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World media put spotlight on Iran as tourist hub **10**



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Germany: Erdogan's remarks 'absolutely unacceptable'

The German Chancellery has described as "absolutely unacceptable" recent remarks by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan comparing German authorities to Nazis for banning Turkish officials from holding campaign events in Germany.

The Turkish comparison between German officials and Nazis is "absolutely unacceptable," said Peter Altmaier, German Chancellor Angela Merkel's chief of staff, on Monday.

In an interview with ARD public broadcaster, Altmaier said German officials had committed nothing to provoke such criticism. "There is absolutely no reason to allow ourselves to be reproached over this," he said.

Chancellor Merkel's chief of staff said the Turkish government was obliged to accept German officials' decision to cancel pro-Erdogan rallies across the country. "The government will make this very clear" to Ankara, he said.

Last week, Berlin blocked three Turkish rallies aimed at promoting a "yes" vote in a referendum on constitutional reforms in Turkey next month.

The cancellation of the political rallies, which aimed to garner votes from the 1.5 million Turks residing in Germany for Erdogan in the April 16 referendum, prompted Turkish anger. Erdogan, on Sunday, accused Germany of "fascist actions" reminiscent of Nazi practices.

(Source: DPA)

Weakness emboldens enemy: Leader



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No progress made on restoring ties with Cairo: Iran

By Ali Kushi

TEHRAN – Despite its vitality for the Middle East, no special advance has been made on relations between Tehran and Cairo, stalled for about four decades now, a spokesman with Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Monday.

"Currently, there is no special progress (in bilateral ties) and relations are at the same level as they were in the past," Bahram Qassemi replied to a Tehran Times question in a press conference in Tehran.

"We hope to overcome obstacles for the relations to enjoy a better situation."

Egypt, with a third of the Sunni Arab world's population, and Iran, the biggest Shia country, can be the prime movers for reconciliation in the Muslim world and for regional stability.

Relations between the two regional powers originally soured in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, when then-Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat gave refuge to the ousted Shah of Iran and signed the Egypt-Israel peace treaty in 1979.

The two agreed to set up interest section offices in 1991 under the Rafsanjani administration.

Prior to the political severance between Saudi Arabia and Iran and the subsequent closure of embassies in the two countries, Egypt was the only Arab country that did not have an embassy in Iran. **→2**

U.S. veterans accuse Saudi Arabia of tricking them into lobbying against justice for 9/11 families

The United States military veterans are being sent on all-expenses paid trips to Washington on the Saudi government's dime to lobby against the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA) that allows victims of 9/11 to sue foreign governments, the New York Post reports.

A number of veterans have told the New York Post that they were horrified to discover they were part of a ploy to pressure Washington to prevent justice for the families of the victims of 9/11.

According to the vets, the House of Saud regime solicits them through an intermediary to go on an all-expenses paid trips to Washington so that they can pressure lawmakers to amend the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA).

The four day trips include airfare, food and drinks, and accommodation at none other than the Trump International Hotel.

Qorvis MSLGROUP, one of the largest PR firms in the world, organizes the Washington visits, but doesn't mention that the Saudi regime is funding the operation.

Qorvis MSLGROUP has counted the Kingdom as a client since 2001. The money trail tying the Saudis to the journeys is obscured through the use of foreign agents, 75 in total, as compiled by 28pages and reported in the Post, yet the PR firm tells the vets that there is no Saudi regime involvement in these trips.

Veterans are lured by lobbyists posing as veteran advocates and told that JASTA puts them at risk of "retaliatory lawsuits" from foreign countries, in an effort to scare the military men and women into advocating against the Act.

JASTA, also known as House Resolution 3815, was passed in September, after years of delays and in spite of president Obama's veto. **→13**

Armenian expert: Iran can't be ignored in coalition against Daesh

By Vahid Pourtajrishi

Johnny G. Melikyan, a political analyst at the Armenian Center for Regional Studies (CRS) of Public Administration Academy, believes that the great powers including the new U.S. administration should know that the only way to defeat Daesh is to form a large coalition, which includes NATO, Russia, Turkey, Iran, Arabs, etc.

He also predicts that the Iranian gas export to Georgia and Armenia will be increased through the Iranian-Armenian gas pipeline in the coming years.

Following is the text of Desai's interview with the Tehran Times:

■ Can the war against Daesh succeed without an inclusive coalition?

A: There is a hope that in a near future world powers and regional prayers will realize, that the only way to struggle Daesh in Syria and Iraq is a large coalition, including all interested actors such as NATO member states, Russia, Turkey, Iran, Arab states, etc.

■ The Iranian Oil Ministry has said before that it may supply gas to Georgia through the existing pipelines in Azerbaijan and Armenia. However, Russia media reported on February 7 that President Vladimir Putin has ratified a deal to build the Turkish Stream natural gas pipeline to southern Eu-

rope. Could this be seen as a rival plan to Iran's gas export to Eastern European states like Georgia?

A: We live in a world where each country is trying to carry out its own national interests, realizing them for the benefit of stability and prosperity of its own people. Exceptions are neither Iran nor Russia. The recent decision of official Moscow to join the Turkish gas distribution network and pipelines, which are coming from Azerbaijan, is a project that in the long term perspective will influence IRI's ability to export natural gas to Europe. Another competitor is Azerbaijan with the Shah-Deniz 2.

It should be mentioned, that Islamic Republic of Iran consumes about 95-97% of its own gas. British Petroleum report (2015) shows, that only in 2014 Iranian gas output increased to 172,6 billion cu. m, in a case, when 170,2 billion cu. m of that gas consumes within the country. That is why for more than a decade, Iran has even been importing gas from Turkmenistan (4.7 billion cu. m only in 2013), which actually makes it possible for Tehran to export gas to Turkey. The same is in a case of Southern Caucasus, where Iran only exports a limited volume of gas by pipeline to Armenia and Azerbaijan. **→13**

Certain regional states pave way for foreign presence: Dehqan

Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan said in comments on Monday some regional countries are paving the way for the presence of foreign military powers in the region, stressing that the provision of security cannot be entrusted to others, according to Press TV.

"Today, some Persian Gulf littoral states want to purchase security and are spending huge sums to buy [military] equipment," Dehqan said on Monday, adding that the Islamic Republic regards such bids as being at odds with the regional security.


Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan

The Iranian defense minister emphasized that instead of relying on for-

ign powers, regional countries must rely on their internal capabilities.

During recent years, some Arab states of the Persian Gulf have been prompted by the West's Iranophobic propaganda to spend huge sums of petrodollars on Western military equipment and even conduct joint maneuvers with transregional powers such as the United States, Britain, and France, which in some cases included simulation of attacks on the Iranian targets.

Britain, the US, France and Australia started a three-day maritime military exercises, dubbed the Unified Trident, in the Persian Gulf on January 31 with Iran warning that it would not allow any intrusion into its territorial waters.




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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Iran says Arab neighbors cannot ‘buy’ security

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian defense **d e s k** minister has said that certain Arab neighbors should know that they cannot “buy security”, calling on them to think other ways to ensure their security. “If the Persian Gulf littoral countries want to buy security and give big money to buy equipment they should know such things would not secure them. It is even anti-security because the owners of the equipment would only need to withhold the equipment,” Hossein Dehqan said on Monday, Mehr reported.



Mirsalim, potential presidential candidate, meets Makarem Shirazi

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Mostafa Mirsalim, a **d e s k** potential principlist candidate for the 2017 presidential election, met with Grand Ayatollah Nasser Makarem Shirazi, the Shoma weekly paper reported on Monday. Makarem Shirazi urged honesty in electoral campaigns, saying “One of the things that causes victory both in our country and America is populism. The righteous, however, cannot demonstrate such behavior.” The ayatollah also urged principlist groups to endorse only one candidate, saying if they introduce many candidates, they are sure to fail.



Aref: We will name a presidential candidate by March 20

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The reformist policy **d e s k** making council will name a candidate for the May presidential election by the end of the current Iranian year (March 20), the council's chief Mohammad Reza Aref announced on Monday. “We have had serious talks about the (to-be) final candidate and we hope to announce the final candidate by the year’s end,” Aref said, ISNA reported. Regarding the council elections, he said the reformists cannot introduce any candidates until mid-April.



Social media won’t freeze during presidential election: minister

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Social media in Iran won’t **d e s k** freeze during presidential election, due in May 2017, the ICT minister said in an interview with the Iran newspaper published on Monday. It’s unlikely that anybody disagrees with taking advantage of social media, Mahmoud Vaezi said. “All parties should respect public opinion. We can’t dictate people which media to trust.” Elsewhere in his remarks, Vaezi highlighted that the facility needed for electronic voting in 10,000 polling stations is in place.



Iran tells IORA to seize Chabahar port as regional hub

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran’s deputy foreign **d e s k** minister on Monday called on the Indian Ocean Rim Association to note the strategic location of Chabahar Port in southeast Iran. Chabahar is a connecting point of south, north, east, and west and worthy of note by the IORA, Abbas Araqchi told a meeting of the association in Jakarta, Indonesia, IRNA reported. He underlined that in the post-JCPOA era the port city can act as a good hub to boost economic relations between countries near the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean.



Iran: No citizenship to families of foreigners killed in Syria

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Supreme National **d e s k** Security Council has rejected reports that the country is granting citizenship to the families of those martyred in Syria, called “defenders of shrine” in Iran. “The reports are imprecise,” the council said in a statement, saying only official reports by the secretariat of the council are the correct accounts of the decisions the council makes. Iranian news outlets had recently quoted an official with the Martyrs and Veterans Foundation as having said the Supreme National Security Council had passed a regulation to grant citizenship to the families of the defenders of shrine.

Envoy hails China’s role in achievement of nuclear deal

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The **d e s k** Iranian Ambassador to China, Ali Asghar Khaji, has praised China’s important role in the negotiations that led to the historic nuclear agreement between Iran and six world powers, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany. The agreement, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), clinched in July 2015 and went into effect in January 2016. “China, as an effective member of P5+1, played a positive role over negotiations of the JCPOA. Today, China has a good cooperation with Iran on the Arak modernization project as part of the JCPOA,” Khaji said in an interview with the Global Times published on Sunday. Noting that the nuclear deal is a symbol of peaceful diplomacy, Ambassador Khaji said the deal has proven that “Iran is looking for peaceful use of nuclear energy and recognized Iran as a member of the NPT.” Therefore, he maintained, Iran should enjoy its inherent rights of nuclear technology because it has “fulfilled all its commitments under the JCPOA.” He urged the other sides to fulfill their



commitments and to quickly remove obstacles to full implementation of the accord.

“After lifting of sanctions, Iran is going to restore everything back to normal,” the ambassador said, emphasizing that Iran’s economic growth reached 6.7 in 2016. Referring to Sino-Iranian relationship, Khaji said the Chinese president’s visit to Iran in 2016 was a turning point in development of relations between the two countries. “The bilateral relations were promoted to the Strategic Comprehensive Partnership,” he said, adding that 17 cooperation documents were “signed in different fields and some of those have been implemented.” He also referred to China as Iran’s No. 1 trade partner. “In 2016, the total volume of trade between the two countries reached \$ 31.2 billion. China is ranked first among Iran’s oil consumers and Iran is the 6th oil supplier to China.” Khaji added that Chinese companies have made considerable investment in high-speed rail as well as oil and gas industries even in downstream in Iran.

Weakness emboldens enemy: Leader

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic **d e s k** Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Monday that a display of weakness will embolden enemy to make an attack, citing the Iraqi invasion of Iran in the 1980s as an example. “The imposed war occurred, because the enemy found the weakness in us,” the Leader pointed out. “This is a general rule that that display of weakness will prompt enemy to attack,” the Leader asserted. He added, “If you want to prevent enemy from attacking, you should avoid displaying weakness and show the many points of strength that we have.” The Leader made the remarks during a meeting with officials and organizers of the Rahian-e-Nour [the Journey to the Light], a term used for journeys to the scenes of the battlefields where Iranian military and volunteer forces bravely resisted against the invading Saddam army. These

visits take place annually especially in advent of the new Persian Year which mostly starts on March 21. The Leader said that the show of weakness also prompts enemy to undermine a country’s economy or cultural values, criticizing Iranian officials for showing weakness in economic areas. “The mistake some made regarding the big economic challenge that the country is facing now was that some people displayed weakness in the economic sphere and the enemy exerted pressure” on Iran, the **The Leader criticized an unfettered import of goods and lack of efforts to increase domestic production as great blows to economic stagnation.**

No progress made on restoring ties with Cairo: Tehran

1→ So far efforts to reconcile the two countries have produced no results. In December 2003, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak attended a groundbreaking meeting with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Khatami on the sidelines of a UN technology summit in Geneva. Although the meeting, the first between an Iranian and an Egyptian president since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, generated talks of rapprochement, but it never happened in practice. One year later a more practical step was taken. Seyyed Hossein Mousavian, then head of the foreign relations committee of Iran’s National Security Council, was invited for a confidential meeting with Osama El-Baz, the then senior political advisor to then-Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, the Iranian diplomat revealed in a recent article in Asia Times. After a day of negotiations in Alexandria, a package was agreed for the normalization of Iranian-Egyptian ties. Ultimately, however, the

agreement was met with rejection by top decision makers in Cairo and Tehran. More recently, in February 2013, former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took a formal visit to Cairo, a landmark visit in which he was greeted by his Egyptian counterpart Mohammed Morsi on arrival, but again with no real subsequent warming of relations. Also in December 2016, Yasser Othman, the head of Egypt’s Interests Section office in Tehran, met with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to discuss regional issues. Although there are no senior direct contacts, the two sides have avoided taking hostile stances towards one another. Egypt did not follow suit after most Arab countries appeared critical of a 2015 international nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers, which they fear contributes to a stronger Iran with wider spheres of influence.

Also Egypt’s stance on the Syrian crisis, which was close to that of Saudi Arabia during Morsi’s tenure, has changed since the ouster of Morsi. Now the ruling Egyptian government’s stance on the Syrian crisis has tilted towards that of Iran and Russia. In October, Egypt voted in favor of a Russian-drafted UN resolution on Syria, a move that angered Saudi Arabia. 

UN atomic chief expects U.S. cooperation on nuclear pact

VIENNA (AP) — The head of the UN agency monitoring the Iran nuclear deal says he emphasized the benefits of the pact in a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and says he is confi-

dent his message was heard. The issue is important because U.S. President Donald Trump promised to “tear up” the pact during campaigning, saying it fell short of the aim of sufficiently

crimping Tehran’s nuclear programs. Yukiya Amano of the UN’s International Atomic Energy Agency says he told Tillerson last week that because of the deal the IAEA now has the “strongest verification” tools to

monitor Tehran’s atomic activities. As well, he said, “the nuclear activities of Iran are reduced.” He told reporters Monday that he is confident of “very good cooperation” with the United States on Iran.

Trump leaves Iraq off new travel ban order, Iran not delisted

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — U.S. President Donald **d e s k** Trump removed Iraq from a list of countries targeted in a U.S. travel ban when he signed a new executive order on Monday, a White House source said, as reported by Reuters. His controversial first attempt was blocked in the U.S. courts. The senior White House official stated that the new executive order would keep the 90-day ban on travel to the United States by citizens of six Muslim-majority nations: Iran, Libya, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. Iraq, however, has reportedly been taken off this list in the new order, even though it was present in the original one, issued on Jan. 27. The Iraqi government had imposed new vetting

procedures, such as heightened visa screening and data sharing. Also because of Iraq’s contributions in the fight against the Islamic State, the country was taken off the list, according to the official. The White House official also said that the new executive order would ensure that legal permanent residents of the U.S., those holding a green card, from the listed countries would not be affected by the travel ban. Numerous lawsuits were filed in U.S. courts against the original travel ban, which was finally suspended by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals because it argued that the ban violated constitutional protections against religious discrimination. The official said that the new travel ban “is substantially

different from the first order yet it will do the same thing in this important way: it will protect the country and keep us safe”. The new order will launch a 90-day period for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to define a new series of requirements for the targeted countries to have full participation in U.S. entry programs. When the original travel ban was issued, Iran’s Foreign Minister Javad Zarif said that it was “a great gift to extremists and their supporters”. “The U.S. decision to restrict travel for Muslims to the U.S., even if for a temporary period of three months, is an obvious insult to the Islamic world and in particular to the great nation of Iran,” Iran’s Foreign Affairs Ministry said in a statement.

Iran describes Rouhani-Erdogan meeting as ‘useful’

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian **d e s k** Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Monday that meeting between Iranian and Turkish presidents in Islamabad on Wednesday was “useful” and “important”. Hassan Rouhani and Tayyip Erdogan met on the sidelines of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) meeting in Pakistan. “I think there are still differences in

some areas, but the meeting at the current time was important in principle,” Qassemi said. He said during the senior Iranian and Turkish officials agreed to continue consultations. The two presidents were accompanied by their foreign ministers and aides. The spokesman also said that relations between Iran and Turkey are on the right path.

During the meeting Rouhani told the Turkish side that Tehran is against the violation of the territorial integrity of regional countries especially Syria and Iraq. “The Islamic Republic of Iran stresses respect for the territorial integrity of regional countries and is against any violation of territorial integrity in the region, especially in Syria and Iraq,” Rouhani stated, according to the Press TV.

The Iranian president reaffirmed Tehran’s support for dialogue and mutual respect to settle differences. “We should make efforts to immediately put an end to war, bloodshed and foreign interference in the region.” Erdogan, for his part, said that Tehran-Ankara cooperation was essential to the settlement of regional woes and anti-terror fight. He also said that Turkey embraced the promotion of ties with Iran.

North Korea fires four ballistic missiles into sea

North Korea fired four ballistic missiles into the sea off Japan's northwest on Monday, angering South Korea and Japan, days after it promised retaliation over United States-South Korea military drills it sees as a preparation for war.

South Korea's military said the missiles were unlikely to have been intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), which can reach the United States. The missiles flew on average 1,000 km (620 miles) and reached a height of 260 km (160 miles).

Some of the missiles landed in waters as close as 300 km (190 miles) from Japan's northwest coast, Japan's Defense Minister Tomomi Inada said in Tokyo.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said "strong protests" had been lodged with nuclear-armed North Korea, which has carried out a series of nuclear and missile tests in defiance of the United Nations resolutions.

