



Iranian light crude's weekly price up \$1.24 **4**



Harming environment detrimental to health, public security: Rouhani **12**



Iran down Malaysia in AFC Beach Soccer Championship opener **15**



Qajar painting "Line for Salute" restored **16**

Zarif, Ebtekar write to UN chief on dust storms

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's environment chief Masoumeh Ebtekar announced on Sunday that she and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif have written a letter to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on the dust storms which hit Iran once in a while.

The announcement was made during a meeting assessing the ways on how to control dust storms. Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian and some other officials were present in the meeting.

Particles, mostly originating from deserts from Iraq, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, sometimes disrupt daily life in southern Iran, especially Khuzestan.

Ebtekar said in the letter they have called on the UN chief to form a task force in the Middle East region to deal with the dust issue.

Zarif said the necessity of international consensus on controlling dust storms and also cooperation among the neighboring countries to control dust storms are highlighted in the letter. However he said it takes time to reach a consensus on how to deal with the problem.

Chitchian said that negotiations on controlling dust storms should be prioritized by the neighboring countries. **→13**



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Leader backs trade jump with Baku

Iran ready to sell oil to South Africa, buy refinery shares

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran is ready to sell South Africa 100,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil and also to buy shares in the African country's oil refineries, Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said on Saturday.

He made the remarks on the sidelines of a meeting with the visiting South African energy minister Tina Joemat-Pettersson in Tehran, Mehr news agency reported.

"Along with talks around oil and oil products exports to the African country, we have also discussed gas-to-liquids (GTL) projects which South Africa is willing to execute in Iran," Zanganeh noted.

The minister further said Iran's National Development Fund (NDF) could support Iranian companies for purchasing shares of South African refineries.

The South African minister also held talks with Marziyeh Shahdaie, the managing director of Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC), on Sunday and expressed her country's interest to investment in Iran's petrochemical sector, especially in GTL projects.

Iran was the major exporter of crude oil to South Africa before the imposition of sanctions on Tehran in 2012. The African country imported about 380,000 bpd of oil from Iran in the pre-sanctions era.



ARTICLE
Harun Yahya
Political analyst

Iran and Turkey will stay as brothers no matter what

The Middle East has always been the target of certain factions due to its geopolitical significance and rich underground sources. These circles have stirred disorder in the region by driving a wedge between the regional countries. Against all odds, Turkey together with Iran and Russia dealt a strong blow to those who tried to hatch plot to fragment this league. This alliance had the privilege to take the first practical steps on the way to a peaceful solution in Syria since civil war broke out. Yet, as soon as the effect of this union was clear, these provocateurs imposed pressure in many ways to disband this nexus. These countries bear grave responsibility to bring stability to the region.

For a long time, these agitators attempted to execute several schemes to damage the ties between Turkey and Russia. However, recently both countries did not allow any kind of fracture to splinter their on-going affairs taking lesson from the damage done to both peoples during the time of the downing of the jet crisis. Recently, these provocateurs have tried to derail the relations between Iran and Turkey. Regardless of being aware of the burden and responsibility to bring peace to the region, these two strong countries have repelled such attempts. They will probably do so for current and future events; not only because they are two regional countries that need each other in many aspects but also because they have a lengthy history of brotherhood and friendship dating back to a thousand years. Presidents Rouhani and Erdogan's meeting in Pakistan on the sidelines of Economic Cooperation Organization summit was an exemplary move in which both leaders used constructive rhetoric to improve their ties. While Rouhani stated "Resolving political differences [between Iran and Turkey] can lead to regional stability," Erdogan focused on ending the bloodshed, saying, "Let us extinguish the flames of fitna" **→13**

Netanyahu to discuss Iran's activity in Syria with Putin

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he would meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Thursday to voice opposition to what he said were Iran's attempts to establish a permanent military foothold in Syria, Reuters reported.

"In the framework of a (future peace agreement) or without one, Iran is attempting to base itself permanently in Syria — either through a military presence on the ground or a naval presence — and also through a gradual attempt to open a front against us on the Golan Heights," Netanyahu

told his cabinet in public remarks on Sunday.

"I will express to President Putin Israel's vigorous opposition to this possibility," he said.

Iran and Russia are offering support to Bashar al-Assad's government in the Syrian conflict and have brokered the recent ceasefire in Syria together with Turkey. Progress in resolving the six-year-old Syrian crisis was recently made in the Kazakh capital Astana and talks between the Syrian government and opposition forces took place in Geneva on February 23, mediated by the UN.

Additionally, the economic and military

ties between Iran and Russia have been growing after the 2015 nuclear deal, with Russia recently providing Iran with the new S-300 surface-to-air missile defense systems.

However, this is not the first time Netanyahu has tried to call upon world leaders to assume a tougher stance on Iran. Last month he visited London to try and gain support from British Prime Minister Theresa May for imposing new sanctions on Iran. Prior to his visit he had spoken of a coalition with England and the U.S. to withstand what he called Iran's "extraordinary aggression." **→13**

Trump trade threat is uniting rest of world, top EU official says

By Jonathan Stearns and Nikos Chrysoloras

U.S. President Donald Trump's protectionist stance may propel Asian, Middle Eastern and Latin American economic powers into market-opening alliances with the European Union, a top EU official said.

Jyrki Katainen, a vice president of the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, said Trump's rejection of multilateral commercial deals and border-tax threat are giving impetus to the 28-nation bloc's push for free-trade or investment pacts with countries including Japan, China, India, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina.

"When there has been some signals to raise protectionism, especially from the U.S. side, the rest of the world seems to be fighting back and saying that this is not our line, this is something which we don't want," Katainen,

45, said in Bloomberg Television interview in Brussels. "This is music to our ears."

The comments signal that Trump's "America First" approach that seeks to reduce the U.S.'s \$502 billion trade deficit may be as much an opportunity as a threat to the EU. The bloc is seeking renewed impulse as it grapples with challenges such as the U.K.'s planned departure from the EU, the demise of talks with Washington on a free-trade pact, Russian meddling in eastern Europe, surging populism and an influx of refugees.

Katainen, a former prime minister of Finland now in charge of the jobs, growth and investment portfolio at the commission, said the EU's "No. 1 priority" with the Trump administration is "to settle down all the tensions and try to create as smooth a trade relationship as possible" between the world's two biggest economic partners.

He declined to speculate about the risks of greater commercial disputes with Washington, saying "there's very little on paper yet" from the new U.S. government.

At the same time, Katainen offered an unabashed defense of the liberal economic order that the EU stands for, calling the bloc a "trade superpower" that will embrace overtures from economic partners elsewhere since Trump's surprise election victory in November.

"We have been happy to see that, during the last couple of months, many of those countries with whom we have negotiated and with whom the negotiations have been very, very slow have indicated they want to speed up the negotiations and get good agreements done with the EU," he said. "The EU will do everything in order to materialize and capitalize on this political moment. It's in our DNA to support freer world trade." **→4**



Spring cleaning, a fresh welcome to Noruz

A rural woman in northern Mazandaran Province hits a rug using a stick to remove dust from it as Noruz, the Iranian New Year, starting on March 21, is approaching.

In preparation for Noruz, nationwide Iranians spring-clean every nook and cranny of their homes. The debris is swept away, carpets and curtains are washed, silverware is polished, and windows cleaned to a sparkle.

The spring cleaning, known as Khouneh Tekouni in Persian, is proceeded by decorating the house with fragrant plants such as daffodils, hyacinths and roses.

Zarif says Iran sees no 'positive behavior' by Saudis

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that Iran is not seeing any "positive behavior" from Saudi officials.

"We do not see positive behavior by the Saudi officials in area of politics and they continue spreading tension in the region instead of using the current situation to hold dialogue and interact," Zarif told ISNA in an interview published on Sunday.

However, he said, "Iran has good wishes for the region [the Middle East] and is willing to cooperate with the regional countries and hold talks with them."

The minister said that some regional countries are suffering from "delusion" and seek to revive imperialism in the region which is "impossible."

The chief diplomat said regional countries will finally come to the conclusion that the policy of Iranophobia will bring no fruit and they will have no choice but cooperation and interaction.

He also said there is no need for mediation between Tehran and Riyadh.

"The problem is not choosing a mediator. The problem is that Saudi Arabia feels that creating tension is essential for pursuing its regional policies. Saudi Arabia seeks to create negative atmosphere against Iran," the foreign minister pointed out, saying the Saudi kingdom "should leave this delusional policy."

Iran-Russia-Turkey cooperation has reduced clashes in Syria'

Zarif also said cooperation among Iran, Turkey and Russia has been "successful" in reducing clashes in Syria.

The trilateral cooperation will continue to help stop humanitarian disaster in Syria, the minister pointed out.

Though Turkey backs the Syrian armed opposition group and Iran and Russia the central government the sides have convinced the sides to silence the guns, at least temporarily, in the country. So far they have succeeded to arrange talks between the opposition and the government in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The three countries are also unanimous in their views that the fight against terrorist groups in Syria should continue unabated. **→13**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Iran hopeful to send 80,000 on Hajj pilgrimage

POLITICS TEHRAN — Tehran will hopefully dispatch 80,000 pilgrims to Hajj in 2017, the Supreme Leader's representative in Hajj affairs said on Sunday, Tasnim reported.

Except for some minor issues which are yet to be settled, Tehran and Riyadh have almost agreed on resuming Hajj, Ali Qazi Askar stated.

He further said the Saudi Arabian airport workers have been sentenced to four years in prison each, 1000 lashes, and dismissed for sexually harassing an Iranian minor in 2015.



Front of Independents and Moderates names candidates

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Front of Independents and Moderates has introduced five candidates for the May presidential election.

The front's spokeswoman said members of the front chose Qodratali Heshmanian, Ali Motaehari, Hassan Rouhani, Mohammad Shariatmadari, and Mohammad Shrafi Esfahani as their candidates, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The candidates received 893, 768, 587, 523, and 485 votes respectively, Razieh Alibakhshi said.

She also said that on Sunday the members of the front's central committee were elected.



Over 280 hopefuls register for midterm Majlis elections

POLITICS TEHRAN — More than 280 individuals have registered to run in the midterm parliamentary elections slated for May 19, Tasnim reported on Sunday.

Before the seven-day deadline for registration ended on Saturday, 282 persons - 271 men and 11 women - had registered.

According to the schedule, the process of vetting the candidates began on Sunday and will last for 10 days.



Pakistan army chief urges closer defense ties with Iran

POLITICS TEHRAN — Pakistan's army chief has said that stronger defense ties between Tehran and Islamabad can enhance regional peace and stability.

"Enhanced Iran-Pakistan military-to-military cooperation will have positive impact on regional peace and stability," General Qamar Javed Bajwa said in a meeting with the Iranian Ambassador to Islamabad Mehdi Honardoost, the Dawn news website reported on Sunday.

"Pakistan Army greatly values historical relationship between the two brotherly countries which can never be compromised at any cost," he added.



Araqchi departs for Jakarta to attend IORA meeting

POLITICS TEHRAN — Abbas Araqchi, Iran's deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, left Tehran for Jakarta on Sunday to attend the ministerial meeting of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), IRNA reported.

Committee of Senior Officials Meeting of IORA started work in Jakarta, Indonesia, on March 5, with participation of Iranian representatives.

Majid Bizmark, director general of the Iranian Foreign Ministry for international affairs, environment and sustainable development, and Iranian Ambassador to Jakarta Valiollah Mohammadi-Nasrabadi are present in the IORA meetings.



Rafsanjani family meet Supreme Leader in 'friendly atmosphere'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Mohsen Hashemi, son of the late Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, on Sunday said a recent meeting of the Hashemis with the Supreme Leader was held in "an atmosphere of friendliness and kindness", dismissing ill-wished allegations about the family's relationship with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Hashemi explained that the meeting took place after the late ayatollah's 40th day service, where the Hashemis thanked the Leader for having prayed over Rafsanjani's body and held a mourning service for him.

Tehran, Baku on fast track to closer ties

POLITICS TEHRAN — Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev arrived in Tehran on Sunday for the third time in three years in a bid to seek closer ties with its big neighbor.

"Our relations have been built on ancient history, culture and common religion," he was quoted as saying during an appearance with President Hassan Rouhani, the eighth one between the two since 2013 when Rouhani took office.

"We have established very good cooperation on this solid basis. Our political relations are at a high level and we support each other in all international organizations," Aliyev explained.

Referring to documents finalized between the two sides during previous meetings, the Azerbaijani head of state noted that the agreements have either entered implementation or are being prepared for implementation.

As a result, trade between the two neighboring countries grew as much as 70 percent in 2016, Aliyev said while citing 18 MOUs signed in recent years.

"Today, two more documents were signed which is a good basis for strengthening relations," he added.

A key project the two governments, along with several other more, are working on a mega rail project which increases connectivity between India, Iran, Central Asia countries, Russia, and Europe, what Aliyev called a "historic and important" move which benefits the whole region.

The corridor is expected to connect Northern Europe to Southeast Asia through their territories.

According to preliminary estimates, the overall capacity of the rail link will be 1.4 million passengers and 5-7 million metric tons of cargo a year.

In a February visit to Tehran by Aliyev, the two sides signed 11 memoranda of understanding in areas of transportation, electricity swap, health and medicine, oil, gas, petrochemicals, etc.

Aliyev also expressed thanks to Iran for its position on settling the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on the basis of territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan.

Tehran insists that the conflict should be settled through peaceful and political tools, inviting both sides to exercise restraint.

Late February, Iran declared it would not recognize Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region, occupied



by Armenia, as an independent republic and consider it wrong to conduct a referendum in that region.

In April 2016, Iran and Azerbaijan inked four MOUs, including one between Iran's Darou Pakhsh Company, Azerbaijan Investment Company OJSC, and Azersun Holding MMC on producing 52 kinds of medicine in a site near Baku.

Also, an agreement was made on a cooperation pact between Darou Pakhsh and Azerbaijan's Sumgait Chemical Industrial Park MMC on establishing a relevant production unit in Sumgait Chemical Industrial Park.

Practical steps to shore up economic cooperation have been a focus of 11 joint economic commissions attended by senior officials from both sides.

■ **Rouhani hails ties with Baku 'friendly, brotherly and strategic'**

At a joint news conference with Aliyev, President Hassan hailed ties with Azerbaijan as "friendly, brotherly and strategic," emphasizing that ties "have made considerable progress in the past

three years."

"10-month trade between Tehran and Baku this year indicates that the two countries are seeking to expand and strengthen all-encompassing ties," Rouhani noted.

Trade turnover between Azerbaijan and Iran amounted to \$175 million in January-November 2016, \$130.13 million of which explained by imports from Iran, according to the State Customs Committee of Azerbaijan.

Iranian companies have so far invested \$2.6 billion in Azerbaijan's economy, some \$145 million of which is accounted for by investment in the country's non-oil sector.

The investment has been the result of more than 450 Iranian companies operating in Azerbaijan.

President Rouhani also said the two Muslim countries view terrorism as a major threat, and share common views on the need to fight terrorists in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere.

"We see terrorism, which is unfortunately rooted in the Wahhabi and

Salafi ideology, as a big threat to the region and believe the roots of this ideology need to be dried up," the president said.

"On the issue of Syria and Iraq, we share common views and hope efforts by Iran, Turkey and Russia will bear fruit," Rouhani said, adding the ultimate solution for Syria has to be political.

"Iran believes the territorial integrity of countries must be respected and regional problems resolved through political means and dialogue."

Rouhani also made a case for closer consultation between Tehran and Baku on working out a legal regime for the Caspian Sea, insisting that the consultations "should continue until final agreement is achieved."

The Caspian Sea littoral states - Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Russia - are discussing a convention on the sea's legal regime that would be a comprehensive document outlining the duties and rights of the five littoral states as well as the framework of cooperation among these countries.

Leader backs trade jump with Baku

positive stances bring the two countries closer to each other more than ever," Ayatollah Khamenei noted.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader referred to attempts by the Israeli regime to mar the close ties between Tehran and Baku, urging awareness to militate against the Zionism hostility.

"The evil Zionist regime, more than any other enemies, tries to weaken brotherly relations between Iran and Azerbaijan, and instead the existing cordial relationships should be protected."

Leader says the level of economic cooperation between Iran and Azerbaijan is very low compared to the two countries' potentialities and facilities, and trade turnover should increase up to 10 times of the current level.

POLITICS TEHRAN — In a meeting with visiting Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on Sunday, the Supreme Leader called for a 10-fold hike in trade between Iran and Azerbaijan given the great potential in the two countries.

"The level of economic cooperation is very low compared to the two countries' potentialities and facilities, and trade turnover should increase up to 10 times of the current level," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei suggested.

Trade turnover between Azerbaijan and Iran amounted to \$175 million in January-November 2016, \$130.13 million of which explained by imports from Iran, according to the State Customs Committee of Azerbaijan.

The Leader expressed satisfaction with Baku's stance on Iran in the international community, particularly on the nuclear negotiations between Iran and six world powers.

"The Azerbaijan government has always stood beside Iran in political circles and communities and these

Iran's home-made S-300 system will be ready soon: Dehqan

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's defense minister has said that the home-made version of the sophisticated S-300 missile system, dubbed Bavar-373, will be ready for use after it passes final operational tests.

"The full battlefield operational tests of Bavar-373 system have been scheduled for May 23," Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan said in an interview with Fars news agency on Sunday.

He said the missile system has undergone three tests out of five, adding



that the fourth, which was due to be held in the calendar month of Esfand (February 19 - March 20), has been postponed due to technical glitches.

Bavar-373 is a domestically built long-range mobile air defense system which was developed after the UN Security Council passed a resolution banning the sale of advanced weapons to the Islamic Republic, which in turn suspended Iran's purchase of the Russian S-300.

However, the restriction was lifted last year after Iran and six world powers

signed a nuclear deal that restricted some aspects of Tehran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

Saturday, Iran successfully tested the newly-purchased S-300 surface-to-air missile defense system.

The test-firing was conducted with the aim of analyzing the performance of the S-300 system, assessing the capability of the system in engaging targets with a low radar cross section and ballistic missile threats as well as the ability of Iranian officers to use the system.

Iran, Saudi Arabia likely to clinch hajj agreement

symbolic ceremony of the stoning of Satan in Jamarat.

On Sunday, Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri said Iran is determined to dispatch pilgrims to Hajj if Saudi Arabia accepted certain conditions, Mehr news agency reported.

"Provided that Saudi Arabia accepts Iran's conditions, the government's decisive policy is to dispatch [pilgrims] to hajj," Salehi-Amiri told reporters.

Following the hajj stampede, Iranian authorities strongly criticized Saudi Arabia for being incompetent in managing

hajj rituals, appealing to the Muslim world to hold Riyadh accountable for the tragedy.

As disagreements arose between Tehran and Riyadh, Iranian pilgrims did not participate in the latest hajj rituals - which were held months ago - when Saudi Arabia declined to guarantee their safety.

Salehi-Amiri further said that the two countries have had successful negotiations and reached agreements regarding some issues, adding that there still remains some issues that should be considered.

Iraqi forces launch fresh push in western Mosul battle

Iraqi forces have started a new push toward Mosul's old city center as they press ahead with their operation to purge the western bank of the Tigris River of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists.

Brigadier-General Yahya Rasool, spokesman for the Iraqi Joint Operations Command (JOC), told state-run television on Sunday that the Iraqi forces were advancing from the south and the southwest toward the city center.

Members of the Counter Terrorism Service were also pushing through Mosul's Tal al-Ruman and Somood districts, he added.

An unnamed media officer with the Rapid Response Division said the forces were progressing from the south through the neighborhood of Dawasa and Danadan and had reached within a few hundred meters from the government buildings near Mosul's old city.

Retaking Dawasa is said to be of strategic importance as it hosts the Nineveh governor's headquarters and other government buildings.

Separately, the JOC confirmed that an offensive was underway against terrorists in the four aforesaid Mosul districts, adding, "the advance is still ongoing."

Mosul fell to ISIL in 2014, when the terrorist outfit began its campaign of death and destruction in the country.

Iraqi army soldiers and allied fighters launched the offensive to retake Mosul, ISIL's last major city stronghold in the country, last October and since then they have made sweeping gains against Takfiri elements.



Iraqi forces took control of eastern Mosul in January after 100 days of fighting and launched the battle in the west on February 19.

