release, decrease in frauds and documents

forgery which results assessment of the consignments on an absentia basis by exercising the selectivity system.

- ICCS and its subsystems, the essential and coordinating part of the customs is ascertained as a coordinated Border management in foreign business by creation of a single window of foreign trade as a communication gate of the traders and the related organizations.

- On the other part, in order to execute the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) action is taken in order to amend the domestic rules and create a legal field to operate the electronic information exchange and establish CBM.

- Furthermore, in execution of the standards 3-3, 3-4 and 3-5 of RKC, action has been taken regarding entering into the contract of common Border with the customs of the neighboring countries such as Turkey, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan and negotiations have been conducted regarding Afghanistan, Russia and Armenia.

- Having taken the mentioned targeted actions, IRICA has achieved the required ground and preparedness to ascertain and execute the digital customs, and the main axis of the organization has taken place in the year 2016 and we hope this organization will be more creative in the field of business and international transactions upon execution of the legal means and documentations passed by WCO.

- E-TIR Project is executed on a pilot basis between Iran and Turkey for the purpose of mechanization and electronic transmission of TIR Carnet Information upon coordination and cooperation with IRU Economic Commission for Europe of United Nations.

- Action is taken regarding the training on the basis of RTC Regional Training in proportion to the customs personnel of the neighboring countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Turkmenistan.

Actions of IRICA in line with the Digital Customs

Digital Customs: Progressive Engagement

The quick and accelerating international development in the beginning of the 21st century and complication of the work environment and its effect on the international economy have caused the matter of organization of the business and commercial network to become a matter of attention more than before. Such a matter has caused that the regional and international organizations to pay more attention to facilitating and smoothing the trends of execution in the international trade and business. In this line, IRICA has taken into consideration the execution and application of digital customs to improve and facilitate the business environment, to decrease the business and customs obstacles and to increase the translucence of the foreign business system of the country, having effectively benefited by the modern local technologies and the technologies of the foundations startup companies.

Whereas, the Customs is a complicated organization of unique processes and trends, and embraces a vast limit of the customs operations, one of the most important activities required for change in the customs from the existing status to a desirable status is to effectively and multilaterally apply the tech-

nology in all customs activities and procedures. IRICA has taken into consideration such a matter upon presentation of consolidated systems of customs affairs, single window of foreign trade and intelligent risk management system. Financial and economic interests arising from facilitation and development of business upon execution of the single window of foreign trade may be a good reason for justification of such a matter on the part of its beneficiaries.

Integrated Comprehensive Customs System

ICCS is a novel and comprehensive solution which may cover all the customs procedures and may be operated as the heart of the foreign trade. Implementation of the system modules provide data integration of overall nodes in the supply chain in the territory of the customs operations. Customs control nodes can be automated by using data integration and consequently increase the speed of business and trade can be applied by decreasing the merchant's stoppage. By implementation of such a system, the cycle of the information circulation may be formed in the main part of the foreign trade chain. In all processes of design and establishment of the mentioned system with a strategic approach to the subject, the following matters are taken into consideration:

1. To develop the time extent of performance of the customs controls, before, during and after discharge and removal of the goods according to the new control methods;

2. To modernize the national customs toward insufficient Customs automation;

3. To send the information and declaration on an electronic basis without paper;

4. To perform intelligence risk management system and comprehensive targeting system;

5. To be of behavioral difference with the economic agents on the basis of the risk results.

Reputable merchants
Active and professional merchants

High level of background from the point of view of compliance with the regulations

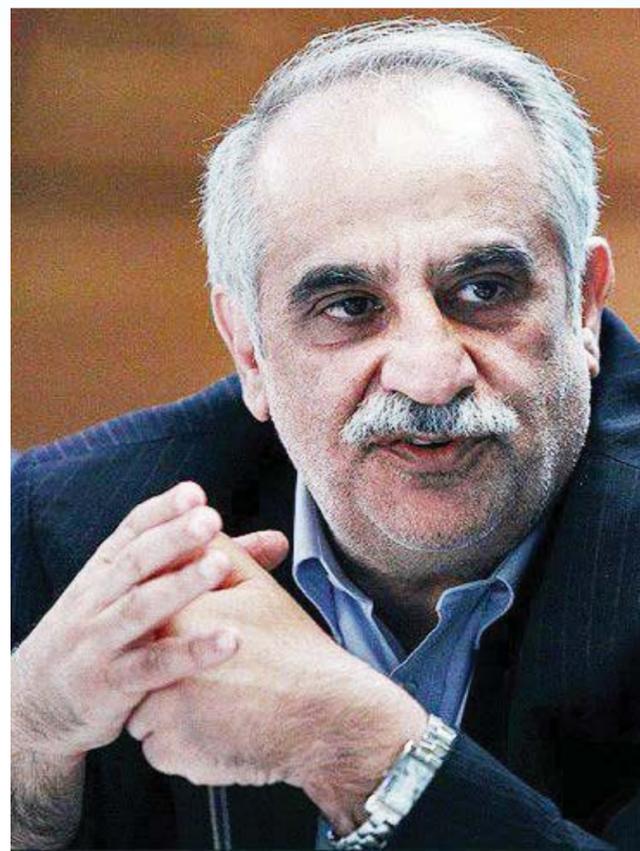
6. To establish Post Clearance Audit (PCA);

7. To have an obligation to respect and employ the personnel of various educational and professional past;

8. To create logical and working sequence and optimize the designs for the purpose of reengineering the issues;

9. To create a limpid system regarding the unloading and loading conditions, warehousing and displacing the goods and its relation with the customs controls;

The system is designed in such a way that customs infrastructure problems dominate. One result of the system is effective operational data in order to fulfill the development of intelligent risk management system. Furthermore, it is also a step towards the proper management of relations with stakeholders, appropriate organizational structure, creating the desired level of the main entities control, as well as promoting transparency and fulfill the administration's safety. Development and implementation of the system has taken place upon cooperation with the research center



of Tehran University and in this line, the modern information technologies and intelligent systems have been put into operation in order to ascertain the digital customs. Currently, the Customs Information System are producing critical information on customs procedures by using centralized data such as importation, exportation, transit, TIR Carnet, inspection, e-payment and implementation of the management dashboard (management information system).

Decrease the workstations for customs formalities

By execution, implementation and exploitation of ICCS in the executive customs, the unneeded and encumbrance stations and units, each of which is considered as an origin of perverseness, may be crossed out, and all the customs formalities related to the customs procedure for exports may be performed in a centralized and unit station entitled "Assessment Service".

Importation and Exportation Procedures

One of the privileges of ICCS is to remove the problem of taking a long time of fulfillment of the customs formalities because of high quantity of the import in proportion to the existing facilities, and at present, by controlling distribution of customs declaration among the experts and also merging the various parts and execution of optimum risk management, a less amount of work is entrusted to the experts, and, by average, each expert in the row has only three customs declarations to examine. In this method, after decrease in the queuing waiting time, the total release/discharge time is sensibly decreased.

Such a system is started up in most of the important and active customs which form above 90% of the national customs activities, and in the current year, such a system may be installed in the other national customs. The following are some palpable results of such actions:

Cut face-to-face relationship between the clientele with the customs staff and increase the level of professional integrity

By execution and implementation of the comprehensive customs system and non-presence of the goods owners before the customs departments, the relationship between the clientele and customs experts may be conducted exclu-

sively through the system and such a matter has caused promotion of the level of integrity and safety in fulfillment of the customs formalities.

Separate the experts framework from customs assessment

For preventing inappropriate distribution of human resources in the country and the related controls and optimizations, Iranian Customs has separated the expertise framework from assessment, has settled the customs experts in specified centers such as the provinces centers and the clientele may proceed to register the customs declaration at the system of single window of trade without need for attending in person. As a result, the process of expertise of the customs declarations are speeded up and the examination of the customs declarations may take place in a very shorter period.

Intelligent expertise of customs declarations

Having referred to its folder, the customs expert observes and examines the customs declarations, and in case of existence of no discrepancy, the matter may be approved by the expert. In case of existence of discrepancy, the relevant reason will be inserted in the system and such information and data will be sent to the issuing authority. The system may exercise the systemic controls in the expertise section of customs declarations and may offer suggestions to the expert.

Remove bureaucracy from customs control process

In the current ICCS, there is no need to presentation of documents in paper, and by scanning some of the documentations and uploading the same in the window of single system, and obtaining the other documents on an electronic basis, the expert may proceed to examine the same and register its opinion. For instance, the bank slips is not needed to be presented, and the system may receive its payment data from the bank on an intelligent basis.

e-Card for driver and truck

IRICA has prepared the e-cards for data of drivers and the trucks entitled "single window system of foreign trade" and has furnished to the truck drivers. On such a basis, these cards may be used in the process of importing, weighing, warehousing, etc. and may cause acceleration of customs formalities in addition to prevention of breach or violation or operating mistakes and errors.

e-Wallet

Whereas, some certain amounts should be paid for Rendering services such as weighing, warehousing, uploading and loading on the basis of the relevant rules and guidelines, the ICCS has commissioned e-wallet service connected to the intelligent credit cards, and, therefore, the issuing authority may not need to pay the financial amounts of the services, and the system may withdraw from the e-wallet on an intelligent basis. In addition to implementation of accurate controls and prevention of the frauds, such a matter may accelerate the process and may cause no need for taking complicated accounting procedures.

Issue e-permit of customs release

At the end of the processes of customs controls, and after making sure of the goods removal, the e-permit of customs release will be issued and will be furnished to the exporter, importer or other competent authorities.

Local assessment (ex-works)

One of the most important services to accelerate the exports process is to assess the goods at premises of the exporter. The exporter will determine the option of ex-work (local assessment) at the date of completion of customs declaration. On the basis of risk management and special controls, and in case of authentication, the authorization of such kind of assessment will be issued and will be delivered to the dossier of the expert. The expert will attend the place of assessment, and having approved the assessment, the system will automatically issue the goods exports permit on an intelligent basis.