"The launches are clearly in violation of Security Council resolutions. It is an extremely dangerous action," Abe told parliament.

South Korea's acting President Hwang Kyo-ahn condemned the launches as a direct challenge to the international community and said Seoul would swiftly deploy a U.S. anti-missile defense system despite angry objections from China.

The missiles were launched from the Tongchang-ri region near the reclusive North's border with China, South Korean military spokesman Roh Jae-cheon told a briefing. It was too early to say what the relatively low altitude indicated about the types of missiles, he said.

Joshua Pollack, editor of the U.S.-based Non-Proliferation Review, said it did not appear the North had launched an ICBM.

U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, also told Reuters there were no indications so far that North Korea had tested an ICBM.

The U.S. military said it detected and tracked what it assessed was a North Korean missile launch, but it did not pose a threat to North America.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at a daily news briefing that China, which is holding its annual meeting of the National People's Congress, had noted North Korea's latest action.

"All sides should exercise restraint and not do anything to irritate each other to worsen regional tensions," Geng said, referring to both the missile launch and U.S.-South Korean military exercises.

Joint drills

North Korea had threatened to take "strong retaliatory measures" after South Korea and the United States began annual joint military drills on Wednesday that test their defensive readiness against possible aggression from the North.

North Korea criticizes the annual drills and has pre-



viously conducted missile launches to coincide with the exercises.

Last year, North Korea fired a long-range rocket from Tongchang-ri that put an object into orbit. That launch was condemned by the United Nations for violating resolutions that ban the use of ballistic missile technology.

North Korea test-fired a new type of missile into the sea early last month, and has said it would continue to launch new strategic weapons.

Last month's test was the first since the election of the U.S. President Donald Trump, who has vowed to rein in North Korea and its young Leader, Kim Jong Un.

Trump's national security deputies have reviewed in recent meetings a range of options to counter the North's missile threat, the New York Times reported. Options include direct missile strikes on the North's launch sites and the possibility of reintroducing nuclear weapons to the South, the Times said.

Those options would soon be presented to Trump and his top national security aides, the report said, quoting U.S. administration officials.

The United States withdrew nuclear weapons from South Korea in 1991 before the rival Koreas signed a declaration on denuclearization of the Korean pen-

insula. North Korea has since walked away from the agreement, citing the threat of invasion by the United States.

"The claim that we should redeploy nuclear weapons here, 20 years after they were withdrawn, is total nonsense," said Woo Sang-ho, floor leader of South Korea's main opposition Democratic Party.

"I am formally asking the United States not to bring this issue up for consideration," Woo said in a party meeting.

North Korea conducted its fifth and most powerful nuclear test last September, following what the United States said was an "unprecedented" level of activity in its banned nuclear and missile programs.

State media said after that test Pyongyang had used a nuclear warhead small enough to mount on a ballistic missile.

The United States has about 28,500 troops and equipment stationed in the South, and plans to roll out the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile defense system by the end of the year.

Japan also plans to reinforce its ballistic missile defenses and is considering buying either THAAD or building a ground-based version of the Aegis system that is currently deployed on ships in the Sea of Japan.

(Source: Reuters)

Iraqi forces capture Mosul bridge

Iraqi forces captured the second of Mosul's five bridges on Monday, giving a boost to their onslaught on the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group's remaining stronghold in the western part of the city.

All of Mosul's five bridges over the Tigris have been destroyed but their capture facilitates the movement of forces progressing alongside the river, which cuts Mosul in two.

The bridge seized, al-Hurriya, is the second after one located further south. Its capture shields the back of the forces advancing toward a nearby government buildings complex.

"We control the western end of the bridge," said a senior media officer with Rapid Response, the elite unit of the Interior Ministry leading the charge toward the complex.

Recapturing the site would help Iraqi forces attack the terrorists in the old city. It would also mark a symbolic step towards restoring state authority over Mosul, even though the buildings are destroyed and not being used by ISIL.



The battle of Mosul, which started on Oct. 17, will enter a more complicated phase in the densely populated old city.

Iraqi forces captured the eastern side of Mosul in January after 100 days of fighting and launched their attack on the districts that lie west of the Tigris on Feb. 19.

Defeating ISIL in Mosul would crush the Iraqi wing of the caliphate declared by the group's Leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghi-

dadi, in 2014, over parts of Iraq and Syria.

200k civilians displaced

Meantime, a high-profile non-governmental organization (NGO) says more than 200,000 civilians have been displaced since the onset of the operation to liberate the northern Iraqi city of Mosul from ISIL terrorists.

In a report, the Geneva-based International Organization for Migration (IOM) said the total number of those dis-

placed from Mosul since October 2016 has surpassed 206,000.

The Iraqi army, backed by allied popular fighters, launched the Mosul liberation battle in mid-October 2016, and managed to claw back the eastern half of the city some 100 days later in January.

Late last month, they began engaging the terrorists in the western side of Mosul.

The IOM further said the number included 45,000, who have fled the western sector of Mosul since February to the sites set up for the displaced.

On March 3, the United Nations refugee agency reported that about 4,000 people are escaping Mosul's embattled west on a daily basis.

As a strategy to hold onto Mosul, ISIL has been using civilians as human shields to slow Iraqi army advances.

According to the civilians who have managed to flee Mosul, the terrorists have resorted to brutal executions or inhuman torture tactics to prevent people from escaping the city or cooperating with government troops.

(Source: agencies)

Israeli forces kill Palestinian during West Bank raid

A young Palestinian man has been killed as clashes broke out between Israeli forces and Palestinian youths in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah.

The Israeli forces stormed the Qaddura Refugee Camp in central Ramallah in the early hours of Monday and fired tear gas and live ammunition at youths there, al-Aqsa satellite television said.

The TV channel quoted Palestinian sources as saying that the victim was shot dead by Israeli forces at his home in Ramallah. Photos of the young man's house were also released, showing traces of blood.

Israeli media, however, alleged that soldiers killed the Palestinian man after he opened fire on them.

According to al-Aqsa, two young Palestinian men were injured when Israeli soldiers fired live ammunition while several others suffered symptoms of tear gas inhalation.

Israeli forces arrest 2 Hamas-linked lawmakers in occupied West Bank

Elsewhere, Israeli forces have arrested two legislators with the Gaza-based Islamic resistance movement, Hamas, along with more than a dozen other Palestinians during separate raids across the occupied West Bank.

On Monday morning, a large number of Israeli troops raided the town of Beit Sahur, which lies east of the central West Bank city of Bethlehem, and arrested Khalid Tafish and Anwar Zaboun.

They are members of the Hamas-affiliated Change and Reform bloc in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC).

Israeli forces also arrested Sheikh Husain al-Wariyan, a high-ranking Hamas figure, in Handazah district east of Beit Lahm (Bethlehem).

Two former prisoners from Beit Lahm, situated about 10 kilometers south of al-

Quds (Jerusalem), were also detained by Israeli forces.

Also early on Monday, Israeli forces broke into several homes in the city of Qalqilyah, making several arrests. Three Palestinians were detained in the northern West Bank city of Jenin, two in al-Khalil (Hebron) and two more in Nablus.

Israeli forces carry out night raids across the occupied Palestinian territory on a nearly daily basis.

More than 7,000 Palestinians are reportedly held at Israeli jails. Hundreds of the inmates have apparently been incarcerated under the practice of administrative detention, which is a policy under which Palestinian inmates are kept in Israeli detention facilities without trial or charge.

Some Palestinian prisoners have been held in administrative detention for up to eleven years.

The Palestinian inmates regularly stage



hunger strikes in protest at the administrative detention policy and their harsh prison conditions.

Tensions have rocked the occupied Palestinian territories since August 2015, when Israel imposed restrictions on the entry of Palestinian worshippers into the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East al-Quds.

Around 285 Palestinians have lost their lives at the hands of Israeli forces since the beginning of October that year, when tensions escalated.

(Source: Press TV)

EU approves new military HQ

The European Union Monday approved plans for a military headquarters to coordinate overseas security operations, foreign affairs head Federica Mogherini said.

Mogherini, who has pushed hard for the EU to take on an increased military role, said foreign and defense ministers of the 28 member states "unanimously" backed the project.

"Today we decided to establish a MPCC (Military Planning Conduct and Capability facility) which will command the EU's non-executive military missions," she told reporters.

The facility will initially run three operations – civil-military training missions in Mali, the Central African Republic and Somalia – which do not involve the use of force, other than in self-defense.

The EU has also mounted Operation Sophia in the central Mediterranean, which can use force to stop migrant smugglers, and Operation Atalanta, part of international anti-piracy forces off the Horn of Africa.

These executive operations have their own command centers which will remain separate.

Mogherini said the decision was a huge step forward for the EU after decades of division over what defense role the bloc should take on – with exit-bound Britain having long opposed it.

She spoke of a "certain pride" about the agreement.

"This is one of the fields where traditionally we have had in the history of the European Union more divisiveness – since the Fifties we were struggling in the defense field," she said.

Britain's vote to leave the EU, stripping the bloc of one of its most powerful and nuclear-armed countries, plus doubts about U.S. President Donald Trump's NATO commitment have given fresh impetus to efforts to step up military cooperation.

But top EU officials, including Mogherini, have had to repeatedly issue reassurances that the bloc is not going to undercut NATO as the primary defense for Europe.

Besides Britain, many of the former Communist states of eastern Europe such as Poland and Hungary have argued consistently that NATO must come first, given the need for U.S. support in facing a more assertive Russia.

"It is not a European army – I know this is the label going around – it is a more effective way of handling our military work," Mogherini, a former Italian foreign minister, said as she went into the meeting earlier Monday.

European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker called for a common EU defense headquarters in September after the Brexit vote, resurrecting an idea that had circulated in the EU for years.

The new facility will initially have a small staff of around 30 and come under the EU's existing military structures.

(Source: AFP)

Ukraine accuses Russia of 'terrorism' in top UN court

Ukraine urged the UN's top court on Monday to help bring stability to its war-torn east, seeking to convince judges that Russia is "sponsoring terrorism" in Kiev's conflict with separatist pro-Russian rebels.

"Today I stand before the court to ask for the protection of the basic human rights of the Ukrainian people," Kiev's deputy foreign minister Olena Zerkal told the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

"Thousands of innocent Ukrainians have already suffered deadly attacks," she said.

Zerkal later told journalists on the steps outside the Peace Palace courthouse that "Ukraine will win this case because we are on the right side."

Russia's representatives did not comment after the three-hour hearing, but a large delegation is present in The Hague. They will put the Kremlin's case on Tuesday.

Nearly three years of conflict have claimed about 10,000 lives in eastern Ukraine – and led to Russia's seizure of Ukraine's southern peninsula of Crimea in 2014 – pushing ties between Moscow and the West to their lowest point since the Cold War.

Zerkal told the court that Kiev was only seeking "a measure of stability and calm in an unpredictable and dangerous situation."

Ukraine is asking the ICJ to impose emergency measures ordering Russia to stop its alleged funneling of money, weapons and personnel into the east, and to halt what it called "discrimination" against minorities in Russian-occupied Crimea.

It is also seeking compensation for attacks on civilians during the conflict including victims of Malaysia Airways flight MH17, shot down in 2014 over eastern Ukraine with the loss of all 298 lives on board.

----- 'Human rights emergency' -

Moscow has long denied arming the rebels and has said the case is motivated only "by political interests".

It also says Kiev has "shown a lack of will to hold a concrete dialogue."

Moscow has denied any involvement in the MH17 disaster and instead points the finger at Kiev.

Ukraine lodged its case at the ICJ against its former Soviet master in mid-January, saying it had protested for several years against Moscow's alleged financing of separatist rebels battling Ukrainian government forces.

Kiev says that Moscow has "largely failed" to respond to its efforts to resolve the dispute and that "further negotiations would be futile."

Ukraine "respectfully requests the court to adjudge and declare that the Russian Federation bears international responsibility by virtue of its sponsorship of terrorism ... for the acts of terrorism committed by its proxies in Ukraine," it said in papers before the court.

(Source: AFP)

Geopolitics, Deutsche Bank drag global stocks lower

European stocks and U.S. futures fell on Monday, as geopolitical tensions in Asia and U.S. President Donald Trump's accusation that his predecessor Barack Obama wiretapped him overshadowed a flurry of M&A activity in Europe.

Deutsche Bank shares slumped more than 5 percent after Germany's biggest lender said it needs to issue more shares to raise 8 billion euros of capital.

That dragged down European banking stocks and weighed on broader indices, trumping a rise in shares of asset management firms after Aberdeen (ADNL) and Standard Life (SL.L) set the terms of their 11 billion pound tie-up.

Both stocks rose more than 6 percent. "The question is whether this will be the last capital hike or whether the bank will need more yet again in a few years," said Stefan de Schutter, a trader at Frankfurt-based Alpha, referring to Deutsche. "Until now, none of the restructuring measures have borne fruit."

The FTSEuroFirst index of 300 leading shares and Germany's DAX .GDAXI fell 0.7 percent. FTEU3, both hit by the 5.3 percent slide in Deutsche Bank. The European banking index .SX7P was down 1 percent.

U.S. stock futures ES1 DJ1 pointed to a fall of around 0.5 percent at the open on Wall Street which would take some of the shine off last week's rally to fresh record highs, particularly the Dow's leap above 21,000 points.

Japan's Nikkei .N225 lost 0.5 percent, but that was the outlier in Asia. MSCI's broadest dollar-denominated index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan .MIAPJ0000PUS rose 0.4 percent, recovering from Friday's 1 percent fall, its biggest this year.

MSCI's benchmark global stock index .MIWD00000PUS was flat on the day.

Risk appetite also took a hit on rising geopolitical tensions in East Asia. North Korea fired four ballistic missiles early in the day, while a spat between China and South Korea over missile defense deepened.

Trump's accusation that his presidential predecessor Barack Obama wiretapped him during the late stages of the 2016 election campaign also cast a shadow over U.S. stocks. Some investors view Trump's confrontational style as distracting the president from his economic agenda. *(Source: Reuters)*

OPEC chief expects all Vienna deal members to meet oil cutting commitment

OPEC Secretary General Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo said he expects all members of last year's oil-cutting deal to meet their commitments.

Thirteen OPEC members are expected to cut oil production by 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) within the so-called Vienna Agreement. Russia, as part of 11 non-OPEC producers' wider 558,000 bpd reduction that went into effect this year, pledged to reduce production by 300,000 bpd.

The Joint OPEC-Non-OPEC Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) reported in late February that producers achieved 86-percent conformity with pledged cuts in January.

"We don't like to preamble anybody, because we've got commitment from all 24 countries. They will achieve their obligations," Barkindo told reporters on the sidelines of the CERAWEEK energy conference in the U.S. city of Houston.

The OPEC expects that the results of the deal on decreasing oil output in February would be better than the ones in January, OPEC Secretary General Mohammed Barkindo said.

"We expect a higher level of conformity than in January. January is the first month. So, everybody is struggling," Barkindo told reporters.

According to the OPEC's February figures, the organization has cut the output down to 32.1 million barrels per day by 890,200 barrels if to compare with December, implementing the deal's provisions by over 90 percent.

OPEC Secretary General Mohammad Barkindo also said he had met shale oil producers in the United States ahead of the CERAWEEK annual gathering of senior energy executives.

"We're just coming from a dinner with 'shale guys.' They are very happy with what we have done. They deeply appreciate the efforts of OPEC and non-OPEC," Barkindo told reporters.

The head of the 13-member cartel answered in the affirmative when asked whether U.S. shale oil producers would like to cooperate with OPEC. *(Source: Sputnik)*

UK manufacturers enjoy post-Brexit surge in orders: survey

Britain's factories are growing at their fastest pace in more than three years, helped by the fall in the value of the pound after the Brexit vote and a recovery in core markets in Europe, a survey showed on Monday.

The survey, by manufacturing lobby group EEF and consultancy BDO, added to signs that British factories are enjoying a growth spurt, something that Brexit supporters said would be one of the early benefits of leaving the European Union.

However, many economists say the revival is unlikely to offset fully the impact on the economy of slower consumer spending as sterling's fall pushes up inflation. Manufacturing accounts for about 10 percent of Britain's economy.

"The post-referendum wobble that defined UK manufacturing's performance in the second half of 2016 has been left firmly behind with manufacturers now rallying far more strongly than even they had predicted," EEF chief economist Lee Hopley said.

Last month, GKN and Meggitt, two British engineering firms, reported better than expected results and growing business orders.

The survey by EEF and BDO showed output for manufacturers sped up sharply with the balance of firms reporting growth rising to 31 percent in the first quarter, its highest since the third quarter of 2013, when Britain was starting to cast off the after-effects of the global financial crisis.

The balance of firms expecting growth in the second quarter rose to 33 percent. *(Source: Reuters)*

Russia's TATNEFT inks MOU to study Iranian oilfield

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Russian **d e s k** Public Joint Stock Company TATNEFT signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with National Iranian South Oilfields Company (NISOC) for carrying oilfield development studies in southwestern Iran, Shana reported.

The MOU for preliminary studies on Shadegan oilfield in Khuzestan province was signed by the two sides' representatives in Tehran on Sunday.

According to the agreement, TATNEFT will carry out studies on the field

and the company is to hand the results and its proposal to NISOC in six months.

"The MOU is under the framework of NISOC contracts and hopefully we will sign two other MOUs under such frameworks in the upcoming weeks," Hamid Deris, the NISOC's director for technical affairs, said in the signing ceremony.

The Russian envoy for his part expressed satisfaction with the agreement saying we hope the cooperation between the two sides will be enhanced further in the future.

Exports from PSEEZ up 41% in 11 months yr/yr

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The **d e s k** value of exports from Pars Special Economic Energy Zone (PSEEZ) in Iran's southwestern port city of Assaluyeh stood at \$13.586 billion during the first eleven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2016-February18, 2017), with 41 percent rise from the figure of the same period of time in the preceding year, according to Mehdi Yousefi, the managing director of PSEEZ Organization.

He also put the weight of products exported from the zone at 31.014 million tons during the men-

tioned time, showing 22 percent growth from the same time in the preceding year, Shana reported.

The official further said that the value and weight of gas condensate exports from the zone witnessed 44 percent and 61 percent growth, to stand at \$6.394 billion and 15.942 million tons, respectively, during the eleven-month period compared to the same time span in the past year.