More than 45,000 people have fled western Mosul since the start of the campaign there, according to the latest figures released by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

■ U.S. admits killing 220 civilians in airstrikes

Meanwhile, the U.S. military has admitted to killing 220 civilians in airstrikes in Iraq and Syria since 2014, but reports by independent monitoring groups

point to more staggering figures.

The military released figures after the deaths of 21 civilians during nine separate raids against various targets in the two counties between November and January.

"Although the Coalition takes extraordinary efforts to strike military targets in a manner that minimizes the risk of civilian casualties, in some incidents casualties are unavoidable," it claimed.

According to monitoring group Airwars, at least 2,463 civilians have been killed in U.S.-led airstrikes in Iraq and Syria since the start of operations in

2014.

Enlisting the help of dozens of allies, the U.S. started pounding Iraq and Syria in a purported effort to root out the terrorist group. Those operations have widely been criticized by both countries for falling short of their announced objectives.

At intervals, U.S. troops have air-dropped weapons among the territory held by ISIL terrorists in the face of advances by government forces, triggering suspicions of deliberate American aid to the extremists.

(Source: agencies)

Pentagon proposes increased military engagement in Syria

In a proposal presented to the White House, the Pentagon has called for a significant increase in U.S. military engagement in Syria including more Special Operations forces, attack helicopters and artillery, U.S. officials say.

The favored option, among several recommendations currently under review by the White House, would ease a number of restrictions on U.S. military activities imposed during the administration of former president Barack Obama, officials told The Washington Post.

Military planners have also proposed lifting a cap on military force level in Syria, which currently numbers around 500 Special Operations troops, who U.S. officials say are training and advising allied militants on the ground.

While officials say American troops would not be directly involved in ground combat, the proposal would allow them to operate closer to the front line and would delegate broader authority down the military line from the White House before an operation is launched.

President Donald Trump, who has promised a tougher military action



against ISIL (Daesh) terrorists in Iraq, Syria and beyond, received the plan Monday after giving the Pentagon 30 days to complete it.

The recommendations came ahead of an anticipated assault on the northern city of Raqqa, the de facto capital of Daesh in Syria.

Preparations are ongoing for the upcoming offensive, but they are not going smoothly.

In just the past two days, U.S. troops intended for the Raqqa op-

eration have been forced to make a detour to a town in northern Syria to head off a confrontation between Turkish and Syrian Kurdish fighters - both U.S. allies.

The proposal for Raqqa, if approved by the White House, would effectively deal a blow to Turkey's demands that military equipment be denied from Syrian Kurds, considered terrorists by Ankara.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said the participation

of Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in the Raqqa operation is unacceptable.

U.S. Army Lieutenant General Stephen Townsend, the Baghdad-based commander of a coalition purportedly fighting Daesh, said Wednesday that talks were underway with Turkey on the role the NATO ally might play in the operation.

The commander, however, insisted that there was "zero evidence" that the YPG was a threat to Turkey.

Turkey launched its incursion into Syria in August 2016, sending tanks and warplanes across the border in what was condemned by Damascus as an act of aggression.

Turkish-backed militants have in recent days seized two Kurdish-held villages in Syria, inching closer to Manbij, a city near the Turkish border which Erdogan has promised to capture.

On Saturday, the U.S. military said it had "increased force presence in and around Manbij to deter hostile acts, enhance governance and ensure there's no persistent YPG presence."

Turkey has long threatened to forcibly eject the Kurds from the area.

(Source: The Washington Post)

Somalia's PM: Hunger, disease kill 110 in two days

Somalia's prime minister has announced the deaths of at least 110 people due to hunger and diarrhea in the country over the past 48 hours amid a drought in the Bay region.

The announcement by Hassan Ali Khaire on Saturday followed the Somali government's warning last week that the drought amounts to a national disaster.

"It is a difficult situation for the pastoralists and their livestock. Some people have been hit by [hunger] and diarrhea at the same time. In the last 48 hours, 110 people died due to [hunger] and diarrhea in Bay region," Khaire's office said in a statement.

The Bay region is in the southwest part of the country.

"The Somali government will do its best, and we urge all Somalis, wherever they are, to help and save the dying Somalis," said the statement, released after a meeting of a famine response committee.

Mostly children and elderly people died in villages surrounding the town of Baido, Abdullahi Omar Roble, the government's regional humanitarian chief, told the DPA news agency.

There was not enough medication to treat all of the patients, Roble said.

The drought has led to the spread of acute watery diarrhea, cholera and measles and nearly 5.5 million people are at risk of contracting waterborne diseases.

The cholera outbreak has killed at least 69 since



Friday, a local government official said.

More than 70 others have been treated in hospital.

United Nations experts have sounded a warning on deaths related to cholera and other diseases that arise from a lack of clean water.

The UN estimates that five million people nationwide need aid, amid warnings of a full-blown famine.

Thousands have streamed into the capital, Mogadishu, in search of food aid, overwhelming local and international aid agencies.

More than 7,000 internally displaced people checked into one feeding center recently.

About 363,000 acutely malnourished children in Somalia "need urgent treatment and nutrition support, including 71,000 who are severely malnourished", the United States Agency for International Development's Famine Early Warning Systems Network has said.

The Somali government has said the widespread hunger "makes people vulnerable to exploitation, human rights abuses and to criminal and terrorist networks".

Somalia was one of four regions singled out by the UN secretary-general last month in a \$4.4bn aid appeal to avert catastrophic hunger and famine, along with northeast Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen.

In 2011, an estimated 260,000 people starved to death in Somalia.

The UN humanitarian appeal for 2017 for Somalia is \$864m, to provide assistance to 3.9 million people.

But the UN World Food Program recently requested an additional \$26m plan to respond to the drought.

The drought is the first crisis for Somalia's newly elected Somali American leader, President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, who is also known as Farmajo.

Mohamed has appealed to the international community and Somalia's diaspora of two million people for help.

Previous droughts and a quarter-century of conflict, including ongoing attacks by al-Shabab, have left the country fragile.

(Source: agencies)

Revealed: Blair's secret White House summit as he launches astonishing bid to work for Trump

The former British Prime Minister Tony Blair has attended a secret meeting at the White House to discuss working for the United States President Donald Trump, The Mail on Sunday revealed.

The former Prime Minister held talks with Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner on Wednesday with a view to becoming a Middle East peace envoy for Trump.

This newspaper has learned that Blair and Kushner have met three times in secret since September, including their three-hour summit in the West Wing last week.

If Trump gives Blair the new role, it would mark an astonishing international comeback for the man whose reputation was left in tatters after the Iraq War.

And it would be a major setback to Theresa May's hopes of forging her own 'special relationship' with Trump, especially as former UKIP Leader Nigel Farage is already a close confidant of the President.

Blair's wooing of the Trump family is also likely to re-open speculation about his close friendship with Rupert Murdoch's ex-wife Wendi Deng, who is a friend of Kushner's wife, Ivanka, Trump's daughter.

Blair and Deng were both present at a gathering of media and political powerbrokers in Aspen, Colorado, in September, where Blair first met Kushner to discuss political issues. The event was organized by veteran U.S. talk-show host Charlie Rose, who visited Trump at his New York Headquarters days after his election triumph. Former Chancellor George Osborne was a speaker at the Aspen event.

Blair has previously been a Middle East envoy for the so-called 'Quartet' of the European Union, U.S., Russia and the United Nations - and his knowledge of the region is said to be attractive to the inexperienced Trump administration.

(Source: Mail on Sunday)

Thousands of Turkish women rally in favor of Erdogan's powers

Thousands of pro-government women filled an Istanbul arena on Sunday in support of a "Yes" vote in next month's referendum on boosting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's powers.

Waving Turkish flags, women shouted "Of course, Yes!" ahead of the April 16 vote on constitutional changes that would give Turkey an executive presidency similar to political systems in France or the United States.

Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP/ Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) is running the "Yes" campaign, saying the changes would bring political stability. The vote is widely seen as a referendum on Erdogan himself because the proposed plan could see him stay in power until 2029.

Opponents however say the changes that would grant sweeping new powers to the head of state would make parliament dysfunctional and promote a one-man model.

Pro-government supporters gathered at the 12,500 capacity sports complex, known as Abdi İpekçi Arena, outside Istanbul's ancient city walls, with the campaign theme: "Yes! If women are there, democracy is there."

Erdogan himself, together with his wife Emine, showed up for the event organized by the pro-government Women and Democracy Association (KADEM), whose deputy chair is Erdogan's younger daughter Sumeyye Erdogan Bayraktar.

Critics however argue if the constitutional plan is approved, Turkey would lurch toward authoritarianism, saying it would not be a system based on checks and balances.

In Bakirkoy, another Istanbul district, women took to streets for the "No" campaign in opposition to the constitutional changes.

(Source: AFP)

66,000 displaced in fresh fighting in northern Syria: UN body

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) says a total of 66,000 people have been displaced due to fresh fighting in northern Syria, where Turkey has been carrying out operations.

The agency said on Sunday that 39,766 people have been forced out of their homes in the Syrian city of al-Bab and the nearby town of Tadir which Turkish forces are trying to control.

Displaced people have fled north to militant-controlled areas where "high contamination" of unexploded bombs and booby traps planted by retreating terrorists is further complicating the situation, it added.

Turkey launched a major military incursion into Syria in August 2016 in a move denounced by Damascus as a breach of its sovereignty.

Ankara claimed at the time that its military campaign was aimed at stopping Kurdish advances and driving away the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists from the Turkish-Syrian border but since then it has occupied at least two major Syrian cities.

Turkey has lately announced plans to advance into the Syrian city of Manbij after seizing al-Bab. Manbij is currently held by the so-called Syria Democratic Forces (SDF), a United States-backed outfit of mostly Kurdish militants.

(Source: SANA)

Banque de France to finance Iran-France projects: French fin. min.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The central bank of France, Banque de France, is working on plans to issue direct loans for companies that want to invest in Iran, Finance Minister Michel Sapin told reporters at Iran's Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs in a joint press conference with his Iranian counterpart, Ali Tayyebnia, the Iranian ministry's news agency, Shada, reported on Sunday.

During their meeting the two ministers discussed how the French government and central bank can support French companies who cooperate with Iranian counterparts with financing projects.

"We are trying to help these companies," Sapin was quoted by Bloomberg as saying, "They will be able to apply for loans, but it's not active yet. We are working on this."

Sapin said he was "confident" that banking relations between France and

Iran would be normalized in due time and said he was seeking clarification from the U.S. government on the extent to which its sanctions will impact French banks working with Iran, Bloomberg reported.

Tayyebnia, for his part, said that both sides are eager on expanding mutual economic ties and have conferred on paving the way, specially removing banking barriers, to revive bilateral relations, Shada reported.

■ France ready to renew Iranian railway

In a separate meeting with Iranian Transport Minister Abbas Akhoundi on Sunday, Sapin voiced France's readiness for cooperating on expansion and revival of Iranian railway network, Mehr news agency reported.

The French minister said that his country is poised to expand its ties in various trans-

Iran may skip tender for Kish gas field, go to negotiation with Shell

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — An Iranian oil official has announced that since Royal Dutch Shell is the only foreign bidder for the development project of Kish gas field (in the Persian Gulf), Iran may skip the tender and directly enter negotiation with the Anglo-Dutch company.

According to Nouredin Shahnazadeh, the managing director of Iran's Petroleum Engineering Development Company (PEDEC), Shell has signed a six-month agreement with Iran, two months of it have already passed.

"The company is supposed to hand in the results of their studies on the field at the end of this six-month period," he said. Royal Dutch Shell signed an initial



memorandum of understanding (MOU) with National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) in December 2016 to conduct development studies on three oil and gas fields in Iran.

Based on the MOU, the development studies on South Azadegan and Yadavaran oilfields and Kish gas field was awarded to the Anglo-Dutch company.

Import of cars, related spare parts hits \$2.3b in 11 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The value of vehicles and related spare parts imported to Iran during the first eleven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2016-February 18, 2017) stood at over \$2.3 billion, Tasnim news agency reported on Sunday.

China, Germany and the United Arab

Emirates (UAE) stand at the top of exporters to the country during the mentioned time span.

Iranian car makers manufactured 1.224 million vehicles during the eleven-month period, with 31.9 percent rise compared to the figure of the same period of time in the previous year.

UK ramps up skills training to tackle productivity problem

Britain plans to spend an extra half a billion pounds a year to improve skills training, the government said on Sunday, seeking to address the country's nagging productivity problems as it prepares to leave the European Union.

Weak productivity growth has hindered Britain's recovery from the financial crisis, and many employers say the problem is largely due to a shortage of workers with sufficient training.

With Britain seeking to impose more controls on workers from the EU once it leaves the bloc, the government is looking with increasing urgency to bridge the skills gap.

The extra spending on developing the skills of 16- to 19-year-olds will be announced in finance minister Philip Hammond's annual budget statement on Wednesday. It will be rolled out from the 2019-20 financial year, reaching 500 million pounds (\$615 million) a year from 2022.

The move will take total spending on academic and technical education for the age group to nearly 6 billion pounds. The current system of technical education, which is made up of around 13,000 separate qualifications, will be reformed and replaced with 15 schemes.

"Investing in technical education is



French Finance Minister Michel Sapin (L) visited his Iranian counterpart Ali Tayyebnia (R) in Tehran.

portation sectors with Iran, underlining that France seeks long term contracts besides short-term ones.

Akhoundi, for his part, expressed content about the signed contracts with French companies, including the deal with Airbus, noting that Iran-France relation cannot be restricted to purchase of some particular goods and the two sides are getting prepared for economic ties in the long run.

According to Bloomberg, French companies were among the first to return to Iran after sanctions were eased last year under

Iranian light crude's weekly price up \$1.24

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The price of Iran's light crude oil in the week ended on February 24 rose \$1.24 to stand at \$53.14 per barrel, IRNA reported.

The country's light crude price stood at \$52.35 on average since the beginning of 2017 until February 24.

Meanwhile, Iran sold its heavy crude oil at \$53.47 per barrel in the mentioned week, up 42 cents from its preceding week.

The country's heavy oil price was reported \$52.46 on average since the beginning of 2017 until February 24.

Meanwhile, with 45 cents rise from its preceding week, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)'s

Tehran's nuclear deal with six world powers, but officials have said financing issues have hobbled some big infrastructure projects. France's largest banks have been reluctant to do business with the oil-rich country because of remaining U.S. sanctions, and Iran lacks access to major international lenders.

Iran's largest state-run and partly state-run banks, Bank Mellī and Bank Tejarat, have started brokerage services in France and were working with some French banks, Tayyebnia said, declining to name them, the report added.

basket price stood at \$53.68 per barrel in the mentioned week.

Earlier in February, National Iranian Oil Company Managing Director Ali Kardor had said that oil production in Iran will reach four million barrels per day (bpd) by the beginning of the next Iranian calendar year (March 21).

According to a survey by Reuters published on January 31, Iran has increased its oil output by 20,000 bpd in January after the country was exempted from the OPEC cuts.

Iran's crude oil output was 3.9 million bpd in January, according to Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh.

Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Mohsen Salehinia had announced in last April.

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

to invest more in housing, transport and digital infrastructure and research over the next five years.

Prime Minister Theresa May has also outlined an industrial strategy to tackle weak productivity, though lawmakers last week criticized it for lacking long-term thinking.

The Confederation of British Industry, an employers group, said that businesses would be "delighted" with the forthcoming investment in skills training.

"There has never been a more important time to address the UK's skills shortages," CBI Director-General Carolyn Fairbairn said. (Source: Reuters)

China cuts growth target as it pushes through reforms

China has cut its growth target this year as the world's second-largest economy pushes through painful reforms to address a rapid build-up in debt, and constructs a "firewall" against financial risks.

China aims to expand its economy by around 6.5 percent in 2017, Premier Li Keqiang said at the opening of the annual meeting of parliament on Sunday. China targeted growth of 6.5 to 7 percent last year and ultimately achieved 6.7 percent, the slowest pace in 26 years.

A lending binge and increased government spending have fueled worries among China's top leaders about elevated debt levels and an overheating housing market.

The 2017 target for broad money supply growth was cut to around 12 percent from about 13 percent for 2016, while the government's budget deficit target was kept unchanged at 3 percent of gross domestic product.

China will continue to implement a proactive fiscal policy and maintain a prudent monetary policy, Li said, adding that government would press on with supply-side reforms and take steps to control risks and ensure safety in the financial sector.

"In general, China's policy stance has turned to 'risk control' and 'bubble deflating'. This means that the monetary policy will gradually tighten," said Zhou Hao, emerging markets economist at Commerzbank AG in Singapore.

The target for consumer price inflation this year was kept unchanged at 3 percent.

"At present, overall, systemic risks are under control. But we must be fully alert to the build-up of risks," Li said.

China should have higher levels of vigilance concerning

risks from non-performing assets, debt defaults, shadow banking and internet finance, he said.

"We will ensure order in the financial sector and build a firewall against financial risks," Li said.

It will steadily push forward with de-leveraging, mainly in the non-financial corporate sector, Li added.

The finance ministry pledged in its work report released on Sunday to clamp down on local government debt risk.

China's debt-to-GDP ratio rose to 277 percent at the end of 2016 from 254 percent the previous year, with an increasing share of new credit being used to pay debt servicing costs, according to a recent UBS note.

Chinese banks doled out a record 12.65 trillion yuan (\$1.83 trillion) of loans in 2016, and recent data shows that new yuan loans hit 2.03 trillion yuan in January, the second-highest ever.

The central bank said in a working paper published last month that the debt deleveraging process should be managed prudently to help avoid a liquidity crisis and asset bubbles.

"We will apply a full range of monetary policy instruments, maintain basic stability in liquidity, see that market interest rates remain at an appropriate level, and improve the transmission mechanism of monetary policy," Premier Li said.

China will also press on with asset securitization and debt-to-equity swaps this year.

It will continue to implement a city-based policy to reduce real estate inventories, mainly in the third and fourth-tier cities, Li said.

Transportation needs above \$132b of investments by Mar. 2026



ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Some 5 quadrillion rials (about \$132.8 billion) of investments is required to fully implement transportation projects in Iran by the end of the country's 1404 Outlook Plan (March 2026), according to a transport official.

Iranian Deputy Transport Minister Amir Amini made the statement addressing the media on Sunday, IRNA reported.



Germany enters Iran's auto parts market

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Germany's Continental Automotive Group and Iranian auto parts manufacturer Crouse Company have signed an agreement to establish a joint venture in Iran.

According to Tasnim news agency, Continental, which is the world's third biggest automotive replacement parts manufacturer, and Crouse founded a new company called "CCAC" after the agreement.

The new company's initial capital is estimated at over €18 million of which the Iranian side owns 55 percent and the other 45 percent belongs to Continental.

Iran to attend IORA conference in Jakarta

Iran will participate in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Conference slated for March 7 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

"The Iranian officials have voiced their readiness to attend the high-profile IORA conference in the coming days," Indonesian Director General for Asia-Pacific and African Affairs Desra Percaya said on Friday.

Percaya reiterated that 16 IORA member-states will attend the event at the highest level. He confirmed that representatives of 21 member-states are to attend the conference, 16 of whom will be presidents, vice-presidents and prime ministers of the participating states.

As an international organization founded in 1997, IORA is an international organization which considers sustainable development, boosting economic cooperation and removing obstacles in the way of promoting scientific and commercial cooperation among member states as its major objectives. It seeks to expand mutually beneficial cooperation in the Indian Ocean region through a consensus-based approach. (Source: Netral News)

Turkish finance minister sees budget gap pressure after stimulus

Finance Minister Naci Agbal said Turkey's budget deficit is likely to be wider than forecast this year as the government boosts spending to spur the economy, though the expansion won't hurt fiscal discipline.

The ratio of Turkey's budget deficit to gross domestic product may be as much as one percentage point higher than the government's target. Its medium-term program published in October forecasts a central government budget gap of 1.9 percent of GDP and a shortfall of 1.7 percent in the general state balance at the end of this year.

Agbal struck a balance between talking up the government's stimulus since July's failed coup and its positive impact on economic activity, while also emphasizing that it wouldn't undermine the country's long-term fiscal health. Increased spending, which is aimed more at investments than consumption, will be partly offset by higher-than-expected tax income in January, Agbal said.