10 →

Control and supervise the working operations of customs and experts

Having applied the intelligent management of the data and having benefited from the appropriate orientation of the probability of supervision and comprehensive control on the operations of executive customs and the related experts by the superior, senior and intermediate managers and directors upon presentation of the up-to-date reports on a systemic and SMS basis, ICCS may notify the problems and other relevant issues to the managers, so that the managers may trace such problems and may solve the same. For instance, by application of the information of the reports related to the chronometry and time release study of the declaration, the managers may examine the reason of probable long-length of the process of a goods declaration and may pay attention to the amendment issues. Such a matter has worthily assisted the process of customs management.

e-Payment

Application of the modern means and tools in control and management of accounting may be effective in increasing the accuracy and speed of serving. The exact discovery of the modality of finding the incomes and expenses under complicated and time-consuming paper-based registration methods is distinct. So that by adding the paper-based registration processes, the possibility of rendering services will be decreased and elimination of such processes without existence of appropriate tools may cause discrepancy in the financial activities. This system may apply the automatic accounting procedures in order to calculate the amounts of each declaration and by creation of a payment identity number before starting the banking operations it may proceed to identify the incomes or expenses on the basis of the internal processes of the organization. Such an identity number is only a draft for fulfillment of the banking operations for the clientele in which the financial requirements for performance of the accounting issues are taken into consideration. Direct connection of the system to the bank may cause direct identification and registration of any deposit, withdrawal and refund in the system to the financial affairs section, and also it worthily guarantees the accurate identification of the incomes or spending money and guarantee of collection of income or the expenses to the other sections of the organization. One of the capabilities of this system is e-payment via single window of trade and business which prevents referring to the bank and presenting the information in paper.

Such a procedure has caused accurate management of public accounting, increase in the security and capability of examination in case of outbreak of probable errors or mistakes in payment and calculation of the amounts on the basis of the incomes breakdown.

Internal and External Transit Procedure

The complete coverage of the processes including the seal soundness, goods authenticity and two-sided transfer of information of the customs of destination and origin in order to make sure of removal, discharge and exports of the goods, which has been exercised in more than 90% of the important transit customs of the country. Furthermore, the intelli-

gent transit system may fully cover the transit process alongside with the intelligent weighing system, access control system, warehousing system, transfer system and loading system. By taking the following actions:

Installing GPS on the transit trucks on an essential basis (domestic and foreign)

Performing electronic manifest

Starting up and developing TIREPD program and E-TIR program (electronic TIR carnet), after signing the tripartite agreement among Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture of Iran, International Road Transportation Union (IRU) and IRICA, and taking advantage of the related accessible data flow, may cause a significant step to be taken in creating a secure field for the goods transit and developing the foreign trade of the country.

Conducting e-payment of the import duties and other charges

Establishing e-communication between the systems of Customs and bank with the advantage of possibility of conducting more effective controls and exercising required accuracy to collect the public duties

Accessing and controlling the information of the warehouse stock and tracking the import and export of the goods to/ from the warehouse is necessary for the process of declaration, removal and discharge.

Scanning all the paper documents supporting the goods declaration which may be saved and archived in the form of electronic file and any transfer of the declaration and documents at the request of the competent legal authorities, is exclusively conducted on an electronic basis without exchanging any paper document, which is an effective action for prevention and decrease in any forgery in public instruments and documents.

Intelligent barricade and controlling the import and export

Applying the intelligent barricade connected to the system has caused the drivers to be able to pass through the barricades by showing their e-cards without need for the manpower for controlling the drivers on the entry and exit stations of the customs areas. In such a case, the system will issue the authorization for opening the barricade upon controlling the related card and the required authorizations.

Weighing the goods without need for operation and manpower

One of the most important processes in the customs formalities is weighing the goods, and before application of the ICCS, such a matter was conducted in the presence of an operator and caused many operation errors and probable mistakes, and after application of this system, by weighing the entire truck on the bascule, the system may automatically obtain the e-card of the driver and may weigh the truck on an electronic basis.

Electronic seal

After approval of the transit authorization of the export truck, such a truck would be sealed and would move toward the exit Border of the country. A passing permit will be issued for each truck and the information of the trucks and seals will be delivered to Police, destination customs and the other competent authorities via electronic means of

communication.

e-approval of the goods export/ exit through the Border

After exit and export of the goods through the national Border, the goods exports approval will be electronically furnished to the customs of origin and the issuing authority and such an approval will be filed in the related folder.

Such arrangements have completely removed the problems related to the declaration of goods exports and non-exit of the goods.

Foreign Trade Single Window

In today's accelerating world, the factor of Speed in exchanging correspondence, documents and information, and decreasing the time period of customs formalities, alongside with assuring the safety and exercising the regulations, plays a determinative part in the success of business, especially in international domain. Whereas, the export and import processes are mostly subject to exchange of the information and documentations between the customs and many other organizations, each has special work procedure and format in its turn, in such conditions, nonexistence of facilitating and smoothening mechanisms result many obstacles in the course of business and trade development, especially within the international scope and may cause the economic and trade sectors of the country to lose many opportunities in spite of creation of disorder in exertion of law by the Customs.

In such a case, one of the best possible approaches for solving such a problem is establishment of SINGLE WINDOW in Customs. Attention of the government of Islamic Republic of Iran and service of the decree of Council of Ministers with this respect, has caused IRICA to take urgent actions for quick exploitation of such important measures.

Single Window System of Business has created such a facility or opportunity for the goods owners, traders and other business beneficiaries to draw the reliance and trust of the economic persons to perform, trace and observe all their business activities.

Therefore, by performance and implementation of such a system, there will remain no need to attend the national customs and the other competent authorities relevant to customs to trace the issues, and all the processes may be performed and controlled on an electronic and automatic basis. Such data and information may be furnished to the merchants via internet, mobile phone and SMS, and all the processes of performance of customs procedures may be notified to the merchants and traders via SMS, so that the goods owner may get information of its goods during transportation and warehousing at the customs premises and the discharge and removal process of the goods in every moment.

Such a system is performed having benefited from the existing capacities and potential of the country, and having coordinated the actions of the responsible organization in the foreign trade procedure (importation, exportation and transit) at the ports of entry and exit and by establishment of required liaison among them on a cohesive basis by a distinguished time schedule.

The concrete outputs of this system are as follows

Electronic exchange of data

with Standard Organization, Ports and Shipping Organization, Police Force, bank and other neighbor organizations:

On the strength of the related rules and regulations in some circumstances, IRICA is charged to obtain and control the authorizations of the other organizations engaging in such grounds. For instance, as to the goods subject to the standard permit, this organization should obtain the required permits and approvals from Iranian National Standards Organization, and all the stakeholders, should present their permits to Customs on the strength of the existing rules and regulations.

Validation of transit transportation companies and electronic exchange of data with insurance companies

Some complexes which extend cooperation with Customs within the goods transit scope, are insurance companies and the operating banks, who are obliged to present the necessary guarantee bonds and next transit of the goods from the country on the strength of the existing rules. On such basis, after starting up the Single-window System of Foreign Trade and Business, the credit of transit and transportation companies will be directly received from the insurance companies and such electronic credit will be taken into the companies' account. By transit declaration of the goods before customs, such credit will be deducted from the accounts of the transportation companies without interference of the manpower and on an intelligent and automatic basis, and after declaration of collection by the Customs of destination, the accounts will be settled up.

Thus, in every moment of the process, in addition to creation of risk management system within the transit domain, the credit of transportation companies would be automatically controlled, and the process will be performed on a very high speed.

To establish information exchange through the Single-window System of Foreign Unit with the other countries such as Turkey, on the basis of the agreements exchanged, and on an online basis

Electronic Declaration of Goods (Remote Declaration in Importation, Exportation and Transit Procedures)

By execution of this modern method which has replaced the traditional process of approaching the customs in person, there will remain no need for the goods owners to physically attend the executive customs in person, and they may timelessly proceed to declare their goods from their office, home or any other place. In such a system, all the various processes of discharge/ removal may be performed on an absent basis and the latest status of the goods removal will be notified to the goods owners via SMS.

To capture manifest information

All the international transportation companies, who transport their goods to the destination of Iran, or pass their goods through Iran, may deliver the information of their bills of lading or manifests to the Customs, before the goods have been reached to the ports or import boundaries, on an electronic basis via this Single-window. Such information and data may be furnished to Customs Departments and the other related organizations, and the processes of goods upload-



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

ing, warehousing, discharging and transporting may be considerably speeded up.

Intelligent Turn Ratings via Single-window System of Business

The system proceeds to rate turns on an intelligent basis in order to manage the work processes of executive customs. Therefore, on the strength of the specified standards and criteria, the customs declaration will be put into the folder related to the experts. For this purpose, the goods owner may observe his/her turn and after performance of the expertise issues, he/she may see the relevant information in his/her folder.

Centralized System of Collection of Customs Revenues

All payments of the merchants and the goods owners may be controlled and obtained via this system on a unit basis, so that the merchant would not need to approach the executive units, present the slip in paper and approve payment to the Customs account.

Authorized Economic Operators System

After starting up the Authorized Economic Operators System in Customs, in addition to execution of the recommendations of the WCO, many positive changes have been made in this field. Thus, a number of reputable exporters may enter their data via Single-window System of Business, without need for approaching the Customs and performing the assessment process, and after exports of the goods through the country, the exports license will be intelligently issued.

Single-window System on Mobile Phone Base

After starting-up and commissioning the Single-window System of Business, with the purpose of reverence of the clientele, the Customs proceeded to develop the mobile phone software in Customs, and in this version of software, the goods owners and declarants may be informed of the latest status of their customs permits by the application of mobile phone in all customs declarants procedures, on an online basis. In this version, the list of all customs declarations are furnished to the clientele, and the clientele may specify the important actions such as exit of the truck and may get the latest information of the status of the consignment.

News Transmission and Training

The portal of IRICA at www.irica.ir may cover all the needs related to the field of activities in business, customs, traders and transportation companies. In this way, on the subject of development of Single-window System of Business and ICCS, an information and interaction website is developed at eplrica.blog.ir, and all the traders and merchants may refer to this website, get all the necessary instructions of the system, and be informed of the latest changes and electronic processes of customs. In this manner, the merchants and traders may put their problems and questions forward via this website and may obtain the re-

quired answers and replies.

Establishment of Common Border Gate with Customs of Neighbor Countries

IRICA has planned to implement and exercise the common Border gate in accordance with the recommendations of RKC and Chapter 7 of International Convention of United Nations in the field of Harmonization of Border Controls of Goods, and up to now, the Customs has succeeded to draw mutual agreements with the neighbor countries such as, ie, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Russia, Armenia and Turkmenistan in this field, with the purpose of facilitating the customs cooperation and easing the international traffic of the passengers, goods and vehicles. One of the most important targets of application of common Border gate is to prevent performance of repetitious procedures which are identical in two Border customs.