He also put the worth and weight of non-oil products exported from the zone at \$7.192 billion and over 15 million tons in the mentioned period.

Indonesia willing to increase LPG imports from Iran

Wiratmaja Puja, Indonesia's Director General of Oil and Gas at the Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry, said that the government is expecting to increase liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) imports from Iran. The government has been exploring the option since the Chief Economic Minister Darmin Nasution's visit to Iran in February.

"We wish to add the amount of im-

ported LPG from Iran. At a discounted price, if possible," Wiratmaja said on Sunday, March 5, 2017.

He said that the government wants to double import volume from 500,000 tons to 1 million tons of LPG for domestic needs.

Wiratmaja stressed that the deal may or may not go through as the government expects a discounted



According to Gholamreza Manouchehri, the deputy managing director of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) for development and engineering affairs, Iran has received 25 Management Development Programs

(MDP) for the development of its oilfields from foreign companies since the sanctions were lifted in January 2016.

TATNEFT is a Russian vertically integrated oil and gas company; it is the sixth largest oil company in Russia.

Slovakian trade delegation due in Tehran today

ECONOMY TEHRAN — A high **d e s k** ranking Slovakian trade delegation led by the country's Deputy Prime Minister for Investments and Information Peter Pellegrini will arrive in Tehran today to discuss issues of mutual interest with Iranian private sector and entrepreneurs, IRNA reported on Monday.

As reported, Slovakia's Economy Minister Peter Žiga and Finance Minister Peter Kazimir will accompany the delegation, comprised of representatives from 35 Slovakian private companies, during the trip to Iran.

Today, the Slovakian delegation will attend a forum in the Industrial Devel-

opment and Renovation Organization (IDRO) to confer on development of mutual ties with the organization's head Mansour Moazzami in the fields of energy, oil, gas, transportation, wagon, finance and Information Technology (IT).

IDRO has expressed readiness for bilateral cooperation with Slovakian industrial companies in Iran's post-sanctions era.

Holding Iran-Slovakia Joint Economic Committee meeting would be another issue to be discussed by the two sides.

The visiting delegation will also pay a visit to Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCI-MA) today. *(Source: tempo.co)*

Tehran, Prague agree on building 20MW waste-to-energy plant in Iran

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran **d e s k** and Czech Republic agreed on signing a contract for the construction of a 20 megawatt waste-to-energy plant in the Iranian northern province of Gilan, the portal of Iranian Energy Ministry reported.

The agreement was made by Houshang Falahatian, the Iranian deputy energy minister, and Milan Šarapatka, the chairman of Czech Republic Parliament's Energy Committee, in Tehran on Sunday.

The project of building the mentioned plant was agreed to be implemented based on a build-operate-transfer (BOT) contract.

The plant is estimated to generate electricity from 350 tons of garbage per day.

A waste-to-energy plant is a waste management facility that combusts wastes to produce electricity. Waste-to-energy generation is being increasingly looked at as a potential energy diversification strategy.

Surge in Iran's oil exports to Europe post-JCPOA

Iran's crude oil exports to Europe have increased since a nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers came into effect early last year and terminated all nuclear-related sanctions against the country, reports said.

Platts energy news service reported that Iran had sent a total of 63 major crude cargoes to France, Italy, Greece and Spain over the past year.

The largest number of shipments belonged to France at 21. Italy and Greece were the next top destinations of Iranian oil, each receiving 15 and 14 tankers from the country. Spain came closely in the fourth

place by receiving 13 tankers.

The shipments were made with very large crude carriers (VLCCs), Suezmaxes, and Aframaxes containers, Platts added, quoting a report by UK-based shipping consultancy VesselsValue.

Iranian crude exports via tankers jumped to 563 shipments last year from 66 in 2012, when the sanctions were imposed, and up from 277 in 2015, VesselsValue was quoted as saying.

Iran's crude oil and gas condensate exports were expected to rise to about 2.2 million barrels per day (mb/d) last month

from some 2.16 mb/d in January.

Europe's share of Iranian oil exports was 767,000 barrels per day (bpd) in December 2016, up by 10 percent from November, and very close to pre-sanction export levels that averaged 800,000 bpd.

Not only destinations of Iranian crude were diverse in 2016, the countries of origin of the owners of ships being used to transport oil have also diversified, Platts further quoted VesselsValue as saying in its report.

During the sanctions, the National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC) was the biggest

Oil falls on lower China growth targets, doubts on Russian output curbs

Oil prices fell in Asian trade on Monday, wiping out some of the gains of the previous session amid worries lower growth targets in China could cut oil demand and ongoing concern over Russia's compliance with a global deal to cut oil output.

But worries over escalating violence in the Middle East put a floor under prices.

Brent crude futures dropped 47 cents, or 0.8 percent, to \$55.43 a barrel as of 0749 GMT after settling 1.5 percent higher in the previous session.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures fell 47 cents, or 0.9 percent, to \$52.86 a barrel after closing the previous session up 1.4 percent.

"The main drag affecting markets today is the lowering of growth targets by China and tighter regulatory controls which implies less demand for oil and commodities in general," said Jeffrey Halley, senior market strategist at Oanda brokerage in Singapore.

China aims to expand its economy by around 6.5 percent this year, Premier Li Keqiang said in his work report at the opening of the annual meeting of parliament on Sunday.

That is lower than the 6.7 percent growth achieved last



year.

China also plans to cut steel and coal output this year in an effort to tackle pollution, its top economic planner said on Sunday, while China's newly appointed banking regulator vowed to strengthen supervision of the lending sector.

Meanwhile, figures by Russia's energy ministry released last week showed February oil output was unchanged from January at 11.11 million barrels per day (bpd), casting doubt on Russia's moves to rein in output as part of a pact with oil producers last year.

(Source: dinardetectives.info)

(Source: Reuters)

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Fearing U.S. withdrawal, Europe considers its own nuclear deterrent

By Max Fisher

An idea, once unthinkable, is gaining attention in European policy circles: a European Union nuclear weapons program.

Under such a plan, France's arsenal would be repurposed to protect the rest of Europe and would be put under a common European command, funding plan, defense doctrine, or some combination of the three. It would be enacted only if the Continent could no longer count on American protection.

Though no new countries would join the nuclear club under this scheme, it would amount to an unprecedented escalation in Europe's collective military power and a drastic break with American leadership.

Analysts say that the talk, even if it never translates into action, demonstrates the growing sense in Europe that drastic steps may be necessary to protect the postwar order in the era of a Trump presidency, a resurgent Russia and the possibility of an alignment between the two.

Even proponents, who remain a minority, acknowledge enormous hurdles. But discussion of a so-called "Eurodeterrant" has entered the mainstream — particularly in Germany, a country that would be central to any plan but where antinuclear sentiment is widespread.

Jana Puglierin of the German Council on Foreign Relations said that a handful of senior European officials had "for sure triggered a public debate about this, taking place in newspapers and journals, radio interviews and TV documentaries." She added: "That in itself is remarkable. I am indeed very astonished that we discuss this at all."

■ A nuclear 'plan B'

Jaroslav Kaczynski, Poland's former prime minister and now the head of its ruling party, provided the highest-level call for a European Union nuclear program in a February interview with a German newspaper.

But the most important support has come from Roderich Kiesewetter, a lawmaker and foreign policy spokesman with Germany's ruling party, who gave the nuclear option increased credibility by raising it shortly after Trump's election.

In an interview in the German Bundestag,

Kiesewetter, a former colonel who served in Afghanistan, calibrated his language carefully, providing just enough detail to demonstrate the option's seriousness without offering too much and risking an outcry from German voters or encouraging the American withdrawal he is hoping to avoid.

"My idea is to build on the existing weapons in Great Britain and France," he said, but acknowledged that Britain's decision to leave the European Union could preclude its participation.

The United States bases dozens of nuclear warheads in Germany, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands as both a quick-reaction force and a symbol of its guarantee to protect the Continent. Kiesewetter said his plan would provide a replacement or parallel program.

This would require, he said, four ingredients: a French pledge to commit its weapons to a common European defense, German financing to demonstrate the program's collective nature, a joint command and a plan to place French warheads in other European countries.

The number of warheads in Europe would not increase under this plan, and could even decrease if the United States withdraws. "It's not a question of numbers," Kiesewetter said. "The reassurance and deterrence comes from the existence of the weapons and their deployability."

This would require a doctrine, he said, allowing Europe to introduce nuclear weapons to a non-nuclear conflict. "These are political weapons. Their use must be unpredictable," he said. Smaller nuclear powers often maintain vague doctrines to deter more powerful adversaries.

The goal, he said, would be to maintain Europe's defense, seen as crucial for its internal unity, as well as its international diplomatic standing.

German lawmakers across the political spectrum worry that Trump could strike a grand bargain with Russia that excludes Europe, a potential first step toward Washington and Moscow dictating Europe's future. Kiesewetter believes a European nuclear program would allow Europe to preserve its autonomy.

■ 'A political minefield'

Mostly, Kiesewetter said he hoped to spur Trump to end doubts over American security



Kiesewetter, a former German colonel, believes a European nuclear program would allow Europe to preserve its autonomy.

commitments to Europe, rendering unnecessary the nuclear "Plan B."

For now, Kiesewetter's intention is merely to "trigger a debate" over addressing "this silent, gigantic problem."

It has worked. A small but growing contingent of German analysts and commentators have endorsed versions of a European nuclear program.

Kiesewetter said he had heard interest from officials in the Polish and Hungarian governments, at NATO headquarters in Brussels and within relevant German ministries, though he would not say which.

But any European nuclear program would face enormous hurdles. "The public is totally opposed," Ms. Puglierin said, referring to German antinuclear sentiment, which has at times

culminated in nationwide protests against the weapons.

In practical terms, the plan would change the flag on Europe's nuclear deterrent from that of the United States to that of France. But this would risk making an American exit from Europe more permanent.

Oliver Thränert, a German analyst with the Switzerland-based Center for Security Studies, warned in a white paper that any plan "would not only be expensive, but also a political minefield full of undesirable potential political consequences."

The biggest challenge may be who controls the French arsenal and where it is based. The United States currently shares warheads with allies like Germany, whose militaries are equipped to deliver the weapons, granting the program

credibility as a Pan-European defense.

But France has shown no willingness to share its weapons, much less put them under a joint European command. If Paris maintains final say over their use, this might cause an adversary to doubt whether France would really initiate a nuclear conflict to protect, say, Estonia.

■ France and 'a special responsibility'

These sorts of problems are why Bruno Tertrais of the Foundation for Strategic Research in Paris said, "In other times I would have told you don't bother, there's no story here." Similar proposals have been floated before, including by the French government, and always rejected as politically risky and strategically unnecessary. But, he said, that calculus appears to have a potential to change with Trump.

"There's already a bit more interest in Berlin and in Paris," Tertrais said, though he emphasized that this talk would become action only if there were "a serious loss of trust in the U.S. umbrella."

But a joint European command or funding scheme would most likely be impossible, he warned. The French government would insist on maintaining "the final decision to use nuclear weapons." That is also United States policy in Europe, which is why Tertrais believes a more workable plan would be for France to reproduce American-style practices of basing its warheads abroad, while keeping them under French control.

While most French warheads are lodged on submarines, a few dozen are fitted to air-launched cruise missiles that could be housed in, for example, German airfields. These are smaller, shorter-range tactical weapons — exactly the American capability that Europe most fears losing. French policy already allows for, though does not require, using nuclear weapons in defense of an ally.

With Britain's exit from the European Union, "the French might feel they have a special responsibility" as Europe's sole nuclear power. Vipin Narang, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor who studies regional nuclear powers, was initially skeptical but came to see such a plan as both technically and politically feasible. For France, he said, "it extends their frontier," making it likelier that a nuclear conflict would be fought far from French soil. →13



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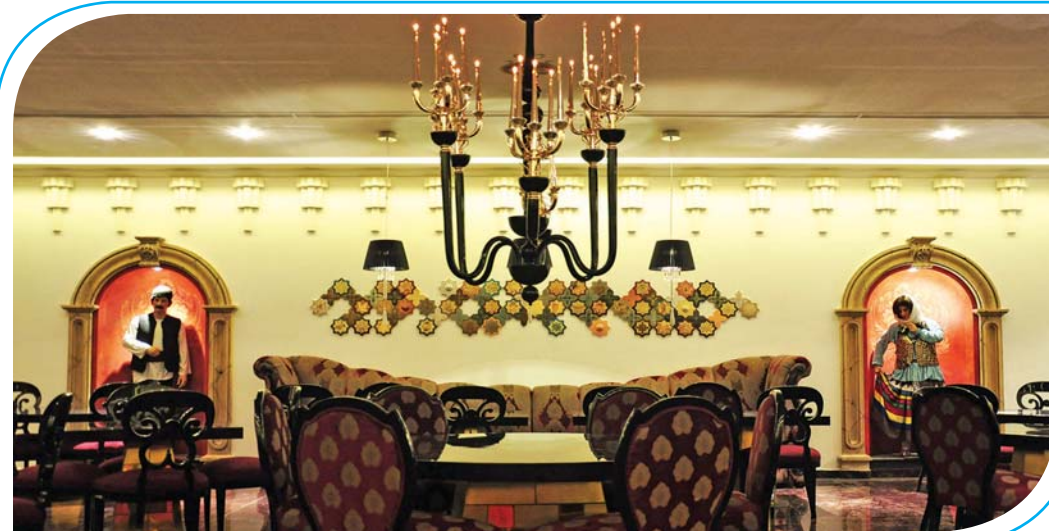


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By Samad Habibi

How would high-profile session succeed in effectively addressing pressing issues of airborne particles which have jeopardized the daily life of people in Khuzestan and other provinces in varying degrees?

A session finally decides to hear the plights of the environment in the southwestern province of Khuzestan after reports of the pollution brought the issue to national and even international focus; the high-profile session is brilliant in terms of its members: Javad Zarif, Foreign Minister, Masoumeh Ebtekar, VP and Head of Department of Environment, and Hamid Chitchian, Minister of Energy. But to what extent they will succeed in bringing concrete results to the public depends on the premises of the session which seem at best only tepidly reacting to the disaster already having affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in a province very strategic for the system; the golden province which serve the country as a cornucopia of oil income.

Iran's state news agency IRNA coverage of the event quoted Department of Environment website, who itself quoted Javad Zarif who had been addressing the meeting about the foreign sources of the airborne particle so much the subject of officials' blame: Iraq and its very disorganized millions of acres of desert. Zarif reportedly called for an 'international consensus' on the issue of pollution which only hinged upon few countries neighboring Iran. Mr. Zarif said that Iran had been working with Syria and Iraq especially in managing the desert areas, the source or hotbed of airborne particles and dust; "however, since 2011, political incidents in both countries adversely affected the cooperation; Iran has continued and it will continue efforts in international community which included a letter to UN Secretary-General to be sent soon to urge international attention to the issue and to persuade neighbors to look into the pollution more seriously and responsibly," he told the meeting, admitting that such consensus-building would be quite time-intensive and thus would prove futile in meeting short-term and emergent occasions of severe pollution in Khuzestan.

Hamid Chitchian also addressed the session; "the Ministry of Energy has addressed the issue by reviving Hour al-Azim marshland through channeling 4 billion cubic meters of water from River Karkha; the marshland stretches in both sides of the border with Iraq; the wetland had almost been dried and thus was an active bed of the particles," he detailed. "Two issues affect the drying of the wetland; first is Turkey's unregulated dam building on Tigris and Euphrates in its side of the border; this decreased the flow of water in these two rivers down to Iraq alluvial plain; the second is Iraq's measures to reserve water in lakes devised to trap water inside the country; this contributed to loss of about 100 billion cubic meters



The hazards of simplifying the disaster to mere facts would be quite enormous; to seek simple solutions for a disaster which is a consequence of years of mismanagement and environmentally unfriendly practices would be to defy the laws of nature.

of water which previously inundated the marshland. In the eastern border with Afghanistan, we have a similar issue: Afghan government had not acted according to a deal signed in the 1970s whereby it became committed to allow water quota of the Hamoun wetland to perpetuate the water ecosystem of the region on which the livelihood of many people depended."

Chitchian's proposals that the foreign policy machinery should be more active in diplomatic corridors to persuade Turkey and Iraq to abandon their water-reserving schemes as GAP (Southeastern Anatolia Project) seem impractical; the political leverages have not been enough to persuade the Turkish and Iraqi officials to merely hear the case, let alone stopping such grand schemes in their own home country. "To address the issue, the government's share of responsibility have been carried out through negotiations with Iraqi, Syria, and Turkish officials as the source of airborne particles," he said, a fact which seems quite unresponsive in immediate addressing the disaster which had made the public impatient.

The political conditions of these countries Mr. Chitchian mentions, are not conducive to addressing the disaster; in Iraq, the central government had largely been engaged in war with ISIL and the disintegrated political and social conditions would not allow such rectifying efforts to address a geographical phenomenon which affects the country's own people as well. Mr. Al-Abadi's administration is not in a sta-

ble conditions to turn to the issue, even if his delegations would assure Iran's negotiators of such and such measures. In Turkey as well, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's is highly obsessed with political crisis of an aborted coup and its far-reaching consequences. Even if the country was in peaceful terms with itself, internationalizing of the GAP project, which according to a report, has totally been disastrous to Syrian and Iraq in environ-



Political leverages have not been enough to persuade the Turkish and Iraqi officials to merely hear the case, let alone stopping such grand schemes in their own home country.

mental terms, as Mr. Zarif admits, would be a matter of years to be realized.

Mrs. Masoumeh Ebtekar points to a different but highly effective cause; human intervention in changing climate, global warming, etc. In her scheme of things, the causes have been short-term as well. The hazards of simplifying the disaster to mere facts would be quite enormous; to seek simple solutions for a disaster which is a consequence of years of mismanagement and environmentally unfriendly practices would be to defy the laws of nature; the regional trends have been at work since time immemorial and Mrs. Ebtekar and other authorities should have been predicting such disaster to come once the overall effect of these trends turns to be a beast, equally unruly and devastating. The case of Lake Urmia provides testament to this mismanagement and the failure to study trends and the domestic sheer irresponsibility of the system.