"It is certain that these decisions we have made in the fourth quarter of 2016 or in 2017 will create upward pressure on this year's budget," Agbal said. "As long as the budget gap is at manageable and controllable levels, a certain amount of increase will not hurt the perception of fiscal discipline."

Fiscal discipline became a mantra for Turkish policy makers after a banking crisis caused a deep recession nearly two decades ago. Since then, successive governments led by then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan -- faced with warnings from international lenders -- curbed government spending. Even at times when investors considered Turkey's expanding current-account deficit to be unsustainable, the country's low debt stock and tight budgets have provided a source of stability.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Trump trade threat is uniting rest of world, top EU official says

➔ Landmark trade deal

After seeking a landmark free-trade agreement with Canada, the EU is seeing to make progress on a slew of commercial goals ranging from the upgrade of a longstanding accord with Mexico to the completion of four years of talks on a deal with Japan.

Other initiatives include slow-going or stalled negotiations on free-trade pacts with India, South America's Mercosur bloc and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, and on an investment accord with China.

Katainen stressed the prospect of improved EU ties with China, which has clashed with Europe over trade issues including Chinese shipments of steel and export restrictions on raw materials.

"It's our intention to speed up our investment-agreement negotiations," he said. "I think the relationship between Europe and China will deepen." (Source: Bloomberg)

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The futility of a Mexico-United States wall

By Filiz Garip

Building a wall to control immigration from Mexico is hardly a new idea. In October 2006, President George W. Bush signed the Secure Fence Act to authorize and partially fund the construction of 700 miles of steel fences and other hurdles along the Mexican border. “This bill will help protect the American people,” Bush said at the time. “This bill will make our borders more secure.”

A wall has an obvious appeal. It represents a concrete and visible effort to keep immigrants out; it carries great symbolic power. It is a perfect policy for allaying the concerns of an electorate who might see immigrants as a source of their economic misfortune or a threat to national security. But would it really keep immigrants from illegally entering the United States?

From 1965 to 2010, the United States spent over \$40 billion (adjusted to 2010 values) to securing the border. These funds supported not just the fence and technology to prevent clandestine crossing, but also the number of officers patrolling the border, which increased from 1,500 in 1965 to over 20,000 in 2010.

Spending on the border first spiked after the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) – major legislation that increased border enforcement and imposed sanctions on employers hiring undocumented workers, and also opened the path to legalization for 2.3 million Mexicans already in the United States.

■ Undocumented migrants

At first, the investment seemed to work. The number of undocumented migrants caught along the Mexico-U.S. border dipped after IRCA, from 1.6 million in 1986 to less than 900,000 in 1989. But this drop had more to do with legalization than to enforcement. Indeed, by 1993, the number of apprehensions on the border had climbed back to 1.2 million. From 1990 to 2010, the number of undocumented migrants from Mexico tripled, even though the amount spent on border control in the United States increased by more than tenfold during this same period.

Today, the tide has turned again. Since the end of the Great Recession, more Mexican immigrants have left the United States than have come here, according to the Pew Research Center’s analysis of government data from both countries.

This recent shift is not without precedent: migration rates after IRCA responded not just to immigration policy (enforcement or legalization), but also to relative wage and employment levels in Mexico and the United States, reminding us of the limits of this policy. Even major legislation such as IRCA cannot turn off immigration like a tap.

It is difficult for the United States to develop an effective policy when the factors producing immigration are largely transnational or global, that is, beyond the control of any single nation. It is also hard for the country to settle on an immigration policy when there are interest groups with divergent views, such as employers or human rights groups, who favor migration, and workers who oppose it. These challenges often lead to policies that are not only mostly symbolic, but also carry unintended consequences. Building a wall is one such policy.

So are the location-specific crackdowns that Border Patrol launched in the 1990s to deter undocumented migrants: Operation Hold the Line in the El Paso area in 1993; Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego in 1994; Operation Safeguard in Nogales, Arizona in 1995 and Operation Rio Grande in South Texas in 1997.

■ Heightened security

Each operation reduced the number of apprehensions in its respective sector. But the heightened security in particular areas ended up pushing undocumented migrants to less guarded and more dangerous routes along the border. It also moved migrant smuggling activities – once the work of former migrants themselves – into the domain of organized crime. The border became a much riskier place for not just for migrants, but also for Border Patrol officers.

As migrants moved to more remote regions of the border, the rate of apprehensions also dropped. Consequently, the cost to U.S. taxpayers of making one arrest along the border increased by more than fivefold, from \$300 in 1992 to \$1,700 in 2002.

Border enforcement also turned a mostly circular migrant flow into a system where migrants settled permanently. As it became costlier to cross the border (both in terms of physical danger and fees paid to smugglers), migrants started making fewer trips and staying in the United States for longer periods to recover the costs they incurred.

One might argue that previous border enforcement efforts haven’t been successful because they weren’t big enough. But historical evidence suggests that increasing enforcement is not always an effective deterrent of undocumented migration; it can introduce new threats to the border (more deaths for migrants and more involvement by criminal organizations), and can keep migrants in rather than out.

Improvements in enforcement do not come easy. Let’s take the “virtual fence” project. In 2006, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) started investing in a suite of cameras and radars to enhance surveillance along the border. In 2011, then-DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano canceled the project, stating that it “does not meet current standards for viability and cost effectiveness,” – after \$1 billion had already been spent.

Before we make the leap to spending billions (about \$8 billion according to Trump but as much as \$25 billion according to some estimates) on building a wall, we need to know: What is the policy trying to achieve? How will we know if it is effective? And under what circumstances will we abandon the effort? The president’s signature plan to build a wall may work as a symbol, but there is little evidence to suggest it will make for effective policy.

(Source: Reuters)

Sweden has introduced military conscription

By Janet Street Porter

All over Europe, compulsory military service has gradually been phased out, but – given recent terrorist attacks – could it be time for a rethink?

Sweden has followed Norway, announcing plans to introduce military conscription for both sexes: 13,000 recruits will be called up each year, from which 4,000 will be selected for service. Currently, most EU countries rely on volunteers, and there are few penalties for refusing to serve when asked.

Public opinion started to change following the Russian annexation of Crimea and the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris in 2015. In Switzerland, a referendum in 2013 revealed that 73 percent favored conscription; there, young people have a choice between joining the military or the civil protection force.

In France, polls show 80 percent of the public would like compulsory military service to return (it ended in 2002), whereas in Germany only 36 percent are in favor. The arrival of millions of refugees and an increasing number of attacks on civilians by terrorist groups have placed new strains on security services, particularly in France and Germany.

In some EU countries, youth unemployment is so high that compulsory service has been proposed as a solution. Perhaps the UK might consider a different form of youth service – not military – which relies on volunteers, properly funded and lasting one or two years. It could be residential,



At the moment, too many working-class boys are underperforming, lacking in motivation, technical and social skills. In short, many are unemployable. It may be time for a radical solution

but that’s not essential.

At the moment, too many working-class boys are underperforming, lacking in motivation, technical and social skills. In short, many are unemployable. It’s all very well to create apprenticeships, but there aren’t enough and some of the jobs sound pretty grim. These young men need to learn confidence

and the realities of life before we start urging them to become plumbers and electricians. In the meantime, they collect benefits and just fester.

A youth force might tackle jobs that councils are finding tough to finance, like litter clearance, helping with basic tasks in the production and delivery of meals on wheels, cleaning in old people’s

homes, and maintaining parks and open spaces. This work needn’t be demeaning. A carefully targeted youth force paid the living wage could inspire leadership, provide education and create the leaders of tomorrow. Otherwise, where will the next generation of politicians come from?

(Source: Independent)

In Somalia, a drought killed 110 people in just 48 hours

By Amanda Erickson

The signs of crisis are everywhere. Each day, thousands flood the capital in search of food. More than 7,000 internally displaced people sought help from one feeding center in just a day, a level of demand the center cannot possibly meet. In the country’s north, local leaders say that 65 percent of livestock have died. Without rain, there is no food for the camels and goats to graze, and no milk for the children.

■ Water-borne diseases

On Saturday, Somali Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire offered another stark fact to illuminate the magnitude of the country’s drought. At least 110 people have died in the previous 48 hours in a single region of Somalia, he said in a statement. Most of the victims were women and children, killed by water-borne diseases. The families know the water isn’t safe to drink, but they have no choice: There are no other sources.

“Outbreaks of diarrhea and some cases of measles are striking down people, mainly children already weakened by hunger,” Abdullahi Omar Mohamed, the chairman of the Ow-diinle village in Bay region, told local news media.

It is the first death-toll announcement the country has offered as it braces for the famine almost certainly to come. More than 5 million Somalis are in immediate need of food, the United Nations estimates. Half the country’s population — 6.2 million people — are at risk of famine if conditions do not improve soon. “It’s pretty staggering,” Plan Australia Program Director Dave Husy told ABC. “We’re looking at 40 to 50 percent of the population facing acute food shortages, and a good proportion would be reaching a desperate state.”



Already, about 363,000 children are acutely malnourished; 270,000 more are at risk in 2017. The United Nations warned recently that there is only “a two-month window to avert a drought catastrophe.”

Other countries in the region are at risk, too. Last week, South Sudan declared a famine in areas of the country’s south. A bloody civil war displaced thousands, disrupted crop planting and led to economic collapse. It is the first country in the world to declare a famine since 2011. The world is in the grip of an astonishing and acute crisis: More than 20 million people in South Sudan, Somalia, northern Nigeria and Yemen face starvation in the next six months, according to the United Nations.

■ Imminent risk

Nearly 1.4 million children are at “imminent risk” of death. The scale of the hunger epidemic was described last month by U.S.-based researchers as “unprecedented in recent decades.”

In Somalia, the famine comes after three years of drought, particularly in the country’s north. Crop production and livestock numbers have dropped

precipitously, and thousands of people have fled to major cities in search of food and sanctuary. The lack of clean water means that outbreaks of cholera and other waterborne diseases are a near certainty.

The ongoing violence has made even small improvements hard. Somalia was wracked by decades of civil war, and hundreds of thousands of people still live in camps for internally displaced people. Much of the country, including the capital, Mogadishu, is under regular attack by al-Qaeda-linked terror group al Shabaab. Additionally, aid agencies have only limited access to al-Shabab-held towns and rural areas.

Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo declared a state of disaster in the past week. He warned that widespread hunger “makes people vulnerable to exploitation, human rights abuses and to criminal and terrorist networks.” Hope for an easy remedy, though, is in short supply. The United Nations says it needs \$6 billion in the next few weeks to prevent a calamity. So far, it has received just half a billion dollars.

(Source: The Washington Post)

Merkel risks tension with Erdogan over Turkish reporter’s arrest

By Arne Delfs

Chancellor Angela Merkel condemned the arrest of a German reporter in Turkey as excessively harsh, risking tension with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as she counts on him to stem refugee flows to Europe.

Merkel’s comments on the arrest of Deniz Yucel, a correspondent for German newspaper Die Welt, brings her previously muted criticism of Turkey’s record on media freedom and human rights out into the open. As she runs for a fourth term as German chancellor, Merkel is under pressure to take a stand on Turkey while depending on a European Union refugee accord with Turkey that’s cut the influx of asylum seekers from the Middle East.

“This measure is disproportionately harsh,” Merkel said of Yucel’s arrest in a statement issued in Berlin late Monday. It’s “bitter and disappointing,” particularly since the reporter turned himself in to Turkish police, she said.

■ Hacking group

Yucel, 43, was detained on Feb. 14 for reporting on e-mails published by the Redhack hacking group from the account



of Erdogan’s son-in-law Berat Albayrak, Turkey’s energy minister. Authorities have now placed him under arrest on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda, Turkish media group P24 reported.

While German politicians have regularly raised concern about Erdogan’s crackdown following a quashed coup last year and human rights groups have pressed Merkel to raise the matter with Erdogan, the arrest of the German-Turkish

citizen provoked outrage.

“This doesn’t lead one to expect fair proceedings governed by the rule of law,” Deputy Finance Minister Jens Spahn, a member of Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union, said in a ZDF television interview Tuesday. “We have to criticize this -- precisely because Turkey is a partner, including in NATO.”

■ Global Campaign

Axel Springer SE Chief Executive

Office Mathias Doepfner, whose company publishes Die Welt, criticized Erdogan in a column in the newspaper headlined “We are Deniz,” saying the Turkish president’s practices are part of a global campaign of intimidation against “intellectual freedoms.” Some of the e-mails cited by Yucel concerned the control of Turkish media groups and efforts to influence public opinion through fake users on Twitter Inc.’s messaging platform. According to Die Welt, the e-mails have been accessible on WikiLeaks since early December. Under Turkey’s state of emergency, suspects can be detained for up to 14 days without appearing before a judge.

A resurgent Social Democratic Party under Martin Schulz and a public backlash against the biggest influx of refugees since World War II are key threats to Merkel’s re-election. An estimated 280,000 asylum seekers entered Germany last year, compared with 890,000 in 2015. Merkel’s government credits the EU-Turkey accord last March, which includes as much as 6 billion euros (\$6.4 billion) in European aid for Turkey, with helping slash the influx.

(Source: The Bloomberg)

By Mina Ahmadi

As two developing Muslim countries, Iran and Indonesia have always enjoyed many commonalities.

The Islamic Republic of Iran as one of the most distinguished countries in the region is now in a path that Indonesia experienced in terms of growth in gross domestic product over past few years.

The Iranian and Indonesian officials have always expanded their interactions since Indonesian President Joko Widodo took office concurrent with President Hassan Rouhani's second year in office.

The visit by President Rouhani to Indonesia in May 2015 and the reciprocal visit by President Widodo to Iran in December 2016 as well as exchange of visits by the two countries' other officials show their political will to boost their interactions.

As one of the main poles of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Indonesia, experienced a six percent growth in gross domestic product (GDP) between 2008 and 2013 and is considered a newly-emerge economy with vast capacities for cooperating with other countries.

The capacities and advantages of the two countries will pave the way for broadening of cooperation in different sectors, including trade and energy, and this can eventually accelerate the pace of the two countries' developments.

In an indication of fostering mutual cooperation, Indonesia's 46-member economic delegation departed Jakarta for Tehran on Feb 25 to kick off talks with Iranian officials in the field of trade, energy, banking and agriculture. Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Darmin Nasution was heading the delegation.

While in Tehran, the Indonesian delegation followed up agreements reached during the visit by President Joko Widodo to Iran last December as well as approvals of the 12th joint economic commission meeting.

Meanwhile, continuation of gas imports by Indonesian State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Company (PERTAMINA) from Iran as one of the main subjects for discussion.

Considering Indonesia's neighbors

Iran, Indonesia mull expanding ties



like Malaysia and Australia are among gas exporters, so price of liquid natural gas (LNG) is important for Jakarta and its officials discussed and consulted this issue in Tehran visit.

■ Deepening ties

In meeting with Nasution, President Rouhani said that Tehran welcomes expansion and deepening of ties with Jakarta.

President Rouhani called for prompt implementation of agreements previously signed between Tehran and Jakarta voicing readiness of the Iranian companies to participate in development projects of Indonesian refineries as well as electricity and road construction projects.

The president also welcomed Indonesia's willingness to invest in Iran's energy sector and increase imports of oil and gas from Iran.

The level of Iran-Indonesia relations, particularly in the field of economic activities, should develop more than before considering capabilities and potentials of the two countries, said the President.

■ Banking interactions

Nasution underlined Jakarta's intention to bolster ties with Tehran in all fields, especially the economic affairs.

He added that Indonesia is ready to invest in Iran's oil fields and is willing to participate with the Iranian companies in construction and development projects for oil refineries in Indonesia.

He added that Jakarta also wants to increase its oil and gas imports from Iran.

Nasution said that the Central Banks of Iran and its Indonesian counterpart have reached good agreements for banking interactions.

He added that Jakarta also wants to increase its oil and gas imports from Iran.

■ Oil purchase

Indonesia says it is looking into the prospects of purchasing crude oil from Iran through long-term supply agreements.

Nasution told Mahmoud Vaezi, Iran's minister of information and communication technology, that Indonesia had purchased one million barrels of oil from Iran for a related compatibility

check with its refineries.

He added that once the check is successful, Jakarta would proceed with sealing a long-term supply deal with Tehran in the near future, Press TV wrote.

Nevertheless, Nasution emphasized that a serious plan on the country's agenda was to invest in two Iranian oil projects – Mansouri and Ab Teymour – which he said had the potential to produce a collective of 200,000 barrels per day.

Nasution said Iran and Indonesia were yet to fully use the available potentials to boost their mutual cooperation.

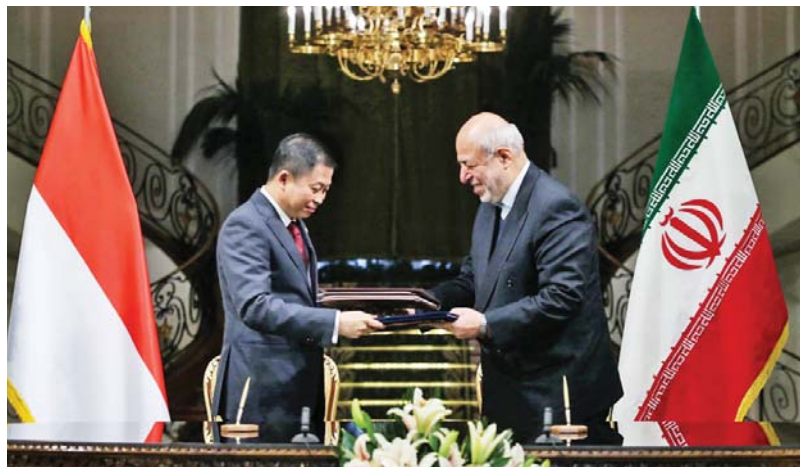
He said that there are a series of areas that have a high potential of cooperation. They, the Indonesia minister said, included agriculture, oil and gas, tourism and customs affairs.

Vaezi, for his part, said Tehran expected to see an increase of 25 percent in its level of trade with Indonesia in 2017.

He emphasized, the value of trade between the two countries would reach above \$1.2 billion.

The Iranian minister expressed hope that signing the related economic cooperation agreements particularly one that would involve the preferential tariffs would help enhance the level of trade between the two countries.

■ Azadegan oil field



In a meeting with Nasution, Oil Minister Zanganeh announced that only a limited number of companies will be invited to the tender for development of Azadegan oil field.

Zanganeh pointed to good and friendly relations between the two nations and the deepening of bilateral ties following implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) saying "in addition to imports of oil products, Pertamina Corporation also holds partnership with NIOC in the field of expanding Iranian oil fields."

The official, while referring to exports of a one-million-barrel cargo of crude oil to Indonesia, asserted "the first shipment was experimental as talks will be held over increasing the exports volume once relevant tests are carried out in Indonesian refineries."

Iran's petroleum minister said Indonesia, in addition to crude oil, has also purchased Iranian Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) stating "Indonesia remains a large South East Asian market for crude oil and petroleum products and holds great significance for Iran."

■ 1st post-sanctions oil cargo

For the first time after the lifting of the west-imposed sanctions, an Iranian oil tanker left the country to deliver its cargo to Indonesian Cilacap Refinery in mid-February.

Iranian oil delivery to Indonesia comes at a time when Tehran and Ja-

karta have started serious talks for expansion of joint investments.

According to the two sides' recent negotiations the Southeast Asian nation will contribute to Iran's upstream oil sector and Iran will invest in refining and downstream sector of Indonesian oil industry.

According to media reports, Indonesia is presently producing 817,000 barrels of oil per day and imports exactly the same amount, but the estimates say that Indonesia will be able to produce only 550,000 barrels of oil per day by 2020.

Iran-Indonesia cooperation in operationalizing Ab Teymour and Mansouri oilfields in Iran can be considered as another positive step by the two strategic partners in the energy sector.

In spite of Iran-Indonesia cooperation in the energy sector which is needed by the two sides, their collaborations are not restricted to this field.

Some figures indicate that Iran's non-oil export to Indonesia surpassed \$50 million in the first six months of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2016-September 20, 2016) showing a 40-percent growth as compared with the previous year's corresponding period.

Indonesia also exported different products such as palm oil, paper, coffee, tuna fish, auto parts and wood pulp for paper industry amounting to 117,800 tons.