The purpose of implementation of Virtual Border Single-window System is capturing international trading data with the capability of exchange of information between the information technology systems of the customs of the both countries, decreasing the additional expenses of control and facilitating the business transactions. The data model applicable in this system is designed according to WCO Data Model. Connection is established between this window and the other neighbor and associate organizations which may provide the facility of obtaining the necessary permits and presenting the relevant reports.

In this choice, the movement of the government and industry toward improvement of management of the international security chain is emphasized

The base of this choice is to capture data through the relevant references and to exchange information with the other organizations or the transboundary trading entities related to replacement and transportation of goods, and such a choice may provide the facility of data exchange within the B2G and G2G international levels.

In this line, on the basis of the protocol of Electronic Pre-declaration Information Exchange (TIR-EPD) among IRICA, IRU and, Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture of Iran as of the year 2012, the process of development of the web services of information exchange started, and in the years 2013 and 2014, actions were taken to develop the mentioned service and startup RTS (Real-time Safe TIR) on behalf of Iranian Customs, in cooperation with IRU Organization. In consideration of successful completion of the mentioned projects, Customs of Iran and Turkey were selected as the first customs in starting up E-TIR Project on an experimental and trial basis. The target of starting-up and implementing such a project is online electronic exchange of information and data of declarations of TIR Carnet between Iran Customs and Turkey Customs, elimination of bureaucracy and acceleration of the process.

LEARN ENGLISH

Buying a TV

A: Seriously, I don't know why we need to get a new TV.
B: Honey I told you already. I can't appreciate the graphics level and detail of the games on my PlayStation 3 on our old TV.
C: Good afternoon folks! How can I be of service today?
B: I'm looking to upgrade to a newer, bigger television set.
C: You've come to the right place! What size are you looking for?
A: Just a normal sized TV for our living room.
C: I see. Well this set here is on sale. It's a forty six inch HDTV screen and has all the works. Three HDMI connectors, USB, VGA and S - Video ports. It even has a DVI port so you can hook up your PC or laptop! This is without a doubt the complete home theater experience!
B: This is exactly what I need! Can you imagine watching movies or playing video games on this thing?
A: Honey, I think it's a bit too big. I don't even think it will fit in our living room.
C: Not to worry, we will deliver and install it in your home. It comes with a wall mount so you can just hang it on the wall like a picture!
B: This is great! How much will this set me back?
C: Lucky for you, this is the last one we have in stock so it's half off!
B: I'll take it!

Key vocabulary
appreciate: to be grateful for (something)
upgrade: get something better, more modern, more useful
hook up: connect
the works: the best things offered
set me back: cost
wall mount: attached to a wall

Supplementary vocabulary
projector: a machine for projecting an image onto a screen or other surface
plug in: to connect (an appliance) to an electrical outlet
speaker: a device that converts electrical signals into sounds loud enough to be heard at a distance
remote control: a device used to control an apparatus or machine from a distance
cable television: a television service in which the subscriber's television is connected to a central receiver by cable
(Source: irlanguage.com)

Budget bill proposes \$125m to deal with dust storms

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The desk national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year (March 2017-March 2018) has proposed a budget of 5 trillion rials (nearly \$125 million) to mitigate the effects of dust storms, MP Abbas Papizadeh said.

Dust storms which consistently disturb local residents of southwestern province of Khuzestan coupled with public utility outage has become a national concern lately. Dust particles originated from host spots (mostly dried up wetlands) located in Iran or Iraq are the main reasons for the storms.

In that regard a budget of 300 billion rials (nearly \$8 million) has been recently allocated to repair and maintain the power grid damaged by the dust storms, Mehr news agency quoted Papizadeh as saying.

However, he said, the budget won't do because the next time the dust storm hit the area it would cause damage to the power grid once again, so the budget is only a short-term fix.

"Up to now, the province has already



sustained losses of 500 billion rials (nearly \$12.5 million)," the MP stated, "So such [small] budget won't help resolve the issue in the long run."

Unfortunately the losses dust storms incur on the economy of the country amounts to more than \$125 million a day, Papizadeh warned, "due to the latest dust storms stricken the area Iran's oil production has dropped by 800,000 barrels."

Elsewhere in his remarks Papizadeh highlighted that a budget of \$100 million will be withdrawn from the National Development Fund and channeled into projects to fight and control dust storms.

President Hassan Rouhani presented the administration's draft of the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1396 to the Majlis on December 4.

The proposed national budget amounted to about 10.849 quadrillion rials (about \$486 billion), an 11 percent rise year on year. Next year's national budget is set with a focus on unemployment, water resources, railways and the environment.

Hundreds of historic structures being renovated nationwide

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A total of 600 historic buildings and monuments are being renovated across Iran, an official with the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization said on Thursday.

Gholamreza Misaqian made the remarks in Semnan on Thursday on the sidelines of a congress, which addressed history of architecture and urbanism in the country, Mehr reported.

Misaqian attached great importance to nationwide protection and maintenance of historic monuments together with safeguarding of cultural heritage, saying "The collective memory of citizens and significant



historical events befallen in [such] buildings should be preserved and passed out to the succeeding generations."

According to officials, some 32,000 historic structures have been inscribed on the national heritage list.

Traditional textile center opens in Yazd

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A traditional textile center was inaugurated in a historic neighborhood of Yazd on Friday in a bid to live up the venerable skills of the ancient city.

Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization Director Zahra Ahmadipour accompanied by several local officials attended the cutting-ribbon ceremony, CHTN reported.

Brocade and termeh are amongst richly decorative fabrics, which will be produced in the center.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Since Sassanid era (224-



651) Yazd has been famous for beautiful silk textiles that were rivaled in later periods only by those of Kashan and Isfahan.

The city is still a major center of silk weaving.



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

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Iranian, foreign officials plant memorial tree in Tehran

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iranian and foreign officials planted a memorial tree in Pardisan Park nations' garden on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of 16th International Environment Exhibition on Friday.

Daniel Calleja Crespo, Director-General for the Directorate-General for Environment [the European Commission department responsible for EU policy on the environment], United Nations Environment Program Executive Director Erik Solheim, Italian Minister of the Environment Gian Luca Galletti and Iranian Environment Chief Masoumeh Ebtekar all helped planting a tree as a symbol of solidarity and reinforcing international cooperation and collaborative efforts to face environmental challenges.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Iran's Welfare Organization conducts offline autism screening test

An offline autism screening test is now available for downloading from Iran's Welfare Organization website, ISNA news agency reported.

The questionnaire is comprising of 10 questions for parents with children aged 2 to 5 to diagnose children who are suffering from the autism spectrum disorder, an official with Iran's Welfare Organization has said.

آغاز طرح غربالگری آفلاین اوتیسم توسط بهزیستی

به گزارش خبرگزاری ایسنا پرسشنامه آفلاین غربالگری اوتیسم در حال حاضر در سایت سازمان بهزیستی کشور قرار گرفته است.

رئیس گروه مراکز روزانه آموزشی توانبخشی بهزیستی گفت: این پرسش نامه شامل ۱۰ سوال برای خانواده هایی است که فرزند ۲ تا ۵ سال دارند و برای شناسایی کودکان مبتلا به اوتیسم در کشور طراحی شده است.

ENGLISH PROVERB

Two wrongs do not make a right

Explanation: it is not acceptable to do something bad to someone just because they did something bad to you first
For example: Jill: I'd really like to humiliate Fred, after he made fun of me in front of everyone at lunch. Jane: Not now, Jill. Two wrongs don't make a right.

PHRASAL VERB

Change over

Meaning: to stop doing or using one thing and start doing or using another
For example: Complete all the exercises on one leg, then change over.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Be my guest

Explanation: used to give someone permission to do what they have asked to do
For example: 'Do you mind if I look at your notes?' 'Be my guest.'



Ministry of Energy
GHARB REGIONAL ELECTRIC COMPANY

Invitation for Prequalification for two Stage International Tender No. 955/1

Gharb Regional Electric Company (GHREC) intends to issue an invitation for prequalification for Procurement and Finance (PF) of a package of projects comprising Transmission and Sub Transmission Substations at 230 and 63 kV voltage levels and Underground 63 kV Cables, through the Tender No. 200951132000003, utilizing Government Electronic Procurement System.

All stages of tendering from receiving and delivering prequalification documents to preparation of the list of qualified bidders will be carried out through the Government Electronic Procurement System, addressed at: www.setadiran.ir. It is necessary that tenderers, in case that they are not yet registered as a member, complete their registration steps in the said site and receive their certificate for electronic signature, in order to take part in this invitation. The date for issuing the Invitation for Prequalification in the site would be: February/27th/2017.

Starting date to receive the documents for prequalification would be: 08:00 hour of the date February/27th/2017 to 19:00 hour of the date March/11th/2017.

Closing date to send the replies to prequalification would be at the end of office hour of the day: May/13th/2017.

Information of Tendering Authority: Gharb Regional Electric Company, Office of the Procurement and Contract Office, Gelayol St., 22nd Bahman Ave., Kermanshah, I. R. Iran.

Phone No.: +98-83-38232001-5, Extension: 2085 (Procurement and Contract Office) and Extension: 2049 (Technical Office) and;

Ghods Niroo Engineering Company, No. 82, Ostad Mottahari Ave., Tehran, Iran, Phone No.: +98-21-88414495 and +98-21-8240, Extension: 4065

Contact Information of electronic site to perform steps of registration in the site is:

Contact Center: +98-21-27313131

Registration Office: +98-21-88969737 and +98-21-85193768

Public Relations of Gharb Regional Electric Company

Yes we can... elect Obama president of France?

Could France elect Barack Obama president? Not really -- but that's not stopping the organizers of Obama17, a guerrilla campaign trying to entice the former United States president to head to Paris.

"It's totally crazy, but the cool thing is that once you get past that, you start thinking that maybe it's possible. Who cares that he's not French? He's Barack Obama," one of the campaign organizers told CNN.

They've launched a website and they put up 500 posters of Obama around Paris last weekend, said the organizer. He asked to be identified only as Antoine.

They're hoping to get 1 million people to sign a petition urging Obama to run.

Yes, it's a joke, he admits -- but one with a serious purpose.

"We want to show that people are fed up with the politicians here. People are tired about it and they like this joke. It gives people a little fun amid all these scandals," he said.

French voters go to the polls April 23 in



the first round of voting for a new president. If no one gets more than 50% of the vote, the top two finishers go to a runoff on May 7.

Polls suggest that Marine Le Pen, the leader of the far-right National Front par-

ty, will top the field in the first round, but won't get the absolute majority a candidate needs to win outright.