"The session addresses bilateral and multilateral measures in regional and international levels to prepare for dust storms and drafting a national roadmap to secure national rights and to address damage in health, national economy, water resources, agriculture, and natural resources," Mrs. Ebtekar grandiloquently said. The objectives set totally exceed the possible achievements of the session, with members' proposals to remain on paper at least for the time being. "Local interventions in natural resources in Karoun and distorting the natural ecosystem in Hour al-Azim marshland, grand scheme of



The regional trends have been at work since time immemorial and Mrs. Ebtekar and other authorities should have been predicting such disasters to come once the overall effect of these trends turns to be a beast, equally unruly and devastating.

plantations of sugarcane planned to cover Karoun upstream lands, and to expand still further plantation for another 550,000 hectares are the causes for the current situation; the real solution is to reform these changes to the better; to improve resilience would not mean to allow the status quo but to adapt to conditions to prevent further damage to the environment," she said.

Yet another official, Mr. Khoda Karam Jalali, Deputy Minister and Head of the Forest, Range and Watershed Management Organization (FRWO) drew dark prospects for still deteriorating conditions of the dust storm and airborne particles in the years to come; the response, he says, had been addressing short-term solutions to immediately provide relief for the affected citizens through seeking cooperation of WHO and their advice and expert consultation. "Currently, the province's dried 40,000 hectares are the grounds from where severe sand storms roam the city of Ahvaz the most hit area; planting saplings in these lands would require 3 years to gradually reduce the critical conditions in weather for the public; the drying of wetlands and marshlands in the province contributed to emergence of 350,000 such empty land susceptible to provide sands enough to reduce the vision in cities to less than 5 meters; add to this 250,000 hectares of varying area of Hour marshland, 46,000 permanent wetlands, 58,000 hectares of dry farming lands, and 40,000 hectares of empty desert; such extensive surface areas are demanding for management and

keeping the dust and sands on place," he lamented, where he believed water shortage of years of drought and water loss had hollowed the soil.

"Sand storm should be addressed apart from naturally-born sand brought by 120-day seasonal winds; the particle size, wind speed, soil moisture, and grass covering in the area determine the wind erosion and sand storm and its severity; particles less than 100 micrograms in diameter remains suspended in the air for 4-7 days, moving horizontally up to 8,000km and soaring up to 6km in altitude" said Ziaeddin Shoaie, head of the Department of Environment's task force to combat dust storms detailed.

He believed general practices of tiling the lands to secure ownership in Iraq and then abandoning it exacerbated already tense situation in the western borders; "in eastern borders, Lake Hamoun is the major source of dust storms where extreme evaporation of 5,000mm renders the region virtually uninhabitable, with villagers preferring flight to cities with better conditions; in Central Asia and Lake Aral regions, cotton plantations had since long dried up the lake during the Soviet era with disastrous effects on the ecosystem of the lake; we believe that low-intensity dust in northern provinces should be considered an implication of the Aral drying up, and negotiations would be on the horizon to address the issue with Uzbekistan and other countries of the region," he told the meeting.

Syria's Water Cut Off By Turkey Following McCain, Erdogan Meeting

By Whitney Webb

While some measure of stability has returned to pockets of northern Syria following the Syrian Army's recent liberation of al-Qaeda from Aleppo and elsewhere, external forces seem determined to keep the region volatile, regardless of the cost. In the latest example of aggressive foreign intervention in Syria, Turkey, which has long played an antagonistic role in Syria's nearly six-year-long conflict, has now cut off the flow of the Euphrates River into Syria, depriving the nation of one of its primary sources of water.

According to the Kurdish Hawar News Agency, Turkey cut water supplies to Syria around Feb. 23, which subsequently forced a hydroelectric plant at the Tishrin Dam to shut down while also significantly reducing water levels on its associated reservoir. The dam supplies both water and power to key parts of northern Syria, such as the city of Manbij and other parts of the predominantly Kurdish Kobani Canton.

The dam is one of several major dams along the Euphrates River. Just downstream from Tishrin lies the Tabqa Dam and its reservoir Lake Assad, which supplies Aleppo with most of its power and drinking water, as well as irrigation water for over 640,000 hectares (2,500 square miles) of farmland. A city official in Manbij told Hawar that the city would provide generator fuel to civilians to help cope with the black-out that has resulted from the river be-



ing cut off. The same official added that Turkey had "violated the international conventions of water and rivers energy by cutting off Euphrates water."

This is not the first time Turkey has deprived Syrians of water as a means to advance their political goals in the region. Turkey previously cut the river off in May of 2014, causing water levels on Lake Assad to drop by over 20 feet and creating the potential for genocide by means of dehydration. By blocking the river, Turkey threatens Iraqi civilians as well. Major urban centers like Mosul,

whose water supplies largely depend on reservoirs fed by the Euphrates, could be gravely impacted if the river continues to be blocked.

The act of cutting off the river is not unprecedented, but its timing is peculiar. Just days prior to Turkey's act, U.S. Senator John McCain "secretly" visited the Kobani Canton, the very region that now finds itself without water, before heading to Turkey, where he met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. According to the senator's office, "Senator McCain's visit was a val-

Just days after John McCain's "unusual" trip to Syria and Turkey, the Turkish government has cut off water supplies from the Euphrates River into northern Syria, violating international conventions on water rights.

The dam is one of several major dams along the Euphrates River. Just downstream from Tishrin lies the Tabqa Dam and its reservoir Lake Assad, which supplies Aleppo with most of its power and drinking water

uable opportunity to assess dynamic conditions on the ground in Syria and Iraq." It adds that McCain looks forward to working with the Trump administration and military leaders "to optimize our approach" on fighting the Islamic State.

While the U.S. has backed the Kurds in their fight to keep their territories along the Syrian-Turkish border free of terrorist influence, it has come at the cost of greatly complicating diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Turkey. For example, in early 2016, Erdogan dramatically demanded that the U.S. choose between an alliance with Turkey or with the Syrian Kurds. The diplo-

matic stand-off has since reached new heights of tension, with Turkey threatening to invade Kurdish-held Manbij less than two weeks ago. Manbij is suffering the most from Turkey's blockage of the Euphrates, suggesting that the move could be intended to destabilize the Kurds before something more drastic takes place.

It also warrants mentioning that despite Erdogan's and McCain's claims that they are eager to "defeat" the Islamic State and other terrorist factions, both have close ties to those very same groups. This, of course, suggests that McCain's visit, as well as recent moves by Turkey, have ulterior motives that



have yet to be publicly expressed.

For example, McCain has been so intent on removing Assad from power that he has fostered relationships with the Syria's "moderate rebels" and its more notorious opposition factions such as the Islamic State. Photographic evidence has confirmed this, with one infamous photo showing McCain posing with Khalid al-Hamad – a "moderate" rebel who gained notoriety after a video of him eating the heart of a Syrian Army soldier went viral online. McCain has also admitted meeting with ISIS on national television, going so far as to acknowledge that he is still in contact with the infamous terrorist group.

Erdogan, for his part, was revealed to be a major player in the smuggling of Islamic State oil out of Syria for sale on the global market. It was these oil sales that enabled the Islamic State to grow into what it is today and to become one of the world's most well-funded terror groups.

With such connections now well-documented, it seems unlikely that McCain and Erdogan discussed how to defeat the Islamic State. Based on the evidence, it seems much more likely that both remain eager to destabilize the region due to their shared goal of deposing Assad. With Turkey already working to destabilize Northern Syria by cutting off key resources, we will soon see what other measures may have been discussed during this "secret" meeting. (Source: Mintpress)

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Myths and facts about depression

■ Myth: Hard work beats depression

Depression affects nearly one in six people at some point in their lives, so folk remedies and half-truths about this common illness abound. One such idea: throw yourself into work and you'll feel better. For a mild case of the blues, this may indeed help, but depression is a different animal. Overworking can actually be a sign of clinical depression, especially in men.

■ Myth: It's not a real illness

Depression is a serious medical condition -- and the top cause of disability in American adults. But it's still confused with ordinary sadness. Biological evidence of the illness can be seen in brain scans, which show abnormal activity levels. Key brain chemicals that carry signals between nerves (shown here) also appear to be out of balance in depressed people.

■ Fact: Men fly under the radar

A depressed man, his loved ones, and even his doctor may not recognize depression. That's because men are less likely than women to talk about their feelings -- and some depressed men don't appear sad or down. Instead, men may be irritable, angry, or restless. They may even lash out at others. Some men try to cope with depression through reckless behavior, drinking, or drugs.

■ Myth: Depression is just self-pity

Our culture admires will power and mental toughness and is quick to label anyone who falls back as a whiner. But people who have clinical depression are not lazy or simply feeling sorry for themselves. Nor can they "will" depression to go away. Depression is a medical illness -- a health problem related to changes in the brain. Like other illnesses, it usually improves with appropriate treatment.

■ Fact: Anyone can get depressed

Poet or linebacker, shy or outgoing, anyone from any ethnic background can develop depression. The illness is twice as common in women as in men, but it may be that women are more likely to seek help. It's often first noticed in the late teens or 20s, but an episode can develop at any age. Tough personal experiences can trigger depression, or it may develop out of the blue.

■ Fact: It can sneak up slowly

Depression can creep up gradually, which makes it harder to identify than a sudden illness. A bad day turns into a rut and you start skipping work, school, or social occasions. One type, called dysthymia, can last for years as a chronic, low-level illness -- a malaise that silently undermines your career and relationships. Or depression can become a severe, disabling condition. With treatment, many feel substantial relief in 4-6 weeks.

■ Myth: Help means drugs for life

Despite the buzz about a "Prozac Nation," medication is only one of the tools used to lift depression. And asking for help does not mean you'll be pressured to take prescription drugs. In fact, studies suggest that "talk" therapy works as well as drugs for mild to moderate depression. Even if you do use antidepressants, it probably won't be for life. Your doctor will help you determine the right time to stop your medication.

■ Myth: Depressed people cry a lot

Not always. Some people don't cry or even act terribly sad when they're depressed. Instead they are emotionally "blank" and may feel worthless or useless. Even without dramatic symptoms, untreated depression prevents people from living life to its fullest -- and takes a toll on families.

■ Fact: Family history is not destiny

If depression appears in your family tree, you're more likely to get it too. But chances are you won't. People with a family history can watch for early symptoms



Depression is a medical illness -- a health problem related to changes in the brain. Like other illnesses, it usually improves with appropriate treatment.

of depression and take positive action promptly -- whether that means reducing stress, getting more exercise, counseling, or other professional treatment.

■ Myth: Depression is part of aging

Most people navigate the challenges of aging without becoming depressed. But when it does occur, it may be overlooked. Older people may hide their sadness or have different, vague symptoms: food just doesn't taste good anymore, aches and pains worsen, or sleep patterns change. Medical problems can trigger depression in seniors -- and depression can slow recovery from a heart attack or surgery.

■ Fact: Depression imitates dementia

In seniors, depression can be the root cause of memory problems, confusion, and in some cases, delusions. Caregivers and doctors may mistake these problems for signs of dementia, or an age-related decline in memory. Getting treatment lifts the cloud for the majority of older people with depression. Psychotherapy is particularly useful for people who can't or don't want to take medication.

■ Myth: Talking makes things worse

People were once advised not to "dwell on" problems by talking about them. Today, there's evidence that guided discussions with a professional can make things much better. Different types of psychotherapy help treat depression by addressing negative thought patterns, unconscious feelings, or relationship troubles. The first step is to talk to a mental health professional.

■ Fact: Positive thinking may help

The old advice to "accentuate the positive" has advanced into a practice that can ease depression. It's called cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). People learn new ways of thinking and behaving. Negative "self-talk" and behavior is identified and replaced with more upbeat thoughts and a more positive mood. Used alone or with medication, CBT works for many people.

■ Myth: Teens are unhappy by nature

Although many teens are moody, argumentative, and intrigued by "the dark side," prolonged

sadness or irritability is not normal for teens. When unhappiness lasts more than two weeks, it may be a sign of depression -- which develops in about one in 11 teens. Other signs a teen may need help include: being constantly sad or irritable even with friends, taking no pleasure in favorite activities, or a sudden drop in grades.

■ Fact: Exercise is good medicine

Very good studies now show that regular, moderately intense exercise can improve symptoms of depression and work as well as some medicines for people with mild to moderate depression. Exercising with a group or a good friend adds social support, another mood booster.

■ Myth: Depression is tough to treat

The reality is most people who take action to lift their depression do get better. In a large study by the National Institute of Mental Health, 70% of people became symptom-free through medications -- though not always with the first medicine. Studies show the best treatment is combining medication and talk therapy.

■ Fact: It's not always depression

Some life events cause sadness or disappointment, but do not become clinical depression. Grief is normal after a death, divorce, loss of a job, or diagnosis with a serious health problem. One clue of a need for treatment: the sadness is constant every day, most of the day. When people are weathering difficult times appropriately, they can usually be distracted or cheered up for short periods of time.

■ Fact: Hope for better days is real

In the depths of depression, people may think there's no hope for a better life. This hopelessness is part of the illness, not a reality. With treatment, positive thinking gradually replaces negative thoughts. Sleep and appetite improve as the depressed mood lifts. And people who've seen a counselor for talk therapy are equipped with better coping skills to deal with the stresses in life that can get you down.

(Source: webmd.com)

Healthy ways to get protein in your diet

By Malia Frey

Some dieters avoid protein because many protein-rich foods are high in fat and calories. But there are healthy ways to get protein in your diet and still lose weight. Use these tips to eat the right amount of protein for weight loss and good health.

■ Will protein help you lose weight?

People usually expect to get hungry when they go on a diet to lose weight. But if you eat more protein, losing weight doesn't necessarily mean going hungry.

Good sources of lean protein can help you to feel full and satisfied during the day, which may help to curb your cravings so you lose weight faster.

Sarah Berndt, MS, RD, CD, CPT is a registered dietitian and certified personal trainer. She explains that not only does protein improve satiety—that feeling of fullness—but lean protein also helps to stabilize blood sugar, provide immune support, and helps you to maintain a healthy metabolism.

So how do you get enough protein to lose weight? Sarah suggests getting some form of protein at every meal. These are just a few ways to get creative and include protein at each meal, during snack time and even at dessert.

■ 5 ways to get more protein for weight loss

1. Make cooking protein easier

One of the most common reasons that people don't eat more protein is that it is too hard to prepare. Let's face it, meat doesn't microwave well. But there are many inexpensive counter grills that make grilling meat easier and healthy. The George Foreman Grill is a brand that is popular with many dieters.

Sarah also points out that grilling is a good way to prepare food without too much fat. In addition to chicken, Sarah suggests grilling turkey, lean pork, lean beef and even tofu.

2. Get creative with egg whites

There are countless ideas for healthy omelets and egg white scrambles that are popular with smart dieters. But you can also get creative and make a healthy veggie and egg frittata on Sunday night and portion it out for lunch during the week. Unlike meat, eggs do microwave well and they are easy to carry to work in single-serve containers.

In addition, you can add cooked egg whites to other foods you might not typically consider. Throw scrambled whites into tacos, diced cold egg whites into a three bean salad or sliced hard boiled egg onto a sandwich. Egg whites have a very little flavor so you can add them to almost anything without changing the taste.

3. Pick veggies with protein

In general, animal sources have more protein than plant sources. But that doesn't mean that the protein content in vegetables can't contribute to your overall intake. Some veggies are better than others. Good vegetable sources of protein include broccoli, spinach, kale, cauliflower, and asparagus. Some fruit even contains protein. A banana, for example, can contain up to 2 grams of the nutrient.

4. Stock up on legumes, beans, nuts

For non-meat eaters, your best source of protein will be legumes. One cup of butter beans, for example, contains 14 grams of protein. That's less than you'll get from a single serving of chicken breast, but if you combine beans with protein rich vegetables, you'll end up with a high protein meal. Quinoa is another popular legume that is rich in protein.

Beans and nuts also make good snacks because they are easy to cook in advance and carry around. Just be careful about choosing the best varieties. Canned beans are fine, but many contain added salt and sugar. If you can make the time to cook your beans from scratch, you'll be better off. And choose nuts that aren't heavily flavored or salted.

5. Eat protein for dessert

Believe it or not, you can even include protein in a healthy dessert. Low-fat yogurt with fruit is a great example. Greek style yogurt tends to have more protein, but remember to eat this sweet treat in moderation (both the frozen and refrigerated varieties) as some of the brands and flavors contain quite a bit of sugar.

(Source: verywell.com)

Lean protein also helps to stabilize blood sugar, provide immune support, and helps you to maintain a healthy metabolism.

Milk protein may lower blood pressure

Whey protein, one of the main proteins found in milk, may modestly lower blood pressure, according to a small study in the December 2016 American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

Whey is the liquid that's left over after milk is curdled and strained to make cheese. Evaporating this liquid creates

whey protein powder, a supplement popular among athletes and bodybuilders for building muscle mass (despite insufficient evidence for this claim).

For the study, researchers recruited 42 volunteers with slightly elevated blood pressure. The participants drank two shakes a day that contained whey, casein

(another milk protein), or maltodextrin (a carbohydrate that served as a control). They all consumed each of the three supplements for eight weeks each, in random order. Thirty-eight people completed the entire study.

Consuming 56 grams per day of whey protein led to about a 3-point drop in

systolic blood pressure (the first number in a blood pressure reading) and a 2-point drop in diastolic blood pressure (the second number) compared with the control. Both whey and casein also led to better blood vessel function as well as small improvements in blood cholesterol levels.

(Source: health.harvard.edu)

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Tourism chief to attend ITB Berlin, visit German officials

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Zahra Ahmadipour, the **d e s k** director of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, left Tehran for Germany on Monday to attend the opening ceremony of the Internationale Tourismus-Börse Berlin (ITB Berlin), which runs from March 8 to 12.



CHTHO Director Zahra Ahmadipour in an undated photo

During her stay, Ahmadipour is also slated to hold separate talks with Claudia Roth, the deputy president of the German Parliament, and Taleb Rifai, the secretary general of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), CHTN reported on Monday.

Known as the World's Largest Travel Trade Show, the ITB Berlin focuses on the 'International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017', a slogan introduced by the UNWTO earlier this year.

Tour operators, online booking portals and hotels, and many other service providers from over 180 countries will present their products and services at the event.

Majlis, MPO host handicrafts exhibits

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — To promote traditional skills **d e s k** and crafts, two separate handicrafts exhibits are being held at the parliament (Majlis) and the Management and Planning Organization, both in Tehran.



Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani (2nd from R) visits a handicrafts exhibit at the parliament premises in Tehran on March 4, 2017.

Organized under the auspices of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, the showcases will come to an end on March 8, CHTN reported.

Over the past couple of years, dozens of Iranian handicrafts have been honored with the UNESCO Seal of Excellence. In 2010, a total of 65 crafts on various themes including enamel, tile, metalwork, leatherwork, wood carving received the privilege.

ROUND THE GLOBE

Samarra archaeological city

Samarra archaeological city is the site of a powerful Islamic capital city that ruled over the provinces of the Abbasid Empire extending from Tunisia to Central Asia for a century.

Located on both sides of the River Tigris 130 km north of Baghdad, Iraq the length of the site from north to south is 41.5 km; its width varying from 8 km to 4 km.



A file photo shows people visiting the Great Mosque and its immense spiral minaret in Samarra, Iraq

It testifies to the architectural and artistic innovations that developed there and spread to the other regions of the Islamic world and beyond. The 9th-century Great Mosque and its spiral minaret are among the numerous remarkable architectural monuments of the site, 80% of which remain to be excavated.

Samarra was the second capital of the Abbasid Caliphate after Baghdad. Following the loss of the monuments of Baghdad, Samarra represents the only physical trace of the Caliphate at its height.

The city preserves two of the largest mosques (Al-Malwiya and Abu Dulaf) and the most unusual minarets, as well as the largest palaces in the Islamic world (the Caliphal Palace Qasr al-Khalifa, al-Ja'fari, al Ma'shug, and others).

Since the war in Iraq commenced in 2003, this property has been occupied by multi-national forces that use it as a theatre for military operations.

(Source: UNESCO)

West’s super floods may wash over aging dams, scientists warn

In the late 1980s, a Japanese scientist named Koji Minoura stumbled on a medieval poem that described a tsunami so large it had swept away a castle and killed 1,000 people. Intrigued, Minoura and his team began looking for paleontological evidence of the tsunami beneath rice paddies, and discovered not one but three massive, earthquake-triggered waves that had wracked the Sendai coast over the past 3,000 years.

In a 2001 paper, Minoura concluded that the possibility of another tsunami was significant. But Tokyo Electric Power was slow to respond to the science, leaving the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant unprepared for the 15-meter wave that inundated it in 2011. The wave resulted in a \$188 billion natural disaster. More than 20,000 people died.

■ Infrastructure of floods
For the past several decades, paleo-hydrologist Victor Baker of the University of Arizona has been using techniques similar to Minoura's to study the flood history of the Colorado Plateau. Like Minoura, he's found that floods much larger than any in recorded history are routine occurrences. And like Minoura, he feels his research is being largely ignored by agencies and public utilities with infrastructure in the path of such floods.

Last month, when a spillway at the nation's tallest dam in Oroville, California,



nearly buckled under the pressure of record rainfall, the consequences of under-estimating flood risks were brought into sharp relief. Dams aren't built to withstand every curveball nature can throw — only the

weather events that engineers deem most likely to occur within the dam's lifespan. When many Western dams were built in the mid-20th century, the best science to determine such probabilities came from

Today, technology allows scientists to reconstruct thousands of years of natural history, giving us a much clearer picture of how often super-floods occur. The “probability of rare things is best evaluated if your record is very long,” Baker explains.

historical records and stream gauges.

■ Clearer pictures of super-floods
But that record only stretches back to the late 1800s, a timespan Baker calls “completely inadequate.” Today, technology allows scientists to reconstruct thousands of years of natural history, giving us a much clearer picture of how often super-floods occur. The “probability of rare things is best evaluated if your record is very long,” Baker explains.

An aerial view of the damaged Oroville Dam spillway is shown as the California Department of Water Resources gradually reduced the outflow from the spillway from 50,000 cubic feet per second to zero in Oroville, California.

By combing the Colorado River, the Green River and others in the Southwest for sediment deposits and other flood evidence and then carbon-dating the results, Baker has concluded the short-term record severely underestimates the size and frequency of large floods. On the Upper Colorado near Moab, Utah, Baker and his team estimated the average 500-year flood at roughly 246,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), more than double the 112,000 cfs that scientists had estimated drawing on the stream gage record alone. Baker's calculations put the 100-year flood at 171,000 cfs, also much greater than the previous estimate of 96,000 cfs.

(Source: Newsweek)

Mars far more likely to have had life than we thought: new study

Mars might have been far more likely to support life than we thought, according to new research.

Scientists have found that the planet was probably far wetter than we'd previously understood. The study, which simulated Martian meteorites to understand more about its ancient environment, suggests that our history of the planet's surface might be entirely wrong.

Until now, a specific mineral found in Martian meteorites was used as proof that the planet had an ancient, dry environment. But in fact it might have contained hydrogen, which may see the history of the Red Planet rewritten into one far more covered with water.

Water is thought to be one of the central building blocks and requirements of life, and any discovery of water vastly improves the chances that the planet was inhabited.

■ Important material

The study also found that the important material could help create phosphorous — another essential element for life on Earth, and perhaps on Mars.

Everywhere on Earth, wherever water is found then life is also found. And phosphorous is necessary for that life to come about.

In the study, scientists created a synthetic version of the mineral known as whitlockite. They then conducted

shock-compression experiments on samples of the material, simulating the conditions of being thrown on a meteorite from Mars.

The material was then studied using X-rays to find its microscopic makeup. They found that whitlockite could become dehydrated from those shocks and form merrillite, which is commonly found in meteorites thrown to Earth from Mars but doesn't occur here naturally.

“This is important for deducing how much water could have been on Mars, and whether the water was from Mars itself rather than comets or meteorites,” said Martin Kunz, a staff scientist who worked on the studies of the samples.

“If even a part of merrillite had been whitlockite before, it changes the water budget of Mars dramatically,” said Oliver Tschauer, a professor who co-led the study with Christopher Adcock.

■ Life on Mars?

The “water budget” is central to the question of whether there was ever life on Mars. Whitlockite can be dissolved in water to make phosphorous — which is required to bring about life on Earth — and the material could therefore once have been abundant on the planet.

The “overarching question here is about water on Mars and its early history on Mars: Had there ever been



an environment that enabled a generation of life on Mars?” Professor Tschauer said.

To simulate the effect of being thrown from Mars, scientists blasted the synthetic whitlockite samples with metal plates that were fired from guns at about 1,678 miles per hour and with huge amounts of pressure.

“You need a very severe impact to accelerate material fast enough to escape the gravitational pull of Mars,” said Professor Tschauer.

(Source: The Independent)

Researchers pack movie, computer OS and more into a tiny drop of DNA

The amount of data in the world is doubling every two years, according to a 2014 estimate by EMC, but data storage technologies are having a hard time keeping up. That's led some researchers to look for a solution in biology rather than computers.

DNA, the molecule that uses biological codes to store genetic information, has been studied for a while as a possible solution for storing human-generated data. And this week, researchers in New York unveiled a new technique that allows DNA to store more data than ever before.

With the help of a California startup that makes synthetic DNA, researchers Yaniv Erlich and Dina Zielinski of Columbia University and the New York Genome Center, were able to transfer a complete computer operating system, a very old movie, a \$50 Amazon gift card and more

into a tiny speck of DNA. That achieves a data storage density of 215 petabytes per gram. In theory, that means it would be possible to store all the information humans have ever generated into the space of a single room.

(Source: toptechnews.com)

Shatel Receives Full MVNO License

Shatel Communication Development Company has managed to receive Full Mobile Virtual Network Operator License from Communication Regulatory Authority (CRA) of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

According to Shatel's Public Relations Dept., with the new license, Shatel Group (as a mobile operator) will provide its subscribers across the country with services on new generations of mobile phone via SIM Cards under the brand name: Shatel Mobile.

With providing the required facilities, technical equipment and network core and using available radio infrastructures, the Mobile Virtual Network Operators (First MVNO) can offer their users innovative and comprehensive services.

As a leading provider of mobile communication services via mobile phone networks as well as high-speed



wireless internet using TD LTE, Shatel Mobile is capable of offering its subscribers mobile and fixed internet services in a consistent way.

About Shatel
Shatel Group is the largest active service provider

in Iran. The company has been providing hundreds of thousands users across Iran with innovative and diverse services over the past years. Shatel was the first service provider in Iran which began to offer ADSL2+ services.

With more than 1300 specialists, offering services to a growing area across Iran via near to 400 outlets, as well as with one thousand marketers and over 2500 human resources, the group has managed to cover the whole country and gained the largest share of Iran's internet market and its relative additional services.

Shatel established Communication Development Company in 2015 with the main focus on new generations of wireless communication services on mobile phone networks, TD-LTE and public Wi-Fi. Today the company has proved itself to the Iranians as a leading mobile communication services provider across the country.

France’s SCOR Co. Eyes Broadening Insurance Ties with CII

France's leading insurance company named "SCOR" has expressed its readiness to enhance and broaden ties with Iranian insurance industry, Public Relations Dept. of Central Insurance of Iran (CII) reported.

Chief Executive of France's SCOR Re-

insurance Company Victor Pineh and Managing Director of Central Insurance of Iran (CII) Abdol-Nasser Hemmati held talks and conferred with each other in order to broaden bilateral insurance services in the field of reinsurance.

“Before taking any action to negotiate

and reaching to understanding with the Iranian insurance companies, we consider meeting demands of Central Insurance of Iran (CII) atop agenda and it is hoped that our company will be able to develop its amicable relations with the insurance industry of Iran in the best form possible.”

For his part, Hemmati pointed to the age-old insurance cooperation and collaboration between insurance industry and France's "SCOR" Reinsurance Company and said: "It is hoped that insurance ties between the two countries will be enhanced in current year."

“SINA BANK” Named Exemplary Economic Enterprise at 4th Top Iranian Companies Festival

SINA Bank was introduced as top economic enterprise at 4th Top Iranian Companies Festival, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

It should be noted that 4th Top Iranian Companies Festival (TPOEX) was held at Conferences Hall of Tehran Olympic Hotel on Saturday March 4 at the initiative taken by Iran Management Institute (IMI) and Industrial Lumi-

naires Association in the presence of industrialists, industrial activists, Majlis deputies, university lecturers, etc.

This prestigious festival was sponsored by Tehran Province Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIIMA), Tehran Governor-Generalship, Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majlis), Secretariat of Expediency Council.

Faculty Board members of this prestigious institute embarked on vetting qualification of Iranian companies, focusing on indicators of development, efficiency, productivity, entrepreneurship and the credits obtained by shortlisted companies both in national and international levels, based on which, SINA Bank managed to win top rank in this category, the report ended.

Can math help explain our bodies -- and our diseases?

What makes a cluster of cells become a liver, or a muscle? How do our genes give rise to proteins, proteins to cells, and cells to tissues and organs?

The incredible complexity of how these biological systems interact boggles the mind -- and drives the work of biomedical scientists around the world.

But a pair of mathematicians has introduced a new way of thinking about these concepts that may help set the stage for better understanding of our bodies and other living things.

Writing in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the pair from the University of Michigan Medical School and University of California, Berkeley introduce a framework for using math to understand how genetic information and interactions between cells give rise to the actual function of a particular type of tissue. They note it's a highly idealized framework -- not one that takes into account every detail of this process, called 'emergence of function.'

But by stepping back and making a simplified model based on mathematics, they hope to create a basis for scientists to understand the changes that happen over time within and between cells to make living tissues possible. It could also help with understanding of how diseases such as cancer can arise when things don't go as planned.

(Source: EurekAlert)

Did this protomammal have a venomous bite?

Long, long ago, before the dawn of the dinosaurs, there lived a protomammal named Euchambersia mirabilis. This creature didn't call itself that, or likely any name at all, but that's how it's known to paleontologists. And as far as our ancient protomammal relatives go, Euchambersia is a bit of a celebrity. That's because it has long been thought to be the first vertebrate with a venomous bite.

The idea that this long-fanged synapsid from South Africa was venomous goes back to the eccentric paleontologist Franz Nopsca, who proposed the idea in 1933. Other experts have reinforced the conclusion since that time, pointing to a pit along the animal's snout and conspicuous grooves along the canine teeth - an anatomical pairing reminiscent of venomous snakes. But now paleontologist Julien Benoit and colleagues have challenged the popular hypothesis, drawing from high-definition CT scans to investigate whether Euchambersia really had a little something extra behind its bite.

Even though paleontologists have pointed to grooves on Euchambersia teeth as evidence of venom delivery since the 1980s, Benoit and coauthors point out, the actual teeth bear no such indentation.

Nevertheless, the researchers found, Euchambersia has a set of curious characteristics. There's that indentation on the upper jaw, connected by a canal to the mouth, which could have delivered venom to those ridged teeth. Venom could have flowed from a gland housed in that maxillary fossa into the saliva of the mouth, the ridged teeth facilitating delivery of the dangerous substance during a bite.

Euchambersia might meet the three requirements for a venomous species, Benoit and colleagues write - a venom gland, a way to deliver the venom, and a way to make a wound for the venom to penetrate. If this idea holds, then Euchambersia retains its title for the earliest known venomous vertebrate and is a touchstone for the various other prehistoric species that have been called venomous on the basis of their osteology.

(Source: Scientific American)

Geologists find slew of manmade minerals, but no start to Anthropocene

Over the centuries, humans have sunk mine shafts deep underground, burned carcasses on sacrificial altars, and gently placed rocks in wooden museum drawers for visitors to admire. All these activities, says a new study published in American Mineralogist, caused chemical reactions that left a total of 208 different compounds behind. Of those, 91 are not known to occur naturally.

While they have similar chemical formulas and crystalline structures to minerals, the International Mineralogical Association says that manmade substances “are not regarded as minerals.” But the study's lead author, Robert Hazen, nonetheless sees this study as a sign of ongoing changes in Earth's system.

“From a mineralogical point of view, we are in a unique time,” he tells The Christian Science Monitor in a phone interview.

It's not just mineralogists who are excited by the news. Many environmentalists are taking this study as the latest sign that we've entered the “Anthropocene,” a new geological epoch brought on by humanity's changes to the Earth. But this shift won't become official until stratigraphers - the scientists who demarcate these time units - declare a new one.

“There's so much evidence piled up that humans are transforming Earth, and these (minerals) are nice examples” of that transformation, Erle Ellis, an ecologist at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, tells the Monitor over Skype.

As explained by the Geological Society of America's GSA Today magazine, the working group must select a Global Standard Stratotype Section and Point (GSSP): a point in earth's crust where the fossil record and rock chemistry show a major change, one that can be noticed and verified around the world.

(Source: The CSM)

Meet the Muslim women inspiring a modest revolution

Something curious has happened to the fashion industry in the last few years: So-called modest fashion has started to take off. Designers and retailers are producing clothing that's often a little longer and slightly looser and tends to have a higher neckline.

That's good news for an eager generation of young women who want to look great while respecting their religious values.

Burberry, DKNY, and other brands have released special Ramadan collections, timed to coincide with the Muslim holy month. Uniqlo sells a line from British designer Hana Tajima described as fusing "contemporary design and comfortable fabrics with traditional values." And last month, an event billed as the first "modest fashion" week was held at the Saatchi Gallery during London Fashion Week.

Behind this shift in tastes and preferences are a cadre of amateur designers and bloggers who amassed millions of followers on social media and grabbed the attention of big brands.

"It's not like we just started to wear hijab," said Mariah Idrissi, 24, who in 2015 became the first person to wear a hijab in an H&M ad campaign. "We've had this industry for a very long time, and they never really took notice."

That seemed to change after bloggers proved they could attract huge followings.

Dina Torkia, 27 years old, started out posting pictures of her own clothing designs on Facebook five years ago, but people kept asking about how to style a hijab. She turned to YouTube, where she showed people how to create a "volumized" style. In one video, she showed viewers 20 different ways to tie a scarf.

(Source: Bloomberg)

RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Persian walnut cookies

"These delicately-spiced, rose-scented cookies are a perfect treat since they contain no flour. They are nutty and rich, slightly chewy with a crunchy exterior. Pistachios or almonds can be substituted for the walnuts."



Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups finely ground walnuts
- 3 egg yolks
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 1 tablespoon ground cardamom
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon rose water
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 teaspoon water
- 1/2 cup walnut pieces for decoration

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).

In a medium bowl, mix together the ground walnuts, 3 egg yolks, sugar, cardamom, baking soda and rose water until well blended. Roll teaspoon sized pieces of dough into balls and place onto parchment-lined baking sheets. Cookies should be spaced 2 inches apart. Whisk together the remaining egg yolk and water using a fork. Press a walnut piece into each cookie, then brush with the egg yolk glaze.

Bake for 20 minutes in the preheated oven, or until golden. The cookies will appear soft and undercooked but take heart, they will harden considerably when cooled. Allow them to cool on the baking sheets for at least 10 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.

LEARN ENGLISH

Moving

A: Ok, that's fine. Bye.

B: What happened?

A: That's it, my **lease** is **up**. I have to move.

B: What? Why? Can't you **renew** it?

A: The owner apparently is selling this place to **make way** for the construction of a parking lot.

B: Well, I can help you **pack**. We should start looking for a new **place** for you **ASAP**.

A: I think I might move in with my parents for a couple of months until I can find something. You know how hard it is to find a **decent** place around here. I'm gonna have to put most of my stuff in **storage** for a while.

B: Well, let me know if there's anything I can do to help out.

A: Actually, would you mind **looking after** my pet **tarantula** and snake for a couple of weeks?

B: Hehe... sure

Key vocabulary

lease: a contract granting use of property

up: if a period of time is up, it is finished

renew: to cause something to continue to be effective

make way for: to create space for something else

pack: wrap up; to put articles in a case or container for moving

place: a building or an area

ASAP: as soon as possible

decent: good

storage: a space for storing goods

look after: take care of

tarantula: a large poisonous spider from Southern Europe and tropical America

Supplementary vocabulary

moving truck: a big truck that can be hired or rented to carry furniture and boxes to another place

bubble wrap: transparent plastic material commonly used for packing fragile items

real estate agent: one that is authorized to sell land or property

deposit: a sum of money given as security for an item acquired for temporary use

movers: one that transports household or office goods from one location to another as an occupation

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Successful women's role in sustainable development underscored

WOMEN d e s k TEHARN — The first national congress on successful Iranian women was held here on Monday with the main theme of women's role in sustainable development.