At the Initiative Taken by Municipality of Qazvin:

Islamic World History and Civilization Museum to Be Constructed in Qazvin



Mayor of Qazvin: This plan is one of the most influential plans approved by the UN for introducing Islamic Iranian civilization to the world in the historical-cultural city of Qazvin

A trilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the construction of Islamic World History and Civilization Museum was inked between Dr. Nosrati Head of World Assembly of Islamic Cities, Dr. Hemmati Governor General of Qazvin Province and Dr. Izadi Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development and Managing Director of Iran Urban Rehabilitation and Development Company in the presence of Aboutorabifard Chairman of Board of Trustees of Islamic World History and Civilization Museum Foundation and a number of senior city and provincial officials. The signing and sealing ceremony was held at the amphitheater of Qazvin Province Governor-Generalship.

It should be noted that this giant project is one of the most influential plans approved by the UN which will pave suitable ground for more introduction of Iranian-Islamic civilization in Qazvin Historic-Cultural City to the world. Aboutorabifard Chairman of Board of Trustees

of Islamic World History and Civilization Museum Foundation was the first speaker who expressed his special thanks to the mayor of Qazvin for paving suitable grounds for the construction of Islamic World History and Civilization Museum in Qazvin.

With the selection of Dr. Nosrati as mayor of Qazvin, suitable ways have been provided for the development of this city, he said, adding: "Urban managers and mayor of Qazvin received unsparing supports of councilors of Qazvin City Council and Dr. Mohammadi representative of people of Qazvin in Majlis and suitable ways were prepared for putting Qazvin Province on the track of development and progress."

He pointed to the positive and constructive performance of Qazvin City Council for the selection of Dr. Nosrati, as one of the able and most experienced mayors in the country, who took giant strides for booming and prosperity of this historic city.

Turning to the paramount status of Qazvin Province in scientific, economic, social and cultural fields, he said: "Important and specific status of this historic city is one of the main reasons behind selection of this province as a city for the construction of Islamic World History and Civilization Museum."

In the end, he thanked all city and provincial officials who took giant strides for materializing most objectives of this huge project.

Masoud Nosrati President of World Assembly of Islamic Cities was the next speaker who pointed to Islamic World History and Civilization Museum in Qazvin Province and said: "Construction of Islamic World History and Civilization Museum is one of the most influential plans approved by the UN Settlement Program (UN HABITAT) and said: "With the construction of this magnificent museum, renewal plan in SARDAR and DIMAJ neighborhood will be put into operation."

He said: "Following the decision of UN Settlement Program (UN Habitat), City Prosperity Initiative (CPI) which was launched in August 2016 in Geneva Summit in Qazvin Province, a number of nine macro-scale projects as a result of six booming indexes were taken into consideration within the framework of Islamic



World History and Civilization Museum."

The building of international museum will be constructed on a land area as large as 17,000 square meters with 30,000 built-up area in the historic texture of Qazvin city according to Iranian-Islamic architectural design.

Fereydoun Hemmati Governor General of Qazvin Province was the next speaker who said: "With the coordination made in this regard, Islamic World History and Civilization Museum in Qazvin will be introduced as a global pattern in world."

The museum is very important project, he said, adding: "Qazvin city will be as a role model to other cities in the country and the world."

It is hoped that construction operation of this project will be accelerated in Qazvin Province, he said, adding: "This important project will be constructed at the unsparing cooperation of mayor of Qazvin and unflinching support of state and provincial officials for the construction of development projects in Qazvin."

Dr. Mohammad-Saeed Izadi Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development and Managing Director of Iran Urban Rehabilitation and Development Company was the other speaker who said: "Qazvin Province should be introduced to world as all-out mirror of Islamic civilization history."

He said: "History city of Qazvin has been introduced in the statement of Islamic World Museum."

Iran Urban Rehabilitation and Development Company has expressed its readiness to construct Islamic world History and Civilization Museum in this province in the shortest time possible, he said, adding: "With organizing a contest on design this magnificent museum, it is tried to design the best possible architectural plan as deserving for this historic city."

He revealed on the constructive joint-venture participation with the city of Qazvin on the allocation of two trade-residential parcels of land area to this giant project within the framework of objectives of Ministry of Roads and Urban Development and City Prosperity Initiative (CPI), he said: "According to the joint objectives and considering the innovative nature of subject, this project will be constructed in Qazvin city. CPI also focuses on promoting quality of cities and the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development will support any move in line with boosting quality of life."

This giant project will develop the valuable and historic texture of Qazvin to a great extent, he maintained.

In the end, he said that construction of Islamic World History and Civilization Museum can bring about convergence between Islamic countries, the issue of which is of salient characteristics of this plan.

Representative of people of Qazvin, Alborz and Abyek in the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Ira-

nian Parliament also called Majlis) Mohammadi was the next speaker who said: "Effective steps should be taken in this regard for showcasing the magnificence of this museum the same as glorious history of Islamic world."

Turning to a MOU inked between Qazvin and Iran Urban Rehabilitation Development Company for the construction of Islamic World History and Civilization Museum, he added: "Municipality of Qazvin and Qazvin City Council have thus far launched excellent performance in this regard, so that they have taken giant strides at the unsparing support of governor general of Qazvin Province and Dr. Izadi Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development for the construction of this magnificent project."

Ebrahim Rahimpour, Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia-Pacific Affairs was the next speaker who said: "Islamic World History and Civilization Museum is constructive and useful for the strengthening tourism industry."

The excellent geographical situation of Qazvin, as main communication corridor and nearness to the capital Tehran, can be effective and constructive in constructing and developing Islamic World History and Civilization Museum."

Attendance of Dr. Zarif Minister of Foreign Affairs and Dr. Salehi former Foreign Minister at the Board of Trustees of Islamic World History and Civilization Museum has boosted the capacity of its international relations especially in the Islamic World, he maintained.

Considering the tourism infrastructures and standards in Qazvin, a comprehensive 20-year program should be compiled for the construction and completion of Islamic World History and Civilization Museum, he said, adding: "Certainly, making huge investment for the construction of this giant project spiritually and economically will be profitable for this province as well."

In the end, Ebrahim Rahimpour, Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia-Pacific Affairs said: "With the construction of Islamic World History and Civilization Museum, international relations should be developed both in the country and region, so that salient advantages of Silk Road and North-South Corridor should be used optimally."

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7 things you can do to improve your mental focus

By Kendra Cherry

Staying on task can be difficult, but it can be particularly challenging when you are surrounded by constant distraction. In today's always-connected world, diversions are nothing more than a click away. Even during quiet moments, distraction is literally at your fingertips as you find yourself checking your Facebook or trying to catch that elusive Pokémon.

Fortunately, focus is a lot like a mental muscle. The more you work on building it up, the stronger it gets. Why is focus so important? The ability to concentrate on something in your environment and direct mental effort toward it is critical for learning new things, achieving goals, and performing well across a wide variety of situations. Whether you are trying to finish a report at work or competing in a marathon, your ability to focus can mean the difference between success and failure.

Improving your mental focus is achievable, but that does not mean that it is necessarily quick and easy. If it was simple, then we would all have the razor-sharp concentration of an elite athlete. It will take some real effort on your part and you may have to make some major changes to some of your daily habits.

Here are some tips and tricks from psychology that can help you develop laser-like mental focus and concentration.

1. Start by assessing your mental focus

Before you start working toward improving your mental focus, you might want to begin by assessing just how strong your mental focus is at the present moment. Consider the following statements and select the ones that seem to best describe you.

- I find myself daydreaming often when I need to be working on an important task.
- I find it difficult to tune out distractions.
- I often lose track of what I was working on and have to start over again.
- I tend to focus on difficult tasks during times of the day when I know I will be the most alert.
- I like to set goals and break tasks up into more manageable segments.
- If I find my mind wandering, I'll take a short break and then come right back to what I was working on.

If you identify more with the first three statements, then you probably need to work on your mental focus quite a bit. If the second set of statements seems more your style, then you probably already have fairly good concentration skills, but you could be even stronger with a little practice.

2. Eliminate distractions

Admit it, you saw this one coming. While it may sound obvious, people often underestimate just how many distractions prevent them from concentrating on the task at hand. Such intrusions might come in the form of a radio blaring in the background or perhaps an obnoxious co-worker who constantly drops by your cubicle to chat.

Minimizing these sources of distraction often sounds easier than it really is. While it might be as simple as turning off the television or radio, you might find it much more challenging to deal with an interrupting co-worker, spouse, child, or roommate.

One way to deal with this is to set aside a specific time and place and request to be left alone for a period of time. Another alternative is to seek out a calm location where you know you will be able to work undisturbed. The library, a private room in your house, or even a quiet coffee shop might all be good spots to try.

Another important thing to remember is that not all distractions are external. Environmental noises and interruptions are often easier control than the internal distractions that might make it difficult to focus your attention. Exhaustion, worry, anxiety, poor motivation, and other internal disturbances can be particularly difficult to avoid.

A few strategies you might want to try to minimize or eliminate such internal distraction are to make sure you are well-rested prior to the task and to use positive thoughts and imagery to fight off anxiety and worry. If you find your mind wandering toward distracting thoughts, consciously

bring your focus back to the task at hand.

3. Focus on one thing at a time

While multitasking sometimes seems like a great way to get a lot done quickly, it turns out that people are actually rather bad at it. Juggling multiple tasks at once can dramatically cut down on productivity and makes it much harder to hone in on the details that are truly important. Why? Because our attentional resources are limited so it is important to budget them wisely.

Think of your attention as a spotlight. If you shine that spotlight on one particular area, you can see things very clearly. If you were to try to spread that same amount of light across a large dark room, you might instead only glimpse the shadowy outlines.

Part of improving your mental focus is all about making the most of the resources you have available. Stop multitasking and instead give your full attention to one thing at a time.

4. Live in the moment

It's tough to stay mentally focused when you are ruminating about the past, worrying about the future, or tuned out of the present moment for some other reason. You have probably heard people talk about the importance of "being present." It's all about putting away distractions, whether they are physical (your Smartphone) or psychological (your anxieties) and being fully mentally engaged in the current moment.

This notion of being present is also essential for recapturing your mental focus. Staying engaged in the here and now keeps your attention sharp and your mental resources honed in on the details that really matter at a specific point in time.

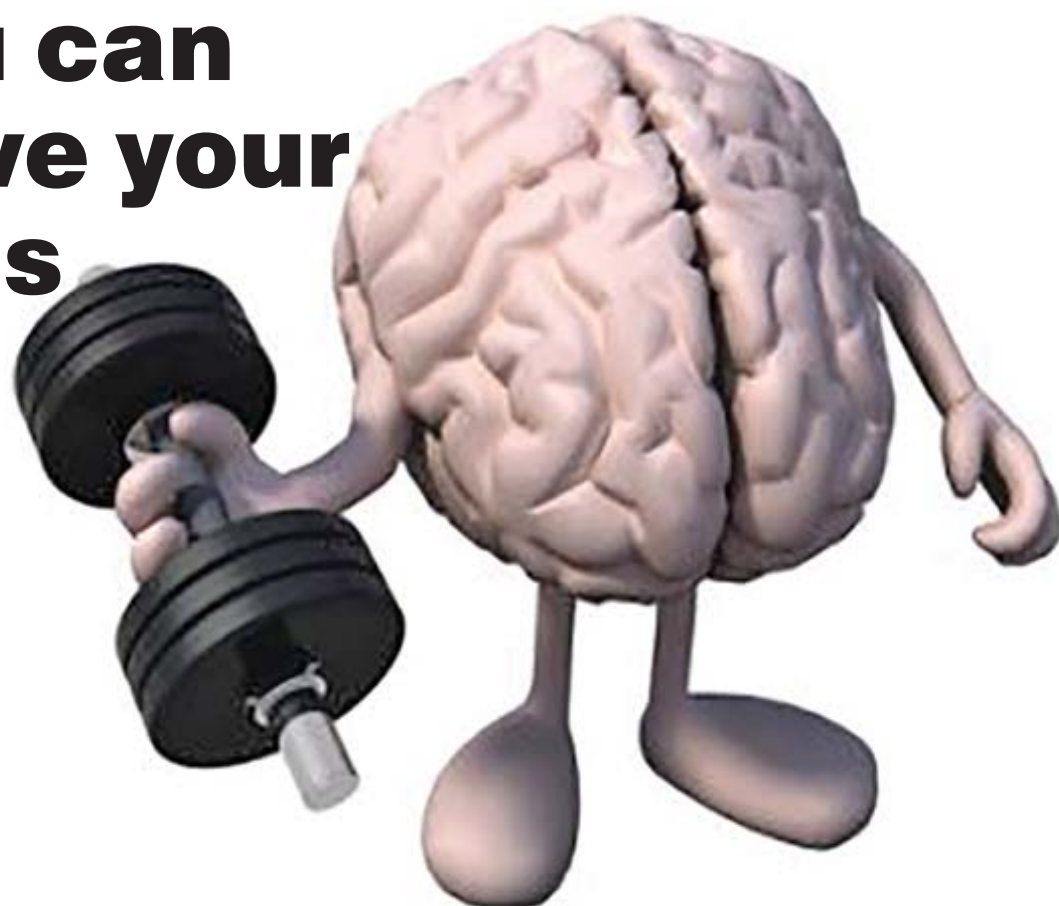
It may take some time, but work on learning to truly live in the moment. You cannot change the past and the future has not happened yet, but what you do today can help you avoid repeating past mistakes and pave a path for a more successful future.

5. Practice mindfulness

Mindfulness is a hot topic right now, and for good reason. Despite the fact that people have practiced forms of mindfulness meditation for thousands of years, its many health benefits are only recently starting to be understood.

In one study, researchers had human resources professionals engage in simulations of the sort of complex multitasking they engaged in each day at work. These tasks had to be completed in 20 minutes and included answering phones, scheduling meetings, and writing memos with sources of information pouring in from multiple sources including by phone calls, emails, and text messages.

One way to deal with distraction is to set aside a specific time and place and request to be left alone for a period of time.



Some of the participants received 8 weeks of training in the use of mindfulness meditation, and the results found that only those who had received this training showed improvement in concentration and focus. Members of the meditation group were able to stay on task longer, switched between tasks less frequently, and performed the work more efficiently than the other groups of participants.

Practicing mindfulness can involve learning how to meditate, but it can also be as simple as trying a quick and easy deep breathing exercise. To accomplish this, start by taking several deep breaths while really focusing on each and every breath. When you feel your mind naturally begin to wander, gently and uncritically guide your focus back to your deep breathing.

While this might seem like a deceptively simple task, you may find that it is actually much more difficult than it appears. Fortunately, this breathing activity is something you can do anywhere and anytime. Eventually, you will probably find that it becomes easier to disengage from intrusive thoughts and return your focus to where it belongs.

6. Try taking a short break

Have you ever tried to focus on the same thing for a long period of time? After a while, your focus starts to break down and it becomes more and more difficult to devote your mental resources to the task. Not only that, but your performance ultimately suffers as a result.

Traditional explanations in psychology have suggested that this is due to attentional resources being depleted, but some researchers believe that it has more to do with the brain's tendency to ignore sources of constant stimulation.

So what's the solution?

Researchers have found that even taking very brief breaks by shifting your attention elsewhere can dramatically improve mental focus. So the next time you are working on a prolonged task, such as preparing your taxes or studying for an exam, be sure to give yourself an occasional mental break. Shift your attention to something unrelated to the task at hand, even if it is only for a few moments. These short moments of respite might mean that you are able to keep your mental focus sharp and your performance high when you really need it.

7. Keep practicing to strengthen your focus

Building your mental focus is not something that will happen overnight. Even professional athletes require plenty of time and practice in order to strengthen their concentration skills. One of the first steps is to recognize the impact that being distracted is having on your life. If you are struggling to accomplish your goals and find yourself getting sidetracked by unimportant details, it is time to start placing a higher value on your time. By building your mental focus, you will find that you are able to accomplish more and concentrate on the things in life that truly bring you success, joy, and satisfaction.

(Source: verywell.com)

Tips to measure your blood pressure correctly

To determine whether you have hypertension, a medical professional will take a blood pressure reading. How you prepare for the test, the position of your arm, and other factors can change a blood pressure reading by 10% or more. That could be enough to hide high blood pressure, start you on a drug you don't really need, or lead your doctor to incorrectly adjust your medications.

National and international guidelines offer specific instructions for measuring blood pressure. If a doctor, nurse, or medical assistant isn't doing it right, don't hesitate to ask him or her to get with the guidelines.

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National and international guidelines offer specific instructions for measuring blood pressure. If a doctor, nurse, or medical assistant isn't doing it right, don't hesitate to ask him or her to get with the guidelines.

Here's what you can do to ensure a correct reading:

- Don't drink a caffeinated beverage or smoke during the 30 minutes before the test.
- Sit quietly for five minutes before the test begins.
- During the measurement, sit in a chair with your feet on the floor and your arm supported so your elbow is at about heart level.
- The inflatable part of the cuff should completely cover at least 80% of your upper arm, and the cuff should be placed on bare skin, not over a shirt.
- Don't talk during the measurement.
- Have your blood pressure measured twice, with a brief break in between. If the readings are different by 5 points or more, have it done a third time.

There are times to break these rules. If you sometimes feel lightheaded when getting out of bed in the morning or when you stand after sitting, you should have your blood pressure checked while seated and then while standing to see if it falls from one position to the next.

Because blood pressure varies throughout the day, your doctor will rarely diagnose hypertension on the basis of a single reading. Instead, he or she will want to confirm the measurements on at least two occasions, usually within a few weeks of one another. The exception to this rule is if you have a blood pressure reading of 180/110 mm Hg or higher. A result this high usually calls for prompt treatment.

It's also a good idea to have your blood pressure measured in both arms at least once, since the reading in one arm (usually the right) may be higher than that in the other. A 2014 study in The American Journal of Medicine of nearly 3,400 people found average arm-to-arm differences in systolic blood pressure of about 5 points. The higher number should be used to make treatment decisions.

In general, blood pressures between 160/100 mm Hg and 179/109 mm Hg should be rechecked within two weeks, while measurements between 140/90 and 159/99 should be repeated within four weeks. People in the prehypertension category (between 120/80 and 139/89 mm Hg) should be rechecked within four to six months, and those with a normal reading (less than 120/80 mm Hg) should be rechecked annually. However, your doctor may schedule a follow-up visit sooner if your previous blood pressure measurements were considerably lower; if signs of damage to the heart, brain, kidneys, and eyes are present; or if you have other cardiovascular risk factors. Also, most doctors routinely check your blood pressure whenever you go in for an office visit.

(Source: health.harvard.edu)

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10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

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

1 Next iPhone will have USB-C cable, but on the other end of the cable.
According to KGI Securities analyst Ming-Chi Kuo, the new iPhones will retain the Lightning connector on the device side but make use of USB-C Power Delivery specification for charging. This means the other end of the charging cable is the one that will have a USB-C connector, the one that plugs into the charger.

2 Gboard 6.1 Beta adds ability to translate text within the keyboard.
One of the features is built-in translations. You can start typing in your language and the keyboard will automatically translate and enter the translated text in the text field as you type.

3 Xiaomi Mi MIX 2 to boast a 93% screen-to-body ratio.
Like the current Mi MIX, it's also being suggested that the MIX 2 will offer a ceramic version, and is being prepared for arrival at some point later this year.

4 Report says Alexa to add speakerphone and intercom capabilities.
Amazon will be offering at least one Alexa enabled device with the ability to make phone calls. The Amazon Echo and Echo Dot, both of which feature Alexa, are two of the hottest consumer products in the states.

5 Apple launched a 32GB Apple iPhone 6 in Gold for certain Asian markets. When the iPhone 6 was originally released in 2014, the phone was offered in 16GB, 64GB and 128GB variants.
The unit has been available in China since late last month as a low-price version of the iPhone. It will launch on Taiwan Mobile on March 10th.

6 Xbox Live was down in weekend.
Hundreds of Xbox One and Xbox 360 owners on social media sites like Twitter were complaining that they could not get logged in on their systems.

7 Microsoft released a new Windows 10 preview for PCs with no new features.
Because this build has no new features, we're likely getting close to the release of the Creators Update.

8 The BlackBerry KEYone will be available from almost all major carriers in Canada. Rogers, Bell, and Telus have all confirmed that they'll be carrying the phone. The first two will start selling the phone in April.