Antoine isn't a fan of the frontrunner. "We are so fed up with what Marine

Le Pen is doing, and with the fact that we weren't able to find a candidate to vote for, only one to vote against," said Antoine. "We started talking about that and it came up that Obama is free -- so why not hire him?"

Antoine knows there's not much chance Obama will play along with his joke.

But he says people have been getting in touch with serious suggestions -- for example, how to get around the problem that Obama isn't French.

"We've had some funny emails from lawyers telling us how it could be possible. He would have to be naturalized by the president of the French Assembly," Antoine said.

It's not clear whether Obama is aware of the project, but Antoine is hopeful.

"I think if Barack Obama answers this, there will be a huge amount of reaction. I think he might like this kind of thing," said Antoine. "People in France would get crazy, especially young people. But he won't say yes to our proposal."

(Source: CNN)

Trump trapped in Orientalism, racism, and imperialist system

Although it was exactly in the late 19th century when race was used as a separate concept of humankind with characteristic inherited features, and although great thinkers such as Immanuel Kant and William Dunbar first introduced the word race into philosophy and literature, it was in the late 1600s that Europeans did categorize humans according to their physical features. This happened at the time when Francois Bernier postulated a number of distinctive categories based on facial characters and skin color.

Soon the hierarchy of groups (race had not been termed yet) was commonly accepted. In this hierarchy white Europeans were at the top. The Negro, or the black African, was usually relegated to the bottom. This viewpoint was to some extent due to the African black color and so-called primitive culture. But the underlying reason for it was that Europeans used to know from earlier the black as slaves.

In 1805, French naturalist Georges Cuvier talked about the three races white, yellow, and black. This structure could be read equally importantly across and down so that white was absolutely opposed to black and partially opposed to yellow. Yellow in its turn was partially opposed to black. At the same time, imperialism was also justifying its colonialism through the motto about having a mission to civilize and educate the inferior barbarians. Consequently, new ideas about race could well serve it.

With the formation of Charles Darwin's On the Origin of Species (1859), the discipline of social Darwinism was established. The discipline soon agreed with Cuvier's race paradigm and the emperor's act. The reason for this was the paradoxical dualism (debasement of the colonized subject and their idealization) that existed in the imperialist thought. On the other hand, the debasement of the primary races could provide a justification for the subjugation and, now and then, extinction of low races in social Darwinism. This was not only unavoidable, but the proper unfolding of natural law. On the other hand yet, the concept of racial improvement came into synchrony with the emperor's ideology of civilization mission, which is what encouraged colonial powers to improve the status of debased races. Thus, the hypothesis of superiority was supported by the scientific hypothesis of race to fearlessly pursue its global dominance project.

In the next stage, the black were identified as desperate creatures worthy of care, support, and improvement. This identification was soon found in unison with the previous viewpoint of blacks being primitive creatures and crippled savages. This identification helped colonialism find low-cost labor for its projects. Thomas Carlyle vigorously propounded the "right to coerce the indolent black man into the service of colonial plantation agriculture."

The usefulness of the concept of race in establishing the innate superiority of the imperialist culture can be discerned in how modern England treated British "races", especially the Irish. In the first writing, although the Irish is first seen much as the English, the Irish culture was seen as alien and threatening. Rich (1986) traces the process from 1617 when Fynes Moryson found the language of the Irish crude, if indeed it was a language at all, their clothing almost animal-like, and their behavior shocking. Edmund Spenser refers to the "bestial Irishmen", while William Camden in 1610 recounted the profanity, cannibalism, musicality, witchcraft, violence, incest and gluttony of the "wild and very uncivil" Irish. In this description the Irish sound remarkably like Africans as described by nineteenth-century English commentators.

In fact, by 1885, John Beddoe, president of the Anthropological Institute, had developed the "index of Nigrescence" to show that people of Wales, Scotland, Cornwall, and Ireland were essentially different than the people of Britain. More specifically, he argued that those from western Ireland and Wales were "Africanoid in their jutting jaws" and "long, slitty nostrils", and thus originally immigrants from Africa (Szwed 1975: 20-1).

Although such view is likely to seem strange, it is a good interpretation of the monopolistic motivation of imperialism which is energetically implemented through the concept of race.

Linking the Irish, Welsh, and Africans together is very noteworthy, since it clearly shows the strategy adopted by the imperialist ideology to be able to separate and marginalize the colonized, whether in Britain or the Empire. Such racial hierarchy was integral to the expan-

sion of the empire. By 1886, anthropologists in Britain reached a general consensus on the "cephalic index", that is, discrimination of racial identity in terms of skull. Francis Galton, the founder of eugenics, measured the heads of 9,000 people at the International Health Exhibition in London in 1884.

In 1887, a conference on native races in the British territories heightened the anthropological-imperialist interest in race. The conference was held at the same time as Queen Victoria Golden Jubilee. By the late 1890s, many famous works were out. The works would thoroughly depict the multitudinous nature of human races and the obvious superiority of the Anglo-Saxon races. The description of Negroid, despite such scientific, hair-splitting scrutiny, offered no improvement over Carlyle's stereotypical definition.

The 20th century witnessed great oscillations in theoretical approaches to race. But the term continued its path to a realistic position in the world's public opinion. In the early decades of the 20th century "race" would tread its path to a legal stance through a "scientific" study of race diversity. But the horror of World War II and the massacre of millions of Jews, slaves, Polish, and gypsies for race issues led to the 1951 UNESCO Statement on Race. The statement underlined that race, even from the biological point of view, can in the end count for a group with a distinct density of the genome. According to the statement, mental indices should never be counted in such classification, and that the role of environment in shaping behavior is much greater than that of genetic factors.

In 1960 once again a great change occurred in the biological view of human behavior. This was a contribution of authors such as Lorenz, Ardry, and Morris who claimed that a person's behavior is largely under control of ancient instincts which culture can modify in the best way. Through such outlook, the West and its educational foundations were the pioneers and soon came to be known as the educated or civilized society, while the non-Western societies were known as uncivilized. Those whose behavior resembled the West's more were superior. Such recognition was based on the Western view. Its absoluteness and unquestionability were the source of concern for many critics and were thus questioned, because the race paradigm had only been replaced by the education paradigm.

■ Sociology/anthropology and modern racism

Barker (1981) was one of the first to study the relationship between sociology and modern racism. Obviously sociology is considered as a Western science which studies the urban and social issues of the West. But anthropology also is a Western science, developed to study the urban and social issues of non-Western societies. Hence, sociology deals with "us" and anthropology with "them".

These two sciences have created the bipolarity, duality, and binary opposition of us/them. Scientists in these two fields believe that a Western society is an urban society in the true sense of the word, because it is past ethnicity and has initiated into the urban society, where ethnic structure is broken and a kind of dispersion is the case, a society in which all live under the rule of law, law that is the same for all and kids nobody. Therefore, such society enjoys a high level of orderliness. On the other hand, they argue that the non-Western society has not yet been initiated into this stage, because ethnic groups and clans, while continuing their tribal and ethical conflicts in a new form, settle down and coexist. The people in such society are still dependent on majority, just the same way in the past when the biggest clan had the biggest role in deciding things. Therefore the biggest clan has the biggest role in elections. Such views have helped recreate modern racism, since these two disciplines, as was mentioned earlier, have created the us/them binary, a binary in which the primary sign has been axiomatically and unquestionably preferred and privileged, while the secondary signifier deserves improvement, education, development, and control by the first one. By creating this binary opposition, the West once again found a replacement for Cuvier's typology and race classification and Carlyle's outlook.

However, anthropology criticism is another contemporary field that has questioned ethnographical studies. This discipline argues that none of the activities of ethnography, observation, listening, questioning, collecting, are unbiased and pure, because what is known depends upon how it is known, that is, cultural knowledge is "constructed" rather than "discovered" by eth-

nography.

Therefore, the us/them opposition lacks objective support and foundation and is rather a creation of the minds and words of sociologists and ethnographers, that is, it is a structure that has re-classified humans and recreated racism through the process of othering.

■ The false objectivity of racist ideas and Trump's recent decision

Racism can be seen as a mode of thought which considers the unchangeable, physical characteristics of a group and tries to link them somehow directly and commonly to psychological or rational characteristics; and based on such criteria, distinguish between "superior" and "inferior" races. But the fundamental ideas of racism (such as blackness) lack objective reality. Nonetheless, the goal of the psychological forces that made blacks' self to acquire an objective existence in their behavior, just like ethnography which, instead of discovering cultural knowledge, created it. This was the most important truth about race. Fanon was the first to notice that, however lacking in objective reality racist ideas such as "blackness" were, the psychological force of their construction of self meant that they acquired an objective existence in and through the behavior of people. The self-images and self-construction that such social pressure exerted might be transmitted from generation to generation, and thus the "fact of blackness" came to have an objective determination not only in racist behavior and institutional practices, but more insidiously in the psychological behavior of the peoples so constructed.

Now the U.S., or Trump, has found a new replacement for race and racism. Trump has dissected the world according to a new criterion: People who hail from certain lands are much more barbarian than Cuvier's black, more savage than Carlyle's Negroid, and more animal and uncivilized than Spenser's Irish. These people, whose nationality is the only cause for their savageness, cannot enter the United States, even for service occupations. They are, therefore, more inferior than the black, Irish, or Negro. Can one say that man has grown more civilized? These people do not earn the title of terrorist. Today terror, assassination, and espionage are part and parcel of the politics of all countries. The interesting point is that there are noteworthy rumors and gossips about the American ways of terror and assassination. Many microbiologists believe that the U.S. attacks other peoples using bioterrorism methods, that is, highly advanced terror methods the use of which is beyond the ability of all the countries the U.S. calls terrorist, just the same way no country could respond to the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima.

The U.S., or Trump, have in fact created such identity for the people of these lands, or are trying to promote such an identity or image. This method is reminiscent of the ethnographic studies which created instead of discovering a cultural knowledge of non-Western people, by which it interpellated the others of Europe. It is also reminiscent of the ideology or discourse which, according to Fanon, created the subjects. It is also reminiscent of the colonialism which, according to him, fought to maintain the identity of the image it had of Algerians and the depreciated image that people had of themselves. Now the U.S. is impeaching, threatening, and using for the public fun these people in many ways. For example, a fun TV program on international channels is one where a man in Arab, Muslim, or Iranian garb throws a backpack in the middle of a crowd in the subway, a supermarket, or a park, and then everybody takes to flight. It is not so unlikely that in the future these people are identified through genetic tests and then expelled from the U.S. People from these countries should know they are accomplices and in complicity with the U.S. It is a simple equation: An Iranian national lives in the U.S. The Iranian national pays taxes to the government of Trump. The U.S. government is against Iranian people. The Iranian is one with the U.S.: The U.S.-based Iranian is against the Iranian-based Iranian. There may be some justification to call the U.S.-Iran war an Iranian vs. Iranian war.