Hosted by Tehran's Shahid Beheshti University, the event was focused on recognizing the role of successful women in accordance with Islamic thoughts, IRNA quoted Morteza Kazemian, the executive secretary of the congress as saying.

The congress also followed the goal of increasing self-confidence in women and increasing their capabilities in administrative arena, Kazemian said adding, the event discussed ways for conveying experiences of successful Iranian women.

More than 10 specialized panels in the fields of employment, entrepreneurship and social support were held during the one-day event, he explained.

The congress also dealt with challenges and strategies related to women's empowerment in the work environment and different art fields as well, Kazemian added.

Turkish women rally behind democracy ahead of constitutional referendum

Thousands of women from around the country gathered in a sports hall in Istanbul on Sunday for perhaps the largest gathering of its kind, the Women and Democracy Meeting. The event, first held in 2014, is the brainchild of the Women and Democracy Association (KADEM) and aims to make women's voices heard for democratic progress in the country as Turkey counts down to a significant referendum in April for constitutional changes. The event is co-sponsored by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies and the Istanbul municipality, and some 200 women's nongovernmental organizations sent representatives to the convention; which highlights the increasing role of women in civic society and politics.

With the motto: "Yes! Democracy Exists If There Are Women," the event hosted panels and speeches on the stories of women who fought for the country and democracy. It also gives a platform for women to show their support for democracy in the upcoming referendum that will change the governance system in the country.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said at the event that democracy without the participation of women and the youth cannot be sustainable.

"The secret of my political success is accomplishing the goal to include more women in the democratic process and politics," the president said.

The president gave examples of women fighting for democracy and how they became heroes.

"Our 11 sisters martyred on July 15. They had faith, and their faith did not daunt them (in their struggle for democracy)," Erdogan said, referring to women who

died while confronting pro-coup troops during the foiled putsch bid last year.

Erdogan also praised Khadija, the first wife and first follower of Prophet Muhammad (S).

"Mother Khadija became a companion to the Prophet in his cause and did not abandon him. Women gathered here follow her example, and I believe your determination, your fight for democracy will contribute a lot to Turkey's struggle to expand its democracy," Erdogan stated, referring to the upcoming referendum that is promoted to give more say to the president in state affairs; therefore, giving a boost to the power of the electorate who are set to elect him or her.

Erdogan said women's issues could be solved only if women are treated as human beings.

"Look at the countries claiming a lot about women's rights. They all have a dark history when it comes to women. They did not treat women as human beings and viewed them in a level lower than animals. Today, they passionately advocate women's rights, in a bid of redemption for their dark past," he said.

"Women were not regarded as human beings in the past, but today, they are objectified, and they face modern slavery," he said, referring to women's sexual objectification.

He said Turkey does not adopt a foreign model to boost women's rights, as it already has an ancient philosophy for women's rights.

Erdogan also criticized viewing domestic violence as something to do with the faith and culture.

"If a woman is subject to violence, you cannot blame

the religion or culture for it. In our faith and culture, women are in an esteemed position. She is not equal to men; she is in a far higher place. We even call our country our motherland, not the fatherland," he stated.

Erdogan added that women have a say in everyday affairs and "a determining factor" in social life. He said "the mistakes of a few psychopaths" couldn't be linked to Turkey's faith and traditions, in reference to domestic violence perpetrators.

"The state certainly punishes them, and society weeds them out through social pressure," he said.

Erdogan said it was a humanitarian task to side with women facing discrimination and injustice.

"Men create crises, and women pay for it all across the world. For instance, in Syria, a humanitarian crisis is in its sixth year. Women lost their husbands, their homes and they suffered more than anyone. Women have a great burden when they work in factories and farms and while doing household chores and rearing their children, and our task is to ease their burden," he stated.

Director of KADEM Sare Aydin Yilmaz in a speech said, a struggle for democracy "without participation of women" is doomed to fail and an underrepresentation of women in politics and governance was a shortcoming for any country aiming for development and prosperity.

She said that they gathered as women of "seven regions of Turkey" who "overcame their differences for their common respect of human rights."

Yilmaz said that they convened to "make the right decision" in the upcoming referendum.

(Source: Daily Sabah)

Tehran to host intl. congress on Muslim women and family



WOMEN d e s k TEHARN — An international congress titled "Muslim Women and Family, Axis of Social Change" is to be held at Tehran's female-only Alzahra University on Wednesday.

The one-day event is to be held in cooperation with the Global Association of Muslim Women and under the auspices of the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought.

The congress attempts to introduce Hazrat Fatima (SA) as a role-model for today's life in all aspects of life, including family, society, morality, culture, science, economy, and politics.

10th exhibition on women and national production underway




WOMEN d e s k TEHARN — the 10th edition of the exhibition of women and national production opened at Tehran's Goftegoo Park on Friday.


The exhibition space includes 74 booths, special for women, men, and kids. Handicraft products are being sold on the sidelines of the exhibition.

The event will come to an end on March 13.

First Announcement



N.I.O.C
1395.5290



National Iranian Drilling Company

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	No
Euro	Rial					
83,050	2,840,300,000	82,014,333,600	p/f"geolink measuring while drilling(mwd) orienter system negative mud pulse telemetry,4.75"-8" tool o.d. ref: geolink(uk) ltd .	1479255	TenderNo.: FP/05-95/058 Indent No:9545010	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 doucments. 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.

Reciving 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 recieve 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. steps up drone attacks in Yemen’

Suspected United States drones have carried out more attacks in Yemen, according to residents.

Residents said suspected U.S. drones fired missiles at the house of a purported al-Qaeda suspect in the village of Noufan in central al-Bayda Province on Monday.

They added that a mountainous area believed to house a training camp in al-Saeed in Shabwa Province in southern Yemen was also targeted in what were likely U.S. drone strikes.

Meanwhile, a Yemeni source was quoted by AFP on Monday as saying that a suspected U.S. airstrike had hit the town of al-Nasl in the southern province of Abyan at dawn.

There were no immediate reports of casualties from any of the attacks.

The U.S. has intensified its military engagement in Yemen.

On March 2, Washington launched a series of strikes against alleged al-Qaeda targets in Yemen. The military attacks



focused on the southern provinces of Abyan and Shabwah as well as Bayda,

farther to the north. The military operations were the first since a botched raid in

January that killed women and children as well as an American commando.

Reports also said the Pentagon has quietly ordered fresh deployments of Special Operations troops to the Middle East and North Africa, which signals that the U.S. military appears to be launching a more aggressive campaign against what it calls terrorist positions in Syria and some regions of North Africa.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has grown in weapons and number since the start of a Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen, which was launched in March 2015 to bring back Abd Rabuh Mansur Hadi — who has resigned as Yemen's president — to power.

The terrorist organization has taken advantage of the chaos and breakdown of security caused by the U.S.-backed, the House of Saud regime-led war to tighten its grip on the southern and southeastern parts of the crisis-hit country.

(Source: Press TV)

FBI disputes Trump wiretapping accusations: reports

The United States FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) has asked the U.S. justice department to refute President Donald Trump's accusation that Barack Obama ordered a wiretap of his phone, according to U.S. media.

Citing senior officials, the New York Times reported that FBI director James Comey made the unprecedented request on Saturday because there was no evidence, and the accusation “insinuates that the FBI broke the law”.

A U.S. congressional committee has confirmed that it will look into Trump's allegation. The justice department has not commented.

Comey's request came after Trump, without providing evidence, accused Obama of ordering his phone in Trump Tower be tapped during last year's election campaign.

Trump has not commented further on the accusation since making it in a series of tweets on Saturday.

Democrats accused Trump of trying to distract from a rising controversy about possible ties to Russia. His administration has come under pressure from the FBI and congressional investigations into contacts between members of his campaign team and Russian officials.

A spokesman for Obama denied the allegation, calling it “simply false”. The former president's national Intelligence Chief James Clapper has also denied it. “There was no such wiretap activity

mounted against the president-elect at the time, as a candidate at the time or against his campaign,” Clapper said on NBC's Meet the Press.

■ White House backpedals

However, on Sunday, the White House appeared to somewhat backpedal on the accusations, only going as far as saying there should be a probe into the possibility of wiretapping.

“I think the bigger thing is let's find out. Let's have an investigation. If they're going to investigate Russia ties, let's include this as part of it,” Trump spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said.

Trump's accusation appears to have been based on unverified reports from right-wing Breitbart News outlet, which was once run by his chief strategist, Steve Bannon.

Trump was said to be furious that positive reviews of his joint address to Congress on Tuesday were overshadowed by a series of revelations about meetings between members of his team and Russian officials.

The president was also said to be angry that Attorney General Jeff Sessions recused, or excused, himself from any election campaign or Russia-related investigations.

Democrats and a growing number of Republicans in Congress have called for the appointment of a special prosecutor and a bipartisan inquiry to look into the Russia question.

(Source: agencies)

Retired officer links the Philippines Duterte to almost 200 killings

A retired Filipino police officer has linked the Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte - during his time as a mayor of Davao - and his men to nearly 200 killings that the officer and other members of a “death squad” allegedly carried out.

Arturo Lascanas made the allegations at the start of a nationally televised Senate inquiry on Monday after he admitted to lying in October during another Senate inquiry into alleged extrajudicial killings linked to Duterte.

Lascanas said that he had personally killed 300 people, about 200 as a member of a “Davao death squad”, with his last in 2015. He also detailed two cases where he had murdered critics of Duterte, under the instruction of the then-mayor's bodyguard.

Lascanas, who broke down in tears before the media when he revealed his story two weeks ago, is the second person to testify before politicians to Duterte's alleged links to a clandestine hit squad.

“I feared for the life of my loved ones,” Lascanas said when asked why he had earlier denied the death squad existed.

He said he changed testimony because he was tormented by what he had done and wanted the truth to “set me free”.

It was “because of my desire to tell all the truth, not only because of my

spiritual renewal, but the fear of God, I wanted to clear my conscience”, he said.

Duterte's allies dismissed the claims as a plot by his opponents to discredit the president and his war on drugs, a campaign that critics say has disturbing similarities to a pattern of mysterious killings in Davao.

Duterte's spokesman, Ernesto Abella, described Lascanas as a “polluted source and perjured witness”.

Abella called Lascanas' testimony “fabricated and unacceptable”.

Duterte has repeatedly denied involvement in summary executions, either as president or during his 22 years as Davao mayor.

His police chief Ronald dela Rosa, a former Davao police chief, has dismissed the death squad claims as a myth created by the media.

Human rights groups have documented about 1,400 suspicious killings in Davao while Duterte was mayor and critics say the war on drugs he unleashed as president has the same hallmarks. Numerous investigations have found no proof linking Duterte to those deaths.

More than 6,000 people have been killed in Duterte's war on drugs since he took over as president on June 30 last year.

(Source: agencies)

Afghanistan moves against Turkish schools linked to Erdogan foe

Afghanistan has ordered a network of schools run by an organization regarded with suspicion by the Turkish government to be transferred to a foundation approved by Ankara, Afghan officials said.

The move against Afghan Turk CAG Educational NGO (ATCE), the body that runs the schools, appears to be part of Turkey's campaign against followers of Fethullah Gulen, a United States-based cleric it accuses of being behind a coup attempt in July.

ATCE, which says it is an independent organization, runs schools in several cities including the capital, Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kandahar and Herat and has been in Afghanistan since 1995.

Acting Education Minister Shafiq Samim said the Turkish government had asked for the schools to be placed under the management of a so-called “Vakif”, a

Turkish educational and charitable foundation.

He said there would be a “gradual transition” of staff but the government would not expel any of the schools' Turkish teachers.

“Turkish teachers are our guests and there has not been any decision to expel them,” he told a news conference on Saturday, adding that the schools would continue to operate.

ATCE Chairman Numan Erdogan said his organization had not yet received any government notification, and would challenge any decision to take away management of the schools.

“We have nothing to do with developments in Turkey, none of our teachers is implicated and any allegations against us about that are baseless,” he said.

Last year, shortly before a visit to Islamabad by Turk-

ish President Tayyip Erdogan, Pakistan ordered Turkish teachers at schools run by a body called PakTurk International Schools and Colleges to leave the country.

Gulen, a former ally of Erdogan, lives in self-imposed exile in the United States. In the wake of July's attempted coup, the Turkish president branded him a “terrorist” and pressed other countries to move against him and his supporters.

Turkey has donated around \$1 billion in development aid to Afghanistan since 2004, according to the ministry of foreign affairs and is one of the country's most important economic partners, with ethnic and cultural links in the north.

It also provides more than 500 troops to the NATO-led Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan.

(Source: Daily Star)

Clashes on Pakistan-Afghanistan border kill 15

At least 15 people were killed in clashes on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border after Taliban fighters attacked three border posts in Pakistan's Mohmand tribal area, the military said.

A Pakistan military statement confirmed that 10 fighters were killed and five soldiers lost their lives in the attacks that took place late on Sunday.

The attacks were carried out by people who had sanctuary on Afghan soil, according to Pakistan's foreign office and

the military, and were launching the attacks by crossing the largely unpatrolled and disputed 2,500km-long border.

“[This attack] emphasizes need for required physical presence on Afghan side of the border for matching and effective border security,” the statement said.

“Terrorists are common threat and must be denied freedom of movement/action along the border.”

In a statement emailed to journalists, the Jamaat-ur-Ahrar faction of the

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for the attack.

The group had previously claimed responsibility for several attacks last month: suicide attacks against police in the eastern city of Lahore; targeting government employees in the northwestern town of Ghalanai; and blowing up a court complex in Charsadda district.

Pakistan sealed all border crossings with its northwestern neighbor following those attacks that killed more than 120

people, including 88 at a shrine in the Sindh province.

On Monday, Pakistan's foreign office summoned a senior Afghan diplomat to protest over the latest border attacks, urging Afghanistan to “take firm action against terrorists operating from its soil to prevent recurrence of such incidents”.

The statement added that a soldier was killed in a similar attack on a border post in Pakistan's Khyber tribal area.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Fearing U.S. withdrawal, Europe considers its own nuclear deterrent

6→ ■ An insurance policy

Some observers believe that official shows of support are intended only to pressure Trump into maintaining the status quo, which Kiesewetter emphasized is his preferred outcome. But Narang said that, regardless of intentions, there is a blurry line between mere signaling and actually pursuing a fallback nuclear option.

Nuclear scholars call this “insurance hedging,” in which a protectee comes to doubt its protector and responds by taking steps toward, but not actually completing, its own nuclear program. This is meant to goad the protector into staying, and to prepare in case it doesn't.

Japan, for instance, has quietly developed latent capabilities that are sometimes figuratively described

as a “screwdriver's turn” away from a bomb. Because Europe's primary challenges are political rather than technical — France already possesses the warheads — sparking public discussion and exploring options makes those challenges more surmountable and the option more real. “In order for it to be credible there has to be some sort of workable option,” Narang said.

■ ‘I never thought we would see this again’

Kiesewetter hopes the United States will come around. He puts particular faith in Jim Mattis, the defense secretary, whom he met in Afghanistan and Brussels while both were military officers.

But Mattis has echoed Trump's warnings that the United States could lessen its support for Europe, saying in a re-

cent speech in Brussels, “I owe it to you to give you clarity on the political reality in the United States.” If Europeans grew more serious about a nuclear program, Tertrais said, “you would not necessarily see it.” Negotiations would most likely remain secret for fear of giving Trump an excuse to withdraw — or of triggering a reaction from Russia.

Narang said he was reeling from the seriousness of the discussion, the first since a failed and now-forgotten effort in the 1950s for French-German-Italian nuclear cooperation.

“I never thought we would see this again. I never thought there would actually be this concern,” he said. But, he added, “You can see where the debate is surfacing from. There is a logic to it.”

(Source: The NYT)

U.S. veterans accuse Saudi Arabia of tricking them into lobbying against justice for 9/11 families

1→

The Saudis are now seeking to have the act amended so as to minimize its liability. The amendment has been introduced by Republican Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham and states that foreign governments can only be sued if the country “knowingly engaged with a terrorist organization directly or indirectly, including financing.”

The amendment will likely provide legal cover for the Saudis, despite years of accusations that wealthy Saudis, including the royals have funded terrorist groups.

The veterans have expressed disgust that they have been used to further the House of Saud regime agenda.

“I joined the Marine Corps as a direct result of 9/11, so to be wined and dined by the very people I joined to fight against, that was sickening,” Marine sergeant and Iraq war veteran Timothy Cord said.

Marine sergeant and Afghanistan veteran Thomas J. Hermesman recounted his January trip to Washington as “pretty shady.”

“The organizers were definitely keeping stuff from us,” he said, explaining that the vets were told that if any of them travelled to Afghanistan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, they could be arrested as terrorists under JASTA.

According to Cord, trip leader Jason E. Johns flatly denied any ties to the Saudi regime. “He stood up the first night to announce that ‘there are rumors going around about Saudi involvement, and they absolutely aren't [involved].’” he told the Post.

Hermesman also posted a video on Facebook detailing how he was “used.”

Johns says he is president of the No Man Left Behind Veterans Advocacy Group, but federal records show he was paid \$100,000 by Qorvis on behalf of the House of Saud regime to conduct outreach against the act.

Qorvis MSLGROUP denies any wrongdoing. “My understanding is everything is fully above board and everyone is fully informed of the issues,” Qorvis Managing Director Michael Petruzzello said.

The House of Saud regime adamantly denies funding terrorism and allegations of its role in the 9/11 attacks. Fifteen of the 19 suspected 9/11 hijackers were from Saudi Arabia. One of the hijackers, Zacarias Moussaoui even claimed members of the royal family were listed on an al-Qaeda database he worked with.

Former U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton wrote in a 2014 email, released by WikiLeaks, of the importance of pressuring “the governments of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which are providing clandestine financial and logistic support to ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Daesh) and other radical Sunni groups in the region.”

(Source: RT)

Armenian expert: Iran can't be ignored in coalition against Daesh

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At the same time, it should be mentioned, that in a short term perspective, Iran does not have enough natural gas to increase its gas export to the European and South Caucasian energy markets. On the other hand, Iranian gas is expensive in a comparison with Russian, Turkmenistan or Azerbaijani. Positive thing is that earlier official Tehran has announced, that is planning in the period of 2016-2020 to increase the natural gas production from 240 billion cu.m (in 2016) to 340 billion cu.m (in 2020). Gas export, at the same time will also be increased sevenfold to 70 billion cu.m.