9 Nintendo Switch is suffering from some connectivity issues with its Joy-Con controllers, according to several users. Now Nintendo has addressed this issue by releasing a list of objects that could be causing interference between the console and its controllers.
Among the list includes a lot of everyday objects, including wireless speakers, wireless access points, wireless headsets, wireless printers, microwaves, cordless phones, mobile phones, tablets, laptops, and USB 3.0 compatible devices such as hard drives, flash drives, LAN adapters, etc.

10 The Google Pixel 2 is coming and it won't be cheap. Google Testing Pixel 2 With Multiple Chipsets, Including Custom Solutions Claims Credible Source.
The Google Pixel 2 Imagined with Dual-Cameras, 18:9 Display.

Facebook tries adding reactions to Messenger chats

Facebook's reactions are thriving in your News Feed, and it now looks like the company wants to spread them to Messenger, too. The social network has confirmed to TechCrunch that it's testing the ability to add reactions to individual messages, much as you would with stickers in Apple's iMessage system or Slack's team chats. The experiment has all the icons you'd expect from conventional Facebook posts (five emotions plus a thumbs-up), but also a thumbs-down -- this is the closest you may get to that mythical Facebook "dislike" button. This would help tally up votes for a place to eat, for example, or share your response if you're a little late to reply with text.

There's no guarantee that you'll see reactions any time soon. Facebook describes this as a "small test" and isn't committing to a launch any time soon, assuming it goes forward. However, it'd make sense to beef up both Messenger and Workplace, Facebook's Slack-alike.

(Source: TechCrunch)

New York will offer \$2,000 if you buy an electric car

Believe it or not, New York hasn't offered a financial incentive to buy eco-friendly cars. While over three quarters of the US has some kind of state-level discount, New York has made you 'settle' for the federal tax credit. Officials are about to sweeten the pot, though: months after approval, New York is launching a rebate program on April 1st that gives you up to \$2,000 if you buy an electric car or plug-in hybrid. If you can buy a car that also qualifies for the federal credit, you're looking at nearly ten grand off the sticker price.

The initiative wasn't exactly on the fast track. April 1st was the deadline for launching the program -- the state clearly put this off until the last minute, and staff at New York's Energy Research and Development Authority are still hashing out the details of the rebate.

(Source: Electrek)

Why voice assistants will become the center of home entertainment

By Jaja Liao

The mass adoption of the radio changed American homes forever. In 1930, more than 40 percent of American households owned a radio; a decade later, 83 percent owned at least one. The radio brought news, entertainment, music, sports, politics (think Franklin D. Roosevelt's Fireside Chats), and advertisements to millions of Americans. It was the first time that ordinary people had access to live, broadcasted information from the ease and comfort of their living rooms.

Before the radio, American homes were largely organized around activities such as sleeping and eating. However, after the mass adoption of radio, Americans needed gathering areas to listen to their new radios. Parlors, or drawing rooms, once used for conversation, poker games, or perhaps playing the piano, became living rooms with radios as their focal point. People huddled together to listen. Radio transformed American homes and American home culture, formalizing the concept of a communal, family-style entertainment centerpiece.

After World War II, the television set moved into the mainstream. In the mid-1950s post-war economic boom, 50 percent of American households had a TV, and that percentage grew to 90 percent by 1960. The TV replaced the radio physically — and metaphorically — as the symbol of home entertainment for the living room.

Since then, add-ons like game



consoles, cordless TV micro-consoles like Apple TV and Roku, Wi-Fi connectivity, and more have expanded its capabilities.

No other consumer product has really challenged the television as the center of living room entertainment for over half a century. But with the popularization of voice assistants such as the Amazon Echo and Google Home, the TV may have its first major challenger.

Already more than 8.2 million Amazon

Echos have been sold, and it's predicted that over 24.5 million Amazon Echos and Google Homes will be sold in 2017. These numbers are nowhere near the percentages for radio or TV ownership, but we're still in the early days of voice assistant adoption. (Amazon Echo was released publicly in June 2015). At the same time, the number of American homes without a TV has doubled in six years.

Singapore looks to better arm itself with cyberdefence unit

Singapore will set up a new cybersecurity command centre to combat increasing threats and ensure there are adequate skillsets in cyberdefence.

Running 24 by 7, the new facility would encompass four key groups and comprise top-ranking military and armed officers, according to the country's defence minister Ng Eng Hen. The new Defence Cyber Organisation (DCO) would be manned by some 2,600 soldiers operating within divisions overseeing cybersecurity operations, policy and planning, vulnerability assessment, and cyberdefence.

The command unit would run under the purview of the defence ministry and Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), and the four key units would be led by a colonel, general, or admiral from the two organisations. It also would be supported by scientists and engineers from Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA).

The move came after Singapore's Ministry of



Defence (Mindef) suffered a recent security breach that compromised the personal data of 850 national

servicemen and employees.

Elaborating, Second Minister for Defence Ong Ye Kung said a new cyber vocation would be established in August, enabling the SAF to enrol national servicemen for cyber defence. "Our cyber defenders will need to possess a high level of skill given the increasing frequency and complexity of cyberattacks.

"They will be entering a very selective and demanding vocation," Ong said, noting that these men would be identified likely through local cyber competitions, camps, and selection tests. He added that they also would support the Cyber Security Agency of Singapore.

Singapore government is blocking internet access on all workstations used by public sector employees from May 2017, in a move that throws up critical questions regarding its smart nation and e-government services.

(Source: TODAYonline)

Ericsson and Brazilian government to create IoT partnership



The Brazilian government and Ericsson have agreed on a partnership for the creation of an innovation center for Internet of Things (IoT) applications within the public security space.

The facility will be based in São José dos Campos, one of the main technology hubs in the state of São Paulo. The idea is to form an ecosystem to include other private sector organisations including telecommunications operators, as well as startups and academia.

Ericsson has been involved in a number of projects related to IoT and 5G in Brazil. In São José dos Campos in particular, the company has rolled out products from its smart cities portfolio such as a monitoring and control system for the city, an application for public lighting and sensors to detect gunshots.

"We believe that bringing the IoT to São José dos Campos, through the creation of this Innovation Center, is to continue this partnership, promoting benefits not only for the municipality, but for the whole society," said Sergio Quiroga, Ericsson's president for Latin America and the Caribbean.

"That is why we want to foster open innovation in all sectors of industry, the state and society, and public safety is one of the areas we want to foster with projects, already aligned with 5G technology," he added.

Back in 2015, Ericsson announced that it would be bringing 5G technology to Brazil in partnership with Mexican telco giant América Móvil.

According to the Swedish firm, the idea is to initially research how 5G networks will be used by consumers and corporates, with a view of having a commercial offering available by 2020

(Source: zdnet)

Google Cloud launches VM instances with 64 virtual CPU cores



Google today enhanced its Google Cloud Platform (GCP) public cloud infrastructure offering with new virtual machine (VM) instances that boast up to 64 virtual central processing unit (CPU) cores, effectively providing more computing power for applications. They're available now in beta for all users and projects out of Google's data center zones that run Intel's Haswell and Broadwell chips.

There are three available flavors in the Google Compute Engine (GCE): a standard instance called n1-standard-64, a high-memory instance called n1-highmem-64, and an instance with high CPU-to-memory ratio called n1-highcpu-64. They're all available from Google's web-based Cloud Console and in the command-line interface (CLI) with the Google Cloud SDK.

Google has been taking many steps to become more competitive with other public clouds. The biggest one, Amazon Web Services (AWS), does offer machines with 64 vCPUs. There are even 128 vCPU machines available from AWS. Currently, Microsoft Azure, the second biggest cloud, does not have machines with more than 32 vCPUs.

Google followed AWS and Azure and introduced a key management service in January.

People with free trials will need to ask for a quota increase in order to spin up one of the new instances — if you try to create one with a free trial, you'll receive an error saying you've reached a limit of 24 CPUs.

(Source: techi)

Toyota unveils its first self-driving car



The Toyota Research Institute (TRI) showed its first self-driving car, a Lexus LS 600hL test vehicle equipped with LIDAR, radar, and camera arrays to enable self-driving without relying too heavily on high-definition maps.

The vehicle is the base for two of TRI's self-driving research paths: Chauffeur and Guardian.

Chauffeur is research into Level 4 self-driving, where the car is restricted to certain geographical areas like a city or interstates, as well as Level 5 autonomy, which would work anywhere. Guardian is a driver-assist system that monitors the environment around the vehicle, alerting the driver to potential hazards and stepping in to assist with crash avoidance when necessary.

Toyota thinks Guardian's research will be deployed more quickly than Chauffeur. Similar tech is available in many cars today in safety features like Automatic Emergency Braking. The car is part of a billion-dollar investment Toyota announced in late 2015 into the TRI, which has a mandate to develop AI technologies for autonomous cars and robot helpers for the home. The Institute has its headquarters near Stanford in California and satellite facilities near MIT in Massachusetts and the University of Michigan campus in Ann Arbor.

Toyota's approach to Automatic Emergency Braking shows a similar commitment. It will be standard equipment on nearly every model and trim level of Lexus and Toyota vehicles in the US by the end of 2017, five years ahead of NHTSA's 2022 target date.

(Source: neowin)

Solar storms responsible for removing electrons from our atmosphere

Ever wondered what is responsible for creating the magical Northern Lights across the Arctic, which many flock to see? A new study may hold the answer.

A new research by DTU suggests that millions of electrically charged particles are transmitted to the Earth, which create storms that may generate the Aurora Borealis lights across the Arctic.

The researchers share that not only do eruptions that occur on the surface of the sun transmit particles to our planet's atmosphere, but also eradicate the electrons over a massive area.

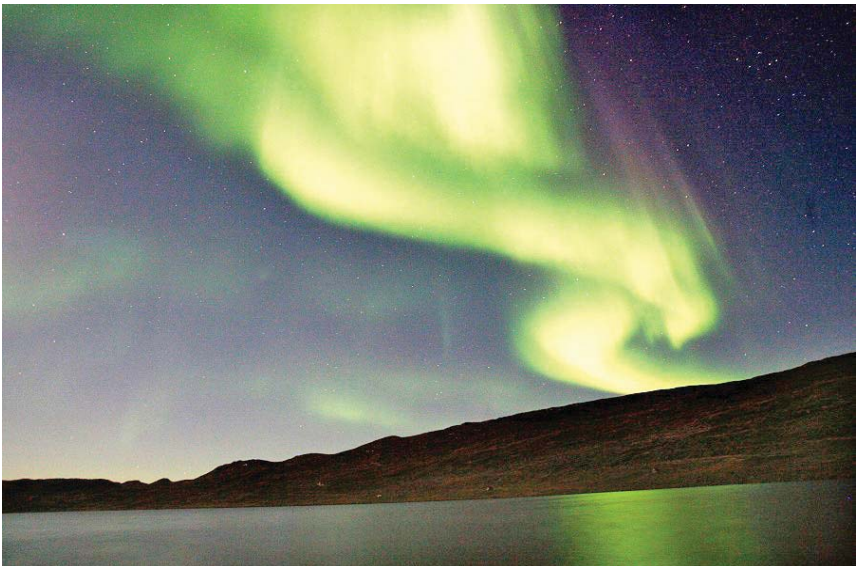
However, the onset of these solar storms can negatively impact the navigation system, as well as the communication systems' efficiency at higher altitudes.

To get an in-depth knowledge about the solar storms, a research was conducted by NASA Jet Propulsion Library, University of Illinois, DTU Space, and University of Brunswick.

Strange phenomenon

The researchers reveal that a strange phenomenon is at play at the time of solar storms. During these storms, a gust of electrons are sent into ionosphere, which begins 49.7 miles above the Earth's atmosphere.

The solar storms mainly take place at the high latitudes, as a result of the creation of the magnetic field which takes



form due to the eruptions on the sun's surface. This magnetic field creates an interference with that of our planet's. As a result, the magnetic field opens up and enables electrons and particles to seep

through to the ionosphere. Normally, these would be reflected.

According to Professor Per Høeg from DTU Space, with the help of the measurements from solar storms over the Arctic recorded in 2014, it

was analyzed that the electrons got removed from the atmosphere from areas that extended over 310 miles to 612 miles.

He also mentioned that due to the creation of the high burst, which is the result of the solar winds, the magnetic field undergoes major alterations in the region between the magnetic field of the Earth and solar winds, which in turn is a catalyst for energy bursts.

The "forerunner to the phenomenon is a violent eruption on the Sun's surface-also known as coronal mass ejections or CME, where bubbles of hot plasma and gas in the form of particles, electrons, and a magnetic field are hurled in the direction of the Earth," he noted.

Future experiments

According to Tibor Durgonics, a PH.D. student at DTU Space, the research is very useful for future experiments and the theories will help decode various other phenomenon.

He further stated that the research carried out will also make navigation safe during the ionospheric storms in the Arctic region.

The main reason for conducting this research was to understand the solar storms, which impact satellite signals' efficiency. Solar storms are also known to affect GPS signals, damages radio signals and power cuts can occur due to these solar storms.

(Source: Tech Times)

The solar storms mainly take place at the high latitudes, as a result of the creation of the magnetic field which takes form due to the eruptions on the sun's surface.

Why pandas are black and white

The scientists who uncovered why zebras have black and white stripes (to repel biting flies), took the coloration question to giant pandas in a study published last week in the journal Behavioral Ecology.

The study, a collaboration between the University of California, Davis, and California State University, Long Beach, determined that the giant panda's distinct black-and-white markings have two functions: camouflage and communication.

"Understanding why the giant panda has such striking coloration has been a long-standing problem in biology that has been difficult to tackle because virtually no other mammal has this appearance, making analogies difficult," said lead author Tim Caro, a professor in the UC Davis Department of Wildlife, Fish and Conservation Biology. The "breakthrough in the study was treating each part of the body as an independent area."

This enabled the team to compare different regions of fur across the giant panda's body to the dark and light coloring of 195 other carnivore species and 39 bear subspecies, to which it is related. Then they tried to match

the darkness of these regions to various ecological and behavioral variables to determine their function.

Snowy habits

Through these comparisons, the study found that most of the panda - its face, neck, belly, rump -- is white to help it hide in snowy habitats. The arms and legs are black, helping it to hide in shade.

The scientists suggest that this dual coloration stems from its poor diet of bamboo and inability to digest a broader variety of plants. This means it can never store enough fat to go dormant during the winter, as do some bears. So it has to be active year-round, traveling across long distances and habitat types that range from snowy mountains to tropical forests.

Sense of ferocity

The markings on its head, however, are not used to hide from predators, but rather to communicate. Dark ears may help convey a sense of ferocity, a warning to predators. Their dark eye patches may help them recognize each other or signal aggression toward panda competitors.

"This really was a Herculean effort by our team, find-



ing and scoring thousands of images and scoring more than 10 areas per picture from over 20 possible colors," said co-author Ted Stankowich, a professor at CSU Long Beach.

"Sometimes it takes hundreds of hours of hard work to answer what seems like the simplest of questions: Why is the panda black and white?"

(Source: EurekAlert)

Volcanoes erupting all over the world: Is something happening to the Earth's core?

Volcano eruptions aren't as rare as many people assume them to be. Although Mount Etna is the latest volcano to make big headlines, there are numerous other eruptions occurring all over the world. Volcanoes are erupting practically everywhere: India's only volcano is active again after 150 years, and four of Iceland's main volcanoes are expected to erupt soon, to name a few. This begs the question: Is something happening to the Earth's core?

According to Volcano Discovery, 35 volcanoes are either currently erupting right now or just recently erupted all over the world. There are even more volcanoes with eruption warnings and tons of other volcanoes that are active, meaning they could technically erupt at any minute (though unlikely).

Scientists use the term magma for molten rock underground and lava for

molten rock (and contained gases) that breaks through the Earth's surface. At the moment, something in the Earth is causing magma to be pushed up in numerous volcanoes worldwide.

Mount Etna eruption

One of the latest eruptions was Mount Etna. On February 27, 2017, the active volcano, located on the Eastern coast of Sicily, Italy, erupted. The volcano stands tall at 3,329 meters, representing the largest active volcano in all of Europe. The city declared a yellow alert and, as recommended by the municipal emergency plan, issued an ordinance restricting anyone from visiting the volcano. Although there were no casualties, the eruption is still cause for concern, sparking fear around the city.

Barren Islands volcano, India's only active volcano, just recently became active again after being dormant for the past



150 years. It erupted for four hours in January 2017. This volcano is particularly old, as its first eruption dates back to 1787. But what woke it up?

Main volcanoes

According to geophysicist Páll Einarsson, four of Iceland's main volcanoes are showing more and more activity, indicating that they will erupt very soon. One of these volcanoes, Katla, is the most active

it's been in the past four decades.

Earlier this month, Indonesia's Mount Sinabung in north Sumatra province erupted seven times over the course of a single day. Tourists and locals in the area are wearing eye, mouth, and face masks in order to prevent direct exposure to the volcanic ash, and thousands of villagers were displaced. At the time of the eruption, Mount Sinabung represented the tenth volcanic eruption over the course of a week.

On February 25, 2017, Guatemala's Volcano of Fire erupted as well. This was actually the second time it had erupted already this year. The Kilauea volcano in Hawaii produced what locals are calling a "firehose" of lava on New Year's Eve, which is still ongoing. There are numerous more examples of volcanoes erupting all over the world, some of them entirely unexpected.

(Source: The Collective Evolution)

"Magnolia" Named Top and Exemplary Entrepreneur

"Magnolia" Flavor and Fragrance Company was introduced as top and exemplary entrepreneur at 11th Top Entrepreneur Festival in Tehran Province.

A glorious ceremony was held in March, based on which, Magnolia Flavor and Fragrance Company, as a knowledge-based industrial company, managed to win Plaque of Honor and statue of this festival, Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

The ceremony was attended by Dr. Mansouri Deputy Minister of Labor, Cooperatives and Social Welfare for Economic and Employment Affairs, Eng. Shakarami



Director General of Tehran Province Labor, Cooperatives and Social Welfare Organization, Dr. Emami-Amin Deputy Tehran Governor-Generalship for Coordinating Economic and Resources Development Affairs, Dr. Sayyari Head of Tehran Province Entrepreneurs Center.

It should be noted that Plaque of Honor and statue of the Festival was awarded to Dr. Mohsen Baraktin Managing Director of "Magnolia" Flavor and Fragrance Company and another golden page was opened for this industrial and production unit in current year in 1395 (to end March 19, 2017), the report ended.

SARMAYEH Bank Reveals Arrest of Several Banking Debtors

In the continuation of collecting its outstanding claims, SARMAYEH Bank disclosed the arrest of several chief debtors in banking network of the country, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

SARMAYEH Bank has not gone "bankrupt" while it is after collecting its outstanding debts. For this purpose, the bank has nabbed some chief debtors of the bank.

In response to some rumors, claiming that the bank announced its bankruptcy on March 5, the Public Relations Department of the bank refuted and denied the rumor and added: "Presently, the bank has shown

best performance in the current year as compared to 11 years ago in terms of growth in financial resources."

To maintain inalienable rights of its shareholders and beneficiaries, the bank will spare no effort to retain main assets of the bank with all its means and power, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank ended.

It should be noted that the bank has taken legal measures to deal with the inauspicious origin of such smear campaign in cooperation with the judicial bodies, the result of which will be announced to its dear customers wholeheartedly.



Elephant all-nighters? Giant beasts sleep only 2 hours

The enormous African elephant doesn't need that much sleep, a new study finds.

After observing two female matriarchs for about a month, researchers learned that the giant pachyderms sleep an average of just 2 hours a day, and often go almost two days without sleep.

A sample size of two is small, but if the two matriarchs are representative of their species, African elephants may be the shortest-sleeping mammals on Earth, the researchers said.

"Elephants really don't sleep all that much, and this appears to be related to their large size," said study lead researcher Paul Manger, a professor in the School of Anatomical Sciences at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. "This confirms a long-held suspicion in the field of comparative sleep studies."

Before studying elephant snoozing times, Manger spent years researching the structure of elephant brains. "During this time, we found some unusual aspects related to the systems that control sleep, suggesting that they (elephants) should be very short sleepers," Manger told Live Science in an email.

Previous studies have described elephant sleep, but many of those studies have flaws — either using captive elephants, which have different sleep schedules than wild elephants, or failing to consistently distinguish between rest and sleep, Manger said. To get accurate results, Manger and his colleagues tagged two wild female African elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) in Botswana's Chobe National Park.