The crisis of "race" still remains in the center of the stage. Thus, one cannot expect the dangling, indefensible concept of race to be eliminated. Race in the contemporary era is as dangling and reactionary as it used to be during Europe's imperialism. According to what was said, the direction of the development of the issue of race may appear to have changed, but it still remains as the best tool to classify people and justify inequality. Trump has recreated it in a different embodiment.

Nearly a dozen Afghans shot to death by ISIL in mosque ambush

Nearly a dozen people have been shot dead in an ambush by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists in northern Afghanistan, a local official said.

The fatalities, including 10 Afghan police officers and the wife of a police commander, occurred in the country's northern Jowzjan Province after the victims came under attack while leaving a mosque.

Mohammad Reza Ghafari, spokesman for the provincial governor, said the commander's wife was gunned down when she rushed to the scene after hearing about her husband being shot.

Afghanistan faces many security challenges years after the United States and its allies invaded the country in 2001 as part of Washington's so-called war on terror. The offensive removed the Taliban from power, but many areas in the country are still beset with insecurity.

Despite the presence of thousands of foreign boots on the ground, Afghanistan has been rocked by a surge in terrorist attacks, some of them carried out by the ISIL.

The rise of ISIL in Afghanistan has raised concerns in the Asian country that has already been torn apart by decades of Taliban-led militancy and the U.S.-led invasion.

Civilian casualties in 2016 were the highest recorded by the United Nations since 2009, with nearly 11,500 non-combatants killed or wounded.

(Source: AFP)

Rudaw's Shifa Gardi killed covering battle for Mosul

A female reporter working for an Iraqi Kurdish channel was killed in a roadside bomb attack while covering clashes between government forces and the Islamic State in Iraq (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group in Mosul, her channel said.

Killed on Saturday, 30-year-old Shifa Gardi was a presenter and chief of output at Rudaw, a media group in Kurdistan funded by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP/Partiya Demokrat a Kurdistanê).

Her cameraman, Younis Mustafa, was also wounded in the attack.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Srinivas Kuchibhotla: Wife questioned safety in U.S.

The wife of an Indian man shot dead in a United States bar said she expressed concern about the targeting of immigrants in the United States before the attack, but her husband told her not to worry.

Speaking at a news conference on Friday in Kansas, the victim's wife, Sunayana Dumala, said she had questioned whether it was safe to live in the U.S. after other shooting incidents.

"We always wondered how safe it was to stay in the United States of America, but he always assured me that only good things happen to good people," said Dumala. "He did not deserve a death like this."

Srinivas Kuchibhotla, 32, was killed and Alok Madasani - also 32 and from India - wounded in Austin's Bar and Grill in Olathe, Kansas on Wednesday night. American Ian Grillo, 24, was shot, but survived after he chased down the attacker.

At least one bystander told the Kansas City Star newspaper the gunman shouted: "Get out of my country" before shooting the Indian victims.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is investigating whether the attack was a hate crime - the official term for crimes motivated by bias or prejudice.

Pratik Mathur, spokesman for the Indian embassy in Washington DC, said India had requested a "thorough and speedy investigation" by U.S. authorities.

The shooting triggered outrage on social media with people voicing concern that Trump's "America First" position on immigration and jobs has fuelled a climate of intolerance.

White House spokesman Sean Spicer said on Friday any loss of life was tragic, but it would be "absurd" to link the killing to Trump's rhetoric.

■ Mindset of hate

The suspect fled and was arrested five hours later at a restaurant in Missouri. He reportedly told an employee there he needed a place to hide because he had killed two Middle Eastern men, the Star reported.

Adam Purinton, 51, was charged on Thursday with one count of premeditated first-degree murder and two counts of attempted premeditated first-degree murder, District Attorney Stephen Howe told reporters.

At Kuchibhotla's family home near the Indian tech hub of Hyderabad, relatives backed government calls to ensure the safety of Indians living in the United States.

"The government should voice out this strongly because our brothers, sisters and our relatives are there," the victim's brother, Venu Madhav, told Reuters Television.

Madhav said the U.S. government under Trump seems to be "cultivating the mindset to hate Asians and Middle East people."

Dozens of people attended a candlelight vigil on Friday evening in Olathe at a church across the road from the bar where Kuchibhotla was murdered. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were raised through crowd funding sites for the three victims.

Trump's immigration restrictions could target skilled Indian workers as the government considers curbing the H-1B visa program, worrying both India's \$150bn IT services industry and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government.

Social media lit up with responses to the Kansas attack. "Don't be shocked! Be angry!" Siddharth, a well-known South Indian actor who uses one name, tweeted to his 2.6 million followers.

"Trump is spreading hate. This is a hate crime! RIP #SrinivasKuchibhotla."

(Source: agencies)

The Week in Quotes

"I have a few coaches I look up to but I don't copy the philosophy of people like Jurgen Klopp, Jose Mourinho or Antonio Conte. I respect all the great coaches and their achievements at the highest level, but they all have their own personalities and philosophy. I have my own method, one that is tailored to what my team is capable of and to the matches we have to play."

Eastern head coach Chan Yuen Ting speaks exclusively with FIFA.com ahead of becoming the first female to coach a men's team in a continental club tournament

"My groin was hurting. I was only at 60 per cent. So I shaved my head. Everybody was only talking about my injury. When I arrived in training with this haircut everybody stopped talking about the injury."



Former Brazil forward Ronaldo reveals the reason behind his famous haircut during the 2002 FIFA World Cup Final, speaking with ESPN Brazil

"There are not quite as many [who are ready] as we always think. We're talking about [beating] Messi and Ronaldo for Germany to become world champions. If someone in the Bundesliga

performs well, that does not mean that he will perform well in World Cup knockout games, which the team needs to win the title. We speak of world class, of absolute world class."

Germany head coach Joachim Low speaks with Kicker about his high standards for the World Cup holders

"Yes, I would have wanted Messi to be born in Brazil. Regardless of the great rivalry between Brazil and Argentina, one only rivals who he admires. And we have an admiration for the Argentine. Messi is awesome. His creative ability is extraordinary, outside of normal patterns. He manages to see what others don't"

Brazil coach Tite praises Argentina rival Lionel Messi in an interview with AS

"He is now the best Italian coach, one of the best in the world. 1,000 games is not easy, to stay on the bench for that long but with that responsibility to win every season is great. He deserves the best."

Chelsea manager Antonio Conte praises Bayern Munich coach Carlo Ancelotti, who will reach 1,000 games as a coach this weekend.

"I don't just want the boys to go out and perform for the sake of it. We're not England or Brazil, but our fans have a special way of loving the game. They want success and I want to give it to them again."

Trinidad and Tobago coach Dennis Lawrence speaks exclusively with FIFA.com about bringing success to the Soca Warriors in Russia 2018 qualifying

"I do remember one moment when I said something to Iniesta. When Marco was on the ground, I told Iniesta 'that is your successor'. He agreed and replied 'yes'. That is my opinion. Iniesta is an extraordinary player. He is ageing but he is still capable of great things. We are lucky to have [Iniesta's] heir in Marco. That is the message I passed on to him."

Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Blaise Matuidi tells France Bleu radio that Andres Iniesta believes Matuidi's team-mate Marco Verratti will be his successor in midfield in the future

"I would never have forgiven myself if I hadn't kept trying. I told myself 'I'm not going to stop until they amputate my leg. If I've got two legs and two knees I've got to keep going until I'm not in pain any longer. That day has to arrive."

Valencia forward Marianela Szymanowski talks about her recovery from serious injuries, in an interview with FIFA.com

"He reads the game very well. In fact, he sees football the way the great players do, although he's very young. I hate comparisons, so I say that Dybala must become Dybala, someone who has the potential to be among the best in the world. But he has to be left alone."

Juventus forward Gonzalo Higuain praises team-mate Paulo Dybala in an interview with La Stampa

"This is a time for the team to be united. By sticking together, they can get through this situation. We know that the result in Paris hurt, but if there is any team that can turn something like this around, then that team is Barca. It is a difficult result, but not impossible. This team has done a lot in recent years and they deserve every confidence in the world. I am with them to the death, not just because they are friends of mine but because at Barca we are all in the same boat. We cannot afford to have doubts. We have to fight to the end."

Barcelona legend Carles Puyol tells reporters that his former team can overcome their 4-0 first leg defeat by Paris Saint-Germain in the Round of 16 of the UEFA Champions League

"We know how Ancelotti's formation functions by now. In order to be successful, Robben, Ribery and Thiago are irreplaceable. Ancelotti has a much bigger chance of winning the Champions League when these three players and Lewandowski are all on the pitch at the same time. He has found his best starting XI for the big games. I know what Thomas Muller has done for Bayern and what he has achieved, but there is no room for him at Bayern in the big games."

Bayern Munich legend Lothar Matthaus gives TZ his views on the club's current form

"Yesterday my dream died. After the euphoria of last season and being crowned Premier League champions all I dreamt of was staying with Leicester City, the club I love, for always. Sadly this was not to be."

Claudio Ranieri releases a statement after being sacked by Leicester City

"I shed a tear last night. I shed a tear for Claudio. I shed a tear for football, and I shed a tear for my club. It's inexplicable to me, and I think it's inexplicable to a lot of football fans who love the game, but I suppose in some ways you can explain it in terms of a panic decision, and for me a wrong decision and it's very sad."

Former Leicester City forward Gary Lineker reacts to the news that his club sacked manager Claudio Ranieri, speaking on BBC Radio 4's Today programme

"He deserves the Leicester stadium to be named 'Claudio Ranieri Stadium'. The most beautiful thing in the Premier League and one of most beautiful in football history."

Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho reacts to Ranieri's sacking, speaking with the media in the build-up to Sunday's EFL Cup final against Southampton

(Source: FIFA)

Kazu Miura: The indefatigable veteran

The hairs are greyer, the legs and knees not what they used to be, but that doesn't stop Kazuyoshi Miura for preparing for his 32nd season in professional football. Well and truly defying the ageing process of a player, 'King Kazu' could feature on his 50th birthday on 26 February for Japanese second-tier side Yokohama FC, who begin their J2 League campaign at home to Matsumoto Yamaga on Sunday.