About the Georgian energy market, I can say, that today, Azerbaijan has a gas monopoly in Georgia and in future that situation will remain the same, because of the government's expectation from Shah-Deniz 2, which (after 2019) will cover more than 60% of the Georgian gas consumption only (approximately 40% will be imported also from Azerbaijan). Armenia, as far as Turkey, will remain the main directions of Iranian gas export and here we can expect increase of gas supply from IRI. 140 km long Iran-Armenia Natural Gas Pipeline will continue to import Iranian gas and Yerevan will continue to export Armenian electricity via 3 power-lines (3-rd is planning to build in a near future).

■ Tbilisi has tried to close its cooperation with NATO since the 2008 crisis, and now President Trump has said the U.S. is no longer able to pay the membership fees of Eastern European states which are members of NATO. In view of such developments and remarks how do you see the future of the military bloc?

A: The Georgian government was shocked by the winning of Donald Trump in the U.S. presidential elections. Till the recent contacts of the Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili with Vice-President Pence in Germany, during the Munich Security Conference, there was skepticism in Tbilisi that the new cabinet in the U.S. will decrease its interest in the region of Southern Caucasus. But after recent contacts, especially NATO defense ministerial meeting in Brussels, now it is clear that nothing has changed globally and the U.S. will continue to help Georgia in the long road of its Euro-Atlantic integration. The only transformation at this moment I see the approach of Washington on the issue of increasing the military spending of the NATO member states (minimum 2 percent of GDP). It is a challenge for some of the nations, but here I see the beginning of a new and unprecedented process within the organization since the collapse of the Soviet Union.



Napoli need to avoid distractions against Real

Napoli will need to stay focussed and avoid distractions if they are to have any chance of clawing back their two-goal deficit against Real Madrid in the Champions League round of 16, second leg on Tuesday.

Bidding to reach the quarter-finals for the first time, Serie A's highest scoring side certainly have enough talent to cause an upset against the titleholders, who are looking to reach the last eight for the seventh season running.

Napoli coach Maurizio Sarri, a former bank employee who did not play professionally himself, has moulded the likes of Marek



Hamsik, Dries Mertens, Jose Callejon and Lorenzo Insigne into the most entertaining side in Italy's top flight.

Too often, though, Napoli seem to get distracted -- both on and off the field.

The latest episode began when their flamboyant club president Aurelio De Laurentiis publicly criticised the team after their 3-1 defeat in the first leg at the Bernabeu three weeks ago.

Not for the first time, he imposed a media blackout

on both the coach and players, who have refused to give interviews since.

Italian media reported that Sarri had already clashed with De Laurentiis after a 1-1 draw against Palermo at the end of January.

There was more drama when Napoli reacted furiously after losing 3-1 away to Juventus in the Italian Cup last Tuesday, angrily criticising the referee for awarding two penalties to their opponents.

Juventus defender Giorgio Chiellini was among those who suggested that Napoli needed to calm down.

"At the end of the day, all this controversy just drains their energy," he said. "As a good Italian, I hope that Napoli don't waste too much energy, as I'd love them to beat Real Madrid."

Napoli are also prone to losses of concentration on the pitch. They dominated Saturday's Serie A match at second-placed Roma but still had to cling on at the end for a 2-1 win after letting up in the final few minutes.

One of their best performances of the season came in the Champions League group stage against Benfica when they scored four goals in a stunning first hour, but again they let up and conceded two in the last 20 minutes.

A home defeat against Besiktas and draw with Dynamo Kiev then left them struggling to qualify for the round of 16, though they finally made it with a 2-1 win at Benfica in their final match. Similar lapses on Tuesday are almost certain to be fatal.

(Source: Reuters)

Wenger rejects 'completely false' reports of Sanchez bust-up

Reports of a training ground bust-up between Chilean forward Alexis Sanchez and his Arsenal team mates are "completely false", manager Arsene Wenger said on Monday.

"I'm not aware. Nothing happened. Nothing at all," the Frenchman told reporters ahead of Arsenal's Champions League last 16 second-leg match against Bayern Munich at the Emirates on Tuesday.

"(The media reports are) completely false. But I understand that you have to fill the newspapers and we respect that," added Wenger.



Reports in Monday's papers said Sanchez was dropped from the starting line-up for Saturday's 3-1 Premier League defeat at Liverpool after the 28-year-old allegedly rowed with the manager and team mates.

Wenger brought on the Chilean at halftime with Arsenal, who are now out of the top four in the Premier League, 2-0 down at Anfield.

"I explained after the game at Liverpool that I decided to go for a more direct option in the game and that's what happened. That was the unique reason for my decision," said Wenger of his tactics.

"For the rest, his attitude...He is a committed player, sometimes with excessive behaviour, but you have seen that many times in history in every squad."

Responding to questions about Sanchez's future at Arsenal, with mounting speculation that the player could leave at the end of the season in a big-money transfer, Wenger said it would be the club that decided.

"Alexis Sanchez has 15 months on his contract so the decision will depend completely on Arsenal football club, not anyone else," he said, describing his relationship with the forward as "honest and normal like with every player".

The manager added that the most important thing was to perform as a team.

"Players at that level are proven but football is not about one player, it's much bigger than that," he said.

Sanchez, Arsenal's top scorer with 17 league goals this season, trained with the rest of the players at London Colney on Monday and was photographed shaking Wenger's hand.

Arsenal were trounced 5-1 by Bayern in the away leg and will have to produce the biggest second-leg comeback in a Champions League knockout tie to avoid a seventh successive exit at the last-16 stage.

(Source: Reuters)

BT outbids Sky to retain Champions League rights in 1.2 billion pounds deal

BT (BTL) has beaten arch-rival Sky (SKYB.L) to retain the rights to broadcast Champions League soccer matches until 2021, agreeing to pay 1.2 billion pounds -- nearly a third more than last time.

BT, Britain's biggest broadband and mobile operator, said it had won the exclusive rights to show both live matches and highlights in Britain from 2018/19, featuring the likes of holders Real Madrid, Bayern Munich and Manchester City.

BT has taken on Sky in the sports rights market but an accounting scandal in Italy and a profit warning in its corporate business had raised questions about its ability to reshape itself as more of a growth-focused, content supplier.

The former state-owned telecoms group said it had been "financially very disciplined" in the auction.

"We are paying more but we've got a lot more for it, 35 percent more broadcasting slots for example, and complete exclusivity instead of being shared with ITV," said John Petter, chief executive of BT's consumer business.

BT's new package includes 'double-header' nights of two matches starting at 6 pm and 8 pm, which it hopes will appeal to pubs and clubs. Commercial broadcaster ITV (ITV.L) has a highlights programme as part of the current deal.

BT has bundled soccer coverage in with its broadband packages, starting with some English Premier League games in 2013, to help protect its leadership in its core market from rivals such as Sky.

Analysts at Jefferies noted that before it launched BT Sport in 2013, it was losing around 200,000 consumer customers a quarter. The immediate impact of BT Sport was to reduce line loss by two thirds, and it has enabled BT to raise prices ahead of inflation since then.

"Loss of rights would have undermined retention efforts and pricing power," they said, adding that the winning bid was in



line with expectations.

"But the speed of the announcement, less than a week after the tender deadline, suggests bidding action was muted, so shareholders may wonder how necessary it was to meet UEFA's expectation of a rise of at least 30 percent in full."

RIGHTS BATTLE

BT has been screening the competition since 2015 after it beat Sky with a deal that signalled its willingness to go head-to-head with its rival in the sports broadcasting market.

Petter said BT could fund the new deal through more than 1 billion pounds of free cash generated by its consumer business, and it would not have to

change any of its financial forecasts.

Audiences for soccer on pay-TV have come under pressure this season, but Petter said BT Sport was bucking the trend by using social media like YouTube to reach fans.

He said BT Sports audience was up by about 5 percent year-on-year and it was continuing to grow.

"This isn't about customers paying top dollar, this is about customers paying very affordable prices, our prices start from 3.50 pounds, and there's a lot free on social media," he said.

Petter did not completely rule out doing a secondary deal to provide highlights to a free-to-air broadcaster such as ITV, but said social media was a

great way to reach viewers.

BT streamed the finals of the Champions League and the secondary Europa League on YouTube as well as showing them on its own channels, last year, achieving a combined audience of 12 million people, he said.

Shares in BT were trading up 0.2 percent at 334 pence on Monday, while Sky was down by the same percentage at 996 pence.

Sky has previously said it can live without the Champions League, saying its U.S. drama and films gives it a wider audience. It retains the majority of the rights to the Premier League.

(Source: Reuters)

Korkut takes over as Leverkusen coach until season's end



Bayer Leverkusen named Tayfun Korkut as their head coach until the end of the season on Monday, with the former Hanover 96 boss succeeding Roger Schmidt, who was sacked after Saturday's 6-2 demolition by Borussia Dortmund.

The 42-year-old former Turkey international, who coached Hanover from early 2014 to 2015, was more recently coach of second-tier Kaiserslautern until December.

"I am confident we can finish the season as Leverkusen had imagined it," Korkut told reporters. "I am happy to take on this task and work with such a talented team."

Leverkusen have managed just three wins in their last nine league games in an erratic campaign, and they are 13 points away from the third place that leads to the Champions League group stage.

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.

"We can still clinch a European spot, that's achievable. I am optimistic with our quality we can get back on track," said Leverkusen sports director Rudi Voeller, who said a contract extension was also possible for Korkut.

"This is a chance for him and for us. I know he is extremely motivated and ready to go. Everything is possible when we talk in the coming weeks, months or after the end of the season," Voeller said.

Leverkusen also suffered an ignominious German Cup second-round exit at the hands of third-tier club Lotte this season.

(Source: Reuters)

London mayor approves Chelsea's new 'jewel' of a stadium



Chelsea's plans for a new 60,000-capacity stadium at their historic Stamford Bridge home have been approved by Mayor of London Sadiq Khan.

Khan said in a statement on Monday that he was confident the 500 million-pound redevelopment would produce "a jewel in London's sporting crown" and attract visitors and fans from around the world.

"I'm satisfied this is a high-quality and spectacular design which will significantly increase capacity within the existing site, as well as ensuring fans can have easy access from nearby transport connections," he added. Planning permission was granted by the local council in January but it was subject to the mayor's approval.

Premier League leaders Chelsea said Khan's decision was a significant step towards the new stadium, which currently has a capacity of 41,600, but some hurdles remained.

"Further steps lie ahead, both during and after the planning process, before construction work can commence," Chelsea said on the club website (www.chelseafc.com).

The new stadium has been designed by Swiss-based architects Herzog and de Meuron, whose other work includes Bayern Munich's 75,000-seat Allianz Arena and Beijing's "Birds Nest" Olympic Stadium.

The current ground dates back to 1877 and has been home to the west London club since 1905.

Chelsea's three main London rivals either have or are building larger stadiums than their previous homes. Arsenal play at the 60,000 capacity Emirates Stadium, Tottenham Hotspur are building a new White Hart Lane ground with a similar capacity and West Ham United now play in the London Stadium, built for the 2012 Olympic Games.

(Source: Reuters)



♡ @toni.kr8s Napoli



... ♡ @javi8martinez London calling!



... ♡ @jeromeboateng Brother, friend, great person. Now and then. Happy 30th birthday bro @prince09_ ...

Russian language is my biggest difficulty: Saeid Ezatolahi

S P O R T S Iranian international midfielder Saeid Ezatolahi discussed his loan move to Anzhi Makhachkala and his recent condition in an interview with Russian website Sport.ru.

■ **Move to Anzhi**

I had little time to play in Rostov so I decided to move here to Anzhi to have more playing time and show my qualities. People in Iran know Anzhi Makhachkala quite well as a couple of big players like Samuel Eto'o and Roberto Carlos have played here. Anzhi is a big club with great fans and I'm so proud to be part of it.

■ **The biggest problem in Russia**

My biggest difficulty in Russia is the language. Fortunately in Rostov I had very little problem in communicating as Sardar could translate everything and I was so happy with it but here at Anzhi I would definitely have difficulties with the language.

■ **Leaving Spain**

I had the offer to extend my contract with Atletico Madrid but I wanted to develop my football and have more playing time. I had even an offer from Getafe but I chose to move to Rostov in order to work under Kurban Berdyev. He is interested in working with young talented players and was eager to sign me even before my move to Madrid. I also discussed my move to Russia with



Queiroz and he was quite positive.

■ **Queiroz vs. Berdyev**

Carlos Queiroz is a great coach and I

have talked with him whenever I had to take a decision, he told me to move to Anzhi in order to have more playing time. Queiroz and

Berdyev have something in common, they both know modern football very well and are among the top coaches I have in my mind.



Iran wants to expand sports ties with Armenia: sports minister

S P O R T S

d e s k Iranian Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs Masoud Soltanifar says that they want to expand ties with Armenia.

Soltanifar met with Armenian ambassador to Tehran Artashes Tumanyan in Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs' headquarters on Monday.

"Armenia has a high economic potential and two countries have had good relations in the field of culture," Soltanifar said.

"I suggest that sport teams from two countries to meet together in the current year and we can take advantage of our capacities. Iran and Armenia football teams can play each other according to their respective federations' schedule," he added.

"Iran and Armenia can develop their ties in the various areas focusing on the area of women's football development, coaching, and youth sports," Soltanifar said.

AFC Beach Soccer Championship: Iran 6-1 Afghanistan



Islamic Republic of Iran cruised to their second win in Group A of the 2017 AFC Beach Soccer Championship after beating Afghanistan 6-1 in Kuala Terengganu on Monday.

Iran talisman Farid Boulkhashi, who scored four goals in the 14-0 drubbing of Malaysia the day before, drew first blood on seven minutes but Raof Qaderi equalised shortly after.

Seyed Ali Nazem then made a soft nudge of the ball into goal during a melee to score Iran's second before the game went into the second period.

Boulkhashi then registered his second in the match to take it to 3-1 for his side before Moslem Mesigar struck Iran's fourth a minute later.

Mohammadali Mokhtari then had an opportunity to extend the lead when he smartly caught the ball with his chest and volleyed, but only for the keeper to beat as it went above the post.

Iran squandered another chance

when Boulkhashi missed a penalty after keeper Shabab Alavi fouled him in the area before the second period ended.

Afghanistan's Qaderi then hit the woodwork a minute after the restart before Iranian captain Mohammad Ahmadzadeh missed his penalty awarded after Afghanistan skipper Zainuddin Sharifi booked a red card for a hard tackle.

Iran finally found their goal in the third period with hotshot Boulkhashi's number three in the game, his seventh in the tournament, before Hassan Abdollahi converted his free-kick to help the 2013 champions leapfrog Afghanistan to the top of their group.

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)

Iranian coach leads U.S. U-20 national team to first-ever CONCACAF title



Iranian-American coach Omid Namazi has led United States U-20 national team to the first-ever CONCACAF title after a win against Honduras on penalties.

It didn't come easy, but the United States Under-20 national team prevailed in a penalty shootout after a 0-0 tie with Honduras to capture the country's first ever CONCACAF Championship at the U-20 level.

The US had to suffer through a trying 90 minutes that saw Justen Glad and Eryk Williamson substituted through injury and Erik Palmer-Brown also forced off with a knock after US coach Tab Ramos had used all three of his subs.

Both teams had their chances, with the US generating most of their shots in the first half. But neither team could find a breakthrough in 90 minutes of regulation, and the match went straight to penalties.

Each team made their first three penalties in the shootout, but after Luca De La Torre converted the USA's

fourth attempt, Honduras' Rembrandt Flores missed high. That set up Danny Acosta for the winning penalty attempt, and the Real Salt Lake man made no mistake, sparking frenzied celebrations from the US bench.

The US will now look forward to the 2017 FIFA U-20 World Cup, set to take place in South Korea in May. The draw for that tournament will take place on March 15.

US Under-20s lineup (4-5-1): Jonathan Klinsmann; Marlon Fossey, Tommy Redding, Justen Glad (Auston Trusty 48'), Danny Acosta; Brooks Lennon, Erik Palmer-Brown, Tyler Adams, Eryk Williamson (Emmanuel Sabbi 26'), Luca de la Torre; Jeremy Ebobisse (Coy Craft 79').

Honduras Under-20s lineup (4-3-3): Javier Delgado; Dylan Andrade, Jose Garcia, Denil Maldonado, Wesly Decas; Byron Rodriguez (Rembrandt Flores 72'), Carlos Pineda, Jorge Alvarez; Foslyn Grant, Douglas Martinez, Darixon Vuelto Perez

'Iranian Messi' Sardar Azmoun strikes twice for Rostov ahead of Manchester United clash

Iranian striker Sardar Azmoun scored twice for FC Rostov ahead of their clash with Manchester United in the Europa League.

Rostov, who host Jose Mourinho's side in the first leg of their last-16 tie on Thursday evening, beat Tom Toms 6-0 on Friday in the Russian Premier League.

Dubbed the "Iranian Messi" by Rostov supporters and media after moving to the club on loan in 2015, his fine form earned a permanent deal last year.

Rostov ultimately failed to qualify from their

Champions League group earlier this season, but Azmoun impressed, scoring against Atletico Madrid and Bayern Munich.

Having dropped into the Europa League, they dispatched Sparta Prague in the last 32 and have not lost a match in any competition since November.

Azmoun struck twice against Tom Toms to take his tally to seven goals from his last 10 appearances in all competitions and he will be the danger man when United visit.

(Source: Sky Sports)



Van Basten: Video Assistant Referees are good for football

There were some fascinating footballing trends at the most recent FIFA Club World Cup, and the Technical Study Group (TSG) of Japan 2016 has now published its technical report on the tournament along with some key facts and figures. Marco van Basten, FIFA's Chief Officer for Technical Development, sat down with FIFA.com to give his take on the style of play at the tournament, as well as divulging insights into the changing role of centre forwards and the testing of Video Assistant Referees (VARs) which took place in Japan.