(Source: Live Science)

Why sleeping too much may be bad for mental health

Sleep is a good indicator of our overall health and well-being. Seven to nine hours of sleep is recommended to feel truly rested, but oversleeping on a regular basis could signal problems with our brain health.

A study published in Neurology found people who consistently sleep more than nine hours a night are more likely to develop dementia accompanied by smaller brain volume and poor executive function.

"Participants without a high school degree who sleep for more than 9 hours each night had six times the risk of developing dementia in 10 years as compared to participants who slept for less," said Dr. Sudha Seshadri, corresponding study author, and professor of neurology at Boston University School of Medicine Alzheimer's Disease Center (BUSM) and Framingham Heart Study (FSH) senior investigator, in a statement.

Previous research suggests both too little sleep and too much sleep are linked to dementia. Missing out on deep non-REM (rapid eye movement) sleep may allow proteins linked to dementia to have easier access to the brain. Beta-amyloid, a protein suspected of triggering Alzheimer's, aggregates in higher concentrations in the brains of those who chronically suffer from poor sleep. As beta-amyloid accumulates, the protein further inhibits the ability to sleep, which feeds into a terrible cycle linked to dementia.

Researchers have also found education levels can affect the likelihood of developing dementia. Studies on dementia have consistently showed the more time spent in education, the lower the risk of developing the neurodegenerative disease. It seems people with more education are better able to compensate for the effects of dementia. Education in early life appears to help people cope with a lot of changes in their brain before showing dementia symptoms.

(Source: The Telegraph)

The inventor of the lithium-ion battery invents an even better one

At 94, John Goodenough has accomplished more than most. Working at Oxford in 1980, he and his colleagues invented the rechargeable lithium-ion battery, the bedrock of most of today's electronic devices. For this accomplishment, he has been given more awards and distinctions than any one person could hope to receive.

But Goodenough is not one to rest on his laurels. More than 30 years later, and now a professor at the University of Texas at Austin, Goodenough has outdone himself by inventing an even better version of his ubiquitous lithium-ion battery.

Goodenough's new battery boasts triple the energy storage of standard batteries, along with a much higher longevity. As an added bonus, the battery doesn't explode like lithium-ion batteries can.

The new battery is solid-state, which means there are no liquid components in the battery. Traditional lithium-ion batteries are made of a solid cathode and anode separated by a liquid electrolyte that conducts electricity. Goodenough's solid-state battery replaces that liquid with a more efficient glass compound.

A solid-state battery not only carries little risk of exploding, but also can charge much faster. With a solid-state battery instead of a lithium-ion, charging could happen in minutes instead of hours, which would be beneficial for people charging their phones and electric cars.

Although this battery may be a game-changer for electronic devices, don't expect to see it in your phone or car anytime soon. New innovations in battery tech have many large obstacles between development and production, so it may be a long time — if ever — before Goodenough's invention makes it to market.

(Source: Popular Mechanics)



World Wildlife Day: Listen to the young voices

On 20 December 2013, at its 68th session, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed 3 March, the day of signature of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), as UN World Wildlife Day to celebrate and raise awareness of the world's wild animals and plants. The UNGA resolution also designated the CITES Secretariat as the facilitator for the global observance of this special day for wildlife on the UN calendar.



World Wildlife Day was celebrated in 2017 under the theme "Listen to the Young Voices." Given that almost one quarter of the world's population is aged between 10 and 24, vigorous efforts need to be made to encourage young people, as the future leaders and decision makers of the world, to act at both local and global levels to protect endangered wildlife.

The engagement and empowerment of youth is high on the agenda of the United Nations and this objective is being achieved through the youth programs of various UN system organizations as well as the dedicated UN Secretary General's Envoy on Youth.

In September 2016, Parties to CITES gathered in Johannesburg, South Africa, at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17) and adopted the very first CITES resolution on 'Youth Engagement' – calling for greater engagement and empowerment of youth in conservation issues.

World Wildlife Day 2017 encourages youth around the world to rally together to address ongoing major threats to wildlife including habitat change, over-exploitation or illicit trafficking. Youth are the agents of change. In fact, we are already seeing the positive impacts on conservation issues made by some young conservation leaders around the world. If they can help make a change, you can too!

Governments, law makers, enforcement officers, customs officials and park rangers across every region are scaling up their efforts to protect wildlife. It is also up to every citizen, young and old, to protect wildlife and their habitats. We all have a role to play. Our collective conservation actions can be the difference between a species surviving or disappearing.

It's time for us all to listen to the young voices.
(Source: [wildlifeday.org](#))

Harming environment detrimental to health, public security: Rouhani

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Damaging the environment would endanger the public health and public security, President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday. Rouhani made the remarks after planting a tree on the occasion of the Natural Resources Week (March 5-12) with its first day dedicated to tree planting, ISNA reported.

"Our lives depend on the environment and the subject of environment and protecting it is not at all of secondary importance," Rouhani stated.

"Today we are putting great pressure on water resources, soil and the Earth which needs to be reduced by taking advantage of the new technologies, enhancing proper management, and raising productivity," he suggested.

Commenting on environmental impact assessment the president pointed out that currently all national projects are legally



Rouhani is planting a sapling on the occasion of the tree planting day on Sunday.

required to ensure that environmental and possibly other sustainability aspects are considered effectively in policy, plan and program making.

Many of the projects such as dam construction are hampered due to the environmental impacts they could have inflicted upon the environment and some have undergone changes to become more sustainable, he explained.

"We have taken some serious measures for restoring wetlands in the country and we are on our way to stabilize their conditions," he added.

Rouhani went on to say that development must be sustainable which will lead to conservation of the environment and public health.

The public should also reconsider their environmental responsibilities and ask themselves what should they do to safeguard the environment, he underscored.

The importance of common fox in Iran

By Farnaz Heidari

The ecology of the common fox is of interest because of high adaptability. This species is found in all regions of Iran with the exception of the northern forests and the drier parts of the central deserts, where it is replaced by the sand fox. In Europe common fox (or red fox) is a reddish color but in Iran it is usually a buff grey-brown with a browner back. In North America, however, there are many distinct color varieties, with up to 20 percent of red foxes being black or silver.

Common features

The largest foxes occur in Europe but common foxes in Iran reach a length of 75 to 120 cm and weight of 5-10 kg. The fox's sharp features and smart nature contribute to its reputation as a wanton predator. But contrary to popular opinion, foxes rarely kill more than they need.

Foxes in Iran are often seen in farmland in search of rodents, they are also likely to feed on melons, scavenge in refuse dumps, or track hares and other small mammals, especially when there is snow on the ground. It is probably difficult for people to admire an animal so smart and adaptable that is able to live almost anywhere that they can. Foxes in Iran are trapped, shot, and hunted almost everywhere they occur, and yet they still manage to thrive.

Foxes in Iran such as other places are detested by farmers and is persecuted throughout much of its range because of its predatory habitats and the risk of transmitting rabies. As foxes' diets and their hunting and foraging techniques vary as much as their habitat so they are considered messy eaters. In temperate climates in late summer many foxes exist almost entirely on sugary fruits such as apples but on warm, humid evenings in summer when earthworms come to the surface on open grassland and pasture, a fox can eat enough in an hour to keep it going for the whole day. At other times foxes are more intensive, they stalk, chase, and pounce on prey including voles, rabbits, frogs, and birds.

Common foxes in hennery cause serious economic



©Tehran Zoo/ Azka Soltani

losses and that's why they do not have good reputation. As an opportunist, a fox will also take advantage of road-kills and refuse. Excess food is usually stored, bones and bits of meat are buried in the ground to be dug up and eaten later. Rotten meat does not appear to do foxes any harm.

Contrary to popular opinion, foxes are not wanton killers and will rarely kill more than they need. Stories of foxes running amok in chicken runs and killing dozens of birds at a time have more to do with the unnatural conditions in which chickens are kept than the fox's killer instincts. In a run where chickens live at high density and have no way of escaping, a fox cannot simply make a kill and slink away to eat in peace. A flock of panicking birds causing mayhem all around sends the fox into a frenzy. As long as the chicken farmer ensures his enclosures are fox-proof, the problem does not arise.

Why foxes are important?

There are more than 20 species of foxes. Foxes eat almost anything, including small mammals, birds, reptiles, insects, worms and fruit. The common fox is considered by some as pest species, being an opportunistic hunter of game birds, ground-nesting birds and small mammals, often killing animals' surplus to its needs. In addition, it is a potential carrier of a number of zoonotic diseases, for example classic rabies virus, *Echinococcus*

LEARN ENGLISH

Chicken Pox

A: What's wrong with you? Why are you **scratching** so much?

B: I feel **itchy**! I can't stand it anymore! I think I may be **coming down with something**. I feel **lightheaded** and weak.

A: Let me have a look. Whoa! Get away from me!

B: What's wrong?

A: I think you have **chicken pox**! You are **contagious**! Get away! Don't breathe on me!

B: Maybe it's just a **rash** or an **allergy**! We can't be sure until I see a doctor.

A: Well **in the meantime** you are a **biohazard**! I didn't get it when I was a kid and I've heard that you can even die if you get it as an adult!

B: Are you serious? You always **blow things out of proportion**. In any case, I think I'll go take an **oatmeal bath**.

A: Ewww!

Key vocabulary

scratch: to rub your skin to stop an itch

itchy: an unpleasant feeling on your skin, makes you want to scratch

come down with (something): to become ill

lightheaded: to feel dizzy

chicken pox: a childhood disease that leaves red spots on the skin

contagious: having a sickness that can be passed to someone else

rash: a skin irritation

allergy: medical condition that causes someone to become sick after eating, touching, or breathing something

in the meantime: for the present time

biohazard: a harmful substance

blow (something) out of proportion: to make something seem more serious

oatmeal bath: a soothing bath treatment for itchy, irritated skin

Supplementary vocabulary

flu: influenza, a contagious virus

cold: a contagious common sickness

fever: a high body temperature caused by illness

nauseous: feelings of upset stomach and dizziness caused by illness
(Source: [irlanguage.com](#))

Aria Banader Iranian Chabahar Port and Marine Services Company

International Public Tender Announcement

Tender No. ME/1006/95



Aria Banader Iranian Chabahar Marine & Port Services Company

Tender subject: Manufacturing, Shipment, Training and delivery of two 6000 HP ASD TUGBOAT units for Shahid Beheshti Port of Chabahar.

It is hereby to announce that Aria Banader Iranian Chabahar Port and Marine Services Co. as the equipment supplier of Shahid Beheshti Port(Chabahar) Development Plan First Phase proceeds to hold an international public tender of Manufacturing, Shipment, Training and delivery of the above vessels in a two-stage way after quality assessment.

All domestic and foreign manufacturer companies with the experience in the field of manufacturing the similar vessels are invited to receive the relevant CD containing the quality assessment forms and Tender Documents, presenting a written introduction letter (National ID is mandatory). Valid ID card and the original bank receipt of **2,000,000 Rials** deposited to account No. 0203568843007 of Aria Banader Iranian Chabahar Port and Marine Services Company, by Bank Day **maximum till Wednesday March 15, 2017 at 16:00** refer to the following address.

The deadline for submitting the documents and completed quality assessment forms will be up to **Saturday April 15, 2017 at 16:00**.

- Purchasing and delivery of tender documents address:

No. 40 ,Kish St., Jahankoodak Crossroads, Nelson Mandela Blvd., Tehran, IRAN, Post-al Code : 1518814111, Phone: +982188190677-9 , FAX: +982188190679 or Email: m.niapak@abiports.com.

- **Tender deposit:** unconditional and multiple extendable bank guarantee to the amount of **15,000,000,000 Rials** and its equivalent sum of **350,000 Euro**. (the aforesaid guarantee will be received after participants qualification in tender in quality assessment stage at the same time with price and technical proposal offer)

- To keep the date of documents delivery, any question is allowed only 72 hours before deadline of documents delivery.

- All manufacturers obliged to consider the Law Of Max Local Capabilities.

- The cost of advertising is undertaken by the winner.

- After quality assessment, to provide technical and commercial documents the competent companies will be invited.



N.I.O.C
1395.5224



National Iranian
Drilling Company

Second Announcement

Public Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tender(First Publish/Seconed Publish) Two-Stage(Semi-compressive)					
TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	DESCRIPTION	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO
Euro	Rial				
7310	250000000	5000000000	P/F: PRESS RELIFE VALVE 2"	1,478,906	TenderNo.: Indent No:01-22-9545303
					No
					1

Brief discription of subject:

National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address pasdaran Blev., Airport Saqare, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements from qualified and interested tenderers through two-stage public tender (semi-pressed) upon following terms and conditions:

A) Qualitative evaluation of tenderer:

The evaluation is based on article (J) implementing regulations of the law of tenders and also carried out base on worksheets qualitative evaluation inquiry in the tender documents. Minimum acceptable point of quality is 60.

B) Preparation of tender documents:

Purchasing of documents:

In order to receive the tender documents, 510,000 Rials should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.

Receiving of documents:

Tenderers must be obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum one week after the date of second publication in person at the following address: Hall No.:113, 1thfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN

Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and receive tender ducments from foreign procurment department in due date will be known as tenderer from tender committee.

C) Delivery of call quality evaluating:

Tenderers shall submit the completed documents including qualificaion worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 14 days from last day of document recived deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN.

D) Tender Guarantee:

Type of guarantee:

A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activites licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to National Iranain Drilling Company.

Duration of credit guarantee:

This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.

More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. [WWW.NIDC.IR](#)

Foreign Procurement Dept
National Iranian Drilling Company

U.S. embassy move to al-Quds would ruin whole Middle East, Fatah warns

The Palestinian Fatah political faction has warned against the potential relocation of the United States embassy from Tel Aviv to the occupied al-Quds (Jerusalem), stressing that any such move would “explode the situation” in the Middle East and North Africa.

Ziad Khalil Abu Zayyad, the spokesman for the Ramallah-based movement, stated on Saturday that the U.S. Congress “should understand that moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem (al-Quds) will not only explode the situation in Palestine but the whole MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region.”

The Fatah spokesman's remarks came as a U.S. congressional delegation, led by Republican Congressman Ron DeSantis, is currently paying a visit to the occupied territories to study the possibility of the move.

Since taking office in late January, U.S. President Donald Trump has been exploring avenues to fulfill his campaign pledge and move the U.S. diplomatic mission in Israel to al-Quds.

Speaking in a meeting with Trump on the sidelines of the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington on February 2, Jordanian King Abdullah II stated that such a move would wreck the prospects for the so-called two-state solution, and could worsen the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

On January 5, Jordanian Information Minister Mohammed Momani said moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds would be a “red line” for Jordan and would “inflamm the Islamic and Arab streets.”

He noted that the transfer of the U.S. diplomatic mission could disrupt relations between the U.S. and regional allies, including Jordan, stressing that Amman will make use of all available political and diplomatic avenues to prevent the relocation.

Jordan administers the holy al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East al-Quds (Jerusalem).



The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has also warned the U.S. against the relocation of its diplomatic mission in Israel, saying all American embassies in the Arab states would have to close in the face of popular Arab outrage that would follow such an action.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has cautioned all foreign countries against relocating their respective embassies in Israel from Tel Aviv to East al-Quds (Jerusalem).

In an address to the 34th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva on February 27, PA President Mahmoud Abbas said, “We call for the establishment of a system, which would guarantee the independence of the Palestinian state with East al-Quds as its capital, within the boundaries of the 4th of June, 1967.”

■ **Pro-Palestine activists urge Britain to apologize for Balfour Declaration**

Elsewhere, activists have called on Britain to apologize for causing a century

of suffering for the Palestinians through its support for a document that paved the way for the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands.

The campaigners made the plea during a Saturday forum at University College London, dubbed Palestine Conference 2017, marking the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration.

The document issued in November 1917 by the then British foreign secretary Arthur Balfour said the British government “views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”

It set the stage for the al-Nakba (Catastrophe) that refers to the Palestinian exodus when more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs fled or were expelled from their homes by Israel during the 1948 war.

The event organized by the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) and Olive, a Palestinian youth organization, aimed to “expose the illegality of the

state of Israel while giving practical steps in campaigning towards an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine.”

The conference further discussed the Israeli occupation and condemned U.S. President Donald Trump's support for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to expand settlements in the occupied territories.

The forum stressed that backing the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel is the only way to topple the “apartheid” regime.

■ **Britain crackdown on pro-Palestine campus activities**

Pro-Palestine activists on British university campuses fear a crackdown is taking place against them following the cancellation of several events affiliated with the Israeli Apartheid Week initiative.

At least two events linked to Israel Apartheid Week have been canceled or postponed this week, sparking fears about freedom of speech on campus.

The developments came after more than 200 academics signed an open letter condemning attempts to silence campus discussion about Israel and its treatment of Palestinians.

Several activists told Middle East Eye online news portal that university senior management had sent representatives to monitor their activities and demanded that their events be recorded.

Israeli Apartheid Week is held every year on campuses across the world and aims to draw parallels between the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and apartheid-era South Africa.

The Palestine movement has gained traction across Britain campuses with student unions passing motions urging universities to divest from companies complicit in the illegal Israeli occupation of the West Bank.

(Source: Press TV)

Mexico expands legal help for its citizens in the U.S.

Mexico has opened legal aid centers in its 50 consulates across the United States to defend its citizens amid worries of a crackdown on undocumented immigrants.

The centers will provide free legal assistance to Mexican citizens who feel that their rights in the U.S. are being threatened.

On Saturday, Luis Videgaray, Mexico's foreign minister, called on the U.S. government to respect the rights of Mexicans, and urged the U.S. to allow a path to legality for those without documents.

“We are not promoting illegality,” Videgaray said in a video of an event at the Mexican consulate in New York provided by the foreign ministry.

He said Mexico's government wants its citizens in the U.S. to follow the law, but it also advocates the respect of human rights.

Mexico is worried about the impact that guidelines issued last month by President Donald Trump will have on the lives of its citizens.

During his first month in office, Trump issued orders to initiate tougher deportation procedures, following up on campaign promises to build a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border, and crack-



down on illegal migration.

The Pew Research Center estimates that there are nearly six million undocumented Mexicans living in the U.S.

In late February, Videgaray expressed “worry and irritation” about Trump's new policies to U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Homeland Security chief John Kelly when they visited Mexico for talks on immigration and security.

Diplomatic relations between the neighboring countries have deteriorated after Trump declared his plan to build the wall, the construction of which, he said, will be paid for by Mexico.

The remarks prompted President Enrique Pena Nieto to cancel a visit to Washington on January 31 and to announce extra funding to protect the rights of Mexican citizens in the U.S.

(Source: Reuters)

U.S. suspends fast processing of high-tech H-1B visa applications

Foreigners aiming for temporary jobs at high-tech United States companies will undergo a longer visa approval process after the Trump administration announced it will temporarily suspend expedited applications for H-1B visas.

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) said on Friday that starting April 3 it will suspend “premium processing” for up to six months. Under this expedited procedure, applicants can be eligible for visa approvals within 15 days, instead of a regular review period that can last for up to a few months.

The H-1B non-immigrant visa allows U.S. companies to employ graduate-level workers in several specialized fields, including information technology, medicine, engineering and mathematics.

USCIS said that during the suspension period, individuals still can request expedited consideration, but must meet certain criteria, such as humanitarian reasons, an emergency situation or the prospect of severe financial loss to a company or individual.

The United States currently caps H-1B visas at 65,000 a year, with an additional 20,000 allowed for those who have earned advanced college degrees in the United States.



The visa is valid for three years but can be extended for an additional three years.

The agency said that suspending premium processing will allow it to reduce a backlog of long-pending visa petitions and thus reduce overall H-1B processing times.

The move comes as the Trump administration also has been implementing tougher deportation procedures against illegal immigrants in the United States and has attempted to impose a visa ban on people from seven primarily Muslim countries. That ban was put on hold by a federal court.

President Donald Trump campaigned last year on a promise to crack down on immigrants who he said were taking jobs from U.S. citizens.