It's another chapter in a remarkable career which began for the 89-time Samurai Blue international in Brazil at the tender age of 15, and saw the striker go on to ply his trade in three other continents and score a staggering 12 goals on the road to France 1998 to help his nation qualify for their first FIFA World Cup™.

"I hope to keep fighting with all my might together with people involved with the club, my team-mates and supporters who have always given me support," the Japanese legend said after penning a contract extension that would see him play into his fifties. FIFA.com looks back at the age-defying veteran's extraordinary career.

■ Brazilian beginnings

A native of Shizuoka, home of the iconic Mount Fuji, Miura embarked on his footballing career on a path less travelled, leaving behind his high school in Japan for Sao Paulo, Brazil in 1982. The frontman spent seven seasons in South America, making his senior debut for giants Santos in 1986.

"The first three years were quite tough and I often felt homesick," he said. "After that it was okay because I learned the language and got my driver's licence, so I could get about on my own. As a soccer player in Brazil I learned to have high morals, and never to be satisfied with the level you have reached. You must always try to build your mental spirit."

It was also in South America that the veteran got his first taste of futsal. Miura would go on to represent his country at the 2012 FIFA Futsal World Cup three decades later as Japan reached the Round of 16. "Playing at the FIFA Futsal World Cup is the ultimate for a futsal player," he said. "Although it's a different category of football, it's not a matter of one being superior to another."

Japan return and national service
Miura returned to his homeland in



1990, joining Yomiuri FC which later became Verdy Kawasaki (now Tokyo Verdy), and quickly established himself as one of the league's stars with his samba flair and iconic goal celebrations. In the same year, his national team came calling and just two years after making his senior international debut, the frontman helped Samurai Blue to their first AFC Asian Cup in 1992 – being named the tournament's MVP – before featuring at the 1995 FIFA Confederations Cup.

An appearance at the FIFA World Cup continued to escape his grasp, however. After enduring the Agony of Doha – when an Iraq injury-time goal shattered Japan's dreams of reaching their first global finals at USA 1994 – Miura looked set to be on course for an appearance at France 1998. After netting 12 times in qualifying

as Samurai Blue earned a berth at their maiden World Cup, it came as a shock to many when national team manager Takeshi Okada axed the forward from the final 22-man squad. "I couldn't find a place for him even when thinking about the possibility of him being a substitute," said Okada.

Miura would bring an end to his Samurai Blue playing days two years later in 2000 with 55 goals from 89 caps, but the much-travelled frontman's exploits at club level were far from over.

World stage
Though the chance to play at the World Cup failed to materialise for Miura, after spells in Europe with Genoa and Dinamo Zagreb, the opportunity to feature on the world stage would finally present itself at club level, aged 38.

A loan move to Australian side Sydney FC enabled the Japanese legend to compete at the 2005 FIFA Club World Cup in his homeland, where he would go on to help a side captained by Dwight Yorke to a fifth-place finish.

"I love football and my passion for the game hasn't changed," Miura told FIFA.com shortly before that tournament began in 2005. "I know that I'm not young anymore and I am finding the game a lot tougher physically, but I still get a lot of pleasure when my team wins or I play well. As long as I'm enjoying my football, I'll keep going."

And keep going, he has. The evergreen forward is now preparing for his first season in his fifties as the reign of 'King Kazu' continues.

(Source: FIFA)

Scholes wants Guardiola to coach England

Former England midfielder Paul Scholes would like Manchester City coach Pep Guardiola to take charge of the England team one day, he said in an interview published on Saturday.

"I hope he becomes England coach one day and bring us his style," Scholes told Spanish sports daily Marca.

Scholes, who had a long career with Manchester United, said he admired the style of the Catalan coach at his former club's bitter rivals.

While Guardiola has not had the same impact in his debut campaign in English football as he did in his first seasons at Barcelona and Bayern Munich, where he stormed to the title, City are second in the Premier League, eight points adrift of leaders Chelsea, and beat Monaco 5-3 in the first leg of the Champions League last 16 on Tuesday.

"He can still succeed in England, he could improve in defence because at every ground you come under pressure but everyone in England loves the way his teams play," Scholes said of Guardiola.

Scholes, one of the leading figures of Alex Ferguson's trophy-laden spell in charge of United, also praised current



United coach Jose Mourinho despite the fact that his former side are sixth in the Premier League, 12 points behind Chelsea.

"He is getting the team to play how the fans and the club want. Before the style of play from other coaches was difficult to understand, their league position does not match the good football the team are playing," Scholes said.

"The first few months were not great but he wants to win everything. Now they are winning the games that they should have won before. He's returning United back to where they belong."

(Source: Reuters)

Zidane warns Real to be wary of 'game of the year' for opponents

Real Madrid's players need to be prepared for rival teams raising their game when they meet the La Liga leaders, coach Zinedine Zidane said on Saturday.

"We know we have to always improve but it's difficult because when teams play us it's always their game of the year," Zidane told a news conference.

"Sometimes you don't even recognise the opponent when they play against us but that's normal because playing against Real Madrid is an extra motivation for everyone and we have to always remember that."

Real, looking for their first title since 2012, were caught out on Wednesday when Valencia woke up from a poor season to inflict only the second defeat of the campaign on Zidane's side.

The defeat cost Real the chance to gain ground on their rivals, though they remain one point clear of Barcelona going into the weekend's matches.

On Sunday, Real visit Villarreal, who are sixth in the standings and have the best defence in the league, and Zidane expects a stern test from Fran Escriba's side.

"It's an even more difficult game against a really good side who are well organised but it's good to play so soon after Wednesday; we have the



opportunity to pick up points and that's what we're going to try and do," he said.

The weekend could have a large say in the title race, with second-placed Barcelona facing a testing encounter at Atletico Madrid hours before Real meet Villarreal.

"We can't control that game, we will see it but the most important thing is what we do in our game," said the coach.

Real could be boosted by Gareth Bale making his first start since injuring his ankle in November. Zidane said the Wales international, who came on as a substitute against Valencia and in the 2-0 win over Espanyol, was "physically 100 percent."

(Source: Reuters)



♡ @ronaldo Good day



♡ @atpworldtour @rogerfederer and @andymurray are in #Dubai



♡ @philippeville18 Romantic night in Paris

Iran's Ashkan Dejagah granted ITC to play for Wolfsburg

S P O R T S Ashkan Dejagah has been cleared to play for the Wolves. The lengthy back and forth is finally at an end!

On Friday afternoon, the world football federation FIFA granted playing permission for Ashkan Dejagah. The Bundesliga winner from 2009, who was most recently active for Qatari first division side Al-Arabi Sports Club and signed for VfL again in winter after five years away from the club, has now been cleared to play in the Bundesliga.

"That subject has preoccupied us for far too long. That considered, I would like to take the opportunity to thank FIFA and the DFL for their support and the constructive cooperation. Ashkan must now recover from his calf injury and then we will be very happy to see him in action again in the VfL jersey," explained VfL Sporting director Olaf Rebbe.

Dejagah is recovering from calf injury at the moment. He has been ruled out for four weeks.

Dejagah is a doubt for Iran's two important matches against Qatar and China in the 2018 World Cup qualification.

Iran remains top of Group A in the 2018 FIFA World Cup qualification, followed by South Korea and Uzbekistan.



UWW Hall of Fame Mehdi Khaledi dies

S P O R T S Wrestling Hall of Fame Mehdi Khaledi died on Saturday after a long battle with disease.

He passed away in Tehran's Laleh Hospital at the age of 75.

Khaledi took part at the five editions of Olympic Games (1988, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004) as a referee.

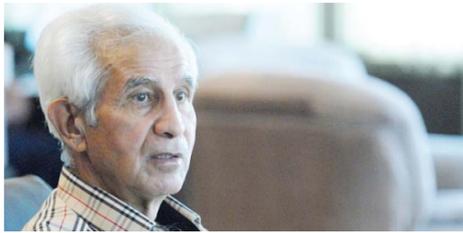
He also officiated 36 times at the World

Championships as well as five Asian Games (1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006).

Khaledi was inducted into the FILA Hall of Fame in 2008.

The referee will be laid to rest on Sunday.

Tehran Times offers condolence to the Iranian wrestling community and to Khaledi's family and friends.



Azizi resigns as Siah Jamegan head coach

S P O R T S Khodadad Azizi, who took charge of Siah Jamegan as Farhad Kazemi successor in the 10th week of Iran Professional League, resigned from his post after just thirteen weeks.

A 2-1 defeat against Tractor Sazi on Friday left them in the 15th spot in the relegation zone with just eight games remaining.

Siah Jamegan started the season with Farhad Kazemi as the head coach. Kazemi sacked in the ninth week after three consecutive defeats against Tractor Sazi, Esteghlal and Sepahan.

Azizi was appointed as the new head coach in the 10th week but he couldn't improve the team's results as they managed to get just one win in 13 games. Akbar Misaghian is the main candidate



to replace Azizi while accepting this responsibility will be a great risk as the team struggle with financial problems and fighting to avoid relegation.

Karim Ansarifard offered €10m to join Tianjin

The officials of Olympiacos claim that they have received 10-million euros bid from Chinese club Tianjin Quanjian for Iranian striker Karim Ansarifard.

The 27-year-old international joined the Reds from Panionios in January and after the expected departure of Nigerian Brown Ideye, sdnagr reported.

Ansarifard will most likely be the starting striker in manager Paulo Bento's plans, ahead of experienced Paraguayan Oscar Rene Cardozo Marin.

He started his playing career at Saipa in 2007 and joined Iranian popular team Persepolis after five

appearances for Iran national football team and scored 14 times.



appearances for Iran national football team and scored 14 times.

(Source: Tasnim)

Saeid Ezatolahi extends contract with Rostov

Iranian international midfielder Saeid Ezatolahi has extended his contract with Rostov for two-and-a-half year on Friday.

The 20-year-old player has joined Anzhi Makhachkala on loan in early February.

Football Club Anzhi Makhachkala is a Russian football club based in Makhachkala, capital of the Republic of Dagestan. Founded in 1991, the club competes in the Russian Football Premier League, playing its home games at the Anzhi-Arena.

Ezatolahi came up through Malavan's youth academy and impressed from an early age, making

his first team debut in 2012 as the Iran Pro League's youngest ever player at the age of 16.

He has earned a number of accolades since then, including the Iranian federation's young player of the year award. In 2014 he was named as one of the most talented football players according to Wonderkids.