■ **FIFA.com: All sides at the FIFA Club World Cup tried to retain possession of the ball, playing out from the back. Is this collective style of play a coincidence or are teams playing more offensive football in the modern era? What are the challenges of playing this way?**

Marco van Basten: Most teams like to play football from the back, as Barcelona have done in recent times. In this way, you control the ball, you have a technical and tactical base going forward and that's probably the football that most people like to watch. In the past it was probably easier to play long balls in behind the defence.

It's not always easy to play from the back. The opponent also has their own tactics to counteract this style. If their pressing is well organised, it is not easy to go forward. This is something that, for the last ten years, we have seen in different games at every level. The better defenders you have, the more you try to play football from back to front. The advantage of this is that you can give easier passes for the technical players to receive and it's easier for them to do something with the ball.

What you see now more than before, is that teams are beginning to play with three rather than four defenders. With three defenders, you have more players in midfield, more possibilities to reach them with the ball. This can, however, be a bit more dangerous. With three players in behind, it's not always easy to find your team-mate in the midfield because it is a bit more straightforward to be pressed by your opponent.

■ **Kashima Antlers have become the first Asian team to reach the final of a FIFA Club World Cup. What were Kashima's main characteristics during the tournament?**

We've seen a very professional, experienced team reach the final. They were very well organised defensively, with good tactical discipline. They played at a very high level, with Real Madrid finding it difficult to create chances against them. When Antlers did get possession, they were very quick to counter-attack and were technically very good. Altogether, the final was a very interesting game. It was fully balanced into the 90th minute, when the game was level at 2-2. It's a big compliment for Asian football and, in this case, Japanese football. I think that Kashima Antlers could easily play in high level European competitions.

■ **How has Asian football developed in recent years?**

Most of the players in the Kashima Antlers side were Japanese, and if these players are playing at a high level, then the national team will only continue to improve. I think at this moment there are a lot of players from Asian football also playing in Europe, which helps them and the national teams, putting them on a better level.

■ **Teams had the opportunity to bring on a fourth substitute in extra time. Does this change the tactics of the coaches? Does this also influence the way teams play in the final minutes of regular time?**

I think the good thing about having a fourth substitute in extra time is that probably, quite often, the players are getting tired after 90 minutes of the game. When players get tired, they have fewer ideas and the game gets less interesting because nobody takes the initiative. If you bring on fresher players it's good for the dynamic of the game, so the people in the stadium and watching on television see more exciting football, which I think is very important.

I don't think it changes the tactics a lot, I don't think coaches will use it in a special way, it's just an extra possibility to change a player when they get injured or tired.

■ **Having played as a centre forward in your career, what qualities do you think a striker needs in modern football?**

What you see now in football is that the sport is getting a bit more like handball. There are nine defenders and a goalkeeper and the others are trying to break that wall, which is very difficult. This means the space for a centre forward is so small. The only thing you can do is a one-two, or quick passes, you can't find a solution by dribbling or something similar. You can see this in two ways, the situation of a centre forward is very difficult because there is no space, but on the other hand they have to try to score goals so you have to serve them in a different way – either by scoring quick goals, like headers, or through fast counter attacks.

I think strikers need to be much cleverer. It's all about a little moment or space that you can use, in one split-second it's already gone. Or, you have to be very strong. A target man who is served by his team-mates – you receive the ball and the defenders and team-mates see you as the focal point, it's difficult to defend someone like that.

I was a centre forward who liked to go to the wings and create space for other players. In modern football that's very difficult. We see Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi, going from left to right, front to back, to create problems for the opponent because then you have to defend players in motion, which is much more difficult than players who are static.

■ **We have witnessed the first-ever live trial with video assistant referees (VARs) at a FIFA competition during the Club World Cup in Japan. How happy have you been with this trial?**

I've been very happy with the tests. It's good for football and helps the game a lot. This is something that eradicates the big incorrect decisions, which is our goal. We had a few difficult moments at the Club World Cup in Japan, which were about the communication between the referee and the VAR. That has to improve, that's clear. On the other hand, there was not a big mistake, so that is a positive thing. There are some things that have to improve, one of which is that when Cristiano scored his goal [against Club America], we did not give him time to celebrate, because there was a discussion with the VAR. But we are all happy. I think the players and the public can watch a little bit more quietly, without arguments, because we know that the result from a VAR decision will be correct. I'm convinced we'll see more tests of the VAR system in the future.

(Source: FIFA)

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NEWS IN BRIEF



Fajr Intl. Poetry Festival holds poetry session in Neyshabur

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — The 11th Fajr International Poetry Festival organized a poetry recitation session on Monday in the northeastern Iranian city of Neyshabur, which is home to the tombs of Persian poets Attar and Omar Khayyam.

Among the literati attending the session were Anna Berzina from Russia, Maryam Attar from Iraq, Ahmad Shahriar from Pakistan, Golnaz Taherian and Fakhraddin Gurbanov from Tajikistan, and Mohammad-Hossein Fayyaz and Zahra Hosseinzadeh from Afghanistan.

The 11th Fajr International Poetry Festival will come to an end in Mashhad on Wednesday.



Dresden filmfest to screen Iran's "Bibi"

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Saeid d e s k Najati's "Bibi" will go on screen at the Children and Youth section of the 29th Dresden International Short Film Festival, which will be held in the German city from April 4 to 9.

"Bibi" tells the story of some teenage boys who want to help their friend to send his grandmother to Iraq for the Arbreen mourning ritual.

Bruno Mars, Justin Timberlake shine at iheartradio Awards

CALIFORNIA (AP) — The 2017 iHeartRadio Music Awards started with Justin Timberlake speaking about inclusion and dedicating his award to children who feel different, and ended with a rousing performance by Bruno Mars that included crowd participation from Florida Georgia Line, Thomas Rhett, Ty Dolla \$ign, Heidi Klum and more.

Timberlake won the night's first award, song of the year, for "Can't Stop The Feeling!" - his massive No.1 hit that was nominated for an Academy Award last month.

"Can't Stop This Feeling!" appeared on the "Trolls" soundtrack and was nominated for the best original song Oscar.

Mars, who earned the Innovator Award and closed the show, started his performance with his past hit, "Treasure," and later sang his newest hit, the groovy "That's What I Like." It featured his signature, slick dance moves and all-star band.

"Innovator is a very heavy word. ...It's a little ironic for me because I genuinely feel like I'm just getting started," Mars, 31, said onstage, sporting a black suit and sunglasses. "So buckle up. I don't know where we're going yet but we're going. Keep up y'all."

Other A-list stars were part of the awards show, too: Ed Sheeran started solo and strummed his guitar during "Shape of You" - currently No.1 on the Billboard Hot 100 - and later walked to another stage to perform "Castle on the Hill" with a full band. Sheeran won best lyrics for co-writing Justin Bieber's "Love Yourself."

"We started this song on the back of a tour bus," Sheeran said onstage next to co-writer Benny Blanco (Bieber, who didn't attend, also co-wrote the song).

Drake, who didn't attend the show, was the night's big winner with seven awards (he was also the top contender with 12 nominations). The Chainsmokers had 11 nominations and won five awards, including best new artist. The Grammy-winning EDM duo performed "Paris" and "Something Just Like This" with Chris Martin, who ran into the crowd during the performance.

"It's been a really, really tough year, but I hope that somehow this song made the summer a little bit better for you guys despite everything that's been going on," Halsey said onstage after she and the Chainsmokers won dance song of the year for their ubiquitous hit, "Closer."

Martin and his band Coldplay won best tour. He accepted the award onstage with three people - not his band mates - but child background dancers who performed with Katy Perry at the top of the show.

"Hello, we are Coldplay. Thank you so much for this award. We love our job and we love our fans," the young girl read from a paper. "You wouldn't believe it, but we are in our late 30s."

Perry, in a bright red blazer, hot pink pants and a short blond haircut, kicked off the show with kid dancers dressed as laborers when she sang "Chained to the Rhythm." Miley Cyrus was ecstatic as she introduced her younger sister, Noah Cyrus, to the stage for a performance. Miley and her parents sang along as Noah performed "Make Me (Cry)" alongside English singer-producer Labrinth.

Comic stories on donkeys by composer Loris Tjeknavorian published

A R T **TEHRAN** — A book by composer d e s k Loris Tjeknavorian containing short comic stories on donkeys has recently been published.

Entitled "Kharestan" (The Land of Donkeys), the book was introduced during a ceremony at the Iranian Artists Forum on Monday.

In his brief remarks, Christian Iranian maestro Tjeknavorian said that he has long desired to write a book but was afraid. "However, Yarta Yaran, a prominent writer and painter, encouraged me to write stories about the donkeys and this is the final product.

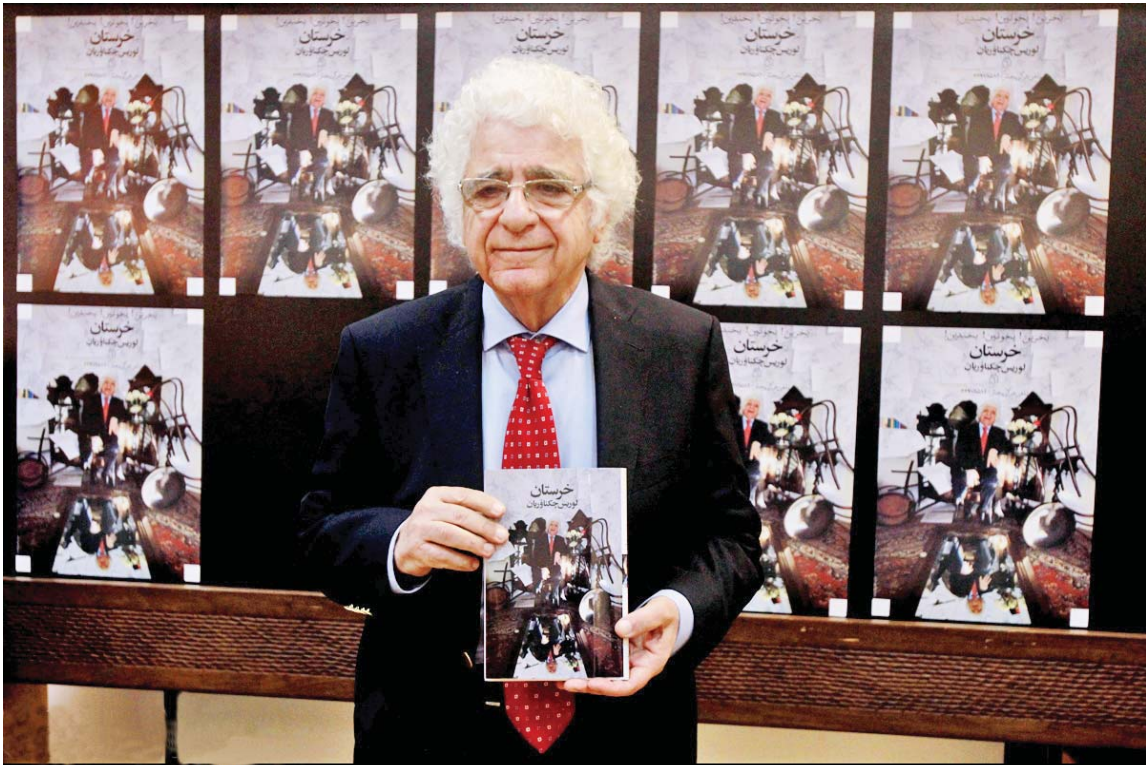
"This book contains a series of jokes that only aim to bring smiles to the faces of people and nothing more," he added.

He also said, "I have created a land of donkeys in this book and I myself am the Prime Minister of this land."

He also noted that he is planning to do a second edition of the book if it sells well.

The 79-year-old composer also talked about his future plans and, surprisingly enough, he said that he wants to become an actor and also make films. "There is no day in which I have not laughed, because life is too short and does not deserve to be taken seriously. If I am supposed to have a long life, I prefer to remain a child forever," he remarked.

The audio version of the book, which has been published by the Seday-e Moaser Publications, is soon to be released by a team of famous narrators next year.



Composer Loris Tjeknavorian holds a copy of "Kharestan" during a ceremony held by the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran on March 4, 2017 to introduce the book of short comic stories on donkeys.

Iranian films win awards at Venezuelan festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — Seven d e s k Iranian films won awards at the February edition of the Festival Internacional de Cine On-Line de los 5 Continentes, a monthly short film festival that is held in Puerto la Cruz, Venezuela.

Iranian director Amir Lashkari's "Label" won the best experimental film award while "Paper Boat" by Elham Abbaszadeh received a special mention.

"Crazy Essay" by Saeid Zare Soheili was named best super short film while "Mr. A" by Siamak Ahmadi received a special mention for the best animated movie.

Actor Puyan Yahyapur and actress

Maryam Masudi received best actor and actress awards for their role in "Without Eve" by Komeil Rohani.

The film also brought a special mention for the best sound for Nima Taqavizadeh, the film's sound editor.

"From Us" by director/writer Seyyed Morteza Sabzeqaba received a special mention for the best screenplay while Ehsan Kaffash received a special mention of best cinematography for his cooperation on "Label" by Amir Lashkari.

In addition, Asma Sadeqi won the best child actor award for her role in "Confined Space" by Siamak Ahmadi.

"Mazar-i-Sharif" named best at Phoenix Film Festival Melbourne

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian filmmaker d e s k Hassan Barzideh's acclaimed political drama "Mazar-i-Sharif" has won the best film award at the Phoenix Film Festival Melbourne.

The film received the award in a category dedicated to movies with a budget under \$250,000, the organizers announced last Thursday.

The film tells the story of the killing of several Iranian diplomats and a journalist by Taliban militants in the Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif in 1998.

"Tatara Samurai" from Japanese director Yoshinari Nishikōri won the award for best film in a category dedicated to movies with a budget over \$250,000.

The movie is about a young man in 16th century Japan who faces a dilemma of choosing between



Mahtab Keramati acts in a scene from "Mazar-i-Sharif".

Pink Floyd's "Dark Side of the Moon" recording console heads to auction

LONDON (The Guardian) — Assuming Pink Floyd do not play at Glastonbury – and given the coolness between Roger Waters and David Gilmour, that seems a reasonable assumption to make, no matter how tantalizing the speculation – then the Floyd obsessive in your life has a hole they need filling.

If they also have a garage or storage unit they need filling, then the perfect gift to meet their needs is on the market: the recording console used by the band when they recorded "The Dark Side of the Moon".

The desk – the Abbey Road Studios EMI TG12345 Mk IV, in case you didn't know – was housed at Abbey Road's studio two from 1971 to 1983, where it was also used to record solo records by Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr, as well as work by Kate Bush and the Cure among many others.

It is to be sold by the auction house Bonham's as part of their TCM Presents ... Rock and Roll Through the Lens auction in New York on March 27. The seller is the producer Mike Hedges, who bought it when the studio upgraded its equipment in 1983. The console was built by Abbey Road and EMI engineers working together, and was among the most advanced of its time when new.



Hot desk ... the recording console used by Pink Floyd. Photograph: (Rex/Shutterstock)

Be warned, however: no estimate is listed, suggesting it may cost more than the casual buyer has to hand. Rolling Stone reports that it is expected to attract "six-figure bids". It is on view at Bonham's London branch, in Knightsbridge, from March 19 to 27.

For something a little less expensive, and for those without room to store a recording console, an early 1970s Pink Floyd promotional poster is being sold at the auction with an estimated cost of between £250 and £410. If you have the money but not the space, then you might want to consider a bid of between £120,000 and £160,000 for Jimi Hendrix's recorder. Not tape recorder. But recorder, as played tunelessly by children since time immemorial.

"Beyond the Words" to go on stage in France

A R T **TEHRAN** — d e s k "Beyond the Words", a co-production of France and Iran, will go on stage at the Theatre Le Verso in the city of Saint Etienne running from March 23 to 26.

A coproduction of French Litecox and Iranian Zendegi Theater Company, the play has been directed by Jafar Mahyari in collaboration with French choreographer Daisy Fel, and was staged at the 35th Fajr International Theater Festival in January.

"Beyond the Words" tells the story of an old pencil and a young eraser which live in a pencil box. For a long time they have been without news

of their owner. The latter used to make his pencil write about negative events, and remove anything that might seem positive to him by using his eraser.

The play focuses on the relationship between the language of the body and the relationship to the text.

Beatrice Garnier Ikken, Daisy Fel and Saeid Abak are the cast members of the play.

Costume designer Cathy Ray, stage manager and light designer Camille Gonzales, sound designer Jean-Francois Minjiard and photographer Seghir Zouaoui have collaborated in the project.

Burkina Faso director gives African women authentic voice

OUAGADOUGOU (Reuters) — Burkina Faso film director Apolline Woye Traore, who won three prizes at the country's prestigious Fespaco festival on Saturday, knows a thing or two about challenges.

Born in 1976, she left her homeland at the age of seven and spent 17 years in the United States where she studied film and then worked in Los Angeles.

When she decided to return to focus her work on Africa, she found herself in a male-dominated industry and a society where her elders demanded a kind of deference that often hindered her ability to direct on the set.

"It was difficult," she said in an interview with Reuters in the garden of her home in the capital Ouagadougou.

"I had to bang on the table. I had to be direct and raw. There were lots of fights before I imposed myself. I think if I had been a man, it wouldn't have been like that."

Frustrated by two-dimensional portrayals of African women on the screen, Traore aims to tell their stories her own way.

"Having women in the industry is very important. We have a different vision. We see things differently," she said. "It's not only in Africa."

Her 2013 entry at Fespaco, "Moi

Zaphira", told the fictional story of a young woman who seeks to break out of the confines of her village and forge a better life for herself and her daughter.

Her latest film, "Frontieres", centers on four market women who travel across West Africa from Dakar, Senegal to Lagos, Nigeria, braving corrupt border guards and the ever-present threat of violence to earn a living.

"It was an experience for me to really see how Africa struggles and how these extraordinary women struggle for a better life and confront all off these dangers," Traore said.

"Frontieres" missed out on Fespaco's top honor this year, which went to Senegalese director Alain Gomis for "Felicite", the story of a nightclub singer in Congo's dilapidated mega-city Kinshasa.

It did however pick up three prizes, including the Paul Robeson Prize for the best film by a director from the African diaspora.

Traore said she already has her next project in mind, though she declined to give details.

"I think in our trade the only way to impose yourself is to produce. It's a very hard field," she said. "It's always a struggle, because it's art and so you are always trying to convince people."