(Source: Reuters)

Iran and Turkey will stay as brothers no matter what

➔ When we examine the history of both countries, we see that the existence of Turks in Iran dates back long before the Oghuz migration. Thanks to these mass movements, the Turkish population became a significant part of the demographics of Iran making us true brothers. With the effects of this intermingling, the Turkish language endorsed many Farsi words and Iranian culture had a profound impact upon Turkish culture. On the other hand, Turkish became the second spoken language in Iran. Additionally, there were numerous interactions between them concerning the states' administrative systems, arts and science.

A very important accord to determine the border between the Ottomans and Safavids was signed in 1639. The 570-kilometer border that was determined during the time of the treaty of Qasr-e Shirin is still valid today. This border is famous because it is the only border that has stayed unchanged for 377 years and it is, at the same time, the only border in

the Middle East that was not drawn by the imperialist powers. This accord is frequently stated as a historical document to recall how these two countries have a long-term relationship based on mutual respect. Despite the fact that there were some conflicts between the Ottomans and Iranians throughout the course of history, they penned many peace treaties aside from the Qasr-e Shirin and enjoyed political and military relations. 1555 Peace of Amasya, 1590 The Treaty of Constantinople, also known as Treaty of Ferhad Pasha, 1612 Treaty of Nasuh Pasha, 1618 Treaty of Serav, to name only a few.

Turkey and Iran should be mindful of this rich, common history all the time and determine their foreign policy accordingly. Their relationship should be kept intact even though there might be government changes in one of them. Their ties are beyond politics. History has proven this friendship and hopefully time will show the same. They should both feel blessed they are neighbors. It is a great favor for Turkey to have Iran on its border as

a devout Muslim country and vice versa. Believing in the same God and following the same faith are the most important factors to draw two countries together as a family. Leaders from both sides have declared their identities as Muslims not differentiating that they are Sunni or Shia on many occasions in which they shared.

They both have very powerful armies and their union would be a great deterrence for those trying to fuel tension in the region. They can also develop a strategy on cooperating in terms of energy and trade. This collaboration will definitely be very fruitful to increase the living standards of both peoples. Turkey can play an important intermediary role to connect Iran to Europe since Iran is new in the international arena after some of their sanctions were lifted. Iran had been having difficult times due to these sanctions and when they were lifted, they found relief. With the support of Turkey, Iran would get a huge economic boost. It would give both Turkey and Iran a huge economic relief.

It would be a great mistake to fall into the erroneous idea of sectarian division in the region. No Muslim should let anyone speak against any sects. There are millions of Shias living in Turkey and at least fifteen million Shia Azeri Turks inhabit in Iran. The Shia sect is a beauty that all the Muslims should be proud of and those endorsing this sect are all very dear and blessed people. When both countries like each other, they will certainly witness abundance. To accelerate the steps in forming this unity, leaders from both countries should make frequent visits to one another, giving positive messages of unity and cooperation. Businessmen and civilians should follow. Carrying out joint projects on many levels will help the links grow. Lifting visa procedures between these countries will also be an important achievement in this approach. This unity will be sufficient to thwart any plans to destabilize the region. The unification of these two countries will be a role model for other Islamic nations and hopefully we will see others follow in their steps.

Bahrain approves military trials for civilians

Bahrain has approved trial of civilians at military tribunals in a measure blasted by human rights campaigners as being tantamount to imposition of an undeclared martial law countrywide.

The Consultative Council, the upper house of the Bahraini parliament, voted for the measure on Sunday, less than two weeks after it was approved by the Council of Representatives, the lower house. The move saw Manama manipulating part of its constitution, which defines the identities of those who can stand trial at such courts.

Neighboring Saudi Arabia, whose influence radically sways Bahrain, has likewise redefined its anti-terror laws to expand the powers of its security forces in the face of political dissent.

Bahrain has been witnessing peaceful anti-regime protests since 2011. High-handed suppression of the rallies has led to widespread imprisonments and scores of deaths.

Hundreds of the detainees have already faced summary proceedings at military courts.

The country has already dissolved its biggest opposition party al-Wefaq and taken legal proceedings against its leader Sheikh Ali Salman and spiritual leader Sheikh Isa Qassem.

Reacting to the Sunday decision, the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy advocacy group said, “This came from the Bahraini king and for him to sign off on this amendment means that he is personally approving the new repressive measure and all the consequences it will have.”

“The responsibility for this de facto martial law lies at his feet,” it added.

(Source: Press TV)

Zarif, Ebtekar write to UN chief on dust storms



➔ Khodakaram Jalali, the director of Iran's Forests, Range, and Watershed Management Organization, said it will take a decade to control the sources of dust storms.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said that international technologies are required to counter the environmental problems.

Netanyahu to discuss Iran's activity in Syria with Putin

➔ May has resisted the pressure to re-examine the viability of the international nuclear deal with Iran, after Netanyahu urged her to follow U.S. President Donald Trump's example by imposing fresh sanctions.

Before meeting Trump, Netanyahu and his newest ally in the White House had already aligned on a tough stance against Iran. Trump and Netanyahu are both strong critics of the nuclear deal and have shifted their focus to Iran's ballistic test on January 29.

After Iran's ballistic missile test, which the White House claimed “violated the spirit of the nuclear deal”, Trump responded by imposing sanctions on 25 individuals and entities, with alleged links to Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps.

Iran has denied that its missile test violated the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 that endorsed the 2015 nuclear deal with six world powers, saying “the test was in line with its defense program”.

The resolution calls upon Iran “not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including using such ballistic missile technology”.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif commented on the issue, saying, “The missiles aren't part of the nuclear accords. Iran will never use missiles produced in Iran to attack any other country”. He added that Iranian missiles were not designed to carry nuclear warheads and thus did not violate the Resolution 2231.

Zarif says Iran sees no ‘positive behavior’ by Saudis

➔ **‘U.S. lost golden opportunity to build trust with Iran’**

The Iranian foreign minister also said the U.S. lost “golden opportunities” by failing to build “trust” with Iran after the conclusion of the July 2015 nuclear deal.

Iran and the 5+1 group (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany) finalized the text of the in July 2015. The nuclear deal went into effect in January 2016.

Despite the nuclear deal, the U.S. Congress still renewed the Iran Sanctions Act which had been in place since 1996. The situation has got more complicated as the Trump administration has expressed hostile remarks against Iran and recently introduced some sanctions against certain individuals and entities just because Iran carried out a conventional missile test which did not contravene the UN Resolution 2231 which endorsed the nuclear deal between Iran and great powers.

The Trump administration also introduced visa ban against seven Muslim countries including Iran, further eroding trust in Washington.

Nadal has no answer to Querrey power in Acapulco final

American Sam Querrey claimed the biggest title of his career with an emphatic 6-3 7-6(3) upset victory over second seed Rafa Nadal in the final of the Mexican Open on Saturday.

The unseeded world number 40 belied his ranking to overpower Nadal, blowing away his Spanish opponent for a first victory in five career meetings with the Spaniard.

Nadal, beaten by Roger Federer in a classic Australian Open final in January, was seeking his 70th career victory, and his third in Acapulco, though his first since the event moved from clay to hardcourt in 2014.

But after storming to the final without dropping a set, Nadal had no answer to the tall 29-year-old from California, who thumped down 19 aces and ripped a series of thundering groundstroke winners.

Querrey tore through the opening set without facing a break point in 29 minutes, seizing Nadal's serve to love in the eighth game with a crosscourt backhand winner.

Nadal fought back in the second set, roared on a supportive crowd, but failed to convert any of his six break point opportunities.

Querrey pounced in the tiebreak to dispatch the 14-times major champion.

(Source: Reuters)

Romelu Lukaku: I need Champions League football to become world's best

Romelu Lukaku believes he must play Champions League football before he can compare himself to the world's best strikers.

The Everton forward, who will face Tottenham live on Sky Sports on Nissan Super Sunday, has scored 17 goals in 25 Premier League appearances this season.

Sky Sports analyst and former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher asked Lukaku how far away he sees himself from the likes of Luis Suarez and Robert Lewandowski.

The Belgium international said: "It's difficult to compare at the moment. They have the Champions League platform to show themselves.

"Those are the top games where I need to show people I belong to them too."

Lukaku, who joined Everton from Chelsea in 2013 on loan before a £28m move a year later, sees his contract run out in the summer of 2019, but is routinely linked with a move away from Goodison Park.

He recently told Sky Sports he is happy at the club but wants to win the biggest prizes in football, with playing in the Champions League his next goal.

Asked what separates elite strikers at the highest level, Lukaku added: "Every striker has to have that edge. When they are not scoring or when the team is losing, they explode.

"I think I have it more and more lately. When people used to talk to me about that and say, 'Rom doesn't play with passion.'

"I do but I don't show it too much because in my mind I'm a guy that thinks a lot about how to win the game.

"Sometimes I let the emotions just come now and it helps me. I need a platform where I can show myself constantly in the big games because now I am scoring over the last five or six seasons all the time in the Premier League.

"I consider myself one of the best strikers in this league, 100 per cent, but I want to show it as well on the biggest stage in the near future."

(Source: SkySports)

Leverkusen sack coach Schmidt after losing run

Champions League contenders Bayer Leverkusen sacked coach Roger Schmidt on Sunday, a day after his team suffered their fourth loss in the last six league games with a 6-2 demolition by Borussia Dortmund.

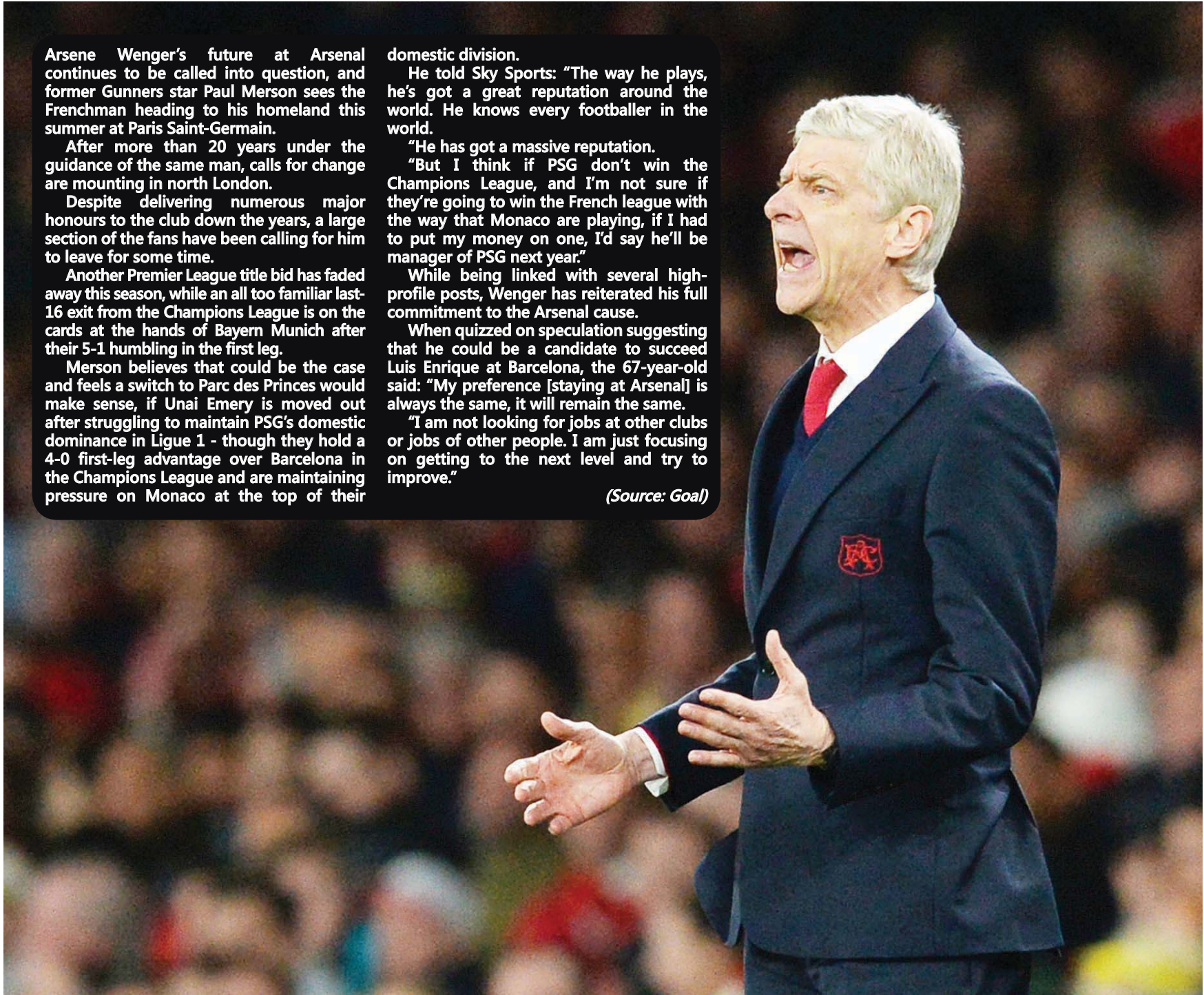
Leverkusen are in ninth place in the Bundesliga after an erratic campaign and risk losing out on European action altogether next season.

They travel to Atletico Madrid on March 15 for the return leg of their Champions League round-of-16 match after a 4-2 loss at home in the first leg last month.

"Due to the current sporting development we reached the conclusion after a long analysis that parting ways may be painful but unavoidable for the further development of Leverkusen," said the club's managing director Michael Schade.

(Source: Reuters)

‘Wenger will be at PSG next year’



Arsene Wenger's future at Arsenal continues to be called into question, and former Gunners star Paul Merson sees the Frenchman heading to his homeland this summer at Paris Saint-Germain.

After more than 20 years under the guidance of the same man, calls for change are mounting in north London.

Despite delivering numerous major honours to the club down the years, a large section of the fans have been calling for him to leave for some time.

Another Premier League title bid has faded away this season, while an all too familiar last-16 exit from the Champions League is on the cards at the hands of Bayern Munich after their 5-1 humbling in the first leg.

Merson believes that could be the case and feels a switch to Parc des Princes would make sense, if Unai Emery is moved out after struggling to maintain PSG's domestic dominance in Ligue 1 - though they hold a 4-0 first-leg advantage over Barcelona in the Champions League and are maintaining pressure on Monaco at the top of their

domestic division.

He told Sky Sports: "The way he plays, he's got a great reputation around the world. He knows every footballer in the world.

"He has got a massive reputation.

"But I think if PSG don't win the Champions League, and I'm not sure if they're going to win the French league with the way that Monaco are playing, if I had to put my money on one, I'd say he'll be manager of PSG next year."

While being linked with several high-profile posts, Wenger has reiterated his full commitment to the Arsenal cause.

When quizzed on speculation suggesting that he could be a candidate to succeed Luis Enrique at Barcelona, the 67-year-old said: "My preference [staying at Arsenal] is always the same, it will remain the same.

"I am not looking for jobs at other clubs or jobs of other people. I am just focusing on getting to the next level and try to improve."

(Source: Goal)

Athletics: Lyles and Berry set world indoor bests at U.S. champs

Teenager Noah Lyles ran the fastest indoor 300 meters of all-time as he and weight thrower Gwen Berry set world bests at the U.S. championships on Saturday.

Lyles, 19, clocked 31.87 seconds at high altitude Albuquerque, New Mexico, to clip one-hundredth of a second off fellow American Wallace Spearmon's 2006 best of 31.88.

"I have been doing a lot of endurance and speed work ... so I was really confident in what I could do," said Lyles, one of America's top young sprinters.

Berry unleashed a toss of 25.60 meters on her final throw, bettering the previous best of 25.56m by American Brittany Riley in 2007.

"I really injured [my back] four weeks ago, and two weeks ago I wasn't even going to come but I fought it out," said Berry.

World records are not recognized in the two events because they are held so infrequently.

Lyles, the 2016 world under 20 100m gold medalist, narrowly missed making last year's Olympic team as he finished fourth in the 200 at the American trials.

Runner-up Paul Dedewo also dipped under 32 seconds, finishing in 31.92 seconds, the third-fastest time ever indoors.

Berry, a hammer thrower outdoors,



last summer was stripped of her pending American record in that event and suspended by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency for three months for using a prohibited medication.

Olympic medalists Paul Chelimo and Sam Kendrick also were winners.

Chelimo, who grabbed the silver medal in the 5,000 meters at last summer's Rio Olympics, ran away with the men's two mile. His time of eight minutes, 28.53 seconds was more than 10 seconds faster than second place finisher Woody Kincaid.

Kendricks, the Olympic bronze medalist, dominated the pole vault with a clearance of 5.85 meters.

(Source: Reuters)

Jose Mourinho: Manchester United dropping too many home points

Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho is concerned that his side's struggle to kill off home games could cost them the Champions League qualification.

Stoke, Burnley, Arsenal, West Ham, Liverpool, Hull and Bournemouth have all left Old Trafford with a point this season.

No team has drawn as many home games as United this season, with their inability to turn dominance into victories leaving them three points off a Champions League spot.

Saturday's 1-1 draw with 10-man Bournemouth saw Zlatan Ibrahimovic have a penalty saved and United miss a string of other chances.

And Mourinho said: "If you look at the points we lost at home, if you accumulate these points, you are talking about 10 or 12.

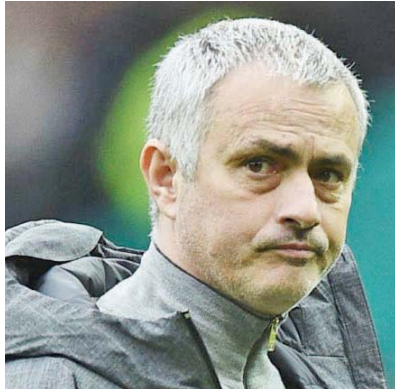
"With these points we are not just speaking about the top four, we would be speaking about the top two or top one.

"We lost too many points at home and that obviously cost us our position.

"But are we dead in relation to the top four? No, we are not dead. We are not dead.

"But the reality is that we are losing too many points at home."

Saturday's game was the fourth in the league this season in which United



have managed 20 or more shots at goal without winning.

"The old story of create lots of chances but not score goals applies perfectly to our football in these matches at home against Hull, Burnley, Bournemouth, Stoke," Mourinho said.

"It is more of the same. We play well, we start well. We have one chance in the first minute, we have another in the third or fifth minute. We accumulate and the goalkeeper gets confidence.

"The goalkeeper is the man of the match and so on, and so on, and so on. It is more of the same.

"We need to score goals. Other teams with less chances, they score goals."

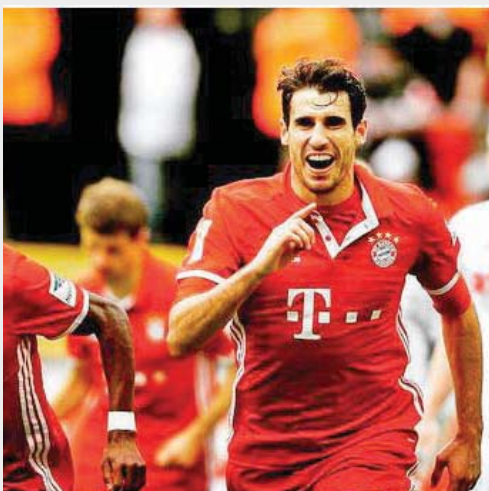
(Source: ESPN)



♡ @cristiano Good Day!



♡ @atleticodemadrid A recovered Fernando Torres has come to the Calderón to support the team.



♡ @javi8martinez ?Back in the path of, so happy!

Iran down Malaysia in AFC Beach Soccer Championship opener

Islamic Republic of Iran stormed to a 14-0 win over Malaysia in their 2017 AFC Beach Soccer Championship campaign opener in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia on Sunday.

The result also saw Malaysia slip to a second successive defeat following the hosts' 5-3 loss at the hands of Afghanistan in their opening Group A match some 24 hours earlier.

In what to be a sign of things to come, Mohammad Hoseyn Mirshamsi's side team took an early third minute lead when Moslem Mesigar (pictured right) tapped the ball home, before Mohammadali Mokhtari doubled his side's advantage with a close-range header.

Mesigar outwitted goalkeeper Nazri Sulaiman on seven minutes to add his second of the game and Farid Boulakbashi's free-kick stretched Iran's lead yet again.

A simple Mostafa Kiani tap-in and, with the match almost beyond reach for the Malaysians, a long-range strike by Mokhtari brought the first period to a sizzling conclusion.