Ezatolahi became the youngest goalscorer in the history of the Iran national football team at the age of 19 years and 42 days after scoring in a 3-1 victory against Turkmenistan in November 2015.

(Source: Tasnim)

Iran men's team rolls into West Asia Baseball Cup semi-finals

The Iran men's national baseball team has earned an easy spot in the semi-finals of the 13th edition of the West Asia Baseball Cup, after the Indian squad could not participate in the regional event because they had not been issued Pakistani visas.

The Iranian sportsmen were scheduled to face their Indian counterparts at the multi-purpose Jinnah Stadium in the Pakistani capital city of Islamabad for a Group A fixture on Saturday.

They automatically clinched the victory as the opposite team did not show up to the contest, and lost as the forfeiting team.

The Iran men's national baseball team is slated to take on Sri Lanka on Sunday in a match that will determine the Group B topper.

While Iraq, Nepal and the host nation Pakistan are pitted against each other in Group A, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Sri Lanka form Group B.

The top two teams in each group (five teams in total) will qualify for the knockout stage.

The 13th edition of West Asia Baseball Cup opened in Islamabad, Pakistan, on February 25 and will conclude on March 1, 2017.

The names on the roster of the Iranian men's team include Majid Pashoei,



Davoud Jabbari, Kayvan Runna, Mohammad Reza Shabani, Yassin Sharifi, Mohammad Safdari, Amir Arefinia, Hesham Arefzadeh, Asghar Veghari, Rajabali Barzegar, Mostafa Kamali, Mohammad Goudarzi, Mohammad Sadeq Gohari, Mojtaba Kordan, Sepehr Mosharrafjavadi, Mehdi Ma'soumi, Iman Mo'azzeni, Seyyed Jalal Farahibozorg and Mojtaba Vaezzadeh.

The Iranian outfit is under the tutelage of Spanish head coach Rafael Lemes.

(Source: PressTV)

Weightlifter Salimi pulls out of 2nd International Fajr Cup

Iranian super heavyweight lifter Behdad Salimi Kordasiabi has decided to withdraw from the second edition of the International Fajr Cup, which is scheduled to be held next month in southern Iran.

The 27-year-old man-mountain told reporters in the southwestern Iranian city of Ahvaz, located approximately 830 kilometers southwest of the capital, Tehran, late on Friday that he had seriously aggravated his knee injury during a recent snatch competition of the Iranian Weightlifting Clubs Super League, and had to undergo treatment in order to return to full fitness soon.

Salimi suffered a serious knee injury on October 26, 2015 as he was trying to lift 262 kilograms overhead in the clean and jerk during his training session.

He was immediately rushed to hospital, where he underwent a surgery following results of an MRI scan.

The second edition of the International Fajr Cup will begin in Ahvaz, Iran, on March 9, and will finish on March 14, 2017.

Contestants from Azerbaijan,



Bangladesh, Cameroon, England, Hungary, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Romania, Serbia, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda and Yemen have already confirmed their participation in the event.

The participants will be in action in men's 85-kilogram, 94-kilogram, 105-kilogram and over 105-kilogram weight categories. The top three athletes will be awarded cash prizes.

(Source: PressTV)

Jordan Burroughs: wrestling is an old culture for Iranians

In response to Donald Trump's hastily slapped-together executive order last month that blocked entry for citizens from seven predominantly Muslim countries, including Iran, the Iranian government barred visa entry for all U.S. citizens. The move had a direct effect on the wrestling World Cup, an international competition that was set to take place in the country, where wrestling is pretty much the national sport.

The United States, of course, has some of the world's best wrestlers; a wrestling World Cup in Iran without the Americans would be kind of like an NBA finals in the '80s without the Celtics or Lakers.

In Iran, Burroughs received a superstar's welcome, and the 28-year-old was swarmed by fans seeking selfies and autographs. GQ spoke with Burroughs this week about his experience there, what he hopes Americans can learn from his trip, and if he would ever go back to a country many Americans see as a sworn enemy of the state.

■ GQ: Congrats on a hell of a performance in this past World Cup. How long were you in Iran, and when did you get back?

Jordan Burroughs: Thank you, I appreciate it. We were in Iran for a total of eight days, and I got back home to Lincoln, Nebraska, on Sunday night.

■ Iran ended up winning this year's wrestling World Cup. They consistently have some of the best wrestlers on the planet. What makes them so good?

It's interesting, because on a personal level, after seven years on the international stage, I've never lost to an Iranian wrestler. But don't get me wrong: As a team, they are always the best. This was my fifth World Cup, and in each of those competitions, we were beat by the Iranians. It just shows how high of a level those guys are consistently wrestling. Above all else, they are extremely athletic, disciplined, and know how to maintain great positioning throughout a match.

■ Do you think this type of dominance must have something to do with Iran's cultural pride?

Absolutely, without a doubt. Other than the U.S., they're the only other country that I've felt their love for sports is interwoven with their national identity. For Americans, of course, it's football, basketball, and baseball. We live for it. In many ways, it sums up who we are. In Iran, it's all about wrestling. The patriotism toward their country comes out in the way they wrestle, so it makes sense why they're the best.

■ How difficult was it for you, as an American, to visit Iran after decades of hostile relations? And, most recently, President Trump's travel ban?

I don't describe myself as a nationalist, but I do love my country. What I tried to focus on, and what I wanted the Iranian people to understand, is that, listen, America is a democracy. And what that means is we vote for our public officials, and sometimes they don't win. That means I can still love my country, while wholeheartedly being against certain policies. Donald Trump and I have very different views on Iranians. I am confident that if he ever visited the country, he'd learn a lot about the people and come back to the States with a newfound appreciation for the Persians.

■ That's a bold statement. Do you fear for any repercussions it may produce here at home?

I've been to Iran twice now, and I can honestly say they are some of the kindest, most hospitable people in the world. It's such an old culture, and I feel like I'm just starting to learn more about it. So, to answer your question, I'm extremely confident in making that statement and feel comfortable with whatever potential backlash may come with it.

■ You are considered the best 74 kg wrestler on the planet in a country that's obsessed with the sport. Did you feel like a celebrity while you were there?

Honestly, it was insane. It seemed like the entire nation was tuned in to the tournament. Their version of ESPN was talking about the event all day long, streaming throughout millions of homes. There were fans lining the airport when we landed, and fans bidding us farewell after the competition was done. I've never gotten that type of reception here in the U.S. In the stadium during the tournament, it was something else. They were cheering our names. It's crazy, right? Here we were in the middle of Iran, and it felt like home.

■ Are you friends with anyone on the Iranian team?

I've become close with Masoud Esmaeilpour and consider him a friend. We send each other messages from time to time on Instagram, checking in to see how the other is doing. Whenever I see him, he's always a gentleman, giving me tips about my next opponent. There is a tremendous amount of respect in our friendship.

What would you say to those Americans out there who simply don't trust Iranians, and who believe the Muslim travel ban is smart policy? I'd say that the way the Iranian people are portrayed in the media, and in movies, is simply false. It's not representative of who they are as individuals. And that level of awareness is not possible unless you travel there and experience it for yourself. If you do that, if you see for yourself what it means to be Iranian, I promise you your mind will be changed.

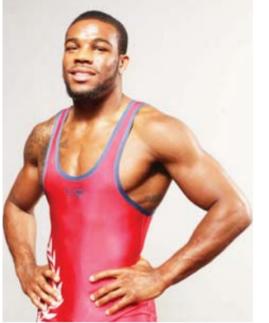
■ Did you run into any issues at any point while you were there?

No, quite the opposite. At times, the love and support we received was overwhelming. We'd be preparing for a match, and the Iranians would have already formed lines of people waiting to get their picture with us, asking for our autographs. Even after the World Cup was over, there were ordinary Iranian citizens sending me and my family gifts such as traditional Kurdish clothing, a book of Persian poetry, dolls for my young children, saffron, an Iranian toffee called sohan.

■ If I said there was a flight waiting for you to head back to Iran right now, what would you say?

[laughs] I'd say I'm already out the front door on my way to the airport.

(Source: gq.com)



INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

Managing Director: Ali Asgari
Editor-in-Chief: Hassan Lasjerdi

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 editor@tehrantimes.com
Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450
Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co. Tel: 88911433
Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
Printed at: Kayhan - ISSN: 1017-94

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.O. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713



NEWS IN BRIEF



"Wenjack" comes to Iranian bookstores

CULTURE TEHRAN — Canadian writer Joseph d e s k Boyd's 2016 novel "Wenjack" has recently been published in Persian by Tandis Publications in Tehran.

Translated by Mohammad Javadi, the book tells the story of a Native American boy who runs away from a North Ontario Indian School to get back home with his parents and sisters and two beloved dogs. But he doesn't realize that home is 600 kilometers away.



Hasanat festival to honor Kiumars Purahmad, Amrollah Ahmadju

CULTURE TEHRAN — Isfahan-born prominent d e s k directors Kiumars Purahmad and Amrollah Ahmadju are scheduled to receive lifetime achievement awards at the 6th National Hasanat Short Film Festival, which will be held in the central Iranian city of Isfahan from March 5 to 8.

The festival is established by the Hasanat Islamic Culture Publication and Promotion Foundation in Isfahan in collaboration with the Farabi Cinema Foundation. Hasanat aims to promote the culture of charity in the country.

Obama returns to Broadway to see Arthur Miller's "The Price"

NEW YORK (AP) — The Obamas just can't quit Broadway. Former President Barack Obama and his daughter Malia Obama have caught a new revival of Arthur Miller's "The Price." They attended the play starring Danny DeVito, John Turturro, Tony Shalhoub and Jessica Hecht at the American Airlines Theatre on Friday.

In "The Price," a police officer feels that life has passed him by while he took care of his now-dead father. He and his estranged brother must reunite to sell off dad's possessions.

The Obamas were big boosters of Broadway during his presidency, especially "Hamilton," "A Raisin in the Sun" and "Joe Turner's Come and Gone." Members of the Obama family also attended "Memphis," "Kinky Boots," "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark," "Sister Act," "The Trip to Bountiful," "Motown the Musical" and "The Addams Family."

Iranian-American space experts to step in for Farhadi at Oscars

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Iranian director Asghar Farhadi has chosen an Iranian-American female engineer and a former NASA scientist to represent his film "The Salesman" at Sunday's Oscar ceremony, which he is boycotting in protest over U.S. President Donald Trump's crackdown on immigration.