Seyed Ali Nazem promptly scored Iran's seventh after the restart and the drubbing continued for the hosts as Boulakbashi again beat the keeper three minutes later.

Worse was to come for Malaysia however, as Mokhtari scored once again, before Hamid Behzadpour's bicycle kick delivered another shortly after.



Mohammad Ahmadzadeh's free-kick, Boulakbashi's third and fourth of the match as well as a fourth for Mokhtari duly put the lid on a fine Iranian performance

and their first victory of the competition.

The top three finishers at the AFC Beach Soccer Championship will represent Asia at the 2017 FIFA Beach

Soccer World Cup, which is scheduled to be held in Nassau, Bahamas from April 27 to May 7.

(Source: AFC)



Iran lose to China in Asian Girls' U18 Volleyball

S P O R T S It was not a good start for Iran in the 11th Asian Girls' U18 Volleyball Championship after the Persian suffered a 3-0 defeat to powerhouse China on Sunday.

Iran lost to Olympic champion China in straight sets (25-14, 25-6, 25-12) in Pool A in the match held in Chongqing, China. Iran has been scheduled to meet Hong Kong on Monday.

In the opening match defending and successive

five-time champions Japan defeated New Zealand 3-0 (25-6, 25-5, 25-9).

A total of 11 teams including reigning champions Japan, China, Thailand, Korea, Chinese Taipei, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Uzbekistan, Australia, Iran and Samoa will compete in the next nine days for the four tickets to the 2017 FIVB Girls U18 World Championship, which is due to take place in Argentina from August 18 to 27, 2017.

Persepolis beat 10-man Naft Tehran, Sepahan win Isfahan derby

S P O R T S Persepolis football team took another step towards the title as they defeated Naft Tehran 2-0 in the 23rd Week of Iran Professional League in front of more than 17,000 fans at Tehran's Takhti Stadium on Sunday.

Naft Tehran goalkeeper Nader Safarzai was shown a red card just five minutes into the game after he touched the

ball with his hands outside of the penalty area in order to block Persepolis's chance.

Persepolis couldn't open the deadlock in the first half but Soroush Rafiei finally put the ball into the back of the net with a rocket shot from edge of the box in the 57th minute.

Mehdi Taremi made it double in the 87th minute with a low right-footed shot

between the keeper's legs.

Elsewhere in Isfahan, Sepahan won the derby against Zob Ahan 2-1. Uzbek midfielder Server Djeparov opened the scoring in the 9th minute while Masoud Hasanzadeh scored the second goal from the penalty spot in the 26th minute. Honduran striker Jerry Bengtson reduced the deficit for Zob Ahan in the 87th minute but it was too late to come back.



Asian Girls' Volleyball Championship very important for Iran: Cicic

Iran coach Majda Cicic says that 11th Asian Girls' U18 Volleyball Championship is a good opportunity for her girls to get experience.

Iran lost to China 3-0 in Pool A in their first match.

"Iran team is very young. It's the first experience for these girls. I'm so happy, because it's very important to get this kind of experience for their future. I hope they have great careers," Cicic said in the

"My great expectation is for China team. They have won the Olympic gold medal. A good senior team

should have a good young selection. I'm sure that in China, this selection is perfect," she added.

A total of 11 teams including reigning champion Japan, China, Iran, Thailand, Korea, Chinese Taipei, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Uzbekistan, Australia, and Samoa will vie in the next nine days for the four tickets to the 2017 FIVB Girls' U18 World Championship, which is due to take place in Argentina from August 18 to 27.

(Source: Tasnim)

Iranian wrestlers pocket 3 more medals at Ukraine championships

Iranian wrestlers have continued to feature praiseworthy performances at the 21st edition of Outstanding Ukrainian Wrestlers and Coaches Memorial, and scooped more honor to boost the Islamic Republic's medal count to eight.

Iran's freestyle wrestler Payman Biabani overcame representatives from the host nation and Romania in his first two contests of the 61-kilogram weight class at the Palace of Sports in the Ukrainian capital city of Kiev on Saturday.

He, however, lost to an opponent from Azerbaijan 3-9 in the semi-final round and had to participate in the repechage round. He defeated 29-year-old Bulgarian wrestler Vladimir Dubov and won the bronze.

Hamed Rashidi picked up a silver medal for the Iranian team in the 70-kilogram division, and Saeed Qiyasi settled for the 86-kilogram bronze.

Earlier in the tournament, Iranian freestyle wrestler Reza Atari had received a bronze medal in the 57-kilogram weight category. Reza Afzali and Hossein Shahbazi got a gold and bronze medal in the 74-kilogram and 97-kilogram sections respectively.



Moreover, Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler Shirzad Beheshti pocketed a silver medal for the Islamic Republic in the 59-kilogram class.

Farshad Belfakkeh was awarded the gold medal in the 71-kilogram class, and clinched the title. The 21st edition of Outstanding Ukrainian Wrestlers and Coaches Memorial began in Kiev, Ukraine, on March 2, and finished on March 4, 2017.

The tournament brought together dozens of freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestlers from various countries, namely Algeria, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Brazil, China, the Czech Republic, France, Hungary, India, Iran, Japan, Mongolia, Romania, South Korea, Sweden, Tunisia, Turkey and the United States. (Source: PressTV)

Sergio Ramos not letting Cristiano Ronaldo off defensive duties

Real Madrid captain Sergio Ramos denied reports he gave teammates Isco and Alvaro Morata a telling off during a team meeting this week, while also refuting that he said Cristiano Ronaldo was not required to work hard off the ball.

Madrid's squad reportedly had a clear-the-air talk before training on Friday morning, following a rough week in which the team had lost 2-1 at Valencia and drawn 3-3 at home to Las Palmas, allowing Barcelona to overtake them at the top of the table in La Liga.

Spanish TV show "Jugones" claimed that Ramos had told the entire squad that Ronaldo's usual contribution of around 60 goals a season meant he did not have to press opposition defenders as much, while Isco and Morata were told not to let doubts over their futures affect their focus at this vital stage of the season.

Speaking after Madrid's 4-1 La Liga win at Eibar on Saturday afternoon eased some of the pressure around the Bernabeu, the Spain defender said in the Ipurua mixed zone that a meeting had taken place but the details reported were entirely wrong.



"It is totally false, this report," Ramos said. "I want people to tell the truth. We had a meeting after what happened against Las Palmas."

"This happens in the best families -- when there are problems, we take the bull by the horns, and face up to what is happening. But these things stay in the dressing room. We talked as we have often talked."

"I never said that Cris did not have to run. At this club we all must run, from the first to the last. We are all the same. That is the key to everything, competition within the group. Everyone has to run and press, that is what brings you trophies."

(Source: Soccermet)

Carlos Queiroz U-turn puts Renard in front

Carlos Queiroz has bolted out of the Bafana Bafana coaching race.

The Mozambique-born mentor was a hot favourite to succeed Ephraim Shakes Mashaba in the Bafana hot seat.

However, City Press can today reveal that Queiroz is no longer in the running for the vacant position.

A highly placed SA Football Association (Safa) source said the coach had contractual issues with Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran, where he is the head coach.



There were reports that he had resigned from his post, but apparently the federation is reluctant to let him go.

The Safa insider said Queiroz, who was the preferred candidate out of the five-man short list, had asked not to be considered any more because of the ongoing battle with his employer.

This week, Safa was forced to reschedule the naming of the coach to next week.

On Friday, the association issued a terse statement via its Twitter account, which said the new coach was not available for a press conference this week -- when the announcement was expected to have been made.

"The naming of new @BafanaBafana coach has been postponed to next week as we need the coach available at the press conference!" the tweet read.

But City Press can reveal that there is no coach at the moment.

The selection panel had to be convened on Friday to go through the process again, following Queiroz's U-turn.

"We have to go to plan B now because our first target is no longer available," said the insider.

"We didn't see this coming, but we have a few options up our sleeves."

The source said Hervé Renard and Hugo Broos were now in the picture.

He also said Bidvest Wits coach Gavin Hunt and former Orlando Pirates mentor Ruud Krol should not be ignored.

"Now that Hervé is available after he resigned from Morocco, his name is in the hat and we will now engage all of them and see if we meet their financial demands," said the insider.

After leading Cameroon to the Africa Cup of Nations championship in Gabon last month, Broos is seen as the dark horse if Renard is not available.

Renard has also been linked with the Ghana, Senegal and Ivory Coast national teams.

It is unclear if he resigned from his post as Morocco national team coach before or after the team's assistant coach, Mustapha Hadji, insisted that Renard was not leaving the Atlas Lions.

The selection panel is racing against the clock to get their man in place before the end of the month for Bafana's friendly games.

Safa has lined up two matches for Bafana -- against Angola in Durban and Guinea-Bissau in Bloemfontein.

(Source: sport24.co)

Kane feeling 'fitter than ever' after scoring two against Everton

Harry Kane warned the Premier League he feels sharper than ever after his superb run of form continued with a double against Everton.

The Tottenham striker was in impressive form as his side won 3-2 at White Hart Lane on Sunday, with Dele Alli also on target for the hosts.

Kane now has 19 league goals this season and has the outright lead over Romelu Lukaku -- who along with Enner Valencia netted for visitors Everton -- in the top-flight scoring charts.

The England international has 14 goals from 12 appearances in 2017 and warned the rest of the sides on Spurs' fixture schedule he is far from finished.

"I feel sharp, fitter than ever so I need to keep it going," he said after the match. "Every time I go out there I want to score goals. "We did so well, controlled the game - at 2-0 up it probably should have been three or four."

"It was a nervy last 10 minutes when they scored -- 2-0 is a dodgy scoreline. When Dele scores you think it is over and then they scored again. But we deserved the win and are very happy."

Kane's first goal was a brilliant, dipping 30-yard strike that caught out Joel Robles, with Spurs moving to within seven points of leaders Chelsea as a result of the triumph.

Crazy Alexis call cost Arsenal

"We want West Ham to win against Chelsea on Monday - we don't normally say that [about West Ham]," added the 23-year-old, who went on to discuss his long-range goal.

"It is funny -- me, Christian and Eric were having shots from that distance in training on Friday. It was a bit windy and I thought if it could get a little wobble it would go in. I am happy it went in."

"I definitely wanted the match ball again and I had chances which I should have scored."

"There was one chance first half I probably should have scored and second half I dinked one but should have just put my foot through it."

"I will take the two, but slightly disappointed not to get another match ball!"

(Source: Soccerway)

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Film Museum of Iran commemorates Rasul Mollaqolipur by planting sapling

A R T TEHRAN — The Film Museum of Iran commemorated the deceased Iranian filmmaker Rasul Mollaqolipur by planting a sapling in its courtyard on Saturday.



His family and a number of his friends and colleagues also attended a special ceremony held a day before Arbor Day.

Actors Saeid Pursamimi, Jamshid Hashempur and Habib Dehqan-Nasab, director Azizollah Hamidnejad, producer Mehdi Karimi, and Film Museum of Iran director Mohammad Heidari delivered speeches at the ceremony.

Speaking at the event, Mollaqolipur's son, Ali, who is also a director, said that he is very grateful because planting a tree is something that his father liked.

Hashempur, who starred in some of Mollaqolipur's films, also praised the museum for the deed and said, "He will be remembered as long as the tree is growing."

In addition, Mollaqolipur's family donated his dog tag to the Film Museum of Iran.

Mollaqolipur died of a heart attack in 2007. His films center on stories about the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war and the repercussions of the event.

His credits include "Journey to Chazzebah" (1995), "The Burnt Slip" (1999), "The Poisonous Mushroom" (2002) and "M for Mother" (2006).

NEWS IN BRIEF



Iranian films to go on screen at Swedish festival

A R T TEHRAN — Three Iranian films will go on screen at the 34th BUFF International Film Festival, which will be held in Malmo, Sweden from March 20 to 25.

Iranian director Behruz Nuranipur's "A157" will be screened in the documentary section while "Just This Once" by Mohammad-Hassan Shahmohammadi and "Class" by Reza Golchin will be shown in the short films section of the festival.

Earliest Jewish manuscript in New World to return to Mexico

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) — The oldest Jewish document of the New World will be returned to Mexico in March, the Mexican consulate in New York said on Friday, more than seven decades after it disappeared.

The document, a 1595 autobiography of Luis de Carvajal, is considered to be an important artifact showing Jewish life on the American continent, but disappeared from Mexico's national archives more than 75 years ago, according to the consulate.

The manuscript was lent to the museum of the New York Historical Society by the government of Mexico after reportedly resurfacing on the auction circuit in 2015.

Luis de Carvajal, a "converso" Jew in Mexico, was put on trial during the Inquisition and executed in 1596, after he denounced more than 120 other secretly practicing Jews, according to the New York Historical Society.

The "Memorias" manuscript consists of Carvajal's memoirs, a book of psalms and commandments, and a collection of prayers, Mexico's consulate in New York said.

The consulate said the manuscript would be returned to Mexico's Museum of Memory and Tolerance after its exhibition on March 12.

According to Swann Galleries in New York, where the manuscript was on sale last June, Carvajal's wrote under a pseudonym and told of his Jewish faith.

After Carvajal was incarcerated, the auction house said, a cell mate exposed his manuscript whereupon Carvajal gave in under torture and was ultimately killed.

Qajar painting “Line for Salute” restored

A R T TEHRAN — "The Line for Salute", a painting by the Qajar-era artist and architect Abdollah Khan, has been restored by a team of Iranian experts.

The painting, which depicts a long queue of the royals and elites waiting to salute Qajar king Fath'Ali Shah, was unveiled for the first time after its restoration at the Negarestan Garden Museum in Tehran on Saturday.

The museum that was constructed by Abdollah Khan will be the permanent home to the 50-tych painting.

The painting was previously on display at the entrance of Tehran's Sahebqaranieh Palace, which was also designed by Abdollah Khan.

"The Line for Salute" was then transferred to a storehouse where serious damage to the artwork resulted from improper conditions for storage.

The restoration of the artwork was initiated by a team of prominent experts at the University of Tehran two years ago.

In a brief speech painter Aidin Aghdashlu, who was a member of the team, said, "The painting was badly damaged as if it had been destroyed by a mortar shell. Ignorance plus nature had played major roles in its destruction.

"However, the officials helped restore the painting. While I was working on the painting, I noticed it had lively colors and had preserved history within itself," he added.

"This painting beautifully narrates the goals and the wishes of a man, the one who had made a great complex (Persepolis) 2500 years ago to portray its glory to the world," he mentioned.



Art enthusiasts visit the Qajar-era painting "The Line for Salute" at the Negarestan Garden Museum in Tehran on March 4, 2017. (Mehr/Shahab Qayyumi)

“Starless Dreams” wins award at ZagrebDox

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Mehrdad Oskui's acclaimed documentary "Starless Dreams" won the Teen Dox Award for the best film at ZagrebDox 2017, an international documentary film festival held in Zagreb, Croatia from February 26 to March 5.

"Starless Dreams" shows the lives of seven young teenage girls sharing temporary quarters at a rehabilitation and detention center on the outskirts of Tehran.

"The Dazzling Light of Sunset", a joint production of Georgia and



Germany by Salome Jashi, won the best film award in the official section.

"21xNew York" by Piotr Stasik and "Communion" by Anna Zamecka, both from Poland, received special mentions in this section.

Tehran gallery makes its debut with exhibit on trees

A R T TEHRAN — Tehran's newly-established gallery Daargoun dedicated its first show to an exhibition on trees to join Iranian people who are preparing to celebrate the arrival of spring.

Works by 50 artists, including Ahmad Vakili, Yaqub Ammamepich, Arjang Kamkar, Jamshid Haqiqatshenas, Taraneh Sadeqian, Behnam Kamrani and Ali Nedai, have been selected for the exhibit entitled "50 Artists, 50 Trees".

In a press release published on Sunday, Daargoun Gallery owner Arash Reisian said that there are two reasons behind the choice of the theme for the debut exhibit of the gallery.



A couple visits an art exhibition on trees at Daargoun Gallery in Tehran on March 2, 2017. (Iran Art/Farzan Qasemi)

World Book Day gives many children first chance to buy one

LONDON (The Guardian) — World Book Day provides a quarter of eight to 11-year-olds in the UK with their first chance to buy a book of their own, according to a survey published by the National Literacy Trust.

The poll of 9,000 pupils between eight and 11 found that last year 25% of children had used the £1 book token given away as part of the annual celebration of reading to buy a book for the first time.

Thousands of specially published £1 World Book Day books are donated by publishers to children and young people each year. After 789,738 World Book Day titles were distributed in 2016, the charity announced it would aim to giveaway 1m books in 2017, with authors including Jacqueline Wilson, Julia Donaldson and David Walliams writing some of this year's £1 books.

Kirsten Grant, World Book Day director, said the event, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, gave teachers freedom to challenge the emphasis on literacy skills in primary-school pupils and encourage the enjoyment of reading. "The day is the antidote to the curriculum demands," the former children's publisher said, adding: "Teachers are amazing, but they don't have any freedom and are under so much pressure to get through [the curriculum], so anything that makes space for them to do fun things around

reading is really important."

Grant hailed the NLT statistics as proof that World Book Day was tackling high levels of cultural poverty in the UK. In 2016, a poll found that one in 10 people in the UK across all demographics did not own a book. "Evidence suggests that there is a lost generation of readers among today's adults, but we truly hope and firmly believe that, through giving children and young people greater access to books, World Book Day is ensuring that the next generation carry a love of reading with them on into adulthood," she added.

Baroness Gail Rebuck, chair of Penguin Random House UK, who founded the event in 1997, said it had rescued children's engagement with reading from the point of national crisis. "The previous year, a government report had been released showing that 42% of 11-year-olds failed to achieve level four in reading and writing on entry to secondary school," she said. "We wanted to do something to reposition reading and our message is the same today as it was then – that reading is fun, relevant, accessible, exciting, and has the power to transform lives."

For the first time this year, World Book Day has been extended to all 13 government-run prisons in London, including Belmarsh and Pentonville, with children visiting parents in prison to receive books from

"First reason is the name the gallery that means 'tree-like' and the other reason is the coincidence between the exhibition and tree planting season," he mentioned.

Reisian said that an exhibition on the same theme will be organized every year before the arrival of spring.

"In praise of the tree for its perfect kindness, the gallery plans to invite a number of artists and art enthusiasts to participate in a tree planting ceremony, which will be held during the closing day of the exhibition in Tello Park," he added.

The exhibition will run until March 10 at the gallery located at 14 Bashardoost Dead End, Kusha St. off Shariati Ave.



An antidote to the curriculum demands' ... children in Glasgow participating in the Biggest Book Show on Earth, organized by World Book Day UK in 2017. (Photo by Ross Güllmore)

Thursday to the weekend. David Kendall, the reading engagement specialist leading the prisons initiative, said that sharing a book with a parent was "hugely important" to a child's enjoyment of reading, which children with a parents in the criminal justice system had less opportunity to experience. "Being able to work ... to ensure books are available to children and parents on World Book Day is fantastic, as it will help all families to feel included and show that reading is for everyone," he said.

Veteran music executive and former pop star Tommy Page dies

NEW YORK (AP) — Tommy Page, a former pop star whose song "I'll Be Your Everything" went to No. 1 in 1990 and who later became a record company executive, publisher of Billboard magazine, a vice president at Pandora and an executive at The Village Voice, has died. He was 46.

Billboard.com Editorial Director, Denise Warner said Page was found dead Friday in New York of an apparent suicide. Page started at the magazine in 2011 as associate publisher and was promoted to publisher a year later.

"We are all mourning the loss of our friend and colleague, Tommy Page," Billboard Entertainment Group President John Amato said. "He was a magnetic soul and a true entertainer."

Page, who at the time of his death was vice president of music partnerships at the Voice, previously led artist partnerships, branded content and events at internet radio company Pandora. He also had been an executive at Warner Bros. Records, where he helped shape the careers of Michael Buble, Alanis Morissette, Josh Groban and Green

Day. He also had been a senior vice president at Cumulus Media Inc.

Page, a graduate of New York University's Stern School of Business, started his music career as an artist at Sire Records and topped the Billboard Hot 100 chart with "I'll Be Your Everything" in April 1990. He co-wrote the song with Jordan Knight and Danny Wood, of Page's tourmates New Kids on the Block. Page recorded nine studio albums.

Page appeared as himself on an episode of "Full House" in 1992.