Farhadi, who has given no interviews since Trump in January banned travel from seven majority Muslim nations, planned to address a rally in Beverly Hills on Friday via video from Tehran, rally organizers said.

The rally, organized by the United Talent Agency, which represents Farhadi in Hollywood, is being held instead of the agency's traditional pre-Oscar party. It will protest policies of exclusion and division and speakers will include actors Jodie Foster, Michael J. Fox and Keegan-Michael Key.

"The Salesman," a family drama set in Tehran, is one of the front runners to take home the Oscar for foreign language film on Sunday. If it wins, it would mark Farhadi and Iran's second Oscar after "A Separation" won in 2012.

Farhadi and the film's lead actress, Taraneh Alidoosti, both said last month they would not travel to Los Angeles to represent the film because of Trump's ban, even if they were exempted. The ban was later overturned by U.S. courts but the administration is working on a new executive travel order.

In a statement to Hollywood trade publication Variety on Friday, Farhadi's publicist said that engineer Anousheh Ansari, who was the first female space tourist, and Firouz Naderi, a former director of NASA's Solar System Exploration program, would take Farhadi's place at the Oscars and represent him on stage should the film win.

Ansari moved to the United States from Iran in 1984 as a teenager and made headlines as the first Iranian and first Muslim woman in space in 2006.

Afghanistan's "Fisherman" crowned best at Intl. 100-Second Film Festival

A R T TEHRAN — Afghan director d e s k Ahmad Vahid Omid's "The Fisherman" has won the best film award in the international section of the 11th International 100-Second Film Festival in Tehran.

"Fox Tale" by Doosun Shin from Sri Lanka was named best animated film while "Chripajas" by Olga Poliektova and Jaume Quiles from Russia received the award for best documentary during the closing ceremony of the festival held at Andisheh Hall of the Art Bureau on Friday evening.

In the national section, "Kept Waiting" by Hossein Darabi won the Grand Prix while "His Excellency the Engineer" by Mohammad-Hossein Emami received the best film award.

"Iron-Image" by Mohammad Hassani was picked as best documentary and "Shape-Life" by Ehsan Masum was selected as best animation.

The Audience Award was presented to "Me, You, Us 2" by Ali Erfan Farhadi from Iran.

Fifty-nine movies by filmmakers from 28 countries competed in this edition of the festival, which is organized every year by the Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization.



Afghan filmmaker Ahmad Vahid Omid (R) accepts the best film award for his "The Fisherman" during the closing ceremony of the 11th International 100-Second Film Festival at the Art Bureau in Tehran on February 24, 2017. (Fars/Soheil Sahrnavard)

Cartoon exhibit on Trump to open today in Tehran

A R T TEHRAN — A d e s k number of Iranian cartoonists will be hanging their works focusing on U.S. President Donald Trump in an exhibition, which opens at Iran's House of Cartoon today.

Alireza Pakdel, Bahram Arjomandnia, Ali Paknahad, Amin Montazeri, Jaber Asadi, Salman Taheri and Arash Foroughi are among the cartoonists whose works will be on display.

The exhibit has been set up in collaboration with the Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Sacred Defense Works and Values, and will be running until March 5 at the house located at No. 44, West Gol Nabi St., off Shariati Ave.



Theater troupe to perform Noruzkhani at Sangelaj

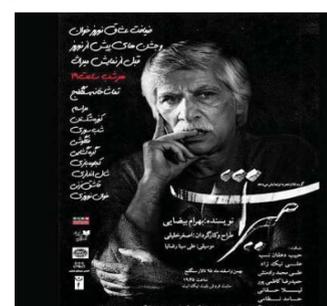
CULTURE TEHRAN — The d e s k Theater Troupe directed by Asghar Khalili will be performing Noruzkhani before staging Bahram Beizai's 1967 play "Heritage" at Tehran's Sangelaj Theater beginning tonight.

Noruzkhani consists of performances featuring songs about Noruz (Iranian New Year) and spring.

The troupe aims to preserve and revive old Iranian traditions and celebrations.

The celebration will begin at 7 p.m. before the play goes on stage at 7:45.

"Heritage" is about three brothers who are fighting for their inheritance, and will be on stage



until March 14. Habib Dehqan-Nasab, Ali Nikzad, Leila Haqqani, Hamidreza Kazempur and Hamed Nezami are the main members of the cast for the play.

Tehran exhibit hangs landscapes by Iranian modern painters

A R T TEHRAN — Landscapes by several d e s k eminent modern Iranian painters are currently on display in an exhibition at Tehran's Mah-e Mehr Gallery.

Entitled "A Lyrical Approach to Painting", works by six modern Iranian artists Sohrab Sepehri, Behjat Sadr, Nasser Assar, Hossein Kazemi, Abolqasem Saeidi and Manuchehr Yektaei are on display, highlighting the beautiful scenery as seen through the eyes of each artist.

Each artist has had his/her specific approach towards nature and has portrayed what he/she has seen through using special techniques, the gallery

has announced in a press release.

The exhibit also puts emphasis on the viewpoint of each artist, while the paintings reveal the world view of the artists.

For example, Sepehri has been seeking only beauty in his works, and ugliness has no position in his world.

In works by Bejat Sadr, light and shadow play key roles and tree trunks reveal metamorphosis in the nature, while Kazmei uses simple plates moving towards abstract forms.

The exhibit will be running until March 10 at the gallery located at No. 7, Nilufar St., off Africa Ave.



Art enthusiasts visit an exhibition of landscapes by several modern Iranian painters at Tehran's Mah-e Mehr Gallery on February 24, 2017. (Iran Art/Shareh Samei)

Foreign Oscar contenders denounce 'fanaticism' in U.S.

BEVERLY HILLS, CALIF. (Reuters) — The directors of all five Oscar-nominated foreign language films on Friday denounced what they called a "climate of fanaticism and nationalism" in the United States and elsewhere, and dedicated their Academy Award to the cause of unity and free expression.

The directors from Iran, Sweden, Germany, Denmark and Australia spoke out in a statement as hundreds of people attended a rally on the eve of Oscar weekend. The rally was organized by one of Hollywood's biggest talent agencies in support of freedom of expression and unity.

The statement and show-business rally in Beverly Hills followed a crackdown by U.S. President Donald Trump on travel to the United States, and months of fiery speeches by celebrities at awards shows and marches.

Iranian film director Asghar Farhadi, is boycotting Sunday's Oscar ceremony in protest at Trump's bid to ban travel from seven majority Muslim nations.

Speaking to the rally in a video from Tehran, Farhadi denounced politicians whom he said are "trying to promote hate but creating divisions between cultures, traditions and nationalities."

Farhadi was also part of the group that attacked "divisive walls," and the divisions of "genders, colors, religions and sexualities" in current politics.

"We would like to express our unanimous and emphatic disapproval of the climate of fanaticism and nationalism we see today in the U.S. and in so many other countries, in parts of the population and, most unfortunately of all, among leading



Director Asghar Farhadi, Best screenplay award winner for the film "Forushande" (The Salesman), poses during a photocall after the closing ceremony of the 69th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France, May 22, 2016. (Reuters/Jean-Paul Pelissier)

politicians," said the statement, issued to trade publications Variety and the Hollywood Reporter.

It was signed by Farhadi director of "The Salesman", Martin Zandvliet (Denmark's "Land of Mine"), Hannes Holm (Sweden's "A Man Called Ove"), Maren Ade (Germany's "Toni Erdmann"), and Martin Butler and Bentley Dean (Australia's "Tanna").

The directors said that "regardless of who wins the Academy Award for best foreign language film on Sunday, we refuse to think in terms of borders."

"We dedicate this award to all the people, artists, journalists and activists who are working to foster unity and understanding, and who uphold freedom of expression and human dignity."

Their statement echoed speeches at the Beverly Hills rally, organized by the United Talent Agency in place of its annual Oscar party.

Actress Jodie Foster urged the crowd of about 500 people to take action to defend civil liberties and democracy.

Oscars so divided: Hollywood still struggles with race

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — On their way to this year's Oscars, Dev Patel searched for his Indian roots, Denzel Washington wrestled with racism as an angry African-American patriarch and Octavia Spencer became a top black female mathematician.

With seven nominations for actors and actresses of color, the Oscars this year have been touted as an improvement on diversity after two years of #OscarsSoWhite criticism.

Yet critics say the real test will be when the movie industry, like television, casts more actors of color in roles that are not defined by their race.

"It can get burdensome possibly to actors (of color) to play characters where the main storyline is about race, as opposed to just being a person going through a divorce or something similar," said Victoria Thomas, casting director of best picture Oscar nominee "Hidden Figures."

"That's the next hurdle to get over," she added.

To be sure, some of this year's crop of Oscar hopefuls have found success in color-blind roles.

Washington was Oscar-nominated for playing an alcoholic airline pilot in 2012's "Flight," "Moonlight" supporting actress Naomie Harris was cast as Miss Moneybags in James Bond movies "Skyfall" and "Spectre," and "Fences" star Viola Davis won an Emmy for playing a hard-bitten criminal lawyer in the TV series "How to Get Away with Murder."

Yet in the 89-year history of the Oscars, nearly all black actors who have won Academy Awards have done so for playing black characters.

This year's lineup is no exception, although films like "Moonlight," "Fences" and "Hidden Figures" tell black stories outside the themes of slavery and civil rights that in the past most attracted awards attention.

Washington and Davis star in the screen adaptation of African-American playwright August Wilson's "Fences." In independent film hit "Moonlight", supporting actor Oscar front-runner Mahershala Ali plays a Miami drug dealer and Harris plays the drug-addicted mother of a black boy.

Ruth Negga plays a black woman who marries a white man in defiance of 1950s U.S. segregation laws in "Loving", Spencer plays NASA mathematician Dorothy Vaughan in "Hidden Figures" and Patel plays an Australian-Indian man in "Lion."

"Moonlight", the coming-of-age story about a black boy, is a character that "would never have been seen in the past, and certainly not nominated for Oscars," said Darnell Hunt, author of a University of California Los Angeles annual report on Hollywood and diversity.

"Sometimes, we (the black community) want our narratives and our experiences to be told, and that's what we get in 'Moonlight' and 'Fences,'" Hunt said.

"Of course, the ideal would be to get both at the same time, such as a 'La La Land' with a black actor as a lead."

Oscar best picture favorite "La La Land" features a largely white cast even though it is set in multiracial Los Angeles and is the story of a struggling actress (Emma Stone) and a jazz pianist (Ryan Gosling).